Intercultural Adjustment: Female Saudi Students' Experiences of Adaptation and Acculturation in the United Kingdom

Huda Ali Alqahtani*, Karen Pfeffer
School of Psychology, University of Lincoln,
Brayford Pool, Lincoln, United Kingdom
*Corresponding Author: halqahtani@lincoln.ac.uk

Abstract

Saudi Arabia's culture involves a complex mixture of religious and cultural principles, which has given Saudi women a unique position compared to women elsewhere in both the Arab and Western world. In recent years, Saudi Universities and institutions have become increasingly eager to send their female staff abroad for study purposes. Adapting to a new country or culture and education system involves changes and adjustments which might be experienced as challenging by female Saudi international students. Previous studies reported on the experiences of Saudi students in the US, however none of these studies report on the experiences of female Saudi students of adaptation and acculturation in the UK. This paper therefore set out to explore the academic challenges experienced by female Saudi students' during their adaptation to the UK and their associated coping strategies. Accordingly, a mixed method approach was used, combining quantitative and qualitative analysis of questionnaires and interviews with 25 female Saudi PhD students. Interviews were conducted between 2016 and 2017, and analyzed using thematic analysis. Two main themes emerged: academic adaptation and parenting themes. Participants felt that the requirements of the education system in the UK represented a major challenge, they noted a lack of skills and knowledge is needed to achieve academically. For the parenting theme, both negative and positive points emerged around social and cultural identities. The implications of this research will therefore help Saudi international students and academic institutions in the UK and Saudi Arabia with the understanding of the challenges and experiences facing this profile of students, the relevant coping strategies and the provision of services required to accommodate their needs.

Keywords: Female Saudi students, Saudi women, adaptation, acculturation

Introduction

Some of the common reasons for students to study abroad include language learning, learning about a different culture, making new friends and improving cross-cultural knowledge and skills (Sherry, Thomas and Chui, 2010). However, in the process of pursuing international study, students can face challenges adapting to the host country and the education system which can be perceived as stressful (Zhang & Goodson, 2011). Experiences of international students have been found to differ depending on several factors, including their proficiency in language of the host country, the region/country of origin, length of residence in the host country, cultural identity, social interaction with host citizens, gender, and social support (Zhang & Goodson, 2011). This paper focusses on the experiences of students from Saudi Arabia.

Although students from Saudi Arabia have been studying abroad since the 1960s (Ministry of Higher Education., 2017), studies which examined the lived experiences of international Saudi students in English-speaking countries are limited (Zhanga & Goodson, 2011). Also, the number of female Saudi students studying abroad has increased. However,

very few studies have focussed exclusively on the experiences of international Saudi female students (Sandekian, Weddington, Birnbaum, & Keen, 2015). Also, most of the research has focused on Saudi students in the US and Canada (e.g., Lefdahl-Davis & Perrone- McGovern, 2015). Although the UK has the second largest intake of Saudi students (after the US), few studies have addressed the lived experiences of Saudi students during their stay in the UK. Given the cultural differences between Saudi Arabia and the UK that are likely to affect Saudi female students, more research on this group of international students is needed. Therefore, the aim of this study was to examine the adaptation of female Saudi students in the UK from a psychological perspective.

Purpose of the Study

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the experiences of female Saudi students studying in the UK. Specifically, the aim was to investigate the academic challenges and parenting experienced by female Saudi students during their adaptation to the UK, the extent of acculturation, and associated coping strategies.

Research Questions

The study was designed to address the following research questions. (1) What are the adaptation and acculturation experiences of female Saudi students in the UK in relation to (A) academic contexts, and (B) home/family contexts? Also, (2) what coping strategies do they employ to deal with adaptation challenges?

Theory

Adaptation can be conceptualized in different ways. This paper however, adopts the Searle and Ward (1990) model. This model differentiates between two distinct aspects of psychological and sociocultural adaptation. Psychological adaptation refers to how happy and comfortable a person feels in the new culture, or anxious and out of place. Sociocultural adaptation however, refers to the more behavioral and practical aspects of adapting that allow a person to navigate effectively in the new culture on a day-to-day basis. These two types of adaptation are obviously different and are not always correlated. Acculturation refers to the process by which human beings adopt the social patterns or cultural traits of another social group. It describes the outcomes of contact between different cultures (Demes, & Geeraert, 2014).

Two main theories underpinned this research. The first theory is the Affective, Behavioural and Cognitive (ABC) theory of adaptation and acculturation (Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, Todman, 2008). This theory is comprehensive, considers acculturation as an active process that occurs over time, and addresses the characteristics of the person and the situation. The ABC theory has been used in research and practice with international students in higher education (Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, K. Todman, 2008). The ABC theory builds on from three earlier cultural shock and adaptation theories; Stress and Coping (Affect), the Cultural Learning theory (Behavior) and Social Identification (Cognition).

The second theory underpinning this research is Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (Hofstede, 2003). The most well-known dimension is Individualism versus Collectivism. Individualism is described as a preference for a society in which people are expected to take care of themselves and their immediate families, to think for themselves, to focus on personal achievement and how to make a unique contribution to society. Collectivism is described as a preference for a society in which people are very loyal to the in-group to which they belong, such as family or extended family, and they expect their family or other in-group members to look after them. Comparing the UK with Saudi Arabia, individualism versus collectivism represents the highest cultural difference between the two

countries. According to Hofstede Insights (2017) the UK is amongst the highest scoring nations for Individualism scores and Saudi Arabia is considered a collectivist society. Such cultural differences between Saudi Arabia and the UK are expected to have an impact on the social cultural challenges that may face female Saudi students in the UK.

Literature Review

Among the few studies of Arab women's international student experiences, McDermott-Levy (2011) described cultural differences that may influence Arab-Muslim women's experiences in unique ways. She contrasted the collectivist, family-oriented, patriarchal structure of Arabian culture with the more individualistic cultures of the host countries in which they study. In addition, Lefdahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern's (2015) study of female Saudi students' adaptation experiences found that the first three months may involve difficulties in adaptation which can last up to two years. This emphasizes the longer term perspective proposed by the ABC theory.

Also, Alqahtani (2015) interviewed male and female students from Saudi Arabia who were studying in the UK, focusing on communication and friendships. Alqahtani found that experiences and their effects were varied, and for some students their experiences led to adaptations to their beliefs, behaviors and identities. Alqahtani also found that Saudi students in Britain did not find mixed-gender educational contexts as challenging as previous research studies have suggested (Sandekian, Weddington, Birnbaum & Keen, 2015). However, Alqahtani's study was limited to exploring the communication and friendships of Saudi students in the UK based on a small sample of two (one male and one female). Previous literature has outlined differences of adaptation between males and females (Lee, Park, & Kim, 2009). Also, certain aspects of the Saudi culture regarding female roles, such as having to be accompanied by a male family member, gender segregation and driving restrictions, (Alhazmi, 2013; Van Geel, 2016) may make the Saudi female students experience of adaptation and acculturation unique when compared to women elsewhere in both Arab and western countries. Therefore this study aimed to add to the scant literature on this topic and explore the female Saudi students' experiences of adaptation in the UK.

Methodology

This study uses a mixed methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. The primary research tool is a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions for qualitative analysis. Fixed choice questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data. This research is part of an ongoing study that examines the experiences of Saudi postgraduate female students during their doctoral journey in the UK. Doctoral students were selected for the following reasons. Unlike those on a shorter Masters course, the prolonged nature of doctoral studies would allow time for them to adapt and potentially acculturate to the social and academic environment. Also, unlike undergraduates, doctoral students often study on their own without a supporting network of peers which could make adaptation more challenging.

Participants

A total of 25 Saudi female students enrolled on a postgraduate doctoral programme in the UK were sampled using 'snow ball' sampling techniques. All interviewees were sponsored by the Saudi government and were studying different academic subjects (e.g., Mathematics, Physics, Nursing, Computer Science, Nutrition, Education, Fashion Design). The age range was between 26 and 40 years and 72% were aged 31-35 years, 86% of the participants were married and accompanied by their spouse in the UK, the remainder were either single, divorced or not accompanied by their spouse and children. Participants were

geographically dispersed between Manchester, Leeds, Edinburgh and Sheffield in the north of England.

Interviews

The interview schedule consisted of demographic questions (e.g., course and level of study, marital status, age, whether sponsored or self-funded) and 13 open-ended questions covering four main aspects. These were (1) previous experiences, (2) expectations, (3) challenges and (4) cultural differences.

Questionnaires

Adaptation and Acculturation Scales developed by Demes & Geeraert (2014) were used. The scales comprised five subscales as follows: home acculturation orientation (importance of home culture), host acculturation orientation (importance of host culture), psychological adaptation, sociocultural adaptation and perceived cultural distance. Each item was scored on a seven-point scale. These subscales have been used in cross-cultural research and have been translated into Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish, Thai, and Turkish. Demes & Geeraert (2014) validated these scales against similar scales using a large sample of sojourners. Also, they assessed scale reliability with international student samples studying in the UK and concluded that reliability was good. A pilot study with a small sample of Arabic-speaking adults showed that they were suitable for use with Saudi students.

Procedure

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant ethics committee at the researchers' university. Each participant was met separately and interviewed individually. Interviews lasted approximately 30-40 minutes and were conducted in Arabic. Nineteen interviews took place by telephone and 6 were conducted face-to-face. Each interview was audio recorded to allow for the interviews to be replayed and transcribed. The study was explained to the participants and information sheets, consent forms and withdrawal procedures were provided in writing. They were told in advance that they do not have to participate or answer all the questions if they do not want to. Interviews were conducted in Arabic by the first author who is a native Arabic speaker and familiar with the Saudi culture. Answers were transcribed in Arabic. Questionnaires were completed immediately after the interviews and took approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

Data Analysis

Analysis of interviews used a thematic analysis approach following Braun and Clark (2006). Data analysis, including identification of themes was completed in Arabic. Results were translated into English for reporting purposes. Particular care was taken in order to accurately capture the general meaning obtained from the responses, rather than using literal translations, to get a more sensible understanding of the meaning (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011). 'Member checking' was used to ascertain the validity, credibility and trustworthiness of the thematic analysis by asking for participant feedback on the coding, by consulting with other Saudi psychologists who are familiar with qualitative data analysis and a good knowledge of the culture, and by triangulation with the quantitative data. Means, standard deviations and correlations were calculated for the questionnaire subscales.

Findings

Qualitative Analysis

Three overarching themes were identified; 'Academic adaptation is challenging', 'Parenting', and Coping strategies.

Academic adaptation is challenging. For academic adaptation challenges, four main themes were identified. These were language and communication, differences in education systems and skills, health and well-being challenges, and coping strategies. Table 1 presents the relevant themes.

Language and communication. The majority of the participants (52%) cited language as a barrier and contributor to their communication challenges with an impact on their academic performance. Participants reported that language difficulties slowed them down and caused difficulties with academic writing. Even when understanding of the host language was good, the local accent was sometimes seen as a communication problem. Communicating with the supervisor was also identified as a problem which was sometimes linked to differences in the educational systems and expected roles of supervisor and student. Although the mean score on the language item of the Social Cultural Adaptation scale (4.96) showed that they did not find it very difficult to adapt to the English language, scores on the Perceived Cultural Distance Scale (6.28) showed that they found the English language to be very different from Arabic. Also, participants did not think it very important to have host country (British) friends (mean score = 3.56 out of 7), but did think it important to have Saudi friends (mean score = 6.1), both of which could hinder them from improving their English language and communication skills.

Differences in education systems and skills. Challenges adapting and acculturating to differences in education systems were reported by 80% of participants. This included academic skills such as critical thinking skills and research skills, understanding technical/scientific terms and equipment, and differences in education background such as degree programme content. Female Saudi students who had completed their MA studies in the UK, USA or Australia found it less challenging to adapt academically to PhD.

Health and wellbeing. This was considered a challenge to their academic adaptation by 20% of the participants. Two of the participants reported about physical illness that impacted on their academic performance and three of the participants reported about psychological disorders that they have faced during the course of their study. These findings were supported by the mean scores on the homesickness item of the Psychological Adaptation Scale (5.36)

Table 1
Themes and examples representing academic adaptation challenges

Theme		Example
Language and communication	Language	*My English language is a barrier to read in a reasonable amount of time….I always need to re-read academic articles more than three times*
	Understanding accent	*I can't understand the British accent very well*
	Communication	*I don't get what my supervisor really wants, I go to him with one question and he sends me back with 100 questions*
Differences in education systems and skills	Content differences	*My degree was entirely different to what I did in Saudi Arabia*
	Understanding technical	*When my group in the lab would talk about something I didn't understand what they were on*

Theme		Example
	terms/equipment	*about, not because I don't know English, nooo, but because they would use scientific terminologies which I didn't know the meanings of.*
	Academic skills	*My supervisor always asks me to be critical but I don't know how*
	Previous experiences	*studying masters turned out to be very useful at least in terms of adapting to the education system and learning research skills*
Health and well-being	Health problems	*I became depressed after having a baby, and this affected me psychologically*
Language and communication coping strategies	Recording meetings with the supervisor	*I used to record my meetings with the supervisor and then ask him questions (after having listened to the recording at home)*
	Explaining by drawing	*When the supervisor didn't get what I wanted to say, I would draw it to him on the board*
	Practice listening	*I listened to the BBC all weekend until I became used to the British accent*
	Translating into own language	*Translating terminologies and PowerPoint slides from the lectures helped me understand*
Extra effort coping strategies	Multiplying effort and time	*I put tenfold the time and effort that others would put (home students/native English speakers)*
	Additional courses/ private tutoring	*I enrolled in some online courses*
	Self-teaching	*I used to teach myself*
	Asking for help	*I asked everyone I could ask*
	Reading more	*I started to read a lot so I can understand*

Parenting theme. Both negative and positive points emerged in the parenting theme (see Table 2). Some negative aspects of parenting away for the home country were noted by the participants. For example, participants commented on the lack of Arabic language skills that affected their children's reading and writing, lack of home country social cultural skills, lack of similar interests to other Saudi children, different cultural values, and instability of cultural identities.

Participants noted several positive aspects of parenting in the UK. These included developing social-cultural communication, acquisition of foreign languages (English and other European languages), acculturation (integration), and positive developments to the parent-child relationship.

These findings were supported by the mean scores on the difficulties to adapt to the British values and beliefs items of Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (3.72) showing that they did not find it easy to adapt to the British values and beliefs, and the mean scores on differences between Saudi Arabia and British values and beliefs items of Cultural Distance Scale (6.24) showing that they found the British values and beliefs are very different to their home country values and beliefs.

Parenting coping strategies. Two types of parenting strategies were reported, language strategies and socio-cultural strategies.

Coping strategies: language.   Different strategies were reported to improve the children's' Arabic language such as speaking Arabic at home and enrolling the children in Arabic schools. For example,

> *"I force my children to speak Arabic at home"*
> *"I send my children to Arabic school three days a week"*

Coping strategies: socio-cultural. To maintain the children's socio-cultural home communication skills and identity, the participants developed coping strategies by mixing with the Saudi community and enrolling on trips and activities organised by the Saudi club, besides encouraging their children to integrate with the Arabic community.

> *"It is important that my children attend the Saudi Club events such as the Saudi national day"*
> *"I have to meet with my Saudi friends every weekend so that my daughter mixes with other Saudi girls"*

Table 2
Themes and examples representing the 'parenting' theme

Themes		Examples
Language skills	Speaking	*My child's Arabic is very poor*
	Reading	*I feel sad that my child stutters when he reads Qura'an [in Arabic]*
	Writing	*My son does not know the Arabic alphabet*
	Acquiring languages	*She* (her daughter) *speak English like the native*
		My sons leaned Spanish French languages beside the English language
Social-cultural skills & communication	Lacks behavior	*My son doesn't know how to act in certain situation (in Saudi Arabia)*
	Interests	*His* (her son) *area of interest is completely different to his peers in Saudi Arabia*
	Intercultural friendships	*The children made friends with others from different nationalities, religions and ethnicities*
Identities	Social identity	*He (her son) escapes from his Saudi friends in the school. He does not want to be with them. So, no one can call him terrorist*
	Religious identity	
	National identity	*Mom can I be half Muslim half Christian*
		My son always telling me I am not Saudi, and I am not going to live in Saudi Arabia
Acculturation: assimilation (negative)	Beliefs	*My child is influenced by a lot of ideas which are unacceptable in our culture, even if I think I managed to persuade, he reverts back to the other ideas*
	Values & norms	*My son is no longer convinced that he has to 'show courtesy' to his older relatives, when I ask him to come along to visit his uncles, he talks back and says that he doesn't like them and asks why he has to be around someone he doesn't like*
	Behaviour	*My daughter is influenced by her English friends and*

Themes		Examples
		she acts like them
Acculturation: integration (positive)	Respect others Self-independence Polite	*my children became better at tolerating and respecting others even they were different to them* *My child became more confident, bold, independent and able to take more responsibility* *Thanks God, he (her son) is polite*
Developing the parent-child relationship	Closer	*My relationship with my children grew stronger and I became more aware of their needs and their personalities and what they're after before they tell about it*
	Discussion and dialogue	*In the UK I discuss with children more and better than I do in Saudi Arabia*

Quantitative Analysis

Mean scores were above the midpoint for adjustment and adaptation scales showing that the participants were fairly well psychologically and socially adapted to the UK (Table 3). They had a stronger acculturation orientation to their home country than the host country. They thought the cultural differences between the host and home countries were very high. A significant positive correlation was found between Host Country Acculturation Orientation and Perceived Cultural Distance; $r (25) = .523$, $p = 0.007$. The higher the perceived distance between the home country and the UK, the more important it was considered to acculturate to the host country.

Table 3

Mean scores for acculturation orientation, psychological adjustment, social-cultural adaptation and cultural distance scales (maximum = 7)

	Psychological adjustment	*Social-cultural adaptation*	*Home country acculturation orientation*	*Host country acculturation orientation*	*Perceived cultural distance*
Mean	4.61	4.62	5.16	3.38	6.24
SD	0.55	0.77	1.22	1.15	0.70

Discussion

Although the quantitative data suggested that the female Saudi students were fairly well adjusted to the UK, the interviews revealed academic challenges that affected their adaption and acculturation in the UK. English language represented the biggest academic challenge. This finding supports Sandekian et al (2015) and Alhajjuj (2016). Given that the female Saudi students are obliged to be accompanied by a male family member during their study abroad, and are often accompanied by additional members of the family (e.g., parents, sisters, children etc.) communicating in Arabic language at home becomes inevitable. Studies based on the ABC theory of cultural adaption identified the host country language as one of the factors that can help the adaption of the international students in the new environment (Zhou, et al. 2008). However, cultural norms restrict the freedom of female Saudi students from going out without permission, which restricts their opportunities to improve their English language skills through interacting with the host country people.

Communication with the supervisors was another academic challenge faced by the students. This finding is also supported by Razek & Coyner (2013) who found that Saudi students are not lacking 'subject knowledge' as much as they may be lacking 'communicative skills'. Also, according to (Al-Ruwaitea 2014; Razek & Coyner, 2013) the collectivist culture

reflects the mindset of the Saudi students perceiving a 'good supervisor' as a role model that instructs and guides students giving them clear directions and step-by-step guidance, dictating precisely what they need to do. In contrast, the supervisor in the individualistic host country culture is seen to be more of a facilitator to the learning process involving peers, provoking conversations and promoting student independence. Other differences between the UK and Saudi education system presented challenges for female Saudi students, for example, critical thinking and research–skills in the UK in contrast to memorizing learning material in Saudi Arabia. To overcome the academic challenges, female Saudi students developed coping strategies. This finding is supported by Razek & Coyner (2013) who found that Saudi students developed coping strategies to resolve challenges.

Some of the interviewees considered their health and wellbeing as a challenge that impacted on their academic experience. Those who suffered physical illnesses felt the need to return to the collectivist family support system in Saudi Arabia. Some of the students experienced psychological disorders (e.g., depression) and homesickness which prevented them from progressing with their studies. Also, these results are supported by Caldwell's research in the United States (2013) who found that females Saudi students experienced more difficulties relating to health than males did.

The interviews also revealed the acculturation and adaption experiences of their children, such as lack of Arabic language fluency when compared with Saudi children of similar ages, lack of home country social-cultural skills, and adopting some (individualistic) British values and beliefs. The Saudi children's reported behavior in some situations contradicted the Saudi social- cultural norms. Although Alhajjuj (2016) found that Saudi mothers in the USA expressed their fear that their children will forget their native language, previous research has not commented on the children's lack of home country social cultural skills. The interviewees also expressed their concerns about changes in their children's social, national and religious identities. This supports Qutub (2016) and Alhajjuj (2016)'s findings regarding parental concerns about their Saudi children losing their ethnic identity and religious beliefs. Coping strategies adopted by the respondents were speaking Arabic exclusively at home, enrolling children in Arabic schools, encouraging children to mix with the Saudi community and participate in cultural and religious activities   such as Saudi national day and religious celebrations (e.g Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Fitr), to maintain their children's Socio-cultural communication skills and identity.

Positive adaptation and acculturation experiences reported for children included forming friendships with different nationalities, religions and ethnicities, as well as learning the English language or improving their language fluency. Alhajjuj (2016) reported that Saudi mothers perceived the improvement of their children's English proficiency and accepting others from different cultures as having a positive impact on their children. The participants of this study considered learning other languages (e.g., French and Spanish) in school as having an additional positive impact. The Saudi students considered their children's acculturation with the British culture as having a positive impact. These mothers considered their children's acculturation as positive when it aligned with their religious value and beliefs, whether it is consistent with their collectivistic culture norms or not. This reflects the powerful role that religion plays in the Saudi culture. Also, the participants observed that the development of their relationship with their children became closer when compared to their relationship with their children in Saudi Arabia. This was due to their limited social commitments in the UK compared to when living in Saudi Arabia.

Limitations

This study reports on some of the findings of ongoing research that explores postgraduate female Saudi students' experiences of adaptation and acculturation in the UK. This paper focussed on the academic challenges and parenting of these students. Although this study did not include undergraduate students or participants from a broad range of locations in the UK, it has a representative sample of Saudi female students from diverse backgrounds and experiences that are studying in the North and North West of England.

Recommendations

The findings of this study identified the academic and parenting challenges experienced by female Saudi students in the UK. Further research is needed on the effect of both the mothers' and children's acculturation in the UK on their experiences of re-adaption in their home country. Also, further research could focus on the impact of host country friendships on the female Saudi students' English language proficiency and exploring appropriate ways to increase host country friendships. Quantitative measures could be developed to assess a range of specific academic and parenting experiences not included in the adaptation and acculturation scales used.

Conclusions

This paper explored the academic and parenting challenges of 25 Saudi female postgraduate students and their coping strategies during their adaptation and acculturation in the UK using mixed methods of data collection. Two main theories underpinned this research; (ABC) theory and Hofstede's cultural dimensions' theory in particular Individualism versus Collectivism. The study found that female Saudi students were fairly well adjusted but faced several academic challenges such as language and communication, differences in education systems, health and well-being challenges. Also, participants reported a decline in the children's Arabic language and socio-cultural skills, concerns about instability of their children's national, religious and linguistic identities. They described coping strategies to manage academic and parenting challenges. Finally, they expressed positive comments about their parent-child relationships, their children's acquisition of foreign languages, integration and acculturation with the British society. The decision makers in Saudi education ministry should prepare the scholarship students before they travel abroad by giving them intensive academic English language course that suits the requirements of their programme of study and review the regulation policy to be more flexible for students who suffer from health or psychological issues. UK institutions should consider ways of making PhD studies less isolating and encourage female Saudi students to integrate, improve their English language proficiency and establish friendship with the English native speakers by organizing mentoring services between British and Saudi female students.

References

Alhajjuj, K. K. (2016). Learning to manage: how Saudi female doctoral students in education manage academic and motherhood roles in us universities (Doctoral dissertation, University of Kansas).

Alhazmi, A., & Nyland, B. (2013). The Saudi Arabian international student experience: From a gender-segregated society to studying in a mixed-gender environment. Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 43(3), 346-365.

Alqahtani, M. H. (2015). Fluid Cultures and Identifications: The Intercultural Communication Experiences of Saudi International Students in the UK (Doctoral dissertation, Durham University).

Al-Ruwaitea, A. S. (2014). Collectivism / Individualism and Cultural Privacy of the Saudi Society: A Critic or Governor Society. Research Center of the Faculty of Education, king Saud University.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative research in psychology, 3(2), 77-101.

Caldwell, J. D. (2013). Examining the experiences and adjustment challenges of Saudi Arabian students in the California state university system. California State University, Fresno.

Demes, K. A., & Geeraert, N. (2014). Measures matter: Scales for adaptation, cultural distance, and acculturation orientation revisited. Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 45(1), 91-109.

Hennink, M., Hutter, I., & Bailey, A. (2011). In-depth interviews. Qualitative Research Methods. London: Sage, 108-134

Hofstede, G. (2003). Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations. Sage publications.

Hofstede Insights. (2017). Country Comparison - Hofstede Insights. [online] Available at: https://geert-hofstede.com/saudi-arabia.html [Accessed 6 Sep. 2017].

Lefdahl-Davis, E. M., & Perrone-McGovern, K. M. (2015). The cultural adjustment of Saudi women international students: A qualitative examination. Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 46(3), 406-434.

McDermott-Levy, R. (2011). Going alone: The lived experience of female Arab-Muslim nursing students living and studying in the United States. Nursing outlook, 59(5), 266-277.

Ministry of higher education. (2017, September 6). King Abdullah Scholarship Program. [Online] Available at: http://www.sacm.org/ArabicSACM/pdf/Posters_Sacm_schlorship.pdf

Qutub, S. (2016). A case study exploring the ethnic identity of sojourners: Saudi mothers and children's perspectives. Texas Woman's University.

Razek, N. A., & Coyner, S. C. (2013). Cultural impacts on Saudi students at a mid-western American university. Academy of Educational Leadership Journal, 17(1), 103.

Sandekian, R. E., Weddington, M., Birnbaum, M., & Keen, J. K. (2015). A narrative inquiry into academic experiences of female Saudi graduate students at a comprehensive doctoral university. Journal of Studies in International Education, 19(4), 360-378.

Searle, W., & Ward, C. (1990). The prediction of psychological and sociocultural adjustment during cross-cultural transitions. International journal of intercultural relations, 14(4), 449-464.

Sherry, M., Thomas, P., & Chui, W. H. (2010). International students: A vulnerable student population. Higher education, 60(1), 33-46.

Van Geel, A. (2016). Separate or together? Women-only public spaces and participation of Saudi women in the public domain in Saudi Arabia. Contemporary Islam, 10(3), 357-378.

Zhang, J., & Goodson, P. (2011). Predictors of international students' psychosocial adjustment to life in the United States: A systematic review. International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 35(2), 139-162.

Zhou, Y., Jindal-Snape, D., Topping, K., & Todman, J. (2008). Theoretical models of culture shock and adaptation in international students in higher education. Studies in higher education, 33(1), 63-75.