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**ADJUSTMENT ISSUES OF SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS  
AND THEIR SPOUSES IN THE U.S**

**A**

**DISSERTATION**

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

St. Mary's University in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

in

**Marriage and Family Therapy**

by

Saleh Saeed Alshihri

San Antonio, Texas

October, 2019

**ADJUSTMENT ISSUES OF SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS  
AND THEIR SPOUSES IN THE U.S: A REGRESSION ANALYSIS**

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# ADJUSTMENT ISSUES OF SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS

## ABSTRACT

### ADJUSTMENT ISSUES OF SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS

#### AND THEIR SPOUSES IN THE U.S

Saleh Saeed Alshihri

St. Mary's University, 2019

Dissertation Advisor: Carolyn Y. Tubbs, Ph.D.

A significant proportion of Saudi Arabians seek further studies in western countries, including the United States. The benefits of an international education come with the challenges of relationship stress for Saudi students and their spouses that increase during their stay in the United States. The purpose of this study was to understand the adjustment issues of Saudi Arabian students and their spouses in the U.S. This study used a sample of 320 Saudi Arabian students and student spouses, 65 of which could be matched with their spouse, in the U.S. The couples were sampled from different areas in the United States in order to reduce research bias. This study used the Arabic-translated Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (A-RDAS) and the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS) to examine Saudi Arabian couples' relationship quality. Results indicated that factors such as the years of marriage, the number of children, level of education, and current household income have a significant impact on the adjustment issues they face in their new environment.

## CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Immigrants primarily move to another country to seek success and improve their lives. The United States of America is by far the most attractive country for immigrants. In particular, the considerable size of the United States (U.S.), the large number of employment opportunities, and the multiplicity of cultures fuel this attraction (Pumariega, 2003). The United States has also offered access to different resources for persons who choose to live in the region (Hernández, Nguyen, Saetermoe, Suárez-Orozco & Casanova, 2013; Lefdahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern, 2015). A significant number of Saudi Arabian students have gained opportunities to study in the U.S. Recent statistics suggest that state grants and scholarship programs have led to over 15,000 Saudi Arabian apprentices secure opportunities in Canada (Lovitch, 2018). In the U.S., a higher number has been reported whereby the Saudi Arabian apprentices exceed 84,000 (Lovitch, 2018), especially those undertaking English programs.

In the U.S., different communities coexist in an array of customs, traditions, values, religious rituals, and languages that exhibit significant differences. For many immigrants, the openness to the U.S. offers opportunities; however, for others, the heterogeneity of cultures and exposure to diversity creates various challenges. These challenges include psychological and social stressors. This fact is especially true for Saudi Arabian students who are temporary immigrants as they seek to gain additional education. These Saudi students experience many psychological and social problems, which vary in the degree of severity (Heyn, 2013). Notably, the extent of the immigrants' cultural stress is not fully known due to a lack of research that focuses specifically on the problems faced by Saudi immigrants.

### **Predictors of Relationship Stress among Saudi Couples**

Family stress is “a state that arises from an actual or perceived imbalance between a stressor (such as a challenge or threat) and capability (such as resources and coping) in the family's functioning” (Boateng, 2017; Boss, 1993; Hoffman, 2002). Family stress that is not well handled or goes unaddressed could easily develop into a crisis that adversely affects the roles and relationships that define the family and the health of its members. The handling of family stress and its potential implications are also dependent on the manner in which individuals perceive stress – which invariably informs reactions to the stressor. Domestic violence and divorce become two negative reactions or coping strategies to deal with relational stress. Learning about the nature of family stress and how families cope with stress, therefore, becomes a critical step toward the institutionalization of long-term and feasible strategies aimed at addressing the social repercussions posed by stress on the health of family members (Boateng, 2017; Boss, 1993; Hoffman, 2002). Thus, learning the nature of and strategies for dealing with Saudi Arabian students and their spouses’ distress is of particular interest.

**Domestic violence.** Domestic abuse occurs regularly in Saudi Arabia, although no reliable statistics exist – and, until recently, the government failed to address it (Butler, 2017). As in the U.S., most domestic violence is not widely publicized or even reported in Saudi Arabia because it is not reported by the majority of victims (Lovitch, 2018). Women, when given the possibility of losing children, suffering the effects of divorce proceedings (such as distress or anger from the abuser), or being shamed for reporting the abuse, were likely to keep their abuse from the public view (Butler, 2017). In addition, reporting domestic violence is perceived to raise a concern by the government and civil community. “Although it is not reported, violence

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against women can negatively affect the physical, mental, sexual, and reproductive health of the women, as well as the well-being of their children” (Barnawi, 2017).

Saudi women who have experienced domestic violence report prevalence of the following types of violence: emotional (69 percent), social (34 percent), economic (26 percent), physical (20 percent), and sexual (10 percent) (Boateng, 2017). Unsurprisingly, the most common impacts of domestic violence on women include health or behavioral problems (72 percent) and psychiatric problems (58 percent) (Butler, 2017), which prompt the women to seek separation (56 percent) as the most prevalent form of relief, with about 41 percent of the victims resorting to doing nothing (the second most prevalent strategy) (Ahmed, 2011). Over 90 percent of children of abused women also suffer psychological or behavioral problems (Lefdahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern, 2015). Hence, domestic violence against Saudi women is pronounced while the response has not been addressed. The reality is that efforts seeking to promote a non-tolerant culture to domestic violence while offering accessible, effective, and trustful social services to the abused women were critical. This profile of domestic violence does not necessarily change due to immigration; the challenges of being an immigrant may cause it to increase (Barnawi, 2017). Stress on the Saudi students, their spouses, and their families caused by creating a new life and undertaking education in a new cultural context increases the potential for domestic violence.

**Divorce.** Divorce is another problem that the Saudi couples face, with the rate of divorce increasing in the last two decades at such a rate that Ahmed (2011) labeled it a “divorce explosion.” Recent statistics indicate that in 2009, the Saudi family courts issued divorce documents for 31,218 couples, exceeding the previous rate of 5,000 cases per year (Saudi Ministry of Justice, 2009). Several factors contributed to this increase in divorces, such as the

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sudden and quick economic growth due to an oil boom, increased societal consumption behaviors, education and economic independence of educated women, and shifting culture values (Alsadhan, 2010).

### **Theoretical Framework**

A family system as a whole cannot be fully understood by only examining its members in isolation from others. All parts of the system are interconnected (White & Klein, 2008). Burr, Leigh, Day, and Constantine (1979) stated that “the discovery by the family process group that changes in one part of a system influence all other parts of the system should be greeted with as much enthusiasm as the observation that people talk and think.” Marital tensions can be reduced by one spouse giving in or compromising him or herself to go along with the other spouse. Moreover, when there is a fusion of intellectual and emotional functioning, people are characteristically expecting too much or too little of themselves and others (Gurman & Kniskern, 2014). In marriage, unrealistic expectations can be reflected in one spouse feeling it is his or her responsibility to preserve harmony in their family relationship and preserve a sense of emotional well-being in other family members (Gurman & Kniskern, 2014).

General System Theory (GST) seeks to explain the behavior of complex, organized systems of all family issues by using many resources to analyze all common problems in a particular society (Boos, 1993). Many researchers believe that problems once attributed to the dysfunction or pathology in an individual family member are more accurately associated with, or precipitated in, dysfunctional transactional patterns in the entire system of affected families (Boss, 1993).

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System approaches view problematic behaviors as becoming entrenched in the couples' relational system and recurring because of the patterned nature of components' transactions in the system. As a result, working to develop an individual is less effective than working to improve all as a system (Boos, 1993). White & Klein (2008) had mentioned that system perspectives rely on four basic assumptions: (1) system elements are interconnected, (2) systems can be understood only as wholes, (3) all systems affect themselves through environment feedback, and (4) systems are not reality.

Systemic thinking is central when assessing a couple's relationship since their relations cannot be fully understood when processed individually. The choice is deemed appropriate to marriage and family therapists' thinking when assessing the marital quality of couples since they consider marital adjustment as an interpersonal construct rather than a personal psychological procedure (Sprung & Jex, 2017). The larger cultural diversity in the United States benefits Saudi couples. Systems, such as the high quality of an educational system, cultural system, etc. are helpful; and Saudis, no doubt, get the benefits. However, Saudi couples' movement to a different cultural system whose governmental and social policies are so different, and sometimes harmful, to Saudis can cause maladjustment in relationships (Boos, 1993).

Additionally, Saudi couples are alone in the United States for many years and far away from their nuclear and extended families that might influence some issues between spouses. Differences between husbands and wives may contribute to a power differential that impacts marital satisfaction (Sprung & Jex, 2017). Finally, this research study will use the systems theory as a theoretical frame, since systemic thinking is central when assessing Saudi Arabian couple's relationships as their relations cannot be wholly understood when processed in isolation. This thinking is parallel to marriage and family therapists' thinking when evaluating the marital

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quality of couples as they consider marital adjustment as an interpersonal construct rather than a personal psychological process.

### **Rationale – Justification of the Study**

Of the more than 84,000 Saudi Arabian international students in the U.S. at the end of 2015, more than one-third are married (Saudi Culture Mission Report, 2015). The Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission (SACM) is responsible for all Saudi students and their families; therefore, it is important for the Saudi government to prepare potential student families for the mental and relational challenges they may face while they are in the U.S. Knowing some of the cultural, social, and maladjustment issues facing students, their spouses, and their families will allow SACM to prepare them for the cultural transitions that await them. Another compelling rationale for this study is the fact that there is a lack of peer-reviewed studies focusing on Saudi Arabian couples (SACM, 2015; Hamdan, 1990). This fact provides an essential rationale for this research because, although research on international students is sufficient and available, there is scant analysis of the issues which specifically affect international students accompanied by spouses or families. Consequently, this kind of research should help marriage and family researchers recognize the cultural and social transformations of Saudi families in response to adjustments with a new environment, culture, and society. Moreover, understanding this study, the nature of its population, the problems faced by Saudi couples, and the resulting data will help develop research in the field of Marriage and Family Therapy as well as for the Saudi Culture Mission. Finally, such research may help Saudi couples better prepare to face the various challenges of living in a new country.



## Research Design

### Research Questions

A quantitative research paradigm offers the researcher varying amounts of control over the research situation. A quantitative research paradigm (experiments, simulations, field experiments) uses numbers to test hypotheses, answer research questions, and make meaningful predictions of real-world behavior (Creswell, 2014). This kind of data and their concomitant research paradigms are important parts of social and behavioral science research, and are essential to understanding behavior and advancing these sciences (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe & Neville, 2014).

In this study, the researcher seeks to examine Saudi couples' perceptions of their couple relationship using two marital satisfaction measures to address the gaps in the literature. The following central question guides the study:

*How do Saudi students and their spouses in the U.S. rate their level of marital satisfaction?*

The specific research questions below will assist in achieving the central aim and objectives of the study:

1. What demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, social and economic, relational, etc.) best predict marital adjustment for Saudi students and their spouses in the United States?
2. Are there any gender differences between individuals in non-distress couples and distressed Saudi couples?
3. What type of help do Saudi Arabian student couples seek when there is difficulty in the relationship?

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4. Are Saudi Arabian couples satisfied with the couple and family therapy services currently offered by the Saudi Culture Mission?

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The study recruited 320 individuals, 130 of whom were the 65 couples, for the study. The research study conducted t-tests, ANOVAs, MANOVAs, and correlations to answer the research questions. Attaining these numbers allowed for comparisons with the study done by Elanbari (2015), who recruited approximately 50 couples. The researcher recruited all participants who were qualified to be involved in this important study. The researcher requested their participation in this study through e-mail blasts, social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter.

### **Limitations**

There are four notable limitations to this research. First, because personal data were collected online, a considerable number of respondents seemed not to wish to risk abridging their privacy. Most of the participants did not understand the goal of the password component. A considerable proportion of the participants thereby, left a large number of questions blank. The discord between the aforementioned factors is evident in the significantly high number of participants whose passwords did not match, and therefore did not allow their data to be matched with their spouses' data (Crane et al., 2000). Moreover, the use of non-random sampling influences the quality of the data as a considerable proportion of the respondents represented the same geographical areas, socioeconomic statuses and religious affiliations (Elanbari, 2015).

These areas of overlap limit the generalizability of the results..

Secondly, some Saudi students do not use either Facebook or Twitter, but they might use other social media resources. The use of Facebook might, therefore, limit the accessibility and the range of responses offered in the survey. The sample size was thus limited by the choice of

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the data collection tool (Crane et al., 2000). A larger sample size might have increased the robustness of the data and the analyses. Third, data collection during the summer presented challenges for the researcher since a considerable proportion of the potential participants were not around as they focus on spending quality time with their extended family in Saudi Arabia or are traveling somewhere in the United States.

Finally, the Saudi cultural system generally emphasizes that Arabs maintain a close-knit family structure where marriage and relationship issues are solved within the family. The study did not include questions related to family support and connection, which would have provided important information about couple support beyond the assistance of SACM. It would be helpful in future research to consider this aspect of couple support and satisfaction.

### **Definition of Terms**

There were a few terms that should be defined to facilitate the understanding of the meaning in this research.

**Adjustment:** Coleman and James indicate that adjustment is the outcome of the individual's attempts to deal with stress and meet his needs. It also refers to efforts aimed at maintaining relationships with the environment in which an individual lives (Gavit, 2016).

**Adaptation.** Refers to changes that take place in individuals or groups in response to environmental demands, and that can occur immediately, or they can be extended over the longer term (Berry, 1979).

**Saudi Arabia.** The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the largest nation on the Arabian Peninsula. It is bordered on the north by Jordan, Iraq, and Kuwait; on the east by Qatar, with the island nation of Bahrain lying off its eastern shore in the Persian Gulf; on the

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southeast by the United Arab Emirates and Oman; and on the south by Yemen. The Red Sea and Gulf of Aqaba lie to the west. It is a Muslim nation ruled by members of the Saudi royal family, known as the House of Saud (Belanger, 2017).

**Islam.** The word Islam derives from a word meaning "submission," particularly submission to the will of Allah (Johnson, 2016).

**Muslim.** Those who practice Islam, fall into two major groups, Sunni and Shia (or Shi'i,) based on political rather than theological differences (Johnson, 2016).

**Marital Satisfaction.** Defined by Gelles (1995) as “an individual’s subjective evaluation of the overall nature of marriage.”

## CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

This chapter discusses the issues Saudi Arabian couples face when they come to the U.S and how they cope and adjust to the new environment. It also discusses the literature review that has been done by other researchers on the same topic. The topics covered in this literature review are: Saudi Arabians in the U.S, Saudi Arabian students and their families, Saudi Arabian culture, challenges for Saudi Arabian students and couples, research and tools for helping Saudi Arabian couples, and the framework for understanding challenges for Saudi Arabian couples in the U.S. These topics will help in having a clear understanding of the Saudi Arabian students and will form the basis for most of the approach to some situations in later chapters.

Thus, this chapter provides a literature review of the major adjustment issues that Saudi Arabian students and their spouses might face while seeking to settle in the U.S. successfully. In doing so, the chapter is divided into three sections. The first section identifies the Saudi Arabian population in the U.S. and broadens the description provided in chapter one. The second section reviews the essential aspects of Saudi culture, which interface with U.S. American culture, and the third section highlights challenges Saudi students and their spouse encounter. A review of research and intervention tools utilized with Saudi couples, as well as existing gaps in the literature creates the fourth section. Systems theory is helpful to understand the clashing and overlapping of cultures; reviewing the theory and its application occurs in the fifth section. Finally, this chapter closes with a section of the proposed study before transitioning to chapter three.

## ADJUSTMENT ISSUES OF SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS

### **Saudi Arabians in the U.S**

Saudi Arabians continue to settle in the U.S. and bring with them rich skills and a rich cultural heritage. The majority of the Saudi Arabians entered the U.S. as the staff to Washington D.C's Saudi Arabian Embassy, as well as ambassadors (Smith, 2017). Saudi Arabians live primarily in California, Michigan, New York, Florida, and Texas. Others include Illinois, New Jersey, Ohio, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania (Sirin, Ryce, Gupta & Rogers-Sirin, 2013). Similar to the rest of the national average, the majority of the Saudi Arabians living in the U.S. are in the labor force. This population has been documented to constitute about 65 percent of the population of Saudi Arabians in the U.S (Sprung & Jex, 2017). The Saudi Arabian labor force works in sales, administrative, professional, technical, and managerial fields (73%). Service jobs account for about 14 percent of employed Saudi Arabians (Qureshi, Al-Habeeb & Koenig, 2013). It is important to highlight that the majority of working personnel are attached to the private sector (about 88 percent), while those who work in the public sector (government employees) are fewer (Paterson & Hakim-Larson, 2012). Based on recent statistics (2010), there was a significant increase in the number of Saudi Arabians living in the U.S. (over 15,000) compared to the 2000 census data in which the population was 7,419 (Smith, 2017).

Indeed, most of the past scholarly studies contend that Saudi Arabian couples exhibit a significant difference in cultural backgrounds and language when compared to their foreign counterparts, as well as those of other immigrants. In the study by Al Wekhian (2016), the main aim was to find out some of the motivating factors prompting the westward movement of Saudi Arabians. In the findings, it was noted that the immigrants are motivated by occupational opportunities and education-related reasons, with others taking refuge due to internal pressure in war-torn regions. The implication is that socio-economic, cultural, and political reasons account

## ADJUSTMENT ISSUES OF SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS

for the migration of the selected ethnic group. What remains unaddressed is the extent to which they are prepared to handle adjustment issues - a subject that proves worth investigating. It has also been documented that the Saudi Arabian forefathers migrated westward in small proportions, but recent statistics point to a substantial number of the ethnic group's members moving to the U.S., especially, during the last half-century. From the perspective of migration theories, such populations face adaptation and acculturation processes.

Abu-Bader, Tirmazi, and Ross-Sheriff (2011) cautioned that the aspect of adjusting to the U.S. culture, which is different from Saudi Arabia's, proves the most challenging. In particular, couples are expected to go through acculturation processes to ensure that they adjust to the new way of life and the new country with ease. The implication is that acculturation forms one of the key phases characterizing resettlements. Despite this promising trend, Ahmed, Kia-Keating, and Tsai (2011) observed that the adjustment process is yet to receive an in-depth analysis. Acc Amer and Bagasra (2013) assert that intergroup contact yields psychological changes that result from cross-cultural engagements. In particular, the newly arrived couples are likely to undergo cultural shocks and distress and, through continuous movement, tend to experience personal assimilation, stability, and growth. However, those who oppose this bi-dimensional model avow that the newly arrived couples tend to retain their original traditions, values, and ideas while incorporating the new society's norms, culture, behaviors, and belief systems (Arahamian et al., 2011).

Other theorists acknowledge that social adaptation of ethnic minorities may occur at the group level while their psychological adaptation takes place at the individual level (Arnold, Braje, Kawahara & Shuman, 2016). On the one hand, these studies are important because they point to the context prompting adjustment at the individual level and those that require successful

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adjustment at the group level. Additionally, the studies are important because they differentiate between situations where the ethnic minority groups accommodate the socio-cultural beliefs and norms of the dominant and local culture and those in which these ethnic minority groups are determined to retain their beliefs, norms, and behaviors; only stretching further to incorporate the new cultures into their original traditions. However, the observations falter in various ways. For instance, the studies do not achieve the aspect of context-specificity. Instead, they over-generalize the findings while ignoring the role of demographic, geographical, socio-economic, and political factors or conditions specific to certain regions. Whether or not the adjustments are likely to be responsive to these variations in local conditions remains unaddressed. Indeed, the current study strives to address such gaps by gaining insights from the experienced and their associated adjustment issues of Saudi Arabian couples living in the U.S.

### **Saudi Students and Their Families in the U.S**

King Abdullah has endowed thousands of scholarships for Saudis to study abroad. In 2009 more than 25,000 Saudi students were pursuing higher education abroad at government expense. The majority of these students are in the United States, while a new wave of Saudi students are fanning out across the globe, from the UK to China and Malaysia. These students, both men and women, will return home with the world-class skills required for the increasingly industrialized economy being built in the kingdom (Fraker, 2010).

According to Smith (2017), Saudi Arabia ranks fourth behind China, India, and South Korea in the number of students traveling to study in the U.S. However, there was a decrease in students coming to the United States in 2017 compared to 2014 due to the economic crisis. As documented by the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission (SACM) (2015), more than 84,000 Saudi Arabian international students were admitted to the U.S. higher education institutions at the end



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of 2015. For the Saudi Arabian couples who chose to study in the United States during this time, it would be beneficial to understand their experiences as they transition from their home country. Moreover, given complicated cultural factors that arise for this population as they undertake their education and how they might adjust with being exposed to new academic styles, culture, values, attitudes, and behaviors, it is important to know more about their educational experience in the United States (Smith, 2017). In the U.S., about 89 percent of Saudi Arabians have attained at least a high school diploma. Also, about 45 percent of the population has a bachelor's degree, while those with post-graduate degrees are about 18 percent, exceeding the national average by almost 10 percent (Smith, 2017). Similar to the career statistics, most of the community's intellectuals pursue courses in the fields of sales and administration, technical, professional, and managerial sectors.

Although Saudi students and their families are not immigrants (those moving to a new country with the intent to settle there), the research on Saudi migrants (those moving for economic reasons with no intent to settle) provides helpful insights into some of the cultural issues Saudi student families must negotiate. According to Abu-Bader, Tirmazi, and Ross-Sheriff (2011), migration among communities such as Asian-Americans and other ethnic minority groups disrupts traditional gender roles and stretches further to fracture the family network. For families from the Middle East and other Asian regions, it has been observed that the majority hold strong collectivist orientations endorsing strict gender expectations and roles (Ahmed, Kia-Keating & Tsai, 2011). Similarly, these ethnic groups have been documented to honor filial piety, with the families marked by hierarchical relationships. It is also worth noting that the hierarchy continues to be structured by gender and age (Al Wekhian, 2016). In particular, the male members of the community are vested with more authority when compared

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to their female counterparts. As such, fathers and husbands are expected to play the role of the head of the family and exhibit decision-making powers.

*Shift in gender roles.* The post-immigration phase is associated with many changes. These changes include significant shifts in gender processes and roles (Lefdhahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern, 2015). Amer and Bagasra (2013) asserted that the changes are pronounced for the case of men whereby the occupational experiences and skills from native countries are unlikely to translate similarly while in the U.S. A practical illustration is a case in which a Saudi Arabian male is a doctor in Saudi Arabia but, upon entering the U.S., is expected to restart from the foundation of the occupational ladder or abandon his career altogether due to credential or language barriers. Similarly, such a man could encounter Americanized racial stereotypes and gender norms that end up marginalizing him as a feminized or emasculated man (Aprahamian et al., 2011). The eventuality is that such a state of immigration makes the majority of the men in contexts such as the U.S. experience social and economic loss. On the other hand, the women in such new environments end up playing the roles of sole providers or co-providers for their families. Thus, these studies point to a situation in which gendered experiences and positions in the U.S. exhibit significant variation when compared to the case of regions such as Saudi Arabia and other parts of Asia.

According to Arnold, Braje, Kawahara, and Shuman (2016), most of the women from the Middle East and the rest of Asia are more likely to secure jobs while in the U.S. compared to their male counterparts of the same ethnic origins. Similarly, it has been observed that women tend to secure jobs faster while in the U.S. than when they seek positions from their native countries. Thus, the observations are insightful in such a way that they point to a situation in which the dominant role that the men are likely to play in relation to societal expectations come

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under threat when couples from these ethnic communities live in the U.S. Thus, the assertions lay a foundation for analyzing whether or not Saudi Arabian couples living in the U.S. have had the women secure jobs much easier and if so, the man in which the male and female as a couple from such family institutions have adjusted while facing potential conflicts due to the threat that such scenarios pose to the role of Saudi husbands as heads of their families.

In another study, Awad (2010) documented that most of the women from the Middle East and other Asian regions enter the workforce due to the need to support families while others enter the workforce by choice. It has also been established that most of the Asian American men are likely to hold more traditional values compared to women from the same ethnic groups. Indeed, the affirmations concur with those established by Basto, Warson, and Barbour (2012), who noted that Asian-American women are likely to adopt more egalitarian beliefs and acculturate faster than the men from the same geographical origins or of the same ethnic composition. Therefore, the findings are worth acknowledging in such a way that they point to a situation in which females are documented to adjust faster than males. However, these observations falter in such a way that they do not give an insight into community-specific adjustment issues.

In the study by Berry and Sam (2014), the main aim was to determine the role of the new earning power of the women in shaping adjustment while living in the U.S. It was documented that the financial position makes women assume a more active role in decision-making processes. Being financially independent due to their ability to secure jobs in U.S., Saudi women can seek more active role in decision making within their families, which, in turn, would negatively affect the traditional male domination in Saudi culture. Consequently, this adjustment could lead to a conflict between Saudi spouses living in the U.S.

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. Thus, the observations are important to this study because they form a basis for understanding whether the role of men as breadwinners has come under threat in the case of Saudi Arabian couples living in the U.S. In another study, Brown and Chu (2012) focused on the challenge of gender role definition among Saudi Arabian, Middle East and the rest of Asian families living in the U.S. The study established that conflicts are likely to arise when gender roles are defined. The conflicts were linked to attempts to maintain traditional family structures and patriarchies. The study indicated further that the added stress that women face arises from the need to work outside the home and perform household labor. Thus, it was inferred that the ease with which women from the regions mentioned above secure jobs while in the U.S. poses a two-fold outcome. On the one hand, the jobs secured increase their power and allow them to assume active roles in decision-making while challenging the role played by men as breadwinners. On the other hand, the securing of jobs adds stress to the wives due to the need to assure work-life balance. Therefore, this study strives to determine whether the same trend holds for Saudi Arabian couples in the U.S.

The majority of males, as documented by Cooc and Gee (2014), struggle to maintain their traditional patriarchal family structures. Imperative to note is that the above studies failed to establish whether the adjustment issues arising from the women's participation in the workforce operate uniform across families and regardless of the type of jobs and levels of income that these women hold. The need to clarify the dilemma cannot be overemphasized. Similarly, the previous studies do not shed light on the adjustment strategies that successful families have embraced while seeking to settle in the U.S. harmoniously. The culture reflects on the Saudi couples studying in the U.S. and contributes to forming their experiences and personalities. In Saudi Arabia, for example, it is not just the educational system that is not coeducational, most of the

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public activities are based on a separation between males and females, and that separation will not exist in the U.S.

Similar to the above documentation, Dulin-Keita, Hannon, Fernandez, and Cockerham (2011) observed that the men's downward mobility yields marital conflicts, and the escalation of these conflicts threatens to translate into marital violence. The implication is that the cultural changes and factors documented may threaten the males' patriarchal positions as heads, as well as destabilize hierarchical family structures. Other studies contend that the instability compounds the added frustration and stress tend to push most of the men from the Middle East and the rest of the Asian American families to attempt to reassert their control over families via marital abuse and physical violence. Therefore, it can be inferred that these observations point to a state in which men encounter psycho-social adjustment problems when the women secure jobs and threaten their position as family heads and breadwinners. However, English, Lambert, and Ialongo (2014) cautioned that the over-generalization fails to account for possible differences between new and old immigrants and whether or not the men's stress and frustration differ based on whether their immigration statuses belong to the new or old category of ethnic minority groups.

From the perspective of Saudi Arabian students in the U.S., the insights gained above lead to a question of whether adjustment issues that they face are similar regardless of the geographical and demographic features surrounding their neighborhoods. The information also paves the way for an understanding of the degree to which the students and their spouses have sought assistance relative to any challenges faced, as well as the level of success or uniformity with which relevant authorities offer the required services.

### **Saudi Arabian Culture**

According to Harper (2003), Arab culture, as identified with the Arabic language, had its roots in the Arabian Peninsula. That culture extends across North Africa from Morocco on the Atlantic coast to Egypt on the Red Sea. It reaches the heart of the Middle East in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. In this area, 270 million people are called Arabs, speak the Arabic language, and their faith is Islam (Harper, 2007; Al-Farsy, 2004). The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the largest nation on the Arabian Peninsula. It is bordered on the north by Jordan, Iraq, and Kuwait; on the east by Qatar, with the island nation of Bahrain lies off its eastern shore in the Arab Gulf; on the southeast by the United Arab Emirates and Oman; and on the south by Yemen. The Red Sea and Gulf of Aqaba lie to the west (Belanger, 2017; Craig, 2018).

Saudi Arabia is the center of Islam, one of the world's great religions. Today, there are more than 1.2 billion Muslims, the name given to those who follow Islam in the world (Harper, 2003). It is a Muslim nation ruled by members of the Saudi royal family, known as the House of Al Saud. Saudi Arabia derives its economic influence over much of the Middle East and the world at large from its vast deposits of oil. The country has come under scrutiny in recent years for its connection to radical Islamic fundamentalism, human rights abuses, and allegations of state-sponsored terrorism. Nonetheless, it has remained an important ally of the United States and other Western nations (Belanger, 2017).

### **Religion**

The teachings of Islam promote collectivism, or a cultural orientation toward the group, which contrasts with individualism, or a cultural orientation toward the rights of the individual. Collectivism pertains to a value system in which groups such as Arabs are integrated into strong in-groups from birth. Despite the high gender contrast in Saudi Arabia, Jandt (2004) explains

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how most Saudi women are pleased to accept the role of women in return for security that social and Islamic doctrines offer. Even those women who prefer change are determined to achieve the same but within the context of the Arabian habits and customs.

**Contracts of faith.** One cannot understand today's Saudi Arabia without appreciating the tribal society and Islamic roots that form the kingdom's core (Bowen, 2015). Given that Islam is the dominant religion in Saudi Arabia, it becomes imperative to provide some information about Islam. Islam, the name of the religion based on the teachings of Muhammad and the Qur'an, means "submission." The submission is to Allah, the Supreme Being, with the adherent referring to himself or herself as Muslim – or one who submits to the will of God.

The word Islam comes from "salam" (peaceful), which means peace (Bowen, 2015). Despite the military campaigns that fostered its spread, the teachings of the Qur'an were fairly liberal for the time and were interpreted and practiced with great tolerance. Rather than denying the validity of other monotheistic religions of the time (Christianity and Judaism), Islam built upon them. Muhammad follows the attitudes of Abraham and Moses as prophets of God. Muhammad preached that he was the last of the four prophets chosen to bring the word of God to the people, following Abraham, Moses, and Jesus (Bowen, 2015). Islam also shares in the beliefs of the Day of Judgment, the Resurrection, heaven, hell, and the eternal life of the soul. Thus, Muhammad considered Muslims to be brothers of Christians and Jews, as well as Zoroastrians – referring to all these categories as "ahlu al kitab," or "People of the Book." In turn, he announced the Old and New era of the Bible – as inspired by the same divine revelations that yielded the Qur'an (Bowen, 2015).

**Contracts of marriage.** Marriage is an essential turning point in individual Saudi Arabians' lives. Although some exceptions exist, most marriages are arranged civil contracts

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with weddings referred to as “Islamic Civil Ceremonies” (Bowen, 2015). Since Saudi Arabian people follow Islam and the rules of Islam, a marriage rooted in Islam must be contracted. An Islamic marriage also follows gendered roles – within a patriarchal framework – prescribed with creating a healthy family and contributing to society as their goals.

Long (2006) documented the role of women in Saudi Arabia as that which entails participating in positions that affect life inside the household – such as controlling domestic activities, taking care of children, and other decisions surrounding the practice of child upbringing. However, women are not mandated to perform these roles – as is demonstrated by the increasing number of successful business ladies. In Saudi Arabia, the role of women is to keep the structure of the family as well as that of the society (Ahmed, 2011). This trend is, in large part, due to the affirmation that women are keeping their chastity and, thus, their family honor in check – making the family coherent and society stronger (Long, 2006).

A contract must also be signed by two witnesses present during the time of marriage – along with the groom and the bride. Dowry, which constitutes the amount of money given to the bride by the groom, must be paid at least during the time of officiating the marriage or earlier. In Islam, dowry is the property of the bride, so she can buy anything she wants for herself, such as clothes or jewelry. The amount of the dowry is not prescribed within a certain limit, but it is up to the two families to decide how much the groom has to pay (Siddigi, 1977). In addition, Islam does not encourage demanding a higher dowry by the bride’s family.

Men are also expected to pay the dowry for brides. The societal expectation holds that the dowry is paid in the form of Saudi money or a “Mehr.” It is also the obligation of men to pay the dowry in the range of 25,000 to 40,000 Saudi Arabia Riyal (SAR) – as a Mehr (AlSabt, 2006). As mentioned earlier, the structure of Saudi families is traditionally patriarchal, with the male



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being the head of the family and in charge of duties that are usually practiced outside the household – such as protecting and supporting his family. Family identity is also tied to the father and he, therefore, has custody of the children – should the question arise. Men can have as many as four wives, but polygamy is no longer practiced widely. In polygamous families involving wealthier men, the wives and their children live in separate or independent units (AlSabt, 2006).

**Structured Roles.** According to Hamdan (1991), the family performs the function of socialization and maintaining the culture in the society – by passing it to new generations. Furthermore, the family system includes social roles performed by the husband and wife, which represents the division of labor within the household. Traditionally, the husband's role was seen as working outside the family to support the family economically while the wife's role was seen as centered on the household, and the socialization of children while providing emotional support for the husband and children. Saudis families living in the U.S. struggle when these roles and positions change due to living in a different environment. Such struggles are projected to include the difficulty of adjusting during the first year in a new society, cultural differences, language communication with others who are non-Arabic speakers, unfamiliarity with the legal aspects and rights, and the absence of assistance in guidance and counseling - whether psychological or social. Most of the current literature suggests that these differences could lead to feelings of anxiety, depression, and lack of psychological and social adjustment, as well as emotional tensions and family conflicts (Hamdan, 1991).

### **Family Stress and Mental Health**

When ethnic minority families have had refugee experiences, traumas tend to arise. In the study by Jones, Lee, Gaskin, and Neblett (2014), the main aim was to determine the role of

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previous experiences of ethnic minority groups that may have had refugee experiences on their adjustment in the U.S. context. Findings indicated that the adults and children born in these families have a high likelihood of experiencing mental health problems. Thus, it will be important to examine whether the Saudi Arabian couples in the U.S., especially those with refugee experiences, have undergone similar challenges, proceeding further to determine the manner in which they may have adjusted or addressed the adversities arising in the wake of conflicting bicultural expectations.

For non-native couples living in the U.S., some studies concur that depression and loneliness are likely to mar their early years. According to Kim, Wang, Deng, Alvarez, and Li (2011), almost a third of the uninsured and low-income individuals are the ethnic minority and immigrant families. In another observation, Lichter (2013) documented that socio-economic, legal, cultural, and linguistic circumstances pose additional challenges that constraint the ability of these families to freely interact with the rest of society. Thus, depression and loneliness are seen to emerge as tertiary effects accruing from poor adjustment, effects ranging from socio-cultural to economic aspects surrounding the lives of these communities. However, these observations are too general and assume a state of uniformity in the experiences and adjustments of the target communities, yet Amer and Bagasra (2013) cautioned that individual and group characteristics are likely to yield differences in the experiences and states of adjustment among the families. Therefore, this study will address the gap by determining whether Saudi Arabian couples in the U.S. have a similar pattern of socio-cultural experiences. In addition, the study will seek to determine the major drivers of successful adjustment and whether these drivers can be applied to the majority of the community's couples or unique characteristics, experiences, and needs of individual families demand different adjustment approaches.

### **Family stress**

Some studies contend that when a couple or family is removed from the extended social network, they end up losing the resources that would have, otherwise, been provided by such extended social networks. Neblett, Rivas-Drake, and Umaña-Taylor (2012) observed that the case of new and old immigrants in the U.S. has witnessed financial and economic strain dominate the adjustment subject. Niwa, Way, and Hughes (2014) observed further that the strain yields family tension, often attributed to arguments over money and associated expenditures. Other studies suggest that the financial strain as a cause of family tensions leads to the tertiary effect of the academic and psychological functioning of children from the affected families, with depressive symptoms and emotional stress linked to the youths experiencing greater family economic strain (Paterson & Hakim-Larson, 2012). Indeed, a two-fold outcome arises from these observations. On the one hand, situations involving groups such as refugees or immigrants escaping the adversities in war-torn areas are likely to be reflected by the above scenarios in which financial strain (due to the isolation from the rest of the extended social network) leads to family tensions. Therefore, it will be worth examining whether the majority of Saudi Arabian couples are experiencing financial strain and family tensions due to the separation from their extended social networks, as well as the manner in which they are adjusting.

On the other hand, the observations falter in such a way that some studies indicate that some of the ethnic minority groups in the U.S. migrate to the region in search of better economic opportunities via employment and academic progress; an outcome that compromises the above assertions because of such community members, the U.S. becomes a better destination for economic stability, rather than posing the danger of financial strain. Thus, this study will address the gap by determining whether the Saudi Arabian couples in the U.S. are experiencing financial

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strain or the destination is better when compared to their extended social networks in Saudi Arabia. In turn, the results are poised to be informative in such a way that they will be used to determine some of the adjustment mechanisms and challenges (if any) that the affected families have implemented or faced.

In families such as those of the Asian-Americans, Roche, and Kuperminc (2012) observed that filial piety and family obligations remain strong values. It has also been noted that the collectivist cultural values that this community holds imply that sharing resources is emphasized. Recent statistics from the American Association of Retired Persons indicate that 42 percent of Asian-Americans are likely to offer financial support for their older relatives. This high percentage makes them one of the most supportive ethnic groups in U.S. The study by Sirin, Ryce, Gupta, and Rogers-Sirin (2013) concurred with these observations by highlighting that unemployment and underemployment engender feelings of worthlessness and produces financial hardships, but the danger of failure to fulfill family obligations is countered by the aforementioned care and support practices (Xia, Do and Xie, 2013). Indeed, these findings are insightful and important to the current study in such a way that they pave the way for investigating whether Saudi Arabian couples who may be experiencing financial strain, if any, have depended on support from other community members as an adjustment mechanism. Similarly, the findings are important because they prompt the analysis of the extent to which such financial support aids in addressing possible strain among couples belonging to the categories of new and old immigrants.

**Domestic violence.** For Asian-American families and other Middle East groups living in the U.S., a significant number of the past scholarly contributors avow that the most detrimental and stressful aspect concerns domestic violence. According to Friedman and Saroglou (2010),

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about 25 to 38 percent of women from these communities are prone to domestic violence via adversities such as physical assault and isolation. The study revealed further that about 12 percent of men from these communities, while in the U.S., are likely to experience domestic violence. Galliher, Jones, and Dahl (2011) observed that the situation is exacerbated by the majority of the community's norms that when one seeks external intervention, the action could be considered as dishonor and shameful to the family. These observations point to a situation in which the victims of domestic violence (from the community) are unlikely to seek external assistance because of the fear of family shame and dishonor. In this study, it will be worth examining whether domestic violence is evident in the selected Saudi Arabian couples. In turn, the findings will aid in determining whether the affected families (if any) seek external assistance. For those that may be found to shy away from outside help, the study will stretch further to examine the motivations behind their reluctance to explore external alternatives. It is also worth noting that this understanding will aid in determining whether domestic violence emerges as an adjustment issue among Saudi Arabian couples, and, in situations where the case holds, the study will strive to unearth the specific coping mechanisms that the families have established.

Focusing on Asian-American couples, Goforth (2011) sought to determine some of the major causes of domestic violence. Indeed, the findings suggested that intimate partner violence accrues from stressors arising from acculturation and immigration processes, particular emphasis on changes in gender roles and social statuses, pre-immigration and post-immigration adverse experiences (such as trauma), and social isolation. Another factor found to account for incidents of intimate partner violence was found to constitute male preferences and male superiority in the country of origin's culture. The implication is that most of the men from Asian-American

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families were documented to face difficulties in adjusting to America's redefined gender roles that deviate from those of these men's countries of origin. The emerging theme is that the conflicting gender roles and cultural expectations between the U.S. and the Asian-American families' countries of origin form major drivers of intimate partner violence because the men, in the face of redefined gender roles, tend to feel that their traditional roles as breadwinners and family heads are under threat and that violence forms one of the coping mechanisms through which the traditional roles expected of them and in their countries of origin might not be tilted. In the current study, the literature will be continued by examining possible incidents of intimate partner violence among the U.S. based Saudi Arabian couples. Should the violence as a coping or adjustment strategy be evident in these families? The study will stretch further to unearth the major drivers of the men's engagement in violence. In so doing, the findings will establish potential parallels between the results obtained and the documentation contained in the past scholarly studies.

Despite the insightful nature of the above observations, the documentation could be criticized in various ways. For instance, the authors overemphasize the role of cultural factors in the countries of origin as the key driver of intimate partner violence, yet Goforth et al. (2014) cautioned that the conflicts might span from socio-cultural to economic reasons. In particular, the latter study indicated that the stress and frustration arising from some of the Asian-American men's failure to secure jobs easily contribute to intimate partner violence as a coping strategy, yet the earlier studies fail to acknowledge this factor. It is further apparent that the studies above fail to acknowledge possible differences in the socio-economic statuses of groups such as Asian-American families and the potential contribution of these differences in shaping the extent to which intimate partner violence is experienced. Therefore, the current study will fill the gap by

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determining whether intimate partner violence, if present among Saudi Arabian couples living in the U.S., differs from one family to another (on the economic-level). The eventuality is that the study will conclude whether or not differences in the couples' socio-economic statuses account for variations in the extent to which domestic violence occurs. The eventuality is that the results will inform the conclusion regarding the operation of economic statuses and differences in cultural expectations between the U.S. and the country of origin in shaping adjustment issues. Whether the factors play a leading role in isolation or complementarily will be examined before paving the way for the recommendation of possible lasting solutions that could enable the selected couples or target population live in the U.S. harmoniously - not only in the near future but also in the far future.

**Divorce.** Divorce is another problem that the Saudi couples face, with the rate of divorce increasing in the last two decades. Ahmed (2011) referred to this trend as a "divorce explosion." Recent statistics indicate that in 2009, the Saudi family courts issued divorce documents for 31,218 couples, exceeding the previous rate of 5,000 cases per year (Saudi Ministry of Justice, 2009). The discovery of oil in the region has also contributed to sudden and quick economic growth in many areas of Saudi Arabia, with the pattern influencing the society's social fabric as reflected in the increase in consumption behaviors, education of women, economic independence of educated women, and the appearance of new values that change the perception of the family as a social unit (Alsadhan, 2010). Communication technologies (such as the Internet) have also exposed most of the Saudis to social values, behaviors, norms, and traditions associated with other societies. Other causes of divorce in Saudi society include differences in couples' behaviors and attitudes, extended family interference in family issues, family finances and

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decisions, couple intimacy, poor decision making, and the emerging trend of polygamy (Al-khatieb, 2008).

Saudi couples have also been found to be dissimilar to the norm in families around the world. For instance, the right to seek a divorce in Arab countries remains the sole right of parents without input from external persons (Al-Zamil, Hejjazi, AlShargawi, Al-Meshaal & Soliman, 2016). Many of the social actions in Arab societies are influenced by religious instructions and cultural norms (Al-Krenawi and Graham, 2000). For example, marriage in Saudi Arabia follows the Islamic tradition and, in most cases, families arrange marriages – despite social and economic changes (and the spread of education in the Gulf countries) (Alkhadhari, 2009). The responsibilities and duties of the wife and husband are also stated in the Islamic laws – known as “Sharia.” To a significant extent, marriage is still arranged by families. According to the Sharia laws, individuals who are planning for marriage or considering divorce have the final decision and, in the event the marriage or divorce occurs, both parents are considered responsible for caring for their children (Alkhadhari, 2009). However, being in a culture with no strong rules against divorce may negatively affect how Saudi Arabian students and their spouses decide to deal with inevitable stress and strains in their relationship while in the U.S. Some may decide to divorce, which may be a problem for continuing education in the U.S. and returning to family life in Saudi Arabia.

### **Couple’s Therapy**

In Saudi Arabia, couple’s therapy provides love relationship advice and expert relationship help for married partners, women, and men (English, Lambert & Ialongo, 2014; Fraker, 2010). The target populations are those facing family problems and issues concerning



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wife and husband. Some of the issues that the couple's therapy practices target includes adjustments after breakups, depression, anxiety, fear, grief, stress, loneliness, and money and budget issues (Gurman & Kniskern, 2014). Others include love and friendship, betrayal, jealousy, abuse, power struggles, conflicts, and anger. In most cases, professional marriage and family therapists provide these services but also seek social and family support to ensure that the affected couples adjust successfully (Ahmed, 2011).

### **Summary of Saudi Arabian culture**

Saudi Arabia is a land of rapid economic and social change (Craig, 2018). The Empty Quarter (the largest contiguous sand desert in the world located in the East of Saudi Arabia) is no longer quite empty as oil companies seek the 'black gold' and gas buried in the rocks beneath the dunes. Many of the Kingdom's once small villages of mud-brick houses lying on either side of dusty caravan tracks have been transformed into thriving towns connected by modern highways and telecommunications. Saudi Arabia occupies by far the larger part of the Arabian Peninsula, which is sometimes just called Arabia, though this usage is not agreed upon unanimously (Vincent, 2008).

Long and Maisel (2010), had described the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as "a country of startling contrasts a huge landmass and a small population; a barren desert terrain situated over great oil wealth; a traditional Islamic society undergoing rapid modernization; a closed society that is often in the news" (p. 1). While an awareness of the Kingdom's contrasts is valuable, the roles of religion, family, language, gender, economics, education, government, and land and people will be discussed in the next section to provide a background for understanding the personal and academic experiences Saudi Arabian international college students may experience in United States institutions of higher education (Long & Maisel, 2010; Craig, 2018).

### **Challenges for Saudi Arabian students and Their Spouses in the U.S**

Whether immigrants or born in the U.S., most of the Arab American families have been reported to experience challenges linked to the need to retain the traditions of their cultural heritage, the values held, and the extent of participation in the traditions of the mainstream American society. According to Aprahamian et al. (2011), this combination of factors translates into a state of psychological adjustment, especially for Muslim Arab Americans. In the U.S., Arab Americans account for more than three million people, but the current literature contends that the ethnic minority group is yet to receive an in-depth examination regarding its psychological adjustment. In the study by Arnold, Braje, Kawahara, and Shuman (2016), it was established that the Americans of Arab descent are not only religiously diverse but also ethnically diverse in such a way that they continue to trace their roots to North Africa and countries in the Middle East. In another study, Awad (2010) observed that the majority of Arab Americans hold diverse religious beliefs, with some being Muslim while others are Christian. As avowed by Basto, Warson, and Barbour (2012), about 25 percent of Arab Americans are Muslims, while an estimated 63 percent are Christians. Thus, it becomes imperative to examine the literature pointing to the role played by religious diversity in shaping psychological adjustment among Arab Americans; upon which the current study will strive to determine whether the resultant adjustment issues related to this theme hold for the case of Saudi Arabian couples (whether immigrated to or born in the U.S.).

### **September 11, 2001**

According to Berry and Sam (2014), the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> and America's sociopolitical events in the last two decades have yielded negative perceptions about Arab

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Americans, with the community emerging as a victim of discrimination. In a recent observation, Brown and Chu (2012) highlighted that about 135 cases of hate crimes occur annually, while about one in every four Americans perceives Islam as an institution that is marred by violence and hatred. Therefore, hate crimes and underlying attitudes toward groups such as Arab Americans threaten to affect the community's psychological adjustment negatively. The attitudes are also relevant to this study because they aid in determining whether Saudi Arabian couples have been affected by the mainstream society's perception of the ethnic minority groups, as well as the implication for psychological adjustment.

Related to September 11 and anti-Arab bias, some studies have also focused on the role of prejudice and acculturation on families whose children are in the transition stage from childhood to adolescence. For instance, Cooc and Gee (2014) observed that the children belonging to these families are developing clearer senses of personal identity, developing independence, and establishing closer relationships. Other studies contend that the adolescents belonging to such Arab American families are forging identities that strive to reflect their mainstream and Arab culture, in addition to negotiating multiple cultures. Thus, Arab American families whose children are in the transition stage towards adolescence face critical stages of identity development in which the children are in a quest to understand themselves as belonging to an ethnic minority group within the U.S. mainstream culture and society. According to Dulin-Keita, Hannon, Fernandez, and Cockerham (2011), the Arab American children's negotiation of identity and culture is compounded by the United States' current socio-political climate. In particular, the children begin to recognize themselves as Muslim Arab Americans and wonder about the identity of Arab American in the U.S. The arising question is how do the affected groups such as Saudi Arabian couples whose children are approaching adolescence handle the

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psychological adjustment and complexities surrounding the children's negotiation of identity and culture?

### **Religious Practices**

In the study by English, Lambert, and Ialongo (2014), the main aim was to unearth some of the stressors that are likely to affect the overall wellbeing of Arab American families. In particular, the study focused on the challenges facing Muslim Americans of Arab descent, some of the difficulties experienced in their community and home settings, and gendered identities associated with their religious and ethnically diverse community. In the findings, it was established that the girls' use of *hijab* was more likely to expose them to daily discrimination in the community and school environments when compared to their counterparts. Consequently, religious belonging was found to play a complementary role in compounding the psychological adjustment challenges facing Arab American families, especially for the case of couples with children. In another study, Friedman and Saroglou (2010) focused on the drivers of the difficulties that Muslim Arab Americans face both in the community and home settings. Findings indicated that the nature of child socialization shapes the resultant challenges. In particular, the study revealed that Arab cultures reflect an interdependent or collectivist society. In such a culture, Galliher, Jones, and Dahl (2011) avowed that one defines the self-relative to others. Indeed, the documentation suggests that for recent immigrants of the Muslim Arab American descent, the cultural context surrounding their socialization is likely to be different from that which characterized their parents' state of socialization. Hence, the observations avow that these generations exhibit variations in their cultural values and attitudes, as well as the conflicts experienced in the community and home settings. The emerging theme is that the studies above

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point to the role of child socialization in shaping the manner in which Muslim Arab American families tend to hold cultural values and beliefs. Therefore, the assertions are deemed relevant to this study because it will worth examining the generation to which the selected Saudi Arabian couples living in the U.S. belong and the potential role of socialization and generation differences in shaping their psychological adjustment.

### **Acculturative stress**

According to Goforth (2011), there is also a strong relationship between socio-cultural adversities such as support and religious coping and psychological distress among ethnic minority groups in the U.S., with Arab Americans unexceptional. The study established further that the socio-cultural adversities are predictors of acculturative stress and discrimination. The implication is that psychological adjustment can be inferred to depend on factors operating in the socio-cultural arena. If those factors that accrue from the mainstream society are positive and supportive, psychological adjustment tends to be successful. However, the presence of an unsupportive and negative socio-cultural environment has been associated with poor psychological adjustment among the majority of U.S.-based ethnic minority groups (Goforth et al., 2014). The same trend holds for Saudi Arabian couples will worth examining to determine whether parallels could be drawn between the findings.

Additional studies focused on the stressors that ethnic minority groups face after migrating to the U.S. point to factors specific or related to the immigration process, perceptions of the mainstream culture regarding the ethnic group, and personal characteristics. According to Jones, Lee, Gaskin, and Neblett (2014), these aspects contribute to acculturative stress, an aspect constituting the manner in which the affected families respond to life events. Some of the dimensions defining acculturative stress in the context of ethnic minority families include family,

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attitudinal, and environmental factors. Environmental factors accounting for acculturative stress include overt or subtle acts of racism, while family factors come in the form of conflicts with the expectations or values of the ethnic community. Regarding attitudinal factors contributing to acculturative stress, Kim, Wang, Deng, Alvarez, and Li (2011) documented that the issues include difficulties that arise from being far from heritage culture, friends, and the rest of the families in the home country (Lichter, 2013).

The trickle-down effects of acculturative stress as an adjustment issue facing some of the ethnic minority groups in the U.S. have also been studied. According to Neblett, Rivas-Drake, and Umaña-Taylor (2012), secondary effects arising from the families' acculturative stress include social, psychological, and physical changes on the part of the affected families. Specifically, the quest by immigrant to handle the demands associated with acculturation attracts behavioral changes that seek to assure successful adaptation to the host culture. Should the behavioral changes yield successful adjustment, Niwa, Way, and Hughes (2014) highlighted that acculturative stress is unlikely to arise. Nevertheless, some situations surrounding immigrant families from ethnic minority groups have been observed to exceed the ability of the affected institutions to cope. In such cases, Paterson and Hakim-Larson (2012) observed that acculturative stress is likely to be experienced.

Therefore, it can be inferred that the presence or absence of acculturative stress shapes the overall wellbeing of ethnic minority groups in the U.S. Acculturative stress is seen to translate into psychological problems, especially those associated with mental health as a result of discrimination. The situation is also seen to be compounded by the aspect of "anti-Arabism" – due to the current socio-political environment in the U.S. In this study, these observations are important in various ways. For instance, the findings aid in examining whether Saudi Arabian

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couples have experienced acculturative stress as an adjustment issue. If so, the findings are relevant because they lay a foundation for establishing the causes associated with this adversity, as well as potential early interventions that could steer harmonious living while seeking to integrate this community into the rest of the mainstream culture. The findings are further important in such a way that they aid in discerning specific secondary effects that Saudi Arabian couples might have witnessed and the tertiary effects on their adjustment efforts. Despite the insightful nature of the aforementioned observations, the major weakness is that the studies do not focus on specific ethnic minority groups to discern whether or not acculturative stress, its causes, and effects are specific to certain ethnically diverse groups in contexts such as the U.S. To address this gap, the current study focuses on Saudi Arabian couples.

Roche and Kuperminc (2012) focused on the specific psychological problems and the overall competence that acculturative stress as an adjustment issue yields among U.S.-based ethnic minority groups. In the study, overall competence was observed to include issues such as friendship and social skills, while psychological problems arising from acculturative stress were avowed to entail externalizing and internalizing problems. For ethnic minority or immigrant families that choose to identify with both their heritage and the mainstream culture, Sirin, Ryce, Gupta, and Rogers-Sirin (2013) observed that the group is likely to have better overall mental health. For the families identifying with both the host culture and the home culture, the studies contend that the groups are associated with fewer psychological problems. The implication for groups such as Muslim Arab Americans is that the extent to which the community identifies with the mainstream culture shapes the degree of success in psychological adjustment. Consequently, the findings lend themselves to this study in such a way that they aid in discerning whether some of the selected Saudi Arabian couples have associated with both the Arabian and U.S.

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mainstream culture and, also, the correlation between this form of cultural adjustment and psychological functioning.

Apart from the decision to identify with one or both cultures as an adjustment strategy yielding different psychological outcomes, additional factors that have been documented to determine the nature of psychological adjustment (among Muslim and Arab Americans) include the length of interaction with the host culture, gender, and age. In relation to the attribute of age, the study by Xia, Do, and Xie (2013) revealed that younger children, compared to their older counterparts, are more likely to be acculturated. From the perspective of gender as a predictor of variations in psychological adjustment and other adjustment issues among ethnic minority groups, Abu-Bader, Tirmazi, and Ross-Sheriff (2011) observed that for Arab Americans, girls and women experience more difficulties adjusting to the host culture. The study illustrated that the difficulties arise from variations in gender expectations and roles when the host culture is compared to their home culture. The female groups are expected to alter a higher number of behaviors compared to their male counterparts, including the dress code that the mainstream culture demands.

Regarding the length of residence in the U.S., most of the past scholarly contributors assert that immigrants associated with longer stays in the U.S. tend to participate in and desire contact with the mainstream culture (Ahmed, Kia-Keating & Tsai, 2011). Indeed, the studies are important because they acknowledge variations in ethnic minority group adjustment while interacting with the mainstream culture, as well as the factors accounting for these variations in the degree of adjustment. Nonetheless, the assertions falter in such a way that they do not give critical insights into specific ethnic groups and the factors promoting their state of adjustment. Thereby, this study addresses the gap by focusing on Saudi Arabian couples living in the U.S.



### **Family adjustment and communication patterns**

In Asian culture, most of the current literature points to a general discouragement of open and affectionate communication. According to Jones, Lee, Gaskin, and Neblett (2014), this communication includes verbal and physical expressions of strong opinions, emotions, anger, and love. Instead, the culture has been avowed to emphasize restricted communication while maintaining tolerance, collective interests, and harmony (Kim, Wang, Deng, Alvarez & Li, 2011). For families that are less assimilated into American society and are more traditional, Lichter (2013) concurred that implicit and unaffectionate communication prevails. However, families with young adult children and parents with advanced education have been observed to find the above trend less desirable. As such, the observations point to a situation in which the nature of the family and level of education among parents dictate the extent to which couples of Asian-American origins tend to hold onto the traditional values associated with the Asian culture.

In the study by Neblett, Rivas-Drake, and Umaña-Taylor (2012), the main aim was to determine the impact of open communication on relationship-building among Chinese-American families. In the findings, it was noted that open communication tends to exhibit an inverse correlation with parent-child conflicts. In particular, it was asserted that even in situations where the children and their fathers hold different views regarding cultural values, sensitivity to each other's emotional needs and open communication imply that the groups could enjoy good relationships. In this study, the above observations are deemed insightful because they form a platform for examining whether or not Saudi Arabian couples continue to discourage open communication or tend to fall for the Chinese-American trend. Should the majority of the couples be found to prefer open communication and deviate from the general Asian culture? The

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study will stretch further to determine the impact of such a deviation on their aspect of adjustment while living in the U.S. According to Niwa, Way, and Hughes (2014), an absence of affectionate and open communication forms a breeding ground for increased conflict between sons and fathers, as well as daughters and mothers. In a related study, Paterson and Hakim-Larson (2012) documented that father-daughter relationships gain significantly from affectionate communication if differences in their beliefs and cultural values are low. Thus, the assertions point to the attribute of cultural values and beliefs as a predictor of family relations. If a similar paradigm holds for the Saudi Arabian couples in the U.S., it will worth unearthing.

Additionally, better relationships between fathers and daughters are seen to be predicted by the degree of differences in their cultural values and differences. Therefore, the observations are beneficial to the current study because they pave the way for examining whether or not the couples, especially with children, exhibit significant disparity in cultural values and beliefs (when compared to their children). Should the differences be small, the study's findings will be deemed relevant in such a way that the role of these differences in shaping adjustment and coping mechanisms of Saudi Arabian couples (in the U.S.) will be assessed and inform additional strategies that could be embraced to minimize family tensions.

Apart from the attribute of communication pattern as an aspect of adjustment for groups such as immigrants in the U.S., the issue of parent-child relationships and parenting has also been studied. For instance, Roche and Kuperminc (2012) focused on the effect of immigration on the nature of the parent-child relationship. Findings suggested that in most cases, couples such as those of the Saudi Arabian origin go to the U.S. and stay for a significant period before the children join them. In such situations, the study concluded that immigration alters the normal relationship between parents and children by preventing simultaneous unions. During the period

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when the parents stay in the U.S. while leaving the children in their home countries, the parent-child relationships are strained (Sirin, Ryce, Gupta & Rogers-Sirin, 2013). Thus, the highlights are important, and this study strives to contribute to such literature by examining the case of Saudi Arabian couples whose children (if any) might be staying in the home countries.

Particularly, this aspect will be examined by establishing the possible impact of the strained parent-child relationship or the fracture of family ties (due to immigration) on adjustment. Other studies contend that the need for survival in new environments such as the U.S. prompts the mothers and fathers to join the workforce. In such a case, Xia, Do, and Xie (2013) observed that the parents remain absent from home for a long time while leaving very little time for child supervision. Indeed, this study gives a new insight in such a way that it accounts for the role of workforce participation as one of the major contributors to strained parent-child relationships among immigrant families, stretching beyond the initial observation regarding the strained relationship as a product of parental decision to leave children in the home countries for significant periods. Above all, both observations imply that whether the children are left in the home countries or live with the parents in the U.S., immigrant families might still face the adversity of strained parent-child relationships. Abu-Bader, Tirmazi, and Ross-Sheriff (2011) asserted that the situation is compounded in cases where immigrant children belong to families such as those of the Saudi Arabian couples are accorded the translator and interpreter positions; especially when the parents do not speak English well. In such scenarios, the reversal role threatens to decrease the authority of parents and even yield a situation that is marked by parental dependence on children. For the case of the Saudi Arabian couples living in the U.S., the observations are insightful because they point to the need to determine whether the scenario of reversal role and parental dependence on children holds. Furthermore, the assertions aid in

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determining the manner in which the affected families continue to adjust while seeking to avoid contravening traditional values and beliefs that their countries hold. However, the studies fail to give an insight into some of the strategies that could be implemented to address the strain in the relationship between parents and children of immigrant families (due to workforce participation or the parental decision to leave the children in their home countries).

Most of the American families originating from the Middle East and other Asian zones have also been found to have their parents and children acculturate at different speeds. According to Ahmed, Kia-Keating, and Tsai (2011). This discrepancy is attributed to the nature of school environments and the languages spoken. This trend has prompted some studies to conceptualize acculturation gaps between offspring and their immigrant parents. For example, Al Wekhian (2016) coined the aspects of generational dissonance versus consonance. As a result, it was admitted that generational consonance constitutes situations where the children and parents' acculturation occurs at the same rate.

Similarly, generational consonance was observed to constitute situations where the children or and their immigrant parents do not acculturate. On the other hand, the study revealed that generational dissonance accrues when the immigrant parents' acculturation occurs at a slower speed when compared to their children. Amer and Bagasra (2013) cautioned that if generational dissonance occurs, the children from immigrant families are unlikely to conform to the parental authority that the cultural values and beliefs of their home countries hold. As a matter of fact, the affirmations are highly informative because they lead to the understanding that different speeds with which children and immigrant parents acculturate translate into states of generational dissonance and consonance. Additionally, the observations sensitize audiences regarding the role played by the school environments and languages spoken in accounting for the

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possible differences in the speeds of acculturation between children and their immigrant parents. Albeit, the studies do not establish whether the generational consonance and dissonance are specific to certain ethnic communities from the Middle East and other Asian parts or operate across these ethnic communities in the U.S. and the entirety.

Hence, it is worth examining with U.S.-based Saudi Arabian couples continue to experience poverty and its associated adversities. In situations where these conditions will be found to hold, it will be essential to determine some of the coping strategies or adjustment mechanisms that the couples have embraced while seeking to survive. The conclusion is that the study will not only strive to depict the possibility of poverty as an adjustment issue among Saudi Arabian couples but also lay a foundation for the understanding of the adjustment strategies and possible recommendations regarding feasible solutions that could reverse the trend.

Beyond the issue of poverty, the aspect of social support has been observed to emerge as an adjustment issue among sections of ethnic minority families, inclusive of Asian Americans. According to Xia, Do and Xie (2013), there is a direct relationship between social support and parental adjustment. For most Asian American families, it has been documented that extended family social support and kin networks are culturally distinctive and play a leading role in steering family functioning. In another study, Abu-Bader, Tirmazi, and Ross-Sheriff (2011) sought to determine the relationship between kinship social support and parental adjustment, as well as family functioning. In the findings, it was noted that when ethnic minority families experience higher levels of kinship support, they tend to employ fair and consistent parenting. The study indicated further that such families are associated with higher levels of family management. The results suggest that the presence of extended family networks leads to the facilitation of upward mobility. Ahmed, Kia-Keating, and Tsai (2011) concurred that when

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families are upwardly mobile, they are unlikely to lose emotional connection the rest of the community. In Addition, these families are unlikely to cut themselves off from the rest of the wider community (Al Wekhian, 2016). Consequently, the current study will benefit from this literature by determining the extent to which Saudi Arabian couples living in the U.S. have maintained extended support networks as well as the role of such support networks (if any) in shaping their adjustment.

### **Helping-seeking Among Saudi Arabian Couples**

Currently, there are no professional relational therapists in Saudi Arabia to assist distressed Saudi couples; therefore, when in the U.S., Saudi couples, like other international and ethnic minority couples, are also likely to underutilize social services. They are inclined to avoid all forms of professional help and public assistance because they feel they are capable of supporting themselves. This behavior concurs with research by Al Wekhian (2016) which found that in initial struggles in adjustment, most of the ethnic minority groups and immigrant families tend to establish an acceptable quality of life and pattern for themselves. However, subsequent crises tend to set in when intergenerational and intercultural differences (as well as family expectations) question the norms and traditions that are long-established. Friedman and Saroglou (2010) documented that these periods mark the beginning of frequent areas of socio-cultural change (such as gender role relationships), but the majority of these families strive to address the adversities on their own.

Galliher, Jones, and Dahl (2011) observed that when the families achieve these states of self-sufficiency, the outcomes reflect a state of high levels of adjustment and personal strengths. Thus, the studies are important because they point to the quest by most immigrant families and ethnic minority groups to make successful adjustments. However, these observations could be

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criticized in such a way that they do not acknowledge this form of adjustment (self-sufficiency) as that which could be translated into a culture of familial privacy and, if so, some of the demerits accruing from such a pattern of adjustment. It is also worth noting that this study fails to highlight the manner in which immigrant families and ethnic minority groups are liable to adjust from the perspective of couples such as those of Saudi Arabian origin.

Other studies contend that the majority of immigrant and ethnic minority parents are unlikely to seek assistance for their children until the level of difficulty is pronounced to the extent of attracting the attention of other families (Goforth, 2011). In such a case, Jones, Lee, Gaskin, and Neblett (2014) observed that other familial problems tend to arise. For instance, the children may end up exploiting the conflicting bicultural expectations to challenge the authority of their parents while deriding the behavior and perceptions of their parents. The affirmations point to a situation in which the majority of parents in immigrant and ethnic minority families are not only confronted by external issues in the rest of the U.S. environment but also by internal issues arising from their children's decision to question their authority, having found themselves in situations marred by bicultural expectations.

One of the reasons that Saudi students do not seek professional mental health services stems from the fact that the popular clinical assessments in the U.S. are written primarily in English, and few have been translated into Arabic. In addition, as mentioned earlier, some translated clinical instruments lack cultural sensitivity even though they are in one's native language.

Elanbari (2015) created and validated an Arabic version of the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (the A-RDAS, 2015) on a small population of Arabic-speaking Muslim couples from various Arabic-speaking countries with interesting and encouraging results. Her

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study utilized three post-baccalaureate-level Arabic speakers who were also proficient in English to forward and backward translated the RDAS in Arabic than English. Then, She recruited Arabic speaking couples in the U.S. to complete the measure. She found that Arabic-speaking couples scored primarily in the non-distressed range in both the A-RDAS and an Arabic-translated version of the KMSS, which she used as a check on the A-RDAS. Although the overall scores for the measures were positive, some subscale scores seem to contradict this finding. Elanbari hypothesized that the results were conflated by the nature of marriage and the structure of gender relationships in Islamic traditions, which typically speak Arabic.

### **Gaps in the Literature**

This chapter has provided a review of some of the past scholarly studies contributing to the subject of ethnic minority groups such as Saudi Arabian students and their associated adjustment issues. The literature draws on the acculturative stress perspective, which holds that the process of acculturation can be likened to a learning experience in which the initial phases are marked by a period of “honeymoon” before paving the way for a cultural shock as the affected communities interact with the mainstream culture. The theory suggests that stress is an inherent outcome of mixing cultures. From the current literature, groups such as Arab Americans students and their families face adjustment experiences spanning from the socio-cultural to the political and economic arenas. Specific issues that the members face include psychological adjustment and problems, attribute of religiosity, prejudice and discrimination, communication patterns, poverty, and intergenerational relationships. Despite the informative nature of these studies, they fail to highlight the adjustment issues in relation to specific ethnic groups. Instead, they over-generalize the attributes of gender, age, physical environment, and family factors as major predictors of successful adjustment and acculturation. The most salient gap in the literature is the absence of Arabic-language instruments to assess the quality of marital relationships of



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Saudi couples except for Elanbari's work. That is why the need to address these gaps cannot be overemphasized. A study testing an Arabic language relationship quality tool exclusively on Saudi Arabian couples would assist in filling this gap. This research outlined in chapters three and four addresses this gap.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Coined by Murray Bowen, the family systems theory posits that it is not possible to understand individuals when they are isolated from each other. Instead, individuals are more likely to be understood if they are examined as part of their respective families (Barlow & Durand, 2006). The theory acknowledges further that families constitute emotional units that involve systems of interdependent and interconnected individuals, with none of these individuals likely to be understood when they are isolated from the system; their families in this case (Baumeister & Bushman, 2008). Therefore, the theory is deemed appropriate and worth applying in this study because Saudi Arabian couples living in the U.S. are seen to be isolated from the mainstream society or dominant Arab Muslim population in Saudi Arabia. The extent to which such a separation poses an impact on their U.S.-based adjustment will be worth examining, rendering Bowen's family systems theory appropriate.

As highlighted by the theorist, families entail systems that have their respective members play respective roles while respecting certain rules as expected by the rest of the society. Similarly, the family systems theory dictates that members of the system ought to respond to the rest of the members in certain ways (based on the roles expected of them). According to Bump (1991), the roles played by members of the system are dependent on relationship agreements. Within system boundaries, the theory suggests that patterns tend to develop because the behaviors of certain members of the family arise from and are also shaped by the behaviors of

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the rest of the members of the family or system; a trend arising in predictable ways (Corey, 2001). Situations, where a system maintains similar behavioral patterns, is documented to yield a balance; but dysfunction tends to arise. In the current study, the theory is worth applying because it will guide the understanding of the manner in which U.S.-based Saudi Arabian couples might have maintained possible connections to the dominant society in their home country, or if dysfunction has arisen. Additionally, the theory will aid in defining possible behavioral patterns of the selected patterns and discern whether they are flexible and responsive to the mainstream society in the U.S. or the resultant patterns are still linked to their cultural background and attitudes as those dominating the Saudi Arabian context.

In the study by Gladding (2005), it was also reported that dysfunction could arise in a situation such as that in which a depressive husband fails to pull himself together. In such a case, dysfunction is predicted by the decision of the wife to take up additional responsibilities. Whereas such a change in the roles of members of the system strives to maintain stability in the perceived relationship, it ends up pushing the family towards a deviated equilibrium. In turn, the new equilibrium causes dysfunction in such a way that the wife might not be better placed to maintain the new overarching role for a significant period (Knudson-Martin, 2002; Rothbaum, Rosen, Ujiie & Uchida, 2002). By applying the theory to the current study, it is projected that the possibility of balances and imbalances via shifts in roles and equilibriums will be unearthed, especially due to the perceived differences in socio-cultural expectations of the mainstream society in the U.S. compared to role expectations as dictated by the Saudi Arabian cultural context.

Bowen's family systems theory states further that the system constitutes eight interlocking steps. The first step involves triangles. According to Larson (1995), the triangle

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involves the smallest stable relationship system whereby two sides are in harmony while one side is in conflict. The result is an evolution of clinical problems. The differentiation of self-control forms another step in the interlocking concepts. As affirmed by Prest and Protinsky (1993), this concept refers to the variance in the susceptibility of individuals or members of the system, upon which they end up depending on others for approval or acceptance. The third concept involves nuclear family emotional systems. As highlighted by Rosenblatt (1994), this concept involves four relationship patterns or trends defining possible points or situations where family problems are likely to arise. The four relationship patterns include emotional distance, impairment of one or more children, dysfunction in one spouse, and marital conflict. Therefore, the theory is important to this study because it will be used to determine whether one or more of the four relationship patterns are present in the selected couples. Should the patterns be evident, the theory will prove significant and contributory to the study because findings will be used to formulate and recommend feasible solutions to possible adjustment issues linked to these patterns, with a harmonious society projected to be achieved.

Bowen acknowledged that the fourth concept entails the family projection process. As concurred by Rothbaum, Rosen, Ujiie, and Uchida (2002), this aspect constitutes emotional problem transmission from parental groups to children. An additional concept involves multigenerational transmission processes in which small variations in differentiation levels arise, especially in situations involving children versus parents. The concept culminates in a state of emotional cutoff. As observed by Barlow and Durand (2006), emotional cutoff is an act or restricting one's emotional contact with the rest of the system or family. Baumeister and Bushman (2008) highlighted that emotional cutoff is used as a mechanism through which individuals strive to manage unresolved emotional problems. Sibling position has also been

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documented as one of the interlocking concepts. This concept refers to the impact posed by the position of siblings on behavior and development. Lastly, Bowen documented that aspect of societal emotional process. Specifically, the theory states that on a societal level, emotional system aids in governing behavior. In so doing, Bump (1991) concurred that regressive and progressive periods are promoted in society. The implication for this study is that the theory will aid in depicting some of the dominant concepts characterizing Saudi Arabian couples living in the U.S., upon which themes will be established or created in relation to the resultant characteristics surrounding the couples' adjustment issues. Another aspect prompting the use of the family systems theory is that it will be used to gain understanding of operations of emotional systems among Saudi Arabian couples living in the U.S., upon which appropriate therapeutic approaches will be formulated or recommended for implementation.

From the positive and negative perspectives of the theory, mixed outcomes accrue. Proponents contend that the benefits of Bowen's family systems theory outweigh the demerits. For opponents, their position holds that the family systems theory is compromised by several weaknesses. Regarding strengths, Corey (2001) observed that the theory's incorporation into therapy aids in broadening the perception of therapists (regarding the problem at hand). In so doing, the family systems theory offers a holistic view of the issue and the best way through which it can be treated. Gladding (2005) concurred that the family systems theory is advantageous because it perceives a congregation as a living organism that is affected by other parts constituting the whole. Thus, the theory offers a global view of the individual and how social constructs play a role in shaping behaviors, as well as the manner in which these constructs could be molded to achieve desired outcomes (Knudson-Martin, 2002; Rosenblatt, 1994). From the negative side, Larson (1995) documented that Bowen's family systems theory

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tends to ignore positive aspects associated with the spirit of togetherness, rendering it less applicable in collectivist societies. Furthermore, the theory fails to acknowledge variations in socio-cultural environments and how these differences are likely to shape behavior. Instead, the theory emphasizes the critical role of family patterns; yet Prest and Protinsky (1993) observed that problems emanating in family systems could also arise from causes that are external to family structures. Despite these weaknesses, the theory is insightful and worth applying to the current study.

### **Proposed Study**

Based on the gaps in the literature, the proposed study strives to examine some of the adjustment issues that continue to face Saudi student couples living in the U.S. The study will strive to address the gaps in the literature by focusing on the context of student couples of Saudi Arabian origin. The motivation behind the study has been to predict some of the adjustment challenges that the future generations of Saudi Arabian students migrating to or living in the U.S. might face and pave the way for the formulation, adoption, and implementation of early interventions. Notably, the recommended strategies are poised to aid in enabling students and their spouses adjust successfully in a manner that might allow them to better fit into the rest of the American society without facing challenges such as stress or depression, poverty-related issues or problems of accessing mental and social health services, and socio-cultural and linguistic challenges that could arise. The following chapter describes the methodology that the study will use to collect, analyze, and interpret data.

### CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

The main aim of this chapter is to describe the methodology for the proposed study on adjustment issues affecting Saudi Arabian students and their spouses living in the U.S. Notably, the chapter aims to identify the proposed research methodology for addressing the following research question: *How do Saudi Arabian students and their spouses in the U.S. rate their level of marital satisfaction?* The chapter will explain the research design, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

#### **Research Philosophy**

The social world of Saudi Arabian couples in the U.S. and the perceived institutions catering for the socio-economic welfare of members of this ethnic community exists externally. As such, objective methods will be used to measure the attributes of interest; rather than infer these aspects subjectively via intuition, sensation, or reflection. The implication is that this study embraces a positive approach to ensure that credible data is derived via quantitative analyses of the phenomena that the researcher will observe. According to Punch (2013), the role or main aim of social interpretive philosophy lies in the need to reflect on and study inner feelings of the selected participant group. In this study, social interpretivism will not be utilized because of the nature of the research aim and objectives. In particular, the central goal is to unearth some of the adjustment issues surrounding lives of U.S.-based Saudi Arabian couples, a trend that deems the social interpretivism philosophy less appropriate. Hence, a positivist approach is warranted by details that ought to be measured by objective means such as mental health issues, cultural shock, and access to services.

The positivist nature of this study implies further that a deductive approach will be embraced. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), the deductive approach represents most of the views regarding the relationship between research and theory. Other studies affirm that the

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results obtained by studies that adopt the deductive approach are developed by employing the logical reasoning path (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). In relation to the current study, the implication is that the results or data obtained will be compared to some of the past scholarly studies (or current literature) to discern levels of concurrence, if any.

In relation to the attribute of access, the capacity to collect primary data will rely on the extent to which the researcher gains access to sources that are deemed relevant and reliable. It is further notable that the extent to which participants or other sources of primary and secondary data will be deemed appropriate will be dependent on the central research question established in chapter 1, as well as the related and specific research questions seeking to achieve the main aim and objectives of this quantitative study. Other aspects that are poised to determine the appropriateness of participants and other sources of data include the study's research design and related objectives.

Whereas the positivist approach remains appropriate to the current study, mixed outcomes accrue in relation to the advantages and disadvantages associated with this research philosophy. From the perspective of merits, one of the advantages of the positivist approach lies in the attribute of the quantitative approach. According to Gholamreza and Hasan (2010), the positivist approach is more trustworthy because it offers objective information. Additionally, the positivist approach is advantageous in terms of structure. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), the approach embraces well-defined structures during discussions and studies. Indeed, set rules and laws are followed, and this technique embraced by positivists leaves minimum room for error. It has also been established that the structure embraced by positivists ensures that little room is left for drastic variable changes and variance (Creswell, 2014). Given that this study

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adopts the positivist philosophy, it is projected that the results will be accurate due to the tools or instruments employed in the data collection and analysis processes.

Despite these advantages, the positivist approach has been associated with several drawbacks. For instance, Creswell (2013) asserted that human behavior forms an area compromising the reliability of the positivist approach. Specifically, the positivist approach holds the assumption that objective conclusions and inferences arise almost automatically as long as the researcher disregards his or her emotions, remaining objective. However, Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, and Neville (2014) cautioned that emotional responses follow human behavior naturally. As such the ability to disregard one's emotions during data collection and analysis is not guaranteed, an aspect that positivists fail to acknowledge. Other studies affirm that the positivist approach is disadvantageous in terms of inflexibility. For these studies, positivism believes that everything can be measured, and this stand makes it inflexible (Bernard & Bernard, 2012). Despite these demerits, the advantageous associated with positivism outweigh the demerits. Additional assertions indicate that positivism is suitable for research projects that are descriptive and that the approach can be reproduced with ease (Antwi & Hamza, 2015).

### **Research Design/Approach**

The nature of the question asked in the proposed study requires a research design and methods congruent with a quantitative paradigm. This research design adopts a survey technique with a quantitative approach to collect and analyze data. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), quantitative studies yield detailed information that is worth generalizing to the rest of the sampling frame, target audience, or demographic groups on focus (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Other studies contend that quantitative research is important because it yields openness. In particular, the research technique encourages participating individuals to expand their answers or explain why they respond in certain ways (Antwi & Hamza, 2015; Creswell, 2013). Merriam and



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Tisdell (2015) observed that this trend ensures that quantitative research creates new subjects and, in turn, steer research continuity by recommending future studies that are informed by participants' responses and clarification of the factors or motivations behind the perceived responses.

Imperative to highlight is that most of the previous studies indicate that quantitative research is flexible (Punch, 2013). This attribute makes it applicable to the current study because it is poised to enable the researcher to collect information in new directions, especially in situations where the selected participants fail to provide reliable or desirable data. Despite these merits, quantitative research is associated with various disadvantages. For example, Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012) observed that the quantitative research technique is less applicable or unreliable if the research context involves a demographically complex and large sampling frame. According to Savin-Baden and Major (2013), quantitative studies that focus on smaller sample sizes are prone to issues such as researcher bias and compromised validity and reliability because the outcomes are unlikely to be representative of the target population in the entirety. Given that part of the current study is quantitative, it remains prone to the drawbacks mentioned above.

It has also been established that when quantitative research is employed, it becomes difficult to make systematic comparisons. In the study by Antwi and Hamza (2015), it was observed that situations, where participants in quantitative research give widely differing and highly subjective opinions, are likely to prove difficult to establish common themes or patterns of response. Bernard and Bernard (2012) observed that such a scenario complicates the researcher's intention to draw valid conclusions or inferences. Despite these drawbacks, the merits arising from quantitative research are seen to outweigh the demerits, making the approach

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worth applying. Particularly, the quantitative approach will aid in answering the research question by giving an insight into the number of Saudi Arabian students and their spouses living in the U.S., the frequency of possible adjustment issues such as culture-related problems due to differences between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, and some of the coping strategies that have led to successful adjustment.

**Use of surveys.** Furthermore, the study relies on the practice of administering surveys to collect data. According to Creswell (2013), surveys are advantageous in various ways. For instance, surveys are cost-efficient, especially when they are conducted via mobile or online platforms, yet the reach remains generous (Creswell, 2014). Surveys have also been documented to be practical because of the flexible nature that enables them to be managed in various ways and targeted to groups of the researcher's choosing. In so doing, surveys lead to the collection of vast data amounts (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Speedy results have also been associated with surveys. In particular, mobile and online tools imply that surveys do not necessarily require other firms to deliver the needed answers. Scalability forms another merit. As avowed by Gholamreza and Hasan (2010), surveys ensure that the researcher gathers data from large audiences, having distributed or administered the surveys to different participants anywhere and at any time. The eventuality is that surveys can be administered at a relatively low cost but target a vast demographic and geographical zone (such as a country or city). Given the resource and time constraint in the current study, surveys become appropriate. Surveys have also been documented to cover numerous aspects of the topic. Specifically, the instrument ensures that the researcher asks as many questions as possible (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). However, Merriam and Tisdell (2015) cautioned that each questionnaire needs to be kept short to avoid complex themes or patterns of responses that could make it difficult to make inferences.

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From the perspective of drawbacks, surveys have been associated with dishonesty. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012), respondents are unlikely to be 100 percent truthful. Some of the reasons behind the provision of dishonest responses include the participants' quest to protect their privacy, and social desirability bias (especially in multicultural settings) (Punch, 2013). In this study, participant anonymity will be assured to ensure that possible dishonest responses are curbed accordingly. In particular, pseudonyms such as codes will be used in the place of the participants' details, including their names, professions, and physical addresses. Dishonest responses will also be curbed by assuring data privacy and confidentiality. Specifically, any print media or material collected will be stored in secure cabinets. Regarding the data collected via electronic means such as mailed surveys and social media platforms, strong passwords will be used to secure raw data, barring unauthorized access.

Differences in interpretation and understanding of surveys have also been documented to contribute to the instrument's drawbacks. Specifically, the failure to present questions to participants face-to-face implies that the respective participants might interpret the items differently. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012), such a scenario threatens to yield subjective responses. Savin-Baden and Major (2013) concurred that skewed results tend to arise from such a form of miscommunication. In this study, the risk of misinterpretation and misunderstanding will be addressed by formulating questions in the questionnaire clearly, a trend that will also aid in collecting and analyzing data in its original form without the researcher's intervention, interference, and even bias or manipulation.

Several factors are responsible for the current study's adoption of a survey technique. For instance, Creswell (2013) observed that surveys provide room for the researcher to satisfy the audience's curiosity and desire. In particular, Creswell (2014) avowed that surveys achieve this

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objective by collecting first-hand and comprehensive data. Other assertions hold that surveys can be used in situations where the issue under investigation is yet to receive in-depth analysis and clear definition (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). As mentioned in chapter 1 and 2, most of the past scholarly contributors focus on the experiences of groups such as Asians and other individuals or ethnic communities from the Middle East and major issues that they face while facing the United States' new socio-cultural environment. However, most of the studies fail to achieve the attribute of context-specificity, including the focus on Saudi Arabian couples living in the region. With the latter subject yet to receive in-depth analysis and examination, it becomes appropriate to employ a survey technique to gain crucial insights surrounding the subject. It is also worth noting that the survey technique is deemed appropriate because the results are not apparent to the researcher. Therefore, a survey technique, as highlighted by Gholamreza and Hasan (2010), promises to give an inclusive mental picture regarding the experiences and adjustment issues facing U.S.-based Saudi Arabian couples. Overall, a survey technique is deemed appropriate and expected to offer insightful results from which practical and realistic recommendations might be made.

**Recruitment.** Recruitment started in spring 2019 when the IRB approved the study. The Saudi Arabia Culture Mission (SACM), an organization charged with the welfare of Saudi Arabian students and their families in the U.S. context, was asked to advertise the study (Appendix A). An Arabic RDAS will provide mental health professionals with the necessary tools to offer adequate help for Arab-American couples. SACM shared a recruitment message on its distribution list (Appendix B). Both the recruitment message and the Facebook page contained direct links to the questionnaire (Appendices C-E). SACM also shared the link to a recruitment Twitter page (Appendix F) and Facebook page (Appendix G) with individuals and

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organizations. Apart from this option, the study used social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to recruit participants. Participants also are recruited via the Saudi Arabia Culture Mission (SACM). This organization is poised to play a leading role in providing maximum access and recruitment of potential participants. Indeed, the increasing number of mobile device users and frequency (as well as duration) of interaction among individuals imply that social media is poised to increase the number of participants; a trend that might assure outcome validity and reliability while paving the way for the generalization of the results to other Saudi Arabian couples living in the U.S.

Participants also were recruited using two sampling strategies. The strategies included convenience sampling and a snowball or chain-link sampling. Whereas snowball sampling implies that the initial subjects or participants selected recruit others from among their acquaintances (Creswell, 2014; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012), convenience sampling implies that some participants are selected due to their convenient proximity and accessibility to the researcher (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). Regarding the convenience sampling strategy, the researcher liaised with the Saudi Arabia Culture Mission (SACM), which is an organization responsible for monitoring the welfare of Saudi Arabian students and their families in the U.S.

Apart from the convenience sampling approach, snowball sampling was used in such a way that potential subjects will be encouraged to share the survey link, which also shared through the official website and social media sites of SACM. Thus, employing snowball sampling implies that the researcher selected some participants who would, in turn, select other participants and maintain the chain referrals until the desired number of students and their spouses is reached (saturation).

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Before recruiting any participants for this research project, the researcher performed a power analysis to determine a suitable sample size necessary for satisfactory power to run a multiple regression with five predictor variables. Using G\*Power 3.1 software, the following information was used to estimate the sample size required for power (1- $\beta$ ) at 0.95:  $\alpha = 0.05$  and a medium effect size ( $d = 0.15$ ). The program calculated a total sample size of 138 participants (69 couples), actual power - 0.95; critical  $F = 2.3$ , and  $\lambda = 20.7$ , numerator  $df = 5$ , denominator  $df = 132$ . Based on this power analysis, a sample size of 69 couples would be a sufficient number of participants to allow adequate statistical power for the majority of the statistical analyses, specifically, a multiple regression using the Arabic translated Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale.

**Participants.** The current study's inclusion/exclusion criterion holds that the participants were Saudi Arabian international students and their spouses living in the U.S. Participants should, therefore, be aged 18 and above, arriving in the U.S. after high school, can to read and write Arabic at the eighth-grade level. As such, the study excluded individuals who have not attained the age of 18, individuals who are not of the Saudi Arabian origin, who have lived in the U.S. prior to attending university (as the latter group is unlikely to be well placed to discern adjustment issues, upon which their inclusion could compromise the validity and reliability of the results), and cannot read Arabic at an eighth grade level or above. The study also relied on 69 couples, or 138 individuals gain insight into the subject under investigation.

The nature of the subject being investigated implied that snowball sampling is appropriate because it promises to achieve the desired sample size. The participants are also expected to have lived in the U.S. for a significant period. Indeed, this criterion is poised to ensure that data is collected from Saudi Arabian students and their spouses who, after living in the U.S. for at least a year, are capable of discerning significant adjustment issues associated

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with living in the U.S. To assure ethical conformity, the study is secure informed consent from the participants (see Appendix B) after they have read the study information presented immediately after opening the study's digital link. If potential participants disagreed with the study's goal, they can indicate that they do not wish to participate in the study, and they are redirected to a thank you message at the end of the survey. Those who consent will move to the inclusion criteria questions. If they answered "no" to any of the eligibility questions, they, too, are re-directed to an end of survey thank you message. Those who meet the inclusion criteria moved forward to creating a password and the study's measures.

Since the goal of the study was to encourage couples to complete the survey instruments, participants were asked to meet with their spouse prior to moving on to the survey instruments. The couple was instructed to create a unique, seven-digit password, which they would typed into an ID box of their survey. The seven digits of the password were followed by the name of the city where the couple met for the first time. Together, these two features, i.e., the seven-digits followed by the city name, constituted each couple's unique password. After creation of the password, each member completed the surveys separately.

**Measures.** In order to examine the relationship quality of Saudi Arabian students and their spouses, this study used two validated measures of relationship quality. Besides, participants completed a demographic questionnaire to capture broad profiles of the sample.

***Demographic questionnaire.*** Appendix C contains the questionnaire. Some of the demographic data that are collected includes the participants' age, gender, and the duration of living in the U.S.

***Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS).*** In addition, the study administered a translated version of the three-item Kansas Marital Satisfaction Survey (Elanbari, 2015; Schmitt

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et al., 2003) to increase the robustness of the analyses of the R-DAS. Regarding the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS) (Appendix D), Creswell (2014) observed that the scale is a 3-item measure that seeks to assess marital satisfaction. Hence, the scale allows the respondents to answer each of the items presented on a 7-point scale, whereby 7 represents “extremely satisfied” while 1 represents “extremely dissatisfied” (Crane, Middleton & Bean, 2000). Additionally, the total scores for KMSS range from 3 to 21 and high scores suggest better marital quality among the groups or couples being assessed (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). The cut-off score for the KMSS is 17. Scores of 17 or above indicate non-distress, and scores of 16 or below indicated distress.

*Arabic Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (A-RDAS).* The researcher used the Arabic version of the RDAS (A-RDAS) translated by and used in a study by Elanbari (2015). An Arabic RDAS will provide mental health professionals with the necessary tools to offer adequate help for Arab-American couples (Appendix E).

According to Spanier (1976), the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) is a new 32-item measure for assessing the quality of marriage and other similar dyads. The scale is divided into 4 subscales: (1) Dyadic Consensus, a degree to which a respondent agrees with a partner, (2) Dyadic Satisfaction, a degree to which a respondent feels satisfied with a partner, (3) Dyadic Cohesion, a degree to which a respondent and a partner participate in activities together, and (4) Affectional Expression, a degree to which a respondent agrees with a partner regarding emotional affection.

The RDAS is a revised version of the original Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Busby, Christensen, Crane, & Larson, 1995). In addition, the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS) consists of a 14-item scale designed to measure relationship satisfaction. The revised



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version offers improved psychometric properties, is shorter, and includes only three of the original four subscales. Scores range from 0 to 69, with a cut-off score of 48. Scores of 48 and above indicate a non-distressed relationship, and scores of 47 and below indicate a distressed relationship. The RDAS has been found to have a Cronbach's alpha (reliability) of .90 (Busby et al., 1995).

The first subscale, Dyadic Consensus, is the degree to which a respondent agrees with a partner. The second, Dyadic Satisfaction, is the degree to which a respondent feels satisfied with a partner. The third, Dyadic Cohesion, is a degree to which a respondent and a partner participate in activities together (Busby, Christensen, Crane & Larson, 1995). It provides a total score and the 4 sub-scales of dyadic consensus (measures the degree to which the couple agrees on matters of importance to the relationship), affective expression (measures the degree of demonstrations of affection and of sexual relationships), dyadic satisfaction (measures the degree to which the couple is satisfied with their relationship), and dyadic cohesion (measures the degree of closeness and shared activities experienced by the couple) (Assari, Lankarani & Tavallaii, 2009).

### **Data Analysis**

Initially, descriptive statistics of the sub-scales and the total scale is obtained before calculating Cronbach's (1951) alpha coefficient. The latter procedure is used to assess sub-scales reliability. Finally, the factorial structure of the translated scale is evaluated before being compared with the original DAS scale. Indeed, descriptive statistics of the subscales and the total scale for each subscale (and for the total scale) presented. This step supported in summarizing the data collected. The procedure is followed by a determination of the distribution of scores before comparing the results obtained by the study with those of RDAS – that were used with the original Caucasian middle-class population. An analysis of the factor structure of

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the A-RDAS also has done before examining the interrelationships between items. In so doing, the study identified the dimensions underlying each measure and, in turn, establish the meaning of the results obtained (Krathwohl, 2009).

Therefore, the resultant factor structure analysis of the A- RDAS is used to determine if this version of the RDAS, when used with Saudi Arabian couples, supports the existence of three subscales – as suggested by Busby et al. (1995) when tested with a Caucasian middle-class population. Notably, the participants' behavioral cues and information summarized and classified before presenting the data in figures and tables. Indeed, the demographic information of the selected Saudi Arabian couples will precede the content of their responses to the main aim and objectives. In situations, where similarities between the participants are established, the outcomes form a foundation for drawing possible parallels between the primary data collected and the current literature regarding adjustment issues that U.S.-based immigrant groups such as Saudi Arabian and other Asian couples face. The results also are compared to those reported by Elanbari (2015).

The questionnaire has both closed and open-ended questions. From the self-completion questionnaires, data analyzed using SPSS. This process will apply to both Bi-variate and unit-variate analysis. Particularly, SPSS data analysis approach is to generate frequencies of the participants' responses. It is also imperative to highlight that the SPSS data analysis process will rely on two methods through which meanings are analyzed. On the one hand, social and temporal organization of texts are embraced to bring out their meanings via narrative restructuring. On the other hand, the meanings that the participants are express are abridged into shorter formulations via the process of meaning condensation. Table 1 has the proposed statistical analyses for the study.

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Table 1

*Proposed Statistical Analysis for Each Research Question*

Research Questions	Measures	Analysis
What demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, social and economic, health, relational, etc.) best predict marital adjustment for Saudi students and their spouses in the United States?	Demographic questionnaire A-RDAS KMSS	Regression
Are there any gender differences between individuals in non-distress couples and distressed Saudi couples?	Demographic info KMSS A-RDAS	t-test
What type of help do Saudi Arabian student couples seek when there is difficulty in the relationship?	Study question	Chi-square
Are Saudi Arabian couples satisfied with the couple and family therapy services currently offered by the Saudi Culture Mission?	Study question on services	Chi-square

### **Study Limitations and Delimitations**

As mentioned above, the current study employs a survey technique seeking to collect quantitative data regarding adjustment issues that Saudi Arabian couples face while living in the U.S. in the study by Denzin and Lincoln (2011), it was documented that quantitative research is prone to interviewer bias, and the use of surveys faces the threat of social desirability bias; especially when the research occurs in multicultural settings. Other studies contend that situations, where questions in the questionnaire are unclear, compromise the validity and reliability of the outcomes due to the possibility of collecting subjective responses from the participants (Gholamreza and Hasan, 2010). It is also worth noting that this study relies on an online survey technique via mailed surveys and the use of social media platforms to recruit

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participants and collect data. The eventuality is that the study is unlikely to achieve the merit of research continuity because responses that might seem unclear are unlikely to provide room for probing to ensure that the selected respondents clarify why they respond in certain ways.

To curb these limitations, this study employs several steps. For instance, questions in the questionnaire designed clearly to avoid misinterpretations and misunderstandings that might attract subjective responses. Additionally, subjective terms that might attract dishonest and subjective responses are eliminated. Instead, the questions are designed objectively to collect honest answers in their natural form. Furthermore, social desirability bias is avoided by embracing snowball sampling, with the latter criterion aiding further in ensuring that the desired sample size is achieved – especially through social media platforms.

### **Ethical Issues**

In this study, ethical conformity is assured in different ways. For instance, all participating individuals and organizations had informed that the decision to participate is voluntary. Similarly, the individuals and institutions involved will be informed by the freedom of participation and withdrawal from the study at any stage of data collection. In particular, the participants informed that the decision to withdraw not attracted any penalty. Furthermore, such a decision is expected to arise from possible adversities such as psychological harm and trauma on the part of the participants. It is further notable that permission or consent is secured from the participants and other relevant authorities.

Another step seeking to assure ethical conformity will involve an explanation regarding the sensitive nature of the subject being investigated, as well as possible psycho-social consequences and adversities that might accrue during the data collection process. Additionally, the institutional review board consulted to ensure that ethical forms are not only secured but also filled before embarking on the data collection process. Regarding the anonymity of participants

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and confidentiality and privacy of the data collected, codes will be used in the place of the participants' personal information while the information collected are secured via strong passwords (for electronic versions of data) and even stored in the current academic institution's secure cabinets (for the case of print information). Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) documented that such a decision to assure participant anonymity stretches beyond the collection of honest information to curb the possible adversity of victimization.

Overall, this study's ability to work within the limitations mentioned above implies that it is projected to collect and analyze data regarding the experiences and adjustment issues facing U.S.-based Saudi Arabian couples while striving to inform relevant authorities regarding intervention strategies that could steer harmonious living between the selected ethnic community and other groups living in the U.S.

## CHAPTER 4 - RESULTS

This study investigated the levels of marital satisfaction indicated by Saudi Arabian students and their spouses living in the U.S. Specifically, this research examined whether or not couples and individuals' scores indicated that they were distressed or non-distressed in their marital relationship based on two standardized measures: the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS) and the Arabic-Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (A-RDAS) (Elanbari, 2015). The A-RDAS is used to collect data on the individual perception of the state of their husband or wife by the individuals that took part in the study. A-RDAS is made up of 14 questions, with cumulative summations of 17 and above indicating non-distress in the marriage and 16 and lower indicating distress. Both measures were translated into Arabic, although the A-RDAS went through the rigorous process of forward and backward translation.

### **Descriptive Statistics**

There is an assumption of the normality of the data collected for this study hence the preferred use of the Independent Samples t-test, the Chi-square, regression models, and ANOVA to test the variable of the samples used in this analysis. Five hundred and sixteen (516) individuals started and qualified for the survey. Of the 516 eligible participants, up to 358 participants completed the demographic and Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission questions. Up to 320 participants completed the KMSS, and up to 308 people completed the A-RDAS. Table 2 shows the demographic information for the 358 participants who started the survey. Sixty-five (65) pairs of participants correctly completed the password information and were identified as couples. Although the descriptive analyses reflect up to 358 participants, most of the study's analyses focus on the A-RDAS since they are more reliable of the other validated assessment

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instruments. The three-item KMSS is a gross measure of the relationship satisfaction and was used for correlational purposes.

**Table 2**

*Characteristics of Participants Responses to Demographic Questionnaire*

<b>Variable</b>	<b><i>N</i></b>	<b><i>Percent</i></b>
Age		
18- 23 years	88	25
24-28 years	108	30
29-33 years	99	28
34-38 years	45	12
Over 39 Years	18	5
Total	358	100
Gender		
Male	201	57
Female	152	43
Total	353	100
State of Residence		
Northern Region	53	16
Southern Region	152	47
Eastern Region	118	36
Western Region	4	1
Total	327	100

**Age of the participants.** The ages of the respondents were divided into five groups. Out of 358 participants, there were 88 who were 18-23-year-old (25%), 108 participants were 24-28 years (30%), 99 participants were 29-33 years (28%), 45 participants were 34-38 years (12%), and 18 participants were over 39 years (5%). The age group with the most significant number of participants was 24-28-year-olds, followed by 29-33-year-olds, 18-23-year-olds, 34-38-year-olds, and finally 39-year-olds and older (Mean =2.43, Standard Deviation = 1.137). Table 2 illustrates these statistics.

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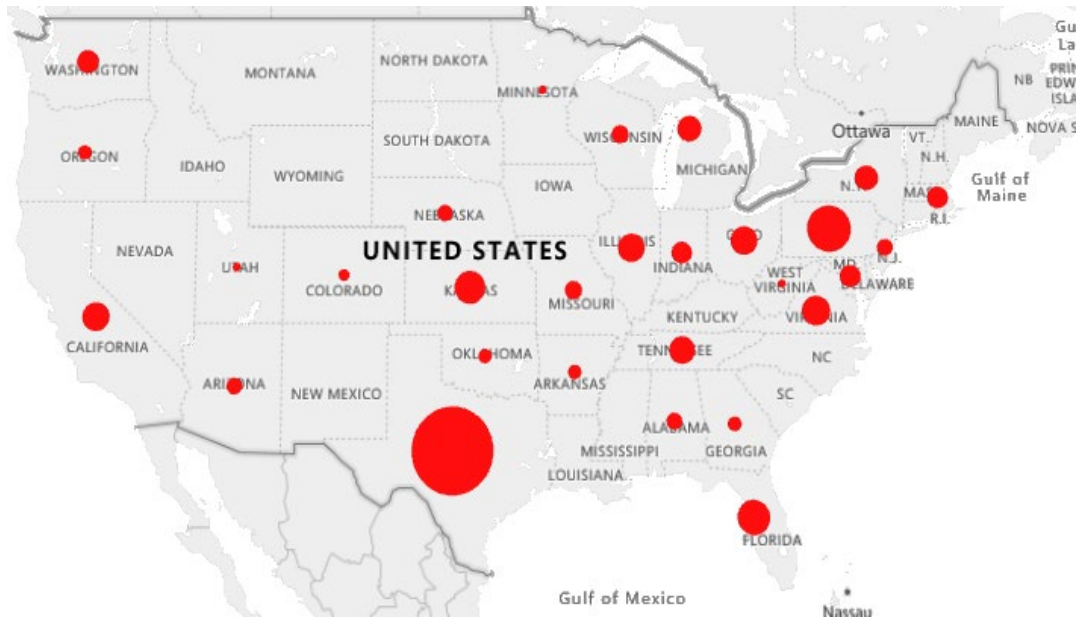
**Gender.** The gender responses were divided into two groups: male and female. From the results of the analysis, 201 (57%) out of the 353 responses, participants are male, while 152 (43%) were female. The above statistics are as illustrated in Table 2.

**Residential State.** The question on the state of residence of the participants is open to the relevant in which both couples can identify as their official liking address. The rules are given different numerical denotations with no specific arrangement. The evidence concerning the state in which the respondents reside heavily influences their propensity to receive whether they can afford proper marital counseling. Of the total participants in the study, 94.9% of the participants were comfortable disclosing their state of residence. The division of the sphere; west, east, north, or south. From the study, a significant proportion of the participants come from the Eastern and southern parts of the United States. The chart below shows the specific distribution of the participants in this study. From the results of the respondents above, a significantly considerable number of the respondents reside in Texas (in the Southern Region) (33.9%) with a frequency distribution of about 111 out of the total 437 respondents that took part in the study. The states of Pennsylvania – Eastern Region (12%) and Florida – Southern Region (11%) also have significantly higher respondent populations. There is a somewhat skewed distribution in the geographical location of the participants that took part in the study, citing that a significant proportion dwell in the state of Texas. A graphical illustration of the distribution is shown below (Figure 1).

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*Figure 1: Geographical distribution of participants in the study.*

**Years of Residence in the U.S.** Concerning the number of years in which the residences have resided in the U.S, the following responses were collated; 0-1 years (81 of the total 353 participants – 23%), 2 -10 years (262 of the total 353 participants – 74%), 11-20 years (9 of the total 353 participants – 3%) and for more than 20 years (only 1 out of the 353 participants - 0%). Notably, a comparatively higher number of respondents have lived in the U.S for a period between 2 to 10 years. Moreover, the population of the participants that have lived in the years for one year and less is also high. The above statistics are as illustrated in Table 3.

**Years of husband/wife.** Question 6 of the demographic section of the questionnaire looks at how long the couples taking part in the survey have been married. Twenty-seven of the 357 total participants in the study (8%) of the couples have been married for less than one year, 237 (66) % have been married between 2 and 10 years, 88 (25%) have been married between 11 and 20 years and 5 (1%) have been married for more than 20 years. The mean for the data was 2.20 and a standard deviation of 0.583. Notably, the majority of participants had been married

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two or more years with one-fourth ( $\frac{1}{4}$ ) of the sample being married 11 or more years. The above statistics are as illustrated in Table 3.

**Number of Children.** Of the total participants in the study who responded, 80% of the respondents in the study have children (254), while (79%), and 64 out of the total 318 of the participants indicated that they do not have children. One hundred and ninety-eight (198) participants did not respond to the question. Participants indicated that they had between 1 to 7 children ( $M = 1.20$ ;  $SD = .402$ ). A majority of participants ( $n = 93$ , 37%) stated that they have 2 children; 24% ( $n = 62$ ) had one child; 18% ( $n = 45$ ) had 3 children; 16% ( $n = 40$ ) had 4 children; and the remaining 5% ( $n = 13$ ) had 5 or more children. The above statistics are as illustrated in Table 3.

**Education.** Concerning the level of education attained by the respondents to the study, 19 (6%) out of the total respondents 310 have a high school diploma as their highest qualification, 16 (5%) have some college degree as their highest level of education they have completed, 136 (42%) have a bachelor's degree as the highest education level they have achieved, 126 (39%) indicated they have a master's degree as the highest level of education they have received and 28 (9%) indicated that they have a doctoral degree as the highest level of education they have received. The mean of the data was 3.39, and the standard deviation was .929. There is a skewed distribution over the highest level of education achieved by the participant in the study, with the highest population affirming that they have a Bachelor's degree as their highest level of education. The above statistics are as illustrated in Table 3.

**Current Household Income.** Concerning the current household income recorded by the participants in this study, the responses were grouped into 5 categories. Eighteen (18, 5%) of the out of the total participants 324 indicated that they have a monthly household income of less than

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\$2000. One hundred and eighty-four (184, 57%) of the participants indicated that they have a monthly household income of between \$2000 - \$4000. Ninety-three (93, 29%) of the participants stated that they have a monthly household income of between \$4000 and \$6000. Twenty-nine (29, 9%) of the participants state that they have a monthly household income above \$6,000 ( $M = 2.41, S.D = .731$ ). See Table 3.

Table 3

### *Additional Demographic Information*

Variable	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<b>Years lived in the US</b>		
0-1 year	81	23
2-10 years	262	74
11-20 years	9	3
Over 20 years	1	0
Total	353	100
<b>Years of marriage</b>		
0-1 year	27	8
2-10 year	237	66
11-20 year	88	25
Over 20 year	5	1
Total	357	100
<b>Parent Status</b>		
Yes	254	80
No	64	20
Total	318	100
<b>Number of children</b>		
One (1)	62	24
Two (2)	93	37
Three (3)	45	18
Four (4)	40	16
Five (5)	7	3
Six (6)	5	2
Seven (7)	1	0
Total	253	100
<b>Education</b>		
High School	19	6
Some college	16	5
Bachelor's degree	133	43

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Master's degree	116	37
Ph.D. or professional degree	26	8
Total	310	100
Current Household Income		
Less than \$2000	18	5
\$2001- \$4000	184	57
\$4001- \$ 6000	93	29
Over than \$6001	29	9
Total	324	100

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### Relationship Measures

**Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS).** The total number of participants tested under this section was 298 based on those respondents with a KMSS score equal to or greater than three (3). The three-item measure seeks to assess marital satisfaction. Hence, the scale allows the respondents to answer each of the items presented on a 7-point scale, whereby 7 represents “extremely satisfied” while 1 represents “extremely dissatisfied” (Crane et al., 2000). Additionally, the total scores for KMSS range from 3 to 21 and higher scores suggest better marital quality among the individuals or couples being assessed (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). The cut-off score for the KMSS is 17. Scores of 17 or above indicate non-distress, and scores of 16 or below indicate distress. Owing to the sensitivity of the question, 132 respondents did not answer the question.

***Satisfaction with Their Marriage.*** The table below (Table 4) shows the results on the level of satisfaction perceived by the responders concerning their marriages. Thirteen (4%) of the out of the total 298 participants were extremely dissatisfied with their marriage, 17 (6%) were very dissatisfied with their marriage, 9 (3%) were somewhat dissatisfied with their marriage, 24 (8 %) had mixed emotions over their satisfaction with their marriage, 39 (13%) were somewhat satisfied with their marriage, a significant proportion of 107 (36%) were very satisfied with their marriage, while 89 (30%) were extremely satisfied ( $M = 5.31$ ,  $SD = 1.687$ ).

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In conclusion, a significant proportion of the respondents (79%) were somewhat satisfied to extremely satisfied with their marriages.

***Satisfaction with their Husband or Wife.*** The table below (Table 4) shows the results on the level of satisfaction perceived by the 296 responders concerning their husband/wife. Twelve (12) out of 296 participants (4%) were extremely dissatisfied with their husband/wife, 13 (4%) were very dissatisfied with their husband/wife, 12 (4%) were somewhat dissatisfied with their husband/ wife. Twenty-eight (28, 10%) indicated mixed emotions. Forty-two (42, 14%) were somewhat satisfied with their husband/wife, 104 (35%) were very satisfied with their husband/wife, while 84 (29%) were extremely satisfied ( $M = 5.43$ ,  $SD = 1.605$ ). One hundred thirty-four respondents did not answer the question. Over half of the sample (78%) reported being somewhat satisfied, very satisfied, or extremely satisfied.

***Satisfaction with the relationship with the Husband or Wife.*** Table 4 shows the results on the level of satisfaction in the relationship with the husband/wife. Thirteen (13) participants (4%) were extremely dissatisfied with their relationship with their husband/wife; 15 (5%) were very dissatisfied, and 22 (7%) were somewhat. Twenty-six (26) participants (9%) had mixed emotions over their satisfaction with their relationship with their husband/wife., while 36 (12%) were somewhat satisfied with their relationship with their husband/wife, 107 (36%) were very satisfied with their relationship with their husband/wife, while 79 (27%) were extremely satisfied ( $M = 5.43$ ,  $SD = 1.605$ ), 134 respondents did not answer the question. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the sample reported being somewhat satisfied to extremely satisfied. Table 4

### *Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS)*

KMSS Questions	N	Percent
How Satisfied Are You with Their Marriage? ( $M = 5.31$ )		
Extremely dissatisfied	13	4
Very dissatisfied	17	6

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KMSS Questions	N	Percent
Somewhat dissatisfied	9	3
Mixed	24	8
Somewhat satisfied	39	13
Very satisfied	107	36
Extremely satisfied	89	30
Total	298	100
<b>How Satisfied Are You with Your Husband/Wife? (M = 5.43)</b>		
Extremely dissatisfied	12	4
Very dissatisfied	13	4
Somewhat dissatisfied	12	4
Mixed	28	9
Somewhat satisfied	42	14
Very satisfied	104	35
Extremely satisfied	85	29
Missing	2	1
Total	296	100
<b>How Satisfied Are You with Your Relationship with Your Husband (Or Wife)? (M = 5.43)</b>		
Extremely dissatisfied	13	4
Very dissatisfied	15	5
Somewhat dissatisfied	22	7
Mixed	26	9
Somewhat satisfied	36	12
Very satisfied	107	36
Extremely satisfied	79	27
Total	298	100

Table 5 below summarizes the number of distressed and non-distressed couples, according to the KMSS. A score of 18 or above among the respondents that took part in this study represents the perception of a non-distressed relationship, whereas a score of 17 and below indicates perception of marital distress. Of the 298 participants, 127 (42.6%) and with a cumulative frequency of 42.8% stated they experienced distressed marriages while 171 (57.2%) stated that they did not experience distressed marriages.

Table 5

*Results of Frequency and Percentage Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS) s' Total Scores*

Total Score KMSS	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percentage
Distressed $\leq 16$	127	42.8	42.8
Non-Distressed $\geq 17$	171	57.2	57.2
<i>Total</i>	298	100.0	100.0

**Arabic - Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (A-RDAS).** The A-RDAS is divided into 4 subscales: (1) dyadic consensus (degree of agreement with a partner); (2) dyadic satisfaction (degree of satisfaction with a partner); (3) dyadic cohesion (degree of participation in activities together); and (4) affectional expression (degree of agreement on emotional affection). Scores range from 0 to 69, with a cut-off score of 48. Scores of 48 and above indicate a non-distressed relationship, and scores of 47 and below indicate a distressed relationship. Table 6 provides an overview of the frequencies for the A-RDAS. Table 7 summarizes the number of distressed and non-distressed couples according to the A-RDAS. The researcher had illustrated the participants who responded to the following A-RDAS sub-scales.

**Religious matters.** Concerning the religious matters handled by the couples that took part in the study, 81 out of 308 participants (26%) always agree on religious matters, 121 (39%) almost always agree on religious matters, 67 (22%) occasionally agree on religious matters, 31 (10%) frequently agree on religious matters, 5 (2%) almost always disagree on religious matters while 3 (1%) always disagree on religious matters ( $M = 3.76$ ,  $SD = 1.063$ ).

**Demonstration of affection.** Sixty-four (21 %) out of 307 responders always agree on demonstration of affection, 126 (41%) almost always agree on demonstration of affection, 86 (28%) occasionally agree on demonstration of affection, 23 (7%) frequently agree on

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demonstration of affection, 5 (2%) almost always disagree on demonstration of affection while 3 (1%) always disagree on demonstration of affection ( $M = 3.69$ ,  $SD = .999$ ).

***Making major decisions.*** With regards to the involvement in making major decisions, 77 (25%) out of 307 Saudi Students always agree on involvement in making major decisions, 133 (43%) almost always agree on involvement in making major decisions, 61 (20%) occasionally agree on involvement in making major decisions, 21 (7%) frequently agree on involvement in making major decisions, 13 (4%) almost always disagree on involvement in making major decisions while 2 (1%) always disagree on involvement in making major decisions ( $M = 3.76$ ,  $SD = 1.075$ ).

***Sex relations.*** Concerning the sexual relations, 93 (30%) out of 307 responses always agree on sexual relations, 132 (43%) almost always agree on sexual relations, 46 (15%) occasionally agree on sexual relations, 13 (4%) frequently agree on sexual relations, 17 (5%) almost always disagree on sexual relations while 6 (2%) always disagree on their sexual relations ( $M = 3.82$ ,  $SD = 1.186$ ).

***Conventionality (Correct or Proper Behavior).*** Concerning the display of correct behavior, 64 (21%) out of 308 participants always agree on conventionality and the display of correct and proper spousal behavior, 135 (44%) almost always agree on conventionality and the display of correct and proper spousal behavior, 71(23%) occasionally agree on conventionality and the display of correct and proper spousal behavior, 26 (8%) frequently agree on conventionality and the display of correct and proper spousal behavior, 10 (3%) almost always disagree on conventionality and the display of correct and proper spousal behavior while 2 (1%) always disagree on conventionality and the display of correct and proper spousal behavior ( $M = 3.69$ ,  $SD = 1.037$ ).



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**Career decision.** With regards to involvement in making career decisions, 75 (24%) of the 308 respondents always agree on the alignment and support of career decisions with their spouses. One hundred and thirty-two (132, 43%) almost always agree on alignment and support of career decisions, 76 (25%) occasionally agree on alignment and support of career decisions, 16 (5%) frequently agree on alignment and support of career decisions, 7 (2%) almost always disagree on alignment and support of career decisions while 2 (0%) always disagree on alignment and support of career decisions ( $M = 2.0$ ,  $SD = 0.984$ ).

**Discussed the ending relationship.** Regarding the question on how often the couples discussed, divorce, separation or terminating the relationship, 7 (2%) out of 305 responses agree that they discuss divorce, separation or terminating the relationship all the time, 10 (3%) state that they discuss divorce, separation or terminating the relationship most of the time, 17 (6%) agree that they more often than discuss divorce, separation or terminating the relationship, 28 (9%) agree that they occasionally discuss divorce, separation or terminating the relationship, 79 (26%) of the respondents agree that they rarely discuss divorce, separation or terminating the relationship occasionally, while a significant 164 (54%) state that they never discuss divorce, separation or terminating the relationship ( $M = 4.14$ ,  $SD = 1.224$ ).

**Frequency of Quarrels.** With regards to the question on the frequency of quarrelling among the couple, 4 (1%) out of 305 responses agree that they argue all the time, 17 (6%) state that they argue most of the time, 33 (11%) agree that they argue more often than not, 122 (40%) of the respondents agree that they argue occasionally, 100 (33%) state that they rarely argue while 29 (10%) state that they never argue ( $M = 3.26$ ,  $SD = 1.046$ ).

**Relationship regret.** On the question on the whether the couples regret living together or getting married to their spouse, 10 (3%) out of 304 participants regret that they married or live

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together with their spouse all the time, another 10 (3%) state that they regret that they married or live together with their spouse most of the time, 12 (4%) agree that they regret that they married or lived together with their spouse more often than not, 49 (16%) of the respondents agree that they regret that they married or live together with their spouse occasionally, 73(24%) state that they rarely that they regret that they married or live together with their spouse while 150 (49%) state that they never that they regret that they married or live together with their spouse ( $M = 4.02$ ,  $SD = 1.281$ ). One hundred thirty-nine participants did not offer a response with regard to the question mentioned above.

***Irritation with a partner.*** On the question how often they get on each other's nerves, 8 (3%) out of 305 responses state they get on each other's nerves all the time, another 16 (5%) state that state they get on each other's nerves most of the time, 31 (10%) agree that state they get on each other's nerves more often than not, 121 (40%) of the respondents agree that they state they get on each other's nerves occasionally, 109 (36%) state that they rarely state they get on each other's nerves while 20 (7%) state that they never state they get on each other's nerves ( $M = 3.20$ ,  $SD = 1.063$ ).

***Conjoint outside interests.*** The eleventh question on the scale asks whether the couples engage in outside interests together. Twelve (4%) of the 303 participants indicated they never engage in outside interests together, 41 (13%) affirm that they rarely engage in outside interests together, a significant proportion of the respondents 117 (39%) state that they occasionally engage in outside interests together, 110 (36%) state that they engage in outside activities together, almost every day and 23 (8%) of the population are sure they engage in outside activities together every day ( $M = 2.30$ ,  $SD = .934$ ).

***Stimulating exchange of ideas.*** The twelfth question on the scale asks whether the couples engage in outside interests together. 19 (6%) out of 298 response state they never engage in a stimulating exchange of ideas forum, 30 (10%) affirm that they engage in a stimulating exchange of ideas forum less than once a month, 68 (22%) state that they engage in a stimulating exchange of ideas forum once or twice a week, 83 (27%) state that they engage in a stimulating exchange of ideas forum once a day and 23 (8%) of the population stimulate an exchange of ideas between the couple at least once a day, and 79 (26%) engage in a stimulating exchange of ideas forum more often ( $M= 2.99$ ,  $SD = 1.523$ ).

***Conjoint project work.*** The thirteenth question on the scale asks whether the partners work on projects together. 96 (32%) out of 302 state they never engage in a stimulating exchange of ideas forum, 67 (22%) affirm that they work together projects together less than once a month, 54 (18%) state that they work together projects together once or twice a month, 36 (12%) state that they work together projects together once or twice a week, 14 (5%) state that they work together projects together once a day, and 36 (12%) of the population work together projects together more than once a day ( $M= 1.71$ ,  $SD = 1.671$ ).

***Calm discussions.*** The final question on the scale asks. Eighteen (18, 6%) answers out of 302 response state they never the partners calmly discuss something, 36 (12%) affirm that the partners calmly discuss something together less than once a month, 59 (19%) state that they the partners calmly discuss something once or twice a month, 75 (25%) state that they the partners calmly discuss something once or twice a week, 27( 9%) state that the partners calmly discuss something together once a day, and 87 (29%) the partners calmly discuss something more often ( $M= 3.05$ ,  $SD = 1.567$ ).

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Table 6

*Responses to the A-RDAS (N = 437)*

A-RDAS Items	N	Percent
<b>Religious matters</b>		
Always Agree	81	26
Almost Always Agree	121	39
Occasionally Agree	67	22
Frequently Agree	31	10
Almost Always Disagree	5	2
Always Disagree	3	1
Total	308	100
<b>Demonstration of Affection</b>		
Always Agree	64	21
Almost Always Agree	126	41
Occasionally Agree	86	28
Frequently Agree	23	7
Almost Always Disagree	5	2
Always Disagree	3	1
Total	307	100
<b>Spousal Involvement in Decision-Making</b>		
Always Agree	77	25
Almost Always Agree	133	43
Occasionally Agree	61	20
Frequently Agree	21	7
Almost Always Disagree	13	4
Always Disagree	2	1
Total	307	100
<b>Sex Relation</b>		
Always Agree	93	30
Almost Always Agree	132	43
Occasionally Agree	46	15
Frequently Agree	13	4
Almost Always Disagree	17	5
Always Disagree	6	2
Total	307	100
<b>Conventionality/ Proper Behavior</b>		
Always Agree	64	21
Almost Always Agree	135	44
Occasionally Agree	71	23
Frequently Agree	26	8
Almost Always Disagree	10	3

## ADJUSTMENT ISSUES OF SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS

A-RDAS Items	N	Percent
Always Disagree	2	1
Total	301	100
<b>Career Decision</b>		
Always Agree	75	24
Almost Always Agree	132	43
Occasionally Agree	76	25
Frequently Agree	16	5
Almost Always Disagree	7	2
Always Disagree	2	1
Total	301	100
<b>Frequent Discussion On Divorce and Separation</b>		
All the time	7	2
Most of the Time	10	3
More often than Not	17	6
Occasionally	28	9
Rarely	79	26
Never	164	54
Total	305	100
<b>Frequency of Quarreling Among Couples</b>		
All the time	4	1
Most of the Time	17	6
More often than Not	33	11
Occasionally	122	40
Rarely	100	33
Never	29	9
Total	305	100
<b>Partners Regret Over Living with Spouse</b>		
All the time	10	3
Most of the Time	10	3
More often than Not	12	4
Occasionally	49	16
Rarely	73	25
Never	150	49
Total	304	100
<b>How Often They Get on Each Other's Nerve</b>		
All the time	8	3
Most of the Time	16	5
More often than Not	31	10
Occasionally	121	40
Rarely	109	36
Never	20	7

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A-RDAS Items	N	Percent
Total	305	100
<b>Whether They Engage in Outside Interests Together</b>		
Never	12	4
Rarely	41	13
Occasionally	117	39
Almost Every Day	110	36
Every Day	23	8
Total	303	100
<b>Whether They Have a Stimulating Exchange of Ideas</b>		
Never	19	6
Less than once a month	30	10
Once or twice a month	68	22
Once or twice a week	83	27
Once a day	23	8
More often	79	26
Total	302	100
<b>Whether They Can Work on a Project Together</b>		
Never	96	32
Less than once a month	67	22
Once or twice a month	54	18
Once or twice a week	35	11
Once a day	14	5
More often	36	12
Total	302	100
<b>Whether the partners calmly discuss something together</b>		
Never	18	6
Less than once a month	36	12
Once or twice a month	59	19
Once or twice a week	75	25
Once a day	27	9
More often	87	29
Total	302	100

**Reliability Analysis.** Each item on the original RDAS had a possible score ranges from 0 to 5. It is important to note that item number 11's score t ranges from 0 to 4. The individual total score, therefore, ranges from 0 to 69. The cutoff score for differentiating between distressed and non-distressed married individuals and couples is 48. The questions between 1 and 6 look at the consensus among the couple, the questions ranging from 7 to 10 look at the level of satisfaction,

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while the questions between 11 and 14 look at the issues of cohesion in the couple's relationship. Using the fact that the original RDAS' cutoff score is 48, a score of 48 or above among the respondents that took part in this study represent perception of a non-distressed relationship, whereas a score of 47 and below indicates perception of marital distress.

Table 7

### *Results of Frequency and Percentage of ARDAS' Total Scores*

Total Score ARDS	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percentage
Distressed $\leq 47$	160	54	54
Non-Distressed $\geq 48$	138	46	46
<i>Total</i>	298	100	100

*A-RDAS Psychometric Properties.* The collected data from this study were used to test the psychometric properties of the Arabic translated Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (A-RDAS; Elanbari, 2015). The internal consistency reliability of the A-RDAS was examined using Cronbach's alpha (.831) from data collected from 298 individuals (see Table 8). Moreover, the use of the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the three subscales of the original RDAS were also computed (Table 10), and the results show the alpha score for the A-RDAS total score was  $\alpha = .899$ ,  $\alpha = .595$  for Consensus,  $\alpha = .857$  for Satisfaction, and  $\alpha = 0.700$  for cohesion. Cronbach's alpha for the Arabic translated KMSS (A-KMSS) was computed with its three items, and the results show  $\alpha = .953$  (Table 10).

Table 8

### *Reliability Statistics for A-RDAS (n =*

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.831	.829	14

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The Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS) scale focuses on aspects of marital satisfaction, including the individual's satisfaction with their husband/wife, the satisfaction with their relevant spouses, and the satisfaction with their relationship with their significant others, among other abstract variables. A high correlation (Cronbach Alpha) in the KMSS scale indicates great reliability in delivering the construct on the satisfaction of the couples (see Table 9 and Table 10).

Table 9

### *Inter-Item Correlation Matrix*

	Total KMSS	Total ARDAS	Consensus Subscale	Satisfaction Subscale	Cohesion Subscale
Total KMSS	1.000	.496	.390	.435	.378
Total ARDAS	.496	1.000	.810	.800	.812
Consensus Subscale	.390	.810	1.000	.508	.488
Satisfaction Subscale	.435	.800	.508	1.000	.441
Cohesion Subscale	.378	.812	.488	.441	1.000

Table 10

### *Item-Total Statistics*

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Total KMSS	91.1892	363.028	.496	.250	.829
Total ARDAS	61.8581	157.844	.945	1.000	.751
Consensus Subscale	86.5676	361.372	.715	1.000	.794
Satisfaction Subscale	92.8446	355.108	.712	1.000	.791
Cohesion Subscale	97.3514	346.805	.700	1.000	.788



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To test the construct validity over the use of the two scales, the Pearson's correlation coefficient was computed between the two translated scales (A-RDAS and A-KMSS) and the results show that the correlation between ARDAS and Arabic-translated KMSS was significant (Pearson  $r = .863$ ,  $p < .001$ ) (see Table 11), suggesting that the A-RDAS has adequate construct validity.

Table 11

### *Correlation Analysis KMSS & A-RDAS*

		KMSS	ARDAS
Total KMSS	Pearson Correlation	1	.496**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	298	296
Total ARDAS	Pearson Correlation	.496**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	296	317

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### **Perceptions of the Saudi Cultural Mission (SACM)**

Concerning participants' descriptions of themselves, 162 (47.6%) state that they would describe themselves as detractors, 114 (33.4%) state that they would describe themselves as passive while 27 (8%) state that they would describe themselves as promoters ( $M = 1.64$ ,  $SD = .678$ ). The question is open to a follow-up question that asks the participants the extent to which they would describe the intensity of their responses. Table 12 and Table 13 provide representations of both responses as shown below.

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Table 12

*How They Would Describe Themselves*

	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Detractor	162	48
Passive	114	33
Promoter	27	8
Total	303	89
System	37	11
Total	340	100

Table 13

*Intensity of how They Would Describe Themselves/Their Responses*

<b>Intensity</b>	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>
0	6	1
1	2	1
2	1	0
3	6	1
4	14	3
5	71	16
6	46	11
7	68	16
8	58	13
9	21	5
10	14	3
Total	307	100

**Intensity of How They Would Describe Themselves?** The scale used in the question above is that of increasing intensity with the increased numerical connotation. There is a skewed concentration over the values 7, 8, 9, and 10, indicating the respondents felt very strongly concerning their responses. The histogram below shows the variable distribution of the responses (Figure 2).

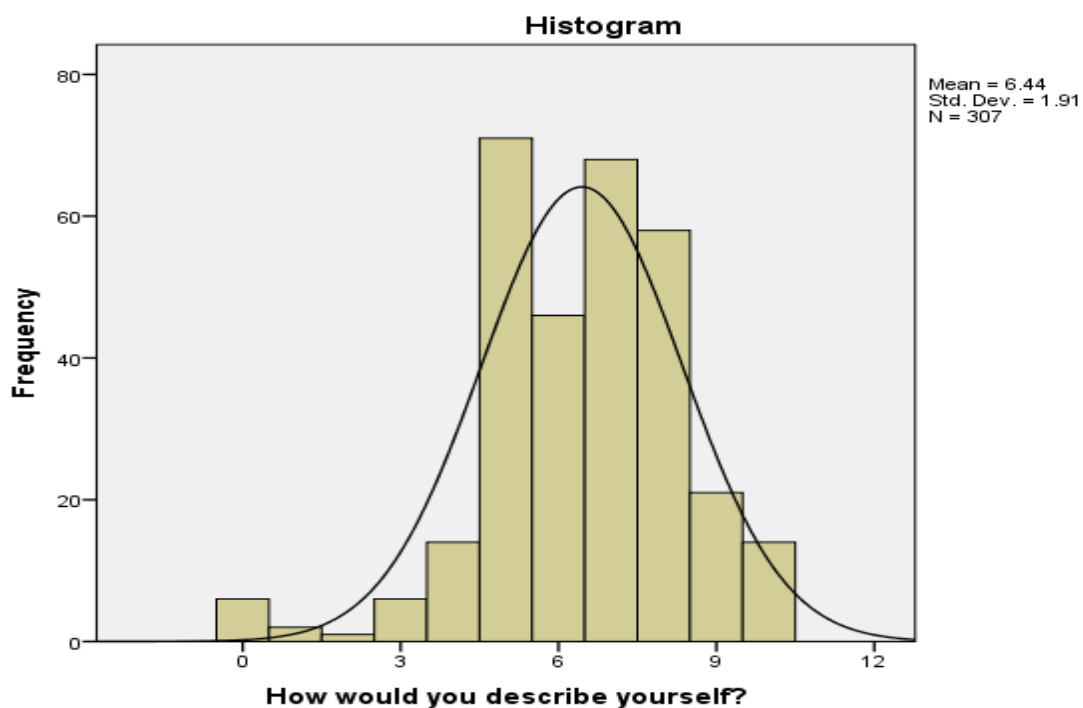


Figure 2. Histogram description of how strongly the respondents would describe themselves.

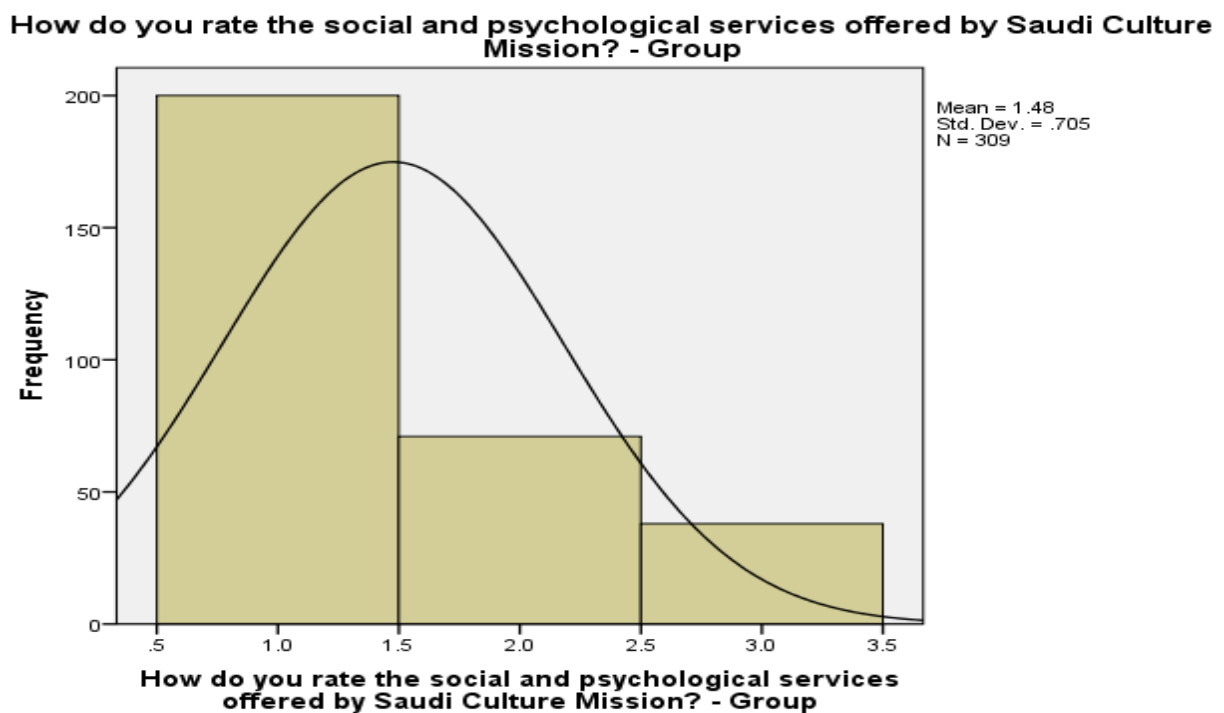
With regards to how the participants would rate the social and psychological services offered by Saudi Culture Mission, 65% state that they would describe themselves as detractors, 23% state that they would describe themselves as passive while 12% stated that they would describe themselves as promoters (M= 1.48, SD = .705) (Table 14). The question is open to a follow-up question that asks the participants the extent to which they would calibrate their description.

Table 14

*How Respondents Would Rate the Social and Psychological Services Offered by Saudi Culture Mission*

	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Social and Psychological Services Offered by Saudi Culture Mission		
Detractor	200	65
Passive	71	23
Promoter	38	12

The scale used in the question above is that of increasing intensity with the increased numerical connotation. There is a skewed concentration over the values 1 (Detractor) and 2 (Passive), indicating the respondents felt very strongly concerning their response. The histogram below shows the variable distribution of the responses (Figure 3).



*Figure 3.* Histogram Illustration on How They Would Rate the Social and Psychological Services Offered by Saudi Culture Mission

### ***Sufficiency of current psychological services offered at Saudi Culture Mission***

The table below gives a tabular representation of whether the participants, given the rating of the psychological services offered at Saudi Culture Mission are sufficient. From the table below (Table 15), 40.1% state that they agree the services offered are sufficient, while

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59.9% disagree over the sufficiency of the current psychological services offered at the Saudi Culture Mission. The mean of the data  $M= 1.60$  and the Standard Deviation  $SD = 0.491$ .

Table 15

### *Social and Psychological Services Provided by Saudi Culture Mission Sufficiency*

	N	Percent
Yes	123	40
No	184	60
Total	307	100

**Type of Services Received from The Saudi Culture Mission.** With regards to the type of aid received by the participants from the Saudi Culture Mission, 141 of the total respondents (47%) state that seek financial resources from the Saudi Culture Mission, 59 of the total respondents (19%) state that they seek psychological services, including individual and family therapy from the Saudi Culture Mission in the USA while 92 of the total respondents (30%) state that they seek help in the form of seek social services such as training, referrals for job, information on a lawyer from the Saudi Culture Mission. On the other hand, 11 of the total respondents (4%) of the respondents in the survey seek spiritual help from the Saudi Culture Mission when they experience relationship difficulties ( $M= 1.91$ ,  $SD = .954$ ) (Table 16).

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Table 16

*Type of Services Do You Seek from The Saudi Culture Mission When You Experience Relationship Difficulties*

What Type of Services Do You Seek from The Saudi Culture Mission When You Experience Relationship Difficulties?	N	Percent
Financial resources	141	47
Psychological services (individual therapy, family therapy)	59	19
Social services (example: training, referrals for job, information on a lawyer)	92	30
Spiritual resources	11	4
Total	303	100

On further inquiry on a specific service offered at the Saudi Culture Mission concerning the family therapy, 101 respondents (33%) agreed that they were content with the services while 117 respondents (38%) are dissatisfied with the couple and family therapy services currently offered by the Saudi Culture Mission. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of the respondent's state that they are not sure ( $M = 2.23$ ,  $SD = 1.189$ ) (Table 17).

Table 17

*Satisfaction of the Couple and Family Therapy Services Currently Offered by the SACM*

	N	Percent
Are you Satisfied with The Couple and Family Therapy Services Currently Offered by the Saudi Culture Mission? - Selected Choice		
Yes	101	33
No	117	38
Not Sure (please explain)	86	28
Total	304	100

There were varied responses offered in support of the response on whether the participants are satisfied with the individual and family therapy offered at the Saudi Culture Mission. One respondent stated that he felt like the current service is not like the previous service; hence, the change breeds their dissatisfaction. Another respondent answered that they

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did not have any need for individual or family therapy from the Saudi Culture Mission and as such, did not even know that they offered such services. There were other responses concerning the individual and family therapy offered at Saudi Arabian Culture Mission, such as they did not know it is offered, and they do not see the need to take up such services. Another respondent said that they had no prior information that the Saudi Arabian Culture Mission offered such services since he had not received an email or any communication before over the offering of such services. All 437 respondents who took part in the survey offered an answer to this question (Table 18).

Table 18

### *Saudi Students Attitude to themselves and to Saudi Arabia Culture Mission Services*

Description	N	Percent
How They Would Describe Themselves?		
Detractor	146	48
Passive	126	41
Promoter	35	11
Total	307	70
Missing	130	30
Total	437	100
Intensity of how They Would Describe Themselves Religiously		
0 (not very religious)	6	1
1	2	1
2	1	0
3	6	1
4	14	3
5	71	16
6	46	11
7	68	16
8	58	13
9	21	5
10 (very religious)	14	3
Total	307	100
How Respondents Would Rate the Social and Psychological Services Offered by Saudi Culture Mission?		

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Description	N	Percent
Detractor	200	65
Passive	71	23
Promoter	38	12
Total	309	100
Are the Social and Psychological Services Provided by Saudi Culture Mission Are Sufficient?		
Yes	123	40
No	184	60
Total	307	100
What Type of Services Do You Seek from The Saudi Culture Mission When You Experience Relationship Difficulties?		
Financial resources	141	47
Psychological services (individual therapy, family therapy)	59	19
Social services (example: training, referrals for job, information on a lawyer)	92	30
Spiritual resources	11	4
Total	303	100
Are you Satisfied with The Couple and Family Therapy Services Currently Offered by the Saudi Culture Mission?		
Yes	101	33
No	117	38
Not Sure (Please explain).	86	29
Total	304	100

### Research Question Outcomes

**Research Question 1:** *What demographic characteristics best predict marital adjustment for Saudi students and their spouses in the United States?*

**Regression analysis: ANOVA analysis.** In order to answer this research question, the researcher conducted a regression analysis. Prior to running the regression, the researcher ran a correlation analysis using the KMSS, the A-RDAS, and the demographic variables, including questions related to SACM (Table 19).



Table 19

*Correlation Matrix with Significant Results*

		KMSS_T otal	How satisfied are you with your marriage?	3. Making major decisions	4. Sex relations	7. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship	9. Do you ever regret that you married (or lived together)?	11. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?
KMSS_Total	Pearson's Correlation(r)	1	.945**	-.392**	-.301**	.413**	.440**	.291**
	N	437	305	300	300	299	298	298
How satisfied are you with your marriage?	Pearson's Correlation(r)	.945**	1	-.347**	-.278**	.384**	.417**	.266**
	N	305	305	300	300	299	298	298
3. Making major decisions	Pearson's Correlation(r)	-.392**	-.347**	1	.598**	-.337**	-.440**	-.381**
	N	300	300	300	299	298	297	298
4. Sex relations	Pearson's Correlation(r)	-.301**	-.278**	.598**	1	-.282**	-.331**	-.309**
	N	300	300	299	300	298	297	297
7. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship	Pearson's Correlation(r)	.413**	.384**	-.337**	-.282**	1	.739**	.228**
	N	299	299	298	298	299	298	298

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9. Do you ever regret that you married (or lived together)?	Pearson's Correlation(r)	.440**	.417**	-.440**	-.331**	.739**	1	.321**
	N	298	298	297	297	298	298	297
11. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?	Pearson's Correlation(r)	.291**	.266**	-.381**	-.309**	.228**	.321**	1
	N	298	298	298	297	298	297	298

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).



The researcher also ran a stepwise regression to identify the significant variables which determine the marital adjustment between Saudi Arabian students. In order to run the stepwise regression, the researcher entered the total A-RDAS score as the dependent variable and the demographic variables that were highly correlated to the marital adjustment variables as the independent variables using a  $p < .05$  level or lower (Table 20).

Table 20

*Regression analysis for SACM Questions and A-RDAS*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
(Constant)	-.331	.218	-1.523	.129
How satisfied are you with your marriage?	1.200	.052	.418	23.133 .000
How would you describe yourself? – Group	.028	.115	.004	.243 .808
How would you describe yourself?	.001	.042	.000	.024 .981
How do you rate the social and psychological services offered by Saudi Culture Mission? – Group	.149	.101	.022	1.481 .140
How do you rate the social and psychological services offered by Saudi Culture Mission?	-.024	.026	-.013	-.925 .356
Are you satisfied with the couple and family therapy services currently offered by the Saudi Culture Mission? -	.099	.035	.025	2.867 .004
How satisfied are you with your husband (or wife)?	1.769	.053	.601	33.505 .000

a. Dependent Variable: KMSS\_Total

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**Results.** The stepwise regression analysis found that satisfaction with spouse, satisfaction with SACM couple and family therapy services and satisfaction with marriage to be the best predictors of marital adjustment in Saudi student couples.

**Research Question 2.** *Are there any gender differences between individuals in non-distress couples and distressed Saudi couples?*

To answer this question, the researcher conducted a Chi-square analysis and an independent samples t-test analysis using gender (male, female) as the independent variable and the distressed/non-distressed categorical statuses for the A-RDAS. A Chi-square analysis is run when determining the degree of association between two categorical variables (gender and A-RDAS status). The Chi-square results for gender by A-RDAS status was insignificant  $\chi^2 (1, N = 294) = .483, p < .487$  (see Table 21 and Table 22 below). There was no significant association between gender and distress or non-distress scores on the A-RDAS.

Table 21

*Crosstab of A-RDAS and Gender*

A-RDAS_Status		Participant's gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Distressed	Count	83	73	156
	Expected Count	86	70	156
Non-distressed	Count	79	59	138
	Expected Count	76	62	138
Total	Count	162	132	294
	Expected Count	160	132	294

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Table 22

*Chi-Square Test of A-RDAS by Gender*

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2- sided)	Exact Sig. (1- sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.483*	1	.487		
Continuity Correction	.334	1	.563		
Likelihood Ratio	.484	1	.487		
Fisher's Exact Test				.557	.282
Linear-by-Linear Association	.482	1	.488		
N of Valid Cases	294				

\*0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 61.96.

An independent t-test was also run to answer this question. This statistic is used to compare mean scores on the same variable using two different groups of cases. Mean for males and females were compared on the A-RDAS total score, A-RDAS Consensus, A-RDAS Satisfaction, and A-RDAS Cohesion. The results indicated no significant differences between the means of male ( $M = 46.5$ ,  $SD = 8.66$ ), and female respondents ( $M = 44.6$ ,  $SD = 10.48$ ),  $t(162) = 1.69$ ,  $p = .09$  on the A-RDS total. None of the results on the A-RDAS subscales (Consensus, Satisfaction, Cohesion) indicated significant differences in the means between males and females (see Table 23 and Table 24 below).

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Table 23

*Independent Samples T-Test For A-RDAS By Gender (Group Statistics)*

	Participant's gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
A_RDAS Tot	Male	162	46.50	8.66	.68
	Female	132	44.57	10.48	.91
A_RDAS_Consen	Male	167	21.20	3.35	.26
	Female	134	20.54	4.00	.34
A_RDAS_Satis	Male	166	14.97	3.60	.28
	Female	133	14.14	4.17	.36
A_RDAS_Cohesion	Male	163	10.23	3.95	.31
	Female	133	9.92	4.57	.40

Table 24

*Independent Samples T-Test Gender Means For A-RDAS And A-RDAS Subscales*

		<u>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</u>			df	Sig. (2- tailed)
		F	Sig.	t		
A-RDAS Tot	Equal variances assumed	4.24	.04	1.72	292	.09
	Equal variances not assumed			1.69	253	.09
A-RDAS-Consen	Equal variances assumed	2.90	.09	1.56	299	.12
	Equal variances not assumed			1.53	259	.13
A-RDAS-Satis	Equal variances assumed	2.65	.10	1.84	297	.07
	Equal variances not assumed			1.81	262	.07
A-RDAS-Cohes	Equal variances assumed	4.00	.05	.62	294	.52

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Equal variances not assumed	.63	262	.53
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\*\*Significant at the  $p < .05$

**Results.** Results of both the Chi-square and independent samples t-test analyses indicated that no significant gender difference existed between female and male respondents on the A-RDAS. Males and females gave replies with a considerably small deviation with more males showing satisfaction towards the marriages.

**Research Question 3.** *What type of help do Saudi Arabian student couples seek when there is difficulty in the relationship?*

The Saudi Arabian student couples seek financial resources, psychological services such as individual therapy, family therapy, social services such as training, referrals for a job, information on a lawyer), spiritual resources when there is difficulty in the relationship. A significant proportion ( $n = 437$ ; 46.5%) of the Saudi Arabian student couples, however, seek financial resources as compared to the psychological, social and spiritual services offered at the center (Table 25).



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Table 25

*What Type of Services Do You Seek From The Saudi Culture Mission When You Experience Relationship Difficulties?*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Financial resources	141	32.3	46.5	46.5
Psychological services (individual therapy, family therapy)	59	13.5	19.5	66.0
Social services (example: training, referrals for job, information on a lawyer)	92	21.1	30.4	96.4
Spiritual resources	11	2.5	3.6	100.0
Total	303	69.3	100.0	
Missing	134	30.7		
Total	437	100.0		

Similarly, a significant proportion (n = 437; 38.5%) of the Saudi Arabian student couples state that they are not satisfied with the individual and family therapy offered at the Saudi Culture Mission. Moreover, a significant proportion of the Saudi Arabian student couples (n = 437; 59.9%) disagree on the sufficiency of the social and psychological services offered by the Saudi Culture Mission.

**Results.** On further inquiry on a specific service offered at the Saudi Culture Mission concerning the family therapy, 101 respondents (33%) agreed that they were content with the

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services while 117 respondents (38%) are dissatisfied with the couple and family therapy services currently offered by the Saudi Culture Mission. 28% of the respondents state that they are not sure ( $M = 2.23$ ,  $SD = 1.189$ ).

**Research Question 4.** *Are Saudi Arabian couples satisfied with the couple and family therapy services currently offered by the Saudi Culture Mission?*

Using evidence from Table 14, 15, 16 and 17 in the results above, the Saudi Arabian student couples state that they are not satisfied with the individual and family therapy offered at the Saudi Culture Mission. Moreover, a significant proportion of the Saudi Arabian student couples ( $n = 437$ ; 59.9%; see Table 16) disagree on the sufficiency of the social and psychological services offered by the Saudi Culture Mission. A significant proportion ( $n = 437$ ; 33.2%) is further displeased with other services offered by the Saudi Culture Mission by giving low ratings on the general nature of their services.

**Results.** Item analyses were conducted on the four items hypothesized to assess the Satisfaction subscale. Initially, each item of the four items was correlated with the total score for the Satisfaction subscale (with the item removed). *Corrected item-total correlations* for the four-item subscale yielded correlations that are all larger than .3, more specifically, these values ranged between .68 and .80, indicating that each of the four items correlates well with the total subscale. Furthermore, the values of *Cronbach's alpha if item deleted* ranged between .798 and .849, which are all values smaller than the subscale's overall Cronbach's alpha of .87, indicating that all items are worthy of retention (Field, 2005) (Table 9).

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### Limitations

First, given the data collected in the study was done through an online platform, a considerable number of respondents did not feel free sharing such personal data. Most of the participants did not understand the goal of the password component. A considerable proportion of the participants thereby, left a large number of questions blank. The discord between the aforementioned factors is evident in the significantly high number of participants whose passwords did not match, and therefore did not allow their data to be matched with their spouses' data (Crane et al., 2000). Moreover, the use of non-random sampling influences the quality of the data as a considerable proportion of the respondents represented the same geographical areas, socioeconomic statuses and religious affiliations (Elanbari, 2015). These areas of overlap limit the generalizability of the results..

Secondly, some Saudi students do not use either Facebook or Twitter, but they might use other social media resources. The use of Facebook might, therefore, limit the accessibility and the range of responses offered in the survey. The sample size was thus limited by the choice of the data collection tool (Crane et al., 2000). A larger sample size might have increased the robustness of the data and the analyses. Third, data collection during the summer presented challenges for the researcher since a considerable proportion of the potential participants were not around as they focus on spending quality time with their extended family in Saudi Arabia or are traveling somewhere in the United States.

Finally, the Saudi cultural system generally emphasizes that Arabs maintain a close-knit family structure where marriage and relationship issues are solved within the family. The study did not include questions related to family support and connection, which would have provided

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important information about couple support beyond the assistance of SACM. It would be helpful in future research to consider this aspect of couple support and satisfaction.

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### **CHAPTER 5 - SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study explored the question, “*How do Saudi students and their spouses in the U.S. rate their level of marital satisfaction?*” to fill a gap in the social science literature on the relationship needs of a critical population of students in the U.S. The study used a quantitative paradigm and a correlational, survey research design to answer this question and its secondary questions. This study used the A-RDAS (Arabic-Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale) and an Arabic-translated version of the KMSS (Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale) to collect data for the analysis. Because the A-RDAS captured more nuanced detail on the relationship quality than the KMSS, it was used as the primary outcome variable. This chapter will provide an overall summary of the data analyses before addressing the results for each research question individually. The discussion follows, and the chapter ends on recommendations for clinicians and support services working with Saudi students and their partners in the U.S.

#### **Global Summary**

Summing up the aforementioned analyses, it is evident that factors such as age of the couple, their monthly household income, their perception of their personal temperament, their highest educational level achieved, the number of children they have and the number of years the Saudi Arabian American spouse have been married has an impact on the level of distress they experience in their marriage according to KMSS and ARDAS analyses. The results concur with those of Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern (2015). Research studies highlight that social integration and the regulation of mental health behaviors among Saudi Arabian American spouses living in America is imperative to the state of their marriages (Lefdahl-Davis and

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Perrone-McGovern (2015). Moreover, religious and financial experiences can significantly improve and enrich people's spiritual lives (Waite & Lehrer, 2003).

The results of the study show that the unequal distribution of resources may be a significant contributing factor to the availability of the Saudi Culture Mission aid. This is with reference to the question of the type of services sort after in the Saudi Culture Mission. Similar to the summary by the analysis of Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern (2015), there are no gender differences between individuals in non-distress couples and distressed couples. A slightly larger, but statistically insignificant, number of couples that have lived in the US for less than 10 years' experience higher distress levels as compared to couples that have lived longer in the US (Crane et al., 2000). Similarly, the number of years the Saudi Arabian couples have been married does not significantly impact the level of stress experienced by the couple. A similar case is experienced in the case of the number of children (Waite & Lehrer, 2003), and children who have experienced refugee environment are more likely to show higher stress levels. However, there is a somewhat uniform trend in the couples with less than two showing a consistent decrease in level of stress experienced (Waite & Lehrer, 2003). Saudi Arabian couples are not satisfied with the services offered by the Saudi Mission culture concerning the much-needed individual and family therapy.

### **Summary of Research Questions**

**A-RDAS analysis.** Research question 1 (*What demographic characteristics best predict marital adjustment for Saudi students and their spouses in the United States?*) and Research question 2 (*Are there any gender differences between individuals in non-distress couples and*

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*distressed Saudi couples?)* focused on the relationship between demographic characteristics and A-RDAS outcomes.

In terms of resources (Research Question 3: *What type of help do Saudi Arabian student couples seek when there is difficulty in the relationship?*), Saudi Arabian student couples seek financial resources, psychological services such as individual therapy, family therapy, social services such as training, referrals for job, information on a lawyer), spiritual resources when there is difficulty in the relationship. A significant proportion of the Saudi Arabian student couples, however, seek financial resources as compared to the psychological, social, and spiritual services offered at the center. Similarly, a significant proportion (n = 437; 38.5%) of the Saudi Arabian student couples state that they are not satisfied with the individual and family therapy offered at the Saudi Culture Mission. Moreover, a significant proportion of the Saudi Arabian student couples (n = 437; 59.9%) disagree on the sufficiency of the social and psychological services offered by the Saudi Culture Mission.

*Are Saudi Arabian couples satisfied with the couple and family therapy services currently offered by the Saudi Culture Mission* (Research Question 4)? Using evidence from Table 14, 15, 16, and 17 in the results above, the Saudi Arabian student couples state that they are not satisfied with the individual and family therapy offered at the Saudi Culture Mission. Moreover, a significant proportion of the Saudi Arabian student couples disagree on the sufficiency of the social and psychological services offered by the Saudi Culture Mission. A significant proportion is further displeased with other services offered by the Saudi Culture Mission by giving low ratings on the general nature of their services.

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### Discussion

The A-RDAS is a reliable and effective instrument to assess the quality of Arabic-speaking couples' marital relationship. Similarly, just like the French, Chinese, Spanish, and Turkish translated versions of the original DAS, the A-RDAS was highly correlated with the KMSS, suggesting that Arabic translation accurately captured the construct of marital adjustment, Consensus, Satisfaction and Cohesion. Based on the results of the study, the results indicated that a considerable number of the participants scored within the non-distressed range based both on the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS) and the Arabic translated Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (A-RDAS). Isanezhad et al. (2012) focus on the reliability of the factor structure and reliability of the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS) using the case study of an Iranian Population. Unlike the sample used in this study, Isanezhad et al. (2012), uses 338 case samples of parents of elementary students. Similar to the purpose of this study, Isanezhad et al. (2012), combined the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS) with other effective scales including the Marital Happiness Scale (MHS) and the Enrich Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire (ENRICH). Similar to the case of the sample results by Isanezhad et al. (2012), there was a relationship between RDAS with marital happiness and satisfaction in anticipated direction, between husband and wife adjustment scores. Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern (2015) offer an insightful assumption that is confirmed in this study. According to a study conducted by Graham et al., (2011) and further on reiterated by Waite and Lehrer (2003), it is fundamental to analyze how the personal temperaments influence the individual's perceptions of the marriages and how they feel about their spouses while looking at the communication among the couple. The general affirmation drawn from these studies on the efficiency of either or both of the KMSS



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and the RDAS scale is that emotional and sexual aspects of intimacy in romantic relationships are important in accessing couples' relationship satisfaction.

Concerning the help received by the couples on individual and family therapy, Assari et al., (2009) completely agree with the findings by this study. Despite the difference in the institutions offering individual and family therapy compared in the two studies, there is a similar affirmation that the organization that oversees the individual therapy, family therapy, social services such as training, referrals for job, information on a lawyer, spiritual resources must identify the individual temperaments of their subjects as well as the social-cultural influences. This study points out that the unavailability of synchronicity of the individual and the social cultural interaction limits the help received from the Saudi Arabian Culture Mission. This study, similar to the recommendation offered by Assari et al., (2009) suggests that it is imperative that the relevant governments and their respective international consulates (as suggested by this study) prepares the potential student families for the mental and relational challenges they may face while they are outside the normal environments.

The Saudi Arabian student couples thus seek financial resources, psychological services such as individual therapy, family therapy, social services such as training, referrals for a job, information on a lawyer, and spiritual resources from the Saudi Culture Mission. A significant proportion of the Saudi Arabian student couples, however, seek financial resources as compared to the psychological, social and spiritual services offered at the center (Elanbari, 2015; Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern, 2015).

### **Implications**

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An important implication of this study was that it was highly likely that the data reflected by A-RDAS, although translated verbally and conceptually into Arabic, did not represent the cultural sensitivities of the Saudi culture around exploring issues related to couples' marriages. The A-RDAS reflects the knowledge needs of Western family institutions and practitioners, such as family science and marriage counselors and psychologists. However, as with many communities and countries with strong cultural values toward marriage, Saudi couples may consider marriage more of a cultural and familial contract, so questions of satisfaction may seem foreign and awkward. Gudmundsson (2009) reveals that many Saudi Arabian young couples depend on their elders for marriage counseling. This uncertainty may have also affected the decision of a considerable number of participants to leave large portions of the survey unanswered. Second, and in contradiction to the above implication, Saudi Arabian participants indicated that they were dissatisfied with SACM's offerings available to them when they were experiencing marital difficulty. SACM may need to survey this younger generation of its constituents to determine if they are indeed open to the help of non-family professionals in dealing with marital challenges.

**Implications for mental health.** The findings of this study make a significant contribution to the general field of social science about adjustment issues of young couples away from their home countries. Specific issues that the members face include psychological adjustment and problems, the attribute of religiosity, prejudice and discrimination, communication patterns, poverty, and intergenerational relationships. The findings of this study show similar factors influence the marriage of an immigrant couple, which was ascertained through the research study by Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern (2015). Little is known

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about this growing Saudi Arabian minority group in the U.S, and not much is known about their marriages, families, or relationships (Elanbari, 2015). Despite the informative nature of the studies on the causes of marital failure among young couples, they fail to highlight the adjustment issues in relation to specific ethnic groups.

Contrarily, these studies over-generalize the attributes of gender, age, physical environment, and family factors as major predictors of successful adjustment and acculturation. According to a study conducted by Waite and Lehrer (2003), it is important to understand how personal temperaments influence the individual's perceptions of marriage and how they feel about their spouses. The individual perception of the factors that cause high level of stress in their marriage is important in narrowing down the specific pressure points for Saudi Arabian American couples (Elanbari, 2015). With the aforementioned regard, the need to address these gaps cannot be overemphasized. The Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS) scale is presented in 3 questions and offered to the study participants in both English and Arabic based on their preferences.

As much as the Saudi Arabian-American student couples like the offer of financial resources, social and spiritual services offered by SACM, they are dissatisfied with the quality and quantity of the services offered (Elanbari, 2015). The Saudi Culture Mission must seek to be more involved with their communities and communicate at a more personal level, such as sending personal emails (Lefdahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern, 2015).

The data from KMSS produced inconsistent results regarding the mental health of Saudi Arabian students living in the U.S. The data showed that half of the participants scored in the range of non-distressed and half scored in the range of non-distressed in their marital

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relationships. The results had a lower level of consistency with Ferguson (2008), who conducted an primary study on mental health characteristics of Saudi Arabian young spouses that reported to have marital problems Ferguson found that Saudi Arabian couples living in the United States face various sociopolitical and acculturation challenges that intensify their personal and relational stressors, making them more vulnerable to marital distress. These stress markers were not related to gender disparities between male and female Saudi Arabia Americans concerning how they handled relationship issues. Baqi et al. (2017) reveal that there are few studies showing the position of women in family structures in Saudi Arabia. This is because there is sparse data that is available to reveal the mental health challenges affecting young spouses that are in complicated relationships and marriages.

Moreover, the KMSS data was based on the analysis of the impact of the U.S politics on the Arab communities, particularly how men and women cope with political discrimination against the Arabian American families. However, these showed a significant deviation from Erickson and Al- Timimi (2004)'s findings. Erickson and Al- Timimi found that some of the cause of stress among Saudi Arabian American families was political discrimination by the U.S government. Politically, the U.S' obvious support of Israel during the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli struggle, in addition to the U.S. Invasion of Iraq, made the gap between Arab/Muslim Americans and non-Arab/Muslim Americans even larger. Furthermore, the events of September 11, 2001, and the associated negative media prejudice towards Arabs and Muslims (Erickson & Al-Timimi, 2004) made members of this group an easy target for discrimination and assaults, thus increasing their stressors and making them more susceptible to intrapersonal and interpersonal challenges. Socially, living in an individualistic society with traditions, customs and beliefs that

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are all rooted in a collectivistic culture is both difficult and challenging for Arab American couples, especially for partners with unequal levels of acculturation. Arab American couples might find themselves facing additional challenges related to their variable acculturation stages, in addition to marital distress every other couple faces. KMSS did not cover the topic of politics and its influence on the relationship between American couples of Saudi Arabian origin.

The second implication of the KMSS and A-RDAS was women revealed as men's subordinates, which was the main cause of the increased mental depression among female Saudi Arabian American female students. However, this data was not reliable because it was outdated, meaning that it lacked information on current marriage patterns and characteristics of families living in the U.S. For instance, Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern (2015) shed a light into the issue by showing the changing role of women in the Arabic culture helps Arab women achieve more financial independence; and as a result, younger Arab women are no longer quiet and accepting of the status quo. As Alahmed, Anjum, and Masuadi (2018) reveal in a study, Saudi Arabia is a very conservative country consisting mainly of the Muslim population. People of Saudi Arabia are a strong believer in supernatural spirits, which include "Jinn" and "the evil eye," which discourage them from appearing in public gatherings. This leads to limited availability of knowledge that reflects the actual status of mental illness affecting young Saudi Arabian couples. As more Arab women are getting higher education and good-paying jobs, they are similarly gaining their financial liberation, and thus are less dependent on their partners for financial support. The study further shows that this shift might be the driving force for Arab women's increasing unwillingness to tolerate cultural gender inequalities, emotional, verbal or physical abuse from their partners (Lefdahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern, 2015) As a result, Arab

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men find themselves having to give up or at least renegotiate some of their male privileges grounded in the Arab patriarchal culture. Researchers suggest that one of the most significant causes of marital problems in the patriarchal Arabic culture is the wife's changing role (Lefdahl-Davis et al., 2015).

In terms of the research questions, the data provided by the A-RDAS were not detailed enough to solve the problem that was under investigation. The Arabic translation of the RDAS items was conceptually and culturally incongruent to the original to the degree that the items of the three subscales were more highly correlated than the original subscales. As Neukrug and Fawcett (2014) reveal, the RDAS (and the DAS) measures marital adjustment, and marital adjustment is an inherent part of early socialization in collectivist cultures that emphasize arranged marriage. Durat, Özdemir, and Çulhacık (2018) provide wide coverage of the cause of mental problems affecting Saudi Arabian married women by addressing issues such as infertility. The study reveals that Saudi Arabian women suffer health problems that include hopelessness, loneliness, anxiety, depression, and social withdrawal due to infertility problems. These are some of the characteristics that were not identified using the A-RDAS and KMSS. Consensus, Satisfaction, and Cohesion seem intuitive for collectivist cultures, and marital adjustment is a belief that starts early in the lives of its children based on cultural mores and faith tradition (Neukrug & Fawcett, 2014) Ironically, although the A-RDAS is also highly correlated with the KMSS, it is the KMSS that illuminates the almost even split between non-distressed and distressed couples.

A-RDAS lacked reliable data to show how consensus, cohesion, and relationship satisfaction contributed to mental health challenges within the study population in reference to

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research question two. The A-RDAS indicated a single factor loading related to consensus, which was inconsistent with Sharpley and Cross, (1982)'s and Kazak, Jarmas & Snizer (1988)'s findings, which showed that marriage in the Arab society is defined by all of the three factors. Furthermore, Toth and Kimmelmeier (2009) affirm that most individual societies, especially Muslims communities, exhibit favorable attitudes towards marriage, which are based on the fundamental norm of the Arab society-cohesion, consensus, and satisfaction. When couples break away from these norms, they are treated as outcasts by the larger group within the Saudi Arabian society, thus contributing to increased mental health problems that include depression. The A-RDAS lacked qualitative data that described attitudes that were a contributing factor to the rising mental problems within the study population. Their findings reveal that the cultural foundations of Arab marriage, i.e., based on the faith values of the Qur'an and a collectivist orientation that values marriage are for the common good rather than for personal interest. These findings suggested that A-RDAS was not a completely reliable research instrument in analyzing the three-factor structure for the DAS. Therefore, the A-RDAD produced mixed results about meta-analyses studies that were conducted by (Sharpley & Cross, 1982; Kazak, Jarmas, & Snizer, 1988). Notably, the sample size may have also played a role in this outcome – an issue that will be addressed in the section on future research.

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### Recommendations

Based on the results of the study on the adjustment issues of Saudi Arabian students and their spouses in the U.S, the recommendations for future research on the subject include using a cross-sectional or panel data. With this regard, the research will identify the stress level across different years, including both before and after the intervention strategies are applied (Crane et al., 2000). It is also important to introduce a variable over the complexity of the course or work the student couples have taken up when they come to the U.S (Elanbari, 2015). In retrospect, being able to differentiate between distressed and non-distressed Saudi Arabian students couples would be of great importance in identifying the extent of personal temperaments on the general state of the marriage (Crane et al., 2000). Moreover, including study participants from a clinical setting or the use of an alternate couple distress scale is important in studying the issue of adjustment issues of Saudi Arabian students and their spouses in the U.S. An analysis on how the adjustment is further heightened by the stress of other family members may also be included in the study (Crane et al., 2000). In conclusion, a follow-up study using Arab couples from other countries would be significant- one study with Arabic couples from English-speaking European countries, and another study with Arab couples in their home countries or even this one of the US (Elanbari, 2015). The study will capture the effect of other variables including the socio-political influence on the adjustment issues of Saudi Arabian students and their spouses in the U.S. Qualitative research and Mix method research might offer a deeper insight into the Saudi Arabian couples such as the unique experiences of female Saudi students' empowerment and how that might affect their relationships, adjustment with new environments, culture, and SACM role to assist them to resolve that



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# ADJUSTMENT ISSUES SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS

## Appendix A

### Letter to SACM Seeking Access to

### Saudi International Students and Their Spouses (English / Arabic)

Letter of Permission to Saudi Arabian Culture Mission (SACM)-English

**To:** Cultural Attaché

Director of Cultural and Social Affairs Department

Re: Dissertation Research

Assalamou Alaykoum wa Rahmatou Allah wa Barakatouh (Peace be upon you and the mercy and blessings of God).

My name is **Saleh Alshihri**, Saudi National ID # 1010793238 and I am a PhD student at St.

Mary's University, San Antonio Texas. I am working on a dissertation study entitled:

#### **Adjustment Issues of Saudi Arabian Couples in the United States of America.**

This research study will help not only researchers and therapists, but also the Cultural and Social Affairs Department, Ministry of Higher Education, Saudi Families who are living in the United States, and the Saudi Arabian families who are planning to study in the United States. Based on lacking of Saudi Arabia couple's studies, this study will give a great knowledge and recommendations biased on the study finding about the Saudi Arabian face marital difficulties, and the quality of this group's marital relationships.

Please accept this letter as an invitation to allowing me to conduct a part of my research through (SACM e-mail) by encouraging all Saudi Arabian couples to participate in this important study.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

## **ADJUSTMENT ISSUES SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS**

Saleh Saeed Alshihri  
Marriage and Family Therapy  
Doctoral Candidate – St. Mary's University -San Antonio, TX  
412-980-7477  
[salshihri@mail.stmarytx.edu](mailto:salshihri@mail.stmarytx.edu)

# ADJUSTMENT ISSUES SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS

## Appendix A (cont)

### Letter of Permission to Saudi Arabian Culture Mission (SACM) – Arabic

الملحق ( أ ) : طلب تطبيق استمارات الدراسة على الطلاب السعوديين وازواجهم.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الموضوع: طلب تطبيق استمارات  
لرسالة دكتوراه

سعادة / الملحق الثقافي بالولايات المتحدة الامريكية  
سعادة / مدير إدارة الشؤون الثقافية والاجتماعية بالملحقة الثقافية

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

أنا المبتعث / صالح بن سعيد الشهري الهوية الوطنية رقم (١٠١٠٧٩٣٢٣٨)، لمرحلة الدكتوراه بجامعة سانت ميري سانتونيو - تكساس. وأقوم بعمل دراسة بعنوان " صعوبات التوافق لدى الأزواج السعوديين في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية "

وتعد هذه الدراسة ذات أهمية ليست فقط على مستوى الباحثين او المعالجين، ولكن قد تمتد الاستفادة من نتائجه للمختصين في الشؤون الاجتماعية والنفسية في الملحقيات الثقافية، في وزارة التعليم العالي والجامعات، وايضاً على مستوى الاسر السعودية سواء من يتواجدون في الولايات المتحدة أو من لهم فرصة الدراسة في الولايات المتحدة في السنوات القادمة. وذلك لقلّة الدراسات في هذا مجال الأزواج السعوديين والصعوبات التي قد يواجهونها وكذلك في جودة ورضا الأزواج عن تلك العلاقة الزوجية التي يعيشونها.

عليه أمل التكرم بقبول خطابي هذا والتوجيه لمن يلزم كجزء من إتمام رسالة الدكتوراه بدعوه الأزواج السعوديين وتشجيعهم في المشاركة والاجابة على الاستبيانات اللازمة وذلك من خلال البريد الالكتروني للملحقة الثقافية وارساله للطلاب والطالبات المبتعثين في أمريكا.

هذا وتقبلوا تحياتي،،،، وللتواصل لأي استفسار او استيضاح تجدون ارقان التواصل ادناه،،،،،

خالص تحياتي،،،،،

صالح بن سعيد الشهري  
قسم العلاج الزوجي والاسري  
جامعة سانت ميري - سان انتونيو - تكساس  
٤١٢٩٨٠٧٤٧٧

salshihri@mail.stmarytx.edu

# ADJUSTMENT ISSUES SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS

## Appendix B

### Informed Consent/Ethics Form (English/ Arabic)

Department of Counseling and Human Services  
School of Humanities and Social Science  
One Camino Santa Maria  
San Antonio, TX 78228  
210-436-3011; ctubbs@mail.stmarytx.edu

#### Consent Form

**Title: Adjustment Issues of Saudi Arabian Couples in the United States of America.**

This study is being conducted by Saleh S. Alshihri, doctoral candidate in the Department of Marriage and Family Therapy at St. Mary's University, San Antonio Texas. Dr. Carolyn Tubbs is the dissertation supervisor for this study.

I am being asked to participate in a study measuring marriage adjustment in Saudi Arabian students and their spouses. My participation in this study is entirely voluntary and I may refuse to participate, or may decide to cease participation once began. Should I withdraw from the study, my decision will involve no penalty? I am being asked to read the consent form carefully and to print a copy to keep, if I decide to participate in this study.

I was informed that the purpose of this research is to learn more about Saudi Arabian couples in the United States, to know about the difficulties that facing Saudi Arabian marital, and the quality of this group's marital relationships. This research study will help not only researchers and therapists, but also the Cultural and Social Affairs Department, Ministry of Higher Education, Saudi Families who are living in the United States, and the Saudi Arabian families who are planning to study in the United States.



## **ADJUSTMENT ISSUES SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS**

### **Procedures**

I was informed about the following research procedures:

Once I decide to be a part of the study, I will be asked to follow a link, which will take me to website page with study information. If I agree to participate, I will complete the following steps:

- 1- I will be asked to complete a Demographic Questionnaire.
- 2- I will be asked to answer about 14 questions on the Arabic version of Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale.
- 3- I will have asked to answer about 3 questions on the Arabic language of the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale.

This study should take between 15- 20 minutes in Arabic Language to complete all the forms (Demographic Questionnaire, A-RDAS, and the Arabic version of KMSS), but I can take as much time as I want.

### **Confidentiality and Records Management**

I have read that all collected data and each participant's identity will be anonymous, that is, the researcher does not know who I am since the researcher will not have my name or any identifying information. Information from this study will used for scientific research presentation at conferences and for journal publication. Data from the study will be kept private and only accessible to the research team for five years and all data will be securely destroyed according to federal regulations.

### **Risks and Benefit of the Study**

The study has minimal risks. The survey is anonymous, so there is no risk of disclosure. The survey addresses common issues of adjustment of Saudi Arabian couples.

## **ADJUSTMENT ISSUES SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS**

The study might be helpful in educating the Saudi Arabian couples of what will they face in a new country and how they can avoid these issues and adjust with a new environment such as the United States. This study can be a guideline for Saudis to be ready for any cross-cultural issues. It may also present as a new study for marriage and family therapy.

### **Contact and Questions**

If you have any inquires or concerns regarding to this study, you are encouraged to contact Mr. Saleh Alshihri at (412)980- 7477 or e-mail: (salshihri@mail.stmarytx.edu.), or Dr. Carolyn Y. Tubbs, at 210-438-6418 or e-mail: ([ctubbs@stmarytx.edu](mailto:ctubbs@stmarytx.edu)).

Checking the “I Agree” box below acknowledge my voluntary participation in this research project. Such participation does not release the investigator or the institution from their professional and ethical responsibilities to me.

ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING YOUR RIGHT AS A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT MAY BE ADDRESSED TO THE ST. MARY’S UNIVERSITY REVIEW BOARD- HUMAN SUBJECTS AT 210-436-3736 OR ([IRBCommitteeChair@stmarytx.edu](mailto:IRBCommitteeChair@stmarytx.edu)). ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS THAT ARE CARRIED OUT BY INVESTGATORS AT THE UNIVERSITY ARE GOVERNED BY THE REQIRMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY AND IN THIS STUDY.

\*If you would like to keep a copy of this letter for your records, you can save a copy on your computer as a PDF, or you can print a copy by pressing (ctrl+P) for a PC, or by pressing (command+P) for Mac.

## ADJUSTMENT ISSUES SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS

I have read and understood the above letter and informed consent form, and had my questions or concerns, if any, answered to my fulfillment. By desire of my own free will, I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I Agree

I Do Not Agree

If a participant select “I Do Not Agree”, the Qualtrics skip logic will automatically direct the person to a thank you screen for exiting the study.

I am 18 years or older; I am married; and I have an eighth grade or above reading level of the Arabic language.

YES

NO

If a participant select “NO”, the Qualtrics skip logic will automatically direct the person to a thank you screen for exiting the study.

Appendix B (cont.)

Informed Consent/Ethics Form (English/ Arabic)

الملحق ( ب): استمارة موافقة المشاركة في الدراسة العلمية

Department of Counseling and Human Services  
School of Humanities and Social Science  
One Camino Santa Maria  
San Antonio, TX 78228  
210-436-3011; ctubbs@mail.stmarytx.edu.

استمارة موافقة للمشاركة في دراسة علمية

عنوان الدراسة : مشكلات التوافق لدى الأزواج السعوديين في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية

**Title: Adjustment Issues of Saudi Arabian Couples in the United States of America.**

هذه الدراسة ستجرى من قبل المرشح للحصول على شهادة الدكتوراه /صالح بن سعيد الشهري في تخصص العلاج الزوجي والأسري في جامعة سانت ميرري في مدينة سان انتونيو- تكساس. بإشراف الدكتورة /كارولين توييز، مساعد عميد كلية العلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية والأستاذ المشارك والمشرف على قسم العلاج الأسري والزوجي بجامعة سانت ميرري.

ادعوك للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة والموضح عنوانها أعلاه. علماً بأن مشاركتي في هذه الدراسة بكامل اختياري، وانني لي كامل الحرية برفض المشاركة، او التوقف عن الاستمرار في المشاركة بالرغم من البدء فيها. وقد يكون لي الحق في الانسحاب من هذه الدراسة ، وأن هذا القرار لن يؤدي لأي عقوبة. كما أنه طلب مني قراءة وثيقة المشاركة بعناية وطباعة نسخة منها للاحتفاظ بها، في حالة قررت المشاركة في هذه الدراسة.

لقد أبلغت بأن هذه الدراسة والتي هي بعنوان مشكلات التوافق لدى الأزواج السعوديين في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية. وسوف نتعلم الكثير عن الأزواج السعوديين الذين يعيشون في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية، وذلك من خلال صعوبات الحياة الزوجية التي توجه الأزواج السعوديين، وكذلك جودة العلاقات الزوجية لهذه المجموعة. كما أن الفائدة لهذه الدراسة لا يقتصر على الباحثين او المعالجين، ولكن قد يساعد الملحقية الثقافية السعودية بالولايات المتحدة الأمريكية وادار الشؤون الثقافية والاجتماعية في التعرف على حالة الأزواج السعوديين واستقرارهم النفسي والاجتماعي، وكذلك وزارة التعليم العالي السعودية

## ADJUSTMENT ISSUES SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS

، والاسر السعودية التي تعيش في الوقت الحالي في الولايات المتحدة الامريكية ، او تلك الاسر السعودية التي تخطط للدراسة في الولايات المتحدة الامريكية.

### الإجراءات

لقد تم ابلاغي بإجراءات البحث التالية:

حينما قررت أن أكون جزء من هذه الدراسة، سوف يتم سؤالي بمتابعة الرابط التالي، والذي سينتقل بي الي صفحة الكترونية عن معلومات الدراسة. اذا وافقت على المشاركة، سوف اكمل جميع الخطوات التالية:

1 - سوف يطلب مني اكمال البيانات الأساسية عن المشارك.

2 - سوف يطلب مني الإجابة على ١٤ سؤالاً على مقياس مراجعة التوافق الزوجي بالنسخة العربية.

3 - سوف يطلب مني الإجابة على ٣ اسأله على مقياس كنساس الرضى الزوجي بالنسخة العربية.

المشاركة في هذه الدراسة قد تستغرق من ١٥ – ٢٠ دقيقة لإكمال جميع الاستبانات، علماً بأنها جميعاً باللغة العربية، ولكن في حالة حاجتي لوقت اكثر فيمكنني استغرق اكثر وقت ممكن للإجابة عن كل ما سبق.

### السرية و إدارة السجلات

لقد قرأت جميع هويات المشاركين في الدراسة وجمع كل بياناتهم وستكون غير معلنه. بمعنى أن الباحث لا يعرف من أنا عندما لا يوجد لدى الباحث معلومات عن أسمى أو معلومات هويتي الشخصية. جميع المعلومات عن هذا الدراسة سيتم استخدامها لأهداف علمية فقط، وحينما يتم الانتهاء جمع البيانات، النتائج وتحليل البيانات لهذه الدراسة، سوف يتم حفظها في مكان خاص و سيكون فقط مرخص لاستخدامها من قبل فريق البحث لمدة خمس سنوات ثم بعد ذلك سيتم اتلافها بطريقة آمنة وفقاً للقوانين الفدرالية.

### المخاطر والفوائد من هذه الدراسة

رغم قلة الصعوبات. معلومات المشاركين الشخصية غير معروفة، لذا لن يكون هنا خطر في كشف المعلومات. مقاييس الدراسة ستتعامل مع المشكلات الشائعة التي تؤثر في توافق الأزواج السعوديين في الولايات المتحدة الامريكية.

الدراسة الحالية ستسهم ان شاء الله في تعريف الأزواج السعوديين ببعض المشكلات التي من المحتمل ان يواجهونها اثناء تواجدهم في دولة جديده وكذلك ما هي الطرق المناسبة في تجنب وجاوز مثل تلك الصعوبات وكيف يتوافقون مع البيئة الجديدة

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مثل الولايات المتحدة مثلاً. ايضاً قد تقدم هذه الدراسة إرشادات هامة للسعوديين لمواجهة صعوبات اختلاف الثقافات. كما ستكون هذه الدراسة اضافة في مجال العلاج الاسري والزواجي على وجه الخصوص وفي المجال العلوم الإنسانية بشكل عام.

### الاتصال و الاستفسار

للتواصل او الاستفسار بشأن هذه الدراسة، أمل التواصل مباشرة مع الباحث / صالح الشهري هاتف ( ٤١٢٩٨٠٧٤٧٧ ) أو

salshihri@mail.stmarytx.edu

أو التواصل مع المشرف على الدراسة الدكتورة / كارولين توييز هاتف ٢١٠٤٣٨٦٤١٨ أو البريد الالكتروني (

ctubbs@stmarytx.edu.)

النقر على مربع " أنا موافق" في الأسفل إقرار بمشاركتي حسب رغبتي الشخصية في هذه الدراسة. وبمجرد مشاركتي لا يعفي الباحث أو المؤسسة التعليمية من الالتزام بمسؤولياتها المهنية والأخلاقية نحوي.

يمكنك توجيه أي تساؤلات بخصوص حقوقك كمشارك في البحث يمكنك التواصل مع لجنة مراجعة المشاريع والأبحاث بجامعة سانت ميرز - سان انتونيو - تكساس على :

210-436-3736 OR (IRBCommitteeChair@stmarytx.edu).

جميع المشروعات البحثية التي يقوم بها الباحثون في الجامعة تخضع لشروط الجامعة والحكومة الفدرالية لقد قرأت المعلومات أعلاه، ولقد تم الرد على اسئلتني . و عليه أوافق طوعاً على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة.

\* إذا كنت ترغب في الاحتفاظ بنسخة من هذه الرسالة في سجلات، يمكنك حفظ نسخة على جهاز الكمبيوتر الخاص بك على شكل بي دي اف أو يمكنك طباعة نسخة عن طريق الضغط على ( كومنند أو كنترول + ح ) .

لقد قرأت وفهمت المذكور أعلاه وبيان الموافقة على المشاركة، وقد تمت الإجابة على جميع تساؤلاتي واستفساراتي، وبرغبتي و ارادتي، أنا أوافق طوعاً على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة.

أنا أوافق

أنا لا موافق

## ADJUSTMENT ISSUES SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS

إذا المشارك اختار " أنا لا أوافق"، البرنامج كوالتريكس سوف ينتقل بك بشكل اتوماتيكي إلى شاشة الخروج من الدراسة  
وشكراً لتعاونك.

نعم أنا عمري ١٨ سنة أو أكبر، أنا متزوج، أنا لذي القدرة على القراءة عند مستوي الصف الثاني المتوسط أو أعلى باللغة  
العربية.

نعم

لا

إذا المشارك اختار " لا"، البرنامج كوالتريكس سوف ينتقل بك بشكل اتوماتيكي إلى شاشة الخروج من الدراسة وشكراً  
لتعاونك.

# ADJUSTMENT ISSUES SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS

## Appendix C Demographic Survey

Please answer all of the following questions for this Demographic Data

Age of the participant

- 18- 23 years
- 24-28 years
- 29-33 years
- 34-38 years
- Over 39 years

Participant's gender

- Male
- Female

Which State/U.S. do you live in? \_\_\_\_

For how long have you lived in the U.S.?

- 0-1 year
- 2-10 years
- 11-20 years
- More than 20 years

How long have you been married?

- 0 -1 year
- 2- 10 years
- 11 -20 years
- More than 20 years



**ADJUSTMENT ISSUES SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS**

**Appendix C (cont)**

Do you have children? If Yes How many?

- Yes (How Many?)
- No

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- High School
- Some college
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree or professional degree

What is your current household income in U.S. dollars ( monthly)?

- Less than \$2000
- \$2001- \$4000
- \$4001- \$ 6000
- Over than \$6001

How would you describe yourself religiously?

- Not at all likely                      Religious
- 0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
- 

How do you rate the social and psychological services offered by Saudi Culture Mission?

- Not at all likely                      Extremely satisfied
- 0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
- 

Are the social and psychological services provided by Saudi Culture Mission are sufficient?

- Yes
- No

## ADJUSTMENT ISSUES SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS

### Appendix C (cont)

What type of services do you seek from the Saudi Culture Mission when you experience relationship difficulties?

- Financial resources
- Psychological services (individual therapy, family therapy)
- Social services (example: training, referrals for job, information on a lawyer)
- Spiritual resources

Are you satisfied with the couple and family therapy services currently offered by the Saudi Culture Mission?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure (please explain)

# ADJUSTMENT ISSUES SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS

## Appendix D

### Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS) (English /Arabic)

How satisfied are you with your marriage?

- Extremely dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Mixed
- Somewhat satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Extremely satisfied

How satisfied are you with your husband (or wife)?

- Extremely dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Mixed
- Somewhat satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Extremely satisfied

How satisfied are you with your relationship with your husband (or wife)?

- Extremely dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Mixed
- Somewhat satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Extremely satisfied

Appendix D (cont.)

Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS) (English /Arabic)

ملحق (ج): مقياس كنساس للرضي الزواجي

ما مدى رضاك عن زواجك؟

- غير راضي لأبعد حد
- غير راضي جداً
- غير راضي لحد ما
- شعور مختلط
- راضي لحد ما
- راضي جداً
- راضي لأبعد حد

ما مدى رضاك مع زوجك أو زوجتك كزوج أو كزوجه؟

- غير راضي لأبعد حد ممكن
- غير راضي جدا
- خير راضي لحد ما
- مختلط المشاعر
- راضي لحد ما
- واضي جدا
- راضي لأبعد حد ممكن

ما مدى رضاك من علاقتك مع زوجك أو زوجتك؟

- غير راضي لأبعد حد ممكن
- غير راضي جدا
- راضي الى حد ما
- مختلط
- راضي الى حد ما
- راضي جدا
- راضي لأبعد حد ممكن

# ADJUSTMENT ISSUES SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS

## Appendix E

### Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS)

Most persons have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list.

#### *R-DAS Consensus*

##### 1. Religious matters

Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occasionally Agree	Frequently Agree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

##### 2. Demonstration of affection

Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occasionally Agree	Frequently Agree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

##### 3. Making major decisions

Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occasionally Agree	Frequently Agree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

##### 4. Sex relations

Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occasionally Agree	Frequently Agree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## ADJUSTMENT ISSUES SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS

### Appendix E (cont)

5. Conventionalty (correct or Proper behavior).

Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occasionally Agree	Frequently Agree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. Career decisions.

Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occasionally Agree	Frequently Agree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### *R-DAS Satisfaction*

7. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship

- All the time
- Most of the time
- More often than not
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

## ADJUSTMENT ISSUES SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS

### Appendix E (cont)

8. How often do you and your partner quarrel?

- All the time
- Most of the time
- More often than not
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

9. Do you ever regret that you married (or lived together)?

- All the time
- Most of the time
- More often than not
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

10. How often do you and your mate “get on each other’s nerves”?

- All the time
- Most of the time
- More often than not
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

## ADJUSTMENT ISSUES SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS

### Appendix E (cont)

#### *R-DAS Cohesion*

11. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?

- Every day
- Almost Every Day
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

12. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas

- Never
- Less than once a month
- Once or twice a month
- Once or twice a week
- Once a day
- More often

*How often would you say the following events occur between you and your mate?*

13. Work together on a project

- Never
- Less than once a month
- Once or twice a month
- Once or twice a week
- Once a day



## ADJUSTMENT ISSUES SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS

More often

## ADJUSTMENT ISSUES SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS

### Appendix E (cont)

14. Calmly discuss something

- Never
- Less than once a month
- Once or twice a month
- Once or twice a week
- Once a day
- More often

Appendix E (cont)

ملحق (د): مقياس التوافق الثنائي المترجم للغة العربية (A- RDAS)  
معظم الأشخاص لديهم اختلافات في علاقاتهم. الرجاء الإشارة أدناه الى المدى التقريبي من الإتفاق أو  
الاختلاف بينك وبين شريك حياتك في كل بند في القائمة التالية:

المسائل الدينية:

- تتفق دائماً
- غالباً تتفق
- نختلف أحياناً
- نختلف في كثير من الأحيان
- غالباً ما نختلف دائماً
- دائماً نختلف

اتخاذ القرارات المصيرية

- تتفق دائماً
- غالباً تتفق
- نختلف أحياناً
- نختلف في كثير من الأحيان
- غالباً ما نختلف دائماً
- دائماً نختلف

العلاقات الجنسية

- تتفق دائماً
- غالباً تتفق
- نختلف أحياناً
- نختلف في كثير من الأحيان
- غالباً ما نختلف دائماً
- دائماً نختلف

التقاليد ( السلوك الصحيح والمناسب)

- تتفق دائماً
- غالباً تتفق
- نختلف أحياناً
- نختلف في كثير من الأحيان
- غالباً ما نختلف دائماً
- دائماً نختلف
- القرارات المهنية
- تتفق دائماً

## ADJUSTMENT ISSUES SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS

- غالباً نتفق
- نختلف أحياناً
- نختلف في كثير من الأحيان
- غالباً ما نختلف دائماً
- دائماً نختلف

كم غالباً تناقش أو هل أخذت بعين الاعتبار الطلاق، الانفصال أو إنهاء علاقتك؟

- كل الوقت
- معظم الوقت
- في كثير من الأحيان
- أحياناً
- نادراً
- أبداً

كم غالباً أنت وشريك حياتك تتشاجران

- كل الوقت
- معظم الوقت
- في كثير من الأحيان
- أحياناً
- نادراً
- أبداً

هل تندم ابداً على زواجك (أو على العيش معاً؟)

- كل الوقت
- معظم الوقت
- في كثير من الأحيان
- أحياناً
- نادراً
- أبداً

○ كم غالباً أنت وشريك حياتك تثيران اعصاب بعضهم البعض؟

- كل الوقت
- معظم الوقت
- في كثير من الأحيان
- أحياناً
- نادراً
- أبداً

○ هل أنت وشريك حياتك تتشاركان في الاهتمامات الخارجية سويًا؟  
○ كل يوم

## ADJUSTMENT ISSUES SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS

- معظم الايام
- احيانا
- نادرا
- ابدا

كم في الغالب تستطيع القول بأن الاحداث التالية تقع بينك وبين شريك حياتك؟

- تتبادلان الافكار المحفزة؟
- ابداً
- أقل من مرة في الشهر
- مرة أو مرتين في الشهر
- مرة أو مرتين في الاسبوع
- مرة في اليوم
- أكثر المرات

تعملان سوياً في مشروع

- ابداً
- أقل من مرة في الشهر
- مرة أو مرتين في الشهر
- مرة أو مرتين في الاسبوع
- مرة في اليوم
- أكثر المرات

بهدهوء تناقشان شيئاً ما

- ابداً
- أقل من مرة في الشهر
- مرة أو مرتين في الشهر
- مرة أو مرتين في الاسبوع
- مرة في اليوم
- أكثر المرات

# ADJUSTMENT ISSUES SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS

## Appendix F

### Link to the Twitter Page Advertising the Study

The image shows a screenshot of a Twitter profile page. The profile name is "ADJUSTMENT ISSUES OF SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS AND THEIR SPOUSES IN THE U.S.: A REGRESSION ANALYSIS" with the handle @AdjustmentU. The bio repeats the study title. The location is San Antonio, TX, and it was joined in July 2018. The profile statistics show 4 tweets, 1 follower, 0 lists, and 0 moments. The tweets section shows four tweets from July 22, 2018, all advertising the study. The first tweet is in English, and the following three are in Arabic.

**ADJUSTMENT ISSUES OF SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS AND THEIR SPOUSES IN THE U.S.: A REGRESSION ANALYSIS**  
@AdjustmentU  
ADJUSTMENT ISSUES OF SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS AND THEIR SPOUSES IN THE U.S.: A REGRESSION ANALYSIS  
San Antonio, TX  
Joined July 2018

**Tweets** Tweets & replies

**ADJUSTMENT ISSUES OF SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS AND T...** · 2m  
Title: ADJUSTMENT ISSUES OF SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS AND THEIR SPOUSES IN THE U.S.: A REGRESSION ANALYSIS  
This study is being conducted by Saleh S. Alshihri, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Marriage & Family Therapy at St. Mary's University, San Antonio, Texas.

**ADJUSTMENT ISSUES OF SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS...** · 22 Jul 2018  
لنا كان صورك 18 سنة أو أكثر، متزوج، ولديك القدرة على القراءة عند مستوى الصف الثاني المتوسط أو أعلى باللغة العربية. ارجو مشاركتك بنجدة الاستمارة في [الرابط سوف يكون مرفقاً] الهدف في هذه الدراسة مشاركة عدد 70 أزواج أو 170 فرد في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية. شكراً لتعاونك

**ADJUSTMENT ISSUES OF SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS...** · 22 Jul 2018  
 عنوان الدراسة: مشكلات التوافق لدى الأزواج السعوديين في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية  
هذه الدراسة ستجرى من قبل المرشح للحصول على شهادة الدكتوراه / صالحي بن سعيد الشهري في تخصص العلاج الزوجي والأمري في جامعة سانت ميري في مدينة سان أنتونيو - تكساس.

**ADJUSTMENT ISSUES OF SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS...** · 22 Jul 2018  
I need around 70 couples OR 170 individual from all over the United States.  
Thanks for your participation.

**ADJUSTMENT ISSUES OF SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS...** · 22 Jul 2018  
If you are 18 years or older, married, and you have an eight grade or above reading level of the Arabic language. Please take your to participate in this study by filling out this online survey at lLink will be included here.

## Appendix G

### Link to the Facebook Page Advertising the Study

The image shows a screenshot of a Facebook profile for Abdul Saleh. The profile picture is a circular image of a man in a white thobe and ghutra. The cover photo is a close-up of hands, one with a ring and henna. The profile name is Abdul Saleh, and the bio is: "Title: ADJUSTMENT ISSUES OF SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS AND THEIR SPOUSES IN THE U.S.:A REGRESSION ANALYSIS". The profile is located at St. Mary's University. The main content area shows a post from July 23, 2018, titled "Adjustment Issues of Saudi Arabian Couples in the United States of". The post text is in Arabic and discusses the study's focus on adjustment issues of Saudi Arabian couples in the U.S. The post includes a "Like" button and a "Comment" button. The profile also has a "Did You Know" section with a question about the study.

Update Cover Photo

Abdul Saleh

Abdul Saleh

Update Info

Activity Log

Timeline

About

Friends

Photos

Archive

More

Intro

Title: ADJUSTMENT ISSUES OF SAUDI ARABIAN STUDENTS AND THEIR SPOUSES IN THE U.S.:A REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Studied at St. Mary's University

Showcase what's important to you by adding photos, pages, groups and more to your featured section on your public profile.

Add to Featured

+ Add Instagram, Websites, Other Links

Photos

Add Photo

Friends

Find Friends

Did You Know

Answer Question

English (US) · العربية · Español · Português (Brasil) · Français (France)

Privacy · Terms · Advertising · Ad Choices · Cookies · More

Facebook © 2019

Create Post

Photo/Video

Live Video

Life Event

What's on your mind?

Photo/Video

Tag Friends

Feeling/Activ...

Posts

Manage Posts

List View

Grid View

Abdul Saleh updated his bio.

July 23, 2018

Adjustment Issues of Saudi Arabian Couples in the United States of

Like

Comment

Write a comment...

Press Enter to post.

Abdul Saleh

July 23, 2018

عنوان الدراسة: مشكلات التوافق لدى الأزواج السعوديين في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية هذه الدراسة ستجرى من قبل العرش للحصول على شهادة الدكتوراه / صالح بن سعيد الشهري في تخصص العلاج الزوجي والأسري في جامعة سانت ميري في مدينة سان أنتونيو- تكساس. لذا كان عمرك ١٨ سنة أو أكثر، متزوج، ولديك القدرة على القراءة عند مستوى الصف الثاني المتوسط أو أعلى باللغة العربية . ارجو مشاركتك بتعبئة الاستمارة في [ الرابط سوف يكون مرفق]. والهدف في هذه الدراسة مشاركة عدد ٧٠ زوج أو ١٧٠ افراد في جميع انحاء الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية. اقدر لك تعاونك ومشاركته. للتواصل مع الباحث من خلال هذه الصفحة او البريد الالكتروني ادناه: salshihri@mail.stmarytx.edu

Like

Comment

Write a comment...

Press Enter to post.