

The Supporting Role of Online Social Networks for Divorced Saudi Women

By

Ramzia Hisham Saleh

Directed by

Professor Dominique J. Ferrand

Thesis in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of
Master of Science (MSc) in
Electronic Business Technologies



uOttawa

L'Université canadienne
Canada's university

© Ramzia Hisham Saleh, Ottawa, Canada, 2014

Table of Contents

<i>Table of Contents</i> -----	<i>ii</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i> -----	<i>vi</i>
<i>II. Abstract</i> -----	<i>viii</i>
<i>III. List of Figures</i> -----	<i>ix</i>
<i>IV. List of Tables</i> -----	<i>x</i>
Chapter 1: Orientation to the Study _____	1
1.1 Background of the Problem _____	3
1.2 Importance of the Problem _____	3
1.3 Problem Statement and Research Question _____	4
1.4 Definition of Concepts _____	4
1.5 Purpose Statement _____	5
1.6 Research Methodology _____	6
1.6.1 Overview of Methodological Phases _____	6
1.6.2 Populations and Sampling _____	7
1.6.3 Data Analysis _____	7
1.7 Research Contribution _____	7
1.8 Structure of the Thesis _____	8
Chapter 2: Online Social Networks and Saudi Society _____	10
2.1 From Virtual Communities to Social Networks _____	10
2.1.1 Definition of Virtual Communities _____	11
2.1.2 Definition of Social Network Sites _____	12
2.2 Motivations for Using Virtual Communities and Social Networks _____	12
2.3 The Impact of Social Networks Sites on Individuals and Society _____	14
2.4 Online Social Networks in a Saudi Context _____	16
2.4.1 Cultural Characteristics of Saudi Arabia _____	16
2.4.2 Evolution of Online Social Networks in Saudi Arabia _____	18
2.4.3 The Influence of Social Network Sites on Saudi Culture _____	19
Chapter 3: Divorce in a Saudi Context _____	22
3.1 Definition of Divorce _____	22
3.2 Divorce Rates _____	22
3.3 The Consequences of Divorce for Women _____	23

3.4	Family Law in Saudi Arabia	24
3.4.1	Talaq	25
3.4.1.1	Revocable Talaq (temporary)	25
3.4.1.2	Irrevocable Talaq (permanent)	26
3.4.2	Khula	26
3.4.3	Faskh	27
3.4.4	Alimony	28
3.4.5	Custody of Children after Divorce	29
3.5	Saudi Divorce Rates	30
3.6	Divorce Factors in Saudi	31
3.7	Privileges for Divorced Women in Saudi	32
3.8	The Challenges of Divorce for Saudi Women	33
 Chapter 4: Research Methodology		34
4.1	Research Goals, Questions, and Hypothesis	34
4.2	Population and Sampling (Phase-1 and Phase-2)	35
4.3	Data Collection Phase-1	36
4.4	Thematic Analysis (Phase-1 and Phase-2)	37
4.5	Research Themes	38
4.6	Data Collection Phase-2	39
4.6.1	Questionnaire	39
4.6.2	Pre-testing of Questionnaire	40
4.6.3	Ethical Approval	41
 Chapter 5: Issues Faced by Divorced Saudi Women		42
5.1	Social Issue	43
5.1.1	Social Stigma	44
5.1.2	Family Restrictions	47
5.1.3	Social Outcast: Relationships with Friends	48
5.1.4	Relationship with Former Husband	50
5.2	Economic Issue	53
5.2.1	Income	54
5.2.2	Housing	55
5.2.3	Employment	55
5.2.4	Alimony and Child Support	56
5.3	Psychological Issue	58
5.3.1	Regret and Remorse	59
5.3.2	Emotional Vacuum	60
5.3.3	Lack of Confidence	60

5.3.4	Depression	60
5.4	Legal Issue	63
5.4.1	Male Guardianship	64
5.4.2	Communication with Governmental Departments	65
5.4.3	Access to Official Documents	65
5.4.4	Custody	66
5.4.5	Women’s Legal Rights	68
 Chapter 6: Assessment of the Supporting Role of Online Social Networks		 70
6.1	Description of the Sample (Phase-2)	70
6.1.1	Geographical Location	70
6.1.2	The Period of Time Elapsed after Divorce	71
6.1.3	Occupation	72
6.1.4	Education Level	73
6.1.5	Most Accessed Social Networks	74
6.1.6	Experience with Social Networks	75
6.1.7	Frequency of Access to Social Network	76
6.1.8	Time Spent on Social Network	77
6.2	Supporting Role of Social Networks	79
6.2.1	Supporting Role of Social Networks in Social Issue	79
6.2.1.1	Level of Support in Themes of Social Issue	79
6.2.1.2	Qualitative Analysis of the Supporting Role in Social Issue	81
6.2.2	Supporting Role of Social Networks in Economic Issue	83
6.2.2.1	Level of Support in Themes of Economic Issue	84
6.2.2.2	Qualitative Analysis of the Supporting Role in Economic Issue	86
6.2.3	Supporting Role of Social Networks in Psychological Issue	87
6.2.3.1	Level of Support in Themes of Psychological Issue	87
6.2.3.2	Qualitative Analysis of the Supporting Role in Psychological Issue	89
6.2.4	Supporting Role of Social Networks in Legal Issue	91
6.2.4.1	Level of Support of Themes in Legal Issue	91
6.2.4.2	Qualitative Analysis of the Supporting Role in Legal Issue	94
 Chapter 7: Conclusion		 97
7.1	Review of Major Contributions	97
7.2	Key Findings and Discussions	98
7.3	Recommendations	102
7.4	Limitation of the Thesis	103
7.5	Future Research	104
 References		 106
 Appendix		 118

Appendix (1) Ethical Approval Form (University of Ottawa)	118
Appendix (2) Ethical Approval Form (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia)	119
Appendix (3): Online English Questionnaire	120
Appendix (4): Online Arabic Questionnaire	130

Acknowledgments

All praise is due to **ALLAH**, the Great Almighty, the most merciful, the most gracious, who bestowed upon me blessing and gave me the strength and perseverance to undertake and complete this research. Undertaking this research would also not have been possible without the support and cooperation of several individuals for whom the researcher would like to express her thanks and appreciation.

I must first express my gratitude towards my thesis supervisor, **Professor Dominique Ferrand**. His expertise, patience, criticism and great attention to details helped me a great deal throughout the past three years. He taught me many skills that allowed me to complete my thesis successfully and pushed me to surpass myself. Also, many thanks to **Monique Walker** for ensuring every administrative detail went smoothly from beginning to end.

Acknowledgement and appreciation are also extended to the government of Saudi Arabia for allowing me pursuing my studies in Canada. I'm thankful to the **Saudi Arabian Cultural Bureau** in Canada and my Sponsoring Agency in Saudi Arabia for providing me a funded scholarship. My research would not have been possible without their financial support.

I am grateful to my parents **Azizah Hafez** and **Hisham Saleh** for their infinite support and love. This whole thing would not be what it is today without their help. Deep thanks to my mother, who encouraged me and prayed for me throughout the time of my research. I appreciate you always being there for me and for being such a good listener; I can't thank you enough for devoting your time to take a good care of my son 'Abdullah' so I can focus on my thesis. To my father, thank you for your sound advice and continuous coaching this helped a great deal with my studies. I appreciate all the help you provided, taking care of life's every day demands when I didn't have the time to do

so myself. Thank you for your continued support during the many periods of high stress in the past four and a half years.

I would like to express my deepest thanks to my son, and best friend, **Abdullah**. Without his love, encouragement, and extreme patience this thesis could not have been possible.

I am deeply thankful to my brothers and sisters **Abdullah, Alauddin, Dalia, and Dalal** for their unconditional support, both financially and emotionally throughout my degree.

Finally, special thanks to my informants. Their names cannot be disclosed, but I want to acknowledge and appreciate their help and transparency during my research. The information they provided helped me complete this thesis.

II. Abstract

This thesis aims to assess the supporting role social networks provide to divorced Saudi women who face after divorce challenges. After reviewing the impact that online social networks have on Saudi society and the legal context of divorce in Saudi Arabia, this study explores key issues faced by divorced Saudi women using a qualitative approach. Upon reviewing the limited amounts of literature and following two methodological phases, the key findings are: (1) identifications of primary challenges faced by divorced Saudi women namely; social, economic, psychological, and legal issues; (2) extraction of themes based on each identified issue, leading to the identification of four qualitative models; and (3) assessment of the supporting role social networks have in the identified themes of each issue.

III. List of Figures

<i>Figure 1 Example of the close-ended question about social issue</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>Figure 2 Geographical Area of Respondents Phase-1</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>Figure 3 Number of 'Chunks' per Theme in Social Issue</i>	<i>43</i>
<i>Figure 4 Qualitative Model of Social Issue for Divorced Saudi Women</i>	<i>52</i>
<i>Figure 5 Number of 'Chunks' per Theme in Economic Issue</i>	<i>53</i>
<i>Figure 6 Qualitative Model of Economic Issue for Divorced Saudi Women</i>	<i>57</i>
<i>Figure 7 Number of 'Chunks' per Theme in Psychological Issue</i>	<i>58</i>
<i>Figure 8 Qualitative Model of Psychological Issue for Divorced Saudi Women</i>	<i>62</i>
<i>Figure 9 Number of 'Chunks' per Theme in Legal Issue</i>	<i>63</i>
<i>Figure 10 Qualitative Model of Legal Issue for Divorced Saudi Women</i>	<i>69</i>
<i>Figure 11 Geographical Locations of Respondents Phase-2</i>	<i>71</i>
<i>Figure 12 Periods Elapsed After Divorce</i>	<i>72</i>
<i>Figure 13 Role of Occupation of Respondents</i>	<i>73</i>
<i>Figure 14 Level of Education of Respondents</i>	<i>74</i>
<i>Figure 15 Most Accessed Social Network Sites by Respondents</i>	<i>75</i>
<i>Figure 16 Years of Experience with Social Networks</i>	<i>76</i>
<i>Figure 17 Frequency of Access to Social Networks</i>	<i>77</i>
<i>Figure 18 Time Spent on Social Networks per Access</i>	<i>78</i>
<i>Figure 19 Level of Support in Themes of Social Issue</i>	<i>80</i>
<i>Figure 20 Average of Support per Theme in Social Issue</i>	<i>81</i>
<i>Figure 21 Level of Support in Themes of Economic Issue</i>	<i>84</i>
<i>Figure 22 Average of Support per Theme in Economic Issue</i>	<i>85</i>
<i>Figure 23 Level of Support in Themes of Psychological Issue</i>	<i>88</i>
<i>Figure 24 Average of Support per Theme in Psychological Issue</i>	<i>89</i>
<i>Figure 25 Level of Support in Themes of Legal Issue</i>	<i>92</i>
<i>Figure 26 Average of Support per Theme in Legal Issue</i>	<i>93</i>

IV. List of Tables

<i>Table 1: Research Themes</i>	<u>38</u>
<i>Table 2: Subthemes of Social Stigma</i>	<u>45</u>
<i>Table 3: Subthemes of Family Restrictions</i>	<u>47</u>
<i>Table 4: Subthemes of Social Outcast</i>	<u>49</u>
<i>Table 5: Subthemes of Relationship with Former Husband</i>	<u>50</u>
<i>Table 6: Themes of Economic Issue</i>	<u>54</u>
<i>Table 7: Subthemes of Psychological Issue</i>	<u>59</u>
<i>Table 8: Themes of Legal Issue</i>	<u>64</u>
<i>Table 9: Subtheme of Communication with Governmental Departments</i>	<u>65</u>
<i>Table 10: Subthemes of Custody</i>	<u>66</u>
<i>Table 11: Supporting Role of Social Networks in Social Issue</i>	<u>83</u>
<i>Table 12: Supporting Role of Social Networks in Economic Issue</i>	<u>87</u>
<i>Table 13: Supporting Role of Social Networks in Psychological Issue</i>	<u>91</u>
<i>Table 14: Supporting Role of Social Networks in Legal Issue</i>	<u>96</u>
<i>Table 15: Overview of Findings</i>	<u>98</u>

Chapter 1: Orientation to the Study

Divorce is a global issue that has been addressed by various scholars and international organizations. However, in Arab countries the situation is unique, due to the significance of tradition and family ties as well as the stigmatization of and limited options available to divorced women. In other words, the phenomenon is relatively sensitive (Al Gharaibeh & Bromfield, 2012). Nevertheless, divorce rates in Arab countries have risen dramatically in recent years and continue to rise, with an adverse effect on families, women, and society as a whole (AlMunajjed, 2010). Saudi Arabia, in particular, has one of the highest divorce rates among the Gulf Cooperation Council countries¹ (Kawach, 2012).

The reason for rising divorce rates is due to the fact that the challenges of modernization and the traditional norms of Saudi society (including arranged and early marriages), as well as the influence of economic, social, and cultural factors have had a negative impact on the institution of marriage (AlMunajjed, 2010). One of the challenges of modernization as described by Al-Khatib (2009) is widespread communication technology. According to the author, involvement of Saudi citizens in online communication is one of the crucial factors that has caused a significant rise of divorce rates in the region.

Paradoxically, online communication in Saudi Arabia is poised on the edge of significant new social settings², which includes not only private forms of communications such as emails and chat, but also online public communities (Alsaggaf, 2004). These online communities are known as online social networks (Bhattacharjee & Miah, 2011). The

¹ The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) consists of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

² For example, due the popularity of social networks in Saudi society, the segregation between the two sexes has been decreased (Alsaggaf, 2004). (This aspect is explained in details in chapter-2, section 2.4.3)

main purpose of social networks is to allow users to share ideas, activities, events, and interests within their individual networks (Anagnostopoulos, Kumar, & Mahdian, 2008).

There are hundreds of social networking sites that support various interests and practices (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Social Networks such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, YouTube, or LinkedIn have become the means of communication for many people, and have allowed for users to connect and interact on an international level (Anagnostopoulos, Kumar, & Mahdian, 2008). Most sites support the continuance of pre-existing social networks, but others allow strangers to connect based on common interests, political views, or activities. Some sites attract people based on common language or shared racial, sexual, religious, or national backgrounds (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

The popularity of social networking is increasing day by day; Facebook and Twitter have evolved to be global, having users from all the corners of the world. As of July 2013 Facebook had more than 1.15 billion active users (AllFacebook, 2013), which makes it the world largest social network site (Statista, 2013). With the dramatic increase of online users, it has been proven that social networks play a significant role in influencing the behavior of users on the web, and it has become a major means for users to both interact with and influence the behavior of others (Anagnostopoulos, Kumar, & Mahdian, 2008).

In Saudi Arabia, the society is generally religious, where Islam plays an essential role in defining the culture and determining social norms, traditions, values, attitudes, and practices (Al-Munajjed, 1997). That is, the Saudi government filters the Internet, and maintains a censorship over what is believed to be immoral or illegal³ (Internet Services Unit King Abdul-Aziz city for Science and Technology, 2006), however, 13 million Saudi citizens make use of the Internet, which corresponds to nearly half of the entire population; youth in particular are the most active users on social networks (Internet World Statistics, 2012). The estimated proportion of women who use social networks in

³ This aspect is developed in chapter-3

Saudi Arabia is about 41%, which indicate that Saudi women are well-represented online (CITC, 2010).

With the large number of Saudi users on social networks, and more specifically female users, there is scant literature on the supporting role of social networks. This constitutes an opportunity to expand on the existing body of knowledge. More specifically, there is little information about the challenges divorced Saudi women might be facing. To our knowledge, there exists no research on the supporting role social networks are likely to provide for divorced Saudi women.

1.1 Background of the Problem

Divorced Saudi women suffer considerable challenges not only related to economic and social aspects, but also to legal inequalities of divorce under personal status laws (Al-Munajjed, 2010). Although divorced Saudi women face several challenges after the dissolution of marriage, there is a lack of details describing the weight, the extent, and the Islamic conditions of these challenges.

1.2 Importance of the Problem

The research will add new information to the existing body of knowledge on the subject, such as the key issues divorced Saudi women are facing as well as the role of support that social networks provide them with.

Identifying the challenges and issues divorced Saudi women are facing, and assessing the supporting role that social networks are likely to provide them will allow for the establishment of website-development principles that are more meaningful, appealing and useful to divorced women. It would also allow websites to be customized according to the challenges faced by divorced women.

Another benefit to this study is that the research will help professionals and social workers increase awareness about the impact of social networks by allowing them to post relevant articles and information. Also, the results of this study can lead to identifying gaps in the support provided by online social networks, so that more complete and relevant information can be circulated.

Finally, the results can be used as a basis for further research on the divorce phenomenon. It would help decision-makers in Saudi Arabia to take serious action towards the high rise of divorce incidence and set efficient solutions to reduce the challenges divorced Saudi women are facing.

1.3 Problem Statement and Research Question

Despite, the current high-profile debate with regard to divorce incidence in Saudi Arabia, few studies have examined challenges that divorced Saudi women may be facing. In addition, no studies have been done about any potential support that divorced Saudi women may receive through social networks. This leads to the general research question of this thesis:

“What support do online social networks provide to divorced Saudi women?”

1.4 Definition of Concepts

Concepts used frequently throughout this thesis are defined so that the reader can understand the researcher’s meaning associated with each concept.

Social Networks: “Networks of friends, colleagues, and other personal contacts made online. Online communities of people with common interest that allow them communicate with each other through websites or other technologies to share and

exchange information or resources” (Dictionary.com, 2014). In this study social networks refer to online social networks sites including virtual communities that divorced Saudi women are joining the most. Websites dedicated to social networking include Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube.

Role: “A function or position” (TheFreeDictionary.com, 2013). In this study it refers to the function of social networks in the lives of divorced Saudi women.

Support: “To provide the necessities of life for (a family, person, etc.), and/or the means of maintenance of a family or a person, or a person or thing that furnishes aid” (TheFreeDictionary.com, 2013). In this study it refers to the level and type of support that social networks may or may not provide to divorced Saudi women.

Divorced Saudi Women: In the context of this study a divorced Saudi woman is a Saudi female who lives in Saudi Arabia, and has experienced divorce in Saudi society regardless of her age, level of education, or occupation.

1.5 Purpose Statement

This thesis addresses two objectives. The first is to explore the challenges that divorced Saudi women are facing. The goal is to identify the major issues, and to determine the weight and the extent of each identified challenge or issue.

The second objective is to assess the role of support social networks are likely to provide to divorced Saudi women. The goal is to examine the level of support and the way social networks contribute to the support of divorced Saudi women in each of the challenges they face in their society.

1.6 Research Methodology

Given the exploratory nature of this research and scant previous research specific to the supporting role of social networks for divorced Saudi women, it was necessary to follow two methodological phases to assess the role of social network support, and to explore the challenges divorced Saudi women are facing.

1.6.1 Overview of Methodological Phases

Data in Phase-1 was collected using a qualitative approach. The advantage of the qualitative approach is that it focuses on individuals experiences (Mouton, 2001). To explore the challenges, participants were requested to write (based on an open text question) the major challenges they face based on their own experience of divorce . The link of the open text question was posted online in several social networking sites including virtual communities. The narrative text provided by these participants formed one chapter⁴ of the larger study, and provided qualitative models for each of the issues divorced Saudi women are facing.

Data in Phase-2 was collected using both descriptive statistics and qualitative analysis. Based on the research themes obtained from Phase-1, an online questionnaire was developed. It consisted of both closed and open-ended questions. The goal of this survey was to assess the supporting role that social networks are likely to provide to divorced Saudi women. The open-ended question required written responses from respondents, while options and multiple choices were provided in the closed-ended questions. An online survey service, www.surveygizmo.com, was used to host the questionnaire (Appendix 3).

The ethical issues pertinent to conducting this research were the participants' rights to privacy, which included the right to refuse to participate in this study, the right to anonymity and confidentiality, and the right to informed consent (Appendix 3). These

⁴ Chapter-5

rights were protected and will be further discussed in the methodology chapter. Due to the sensitive nature of this study, approval was obtained from both the Ethical Committee of Ottawa University and the Saudi Arabian Cultural Bureau in Canada (Appendix 1& 2).

1.6.2 Populations and Sampling

The target population for both phases of this study is divorced, Saudi women who use social networks in Saudi Arabia. Convenience and Snowballing sampling methods were used⁵.

1.6.3 Data Analysis

In Phase-1, the narratives received from divorced Saudi women were analyzed qualitatively using manual coding.

In Phase-2, data obtained from the questionnaire completed by divorced Saudi women were analyzed in two parts; the first part described the sample and analyzed closed-ended questions using descriptive statistics, supplemented by a qualitative analysis of the open-ended questions. (Chapter-4)

1.7 Research Contribution

This thesis introduces five major contributions;

1. The research attempts to explore the challenges faced by divorced Saudi women, and to gain a better understanding by highlighting the rates, types, Islamic definitions, concerns and privileges relating to divorce in Saudi Arabia.
2. It also aims to assess the supporting role social networks are likely provide to divorced Saudi women when facing divorce-related challenges.

⁵ Chapter-4 provides more details about methodology.

3. Describing some major aspects of legal processes of divorce in Saudi Arabia based on Islamic law,
4. Reviewing literature on the impact of online social networks on Saudi society, and
5. Defining specific cultural practices and characteristics of Saudi society that is likely influencing the after divorce challenges faced by divorced Saudi women.

1.8 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is structured into seven chapters, including the orientation to the study (Chapter one).

The second chapter thoroughly reviews the literature on research about online social network sites, including definitions, historical development , and the potential impact of online social networks on people and society. It also reviews recent literature on the evolution of online social networks exclusively in Saudi Arabia, explains cultural characteristics of Saudi society, elaborates on how social networks have influenced Saudi culture, and demonstrates the place of technology in the lives of Saudi citizens.

The third chapter is divided into two main parts; the first deals with divorce in general, which includes the definition, rates, and consequences of divorce across the world. The second part describes divorce in Saudi Arabia including divorce according to Islam, rates, types, factors, privileges, and negative consequences for Saudi women. It will also shed the light on some legal aspects and family law related to divorce in Saudi Arabia.

The fourth chapter defines the methodology used for this research and exposes the research themes and questionnaire. The sampling, steps for data collection, and data analysis will be described.

The fifth chapter is a detailed analysis and discussion of the findings from the data collected in Phase-1. It investigates the key issues divorced Saudi women are facing in their home country.

Sixth chapter analyzes data collected in Phase-2. It provides a description of the sample. Analysis of the level of support of online social networks is addressed using descriptive statistics. A qualitative analysis of the nature of online social networks supporting role will be covered.

The conclusion (chapter seven) summarizes the background of this study, reviews its major contributions, discusses the key research findings and provides some recommendations for future studies. It also specifies the limitations of this research.

Chapter 2: Online Social Networks⁶ and Saudi Society

This chapter provides a conceptual, historical, and scholarly context for social networks. We begin with a presentation of the historical development of social networks, followed by definitions of virtual communities and social networks. The motivation for using social networks as well as their potential impact on the population will be highlighted. Relevant literature on social networks in Saudi Arabia will be reviewed, including the relevant cultural characteristics of Saudi society.

2.1 From Virtual Communities to Social Networks

Virtual communities have existed on the Internet since 1979. The first were “Usenet” newsgroups, followed by “The WELL” (<http://www.well.com>), which was launched in 1985 (Ridings & Gefen, 2004). Usenet was established to link university computing centers that used the UNIX operating system. Its main function was to distribute different news topics to participants throughout the network (Donath, 1999). The WELL was established to allow users to form conferences and discussions about different topics based on their interests in health, art, business, etc (Ridings & Gefen, 2004).

In the mid-1990s, webpages started to shift from static to highly interactive, which helped increase communication between sites and users. This expansion has resulted not only in the presence of virtual communities on the World Wide Web (WWW), but also in their rapid growth in popularity. This growth rate has garnered the attention of the popular press and MIS researchers, and has become a subject of study (Lee, Vogel, &

⁶ In this study, in order to lighten the writing, we sometimes refer to online social networks sites as “Social Networks”.

Limayem, 2003). Among various website categories, community sites were one of the fastest growing (Petersen, 1999; Wingfield & Hanrahan, 1999).

At the present time, there are hundreds of social network sites that differ in feature and function (Aljabre, 2013). In 1997, the first recognizable social network site was launched: SixDegrees.com. The main features of SixDegrees.com were to enable users to create profiles, to make a list of their friends, and to surf these lists of friends. It also functioned as a tool to help users communicate with each other by sending messages. As of 2001, a number of featured communities started to flourish with capabilities that allowed users to create personal, professional, and dating profiles (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Facebook is a good example of featured social network sites; it started as a tool allowing Harvard school students to communicate and eventually expanded to be the world's largest social networking site (Phillips, 2007).

2.1.1 Definition of Virtual Communities

Virtual communities as defined by Hagel and Armstrong (1997):

“Groups of people with common interests and needs who come together on-line. Most are drawn by the opportunity to share a sense of community with like-minded strangers, regardless of where they live. But virtual communities are more than just a social phenomenon. What starts off as a group drawn together by common interests ends up as a group with a critical mass of purchasing power, partly thanks to the fact that communities allow members to exchange information on such things as a product's price and quality.”

According to Komito (1998), the term community “...means many things to many people, and it would be hard to find a definition of community that would be widely accepted” (Komito, 1998, p.101). The word “community” traditionally refers to a geographical location (Wellman & Gulia, 1999), while the word “virtual” refers to a non-physical place (Handy, 1995) and also indicates that interaction within the community is

enabled by technology (Hiltz & Wellman, 1997). The term “virtual” was used in other literature to describe the communication and social interaction occurring on the Internet and online communities (Preece, 2000). That is, virtual communities allow people with shared interests and practices to communicate regularly in a structured way over the Internet through a common location or mechanism (Ridings, Gefen & Arinze, 2002, p. 273).

2.1.2 Definition of Social Network Sites

Social Networking sites are a much more recent phenomenon than the virtual world (Messinger P. R., et al., 2009). Boyd & Ellison (2007) defined social network sites as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site.”

Based on these definitions, several studies have been conducted to inquire about what motivates people to participate in virtual communities and social networks.

2.2 Motivations for Using Virtual Communities and Social Networks

The most commonly cited reason for virtual community participation in the literature is to access information (Furlong, 1989; S. G. Jones, 1995; Wellman et al., 1997). Virtual communities can be ideal places for people seeking an information exchange about specific topics (Baym, 2000; Wellman & Gulia, 1999a). They provide unique information generated by community members to the Internet, unlike other categories of information found on the Internet that are only provided by the site administrator (Filipczak, 1998, as cited in Ridings & Gefen, 2004). This means that the content found within online

communities can be of a personal nature and people can relate to it more than they can to other forms of website content. Therefore, knowledge and information are valuable social resources in virtual communities (Binik, Cantor, Ochs & Meana, 1997; Hiltz & Wellman, 1997; Rheingold, 1993a; Sproull & Faraj, 1997).

Another reason that people join virtual communities is for the social support that these communities can provide (Ridings & Gefen, 2004). According to Thoits (1982), social support refers to “the degree to which a person’s basic social needs are gratified through interaction with others.” From a social psychology perspective, social support provided by virtual communities may motivate individuals to join these sites (Watson & Johnson, 1972), since human beings are social animals that cannot live in isolation (Dyson, 1998) and need to feel a sense of belonging in groups with others (Watson & Johnson, 1972). Even though people who communicate through virtual communities may not know each other, it can be a positive feature as they are encouraged to reveal more about themselves (Lea, O’Shea, Fung, & Spears, 1992; Walther, 1996). Herring (1996) suggests that the main reason individuals join and use virtual communities is not only the freedom to express views and feelings, but also to receive social support (Herring, 1996; Watson & Johnson, 1972).

The social support aspect of virtual communities and social networks has been addressed in many studies, identified as communities that provide emotional support and sociability as well as information and instrumental aid (Hiltz & Wellman, 1997). Examples are as follows: communities for people suffering from diseases; recovering drug addicts; and people under stress from major life changes such as job loss, death of loved ones, or divorce (Ridings & Gefen, 2004).

In addition, seeking friendship and maintaining social ties with existing friends is another reason that people join virtual communities (Al-Saggaf, 2011). People who seek friendships in virtual communities benefit from the valuable feeling of being a member of a group that has the privileges of companionship, socializing, and networking. While a friendship may provide social support as well as information, social support does not

necessarily indicate a desire for friendship. For example, someone may seek social support to deal with the loss of a job or wife without the intention of forming friendships (Ridings & Gefen, 2004). However, there is a strong motivation for individuals to form friendships and personal relationships through virtual communities (Horrigan et al., 2001) because such communities make locating like-minded people and forming friendships easier to do than in reality (Igbaria, 1999; Wellman & Gulia, 1999a).

Another reason people participate in virtual communities is for recreation and entertainment (Ridings & Gefen, 2004). A good example of this is the type of virtual community that allows users to play games online with other members, called a Multi-User Dungeon (MUD) (Utz, 2000). Studies have shown that people who participate in this kind of virtual community found it fun and enjoyable (Wasko & Faraj, 2000). Utz (2000) suggests that people join MUDs to seek fun and entertainment in role-playing and game-playing.

Similarly, the literature on social networks indicates that there are various reasons why individuals join online social networks, namely for developing relationships, socializing, enjoying themselves, relaxing, having fun, forgetting about their problems, killing free time or expressing themselves intellectually (Al-Saggaf, 2003; Hampton, Goulet, Rainie, and Purcell 2011).

2.3 The Impact of Social Networks Sites on Individuals and Society

Social Networking has evolved to become among other sites as a source for news, a channel for advertising, an investigating service, a discussion forum, a photo album, a game center, a message board, and a social gathering place.

The significant effects of social network sites are the spreading of news and the way news is acquired, as well as the way people interact (Aljabre, 2013). There is a clear shift in the use of the Internet today as a result of the massive popularity of social network sites;

these sites have changed the way people interact online. In the past, the Internet was a source for information (Aljabre, 2013), but because of increased interaction through social network sites, the Internet has become a place for social gathering (Weaver & Morrison, 2010 as cited in Aljabre, 2013). These social gatherings allow users not only to search for information, but also to share it with others in an informal setting (Aljabre, 2013).

Another effect of social network sites is the spread of freedom of speech. Gelman (2009) suggested that social network sites have eliminated restrictions on freedom of expression and reduced limitations on what can be published; they also help individuals determine what is newsworthy. Due to the growing number of online users, and with elaborate profiles and pages that can be created in minutes, it has become difficult to control what can or cannot be said on social network sites, even though most sites have policies to regulate prohibited language (Aljabre, 2013).

The degree of anonymity provided by the Internet has allowed those who are neglected or silenced to express themselves freely via social network sites (Parameswaran & Whinston, 2007). Joinson (1998) suggests that one of the impacts of these sites is that people behave differently online than in reality as a result of the degree of anonymity achieved through online identities. When people interact in front of their computer screens, they feel a sense of freedom to behave without constraints because they know they won't be evaluated or personally identified. Besides the benefits of anonymity, social networks allow people to become more confident; open-minded and flexible (Tukle, 1995; Brody, 1996); and less shy (Preece, 2000; Rheingold, 2000; Utz, 2000).

However, online users might become addicted to social networking sites (Tukle, 1995; Wellman & Gulia, 1999; Rheingold, 2000) and isolated from their real-life commitments, including their family and friends (Tukle, 1995; Wellman & Gulia, 1999; Rheingold, 2000; Al-Saggaf, 2004).

2.4 Online Social Networks in a Saudi Context

Each culture reflects the life, attitudes, and actions of people in a given community (Oshan, 2007). As this study is targeting divorced women living in Saudi Arabia, this part section aims to highlight specific cultural characteristics of Saudi society. More specifically, it highlights particular practices regarding social networks as they relate to significant aspects of the culture. This refers to the way social networks are perceived and accepted as well as their impacts in Saudi context.

2.4.1 Cultural Characteristics of Saudi Arabia

Previous studies have revealed many different definitions of culture (Oshan, 2007; Belshek, 2006); however, no specific definition of the word “culture” has achieved total acceptance in the literature (Belshesk, 2006) because each definition leads to a different understanding of human actions and activities (Oshan, 2007). According to Hofstede (1980, p.21-23) culture is “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group from another.” Another definition states that culture means “a set of shared and enduring meaning, values, and beliefs that characterize national, ethnic, or other groups and orient their behaviour (Mulholland 1991; Dahl, 2004). It is the latter definition that is used in this research, since the Saudi population has an overall high degree of cultural homogeneity (Oshan, 2007).

Saudi culture is a mixture of traditions and Islamic values, presented in a way that makes it hard to differentiate between the culture and the religion (Gallagher, 1985). Saudi Arabia is a combination of many provinces, where some cultural characteristics vary from one province to another (Al-Lily, 2011). “Saudi Arabia’s culture is in its very nature, religious. That is, Islam plays a central role in defining the culture, and acts as a major force in determining the social norms, patterns, traditions, obligations, privileges and practices of society” (Al-Saggaf, 2004, p. 1; Oshan, 2007). The influence of Islam is reflected in almost every aspect of Saudi practices, including social and economic

development (Aldossary et al., 2008; Littlewood & Yousuf, 2000), and expands to include food, behavior, language, and healthcare (El-Gilany & Al-Wehady, 2008).

The reflection of Islamic values on the Saudi people is demonstrated in relations between the family and the rest of society (Al-Saggaf, 2004; Oshan, 2007). In fact, family ties and relationships with relatives are important elements that every Muslim is expected to maintain (Al-Saggaf, 2004; Zakaria et al., 2003). Maintaining such relations is to keep in touch by visiting, offering money or help, and showing kindness and respect (Zakaria et al., 2003).

The Library of Congress of U.S.A (2012, p.20) stated:

“The family is the most important social institution in Saudi Arabia. For Saudis generally, the family was the primary basis of identity and status for the individual and the immediate focus of individual loyalty, just as it was among those who recognized a tribal affiliation. The structure of the family in Saudi Arabia was generally compatible with the structure of tribal lineage”

Sexual modesty and virtues are very highly valued religious commitments in Saudi culture (Oshan, 2007). The honor and reputation of the family is based on these morals, which are applied primarily to women (Oshan, 2007; Al-Saggaf, 2004). Since the honor of the family is based on the behavior of family members (Castillo, 2003), women should not do anything inappropriate that would affect the family’s honor (Oshan, 2007). This is what pushes Saudi males to control Saudi females and apply more rules and pressure on them by restricting their mobility and public activities (Baki, 2004; Mackey, 2002). For example, women in Saudi Arabia must gain permission from their legal male guardians in order to practice many activities, such as travelling, having a job, enrolling in university, and filing a court case (Deif, 2008).

Another characteristic of Saudi culture that affects women is modesty. Saudi women are expected to be shy, and shyness in this context means not to be too outgoing, and not to dress improperly (Al-Saggaf, 2004; Oshan, 2007). Al-Saggaf (2004) suggests that

shyness is an essential mechanism in Islam that is important to the whole society as it prevents people from behaving badly.

The segregation of the sexes is another important feature of Saudi culture that is applied to every aspect of life, including public and social realms. For example, segregation applies to education, banking, public transportation, restaurants, libraries, and the workplace (Al-Munajjed, 1997; Al-Saggaf, 2004). According to the Islamic rules, women are not allowed to mix with unrelated men (Al-Munajjed, 1997; Wheeler, 2000; Al-Saggaf, 2004; Mirza, 2008). “The practice of segregation and confining women to their own company is an institutional mechanism designed to regulate women,” to protect their chastity and to “prevent other men from encroaching on the male honor of the family” (Al-Munajjed, 1997, p.8, p.34).

2.4.2 Evolution of Online Social Networks in Saudi Arabia

The introduction of the Internet into Saudi society was initially delayed until the early 1990s. Saudi authorities continued to limit access for a period of time before it was made available to the public (Goodman, 1998; Oshan, 2007). Even today, Internet access is strictly controlled and filtered in such a way that any online practice goes through King Abdul-Aziz City for Science & Technology (KACST) in Riyadh, which filters both incoming and outgoing traffic. Moreover, a substantial effort has been made to block sites with undesired content and services as they conflict with the country’s religious, cultural, legal, and traditional norms (Al-Saggaf, 2004; Wheeler, 2006; Sait et al., 2007; Al-Saggaf, 2011). Examples of this are “pornographic web pages; pages related to drugs, bombs, alcohol, gambling; and pages that are insulting to the Islamic religion or Saudi laws and regulations” (Internet Services Unit, 2006). “Saudi Arabia’s Council of Ministers in 2001 issued a decree regulating Internet use which prohibits users from accessing or publishing certain forbidden content” (The OpenNet Initiative, 2004, p.5).

According to Saudi literature, the introduction of the Internet into the Saudi public was extremely controversial, as some thought that it would destabilize the culture while others found it to be a valuable advantage that facilitated communication and worked as a tool

of innovation (Hampton, Goulet, Rainie, & Purcell, 2011; Aljabre, 2013). In his study, Al-Saggaf (2006) argued that in spite of the Internet restriction in Saudi Arabia, the number of people who use social networks, including virtual communities, is increasing. In 2003, there were 1.9 million Internet users in Saudi Arabia (Al-Riyadh, 2003; Yunis, 2003), and 53% of those users participated in virtual communities (JeddahNews.net, 2003). In 2011, the number of Internet users grew to 13 million, and Internet use increased to 46% of the population by the end of the year. The estimated proportion of women who use the Internet in Saudi Arabia is about 41%, which shows that Saudi women are represented online (CITC, 2010).

A large number of Saudi Internet users also joined social network sites such as Facebook and Twitter (Al-Saggaf, 2011, p.2). Facebook is ranked as the third most frequently accessed website out of the top 500 (Alexa.com, 2012). In 2012, the number of Twitter users in Saudi Arabia reached 2.9 million; by April 2013, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was the eighth biggest user of Twitter in the world (Smith, 2013).

2.4.3 The Influence of Social Network Sites on Saudi Culture

According to previous studies, social networks have a strong impact on Saudi culture. A study conducted by Al-Saggaf (2004) indicates that social networks have a significant influence on both male and female Saudi Arabian people, allowing them to become more open-minded in their thinking, discussions and expressions.

Specifically, a dramatic change in Saudi women's attitudes have occurred because of the widespread popularity of social networks in Saudi Arabia (Al-Saggaf, 2004; Al-Salem, 2005), especially in the way they see their culture, beliefs, and identities. Thus, for the first time in history, Saudi women are able to freely express their ideas, thoughts, and defend their views online (Al-Salem, 2005). Given that the freedom of expression in Saudi Arabia is limited, Saudi females are well-represented in online forums (Al-Saggaf, 2011) as they struggle to achieve their rights and ask for social support (Al-Salem, 2005). Such practices show a profound influence of social networks.

Another factor about social networks in Saudi is the concern regarding sociability between the two sexes (Al-Saggaf, 2011). While segregation between the sexes is obligatory by law and culture in Saudi Arabia, making it difficult for women to mix with unrelated men in public, social networks made it easy for Saudi people to bridge the public and private division of society. They are able to communicate beyond gender restrictions while remaining physically segregated (Al-Saggaf, 2004), with or without permission of their male guardians (Al-Saggaf & Weckert 2004; Sait et al., 2007).

As a result, it helped both sexes to explore the characteristics of the opposite gender, in a way that made them less inhibited and more appreciative of each other (Al-Saggaf & Weckert, 2004). Thus, social network sites have increased the self-awareness of Saudi females and made them less naïve about the outside world, achieving self-confidence and self-esteem through their experience in online communities (Al-Saggaf, 2004).

On the other hand, social networks have an impact that is considered negative on Saudi people and Saudi females in particular. They would neglect families' commitments, and being too extroverted (Al-Saggaf, 2011). The significance of family ties in Saudi culture must be taken into account as it is a crucial characteristic of the Saudi identity, and consequently, wasting time on virtual communities and social networks could be harmful to the structure of the family (Zakaria et al., 2003; Al-Saggaf, 2004).

Also, shyness is an important feature that symbolizes Saudi women (Al-Saggaf, 2004; Oshan, 2008; Al-Saggaf, 2011) Saudi women became less shy, more talkative and too outgoing after participating in social networks and virtual communities (Al-Saggaf, 2004).

Another considerable influence is exposure to ideas and views that are against religious and cultural values (Al-Saggaf, 2004). For example, obscene references, pornographic materials, anti-Islamic material or criticism of Saudi Arabia (Al-Saggaf, 2011). Exposure to such content may affect Saudi women's morals and could make them intellectually

confused, as some may spread cultural beliefs and values that contradict Saudi culture (Al-Saggaf, 2004). Plus, “Saudi women are subject to sexual coercion by criminals” due to self-disclosure in these communities; the personal information of Saudi women, such as photos and sensitive data, could be harmfully used by others and result in serious damage to the family’s reputation (Al-Saggaf, 2011).

Al-Saggaf (2004) suggests that Saudi society should avoid the negative influence of this technology by educating, training and raising awareness about the real danger of such communities, and to continually uphold the cultural and religious values and norms of Saudi society in order to benefit from this technology.

The following chapter highlights another dimension of the context in which the research is carried. It reviews relevant literature on divorce and divorced women, and describes the family law in Saudi as well as some specific legal aspects about divorce in Saudi.

Chapter 3: Divorce in a Saudi Context

This chapter examines another aspect of the context of this study; after dealing with divorce in general, including definitions, rates and consequences, a description of the Islamic divorce in Saudi Arabia is addressed including rates, types, factors, privileges, and negative consequences for women. It will also shed light on legal aspects and family law regarding divorce in Saudi Arabia.

3.1 Definition of Divorce

Divorce is a situation that millions of adult women have in common, and it is a traumatic event that makes a woman undermines herself, her belief about her safety and security, and her understanding about love, family relationships, commitment, and certainty. The world as the divorced woman has come to know and live it turns upside down (Divorcemag.com, 2013). The word “divorce” has been defined in many different ways, though each lead to the same meaning. Put simply, divorce is a legal termination of a marriage by a court in a legal proceeding, requiring a petition or complaint for divorce by one party (USLegal.com, 2012). It is a judicial declaration dissolving a marriage in whole or in part, releasing the husband and wife from all matrimonial obligations. A common definition is any formal separation of husband and wife according to established custom (Dictionary.com, 2012).

3.2 Divorce Rates

The rates of separation and divorce across all developed countries are increasing largely (Hewitt & Turrell, 2011). According to Canadian statistics (2011), since the end of the 1980's, the rate of divorce has fluctuated between 35% and 42%. In 2008, there were over

70,000 divorces granted in Canada which indicates that 40.7% of Canadian marriages were projected to end in divorce before the thirtieth wedding anniversary, while 43% of marriages will not reach their 50th wedding anniversary (Statistics Canada, 2011). Statistics show that divorce rates around the world vary; for example, Sweden reported the highest rate at 55%. The United States and Australia share the same divorce rate of 46%, while the rate in the United Kingdom is 43% (Feldstein, 2012).

3.3 The Consequences of Divorce for Women

The dramatic increase of divorce incidence has a strong effect on an individual's life experience (Vikstrom et al., 2011). Some studies have shown that marital dissolution plays a major role in changing different areas of women's lives (Hewitt & Turrell, 2011). These changes are most likely related to physical and mental health and wellbeing (Korner et al. 2014). Kalmijn and Brose (2005) suggested that divorced women suffer from issues related to financial status, custody of children, education, and social and emotional concerns.

Issues regarding financial status usually include employment status, household income, and household composition (Hewitt & Turrell, 2011). A study conducted in Australia revealed that financial status continues to be an issue of concern relating to the negative impact of divorce, especially for mothers and children (Smyth & Weston, 2000). This means that a single mother who doesn't have a job may have a hard time being self-sufficient. Therefore, a single mother has to work twice as hard to provide financial security for her children, especially when she doesn't get financial support from her former husband.

Divorced women also suffer from social and emotional (AL-Kernawi, 2004), and health conditions (Hewitt, 2011). Social and emotional issues usually include a powerful sense of loneliness, lowered satisfaction with life, lowered self-esteem, and an increase in family problems (Al-Kernawi, 2004). As for health issues, a study by Hewitt (2011)

suggests that divorced women are often found to have poor health as a negative consequence of divorce (Hewitt & Turrell, 2011). These health issues usually include somatization, paranoid ideation, obsessive-compulsion, depression, anxiety, phobic anxiety and psychosis (Al-Kernawi, 2004).

3.4 Family Law in Saudi Arabia

The following section is mainly cited from the “Muscat Document of the Uniform Code of Personal Status for Gulf Countries Including Saudi Arabia.” This document is a codification of Islamic Shareea’h approved by the Ministers and figures of the justice in the Gulf cooperation council countries⁷. It consists of 282 articles which provide rules related to family, human, and personal status including marriage, divorce, capacity, guardianship, will, and inheritance.

Since the Islamic culture plays a major role and is highly adapted within Saudi society, family law in Saudi Arabia follows the Islamic law of Shareea’h. It is important to note that Muslims in divorce cases may use the term “Islamic law” to imply verses of the Qur’an, hadith (sayings of the Prophet peace be upon him), fiqh, legislation from their countries of origin or any combination of these (Ayubi, 2006).

In Islam, the rules and rights of marriage are equal for both men and women; these rules are in harmony with upright human nature (Ragab, 1995). They both have the same claims on one another except for one responsibility, which is that of protection and leadership. This is justified by the natural differences between the two sexes, entitling the weaker sex to protection. In marriage, Islam gives both men and women the full right to seek an end to an unsuccessful marriage (Badawi, 1979).

⁷ GCC countries is the cooperation council for the Arab states of the gulf.

According to Islamic law, there are three methods of divorce: (1) the will of the husband, which is called Talaq, (2) the will of the wife, which is called Khula, and (3) a judicial judgment, which is called Faskh (Sibulo, 1974).

3.4.1 Talaq

The most frequently used form of the word is talaq, which is used by Islamic law. The term implies divorce in English, while in Arabic it means “to set free,” and it is initiated by the husband (Raza, 1998). Talaq is either revocable or irrevocable (Sibulo, 1974; Raza, 1998).

3.4.1.1 Revocable Talaq (temporary)

Revocable divorce does not terminate the marriage contract unless and until the waiting period expires. It occurs when the husband pronounces the talaq two times on his wife. Pronouncement of talaq falls under two categories:

Sareeh means direct and clear: when the husband utters the talaq on his wife clearly or distinctly and there is no ambiguity in meaning. An example of direct pronouncement of talaq is when a man says, “I divorce you with one talaq,” “I’m letting you have the talaq” or “With effect from today you are divorced.”

Kinaya means indirect; it is when the word or words uttered can be interpreted in more ways than one. An example of indirect pronouncement of talaq is as follows: “I don’t want you anymore,” “You may go to your parent’s house,” or “There is nothing between us anymore.” However, in Kinaya if the husband has no intention to divorce his wife, no divorce will take place. The divorce only occurs if the husband pronounces indirect words of talaq with the intention of divorce (SyariahCourt.gov, 2013).

After the pronouncement of talaq the wife has to go through a period of Idda (Raza, 1998). Idda means a “specified period of time that must elapse before a Muslim widow

or divorcee might legitimately remarry. The Qur'an (2:228)⁸ prescribes that a menstruating woman has three monthly periods before contracting a new marriage; the required delay for a non-menstruating woman is three lunar months, while a widow's delay is 4 months and 10 days. These stipulations serve to remove all ambiguity about paternity should pregnancy have occurred shortly before the couple's separation or the death of the husband. If a woman becomes pregnant before the divorce or separation, she may remarry after the birth of her child. In the case of divorced partners, the concept of iddah also provides an opportunity for re-establishing the marriage, though no reunion can take place until a period of waiting removes all doubt about existing pregnancy" (Britannica Encyclopedia.com, 2012). The husband is expected to cover the wife's expenses (alimony) during the time of idda. Before the period of idda ends, the husband can return back to his wife (Sibulo, 1974; Raza, 1998).

3.4.1.2 Irrevocable Talaq (permanent)

Irrevocable divorce terminates the marriage contract if pronounced. It occurs when a husband makes three pronouncements of divorce (direct or indirect) on his wife in sequential settings or in the same setting. If the husband divorces his wife three times, he then cannot remarry her until after she has married and divorced a new husband. However, this only applies to situations where the desire for remarriage to a former spouse occurs by chance. If the situation were pre-planned it would be considered a grave sin (Raza, 1998).

3.4.2 Khula

The second form of divorce in Islam is khula. According to Islamic law, khula is the right of the wife to divorce her husband in return for payment: she has to pay back the dower, jewelry, or gifts given to her by her husband at the time of marriage (Sibulo, 1974; Raza, 1998). In khula, the wife has the right to divorce her husband without referring to the

⁸ The Holy, Qur'an: Translation of verses is heavily based on A. Yusuf Ali's Translation, The Glorious Qur'an, text translation, and Commentary, The American Trust Publication, Plainfield, IN 46168, 1979.
<http://www.al-islam.org/tahrif/yusufali/>

court (Badawi, 1979). There are two conditions for the khula to be valid. First, the wife has to be capable of paying the compensation (dowry) to the husband, and second, the husband has to agree to pronounce the divorce. If he does not agree, the divorce can be awarded by a judicial judgment, which is faskh.

3.4.3 Faskh

Faskh means ending a marriage. Only the court makes a decision on faskh after hearing the wife's complaint. According to Sharee'ah Law, there are several conditions for a Muslim wife to seek a divorce by a judicial judgment, such as if the wife hates the husband; if the husband is poor; if there is harm and conflict between spouses; in the case of the husband's absence for a period of four months; in the case of the husband's refusal to have sexual intercourse; or in the case of the husband's failure to support the wife. If proof can be provided, the judge is able to issue a divorce judgment in the favor of the wife (Muscat Document of the Uniform Code of Personal Status for GCC Countries, 2001, P.212-214-217).

According to SyariahCourt.gov (2013), the following is true:

"A married woman shall be entitled to apply to the court for and obtain a decree of faskh on any one or more of the following grounds:

- That the husband has neglected or failed to provide for her maintenance for a period of three months;
- That the husband has been sentenced to imprisonment for a period of three years or more and such sentence has become final;
- That the husband has failed to perform, without reasonable cause, his marital obligations for a period of one year;
- That the husband was impotent at the time of the marriage and continues to be so;

- That the husband is insane or is suffering from some chronic disease the cure of which would be lengthy or impossible and which is such as to make the continuance of the marriage relationship injurious to her;
- That the husband treats her with cruelty, that is to say (a) habitually assaults her or makes her life miserable by cruelty of conduct even if such conduct does not amount to physical ill-treatment;(b) associates with women of ill repute or leads an infamous life; (c) attempts to force her to lead an immoral life; (d) obstructs her in the observance of her religious profession or practices; (e) lives and cohabits with another woman who is not his wife; or (f) if he has more wives than one, does not treat her equitably in accordance with the requirements of the Muslim law; and
- On any other ground which is recognized as valid for the dissolution of marriage by faskh under the Muslim law”

3.4.4 Alimony

Alimony is mandatory for the woman during the waiting period as a result of divorce, dissolution, or consummation of a corrupt marriage. Alimony includes food, clothes, accommodation, and all things that are necessary for human life according to public practice (Muscat Document of the Uniform Code of Personal Status for GCC Countries, 2001, p. 212-214-217). It is only the father who is responsible for the children’s financial support either during marriage or after divorce. This is the children's right upon their father, and courts have the power to enforce child-support payments if necessary. The amount is open for negotiation and should be in proportion with the husband's financial means.

The Qur’an advises the husband and wife to consult each other in a fair manner regarding their children's future after divorce (2:233). This verse specifically holds that infants who are still nursing may continue to breastfeed until both parents agree on the period of

weaning through "mutual consent and counsel." This spirit should define any co-parenting relationship (Badawi, 1979).

3.4.5 Custody of Children after Divorce

Custody is meant to protect the child, to bring him up and take care of him in a manner that does not contradict the rights of the guardian in personal guardianship. In the event of a divorce in Islam, regardless of which spouse initiates the divorce, Sharee'ah Law states that the custody of all children (male or female) will remain a right of the mother until they reach the age of puberty; the father is responsible for providing financial support to the children (Muscat Document of the Uniform Code of Personal Status for GCC Countries, 2001, p. 212-214-217).

Once the children reach the age of puberty and understanding, the father has a right to claim to the Sharee'ah Court if he wishes to gain custody of the children. The Sharee'ah Court Judge will then ask the children to choose whom they wish to live with: their mother or their father. The decision of who gains custody of the children in a divorce neither rests with the mother nor the father, nor the Sharee'ah Court Judge; it is the right of the children to decide as soon as they reach the age of understanding and puberty. The Sharee'ah Court Judge will only enforce the decision of the children and give the parent who lost custody fair visitation rights.

The custodian shall be:

- Sane
- Adult
- Trustworthy
- Able to rear the child under custody, protect him and take care of him
- Be free from any serious contagious diseases

In addition to the above conditions, the custodian shall meet the following requirements:

a) “If she is a woman: She should be free from any ties to a husband who consummated the marriage with her who is a stranger to the child under custody, unless the court decides otherwise for the interest of the child under custody.

b) If he is a man: (1) He shall have a woman capable of taking custody of the child. (2) He should have a close relationship that prohibits marriage with the child under custody if she is a female” (Muscat Document of the Uniform Code of Personal Status for GCC Countries, 2001, p. 212-217).

3.5 Saudi Divorce Rates

According to studies, divorce rates in Saudi Arabia are rising, and the country is ranked second among Gulf Cooperation Council countries in divorce cases (Toumi-gulfnews.com, 2013). In 2008, studies revealed that in the past 20 years, divorce rates in Saudi Arabia rose from 25% to 60% (MENAFN - Arab News, 2010). Around 60% of those divorces took place in the first year of marriage (Alshayea, 2012; Kawach, 2012).

According to a study by the Saudi Ministry of Social Affairs, in 2011 the divorce rate in Saudi Arabia increased by 35%, which makes the Kingdom’s figure higher than the world average, which is 18-22%. The Saudi family consultant, Abdullah Al-Sadhan, suggested that based on Saudi statistics, there is a divorce incident every 30 minutes in Saudi Arabia (Alshayea, 2012). The marriage court in the western Red Sea port of Jeddah reported that by 2010 a total of 18,765 divorces occurred out of 90,983 marriages (Kawach, 2012).

Subsequently, the head of the Tabuk northern region, Sheikh Saud Al-yousif, claims that the divorce rate in the latest period has surpassed 40%, which is a warning of danger for Saudi society (Alshayea, 2012). The total number of divorce cases recorded in 2012 was more than 30,000, an average of 3.4 divorces per hour (Toumi-gulfnews.com, 2013).

Hence, Saudi analysts warn of frightful consequences due to high divorce rates in the Kingdom and suggest that “divorces are expected to remain widespread as the number of spinsters will likely increase more than double in the next few years due to the negative impact of divorces in Saudi” (Kawach, 2012). In Saudi Arabia, spinsters are women who have remained single beyond the normal age for marrying, which is over 30 years old (Kawach, 2011).

3.6 Divorce Factors in Saudi

The rising divorce rates are seen sometimes as a social emergency that needs to be resolved (Al Gharaibeh & Bromfield, 2012). Therefore, some Middle Eastern scholars have shown interest in studying divorce in Arab countries. Abdul Jalil and Sibai (2006) conducted a study on a random sample of divorced Saudi women to investigate the factors affecting divorce rates in Saudi families. The study revealed that the main factors contributing to divorce incidence in Saudi are social factors, such as a lack of awareness among spouses about the rights and obligations of marriage, parental and family interference in spousal affairs, large gaps between the ages of the couple, differing levels of education, and social classes.

Al-Khatib (2009) suggested that the reason for high divorce rates in Saudi Arabia is due to the crucial changes of the Saudi society. These changes include the discovery of oil, changes in social constructions, changes in family structures and the functions of its members, the domination of consumption behavior, the spread of new communication technology, the expansion of education between the two sexes, and the economic independence of Saudi women.

Attitudes of excessive consumption have become dominant in the modern Saudi society. As marriage expenses increased, they grew beyond what the majority of men could afford, and the youth of both sexes became reluctant to marry. Additionally, the spread of education among Saudi females resulted in an increasing awareness about their rights, as well as changes in their perspective about themselves and their role in society.

Another significant factor is the spread of new communication technology, such as the Internet, which helped Saudi society learn more about the outside world; it also allowed for the exchange of information within and without Saudi society (Al-Khatib, 2009). Alramlawi (2006) stated that these technological and educational developments have increased the growth of divorce incidence in Saudi Arabia (Alramlawi, 2006).

3.7 Privileges for Divorced Women in Saudi

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has established the Ministry of Social Affairs; its main role is to socially secure all beneficiaries in the Saudi society. Divorced women are among the beneficiaries that get various kinds of support and social security from the Ministry. These privileges, as listed on the website of the ministry of social affairs (2012), are as follows:

- Public housing, in case the divorced woman doesn't have a home
- Repairing and renovation of her house, in case the divorced woman owns a home
- Furnishings for the house
- A decided sum of money paid to the divorced woman and her kids
- Provision of a servant and a piece of land (per request)
- Free health care system includes medications and rehabilitation
- Free education and school supplements for kids
- Sponsorship of small businesses as well as offering suitable jobs
- Payment for bills and services
- Provision of a discount card for grocery and fine food

3.8 The Challenges of Divorce for Saudi Women

Divorce in Saudi Arabia is a sensitive situation, and women are more often affected by its negative impact than any other members of the family (Al-Khatib, 2009). However, the severity of the consequences of divorce varies according to the social, economic, and educational level of the divorced woman or her family (AL-Khatib, 2009, p. 173). In online Arab News (2011), Rima revealed that divorced women in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are struggling to find social acceptance from society, and "...to be a divorcee in Saudi society is like having a scarlet letter burned on the chest. Many women who happen to leave marriages are forced into a life of shame; for some this is so much that they remain perpetually hidden behind closed doors."

Like divorced women across the world, divorced Saudi women suffer the most from challenges related to adaptability. As reported in social studies, there are three types of inadaptability that divorced Saudi women are facing. For example, as reported in a study conducted by Al-Khatib (2009) 42% of divorced women are unable to adjust to the new situation, 32% are suffering from difficulties relating to the adaptability of society, and 52% are suffering from economic problems (Al-Khatib, 2009). Divorced Saudi women find it difficult to manage financial expenses, especially when having kids (Al-Munajjed, 2010).

Besides inadaptability, the general view of society is harshly negative to divorced women in Saudi Arabia. After divorce, women have to adjust to the new situation and make new relationships with unmarried or divorced women, in contrast to the fact that married women usually try to avoid being in relationships with divorced women (Al-Khatib, 2009).

Focusing on the challenges⁹ of divorce for Saudi women, the next chapter presents the research methodology of this study.

⁹ We consider consequences of divorce as a source of challenges.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

Like so many divorced women across the world, Saudi women face various challenges when experiencing divorce. However, due to the limited amount of relevant literature¹⁰, it has proved impossible to extract the key aspects of existing challenges. As a result of this lack of literature, the methodology of Phase-1 was developed based on a convenient sampling to identify the potential challenges that divorced Saudi women might be facing. The identified challenges form the research themes, which is used as the foundation of Phase-2 methodology. The purpose of Phase-2 is to assess the supporting role of social networks. The methodology of Phase-1 uses a qualitative survey design with one open question. The methodology of Phase-2 consists of an online survey based on a questionnaire including close-ended and open-ended questions. The collected data is analyzed using descriptive statistics and qualitative method.

This chapter covers research goals; research questions, hypothesis, population and sampling method used as well data collection method.

4.1 Research Goals, Questions, and Hypothesis

Opening new field of study, this research is exploratory, descriptive and evaluative. It has two phases of methodology to fulfill two main goals. The first is to identify the challenges that divorced Saudi women are facing, and the second is to assess the support that social networks are likely to provide them with.

The research questions according to these goals are spelled out as follows:

1. What are the challenges that divorced Saudi women face within their society?
2. What support do social online networks provide to divorced Saudi women?

¹⁰ Chapter-3, section 10, reviews a short literature on divorce-related challenges in Saudi Arabia

These research questions are based on two alternative hypotheses, which read as follows:

Ha₁: Saudi women face multiple challenges after divorce.

Ha₂: Social networks have a significant supporting role for divorced Saudi women as they face divorce-related challenges.

4.2 Population and Sampling (Phase-1 and Phase-2)

The criteria of studied population in both phases are divorced Saudi women who live in Saudi Arabia. Saudi participants not currently living in their country of origin were excluded from this study due to the possibility that the culture of their current place of residence would influence their perceptions of divorce in Saudi Arabia.

Respondents were recruited through social networks, which indicate that they may have had prior experience with these sites. In order to reach the criterion of saturation when analyzing answers qualitatively, a total of 100 respondents¹¹ were estimated as a required sample size due to the likelihood of the variety of existing challenges. These criteria should be sufficient to ensure a satisfactory degree of validity in the analysis.

A convenient and snowballing¹² sampling are used in both phases. Snowballing was desirable because it enabled access to a broad range of geographical areas in Saudi Arabia. Potential respondents were found online through social network sites and virtual communities including: online divorce communities, Facebook divorce groups, Twitter,

¹¹ The criterion of saturation was assigned to the chunks extracted from the narratives and not to respondents, we decided that when analyzing 100 responses if the themes and chunks are repeated then we reach the saturation

¹² This technique uses a small portion of participants to nominate, through their social networks, other participants who meet the criteria and could contribute to a specific study (David L., Morgan, 2008).

and WhatsApp. Respondent contact information was never displayed. A total of 394 responses were successfully obtained in Phase-1, and 248 in Phase-2.

4.3 Data Collection Phase-1

An online survey was conducted through SurveyGizmo (www.surveygizmo.com), a site that allows users to create online surveys, questionnaires and forms. The survey includes one open text question worded¹³ as such:

“As a divorced woman, what are the most common consequences you may face in Saudi Arabia?”

We included an open question to help divorced women express themselves freely, since divorce is a sensitive phenomenon that Saudi women are discouraged from mentioning. Also, the anonymity of respondents’ online identities will encourage them to disclose more about themselves without restrictions. Although the survey contained one question only, it was easier to distribute it via SurveyGizmo due to the features this software provides: it allowed us to save all the responses and corresponding times and dates, and to mark the geographical locations of each divorced Saudi woman.

The link to the online questionnaire was posted in different virtual communities and social networks for divorced women, such as Saudidivorced.org, Sawomenvoice.com, mawaddah.org.sa, Twitter, Facebook, and Saudi divorce blogs. These communities have different sections for users to share information on a variety of topics; we posted the research question on a section of the site that focused specifically on topics relating to divorce in Saudi Arabia. At the time of posting, respondents were asked to share the link with others by reposting it in their personal online communities. The questionnaire was developed in both English and Arabic¹⁴. (Appendix 3 & 4)

¹³ من المشكلات التي تعاني من هنا كمطلقة في المملكة العربية السعودية ؟
وجهة نظرك، ماهي

¹⁴ The Arabic responses were translated into English.

4.4 Thematic Analysis (Phase-1 and Phase-2)

As the data obtained were qualitative, we used the process of coding in order to perform a thematic analysis. Coding is a mechanism for understanding the meaning of the data and for reducing the amount of it (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The methodological steps suggested by Bryman & Bell (2003) were strictly observed (Phase-1):

- A careful reading through the initial set of the transcripts, as well as studying each word and each line without taking any notes or considering an interpretation.
- Reading through the data again and making marginal notes about significant remarks and observations, such as key words used by the respondents.
- Cutting up one's transcripts into files of chunks of data, each file representing a code.
- Reviewing the codes and then removing duplicates.
- Generating an index of terms and themes based on key words used by the respondents.
- Outlining connections between developed concepts and categories¹⁵.
- Finally, interpreting and theorizing in relation to existing data.

In Phase-1, for the purpose of ensuring appropriate themes, each was defined and evaluated in accordance to what these themes mean within the social and cultural context of Saudi Arabian society. The qualitative models were validated by applying the saturation criterion to the chunks.

In Phase-2, responses to open-ended questions were quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed. The comments specified for each issue were grouped under related themes to identify respondents' perception regarding the nature of support.

¹⁵ In the context of this study, "categories" are worded as "Issues".

4.5 Research Themes

The coding of data obtained from Phase-1 was classified and categorized by issues; each issue was broken down into themes. Themes were chosen and classified based on the key words used by respondents in the repeated chunks.

The process of coding data into categories and themes resulted in forming the research themes made up of four major issues that divorced Saudi women are facing: social, economic, psychological, and legal issues. This research themes (Table 1) including issues and related themes is used as the foundation of Phase-2 methodology.

Table 1: Research Themes


Issues	Themes
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social stigma• Family restrictions• Social outcast• Relationship with former husband
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Income• Housing• Employment• Alimony
Psychological	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regret and remorse• Emotional vacuum• Lack of confidence• Depression
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Male-guardianship• Communication with governmental departments• Access to official documents• Custody• Women's legal rights

4.6 Data Collection Phase-2

Based on this research themes, an online questionnaire was developed and hosted by SurveyGizmo.¹⁶ It was considered that this method would be more informative to have a number of divorced Saudi women fill out an online survey than doing in-depth interviews with a small sample. Given the high rise of divorce across the country, this methodology also provided access to wide geographical areas in Saudi Arabia. The anonymity of the respondents' online identities encouraged them to disclose more about themselves without restrictions. This methodology allowed us to gauge the possible influence of variables affecting respondent answers such as the period of time elapsed after divorce level of education, role of occupancy, and experience with social networks.

4.6.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire included two main parts: the first collected data regarding the sample. The second part consisted of four sections corresponding to the four major issues. The respondents were asked to rate the support they received from social networks when facing each theme, within each issue (social, economic, psychological, and legal). (Figure 1)

Each question was followed by an open-ended question asking respondents to explain the reason for their answer. The open-ended question was formulated as follows: *“Please explain how social networks were supportive in facing the selected challenges.”* Each one of the themes was fully defined; the definition appeared when the respondent clicked the  icon next to the themes in the questionnaire. (Appendix 3)

¹⁶ chapter-4, section 4.3 Data Collection Phase 1 for information about surveygizmo.com






Social Issues	No support at All	Slightly supportive	Fairly supportive	Very supportive	Not applicable
Social Stigma 					
Family restrictions 					
Social outcast 					
Relationship with former husband 					

Figure 1 Example of the close-ended question about social issue

The questionnaire is available in both English and Arabic in Appendixes 3 and 4.

4.6.2 Pre-testing of Questionnaire

Five experts with different profiles, currently living in Saudi Arabia, were asked to check the questionnaire for clarity and comprehensiveness, and to find any potential difficulties with the questions. The five experts were as follows: a family consultant, a professor of psychology, a certified family lawyer, an English professor, and a feminist activist and writer. They were asked to judge if the questions were free of bias, clear of confusion, and easy to answer by the targeted population.

Two of the experts expressed their opinion that the questionnaire was ready to be sent out, while the other three experts gave some suggestions. As a result, the order of the questions was changed by placing the demographics at the beginning of the questionnaire instead of at the end, to make respondents more aware of the goal of the questionnaire.

Also, the number of open-ended questions was reduced to one for each issue instead of one for each theme. Finally, each of the issues and themes were clearly defined within the

questionnaire to allow respondents to understand the exact meaning of the question. (Appendix 3)

Since the questionnaire was provided in both English and Arabic, a professional Arabic-English translator was asked to check the accuracy and proficiency of both versions.

4.6.3 Ethical Approval

The questionnaire was approved by the Ethical Board of the University of Ottawa prior to distribution (Appendix 1). Another ethical approval was obtained from the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Canada prior sending the questionnaire to Saudis. (Appendix 2)

Chapter 5: Issues Faced by Divorced Saudi Women

The objective of this chapter is to expose the key issues faced by divorced Saudi women¹⁷ and to explain in details the themes linked to each identified issue. A snowballing method was used in distributing the survey¹⁸. The survey was received by 464 respondents¹⁹, and was completed validly by 394 participants in three days, which correspond to 85%. Participants were classified by geographical area (Figure 2)

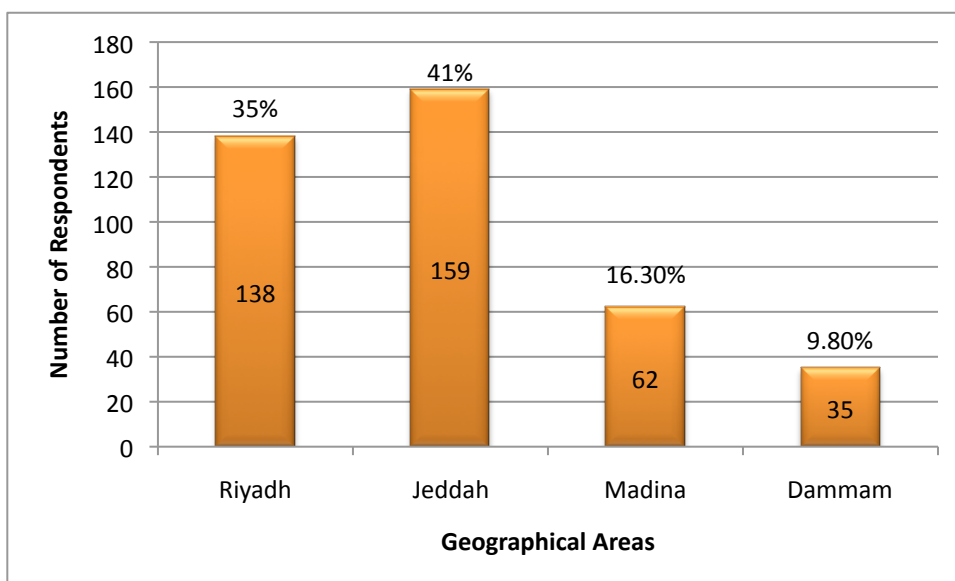


Figure 2 Geographical Area of Respondents Phase-1

The city of Jeddah has the highest number of respondents at 41%, followed by the city of Riyadh (the capital of Saudi Arabia) with 35%. Participants from Madina represent 16.30% of the sample, while the city of Dammam demonstrates the least participants with 9.80%. Thus, Jeddah and Riyadh account for around 75% of the sample.

¹⁷ In this study, the terms “divorced women or divorced Saudi women” refer to participants in this study.

¹⁸ Chapter -4, section 4.2 provides explanation of the sampling method

¹⁹ Using Surveygizmo.com allowed us to save all the responses and corresponding times and dates, and to mark the geographical locations of each divorced Saudi woman.

This section proceeds with the qualitative analysis of the 394 responses following the method steps suggested by Bryman & Bell (2003), and described in chapter 4 (4.4). This analysis resulted in distinguishing four major issues for divorced Saudi women: social, economic, psychological, and legal issues. We present our analysis of these four major issues.

5.1 Social Issue

Social issues are related to society's perception and standards for the personal lives of individuals. The category of social issues is the grouping of the following themes: social stigma, family restriction, social outcast, and relationship with former husband. Figure 3 shows the number of chunks²⁰ with percentage for the identified themes. The number of chunks is divided by the number of respondents to find the relative importance of the chunks by themes and subthemes.

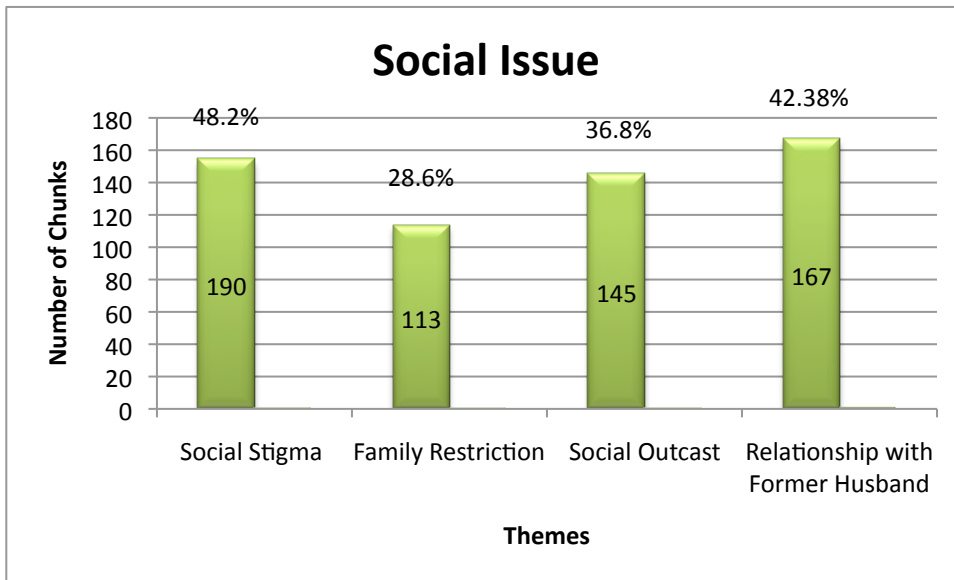


Figure 3 Number of 'Chunks' per Theme in Social Issue

²⁰ As defined in Chapter -4, the process of coding is attached to 'chunks' of words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs

Social Stigma and Relationship with Former Husband both have a high number of chunks, followed by Family Restrictions and Social Outcast. The high response rate of all four issues indicates the significance of the challenges faced by divorced Saudi women.

5.1.1 Social Stigma

We assigned the expression ‘social stigma’ to the theme for the purpose of identifying the social negativity that Saudi society directs toward divorced Saudi women. In his book *Stigma*, the Canadian sociologist Goffman (1963) developed a theory and definition of the term ‘social stigma’ as follows:

Stigma is an attribute, behaviour, or reputation, which is socially discrediting in a particular way: it causes an individual to be mentally classified by others in an undesirable, rejected stereotype rather than in an accepted, normal one. (Goffman, 1963, p.3)²¹

Social stigma was also defined by Weiss, Ramakrishna, and Somma (2006) as a:

“Social process, experienced or anticipated, characterized by exclusion, rejection, blame or devaluation, that results from experience, perception, or reasonable anticipation of adverse social judgment about a person or group.”

In addition, stigma as a social consequence leads to prejudice and discrimination (Heatherton et al., 2000). That is, when a person or group of people share characteristics in a society that may differ or distinguish them from social or cultural norms, this can result in feelings of rejection, exclusion, and extreme disapproval by the society.

²¹ Upon his examination of the term ‘social stigma,’ Goffman (1963) classified social stigma into three types: “defect of the body,” such as scars, physical deformation, obesity, or leprosy leading to abominations of the body. The second type of social stigma is “deviation in personal traits, or defect of character” such as mental disorders, drug addiction, unemployment, and criminal background. The third type is “tribal stigmas,” or membership in socially devalued groups such as racial and ethnic minorities, and gender.

The term ‘social stigma’ was chosen as a theme based on the perception of the participants. It was used to describe the divorced woman’s point of view in the social and cultural context of Saudi Arabian society. A total of 190 of the responses indicate that divorced women are suffering from the stigmatization and negativity of Saudi society. Respondents have reported the different facets of social stigma based on their own perceptions, such as feelings of exclusion, of being criminal-like, of being sinful, of inequity, and of being to blame.

Table 2: Subthemes of Social Stigma

Subthemes	Definition	Number of Chunks ²²	Typical Statements
Exclusion	Divorced women report that they suffered from inferiority and stigmatization within Saudi society.	154 (39%)	‘I feel excluded,’ ‘I don’t belong to this society,’ ‘I’m typically shunned by the society,’ ‘divorced women are viewed as social stigma.’
Criminal-like	Divorced women argue that they are viewed as criminals by society.	43 (10.9%)	‘I’m treated as a criminal,’ ‘Society looks to divorced women as if they commit a crime.’
Sinful	Respondents indicate that the society views them as if they committed a sin.	39 (9.89%)	‘It’s normal to be divorced, because divorce is nothing but an experiment that we should learn from, however, in Saudi Arabia, divorce is a transgression.’
Inequity	Divorced women indicate that Saudi society is male-oriented in its nature.	150 (38%)	‘Our society is male-oriented,’ ‘Men have dominance in the society,’ ‘We live in an unfair society,’ ‘An ignorant male-oriented society’
To Blame	Divorced women indicate that they are blamed for being divorced.	74 (18.78%)	‘All the people around me blamed me regardless of the circumstances of the divorce,’ ‘Treated as responsible for the divorce incident.’

²² The percentage gives the relative importance of the numbers of chunks in themes and subthemes.

Divorced women raised the issue of social stigma in various facets, some demonstrating, “the society of Saudi Arabia takes a harsh view towards divorced women, and believes that divorced women are flawed figures.” “The most significant issue I’m facing as a divorced woman, besides the loss of my status, is being treated as a social stigma from my society,” commented one of the participants. As a result of the social stigma they may have experienced, many divorced women reported their preference not to reveal their marital status to the public because they fear the harsh reaction and the exclusion they will inevitably encounter from society.

For the same reason, they hope that they “could remarry again rather than being locked in the word ‘divorced’ in such a society.” Other respondents reported, “as a divorced woman living in Saudi Arabia, I would rather remarry again without giving myself enough space to think whether or not the new husband or the new marriage is going to be appropriate and successful, all I need is to escape from the society,” and “Due to the faults of the Saudi society, I accepted the first bridegroom to propose to me.” Such comments may explain how the social stigma that Saudi society projects at divorced women affects their decisions, even in sensitive cases like marriage.

The results also revealed another facet of stigmatization, which is that divorced women are “sometimes treated like criminals and sinful people,” as one respondent declared. Other comments, such as “from my own experience, divorced women in Saudi Arabia suffer from the society itself, who look to us as a crime perpetrator,” and “divorce is not a crime, not even forbidden in Islam, but a lawful solution to help people live a better life,” suggest that stigmatization is tied to the demeaning view held by the society and not to Islamic laws and rules.

Divorced women in Saudi Arabia “are most likely held responsible for the divorce.” Participants reflected that when the divorce occurs, the society blames the woman. Some noted that the reason for this social stigma is simply that Saudi Arabia is a male-oriented society in its nature, where men maintain dominance in almost everything. One

participant argued the following: “In fact, divorce is not the end of the world, but in a society like Saudi Arabia it means death. I hate to say that, but our society is male-oriented, where men have the power in everything.” Comparing the consequences of divorce to death explains how harsh it is to be a divorced Saudi woman.

5.1.2 Family Restrictions

Family restriction implies an extreme pressure practiced on divorced women by their families, as well as acts of disgrace. A total of 113 divorced Saudi women expressed the difficulties they have experienced with their family members after their marriages ended. The subthemes generated from Family Restrictions are: Confinement and Disgrace.

Table 3: Subthemes of Family Restrictions

Subthemes	Definition	Number of Chunks	Typical Statements
Confinement	Divorced women indicate that they tolerated extreme pressure and boundaries that separated them from their families.	111 (28.1%)	‘Divorced women are subjected to their families’ restrictions,’ ‘My family treat me with extra pressure,’ and ‘Living in my family’s house is almost like living in a prison.’
Disgrace	Divorced women indicate that divorce is considered as shameful and infamous to family members.	70 (17.7%)	‘People think that divorced women shouldn’t be free, because they may bring shame to their families,’ ‘Families force their divorced daughters to remarry as soon as possible so they don’t ruin their family’s reputation in the community.’

Divorced women face major pressure from family and relatives, as one commented: “The day I got divorced, I went to my father’s house, yet, my family members forced me to go back to my husband on the first request. They didn’t bother to ask about details, I was forced to go back until I received an official divorce from the court. Only few have supported me among my family, and the community at large.” Similarly, some

participants stated: “My family told me that I disgraced them, and that is only because of our stupid, merciless customs and traditions.” According to some participants, divorced women are even reluctant to discuss their situation with relatives. “Women who go through divorce are usually shunned by their own family members.”

Indeed, as mentioned earlier in this paper, family ties and reputation are crucial characteristics in every Saudi family. Specifically, family honor is based on the behavior of the female family members in Saudi Arabia; therefore, women face many restrictions from their families and relatives in order to avoid dishonoring the family and destroying its reputation.

In contrast, several of the comments reflected different opinions. “Because I moved to my father’s house after divorce, I was able to overcome my painful memories since my family are not only supporting me, but most importantly taking good care of my kids,” and “I’m blessed to have my family after my divorce.” These comments however are marginal.

5.1.3 Social Outcast: Relationships with Friends

The term outcast means “a person who is rejected or cast out, as from home or society” (Dictionary.com, 2014). Rejection, exclusion, and lack of respect are significant issues that Saudi women face as social consequences of divorce. The definition of ‘social outcast’ may be similar to ‘social stigma’ in terms of rejection and exclusion. However, the meaning of rejection related to ‘social stigma’ refers to society’s perception of divorce on a larger scale; the term ‘social outcast’ implies that the action of rejection is practiced by people who have a direct relationship with the divorced woman.

According to participants’ comments, married women are most likely to avoid their female friends after their divorce, as some commented: “Saudi women who undergo divorce like me are typically avoided by close friends, especially those who are married, because they fear that we (divorced women) may attract their husbands.” They also

believe that “divorced women are subjected to psychological violence by other girls, especially married ones.”

A total of 145 divorced women reported that they became social outcasts after divorce, as they experienced negative changes in their relationships with friends, peers and relatives, such as avoidance and lack of respect. Table 4 displays a summary of subthemes and definitions:

Table 4: Subthemes of Social Outcast

Subthemes	Definition	Number of Chunks	Typical Statements
Avoidance	Divorced women indicate that their friends and peers have avoided them after divorce.	68 (17.2%)	‘I noticed a big difference in my relationships with friends, they evasively try to avoid me as if I did something wrong,’ ‘My friends who are married think that their husbands would be interested in me, so they treat me with evasion, which I don’t really like.’
Failure	Respondents indicate that they are viewed as losers.	22 (5.58%)	‘Society classifies divorced women as failures, which makes people - especially females friends - adopt this harsh look towards divorced women,’ ‘Women after divorce suffer the most from their friends.’
Lack of Respect	Divorced women indicate that they are treated with disrespect.	56 (14.2%)	‘I didn’t imagine that I would suffer this much from my friends after divorce, they treat me with lots of rebuke.’

The results indicate that friends and peers sometimes treat divorced women as failures, as one described great suffering following her divorce as follows: “It’s agony, since I was treated with a lot of rebuke and lack of respect especially from my friends, and those around me at work,” and “only few of my friends keep in touch with me.” Expressions such as rebuke, lack of respect, agony, and psychological violence in participant responses gives a strong indication of the pain and suffering that these women have experienced.

5.1.4 Relationship with Former Husband

A total of 167 divorced women showed significant concern about their relationship with previous husbands, which include the following subthemes: controlling by the former husband, depriving, lack of communication, opportunism, and lack of respect. Comments such as “awful treatment from my ex-husband,” “I don’t feel safe, my ex-husband is threatening to force me to go back to him,” and “he deprived me from my kids” appear consistently in the transcripts of the responses. (Table 5)

Table 5: Subthemes of Relationship with Former Husband

Subthemes	Definition	Number of Chunks	Typical Themes
Controlling	Divorced women indicate that their former husbands have power over their lives after divorce.	84 (21.3%)	‘I can’t do anything, since my kid’s life is in his father’s hands,’ ‘I can’t travel with my kids unless I get my ex-husband’s permission,’ ‘I don’t have the right to register my kids in school, hospitals, travel with them, or even issue passport for them without having my ex’s permission.’
Depriving	Divorced women indicate that their former husbands took away their kids, and do not allow them to have any contact with them.	155 (39.3%)	‘As a divorced woman, the most thing I suffer from is depriving me from seeing my kids,’ ‘Nothing is worse than taking my kids away from me after divorce.’
Banned Communication	Divorced women indicate that the rules of society make it inappropriate to maintain communication between spouses after divorce.	92 (23.3%)	‘Our ignorant society forbids any communication between the parents after divorce,’ ‘If I ever tried to contact my ex-husband, I would be viewed as immoral,’ ‘We are not allowed to have direct communication with our former husbands.’
Opportunism	Respondents indicate that their former husbands take advantage of their situation after divorce.	42 (10.6%)	‘Divorced women are subjected to selfish practices by their former husbands,’ ‘Some spouses take selfish advantage of circumstances by forcing the wives to pay money or to compromise alimony and custody.’

Other comments such as, “I can’t travel with my kids without permission from my ex-husband,” “a consent form from the previous husband is a must in every single thing in my kid’s life, for example: schools, hospitals, travelling, etc.,” “my ex-husband never ask about his kids, not even bother to see them,” “once the marriage breaks up, the ex-wife can’t have direct contact with her ex-husband, due to the traditions and customs that makes it forbidden,” and “I can’t remarry again, or otherwise my ex-husband will deprive me from my kids,” suggest that divorced women, and more specifically single mothers, are struggling with the responsibilities of controlling and raising their kids. This is due either to a lack of communication between the two ex-spouses, or because of the pressure that some ex-husbands may exert upon their ex-wives.

A few participants named their formers as “opportunists” who try to take advantage of their new situations, “since I’m ignorant about my rights regarding divorce, I was misled by my ex-husband, who forced me to seek *khula* and pay him back the money he paid at the time of our marriage.” One participant stated, “I had to compromise the alimony so my ex-husband would agree to give me back my kids.” Such comments indicate the shallow knowledge these women may have not only about divorce, but also about their rights after divorce.

One of the participants commented that a “divorced woman doesn’t only suffer from her previous husband after divorce, but also suffers from his family, who treat her like a pariah and talk badly about her in the community.” This comment explains how the disintegration of the family expands to reach the extended families of each ex-spouse.

The first part of our investigation exhibited social issue and its related themes and subthemes. Before moving to the next section, which investigates economic issue, Figure 3 presents resulting qualitative model of social issue faced by divorced Saudi women.

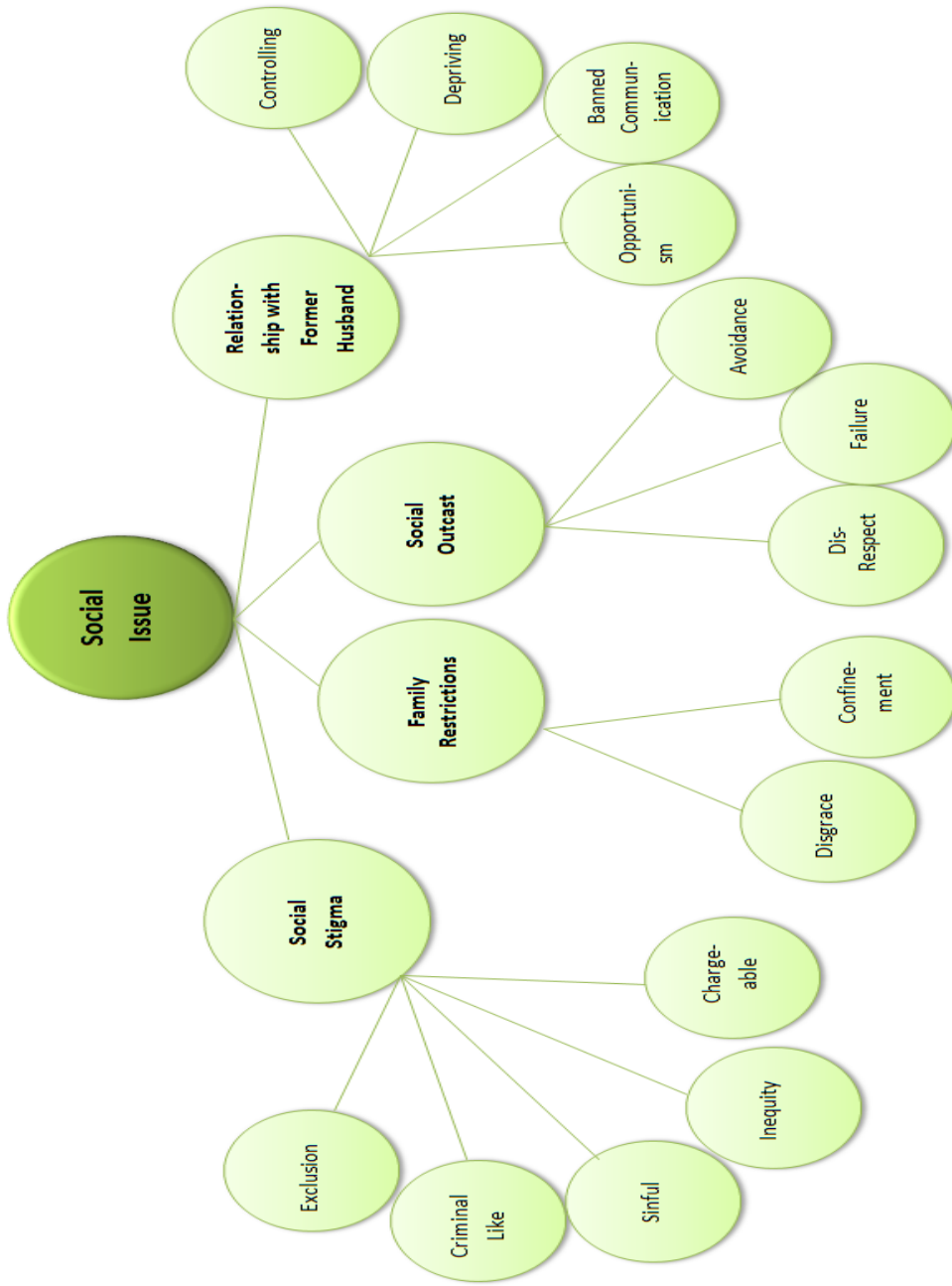


Figure 4 Qualitative Model of Social Issue for Divorced Saudi Women

5.2 Economic Issue

Divorced women tend to suffer considerable financial losses, especially those who have children (Funder & Kinsella, 1991). Four themes were identified as a result of our analysis of the economic issue. These themes are the lack of stable income, a lack of housing, a lack of employment, and unpaid alimony from former husbands. No subthemes were found in this section. Figure-5 illustrates the themes, the number of chunks and their relative importance:

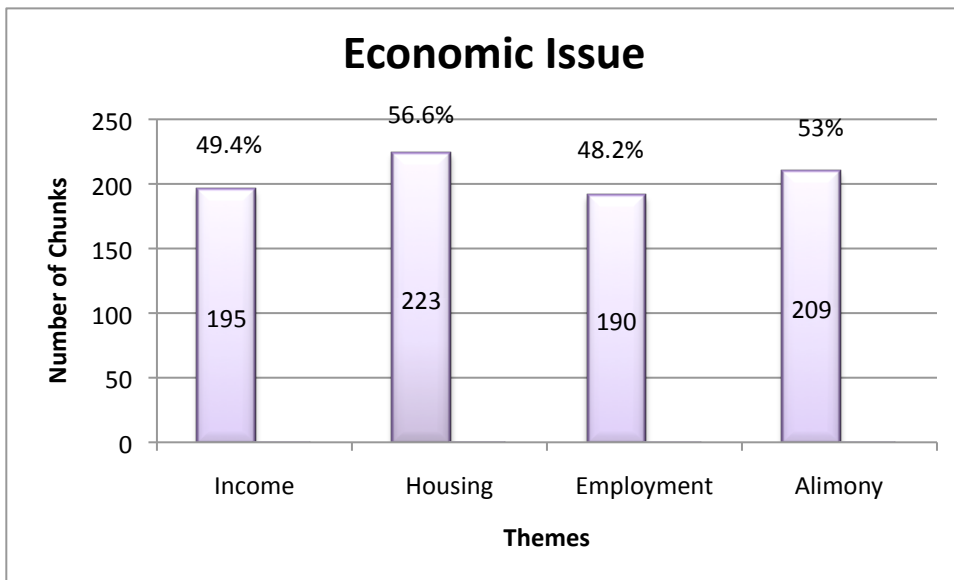


Figure 5 Number of 'Chunks' per Theme in Economic Issue

The large amount of chunks across all themes shows the significant weight of economic issue in the lives of divorced Saudi women. Typical statements found in participants' scripts are used as a summary with the identified themes (Table 6).

Table 6: Themes of Economic Issue

Themes	Definition	Number of Chunks	Typical Statements
Income	Lack of stable income.	195 (49.4%)	'The financial situation after divorce knocked me down,' 'Accepting a second marriage to guarantee a stable income,' 'Divorce is an absolute change in the financial status.'
Housing	Lack of independence, where divorced women are forced to live in their family's house after divorce, they can't have their own houses whether they have kids or not.	223 (56.6%)	'There is no way for a divorced Saudi woman to live independently,' 'We need houses of our own,' 'How a divorced mother with three kids would manage living in her family's house?', 'Can't own a house.'
Employment	Includes lack of suitable jobs, losing jobs, or lack of qualifications	190 (24.2%)	'Finding jobs after divorce is a matter of concern,' 'Suitable job would help in facing a critical financial situation.'
Alimony	Respondents indicate that their former husbands don't pay the decided amount of money to kids and wife after divorce	209 (53%)	'Payment of alimony would so much help in maintaining life financially,' 'Women suffer from the disloyalty of former husband in paying child support.'

5.2.1 Income

As reported by 195 participants, the lack of stable income after getting divorced is an obstacle. The majority of comments consistently referred to the reduction of income after divorce. One commented that “divorced woman suffer financially, especially if her parents are dead,” while another argued, “I had to spend lots of money to get an official divorce”. Another commented “I waste my money paying lawyers before and after the divorce,” and one commented, “my ex-husband asked for money to execute a quick divorce.”

It can be seen from the above quotes that some women who seek divorce are forced to spend a substantial amount of money and maybe compromise their financial rights, such as abnegating the right to alimony. As a result of this abnegation, these women may end up facing critical financial conditions.

5.2.2 Housing

A total of 223 respondents reported that after divorce, regardless of whether they had children or not, they had to leave their houses and return to living with their families. Some participants expressed this issue as follows: “It is quite offensive how I had to go back to my father’s place,” and “It is sad that I can’t rent or own a house under my name.” The words “offensive” and “sad” are quoted from participant responses, which not only show the devaluation of their self-image, but also describe the negative feelings they have experienced as a result of divorce.

Other participants articulated “since the idea of divorce is not welcomed in my family’s traditions, I found it tough to live with them in the same house. I wish I could have a separate house for me and my kids,” “it is not easy to live in a place where people don’t like you or even like your kids; divorced women should have their own houses after divorce,” “living in my family’s place is like living in a prison.” Considering that participants compared living with family to living in a prison, this indicates the lack of insight families may have about divorce. As a result of the negativity that comes from ignorance, divorced women and their children may suffer from extreme restrictions imposed by their families.

5.2.3 Employment

According to 190 participants, employment is another type of economic issue that divorced Saudi women are facing. This issue was expressed differently by various respondents, depending on their personal situations. Divorced women need to have a job to be financially independent, especially those who have kids. One respondent commented, “I found it hard to adjust to my new economic situation since my father

carries all the financial loads for me and my kids, which makes me feel so dependent and disabled.” Another participant commented, “I hate being financially dependent, I can definitely tell how hard it is on my family to cover my children’s expenses.”

Another concern is that some divorced women are likely to remain jobless after marital dissolution because they relocated to another city as a result of the divorce. A respondent stated, “I had to quit my job after divorce and move back to my family, who were living in different city. I couldn’t imagine it would be that hard to find a new job.”

Moreover, during the time of marriage, some women don’t need a job since they are sponsored financially by their husbands. One woman described her situation as follows: “I have never thought that one day I would need a job, although I tried so hard to find a suitable position, but since I’m not a qualified person, that was a huge obstacle.”

5.2.4 Alimony and Child Support

According to 209 participants, refusal by former spouses to pay alimony and child support to their former wives and kids after divorce is a matter of concern. It is important to note that alimony and child support are not only legal obligations, but also mandatory in Islam, where the former spouse is to provide financial support to his previous wife as well as her children (Badawi, 1979).

Evidence in support of this theme can be found in participant comments such as, “the reason why divorced women suffer financially after divorce is because former spouses don’t pay the decided alimony and maintenance after divorce,” “the main issue is my children’s financial support,” and “I suffer a lot from the financial burdens, and my ex-husband never pays alimony or maintenance for his kids.” The sentiment expressed in the quotations embodies the view that divorced Saudi women endure serious financial difficulties after the termination of marriage.

This part of our investigation revealed economic issues with its themes. Before moving to the third part, which explores psychological issues, Figure 6 presents the resulting qualitative model of economic Issue.

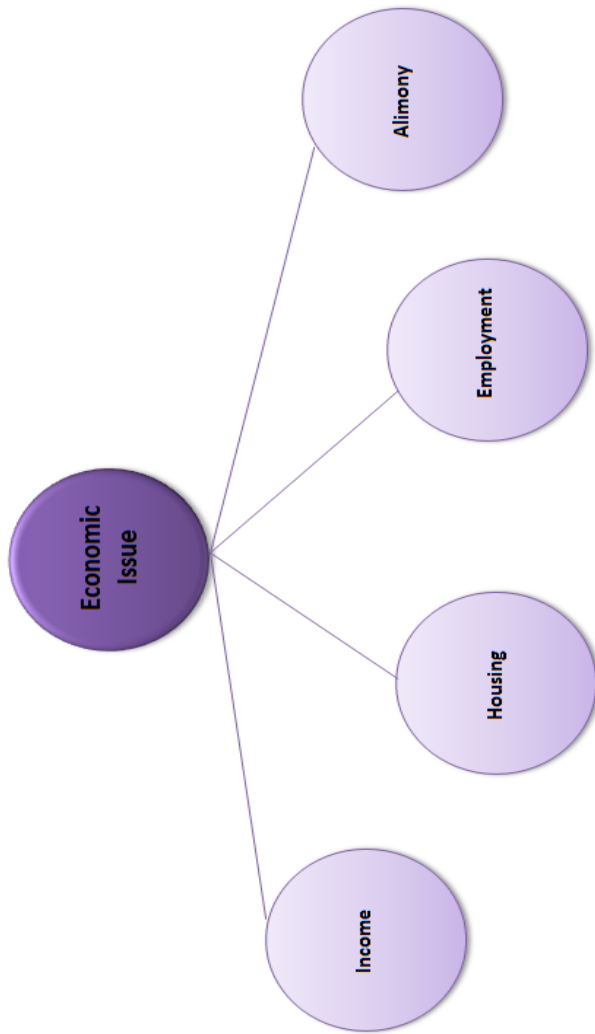


Figure 6 Qualitative Model of Economic Issue for Divorced Saudi Women

5.3 Psychological Issue

Like divorced women across the world, divorced Saudi women experience emotional symptoms after divorce. Themes of psychological issue are emotional disorders that result from divorce, including regret and remorse, emotional vacuum, lack of confidence, and depression. Figure 7 highlights the number of chunks and their relative importance for each identified theme:

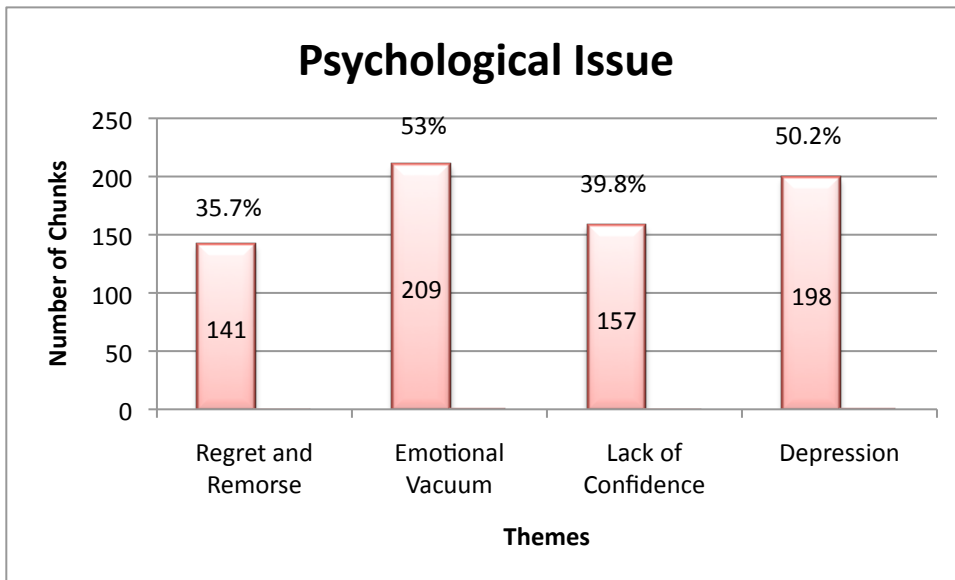


Figure 7 Number of 'Chunks' per Theme in Psychological Issue

Depression and Emotional Vacuum both demonstrate a high rate of responses, followed by Lack of Confidence, and finally Regret and Remorse. Table 7 illustrates definitions of each theme with typical statements.

Table 7: Subthemes of Psychological Issue

Themes	Definition	Number of Chunks	Typical Statements
Regret and Remorse	Divorced women express a sense of sorrow for being divorced, as well as feelings of guilt.	141 (35.7%)	I see myself as a loser,' 'I wish I could go back to my husband.'
Emotional Vacuum	Divorced women indicate their strong need for compassion.	209 (53%)	'Lack of compassion,' 'Divorced women suffer from emotional emptiness,' 'The sense of loneliness and emptiness.'
Lack of Confidence	Divorced women indicate that they suffered from low self-esteem, feelings of worthlessness, helplessness, insecurity, and unattractiveness.	157 (39.8%)	'I lost my confidence,' 'I became more introverted,' 'I can no longer trust in people,' 'I don't think anyone will accept to marry me again,' I feel as an inferior.'
Depression	Divorced women express the feeling of anxiety, frustration, sadness, worry, and restlessness.	198 (50.2%)	'I'm afraid of future,' 'I don't know how my future will be,' 'I feel insecure,' 'I'm marginalized,' 'My friends try to avoid me,' 'I feel lonely,' 'Isolation.'

5.3.1 Regret and Remorse

According to Landman (1987), regret means “a more or less painful cognitive/affective state of feeling sorry for losses, transgressions, shortcomings, or mistakes.” Respondents expressed regret and remorse in the context of feeling that life would have been better if they hadn't sought divorce. Some of the respondents commented: “Divorced women suffer from the negative feeling that is allocated with divorce such as regretting past choices,” “I wish I could have a second chance,” and “If the days go back, I would never leave my husband.”

Such comments suggest that Saudi women experience feelings of regret after divorce.

Presumably, there may be several reasons for them to feel this way, firstly, the decisions they made regarding divorce were done poorly. Secondly, the pressure imposed by family on the divorced woman could be enough to create feelings of regret and remorse. Thirdly, as mentioned earlier in this paper, social stigma within Saudi society causes divorced women to feel remorse and wish to go back their husbands simply to escape stigmatization.

5.3.2 Emotional Vacuum

A total of 209 responses indicated that divorced Saudi women suffer from emotional issues. “Emotional vacuum” and “lack of compassion” were expressions used repeatedly by participants to describe their emotional status and experience. In support of this point, some participants commented “women suffer from emptiness after divorce,” and they also “have a strong need for caring and consideration.” One of the participants also revealed that “feeling hollow is painful.” This issue could be linked to social issues related to relationships with family and friends. When relatives and peers avoid divorced women, this in itself can cause them to feel emotionally vacuumed.

5.3.3 Lack of Confidence

Divorced women are likely to suffer from low self-esteem and a lack of confidence as a consequence of divorce. This issue was raised by 157 of the participants. The following comment illustrates the perception that divorced women have about themselves, and the level of their self-esteem: “Because of our traditions, no one will be interested in me as a wife unless he’s divorced, widowed, or maybe if he accepts me as a second wife.”

5.3.4 Depression

Respondents expressed that they were suffering from depression and frustration as a result of divorce in Saudi Arabia. About 198 responses indicated that, as a result of the loneliness they experienced, they were subjected to varying degrees of depression and frustration. Some commented, “I feel depressed and lonely,” “divorced women suffer

from loneliness and insecurity,” and “I think women who have a job, and financial independence, are more stable in their lives and less depressed.” This issue can also result from a bad relationship with family and friends, as well as a lack of employment. It can be seen from the above analysis that Saudi women experience emotional challenges after divorce.

The third section explored psychological issue; figure 8 illustrates the resulting qualitative model of psychological Issue face by divorced Saudi women.

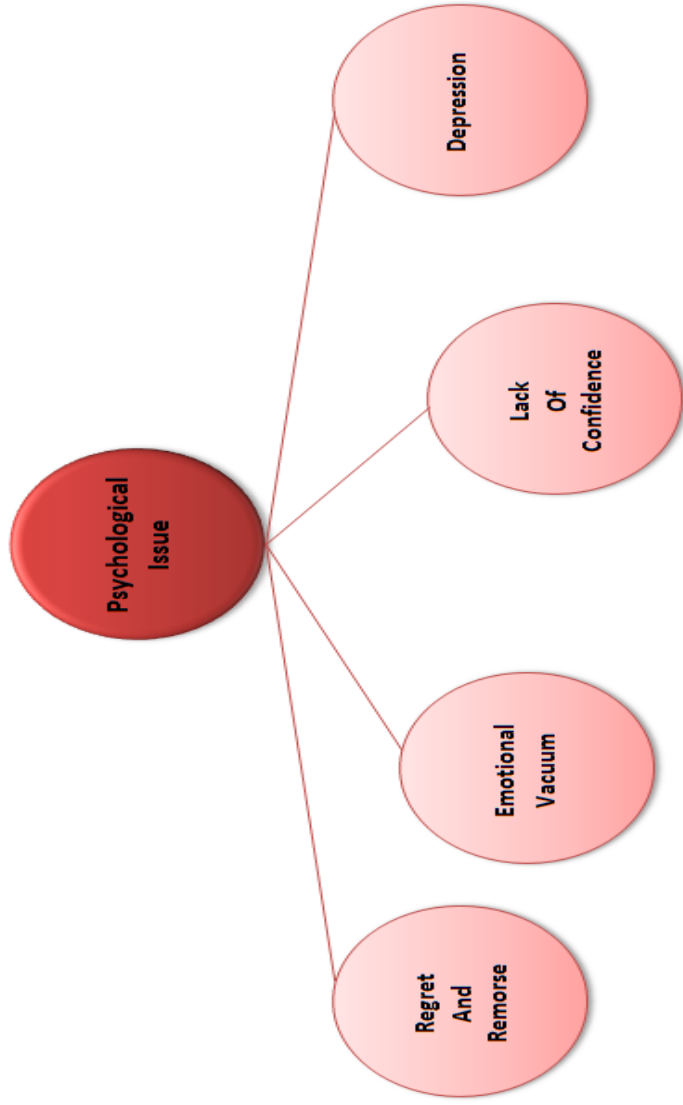


Figure 8 Qualitative Model of Psychological Issue for Divorced Saudi Women

5.4 Legal Issue

Legal issues are linked to the set of rules and regulations regarding family law in Saudi Arabia, and they present a challenge for divorced women. Respondents pointed out serious difficulties with legal processes and practices including the following themes: the imposition of male guardianship, and the lack of knowledge about their legal rights. Figure 9 exemplifies the number of chunks and their relative importance for each selected theme:

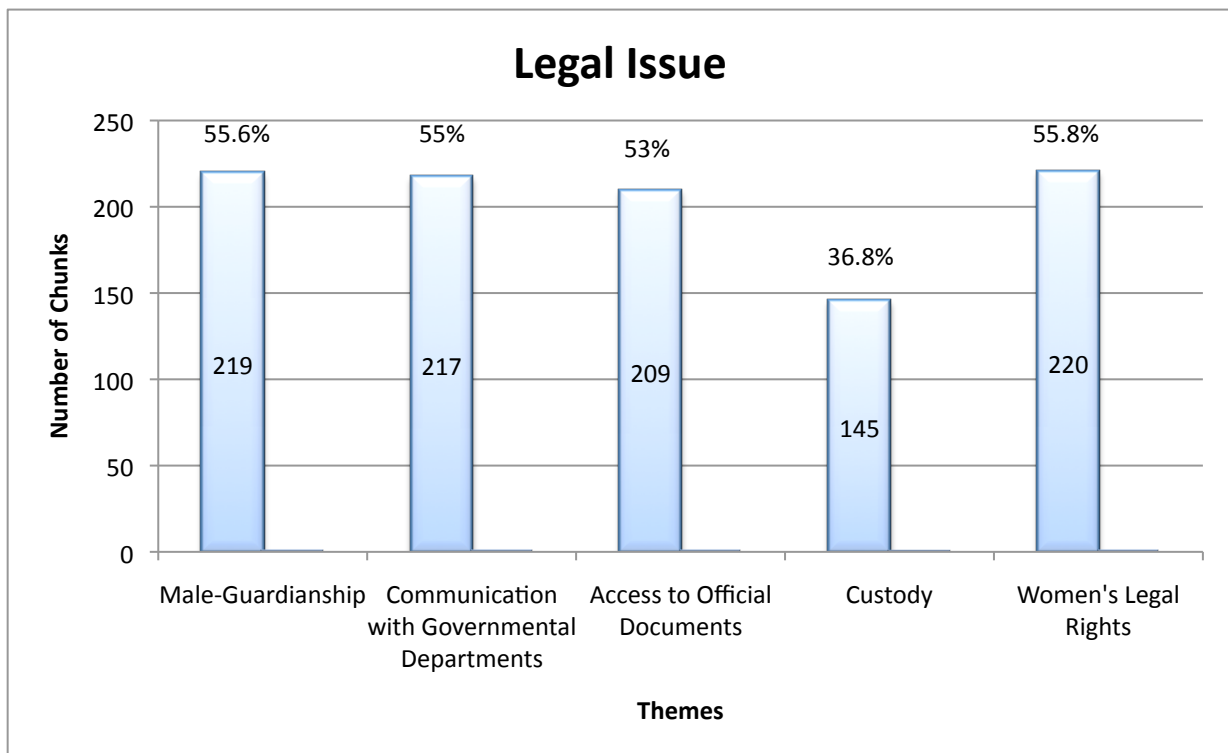


Figure 9 Number of 'Chunks' per Theme in Legal Issue

The number of chunks for all themes is relatively high: women's legal rights came to 55.8%, and male-guardianship was at 55.6%. This could be an indication of the major importance of this particular issue. Table 8 presents a summary of legal issue related themes:

Table 8: Themes of Legal Issue

Themes	Definition	Number of Chunks	Typical Statements
Male-Guardianship	Divorced women indicate that it is mandatory to have a guardian involved in every single aspect of their lives.	219 (55.6%)	‘My life is hooked to my father, brother, son, any male on this earth,’ ‘Nothing can be done in this country without having a male guardian.’
Communication with Governmental Departments	Divorced women indicate that their access to governmental departments is limited	217 (55%)	‘I’m not allowed access to any of the governmental departments without having a male-guardian.’
Access to Official Documents	Divorced women indicate that they can’t issue official documents for their children.	209 (53%)	‘I can’t issue passports for my kids,’ ‘I can’t add my kids to my identification card.’
Custody	Divorced women indicate that they lack the right to child custody.	145 (36.8%)	‘I’m only allowed to see my kids once a week,’ ‘I tried so hard to seek my right to custody,’ ‘I’m deprived of my kids.’
Women’s Legal Rights	Divorced women indicate that they lack knowledge about their personal rights.	220 (55.8%)	‘I had to compromise lots of my rights due to the shallow knowledge I have about my rights’.

5.4.1 Male Guardianship

With reference to 219 responses, the imposition of guardianships was found to be an obstacle for divorced Saudi women participated in this study. Quotes by divorced Saudi women are provided, such as “divorced women have no way to be independent in her life because of the obligatory male-guardian,” who “almost has the authority to control her life.” Some participants argued, “a divorced woman needs a male-guardian for her daily life practices”, such as “applying for a job,” “travelling,” and “owning a house”. While male-guardianships are of great significance in terms of legal issues, the comments

suggest that divorced women are facing limitations by guardians (or a lack thereof) in their daily life practices as well.

5.4.2 Communication with Governmental Departments

As indicated by 217 of respondents, divorced Saudi women of this study lack the ability to communicate with and access governmental departments. One comment specified that “unless women are accompanied with a male-guardian, their access to governmental departments is limited”. The lack of communication with governmental departments as described with some participants includes “presenting in a court,” “claiming a judicial case,” and even communicating with judges or lawyers.

Table 9 presents the definition of the subtheme of communication with governmental departments with typical statements, as well as the number of chunks:

Table 9: Subtheme of Communication with Governmental Departments

Subtheme	Definition	Number of Chunks	Typical Statements
Communication with Courts and Judges	Divorced women indicate that found it difficult to communicate with courts and judges.	157 (39.8%)	“There is a lack of communication with courts especially for females, ‘I wasn’t able to contact with the judge without having a male-guardian.’”

5.4.3 Access to Official Documents

About 209 of respondents commented that divorced Saudi women have limited access to official documents such as passports and identification cards. Some typical statements revealed: “it is almost impossible to issue official documents such as passports, and identification cards for myself by my own,” and “women in my country need to have consent of their male-guardians to access her own official documents.”

As those women can't have a complete freedom in accessing or obtaining their own official documents without a prior consent from their male-guardians, this may indicate that the limited options in legal practices that is available for divorced women in Saudi is mainly a consequence of the imposition of male-guardianship.

5.4.4 Custody

Because divorced Saudi women have limited options in legal practices, this has resulted in considerable problems, including the following subthemes: rules and regulations about women's safety, and communication/access to male children's schools. Table 10 presents definitions of subthemes with typical statements as well as the number of chunks per subtheme:

Table 10: Subthemes of Custody

Subthemes	Definition	Number of Chunks	Typical Statements
Rules and Regulations about Women's Safety	Divorced women indicate that there is a lack of rules and regulations that protect women from mistreatment after divorce.	220 (55.8%)	'There is no firm law that protects women from people around her after divorce,' 'Lack of protection and regulations for women and her kids.'
Communication/ Access to Male Children's Schools	Divorced women indicate that they have limited access to the schools of their male children.	217 (55%)	'I can't communicate with my son's school,' 'I'm not allowed to access my son's school,' 'There is no reasonable reason why I can't go to my son's school,' 'Communication with boys' schools is an issue.'

In regard to the mistreatment of children and women, some participants expressed that "some divorced women may be victims of their ex-husband's abuse," and that according to them there were three reasons for this: "the lack of laws that protect divorced women

from any abusiveness,” “the absence of family law and family courts,” and, “divorced women don’t have enough knowledge about their personal rights.”

One commented: “I have spent years going back and forth to the court claiming custody for my child, who was taken by his psycho father after divorce. My case ended up being denied, even though I provided all the evidence to the court that my former husband is sexually abusing my child. I was only allowed to see my kid for one hour every week.” Her experience suggests how difficult it is for divorced women to claim child custody.

Another comment, “In case a divorced woman was granted custody of her child, her former husband will still control her life.” Single mother can’t “travel with her kids, register them in schools, or even add them to her identification cards without having a consent form from their father” as some respondents commented.

Participants presented a further concern regarding their children, as a total of 217 responses indicated that Saudi women generally have no access to their male children’s schools. This means that divorced women who have male children are more limited than those with female children in terms of access to educational institutions. One woman commented, “it is quite difficult for me as a divorced woman to communicate with my son’s school,” and mentioned “stupid regulations that forbid mothers from entering male-only schools.”

It can be seen from the above analysis that according to respondents’ perceptions the imposition of male-guardianship has an impact on nearly all themes.

5.4.5 Women's Legal Rights

Many comments support that divorced Saudi women don't have enough knowledge about their legal rights, as some indicated: "mostly all the obstacles we face in this country regarding legal issues are because the limited promotions of legal rights by governmental institutions", and "the recognition of women's legal rights is not very well reflected by the society". As a result of this lack of knowledge about legal rights, divorced women may be subjected to mistreatments by others, and or they may be forced to compensate their rights.

This was the final part of this chapter, before moving to chapter 6 and proceeding with Phase-2 analysis, figure 10 displays the resulting qualitative model of legal Issue for divorced Saudi women.

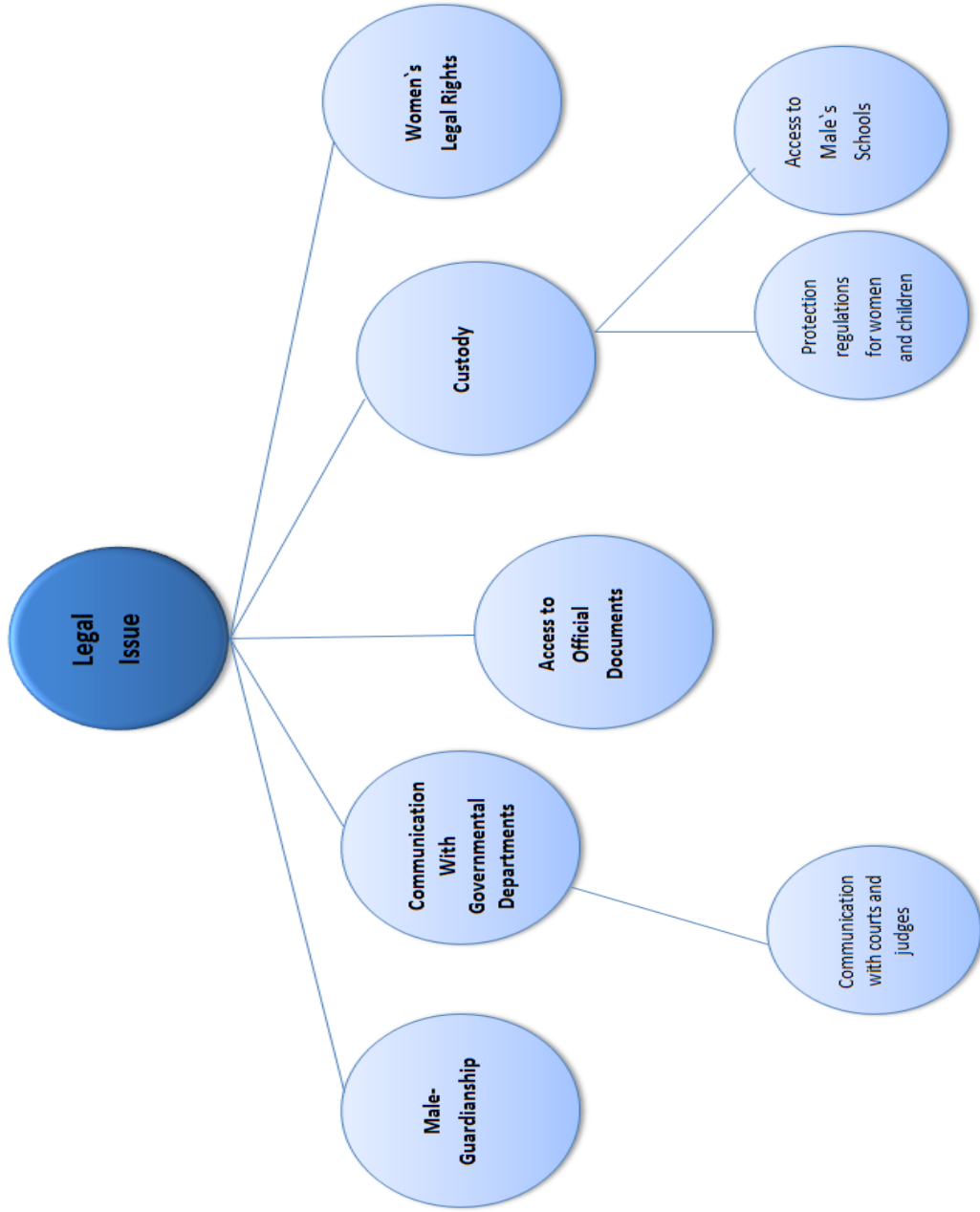


Figure 10 Qualitative Model of Legal Issue for Divorced Saudi Women

Chapter 6: Assessment of the Supporting Role of Online Social Networks²³

This chapter presents the analysis of data collected through Phase-2 methodology including; the description of the sample and the assessment of the supporting role of social network in four issues namely; social, economic, psychological, and legal. The assessment of the support is supplemented by a qualitative analysis in order to interpret the level of support of social networks.

6.1 Description of the Sample (Phase-2)

This section provides the demographic information of respondents. The demographics include geographical location, period after divorce, occupation, and level of education. Other variables are addressed, including the following: most accessed social networks, experience with social networks, frequency of access to social networks, and amount of time spent on social networks. The questionnaire was sent out to 480 potential respondents and 248 forms were completed validly²⁴, which corresponds to 52%.

6.1.1 Geographical Location

Respondents' location was determined using the IP addresses lookup for those who partially or fully completed the questionnaires using the Surveygizmo.com GeoIP database. The respondents were located in major locations in Saudi Arabia, and are listed as follows; the city of Riyadh includes the city of Shaqra, Kharj, and Majma'a; the city of

²³ For specification, we use the expression "social networks" to refer to "online social networks" in the subsequent text.

²⁴ Chapter-4, section 4.6.3 provides more details about the questionnaire.

Makkah; the city of Jeddah includes the cities of Taif and Rabigh; the city of Madina; and finally the city of Dammam including the city of Khobar and Ras Tannoura. The majority of respondents were located in the city of Jeddah.

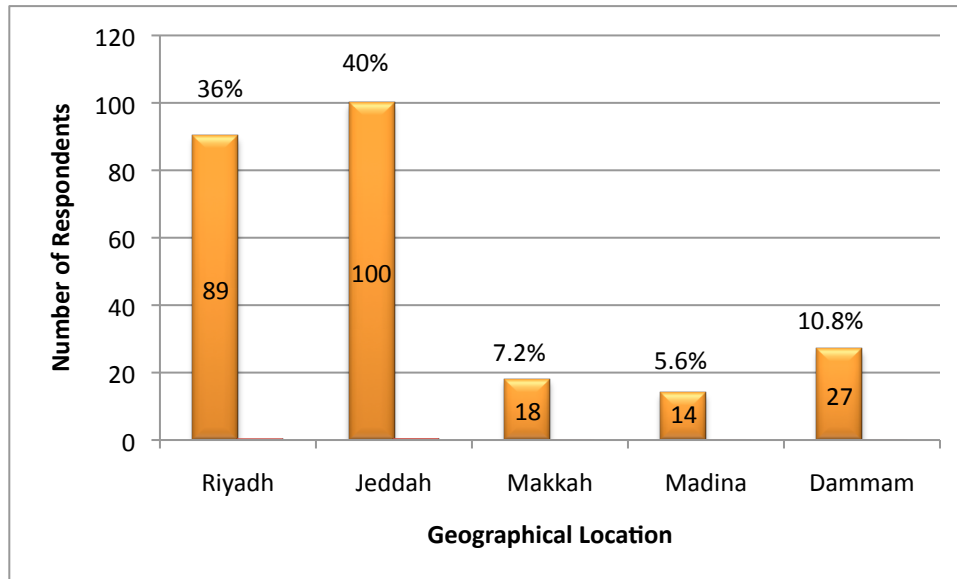


Figure 11 Geographical Locations of Respondents Phase-2

As indicated by Figure 11, 36% of respondents are from Riyadh, 40% are from Jeddah, and 10.8% are from Dammam. Respondents from Makkah cover 7.2% of the sample, where respondents from Madina cover 5.6% only. Jeddah and Riyadh have the highest number of respondents, as they are major cities in Saudi Arabia where the number of divorced women may be higher because of the population size. Higher education, and/or better Internet access might be other valid reasons for this high number of respondents from the two major cities. The snowballing method that was used for recruiting respondents may also have had an impact on the distribution of respondents.

6.1.2 The Period of Time Elapsed after Divorce

In the sample, 27.8% of respondents have been divorced for less than two years, where 41% have been divorced for 2 to 5 years. Respondents who were divorced for 6 to 10

years cover 22.5% of the sample, whereas those divorced for 11 to 20 years represent 7.6%. Finally, 1.2% of the surveyed women have been divorced for more than 20 years.

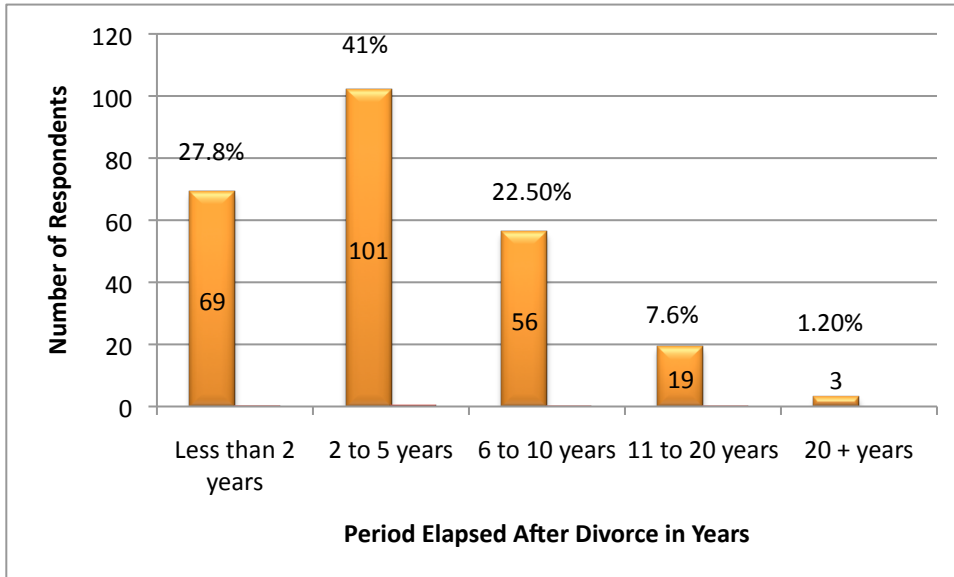


Figure 12 Periods Elapsed After Divorce

Women who have been divorced between less than 2 years to 5 years represent 67% of responses, which indicates that women with recent divorce profiles are well-presented online. They may be seeking support as their divorce experience is still new. Women who have been divorced for 6 years to 20 years are less present online and cover more than a quarter of respondents with 30%, which may indicate that those women are not as in need of as much support as those divorced more recently. Those who have been divorced for more than 20 years are not well-represented and only account for 1.2% of respondents.

6.1.3 Occupation

The most frequently encountered occupation was paid worker with 39% of responses followed by self-employment with 23.3%. About 37% of divorced women are students or family caregivers, each representing 18.5%. Only .08% of respondents are retired.



Figure 13 Role of Occupation of Respondents

The high number of paid worker and self-employed respondents suggests that those women are well represented on the Internet and social networks.

6.1.4 Education Level

In the sample, more than 70% of divorced Saudi women using social networks have a high level of education. Half of the respondents have a bachelor's degree at 51% and 22% have a higher education (graduate degrees). Respondents holding a diploma cover 14.1%, whereas respondents with a high school education cover 11.2%. Only 1.6% of divorced women have less than a high school education.

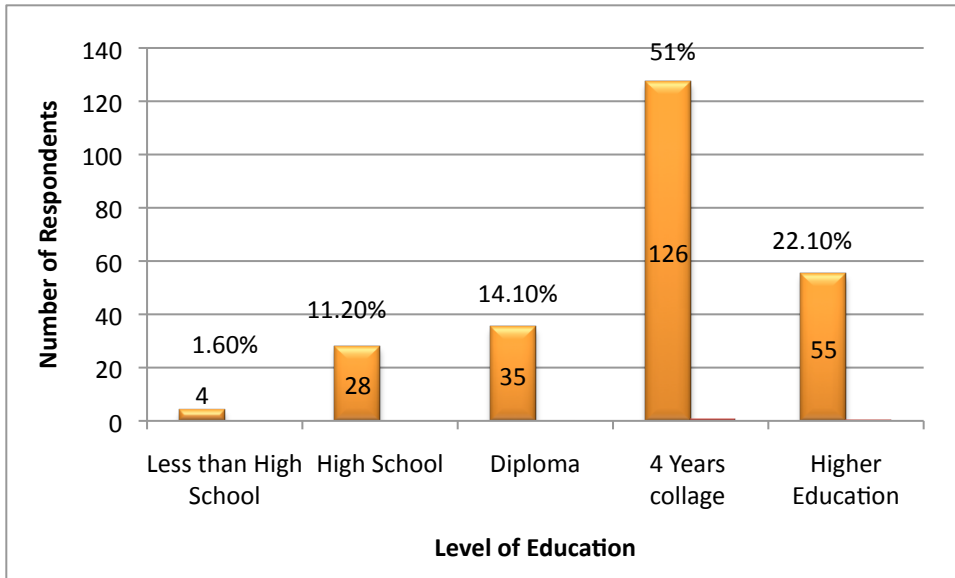


Figure 14 Level of Education of Respondents

6.1.5 Most Accessed Social Networks

The most accessed social network by respondents is Twitter at 63%, followed by Facebook, and YouTube with 45.5% each, and LinkedIn with 18.1%. The least accessed social networks were MySpace and Path with a combination total of 15.6%. Other social networks like Instagram, WhatsApp, and Skype are accessed by 17.3% of respondents.

It is important to mention that the respondents were asked to choose their most accessed networks from a list of popular social networks and were allowed to choose more than one option.

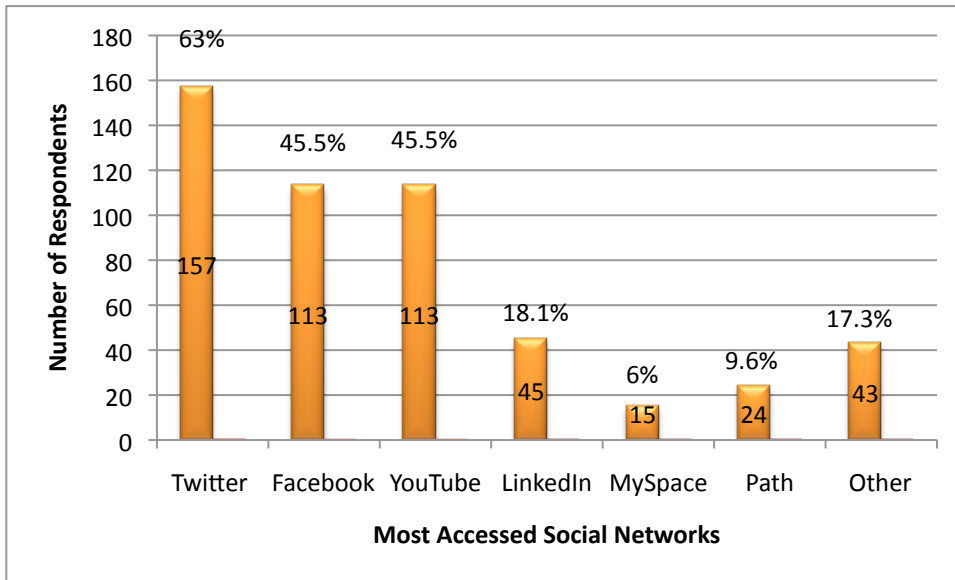


Figure 15 Most Accessed Social Network Sites by Respondents

6.1.6 Experience with Social Networks

Divorce women who have less than two years of experience with social networks cover 29.4% of the sample, while women with 2 and 5 years of experience cover 44%. This may indicate that for some, experience with social networks could be related to their recent divorce. Those who have between 6 to 10 years of experience with social networks cover 20.5% of respondents and 6% have between 11 to 15 years of experience.

Note that divorced women who have 11 to 15 years of experience are more likely to refer to virtual communities as well as social networks.

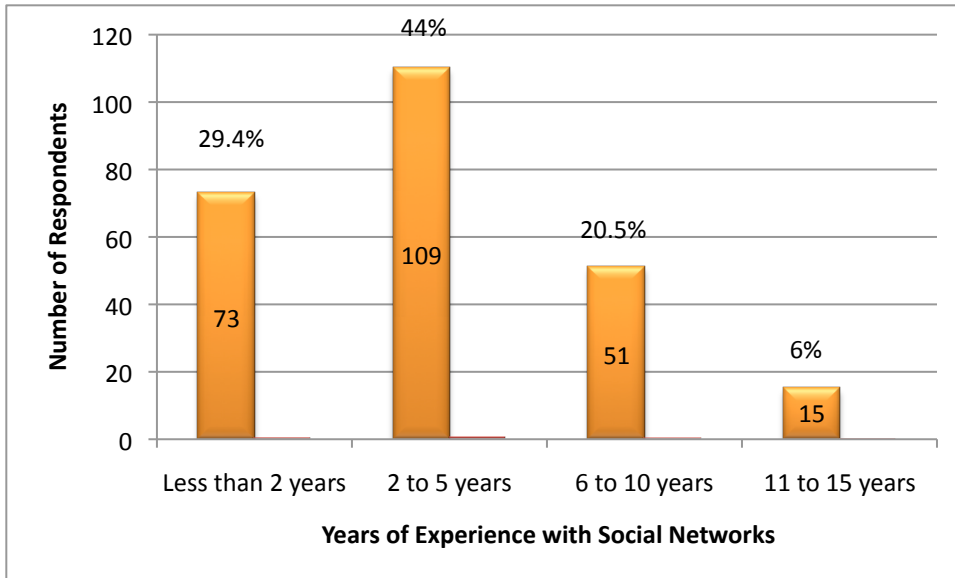


Figure 16 Years of Experience with Social Networks

6.1.7 Frequency of Access to Social Network

About 89% of divorced Saudi women access social networks at least once a day; 49.8% of them access every day, whereas 39% access them several times a day. On the other hand, only 7.6% of respondents access social networks several times a week, and 2.4% access once a week. The least number of respondents with 0.8% only access social networks once every month. The sample therefore addresses the majority as frequent users.

Also, the high number of respondents who frequently access social networks suggests that they are knowledgeable about social networks, and they will be able to provide reliable input for the purpose of this research.

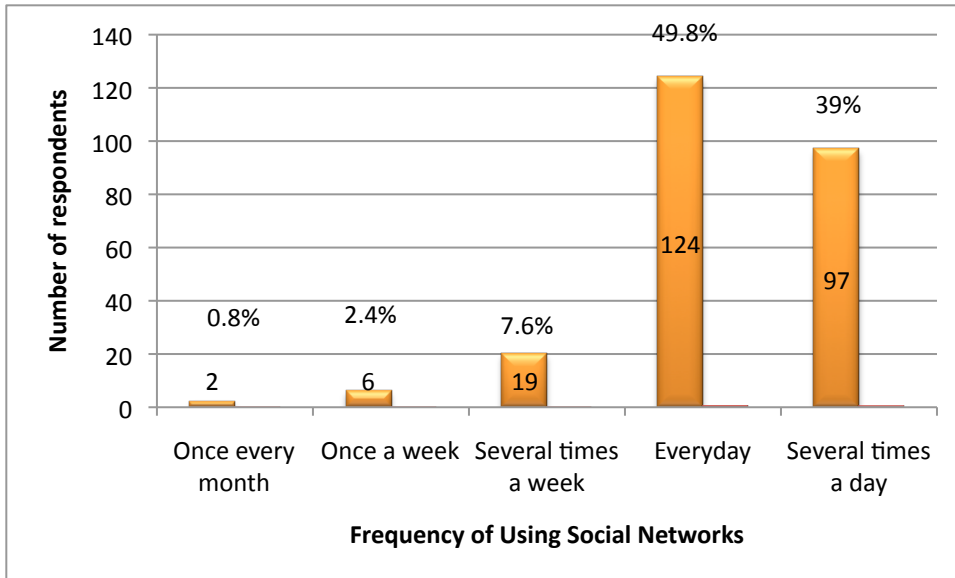


Figure 17 Frequency of Access to Social Networks

6.1.8 Time Spent on Social Network

Divorced Saudi women who spend between 1 and 2 hours on social networks (per access) cover 24.5% of respondents, and those who spend less than 1 hour cover 13.7%. Respondents that spend between 3 and 4 hours on social networks represent 25.7% of the sample, while 20.9% spend between 5 and 7 hours per access, and 15.3% spend more than 8 hours on the networks.

Respondents who spend from 1 to 7 hours on social networks cover more than 70% of the sample.

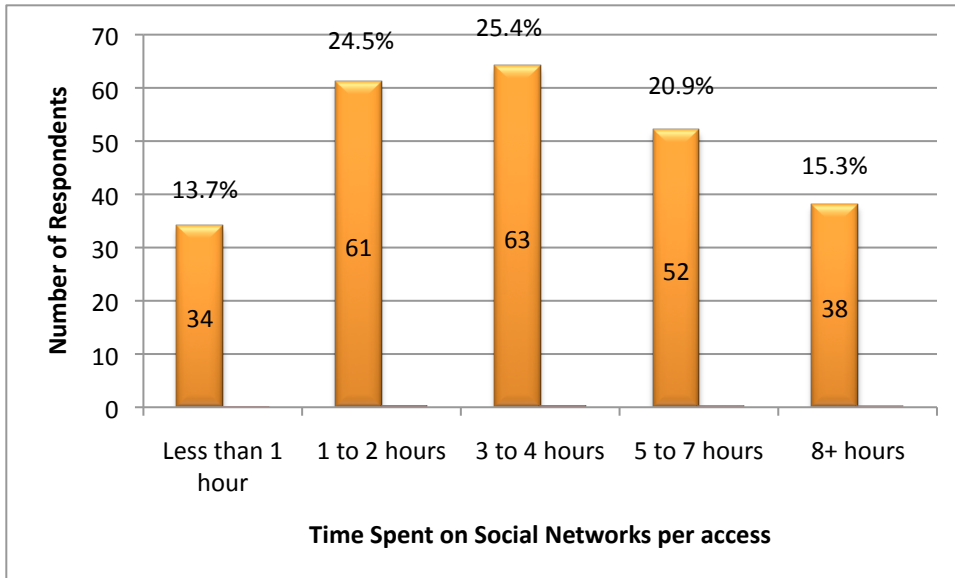


Figure 18 Time Spent on Social Networks per Access

In conclusion, this sample includes respondents with various characteristics. Nearly all divorced women are located in the largest cities of the Kingdom, Jeddah and Riyadh. The greater part of respondents has been divorced between 2 to 5 years; it is reasonable to assume that because divorce has become more widespread recently, most respondents have a recent divorce profile. It should be noted that the majority of divorced women are paid workers, and nearly all respondents have a high level of education.

Respondents have on average accessed 3 social networks (Twitter, Facebook, and Youtube), and the majority has 2 to 5 years of experience using online social networks. It can be readily noted that the largest group of divorced women use social networks every day, and the majority spends between 3 to 7 hours per access on social networks.

Cross tabulation was conducted for the sake of finding potential correlations between variables within the sample, however, no significant links have been found between all the variables.

6.2 Supporting Role of Social Networks

Respondents were asked to determine how supportive social network sites are in facing each of the social, economic, psychological, and legal issues. The following section proceeds with a descriptive statistics analysis of the level of support social networks provide to divorced Saudi women when facing each of the themes within each issue. This is followed by a qualitative analysis that analyses responses to questions regarding the role of social networks support based on the divorced Saudi woman's perspective. The respondents were asked, with an open-ended question, in which way social networks were supportive when facing the themes they selected. This allowed the respondents to explain in detail what kind of support social networks provide.

The text answers are grouped under each related issue to identify respondents' perceptions. The number of answers to the open-ended question doesn't match the number of respondents who completed the survey validly. As 67 of the 248 respondents did answer the open-ended question, this corresponds to 27% of respondents. Typical statements from text answers are used to clarify each point.

6.2.1 Supporting Role of Social Networks in Social Issue

This section presents a descriptive statistics analysis of the level of support described by respondents when facing each of the themes within Social Issue. This is followed by a qualitative analysis in order to interpret the nature of support provided by social networks.

6.2.1.1 Level of Support in Themes of Social Issue

The level of support for each identified theme in the Social Issue is displayed in Figure 19. Respondents receive a low to medium level of support in social stigma, and a slightly higher support in family restrictions.

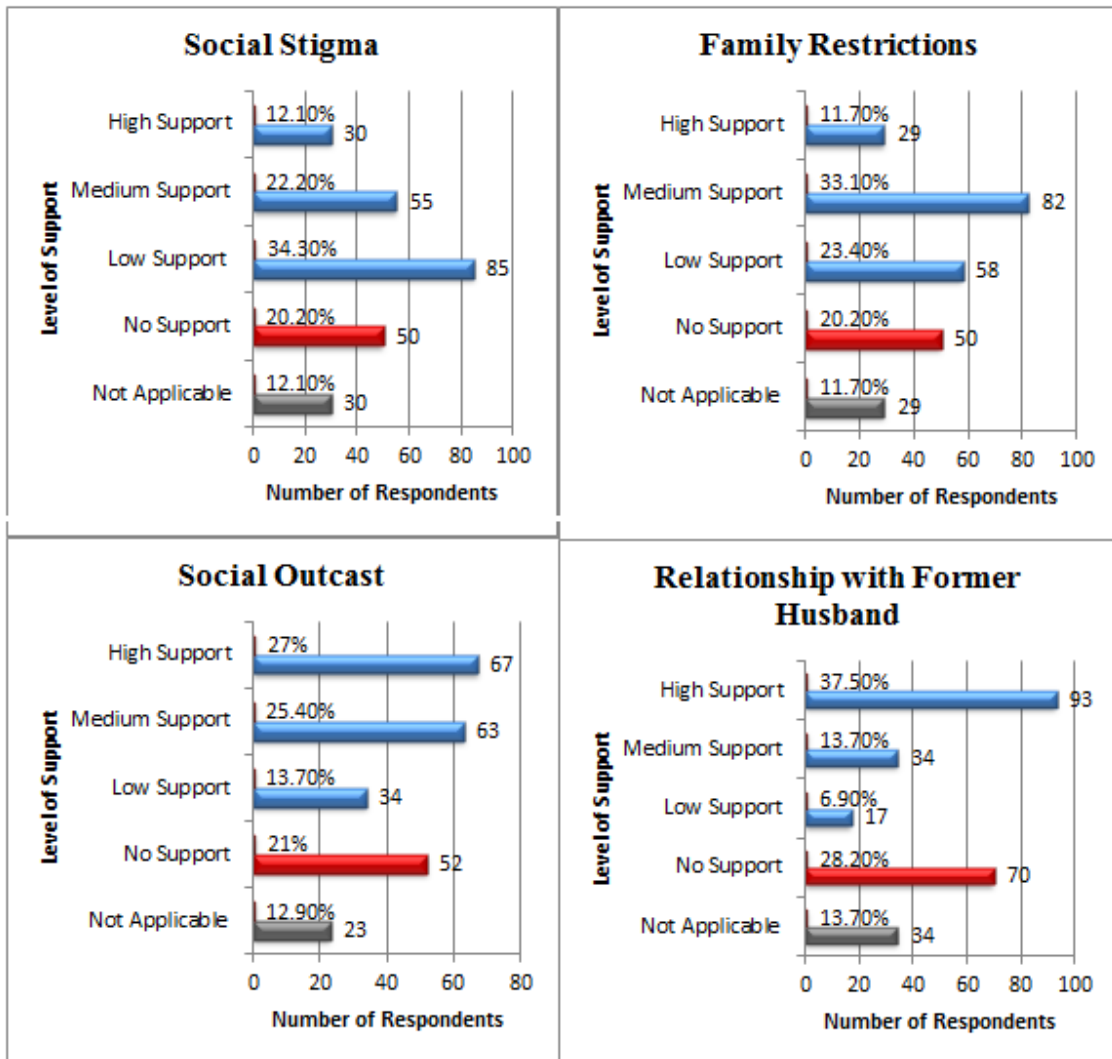


Figure 19 Level of Support in Themes of Social Issue

In social outcast, divorced women obtain a strong level of support from social networks. A possible reason could be the capability of social networks to allow divorced Saudi women to make and meet new friends, which could help decrease social out-casting.

As for the theme of relationship with former husband, we observed two opposite categories of respondents: some receive a high level of support, and others obtain no support.

In order to determine the average support for all themes, we assigned a weight for each of the three support levels in each theme. That is, “Low Support” is 1, “Medium Support” is 2, and “High Support” is 3. We consider that the support is high when the average is greater than 2. The “No Support” is excluded from this calculation as we focus only on levels of support. Figure 20 presents the average amount of support per theme in Social Issue;

Social Issue Themes	Social Stigma	Family Restrictions	Social Outcast	Relationship with Former Husband
Average of Support	1.67	1.83	2.2	2.5

Figure 20 Average of Support per Theme in Social Issue

Although a certain number of respondents don’t experience the same level of support in themes, the calculation of the average of support depict that the support perceived by respondents indicate that the average amount of support in social stigma and family restrictions is almost the same. Similarly, the average amount of support when dealing with former husband and social outcast falls in the same category, as both of them demonstrate an average of high support. To be consistence with the above analysis, the coming section pursues a qualitative analysis.

6.2.1.2 Qualitative Analysis of the Supporting Role in Social Issue

According to the comments of the respondents, social networks play a significant role of support for divorced Saudi women when facing social issue. When facing social stigma, social networks pushed society towards the acceptance of divorce as indicated by the following comments “the society become more aware of divorced women needs,” and “the society started to accept the idea of divorce and divorced women”. Another comment indicates that social networks “helped in spreading awareness between societies regarding divorce issues”. An additional comment states that “social networks helped me spread my thoughts about divorce; it is the time that society changes its negative

stigmatization”. Some comments such as “I became careless of what society think of divorced women”, and “there are plenty of divorced women around the world I’m not the only one”, emphasizes that social networks help divorced Saudi women to be stronger and to face stigmatization by society with a positive attitude.

As for family restrictions, social networks demonstrate a role of support for divorced woman they allow exposure to others in the same situation and they open the mind to new ideas. This is illustrated in the following typical comments: “people around me became more open-minded when they use social networks, it works as a window to the other world,” and it helped in “breaking down boundaries by learning from others.” Because social networks facilitate communications with others, divorced Saudi women were able to deal with the constraints imposed by their families.

For those who have been treated as social outcasts after divorce, social networks helped them to overcome this concern by making new friends, as one woman specified “I was able to make new friends, who accepted me as I am”. Also, networks allow them exchange experiences, which is another means of support as indicated by some respondents. A typical statement exemplifies that “social networks gave the chance to every divorced woman to share her story with others which has two advantages: the first one is the divorced woman could learn from other women who share the same situation, which helps her in accepting the idea of divorce; and the second advantage is that people and society will see divorce from different angle and maybe change their negative belief towards divorced women”. In addition, one woman revealed “It was supportive in a way that I was able to express my point of views”. Another way social networks provide support for divorced Saudi women is by providing objective solutions, as one responded “It is supportive because it allows me to discuss all the above issues and try to find objectives solutions”.

For some divorced women, a relationship with their former husband is considered an obstacle. However, using social networks enabled divorced women to overcome this challenge by facilitating communication between the two parties. It also helped them to

easily communicate with their kids by exchanging pictures or video-calls. Some commented: “It helped in easily communicating with my ex-husband and his family,” and “I use social networks to communicate with my kids, I can see them through Skype and send them my pictures”. This suggests that if children are not living with the mother after divorce, she still can communicate with them through social networks.

The analysis of this section concludes that social networks play a significant supporting role for divorced Saudi women when facing each of the identified themes of Social Issue. (Table 11)

Table 11: Supporting Role of Social Networks in Social Issue

Social Issue Themes	Nature of Support
Social Stigma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing society stigmatization • Increasing awareness of divorce issues • Increasing acceptance and understanding of divorce phenomenon
Family Restrictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breaking boundaries • Openness to others
Social Outcast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making new friends • Exchanging experiences & sharing views • Providing objective solutions
Relationship with Former Husband	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling communication with former husband • Facilitating communication with kids

6.2.2 Supporting Role of Social Networks in Economic Issue

This section presents the descriptive statistics analysis of support level social networks provide to divorced Saudi women when facing economic issue. It also links to results obtained with the qualitative analysis to clarify the nature of support in each theme.

6.2.2.1 Level of Support in Themes of Economic Issue

In Economic Issue, divorced Saudi women get a relatively high level of support when encountering unstable income and employment sufficiency. Figure 21 displays the levels of support for all themes;

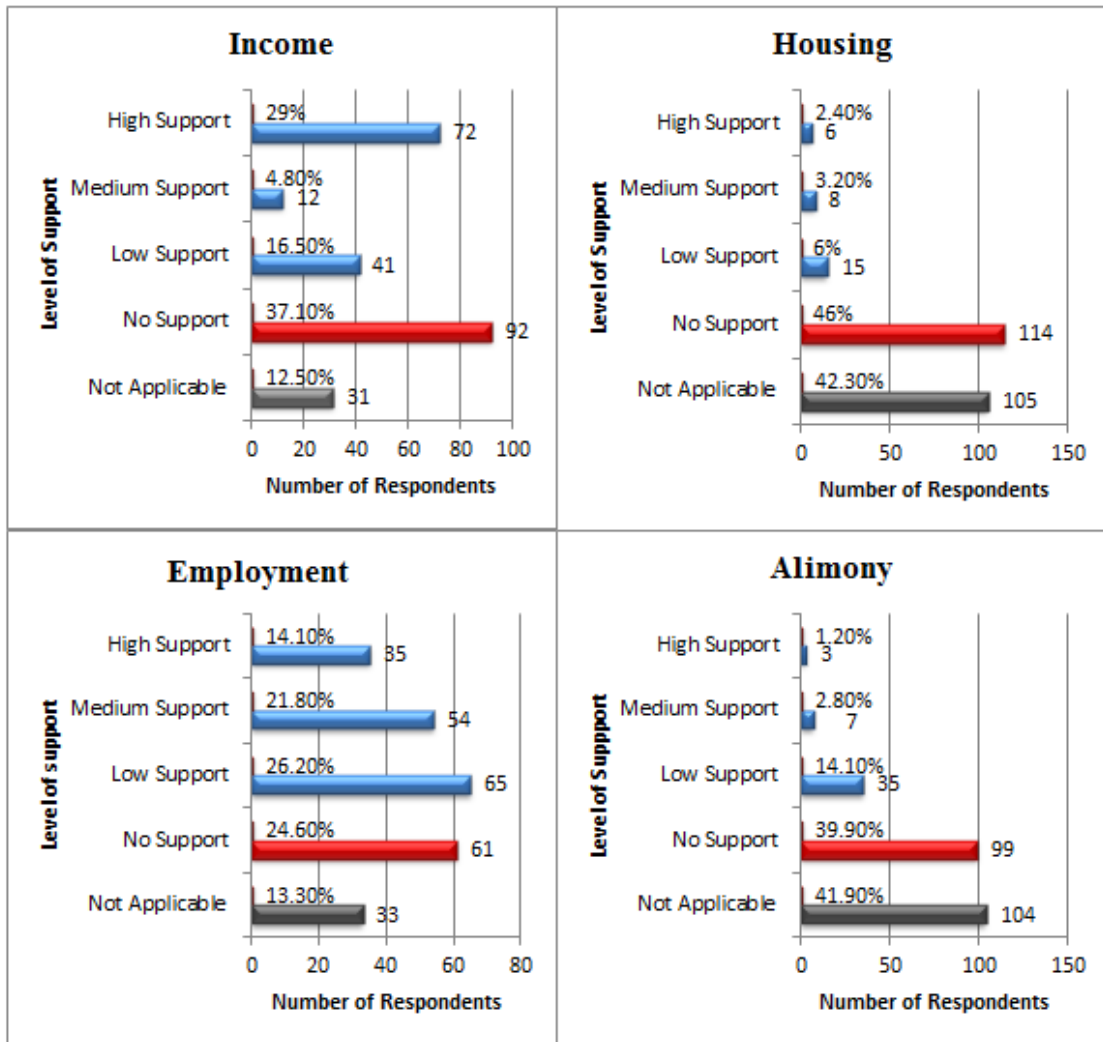


Figure 21 Level of Support in Themes of Economic Issue

For concerns regarding unstable income, social networks represent the two opposite extremes of support. That is, High Support with 29%, and No Support with 37%. The high number of respondents could be an indication that social networks may have provided useful information to divorced women on how to maintain or increase income after divorce.

As for housing, almost no support was observed. Potential support covers only 11.6% of the respondents, while the No Support represents 46%, 42.3% of respondents chose Not Applicable. This could be an indication that housing is not among their concerns, or perhaps those participants don't see a relationship between the role of social networks and housing.

In employment, the level of support by social networks is diverse, where all levels of support are almost equivalent. Generally, the level of support perceived by 48% of divorced women is Low to Medium, and the level of No Support covers 24.6% of respondents.

No significant support by social networks was observed for divorced Saudi women when facing challenges regarding alimony. Since the level of support in alimony is as low as 18.1%, and the level of No Support is as high as 39.9%, divorced Saudi women seem to attain slight or almost no support from social networks. In addition, they may consider that this theme is not among their concern when using social networks.

The average amount of support per theme in Economic Issue is calculated (Figure 22) as follows:

Economic Issue Themes	Income	Housing	Employment	Alimony
Average of Support	2.24	1.68	1.8	1.28

Figure 22 Average of Support per Theme in Economic Issue

The calculation of the support average confirms the preceding descriptive analysis. It can be seen from Figure 22 that the average amount of support by social networks in economic issue is relatively low in three themes. Only challenges related to income have an average of a high support.

6.2.2.2 Qualitative Analysis of the Supporting Role in Economic Issue

The most frequent comments in economic issue were about income and employment only; no remarkable comments were found about the supporting role of social networks for housing or alimony.

When facing income-related concerns, social networks helped divorced Saudi women to maintain and increase their income after divorce. Some respondents argued that they learned online marketing techniques as demonstrated in their typical comments: “the only way that social networks supported me in facing economic issue was by doing online marketing, selling and buying stuff online”, and “I was able to learn new techniques in marketing”.

Social networks helped divorced women to choose their target customers as one stated “I use social networks for selling products exclusively for women”. Besides, social networks enabled divorced women to do online marketing not only locally but also overseas, as indicated here: “exchanging products with merchants from Saudi Arabia and abroad”.

Regarding employment, social networks made it easier for divorced women to search for jobs as some companies use social networks to post job offers. The following typical comments are used as an example; “social networks helped me find jobs and maintain life expenses,” and “there are plenty of job offers and advertisements through social networks; all in all it’s a great tool, helpful and supportive”.

In addition to receiving and searching for job offers, social networks make it easy for divorced women to communicate with business experts and build professional relationships, as one commented “I use social networks to communicate with business experts and consult them in finding suitable jobs”. Also, “sharing successful stories for financial situations after divorce” is another that way support social networks appears to provide support for divorced Saudi women.

Table 12 presents a summary of the supporting role of social networks for the themes of Income and Employment in Economic Issue.

Table 12: Supporting Role of Social Networks in Economic Issue

Economic Issue Themes	Nature of Support
Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning online marketing techniques • Choosing target customers
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receiving job offers • Searching for jobs • Building business relationships • Sharing successful stories

6.2.3 Supporting Role of Social Networks in Psychological Issue

This section presents the descriptive statistics analysis of support levels for themes in Psychological Issue, followed by a qualitative analysis to interpret the obtained results.

6.2.3.1 Level of Support in Themes of Psychological Issue

When experiencing feelings of regret and remorse, the level of support of social networks is strong and diverse. The highest level of support covers 32.7% of respondents, and the total of medium and low support represents 31%.

When experiencing emotional vacuum, the level by support of social networks is also strong and diverse. The highest level of support represents 35.9% of the respondents, and 29.4% receive medium to low levels of support.

Regarding lack of confidence, the support perceived by respondents is divided between High at 34.7%, and Low at 25.8%. Only 14.9% of them receive No Support.

Figure 23 presents the levels of support for each identified theme in Psychological Issue.

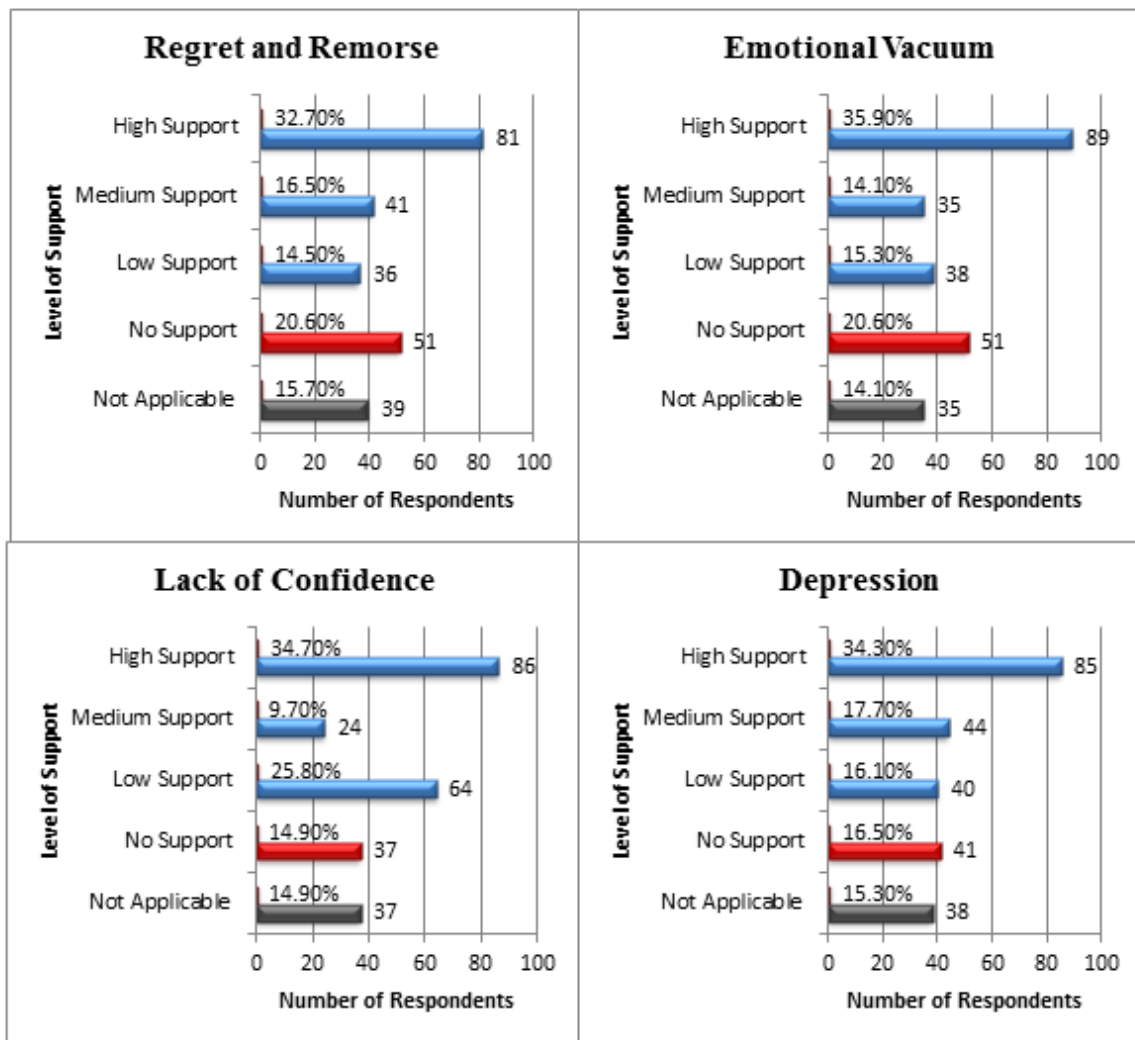


Figure 23 Level of Support in Themes of Psychological Issue

As for depression, the level of support is strong for a third of respondents, and diverse for another third. The highest level of support is exhibited by 34.3% of respondents, where responses representing No Support cover only 16.5%.

Respondents who chose Not Applicable cover 15% of all themes.

Social networks have on average a high level of support in all themes in Psychological Issue. The coming portion highlights the reasons for this High Support. (Figure 24)

Psychological Issue Themes	Regret and Remorse	Emotional Vacuum	Lack of Confidence	Depression
Average of Support	2.28	2.3	2.1	2.26

Figure 24 Average of Support per Theme in Psychological Issue

6.2.3.2 Qualitative Analysis of the Supporting Role in Psychological Issue

According to respondent comments, social networks have a significant, supportive role for divorced Saudi women when facing psychological issues.

Social networks helped some divorced Saudi women to overcome feelings of regret and remorse by allowing them to express their feelings to others, as these typical statements indicate: “after using Twitter I no longer give a chance to whomever to make me feel the sorrow of regret and remorse,” and “it helped me express my pain and regret with others,” and “it helped me forget my painful past.” Such comments could be an indication that by using social networks, divorced women became stronger and able to protect themselves against undesirable feelings.

Another statement suggests that social networks helped divorced women to condense the pain of regret by following and communicating with professionals and consultants: “communication with specialists and psychiatrics helped me in reducing pain and overcoming lots of psychological issues.”

Social networks supported Saudi women in reducing the feeling of emptiness they experienced after divorce. Allowing them to meet new people in similar situations helped in reducing loneliness and defying the emotional vacuum. Actual comments specified: “an absolute encouragement in preventing emotional vacuum,” and “I found it useful to share what in my mind and easily find who listen to me so I don’t feel lonely.” A similar comment was, “I like how there are plenty of people on social networks who are willing to listen to my problems and provide me with tips and solutions,” and “meeting people

with same exact issues and situations make me feel better.” Meeting new people resulted in “fighting loneliness and forget the fact of being divorce,” as one woman noticed.

By using social networks, divorced Saudi women were able to increase their self-confidence as some observed, “when I communicate with people who talk nicely to me as a divorced woman I felt more confident” and “It helped me in getting rid of my self-flagellation.”

Furthermore, social networks supported divorced women by pushing them towards self-development, as one mentioned, “It is supporting when searching for websites that is helpful for self-development,” and another said, “social networks increased my knowledge and taught me that life doesn’t stop at the word divorce.”

When facing the feeling of depression, the support divorced Saudi women obtained from social networks helped reduce stress and overcome frustration. One woman pointed out, “I use social networks in searching for suitable solutions to overcome bad feelings and eliminate stress.” Another comment was, “I was able to find some solutions that helped me control my emotions.”

Furthermore, some divorced women expressed that social networks helped in reducing depression by providing entertainment, as one stated, “spending an entertaining time online helps in forgetting the pain and overcoming frustration” and another said, “killing leisure time which helps in refining the mood.”

Besides entertainment, social networks provided divorced women with guidance that helped them strengthen their faith and religious beliefs. “It is supportive indeed, by watching lectures for religious figures on YouTube, it increases and strengthens my faith and makes me stronger and solid,” one woman commented.

Table 13 summarises the role of support by social networks for each identified themes in Psychological Issue.

Table 13: Supporting Role of Social Networks in Psychological Issue

Psychological Issue Themes	Nature of Support
Regret and Remorse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing regret and remorse • Condensing pain • Enabling communication with consultants and specialists
Emotional Vacuum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminating emotional vacuum • Meeting new people • Reducing loneliness
Lack of Confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing self-esteem • Improving self-development • Raising self-confidence
Depression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing stress • Overcoming frustration • Providing entertainment

6.2.4 Supporting Role of Social Networks in Legal Issue

This section provides a descriptive statistics analysis of the level of support provided by social networks for themes in Legal Issue. It continues with a qualitative analysis for the interpretation of results.

6.2.4.1 Level of Support of Themes in Legal Issue

Social networks show a relatively low level of support in all themes. In challenges regarding male-guardianship, the overall level of support covers only 14.1% of respondents, while the level of No Support covers 16.9% of respondents. This makes the level of No Support higher than the level of Low Support. Figure 25 exemplifies the level of support for each theme in Legal Issue.

As for concerns regarding communications with governmental departments, social networks demonstrate a diverse level of support; however, the overall level of support is relatively low.

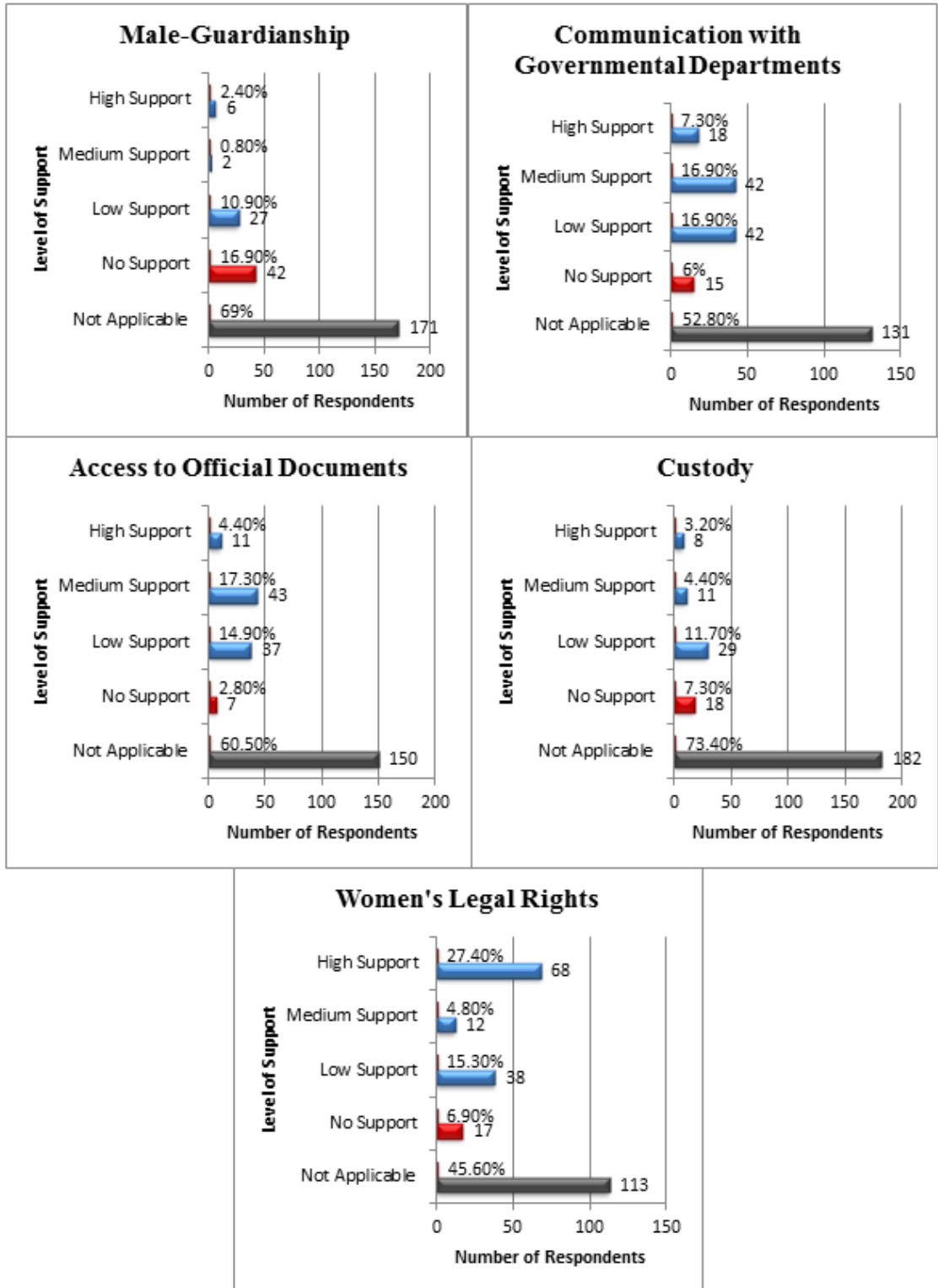


Figure 25 Level of Support in Themes of Legal Issue

Similarly, the overall support divorced Saudi women gain in regards to official document access is 36.6%. The No Support level covers only 2.8% of respondents, and the overall level of support is moderately low.

In challenges related to custody, the overall level of support is significantly low. Only 19.3% of respondents found social networks to be supportive, where 7.3% of divorced women gained no support.

As for women’s legal rights, 27.4% of divorced women receive a high level of support from social networks, which may indicate that social networks make information about women’s legal rights more easily available.

It’s worth mentioning that the largest portion of respondents did not establish a relationship between social networks and Legal Issue. Nearly all respondents chose “Not Applicable,” which could be due to the fact that discussing legal issues online is a sensitive matter in Saudi Arabia, as there is restriction over what can be discussed online (Al-Saggaf, 2011). It could also be for the reason that women in Saudi Arabia are less interested in discussing legal issues (Al-Saggaf & Weckert 2006).

Calculating the average of the level of support for each theme (Figure 26) confirms that divorced Saudi women receive a relatively low support level through social networks when facing legal issues. The average of support for each theme matches the results in figure 25; only aspects related to women’s legal rights have a significantly high level of support.

Legal Issue Themes	Male-Guardianship	Communication with Governmental Departments	Access to Official Documents	Custody	Women Legal Rights
Average of Support	1.4	1.76	1.7	1.56	2.25

Figure 26 Average of Support per Theme in Legal Issue

The lowest average of support relates to the challenges of male-guardianship. In comparison with the previous issues, Legal Issue has the lowest average of support except for women's legal rights. The qualitative analysis provides some explanations on the nature of support in Legal Issue.

6.2.4.2 Qualitative Analysis of the Supporting Role in Legal Issue

Respondent answers concluded that social networks have no remarkable role of support for divorced Saudi women when facing legal issues such as the imposition of male-guardianship and custody. Even though some comments indicated that social networks "helped in communicating with external relations like governments," and allowed them to "communicate with a different group of lawyers and legal figures like judges," women still need their male-guardian to consent to their daily life practices.

According to respondents, the most significant role of support by social networks to divorced Saudi women was spreading legal awareness. One woman commented, "social networks helping divorced Saudi women become aware and more knowledgeable of rules and regulation." Other comments used for emphasis are, "access to social networks helped me in thinking legally, and know my rights," and "finding full answers for most of legal questions." Using social networks allows divorced Saudi women to "become knowledgeable of women rules and regulations," as one mentioned.

Some divorced women may suffer from legal issues only because they lack the knowledge of their own legal rights, as one respondent commented, "I was ignorant of my rights, I lost the custody of my daughter; however, after participating in social networks I was able to understand my legal situation and therefore I was able to legally restore my daughter after spending 4 years. It wasn't a nice journey though, I suffered a lot, and I still don't have the alimony and official documents."

Freedom of expression is another significant role of support that social networks afford to divorced Saudi women, as one stated, “social networks are a free space for divorced Saudi women to express their legal views and share legal thoughts with others.” Additional comments suggested that “the freedom of expression” is one of the most important features that social networks provided to “not only divorced Saudi women, but also the whole society.”

Gaining legal support from legal figures and practitioners is an additional role of support, as reported by some respondents. Actual quotes explained that social networks afford “guidance and recommendation from people with legal specialties” for divorced Saudi women by allowing “searching for similar issues and seeking legal support.”

On the other hand, some comments suggested that although social networks are very supportive tools, they are not helpful for legal issues, as one commented, “legal issues would never be solved virtually; it has to be solved in actual world first.”

Social networks are “not helpful because Saudi women can’t do anything without male guardianship,” and “communicating with governmental departments is impossible.” Another respondent said, “Social network doesn’t support divorced women in any way.” Such comments suggest that divorced Saudi women still suffer from legal issues even with the slight support they may get from social networks. This could lead to a conclusion that unless information about legal issues is properly addressed online, the support social networks may provide to divorced Saudi women will remain limited.

Table 14 displays the role of support by social networks for divorced Saudi women in facing Legal Issues.

Table 14: Supporting Role of Social Networks in Legal Issue

Legal Issue Themes	Nature of support
Communication with Governmental Departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enabling communication with governmental departments• Facilitating communication with lawyers and judges
Women's Legal rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increasing knowledge of legal rights• Spreading awareness of legal rules and regulations• Enabling freedom of expression• Gaining legal support

Chapter-6 covered Phase-2 analysis by describing the sample and assessing the support level provided by social networks to divorced Saudi women when facing each of the selected issues. This analysis fulfilled the research goal in determining the nature of support that social networks provide to divorced Saudi women. The coming chapter proceeds with key findings, discussions of results, and thesis conclusion.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This chapter presents a discussion of the results drawn from this research, as well as the major contributions of this thesis, and a summary of the key findings. The recommendations of this research are outlined along with future research; we also note research limitations.

7.1 Review of Major Contributions

This study set out to explore key issues divorced Saudi women are facing; we have identified the dimensions of these issues, the classifications and the extent of each identified issue. The study has also sought to assess the supporting role social networks are likely to provide to divorced Saudi women when facing each of the identified issues. Upon reviewing the limited literature on this subject, specifically in the context of divorce in Saudi Arabia, a methodology in two phases was elaborated in an attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the key issues divorced Saudi women face within their society?
2. What role of support do social networks likely provide to divorced Saudi women?

Based on a qualitative methodology, major challenges faced by divorced Saudi women were identified, which resulted in four qualitative models: social, economic, psychological, and legal. Also, we assessed the supporting role of social networks regarding these four major challenges by qualitatively analysing comments provided by divorced women.

Reviewing literature about social networks in a Saudi context, and highlighting the impact of specific aspects of cultural characteristics on Saudi society is another contribution to this study. A solid foundation was developed by describing the types and main processes of divorce in Saudi Arabia, and providing an overview of family law practices in Gulf Cooperation Council countries

7.2 Key Findings and Discussions

When exploring the role of support provided by social networks, two dimensions are considered: the level of support and the nature of support. Upon analysing data collected through Phase-1 and Phase-2, the findings suggest that social networks provide support in levels ranging from substantial to light in issues and their themes. We provide a synopsis of those findings where the “Extent of Support” is the number of respondents that perceived positive support and the “Average of Support” is a measurement from 1 to 3 of the support levels (Table 15).

Table 15: Overview of Findings

Issue	Themes	Extent of Support	Average of Support	Nature of Support
S O C I A L	Social Stigma	68.6%	1.67	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing society stigmatization • Increasing awareness of divorce issues • Increasing acceptance and understanding of divorce phenomenon
	Family Restrictions	66.1%	1.83	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breaking boundaries • Openness to others
	Social Outcast	68.2%	2.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making new friends • Exchanging experiences & sharing views • Providing objective solutions
	Relationship with Former Husband	58.1%	2.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling communication with former husband • Facilitating communication with kids

	Issue Themes	Extent of Support	Average of Support	Nature of Support
E C O N O M I C	Income	50.3%	2.24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning online marketing techniques • Choosing target customers
	Housing	11.6%	1.68	(no comment)
	Employment	62.1%	1.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receiving job offers • Searching for jobs • Building business relationships • Sharing successful stories
	Alimony	18.1%	1.28	(no comment)

Issue	Themes	Extent of Support	Average of Support	Nature of Support
P S Y C H O L O G I C A L	Regret and Remorse	63.7%	2.28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing regret and remorse • Condensing pain • Enabling communication with consultants and specialists
	Emotional Vacuum	65.3%	2.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminating emotional vacuum • Meeting new people • Reducing loneliness
	Lack of Confidence	70.2%	2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing self-esteem • Improving self-development • Rising self-confidence
	Depression	68.1%	2.26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing stress • Overcoming frustration • Providing entertainment

Issue	Themes	Extent of Support	Average of Support	Nature of Support
L E G A L	Male-Guardianship	14.1%	1.4	(no comment)
	Communication with Governmental Departments	41.1%	1.76	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling communications with governmental departments • Facilitating communications with lawyers and judges
	Access to Official Documents	36.6%	1.7	(no comment)
	Custody	19.3%	1.56	(no comment)
	Women's Legal Rights	47.5%	2.25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing knowledge of legal rights • Spreading awareness of legal rules and regulations • Enabling freedom of expression • Gaining legal support

The highest level of overall support that social networks provide to divorced Saudi women is when they face psychological issue, followed by social issue. These results are aligned with the results found in the questionnaire's open-ended questions. The 67 respondents who have responded to the open-ended questions have expressed a large number of explanations about the nature of support that social networks provide.

Respondents indicated that social networks are mostly supportive when facing social and psychological issue, moderately supportive when facing economic issue, and relatively unsupportive when facing legal issue.

In the context of social and traditional practices of the Saudi society, divorced women suffer a traumatic experience with difficult consequences in many aspects of life. Since the male family members have the power and carry authority over female family members, women are subjected to social and economic discrimination. They may become excluded or rejected by the family, peers and friends.

Some divorced women are also subjected to physical and psychological abuse at the hands of former husbands who refuse to provide alimony, or deprive their wives custody of their children. As a result, divorced women could be affected by lower income levels; they cannot secure themselves financially or protect themselves against a former husband's abuse. It shows in the synopsis table (Table 15) that those who find jobs may still suffer from social stigma.

Divorced women may also suffer from legal issues. Although family law in Saudi Arabia contains legal rules and regulations about rights and protections for divorced women, these rules may not be fully implemented by courts and judges. As a result, divorced women in Saudi Arabia lack knowledge of women's legal rights relating to divorce, including custodial rights; they also find it difficult to communicate with courts and judges.

On the other hand, social networks helped in reducing the negative impact of some of the above issues. The most significant role of support provided by social networks is the increase of awareness about divorce issues. Saudi society started to deal with divorced women differently as a result, and gradually showed some acceptance by reducing the stigmatization against divorced women.

Those who suffered from social out-casting were able to make new friends and retrieve their sense of belonging. As well, for those who were subjected to abuse by a former husband, social networks made it easy to communicate with their formers and children without needing to be in the same physical location. As for financial security, social networks helped some women to increase their income after divorce by searching and finding suitable jobs, or even by buying and selling products online.

Social networks helped divorced women to overcome some psychological issues by reducing regret and remorse, illuminating emotional vacuum, raising self-confidence, and overcoming depression and frustration. It allowed them to meet with new people, sharing and exchanging experiences.

In terms of legal issue, the only remarkable support that social networks provide to divorced Saudi women is that it helped them increase their awareness of women's legal rights in divorce. No remarkable support was found in other aspects of legal issue, and that may be because legal issue are regional customs of traditional family laws in Saudi society, which can't be modified by the public. Such issues need to be solved in the physical realm first.

In conclusion, social networks may be supportive for divorced women caught in socially, emotionally or economically problematic circumstances, but not for those who experience difficulties due to the legal issues surrounding them. It is worth mentioning that although legal issue is the most critical among other issues, to many divorced Saudi women the support perceived from social networks in this issue is significantly low.

7.3 Recommendations

The findings of this research are useful to determine what should be done for the divorced Saudi women, as well as social networks sites. The gap between the challenges identified by the divorced Saudi women and the degree of support they receive from online social networks allows formulating a number of recommendations to increase the level of support they are likely to get:

Social Issue

- It appears urgent to understand why divorce rates are increasing in Saudi Arabia. Doing this will help the decision-makers to take various legal and social steps to decrease rising divorces rates and to improve the position of divorced women.
- A set of rules should be established to protect divorced women from any abusive source; ensuring they be treated fairly and receive the rights that they are guaranteed under the Islamic law.

Economic Issue

- Activating the list of privileges provided for divorced women by the Saudi ministry of social affairs. Doing this will help decreasing financial challenges.

Psychological Issue

- It would be appropriate for institutions to develop programs dealing with the harmful impact of divorce on the family as a whole, and particularly on women and children.

Legal Issue

- The Saudi government must implement the existing legislation that protects divorced Saudi women's rights, and highlight the social constraints they face.
- Serious considerations in promoting information about women legal rights should be considered by social professionals and agencies.
- The government should implement counselling programs on divorce processes and rights available for divorced women.

7.4 Limitation of the Thesis

The shortage of literature about key issues affecting divorced Saudi women constitutes a limitation to this study. Sufficient literature would have been of greater support to the thesis analysis. Very little studies have identified divorce and divorce-related consequences in Saudi Arabia.

Using convenient and snowballing sampling based on online survey as a tool of data collection made it difficult to guarantee representation of the population of divorced Saudi women. In addition, snowballing could introduce biases. Using a structured sampling would have been helpful in identifying and clarifying the profile of each respondent. Nevertheless, the larger number of respondents in our study allowed us to reach the saturation criteria in qualitative analysis.

As this study focused exclusively on divorced women in Saudi Arabia, small link between divorced women across the world and those in Saudi was provided. A linkage between divorced Saudi women with other divorced women worldwide would have possibly allowed for a deeper interpretation of our results.

Finally, a larger number of comments to the open-ended question regarding the nature of support by social networks may have added more precise interpretation to our findings about levels of support.

7.5 Future Research

This thesis is among the first academic research on the supporting role provided by social networks to divorced Saudi women. There exist many opportunities to conduct further research on this topic. Similar studies could be conducted, adding the objectives of identifying the profiles of respondents. In this study cross tabulation was conducted for the sake of finding relation between socio-demographic variables describing the sample, however, no significant links have been found. Based on social support theory more explicit hypothesis could be considered following the results came out of this thesis. For example, research questions such as the following could be asked: “what is the impact of such variables as those defined in our sample (geographical locations, occupation, level of education, etc.) on the level of support perceived by divorced Saudi women?”

Data was collected based on the perspective of divorced Saudi women. A similar study could be done about divorced women in Saudi Arabia but from a legal-professional point of view. For instance, in this thesis divorced women were asked to explain the key issues and challenges they face, and then rate the supporting role of social networks. A similar question could be asked to legal-professional figures regarding the status of divorced women in Saudi Arabia.

Although the available information on divorce rates in Saudi Arabia is vast, this information lacks the explanation of growing divorce rates. Therefore, more professional or academic studies on the causes and consequences of divorce in the Kingdom have to be conducted, and more specifically, studies on the impact of social networks on the growing divorce rates.

We hope that this study will be a stepping-stone for additional research in the future

References

- Abdul Jalil, Z. & Sibai, H. (2006). *Factors influencing the rise in divorce rates between the Saudi families: An analytical study in a sample of divorced women in Jeddah* (Master's thesis). King Abdul-Aziz University, Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- Al Gharaibeh, F. Bromfield, N. (2012). *An analysis of divorce cases in the United Arab Emirates: A rising trend*. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, 53, 436-452. doi: 10.1080/10502556.2012.682896
- Al Salem, A.A. (2005). *The impact of the Internet on Saudi Arabian EFL females' self-image and social attitudes* (Unpublished PhD Thesis). Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana.
- Aldossary A., While A., Barriball L. (2008). *Health care and nursing in Saudi Arabia*. *International Nursing Review*, 2008, 55(1), 125–128.
- Alexa.com. (2012). *The Top 500 Sites on the Web*. Viewed 1 June 2013.
<http://www.alexa.com/topsites>
- Aljabre, A. A. (2013). *Social Networking, Social Movements, and Saudi Arabia*. A Review of Literature. *ARPN Journal of Science and Technology*, vol. 3, no. 2.
- Al-Khatib, S. (2009). *Social changes and its effect on the increasing divorce rates in Saudi Arabia from the point of view of Saudi Women*. Retrieved from
http://spc.kau.edu.sa/Files/320/Researches/54879_25188.pdf
- Al-Krenawi & Graham, J. R. (2004). *Somatization Among Bedouin-Arab Women*. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 42:1-2, 131-143.
- Allfacebook.com. (2013). *Facebook Has 1.15B Monthly Active Users, But How Many Are Invalid?* AllFacebook, July 26th. http://allfacebook.com/form-10q-invalid-accounts_b122538

- Al-Lily A.E.A., (2011). *On line and under veil: Technology-facilitated communication and Saudi female experience within academia. Technology in Society.*
doi:10.1016/j.techsoc.2011.03.005,from:
<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0160791X11000066>
- AL-Mukhtar, Rima. (2011). *Divorced women in Kingdom struggle to find social acceptance.* ArabNews. <http://www.arabnews.com/node/364717>
- Al-Munajjed, M. (2010). *Divorce in Gulf Cooperation Council Countries: Risks and Implications.* Ideation Center Insight. Retrieved from <http://www.ideationcenter.com>
- Al-Munajjed, M., (1997). *Women in Saudi Arabia today.* St. Martin's Press, New York.
- Alramlawi,S. (2006). *Internet as a main reason for increasing divorce rates between youths in Saudi Arabia.* Alriyadh.com. Retrieved from
<http://www.alriyadh.com/2006/03/20/article139463.html>
- Alriyadh.com (2003). *The Number of Internet Users in Saudi Arabia Will Exceed 4.5 million by the end of the year 2005.* AL Riyadh newspaper, Saudi Arabia. April 2
- Al-Saggaf Y. (2003), *Online Communities in Saudi Arabia: An Ethnographic Study*, PhD thesis. Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, AUS.
- Al-Saggaf, J. Weckert. (2004).*The effects of participation in online communities on individuals in Saudi Arabia.* ACM SIGCAS Computers and Society, 34 (1). Available at
<http://delivery.acm.org/10.1145/1060000/1050307/904.html?key1=1050307&key2=7225602621&coll=GUIDE&dl=GUIDE&CFID=70175536&CFTOKEN=34039561>
- Al-Saggaf, Y. (2004). *The effect of community on offline community in Saudi Arabia.* Electronic Journal of Information Systems in Developing Countries (EJISDC), 16, 1-16. Retrieved May 25, 2013 from <http://www.ejisdc.org/>
- Al-Saggaf, Y. (2006). *The online public sphere in the Arab world: The war in Iraq on the Al Arabiya website.* Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 12(1), 311–334.
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2006.00327.x/abstract>

- Al-Saggaf, Y. (2011). *Saudi females on Facebook: An ethnographic study*. Australian Journal of Emerging Technologies and Society, 9(1), 1-19. Retrieved from www.scopus.com
- AlShayea, Khalid. (2012). *Saudi analysts warn of dire consequences of high divorce rate*. Al Arabiya News. Accessed from <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/02/15/194847.html>
- Anagnostopoulos, A., Kumar, R., & Mahdian, M. (2008). *Influence and Correlation in Social Networks*. In *Proceedings of the 14th ACM SIGKDD international conference on Knowledge discovery and data mining (KDD '08)*. ACM, New York, NY, USA, 7-15. DOI=10.1145/1401890.1401897 <http://doi.acm.org/10.1145/1401890.1401897>
- Andrew Feldstein. (2012). *Divorce Fact Sheet*. Feldstein Family Law Group Professional Corporation. Retrieved from <http://www.separation.ca/pdfs/divorcefacts.pdf>
- Ayubi, Zahra. (2006). *Specific Issues in Muslim Divorce*. The Family Law Review, a publication of the family law section of the state bar of Georgia. <http://www.ksfamilylaw.com/pdf/family-law-newsletter-12-06.pdf>
- Badawi, J. (1979) *The Status of Women in Islam*. Quarterly journal, Al-Ittihad, Vol. 8, No. 2. http://www.alfurqane.net/uploads/3/4/7/6/3476526/status_of_woman_in_islam.pdf
- Baki, R. (2004). *Gender-segregated education in Saudi Arabia: Its impact on social norms the Saudi labor market*. Education Policy Analysis Archives, 12, 28. Retrieved from <http://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/view/183/309>
- Battacharjee, A. & Miah, Md. (2011). *A study on social media networks: impact of intrinsic motivators and demographic factors*. (Master's Thesis). <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:430282/FULLTEXT02>
- Baym, N. K. (2000). *Tune in, log on: Soaps, fandom and online community*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Belshek JA (2006) *The influence of culture on the negotiation styles of British students*. Annual review of education, communication and language sciences 3. Online document: http://research.ncl.ac.uk/ARECLS/vol3_documents/jalalali.pdf

- Binik, Y. M., Cantor, J., Ochs, E., & Meana, M. (1997). *From the couch to the keyboard: Psychotherapy in cyberspace*. In S. Kiesler (Ed.), *Culture of the Internet*, pp. 71-102. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, NJ.
- Boyd, D., & Ellison, N. B. (2008). *Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship*. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13, 210–230.
- Brody, H. (1996) *Session with the Cyberink*. *Technology Review*, 99, 2, 41-47.
- Bryman, A., & Bell, E. (2003). *Business research methods*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK.
- Castillo. (2003). *Teaching through an electronic veil*. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 49 (29) (2003), p. A.48. Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, AUS.
- CITC (Communication and Information Technology Commission), (2010). *ICT Indicators in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (2009)*, viewed 5 September 2013, <http://www.citc.gov.sa/NR/rdonlyres/ECC196FFD3C1-4C88-B793685C96CA0309/0/ICTSectorinKSA2009English.pdf>
- Dahl, S. (2004). *Intercultural research: the current state of knowledge*. Retrieved from <http://ssm.com/abstract=658202>
- Deif. (2008). *Perpetual minors: human rights abuses stemming from male guardianship and sex segregation in Saudi Arabia*. Human Rights Watch, London (2008). Available at <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/saudiarabia0408webwcover.pdf>
- Divorce. (n.d.). Dictionary.com. Unabridged. Retrieved June 21, 2012 from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/divorce>
- Divorcemag.com. (2013). *Why Divorce Is So Difficult for Woman?*, Divorce Magazine.com, published (n.d), by Karen Kahn Wilson, Ed,D.http://www.divorcemag.com/articles/Divorce_Recovery/why_divorce_is_so_difficult_for_woman.html

- Donath, J.S. (1999) *Identity and deception in the virtual community*. In M. Smith and P. Kollock (eds.), *Communities in Cyberspace*. Routledge, London, 1999, pp. 29-59.
- Dyson, E. (1998) *Release 2.1: A Design for Living in the Digital Age*. Penguin, London.
- El-Gilany A, Al-Wehady A. (2008). *Job satisfaction of female Saudi nurses*. *Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal*, 7(1/2), 31–37.
- faskh. (2013). Syaria Court, Singapore. [Syariahcourt.gov.sg](http://app.syariahcourt.gov.sg). Retrieved from http://app.syariahcourt.gov.sg/syariah/front-end/TypeOfDivorce_Fasakh_E.aspx
- Filipczak, B. (1998). *Trainers on the Net: A community of colleagues*. *Training*, 35(2), 70-76.
- Funder, K., & Kinsella, S. (1991). *Divorce, change and children*. *Family Matters*. 30, 20-23.
- Furlong, M. S. (1989). *An electronic community for older adults: The SeniorNet Network*. *Journal of Communication*, 39(3), 145-153.
- Gallagher, E. B. (1985). *Health services and the political culture of Saudi Arabia*. *Social Science & Medicine* 21 (3), 251–262.
- Gelman, L. (2009). *Privacy, free speech, and “blurry edged” social networks*. *Boston College Law Review*, 50(5), 1315-1344.
- Goffman, E. (1963) *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Engelwood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Goodman, S. (1998). *The Internet Gains Acceptance in the Persian Gulf*. *Communication of the ACM*, Vol. 41, pp. 19-24.
- Hagel & Armstrong. (1997). *Net Gain: Expanding Markets Through Virtual Communities*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Hampton, Goulet, Rainie, and Purcell. (2011). *Social networking sites and our lives*. Technical report, Pew Internet & American Life Project.
- Hampton, K., Goulet, L.S., Rainie, L., & Purcell, K. (2011). *Social networking sites and our lives*. Pew Internet & American Life Project. Retrieved from

<http://www.pewinternet.org/~media/Files/Reports/2011/PIP%20%20Social%20networking%20sites%20and%20our%20lives.pdf>

Handy, C. (1995). *Trust and the virtual organization*. Harvard Business Review, 73(3), 40-48.

Heatherton, T., Kleck, R., Hebl, M., & Hull, J. (2000). *The social psychology of stigma*. New York: Guilford Press.

Herring, S. C. (Ed.). (1996). *Computer-mediated communication: Linguistic, social and cross-cultural perspectives*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Hewitt, B., & Turrell, G. (2011). *Short-term functional health and well-being after marital separation: Does initiator status make a difference?* American Journal of Epidemiology, 173(11), 1308-1318. Retrieved from www.scopus.com

Hiltz, S. R., & Wellman, B. (1997). *Asynchronous learning networks as a virtual classroom*. Communications of the ACM, 40(9), 44-49.

Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values*. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Horrigan, J. B., Rainie, L., & Fox, S. (2001). *Online communities: Networks that nurture long-distance relationships and local ties*. Retrieved June 17, 2012 from <http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/Report1.pdf>

‘iddah. (2012). In Encyclopædia Britannica. Retrieved from <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/281719/iddah>

Igbaria, M. (1999). *The driving forces in the virtual society*. Communications of the ACM, 42(12), 64-70. <http://countrystudiesu.s/saudi-arabia/21h.tm>

Internet Services Unit (ISU). (2006). “*User’s Survey*,” King Abdulaziz City for Science & Technology. <http://www.isu.net.sa/surveys-&-statistics/new-user-survey-results.htm>

Internet World Statistics. (2012 Feb 12). MiddleEast. Retrieved from <http://www.internetworldstats.com/middle.htm#sa>

- JeddaNews.net. (2003). *Where Do You Spend Most Of Your Time Over the Internet?*,
www.JeddahNews.net
- Joinson, A (1998). 'Causes and implications of disinhibited behaviour on the Internet', in J
- Jones, S. G. (1995). *Understanding community in the information age*. CyberSociety: Computer-mediated communication and community, pp. 10-35. London: Sage Publications.
- Kalmijn, M., & Broese Van Groenou, M. (2005). *Differential effects of divorce on social integration*. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 22(4), 455-476. Retrieved from www.scopus.com
- Kawach, N. (2011). *Saudi Arabia warned of 'women explosion'*. Emirates 24/7 News. Accessed from <http://www.emirates247.com/news/region/saudi-arabia-warned-of-women-explosion-2011-12-18-1.433275>
- Kawach, N. (2012). *In Saudi who is blamed for high divorce rates?*. Emirates 24/7 News. Accessed from <http://www.emirates247.com/news/region/in-saudi-who-is-to-blame-for-high-divorce-rates-2012-03-20-1.449351>
- Komito, L. (1998). *The net as a foraging society: Flexible communities*. The Information Society, 14, 97–106.
- Körner, A., Silbereisen, R. K., & Cantner, U. (2014). *Work-related demands emanating from social change and their relation to trait-like and occasion-specific aspects of subjective well-being*. Social Indicators Research, 115(1), 203-222.
- Landman, J. (1987a). *Regret: A theoretical and conceptual analysis*. Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 17, 135-160.
- Lea, M., O'Shea, T., Fung, P., & Spears, R. (1992). *'Flamming' in computer-mediated communication: Observations, explanations, and implications*. In M. Lea (Ed.), Contexts of Computer Mediated Communication. London: Harvester-Wheatsheaf.

- Lee, F. S. L., Vogel, D., & Limayem, M. (2003). *Virtual community informatics: A review and research agenda*. *Journal of Information Technology Theory and Application*, 5(1), 47 - 61.
- Library of Congress, [n. d.]. (2012). *Cultural homogeneity and values*. <http://countrystudies.us/saudi-arabia/21.html>
- Littlewood J, Yousuf S. (2000). *Primary health care in Saudi Arabia: applying global aspects of health for all, locally*. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 2000;32(3):675–681.
- Mackey, Sandra. (2002). *The Saudis: Inside the desert kingdom*. New York: W.W.Norton & Company.
- MENAFN. (2010). Arab News. *Divorce on the rise in the Saudi Arabia*. Retrieved from: <http://www.menafn.com/menafn/1093302581/Divorce-on-rise-the-Saudi-Arabia>
- Messinger, P.R., Stroulia, E., Lyons, K., Bone, M., Niu, R., Smirnov, K., Perelgut, S. (2009). *Virtual worlds – past, present, and future: New directions in social computing*. *Decision Support Systems Journal*, (forthcoming).
- Miles, MB. & Huberman, AM. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis (2nd edition)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Mirza. (2008). *Students' perceived barriers to in-class participation in a distributed and gender segregated educational environment*. *The Electronic Journal of Information Systems in Developing Countries*, 35 (7) (2008), pp. 1–17.
- Morgan, D. (2008). Snowball sampling. In L. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*. (pp. 816-817). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909.n425>
- Mouton, J. (2001). *The practice of social research*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Mulholland, J., 1991. *The Language of Negotiation*. London: Routledge.
- Muscat Document of the Uniform Code (the Law) of Personal Status for GCC Countries. (2001). Accessed April 19, 2012 from: <http://adl.moj.gov.sa/ENG/attach/193.pdf>

- Oshan, Maryam S. (2007). *Saudi women and the internet: gender and culture issues*. (Doctoral Thesis). Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy of Loughborough University.
- out-cast. (n.d.). Dictionary.com Unabridged. Retrieved April 13, 2014, from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/out-cast>
- Parameswaran, M. & Whinston, A.B. (2007). *Social computing: An overview*. Communications of the AIS, 19, 762-780.
- Petersen, A. (1999). *Some places to go when you want to feel right at home: Communities focus on people who need people*. The Wall Street Journal, p. B6.
- Phillips, Sarah. (2007). *A brief history of Facebook*. Theguardian.com. Accessed at <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2007/jul/25/media.newmedia>
- Preece, J. (2000) *Online communities: Designing useability, supporting sociability*. John Wiley & Sons: Chichester.
- Preece, J. and Diane Maloney-Krichmar. (2003). *Online Communities*. In J. Jacko and A. Sears, A. (Eds.) Handbook of Human-Computer Interaction, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc. Publishers, Mahwah: NJ. 596-620.
- Ragab, N. (1955). *The record set straight: Women in Islam have rights*. Retrieved from The Chronicle: <http://www.dukechronicle.com/article/record-set-straight-women-islam-have-rights>
- Raza, M.S. (1998). *Divorce in Islam*. Retrieved from <http://www.islamiccentre.org/presentations/divorce.pdf>
- Rheingold H. (2000), *The virtual community: Homesteading on the electronic frontier*, revised edition. MIT Press: Cambridge.
- Rheingold, H. (1993). *The virtual community: Homesteading on the electronic frontier*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

- Ridings and Gefen, D. (2004). *Virtual community attraction: Why people hang out online*. JCMC 10, Article 4, November 2004.
- Ridings, C., Gefen, D., & Arinze, B. (2002). *Some antecedents and effects of trust in virtual communities*. Journal of Strategic Information Systems, 11(3-4), 271-295.
- role. (n.d.) The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition. (2003). Retrieved August 28 2013 from <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/role>
- Sait, K. Al-Tawil, S. Sanaulla, M. Faheemuddin. (2007). *Impact of Internet usage in Saudi Arabia: A social perspective*, International Journal of Information Technology and Web Engineering, 2 (2) (2007), pp. 81–115.
- Sibulo, E. A. (1974). *Islamic laws of marriage and divorce as affected by Philippine legislation*. Philippine Law Journal, vol 49. <http://plj.upd.edu.ph/wp-content/uploads/plj/PLJ%20volume%2049/PLJ%20volume%2049%20number%203/PLJ%20Volume%2049%20number%203%20-07-%20Emily%20A.%20Sibulo%20-%20Islamic%20Laws%20of%20Marriage%20and%20Divorce%20as%20affected%20by%20Philippine%20Legislation.pdf>
- Smith, M. (2013). *Web-based apps pose tricky problem for Saudi monitors*. Reuters. Accessed at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/22/us-saudi-security-internetidUSBRE97L0NJ20130822>
- Smyth, B. & Weston, R. (2000). *Financial living standards after divorce: A recent snapshot*. Retrieved from <http://www.aifs.gov.au/institute/pubs/RP23.html#abstract>
- social network. (n.d.). Dictionary.com Unabridged. Retrieved April 12, 2014, from [http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/social network](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/social%20network)
- Sproull, L., & Faraj, S. (1997). *Atheism, sex and databases: The Net as a social technology*. In S. Kiesler (Ed.), Culture of the Internet, pp. 35-51. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Statista.com. (2013). *Half of the world's online population use Facebook*. Statista, May 16th. <http://www.statista.com/topics/1164/social-networks/chart/1103/top-10-social-networks-in-q1-2013/>
- Statistics Canada. (2011). *Divorces and crude divorce rates*. Canada, provinces and territories, annual. (CANSIM table 101-6501) (in Excel format). Ottawa: Statistics Canada.
- support. (n.d.) The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition. (2003). Retrieved August 28 2013 from <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/support>
- The Ministry of Social Affairs (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia). (2013). *The bill of the social security system*. <http://www.mosa-d.gov.sa/daman/en/thebill.html>
- The OpenNet Initiative. (2004). *Internet filtering in Saudi Arabia in 2004*. <http://www.opennetinitiative.net/studies/saudi/>
- Thoits, P. A. (1982). *Conceptual, methodological, and theoretical problems in studying social support as a buffer against life stress*. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 23, 145-159.
- Toumi, Habib. (2013). *Three divorces every hour in Saudi Arabia*. www.gulfnews.com. Accessed from <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/three-divorces-every-hour-in-saudi-arabia-1.1245292>
- Trukle, S. (1995) *Life on the screen: Identity in the age of the Internet*. Simon & Schuster: New York.
- USLegal. (n.d). *Divorce*. USLEGAL.COM. Accessed Dec 20, 2012. <http://uslegal.com/divorce/>
- Utz, S. (2000). *Social information processing in MUDs: The development of friendships in virtual worlds*. *Journal of Online Behavior*, 1(1). Retrieved May 22, 2012 from <http://www.behavior.net/job/v1n1/utz.html>.
- Vikstrom, L., Van Poppel, F. & Van de Putte, B. (2011). *New light on the divorce transition*. *Journal of Family History*, 36 (2), 107-117.

- Walther, J. B. (1996). Computer-mediated communication impersonal, interpersonal, and hyperpersonal interaction. *Communication research*, 23(1), 3-43.
- Wasko, M.M., & Faraj, S. (2000). *It is what one does: Why people participate and help others in electronic communities of practice*. *Journal of Strategic Information Systems*, 9, 155-173.
- Watson, G., & Johnson, D. (1972). *Social psychology: Issues and insights*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott.
- Weiss, M. G., Ramakrishna, J., & Somma, D. (2006). *Health-related stigma: Rethinking concepts and interventions*. *Psychology, Health & Medicine*, 11, 277-287.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13548500600595053>.
- Wellman, B. & Gulia, M. (1997) *Net surfers don't ride alone: Virtual communities as communities*. Department of Sociology and Center of Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto.
- Wellman, B., & Gulia, M. (1999). *Virtual communities as communities*. In M. A. Smith & P. Kollock (Eds.), *Communities in cyberspace*, pp. 167-194. New York: Routledge.
- Wheeler, D., 2006. *The Internet in the Middle East: Global expectations and local imaginations in Kuwait*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Wheeler, Debora (2000). *New Media, globalization and Kuwaiti national identity*. *Middle East Journal*, 54(3), 432-448.
- Wingfield, N. and Hanrahan, T. (1999). *Web firm salon buys 'the Well', an online pioneer*. *The Wall Street Journal*, April 8, B9.
- Yunis, E., (2003). *Top ISPs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*. <http://www.isplanet.com/research/rankings/kshat.ml>
- Zakaria, N., et al. (2003). *Designing and implementing culturally-sensitive IT applications the interaction of culture values and privacy issues in the middle east*. *Information Technology & People*, 16(1), 49-75

Appendix

Appendix (1) Ethical Approval Form (University of Ottawa)

File Number: 05-13-04

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 07/15/2013



Université d'Ottawa **University of Ottawa**
Service de subventions de recherche et déontologie Research Grants and Ethics Services

Ethics Approval Notice

Social Science and Humanities REB

Principal Investigator / Supervisor / Co-investigator(s) / Student(s)

<u>First Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>Role</u>
Dominique	Ferrand	School of Management / School of	Supervisor
Ramzia	Saleh	School of Management / School of	Student Researcher

File Number: 05-13-04

Type of Project: Master's Thesis

Title: The Supporting Role of Social Networks For Saudi Divorced Women

Approval Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Expiry Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Approval Type
07/15/2013	07/14/2014	Ia

(Ia: Approval, Ib: Approval for initial stage only)

Special Conditions / Comments:
N/A

1

550, rue Cumberland, pièce 154
Ottawa (Ontario) K1N 6N5 Canada
(613) 562-5387 • Téléc./Fax (613) 562-5338
<http://www.rges.uottawa.ca>

550 Cumberland Street, room 154
Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5 Canada
(613) 562-5387 • Téléc./Fax (613) 562-5338
<http://www.ssr.uottawa.ca>

Appendix (2) Ethical Approval Form (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia)

ROYAL EMBASSY OF SAUDI ARABIA
CULTURAL BUREAU
OTTAWA



المملكة العربية السعودية
المحكمة الثقافية
أوتاوا

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: RAMZIA HISHAM AHMED SALEH - Online Ethical Approval

The bureau has accepted that Ms. RAMZIA HISHAM AHMED SALEH conducts her study in "The Supporting Role of Social Networks for Saudi Divorced Women". Ms. RAMZIA is a sponsored student by the Saudi Arabian Cultural Bureau. Under the system of Saudi Arabia, it is permitted, with no concerns, that Ms. RAMZIA conducts her study. For this purpose, Ms. RAMZIA can use survey questionnaires, or any other scientific instrument that she might need for her study.

The bureau, kindly, asks you to support Ms. RAMZIA by accepting her ethics application so she can conduct online surveys, or via email, or via phone whereby she can start this process by May 13th, 2013.

For any further information please do not hesitate to contact the Bureau at

Best Regards,

Director of Educational and Training Affairs

الرقم: التاريخ:
الرقم: التاريخ:
الرقم: التاريخ:

Appendix (3): Online English Questionnaire

1

Research Questionnaire (Online Survey)



Survey on The Supporting Role of Social Networks for Divorced, Saudi Women

Researcher information

Ramzia Saleh
Electronic Business Technologies
University of Ottawa,

Dr. Dominique Ferrand
Electronic Business Technologies
University of Ottawa

Invitation to participate

If you are a divorced, Saudi woman who uses social networks  and/or virtual communities , we invite you to participate in this survey of your experience using online, social networks. This survey is part of Ramzia Saleh's master's thesis, supervised by Dr. Dominique Ferrand.

Purpose of the study

This survey aims to explore the way social networks and/or virtual communities contribute to the support of divorced, Saudi women. Due to the various challenges faced by divorced, Saudi women within their society, this study attempts to assess the role of support that social networks and/or virtual communities are likely to provide.

Type of Participation

Participation consists of filling out a questionnaire.


Risks

There are no risks associated with participation. However, If at any time during the participation you feel any psychological or emotional discomfort, you have the choice either not to answer the question by choosing ' NOT APPLICABLE', or to withdraw from the study.

Benefits

The results of the study will help clarify the challenges that divorced, Saudi women are facing, as well as identifying the support mechanism that social networks and / or virtual communities are likely to provide to divorced, Saudi women.

Confidentiality and anonymity

No names will be collected. Only your IP address  will be collected to filter for duplicate submissions, and to identify your submission should you decide to withdraw from the survey. All survey data will remain confidential and will not be used for any other purpose than this research. Furthermore, only aggregated data will be presented in the final results. In case you wish to withdraw from the study and you don't know how to find your IP address, simply use the same computer or device you have used at the time of participation.

Research Questionnaire (Online Survey)

Voluntary participation

You may withdraw from the survey at any time, and you can request the results of the research after the completion of the project. Should you wish to withdraw from the survey, please contact the primary researcher with your IP address to have your submitted data destroyed.

Acceptance

You agree to participate in the above research. Consent is implied by completing and submitting the online survey. Participants should print a copy of the consent form to keep for their personal records.

If you have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, you may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON, K1N 6N5; tel.: (613) 562-5387; email: ethics@uottawa.ca .

The survey should take approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

Research Questionnaire (Online Survey)

This survey is divided into five main sections. The first section collects demographics for classification purposes. The other four sections attempt to investigate the supporting role of social networks.

Note: In this questionnaire, the term "social networks" includes "virtual communities."

1. DEMOGRAPHICS *(for classification and selection purposes)***1.a For how many years have you been divorced?**

- less than 2
- 2 to 5
- 6 to 10
- 11 to 20
- more than 20

1.b What do you do for a living? *(Check all that apply)*

- Paid worker
- Self-employed
- Family caregiver
- Retired
- Student
- Other (Please specify): *[participants will have a space to write in the web version]*

1.c How old are you?

- 18 - 24
 - 25 - 34
 - 35 - 44
 - 45 - 50
 - 51 +
-

Research Questionnaire (Online Survey)

1.d What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Less than high school
- High School /GED
- College Diploma
- 4-year University Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctoral Degree
- Professional Degree (JD, MD)

1.e Which of the following social networks do you participate in the most? (Check all that apply)

- Twitter
- Facebook
- YouTube
- LinkedIn
- Skype
- Path
- Online divorce communities (please specify) : *[Participants will have a space to write in the web version]*
- Other (please specify) : *[Participants will have a space to write in the web version]*

1.f How many years of experience do you have with social networks?

- Less than 2
- 2 to 5
- 6 to 10
- 11 to 15
- More than 15

1.g How frequently do you access social networks?

- Once every month
 - Once every two weeks
 - Once a week
 - 2 to 3 times a week
 - Almost every day
 - Other: *[participants will have a space to write in the web version]*
-


Research Questionnaire (Online Survey)

In the following section you are kindly asked to answer questions to investigate the supporting role of social networks including virtual communities for divorced, Saudi women who face various challenges. These challenges usually include social issues, economic issues, psychological issues, and legal issues.

2. SOCIAL ISSUES

Social issues are one of the key concerns that divorced, Saudi women are facing, which usually include social stigma, family restrictions, social outcast, and relationship with former husband.

2.a How do you rate the support you get from social networks to in facing each of the following issues: (Check one answer for each)

	No support at All	Slightly supportive	Fairly supportive	Very supportive	Not applicable 
Social Stigma 					
Family restrictions 					
Social outcast 					
Relationship with former husband 					

2.b Based on your answers in the previous question, please indicate how social networks were supportive to you in some of the above issues? (Please write in the space below)

[Note: participants will have a space to write in the web version]

Research Questionnaire (Online Survey)

3. ECONOMIC ISSUES

Economic issues are one of the key concerns that divorced, Saudi women are facing, which usually include income issues, lack of housing, employment difficulties, and lack of alimony.

3.a How do you rate the support you get from social networks to in facing each of the following issues: (Check one answer for each)

	No support at All	Slightly supportive	Fairly supportive	Very supportive	Not applicable 
Income issues 					
Lack of housing 					
Employment difficulties 					
Lack of alimony 					

3.b Based on your answers in the previous question, please indicate in which way social networks were supportive to you in some of the above issues? (Please write in the space below)


[Note: participants will have a space to write in the web version]

Research Questionnaire (Online Survey)

4. PSYCHOLOGICAL ISSUES


Psychological issues are one of the key concerns that divorced, Saudi women are facing, which usually include regret and remorse, emotional vacuum, lack of confidence, and depression.

4.a How do you rate the support you get from social networks to in facing each of the following issues: (Check one answer for each)

	No support at All	Slightly supportive	Fairly supportive	Very supportive	Not applicable 
Regret and remorse 					
Emotional vacuum 					
Lack of confidence 					
Depression 					







3.b Based on your answers in the previous question, please indicate in which way social networks were supportive to you in some of the above issues? (Please write in the space below)

[Note: participants will have a space to write in the web version]

5. LEGAL ISSUES 

Legal issues are one of the key concerns that divorced, Saudi women are facing, which usually include the imposition of male-guardianships, lack of access to governmental departments, Custody issues, and Lack of knowledge of women's legal rights.


5.a How do you rate the support you get from social networks to in facing each of the following issues: (Check one answer for each)

Legal Issue	No support at All	Slightly supportive	Fairly supportive	Very supportive	Not applicable 
Imposition of male-guardianships 					
Lack of communication with governmental departments 					
Lack of access to official documents 					
Custody issues 					
Lack of knowledge of women's legal rights 					

3.b Based on your answers in the previous question, please indicate in which way social networks were supportive to you in some of the above issues? (Please write in the space below)

Thank you for your time! If you would like to receive the survey results, please send an email to rsale034@uottawa.ca.

Definitions

(Note: On the web version, the definition appears when the respondent clicks the  icon next to the term in the questionnaire. They are listed below for the paper version.)

Social Network: A network of social interactions and personal relationships through the Internet.

Virtual Communities: A community of people sharing common interests, ideas, and feelings over the Internet.

IP Address: A unique string of numbers that identifies each computer attached to the Internet.

Social Issues: Issues that relate to society's perception of an individual's personal life.

Social Stigma: A social process, experienced or anticipated, characterized by exclusion, rejection, blame or devaluation resulting from experience, perception, or reasonable anticipation of adverse social judgment about a person or group. Social stigma includes the accusation of guiltiness, sinfulness and criminality.

Family Restrictions: Extreme pressure and boundaries, as well as the action of disgrace.

Social Outcast: Negative changes in relationships with friends, peers and relatives, such as rejection, avoidance and lack of respect.

Relationship with former husband: Includes controlling, taking kids away and lack of communication.

Economic Issues: The financial situation after divorce.

Income: Includes unstable income after divorce.

Housing: Due to lack of independence, divorced women are forced to live in their family's house after divorce. They cannot have their own houses regardless of whether or not they have children.

Employment: Includes lack of suitable work, losing a job, or lacking job qualifications.

Alimony: The amount of money paid by former husband to kids and wife after divorce.

Psychological Issues: Includes emotional distress as a result of divorce.

Regret and remorse: The sense of sorrow for being divorced, as well as feelings of guilt.

Emotional vacuum: The sense of loneliness and emptiness.

Lack of confidence: Includes feelings of worthlessness, helplessness, insecurity and unattractiveness.

Research Questionnaire (Online Survey)

Regret and remorse: The sense of sorrow for being divorced, as well as feelings of guilt.

Emotional vacuum: The sense of loneliness and emptiness.

Lack of confidence: Includes feelings of worthlessness, helplessness, insecurity and unattractiveness.

Depression: Feelings of sadness, anxiousness, worry, irritability, hurt, or restlessness.

Legal issues: The set of rules and regulations of family law in Saudi.

The imposition of male guardianships: It is mandatory for every Saudi woman to have a male guardian involved in all circumstances of their lives.

Access to governmental and non-governmental departments: Includes ministries, courts, and even schools for boys. It also includes:

Access to official documents: Children's birth certificates, passports and identification documents.

Custody: Judicial cases concerning which parent has the right to care for the child, including the lack of rules and regulations that protect divorced women and their kids from mistreatment after divorce.

Lack of knowledge of women's legal rights: Divorced women in Saudi lack knowledge of their own rights.

Not Applicable: In case you were not facing this kind of issue.

Appendix (4): Online Arabic Questionnaire

استبيان عن الدور الداعم لشبكات التواصل الاجتماعي للمطلقات في السعودية

بيانات الباحثة

رمزية صالح
ماجستير ادارة الاعمال الالكترونية و التكنولوجيا
جامعة اوتارا، كندا
rsale034@uottawa.ca

دعوة للمشاركة

اذا كنت سيدة سعودية و مطلقة ممن يستخدمن شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي، نحن ندعوك للمشاركة في هذا الاستبيان من واقع تجربتك في استخدام شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي الحديثة. هذا الاستبيان جزء من رسالة الماجستير للطالبة رمزية صالح و التي يقوم بالاشراف عليها الدكتور دومينيك فيراند.

الغرض من الاستبيان

هذا الاستبيان يهدف الى اكتشاف وسائل الدعم و المساعدة التي تقدمها شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي للمرأة السعودية المطلقة. نظراً لتعدد المشكلات التي تعاني منها المرأة السعودية المطلقة داخل مجتمعها، يسعى هذا الاستبيان لعناية الدور الداعم الذي يمكن أن تقدمه هذه الشبكات للمطلقة.

طريقة المشاركة

المشاركة في هذا الاستبيان تتطلب تعبئة النموذج و الاجابة على الاسئلة فقط.

الخاطر

لا توجد أي مخاطر جراء المشاركة

أهمية الاستبيان

ستساهم المعلومات الناتجة عن هذا الاستبيان في ايضاح التحديات و الصعوبات التي تواجه المرأة السعودية المطلقة، بالإضافة الى تحديد الية الدعم التي تقدمها شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي للمرأة السعودية المطلقة في ظل مواجهتها للتحديات.

حماية الهوية و المعلومات للمشاركة

ان يتم جمع الأسماء للمشاركة. سوف يتم جمع عناوين البريد الإلكتروني فقط لتكرار المشاركات. جميع المعلومات التي سيتم الحصول عليها من هذا الاستبيان ستبقى سرية و غير معلنة و لن تستخدم الا الاهتمام هذه الدراسة فقط. سيتم تقديم النتائج التي تم جمعها في نهاية الدراسة للاستفادة منها كمعلومات فقط.

حفظ البيانات

البيانات التي تم جمعها سيتم حفظها برقم سري الكترونياً لحمايتها. سيتم حفظها لمدة ١٠ سنوات في جامعة اوتارا، الدخول لهذه البيانات سيكون مفيداً للباحثة و مطرفها الأكاديمي فقط.

نوع المشاركة

المشاركة اختيارية. يحق للم التمتصاع من هذا الاستبيان في أي وقت، كما يحق للم طلب الاطلاع على نتائج الاستبيان بعد الانتهاء من الدراسة. في حين قررنا التمتصاع من الاستبيان الرجاء التواصل مع الباحثة و تزويدها بعنوان البريد الإلكتروني الخاص بجهازك حتى يتم حذف البيانات الخاصة بك.

قبول المشاركة

بإكمالك لهذا الاستبيان تكون قد وافقت على المشاركة.

إذا كانت لديك أي أسئلة أو استفسارات حول الاجراءات المترتبة على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة، يمكنك التواصل مع الموظف المسؤول في جامعة أوتارا على العنوان التالي:

University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street,

Room 154, Ottawa, ON, K1N 6N5; tel.: (613) 562-5387;

email: ethics@uottawa.ca

لا تتجاوز المدة لكامل هذا الاستبيان ١٥ دقيقة.

الإنسان لثاني قسم إلى ٥ أقسام رئيسية. قسم الأول عبارة عن أسئلة ديموغرافية الهدف منها تصنيف البيانات. أما الأربعة الأخرى تهدف إلى التحقق من الدور الذي تلعبه شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي للمرأة العظيمة.

١. أسئلة ديموغرافية:

أ- كم سنة مضى على طلاقك؟

- أقل من سنتين
- ٢ إلى ٥
- ٦ إلى ١٠
- ١١ إلى ٢٠
- ٢٠ وأكثر

ب- ماهو مجالك الوظيفي؟ (تستطيعين اختيار أكثر من إجابة)

- موظفة براتب شهري
- عمل خاص
- ربة منزل
- متقاعد
- طالبة
- أخرى (الرجاء التحديد)

ج- كم عمرك؟

- ١٨ إلى ٢٠
- ٢١ إلى ٣٠
- ٣١ إلى ٤٠
- ٤١ إلى ٥٠
- ٥١ وأكثر

د - ماهو أعلى مستوى تعليمي وصلتني إليه؟

- أقل من الثانوية
- ثانوية عامة
- كلية (بكالوريوس)
- جامعة (٤ سنوات)
- ماجستير
- دكتوراة
- أخرى (الرجاء التحديد)

هـ- أي من شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي التالية تشاركين فيها أكثر (يمكنك اختيار أكثر من إجابة)

- Twitter
- Facebook
- YouTube
- LinkedIn
- Skype

- منصات خاصة بالناطق و المنطقت (الرجاء التحديد)
- أخرى (الرجاء التحديد)

و- كم عدد سنوات الخبرة لديك في استخدام شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي؟

- أقل من سنتين
- من ٢ إلى ٥
- من ٦ إلى ١٠
- ١١ وأكثر

ز- كم عدد الفترات التي تقومين فيها بالدخول على شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي؟

- مرة واحدة كل شهر
- مرة كل أسبوعين
- مرة واحدة في الشهر
- من ٢ إلى ٣ مرات في الأسبوع
- كل يوم تقريباً
- أخرى (الرجاء التحديد)

ح - غالباً، كم من الوقت تستغرقين في استخدام شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي؟

- أقل من ساعة
- من ١ - ٢
- من ٢ - ٤
- من ٥ - ٧
- ٨ وأكثر

في هذا القسم يُطلب منك الإجابة على 4 أسئلة رئيسية. كل سؤال يهدف إلى تحديد دور شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي في تقديم الدعم للمرأة السعودية المطلقة في ظل التحديات والصعوبات التي تواجهها. هذه التحديات غالباً تشمل المشكلات الاجتماعية، المشكلات الاقتصادية، المشكلات النفسية، والمشكلات القانونية:

٢- للمشكلات الاجتماعية:

تعد المشكلات الاجتماعية أحد أهم التحديات التي تواجه المرأة السعودية المطلقة والتي غالباً ما تشمل الآتي:

- وصمة العار الاجتماعية
- القيود العائلية
- النبذ الاجتماعي
- سوء العلاقة مع المطلق

١ - من وجهة نظرك، كيف تقيمين الدور للمساعد مواقع شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي في مواجهتك للمشكلات الآتية: (الرجاء اختيار إجابة واحدة لكل مشكلة):

لا يطبق	مساعدة جزأ	اجدها مساعدة التي حد ما	مساعدة محدودة	لا توجد مساعدة على الإطلاق	
					وصمة العار الاجتماعية
					القيود العائلية
					النبذ الاجتماعي
					سوء العلاقة مع المطلق

ب - بناءً على إجاباتك في السؤال السابق، كيف ساعدتك مواقع شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي في مواجهة بعض المشكلات المذكورة أعلاه؟

٣- للمشكلات الاقتصادية:

تعد المشكلات الاقتصادية أحد أهم التحديات التي تواجه المرأة السعودية المطلقة والتي غالباً ما تشمل الآتي:

- عدم توفر دخل مالي ثابت
- عدم توفر سكن مستقل
- صعوبة الحصول على وظيفة
- عدم التزام المطلق بالنفقة

١ - من وجهة نظرك، كيف تقيمين الدور للمساعد مواقع شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي في مواجهتك للمشكلات الآتية: (الرجاء اختيار إجابة واحدة لكل مشكلة):

لا يطبق	مساعدة جزأ	اجدها مساعدة التي حد ما	مساعدة محدودة	لا توجد مساعدة على الإطلاق	
					عدم توفر دخل مالي ثابت
					عدم توفر سكن مستقل
					صعوبة الحصول على وظيفة
					عدم التزام المطلق بالنفقة

4- المشكلات النفسية

تعد المشكلات النفسية أحد أهم التحديات التي تواجه المرأة السعودية المطلقة والتي غالباً ما تشمل الاتي:

- الشعور بالندم و تكتيب الضمير
- القراع العاطفي
- فقدان الثقة بالنفس
- الاحباط

1 - من وجهة نظرك، كيف تقيمين الدور المساعد لمواقع شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي في مواجهةك للمشكلات الاتية: (الرجاء اختيار اجابة واحدة لكل مشكلة)

لا ينطبق	مساعدة جداً	اجدها مساعدة نوعاً ما	مساعدة محدودة	لا توجد مساعدة على الاطلاق	
					الشعور بالندم و تكتيب الضمير
					القراع العاطفي
					فقدان الثقة بالنفس
					الاحباط

ب - بناءً على اجاباتك في السؤال السابق، كيف ساعدتك مواقع شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي في مواجهة بعض المشكلات المذكورة اعلاه؟

5- المشكلات القانونية

تعد المشكلات القانونية أحد أهم التحديات التي تواجه المرأة السعودية المطلقة والتي غالباً ما تشمل الاتي:

- فرض الحريم في معظم أمور الحياة اليومية
- صعوبة التواصل مع المحاكم و الجهات الرسمية
- صعوبة الحصول على الأوراق الرسمية و الوثيقة للبناء
- عدم وجود قوانين ثابتة للضمانات
- قلة معرفة المرأة السعودية بالحقوق القانونية الخاصة بها

1 - من وجهة نظرك، كيف تقيمين الدور المساعد لمواقع التواصل الاجتماعي في مواجهةك للمشكلات الاتية: (الرجاء اختيار اجابة واحدة لكل مشكلة)

لا ينطبق	مساعدة جداً	اجدها مساعدة نوعاً ما	مساعدة محدودة	لا توجد مساعدة على الاطلاق	
					فرض الحريم في معظم أمور الحياة اليومية
					صعوبة التواصل مع المحاكم و الجهات الرسمية
					صعوبة الحصول على الأوراق الرسمية و الوثيقة للبناء
					عدم وجود قوانين ثابتة للضمانات
					قلة معرفة المرأة السعودية بالحقوق القانونية الخاصة بها

ب - بناءً على اجاباتك في السؤال السابق، كيف ساعدتك مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي في مواجهة بعض المشكلات المذكورة اعلاه؟

٦- ختاماً

إذا كان لديك أي إضافات حول الدور المساعد الذي تقدمه المرأة السعودية المطلقة في ظل ما تواجهه من صعوبات في المجتمع، أرجو كتابته هنا:

شكراً لك على وقتك! إذا كانت لديك رغبة في الحصول على نتائج هذا الاستبيان الرجاء إرسال رسالة عبر البريد الإلكتروني على العنوان التالي:
rsale034@uottawa.ca

تعريفات

(ملاحظة: في النسخة الإلكترونية لهذا الاستبيان ستظهر التعريفات حين تضغط للمشاركة على الأيقونة لتوضيح وجودها بجانب أي من المصطلحات الواردة في هذا الاستبيان. تم كتابتها بالترتيب هنا للفئة الورقية فقط)

شبكة التواصل الاجتماعي: هي شبكة من التفاعلات الاجتماعية والعلاقات الشخصية على الإنترنت

عنوان البروتوكول: سلسلة من الأرقام الفريدة التي تميز كل جهاز كمبيوتر عن الآخر متصل بالإنترنت

الشكلت الاجتماعية: هي القضايا التي تتعلق بالجمع للحياة الشخصية للفرد.

وصمة العار: نظرة المجتمع السلبية للمنطقة و كأنها مثنية أو أن ملاحقها جريمة.

التقيد العائلي: ممارسة الضغط من الأهل على المطلقة بوسائل مختلفة وربما تخييبها وإزالة.

النقد الاجتماعي: التعيرات السلبية في العلاقات مع المطلقة من الأصدقاء والزلاء، مثل الرفس والتجنب و عدم الاحترام.

سوء العلاقة مع المطلق ونوبه: يشمل السيطرة، أخذ الأبناء من الأم و حرمانها من التواصل معهم أو رؤيتهم.

الشكلت الاقتصادية: سوء الحالة المالية للمطلقة بسبب المطلق.

عدم وجود سكن مستقل: خصوصاً أن كان لديها أبناء.

صعوبة الحصول على وظيفة: لعدم وجود المؤهلات، أو نقصان الوظيفة.

النفقة: عدم التزام المطلق بدفع النفقة للأبناء و الزوجة بعد المطلق.

الشكلت النفسية: تشمل الاضطرابات النفسية و العاطفية نتيجة المطلق.

الأسى و الندم: بمعنى شعورها بالحزن لكونها مطلقة.

الفرار العاطفي: الشعور بالوحدة و الفرار لفقدان الزوج وربما الأبناء أيضاً.

انعدام الثقة: و تشمل شعور المطلقة بأنها تافهة ، و عاجزة و غير مرغوب بها لاعتقادها أنها فقدت جانيبيتها، و انعدام الأمان النفسي.

الاحباط: و تشمل الاكتئاب و القلق أو الأرق.

الشكلت القانونية: مجموعة من القوانين و الأنظمة المعمول بها فيها قانون الأسرة السعودية و تعاني منها المطلقة.

الوصول إلى الوثائق الحكومية و غير الحكومية و تشمل الوزارات و المحاكم و حتى مدارس البنين.

الحصول على الوثائق الرسمية: شهادات ميلاد الأبناء و جوازات السفر و الهويات.

الخصاصة: الصعوبة القضائية المتعلقة بحق رعاية الأبناء، بما في ذلك عدم وجود قواعد و لوائح تحمي النساء المطلقات و ترويم من سوء المعاملة بعد المطلق.