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University students' perception of how informal education influences cultural security: A Saudi institution experience

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A B S T R A C T

This article reports a study conducted on Saudi university students, including both males and females. The study used a 21 items questionnaire that aims to elicit students' responses regarding social security and to what extent formal education could affect their perception of cultural security. These questions are designed to check the students' perception and understanding of culture and cultural security within the Saudi context and they also aim to show how Saudi society could influence and shape many cultural and ideological concepts adopted by Saudi university students. Other questions were written in the questionnaire in order to elicit students' views on the role of informal education in enhancing their concept of cultural security, as the idea of informal education is subsumed under small categories like social, media, religious and family categories. After analyzing their views and responses to the questions of the questionnaire, it was revealed that both males and females agreed on defining culture as 'a scientific and academic knowledge' and a representation of 'social and family values' which construct the 'identity of individuals'. However, there has been a salient contrast between males and females regarding the role of culture. Females disagreed with the assumption that culture helps people 'to appreciate modern art'.

1. Introduction

The idea of exploring the impact of informal education on the concept of cultural security of the Saudi University Students has not been addressed adequately. It has not been settled whether informal education contributes to sustaining the requirements of cultural security or not. Grossly simplified, the issue hinges on whether university students can accept uncritical knowledge, values, and other forms of teachings provided through the channels of informal education or develop a critical mind that helps them distinguish between ethical and unethical values, and between intransigent and critical discourse and moderate one. After enumerating the hypotheses and questions of the present research, the significance of this study is highlighted. The rest of this paper is organized into five sections. The related works are underpinned briefly before the theoretical preliminaries are

introduced. There is a section that addresses the methodology. Results and discussions are given in the nest section before drawing conclusion remarks.

1.1. The problem of the study

The widely spread of the informal education, which includes under its rubric social media, religious discourse, family institution, general reading outside the scholastic curriculum, has not only accelerated the process of circulating new ideas, thoughts, values, and different cultural concepts but also made them inescapable. The younger generations have become more vulnerable to a myriad of new ideas and ideologies, different faiths and values, a new vision of truth, different styles of life and new cultures, which have largely shaken their traditional value system. The traditional techniques of censorship and the norms of cultural isolation have no longer been valid for isolating youth from their surrounding world and from the external cultural values, which may be incongruent with their cultural norms and value system. They may be exposed to taboos that range from nudity, sexual scenes, and immoral videos, to alien and strange ideas, which may be accepted in other cultures. Young generations in Saudi Arabia may be exposed to intolerant and fanatic religious discourse

circulated widely across the Internet that always focuses on the religious zeal of the Saudis' Muslim mind and their excessive emotions toward religion. Terrorist organizations like ISIS and Al-Qaeda have managed to use the channels of informal education especially social networking sites to recruit many university students in the Middle East through exploiting their extreme religious zeal and eliciting their emotions toward religion that represents a permanent threat to the cultural security of Saudi Arabia. In other words, the problem of the study is twofold; it is not only represented in the inability of the formal education and the State bodies to protect the cultural security of Saudi Arabia but also in the difficulty of controlling the forms of informal education with its diverse and invisible sources.

1.2. Research hypotheses

The following hypotheses are tested in the study:

- **H1.** Saudi institutions offer basic pedagogical requirements for harnessing college students.
- **H2.** Saudi students, males, and females are equipped with good awareness about extremist thinking, cultural security and political consequences of online radicalization.

1.3. Research questions

The present studies attempt to present more convincing answers to some important questions:

- Is there any gender-based difference regarding the conceptualization of cultural security and its shaping via informal education?
- Are Saudi university students well-informed about rational and critical thinking and cultural security?
- Are Saudi university students inclined to accept knowledge, values, fashion, and cultural schemas provided through the channels of informal education?

1.4. Study significance

Applying this empirical and critical study to Saudi Arabia is significant, the impact of which is not confined to Saudi Arabia and the Middle East but also to other sides of the world which may be affected by the politics of the Middle East. The present study attempts to critically highlight the critical role entitled to Saudi authorities in combating the extreme, harsh and fanatic religious discourse and replace it with a moderate and tolerant religious discourse that shows deep empathy toward others. Students' responses to the questionnaire can determine whether or not they show empathy toward different and new human experiences. Therefore, the questions of the questionnaire are mainly focused on revealing students' understanding of the idea of culture, and how they evaluate the idea of cultural security and,

how they can perceive others and those who follow different faiths and different value systems and adopt the opposite cultural values and traditions. As such, it has become significant to study the impact of informal education on the concept of cultural security of Saudi university students. That is to say, the significance of the present paper is twofold. Firstly, it seeks to present a concept of cultural security that aligns appropriately with the irregularities and oddities of informal education in a singular cultural society. Secondly, it tries to present a prototype of a moderate and critical mind personality that can automatically distinguish between fallacious, and logical knowledge and prejudiced and unprejudiced knowledge.

2. Review of the literature

Dib (1988) argued that the concept of informal education has completely changed with the advances in technology that has provided accessible channels, through which students can receive information, knowledge, and values distinct from the knowledge supplied by public education organizations. The social media have ever changed completely the concept of informal education from a fixed, unchangeable and limited concept, which can be easily controlled, into fluid, transformative, changeable and developed. However, the study has not addressed the impact of social media adequately in sustaining or hindering the requirements of cultural security. Important issues relating to the impact of informal education on university students like radicalization are not considered.

Farahani et al. (2014) examined the major role of informal education in the postmodern age. They hold a belief that the common forms of formal education are no longer valid in the postmodern age that witnesses rapid and remarkable progress in different aspects of life and cannot be covered through the formal education. These new advances in technology, the overwhelming effect of the social media, and the multiple sources of information and their accessibility require us to incorporate informal education into the formal education system in order to control the negative impact of the formal one.

Jovkovska and Aneta (2014) argued for the importance of informal education in building up the interreligious and interethnic tolerance in multi-religious societies. His study was conducted in Macedonia and it encompasses people belonging to different religious backgrounds. It focuses on the role of informal education in sustaining the concept of cultural security among people of different faiths and ideologies. In Saudi Arabia, however, the majority of people almost believe in Sunni Islam. Accordingly, the concept of cultural security has to be considered from a different perspective. As such, the idea of informal education has to be scrutinized and considered to be consistent with the unique cultural and religious structure of Saudi Arabia. In addition, the issue of cultural security and its relation to the in other words, the concept of cultural

security of the present study is developed to be more universal and holistic that can be applied not only to multicultural and hybrid societies but also to the homogenous societies of singular culture and one religion.

Alabdulkareem (2015) discussed the impact of informal education on teaching and learning science in Saudi Arabia. The study focuses on how social media could affect the teaching and learning of science. He argues that the use of social media in Saudi Arabia is limited to socialization. The students have not used the applications of social media for educational purposes. His study proves indirectly how social media could be used to manipulate and affect the minds of the students through the forms of socialization and diverse types of social interactions. Despite having examined the impact of informal education on the teaching and learning of the students, the study has not directly addressed its impact on the cultural security of the Saudis.

Addressing the influence of mass media as an example of the informal education on the students, Treapat (2017) explained that the impact of mass media is negative because they manipulate the minds of the students and affect badly their perception of the external realities. He further argues that mass media disseminate manipulative and subjective information to the users. As a result, mass media could brainwash the minds of the youth and introduce them to reality from its own lenses. Therefore, mass media may have a negative impact on the concept of cultural security. Though this study has approached handling the issue of the impact of informal education, it has not addressed these inputs adequately. A major objective of the present study is to critically and empirically address such negative influences. The study, however, narrows its scope to be sharply focused on the Saudi University students.

2.1. Theoretical background

The idea of cultural security is fluid and controversial, which is often reshaped and restructured to serve the political interests and the political stability of regimes. In other words, the concept of cultural security can be reduced to what serves the national interests of each culture. As such, formal education is mainly designed not only to spread the national cultural values and norms but also to protect them. In most cases, several nations have some reservations about new ideas, different values and trends and strange customs and traditions, the repercussion of which is a condition of cultural isolation, xenophobia and self-centrism. This condition of cultural isolation may not only represent a barrier to the idea of intercultural socialization but also promote a dominating feeling of suspicion and lack of trust in others. It represents a fertile soil for radicalization and terrorism. The self-centered cultures hold a belief that the major requirements for sustaining their culture security rest upon reductionist and essentialist values that divide human realities and create barriers between

cultures. They hold a belief that the idea of intercultural dialogue may undermine their deeply-rooted cultural values, traditions, and faiths. They are always suspicious of the cultural product of others, their value system, and their way of life. Paradoxically, they are the first consumer of his material products which have become an integral part of their lives. Therefore, the curricula are mainly designed not only to protect the traditional and inherited cultural values but also to make students more susceptible to others and their cultures. However, the world has recently turned into a smaller village and a more globalized institution. As such, it has become difficult to censor or stop the circulation of different ideas, antagonistic ideologies, opposed visions of life, and new habits and customs.

The paradigm of the formal education is the style of schooling developed in the industrialized West where it has been defined as any form of education that is deliberate, carried on, "out of context in a special setting outside of the routines of daily life, and made the responsibility of the larger social group" (Strauss, 1984). Formal education is known as an important instrument of preserving the cultural security of a nation because it aims to keep the cultural identity and social control alive and to protect the values and traditions of a nation (Thomas, 1983; Fagerlind and Saha, 1989; Burns, 1997). The informal education, however, is not often censored by the state authorities. Social networking sites, TV channels, family conversations, and friendship chats are some channels of informal education, which are vulnerable and can be easily penetrated. Tudor (2013) defined informal education as learning a foreign language while living in the country where that language is spoken, by conversations with a friend or family member who speaks the given foreign language, or movies, songs or using the internet, reading books, magazines or newspapers and through this activity, learning new things incidentally learning; also, learning more ways to use computers by completing an activity with their help.

The idea of informal education covers under its umbrella a wide spectrum of activities, which are always practiced outside the formal education domain. They can include various daily life activities like reading, watching TV, using social media like Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp and so on. These informal education channels are intertwined and overlapped with the concept of cultural security. They help shape the individualistic concept of cultural security. At the same time, these channels may undermine the inherited concept of cultural security for a closed and self-centered culture that rejects the principle so critical thinking which can secure and protect the cultural security of nations. Lumby and Farrelly (2009) believed that cultural security is built from the acknowledgment that theoretical 'awareness' of culturally appropriate service provision is not enough. It shifts the emphasis from attitudes to behavior, focusing directly on practice, skills and efficacy. It is about

incorporating cultural values into the design, delivery and evaluation of services. Cultural Security recognizes that this is not an optional strategy, nor solely the responsibility of individuals, but rather involves society and system levels of involvement.

Cultural security always seeks to build a model of value system, code of ethics and a way of life, and cultural identity that would keep the traditional cultural notions and the inherited values unchanged. It starts from the premise that keeping the inherited traditional values alive is a major barrier to the moral degradation of societies. However, the idea is that the concept of cultural security in itself is just a theoretical concept that needs to be practiced and applied through incorporating its cultural values, worldview, and code of ethics into the daily life of people. In such a context, the formal education is entitled with a major responsibility of enhancing the cultural security of a nation, as it is responsible for cultivating such values into the minds of the young generations through the content of the curricula.

However, with the advent of the Internet and the excessive flow of digital information, which have recently become accessible through social media and mass media, the role of formal education in protecting the cultural security of a nation has largely diminished. The formal education no longer becomes the sole source for disseminating values; however, there are other platforms of knowledge, the influences of which have largely exceeded the power of formal education. As such, there has been a clear conflict between the formal and informal education, the negative consequence of which is the inability of the state to protect its own cultural security through resorting to the traditional methods of formal education. As a result, the concept of cultural security has largely changed and the younger generations' worldview has also been dramatically changed.

3. Methodology and participants

The methodology applied in this study combines various elements. First, it uses the empirical study by designing a questionnaire to be distributed to a random sample of Saudi university students. The concepts and the statements in the questionnaire were critically written and they are based on the intercultural education approach. This approach derives its validity and reliability form writing statements that can measure to what extent the students are ready to accept others, different ideas and different ideologies. The results of the questionnaire are qualitatively analyzed in order to reveal the ideologies and cultural attitudes of the students toward their culture and different cultures.

The methods and questionnaire instruments are largely consistent with the objectives of the research in order to ensure the sustainability of observant research in the context of the time allowed for the students to respond to the items of the questionnaire. As a complementary method, interviews were held with many students who

responded to the questionnaire where their impressions, views, opinions, and suggestions about the points addressed in the questionnaire were considered and critically analyzed. These interviews were conducted in order to verify the results obtained through the empirical results taken from the questionnaire addressed to the students. In such a type of research, the research tools and methods used in data collection were considered, whose analysis verifies the hypothesis and provides related answers on the topic under examination. In addition, quantitative and qualitative methods were applied to the study.

A random sample of students was selected from different university departments and colleges. A total of 500 male and female students were requested to answer the questionnaire, however, only 370 students (74%) responded. The participants were undergraduate students from the Community College (male), College of Humanities (male) and the College of Education (female). As the number of female students in the university is less than the male ones, the response wasn't relatively balanced: 225 (60.8%) were male and 145 (39.2) were female.

After studying the literature review thoroughly, the researchers prepared a questionnaire consisting of 21 items so as to get the needed information for the study from the Saudi students who were asked to respond to the questionnaire online in order to avoid any missing value; students of colleges and university have been chosen as a sample.

The questionnaire was distributed in Arabic because all the students in university were native speakers of Arabic. The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert-scale (Strongly disagree= 1 and disagree= 2; unable to decide: Neutral= 3, agree= 4 and strongly agree= 5).

To avouch the questionnaire content validity, it was revised by some experienced university professors. They were asked to evaluate the appropriateness and clarity of the items in order to decide whether the students can recognize the concept of cultural security and their opinion regarding the role of the informal education and its effect on the cultural security.

SPSS version 23 (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA) was used for data analysis. Demographic data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. Secondly, item performance and internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha and item-total correlations) were explored to assess internal consistency.

4. Findings and results

Questionnaire validation and refinement were based on piloting the questionnaire among a small group of staff (n=30) (Table 1). The comprehension of the technical terms, clarity of language and appropriateness of questions were assessed. Some modifications were suggested and were applied. The piloted questionnaire was tested again on thirty

randomly selected students (15 males and 15 females).

Table 1: Pilot questionnaire

Item	Strongly disagreed	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5
Culture as a concept					
1. Culture is the scientific and academic knowledge that students best receive from governmental education.					
2. Culture represents the social and family values that help to constitute the identity of individuals.					
3. Culture enables people to appreciate modern arts like literature, cinema, theatre and music. So, "Cultural Capital" should be a valid measure.					
Concept of culture security					
4. Cultural security is the adherence to religious values and tradition without being open to different cultures, and different religious values and traditions.					
5. Cultural security paves a smooth road into isolation.					
6. Securing cultural codes maintain the identity of nations.					
Culture sources					
7. Cultural values are individualistic in nature.					
8. I receive my cultural values from Islamic teachings.					
9. Social networking sites offer a rich repertoire for teaching cultural values.					
Acceptance of contradicting ideas					
10. I do not mind accepting different ideas, western values, and beliefs as they are.					
11. I may accept occidental ideas, values, and antagonistic ideologies after critically thinking about them.					
12. I may be unable to tolerate any exported ideas, values and beliefs. Oriental codes are the original ones.					
Social Media					
13. Social media play a critical role in influencing the behavior of males and females equally.					
14. Social media have a negative impact on cultural security since they help spread rumors and misleading news.					
15. Social media may radicalize vulnerable personalities by using a theologically stained speech.					
Religious Discourses					
16. Complying with Islamic values and traditions helps to combat extremist religious discourse and destructive values.					
17. The contemporary moderate religious discourse is a deviation from the true teachings of Islam.					
18. The intransigent religious discourse is a source of protection against all dangers: The Western values, heresies, and fallacies.					
Family					
19. My family has an important role in my life and protects me from exposure to fallacies and ethical degradation.					
20. My family draws great attention toward cultivating the Islamic and Arab values and traditions into the minds of its members.					
21. My family taught me how to differentiate sound thinking from the extreme ones.					

The same parameters were investigated. No modifications were required. The questionnaires were electronically distributed to 500 students and only 370 volunteering college students responded.

A total Cronbach's alpha of 0.715 was achieved on total scale level whereas, on subscale levels (conceptualization of culture and awareness of informal education), the Cronbach's alpha values were 0.71 and 0.72. Hedges' g test was also calculated to evaluate the effect size of the sample (Hedges' g= 0.4598). Unpaired *t*-test was measured between the answers of the 225 males and 145 females and so was the corresponding *p*-value. Table 2 shows the main sections of the questionnaire with the descriptive statistics and the statistical significance of the calculated unpaired *t*-test.

Table 2: Responses of male and female Saudi college students to the seven sections of the questionnaire

Category	Male respondents (n= 225)		Female respondents (n= 145)		p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Culture as a concept	3.726	1.003333	3.97	0.878	Insignificant
Concept of culture security	3.524	0.942	4.017	0.979	Significant
Culture sources	3.107	0.972	3.417	0.989	Significant
Acceptance of contradicting ideas	3.332	0.921	3.771	0.897	Significant
Social Media	3.138	0.933	3.611	0.973	Significant
Religious Discourses	3.321	0.972	4.142	0.991	Significant
Family	3.109	0.984	3.415	0.982	Significant

Abbreviations: M= Mean; SD= Standard deviation

After sorting answers according to gender and measured the variance using the One-way ANOVA tests, there was a statistical difference between males and females in disagreeing with the questions

of the questionnaire (as confirmed by Post-hoc Tukey test). Table 3 shows the results of the Post-hoc Tukey HSD test of college students responding to the questionnaire.

Table 3: Results of Post-hoc Tukey HSD test of college students responding to the questionnaire

Groups	Tukey HSD Q statistic	Tukey HSD p-value	Tukey HSD inference
M_{agree} vs $F_{disagree}$	11.8457	0.0010053	p<0.01
M_{agree} vs $M_{disagree}$	11.8375	0.0010053	p<0.01
F_{agree} vs $F_{disagree}$	7.8323	0.0010053	p<0.01
F_{agree} vs $M_{disagree}$	7.7935	0.0010053	p<0.01

The 7-section questionnaire, which consisted of 21 questions, was designed to investigate the impact of informal education on the cultural security of Saudi university students. The first three sections are related to the concept of culture, culture security and cultural sources. Both males and females agreed on defining culture as 'a scientific and academic knowledge' and a representation of 'social and family values' which construct the 'identity of individuals'. However, there has been a salient contrast between males and females regarding the role of culture. Females disagreed with the assumption that culture helps people 'to appreciate modern art'. The second section measured the responses of Saudi students to the concept of cultural security. Respondents seemed to have a neutral attitude, accompanied by a minor inclination to disagree, towards defining culture security as the adherence to the religious values and tradition without being open to different cultures. In the same vein, respondents agreed on the negative impact of cultural security which could pave a smooth road into isolation. However, they agreed on the influence of securing cultural codes on maintaining the identity of nations. The third section addressed the sources of culture. Saudi students agreed that regardless of cultural sources, cultural values are individualistic. As for the resources of culture, while females agreed on the Islamic teachings as the source of their cultural values, males strongly agreed with females on the same point. Moreover, both disagreed that social networking sites offer a rich repertoire for teaching cultural values. Fourth, a section was dedicated to testing the Saudi students' acceptance of contradicting ideas. Both males and females demonstrated high resistance to accepting different ideas as they strongly disagreed on accepting different ideas, western values and beliefs as they are. Much as male students agreed that they may accept occidental thoughts after critically thinking about them, females disagreed on so.

5. Appropriateness

Both male and female respondents agreed that they may be unable to tolerate any exported ideas and admitted that the Saudi moral codes are the original source of values. The fifth section focused on the impact of social media on cultural codes. Respondents agreed on the critical role played by social media on the behavior of males and females equally. There has been a consensus, among males and females, on the negative impact of social media on cultural security because of spreading rumors and misleading news. At a more specific level, respondents were asked about the probability of radicalizing vulnerable personalities through theologically stained discourse on social media, and they agreed on this point, too. The sixth section explored the interaction between culture and religious discourses. There was a relative difference between the responses of males and females to the question of whether complying with the Islamic values could help combat the extremist religious discourse or not. The responses of males displayed agreeing and the attitude of females was strongly agreeing. The stark variation between males and females appeared when they were asked whether they consider the contemporary moderate religious discourse a deviation from the true teachings of Islam. On the one hand, males disagreed with this point. On the other hand, females agreed. Similarly, females agreed that the intransigent religious discourse is protection against dangers defined as western values, heresies and fallacies. Males, however, disagreed. Finally, the cultural role of families is studied. Respondents strongly agreed on the protective role of the family against the exposure to fallacies and ethical degradation. They have also agreed that families carefully cultivate Islamic values and traditions in all members. However, while males disagreed on the impact of the family teaching them how to differentiate sound thinking from the extreme ones, females agreed.

To sum up, gender differences were present throughout the questionnaire, but they were most salient in the section devoted to religious discourse and culture. Generally speaking, Saudi students revealed conservative responses to social networks and western ideas. They also highly esteemed the role of Islamic values and families in constructing the cultural identity of individuals.

6. Discussion

This study is designed to measure the correlation between the conceptualization of culture, culture security and sources of informal education (social media, religious discourses, and family). The resilience of Saudi college students is also explored in terms of accepting other ideas, exported from informal sources, which are not essentially aligned with the mainstream teachings of Saudi formal education.

The first section of the questionnaire aims to assess the college students' understanding of culture as a concept and its main sources. The participants' understanding of culture as a concept is very traditional and reflects their trust in formal education, social norms and family values. Believing

in culture as a core element constructing one's identity, Saudi students only approve the culture received from governmental educational institutions. Such cultural knowledge is perceived, moreover, as a representation of general codes agreed upon among both family and society members. However, when it comes to the interaction between culture and individualistic points of view reflected in arts, respondents revealed a strikingly different attitude. Female participants, unlike males, adopted a negative and conservative attitude towards literature, cinema, theatre and music. They rejected viewing culture as a factor helping in appreciating works of arts. So, females tended to be against any cultural manifestation which may present an individual point of view. They choose to embrace only the governmentally and socially approved culture.

The second section of the questionnaire is related to adherence to the traditional values with being open to different ideas and modernity. The collected responses of students demonstrated a degree of uncertainty regarding the definition of culture security. Reflecting on the conservative nature of the Saudi society, participants could not decisively reject associating cultural security with the adherence to traditional values which they have previously accepted as a representation of culture and a constituent of identity. This conflict between conservative adherence to traditional values and the concerns about the impact of cultural security is crystallized in two consecutive questions. While participants displayed an awareness of the negative impact of cultural security as a way into isolation, they were confident that securing cultural codes is what maintains the identity of a nation. Therefore, Saudi students want to achieve a balance between keeping their identity and preserving their culture without suffering from isolation.

The semi-structured interviews aimed at investigating if cultural security is considered a barrier to the idea of intercultural socialization or a source of generating a dominating feeling of suspicion and lack of trust in others (Ahearne, 2017; Casimiro et al., 2007; Farrell, 2005; Murray, 2010). Males expressed that sustaining the Saudi culture security can push the society in darker circles of the cultural isolation in the modern globalized world. Females did not mind being culturally isolated given the indefinite threats they may perceive from the globalized world.

With reference to the sources from which they receive their cultural values, participants advocated Islamic teachings to be the source of their cultural values and rejected social media as a cultural platform. The questionnaire aims to elicit students' responses regarding their understanding of the idea of informal education. It tries to critically assess the impact of the informal education on the cultural security of the students, by addressing a number of questions relating to the impact of social media, family and religious discourse influence on the students' cultural security. The study has divided the informal education sources to which the Saudi students may be exposed to social media, religious discourse and family. Complying with the previous results, the responses of the students prioritized the positive impact of religious discourse and family teachings on the behavior of males and females and criticized the negative impact of social media on society.

The social media category aims to evaluate the online threats that social network sites may bring on to Saudi society in terms of cultural insecurity. Respondents believe that theological discourse can be exploited on social media to radicalize vulnerable people. The elicited responses expressed the deep concerns of Saudi students about the negative role of social media. Participants admitted that social media jeopardizes their cultural security, alters their behavior and facilitates the radicalization of vulnerable Saudi youth. This is consistent with other concerns regarding the negative impact of social media streams in the literature (Awan, 2007; Byman, 2016; Conversi, 2012; Stenersen, 2008).

The questionnaire, and the semi-structured interview, focus on the religious discourse since the Islamic religion has an overwhelming effect on the life of Saudi society. Saudi students considered religion the solution to all culturally threatening problems. They believe that if they stick to the Islamic values, they can fight the negative radicalization impact of social media which takes advantage of theological discourses. However, when it comes to generalizing the cultural dangers as 'western values and fallacies' and specifying the religious discourse as the 'intransigent' type, males and females disagree. Female students, unlike males, are against the contemporary moderate religious discourse and consider it a deviation from the original Islamic teachings. Therefore, they are in favor of the 'intransigent' version of the religious discourse to be the protection against all cultural threats. Males, however, displayed a higher degree of awareness than females as they rejected the 'intransigent' type of Islamic discourse to be a protecting shield against 'all dangers'.

The final category discusses the role of the family in enhancing the cultural security in Saudi society through addressing four items. The first item addresses students' feelings of family responsibility in protecting them from fallacious and deceptive ideas that deconstruct their cultural security. The second item examines whether the Saudi family tries to cultivate into the minds of their members the Islamic cultural values. The third items address the issue of the role of the family in blocking its members from all different and strange values and Western values. The fourth item addresses the issue of whether the family plays a real role in enhancing the social security of its members or it has no role in such a process. There has been a more consensus on the role of the family than on the role of religious discourse as a protection against dangers. The role of the family is highly acknowledged by males and females.

7. Conclusion

Much as Saudi institutions offer the basic pedagogical requirement for harnessing college students, the college students are concerned with informal education. The present study demonstrates that female Saudi students seem to be more equipped with good awareness about extremist thinking, cultural security and political consequences of online radicalization than males. Females are expressed feeling safe with rejecting exported conflicting ideas while males were partially inclined to show a sort of openness to evaluating these ideas. However, both gendered is remarkably influenced by the religious discourse in terms of shaping their visions, worldview and identity.

The limitation of this study includes three factors. First, the respondents are affiliated with the same academic institution. Multi-institutional studies are recommended. Second, the interviews and questionnaires were conducted within the campus to ensure the representativeness of the studied sample and the affiliation to the hosting university. However, responses of participants, especially females, might have been affected by such supervision on giving answers. Third, the link between soliciting cultural security and avoiding cultural isolation should be discussed using open-end questions in future studies.

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Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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