Parental Influences on the Internet Use by Children in Saudi Arabia

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by

Ahmed Nasser Almogbel

Faculty of Health and Life Sciences
De Montfort University

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my loving parents who have instilled in me the pursuit of knowledge. To my father, I want to say thank you so much for your encouragement and your motivation. I love you Dad. To my mother who encouraged me to complete my PhD, but before I could finish it, she passed away. This is dedicated to her, I will never forget you or your love. I love you Mum. I also dedicate this study to all my sisters and brothers, thank you so much for your support.

I also dedicate this study to my wife, Fatimah. Your health has not been the best in the past few years, but that did not stop you from encouraging me to achieving a PhD for the whole family.

I dedicate this research to my children, Abdulaziz, Nawaf and Layan. I wish I had spent more time with you. I hope this achievement will inspire you to be the best you can be.

Finally, I dedicate this work to all the children who consume the internet. I also dedicate it to the parents who dedicate their time in ensuring that the internet provides enriching positive content for all their children. The professionals who dedicate their lives to make sure that the internet is safe for children are much appreciated.

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Publications

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

BABO	Bibliography of Arab Books Online
CIT	Communications and Information Technology
CITC	Communications and Information Technology Commission
D-gen	Digital Generation
DN	Digital Natives
DSP	Data Service Providers
GPA	Grape Point Average
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISU	Internet Service Unit
KACST	King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
MSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
N-gen	Net Generation
SA	Saudi Arabia
SR	Saudi Riyal
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations for Science; Education and Culture Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
US	United State of America
WHO	World Health Organization
DBS	Disclosure Barring System

Abstract:

The advancement in technology has undoubtedly enriched the world, both socially and culturally, leading to concerns and unintended consequences surrounding both accessibility and its usage. The concerns of parents on their children's internet usage have been one of the main reasons behind identifying ways and means to mediate children's internet access and usage effectively. Even though it is recognised that internet usage has many positive influences on children, there are also concerns about the possible negative impact. For parents in Saudi Arabia (SA), mediating children's internet usage is a significant concern due to the increasingly easy access to the internet and the likely negative impact on the children. These concerns and existing literature formed the basis for this research which sought to investigate the parental mediation of children's internet usage in Saudi Arabia. Specifically, the research questions ask what the intensity of children's participation in internet activities is and how effective is parental mediation in controlling usage is? In what way do social and cultural factors motivate parents to practice regulative and restrictive mediation of their child's internet usage.

Furthermore, does excessive internet usage result in negative or inappropriate consequences regarding children's behaviour? This research adopted a multiple paradigm approach which utilised both qualitative and quantitative approaches to collect and analyse data. Data collection for this research was through a questionnaire survey (involving 700 children and 465 parents) randomly selected, and semi-structured interviews involving 23 parents. Analysis of the data suggested that parental mediation of children's internet usage in Saudi Arabia is a major issue. The key findings from this research indicate a very high level of internet use among children in Saudi Arabia. Approximately, 64% of the respondents indicated that they use the internet on a daily basis spending between 2 to 6 hours on the internet. Video sharing was identified to be the most common use of the internet by the children. The main drivers for parental mediation of children's internet usage in SA were identified as the need to ensure children were trained to adhere to Islamic teachings and social values, the security of children and misinformation of children. Mediation strategies adopted by parents ranged from controlling the amount of times children spent on the internet; restricting children's access to potentially dangerous websites, and advising children on safety

issues on the internet. The implications of the research results and recommendations for ensuring effective mediation of children's internet usage in SA are discussed in the study.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

> Today, after more than a century of electric technology, we have
> extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace,
> abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned.
> (McLuhan, 1964: p3)

Technological and internet usage have opened up hitherto closed continents in ways
which were once considered unimaginable and unthinkable, effectively turning the
world into what Marshall McLuhan (1964) refers to a "global village". However, while
this technological revolution has undoubtedly enriched the world, both socially and
culturally, in other ways it has led to concerns and unintended consequences
surrounding both accessibility and its usage (Spada, 2014). For example, while
information technology may have made communication quicker, easier and more
convenient, it has also bought with it, issues surrounding security, privacy, and
safeguarding, with children in particular at risk from activity such as cyberbullying,
sexting or online grooming. As Shin noted, "children spend more time engaged in
various online activities, and concerns regarding their internet use have also increased"
(Shin, 2015:649).

Whilst such concerns have led to advice around ways in which parents or guardians can
better prepare and protect their children or adolescents, against such online threats, for
example, the NSPCC in the United Kingdom (UK) has produced guidelines on online
safety – elsewhere, efforts to police or control children's internet usage has led to claims
that parents were simply imposing their values upon their offspring (Ozgur, 2016).
Nonetheless, the issue of parental mediation is of major concern in many countries in
the world (Subrahmanyan *et al.*, 2001; Gross 2004; Livingstone and Helpser, 2008; Lee,
2012). Several researchers have, for example, investigated the divergence in the way
this process operates, both within and between different countries, and the extent to
which such parental influence represents either a safety mechanism – one designed to
shield children from potential risks or harm - or restrictive mediation and social control.
For a country such as Saudi Arabia (SA), the dynamics for the relationship between
parents and their children's internet and social media usage differs from many western

countries due to the less secular nature of the society and the high level of government regulation of internet usage (Fulih, 2002). It is in this light that this research investigates children's internet and social media usage and parental influences in SA. While literature such as Fulih (2002) presented evidences showing a high level of government regulation of internet usage in SA; there is little research that examines the intensity of children's participation in internet activities and how effective parental mediation is in controlling or restricting usage. This gap in the literature informs the research questions in this research.

This initial chapter serves as an introduction to the research and presents a background to the issues under investigation. The chapter is divided as follows. A background to the subject of children's internet and social media usage and parental influences is first presented, followed by a definition of the key terms to be used in this research. A statement of the problem to be investigated is presented which leads to the presentation of the aims and objectives of the research. Following this, the questions posed by this research are also presented, including the potential significance of the study to SA and the wider research community is presented. A quick overview of the study country, SA, is presented next to help situate the research in both the context of the country and culture including children and their rights. The chapter ends with a brief overview of internet usage in SA.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The last half of the twentieth century, and the beginning of the twenty-first century has each witnessed a huge information revolution; this period is known as the information age (Prensky, 2013). The term "information revolution" is used by some literature as a result of the significant progress in both telecommunication and computer fields which have further led to the facilitation of most daily practices and activities people perform (Facer and Furlong, 2001). This expansion of computer application ranges in particular, after the spread of PCs became substantial, not only by small and large establishments but also by family members as well (Prensky, 2013). Computers perform many tasks accurately and quickly. Therefore they have become popular gadgets, especially among the younger generation who have been labelled as 'digital natives' (DN) (Valcke *et al* 2010). However, the suggestion by some that many parents are not 'digital natives',

thus presents challenges in the way parents attempt to control the internet usage by their children and their use of computers (Selwyn, 2009). Examples of these challenges will be illustrated in the literature review.

The Saudi population, much like the rest of the world, has been affected by the new information age phenomena. This has, for many, become a bone of contention in a country where strict religious teachings govern social norms and structures. By way of illustration, an interesting study in one of Saudi Arabia's hospitals (King Faisal Specialist Hospital) was undertaken in 1999 which suggested that internet usage within the hospital was proving to have contributed to the social expectations of the nation (Alminshawi 2003). Whilst this institution was the first to incorporate the use of the internet into its activities, the results of this study showed that 93% of internet use was for purposes that undermined and degraded religious and moral values, such as access to pornography websites, in comparison to a tiny 3% which showed it was used for scientific and research purposes. Thus, indicating that an overwhelming amount of internet users in this hospital did not conform with religious expectations. This study draws attention to the potential impact that internet usage could have on the population of SA and in particular children. Open and unregulated internet access may lead to increased access amongst children to websites and information that undermines the religious and moral values.

For a country ruled by strict religious teachings, this research supports the view that access to the internet should be closely monitored. As reported in Sait and Al Tawil (2007) and Alsaedy (2015), the inevitable social and moral conflict in internet use remains one of its key issues. The use of the internet for purposes that conflict with Saudi Arabia's religious, cultural, legal and traditional norms have been the main reasons for blocking and filtering contents in the nation (Sait and Al Tawil, 2007). For children, the possible exposure to content that conflict with religious, social and traditional norms are seen as a threat to their upbringing, leading to the need for parents to mediate their children's internet usage. As defined by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media refers to "internet-based applications that allow the creation and exchange of content which is user generated". From the definition, it can be identified that social media can serve as a means for children from all over the world to share content and exchange information. For students, Alwagait *et al* (2014) suggested that social media

usage can potentially impact the educational performance of students. For University students in SA, Alwagait *et al* (2014) found that social media usage related to positive GPA. For children, however, this may not be the case, as they may not have the required abilities to manage their social media and internet usage (Sait and Al Tawit, 2007). Parental influences are therefore expected to have an important role in controlling social media and internet use for advantageous use. In recognition of existing research by (Sait and Al Tawit, 2007), there is a need to understand children's access to online material and social media and possible consequences to children's behaviour. This current research study, therefore, intends to understand the intensity of children's participation in internet activities and the consequences of its use to behaviour, parents' regulative mediation of their children's internet use and its effectiveness. Research by Alsaedy (2015), also suggested that Saudi Arabia's religious, cultural, legal and traditional norms impact on monitoring and regulation of internet usage. This current research will question whether these types of social and cultural factors also motivate parents to practice regulative monitoring.   By asking these questions, the current research intends to increase the knowledge and awareness of children's internet usage and the influence of parents on their children's usage. By utilising both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, the research will also potentially draw attention to some of the online risks and the possible negative consequences for children such as addiction, sexual exploitation and cyberbullying (Livingstone and Staksrud, 2009; Hargrave and Livingstone, 2009; Staksrud, 2008).

1.3 KEY ISSUES COVERED BY THIS STUDY

This section of the thesis presents a brief outline of all the key issues and concepts covered by the present study. These issues include: parental control (influence), web filtering and children's digital behaviours and their implications.

1.3.1 Parental Control

Growlnic and Pomerrantz (2009) highlighted the controversy and ambiguity concerning the concept of parental control and claimed that there is an association between parental psychological control and ill-being in adolescents (Gronlick and Pomerantz 2009 in Soenens and Beyers, 2012). Some scholars argue that psychological control is largely an outcome of behaviour control (Beyers and Soenens, 2012; Gronlick and Pomerantz 2009 in Soenens and Beyers, 2012). Chao and Ague (2009) studied the manifestation

of parental behavioural control in which they note how "…controlling practices are more commonly endorsed in some cultures in particular" and, moreover, that "because those practices are widespread or even normative in those cultures they would be less detrimental to children's well-being" (Chao and Aque, 2009: 247). Interestingly, the same authors suggested that the effect of parental control on children's online activities in collectivist societies has a benign impact, as children are socialised to believe that their parents are well meaning. This assertion is, however, strongly refuted by Baber *et al.,* (2005) based on the studies undertaken in 6 different nations in all continents except Australia argued that parental control correlates with the negative developmental outcome to children regardless of socio-cultural backgrounds. Similarly, Deci and Ryan (2000) explained how parental control correlates with adverse outcomes because (psychologically) controlling behaviour suppresses autonomy (Soenens and Beyers, 2012) and this is detrimental for individual needs of relatedness, competence and self- determination (Soenens and Vansteenkiste, 2010 in Soreness and Beyers, 2012).

The juxtaposition of the experience of parental control can be illustrated in a parent's verbal expression of disappointment in a child which:

> "---might be experienced differently, depending on adolescence cultural orientation. They may subjectively experience this statement as pressuring and eternally controlling, whereas an adolescent with a collectivist or interdependent orientation may be relatively more likely to see it as a legitimate expression of involvement and concern (Soerens and Beyers, 2012 p. 248).

Given the positioning of SA as a collectivist society, it is essential to consider how the children perceive their parents' mediation, regulation and control of their internet usage. The research questions employed in this current research are informed by Soerens and Beyers' (2012) research and ask them to provide their views on their parents' control.

Coercion theory refers to how aggressive and antisocial behaviours develop in children in short term due to ineffectual parental responses to problem behaviour (Ispa *et al., 2004*, Dekovic *et al.,* 2004, Rudey and Grusec, 2006; Crosswhite and Kerpelman, 2009). This theory could be used to explain the construct of behaviour control

parenting. While all parents expect their children to be obedient and conform to social expectations, authoritarian parents are physically interfering and expect children to follow laid down rules even in a group are more valued. Some media content, like social networking sites (SNS), which promote the values of the widespread use of internet consumption by children, may be viewed by many in SA as a potential threat to the social fabric of the country. For example, the implication of exposure to individualistic values such as free speech, promotion of self–reliance, autonomy, secular entertainment and worldview, is a significant challenge to traditional parenting in Saudi Arabia (Tamis-leMonda *et al.,* 2009). It could, therefore, be argued that Saudi citizens who are enculturated into the values of an individualist country may adopt parenting practices of that culture which may be viewed as undermining the traditional parenting models (Yagmurlu and Sanson, 2009). For example, a study of Turkish immigrant parents living in the Netherlands suggested that immigrant parents are less authoritative in their parenting skills than native parents. This representation implies that control parenting presents a deficient model of parenting with regards to disciplining children. Authoritarian parenting is associated with parenting styles that are less supportive of the needs of the children, particularly in problem-solving tasks. The internet is thus feared to be a barrier to attainment of this aspiration (Sait and Al Tawit, 2007; Alsaedy, 2015). Indeed, it could be argued that young people need (parental) guidance to positively benefit from internet consumption and the process of supporting them to make informed choices. This calls for parents to exercise authoritative guidance characterised by the encouragement of autonomy, creativity and freedom of expression, values which are generally not encouraged in a collectivist society like Saudi Arabia (Hofstede, 2003).

1.3.2 Web Filtering

As noted above, many parents feel concerned by their children's use of the internet and hence feel the need to use different strategies to control unlimited access to the totality of the internet. Parents may, for example, be concerned about children accessing unsuitable sites such as pornography, drugs, gambling or social networking sites. However, children are, it is argued, likely to access web content away from home (Kerawalla and Crook, 2002). Parents are thus advised to consider some real-life risks to children such as meeting strangers when they are out and have a culture of openness

to discuss these issue and other distressing situations (AV-Comparatives, 2014). A research study by Oyaid (2010) reported that access to Internet-based computers mainly occurred at home, as children are more likely to have access to the internet at home than away from home. This presents an excellent opportunity for parents to mediate or filter their children's internet use. Parental controls should not, however, be seen as absolute (Clayton et. al, 2006). Every computer has an IP address similar to this format 192.0.2.166 (AV- Comparatives, 2014). The internet industry offers parental control software which when turned on allows the host wishing to make a connection and "send …packets to this IP address" and blocks selected content. However, parental control packages come with instructions which use technical jargon. This deters parents without confidence in the use of software to use it. Additionally, some software works with extra configurations and software packages to allow for increased control (AV-Comparatives, 2014. Clayton *et al*., 2006. Lenhart *et al*., 2010). Therefore, it is important to understand parents' level of confidence and knowledge in using parental control packages to regulate their children's internet usage. Therefore, this is a theme of discussion in the survey and interview guides within this research.

1.3.3 Digital Behaviours and Their Implications and Outcomes

The section introduces a summary of the various perspectives of the digital behaviours and further explains the outcomes of each.

1.3.3.1 Digital Natives

The term "Digital Natives" was coined by Prensky (2006, 2009) and refers to children of the 21st century with regards to their savviness in using the internet. Prensky suggested that students nowadays are native speakers of the digital language. This according to researchers such as Prensky (2001) and VanSlyke, (2003) is due to the trouble-free accessibility of such technologies to students in today's generation. The early access, as well as the length of time students, spend with these technologies help them become native speakers of the digital language as they naturally engage with digital technology on a day to day basis. They are fluent and speak different variations of the language which may not be otherwise understood by the older generations.

Furthermore, Prensky (2006, 2009) refers to the digital natives as the N - gen (Net generation) or D –gen (Digital generation).

1.3.3.2 Digital Immigrants

These are people who are not fluent in the native language of digital technology like the internet and video games. This group is not born into the native world of computers but are 'socialised' into it by a need to connect with other people or for employment purposes (Prensky, 2006). The writer highlights some characteristics of this group by using the 'accent' analogy. Digital immigrants have thicker accents than the digital natives and these accents are manifest themselves in activities like printing out an email, calling someone to check if they have received the sent email, instead of using settings on the web host. In addition, printing documents out to edit instead of editing on the screen (ibid, 2006).

1.3.3.3 Digital Aliens

According to Prensky (2001, 2006, 2009), this group is on the extreme end of the spectrum of technology competitiveness. The world of the internet is mysterious to them. Digital aliens consider the digital world mysterious (Bartlett & Miller 2011). They lack the basic skills required to use digital tools when needed, for instance, typing a letter, completing an online form, sending an email or a message via WhatsApp or text message.

1.3.3.4 Net Savviness

Bartlett and Miller (2011, p.19) offer a clear and all-encompassing definition for net savviness as "a practical understanding of the way the internet works, for instance, the basics of how search engines return results, how user-generated feedback functions, how websites are designed and built, how identity can be established and faked and how images and videos can be altered". This definition is adopted throughout this research.

1.3.3.5 Collectivism

Collectivism is one of Hofstede's (2003) conceptualisations of national culture. Sorensen and Oyserman (2011) define the central theme of collectivism as:

> "A cultural syndrome, in which relationships with relevant others and
> group memberships constitute the primary unit of society. [This includes]
> the foundation of self-concept, and the key values that ….govern one's life".
> (Sorensen and Oyserman, 2011 p. 2).

Within these societies, interdependence is valued, and social units are defined as groups with ties for example to religion, ethnicity, tribes and families. There is an obligation among group members to identify with each other to form strong bonds. The relationships are viewed as fixed and permanent, and any deviation from the expected norm is frowned upon, and in most cases, such behaviour is reprimanded (ibid, 2011).

1.3.3.6 Individualism

As an opposing term for collectivism, according to Hofstede's conceptualisations, individualism is also conceived as a trait of a national culture since in the individualistic perspective:

> "--- the individual is the most basic unit of society. Individuals are defined
> by their own attainments and relationships, and group memberships have
> meaning only in so far as they facilitate the attainment of personal goals"
> (Sorensen and Oyserman, 2011 p. 2).

In such societies, individuals are encouraged to be self-confident and make achievements to the best of their abilities.

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Given the seemingly pervasive and all-encompassing rise of both digital technologies and social media, and the resultant social and cultural implications and impact, it could be argued that the family, a source and site of primary socialisation, is likely to be at the forefront in policing children's access. For example, the family as an agent of primary socialization is seen by some as the initial social-based in the forming and building of an individuals' character, moderating their behaviour patterns and influencing their choices in their use of technology (Surette, 2011); each of which is extremely important given its part in the process of globalization. Therefore, the family performs a pivotal role in the social education process to ensure the direction of the desired behaviour towards the acceptable social values particularity in Saudi Arabian culture (Sait and Al

Tawil, 2007; Alsaedy, 2015). Control in this study means observing children's behaviours in a range of situations and putting in place a deterrent aimed at dictating and determining their behaviour; thereby preventing excessive levels of rebelliousness.

Families in the Saudi community, in particular, when compared to other families or communities in most contemporary societies, appeared distinguished by its ability to practice social control of its members and restraining their behaviour if they deviate from what is generally socially accepted (Schneider & Silverman, 2010). However, given the global reach of technological advances such as the internet and social media, children are no longer as immune as they once were from the type of external forces designed to subvert localised social or cultural practices. Given this new-found intrusion and exposure to new ideas, there is potential for children to be attracted and seduced by new ways of communicating with each other and the outside world (Buckingham, 2013).

Moreover, children in SA are giving in to the new technology wave that is sweeping across nations due to its vast availability and ease of access. However, SA is a collectivist society and religion is used to maintain a firm grip on behaviour patterns of its population (Lefebvre & Frankie, 2013) although this is likely to change due to high numbers of Saudi Arabian students studying and working in individualist societies like the USA and the UK.

Nonetheless, the Saudi Arabia's Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC), an independent scientific organisation responsible for monitoring and controlling internet use in Saudi Arabia, has made intensive efforts in controlling this open service. For example, it was reported that in April 2016 the CITC "controlled 900,000 internet links in 2016 and blocked 68% of them. Furthermore, 92% of the blocked links had porn content, while 1,300 links were said to be harmful to children" (English Alarabiya, 2016).

In addition to this, the observer of the Saudi community section found that half of the active internet users were in fact below fifteen years old (Ministry of Planning (2000)) and in August 2014 the highest percentage of internet users were people between 25-34 years old. This increase in trend is even more visible now as 75% of internet users in SA are now aged between 15-39 years old.

Presently, active participation of Saudi families is reported in controlling their children's use of the internet more insistently, where the family is the first brick in community building. Its utility means that the community's utility and corruption results in community corruption. It is the family that holds responsibility for the security of everyone in the nation intellectually, behaviourally and socially (Yamani, 2000). Additionally, in more recent times, new problems have appeared in Saudi society such as theft, drug abuse and domestic violence (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2005). One of the noticeable challenges facing SA is that the function and influence of the family are continuously being threatened by the world's socio-economic developments projected by the process of globalisation (Alsaedy, 2015; Al Shiki, 2010; Al-Ghanim, 2012). Therefore, it is inevitable that any researcher examining the sociological issues facing the nation takes into consideration the social, economic and cultural factors surrounding the family, as it has been previously stated that SA does not operate in a vacuum (Al-Shiki, 2010). Only a few studies have tackled the topic of family involvement in using the internet by children in the Saudi community, and these studies did not explicitly focused on the control and enforcement aspect within the home. This gap in research formed the central focus of the current research but also the research questions that examine parents' regulation of their children's internet usage at home.

1.5 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The main aim of this research is to investigate the degree to which parental input and influences impacts and shapes children's internet and social media usage in Saudi Arabia.

The aim of this research will be achieved using the following objectives:

1. Utilise both quantitative and qualitative approaches to survey the magnitude of children's internet usage and its influence on behaviour.

2. Investigate the level of parental governance and the strategies and mechanisms with which they achieve this control.

3. Assess the extent to which internet access and usage impact the quality of family relationships.

4. Critically evaluate the effects of familial structures, and matrimonial hierarchy on the way parents socialise with their children as Internet users.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the background provided in this chapter and the aim and objectives, several research questions emerged. A summary of the literature informing these questions is presented in Chapter 2, section 2.6. The section discusses how the research questions posed by this research is supported by the literature and the extent to which the questions inform the development of the questionnaire and interview guides used as the basis for collecting data for this research. This research seeks to address the following questions:

1. What is the intensity of children's participation in internet activities and how effective is parental mediation in controlling or restricting usage?
2. In what way do social and cultural factors motivate parents to practice regulative and restrictive mediation of their child's internet usage?
3. In what ways does excessive internet usage result in negative or inappropriate consequences regarding children's behaviour?
4. What strategies and mechanisms do parents adopt to ensuring children's internet safety?
5. In what way does the influence of the internet on family or family communication differ by the type of children's online activities?
6. How does children's internet usage differ by family's socio-economic status?
7. To what extent do internet access and usage differ based on the gender of children?
8. How might the age of parents' impact on their children's internet usage?
9. To what extent does the number of children within the home impact on children's internet usage?

As stated earlier, these questions provide the basis for collecting data which is then analysed to achieve the aim and objectives of this research.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Previous research on children's use of the internet in SA concentrated on children's addictive use of online games, social networking sites and chat rooms (Alminshawi, 2003; Almuhsin, 2003; Melhem, 2004; Alkidhi, 2005; Toukhi, 2002). More recent research by Salem *et al* (2014) considered the trends of internet access and usage by

children in the Arab region and suggested that internet usage rate among children is very high. About 60% of the study's 3000 respondents suggested that children below the age of 14 should not be given access to devices with internet due to potential dangers. Another research by GSMA (2014) comparing children's internet and mobile usage in Algeria, Egypt, Iraq and Saudi Arabia suggest that over 84% of parents from Saudi Arabia were concerned about their children's access to the internet through their mobile phones. The high rate of internet usage is to be expected since, worldwide, all of these areas are of interest given their ubiquitous global growth, reach and appeal. Some researchers suggested that parental control or guidance should be an influential factor in the level of internet use by children. Thus, the present study will examine their interactions and relationship with the virtual world, and the resultant impact and influence on the social and cultural issues in the lives of children when surfing the internet. It will also go one step further by shedding light on the relationship between parents and children as a direct result of their increasing exposure to what may be perceived of potential threats to the stability and security of Saudi culture. The study will also look at how parents can reduce the exposure of the children to harmful content; whether inside or outside the home.

Therefore, parental enforcement has an important impact on their children's experience with the internet and the objective of this study is to highlight the problem of surfing the Internet by children and what to watch in the absence or presence of the parents. The researcher seeks to reveal what these problems could be and from the analysis and findings resulting from the field work (questionnaires and interviews) potentially suggest solutions or alternatives to the limitation of internet access. This study also tries to describe and explain the potential problem of prolonged internet access and its impact on the family, a connection which has also been lacking in previous work in this field specifically in SA. The results of this study will help parents to understand the reasons why children surf the Internet, how to respond to the changes in behaviour which may accrue from these practices and the extent to which this correlates with children disobeying religious values, without disrupting their family structure.

Finally, this empirical and social scientific study is thought to be the first to investigate children and the Internet in Saudi Arabia in this scholarly fashion. Due to this, the researcher hopes that this work will be the basis for other scientific studies as a database

for researchers, parents and others interested in this field, such as the ministry of education, universities, and counselling centres. The researcher hopes to contribute to the Arab world databases like Almanhal (access to eBooks from the Middle East), a database which maintains periodicals and yearbooks from the Arabic World since 1934 and Bibliography of Arabs Books Online (BABO). These databases can be accessed through library membership of Middle East Countries (Qatar National Library online, 2015). Also, it can be used as an academic reference for future work that draws upon this knowledge due to its capability to be replicated if needed but also because it is a specific area that has not been researched previously by other scholars.

The significance of this study also relates to the increasingly easy access to the internet which has led to the exposure of children to threats, harassment and grooming for sexual purposes, since some children surf the internet unsupervised or when they visit social networking sites (Alsaedy, 2015; Sait and Al-Tawil, 2007). Children are also potentially exposed to unregulated pornographic material on the web where there is often little or not enough restriction in place. A study by Beier et al (2015) suggested that access to such material by children usually have a detrimental effect on the children.

Given that access to the Internet is freely available to children within Saudi, not merely at home, but also friends' homes and popular internet cafes, therefore regulating online contents that the children are exposed to is quite challenging. Likewise, many children have mobile or smartphones, which also serve as a contributing factor to globalisation which according to Hall (1991) has led to increasing porosity of boundaries and changing the experience of time and space, with similar access to the internet and needless to say, they can surf the web whenever they want. They can easily connect to Wi-Fi hotspots often for free which means there are no potential social or parental boundaries or barriers in place to stop them from accessing their desired content when it is convenient for them. Also, parents are usually busy with work, studies or house chores which quite often distract them from effectively monitoring their children's usage of electronic gadgets as they cannot follow their child's every move (Al-Ghanim, 2012; Alsaedy, 2015). However, this means children can freely watch Youtube videos, some of which are not suitable for children but again there is little in place on the internet to help enforce age-restricted viewing on content. On the other hand, both Saudi

Kingdom religious society and the Islamic religion prohibits the viewing of material with sexualised content for any person at any time (Alminshawi, 2003). Children are expected to take such social and cultural norms into consideration, and the potential implications should these be transgressed. Thus part of this study will look at the needs and wants of children in using the internet and how these may contribute to changes in views of religion and positions of the self within society.

Another important factor to highlight is that some parents lack the necessary knowledge of using the computer or how they can guide their children. As the study references the increased impact of globalisation, it has been somewhat sudden and continues to grow, but its features are not known by older generations of grandparents and even some parents (Yamani, 2000). Research work by Hiniker et al (2016) reported increased use of technology by both parents and children. This notwithstanding, research by Correa et al (2015) suggested that there is still a gap between adults and children, who belong to the technology generation. The surge of globalisation can easily be identified in the last 30 years so parents from a time before this who did not grow up in a world of smart technology and mass media access, will not understand the gadgets which their children see as a standard part of their daily lives in today's society.

The motivations for carrying out this study are as a result of the findings from the researcher's regular casual conversations with parents in Saudi Arabia. As a parent, the researcher was extremely surprised to find out the lack of awareness amongst the parents of the risks and potential dangers associated with their children using the internet. Many seemed to lack knowledge or understanding of the potential increased risks children are exposed to when using the internet. Although parents discussed their children's internet usage, their involvement with their children and the restriction of content access seemed less significant. All this convinced the researcher of the importance of this issue in Saudi society.

Having been awarded a scholarship to study for a doctorate outside Saudi Arabia from the Ministry of Education, the researcher chose the United Kingdom to study the impact of internet usage on children, not only in Saudi Arabia but in the West as well and to be able to access literature by Western scholars.

1.8 OVERVIEW OF SAUDI ARABIA AND RIYADH

Saudi Arabia is located in the extreme south-west of the Asian continent and the heart of the Arab world, where it is bordered with the Red Sea from the west, the Arabian Gulf, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar from the east.

Figure 1.1: Map of Saudi Arabia

In addition, SA is considered the heart of the Islamic world as it embraces Mecca and Medina city where millions of Muslims go for pilgrimage every year and visit the Mosque of the Prophet Muhammad. Therefore the religious values are extremely prominent here among the community. The regime in SA is a monarchy as stipulated in the fifth article of the Constitution. The law of governance in SA consists of 83 articles under nine chapters. Articles 5 states that "Monarchy is the system of rule in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia" (saudiembassy.net, 2015). Also, SA is an Islamic country, and its language is Arabic "Saudi Arabia is an Arab Islamic state with religion sovereignty of Islam, and its constitution is the book of Allah (God) and the Sunnah of his Messenger Prophet Mohamed (Peace be upon Him). Its capital is Riyadh, and its language is Arabic" (Ministry of foreign affairs, 2015). The total population of Saudi

Arabia, according to Department of Statistics estimates about 30,770,375, and the population of the Saudis only about 20,702,536, and growth rate of the population stood at 2.55% (CITC, 2013).

The total number of the population in 2014	30,770375
The 2014 population growth rate	2.55%
Population density (persons /Sq. km) for the year	15.3
2014 Saudi population	20,702536
The growth rate for Saudi population in 2014	%2.1

Table 1.1: Population of Saudi Arabia

Due to a significant oil boom, this has led to many social, cultural and economic changes in the roles of the Saudi Arabian population:

"Rapid demographic and economic and social changes, the multiplicity of roles played by women within the home and outside, urban expansion and other developments have increased pressures on the family" (Ministry of Economy & Planning 2005, p.349).

The main focus for this research is on Riyadh, the largest city in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and also its capital. It is located in the centre of Saudi Arabia, which is one of the fastest growing cities in the world in terms of area expansion.

1.9 CHILDREN IN SAUDI ARABIA

To present a better understanding of the context within which this research is situated, the following sections present information on children in Saudi Arabia and the family systems into which they are brought up.

1.9.1 Family Structure

The typical family in Riyadh is a nuclear family; which is composed of a heterosexual couple and children, or an extended family; which consist of spouses, parents and/or married children (Glasze and Alkhayyal, 2002). The previous period since 1987 reflected a change of patterns of Saudi families, where nuclear family units become the norm with a percentage of 75% in 2004 compared to 67% in 1996. Extended families, on the other hand, amounted to only 21% in 2004. There are 919 thousand households

in Riyadh, and 35% are aged less than 14 years old. The average family size is 6.2, and it is expected to shrink down to about 5.7 in 2023. Also, according to statistical projections, the number of households in 2023 will reach nearly 1.1 million households (High Authority for the development of the city).

Although family size is decreasing it is still prevalent in Saudi Arabian culture to have a large number of children as it is considered as a social value (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2004). The family still retains many important key functions such as social upbringing, biological and emotional functions and determining the social status of the individual.

The type of family unit has changed more recently due to the changing positions of women in the family home (Al-Ghanim, 2012). According to Aldosari (2005), a shift occurred in the role of women after they started to work outside the home in SA. This was followed by a shift in family type and relationships within the family. This shift, according to both Sait and Al-Tawil, 2007 and Al-Ghanim (2012) has been as a result of globalisation and access to information from across other parts of the world through the internet. Previously, the family was extended to include children even after their marriage, but now married children are choosing to set up their own house, and living as nuclear families. Therefore, the definition of childhood can be referred to describe an array of different periods of human growth, but in developmental psychology, it means the period between infancy and adulthood.

However, while it is commonly considered that childhood begins from birth, some consider childhood a period of being playful and innocence – that ends at the teens (Holloway and Valentine, 2005; Aitken, 2001). In many countries, there is a specific age of which childhood ends officially, and therefore the person becomes adult legally. This age varies between thirteen to twenty-one years; however, the age of eighteen is typical for the end of childhood in the West and Saudi (Karamaldin, 1997). Its' stages are the 'early childhood stage' which follows infancy and begins when a child starts to speak or walk independently and becomes less dependent on the help of parents when it comes to basic needs. According to UNICEF, UNESCO and other bodies, early childhood ends at the age of eight years. Then there is the 'late childhood stage'; educators define this term as of primary school age, which starts from 6 - 12 years, ending at puberty. Psychologists call it the age of integration into a group (Karamaldin,

1997). This research focuses on the latter stage because it is a crucial developmental stage in terms of consumption and peer influence.

Saudi Arabia gives great importance to a child, as it is evident in Article 10 of the constitution which states that "state is keen to strengthen family bonds in order to maintain Arabic and Islamic values and care for all its members, and to provide the conducive environment for the development of their talents and abilities." (Shura Council in Saudi Arabia, 2014).

It is a primary level of education which often lasts for 5 or 6 years. According to the education system in SA, it consists mostly of six grades; each grade has a full academic year period. The student who enrolled in this period is named as a pupil, due to two main factors, first linked to age, while the second is linked to the characteristics of education which is mostly concerned with teaching basic and introductory principles. The teaching of basic principles is mandatory in the majority of countries around the world, and often broader enrolment ratio does not go down below 90% (Baker, 2011).

In SA, the primary stage is considered as the first stages of the educational ladder. The child enrols after the age of five years and nine months, and the duration of the study is six years whereby the student (child) moves from grade to the next upper grade at the end of each year through continuous assessment system. By official definition as stated in the document of educational policy in SA, the primary stage is:

> "Fundamental base or core stage for the preparation of generations for the next levels of their life and it is a general period that includes all the children of the nation, which provide them with the basics of the true faith, sound ideology, experience, information and skills." (Karamaldin, 1997, p.17).

Saudi Arabia encourages the use of technology from primary school level hence the relevance of sampling that age group.

1.9.2 Rights of Children in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia upholds the rights of the child based on the Islamic approach, which guarantees social rights and decent living for all individuals. This includes access to universal rights like the provision of education and non-discrimination. Also, the country ensures that it meets all the children's basic needs, including a decent living for

the Saudi family, and access to participate fully and perform their full role in the family, school and society (Ministry of Education, 2005).

Children's rights in SA include the rights for development and growth through the dissemination of compulsory education to providing equal opportunities for girls' education and also to give importance to adolescent's stage as well as child's culture and enlightenment. There are also general principles of children's rights in Saudi Arabia, including focusing on the mother as the primary caregiver. The country recognises that it is imperative to reduce illiteracy levels among females and also improve their health outcomes. In addition, the country also ensures that the school, as one of the leading agents of socialisation needs to be supported with meaningful resources (Albkr, 2002).

The National Committee for the care of children in SA was formed since 1979 under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. Saudi Arabia has signed the Convention adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1989. The Saudi government has been keen to protect the life of a child from any form of danger. Also, it prevents child sexual exploitation and abuse. It also punishes the perpetrators of such abuse with harsh and deterrent penalties under Islamic law. The system prevents child trafficking business and every means and methods of exploitation, kidnapping and assault. The government works hard towards achieving good treatment towards individuals and prevents insult and uphold dignity for all. It tries all criminals prosecuted of kidnapping, child trafficking crimes or child abuse, according to the penal provisions of which are consistent with the Islamic judiciary. (Albkr, 2002).

The Saudi government has many efforts and projects concerned with childhood care at government official level. There are several public institutions and charitable organisations that take care of the family and the child. The numbers of charities affiliated to the Ministry of Social Affairs are 748 charities, including 83 women's association (Al-Hayat Newspaper, 2014), some of which include:

- Saudi National Commission for Children which was established in 1978.
- Security family program which aims to protect children and women from any exposure to violence and was founded in 2006 (Ministry of Social Affairs, MSA 2014).
- Society for Children found in 2008 to take care of all that enriches the themes of childhood to the age of eighteen. From publishing educational material and

holding seminars and conferences (Princess Nourah Bint Abdurahman University, 2014).

- There is also a centre for the care of children and youth who are at risk of deviousness or crime which is supervised by the Ministry of Social Affairs, namely: the Social guidance and care for children older than eighteen years of age and the House of social observation and care of the girl's institutions (MSA, 2014).

Saudi Arabia is a member of the following organisations, namely United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO). SA is also part of many international treaties, which aims to ensure a dignified life for children. For example, in 1996 Saudi Arabia joined the Convention on the Rights of the Child with the reservation to specific articles and items that are inconsistent with the provisions of Islamic law (Human Rights Association, 2010). Saudi Arabia also significantly contributes to supporting the Arab League program on justice and the rights of children in the Arab world and signed many treaties and conventions that are in favour of children.

Also, in 2005 it established the Human Rights Commission (human rights commission, 2013) and in 2004 the National Society for Human Rights was created for human rights (national society for human rights, 2013). The two organisations listed above are concerned about human rights in Saudi Arabia, including the Rights of the Child.

The family in the eyes of Islam is the first place and the foundation for the construction of the child's personality and behaviour. The family is the most important element of socialisation, and its role and function can be affected by disorder, hence becoming a nuisance and a posing threat to the child (Aljibreen, 2005). Therefore, Islam encourages marriage because it is a place of love, affection and compassion between the couple. Allah (God) Almighty says "that He created for you wives from among yourselves to find repose in them, and put between you affection and mercy in this are Signs for those who reflect" (Alrum Verse 21).

1.9.3 Implications for The Study

The understanding of social structures and forms of social control, surveillance and enforcement impacting on children in Saudi Arabia helps the researcher to investigate factors relating to children's activities including internet usage. The different models of family control are influenced by religiosity, adherence to the law, particularly, family law, and awareness of the country's commitment to children rights as prescribed by United Nations (UN).

1.10 INTERNET USE IN SAUDI ARABIA

Statistics from the Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC – Saud Arabia) indicates that there are more than 18 million users of the Internet in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by the end of the first half of 2014. The high Internet usage continued with high rates over the past years with a current estimate of 18.3 million users. The observed increase in demand for internet services is linked with the use of large programs based on an Internet connection. It is expected that there will be a continuous increase in demand for internet services in the next few years as a result of the availability of fiber-optic networks for what they offer as high speeds and the increasing factors that assists and support the content of the Internet, the proliferation of smart handheld devices and the content of programs or applications based on the Internet connection. (Communications and Information Technology Commission, 2014).
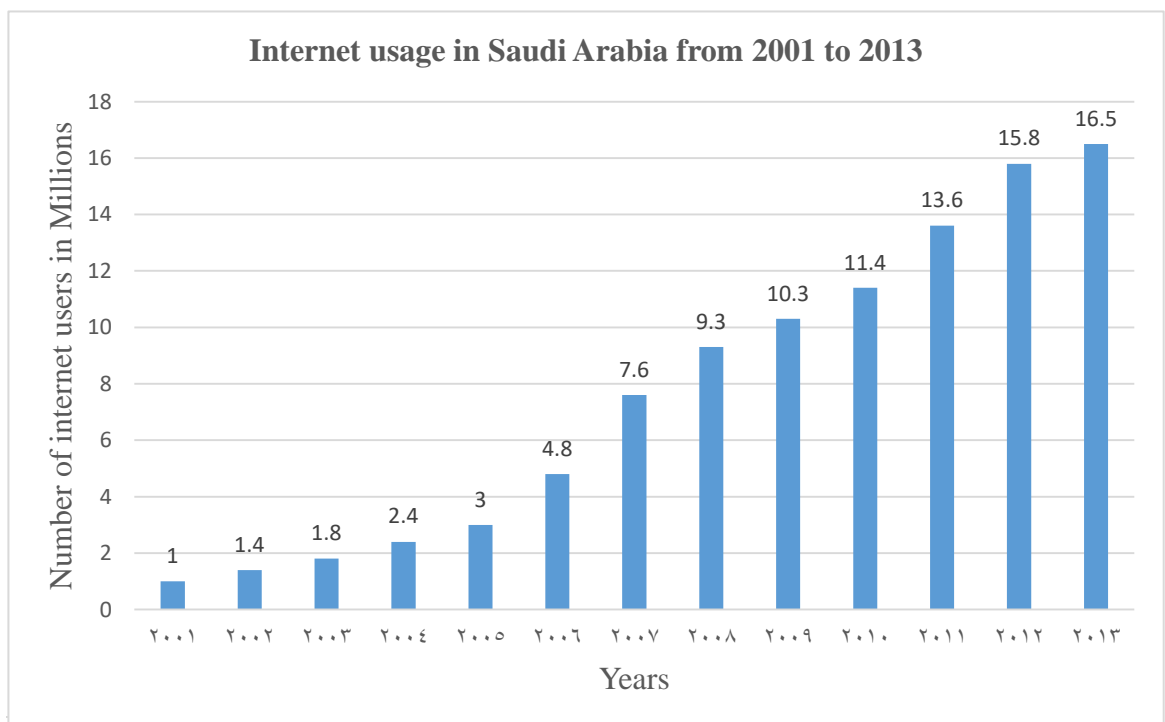
Figure 1.2: Internet Usage in Saudi Arabia during the Period 2001 to 2013(CITC, 2013)

Number of internet users in Saudi Arabia from 2015 to 2022 (in millions)
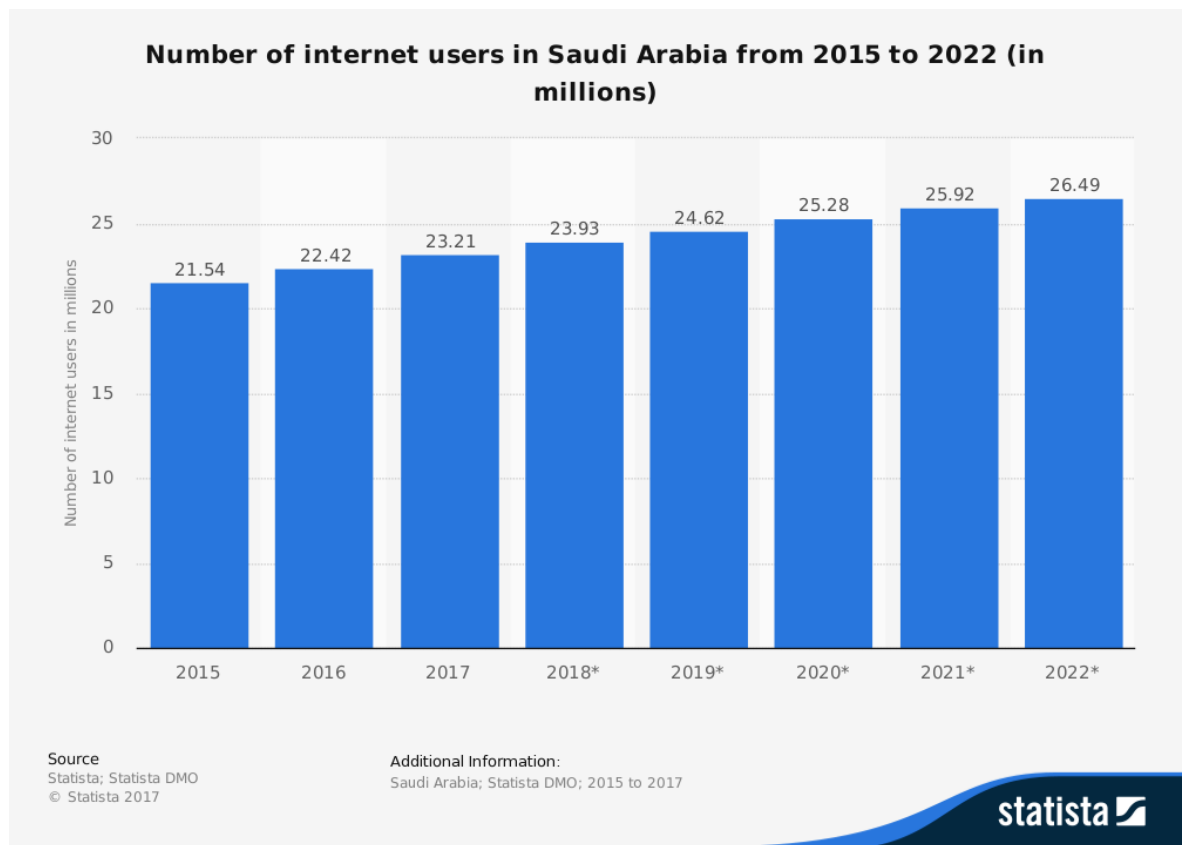
Figure 1.3: Number of Internet Users in Saudi Arabia from 2015to 2022 (STATISTA, 2017)

Saudi Arabia is the second largest in the Middle East in terms of the number of internet users. International statistics also indicates that the number of internet users in 2014 was 18.3 million compared to only 200000 in 2000. This highlights the awareness of people on the importance of the Internet in their lives. (internetworldstats.com, 2015).

Saudi Arabia is also considered one of the top countries in the Middle East in terms of capitalization and volume of spending on telecommunications and information technology. The Government of Saudi Arabia also supports Communications and Information Technology sector by investing large sums annually. For example, the report of (CITC) indicates that the government invested (SR 102 billion) in 2013 compared to only (SR 36 billion) in 2005 (CITC, 2013).

1.10.1 History of The Internet in Saudi Arabia

The introduction of the Internet service to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia began in February 1997 (Al-Tawil, 2001). It was the mission of King Abdulaziz City for Science

and Technology (KACST) to introduce internet service to the Saudi kingdom. Therefore, KACST established an Internet service unit that took all necessary measures to introduce the internet service to the Saudi Kingdom and set regulations in coordination with the relevant authorities (Siddiqui, 1997). Internet service has been officially utilized in the Saudi Kingdom in December 1998 where Saudi universities have been linked to KACST (Al-Tawil, 2001). In addition, some of the companies and institutions provide a service that takes care of providing Internet service for users in the Kingdom, according to the rules and regulations made by the KACST (ISU, 1998; Sait and Al-Tawil, 2007). KACST has also assessed the private sector that is aiming to provide Internet service to the customers in the Saudi Kingdom and trained several institutions and companies in Saudi Arabia which has applied to provide said service. KACST city has issued licenses for providing internet service in the Kingdom to some companies and institutions. It currently holds the provision of technical support and advice to the authorities in the area of the Internet (Al-Tawil, 2001).

In addition, it continues its business of operating and overseeing the network operation centre and the subsequent installation and maintenance of all software, hardware and equipment network (Al-Tawil, 2001). However, the responsibility of regulatory functions of the internet service and the related issuance, renewal and cancellation of service providers and regulations, licenses and irregularities is now transferred to the Communications and Information Technology Arabia as of January 2003 (Warf and Vincent, 2007).

Since the beginning of 2005, the Internet service in Saudi kingdom saw the largest and most important process of restructuring where the Council of Ministers Resolution issued rule number 229 on 28/09/2004 in order to re-organise the internet service in SA. Which led to the distribution of tasks to several suitable organisations to improve service and raise their efficiency (Warf and Vincent, 2007). Overall, internet service is provided by:

1. Communications and Information Technology: the organization is responsible for all the supervisory and regulatory functions relating to the internet services.
2. Data service providers (DSP's), including Saudi Telecom Company: It is responsible for the operational aspects of the service Filter (Filtering).

3. King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology: (KACST) King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology has continued to provide the link service to the internet for academic and research purposes and some government agencies bodies.

4. Service providers to the internet: Provide the link to the Internet for government departments, companies, institutions, and individuals. (King Abdulaziz city for Science and Technology, 2014).

1.10.2 Internet Service Unit (ISU)

The Internet Services Unit (ISU) was set up following the issuance of the Council of Ministers Decision No. 163 on March 1997. This stated that the Internet should enter the Saudi Kingdom through King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology. Also, it stated that the provision of Internet services in the Saudi Kingdom should be in collaboration with the Communications and Information Technology and several other service providers. After the Council of Ministers Resolution on Sep 2004, some of the Internet Services Unit tasks were transferred to other data companies. Thus Internet Services Unit started offering this service to the academic and research bodies and some government agencies.

Aim of Internet service unit: linking academic and research bodies and some government agencies in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) to the Internet while achieving high quality in service and technology localisation and spreading awareness about Internet services in the community.

Role of the ISU:

1. To provide Internet service to the academic bodies, research bodies and some government agencies.

2. The provision of services related to the internet such as hosting unique domain names for academic and government bodies.

3. Completion of projects as part of infrastructure development for academic networks in the Saudi Kingdom.

4. Completion of projects serving the academic, research and government sectors and facilitating its handling of the internet.

5. Supervision of business that supports these sectors.

6. Provide technical consultancy in the field of telecommunications and information technology; participate in awareness programs and organise workshops and scientific seminars on the internet and its uses. (The internet services unit, 2014).

1.10.3 Content Filtering of Internet Usage in Saudi Arabia

With the increasing spread of the internet in Saudi society and the increasing likelihood that the Saudis users will be exposed to harmful content, Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC) plans to apply content filtering to protect Saudi society from harmful content from the Internet system, especially pornography and drugs. Filtration is in cooperation with the users of the Internet, as the organisation received more than 675,000 requests to block certain sites during 2010. (Report of Communications and Information Technology Commission, 2010). The aim of this nomination to block internet content is due to the contents being contradictory to the Islamic culture and religion, as well as take into account the regulations and instructions applicable in Saudi Arabia.

All Internet users in SA adhere to refrain from publishing or accessing information that contains some of the following:

- Contents that contradicts with Islamic teachings, norms or morals.
- Everything contrary to the state system and regulations
- Reports and news that affect the integrity of the armed forces of Saudi Arabia without the approval of the concerned party.
- Publication of regulations or agreements, treaties or the official state data before a formal announcement, unless the consent of the parties.
- Everything which advocates criminality or inciting attacks on others in any way or form. (KACST, 2014).

1.11 SUMMARY

This chapter aimed to provide an introduction to the thesis and give some detail on the background of the issues within the study area, Saudi Arabia. As presented in this chapter, the cultural practices and religious morals in place in Saudi Arabia contribute to parts of this research, and this was presented to help situate the current research. To

further set the scene, the information about the effect of globalisation in Saudi Arabia to understand better how the internet has become more accessible, particularly to a younger audience was also provided. This chapter has presented the research aims and objectives as well as the questions posed and how important the study is to the country. The chapter concluded with some information on internet usage in Saudi Arabia and some government mechanisms aimed at content filtering.

The next chapter conducts a detailed review of the existing literature to cover aspects of the topic covered by other researchers. This will help position the current research within wider research on children's internet usage and mechanisms to influence the activities of children on the internet.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

To date, research on the use of the internet by children has focused mainly on its impact on character formation (West, 2005; Livingstone and Haddon, 2011). However, such research has been limited in scope regarding the extent to which parents mediate the internet usage of their children. In both the USA and other countries in Europe, specific research has concentrated on the role of parents in influencing the internet usage of their children. To this end, this chapter reviews a broad selection of literature on children's internet usage and the mediating role played by parents in the process. The chapter relies mainly on literature from western countries - where there has been prolific research around parental influences on children's internet usage - to identify the experiences of both parents and children throughout the process and the factors influencing the outcomes of such interventions. Some literature examines the parental influence on children's internet usage in Saudi Arabia, but there is a paucity. This chapter touches on several issues related to the subject of parental mediation of children internet usage. These include socialisation, social mediation, parental mediation, and the negative influences of internet use of children.

The chapter is divided into several sections. The first part of the chapter gives a brief overview of children's internet usage and the influences on children's socialisation. This is followed by a review on the subject of socialisation and the role of the internet in children's socialisation. The next section discusses the subject of social mediation and parental influences on children's internet usage. The types of parental mediation strategies and the experiences of both children and parents through the process is also reviewed which leads to answering a series of questions developed in this research. The chapter ends with a review of theoretical frameworks concerning child socialisation.

2.2 CHILDREN AND INTERNET USAGE

Internet use has been on the increase within the last decade which has seen it become a vital part of the everyday life of many people. In a report by the European Union (EU) Kids online survey, it is suggested that 60% of children between the ages of 9 and 16 years use the internet daily, whereas 30% use the internet at least weekly (Livingstone *et al*., 2011 in Alvarez *et al*., 2016). Nonetheless, the internet has become a common

virtual space and place for many different activities and, as reported by Zotova and Zinchenko (2014), the internet serves as a catalyst in managing the relationship between people in the society. However, access to the internet does not occur within the adult population but also with people of all ages, including children and adolescents.

While this increased access has helped create new lines of communication, it also has a sociological impact. The work of Bleakley *et al* (2016) deduced that the internet had transformed the way children and youth communicate, learn and network. Consequently, it has implications on their broader social, psychological, physical health and well-being which cannot be ignored. Alwagait *et al* (2015) point out that the use of the internet can provide an effective and positive forum in sharing ideas, as well as allowing students to build communities with shared interest to collaborate with each other, thereby facilitating the art of learning and reaching out to the students in order to understand and teach them at the same time. These developed social networks can potentially build or supplement social capital (Quan- Hasse and Wellman, 2004) and develop young people's resilience to potential threats or risks that may or may not arise in these mediated spaces.

The available research on children's internet suggested that although internet use provides opportunities for children, it also serves as a source of risk to children (Lee, 2012). The rising of digital competence, however, leads to a digital culture which has become part of the everyday culture. This culture, just like every other culture, must be subjected not just to legislation and taboos but also to ethical behaviour and safety norms (Zotova and Zinchenko, 2014). The need for ethical behaviour and safety norms for children's internet usage becomes very important due to the limitless nature of contents that are shared and streamed through the digital culture. For example, children can be exposed to content ranging from nudity, foul language and criminal ideas (Alsaedy, 2015; Said and Al-Tawil, 2007; Mitchel *et al*., 2003).

There is little doubt that globalisation, with its incessant use of the internet and social media, has revolutionised the way we communicate with one another around the world. The internet is one piece of technology that has been at the forefront of shaping the way people think and behave in the 21st Century (Brockman, 2011). Life has, for some, been made easier by the use of emails, instant messaging, online money transfers and SNS connecting long lost friends, relatives, total strangers and enemies alike. The benefits of

the internet can be viewed from individual, social and cultural perspectives, as well as global levels. They include the empowering of young people, especially in countries where strict traditional religious, ideological and even political values are observed. In such countries, children use the internet as a tool to broaden their world knowledge and connect with other young people from around the world.

Chooi and Ross (2006) gave an example of how the internet empowered young people in a family-focused nation like South Korea. Saudi Arabia, in comparison, is also family-focused where the needs and values of the general group override that of an individual. Hence is collectivist positioning. Also, the availability of the internet has seen children being able to do research online and enhance their school performance.

Holladay, Glusman and Soloway (2011) reveal the enormous benefits of the internet to the modern generation. They argued that the internet has brought more benefits than drawbacks and also highlighted that this technology has made life more convenient because of the introduction of wireless connections. Presently, young people do not need to sit behind a table and glue themselves to the PC screen to access the internet to do research, communicate or listen to music; instead, they can connect to the web through different gadgets such as iPods, iPads and their laptops. For them:

> "Part of the beauty of the web is that end-users who use the internet recreationally do not have to think about where the entertainment is coming from or how it got to their home. You can just open a laptop, charge up your Smartphone, or turn on Web TV and instantly connect to a rich universe of information" (Holladay, Glusman and Soloway, 2011:3).

Lassala (2006) concurs on the fact of convenience and further explains that even though some young people do get easily hooked to the internet, especially through the use of SNS, the intellectual benefits to those who use it sensibly cannot be ignored. The intern*et al*so offers the flexibility to develop virtual and supportive networks that some may not ordinarily experiences in their everyday lives and physical relationships with others. For example, research by Notley (2009) infers that the internet is a platform for online networks which provide young people with valuable opportunities for social inclusion.

Another benefit of the internet is that it also promotes individuality to all citizens regardless of origin; for example, countries like Saudi Arabia and China are perceived

as conservative countries. This perception is based on the fact that these countries have blocked sites with user-generated content like YouTube and Twitter in China and controlled content in Saudi Arabia (Canaves, 2011). In these social spaces, users express personal views, something which is usually characteristic of western values; strong personal views are valued in individualist societies where activism and abundant use of free speech can influence social policy, unlike in some collectivist countries where bloggers can be punished. Raff Badawi, a Middle East blogger on free speech faced legal sanctions for running his blog (Amnesty International, 2015).

Nonetheless, for some, the Internet is a non-judgemental tool which makes children feel safe to express themselves, communicate thoughts and feelings and seek guidance from a multitude of internet consumers, for example, on sensitive subjects that they would not feel comfortable discussing with parents or close relatives (Knaevelsrud and Maerckr, 2010). This non-judgemental nature of the internet exposes children who crave attention to online child groomers who may go on to sexually exploit them.

However, the internet, in many cases, poses a threat to traditional societal values by breaking some moral codes, thereby weakening social fibres and diluting some traditional values and westernising them (Choi and Ross, 2006). For example, there are some culturally and socially accepted norms in western countries in the form of dress codes which are not acceptable in countries like Saudi Arabia.   This is especially so for regions where children spend more time engaged in various online activities. Thus concerns regarding their Internet use have also increased. These concerns include but are not limited to, easy access to child-inappropriate content, cyberbullying, Internet addiction, and online privacy (Shin, 2013). Ferguson (2011, p. 33) refers to parental fear of the risk of addiction as a moral panic and encourages parents to "keep an open mind when evaluating the potential risks and benefits that children and adolescents may encounter in the cyber world". However, there are many benefits for children meeting friends online which include the boost of self-esteem, feeling of belonging, competitiveness, developing problem-solving skills and recreation (Ely *et al*, 2015). Due to the likely negative influence of some of the concerns regarding children's internet use, parents in most cases find it necessary to monitor and to influence their children's use of the internet.

As children spend more time engaged in various online activities, concerns regarding their internet use have also increased (Shin, 2013). Just as internet use brings with it many advantages for children - for example, through the provision of learning or educational materials as well as social groups for entertainment and development - it is the problematic use of the internet that makes the need for such norms and ethical behaviour essential. The next section discusses the problematic use of the internet which gives rise to concerns for parental mediation of the children's internet use.

2.2.1 Internet Use-Consequences for Children

The literature argues that there are many advantages to the use of the internet by children. However, the possible negative influences of the internet on children make it necessary to ensure children are well shielded from such influences. This section discusses the problems that arise in the use of the internet by children. It has been illustrated in the literature that the internet can be a source of anxiety and addiction (Ely *et al*, 2015). SNS has been widely criticised for causing a range of social conflicts (Das and Soho, 2010) and for transforming individuals into narcissistic beings (Lassala, 2008). Such issues, according to Moreno *et al* (2011), are as a result of the prevalence of pathological internet use. Bleakly *et al* (2016) report that cognitive behavioural approaches have been used by various researchers to investigate the harmful or problematic internet use of people.

The subject of problematic internet use is associated with adverse interpersonal and psychosocial outcomes (Caplan and High, 2011 in Mleakly *et al*., 2016). In children and young people, problematic internet use is associated with increased rates of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (Yoo *et al*., 2004), sleep disturbances and excessive daytime sleepiness (Choi *et al*, 2009) and impaired academic performance (Jacobsen and Forste, 2011). The negative influence of the problematic internet use on children and young people make the need to mediate internet use of children very critical.

Not only does internet usage negatively affect the personal lives of children, in most cases such negative influences can be extended to the general intercalations and interactions with other people. Through social networking, young people create new relationships and reinforce existing ones (Subrahmanyam and Greenfield, 2014). The increased peer online communication through SNS like Facebook or MySpace is

detrimental to children's communication with their parents, who may not be aware of the depth of their children's social networks. Similarly, educators use the internet to enhance children's learning.

2.2.2 Effects of Problematic Internet Usage by Children

The problematic use of the internet by children leads to several negative outcomes such as health-related issues and cyberbullying which influences the socialisation of children regardless of their geographical location. This section discusses a wide selection of these outcomes to help demonstrate the extent of the problem and how it cuts across social and cultural boundaries.

2.2.2.1 Exposure to Risks and Inappropriate Content

The internet is fast becoming an agent of primary socialisation, influencing both positive psychosocial development (Griffiths, 2000; Leung and Macbride Chang, 2013) and negativity among young people in equal measures (Livingstone *et al* 2014). Literature infers that internet usage by children may come at a personal cost (Prensky, 2001). For example, although a huge number of children resent their parents monitoring their surfing habits (Green and Brady, 2014), there is overwhelming evidence that suggests children are at risk of accessing harmful and sometimes upsetting content (Livingstone and Haddon, 2011 in Livingstone *et al,* 2014).

Consumption of online content exposes children to a plethora of risks, some of which include exposure to pornographic, violent or offensive content, commercial, invasion of privacy, cyber-bullying and inappropriate contact among others (Eurobarometer, 2006; Guan and Subrahmanyam, 2009; Livingstone, 2003; Livingstone & Haddson, 2008; Livingstone and Helsper, 2010; Valkenburg and Soeters, 2001). Key government policies on online child protection need to highlight these risks especially for purposes of educating parents. Eurobarometer (2006) states that most research on children's use of the internet tend to focus more on older teenagers (more than 4 in 5) yet the age group (primary age) that this current study focuses on is around 1 in 2.5 children. Directing more internet research to older teenagers is a logical undertaking due to the common use of the internet among this age group. It is easy to ignore commercial risks because children are not normally viewed as purchasers of products. Livingstone and

Haddon 2008, Livingstone *et al* (2011) state that most research on risk is on content and the least researched area is the commercial risk. A common risk to children using the internet is exposure to sexually inappropriate content. Studies reveal that a large percentage of children accidentally access such websites (Livingstone and Smith, 2014). Flanders *et al* (2009:851) define exposure to inappropriate material as, "exposure to photographs of nude people, pictures of sexual activities, offensive pictures involving children, and pictures which include violence and sexual activities during online browsing...". A study on academic illiteracies carried out by Lea and Street, (2004) suggests that many parents (over 55%) do not bother monitoring their children while surfing the internet. Paradoxically, 95% admitted that they were worried about sexual and other inappropriate material online.

Similarly, a study carried out by Graham & William Kingsley (2007) claimed that many parents in America feel that they are getting control of their children's surfing habits but are concerned with online content. The experiences for children are both negative and positive. For example, there is a lot of positive and educational information online; however, exposure to violence and sexualised content can be seen as having a negative impact. It is noteworthy to mention that more users of pornographic websites in the world are between the ages of 12-17 years and that sex and pornography sites are highly requested (Alkadhi 2005). Although a quarter of children are at risk of exposure to sexual and inappropriate content, an emotional disturbance is more prevalent with the older ones. Al Muhsin (2003) emphasised the importance of developing self-censorship among the children by directing and instructing them.

Extensive use of the internet increases the risk of exposure to inappropriate materials online (Rideout, 2001; Flander *et al*., 2009). Indeed, this has been identified as a form of child abuse and child neglect (Taylor & Brigid, 2005; Rideout, 2001). However, labelling excessive use of the internet as parental neglect is a contested view because many technological gadgets bought for children as gifts usually come with free access to the internet, for instance, mobile phones, and it is almost impossible for parents or older relatives to monitor the internet use on handheld devices. Similarly, a study by (Mitchell et.al, 2003) reveals that 25% of teenagers ages 10-17 years were exposed to sexual content online. However, the extent of exposure was unclear. This research further examined the psychological damage caused by this kind of exposure. Over a

third of participants felt upset, distressed or aggressively violated and Thornbury and Lin, (2006) inferred that many children stumble on inappropriate content when they misspell words, open unidentified files or open spam email. The rising level of sexual content exposure correlates with the high volume of sexual content presently available on the World Wide Web. All these studies were carried out in America except the study of Flander *et al* (2009) which was conducted in Croatia.

As for the internet crimes in Saudi society, Alminshawi (2003) concluded that 4.2% of respondents visited pornographic sites, 19.2% asked pornographic ones, 24% fostered pornographic sites, 2.9% had defamed others and 4.2% fostered pornographic emails group. Although the statistics presented by Alminshawi (2003) is limited due to societal barriers, there is a problematic internet use in Saudi and children may fall victims to such risks. This makes a strong case for parental mediation of their children's internet use, so the necessary steps can be taken to ensure the safety of children as they use the internet.

Studies by Livingstone *et al*. suggest that the dichotomy of online risks for children covers an extensive ground which include racist and sexist discourses, horror movie, insolence and inappropriate humour directed at certain difference such as disability (Livingstone *et al*., 2014). In addition, other studies suggest there is a ubiquity of "… *threatening or nasty mail… trolling or stalking* …" (Livingstone and Smith, 2014, Ofcom, 2014), some of which is meant as humour. All these add up to the risks faced by children as they access the internet.

2.2.2.2 Sexting

Sexting, a social courtship or humiliation tool currently used in social networking sites, is another form of banter which some children may not be aware of its legal implications. Sexting is the "sending or receiving of sexually explicit images, videos or texts" (BBC website, 2015. Livingstone *et al*, 2011). Over 60% of UK children admit to receiving sexually explicit texts, and yet many are not aware that sending and receiving these text or images is punishable in accordance to the UK law. Children, therefore, need to understand that the consequences of this charge are far-reaching. Livingstone and Smith (2014) and Doring (2014) suggested that protecting children from exposure to sexting can be achieved by educating them on the implications. In the case of Saudi

Arabia, this presents yet another issue and an area of risk to children considering the social and religious perspective on acts such as sex or nudity. As a country primarily governed by religious laws, there is a general perception that such acts are forbidden. For parents in Saudi Arabia, the awareness of issues such as sexting provides them with knowledge on how to protect or prevent their children from falling prey.

The above examples (banter and sexting) give prominence to the argument that children alongside their parents share the responsibility in preventing such risks affecting children and young people online. However, if children are not aware of legal consequences or the appropriate use of banter, the blame is apportioned to the parents and carers or any other stakeholders responsible for safeguarding children. For parental control and mediation, this implies that efforts need to be made to ensure parents are aware of and understand the internet use patterns of their children as well as the extent of said influence. This means that not only should parents be interested in controlling their children's use of the internet, but education should also play a vital role. There is currently a debate by child welfare organisations, some government officials and sections of the police service, who express disagreement on enforcement of legal sanctions on sexting need to be relaxed (Crofts *et al*, 2015; Thomas and Cauffman, 2014).

Children are vulnerable; they need to be protected instead of persecution (NCA in BBC, 2015). Although guidelines on the consequences of sexting are clear, definitions and research in this area are sparse (Martinez-Pranther & Vandiver, 2014). Controversially, mainly young people consider sexting as a normal way of communicating among themselves (NCA in BBC News, 2015; Mitchell, Finkelhor & Ndar, 2012 in Martinez-Pranther & Vandiver, 2014). Sexting presents enormous challenges for law enforcement and society in general. For example, adolescent curiosity and sexual experimentation expose children to sexualisation (American Psychological Association, 2010; Calvert, 2009; Willard, 2010). Likewise, the ubiquitous nature of sexting among young people (CNN, 2009) does not match the legal consequences (NCA in BBC News, 2015) and the implications of branding perpetrators as sexual offenders which have lifetime implications such as employment opportunities and social exclusion/isolation (Martinez-Pranther and Vandiver, 2014; BBC News, 2015). Indeed, children's vulnerability needs to take precedence when prosecuting offenders. Recent scientific

research reveals that "because of their [teenagers] limited capacity for self-regulation and susceptibility to peer pressure, children and adolescents are at some risk as they navigate and experiment with social media" (O'Keefe et. al, 2011 p.800). This vulnerability is arguably a result of the deficient development of the section of the brain that is designated for emotional behaviour and language (Fuster, 2002 in Martinez-Pranther & Vandiver, 2014). Understanding the vulnerability of children and identifying ways to help them in this regard becomes one of the demands of mediating children's internet usage.

2.2.2.3 Negative Identity Formation

A social network is "a structure of social relationships linking social actors" (Marsden, 2000, p.27). Modern terminology refers it to 'six degrees of separation', social support and social capital among others (Pescosolido, 2014). Social networks are functional social structures which form the basis of simple and complex relationships. Some sociologists view them as mechanisms that connect micro and macro levels of social life (Coleman, 1990; Pescosolido, 1992 in 2014). For some young people, particularly teenagers, getting on the SNS platform is part of identity formation which happens in one of two ways: creating an image to represent who they are, or adopting one just to fit in. This explains the use of pseudonyms and aliases in young people's accounts and the choice of custom made avatars in sites like Second Life. Users can control who become their "friends" and can access their data, images and videos. This gives children a sense of autonomy which many do not enjoy, mostly in the Arab world (Al-Eissa *et al*, 2016; Castells, 2015; and Smetana *et al*, 2015).

On the other hand, there are instances where some children are forced to adopt different kinds of identities to fit into groups they find on the internet. Just as peer pressure can lead children to adopt different postures relating to fitting into social groups, in the world of social media and internet use, children may also feel the need to adopt online identities so they can fit into particular communities of friends. The dichotomy between children's need for independence and the parents' commitment to buffer their children from endangerment underscores the height of the struggle to monitor, mediate or control children online activities. Contrary to public fears over exposition of personal information which might endanger children, a recent study involving nearly nine

thousand children found that only 8.8% of MySpace users disclosed their names, with only 4% revealing their instant messaging screen name, 1% displayed their emails and only 0.3% displayed their phone number. Restricting parents from accessing the information, children are asserting themselves as an individual, a complex psychosocial undertaking. Some parents may not understand the psychology or sociology of adolescents for instance, "…identity, autonomy, intimacy and sexuality" (Pescosolido, 2014, p.124) and how these influence them. It is therefore important that parents comprehend these in order to form positive mediation relationships. For the parents with interests in mediating their children's internet usage, there is the need for education which can ultimately provide parents with the tools they require to be able to help (influence) their children's activities on the internet.

Technology is a symbolic developmental task of adolescence. Besides asserting themselves as individuals through SNS, adolescence develops group identity by partaking in Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs), Whatsapp group chats and Facebook. 48% of children believe that these forums have improved their relationship with their friends (PEW, 2001). Erik Erikson stated that the establishment of a coherent identity is a significant psychological aspect of adolescents. By allowing user flexibility in profile names, the internet may be a hindrance to identity development (Macbride-Chang, 2013; PEW, 2001). However, there is no doubt that the internet plays a massive part in helping children explore and practice self-presentation. As reported in Goffman (2006) states that impressions about one's self are developed through two primary means: the expressions the individual gives (verbal symbols and their substitutes) and the expressions that he/she gives off (feigning the meanings of what they communicate). This, in some cases, helps people to hide their real identities to portray the nature of self required for different internet usage (See Goffman, 2009).

As presented above, the internet plays a huge role in the socialisation of children in the present generation, and this is where parents seek to ensure the negative influences are either reduced or eliminated. The next section discusses the concept of socialisation to determine the specific role played by children's internet use.

2.3 SOCIALISATION

The concept of socialisation seeks to explain how people are brought up to be a part of society through the values and belief systems of the society they find themselves in.

Hastinge *et al* (2007) define socialisation theory as how individuals socialise as members of society through interactions with their surroundings in a social setting (Hastings *et al*., 2007 in Shin, 2013). Socialisation is also defined as 'processes whereby 'naive' individuals are taught the skills, behaviour patterns, values, and motivations needed for competent functioning in the culture in which the child is growing up' (Maccoby, 2007: p13). This definition suggests that socialisation can occur in different contexts where an individual is naïve. Through the process of socialisation, people are, as suggested, able to pick the required skills and knowledge required in their day to day existence within a particular social group or culture as it helps to shape and form the behaviour required for such social groups. Other researchers, however, hold the view that people do not pick or chose their required behaviour, but the structural elements of society in which one finds himself/herself, shapes and dictates the behaviour of the person (Grusec and Hastings, 2014; Baltes and Schaie, 2013).

As presented in Scrimgeour *et al* (2016), prosocial behaviour in early childhood is a precursor to later adaptive social functioning. This makes the children's socialisation very important as it is likely that the social behaviours formed early in a child's life are likely to be deep-rooted and has the potential to be part of the child's entire life. While socialisation occurs throughout one's life, socialisation research has heavily focused on children, because profound and lasting socialisation takes place during one's childhood (Maccoby, 2007). In socialisation research, children are viewed as learners who are affected by frequent contact with 'socialisation agents.' Socialization agents refer to individuals or organisations that pass on social norms and skills to the learners through modelling, reinforcement, and social interaction. Socialisation agents are key components of socialisation research because they directly influence the child's learning processes (Hastings *et al*., 2007). These social agents notwithstanding, secondary socialisation (which usually occurs outside the home), also plays a significant role in shaping the lives of people either as children or even in adulthood (Watne *et al*., 2011). In the case of Saudi Arabia, there is a conscious effort from the family to ensure the formation of children are in line with the religious, social and religious norms (Alsaedy, 2015). As presented in Al-Ghanim (2012), even though globalisation is changing the way of lives in many places including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the role of the family as the principal agent of socialisation has not been overridden. In line with

religious norms, parents are expected to shape or influence their children according to religious doctrines.

Peterson and Rollins (1987) suggested that the parent-child relationship initiates the child into the social world and reshapes the components of the adult self-concept into parental roles. It is suggested that, through the facet of socialisation, children, as well as parents, acquire knowledge, attitudes, skills, value and expectations that allow them to become increasingly integrated into new social relationships (Peterson and Rollins, 1987). This makes the need to ensure that the child picks the correct social values and knowledge very important.

Even though the family is seen as the principal institution of primary socialisation, it is nonetheless an important area of social control in which parental and political interventions help regulate or dictate a child's behaviour (Maccoby, 1992; Aunola and Nurmi, 2005; Morris et al., 2007). Nonetheless, in the UK and US there is currently public concern that family values are depreciating and that the internet is one of the causes as children are learning all sorts of different things (including things about the world, life, and even crime) which they do not get either from school, their parents or siblings (Gelle 1995). Gelle in Cranmer (2006:24) asserts that "… the family remains a powerful social institution alongside education, economics, religion and politics which has retained its influence on attitudes, feelings and behaviours". Generally, families influence whom we become in the future or what we turn out to be even though there are other social structures and peer pressure impacting on the value formation of young people. Especially in cultures where children have little say, the family dictates the education and even profession of the children which much be adhered to. A functional view of the family suggests that families have a role in regulating the behaviours of all of its members.

Regarding the functional view of the family, it is reported that some families are more functional for some members of the family than others (Markey and Markey, 2011). In Saudi Arabia, Al-Ganim (2012) reported that the family have a major influence on how children turn out. The effect of globalisation has for some years (Since the 1970s) negatively affected the extended family systems in the Gulf regions leading to a preference for nuclear families. The role of Islam in influencing the nature and norms of the family socialisation process remains an essential factor (Al-Ghanim, 2012). Alsaedy

(2015) also reported that parents have a religious duty to bring up children in line with Islamic religious values. Regarding internet use, families are expected to exercise fairness and have clear boundaries and expectations equally for all the children.

In the family's role in regulating the behaviours and lives of its members, parents play a crucial role, especially in regulating the behaviours of children. Parents are said to be very important in the child's socialisation process as they are key agents in the child socialisation process (Bales and Parson, 2014; Sanders *et al*., 2015). Parents socialise children by teaching them what is acceptable in the society and how to deal with social demands. Parents also affect the way children socialise by influencing children's interactions with external socialisation agents, such as media, to make sure children are protected from undesirable social influences (Grusec and Davidov, 2007). The duty of care from parents to children in Saudi Arabia remains a social, cultural and religious requirement (Al-Ghanim, 2012; Al-Hudithi, and Abdul-Aziz, 2011). Sait *et al*. (2007) also suggest that internet and social media usage in Saudi Arabia is influencing the role of the family in shaping the child into what the society demands. Al-Rumizan (2009) reported that the advent of social media and the internet has to a large extent influenced children's attitude towards instructions from the family due to the feeling of autonomy. This situation according to Al-Nujaimi (2005) is as a result of mimicking foreign cultures to which children have been exposed to through the internet (See also Al-Shiki, 2010).

The current influence of internet usage on the socialisation of children, coupled with the negative influences as well as problematic use of the internet by children, makes it very important to mediate children's internet usage. The next sections discuss the parental mediation process of the children's socialisation to determine how this can be applied in mediating children's internet usage.

2.4 PARENTAL MEDIATION

The key premise of parental mediation research is that children can be affected by their exposure to media, but such media effects can be mediated by the extent to which parents are engaged in monitoring and supervising children's media use (Mesch, 2009). As presented in Shin (2015), research on parental mediation highlights the role of parents as primary socialisation agents regarding media influence and impact on

children. Parents are a huge part of the children's upbringing as they are the agents of primary socialisation, more so in the Arab world where the female parent is culturally endowed with the homemaker responsibilities (Goby and Erogul, 2011; Al-Lamky, 2007; Jamali *et al*., 2005). Agents of primary socialisation are seen as building blocks of a human being's personality which occurs during the individual's formative years (Haralambos and Holborn, 2008).

According to Abbasi (2010) media and the accompanying technological revolution and the continuous evolution of the elements that have affected the Arab family also contributed to the change in the individual's relationship with his family. As well as the impact on the upbringing of the child, Abbasi also mentioned that the stage where the child is given his or her mobile phone is a clear sign of independence (Abbasi, 2010). The influence of the internet on children's relationships with the family has been discussed in the literature. Both parents and children have been reported to spend more time on the internet leading to a reduction in the time spent together as family (Alsaedy, 2015). For parents, the change in the family structures as a result of globalization means both mother and father can concentrate on work leaving little time to communicate or stay with their children (Al-Juhani, 2012; Al-Hudithi and Abdul-Aziz, 2011; Al-Omar, 2009). The child subsequently starts to build friendships outside the boundaries of the house leading to the weakening of the relationship with the family. This according to some researchers make it eminent that children's access and use of the internet and social media should be mediated by parents, indirectly spending more time with their children (Al-Shiki, 2010; Al-Harbi, 2008; Al-Farhan, 2001).

From very early years, parents start to develop measures, such as the use of parental control settings as well as security software, to manage or mediate the present and future internet use of their children (Livingston *et al*, 2015). As reported in Talves and Kalmus (2015), the concept of social mediation originates in socialisation theory, which is related to the research fields of media socialisation and media literacy. Parental mediation is acknowledged to be a fundamental concept due to the need to ensure the family media environment is tailored to the specific needs and competencies of each child while maintaining the values and priorities of the parents. In this section, the relationship between children's internet usage and social mediation will be investigated. The literature provides information that suggests that parental mediation of children's

internet usage is considered a new form of parenting (Livingston *et al*., 2015). Parental mediation is defined as strategies employed by parents to mitigate negative media effects on children (Clark, 2011).

Some researchers suggested that there should be social mediation of children's internet usage (Livingstone *et al*, 2013). Social mediation of children's internet usage can be defined as 'regulatory strategies that parents introduce to maximise benefits and minimise risks for their children' (Kirwil, Garmendia, Garitaonandia, and Martínez Fernández, 2009). Livingstone *et al* (2013, p.181) defines the same concept as "the diverse practices through which parents try to manage and regulate their children's experiences with the media." During the television era, there was a lot of effort from parents to influence the television experiences of their children (by enforcing a bedtime policy) due to the need to ensure the children are not exposed to inappropriate material on the televisions. In the internet (digital) era, researchers, policy-makers and parents themselves are asking whether similar strategies can be adapted to the internet and other digital media, or whether new strategies are needed – including the use of software to filter, limit or monitor children's online activities (Livingstone and Helsper, 2008; Clark, 2013).

The parental mediation of technology usage of their children is often considered a challenge for the parents as most children are identified to be better users of technologies than their parents (Plowman and McPake, 2013). This is as a result of children having more access to information in their very early years compared to parents who perhaps grew up in an era or places where there was limited access to technology or information (Plowman and McPake, 2013). In line with the parental mediation process, this current research explores how the type of parenting may likely influence the parental mediation process. Research by Baumrind (1991) identified four main parental styles: authoritative (parents are more responsive and demanding than average), authoritarian (characterised by high control but low warmth), permissive parenting (warm and supportive but non-demanding), and laissez-faire (or uninvolved parenting low in demands and responsiveness). Vacke *et al* (2010) suggested that these same styles of parenting, apply to parental internet styles. From their perspective, parental influences in the internet usage of their children can be determined to a large

extent by the parental style adopted for mediating children's access and use of the internet.

2.4.1 Parental Influence on Internet Use

Parents play a very significant role in shaping the context of young people's access to and use of the internet, particularly outside the school (Tripp, 2010). The role that parents play in adolescents' problematic internet use is a significant influence to consider. Findings from the literature – particularly research by Chng *et al*. (2015) in China and Siomos *et al*. (2012) in Europe - suggested that problematic internet use occurs mainly in children with less favourable relations with parents. In the media context, in particular, Rideout *et al* (2010) found that six out of 10 parents in the USA have rules about what their children aged 8–14 years can watch on television and engage in on the computer. When it comes to the Internet, Livingstone *et al* (2011) reported that 70% of parents of children aged 9–16 years in Europe talk to their children about what they do on the Internet and 58% of parents stay nearby when children use the Internet.

Different families ascribe different values to the use of the internet. The parents' belief about the value of the internet in their children's lives tends to influence the way they limit or regulate and guide their children in the use of the internet (Cranmer, 2006). Many parents view the internet as a tool that will help their children enhance their children's learning in terms of supporting them with their homework (Rideout, 2007). However, despite putting the family at the centre of the children's safety, children are often left at the mercy of the internet cafes where there are no age limits. A Kaiser foundation parent survey (2007) on children's consumption of the media suggested that many parents felt that they have control over what children watch when they are at home, but they become concerned about what their children watch when they are away from home like when they visit their friends. This is something that is out of the parent(s)` control. In contrast, the UK government does take stringent measures to ensure that children are kept safe online (Selwyn, 2003). For example, when joining the local library, the researcher found out that most local authority libraries in Leicester have separate ICT workstations for children and adults, and children are strictly

forbidden to use the computers reserved for adults. Such efforts form part of the social mediation process.

2.4.1.1 Social Mediation

Social mediation is regarded as a multidimensional, higher-order construct that embraces a considerable variety of types of social interactions, such as collaboration between children and socialising agents, as well as specific child-rearing techniques, practices, and strategies employed within families (Chakroff and Nathanson, 2011; Kirwil, 2009).

In selecting or deciding social mediation strategies, some researchers suggest that parents choose strategies based on the perceived effect of the strategies on their children (Kirwil, 2009). A common conception is that the strategies are intended to have a positive influence on the lives of the children and for this reason, this is related to the kind of change the parents require to see in the children. As presented in Talves and Kalmus (2015), parents who are concerned about media-related risks and harm take steps to protect their children by applying restrictions on media use, and monitoring or supervising the child. Whereas parents who see the media as offering educational or entertainment opportunities more frequently co-use the media with children or discuss the media content (see Nikken and Schols, 2015, for an overview). It is also reported that such social mediation actions are not static, in that they change in relation to the results gained from such interventions.

2.4.2 Types of Parental Mediation

Literature suggested that, on a broader level of generalization, the social mediation of children's internet use can be divided into two categories: *social support*, where parents help, guide and co-use the internet with their children to help them develop positive social values. On order hand, whereby parents set the rules for children to follow as opposed to other aspects of internet usage which may be restricted by the parents is term *rules and restrictions* (Kalmus, 2012). Research by Ozgur (2016) connected general parenting styles to mediation strategies within the context of Internet use. On a more concrete level, several typologies of parental strategies for mediating children's internet usage have been proposed, most common of them being a quadripartite categorisation,

distinguishing between 'active co-use' and three types of 'restrictive mediation' use of technical filtering/ monitoring tools, setting rules and restrictions, and monitoring of visited websites and received/ sent e-mails (Livingstone and Helsper, 2008).

Research by Shin (2015) suggested that there are three forms of parental mediation strategies: active mediation (i.e. parents talking to and discussing with their children about appropriate media consumption behaviours); restrictive mediation (i.e. parents setting rules to control their children's media use); and co-using (i.e. parents sharing media experience with children without any purposeful discussion or instruction). In addition, similar concepts of parental mediation are presented in Nathanson (2002). Considering that parental mediation involves parental efforts to socialise children to become more competent media consumers through modelling (i.e. co-using), reinforcement (i.e. restrictive mediation), and parent–child interaction (i.e. active mediation), parental mediation is seen as a form of parental socialisation (Youn, 2008). For parents in Saudi Arabia, this means there are different means by which parents can influence their children's internet usage.

Considering the strategies discussed by Shin (2015) and Nathanson (2002), the extent of mediation or the style adopted for mediating children's internet usage will ultimately be linked to parent's savviness in terms of internet use and the level of exposure required. Considering the effects of globalisation on family lives in SA as discussed in (Alsaedy, 2015) and the notion of social control in Saudi families through the teachings of Islam (See Al-Salim 2002), parents in SA are very likely to adopt mediation strategies that ensure the adherence of only religiously acceptable standards. For this reason, restrictive mediation and active mediation (Shin, 2015) are likely to be the most standard forms of parental mediation used for children's internet usage. This is due to the likelihood of these strategies to enforce a desired level of outcome.

Other studies on parental mediation of children's internet usage posit that there are five main types of parental mediation regarding children's internet usage (Livingstone *et al.*, 2015) which include:

- active mediation (sharing and discussing online activities),
- safety mediation (advising and guiding on managing risks),
- restrictions (rules and bans),
- technical mediation (use of filters, parental controls) and

- monitoring (checking the computer/social media/phones after use).

The types of parental mediation, according to some researchers, is linked to the different parent types while other researchers suggested that parents may adjust their mediation strategies *retroactively* in reaction to children's negative online experience (Kalmus *et al*., 2012). From this perspective, it is expected that parents who have experienced some form of unfavourable influence on their children (parents who have other children) are likely to adapt their mediation strategies accordingly.

Research by Fujioka and Austin (2003) has suggested that active mediation works better than other types of parental mediation because active mediation is based on conversation and critical discussion, and more likely to cultivate critical thinking skills in children (Fujioka and Austin, 2003). Laible and Thompson (2007) stated that through parent-child dialogues parents could take children to 'a relational system of mutual reciprocity' where children experience positive responsiveness from their parents. This system of mutual reciprocity could lead children to be more responsive to parents' initiatives, and better internalise parents' expectations. Although restrictive mediation and co-using are reported to be less effective than active mediation (e.g. Buijzen and Valkenburg, 2005; Lwin *et al*, 2008; Nathanson, 1999; Warren *et al*, 2002), it does not mean that these have no impact on children. Lwin *et al* (2008) demonstrated that while restrictive mediation was less effective than active mediation, restrictive mediation worked better than non-restrictive mediation in reducing children's information disclosure online. Livingstone and Helsper (2008) revealed negative associations between parents' restrictions on children's engagement in online.

2.4.3 Parental Mediation Strategies

The literature on parental control has so far concentrated on the effects of internet consumption on children. O'Keeffe *et al* (2011) studied parental control but with the emphasis on parenting styles. Research by Livingstone and Helsper (2008); Livingstone *et al*, (2011); and Durager and Sonck (2014) have helped in documenting specific strategies adopted by parents in the parental mediation process. These include rulemaking, restrictions, and social co-viewing (See Livingstone and Helsper, 2008). While a few studies have connected general parenting styles to mediation strategies within the context of Internet use (Kalmus *et al*.2015). Research by Eastin *et al*. (2006)

demonstrated that parenting styles have significant effects on almost all mediation techniques, with authoritative parents using instructive and restrictive strategies more than authoritarian and neglectful parents; also, technological blocking has been found to be strongest among authoritative parents using instructive and restrictive strategies followed by than authoritarian and neglectful parents. Similarly, Rosen *et al* (2008) have shown that authoritative parents are more likely to mediate their children's MySpace usage. Moreover, the authoritative parenting style is related to less high-risk online behaviour on the part of adolescents, for example, low rates of disclosure of personal information (Rosen, 2008).

Four main parenting styles: permissive; authoritative; laisse-Faire; and authoritarian are briefly explained below (See Ozgur, 2016)

- Authoritative Parenting Style: Authoritative parents have solution-oriented communication with their child, share ideas mutually and support the child's unique skills and tendencies (Maccoby, 1992). These parents usually establish practical rules, e.g., the Internet-use duration (Valcke *et al*, 2010).

- Permissive Parenting Style: Permissive parents do not demand much of their child, avoid facing their child and do not refuse the child's requests (Darling, 1999).

- Laissez-faire Parenting Style: Having a tendency to rarely give feedback to their child, these parents provide little or no support, emotionally or as guidance, for their child. Parents with this style have poor communication and low interaction with their child (Maccoby, 1992). Laissez-faire parents do not reflect a correct supportive or restrictive attitude concerning their children's Internet use (Valcke *et al*, 2010).

- Authoritarian Parenting Style: In the authoritarian parenting style, which is defined as the intersection of low parental warmth and high parental control, the child is expected to obey and not to break the strict rules established by the parents (Darling, 1999).

Based on the mediation styles and parenting styles, five main styles of parental mediation of children's internet usage have been presented in the literature (Ozgur, 2016).

- Active mediation of internet use: practices such as talking about internet content and online activities, sitting nearby while the child is online and actively sharing the child's online experiences.

- Active mediation of internet safety: activities and recommendations aimed at promoting safer and responsible use of the internet.

- Restrictive mediation: setting rules that limit time spent online, location of use, as well as content and activities.

- Technical restrictions: the use of software and technical tools to filter, restrict and monitor children's online activities.

- Monitoring: checking up on children's online practices after use.

Forms of internet mediation include discussion of online content, the rules parents set, and monitoring and co-use behaviours that could directly constrain the amount of time adolescents can use the computer and types of content with which they engage online (Vaala and Bleakley, 2015).

2.4.4 Experiences of the Parental Mediation Process

Parental mediation of children's internet usage may not always be an 'easy ride'. As reported in Livingston *et al* (2015), the digital age (digital media) presents a key challenge to the parental mediation process due to the array of domestic and personal digital and networked devices for information, communication and entertainment which is easily accessible to children.

Lindsey *et al*, (2006) suggested that the control of the use of the internet needs a multi-faceted approach with the parents working hand in hand with other agencies of social control (Haralambos and Holborn, 2008) like the police, religious organisations and Children's welfare organisations. The study suggested that early intervention is the best hence the need to start monitoring internet usage at an early age. Barkin (2006) in Valcke *et al*, (2010: 460) on the other hand asserts that "Little is known about parents' role in mediating their children's media use". This gap in research has influenced the investigation of the level of parental control in the Saudi community. Some studies have highlighted that parents with sound knowledge of the internet are more conscious of the risks associated with usage and are bound to be more vigilant in checking on their children's surfing habits and they are most likely to apply tighter controls (Wolak, 2007,

Ybarra and Mitchell, 2008). Duimel and Haran (2007) in Valcke et. al., (2010) point out that the number of children in the family is bound to have an impact in controlling surfing habits. Valcke *et al* (2010) showed that 30% of the UK and the US families remain physically present whenever their children use the internet while others use software to block what they deem to be inappropriate. In addition, these authors highlighted that other parents go to the extent of checking their children's browsing history, who they are chatting with and for how long.

2.4.5 Influences of Family Characteristics on the Mediation Process

Rooted within socialisation theory, social mediation is contextualised in relation to socialisation cultures, guided by morals and values (Kirwil *et al*, 2009). Social mediation of children's internet use carries a heavy contextual loading, which needs to be carefully considered and interpreted. Macro-level analyses have shown that parental mediation of children's internet use is influenced, for instance, by the countries' cultural orientation in terms of individualistic and collectivistic values (Kirwil, 2009), and welfare and gender regimes (Kalmus and Roosalu, 2012). Furthermore, previous studies have demonstrated that the differences and similarities in parental mediation among countries are at least partly based on diffusion rates, parents' online experience and technological opportunities, which in turn are related to national wealth (Helsper, Kalmus, Hasebrink, Sagvari, and de Haan, 2013). As gender aspects of socialisation are heavily dependent on cultural contexts, literature showed considerable variety in gendered patterns of parental mediation across 25 European countries.

Macro determinants within countries, such as class position and educational background, play a significant role in shaping the capabilities of parents to engage in the media socialisation of their children. In general, better-educated parents tend to support their children through more active mediation, whereas lower-educated and socially disadvantaged families rely more on restrictive regulations as parents have less time and competences to assist their children through face-to-face discussion (Paus-Hasebrink *et al*, 2012).

Livingstone *et al* (2015) report many different factors influence the parental mediation of their children's internet usage. Research by Clark (2013) suggests that income and education levels are two factors that influence the parental mediation process. Whereas high income and high level of education are linked with families expressing an 'ethic of

empowerment', families with low incomes and low educational levels encourage an 'ethic of respectful connectedness'. Livingstone *et al*. (2015) also introduced parental occupation as another factor that influences the parental mediation process. Lee (2012) reports that the literature on parental mediation has identified demographic variables of the child and parental perception of media effects as significant predictors of mediation. The younger the child, the more diverse strategies parents implement and the more frequently these are employed by parents (Ahn, 2008; Eastin *et al*., 2006; Hoffner and Buchanan, 2002; Livingstone and Helsper, 2008; Nathanson, 2001; Warren *et al*., 2002). Previous studies (e.g. Kirwil and others, 2009; Livingstone and Helsper, 2008) have described several individual-level differences between parents based on their gender, education and Internet use, as well as on the child's gender and age. For instance, Kirwil and others (2009) have shown that the more parents use the internet, the more they practise instructive or social strategies of mediation and apply restrictions (with the exception of parents who use the internet daily).

2.4.6 Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Parental Mediation Process

As reported in Livingstone *et al* (2015), the parental mediation of children's internet usage brings a far more complex situation compared to the mediation of children's television usage. The sheer technological complexity of online digital devices poses a challenge to the parental mediation process. In addition to digital complexities, market innovations also pose parents with the continual imperative to update and adapt their habits.

2.5 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES FOR INVESTIGATING PARENTAL MEDIATION OF CHILDREN'S INTERNET USAGE

Efforts to theorise the way in which parental input and influence impact and shape children's or adolescent's internet and social media usage have been discussed in literature (Livingstone and Helsper, 2008; Leeand Chae, 2007; Nikken and Jansz, 2014; Ey, and Glenn Cupit, 2011.)**.** Different theories have been developed in the area of identity formation and upbringing of children where the authors present factors that are responsible for managing the effectiveness of the family system (See Parsons and Bales, 2002; Morgan, 2015). These theories are investigated in this section, to determine their suitability as the vehicle for investigating parental mediation of children's internet

usage. The structural functionalism theory and the symbolic interaction theory are the two theories discussed in this section. The two theories are reviewed in relation to their applicability in the Saudi Arabian context.

2.5.1 Structural Functionalism Theory

Functionalists see a child's social upbringing as the social or container aspect which helps to maintain the family equilibrium, complete with a list of four key functions that must exist in order for a family to manage effectively. These key functions include: sexual, reproductive, economic and education (Morgan, 2015). Functionalist theory suggests that the family affects the social discipline process through the integration of its functional performance, implying that there is a positive relationship between the integrated family role and social discipline. This will however only remain positive if these functions are in place. If the family has a reduction in any one of these functions, and therefore its performance, it will then result in a failure of social discipline within the family.

Talcott Parsons (1949) emphasized that social upbringing is the most important function that the family are expected to perform in order to form the social discipline process as part of primary socialisation; a critical period in a child's life where they learn the expectations and values of the society in which they live. Despite this, more recent views of functionalism is presented by Parsons and Bales (2002), where changes in the nuclear family such as reduced average family size and the influence of a contemporary (American) scene may affect the traditional socialisation process. Coser's (1956) theory has become extremely influential in this discussion of family as Morgan (2015) highlighted. For Coser (1956), the family is a universal institution but extends the original four functions presented by functionalists as she suggests that the family also play a role in 'the institutionalization of fatherhood, the establishment through marriage, the imposition of social values and the presentation of social identity' which are all crucial for family members (Morgan,2015).

Functionalists believe that society is based on a set of norms and values which are necessary in any society to create social order among its people (Parsons and Bales, 2002). Taking this into consideration, and into the context of the current research, this approach is applicable to the collectivist nature of Saudi society and its shared views.

For example, if the (Saudi) family face failure in bringing up children where such norms and values are not present or get lost due to other more powerful influences, this could lead to perceptions of a lack social discipline, social disintegration and deviation within their society.

Although functionalist theory is relevant and useful to this research, it does, however, raise particular questions about the type of family on which it was originally based on. Parsons focused on a typical or 'nuclear' family comprising of two parents and two or three children, also known as the 'cereal packet' family for advertisers (Calvert, 2008). Although this was based on the ideological American family, this structure is, despite a social and cultural shift towards a more diverse family structure, is still seen as idealistic in other countries. In Saudi society, it is also important to assess the presence of extended families and how the roles of the family can be affected by the change in 'nuclear' families. Fletcher and Blair (2016) argued that advertisers or marketers see modern nuclear families as an opportunity to sell more household goods for profit, identified by media gadgets including tablets and mobiles which are almost becoming a household necessity and having more than one in a family is not uncommon. In an average Saudi household of two parents and three children, each child will have their smartphone, access to a laptop or tablet and of course, be exposed to a TV where they can view global content (Oyaid, 2010). The increase in the multiplicity of media goods by children in the family home is also evidenced in research by Structional Functionalists' Livingstone (2002; 2007) and Livingstone and Moira (1999). Livingstone and Moira (1999: 2) argue that "there is a difference between childhood and their relationship to the media in the 1950s when television arrived, and childhood at the turn of the twenty first century". Now computers and the internet have made comparable intrusions into the home and children's lives (Livingstone, 2002), thus the family home is now a key site for the integration of telecommunications, broadcasting, computing and video.

Furthermore, satellite and cable television, interactive video and computer games are already part of the children and young peoples' everyday lives (Livingstone, 2007). The consequences of this are that the media is becoming real for young people because it is seen as an environment framing the social context for communication and its content (Livingstone, and Moira, 1999: 2). Also, it serves as "a conduit for the transmission of

certain meanings" through its "language" and thus codes that impact on children's lives" (Livingstone, and Moira, 1999: 2). Consequently, they argue that current media and "the internet are becoming a reality for children… at home" (ibid).

Livingstone (2002; 2007) argues that there have been two significant trends that have impacted on the intrusion of new media into the family home and now on children and young peoples' lives. The first concerns the shifting border between the home and outside, that "alter[s] the balance between life in the community and family privacy, [and is] symbolised by the changing significance of the front door" (Livingstone, 2007: 304). There has been a shift from children's leisure time spent outside to a one more focused on at home. The second trend has been powered by the increase of numerous media goods at home, nurturing a shift in media use from that of 'family television' (Morley, 1986) to that of individualised media consumption and, for children and young people, of bedroom culture closed off to their parents (Bovill & Livingstone, 2001). Livingstone (2007) argues that now children and young people have personalised and individualised relationships with media and the internet. Due to the multiplication and diversification of media goods, children and young people will have access to numerous devices (such as phones, iPods, iPads and personal computers) in which they consume independently away from their parents view behind closed bedroom doors (Livingstone, 2007). Consequently, media use in the family home comes to be perceived by parents as safe within a private space as opposed to that of the public outdoors that differs to when they were young. Livingstone (2007) argues that the creation of a media-rich home tends to be justified by parents in relation to the decline of safe public spaces. She suggests that "outside spaces are progressively seen as hazardous, the range and quality of public services has declined, and media use at home is increasingly construed as educational as well as entertaining" (Livingstone, 2007: 305).

Functionalism is also based on how social actors conform or behave to a set of pre-existing standards that are beneficial or evident where the social actor is found (Kingsbury and Scancozi: 2006). In the context of this research, the children take on the role of the social actors, and this is also seen in the Saudi community. Within this context the family must have a specific structure which Kingsbury and Scancozi (2006 p.196) define as *'the arrangement of the roles of which a social system is composed'*. The family are also the social system and have specialised roles which are based on the

known and shared norms and values which establish the rights of the social actor in that society. Kingsbury and Scancozi (1993) break down social actors into external and internal. Internal actors, such as family members, are more closely connected or 'bound' in comparison to external actors. What is more is that the role of the adults who are internal actors have assigned specialised sets of activities. The first is 'instrumental' and the second is 'expressive'. Instrumental activities belong to the dominant male in the house (husband, grandfather) because of their biological norms and values where the male is considered the breadwinner of the family and the responsible adult for family social and economic needs. There is a perception in many cultures, and it is certainly relevant to a Saudi family, that it is a father's duty to protect his family which in this context can be seen as protecting his children from negative or distracting media content (Altorki, 1997). Expressive activities are taken on by the dominant female in the household (wife, grandmother), and her role is to build the emotional relationships between the family members particularly as the father is out of the house at work. She is there to symbolise the family and also protects while functioning to provide primary socialisation to the children. Such views are a little out of date as now people, including those in the Saudi culture, have changed roles. It is perfectly acceptable and common for the females of the household to go out to work not just to stay at home and fulfil a motherly or housewife duty (Goby and Erogul, 2011).

In as much as there exists this domination in the Saudi context where fathers are regarded as the breadwinners whereas the mothers are regarded as the homemakers, research by Al-Ghanim (2012) suggests that these clear-cut roles are beginning to change. This is due to a large extent on the structural changes that have occurred as a result of globalisation. In a modern Saudi Society, there is evidence to show that the traditional family system (where clear roles are played by fathers, mothers and even extended family members) are beginning to change (to some extent). Although issues such as single mothers and mothers working to take care of or support their families were unheard of in the Saudi context some years ago, research by Al-Hudithi and Abdul-Aziz (2011) and Al-Juhani (2012) suggested that this notion is outmoded, and there is evidence suggesting that females (mothers) are beginning to take control of their homes and children. Decision making in the family, as well as roles, are reported to have evolved, even in the Saudi Context (Al-Juhani, 2012), and this makes the

functionalist theory of clearly defined roles questionable to some extent in terms of its relevance in the modern society.

Although the traditional basis of functionalist theory can be questioned in terms of its relevance to a modern family in today's society, it can still be used to understand the results of this research from the family point of view. It demonstrates how those leading in society must continue to do so to maintain stability and balance through instilling social values and standards in the offspring. The theory also signifies the importance of maintaining the four functions and protects society from corruption (such as terrorism) which in this case can be exposed via mass media either through the visualization of terrorism or explicit media content from celebrities (Smith, 2010). It can be stated that the family ability to control children's behaviour who use the internet is a functional requirement of this family aspect through the adult roles or internal actors that are pre-defined within so that to maintain the social stability in SA while respecting the norms and values. The failure of social actors in their role will reflect poorly on the other social structures and external actors leading to social deviation will result in illegal and harmful use of the internet if the family did not fulfil their role to protect. What must also be considered is that in some societies, notably non-collectivist societies, individuals in society do have an element of freedom and it is questionable as to how much parental guidance can dominate a child's day to day actions especially as they grow into adolescents they are not always under parental supervision (Kakihara and Tilton-Weaver, 2009). Thus, there are limits in terms of time frame and opportunity for parents to enforce the norms and values of their society. In the Saudi context, however, as has been presented in research by Alsaedy (2015), there is a very high level of restriction as to the level of freedom allowed to the child. As a means to ensure social order, Islamic teachings (norms and values) must be instilled in all children, and this means restricting children to norms that are socially acceptable in the Islamic context. Despite this, areas of the functionalist view are questionable when attempting to apply these to a modern non-nuclear family as a large amount of the work in this field was conducted over 50 years ago. This is where we move towards a post-Functionalist view or Structural Functionalist theory such as that presented by Kingsbury and Scancozi (2006) who recognized the importance and role of social actors within the family.

2.5.2 Symbolic Interaction Theory

In contrast to the aforementioned Functionalist theory, the theory of Symbolic Interaction or Symbolic Interactionism, was originally developed by George Herbert Mead in the 1920s and focuses on how people act and interact in society and how they become social actors concentrating on the symbolic relevance and importance of meanings, attitudes identification, symbols and explanations (Aksan *et al*, 2009). This provides a useful framework for how families interact within their environment and how this interaction influences their behaviour to identify a deeper meaning.

Accordingly, symbolic interaction theory involves and concentrates on the family interaction processes, and the associated rituals, which include expected or normal household behaviour such as decision making, social upbringing, family role performance, family communication problems and adapted family behaviour methods (as used in this research). Although this particular theory concentrates on the internal process within a family, it also looks at social interaction involving the social structure as a whole which results in affecting family interaction (Alromi, 2001).

Aksan *et al* (2009) investigated the Symbolic Interactionism theory by analysing the core principles of the theory which are: meaning; language; and thinking principle. As presented in Kleine and Kernan (1993), symbolic interaction theory is concerned with 'self' and social identity, focusing specifically on self-identity, and how this relationship develops in society with ordinary things such as structures (trees etc) that are present in natural settings. Aksan *et al* (2009) suggested that Symbolic interaction is a process including the interpretation of actions because symbolic meanings might be formed differently for anyone. It is the relationship held between every day communication and the 'self' that is of interest here in order to better understand how children form an identity based on their social, cultural, ideological, political and personal interactions, not just with parents, family and friends but more importantly, with the mass media around them. From two studies carried out, Kleine and Kernan (1993, p.3) provided a theoretical framework, 'Social Identity Theory' which supports the view that individuals in society are attracted to products which are connected to the importance of self-identity and this is what becomes attractive thus resulting in a 'fit'.

Kleine and Kernan (1993) suggested that as we consume or partake in daily activities including media interaction or simply watching television, no matter how little, this

contributes to and reflects our sense of identity. As a result, people organise their social identities around what they possess and the activities that they take part in, but this is significantly different from social roles in society which revolve around more expected behaviour that can be taught by family members. Kleine and Kernan (1993) assert that there is a connection between one's self and their possessions and of relevance to this research, the connection is between young children and the media gadgets they possess (tablets and smartphones).

Holding a very similar view is Thompson (1995, p. 210) who bases his view on an initial critique of the 'self', often perceived of as a product or constructed of the symbolic systems which proceed it. He refers to this:

> *"as the dominant symbolic system of ideologies which will not define the moves of an individual but rather the dominant system defines which moves are accessible or available to the individual and which are not"* (Thompson,1995, p. 210).

The role of the individual then is to decide how they wish to play in the game of social life which he metaphorically refers to as a game of chess. In an environment or society with male dominance (such as Saudi Arabia) where structures in the society create or limit the extent to which the individual can decide their identities, people's interpretation of symbols occurs within a defined context. For that reason, the meanings associated with a particular thing in western society or culture is likely to be different in a society like Saudi Arabia.

In this respect, 'self' is not viewed as a product nor a fixed entity in which the individual can immediately grasp (or accept) but in contrast, the 'self' is a symbolic project that is formed for the individual as a result of the symbolic materials that are available to him or her. In relation to this study, this would be the types of media devices or sources available to young children and how they interact with them to form their 'self' identity. Furthermore, Thompson (1995) suggested that a narrative is formed by the individual who changes and adapts over time as people are regularly exposed to new materials or encounter new experiences and they take these on board in an attempt to refine their self-identity. Significantly, Thompson (1995) argued that these symbolic resources or materials are not available or accessible to everyone in the same way.

In addition to the symbolic resources and materials, the development of communication media has had a significant impact on the process of self-formation. Before this, it was face to face interaction that was involved primarily in the process of self-formation (Kleine, Kleine and Kernan, 1993). Here, local knowledge was handed down from generation to generation through verbal and symbolic communication and exchanges but now these conditions have been altered by the formation and development of communication media (Thompson 1995 p. 210). Now the process of self-formation has become increasingly dependent on media, especially electronic forms and less so on traditional forms such as newspapers (Thompson, 1995). Knowledge in the new media forms is reproduced and technologically transmitted via media outlets which further reduces face to face interaction as a result of the influx of technologies. What is more, is that these are continually updating, so individuals in the current generation are always faced with new possibilities as they have even more materials to construct their self-identities. This means that it becomes increasingly difficult to implement or restore any of the previous traditions of communication such as verbal which is similar to the views of Kleine, Kleine and Kernan (1993).

Undoubtedly this will change as the self comes across new experiences and more importantly, new media devices. However, such devices further depend on the material conditions in which each individual lives (Haralambos and Holborn, 2008). Materials can consist of tablets, smart phones and PCs or laptops where in a modern Saudi household, having a minimum of one of each of these is common if not more. Therefore the amount of media the self can consume based on the media materials and devices that are available to them is vast which can make it difficult for families to control. What this means for parents in Saudi families is that although they may try to act as authoritative figures within the household, attempting to implement and encourage face to face interaction, they are likely to fail because of the power of new technologies and media which influences an individual and his or her process of self-formation. As a result, the family or specifically, parental control over children in Saudi Arabia presents some challenges. Increasingly, children are becoming exposed to new media and along with new content which is appealing and readily available to view or engage with. Now, children of the current generation or 21st century are proactively using media sources to help form their self, but this is constantly going through a process of trial and error as

they consume media that is of interest to them to form their identity. Although this can have a positive impact – there is also the huge danger that could have negative impact too.

The previous theory focused on the development of the self as a result of face to face interaction or contexts with locals and the community in which the self-lives in or is surrounded. Thompson (1995) offers a strong view which focuses on the deeper meaning and understanding of the 'self', viewed mainly as a product dominated by systems, in this case, media, which determine the available options to individuals. He also rejected that the self is a product; instead, the self is a symbolic project that each and every individual actively consumes based on the materials available to them to create a self-identity. In relation to this research, the position put forward by Thompson (1995) provides the second theoretical framework in this discussion for the media consumed by young children in Saudi Arabia to create their self or self-identity based on what they access via the Internet.

However, in modern society, the self is often far removed from this due to fundamental changes as communication through media has developed and it can be argued that to some extent, has taken over. In this 21st century, the formation of the self or self-identity depends on the mediated forms. Thompson (1995) related this phenomena to the access to media that is now available to suggest that communication has become more accessible in a modern, media-savvy world which forms the globalisation of communication which he defines as 'growing interconnectedness' that occurs daily thus taking the self even further away from more traditional and cultural interactions. He also uses the term 'electronic invasion' to describe the increase of devices and demand for these not only in modern societies or countries but even those that are identified as third world and the reason for this is to make way for the importation or access to foreign content (mainly American TV shows).

His view is supported mostly by Morley (2007) who links this primarily to Americanism and globalisation. Morley further states that in a postmodern society, the globalised world in which we now live is one that is characterised by rapid communication due to the impact of new technologies (2007). This new content will be readily available through online streaming of either TV shows or music which is where the relevance to this research lies. If there is less parental control over this easy to

access content, how will families in SA control the content that is viewed or listened to in their household?

The discussion presented, both by Thompson (1995) and Morley (1980; 2007), lends itself to the notion that in a modern society, regardless of one's material or economic background, there is guaranteed to be some disconnection from intimate interactions which were typical between family and friends but instead it is between celebrities and their fan base. What is left unanswered is what happens when media communication breaks down? On the one hand, Morley's views can be considered in the sense that new technologies will deliver increased communication in a postmodern society which presents the opportunity for celebrities, for example, to continue to reach out to their global audience. Children may disconnect from daily routine whereas personal relationships can develop as conversations between peers and unknown cyber friends begin to take place. On the other hand, the possibility of increased parental control can restrict this viewing or interaction if enforced within the family.

Symbolic interaction theory is employed in conducting this research by considering the role of the family in instilling positive values in children through social interaction within their homes, in the Saudi family context. This shall involve the family controlling its members through the family as a whole, explaining common interactions and meanings representing the essence of the family behaviour typical in a Saudi community. The structure of the average Saudi family household is crucial to understanding the decision making and behaviours within the household that arise when media access for young children is concerned. Where Symbolic Interaction theory differs however from others theories such as Functionalism, it is evident through its concentration on the family unit which analyses family functions in the light of interaction created among family members rather than just assuming that families rely on these functions alone.

2.5.3 Communication Theory

The term or concept 'mass communication' originated in the 1930s. McQuail (2010) stated that the most obvious feature of the mass media is simply that it is designed to reach many whether this is TV, film or newspapers. In this typical role of applying 'mass communication' the sender of content or media is likely to be the organisation

(i.e. producer, entertainer, director). However, McQuail (2010) argues that the relationship is purely one-directional and one-sided as there is a social and physical distance that is in the way of the sender and receiver. He further argues that the relationship presented by media senders is manipulative in its intention to the receiver because the symbolic content or message of mass communication is 'typically manufactured'.

It is something that is mass produced in a standardised way and often it content can be reused, reproduced and represented which can be rather overwhelming for its audience. As a result, any unique aspects of media content becomes lost because it is so overused and differs largely from other types of human interaction. However, now we are, in the 21st century, currently in a situation where new media forms are constantly emerging and evolving, and McQuail (2010) claims that this can serve both mass commination while serving personalised individual communication through content. What is interesting here is the discussion of active and passive media audiences in relation to the sociology of mass media. Let us take the hypodermic syringe model, to begin with (Glover, 1984). Based on earlier studies of persuasion and propaganda this model assumes that the media are strong while the mass audience is weak (passive). Although the research carried out to develop this model focused on cinematic effects, the fundamental premise that the media are powerful is crucial (Jones and Jones 1999). This model is largely influenced by Bandura and his associates in their experiment which involved a film of an adult hitting a 'Bobo' doll with a mallet. Children in the experiment viewed a film and then began to imitate what they saw when left alone with an identical doll and a mallet as their behaviour was observed by the controllers of the experiment. What must be recognised is that the model has been heavily criticised since its development, notably by pluralist approaches who argued that we must recognise the polysomic reading of media texts by the audience. Audiences are influenced by the environment in which they are placed, and their understanding of media is based on their personal and unique experiences.

For example, early research in the 1950s by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) showed viewed audiences as active individuals who actually influenced others. They developed the two-step flow hypothesis as a newer approach which changed the perspective of media research for a decade (Jones and Jones, 1999). Similarly, but perhaps even more

influential than this, is the reception analysis which concentrates on the way audiences read media texts especially in popular culture where music and new media content may be concerned as is the case with this research. Viewing television, for example, is seen as a 'cultural practice', and this is something that Morley (1980) attempted to analyse. He was concerned with linking the social position of the audience with their media text which looked at categories such as class, occupation and family structure. His research into family is potentially relevant here for the Saudi context because it was discovered that masculine power within the home dominated viewing choices on television which symbolised power over other family members (Jones and Jones 1999). If this is the case, in Saudi Arabian families, there should be control over the media content that is consumed but the difficulty is that children and parents do not all sit together and consume television content together which is what Morley's research is based. Instead, young children have access to new media devices where they can access media content without masculine powers coming into play.

In addition to the reception analysis, there is the use of gratification approach; a slight development of the above models as it is concerned with choice, reception and response of audience members (Jones and Jones, 1999). Similar to other models, this recognises audiences as active; however, it addresses the psychology of needs such as 'diversion and escapes', 'personal relationships', 'personal identity' and 'surveillance'. These are crucial to the discussion of this research as children in Saudi Arabia may come across just one or perhaps all of these needs and this can explain their reason for media consumption.

Finally and more recently the development of a cultivation analysis has been put forward, an approach which recognises media devices such as the television in daily lives as being so revolved around that it dominates 'symbolic environment'. Developed by Gerbner (1973), this suggests that some audiences believe in the 'mediated reality' shown on television rather than having their personal experiences. This can be anything from the language that is used to the imagery or representations which form the content and influence audience belief and behaviours (Jones and Jones 1999). This view is similar to Baudrillard's theory of a consumer society where the proliferation of commodity signs through which commodities take on ever new and ever greater significance for those whose consumption is a way of life (Baudrillard, 1998). For

children being trained as consumers, mediation will remain an essential aspect of their interaction and socialisation process, including internet usage.

Communication theory provides a third and final framework that remains within the institution of media. Media organisations and their activities reflect the expectations of the public and other social institutions, but media institutions themselves have developed and can be segmented according to different types of technology such as TV, Internet and mobile devices or smart technology. McQuail (2010) also raises a significant point here that not only has mass media communication changed over time but it also changes from country to country hence its importance to this study. For example, in certain countries, there are restrictions on social media networking sites.

The future then of mass communication is questionable. On the one hand, it is a solution by providing less one-directional and more personalised content, but on the other hand, it remains a problem as it still holds power. In modern society, the expansion of the Internet seems to raise a challenge to elements of the ideal type of 'mass communication'. The Internet is a type of media that allows and more importantly, encourages, two-way interactive forms of communication. It is less isolating and certainly less institutionalised in comparison to other forms of media.

These traditional media outlets such as TV have attempted to become more accessible online, for example, Netflix, but McQuail argues they are in a state of decline (2010) even if they are transforming. However, this should not be seen as the end of mass communication but rather a shift and a significant one that will only continue in the future which may primarily be concerned with reaching an entire nation with content in a postmodern society. The transmission or delivery of this content will be direct and rapid; more than it ever has been. The chosen form of media, for example, the Internet, will be able to provide a different range of content aimed and targeted towards subgroups and segmented audiences in different communities, or even countries. It is safe to say that the purpose of content will be varied and less standardised, but that mass communication will survive purely as a result of its intimate connection with humans.

2.6   RESEARCH QUESTIONS BASED ON LITERATURE REVIEW

From the critical review of literature on parental mediation of children's internet usage in Saudi Arabia and across the world, several questions arise. From the nine questions

presented in chapter 1, section 1.6 the literature review indicates that these are questions that need to be answered to give a better overview of parental mediation of children's internet usage in Saudi Arabia.

1. What is the intensity of children's participation in internet activities and how effective is parental mediation in controlling or restricting usage?

As seen from the review of literature, the use of the internet among children is growing around the world, and this is no different in Saudi Arabia. As presented by Presnky (2009) and Salem *et al* (2014), children are increasingly having access to the internet, either through a mobile phone or personal computers and this leads to a number of issues relating to the use of the internet by children. Due to the perception of parents on the dangers of the use of the internet, there are varying degrees of parental mediation. The outcomes of the mediation process depend on the effectiveness of the parental mediation measures adopted. For the case of Saudi Arabia, this research, therefore, seeks to answer the question of the intensity of children's internet usage and the effectiveness of the measures adopted by the parents to restrict such usage.

2. In what way do social and cultural factors motivate parents to practice regulative and restrictive mediation of their child's internet usage?

The literature review has also revealed that social and cultural factors have an impact on the actions taken by parents to mediate the internet usage of their children. Considering the differences in culture across different countries, the next question for this research is to identify the ways in which the socio-cultural factors influence the approaches taken by the parents to mediate their children's internet usage.

3. In what ways does excessive internet usage result in negative or inappropriate consequences regarding children's behaviour?

As discussed by Ely et al (2015), Lassala (2008) and Bleakly et al (2016), there are negative consequences for excessive usage of the internet by children and this relates to health issues, as well as other social issues. In the context of Saudi Arabia, this research questions the specific negative consequences of excessive internet usage on children's behaviour.

4. What strategies and mechanisms do parents adopt to ensuring children's internet safety?

Studies by authors such as Livingstone et al (2015), Clark (2011) and Ozgur (2016) all suggested that different strategies are adopted by parents to achieve the mediation of their children's internet usage. The question arising from this viewpoint is to identify whether specific strategies and mechanisms are adopted by parents from Saudi Arabia and to compare these strategies to those adopted by parents in developed countries such as England, America, and other areas in Europe.

5. In what way does the influence of the internet on family or family communication differ by the type of children's online activities?

Considering the likely impact of family characteristics on the children's internet usage, this research will find answers to the question on how the online activities of children influence the level and system of communication used in the families.

6. How does children's internet usage differ by family's socio-economic status?

Another socio-economic question is the influence of socio-economic factors or status on the internet usage preference of children. This question becomes necessary due to the views presented in Livingstone et al. (2015), Bleakley (2016), Al-Juhani, (2012), and Al-Hudithi and Abdul-Aziz (2011) who reported that family structure and status have an influence on children's internet usage as this influences children's access to computers or the internet. The research poses this question to determine if this is the case in the Saudi Arabian context.

7. To what extent do internet access and usage differ based on the gender of children?

Although much is not presented in the literature on internet access and gender, the nature of the community and the level of the extent to which gender mediates activities is likely to impact on children's internet usage. As presented in Kirwil (2009) and Kalmus and Roosalu (2012) a country's cultural orientation is likely to influence the approach to issues based on gender. Due to the heavy influence of cultural contexts on

gender issues, there is the likelihood that gender would influence the levels of access given to children.

8. How might the age of parents' impact on their children's internet usage?

Considering the changing nature of the internet and the ever increasing need to stay up to date with the latest developments in internet technologies, there is the general perception that individuals of the younger generation are technology savvy compared to the older generation who may not have grown up with the internet being readily available and part of everyday life. Livingston et al (2015) for example reported that digital age presents a challenge for parents who may not be as used to the internet as their children. This raises the question of whether the age of the parents would influence their children's internet usage to an extent.

9. To what extent does the number of children within the home impact on children's internet usage?

Children's internet usage is influenced to a large extent by availability and children's access to the internet at home. Considering the cost implication of devices and access to the internets, this research questions whether or not the size of the family influences the accessibility of internet at homes. In areas such as Saudi Arabia, having a big family contributes to social value. The question then is, do the number of children in a family influence access and use of the internet by children to any extent.

These questions inform the development of data collection instruments as they form the basis for data collection to provide answers.

2.7   SUMMARY

This chapter has critically reviewed the extant literature on the subject of parental influences on children's internet usage and the factors that influence the process. The chapter also explored a number of key theories and frameworks on child socialisation, parenting and parental influences on children's socialisation. This review was necessary to ensure the pertinent issues in the parental mediation process are captured from previous studies to help guide the present research. As shown in the chapter, the need for parental influence in the internet usage of children has become necessary due

to the many different impacts of the use of internet has on children. Though there are many positive influences of internet usage on children's socialisation, there is also a lot of negative influences, and there is the need to ensure children are shielded from such negative influences. The literature suggests that the introduction and continued use of the internet by children brings a new perspective to the socialisation of children and like every socialisation, there is the need for norms which must be enforced. Just like in every form of socialisation, there is the need for some level of mediation in the children's socialisation process and the family plays a key role in this process. Specific theories and influences have been carefully researched and considered to provide a basis for understanding the family's role and most importantly the parental influences applied to children in the stages of primary socialisation that can be applied to a typical yet modern Saudi family. As evidenced in the review, the traditional roles and stereotypes within the function of the family have been influenced to a large extent by globalisation leading to a modern society where both men and women can play dual roles in the family.

Each theory initially presented here has been discussed in great detail and draws upon the influential, relevant theorists retrospectively to provide a full theoretical framework that can be applied to the purpose of this research. The elements of these theories collectively provide an overview of the interests and focus of this research by identifying aspects that are likely to affect the parental influence of children's internet usage.

The literature review also suggests that family characteristics have an impact on the type of influences and expectations of parents during the process. All the issues discussed in this chapter will help to develop a strategy and provide guidelines on the issues to be taken into consideration during the data collection process.

The questions presented in section 2.6 form the basis for designing the questionnaire instrument and guides the interview process used to gather the data.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

From the preceding chapter, it has been identified that the use of the internet poses both positive as well as negative risks to children which makes it necessary for parents to put in place measures to mediate the internet usage of their children. To help identify why and how parents in Saudi Arabia influence (mediate) their children's internet usage, there is the need to collect empirical evidence from the parents and children involved in the process. The collection, analysis and interpretation of relevant data are paramount to the success of this research. In this section, definitions of research paradigm by Saunders *et al* (2010); Creswell (2009); Corbin and Straus (2008); and Pollack (2007) will be reviewed.

The success of any piece of research is determined by the choice and use of the most appropriate methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation, primarily, to ensure accurate results which are all influenced by the paradigms within which the research is based (Creswell, 2009; 2009; Saunders *et al*, 2007). To achieve this requires the selection of research methods that can help deliver the aim of the research. To achieve the aim of this research, the chosen research design must ensure that the correct approach to data collection and analysis is taken (Bryman and Bell, 2003; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). This chapter discusses the methodological approach taken in the study to find answers to the questions posed by this research. This includes the research design, the entire sampling processes, reason for method choice and the approach to data collection as well as analysis. Definitions of research paradigm by Saunders *et al* (2010); Creswell (2009); Corbin and Straus (2008); and Pollack (2007) are also reviewed. Furthermore, the challenges faced by the researcher and ethical considerations will be identified and evaluated regarding this study before concluding the methodological approach.

As mentioned above, the research design plays a key role in ensuring the research meets the aims and objectives by ensuring the most appropriate approach is taken. The next section discusses the research design and the factors affecting the design adopted for this research.

3.2 Research Design

Research or scientific enquiry has been described by many scholars as a process that needs to be well planned and executed to ensure the aims of the enquiry are met (Bryman and Bell, 2003; Creswell, 2007; Saunders *et al*, 2009; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). In this regard, it is suggested that research must be properly planned and thought through to ensure the most appropriate approach to finding answers to the research questions are taken. Thus, there is a need to design the research in such a manner that data collection, analysis and results are properly conducted. The term research design encompasses every aspect of the research process and for this reason, serves as the link between the results of a piece of research work and its initial questions. The different researchers mentioned above have conceptually defined 'research design' differently though the central theme in all definitions tends to refer to similar things. Notable among them are Yin (2013); Saunders *et al* (2007); Creswell (2009); Bryman and Bell (2003) among many others. Some of the definitions are discussed below:

Bryman and Bell (2003 p.32), conceptualise research design to be the framework for undertaking any piece of research and serves as a link between the means for collecting and analysing the data to answer the research questions being posed by the researcher. Yin (2013, p.28), in his book on case study research, defines research design as the 'logical sequence that links the findings of any research to the initial questions posed at the beginning of the research. From the two definitions, it can be seen that not only is the research design intended to help achieve the aims of the research by linking the research questions and the results, but it is also provided a logical sequence that determines the order in which the research work should proceed.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011), on the other hand, bring yet another competing perspective to the definition of research design. They suggest that research design provides the guidelines that link together the elements of the methodology adopted for a study, relating the paradigm to the research strategy and then the strategy to the methods for collecting empirical data. This definition introduces the concept of methodology, research paradigm and research strategy. For investigating the parental influences on children's internet usage in Saudi Arabia, the research design will be defined as the framework for ensuring that the research leads to the required outcomes by guiding the selection of research paradigms, strategy for data collection and data analyses. This

definition takes into consideration the need to have an appropriate paradigm selected for undertaking the research and also choosing the correct means for data collection and analyses (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011).

Research design is required to link the research questions, the data collected and the results of the research making it very important (Creswell, 2012). For this research, there is the need to ensure that the design adopted for any research is very appropriate. The consequences of having an inappropriate research design are the likelihood of research leading to the collection of the wrong kind of data or inappropriate analysis which will result in the research not meeting its intended aim or providing unreliable results (Saunders *et al*, 2009). Studies on research design suggest that a research design is not randomly chosen as all designs may not work for every research (Morse, 2003; Myers, 2010). For this reason, several factors have been outlined as influencers on the choice of research design. These include the questions posed by the research; the research philosophy or paradigm; the extent of existing knowledge; the resources and time available to the researcher; and the depth of knowledge sought by the study. For investigating parental influences on the children's internet usage in Saudi Arabia, there is the need to review all these factors and how they can be used to achieve the aim of the research. All these factors will be discussed in detail below.

3.2.1 Research Paradigm

A good research study should have a clear description of the strategy that is adopted and underlying philosophy of the research. For the purposes of specific research paradigms, Descombe (2010) suggested that it should take into account the rationale and outcomes of the investigation. As mentioned above, one of the main factors influencing the choice of research design is the research paradigm or philosophy. In this regard, many different researchers have given different definitions for research philosophy. Most researchers agreed that research philosophies plays an important role in the research process, and the need to ensure the most appropriate paradigm is adopted as it has a significant influence on the outcome of any piece of research. Research paradigms or philosophies are essential in the research process as such philosophies shape the nature of the investigation, its methods and the types of questions asked (Denscombe, 2010). A number of definitions for research paradigm are discussed below.

In his book on research methods, Creswell (2009) defined research paradigm as the philosophical worldview which represents a basic set of beliefs that guide human action. This suggests that for the purposes of research, research paradigms will guide the researcher in every action of the research, especially the design of how data should be collected and analysed. Corbin and Straus (2008) suggested that research philosophies are the worldview that underlies and informs methodology and methods as well as the theoretical influences on the whole research process. From this definition, it can also be seen that the primary purpose of the research philosophy is to guide the researcher in choosing the appropriate methods for collecting and analysing the data whiles informing the design of the research. Pollack (2007, p.266) defined research paradigm as a 'commonly shared set of assumptions, values and concepts within a community which constitutes a way of viewing reality'. From Pollack's definition, the research paradigm affects the views of reality and as such determines what a community makes of reality or phenomenon. All the definitions above suggest that research paradigm acts as a lens for understanding the social world and in that regard shapes what the researchers see or investigate.

In its simplest form, research paradigm can be considered to be a framework comprising an accepted set of theories, methods and ways of doing research. Research paradigms are considered at two main levels: the philosophical and operational level (Creswell, 2009; Corbin and Straus, 2008). At the philosophical level, Pollack (2007) and Saunders *et al* (2010) suggested that research paradigm is used to reflect the basic beliefs about the world and research whereas at the operational level, it is used to provide guidelines about how the researcher should conduct research (Pollack, 2007; Saunders *et al*, 2010). From the definitions above, the two levels of research design can be seen from the views of the various researchers. As seen from the different definitions, the research paradigm influences the way of conducting research by way of norms, values, views and the actions undertaken in the research (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2013). Different research paradigms have emerged which all have different stances on issues such as ontology; epistemology; axiology; logic of reasoning; data collection methods; the kind of data to be generated; and the means adopted to analyse the data (Pollack, 2007; Corbin and Straus, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Saunders *et al*., 2010; Yin, 2013). A summary of the key terms making up a research philosophy is provided in the table below.

Term	Definition
Ontology	the nature of reality
Epistemology	The theory of knowledge and the relationship between the researcher's justified belief and opinion
Axiology	the role of values
Logic	the process of reasoning

Table 3.1 Definition of Key Terms Affecting Research Design

Based on the different stances on the nature of reality, the relationship between the researcher and what is being researched, the role of values in research and the logic of reasoning, there are two traditional groups in research paradigms: the positivist paradigm; and the interpretivist paradigm (Cerswell, 2007). Even though these two main (traditional) paradigms are regarded as separate and distinct from one another, a number of researchers suggest that the paradigms all serve to help shape the design of any research by giving different perspectives to the phenomenon being researched (Bryman and Bell, 2012; Myers *et al*, 2011).

Brannen (2005) reported that 'the case for separate paradigms is that, qualitative and quantitative researchers hold different epistemological assumptions, belong to different research cultures, and have different researcher biographies that work against convergence' (Brannen, 1992 in Brannen, 2005, p.9). It must, however, be taken into consideration that positivism and interpretivism (phenomenology) are the two main streams forming the extreme ends of the research paradigm continuum; something which suggests that differing paradigms combining aspects of interpretivism and positivism exist within that continuum

As one of the two traditional paradigms in research, positivism assumes that a phenomenon obeys natural laws and can be subjected to quantitative logic and, for that reason, reality can be objectively observed, studied and modelled (Sutrisna, 2009). Such views hold that reality can be independently observed as a singular and objective entity and no matter where one observes from the same thing will be experienced by all. For this reason, positivism takes a deductive approach leading to the objective observation of phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). The stance on the nature of reality and approach were

taken by the positivists leads them to focus more on objective knowledge, empirical regularities and deductions the need to produce evidence by factual or mathematical means (Tan, 2002). For example, researchers such as Bandura who have adopted the hypodermic syringe model have advocated experiment-based methods in which the behaviour resulting from media consumption can be objectively observed and measured (Tan, 1999).

The interpretivist paradigm, on the other hand, is of the view that phenomenon does not obey natural laws and, as such, cannot be modelled (Strisna, 2009) and unlike the single reality in positivism, interpretivism proposes a concept of multiple realities (Goldkul, 2012). The view within interpretivism is that people bring their subjective interpretations based on their understanding of the reality surrounding that particular phenomenon and for this reason, people will see different things when observing the same phenomenon. Yin (2013) explained that the different observations and perceptions are due to the differences in the upbringing and socialisation of different people factors such as ideology, politics, and culture. For example, what people consider to be morally right or wrong will be influenced to a large extent by the culture influencing their upbringing.

Within the positivism and intepretivism extremes of research paradigms, alternative more popular paradigms have emerged. Such paradigms arise out of the view of some researchers that aspects of positivism and intepretivism can be combined to ensure more pragmatic means of conducting research emerge (Creswell, 2009). Lee (1991), in making a case for the use of pragmatism, argues that comprehensiveness of reality means no one philosophical perspective is likely to fully explain all issues. Pragmatism focuses on what works best for the study under consideration and seeks solutions to research problems by relying on multiple sources (Saunders *et al*, 2007).

As described in the introduction to this chapter, the choice of research design is based on the philosophical position of the researcher which then influences the choice of methods for collecting and analysing data. From the discussion of research philosophies above, it can be argued that the philosophical stance taken by a researcher goes a long way to influence the choice of design and approach for conducting the research. At its practical level, the research paradigms, i.e. positivism and interpretivism, lead to research approaches such as qualitative and quantitative research designs.

3.2.2 Qualitative and Quantitative Research Designs

The traditional research philosophies of positivism and interpretivism lead to two main different traditional forms of research designs: qualitative and quantitative research designs. As reported in Muijs (2004), the differentiators between quantitative and qualitative research are often discussed in a 'paradigm war' where researchers must align themselves to either side depending on their philosophical and worldly beliefs. A quantitative view can also be described as being 'realist' or more commonly known as 'positivist' while qualitative views are referred to as 'subjectivist' or 'interpretivist'. On the one side, realists seek to discover the reality, and use methods with this objective in mind, therefore, tend to use more scientific methods for this to establish cause and effect. The two designs (strategies) are discussed below considering their advantages and disadvantages.

Qualitative research deals with experiences of people, meanings constructed by people, descriptions and other temporary matters such as feelings that cannot be quantified (Mathew and Ross, 2010). In this research, adopting a qualitative approach will require acquiring from the research participants their experience of mediating their children's internet usage in Saudi Arabia. With roots within the interpretivist paradigm, qualitative research is concerned with interpreting and understanding phenomenon through the meanings that people attach to them (Bryman, 2012). The qualitative strategy is deeply rooted in the interpretivist paradigm and takes an exploratory approach to research. Qualitative research takes a non-numerical approach to address research questions and seeks to develop themes from the qualitative data obtained (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative methodologies are explanatory in nature and aim to answer questions of 'how?' and 'why?' (Walker, 1997; Yin, 2014), or to develop themes from the qualitative data obtained (Creswell, 2003). Common research methodologies within the qualitative strategy include action research; case studies; ethnographies; and grounded theory. The qualitative research approach has however been criticised by many researchers: Leininger, 1994; Morse, 1994; Beck, 1993). One of the key criticisms of qualitative research is the difficulty in generalising results from the study due to the number of respondents used. As discussed in Creswell (2009), another major critique of the qualitative approach is the heavy dependence of the approach on the skills of the researcher. For this reason, it is believed that there is the possibility of a high level of

bias depending on the experience of the researcher. Due to the lack of rigour and statistical interpretation of qualitative research, in some scientific communities, this makes it difficult to accept.

The quantitative strategy, by contrast, entails the numerical representation and manipulation of observation for describing and explaining the observed phenomenon (Bryman, 2012). Just as the qualitative strategy is linked with the interpretivist paradigm, the quantitative has its roots in the positivist paradigm or research philosophy which utilises numerical and objective measurements to address questions (Yin, 2014). This approach to research is deductive in relation to theory and literature and thus useful for answering research questions relating to what, how much and how many (Fellows and Liu, 2008). This makes it a useful research strategy to test theory (Saunders *et al*, 2007) and it comprises popular methodologies such as experiments and surveys.

Beyond the two traditional approaches or strategies for conducting research, a number of researchers suggest that qualitative and quantitative strategies can be combined into a single study to ensure a pragmatic strategy is created. For this reason, a mixed methodology/strategy is proposed. This strategy is based on the pragmatist paradigm which does not commit to any one system of reality and philosophy and as such individual researchers are at liberty to choose among the methods, techniques, and procedures of research that best meet the purposes and needs of the research in question. (Saunders *et al*, 2007). As positivism and interpretivism respectively relate to qualitative and quantitative methods, pragmatism applies to mix methods research and draw liberally from both quantitative and qualitative assumptions (Creswell, 2007; Saunders *et al*, 2007). For the pragmatist, the choice between 'what' and 'how' to research is based on its intended consequences (Creswell, 2007). The underlying principle for pragmatism is 'what works at the time' and as such pragmatic researchers concentrate on selection methods and methodologies that work best for that particular research question.

Taking the paradigms discussed above into consideration, it can be identified that different means can be used to gather the necessary information required for determining the parental influences on children's internet usage in Saudi Arabia. The next section discusses the research design chosen for conducting this research.

3.3 Chosen Research Design

In choosing the appropriate research design for this study, every effort was made to ensure all the ontological, axiological and epistemological stances of the two main paradigms were taken into consideration. Considering the nature of this research from both the positivist's and interpretivist's paradigm, it was decided that aspects of the research will favour a quantitative or objectivists approach whereas others will require qualitative approaches and subjective views. For example, it was necessary to establish and understand the parental influence on children's internet usage; both from the perspectives of the parents and children involved. This required an interpretivists or qualitative approach because it allows for a more in-depth understanding of the perspectives of the parents and the meanings and feelings they associated with this. To be able to identify the extent to which parents influence their children's internet usage, and what measures they put in place, will also require a positivist view of the phenomenon. The positivist views will help to measure what actions are taken and the extent to which it can achieve the aims of such mediation. Positivists can understand what causes certain behaviour and what the effects of this are (Creswell, 2009). For example, in relation to this study, the researcher is concerned with the common methods used by parents to affect the use of the internet by their children and what family characteristics influence the process. Their parents are also involved to a certain extent but more as a variable affecting the cause and effect pattern since they can influence this by controlling the access children have. On the other side, interpretivists focus on the role and meaning-making of humans in the research process which they say cannot be 'measured objectively' (Creswell, 2009).

Based on the demands of this research, it was envisaged that an interpretivist's only perspective or a positivist's only perspective would not be able to effectively me*et al*l the objectives of this study (Creswell and Clark, 2007; Bergman, 2008). For this reason, a multi paradigm perspective was adopted to take advantage of the strengths of both the positivist and interpretivist research paradigms. This was necessary to ensure the research captured all the relevant data needed for the conduct of the study.

3.3.1 Research Phenomenon and Philosophy

As mentioned above, this research adopted a multi-paradigm philosophy which combined both positivist and interpretivist views to achieve the research aim. According to Denscombe philosophical foundations are important in research since:

> "They shape the nature of the investigation, its methods and questions that are asked; specify what types of things qualify as worthwhile evidence (and) ... point to the kind of conclusions that can, and cannot, be drawn based on the investigation". (Denscombe, 2010: 117).

This suggests that underlying philosophies give the researcher guidance and focus on the research. However, the social world can be seen from different perspective; hence it is important for the researcher to clarify which perspectives they are adopting for the type of research being undertaken. The researcher holds ontological assumptions about the particular topic which may be different, for example, from how participants view the world of internet use. The choice of research methodology seeks to uncover the participants' vision of social reality (Denscombe, 2010). The chosen research methodology will also have implications on the "... boundaries around the kind of conclusions that can be drawn." (ibid., 2010, p. 119). Ontological assumptions about social reality are subjective (Denscombe, 2010; Newell and Burnard, 2006). Use of the internet is not a realist interpretation but can be discussed from an interpretivists' view because it is a social activity. A phenomenon is seen as a social construction that is open to interpretation. The disadvantage of this philosophy is the lack of objectivity. The researcher in the study is naturally part of the social world being studied by virtue of sharing the same nationality and social beliefs as the participants. For this reason, it was important to ensure that the necessary efforts were made to prevent biases in the conduct of this research.

Another disadvantage of adopting an interpretivist paradigm is that of relativism (Denscombe, 2010). The researcher's views can be ignored in fear of influencing results. In this philosophy, the researcher is not considered an expert. He or she is expected to have an open mind in relation to different perceptions expressed by participants. For conducting research in Saudi Arabia, cultural factors on the limited contact between males and females are likely to affect the conduct of this research. Explanations in this philosophylack clarity and conclusiveness (Newell and Burnard,

2006; Cohen and Manion, 2007 and Denscombe, 2010). Some authors have criticised it for lack of rigour. Considering the strength and weakness of the two traditional philosophies, this research combined the strengths to achieve the aim of investigating the parental influence on children's internet usage in Saudi Arabia.

Positivists perspective, on the other hand, has been criticised for the lack of acknowledgement of the different social factors that influence the views of individuals. As presented in the study of Yin (2013) and Taylor *et al* (2015), unlike interpretivist research, positivist's research does not go beyond the surface of the phenomenon to unearth deeper meanings and understandings the research participants hold. One of the key criticisms against positivism is the rather descriptive nature of the findings from such research which lacks the ability to provide insights with an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon (Howe, 2009; Richie *et al*., 2013). In line with this, Howe (2009) argued that one of the main disadvantages of positivism is its inability to capture the emotion and behaviour of people which ultimately influences the outcomes. The belief that everything can be modelled and measured poses another disadvantage of the positivists research (See Silverman, 2016) which cannot make it wholly adequate for this current research. Considering the current research, there is the need for flexibility in gathering the data, and this approach could best be achieved with an interpretivist approach, an advantage positivism does not provide (Teddie and Tashakorie, 2009).

3.4 Methodological Approach

This section explains the methodological choice and potion of this research and further reflects the overall benefits and limitations of the research methodology.

3.4.1 Method Choice

According to Moody (2007), the success of any study depends on the methods selected to gather data. For example, questionnaires, the use of interviews or the set-up of experiments are some examples of the type of methods one might utilise. Adopting a qualitative or quantitative stance to research influences the methods selected to gather data.

While both qualitative and quantitative paradigms have their disadvantages, they also each have their strengths. Qualitative methods aim to produce rich, detailed data which

usually maintains the participants view whereas quantitative methods are seen as factual, more reliable and generalisable for a larger population (Burns and Burns, 2008, Muijs, 2006, Denscombe, 2010). It has also been stated that quantitative approaches are 'dominant' in the field of research because 'the purposes, procedures and benefits are known and accepted' while qualitative approaches are unfamiliar and can vary (Steckle *et al*, 1992:2). Therefore, a researcher can, as is the case with this current study, adopt a quantitative, qualitative or even a combined methodology depending on the main aims while also taking into consideration any factors that may influence or impact the method choice as will be explained further below.

Aliaga and Gunderson (2002) cited in Muijs (2006) defined quantitative research as:

> *'Explaining phenomenon by collecting numerical data that are analysed using mathematically based methods.'*

Explaining the phenomena is the key factor in any research as this establishes what the researcher is looking to uncover and in this case, it is to understand the level of parental influence in Saudi Arabia for children when using the internet. The attitudes and beliefs of the participants in this area need to be quantifiable so that their responses can be analysed statistically. Qualitative research, on the other hand, can be defined as explaining phenomenon based on the meaning created by others from their experiences. Polkinghorne (2005) defines qualitative research as an inquiry aimed at describing and clarifying human experience as it appears in people's lives.

3.4.2 Methodological Position of Researcher

Taking a mixed methods approach to a study can provide the researcher with a common reality that is agreed upon by the sample as it emphasises the similarities and this is a view largely favoured by the positivist position (Burns & Grove, 2007). The difference between the theoretical stances that affects one's methodological approach is whether or not one believes reality can be measured and in this case, the researcher takes the stance that, whereas some aspects of the research can be quantified and measured, there are some subjective areas (such as why particular parents adopt a particular strategy and their experiences of implementing such strategies) that rather need to be interpreted in a qualitative manner. With quantitative research, it is suggested, that it presents more robust, objective or scientific results from which patterns can be identified from the

results which are extremely popular when data needs to be measured (Jick, 1979; Creswell, 2013). For this reason, the research adopted an approach that combines both qualitative and quantitative elements. Moreover, it allows the researcher to gather data from a large sample of the population which in this case is a necessity for the study in order to support the researcher's assumptions and draw generalizable conclusions at the end of the research process. In this paradigm, experimental designs can be used to collect numerical information from a sample of participants. In addition to this, the researcher must also identify whether they are looking for causes or understanding as to the purpose of their research, but they must also consider if they will remain detached or become fully immersed in the setting (Burns and Grove, 2007).

In this study, the researcher was conscious to try and remain relatively detached in comparison to other studies such as participant observation; however the researcher was present while some of the questionnaires were completed by children. Denscombe, (2010), Burns and Burns, (2008) and Muijs (2006) all highlighted the importance of the researcher distancing themselves from the target group they are studying to ensure there is maximum objectivity which is something the researcher and research assistant took into account during the data collection process.

3.4.3 Research Methodology Benefits and Limitations

Irrespective of the methodological choices, it is recognised that there are limitations as well as benefits (Kelle and Ezberger, 1999; Creswell, 2009). It is important then that the researcher takes into considerations the limitations of the methodological choice, so the appropriate measures can be put in place to mitigate against the problems such limitations may pose. In choosing the methodology for this research, a review of literature on research paradigms, research designs and methodology was made. From the review, it was identified that the choice of methodology lied within the two extremes of qualitative and quantitative approaches (Sylverman, 2016; Taylor *et al*., 2015; Ritchie *et al*., 2013; Charmaz, 2011; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Teddie and Tashakori, 2009). According to the different authors cited above, each methodological stance has strength as well as a weakness. This research, therefore, adopted a mixed approach to make use of both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies.

Thus, while many of the benefits of quantitative methods have been discussed above, Burns and Groove, (2007) identify further reasons for this methodological approach. Not only are quantitative methods measurable and objective, but they are also perceived as reliable since they can be easily replicated should this or another researcher wish to carry this out again in the future. Similarly, Addock and Collier (2001) highlighted the validity of quantitative research methods. Measuring validity relates to the scoring of the operationalised concepts that the researcher aims to quantify and, in this case,, this is the level or scale of parental control that exists in Saudi Arabia from parents towards their children.

The question of validity is also discussed by Winter (2000) who argues that it very much depends on the different types of research projects which can be both quantitative and qualitative. Hammersley (2004) described validity as representing accurate features of the phenomena. Closely link it to reliability (Winter, 2000) which has led to great confusion among scholars in this area when attempting to agree what is considered reliable and valid. He concluded that the aggregated definition of validity links to accuracy while reliability is more concerned with reliability, both of which are of relevance to this study. Taking this summary on board, the researcher aims to assess how valid the answers are in terms of the accuracy of the response in relation to the question while the reliability will indicate whether questions (and expected answers) can be easily replicated. This may be considered if the researcher wishes to assess the scale of parental influence again in the future to determine any change.

The benefits presented here, for both questionnaires and a quantitative approach, establish the reasons for the methodological choice by the researcher. However, it must also be mentioned that due to cultural views in Saudi Arabia where males are not allowed to freely interact with females, this method choice was also the most suitable and relevant. Nevertheless, this survey captures more people due to a large number of people that could be reached and allows wider access to a group; more so than the researcher could hope to gain from focus groups, observations or individual interviews, therefore, these methodological approaches were eliminated. These qualitative methods are better suited when there are restricted numbers or perhaps a more sensitive topic to explore.

While the researcher is aware of the benefits of questionnaires, it must also be stated that there are some limitations to this approach, as with any research method. As highlighted by Alassaf (2010) and Obaydat *et al* (2011), there is the possibility that some participants may not answer all of the questions, perhaps because they do not understand them or that they lose interest due to the length. If they misunderstand the question, then this too will affect their responses since it will be based solely on their interpretation. Answers can also be inaccurate because participants vary in their experience or knowledge of the research topic and their background and beliefs may also play a part. Taking the research topic into account for this study, parents, for example, may feel under the spotlight to answer in a favourable way for the researcher, so they choose the answer they think they are supposed to provide rather than the truth. They may feel that their parental skills are being scrutinised with regards to how much control they have over their children's internet involvement. This feeling can be linked to a large extent on the societal norm which requires parents to bring up their children based on Islamic values (Al-Omar, 2009). For parents admitting that they have not been able to meet the required religious norms or values will suggest failure and is likely to influence their responses. Similarly, the children may not want to admit how much time they spend on the internet or more importantly, confess what they are using it for because they do not want the researcher to think of them in a negative way.

All of the above factors have been taken into consideration by the researcher; hence a pilot study was conducted to help reduce or eliminate some of these disadvantages.

3.5 Design of the Research Instruments

As mentioned above, the research used aspects of both qualitative and quantitative methods and methodologies. For this reason, two research instruments were constructed for this study. A quantitative research instrument which utilised a questionnaire survey and a qualitative research instrument which utilised an interview guide. The processes taken to ensure the design of the two instruments met the demands of the research are discussed in the next sub-sections. Both questionnaire instrument and the interview guide were influenced by the nine questions identified through the literature review (as presented in Chapter 2, section 2.6).

3.5.1 Design of Questionnaire Instrument

Muijs (2006) stated that there are four main research questions that must be taken into consideration when using quantitative methods and these are important for the design of the questionnaire. First, there is a requirement for a quantitative answer to questions such as, 'how many children do you have?' Second, this approach can help to discover numerical change for example, 'how many hours do your children spend on the internet each week?' Third, the researcher can use questions to determine phenomena as previously mentioned with questions such as, 'list three reasons why you think your children like to use the internet'.

Surveys or questionnaires tend to be one of the most popular choices for researchers when considering quantitative method (Muijs 2006, Burns and Grove, 2007). While social or scientific experiments can be an option, they also present a number of ethical issues especially when children are involved therefore questionnaires allow numerical data to be collected and can still seek to discover cause and effect. However, questionnaires can be flexible and standardised with pre-determined answers as well as be distributed to a sample group in a variety of ways including posting, telephone and face to face, and the latter was selected for this study largely due to language ease. In addition, they can be more cost-effective and the same questions can be shared among the sample population whereas, with unstructured or semi-structured interviews for example, there is the likelihood that additional questions will be asked that have not been considered previously and can skew the results thus making it increasingly difficult to analyse the answers for patterns and trends.

The questionnaires were designed in accordance with the research questions which determined the data required from the questionnaires which were designed in accordance with the required data from respondents with a selection of both open and closed ended questions to be used but many suggest that the design should be realistic and flexible (Muijs, 2006; Cohen, Manion and Lawrence, 2007). In addition, the research objectives must be taken into consideration when designing the research itself. Therefore, the first set of questions aim to obtain preliminary data for the sample while the second set aims to measure the level of family control. Based on the research questions, this research posed questions related to the intensity of children's internet activities and the specific measures adopted by parents to mediate or manage such uses.

As identified in the literature review, some measures might be effective whereas others may not be effective. This research, therefore, set questions related to the effectiveness of measures for mediating children's internet usage. All nine questions posed in chapter 2, section 2.6 were taken into account when developing the questionnaire survey.

3.5.1.1 Questionnaire Implementation

A total of 22 questions were asked for the children and for the parents, 25 questions using a traditional pen and paper questionnaire method (see Appendix I). The advantage of this is that the printed questionnaire could be supplied to children and parents among various schools, but it also allowed for the researcher to help the respondents fill in some of the responses when sitting with the children as they completed them. However, one disadvantage is that the researcher had to manually enter the data onto the computer in order for SPSS analysis. Another disadvantage of this printed method is that some parents did not return the questionnaire to the researcher and it is possible that if there was a more convenient way of completing this, for example, an online survey could result in more responses. To avoid low response rate, especially from children, the researcher sat in the schools to assist them as they completed the questionnaire and aimed to keep these as short as possible with a maximum of 30 minutes as recommended (Muijs, 2006).

3.5.1.2 Question Choice

Using previous work in this field (Bleakley *et al*., 2016; Kalmus *et al*., 2015; Livingstone *et al*, 2015; Khurana *et al*, 2014; Alvarez *et al*, 2013; Jiang, 2013), an approach to the questionnaire was followed with the intention of achieving the most accurate results possible. This allows the results of the survey to be more generalizable to the wider population. Also taken into consideration was that data is not always able to appear naturally in a quantitative form even though it is being collected in this way. Therefore, the research instrument must look at converting phenomena such as attitudes and behaviour into a more statistical form (Cohen and Manion, 2007). For questions that focus on this, the researcher has included Likert scales in order to present results numerically.

The researcher had a number of questions and areas to discuss but also needed to capture the results in a digestible manner, open and closed questions were chosen. Open questions allow the researcher to gain a better understanding of the respondent's perspective in their own words to measure their opinion (Geer, 1988). Whilst many scholars have criticised the vagueness and scale of answers by respondents (Burns & Grove, 2007, Cohen and Manion, 2007), the benefit of this over closed-ended questions is that the respondents are not forced to choose an answer from a pre-determined list. Despite this, there is a further critique that participants who take part in open-ended questionnaires do not have enough knowledge, a view or even interest in the topic, therefore, are not articulate enough to answer as the researcher may have envisaged. Closed questions provide a solution to the loss of standardised responses that come from open questions and allow for the answers to be coded or analysed with ease. Likert or rating scales were also included in the questionnaire which allows the respondent to choose one of several, provided options which indicate their opinion or disagreement (Muijs 2006: 47). This type of question can either be presented in a numerical scale or with a spectrum of answers from 'I strongly agree' to 'I strongly disagree', usually in relation to a statement. Although the latter cannot show mathematically how much people agree or disagree, it allows the researcher to draw some conclusions and code the responses (Wiersma, 1986).

3.5.1.3 Constructing the Questions

Questionnaires, as well as interviews, are used in collecting data for this research. Wiersma (1986, p.179) describes the questionnaire as "a list of questions or statement to which the individual is asked to respond in writing; the response may range from a checkmark to an extensive written statement". What is of importance here is that the researcher must be able to systematically analyse the results using the appropriate statistical tool, therefore, this was taken into consideration, along with the phenomena, when constructing the questions.

Also taken into consideration were the ease and simplicity of the questionnaire. Muijs (2006) pointed out that the questions must be kept short and to the point. If questions are too long, there is the possibility it will put the respondents off and could lead to a low response rate thus affecting the validity. Second, the questions should be clear and

simple as this will help to minimalize vague answers, therefore, the questions have been written in a way that can be understood by the target group, which is especially important for the young children taking part in the research. Less important questions are best placed at the end so that the researcher can feel more assured that the most crucial questions that are instrumental in the results will be answered first. Ibid (2006) also suggests that double negatives such as, 'if you don't disagree', should be avoided and this was considered in the construction of the questions. Finally, the researcher also took into account the language barriers between English and Arabic, therefore, all of the questions were provided in Arabic to ensure that some of the above limitations around misunderstanding could be reduced. As the researcher is confident in both languages, the choice was made to translate to English after all of the data had been collected. To ensure that this was best received, the researcher asked another speaker confident in both Arabic and English to review the questionnaire and provide feedback, particularly on ambiguity. Gass and Mackey (2007) recommend the use of the mother tongue in evaluating the effectiveness and accessibility of questionnaires.

The design of questionnaires for parents and children (see Appendix I) was influenced by recommendations of Oliver (2004) on a suitable questionnaire length for participants of different ages. He advised researchers to use language that is accessible to participants, especially children. They are also designed in accordance with the required data obtained from respondents to ensure that maximum and relevant results can be obtained. The first set of questions aims to obtain preliminary, standard information such as personal details while the second set aims more specifically at measuring the level of family control. Oliver (2010) advised against lengthy questionnaires because participants might lose interest and probably not complete them. Equally, if they are too short, some vital information might not be captured. Questionnaires and information sheets (see Appendix I) were written in child-friendly language and included illustrations so that the language used could be easily understood. The questionnaires used nominal measures that allow participants to choose alternatives for responses (Denscombe, 2010).

The choice questions consist of open and closed questions that only require yes or no responses. Closed ended questions are asked to avoid complicating the data analysis process so that the findings can be systematically assessed. The questions chosen varied

depending on participants (parent or child). For example, it was more of a requirement to collect some general, personal background information about the parents' socio-economic background and for children, perhaps to understand if there was a gender difference that affected or challenged the researcher's assumptions. The overall design of the questionnaire and survey questions were developed with the assistance of the supervisors and the University Ethics Committee. The survey design was rigorously inspected by the Ethics Committee as they requested for the questions to be amended seven times to ensure that the questions were suitable for the children. For example, it was important to continually improve the questions regarding internet risk to prevent the raise a of concern about internet usage in both the parents and children.

3.5.2 Design of Interview Guide

For the qualitative data collection, interviews were conducted. To ensure the interview guide captured all the information needed for this research, recommendations from Yin (2013), Creswell (2009), and Miles and Huberman (1994) were considered when designing a semi-structured interview guide as the basis for collecting data. Recommendations from other scholars such as Brinkmann (2014); Galletta (2013); and Merriam and Tisdell (2015) were also considered. These recommendations ensured the interview questions were easily understandable, were not misleading and did not tilt the responses of the participants in a particular direction. All questions were carefully checked before translating into Arabic (the natural language of the respondents).

The interview guide was purposely designed to capture the subjective views of the participants on the internet use of children and mechanisms in place for influencing the process. This was so designed to enable the researcher to identify the interpretative meanings made by the parents of the internet usage mediation process to answer the questions posed in section 2.6 of chapter 2. Based on the research questions directly designed from the literature review and presented in section 2.6, the interview guide had questions relating to what parental control measures had been put in place in the homes regarding internet usage; the experiences of going through the process; effectiveness of the control measures; and factors that influenced the process.

3.6 Pilot Study

This section outlines the rationale of conducting the pilot study and further reflects the process of piloting both the quantitative and the qualitative methods.

3.6.1 Why Use a Pilot Study?

A pilot study is widely known as a mini-version of a full-scale study that allows the researcher to pre-test a chosen research instrument which in this case is a questionnaire. This element that contributes to the research process is a crucial element for a robust study design (Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001). For the pilot study, a small sample of parents from a cross-section of socio-economic background were briefly interviewed, and heads of private and state schools were informally asked for permission to carry out the research at their schools. The size of the research sample does not matter but should answer the research question (Polit *et al*, 2005; Denscombe, 2010).

The researcher went into the field (Saudi Arabia) between July and September 2012 during an annual holiday. Prior to this trip, a decision had already been made to maximise this opportunity in the field and find a sampling frame to participate in the study which would also allow for pre-testing of the research instrument. During the time spent there, a quantitative pilot study for the questionnaire was carried out among participants to identify a number of factors. Firstly, to preliminarily examine how the research design would work in the field. The results from this would show the researcher how effectively the questionnaire had been designed and constructed for the target group. The second benefit was to discover ideas and approaches that may not have been considered previously, therefore, showing the researcher how their participants may respond beyond their initial expectations. Thirdly and perhaps most importantly, the pilot study can determine any problems with the questions such as ambiguity or give the researcher prior warning about where the main research project could fail (Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001).

Overall this type of pre-testing allows the researcher to gain valuable initial insight into the type of results that are likely to be generated and, from this, the researchers can determine how this can be analysed in accordance to its relevance to the study aim. This is even more important for the researcher as such a large quantity of participants will be taking part in the questionnaire, so any improvements that can be made are crucial to the

final study. Despite these advantages, Teijlingen and Hundley (2001) also highlighted the limitations of pilot studies as they do not guarantee the success of the full survey. There is the possibility that inaccurate predictions or assumptions can be made based on the results from such small numbers, therefore, the researcher must consider this when analysing the results.

Denscombe (2010, p.106) defined pilot studies as "...small-scale trial runs that researchers can use as a means of checking how well their proposed design works". In addition, it allows the researcher to be more efficient with the time spent on the study as problems can be highlighted and rectified before the final questionnaire distribution. Similarly, Polit *et al* (2005, p.467) asserted that a pilot study refers to feasibility studies which are "small-scale versions, or trial runs done in preparation for the major study.'' This trial run gave me the confidence to continue with the study as problems with the initial questions could be altered or improved.

3.6.2 Implementing the Pilot Study

There are different benefits of undertaking a pilot study. Teijlingvan *et al* (2001) asserted that a pilot study might indicate weaknesses of the proposed research design and might thus send a warning to the researcher. Also, it might reveal ethical considerations to be followed and might also suggest if chosen research methods and instruments are appropriate.

3.6.2.1 Quantitative Pilot Study

The process of piloting the study was achieved by visits to Princess Nora University, King Faisal Centre for Islamic Studies and the King Saud University Library. An extensive search of resources and discussions with administrative staff about the research topic and visits to state and private schools were inevitable undertakings. The questionnaire instrument was distributed to 35 students and parents randomly selected from the schools visited. Responses were positive in all the institutions visited. Also, there were mini discussions with parents and a few young boys about the use of the internet by children in Saudi Arabia. Surprisingly, discussions on the subject seemed to be accepted with more enthusiasm than expected. It was identified from the administering of the questionnaire that the questions were not clear in some instances.

Some students, as well as parents, found it very difficult to understand some of the questions.

As a result of the pilot study, the researcher discovered that the more appropriate or forthcoming age group among children was year 6 instead of year 5 as the younger pupils struggled to understand the questions. Based on this, the decision was made to only approach this year group in the schools. Based on the outcome of the pilot study, the necessary modifications were also made to the questionnaire to be used for the main study. This occurred mainly when questions were seen to be misleading which influenced the responses of the respondents. In some cases, certain questions had to be taken out entirely from the research as they did not contribute in any way to the aim of the study. The pilot study also helped to rearrange the questions to allow for easy flow and understanding on the part of the participants.

3.6.2.2 Qualitative Pilot Study

Holloway (1997, p.121) argued that the trial run can be done "...if the researcher lacks confidence or is a novice, particularly when using the interview technique". This quotation resonates well with the researcher's feelings about discussing the taboos of the internet with parents and children of a strict and traditional society like Saudi Arabia, especially in more conservative areas of the country where debating social issues is not a norm. For the qualitative pilot study, four different parents were selected to take part in the research. After the design of the interview guide, semi-structured interviews were conducted with four parents whose children attend Princess Nora University and King Faisal Centre for Islamic Studies. The essence of the pilot study was to test the interview guide to ensure the interview questions were clear, easy to understand and well designed to ensure that the best results will be gathered. The four parents who took part in the pilot of the interview guide were selected during the visit to the schools and after conversations with some parents concerning the research. Analysis of the pilot interviews showed that some of the questions were not properly designed and for that matter were eliminated from the guide. Feedback from the parents was very valuable as this also helped in fine-tuning the guide.

3.7 Sampling

Sampling is an inevitable process in research methodology, particularly when investigating social processes or human phenomena. Acquiring data from the whole target population is impossible (urns and Groove, 2008), usually impractical (Denscombe, 2010) and time-consuming (Sekeran, 2003). Similarly, Mujis (2006) argued that there is no need to survey all the target population as results from a well-selected sample can be generalised to the target population being investigated.

3.7.1 Types of Sampling

Purposive sampling was used for this study. Polit *et al* (2005) asserted that purposive sampling uses participants with characteristics that enable a detailed exploration of the research objectives. Ethical approval was granted in early 2013 which led to the researcher travelling to the field (Saudi Arabia) from February to April that same year. Purposive sampling was chosen over other types of sampling; snowballing and stratified (Cohen, Lawrence and Manion, 2008) because the research involved studying variables that affect families hence the need to collect data from children and parents. The researcher used the judgement of subjects based on the phenomena being studied. These participants were knowledgeable of the phenomena due to their individual experiences. Purposive sampling was convenient and less time consuming (Burns and Groove, 2007). Children completed surveys in one seating and parents completed a single questionnaire. However, the selected sample may not be representative as all participants from the same city. Additionally, there is a potential for bias (Burns & Burns, 2008; Gravetter and Forzano, 2012) and this type of sampling does not contribute to the generalisation of the results (Denscombe, 2007).

3.7.2 Sample Size

The sample size is a significant factor in the selection of participants. Participants consent to take part in the study on the premise that the outcome helps to improve their understanding of the phenomena studied. The selected sample should be sufficient enough to address the research questions, and the recruitment of participants should be ethical (Denscombe, 2010)

Several factors are considered in sampling, however optimising the number of participants is encouraged in order to increase reliability (ibid, 2010). Considerations need to be made in the early stages of the research process.

The sample was drawn from public and private primary schools for boys and girls in Riyadh city. To collect relevant information from participants, the researcher focused on the 12 educational divisions/urban centres (as defined by the Education Minister) within the capital and attempted to contact both public and private schools within each area. These schools were evenly distributed geographically as under each centre or division. To ensure a representative selection, systematic random sampling was applied so that every 8th school was included. This also informed how each school was chosen. The Saudi Ministry of education has 12 branches representing all the areas of Riyadh, north, south, west, middle and eastern parts. All the areas were sampled. The sampling method adopted ensures that the data captured were representative of Saudi Arabia. The challenges of survey implementation were raised here because as the researcher was male, it was difficult to access the female-only schools that were identified in the sample in Riyadh city. To address this issue, a local female researcher who had access to the schools was utilised to assist in delivering the surveys to the Head Teachers within each of these schools. In accordance with the ethical guidelines, she did not have access to the survey itself or the results provided, she merely provided a gateway to the schools and the sample. The sample of children included in the study was derived through their class letter. In Saudi Arabia the classes within primary schools are categorised by alphabetical letters. Within each school, the class with letter A alphabet were chosen for the sampling.

3.8 Data Collection and Analysis

This section outlines the steps of the data collection stage and further explains the process of collecting the data for both the quantitative and the qualitative methods.

3.8.1 Collecting the Data

In social science research, there is a variety of ways to collect data, for example; diaries, observation (covert and overt), questionnaires, interviews, written articles, and analysis of documents. As discussed in the previous sections, this research adopted a design that

relied on the use of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. For this reason, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected for this study. For qualitative data, the use of semi-structured interviews served as the means of data collection whereas questionnaire surveys were used for the quantitative data.

3.8.1.1 Quantitative Data Collection

In total, the researcher was able to distribute 750 questionnaires to pupils and a further 750 to parents throughout the research area. The researcher then met with the head teacher of each school to explain the research project and discussing the aims and objectives as well as explaining how this could be of relevance to the field. In addition, this was the opportunity to ask for the head teacher's permission to see and speak to the children in each school. A letter documenting the important elements and reasoning for the study which fundamentally asked for parental consent was provided by the researcher for the children to take to their parents to be signed. Throughout this process, the researcher discovered that access to boys' schools was easier and their participation was more willing than that of the girls' schools as two schools refused the questionnaires altogether. As discussed above this was addressed by utilising a female who assisted in the dissemination of the questionnaires. Nevertheless, child participants were chosen from private and state schools and time was spent with them to assist in answering the questions in ensuring they could be completed in time and provide clarity for any confusing questions. In order to cover a range of children, one class from each year group in each school was selected. Both genders were involved in the study for both parents and children. Analysis of the results will suggest which gender is more likely to face stricter internet controls from their parents. Although randomly selected, parent participants were chosen from different social backgrounds.

One school was approached per day so that the following day, the researcher could follow up with reply from parents to see if permission had been received for their child to partake in the study. It was also communicated that the child had the right to withdraw from the research project at any given time. The participating children were provided with their version of the questionnaire, and after they had completed this, a version was handed to them to take home to their parents seeking their participation too. The children who completed the surveys acted as a gateway to the parent sample. This

is because the researcher had the opportunity to approach the same school the following day to see how many parents had returned the questionnaire. In total, three days per school was allocated to ensure the same process of distribution and collection of the questionnaires. This process differed slightly for the girls' schools as previously mentioned; it was not as easy to gain access; therefore a female research assistant (spouse) was used. She was taught about the process and requirements especially when assisting the young children to complete the questionnaire and this was hugely beneficial for two main reasons. First, she had the cultural knowledge of Saudi Arabia, therefore, could adapt her approach and second, as a female research assistant working with the girls, it is possible that they were more willing to complete it as opposed to a male researcher (if this was allowed) asking them to do the same thing. Parents sampled were from diverse economic backgrounds, from local government workers to successful business owners. Every effort was made to ensure the data collection process was free from bias and ensured the analysis and presentation of the results were free from the researchers' subjective views. It is acknowledged that the status of the researcher, and the use of a researcher assistant for collecting data as a result of cultural restrictions is likely to have influenced the outcome of the research to some extent.

In total, 1,165 responses were received (465 from parents and 700 from children). This makes a response rate of 62% for the parents and 93.3% for the children. The high response rate was attributed to the time taken to be with the children to help them understand and in some cases fill out the questionnaire.

3.8.1.2 Qualitative Data Collection

To ensure the research went beyond the numbers and captured the experiences of the parental mediation of internet usage, interviews were conducted with 23 different sets of parents. The interviews helped the researcher to capture from the parents what they made of the parental influence throughout the process based on their personal experiences. The interview guide used for this purpose was designed to allow more information to be captured. For this reason, a semi-structured interview approach was taken. Interview guides were translated into Arabic from English and copies given to the participants to ensure they understood the subject of the interviews. It is acknowledged that the process of translating the interview guide could influence the

outcome of the research as some key ideas could be lost or misconstrued (Some of the issues associated with translating interview guides are discussed in the study of Temple and Young, 2004 and Larkin *et al*, 2007). To overcome some of the dilemmas of translating interview guides, it is necessary that the interviewees were allowed to ask for clarification. On average, each interview lasted for 30 minutes through which the main issues of the research were covered. The interview covered areas such as the educational background of parents; familiar sizes; length of time children spent on the internet; measures in place to guide the children's internet use and the experiences of implementing the measures. All the interviews were tape recorded after consent had been given by the interviewees.

3.8.2 Data Analysis

Analysis of data for this research was split into two main stages and took over five months. Straus and Corbin (2008: p. 46) define the data analysis process as the means to 'examine something to find out what is it and how it works`. Considering both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered through the research and effort was made to ensure the best outcome from the different sets of data. Throughout the analysis process, emphasis was placed on the need to answer the questions posed by this research. Both qualitative and quantitative data analysis focused on the research questions presented in chapter 2, section 2.6. This required different methods of analysis. The methods of analysis are discussed below.

3.8.3 Analysis of Qualitative Data

Analysis of qualitative data for this research followed the three stage process in Burns and Grove (2003), data description; data analysis; and data interpretation. This process is similar to that of Wolcott (1994) who also suggested that qualitative data analysis follow the process of description, analysis and interpretation which occur in a dialectic process. Generally, the collection and analysis of qualitative data are said to go hand in hand where the researcher collects some data, analyses the data and collect more data to refine the interpretations of the data as shown in Figure 3.1 below (Wolcott, 1994). This approach was adopted in this research.
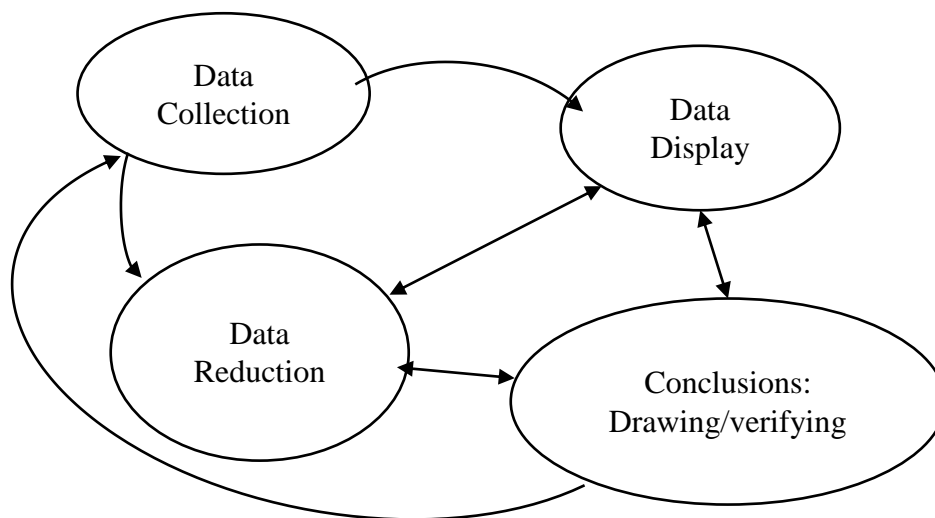
Figure 3.1 The Interactive Process of Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis Adapted from Miles and Huberman (1994)

As shown in Figure 3.1, the data collection and analysis process took the form of data collection, reduction, display and verification. Interview scripts were closely analysed to explore personal feelings and attitudes and how these could possibly influence the outcome of the research. The qualitative data analysis software QSR NVivo version 10 was used to aid in the data analysis process. This software helped in the coding of the interview transcripts, as well as in the formation of themes through the use of queries for searching and retrieving.

3.8.3.1 Descriptive Stage

In this stage, the researcher endeavoured to be fully immersed in the data by repeatedly listening to the interview recordings and reading transcripts over and over again until the information was photographically clear (Burns and Grove, 2003). For this research, this required repeated reading of interview transcripts (conducted with parents) to understand their views on children's safety on the internet, the need for mediation (or otherwise), the activities children perform on the internet and their experience of mediating the internet usage of their children. This helps to understand how parents approach the subject.

3.8.3.2 Analysis Stage

In this stage, the researcher paid particular attention to the volume of data obtained to enable proper scrutiny and attachment of meaning to different elements of the data. The main focus was to identify patterns and themes, and these were organised into a cluster of themes (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). The second stage adopted in the current research involved the building of sub-themes from the data by unearthing the meanings parents provided and how they are linked to their activities. This stage also helped to identify the relationships between parent characteristics and their mediation strategies as well as their experiences.

3.8.3.3 Interpretation Stage

This section is important in that it informs future research and forms a basis for recommendations for future practice. This stage also throws light on the value of the findings.

The qualitative data analysis included coding, theme development and interpretation of data collected. To be able to analyse the data received, the qualitative data analysis software QSR NVivo was used to code, search and retrieve and to help build themes and models to interrogate the data. This form of analysis helped the researcher to first reduce the data to a more manageable size and ensured all the views of the interviewees were captured during the analysis process. The use of the NVivo software also helped to easily encode and decode ideas through the query option available in the software. The analysis of the data began with data preparation where the interview transcripts were cleaned to ensure the data was ready for analysis. The NVivo10 software helped with the next section of the analytical process which included the first step of the analysis of the data. This process was the coding of the data which is where an abbreviation or symbol is applied to a segment of words, sentence or paragraph of transcribed field notes, to classify the words (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The coding process helps to proceed to the other sections of the analytical process through the description, analysis and interpretation (stages of qualitative data analysis (Wolcott, 1994).

3.8.4 Data Preparation

The first part of the data analysis process was to review the interview transcripts to ensure that all aspects of the research had been covered in the transcripts. The review helped to identify unclear words or phrases so that appropriate action could be taken. After the review of the transcripts, all 23 text files were imported into NVivo for analysis. As part of data preparation, areas of the transcripts which did not relate to the research were marked so the analysis will exclude such aspects of the data.

The data (transcripts) were imported into the internals folder of NVivo where data to be analysed are kept. All the transcripts were now read to ensure the researcher was familiar with the information in the transcripts as this was very important for the next stage of the data analysis process. As the researcher collected data from parents without grouping the parents into different categories, the data was imported into a single folder in NVivo. Once all the data had been prepared and transferred into NVivo software, the data was ready for analysis (reduction).

3.8.4.1 Coding of Data (Data Reduction)

The coding of the data was done to ensure that the data was reduced to manageable units. Three main coding approaches were adopted in the coding process, and these included open, axial and selective coding. The term coding is defined by researchers such as Corbin and Strauss (2008) as the process through which labels, keys or symbols are used to represent chunks of data (text) which helps to link the data to the idea made about that data by "developing concepts from the data." (Saldana, 2012). In the NVivo software, codes are referred to as nodes as this forms the basic (smallest) unit of analysis that may be applied to words or paragraphs. Codes or nodes are further developed into categories which are further developed or grouped to form themes and subthemes. The themes and sub-themes are formed based on the similarities and differences between the ideas or interpretations made from the categories developed from the codes.

Throughout the coding process, the data (in the form of sentences) was broken into smaller bits and later grouped to identify patterns or ideas. Saldana (2012) described this process of splitting and putting together the extracts from the data as encoding and decoding. In the decoding process, the researcher makes sense of the data received by trying to understand paragraphs or sentences. After an understanding has been gained

from the data or extract, the research proceeds to encode the meaning into manageable units by applying codes to the extract or paragraph. This process helps the researcher to break down the data into analytically relevant sections, and late put them together based on the sense the researcher seeks to make of the data.

Due to the analysis of quantitative data which preceded the analysis of the qualitative data, there were several predefined codes that were developed (Sections 4.3 and 4.4). These predefined codes formed the basis for initial coding of the data and were grouped into themes, sub-themes and categories as shown in Table 3.2.

Main Theme	Sub Theme	Categories
Experience of mediation of internet usage	Problems with the mediation process	Negative views of children on the process
	Factors influencing the mediation process	Level of education Number of children
	Expectations of the mediation process	Perceived difficulties
	Views of the success of the mediation process	High success rate
Measures to influence children's internet usage	Perception of danger	Specific issues posing danger
	Knowledge of software	
	Children's usage behaviour	Length of time
	Education	Effectiveness of education

Table 3.2 Predefined Codes for Data Analysis

A total of 18 predefined codes were first developed from the results of the quantitative data analysis. As shown in Table 3.2, the main theme pre-defined before the analysis process was the experience of the mediation of children's internet use. Sub-themes of this theme were:

> *problems inhibiting the mediation process; factors influencing the mediation of children's internet usage; expectations of the mediation of*

internet use of children; and the views of the success rate of the mediation process.

There was a further breakdown of the subthemes into categories which all helped with the initial analysis. As mentioned before, three types of coding were done during the analysis of data for this research: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding as devised by Strauss and Cobin (1988) in their thematic analysis framework.

In accordance with Strauss and Corbin's thematic analysis framework, the first stage of the analysis involved Open coding, in which the transcripts were read in the NVivo software line by line and paragraph by paragraph to make sense of the data. Summaries of the data were created, and meanings or labels given to specific extracts from the data were coded (as open codes) (Strauss and Corbin, 1988). The codes given were specifically selected to conform to the analysis done and the aim of the research. The outcome of the quantitative data also influenced the keywords used as open codes. After coding all 23 interview transcripts through the open coding process, a total of 237 open codes were generated. The 237 codes were further reviewed to ensure consistency in the approach to data analysis and where codes were closely related, they were merged together. This approach was adopted because Corbin and Strauss (1990, p.12) encouraged researchers to code "conceptually similar events/ actions/ interactions". For example, in reviewing the initial coding, it was identified that codes such as 'concerns for child safety' and 'concerns for information security' could be created into a single code. This led to the creation of the code 'parental concerns'. The codes generated through the open coding process included codes such as:

internet usage preference; parental concerns; browsing history; importance of internet; advantages of internet to children; skills; internet usage; determinants of use behaviour; parental influence; internet risks; usage with children; same computer use; self-education; among many others.

3.8.4.1.1 Axial Coding

After the development of the open codes (the initial basic codes), it was necessary to make better sense of the data by building the codes further. Taking the codes developed from the open coding as standalone elements did not provide much information and as such there was the need to categorise them based on similarities and differences to help

make better meaning of them. This involved the combination or reassembly of codes which had similar ideas or talked about similar aspects of the data is further grouped into axial codes (Strauss and Corbin, 1988). The essence of axial coding was to help create meaningful categories in the data which form the basis for creating themes and sub-themes. The axial coding allows for identification of the relationships among the open codes and the connections among the codes (Strauss and Corbin, 1988). Examples of the categories formed, and their axial codes are shown in Figures 3.2.
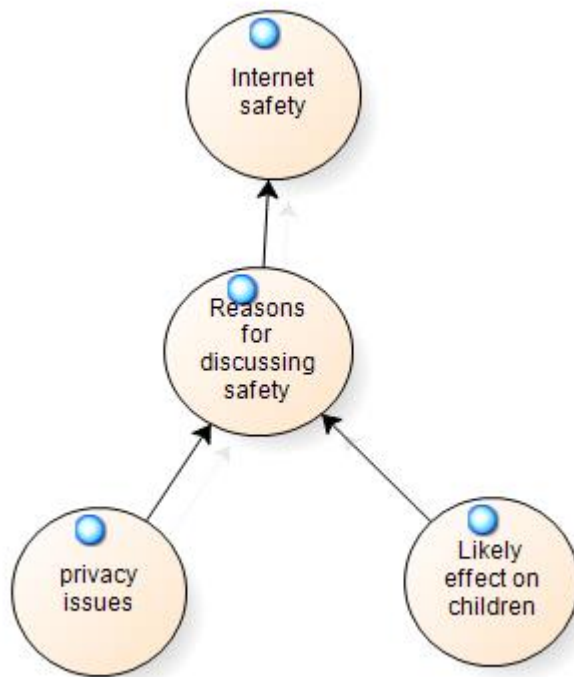

Figure 3.2 Initial Axial Code for Category of Internet Safety

As shown in Figure 3.2, through axial coding initial categories were formed based on common issues extracted from all the interview transcripts coded. Figure 3.2 is about a category that considered internet safety and had nodes (codes) such as the reasons by which parents discuss internet safety with their children. The sub-nodes (also referred to as child nodes) were privacy issues and the likely effect of such safety issues on children. Similar trends were followed to build other themes from the analysis process. Another example is shown in Figure 3.3 showing for factors affecting the level of monitoring.
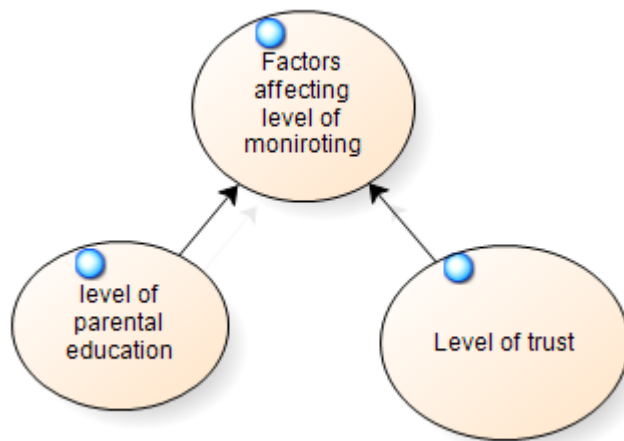
Figure 3.3 Factors Affecting the Level of Monitoring of Children's Internet Usage

From the initial axial coding process, the research identified two key factors that determine or influence the level of monitoring parents had for their children's internet usage. As shown in figure 3.3 above, these were the educational levels of parents, and the level of trust parents had on their children. Many other axial codes were developed by combining open codes and creating parent and child nodes where necessary.

3.8.4.1.2 Selective Coding

During the development of the axial coding process, trends and relationships that were identified to be of interest were further coded to ensure the research made the best out of the relationships and fully understood the implications of such relations. As part of the selective coding process, the emphasis was put on the aim and objectives of the research and more importantly the pre-defined codes that were developed from the quantitative data analysis process. After selective coding, the research proceeded to build themes and sub-themes from the categories developed from the axial coding as well as the selective coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Building categories and sub-themes from the open coding process was followed by the process of adding and putting together codes in line with the aim and objectives of the research. In selective coding, transcripts were searched for specific answers given by the interviewees to help generate codes that are related to the aspect of the research objectives. In some instances, keyword searches were made to identify some relevant words from the responses given by the interviewees.

3.8.5 Building of Subthemes and Data Display

Further development of the analytical process was the development of themes and sub-themes from the data. The sub-themes and themes were built as the basis for presenting the results of the analysis process and were generated after a series of review and reflection on the categories initially developed. This was done by reading through the codes, checking specifically what information was captured by such codes and comparing them to the aim and objective of the research. The quantitative analysis carried out before this process also helped to direct the thinking of the researcher in following the relevant areas of the research. The example of the building of the sub-theme 'views of parents on the dangers on the internet' was developed through the development of categories such as 'determinants of dangers on the internet', general views on 'internet safety', and 'measure in place' that affect the level of perceived dangers on the internet.
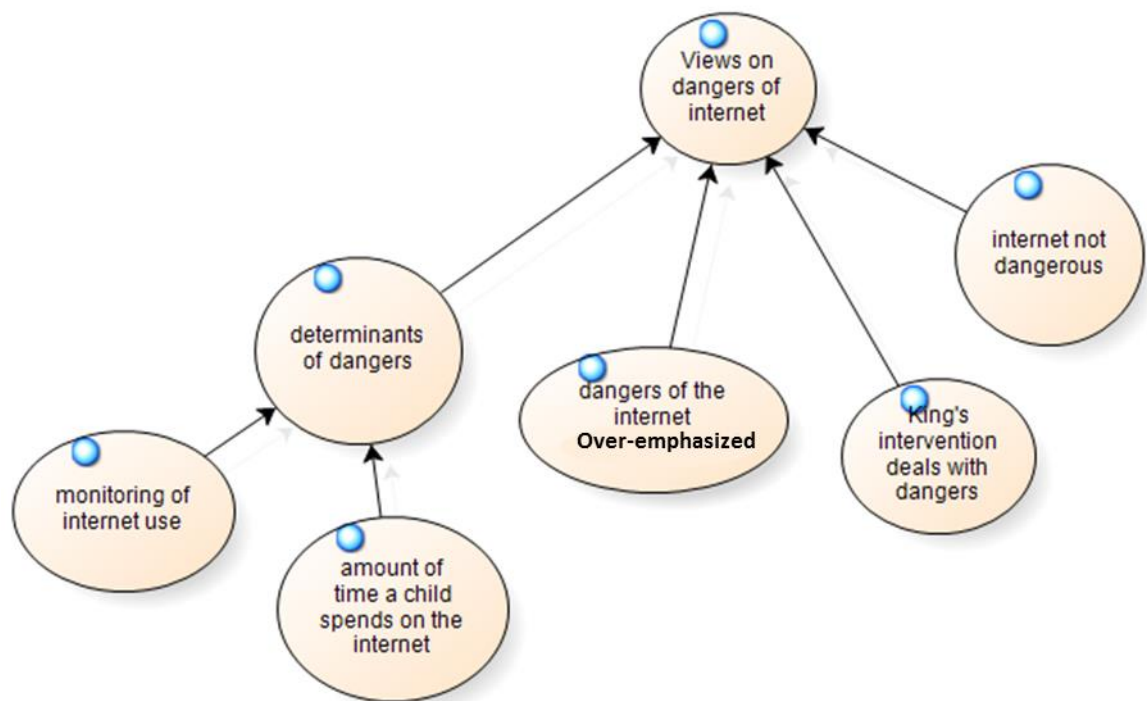

Figure 3.4 Views on the Dangers of the Internet

As seen in figure 3.4, the views of parents on the dangers (risks in the form of exposure to adult content, information security issues, coming into contact with paedophiles, and misinformation of children) on the internet suggested that some parents found the

internet to be very dangerous for children, whereas other parents suggested that the internet was not as dangerous as it is currently portrayed. Such views were from the conviction of some parents that measures put in place by the King to deal with dangers of the internet through the agencies that monitor and filter the internet access in the country are adequate, and as such, there is not as much danger as portrayed. The general perception, however, was that the internet was dangerous, and this had to do with the extent of parents' involvement in influencing the internet usage behaviour of their children. The amount of perceived danger on the internet was also identified to correspond with the extent to which parents monitored their children's internet usage and the amount of time children spent on the internet.

3.8.6 Building of Themes and Data Display

The data analysis process progressed to the development of themes which formed the highest-level reporting of the results of the study. The themes were built through a combination of different sub-themes and categories that either shared similar or opposing views on any aspect of the study. Building the themes required a constant comparison of the views against each other to ensure the level of subjectivism on the part of the researcher was reduced. An example of a theme built for this research is a continuation of the 'views on the dangers of the internet' sub-theme to generate the theme of 'Factors affecting the level of parental monitoring of their children's internet usage'.
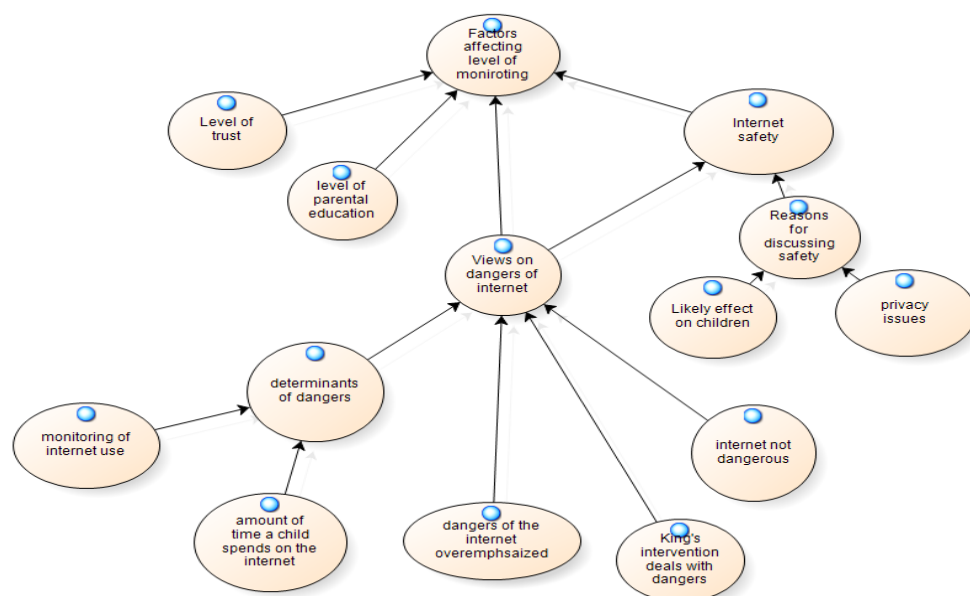

Figure 3.5 Factors Affecting the Level of Parental Monitoring of Children's Internet Usage

As seen in Figure 3.5, the theme of factors affecting the level of parental monitoring of children's internet usage relates to the level of trust, level of parental education, internet safety, and views of parents on the dangers of the internet. All these sub-themes were connected to other categories such as the reasons for discussing internet safety issues with children and the determinants of dangers on the internet.

The building of themes through open coding, axial coding, category building, and the building of sub-themes ensured a well-planned analysis process that ensured the results of the analysis produced information that reflects the perspectives of the participants (interviewees) and not just the subjective views of the researcher (Strauss and Corbin, 1988).

Due to the textual nature of data from qualitative data analysis, it is advised by many researchers that an effective way of communicating results from qualitative research is the adoption of data display mechanisms that can help present the results in non-textual formats (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994 Verdinelli and Scagnoli, 2013). As shown in Figures 3.2-3.5, models are developed to help present the results of the research in ways that can easily be understood. Aside from the models produced from NVivo, Microsoft PowerPoint was also used to develop figures which help to display the results of the research. The diagrams and figures helped to explain relationships between different themes and sub-themes produced as part of the analysis of the data.

3.8.7 Analysis of Quantitative Data

For the quantitative data received through the use of questionnaire surveys, the researcher adopted statistical analysis. After the data had been collected, the researcher used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for the analysis. This is perhaps the most common technique used by researchers to analyse statistical data as it is easily available in higher education institutions as a recognised piece of software, it is also Windows compatible (Burns 2008). Data obtained from the answered questionnaire are populated within the software where columns are attributed to values and variables which allow the researcher to quantify the results according to the codes.

The use of SPSS was taken into consideration at the time of questionnaire design to aid the research analysis process to ensure that data collected from the participants' results

could be implemented into this software for the necessary output to be analysed (Pallant xiii: 2008). For the quantitative data, one type of analysis was utilised: descriptive analysis, which was concerned with the statistical distribution of the responses from the research to determine the trends in the data; and descriptive statistics which was concerned with examining relationships from the data gathered. Full details of quantitative data analysis is presented in chapter 4 of this research.

3.9 CHALLENGES

As reported in the published work of De Leeuw (2005), different countries have different constrains facing data collection. Throughout the data collection process, the researcher faced challenges, particularly when trying to finalise the target population for the questionnaire. These challenges are acknowledged by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2009; 2010; Zahra, 2011) as major problems with conducting research in Middle Eastern countries. Although there were hundreds of schools to choose from for the distribution, the researcher, being male, was not able to approach female-only schools in Saudi Arabia because of the institutionalised segregation of the sexes (Zahra, 2011). As a native Saudi, this struggle was expected but not to the extent that it would affect the group of children able to take part in the research. To tackle this challenge, a female research assistant (spouse) was recruited to approach the female gendered schools to request for the children to partake in the study. Another challenge faced in conducting this research was the need to translate interview guides (Behling and Law, 2000; Temple and Young, 2004; Larkin *et al*, 2007). As data collection was to take place in Saudi Arabia, there was the need to translate the interview guides from English to Arabic to ensure the respondents of the research were able to respond to the best of their knowledge.

The researcher also faced challenges with the amount of time that it took to collect the data as Riyadh is such a large city that is overpopulated. Contact had to be made with the Minister of Education on several occasions to obtain approval of the research and to allow for contact to be made with schools in the city.

Once the schools had been chosen, the time that it took to gain access to each was up to three days which was extremely time consuming and required continued effort from the researcher. Once the questionnaires were given to the children, the researcher also had

to allow for time to be spent with the children to explain the questionnaire purpose and clarify any questions. However, this was of huge benefit to the researcher as the completed questionnaires were ready the next day while those distributed to parents were not.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

The etymology of the word ethos is Greek meaning appropriateness of human conduct. It is a philosophical approach to human morals in general. Likewise, in research, it is good practice and a legal requirement to consider human rights and autonomy (Creswell, 2009). As reported in Broom (2006), there are numerous ethical issues one must consider when developing any piece of research. Prior to the Second World War, prisoners of war were used in unethical research practices which involved the use of human tissue. The Nuremberg Code of 1946 declared that all research involving human participants must follow ethical guidelines (Denscombe, 2010). When conduction research involving children, Christensen and Prout (2002) suggested that ethical issues should take four main perspectives: the child as an object; the child as a subject; the child as a social actor; and the child as a participant and co-researcher. All perspectives were taken into consideration to ensure the use of the children as part of this research did not compromise on their rights. It is in this light and in line with the Research Ethics Committee guidelines that strict ethical considerations were adhered to in this study.

To follow ethical procedures in the UK, the researcher read extensively about the Data Protection Act (1998) in order to understand the importance of anonymity and the legal expectations in relation to handling participants' personal information. The design of the information sheets for both parents and children (see Appendix I) was influenced by NHS guidelines on clinical research involving human participants. Information sheets for all participants were prepared.

Furthermore, to abide by ethics in Saudi Arabia, permission to carry out research in schools was sought from the Higher Ministry of Education. Children and parents were asked to sign consent forms (see Appendix I) for them to take part in the study. Parent participants also read and signed information sheets. They gave signed consent before completing questionnaires and engaging in face-to-face interviews. Girls completed the

questionnaires in the presence of the female Research Assistant as is a legal requirement in Saudi Arabia. To approach the children in schools, separate meetings were pre-arranged with the head teacher to explain the research purpose and the crucial element of having children involved in the assumptions to be fully explored. All participants were also made aware of their right to discontinue taking part in the research anytime they so wished.

In order to make the sample group feel assured that their answers would only be seen by the main researcher, the participants were informed several times that the questionnaires would be completely confidential and anonymous. To maximise this further, envelopes were handed out along with the questionnaire so that the participants could seal their response as it was given back to the researcher. This was extremely important as the questionnaires from parents, for example, could have been seen by their children and the school teachers as they passed by participants to get back to the researcher.

3.11 Summary

This chapter has reviewed the literature on research methodology to help adopt the most appropriate design for investigating parental influences on the internet use of their children in Saudi Arabia. From the review of the factors affecting the choice of research design, it was identified that due to the nature of the questions in this research, both qualitative and quantitative data would be required. The research design, therefore, adopted an approach that combined both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods. Based on the pragmatist philosophy which evaluates theories in terms of the success of their practical application, a mixed methodological approach was adopted which helped to capture the views from both parents and children through interviews and questionnaire distribution. The sampling methods, data collection processes and analysis have all been outlined in this chapter including the ethical considerations made to ensure the research took appropriate steps to consider the rights of the people involved in this study. In addition, the weaknesses and strengths of different methodology have been described using academic literature. Overall, there has been a justification of the choice of research methods, theory and assumptions and the choice of respondents. The next chapter presents the results of the data analysis within the context of the reviewed literature and theory.

CHAPTER 4: QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS (CHILDREN AND PARENTS)

4.1 Introduction

Following the collection of data, it is important to analyse the data in relation to the research questions and to find answers to these questions (Creswell and Clark, 2007). This chapter presents the analysis of the quantitative data collected for the purposes of this research collected from both parents and children.

The use of children as respondents in the study creates a different dynamic. The sociological understanding of children as competent respondents in doctoral research has a bearing on the outcome of both data collection and data analysis (Finlayson & Dickson, 2008). Some children lack the confidence to seek clarification from peers and indeed from adults when they do not understand research questions. The competence is in understanding the language used in research tools and also in conceptualising their behaviour in relation to others (Craig, 2004).

Although gaining access to children in Saudi Arabia is comparatively easier than for example, in the UK with its robust checks for the Disclosure Barring System (DBS) and other equally robust measures of safeguarding children put in place, children in conservative societies are mostly aware of high expectations of conformity hence this is most likely to impact on response outcomes. Nonetheless, the inclusion of children as participants in this research is significant in that they are the consumers of the internet. Since the inclusion of children raises several potential issues in the whole research process, it enables a holistic approach to the analysis of data which incorporates views from parents and their peers (Feliz and Rico, 2005).

As part of the data analysis, the results from the quantitative study is discussed with reference to the literature on children's internet usage preferences and parental mediation of children's internet usage. The chapter begins with a demographic analysis of the respondents for this study. Following the demographic analysis, the remainder of the chapter is split between two main sections: analysis of data collected from children; and analysis of data collected from parents.

4.2 Demographic Analysis of Respondents

As mentioned in the previous chapter, this research gathered data from both parents and children. In presenting the demographic information, the two sources of data are analysed.

4.2.1 Demographic Information on Parents

The demographic information captured on the parents is presented in this section. For this session, Age, Education level, Occupation, Monthly income, and Family size of the parents are presented.

4.2.1.1 Age Distribution of Parents

The age distribution of the parents, as well as the children, who were the respondents for this data collection is analysed in the tables below. The age groups of the parents, mother and father provided in Table 4.1 suggests that for fathers, about half of the entire sample (53.3%) were within the age of 31-45 years. This was followed by fathers who were over 46 years old who made up 42.2% of the total sample whereas fathers less than 30 years old made up only 1.1% of the total sample. This indicates that the majority of participating fathers were at least 31 years old or more. In terms of mothers, a different trend was identified. As high as 75% of all mothers who took part in the questionnaire survey were between the ages of 31-45 years. This is followed by mothers less than 30 years old who were 12.7% of the total sample. 10.1% of the mothers were 46 years old or more. This suggests that there were more mothers younger than fathers in the sample received. From the results, it can be deduced that the majority of the parents who took part in this study were youthful parents between the age of 31 - 45 years. The age of parents is very relevant to this research as younger parents are generally regarded to be more technology savvy than older parents who may not belong to the 'computer age'.

Age of Parents	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Less than 30 years old	5	1.1	59	12.7
31 – 45 years old	248	53.3	349	75.1
46 or more	196	42.2	47	10.1
No response	16	3.4	10	2.2
Total	465	100.0	465	100.0

Table 4.1 Parent's Groups' Age

4.2.1.2 Education Level

The level of education for parents was classified into six categories. According to the level of the father's education, Table 4.2 showed that parents who had completed university represented the largest group where it was 41.7% for fathers and 38.1% for mothers. Following this was those who completed secondary school with 23.4% for fathers and 29.9% for mothers. The percentage of fathers holding a postgraduate qualification was 16.3 %, much higher than mothers which was just 6.2%. Parents showed the same percentage of intermediate education (8.6%). Regarding elementary education, the percentage of mothers was 11.6%, much higher than the percentage of fathers which was 3.9%.

The Education Level of Parents	Father		Mothers	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Illiterate	7	1.5	20	4.3
Elementary	18	3.9	54	11.6
Intermediate	40	8.6	40	8.6
Secondary	109	23.4	139	29.9
University Graduate	194	41.7	177	38.1
Postgraduate(master's or PhD)	76	16.3	29	6.2
No response	21	4.5	6	1.3
Total	465	100.0	465	100.0

Table 4.2 Parents Level of Education

The results suggest that the majority of children who took part in this research have parents with at least secondary level education. Having high levels of education suggests that parents are more likely to be knowledgeable about the internet and the risk associated with internet usage (Wang *et al*, 2005). Higher levels of education place the parents in higher social class which ultimately has an impact on their ability to afford the technologies used by their children for accessing the internet.

4.2.1.3 Parent's Occupation

The occupation of parents was classified into five categories as illustrated in Table 4.3, and Figure 4.3 Fathers who were employed in the government sector were observed to dominate the sample (55.5%). On the other hand, mothers showed a lower percentage (24.7%) than fathers. Private sector employees came second for fathers with somewhat lower percentage (17%), and only third for mothers (3.2%). The businessmen and businesswomen category were represented by a small percentage (8.4 for fathers and 0.2% for mothers). Finally, the unemployed fathers were among the smallest group (2.6%), and in comparison, the percentile observed for unemployed mothers (68.8%) was higher. The results show a high percentage of unemployed women even though most of them are educated at degree level. The explanation for this can be identified within Saudi culture where women are considered as the homemaker, and responsible for the upbring of the children while the fathers work to support the families.

Statement	Father		Mothers	
	Freq.	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**
Unemployed	12	2.6	320	68.8
Retired	61	13.1	9	1.9
Private sector employee	79	17	15	3.2
Government employee	258	55.5	115	24.7
Businessman/women	39	8.4	1	0.2
No response	16	3.4	5	1.1
Total	465	100.0	465	100.0

Table 4.3 Distribution of Parents' Occupation

This is a common trend in Saudi Arabia as within the Arab world mothers culturally play the homemaker role whereas fathers work to take care of the family (Al-Lamky, 2007; Jamali *et al*, 2005). This makes the responsibility of taking care of the children at home including mediating the use of the internet the responsibility of the mothers. This traditional roles of parents are however changing in Saudi Arabia as reported by Al-Omar (2009). The changing nature of this traditional role can be linked to some extent to globalisation and improved education for women in Saudi Arabia which makes them employable. This is in line with Parsons and Bales (2002) recent view of functionalism theory which suggests changes in family roles and sizes.

4.2.1.4 Parents' Monthly Income

Table 4.4 shows the income distribution for four groups. The highest percentage was distributed between 5000-10000 RS (33.3%) and more than 15000 RS, which was a high-income group, (30.5%). Families with low income, which is less than 5000 SR, show the smallest percentage (12.9%). Also, Riyadh is the capital city where the highest number of billionaires and other upper middle class live. The highest paying jobs in the country are in Riyadh, and the second highest income in this study is more than 15000 SR. Most of the sampled parents are between the ages of 30 – 40 years and the highest monthly income observed was between 5000-10000 SR, which could be due to their few years' experiences in the employment industry.

Monthly Household Income	Freq.	%
less than 5000 SR	60	12.9
5000 – 10000 SR	155	33.3
10001 – 15000 SR	80	17.2
More than 15000 SR	142	30.5
No response	28	6.0
Total	465	100.0

Table 4.4 Monthly Household Incomes

From the results presented in this section, it can be identified that the household incomes are high and these high levels of income are likely to be responsible for the

high numbers of computers available to the children. As reported in Livingstone and Bober (2004), parents contribute to the internet usage of their children by buying the computers children use. Having high household incomes is therefore expected to increase the ability of parents to purchase devices with internet access for their children.

4.2.1.5 Family Size

One of the keys attributed investigated for this research was the size of families children belonged. For this reason, the parents were asked to indicate the number of children in their family. This was to help determine if the number of children in the family had an influence on the measures by which parents controlled the internet use of their children. From Table 4.5, it can be identified that Saudi families (at least those who took part in the research) generally have large family numbers. Of all the participants, 80.9% had four children as compared to 11.6% with three children, 3.4% and 1.5% with two children and one child respectively. Only 0.2% of the families partaking in this research had five children. This result is not surprising as generally, having about 4 or more children is a cultural norm in Saudi Arabia. It should be noted that women have free access to family planning clinics but most families choose to have more than 4 children because of the above reason. The choice to have more children can be linked to the socially accepted large sizes of families in Saudi Arabia.

Children Number	Freq.	%
1	7	1.5
2	16	3.4
3	54	11.6
4	376	80.9
5	1	0.2
No response	11	2.4
Total	465	100.0

Table 4.5 Number of Children In Family

Research by Ismael *et al* (2014) reported that the typical Saudi Arabian family would have at least four children, with a national average family size of 5.84. The trend of families with high number of children appears to be reducing as globalisation seems to be affecting the lifestyles of people in Saudi Arabia (Abbasi, 2010).

4.2.2 Demographic Information on Children

This section provides information on the demographics of the children. The section describes the age, gender, family size and the type of school the children attend.

4.2.2.1 Age Distribution of the Children

In terms of the age distribution of the children, the research put the children into three age groups based on the level of children selected for data collection. Of the 700 participating children, 17.0% (119), 19.4% (136) and 62.6% (438) represents participant childen ages 11 years, 13 years and 12 years, respectively.

Age	Freq.	%
11	119	17.0
12	438	62.6
13	136	19.4
No response	7	1.0
Total	700	100.0

Table 4.6 Age of Children

4.2.2.2 Gender

The gender of the children used in this research is very relevant due to the traditional Saudi Arabian culture where boys and girls are naturally treated differently. In terms of access to education and technology, there is generally a difference between boys and girls. This research, therefore, sought to find out if there was equal access to the internet and the extent of usage by gender. Boys and girls were fairly represented with a percentil of 47.3% and 50.1%, respectively (see Table 5.2).

Gender	Freq.	%
Boy	331	47.3
Girl	351	50.1
No response	18	2.6
Total	700	100.0

Table 4.7 Gender of Children

4.2.2.3 Children's School Type

Table 4.8 represents the type of school the children attended. In terms of school type, it was identified that 90% of the participants attend public schools with the remaining 8% representing those children enrolled in private schools. This distribution was also expected considering that majority of schools in this regions used for data collection are public schools.

School Type	Frequency	%
Public	630	90.0
Private	56	8.0
No response	14	2.0
Total	700	100.0

Table 4.8 Distribution of Respondents by School Type

4.3 Internet Usage Pattern of Children

This section of the data analysis presents data on the internet usage pattern of the children who took part in this research. The analysis includes: the frequency of internet usage; the devices and locations of internet usage; the type of sites visited; their views on dangers on the internet; and the views of children on the influence of their parents on their internet usage.

4.3.1 Access to Computer

The research sought to identify the availability and accessibility of computers and the internet to the children as this formed the basis of the children's internet usage. The analysis began by identifying whether there was a family computer in the house. The

results suggest that 656 out of the 700 students had a family computer. This made up 94.5% of the valid responses. Whereas 38 children, making up the remaining 5.5% of valid responses did not have a family computer. This result concurs with studies such as that of CITC (2009) and Salem *et al* (2014) who reported that internet usage is on the rise in Saudi Arabia.

The questioning further inquired whether children owned a personal computer in addition to the family computer. The result of this is shown in Figure 4.1.
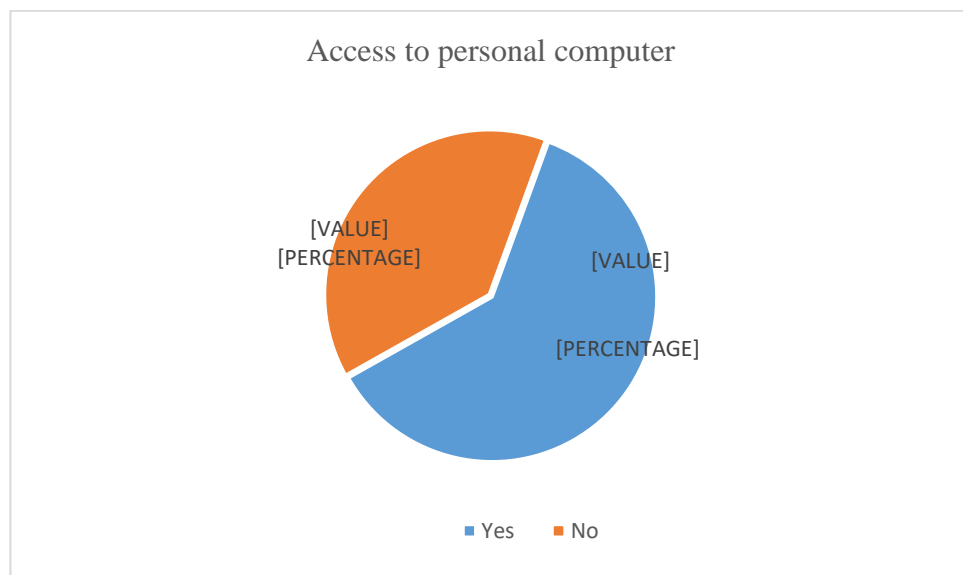

Figure 4.1 Children's Access to Personal Computers

As shown in Figure 4.1, of the 682 valid responses, 418 children representing 61% of the total respondents had their personal computers, while the remaining 264 representing 39% of the respondents did not have a personal computers.

There were different places at home where children could access the computer. According to Table 4.9, computers were most likely to be situated in three places within the house, and the present research shows that 33.6% responded that computers are placed in the living room was the place. While 29.3% responded that their home computer is placed in the bedroom and 33.4% responded that the computer is placed 'elsewhere', meaning neither the living room nor bedroom. Having personal computers in children's bedroom is believed to give them unlimited access to the computer and the internet should they choose to use it. This poses the risk of children using the internet unsupervised or spending too much time on the internet with associated health risks and exposure to dangers on the internet.

Statement	Frequency	%
In the living room	235	33.6
In the bedroom	205	29.3
Elsewhere	234	33.4
No response	26	3.7
Total	700	100.0

Table 4.9 Location of Computer Used

It was essential to discover whether children had a personal computer. This question is essential because it was perceived that children who have personal computers would be expected to spend more time on the internet than those who shared a family computer. According to Table 4.10, more than half of the children owned a personal computer (59.7%), while the remaining (37.7%) did not.

Statement	Frequency	%
Yes	418	59.7
No	264	37.7
No response	18	2.6
Total	700	100.0

Table 4.10 Ownership of Personal Computer

4.3.1.1 Access to Computer and Internet Based on Gender

This research also identified that there were similar levels in terms of access to a personal computer between both male and female children. A crosstabulation of access to computer and gender of participating children shows that 57.6% of the male children had access to personal computers, in comparison to the 64.6% of the female children. This distribution is shown in Figure 4.2.
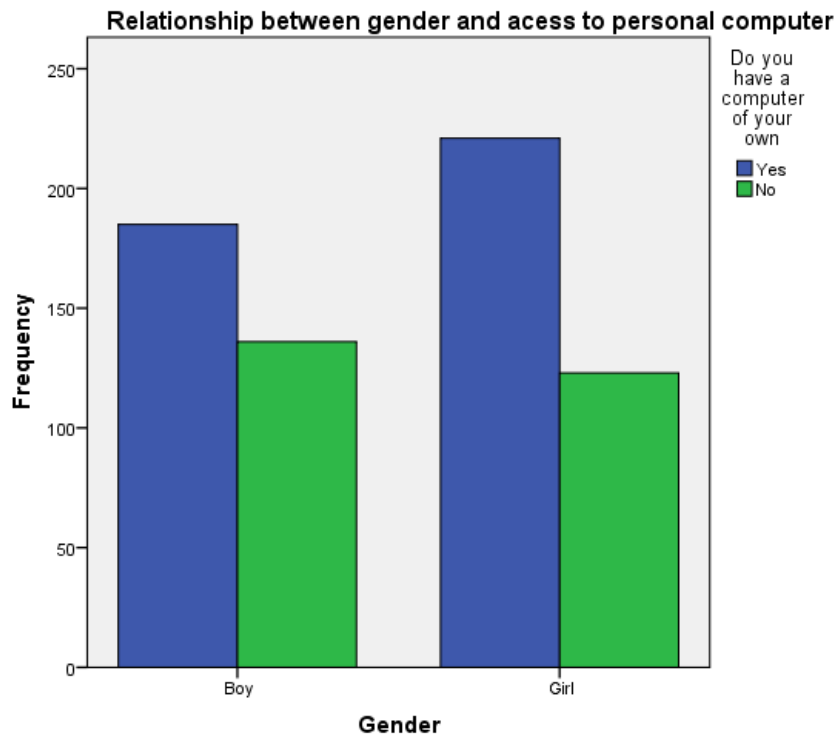
Figure 4.2 Relationship between Gender and Access to Personal Computer

In terms of daily internet use, it was also observed tha there was only a 3% different between girls (65.2%) and boys (62.3%) who used the internet on a daily basis. GSMA (2014) reported that there is a difference between the percentage of girls who access the internet on mobile phones compared to boys (88% for girls compared to 75% for boys). From this study, it was seen that girls had more access to personal computers compared to the boys. This perhaps can be related to the changing roles and nature of Saudi Arabian families which Alsadey (2015) and Al-Omar (2009) reported is due to the effect of globalisation.

4.3.2 Access to The Internet

The research identified the places and devices from which children access the internet. Results of the different locations and devices used to access the internet are discussed below.

4.3.2.1 Location of Internet Access

The children were asked several questions regarding where they accessed the internet. The results for the different locations are displayed and discussed using the figures below.

The first question was to determine the frequency with which the children accessed the internet from home. The results shown in Figure 4.3 indicate that 73.7% of the children always accessed the internet from home while 11.4% often accessed the internet from the home. And 11.6% sometimes accessed the internet from home. From Figure 4.3 it can be seen that majority of children's internet usage occurred at home. The percentage of children who did not access the internet from home was less than 1%. This revelation is important as it helps to know that children will normally access the internet from home. GMSA (2014) reported that internet access for children is not restricted to the home but there is accessibility in other locations which serves as a source of worry for parents (See also Lee, 2002). This is because control mechanisms instituted at home may not be able to have an impact on children's internet usage. This could in some ways be linked to the weakening of conservative cultures within Saudi Arabia leading to a reduced ability for parents to influence their children's internet usage.
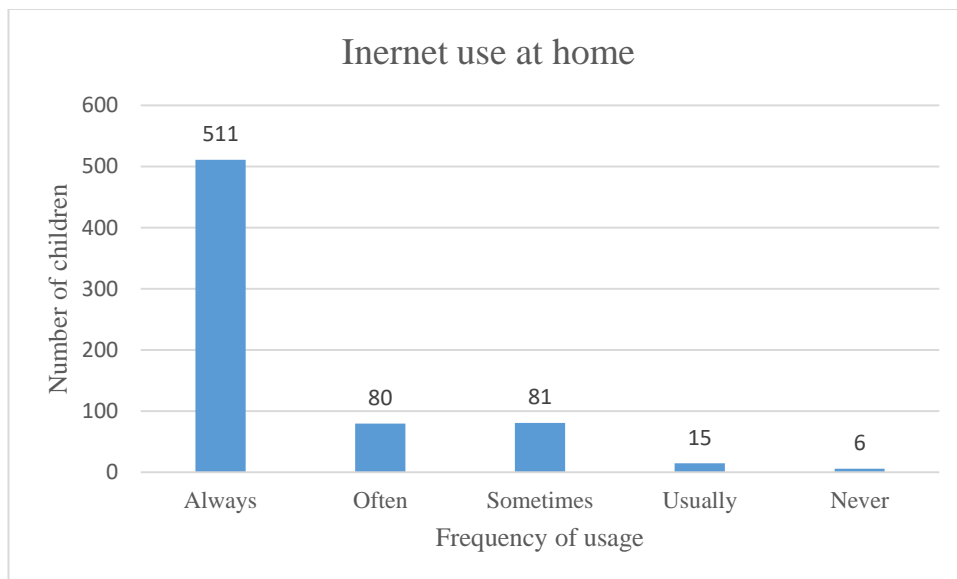

Figure 4.3 Children's Access to Internet at Home

This research also sought to identify other places where children would access the internet outside their home. The research collected data for internet use in places such as coffee shops, school, friend's house, internet café and chat rooms.

The initial question on the use of the internet outside the home was to determine if children did access the internet outside of their home. The responses to this question are displayed in the chart below.

From Figure 4.4, it is seen that only 25.6% of the children, a total of 161 children, never accessed the internet outside their home. The remaining 74.4% accessed the internet from different places outside their home to differing extents.
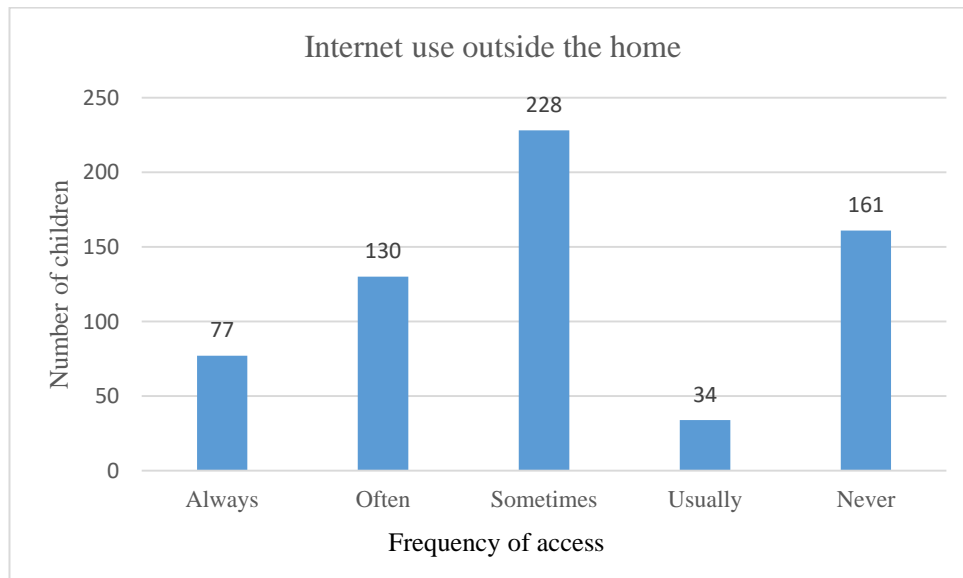

Figure 4.4 Children's Access to Internet Outside the Home

The data on children's internet access from coffee shops indicates that most children, 473 children representing 74.5% of the valid responses, do not access the internet from the coffee shop. Whereas 11.5% and 7.4% of the children either accessed the internet sometimes or often in the coffee shop, respectively, as shown in Figure 4.5.
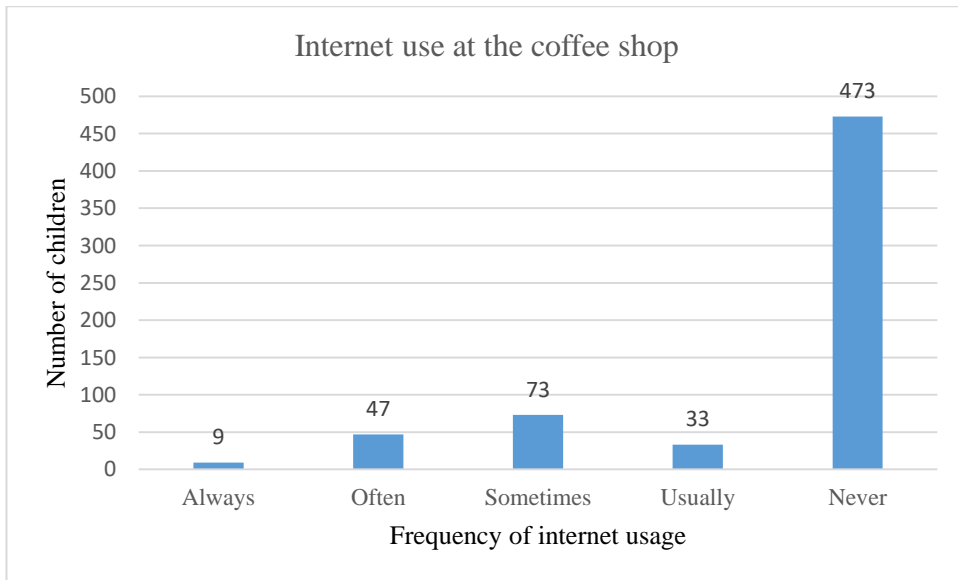
Figure 4.5 Children's Internet Access from the Coffee Shop

According to previous studies, the school is one place from which children are likely to access the internet (Becker, 2000; Lawson and Comber, 2000). The results from this research, however, showed otherwise. It was identified that the children hardly accessed the internet from the school. The results suggest that 86.1% of the (545) children never accessed the internet from their school. Lower trends were found for children who either accessed the internet usually or sometimes with percentages of 2.1% (13 children) and 3.3% (21 children) respectively, as shown in Figure 4.6.
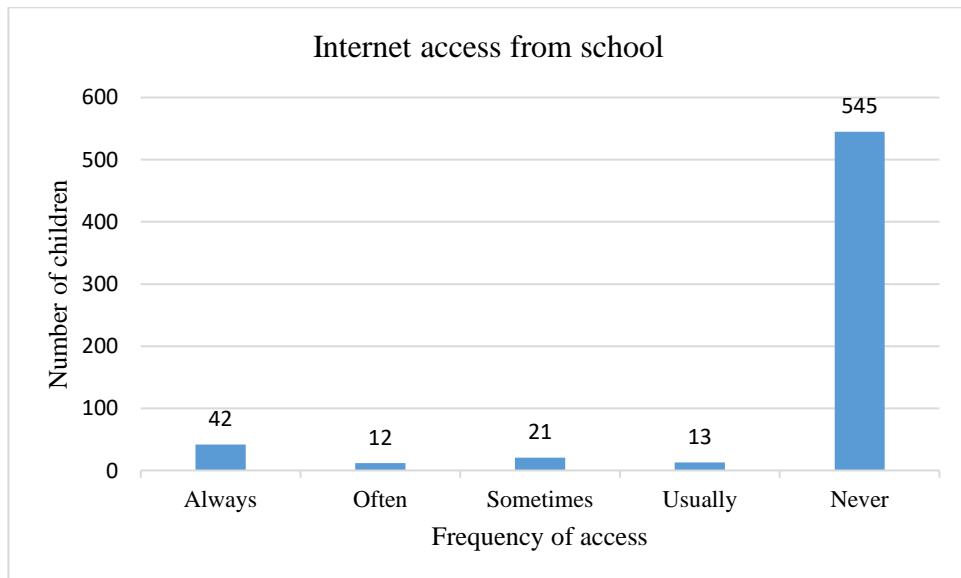

Figure 4.6 Children's Internet Access from School

The limited use of the internet at school could be due to the fact that school activities for this grade of students did not usually require them to use the internet or because students rather accessed the internet from their phones. Use of the internet at home and school are reported to be the two places where parents can have a significant influence on their children's internet usage by mediating such use.

The next place children are likely to use the internet was expected to be at their friend's house. A question was posed for the students to indicate the extent to which they accessed the internet from their friend's house. The results, shown in Figure 4.7 suggests that 45.3% representing 280 children never accessed the internet from their friend's house. Of all the children sampled, 21% (130children), 14.7% (91 children) and 11.2% (69 children) either accessed the internet sometimes, often or always, respectively, from their friend's house. This indicates that accessing the internet from a friend's house is not usually the case with children in Saudi Arabia. The distribution is shown in Figure 4.7. This results can be seen from two main angles: firstly, children are likely to lie about this, especially where parents do not accept such behaviour. The second reason could be due to high usage and access from children's mobile phones.

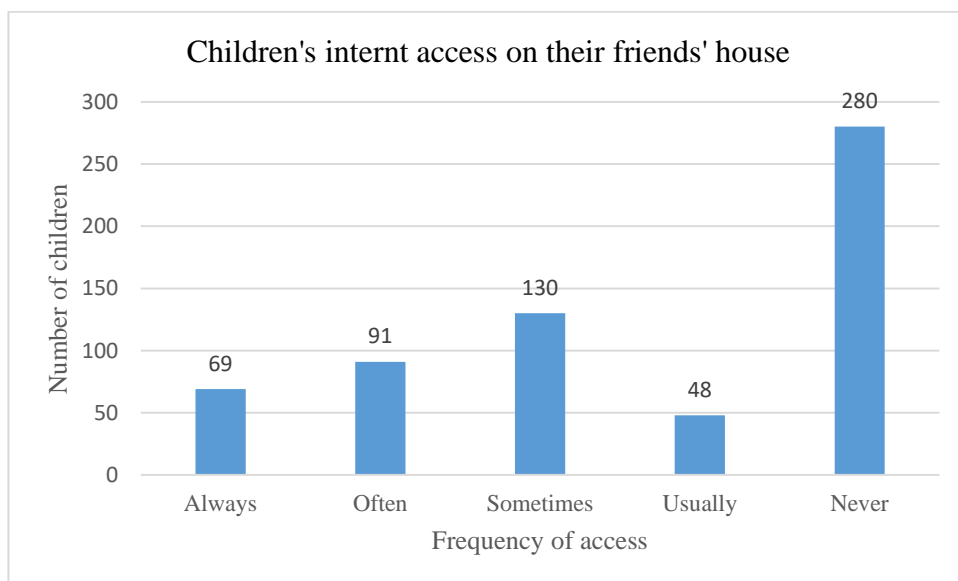Figure 4.7 Rate of Children's Internet Access from Their Friends' House

Another place where children can get access to the internet is at the internet café. The research sought to determine the extent to which children accessed the internet from an internet café. Interestingly, only 21.5% of the children had ever accessed the internet from a café. This shows that children did not usually use the internet café. 3% always

used the internet café, 5.3% and 7.6% either often or sometimes used the internet café, respectively.
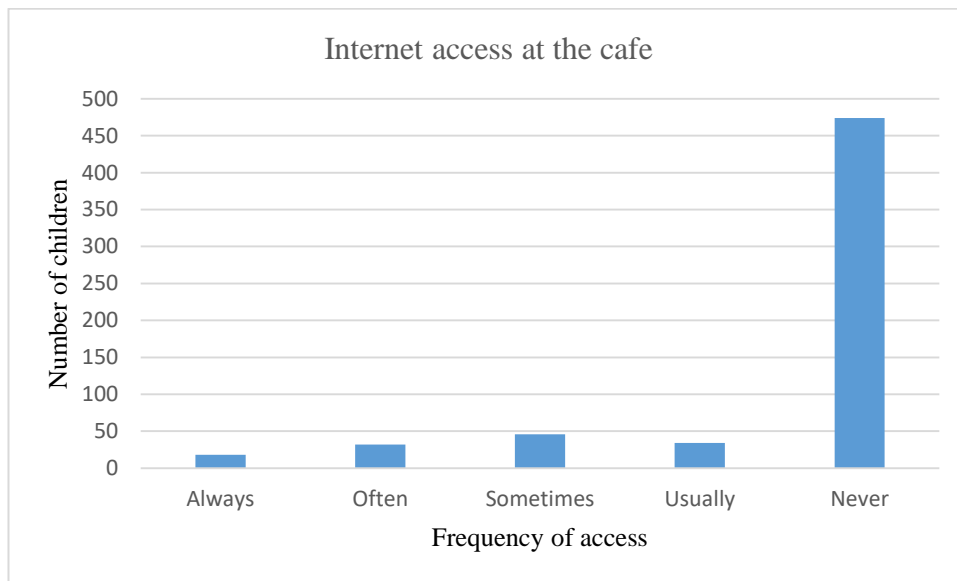

Figure 4.8 Children's Internet Access from the Café

From the results obtained, it can be concluded that children in Saudi Arabia accessed the internet mainly from home or their friends' house. Public places are not common places where these children access the internet. As shown in figure 4.7, children access the internet from their friend's hom, and this is likely to be linked to associations they form with people of their age. As reported in Knaevelsrud and Maerckr (2010), the internet provides children with avenues to express themselves and communicate their thoughts and feelings with their peers. Accessing the internet from the homes of their friends could, therefore, provide children with the avenue to share similar interests with such friends.

One important means of access to the internet for children was identified to be mobile phones. This research, therefore, sought to determine the extent to which children accessed the internet from their mobile phones. Figure 4.9 shows that only 18.9% of the children (129 children) did not use the internet on their mobile phones. The mobile phone was always used by 263 of the children (38.6%) to access the internet. While 17.2% (117 children) and 19.9% (136 children) used the internet on their mobile phones either often or sometimes, respectively.
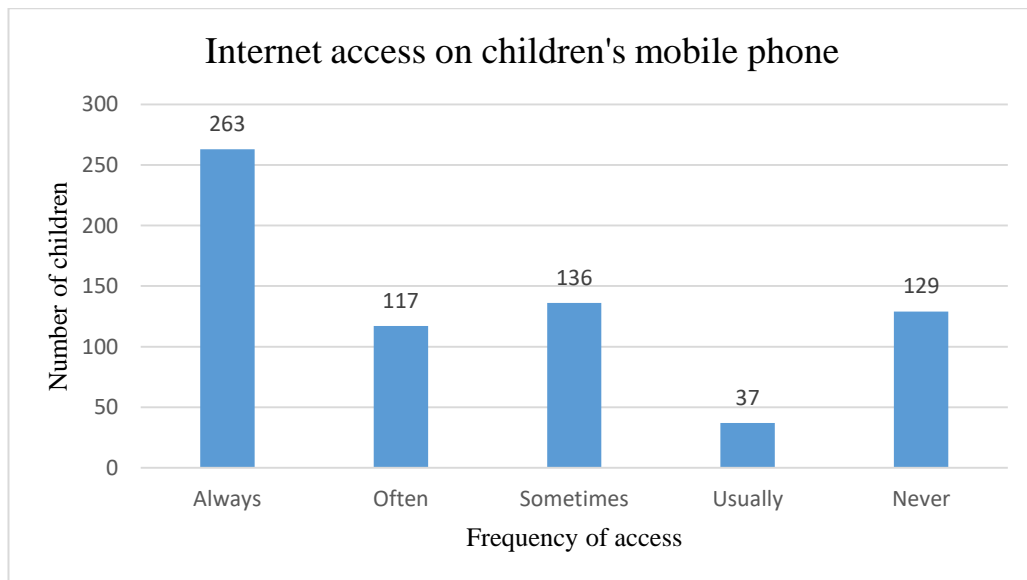
Figure 4.9 Children's Internet Usage from Their Mobile Phone

In places other than Saudi Arabia such as Europe, America and Canada, research results suggested that mobile phone is the primary source from which children have access to the internet (Livingsonte *et al*, 2014). Similar results are presented by Stald *et al* (2014); Goh *et al* (2015); and Edwards *et al* (2016).

From the sources and locations used to access the internet, it can be seen from the above analysis that children would typically access the internet from their homes and or their phones. Access to the internet from children's phones allows the children to access the internet regardless of where they are and again this serves as a source of worry to parents.

4.3.3 Internet Usage Preference of Children

To have a better understanding of children` internet usage, this research sought to find the frequency of usage, the type of sites visited and the relationship between children's characteristics such as gender, age, school type and browsing preference.

4.3.3.1 Frequency of Internet Usage

The research identified the frequency of children's internet usage by asking whether they used the internet and how much time they spent on the internet. The results on the daily usage of the internet by the children suggest that about 64% of all the valid

responses, use the internet daily. The remaining 34% which represents about 241 children did not use the internet every day.
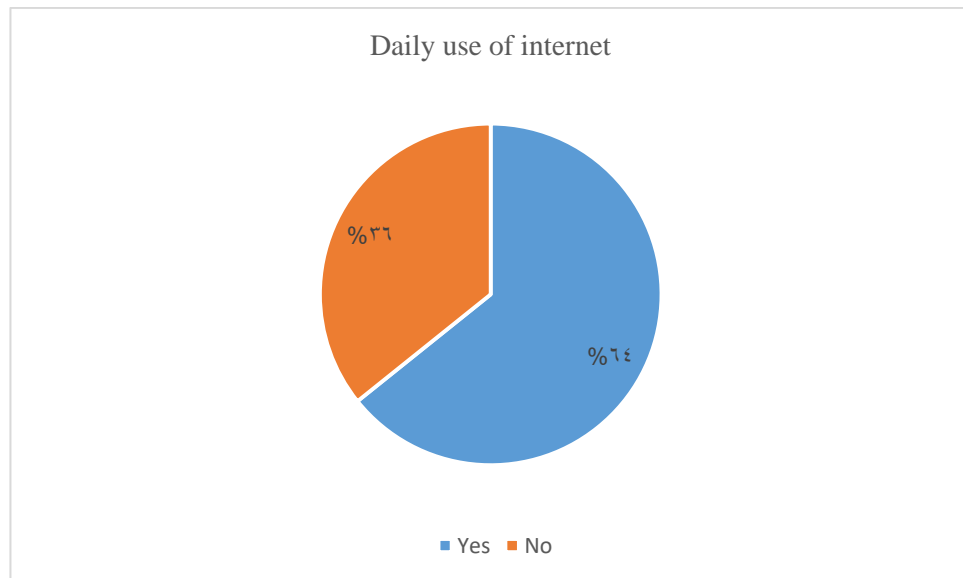

Figure 4.10 Proportion of Children Who Use the Internet Daily

GSMA's study of internet access by children in Saudi Arabia suggested that in terms of preferences, more girls use the internet on their mobile phones and tablets compared to the boys (GSMA, 2014). Daily Internet usage has been reported as the main worry for many parents. As reported by Shin (2013), parents express concerns when children spend more time on the internet, and this is because the probability of children being exposed to risks online increase as they spend more time online. Other researchers suggested related issues such as health issues, lack of sleep, alienation and use of the internet for activities other than studying as the main problems of parents concerning the excessive use of the internet by children.

4.3.3.2 Amount of Time Spent on the Internet

In this research, the children were asked to indicate the amount of time they usually spent on the internet per day. The research results shown in Figure 4.11 below suggests that 45.8% of the children (310 in total) spent less than 2 hours per day on the internet, whereas 27.4% spent between 2 - 4 hours on the internet per day. 12.3% (83 children) and 14.5% (98 children) of the children access the internet for 4 - 6 hours and more than 6 hours, respectively. Considering 64% of the children use the internet daily, the trend

that 54.2% in total access the internet for 2 hours or more per day suggests a high internet use rate within the children. Even though the number of children who spend two hours or more on the internet on a daily basis is high, the figure is considerably low compared to results reported by Livingstone *et al* (2014) on the frequency of internet use by children in Europe. This, however, shows an upward rise in the trend of internet usage by children in Saudi Arabia. Increasing use of the internet by children in Saudi Arabia can, therefore, lead to reduced interaction with family as reported in Sait and Al-Tawil (2007).
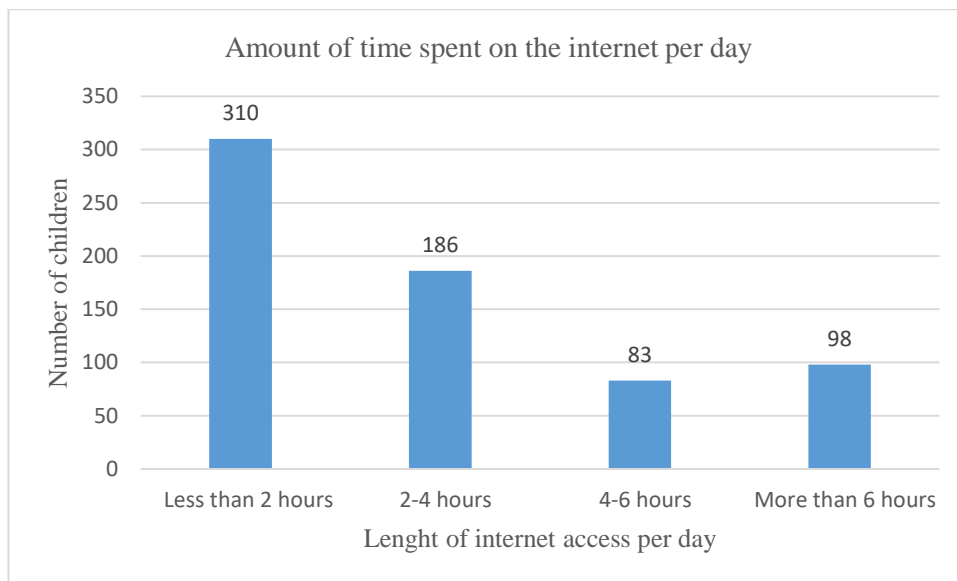
Figure 4.11 Length of Time Spent on the Internet by Children Per Day

A cross tabulation was done to determine the relationship between the gender of the children and the amount of time they spent on the internet. The cross tabulation suggested there was not much difference between the time spent on the internet because of gender. Both boys and girls spent a similar amount of time over the internet where the time spent on the internet was less than 2 hours. As the time spent on the internet increased differenced begin to emerge. Beyond 6 hours, there was a difference in the distribution by gender. Female children were seen to spend more than 6 hours on the internet on a daily basis compared to the male children who spent a similar number of hours on the internet. This relationship is shown in Figure 4.12.

Figure 4.12 Relationship between Gender and the Length of Time a Child Stayed on the Internet

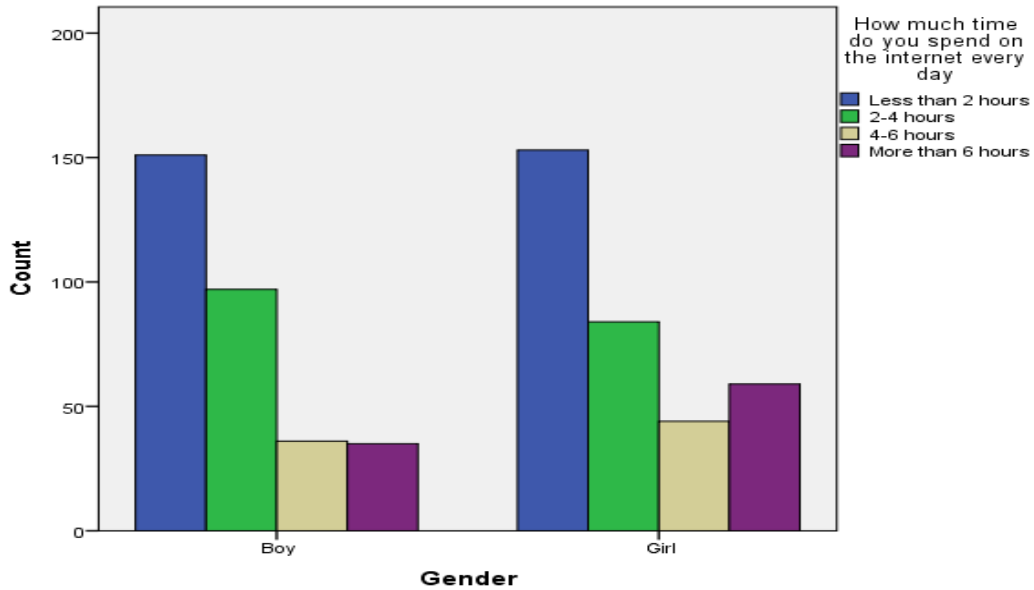Similar to the results from GSMA (2014), there is a difference between the use of the internet by girls as compared to boys. In this research, this difference only becomes apparent when comparing the daily use of the internet for 6 hours or more.

4.3.4 Children's Activities on the Internet

This research went further to identify what specific activities were performed by the children over the internet. It was identified that the children executed a range of activities over the internet, ranging from communicating with their friends, playing games, browsing on social media, checking the news, shopping, movies, music and for educational purposes. In relation to children's activities on the internet, Livingstone (2003) suggested that there are three main uses of the internet: entertainment, education and edutainment. The type of internet use by the children is linked to a large extent to the concerns of the parents over problematic use and the extent to which children will face negative dangers or consequences on the internet.

Of all activities on the internet, YouTube was the most used as 69.3% (485 children) of the participating children used the internet for accessing YouTube. This was followed by gaming with a total of 55.1% (386 children) using the internet for playing games. Facebook followed next with 37.4% (262 children) using the internet to access

Facebook. In terms of frequency of usage, 27.4% (192 children) used the internet to watch movies. Surprisingly only about 20% (139 children) indicated that they used the internet for educational purposes. Music, news and shopping were the least of the activities done on the internet by participating children. 13.9% (97 children), 11.6% (81 children), and 7.4% (52 children) were the percentages of the children who used the internet for music, shopping and news, respectively. This information is presented in Figure 4.13.
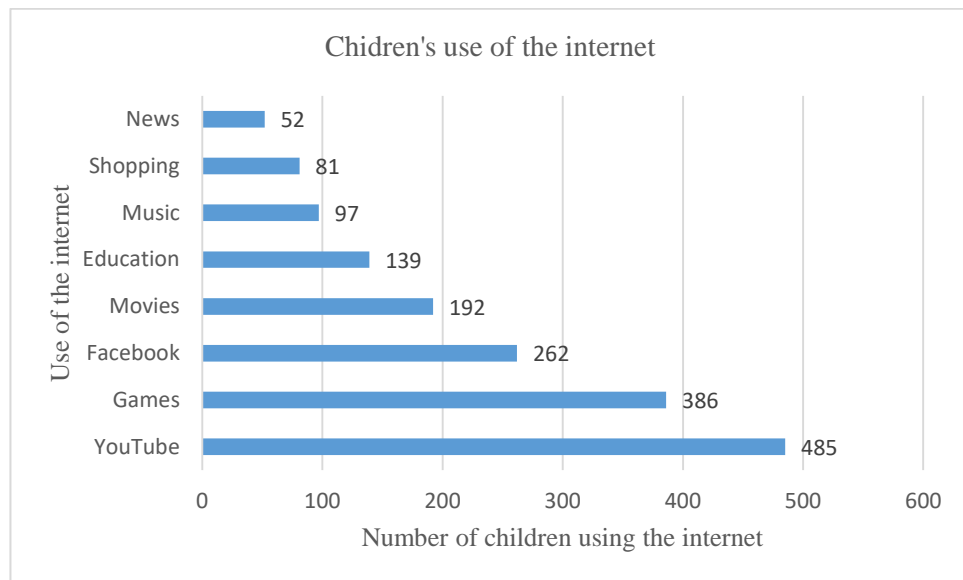
Figure 4.13 Ways Children Use of the Internet

From Figure 4.13 above, data presented shows that the children involved in this research used the internet for mainly YouTube, Games, Facebook, Movies and Education, with education being the least of the top five uses of the internet by the children. This reflects on how children in Saudi Arabia use the internet for entertainment, edutainment and education similar to children from other developed countries (Valcke *et al*., 2010; Livingstone, 2003). Studies by Lee and Chae (2007) reported that parents' recommendation of useful websites and co-using were positively related to the frequency of children's educational online activities. This suggests that parents would have a big impact on the internet usage preferences of their children through their mediation practices.

4.3.4.1 Information Sharing and Access By Children on the Internet

The children were asked to indicate the extent to which they shared information on the internet. This included activities such as sharing of pictures with unknown people; use

of blocked sites by friends of the children; sharing of messages with prohibited content; and assessing sites where vices are promoted. Sharing messages with prohibited content and accessing prohibited content is reported by Al Saedy (2015) and Said and Al-Twail (2007) as some of the main concerns for parent regarding their children's internet usage. The results gathered in this research indicates that the children shared data with unknown people on the internet only to a minimal extent. From the children who participated in the research, as high as 85.9% claimed that they had never shared their personals information including photos with unknown persons. The result from the children could however not be confirmed as there is the likelihood of the children lying about their internet usage patterns or behaviours that may not be in line with the accepted norms in their families or society for fear of being punished by their parents. There were, however, approximately 10% of the respondents who sometimes or usually had sent personal information including pictures to unknown persons over the internet. Participating children were also asked to indicate whether they had ever used a blocked website. The results suggest that, like the sharing of information online, about 86.7% of the children had never tried using a blocked site. 3.5% of the children, however, indicated they always tried using a blocked site whiles 8.1% had to an extent tried accessing a blocked site. This result may also not be entirely valid considering the likely consequences of children being honest about such uses of the internet against the wishes of their parents.

In determining the internet usage of the children, it was important to identify whether the children try to and can access blocked internet sites. The results shown in Figure 4.14 indicates that in most cases the children who took part in this research never tried to access blocked sites. 88.5% of the children indicated that they had never tried this whiles the remaining 11.5% had always tried or sometimes tried to access blocked sites. Over 88% of participating children never assessing blocked sites; this can be linked to the level of control the parents have been able to exercise on their children. The results of this research, therefore, suggest that only a small percentage of children (according to results from this research) access blocked sites or try to block sites.
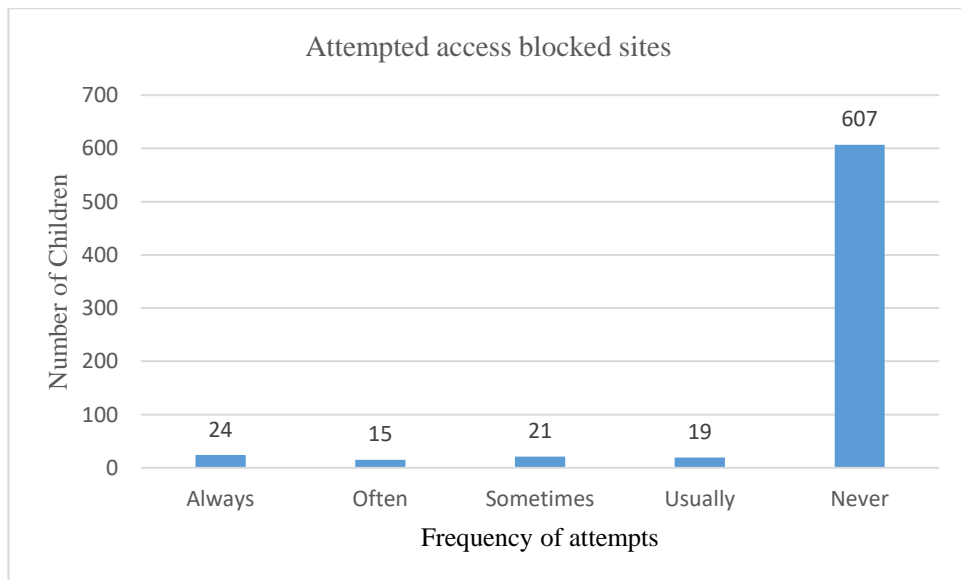
Figure 4.14 Children's Attempt at Accessing Blocked Sites

The research also sought to find out if the children had knowledge of their friends trying to access blocked sites. The results, shown in Figure 4.15 suggests that 83% (550 children) had friends who never attempted to access blocked sites while 16.9% had friends who had attempted either always or some times access blocked sites.
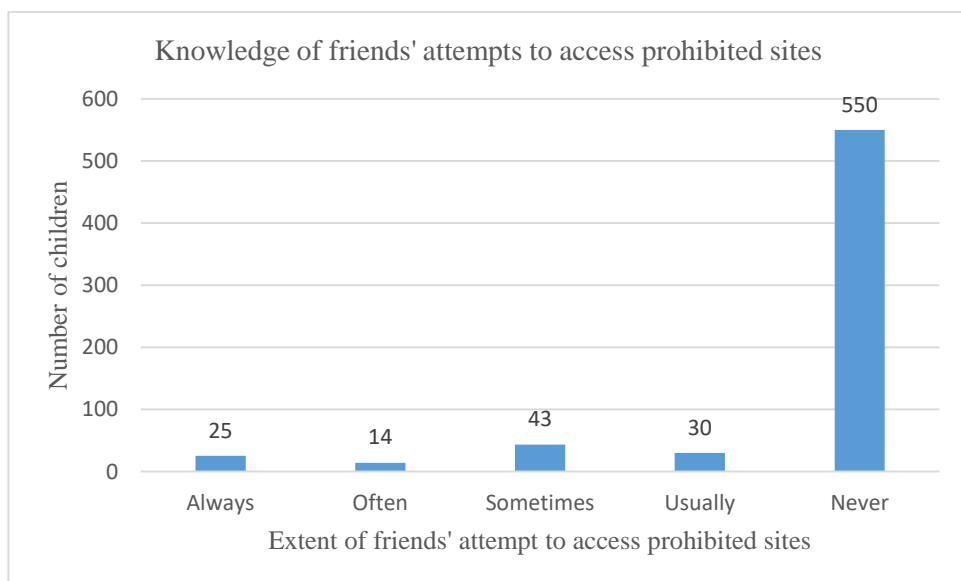
Figure 4.15 Children's Knowledge of Their Friends' Attempt Access Blocked Sites

From the results obtained, participating children indicated that they do not visit prohibited sites and neither do their friends. This very low rate of children accessing

prohibited sites may be linked to the level of control their parents have over their activities. Taking this in line with Shin (2015), the parents can be said to have influenced their children's behaviour on the internet in relation to accessing prohibited sites. Livingstone *et al* (2013) suggested that parental mediation of children's internet usage relate to measures adopted by parents to manage and regulate their children's experience with media. For the parents of these children, it can, therefore, be said that the mediation strategies adopted by the parents have to a large extent been able to influence their access to prohibited sites.

### 4.3.5 Children's Internet Use, Risks and Parents' Involvement

In terms of preference of the children regarding their use of the internet, several questions were posed to ascertain whether the children had a preference for accessing internet alone, in the presence or absence of their parents, and whether they would like their parents to know what sites they visited on the internet.

The children were asked to indicate the extent to which they would want their parents to see the internet sites they used. The results shown in Figure 4.16 suggests that 16.3% (112 children in total) strongly agreed that they do not want their parents to know the sites they visited whereas 17.6% (121 children) agreed that they do not want their parents to know the sites they visited. About 20% (135 children) were neutral whereas the remaining 46.4% (321 children) either disagreed or strongly disagreed. This suggests there was no general agreement among the children on their preference for parents knowing what sites they visited.
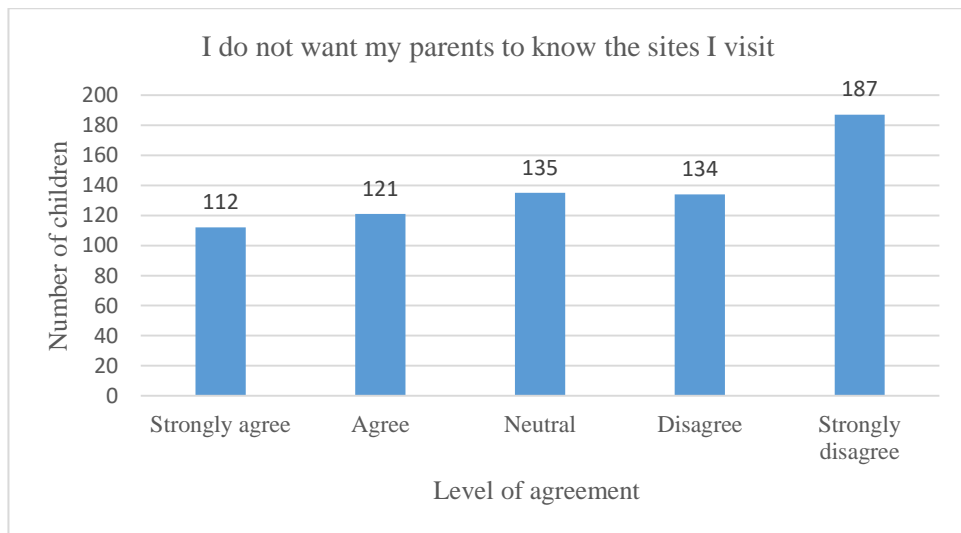
Figure 4.16 Willingness to Allow Parents Know Sites Visited By Children

In terms of parents knowing what their children accessed on the internet, there was no consensus, but more children were happy for their parents to know what they did on the internet than the number of children who did not want their parents to know what they accessed.

The research also asked children to indicate whether they preferred to use the internet when their parents were not around. The results shown in Figure 4.17 indicate that over 59% of the children either disagreed (202 children) or strongly disagreed (167 children) suggesting they would rather use the internet when their parents were at home. 26.4% of the children (180 children) suggested they were neutral and did not mind whether their parents were at home when they use the internet. Only 12.9% and 6.7%, 88 children and 46 children, respectively agreed or strongly agreed that they prefer to use the internet when their parents were not at home.

Even though the children did not mind whether their parents knew what they did on the internet, the children would rather use the internet when their parents are not around. This is likely to be linked to the need for autonomy from the perspective of the children. As presented in Al-Eissa *et al* (2016), the internet presents children with an autonomy (which many do not enjoy in the Arab world). The children, therefore, may see the internet as the place where they have some form of autonomy and may not want their parents to interfere with the process (Smetana *et al*., 2015).
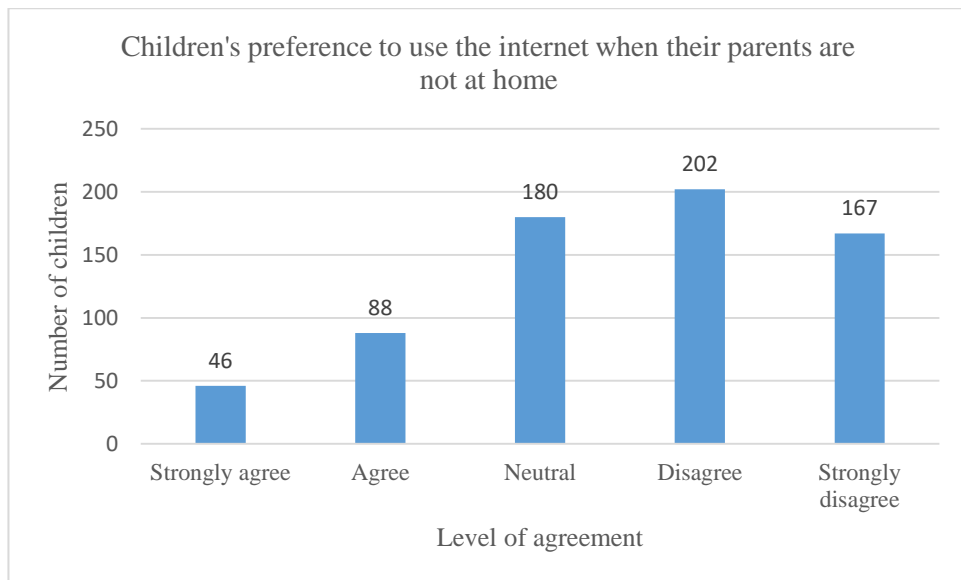
Figure 4.17 Children's Preference to Use the Internet When Parents Are Not At Home

A cross tabulation run between the preference of children in terms of using the internet when their parents are not at home, and the attempts by children to access blocked content on the internet, however, did not return any significant relationships or patterns.

4.3.5.1 Risk of Internet Usage

The awareness of the children regarding the risks of internet usage was also a matter of concern for this research. The children were asked to indicate their level of awareness of the risky nature of internet usage. As part of this, several statements were made for the children to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statements. According to the literature on parental mediation of children's internet use, risks and exposure of children to prohibited contents were the main reasons behind parent's concerns for children's safety on the internet (See Livingstone *et al*., 2013; Clark, 2011; Al-Shiki, 2010).

The first statement was to indicate the extent to which they found sites teaching about crime to be dangerous. The responses shown in Figure 4.18 indicate that 47.8% of the children (335 children in total) strongly agreed that such sites were dangerous whereas 8.8% (62 children) agreed. Only 3.6% of the children (25 children) were neutral with the remaining 37.2% either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that such sites were dangerous. As high as 30.7% of the children (215 children) strongly disagreed that such sites were dangerous.
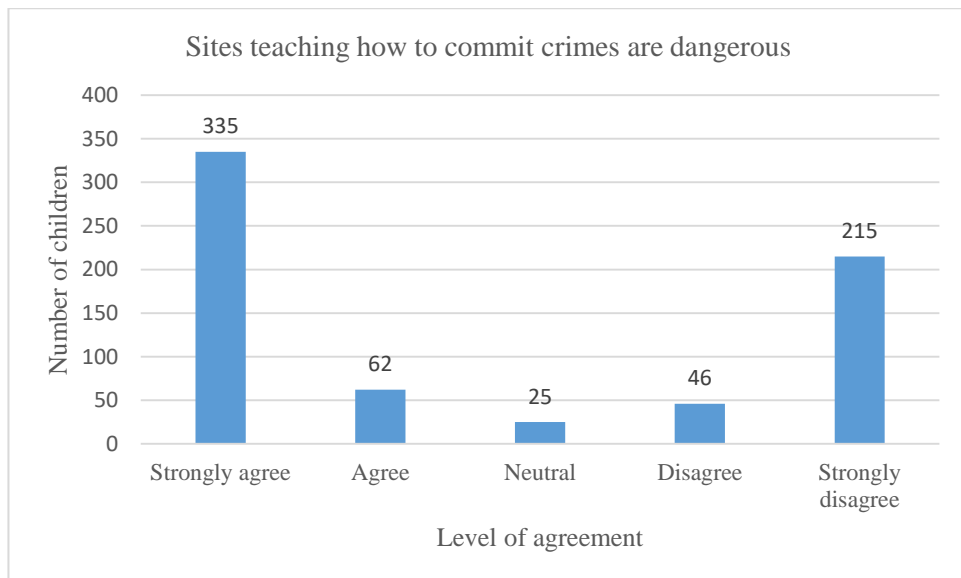
Figure 4.18 Views of Children on Sites Teaching How to Commit Crime

The next question was the extent to which the children agreed that sites that advocate extremism are dangerous. The results shown in Figure 4.19 indicate that whereas 48.7% of the children (328 children) strongly agreed that such sites were dangerous, as high as 32.4% (218 children) also strongly disagreed that such sites are dangerous and 45 children disagreed. This suggests that to about 40% of the children think that sites advocating extremism were not to be considered dangerous.

Figure 4.19 Views of Children on Sites Advocating Extremism

A further question was asked concerning children's view of sites making explosives or bombs. The answers received from the children indicate that the 45.3% (303 children)

strongly agreed that the contents on such sites were dangerous whereas 30.5% (204 children) also strongly disagreed that such sites were dangerous. Apart from the 4.6% of the children who were neutral in this situation, 55.6% either agreed or strongly agreed that such sites were dangerous whereas 39.8% either disagreed or strongly disagreed that such sites were dangerous shown in figure 4.20.
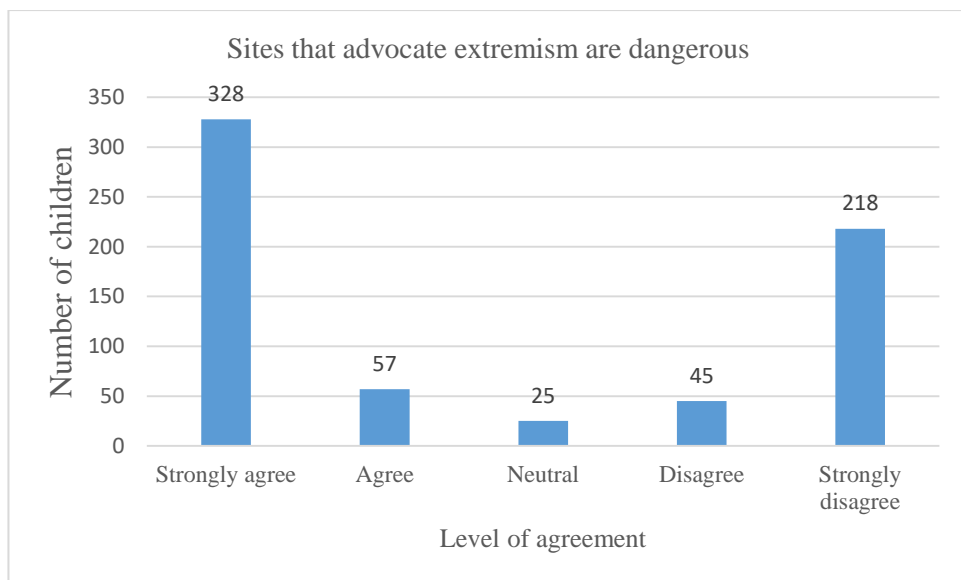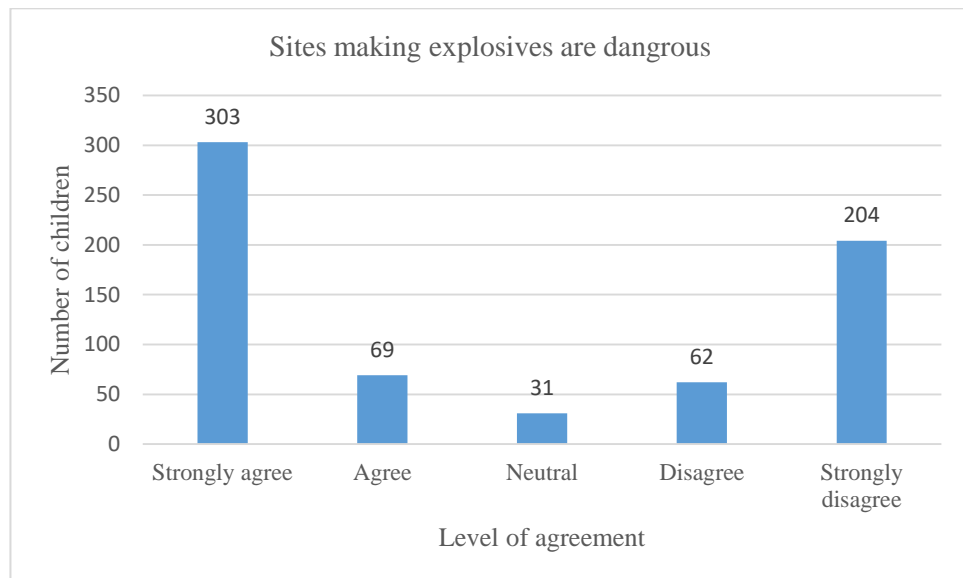

Figure 4.20 Views of Children on Sites Making Explosives

From the results on all the factors presented, the common perception among participants showed a split between the children agreeing or disagreeing on the dangers on the internet. This suggests that websites which could generally be regarded as dangerous by parents were sometimes not regarded as dangerous by a large number of the children that partook in this research. For example, on websites that teach the making of explosives, about 40% of the children found such sites not dangerous. This suggests that parents have much work to do especially in educating their children on the dangers on the internet. Vaala and Bleakley (2015) reported that as part of parental mediation of their children's internet, they are expected to discuss online content with their children set rules and co-use the internet with their children.

Concerning the risks of internet usage, the children were asked to indicate whether their parents had spoken to them about the potential risks on the internet. The answers indicate that close to half of the children (46.3%) have their parents always talk to them about the potential risks online whereas 17% suggested their parents never talked to them about the potential risks on the internet. The remaining respondents were in

between the extreme cases and had their parents either sometimes or often talk to them about the potential risks online. This distribution is shown in Figure 4.21.

My Parents told me about potential risks online

Frequency of parental education	Number of children
Never	118
Usually	43
Sometimes	116
Often	96
Always	322
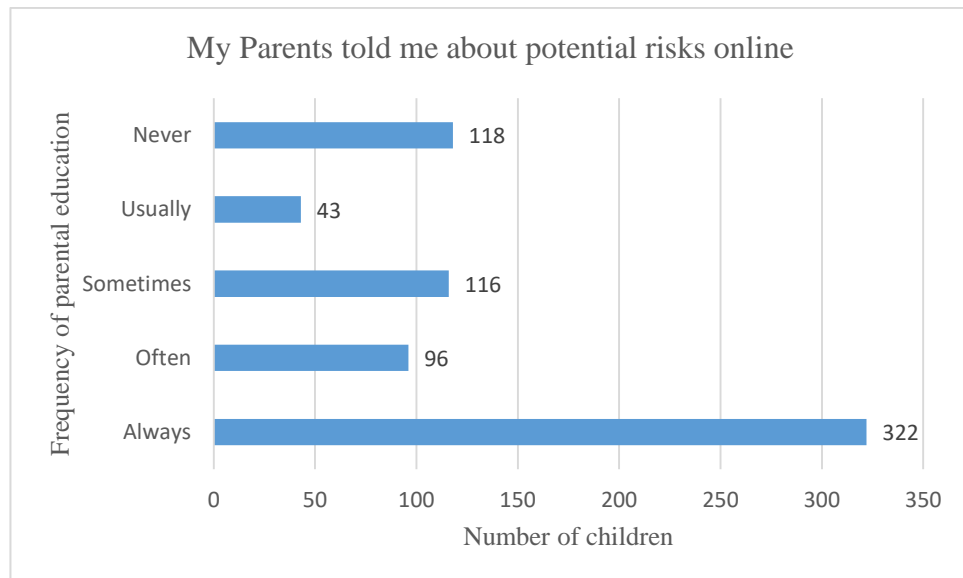
Figure 4.21 Parents' Education to Children on Online Risks

This suggest that whereas some parents discuss internet usage and content with their children (as suggested by Vaala and Bleakley, 2015), there was a high number of parents who never told their children about the dangers on the internet.

In addition to parents talking to their children about the potential risks online, the children were asked to indicate whether they talked to their parents about the risks on the internet. The answers suggest that about 40% (274 children in total) of the children never talk to their parents about the risks of the internet compared to the 18.6% (126 children) who always talked to their parents about the risks on the internet. As high as 23% (158 children) of the children only talked to their parents about such risks sometimes. The total distribution of the responses is shown in Figure 4.22.
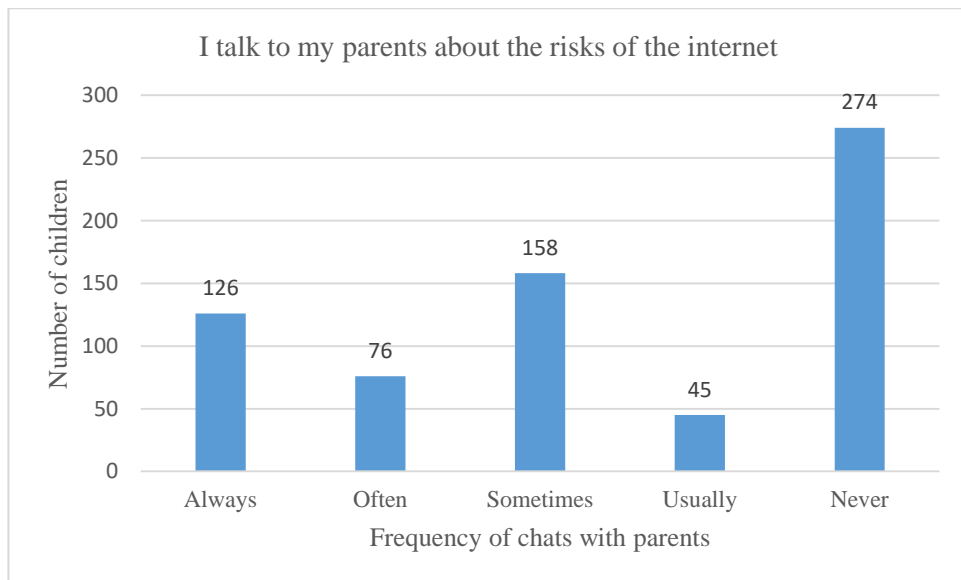
Figure 4.22 Children's Conversation with Parents about Risks on the Internet

Children were asked also to indicate who they will inform should they received an email containing a prohibited image. The responses suggest that 64.5% of the children will tell either their father or mother whereas 16.1% will tell their siblings. Only 5.5% will tell their friends, and the remaining 13.9 % indicated they would not tell anyone. This indicates that the children will usually go to their parents when they receive inappropriate material on the internet and this gives the parents the opportunity to influence the internet usage of their children, Figure 4.23.

Considering the nature of Saudi society, and the role of parents, it was expected that children would usually inform their parents about receiving prohibited images. As reported in Al Saedy (2015), parents in Saudi Arabia have a religious duty to bring up children based on Islamic values. Viewing such content is prohibited by Islamic values and children are expected to inform their parents when such images are received. As reported in Livingstone *et al* (2014), exposure to inappropriate content is one of the main risks to children's internet usage (also Guan and Subrahmanyam, 2009; Valkenburg and Soeters, 2001).
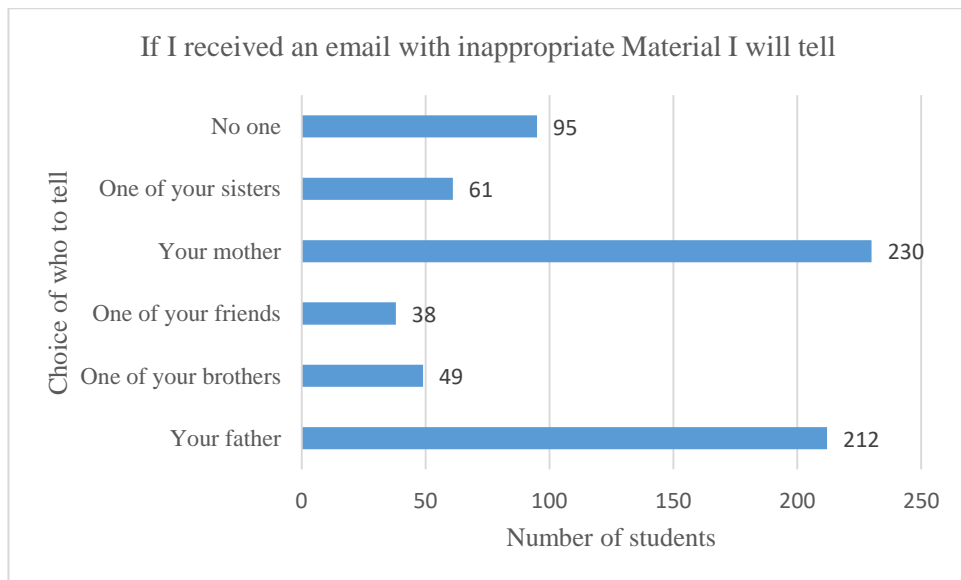
Figure 4.23 Choice of Who to Inform about Inappropriate Emails

4.3.5.2 Children's View of Parent's Actions Regarding Internet Usage

The views of the children regarding their parent's actions in relation to their internet usage. This was to identify their measures by which parents influenced their children's internet usage and the views of the children concerning the process.

The children were asked to indicate what would happen to them should their parents get to know that they were accessing prohibited sites on the internet. 37.6% (256 of the children) indicated that their parents would guide them once they discover they have accessed prohibited sites. This was followed by 27.4% and 23.7% who indicated that their parents would talk to them or punish them, respectively, should they discover they accessed prohibited sites. 9.4% of the children indicated that their parents would rebuke them whiles the remaining 1.9% indicated their parents would do nothing to them in such an instance. The results that 23.7% of the children will get punished by their parents should they discover the children accessing such sites could be linked to the initial assertion that children are likely to be dishonest about such usage. The results in this section also suggest that there is quite a close relationship between the children and their parents such that the parents would advise the children on such behaviours. This was further explored from the perspective of the parents in Chapter 5 (section 5.3.4)
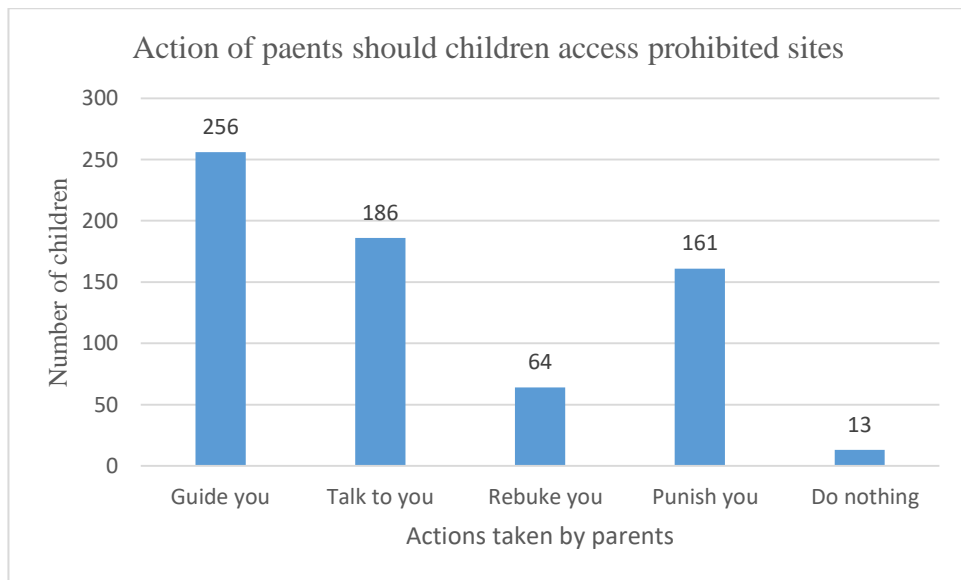
Figure 4.24 Actions to be Taken by Parents Should Children Access Prohibited Sites

As seen from the results in Figure 4.24, different approaches are taken by their parents in mediating or controlling their internet usage. From the results, the mediation approach taken by the parents range between punishments, rebuking, talking and guiding. There were also some parents who would do nothing at all. As discussed in 2.4.2, parental mediation types are of two main groups: social support and rules and restrictions (Kalmus, 2012). From the results obtained, it can be identified that majority of the parents adopted social support style of parental mediation where they guided their children on their internet usage (See Ozgur, 2016).

4.3.5.3 Parental Influence on Children's Internet Usage

The children were asked to indicate the extent to which their parents controlled their internet usage. From the results shown in figure 4.25, 218 children which represent 31.7% of the participating children indicated that their parents never exercised control over their internet usage whereas 152 children (22.1%) said their parents always exercised control over their internet usage. 160 children (23.3%) also indicated that even though parents exercised control over their internet usage, it was done sometimes and not all the time.
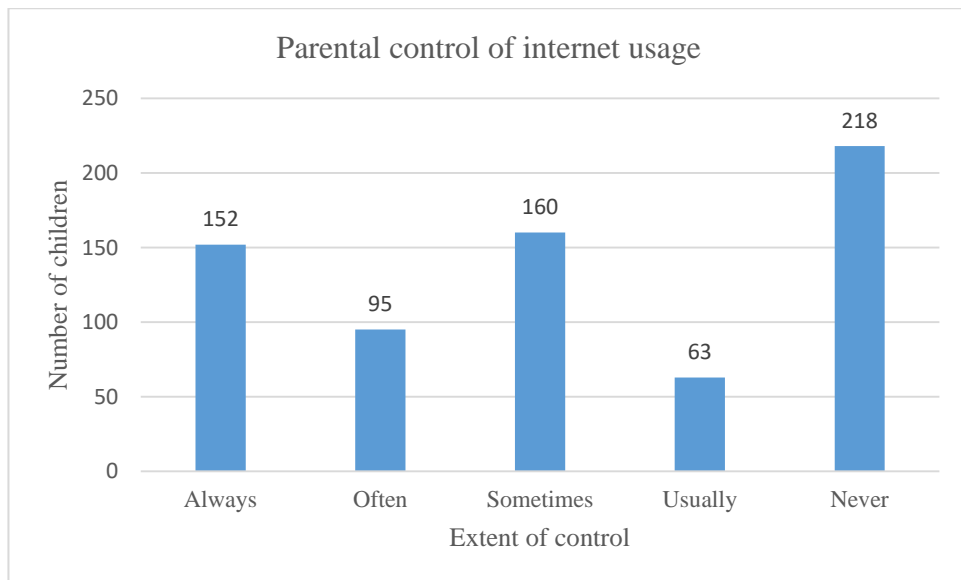
Figure 4.25 Extent of Parental Control on Children's Internet Usage

There was also evidence of parental control of their children's internet usage. About more than half of the children who took part in this research indicated that their parents controlled their internet usage. As discussed earlier, control of internet usage can be linked to social control as well as the restrictive type of social mediation (Shin, 2015; Kalmust, 2012; Livingstone and Helsper, 2008).

In determining how the parents controlled or influenced the internet use of their children, the children were asked to indicate whether their parents put protection software on their computers. The results indicate that whereas 53.9% of the children either strongly agreed or agreed that their parents put protective software on the computers they use, 34.3% either strongly disagreed or disagreed to this. Only 11.7% were neutral as they did not know whether or not their parents put such software on the computers they use.
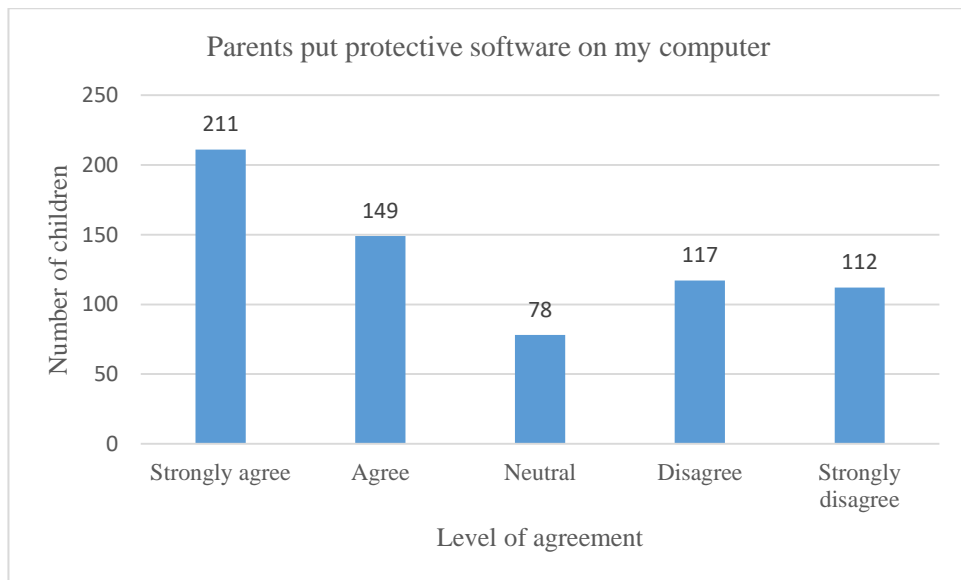
Figure 4.26 Parents' Use of Protective Software on Children's Computer

The use of restrictive software, according to Shin (2015) relate to restrictive mediation where parents use rules to control their children's access to media. This is similar to technical mediation (Livingstone *et al*, 2015) which requires the use of filters or controls by the parents to influence their children's internet usage.

4.3.5.4 View of Children on the Influence of Their Parents over Their Internet Usage

The children were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement that 'parental control is a violation of their privacy'. The results shown in Figure 4.27 below indicates that 26% of the children either agreed or strongly disagreed that parental control of their internet usage is an invasion of their privacy. As high as 56.2% (366 children) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement indicating they did not see parental control as an invasion of their privacy, whereas 17.8% (116 children) were neutral. The results suggest that 169 children (26%) of the total valid responses found parental control of internet usage as invasions of their privacy, this will pose a problem to the activities of parents in trying to control their children's internet usage. This result is similar to that reported in the study of Green and Brady (2014), stating that a huge number of children resent their parents monitoring their surfing habits. This resentment, therefore, can lead to antisocial behaviours as discussed under coercion theory (Ispa *et al*., 2004; Crosswhite and Kerpelman, 2009). This resentment could be

due to a number of reasons: the need for autonomy; the thought that their parents are infringing on their freedoms; or the feeling that their parents do not trust them.
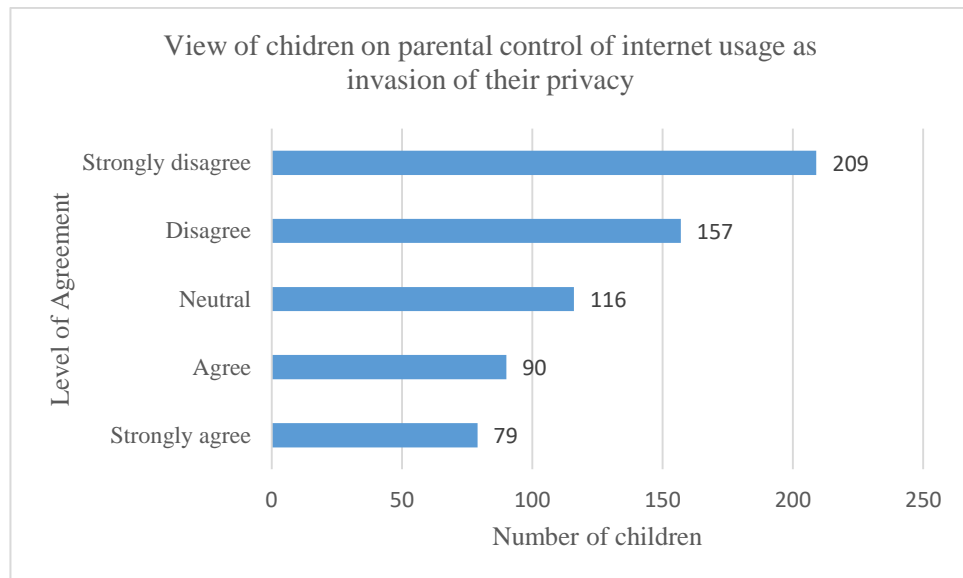
Figure 4.27 Privacy in Relation to Parental Control of Internet Usage

Review of literature suggested that two main views exist in relation to parental influence of children's internet usage: as a good practice with the best of the children at heart (Chao and Aque, 2009); and as a way of suppressing behaviour which is detrimental to the individual's needs for relatedness, competence and self-determination (Soenens and Vansteenkiste, 2010; Soenens and Beyers, 2012). The results suggest that the children in Saudi Arabia are largely unhappy about their patents' control of their internet usage. As discussed by Al Saedy (2015) in the Saudi context there is a very high rate of restriction of children's internet activities. This is likely to be the reasoning behind children not being happy with the influence of their parents on their internet usage.

4.3.6 Summary of Findings from Children

From the discussion provided above, there is a clear indication that internet usage patterns for children in Saudi Arabia is on the increase and this in so many ways has led to increased concerns from the parents in terms of the negative consequences of such uses. As identified from data obtained, internet usage patterns vary, and the location of access goes beyond the home. Children mainly used the internet for streaming content

on YouTube, for playing games, social networking and for learning. The findings also suggest that parents take different approaches in dealing with their children accessing websites they deem prohibited. Overall it as identified that children are generally not happy with their parents controlling their internet usage.

4.4 PARENTAL INFLUENCE ON CHILDREN'S INTERNET USAGE

After determining the patterns and preferences of internet use amongst children, it is important to subsequently ascertain the views of the parents on said usage, as well as some of the measures adopted by the parents to influence such patterns. In addition, the relationship between the parent or family characteristics and these measures are also investigated. This section of the analysis focuses on the data collected from the parents regarding the internet usage of their children. This part of the analysis interrogates the data to determine the views and activities of parents and to determine the relationships between parents and family characteristics and children's internet usage.

4.4.1 Parents View on Children's Internet Usage

The parents were asked to indicate if their children had access to a computer. The results suggest that 39% of the parents had personal computers for all their children whereas 44% had computers for some of their children but not all of them. 17% of the parents, however, did not have personal computers for any of their children. Parents, according to Livingstone and Bober (2004) played a material role by buying the computers their children use in accessing the internet. It was, therefore, important to determine their views on the usage of the internet by their children and the level of risks they attach to it.
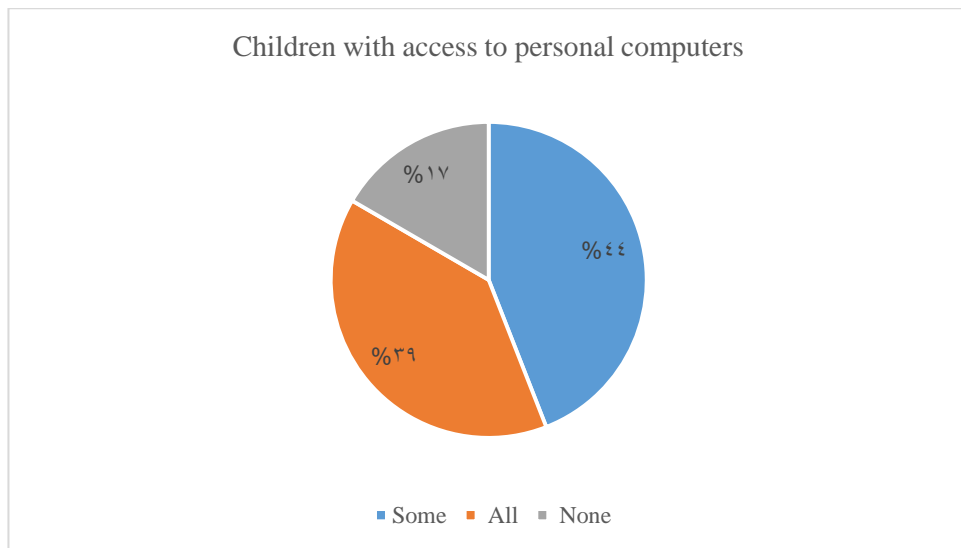
Figure 4.28 Children with Access to Personal Computers

The parents were then asked to indicate the estimated amount of time their children spent on the internet. The results shown in Figure 4.29 indicates that, from the perspective of the parents, 40% think their children spent less than two hours on the internet whereas 39% think their children spent between 2 - 4 hours on the internet. 14.1% were of the view that their children spent 4 - 6 hours on the internet whereas 6.7% indicated that their children spent more than 6 hours on the internet. The views from the parents were found to be quite different from the views of the children concerning internet usage. The results from children suggest that children use the internet more than the parents suggested.
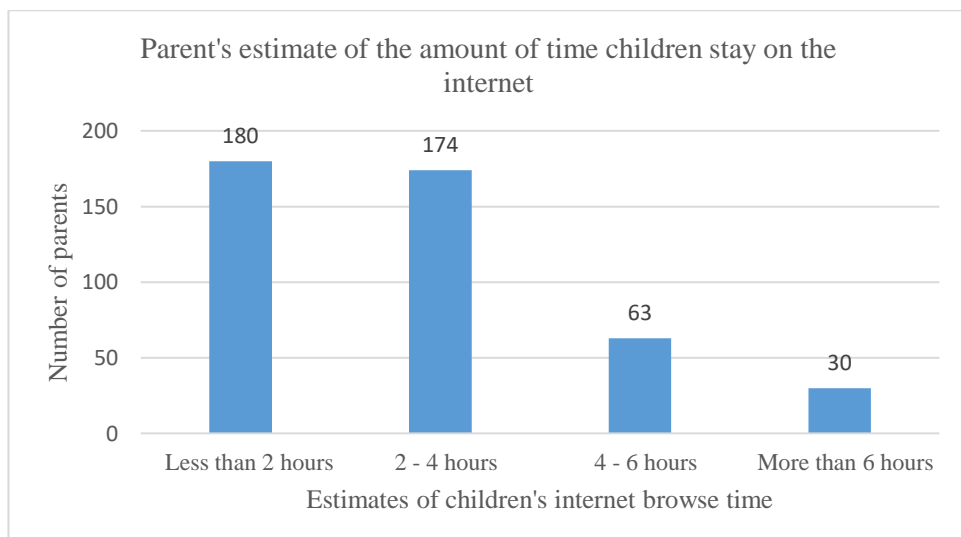
Figure 4.29 Parents Estimate of Time Their Children Spend On the Internet

4.4.2 Supervision and Control of Children's Internet Usage

16% of the parents suggested that their children use the internet unsupervised whereas 40% said that the children would not use the internet unsupervised. 42% of the parents indicated that their children sometimes used the internet unsupervised. Only 2% of the parents did not know whether their children used the internet unsupervised. The high level of supervision of children's internet usage, according to Spada (2014) is as a result of parents' fear of the unlimited consequences on children. For the Saudi Arabian context, this may be due to other reasons such as the culturally accepted need to control the activities of children, setting strict rules to ensure children lived by acceptable norms and the need to control the information exposed to children.
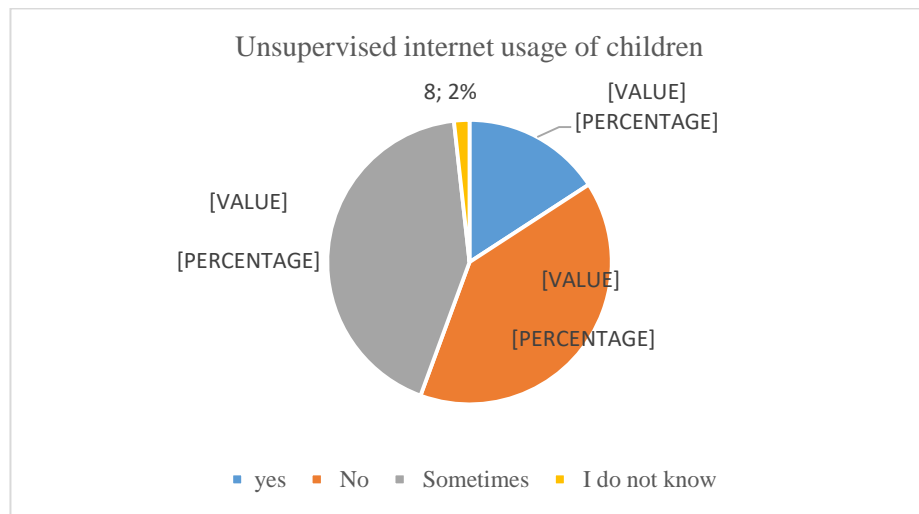
Figure 4.30 Parents' Supervision of Children's Internet Usage

High levels of supervision can be related to control of children's internet usage. Especially in an Islamic society where children are expected to be brought up based on strict Islamic rules, efforts by parents can be seen as an accepted norm. Tamis-le Monda *et al* (2009) suggested that exposure of children to individualistic values from the use of the internet and globalisation is a challenge to the traditional parenting in Saudi Arabia. In such societies, it becomes incumbent on the parents to ensure children are brought up 'the Islamic way' (Sait and Al Tawit, 2007; Alsaedy, 2015). To identify how parents approached this, the parents were asked to indicate whether they educated their children about the dangers on the internet. The results shown in Figure 4.31 indicate that about 51.7% of the parents always talked to their children about the dangers on the internet whereas the remaining parents either only sometimes or usually talked to their children

about dangers on the internet. Only 2.2% of the parents indicated that they never talked to their children about the dangers on the internet.
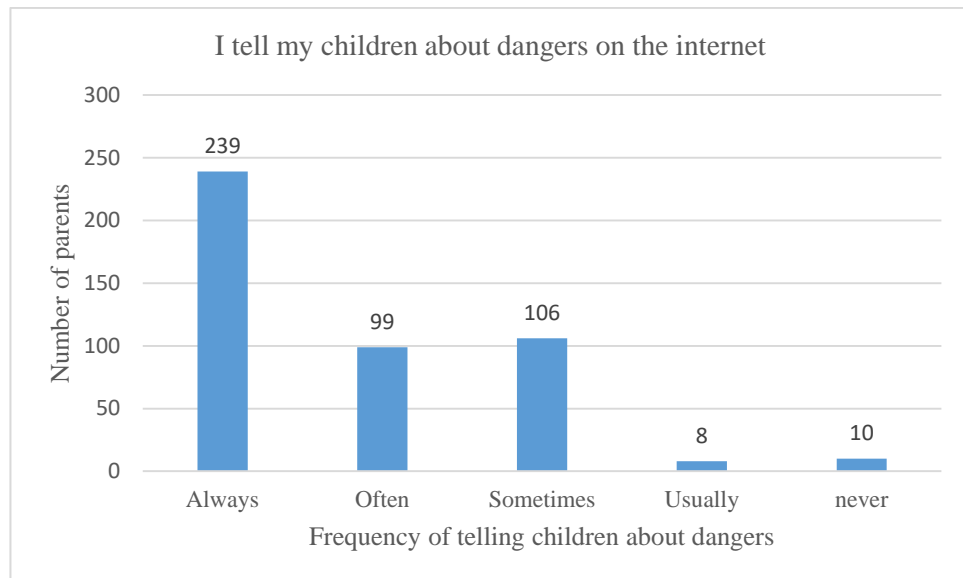
Figure 4.31 Extent to Which Parents Tell Their Children about Dangers on the Internet

To be able to talk to their children about the dangers on the internet, parents are required to have adequate knowledge of such dangers. The research asked parents the extent to which they tried to find out about what their children did on the internet. The results indicate that 48% of the parents always tried to find out what their children browsed on the internet. Only 3% of the parents never tried to find out what their children browsed on the internet. The remaining 49% of the parents tried to find out what their children browsed on the internet to varying degrees. This indicates that majority of the parents at least tried to know what their children browse on the internet, so they can be in a better position to advise them on the dangers on the internet or influence what they did on the internet.

In a society such as Saudi Arabia where parents are expected to be strict (Yagmurlu and Sanson, 2009), it is common practice to have parents trying to keep up to date with the internet usage behaviour of their children. Results from the data gathered from the children suggested that some children (169 out of 749 children – making 25%) viewed this as an invasion of their privacy by the parents (See 4.3.5.4).
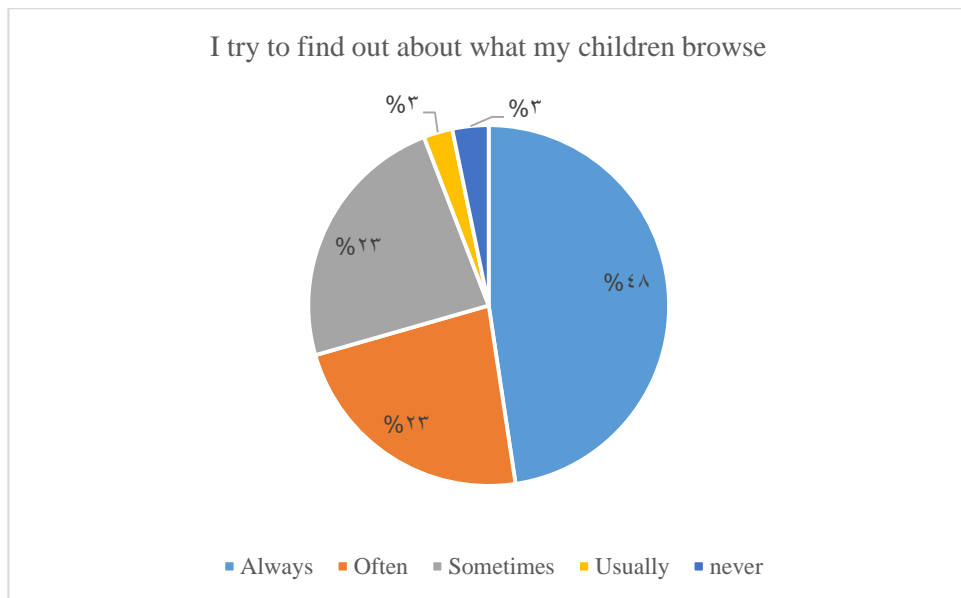
Figure 4.32 Extent to Which Parents Find Out about Their Children's Browsing

In addition to finding out what their children browse over the internet, another means of being able to influence their children's internet usage is for the parents to be updated on what goes on over the internet including the dangers on the internet. The parents were asked to indicate whether they kept up with what was on the internet. As shown in figure 4.33, 158 parents who make up 35% of the total sample indicated they sometimes try to keep up with what is on the internet. 26.6% (120 parents in all) never kept up with what was on the internet whereas 1.9% of the parents always kept up with what was on the internet. Being able to keep up with what is on the internet helps the parents to better influence their children's internet usage as they will be aware of the potential dangers on specific websites.

Moreover, Grossbart *et al* (2002) suggested that children may sometimes know more about the internet than their parents. In a process termed reverse socialisation (Grossbart *et al.* 2002) children may know better than their parents and parents sometimes have to learn from children to be able to keep up with updates of what happens on the internet.
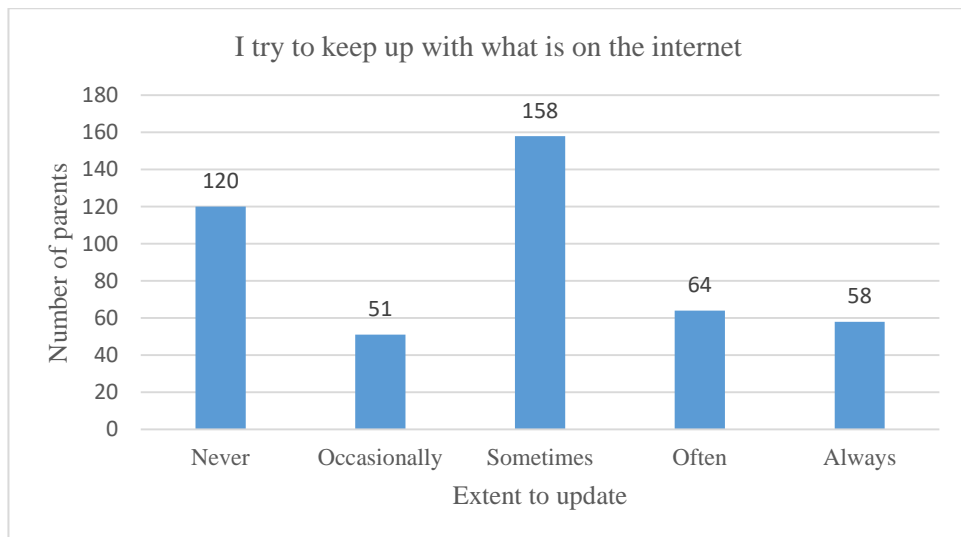
Figure 4.33 Extent to Which Parents Keep Up to Date on What Is on the Internet

The parents were asked to indicate whether they used filtering programs to influence or control their children's internet usage. 42% of all the parents used filtering programs to influence their children's internet usage whereas 24% never used any such programmes. The remaining 34% of the parents did not always use filtering programs for their children's computers but rather used such programmes only to some extent. The use of filtering software to influence children's internet usage can be connected with the idea of parental control which is expected to lead to behavioural control (Beyers and Soenens, 2012). Chao and Ague (2009) argued that controlling practices are more endorsed in some cultures and regarded as acceptable norms. In the Case of Saudi Arabia, it can be ascertained that there is a high level of parental control of children's internet usage through the use of filtering software.
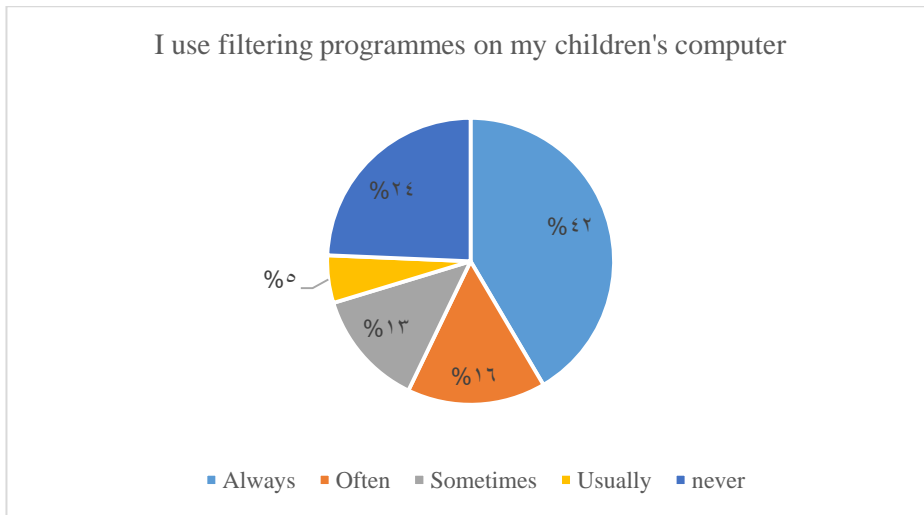
Figure 4. 34 Use of Filtering Programmes on Children's Computer by Parents

Another form of influencing children's internet usage besides using filtering programs is to guide children on their use of the internet. The parents were also asked to indicate whether they guided (in the form of giving them advice, teaching and showing them how to be safe online) their children's internet usage. 53% of the parents indicated that they always guide their children on their internet usage whereas 2% indicated they never guide their children. 20% of the parents often guided their children on their internet use whereas the remaining sometimes guided their children's internet usage.
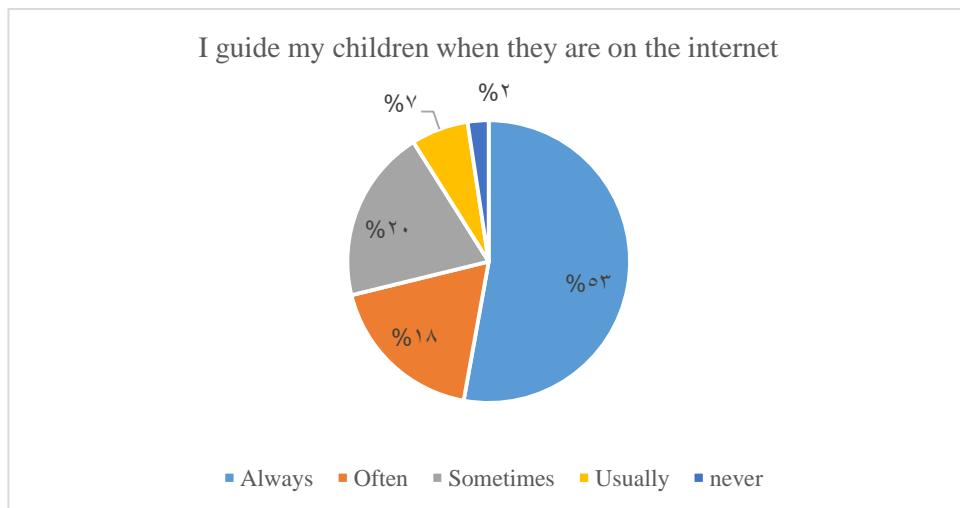
Figure 4.35 Parental Guidance of Children's Internet Usage

As part of the control or influence measures of the parents on their children's internet usage, the parents were asked to indicate what they will do should they find out their children are browsing a site they consider prohibited. Oyaid (2010) suggested that internet-based use of computers occur mainly at home. This then gives the parents the chance to influence their children's activities on the internet. The responses are shown in Figure 4.36.
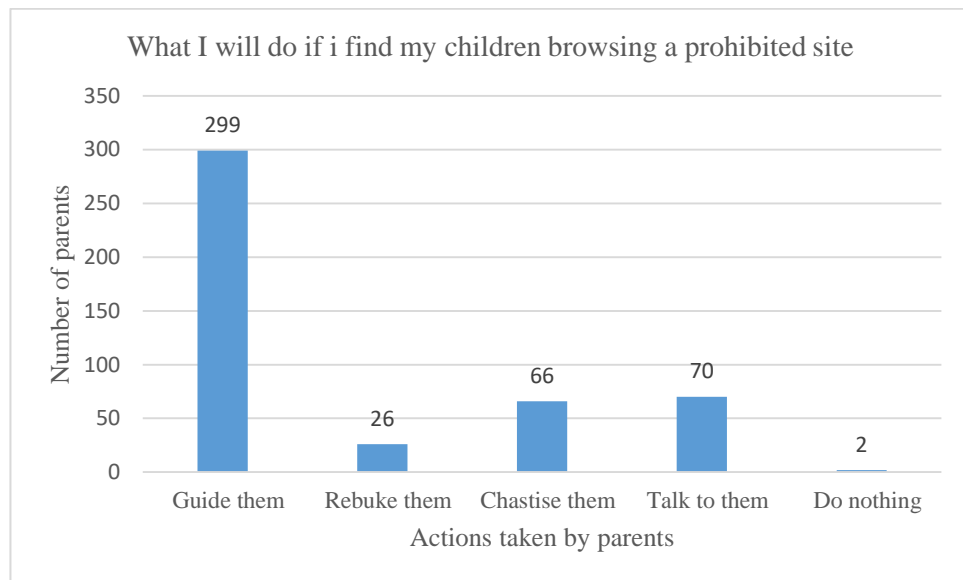
Figure 4.36 Actions of Parents When Children Access Prohibited Sites *(Note: The guide used in this research was interpreted as directing children on what to do and how to do such things).*

As seen from Figure 4.36, 64.6% (299 parents) of the parents indicated they would guide their children should they be accessing prohibited found sites whereas 15.1% (70 parents) and 14.3% (66 parents) suggested they will talk to them or chastise them, respectively. Less than 0.5% (2 parents) of the parents indicated they would do nothing if they found their children accessing prohibited sites. This result suggests that parents are very interested in their children's internet usage and will do well to prevent their children from browsing prohibited sites. Livingstone *et al* (2011) reported that most parents in the EU talk to their children about what they do on the internet. The result of this research suggests that in the Saudi Arabian context, parents have higher control over the activities of their children on the internet. Liau *et al* (2008), however, suggested that parents are likely to overestimate their control over children's activities.

To prevent children from visiting sites that are prohibited, setting ground rules for internet use at home should be able to influence children's internet usage. The parents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed that it was important to have ground rules for children's internet usage. The results shown in Figure 4.37 suggests that 79.6% (360 parents in all) of the parents either agreed (43.8%) or strongly agreed (35.8%) that it was important for them to set ground rules for internet usage by their children. Setting ground rules by the parents is an attempt to 'control' children's internet usage. This was expected considering the nature of the Saudi Arabian society (Yagmurlu and Sanson, 2009). Having about 80% of all parents setting ground rules for their children may be linked to their views on the 'perceived' dangers on the internet (Alsaedy, 2015). High influence of parents on children's internet usage can be linked to the collectivist nature (Sorensen and Oyserman, 2011), constructivist and sometimes oppressive nature of the Saudi society. From the data obtained, there were 12.8% who were neutral on the importance of setting ground rules whiles the remaining 7.5% either disagreed or strongly disagreed that setting ground rules for children's internet usage was important. As found later from the interviews with parents, a couple of parents were of the view that the dangers on the internet are exaggerated and children should be allowed to freely browse the internet with little control.
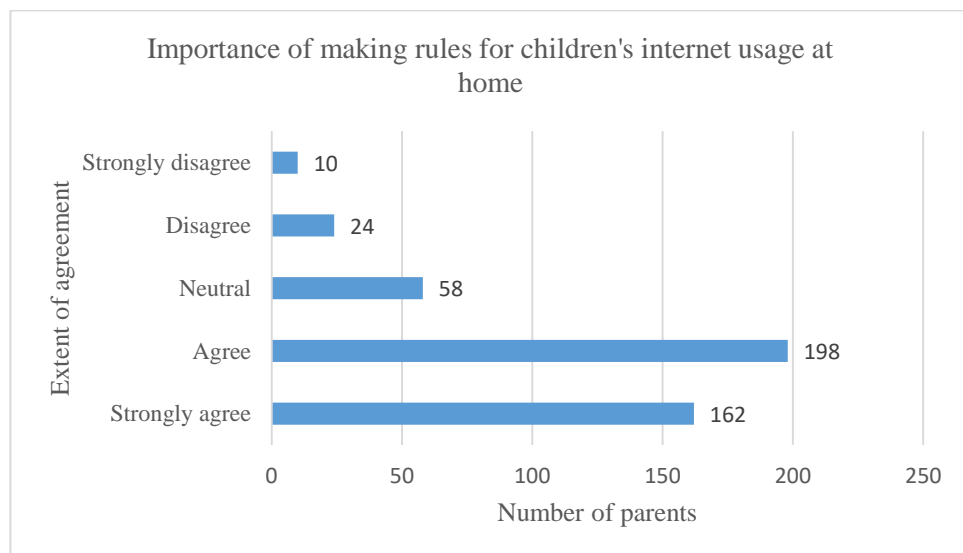
Figure 4.37 Views of Parents Regarding Making Rules for Internet Usage

4.4.3 Relationship between Family Characteristics and Children's Internet Usage

The research inferred the relationship between the family or parent characteristics and their measures to influence the internet usage of their children. The research inferred between the types of measures to control children's internet usage and factors such as parents' level of education, family size, family income, and the views of the parents on the risks of the internet on their children. Studies by Sait and Al Tawil (2007) and Alsaedy (2015) suggested that the family plays a very important role in the socialisation of children, especially in a collectivist society like Saudi Arabia.

A cross tabulation was made between parents' level of education and the extent to which they were concerned about their children's internet safety. The results shown in Figure 4.38 suggests that parents with higher levels of education strongly agreed that they were concerned about their children's safety on the internet. The level of agreement was found to be lower for parents who had lower levels of education.
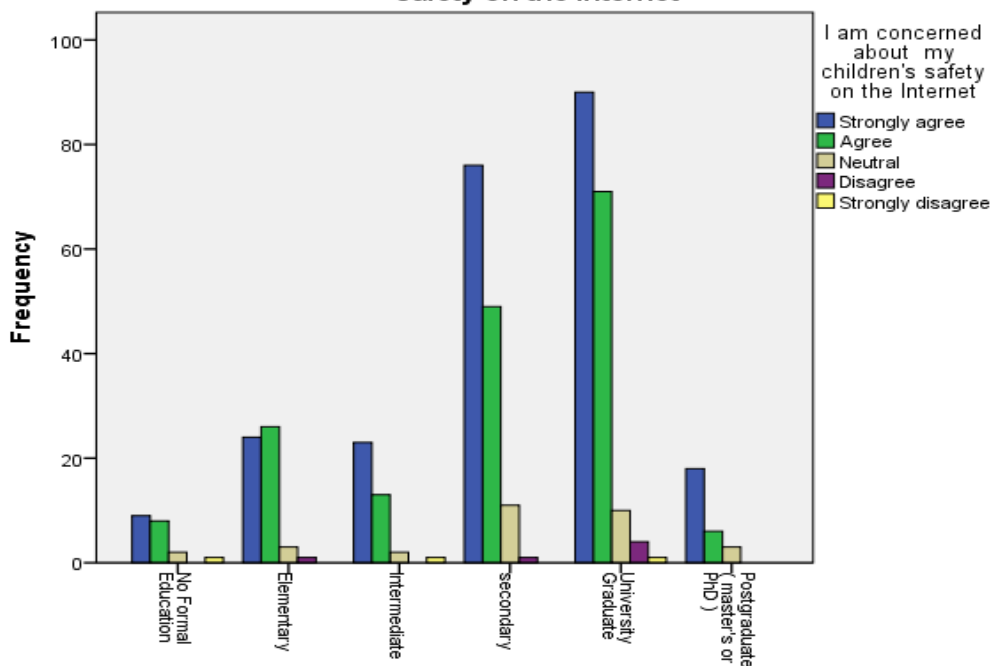
Figure 4.38 Concerns of Parents about Children's Internet Usage Based On Parents' Educational Levels

The research also sought to determine the relationship between the level of education of parents and the rules made at home concerning children's internet usage by doing a cross tabulation between the two variables. The results indicated that parents with

higher levels of education strongly agreed that making rules at home for surfing the internet is important.

Making rules can be linked to aspects of controlling practices which according to Chao and Aguw (2009) are more commonly endorsed in some cultures. A chi-square test was conducted to determine the statistical significance of the result. The chi-square test with 20 degrees of freedom and a Pearson chi-square value of 45.588 and a significance value of 0.001 indicates a statistically significant relationship and as such higher levels of education is related to preference for rules on children's internet usage is accepted. This result could be due to different reasons, notably being the greater awareness of the parents on the dangers of the internet and the likelihood of their children falling victims on the internet. For such educated parents, greater awareness also correlated with a better understanding of measures to mediate children's internet usage.
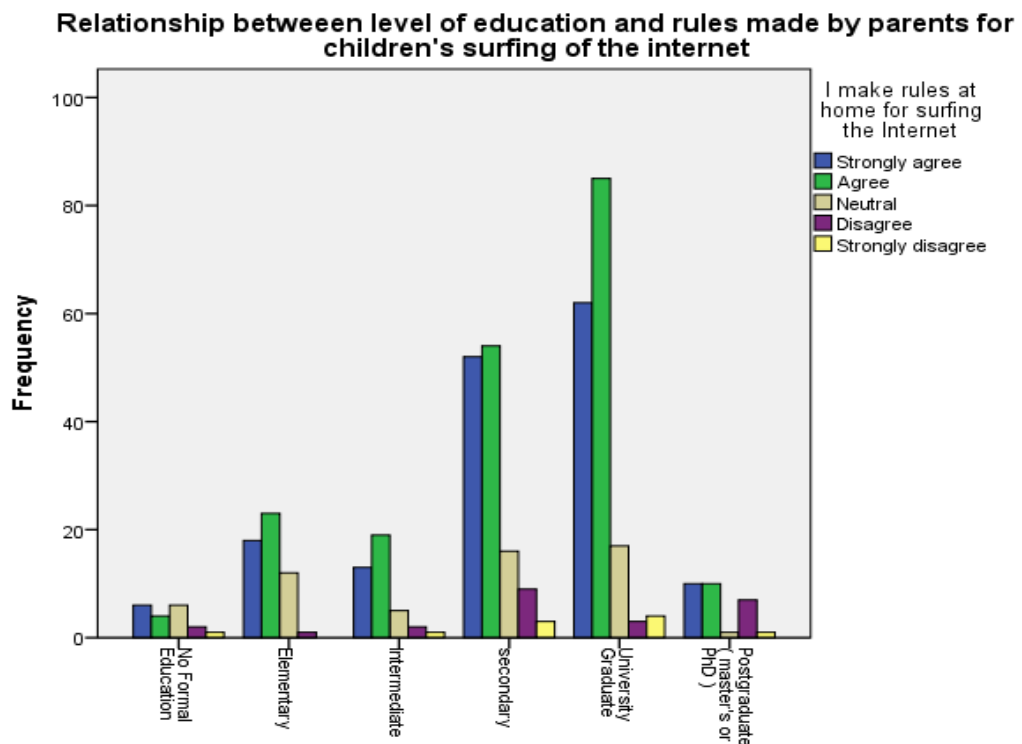
Figure 4.39 Parents' Views on the Need to Make Rules on Children's' Internet Usage Based on Educational Levels

The research went further to check the relationship between family size (number of children) and the measures to influence children's internet usage. None of the statistics could draw a significant relationship between the variables. This suggested that the

measures to influence children's internet usage were not linked to the size of the families the children came from.

These results suggest that a number of children in a family also influences Parents' knowledge about internet use. On the average, families with one child are less aware of internet use than families with more children. This is likely due to the experience gained by the parents from having to mediate internet usage of other children and or having to learn more about internet usage from their children. Children spending time to browse the internet were seen to have a relationship with the knowledge about internet risk on children, Parents' knowledge about internet use and risk of websites on children. On the average, parents of children who spend less than 2 hours on the internet surfing, are less aware of the risk of the internet on their children. The parents of the children spending 6 or more hours are less aware of the risky website and its content such as extremism and pornographic materials.

4.5 SUMMARY

This Chapter has analysed the quantitative data gathered from parents and children using questionnaire distributed to parents and children randomly selected. The results show perhaps the changing traditional roles in the country where women did not usually do formal work to support or raise their families. A discussion of the results with the existing literature was also conducted. The data analysis on children's internet usage suggests that majority of the children have access to a computer and the level of computer access and usage is comparable to that of many other western countries.

Children's internet usage was identified to be from home on computers as well as from mobile devices in and outside the home. For parents, access to computer and internet usage outside the home proves a challenge as the ability to mediate or control children's internet usage from outside the home is usually impossible. The research also observed that the view of parents on the level of risks or dangers of children's internet usage correlates with the level of supervision. The main fears of the parents as gathered from the analysis of data has been the need to ensure children are brought up to conform to societal norms, beliefs and standards and that internet usage poses a threat to this role or function of parents. The next chapter analyses and discussed the qualitative data collected through interviews to provide more insight into the results.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE DATA

5.1 INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in the previous chapter, this research collected both qualitative and quantitative data to help answer the question posed by this research. A mixed methods approach was used in this study to gain a deeper understanding and conceptualisation of the phenomena being studied (Jupp, 2006). However, it is acknowledged that some scholars argue that researching different perspectives may be problematic (Jupp, 2006) as different paradigms interpret phenomena from divergent views. In this research, the use of the qualitative data sought to bring a deeper meaning to the issue of parental mediation by allowing the parents to express their feelings and experience of the process. Participants, also add to the body of knowledge; however, the social interaction between researcher and participants creates abundant knowledge about what is being studied (Denzin, 2008). This occurs through the ability to probe further by asking the participants for more information. Thus, whereas Chapter four presented analysis and discussion of the quantitative data, this current chapter analyses the qualitative data (interviews) to gain a deeper understanding of the measures adopted by parents in Saudi Arabia to influence the internet usage behaviour of their children. The data collection sought to find, from the perspective of the parents, their experience of the process of mediating children's internet usage behaviour. Key features of this data are analysed within the context of the reviewed literature. The analysis presented in this chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section describes the participants of the study and how their characteristics could affect the results obtained. The last section of the chapter presents the results of the analysis informed by the themes which will be the basis for discussing the outcomes of the study. Please see below the table that illustrates the final seven main themes from the analysis process. The table below presents the main themes, their sub-themes and a selection of the codes (categories and sub-categories) that led to the development of the themes.

Themes	Sub-themes	Categories	Sub-categories
Parental views on internet use patterns of children;	Importance of the internet to children's development, the use of the internet for education, amount of time spent on the internet, health implications of excessive internet use, effects of internet use on family interaction, wandering on the internet,	Children need internet to work, children develop through the internet, learning new skills, learning general knowledge, improving the education of children, internet proficiency as intelligence, internet teaching children about other programmes, average time spent on the internet	Children's skills, writing, searching, children's use of the internet at home, children/s use of the internet at school, children's use of the internet in friends' homes,
Parental views on the safety of internet use by children;	risks in the form of exposure to adult content, information security issues, coming into contact with paedophiles, misinformation of children, children browsing without supervision,	Views on level of danger on the internet, conflicting views on the extent of the danger, children's upbringing, amount of efforts parents put into monitoring children's internet usage, views of dangers on the internet,	Effect of dangers on children, religious views, fear of children being misinformed, fake news, need to moderate internet usage behaviour,
Factors influencing the measures adopted by parents to influence children's internet usage;	Level of trust, level of parental education, views on dangers on the internet, internet safety, religious concerns	Reasons for discussing safety, internet not being dangerous, King's intervention dealing with dangers on the internet, dangers on the internet overemphasized, amount of time a child spends on the internet, monitoring of internet use,	Privacy issues, likely effects of dangers on children, level of restriction, positive and negative effects of internet usage, comparing positives and negatives, dangerous issues on children's internet usage, pornographic material, privacy issues, unscrupulous adults searching for vulnerable children, misinformation, religious education miseducation, harassment, addiction to non-profitable games, exposure to narcotics, websites reporting hate crime, fear of children's addiction to internet use
Measures adopted to influence children's internet usage;	Views of dangers on the internet, parent's educational level, parent's technological savviness, parents' rate of internet usage, browsing internet with children, co-using internet with children, education of children,	Soft measures, hard measures, fears of children being negatively influenced, privacy as a priority, filtering of web sites and the use of access prevention on some websites, limiting student screen times with the internet, limiting hours of use to oversee browsing history	Age of children, soft measures, nature of the threat, lack of software packages that worked for parents, previous experience of parents, fear of parents over their privacy, fear of fraudsters, fake news, the invitation of online activities
Factors that promote the parental influence of children's internet usage;	Religious reasons, fear of the negative impact on children, socio-cultural factors, parent's level of education, children's understanding of the need for mediation, trust between parents and children, children's acceptance of religious believes	Consensus on privacy issues, availability of parents, better education of children,	Age of children, children's understanding of religious demands, building trust, adopting a co-sharing attitude, views of friends or other parents,
Barriers to the parental influence of children's internet usage; and	Conflicts with children, Children's privacy needs, lack of technical know-how by parents, availability of internet outside the home	Parental control of general children behaviour, lack of understanding or agreement between parents and children, demanding exercise, lack of time available to parents, work commitments, work policy	Friends, schools, cafes, availability of internet outside the home, educating children, lack of co-sharing, lack of time available to presents,
Lessons learnt by parents over the years to influence children's internet usage.	Understanding the mediation process, Challenges by children, better internet usage by parents, learning and understanding new things	Knowledgeable children, children as better learners and users of the internet, need to improve discussion with children,	Demanding exercise, family size, age of children, shifting parental positions,

Table 5.1: Development of themes on the parental influence of children's internet usage

5.2 BACKGROUND OF PARTICIPANTS

In the qualitative data collection, a total of 23 parents participated. Data collection was done mostly in the form of interviews. The time spent in each interview per parent was between 25 and 37 minutes. The interviews concentrated on the parents' actions, measures, and practices used to influence the internet usage of their children. One of the difficulties faced in the interviews was the inaccuracy of the information provided by the parents. Sometimes parents tended to answer some questions with answers that were not true due to some reasons including an embarrassment and pretending to be good parents. Additionally, the insistence of some husbands to be present while conducting the interviews with their wives, even in the presence of a female research assistant, might affect the final outcomes of the interviews.

An overview of the parents who took part in this research is provided in Table 5.1 for anonymity and to ensure no views can be directly linked to any of the parents. The research gave unique names to replace the identity of the parents. These are shown in the last column of the table

NO.	Gender	Age	Number of Children	Unique Name
1	M	38	4	INT1
2	M	40	3	INT2
3	F	35	5	INT3
4	M	55	3	INT4
5	M	46	6	INT5
6	F	34	4	INT6
7	F	27	2	INT7
8	F	36	3	INT8
9	F	47	1	INT9
10	F	38	6	INT10
11	M	49	4	INT11
12	M	46	3	INT12
13	F	35	5	INT13
14	F	39	3	INT14

15	M	35	2	INT15
16	F	26	4	INT16
17	M	38	3	INT17
18	M	54	2	INT18
19	F	36	3	INT19
20	F	38	5	INT20
21	F	38	3	INT21
22	F	55	2	INT22
23	M	48	5	INT23

Table 5.2 Summary of Research Participants

As shown in Table 5.2, of the 23 interviewees, ten were men, and the remaining 13 were women. All the interviewees had at least one child while some had as many as five children. The age distribution of the parents ranged from 26 years to 55 years with the majority of the interviewees being between the ages of 30 to 40 years. Parents within the different age groups were purposely selected to gather experiences from both young and old parents. This was to help identify if the age of parent(s) influenced the mediation of their children's internet usage.

From the interviewees, it was identified that all parents had computers at home for their children to use, either as their personal computers or as home/family computers which everyone in the family could use. This was necessary to ensure the parents would respond to the interview questions based on their personal experiences.

5.3 RESULTS

The results of the analytical process discussed above are presented in this section. The results are presented based on several themes which formed the basis throughout the analysis process. The main themes selected for presenting the results of the analyses are:

- parental views on internet use patterns of children;
- parental views on the safety of internet use by children;
- factors influencing the measures adopted by parents to influence children's internet usage;
- measures adopted to influence children's internet usage;

- factors that promote the parental influence of children's internet usage;

- barriers to the parental influence of children's internet usage; and

- lessons learnt by parents over the years to influence children's internet usage.

The results of the qualitative data analysis are discussed together with existing literature to determine how the research findings relate to the existing literature.

5.3.1 Parental Views on Children's Internet Usage and Behaviour

The need to influence or mediate children's internet usage will arise based on the views of parents on the internet access and usage behaviour of their children (Shin, 2015; Al-Shiki, 2010; Al-Harbi, 2008). For this reason, this research sought to understand from the perspective of the parents their views on the internet usage of their children, and the perception of the levels of danger associated with such usage. The initial view was that children need to engage with the internet as this has many advantages in regards to educational development (Bleakley *et al*, 2016; Lee, 2012). This was a common view held by all participants of this research. The view that internet use is beneficial for the child` development was identified as a common view for all interviewees. The interviewees identified several advantages as the reason for their views.

INT1 had this specifically to say about the advantages of internet use to children:

> *"Internet is very important for children because it develops their skills in*
> *all aspects of general knowledge, searching, writing and others*"

From the extract above, **INT1** suggested the importance of the internet to children mainly in the form of being able to learn new skills and find general knowledge as amongst the reasons why children should be allowed to use the internet. This view was also held by other interviewees. **INT7** also suggested that the internet has more positives for children than negatives. In his own words

> "*The positive points of the internet is in increasing children's knowledge*
> *which later reflects on their education towards better like in mathematics*
> *and in general knowledge of things.*"

From the views of all the participants, internet usage appears to be a positive thing for children and should be encouraged. From the parents, it was also identified that they see internet proficiency as a form of intelligence in which children who were very good at

using the internet were seen to be more intelligent. These views are similar to views held by researchers such as Holladay *et al* (2011); Notley (2009); Choi and Ross (2006); and Lassala (2006). Each of these suggested that the benefits of the internet to the children cannot be overemphasised. This served as one of the factors making more parents willing to allow their children to browse the internet without concern.
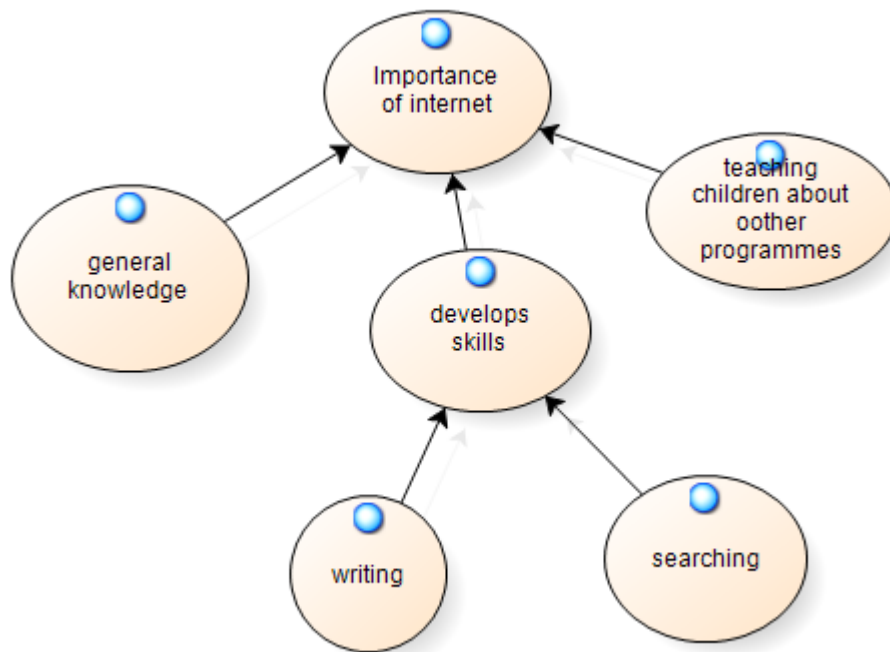
Figure 5.1 Importance of the Internet to Children's Development

In terms of internet usage behaviour, the general view of the parents was that children did not spend too much time on the internet (at least at home). Even though all parents encouraged the use of computers, it was identified that children generally could use the internet at home so long as their use was not excessive. Three main views were identified in this regard. Though parents believed the number of hours children used the internet should be managed, for some parents the management was not for the internet but for general fitness where the children will be expected to walk about and not sit for too long in front of the computer. The second view was that excess time spent on the internet was likely to affect other aspects of children's development such as family interaction and this was the basis for ensuring children did not use the internet over a long period. The third view of children's internet usage behaviour was that excessive

time over the internet could lead children to wander about on the internet and that is the basis for the children coming across inappropriate sites. These views were similar to views expressed in the studies conducted by Ferguson *et al* (2011) and Shin (2013) who suggested that online addiction, internet privacy and exposure to inappropriate content are the main concerns of parents regarding children's internet usage.

Some parents were of the view that children would usually not spend more than two hours on the internet and parents should accept this as the average time children would spend on the internet per day. This view was shared across several interviewees. As part of the children's internet use and behaviour, **INT19** suggests that:

> "*If children are left to browse on their own without guidance,*
> *then there is the possibility of them browsing into prohibited*
> *sites*".

Parents' views on the internet usage and behaviour of children were identified to be linked to the views of the parents on the dangers on the internet. As shown in the comment above, some parents are of the view that unsupervised usage of the internet is a big problem as that leads to avenues for visiting prohibited sites. Livingstone *et al* (2014) and Green and Brady (2014) all reported that even though children may resent their parents's monitoring of their surfing habits, the presence of dangers on the internet and the need to ensure children are safe also presents parents with the need to monitor their children's internet usage.

5.3.2 Parental Views on the Dangers of the Internet for Children

Although the issue of safeguarding Saudi children on the internet may be generally viewed as an issue that needs immediate attention in such typical conservative society.; Some epistemological paradigms like postmodernism view that increased use of the internet in Saudi Arabia, notwithstanding perceived risks to children, positively and progressively.

As mentioned above, the views of parents on the internet usage behaviour of children was to a large extent related to the perceived dangers on the internet (especially for children) Similar results were presented in Prensky (2001) study and that of Livingstone and Helsper (2010). The general view of the parents on the dangers on the internet that affect or are likely to affect their children was in two forms. Whilst some parents firmly

believed that the internet was dangerous to children other parents believed that this danger had been overemphasised. Some extracts of the exact words used by the interviewees are given below.

> **INT5 – "***Dangerous, it is a two-sided weapon, if the children are left on their own without guidance, it will definitely become very dangerous*"
>
> **INT23** – "*In as much as the internet helps the children to study, there is a lot more on the internet that makes it very dangerous for children*"
>
> **INT5 –** "*Of course it is dangerous. Today internet has become semi-open and without any restrictions or conditions and the monitoring is hard*"

From the views expressed above, the parents found the internet to be dangerous to children especially when they use it unsupervised. On the other hand, there were a few parents who were of the view that the dangers on the internet have been blown out of proportion. One of these parents (**INT1**) had this to say:

> "*I don't think so that the internet is a danger, it depends on how much a child is surfing when there is no monitoring control… I would like to emphasise that the fear from the internet's risk has been given a larger picture than it should for the children*"

The view presented above was supported by about three other parents who suggested that the internet is not as dangerous as has been portrayed. This view diverges from the general views of the other parents who took part in the research. This supports the interpretivist or subjectivist epistemological position that reality is interpreted based on the background, experience and knowledge of people and as such, there is no single reality. To parents who suggested the internet was not as dangerous as perceived, their main concerns with internet usage was its effects on health. According to these parents, the long hours spent by children behind the computer was more of a health problem than the dangers on the internet itself. Some parents also suggested that regardless of the perceived dangers on the internet, the way children are brought up will determine whether such dangers will affect them. This suggests that the parents were of the view that the means through which they bring up their children is likely to determine whether

or not dangers on the internet affect the children. This view can be linked to the role of the family in the upbringing of children as presented in the studies by Wang et al (2005) and Ey and Cupid (2011) and both studies suggested that the upbringing of children to some extent affects their internet usage patterns.

These two differing views suggest that parents do not have the same thinking regarding the dangers or level of dangers the internet poses to children and for that reason measures had to be put in place. The amount of efforts parents put into the monitoring and in some instances controlling of their children's internet usage was to a large extent dependent on their views on the dangers of the internet. Where parents associated the internet with high risks, they usually were stricter, and this resulted in restricting the children where possible. For parents who deemed the internet to have fewer risks, they were less restrictive towards their children's internet usage.

Deciding on the levels of dangers on the internet was also seen as a valuation of balance between the "*positives*" of the internet as against the "*negatives*". In the words of **INT3**, he found the positives to outweigh the negatives and for that reason concluded that the internet is not as dangerous. This is what he had to say:

> "*Generally, internet is a positive thing but, there are still some possible risks. I believe the positive percentage for the children is about 65%*".

Other parents had similar views to suggest that where they see a lot more positives, then they rather consider the internet generally or the sites their children visit to be less dangerous. Even though many parents shared views similar to those presented in the literature (Livingstone and Smith, 2014; Doring, 2014; Guan and Subrahmanyam, 2009; and Livingstone and Helsper, 2010), there was also the different view that the level of dangers on the internet has been overemphasised. This again suggests the subjective nature of thinking that affects the actions of parents regarding their children's internet usage.

5.3.3 Dangerous Issues about Children's Internet Usage

From the views on the dangers on the internet for children listed above, it has been identified that most parents found the internet to be dangerous and this affects the extent to which they try to influence their children's internet usage. Like parents from other countries in Europe, and even in the Gulf region, the main concern for parents is the

dangers on the internet (Livingstone and Haddson, 2008; Guan and Subrahmanyam, 2009; Flander *et al*., 2009; Ofcome, 2014; Al-Eissa *et al*, 2016). It was important to identify specific dangers on the internet that were of concern to the parents. Different issues were identified as the specific dangers on the internet which pose a threat to children's internet usage. A summary of the critical issues identified is presented in the Table 5.3.

Dangers on the internet for children	Summary	Parents identifying such dangers
Pornographic material	The exposure of children to illicit materials and content intended for adults such as pornography	A general concern for all parents interviewed.
Privacy issues	The likelihood of fraudsters getting access to the private information of families of parents through the activities of children on the internet	Working parents who also had internet knowledge and experience
Unscrupulous adults searching for vulnerable children	Bad adults looking for young and innocent children to take advantage of them	Parents who spent many hours on the internet (themselves)
Misinformation/ miseducation	People or information from the internet giving the children the wrong education or information	Parents with high educational levels
Harassment	Harassment from other children as well as other adults	Generally among all interviewees
Addiction to non-profitable games	Children are getting addicted to websites or games that do not help the children in any identifiable positive way.	Parents with low level of education (generally)
Exposure to narcotics	Exposure of children to sites where people deal with illicit drugs which may distort or negatively affect the views of the children	Very few parents (no specific group of parents)

Table 5.3 Areas of Danger on the Internet

As seen in table 5.2, the parents identified several areas they found to be problematic to children's internet usage. These areas were the most dangerous aspects of the internet which children had to be protected from or prohibited from accessing.

Of all the dangers, exposure to pornography was seen by the majority of the parents (17 in number) as one of the biggest dangers of the internet. Research by Alkadhi (2005), Flander *et al* (2009), and Livingstone *et al* (2014) suggested that exposure to pornographic content is one of the main problems parents have with children's unsupervised internet usage. Considering the age of their children, the parents suggested that exposure to pornography was dangerous to the children, especially for religious reasons. **INT5** suggested there is "*increased numbers of the pornographic web sites online*" and for this reason, children did not have to specifically go around looking for pornographic sites. These sites can even pop up when children have not gone in search of them, and that adds to the dangers of the internet. When parents were asked to explain their experience with such pop-ups, it was identified that, due to the lack of software packages that block pop-ups, sometimes children visit websites or click on links that generate these pop-ups. It was identified that parents who did not have much internet knowledge shared this view.

INT11 also made a similar comment on the proliferation of pornographic sites "*indecent photographs and pornographic videos pose a big risk to children*". **INT6** suggested that not only are there pornographic sites, but he also added:

> "*the pornographic websites which started becoming available on almost all the social networking sites and they are searching for and hunting young children.*"

This view can be linked to the other danger identified by parents as a risk to children's internet usage; the presence of paedophiles looking for vulnerable children to groom and access. As reported in Al Saedy (2015) and Al-Tawil (2007), parents have concerns for their children's exposure to inappropriate content as these are largely seen to be against Islamic values.

Aside from exposure to pornography which the interviewees viewed as against Islamic values, there was also the issue of privacy. Privacy issues were also identified as one of the dangers on the internet, and this was especially so for children who may mistakenly or unknowingly allow providing sensitive material or information to be made available

to strangers who may use this against their parents or get access to parents' information. Even though none of the parents interviewed had such personal experiences, they suggested that they were aware of people who have been victims and for that matter they were concerned about such dangers. Parents, therefore, saw this as their duty to protect their children from such dangers. This is in line with the study of Parsons and Bales (2002) who suggested that functionalism within the family systems leads to such concerns and the need to provide protection for children. Though the likelihood of sharing sensitive information was identified as a danger to the children, it was identified that in most cases, parents were more worried about the effect of such dangers on themselves. This view was found to be consistent with the majority for the parents, for example, **INT20** suggested:

> *"even for adults, privacy is a big issue and you make sure you do not exchange sensitive information with outsiders. So it is even a bigger to children it becomes a bigger issue as they may not be in the position to tell which site is trying to steal data or not"*

Concerns about the privacy of both the children and their parents were of very high importance to the parents. In some cases, parents indicated that this concern was more about them as parents and not necessarily about their children. From further questioning, it was identified that for some parents, the fear of fraudsters or websites extracting information about them through their children raised such concerns. Livingstone and Helsper (2010) and Guan and Subrahmanyam (2009) suggested that exposure to the invasion of privacy remains a significant concern for parents both for their privacy and the privacy of their children.

Misinformation of children was also identified to be a very major concern for parents regarding internet use. Parents were more worried about websites that purported to be educating children, especially on religious issues. The proliferation of websites that provide 'fake news' to people was identified to be a concern. Some parents suggested that, even for adults, it was difficult to identify fake news and this made it a bigger problem for children who in some cases could not verify the authenticity of the information they received on the internet. Per the parents, there is a lot of misinformation and miseducation on the internet, and if care is not taken, children will

study the wrong things and be misinformed and that can be very detrimental to their wellbeing. This view was found to be related to fears of parents that their children may be misinformed on religious issues. Even though this view has not been found in the literature from European countries, for parents in the Gulf region, there is a religious duty to bring up children according to the teachings of Islam (Al-Ghanim, 2012; Al Saedy, 2015).

INT2 had this to say:

> "*when it comes to religious education, more importantly, I am concerned that people on the internet will teach my children the wrong things or preach them the wrong religious information*".

A similar comment was given by **INT13**

> "*in most instances, Islam is portrayed as a bad religion on the internet especially by western or foreign countries, and I will not want my children to be misinformed by such websites*".

As seen from the two comments, the misinformation of children through the internet is likely to impact on their perceptions of religion, and for that reason, the parents are very worried or careful about what to do. In some cases, parents were not just concerned about the exposure of their children to content that is against their religious beliefs; there were also concerns over exposure to outside social and cultural influences. Such misinformation was also identified and could affect the views of the children on issues such as explosives and hatred as well as other issues that are easy to come by over the internet and was perceived to be an immense danger to children.

According to **INT9**, "*Existence of people encouraging hatred and violence on web sites*" is one of the key areas where children could be exposed and misinformed.

Even though misinformation or miseducation through 'fake news' was a big issue to the parents, it was identified that for most parents, the miseducation of children on religious issues was the biggest area of concern. Reflecting on this results in line with the structural functionalism theory (Morgan, 2015; Talcott Parsons, 1949), parents in this region consider this as part of their primary duty towards the society and the religion to ensure that children are brought up to uphold Islamic values.

In addition to all the dangers listed above, the parents were also more worried about the danger of children being addicted to the use of the internet. Such addiction according to

the parents is likely to have a negative influence on their education, their identity, as well as on the family. As the majority of the parents noted, addiction to the internet means less time for the children to interact with the family and this has a negative influence on family ties making this a challenge to the functionality of the family.

This problem of children spending a lot more time on the internet than they would spend to interact with their families was a major concern to all parents involved in the study. For this reason, most parents choose to browse the internet with their children so they can get the chance to spend time with their children even as they browse the internet.

INT8 suggested that:

> "*lack of conversation and concentration as well as the isolation as they*
> *prefer to be on their own at home…*"

…is one of the problems of addiction to the internet. The addiction of children to the internet was seen to have a negative effect on the relationship between the children and their families, and this view was supported by many of the parents interviewed for this research. The effect of excessive internet usage by children on family relationships has been reported in the literature as a major concern for most parents.

Minkus *et al* (2015) and EU Kids Online (2014) all report that spending time on the internet has the ability to strain the relationship between children and their parents. From the research by Bafakih *et al* (2016) which was conducted in Saudi Arabia, parents are concerned about the negative influence of their children's internet usage on family communication time.

5.3.4 Measures Adopted to Influence Children's Internet Usage

Based on the views and perceptions of the dangers of internet usage by children, the parents developed different mechanisms to influence their children's internet use or to control the information accessible to the children. Table 5.4 summarises the mechanism used by parents to influence their children's internet usage.

The mechanism adopted by parents	Summary	Parents adopting such mechanisms
Education of children on the dangers of the internet	This was the most standard form of mechanism adopted by parents and formed part of all the other mechanisms.	Very well educated parents who were internet users themselves
Use of software to monitor and control children's internet usage	This mechanism was adopted by parents who had the perception that the internet was very dangerous for children. This included using software to monitor children's internet usage and block sites not to be visited.	Working parents who did not have much knowledge about internet use
Filtering of websites and the use of parental locks on specific websites	Some parents changed the settings of their children's computers to filter out websites they deemed inappropriate.	Well educated (and working parents) who knew a lot more about internet usage and security mechanisms
Limiting the amount of time (hours) children can use the internet	For parents who believed excess time spent on the internet allowed children to access inappropriate websites, children were given limited access to the internet as a mechanism to curb access to such sites.	Parents who spent more time at home with their children but did not know much about filtering and software to protect their children
Limiting children's use of the internet to only the time's parents are available	This was a step further to limiting the amount of time children were allowed to use the internet. With this mechanism, parents only allowed their children accessed to the internet when the parents were	Working parents who did not have much knowledge on mechanisms for filtering and prohibiting access to

	around to supervise and monitor their children's usage.	some internet sites
Restricting children to access the internet only from home or school	In some cases, parents restricted their children from accessing the internet only from home or from school where there will be adequate mechanisms to monitor their usage.	Parents who believed their presence or that of 'supervisors' could keep children safe
Investigation of children's internet use history and activities	This mechanism allows parents to have a better view of what their children browse on the internet so the appropriate mechanism can be set in place.	Working parents who did not spend much time with children at home

Table 5.4 Mechanisms Adopted By Parents to Control Children's Internet Usage

Table 5.4 shows the mechanisms adopted by parents to influence children's internet usage. The mechanism adopted by a parent to influence or control their children's internet usage was to a large extent related to their perception of the danger associated with the internet. From this research, it can be identified that the measures adopted by the parents to influence their children's internet usage are not different from that of other countries in the Gulf region and in Europe (See Ozgur, 2016; Shin, 2015; Kalmus, 2012; Livingstone and Helsper, 2008).

For parents who generally felt that the internet is dangerous for children, the mechanisms for influencing children's internet usage would usually include multiple mechanisms from as shown in table 5.4. For parents who did not see the internet to be very dangerous or felt the dangers of the internet to children had been overrated, their general mechanism to check and control children's internet usage was to provide advice to the children on what not to do on the internet. It was identified that only few parents (about 8 in number) believed the internet was not as dangerous as it has been portrayed. Generally, all the parents who took part in the research believed that the education of children on the dangers associated with the internet was a primary mechanism for mediating children's internet usage. Education of children on the potential dangers on

the internet was identified to be the most commonly used mechanism for all the parents regardless of their views on the level of dangers of the internet. For parents who are internet savvy, this mechanism presents a good approach (Nathanson, 2002). For parents in Saudi Arabia with the aim of ensuring Islamic values are maintained, Al-Salim (2002) and Al Saedy (2015) suggested the use of mediation strategies that focus on adhering to acceptable religious standards. It is therefore not surprising to identify results that suggest that educating children was found to be the most common option. This is similar to an active mediation which Fujioka and Austin (2003) suggested that it works better than other forms of parental mediation.

Parents with opposing view suggested that advising their children or talking to them alone is not enough and for that reason, other means of protecting the children or controlling their internet use had to be put in place.

Of all the other forms of mediation mechanisms or control of children's internet usage (aside from education), the use of software was identified to be the most common form. This generally took the form of parents installing applications or software that will screen or prevent children from accessing websites. As discussed by Ozgur (2016), technical restrictions work best when parents have access to software and can use such technical tools to filter, restrict and monitor their children's activities on the internet.

The use of software is one of the key ways of monitoring children's internet usage. According to **INT17:**

> "*I use such programmes that can help detect the activities of the children on the internet and take record of all they do, this helps to identify potential sites that can be harmful and block them from visiting such sites. To me, the software is my best option.*"

INT7 had this to say about monitoring programs:

> "*Yes, I believe the safeguarding programs are helping in reducing the children exposure to risks, and especially when they are beginners to the internet.*"

Many parents shared this view and would allow the children to use computers with such software installed on them.

Even though the parents were happy with the use of software, some parents were of the view that in some instances the children were able to go around the software. **INT6** also suggested that:

> *"Installing filtering programs or increasing the security and safeguarding on the web sites could be a good thing, but there are ways around that to avoid it*".

A number of parents shared this view, and the reason for monitoring children's internet usage or activities. According to **INT8**, children found ways around the use of protection software by using other platforms on their phones and other devices. This view is captured in the statement below:

> *"Protection programs (software) doesn't lead to the goal but to some extent does something, and the filtration software's that the parents are installing on the computers, a child can avoid that especially by using Twitter and WhatsApp."*

Children's ability to bypass the measures developed by parents means the parents have to develop alternative means or mechanisms for dealing with the problems. Moreover, this included the monitoring of children's activities.

INT6 added this comment in relation to the need to monitor the activities of their children *"do checks on my children from time to time when they are online, or checking their own game devices and giving them good advice."* **INT10** made a profound statement about the need to monitor children's internet usage and behaviour:

> *"Children's natural behaviour is always curious and love to discover new things, they must be watched and monitored, should educate them about the web sites which they must not access".*

All these statements in addition to many others made by the parents made the need to monitor children's internet usage very important. The process, however, was found by many parents to be very difficult, especially where children are able to find a way around the systems put in place by the parents. As reported in Livingston *et al* (2015), the parental mediation of children's internet usage is not an easy ride.

Three parents did not believe in monitoring children's internet usage. These were young, very well educated parents who had hectic schedules. These parents suggested that direct monitoring had the potential to affect the confidence of children and as such

could lead to negative consequences. For this reason, such parents instead took a softer approach where children knew their parents trusted them to behave well on the internet. Such parents preferred their children to rather come to them concerning internet sites that were inappropriate so a means of dealing with the problem could be developed together with the child. This mechanism according to some parents helped to build a better relationship with their children.

Some parents also believed in monitoring but decided the best way is to let the children understand for themselves the need to be careful on the internet and the need to put family values first.

INT7 added that:

> "*Personally, I can guess that (monitoring is good), but I think emphasising on the values that a family has been built on and how always to iterate it, and also valuing the privacy and the freedom without breaking its limits and boundaries*".

Other parents appealed to the children based on religious beliefs as the means to get them to have a better understanding of their requirement.

INT21 hinted:

> "*I don't watch them but, I enhance their confidence and the trust between them and myself. I also speak to them frankly about the video pieces which have sexual contents, I tell them that they shouldn't watch it and it is forbidden by our religion. I browse and check their equipment's they use to make sure and enable me to do discussion about anything.*

INT2 shared a similar view:

> "*that is why my wife is participating in monitoring their times and their concentration on their study, I have told them that on internet there are many bad things which are against our Islamic religion, and are forbidden and not permitted, I have also told them that preventing them from using something is for their own benefit*".

Another critical mechanism adopted by the parents was to allow the children to access the internet only when the parents were around. This mechanism helped the parents to

monitor the children's internet usage and to educate children on the spot when issues came up. For such parents, being present helps to ensure the child does not wander unto prohibited websites and helps the children to report any unexpected information or activities they encounter on the sites. In some instances, children were limited to only a particular number of hours per day or per week, and these were targeted at ensuring children use the internet responsibly. As part of this requirement, parents in many instances had to be aware of every social network account their children opened, and the children needed permission to be allowed to access or create accounts.

INT8 had this to add regarding monitoring and controlling of social media accounts:

> *"that is part of the conditions they should tell me everything relating their internet usage and don't cross their limit especially in opening new accounts unless with my permission."*

Parents who were interested in monitoring their children's internet usage by either restricting the time spent, the use of internet only when parents are around or monitoring of activities did not agree to their children using the internet outside the home or the school. **INT12** made this comment in relation to where children can access the internet "*Surfing and using the internet in schools is a normal and logic thing, but at internet cafes, as they are now it is definitely No*".

Even though parents were very interested in monitoring their children's internet usage, as identified from the analysis of the quantitative chapter, children are not always happy with their parents knowing what they browse (see 4.2.5.4). Similar results are presented by Crosswhite and Kerpelman (2009) and Ispa *et al* (2004). Parents who took part in this research suggested that their children were not happy with the mediating of their internet usage. Results from the quantitative data presented in chapter 4 of this thesis (see chapter 4.3.5) support this claim.

5.3.5 Factors That Promote the Parental Influence of Children's Internet Usage

It was identified that certain factors were key in enabling the parental mediation of children's internet access and usage. These factors included: parent's level or education or knowledge of the dangers of the internet; parents having the trust of children throughout the mediation process; children's understanding of the need for filtering or

blocking their access to certain websites; the level of trust between the children and their parents; and the position of the children on religious beliefs and family values. As opined by **INT7:**

> **"**often, whenever the parents have high level of education, they are able to help children with their internet usage and direct them when things go wrong (such as checking what children are likely to be exposed to on some websites".

Level of education of the parents helped in other ways including allowing parents to have a better knowledge of the things available on the internet and the areas of potential harm or negative influence. **INT10** suggested:

> "because the education widens the understandings of everything, so when one of the parents have a good level of education it will help in directing the children to a better websites which have more benefits and helpful for their studies or something he needs to know about his daily life need"

In most instances, the parents had to ensure they are at the same level as their children by learning about the new trends and current issues on the internet. In the words of **INT1:**

> "my children became better than me and I started learning from them, and the internet had taught them many skills and programs. ...So I try to keep up in order to help monitor and protect their internet usage"

The influence of parents' level of education on children's internet usage cannot be over emphasised. Having the trust of children in the process was also seen by many parents as a key factor influencing the process. Where children trust their parents to be truthful and open about the dangers on the internet, it helped to ensure the children obeyed the words of their parents without further questioning or argument. For this reason, many parents ensured their children always trusted them regarding their views of the internet usage. It was identified that such trust was higher where parents were good at educating or explaining things to their children. Where children received better education on the dangers of the internet, the trust levels concerning the activities of their parents

regarding their internet usage was higher. This helped reduce the potential issues arising out of the process.

Due to the use of religion and family values as one of the mechanisms for influencing children's internet usage, the views and understanding of the children regarding religion was identified to play a key role in the process. Where children were made clear of the importance of religion to their activities and life in general, they were more than willing to accept parental influence for religious reasons.

5.3.6 Barriers to the Parental Influence of Children's Internet Usage

Factors such as low levels of education of parents; the accessibility of internet on children's phones; children's view of monitoring of their internet use as invasion of privacy; advancement in children's knowledge on filtering programs; the lack of control of children's internet usage outside the home; and curiosity of the child were found to be barriers to the parental mediation of their children's internet usage.

In most instances, it was identified that where parents did not have the same level of understanding (education) or higher levels of education than their children, the children were ahead of the parents and as such knew better how to get around the measures developed by their parents. Where educational levels of parents were identified to be low, their ability to use filtering software and to manage the internet use behaviour of their children was identified to be low. This is because the basic mechanisms they put in place could easily be bypassed by their children.

The availability of the internet on children's phones and other 'gadgets' as well as the access to the internet outside the home was identified as one of the main means or factors that negatively influenced the parental mediation of children's internet. It was identified that regardless of the efforts by parents to influence children's internet usage, access to the internet on the mobile phones and outside the home on their friends' phones served as an avenue that allowed children to have access to sites that are not permitted on their home computers.

Where children could advance their knowledge on filtering programmes and activities, it was identified that parents had a hard time dealing with such children. In most cases, the children will learn and find ways and means of bypassing even the most advanced

mechanisms the parents could come up with, and this made them always ahead of the parents. As pointed out by **INT9**:

> *"this is due to the curious nature of the children"*.

From this view, which was shared by other interviewees, it could be identified that the children were more likely to know more about the internet than their parents (especially for parents who were less educated and informed). The curious nature of the children, coupled with the less knowledge of the parents made the children always ahead, requiring parents to catch up. Even for parents who knew about the internet and mechanisms for mediating their children's internet usage, it was identified that there was the need for continuous improvement and advancement in their level of knowledge as children always improved on their knowledge and skills. As suggested by Grossbart *el al* (2002), this results in reverse socialisation where parents rather have to learn from their children. From this finding, there is the general requirement that parents will need to improve on their level of knowledge in relation to the internet if they can have the required level of impact on their children's activities.

Another major issue with the parental mediation of children's internet usage was found to be in the area of disagreement regarding the need to monitor children's internet usage and views of children on an invasion of privacy. Research by Iconkids and Youth (2016) reported similar findings suggesting that mediation of internet use is a major cause of disputes between children and their parents.

It was found through this research that some children were not happy with their parents having to monitor their usage and this in most places led to the children having to find other ways of using the internet without the knowledge of their parents. Such views from the children were identified by the parents to affect the mediation process making matters difficult to handle. This view suggested that in some instances, the children either did not understand why their parents should influence or restrict their internet usage or saw this as a parental invasion of their privacy. This view makes the need for parents to advise children on the dangers of the internet very important. Especially in Saudi Arabia where religious grounds serve as a key reason for the mediation of children's internet usage, educating children and communicating with them could serve as a basis of mediation (See AlSaedy, 2015; Bafakih *et al*, 2016). From this view, it was

also identified that a good relationship between the children and their parents was necessary to ensure the mediation process worked.

5.3.7 Lessons Learnt by Parents over the Years to Influence Children's Internet Usage

When asked about lesson parents have learnt throughout the process of mediating their children's internet usage, the parents suggested that the process has been a great learning curve for them. For the majority of the parents, monitoring their children's internet usage has helped them learn a lot that they did not know previously. Many parents suggested that before they had children, they were unaware of the dangers associated with internet usage. However, they are more aware of these issues due to their children and the urge to protect them as they navigate the internet for education and recreational purposes.. For such parents, it took issues faced by their children (such as pop-ups which prevented children from further accessing their computers), to let them know about some of the dangers.

Some parents admitted they were amazed by the number of things that happen on the internet and they sometimes realised they had been left behind. The significant lessons many of the parents had learnt was that the internet was a two-sided weapon that could be used for both good and bad things. The ability to balance the good and bad, to ensure the safety of their children was the key area parents had to learn. This learning involved in some instances having to take extra time off their day to day activities to get themselves updated on current trends on the internet and their potential effect on their children. For parents who were more educated, this was less difficult than for parents who were less educated. For less educated parents, in most cases, they relied on educating themselves to be able to mediate their children's internet usage. Some parents also relied on their children to teach them more about the internet so they could understand some of the issues facing their children. In some instances, less educated parents could not cope with the rate at which things changed on the internet and could only hope that things will get better. Some less educated parents consulted other parents (who are well educated) to help them understand the means and ways of improving their ability to mediate the internet usage of their children.

5.3.8 Parental Views on The Mediation of Children's Internet Usage

Parents were asked to give a general overview of their experience of having to mediate or control their children's internet usage. The views expressed suggested that the process was not an easy task as it got stressful in some cases. As quoted earlier, Livingstone *et al* (2015) reported that the mediation of children's internet usage is not an easy task due to the different avenues available for the children and the level of coercion required to achieve this. In the words of **INT14:**

> "*the process gets more frustrating when you are helpless and do not know what to do to block certain annoying sites that keep popping up on the children's computers*".

INT18 suggested that:

> "*the sites where the children try to play games made the process very difficult. These sites always have many pop-ups that lead to sites that have prohibited material. Even when you use Adblock software, some still manage to come through*".

The process, in general, was found to be difficult for parents though some suggested they enjoyed the whole process. According to some parents, gaining more knowledge as a result of the need to monitor and manage their children's internet use was one of the good parts of the process. To others, this need to monitor and control children's internet usage helped them get closer to their children as they were able to build a better relationship where children could trust them and report all issues to them.

For parents who identified internet mediation as a means to get closer to their children, this helped them to spend more time with the children. As reported by Minkus *et al* (2015) and the EU Kids online (2014), excessive hours on the internet means little interaction between the children and the rest of the family. Some parents, therefore, see this as an avenue to regain some of the lost time by spending time with the children doing what the children enjoy doing (browsing).

5.4 SUMMARY

This chapter has analysed and discussed parental efforts to influence and control their children's internet usage patterns and behaviour. The results of the data analysed suggest that different measures were adopted by parents to influence their children's

internet usage and this related to the level of education of the parents and their views of the level of danger on the internet. Mechanisms identified included education of children, use of software to filter and to block inappropriate websites, restricting of children's internet access to specific times and specific devices, and the use of religious stance to persuade the children. The discussion of the results together with the literature suggests that the measures adopted by the parents are similar to methods used in other countries. The difference is that in Saudi Arabia parents have more autonomy over the activities of children and for that reason active mediation is a common practice.

To put the results of both the qualitative and quantitative together, a discussion of both results in relation to the extant literature is presented in the next chapter with emphasis on the extent to which the research questions have been answered.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Chapter, the qualitative and quantitative data will be discussed together in the context of the examined literature and theory in Chapter Two. It will assess the degree to which parental input and influences impacts and shapes children's internet usage in Saudi Arabia.

The analysis of the data showed trends relating to the aims and objectives of this research, in particular: internet usage patterns of children in Saudi Arabia; the extent to which parents influence their children's internet usage; the types of measures parents adopt to influence children's internet usage; the relationship between family characteristics and children's internet usage; and the experience of the parents as they mediate their children's internet usage. This chapter discusses the results of the two different forms of analysis conducted in relation to existing literature to determine the level of agreement between the results of the research conducted on Saudi Arabia, research from countries similar to Saudi Arabia and research from other western countries.

The chapter is divided into five main sections, which cover the discussion on **internet usage patterns of children in Saudi Arabia; Strategies/measures adopted by parents to influence children's internet usage; experience of parents on the internet mediation process; effectiveness of parental mediation of children's internet usage;**
and the barriers to the internet usage mediation process. The seven central themes from the qualitative analysis are aligned to each of these sections. The chapter will assess whether there are similarities and differences between the results of this research and published literature work.

6.2 INTERNET USAGE PATTERNS OF CHILDREN IN SAUDI ARABIA

The quantitative survey results from both parents and children suggest that children use the internet on a regular basis. Of all the children who took part in this study, 94.5% explained that they had access to a computer within their family home. Furthermore,

61% had personal computers, and this suggests that the availability to access the internet may potentially be high. Children accessed the internet not just from their computers but from phones, from their schools and on a few occasions from equipment, loaned by a friend. This access to computers and the internet is likely to lead to a high rate of internet usage among children.

It was identified that all the children who partook in this research used the internet but to varying degrees. From the data gathered from 700 children, it was identified that 64% used the internet on a daily basis. This figure is similar to research by Livingstone *et al* (2011 in Alvarez *et al*, 2016) discussed in Chapter Two who suggested that 60% of children in the EU aged between 9 and 16 years use the internet on a daily basis. The internet usage rate among the children used for this study can be considered very high as all the children used are in year 6 (11-13 years). Bener and Bhugra (2013) report that there is a very high increase in the use of internet in the Middle Eastern countries, especially in the Arabic Gulf region. It can be deduced that a large number of children from this region have access to the internet on a daily basis. The results also suggest that not only did the children use the internet daily, but some also used the internet for a longer duration of 6 hours or more in a day. From the results analysed, 14.5% of the children used the internet for at least 6 hours a day. Blackwell *et al* (2014) report that, on the average, children between 11 and 12 years spent about 1 hour and 40 minutes per day on the internet. As pointed out by Alwagait *et al* (2015), in Chapter Two the use of the internet can provide a medium to share ideas, collaborate, facilitate learning and help students to understand and teach each other at the same time.

Lenhart, *et al* (2005) report that in some countries, the bewildering array of online content accessible to young people poses an occasional concern among parents, academics and policy-makers. Data from about 10 years ago suggest that internet usage has increased among children. In places such as the UK, 75% of 9 -19 years old were reported to have internet access at home in the year 2005 (Livingstone and Bober, 2005). In the US in 2004, 87% of 12 – 17 years old were internet users, and 49% had home access to broadband (Fox, 2005). More recent data from Lenhart (2012) found that while only 8% of 12- to 13-year-olds owned a smartphone, 92% of owners used their cell phone and 30% used a tablet computer to access the internet. Considering the

younger ages of the children used for this research (less than 12 years), there is an indication that internet usage in very high in Saudi Arabia.

From the data gathered, the children mainly used the internet for the purposes of YouTube videos where over 69% of all the children watched YouTube. Blackwell *et al* (2014) report suggest that YouTube is the top visited internet site among children between the ages of 10 and 12 years. Holloway *et al* (2013) report similar results that indicate that video sharing sites are the very first sites children around the age of 9 will visit. The next was games, which had about 55.1% of the children saying they used the internet to play games. Only 20% of the children indicated that they used the internet for educational purposes. Bleakley *et al* (2016) suggested that the internet has transformed the way children and youth communicate, learn and network.

Parental views of their children's internet use patterns was a central theme that arose in the interviews. Analysis of this theme revealed that there was a general concern amongst all of the parents about the use of internet for playing. This for some parents was worrying because of the potentially addictive behaviour that arises. For example, one parent **INT7** explained that:

> *"Children can get addicted to websites or games that do not help the children in any identifiable positive way".*

There was also a concern that this resulted in a decrease in communication with family members and this hurt their relationships with their children and other members of the family. One parent **INT8** explained that there is:

> *"Lack of conversation and concentration as well as the isolation as they prefer to be on their own at home."*

In this regard, the internet use by the children who took part in this research also shows that communication with peers was a more preferred option for them, and this form of communication was high. However, little of the communication related to educational purposes making the internet use by the children mainly for socialising. Social network sites like Facebook also featured in the internet usage of the children with 37.4 % of the

children indicating they used the internet for Facebook. Compared to internet usage rates elsewhere, the Facebook usage rates among the children is low, and this can be attributed to the age of the children used in this survey (between 11 and 13 years). The legal age for joining Facebook is a minimum of 13 years.

As also reported in Chooi and Ross (2006), the internet usage of children makes them natives of a digital world where the majority of their social activities happen over the internet. Results from this research support this assertion. Even though internet usage is high among the children who took part in this study, the interview sub-themes (from Parental views of their children's internet use patterns) revealed that parents did not feel that their children were making the best use of the internet as they use it more for social activities and little for educational purposes. Furthermore, their children's internet usage behaviour for non-educational purposes was perceived as excessive and could lead children to wander about on the internet to sites that are not appropriate for the children. For example, two parents (**INT3** and **INT 7**) explained that;

> *"The internet is important to my children's development and their education but the amount of time they spend on the internet talking to their friends cannot be good for them".*

> *"I believe the internet is a double-edged sword. It is instrumental when used in a proper way for education, and it could be very harmful if used any other way, when they spend too much time on it".*

The use of the internet mainly for non-educational purposes was connected in a number of ways to the location of use of the internet. The results on where the children used the internet suggest that the children used the internet from their mobiles, at school and in some instances from their friend` device. These locations present different avenues for the children to use the internet and the level of control over internet use by children in these different locations would differ. For internet use at home, parents had the advantage of being able to monitor what their children used the internet for, especially which sites they visited and to be able to mediate such uses (either by security software or change in internet settings). For the use of the internet in school, it was generally

expected that teachers would be able to influence the internet usage behaviours of children in schools. In the survey data, the use of the internet by children in their friends' houses was found to be more challenging as parents were not in control of the use of the internet by children in such areas. Clark (2011) report similar findings and suggest that the use of the internet has become very personal and mobile making it difficult for parents to know what their children do online. In the qualitative data collected here, parents also expressed fears about the mobility of their children's internet access. The availability of the internet on children's phones and other 'gadgets' as well as the access to the internet outside the home was identified as one of the main means or factors that negatively influenced the parental mediation of children's internet. In terms of usage pattern by gender, the research results indicate that there was not much of a difference between the internet use patterns of female children when compared to male children. The literature on parental mediation produces inconsistent results regarding usage patterns and mediation patterns by gender (Lee, 2013); whereas some reported that there is no difference, others suggested that differences exist in terms of mediating male and female children's internet use. From the results, it was identified that the opportunities for both young boys and girls to have access to the internet was almost equal. This could be due to the program facilitated by the government to ensure the compulsory education and rights of both girls and boys in the country. The general principle of children's rights in Saudi Arabia could be linked to this similarity in usage for both boys and girls as the principle seeks to support and provide the resources for child's right to education and reduction in illiteracy (Albkr, 2002). As a signatory to the United Nations General Assembly's convention in 1989, as a country, there has been an effort to reduce the gap between the male child and the female child in terms of rights and the provision of the needed resources to ensure a good childhood is experienced. From the qualitative analysis carried out, it was also identified that parents do not discriminate in terms of giving access to the computer to both their male and female children. This is similar to the results presented in the study of Livingstone *et al.*, (2011). It was identified that the access given to children was not dependent on their gender. As reported in Maramaldin (1997), Saudi Arabia as a country encourages the use of technology from the primary school level, and this could have contributed to the high usage rates for both girls and boys. Even though there is gender disparity between

male and female in relation to access to the internet, Shen and Khalifa (2010) report that for younger people, there are more avenues for access to the internet and this brings about less disparity in access based on gender compared to the older generation. The evidence indicates that there is a growing rate of internet usage in both children and adults in Saudi Arabia and there is no discrimination in terms of gender.

Al-Asmari *et al* (2014) reported that there has been increasing adoption of e-learning in Saudi Arabia. Spada (2014) suggests that, even though internet usage in the Middle East was low, the usage rate grew by more than 26% between 2000 and 2012. A recent study by Poushter (2016) also showed that emerging economies such as those in the Middle East have very high rates of internet usage. Bafakih *et al* (2016) also suggested that Saudi Arabia has the second highest population of internet users in the Middle East.

It was however identified from the present research, that the proportion of female children who spent more than six hours on the internet was higher than the proportion of male children. Even though more children spend less than six hours a day on the internet, the few who spent more than six hours were mainly girls. These findings corroborate that reported by Lenhart *et al* (2010) who suggest that young girls between the ages of 12 and 17 are more likely to have social media accounts such as Facebook than boys of the same age. It is important to consider these findings in the context of the theoretical approaches discussed in Chapter 2. Pluralist approaches to media effects argue that its audience members are not homogenous spectators and therefore adopt polysomic readings of media text. In this case, gender may play an influential part in the time spent on the internet but also impact on the resultant behaviours. Where Morley (1980) has previously linked the social position (such as class, occupation and family structure) of the audience with their media text, here it can be recognised that the gender of children is also important. More recently, research has suggested that Saudi young females are spending more time accessing the internet, such as social media because they are using it as a tool to negotiate and express the boundaries of their identity that is traditionally restricted by cultural and societal rules (Guta and Karolak, 2015). The tentative implications here are that young females may also be adopting this approach.

6.2.1 Children's Internet Usage by Socio-Economic Status of Families

One of the questions to be answered by this research was to identify the differences in internet usage of children based on socio-economic factors of the families. The analysis of the data checked for socio-economic issues such as the educational level of parents, family income/status, age of parents, the number of children in the family and the level of technology use in the family. Duimel and Haran (2007) in Valcke *et al*, (2010) pointed out that the number of children in the family is bound to have an impact in controlling surfing habits. Moreover, older siblings are expected to help in moderating the internet usage of children.

From the analysis of the results (See Chapter 4 and 5), the family factors and characteristics influenced the internet usage behaviour of children as well as the strategies of the parents towards mediation such usage. Research by different authors (Cho and Cheon, 2005; Youn, 2008; Clark, 2011; Livingstone *et al*, 2011; Lee, 2013; Livingstone *et al*, 2015) suggested that the socio-economic status of families may influence the internet usage patterns of the children in the families. A report regarding the use of the internet by EU kids in 2014 showed that the use of the internet by children is to a large extent, influenced by the socio-economic status of the families (EU Kids Online, 2014). In a study on children's online experiences in socially disadvantaged families, it was identified that such children have issues with online behaviour, especially where families do not give social support.

From this research, it was identified that where parents are avid users of the internet or technology, then the children are very likely also to spend more time on the internet. Research by Kaspersky in 2016 reported that one of the impacts of children's Internet-dependency is the Internet-dependency of their parents. The research results suggested that 62% of the parents who spent more time on the internet also had their children dependent on the internet compared to only 32% of the non-dependent parents. Results from this research showed a different trend. The statistical analysis carried out in this study also showed that where parents have little knowledge about the internet, children in most cases used the internet very frequently and this is because parents were not in a good position to mediate (or control) the internet use behaviour of their children. For example, in the qualitative data one parent **INT14** in this position explained:

> *"The process gets more frustrating when you are helpless and do not know what to do to block."*

Similarly, parent interviewees who were less educated and informed expressed the view that children were more likely to know more about the internet than them and this may make it difficult for them to keep up with controlling their dependency. One parent **INT9** explained that:

> *"The inability of the parents to catch up with the children means the children win".*

6.2.2 Influence of Children's Internet Usage on Family Relationships

Livingstone *et al* (2011) reported that new media at home and the internet has fundamentally transformed how parents and children live, work, play and even communicate. The constant use of the internet by children was identified to have many different influences, including influence on the relationships between the children and their family or parents. As reported in Minkus *et al* (2015), technological advances such as the internet present parents with novel concerns. From the study, it was identified that children spent a lot of time on the internet, be it on their phones or computers and some parents find this problematic. The time spent by the children on the internet was met with mixed feelings from their families (parents). Even though all parents who participated in this study agreed that children's internet usage was necessary and had a good influence on their learning and development (such as education and ability to learn from around the world), it was also identified that problematic use (excessive times spent on the internet) had adversarial effects on the family. As presented in Surette (2011), the family is an agent of socialising and needs to play a key role in the life, development and upbringing of the children. Similarly, Structuralist Functionalist theory advocated by Parsons (1949) and Morgan (2015) suggested that family socialisation processes such as discipline are important for developing the child's, expectations and values of the society in which they live. Research on the family structures and developments in Saudi Arabia shows there has been a change in the family system over the years with the nuclear family decreasing in size and expected to be about 5.7 in 2023. Aldosari (2005) reported that this change in family size has been as a result of women playing more roles in society by working

outside the home. This decrease in family size means there are fewer people in the family to have conversations with making family time very important. As we also saw in Chapter Two more recent views of Functionalism presented by Parsons and Bales (2002), showed that changes in the nuclear family such as reduced average family size and the influence might affect the traditional socialisation process.

Taylor (2013) reported that the internet provides children with independence from the family and the overindulgence in online activities has become a strain on the families. As reported, 'with the use of mobile phones, instant messaging, and social networking sites, children see this technological divide between themselves and their parents as freedom from over-involvement and intrusion on the part of their parents in their lives' (Taylor, 2013). This freedom from the over the involvement of parents in their affairs has become the stress for many parents as they see that as a separation from their children. Some parents saw the amount of time spent on the internet as the time that could have been spent together as a family having conversations and as such this took away family time. Some parents termed it as "*addiction to the internet*" by their children. For families where children used the internet 4 hours or more in a day, the parents considered this to be an addiction and as such saw it as a negative influence on the family relationship leading to what parents referred to as "*lack of communication and concentration*". The negative influence of addiction to the internet on the family relationship was supported even by parents whose children did not use the internet for up to 4 hours and formed one of the main reasons for parents' control (influence) on their children's internet usage. Research by the EU kids online Network also indicates that internet usage puts a strain on family relationships by affecting the personal and emotional parent-child relationship (EU Kids Online, 2014). It is reported that this is a common trend in Europe and many other countries where internet access is readily available through the computer or the phone. A research by Kaspersky in 2016 involving 3,780 families with children ages 8 to 16 across 7 countries also report that 50% of children who are dependent on the internet report having less communication with their parents; and 30% of internet dependent children are more likely to have disputes with parents over internet usage (Iconkids and Youth, 2016). Nikken and Haan (2015) also reported a research from the Netherlands which suggested that the excessive use of the internet by children has been a source of constant stress for families. This

problem is reported to be worse for families with single parents. Research results by Bafakih *et al* (2016) suggested that high internet usage in Saudi Arabia is a source of concern for parents of middle and high school students.

To overcome this strain on the family relationship as a result of excessive internet use, many parents tried to build better relationships with their children by ensuring they provided more time to communicate with the children. Another strategy by the parents to overcome the addiction of their children to the internet was placing a ban on the number of hours a child is allowed to stay on the internet. Some parents also reported that the mediation process for their children's internet usage has actually helped them build a better relationship with their children as it gives them more time to communicate even when children are using the internet. This is due to the level of trust required in the process of mediating children's internet usage.

6.2.3 Views of Parents on the Internet Usage Patterns of Their Children

Lee (2013) suggested that parents' perception of media content and effects on their children is an important factor in explaining the extent to which parents supervise and monitor children's media use (Lee, 2013). Shin (2015) reported that there is a lack of an in-depth understanding of how parents perceive the internet and its impact on their children and how such perceptions affect the way parents socialise with their children as internet users. This research sought to investigate this area of parental mediation of children's internet usage. From the research, especially from the qualitative analysis (See chapter 5.3.1 and 5.3.2), it was identified that parents have differing views concerning the internet usage behaviour of their children. These views were largely related to perceptions of the parents on how dangerous or otherwise the internet is to their children. The perception of parents on the level of dangers on the internet also influenced the mechanism they adopted towards influencing the internet usage patterns of their children.

The results from this research are similar to research by Livingstone and Helsper (2008) and Shin (2013) in a number of ways. Livingstone and Helsper (2008) report that parents seem engaged in a constant battle with their children as they seek to balance the educational and social advantages of media use and the negative effects that some content or un-mediated contact might have on children's attitudes, behaviour, or safety.

This finding from Livingstone and Helsper covers the two main views of parents on the internet usage of their children. From this research, parents were of the view that the internet serves both positive and negative purposes for children. The use of the internet on its own is not a problem, but prolonged usage of the internet without beneficial outcomes was the source of worry for the parents. In addition to long unprofitable usage, the risks available on the internet is a major concern to parents. For example, one parent **INT 5** explained:

> *"Of course it is dangerous. Today internet has become semi-open and without any restrictions or conditions and the monitoring is hard."*

For the positive benefits of the internet on children's development, the parents suggested that it helped children to: acquire general knowledge; develop skills such as writing and searching; and teaches children about other programmes. Researchers such as Ito *et al*. (2008) also reported that the benefits of the internet and social media to children and adolescents such as enhancing communication, social connection and even technical skills. These positive benefits of the internet were seen as reasons why parents would encourage their children to spend time on the internet.

The main negative effects of internet usage on children as reported by the parents was on the addiction of children to the internet; the dangers of security issues children face when using the internet. These negative views were the reason behind the strategies adopted by parents to mediate their children's internet usage. The internet is generally perceived to be a dangerous place (especially for children) and this according to Shin *et al* (2012) places more responsibility on parents to ensure their children are kept safe on the internet. Both qualitative and quantitative data gathered through this research support the view that the internet is perceived as a dangerous place for children and even adults.

Research by Shin (2013) however inferred that parents presumed more positive than the negative influence of the internet on their children and felt confident about their ability to manage their children's internet use. From the interviews conducted by this research, even though all parents suggested that the internet provided its own good benefits, some parents were of the view that there is a lot more danger on the internet which made it dangerous for children. This perception of the dangers on the internet influenced the parents to be active in the mediation of their children's internet usage.

There were however a handful of parents who shared the view presented in Shin (2013) and suggested that the dangers on the internet have been overrated. For example, **INT1** One parent explained:

> "*I do not think … that the internet is a danger, it depends on how much a child is surfing when there is no monitoring control… I would like to emphasise that the fear from the internet's risk has been given a larger picture than it should for the children.*"

Concerns of children's internet usage according to Shin (2015); Livingstone *et al*. (2011); and Mesch (2009) include easier access to child-inappropriate content; cyberbullying; Internet addiction; and online privacy. These concerns are similar to the concerns raised by parents as found by this research. From this research, the dangers found on the internet according to the parents could be linked to pornographic materials; privacy issues; unscrupulous adults searching for vulnerable children; misinformation or miseducation; harassment; addiction to non-profitable games; and exposure to narcotics (See section 5.3.2-5.3.3). For parents who felt the dangers on the internet had been overrated, their main reason for mediating their children's internet usage was the addiction of children to internet use which took away time for other things including family engagement. For many other parents, however, the internet was dangerous and children needed to be protected. The qualitative data show that "deciding on the levels of dangers on the internet was also seen as a valuation of balance between the "*positives*" of the internet as against the "*negatives*" of the internet". Based on the outcome of a parent's decision, specific measures were adopted to influence the internet usage patterns and behaviours of their children.

The results from this research suggested that religious beliefs also played a key role in the views of parents of the dangers on the internet. From this research, it was gathered that child exposure to pornography which many parents reported was against the views of Islam and served as one of the main reasons why parents would protect their children against such exposure. Here evidence of the collectivist nature of Saudi society is evident because parents found it as a religious duty to uphold their religious beliefs in the family and to ensure children towed that same path. For issues such as misinformation and miseducation, parents were of the view that the internet had many sites where children were prone to indoctrination or miseducation, which would be

against the values of Islam. For such parents, it was a better option to prevent children from falling into such situations, and as such there had to be an active means of safeguarding the children. Parents shared similar views on dangers such as exposure to narcotics. From the data collected on the views of children on sites teaching about explosives and narcotics, there were significant percentages of children who did not see such sites as dangerous. The parents, however, believed that such sites are too dangerous for children and as such children did not need to have access to such sites. All these dangers, according to the parents were against Islamic beliefs and for that reason, children had to be protected (at least for religious reasons).

6.3 STRATEGIES/MEASURES ADOPTED BY PARENTS TO ENSURE CHILDREN'S INTERNET SAFETY

Parental concerns over their children's internet use come in two main forms: how much time should a child spend online; and how to ensure children retain appropriate privacy (and safety) online (Minkus *et al*, 2015). From the quantitative and qualitative research analysis, it was identified that different strategies are adopted by the parents to ensure the safety of their children when using the internet. The strategies or measures adopted by parents to ensure children's internet safety was identified as one of the central themes from the qualitative data, as evidenced in Chapter 6. It was evident from this themes that there was increasing need by most parents to ensure the safety of their children on the internet and this can be attributed to the views of parents on how dangerous the internet was for their children. Livingstone and Helsper (2008) reported that parent's mediation of their children's media usage has two main targets: preventing unwanted behaviour and promoting family social values. Data from this research suggests that in SA, another essential factor is religious compliance. The need to ensure that the children uphold islamic religious values forms a key target for parental mediation of children's internet usage. Research by Al-Agha *et al* (2016) conducted in Saudi Arabia also suggested that children who spent more than 2 hours a day on electronic devices showed increase BMI. Even though this was not captured in the current study, there is evidence to suggest that parents have concerns to mediate their children's internet usage. As primary caregivers and socialisation agents, parents are

encouraged to actively monitor and supervise children's Internet use (Ho and Zaccheus, 2012).

Parental influence of their children's internet usage as reported in the literature suggests that the strategies extend from the use of restrictions to conversational and interpretive strategies (Lee, 2013; Nikken and Jansz, 2014; Livingstone *et al*, 2015; Talves and Kalmus, 2015; Chng *et al*, 2015). The results gathered from this research indicate that strategies adopted by parents in Saudi Arabia to mediate or control their children's internet usage also range from the use of different levels of restrictions to conversations to help children understand the risk associated with the use of internet and the need to be mindful of which sites were visited. These different methods captured from the study can be divided into the three main strategies reported in the literature: active mediation; restrictive mediation; and co-using (Shin, 2015; Lee, 2013; Kalmus *et al*, 2015). From this research, it was also identified that parents do not necessarily adopt one of these three strategies but adopt different strategies based on the situation they are involved in as reported in Nikken and Hansz (2006). An additional sub-theme identified within the measures adopted by Parents to Ensure Children's Internet Safety theme focused on the parent's level of education. Their education levels and level of understanding of the internet and internet usage were all found to be the basis for the choice of mediation strategies. As reported by Clark (2011), parental mediation strategies are employed by parents to mitigate the negative media effects on their children.

Literature reports different strategies adopted by parents to influence their children's internet usage. From this study, it was identified that the strategies adopted by the parents varied based on a number of sociological factors: the educational level of parents; the size of families; the working status of the families. From the research, parents who had good knowledge of the internet and its associated risk were in a better position to influence their children's internet usage. From this research, such parents used a combination of what Shin (2013) refers to as an active mediation. This approach required parents to have critical discussions about the dangers on the internet and the need to be safe. Laible and Thompson (2007) also stated that through parent-child dialogues parents could take children to 'a relational system of mutual reciprocity' page xx where children experience positive responsiveness from their parents (See Shin, 2013; Nikken and Jansz, 2014). It was found from this research that parents who had a

better knowledge of the internet and its dangers preferred active mediation which helped children to have a better understanding of this topic. Similar results were found by Lee (2013) who reported that parents' perception of media content and effects served as an important factor in explaining the extent to which parents supervise and monitor children's media use (Lee, 2013).

From this research, some parents who regard themselves as knowledgeable and have a good understanding of the internet mentioned that the internet was not as dangerous as portrayed. Although only a few parents shared this view, they also suggested that their approach to influencing their children's internet usage was through active mediation.

Most parents involved in this research adopted restrictive mediation as the means to influence their children's internet usage. This included the use of software to monitor or control children's internet usage; the use of parental locks and filtering of websites; limiting children's access to the internet only to particular hours within the day or particular devices; and restricting children from accessing the internet outside the home or school (where similar strategies are used). In some instances, parents would only allow children to use the internet in their presence, and this served as a means for parents to monitor and control children's internet usage behaviour. Comparable to Lee (2013) study, parents in this study preferred restrictive mediation to active mediation, and time restriction was more prevalent than content restriction. Restrictive mediation, whether it regards to time or content, has its own merits: as compared to communication-based active mediation, restrictive mediation, especially time restriction, can be more straightforward and easier to implement since it does not require extensive knowledge of the Internet. In addition, restrictive mediation based on rulemaking can be more salient than active mediation because "children may have to deal with this kind of mediation on a daily basis" (Nathanson, 2001: 215; Lee, 2013). This means of mediation of children's internet usage was identified from this research to be common among parents who did not have good knowledge on the internet or did not have high educational levels. For such parents, the use of software or another means to restrict the children's internet usage proved to work better as they did not have to worry on a day to day basis so long as the restrictions kept children away from either the addiction to internet usage or the dangers on the internet. From the data analysed, restrictive mediation occurred in four main ways: use of parental locks to filter

websites; limiting the amount of time children spent on the internet; limiting children's internet use to times parents were available only; limiting children's access to internet only from the home or school. This mediation strategy, especially limiting children's access to the internet was said to have minimal effect as children usually accessed the internet from their phones away from the supervision of their parents and teachers and in some instances from their friends' mobile phones. The ability of children to have access to the internet from places other than their homes was a source of worry for parents as they were not sure of the level of security of such accesses. Similar concerns were raised in the study conducted by Clark (2011).

There were some issues identified with the restrictive mediation process, and this included children identifying ways and means of bypassing such restrictions and the generation of friction between parents and children based on such restrictions. Parents reported that as children grow up, they tend to disagree more with the parents on the restrictions and this becomes a source of constant conflict between themselves and the children. Similar results were reported by Lwin *et al* (2008) who suggested that parents and their children have constant conflicts due to the need to mediate the internet usage of their children. This as reported before, was common with parents who had older children but not with younger children. The general practice is to reduce the level of restrictions as children got holder and were generally required to be in a better position to ensure their security online.

The third approach to influencing children's internet usage was for parents to participate in the internet usage with their children and this usually occurs when parents had good knowledge of internet usage and the issues relating to children's internet usage. This was also identified as a sub-theme within the qualitative interviews from the measures adopted by Parents to Ensure Children's Internet Safety theme. Termed as co-using, (Shin, 2015) parents who generally adopted this approach to mediating their children's internet usage were generally parents who did not know much about internet usage and were more interested in improving their internet literacy while keeping an eye on the internet usage of their children. From the qualitative analysis carried out by this research, most parents found co-using as one of the best alternatives to mediating their children's internet usage as in one way or the other the process helped parents and their children to bond the more. For example, one parent (INT2) explained that;

"I am keen to be close to them and share some of their time on the internet".

Livingstone and Helsper (2008) reported that active co-using was adopted by two-thirds of the parents who took part in their research. Shin (2015) and Connell *et al* (2015) also reported that co-using is a trendy approach to parental mediation of children's internet use. From this current research, active co-use was generally seen to be adopted by parents who were interested in knowing more about the internet themselves.

A general trend found from this research was that parents with younger children were more concerned about their children's internet usage than for parents whose children were older. Similar results were presented by Livingstone *et al* (2011) and Warren *et al* (2002), stating that parents with younger children adopted higher levels and more restrictive types of parental mediation. From this research, it was identified that parents were more willing to implement stricter influence when children are younger and willing to accept such influences.

6.4 EXPERIENCE OF PARENTS OF THE INTERNET MEDIATION PROCESS

From the results of this study, it was identified that the internet usage behaviour of children served as a source of worry for some the parents (especially parents whose children spent over four hours on the internet) and this resulted in the need to have the internet usage of their children mediated. The mediation process was also identified to come with varied experiences based on the family characteristics and in most instances the response of the children to the process. As reported by Clark (2011), the unique nature of the internet made it a difficult task for parents to mediate their children's internet usage. To be able to have a better impact on children's internet usage required parents to be very knowledgeable on the internet and issues it presents. Factors that promote the parental influence of children's internet usage was identified as a theme within the qualitative interviews. Low educational level or lack of knowledge about how to use the internet were identified as sub-themes. Many parents who had low educational levels or were not good with the internet found it very burdensome to mediate their children's internet usage. As admitted by the parents in this research, in

most instances "the children are ahead of us in terms of internet use and we as parents have to play catch up with our children" **(INT3)**. Similar results were presented in Shin (2013) who reported that "commenting on internet use requires an understanding of the Internet. However, today's children are savvy Internet users with sophisticated Internet knowledge. If parents lack technical knowledge of the Internet, it will be hard for them to effectively manage their children's Internet use" (Shin, 2013, p. 652).

The changing landscape of internet usage and the sophistication of technology poses a struggle to parents, and this is seen as one of the main barriers to parental mediation of children's internet usage. As suggested by Lentz *et al* (2014), such sophistication makes it difficult for parents to cope with children who are generally regarded as natives of the internet world. Shin (2013) also reported that the very nature of the internet use makes it relatively more difficult for parents to closely monitor children's Internet activities.

Parents also found the process frustrating when their children opposed the mediation of internet usage. Such opposition and the subsequent conflict in some instances cause a rift between the parents and their children leading to negative results (such as constant arguments between children and their parents). This result is similar to that reported by Livingstone and Helsper (2008) whose conclusion is that parents seem engaged in a constant battle with their children as they seek to balance the educational and social advantages of media use and the negative effects that some content or mediated contact might have on children's attitudes, behaviour, or safety.

There were other instances where parents found the mediation process enjoyable when children cooperated with them. In such instances, parents were able to help keep an eye on their children while learning at the same time. For these parents, the ability to learn about the internet which gave them better opportunities to influence their children's internet usage served as a motivation for the parents.

6.5 EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PARENTAL MEDIATION OF CHILDREN'S INTERNET USAGE

In terms of the effectiveness of parent's mediation of children's internet usage, it was identified that different methods by parents have different success rates. From the interviews conducted, it was identified that where some parents believed their mediation was effective in protecting their children from risky behaviour and the dangers on the

internet, a majority of the parents found the process burdensome and stressful. This is contrary to the research conducted by Shin (2013) who suggested that parents are generally confident that their internet mediation strategies can lead to the required outcomes.

The quantitative data on parents' supervision of their children's internet usage suggest that 42% of the parents never use filtering programmes on their children's computers. In terms of guidance, 53% of the parents also suggested that they do not guide their children when they use the internet. Other researchers such as Hwang *et al* (2017); Sonck *et al*. (2013); and Livingstone and Helsper (2008) suggested that parents acknowledge the difficulty in mediating their children's internet use. As seen from this research, the parents acknowledged that there are instances where their children were somewhat ahead of them in terms of internet usage, and they had to in turn learn from their children so they can stand a better chance of mediating the internet usage behaviour of the children.

Parents are reported to underestimate their children's engagement in undesirable social behaviours whiles overestimating their control over children (Cho and Cheon, 2005; Liau *et al*, 2008). As presented in the study by Shin (2013), this can be explained by the fact that children's internet usage and socialisation also takes place outside the home, and that it is possible for children to be involved in less desirable social behaviours without the parent's knowledge. This makes it hard for parents to have control over children's activities outside the home (Liau *et al*, 2008). As reported by some parents, it is impossible to mediate children's use of the internet outside the home, and this is the reason why parents restrict children's internet use to the home and school. Some parents, however, had this self-serving bias which made them suggest that they had full control over their children's internet usage. According to Hoffner and Buchanan (2002), parents are less likely to view their children as vulnerable to negative social influences because parents are motivated to maintain positive self-perceptions of being 'good parents'. This view from the parents suggests that they are aware of what their children do on the internet. The quantitative data collected however suggests that 48% of the parents never find out what their children browse on the internet (See 4.3.2). This can also be interpreted that parents may not always be aware of what their children browse and for that reason may not be in the best position to determine whether or not their

children are vulnerable. Admitting that their children are susceptible to negative social influences (including the internet) and that they have little control over their children's social behaviours can be ego-threatening for parents.

6.6 BARRIERS TO PARENTAL MEDIATION OF CHILDREN'S INTERNET USAGE

When examining the experience of parents in the internet mediation process, it was evident that the mediation of children's internet usage comes with its problems. From this research, problems faced by parents as they try to mediate their children's internet usage. Three main barriers or issues were identified in the quantitative data and were identified as sub-themes in the qualitative interviews. These barriers arose out of either the (1) parent's low level of knowledge regarding internet usage; (2) children's dislike for parents' intrusion of their privacy and (3) the use of the internet outside the home. Regarding the latter, the survey data showed that 74.4% of children accessed the internet from different places outside the home to differing extents.

Known as digital natives (Prensky, 2001; Bennet *et al*, 2008; Palfrey and Gasser, 2013), children are thought of to be more internet savvy than their parents, and this poses a barrier to parents who want to mediate their children's internet usage. From this research, parents who had less knowledge than their children concerning internet usage generally relied on the use of software to restrict children's internet usage. Internet natives are said to be active experiential learners, proficient in multi-tasking, and dependent on communications technologies for accessing information and for interacting with others (Oblinger and Oblinger, 2005). This served as a barrier to most of the parents as they were generally not very literate like their children. One parent **INT9** explained that the reason for this is that:

> *"Children ... are always willing to explore new avenues of doing things and the inability of the parents to catch up with the children means the children win".*

This result is similar to what Livingstone and Helsper (2008) recorded as some of the issues in parental mediation of children's internet usage. They report that the issues faced by parents in mediating their children's internet usage include: the proliferation of media goods in the home, especially in children's bedrooms; and the growing

complexity of media and communication technologies. Especially for new media, lack of technical expertise may hinder the implementation of parental mediation at home (Facer *et al*, 2003; Livingstone and Bober, 2006). What should be considered here is the potential impact this can have on the application of the Functionalist theory. As digital media, new media and the proliferation of media good in the homes increases, the parent's ability to control the social norms and values their children experience potentially decreases. Symbolic forms of communication that are transmitted through new media and the internet can come to play a key part in the meanings children have and inform the child's self -identity (Thompson, 1995). As discussed in the Literature review, Kleine and Kernan (1993) asserted that there is a connection between one's self and their possessions, the connection is between the young child and the media gadgets they possess (tablets and smartphones). Similarly, Livingstone (2007) argued that now children and young people have personalised and individualised relationships with media and the internet. Due to the multiplication and diversification of media goods, children and young people will have access to numerous devices (such as phones, iPods, iPads, computers) in which they consume independently away from their parents view behind closed bedroom doors (Livingstone, 2007).

Different researchers suggest that there is constant conflict between children and their parents on the mediation of their internet usage. For younger children, it was identified that this is not the most significant issue as younger children in Saudi Arabia are very likely to obey what their parents dictate for them. As children get older, however, they begin to find more avenues to have a say in their own life and want little to do with the parent's intrusion. Some researchers such as Livingstone (2007) reported that children actually find the internet as a haven where they can have their own life without interference from parents and essentially works towards building their resilience against extremist behaviour. For this reason, the mediation of children's internet usage comes across as another avenue for parents to interfere with their activities creating a conflict between the children and their parents.

What should also be considered here is whether Livingstone's (2007) research still applies entirely to parents' perceptions of internet usage within the safe spaces of the

home. This research showed that 74.4% of children accessed the internet from different places outside the home to differing extents and the qualitative thematic analysis indicated that its usage outside the home was a key barrier in the mediation process. As discussed in the Literature review, Livingstone (2007) argued that media use in the family home comes to be perceived by parents as safe within a private space as opposed to that of the public outdoors that differs to when they were young. Furthermore, the media-rich home tends to be justified by parents in relation to the decline of safe public spaces. She suggests that "outside spaces are progressively seen as hazardous, [as] the range and quality of public services has declined, and media use at home is increasingly construed as educational as well as entertaining" (Livingstone, 2007: 305). However, it is evident here that for these parents the external settings beyond the home are more hazardous to their mediation of their children's internet usage.

6.7 EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

Underpinned by a pragmatist positioning, a mixed method approach was adopted. Pragmatists believe that reality is continually renegotiated, deliberated, interpreted, and therefore the best method to use is the one that solves the problem. This approach connects the choice of approach directly to the purpose of and the nature of the research questions posed (Creswell, 2003). While there was an observable phenomenon to be measured such as family characteristics, within this research it was also observed that a perceived subjective meanings could provide adequate knowledge. Knowledge is subjective in that it can be understood ontologically by examining people and their understanding and experiences. Social reality is perceived as a set of facts to be known by examining people, their usage and characteristics and thus seeing social reality ontologically as mutually constructed between people in the real world. The mixed method design has been advantageous because it has sought to answer concurrently both confirmatory and exploratory questions adopted in this research. However, there were epistemological and methodological issues that arose in adopting these methods that focus on the relationship between the knower and what is known, the processes of knowing and achieving findings.

It is important to reflect epistemologically on how knowledge is understood and perceived by the researcher. As a Saudi citizen, the researcher` position on how

knowledge is understood by me, the researcher, may be highly dependent on my cultural and religious beliefs. Notably, perceptions of internet usage and its relationship to children and the potential harm may or may not be influenced by my positioning and lived experience of the collectivist society in Saudi Arabia. In discussing this research and it findings, efforts has been made to ensure internal and external factors. Whilst this aligns to the pragmatist approach adopted, in which reality is continually renegotiated, deliberated, interpreted, this may have unconsciously impacted on the research methodology, design, data collection and analysis. Therefore the researcher have to consider the relationship between the knower and what is known.

One of the methodological issue that arose in adopting the chosen methods is that there is a limited depth of knowledge captured on the mediation of children's internet usage in Saudi Arabia. The survey design focuses on a closed more quantitative format which does not give an insight into the children perspectives of their internet usage and their parent's mediation. Furthermore, in-depth interviews of the children's experience of internet mediation by their parents were not adopted due to the time factor and inability to arrange such interviews with children without their parents being present. This limits the depth of information gathered on the children and thus limits the mixed method approach. An additional methodological issue that arose was in access to the appropriate sample sizes. Restricted time, access and limited resources meant that the sample sizes for parents and children adopted differed. Different samples were used for the parents and children, and therefore it was not possible to directly compare the views and experiences of the parents and that of the children. Furthermore, the research was limited to children at level six who are within the ages of 10 - 13 years. Gathering data from a wider age group could add more insights into the mediation process and experiences of the children and thus present a more representative sample.

Given the methodological issues that arose in adopting a mixed method design, it is important to be reflexive about whether the research methods were suitable. To what extent did the research procedures serve the research purposes. In light of this, it could have been more beneficial to reduce the level of quantitative data collection to ensure suitable time and resources were available for the further qualitative data on the children's experiences.

6.8 SUMMARY

This chapter has presented a discussion of the results of this research, comparing the outcome with the extant literature. From the discussion carried out in this chapter, it can be seen that parental mediation of children's internet usage in Saudi Arabia is an issue that many parents battle with. From the outcome of the discussion, the strategies adopted by the parents are related to the family characteristics and more importantly parent's knowledge of the internet and the dangers on the internet. The results from this research relate to research done by other researchers in Europe and other countries within and outside the Middle East. The reasons behind the strategies as well as the strategies adopted in Saudi Arabia as compared to Europe are similar except in cases where the parents mediated children's internet usage for religion purpose. As found from this research, the reason why many parents in Saudi Arabia mediate their children's internet usage is to ensure dangers on the internet which are likely to affect the religious beliefs of the children are prevented negatively. Such beliefs relate to issues such as pornography and indoctrination or miseducation on issues which are contrary to Islamic beliefs.

As discussed in this chapter, such dangers and parent's perception of their existence on the internet serves as the reason behind the parent's mediation strategies. The strategies adopted by parents, however, relate to strategies adopted by parents in other parts of the world reported in the literature. From the research findings and the extant literature, strategies adopted by parents can be grouped into three main categories: active mediation; restrictive mediation; and co-using. In terms of the experience of parents, as they adopt these strategies to influence their children's internet usage, results from this research suggest that parents have mixed experiences on the process. Where some parents find the process enjoyable, others find it very difficult, especially where their children do not corporate leading to conflicts between children and their parents. Barriers to the mediation process were also identified to relate to the level of savviness of parents regarding internet usage, children's opposition of parent's mediating their internet usage and access to the internet outside the home by the children. The next chapter concludes the research by presenting the implications of the findings of this research and the recommendations for successful mediation of children's internet usage in Saudi Arabia.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

From the previous chapter, the results of this research were discussed in line with the extant literature to determine the extent to which the outcome of this research fits within the current body of knowledge on children's internet usage. To conclude this research, this chapter presents an overview of the results of this research, the conclusions made and the implications of the results for the mediation of children's internet usage. The chapter is divided into six main sections. The first section of this chapter provides a review of how the aim and the objectives of this research have been achieved by summarising the process undertaken by this research. The second section of the chapter presents the main conclusions from the research followed by the practical implications of the outcome of the research for mediating children's internet usage in Saudi Arabia and other countries within the Gulf region. The contributions of this research are discussed next, and this leads to the contributions made by undertaking this study. The final two sections of this chapter discuss the limitations of this study and recommendations for future research.

7.2 ACHIEVEMENT OF RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

As presented in chapter one of this report, this research sought to investigate parental mediation of children's internet usage in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia with four objectives (See section 1.5). To achieve this aim, the objectives were explicitly designed to ensure all the necessary information required were gathered, analysed and discussed. The extent to which the objectives were achieved and the sections within which they were achieved are presented in the table below.

Research Aim	Objectives	Achievement of objective	Evidence
This research aims to	1. Survey the magnitude of children's	To achieve this objective, this research critically reviewed the extant	Evidence for the achievement

investigate the degree to which parental input and influences impact and shape children's internet and social media usage in Saudi Arabia	internet usage and its influence on behaviour	literature on children's internet usage behaviour across different regions and in different countries. The achievement of this objective also involved the review of the literature on socialisation and parental mediation as an aspect of child socialisation. This also involved the collection of data on children's internet usage in Saudi Arabia	of this objective is presented in chapter 2, Chapter 4 and chapter 5 of this research.
	2. Investigate the level of parental governance and the strategies and mechanisms with which they achieve this control	To achieve this objective, data was collected from children on their internet usage patterns and behaviours and parents on the mechanisms they adopt to mediate their children's internet usage	Evidence for this is shown in Chapters 4 and 6 of this thesis
	3. Assess the extent to which internet access and usage impacts the quality of family relationships	This objective was achieved by collecting data from parents on their perceptions of the internet use behaviour of their children and their views on the effects of their children's internet use on family	Evidence for this is shown in chapters 5 and 6 of this research

	4. Evaluate the effects of familial structures, and matrimonial hierarchy on the way parents socialise their children as Internet users	To achieve this objective, the research captured data on the effects of different family structures and characteristics on the mediation of children's internet use	Evidence for this is shown in Chapter 4 and 6 of this report

Table 7.1 Achievement of Research Aim and Objectives

7.3 CONCLUSIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

After achieving the main aim and objectives of this research, a number of key conclusions can be made. The following conclusions are made with regards to the nine questions posed by this research (See section 1.6).

1. The first research question was to determine the level of participation of children in internet activities and to investigate how effective parents are in mediating internet use. From this question, the results of this research suggest that, in Saudi Arabia, children have access to the internet and there is a very high usage rate of internet among children. It was identified that all the children participants in this research have access to the internet and on the average 64% of all the children use the internet on a daily basis. The research concludes that for the children participants in this research, the extent of use in a day ranges from 2 hours to 6 hours per day. Children used the internet for various reasons with YouTube (video sharing) being the most frequent use of the internet by children. In terms of the parental mediation of internet use by their children, this research concludes that the effectiveness of parental mediation of children's internet usage differs.

2. The research concludes that the main motivation for the parental mediation of children's internet usage in Saudi Arabia can be grouped into three

factors: preventing unwanted behaviour; promoting family social values; and religious compliance. In some cases, it was identified that religious compliance was the most important motivation for parents to mediate their children's internet usage. Some parents were of the view that apart from unwanted behaviour and family social values, children are at the risk of being misinformed or lured into activities that are against Islamic religious principles and for this reason there is the need to protect them from such risks.

3.   The negative effects of internet usage (problematic internet usage) on children range from effects on their family relationships to security issues. For parents, the risk of the children falling into the wrong hands on the internet and the time taken away from the family engagements were seen as a negative effect of internet use on the children. Another negative effect of internet use on the children is misinformation which could sway the children away from their religious principles. The research concludes that some parents were also of the view that spending too much time on the internet 'playing games or other social activities' is likely to have a negative effect on the education of the students (children).

4.   On the measures adopted by parents to mediate or control their children's internet usage for the purposes of safety, it was identified that different strategies existed but parents did not stick to any specific strategy but rather adopted a strategy based on the situations they are confronted with. The strategies covered two main areas: how much time the child should stay online; and how to ensure the safety of the child when online.

5.   The fifth research question was to identify the differences in the effect of the internet on family communication based on different activities of the children online. In line with this question, the research concludes that, when children spent a lot of hours online (4 hours or more), the family found this to be problematic and parents considered this to be addiction leading to a negative effect on family relationships in terms of time spent communicating or socialising as a family. Where children did not spend too many hours on

the internet on a daily basis, this research concludes that it had minimal effects on family communication.

6.   This research concludes that there are differences in children's internet usage based on family socioeconomic status. Where parents are educated and very savvy with internet use, have positive influences on their children's internet use.

7.   One main area of concern in the Gulf region is the disparity between male and female access to the internet. For children in Saudi Arabia; however, the research concludes that there is no difference between the level of access granted to males and females. This research concludes that for children, there were no restrictions between males and females having access to the internet. It was identified, however, that the proportion of girls who spent more than six hours a day on the internet was higher than the proportion of boys who did the same.

8.   The research also concludes that the age of parents had no relationship to the measures adopted to mediate their children's internet usage.

9.   Regarding the effect of the number of children in the home on the impact of children's internet usage, this research concludes that even though there were differences between the number of children in the family and the use of the internet, there was no significant relationship between the two variables.

7.4 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESULTS OF THIS RESEARCH

The results and conclusions from this research present some practical implications for mediation of children's internet use. These implications are derived from the discussion of the results presented in chapter 7 of this report.

The first implication of the research findings is that, even though parents try to mediate their children's internet usage, the process has not always been simple or successful and this is as a result of the ever-increasing sophistication of children's knowledge and skills on the internet. As digital natives, the results of this research imply that children will always advance their knowledge of internet usage and restriction strategies adopted by their parents. For this reason, there is the need to ensure that the mediation strategies adopted by parents relied more on a softer approach where children are made to

understand the need to be secure online through collaborative approaches requiring efforts from both the children and parents.

Results from this research also imply that children in Saudi Arabia have a very high internet usage rate and just like children from other parts of the world, video sharing sites such as YouTube is commonly used.

7.5 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

This research makes both theoretical and practical contributions to the mediation of children's internet usage within Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region as a whole. These contributions are discussed below.

7.5.1 Theoretical Contributions of the Research

The use of both positivist and interpretivist perspectives in collecting and analysing the data throughout this research presents an excellent theoretical basis to contribute to the subject of parental mediation on children's internet usage. Although many researchers have paid attention to the parental mediation of their children's internet usage (Livingstone *et al*., 2011; Sonck *et al*, 2013; Lee, 2013; Kalmus *et al*, 2015; Connell *et al*, 2015; Livingstone *et al*, 2015), most of these studies have been conducted in Europe and America where the socio-cultural dynamics differ from that of the Gulf region. The few studies on parental mediation of children's internet use do not cover in-depth the views and experiences of the parents and the factors influencing their mediation strategies. To this area of knowledge, this research adopts an interpretivist approach to discuss the experience of mediating children's internet usage from the viewpoint of parents who are involved in the process. This brings a new layer of understanding to the subject and makes the following contributions in terms of factors influencing the parental mediation process; practices adopted and the performance of these measures. The research also contributes by way of proving findings on the experience of parents undertaking the process.

In addition to the two main reasons (factors) for parental mediation of children's internet use, i.e. preventing unwanted behaviour and promoting family social values (Livingstone and Helsper (2008), and for health reasons, results from this research adds another factor which is religious compliance. The results from this research suggest that

for parents in Saudi Arabia, a major area of concern is to ensure their children uphold the Islamic religious values by not being exposed to contents which are frowned upon by Islam teachings (content such as pornography and the wrongful education of children on religious issues). The need to ensure children are brought up to meet societal norms which are primarily shaped by Islamic religious believes in Saudi Arabia served as a key driver for mediating children's internet usage. This was common for all participants in this research regardless of educational level, employment status or family size.

To the body of knowledge on parental mediation of children's internet use, results from this study also suggest that parental mediation practices ranged from soft approaches involving communication and advice given to children, the use of software or security tools to prevent or restrict children's internet usage to punishing children for accessing prohibited sites. In the Saudi Arabian community, punishing children for wrongful doing is a socially accepted norm and parents adopt this as one of the measures for mediating children's internet usage. Research by Lee (2013), Kalmus *et al* (2015) and Shin (2015) report that for Europe, America and in other parts of Asia, the mediation approaches adopted include communication and advising children on safety practices to the use of restrictive software and parental control measures on the devices used for accessing the internet. The use of punishment including corporal punishment is not commonly cited in the literature as a method for mediating children's internet usage. Another contribution of this research is that parents (from Saudi Arabia) do not have a specific mediation style used for their children but adopt different strategies based on the situation. The level of education or understanding of internet usage of parents influenced to a large extent the mediation strategies adopted by the parents. Where parents were highly educated, there are preferences for the use of software or parental controls on devices to mediate children's internet usage. In situations where parents were not highly educated and for that reason did not know much about mediation measures such as parental controls on the devices used by children, the common approach adopted was to talk to the children and prevent access by taking devices away or punishing the child for disobedience.

Through the use of the interpretivist perspective, this research contributes empirical evidence from the lived experience of parents on the mediation process for children's internet usage. The results suggest that mediating children's internet usage does not

only serve as a problem for the children but also for the parents who have to adopt measures which in some cases lead to tension between the children and their parents.

The research conducted also contributes to the advantage of using both qualitative and quantitative approaches in research by helping to gather views from a wider range of the population while getting the advantage of in-depth views at the same time.

7.5.2 Implications and Contributions of the Research

The practical application and recommendations of this research, contribute to the practice of mediating children's internet use has been made. These include the recommendation for parents to understand the changing nature of children's online behaviour and activities due to the ever-changing nature of abilities of children regarding internet use. Another practical contribution of this research is the recommendation for parents in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region to adopt practices that relied on building the capacities of children to take care of their security online. The approach to restricting children's internet usage at home proves less productive as children still have access to the internet from outside the home. This research, therefore, suggests that parents should instead concentrate on building better relationships with their children, so they can help them to understand the dangers associated with the use of internet thus preventing exposure to such dangers when the internet is accessed outside the home.

The findings of this research also suggest that children usually find their way around the restrictions used by parents to mediate their internet usage (Clark, 2011) and for that matter the children are usually a step ahead of their parents. To overcome this problems, this research contributes by recommending that parents instead should take approaches they are well informed about different strategies adopted by the children by improving their knowledge and skills. An alternative is to ensure children get a better understanding of the need to mediate their internet use as they grow.

The research results also suggest that approaches towards mediating children's internet usage that prevents adversarial or confrontational outcomes provide a better outcome. Measures such as co-using, educating children about the safety hazards on the internet including information security issues and the need to use filtering or parental control measures serve to protect the children from danger and at the same time keeping

information safe. Such measures should be adopted by parents with the view to helping the children to be safe and to conform to widely accept societal norms.

The research findings have implications for practice, regulation, policy and families. Importantly, the research has provided evidence for guidance on the mediation processes for parents in supporting their children's internet usage. It is evident that parents can utilise software to monitor their children's time and access to the internet, but some also like to play a role in monitoring their usage. Therefore, further support could be provided for parents with less knowledge of the internet and lower educational levels via schools and online platforms, supported by the Ministry of Education.

The implications of this research is vital for the current political and religious systems in Saudi Arabia. While it is often assumed that political and religious systems impact on controlling internet access for Saudi young people, there are nonetheless, high levels of social media use which have driven an immense diversification of online content, thus offering children a multitude of perspectives beyond state-controlled media. This research shows that children internet usage outside the media-rich home (Livingstone, 2007) is high and is an increasing concern for parents. Further research by the Ministry of Education, the Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC) and the state could assist in providing further guidance on how to support children internet usage beyond the home. Policies that can be regulated by the Ministry of Culture and Information and Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC) could be amended to support usage beyond the home and school for young children.

With the increased use of technology across Saudi Arabia, this research implies that online threats are likely to increase. This calls for improved measures towards security on the use of the internet, especially for children who may not understand the full implication of the threats online.

As the research findings suggest that children can have access to the internet outside the home where their parents cannot mediate such usage, the implication is that mediation by individual parents may not be enough to keep children safe online. For that reason, this research considers a nationwide educational campaign with emphasis on improving online security education for both parents and children, thus providing a more impactful solution. A collaborative effort by the ministry of education, the ministry of culture and

information, and the CTIC can encourage schools to make online security education a key aspect of the curricula for schools to ensure children get the real implications of the threats available on the internet and the measures to keep themselves safe.

7.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Mediating children's internet use has been a major concern in many countries, and this calls for inputs from government, parents, schools and even children. This research is however limited to data collected from parents and children with no input from schools, government or other social institutions. This limitation affects the depth of knowledge captured on the mediation of children's internet usage in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Also, the data collected from the children used only quantitative data which could not provide in-depth views of the children's experience with the mediation of their internet use by their parents. Although the use of quantitative data form this study helped to gather data from a wider range of people, the use of the qualitative approach in addition to the quantitative approach (as done for the parents) could increase the depth of information gathered.

Another limitation of this research is that different samples for parents and children were used and this means it was not possible to compare the views and experiences of the parents and that of the children. Gathering data from the same families (both children and parents) could contribute to the understanding which mediation approaches are effective and in what circumstance.

Due to time and resource constraints, this research was limited to children at level six who are generally within the ages of about 10 to 13 years. Gathering data from a wider age group could add more insights into the mediation process and experiences of these children.

7.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

From the results of this research as well as the limitations of this research, several recommendations for further research are provided. These include:

1. Considering the difference in internet usage behaviour of children of different age groups, this research recommends research into the internet use behaviour of children in Saudi Arabia as well as other areas within the Gulf region using a

wider range of ages and a comparison of the behaviour between the different age groups. This will help to provide a picture of the internet use behaviour of children in the region

2. Another recommendation for further research is to conduct similar studies in other countries within the Gulf region to determine the extent to which the results of this research will be applicable in the region. This will require a comparative study of parental mediation of children's internet use within different countries in the Gulf region.

3. Another recommendation for further studies is to extend the study into the mediation of children's internet usage by expanding the strategies and practices to cover government efforts as well as activities of schools to impact on the internet use behaviour of children.

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Parent's Questionnaire

استبيان الوالدين

Section One : Personal القسم الأول : المعلومات الشخصية information	
Father's Age ❑ Less than 30 years old ❑ 31 – 45 years old ❑ 46 or more	عمر الأب ❑ ٣٠ سنة فأقل ❑ من ٣١ ــ ٤٥ سنة ❑ ٤٦ سنة أو اكبر
Father's level of education ❑ Illiterate ❑ Elementary ❑ Intermediate ❑ secondary ❑ University Graduate ❑ Postgraduate (master's or PhD)	مستوى تعليم الأب ❑ لا يقرأ ولا يكتب ❑ ابتدائي ❑ متوسط ❑ ثانوي ❑ جامعي ❑ دراسات عليا (ماجستير / دكتوراه)
Father's Occupation ❑ Unemployed ❑ Retired ❑ Private sector employee ❑ Government employee ❑ businessman	وظيفة الأب ❑ لا يعمل ❑ متقاعد ❑ موظف في القطاع الخاص ❑ موظف في القطاع الحكومي ❑ رجل أعمال
Mother's Age ❑ Less than 30 years old ❑ 31 – 45 years old ❑ 46 or more	عمر الأم ❑ ٣٠ سنة فأقل ❑ من ٣١ ــ ٤٥ سنة ❑ ٤٦ سنة أو اكبر
Mother's level of education ❑ Illiterate ❑ Elementary ❑ Intermediate ❑ secondary ❑ University Graduate ❑ Postgraduate (master's or PhD)	مستوى تعليم الأم ❑ لا تقرأ ولا تكتب ❑ ابتدائي ❑ متوسط ❑ ثانوي ❑ جامعي

Section One : Personal القسم الأول : المعلومات الشخصية

	☐ دراسات عليا (ماجستير / دكتوراه)
Mother's Occupation	**وظيفة الأم**
☐ full time mother	☐ ربة منزل
☐ Retired	☐ متقاعدة
☐ Private sector employee	☐ موظفة في القطاع الخاص
☐ Government employee	☐ موظف في القطاع الحكومي
☐ Businesswoman	☐ سيدة أعمال
How many children do you have?	**كم عدد أطفالك**
☐ 1	☐ ١
☐ 2	☐ ٢
☐ 3	☐ ٣
☐ More than 4	☐ ٤ أو أكثر
Monthly household income	**الدخل الشهري للأسرة**
☐ less than 5000 SR	☐ أقل من ٥٠٠٠ آلاف ريال
☐ 5000 – 10000 SR	☐ ٥٠٠٠ ــ ١٠٠٠٠ ريال سعودي
☐ 10001 – 15000 SR	☐ ١٠٠٠١ ــ ١٥٠٠٠٠ ريال سعودي
☐ More than 15000 SR	☐ أكثر من ١٥ ألف ريال سعودي

Section Two : How your children browse the internet	**القسم الثاني : كيف يتصفح أطفالك الانترنت؟**
Do your children have their own personal computer?	**هل يوجد لدى أطفالك جهاز حاسب آلي خاص بهم ؟**
☐ Some	☐ بعضهم
☐ All	☐ جميعهم
☐ Non	☐ لا أحد
Where is the computer your children use situated?	**أين يوجد مكان الحاسب الآلي الذي يستخدمه أطفالك ؟**
☐ In the living room	☐ في غرفة الجلوس
☐ In the bedroom	☐ في غرفة النوم

English	Arabic
❑ Elsewhere	❑ في مكان آخر
When do your children use the internet?	**متى يتصفح أبنائك الانترنت**
❑ At all times	❑ في كل الأوقات
❑ In the daytime	❑ في النهار
❑ In the evening	❑ في المساء
❑ After midnight	❑ بعد منتصف الليل
❑ I do not know	❑ لا أعلم
How much time do your children spend browsing the internet every day?	**كم من الوقت الذي يستغرقه أطفالك في تصفح الانترنت يوميا؟**
❑ Less than 2 hours	❑ أقل من ساعتين
❑ 2 – 4 hours	❑ ٢- ٤ ساعات
❑ 4 – 6 hours	❑ ٤ — ٦ ساعات
❑ More than 6 hours	❑ أكثر من ٦ ساعات
Do your children use the internet at home unsupervised?	**هل يتصفح أطفالك الانترنت في المنزل بدون متابعة ؟**
❑ Yes	❑ نعم
❑ No	❑ لا
❑ Sometimes	❑ أحيانا
❑ I do not know	❑ لا أعلم
Do your children have friends on the internet?	**هل يوجد لدى أطفالك أصدقاء عبر الانترنت ؟**
❑ Yes	❑ نعم
❑ No	❑ لا
❑ I do not know	❑ لا أعلم
Do your children communicate with people in chat rooms?	**هل يتواصل أطفالك مع غيرهم من خلال غرف المحادثات (غرف الدردشة)؟**
❑ Yes	❑ نعم
❑ No	❑ لا
❑ Sometimes	❑ أحيانا

☐ I do not know	☐ لا أعلم
What sites do your children usually browse?(you can choose more than on answer) ☐ Games ☐ News ☐ Youtuob ☐ Social networking ☐ Shopping ☐ Music	**ما هي المواقع الالكترونية التي يتصفحها أطفالك عادة؟ (يمكنك اختيار أكثر من إجابة)** الألعاب ☐ الأخبار ☐ اليوتيوب ☐ الشبكات الاجتماعية ☐ التسوق ☐ الموسيقى ☐
Do your children use their mobile phones to access the internet? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Sometimes ☐ I do not know	هل يستخدم أطفالك الهواتف المحمولة لتصفح الانترنت نعم ☐ لا ☐ أحيانا ☐ لا أعلم ☐
Do your children browse the internet outside the house? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I do not know	**هل يتصفح أطفالك الانترنت خارج المنزل ؟** نعم ☐ لا ☐ لا أعلم ☐

If the answer is yes, where do the children use the internet? ☐ With friends ☐ In school ☐ In café ☐ On their phone ☐ I do not know	**إذا كانت الإجابة (نعم) ، أين يتصفح أطفالك الانترنت ؟** ☐ مع الأصدقاء ☐ في المدرسة ☐ في المقهى ☐ من خلال الهاتف الجوال ☐ لا أعلم

Answer the following statements : أجب على العبارات التالية:

Statements	أبدا Never	عادة Usually	أحيانا Sometimes	غالبا Often	دائما Always	الـعبـارات
I tell my children about the dangers of the internet						أخبر أطفالي عن خطر الانترنت
I try to find out what my children browse						أحاول معرفة ماذا يتصفح أطفالي على الانترنت
I use filtering programs on my children's computer						أستخدم برامج الحماية في جهاز الحاسب الآلي الخاص بأطفالي
I guide my children when they are on the internet						أقوم بتوجيه أطفالي عندما يتصفحون الانترنت

If you found out that your child was browsing prohibited sites what would you do? ❏ Guide them ❏ Rebuke them ❏ Chastise them ❏ Talk to them	إذا وجدت طفلك قد تصفح مواقع غير مناسبة ماذا ستفعل ؟ ❏ أقوم بتوجيهه ❏ أوبخه ❏ أعاقبة ❏ أتحدث معه

☐ Do nothing	☐ لا أفعل شيئا
Do you think your child has ever browsed any pornographic websites? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I do not know	**هل تعتقد أن طفلك قد تصفح أي مواقع إباحية ؟** ☐ نعم ☐ لا ☐ لا اعلم

كيف تقيم خطر المواقع التالية بالنسبة لأطفالك ؟ (رقم ١ هو الأكثر خطورة بينما الرقم ٥ هو الأقل خطرا)

How do you assess the risk of the following websites to your children?

(1 being the most risky to 5 being the least risky)

Statements	5	4	3	2	1	الـعبـــارات
Religious websites						المواقع الدينية
Pornographic websites						المواقع الإباحية
Extremism and terrorism						مواقع التطرف والإرهاب
Drugs(narcotics)websites						مواقع تعليم صنع القنابل والمتفجرات
Websites teaching the making of bombs and explosives						الشبكات الاجتماعية مثل الفيسبوك وتويتر وغيرها
Gaming sites						مواقع الألعاب
Music sites						مواقع الموسيقى

Statements	دائما Always	غالبا Often	أحيانا Sometimes	عادة Occasionally	أبدا Never	الـعبـارات
I browse the internet						أنا أتصفح الانترنت
I use social networking sites						استخدم مواقع شبكة التواصل الاجتماعي
I try to keep up with what is new on the internet						أحاول مواكبة كل ما هو جديد على شبكة الانترنت
I know what goes on in chat rooms						أعلم ما يدور في غرف المحادثات (غرف الدردشة)
I surf the internet via my mobile phone						أتصفح الانترنت عبر هاتفي المحمول
I shop on the Internet						أتسوق عن طريق شبكة الانترنت
I communicate with my						أتواصل مع

Statements	لا أوافق بشدة **Strongly disagree**	لا أوافق **Disagree**	محايد **Neutral**	أوافق **Agree**	أوافق بشدة **Strongly agree**	العبارات
children online						أطفالي على شبكة الانترنت

إلى أي مدى توافق أو لا توافق على العبارات التالية.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

في المكان الذي يصف وجهة نظركم(يرجى وضع علامة √) (Please tick [√] the category that best describes your view)

Statements	لا أوافق بشدة **Strongly disagree**	لا أوافق **Disagree**	محايد **Neutral**	أوافق **Agree**	أوافق بشدة **Strongly agree**	العبارات
I allow my children to surf the Internet outside the home						أسمح لأبنائي بتصفح الانترنت خارج المنزل
Internet in general is risky to my children						الانترنت بشكل عام خطر على أطفالي
I give my children a specific time to surf the Internet						أعطي أطفالي وقتا محددا لتصفح الانترنت
I trust my children and do not need to monitor them						أثق في أطفالي ولست بحاجة إلى مراقبتهم
I make rules at home for surfing the Internet						أضع ضوابط في المنزل لتصفح الانترنت
I prefer to tell my children about the dangers of prohibited sites						أفضل أن أخبر أولادي عن خطر المواقع المحظورة
The ignorance of parents regarding the Internet						جهل الوالدين بالانترنت يزيد من

increases the risk to children					خطره على الأطفال
I am concerned about my children's use of the Internet					أنا قلق بشأن تصفح أطفالي للانترنت
I am concerned about my children's safety on the Internet					أنا مهتم بشأن حماية أطفالي عند تصفحهم للانترنت

أخيرا ، هل ترغب أن تضيف أي شيء حول الأطفال والانترنت في المملكة العربية السعودية

Finally, would you like to say anything else about children and the internet in Saudi Arabia?

....

....

....

أشكرك على الوقت الذي استغرقته لإكمال هذا الاستبيان

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

ملحوظة: الباحث يود إجراء مقابلات لاستكمال هذه الدراسة الميدانية، لا تتجاوز مدتها ٣٠ دقيقة ، إذا كنت ترغب المشاركة في هذه المقابلات ، يرجى كتابة أسمك وعنوانك ورقم هاتفك وبريدك الالكتروني ، وسيتواصل معك الباحث لاحقاً.

الاسم (اختياري):

العنوان:

رقم الهاتف:

البريد الالكتروني:

The researcher will conduct follow-up interviews and will be in need of your support to complete the study. If you are willing to participate in the follow-up interviews, please provide your name, address, phone number, and e-mail.

Name:

Address:

Phone number:

E-male:

Appendix II: Children's Questionnaire

Code				الرقم		Dare			التاريخ

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LEICESTER

Children's questionnaire

استبيان الأطفال

Appendix II: Children's Questionnaire

Section One : Personal information	القسم الأول : المعلومات الشخصية
Age ❑ 11 ❑ 12 ❑ 13	العمر ❑ ١١ ❑ ١٢ ❑ ١٣
Are you a? ❑ Boy ❑ Girl	الجنس ❑ ذكر ❑ أنثى
School grade ❑ Year 5 ❑ Year 6	الصف الدراسي ❑ الخامس ❑ السادس
School Type ❑ Public ❑ Private	نوع المدرسة ❑ حكومي ❑ خاص
Father's level of education ❑ Illiterate ❑ Elementary ❑ Intermediate ❑ secondary ❑ University Graduate ❑ Postgraduate (master's or PhD)	مستوى تعليم الأب ❑ لا يقرأ ولا يكتب ❑ ابتدائي ❑ متوسط ❑ ثانوي ❑ جامعي ❑ دراسات عليا (ماجستير / دكتوراه)
Father's Occupation ❑ Unemployed ❑ Retired ❑ Private sector employee ❑ Government employee	وظيفة الأب ❑ لا يعمل ❑ متقاعد ❑ موظف في القطاع الخاص ❑ موظف في القطاع الحكومي

❏ businessman	❏ رجل أعمال
Mother's level of education	**مستوى تعليم الأب**
❏ Illiterate	❏ لا تقرأ ولا تكتب
❏ Elementary	❏ ابتدائي
❏ Intermediate	❏ متوسط
❏ secondary	❏ ثانوي
❏ University Graduate	❏ جامعي
❏ Postgraduate (master's or PhD)	❏ دراسات عليا (ماجستير / دكتوراه)
Mother's Occupation	**وظيفة الأم**
❏ full time mother	❏ ربة منزل
❏ Retired	❏ متقاعدة
❏ Private sector employee	❏ موظفة في القطاع الخاص
❏ Government employee	❏ موظفة في القطاع الحكومي
❏ Businesswoman	❏ سيدة أعمال

Section Two : How children use the internet	**القسم الثاني : كيف يستخدم الأطفال الانترنت؟**
Does your family have a computer? ❏ Yes ❏ No	**هل يوجد لديكم جهاز حاسب آلي في المنزل ؟** ❏ نعم ❏ لا
Do you have a computer of your own? ❏ Yes ❏ No	**هل يوجد لديك جهاز حاسب آلي خاص بك ؟** ❏ نعم ❏ لا
Do you have an email? ❏ Yes ❏ No	**هل يوجد لديك بريد الكتروني ؟** ❏ نعم ❏ لا
Do you use the internet every day? ❏ Yes	**هل تستخدم الانترنت كل يوم ؟**

English	Arabic
❑ No	❑ نعم ❑ لا
Where is the computer, you use situated? ❑ In the living room ❑ In the bedroom ❑ Elsewhere	أين يوجد مكان الحاسب الآلي الذي تستخدمه عند تصفح الانترنت؟ ❑ في غرفة الجلوس ❑ في غرفة النوم ❑ في مكان آخر
When is your preferred time for using the internet? ❑ At all time ❑ In the daytime ❑ In the evening (before midnight) ❑ After midnight	ما هو الوقت المفضل لديك لتصفح الانترنت ؟ ❑ في جميع الأوقات ❑ في النهار ❑ في المساء (قبل منتصف الليل) ❑ بعد منتصف الليل
How much time do you spend on the internet every day? ❑ Less than 2 hours ❑ 2-4 hours Sometimes ❑ 4-6 hours ❑ More than 6 hours	كم الوقت الذي تمضيه كل يوم لتصفح الانترنت ؟ ❑ أقل من ٢ ساعة ❑ ٢ – ٤ ساعات ❑ ٤ – ٦ ساعات ❑ أكثر من ٦ ساعات
How do you communicate with your friends online? ❑ By email ❑ In chat rooms ❑ On Facebook ❑ On Twitter ❑ Other ❑ Not at all	كيف تتواصل مع أصدقائك عبر شبكة الانترنت ؟ ❑ بواسطة البريد الالكتروني ❑ غرف المحادثة(الدردشة) ❑ فيسبوك ❑ تويتر ❑ أخرى ❑ لا أتواصل معهم عبر الانترنت
What sites do you usually use? (You can choose more than one answer)?	ما هي المواقع التي تستخدمها عادة ؟ (يمكنك اختيار أكثر من إجابة)

		العاب	❏
❏	Games		
❏	Facebook, Twitter ,etc	فيسبوك/تويتر	❏
❏	Education	المواقع التعليمية	❏
❏	News	الأخبار	❏
❏	Shopping	التسويق	❏
❏	Movies	الأفلام	❏
❏	Youtube	اليوتيوب	❏
❏	Music	الموسيقى	❏
❏	Other	أخرى	❏

Where do you like to use the internet?   أين تحب أن تتصفح الانترنت؟

Statements	أبدا Never	عادة Usually	أحيانا Sometimes	غالبا Often	دائما Always	الـعبــارات
At home						في المنزل
Outside the home						خارج المنزل
On my mobile						من خلال هاتفي المحمول
My friends house						في منزل أصدقائي
At school						في المدرسة
In the coffee shop						في المقهى
Internet cafe						في مقهى الانترنت

القسم الثالث : التجربة الشخصية للانترنت **Section Three: Personal experience of the Internet**

Answer the following statements : أجب على العبارات التالية:

Statements	أبدا Never	عادة Usually	أحيانا Sometimes	غالبا Often	دائما Always	الـعبارات
I use chat rooms						أستخدم غرف المحادثات (غرف الدردشة)
I use the internet on my mobile phone						أتصفح الانترنت على هاتفي المحمول
I received message containing images and videos which are prohibited						وصلتني رسالة تحتوي على صور ومقاطع فيديو محظورة
I have been asked by an unknown person to send my photo and personal information						طلب مني شخص مجهول إرسال صورتي ومعلوماتي الشخصية
I tried to use a blocked site						حاولت أن أتصفح المواقع المحجوبة
Some of my friends have also tried to use a blocked site						حاول بعض أصدقائي تصفح المواقع المحجوبة
My parents told						أخبرني

						والداي عن مخاطر الانترنت
I talked with one of my parents about the risks of the Internet						أخضع لرقابة من والدي عندما أتصفح الانترنت
My parents do exercise control over me when I use the Internet						تحدثت مع أحد والدي حول مخاطر الانترنت

(first partial row, English:) me about the potential risks online

Answer

If you ever received an email containing a prohibited video clip or picture, who would you tell?	إذا تلقيت رسالة الكترونية تحتوي على مقطع فيديو أو صورة محظورة ، من هو الذي ستخبره بذلك ؟
❑ Your father	❑ أبي
❑ Your mother	❑ أمي
❑ One of your brothers	❑ أحد أخواني
❑ One of your sister	❑ أحدى أخواتي
❑ One of your friends	❑ أحد أصدقائي
❑ No one	❑ لا أحد
What would your parents do if they discovered that you were using prohibited sites?	ماذا سيفعل والديك إذا اكتشفوا أنك تستخدم مواقع محظورة ؟
❑ Guide you	❑ يقومان بتوجيهي
❑ Talk to you	❑ يقومان بالحديث معي
❑ Do nothing	❑ سوف يوبخاني
❑ Rebuke you	❑ سوف يعاقباني
❑ Punish you	❑ لن يفعلا شيئاً

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
إلى أي مدى توافق أو لا توافق على العبارات التالية.

Statements	لا أوافق بشدة Strongly disagree	لا أوافق Disagree	محايد Neutral	أوافق Agree	أوافق بشدة Strongly agree	الـعبـارات
I do not want my parents to know all the sites I use						لا أريد أن يعرف والداي عن المواقع التي أتصفحها
I prefer to use the Internet when my parents are not home						أفضل أن أتصفح الانترنت عندما يكون والداي خارج المنزل
Using the internet separates me from my family						تصفح الانترنت يعزلني عن أسرتي
My parents put protection programs on the computer that I use						يضع والداي برامج حماية على جهاز الحاسب الذي أستخدمه
I think that parental control is a violation of my privacy						أعتقد أن الرقابة من والداي تنتهك خصوصيتي
I prefer to use the internet alone						أفضل أن أتصفح الانترنت عندما أكون وحيداً
I accept new friendships on the Internet						أقبل صداقات جديدة على شبكة الانترنت
I trust everyone in						أثق في جميع الأشخاص في

English						Arabic
the chat rooms						غرف المحادثات (غرف الدردشة)
I accept gifts from friends over the Internet						أقبل الهدايا من الأصدقاء عبر الإنترنت
I can easily gain access to the blocked sites						يمكنني الدخول إلى المواقع المحجوبة
Social networking sites are dangerous(like Facebook ,twitter)						مواقع الفيسبوك وتويتر وغيرها خطيرة
Chat rooms are dangerous						مواقع الأفلام العنيفة خطيرة
Violent movies websites are dangerous						مواقع غرف الدردشة خطيرة
Sites making bomb /explosives are dangerous						مواقع صنع القنابل والمتفجرات خطيرة
Sites that advocate extremism and terrorism are dangerous						المواقع التي تدعو إلى التطرف والإرهاب خطيرة
Sites that teach how to commit crimes are dangerous						المواقع التي تعلم الجريمة خطيرة

Finally, would you like to say anything else about children and the internet in Saudi Arabia?

....

....

أشكرك على الوقت الذي استغرقته لإكمال هذا الاستبيان

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Appendix III: Research Information for Children

Health and Life Sciences Ethics Committee reference number: 943

INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESEARCH (children)

PARENTAL INFLUENCES ON THE
INTERNET USE BY CHILDREN IN SAUDI ARABIA

I would like to invite you to take part in a research organised by De Montfort University (United Kingdom and paid for by Imam University in Riyadh Saudi Arabia) called:

PARENTAL INFLUENCES ON THE INTERNET USE BY CHILDREN IN SAUDI ARABIA

Before you agree to take part in the research I want you to understand why I am doing this research and what you are being asked to do. I will go through the information sheet. Please ask if you have any questions. This should take about 10 minutes.

a) **What is the purpose of the research**

- How parents help you to use the internet
- How your relationships with your parents affect the way you use the internet
- Finding out the best ways for your parents to help you to use the internet safely

b) **Why have I been invited?**

   You have been asked to take part in the study because you are a child under 16.

c) **Do I have to take part?**

   It is up to you to do it. You can stop anytime. You will not be asked to give reasons.

d) **What will happen if I help in the research?**

- You will be asked to sign a form to agree to take part.
- You will fill in the questionnaire at school with other children
- You will give the questionnaires to your teacher when you finish

e) **What will I be asked to do?**

- Sit down with a group of other children (over 20).
- Fill in the questionnaires
- Give them to your teacher when you finish.

f) **Will you use my name on your report?**

- No, your name will not be written anywhere in the report.

   Your name will not be shared with anybody involved in the research.

g) **Did anyone else check the study is OK to do?**

Yes. A group of people called the Research Ethics Committee have checked this and are happy because they have made sure that it is safe and fair.

h) **What if I don't want to do it?**

- It's fine. Do not be afraid to talk.
- Just tell your teacher.
- You will not be forced.

i) **What if I change my mind?**

- It's fine. Do not be afraid to talk.
- Tell your teacher.
- Your paper will be destroyed.

j) **What if I want to complain?**
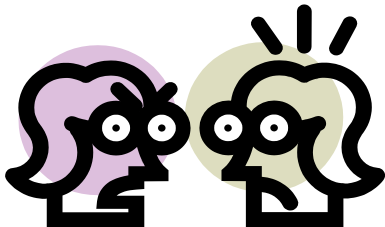
- You can complain to me.

  Ahmed Almogbel

  De Montfort University

  Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, Hawthorn Building LE1 9BH

  United Kingdom

  Tel: 00 44 1162506309

  Mob: 00966553455155

  Email: P10459488@myemail.dmu.ac.uk / Mogbel444@hotmail.com

- You can also complain to your teacher who will tell the headmaster.

- You can also tell your parents about anything you are not happy with.
- My supervisor

  Dr. Mohamed Begg

  Faculty of Health & Life Sciences

  De Montfort University

  The Gateway

  Leicester, UK

  Tel: 00447815767647

  Email: begg@dmu.ca.uk
- Professor Judith Tanner

  The current chair of the DMU Faculty Research Ethics Committee

  Tel: 0044 (0)116 201 3885

   Email: jtanner@dmu.ac.uk

k) What if I want to ask more questions?

- If you are boy you can ask me.

 Researcher

  Ahmed Almogbel

  De Montfort University

  Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, Hawthorn building

  LE1 9BH

  Tel: 00 44 1162506309

  Mob: 00966553455155

  Email: P10459488@myemail.dmu.ac.uk

  Mogbel444@hotmail.com
- If you are a girl you can ask my research assistant to help you or get information from me.

Research assistant:

  Fatimah Alqahtani

  00966505300330

  sraalove@hotmail.com

INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESEARCH (parents)

PARENTAL INFLUENCES ON THE
INTERNET USE BY CHILDREN IN SAUDI ARABIA

I would like to invite you to take part in a research organised by De Montfort University (United Kingdom and paid for by Imam University in Riyadh Saudi Arabia) called:

PARENTAL INFLUENCES ON THE INTERNET USE BY CHILDREN IN SAUDI ARABIA

Before you agree to take part in the research I want you to understand why I am doing this research and what you are being asked to do. I will go through the information sheet. Please ask if you have any questions. This should take about 10 minutes.

a) **What is the purpose of the research?**

- How parents help their children to use the internet
- How your relationship with your children affect the way they use the internet
- Finding out the best ways you can help to keep your children safe when using the internet.

b) What is the benefit of taking part in this research?
- You will be able to express your views.
- Your views may be used to change things about how children use the internet in Saudi Arabia.

c) Why have I been invited?

You have been asked to take part in the study because you are a parent of a child under 16.

d) Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to do it. You can stop anytime. You will not be asked to give reasons.

e) What will happen if I help in the research?
- You will be asked to sign a form to agree to take part.
- You will fill in the questionnaire. This should take about 10minutes.
- You will do a face to face interview with me. This should take about 30minutes.

f) Will you use my name on your report?
- No, your name will not be written anywhere in the report.
  Your name will not be shared with anybody involved in the research.

g) What if I don't want to do it?
- You can stop anytime. You do not need to give reasons for changing your mind.

- This will not affect you in any way and your responses will not be used in the research.

h) What if I change my mind?

- It's fine. Do not be afraid to talk.
- Tell your teacher.
- Your paper will be destroyed.

i) What if I want to complain?

- You can complain to me.

  Ahmed Almogbel

  De Montfort University

  Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, Hawthorn Building LE1 9BH

  United Kingdom

  Tel: 00 44 1162506309

  Email: P10459488@myemail.dmu.ac.uk

- My supervisor

  Dr. Mohamed Begg

  Faculty of Health & Life Sciences

  De Montfort University

  The Gateway

  Leicester, UK

  Tel : 00447815767647

  Email: begg@dmu.ca.uk

- Professor Judith Tanner

  The current chair of the DMU

  Faculty Research Ethics Committee

  Tel: 0044 (0)116 201 3885

  Email: jtanner@dmu.ac.uk

j) What if I want to ask more questions?

- If you are male you can ask me.
- If you are female please ask my research assistant. She may not be able to answer all your questions but she will pass on your questions to me.

❖ **Researcher:**

Ahmed Almogbel

00966553455155

P10459488@myemail.dmu.ac.uk

Mogbel444@hotmail.com

❖ **Research assistant:**

Fatimah Alqahtani

00966505300330

sraalove@hotmail.com

Health and Life Sciences Ethics Committee reference number: 943

Assent Form

Dear Student

My name is Ahmed Almogbel and I am a second year PhD research student of Sociology. I am doing my studies at De Montfort University in the UK; my supervisor is Dr. Mohamed Begg. I will be collecting information about how parents control the use of the internet for the children in Saudi Arabia. The questionnaires will be destroyed when I have collected the results. You can choose whether you want to do the questionnaires or not. If you decide to do it, you are free to stop at any time of the without giving reasons. If you decide to stop, the information collected about you will be destroyed at once.

My final report will not include your name or photograph. In the written report, or in charts and barographs, you will be referred to as a number or a letter (child A). Please ask any questions you have before filling in the questionnaire. You should be able to finish in 10 minutes.

Thank you very much for your time,

Yours sincerely,

Ahmed Almogbel

Please put (signature or initial) in the boxes if you are agree with the following statements:

Statements	Signature/initial
I have read the attached information sheet	
I understand the purpose of the study and what I am being asked to do	
I am aware that I can withdraw without giving a reason	
I give consent for my personal information to be used in the study	
I give consent for the information collected to be included in public documents (a doctoral thesis and related academic papers)	

Full Signature …………………… Child's age …………………

Consent form

Health and Life Sciences Ethics Committee reference number: 943

Dear Parent,

My name is Ahmed Almogbel and I am a second year PhD research student of Sociology. I am doing my studies at De Montfort University in the UK, under Dr. Mohamed Begg. I will be collecting information about how parents control the use of the internet for the children in Saudi Arabia. The questionnaires will be destroyed when I have collected the results. You can choose whether you want to do the questionnaires or not. If you decide to do it, you are free to stop at any time without giving reasons. If you decide to stop, the information collected about you will be destroyed at once.

My final report will not include your name or photograph. In the written report, or in charts and paragraphs, you will be referred to as a number or a letter (parent A). Please ask any questions you have before filling in the questionnaire. You should be able to finish the questionnaire in 10 minutes.

Thank you very much for your time,

Yours sincerely,

Ahmed Almogbel

Please put (signature or initial) in the boxes if you agree with the following statements:

statements	signature / initial
I have read the attached information sheet	
I understand the purpose of the study and what I am being asked to do	
I am aware that I can withdraw without giving a reason	
I give consent for my personal information to be used in the study	
I give consent for the information collected to be included in public documents (a doctoral thesis and related academic papers)	

Full Signature ……………………

Parental consent for children to do questionnaires

Health and Life Sciences Ethics Committee reference number: 943

Dear Parent,

Your child has been asked to fill in a questionnaire about the use of the internet by children in Saudi Arabia.

The questionnaires will be filled in at school under the guidance of their teachers. Your child's name will be kept confidential.

Please sign if you are happy for your child to take part.

Their name will be kept confidential.

I …………………give permission for my child…………..…………………to take part in the research.

Parents signature …………………………..

Date: /   / 2013

Interview Consent Form

Health And Life Sciences Ethics Committee Reference Number: 943

Dear Parent,

My name is Ahmed Almogbel. I am a second year PhD researcher at De Montfort University in United Kingdom. I would like to ask you to help me with the research I am conducting a study about the level of parental control in the children's use of the internet. I invite you to participate in this research. You were chosen as a possible participant simply because you are a parent.

The main aim of this research is to investigate the degree to which parental input and influences, impacts and shapes children's internet and social media usage in Saudi Arabia.

The records of this study will be kept confidential in accordance with Data Protection Act (UK) 1998. In any sort of report I publish, I will not include information that will make it possible to identify you in any way. I would like to record the interview. The recording will be kept safely under lock and key and they will be destroyed as the data analysis has been done. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time of the study without offering an explanation. Should you decide to withdraw information collected about you will be destroyed immediately. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

If you have any questions now or later, you may contact me:

Tel: 0553455155

Email: p10459488@myemail.dmu.ac.uk , mogbel444@hotmail.com .

Or my supervisor Dr. Begg

Tel: 00447816767647

Email: begg@dmu.ac.uk

Statement of Consent:

Please put (signature or initial) in the boxes if you are agree with the following statements:

Statements	Signature/initial
I have read the attached information sheet	
I understand the purpose of the study and what I am being asked to do	
I am aware that I can withdraw without giving a reason	
I give consent for the interview to be recorded	
I give consent for the information collected to be included in public documents (a doctoral thesis and related academic papers)	

I …………………………. have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent to participate in the study. I am at least 18 years of age.

Signature of Study Participant   …………………   Date:

Print Name of Study Participant ……………………   Date:

Signature of Researcher   ………………….   Date:

Appendix VI: Ethical Approval

DE MONTFORT UNIVERSITY LEICESTER

22nd January 2013

Ahmed Nasser Almogbel
PhD Candidate

Dear Ahmed,

RE: Ethics application – Level of parental control of internet use by children in Saudi Arabia (Ref: 943)

I am writing regarding your application for ethical approval for a research project titled to the above project. This project has been reviewed in accordance with the Operational Procedures for De Montfort University Faculty of Health and Life Sciences Research Ethics Committee. These procedures are available from the Faculty Research and Commercial Office upon your request.

I am pleased to inform you that ethical approval has been granted by Chair's Action for your application. This will be reported at the next Faculty Research Committee, which is being held on 31st January 2013

Should there be any amendments to the research methods or persons involved with this project you must notify the Chair of the Faculty Research Ethics Committee immediately in writing. Serious or adverse events related to the conduct of the study need to be reported immediately to your Supervisor and the Chair of this Committee.

The Faculty Research Ethics Committee should be notified by e-mail to HLSFRO@dmu.ac.uk when your research project has been completed.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Judith Tanner
Chair
Faculty of Health and Life Sciences
Research Ethics Committee

Appendix VII: Supporting Letters

DE MONTFORT UNIVERSITY
LEICESTER

Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia
Cultural Bureau
63 Chiswick High Road
London
W4 5 RY

To Whom It May Concern

28 November 2012

Ahmed Nasser A Almoghel – Date of Birth 09 November 1974

This is to confirm that the above named student is a full-time research degree student of De Montfort University, his study leading to MPhil/PhD. The academic discipline for research is Sociology. He enrolled with the University on 01/04/2011 and if successful, is due to complete on 01/04/2014.

Ahmed Almogbel and his Supervisor have informed the Graduate School Office that Ahmed will be visiting Saudi Arabia from 3 February 2013 to 3 May 2013 to collect data as part of his research.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you.

Yours Sincerely,

The Graduate School Office.

Graduate School Office, John Whitehead Building, The Gateway, Leicester LE1 9BH. **T:** (0116) 250 6309 or (0116) 207 8126

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المملكة العربية السعودية

مكتبة الملك فهد الوطنية

إدارة الإيداع النظامي

إفـــــادة

استفسار عن تسجيل موضوع بحث (ماجستير/ دكتوراه)

الاسم:	أحمد ناصر عبدالله آل مقبل	الهاتف:	-
التاريخ:	١٤٣٤/٦/١٣هـ	فاكس:	-
صندوق البريد:	-	الرمز:	-	البريد الإلكتروني:	-
اسم الجامعة :	جامعة الإمام محمد بن سعود	الدرجة العلمية:	دكتوراه

موضوع البحث :

- الرقابة الأسرية لاستخدام الإنترنت من قبل الأطفال .

لاستخدام الإدارة فقط

نفيدكم انه بالبحث في عناوين الرسائل الجامعية بـإدارة الإيـداع النظامـي المتاحة

لدى المكتبة تبين أن :

☑ • الموضوع لم يتم بحثه

☐ • الموضوع تم بحثه

تمت عنوان

....

....

.................الدرجة العلمية ( )

اسم الموظف	التاريخ	الختم
عبدالله البكران	١٤٣٤/ ٦/١٣هـ	
مدير الإدارة	التوقيع	
أحمد بن عبدالله الراشد		

ص.ب ٧٥٧٢ ـ الرياض ١١٤٧٢ـ هاتف: ٤٨٩١٣٧١ـ فاكس: ٤٨٩١٢٦٣: kfnl.deposit@gmail.com

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
King Fahd's Public Library

CERTIFICATE

Inquiry about registration of a research topic (Master/Phd)

Name: Ahmed Bin Nassir Al Mukbil
Date: 13/06/1434H
Name of the university: Imam Mohamed Bin Saudi University
Degree: PHD

Subject of the research:
        Parental control over the use of the internet for the children

We can certify the subject of the research have not been discussed yet.

Named of the employee: Abdullah Al Bakran

Director of the department: Ahmed Bin Abdullah Al Rashed

Date: 13/06/1434H

مركز الملك فيصل للبحوث والدراسات الإسلامية
King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies

الرقم: ٢٥٠٩/٢
التاريخ: ٥/٠٥/١٤٣٤هـ

المكرم الباحث / أحمد بن ناصر آل مقبل   حفظه الله

عضو هيئة تدريس – جامعة الإمام محمد بن سعود الإسلامية

فاكس: ٢٥٨٥٧١٩–٠١

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته ،،، وبعد :

أشير إلى طلبكم الكريم بشأن تسجيل موضوع بحثكم لرسالة الدكتوراه المعنون بـ:" الرقابة الأسرية لاستخدام الإنترنت من قبل الأطفال في بعض مدارس الرياض الابتدائية حكومي أهلي"، ضمن قاعدة معلومات الرسائل الجامعية بالمركز، ويسرني إفادتكم أنه تم إضافة الموضوع وبياناته ضمن القاعدة المذكورة، (مرفق مستخرج) .

مع تمنياتنا لكم بالتوفيق والسداد ،،،

المشرف على إدارة المكتبات والمعلومات

عبدالله بن محمد المنيف
١٤٢٤

King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic studies

Ref: 9520/M
Date: 05/05/1434H

To: Mr. Ahmed Bin Nassir Al Mukbil
Faculty member – Imam Mohamed Bin Saudi Islamic University
Fax: 01/2585719

Assalamualaykum,

This letter serve to confirm that your request to register your Phd research under the subject of " Parental control over the use of the net for the children in some public primaries school in Riyadh" have been approved and registered at our database.

Yours truly,

Abdullah Bin Mohamed Al Naif
1434H
Head of Library and IT department