CHALLENGES AND STRENGTHS OF MUSLIM PARENTS RAISING THEIR

CHILDREN IN THE UNITED STATES

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY SCIENCES

COLLEGE OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

BY

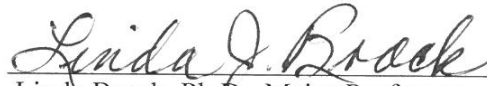JASMINE HUSSAIN, M.Ed.

DENTON, TEXAS

DECEMBER 2018

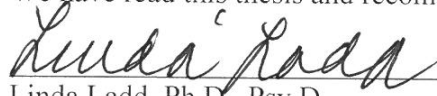TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

DENTON, TX

December 2018

To the Dean of the Graduate School:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Jasmine Hussain entitled "Challenges and Strengths of Muslim Parents Raising their Children in the United States" I have examined this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with a major in Family Therapy.

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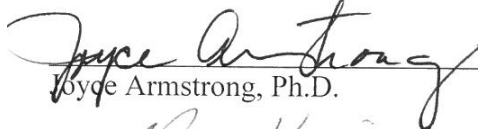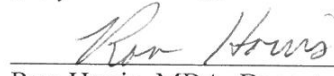Linda Brock, Ph.D., Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

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Accepted:

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Dean of the Graduate School

DEDICATION

For my parents, especially my mother, for being the greatest support and doing all you do for me.

For my husband, Mohamed, for always encouraging me to reach new heights and pushing me beyond my limits.

For my daughter, Sophie, for always reminding me of my goal and loving me with such admiration.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to acknowledge the blessing of God on me and my family.

I am grateful for my family; my parents, especially my mother, my husband, and my daughter for loving, believing, and supporting me.

I thank my husband, Mohamed and my mother, Habeeba. Thank you for all your support, both financial and emotional. Thank you for believing in me and encouraging me to reach beyond my limits. Thank you my beloved daughter, Sophie, for being so understanding, loving, and caring.

I would also like to thank my extended family and my husband's family, for being there for me when I needed. Thank you for the non-stop love and encouragement.

With deep appreciation, love and respect, I would like to thank my advisor and committee chair Dr. Linda Brock. Thank you for working with me with such patience, compassion and professionalism. Thank you for guiding, believing, supporting, and encouraging me through every step of this process.

I thank Dr. Linda Ladd, from the very beginning you have been a constant support and encouragement. Thank you for always being there to help me when I needed. Thank you for encouraging and empowering me. I have learned much from your wisdom and knowledge.

ABSTRACT

JASMINE HUSSAIN

CHALLENGES AND STRENGTHS OF MUSLIM PARENTS RAISING THEIR
CHILDREN IN THE UNITED STATES

DECEMBER 2018

The purpose of this qualitative study was to discover the challenges and strengths
of Muslim parents living in the United States, while raising their children to respect
Islamic teachings and values. The study utilized a phenomenological approach to learn
about the lived experiences of Muslim parents. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological
systems theory was applied as a guiding theory to learn about these experiences. The
participants included 15 Muslim parents, who currently reside in North Central Texas.
The participants were immigrants or individuals who have traveled to the United States
for study or work from a predominately Islamic country. They have been living in the
United States for at least two years. The study participants also had a child between the
ages of 5 and 17. In addition, the participants of this study were able to communicate in
English.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the 15 participants who met the
research criteria. These interviews were then transcribed and read multiple times by the
researcher. They were then coded to identify emerging themes. The researcher, her
faculty advisor, and a research assistant participated in coding and identifying themes.
The five themes that emerged were: lack of recognition and understanding of Islam;

greater responsibility to teach Islam; difficulty balancing American and Islamic values;

underlying concerns and anxiety, and positive experiences as strengths. The results were

compared with previous studies and conclusions were drawn and implications discussed.

In addition, limitations and recommendations for future research are discussed.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Islam is one of the world's largest religions and one of the fastest growing

religions in the United States (Lipka, 2017). According to findings of the Pew Research

Center, there were about 3.35 million Muslims of all ages living in the United States in

the year 2015 (Lipka, 2017). Pew Research Center, also estimated that the Muslim

population in America will double by 2050. Pew Research Center also estimated that

58% of the Muslim adults living in the United States are immigrants (Mohamed, 2016).

Muslims began to migrate to the United States around 1875 with the first Muslims

coming from Syria. At first, Muslims were brought in through the slave trade to the

United States from Africa and the Middle East (Haddad & Esposito, 1998). Later, they

traveled for the purposes of education and employment and many of those who came to

the US decided to seek permanent residency because they enjoyed the freedom and

opportunities available (Al-Romi, 2000; Hodge, 2002). It is important to understand that

the Muslim population is very diverse and the degree that a person follows the Islamic

values, beliefs, traditions, and teachings is highly influenced by the country of origin,

culture, and social and class factors (Ali, Liu, & Humedian, 2004; Eickleman, 1998;

Hodge, 2002).

The Pew Research Center estimated that over half of the projected growth of the

American Muslim population today is due to immigration (Mohamed, 2016). The number

of Muslim immigrants currently represents about 10% of all legal immigrants arriving in the US and, a significantly smaller percentage of unauthorized immigrants. In addition, Muslim American population growth also results from natural increase through birth. It is estimated that one in five who were raised in another faith convert to Islam and vice versa, but this increase through conversion results in only a slight net change (Mohamed, 2016).

Despite the amount of growth in the number of Muslims in the United States, many Americans remain largely suspicious of this group of people (Ali et al., 2004). About 50% of people in the United States who were surveyed, endorsed a negative view of Islam and regarded Islam as anti-American, anti-western, or supportive of terrorism and yet, only 5% of those had direct contact with a Muslim (Blank, 1998). Ali et al. (2004) reported that Muslims have been subjected to prejudice and discrimination throughout the years, especially after 9/11 and that Muslims in the United States have been highly concerned about the increase in discrimination.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), a civil rights and advocacy group, and America's largest Muslim civil liberties organization reported that approximately one in four Americans believe that Islam is a religion of hatred and violence and nearly 10% reported that Muslims believe in a moon God (CAIR, 2006). This report also found that about one-fifth of Americans agreed that civil liberties of Muslims should be restricted and that 17% agreed that *it's okay to lock up Muslims, just in case they are planning a terrorist act*. In addition, the survey found that only 2% of

Americans identified themselves as *very knowledgeable* about the religion, 39% said they were *somewhat knowledgeable*, while 60% are *not very knowledgeable* or *not at all knowledgeable* about Islam (CAIR, 2006). Another report by CAIR (2010) found that on a scale of 1 to 10, Islamophobia in America stands at a 6.4., indicating that there is negative perception about Muslim at a larger scale in the US.

Bryan (2005) reported that the war on Middle Eastern countries and the recent terrorist attacks by the Islamic fundamentalists on Europe and the Middle East continue to put the Muslim-American community under public surveillance, fueling an atmosphere of hate and fear. Bryan further stated that families may feel anxiety and concern regarding practicing their faith in such an environment (Bryan, 2005). Similarly, McMillan (2003) reported that anti-Muslim activists also threaten Muslim Americans who do not demonstrate their loyalty to America.

Ahmed and Szpara (2003) found that Muslims in America find it challenging to embrace both their Islamic faith and American culture. Jackson (1995) reported that Muslims as a minority in America are pressured to adhere to the norms of North American society and find it difficult to merge into mainstream U.S. culture and maintain their identity as Muslims. Mills (2012) found that Muslims experience prejudice and discrimination in their everyday lives. Other studies (Al-Romi, 2000; Hodge, 2002; Sheikh, 2009) have found that Muslim students in America feel that the school systems are not very inclusive and accepting of Islamic culture. Sheikh (2009) found that Muslim students believed that misperceptions and negative stereotypes about Islam and Muslim

values are pervasive in schools, which affects their everyday lives. Likewise, studies like that of Chaudhry (2016) and Mahmood (2011) found that Muslim mothers face difficulties in raising their children in accordance with Islamic values in the US due to cultural differences that exist between the United States and that of their own culture.

Statement of the Problem

Spirituality is an important part of Muslim families and Islam is not only a religion, but also a way of life for Muslims (Chaudhry, 2016). Studies such as that of Sheikh (2009) found that it is challenging for Muslims in America to maintain their American identity and Islamic values. Similarly, other studies have found that Muslims have anxiety and concern regarding being faithful to their religion in an environment where Muslims are subjected to hatred, prejudice and discrimination (Al-Romi, 2000; Mills, 2012).

Al-Romi (2000) reported that "Muslim people in the United States face a variety of challenges which are loosely tied to the overarching character of Islam" (p. 636). Al-Romi further added that some of the issues faced by Muslims in America include how one can live an Islamic life in a non-Muslim country, as Islam as a way of life requires certain things that are difficult to achieve in America like praying at schools. Al-Romi also stated that the second issue is the fact that one must confront and cope with conditions created by modernization of the society and the third is equating of Muslims in America with terrorism (Al-Romi, 2000).

Ahmed (2009) found that growing up in the United States is challenging for Muslim youth, who face discrimination because of practicing their Islamic faith. Kibria (2008) stated that immigrant parents had constant exposure to Islamic rituals and traditions that helped them teach the importance of Islam in their life. Kibria (2008) further stated that living in a country with a diverse population, the religious experience for American Muslim children is not as normative as it was for their parents who grew up in an Islamic country.

Parenting is challenging and raising children to embrace Islamic values in a non-Islamic country comes with many more challenges (Chaudhry, 2016). Most empirical studies focused on the religious aspects of Muslim life, acculturation and assimilation issues related to Muslims and Muslim youth (Ahmed, 2009; Ahmed & Szpara, 2003; Cho & Haslam, 2010), and the importance of embracing Muslim faith in school systems (Ali et al., 2004; Hodge, 2002; Sheikh, 2009). A handful of studies have focused on immigrant Muslim mothers' experiences and, even less, have attempted to learn about Muslim fathers (Chaudhry, 2016; Mahmood, 2011; O'Neill, 2010). Krayem (2015) studied first generation Arab immigrant fathers' parenting styles and roles in the family. Similarly, most studies concentrated on discovering the experiences of the Muslim youth rather than that of the parents and, of those, most of them concentrated only on one parent, mostly mothers, than the experiences of both parents. Likewise, those that attempted to study the experiences of Muslims; mainly focused on learning about their challenges and not strengths.

Understanding the challenges and strengths of Muslim parents raising their children in the United States is important for professionals who work with Muslim immigrant families. As there is an increase of Muslims in the United States, this study will benefit professionals such as family therapists, family educators, child development specialists, and other mental health practitioners by providing them with a better understanding of Muslim families, and help them understand the challenges faced by Muslim parents and strengths that have helped these parents in raising their children in the United States. Greater understanding can lead to greater awareness and sensitivity to the experiences and the enhancement of the family treatment process.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to discover the challenges and strengths of Muslim parents living in the United States, while raising their children to respect Islamic teachings and values. The study utilized a phenomenological approach to understand the lived experiences of the participants.

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the experiences of Muslim parents raising children in the United States?

2. What strengths are helpful to these Muslims parents in raising their children in the United States?

Theoretical Framework

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory has been influential in the field of child and youth care (Derksen, 2010). Therefore, ecological systems theory was applied as a guiding theory to learn about the challenges Muslim parents face raising their children in the United States. The ecological system focuses on the interpersonal relations between family and other ecological systems. It also focuses on application of ecological theory as a holistic theoretical approach in studying immigrant families, as these families are embedded into the larger social systems and cannot be studied in isolation (Fong Paat, 2013). The five layers or systems described by Bronfenbrenner (1979) in the ecological system are the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem.

The Microsystem

Bronfenbrenner (1979) described the microsystem as a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics. Structures in this microsystem include family, schools, neighborhood, and childcare environments (Pequette & Ryan, 2015). According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), interactions are strongest within the microsystems which is the very first system a child encounters in his or her life. Similarly, Bronfenbrenner (1979) believed that these interactions are two directional. Parents can have an effect on the child's belief and behavior and the child can have an effect on the parent's belief and behavior (Pequette & Ryan, 2015). According to Bronfenbrenner

(1979) this presence of relationship in both directions forms a dyadic relationship that is important for development. Bronfenbrenner (1979) stated how these dyads reciprocate in the sense that, in a joint activity, what *A* does influence *B* and vice versa. Therefore, as a result, one member must coordinate his or her activities with those of the other. Applying this, one could say that behaviors and teachings by Muslim parents will affect their children and the behavior and the personality of the child will, in turn, affect how the parents apply their Islamic values with their children and how the parents deal with any challenges they face in doing so.

The Mesosystem

Bronfenbrenner (1979) also talked about how systems other than microsystem can influence a child's development. The mesosystem refers to the interaction that happens between two microsystems. For example, "The relations among home, school, neighbors, and peer group" (1979, p. 25).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) stated that a setting in a mesosystem is enhanced if the person's initial transitions are made in the company of one or more persons with whom he or she has participated in a prior setting. This also highlights the importance of a microsystem such as a family or parents, which is the first system in a child's life. Bronfenbrenner (1979) further stated that the development setting in a mesosystem is enhanced if the roles demanded in the different settings are compatible and that the roles, activities, and relationships one engages in encourage the development of mutual trust, positive orientation and goal consensus, and a balance of power in favor of the

developing person (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Applying these statements to the current study, it could be stated that for the healthy development of a child, there must be compatibility between the child's microsystems like that of parent and schools. Therefore, raising a child in an environment that has very different beliefs or values may bring many challenges.

The Exosystem

The exosystem is the third layer and is defined as the layer that impacts the child's development by interacting with some structures in her or his microsystem (Berk, 2000). This indirect system influences a child's development such as parent's workplace or resources available in a community. For example, a community that provides more resources to parents will impact the child's development in a positive manner while the lack of these resources may impact the child negatively (Berk, 2000). Applying this theory, parents, especially immigrant parents like immigrant Muslim parents, may need extra support from the community in raising their children.

The Macrosystem

Bronfenbrenner (1979) defined macrosystem as the overarching sets of social values, cultural beliefs, customs, and laws that incorporate the microsystem, mesosystem and exosystem. Bronfenbrenner (1979) also believed that different cultures or subcultures have different macrosystems and thus the way they influence a child's development is very different from one another. For example, a child growing up in a predominantly Islamic country will be exposed to a very different school system, tradition, and cultural

values than a child growing in a non-Islamic country. Since one's macrosystem has a role in influencing one's values and beliefs, Muslim parents may find it challenging to raise children in a society that is different from theirs and Muslims parents may need extra support from the community in teaching and maintaining Islamic values in their children.

The Chronosystem

The last is the chronosystem, which is not a layer in the system, but a methodological construct (Pequette & Ryan, 2015). The chronosystem emphasizes life transitions and psychological changes that may impact a child's development across times such as migration (Pequette & Ryan, 2015). Some developmental changes can occur due to certain life experiences a developing person encounters throughout their lifetime (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). According to Bronfenbrenner, these life events could be either external (birth of a sibling) or within the organism (the first menstruation). He also further divided these experiences into normative experiences such as getting married and non-normative experiences such as moving to a new place (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Considering this theory, it could be said that immigrant families or families who have relocated to the United States may be impacted due to their transition into a new environment.

Methodological Approach

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological approach to discover the challenges and strengths of Muslim parents living in the US, while raising their children to respect Islamic teachings and values. Phenomenological research is the study of ordinary, everyday phenomena (Landridge, 2007). By focusing on the lived experience, the phenomenological investigation attempts to reveal the actual nature and meaning of the event, perception, or occurrence, just as it appears (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985). Hence, a phenomenological approach was applied in this study to understand the lived experiences of the participants in their own terms. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews, asking participants to tell in detail about their experiences raising a child to value Islamic teachings in a country where Islam is not the major religion and asking about the differences and similarities in growing up in a Muslim majority country and raising their children in the US and asking about the strengths they find useful in raising their children in the United States.

Delimitations

The following delimitations were applied to this study:

1. Participants were 18 years of age and older.

2. Participants currently parent a child between the ages of 5 and 17 years.

3. Participants currently live in the North Central Texas area.

4. Participants either immigrated to the United States from a predominantly Islamic country or traveled to the U.S for study or work.

5. Participants have lived in the United States for at least two years.

6. Participants were able to communicate in English.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made in this study:

1. The participants volunteered to participate in the study.

2. The participants answered openly and honestly about their experiences.

3. Each participant had his or her own unique experiences in relation to the topic under study.

4. The researcher attempted to be aware of her own experiences and biases and put aside her presumptions, while conducting interviews and analyzing the data.

Definition of Terms

Definitions of the terms relevant for this study are:

Acculturation: The psychological and cultural change in the beliefs and values of an individual as a way of an adaptation to the new culture (Farver, Yiyuan, Bhadha, Narang, & Lieber, 2007).

Azan: The Call for prayer five times a day.

Allah: Arabic name for God (Ali et al., 2004).

Alhamdulillah! Praise God (Connor, 2007).

Eid: Islamic religious celebration at the end of Ramadan or fasting month and celebration at the end of pilgrimage day or Hajj.

Hadith: The recorded collections of Prophet's sayings (Ali et al., 2004).

Hajj: Pilgrimage to Mecca; a city in Saudi Arabia (Ali et al., 2004).

Halal: What is lawful in Islam. Halal food refers to meat that has been slaughtered according to Islamic specifications and that is not made with any pork or alcoholic products (Ali et al., 2004).

Haram: What is forbidden in Islam (Ali et al., 2004).

Hijab: Scarf worn by Muslim girls or women (Hodge, 2002).

Immigrants: Individuals who move to live permanently in another country (Cho & Haslam, 2010).

Islam: Submission to Allah, the one and only God. It is also the religion followed by Muslims (Hodge, 2002).

Islamophobia: Closed minded prejudice against or hatred of Islam and Muslims (CAIR, 2010).

Muslims: Individuals who practice Islam (Hodge, 2002).

PBUH: Peace Be Upon Him (used to show respect to Islamic Prophets).

Quran: The revealed word of God or Allah and the Holy book of Islam (Al-Romi; Hodge, 2002).

Shari'a: The path of God's precept (Hodge, 2002).

Sunnah: The teachings or actions of the Prophet Muhammed [PBUH] (Ali et al., 2004).

Tarbiah: Means to let children know about their Creator, inculcate love for The Prophet (PBUH), faith in hereafter, divine books, angels, prophets and other important aspects of the religion (Arfat, 2013).

Ummah: Islamic community (Hodge, 2002).

The Researcher as a Person

I am a doctoral candidate at Texas Woman's University, in the Family Therapy program. I have a 10 year old daughter who was born in the United States. I traveled to the United States in 2001, and have received my undergraduate and Master's degree in the United States. I have many American friends and have worked with many Americans and people from various ethnic and religious groups. I have also lived and traveled to many other countries and experienced different cultures from that of my own. Likewise, I have befriended many Muslims who are from different countries and whose culture differs from mine significantly.

Born and raised in an Islamic country, Maldives, hearing the *Azan* (call for prayer), performing the daily prayers, fasting during the month of *Ramadan*, learning the teachings of Islam at school and at home, and attending *Quran* classes were a normal part of my everyday life. I never thought that there would come a day when I would have to look at labels on food or ask for the ingredients at a restaurant, or regularly check my daughter's school lunch menu to see if everything was *halal* to eat. Likewise, I never assumed that teaching Islamic values to my daughter would be one day a challenge. Nevertheless, the reality is that having to raise a child in a predominately non-Islamic country has presented with its own challenges for me. However, seeking my education in the United States was my choice and my family and I enjoy living in the United States. Although, there are difficulties living in a country where the culture is different from

where one was born and raised, I love the freedom and opportunity available in the United States.

Nevertheless, as a Muslim parent, I want to raise my daughter according to the teaching of Islam, yet find it difficult to do so because there are limited resources available to support Islamic teachings in the US. Similarly, I am concerned that there is not much encouragement from the government or the school system to recognize minority religions. If I were in my home country, Maldives, then I would not have to be worried about my daughter's school lunch menu or about how to console my daughter when she comes from school complaining about why everyone gets a Christmas holiday break and she does not get *Eid* holiday breaks like her cousins. Islamic countries and some non-Islamic countries have *Eid* as a public holiday. Whereas, this is not so in the United States. I also would not have to worry about whether my daughter is learning to recite *Quran* in the right way or if she is learning to practice and perform other Islamic religious rituals. Likewise, I would not have to be cautious of any prejudice and discrimination that my daughter might be subjected to because of her religion. Awareness of my experiences led me to be curious about other Muslim parents. Thus, I chose to conduct this qualitative study to discover the experiences of other Muslim parents raising their children in the United States.

Summary

Islam is one of the largest growing religions in the United States, and there is an increase in Muslim families moving to the United States. While many Muslim parents

who have moved to the United States from a predominantly Islamic country have been exposed to Islamic traditions, many American born children of these parents do not have this experience. Thus, this study attempted to discover the challenges and strengths of Muslim parents living in the United States, while raising their children to respect Islamic teachings and values. To do so, the study utilized a phenomenological research approach and applied Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory as a guiding theory in understanding the parents' experiences. This study's results will be helpful to family therapists and other mental health professionals who work with families because it will increase their awareness about Muslims and their families. This understanding will lead family science professionals to build rapport and help them formulate and implement programs and policies that will enhance lives of their Muslim clients and their families.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter provides an overview of existing literature related to the topic under investigation. There is very little empirical research available on challenges and strengths of Muslim parents in raising children in the United States. Based on the literature available, the review of the literature includes the following main themes: (1) Introduction to Islam, (2) Islamic community and family values, and (3) Islamophobia and experiences of discrimination.

Introduction to Islam

Before beginning any discussion about Islam and Muslims, it is important to note the diversity of the Muslim population (Hodge, 2002). It is also important to keep in mind that the interpretation and practice of Islamic values and teachings highly depends on cultural, social, and class factors (Hodge, 2002).

Muslims' Immigration to the United States

Islam is one of the largest religions in the world and it is estimated that there are more than one billion Muslims around the world (Lipka, 2017). A 2015 survey by Pew Research Center estimated that there were approximately 3.3 million Muslims living in the United States in that year, making them 1% of the United States population (Mohamed, 2016). The report stated that the first wave of Muslims began to arrive to the United States around 1875 with the first Muslims coming from Syria (Mohamed, 2016). Al-Romi (2000) reported that "Muslims came to America via the slave trade from West

Africa, the Middle East, and other parts of Northern and Southeastern Africa" (p. 631).

Muslims also migrated to the United States for the purposes of financial stability and

finding a permanent home. Later, Muslims traveled to the United States for the purposes

of gaining education and for better opportunities and lifestyle (Al-Romi, 2000).

What is Islam?

Islam is a religion, but at the same time, a philosophy, a moral system, an order, a

life style, an atmosphere or an integrated way of life (Izetbegovic, 1993). It is also a

worldview that unifies the metaphysical and material and gives structure and coherence

to personal existence (Izetbegovic, 1993). The word *Islam* comes from the Arabic word

Salam which means *peace* (Al-Sheha, 2012), and it also comes from the word *Aslam*

which means to obey (Ali et al., 2004). Islam denotes the religion, and it means

submission to *Allah*, the Almighty (the one and only God), with the entire soul and body

and by obedience, compliance and acceptance (Al-Sheha, 2012). Individuals who

practice this submission and follow Islam are called *Muslims* (Hodge, 2002).

Muslims seek to follow the *Shari'a*, the God's straight path of precept derived

from *Quran* (the holy book for Muslims and the direct words from *Allah*), and *hadith*, the

recorded collections of the sayings of the Prophet or prophetic traditions (Al-Sheha,

2012; Hodge, 2002). Muslims believe in the holy book of *Quran*, which was first written

in Arabic and later translated to almost every other language (Ali et al., 2004). Muslims

believe that Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) was a messenger (the last one of them all) of

God and does not ascribe any godlike powers to him (Ali et al., 2004).

The Five Pillars of Islam

Although there are many variations in culture and adherence to many of the principles of Islam, there are five common guiding principles or pillars of Islam. The first pillar is *Shahadaa* or the belief in one God and the belief that Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) was his last and final Prophet. *Shahadaa* is the basis of Islam and to become a Muslim or to convert to Islam, an individual only needs to recite *Shahadaa*. The second pillar of Islam is prayer or *salat*. Prayer is done five times a day: at sunrise, early afternoon, mid afternoon, after the sunset and before bedtime. The third pillar of Islam is *Zakat* or arms giving tax given to the less fortunate and is commonly paid at the end of *Ramadan* (month of fasting). The fourth pillar is fasting for those who are financially and physically abled. During the month of *Ramadan*, Muslims refrain from eating, drinking, and sexual activity from sunrise to sunset. During this time, Muslims go on with their daily activities but are also required to do self-reflection and have spiritual discipline. This is an act done to increase empathy for the less fortunate. *Ramadan* falls during the ninth month of the lunar or Islamic calendar and comes at different times in the Roman calendar. Finally, the fifth pillar of Islam is a pilgrimage to Mecca or *Hajj* performed once in a lifetime and is only obligatory to those who can afford it. Pilgrimage is done once a year on the tenth day of *Zul-Hajjah*, the tenth month of the lunar calendar (Ali et al., 2004). Muslims also have a celebration at the end of *Ramadan,* which is known as *Eid-Al-Fitr,* and a celebration at the end of performance of *Hajj*, which is known as *Eid-Al-Alha* (Ali et al., 2004).

Other Islamic Values and Practices

In addition to the five pillars of Islam, there are some other common obligatory practices of Islam. However, one should always keep in mind that Muslims are a diverse population and cultural, social, and class factors of the country of origin and family and personal values affect how these practices are interpreted and practiced (Hodge, 2002).

Dietary practices. Consumption of food is governed by strict dietary laws in Islam. Muslims are prohibited from eating swine meat, the flesh of carrion (dead animals), blood in any form and any intoxicant such as alcohol. Food is prepared without alcohol or pork products and Islamic countries or Muslim majority countries usually have *halal* food laws (Kwon, 2015).

Modesty. Modesty is an important value in Islam. However, the way modesty is experienced varies depending on the culture of origin, local Islamic norms, and interpretation of *Shari'a* and personal preferences. Islam does prescribe modest dress for both men and women, but the *Quranic* verses have been interpreted in many ways, and in many countries these values are mostly imposed upon women. Some Islamic cultures believe that women are to cover completely, while others interpret modesty in more liberal forms (Al-Romi, 2000; Hodge, 2002).

Dating and marriage. Many Muslim families believe that youth should not socially interact with the opposite sex while others allow supervised interaction (Hodge, 2002). In Islam, unmarried men and women are discouraged from engaging in premarital sex. Likewise, Islam highly emphasizes marriage between heterosexual partners (Ali et

al., 2004; Hodge, 2002). Many Muslim families prefer arranged marriages and adult children are not allowed to date and choose their own spouses. However, this is not followed by every Muslim family, as it depends on the culture, country, societal norms and individual family values (Ali et al., 2004). Also, according to Islam, men can marry non-Muslim women provided they are from a monotheistic religion (Christianity and Judaism). Women, however, are not supposed to marry a non-Muslim. Non-Muslim men are expected to convert to Islam because women are considered vulnerable to pressure from their spouses to covert or follow their beliefs (Ali et al., 2004).

Islamic Community and Family Values

The importance of religion and its positive impact on families has been addressed in many research studies and literature (Copen & Silverstein, 2005; Park & Ecklund, 2007; Yeung & Chan, 2014). Islamic societies encourage collectivism and discourage individualism (Ali et al., 2004). Muslims are believed to be part of *Ummah Wahida* or one community (Weatherhead & Daiches, 2015). There is a reciprocal relationship between an individual and the community and every Muslim has a responsibility to protect and safeguard the community (Haynes, Eweiss, Mageed, & Chung, 1997).

The family is also highly valued in Islamic culture and Muslim youths are likely to be raised in stable families (Hodge, 2002). In general, although husbands and wives are given equal importance, they are expected to have complementary roles where men are the providers and women responsible for maintaining the home and raising the children. According to Islamic faith, children are considered a blessing from God and a

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secure parent-child relationship is crucial for the child's well-being and the future health of the Islamic community (Hodge, 2002).

Islam teaches that raising children according to Islamic values becomes an obligation on the parents first and, then, to the entire community or *ummah.* It is believed that the moral, ethical, and religious well-being of the family unit impacts the moral, ethical and religious well-being of the wider community. The importance of children rearing is encouraged in both the *Quran* and the *hadith*. Parenting was also highly encouraged and practiced by the Prophet (PBUH) and hence, seen as a *sunnah* for all Muslims. Islam encourages Muslims to follow the example of the Prophet (PBUH) who was gentle and compassionate towards his family and children (Samwini, 2012). A *hadith* reported in Sahih-al-Bukhari (as cited in Samwini, 2012) mentions an incident in which the Prophet (PBUH) kissed his grandson and when asked about it, the Prophet (PBUH) responded by saying "those who show no mercy will be shown no mercy" (p. 33) indicating that affection and mercy towards children are important in Islam.

Parents' Responsibility towards Children in Islam

Islam emphasizes not only the relationship between God and his creation, but also, a Muslim's responsibility towards the society, marriage and parent-child relationship (Akin, 2012). According to Islam, children are blessings from Allah and are considered a trust from Allah to parents who will be questioned on the judgement day about how they handled their responsibilities (Akin 2012; Arfat, 2013). Thus, the

children are the responsibility of the adults, especially the parents. The goal, therefore, is to protect the children from hell-fire in the after-life (Arfat, 2013).

In Islam, parents are responsible for and have rights over their children and the children have responsibilities for and rights over their parents (Akin, 2012). Saeidi, Ajilian, Farhangi, and Khodaei (2014) studied the *Quran* and Islamic texts to examine the children's rights given in Islam. They conducted a review survey to evaluate these rights given in Islam. The study found that the *Quran* sets the highest standards of ethics and compassion for raising all the children and stands for their rights. The study also reported that the *Quran* and Islam have guidelines to provide the utmost care, love, protection, and honor granted to all dependent children: orphans, adopted children, needy children of the community, and one's own children. Raising children is dignified and believed to be a sign of reverence of God and the belief in him on the parts of parents, guardians and the community (Saeidi et al., 2014).

Arfat (2013) wrote that in Islam, children's rights begin before birth as the *Quran* and the Prophet (PBUH) cautioned Muslims to choose a righteous spouse to provide their children with parents who are affectionate, noble and of good character. Islam also puts a high emphasis on a child's *Tarbiah* (discipline of a child). The Prophet (PBUH) was reported to have said to order children to perform *salat* when they are seven, and discipline them when they are ten. However, Islam does not encourage imposing parental beliefs on their children once they reach puberty, and rather encourages saying in words and showing in deeds the Islamic way of life to their adolescent children (Arfat, 2013).

Given the emphasis Islam puts on parenting one's children in the righteous way, it is no surprise that Muslims put a high priority on parenting their children according to religious values. Arfat (2013) reported that Muslim parents, both voluntary and non-voluntary immigrants want their children to adhere to Islamic moral, social, and cultural values. To ensure that their children respect these values, parents take them to religious schools and conduct family activities in religious settings.

Abbas and Ijaz (2010) conducted a study to learn about working class, South-Asian Muslim parents' attitudes towards the education of their daughters. The study included 11 participants of South Asian origin who were living in England. This study found that although South Asian Muslim parents believed in women getting an education, they had concerns over sending their daughters to schools in England. This study reported that most Muslim parents did not want to send their daughters to schools where boys and girls mix openly as this was against their religious and cultural beliefs. Likewise, they feared that by interacting with different people in schools, their daughters might become too westernized (Abbas & Ijaz, 2010).

Smith (1999) conducted a study to learn about Muslim families' experiences and fears living in western countries. The study participants included 21 Muslim parents living in different parts of Europe. This study found that Muslim parents feared that their children would learn western secular values that would harm their children in this life and the afterlife. Smith (1999) reported that these Muslim parents enrolled their children in

activities run by Muslim organizations such as Sunday schools that would help instill

Islamic values in their children (Smith, 1999).

Franceschelli and O'Brien (2014) conducted interviews with 15 South Asian

Muslim families to find out how Muslim parents pass their values in the intergenerational

transmission. The study participants included both parents and young Muslims. The

participants were recruited from different communities in the U.K. This study found that

the respondents of the study perceived Islam as being more than a religion, but a way of

life, not only in terms of everyday practices, but in their social relationships and view of

the world. Likewise, this study also found that participants, both parents and young

Muslims, saw that having an Islamic upbringing transmitted a sense of right based on

their interpretation of Islamic teachings and values. In addition, this study found that even

those parents who were not fully practicing Islamic values and teachings felt the duty of

transferring these values to their children (Franceshelli & O'Brien, 2014).

Mother's role in Islam. Although, both parents are important in Islam and are

given great responsibilities, mothers are given a special place in Islam. They are expected

to raise their children in the righteous way (Akin, 2012). It was narrated in one of the

hadith that the Prophet (PBUH) had said that Paradise lies at the feet of the mother

(Furqaan Institute of Islamic Healing, 2017a). Also, the Prophet Mohamed (PBUH) is

said to have mentioned "mother" repeatedly the first three times when asked about whom

one should show kindness and that it is only after the fourth time that the Prophet

(PBUH) mentions father and relatives and the next closest relative (Furqaan Institute of

Islamic Healing, 2017a). This tells the importance of mother in Islam. Oh (2010) stated that in Islam, a Muslim mother's responsibility is to educate her children on faithfulness, and instill Islamic values, and good behavioral and moral values.

Chaudhry (2016) conducted research to study Muslim mothers' experiences in teaching Islamic values and spirituality to their American born children. The study included 15 participants. Chaudhry found that regardless of the nationality, the participating mothers stated, they felt a greater responsibility to teach Islamic values to their children than if they were living in a country where the whole country practiced Islam. The study also reported that these mothers' felt high level of anxiety and stress as they worried about their children's exposure to non-Islamic values and cultures. The study also revealed that these mothers reported accepting other religious and diverse cultural values while trying to teach Islam to their children. In addition, the study found that these mothers reported that as they got accustomed to the American culture, it became easier for them to balance between teaching Islam to their children and respecting other religious and cultural practices in the United States. This study also found that the participants or mothers were in agreement about teaching their children the importance of bringing people together and encourage tolerance and acceptance. In addition, the study found that these mothers' enjoyed that they had the freedom to control the degree to which they can teach the religion to their children. Similarly, these mothers reported appreciation for the role the Muslim community played in raising their children to be good Muslim Americans. Furthermore, these mothers took pride in teaching Islamic

values to their children and saw that the anxiety and stress that comes with is was a normal part of being an Immigrant American Muslim raising their children as good Muslim Americans (Chaudhry, 2016).

Aroian et al. (2009) examined mother-child adjustment and problems in children's behavior among Arab Muslim immigrants in the United States. The study participants included 635 mother-child dyads. The participating mothers were immigrants who had at least one child age 11 to 15 who was also willing to participate in the study. This study found that the Muslim immigrant mothers had to help their children adjust to the new culture while keeping up with the values and customs of their country of origin, which adds stress to their lives. Thus, this study found that trying to balance the two different cultures brings stress on to these mothers and influences the mother-child relationships in a negative way. The study finding suggested the importance of intervening with immigrant mothers to reduce their stress and to help strengthen their relationship with their children (Aroian et al., 2009).

Mahmood (2011) conducted a study to learn about Muslim mothers' experiences in raising children in the United States. The study participants included 12 Muslim mothers from different parts of the Detroit area who had moved to the US from majority Muslim countries. The results of this study showed that these mothers experienced challenges due to discrimination after 9/11 and due to the school environment in public schools. Likewise, the study found that these mothers felt that they experienced challenges because of the negative roles of Muslims portrayed in the media and due to

lack of support from the community. They also felt that as Muslim mothers, they experienced difficulties because of the language barriers, identity problems and financial stress. In addition to the challenges, these mothers identified some positive experiences such as being able to provide better education and future for the children, and acceptance of self because of living in the United States (Mahmood, 2011).

Father's role in Islam. In Islam, the father is given great importance and it is said that *Quran* described a father's role more specifically than a mother's role (Tarazi, 1995). A Muslim father is expected to provide for the financial and educational needs of a child (Akin, 2012). One *hadith* mentioned that a father gives his child nothing better than a good education, while another stated that whoever performs his prayer correctly and spends on his children despite his modest means and does not speak ill against others will be in paradise as close to me [the Prophet] as these two fingers of mine (Furqaan Institute of Quranic Healing, 2017b). It is also believed that the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) not only asked people to provide and care for their families, but he practiced affection, compassion, and love towards his family (Akin, 2012). Prophet Muhammed's (PBUH) wife Aisha is reported to have said that the Prophet (PBUH) helped with house chores whenever he was at home and one of the longest serving servants of the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) was reported to have said that he had never seen any man more compassionate towards his family than the Prophet (PBUH) (Furqaan Institute of Quranic Healing, 2017b).

Krayem (2015) examined Arab American fathers' views on fathering and how immigrating to the US influenced their parenting practices. The study included nine fathers who discussed taking a collaborative approach when parenting, rather than acting as an authority figure. These fathers also expressed facing challenges due to having to grow accustomed to a new culture. Also, the study reported that discrimination against Arabs led them to caution their children not to talk about politics. They also mentioned facing challenges in teaching their children about their culture and language due to the power of the dominant culture and their children's rapid adaptation to the American culture (Krayem, 2015).

Islamophobia and Experiences of Discrimination

As stated on CAIR (2010) "American Muslim reflections on Islamophobia in the United States occur in full recognition that virtually every minority in our nation has faced and in most cases, continues to face discrimination" (p. 5). The CAIR report defines Islamophobia as closed-minded prejudice against or hatred of Islam and Muslims. "An Islamophobic is an individual who holds closed-minded view of Islam and promotes prejudice against or hatred of Muslims" (p. 5). However, CAIR (2010) reported that not all Americans are Islamophobic and the United States is not an Islamophobic nation; nevertheless, there are Islamophobic elements in the United States which cannot be ignored.

In the year 2005, CAIR (2006) conducted a survey to understand what Americans think about Muslims, to identify variables associated with anti-Muslim prejudice, and to

identify conditions conducive to combating prejudices. This survey had 1001 randomly

selected participants from across the nation who participated in a telephone interview.

The survey concluded that approximately one in four Americans believed that Islam is a

religion of hatred and violence. According to the survey, only 2% answered that they

were *very knowledgeable* about Islam, 39% reported they were *somewhat knowledgeable*,

and 60% said they were *not very knowledgeable* or *not at all knowledgeable* about Islam.

Of the participants, 10% also believed that Muslims believe in a moon God. This survey

found that a little over a third of the total of those surveyed were indifferent, confused, or

neutral in their perceptions of Islam and its adherents. More than 25% maintained a

tolerant view of Islam and Muslims. More than 20% were found to be somewhat tolerant

and 20% indicated having intolerant feelings towards Muslims. This survey also found

that most Americans reported that they would change their views of Muslims, if Muslims

condemn terrorism more strongly, show more concern for Americans or work to improve

the status of Muslim women or America's image in the Muslim world. The survey

provided evidence that nearly one in five Americans have a strong anti-Muslim attitude

and believe that Islam teaches violence and Muslim incubates hate in their children. The

survey found that this anti-Islamic prejudice might be a result of lack of accurate

information about Islam and Muslims and apprehensions about personal safety (CAIR,

2006).

      Mills (2012) study stated that Muslims have experienced oppression, threats,

prejudice and discrimination. He further stated that messages from media and politicians

about Islam and Muslims after the September 11, 2001 attack, adds fuel to these acts. Mills (2012) conducted a research to explore how Islamophobia is embedded in the everyday lived experiences and identity negotiations of a sample of Middle Eastern immigrants, 10 years post 9/11. The study included 13 first-generation Middle Eastern immigrants who consisted of nine Muslims, two Christians and two who claimed no religion. The findings of this study suggested that discrimination and cultural hostility vary across both gender and religion. The study found that women who cover themselves with *hijab* were subjected to far more discrimination and humiliation than men or women who did not wear a head cover. The study also found that Iranians were subjected to extremely poor treatment compared with participants from other countries regardless of their religion. The study concluded that while Muslims and Middle Easterners faced greater discrimination after 9/11, the hostility towards those who are visibly Muslim, especially women is much greater (Mills, 2012).

As said previously, Muslims are a diverse population and the degree of religiosity and the manner in which many of the religious values are practiced by individuals and Muslim families differ based on culture, nation of origin, degree of assimilation, and family and individual values (Al-Romi, 2000). Nevertheless, Muslim students living in America are still bound by Islamic traditions and Muslim children who come from mostly conservative families face many difficulties in public schools. For example, some schools have prevented or restricted Muslim students from following certain religious practices like daily prayers and wearing the *hijab* (Al-Romi, 2000).

Hodge (2002) reported that due to lack of understanding and support from teachers and school administration at American schools, Muslim students find it difficult to exercise their religious faith. For example, he noted that most of the Islamic prayers occur during the school hours and many years the fasting month of *Ramadan* falls during the academic year. Nevertheless, special accommodations are not made to help these students to perform their prayers or during the month of fasting such as having a special prayer room or excusing Muslim students from attending vigorous activities or tasks while fasting. However, he did report that some schools have started to make some adjustments for religious minority groups like identifying or marking the food items made of pork (Hodge, 2002).

Ahmed and Szpara (2003) conducted a study, to learn if there was an understanding of the diversity of the Muslim community in American schools and how perceptions about Muslims in America affected Muslim students and whether difference in secular American values and Muslim values helped or hindered learning and socialization of Muslim students. A total of 31 participants including Muslim mothers, fathers, and girls and boys from several cities of New York were included in this study. The results of this study indicated that the Muslim students believed that their classmates and teachers did not understand Islamic practices and their cultural differences. They also believed that negative stereotypes and misconceptions existed about Islam in the larger American community and American schools and that this misconception negatively affected them. The study found that the Muslim students interviewed were aware of their

religious and cultural identity and they also liked to maintain their American identities. Although, there were similarities between the experiences of both boys and girls, the study found that girls felt more pressured by their family on the issue of dressing and modesty. Also, the study revealed that, in general, although there is a lack of knowledge about Islam among their classmates and school staffs, these Muslim students made meaningful relationships in schools and sometimes gained moral support from the school administration. The students were also satisfied with their overall educational experiences and satisfied with school achievements in the United States. Finally, the participants in this study hoped to see their schools connecting with the larger Muslim community, celebrating religious holidays and fostering a positive image of Muslims (Ahmed & Szpara, 2003).

Sheikh (2009) conducted qualitative research to understand the challenges of living in America as a Muslim adolescent attending public school. The study participants included five Muslim females and six Muslim males attending public high schools from various parts of New Jersey. The participants in this study identified peer pressure as one of the challenges which includes pressuring to drink, partying and using drugs. This study also found that participants of this study found family pressure to adhere to Islamic and cultural believes while maintaining their American identity challenging. Similarly, the study found that these students experienced discrimination in their schools and were less likely to seek help from their teachers because the participants felt school staff are generally racists, hold negative stereotype about Muslims and did not understand their

Islamic background. The study also found that these students relied on spirituality and religion to cope with the challenges and stressors they faced in the community and schools (Sheikh, 2009).

Summary

The current study attempted to discover the challenges and strengths of Muslim parents living in the United States, while raising their children to respect Islamic teachings and values. This chapter has attempted to explore the values and teachings of Islam and the role these values play in the lives of Muslim parents. Similarly, this chapter includes research findings addressing the lived experience of Muslims and other minority groups.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to discover the challenges and strengths of Muslim parents living in the United States, while raising their children to respect Islamic teachings and values. This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological approach using semi-structured interviews to better understand the lived experiences of these Muslim parents.

Research Design

This study used a qualitative research approach and applied phenomenological method to understand the challenges and strengths of Muslim parents living in the United States, while raising their children to respect the Islamic teachings and values. The description or interpretation of phenomena will help the researcher understand the meanings these have for the people who experience them, as they experience them (Langdridge, 2007).

Langdridge (2007) stated that phenomenology is the study of human experience and the way in which things are perceived as they appear to our consciousness. Therefore, phenomenological research focuses on human experiences as a topic and is concerned with meaning and how it relates to the experiences. It focuses on descriptions and relationships, rather than interpretation and causality. Phenomenology recognizes the role of the researcher in the co-construction of the topic under investigation, and builds on an understanding of the way in which all experience must be understood in the

personal, cultural and historical context (Langdridge, 2007). The best approach to discover the challenges and strengths of Muslim parents living in the US, while raising their children is through a qualitative phenomenological research method. This study collected its data through individual face-to-face interviews which was audio-recorded. This study addressed the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of Muslim parents raising children in the United States?

2. What strengths are helpful to these Muslim parents in raising their children in the United States?

Participants

The researcher recruited 15 Muslim participants, female and male, who are at least 18 years old and who currently reside in North Central Texas. The participants immigrated or traveled to the United States for study or work from a predominately Islamic country and have lived in the United States for at least two years at the time of the interview. They are currently raising a child between the ages of 5 and 17, in the United States. In addition, the participants of this study were able to communicate in English

Sampling Procedure

The researcher recruited 15 participants for this study. A recruitment flyer was placed in mosques located in various cities in North Central Texas (see Appendix A). In addition, the snowball method was used where participants or others helped to find

participants through word of mouth (Creswell, 2014). Since the study involved a minority population, snowball sampling helped the researcher recruit participants whom she might otherwise not be able to reach. Due to the nature of this study, the researcher recruited a purposive sample; the participants recruited shared the experience investigated (Langdridge, 2007). The researcher approached mosques, universities, peers, colleagues, and acquaintances to recruit participants. The researcher provided contact information and recruitment flyer about the study to the potential recruiters. When a potential participant contacted the researcher, the researcher screened them in accordance with the needs of this study using the telephone script before interviewing them (see Appendix B).

Data Collection

The researcher obtained approval from the Texas Woman's University Institutional Review Board (IRB) before collecting the data. The researcher met with the participants who fit the criteria for the study at a place convenient for the participants. At these meetings, the researcher conducted a face-to-face, in-depth, semi-structured interview with the participants to learn about their experiences raising a Muslim child in the United States.

Before beginning the interview, participants were provided with a written consent form (see Appendix C), which the researcher verbally explained before gaining the written consent from the participants. The purpose, procedure, and risks involved of this study were explained to the participants. The participants were also informed that they can terminate the interview or participation in the research at any time during the period

of this study. First, the researcher collected some demographic information, using the demographic questionnaire (see Appendix D). After this, the researcher moved on to follow the interview protocol and asked the following open-ended interview questions (see Appendix E):

1. What is it like raising a child to value Islamic teachings in a country where Islam is not a major religion?

2. What differences or similarities do you see between your experiences growing up in a Muslim majority country and raising your child in the U.S.?

3. What strengths help you in raising your children in the U.S.?

The researcher used prompts to further understand and clarify the participant's answers. Each participant had individual interviews which were audio-recorded with the consent of the participant. The researcher conducted the interviews at a pace convenient for the participants.

Interview Procedure

The researcher verbally explained the purpose, procedure, benefits and risks of this study to individual participants before each interview. The participants were informed that they could decide to terminate the study at any time. The researcher provided opportunities to the participants to ask any questions they would in relation to the study. Each participant signed two copies of the consent form; the researcher kept one copy and gave the other to the participant. The researcher also provided referrals for mental health services in case the participant wanted to discuss any emotional discomfort.

(See Appendix F) The researcher honored and respected the study participants and tried her best to protect their integrity. The researcher allowed the participants to answer the questions at their own pace and effectively listened to the participants without being judgmental. The researcher stayed true to the study questions and used prompts if needed.

Protection of the Participants

During and after the study, the researcher took all appropriate measures to protect the participants of the study. The researcher obtained approval from Texas Woman's University's IRB to protect the integrity of the participants. Any documents or materials used in this study were kept in a locked cabinet only accessible to the researcher. Participants' names appeared only on the consent form and not on any other materials. The researcher used numerical, alphabetical, and color codes to identify participants during the transcribing and data analysis process.

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, typically, the data analysis of the text is divided into groups of sentences, called *text segments* to determine the meaning of each group of sentences rather than using statistics (Creswell, 2014). The researcher analyzes words or pictures to describe the central phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2014). Thus, the researcher analyzed the interview responses to identify occurring, patterns, keywords, categories, group of sentences, text segments, and themes that then helped the researcher identify meanings behind the experience shared by the participants of this study. The researcher read the transcribed interviews three to four times before analyzing them to

find out underlying themes. In addition to the researcher, a research assistant (a doctoral candidate in the Texas Woman's University family therapy program) and her faculty advisor compared their findings of a sample of the transcripts.

Role of the Researcher

I am a doctoral candidate majoring in Family Therapy. I am also a Muslim parent who has moved to the United States from an Islamic country, Maldives for studying. I have lived in the United States for approximately 16 years and have an American-born child who I am trying to raise in accordance with the Islamic values. Therefore, I, myself have experienced some challenges as a Muslim parent. Similarly, there are many American values I admire. Thus, I am passionate about this topic and interested in learning more about the experiences of other parents who are in a similar situation.

According to Creswell (2014), the researcher is the key instrument in a qualitative study, as she or he collects data through interviewing participants and analyzing the data collected. As the primary instrument, and having experienced the challenges as a Muslim parent, I am aware of many biases that I may bring to this research. Therefore, I tried to be aware of these biases and refrained from making any presumptions about the experiences of the participants. I self-reflected and used method of epoche' described by Langdridge (2007) in order to set aside these biases about the topic or the participants' experiences.

<center>**Credibility of the Study**</center>

To refrain oneself from the bias and to improve the validity and credibility of the research, the researcher used reflexivity and epoche'. In addition, the researcher sought help from her faculty advisor and a research assistant to identify themes.

Reflexivity

Langdridge (2007) identified reflexivity as the process by which the researchers are conscious of and reflective about the ways in which their questions, methods and personal perception might impact the knowledge gained in a research study. Similarly, Carlson (2010) recognized the importance of reflexivity and the researcher being aware of the potential biases that she or he might bring to the study that might influence the interpretation of the study. The researcher made every attempt to stop and reflect to ensure that the researcher's personal experience did not influence the data analysis of this study.

Epoché

The researcher used epoché (or bracketing) in conducting and analyzing the research findings. Epoché is described as attempting to abstain from any presuppositions and the ideas the researcher has about the investigation (Langdridge, 2007). The core of epoché is doubt about the natural attitude or the biases of everyday knowledge. The aim of it is to enable the researcher to describe the things themselves and attempt to set aside the natural attitude and assumptions that the researcher may have. Thus, to conduct and analyze the data from a fresh view point, the researcher tried to be aware of her

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presumptions and prejudice and tried to examine the information gathered from a different perspective. Langdridge (2007) stated that the ability to see phenomena from many different perspectives is crucial in uncovering the essence of the phenomena. Following Langdridge's study, the researcher made every effort to bracket her perception about the phenomenon and to be open to the participant's experiences while being conscious of the researcher's own experiences and biases in relation to the topic investigated. The researcher stayed true to the interview protocol and interview questions and asked prompting questions only to find further information when necessary and tried to stay away from asking additional questions or make any comments that might in any form influence the study results. Similarly, to increase the credibility of the research, in addition to the researcher, the researcher's advisor and a research assistant helped analyze a sample of transcripts to identify common themes.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to describe the challenges and strengths of Muslim parents living in the United States, raising their children to respect Islamic teachings and values. This study utilized a qualitative, phenomenological approach to understand the participants' experience in their own terms. The 15 participants for this study were Muslim parents who have been born or raised in a predominantly Muslim country and who have lived in the United States for at least two years and are currently raising children of age 5 to 17 years. The researcher recruited participants with the help of mosques located in North Central Texas, organizations in universities located in North

Central Texas and by the snowball sampling method. The data were collected by conducting semi-structured interviews. The researcher used a short demographic questionnaire to find demographic information of the study participants. All interviews for this study were audio recorded, transcribed and analyzed for emerging themes and the study findings were described using themes. The researcher used reflexivity and epoché to increase the validity and credibility of this study. In addition to the researcher, the faculty advisor and a research assistant helped in coding and identifying the themes for a sample of the transcripts and these themes were compared with the researcher's themes.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to discover the challenges and strengths of Muslim parents living in the United States, while raising their children to respect Islamic teachings and values. The study utilized a phenomenological approach and focused on the lived experiences of the participants. The study was focused on two main questions:

1. What are the experiences of Muslim parents raising children in the United States?

2. What strengths are helpful to these Muslim parents in raising their children in the United States?

To further direct the study, the following interview questions were asked:

1. What is it like raising a child to value Islamic teachings in a country where Islam is not a major religion?

2. What differences or similarities do you see between your experiences growing up in a Muslim majority country and raising your child in the U.S.?

3. What strengths help you in raising your children in the U.S.?

The following sections presents a description of the sample interviewed in this study and the themes that emerged from the interview questions. Five themes emerged: lack of recognition and understanding of Islam, greater responsibility to teach Islam, difficulty balancing American and Islamic values, underlying concerns and anxiety, and positive experiences as strengths.

Sample Description

The sample consisted of 15 Muslim parents; 10 females and 5 males. The study participants were between the age of 33 and 57 with a mean age of 43. The participants all currently live in North Central Texas and each participated in a face-to-face interview. All the participants for this study were married and had children between the ages of 18 months and 20 years. The participants had at least one child, with the maximum number of children being 5. Most participants had 2 children. The participants were from 9 different countries: 1 from Saudi Arabia, 1 from Gambia, 1 from Maldives, 1 from Libya, 1 from Jordan, 1 from Morocco, 2 from Pakistan, 3 from Egypt, and 4 from Bangladesh. Of the 15 participants, 46% identified themselves as Asian, 13% as Caucasian or White, and 40% as Other.

The sample was highly educated with 47% with an undergraduate degree, 40% holding graduate degree, and 13% with more than 2 years of college education. The reasons for the participants to move to the United States included education, work, better living and having gained U.S. residency. Of the participants, 53% reported that they were in the US permanently and 47% reported they were here temporarily. Some participants reported that they first came to the US temporarily and then changed to permanent status. The number of years the participants lived in the US ranged from 3 years to 30 years with a mean of 11 years. Of the 15 participants, 40% identified themselves as very religious, 47% moderately religious, and 13% somewhat religious. The 15 participants were engaged in various occupations such as education, business, information technology,

tourism, and engineering. Some identified themselves as students. The income range

included 2 participants making under $15,999, 3 making $16,000-$29,999, 3 making $

30,000-$ 44,999, 3 making $45,000-$59,999 and, 3 making $60,000- $74,999. One

participant did not disclose their income. The following Tables 1 and 2 represent the

demographic information of the 15 participants in this study.

Table 1

Participant's Demographic Information (Age, Gender, Country, Number of children and

Education level)

Participant	Age	Gender	Country	# of children	Education Level
P1	39	Female	Saudi Arabia	2	Graduate Degree
P2	49	Male	Gambia	4	Undergraduate degree
P3	33	Female	Pakistan	2	Graduate Degree
P4	47	Female	Egypt	5	Undergraduate degree
P5	35	Female	Libya	2	Graduate degree
P6	43	Female	Jordan	1	Graduate degree
P7	45	Female	Morocco	4	2 years college work
P8	57	Male	Egypt	5	Graduate degree
P9	45	Male	Pakistan	2	Undergraduate degree
P10	37	Female	Bangladesh	3	Graduate degree
P11	47	Female	Bangladesh	2	Graduate course work
P12	51	Male	Bangladesh	2	2 years college work
P13	48	Male	Bangladesh	3	Undergraduate degree
P14	41	Female	Egypt	4	Undergraduate degree
P15	35	Female	Maldives	2	Undergraduate degree

Table 2

Participant's Demographic Information (# of years in the U.S., Religiosity, and Income).

Participant	# of years in the U. S	Religiosity	Income
P1	06 years	moderately religious	$45,000-$59,999
P2	10 years	very religious	$45,000-$59,999
P3	03 years	moderately religious	$16,000-$29,999
P4	11 years	very religious	$30,000-44,999
P5	05 years	very religious	$ > $15,999
P6	04 years	moderately religious	$> $15,999
P7	19 years	very religious	$60,000-$74,999
P8	13 years	very religious	$60,000-$74,999
P9	03 years	moderately religious	$16,000-$29,999
P10	10 years	moderately religious	$30,000-$44,999
P11	17 years	somewhat religious	$60,000-$74,999
P12	17 years	moderately religious	$45,000-$59,999
P13	30 years	somewhat religious	did not report
P14	13 years	very religious	$16,000-$29,000
P15	09 years	moderately religious	$30,000-$44,999

Findings

After analyzing the interviews, the researcher was able to identify five major themes. The following explains these themes and provides descriptions and verbatim quotes to better illustrate these themes. The themes are lack of recognition and understanding of Islam, greater responsibility to teach Islam, difficult balancing American and Islamic values, underlying concerns and anxiety, and positive experience as strengths.

Theme One: Lack of Recognition and Understanding of Islam

Almost all the participants expressed that they felt that there was lack of recognition and understanding of Islam in the American society. They explained how this lack of recognition and lack of understanding of Islam makes it challenging for them to raise their children to value Islamic teachings and practices in the US. The study participants explained how it is confusing to children when Islam is not a part of the bigger community and difficult to teach them the values and practices when children do not see Islamic teachings and values followed as a norm by most of the population nor understood by the majority in the society. These participants expressed that when most of the people do not recognize or understand their religion and its values then it is hard for the children to learn and adapt to these values, as they do not see majority practicing it.

Islam not recognized in the wider community. Many expressed that this makes it difficult for their children to learn their religious values when Islam is not recognized or celebrated at a national level. For example, many participants reported that it is

difficult to teach some of the religious practices like prayers, religious festivals or important days like the Eid (Islamic holiday) when children do not see these days recognized at a national level while some of the practices and religious days of some of the other religions are widely celebrated and recognized in the community. Following are examples of these responses:

> When I grew up in my country which was Muslim majority, so we used to celebrate Islamic holidays. You know, and you get days off from school and work. See your parents around at home and you have several days off of festivals. Ummm the whole country will be you know enjoying the holidays and everybody is off at that time. Whereas here, we are minority so whenever we have religious events, so few people and you don't feel that warmth anymore…over there everybody is doing the same thing, they are enjoying, they have off from school and they have off from work. So here, it's an exception, here it's like Oh! Your kids didn't go to school today because of religious holiday? Oh! You are a Muslim? (Participant #13, Bangladesh, Father)

Another parent talked about how it is difficult to follow some of the religious practices like prayer when the society does not understand its importance or accommodate for these practices.

> Hmm. It's challenging. When you are in your country it comes naturally but here it's kind of like we have to dictate everything…Other thing is like the way we have to live here we don't have time to do everything on time for prayer but when

you are back home to stop for those prayers and it becomes a priority but when

you are in a society like this [US], the society doesn't know that we have to do all

those things so, they don't let us do it. They don't understand or accommodate for

the things we have to do in our religion. (Participant #15, Maldives, Mother).

Lack of understanding in educational settings. Many participants also

explained how it can be difficult for both the parents and the children when there is a lack

of understanding in the educational settings about Islam. Some shared how their children

were asked to practice or follow some of the rituals of other religions at schools, but they

are never taught about Islam or celebrate Islamic holidays at schools. Likewise, some

parents shared that their children get teased at school because the majority of Americans

do not understand Islam and its practices. Here are some of their responses:

The Cafeteria lady did pork sandwich that time and my daughter told her no we

can't eat because she [Cafeteria lady] doesn't know that it is not allowed, so she

said no it's good it's good, just try… but we went to them [school] and told them

this is not okay so they listened to what we said and respected. The Cafeteria lady

didn't know…The second is that for Christmas, you know that our religion is

something else, we don't celebrate the Christmas or Easter or trick-or-treat or

something like that, so my kids school, at school so we have to join it. We have to

share, and we have to celebrate. But also, the second problem is that the kids have

to sing a song about Christmas and they might say Jesus like God but know for

our religion Jesus is not God. (Participant #4, Egypt, Mother)

Some parents also expressed how it is difficult for their children to dress according to Islam when attending school.

It's not easy for my daughter because she go to, she went to the school…and they don't talk about religion at school…it's difficult for and for her to wear hijab because sometimes she refuses to wear hijab because when she goes to school they [students] ask her about why you wear this hijab and you know she is not very big to answer this question. (Participant #6, Jordan, Mother).

Another mother reported a similar experience:

She [her daughter] wears hijab and she went to school too and some kids, it's very curious and ummm told her please we want to ask you because she was the only girl who wore hijab in the school, So they asked her "Are you bald"? because you're covering your hair, she got upset and she told momma kids make fun at me because I am the only one wearing hijab. (Participant #4, Egypt, Mother).

Theme Two: Greater Responsibility to Teach Islam

Every participant in this study shared that if they were in their home country their children would learn about Islam from the culture and that they, as parents would not have to make an extra effort to teach their children about Islam. Many reported that the children would be helped by everyone in the community like family, friends, and neighbors. The school would also be teaching the children about religion and its values and practices. However, many expressed that in the US, they were the only ones who has to take responsibility of teaching these values to their children.

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Islam not part of the mainstream U.S. culture. Many reported that as Islam is embedded as part of the society or culture and therefore parents did not have to make an extra effort to teach the Islamic values to their children in their home countries. Here are their responses:

It's easy to raise them in your country. As I told you, it's between the family, between the friends, kids know what to follow because everybody follows it. Example, when we go to Morocco in the summer they do everything. They do the prayer [laughs], they fast, they read Quran. They do everything but when when we come here it's you know little bit hard because they don't see others doing it except for mom and dad. Over there, it seems like in Morocco everyone does the same and so it's like a custom. Parents have to teach them, you know, to do more. (Participant #7, Morocco, Mother)

A father shared his thought and experience:

They are like, it's like fish in the pond [laughs]. I mean you learn how to swim, you don't teach a duck to go into water. So, I mean it's so so simple over there [Pakistan]. I mean you don't think about that, here you have to think. I mean you need to learn Quran. Like if back home my older one will learn Quran now and now she will be learning Arabic and stuff. Here, you send her once a week to Quran class. There, its, it's like a regular thing, every day or every day or 5,6 days a week. Here, here I pray at home so my kids can learn and when I come to mosque I try to bring my kids, so they can learn. (Participant #9, Pakistan, Father)

Another parent expressed how Islam is part of everyday life in her home country and therefore, children learn the religious practices by seeing it. However, she expressed that she must make an extra effort and take her children to mosque if she wants even for them to hear the azan (call for prayer) here in the US.

> We don't get to go to masjid [mosque] everyday here and kids would even hardly ever hear the prayer. If you are back home, they'll see and hear the prayer either from the T.V. or when you go out on the road you'll hear. So it's just everyday life but here if you want them to really hear it or see it and you just have to go to mosque… yes, so it's part of our everyday life in back home and you don't have to explain it so much there like you would have to do it here. (Participant #15, Maldives, Mother)

Lack of family and community support. Many participants of this study expressed that in their home country, everyone will take part in raising the children and that lack of extended family or community support in the US makes it difficult for them to raise their children to value Islamic teachings and practices. The parents in this study shared that often they carry the sole responsibility of raising their children and hence the greater responsibility of teaching their children the Islamic values and practices. Many of these parents expressed that this makes it very difficult for them because they must make sure that their children are getting the right religious values and carry the burden of raising their children as good Muslims. In contrary to this, these participants shared that if they were in their home country they will have the support of extended families and

support from the community like that of their friends, neighbors, schools, and even the government. Most participants shared that they do not have their extended family in the US and have few Muslim friends which makes it harder for them to depend on anyone else to raise their children and to teach them the Islamic values. Here are some examples of responses shared by the participants:

Over there [referring to Gambia], everybody is a parent. My kids can go out and do something wrong they will hear from others and I will know about it too even if the kids don't tell me. The community observes each other. The community like my friends gonna, they gonna straighten them up but here nobody gonna say "Hey! Your kid this wrong!" they are gonna, they are gonna just leave him or her alone. So, here I cannot look up to anyone to help with your kids but if I tell everybody there then the community is looking up to each other and then you can build a better community, a better person. (Participant #2, Gambia, Father)

Another parent stated:

In the Muslim environment or Muslim majority country, we can leave the kids with the community to watch them in the school for example, and then we know they are under the umbrella of Islamic teaching in the school with the teacher, their families, with their relatives. (Participant #8, Egypt, Father)

Theme Three: Difficulty Balancing American and Islamic Values

Most of the participants mentioned that they themselves or their children identified both as Americans and Muslims. Those who were not Americans either had American born children or who still wanted their children to respect American societal values. Many parents expressed their struggles as a Muslim parent in a non-Muslim society trying to balance between teaching their children the values and practice of Islam while incorporating the American values. However, almost all the parents, regardless of how religious they were, wanted their children to learn and embrace Islamic values. Nevertheless, since Islamic practice does not happen at a societal level and the teaching of Islam does not happen at schools, most parents expressed that they were carrying the sole responsibility of teaching their children Islamic values. Many parents in this study found it difficult. The following are some of the examples of the responses from the participants who shared this view:

> When I say umm religion, I mean that they shouldn't follow anything which is against our rule. Ummm for example, what to eat, the dress, their style of lives supposed to be of Islamic values and under Islamic umbrella…my daughters are raised here [US] and the best is that they believe that this is a great community compared to our back home community and that America is not against Islam…but they should still practice Islam and live according to Sharia and that's lawful. Trying to teach them to keep both is really hard. (Participant #8, Egypt, Father)

I tell them they can be Muslim, they can be American, they can be Asian at the

same time but because everybody is not a Muslim in this country, it's confusing

for the kids. So, for parents it's really difficult. (Participant #11, Bangladesh,

Mother)

Theme Four: Underlying Concerns and Anxiety

A fourth theme that emerged was the underlying concerns and anxiety

experienced by the parents over their children being misjudged and influenced by non-

Muslim values. Likewise, there appeared to be anxiety over the fact that there were some

differences and variations adherence to the Islamic practices within the Islamic

community in the US. For example, some parents worried that their children might learn

some conservative values from other Muslims, which the parents did not share.

Being misjudged. Some parents expressed that they were concerned that their

children might be discriminated against, labelled and misjudged just for being Muslims.

Some parents expressed that Islam as a religion and Muslims were seen in a negative way

in the US. Some parents shared that the US media reports and spreads negativity about

Islam. Some parents shared that they feared that their children might be misjudged by

their neighbors or school mates if they revealed their Islamic identity or practiced it more

openly.

Examples of the following responses reflecting these concerns and anxiety

amongst the parents interviewed were:

My kids' names all of them are Musthafa and Mohamed and whenever I call

them, that's kick on people's head. Because some people when I call them they

will just know, immediately, they will know that these guys are Muslims and they

will label you somewhere and while you are not evil or while you are not bad. But

as soon as you mentioned their name, they say hey, they are Muslim names,

knowing that you are Muslim or not, they will immediately label you as bad

person because of the names and kids are facing those kinds of things too… and I

am afraid to send them outside. (Participant #2, Gambia, Father)

Another father expressed how he tries to be cautious when reveling his and his

children's religious identity to neighbors and others:

We have to be careful also while we are in the society so that we are not targeted

for no reasons...careful in the sense like why I try to do is not show off that I am a

Muslim. Okay! ah,ah, even in our neighborhood. I try not to practice my religion

in front of other people…I, because I don't know who is thinking what…I don't

want to make other people upset or angry or me a target. It's mainly because I still

have the younger kids. I don't want my kids to have the feelings that they are

being targeted because of Muslim. (Participant #12, Bangladesh, Father)

Children being influenced by non-Islamic values. Other participants in this

study expressed they were worried or were concerned that their children might not

identify with some of the Islamic values when they grow up in a non-predominantly

Muslim country like the US. Many participants felt that some of the life style and

behavior identified in the American culture were at odds with their own cultural and religious values. Thus, they worried that their children might not fully embrace or respect some of the Islamic religious values or practices. For example, some shared their struggle to teach their children to pray, learn Arabic or read Quran.

> But no, as they grow up and it's hard for me. You know like my oldest one. Before he was you know like 4, 5, 6 years he was in an Islamic school. He used to memorize Quran easily and he used to pray, and he used to do everything. And now for me it's a challenge you know, he doesn't listen as before [laughs]. Gives me hard time…here they are with other people you know, like other friends, American friends, Christian friends, you know it's hard for them to follow you. (Participant #7, Morocco, Mother)

Some parents expressed how they did not like how sexuality or romantic relationships were practiced or dealt with in the US. It is important to note that in Islam, pre-marital sex, and sometimes interaction between both sexes outside of marriage, is prohibited in some Islamic cultures such as dating before marriage (Ali et al., 2004).

> Maybe here there are some things which is allowed for the majority of the community, but it's not allowed for us, like dating for example, I have 5 daughters here. They are not allowed to date or make relationships before marriage. Legal relationships which is marriage. It's not allowed for them to go to party and things like that. (Participant #8, Egypt, Father)

Some participants shared how difficult it was for them to get the proper food and help their children understand that they need to dress in a certain way or according to Muslim values. In Muslim majority countries this would not be a major issue as non-halal foods are prohibited in the country and mostly everyone follows Islamic values and respects the modesty required in dressing.

Sometimes here, we have a problem about hijab because if you have a daughter she has to wear hijab after like 12 or 13 and it's hard for me and her to wear hijab because sometimes she refuses to wear hijab because when she is in school they ask her why you wear this hijab. Why you cover your hair? (Participant #6, Jordan, Mother)

Another father stated:

There are a lot of differences. Starting from food and then dressing up and their behaving in certain way. I eat halal food. Nowadays it's more easily available but when we moved here, seventeen years ago, it was really difficult to find halal food but there are very few places where I can find halal food but, in my country, I don't have to even think about that's its halal or non-halal. I know it's going to be halal. So, I don't have to think about eating anything in my country but here, I have to think about that before eating in a place. I like my children to follow that too but you know, here when the right food is not available they get confused or they are kids, so so kids like to eat everything good but it's not halal for us. (Participant #12, Bangladesh, Father)

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Differences and variations in Islamic practices. It was interesting that some participants also found that the differences within the Muslims living in the US, like the differences of the sects within the Islamic community, made things difficult here in the US. As mentioned in several instances, the Islam and Muslim population is very diverse. Muslims come from different parts of the world and do carry different experiences that are only unique to their own country and culture (Hodge, 2002). Similarly, there are many variations in the ways Muslims practice some of the Islamic values and rituals. Some countries, cultures, or families might be very liberal while others are more conservative. Given these differences, it is understandable that some participants in this study shared experiences and expressed their concerns over these differences. They were worried that their children might learn Islamic practices or values that might be different from their own. The following are examples of such responses:

> Back home [Bangladesh] we grew, we grew up very liberal. So, here I think things have been a more conservative. Like, I didn't mind. I was wearing shirts and shorts and jeans in high school, but my daughter does not, my son does not because they were taught that in the mosque that you are not supposed to and that has got into them you know that. Back home we were not taught that that rigidity, so we grew. I grew much more liberal there. The mosque gets them much more like a "Islamization", getting them to be "Muslimization". It's way too much here. (Participant #11, Bangladesh, Mother)

Another mother expressed how it is confusing and difficult to explain the differences of practices in the same religion to her children:

Here there is so much of variety that we have to again explain those things to the kids. Within, in, in, in the masjid [mosque] itself. Even prayers they do it different. So again, we have to explain those things to kids too [laughs]. When you are in Maldives, everybody does everything the same way so that even for me sometimes I get confused. Okay! I think these are people doing it differently, but I was raised different. Even Friday prayers, girls and women never did it [referring to women going to Friday prayer in Maldives] but here everybody goes. So those things again become little difficult when it comes to explaining them [referring to her children]. (Participant #15, Maldives, Mother)

Theme Five: Positive Experiences as Strengths

Muslim parents who participated in this study not only shared their negative experiences about raising their children in the US, but also shared some of their positive experiences. The study participants shared strengths that help them to raise their children to value Islamic teachings in the US.

Availability of resources. Having access to valuable resources was the biggest strength for Muslim parents in raising their children in the US. Although, the participants expressed that there were limited resources, having access to these resources was seen positively. Being knowledgeable about Islam, having access to mosques and Islamic educational programs like the Sunday schools (classes usually held at mosques to teach

about Islam), availability of technology and other religious materials and having some family and friends who practiced the same religious views were the biggest strengths shared by the participants that help in raising their children in the US.

Islamic knowledge. Many of the parents who participated in this study shared that it is their own knowledge of Islam and their own religious beliefs that help them to raise their children in accordance with the Islamic values.

I'll says that strengths is my knowledge about my religion. It's the best strengths for me to raise the kids in our way because if I don't know about my religion then I cannot teach my kids, raise my kids because as I said here, here I already said, it's very difficult to find Islamic center where people teach. (Participant #12, Bangladesh, Father)

Another parent stated:

For my kids I think I am the biggest strength because if I pray, they will pray. They will practice what we teach them. So, I try, I try to show them from the knowledge I have or what I have learned in my country as a Muslim. (Participant #15, Maldives, Mother)

Mosques and Islamic educational programs. Many participants shared that one of the greatest strengths in raising their children in the United States as Muslims is having access to a mosque or Islamic educational programs held at mosques. Many participants expressed that having the opportunity to bring their children for prayers, during Ramadan (showing them how people break their fast at the mosque) and Eid and also to Sunday

schools was something that was helpful in teaching and maintaining their Islamic values and to teach those values to their children. Some responses shared by the participants are as follows:

> The mosque is one of the strengths. The Sunday school, they come to learn Arabic and Quran. Also, our home is 5 to10 minutes from mosque, so my husband come to pray here. Alhamdulillah! [Praise God]. This is a very nice thing. Usually, if the kids don't have school they come with him [referring to her husband] and see how Muslims practice and read Quran. (Participant #1, Saudi Arabia, Father)
>
> Sunday school. Yeah! It gives my people the chance to to understand. To discover the real Islam, not the deform Islam or false picture of Islam. So, they teach the right way of Islam. (Participant #4, Egypt, Mother)
>
> The mosque helps, obviously. This Islamic center helps. You know the activities…you know here you have hands on experience. (Participant #9, Pakistan, Father)
>
> I think masjid [mosque] is helping so much keeping the children in touch with Islam. I think it's very helpful and important. (Participant #14, Egypt, Mother)

Family and friends. Many also expressed that having some family members in the US, having Muslim friends or other Muslims they know helped them to teach the Islamic values and practices to their own children. It is important to note that those who shared that having family was helpful in raising their children in the US, shared that they had their extended family living in the US. Many participants raised the importance of

having family and Muslim friends and also being a part of a Muslim community as an important factor in helping them to raise their children in the US. The participants shared how important the family and the Muslim community or friends are in raising their children. Here are their responses:

> My mom. She is you know with me, my mom is there majority of time she is with me. She is helping me to raise our kids. She is there to talk to them, to guide them, try to get them memorize Quran. She plays you know a good role in my life and having someone older helps with kids because by yourself it's not easy to raise boys here, especially, to teach them Islamic values…we have some Muslim friends and we have family nights and we all you know try to teach them to follow Islam. We have to teach them. You know, having Muslim friends is a strong thing that helps a lot. (Participant #7, Morocco, Mother)

> Another parent also reported that having family in the US helps:

> I think the biggest help is having family around. When you have a large family background or around you, you get to spend time with your family, the kids see how you celebrate religious days and learning from them your values. They learn from each other, they see their cousins, they see their aunts and uncles and they learn religious values from them. So, being a parent, you don't have to bare a whole burden. You just basically do a part of it. So, it gets easier. Also, having a large Muslim community around helps. People you know Muslims, you know. (Participant #13, Bangladesh, Father)

Technology and other resources. A few participants also expressed that having

access to resources like to technology such as videos and books about Islam were things

that helped them to teach their children about Islam and its practices. Participants in this

study reported that they use YouTube videos, skype classes and DVD's, and books to

teach their children Quran, Arabic and Islamic lessons. The following is an example of

this:

> I try to show them and teach them Islamic videos too. So, like I show them
>
> YouTube videos and sometime Arabic lessons. So, having those helps.
>
> (Participant #1, Saudi Arabia, Mother)

Freedom, independence and equal opportunity. Another strength of raising

their children in the US identified by the parents in this study was the freedom and

independence that being in the US provides them. Many participants expressed that they

enjoy how the US provides religious freedom. Others shared how they like the idea of

their children having the freedom to become whatever they want in the US, unlike some

countries they have come from. Many participants also expressed that it was helpful to

know that their children will get equal opportunity regardless of their gender and were

able to freely practice their rights. The following are examples of some responses that

further explains this:

> Yeah! Ah ah, in the United States, we have the freedom. Everyone is free, and
>
> they have the freedom by the constitution and it is the country of that law and they

respect the law. Anyone can practice his or her religion and this kind of freedom

is very good for our ah ah ah kids. (Participant #8, Egypt, Father)

Another parent also stated how she appreciated that her children have rights and

independence in the US.

There are very very good things about American society like my child knows

their rights umm like a very early age. They say NO to things that they don't

want. That we don't have learned in Pakistan [laughs]. So, they have and they

have a very strong opinion about things that we don't get to have in Pakistan. So,

so there is pros and cons in different societies…They see how women are

independent here, so they are getting this idea. It is easy here and it is a strength

here that, that they see here equal opportunity. (Participant #3, Pakistan, Mother)

Summary

This chapter presented the results of a phenomenological study conducted to

discover the challenges and strengths of Muslim parents living in the United States, while

raising their children to respect Islamic teachings and values. The study included 15

parents from majority Muslim countries. Researcher's faculty advisor and a research

assistant each reviewed three different transcripts and helped with the coding to increase

the credibility of the research. The demographic characteristics were presented in this

chapter along with an analysis of the data. Verbatim quotes from the participants were

added to illustrate the themes presented in this chapter. The results found five themes:

lack of recognition and understanding of Islam; greater responsibility to teach Islam;

difficulty balancing American and Islamic values; underlying concerns and anxiety; and

positive experiences as strengths.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND

RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to discover the challenges and strengths of Muslim parents living in the United States, while raising their children to respect Islamic teachings and values. The study utilized a qualitative phenomenological approach to learn about the experiences of Muslim parents who participated in this study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the 15 participants who met the research criteria. Five themes emerged: lack of recognition and understanding of Islam, greater responsibility to teach Islam, difficulty balancing American and Islamic values, underlying concerns and anxiety, and positive experiences as strengths. This chapter consists of a discussions of these five themes, conclusions, implications, limitations, and recommendations.

Discussion of Findings

Themes that emerged in this study indicated that there were many challenges for Muslim parents who raised their children in the US. Nevertheless, it also indicated that there are many strengths that helps these parents to face those challenges and appreciate raising their children in the US.

Lack of Recognition and Understanding of Islam

This study found that many of the participants felt that raising their children in a majority non-Muslim country posed its own difficulties and challenges because in the wider American society there is a lack of recognition and understanding of Islam. They

also believed that there was commercialization of other religions in the US, but not enough was done to spread awareness about Islam. The parents of this study found that this commercialization of the religious holidays or practices of other religions like Christmas, and recognition and celebration of other religious holidays in schools posed challenges to them as their children were learning more about other religions than that of their own. A survey conducted by CAIR (2006) supports this finding. CAIR (2006) reported that most Americans they interviewed acknowledged that they lacked the appropriate information and knowledge about Islam and Muslims. This study reported that only 2% interviewed, reported that they were very knowledgeable about Islam, while 60% reported that they were not very knowledgeable or not at all knowledgeable about Islam. Another study conducted by Hodge (2002) on Muslim students also supports this finding. He found that Muslim students felt that exercising their religious faith to be difficult due to the lack of understanding and support from teachers and school administration at American schools. Ahmed and Szpara (2003) also found this lack of understanding. Al-Romi (2000) also found that Muslim students reported that they were prevented or restricted from practicing prayers and wearing hijab at schools. However, there is no indication that the current study participants experienced any such restrictions at schools. Nevertheless, the current study participants felt that unless asked, the schools did not accommodate their religious needs.

Greater Responsibility to Teach Islam

This study found that since Islam is embedded in the culture and as part of the lifestyle in majority Islamic countries, parents did not have to put extra effort in teaching these values the way that they did in the US. Many reported that, in the US, they are solely responsible for teaching their children Islamic values and showing them the right way to practice their religion as Islam was not part of mainstream culture and due to limited family and community support. Several other studies reported similar results. Ali et al., (2004) reported that Islamic societies encourage collectivism and discourage individualism. Haynes et al. (1997) reported that there is a reciprocal relationship between an individual and the community and that every Muslim has a responsibility to protect and safeguard the community. Saeidi et al. (2004), after analysis of Quran and Islamic texts, found that raising children is dignified and believed to be a sign of reverence of God and the belief in him on the part of parents, guardians and community. Thus, it is understandable that Muslim communities take a responsibility and Muslim parents expect communal involvement in raising their children and that this lack of communal support could bring challenges to parents who raise their children by themselves in a non-Islamic community. This current finding also supports the findings of Chaudhry (2016), which stated that regardless of the nationality, the Muslim mothers felt a greater responsibility on them to teach Islamic values to their children than if they were living in a country where the whole country practiced Islam. Krayem's (2015) study also supported the current study findings in that the participants in his study described

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that they had a better sense of community and support system back home and acknowledged the huge role their extended family, friends and neighbors played in raising their children.

Difficulty Balancing American and Islamic Values

The results of this study indicated that almost every parent found it difficult and challenging to try to balance teaching the values and practices of both the American and Islamic cultures to their children. This study found that these parents find it challenging as they felt that they have to solely take the responsibility of teaching their children the Islamic values because there are very little support if any, from the wider community and because the children received conflicting messages from the wider American society due to differences of religious views and practices. Parents also reported that teaching their children to be true to their religion was difficult and stressful as their children also learned about many widely practiced American values (some of which were odds with Islamic values) from the community or others. The current study's findings about difficulty balancing values is supported by Chaudhry (2016) who reported that the mothers in her study expressed that they had to compete with the excitement associated with celebration of other religions being practiced. Similarly, Sheikh (2009) found that Muslim children felt that they got pressure from their families to adhere to Islamic beliefs and pressure from peers to follow some non-Islamic practices, which was challenging. Likewise, Krayem (2015) found that the participating fathers in his study mentioned facing challenges in teaching their children about their culture and language due to the

power of the dominant culture and their children's rapid adaptation to the American

culture. Aroian et al. (2009) found that Muslim mothers had to help their children adjust

to the new culture while keeping up with the values and customs of their country of

origin, which added stress to their lives. Likewise, the study found that trying to balance

the two different cultures negatively influenced the mother-child relationship.

Underlying Concerns and Anxiety

The findings of this study indicated that the parents in this study felt that raising

their children as Muslims and raising them to value Islam in the US was stressful. Some

parents in this study felt worried and anxious about others misjudging them or their

children if they openly practiced their Islamic religious values. Some parents indicated

that they worry that their children might be seen negatively by their neighbors or school

mates, even seen as terrorists just for being Muslims. These findings support Mills (2012)

who found that Muslims experienced oppression, threats, prejudice and discrimination in

the US. Likewise, survey conducted by CAIR (2006) reported that their survey found that

there was existing prejudice, discriminations and violence against Muslims in the US.

Ahmed and Szpara (2003) also found that Muslim students believed that negative

stereotypes and misconceptions existed about Islam in the larger American community

and American schools and that this negatively affected them. Similarly, Krayem (2015)

found that Arab Muslim fathers reported that discrimination against Arabs led them to

caution their children not to talk about politics. Mahmood (2011) found that Muslim

mothers reported facing challenges due to discrimination and negative roles portrayed in

the media about Muslims. Thus, the findings of the current study confirm the findings of some of the previous studies.

Likewise, this study found that parents were also concerned and worried that their children might be influenced by non-Islamic values. These parents feared that their children might grow up not respecting values unique to Islam and instead adopt more western cultural values. This finding supports some of the previous studies. Abbas and Ijaz (2010) found that South Asian Muslim parents did not want to send their daughters to schools where boys and girls mixed openly. They felt this was against their religious and cultural beliefs and they feared that while interacting with different people in schools, their daughters might become too westernized. Likewise, Smith (1999) found that Muslim parents living in parts of Europe feared that their children would learn western secular values that would harm their children in this life and the afterlife. It is important to note that not every parent in the current study felt anxious about this. An explanation could be that Muslims are a diverse group and their views regarding some of the Islamic values and practices differ, depending on personal preferences and cultural differences (Al-Romi, 2000; Hodge, 2002).

It was interesting to discover that Muslim parents found it difficult and challenging when there were more differences and variations of Islamic practices within the American Muslim communities than there would be in their country of origin. It is interesting to note that the researcher did not find any previous studies that indicated that Muslims or Muslim parents were concerned about this difference within their own

religion. This might be an area that needs to be focused on for further research when studying Muslim population.

Positive Experiences as Strengths

This study not only discovered the challenges but also the strengths of Muslim parents living in the United States, while raising their children to respect Islamic teachings and values. One of the positive themes that emerged from participants' responses were the availability of resources, Islamic knowledge, Mosque and Islamic educational programs, family and friends, and technology and other resources. Another strength was freedom, independence, and equal opportunity.

Availability of resources. Muslim parents who participated in this study felt that the resources available for them helped them to teach their children Islamic values and practices. Although there resources were limited, they were seen as a strength in helping these parents raise their Muslim children. These parents reported that their own religious knowledge, having access to mosques and Islamic educational programs, having family and Muslim friends and access to technology and other religious materials was a strength for them in teaching Islamic values to their children. This finding supports a previous study done by Arfat (2013) on voluntary and non-voluntary immigrant Muslim parents. Arfat (2013) in his study found that Muslim parents want their children to adhere to Islamic morals, social and cultural values. To ensure that their children respected these values, parents take them to religious schools and conduct family activities in religious groups. Since, research was scarce on the strengths and what helped Muslim parents to

raise their children in the US, not much information was available to compare the study findings about using technology and other Islamic materials as a strength. This study's findings support the findings of Chaudhry (2016) that Muslim mothers reported appreciation of the role the Muslim community played in raising their children to be good Muslim Americans. Likewise, the study supports Ahmed and Szpara's (2003)'s findings that Muslim parents and children wanted to see their schools connecting with the larger Muslim community.

Freedom, independence and equal opportunity. The study results indicated that Muslim parents find that having freedom, independence, and equal opportunity in the US was a major strength that helps them to raise their children and teach them Islamic values. This finding confirms study results done in few of the previous studies. Chaudhry (2016) found that Muslim mothers enjoyed that they had the freedom to control the degree to which they can teach the religion to their children in the US. However, having freedom and independence and equal opportunity contradicts with earlier findings of this study about parents fearing that their children will be subjected to discriminations and misjudged because of being Muslims. This difference might be due to subjective nature of people's personal experiences and differences in the diverse nature of the Muslims in terms of their original nationality, culture and their current geographic locations. This study did not find any demographic differences relating to this difference.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to discover the challenges and strengths of Muslim parents living in the United States, while raising their children to respect Islamic teachings and values. Based on the findings of this research, the following conclusions were reached:

1. Muslim parents find it difficult and challenging to raise their children to respect Islamic teachings and values in the United States.

2. These parents felt that there was a lack of recognition and understanding of Islam in the wider American society.

3. Muslim parents had to take a greater responsibility of teaching their children Islamic values unlike in their country of origin because Islam was not part of the mainstream culture in the US and because they have limited support of family and community in the US.

4. Muslim parents want to teach their children both American and Islamic values but found difficulty in balancing them.

5. Some parents experienced anxiety related to discrimination and were concerned about openly expressing their religious identity due to fear of being misjudged by the American society.

6. Most parents worried that their children might be influenced by non-Islamic values which were at odds with some of the Islamic values.

7. Some parents felt concerned that their children might learn different variations of the Islamic religion that the parents did not support.

8. Muslim parents not only had negative experiences, but found strengths in raising their Muslim children in the US.

9. Muslim parents saw that having availability of resources such as self-knowledge about Islam; mosques and religious classes; support of family; Muslim friends and Muslim community; and technology and other religious materials were the greatest strength in raising their children in the US. However, these resources were limited and scarce.

10. Muslim parents found that the freedom, independence and equal opportunity that the US provided was a great strength that helped in raising their children in the US.

Theoretical Framework

Looking from a Bronfenbrenner's theoretical lens, the influence of the ecological systems; microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem on raising Muslim children, can be evident from the study findings.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) described the microsystem as patterns of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by a developing person (e.g. parents, schools, and neighbors). The results of this study indicate the importance of microsystems in the lives of Muslim parents and families. It appeared that parents felt that they had to be responsible to teach their children Islamic culture, values and practices. They also felt

that this was better achievable with the help of friends, schools and neighbors. Similarly, this lack of help from other microsystems seems to put a greater responsibility on Muslim mothers to teach their religion to the children.

Mesosystem is described as the interaction that happens between two microsystems (Berk, 2000). Likewise, Bronfenbrenner (1979) stated that the development setting in a mesosystem is enhanced if the roles demanded in the different settings are compatible. Also, Bronfenbrenner (1979) talked about how roles, activities and relationships one engages in encourage the development of mutual trust, positive orientation, goal consensus, and balance of power in favor of the developing person. It appears that the current study findings suggest that there is a clear incompatibility between some of the mesosystems in the lives of Muslim children or families. For example, this study suggests that there is a discretion or incompatibility between a Muslim child's mesosystems like that of between parents, schools, or American community. Thus, this appears to create challenge for one or more systems like the difficulties parents face due to lack of understanding on the parts of school or neighbors or even due to limited support from family and friends while living in the US. Thus, it is important to find out ways into which professionals working with families can help better facilitate these interactions. For example, the experiences that a child has in schools seem to be having an effect on the parent's mentality and causing stress in parents. Thus, finding a way to facilitate better communications and interactions between Muslim parents and schools might be helpful to reduce anxiety and stress in parents.

The influence of the exosystem on Muslim parents' lives can also be evident from the study findings. The study finds that a Muslim child's exosystem like the community these families are living in, has an influence on the parents' and their children's lives. For example, having helpful resources or even access to these resources, regardless of how limited they may be, seems to be helping these parents while lack of these resources impacting them with difficulty, stress and challenges. Likewise, this study found the importance of extended families and Islamic community for Muslim parents. The study suggests that Muslim parents relies on their extended family, friends and the wider community to help in raise their children and to help them teach Islamic values to these children. Hence, not having access to extended families, Muslim friends and Muslim community adds stress and greater responsibility on these parents to raise their children the way they want to.

The macrosystem, the overarching sets of social values, cultural beliefs, customs and laws that incorporate the other systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The study found that when there are differences in one's beliefs, values and customs, it causes greater stress, responsibility and difficulties for Muslim parents. For example, due to the differences of the cultural values, these parents are anxious and worried that their children might not learn about their own values and feared that they might be influenced by non-Islamic values. Similarly, some of the good qualities or values in the US seems to be positively impacting these parents and families. For example, having the freedom, independence

and equal opportunity as good qualities of values of American culture was identified as a strength for these Muslim parents raising their children in the US.

It is clear how the chronosystem influenced Muslim parents and their families. The life event, non-normative life experience such as moving to a different culture than that of their own like the US seems to be impacting the lives of Muslim parents and their families. The parents in this study missed their families, culture and country and fondly remembered the good about their cultures. They also wanted to teach good values and practices about this culture to their children. Likewise, they found that most of the difference in the US from their own culture difficult and challenging. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that these parents also appreciated some of these differences like freedom and equal opportunity.

Implications

Several implications drawn from the research findings may be useful for family therapists and professionals workings in family sciences and education settings. Similarly, these findings might be helpful for Muslim parents and other professionals who work with Muslim populations.

Since, there is a growing number of Muslims in the US, it is important for the American society, family science and educational professionals and others who work with immigrants' families to increase their understanding of Islamic religion and its practices. Family science professionals such as family therapists and educators need to increase their awareness about the experiences, challenges and identify strengths that help

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Muslim parents to raise their children in the US. Family therapists, clinicians, and educators need to understand the anxiety that Muslim parents and their children face and design policies that will help reduce these concerns. Family therapists need to be aware of the challenges Muslim parents and families face and be able to address these challenges and concerns in a sensitive manner. Likewise, family therapists need to be aware that their overall anxiety and experiences of American society not understanding them and their religion might hinder them from approaching therapy and seeking help. Likewise, if they seek help they might not be fully open about their challenges, concerns and anxiety. Thus, it is very important for family therapists to build a therapeutic alliance with Muslim clients and inquire about their culture and religion. Similarly, due to the diversity of Muslims living in the US, family therapists need to work with this population keeping in mind the individual and cultural differences that exist among Muslim families or clients.

The study also found the importance of family and community to Muslim parents and some other resources that was helpful to these parents in raising their children in a non-majority Islamic country. Thus, when working with Muslim children and families, family science professionals need to work towards building a support system and helping find resources that will reduce the challenges and anxiety of Muslim parents and their families. It might be helpful to connect the parents with other Muslims and direct them towards immigrant or Muslim support groups. Likewise, since for Muslim sense of culture, community and religion is an important part, family professionals cannot exclude

these factors from the therapeutic sessions and need to be aware of the influence community and especially Islamic community has on child rearing when working with Muslim families.

Similarly, since the experiences children have in schools contribute to anxiety and challenges of Muslim parents, family professionals can collaborate with educators and schools to work towards increasing the awareness and implementing policies that will help Muslim parents to reduce the challenges and anxiety they face in raising their children in the US. Educators and schools could implement policies to increase awareness of Islam and Muslims amongst educators, school teachers, staff, and other students. Similarly, they can be more accommodating towards children of any children. For example, schools can be more sensitive in including a lunch menu that will be more accommodating to Muslim students and help in celebrating some of the religious functions of Islam. Likewise, they can be more sensitive and understanding that not every child belongs to the majority religion and work towards eliminating programs that do not accommodate or might be offensive to children of any religion, race, and culture. Similarly, family therapists can collaborate with Islamic religious leaders like the Imam to better understand Muslim families and also help advocate and find ways to help them better access resources that are helpful. Likewise, at a national level, more needs to be done to help accommodate Muslims and minorities as a part of the wider American society.

Limitations

Several limitations should be kept in mind when applying this study's findings and conclusions to a wider population. This study only focused on Muslim parents who lived in North Central Texas. Therefore, caution should be used when generalizing the study to Muslim parents from other parts of the United States. The study sample was highly educated. Most participants had an undergraduate or graduate degree and were able to communicate in English. This might have influenced the study results. Also, being a phenomenological study, this study is subjective and only gives experiences and perceptions shared by the participants which could be influenced by their own individual experiences and preferences. As mentioned earlier, Muslims are a diverse population and their interpretations and practicing of Islamic values differ depending on personal, cultural, social, and national and class factors (Hodge, 2002). Thus, any generalization of the findings of this study should be applied keeping this diverse nature of Islam and Muslims in mind.

All the study participants were married and had their spouses with them who help in raising their children. The findings may not be generalized to Muslim parents coming from different family structures. Likewise, this study did not attempt to find if there were any differences of parents' experiences depending on if they had children of different ages. This study also did not attempt to find information that will help understand if the experiences for these parents were different depending on the degree of the availability of some of the resources in areas where the study participants lived.

Recommendations

Based on the above limitations of this study, some recommendations are made that can improve research on Muslim parents and the Muslim population. Future research could expand the study to different geographic locations. Future studies can also include participants from different levels of educational backgrounds. Broadening the geographic location and including participants with different educational levels might enhance the understanding of experiences of Muslim parents. Likewise, future studies could focus on recruiting many participants from the same country of origin which might help find if there were any differences based on one's country of origin. In addition, future research can also recruit participants who did not communicate in English and see if the challenges and strengths they experienced are different from the current sample. Similarly, using mixed method studies might help better understand if there are any difference in the findings based on the demographic differences and help broaden the understanding of the study phenomena.

Future research could also include parents who were from a different family structure like single mothers or single fathers. Likewise, future studies can see if there were any differences in results depending on if the parents lived with extended family members such as a grandparent. In addition, future studies can focus on finding the impact grandparents play or how much of an influence family and friends have in raising Muslim children. Also, in future the studies can focus on findings if the parent's experiences, challenges and strengths differed based on the age of their children.

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Likewise, the study can include questions that would help understand if there were any differences of findings based on the availability and accessibility of Islamic resources such as a mosque in the area or city the parents lived. In addition, future studies can focus on how community resources can better facilitate Muslim parents in raising their children in the US. There are very few studies that have focused on finding the strengths and advantages of living in the US for Muslim parents. Therefore, more research needs to be conducted in this area.

Summary

This chapter included a discussion of the findings, conclusions, implications, limitations and recommendations for future research. There is limited research on finding the lived experience of Muslim parents, thus a need exists for research with this population. The purpose of this study was to discover the challenges and strengths of Muslim parents living in the United States, while raising their children to respect Islamic teachings and values. The study utilized a qualitative phenomenological approach to learn about the experiences Muslim parents who participated in this study. The researcher interviewed 15 Muslim parents and their responses were audio-recorded, transcribed and coded to identify occurring themes. Five themes emerged: lack of recognition and understanding of Islam, greater responsibility to teach Islam, difficulty balancing American and Islamic values, underlying concerns and anxiety, and positive experiences as strengths. This study highlights the importance of family science professional working with Muslims families to have an understanding of Islam and Muslims. Similarly, this

study suggests that family science professionals such as family therapists, educators and policy makers should collaborate to utilize programs and policies that will increase the awareness about Islam and Muslims and implement policies at local and national level that will accommodate this population. In addition, there is a need for further research on this area that will be helpful for both Muslims and for professionals who work with Muslim families.

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APPENDIX A

Recruitment Flyer

CHALLENGES AND STRENGTHS OF MUSLIM PARENTS RAISING THEIR CHILDREN IN THE UNITED STATES

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN A RESEARCH STUDY?

Are you 18 years of age or older?

Do you have a child between the ages of 5 and 17?

Do you currently live in North Central Texas?

Are you a Muslim mother or father?

Have you come to the United States from a predominantly Islamic country?

Have you lived in the United States for at least two years?

Do you speak English?

I am Jasmine Hussain, a doctoral student at the Texas Woman's University, and this study is conducted as a part of my doctoral dissertation. I am seeking voluntary participants who fit the above criteria. The interview will take about 90 minutes and the information obtained will be kept confidential. If you are interested to learn more about this study or interested to participate, please contact me at:

Jasmine Hussain

469-732-0611

jhussain@twu.edu

My advisor, Linda J. Brock, PhD. can be reached at lbrock@twu.edu or 940-898-2713.

As with any electronic submission, there is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, and internet transactions.

APPENDIX B

Telephone Script

Telephone Script

For potential participants who call to ask about the study

"Hello! This is *Jasmine Hussain.* [Caller introduces himself or herself].

"Thank you for calling about my research. The purpose of my research will be to discover the challenges and strengths of Muslim parents living in the United States while raising their children to respect Islamic teaching and values. I am studying at Texas Woman's University and this study is a part of my degree. I will be conducting voluntary confidential interviews with Muslim parents who have a child here in the U.S between 5 and 17 years of age and who are currently residing in North Texas. Also, you must have grown-up in a majority Muslim country and lived in the U.S. for at least two years. As a Muslim parent myself I'd be very interested in hearing your experience.

"What questions do you have about my study"? [Answers any questions].

"May I schedule an interview with you?" If they answer "no", then ask "Do you know any person who might be interested to take part in this study? If so, would you please pass my contact information to them? Thank you so much for calling".

If they answer "yes" to scheduling a face-to-face interview then [discuss the details of interview arrangements like, place, date and time]. Confirm the details of the interview meeting and ask "Do you have any other questions? [Answer the questions]. "Thank you so much and I will be looking forward for our interview" and if you have any more questions before our meeting please feel free to email me or give me a call, my number is [give phone number and email address].

APPENDIX C

Consent Form

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title: Challenges and Strengths of Muslim Parents Raising their Children in the United States

Investigator: ~~Jasmine Hussain~~ ....jhussain@twu.edu 469-722-0611
Advisor: Linda J. Brock, PhD ....lbrock@twu.edu 940-898-2718

Explanation and Purpose of the Research

You are being asked to participate in a research study for Ms. Hussain's dissertation at Texas Woman's University. The purpose of this study is to discover the challenges and strengths of Muslim parents living in the United States, while raising their children to respect Islamic teachings and values. You have been asked to participate in this study because you are a Muslim parent with a child age 5 to 17.

Description of Procedures

As a participant in this study you will be asked to spend about 90 minutes of your time in a face-to-face interview with the researcher. The researcher will first ask you some questions about your demographic information and then later ask questions related to your experiences of raising children to value Islamic teachings in the United States and your strengths in raising your children in the United States. The locations for this study will take place at a convenient setting such as a university campus, public library, mosques or community centers. The interview will be audio- recorded and then written down so that the researcher can be accurate when studying what you have said. The researcher will also take notes on observed, non-verbal behaviors. In order to be a participant in this study, you must be at least 18 years of age or older, have a child between the ages of 5 and 17, currently live in the North Central Texas, have come to the United States from a predominantly Islamic country, lived in the U.S. for at least two years, and speak English.

Potential Risks

The researcher will ask you questions about your experience as a Muslim parent raising children to respect Islamic teachings and values in the United States. A possible risk in this study is discomfort with these questions you are asked. If you become tired or upset you may take breaks as needed. You may also stop answering questions at any time and end the interview. If you feel you need to talk to a professional about your discomfort, the researcher has provided you with a list of resources.

Another risk in this study is loss of confidentiality. Confidentiality will be protected to the extent that is allowed by law. The interview will be held at a location that you and the researcher have agreed upon. A code name, not your real name, will be used during the interview. No one but the researcher will know your real name. The audio-recordings and the written interview will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office. The code sheet will be stored in a location that is separate from the other identifiable data. Only the researcher and her research advisor will have access to your audio-recordings. The researcher, her advisor, and a research assistant will read the written interview. The tapes and the written interview will be shredded within two years after the study is finished. The results of the study will be reported in dissertation format and possibly in scientific magazines or journals but your name or any other identifying information will not be included. There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, electronic meetings and internet transactions.

Initials_____

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Another risk is loss of time. Interviews will be conducted at times and locations that are convenient for you and the researcher to help reduced travel demands. Each interview will be conducted in the most efficient way possible to maximize time convenient. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Another risk will be that participants may experience fatigue. To reduce fatigue, you will be allowed to take breaks at any time of the interview or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

The researcher will try to prevent any problem that could happen because of this research. You should let the researcher know at once if there is a problem and she will do her best to help you. However, TWU does not provide medical services or financial assistance for injuries that might happen because you are taking part in this research.

Participation and Benefits

Your involvement in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. There will be no direct benefits for the participants. If you would like to know the results of this study we will mail you a summary of the results of the study upon request.*

Questions Regarding the Study

You will be given a copy of this signed and dated consent form to keep. If you have any questions about the research study you should ask the researcher or her advisor; their phone numbers and email addresses are at the top of this form. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research or the way this study has been conducted, you may contact the Texas Woman's University Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 940-898-3378 or via e-mail at IRB@twu.edu.

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Signature of the Participant   Date

* If you would like to know the summary of results of this study tell us where you want them to be sent:

Mailing Address:

Approved by the
Texas Woman's University
Institutional Review Board
Approved: February 20, 2018

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APPENDIX D

Demographic Questionnaire

Demographic Questionnaire

1. What is your age?

   ----

2. What is your marital status?

   ----

3. Are you:

   - o Male

   - o Female

   - o Other

4. Race or Ethnicity:

   - o Caucasian/European/White (non-Hispanic0

   - o African/African American/Black (non-Hispanic)

   - o Asian/Asian American

   - o Hispanic/Latino

   - o Native American/Pacific Islander

   - o Biracial

   - o Multiracial

   - o Other

5. What is your country of origin?

----

6. What is your spouse's country of origin?

----

7. How many children do you have? What are their ages?

----

8. Level of Education:

   o Less than high school diploma or GED High school diploma or GED

   o Two years of college or specialized training school

   o More than two years of undergraduate course work

   o Undergraduate degree

   o Graduate course work

   o Graduate degree

9. What is your current job?

----

10. What is your income in the U.S.?

   o Under $ 15,999

   o $ 16,000-$ 29,999

- o $ 30,000- $ 44,999

- o $ 45,000-$ 59,999

- o $ 60,000- $ 74,999

- o $ 75,000- $ 89,999

- o $ 90,000 and above

11. How many years have you lived in the U.S.?

----

12. What is your reason for moving to the U.S.?

----

13. Are you here temporarily or permanently?

----

14. How religious are you?

- o   Not at all religious

- o   Not very religious

- o   Somewhat religious

- o   Moderately religious

- o   Very religious

APPENDIX E

Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Participant's Code: _____   **Start Time:** _____

Date of Interview: _____   **End Time:** _____

"Thank you for participating in this study. The purpose of this study is to discover the challenges and strengths of Muslim parents living in the United States, while raising their children to respect Islamic teachings and values". "Do you have any questions before we begin the interview?"

"I will first go over the consent form." (The researcher verbally explains what's in the consent form). "Do you have any questions?" (After the participant signs the consent, give one copy to him or her and the researcher will keep one copy).

"The questions I am going to ask you will be related to your experience as a Muslim parent raising your child or children in the United States". "During this interview, I will be taking some notes and I will be audio-recording this interview which will later be transcribed". "No names will be used when transcribing, only the code that I will be giving you will be used". "Do you have any questions before we go further with this interview?"

"Ok! I will be turning the recording on now". "My first question is what is it like raising a child to value Islamic teachings in a country where Islam is not a major religion?" (Pause to hear the answer and prompt as needed).

"Thank you!" "My next question is, what differences or similarities do you see between your experiences growing up in a Muslim majority country and raising your child in the U.S.?" (Pause to listen to the answer and use prompts as needed).

"What strengths help in raising your children in the U.S.?" (Pause for their answer and use prompts as needed).
At the end of the interview the researcher will say "thank you so much for sharing your experience with me, is there anything else that you want to add before we end this interview?" (Pause for their response, if nothing to add then thank them and end the interview, if there is more then write down their answers).

Examples of prompts that may be used are:

Tell me more about it?
Smile
Nod
I see
What happened?
How?
What was it like?
Really?
What else happened?

APPENDIX F

Mental Health Referral List

<center>**Mental Health Services Referral List**</center>

TWU Counseling and Family Therapy Clinic
Human Development Building, Room #114
Phone: 940-898-2600
email: twucounselingclinic@gmail.com

Denton CAPS
West Jones Hall
P.O. Box 425350
Denton, TX 76204-5350
Phone: 940- 898-3801
Fax: 940- 898-3810
https://twu.edu/counseling/

TWU T. Boone Pickens Institute of Health Sciences-Dallas Center CAPS

500 Southwestern Medical Ave

Suite 8300

Dallas, TX 75235-7299

Phone: 214- 689-6655

Fax: 940- 898-3810

https://twu.edu/counseling/

Denton County MHMR
2519 Scripture
PO Box 2346
Denton, TX 76201
Phone: 940-381-5000
Crisis Hotline: 1800-762-0157
http://www.dentonmhmr.org

Metrocare Service
4645 Samuell Blvd.
Dallas, TX 75228
Phone: 214-275-7393
https://www.metrocareservices.org/

Denton County Friends of the Family

<center>109</center>

4845 S I-35 E, Suite 200
Corinth, TX 76210
Phone: 940-387-5131
Fax: 940-383-181
http://www.dcfof.org/

University Behavioral Health (UBH)
W. University Drive.
Denton, TX 76201
Phone: 940-320-8100
Phone: 1-888-320-1801
https://ubhdenton.com/

Texas Telephone Crisis and Suicide Prevention Lines:
Denton County Crisis Line: 800-762-0157
Dallas Suicide and Crisis Center: 214-828-1000

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
112 South Alfred Street Alexandria, VA 22314-3061
Phone: (703) 838-9808 | Fax: (703) 838-9805
http://www.aamft.org/imis15/aamft/Core/ContactUs/ContactUs.aspx

American Counseling Association
6101 Stevenson Ave, Suite 600. Alexandria, VA 22304
Phone: 800-347-6647
Fax: 800-473-2329
https://www.counseling.org/

AAMFT Therapist Locator
https://www.aamft.org/iMIS15/AAMFT/Content/directories/locator_terms_of_use.aspx

Psychology Today Therapist Locator
https://therapists.psychologytoday.com/rms/

APPENDIX G

Email Script

This email script is written for student organizations, mosques or any other third parties that are not friends of the researcher or P.I.

(Name of the recipient)

My name is Jasmine Hussain, a doctoral student at the Texas Woman's University. I am conducting a research as a part of my dissertation and seeking volunteer participants for my study. My research topic is *Challenges and Strengths of Muslim Parents Raising their Children in the United States*. The purpose of my study is to discover the challenges and strengths of Muslim parents living in the United States, while raising their children to respect Islamic teachings and values.

Therefore, in order to seek some potential participants for my study, I would like to request for your assistance in *emailing, distributing, posting* (the word relevant for the organization or agency will be used here) some recruitment flyer to *members* or *individuals* (word relevant will be used) of your *organization, agency* or *center* (relevant name will be used).

Please find the recruitment flyer attached with this email.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jasmine Hussain   .

There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, electronic meetings, and internet transactions.

This email script is written for friends or individuals known to the researcher.

Dear (recipient's name),

I am conducting a research as a part of my dissertation and seeking volunteer participants for my study. My research topic is *Challenges and Strengths of Muslim Parents Raising their Children in the United States*. The purpose of my study is to discover the challenges and strengths of Muslim parents living in the United States, while raising their children to respect Islamic teachings and values.

Therefore, in order to seek some potential participants for my study, I would like to request for your assistance in distributing some recruitment flyers to individuals who might be interested in participating in my study.

Please find the recruitment flyer attached with this email.

Thank you.

Jasmine Hussain

There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, electronic meetings, and internet transactions.

APPENDIX H

Sample Master List of Participant Results

Sample Master List for Participant's Results (Code Sheet)

Participants will be asked if they want a summary of the research results. The appropriate answer will be checked and their address will be added if applicable.

CODE NUMBER	NAME	YES	NO	ADDRESS

APPENDIX I

IRB Letter

Institutional Review Board
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
P.O. Box 425619, Denton, TX 76204-5619
940-898-3378
email: IRB@twu.edu
http://www.twu.edu/irb.html

DATE: February 22, 2018

TO: Ms. Jasmine Hussain
            Family Sciences

FROM: Institutional Review Board (IRB) - Denton

Re: *Approval for Challenges and Strengths of Muslim Parents Raising their Children in the United*
        States (Protocol #: 19929)

The above referenced study has been reviewed and approved by the Denton IRB (operating under FWA00000178) on 2/20/2018 using an expedited review procedure. This approval is valid for one year and expires on 2/20/2019. The IRB will send an email notification 45 days prior to the expiration date with instructions to extend or close the study. It is your responsibility to request an extension for the study if it is not yet complete, to close the protocol file when the study is complete, and to make certain that the study is not conducted beyond the expiration date.

If applicable, agency approval letters must be submitted to the IRB upon receipt prior to any data collection at that agency. A copy of the approved consent form with the IRB approval stamp is enclosed. Please use the consent form with the most recent approval date stamp when obtaining consent from your participants. A copy of the signed consent forms must be submitted with the request to close the study file at the completion of the study.

Any modifications to this study must be submitted for review to the IRB using the Modification Request Form. Additionally, the IRB must be notified immediately of any adverse events or unanticipated problems. All forms are located on the IRB website. If you have any questions, please contact the TWU IRB.

cc.   Dr. Jerry Whitworth, Family Sciences
      Dr. Linda Brock, Family Sciences
      Graduate School