

## **Losing Identity: Snapshot of Bilingual and Bicultural African Children in Saudi Arabia**

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### **Abstract**

Children's practice of their mother tongue affects their respect for themselves and their traditions, so neglecting it while learning another language threatens their original identity. African culture, specifically the Hausa, is one of the greatest African cultures found in Mecca, next to the main culture, which is Saudi. The current study sheds light on this how the Arabic and Hausa languages affect the identity of African children. To achieve this, the current study used a questionnaire to collect data for bilingual children of African nationality, born in Saudi Arabia, specifically in the city of Mecca. The importance of the study was manifested in revealing the important results about linguistic and cultural practices in terms of (reading, writing, social communication, cultural practices such as dancing, singing, arts). The study found that children are more inclined to Saudi culture with its linguistic practices, and culture, which positively affected the identity of children. Although children's practices of their own culture are specific, they are important in belonging to their community.

**Keywords:-**Identity, bilingualism, Hausa, Arabic, biculturalism, African children

### **Introduction**

Certainly, most of migrant people around the world have knowledge of at least two languages, one being the local language and the other being their mother tongue. Many of these are people who speak two languages, simultaneously live within two cultures, and learn and practice their rituals. Language is one of the main pillars of (ethnic) identity, as it is considered one of the factors that determine the leading positions in an ethnic group or people (Shrapova, Litvinenko & Shakirova, 2019). It should be noted here that linguistic knowledge is gained from individuals' participation in cultural practices through which they can express their ideological and cultural beliefs, and thus the experience of bilingualism and cultural identity is closely related to individuals. Prior studies have confirmed that there is a positive relationship between language and culture, in which the second language acquisition play fundamental part in shaping the cultural identity of a bilingual (Schroeder, Lam & Marian, 2017). First and foremost, language is a mirror of culture as it reflects a person's identity, thoughts, practices, and beliefs. It is well known that by emerging in second language resources, bilinguals obtain access to a second culture, empowering them to learn about, involve in, and use that culture effectively in their lives through social interaction with others (Schroeder et al., 2017).

The term biculturalism, in describing a bicultural person, is used specifically: one who participates in the lives of the two cultures, the adaptation of their languages, attitudes, etc., to these cultures, in specific situations. Bilingual children exposure to second language in disproportionate or inconsistent amounts may affect identity and heritage. This is a complex and incomprehensible process, which may be shaped by conflicts and internal struggles over the languages used and emotional attachment to a particular language or culture (Şenaydın & Dikilitaş, 2019). Interestingly, in the case of language predominance, the individual is likely to prefer one of the two cultures in which he lives (Pawliszko, 2020). It is important to highlight that bilingual family contexts, where children acquire the language of one parent as a second language in addition to the local language in the country to which the immigration took place as the main language. Among the most famous families of African descent in Saudi Arabia are Fallatah, Hausawi and Barnawi. Besides, their children born in Saudi Arabia to migrant parents from Africa who speak their mother tongue, whether Hausa, Fallata, and Borno languages, and at the same time are fluent in speaking and writing in Arabic as the official language in Saudi Arabia. Needless to say, African-Saudi binational children living in the Saudi Arabia is inundated by the Saudi culture. The day-to-day exposure to Saudi culture motivate children exposure to cultural practices. In this environment, the African parent's effort is to sustain an equal position for their own heritage and culture rooted in their children.

Based on previous studies, an individual who lives between two cultures is able to switch between one culture and another in terms of daily practices, societal norms, and responses to cultural prompts. Here, it can be noted that bilingualism has been described in the existence literature by referring to the levels of an individual's ability to speak two languages and native control of two or more languages (Şenaydın & Dikilitaş, 2019). As it is scientifically proven, that bilinguals and cultures are subject to the so-called blend phenomenon, which can be identified through two important aspects: one that is adaptable and controlled allowing them to adapt to a specific and more static context, such as a mixture of features from the two cultures, and this is always present and cannot be modified (Pawliszko, 2020). Accordingly, the blend phenomenon less prominent in the linguistic component of bilinguals, in contrast the combination of language systems by switching and borrowing is frequent, so the actual mixing of languages is not very common in the case of bilingual individuals (Pawliszko, 2020). As is well known, when bicultural persons are exposed to, for the two cultures, they grouped them into a single repertoire behavior. In the context of this sense, the results of previous studies indicated that it means the capability to communicate actively and effectively in different language (Şenaydın & Dikilitaş, 2019). This context may contribute to bilinguals' perception of the complexities of identity, which embraces many significant aspects of belonging to particular environments. There is no doubt about it, this concept embodies the cultural, social, emotional and political elements of individuals, and continues to expand as it requires study beyond linguistic issues to include the symbolic behaviors of individuals on a large scale (Şenaydın & Dikilitaş, 2019).

In particular, when at least one parent is a native speaker of a second language, the matter is less complicated. More importantly, bilingual education often requires teachers who speak the

child's native language in the school environment and practiced in the home environment (Pawliszko, 2020). It can be said here that a mother who practices fluently speaking the mother tongue with her child, while at the same time striving to learn and acquire a second language, thus helps her child to accept different identities without any complication. To contribute to research on the identity of bilingual children, this study will reveal the evolution in the identity of bilingual children born in Saudi Arabia to immigrant parents who African descent speak Hausa languages, in addition to the second language, Arabic. This study is characterized as a deep insight that will shed light on the identity of these young children, in addition, to the linguistic context.

### **Theoretical Perspective**

The current study focuses on family dynamics in Arabian and African bi-nationalists, who speak Arabic beside their mother tongue. The concept of identity is produced and represented in the consciousness of the individual during the process of accumulating acquired social experience, and through its expression. It is worth noting here that the concept of identity means the effectiveness, while the concept of identification has border meaning which refers to the processualization (Shrapova et al., 2019). The expectations and practices of preschool children and their families for bilinguals and bilinguals by revealing their identity will be examined by Ting-Toomey's (1999) Identity Negotiation Theory (INT). It is a framework for a current study aimed at understanding how the practice of children's language and cultural identity with their migrant parents encourages and facilitates the adoption of their inherent culture in their children.

#### ***The role of INT in cultural adaptation of immigrant families***

Identity Negotiation Theory (INT) assumes that individual in all cultures need to be valued and respected in term of identity, and therefore multiple self-images are influenced by cultural and social identity (Tommy, Dorjee, & Ting-Toomey 2013). INT has ten basic hypotheses (Ting-Toomey 1999); however, the emphasis of the study tends to be on the seventh and the eighth hypotheses. This indicates that individuals recognize the stability of identity and predict this in cultural situations that reveal a change may occur in identity or chaos that may occur in culture in an unexpected way in positions (Barbuto, Beenen & Tran, 2015). The more stable or comfortable an individual feels within their own identity, the more culturally sensitive information becomes communicated. More effective because effective cultural communication is characterized by sensitive information, which builds bonds and trust between the individual himself and those nearby them even if they do not have the identical cultural norms as them (Chiu, Gelfand, Yamagishi, Shteynberg, & Wan, 2010; Khan, 2020).

Additionally, based on the eighth assumption that the dimensions include cultural, personal and situational affect the meanings, interpretations, and evaluations individuals' identity toward related matters (Ting-Toomey 1999). Language is the window of the individual to the world and through it the identity is reflected. In this context, migrant parents who are from diverse cultural backgrounds endorse their cultures with their children, and strive to sustain

their sense of belonging to both cultures (Clark, 2017). In addition, these parents expect their children not only to integrate into the new culture, but also to achieve academic achievements of their bilingual children. In such stimulating and supportive environments, parents evolve children's identities in regard to binational cultural values.

Across cultures, parents play an important role in preparing children to succeed in a world full of cultural and linguistic pluralism, which has become an important basis for success and continuity. Biculturalism reinforces the individualistic idea that persons espouse. In addition, bicultural generation inclined to use direct methods of communication, where avoidance is not considered a mutual practice (Clark, 2017). Moreover, Clark found that bicultural children who, are from collective cultures, such as African, Latin American and Asian cultures are distinguished by the long preservation of their identity and culture. INT has been used commonly on population groups for instance migrants (Crippin & Brew 2013; Bhugun 2017; Clark 2017). In addition to, there have been some studies using identity negotiation theory in relation to language identity (Du 2015; Clark 2017). Thus, this theoretical framework is applied in the current study to explore in depth the identity of bilingual African children in the Saudi context, which was found to be limited in Saudi literature in early childhood.

### **Migrant in Saudi context**

In recent years, the integration of highly skilled immigrants in Saudi Arabia has been significant because in some sectors the country's economy is primarily dependent on the foreign employees. In 2020, the proportion of immigrants to the population of Saudi Arabia was almost 38.4% (Migration Profile Saudi Arabia, 2020). As a matter of fact, nearly all of these migrants are temporary workers or moved for the purposes of trade and pilgrimage or visitors performing Hajj and Umrah, and many of them have resided in the country for years, sometimes even generations. Kingdom sought signing memoranda of understanding and agreements with a number of workers wishing to work in the Kingdom, especially with South and Southeast Asian and African countries to facilitate the employment of these highly qualified immigrants. Sponsorship system or (*kafala system*) in the Kingdom almost the only way to hire workers and benefit from them to thrive (Migrant Workers in Saudi Arabia, 2020). The International migration study revealed statistically that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ranked third in the average destination of international migrants in the world, where the rate of migratory flows at the beginning of 2020, was 4.7 migrants per 1000 people (Migration Profile Saudi Arabia, 2020).

Another category of immigrants, in addition, has been integrated into Saudi society and amounts of two million multi-generational migrants, also identified as Saudi-born generation. These consist of nearly 500,000 Palestinians, 250,000 Rohingya migrants, 300,000 Uzbeks and Uyghurs, and 30,000 third-generation of Saudi-born Indians (Migration Profile Saudi Arabia, 2020). They are geographically residence mainly cities such as Jeddah Mecca and Al Madinah. Saudi Arabia accepted the Nationality Law in 1953 and acquired Saudi citizenship; while others benefited from permanent residence. It is worth noting, a lot of migrants in Saudi Arabia are capable to enroll their young children in public schools for free. However, they have to be sponsored by a Saudi government under the kafala system.

Generally speaking, these migrants live with two conflicting dilemmas: the desire to maintain their own language as an essential element of their heritage as well as identity, and the desire to integrate more fully into the host society (Tawalbeh, Dagamseh, Al-Matrafi, 2013). As mentioned earlier, immigrants from Africa to Saudi Arabia (also called Hijra) to perform pilgrimage decades ago (Miller & Abu-Manga, 2005). The Hausa people are considered residents and residents of Saudi Arabia, and the word Hausa means both a language and an ethnic group inhabiting a specific area (Tawalbeh et al., 2013). Speaking of the Hausa, their main ethnic roots are in northwest Nigeria and neighboring southern Niger, they created the greatest tribe in that region. This also includes another big tribe, called *Fulani*, who settled with Hausa as the dominant class, adopting the Hausa language as well as culture. Here it is worth noting, that there are two main groups of Hausas in Saudi Arabia include: the Saudi Hausas, and the other are Hausas residing.

Results reported by Tawalbeh et al. (2013) that Hausa people used the Arabic language as a vital means of social sharing with their friends and neighbors in social occasions; and with peers or colleagues at school or university. The study results showed that there is a precedent for a restricted use of Hausa language in Hausa community (5%), while (28%) use Hausa and Arabic in social events. The interpretation of these results led to two subsequent results, the first of which is that the Hausa people in their spoken use tend to the Arabic language, which ranked first in the most common languages spoken in the Hausa community. The second is that there has been a shift in the identity of Hausa, as the Arabic language is considered a prestigious language, while talking about Hausa is a stigma by society. Despite the limited information about immigrants to Saudi Arabia, one of the previous studies revealed that there are negative attitudes of the Hausa Saudis towards their race language and their low appreciation for it led to a transformation towards the Arabic that lost some identification (Tawalbeh et al., 2013).

Some Hausa Saudis, in addition, have neglected their roots, practices and traditions. Above all, most, if not all, of these generation have never visited their home country also they have no desire to do so. Furthermore, most of them specifically from the new generation don't know their national songs, dances and food. Based on the current literature, there are limits in the studies that dealt with the Hausa children, who are most of the residents of Africa inside the Kingdom. Therefore, this study focused on shedding light on these ethnic origins in terms of families' practice of the prevailing culture, the spoken language and the dominant identity in the Mecca region.

### **Linguistic context and cultural identity**

There is no doubt that there is a strong connection between culture and language, as both are two sides of the same coin. It should be noted that cultural participation through activities that allow bilingual individuals to use language to communicate with others achieves cultural enrichment. Accordingly, the ability to contribute in these cultural events, and the amount of time these people spend in culturally rich practices, must be closely related to cultural identity (Schroeder et al., 2017). In line with this, exposure to language at an early age through rich cultural immersion reflects the high language proficiency that individuals have during cultural engagement. In this context, Schroeder et al. (2017) found that bilingualism is strongly relevant to cultural identification, incorporating early age of children and long-term

of language acquisition, proficiency of language, foreign dialect, and language exposure within contexts. When teaching children, a second language, it is inappropriate to think that transfer of linguistic knowledge about that this language is valid for all learners (Rodríguez-Tamayo & Tenjo-Macias, 2019). Language is an important element of the reflection of a person's identity and culture. They are important in preserving and promoting indigenous languages, therefore there must be global cultural approaches that include integrating cultural heritage into student learning.

Indeed, the family is the most influential factor in shaping the identity and personality of their children. Educators must engage collaborative work between the family and the wider society in which children live, this is necessary to ensure that language learning is nurtured to the fullest (Peace-Hughes, Lima, Cohen, Jamieson, Tisdall, & Sorace, 2021). In this context, Wilson (2020) advocated for further integrating children's perceptions of learning to account for family language and practices, integrating the efforts of pedagogical, social and political contexts side by side, to increase interest towards the use of qualitative methods in revealing conceptual ideas of society in order to explore the experiences of bilingual children more broadly. To preserve cultural identity, families often tend to sustain their children's first language culture in terms of first language use, as the best way to preserve their identity.

Conversely, Schroeder et al., 2017 study revealed that families who choose to apply the second language (L2) at the expense of the first language (L1) may make an effort to assimilate the L2 culture, resulting in less affiliation with the L1 culture. However, parents' decision to use their children's native or acquired language has a strong impact on the cultural identity of them and their children. This may depend on the particular composition of the family's linguistic context, for example the language(s) that parents speak with their children and the environment around them, as well as the language children speak with their peers, which determines the relative dominance of each language over cultural identity. In the case study of the child Maya of the English language (L2) besides her mother tongue Turkish (L1), there is a challenge as a child acquiring a non-social language, for her knowing the English language is useful and informative in its Turkish society (Şenaydın & Dikilitaş, 2019). However, there is a potential risk of losing it the advantages of being bilingual are her lack of confidence and the uncertainty that may occur due to overlapping languages.

Whereas others in her community view her as linguistically strong and capable of handling multiple languages, she learns despite the lack of "live input" offered by an English-speaking parent, resulting in a persistent threat her emotional connection to the English language (Şenaydın & Dikilitaş, 2019). The results of the recent study by Sa'diyah and Setiawan (2019) revealed the linguistic trend of bilingual and bilingual children's languages, including; Javanese, Bahasa Indonesia and English. The results of the case study presented that the bilingual and bicultural child had a positive attitude towards the three languages as a result of the influence of his parents and others around him on language acquisition. Diamond was able to distinguish the language in which he communicates with others in order to appreciate those he addresses in his environment and make them comfortable with communication. Diamond's case showed great ability to demonstrate language proficiency; and differentiate between different language and contexts.

Based on this case study of family use of language, it can be argued that if the parents and their children hold a positive position toward the different languages include Javanese, Bahasa Indonesia and English, all languages will be significant and interesting to be learnt (Şenaydın & Dikilitaş, 2019). In addition, there is an important opportunity for policy makers to benefit from the experiences of active communities and minority languages in developing innovative approaches. It should be noted that the exchange of practices, experiences and knowledge across different cultural and linguistic groups may shed light on approaches to revitalize language use, inclusion and reinforce of minority languages in local and the wider communities, which has a positive impact in enhancing children's identity and learning (Peace-Hughes et al., 2021).

Within the scope of all this, a balanced cultural education is the real key to Bilingualism without identity crises and suchlike side-effects may occur (Broadbent & Vavilova, 2015). It is important to note here that acquiring a second language, regardless of the sort of bilingual program preferred, is beneficial for learners. In this case, giving children a variety of opportunities is important not only because they have the opportunity to learn to read and write in a different language, but also because they can learn about the diversity of language, cultures, particularly the local culture (Rodríguez-Tamayo & Tenjo-Macias, 2019). Accordingly, wise policy makers should promote one's self-perception as a diverse and highly developed individual, with speech competence achieved in different cultural and linguistic environments, thus leading to appreciate the role of multilingualism in self-identification.

### **Objectives of the study**

As mentioned earlier, the most important aim of this study is exploring language practices of bilingual children are investigated and social practices that clearly reflect the cultural identity of bilinguals. Consequently, the main focus of this study is to discover the language development of bilinguals both in the language acquired in the mother tongue, so that we can provide a clue about the way in which new readers learn and the way in which language education works for bilingual children. The current study addresses the following research question: *How does the acquired language forms the mother tongue and the cultural identity of the child? and how does this form the bilingual identity in African and Saudi setting?*

### **Method**

#### ***Research Design***

This study is based on observing the performance of the linguistic practices of a bilingual child in preschool settings, which include Language proficiency in (Hausa language-L1) and (Arabic language-L2), Language use in different domains, Attitudes toward L1 and L2, Parental, Cultural practices (practices that reflect the identity of the children and their family such as traditional songs, clothing, arts, dancing, national festival etc. The last two questions were asked parents about their children ethnic self-identification and social context. As a research methodology, case studies aim to generalize the results of extensive and systematic investigations about a person or group of people. Current study examines in-depth data collected from the questionnaires.

### ***Participants***

The study sample consisted of (n=100) families of African immigrants in the city of Mecca, who spoke Hausa languages, and had children in government kindergartens. The consent forms were obtained from them to voluntarily participate in the study. Those children (n=100) were selected from different government kindergarten centres (n=20) in the city of Mecca. The purpose of the study was explained and they were assured that information would be kept confidential to the study participants. The focus was on government kindergartens in the Mecca region, which teach the Arabic language to children, and these children enroll in them, where they find themselves without paying tuition fees. The main data for this research was collected using questionnaire of family language practice of bilingual children.

### ***Validity***

The validity of the research method was measured to ensure the credibility of measuring what was built and designed to measure, through applying internal consistency test between the total score for each axis and the total score. Also, it was calculating by the correlation coefficient (Pearson's correlation coefficient) between the total score for each axis and the total score for the questionnaire; which is evident from Table (1).

Table 1.

*The values of the correlation coefficients between the total degree for each axis and the total degree for the questionnaire*

	Correlations	Sig
Children's Language proficiency	0.853	0.01
Children's Language use in different domains	0.964	0.01
Attitudes toward Language	0.826	0.01
Cultural practices (practices that reflect the identity of the children and their family)	0.797	0.01

As shown in the table above, the results of the analysis confirmed that all correlation coefficients are showed to be significant at the level of (0.01) due to their proximity to the entire coefficient, which shows the validity and homogeneity of all questionnaire statements.

### ***Reliability***

It means the consistency of the of the scores that outcome from the observation measurement progression, and it's not the inconsistency with itself. It gives detailed information about the behavior, which is the ratio between the score difference in the questionnaire, which indicate to the actual performance of the examiner. Accordingly, it was calculated using Alpha Cronbach coefficient and Split-half methods.



Table 2.

*The values of the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire axes*

	Cronbach's Alpha	Split-half
Children's Language proficiency	0.751	0.712 – 0.793
Children's Language use in different domains	0.803	0.765 – 0.845
Attitudes toward Language	0.924	0.888 – 0.961
Cultural practices (practices that reflect the identity of the children and their family)	0.779	0.738 – 0.814
Reliability of the questionnaire as a whole	0.881	0.840 – 0.929

As demonstrated from table 1, all the values of the reliability coefficients (Alpha coefficient, the Split-half) had a significant level at (0.01), which proves the credibility of the research instrument.

### Demographic information

#### *The dominant language among African children*

In the context of language, African parents were asked in relation to children's language and the question was; Please describe your child? Whether their children are Arabic dominant or Hausa dominant. The analyzes from table (3) and figure (1) revealed that nearly three quarters of children (n=74,74%), are dominant Arabic speakers, followed by about a quarter of children (n=26,26%), who are dominant Hausa speakers.

Table 3.

*Most dominant language spoken by African children*

Language	Number	Percentage
Dominant Arabic speaker	74	74%
Dominant Hausa speaker	26	26%
Sum	100	100%

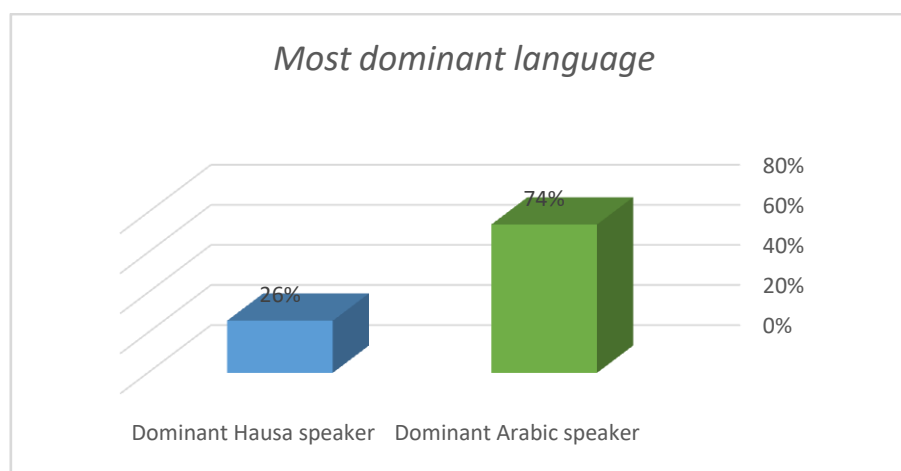


Figure 1. Most dominant language spoken by African children

***Parents' perspectives toward their children's identities***

African parents were asked the question: *Which one of the following best describes how you view your child?* And this question has multiple choices answer include; Basically African, even though my child lives in Saudi, Basically Saudi, even though my child has African background, and African-Saudi, my child has both African and Saudi characteristics, and I view him/her as a bend. As shown in Table (4) and Figure (2), the findings related to the parents' perception of their children's identity showed that (n=59,59%) of the children are considered by their parents to be of African-Saudi descent, and their children have African and Saudi characteristics. While about (n=35,35%) of children are seen by their parents as basically Saudi, even though their children have an African background.

Table 4.

***African Parents' perspectives toward their children's identities***

Parents' perspectives toward their children's identities	Number	Percentage
Basically African, even though my child lives in Saudi	6	6%
Basically Saudi, even though my child has African background	35	35%
African-Saudi, my child has both African and Saudi characteristics, and I view him/her as a bend	59	59%
Sum	100	100%

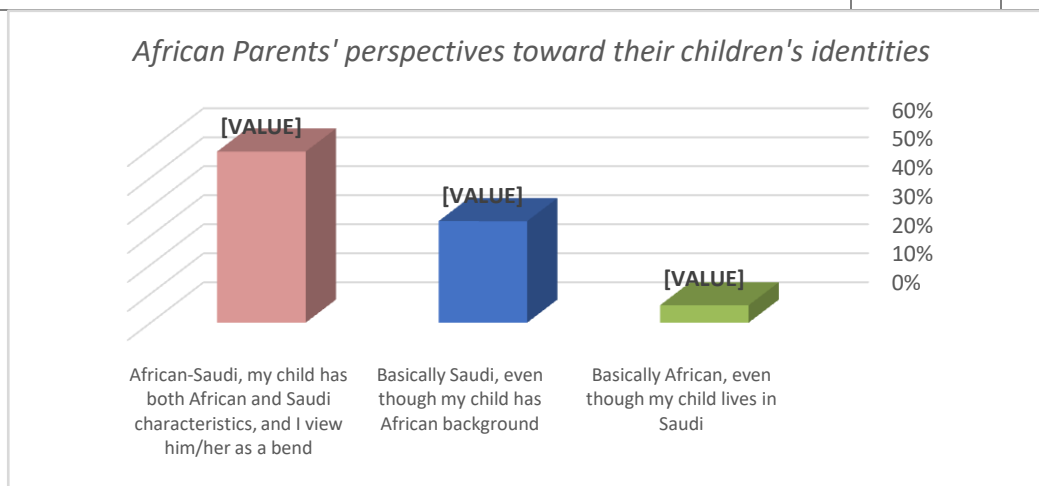


Figure 2. African Parents' perspectives toward their children's identities

The minority of children from the study sample (n=6, 6%.) consider them to be basically African by their parents, even though their children live in Saudi Arabia and immerse in Saudi culture. With regard to the identities of the children, the subsequent analyzes revealed that the parents asked what they would like people to view their children (Africans, Saudis, Saudi-Africans), as presented in table (5) and figure (3).

Table 5.

***Community perspectives toward children's identities***

I would like other people to regard my child as;	Number	Percentage
African	6	6%
Saudi	17	17%

African-Saudi	77	77%
Sum	100	100%

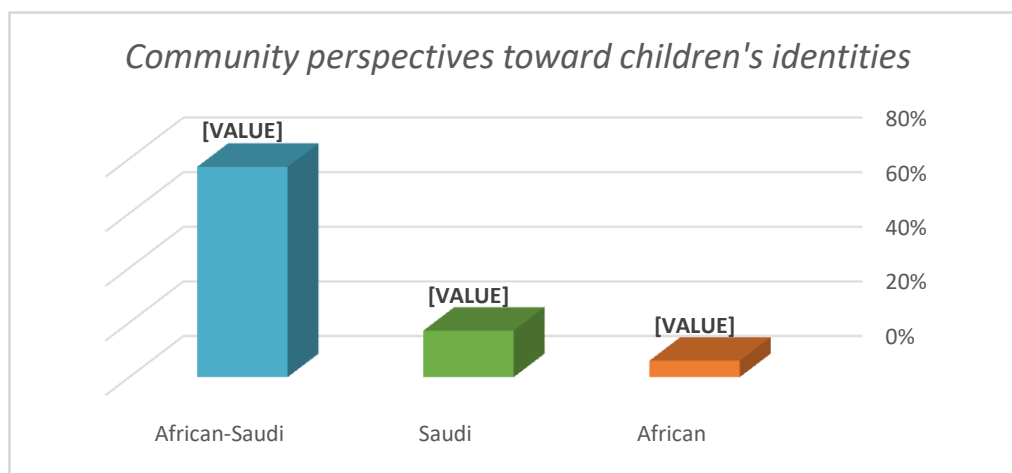


Figure 3. Community perspectives toward children's identities

The results showed that (n=77, 77%) children are viewed as Saudi-African by the people and the surrounding community (see table 5& figure 3). Nearby (n=17,17%.) of the children are considered by the people and the society around them to be Saudi. Few numbers of children (n=6, 6%.) are perceived by the society around them as Saudi-African.

## Results

### Children's language proficiency

There are significant differences in the mean score of values among African children with regard to the languages they speak and include (Hausa and Arabic) with respect to the children's language proficiency indicator. The (T-Test) was used for the mean value level of the children's language proficiency scores in order to confirm the validity of this hypothesis (see table 6).

Table 6.

*The differences in the degrees' mean values of children's language proficiency indicator*

Children's proficiency	Language	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation(SD)	N	df	t	Sig
understand the language used in TV shows, videos, movies or songs							
Hausa Language		15.483	1.670	100	99	9.638	0.01
Arabic Language		22.369	2.957				
engage more in a conversation with others							
Hausa Language		13.270	1.035	100	99	11.420	0.01
Arabic Language		20.142	2.410				
can read books, printed sings or texts							
Hausa Language		11.192	1.229	100	99	15.347	0.01
Arabic Language		21.675	2.358				

can write freely and expressively grammatically correct sentences						
Hausa Language	14.910	1.347	100	99	13.034	0.01
Arabic Language	24.001	2.779				
has no problem understanding parents' conversations with other adults						
Hausa Language	19.537	2.001	100	99	8.241	0.01
Arabic Language	12.492	1.450				

Based on the results of the analysis, the value of ( $t$ ) was ( $t=9.638$ ) for understanding the language used by African children in television programs, videos, movies or songs, which has statistically significant value at the level of (0.01) in relation to Arabic language. There was significant difference between the mean value of the Arabic language ( $M=22.369$ ;  $SD=2.957$ ), and the mean value of the Hausa language for these children ( $M=15.483$ ;  $SD=1.670$ ). In subsequent results, it showed that the mean value of ( $t$ ) reached the equivalent of ( $t=11.420$ ) in the children's ability to engage more in conversation with others, which has statistically significant value at the level of (0.01) in relation to the Arabic language. There was statistically significant difference between the mean of language score of the Arabic used by children is equivalent to ( $M=20.142$ ,  $SD=2.410$ ), while the average score for Hausa language ( $M=13.270$ ,  $SD=1.035$ ).

With regard to the indicator of children's ability to read books, printed sings or texts, the value of ( $t$ ) reached ( $t=15.347$ ), which has a statistically significant value at the level of (0.01) in favor of the Arabic language. There was significant difference among the mean value of children's reading printed resources in Arabic language ( $M=21.675$ ;  $SD=2.358$ ) and the mean value of the children's ability to read printed texts in Hausa was ( $M=11.192$ ,  $SD=1.229$ ). The value of ( $t$ ) reached ( $t=13.034$ ), when the indicator of children's ability to write freely and grammatically correct Arabic sentences, which is a statistically significant value at the significance value at the level (0.01) in regards to the Arabic language. There was significant difference between the average score of the mean value of Arabic language ( $M=24.001$ ,  $SD=2.779$ ) and the mean value of Hausa language ( $M=14.910$ ,  $SD=1.347$ ).

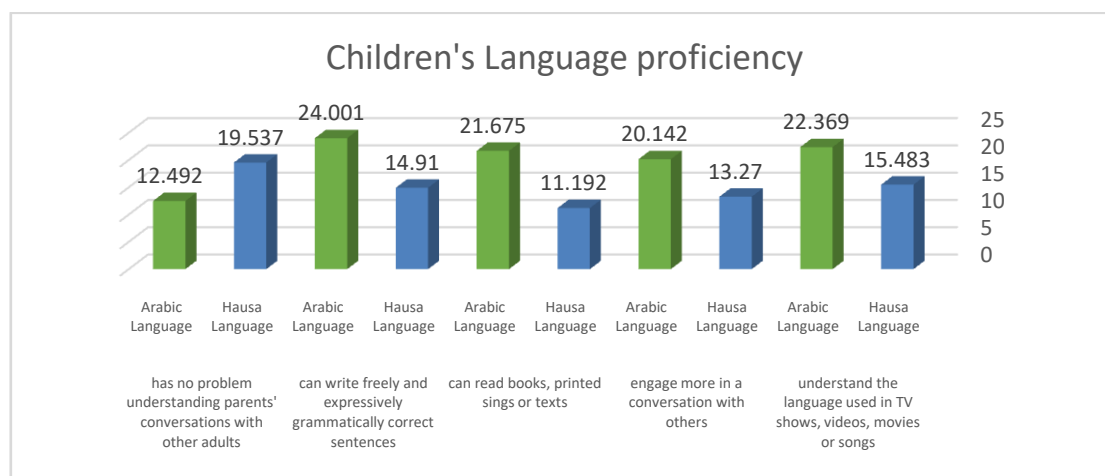


Figure 4. The differences in the degrees' mean of children's language proficiency

Regarding communication, the value of ( $t$ ) was ( $t=8.241$ ), where the results revealed that there is a problem in understanding parents' conversations with others, which has a statistically significant value at the level of (0.01) in relation to the Hausa language. There was significant difference found between the mean value of Hausa language ( $M=19.537$ ,  $SD=2.001$ ), and the mean value level of Arabic language ( $M=12.492$ ,  $SD=1.450$ ).

### *Children's Language use in different domains*

The results showed that there were statistically significant differences between the mean scores of children's language (Hausa and Arabic) in terms of their use in different domains, and to confirm the hypothesis, the T-Test was used as shown in the subsequent table.

Table 7.

*The differences in the degrees' mean of children's language use in different domains*

Children's Language use in different domains	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)	N	df	t	Sig
when he/she write personal letter						
Hausa Language	24.456	2.541	100	99	13.527	0.01
Arabic Language	37.812	3.606				
when he/she speak with neighbors						
Hausa Language	41.146	4.098	100	99	16.381	0.01
Arabic Language	28.436	2.635				
when he/she speak with other children in his/her community						
Hausa Language	39.258	3.157	100	99	12.660	0.01
Arabic Language	25.135	2.389				
with you parents and the elderly						
Hausa Language	36.510	3.670	100	99	11.113	0.01
Arabic Language	24.169	2.324				
at home with her/his siblings						
Hausa Language	43.887	4.351	100	99	16.358	0.01
Arabic Language	29.381	2.129				
during social occasion						
Hausa Language	35.006	3.187	100	99	14.362	0.01
Arabic Language	22.967	2.663				
at school with her/his friends						
Arabic Language	42.277	4.819	100	99	8.701	0.01
Hausa Language	30.339	3.271				
most commonly when he/she angry						
Hausa Language	36.558	3.492	100	99	14.625	0.01
Arabic Language	24.370	2.001				
when in he/she praying						
Hausa Language	21.337	2.501	100	99	23.409	0.01
Arabic Language	40.112	4.189				

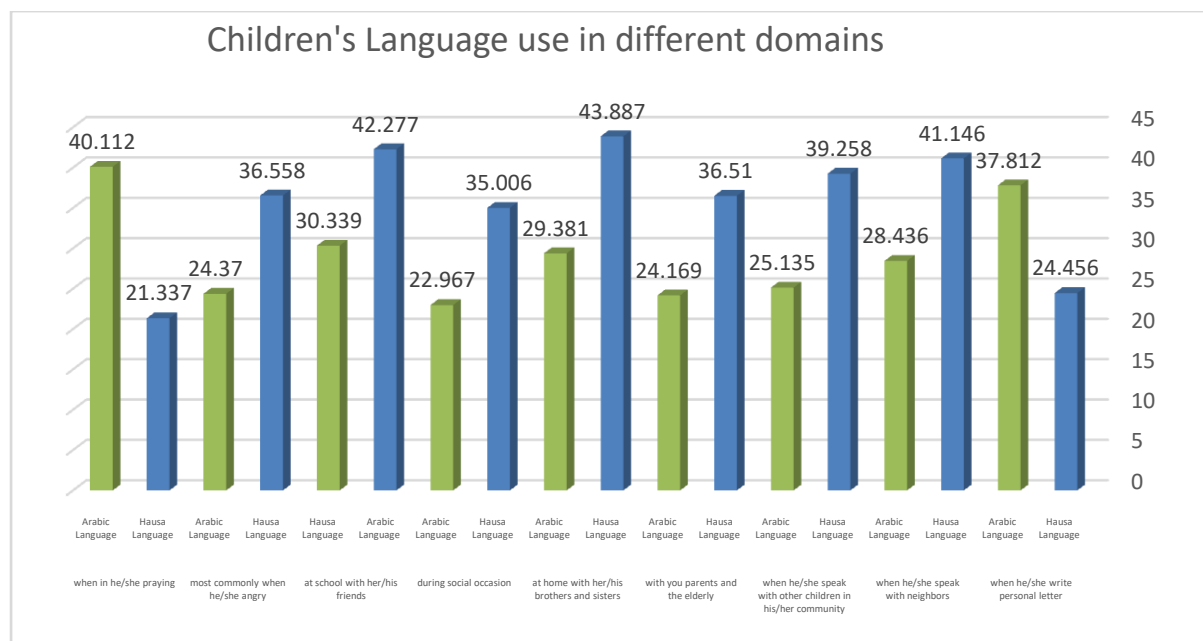


Figure 5. The differences in the degrees' mean value of children's language use in different domains

Regarding writing a personal letter, the value of ( $t$ ) was ( $t=13.527$ ), which has statistically significant value at the level of (0.01) in relation to children writing personal letter in Arabic language. The result confirmed that there was a significant statistical difference between the average score among children who were writing personal letter in Arabic language ( $M=37.812$ ,  $SD=3.606$ ), and the average score of children who were writing personal letter in Hausa language ( $M=24.456$ ,  $SD=2.541$ ).

Further results showed that the African children speak Hausa language when communicate with their neighbors. The value of ( $t$ ) was ( $t=16.381$ ), which has a statistically significant value at the level of (0.01) regarding Hausa language. Additional analyses revealed that there was a significant statistical difference occurred between the average degree of children's use of the Hausa language when talking with their neighbors ( $M=41.146$ ,  $SD=4.098$ ), and the average degree of their use of the Arabic language ( $M=28.436$ ,  $SD=2.635$ ).

With regard to children talking with other children in their community, the value of ( $t$ ) was ( $t=12.660$ ), which has a statistically significant value at the level of (0.01) associated with the Hausa language. There was significant statistical difference the mean value of children speaking with others in the Hausa language ( $M=39.258$ ,  $SD=3.157$ ), and the mean value of the Arabic language ( $M=25.135$ ,  $SD=2.389$ ).

As for their conversation with their parents and the elderly, the value of ( $t$ ) reached ( $t=11.113$ ), which has a statistically significant value at the level of (0.01) relating to the Hausa language. There are significant statistical differences between the average degree of children's use of the Hausa language with the elderly ( $M=36.510$ ,  $SD=3.670$ ), and the average degree of their use of the Arabic language ( $M=24.169$ ,  $SD=2.324$ ) with the same category. The results indicated that children used more frequently Hausa language when speaking inside the house with the siblings, as the value of ( $t$ ) was ( $t=16.358$ ), and this

indicated that there was a statistically significant value at the level of (0.01). Results showed that there was statistically significant difference appear between the mean value of the Hausa language spoken by children at home ( $M=43.887$ ,  $SD=4.351$ ), and the mean value of the Arabic language ( $M=29.381$ ,  $SD=2.129$ ).

In addition, the value of ( $t$ ) was ( $t=14.362$ ) for children's linguistic practices in social occasions, which has a statistically significant value at the level of (0.01) relating to the Hausa language. Hausa language mean value was statistically significant ( $M=35.006$ ,  $SD=3.187$ ), compared to the mean value of the Arabic language ( $M=22.967$ ,  $SD=2.663$ ). With regard to children's language used mostly when they speak with friends at school, Arabic language value of ( $t$ ) was ( $t=8.701$ ), which has a statistically significant value at the level of (0.01). The mean value of Arabic language that children used with friends at school was ( $M=42.277$ ,  $SD=4.819$ ), compared with mean value of Hausa language ( $M=30.339$ ,  $SD=3.271$ ).

Subsequent result revealed that children tend to use the Hausa language, which is the most common language when expressing feelings of anger, with a value of ( $t$ ) ( $t=14.629$ ), which has a statistically significant value at the level of (0.01). From these results it is evident that children were more likely to use of Hausa language in expressing feelings, as the mean value was significant at the level of ( $M=36.558$ ,  $SD=3.492$ ), in comparison with the mean value level of Arabic language ( $M=24.370$ ,  $SD=2.001$ ). With regard to the religious rituals of children when praying, the value of ( $t$ ) reached (23.409), which has a statistically significant value at the level of (0.01) in relation to Arabic language. The mean value level of children using Arabic language in practicing their religious rituals was ( $M=40.112$ ,  $SD=4.189$ ). While small number of children participating these rituals with their parents in Hausa language as the mean value level was ( $M=21.337$ ,  $SD=2.501$ ).

### ***Children's Attitudes toward Language***

The results of the study show that there was statistically significant difference found between the mean value of children's linguistic attitudes towards Hausa and Arabic languages. To test this hypothesis, the (T-Test) was used (see table 8).

Table 8.

*The differences in the degrees' mean of children's attitudes toward language*

Attitudes toward Language	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)	N	df	t	Sig
Is more useful to your child						
Hausa Language	9.751	1.318	100	99	12.457	0.01
Arabic Language	18.862	2.631				
would your child prefer to use when you talk to others						
Hausa Language	11.116	1.528	100	99	8.860	0.01
Arabic Language	17.360	2.450				
can your child express more himself/herself better in						
Hausa Language	8.314	1.036	100	99	12.224	0.01
Arabic Language	19.001	2.372				

Which language use more in your community						
Hausa Language	16.665	2.433	100	99	9.340	0.01
Arabic Language	7.261	1.210				

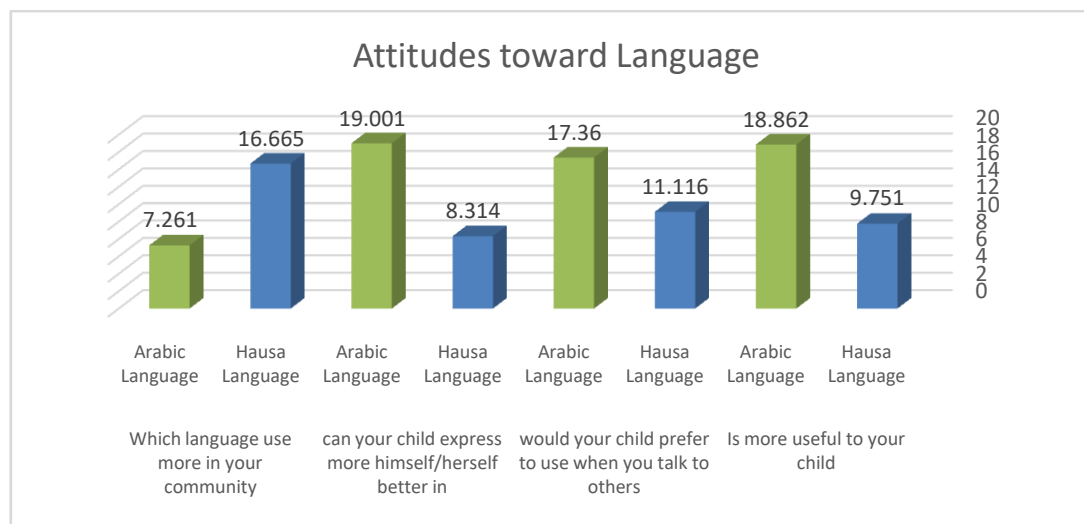


Figure 6. The differences in the degrees' mean value of children's attitudes toward Language

The results showed that the from parents' point of view, Arabic language is the most useful language for children, as the value of ( $t$ ) was ( $t=12.457$ ). This has a statistically significant value at the level of (0.01) in relation to Arabic language. There was statistical difference found in the mean value level of the Arabic language ( $M=18.862$ ,  $SD=2.631$ ), compared with the mean value level of the Hausa language ( $M=9.751$ ,  $SD=1.318$ ). Besides, the parents expressed their children's preference for using the Arabic language over speaking with others, where the value of ( $t$ ) was ( $t=8.860$ ), which has a statistically significant value at the level of (0.01). In addition, there were statistical differences in the average degree of children's preference for the Arabic language ( $M=17.360$ ,  $SD=2.450$ ), followed by the Hausa language in the second place, with an average score of ( $M=11.116$ ,  $SD=1.528$ ).

With regard to the children's preferred language to express themselves, the value of ( $t$ ) was ( $t=12.224$ ), which has a statistically significant value at the level of (0.01) relating to Arabic language. The results revealed that there were significant statistical differences that appeared between the mean value of the Arabic language ( $M=19.001$ ,  $SD=2.372$ ), and the mean value of Hausa language ( $M=8.314$ ,  $SD=1.036$ ). In the context of the children's preferred language in their community, the value of ( $t$ ) was ( $t=9.340$ ), which has a statistically significant value at the significance level of (0.01) relating to Hausa language. Children showed great tendency to speak Hausa in their own community as the mean value level was ( $M=16.665$ ,  $SD=2.433$ ), compared to Arabic with mean value level of ( $M=7.261$ ,  $SD=1.210$ ).

### ***African children's cultural practices***

Further analyses indicated that there was statistically significant difference in cultural practices of children at the home environment, which influence their identity. To test this hypothesis, the T-Test was applied (see table 9).



Table 9.

*The differences in the mean value of children's cultural practices*

Cultural practices that reflect the identity of the children and their family	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)	N	df	t	Sig
showing his pride in culture by wearing the formal clothing and singing the national songs on the National Day, which reflects the culture of						
African	13.624	1.662	100	99	15.052	0.01
Saudi	28.198	2.492				
Watching cultural and entertainment programs on TV in						
Hausa Language	14.501	1.278	100	99	13.488	0.01
Arabic Language	25.758	2.995				
Practicing traditional and popular activities and games in a society that reflects culture of						
African	18.734	1.324	100	99	10.160	0.01
Saudi	27.301	2.637				
Finding ease, flexibility and comfort in dialogue with his family and society when speaking the language that reflects the culture of						
African	26.789	2.590	100	99	12.510	0.01
Saudi	13.628	1.113				
He/she is inclined for arts (such as painting, clothes, designs etc) that reflects culture of						
African	22.405	2.437	100	99	13.990	0.01
Saudi	11.360	1.330				
The child helps his/her parents or relatives by teaching them some terms or vocabulary to use them in the dialogue in the language of						
Hausa	20.214	2.341	100	99	8.410	0.01
Arabic	29.301	2.558				

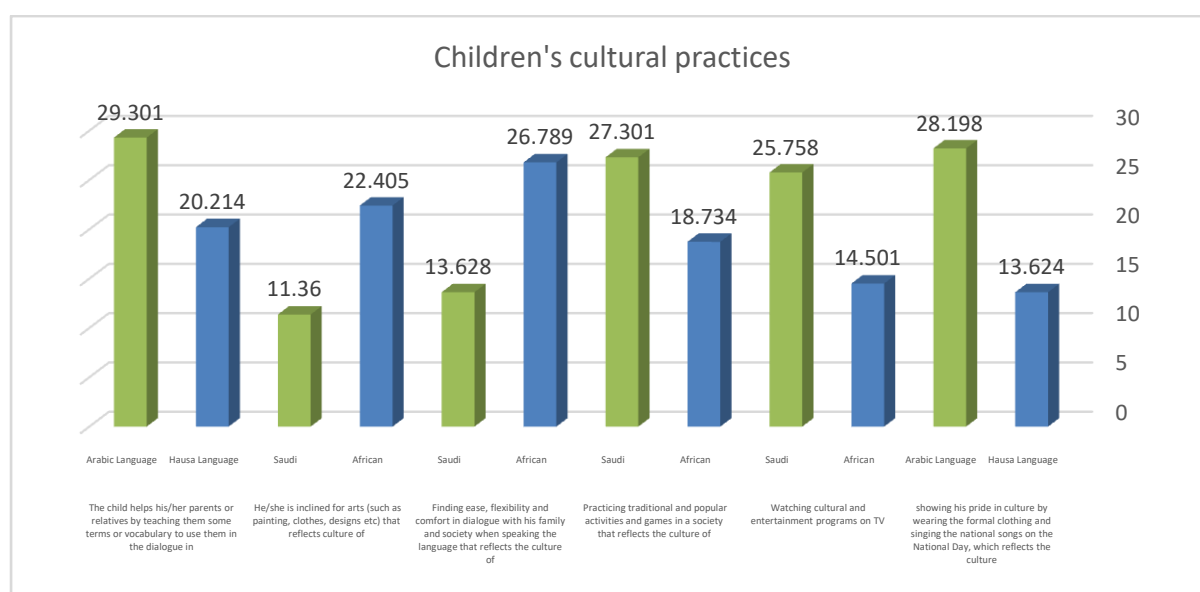


Figure 7. The differences in the mean value of children's cultural practices

Interestingly, the results of the study showed that African children express the pride of their Saudi identity, as they tend to celebrate Saudi culture by wearing formal clothes and singing patriotic songs on National Day compared to their own culture. The value of ( $t$ ) was ( $t=15.052$ ), which has a statistically significant value at the level of (0.01) associated to Saudi culture. The mean value of Saudi culture score was ( $M=28.198$ ,  $SD=2.492$ ), whereas the mean value of African culture score ( $M=13.624$ ,  $SD=1.662$ ).

In the context of children's entertainment with regard to watching cultural and entertainment programs on television, the value of ( $t$ ) was ( $t=13.488$ ), which is a statistically significant value at the level of (0.01) in relation to Saudi culture. There are statistically significant differences in the mean value of Saudi culture score ( $M=25.758$ ,  $SD=2.995$ ), compared to the mean value of African culture score ( $M=14.501$ ,  $SD=1.278$ ). In the same context, parents reported that children practice traditional and popular activities and games in their society, which reflects the Saudi culture. The value of ( $t$ ) was ( $t=10.160$ ), which has a statistically significant value at the level of (0.01) associated with Saudi culture. The mean value of Saudi culture was ( $M=27.301$ ,  $SD=2.637$ ), while the mean value of African culture ( $M=18.734$ ,  $SD=1.324$ ).

More interestingly, the result revealed that children finding ease, flexibility and comfort in dialogue with their family and society when speaking the Hausa language. The value of ( $t$ ) was ( $t=12510$ ), which has statistically significant value at the level of (0.01) relating to Hausa language. There are important statistical differences found between the mean value of children speaking the Hausa language ( $M=26.789$ ,  $SD=2.590$ ), and the mean value of the Arabic language ( $M=13.628$ ,  $SD=1.113$ ).

In the context of arts, the results of the study revealed that children's tendency to arts (such as painting, clothing and designs in African culture. The value of ( $t$ ) was ( $t=13.990$ ) in relation to African culture. There was significant difference between the mean value of children tendency toward African culture ( $M=22.405$ ,  $SD=2.437$ ), and the mean value of their tendency toward Saudi culture is ( $M=11.360$ ,  $SD=1.330$ ). Furthermore, children expressed more tendency to help their parents or relatives by teaching them some terms or vocabulary to be used in dialogue in the Arabic language. The value of ( $t$ ) was ( $t=8.410$ ), which has a statistically significant value at the level of (0.01). The mean value of children usage of Arabic language ( $M=29.301$ ,  $SD=2.558$ ), which was statistically significant different than the mean value of the Hausa language ( $M=20.214$ ,  $SD=2.341$ ).

## Discussion

This study contributed to revealing important results that would enrich the literature in the field of bilingualism, culture and identity in early childhood, which is very limited in Saudi Arabia. The first contribution of the study showed that African children tend to watch TV shows, videos, films or songs in Arabic more than in Hausa. In addition, children are able to read books, publications or texts in Arabic more than their mother tongue is Hausa. The study found that African children showed a higher tendency and ability to write more grammatically correct Arabic sentences than their native language, Hausa. With regard to communication, the results showed that the children had a problem in understanding the

speech of parents and others, regarding the Hausa language. The study found that children write personal letters in Arabic.

The second significant contribution is that African children tend to switch between Arabic and Hausa when use language different domains. Parents reported that their children were more likely to apply Hausa with other children in their community. Moreover, the children used simple Hausa language in their conversation with their parents and the elderly in their community. According to the parents' report, the children, in addition, demonstrated abilities to speak Hausa within the home with siblings. At social events, the children's language practices were mainly shown in the simple Hausa language. This finding is consistent with the previous finding of a study that indicated that people's orientation to a culture by participating in activities, and the amount of time these people spend in culturally rich activities, must be closely related to their cultural identity (Schroeder et al., 2017). As noted above, one identity should not be extinguished at the expense of another identity.

However, in the school context, children reported that they mostly use Arabic when they approach friends. More interestingly, the children tended to use Hausa, which is the language more commonly used when expressing feelings of anger than Arabic. The results revealed that from parents' perspectives that they agreed that Arabic language most useful for their children as their children were more likely in Arabic language when speaking with others. Besides, the children showed a positive attitude towards the Arabic language because they were more confident in expressing themselves, which is consistent with the previous result by Tawalbeh et al. (2013).

The third vital contribution of the current study was related to children's cultural practices. The analyses yield that children's pride in the culture they preferred by wearing official clothes and singing patriotic songs on the national day that reflects the Saudi culture. Further analyses indicated that children tended to watching cultural and entertainment programs on television that reflected Saudi culture, which outline the strong influence of Saudi culture on those children. This result is in agreement with a previous result of Schroeder et al., (2017) revealed that families who choose to use a L2 over a L1, may make an effort to integrate the acquired culture, resulting in less affiliation with the indigenous culture.

More surprisingly, African children's practice of traditional and popular activities and games in their society, which reflects Saudi culture. However, within their community, children were finding ease, flexibility and comfort in dialogue with their family and society when speaking the Hausa language as well as they had tendency to arts (such as painting, clothing and designs that reflected African culture. This result consists with previous finding by Clark (2017), who found that bicultural children who, are from collective cultures, such as African culture are distinguished by the long preservation of their identity and culture.

The last contribution sheds light on the dominance of language that children are influenced by, and which will later shape their identity. Parents stated that the social interaction in the linguistic context between them and their children helped in learning some new vocabulary to be used in dialogue in the Arabic language. As a result, more than one-half of the parents in

the current study asserted that the Arabic language is dominant language, and considered their children's blend of Afro-Saudi identity.

### Conclusion and recommendation

To sum up, it is worth saying that the great immersion of African children born in Saudi Arabia in Saudi culture, which is appeared in its cultural, linguistic and social practices, makes us, as researchers, question the extent of the strong positive influence of Saudi culture on these children. Despite this, the study found that there are limited linguistic and cultural practices of African children within their community with the elderly and their families and for expressing themselves within their narrow surroundings. This will affect the African culture of these children in the long term. This study concludes with two main recommendations for early childhood policy makers and researchers. The first recommendation, to give more attention to bilingual and bi-cultural children regarding the design and implementation of a bilingual program for these children in public schools in Saudi Arabia in order to teach these children the value of their culture and the culture of others.

Overall, the current study confirmed the previous statement that balanced cultural education is the real key to Bilingualism without identity crises and suchlike side-effects may occur (Broadbent & Vavilova, 2015). The second recommendation is summed up in the importance of directing future research in the field of early childhood to more attention to children born in a country other than their mother country, and who are from immigrant parents. This is in order to shed light on issues related to cultural and linguistic identity, which are considered multi-faceted in terms of impact, whether positive or negative.

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