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Examining Kindergarten Teachers' Beliefs About and Implementation of School, Family, and Community Partnerships in Saudi Arabia

Najla Albaiz
University of Alabama at Birmingham

EXAMINING KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SCHOOL, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS IN SAUDI ARABIA

by

NAJLA E. ALBAIZ

JAMES R. ERNEST, COMMITTEE CHAIR
GRACE JEPKEMBOI
JENNA LACHENAYE
JENNIFER SUMMERLIN
DEBORAH STREVY

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EARLY CHILDHOD EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

The research examined kindergarten teachers' beliefs and implementation of school, family, and community partnerships (SFCPs) in Riyadh City, Saudi Arabia. It used Epstein's model of SFCPs including the following practices: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. Two strands were employed: the quantitative obtained teachers' beliefs and implementation of the SFCP practices by surveying a sample of 266 teachers from 126 public kindergartens. The follow up qualitative strand included a purposeful sample of 12 teachers to explore their experiences with SFCPs within three different social and economic areas (SEAs): High, middle, and low SEAs.

Two-way Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) and chi-square tests were used to analyze teachers' response to the survey. Thematic analysis was used to analyze teachers' responses the follow-up interviews. The results revealed that there were no significant associations between teachers regarding to their years of experience or different teaching areas in terms of their beliefs about or implementation of SFCPs. The teachers believed that all of the six practices were important but gave slightly differences priorities to them. For the implementation of the practices, learning at home ranked the highest of the implementation, 74% of the study sample implemented this practice between once a semester to a weekly basis. For parenting and communication practices,

over 50% of the sample implemented these practices between several times a semester to weekly. Collaborating with the community, volunteering, and decision-making were the lowest in implementation. More than half of the participants (49%, 60%, and 66% respectively) never implemented any of them.

The interviews analysis provided four main themes; partnerships knowledge, establishing partnerships need, partnership obstacles, and partnerships enhancement. The result showed that not all teachers acknowledged the six practices. They provided different stories to show the need (or not) of specific practices. The interviews focused on teachers' experiences and highlighted many of the barriers that weakened the partnerships and emphasized the need to enhance these partnerships. This enhancement should be from different levels and parties, including but not limited to the teachers, co-workers, families, Ministry of Education, and the community.

Keywords: school, family, and community partnerships, belief, implementation, kindergarten teacher, Saudi Arabia.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the memory of my role model, my best friend and dearest sister, Dr. Latifah (may Allah be merciful to her), she left us too early before witnessing or celebrating this moment. Her great support and words still ring in my ears and pushed me to greater tenacity. Her optimism and sense of humor were the color of my life. My prayers are to meet my beloved sister in heaven and talk about this achievement with her, to hear her wonderful laugh.

I also dedicate the dissertation to the apple of my eyes, Feras and Fawaz, who came to the world during my graduate studies. Their unconditional love encourages me to work harder, and to learn about childhood characteristics that will make their life better.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EDF	Engaging Diverse Families
IRB	The Institutional Review Board for Human Use
KSU	King Saud University
MANOVA	Multivariate Analysis of Variance Among Subjects
MOE	Ministry of Education
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
PCA	Principle Component Analysis
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
PTO	Parent-Teacher Organization
SACM	The Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission
SEAs	Social Economic Areas
SES	Socioeconomic Status
SEDL	Southwest Educational Development Laboratory
SELS	Saudi Early Learning Standards
SEMM	Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods
SFCPs	School, Family, and Community Partnerships
SLC	Self Learning Curriculum
SPSS	Statistical Package for The Social Sciences

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood experiences provide the basis of individuals' later development (Cunningham, Stanovich, & Keith, 1997; Sroufe, Egeland, & Kreutzer, 1990). Traditionally, the family plays an important role in shaping these experiences and helping young children flourish in the future (Turney & Kao, 2009). However, in most contemporary cultures, some social agencies, such as formal schools, share this task with the families. According to Epstein (1992), in the past, women were responsible for rearing children at home before school age. When women entered the workforce, day cares and preschools took on the responsibility of nurturing children. The family also needs help with the child's transition from home to school. McIntyre, Eckert, Fiese, DiGennaro, and Wildenger (2007) found that families face difficulties helping their children to adapt to the school environment as they encounter its new expectations and behaviors.

On the other hand, early learning centers cannot do their work effectively without school, family, and community partnerships (SFCPs). Epstein (2001) documented that family involvement enables teachers to understand their students better, which enhanced the quality of education and resulted in better outcomes. Furthermore, Kreider (2002) suggested that engaging families in their children's kindergarten helps children transition

to elementary school and helps the family be ready to engage in their children's education in the future.

Some characteristics influence the quality of the partnerships. The underlying beliefs and assumptions teachers develop during their teaching experience have a heavy influence on their behaviors (Turner, Christensen, & Meyer, 2009). Teachers who are more open and believe in the importance of building a family-friendly environment encourage families to engage in their children's education (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991; Sheldon, 2003). The socioeconomic status of the school district also play a significant role in the success of SFCPs (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987). The family's socioeconomic status (SES) significantly affects the quality of the partnership between the family and school (Lareau, 1989). Studies have shown that low SES families are less likely to engage in their children's education because of time and economic barriers (Lareau, 1989; Sheldon, 2003).

Besides family partnerships, the community can provide the support that schools need to ensure student achievement (Ice, Thapa, & Cohen, 2015). Epstein et al. (2009) mentioned that the local community plays an important role in enhancing and supporting children's development and learning. Through several activities and facilities, community agencies, such as religious-based institutions and health care institutions, can improve educational outcomes in schools. Research has found that community involvement also helps decrease children's inappropriate behaviors (Nettles, 1991) and enhance children's development through learning services in the community that supplement the role of the school (Gent, 2009).

Similar to cultures around the rest of the world, the Saudi Arabian culture has continued to evolve. The number of employed women has doubled in the past 10 years to 15% of the total workforce (Central Department of Statistics and Information, 2015). Women joining men in the workforce has raised the need for child care centers during day time. In the Saudi Arabian educational system, formal education starts in first grade (6-year-old children). Kindergarten is not required as a prerequisite for enrolling in elementary school; thus, it has not yet been included in the formal educational system, which is based on a six-three-three pattern. According to Algahmdi and Abduljawaad (2005), the first kindergarten in Saudi Arabia that accepted 3- to 6-year-old children opened in 1966.

Consequently, a curriculum for kindergartens entitled *Project Curriculum* was implemented in 1975; the name was later changed to the *Self Learning Curriculum* (SLC). The curriculum was written for kindergarteners aged 3-5 years. Its authors emphasized that working with families and the community is an essential component in the educational process and cannot be replaced. However, in a recent study by Alshanwani (2013), an evaluation of the SLC indicated that the teacher should discuss children's development and progress with their mothers as a practice related to SFCPs. She found that some essential elements, such as family contributions to their children's development and the parents' role in decision-making related to learning activities have disappeared.

SFCPs have traditionally been a sensitive and problematic issue in Saudi Arabia because kindergarten is not included in the educational ladder; certainly, many families give less attention to children's participation in kindergarten activities. Moreover, not all

families and school personnel are aware of the importance of engaging parents in their children's education (Ghahwaji, 2007).

SFCP Theoretical Perspective

Several theorists have described the importance of strong family–school ties in a child's development. In Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory, for example, he proposed that the "ecological environment is conceived topologically as a nested arrangement of structures, each contained within the next" (p. 514). Bronfenbrenner (1977) explained five sub-systems in his model. The first, the *microsystem,* is composed of the social relations between an individual and his or her immediate environmental setting. This environmental setting can include family, teachers, and peers. The interactions between individuals in this setting happens on the second sub-system, the *mesosystem*. Third, the *exosystem* sub-system refers to the interactions among social settings that the individual is not an active part of, such as formal and informal social networks, media, parents' work, and the larger neighborhood. The cultural context in which the individual lives is the fourth sub-system, called the *macrosystem*. Bronfenbrenner (1977) added that the *chronosystem* as the fifth sub-system, which is defined as the experiences in the individual's life span and their effects on the individual.

According to the ecological systems theory, the effect of SFCPs on children's education occurs on the *mesosystem* level. Bronfenbrenner (1990) explained that dynamic relationships that have open, trusted lines of communication between the child's family and school are essential for the child's development. However, Paquette and Ryan (2001) believed that if the relationship breaks down between the home and school, the child's

growth will be affected negatively. Because the Saudi Arabian culture requires the Ministry of Education (MOE) to hire female teachers in kindergartens, almost all partnership practices take place between kindergartens' female teachers and mothers. Attanucci (2004) discussed the mother–teacher conflict from a feminist theory point of view. The author stated that:

> feminism addresses the fullness of women's lives with the conflicts and contradictions inherent in subordinate social position and struggles against domination. Conflicts between women . . . left unexamined, undermine women at home, on the job and in communities. Feminism explicitly interrogates seemingly "natural" splits between private selves and public roles and between personal and professional values. (Attanucci, 2004, p. 65)

As an extension of Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological theory, Epstein (1992) built a useful model for studying SFCPs. Her theoretical perspective of the influences of SFCPs includes (1) *separate*, (2) *sequenced*, (3) *embedded,* and (4) *overlapping spheres of influence.* In the *separate influence*, families and schools work apart. Families think that their sole role is to raise their children, and the school's role is to educate them. In this model, the effectiveness of the separate efforts of a child's nurturing is emphasized. Each party does not contact the other unless it is out of necessity, such as an emergency. The *sequenced influence* perspective emphasizes the importance of the first years and their effects on a person's later life, based on theories by Piaget (1932/1965), Freud (1937), and Bloom (1964). In this second influence, the *sequenced influence,* the family takes on the development and learning responsibility during the very early years of their

children's lives as preparation for the school years. At this transitional point, the schools become responsible for the children's education. The third perspective in spheres of influence is the *embedded influence,* which refers to the cultural effects of the environments on their members (children).

Finally, in the *overlapping sphere of influence,* there are three different spheres (environments): the school, family, and community. These spheres can "be pushed together or be pulled apart by practices and interpersonal forces in each environment" (Epstein, 1992, p. 2). For example, the school and family spheres get closer if the teacher and a family member contact each other regularly. Epstein et al. (2009) indicated that in the theory of overlapping spheres, the main idea is to create a *family-like* environment in schools. The theory assumes "that children's learning, development, and success, broadly defined, are the main reasons for home and school partnerships" (Epstein, 1992, p. 3). The family-like environment is open and welcomes all family structure and meets each child's needs. Furthermore, *school-like* families can be created in a home environment that motivates students—children—to be creative and achieve better outcomes in school (Epstein et al., 2009).

Significance of The Study

Given the importance of SFCPs in children's education and development, investigating research related to this topic at King Fahad National Library (that documents all research about the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) and at other national libraries in Saudi Arabia. The investigation results showed that no studies have been conducted on early childhood levels (especially kindergarten) and SFCPs. Epstein et al.

(2009) stated that "despite the evidence of school, family, and community partnerships . . . this topic rarely receives adequate attention from school, district, and state education leaders" (p. 40).

Epstein (2010) mentioned that preservice teachers are prepared to teach subject content intensively for all grades, yet they are not ready to collaborate with families. Many teachers start their careers without primary skills related to developing partnerships with diverse families, community members, or outside agencies. Teachers' endorsement of the partnerships is one of the essential components of the partnerships' success; however, these beliefs cannot be investigated based solely the teachers' background and practices directly. That is because many factors influence teachers' practices. Investigating both teacher beliefs and implementation of SFCPs in the current study would portray the whole picture when further exploring these aspects. Therefore, the results from the current study would provide an insightful description of the current state of SFCPs in public kindergartens in Saudi Arabia and fill the gaps in the literature that have not addressed teachers' beliefs about and implementation of SFCPs. Additionally, results from the current research would help the MOE to build a program that supports partnerships among schools, families, and the community.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this sequential explanatory mixed methods (SEMM) study was to study kindergarten teachers' beliefs about and implementation of SFCPs in Riyadh City, Saudi Arabia. This study used Epstein's model of partnerships because it is a well-known theory and many studies have proven its effectiveness. Epstein's model includes the six

constructs of parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating within the community (Epstein et al., 2009). This study employed an initial quantitative strand to obtain teachers' beliefs and implementation of SFCPs by surveying a sample of 266 teachers from 126 public kindergartens in Riyadh City, Saudi Arabia. The follow-up qualitative explanatory strand included a purposeful sample of 12 teachers to discuss their experiences with SFCPs within three different social and economic areas (SEAs) in Riyadh City.

Research Questions

Quantitative Strand Questions and Null Hypotheses

The quantitative instrument question. Was the Arabic version of the survey, Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships*,* reliable and valid to be used in the Saudi Arabian context?

The teachers' beliefs about SFCPs question. How much did the public kindergarten teachers believe in the importance of SFCP practices (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community)?

The teachers' beliefs null hypothesis. $H0_1$: There were no statistically significant interaction effects between teachers' years of experience and different SEAs with regard to teachers' beliefs about the SFCP practices (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community).

The teachers' implementation of SFCPs question. How often did public kindergarten teachers implement SFCP practices (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community)?

Parenting Practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_2$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers' years of experience and their implementation of parenting practices.

Parenting Practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_3$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers working in different SEAs and their implementation of parenting practices.

Communication practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_4$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers' years of experience and their implementation of communication practices.

Communication practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_5$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers working in different SEAs and their implementation of communication practices.

Volunteering practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_6$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers' years of experience and their implementation of volunteering practices.

Volunteering practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_7$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers working in different SEAs and their implementation of volunteering practices.

Learning-at-home practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_8$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers' years of experience and their implementation of learning-at-home practices.

Learning-at-home practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_9$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers working in different SEAs and their implementation of learning-at-home practices.

Decision-making practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_{10}$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers' years of experience and their implementation of learning-at-home practices.

Decision-making practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_{11}$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers working in different SEAs and their implementation of decision-making practices.

Collaborating with community practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_{12}$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers' years of experience and their implementation of collaborating with community practices.

Collaborating with community practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_{13}$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers working in different SEAs and their implementation of collaborating with community practices.

Guiding Questions for Qualitative strand

Question one. What were teachers' experiences that shaped their beliefs about and affected the implementation of SFCPs?

Question two. How would the teachers improve the implementation of the partnerships?

Mixed Methods Question

What were kindergartens' teachers' beliefs about and implementation of SFCPs, what were the experiences that shaped their beliefs and affected the implementation, and how would they improve the partnerships?

Definitions of Terms

Kindergarten

A social and educational institution that seeks to build the child's personality in cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and other developmental aspects in order to accomplish balance and completed development in the three years (from 3 to 6 years old) prior to elementary school (MOE, 2002).

The Teacher

A female who holds an educational degree and has readiness and acceptance to work with children effectively to contribute to the children's development. Teachers are responsible for collaborating with kindergarten principals to engage families by holding individual and group meetings with children's mothers, sending letters to families about their children, and cooperating with mothers to gain the advantage of mothers' skills and abilities as educational resources to enrich the teaching process (MOE, 2002).

Teacher's Belief

The teacher's view and evaluation of something that affects and is expressed in her attitude, judgment, and practices in the educational context.

Teachers' Implementation of SFCPs

Includes the partnership practices in their teaching practices.

Family Members

Primarily parents, if parents are not available, *family members* term refers to any adults such as grandparents, older siblings, uncles or aunts, or a guardian whose name is listed in the child's file as the first person responsible for him or her.

The Community

"a group of people living in a particular place or region, where the people share common traits, values, knowledge, and activities embodied through such things as ethnicity, culture, language, religion, recreation, . . . and lifestyle" (Preston, 2013, p. 413).

School, Family, and Community Partnerships (SFCPs)

To engage parents or any other family members in the child's educational- and developmental-related process in and out of the schools. The SFCPs model (Epstein et al., 2009) includes the following six practices:

Parenting. The kindergarten helps parents to meet their roles at home and provides the best understanding for the child and his or her family.

Communicating. Adequate two-way communication occurs between the kindergarten and homes and vice versa about a child's development and school program.

Volunteering. The kindergarten offers a variety of volunteering opportunities suitable for parents.

Learning at home. This provides opportunities for parents to be involved in their children's homework and other school activities.

Decision-making. The kindergarten works with the family unit as a team to make decisions related to the school and community.

Collaborating with the community. The kindergarten suggests community resources and facilities to the family and offers services for the community.

Limitations

The findings of the study were limited in the following ways:

1. They included only public kindergarten teachers' beliefs about, implementation of, and experiences with SFCPs.
2. They were limited to the kindergarten teachers in the capital city of Saudi Arabia, Riyadh City.
3. Based on the 2016 MOE statistics, the total number of teachers in Riyadh City, Saudi Arabia, was 1,082 who worked at 126 public kindergartens. The total number of the study sample who responded to the survey was 266 teachers.
4. Two methods were used to gather the data. In fall 2016, an Arabic version of a survey developed by Epstein et al. (2009) called Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships was modified and used to collect the quantitative data. The other method was follow-up interviews in fall 2017 to collect the qualitative data. The interview questions were derived from the quantitative strand results.
5. In the analyses and discussion, the word *mother* refers to a child's primary contact caregiver. In limited situations, such as in the case of an emergency, the father or any adult who takes his place should be contacted.

Organization

This dissertation consisted of five chapters followed by appendices. The first chapter included the research introduction. The second one presented the literature review related to the research topic. The third chapter explained the methodological procedures that were used to obtain the results. The results were presented in the fourth chapter. The final chapter presented the summary, discussion, implementation, and future research recommendation derived from the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE RIVEW

The second chapter summarized previous research related to SFCPs and children's development and academic achievement, as well as presented some of the SFCPs models. The chapter reviewed studies about each one of the six practices of SFCPs, the impact of teachers' beliefs about the implementation of SFCPs, and the obstacles surrounding the implementation. The chapter also included a preview of early childhood educational history, the nature and constraints of SFCPs, and some current efforts to improve SFCPs in Saudi Arabia.

Partnerships and Children's Development and Achievement

Research regarding partnerships among schools, families, and communities is newly emergent. Epstein et al., (2009) claimed that 60 years ago, the research was segregated to be about school, family, or community. In the '80s, research about SFCPs began to reveal the importance of aggregation of the three parties on behalf of children's development (Rosenzweig, 2001). Since the 1960s, researchers have collected evidence asserting that the relationships are associated with children's development and academic and behavioral achievements (Domina, 2005; Egbert & Salsbury, 2009; Fehrmann, Keith, & Reimers, 1987; Karnes, 1969; Radin, 1972; Smit, Driessen, Sluiter, & Sleegers, 2007; St Clair, Jackson, & Zweiback, 2012).

Family involvement is defined as "a multidimensional concept, referring most generally to a partnership between school actors and parents [or other family members] that promotes the social, emotional, and academic growth of children" (Marschall, Shah, & Donato, 2012, p. 132). However, Epstein (1992) believed that "parent involvement or home-school relations" (p. 1) are not adequate to represent the sharing of responsibilities toward children's learning and development between home and school. According to Epstein (1992), "family partnerships is a better term" because it "implies a formal alliance and contractual agreement to work toward shared goals and to share the profits or benefits of mutual investments" (p. 1).

Regarding social development, studies' findings have shown that SFCPs influence children's social relationships. McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, and Sekino (2004) conducted research to assess the role of parental involvement in children and kindergartners' social development and academic performance. The researchers used two measurements; the first was called the Parent Involvement in Children's Education Scale, which was built upon Epstein's (1987) model of SFCPs as well as measurements developed by teachers and parents from the Head Start program. The second measurement was the Penn Interactive Peer Play Scale, which was used to evaluate the children's play interactions. The findings revealed that among 307 kindergarteners, children of parents who communicated with the schools regularly and followed up on their children's learning at home had positive social relationships with their peers.

A similar result was discovered by Fantuzzo, McWayne, Perry, and Childs (2004). The study sample consisted of 144 urban area kindergartners who were chosen to discover the impact of family involvement in their children's school and children's social

behavior and academic performance. The researchers used the Family Involvement Questionnaire, Preschool Learning Behaviors Scale, and Conners' Teacher Rating Scale-28. The findings showed that there were positive correlations between family involvement and children's academic learning, especially literacy performance. Additionally, for academic achievements, Sheldon, Epstein, and Galindo (2010) explored the link between SFCPs and high mathematical achievements on the standardized tests across grades. They found that high standardized test results were linked to family and community involvement.

Comparable studies concluded that children of all ages who experienced family involvement tended to participate more and have more positive attitudes toward schools as valuable institutions than those whose families did not engage in their schools. St Clair and Jackson (2006) divided kindergartners into two groups: The treatment group included 14 students whose families participated in a training program for family involvement, and the control group included 15 students whose family members did not participate in the program. The researchers followed up on the students' achievement in literacy learning and found that the first group of children achieved better than the other group on literacy tests.

Six years later, St Clair, Jackson, and Zweiback (2012) followed up on their previous research and investigated the effects of parental engagement in academic practices related to literacy learning in the fifth and sixth grades. To pursue this goal, the researchers compared children whose parents did not participate in their kindergarten education to a treatment group. The results showed that the children in the treatment group scored higher on reading assessments than those in the control group in all grades,

from the first through the sixth. The study suggested that involving families in their children's learning inspires lifelong literacy in the children's lives.

Regarding family involvement effects on preschoolers, Sénéchal et al. (2006) found in their longitudinal study that significant educational achievement in fourth grade reading and writing skills was linked to parents' involvement in the child's kindergarten activities. After reviewing 95 sets of research about family involvement during preschool and kindergarten, Van Voorhis, Maier, Epstein, and Lloyd (2013) found a high correlation between family involvement in early years and children's literacy, as well as mathematics achievement and emotional development. Building their study upon both Bronfenbrenner's (1977) and Epstein's (1992) theories, Galindo and Sheldon (2012) examined 16,425 kindergartners' academic achievement in math and reading at 864 schools. The findings showed that family involvement was a predictor of children's higher achievement in both subjects.

Researchers found that the benefits of strong ties between schools and families were not limited to children, but also benefited families. Many families are eager to be involved and help their children to succeed in school; however, Epstein (1992) asserted that many of them do not know how to be involved. For example, Moosa, Karabenick, and Adams (2001) found that Arab parents consider education important, but they need guidance from schools in order to help their children at home. Involving family members helps them to increase their academic skills (Ladky & Peterson, 2008; Paratore, 2005), by which they can teach and educate their children. They also become more confident in parenting their children and have positive expectations of their children (Henderson & Berla, 1994).

SFCPs Models

Scholars have categorized SFCPs into many categories. In terms of parenting, Greenwood and Hickman (1991) listed six roles of parents: As audience, volunteers, paraprofessionals, teachers of their own children, learners, and decision makers. Jabar (2010) also added another category: parents as partners to teachers and other parents. Other researchers developed a model to understand parents' involvement and motivational sources for involvement with schools. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler in 1995 and 1997 proposed that the motivations of parents to become involved in their children's education consisted of five constructed levels. The first level includes the reasons behind parents' involvement and their views on this involvement; the second one is about principles that shape parents' style of involvement; the third one addresses the influences of parents' school involvement on children's achievement at school, including modeling and motivation; the fourth level focuses on the parents' utilization of developmentally appropriate practices with their children's education; and the fifth level specifies children's skills and knowledge gained due to parental involvement (Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005).

As mentioned earlier in chapter one of this research, Epstein et al. (2009) built a model upon the theory of the overlapping spheres of influence and believed that this model gives the practitioners all aspects needed for connecting schools not only with families but also with the community. The six practices of SFCPs are published in a handbook as guidance for schools, along with a one-year action plan. The six main practices of involvement are as follows: parenting, communicating, volunteering,

learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community (Epstein et al., 2009).

According to Epstein et al. (2009), parenting means that the school helps parents to meet their roles at home and best understand the child and his or her family; communicating means adequate two-way communication between the school and home regarding children's development and school programs; volunteering means the school offers a variety of volunteering opportunities suitable for parents; learning at home provides opportunities for parents to be involved in their children's homework and other school activities; decision-making means the school works with the family as a team to make decisions related to the school and community; and collaborating with the community means the school suggests community resources and facilities to the family and offers services for the community (pp. 16–17).

SFCP Practices

Further studies have supported the fact that the six practices—parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with community—improve children's academic achievements and reduce behavioral problems. Epstein and Dauber (1991) proved the effectiveness of Epstein's five practices of involvement (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, and decision-making) in different academic subject achievements. Information was gathered from 177 elementary and middle school teachers who had experiences in a variety of classroom structures, from self-contained to departmentalized. The findings showed that all five practices were effective with differences in their prevalence starting from

communication, which was the most effective and commonly used, to volunteering, which was the lowest.

Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, and Brissie (1987) found that parent conferences, which are in the communication practice (the second type of Epstein et al.'s SFCPs), account for 52% of the overall impact of involvement. Parent volunteers accounted for 27%, followed by tutoring at home at 24%. However, in their longitudinal study for predicting third graders' academic achievement due to their parents' involvement in their education from kindergarten to third grade, Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, and Fendrich (1999) found that teachers scored parent-child home-based activities higher as a predictor of children's success than parent-child school-based activities and parent-teacher conferences. Simon (2001) used SFCP practices as variables to predict students' performance. In the study, 11,000 parents and 1,000 principals were surveyed and the results showed that parenting, volunteering, and learning at home hold the most positive impact on students' academic performance.

Jordon, Obeidat, and Al-Hassan (2009) found that the 28 teachers who received the Queen Rania Award for Excellence in Education created school-parent-community partnerships and implemented five categories of involvement, which included the following: (a) communicating with parents, (b) involving parents in the learning process, (c) involving the community in the school, (d) pursuing volunteer projects, and (e) involving students in the community.

With regard to SES, Epstein and Sheldon (2002) conducted a longitudinal study of students from elementary through high school from different SESs. The study investigated the effect of the six types of SFCPs on the students' behaviors. Findings

revealed that implementation of these SFCPs helped to reduce the need for disciplinary actions in schools based on behavior problems. Parenting and volunteering were the most effective types in improving students' behaviors. In Chicago public elementary schools, 220 low SES parents strongly engaged in parenting and learning but rarely participated in decision-making activities. Learning at home practice was more effective than the other four practices. Parents suggested schools send home clear strategies on how to parent and help their children do homework. They also hoped to take advantage of the community resources and were eager to know more about them, especially those that helped them parent their children (Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman, 2007).

Parenting Practices

Traditionally, much literature has focused on relating parenting in family/school relationships to children's success at school. Even though this is the most noticeable role, it should not be the only one (Ferguson, Ramos, Rudo, & Wood, 2008). That is, a parent-child relationship is deeper than participating at school events or monitoring children while doing homework. This deep relationship, eventually, reaps its results and leads to life success, including academic performance. Rosenzweig (2001) reviewed 34 studies in a meta-analysis and classified parenting into three types. Two of them, "academic-oriented parenting practices, and school-participation parenting practices," (p. 4) are directed to the children's success at school. The third classification included 13 fundamental parenting practices:

> (1) child-rearing practices (which involve communication about the child's problems and internalization of social values); (2) autonomy support; (3) emotional support; (4) warmth; (5) nurturing; (6) structure; (7) discipline; (8)

control; (9) monitoring home and out-of-school activities; (10) parental engagement; (11) time spent with child; (12) calm discussion; and (13) parenting style. (p. 4)

Not all parents are aware of these practices or of how to create a healthy environment. Rosenzweig (2001) illustrated that those above practices were highly linked to children's social and school success. They were the base of promoting healthy development, which is essential in a child's future success. Epstein et al. (2009) listed some practices that can be used to promote a healthy home environment, such as conducting workshops on different topics, sending auto phone messages (voice or text) that include tips, creating support programs for families in need, visiting homes to assess the environment, and customizing support if needed. Topics that may be valuable for families include health, child rearing, safety, nutrition, employment, and educational opportunities (Epstein et al., 2009; Ingram et al., 2007).

Communication Practices

Communicating with students' families is the most noticeable practice. Almost all schools require families to provide their contact information at least for emergency situations. Crosnoe (2009) published a study as part of the National Educational Longitudinal Study that consisted of 17,899 students. The study focused on the effects of families' communication with the school on children's math and science achievement from middle school through high school. The results revealed that better school achievements in both math and science were linked to strong communication between middle/high schools and the family.

Families and teachers need to be informed of each other's needs and objectives toward pupils' educations. If not, teachers will lack information related to families' efforts at home that are relevant to their children's education and to what their future ambitions are for their children. On the other hand, families do not have knowledge of teachers' efforts or teaching plans to achieve educational goals. They also lack information about involvement opportunities. Finally, the children themselves lack knowledge of their family's or teacher's goals. Communication among these three parties can fill in the blanks and unite the effort when each party understands the other's goals and works together to achieve these goals (Epstein & Sanders, 2000).

Hoover-Dempsey and Walker (2002) examined family–school communication studies to discover the advantage students, family, and teachers gain from this communication. From family–school communication, children's behaviors and learning have improved. The families, also, could trust the school and considered it a high-quality institution for their children's education. When families communicate with their children's teachers, the latter are able to achieve their teaching goals effectively: Students' higher academic achievement.

However, Epstein et al. (2009) emphasized that the communication should be mutual between school and home and between home and school. Yet, time restrictions, for example, may hinder effective communication between both parties (Ingram et al., 2007). That is, schools and families can use a variety of communication methods, such as "memos, [individual and group] conferences, notices, report cards, newsletters, phone calls, computerized messages, the internet, [and] open houses" (Epstein et al., 2009, p. 198). In addition to time, many challenges associated with communication, including job

commitments, feeling unwelcome based on cultural differences, and families' negative perceptions toward school communication, may impede the success of communication (Epstein et al., 2009; Graham-Clay, 2005; Olmstead, 2012).

Physical participation is not required, as technology partially solves this issue; the challenge here is not all parents have Internet connections or can afford smart devices, for many reasons (Graham-Clay, 2005). Olmstead (2012), in a mixed methods study, investigated teachers' and parents' attitudes about school-home technological communication and found that it is more effective than traditional communication for both teachers' and parents' points of view, though the study also showed that a lack of network access was one of the obstacles to communication. The parents in the study indicated that classroom websites or email was more convenient for communicating updates regarding their children's educational or school-based activities.

On the other hand, with critical situations, parents prefer in-person meetings with the teacher (Olmstead, 2012). The technology revolution has expanded opportunities for school-home communication via emails or phone calls as a way to communicate, share, or update information and also through social networks like Facebook and Instagram, applications like iMessage, or video calling like Skype.

Volunteering Practices

Epstein et al. (2009) clarified that parents' volunteering practice can be in or for the school. Volunteering practice in a school means to work, voluntarily, inside the school building with teachers, school personnel, or other parents. School volunteering means any work that is done outside the school building but for the school; for example, a parent room coordinator contacts parents from any location to arrange classroom

events. Some opportunities for volunteering are a "class parent telephone tree, . . . parent room or family center for volunteer work, . . . parent patrols" (Epstein et al., 2009, p. 16).

Burke (2001) highlighted that teachers must be trained to plan and recruit parents for volunteering programs. Teachers are supposed to train volunteers and give them clear rules for their responsibilities and limits. Some volunteers' efforts have opposite consequences than what is intended (e.g., teaching disturbances). In this case, the teacher is required to redirect the volunteer's efforts to something else. Porter, DeCusati, and Johnson (2004) focused on the benefits of volunteering for kindergartners' emergent literacy. The study involved 56 kindergartners and divided them into two groups. One group was the treatment group, and their parents volunteered in an emergent literacy program for five months. The findings showed that the students were excited to have their parents in the school, and their literacy skills grew compared to the control group. The volunteer parents, also, gained benefits as they saw that their children's reading skills improved.

Regardless of the important impact volunteering has on students' achievement and behavior, findings showed that the practice of volunteering was low compared to other parents' participation percentages in several events at schools (Child Trends, 2013). One reason is that because volunteering is voluntary, families are less interested in contributing. Haynes, Emmons, Gebreyesus, and Ben-Avie (1996) added another explanation: Volunteers' weak turnout at schools is due to the fact that not all parents can afford transportation from and to schools and have no time for volunteering among other life responsibilities.

In Saudi Arabia, Al-Amer (2006) conducted a study about volunteer work among young Saudi people. The sample consisted of Saudi school principals and different university and college students. The survey results showed that even though Islamic teaching emphasizes voluntary services (charity), the culture of volunteering among young citizens is weak. The researcher investigated the barriers to volunteerism in Saudi Arabia and identified possible reasons: that young people are busy looking after their family responsibilities; media programs show a lack of importance in volunteering; there is insufficient awareness among members of the community about the importance of volunteering; and there is a lack of clear roles for a volunteer.

Learning at Home Practices

Schools help families adjust to an effective home learning environment. Epstein et al. (2009) in the SFCP model illustrated that in this practice, schools provide families information related to homework and home-based activities and to how to boost children's skills and engage in activities with their children. Technology can be involved, and school websites are a great place to reach families and publish homework and other home-based activities (Piper, 2012). Because family–school partnership success has traditionally been assessed by students' achievement (Ferguson et al., 2008), learning at home practice is one of the practices most implemented by families (Herrell, 2011).

Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2001) investigated the reasons behind parental involvement in their children's homework and the consequences. Research revealed that the parents chose to become involved according to their perception that the more they helped the better their children would do in school. The researchers collected a variety of strategies parents used for learning at home, such as providing the physical and emotional

foundation and support for their children to do homework, illustrating, reviewing, engaging in specific tasks, and motivating. However, Wilder (2014), in a meta-analysis, mentioned that involving parents in learning at home is very effective regardless of its form; yet, when it is in the form of homework help, the effect comes at the lowest levels. The researcher concluded that helping children in completing homework had negative consequences and decreased students' coursework achievement.

Puglisi, Hulme, Hamilton, and Snowling (2017) conducted a study about young children's linguistic development and the literacy activities and interaction at home. The researchers included 251 preschoolers and found that organized literacy activities were linked to improved linguistic learning. They also emphasized the significant role of indirect activities in literacy learning. Moreover, Bierman, Heinrichs, Welsh, Nix, and Gest (2017) revealed more advantages for learning at home. For low-income families' children, learning at home promoted their academic performance and social-emotional development. The researchers conducted two studies over three years to follow up a program that depended on home learning. The study sample of 556 second-grade students showed significant improvement in their social life at school in their interactions with classmates, better scholastic performance, and relationships with teachers.

Decision-Making Practices

Schools should allow families a voice in school decisions and give their ideas value since the parents are their children's first teachers. Epstein et al. (2009) described decision-making as schools' making decisions with families and/or with families' representatives. Some decision- making activities include "school improvement teams or school councils, committees, the PTA [parent-teacher association]/PTO [parent-teacher

organization] or other parent organizations . . . and advisory committees" (Epstein et al., 2009, p. 201).

The National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) first principle in the Engaging Diverse Families project is that the "programs invite families to participate in decision making and goal setting for their child" (NAEYC, 2017, para 1). Anderson and Minke (2007) examined elementary school parents' perceptions of making decisions relevant to their children's schools. Their findings showed that the main reason behind parents' decision to be involved was the teachers' invitation, meaning the teachers influenced parents to be educational partners with the teacher in the school. Arguea and Conroy (2006) investigated the influence of parents' engagement with teachers as groups in fifth graders' math performance. The research covered PTA, PTO, and other groups involving parents and teachers. Statistical analyses showed that students of parents who engaged with the teachers in groups performed better in math.

Even though decision-making practice holds benefits for students' scholastic performance (Noguera, 2001), the research to assess the performance of this practice is not as prolific as for learning at home practice (Detroit Community-Academic Urban Research Center, 2014). Simon (2001) found that about one third of the study sample, 330 public school principals, indicated they have not provided PTA or PTO opportunities to engage parents in making decisions, which affected their students' academic performance and families' attitudes toward the schools.

Collaborating With The Community Practices

This practice is mutual where the school serves as a coordinator to connect families to community resources and offers services to the community. The four

parties—the student, the family, the school, and the community—gain benefits from these partnerships (Epstein et al., 2009). Bouillion and Gomez (2001) examined the relationships between community resources and students' science, mathematics, and literacy learning and achievement. The researchers used some real-world global problems, like pollution in the river, to teach students. The results showed that using real problems to study concepts from the local community was effective and enhanced science skills and scientific research skills like inquiry, hypotheses testing, and result validation.

Ice, Thapa, and Cohen (2015, p. 17) surveyed 127 community members with different roles such as "public safety, parent, civic/leisure activities, philanthropic organization, youth leader, higher education, school board, business, elected official, health/mental health, arts, media/entertainment, public library/agencies, faith based, and social services." The research findings showed that the majority of the samples were eager to collaborate with schools on the students' behalf.

However, this relationship varies from community to community. Eccles and Harold (1993, p. 571) explained that communities' characteristics such as "cohesion, social disorganization, social networking, . . . [and] resources and opportunities" influence the degree of family, school, and community partnerships. For example, in poor communities this partnership may be weak or almost nonexistent. The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) (2000) posited that community agencies and members will not get into schools without invitation. Schools are supposed to identify community characteristics and members, then plan in detail how to reach and work with each other to fill the gap between families, schools, and the community.

Sanders (2001) concentrated on his quantitative nationwide research on community roles in the activation SFCP model. The study investigated information from more than 400 American schools. The findings showed that many community partners support the other five practices: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, and decision-making. Those partners are "large and small businesses, national service organizations, health facilities, and individuals in the community. Some activities focused on students; others focused on schools and students' families and communities" (p. 32). Inadequate time and absence of trained management were reported as obstacles to community practice. The school needed enough time to locate and communicate with community resources, which requires professional leadership.

In Saudi Arabia, Alshabrami (2005) investigated the role of male elementary school principals in building relationships between the school and the local community. The researcher surveyed 105 principals and 84 educational supervisors. Statistical analysis showed that schools highly benefited from the local community; however, their services provided to the community were weak.

Teachers' Beliefs About SFCPs

To enhance the quality of involvement, studies show that teachers are significant figures who influence families' willingness to engage in their children's education. The theory of overlapping SFCP spheres of influence on children's development and learning illustrates that the three spheres account partially for teachers' perspectives and practices to be closer to each other or further apart from each other (Epstein et al., 2009). At school, teachers "are parents' primary contacts . . . and thus practices in the classroom are

potential influences on parent involvement" (Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, & Apostoleris, 1997, p. 539). Tichenor (1998, p. 248) stated, "The teacher's role is direct and central to the success of parent involvement programs." Dauber and Epstein (1993) highlighted the direct contribution of teachers' role in family involvement because they work as guides and directors who encourage families to be involved in the educational process.

Educators claimed that teachers' diverse beliefs about the teaching process should be taken into consideration before making any efforts to alter their practices (Goh, Zhang, Ng, & Koh, 2005; Harwood, Hansen, & Lotter, 2006). Beliefs are defined as "any simple proposition, conscious or unconscious, inferred from what a person says or does"; beliefs are of considerable importance in individual attitudes such as the way of interacting and responding (Rokeach, 1968, p. 113). Certainly, teachers' beliefs are important factors that affect their practices for engaging families and community in the educational process (Baum & McMurray-Schwarz, 2004; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). Families' cues for involvement are received from teachers' practices and attitudes (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Grolnick et al., 1997; Jones, White, Aeby, & Benson, 1997). Holding positive views toward SFCPs that are reflected in teachers' practices makes teachers more trustworthy, which leads families to have a higher positive perception toward getting involved (Knopf & Swick, 2007).

Hoover-Dempsey et al. (1987) revealed that teachers' perceptions toward SFCPs accounted for 41% of partnership quality with families. In another example, Epstein and Dauber (1991) found that parents tended to rank teachers higher when they engaged with them in their children's education, leading the teachers to be more confident about themselves and their teaching. Teachers' beliefs toward the importance of the

implementation of SFCPs are formed from many sources such as their experiences. Evidentially, Wright (2009) examined teachers' and parents' perspectives toward Epstein's model of SFCPs. The findings showed that both parents and teachers rated Epstein's model of six types of SFCPs between effective and highly effective, and there were statistically significant differences among teachers in terms of their years of experience and among parents from different SESs. In the study, teachers who taught 20 years and more viewed volunteer practices as more effective than did teachers with fewer than 20 years of experience. Also, in the study, parents of low SES ranked the effectiveness of the practices higher than those of high SES.

Teachers' knowledge about involvement is one factor influencing their beliefs and practices. For example, Baker, Kessler-Sklar, Piotrowski, and Parker (1999) found from kindergarten teachers' and parents' reports that weak ties between school and family are linked to a lack of knowledge about SFCPs. Also, Tichenor (1998) emphasized that working with families must be a major topic in preservice teachers' programs in order to give student teachers the needed knowledge about the significance of SFCPs. Dellard (2013) suggested that besides developing knowledge about the benefits of family involvement, it is important for preservice teachers to build meaningful knowledge about a variety of ways to involve families.

Consequently, Chavkin (2005) focused on the educational background of teachers as a significant component that affects their beliefs about and implementation of the partnership. Recently, preservice teachers' programs added curriculum relevant to family-teacher partnerships; however, these curricula are limited and lack important topics such as families' training and school–community relationships. Thus, Epstein and

Sanders (2006) surveyed school principals and found that they preferred to hire teachers who were knowledgeable and skilled in terms of SFCPs.

In-service teachers' SFCP skills can be improved as well. Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones, and Reed (2002) conducted empirical research involving 52 teachers from elementary and middle schools. The researchers divided the sample into control and treatment groups. The treatment group attended a program related to family involvement. Findings from the study showed that the program enhanced teachers' work effectiveness toward working with or creating barriers with students' families as having an initial impact on children's learning.

SFCPs Constraints

Much literature has been developed out of the broadly-based interest in investigating obstacles that impede teachers from successfully implementing SFCPs. The lack of support from administrative levels has weakened families' involvement in the schools (Epstein, 1987). Hourani, Stringer, and Baker (2012), in their qualitative case study in the United Arab Emirates about barriers to family–school relationships, found that some of the barriers come from a lack of higher administration support.

Family–school partnerships are sometimes hard to nurture in a non-family-friendly school environment. Epstein and Dauber (1991) illustrated that teachers in their study found family volunteering in their children's education rare and difficult to implement. Parents in the study mentioned that they needed more instruction from schools in terms of how to be volunteers, and teachers' views about their roles sometimes prevented them from welcoming families into the educational process. Souto-Manning

and Swick (2006) believed that specific school cultures influenced teachers' beliefs about family involvement: "If the 'norms' of the school signal to parents that their roles are limited and do not involve leadership then teachers receive distorted messages about how to approach and develop meaningful parent and family involvement" (p. 187).

Differing characteristics among families are an important variable that may hinder this partnership. Eccles and Harold (1993) explained that sending invitations and reports to families was essential in a school's efforts to encourage them to participate in school activities. Each family has different characteristics, such as beliefs, structure, and expectations, and therefore schools deal with each according to its characteristics. For example, high SES families prefer to use community resources to enhance their children's school performance because they live in well-developed communities.

The Saudi Arabian Context

A Brief Overview of the Saudi Arabian History

The kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a desert country located in southwestern Asia. The country was unified by King Abdul-Aziz bin Saud (may Allah have mercy on him) in 1932. It is the largest country in the Middle East region and shares borders with Iraq and Jordan to the north and Kuwait to the northeast. To the east are Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, the Arab Gulf, and Bahrain (an island in the Arab Gulf). The Red Sea delineates the western border, and Yemen the southern border. Saudi Arabia shares its southeastern border with Oman. The total population in 2016, according to the Saudi Arabian general authority of statistics, was 31,742,308 persons (General Authority of Statistics, 2016). The country is divided into 13 administrative regions and five

educational administrative regions: north, south, west, east, and middle. The capital city is Riyadh, where the current research was conducted, and which is located in the Riyadh City administrative region under the middle educational administrative region. The main language in Saudi Arabia is Arabic, and the religion is Islam.

The religion of Islam goes back more than 1430 years, late in the sixth century. The first word that Prophet Mohammed was told by divine revelation was *Eqraa* (The Holy Qur'an, Surat al-Alaq 30.1), an Arabic word meaning *read*. After that, the illiterate Prophet Mohammed sought to spread education. For example, in *hadith* (phrases and words describing the Prophet Mohammed's sayings, habits, or actions), Anas bin Malik narrated that the Prophet Mohammed said, "seeking knowledge is a duty upon every Muslim" (Sunan Ibn Majah, Hadith 224). Hence, *Kutak* (meaning *writers*) is considered the first Islamic school for literacy teaching. Muslims have continued to spread knowledge everywhere, as they believe that *knowledge charity is to publish it*, and Muslims believe in the positive consequences of this charity, as long as Allah's sentence upon those who conceal beneficial knowledge.

Education in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is a Muslim country that follows the Islamic teachings, and education has been one of the country's main objectives since its unification. Many schools have opened since 1932 with different systems. The current educational system pursues the global slogan "education for all," meaning that public education is provided for free to all citizens and residents and includes the following stages: six years of elementary school, from first grade to sixth; three years of middle school; and three years of secondary school. Kindergarten is separate and is included in preschool education,

which includes three stages: the first for three-year-old children, the second for four year-old-children, and the last for five-year-old children.

Kindergarten education in Saudi Arabia has in more recent history been compared to the beginning of formal education in the country. The first kindergarten launched by the private sector was in 1966, while the first formal school started in 1925 (Hakim, 2012). Education in Saudi Arabia, including the kindergarten level, follows higher goals formed in 1970. The Higher Committee of Educational Policy, which was created by a royal decree to set high educational goals for all educational levels in Saudi Arabia through the Educational Policy Document, formed these goals for early childhood to higher education for both public and private institutions, including special needs educational goals. The chairman of the committee was King Fahad bin Abdulaziz, and it also included ministers such as the Educational Minister. The 236 goals were divided into nine chapters. The third chapter has nine early childhood level goals, from number 63 to 71. They cover all aspects of children's development, such as cognitive, social, emotional, and language development. The nine goals are:

1. Preserve the instincts of the child and foster his moral, mental, and physical development in a family-like natural environment in accordance with the requirements of Islam.
2. Shape the child's religious beliefs based on unification of the Creator, corresponding to the instinct.
3. Guide the child to ethical behavior and facilitate the absorption of Islamic virtues in the presence of a good, beloved role model.

4. Familiarize the child with the school environment, prepare him for school life, and move the child gently from self-centered to a social life shared with his classmates.
5. Provide the child with a fundamental knowledge, basic language, and information appropriate to his age.
6. Train the child in motor skills and teach him positive habits and enhance his senses for good use.
7. Encourage the child's innovative activity, commitment to his aesthetic taste, and give his vitality the opportunity to thrive.
8. Fulfil the childhood needs for happiness without spoiling or intensity.
9. Be aware to protect the child from dangers, to treat signs of misbehavers, and to do good confrontation of childhood's problems. (Supreme Commission for Education Policy, 1970)

SFCPs in Saudi Kindergartens

In 1988, the MOE issued the SLC, which is composed of a guide for the teacher, and the eight educational units, namely *The Water, The Sand*, *The Nutrition*, *The Hands*, *My Country*, *My Friends*, *My Kindergarten*, and *My Safety and Health*. In the fifth chapter of the teacher's guide, there is a section called "Preparation of the New Academic Year," where the authors discussed the value of SFCPs. They mentioned that there is no success for any educational plan without assuring the family's collaboration in the plan. They also suggested that the partnership between school and the family starts before the academic year.

The first section of the fifth chapter, titled "Relationships With Families," discussed different types of mothers' involvement in detail and provided examples. For example, before the first day of school, the teacher meets the mother and her child personally to talk in a friendly atmosphere about the school and classroom policies, to encourage the child to love school, and to ensure a smooth transition to school. The SLC also provided some activities for mothers to participate in during the academic year, such as going with a child's class on a field trip and holding mother–teacher conferences, along with examples of questions the teacher might ask the mothers (MOE, 2014).

In Saudi Arabia, all kindergartens' personnel and supervisor positions are held by females. According to Saudi culture, which is retained from Islam, women are required to wear modest dresses when men are present. However, to make the environment more comfortable and convenient for female teachers, because it is not easy to wear a long *hijab* (an Arabic word meaning a *cloak* or *vail*) for hours, men do not have access to schools. For this reason, schools rely primarily on mothers when sending invitations, making contact, and engaging in cooperation. Fathers' contact information is listed in children's files and is used only in cases of emergency.

Both public and private early childhood institutions in Saudi Arabia associate with and follow the rules of the MOE. The MOE (2002) issued a regulation called the *Regulation of Interior Work in the Early Childhood Institutions*, which included six chapters that discuss the mechanisms of work. The chapters are Definition of the Kindergarten and Its Goals, Conditions of Admission in Kindergartens, Kindergarten Opining Hours and Attendance and Absence Policies, Recruiting Employees and Their Responsibilities, Enrollment, and General Rules. The regulation clarified that the

educational supervisor must supervise both technicians and administrative workers, which means she is supposed to evaluate teachers' and other school personnel's work and outcomes during and at the end of the year. Collaborating with parents was mentioned in Chapter 4 as one of teachers' responsibilities.

The regulation explained kindergarten principals' and teachers' roles regarding collaborating with children's families. The teacher meets with family before the child's enrollment at the school, sends letters to the family to introduce the new units, sends families any needed letters about their children, conducts group meetings with the mothers to discuss specific topics, cooperates with the mothers as a teaching resource, and benefits from the mothers' experience. Also, in Chapter 6, the 15th article stated that the kindergarten administration must collaborate with children's mothers and strengthen the relationship with families through different means of communication.

SFCPs Barriers in Saudi Arabia

Some previous research has focused partially on obstacles to the implementation of SFCPs related to the curriculum, teachers' lack of skills or of autonomy to make decisions, or lack of community awareness. With regard to the curriculum, Alshanwani (2013) conducted a study aimed at critiquing SLC according to criteria specified by the researcher. The family–school partnerships found that children's families were included in the teachers' guideline only; while the other educational units lacked any family partnerships. However, I reviewed the curriculum and found a few mentions of school–community partnerships. For example, in the *Friendship* unit, the teacher invites two doctors in to show that friendship can be built from work life. Also, the only activity aimed at the community is in the *My Country* unit. The activity consisted of fundraising

through selling products children create and then giving the money to charities or organizations that help people in need.

In 2008, Alsultan examined the reality of the collaboration between the local community and elementary, middle, and secondary schools in Riyadh City, Saudi Arabia. A random sampling of 842 principals showed that the relationships were weak. The researcher discovered many factors that impeded this collaboration, including restrictions imposed by the MOE. The collaboration activities were limited to inviting parents to school to discuss their children's academic achievement, and the schools never provided services for the community.

At the early childhood level, Alotabi and Alswelem (2002) aimed to evaluate early childhood goals in Saudi Arabia that were assigned by The Higher Committee of Educational Policy (1970). The researchers surveyed teachers from public and private schools and found that there were many barriers to the implementation of these goals. One was that kindergarten is still considered a preschool stage, meaning it is not included as an educational ladder. The teachers in Alotabi and Alswelem's (2002) study asserted that they suffered because of the community's low perception of kindergarten teachers' job. The teachers added that, regarding family–school collaboration, families were uncooperative in terms of home-based learning and undervalued the teachers' work and the role of kindergarten in children's lives.

Albaiz's (2009) study investigated the achievement of the same nine kindergarten goals. Public kindergarten principals in Riyadh City, Saudi Arabia, showed that the weaker parents' beliefs toward the importance of early childhood education institutions affected the achievement of these goals, highlighting the need to raise parents' awareness

about the importance of family involvement. The teachers in Alghamdi's (2016) study admitted that family involvement at the kindergarten level is weak due to either families' personal choices or organizational restrictions imposed by higher authorities. The researcher explained that kindergarten education in Saudi Arabia is fully managed by females and all of the working staff are females. The Saudi culture and norms limit opposite gender encounters, meaning that teachers, who are females, are supposed to contact mothers first, which decreases partnership opportunities. According to Hakim (2012), kindergarten education faces many challenges that impede its success. The author listed the weak relationships between children's families and schools as the top challenge that weakens kindergarten performance. The family usually concentrates on many aspects of life, but not on their young children, which impacts the children's kindergarten performance and consequentially, their development.

The community role in the family–school partnership has not reached its potential. Khalifa (2012) suggested a project for children's after-school programs. Her recommendation was based on the lack of these kinds of programs in Saudi Arabia, suggesting that if they are available they are limited to a few activities. Therefore, the proposed program would provide a variety of after-school activities for young children led by school teachers.

Moving Forward Toward Reformation Strategies

Many educational reformations have been made in recent years in Saudi Arabia. For example, as part of the King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz's Public Education Development Project, in 2015 the Preschool Development Program created the Saudi Early Learning Standards (SELS) through collaborating with the NAEYC. Some of the

assertions that were used to build the SELS include, but are not limited to, the following: (1) In order to develop educational goals and plans, it is important to be aware of each child's cultural context and encourage positive relationships with families, and (2) children learn better when their families are partners in the educational process (Tatweer, 2015). Another MOE project provides neighborhood clubs for school-age children, their families, and community members. These clubs are held in school buildings and provide many activities and enrichment classes, such as physical education and sports, arts, and reading (Tatweer, 2015).

In 2016 the MOE published *The Organizational Guide for Kindergartens and Nurseries*. One of the subsections describes the work of the SFCP committee. The committee's goal is to encourage kindergarten personnel to collaborate with families and the community. The committee members are the school principals, school vice principal, two teachers, three students' mothers, and a member of the private sector. Some of the committee roles are to plan, investigate, and improve work fields with families and the community. Another goal is to train teachers, children, and their families to contribute through volunteer work (MOE, 2016).

Recently, the Saudi Arabian vision for 2030 discussed, as part of the national transformation program, the subprogram IRTIQAA (an Arabic form which means *enhancement*). IRTIQAA's goal is to enhance school, family, and community partnerships. It assigns a four-year goal that by 2020, 80% of families will be involved in partnerships. It will also assess the progress and effectiveness of the partnerships and special training for the teachers to perform successfully. Furthermore, IRTIQAA aims to

work with different community resources to enhance educational programs (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016).

In the same year, 2016, the MOE launched the first annual conference for school, family, and community partnerships. The presenters discussed the electronic platform of SFCPs Ayn, meaning *an eye*. Using the platform, SFCP supervisors will continue training to enhance their work. Many research papers were presented during the conference, and Alshamrani (2016) in his presentation concluded that there should not be one type of partnership because 33% of the 21,408 parents who participated in a nationwide study about learning and family roles do not have time to engage in their children's education. Alothman (2016) presented that preservice special education teachers emphasized the importance of family school partnerships.

Summary

This literature review presented the academic benefits of SFCPs gained by students of all ages in different content areas (Sheldon et al., 2010; St Clair & Jackson, 2006) or for behavior and development (McWayne et al., 2004). The research also suggested that these advantages are long-lasting (years) and that students' performance paid dividends in the future (St Clair et al., 2012; Sénéchal et al., 2006). Researchers encouraged further investigation of the effects of such partnerships on early childhood, and to document that stronger family–school relationships are considered predictors of future school success (Sénéchal et al., 2006; Van Voorhis et al, 2013). Studies showed that the positive impacts go beyond students to reach their families. Partnerships gave

family members more confidence and knowledge of how to parent, raise, and educate their children better (Ladky & Peterson, 2008; Moosa et al., 2001; Paratore, 2005).

Many models of SFCPs have been written and published (e.g., Greenwood, et al., 1991; Jabar (2010). Epstein et al.'s (2009) model was one of the well-developed models that was constructed upon Bronfenbrenner's ecological system (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) and the theory of the overlapping spheres (Epstein et al., 2009). The current chapter presented much research related to each aspect of SFCPs: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the local community. It indicated their benefits and listed some of the activities that are recommended for use under each practice. The benefits of the SFCP model have been documented in some Arab countries, such as Jordan (Obeidat & Al-Hassan, 2009).

The literature review presented research about teachers' beliefs. It showed that their beliefs about the importance of conducting strong partnerships with students' family members and the local community are considered one of the most significant aspects to having successful SFCPs (Baum & McMurray-Schwarz, 2004; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). However, research showed that many obstacles may weaken, limit, or hinder SFCP implementation, such as a lack of administrative support (Epstein, 1987; Hourani et al., 2012). This chapter provided a synopsis about the history and nature of Saudi Arabian early childhood education. It also documented some of the efforts to enhance SFCPs in Saudi Arabia.

Some research was found regarding SFCPs in Saudi Arabia. In particular, a gap in the literature exists at the early childhood education level. This gap raises the need to investigate SFCPs in Saudi Arabia in terms of teachers' beliefs about the importance of

these partnerships with families and communities. Since the literature review revealed that constraints limit the implementation of SFCPs, the current study would include, besides the teachers' beliefs about SFCPs, an implementation assessment of SFCPs. Also, mixed methods design is relatively new in Saudi Arabia. All of the studies found there regarding SFCPs were quantitative. Moreover, there was no research that combined kindergarten teachers' beliefs about SFCPs with implementation of SFCPs in Saudi Arabia that used mixed methods to gather their opinions qualitatively. In the following chapters, methodologies used in this chapter were discussed.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The third chapter presented the methods used in the current study. The purpose of this study was to study kindergartens' teachers' beliefs about and implementation of SFCPs in Riyadh City, Saudi Arabia. Two strands were employed; an initial quantitative strand was used to obtain information on teachers' beliefs about and implementation of SFCPs, and a follow-up qualitative explanatory strand was used to discuss their experiences with SFCPs. The chapter discussed the rationale for the study design, philosophical assumptions regarding both strands, study site and participation selection, data collection and the instruments, and analysis methods used for both strands.

Rationale for Mixed Method Design

Mixed methods design is a research approach "in which the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or a program of inquiry" (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007, p. 4). The rationale for integrating the two strands, quantitative and qualitative, in this study is that they both work together to present the entire picture of the studied phenomena. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) asserted that the need for using mixed methods design arises when one strand is inadequate. They believed that quantitative data provide a general idea about phenomena, whereas

qualitative data help with investigating and explaining quantitative results in more depth through the views of a small sample of people. In this case, Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, and Hanson (2003) wrote that the best approach—one that builds a more qualitative understanding of quantitative results—is SEMM, which was applied in the current research.

According to Creswell (2012), quantitative research is used to measure a large number of trends on individuals' beliefs or perceptions. In this research, the quantitative strand was used to discover the degrees of the participants' beliefs about the importance of the SFCP practices and the frequent implementation of these practices. In addition, it provided demographic data that helped with identifying participants for the qualitative strand.

The qualitative strand was chosen in the current study to explain in depth and expand the quantitative results. Stake (2010) indicated that qualitative research is usually employed to explain and understand the phenomena studied. Therefore, the qualitative strand in this study focused on the explanation of teachers' experiences with SFCPs, their explanations for the degrees of importance they provided, and the actual implementation of each practice along with the teachers' ways of improving them, the obstacles they faced, and the recommendations they had. Hatch (2002) indicated that the qualitative approach helps with discovering the natural setting of the "experience of real people in real setting" (p. 6).

Mixed Methods Design Timing and Interaction

In terms of timing, Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) said that timing is "the temporal relationship between the quantitative and qualitative strands within a study" (p. 65). Sequential timing, which was used in the current study, means that the quantitative strand data were collected and analyzed, and then, based on these results, the qualitative strand data were collected based on the quantitative strand data collection and analysis (a visual model of the procedure is attached in Appendix A). The reason for choosing the quantitative strand first and then the qualitative strand was to use the latter to explain the quantitative data results. The qualitative strand's goal was to explain in depth any inconsistent results when compared with the results of teachers' beliefs and the actual implementation of SFCPs in the quantitative strand. Hesse-Biber (2010) asserted that tying two strands together helps when "qualitative approaches to research are able to traverse contradictory findings" (p. 466).

The level of interaction between quantitative and qualitative strands may be either independent or interactive. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), independent interaction means the two strands are independent of each other in all study processes except for in the conclusion; however, interactive interaction means that the two strands interact in different study processes—one of them when the qualitative strand depends on the quantitative strand in choosing qualitative strand cases for the follow-up interview, and to develop the interview questions as applied in the current study. The other connecting level, which was used in the current research as well, is to combine both strands results "during the interpretation of the outcomes of the entire study" (Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006).

Philosophical Assumptions

The changing of a strand from quantitative to qualitative in SEMM research changes the knowledge claim. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) suggested employing more than one philosophical assumption when choosing mixed methods design. The quantitative strand is made based on a post-positivism point of view to generate research questions, hypotheses, instrument, and analysis. Post-positivism as a worldview posits that established theories or even what are thought to be facts are not firm and may be imperfect and revisable. Teddlie and Tashakkori (1998) wrote that the aim of post-positivism is to use deductive reasoning when testing hypotheses or answering questions. Deductive reasoning studies gather data "from the 'top' down, from a theory to hypotheses to data to add to or contradict the theory" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 41). That is, the current research collected quantitative data to deduce evidence to either accept or reject hypotheses along with statistical facts to answer the research questions.

Due to the various perceptions in the qualitative strand, constructivism is recommended for constructing and generating different views. Constructivism as a worldview concedes that people build their knowledge subjectively. In research methodology, the researcher starts from the results to construct meaning and themes (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Constructing meaning and themes, in the current study, was inductive. The researcher interviewed the participants to gather information regarding their experiences with SFCPs and to draw out the common meaning to build themes.

The philosophical assumption elements that the researcher made when deciding on the methodology for the study were ontology, epistemology, and axiology. Because

the philosophical assumptions varied due to changes in the strands of the current mixed methods design study, the discussion below consists of both post-positivism and constructivism assumptions.

Ontology

Ontology refers to the nature of reality or to how people gain knowledge. In the quantitative strand, post-positivism orientation assumes that the researcher seeks to test hypotheses or to answer close-ended question; therefore, the reality is singular and is reachable. Yet, it is still insufficient due to the lack of methods used for searching (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). For this reason, researchers usually report limitations in their research and recommendations by the end of the research to find out reality as much as they can. The reality in a qualitative strand is always multiple. According to the constructivism orientation, realty is subjective. The meanings vary according to individuals' experiences. Even though people share common aspects, these aspects vary from one to another according to the context and to the individuals' interactions with the environment (Creswell, 2013; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In the current research, the goal of the first strand was to discover the kindergarten teachers' beliefs about and implementation of SFCPs. The significant differences among their points of view, if any, were also explored by testing the null hypotheses. Because the reality can be revisable, more explanation is needed. The aim of the second strand, the qualitative, was to collect the various experiences of the different participants regarding SFCPs in various areas of Riyadh City.

Epistemology

Epistemological assumption refers to the connection between researchers and study participants (source of the knowledge). The post-positivism disposition employs scientific methods to legitimate knowledge by gathering facts objectively throughout research and statistics data. Therefore, the researcher separates his or her values and beliefs from participants, data, and results, emphasizing the importance of external editing for monitoring and validating objectivity (Creswell, 2013; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Meanings, in the constructivism point of view, are developed as a result of people's interactions, and they vary in terms of how these meanings are constructed (Crotty, 1998). Thus, the researcher's and participants' subjectivity appear in the constructivism orientation. The researcher and participants closely interact to construct the reality of the phenomenon, which reflects their beliefs (Hatch, 2002).

For the support of the post-positivism belief, a survey was sent electronically to the participants to collect data without direct interaction between the researcher and participants. The data analysis depended upon the statistical results; therefore, the researcher would bracket her beliefs. Following the constructivist position was evident in the qualitative strand. The researcher contacted each teacher directly in an interview to construct meaning of how the teacher's knowledge was generated through experiences and social interactions with the children's families and the community.

Axiology

Axiology is defined as the role of researchers' values and how to express them. It includes "what is essentially valuable and precious in individual life, in a more precise way, what kind of information and knowledge, if any, is fundamentally and inherently

valuable and important" (Aliyu, Bello, Kasim, & Martin, 2014, p.80). The researcher's axiology in post-positivism is passive, as this position of research must be value free. Therefore, the researcher objectively searches, collects and analyses data, and discuses results depending on the physical observations (Miller, 2000). To decrease bias, post-positivism researchers use methods for instrument external and constructive validity testing (Teddile and Tashkkori, 2009). Whereas post-positivist-leaning beliefs acknowledge that the value of knowledge is the final valuable destination, the fundamental value of constructivism position is the use of knowledge and transactions for social freedom (Aliyu, Bello, Kasim, & Martin, 2014). Constructivism orientation values social interaction as the essence of humans' experiences and construct meanings (Vygotsky, 1978). For this reason, the researcher's bias, such as his or her values and beliefs, may be more obvious in constructivism research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Post-positivism ideas went along with the quantitative strand in the current research. The value in this strand was given to the data collected from the teachers through a survey that was built objectively. For unbiased quantitative instruments, the researcher tested for internal and external validity through face validity and construct validity. On the other hand, the constructivism idea fit in the second strand of this study. The follow-up interviews with kindergarten teachers were conducted to gather information about their experiences regarding SFCPs. That is, these experiences were transcribed and analyzed to build meanings and themes to be used in the discussion section. In the discussion section, the researcher's values and points of view would be appeared, and they would laden the qualitative report.

Site and Participants

Study Population

The total study population included all 1,082 Saudi public kindergarten teachers in Riyadh City. The private kindergartens in Riyadh City were not included in this study because a third party (owners) determines their rules and decisions in terms of dealing with families. However, public kindergartens follow the MOE obligations and rules. The City of Riyadh was chosen because it is one of the biggest cities in Saudi Arabia, the capital city, and it is where the researcher lives; thus, she had access to the kindergartens there. Riyadh City features three SEAs (high, middle, and low socioeconomic areas), and a total of 126 public kindergartens are located in these areas. Table 1 below presents the total number of teachers in each SEA.

Table 1

Study Population

SEAs	Teachers Number	%
High	518	48%
Middle	285	27%
Low	279	26%
Total	1,082	100%

Quantitative Strand Sampling

Due to time and location restrictions, it was impossible to include the whole research members of the population in the current study. A probability representative sample of the population was selected. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) stated, "Probability sample is planned to select a large number of cases…[the sample size should

be] large enough to establish representativeness…[,] at least 50 units" (pp. 178–179). Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) indicated that "probability samples are based on mathematically defined estimates of the number of cases required to estimate the characteristics of a population within a prescribed margin of error" (p. 182). When selecting a probability sample, researchers are recommended to consider the margin of error, which "is the range in which the true value of the population is estimated to be. This range is often expressed in percentage points, (e.g., ±5 percent)" (Kasiulevičius, Šapoka, & Filipavičiūtė, 2006, p. 226).

The second criterion is the confidence level, which means "when a population is repeatedly sampled, the average value of the attribute obtained by those samples is equal to the true population value" (Singh & Masuku, 2014, pp. 9–10). The suggested confidence level is 95%. One of the methods for deciding on the sample size is the "small sample techniques" for a known population (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970, p. 607). With a total study population of 1,082, the recommended sample should be 280 teachers. For this study, an electronic copy of the surveys was sent to the public kindergartens teachers in Fall 2016. Five follow-up reminders were sent to the teachers. In addition, a service provided through the MOE was used to send text messages twice from the MOE to the teachers' phones directly. The researcher also contacted the general manager of kindergarten education in Saudi Arabia, Hassah Aldabass. She sent the survey to the supervisors electronically, asking them to encourage the teachers to participate, if possible. The total number of surveys returned by the end of the fall semester was 266. A description of the study sample is presented below in Table 2.

Table 2

Study Sample

SEAs	Year of experience	Number of teachers	Total	% of each SES
High	1-10	56		
	+10	69	125	47%
Middle	1-10	45		
	+10	20	65	25%
low	1-10	43		
	+10	33	76	29%
Total		266	266	100%

Qualitative Strand Sampling

In SEMM, the sample of the qualitative strand should be smaller than that of the quantitative strand to gather more significant in-depth information from the second strand (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In addition, the quality of the qualitative strand is not related to the number of the participants, and their number is chosen based on the study purpose (Hatch, 2002) The purpose was to collect and explain varied teachers' experiences with SFCPs in Riyadh City public kindergartens. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) noted that one of the challenges of SEMM design is that choosing qualitative strand participants sometimes is not easy because it cannot be done ahead of attaining quantitative strand findings.

Unlike with quantitative research sampling, researchers are recommended to use the purposeful sampling procedure for qualitative research sampling. They "intentionally

select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon… or to an understanding that provides voice to individuals who may not be heard otherwise" (Creswell, 2012, p. 206). Creswell (2012) suggested the researcher to use maximal variation sampling. It is

> a purposeful sampling strategy in which the researcher samples cases or individuals that differ on some characteristic or trait (e.g., different age groups). This procedure requires [the researcher identifies] the characteristic and then [finds] sites or individuals that display different dimensions of that characteristic. (p. 208-209)

Maximal variation sampling method was used in the current study. The quantitative analysis revealed that 42 teachers volunteered to participate in the qualitative strand. The demographic section analysis as seen in Table 3 indicated that these teachers work in various SEAs in Riyadh City (high, middle, and low) and had different years of experience (1 to 10 and more than 10). A total of 12 teachers were purposefully selected among the 42 teachers. As seen in Table 4, four participants from the high SEA, four from the middle SEA, and four from the low SEA were selected. The criteria for recruiting teachers in each group was to send text messages to all participants, and the teachers who responded first were chosen. The rest of the responding teachers were listed on a backup list and were told about this. One chosen teacher from the high-SEA did not respond when called at the assigned time, and one in the group of low-SEA teachers sent a text message indicating she preferred to withdraw from the interviews. Therefore, two from the backup list were called. None of the low-SEA teachers whose experience was

fewer than 10 years agreed to participate other than one teacher. Therefore, as seen in Table 4, the total number of 12 teachers, four teachers in each SEA, was achieved. Two were in each years-of-experience category except for in the case of the low-SEA teachers; one teacher was in the category of 1to 10 years of experience, and three teachers were in the category of more than 10 years.

Table 3

Population

Years of experience	SEAs	Volunteered teachers
Fewer than 10 years	High	4
More than 10 years	High	10
Fewer than 10 years	Middle	5
More than 10 years	Middle	11
Fewer than 10 years	Low	8
More than 10 years	Low	4
Total		42

Table 4

Study Participations

Years of experience	SEAs	Participant teachers
Fewer than 10 years	High	2
More than 10 years	High	2
Fewer than 10 years	Middle	2
More than 10 years	Middle	2
Fewer than 10 years	Low	1
More than 10 years	Low	3
Total		12

Data Collection

Quantitative Strand Data Collection

The aim of the quantitative strand was to collect data identifying both teachers' beliefs about and the frequency of their implementation of SFCPs. The closed-ended quantitative questionnaire was used because it was more effective in gathering and analyzing data (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). An electronic modified copy of the Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships (Epstein et al., 2009) was sent to teachers in August 2016, and the surveys were collected at the end of November 2016.

Permission to use the translated survey was obtained from Dr. Joyce Epstein (personal communication, November 30, 2015). The survey measures by using a five-point Likert scale consisting of the following item options: *Not Occurring, Rarely, Occasionally, Frequently,* and *Extensively.* According to a personal communication with Dr. Joyce Epstein (2015), "the items in the *Measure* were selected because of consistent patterns found in other surveys and in field studies on the six types of involvement" (personal communication, 2015). The original survey contains six tables using Epstein's model of SFCPs to measure the school partnerships, as a team, with family and community.

For the current study purpose and questions, the first section's goal was to collect demographic information from the participants: SEAs (high, middle, and low) where teachers teach and years of experience (1 to 10 years, and more than 10 years). This information was included to provide the researcher with an opportunity to further analyze the results. The aim of the second part of the survey was to measure teachers' beliefs about SFCPs; it used four Likert-type points, namely *Strongly Important, Not Important,*

Important, Slightly Important, and *Not Important*. The third part of the survey contained the same first part item; however, the Likert type was altered to be five points to measure teachers' implementation *More Than Once a Week, Once or Twice a Month, Once a Semester, Once a Year,* and *Never Have Been Done*. At the end of the survey, there was a request to ask about teachers' voluntary participation in the interviews for the qualitative strand of the study.

The total number of items in the original survey was 53, but the number ended up being 38. Because the original survey was built to serve all school levels in the United States of America, some of them were modified to meet Saudi public kindergartens characteristics; for example, item number-one, from home practice, was omitted because no homework is assigned at the kindergarten level. Hence, the teachers' beliefs part of the survey in this study included the following six sections: Parenting included five items, communication included 12 items, volunteering included seven items, learning at home consisted of four items, decision-making featured six items, and four items were included in the section on collaborating with the community. The teachers' implementation part of the survey included the exact same items as the teacher's beliefs part (see Appendix B).

The total time required to fill out the survey was 15 to 25 minutes. Because the teachers' first language is Arabic, the Arabic version of the survey instrument was used. Dr. Muhemmed B. Al-Jeosey from the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States completed the Arabic translation of the survey as part of the Arabic version of Epstein et al.'s (2009) book, where the original survey was published. The consent letter was translated with the help of Vanan Web Services (https://vananservices.com/).

Reliability and Validity in the Quantitative Strand

In the current study, reliability and validity were tested as an answer to one of the quantitative strand question: Was the Arabic version of the survey the Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships, reliable and valid to be used in the Saudi Arabian context? Ensuring the reliability of the instrument is essential in any research. Reliability refers to the ability of the instrument to achieve similar scores each time it is replicated (Zohrabi, 2013). In addition, the goal was "to identify any problems with the questionnaire itself, as well as with the response rate and follow-up procedures" (Kitchenham & Pfleeger, 2008, p. 78). Cronbach (1951) indicated that it is not possible to repeat a test for accuracy, leading researchers (e.g. Creswell, 2005; Cronbach, 1951; Drost, 2011) to recommend several procedures for checking instrument reliability, such as the test–retest method, the split-halves approach, and internal consistency.

In this research, internal consistency was used because it is the most popular and useful method (Cronbach, 1951; Drost, 2011) Cronbach's alpha (α) method testes internal consistency. Cronbach asserted that for reliability, the accepted coefficient value (α) must be equal to .70 or higher. In some previous studies that used the same measurement as used in this research, the Cronbach's alpha values were .929 (Wright, 2009) and .894 (Herrell, 2011), which is acceptable. Additionally, the Cronbach's alpha of a Turkish version was 0.945 of reduced items number, based on 29 statements in the survey, confirming that it was reliable (Erdener, 2013). To measure reliability, after translating the survey for the current research, a pilot study of 40 people was randomly selected and divided into two halves to obtain the internal consistency of the survey through generating Cronbach's alpha.

The test was applied to the second section of the measurement in the current study, wich was the teachers' beliefs about SFCP practices, and to the third section, which was the teachers' implementation of SFCPs. The first section aimed to gather demographic information; thus, there was no need to test its reliability. The coefficient value alpha (α) in the second section of this study (the teachers' beliefs about SFCPs) was .948, and the third section (total statements of the implementation of SFCPs) coefficient value Alpha (α) was .934. Table 5 presented the internal consistency of each practice of the second section and showed that the reliability ranged from .902 to .771. For the third section of the survey, the implementation of SFCP practices, the internal consistency of each practice ranged from .862 to .957. These results indicated that the six practices in both the second section and the third (the Arabic version of the survey) were correlated, and the degree of internal consistency was high.

Table 5

Internal Reliability of the Measurement

Practice	Number of statements	Cronbach's alpha
The teachers' beliefs section		
Parenting	5	.771
Communication	12	.856
Volunteering	7	.878
Learning at home	4	.823
Decision-making	6	.902
Collaborating with the community	4	.824
The teachers' implementation section		
Parenting	5	.863
Communication	12	.910
Volunteering	7	.957
Learning at home	4	.862
Decision-making	6	.955
Collaborating with the community	4	.933

Validity refers to "how well a survey instrument measures what it sets out to measure" (Kitchenham & Pfleeger, 2002, p. 20). Herrell (2011) tested a face validity of the measurement and found that it is valid. For face validity, three early childhood experts edited the Arabic version of the survey and ensured that it was clear and suitable for public kindergarten teachers in Saudi Arabia. Principle Component Analysis (PCA) would be generated to test the construct validity. Construct validity means "the extent to which a particular measure relates to other measures consistent with theoretically derived hypotheses concerning the concepts that are being measured" (Carmines & Zeller, 1979, cited in Thatcher, 2010, p. 147).

In the current study, PCA was used to determine the extent to which the surveys' statements clustered into each component (six practices). PCA explored the commonalities and differences of the returned survey statements. To assess the suitability of PCA prior to analysis, the assumptions, linearity relationships between variables, sample adequacy, and outliers were tested (Laerd Statistics, 2016). All assumptions were not violated, which meant the data were suitable for the principal components analysis.

The criteria of how many components need to be retained were: (a) all factors had eigenvalues greater than 1, (b) SPSS was instructed to suppress all coefficients less than 4 (Pituch & Stevens, 2016), and (c) the total number of factors was chosen according to the number of the original survey categories, which was six. The Varimax orthogonal rotation was employed to discover the uncorrelated factors and to aid interpretation (Costello & Osborne, 2005). The interpretation of the data was almost consistent within the initial survey.

PCA showed that the six components (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community) had eigenvalues greater than 1 and explained 33.6%, 7.9%, 4.6%, 4.1%, 3.5%, and 3.3% of the total variance, respectively. The total variance accounted for by six components was 57.2%. The rotated component matrix table (see Table 6) showed how the retained and rotated components load on each variable, which are the six practices in the original version of the survey:

Component 1 from PCA showed that decision-making practice items from 1 to 6 and volunteering practice items 4, 5, and 7 shared variances and were loaded significantly with the first PCA. Communication practice items from 1 to 12 were significantly loaded with the principal Component 2. The principal Component 3 was loaded on the fourth item in communication practice and on items 1 to 7 in volunteering practice. Decision-making practice item 6 and all of the collaborating with the community practice items from 1 to 4 shared variances with principal Component 4. The 5 parenting practice items were strongly correlated with Component 5. Finally, Component 6 was loaded on the learning-at-home practice's 4 items.

Conceptually, item 6 of the decision-making practice, "develop the school's plan and program of family and community involvement with input from educators, parents, and others," was added to the collaborating with the community practice.

Table 6

Rotated Component Matrix

Items	components					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Conduct workshops or providing information for parents on child development. P 1					.475	
Provide information to all families who want it or who need it, not just to the few who can attend workshops or meetings at the school building. P 2					.585	
Produce information for families that is clear, usable, and linked to children's success in school. P 3					.738	
Provide families with age appropriate information on developing home conditions or environments that support learning. P 4					.698	
Respect the different cultures represented in our student population. P 5					.594	
Review the readability, clarity, form, and frequency of all memos, notices, and other print and non-print communications. C 1		.403				
Develop communication for parents who do not speak Arabic well, do not read well, or need large type. C2		.408				
Have clear two-way channels for communications from home to school and from school to home. C 3		.462				
Conduct a formal conference with every parent at least once a year. C 4		.403	.410			
Conduct an annual survey for families to share information and concern about student needs, reaction to school programs, and satisfaction with their involvement in school and at home. C 5		.443				
Conduct an orientation for new parent. C 6		.540				
Send home folders of student work weekly or monthly for parent review and comment. C 7		.734				
Provide clear information about the curriculum, assessments, and achievement levels and report cards. C 8		.711				
Contact families of students having academic or behavior problems. C 9		.541				
Use email and school website to communicate with parents, including information on internet safety. C 10		.489				
Train teachers, staff and principals on the value and utility of family involvement and ways to build positive ties between school and home. C 11		.526				
Produce a regular school newsletter with up-to-date information about the school, special events, organizations, meetings, and parenting tips. C 12		.633				
Conduct an annual survey to identify interests, talents, and availability of parent volunteers, to match their skills/talents with school and classroom needs. V 1			.554			
Provide a parent/family room for volunteers and family members to work, meet, and access resources about parenting, childcare, tutoring, and other things that effect their children. V 2			.699			
Create flexible volunteering and school events schedules, enable employed parents who work to participate. V 3			.721			
Schedule special events at different times of the day and evening so that all families can attend as audience. V 4	.578		.420			
Train volunteers so they use their time productively. V 5	.565		.533			
Recognize volunteers for their time and efforts. V 6			.511			
Encourage families and the community to be involved with the school in various ways (e.g., assisting in classroom, monitor halls, lead talk or activities, serving as audiences.) V 7	.433		.598			

Items	components					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Provide information to families on required skills in major subjects. L1						
Provide specific information to parents on how to assist students with skills that they need to improve. L2						
Ask parents to focus on reading, listen to children read, or read aloud with their child. L3						
Schedule regular interactive homework that requires students to demonstrate and discuss what they are learning with a family member. L4						
Include parent representatives on the school's advisory council, improvement team, or other committees. D1	.663					
Involving parents in an organized, ongoing, and timely way in planning and improvement of programs. D2	.757					
Involve parents in reviewing school curricula. D 3	.795					
Recruit parents' leaders for committees from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other groups in school. D 4	.763					
Guide parent representativeness to contact parents who are less involved for their ideas. D 5	.625					
Develop the school's plan and program of family and community involvement with input from educators, parents, and others. D 6	.475			.547		
Provide a community resource directory for parents with information on community services, programs, and agencies. Comu1				.674		
Involve families in locating and utilizing community resources. Comu2				.727		
Work with local businesses, industries, libraries, parks, museums, and other organizations on programs to enhance student skills and learning. Comu3				.712		
Offer after-school programs for students with support from community businesses, agencies, and volunteers. Comu4				.653		

Qualitative Strand Data Collection

In-depth recorded semi-structured and interviews conducted by (phone) were used in the current study. The interview questions were developed based on the quantitative strand data results (the interview questions can be found in Appendix C). The teachers were asked for explanations for their beliefs about the importance of each practice and their frequent implementation according to the quantitative results. The questions also focused on teachers' experiences with the implementation of SFCPs in their kindergartens. Interviews in the current study were conducted individually to avoid "one

respondent influencing a later respondents' answers" (Fowler, 2014. p.29) and to protect the teachers' privacy. They were conducted during Fall 2017, and each interview took 25–40 minutes.

Establishing Credibility in the Qualitative Strand

Validation of the study results is an essential part of the qualitative strand. Creswell and Miller (2000) identified nine common verification methods: triangulation, search for disconfirming evidence, researcher reflexivity, member checking, prolonged engagement in the field, collaboration, thick rich description, peer review, and external audit. Creswell (2009) noted that to increase credibility and trustworthiness, researchers should use at least three of these methods. In the current study, researcher reflexivity, the external audit, and thick rich description.

Researcher reflexivity is the first strategy used to clarify biases as a researcher approaches a given phenomenon. According to Creswell and Miller (2000), researcher reflexivity allows researchers to share personal beliefs, values, and biases that may influence their research. Throughout this study, the researcher documented the unique perspectives that may have affected her approach to the research topic and her interpretation of the research results. Once the researcher acknowledged these assumptions and biases, she bracketed her personal expectations to increase the accuracy of the findings.

The second strategy used to establish credibility was the external audit. Creswell and Miller (2000) recommend involving various methods for credibility, such as having experts in the field review the research and provide critical comments. The authors indicated that dissertation committee members can serve as auditors because they

examine the research process. External auditors in this research, the dissertation chair, the methodologist, and three professors at the University of Alabama at Birmingham committee, were asked formally to review and examine the research process from the beginning.

Thick, rich description was the third strategy for establishing credibility. By describing the participants and the themes (intensively) the researcher reports detailed participants' experiences, and these have been further investigated. "Thus, credibility is established through the lens of readers who read a narrative account and are transported into a setting or situation." (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 129). In the current research, a detailed description of the participants, including their demographic information and educational backgrounds, will be provided in chapter four.

Data Analysis

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) illustrated that data analyses in the SEMM design occur chronologically in three steps starting with the survey's data analysis, determining the best participants for the qualitative strand, and then formulating interview questions. The second strand, qualitative, depends on the quantitative results. The second analysis in the SEMM design is the qualitative strand data analysis, which runs after interviews and then is followed by the third and final analysis called the mixed methods analysis, which reveal how the qualitative strand explains the quantitative one. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) illustrated that analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data boosts the presentation of the gathered data because it provides a comprehensive understanding of the given phenomena.

Quantitative Strand Data Analysis

The quantitative instrument question. Was the Arabic version of the survey, Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships, reliable and valid to be used in the Saudi Arabian context?

Reliability and validity testing methods were discussed earlier in this chapter. Again, Cronbach's alpha would be used to test the Arabic version of the survey reliability. For face validity, three early childhood experts edited the survey statements and ensured that they were clear and suitable for public kindergarten teachers in Saudi Arabia. The researcher employed PCA to test the construct validity. The test, PCA, would group the survey statements together into components: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. Clustering the statements that shared similarities into one component helped researcher interpret each component instead of reporting each statement separately (Pituch & Stevens, 2016).

The teachers' beliefs question. How much did the public kindergarten teachers believe in the importance of SFCP practices (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community)?

Teachers' implementation question. How often did public kindergarten teachers implement SFCP practices (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community)?

The first question's aim was to find the extract means, percentages, and frequencies for the kindergarten teachers' beliefs about each of the six SFCP practices. The second one's goal was to discover the percentages and frequencies for the kindergarten teachers'

implementation of each of the six SFCP practices. For answering these questions and addressing all of the quantitative strand null hypotheses, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used.

The teachers' beliefs null hypothesis. $H0_1$: There were no statistically significant interaction effects between teachers' years of experience and different SEAs with regard to teachers' beliefs about the SFCP practices (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community).

The dependent variables of the teachers' beliefs about SFCPs were interval and were parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with community. The values of the interval variables were *Very Important, Important, Slightly Important,* and *Not Important.* For testing the null hypothesis, a two-way MANOVA among subjects was performed, and the independent variables were years of experience and its two levels were (10 years or fewer and more than 10 years). The second independent variable was various SESs, which were three levels (high, middle, and low). Bray and Maxwell (1985) advised the use of MANOVA over ANOVA when the goal is to measure the interaction among group of independent variables on more than one dependent variable. Because the SEAs were grouped into three factors, level-post-hoc analysis would be used to conduct comparison among the three levels, if any statistical associations were found.

The parenting Practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_2$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers' years of experience and their implementation of parenting practices.

The parenting Practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_3$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers working in different SEAs and their implementation of parenting practices.

The communication practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_4$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers' years of experience and their implementation of communication practices.

The communication practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_5$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers working in different SEAs and their implementation of communication practices.

The volunteering practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_6$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers' years of experience and their implementation of volunteering practices.

The volunteering practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_7$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers working in different SEAs and their implementation of volunteering practices.

The learning-at-home practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_8$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers' years of experience and their implementation of learning-at-home practices.

The learning-at-home practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_9$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers working in different SEAs and their implementation of learning-at-home practices.

The decision-making practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_{10}$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers' years of experience and their implementation of learning-at-home practices.

The decision-making practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_{11}$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers working in different SEAs and their implementation of decision-making practices.

The collaborating with community practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_{12}$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers' years of experience and their implementation of collaborating with community practices.

The collaborating with community practices implementation null hypothesis.$H0_{13}$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers working in different SEAs and their implementation of collaborating with community practices.

The dependent variables in the implementation part were ordinal, and they were parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. The values of the ordinal variables were as follows: *More Than One a Week, Once or Twice a Month, Once a Semester, Once a Year,* and *Never Have Been Done*. The independent variables were teachers' years of experience, which was a dichotomous variable that has two groups (10 years or fewer and more than 10 years). The second independent variable was various SEAs, which had three groups (high, middle, and low). For testing the 12 null hypotheses, a chi-square test was run 12 times to test the associations between each independent and dependent variable separately.

Qualitative Strand Data Analysis

The qualitative strand data analysis was guided by these two questions:

Question one. What were teachers' experiences that shaped their beliefs about SFCPs?

Question two. How would the teachers improve the implementation of the partnerships?

The quantitative strand results provide information about the teachers' beliefs about the importance of SFCP six practices and their degree of the implementation of these six practices. However, these results are not sufficient because they do not provide explanations for the teachers' beliefs about or implementation of each practice. The quantitative strand results helped identify the qualitative strand participants and build the interview questions. Two teachers from each SEA were chosen for qualitative strand interviews. Analyzing qualitative data "means organizing and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanation, make interpretations" (Hatch, 2002, p. 148). Thematic analysis was used to analyze data. Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules, (2017) indicated that thematic analysis is used to reduce a large number of different perceptions and to create a more coherent account of the data. It helps the researcher to underline the similar experiences and distinguish the differences. Braun and Clarke (2006) explained the analysis steps:

1. Reading through the participants' transcripts to understand each experience and become immersed in the information.
2. Coding by writing notes near significant phrases in each transcript.
3. Clustering the codes to create themes and subthemes.

4. Reviewing the codes and the themes for coherent assurance.
5. Deciding the themes and subthemes' names.
6. Writing up the report.

Mixed Methods Question Analysis

What were kindergartens' teachers' beliefs about and implementation of SFCPs, what were the experiences that shape their beliefs and affect the implementation, and how would they improve the partnerships?

The answer to the mixed methods question is in the discussion section of the fifth chapter. According to Ivankova, et. at, (2006), the SEMM research combines both strands results during the discussion of the quantitative and qualitative strand results.

Ethical Considerations

An approval of the institutional review board (IRB) at the University of Alabama at Birmingham was obtained, and American Psychological Association guidelines for ethical conducted in research were followed. Informed consent means "a participant's agreement to participate in a research study, with explicit understanding of the risk involved." (Teddlie &Tashakkori, 2009, p.199). In the survey, the study purpose was explained, participation in the study was voluntary, and all information was used for study purposes only (see Appendix D for the IRB approval form).

For the qualitative strand, the follow-up interviews, the participants signed their names and contact information at the bottom of the survey if they agreed to participate in the follow-up interview. For this reason, there was no need for a gatekeeper. Before the interview, an electronic participant recruitment letter was sent through Qualtrics to

explain the purpose of the study to avoid deception and obtain their signed voluntary consent (see Appendix E for both strands informed consents). The participant recruitment letter clarified researcher's intentions, as well.

For privacy and anonymity of participants, the participants were given a pseudonym for use in in this research. In terms of their responses, the participants were told that the interviews, including their responses, were voice recorded and that confidentiality would be maintained via a locked password-protected computer. Moreover, they were told that all audio, written, and computer files associated with the study would be subsequently deleted when the information was no longer needed.

The Role of the Researcher

In the quantitative strand, the researcher adapted the instrument. It is important to be aware of researcher's bias in the surveys items and instructions by choosing natural words and phrases (Kitchenham & Pfleeger, 2008). To minimize bias, the researcher chose a translated version of the well-developed survey Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships by Epstein et al., (2009) and translated by Muhemmed B. Al-Jeosey from the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States. Also, the data in the current research were collected electronically. The researcher sent the survey to the teachers through emails. In data analysis, the researcher's role was to run data through statistical techniques and discuss the results.

In the qualitative strand, the researcher conducted the interviews and data analysis, personally. Qualitative research involves subjective interpretations, especially, in the research findings because of the researcher's intensive interactions with the

participants (Creswell, 2013). Yet, "without such inner freedom of judgment and expression, no statement would have significance" (Straus, 1966, p.119). To limit subjectivity, Jones, Torres, and Armino (2013) advised the researcher to determine his or her position in the research in terms of the impact of the insider and outsider statuses to avoid researcher's bias in both interpretation and analysis of the data. This shifts the researcher's concentration from support to understanding. To avoid subjectivity in the current research, the researcher identified the effect of her insider status (she worked in a kindergarten and interacted with families) and outsider status (her educational background) in the research.

In qualitative studies, Creswell (2013) suggested the researcher to state her experience with the phenomena. The researcher's experience with SFCPs dates to her childhood, when her parents were extensively involved in her education. Her memories of this involvement were positive and impacted her later education and development. Her mother visited the school monthly and discussed not only the coursework achievement but also behavioral development as well. Her father was eager to provide books and to motivate her to read by assigning prizes upon finishing a book. He discussed and critiqued with her the book components in a friendly manner. Additionally, visiting the public library and inviting some of the community organization members, such as welcoming a nurse to attend a science lesson at school, enhanced her knowledge and made it unforgettable. Specializing in early childhood and working with children highlighted the necessity of collaboration among schools, families, and the community for children's development. These experiences are the cornerstone of planting the idea of researching more about SFCPs.

Summary

This chapter included information about the research design-SEMM. It discussed the study site and participants' selection procedure. For both strands, the chapter documented the process that was followed to choose the research instruments, along with the data collection strategies. It also presented the data analysis methods, the role of the researcher, and ethical considerations. The data analysis and results of the research would be in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

This study aimed to discover Saudi public kindergarten teachers' beliefs about and their implementation of SFCP practices. The SEMM design was used to investigate the phenomena by integrating two strands: Quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative strand provided statistics that expose the degrees of the teachers' beliefs about and the implementation of SFCP practices. The follow-up qualitative strand helped search for more support behind the quantitative data results. It has helped researchers discover unique teachers' experiences with SFCP practices to explain the potential reasons associated with their answers in the previous strand in-depth, leading to recommendations for future SFCP enhancement. This chapter documented the statistical analyses that answered the first-strand questions and tested the null hypotheses, followed by the analysis of the interview scripts to address the qualitative strand questions.

Quantitative Strand Findings

The first study question asked if the Arabic version of the Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships was reliable and valid. Statistical analyses were employed to answer the question (the answer is in Chapter three).

Teachers' Beliefs about SFCPs Findings

The teachers' beliefs question. How much did the public kindergarten teachers believe in the importance of SFCP practices (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community)?

Descriptive statistics of the collected data showed that teachers believed in the importance of school, family, and community partnerships with differences in the degrees of importance. The degrees of importance varied from one practice to another among the six practices used in this study. When analyzing the resulting data, means for all the dependent variables except for the decision-making practice value fell between very important (1) and important (2). The decision-making practice mean value fell between important (2) and slightly important (3). The total means of parenting practice items, as seen in Table 7, ranked at the top of the important practice (M = 1.41, SD = .37), followed by the total means of learning-at-home practice items (M = 1.44, SD = .44). The third practice in the importance was the communication practice (M = 1.45, SD = .46). The total mean of the collaborating with the community practice (M = 1.71, SD = .51). The fifth practice was the volunteering (M = 1.85, SD = .54). The last on the list was the decision-making practice (M = 2.04, SD = .68), but the total means fell between important (2) and slightly important (3).

Table 7

The Ranks of The Six Practices

Rank	Practice	*M*	*SD*	*N*
1	Parenting importance	1.41	.37	266
2	Learning-at-home importance	1.44	.44	266
3	Communication importance	1.45	.46	266
4	collaborating with the community importance	1.71	.51	266
5	Volunteering importance	1.85	.54	266
6	Decision-making importance	2.04	.68	266

As seen in Table 8 below, more than of the half of the study sample believed that the practices of parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, and collaborating with the community were very important. The parenting and learning-at-home practices showed a lower percent of teachers (14.3% and 27%, respectively) who believed that these practices were important. Less than half of the teachers who participated in the study believed that the practices of communication, volunteering, and collaborating with the community were important; very few teachers believed that they were slightly important. Finally, more than 50% of the teachers thought that the decision-making practice was an important practice, a few of them believed it was slightly important, and five teachers believed that including families in decision-making was not important.

Table 8

Degrees of Importance of the Six Practices

Rank	Practice	Degree of importance	Percentage	*N*
1	Parenting	Very important, 1 to less than 2	85.7%	228
		Important, 2 to less than 3	14.3%	38
2	Learning-at-home	Very important, 1 to less than 2	72.6%	193
		Important, 2 to less than 3	27.4%	73
3	Communication	Very important, 1 to less than 2	56.8%	151
		Important, 2 to less than 3	39.9%	106
		Slightly important, 3 to less than 4	3.4%	9
4	Collaborating with the community	Very important, 1 to less than 2	56.8%	151
		Important, 2 to less than 3	31.9%	85
		Slightly important, 3 to less than 4	3.3%	9
5	Volunteering	Very important, 1 to less than 2	52.6%	140
		Important, 2 to less than 3	42.4%	113
		Slightly important, 3 to less than 4	4.8%	13
6	Decision-making	Very important, 1 to less than 2	34.2%	91
		Important, 2 to less than 3	54.1%	144
		Slightly important, 3 to less than 4	9.7%	26
		Not important	1.8%	5

The teachers' beliefs null hypothesis. $H0_1$: There were no statistically significant interaction effects between teachers' years of experience and different SEAs with regard to teachers' beliefs about the SFCP practices (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community).

To test the null hypotheses, a two-way MANOVA was run with six dependent variables (parenting, communication, volunteering, learning-at-home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community) and two independent variables (years of experience and SEAs). The validity of six assumptions (linearity, multicollinearity, univariate outliers, multivariate outliers, normality, equality of variance, and equality of

covariance) were tested to assess the suitability of the two-way MANOVA prior to running it. A scatterplot showed that there were linear relationships between the six dependent variables and that there was no evidence of multicollinearity in a Pearson correlation ($|r| < 0.9$). A boxplot showed no univariate outliers and a Mahalanobis distance was ($p > .001$), meaning there were no multivariate outliers.

For normality, a total of six Shapiro–Wilk tests have been run on each cell in the design: the six of the dependent variables and the two independent variables. Almost 32 cells were not normally distributed ($p < .05$). Four cells (1 to 10 years of experience in middle-SEA volunteering and more than10 years of experience in low-SEA communication, volunteering, and decision-making) were normally distributed in the Shapiro–Wilk tests ($p > .05$). With respect to the deviations in the normality (assessed by a Shapiro–Wilk test), researchers, such as Bray and Maxwell (1985) and Pituch and Stevens (2016), suggested that a MANOVA is considered to be a robust method for type 1 error regarding the violation of normality assumption. Also, one of the negative consequences of transforming the data, as a recommended solution with non-normality assumption, is that the other variable may become non-normal. Pituch and Stevens (2016) also recommended the use of the Bonferroni Inequality Correction to have a new adjusted alpha level by dividing .05 by the number of tests, which is equal to .001. Scanning the 36 cells again revealed that 15 cells were not normally distributed ($p < .001$) after correcting them.

The equality of variance was tested by using Box's M ($p = .24$), which meant the homogeneity assumption was violated; however, the equality of covariance was not violated when assessed by Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variance ($p > .05$). When

homogeneity assumption is not upheld, it is recommended to use "Pillai's trace instead of Wilks' lambda for these data as Pillai's trace is more robust to assumption violations than the other methods" (Harlow & Duerr, 2013, p. 135).

Because the normality assumption was violated, Pillai's Trace would be used because it is the most robust statistic (McFarquhar, et al., 2016). The two-way MANOVA results as seen in Table 9 yielded that the null hypothesis ($H0_1$) failed to be rejected because the multivariate test revealed that there was no statistically significant interaction between years of experience and different SEAs on the combination of six dependent variables (Pillai's Trace = .033, partial $\eta^2 = .016$, F (12, 512) = .714, $p = .738$).

From this information, it can be concluded that the main null hypothesis, $H0_1$, there were no statistically significant interactions between years of experience and different SEAs with regard to their beliefs about the importance of school, family, and community partnership practices (parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community), failed to be rejected. The main effect of years of experience on the combined dependent variables was not statistically significant (Pillai's Trace = .041, partial $\eta^2 = .041$, F (6, 255) = 1.804, p = .099). Similarly, the main effect of different SEAs on the combined dependent variables was not statistically significant (Pillai's Trace = .065, partial $\eta^2 = .033$, F (12, 512) = 1.433, p= .146). Consequentially, it can be concluded that the main and interacting effects were nonsignificant.

Table 9

Multivariate Test

Independent Variable	Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis Df	Error Df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Experience	Pillai's Trace	.041	1.804[b]	6.000	255.00	.099	.041
	Wilks' Lambda	.959	1.804[b]	6.000	255.000	.099	.041
	Hotelling's Trace	.042	1.804[b]	6.000	255.000	.099	.041
	Roy's Largest Root	.042	1.804[b]	6.000	255.000	.099	.041
SES	Pillai's Trace	.065	1.433	12.000	512.000	.146	.033
	Wilks' Lambda	.936	1.434[b]	12.000	510.000	.146	.033
	Hotelling's Trace	.068	1.435	12.000	508.000	.146	.033
	Roy's Largest Root	.051	2.184[c]	6.000	256.000	.045	.049
Experience * SES	Pillai's Trace	.033	.714	12.000	512.000	.738	.016
	Wilks' Lambda	.967	.714[b]	12.000	510.000	.739	.017
	Hotelling's Trace	.034	.714	12.000	508.000	.739	.017
	Roy's Largest Root	.028	1.196[c]	6.000	256.000	.309	.027

Teachers' Implementation of SFCPs Findings

The teachers' implementation question. How often did public kindergarten teachers implement SFCP practices (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community)?

Table 10 showed that the majority of the teachers (79.8%) implemented the parenting practice from weekly to at least once a year, but 19.2% of the teachers never provided any information or activities related to this practice.

Table 10

Parenting Implementation Frequency

Frequency	*N*	%
More than one a week	30	11.3
Once or twice a month	51	19.2
Several times a semester	83	31.2
Once a year	51	19.2
Never have been done	51	19.2
Total	266	100.0

Table 11 showed that 29.3% of the total participants never implemented communication with families, and 17.7% of them communicated with families more than once a week.

Table 11

Communication Implementation Frequency

Frequency	*N*	%
More than one a week	47	17.7
Once or twice a month	47	17.7
Several times a semester	73	27.4
Once a year	21	7.9
Never have been done	78	29.3
Total	266	100.0

Table 12 showed that more than half of the teachers (59.4%) who participated in this study never provided or organized volunteering opportunities for families. Only 9.4% and provided these chances several times a month, and very few teachers (7.1%) let families volunteer weekly.

Table 12

Volunteering Implementation Frequency

Frequency	*N*	%
More than once a week	19	7.1
Once or twice a month	25	9.4
Once a semester	35	13.2
Once a year	29	10.9
Never have been done	158	59.4
Total	266	100.0

The learning-at-home implementation frequency Table 13 showed that almost 81.6% of the total teachers in this study worked with families with regard to children's learning at home at least once a semester. However, only 8.3% have done this practice once a year. Around 18.4% never worked with families with regard to children's home learning.

Table 13

Learning-at-Home Implementation Frequency

Frequency	*N*	%
More than one a week	59	22.2
Once or twice a month	58	21.8
Once a semester	77	28.9
Once a year	23	8.6
Never have been done	49	18.4
Total	266	100.0

It can be concluded from Table 14 that more than half of the participants (65.4) never involved families in making decisions regarding their children's learning. Only 7.5% of the total participants engaged families in the decision-making process weekly.

Table 14

Decision-Making Implementation Frequency

Frequency	*N*	*%*
More than one a week	20	7.5
Once or twice a month	28	10.5
Once a semester	22	8.3
Once a year	22	8.3
Never have been done	174	65.4
Total	266	100.0

In this study's sample, 48.9% of the teachers never collaborated with the community with regard to the education process. The percentage decreased to 9.0% of the teachers who worked weekly with the community to gain more support in teaching children.

Table 15

Collaborating with Community Implementation Frequency

Frequency	N	%
More than one a week	24	9.0
Once or twice a month	29	10.9
Once a semester	46	13.9
Once a year	37	17.7
Never have been done	130	48.9
Total	266	100.0

For teachers' implementation of the SFCP six practices null hypotheses from 2 to 13, Chi-square test for associations was conducted between the years of experience and SEAs and the SFCP practices. The assumption of the expected cell counts was met, as all the expected counts were greater than five (Starnes, Yates, & Moore, 1996). The following presentation is the result of each null hypothesis:

The parenting practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_2$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers' years of experience and their implementation of parenting practices.

The parenting practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_3$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers working in different SEAs and implementation of parenting practices.

The test revealed that there was no statistically significant association between teachers' years of experience and the implementation of parenting practices: $\chi^2(4) = 1.325$, $p = .857$. Also, no significant result appeared when conducting a chi-square test for association between SEAs and parenting practices: $\chi^2(8) = 2.513$, $p = .961$.

The communication practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_4$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers' years of experience and their implementation of communication practices.

The communication practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_5$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers working in different SEAs with regard to their implementation of communication practices.

The test revealed that there was no statistically significant association between teachers' years of experience and the implementation of communication practices: $\chi^2(4) = 3.834$, $p = .429$. Also, nonsignificant result appeared when conducting a chi-square test for association between SEAs and communication practices: $\chi^2(8) = 7.339$, $p = .603$.

The volunteering practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_6$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers' years of experience and their implementation of volunteering practices.

The volunteering practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_7$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers working in different SEAs and their implementation of volunteering practices.

The test revealed that there was no statistically significant association between teachers' years of experience and the implementation of volunteering practices: $\chi^2(4) = 2.063$, $p = .724$. Also, nonsignificant result appeared when conducting a chi-square test for association between SEAs and volunteering practices: $\chi^2(8) = 7.311$, $p = .503$.

The learning-at-home practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_8$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers' years of experience and their implementation of learning-at-home practices.

The learning-at-home practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_9$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers working in different SEAs and their implementation of learning-at-home practices.

The test revealed that there was no statistically significant association between teachers' years of experience and the implementation of learning at home practices: $\chi^2(4) = 7.693$, $p = .104$. Also, a nonsignificant result appeared when conducting a chi-square test for association between SEAs and learning at home practices: $\chi^2(8) = 9.295$, $p = .318$.

The decision-making practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_{10}$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers' years of experience and their implementation of decision-making practices.

The decision-making practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_{11}$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers working in different SEAs and their implementation of decision-making practices.

The test revealed that there was no statistically significant association between teachers' years of experience and the implementation of decision-making practices: $\chi^2(4) = 1.095$, $p = .895$. Also, a nonsignificant result appeared when conducting a chi-square test for association between SEAs and decision-making practices: $\chi^2(8) = 2.019$, $p = .980$.

The collaborating with community practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_{12}$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers' years of experience and their implementation of collaborating with community practices.

The collaborating with community practices implementation null hypothesis. $H0_{13}$: There was no statistically significant association between teachers working in different SEAs and their implementation of collaborating with community practices.

The test revealed that there was no statistically significant association between teachers' years of experience and the implementation of collaborating with the community practices: $\chi^2(4) = 1.468$, $p = .832$. Also, a nonsignificant result appeared when conducting a chi-square test for the association between SEAs and collaborating with the community practices: $\chi^2(8) = 1.712$, $p = .989$.

In conclusion, the teachers' implementation in all 12 component null hypotheses were all not rejected because the test showed nonsignificant results.

Qualitative Strand Findings

The data analysis aimed to answer the following questions:

Question one. What were teachers' experiences that shaped their beliefs about and affected the implementation of SFCPs?

Question two. How would the teachers improve the implementation of the partnerships?

To answer these questions, 12 public kindergarten teachers worked in different SEAs and varied in their years of experience were interviewed. The analysis of the interview transcripts followed Braun's and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis procedure:

1. Reading through the participants' transcripts to understand each experience and become immersed in the information.
2. Coding by writing notes near significant phrases in each transcript.
3. Clustering the codes to create themes and subthemes.
4. Reviewing the codes and the themes for coherent assurance.
5. Deciding the themes and subthemes' names.
6. Writing up the report.

Setting and Context

This research focused on 12 different public kindergarten teachers' work in 12 different kindergartens in Riyadh City, Saudi Arabia. The first four kindergartens (A, B, C, and D) are in the high SEA (H); the next four kindergartens (E, F, G, and H) are in the middle SEA (M); and the final four kindergartens (I, J, K, L) are in the low SEA (L). According to the Saudi General Authority of Statistics (2010), the total population of Saudi citizens is 20,427,357 persons, and 2,124,889 are children from 0 to 9 years old. In Riyadh City, the total population of Saudi citizens is 3,153,478, and the total number of children enrolled in kindergartens in 2010 was 46,588. For the purpose of anonymity, teachers' names were changed and related to their areas of

teaching. For example, Teacher H1 means the first teacher who participated from high SEA.

Participants

The 12 public kindergarten teachers were purposefully selected using maximal variant sampling from the three different SEAs (high, medium, and low) in Riyadh City and from the two different periods of experience in years. All 12 teachers who participated in this study were Saudi citizens.

At the time of this study, Teacher H1 was 39 years old and was a single mother of one 14-year-old boy. She had worked at school A in the high SEA for 5 years. She lived in the middle SEA at her parents' house, and her monthly income was between $1,500 and $2,000. She earned her bachelor's degree in early childhood education from a university in the western region of Saudi Arabia in 2004 and moved with her family to Riyadh City 12 years ago.

Teacher H2 was 36 years old. She had worked at school B in the high SEA for 12 years. She had been married for 6 years and had 3 kids between the ages of 6 months and five years. Her monthly income was between $2,000 and $2,500, and she lived in a house in the high SEA. Teacher H2 graduated from a teachers' college in 2002 and earned a 2-year diploma in education. She continued her education at a university in the middle region and graduated in 2005 with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education.

Teacher H3 was 43 years old. She had been married for 25 years and had 3 kids between the ages of 7 and 18. Her monthly income was between $2,500 and $3,000, and she lived with her family at a house in the high SEA. Teacher H3 graduated in 1992 from

a university in the middle region with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education. She had worked at school C in the high SEA for 26 years.

Teacher H4 was single and did not have kids. She was 31 years old and lived with her brother and his family in a house in the middle SEA. Her monthly income was between $1,500 and $2,000. She had worked at school D in the high SEA for 5 years. Teacher H4 had a master's degree in curriculum and instruction, which she earned in 2010, and she earned her bachelor's degree in early childhood education in 2007 from a university in the middle region.

Teacher M1 was 33 years old. She had been married for 7 years and had 3 children between the ages of 2 and 6. She lived in an apartment in the low SEA, and her monthly income was between $1,500 and $2,000. She had worked at school E in the middle SEA for 4 years. She studied at a community college in the southern region for 2 years. Upon getting married, she transferred to a university in the middle region and graduated with a degree in early childhood education in 2011.

Teacher M2 was 38 years old. She had been married for 19 years and had a 12-year-old girl and a 14-year-old boy. She lived with her children and husband at her parents-in-law's house in the low SEA. Her monthly income was between $2,500 and $3,000. She had worked for 20 years in various schools and SEAs. During the 10 years before the study, she had worked at school F in the middle SEA. She studied early childhood education at a university in the middle region and graduated in 1994.

Teacher M3 was 33 years old. She was married for 10 years and had four kids between the ages of 3 and 8. She lived in a rented apartment in the high SEA, and her monthly income was between $1,500 and $2,000. Teacher M3 had a bachelor's degree in

early childhood education from a university in the middle region and a master's degree from the same university in curriculum and instruction. She earned her bachelor's degree in 2000 and her master's degree in 2010. She had worked at school G in the middle SEA for 7 years.

Teacher M4 was 36 years old. She was married for 15 years and had three kids between the ages of 3 and 9. She lived in a house in the low SEA, and her monthly income was between $1,500 and $2,000. She earned her bachelor's degree in 2003 from a university in the southern region in early childhood education and her master's degree in early childhood. She had worked at school H in the middle SEA for 13 years.

Teacher L1 was 39 years old, and she had been married for 19 years. She had five children, the oldest in university and the youngest in private kindergarten. She lived with her family and parents-in-law in a house in the middle SEA. Her monthly income was between $1,500 and $2,000. She had worked at school I in the low SEA for 7 years. She graduated from an educational college in the northern region of Saudi Arabia with a teaching degree in 1997. She had worked 3 to 4 years in an elementary school there before moving to Riyadh City upon getting married.

Teacher L2 was 42 years old. She had been married for 25 years and had six children between the ages of 12 and 23. She lived in a house in the high SEA, and her monthly income was between $2,000 and $2,500. She earned an educational diploma in teaching in 1996 from a teachers' college in the middle region. Teacher L2 had worked at school J for 20 years in the low SEA.

Teacher L3 graduated from the early childhood education department of a university in the middle region in 1994. She had worked in various schools and SEAs

over 25 years, and for the 5 years before the study, she had worked in school K in the low SEA. She had been married for 26 years and had five kids between the ages of 11 and 23. She lived in the low SEA in a house, and her monthly income was between $2,500 and $3,000. Teacher L4 was a mother of five and had been married for 23 years. She lived in a house in the middle SEA, and her monthly income was between $2,000 and $2,500. She graduated with a teaching diploma in 1995 and had taught at school L in the 18 years before the study.

Emergent Themes

Thematic analysis identified four major themes: partnership knowledge; establishing partnerships need; partnership obstacles; and partnership enhancement. The first three themes answered the first qualitative strand question: What were the teachers' experience that shaped their beliefs about and affected the implementation of SFCPs? The last theme, partnership enhancement, answered the second question: How would the teachers improve the implementation of the partnerships?

Partnership knowledge. The first theme to emerge was the knowledge related to partnerships. The teachers were aware of the meanings behind the partnerships and recognized that involvement and partnership are not the same. Teacher L2 said,

> Family involvement has to do with working with the kindergarten, like teaching children the alphabet at home and partnerships or participating in meetings to discuss issues related to children's development . . . Partnerships mean working hand-in-hand with the teachers.

Teacher H2 stated, “They seemed to be the same, but partnerships involve working with all school personnel and families at all levels.” However, Teacher H2 clarified the different meanings, in that “partnerships are a formal organized and supervised work by the kindergarten teachers or principals to enhance the teaching process, but involvement is passive, and parents become the audience.”

Regarding the six different practices, some teachers remembered them from the survey. Yet other teachers first believed that the partnerships centered on communication; for example, Teacher M4 explained that “successful family–school partnerships find an effective and quick way to reach the mother and discuss with her the child’s progress.” Teacher H3 claimed that “it means communicating with the family when needed.” Teacher H1 indicated that “communication with family is a foundation stone of the partnerships. Fast response is important.”

Regarding parenting practice, Teacher L3 teachers mentioned that:

> Parenting is the basis of partnerships. Many children need care during sickness or weather changes. I text mothers to tell them to put warm clothes or jackets on their children or to be aware of flu season. Sometimes I send home fliers about the negative consequences of using tablets and iPads.

Teacher L4 expanded on the idea of partnerships to mean:

> Everything can strengthen the family–school relationship. As a teacher, I have searched and found that volunteering is important and should not be limited to the mother visiting and giving children toys. It is more than this. Mothers can show children skills they are experts in, like handwriting, painting, or cooking. Also,

> partnerships can be made through completing some assignments at home with their children. We tried this this year, and many mothers and children are happy. Children learn a lot, and the mothers become more interested in the kindergarten and contact me more and more about their children. Some mothers joined in a group and shared information related to their children's health and learning. They helped me, sometimes, in making decisions, like the best materials I am supposed to use in teaching children.

From her experience, Teacher H4 focused more on learning at home; she said, "working at home is what we as teachers need to build partnerships . . . we cannot work solely to teach children reading or at least emergent reading skills without help from home." She emphasized further that

> Contacting the mother through written messages and daily notes is important . . . I need to hear from the children's parents or at least from the mothers when deciding on some activities. That is why I think partnerships should include decision-making.

Some teachers had never heard of decision-making practices and were happy to learn more, such as Teacher M1, who said,

> This is the first time that I have heard about parent representatives or the school's advisory council . . . I thought decision-making was done at the mother and teacher conference to discuss some issues related to the child's development.

Teacher L2 added that "it is good to learn that parents can help to contact other parents to gather ideas related to school programs and children's learning."

Other teachers expanded on the partnerships to include collaborating with the community; for example, Teacher M3 said, "I send brochures about new activities, like those that are held in the public library. Many mothers now ask me about other activities." Teacher M1 claimed,

> Business owners contacted the kindergarten to conduct events like book trucks. The truck stayed a few days in the kindergarten, and the children borrowed some books and returned them by the end of the week. It was an amazing experience.

Summary. According to teachers' experiences with partnerships, they viewed them differently. Some of them emphasized communication practice with children's mothers. Others thought that family–school partnerships are about helping children complete homework or read teachers' notes. A few teachers experienced collaborating with community practice by accepting offers from the business owners, which means the teachers did not plan for it in advance.

Establishing partnerships need. The teachers explained their reasoning for the importance of the SFCPs. From their experiences, some teachers claimed that these partnerships affected children's achievement. Teacher H2 explained that

> The mother who gives the school her contact information and responds to my letters or through phone calls helps us build strong partnerships . . . For mothers who ignore my letters and do very little, their children's achievement is weak.

Hence, the teachers could see the difference, in that "the child whose mother communicates with the kindergarten frequently usually achieve more than those whose mothers keep ignoring communication" (Teacher L1). Parenting appears to be significant because "workshops for mothers about screen time and crafts alternatives, children's sexual abuse awareness, and healthy food alternatives help mothers to know how to deal with their children in these situations" (Teacher M3). Teacher L2 added that

> The mothers in my classrooms really loved meeting and talking about some issues like the dangers of spending long periods with nannies and tablets and the need to talk with children every night . . . They tried to find solutions. One day a mother shared some other practices she made with her daughter, like a special time to discuss what happened during the day or to play together . . . Some [of the mothers] sent me messages that their children's behaviors and discipline had changed and asked me to share their experiences with others.

Teacher M2 addressed that it

> It is hard to deal with children suffering from malnutrition . . . some parents think fast food is more modern. . . but this harms their health . . . I frequently sent home notes and flyers about healthy foods, and I see good results.

According to their experiences, all teachers agreed that children need learning at home but for different reasons. For example, Teacher H4 addressed that

> Children spend their time after school watching TV or using tablets . . . some mothers listened to my suggestions and helped their children to learn some

> activities like reading or playing cards . . . these activities boost the mother–child relationship.

The official kindergarten curriculum (SLC) has not provided take home activities; thus, any activities would be the teachers' suggestions. Teacher L4 expressed that

> Usually I offered a file with daily activities; some mothers are interested in helping their children complete them at home, but unfortunately, many of them are not aware of the importance of daily reading at home. They said it was too early for their children to learn how to read; this should be in first grade. I told them learning to read or write requires some practice and encouragement at home. . . but their responses disappointed me.

Communicating and meeting with mothers at the beginning and during the school year help teachers get to know children better. Teacher M4 discussed her reasoning: "In the first meeting with the mother, we decided to develop a rough plan about her child's behaviors; mothers know and have become more aware than before . . . they focus more on behaviors and comprehensive development." Teacher L4 added another reason: "I do not know this child and cannot work with him or teach him without knowing his background." Moreover, Teacher L3 added,

> From my experience, I learned that meeting with the mother can solve many developmental problems. I remember a child conducted destructive behavior. I tried many methods, but nothing worked. I met with the mother, and she told me that the child missed her nanny so much. Another child, I learned from the

mother, had received surgery in his ear and could not hear very well. So that was why he talked so load.

Teacher L1 highlighted that another reason for strong communication with children's families is that "the mothers believe in us more when they can reach us . . . The more respectful relationship is when we [the teachers] communicate with mothers using different media." Teachers' job satisfaction increased when families appreciated their hard work. Teacher M2 said "every time I contact mothers through phone or written notes, I feel how important I am, especially when they tell me I am like their children's other mother."

Teacher H1 explained that there are consequences of collaborating with community and children's health: "When children received fun activities and comic books related to health facts about dates that were sent by a dates factory, I realized that two children started bringing dates for breakfast besides their regular food." The collaborating is not only from the community to the kindergarten but is also the other way around. Teacher M2 participated with her students in "the activity of planting seedlings in the neighborhood public park . . . the kids were happy they made a difference in the area and kept talking about this experience for a while." Teacher L4 collaborated in an event called *Ataa* an Arabic work meaning *giving* "The MOE sent circulars encouraging teachers to send families flyers asking them to send old toys to be given to the children . . . My students become aware of their role in helping others."

Additionally, community helpers were involved in teaching according to SLC suggestions: "In some classes, there were examples where local agents may elevate

children's learning like fire fighters, nurses, doctors. The children enjoyed the presentation and talking to real firefighters" (Teacher H1). The teachers asserted that the partnerships are also beneficial for the whole family. Teacher L3 said, "our kindergarten provided a variety of workshops for mothers or big sisters like computer, cooking . . . public speaking skills." Teacher L2 added, "online groups that use apps like WhatsApp help mothers to learn from each other . . . a mother could solve a personal problem with her teenager after discussing it with the other mothers." Teacher H4 indicated that

> the mothers feel they are not the only ones who have a certain problem, question, or need . . . many of them share the same thing . . . which encourages them to join the group and talk freely.

Teachers in this study viewed volunteering as an important practice, even though the teachers' experiences seemed to be very weak and limited to each mother visiting the kindergarten once a year and giving the children presents, as Teacher H2 said:

> We do not have volunteering in our kindergarten other than The Visiting Mother Program . . . We invite each mother once a year to be a visiting mother. In her visit, she can present some of her child's daily life activities and his or her pictures. These days, we tried to alter that to give mothers the chance to make their visiting more effective.

Teacher L2 added, "the visiting mother program is not volunteering; actually, there are competitions among the mothers to show who provides better gifts or fancy parties." She continued with,

> I had a new plan for the visiting mothers . . . one mother made sandwiches with the children in the *Nutrition Unit* . . . a mother conducted a painting activity . . . we painted a wall with children's decorations, and the mother brought the tools in her visit.

Teacher L1 discussed that, "volunteering sometimes takes a long time—more than what it is supposed to be. I do not have time to tell the mothers what they have to do. I am so busy during the day."

Teacher H1 had a different experience and explained why she needed volunteering: "To take advantage of mothers' skills like reading stories and preparing healthy meals with kids . . . We [the teachers in her kindergarten] did that once, and the benefits were excellent." One experience showed how volunteering helped Teacher M1 in teaching some concepts. She explained that "a mother volunteered and invited us to her house to teach children concepts related to the family and home."

The teachers stressed the significant role of decision-making in partnerships with the mothers in terms of the mother–teacher decision level. Teacher M1 believed that

> thinking out loud with mothers as a team or committee would be great to help us [teachers] to work professionally with many issues in my classroom. I remember how upset and disappointed I was when I spent nights reading books to deal with some disruptive behaviors but with poor results.

Regarding the wider decision-making practices, such as parent representatives, the school advisory council, the review school curricula committee, and so on, some teachers agreed that it is a "good idea to have the family members when making major decisions at the

school level" (Teacher H2). Teacher H1 expressed her hope: "Involving mothers to make decisions related to our school plan is a good idea . . . I really need them because they know their children better." She continued with, "the reprehensive mother, for example, eases the work so that we can know what mothers want from us and we can improve our work due to families' needs." Some teachers believed that many parents have knowledge that "may be better than the teachers themselves. Some of the educators have a lot of teaching experience." (Teacher H4)

The teachers, like Teacher L4 and Teacher M2, had different opinions and would have liked to limit the decision-making practice. Teacher L4 claimed that "not all mothers can be involved in making decisions. Some mothers become biased to their opinion." Teacher M2 said,

> I become so nervous when asking mothers to discuss an issue and to improve some parts of the teaching because not all mothers understand their limits and mine as well . . . I think decision-making is important for individual children's problems, only and it is not appropriate for discussing classroom or school organizational plans.

Summary. The public kindergarten teachers in the current study discussed the benefits of the partnerships. Children's development can be enhanced by strong ties with the family and the community. Partnerships with the children's kindergarten benefited the mothers in enhancing their skills and raising their children. According to teachers' experiences, each practice appeared to have distinguishing benefits to teachers and children.

Partnership obstacles. During their teaching years, public kindergarten teachers experienced many barriers toward practicing one or more partnership practices. There are four subthemes in this theme, namely time, lack of skills, administrative restrictions, and personal preference.

The firs subtheme is the time barrier. All teachers in this study reported that a lack of time was one of the obstacles in involving mothers in school activities. The school hours in Riyadh City were from 7 a.m. until 12: 30 p.m. Teacher H3 said, the school day "is full of activities, so we barely have time to finish all of the planned activities." Teacher H3 added, "our school hours are short . . . about six hours . . . and limited for a specific program decided in advance . . . I cannot change any part without official reasons and principal approval." Also, the mothers' time is tight. "Even if the kindergarten offers volunteering opportunities, many mothers cannot make it because of their restricted time. They have jobs or little babies at home," said Teacher M2. Teacher H3 indicated that, "when sending home activities, some mothers do not look at them. They say, 'we do not have time to review the kindergarten homework.'" She explained, as a teacher, that "it took time to choose the best activities and copy them for children to take home, but I am disappointed when children return them as they go. I stopped that recently."

However, it is all about proprieties. When mothers understood the significant role of the home learning, they found time to improve their children's learning at home. Teacher L2 identified,

> Some teachers find time to involve mothers, and many mothers participate when invited . . . In my experience, I witnessed that mothers do not believe in the importance of kindergarten education, so they claimed they do not have time . . . I

> know many mothers have a hard time managing their houses. They work and have little babies, but they find time to visit the kindergarten when invited, review school letters, help their children to read every night, and send notes all the time.

The lack of required skills is the second subtheme. Some teachers reported that they had not received the needed training or background regarding SFCPs during their years of preservice studies. The university early childhood programs do not provide family, school, and community partnership classes. Teacher L2 asserted that she had not taken "any course during my bachelor's degree talking about relationships with children's families." She continued with, "There were one or two classes about the role of the family in children's life and education." Teacher M1 added, "I do not remember any classes related to family involvement topics at all. The professors may have mentioned that when talking about children's disciplines." During field training, Teacher M2, noted, "As a preservice teacher, I was not allowed to contact families or attend any mother–teacher meeting or read letters from or to families." Teacher M2 specified that, "Honestly, I could not find the best way to communicate with mothers." Teacher L2 clarified,

> You should contact the parents or involve them; this is so important for children's education, development . . . and behaviors. These phrases were mentioned in many classes for many reasons, but no one told us how to do that. Of course, we made so many mistakes at the beginning. I wish there was a class or more related to family involvement.

For collaborating with the community skills, Teacher H2 stated,

> We never heard about how to collaborate with the community during my studies in the university. In some classes, there were examples of how local agents may elevate children's learning like fire fighters, nurses, doctors . . . The official curriculum suggests a few examples, also. But I did not know how to invite them at the beginning of my career. Now things have gotten better, and I have learned from other teachers how and when to invite them.

In service teachers' experiences revealed the lack of in-service training related to SFCPs. All the teachers documented they had never been offered or participated in workshops about the partnerships. Teacher H3 said that "it was not easy to write letters to mothers . . . I do not know what to say and when . . . what is the best way and appropriate way to contact the mothers." Teacher H4 reported that she "had over 40 workshops in different topics but nothing about family or community partnerships." Teacher L3 added, "Some workshops discussed the need to include parents, especially with misbehaving children, but we never had a workshop about how to do that." Teacher L4 explained, "All the workshops I participated in were about children's learning and development. I do not remember any of them being about family partnerships." Teacher M2 had a different experience, in that she "participated in some meetings about the importance of contacting families . . . but these meetings encourage teachers to collaborate with families only."

Also, the families should have specific skills to communicate effectively with teachers. The teachers, in this research, explained that the weak communication practice may lean partially on families' beliefs and skills. Teacher H2 said that

> Not all mothers have email or check their email daily. . . . One mother prefers to communicate via landline phone, but another wants printed copies of the memos. . . . Some text me when they need to communicate. . . but the worst is the one who insists on coming in each time she needs to talk to me, . . . which is not professional at all.

The teachers liked to use advanced technology to communicate with families. Yet, "when using emails, the classroom Facebook page, or an Instagram account to share newsletters, many mothers kept complaining that they wanted the old-fashioned ways" (Teacher M4). In this area, Teacher H2 expressed that

> It is a challenge that the teacher is supposed to communicate with all families in their suitable ways. Some prefer to learn news from social media, such as Twitter or Facebook, . . . but some want the traditional methods, and other mothers think such communication is unnecessary unless it is an emergency.

Teacher L1 said, "Some mothers are busy at home or work and prefer not to communicate at all." Teacher H2 talked about her experience working with the community, in that "it was almost a personal effort to work with community services." For example, Teacher M4 noted, "The teacher or our principal contact... [business owners] or sometimes they send commercial offers, like foods companies. So, we receive the approval from the MOE and invite them."

Administrative restrictions are the third subtheme. The bureaucratic central educational system in Saudi Arabia (which offers united instructions to all regions,

monitors the implementation, and assigns authorities to higher positions) makes it hard to involve families or collaborate with the community. The teachers explained their lack of autonomy to become partners with families and the community; as Teacher M2 said, "We tried to visit factories or public libraries, but the MOE's long and complicated process that is required to gain the approval prevents us." Teacher L2 explained her borders and role in the partnerships as:

> It is not prohibited but complicated… We collaborate with many agencies such as hospitals, train stations, the public library, and so on... [Yet], as a teacher, I am not allowed to do that myself. My role is to suggest some local agencies, places, and activities to the kindergarten principal, and she decides what is the best and then sends to the supervision office to gain approval.

Teacher M1 indicated that "we receive regulations and memos from the MOE and we must sign that prevents any outside party or individuals from participating in our program activities without gaining approval in advance from the [educational supervision] office." The kindergarten principal has the right, sometimes, to use practices. The MOE sends circulations to The Visiting Mothers Program and conduct workshops, but "they are not mandatory. The MOE suggests, encourages, motivates… but there is no penalty if we do not use the programs" Teacher M1 continued, "I remember my previous principal kept these regulations in her office and we never knew about them…"

Regarding decision making, all the teacher asserted that their kindergarten or the MOE did not offer any opportunities to involve families in any decision-making groups.

Teacher L1 said that "the curriculum was formed in advance… we just implement what we have." Teacher M3 added, "If I changed a little bit in the educational unit, the educational adviser will reject that… so how can we involve mothers to change the curriculum?" About the families' roles in making decisions, teachers indicated:

> Mothers can individually make decisions regarding their children's behaviors or if they prefer to work with their children to improve their literacy and math skills… but we cannot involve them to alter the curriculum or any of the school policies... the teachers themselves cannot do that… these decisions come from higher authorities. (Teacher M4)

Teacher H4 emphasized:

> From my experience, some teachers welcome mothers to make some decisions and others do not… for me, I have a group of mothers, and they assigned one to represent them… the voices were heard, and we made some decisions like activities in the classroom corners related to concepts I teach… I know that we cannot change something at the school level, but at least mothers are involved in my decisions… children gained the advantage that they have more enjoyable activities.

The fourth subtheme is the personal preferences. Some teachers hold to the idea that family and community partnerships with kindergartens is significant at some points; however, this should be very limited and differs according to the family's performance. Teacher L3 claimed:

> Not all families are the same. I would use four classifications. Silent families are the most difficult because I do not know what they want. I try to communicate them, but they respond only weakly. Neglectful families are the least difficult; they do not care about the children and think that kindergarten is a day care and that the teachers are nannies, so I only contact them for emergencies. Other families are very cautious and take care of their children. . . . We communicate with them frequently. The fourth are the aware families. These parents are educated and hold deep knowledge about nurturing. . . . It is hard or impossible to be involved with the first two types families. They ignore letters or notes. . . . The third family type is sometimes hard to deal with. For example, a mother asked me how often her child coughs and what exactly she says to her classmates. They try to control their children's lives and environments everywhere, which is impossible. . . . I prefer to not work with them as much as I can. The aware family is the best. They know their limits and work with their children, not for them.

About the community, Teacher M3 noted that "children's safety comes first. I cannot invite someone to talk to the children unless I can trust him or her… I cannot take them outside the school building for any reason... It is my responsibility to keep them safe."

The work environment served as a barrier to the partnerships. Even though the teachers were enthusiastic to work with families and the community, others discouraged them. "I feel that I am the only one who want to work with families," Teacher L1 continued,

> When discussing which workshop we can provide to the mothers, many teachers become annoyed and said ‘do not open closed doors, we do not want to have extra work, mothers have not asked for workshops, or no one will participate.

Teacher M3 addressed the peer pressure: “The group of teachers I work with now are discouraging me. I feel disappointed when I give them my ideas and not one of them is interested.” Teacher L4 explained, “in my first years of teaching, there was a teacher-conducted workshop in different topics for mothers, like healthy foods; I like the idea and asked the principal, but she said that we do not have time for unnecessary things.”

Without any rewards or encouragement, Teacher H3 said that “our kindergarten principal would not be interested to work toward the partnerships more than what is written in the kindergarten official curriculum [SLC].” Teacher M1 explained:

> I do not ignore the importance of the family involvement, but no one ask me to involve mothers other than in regular meetings or as needed... Even collaborating with community resources, the MOE sends regulations for events to collaborate with some community resources, but if we have time, we would conduct them or we would not, because this is optional and not included in our yearly report [evaluation].

As Teacher H2 noted, “Because there is nothing in return, I do not think we [the teachers] would apply all of the practices.” According to her experience, Teacher L3 stated that “it will be time-wasting if there is no reward, especially if the families do not believe in the importance of this collaborating.”

Another concern raised was the limited consideration of the kindergarten role in the education system in Saudi Arabia. The teachers believed that "even we work very hard in these partnerships and prepare fantastic programs for families… we need family and community understanding of our hard work and for them to collaborate with us." (Teacher M1). Some families viewed the kindergarten "as a nursery and we [the teachers] as nannies; they have not given the communication any import" (Teacher L1). Teacher L3 revealed that "for some children, we never have met their mothers; the mothers explained their neglect by saying that their kids' education at this moment is not important; they just want the child to be used to the social life." Even in critical situations, teachers claimed that some mothers ignored communications: "When I call the mother to assign an appointment to discuss her child's misbehavior, they keep ignoring." (Teacher L3)

Additionally, some teachers indicated that they do not have the right to give their opinion to the mothers regarding nurturing their own children. "It is not easy to tell the mother what to do with her children" (Teacher H3). Teacher H4 added, "A mother told me that is not of my business… [because] she is the mother and she knows what is better for her child." During a workshop about children's sexual abuse, a mother said:

> It is not professional to discuss these things with our kids they are still young. I have seven kids, and everything is fine. I am a mother for 25 years and do not need to tell me what to do to protect my children (Teacher M2).

Summary. Public kindergartens teachers asserted that they experienced many barriers to conducting partnerships with families and community. Time limitation

impeded the teachers from effective collaboration. They highlighted their lack of skills and training opportunities prior to and during service to practice the partnerships more efficiently. Higher authorities such as educational supervisors and the MOE obligations play significant role in hindering the partnerships. Some teachers and families chose to not engage in the partnerships or limited their participation for personal reasons. Finally, family and the community lack of knowledge regarding to the significant role of kindergarten affects the educational process and the partnerships negatively.

Partnerships enhancement. When teachers addressed their experiences, they followed them with valuable enhancement suggestions. The teachers' recommendations concentrated on two subthemes: Organizational reformation and knowledge and skill improvement.

The first subtheme is the organizational reformation. All teachers revealed that the MOE kept sending administrative circulars emphasizing the significance of family partnership in children's learning and development but that "this is not mandatory, and there is no credit to teachers who collaborate with families." Teacher H3 continued, "There should be items or section in the teacher's performance evaluation sheet related to family involvement." Teachers also need support and encouragement from principals and supervisors "I recommended giving families chances to participate during teaching. We cannot do that without permission from the principal and supervisor" (Teacher M2). Many teachers thought that delegation of authorities would solve the problem; they "need to have control of many things… need to decide who, what, and when to invite mothers or any community member… I wish I could take my children to field trips without waiting months for approval." (Teacher L2)

kindergarten teachers hope to facilitate their job by decreasing MOE restrictions. Teacher H2 said that "teachers or at least kindergarten principals need to have the control over family school partnerships…even taking advantages of community resources, each principal can do that without waiting for a permission from a higher and very long administrative pyramid."

Another angle that teachers expressed was that by June 2018, women in Saudi Arabia will be allowed to drive. "They can attend school activities easily, since many of them complain that they could not participate the kindergarten's activities because of lack of transportation" (Teacher M3). More family–school activities will be conducted in the future, as Teacher L2 explained that "more mothers can help and support their children's learning by attending kindergarten's activities, because there will be no more transportation barrier." For this reason, teachers "will have more volunteers and an effective parents' room." Teacher H1 added that "many mothers are talented and would like to help but could not continue, because they do not have drivers… we need to expand the opportunities and involve mothers intensively."

The second subtheme is the knowledge and skill improvement. Kindergartens teachers believed that they needed strong backgrounds and training related to SFCPs. Teacher M4 explained that "pre-service teachers' programs have to include subjects related to family–school relationships." Teacher M1 added:

> The family–school or school–community topics must be in detail and in independent subjects… [that] discuss partnerships topics…and community resources. We need to know what the best resources are and how to communicate

> with community people and agencies to support and enhance teaching and children's development.

During the field training, which usually takes place during the last year in early childhood bachelor's programs, teachers are encouraged to "give [pre-service teachers] a chance to communicate with children's mothers as much as possible... and of course under classroom teachers' supervision." (Teacher M3)

Because team spirit or group effect is important for individuals, Teacher L2 noted that "special training, I mean in service training should be given to teachers all the time… some teachers think this is not important and frustrate others." Teacher H2 had a suggestion:

> Each teacher has to get tests to measure her enthusiasm degree… we do not want anyone to let us down when we are eager to work with families… team spirt is important, and there should be an action to increase our teamwork quality.

Teachers' skills and interests vary; therefore, identification of training helps to provide appropriate workshops. Teacher L4 said, "Instead of providing similar training to all teachers in the city, I suggest surveying teachers to assess their abilities and skills and then deciding the proper workshops." Teacher M4 claimed that "I think that we need to meet with other kindergarten teachers once a year at least to exchange experiences and learn from each other."

The teachers addressed the need to raise awareness of the importance of kindergarten level among the community. The kindergarten level in the educational ladder is still counted as preschool. Teacher H1 said, "We need to share the knowledge of

the importance of the kindergarten in future life." Teacher H3 added, "It is not a place to leave children when parents are busy. Parents should know that this place is important for children's whole development… so many children's behaviors issues …were solved or improved when we worked with families." She continued, "I suggest including kindergarten in the educational ladder to give it the same importance as first grade" (Teacher H3).

Local community agencies and members would like to partner with schools, but they lack guidance. Teacher H1 added:

> We always receive memos regarding community resources, but we do not know how and when to involve them… some instructions should be added, and the benefits…in contrast, the community members and business should know about us… many of them want to cooperate but do not know how.

Summary. Many teachers expressed that SFCPs can be improved by different methods. According to their experience, teachers believed that the MOE should impose procedures to organize and impose SFCPs within teachers and kindergarten work. Concomitant with that, teachers heavily emphasized the necessity of career development to build healthy partnerships. Therefore, given the authority to hold partnerships, as they are aware of and acknowledge its dimensions, teachers will hold and accomplish successful partnerships with families and community.

Summary

The fourth chapter answered both strands questions and null hypotheses. Statistical analysis using SPSS presented numeric data related to the quantitative strand results followed by an interpretation of each result. The chapter provided qualitative

analysis using the thematic analysis procedure. The next chapter would restate the major results in a summary and would add the discussion of the result by integrating both strand results to draw the answer for the mixed methods question: What were kindergartens' teachers' beliefs about and implementation of SFCPs, what were the experiences that shape their beliefs and affect the implementation, and how would they improve the partnerships? Finally, the fifth chapter would view the implications and recommendations extracted from this research.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter started with a summary of the major results, which, along with the discussion of the strand results, combine to answer the mixed methods questions: What were kindergartens' teachers' beliefs about and implementation of SFCPs, what were the experiences that shape their beliefs and affect the implementation, and how would they improve the partnerships? A summary of the major results was followed by the conclusions, implications, and recommendations, which were drawn from the literature review and the study's results.

Summary

Research has documented that teachers' beliefs regarding the importance of SFCPs was a considerably significant aspect of partnership implementation. Previous studies (e.g., Van Voorhis et al., 2013; Fantuzzo et al., 2004 McWayne et al., 2004; Van Voorhis, Maier) asserted that family partnerships had a tremendous impact on children's education and achievement. Epstein et al. (2009) explained that the teachers were not replacement pillars for successful partnerships. This SEMM study aimed to examine public kindergarten teachers' beliefs about and implementation of the SFCP six practices in Riyadh City, Saudi Arabia. It used Epstein's model of partnerships, which includes the constructs of parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-

making, and collaborating within the community (Epstein et al., 2009). The quantitative strand obtained teachers' beliefs and implementation of SFCPs by surveying a sample of 266 teachers from 126 public kindergartens in different SEAs. The follow-up qualitative strand included a purposeful sample of 12 teachers who had varying amounts of experience discussing their experiences with SFCPs within three different SEAs. The major results were**:**

Quantitative Strand Finding Summary

The quantitative strand included three questions and 13 null hypotheses. The first question aimed to test the instrument validity and reality. The second question's goal was to examine public kindergarten teachers' beliefs about the six SFCP practices, and there was a null hypothesis to examine the statistical interaction effects between teachers' beliefs about the six SFCP practices and their years of experience or SEAs. The third question examined the teachers' implementation of the six SFCP practices, and there were 12 null hypotheses; six of them tested the statistical significant associations between teachers' implementation of SFCP practices and their years of experience. The other six null hypotheses tested the statistical significant associations between teachers' implementation of SFCP practices and the SEAs.

The quantitative instrument question. Was the Arabic version of the survey, Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships, reliable and valid for use in the Saudi Arabian context?

Two tests were employed to answer this question. For reliability, Cronbach's alpha was applied to the teachers' beliefs about and implementation of SFCP sections. The coefficient value alpha (α) for each practice ranged from .902 to .771, which meant

that the instrument is reliable. For face validity, a group of experts reviewed the statements and edited them.

For constructive validity, PCA analysis needed to assess the constructive validity for the Arabic version of the survey. The assessment clustered the survey statements into components. These components were in the original survey: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. The statements clustered into each component after the face validity were: five statements included in the parenting component; 12 statements in the communicating component; seven statements in the volunteering component; four statements in the learning at home component; six statements in the decision-making component; and four statements in the collaborating with the community component.

Results from the PCA revealed that almost all of the Arabic version statements were as significantly loaded into the components as those in the original survey developed by Epstein et al., (2009); thus, no statements had to be omitted. The only exception was that the sixth statement in the decision-making component (developing the school's plan and program of family and community involvement with input from educators, parents, and others) shared variances with the decision-making and collaborating with the community components. Beside to that this statement was significantly loaded higher (.547) with the collaboration with the community component than with the decision-making component (.475), conceptually, it was compatible with the collaboration with the community. This result emphasized that the survey structure was valid and had a strong reason to be used in the Saudi Arabian context.

The teachers' beliefs question. How much did the public kindergarten teachers believe in the importance of SFCP practices (parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community)?

More than half of the teachers in this study believed that the practices of parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, and collaborating with the community were very important. The majority of the teachers believed that the decision-making practice was important as well. The total means supported for each practice varied from one teacher to another; therefore, these practices were ranked according to their mean value differences. The parenting practice was at the top followed by the learning at home practice. The third practice was communicating, and the fourth was collaborating with the community. The fifth one was volunteering, and the sixth practice was decision-making.

The teachers' beliefs null hypothesis. $H0_1$: There were no statistically significant interaction effects between teachers' years of experience and different SEAs with regard to teachers' beliefs about the SFCP practices (parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community).

The two-way MANOVA analysis revealed that the above null hypothesis was returned, and there were no statistically significant interaction effects among teachers according to their years of experiences or to the areas where they taught. In other words, the number of years of experience did not affect the teachers' beliefs regarding the importance of SFCP practices nor did the SEAs in which they taught.

The teachers' Implementation of SFCPs question. How often did public kindergarten teachers implement SFCP practices (parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community)?

The teachers' implementation of the six practices greatly varied from one practice to another. For the parenting practice, 32% of the study sample implemented it several times a semester, and 20% of the teachers have never worked with families with regard to parenting practices. Around 30% of total teachers have never communicated with families, and 28% of them communicated with families several times during the semester. In terms of volunteering, the majority of the teachers have never provided volunteering opportunities to the families. About 29% of the total teachers organized learning at home activities for the children, and 23% of them implemented that practice weekly. The least implemented practice was decision-making. More than half of the participants, 66%, have never engaged families in making any decisions. Similarly, almost half of the teachers, 49%, have never collaborated with the community regarding children's learning and development.

The null hypotheses from 2 to13 examined the statistically significant associations among teachers' years of experiences and working in different SEAs with regard to their implementation of each practice. Chi-square tests for associations were conducted between the independent variables, years of experience and SEAs, and the six dependent variables (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community). The results showed that there were no statistically significant associations between the years of experiences or SEAs and the teachers' implementation of any of the six practices.

Qualitative Strand Finding Summary

The participants in this strand were 12 public kindergarten teachers in Riyadh City. These participants were purposefully chosen from the quantitative strand participants. The teachers varied in their years of experience and the SEAs where they taught. They indicated at the end of the survey that they agreed to participate in the interviews. The thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data. The main guided qualitative strand questions and a summary of each one answer were as follows:

Question one. What were teachers' experiences that shaped their beliefs about and affected the implementation of SFCP?

The emergent themes associated with this question were the following: partnership knowledge, establishing partnership need, and partnership obstacles. The partnership knowledge reflected the teachers' prior knowledge with regard to SFCP six practices and the sources of this knowledge. The results indicated that many of the teachers were aware of the partnerships, but they did not receive any classes or training about the partnerships. The second theme was establishing partnerships' need. Some teachers indicated that the SFCP practices helped to enhance students' academic achievement, and learning. Others asserted that the partnerships helped them for teaching quality improvements because they knew their children and families better, and the community supported them.

The third theme was the partnership obstacles. The teachers discussed many barriers related to the time limitations that prevented them from forming partnerships with families and the community. They also documented that the lack of required skills and training pre- and in-service to implement SFCP was considered an essential barrier.

The administrative restrictions such as regulations and circulars from high authorities, like educational supervisors, limited collaboration between the families and the community. A few teachers in the research claimed that they chose not to implement some practices with families or the community for personal purposes. An important barrier that weakened or prevented the teachers' effort of conducting partnerships was that families and community members lacked knowledge about the significant role of SFCP in teaching and learning.

Question two. How would the teachers improve the implementation of the partnerships?

The main themes related to this question were as follows: organizational reformation and knowledge and skill improvement. The teachers suggested that to improve SFCPs, the teachers needed to receive credits or any type of encouragement as motivations. The delegation of authority was also another method to facilitate planning to involve families or the community into schools. To improve their skills, the teachers advocated for the need to attend courses or training workshops and other sources that enhanced their skills and knowledge for successful partnerships.

Discussion

The following discussion presented the integration of quantitative and qualitative strands of results as an answer to the mixed methods question. In the discussion, the current research results and the findings of previous studies would be compared and contrasted, with some explanation related to the different findings.

Teachers' beliefs about SFCPs Discussion

Epstein et al. (2009) explained that teachers were not replacement pillars for successful partnerships. The teachers' beliefs about partnerships with the students' families and the community are essential aspects of constructing strong and successful relationships. The Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships (Epstein et al., 2009) was used in this study to examine public kindergarten teachers' beliefs about and implementation of SFCPs in Riyadh City, Saudi Arabia. The survey was translated into Arabic, as this was the teachers' first language. Therefore, PCA analysis needed to assess the constructive validity after the face validity (experts in the early childhood field reviewed the survey content).

Results from the PCA revealed that almost all of the Arabic version statements were as significantly loaded into the components as those in the original survey developed by Epstein et al., (2009). Because the sixth statement in the decision-making component (developing the school's plan and program of family and community involvement with input from educators, parents, and others) shared variances with collaboration with the community component, it was added into the collaboration with the community component.

A different result found was found in Erdener (2013), which used 23 statements from the same original survey, Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships; however, these statements were obtained from all practices except the collaborating with the community practice. The survey was used in a Turkish context, and the study participants were parents. The PCA findings showed that the components parenting, learning at home, and decision-making were strongly correlated to their original

components in the Turkish version. On the other hand, the report indicated that the communicating and volunteering statements were mixed; therefore, these statements combined into one: The school interaction factor. The explanation reported in the Turkish research stated that there was a distinct culture variation between the Turkish and American educational systems. As the original survey was constructed in America, this might be the reason behind the different clustering. The current research researcher would add that the original survey was developed by a group of highly educated colleagues specialized in education and the current research participants were kindergarten teachers who have educational degrees. Therefore, it is possible that their opinions would be similar to the original survey. In contrast, 76% of the parents (in the Turkish study) did not have college degrees, 50% of the total parents in the study had less than a high school degree, and 85% of the participants were low-income parents.

The statistical analysis of the current research regarding the teachers' beliefs about the SFCP six practices indicated that parenting was the most important practice, followed by learning at home. The communicating practice and collaborating with the community were the third and fourth important practices. Finally, the fifth significant practice was volunteering and the sixth was the decision-making practice. There are some similarities between the Saudi teachers' beliefs and those of the American teachers in the Herrell (2011) study. Both groups of teachers believed that communication and learning practices were the two most important practices, which means that there would be no successful school–home partnerships without communication or home-based learning. The lowest-ranked practice according to the statistical means of the current research and Herrell

(2011) was decision-making, which emphasized that intensively engaging families in the decision-making practice may produce negative consequences.

Although the parenting practice was the most important practice in the current study, the American teachers' research in Herrell (2011) revealed that parenting was in fifth place among the six practices. The cultural differences between the two countries can explain some of the differences here. Many parents in Saudi Arabia usually rely on nannies to look after their children, and some mothers do not know basic details about their children's life. The nanny and the driver are responsible for dropping the child off at school in the morning and picking him up in the afternoon. The nanny prepares food, clothes, spends time with the child at bedtime, and some families let the nanny take the child to the doctor's office (for illness or routine visits). Therefore, teachers in Saudi Arabia feel that the parents need to be more aware of their roles toward their own children.

The null hypotheses in the quantitative strand proved that there were no statistical interaction effects regarding beliefs toward the significant role of the SFCP six practices among teachers who taught in the three SEAs or with different levels of experience. This result seemed to be consistent with the results found by Herrel (2011), which examined teachers' perspectives toward the effectiveness of the Epstein et al. (2009) survey. The results expressed that there were no differences related to the teachers' experience levels and their beliefs in the effectiveness of the six practices. The previous and current studies asserted that inexperienced or experienced teachers in Saudi Arabia and the United States shared the same beliefs. This result added more significant data to the SFCP practices, as

even the highly experienced teachers believed they needed to collaborate with the family and the community to enhance children's education.

Concomitant with those findings, the educational system in Saudi Arabia provides a strong base for future success. That is because the teachers believe that partnerships with the family and community are significant components in the educational process (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Baum & McMurray-Schwarz, 2004; Souto-Manning & Swik, 2006). Teachers' positive beliefs about SFCPs builds strong ties and trustworthy relationships with parents (Knopf & Swick, 2007). In the qualitative strand follow up interviews, teachers declared that partnerships are important for the academic achievement and development of children. One teacher said that the difference between "the child whose mother communicates with the kindergarten frequently usually achieve more than those whose mothers keep ignoring communication" (Teacher L1). Teacher H2 explained further:

> The mother who gives the school her contact information and responds immediately to my letters or the school's call helps us to build strong partnerships . . . . Mothers who ignore my letters and are unavailable, their children's achievement is weak.

This result is compatible with research findings that asserted that the earlier the involvement by families the higher achievement reaped by the children later. In longitudinal studies, students whose parents became involved early on achieved more in their academic studies. For example, St. Clair and Jackson (2006) and the follow up research in St. Clair et al. (2012) compared two groups of students in which the first

group of kindergarten parents were involved in a program about literacy activities for their children, and the second group became the control group. In the first and the second studies, the researchers found that family involvement in children's education was a significant factor in academic success.

According to the statistical analysis, parenting was the most important practice among the six SFCP practices. The majority of the teachers in this study believed parenting was very important, and about 15% thought it was important. In the follow up interviews, teachers explained their reasons; cooperating with families in parenting their children promote children's achievement and development of healthier behaviors. As one teacher expressed,

> It is hard to deal with children suffering from malnutrition. . . . some parents think fast food is more modern . . . but this harms their health. . . . I frequently send home notes and flyers about healthy foods, and I see good results." (Teacher M2)

For this reason, Rosenzweig (2001) addressed the school–home relationship and indicated that children's success and development were not limited to academic practice or to family members' participation in school activities. Fundamental parenting practices reach further than monitoring children while they are completing school assignments or participating in teacher–parent conferences; parenting included emotional support and positive expectations. As in Maslow' Hierarchy of Needs, basic and physiological needs are in the base of the pyramid; the self-fulfillment and actualization needs are at the top.

A child is unable to reach the top before satisfying the needs at the bottom (Maslow, 1943).

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, many Saudi families have nannies for their children. It is known that depending on nannies to meet children's need during the critical early years has negative consequences. A healthy mother–child attachment during childhood is essential for a successful future life (Bowlby, 1969); therefore, teachers in this study felt that the increasing public awareness of parenting issues was important. Teacher L2 indicated:

> The mothers in my classrooms really loved meeting and talking about some issues, like the dangers of spending long amounts of time with nannies and tablets and the need to talk with children every night. . . . They tried to find solutions. One day, a mother told another mother about some practices she had with her daughter, like special daily time to discuss what happened during the day or to play together. . . . Some [of the mothers] sent me messages that their children's behaviors had changed and asked me to share their experience with others.

The survey data analysis showed that the learning at home practice is the second most important practice after parenting. Around 73% of the total sample asserted that it was very important and 28% indicated it was important. These results agreed with previous research that the effectiveness of home–school partnerships are traditionally measured by students' scores (Ferguson, Ramos, Rudo, & Wood, 2008). The practice of learning at home is the most important practice implemented by families (Herrell, 2011).

The interviews analysis, in the current study, discovered the teachers' purposes of assigning learning at home in a higher level. Teacher H4 expressed that

> working at home, working at home, and working at home is what, we as teachers, need to build partnerships. . . . We cannot work sole to teach children reading or at least emergent reading skills without the help from home.

The classical view of home-school partnerships in Saudi Arabia is that the parent or family members help children to complete their homework or illustrate parts of an assignment task for elementary school children or upper but not for kindergarten level. That is because the official kindergarten curriculum SLC has not provided daily learning activities. Thus, any activities would be teachers' suggestions. Teacher L4 explained:

> Usually I offered a file with daily activities; some mothers are interested in helping their children complete them at home, but unfortunately, many of them are not aware of the importance of daily reading at home. They said it was too early for their children to learn how to read; this should be in first grade. I told them learning to read or write requires some practice and encouragement at home. . . but their responses disappointed me.

Kindergarteners do not usually take assignments home in Saudi Arabia, but research has shown that learning at home was considered a significant component in children's development. For example, Puglisi, et al. (2017) proved that home-based literacy activities promoted children's linguistic development. Concomitant with those benefits of home–learning activities, Teacher H4 stated,

> Children spend their time after school watching T.V or using tablets. . . . Some mothers listened to my suggestions and helped their children complete some activities like reading or playing cards. . . these activities boost mother–child relationship.

This result indicated that there were mothers that recognized the significant role of home learning for early ages not only for their academic performance but for emotional development. This notion was emphasized in research by Bierman et al. (2017). The researchers built their study upon a previous one that was conducted on the same group of children when they were preschool age. The study sample was assessed when they were in the second grade to examine their academic performance and social–emotional progress. Results showed that home–learning was a significant predictor of not only improved academic performance but improved relationships with one another and their teachers as well. This result asserted that learning at home should concentrate on strong parent–child relationships that are considered from a comprehensive view. Hence, Bowlby (1969) reported that strong and confident parent–child relationships allow the child to learn, improve, and interact with their environments more effectively.

The quantitative strand analysis revealed that the teachers in the current research believed in the importance of different forms of communication practices, like "memos, [individual and group] conferences, notices, report cards, newsletters, phone calls, computerized messages, the internet, [and] open houses" (Epstein et al, 2009, p. 198). Over half of the study sample indicated that the communication practice is very important, 40% mentioned it is important, and only 4% consider it to be slightly

important. The interviews showed that teachers needed to communicate with children's families to boost their ability to work with the student because communication allows teachers to see the whole picture to teach him or her effectively. Teacher L4 stated, "I do not know this child and cannot work with him or teach him without knowing his background."

The Saudi school system requires each family to provide contact information, and the SLC illustrated that at the beginning of the academic year, a mother–teacher conference is required as a part of the relationship with families. Teacher M4 explained, "During the first meeting with the mother we decide a rough plan for her child's behaviors. Mothers are now becoming more aware than before. . . they focus more on behaviors and comprehensive development." This is one story about communication and problem solving told by Teacher L3:

> From [her] experience, [she] learned that meeting with the mother can solve many developmental problems. [she] remembered a child who had destructive behavior. [she] tried many methods but nothing worked. [she] met with the mother and told me that the child missed her nanny so much. Another child, [the teacher] knew that the child had ear surgery and could not hear very well; that is why he talked very loudly.

Asserting the importance of having open communication, Epstein and Sanders (2000) affirmed that families and teachers needed to be informed of each other needs and objectives towards pupils' educational objectives. Teachers lack information related to families' effort at home that are relevant to their children's education and what the future

goals or ambitions for their children are. On the other hand, families do not have any information about teachers' efforts or teaching plans to achieve educational goals. Parents also lack of information regarding opportunities to get involved. Communication among these parties can unite efforts when each party understands the other's goals and they work together to satisfy and achieve those goals.

Hoover-Dempsey and Walker (2002) emphasized that families trust their children's teachers and schools because of strong mutual communication. Teacher L1 asserted, "The mothers believed in us more when they could reach us. . . . The more respectful relationship is when we [the teachers] communicate with mothers using different media." Furthermore, teachers believed that communication was important so that the families would appreciate the significant role they played in achieving their educational goals. When teachers communicated effectively with families, their job satisfaction increased. Teacher M2 said, "Every time I contact mothers through the phone or a written note, I feel how important I am, especially when they tell me I am like their children's other mother."

Statistical analyses of this study revealed that over half of the public kindergarten teachers in this study believed in the importance of collaboration with the community very important. Around 32% of the sample viewed it as important, and 4% thought it was slightly important. In the follow up interview analyses, community helpers, firefighters and doctors were great resources. The SLC suggested inviting these members of the community to kindergartens; thus, children learn about different professions from experience. Teacher H1 said, "In some classes, examples of local agents may elevate children's learning, such as fire fighters, nurses, and doctors. The children enjoyed the

presentation and talking to real firefighters." Moreover, the teachers expressed that the children reap health benefits: "When a dates factory sent dates, fun activities, and comics books related to health facts about dates, I realized that two children started bringing dates for breakfast in addition to their regular food" (Teacher H1). Community members and business owners sometimes consider a partnership with schools as a chance to achieve their business goals.

For example, when the dates factory sent dates and conducted fun program to advertise its products, the children benefited. Ice, Thapa, and Cohen (2015) found that after surveying 127 community members from different agencies and roles in the community, the majority of the sample was eager to collaborate with the schools on behalf of the students. On the other hand, the teachers directed attention towards ways in which kindergartens could benefit the community: "Planting seedlings in the neighborhood public park. . . the kids were happy that they made a difference in the area and kept talking about this experience for a while" (Teacher M2).

Additionally, Teacher L4 and her students collaborated in an event called *Ataa* meaning *giving* "The MOE sent circulars encouraging teachers to send flyers to families asking them to send old toys to be given to the children. . . my students became aware of their role in helping others." Recently, The SLC issued a new unit called *My Country.* Some activities in this unit are related to the community, like charity. Children are involved in donating to campaigns to collect money for charities. Life experience enhances the quality of teaching, as it is meaningful. Using real-life experiences by linking the students to the community enriches teaching and enhances achievement. Bouillion and Gomez (2001) found that involving students in real environmental

problems, such as pollution in the river, enhanced science skills and scientific research skills, like conducting inquiries, testing them, and validating results. Students felt the need to pay attention to their community's problems.

The surveys showed that the majority of the teachers in this study believed that the volunteering practice was very important, less than half of them thought it was important, and fewer than 5% of the total sample believed it was slightly important. In the follow up interviews, the participants told their stories about volunteering. The most distinct volunteering practice was when mothers visited the classroom. Teacher H2 said:

> We do not have volunteering in our kindergarten other than The Visiting Mother Program. . . . We invite each mother once a year to be the visiting mother. During her visit, she can talk about some of her child's daily activities and bring his or her pictures. Recently, we have been trying to alter the program to give mothers the chance to make their visit more effective.

However, Epstein et.al, (2009) clarified that volunteering can be in or out of the school. In-school volunteering is wider than the mothers visiting and bringing gifts. It means to work voluntarily inside of the school building with teachers, school personnel, or other parents, such as monitoring children in playground or assistant teaching. For this reason, Burke (2001) emphasized that teachers have to assign plans for volunteering and not allow it to be arbitrary. If they do not, volunteering will produce negative consequences. Therefore, Teacher L2 decided to reform volunteering practice in her classroom:

> I had a new plan for the visiting mothers. . . .one mother made sandwiches with the children in the *Nutrition Unit*… a mother conducted a painting activity. . . and we painted a wall with children's decorations, and the mother brought the tools during her visit.

Another story related to volunteering and its importance was when Teacher H1 sought volunteers "to take advantage of mothers' skills, like reading stories, preparing healthy meals with kids. . . We [the teachers in her kindergarten] did that once, and the benefits were excellent." One experience showed how volunteering helped Teacher M1 in teaching some concepts. She explained, "A mother volunteered and invited us to her house to teach children concepts related to the family and home." In their empirical study, Porter DeCusati and Johnson (2004) proved the positive relationship between parents volunteering in their children's kindergartens and kindergartners' literacy skills. That is because involving parents as volunteers in school activities increases the students' motivation to learn more. Also, volunteering in schools helps parents get to know their children better and explore methods of enhancing their children's learning and development.

The quantitative strand data analysis revealed that not a single teacher chose the decision-making practice as a very important one. It appeared that 55% of the total teachers in the current study believed that the decision-making practice was important, about 10 % believed it was slightly important and less than 2% believed it was not important. When asking for explanations in the qualitative strand, Teacher L4 expressed

that “not all mothers can be involved in making decisions. Some mothers become biased to their opinion.” An additional explanation was:

> I become so nervous when asking mothers to discuss an issue to decide a solution because not all mothers understand their limits or mine as well. . . I think decision-making is important for individual children’s problems but not in discussing classroom organizational plans. (Teacher M2)

It appeared that the teacher preferred to not involve mothers during decision-making for their children. According to the ecological system theory, conflict between the two parties, the family and the child’s teacher, negatively influence a child’s development. (Paquette & Ryan, 2001).

The more welcoming a teacher is to engaging the family in decision-making results in more successful children. Arguea, and Conroy (2006) found in their study about parents’ partnerships as decision-makers that the higher a parents’ engagement in the decision-making process the better their students’ schoolwork performance. On the other hand, some teachers believed that families were the children’s first teachers; hearing families’ opinions toward their child’s learning and development increased the efficacy of teachers’ work with children. Teacher M1 thought:

> Thinking out loud with mothers as a team or committee would be great to help us [teachers] work with many issues in the classroom professionally. I remember how upset and disappointed I was when I spent nights reading books about how to deal with some disruptive behavior but had poor results.

Teacher H1 expressed her opinion that "Involving mothers in decisions related to our school plan is a good idea. . . I really need them because they know their children better." She continued, "the reprehensive mother, for example, could help us understand what mothers want from us, and we can improve our work in a way that reflects family needs." Many parents have knowledge that "may be better than ours. Some of them are educators and have a lot of teaching experience" (Teacher H4).

Teachers' Implementation of SFCPs Discussion

The quantitative strand statistical analysis revealed that neither the teachers' SEAs nor their years of experience affected the implementation of the six practices. That means the areas where the teachers worked and their years of experience did not affect their implementation of the SFCP practices. Regarding the frequency of practice implementation, the analysis showed significant differences both between practices and within each practice. For instance, around one third of the teachers in this study experienced parenting practice with families either weekly or monthly, but around 20% of them had never experienced this.

In the qualitative strand, the teachers' stories revealed issues related to parenting practice. Some teachers expressed that parenting is fully the family's responsibility: "It is not easy to tell a mother what to do with her children" (Teacher H3). Teacher H4 provided an example of a mother–teacher conflict: "A mother told me that is none of my business . . . [because] she is the mother and she knows what is better for her child." Despite the hard work that the teachers did in the children's abuse awareness workshop, a mother confronted Teacher M2 during that workshop:

> I was shocked when a mother loudly said, "I am here to tell you all that it is not professional to discuss these topics with our kids; they are still young. I have seven kids, and everything is fine. I have been a mother for 25 years and do not need you to tell me what to do to protect my children."

This conflict is linked partially to feminist theory, which

> addresses the fullness of women's lives with the conflicts and contradictions inherent in subordinate social position and struggles against domination. Conflicts between women. . . left unexamined, undermine women at home, on the job and in communities. Feminism explicitly interrogates seemingly "natural" splits between private selves and public roles and between personal and professional values. (Attanucci, 2004, p. 65)

When the mother–teacher relationship is broken, children are the victims. Bronfenbrenner (1977), in his ecological system theory, argued that children's development is influenced by various systems around them, including the mesosystem, which consists of interactions with those who are closest to the child: family members, teachers, and classmates. The unity of roles and goals between teachers and families is essential for children's healthy progress. Paquette and Ryan (2001) stated that, if the relationship between home and school breaks down, children's growth will be negatively affected.

The relationships between teachers are also an issue. Some teachers in this study indicated that they suffered peer pressure and discouragement when they were excited to implement parenting practice: "The group of teachers I work with now are discouraging

me. I feel disappointed when I give them my ideas and none of them is interested" (teacher). Also, Teacher L4 explained,

> In my first years of teaching, there was a teacher who conducted workshops for mothers on different topics, like healthy foods. I liked the idea and asked the principal, but she said we did not have time for unnecessary things.

Bellemare, Lepage, and Shearer (2010) asserted in their empirical research that peer pressure decreased employees' productivity. Teacher L1 asserted,

> When discussing what workshops we can provide to the mothers, many teachers became annoyed and said to not open closed doors and not do extra work; they said the mothers have not asked for workshops and that no one would participate.

In this area, Souto-Manning and Swick (2006) noted that specific school cultures influence teachers' beliefs about family involvement.

The teachers' implementation of communication practice brought inconsistent results. The teachers chose very different frequencies, as 30% of them never communicated with the children's families, but 28% communicated several times each semester. Regarding beliefs, however, the teachers in this study strongly believed in the significance of communication practice as a part of SFCPs. These results coincide with those from Alsultan's (2008) study about home–school communication in a Saudi Arabian public elementary school. Alsultan found that communication was weak due to many factors, including MOE restrictions and the limited communication methods (mostly inviting parents to discuss students' academic performance).

This study's qualitative analysis revealed some of the teachers' reasons for decreasing the frequency of their communication practice. Lack of time was one obstacle that hindered the communication between the teachers and the children's families. Teacher H3 said, "[the schedule] is full of activities, so I barely have time to finish all of the planned activities." Teacher M2 explained,

> Now, we use social media to communicate with mothers, . . . but these apps are time-wasting. . . . Mothers kept sending me messages all day and night. . . . I cannot do that even though I know we have to. . . . I decided to allow communication through the school's phone line only.

Epstein et al. (2009) emphasized that home–school communication should be reciprocal. Yet, time restriction for both families and teachers prevent effective communication (Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman, 2007). In Saudi Arabia, teachers are usually mothers and are responsible for their families. Once they arrive home, they practice their role as mother and have no time to follow up on work tasks such as communicating with students' families.

The teachers in this study stated that their preparation, both during preservice year and before, was lacking in classes or trainings related to SFCPs—or any type of communication with families. L- teacher2 said, "I do not remember any course during my bachelor's degree that talked about relationships with children's families"; she continued, "There were one or two classes about the role of families in children's lives and education." Teacher M2 specified, "Honestly, I could not find the best way to communicate with mothers." Even in service, the teachers did not receive any training on communication with families; for example, Teacher H4 said, "It was not easy to write

letters to mothers. . . . I did not know what to say and when, or what is the best way to contact the mothers." Researchers such as Tichenor (1998) have emphasized that working with families must be a major topic in preservice teaching programs so that preservice teachers have all the knowledge they need about the significance of SFCPs.

Teachers in this study asserted that families varied in their intensity of communication; for instance, Teacher L3 claimed,

> Not all families are the same. I would use four classifications. Silent families are the most difficult because I do not know what they want. I try to communicate them, but they respond only weakly. Neglectful families are the least difficult; they do not care about the children and think that kindergarten is a day care and that the teachers are nannies, so I only contact them for emergencies. Other families are very cautious and take care of their children. . . . We communicate with them frequently. The fourth are the aware families. These parents are educated and hold deep knowledge about nurturing. . . . It is hard or impossible to be involved with the first two types families. They ignore letters or notes. . . . The third family type is sometimes hard to deal with. For example, a mother asked me how often her child coughs and what exactly she says to her classmates. They try to control their children's lives and environments everywhere, which is impossible. . . . I prefer to not work with them as much as I can. The aware family is the best. They know their limits and work with their children, not for them.

Some teachers have explained that the neglected families do not communicate with schools because they view kindergarten "as a nursery and we [the teachers] as

nannies; they have not given communication any importance" (Teacher L1). Teacher L3 revealed that, "for some children, we have never met their mothers, and the mothers explained their neglect by saying that their kids' education at this moment is not important; they just want the children to be used to a social life." The teachers claimed that, even in critical situations, some mothers ignored communications; for instance, teacher said, "When I called a mother to make an appointment to discuss her child's misbehavior, she keeps ignoring me." (Teacher L3)

Scholars have documented the negative consequences of these weak relationships in many previous studies. For example, Ghahwaji (2007) stressed that many Saudi Arabian community members did not believe that the kindergarten period was significant, and this led them to see the teachers as babysitters. This false perception limited the efficacy of implementation aimed at early-childhood goals, according to Alotabi and Alswelem (2002), who found that community members' lack of consideration of the kindergarten teachers' role made families uncooperative in terms of a lack of home-based learning and a deficient consideration of kindergarten's importance in children's lives; this was a significant component in preventing achievement of the educational goals. Albaiz (2009) found similar results: Kindergarten principals noted that the parents' beliefs about the importance of early-childhood education affected these institutions' achievement of educational goals regarding children's development.

In addition, Albaiz (2009) found that some families preferred traditional written, hard-copy communication methods. However, this method is obsolete and costly. The technological revolution has brought new media types such as text messages, emails, and social media applications such as Instagram and Facebook. Teacher H2 said,

> Not all mothers have email or check their email daily. . . . One mother prefers to communicate via landline phone, but another wants printed copies of the memos. . . . Some text me when they need to communicate. . . but the worst is the one who insists on coming in each time she needs to talk to me, . . . which is not professional at all.

These results support Olmstead's (2012) research findings about teachers' and parents' beliefs regarding home–school technological communication. Olmstead found that technological communication is more effective than traditional communication from the points of view of both teachers and parents; the study did show, however, that a lack of network access is an obstacle to technological communication. For this reason, Teacher H2 noted,

> It is a challenge that the teacher is supposed to communicate with all families in their suitable ways. Some prefer to learn news from social media, such as Twitter or Facebook, . . . but some want the traditional methods, and other mothers think such communication is unnecessary unless it is an emergency.

Teacher L1 said, "some mothers are busy at home or at work and prefer to not communicate at all." On this topic, Epstein et al. (2009) noted that schools and families can use a variety of communication methods, including "memos, [individual and group] conferences, notices, report cards, newsletters, phone calls, computerized messages, the internet, [and] open houses" (p. 198). Saudi social norms specify that communication with families is supposed to be between teachers and mothers only. Fathers can be

contacted only in emergency situations. However, some mothers are busy, either at home with little kids or outside the home at a job. Placing all the burden on the mother is unfair, and many people expect mothers to neglect some of their responsibilities. kindergarten education in Saudi Arabia is female-managed and that all of the kindergarten staff members are females. The Saudi cultural norms limit opposite-gender encounters, meaning that teachers, who are female, are supposed to contact mothers first; this decreases partnership opportunities.

In the quantitative strand, I examined kindergarten teachers' implementation of volunteering practices. The results indicated that around 60% of the teachers in this study have not employed volunteering practice at all; another 14% and 11% experienced this practice once per semester and once per year, respectively. Prior to the implementation of the practice, the teachers presented their beliefs about volunteering on a scale from "very important" to "slightly important"; volunteering practice was fifth in importance out of the six SFCP practices. In the follow-up interviews in the second (qualitative) strand, the teachers gave many reasons to explain why the implementation rate was low. One stated that "the MOE imposed restrictions on inviting people to visit kindergarten classrooms; prior authorization has to be granted from an educational supervisor before someone, even a mother, can volunteer in kindergarten" (Teacher M1).

The teachers in this study clarified that they have limited volunteering opportunities, as they "do not have volunteering in [their] kindergarten other than The Visiting Mother Program" (Teacher H2). Researchers have found evidence that the lack of support from managers has weakened families' involvement in schools (Epstein, 1987; Hourani et al., 2012). Epstein and Dauber (1991) found that teachers reported that

families practice volunteering in school rarely and that this was difficult to be implement. Parents need more instructions from schools in terms of how to volunteer. Dauber and Epstein (1993) stressed that teachers' influence and guidance are significant in this partnership.

A kindergarten principal has the right to implement proactive practices. The MOE sends regulations for The Visiting Mothers Program; it also conducts events and workshops that "are not mandatory. The ministry suggests, encourages, and motivates, . . . but there is no penalty if we do not active the programs," Teacher M1 pointed out, continuing to say, "I remember my previous principal kept these regulations in her office, and we never knew about them." Hourani et al. (2012), in a qualitative case study about family–school relationship barriers in the United Arab Emirates, found that a lack of administrative support was one of the barriers.

Given the parents' lack of time and attention, the teachers mentioned that, "Even if the kindergarten offers volunteer opportunities, many mothers cannot make it because of their restricted time. They have jobs or little babies at home" (Teacher M2). Alshamrani (2016), in a study on family–school partnerships, suggested not all partnerships should be of one type, as 33% of the 21,408 parents who participated in the study did not have time to engage with their children's education. The teachers' time is also important. Their experience has taught them to use their time wisely, as some practices may be time-wasting unless they are planned in advance.

Teacher H2 explained,

> I learned from my mistakes. I offered the moms room and spent a very long time teaching them what I needed from them; of the five volunteer moms, only one

mother continued, and two weeks later, she quit, . . . [saying] "I do not have time anymore . . . my mother is sick and needs me.

One possible explanation is that, in Saudi Arabia, volunteer work is not common. Community members are reluctant to engage in volunteer work for many reasons. Al-Amer (2006) found in a study about volunteer work that, even though Islamic teachings emphasize volunteer services, the culture of volunteering is weak, especially among young citizens. Al-Amer investigated the barriers to volunteering in Saudi Arabia and noted that young people are busy looking after their family responsibilities; in addition, there is a lack of media programs that show the importance of volunteering, community members have insufficient awareness regarding the importance of volunteering, and volunteers often lack clear roles.

A statistical analysis of learning-at-home practice showed that the public kindergarten teachers in this study implemented activities and actions to encourage families to support their children's home learning. Similar percentages implemented learning-at-home practice once per semester (29%), once or twice per month (22%), more than once per week (23%), and once per year or never has been done (25%). The teachers believed that this practice was either important or very important. Moreover, this practice was ranked as second in importance after parenting practice. The results of the qualitative strand included the teachers' explanations of the various implementations.

Some teachers blamed teachers' and mothers' lack of time, which hindered them from providing home-based learning activities. Teacher H3 indicated, "When I send home activities, some mothers do not look at them. They say, 'We do not have time to review kindergarten homework.'"; she continued by noting that, as a teacher, "It takes

time to choose the best activities and copy them for children to take home, but I am disappointed when children return them as they go, so I stopped that recently." On the other hand, this conflict is about priorities. Teacher L2 identified,

> I know many mothers have a hard time managing their houses. They work and have little babies, . . . but they find time to visit the kindergarten when invited, to review school letters, and to help their children read every night. They send notes all the time.

This result corroborates what Moosa et al. (2001) found in their study about Arab parents, which is that such parents consider education to be important but need guidance from schools to help their children at home.

Saudi society does not give kindergarten sufficient attention. Kindergarten is not included as its own grade in the educational ladder; this means that entering first grade does not require finishing kindergarten. Additionally, SLC has not provided learning at-home activities, so any activities must come from teachers' suggestions. Teacher L4 explained,

> I usually provide a file with daily activities, as some mothers are interested in helping their children complete them at home, but unfortunately, many of them are not aware of the importance of daily reading at home. They say that it is too early to learn to read now and that this should occur in first grade. I told them that learning to read or write needs some practice and encouragement at home, . . . but their responses disappointed me.

The above statement is contradicted, however, by Puglisi et al. (2017), who, in their study about young children's linguistic development, literacy activities, and at-home interactions, found that organized literacy activities promoted children's linguistic learning. In the Saudi community, Alotabi and Alswelem (2002) found that one of the obstacles to implementing Saudi early-childhood educational goals was weak home–school collaboration. Many families preferred to not provide support for their children's homework. Many Saudi families believe that their children's time in kindergarten should help their children adapt to school and practice social interactions with other children and teachers. They think that learning skills such as reading and writing at home is not necessary because the children will learn them in the first grade.

For decision-making practice implementation, the statistical analysis showed that 66% of the teachers in the sample had never involved families in the decision-making process. This practice ranked sixth of the six practices in importance. The teachers believed that implementing decision-making practice in kindergarten was either important or slightly important. Alshanwani (2013) revealed, after analyzing SLC, that the curriculum lacks teacher–family collaboration on decision-making regarding children's learning activities. Ingram et al. (2007) found the same result for Chicago public elementary schools, as the parents asserted that they rarely participated in the decision-making process.

The teachers, in the interviews, explained their points of view regarding the exclusion of families during the decision-making process. The most important reason was that teachers (and even kindergarten principals) do not have the authority to require that families (particularly mothers) discuss or change a kindergarten program's curriculum or

polices. Teacher L1 said, “The curriculum was formed in advance. . . . We just implement what we have.” Teacher M3 added, “If I changed a little bit in the educational unit, the educational supervisor would reject that, . . . so how can we involve mothers to change the curriculum?” This result, however, was inconsistent with some studies’ findings, which showed the integrating families into decision-making brought positive consequences for students’ achievement. For example, Arguea and Conroy (2006) revealed that parents’ participation in groups related to their children’s educational work enhanced those students’ math achievement, compared to that of students whose parents did not engage in the process.

On the other hand, some teachers explained that mothers can make decisions in conjunction with teachers

> regarding their children’s behaviors and discipline. If they prefer, they can work with their children to improve their literacy and math skills, . . . but we cannot involve them in altering the curriculum or any of the school policies. . . . The teachers themselves cannot do that; . . . these decisions come from higher authorities. (Teacher M4)

Teacher H4 emphasized,

> In my experience, some teachers welcome mothers making some decisions, and others do not. . . . For me, I have a group of mothers who assigned one person to represent them. . . . I heard their voices, and we made some decisions regarding activities in the classroom related to the concepts I teach. . . . I know that we cannot change this at the school level, but at least the mothers are involved in my

> decisions. . . . Their children gained the advantage of having more enjoyable activities.

This result corresponds with Anderson and Minke (2007), who attributed parents' determination to engage in decision-making practice to the teachers' invitations. Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, and Brissie (1987) supported this result, as the teachers' perceptions of SFCPs accounted for 41% of the quality of the teacher–family relationship.

For the last practice, collaboration with the community, the statistical analysis indicated that even though more than half of the teachers believed that this practice was very important, 49% of them had never collaborated with the community. During the follow-up interviews, the teachers expressed their interpretations for why they were not able to collaborate with the community. One explanation was the lack of background on this topic in their preservice studies. The teachers asserted that, in their university years, there were no classes about building partnerships with the community. Teacher H2 stated,

> We never heard about how to collaborate with the community during my studies at university. In some classes, there were examples of how local agents (such as firefighters, nurses, and doctors) could elevate children's learning. . . . The official curriculum suggests a few examples, also, but I did not know how to invite them at the beginning of my career. Now, things are better, as I learned from other teachers how and when to invite them.

The academic plans for early-childhood education at many major Saudi universities (for example, KSU) lack courses about SFCPs (KSU, 2017). Also, within college courses, the

SFCP's topics are rare. Course syllabi do not mention topics related to SFCPs except in a few discussions about children's behaviors.

The current research researcher investigated in-service teachers' experiences with the community as well. Teacher H2 declared that her work with the community was "almost a personal effort to work with community services." Another teacher explained the process: "The teacher or principal contacts. . . [business owners] or sends commercial offers, such as from food companies. So, we receive the approval from the MOE and invite them." (Teacher M4) These teachers' statements proved that community partners would like to collaborate, but they need organized invitations from a school or from the MOE. This is addressed in SEDL (2000): Agencies and members of the community will engage in school activities when invited. That is, schools ought to identify opportunities in the community and organize such work. School-community collaboration is not common in Saudi Arabia. Public kindergartens are free because the government bears the costs of education. Therefore, community members think that they are not supposed to collaborate with the schools.

Because collaboration with the community is not included in the annual teachers' evaluation forms, which the educational supervisors use to assess teachers' performance, many are rather reluctant to work with the community. Teacher H3 mentioned, "Our kindergarten principal would not be interested in working toward partnerships beyond what is written in the kindergarten's official curriculum [SLC]." Sanders (2001) agreed with this result and noted that one of the obstacles preventing teachers from collaborating with the community is that those in the management level lack adequate training on partnerships with the community.

Teacher M1 explained that, according to the

> resources on collaboration with the community, the MOE sends circulations for events to collaborate with some community groups, but if we have time, we would conduct them ourselves—or we would not, as this is optional and is not included in our yearly report [evaluation].

Motivation is a significant component in promoting teachers' work. It is illogical to request that teachers do more than what they are paid to do. Because their final evaluations do not rely on working with families or the community, these partnerships are voluntary. Teacher H2 explained that, "because there is nothing in return, I do not think we [the teachers] will apply all of the practices." This finding is compatible with the results of Ololube's (2006) study about teachers' job satisfaction and motivations; teachers' work efficacy is highly related to their motivation. Teacher M1 mentioned, "If we had time, we would conduct them." Sanders (2001) also mentioned this time insufficiency and explained another obstacle to implementing this collaboration with the community: There must be enough time to locate and communicate with community groups.

SFCP Enhancement Discussion

The study aimed to explore the teachers' recommendations for improving partnerships. According to the quantitative strand analysis, the teachers believed that the six SFCP practices are important. The degree of importance varied slightly from practice to practice. However, the frequency of the implementation showed that a high percentage of the teachers had never performance some practices (e.g., 60% had not had volunteers

in their classrooms, and 66% had never collaborated with families in decision-making practice). These conflicted results led to a request for the teachers' explanation, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Because the teachers conduct the partnership journey with families and the community, they are the best resource for identifying ways to enhance SFCPs.

The qualitative analysis of the teachers' statements disclosed two major areas of improvement: administrative reformation and teachers' skills improvement. For administrative reformation, the teachers affirmed that they received circulars from the MOE that were relevant to their partnerships with the children's families and the community; however, these partnerships were "not mandatory, and there is no credit given to teachers who collaborate with families," as Teacher H3 said; she continued, suggesting that "there should be items or sections related to family involvement in the teacher's performance-evaluation sheet." One teacher affirmed that her "kindergarten principal would not be interested in working toward any partnerships beyond what is included in the official kindergarten curriculum [SLC]" (Teacher H3).

Indeed, Epstein et al. (2009) found that, even though scholars have shown that partnerships with families and the community have brought significant results in terms of improving children's learning and development, schools and administrators give these partnerships inadequate attention. Researchers such as Johnson (1986) have written about the relationships between teachers' motivation and their performance. Johnson discussed the teachers' performance, which has been linked to physical motivations such as promotions. Linking teachers' professional functioning to external stimulation encourages those teachers to be more effective. Therefore, including the SFCPs in the

teachers' annual evaluation card is vital in ensuring that they implement the practices effectively.

In addition to external motivation, inner motivations are essential to effectively accomplish any activity. Some teachers indicated that they are enthusiastic to work with families and the community, yet other teachers were frustrated for various reasons. Such as Teacher M3's and Teacher L4's experiences that other teachers and the principal discouraging them when they suggested some activities for family partnerships.

Johnson (1986) asserted that inner motivation is sometimes more effective and longer-lasting than external rewards such as money or promotions. Pride, self-efficacy, and self-respect are example of inner motivation. Johnson believed that both types of the motivations are significant; however, inner motivation pushes people toward problem-solving and creativity in the workplace. The teachers' positive beliefs regarding the implementation of SFCPs is an inner motivation. Researchers such as Baker et al. (1999) have asserted that the strength of the family-school relationship is related to the teachers' knowledge of this relationship. For this reason, Teacher M4 claimed, "preservice teachers' programs have to include subjects related to family–school relationships." In these subjects,

> the family–school or school–community topics must be detailed and independent subjects . . . [that] discuss partnerships topics . . . and community resources. We need to know what the best resources are and how to communicate with community members and agencies to enhance teaching and support children's development. (Teacher M1)

Prior knowledge about SFCPs is necessary, and the teachers who have missed this essential preparation must receive it during their career. The teachers in this study claimed that that they had not attended any workshops or received training related to SFCPs. For instance, Teacher H4 said that among the "over 40 workshops on different topics, [there was] nothing about family or community partnerships." Teacher L3 explained, "All the workshops I participated in were about children's learning and development. I do not remember any about family partnerships." Teacher M2 had a different experience, as she "participated in some meetings about the importance of contacting families, . . . but these meetings encouraged teachers to collaborate with families only." These results match with Gahwaji's (2013) results based on interviews with kindergarten teachers that explored teachers' concerns related to their work. One of the obstacles that teachers face is neglect of their professional improvement.

Consequently, in-service teachers' programs are an important component of their professional performance improvement. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2002) found that elementary- and middle-school teachers who attended programs related to family involvement enhanced their effectiveness when working with families. This efficacy also improved the teachers' ability to overcome family-involvement barriers.

Even once teachers have the required knowledge, they are unable to apply it to partnerships until they are given the authority to activate it. Scholars such as Alsultan (2008) have found that administrative restrictions are a barrier to the implementation of SFCPs. This study's results support this claim; the teachers in this study asserted that they needed permission from many parties before implementing SFCPs. For instance, Teacher M2 suggested "giving families chances to participate during teaching but was

told, ‘We cannot do that without permission from the principal and supervisor.’” Teacher L2 explained that a delegation of authorities would

> solve the problem. We need to have control of many things; . . . we need to decide when to invite mothers or other community members and what to invite them to. . . I wish I could take my children on a field trip without waiting months for approval.

Teacher H2 offered another suggestion: “Teachers, or at least kindergarten principals, need to have control over family–school partnerships and . . . even take advantage of community resources. Each principal can do that without waiting for a permission from higher-ups in the large administrative pyramid.” Researchers have also found that greater autonomy in making decisions about their teaching process decreased teachers’ stress and elevated both their efficacy and their job satisfaction (Reyes, 1989; Pearson & Moomaw, 2005).

The community comprises individuals and agencies that can provide valuable work for kindergartens as partners, but these entities need guidance. In the current research, many teachers

> always receive memos regarding community resources, but. . . [they] do not know how and when to involve them. . . . Some instructions should be added, and the benefits should be listed. . . .By contrast, the community members and businesses should know about . . . [kindergarten collaboration opportunities], as many of them want to cooperate but do not know how. (Teacher H1)

These findings coincide with the SEDL's (2000) suggestion that schools are responsible for sending invitations to the targeted community members and businesses to tell them about partnership methods.

The fact that women will be allowed to drive makes it easier for families to participate in their children's school activities. Teacher L2 explained, "More mothers can help and support their children's learning by attending kindergarten activities; because there will be no more transportation barriers, [teachers] will have more volunteers and parents in the room." Teacher H1 added, "Many mothers are talented and wanted to help but could not continue because they did not have drivers. . . . We need to expand the opportunities and involve mothers intensively."

Conclusion and Implications

SFCPs is a new topic in the education field. During the past few decades, scholars from many research fields have asserted that partnerships are significant for all parties (family, school, and community), as well as for children's development and learning. This SEMM study focused on the beliefs and implementation of the public kindergarten teachers in Riyadh City, Saudi Arabia regarding SFCP practice, based on Epstein et al.'s (2009) model. The teachers were from various SEAs and had various levels of experience, and they believed that the implementation of SFCP practices (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community) varied in importance.

Also, in the quantitative strand, the teachers declared that the implementation of these six practices was lower than they hoped. At the same time, the teachers' rich experience in teaching added more clarification to the research results, and their

experience with SFCPs helped justify this study's contradictory results. Specifically, in the qualitative strand, they explained why they gave high rankings for their beliefs about the six SFCP practices despite the low frequency of implementation for these practices. That is, the teachers addressed the many barriers to partnership implementation and provided their suggestions for promoting such partnerships. The Saudi Arabia 2030 vision lists many future aspirations for the pedagogical field. IRTIQAA is one of the programs initiated in this process; its aim is to foster partnerships among schools, families, and the community. The lists of obstacles and suggestions documented in this study will help administrators to overcome these barriers to achieve the program's goals. The implications of the current research are listed below.

1. The study involved a sample of public kindergarten teachers in Riyadh City, Saudi Arabia. The research investigated their beliefs regarding the implementation of six SFCP practices. The findings showed that their beliefs about the practices' importance varied. However, scholars have emphasized that these six practices are all significant components in students' academic performance and development. More attention should thus be given to raising teachers' awareness of SFCPs as a significant element of their teaching goals. Partnerships with families and the community should be part of the preservice teachers' preparation programs. In addition, in-service teachers need continued training to ensure that they are up to date on all the new SFCP strategies and practices.
2. The study's results revealed that SFCP practices, such as forming relationships with families and the community, are not mandatory. The teachers' annual

evaluation lacks any mention of these items. For this reason, not all teachers are eager to work on these partnerships. To enhance such partnerships, it is important to include items that measure and evaluate these partnerships in teachers' evaluations.

3. Aside from adding items to the teachers' annual evaluation form, it is important that the MOE gives kindergarten principals and teachers the authority to autonomously make decisions and practice such partnerships.
4. The analysis showed that many teachers are eager to engage with children's families in parenting practice, especially by conducting workshops. These can take place after school hours and in centers where qualified teachers can provide sessions and workshops for families to learn about various topics related to their children's care.
5. The teachers in this study mentioned that written communication methods are old-fashioned, but some families still prefer using them instead of technological communication. Either way, the goal is to reach families and conduct partnerships with them; therefore, teachers must follow families' preferences as closely as possible. At the same time, they should introduce the benefits of the technological methods to the old-fashioned families and show how it can be an advantage in the family–school partnership.
6. This study revealed that teachers consider volunteering and decision-making the least important practices on the list. The barriers to implementing these two practices revolved around families' attitudes toward kindergarten and its role as an educational institution that provides an essential service for a critical age. The

first 5 years of human life are significant to future development. The families and the community need more awareness that kindergarten is more than just babysitting children while their parents or guardians are working. Kindergarten offers a healthy environment for the whole child's development and learning. Social media can be an effective medium for reaching community members and fostering their beliefs in kindergarten's importance. Another way is to include kindergarten in the educational ladder so that it becomes a required grade in elementary school instead of being part of preschool.

7. The study's results also showed that the Saudi community does not believe in the importance of volunteering. Volunteering in kindergarten is limited to mothers who visit for an hour to lead an activity or give the children gifts. Encouraging families to volunteer at their children's schools can lead to broad volunteering opportunities at all school levels—and at home as well.
8. Regarding decision-making practice, the study's results indicated that kindergarten teachers and principals do not collaborate with students' families when making decisions related to teaching methods or school policies. Empowering families and community educators to contribute fosters the teachers' efforts to achieving educational goals.
9. The study's results also showed that learning-at-home practice is important for both teachers and families. More attention should be given to these materials, as teachers have indicated that they are focused on sending home-based activities. It is recommended to discuss with mothers the content of these activities prior to send them.

10. The study's findings also showed that collaboration with the community is important but not always effective. The teachers' efforts in this area were voluntary, and the community businesses tried to advertise by sending samples of their products to the kindergartens. The community–school partnership is broader than this, however. It should be a reciprocal relationship between the kindergarten (including the children's families) and all community members. More opportunities should be given to the teachers so that they can take advantage of all community agencies, including the local libraries, grocery stores, and public parks. The community can also benefit from services provided in kindergarten, such as the aforementioned building of the relationship between the kindergarten and the community members. This can serve various purposes, including workshops and afterschool programs for parents who work long hours and their children.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations are based on the study's procedure, results, and discussion:

1- This research was limited to public kindergarten teachers in Riyadh City; involving family members, kindergarten principals, educational supervisors, and community members in future research would help to portray a broader picture of the reality of SFCPs and to develop more practical ways of overcoming obstacles and enhancing implementation.

2- Implementation and obstacles vary from city to city. To enhance SFCPs, more studies should be conducted in cities around Saudi Arabia.

3- This study's quantitative results were inconsistent regarding teachers' beliefs about and the implementation of partnership practices; using other methods such as an analysis of MOE documents (e.g., memos, regulations, and circulars) would help explain this inconsistency.

4- Future researchers should investigate methods to foster the public's belief in the significance of kindergarten to children's future development and learning.

5- More research is needed regarding alternative channels for partnerships that engage community members in kindergarten classes.

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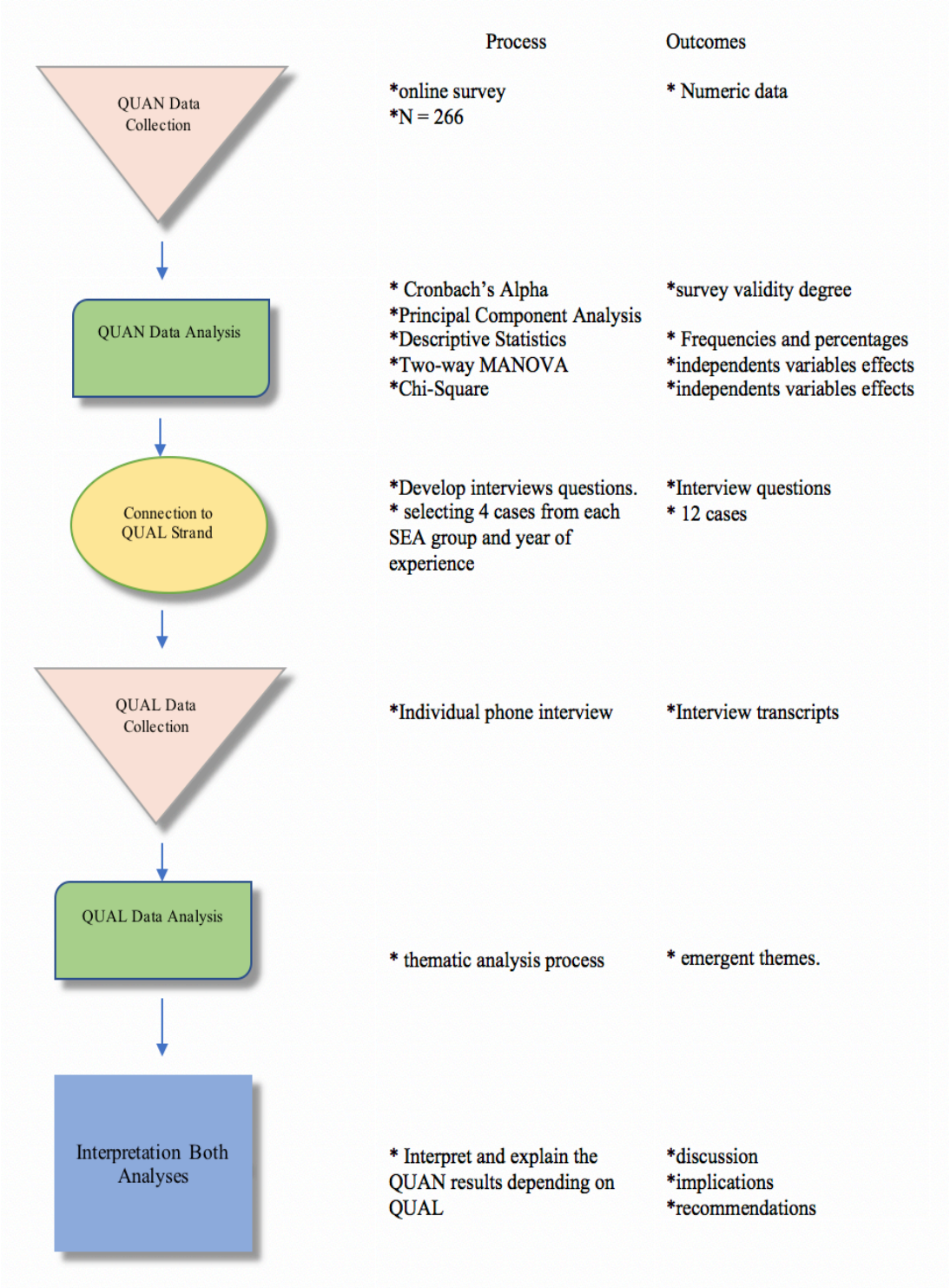
APPENDIX A

VISUAL MODEL of SEMM

Visual Model of SEMM



APPENDIX B

THE MEASUREMENT

The Measure of School, Family, And Community Partnerships

First section: background information:

Choose the answer that suitable for you:

1- Years of experience in kindergarten teaching:

A- 1- ten years.
B- More than ten years.

2- the educational office (Eshraf) you work at is:

A- North
B- Alnahdha
C- Alrowabi
D- Middle
E- West
F- South
G- Badeaa
H- Alshifaa

Second Section: Teachers' beliefs about the importance of School, Family, and Community Partnership

Read each item and choose the field you find it reflects your opinion:

I. PARENTING: Help all families establish home environments to support children as students.

How important do you believe the following are	Very important	Important	Slightly important	Not important
1- Conducting workshops or providing information for parents on child development				
2- Providing information to all families who want it or who need it, not just to the few who can attend workshops or meetings at the school building.				
3- Producing information for families that is clear, usable, and linked to children's success in school				

4- Providing families with age appropriate information on developing home conditions or environments that support learning				
5- Respecting the different cultures represented in our student population.				

II.COMMUNICATIONS: Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress.

How important do you believe the following are	very important	Important	Less important	Not important
1- Reviewing the readability, clarity, form, and frequency of all memos, notices, and other print and non-print communications.				
2- Developing communication for parents who do not speak Arabic well, do not read well, or need large type.				
3- having clear two-way channels for communications from home to school and from school to home.				
4- Conducting a formal conference with every parent at least once a year				
5- Conducting an annual survey for families to share information and concerning about student needs, reaction to school programs, and satisfaction with their involvement in school and at home.				
6- Conducting an orientation for new parents				
7- Sending home folders of student work weekly or monthly for parent review and comment.				
8- Providing clear information about the curriculum, assessments, and achievement levels and report cards.				
9- Contacting families of students having academic or behavior problems.				
10-Using email and school website to communicate with parents, including information on Internet safety.				
11-Training teachers, staff and principals on the value and utility of family involvement and ways to build positive ties between school and home.				
12- Producing a regular school newsletter with up-to-date information about the school, special events, organizations, meetings, and parenting tips.				

III. VOLUNTEERING: Recruit and organize parent help and support.

How important do you believe the following are	very important	Important	Slightly important	Not important
1-Conducting an annual survey to identify interests, talents, and availability of parent volunteers, in order to match their skills/talents with school and classroom needs.				
2- Providing a parent/family room for volunteers and family members to work, meeting, and accessing resources about				

parenting, childcare, tutoring, and other things that effect their children.				
3- Creating flexible volunteering and school events schedules, enabling employed parents who work to participate.				
4-Scheduling special events at different times of the day and evening so that all families can attend as audience.				
5-Training volunteers so they use their time productively.				
6-Recognizeing volunteers for their time and efforts.				
7-Encouraging families and the community to be involved with the school in various ways (e.g., assisting in classroom, monitoring halls, leading talk or activities, serving as audiences.)				

IV. LEARNING AT HOME: Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum related activities, decisions, and planning.

How important do you believe the following are	very important	Important	Slightly important	Not important
1- Providing information to families on required skills in major subjects.				
2- providing specific information to parents on how to assist students with skills that they need to improve.				
3- asking parents to focus on reading, listen to children read, or read aloud with their child.				
4- Schedules regular interactive homework that requires students to demonstrate and discuss what they are learning with a family member.				

DECISIONMAKING: Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.

How important do you believe the following are	very important	Important	Slightly important	Not important
1- Including parent representatives on the school's advisory council, improvement team, or other committees.				
2- Involving parents in an organized, ongoing, and timely way in planning and improvement of programs.				
3- involving parents in reviewing school curricula.				
4- recruiting parent leaders for committees from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other groups in school.				
5- guiding parent representativeness to contact parents who are less involved for their ideas.				
6- developing the school's plan and program of family and community involvement with input from educators, parents, and others.				

VI. COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY: Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

How important do you believe the following are	very important	Important	Slightly important	Not important
1- Providing a community resource directory for parents with information on community services, programs, and agencies.				
2- Involving families in locating and utilizing community resources.				
3- Working with local businesses, industries, libraries, parks, museums, and other organizations on programs to enhance student skills and learning.				
4- Offers after-school programs for students with support from community businesses, agencies, and volunteers				

Third Section: Teachers' implementation of School, Family and Community Partnership

I. PARENTING: Help all families establish home environments to support children as students.

Do you	More than once a week	Once or twice a month	Once a Semester	once a year	Never have been done
1- Conduct workshops or providing information for parents on child development					
2- Provide information to all families who want it or who need it, not just to the few who can attend workshops or meetings at the school building.					
3- Produce information for families that is clear, usable, and linked to children's success in school					
4- Provide families with age appropriate information on developing home conditions or environments that support learning					
5- Respect the different cultures represented in our student population.					

II.COMMUNICATIONS: Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress.

Do you	More than once a week	Once or twice a month	Once a Semester	once a year	Never have been done
1- Review the readability, clarity, form, and frequency of all memos, notices, and other print and non-print communications.					
2- Develop communication for parents who do not speak Arabic well, do not read well, or need large type.					
3- have clear two-way channels for communications from home to school and from school to home.					

4- Conduct a formal conference with every parent at least once a year					
5- Conduct an annual survey for families to share information and concern about student needs, reaction to school programs, and satisfaction with their involvement in school and at home.					
6- Conduct an orientation for new parents					
7- Send home folders of student work weekly or monthly for parent review and comment.					
8- Provide clear information about the curriculum, assessments, and achievement levels and report cards.					
9- Contact families of students having academic or behavior problems.					
10-Use email and school website to communicate with parents, including information on Internet safety.					
11-Train teachers, staff and principals on the value and utility of family involvement and ways to build positive ties between school and home.					
12- Produce a regular school newsletter with up-to-date information about the school, special events, organizations, meetings, and parenting tips.					

III. VOLUNTEERING: Recruit and organize parent help and support.

Do you	More than once a week	Once or twice a month	Once a Semester	once a year	Never have been done
1-Conduct an annual survey to identify interests, talents, and availability of parent volunteers, in order to match their skills/talents with school and classroom needs.					
2- Provide a parent/family room for volunteers and family members to work, meet, and access resources about parenting, childcare, tutoring, and other things that effect their children.					
3- Create flexible volunteering and school events schedules, enable employed parents who work to participate.					
4-Schedul special events at different times of the day and evening so that all families can attend as audience.					
5-Train volunteers so they use their time productively.					
6-Recognize volunteers for their time and efforts.					
7-Encourage families and the community to be involved with the school in various ways (e.g., assisting in classroom, monitor halls, lead talk or activities, serving as audiences.)					

IV. LEARNING AT HOME: Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum related activities, decisions, and planning.

Do you	More than once a week	Once or twice a month	Once a Semester	once a year	Never have been done
1- Provide information to families on required skills in major subjects.					
2- provide specific information to parents on how to assist students with skills that they need to improve.					
3- ask parents to focus on reading, listen to children read, or read aloud with their child.					
4- Schedule regular interactive homework that requires students to demonstrate and discuss what they are learning with a family member.					

DECISIONMAKING: Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.

Do you or your school	More than once a week	Once or twice a month	Once a Semester	once a year	Never have been done
1- Include parent representatives on the school's advisory council, improvement team, or other committees.					
2- Involving parents in an organized, ongoing, and timely way in planning and improvement of programs.					
3- involve parents in reviewing school curricula.					
4- recruit parents' leaders for committees from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other groups in school.					
5- guide parent representativeness to contact parents who are less involved for their ideas.					
6- developing the school's plan and program of family and community involvement with input from educators, parents, and others.					

VI. COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY: Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

Do you	More than once a week	Once or twice a month	Once a semester	once a year	Never have been done
1- Providing a community resource directory for parents with information on community services, programs, and agencies.					
2- Involving families in locating and utilizing community resources.					

3- Working with local businesses, industries, libraries, parks, museums, and other organizations on programs to enhance student skills and learning.					
4- Offers after-school programs for students with support from community businesses, agencies, and volunteers					

Interview agreement:

I ……..……. voluntary agree to participate in an interview of the second strand of School, Family, Community Partnership in kindergartens in Saudi Arabia. By ticking agree bottom, I give the researcher the permission to contact me through phone number (……...) or email address (……@.....) to assign an appointment of the interview.

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

Ice breaking questions

- Tell me about yourself, "e.g, social statues, children, education"

interview questions:

- What are your preservice experiences with families and community partnerships?
- What do you about the different between partnerships, engagement, and involvement?
- What dimensions, incidents, and people intimately connected with the experience stand out to you? For example
  - Did the kindergarten or MOE provide any type of training related to school, family, and community partnerships? If yes, are they effective and how?
  - How does the kindergarten principal support the partnerships?
  - How does the MOE principal support the partnerships?
- Comparing to children whose parents do not involve/ are not involved to the kindergarten do you think they academically achieve and behave better than the other?
- Do you think working with kindergartens families is harder than older children's families (elementary school and above) and why?
- What do you think of school, family, community partnerships and what is your past experience with practices related to them?

Q: Parenting:

- Describe your experience of helping families in parenting their children:
- How did the family receive the information?
- What other issues related to helping families with parenting and what are your suggestions?
- What changes do you associate with the parenting practice experience?

- many teachers indicated this is an important practice, but their implementation was weak, why?

Q: communication:

- Describe your experience of communicating with families:
- How did the family receive your letters, calls..?
- What are the effective ways to reach the families and why?
- What other issues related to communications and what are your suggestions?
- What changes do you associate with the communication with families experience?
- Why do you think the communication practice earn one of the lowed implementation scores in the survey (teachers did not implement it frequently)?

Q: volunteering:

- Describe your experience of encourage volunteering families:
- How did the family members collaborate to become volunteer?
- What are volunteering opportunities families like the most and why?
- What other issues related to volunteering and what are your suggestions?
- What changes do you associate with the volunteering experience?
- Why do you think this practice earn one of the lowed implementation scores in the survey (teachers did not implement it frequently)?

Q: learning at home:

- Describe your experience with families regarding to children's learning at home
- How did the family members receive suggestions about learning at home?
- What are the activities that families most like and why do you think they like them and did not like the other?
- What other issues related to helping families with learning at home and what are your suggestions?
- What changes do you associate with the learning at home experience?
- Why do you think this practice earned one of the highest implementation scores in the survey (teachers did implement it frequently)?

Q: decision making:

- Describe your experience when making decisions regarding to children's development and learning:
- How did the family members collaborate with you in making decisions?
- What other issues related to involving families in decision making and what are your suggestions?
- What changes do you associate with the decision-making experience?

- Why do you think this practice earned one of the lowed implementation scores in the survey (teachers did not implement it frequently)?

Q: collaboration with community

- Describe your experience when collaboration with community regarding to children's learning and development?
- How did you know about community resources?
- What are the most effective resource and the lowest in terms of welcoming collaborating with you, and why do you see so?
- What other issues related to collaboration with community and what are your suggestions?
- What changes do you associate with the community experience?
- Why do you think this practice earned one of the lowed implementation scores in the survey (teachers did not implement it frequently)?

APPENDIX D

THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN USE APPROVAL FORM

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

Institutional Review Board for Human Use

Exemption Designation
Identification and Certification of Research
Projects Involving Human Subjects

UAB's Institutional Review Boards for Human Use (IRBs) have an approved Federalwide Assurance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). The Assurance number is FWA00005960 and it expires on January 24, 2017. The UAB IRBs are also in compliance with 21 CFR Parts 50 and 56.

Principal Investigator:	ALBAIZ, NAJLA ESSA A
Co-Investigator(s):	
Protocol Number:	**E160524002**
Protocol Title:	*Examining Kindergartens' Teachers' Beliefs and Implementation of School Family Community Partnerships in Saudi Arabia*

The above project was reviewed on 6/27/16. The review was conducted in accordance with UAB's Assurance of Compliance approved by the Department of Health and Human Services. This project qualifies as an exemption as defined in 45CFR46.101(b), paragraph 1.

This project received EXEMPT review.

Date IRB Designation Issued: 6/27/16

Cari Oliver, CIP
Assistant Director, Office of the
Institutional Review Board for Human
Use (IRB)

Investigators please note:

Any modifications in the study methodology, protocol and/or consent form/information sheet must be submitted for review to the IRB prior to implementation.

470 Administration Building
701 20th Street South
205.934.3789
Fax 205.934.1301
irb@uab.edu

The University of
Alabama at Birmingham
Mailing Address:
AB 470
1720 2ND AVE S
BIRMINGHAM AL 35294-0104

APPENDIX E

PARTICIPANTS' CONSENT FORMS

Informed Consent (Quantitative Strand)

Title of Study: Examining Kindergarten Teachers' Beliefs about and Implementation of School, Family, and Community Partnerships in Saudi Arabia
IRB Protocol:
Principal Investigator: Najla Albaiz, PhD Student

Procedures Explanation:

You are being invited to take part in a research study regarding your beliefs as a kindergarten teacher. The purpose of this study is to learn more about kindergarten teachers' beliefs and practices of School, Family, and Community Partnerships (SFCPs) identified by Dr. Epstein and colleagues dated 2009. You have been selected because, as a kindergarten teacher, you will be able to provide valuable information regarding your teaching experiences and pedagogical practices with your students' families and community. The information will help us to understand the professional practices of Saudi kindergarten teachers in early childhood settings.

The study is in two parts. The first part of this study is being conducted through a questionnaire while the second part is being conducted through interviews. For the questionnaire, carefully read the items and add a circle around the choice you feel it is applicable to you. The questionnaire consists of three sections. The first section is information about your background. The second section is your belief in the importance of Family, School, and Community Partnerships. The third section is your actual practices of School, Family, and Community Partnerships.

At the end of the questionnaire, there is a field to sign your name, signature, phone number, as well as your E-mail address as an approval to participate in the second part of the study (follow-up interview). Your participation in the interview is voluntary and will be appreciated. If you choose not to participate in the second part (interview), **DO NOT SIGN** your name at the end of the questionnaire. The estimated date of the interviews will be in the first semester of 1439 AH / Fall 2017, and it will take half hour.

Risks:
The risks of this study are minimal. You may choose not to answer any or all the questions, or you may withdraw from the interview or from all the study with no penalties.

Unforeseeable Risks:
There may be risks that are not anticipated. However, every effort will be made to minimize any risks.

Benefits:

There will be no direct benefits to you for your participation in this study. However, we hope that the information obtained from this study will help to understand the Saudi kindergartens teachers' beliefs and implementation of School, Family, and Community Partnerships.

Confidentiality:

All types of collected data from this study including the questionnaire, written notes, recorded and transcribed interviews, or any other information by the identified participants will be kept in a locked file and in computer with a security password. All materials will be destroyed when they are no longer necessary for the research.

The information that has been collected from this study will be used for the purpose of this study only. Participants will be not identified in any publications in the future that might result from the findings of this study.

Legal Rights:

You are not waiving any of your legal rights by signing this form.

Contacts:

If you need any further information or if you have any question, please contact the primary researcher, Najla Albaiz at +1 (812) 391-2274, or +966 (555)185186, or via email nalbaiz@uab.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, concerns, or complaints about the research, then you may contact the UAB Office of the IRB (OIRB) at +1 (205) 934-3789, or toll-free at 1-855-860-3789. Working hours for the OIRB are 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM C.T., from Monday till Friday.

Costs and Compensation for Participants:

There are no costs or monetary compensation to you for your participation in this study.

Consent:

By ticking the "I AGREE" checkbox at the bottom of this consent form, I confirm that I have read and understood the information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I'm free to withdraw at any time, and I also understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form.

☐ I Agree Date_____

Informed Consent (Qualitative Strand)

Title of Study: Examining Kindergarten Teachers' Beliefs about and Implementation of School, Family, and Community Partnerships in Saudi Arabia
IRB Protocol:
Principal Investigator: Najla Albaiz, PhD Student

Procedures Explanation:

You are being invited to take part in a research study regarding your beliefs as a kindergarten teacher. The purpose of this study is to learn more about kindergarten teachers' beliefs and practices of School, Family, and Community Partnerships (SFCPs) identified by Dr. Epstein and colleagues dated 2009. You have been selected because, as a kindergarten teacher, you will be able to provide valuable information regarding your teaching experiences and pedagogical practices with your students' families and local community. The information will help us to understand the professional practices of Saudi kindergarten teachers in early childhood settings.

The study is in two parts. The first part, which you already participated in, was being conducted through a questionnaire. The interview is related to your experience with family, school, community partnerships practices. It will take between 30 to 45 minutes and it is recorded unless you do not want that. You will be asked open-ended questions to clarify your perspectives. Prior to the interview, you will receive a copy of the open-ended questions to give you time to gather your thoughts and reflect on your answers. Should you choose to participate, your name will remain anonymous in the research.

Risks:
The risks of this study are minimal. You may choose not to answer any or all the questions, or you may withdraw from the interview or from all the study with no penalties.

Unforeseeable Risks:
There may be risks that are not anticipated. However, every effort will be made to minimize any risks.

Benefits:
There will be no direct benefits to you for your participation in this study. However, we hope that the information obtained from this study will help to understand the Saudi kindergartens teachers' beliefs and implementation of School, Family, and Community Partnerships.

Confidentiality:
All types of collected data from this study including the questionnaire, written notes, recorded and transcribed interviews, or any other information by the identified participants will be kept in a locked file and in computer with a security password. All materials will be destroyed when they are no longer necessary for the research.

The information that has been collected from this study will be used for the purpose of this study only. Participants will be not identified in any publications in the future that might result from the findings of this study.

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Consent:

By ticking the "I AGREE" checkbox at the bottom of this consent form, I confirm that I have read and understood the information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I'm free to withdraw at any time, and I also understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form.

☐ I Agree Date_____