The Pragmatics of Refusal: A Study of Parent-Daughter Communication Dynamics in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract: This study examines the realization of refusal speech acts by female Saudi Arabic speakers in response to parental requests, focusing on the potential impact of parental gender and request imposition on refusal strategies. Sixty participants from Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University completed a written discourse completion test (DCT) containing six scenarios with varying degrees of imposition (low, medium, high) featuring either a mother or a father. Findings revealed significant variations in refusal strategies directed toward mothers and fathers, influenced by gender expectations and imposition levels. Saudi females predominantly employed the "Excuse, reason, explanation" strategy with both parents but demonstrated distinct strategies in high-imposition request situations when interacting with fathers versus mothers. Females tended to use the "Attempt to dissuade interlocutor" strategy with fathers and the "Statement of alternative" approach with mothers. Furthermore, Saudi daughters were less inclined to use direct refusals when responding to fathers compared to mothers. These findings highlight communication, power, and relationship dynamics within Saudi families, potentially leading to distinct communication patterns and expectations among interlocutors.

1. Introduction
The speech act of refusal is categorized as an expressive speech act (Searle 1979) that conveys "a denial to engage in an action proposed by the speaker" (Verzella and Tommaso 2020:35), through generating a dispreferred response that contradicts the interlocutor's expectations. Refusal is widely regarded as one of the most challenging speech acts, as it threatens the face of the interlocutor, who is anticipated to decline a request, suggestion, offer, or invitation from a speaker who does not foresee rejection. It is worth noting that refusing a request differs from refusing in other situations. The burden of refusal primarily lies on the requestee and, contingent upon contextual variables, may cause the requester to lose face, as they are the sole benefiting party. This is because refusing a request can be perceived as rejecting the requester's needs or desires, which may threaten their social status or reputation.

Refusal is a high-risk speech act that is culturally distinctive (Felix-Brasdefer 2003; Sattar, Qusay, Che Lah, and Suleiman 2013; Nassar, Saad, and Nordin 2020) and potentially lead to misunderstandings and communication

breakdowns between speakers of different languages (Al-Issa 1998; Morkus 2014) as well as among monolinguals. It is perceived as a negative response (Abuarrah and Lochtman 2019), indicating disapproval and disrespect, which may damage the relationship between interlocutors (Brown and Levinson 1987; Alrefaee and Alghamdi 2019). As a result, refusal is inherently problematic, requiring polite semantic formulas to prevent the occurrence of face-threatening behavior and ensure effective communication between participants (Blitvich and Sifianou 2019).

The interpretation of refusal and its impact on interpersonal dynamics is deeply rooted in cultural and contextual factors. Benbouya and Rabab'ah (2022) posited that the implications of refusal on face-saving depend on various contextual variables, including the relationship between the requester and the requestee, the prevailing social norms and cultural expectations, and the nature and urgency of the request. In certain cultures, for instance, refusing a request may be interpreted as a sign of respect or politeness, while in others, it may be considered rude or disrespectful. This proposition is substantiated by empirical research conducted by Nelson Al Batal and El Bakary (2002) and Saeki and O'Keefe (1994), who have explored the cultural complexities shaping refusal strategies. For example, American culture values direct and explicit refusals, reflecting a preference for clear and precise communication. Conversely, both Arab and Persian cultures favor indirect, polite, and symbolic refusal strategies, a practice viewed as preserving respect and social decorum (Nelson et al. 2002; Allami and Naeimi 2011). Intriguingly, Saeki and O'Keefe (1994) found that Japanese respondents employed more direct refusal strategies than anticipated, suggesting that direct refusal does not necessarily signify rudeness in some contexts. These studies collectively underscore the premise that the interpretation of refusal—whether perceived as a sign of respect, politeness, rudeness, or disrespect—varies significantly across cultures.

The speech act of refusals has been extensively explored in the literature through the lens of cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics (e.g., Wijayanto 2019; Nassar et al. 2020; Al-Shboul and Maros, 2020) research, exploring how communication is enacted in different communities (e.g., Hariri and Moini 2020; Nurjaleka 2020; Hashemian 2021). These studies have generally revealed that refusal strategies used by individuals are primarily influenced by cultural norms and parameters as well as linguistic backgrounds that can influence their choice of refusal strategy. Thus, each language has its own unique set of native refusal strategies that reflect the culture and society it belongs to. Research on cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics has led to an increase in monolingual studies focusing on how the speech act of refusal is realized in a specific language considering multiple social factors such as social status, gender, age, or the degree of severity of the act and social norms that govern appropriate language use and face wants of a speech community (Gass, Behney, and Plonsky 2020). However, compared to cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics research, monolingual studies are relatively scarce in the literature (Félix-Brasdefer 2006; Sattar et al. 2013; Yousef and Al-Khawaldeh 2014; Izadi and Zilaie 2015; El-Dakhs 2018;

Marniati and Jaafar 2022). Thus, it is essential to explore the relationship between the social variables of the interlocutor and the choice of refusal strategies used to understand the complex nature of communication in different linguistic and cultural contexts (Félix-Brasdefer 2006). Such investigations are beneficial in minimizing intercultural communication breakdowns and cultural stereotyping, particularly when addressing face-threatening speech acts, such as refusal (Verzella and Tommaso 2020).

The present study investigates the refusal strategies employed by Saudi daughters in response to their parent's requests. In Saudi Arabia, where collectivism is highly valued over individualism and in-group social harmony is emphasized over personal interests, family ties and respect for parents are deeply ingrained cultural values (Alghamdi and Alqarni 2019; Gass et al. 2020). Parents are regarded as authoritative figures whose requests should be granted, and complying with these requests is often viewed as a manifestation of religious principles. Conversely, declining parents' requests can be a sensitive task that potentially violates religious values and traditional norms, damaging the parent-daughter relationship. To navigate this complex cultural context, daughters must consider various pertinent factors, such as power dynamics, parental gender, request severity, and the nature of the parent-daughter relationship. Balancing these expectations and goals requires a delicate approach that can significantly impact the parent-daughter relationship compared to more casual conversations (Nassar et al. 2020).

This study holds significant value within speech act theory and politeness principles. First, realizing different speech acts in parent-daughter interactions is a relatively under-researched area in the literature, making it an intriguing gap that requires attention. Prior research on speech acts of refusals has failed to adequately explore the dynamics of refusals made by daughters to their parents, including the subsequent consequences, gender expectations, and speakers' cultural norms and values. The findings of this study have the potential to provide valuable insights into intercultural communication, revealing noteworthy patterns in familial communication, power, and relationship dynamics within a specific context. Second, the study addresses the relatively scant literature on refusal strategies in monolingual communities. Previous research was mainly cross-cultural and interlingual. Conversely, this study explores how the realization of this speech act varies in a specific language variety in the context of interpersonal discourse, namely Saudi Arabic. Third, the study intends to explore the potential impact of parental gender and the possible influence exerted by the degree of imposition in request situations on the utilization of refusal strategies by Saudi female Arabic speakers. The influence of gender on communication has been extensively acknowledged in academic literature (e.g., Carli 1990; Wardhaugh and Fuller 2021). Nevertheless, there remains a scarcity of research examining the interplay between gender and power dynamics of the recipient, specifically about the speech act of refusal within parent-daughter discourse in the Saudi Arabian context. To this end, the following research questions were formulated.

(1) What refusal strategies do Saudi daughters use to decline their mothers' requests?
(2) What refusal strategies do Saudi daughters use to decline their fathers' requests?
(3) To what extent does parental gender influence participants' use of refusal strategies?
(4) To what extent does the degree of request imposition impact participants' use of refusal strategies?

2. Literature review
2.1 Brown and Levinson's politeness theory
Refusals have been extensively studied through the framework of linguistic politeness theory proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987). Their theory emphasizes the concept of face, which is defined as "the public self-image that every member [of a society] wants to claim for himself" (Brown and Levinson 1987:61). The theory posits that there are two universal aspects of face. The first is a positive face, which represents the interlocutor's desire for appreciation or approval, typically achieved through the use of strategies of solidarity and agreement. The second is a negative face, which represents the desire for freedom of action and freedom from imposition, typically achieved by being indirect, apologetic, and showing deference. The face is constantly at risk of being threatened by face-threatening acts in an interaction. According to Brown and Levinson, face wants vary across languages and cultures. The severity of face-threatening acts can be calculated based on variables such as the power of the interlocutors, the social distance between them, and the level of imposition of the act. That is when performing the speech act of refusal, speakers must contend with the social variables of their interlocutors, which can potentially impact their selection of strategies for realizing the speech act of refusal.

Refusal is considered a high-risk face-threatening act as it contradicts the interlocutor's expectations, thereby threatening their positive face. To mitigate the risk of offending the interlocutor, various strategies and "face-saving maneuvers" are often employed in refusals that save interlocutors' faces and maintain successful communication (Gass et al. 2020). The level of directness in producing a speech act is also a factor in politeness, and it is relatively determined by sociological factors affecting the context of utterance, such as social status, distance, power, and gender (Benbouya and Rabab'ah 2022; Marniati and Jaafar 2022). Indirect strategies, which conceal interlocutors' true intentions in the discourse, often exemplify politeness, whereas direct strategies communicate more clarity by explicitly delivering one's feelings and wants. However, direct strategies may be viewed as impolite and abrupt (Brown and Levinson 1987). Consequently, to mitigate the potential offense elicited by the refusal speech act, implementing politeness becomes a requisite when performing the act of refusal.

2.2 Studies on the speech act of refusal

The literature on the speech act of refusals can be categorized into three main areas of research: (1) studies investigating refusal behavior within a single language, (2) studies focusing on cross-cultural comparisons involving comparative analyses of refusal strategies across two or more cultures, and (3) studies examining interlanguage pragmatics which focus on the use of refusal strategies by language learners in comparison to that of native speakers. While research in the latter two areas, cross-cultural and interlingual, is more extensive, monolingual studies, also termed intralingual studies, are relatively scarce in the literature (El-Dakhs 2018; El-Dakhs 2020; Marniati and Jaafar 2022). These studies explore how refusal is performed in a specific language while considering various social variables. For this study, the focus will be on reviewing intralingual studies exclusively.

Félix-Brasdefer (2006) investigated the linguistic components of refusals and politeness strategies utilized by native male speakers of Mexican Spanish in a specific community in Mexico in formal/informal situations. The results revealed that the community utilized a set of formulaic or semi-formulaic expressions to negotiate face and achieve politeness. The negotiation of the face was achieved through indirect attempts to (re)negotiate a successful resolution while considering the group's face needs over individual independence. This issue suggests that the community in question prioritizes involvement and cooperation over autonomy. The researcher contends that it is essential to explore the relationship between the social variables of the interlocutor and the choice of refusal strategies used to understand the complex nature of communication in different linguistic and cultural contexts. Izadi and Zilaie (2015) investigated how Iranian speakers of Persian realize the speech act of refusals to a range of initiating acts, including offers, suggestions, invitations, and requests in naturally occurring encounters. The results indicated that Iranian Persian speakers tend to use indirect strategies and a combination of direct and indirect strategies more frequently than direct strategies when refusing, notably in communication with the interactants with whom they have ongoing relationships. The study highlighted that speakers employ "Reason" and "Gratitude" as the most common strategies when refusing and also introduced "Returning the act" as a new strategy. The role of sociocultural norms was evident in shaping the realization of refusals in Iranian Persian. Marniati and Jaafar (2022) examined the manifestation of refusal speech acts by native speakers of the Tanjung Tanah dialect of Kerinci towards interlocutors of varying social statuses. The study involved 25 native speakers of both genders participating in open role-plays to generate data. The findings revealed that Tanjung Tanah speakers employed different semantic formulas to decline requests depending on the social status of the interlocutors. Specifically, they used higher frequencies of "Reasons," direct "No," "Negative willingness," and "Elaborative reasons" when declining requests from interlocutors of high and low social status. In contrast, they used higher frequencies of direct "No," "Reasons," "Negative willingness," and "Persuasion" when refusing requests from interlocutors of equal social status. It is apparent that the social status of the interlocutors played a crucial role in the choice of refusal strategies used by the Tanjung Tanah speakers.

In the Arabic context, Yousef and Al-Khawaldeh (2014) explored how native speakers of Jordanian Arabic realize refusals in different social situations, including invitations, suggestions, and offers, as well as the influence of gender on refusal realization patterns. The study revealed that participants preferred indirect strategies, such as the "excuse, reason, and explanation" strategy, to mitigate the interaction, as opposed to strategies that could potentially threaten face, such as direct refusals. The study also found that gender significantly impacted the use of linguistic forms in refusal. Both males and females were found to be aware of the gender of their interlocutors. These findings provide valuable insights into the relationship between communicative acts and interpersonal rapport in social interaction. El-Dakhs (2018) explored the speech act of refusal in two regional varieties of Arabic, namely, Egyptian and Saudi Arabic. Using a variational pragmatic approach, the study examined the different realization strategies employed by the two groups in giving consent and refusing requests. The study found that both groups preferred indirect refusal strategies over direct ones. Furthermore, the effect of social variables, such as distance and dominance, was similar across the two groups. The study provides valuable insights into the pragmatic differences between regional varieties of Arabic and the influence of social variables on refusal strategies.

In a more recent study, Benbouya and Rabab'ah (2022) investigated the refusal strategies employed in Algerian Spoken Arabic in response to offers. The sample comprised 30 native Algerian participants (15 males and 15 females) enrolled at the University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia in Algeria. The researchers utilized an Oral Discourse Completion Task (ODCT) to present six scenarios representing three social status levels (equal-equal, low-high, and high-low). The results revealed that speakers of Algerian Arabic predominantly opted for direct refusal strategies when addressing offers from interlocutors of varying statuses. Notably, negative willingness/ability emerged as the most prevalent strategy for declining offers across all status levels of interlocutors. Sharifian and Izadi (2021) examined the influence of gender on the usage and distribution of two mitigating devices, hedges and ritual politeness, "Taarof," in Persian refusals. The study employed a mixed-method approach involving the analysis of 62 hours of natural conversations among adult Persian male and female native speakers, with attention paid to social distance and status. Findings indicated that women disregard the social status of addressees in same-gender intimate interactions while considering social distance in both same-gender and cross-gender socially distant interactions. On the other hand, men display sensitivity to the social status of addressees, especially when engaging with higher-status women. Nevertheless, they exhibit a lack of sensitivity to social distance in their interactions.

A thorough review of the current literature reveals a research gap concerning refusal strategies in familial contexts in Saudi Arabia and other cultures. This gap is particularly significant concerning factors that may impact daughters' linguistic behavior when declining their parents' requests, such as the gender of the parent and the level of request imposition. The present study addresses this gap by investigating the refusal strategies employed by Saudi daughters in response to

their mothers' and fathers' requests. It also examines the potential influence of parental gender and the degree of imposition on strategy selection. This study holds significant importance for several reasons. The findings will contribute to the growing body of pragmatic research on language and gender by elucidating language use within a specific linguistic context. Previous pragmatic studies in other languages have seldom taken the recipient's gender into account, rendering the contributions of this study particularly unique and valuable. Secondly, this research will offer insights into potential intercultural differences and similarities in refusal strategies directed toward parents, as well as the impact of parental gender on the choice of linguistic formulas. The results of this investigation will heighten awareness among learners of Saudi Colloquial Arabic from diverse cultural backgrounds about cultural distinctions and social norms. Additionally, this study will serve as a valuable information source on the sociocultural values of a speech community, revealing notable patterns in communication, power dynamics, and relationship dynamics within the Saudi context.

3. Method
3.1 Participants
The present study recruited a sample of 60 Saudi female students who were enrolled at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. The participants ranged from 20 to 27 years, with a mean of 22.48. All participants were native speakers of Arabic and resided in the central province, specifically in the capital city of Riyadh and its neighbors, such as Alkharj. The purpose of the study was thoroughly explained to all participants, and they signed a written consent acknowledging their understanding that their personal information would be treated confidentially throughout the study.

3.2 Instrument
The participants were provided with an online questionnaire consisting of two sections; (1) a demographic survey which consisted of personal information, and (2) a discourse completion test (DCT) to elicit refusals. The DCT comprised six written scenarios likely to occur in family interactions (and reflected different degrees of imposition): three sought a refusal of mothers' requests, and the remaining three sought a refusal of fathers' requests. The researcher designed the DCT based on the work of Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990). The scenarios were presented in standard Arabic, but the participants were requested to answer them in their own dialect to make them as authentic as possible. To establish content validity, the instrument was thoroughly examined by four university professors who were experts in the field. In addition, the DCT was piloted with a sample of 25 students to enhance its appropriateness for the study's specific context. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS, and the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was calculated to be .81, indicating high internal consistency.

Table 1. Request situations according to the degree of imposition

The recipient of refusal	Situation	Degree of imposition
Mothers' requests	Washing dishes after coming back from University	Low
	Looking after a sibling while studying for an exam	Moderate
	Not wearing an expensive dress for a particular reason	High
Fathers' requests	Going to the store with your father	Low
	Going for a visit to your grandparents	Moderate
	Leaving a job offer for family traditions	High

3.3 Data collection and analysis

Participants' refusal strategies were documented in an Excel spreadsheet and coded based on the categorization framework for refusal strategies proposed by Beebe et al. (1990). This framework, widely used in literature for analyzing refusal strategies, classifies refusals into direct, indirect, and adjuncts to refusals. Direct refusals consist of explicit performative utterances (e.g., "I refuse") and non-performative utterances that unambiguously reject or convey an inability to fulfill a request (e.g., "No"; "I cannot"; "I don't think so"). Indirect refusals use implicit expressions to decline a request, often intending to preserve the interlocutor's face, such as (1) excuse, reason, and explanation, (2) statement of alternative, (3) statement of regret, (4) wish, (5) attempt to dissuade the interlocutor, (6) set condition for future acceptance, (7) statement of principle, (8) statement of philosophy, and (9) acceptance functioning as a refusal. Adjuncts to refusals serve as external modifications to the primary refusal act, implying solidarity to mitigate its force. These can include statements of positive opinion/feeling or agreement, gratitude/appreciation, and pause fillers.

Initial screening of data revealed that a significant number of participants opted not to initiate a refusal in certain situations. Instead of disregarding these instances, the researcher incorporated them in the analysis under a new category, "non-refusals," given their potential implications for the study. The corpus was composed of two distinct datasets. The first dataset encompassed refusal strategies employed by Saudi daughters when declining requests made by their mothers, while the second dataset consisted of refusal strategies utilized by Saudi daughters when rejecting requests made by their fathers. Each dataset was categorized into four groups: direct refusals, indirect refusals, adjuncts to refusals, and non-refusals.

Descriptive statistics were employed to calculate the frequencies, means, and standard deviations of refusal strategies across the two independent variables (parental gender and level of imposition). Subsequently, a dependent sample t-test was conducted to (1) compare the means of the semantic formulas and types of refusal strategies utilized by daughters when declining their mothers' requests versus their fathers' and (2) determine whether parental gender and degree of imposition significantly influenced daughters' selection of refusal strategies.

4. Results

4.1 Refusal strategies used by Saudi daughters to decline their mothers' requests

In response to the first research question, table 2 summarizes the frequencies and percentages of the refusal strategies used by Saudi daughters when issuing refusals to their mothers. The results reveal a marked preference for indirect strategies, comprising 129 instances in contrast to 26 instances of direct strategies and 12 instances of adjuncts to refusals. Within the non-refusal category, daughters stated they would not issue refusals to their mothers in 13 cases. This observation suggests that participants tend to employ more subtle and polite forms of refusal as opposed to direct and assertive expressions. A closer examination of the indirect sub-strategies indicates that the "Excuse, reason, explanation" strategy yielded the highest frequency, with 43 instances, followed by the "Statement of alternative" with 37 instances. The "Statement of regret" strategy and "Wish" were utilized interchangeably in mother-daughter scenarios, with 18 and 17 instances, respectively. The "Attempt to dissuade interlocutor" strategy, which accounted for 14 instances, was less frequently employed.

Table 2. Distribution of daughters' refusal strategies issued to mothers.

Refusal strategy	Semantic formula	Freq.	%	Total	%
Direct	No	5	3%	26	14%
	Negative ability	21	12%		
Indirect	Excuse, reason, explanation	43	24%	129	72%
	Statement of alternative	37	21%		
	Statement of regret	18	10%		
	Wish	17	9%		
	Attempt to dissuade interlocutor	14	8%		
Adjuncts	Positive feeling/opinion or agreement	7	4%	12	7%
	Gratitude/Appreciation	5	3%		
Non-refusals	Cannot refuse	13	7%	13	7%
Total		180	100%	180	100%

4.2 Refusal strategies used by Saudi daughters to decline their fathers' requests

In response to the second research question, table 3 summarizes the frequencies and percentages of the refusal strategies employed by Saudi daughters when declining their fathers' requests. The findings highlight a significant inclination towards indirect strategies, with 122 instances in contrast to the 14 instances of direct strategies and ten instances of adjuncts to refusals. Within the non-refusal category, daughters stated they would not issue refusals to their fathers in 34 cases. The data indicates a minimal use of direct refusals compared to the mother-daughter scenarios. Although participants utilized similar semantic formulas when rejecting their fathers' requests, they refrained from using a flat "no," as it could be perceived as threatening the father-daughter relationship. These results suggest that daughters tend to hesitate to communicate directly with their fathers relative to their mothers.

A more comprehensive examination of the indirect sub-strategies reveals that the "Excuse, reason, explanation" strategy registered the highest frequency, with 42 instances, followed by the "Attempt to dissuade interlocutor" strategy, accounting for 29 instances, and "Statement of alternative" with 21 instances. The "Wish" and "Regret" strategies were less frequently employed, with 16 and 14 instances, respectively.

Table 3. Distribution of daughters' refusal strategies issued to fathers.

Refusal strategy	Semantic formula	Freq.	%	Total	%
Direct	No	0	0%	14	8%
	Negative ability	14	8%		
Indirect	Excuse, reason, explanation	42	23%	122	68%
	Attempt to dissuade interlocutor	29	16%		
	Statement of alternative	21	12%		
	Wish	16	9%		
	Statement of regret	14	8%		
Adjuncts	Positive feeling/opinion or agreement	5	3%	10	6%
	statement of empathy	3	2%		
	Gratitude/Appreciation	2	1%		
Non-refusals	Cannot refuse	34	19%	34	19%
Total		180	100%	180	100%

4.3 Refusal strategies in context

This section presents a qualitative analysis, supplemented by examples drawn directly from the data, of the refusal strategies deployed by respondents. The

categorization proposed by Beebe et al. (1990) is used as a framework that defines direct strategies as including explicit refusals (e.g., "I refuse'"; "no") that convey an inability to fulfill a request or express negation of a proposition (e.g., "I cannot"). In low to moderate imposition scenarios, few respondents flatly said 'no' to their mothers in a potentially discourteous way, while none displayed such behavior to their fathers. Some direct responses bore the semblance of complaints, as in example (1). Alternatively, some participants expressed their negative willingness or ability to fulfill the request, as illustrated in examples (2-4) for both parents. In many cases, participants deployed a dual-strategy approach to soften their overt refusal, as shown in examples (2-4), particularly as the level of imposition escalated.

(1) "No, Mom. Please, not today" "لا يمه. تكفين مو اليوم!" (scenario 2)

(2) "I cannot today. I have a long exam". "ما أقدر اليوم. عندي امتحان طويل" (scenario 3)

(3) "I cannot today. I am exhausted and bored." "ما أقدر اليوم، مره تعبانة وطفشانة." (scenario 1)

(4) "I cannot, Mom. I have an exam. Put him with my sister. She is free." "ما أقدر يمه. بكره عندي اختبار. حطيه عند أختي. فاضية" (scenario 4)

Participants most frequently opted for indirect refusal strategies that serve to mitigate the illocutionary force of the refusals, thereby minimizing potential offense to the interlocutor's positive face. The strategy most frequently used with both parents was the "Excuse, reason, explanation" strategy, as in examples (5-6). Occasionally, respondents utilized a combination of the "Excuse/Reason" strategy, "Attempt to dissuade the interlocutor," and "Negative willingness" to rescind their request. This combined strategy is most evident in high-imposition scenarios, as shown in example (6). These scenarios often feature lengthy and expressive responses, illustrating daughters' efforts to justify their refusal.

(5) "I bought it with a lot of money. There is no way not to wear it" "شريته وخسرت عليه. ماله داعي ما ألبسه" (scenario 6)

(6) "Job opportunities have become almost non-existent, and I cannot seize any opportunity that comes my way. I cannot refuse this opportunity after all this search." "فرص العمل صارت شبه معدومة ولازم استغل أي فرصة تجيني. ما أقدر أرفض هالفرصة بعد كل هذا البحث" (scenario 5)

The "Statement of alternative" strategy stands as the most used refusal strategy in mother-daughter scenarios. This approach entails the speaker's attempt to negotiate the request and propose alternatives, thereby lessening the severity of the refusal and preserving the face of all parties involved, as indicated in examples (7-8). Conversely, in father-daughter interactions, it ranks as the third most frequently employed strategy, especially in low to moderate imposition situations, as illustrated in examples (9-10). It is worth noting that if the request does not interfere with their personal objectives and path, daughters may refrain from issuing a refusal to save their faces.

(7) "Leave them until I wake up." "خليها لما أصحى" (scenario 2)

(8)   "لو تآخذيها معك أفضل. منها تغير جو وأنا أقدر أذاكر بتركيز. ما أقدر أركز على شيئيين مع بعض"
"It is better if you take her with you. This way she would enjoy her time and I can study attentively. I cannot focus on two things at once." (scenario 4)

(9)   "وش رأيك تأجل الزيارة. لازم اليوم مثلا" "Why don't you postpone the visit? Does it have to be today, for example?" (scenario 3)

(10)   "والله تعبانة الآن. خلها العصر" "I swear I am tired. Let us leave it for the afternoon" (scenario 1)

The "Attempt to dissuade interlocutor" strategy emerges as the second most frequently employed in father-daughter exchanges, especially in high-imposition scenarios. This preference starkly contrasts mother-daughter interactions, where it is the least utilized strategy. This approach encompasses several tactics, including stating negative consequences or feelings towards the request or requester (as in example 11), letting the interlocutor off the book (as in example 12), self-defense (as in example 13) and request for empathy or assistance by dropping or holding the request (as in example 14).

(11)   "ما راح يكون فيه فرص ثانية""There won't be no other opportunities." (scenario 5)

(12)   "الناس ما يعجبها شيء. راح يتعودون بعدين" "People are not satisfied with anything. They will get used to it eventually." (scenario 5)

(13)   "هذا مستقبلي وأنا أبغى أتوظف وأعتمد على نفسي والشخص ما يتشرط اذا جته وظيفة. يحمد ربه لأن غيره مالقاها" "This is my future, and I want to get a job and rely on myself. A person should not be picky when a job opportunity comes their way. They should be thankful because others have not found one." (scenario 5)

(14)   "أنا فاهمة لكن ما أبي أندم. يمكن ما ألاقي فرصة ثانية" "I understand, but I do not want to regret it. Probably I will not find another chance" (scenario 5)

The "Statement of regret" strategy emerges as the third most prevalent refusal strategy in mother-daughter scenarios, a notable divergence from its position as the least used strategy in father-daughter exchanges. This strategy, exemplified in examples (15-17), involves expressing regret for declining a request, often starting with the colloquial phrase "معليش" which signals a casual apology and dismissal of responsibility (akin to "sorry" in English), and aims to soften the refusal. It is typically paired with either the "Excuse/Reason" or "Statement of alternative" strategy.

(15)   "معليش يمه. خلي واحد من أخواني ينتبه له" "Sorry, Mom. Ask one of my siblings to take care of him." (scenario 4)

(16)   "معليش يمه. اذا قمت غسلتها" "Excuse me, Mom. I will wash them when I wake up." (scenario 2)

(17)   "أنا آسفه. ما عندي فستان مناسب غيره" "I am sorry. I do not have any other appropriate dress." (scenario 6)

The "Wish" strategy is the least used in mother and father-daughter interactions. It involves expressing a desire or willingness to fulfill a request or meet an expectation (as demonstrated in examples 18-19) yet acknowledging the inability to do so due to a lack of alternatives. It predominantly emerges in high-imposition scenarios with mothers and low-imposition scenarios with fathers. The colloquial phrase "ودي" (translated as 'I wish' or 'I would like' in English) is often

used and occasionally emphasized by invoking the name of Allah, as in "والله ودي" ('I swear I wish').

(18)　"ودي لكن ما عندي غيره" '' I would like to, but I do not have any other." (scenario 6)

(19)　"والله ودي لكن عندي اختبار" '' I swear I want to, but I have an exam" (scenario 1)

Similarly, adjuncts to refusals were scarcely used for both parents, primarily combined with invoking the name of Allah. These adjuncts do not express refusal independently but serve as external modifications to the central act of refusal, reducing its severity (Beebe et al., 1990). For instance, in example (20), the respondent used prayers to soften the refusal. Conversely, in example (21), the respondent employed the "Statement of positive agreement" as an adjunct to refusal, recognizing the father's concern about the job's compatibility with the family's cultural mindset.

(20)　"الله يحفظك مالي خلق الآن. خليها بالليل" '' May Allah bless you. I do not feel like it right now. Let us do it tonight." (scenario 1)

(21)　"يبه أنت تعرف أنه ما فيه مكان عمل يناسب محيط تفكير عائلتنا وأنا دورت كثير وقدمت كثير وهذي الوظيفة هي أكثر وظيفة مناسبة" Dad, you know that there is no workplace that suits the mindset of our family environment. I have searched a lot and applied a lot, and this job is the most suitable one." (scenario 5)

4.4 Impact of parental gender on Saudi daughters' use of refusal strategies

In response to the third research question, a dependent sample t-test was conducted to examine the potential influence of parental gender on the employment of refusal strategies by Saudi daughters. This analysis aimed to ascertain if the variation in refusal strategies was affected by whether the daughters were addressing their mothers or fathers. Interestingly, the results in Table 4 demonstrate that participants utilized more indirect strategies (M = 43) when issuing a refusal to their mothers as opposed to their fathers (M = 40.66). Statistically, this observation can be attributed to the tendency of daughters to refrain from issuing a refusal to their fathers in 34 cases (M = 11.33) compared to the non-refusals directed towards mothers in 13 cases (M = 4.33). This could potentially increase the proportion of indirect strategies used with mothers and decrease it with fathers. In contrast, daughters employed fewer direct strategies with their fathers (M = 4.66) than their mothers (M = 8.66). The disparity in refusal strategies applied to mothers and fathers was statistically significant (Sig. = .009), indicating that parental gender substantially impacted the use of refusal strategies among Saudi daughters.

A notable discrepancy has also emerged between the two datasets in the non-refusal category. Specifically, daughters reported that they would not issue refusals to their mothers in 13 instances, while they explicitly stated that they could not refuse in 34 instances when addressing their fathers. This observation highlights the unique communication dynamics and gender expectations of parent-daughter relationships.

Table 4. Impact of parental gender on the use of refusal strategies

Refusal strategies	Issued to Mothers		Issues to Fathers		T value	Sig.
	Mean	Std.	Mean	Std.		
Direct strategies	8.66	4.04	4.66	1.52	2.364624 25	0.009167 45
Indirect strategies	43	9.5	40.66	10.21		
Adjuncts	4	3	3.33	1.52		
Non-refusals	4.33	3.21	11.33	7.57		

4.5 Impact of degree of imposition on Saudi daughters' use of refusal strategies
In response to the last research question, a further analysis was performed using a dependent sample t-test to explore the potential influence of the level of imposition of the request scenarios on the utilization of refusal strategies by Saudi daughters. Table 5 indicates that participants employed a reduced number of refusal strategies to decline their parents' requests (M = 17.33 and 13.33 for mothers and fathers, respectively) or opted for non-refusals (M = 4.33 and 11.33 for mothers and fathers, respectively) in situations characterized by a high level of imposition. The variation in refusal strategies directed towards mothers and fathers, concerning the level of imposition, was found to be statistically significant (Sig. = .012). This evidence suggests that the level of imposition played a considerable role in shaping the use of refusal strategies among Saudi daughters.

Table 5. Impact of degree of imposition on the use of refusal strategies

Degree of imposition	Refusals to mothers' requests				Refusals to fathers' requests				T value	Sig.
	Mean	Min	Max	Std.	Mean	Min	Max	Std.		
High	17.33	7	32	13.0	13.33	6	29	13.5	3.21	.01239
Medium	19	1	48	25.3	17.33	2	45	24		
Low	19.33	4	49	25.6	18	3	48	25		
Total	18.55			19.2	16.22			19.07		
Non-refusals	4.33	2	8	3.2	11.33	6	20	1.5		

5. Discussion
This study aimed to expand upon the current body of knowledge in intercultural communication by investigating the refusal strategies used by Saudi Arabian

females interacting with their parents using real-life scenarios. Specifically, the study scrutinized the potential impact of parental gender and the degree of imposition in request scenarios on the deployment of refusal strategies, aiming to glean insights into communication, power, and relationship dynamics.

The primary findings of this study revealed variations in refusal strategy rates directed towards mothers and fathers, influenced by gender expectations, the degree of imposition, and the cultural norms of speakers. Daughters leaned towards indirect strategies when refusing both parents' requests. This preference can be ascribed to the highly context-sensitive nature of Saudi culture and religious values, prioritizing harmonious relationships with parents. Respecting elders, especially parents, is a deeply ingrained ethos from early childhood, adhering to the religious tenets of the Quran. Consequently, daughters demonstrate a propensity for employing nuanced and courteous refusal strategies to avoid offense or familial disruption, as opposed to direct and assertive expressions. This observation aligns with Alghamdi and Alqarni's (2019) assertion that in collectivist cultures like Saudi Arabia, direct refusals may be perceived as disrespectful or disobedient, emphasizing the cultural importance of respect for elders and family harmony. Similarly, Al-Issa (1998) and Alaboudi (2020) emphasized the significance of politeness and face-saving in Arab cultures. Directive strategies help maintain rapport and avert potential conflicts (Brown and Levinson 1987). This finding concurs with El-Dakhs (2018), demonstrating a preference for indirect over direct refusal strategies in two regional varieties of Arabic, namely Egyptian and Saudi Arabic.

The results have also discovered that Saudi daughters are less inclined to employ direct refusals with fathers compared to mothers. This can be attributed to power dynamics and relational aspects within Saudi families, which give rise to distinct communication patterns and expectations for daughters. Fathers are viewed as authoritative figures in the Saudi culture, and their requests may be perceived as commands, making it challenging for daughters to refuse directly. This finding corroborates Budha's (2021) assertion that in a social context where higher status and power are ascribed to men, women occupying a subordinate status may resort to subtle, passive, and non-threatening language to navigate their interactions. Gender-stereotyped cultural beliefs and practices encourage gender-specific behaviors (Khan and Tidman 2023). As a result, daughters may feel obligated to comply with their fathers' requests out of respect or apprehension of potential consequences. The patriarchal nature of Saudi culture sees direct refusals to fathers as particularly offensive behavior. These findings align with earlier studies (Izadi and Zilaie 2015; El-Dakhs 2018), highlighting the influence of social factors, such as gender and power, and sociocultural norms in shaping refusal strategies across Arabic dialects, particularly in ongoing relationships.

Conversely, daughters often have a more open, communicative relationship with their mothers, encouraging candid expression of thoughts and emotions. Mothers, viewed as nurturing and accessible with less perceived power, create a comfort zone for daughters to refuse requests without jeopardizing the relationship. This is consistent with Sharifian and Izadi's (2021) observations that

the social status of the addressee does not significantly influence refusals within same-gender intimate interactions.

A meticulous analysis of the data indicates that Saudi females predominantly utilized the "Excuse, reason, explanation" strategy when refusing both parents, aligning with previous studies (Al-Issa 1998; Izadi and Zilaie 2015; El-Dakhs 2018; Alghamdi and Alqarni 2019; Alaboudi 2020; Al-Shboul and Maros 2020; Sharifian and Izadi 2021). These studies highlight Arabic speakers' preference to utilize explanation/excuse strategies in refusals more frequently to show respect, consideration, and compliance willingness. Within this cultural milieu, the act of refusing a request is deemed discourteous unless accompanied by genuine concern, explanations, or regretful expressions. This refusal approach underscores the significance of politeness and face-saving within Arab cultures.

In high imposition request situations, Saudi females exhibit distinct refusal strategies when interacting with their fathers versus their mothers. Daughters tend to adopt the "Attempt to dissuade interlocutor" strategy when rejecting their fathers while favoring the "Statement of alternative" and "Statement of regret" approaches when issuing refusals to their mothers. This finding concurs with Mulawarman, Hudiyono, Andri, and Ningsi (2021), claiming that females exhibit heightened self-expression toward their mothers. This can be attributed to the shared gender fostering an environment conducive to alternative methods of refusal. In contrast, daughters may perceive the need to employ a more cautious strategy to maintain respect and avert confrontation with their fathers. Therefore, they resort to relatively evasive language to reduce the face-threatening act by attempting to dissuade the interlocutor from withdrawing their request or changing their mind. This finding corroborates Carli's (1990) assertion that women often use tentative language, characterized by indirect, polite, or non-assertive speech, to avoid confrontation and maintain positive relationships.

Notably, a considerable proportion of instances arose wherein participants opted not to refuse their fathers' requests under high imposition situations, as opposed to their mothers. This tendency suggests a heightened expectation for daughters to demonstrate respect and deference towards their fathers, stemming from Saudi cultural norms and the socialization of females. This observation is consistent with Chaffee and Plante's (2020) findings on stereotypical behaviors in Middle Eastern societies and parental communication dynamics. They highlighted parents' tendency to prepare sons and daughters differently for adulthood, reflecting gender inequality. In a society where gender roles are distinctly demarcated, daughters may feel more compelled to expectations of deference and respect towards male authority figures, such as their fathers. These gender norms could influence daughters' refusal strategies, potentially explaining their reluctance to refuse their fathers directly. Conversely, daughters may find expressing disagreement or refusal with their mothers easier, reflecting their shared societal gender status. Other factors, such as the unique parent-daughter relationship, may also play a role. This finding is consistent with Chen (2019), Remache and Altakhaineh (2021) and Almegren (2022), who posited that the diversity of refusal

strategies arises due to social and contextual factors, causing interactants to utilize different strategies appropriate for the given situation.

While the present study offers valuable insights into Saudi female speakers' refusal strategies with their parents, several limitations must be acknowledged. The study focused on the impact of parental gender and the degree of imposition on females' refusal strategies. Further research is warranted to explore males' refusal strategies and the potential influence of other sociocultural factors, such as age, education, and social status, on refusal strategy choices within Saudi parent-child interactions. The study focused exclusively on Saudi parent-daughter interactions, suggesting the need for broader cultural context examination to uncover communication pattern similarities and differences. The study involved a relatively small number of participants, which may not represent the wider Saudi female population, indicating the need for larger, more diverse samples in future research. The DCT used, representing real-life scenarios, may introduce context-specific factors influencing the refusal strategies employed. Further research should explore a wider range of scenarios and contexts to determine the robustness of the findings. Future studies could better understand refusal strategies in authentic situations by using observational methods or analyzing naturally occurring data.

In sum, Saudi Arabian society is fundamentally hierarchical, with social status — shaped by age, power, gender, wealth, and religious or governmental positions — playing a pivotal role in interpersonal relationships and social norms. Respect for elders, especially parents, is deeply rooted from early childhood, aligning with Quranic tenets. Given this cultural backdrop, daughters must be cautious when refusing parents' requests, as parents are perceived as religiously and culturally authoritative. Refusal can be seen as challenging their authority, potentially sparking conflict or prompting a more robust assertion of their authority. This societal norm underscores the significance of tact and subtlety in refusal strategies within the Saudi Arabian context. This study enriches the existing body of knowledge on intercultural communication, especially in Saudi Arabia.

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Appendix

عزيزتي المشاركة

تم إعداد هذه الاستبانة لدراسة أساليب الرفض المتبعة من قبل البنات السعوديات تجاه أمهاتهم وآبائهم لأغراض البحث العلمي.

يرجى قراءة المواقف التالية بتأن، وكتابة طريقة الرفض التي ستتبعينها كما لو كنت في الموقف ذاته. الرجاء كتابة الاجابة في المكان المخصص لذلك واستخدام اللهجة العامية.

١. عدت من الجامعة متأخرة وتشعرين بالتعب. طلب منك والدك مرافقته للسوبر ماركت لشراء بعض الحاجيات المنزلية. جوابك بالرفض له سوف يكون:

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٢. عدت من الجامعة متأخرة وتشعرين بالتعب. طلبت منك والدتك مساعدتها في جلي الصحون. جوابك بالرفض لها سوف يكون:

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٣. لديك امتحان بالغد ولم تستذكري دروسك بعد. طلب منك والدك مرافقته لزيارة منزل جدك بعد شفائه. جوابك بالرفض له سوف يكون:

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٤. لديك امتحان بالغد ولم تستذكري دروسك بعد. طلبت منك والدتك العناية بأخاك/أختك الصغيرة ريثما تعود من زيارة عائلية. جوابك بالرفض لها سوف يكون:

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٥. بعد بحث طويل وجدت فرصة للعمل في مكان لا يتوافق مع ثقافة محيطكم العائلي. طلب منك والدك ترك هذا العمل والبحث عن فرصة أخرى. جوابك بالرفض له سوف يكون:

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٦. بعد بحث طويل، اشتريت فستانا باهظ الثمن لارتدائه في مناسبة عائلية، ولكن طلبت منك والدتك عدم ارتدائه لسبب ما، جوابك بالرفض لها سوف يكون: