

Houses' Adaptability Post-Pandemics: A Case Study of Contemporary Saudi Houses Post COVID-19

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Abstract

The interior design of contemporary homes symbolizes the socio-cultural adaptations driven by evolving lifestyles and user preferences. Global pandemics, particularly COVID-19, have profoundly influenced these preferences by reshaping how people organize and perceive their living spaces. This paper investigates COVID-19 as a case study to determine user preference shifts and adaptability in contemporary Saudi homes post-COVID-19 pandemic. It highlights the factors that led to the persistence of specific modifications. The research is based on mixed methods, starting with a literature review defining what "home" means, then exploring its status during and after COVID-19 in Saudi Arabia. Two survey datasets support the findings: one involving 483 participants during the pandemic, and another with 275 participants as restrictions eased. Analysis reveals that changes in spatial preferences among contemporary Saudi home users have persisted beyond the pandemic. This persistence indicates a new socio-cultural understanding of home. Homeowners' perceptions of the definition of home shifted from being guest-oriented to more owner-focused, reflecting adaptations made during the lockdown. The research suggests that similar adaptations likely occurred globally due to shared influencing factors, although the nature and extent of these changes may differ according to socio-cultural contexts. This study underscores the lasting impact of the pandemic on residential preferences and the evolving concept of home.

Keywords

Interior Design, Saudi Arabia, House Design, Home, Post-COVID-19

1. Introduction

COVID-19, often dubbed the unwanted guest, made its sudden and uninvited en-

trance into people's lives in early 2020, marking the beginning of a global disturbance that would redefine people's daily routines and the concept of home. With lockdowns, social distancing mandates, and an unprecedented health crisis, people found themselves confined within their own houses, forcing a reassessment of the space that had previously functioned as a living environment. This transformation prompted a deep examination of what it meant to be at home—interpersonally, economically, and culturally.

In Saudi Arabia, where the architectural narrative is steeped in tradition and social customs, the pandemic forced a reevaluation of how these houses adapt to contemporary lived experiences. Houses are typically seen as spaces of sanctuary, rehearsal, and community, particularly in a culture that traditionally places enormous importance on hospitality. With the advent of COVID-19, users were compelled to shift their focus inward, prioritizing their immediate needs over the societal expectations surrounding entertaining guests. This shift challenges long-held perceptions of home in a society that values communal engagement and familial connections.

This research investigates the perceptions of contemporary Saudi houses following the COVID-19 pandemic. It aims to understand the changes in the configuration of these living spaces, specifically analyzing the modifications implemented during the pandemic to facilitate remote work, social distancing, and multifunctionality. Moreover, it inquires into the persistence of these changes in the post-pandemic context. The study questions whether Saudi homes have reverted to their pre-COVID configurations or if the experiences of lockdown have inspired a lasting transformation in the residents' interactions with their living environments.

Previous studies, such as those conducted by [Alkhateeb and Peterson \(2021\)](#), provide a foundation for this investigation. They highlight a clear paradigm shift during the pandemic, in which individuals redefined their definitions of comfort and utility in their homes. This research will build on those findings, integrating contemporary observations and data to paint a more complete picture of the current housing landscape in Saudi Arabia post-COVID-19.

Prior to the onset of the pandemic, numerous residences in Saudi Arabia were characterized by open social spaces intentionally designed to host guests. This architectural approach often reflected a cultural inclination towards hospitality, wherein the delineation between private and public domains was frequently ambiguous, thus emphasizing communal living ([Al Naim, 2006](#)). However, the period of lockdown necessitated adaptations that led to spatial and design modifications aimed at fulfilling an augmented demand for privacy, productivity, and comfort. In many cases, areas that were previously allocated for social gatherings were repurposed into home offices or educational environments for children, indicating a significant transformation from their original function.

As depicted in various studies ([AlKhateeb & Peterson, 2021](#); [Marcus, 2006](#)), the idea of what constitutes a home has evolved. The pandemic pressured individuals

to confront not just the physical attributes of their houses but also the emotional and psychological connotations tied to those spaces. Today, houses must embody a sense of safety, comfort, and adaptability, serving as both a refuge and a workspace.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is currently experiencing extensive socio-economic changes in line with the 2030 vision, a strategic initiative designed to diminish the country's reliance on oil and diversify its economy. This ambitious endeavor encompasses technological, economic, and socio-cultural transformations that affect housing in modern Saudi Arabia. Architectural developments are now focused not just on exterior appearance and grandeur, but also on reimagining interior layouts and functionalities to better accommodate contemporary lifestyles (AlKhateeb, 2015; Othman et al., 2015).

Remarkably, the pandemic serves as both a catalyst and a magnifying glass, refining focus on these socio-cultural and economic changes within the context of housing. As the country moves towards a more diversified and digital economy, the integration of technology in homes has become essential, impacting both design choices and everyday living experiences. For instance, the need for smart homes equipped with technologies that facilitate easier remote work and communication has surged, mirroring global trends but also giving rise to unique regional adaptations.

Historically, Saudi houses have been esteemed for their openness and warmth, often making considerable efforts to accommodate guests. This culture of hospitality not only served as a source of pride but also constituted a fundamental aspect of social interaction within communities. However, with the emergence of the pandemic, individuals began navigating the intricate emotional dynamics of home, prioritizing personal comfort and safety while striving to uphold traditional values of hospitality. This inherent contradiction prompts significant inquiries: Is it possible to maintain both privacy and hospitality? In what ways do contemporary Saudi homes embody this dual necessity?

In addressing these questions, this research also recognizes the imperative role of health needs in redefining home environments. The pandemic made health and safety paramount in design considerations, with many households incorporating features that may have seemed unnecessary pre-COVID. Enhanced ventilation, separate workspaces, and adaptable furniture have become intrinsic features in many Saudi homes, altering their very essence.

Ultimately, this research will provide an in-depth exploration of how COVID-19 has influenced the perception of contemporary Saudi homes. By examining important themes such as the transformation of space usage, technological integration, and the intruding challenges of post-pandemic life, we can decipher the evolving narrative of what it means to "be at home" in the 21st century. The findings aim not only to contribute to academic discourse but also to offer practical insights for architects, policymakers, and residents as they navigate a future that continues to be shaped by the events of the past few years.

This inquiry aims to encapsulate the essence of our current moment by documenting the resilience and adaptability of a culture in transition. It highlights the significant impact that a global pandemic has had on our homes. As we look toward the future, it will be crucial to understand these dynamics in order to shape living spaces that not only reflect our lived experiences but also honor the complex meanings of home in contemporary society.

2. Literature Review

This literature review explores the concept of home and examines the profound influence pandemics have on people's lives, particularly emphasizing the impact of COVID-19 on house design in Saudi Arabia. It explores key issues related to both the conceptual and physical definitions of a house, highlighting how the pandemic has shifted priorities in residential spaces. Additionally, the review covers literature related to the resilience and long-term implications on house design post-pandemic, suggesting emerging preferences for open spaces, improved ventilation, and multifunctional areas that cater to evolving lifestyles and the new normal in-home living.

2.1. Definition of Home and House

Understanding the essence of home is a significant concern for designers, and research on that topic has been conducted in various disciplines. It was noted that home as a concept is associated with multiple aspects that shape its meaning: social and cultural signifiers; identity and self-identity; territory; physical structure; and financial investment (Fox O'Mahony, 2013; Henilane, 2016). Therefore, the definition refers not only to the physical aspects but also includes the conceptual and socio-cultural aspects of one's house (AlKhateeb, 2015; Birer et al., 2022; Spanedda & Fusaro, 2022). The home is the place where one lives and has experiences of nourishment and safety, as well as time and culture (Marcus, 2006; Al Naim & Mahmud, 2007; Rapoport, 1982).

In the context of the Middle East, particularly in Saudi Arabia, the value placed on privacy within the home is paramount. The house served as a shelter and a place to host guests (AlKhateeb, 2015; Othman et al., 2015; Sobh & Belk, 2011). These two features influenced house design decisions over time. However, the perception of home changed with the presence of COVID-19 because of the lockdown, where users were forced to stay at home and extensively experience all spaces during that period (AlKhateeb & Peterson, 2021; Bettaieb & Alsabban, 2021; Moreira & Farias, 2023). The major change that happened to the definition of the house spatially was the owners' focus shift from the guests to themselves, the house owners and daily users. Furthermore, house owners linked the term house with keywords such as safety, security, and belonging (AlKhateeb & Peterson, 2021). Though that might seem to be a change to some researchers, the connection was there, and now it is more emphasized as Donia Batayib links between home and the following terms: comfort, warmth, privacy, connection to place.

2.2. Houses and COVID-19

In this part of the literature review, the researcher focuses on two studies that examined houses during pandemics around the world, where one study focused on London specifically and the other on Europe in general. The idea of these papers was to provide some examples of how pandemics influenced the lived environment in order for people to adapt to the impacts associated with sudden health pandemics such as plague and other viruses (Alonso & Jacoby, 2023; Vavouraki & Tsakalidou, 2022).

In the following, the effect of the deadly plague on architecture and people was discussed. Architectural changes in Europe after the Plague AND Distant space: the architecture of quarantine.

Humanity has experienced multiple pandemics that have affected their health and lives. With their presence, these pandemics introduced new behaviors that later became part of their cultural norms (Ching & Rani, 2023). The influence of these pandemics was dealt with within living environments, where researchers were searching for containment measures: spatially, medically, and via different mediums such as materials used inside hospitals, houses, and workplace environments (Anas, 2020; Ebert, 2020; Kloncz, 2020; Larson, 2020; Wigglesworth, 2020; Yuko, 2020).

Throughout the centuries, different countries have developed methods within their houses to improve quality of life. The courtyard house model is one of the most popular dwelling models worldwide. This model provided sunlight and fresh air to its users, which helped improve their physical and mental health (Kloncz, 2020; Le Roux, 2020; Yuko, 2020). In modern house designs, the outdoor garden is used to provide the house with what the indoor courtyard provided in historic houses: fresh air, a place to gather, and sanctuary patios (Chayka, 2020; Ebert, 2020; Larson, 2020; McKeough, 2020; Rassia, 2020; Rizzato, 2020; Wigglesworth, 2020).

When the pandemic spread worldwide, different conducted research concluded the need for some functional spaces, which also applied to contemporary Saudi houses (AlKhateeb & Peterson, 2021; Bettaieb & Alsabban, 2021). These spaces included, but are not limited to, multi-functional spaces, more storage spaces, a home gym, and an office (Larson, 2020; McKeough, 2020; Moreira & Farias, 2023; Rizzato, 2020; Tyagi, 2020; Wigglesworth, 2020). Furthermore, a study that focused on Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, highlighted the importance of flexibility in upcoming houses to accommodate users' current and future needs (Bettaieb & Alsabban, 2021).

In late 2021, the world started recovering, one step at a time, from the negative effects that the pandemic left on it. People started going back to work, trying to have their lives return to how they were before the pandemic spread. Yet, people were aware of their surroundings, whether their homes or work environments, and taking the step of stepping out of quarantine mode to return to their regular

lives as they knew it was considered a big step. This caused them to reconsider the designs of these environments to ensure their efficiency and that they achieved the required privacy, spatial functionality, and flexibility (Alawad, 2021; AlKhateeb & Peterson, 2021; Al-Qaisi, 2021; Bettaieb & Alsabban, 2021).

The adjustments that people made to their homes during the pandemic were not all removed; some, if not most, were retained as they became part of their day-to-day lives. The adjustments provided users with better family quality time on the one hand and practicality on the other. Some users were still working from home and did not return to work in offices (AlKhateeb & Peterson, 2021; Bettaieb & Alsabban, 2021; Ching & Rani, 2023; Muhyi & Adiando, 2021).

2.3. Houses in Saudi Arabia during COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly changed the house's dynamics worldwide, and Saudi Arabia is no exception. With strict lockdown measures in place, residents spent extended periods in their homes, leading to a reassessment of their living spaces. The pandemic highlighted the limitations of conventional residential designs and underscored the necessity for flexibility in housing structures, which led homeowners to reevaluate their housing needs, emphasizing adaptability in response to their experiences during prolonged lockdowns (Bettaieb & Alsabban, 2021).

Before the pandemic, residential design in Saudi Arabia, like in other countries, often prioritized aesthetics and traditional layouts over contemporary needs, functionality, and adaptability. Homes were typically designed with fixed purposes for each room, such as living rooms, bedrooms, and kitchens, with little consideration for multifunctional spaces. However, the COVID-19 lockdowns forced families to adapt their homes to accommodate a wide range of activities, from remote work and online schooling to fitness and leisure. This sudden change highlighted the limitations of conventional housing designs and underscored the need for greater flexibility in residential spaces (Hanna, 2023; Alawad, 2021; AlKhateeb & Peterson, 2021; Hijazi & Attiah, 2021).

As a response to the needs emerging from the COVID-19 lockdown, homeowners seek flexibility, which in housing refers to the ability of a home to adapt to changing circumstances, such as the need for a home office, a gym, or an outdoor garden. During the pandemic, many homeowners in Saudi Arabia realized that their houses lacked essential functional spaces, which led them to reconfigure their existing layouts. These modifications ranged from simple furniture reallocation to more significant changes, such as altering the functions of entire rooms. For example, the guest living spaces were converted into home offices or study rooms, and family living rooms were converted into a playroom for the children. Yet, house owners faced the structural limitations of their homes when trying to implement their personal modifications on one hand, and the privacy balance inside the house for each house member on the other hand (Alawad, 2021; AlKhateeb & Peterson, 2021; Bettaieb & Alsabban, 2021).

3. Methodology

The methodology employed in this study is a mixed-methods approach. That methodology utilizes the benefits of qualitative and quantitative methods and tools. While the study could start with the intention of a quantitative approach, later researchers may find that the qualitative analysis approach would answer the research question better than the quantitative approach (Creswell, 2009; Mesyitahsyare & Hermina, 2025). In the case of this study, a mixed-methods approach was used as the research questions required multifaceted tools and analysis approaches (Clark & Ivankova, 2015).

This study analyzed various data sets, including both primary and secondary data. Initially, secondary data were collected through a literature review focusing on housing trends during the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide, with particular emphasis on Saudi Arabia. This review includes an exploration of the definitions of homes in Saudi Arabia, addressing their status before and after the COVID-19 crisis. Primary data were subsequently gathered and analyzed via the surveys as the research tool. Two sets of structured surveys were utilized: the first survey was distributed during the summer of 2020, comprising three sections with a total of ten questions, and involved 485 participants. This survey aimed to understand the evolving requirements of Saudi homes during the pandemic, influenced by health concerns and lockdown restrictions. The second survey was conducted in the summer of 2023, consisting of three sections and encompassing twenty-three questions, with 276 participants. This survey sought to assess the changing needs of Saudi homes in the aftermath of COVID-19, at a time when the immediate health threats posed by the pandemic had lessened. The primary objective of this updated survey was to determine whether the spatial and functional adaptations identified in the 2020 study, which took place at the pandemic's peak, had persisted, evolved, or reverted to pre-pandemic norms. Both surveys were organized into three critical sections: demographics, spatial and functional space requirements within the home, and participants' perceptions of what constitutes a home.

The researcher employed the snowball sampling method to distribute the survey link. Different research expressed limitations with this distribution method within quantitative and qualitative research (Naderifar et al., 2017; Ting et al., 2025), which addresses the sufficiency of the participating sample to represent a larger group, which would assist in generalizing the research outcome.

This paper follows, as mentioned earlier, mixed methods, where quantitative tools were used to collect data, then later analyzed utilizing qualitative thematic analysis tools for both survey questions and open-ended questions. Literature about snowball sampling advocates for the advantages of utilizing this collection method in qualitative research, where reaching participants is hard (Ting et al., 2025).

The survey link was disseminated to various WhatsApp groups and shared on LinkedIn to engage different audiences, encouraging their participation and assistance in forwarding the survey link. The discrepancy in response rates between

the two surveys can be attributed to the timing of their distribution; the initial survey was conducted during the height of the pandemic, when individuals were largely at home and thus more inclined to dedicate time to completing the survey. Conversely, the second survey was administered after individuals resumed their daily activities, resulting in their being comparatively more occupied.

The integration of survey data alongside a literature review facilitated a thorough understanding of the ways in which the pandemic has transformed housing needs. This comprehensive analysis empowers stakeholders to address the current demands of residents effectively and make informed contributions to future housing developments within the region.

3.1. Data Collection and Analysis

This section presents the primary data collected from the distributed surveys, alongside a comprehensive analysis. It discusses three main components of the survey: the demographic information, the functional spaces in contemporary Saudi residences post-COVID-19, and the significance of the dwelling.

3.2. Demographics¹

The demographics for the surveys conducted during and post-COVID-19 are summarized in **Table 1** and **Table 2** below.

Table 1. Demographics of online surveys by percentage: gender, marital status, and age groups.

Category	Gender		Marital Status		Age Group				
	Male	Female	Married	Single	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55+
Survey 1	45.3	54.7	67.7	32.3	14.5	35	21.5	14.5	14.5
Survey 2	31.64	68.36	66.55	33.45	10.18	26.55	34.55	18.91	9.82

Table 2. Demographics of online surveys in percent—Education and Saudi Arabia location.

Category	Education			Location in Saudi Arabia				
	High school	Bachelor	Post-graduate	Eastern Region	Western Region	Central Region	Southern Region	Northern Region
Survey 1	10	66.7	23.3	55	21	17	5	2
Survey 2	13.45	57.45	29.09	53.09	24.73	18.91	2.91	0.36

For the data obtained from the published paper survey analysis, the respondents were 31.64% male and 68.36% female; 66.55% were married, and 33.45% were

¹According to the Saudi General Authority of Statistics, in the data collected about the population updated in 2020, the age group 20 - 45 count is the largest group compared to the younger and elder groups.

single. Their ages were 10.18% in the 18 - 24 group, 26.55% in the 25 - 34 group, 34.55% in the 35 - 44 group, 18.91% in the 45 - 54 group, and 9.82% in the 55 and older group. Their educational status was 13.45% with high school diplomas, 57.45% with bachelor's degrees, and 29.09% with postgraduate studies. Respondents were from all locations in Saudi Arabia, with 53.09% from the Eastern Region, 24.73% from the Western Region, 18.91% from the Central Region, 2.91% from the Southern Region, and 0.36% from the Northern Region.

As for the data obtained from the survey based on the published paper, the respondents were 45.3% male and 54.7% female, 67.7% were married, and 32.3% were single. Their ages were 14.5% in the 18 - 24 group, 35% in the 25 - 34 group, 21.5% in the 35 - 44 group, 14.5% in the 45 - 54 group, and 14.5% in the 55 and older group. Their educational status was 10% with high school diplomas, 66.7% earning bachelor's degrees, and 23.3% attending postgraduate studies. Respondents were from all locations in Saudi Arabia, with 55% from the Eastern Region, 21% from the Western Region, 17% from the Central Region, 5% from the Southern Region, and 2% from the Northern Region.

The preliminary demographic analysis of both surveys indicates that the participants' demographic characteristics are consistent. This similarity enhances the reliability of the data analysis and findings, as discussed in the following sections.

3.3. Functional Spaces in Saudi Houses during and Post-COVID-19

This section of the data analysis investigates functional spaces in modern Saudi homes, focusing on their importance as revealed by residents' experiences during the COVID-19 lockdown. It analyzes the spatial adjustments implemented to meet lockdown demands and evaluates whether these adaptations have been maintained, modified, or reversed in the post-pandemic period. **Figure 1** illustrates the key house spaces identified as most essential in March and April 2020, while **Figure 2** illustrates those identified as most important in July and August 2023.

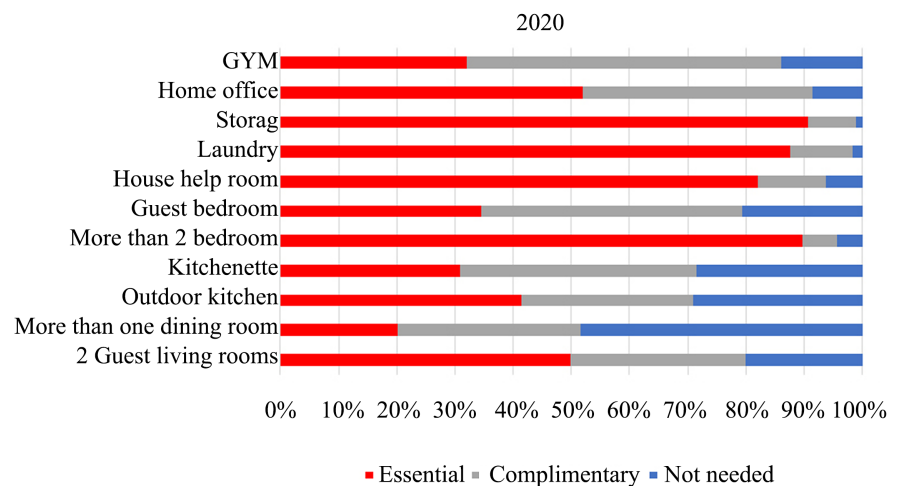


Figure 1. Space preferences in 2019 (during COVID-19) (AlKhateeb & Peterson, 2021).

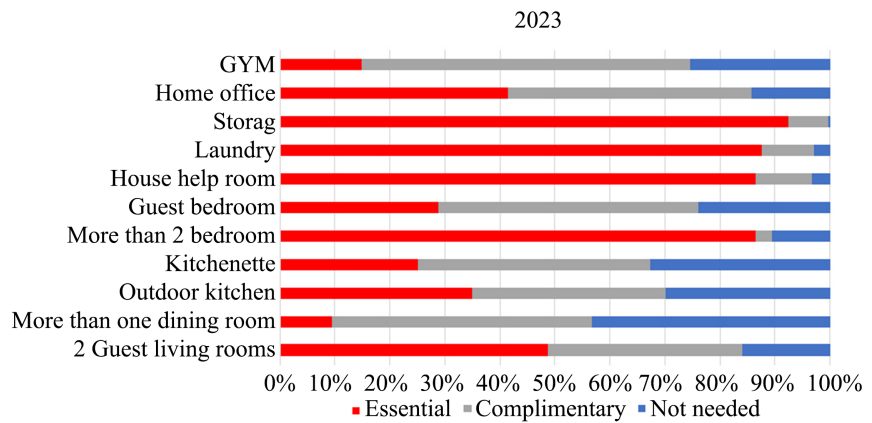


Figure 2. Space preferences in 2019 (post-COVID-19) (the researcher).

When comparing the two sets of DATA outcomes, the differences between them are minimal for most functional spaces. In the survey conducted during COVID-19, the following spaces were considered essential during the pandemic: home gym, home office, more than two bedrooms, kitchenette, outdoor kitchen, and additional dining room. Meanwhile, in the post-pandemic survey, the functional space needs mentioned were less essential and were mostly placed as complementary spaces. The spaces mentioned were an adjustment response to the pandemic, and their necessity also eased with the easing of the situation. Yet, the need for only one dining room is a response to the socio-cultural change, with fewer in-house gatherings compared to pre-pandemic (AlKhateeb & Peterson, 2021; Bettaieb & Alsabban, 2021; Ching & Rani, 2023). Though conducted at distinct stages of the pandemic, both surveys indicate that users’ preferences for spatial requirements in their homes remained consistent.

In response to the survey’s findings conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, additional spaces were added to the 2023 survey to assess adjustments made in reaction to COVID-19. Figure 3 illustrates participants’ perceptions regarding the necessity of these spaces. The most significant addition during and post-COVID-19 was the outdoor garden, which emerged as a fundamental requirement among respondents. It was incorporated into owners’ homes to create a relaxation space and help them cope with the psychological strain of lockdowns.

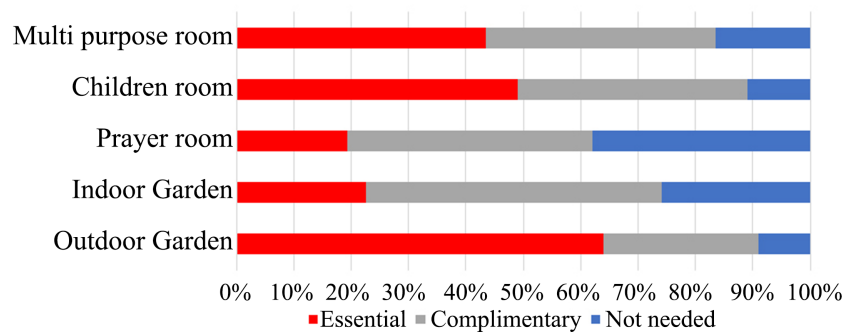


Figure 3. Additional space preferences for July/August 2023 (post-COVID-19) (source: the researcher).

Another notable addition was the children's playroom, which was introduced during the pandemic to provide a dedicated space for studying and playing, separate from the family living room. This addressed the increased need for functional and physical separation within the home to assist owners in separating work and family time.

Spaces like the prayer room and indoor garden were also created during the pandemic. While these spaces played a crucial role at the time, their existence was not perceived as important post-COVID-19.

The second part of the 2023 survey investigated the influence of COVID-19 on some design decisions. Most participants were not greatly influenced by the houses in which they were raised. When asked about seeking interior design offices to design their homes, the majority were hesitant (30%) and agreed on the importance of taking this step (29%). In the investigation, two questions were related to spatial design: family living room utilization and the open home design model. For the first aspect, 29% of the respondents were not in favor of using the family living space to host guests, while 22% were in favor of this action. 39.6% of respondents favored the open home design model, which provided them with openness and spaciousness, which they sought during the pandemic lockdown and learned to appreciate afterward.

Furthermore, 2023 survey participants were asked about the changes they made during the COVID-19 pandemic to accommodate their needs and what they kept. Once again, thematic analysis was used to analyze their answers. There were four dominant themes: outdoor garden, home office and gym, utilizing all rooms to accommodate different household users, and refurbishing their homes. These results align with the findings of the previously mentioned paper (AlKhateeb & Peterson, 2021).

The outdoor garden is one of the spaces from which the participants benefited the most during COVID-19, and it was also mentioned by most participants when asked about the changes that sustained post-COVID-19. The second point was the different spaces created for the family to bond and gather, as they viewed the house as a place that served the owners' needs first and then their guests' needs. This last point was emphasized during COVID-19 and seems highly regarded post-COVID-19.

3.4. Identifying the Meaning of the House

The third part of the survey examined participants' perceptions of the meaning of home, which matured during the pandemic (AlKhateeb & Peterson, 2021; Bettaieb & Alsabban, 2021). Where participants expressed their utilization of the different spaces of the house to meet their changing needs due to the lockdown, this paper was constructed to trace the changes and adaptability in contemporary Saudi houses post-pandemic, as recommended in AlKhateeb and Peterson's (2021) paper.

In the survey conducted in July 2023, participants were asked to define what

home means to them, and their answers were thematically analyzed. The analysis concluded with six themes. Comfort was the most mentioned aspect of the house in their answers, where it was paired with the concept of safety. These two themes accounted for 50% of the answers provided. The house's importance and meaning were linked to the family, and having a place where the family lives constituted 23% of the answers. The remaining three themes were stability, sanctuary, and functionality. These resulting themes matched those concluded in the previous paper published in 2021 by AlKhateeb and Peterson.

4. Discussion

The analysis of a recent survey reveals that the majority of respondents experienced negligible differences in their residential lives when juxtaposing the pandemic and post-pandemic periods. The participants' perspectives were notably influenced by their ages, exhibiting consistent preferences across various age demographics. This observation highlights the significant role of socio-cultural norms in shaping decision-making processes, even amidst the ongoing rapid transformation occurring within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

As Saudi society continues to evolve, the values and expectations that inform individuals' living experiences are also developing. The survey findings point to the necessity of reassessing the concept of home in light of these societal shifts and the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Among the notable insights from the online surveys is the call for a reevaluation of socially oriented spaces within homes, particularly the designation and utility of formal living areas aimed at accommodating guests. Participants chose to have one formal living room, and when needed, they would use the family living area as a secondary formal space to host more guests. This reflects homeowners' evolving understanding of privacy, semi-private, and public spaces within the house.

The respondents criticized the inclusion of two formal living spaces in their homes. It became evident that many participants favored a more practical approach when prompted to reflect on their perceptions of what constitutes a home. The traditional notion of separate formal spaces meant for entertaining guests is becoming less relevant, with many individuals indicating that they prefer a single, multifunctional living area. The same sentiment was echoed concerning dining spaces; the overwhelming consensus appeared to advocate for the sufficiency of one dining room rather than two. This shift suggests a desire for efficiency and functionality in home design, emphasizing the needs of the immediate family and the guests they host.

Moreover, the evolution of home design considerations extends to elements that were once deemed essential, such as the hygiene entrance vestibule implemented in reaction to health concerns during the pandemic. Based on survey responses, this feature is now being viewed as unnecessary in the current post-pandemic context. Participants' insights reflect a deeper grasp of the significance of natural light and the presence of greenery within their living environments, indi-

cating a fundamental prioritization of well-being in contemporary home design.

The survey aims to deeply explore the perception of Saudi residents as they reflect on the enduring impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on their living arrangements. When asked to define their understanding of “home”, respondents employed conceptual terms such as safety, comfort, family orientation, and functionality. Their responses signal a clear desire for spaces within their homes that facilitate gatherings among family members, suggesting the importance of shared experiences and quality time. To meet these needs, the survey highlighted a preference for incorporating outdoor gardens and multipurpose areas that can adapt to various activities and family gatherings.

As participants assessed their functional spaces, they categorized them into three distinct categories: necessary, complementary, and unnecessary. The insights showed a significant shift in attitudes towards spaces such as multiple dining rooms, which now fall into the “unnecessary” category. While some areas, such as home gyms and offices, are still considered required due to the new realities of remote work and fitness, they are also viewed as complementary rather than essential spaces. In contrast, family living areas maintained their status as necessary, underscoring their pivotal role in daily life, along with supportive functions such as laundry rooms and storage.

The understanding of what constitutes a “home” has never been static; it is an evolving entity influenced by various external factors that continuously shape its form, meaning, and the ways users engage with it. In the context of Saudi Arabia, social and cultural norms have played a formative role in the architecture and organization of homes. As these norms undergo development and transformation, so too do the physical structures of houses, reflecting broader societal changes and aspirations.

The COVID-19 pandemic served as a catalyst, introducing new cultural practices such as remote working and learning, which necessitated a reevaluation of home requirements to accommodate these activities. The ability to adapt living spaces to serve dual functions—both as places of work and relaxation—became crucial. This duality underscores the importance of well-thought-out designs that can support social interactions and professional activities simultaneously, a flexibility that modern residents increasingly demand.

As survey results indicate a tendency among residents to reconfigure their living spaces, it becomes apparent that there are both potential and limitations within the current housing designs. This ongoing adaptation process reveals insights into what contemporary homeowners truly value and need from their living environments. For educators in design disciplines, these findings provide critical guidance, illuminating the evolving preferences of homeowners in Saudi Arabia and suggesting pathways for equipping future professionals with the knowledge and insight to respond to these demands.

Moving forward, design curricula can incorporate these insights to foster an understanding of flexible and adaptable home designs that prioritize well-being,

social functionality, and the diverse needs of households. The movement towards creating homes that are multifunctional and that reflect contemporary values in functionality and social engagement is not merely a trend but a reflection of a broader shift in lifestyle choices.

5. Conclusion

The findings from this survey offer a compelling perspective on the changing notions of home within Saudi Arabian society, particularly in the context of the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey underscores the importance of acknowledging the dynamic interplay between social and cultural factors and the physical space that individuals inhabit. As the nation continues to evolve, so too will the concepts of space, functionality, and family life within homes, shaping the future landscape of residential design. Additionally, it was mentioned in the discussion section that the user-oriented preferences expressed by participants, alongside the functional spaces they requested, contrasted with those they demanded less of. These collected insights from this study are essential for practitioners and educators in the design field, as they navigate the complex landscape of contemporary housing needs while cultivating spaces that resonate with the essence of what it means to call a place “home”. Furthermore, these insights align with the Vision 2030 housing program that aims to “*Offer Housing Solutions that enable Saudi families to own or utilize houses as per their needs and within the scope of their means; in addition to improving the housing conditions of the current and future generations*” (Housing Program, 2023: p. 20).

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Appendix

Appendix 1. Online Survey 1 Questions

Participants were asked to rate the need of the following spaces as essential, complimentary, or not needed; and who was allowed to access them:

- Two guest living spaces
- More than one dining room
- External kitchen
- Kitchenette
- More than two bedrooms
- Guest bedroom
- House help room
- Laundry room
- Storage
- Home office
- Home gym
- Outdoor garden

Participants were given scenarios and were asked to express if they agreed or disagreed:

- Type of privacy that was important to the participant
- The utilization of the family living space to host guests
- A room needs to have four walls
- The kitchen overlooks family living space
- What does the term “home/house” mean to you?
- Did home quarantine affect your needs inside the house and the way you think?
- What are the precautions that you have taken in your house post COVID-19 crisis?
- Is there a change in your house layout, taken as a precaution?
- How did you cope with working from home and online? How did you cope with the additional home activities such as work, schooling and so on?
- What do you think of the following functional spaces and their existence in your house: sanitizing zone by the house entrance; gym; office; multifunctional room/space, outdoor space?
- As for the outdoor space, is it important? With your current situation do you have one? If no how did you cope with it? If you live in a flat, what would you like to have that would help you cope with that need?
- Going back to the first question, did the term “home/house” meaning changed because of the home quarantine and COVID-19?

Appendix 2. Online Survey 2 Questions

Participants were asked to rate the need of the following spaces as essential, complimentary, or not needed; and who was allowed to access them:

- Two guest living spaces
- More than one dining room

External kitchen
Kitchenette
More than two bedrooms
Guest bedroom
House help room
Laundry room
Storage
Home office
Home gym
Outdoor garden

Participants were given scenarios and were asked to express if they agreed or disagreed:

Your house design was influenced by your parents' house
Used the assistant of interior design office
Family living space used to host guests
A room needs four walls to be identified as a room
Open house design style
Having an open kitchen
What does the term "home/house" mean to you?
What changes were made due to COVID-19?
What changes were removed post-COVID-19?
Which changes sustained post-COVID-19?
What were the factors influencing your house needs and requirements