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**Sexual abuse in Jordan:
Children and young people speaking up and breaking the
silence**

A thesis
submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of
Doctor of Philosophy in Education
at
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by
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ABSTRACT

All children and young people have the right to live free from being victims of child sexual abuse and from carrying out harmful sexual behaviour (United Nations, 1989).

It is now more than three decades since the United Nations published the *Conventions on the rights of the Child*. Internationally it was recognised that the problem of sexual abuse of children and young people needed to be targeted through practices and policies for their care and protection. Many countries continue to address the crime of sexual abuse of children and young people; however, there is still more work that needs to be done. Studies demonstrate that, in Jordan, children and young people are exposed to various forms of violence, which includes sexual abuse.

This thesis argues that disclosing sexual abuse is an essential step in setting children and young people free from the harms of sexual abuse. If children and young people are provided with the opportunity to speak up safely, they can receive justice and care, and the perpetrator can be held accountable and prevented from committing further crimes on other children and young people. This qualitative study focuses on the moments when children and young people disclose abuse and in whom they choose to place their trust. It examines the ways in which children and young people break their silence and how their families respond to learning about the abuse. This study explores how the victims' experiences of speaking up are affected by the particular sociocultural context of Jordan.

In order to present a holistic understanding of Jordanian children's and young people's experiences of disclosing sexual abuse, this study focuses on the ecological systems in which children and young people are embedded. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory is pivotal to this thesis as it highlights the dynamic interaction between each layer of the system: each layer influences and is affected by the others. This thesis therefore pays close attention to the supportive policies, legislation and agencies available in Jordan that focus on the care and protection of children and young people. This study utilises data generated from semi-structured interviews with people involved in the children's and young people's ecological systems: five senior policy makers and

managers, five social workers and two psychologists, four non-offending parents, and, significantly, nine children and young people who have been sexually abused. Of the nine children and young people, six were girls/young women and three were boys/young men. A narrative analysis was carried out of the research materials from each group of participants – that is, each layer of the ecological system.

The analysis revealed five major findings: Sexual abuse affected both victims and families, causing them to suffer after the abuse occurred. Honour-killing is a persistent problem that families still practise and threaten to practice. Girls who have been subject to sexual abuse lose opportunities to access further education and to choose whom to marry. Parenting practices have a significant effect on the likelihood of a child or young person disclosing abuse, with child-affirming practices shaping the safest environment in which children and young people can speak up and be both heard and supported. Finally, providing sex education in schools and raising public awareness of sexual abuse can have a strong influence on the willingness of children and young people to disclose abuse, and on parents' responses to disclosures.

This study contributes to the field of sexual abuse studies in Jordan and other Arab countries. It is unique in including understandings from children and young people themselves, through qualitative semi-structured interviews. The particular value of this study largely comes from its potential to create awareness in Jordanian society about how children and young people have raised their voices and broken the silence surrounding sexual abuse and the consequential impacts on them and their families. Although the study was undertaken through an English-speaking university and in an English-speaking country, the data were generated in Jordan and most of the literature accessed was in Arabic. The findings will be of international interest, contributing to understandings of child sexual abuse in Jordan and similar ethno-cultural countries with collective societies and traditional practices.

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To my parents, my eyes,

Ibrahim Burhoum and Wedad Al-Ghoula إبراهيم برهوم و وداد الغولة

You believed in me from the day I was born. You offered me unconditional love, support and dedication. You have always had my back and you have always defended me. You have always prioritised me above all else and sacrificed much in order for me to follow my dreams. You sent me to New Zealand with faith in my ability to achieve what I set out to do, in spite of all the cultural restrictions. You believed in my power to overcome challenges and have always been there for me – especially at my low points. You have kept me in your prayers, asking Allah to protect and bless me. You have built my confidence and encouraged me to aim high. I would not have been able to either begin or complete this thesis without the devotion of my parents.

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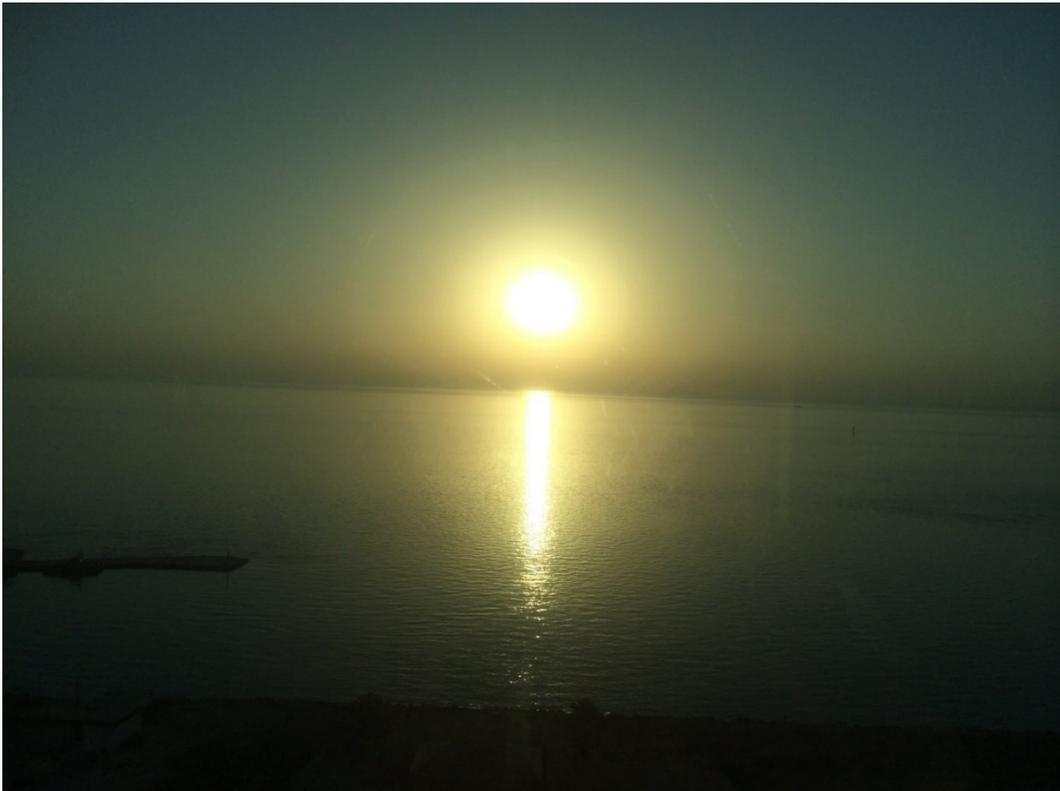
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DEDICATION

To my parents (**Ibrahim Burhoum and Wedad Al-Ghoula** إبراهيم برهوم و وداد الغولة), I dedicate this thesis to you as a true symbol that I cherish your unconditional love, acceptance, and support throughout my study. You are the essential source of my strength. You raised me and my siblings with beliefs about gender equality and you offered me your blind trust that I would never disappoint you and that I would always live up to your expectations. You believe in the strength and power of girls and women, especially your daughters. Thank you for standing with me on this journey. I appreciate and am aware of how challenging it must have been for you to overcome the cultural barriers of sending your youngest girl to a Western country to build her knowledge and achieve her goals. You trusted that I would make you proud. I dedicate to you this special photo of the rising sun that I took a few years ago when I was calling your names and only you and your love were in my thoughts. This photo reflects the ways you persistently encourage me to meditate on the beauty of God's (Allah's) creation and to look forward. I watched the sun rise until the sun shone full, until it reached the middle of the sky and spread the light all around, like how you have spread your love throughout my life.



I dedicate this thesis and this photo to children, young people and all survivors of sexual abuse. “...you never know who needs your light, your warmth and raging courage” – Alex Elle.

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GLOSSARY

Laws in Jordan

- The Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990
- Jordan River Foundation (JRF) in 1995
- Family Protection Department (FPD) in 1997
- Early childhood development strategy in Jordan in 2000
- The National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA) in 2001
- Protection from Family Violence Law, (Law No. 6/2008) and (Law No. 15/2017)
- The National Framework to Protect the Family from Domestic Violence 2009
- Cancellation of Article 308 of the Jordanian Penal Code in 2017
- Health Service Providers' Procedures Manual for Coping with Sexual Assault 2017
- National Policies and guidelines to prevent and respond to cases of violence in Jordan; gender-based violence, family violence and child protection 2018

Arabic terms

- Ejlaa' A social practice undertaken in Jordanian society involves the concerned families moving away from their neighbourhood to a new place where they can start over
- Hadith The words of Prophet Muhammad
- Halal Something that is lawful and permitted in Islam
- Imam Islamic religious scholars
- Khutbah A sermon preached by an imam in a mosque at the time of the Friday noon prayer
- Qur'an Muslim Holy Book

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Sexual abuse of children and young people is a global problem of epidemic proportions, affecting children and young people of all ages, socioeconomic levels, and cultural backgrounds (Modelli, Galvão & Pratesi, 2012). According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2014, international studies reveal that approximately 20% of women and 5-10% of men report being sexually abused as children and young people. In response to the seriousness of child sexual abuse, a range of international studies have investigated and analysed sexual abuse of children and young people, from varying perspectives. Global studies reveal that there is a serious lack of in-depth investigation of sexual abuse in the Middle East, and that, in particular the perspectives of children and young people, have had little consideration. My hope is that this study with its focus on disclosure will contribute to the care and protection of children and young people, in particular the benefits of listening to children and young people and encouraging them to speak up.

In understanding the complexity of disclosing sexual abuse, there are examples of global studies that identified the cultural and religious impacts that can lead to hesitation about disclosure. Tishelman and Fontes (2017) argued that religious influences are one of the most understudied cultural issues in child sexual abuse, noting their role in decisions about disclosure and reactions to seeking help and support. Similarly, Fontes and Plummer (2010) argued that religion has a significant role as it could make children and young people feel they have committed sin and brought shame to themselves and their families by being a victim of sexual abuse.

Whether influenced by the values of collectivism in Middle Eastern culture or by the more individualistic values in Western culture, nondisclosure or lengthy delays in disclosure are common (Paine & Hansen, 2002). The decision to disclose can be affected by a range of factors including age, type of abuse and fear of negative consequences (Goodman-Brown, Edelstein, Goodman, Jones & Gordon, 2003). Many victims of abuse demonstrate sensitivity about other people's reactions and the concern that their

disclosures would lead them to be judged, blamed or punished (Jensen, Gulbrandsen Mossige, Reichelt & Tjersland, 2005).

Regardless of the space, place or society, there are particular challenges that come with each society in terms of the sensitivity of child sexual abuse and all of the cultural and social considerations that impact on the willingness to disclose abuse. It has been argued that disclosure is a fundamentally dialogical process that becomes less difficult if the children and young people are given an opportunity to talk and a purpose for speaking (Jensen, Gulbrandsen, Mossige, Reichelt & Tjersland, 2005). It is the state's responsibility to facilitate ways and services to address these challenges and to support children, young people and families in the disclosure of sexual abuse.

Historical review of child protection in Jordan

Since King Hussain signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 (UNICEF Jordan, 2018), Jordan has set in place some laws and legislations to aid the process of reporting and eliminating sexual abuse, including a range of strategies focused on the care and protection of children and young people. His efforts have been followed up by his son, King Abdullah Al-Hussain, and Queen Rania, who were and are devoted to protecting children's and young people's rights and wellbeing. Their emphasis is on the welfare of family life and the protection and security of all family members (Royal Hashemites Court, n.d.-a).

The Family Protection Department was established in 1997 as the first specialised police department in the Middle East to deal with family issues (Family Protection Department, 2016). Three years later, in 2000, Jordan introduced an early childhood development strategy that aims to ensure growth, development and progress in the early childhood sector (UNICEF & National Council for Family Affairs, 2000). The Jordanian government has made valuable efforts, with national and international agreements, to protect children and young people through the National Council of Family Affairs, established in 2001 (National Council for Family Affairs, 2015). Seven years later, in 2008, a law was passed for "Protection from Family Violence" [Law No. 6 - 2008], thus assisting in the protection of victims and their family members from violence and supporting victims through the consequences of abuse and violence (Nasrawin, 2017). The next year, 2009, "The National Framework to Protect the Family from Domestic Violence" was approved by the State of Jordan, providing a guide for how institutions

should manage cases of family violence. This framework sets up the rights of children, young people and women and seeks to improve the level of care provided to them (Family Protection Department, 2016).

In the next decade, Jordan began to witness amendments to its laws and policies in the interests of the health and safety of children and young people. In 2016, for example, the “National Framework to Protect the Family from Domestic Violence” was updated (Family Protection Department, 2016). The next year, 2017, brought about a significant change to legislation relating to sexual abuse and violence, reflecting a keenness to make the necessary amendments needed for the benefit of children’s and young people’s health and safety, especially regarding sexual abuse. The “Protection from Family Violence Law” [Law No. 15 - 2017] was amended to make it mandatory for officials (health providers, educational or social services in public and private sectors) to report abuse, especially if the person being abused is a child (Ministry of Social Development, 2019).

Another significant amendment was made in 2017, cancelling out Article 308 of the Jordanian Penal Code, which had stated that rapists would not receive punishment if they married the person they abused. Before the cancellation of Article 308, many abusers used this article as a loophole for avoiding punishment by instead marrying their victim. However, after article 308 was cancelled, the justice system made it impossible for the abuser to escape punishment even if they did marry their victim (Ministry of Justice, 2019).

Again in 2017, the “Health Services Providers’ Procedures Manual for Coping with Sexual Assault” was published to guide employees in the health sector who provide services to those who have experienced sexual abuse (National Council for Family Affairs, Ministry of Health, UNHCR, UNICEF & UNFPA, 2017). The next year, in 2018, the “National Policies and Guidelines to Prevent and Respond to Cases of Violence in Jordan” was also published to outline and respond to issues concerning gender-based violence, family violence and child protection (National Council for Family Affairs, 2018).

Jordanian law incorporates relevant practices according to international standards and, at the same time, it shapes these standards to suit the Jordanian context. Jordan’s interest in the protection of children and young people and their rights is therefore specific to cultural and religious considerations in Jordan. The involvement in international

agreements presents opportunities for further improvement to national practice in Jordan. One example is the Jordan River Foundation (JRF), which is a non-profit, non-governmental foundation, established in 1995. The JRF is a national organisation that has an extended network of supporters in France, the USA and the UK and is registered in those places as a tax-exemption charity foundation. The JRF is chaired by her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah and focuses on child safety and community empowerment. Its international connections assist in building new channels of cooperation to build knowledge dissemination, education, marketing, production and fundraising for the benefit of children, young people and the community (Jordan River Foundation, 2019).

Background and research inquiry

Jordan has systems and practices in place to help children and young people who have suffered violence of any kind. The services for sexual violence are of particular interest for this study. Attention in the field of child sexual abuse has focused on the prevention of abuse and the treatment of the child after the abuse has taken place. The Jordanian government has set up a confidential system for reporting sexual abuse and making complaints. However, even with these facilities in place, children, young people and families delay help-seeking or they may not seek help at all (Samih, 2007). In many instances, Jordanian children and young people are too emotionally distressed to report the abuse, and parents may stay silent to avoid any harmful consequences to their children and other family members (Alsawalqa, 2016). Common reasons for maintaining silence are that sometimes the abuser is a member of the family or a powerful stranger, or a family's honour and shame have taken priority over a child's safety and welfare. Many families do not report the abuse to avoid the stigma of shame associated with their child being sexually abused (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 1999).

As a Jordanian with a bachelor's degree in early childhood and a master's degree in the educational psychology of children, I have worked as both a counsellor in a school and as a psychologist at a care centre for children with special needs. Consequently, I have had the opportunity to work with many children who are victims of sexual abuse. There are many challenges, responsibilities and emotional connections that come from working with children. Some of these children were abused by a member of their own family, a family friend, or someone who was in the position of a caretaker. In the most distressing cases, children never raised their voices or had any opportunity to break the silence and

protect themselves from being harmed. In most of these situations, children were hesitant to defend themselves and continued to suffer in silence, which had a significant impact on their emotional health and social wellbeing.

This study began when I started to think that perhaps these children's lives would have been different if they had been believed and supported in breaking the silence about their abuse. However, when taking the perspective of the child and cultural considerations into account, one can understand how difficult it might be for a child or young person to disclose the abuse. This study therefore investigates how stories of sexual abuse come to be disclosed, with whom children and young people choose to place their trust, and how the victims' experiences of disclosure can be affected by the sociocultural context. It also looks at how the services and facilities provided by the state could contribute to empowering children and young people to disclose and report abuse.

Research questions

This study raises questions about the disclosure of sexual abuse stories and their connection to the cultural context in Jordan. It also discusses the support that the state has provided in terms of breaking the silence surrounding sexual abuse. This study further addresses the barriers that prevent or delay help-seeking. As a result of the complex nature of sexual abuse and disclosure, there arises an abundance of questions relating to children's and young people's abilities to find a space to speak up and to be heard from every layer on the ecological system.

This study examines two central questions.

- How do Jordanian children and young people speak up and break the silence when they have been sexually abused?
- Which factors influence these children's and young people's actions towards disclosure?

To investigate these two questions further, my study was guided by some subsidiary questions.

- When children and young people first experience sexual abuse, how do they deal with it?

- How do family help children and young people who are sexually abused to speak up and end the abuse?
- How do families perceive this critical issue in breaking silence surrounding the sexual abuse of children and young people in Jordan?
- How do senior policy makers and managers, social workers and psychologists help children and young people who are sexually abused to speak up and end the abuse?
- How do senior policy makers and managers, social workers and psychologists perceive this critical issue in breaking silence surrounding the sexual abuse of children and young people in Jordan?
- What ideas and practices do people taken for granted that impact on their action towards breaking the silence and reporting about sexual abuse cases?

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

This qualitative study focuses on the ecological systems of children and young people who have been sexually abused. Its data were generated in interviews with people who are part of the children's and young people's lives: senior policy makers and managers, social workers and psychologists, non-offending parents and the children and young people who have been sexually abused.

In this study Bronfenbrenner's (1994) Ecological Systems Theory provided a framework for understanding the influence of multiple factors on one another within a child's ecological system in its consideration of the interactions between children and young people and families, wider families, as well as sociocultural and religious practices, relevant governmental and non-governmental agencies and legislation. Positioning the child at the centre of the ecological system, Bronfenbrenner (1994) introduced this model in order to understand human development within the entire ecological system in which growth occurs. The theory describes a system of relationships between the complex layers of environments that influence the child's development. These systems include the Micro system, the Mesosystem, the Exosystemic, the Macro system, and the Chronosystem (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). The following diagram offers a visual

representation of Bronfenbrenner's model and the interactions between the different layers in the ecological system of the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

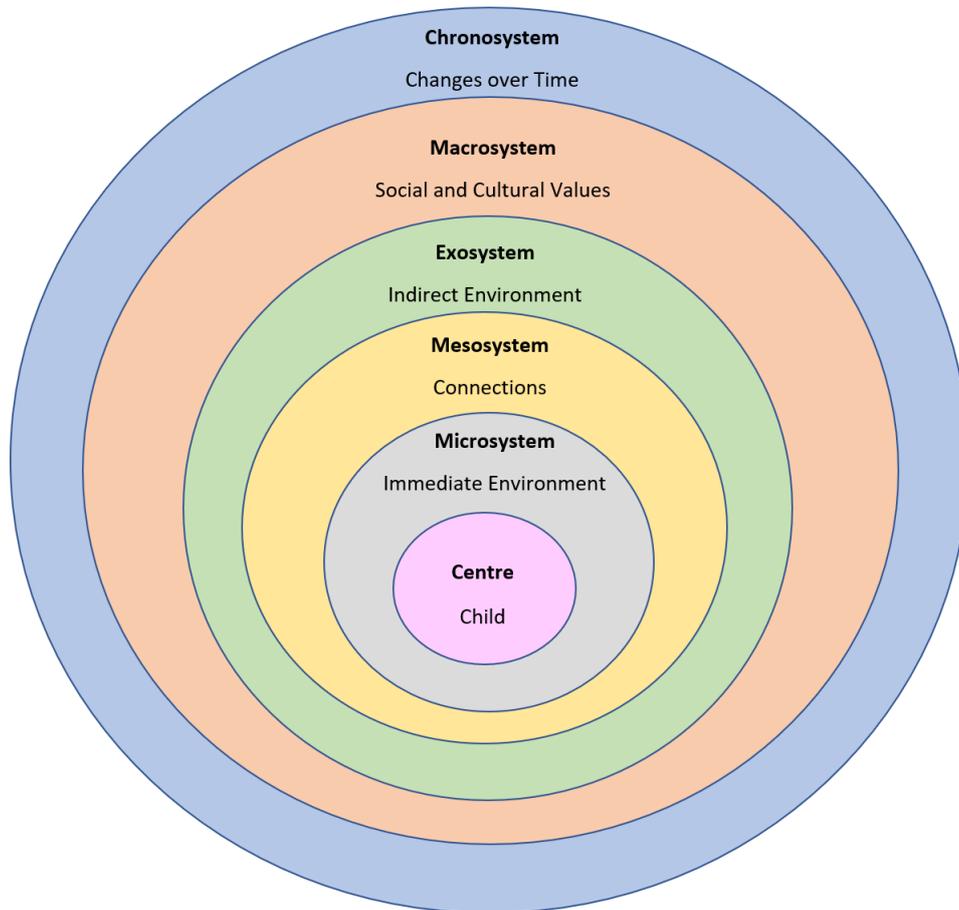


Figure 1. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The Microsystem is the closest layer to the child and contains the relationships and interactions the child has with their immediate surroundings – such as family, school or neighbourhood. The impact of relationships at this layer is bi-directional as the child's beliefs and behaviour are affected by the parents and, similarly, the parents are affected by the child (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). The interactions of the structures at this layer have the greatest impact on the child. For example, the close relationship between a child and their mother may give the child courage to speak up to their mother about the sexual abuse.

At the Mesosystem layer the connections between the structures of the child's Microsystem are created – for example, the connection between the parents and the child's teacher. The next layer is the Exosystem, in which the child's development is impacted by the interactions with some structures such as the parent's workplace or

community-based family resources (Bronfenbrenner, 1981). The Mesosystem may provide a child and their family with significant resources to prevent or speak up about abuse – for example, through community education programmes.

The outermost layer in the child's development is the Macrosystem layer which includes cultural values, customs and laws. A patriarchal social system and the feeling of responsibility to defend the family's honour is an example of the kinds of values that have a cascading effect throughout the interactions of all other layers in the life of the children and young people.

In addition to the consideration of Macro and Micro system, the socio-historical elements that fall within the Chronosystem layer also have an influence on how and when the child speaks up. If the child or young person is a witness of the family's history of violence, it will affect the decision to speak up.

My investigation of their disclosure of sexual abuse is child-affirming, meaning that I aimed to listen to the children and young people about the moment of speaking up about the traumatic experience of sexual abuse. However, the problem needs to be seen in a wider context; therefore, on behalf of the children and young people, I also listened to the people who are closest to them. I spoke to families and professionals—senior policy makers, managers, social workers and psychologists—to draw a comprehensive understanding of the difficulties that the child or young person experiences when they are speaking up. Moreover, in collective societies, such as in Jordan, speaking up about sexual abuse is not an individual matter, as it is particularly influenced by the wider ecological systems, beyond the child, their family and the surrounding community. Since speaking up is a sociocultural issue, legislation has a significant impact on children and young people who are victims of sexual abuse in Jordan. This study thus aims to contribute to a societal change, where the shame of sexual abuse does not rest with the victim and their family.

Significance and contributions of the study

In its interest in children's and young people's voices speaking up about sexual abuse, this study offers particular insight into their concerns, struggles and suffering. The incorporation of multiple perspectives in this study not only offers space for the voices of the young people who spoke up about their trauma and suffering to be heard, but it

also gives voice to the suffering and trauma still being endured by other children and young people who feel they cannot speak up. Furthermore, including the perspectives of senior policy makers and managers of governmental services and non-governmental agencies contributes another valuable layer to this study: their insights assisted in shaping understandings of the complex societal constraints that children, young people and families experience in relation to the disclosure and the consequences of abuse.

As my literature review (Chapter Two) shows, current studies on child sexual abuse and disclosure in the Middle East and in Arab countries are rather limited. I found only two studies (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 1999; Al-Kindari, 2019) that focused on the disclosure of sexual abuse. Only one of them (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 1999) approached child sexual abuse from the perspective of the female victims who had chosen to report and speak up about abuse. Shalhoub-Kevorkian conducted interviews in order to investigate the action of disclosure from the perspectives of victims, families and professionals in the political and sociocultural context. The other study (Al-Kindari, 2019) investigated the factors that could prevent the disclosure of child sexual abuse in Kuwait. Al-Kindari developed a scale of factors that support disclosure of sexual abuse, exploring aspects to do with personality, socio-economic circumstances and communication. Al-Kindari recommended two essential courses of action in order to reduce sexual abuse. She first argued for the necessity of raising children's and young people's awareness about sexual abuse and disclosure through sex education in school. She also stressed the importance of raising public awareness and improving professional training to identify sexual abuse. Shalhoub-Kevorkian's and Al-Kindari's studies are important, as they set the context and background for my study, which aims to provide an in-depth review of the struggles of victims to disclose sexual abuse in the Middle East and, particularly, in Jordan.

My study will add to the current corpus of literature on child sexual abuse, and potentially to the services provided to children, young people and their families in Jordan, through careful analysis of the complex factors that influence disclosure. The value of this study largely comes from its potential to create awareness in Jordanian society about how children and young people can raise their voices and break the silence surrounding sexual abuse and the consequential impacts on them and their families. A further contribution of this study is its unique combination of methods, which no other Jordanian research study in this area has followed. This study applies narrative inquiry (Duff & Bell, 2002; Speedy, 2007), appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider, Peter, Whitney & Yaeger, 2000) and

an ethics of care (Hugman, 2005), thus enacting a methodology appropriate to a child-affirming study.

Reading ahead

Chapter Two of this thesis focuses on literature regarding child sexual abuse in Jordan, taking into consideration the roles played by legislation, policy, governmental and non-governmental agencies, society and other institutions. This chapter draws on academic literature from the Middle East in order to understand how similar cultural and religious contexts, like Jordan, approach the issue of the sexual abuse of young people. Chapter Two considers the complexity of disclosure, the consequences of sexual abuse in the sociocultural context—including stigmatisation and revictimisation—and the impact of disclosure on family reputation. It also covers the Islamic perspective (Sharia) of children's and young people's rights to speak up about and seek help for sexual abuse. Finally, the chapter draws on studies that emphasise the need for sex education in the Jordan curriculum.

Chapter Three provides an outline of the qualitative research methodology and design used in this study. Individual interviews were used to generate data from senior policy makers and managers, social workers and psychologists, families and children and young people. This chapter outlines ethical considerations, such as how to manage the challenges that come with approaching participants. Finally, this chapter introduces the approach used to analyse the data generated from interviews.

Chapters Four to Seven present the findings, each representing what could be learned from each of the four groups interviewed: senior policy makers and managers, social workers and psychologists, families, and children and young people. These chapters cover the complexity of disclosure and the main factors that influence this process, including legislation, prevalent social, cultural and parenting practices in Jordan. These chapters also cover the influence of patriarchy and hierarchy, and how children and young people are positioned within parent-child relationships.

In Chapter Eight, I discuss the five major findings of my study: sexual abuse affected both victims and families, causing ongoing suffering; honour-killing is a serious problem that some families still practise; girls may lose opportunities to complete their education and lose the right to decide whom to marry; parenting practices have a significant effect

on the disclosure of child sexual abuse; and, finally, sex education in schools and the raising of public awareness about sexual abuse could influence the likelihood of disclosure.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature review

Introduction

This chapter focuses on child sexual abuse in Jordan, taking into consideration the roles played by legislation, policy, governmental and non-governmental agencies, society and other institutions. This chapter draws on scholarly literature from the Middle East and Jordan in order to understand how similar cultural and religious contexts, like Jordan, approach the problem of the sexual abuse of young people. The chapter also considers the sexual abuse and protection of children and young people in Jordan within the context of governmental, societal and institutional roles that are necessary for dealing with sexual abuse occurrences. This chapter also pays particular attention to the complexity of disclosing sexual abuse, as well as child protection as a political and legislative issue. It is therefore necessary to outline the progression of laws and legislation in Jordan that seek to support children and young people in speaking up about sexual abuse. This study considers the complexity of disclosure, the consequences of sexual abuse in the sociocultural context and the impact of speaking up on family reputation. Furthermore, it is important to take into account the stigmatisation and revictimisation that can happen to a victim of sexual abuse after disclosure and based on their gender.

The review covers the Islamic perspective (Sharia) of children's and young people's rights to speak up and seek help when they have been abused. This chapter identifies that the number of studies on sex education following the Islamic perspective and undertaken in the Arabian context (including Jordan) is extremely limited (Salih & Shreim, 2008).

Sexual abuse of children and young people

The sexual abuse of children and young people is a heinous crime against humanity. Child sexual abuse occurs globally (Elayyan, 2007) regardless of culture or religion. Different nations and communities have varying approaches for dealing with sexual abuse. Furthermore, means of dealing with sexual abuse depend on the opportunities and

societal constraints that are operational in the community or country – such as the legal system and the state’s policy for offering possibilities to speak up about and report sexual abuse. Abuse has varied negative consequences in a child’s life, subsequently affecting the child’s physical and emotional welfare (Akroush & Al-Farah, 2008; Damra, Nassar & Ghabri, 2014; Shotar, Alzyoud, Oweis, Alhawamdeh & Khoshnood, 2015; Søftestad, Toverud & Jensen, 2013; UNICEF, 2012; World Health Organization, 2006). Child abuse comprises all types of abuse: physical, emotional, neglectful and sexual abuse. Sexual abuse, however, has been claimed to have the worst impact on a child, as it affects them in every life dimension (Al-Sawalqa, 2016).

According to UNICEF (2012), there is no standardised definition of child sexual abuse because it could vary from culture to culture and context to context, depending on particular law and policy. The most widely accepted and fairly comprehensive definition is:

Child sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violate the laws or social taboos of society. (World Health Organization, 2006, pp. 9-10).

Child sexual abuse may include molestation, incest, unnecessary or inappropriate touching, rape, harassment and exposure to pornography, or exploitation, such as the taking of nude images of the child. The offender in child sexual abuse could be an adult or an older child, and could be a stranger, someone known to the child, or a family member (UNICEF, 2012). Some researchers argue that “in some instances the victim is not aware of his/her victimisation” (Murray, Nguyen & Cohen, 2014). As a result of sexual abuse, a child is likely to go through long or short post-trauma that could include the following symptoms: anxiety, anger, low self-esteem, impaired self-conceptualisation, depression, and suicidality (Polonko, Adam, Nassem & Adinolfi, 2011; Essabar, Khalqallah & Dakhama, 2015). Child sexual abuse is widely researched in Western countries. However, more explicit research is required in Eastern countries, and particularly in Jordan, the site of this study (Shotar, Alzyoud, Oweis, Alhawamdeh & Khoshnood, 2015).

Child sexual abuse in the Middle East

As a result of the limited literature about child sexual abuse in Jordan, I have extended my literature review to studies from the Middle East. The Middle East, along with North Africa, comprises of what is known as the Arab region. It comprises 22 countries which are home to 370 million people with three main religions: Christianity, Islam and Judaism. It is an ethnically rich and diverse area (Aidaros, 2005). In this region, sex is a topic that is riddled with taboos (El Feki, 2015). Unlike other nations, where a prevalence of HIV/AIDS has forced the conversation about sex to become commonplace, the Middle East still considers the topic a subject for discussion behind closed doors. Nonetheless, growing concern for the welfare of children has led to more open discussions in recent times (DeJong, Jawad, Mortagy & Shepard, 2005).

Almost all of the available studies on child sexual abuse have been published since 2000. I detail these studies in the following paragraphs. Studies about child sexual abuse in Middle Eastern countries recently have focused on treatment aspects of sexual abuse of children such as the application of cognitive programmes (Bahader, Abdullah & Aziz, 2015) or suggested models to deal with sexual abuse (Abu-Baker & Dwairy, 2003; Elbedour, Abu-Bader a, Onwuegbuzie, Abu-Rabia, El-Aassam, 2006).

Several significant studies examined the impact of sexual abuse on behaviour and mental and physical health. Saeed's (2008) study highlighted the impact of sexual abuse on young people, investigating this abuse from a retrospective lens to demonstrate how young victims of sexual abuse have a higher likelihood of engaging in criminal activity and getting in trouble with juvenile law. Saeed (2008) and Al-Mahroos and Al-Amer (2011) focused on the impact of sexual abuse on victims. While Saeed's study focused on the impact of sexual abuse on young people who are in trouble with the law in Yemen and argued that there is a direct relationship between a history of child sexual abuse and their behavioural problems later on in their life, Al-Mahroos and Al-Amer focused on the demographics of the sexually abused and found that most sexually abused children were from families with fewer socioeconomic resources, in the age range of 6-12 years. These findings were further supported by Essabar, Khalqallah and Dakhama (2015), who also found that 48% of children who were abused were from lower income families and between the ages of six and ten. Essabar et al.'s (2015) study, conducted over the course of 20 years in Morocco, discussed the negative effects of sexual abuse on physical and mental health. The authors found a number of adult psychiatric conditions to be clinically

associated with child sexual abuse, including depression, borderline personality disorder, substance abuse, posttraumatic stress disorder, dissociative identity disorder and eating disorders (Essabar et al., 2015). Other studies have attempted to detail the characteristics of both victims and offenders, their age and the relationship between victim and offender – whether family members, relatives, friends or strangers (Alami & Kadri, 2004; Bahali, Akçan, Tahiroglu & Avci, 2010).

A Moroccan study was conducted by Alami and Kadri (2004), focusing on the relationship between child sexual abuse and long-term depression. Alami and Kadri found that the abuser was known to the victim in 56.2% of the cases and was a family member of the victim in 20.4% of the cases. The authors also noted that all of the women interviewed who had been sexually abused during childhood went on to experience challenges with their sexual lives as adults (Alami & Kadri, 2004). This study helped shed light on how the effects of child sexual abuse manifested in adult life. Bahali et al. (2010) similarly identified that the majority of victims in their study, conducted in Turkey, were abused by an acquaintance. Indeed, 66.3% of the victims in Bahali et al.'s study reported being abused by someone they knew and trusted. Bahali et al. highlighted that “a group of risk factors including age, gender, physical or mental disabilities, and socio-economic status have been reported to have considerable effects in [child sexual abuse]” (Bahali et al., 2010). Of particular significance is the statement that “females are at about 1.5-3 times higher risk than males, although males are more likely to be abused by perpetrators from outside the family” (Bahali et al., 2010, p. 635). The authors revealed that “post-traumatic stress disorder was the most common (54.5%) psychiatric diagnosis established after sexual abuse” (Bahali et al., 2010, p. 633), concluding that these consequences thus highlight the desperate need for appropriate prevention plans to protect children and young people from sexual abuse.

Two studies in the Gulf composed a review and description of medical and forensic records from reported sexual abuse cases (Al-Mahroos & Al-Amer, 2011; AlMadani, Bamousa, Alsaif, Kharoshah & Alsowayigh, 2012). Al-Mahroos and Al-Amer (2011) identified in their study, conducted in Bahrain, that children only disclosed abuse in 26% of cases, noting that the main source of child sexual abuse recognition and referral is the health sector (53%) and the lowest referrals are from schools (2%). The authors argued that, in order to improve the rate of identification and reporting of child sexual abuse cases, more training needs to be offered to professionals to improve their skills and ability

to identify abuse indicators in the early stages (Al-Mahroos & Al-Amer, 2011). AlMadani et al. (2012) also noted an increasing rate of abuse reporting over recent years in Saudi Arabia, arguing that there is a need for more collaboration and advertising about the forensic clinic in order to improve the handling of sexual abuse cases. The studies of Al-Mahroos and Al-Amer (2011), AlMadani et al. (2012), and Bahali et al. (2010) have shown an increase in reporting of child sexual abuse in all of the countries in which the above studies were conducted. However, the researchers of these three studies questioned if the increase was due to an increase in the number of children who had been sexually abused or whether increased public awareness led to increased reporting, or whether there were other factors.

Very few studies have focused on the support programmes that are carried out to benefit victims of sexual abuse. Of these, the study by Bahader, Abdullah and Aziz (2015), which was conducted in Egypt, is noteworthy for they used an experimental method of data collection to find out that young girls who were recently sexually abused had more behavioural problems than those who were subjected to sexual abuse a longer time ago. They also found differences between an experimental group who were exposed to cognitive behaviour therapy and another group of girls who did not receive this therapy. The application of cognitive behavioural programmes helped the victims of sexual abuse to minimise some of the behaviour problems that they developed after exposure to the abuse – such as fear, violence and social withdrawal. As a result, researchers Bahader et al. (2015) emphasised the importance of implementing similar cognitive programmes for victims in order to help them overcome trauma and consequential behavioural problems.

Only one study looked for correlations between sexual violence and other factors among adolescent females (Al-Quaiz & Raheel, 2009). Al-Quaiz and Raheel's 2009 study led to the inclusion of sex education in the school curriculum of Saudi Arabia. These scholars were effectively able to link the risk of sexual abuse exposure in children with a lack of sexual awareness amongst victims and families who are unable to discuss sexual issues with their children. These researchers highlighted the importance of sex education and how parental discussions with children about sexual issues will make an effective change in Saudi Arabia.

Al-Fayez, Ohaeri and Gado (2012), in a study involving Kuwaiti high school students, found that no major gender distinctions were prevalent in cases of sexual attacks. This

study also highlighted that, in the context of a conservative culture, which is based in Islamic religion, child sexual abuse is a serious problem in the Arab world. However, most of the cases are hidden. These researchers found a correlation between child abuse and parental personalities, with a direct link between psychological abuse by mothers and an onset of depression in the children. It was found that 8.6% of the study group had been exposed to sexual abuse, 5.9% had been threatened with sexual assault, and 15.3% had been subjected to unwanted touch. These findings are particularly significant for my study, as these statistics demonstrate the urgent need to protect children and give priority to their wellbeing (AlMadani et al., 2012; Al-Mahroos & Al-Amer, 2011).

A connection between parenting practices and the support of children who have been sexually abused has been established by Al-Fayez et al. (2012) in their study conducted in Kuwait. According to them, those children with parents in a stable relationship were more likely to find support when revealing their sexual abuse experience, than those with parents in conflictual relationships.

Abu-Baker and Dwairy (2003), in their study discussing Arab communities' responses to sexual abuse, reviewed literature of incest in the Palestinian community in Israel. Results showed that the priority of most families was to preserve their reputation which led them to silencing and blaming the child victims rather than offering protection and support to these children. These researchers recommended a model to deal with responding to disclosure in sensitive Arab societies. The suggested intervention "includes six stages: (1) verification of information, (2) mapping the family, (3) bonding with progressive forces, (4) a condemning, apologizing, and punishing ceremony, (5) treatment, and (6) follow up" (p. 109). The authors offered a case example of the successful application of this model of intervention.

Similarly, Elbedour, Abu-Bader, Onwuegbuzie, Abu-Rabia and El-Aassam (2006) examined the occurrence of abuse in the Bedouin-Arab communities of Israel. Using questionnaires and Finkelhor's scale for measuring sexual and physical abuse with female school students age 14-18 years, their results showed that 16% of students had been exposed to sexual abuse one or two times. These findings led the authors to point out that females in the Bedouin-Arab community suffer sexual abuse in silence which makes the problem more complicated, given the cultural factors and the nature of Bedouin life. The authors' recommendations were to pay attention to sexual abuse and

offer counselling and supporting services, which are currently limited to the cases considered the most serious.

From reviewing the Middle Eastern literature of sexual abuse against children and young people, I found two articles that focused on disclosing and reporting abuse. In 1999, Shalhoub-Kevorkian conducted a qualitative study in Palestine focusing on female victims of sexual abuse. Shalhoub-Kevorkian argued that better analytical frameworks can be developed in order to reduce sexual abuse if the sociocultural and political context of disclosure/non-disclosure can be understood. Shalhoub-Kevorkian extracted data from 38 records available on cases of sexually abused Palestinian girls. Shalhoub-Kevorkian's study focused on disclosing abuse in a sociocultural context and conducted interviews with groups consisting of victims, families and professionals. Data revealed that sexual abuse was only acknowledged in situations of extreme trauma, public view and the victim's release from blame. The act of disclosure led to the killing of the victim in 10% of cases. Family attempts to "nullify" sexual abuse included hymen reconstruction, marriage to the rapist or abortion. "Despite newly raised public awareness, as well as changes in social attitudes, behaviours, and definitions over time, sexual abuse remains a mechanism to oppress, suppress, and deny women of their humanity" (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 1999, p. 1290).

Twenty years later, in 2019, Al-Kindari investigated the factors that could prevent the disclosure of child sexual abuse in Kuwait. This exploratory study adopted a descriptive approach and used questionnaires to collect data. Al-Kindari developed a scale of factors that supported disclosure of sexual abuse. The scale is designed to explore four main aspects: the child's personality traits, the abuser's personality traits, the family's socio-economic situation and parents' abilities and skills to communicate with their children, and the cultural and community surroundings. The data were generated from the perspectives of social workers, teachers and lawyers, with 47 participants for each of these groups. Overall, it appeared that family situation and community considerations played a significant role in preventing the disclosure of sexual abuse. The relationship between victim and abuser could also prevent children from speaking up, especially if the perpetrator is someone known to the child. Underdeveloped mental and social skills could also influence the child's awareness of recognising and disclosing abuse. Furthermore, the ability to disclose sexual abuse could be affected by the child's belief that there will be no fairness executed if they complain about the perpetrators. Al-Kindari

recommended two essential courses of action in order to reduce sexual abuse. She first argued for the necessity of raising children's awareness about sexual abuse and disclosure through sex education in school. She also stressed the importance of raising public awareness and improving professional training to identify sexual abuse.

The discussions of child sexual abuse in the Middle East give my study a context and help identify the gap that my study fills. Shalhoub-Kevorkian's (1999) study shares some similarities with my research – such as its use of interview with people involved in the ecological system of the child. The author's study focused on Palestinian female victims whereas this thesis focuses on Jordan and researches both female and male victims. Al-Kindari's (2019) study is equally important but focuses on the Micro and Meso systems and does not include the view of the child in the study. The significance of this thesis rests largely in its child-affirming approach. All the studies discussed above have spoken about how and where child sexual abuse occurs, what its impacts are and which age group demographics are most susceptible to this abuse. As argued by Polonko, Naeem and Adinolfi (2011), in their child sexual abuse review in the Middle East and North Africa, there is a paucity of research that reflects the current situation of sexual abuse cases against children in the Middle East and North Africa. It is essential to consider the serious problem of sexual abuse within the wider cultural and community context in order to recognise its consequences. The authors added that, due to insufficient data, there will be difficulty in assessing and solving these problems if attitudes of ongoing denial and absence of awareness continue to persist.

Legal protection of victims and process of reporting

There are several agencies and laws used for protecting young people who have been sexually abused. The safety of witnesses under the age of 18 is protected by using special modern technology when they give their testimony in Court (United Nations, 2013). Reporting sexual abuse is a three-step process in Jordan, as outlined by the National Framework. The first stage involves actually reporting the incident. This is followed by the immediate response stage and then the intervention stage (Family Protection Department, 2016). In all the three stages, the best interests of the victim and the safety of the family and its community is a high priority (Ministry of Social Development, n.d.-a). This is achieved by through cooperation between governmental, nongovernmental

and international organizations, which enhances the level of protection given to the children who have been sexually abused (Child Rights International Network, n.d.).

The first stage of reporting the abuse is often the most difficult stage. Societal stigmas tend to prevent the victims and their families from speaking up and reporting abuse. Often, it is not the victim or their family who reports but someone who may have witnessed the child's distress. There is provision to report through a helpline (110), where the victim themselves can call in, or if they are under the age of 15, they can call in in the presence of an adult who can confirm the abuse (Family Protection Department, 2016).

The second stage is the response stage. This stage involves providing the victims with protection services based on the initial information. All partner organisations involved in child protection also come together to evaluate the risk factors and make an appropriate plan of action for the victim's safety, security and rehabilitation. The most importance is given to protecting the best interest of the victim.

The third stage, known as the intervention stage, deals with the management of the received cases through healthcare and social and educational support. Case management is concerned with the implementation of a plan of action and gathering feedback to revise the strategy, if needed. Following this stage, the case manager may close the case, but only after ensuring that treatment and protection have been provided to the child who was abused (Family Protection Department, 2016). Essentially this raises child rights awareness, suggesting that it may, simply, be a matter of picking up the phone to tell someone who can help a young person. The victim's interest is also provided for through the U.N Convention on the Rights of the Child, which entitles victims to claim financial compensation (United Nations, 2013). Agencies such as The Family Support Line also provide protection for victims of sexual abuse, based on rights from domestic law (United Nations, 2013).

Additionally, the teams that work directly with the child who has been abused must be trained in legal and psychological knowledge and skills. The Ministry of Health offers training to the Health Working Group, which deals with cases of child violence and ensures they receive full protection (United Nations, 2013). Workshops are also conducted by the Department of Counselling and Psychological Support to help professionals develop skills to deal with sexual abuse (Ministry of social development, n.d.-b).

Child sexual abuse in Jordan

There are a number of sexual abuse studies investigating various aspects of prevention and treatment, relating to Jordanian culture, in particular. Kholqi (1990) identified that some of the factors that prevented sexual abuse cases from being reported were related to the Jordanian culture, such as the privacy of family relationships, an insufficient awareness about the risk of silence, the lack of children's abilities to understand sexual abuse, and a parental hesitance to disclose such indecencies. However, there have been changes in the two decades since Kholqi's observations. As Akroush and Al-Farah (2008) observed, the reporting of sexual abuse officially started in 1997 with the establishment of the 'national project to protect family'. Since then, as discussed in Chapter One, several new departments and frameworks to prevent abuse and support children have been set up in Jordan, which have resulted in increased reporting. Thus, the lack of an official support system in Jordan before 1997 contributed to the extremely low incidence of child sexual abuse reporting in the last century. However, cultural barriers are equally, if not more, responsible for influencing the silence surrounding sexual abuse (Akroush & Al-Farah, 2008). Al-Mahroos and Al-Amer (2011) are of the view that, as well as national legislative and policy changes, it is also important to advise people to take preventative steps including encouraging children to speak up about sexual abuse. A strategy that involves circumventing cultural barriers, clear reporting mechanisms, and preventative measures is what is needed in Jordan to enable reporting to occur freely.

Culture continues to be one of the biggest barriers to speaking up about child sexual abuse. Jordan, as an Arab country, prioritises family reputation above all and thus practises extreme protectiveness over personal and family reputation (Fontes & Plummer, 2010). Abu-Baker and Dwairy (2003) further explain:

...a family's reputation is among the most important resource an Arab family has. A negative reputation may be attached to a family after cultural or religious misconduct. All extended family members bear the consequences of misconduct, which could include an economic boycott and/or social isolation. As a result, fear of bringing shame to it is one mechanism that controls the family. This mechanism ensures acceptable psychological and social behavior. An individual is expected to suffer silently if his or her voiced suffering would bring shame to the family (p.111).

Despite the Jordanian government's effort, it is acknowledged that to improve awareness and disclosure, and bring about the desired outcomes, it will take time. That has been

confirmed by Assaf (2011), who indicated that there is still a need to consider a basic framework related to international standards in order to offer and assess the social support services available to children in Jordan, especially in care centres set up to care for children who experience abuse of any kind. Therefore, Assaf suggested, more research is required in this field to offer more effective social supporting services.

In the last decade, scholarly work on the subject of childhood abuse has developed in Jordan. Very few of these studies have focused on violence against children at a generic level (see for example, Al-Anani, 2015; AlHweian, 2011; Al-Zyoud & Akroush, 2007; Assaf, 2011; Damra et al., 2014). Seven studies have focused particularly on the phenomenon of sexual abuse against children from varied perspectives (AlHarasis, 2010; AlKassab, 2013; Al-Sawalqa, 2016; Alzoubi, Ali, Flah & Alnatour, 2017; Jibril & Al-Harasis, 2012; Jumaian, 2001; Shotar et al., 2015). Each of these latter studies is described below in chronological order to highlight the development of the research in the field of childhood sexual abuse from 2001 to 2016.

The earliest published study conducted in the 21st century is by Jumaian (2001). This study explored the prevalence of child sexual abuse in Jordan, and the long-term impact of sexual abuse among male university students. A questionnaire was completed by 100 male adult students and it was revealed that 27% of participants had encountered sexual abuse when they were under 14 years. Females were not included in this study, due to “ethical and social difficulties” (p. 437).

The next study was carried out on the different types of child abuse and the responsibility of Jordanian families and society toward the children who were exposed to abuse (Al-Zyoud & Akroush, 2007). Out of the sample of 17, 12 children experienced child sexual abuse. The findings of this study were derived from research interviews with the psychologist who had treated the victims. Although the study used a qualitative approach, unlike Jumaian (2001) who used a quantitative survey, this study was based on professional perspectives and did not seek the children’s perspective.

In the following years, studies focused on different aspects of prevention, or treatment, for children who had experienced sexual abuse, including, for example, the development of a counselling programme (Assaf, 2011). Other methods of prevention included various specialised programmes (Al-Harasis, 2010; Jibril & Al-Harasis, 2012). Some programmes involved therapy for overcoming trauma (Damra, Nassar & Ghabri, 2014).

Social support programmes were also implemented (Al-Sawalqa, 2016). Another programme was designed to enhance social skills, self-conceptualisation and the psychological flexibility of children who had been physically abused (Al-Hweian, 2011).

In 2011, Assaf developed a counselling programme to address sexual abuse. For this purpose, Assaf first used a descriptive survey to evaluate the social support services from the perspectives of both counsellors and children. Participants included 20 counsellors and 30 children who had been abused. Counsellors evaluated the quality of counselling services in the care centre. This evaluation included the effectiveness of receiving and evaluating cases, implementing counselling sessions and involving families. Children also evaluated the counselling and social support services they had received. To examine the effectiveness of the counselling programme, Assaf adopted a semi-experimental approach, placing 30 children in experimental and control groups. The experimental group registered higher improvement in communication skills and self-esteem compared with the control group. One of the major findings of this study was the need to develop counselling and therapeutic services designed to assist children in recovery and re-assimilation into society. Overall results revealed that both counsellors and children estimated that the services provided were of an average quality and efficiency.

Several key studies focused on preventative strategies, an important development in Jordan. Researchers such as Al-Harasis introduced a prevention programme aimed to increase the grade five female student awareness of sexual abuse and to enhance their self-assertiveness (Al-Harasis, 2010). Jibril and Al-Harasis (2012) were pioneers in using preventative programmes against sexual abuse, and building a special test to monitor the effectiveness of these programmes for school children. They created a programme designed to increase awareness of sexual abuse and enable first grade female students to acquire concepts of and skills in self-protection (Jibril & Al-Harasis, 2012). Their evaluation studies, conducted with 178 and 50 students respectively, suggested the 2012 programme to be highly successful in raising the students' awareness about sexual abuse, enhancing their assertiveness, and providing them with understandings of self-protection. Another study was conducted by Al-Hweian (2011) to investigate the impact of a play therapy counselling programme for six physically abused children. The findings revealed that the therapy programme contributed to increasing children's social skills and resilience. This result gives encouragement to use counselling programmes to help children who have been sexually abused to overcome the negative impacts of abuse.

Also investigating the implementation of therapy programmes, a first clinical study conducted in Jordan by Damra et al. (2014) adopted Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (TF-CBT) techniques for children who had experienced any kind of abuse. This study involved 14 counsellors, 18 children who had been abused and their parents to explore the applicability and the impact of TF-CBT in Jordan. The findings showed a decrease in symptoms such as anxiety disorders, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, conduct disorder, and substance use disorders, as measured by the Children Depression Inventory (CDI) and Post-Trauma Stress Symptoms (PTSS). Therefore, these authors suggested the use of Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy may prove to be effective for children who have been sexually abused.

Similarly, Al-Sawalqa (2016) employed a social support programme with five girls, aged 15 to 17, who had been sexually abused and had lived in centres for young people. This was the first study to be conducted in a juvenile care centre. While Al-Sawalqa (2016) and Damra et al. (2014) both applied programmes for children who had been abused, where these differed was in terms of their participants and their research methodology. Damra et al. (2014) focused on abuse in general and used a mixed method research approach involving checklists and individual sessions to examine the implementation of therapy programme. Al-Sawalqa (2016), however, conducted an experimental study focused entirely on female victims of sexual abuse, which relied on questionnaires and individual sessions where the social support programme was applied. Al-Sawalqa found female victims/participants reported a decrease of sexual abuse related effects, such as depression, anxiety and anger, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and post-traumatic stress. Both these studies (Al-Sawalqa, 2016; Damra et al., 2014) were important for my study as children were involved in the research and the study evaluated programmes intended to reduce the impact of both abuse and sexual abuse on victims.

Similar to the focus of Al-Sawalqa's (2016) study, Shotar et al. (2015) placed emphasis on victims of sexual abuse. Shotar et al. asserted that theirs was the first study in Jordan to report on sexual offences of children. They used a retrospective design case-series of reported cases of sexual offences from the Forensic Medicine Teaching Centre of North of Jordan. 394 cases included in this study had occurred between 2003 and 2007. The findings indicated that 53% of the cases were male victims, and their ages varied between 3 and 18 years. The cases that were reported were mostly of sexual assaults that did not

involve penetration. Results indicated that male children were more often abused by strangers rather than by family or acquaintances. Due to cultural practices, Shotar et al. reported that many female children do not raise their voice to report. Females who have been sexually assaulted may not disclose the identity of the offender due to fear that they can be forced to marry the offender (Shotar et al., 2015).

A relevant study by Al-Anani (2015) shows the extent of the vulnerability of children who are exposed to abuse, particularly sexual abuse, depending on the gender of the child and other factors. Al-Anani (2015) implemented a quantitative study that aimed to explore the relation between parental abuse and its impact on psychological safety of the children, as well as to detect differences regarding gender, age and place of residence. Al-Anani's study involved 207 children, aged 5-10 years, and used a questionnaire. The results showed that girls have encountered physical, emotional and overall abuse more than boys. There were no differences in parental abuse relevant to the child's age. Moreover, this study suggested that children at the Central Valleys of Jordan, the rural areas, have been exposed to abuse of all kinds more than those who have lived in Amman, the city.

Similarly to Al-Anani's (2015) study, Ghanem, Asha and Darwish (2015) intended to identify the meaning of child abuse from the young person's point of view, with 194 students of the education faculty at the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) University. A questionnaire, like Al-Anani's, used questions focusing on four types of abuse: physical, sexual, emotional and neglect. Through a descriptive survey method, results showed that there were no statistically significant differences regarding the responses to the questions, which can be attributed to the variables of gender, high school stream, cumulative GPA, and place of residence of the participants. However, there were statistically significant differences among the respondents when recognising emotional abuse and parents' educational levels. Thus, the students whose parents have a high level of education have realised the concept of emotional abuse of children more than students of parents with a lower educational level.

A recent study conducted by Alzoubi, Ali, Flah and Alnatour (2017), focused on parental awareness, especially in mothers, towards the sexual abuse against children in Jordan. A questionnaire was used to evaluate 488 mothers' perceptions of their knowledge about the symptoms of sexual abuse, prevention, and their awareness of the Jordanian law of

children and sexual abuse. The findings revealed that although mothers know about sexual abuse prevention practices, very few of them considered to teach their children about it. Most mothers agreed that education plays an important role in preventing children from being sexually abused. However, this awareness was only present in educated and employed mothers with high incomes.

This review of the studies in Jordan shows that a majority of studies have used questionnaire and checklist approaches and have focused more on quantitative methods. (Al-Anani, 2015; Al-Harasis, 2010; AlKassab, 2013; Alzoubi et al., 2017; Assaf, 2011; Ghanem et al., 2015; Jumaian, 2001; Shotar et al., 2015). There are few studies that have used qualitative approaches (Al-Hweian, 2011; Al-Sawalqa, 2016; Al-Zyoud & Akroush, 2007).

Most importantly, only Al-Hweian, (2011) Assaf, (2011) and Damra et al., (2014) involved children who had experienced general abuse as research participants in care centres. Al-Sawalqa (2016) was the only study that interviewed children who had been sexually abused.

Many studies indicated that cultural considerations shaped the implementation of their methods (Al-Anani, 2015; AlKassab, 2013; Al-Zyoud & Akroush, 2007; Damra et al., 2014 Jumaian, 2001). Some of studies have been written in Arabic (Al-Harasis, 2010; AlHweian,2011; AlKassab, 2013; Al-Sawalqa, 2016; Al-Zyoud & Akroush, 2007; Assaf, 2011; Ghanem et al., 2015 & Jibril, 2012), and their full texts are difficult to access. Other studies have been published in English (Al-Anani, 2015; Alzoubi et al., 2017; Damra et al., 2014; Jumaian, 2001; & Shotar et al., 2015). A majority of the published studies focused mainly on the prevention of abuse, counselling and therapy programmes, but none of these studies have focused on the process or challenges of speaking up or breaking the silence of sexual abuse, a most important consideration.

Child protection in Jordan: Background to legislation and service provision

Jordan is a constitutional monarchy in the Middle East region, governed by the Hashemite Kingdom. It is a Muslim country with Arabic as its official language (Jordanian Government, n.d.). One of the significant problems plaguing the Jordanian society is child sexual abuse (Alzoubi, Ali, Flah & Alnatour, 2017). Reports show that

between 1999 and 2006, about 3564 cases of sexual abuse were reported (ECPAT, 2008). As per the reports of the Family Protection Department, 258 sexual abuse cases were reported in the year 2011 which includes 151 females and 107 males (Al-Hweian, 2011). In 2013 the number of reported cases briefly increased to 520 (Bushnaq, 2013) but abruptly declined to 132 in 2015. There is no clear indication as to whether this fluctuation in the reported numbers is a result of actual fall in child sexual abuse or if it is indicative of a reporting trend that is dependent on cultural factors. Jordan may be perceived as a country that upholds a conservative culture, which could contribute to the lack of reporting of sexual abuse. These factors include the stigma of shame, a lack of awareness about the consequences of non-reporting, difficulty in trusting the relevant institutions responsible for investigating or providing support, pressure to forgive an offender, and fear of the offender's threats (UNICEF, 2017). In order to receive the protection and care that they need, it is important that support is provided so that victims can speak up. The Jordanian legal system therefore plays a vital role in the welfare of children and young people.

The Jordanian legal system has several laws aimed at the protection and welfare of children (Ministry of justice, n.d.). The Jordanian National Charter has a distinct focus on children's rights, which is consistent with national and international agreements, including children's rights of citizenship, health, early childhood care, education, labour and special needs services (JordanZad, 2012). One of Jordan's most outstanding achievements was establishing a guideline for the care of abused children, in collaboration with UNICEF and other internationally focused child services. This guideline guarantees non-discriminatory psychological support treatment services for those in need. It declares that it will keep children at the centre of decision-making and to enhance their coping skills (National Council for Family Affairs, 2017).

The year 1990 marked a significant moment of progress in the laws and legislations protecting children and their rights (Royal Hashemites Court, n.d.-a). That year, King Hussain signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which included a range of strategies focusing on the care and protection of children. The signing of this convention set a foundation for more legal amendments to empower children and ensure their welfare.

One of the significant improvements in the child protection sector is the work of the Jordan River Foundation (JRF), which, as a result of active royal support, works towards

the welfare of women, children and young people. Established in 1995, the JRF is one of Jordan's leading non-profit foundations that endeavours to protect children and young people from abuse. The Jordan River Foundation (JRF) seeks to align with international standards in the care and protection of children and young people and aims to be consistent with the culture and society of Jordan. It attempts, through the child safety programme, to reduce violence against children and young people and to raise family awareness (Jordan River Foundation, n.d.). By defining the family as a support unit to the child, and by equipping them with information about the risks and harm of child abuse, JRF educates families on how to report abuse (Family for every child, n.d.). The prevention and intervention services provided by JRF aim to improve the child protection sector and to do so with a healthy and safe approach. However, its efforts are not only limited to prevention and intervention. JRF collaborates with care centres, involving itself heavily with the care and treatment of children and young people who have experienced abuse. Additionally, JRF also facilitates research and information-sharing between care centres. They have also partnered with international organizations such as UNICEF and WHO to further research child sexual abuse (ECPAT International, 2016). The JRF is also registered in France, the USA and the UK as a tax-exemption charity foundation for international sponsorship (Jordan River Foundation, 2019).

Seven years after King Hussain signed the Convention for the rights and protection of children, the Family Protection Department (FPD) was introduced. Established in 1997, the FPD was set up as a specialised unit of the Public Security Directorate (PSD) to deal solely with cases of domestic violence and sexual assault. The FPD was the first department in the Middle East to specialise in the protection of women and children, particularly to handle issues with cases of domestic violence and assaults (Public Security Directorate, n.d.; Nasrawin, 2017).

Continuing the improved efforts in the area of child protection, King Abdullah Al-Hussain, when he attained the royal throne, drew attention to the need to safeguard the rights of women and children. King Abdullah remarked, when addressing the Jordanian Parliament in 1999, that “The women and children sector needs further attention and there is a need to develop programmes and implementing legislation that could...raise the level of care provided to [women and children]” (as cited in Family Protection Department, 2016, p. 3). This sentiment was also echoed by Queen Rania in 1999, who commented that “a new approach should be conducted to cope with new challenges in

this new era for us to be able to provide a solid foundation of a safe and stable society” (as cited in Family Protection Department, 2016, p. 3).

In 2000, an early childhood development strategy was developed in Jordan, which sought to target issues related to the welfare and growth of children, including through legislation. The strategy focused on developing the institutional capacities of both governmental and non-governmental agencies and sought to ensure that children receive appropriate care and protection. The strategy positioned its aims within a framework of freedom, human dignity, spiritual values and positive environments (socially and health-wise) for children. It further provided a summary of the present situation of children in Jordan and is constantly updated and adapted according to the current needs (UNICEF & National Council for Family Affairs, 2000).

In addition to this improvement, Queen Rania Al-Abdullah, in her role as the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, established The National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA) in 2001 to further the government’s support towards families, children and young people. The “project aimed to improve the livelihood of the Jordanian family and its members—children and young people, women and elderly” (National Council for Family Affairs, 2015, p. 4). Some of the key projects included setting up services to take responsibility for the family counselling services; automating a family violence tracking system; conducting studies on child protection hotlines; and developing standards for care centres that were dealing with young people, orphans and elderly (National Council for Family Affairs, 2015).

In the field of family development and protection, NCFA set up a number of frameworks that were aimed at the welfare of the overall family. One of these frameworks was the 2009 “National Framework to Protect the Family from Domestic Violence”, which provides a guide for how agencies can manage family violence cases, particularly children and young people. The framework sought to enhance the effectiveness of responding to domestic violence, and providing services in support of the victim within the preservation and respect of their rights, as well as maintaining confidentiality and privacy, protection and non-discrimination (Family Protection Department, 2016).

This 2009 framework was in alignment with the passing of the 2008 law “Protection from Family Violence” [Law No. 6 - 2008]. This law “was passed in order to maintain family ties and reduce the effects of penal procedures” (Nasrawin, 2017, p. 382) and

assisted in the protection and support of victims from violence and the consequences of abuse. In order to prevent domestic violence, the Family Protection Department has instituted a three-step prevention strategy: increasing public awareness about family violence risks in order to prevent abuse and encourage reporting; intervening and providing advice about how to effectively intervene if someone were to witness abuse happening; and sensitising society about responding to victims and their families post abuse (Family Protection Department, 2016).

Thanks to a partnership between the National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA), the United Nations in Jordan, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Population Fund, as well as the Family Protection department (FPD), two essential guidelines were published. First, in 2017, the Health Service Providers' Procedures Manual for Coping with Sexual Assault (National Council for Family Affairs, Ministry of Health, UNHCR, UNICEF & UNFPA, 2017), and then in 2018, the National Policies and guidelines to prevent and respond to cases of violence in Jordan. These documents aim to support those who work to protect children and offer protection from gender-based violence and family violence (National Council for Family Affairs, 2018).

Jordan's penal code

Jordan's penal code includes as many potential types of abuse as possible. It defines the following as abuse: child trafficking for sexual purposes, child pornography (or similar material), online sexual exploitation of children and sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism. It also includes a provision of unwanted touch (ECPAT International, 2016, p. 34; Ministry of Justice, 2011). The Jordanian penal code is constantly evolving with regard to laws about children, in order to meet international standards in protecting the safety of children.

Jordanian law sees sexual abuse of children and young people as a grave offence. Yet, the law stipulates that the penalty for the commercial exploitation of children and young people is only six months to three years of imprisonment. The law also penalises individuals who traffic persons for the purpose of sexual exploitation and prohibits the distribution of pornography involving persons under the age of 18 (ECPAT International, 2008). Though the law does not prohibit the possession of child pornography, it punishes

those who use the Internet to post or distribute child pornography. The minimum age of consensual sex in Jordan is 18.

Jordanian law deals with the abuse of children, particularly sexual abuse, in a strict and cautious manner. The punishment is prescribed according to the age of the abuser, the age of the victim and the type of sexual abuse that occurred, irrespective of the victim's gender (Al-Toubasi, 2004). The abuser is prosecuted in accordance with the penal code if the abuser has reached the age of 18 years, and the penalty is more intense whenever the victim is younger than 15 years (Royal Hashemites Court, n.d.-b). However, there have been many activists who have raised concerns about the sanctions imposed on abusers under Jordanian law. According to them, imprisonment or fines will not deter an abuser from repeating his offence. Hence, what is needed are psychological and social treatment services during imprisonment that aim at rehabilitation alongside punishment. These views have also been supported by Dr. Hani Jahshan, a noted forensic expert at the United Nations (Jfranews, 2014).

If the offender is a child under the age of 18, Jordanian law recognises them as a juvenile delinquent and sentences them to a rehabilitation and care centre, under the articles of the Juveniles Act in the Penal Code. The Jordanian Juveniles Act 2014 defines 'juvenile' as any child under the age of 18, including both young people who break the law and those who are in need of protection and care (Ministry of justice, n.d.). The Juveniles Act was instituted in line with concern for children's and young people's affairs and the preservation of their rights. The aim of the Juveniles Act is not just to punish, but to deter the offender from future crimes and hence sentences are non-custodial in nature. This law is applied where young people who break the law are punished for their crime, in accordance to the law, but in a manner that is different from the prosecution of adults (Olimat, 2014).

Amendments in the legislations in favour of children

Legislation in Jordan is constantly changing and improving. Of particular significance is the amendment to the "Protection from Family Violence Law" for mandatory reporting (Law No. 15/2017). Under this law all employees and those responsible such as teachers, doctors, social workers and caregivers are required to report any case of abuse they may witness or suspect and to disclose this information to the authorities. Those working in the health, educational and social service sectors who do not report cases of violence will

be held accountable for their silence and can risk being fined and/or imprisoned (Al-Saaideh, 2016).

Another significant amendment came about in 2017 when the Jordanian Law underwent a major revision as a result of the relentless efforts of many social activists. The cancellation of article 308 of the Jordanian Penal Code made a huge difference in terms of serving justice to perpetrators of abuse and violence. This article, while it existed, allowed abusers to marry their victim, thereby letting them go free (Ministry of Justice, 2011; "Parliament Cancelled Article 308", 1960). Before its cancellation, the article stated that rapists will be free of punishment if they marry their victim and remain married for at least three to five years. Although predominantly in favour of the abuser, this article has also been used as a means to save the victim and her family's honour (SIGI- Jordan, 2017).

A third relevant amendment to legislation took place in 2017, leading to the abolition of "clemency" – meaning that, if the perpetrator is at least eighteen years of age and the victim is under eighteen years age at the time of the crime, there is no possibility for the victims' parents or an authority to withdraw the complaint made against the perpetrator. This law applies to both genders and includes people with disabilities (Penal Code of Jordan, 1960, art. 340).

As a result of Jordan's efforts to constantly improve the level of care that children receive, Jordan was ranked 46th in the world in 2016 according to the Children's Right Index. This index is based on the five basic criteria for the rights of the child: life, health, education, safe environment and protection. In comparison with the rest of the Arab countries, which hold the same religious and cultural values, Jordan was ranked 5th after Tunisia, Egypt, Oman and Lebanon (AlNemri, 2016).

Services for children, young people and families who seek help and speak up

In 2000, the Jordan River Foundation, with the support of the Ministry of Social Development, set up Dar Al Aman, a specialised centre for the protection of children and young people who have been abused (National Council for Family Affairs, 2017). There are five care centres in Jordan: Dar Al-Aman, Children's care home/Ma'daba, Children's

care home/Shafa Badran, Home for care, education and rehabilitation of girls/Rusayfa, Dar Al-wifaq Al-Usri (United Nations, 2013).

As reported by the United Nations, Dar Al Aman supports these centres with the services they provide (United Nation, 2013). This child protection centre became a model for other child safety and welfare programmes in the region (Gavlak, 2009), in over 22 countries, including the Palestinian territories, Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, to protect and help children and young people who have suffered extreme physical, sexual and psychological abuse (Gavlak, 2009). The Child Protection Centre, Dar Al Aman (دار الأمان – ‘house of safety’ in Arabic), is the only therapeutic Centre in the WHO’s Eastern Mediterranean Region that offers psychological, medical, social and educational services to maltreated children and young people. Dar Al Aman also offers free helplines, which anyone can call, including the child, to report abuse. The Centre ensures that all cases are followed up (Dar Al Aman, 2012). Dar Al Aman is supported by a law passed in Jordan recommending therapy for the victims and perpetrators of child abuse (Gavlak, 2009). It offers counselling for families to help deal with the impact of the sensitive situation of sexual abuse and to overcome the threat it holds over the family’s reputation. The Centre also supports families to resist social pressure. The aim is that the child is comforted knowing it is not their fault and they have not brought shame to the family. The service includes educating the parents of the child who have been abused by guiding them through the principles of child protection.

Understanding the complexity of speaking up in the sociocultural context.

Although the Jordanian government provides facilities and approves legislation to encourage the reporting of sexual abuse, the complexity of disclosure within the country’s sociocultural context prevents many children and families from doing so (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 1999). Cultural values and the position of families within society affect the disclosure of sexual abuse and also impact on how professionals work to support disclosure. As Fontes and Plummer (2010) identify, the decision to disclose or report abuse is not an individual decision. The process involves a variety of people (children, families and professionals) from different positions in society.

Legislation alone might not change the situation surrounding the disclosure of sexual abuse (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 1999). As well, there need to be efforts made to help the victims of sexual abuse. First of all, encouraging children and young people to speak their mind freely about regular events that happen in their normal lives will help them to be more open about negative experiences that happen to them (Abu-Baker & Dwairy, 2003; Elayyan, 2007; Alzoubi, Ali, Flah & Alnatour, 2017). It is equally important to keep all children and young people informed and aware of their right to complain about any type of violence or inappropriate physical contact by any person. Correspondingly, it is essential to “establish safe, well-publicised, confidential and accessible mechanisms for children, their representatives and others to report violence against children” (Elayyan, 2007, p. 17).

Furthermore, emphasising the need to maintain a child’s confidence and trust can help them to reveal their suffering while keeping faith that they will be believed and will receive justice (Abu-Baker & Dwairy, 2003). However, as Jordan is a conservative Arab country, speaking up is very difficult. In general, children lack the freedom to speak up openly, especially since the collective family voice is heard more than the individual child’s voice (Peleg-Popko, Klingman & Nahhas, 2003). The severity of this situation differs from country to country; nonetheless, it can be argued that, on the whole, the lack of particular attention to children’s positions in the Arab world is a crucial issue. It is left to adults to speak on behalf of children.

The silence of children and young people in collective culture

Jordan is a collective, conservative and Muslim society in which hierarchical and patriarchal systems take precedence. The men hold the most power and authority while the women are expected to support and educate children (Azaiza, 2005). The hierarchical structure of the Arab family means that those who are young are expected to listen to and obey what is asked of them by older family members. This hierarchy prevents healthy, horizontal relationships between parents and children (Peleg-Popko, Klingman & Nahhas, 2003), meaning that children’s voices are overpowered by older family members (Wyness, 2013) and open communication between adults/parents and children is uncommon. It is thus incredibly difficult for a child or young person to speak up, particularly about such cultural taboos as sex and sexual abuse. These obstacles can delay or prevent any issue of sexual abuse from being identified and notified to child support

agencies (Alzoubi, Ali, Flah & Alnatour, 2017). Given that the Arab family relies on a collectivist perspective, where the self is a component of the group rather than an independent entity (Azaiza, 2005), children become silent and invisible in the face of the presiding power of adults. Consequently, the first major challenge children face is convincing parents about the reality of what has happened to them. Parents tend to either believe that the child is being imaginative or that the child is regurgitating a tale they have heard or seen (Alzoubi, Ali, Flah & Alnatour, 2017). Unfortunately, this dynamic between the victims and their parents leaves the child vulnerable to further abuse because the offender knows that they can take advantage of the likelihood that the child's account of events will not be believed (Alzoubi et al., 2017; Fontes & Plummer, 2010). To worsen the situation further for the children, if they try to use nonverbal means to speak about their discomfort, such as drawing or writing, they are labelled as rude or ill-mannered and are consequently punished by parents or untrained professional such as teachers, and this only adds on to their suffering (Abu-Baker & Dwairy, 2003). These responses prevent the offence from being addressed altogether because families resort to silence and blame the child for carelessness. Furthermore, if the offender is a member of the family and the news of the abuse is uncovered, the child is pressured to recant their account of the traumatic experiences to save the family's honour. This tendency to turn a blind eye to the offender's behaviour has had a detrimental effect. The offenders have succeeded in taking advantage of society's beliefs and practices towards the abusers, thereby putting more children at risk of sexual abuse (Abu-Baker & Dwairy, 2003).

Speaking up and family reputation in a collective patriarchal society

Arab society can be characterised as a collective culture, meaning that the honour, reputation and wellbeing of the family often overshadows individual aspirations, needs and desires (Haj-Yahia, 2000). Consequently, the actions of the individual reflect on the entire family (Shotar et al, 2015). Hence, it is common to believe that a victim of sexual harassment brings dishonour to the family (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 1999). Furthermore, the involvement of neighbours, friends and family can lead to further feelings of shame for families (Fontes & Plummer, 2010). The action of disclosure can therefore impact negatively on the family's reputation, which could also damage the marriage prospects of all the child's siblings (Abu-Baker & Dwairy, 2003).

Within the dominant structures of Arab families, gender also has a significant impact in situations of sexual abuse and disclosure. Female victims are blamed far more readily than male victims for damaging their family's honour (Haj-Yahia & Tamish, 2001). If the victim is a girl, she is more likely to be accused of disgracing the family honour (including extended family), since the abuse is perceived as a crime against the collective rather than the individual (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 1999). Family honour and reputation are core values in Arab society and impact on decisions about speaking up about and reporting sexual abuse (Peleg-Popko, Klingman & Nahhas, 2003). Traditionally, families with a girl who has been a victim of sexual abuse must thus choose between living with dishonour or rectifying their shame by killing the victim (Fontes & Plummer, 2010).

Honour-killing of girls and young women

Honour-killing is an extreme gender-based violence, which is a common occurrence within a variety of cultures and communities (Faqir, 2001). Honour-killing is the result of a collectivist and patriarchal culture that emphasises traditional worldviews of obedience and compliance with family expectations and patriarchal norms. It is prevalent in Islamic societies in the context of cultural values to do with family honour (Ouis, 2009). However, it has also been reported in Christian, Hindu and Sikh communities (Nasrullah, Haqqi & Cummings, 2009). Honour-killings have been reported in Brazil, Ecuador, India, Israel, Italy, Sweden, Turkey and Uganda (Al Gharaibeh, 2016). The practice of honour-killing is usually carried out on a female who is seen to have damaged the family reputation (Al Gharaibeh, 2016; AlMosaed, 2004; Eisner & Ghuneim, 2013; Ghanim, 2012). This crime is often planned in advance and usually involves fathers, uncles, brothers and cousins (AlMosaed, 2004). If the family knows that the girl or young woman is in a sexual relationship, her family will kill either the female or both her and her sexual partner (Al Gharaibeh, 2016). While the majority of victims are female, there are also a substantial number of male victims reported in some countries (Devers & Bacon, 2010).

Honour-killings are likely to be supported culturally wherever patriarchy, family honour and the preservation of female virginity are widely practised (Eisner & Ghuneim, 2013). In cultures where family honour is an important value, women are seen as the bearers of the family honour and must tread carefully to avoid transgression; otherwise, those around her will speak up if she is seen to have breached a code of honour (Gill, 2006). The concept of honour, which would meet the purity or chastity of Western contexts

(Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 1999), is based on cultural, social and moral principles, meaning that women are expected to conform to the norms dictated by society. Women are expected, in particular, to abstain from premarital or extramarital relationships (Shaikh, Shaikh, Kamal & Masood, 2010). If a female is raped or seen to flirt or stray from her husband, she could be killed for disgracing the family's honour. Any doubt or unconfirmed rumours about her behaviour are sufficient justification to kill her (Goldstein, 2002; Smartt, 2006). Any situation where a female is a victim of sexual abuse becomes ambiguous when viewed through the "honour lens" (Ali, 2014), meaning that she is more often blamed than she is helped. She could be beaten, locked at home, kept from work or study – anything to prevent her from living her normal life. In the worst cases, she will be killed (Abraham, 2000).

From an honour-killing perspective, the woman or young girl who has been subjected to sexual abuse is not seen as a victim who needs protection but as someone who is to blame for debasing the family honour. Relatives will therefore decide to rectify the family shame by taking her life. If a girl or young woman has been sexually abused and the family decide not to kill her, this situation leaves the family under deeper shame and pressure from society (Feldner, 2000). In these situations, the constant awareness of societal and cultural judgment influences children, young people and their families regarding their decision to speak up (Fontes & Plummer, 2010).

The Jordanian tribal leader Tarrad Fayiz reflects the major thought of people and families in tribalistic patriarchal society, particularly when issues arise related to the killing of women in order to maintain societal honour and integrity.

A woman is like an olive tree. When its branch catches woodworm, it has to be chopped off so that society stays clean and pure (Erondu, 2013).

Consequently, the threat of potential honour-killing revictimises girls and young women, subjecting them to further mental and physical harm. At a time of trauma, when the family should be the victim's support unit, their families instead become a threat (Ghanim, 2012). The pressure of the patriarchal system in conjunction with political tolerance and cultural acceptance has led to both delayed help-seeking and the denial that the abuse happened (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 1999). The victim is left with limited options, which can be seen as forms of death or as an extension of the abuse; she could marry the rapist, be imprisoned, institutionalised, or actually killed, all for reasons of 'family

honour'. "The socio-political licence to kill is not merely a criminal justice issue, but a humanitarian issue basic to the rights of individuals as human beings" (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 1999, p. 1290). In response to this situation, there is a serious need, as suggested by Ghanim (2012), to reconsider the religious interpretations and cultural values that govern daily social life, which contribute to the persistent and disturbing reality of violence against women. Without further action, honour-killing will continue to take more innocent lives.

Honour-killings in Jordan consist of 25% of annual homicides ("Increasing the number of homicides against women in Jordan", 2019). In Amman, the capital city of Jordan, Police records show that every year approximately twenty to twenty-five unmarried women and teenagers are held in protective custody at care centres for their alleged involvement in 'honour' issues. Upon their release from custody, most of these girls and women were killed 'in the name of honour'. These honour-killings were committed due to doubts about the girls' and young women's involvement in sexual relations, although subsequent autopsies revealed that most of the victims were virgins, as reported by Miller (2012, p. 370). This finding emphasises an important point made by Fontes & Plummer (2010) based on their study in the United States and internationally: that, even if penetration of the vagina does not occur during sexual abuse, the girl is still exposed to rumours and judgment that interfere with her marriage prospects due to the fact that her value as a female relies not only on physical virginity but equally importantly her honour and reputation (Fontes & Plummer, 2010).

The Jordanian religious establishment claims that honour-killing is separate from Islam and insists that honour-killing is a practice that originates from pre-Islamic Arab tribalism (Al Gharaibeh, 2016). By contrast, the Islamist party in the Jordanian parliament views honour-killing as a part of Islam's Law. Some Islamic scholars in Jordan have even declared that honour-crimes are essential to Islam because of the "values of virility advocated by Islam" (Feldner, 2000, "Does Islam Endorse Honor Killing," para. 3). Islamic practices are not limited to that which is written in the sacred texts. While the Qur'an does not include any evidence of honour-killing as being connected with the Islamic faith, the issue arises about how verses of the holy books might be interpreted or misinterpreted by the reader (Al Gharaibeh, 2016). I discuss this matter of a Sharia perspective later in this chapter.

Following the improvements to the defence of the rights of women and children in Jordan, honour-killings have been criminalised in Jordan law. Until 2001, Article 340 of the Penal Code of Jordan for 1960 stated that:

(a) He who discovers his wife, or one of his *Maharim* [female relatives of such a degree of consanguinity as precludes marriage], while committing adultery with another man and kills, wounds, or injures one or both of them, is exempt from any penalty; (b) He who discovers his wife, or one of his sisters or female relatives, with another in an illegitimate bed, and kills, wounds, or injures [one or both of them] benefits from reduced penalty (Penal Code of Jordan, 1960, art. 340).

In these instances, the defendant would usually rely on a plea of ‘temporary insanity’. This plea is a form of defence based on Article 98, which lists cases that murderers can take advantage of in order to reduce their punishment. An offender can make a temporary insanity plea if, for example, an action committed by the victim caused what the act calls “extreme anger” on the part of the offender:

Article 98: He who commits a crime due to extreme anger caused by an illegal, and to some extent dangerous act, committed by the victim benefits from reduced penalty (Penal Code of Jordan, 1960, art. 98).

Before 2001, the typical sentencing period for an honour-killing crime ranged between three months and two years of imprisonment (Feldner, 2000). In 2001, new and stricter legislation was introduced (Hussain, 2006), naming honour-killing as a crime. Prison sentences of 15 and 20 years were introduced. Eight years later, in 2009, a special court was established to deal solely with honour crimes (Nazir & Tomppert, 2005). Following the state’s concern about the lives of innocent children and women, the *Iftaa* Department issued a doctrine called ‘fatwa’ in 2016. The doctrine reflects the same values that Islam upholds regarding the sanctity of human life: “Killing one innocent human being is akin to killing the entire human race” (Qur’an 5:32, 6:151, 17:33). *Iftaa* is a Jordanian state institution that deals with moral issues in the Islamic context and fatwa is a doctrine that forbids murder committed on the grounds of family honour, naming it a particularly “heinous crime”. *Iftaa* argues that killing relatives to restore family honour is an act against Islamic values and those who engage in honour-killing must be held accountable

for their crimes (Mende, 2019). Continuous efforts have been made by the state of Jordan to end the practice of honour-killing.

In 2017, amendments were made to Article 98, preventing criminals from pleading ‘temporary insanity’. Perpetrators who commit honour-killing could no longer receive a reduced penalty if the female who was killed is excluded from the close family members listed in Article 340 – such as wives, daughters and sisters. Furthermore, if the offender kills with no evidence of a woman’s involvement with sexual activities, he cannot be granted leniency for his crimes (Penal Code of Jordan, 1960, art. 98). While it was expected that this amendment would minimise honour-killing, this practice is still prevalent in Jordanian society ("Increasing the number of homicides against women in Jordan", 2019). Given the limitations of the amendments to Articles 98 and 340, there is a strong demand from human rights and feminists activists to cancel Articles 98 and 340 altogether and thus to eradicate any excuses that could be used to justify honour-killing against girls and women (Edeabis, 2020). The Jordanian government attempted to cancel these articles on two separate occasions but these cancellations were prevented by parliamentary refusal and the backing of religious and clan powers ("Increasing the number of homicides against women in Jordan", 2019). Nevertheless, when the matter concluded, it led to an increase in the severity of the punishment for the murderer—from seven years to 15 years in prison—after the King’s intervention in 2009 ("Blood of women guards the honour", 2018).

In response to these legislative failures to protect women, international support has enabled additional help for at-risk women in Jordan. In 2018, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded a special care centre called Dar Amneh (meaning ‘safe’), which aims to protect, empower and look after women who have been threatened by honour-killing from their families (Mende, 2019).

Damaging masculinity for boys and young men victims

While the patriarchal system plays a huge role in the lives of girls and women, it also has a significant effect on boys and men. Patriarchy is a socio-political system that insists on male domination (Harker, 1997; Pease, 2019). Patriarchal values consider everything that is not masculinity, especially females, to be weak (hooks, 2004). The problem is that if men define their gender identity according to patriarchal, oppressive masculinity, any attempts to reconstruct this identity away from violence or towards gender equality

means that men are still defining themselves as not being women (Pease, 2019). The prevalence of patriarchal systems in Jordan means that boys and young men who become victims of sexual abuse are harmed in terms of the status of their masculinity, manhood and family reputation. However, unlike girls and young women, they will not be blamed for damaging the family honour (Haj-Yahia & Tamish, 2001).

Male victims become stigmatised in different ways, depending on the sex of the abuser, and are therefore prone to further revictimisation following sexual abuse (Romano & De Luca, 2001). If a woman sexually abuses a boy or young man, his masculinity is considered to be threatened, which consequently prevents boys and young men from disclosing sexual abuse (Fontes & Plummer, 2010). There is another difficult position that boys and young men could be trapped in when they are abused by someone of the same sex, since the abuse will often be perceived to have homosexual implications (Harker, 1997). The issue of penetration with male victims leads to a heavy burden of shame. Regardless of consent, these victims are considered to have engaged in a taboo activity that calls into question their masculinity and their sexual preferences (Harker, 1997). According to this heteronormative logic, being penetrated is akin to being made “like women” (Fontes, 2007; Al-Kindari, 2019). Consequently, this perception influences a gross misunderstanding that sexual abuse influences a person’s sexual orientation (Fontes, 2007). This stigmatisation of male victims of sexual abuse challenges their masculinity, which can lead them to suffer in silence and to find their futures negatively affected, especially opportunities for consensual heterosexual relationships (hooks, 2004).

In patriarchy men are expected to be in control; yet this is not the case when boys and men become victims of sexual abuse, since they are seen to lose their masculinity as well as the opportunity to become a patriarch – meaning that he can also lose his standing in the family hierarchy. This playing out of an oppressive patriarchal system can prevent male victims from seeking the help that might improve emotional wellbeing, thus affecting a boy’s or young man’s mental health (hooks, 2004). Boys and young men may not be aware of the extent to which they have internalised patriarchal expectations; it is thus necessary for men to understand how patriarchy influences on their lives (Pease, 2019). In each of the sets of difficulties that male victims may face, it is possible to see how patriarchy inhibits the disclosure of sexual abuse whether by males (most sexual abuse) or by women (Fontes & Plummer, 2010).

Sharia's perspective of child rights in disclosing sexual abuse

Alongside these matters of civil law, Islamic law (Sharia) forbids any abuse of or aggravation to another human being (Al-Faqieh, 2013). This includes physical, mental, emotional and sexual exploitation. Since children are the most vulnerable members of society have little say and are given limited options to speak, they are in need of protection (Islam, 2015). Islam sanctifies the gift of human life, especially children, who are considered to be loved ones of God (Arfat, 2013). Sharia also considers that the responsibility of Islamic states, as a wider duty, is to offer all facilities that could contribute to raising children in wellness (Al-Faqieh, 2013). The state plays a significant role in the support and protection of children's rights by promoting the importance of health care, proper nutrition, education to acquire skills, and the right to a dignified and secure life within a healthy society (UNICEF, 2005). Jordan follows Islamic Sharia law, which guarantees the child's right to life beginning from an embryo in the womb. Termination of pregnancy¹ is consequently prohibited and children are given their rights by living with a family, being given a kindred name, and being entitled to property and inheritance rights (Al-Yamani, 2015).

Islam perceives children as a blessing from Allah, given by him as a sacred gift to the parents – as an Amanah, meaning 'to be trusted with' (Islam, 2015). In the Holy Qur'an, Allah said "يُوصِيكُمُ اللَّهُ فِي أَوْلَادِكُمْ" – God charges you to be concerned with your children (The Qur'an 4:11). From this verse, Allah called on parents specifically to look after their children, care for them and protect them. Sharia law strictly forbids adults from violating children's rights (Al-Refaie, 2012). There is no doubt that sexual abuse is a violation of the child's right to protection. Sexual abuse is usually difficult to discover and Islam considers it a major sin and one of the greatest crimes under Islamic criminal law (Islam, 2015). It is considered as a betrayal of trust, particularly in incest where the child is sexually abused by those who have been entrusted with their care. Islam abhors the

¹ For the termination of pregnancy, still there is no agreement under this law about the status of termination of pregnancy resulting from rape or incest. There is different fatwa and argument amongst religious leaders considering either the best interest of the mothers/victims or whether to save a new life given by Allah (see "Rulings of aborting the fetus for a raped woman," 2017).

betrayal of trust, and the breach of covenant is a sin against Allah himself (UNICEF, 2005).

Correspondingly, Islam regards abuse of any kind to be a form of oppression. Allah (God) and the Prophet Mohammad (ﷺ) warned people about oppression. Allah said:

I have forbidden oppression for Myself and have made it forbidden
amongst you, so do not oppress one another [Muslim (also by at-
Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah)].

Indeed, the Qur'an and Hadith detailed many instances where oppression is forbidden. Examples of oppression can include cheating people, stealing from others, abusing others or attacking others' property. Since Islam is a religion that values both peace and justice, the Qur'an and Hadith emphasise that those who have been oppressed maintain the right to disclose the harm they have been exposed to and seek justice or help (Mirhosseini & Rouzbeh, 2015). The Qur'an further asserts the right of the oppressed to claim their rights back from the oppressors as well as the duty of others, especially Muslims, to help the oppressed to receive justice.

”وما لكم لا تقاتلون في سبيل الله والمستضعفين من الرجال والنساء والولدان الذين يقولون ربنا أخرجنا من هذه القرية الظالم
أهلها“

And what is [the matter] with you that you fight not in the cause of
Allah and [for] the oppressed and vulnerable among men, women,
and children who say, “Our Lord, take us out of this city of
oppressors' people” (The Qur'an 4:75).

From this verse, Allah calls to help those who are most vulnerable. Allah asks people to care for and look after one another. Here, Allah asserts the duty and responsibility of Muslims to help those who are oppressed and alleviate the harm imposed upon them. Additionally, the Hadith cited many stories in which the Prophet Mohammad listened to people's complaints after they were hurt by others. Prophet Mohammad was also committed to providing justice not only to Muslims but also to any oppressed Christian or Jewish person, promising to hold oppressors accountable for their actions and to serve appropriate punishment if the oppressor does not make amends for their mistakes (Al-Sarjani, 2014).

However, when seen exclusively from the cultural standpoint of family honour, Islamic law is misinterpreted. The patriarchal imposition of an honour culture has influenced the

application and interpretation of Islamic law (Ali, 2014). This collective culture, which perceives family honour through the girls and women, does not concern itself with justice for victims, which consequently causes hesitation, delay and silence about disclosing abuse (Aboul-Hagag & Hamed, 2012). In some cases, if a Muslim family needs assistance from outside the home, they seek help from *Imams*, religious leaders or teachers (Rassool, 2016). People consult *Imams* because they are assured it will be confidential and that there will be no reputational damage inflicted upon the family (Al-Dousari & Prior, 2019). In many Islamic states, conservative, collective culture continues to overshadow the fundamental rights afforded to children by Islamic law (Ali, 2014). Consequently, this cultural emphasis on family honour has resulted in the abuse of the very aspirations that Islamic law stresses to protect children and women (Ali, 2014). In addition to Islamic law, the education system is another potential site for child care and protection.

Sex education in Jordan

Research shows that sex education is one of the main methods to equip children to become aware of sexually abusive behaviour and protect themselves from it (Abdullah & Yawer, 2012; Barsheed, 2014). Bani Khalaf, Anagreh and Jarra (2014) argue that sex education needs to be taught both from scientific and religious perspectives, so that the students understand that it is not merely a study of what is right or wrong but that these are common biological developments applicable to everyone. Such a method also helps educators focus on the psychological, sociological and physiological factors related to sex education. The number of studies on sex education undertaken in the Arabian context (including Jordan) is still limited (Salih & Shreim, 2008). A review of literature on sex education in Jordan shows that studies in this field are limited and those available were only conducted after 2000, following Jordan's signing of the Convention of Child's Rights in 1990.

Providing sex education in schools

Sex education in schools is an educational process that is aimed at providing primary and secondary students with knowledge and information pertaining to the biological and sexual aspects of their life. It also helps them develop the life skills necessary to remain sexually healthy and protect themselves from sexually transmitted diseases which can

help ensure a healthy society with reduced disease (Bani Khalaf, Anagreh and Jarra, 2014).

Alkhalidi (2011) explained that sex education should be approached as a study that informs and educates children about their biological development and needs. This could help develop healthy and positive attitudes towards sex education and sexuality. He also adds that providing such an education will help the students manage their sexuality within the constraints of Jordan's moral, religious, cultural and social values.

Jordanian society is divided in its approach to sex education. As Hindi (2007) points out, some people are of the belief that sex education should not be taught but be left to be learned organically by the child. However, the problem with this approach is that the child or young person might gather information from the sources available around them such as pornographic material and magazines with no confirmation if the information gathered is correct or appropriate.

Bani Khalaf, Anagreh and Jarra (2014) argue that misunderstandings and confusion currently exist regarding what the terms sexual education and sexuality mean, with most people assuming that it focuses on the sexual relationship between a male and a female. This is seen in schools too, as a result of which sex education is viewed as an embarrassing topic by both the teachers and the children. This embarrassment is also one of the main reasons why children turn towards unreliable sources such as pornography, movies and the internet to learn about sex (Alkhalidi, 2011; Obidat and Tawalbeh, 2013). Another significant problem stemming from the taboo surrounding sex is the children's lack of awareness about sex, which can make them more vulnerable to sexual abuse. As a result of lack of information about sex, children are often unaware of the abuse they have suffered and lack the skills required to protect them from it (Jibril & Al-Harasis, 2012).

With globalisation and the subsequent digital revolution, Jordanian society has witnessed a change in its values. It has thus become important to scientifically educate young people about sex, in order to offer them reliable information and guidance and to inform them about the morals and values that can guide them in their daily life (Obidat & Tawalbeh, 2013). The objectives of sex education vary according to different societies, customs, traditions and knowledge (Obidat & Tawalbeh, 2013). The education provided in Jordanian schools needs to be tailored, deliberate and planned to provide students with a

set of concepts, facts, skills, values, and healthy attitudes to identify sexual issues, as much as their physical, mental, emotional and social development allows them within the framework of social values and Islamic instructions (Alkhalidi, 2011).

Further contribution is made by Shotar, Alzyoud, Oweis, Alhawamdeh and Khoshnood (2015) who recommended the integration of violence awareness material into sex education and the development of policies to include parents in sexual assault educational programmes. Including parents will raise their awareness about open communication and close relationships with their children.

Sex education is a practice that is widely referred to in the Qur'an. Many verses from Qur'an such as Surat Al-Nasa'a, Yusuf, Al-Moamenon, and Al-Nour refer to several sexual themes such as the stages of human creation, married life and the pursuit of legitimate relations of marriage as well as penalties for sexual deviation (Alkhalidi, 2011). Religion is therefore not the hindrance in the path of sex education. Jordan needs to approach sex education as any other subject that helps develop students' awareness and guide their behaviour to the right path and protect them from risks (Hindi, 2007).

The embarrassment about or refusal of sex education is mostly a social and cultural issue, which is not related to a religious position (Abdullah & Yawer, 2012; Barsheed, 2014). Influenced by social and cultural practices and ideas about the taboo nature of sex, parents believe that teaching their children sex education may prompt an onset of sexual relationships from an early age and or give attention to sexual practices (Alzoubi, Ali, Flah & Alnatour, 2017). A result of not being well informed is that children in Jordan may not have appropriate knowledge about sexual abuse or do not have the self-confidence to disclose the abuse or ask for knowledge, because of the social stigma of sex (Elayyan, 2007).

Studies in Jordan about sex education

There are five predominant studies that deal with the need and importance of sex education in Jordan. All the studies assess sex education at high schools from different perspectives, and try to address the main gaps in the system while also proposing methods of addressing these gaps. Two of these studies investigated perspectives on sex education within their subjects of biology and social studies (Bani Khalaf, Anagreh & Jarra, 2014; Obidat & Tawalbeh, 2013). Two other studies analyse the content on sex education that

is included in the high school text books on Islamic studies (Alkhalidi, 2011; Hindi, 2007). The last study discussed the parents' stance towards sex education at school (Salih & Shreim, 2008).

Bani Khalaf, Anagreh and Jarra's (2014) research highlighted the need for providing biology teachers with safe boundaries when teaching sex related topics. The lack of proper training, material and information has often left the teachers unable to answer the questions of the students. Lack of training, material and information run the risk of students getting incorrect information. Thus, the instituting of "safe boundaries" (p.464) was suggested by the researchers as a means to safeguard the interests of both the teachers and the students, and better to equip the teachers to answer students' questions efficiently and effectively. Safe boundaries, as set out by Bani Khalaf, Anagreh and Jarra, are a set of teaching strategies that enable science teachers to clarify sexual concepts and topics to students in a safe and reliable way through the use of biology books that suit student needs. Researchers found that these measures of safety prevent embarrassment for students and teachers alike, thus making sex education practices more accessible and less of a taboo (Bani Khalaf, Anagreh and Jarra, 2014, p. 464).

It was also suggested by this research that biology is the closest subject to sex education and as such biology teachers are best equipped to carry out sex education. Obidat and Tawalbeh's (2013) research, also suggested that it was best to combine sex education with the other subjects. They argued that doing so would give a context to the information. Additionally, their research also highlighted that it was best to deliver sex education separately to males and females as their biological needs and processes were different.

Hindi's (2007) study and Alkhalidi's (2011) study, although conducted four years apart, provide similar analyses on the inclusion of sex education in high school text books on Islamic studies. Their findings suggest that not much had changed in the curriculum between the years in which these studies were completed. Both studies found that material focusing on sex education was limited, with Hindi (2007) finding only 6.8% of the total curriculum material was dedicated to sex education, and Alkhalidi (2011) finding 10%. It was also found that the material discussed was limited to "precautionary rules for sexual instinct control, remedy rules against sexual violations, and the rules of maturity in Islam" (Hindi, 2007, p119) and those pertaining to family problems (Alkhalidi, 2011).

The research focusing on the viewpoint of the parents towards including sex education in the curriculum in the capital city of Amman, Jordan, presented the most positive results (Salih & Shreim, 2008). Although parents were, on the whole, receptive to having schools include sex education in their curriculum, mothers were more inclined to having their children be sex educated than the fathers were. The findings also showed a positive correlation between the parents' levels of education and their acceptance of sexual education. The higher education a parent possessed, the more open they were to the inclusion of sexual education in the school curriculum.

The five studies discussed above highlight the concerns with regards to the current scene regarding sex education in Jordanian schools. It was noted that teachers require appropriate materials and professional training in order to be qualified for teaching sex education effectively. The studies also highlighted a correlation between the education level and gender of parents and their acceptance of sex education in Jordan's school curriculum.

Chapter summary

This chapter has presented an Islamic perspective of sexual abuse against children and young people as well as children's and young people's rights to speak up and seek help and/or justice. This chapter has reviewed the literature in a number of areas relating to child sexual abuse in the Middle East as well as child sexual abuse and child protection in Jordan. It also reviewed the efforts for improvement over time to legislation and social support institutions in the two decades following the signing of the Convention of the Rights of the Child. This chapter has examined the influence of sexual abuse on victims, family members and family reputation. It has established understandings of the complexity of disclosure in the sociocultural context and where the child is positioned in collective and hierarchical societies. Since the hierarchical system makes it hard for children's (and young people's) voices to be heard, this thesis will thus follow a 'child-affirming approach', meaning that the wellbeing and perspectives of children and young people are its priority. This study will therefore remain alert to the impacts of the hierarchical system and will thus focus on finding ways through so that the voices of the children and young people can rise safely and be heard more widely.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter introduces the research design for my study. I begin by discussing qualitative methodology, especially in the context of sensitive research. This discussion is followed by a description of the research processes, including ethical considerations that were involved in attaining permission to approach participants. I also outline the challenges I faced as well as the professional skills I relied upon to negotiate the bureaucratic and other protocols necessary to conduct interviews. I conclude this chapter by describing the approaches I utilised for analysis.

Research design

Qualitative researchers work to capture important moments of people's lives, beliefs, actions, and to examine how they give meaning to these moments (Polkinghorne, 2005). Qualitative research focuses on questions such as "what are the kinds of things (material and symbolic) to which people in this setting orient as they conduct everyday life?" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p. 89). While childhood sexual abuse might not be considered an aspect of "everyday life", the care and protection of children and young people is an everyday concern for all societies.

This study employs qualitative strategies in both data generation and data analysis, acknowledging the sensitivity of this topic. To provide a deep understanding of children's and young people's actions of disclosing sexual abuse, this qualitative study focuses on the ecological system of children and young people who have been sexually abused. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, introduced in Chapter One, describes a system of relationships and dynamic interaction between each layer of the system. Each layer influences the children's development and how children respond to events, including traumatic events, in their lives. Taking into consideration an ecological system understanding, I interviewed children and young people who had been sexually abused, as well as others in their wider systems, including non-offending parents, senior

policy makers and managers, social workers and psychologists. Together, the four groups of participants helped to establish a solid understanding of how children and young people who have been sexually abused have begun to break their silence about the abuse and how they have been supported in speaking up. The following diagram based on Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (1979) highlights the interactions of various individuals, groups and organisations within the world of the participants in this study.

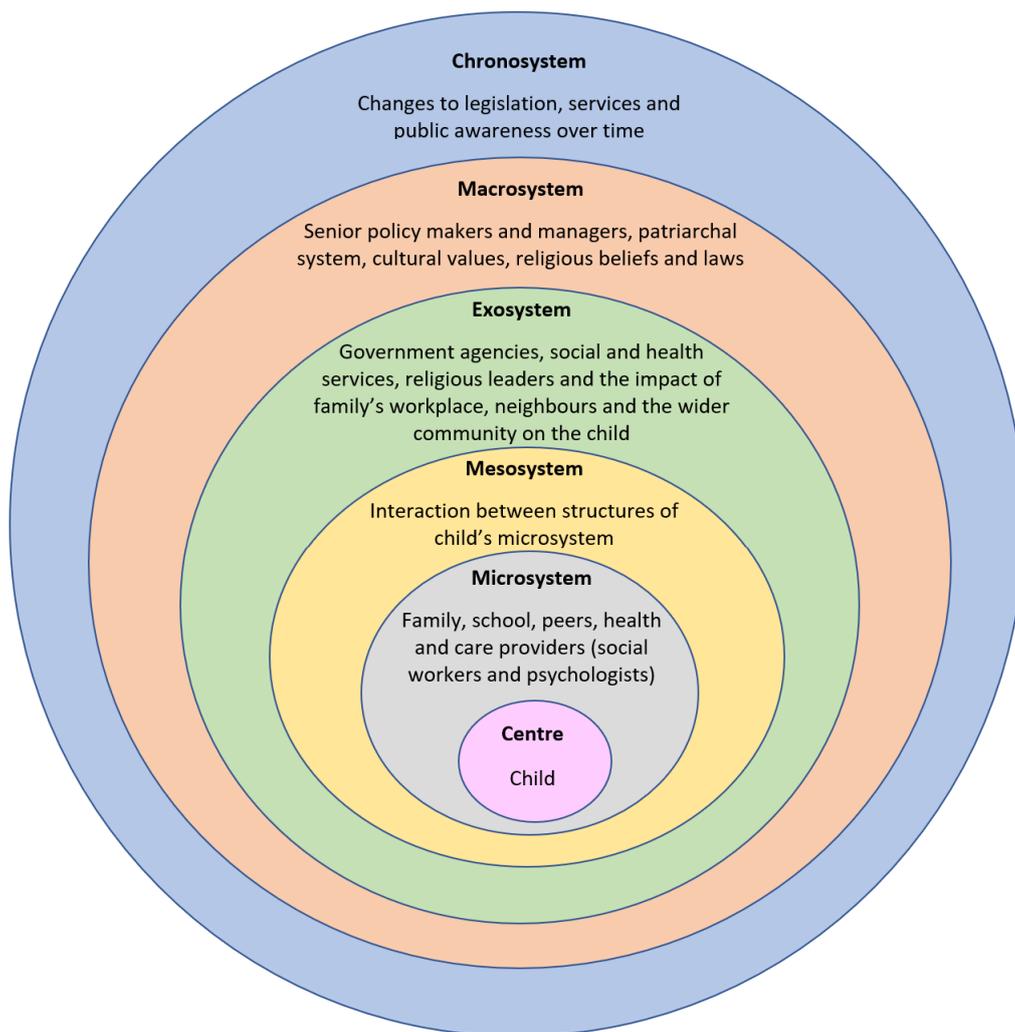


Figure 2. Interactions of different layers in the lives of the participants.

In conducting qualitative research, there are many phenomena that exist within specific social and cultural contexts that may be considered “sensitive” and need to be taken into consideration. These phenomena may be defined as “sensitive” if they are private, stressful or sacred; phenomena that deal with potential fear of stigmatisation or relate to emotional topics such as death and sex may be considered sensitive (McCosker, Barnard

& Gerber, 2001). Consequently, research in sensitive areas requires a careful balancing of ethical principles so that the generation of data does not cause harm to individual participants (Decker, Naugle, Carter-Visscher, Bell & Seifert). Involving children and young people in a qualitative study who have been sexually abused is considered to be sensitive research (Coles & Mudaly, 2010). A study in the area of child sexual abuse requires particular attention to sensitivity and care with ethics (Dickson-Swift, James & Liamputtong, 2008), as I discuss later in the chapter. In sensitive research, the principal consideration is the ethical wellbeing of participants (Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen & Liamputtong, 2007). My study's design holds ethics at its core, with the wellbeing of the participants occupying a central position.

I understand that the sensitivity of my research topic has to do with four issues, all relating to ethical considerations. Firstly, I invited participants to share stories of their lives (Dempsey, Dowling, Larkin & Murphy, 2016); it is a matter of sensitivity to expect others to share freely such vulnerable and traumatic aspects of their lives. Secondly, children and young people were included as research participants. Punch (2002) emphasises that particular sensitivity is required for research with children because of the nature of the stage of development and their ability to express themselves. Furthermore, given considerations about whether or not children are able to understand what it means to give informed consent for such a sensitive topic, it was important to also receive the consent of parents and care centre administrators. The third issue regarding sensitivity relates to the context in which these painful experiences occurred. Conducting such sensitive research in a Muslim Arab conservative culture raises complex dilemmas in terms of speaking up about child sexual abuse (Al-Kindari, 2019; Al-Mahroos & Al-Amer, 2011; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 1999). Most significantly is the topic of sex, which is a taboo issue deemed unacceptable to talk about. The fourth challenge I faced as a researcher was in approaching participants, which proved challenging given the difficulties that arise from discussing sexual abuse and conducting research in such a sensitive context. Furthermore, I am also a student in what can be considered a 'Western' university, which impacted on the sensitivity of my research and posed various political barriers that I had to navigate: I embarked on a lengthy process to gain permission to conduct my research, to access participants and to make (and keep) audio recordings of the interviews. I address each of these issues later in this chapter.

This research relies on a paradigm of sensitivity, including the theoretical foundations I selected for the research design, the professional skills I used in recruitment and in interviews, and my approach to analysis. I constantly had to remain vigilant to the challenging sensitivity of sexual abuse and how I equipped myself to mitigate risks. In setting myself up for this research, I researched in fields that would help me to take up a non-pathological position (Rosenthal, Reinhardt & Birrell, 2016). I read about sensitivity of research involving sexually abused children (Arata & Lindman, 2002; Faller, 2003), as well as narrative approaches to inquiry (Speedy, 2007) and narrative therapy (Monk, Winslade, Crocket & Epston, 1997; Morgan, 2000; White, 1997), appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider et al., 2000) and ethics of care (Hugman, 2005). I discuss these influential readings and how they shaped my research in further detail later in this chapter.

Narrative approaches to research

This study is guided by a narrative approach in inviting participants to share their experiences and to talk about the steps taken towards disclosing sexual abuse, as well as in analysing my data. Narrative research can be conceptually defined as the study of stories which are told by people about themselves as well as about others as part of their daily life activities and conversations (Speedy, 2007). A collection of stories of life experiences can help in furthering the knowledge about important yet often ignored areas of human life (Polkinghorne, 2007). Providing a “window into people’s beliefs and experiences” invites hitherto marginalised or voiceless groups to participate in knowledge construction (Duff & Bell, 2002, p. 209), and may also reveal more about the centres and the status of power in society (Riessman, 2008).

Although the stories of the participants have happened in the past, telling such narratives may give them a new understanding of and add meaning to their stories. At the same time as there is risk of harm, there is also the potential of the benefit the participants may gain from their contributions to research (Dickson-Swift et. al, 2008). Furthermore, participation in telling stories may contribute to social change (Riessman, 2008), such as taking a story of disclosure into the public area of research rather than being limited to reporting the sexual abuse in privacy to authorities. In telling stories of speaking up there is the potential to move stories from a space that brings pain, vulnerability, and fear of scandal and shame to a narrative that reflects the courage and skill of victims in speaking

up in order to receive support. Furthermore, in establishing this change, victims can claim an identity as someone who was not silenced by sexual abuse.

As I describe below, my data generation involved interview conversations that asked about the experience of disclosing sexual abuse. In my reading of Narrative Therapy, I learned about the benefits of re-authoring conversations (White, 2007). These are counselling conversations that encourage people to narrate or re-tell aspects of their lives as a story. Alongside the trauma stories, there are also “resistance” stories available that pay more attention to details or events that might have been overlooked but otherwise had a significant impact on experiences and decisions (Wade, 1997). In the forms and methods of my research, the speaking up of children and young people can be seen as an action of resistance to being silenced from violence and sexual abuse.

Narrative therapy guided me also in constructing my research interviews. I call on the work of White (2007) to demonstrate how narrative therapists ask questions that include the landscape of action and the landscape of identity. White argued that “The concept of landscape of action, and landscape of consciousness [identity] brings specificity to understanding of people’s participation in meaning-making within the context of narrative frames” (White, 2007, p.80). White (2007) used Bruner (2004) to explain these landscape concepts. Bruner wrote about the importance of the “landscape of action”, the narration of events, and the “landscape of consciousness, the inner world of protagonists involved in action” (Bruner, 2004, p. 698). Following Bruner, White explained:

As they talk about certain events, they will indicate what they think those events reflect about the character, motives, desires and so on, of various persons. They will also reflect upon what these events say about the qualities of particular relationships. So, the landscape of consciousness [identity] or meaning has to do with interpretations that are made through reflection on those events that are unfolding through landscapes of action (White, 1995, p. 31).

In my research interviews I paid attention to the landscape of actions, which included detailed information about the children’s and young people’s actions, thoughts, how they spoke up, and how they made the decision to disclose abuse. Here are examples of the questions that I asked the children and young people:

- How soon after the event did you speak up?
- How did you choose the time?

- How did you prepare yourself to tell?
- How did you choose the person that you would tell?
- What did you know about the person that led you to decide they would be safe to tell them?

I was a researcher by asking about landscape of actions questions, however, I am also a counsellor and could see the story of their own identity unfold as they participated in the interview. Therefore, I called on landscape of identity questions, such as:

- When the person believed you, how was that for you?
- What difference did it make that they believed you?
- How did you see the situation? How did your view differ from that of your mother/father/brother/sister?

Morgan added that landscape of identity questions are interested in “desires, wishes, preferences, personal values, relationship qualities, personal skills and abilities, intentions, motives, plans, purposes, beliefs, values and personal qualities” (2000, pp. 62-63). Morgan presented examples of these questions:

What do you think that says about what you want for your life? How would you describe your relationship with this person at that time? What did it take in order to do this? Can you help me to understand more about what that says you believe in you value? What did it take for you to do that? (Morgan, 2000, pp. 62-63).

These forms of inquiry further allowed me to maintain the focus of the interview on the steps the participants took towards disclosure rather than focusing on the trauma. However, maintaining this focus presented some challenges, particularly in terms of the participants’ hesitation to speak. When they were trying to express themselves and speak their minds, I thought I saw hesitation in their eyes. This hesitation could be due to many reasons. I was unknown to them, two adults were present—both the social workers and myself as a researcher—and perhaps they had an ongoing sense of shame. I am aware that the presence of social workers could potentially have influenced what the children and young people had to say. However, since the social worker is a supportive and trusted person to the children and young people, their presence also offered possibility, providing a valuable contribution during some interviews by giving the children and young people confidence to speak with me as a stranger. Furthermore, the social workers proved

helpful in interpreting what some children and young people were saying, especially those with cognitive and learning difficulties. It was only once the children and young people were assured that they could speak openly that they really captured their experiences in words. I followed their language, their bodies and where they looked. I read them for signs of discomfort, or hesitation and tried to encourage them to speak at their own pace – that they can take their time and there are no wrong answers. I worked constantly during interviews to find verbal and non-verbal ways to affirm what the participants shared and to encourage them to share their experiences in the way that suited them best. I acknowledged the children and young people as the ones who know best about their painful experiences because these happened to them and to their bodies.

I assured the participants that “I want to listen to you and learn from you. Whatever came to your mind when you thought about speaking up. I want to learn about how you came to your decision to speak up and how that experience was for you”. The interviews followed the values of the landscape of identity, affirming the participants’ decisions and helping them to see their actions of disclosure as achievements by strong and competent young women and men. Mohsen recognised himself after having disclosed the abuse:

After speaking with the manager, I felt like a strong man who can defend himself. I feel like I can protect myself (أستطيع الآن أن أحمي نفسي) (Mohsen, 14 years).

The participants thus shared important details about their disclosure experiences, which assisted in their identity development. A significant part of my role in interviewing these children and young people was listening carefully and learning from them and from the data these interviews gave me. My contribution, when leaving the research field, was granting the participants recognition for their accomplishments in speaking up.

Data transcription

Taking into account the sensitivity of my research, I chose to use earphones when listening to and transcribing the interviews despite being alone during study time and knowing that it would be unlikely for someone to overhear and understand the recordings. All interviews were conducted in the participants’ local language, Arabic. I transcribed and translated all audio-recordings of the research conversations into written English to facilitate the process of analysis.

Translating the interviews from one language to another was challenging. The translation of some metaphors and expressions from Arabic into English proved particularly challenging. As a language, Arabic reflects both culture and beliefs. Popular and well-known quotes are often used to express particular meanings, which lose their connotations in direct translation. Since these quotes have unclear meanings in English, I had to return to the recordings to check the context in which the particular phrase was used. As Bailey (2008) identified, the process of listening brings life to data through an appreciation of and respect for what participants have said and how they have said it. I then approached my supervisors with the challenge of interpreting these Arabic phrases using the English language. By describing the ideas conveyed by certain phrases, together we were able to establish an understanding in English of these expressions.

Research on sensitive topics can lead to a number of challenges and difficulties for both participants and researchers. Researchers must take care of their own health and wellbeing while undertaking such research (Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen & Liamputtong, 2007). These authors expressed the importance of paying additional attention to the wellbeing of the researchers when they undertake vulnerable situations and listen to untold stories (Dickson-Swift et al., 2007). Ongoing Skype conversations with my supervisors during the interview period in Jordan were important in witnessing the demands on me through this time. Transcribing interviews that contain powerful stories about a sensitive topic can also be emotionally distressing (Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen & Liamputtong, 2009). When I relistened to the interviews during transcription, I found that hearing the participants' voices called back feelings of sadness and empathy that I had experienced during the interviews. Each time that I heard their stories again, I re-experienced overwhelming feelings that originated from the pain and fear of the participants. Particularly when I was focused on the interviews from families, children and young people, I started to have nightmares – the first of a number of trauma symptoms reported by Dickson-Swift et al. (2009), such as “sleeping difficulties, anxiety, gastro-intestinal upsets and depression” (p.71).

I was also impacted by families' and girls' discussions of honour-killing and the very real threat of girls and young women potentially losing their lives at any moment. While I was analysing my data, an honour-killing took place in an Arab Muslim country. A video was posted on social media and I heard the pleading of a young girl seeking help. Unfortunately her attempts were unsuccessful and she screamed until she died. Learning

about this crime had a particularly disturbing effect for me. At the time, I was in the process of writing about children and young people who were not only sexually abused but then lived with the threat of honour-killing hanging over them and hence I felt the intense personal pain of the Arab and Muslim women who were killed and the children and young people who were sexually abused. With support from my supervisors and by having a counselling session through the University Student Health Service—both actions recommended by Dickson Swift et al. (2007)—I was advised about some techniques to create distance between myself and the participants’ traumatic stories. An outcome of these steps was that I was able to navigate that very challenging time, and to engage fully and respectfully with my research data.

Appreciative inquiry

Appreciative inquiry focuses on the value of human life and bringing out the best in a person (Cooperrider et al., 2000). Ludema (2001) suggested that researchers who employ appreciative inquiry have “research agendas that focus on the life-producing, life-sustaining, life-enhancing” aspects (p. 266-267). In its focus on speaking up about abuse in this study I took this ethos to guide me in investigating responses to sexual abuse that had the potential to tell life-producing, life-sustaining, life-enhancing stories. My study purposefully follows an agenda of moving “beyond the limitations of deficit discourse by developing appreciative modes of inquiry that advance vocabularies of human hope” (p. 267), as Ludema further suggested for appreciative inquiry. While appreciative inquiry was developed as an organizational approach, in this study I applied its ethos both in line with an ecological systems framework and out of an interest in children’s and young people’s positions. From an appreciative inquiry perspective, children do not get to exercise much power. I therefore chose to focus on the moments that might lend a level of power to children – the instances in which participants decided to disclose sexual abuse or take small significant steps towards disclosure.

I learned from my readings on appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider et al., 2000) that I could support my research by giving participants the opportunity to share their accounts of the process of disclosure. In sharing these accounts, participants may contribute to their self-confidence following disclosure. Appreciative inquiry focuses more on the reflection of all possible questions during the interview for participants to give a new meaning and highlight the courage of their decision (Cooperrider et. al, 2000). Cooperrider et al.

suggested that appreciative inquiry may act as a turning point that helps to transform great difficulties, to building hopes and aspirations for the future. Indeed, many children and young people were surprised when I asked them to share any advice they might have for other children, young people and parents. In spite of their vulnerable situations and the consequential experiences of shame and/or blame, these children and young people were able to realise that they have some power through the actions they took, which allowed them to recognise their own capabilities and strength. During my interviews, when I asked the children and young people about their hopes and plans for the future, it was encouraging to note that most of them had specific ideas about their future, as I detail in Chapter Seven.

Ethics and professional skills in sensitive research

According to Decker, Naugle, Carter-Visscher, Bell and Seifert (2011), researchers in sensitive topics should first protect participants from any potential harm or distress and not just focus on rich data generation. I am fortunate that I have prior experience dealing with such sensitive situations. I used my experience as a psychologist where necessary to consider the distress people were experiencing, and to keep in mind their wellbeing. In a spirit of care, I looked for those moments when children and young people try to speak up and disclose the abuse in subtle or alternative ways. Since they made their own small steps to disclose the abuse, I first listened to the children and young people and then tried to find out why they spoke up and what they said. I aimed for the children and young people to not only be listened to but to also be heard. I would make their voices visible to others through my research.

In meeting with children and young people, I made careful language choices in order to reduce hierarchy as much as possible, while acknowledging that the participant-researcher relationship is a hierarchical one. I used phrases such as “I want to listen to you” and “I want to learn from you”. I used the words ‘talk’ and ‘chat’ rather than the words ‘interviews’ and ‘questions’. I was mindful to ask the children and young people what seating arrangement they would prefer for both me and them. I wanted them to feel as comfortable as possible.

In Hugman’s (2005) view, a researcher must consider the ethics of professional care to achieve the aims of promoting good professional practice. I accepted the experiences shared by the participants and took care to engage with them and their accounts of

disclosure in ways that were far from judging, discriminating or expressing personal views of right and wrong, as Hugman (2005) advised. In particular, I worked to avoid any trauma by directing my conversation with participants towards the steps they took in disclosing abuse, without the conversation going into the traumatic events itself. However, avoiding traumatic details proved challenging.

Many of the children, young people and social workers I interviewed for my study wanted to detail the process of abuse. I was challenged to listen and at the same time to respectfully facilitate the conversation towards the process of speaking up about the abuse. I did this without affecting the flow of their thought and conversation. Additionally, many social workers, in an effort to offer extra help to me, encouraged the children and young people to reveal more details about the sexual abuse. While the intention of the social workers was to assist me in my research, their attempts at doing so made it problematic and could have potentially inhibited the data generation process. I therefore had to continuously steer the conversation away from descriptions of abuse and toward how the children and young people managed to speak up following abuse. I had to do this without offending either the children and young people or the social workers who were eager to help and talk and to whom I was grateful for facilitating access to the children and young people and their families.

I learned from the challenging sensitivity of my research to be prepared prior to the interview and to be aware of situations in which to respond promptly and apply professional skills, a sense of humanity, and personal instinct for the best interests of the participants, especially the young people. All of these preparations made a huge impact on my ability to take the interviews moment-by-moment. I called on my therapeutic skills and found that, as the interviews continued both over time and during the sessions, these skills developed. I experienced many unexpected moments in my research, which needed quick, wise and professional responses to demonstrate my capacity as a researcher.

During my fieldwork I was faced with several situations where I had to take special consideration and be more vigilant while interviewing the children and young people. For instance, I had to reshape or shorten some of the questions and use simple words, such as when I talked to Amal, a fourteen-year-old participant with cognitive and language difficulties who I introduce in Chapter Eight alongside the other children and young people. At times, I needed help from the social worker to interpret some of the

questions for Amal. As a further example, the social worker informed me that another young woman, fifteen-year-old Niveen, had been through a tough time at court a few days before the interview, which made me more careful while talking to her. I asked if she felt comfortable to proceed with the interview or if she needed to take a rest. I was particularly concerned because she was pregnant and I felt a responsibility of care towards her and her baby. Being aware of all the challenges that Niveen went through, I highly appreciated her keenness to speak her experience through my research. Niveen shared with me her dreams about the quality of life that she wanted for her baby. When Niveen talked to me, with her tiny hands wrapped around her pregnant belly, I heard a very heartfelt care in her words. I found that Niveen's body, in particular her pregnant belly, spoke up about her traumatic experience and it was as though her baby was present with us. That encouraged me to ask her questions I had not planned about what she would like to say to her unborn baby, who could certainly hear our voices as Niveen was six months pregnant.

Process of access to and recruitment of research participants

Before I set forth to Jordan for my data generation, I had received ethical approval to conduct my study from the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Waikato. Following this, I sent a letter from the University of Waikato to the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) in Jordan, seeking permission to interview participants from the care centres, which have been established for the safety and protection of children and young people in Jordan from violence and abuse. This letter was well received and permissions were promptly granted. Upon my arrival in Jordan, the care centres requested that I obtain a new permission letter in Arabic, since the permission letter I had received was in English. Thus, in the interest of the safety of the children, young people and the employees of the care centre who would be participating in my research, I had to produce a new letter. Subsequently, I reapplied for a new permission letter from the Ministry, this time in Arabic and with details about the procedures I would be following when generating my data. The letter also explicitly granted permission to take audio recordings of the interviews (see Appendix 1). It was only after this letter was presented to the care centres that I was allowed to begin my data collection. In addition, I was also directed towards the Directorate of Legislative Affairs

within the Ministry of Social Development to sign a commitment letter in order to protect the privacy rights of the participants during recordings. The Directorate of Legislative Affairs informed me that, as I would be under legislative accountability, it was my responsibility to make sure that no participant information was compromised and that I do not expose the identities of any participants. They also requested that I hand over the audio recordings once I complete my PhD. I suggested another procedure to do this by signing a commitment letter declaring that I would be held accountable for deleting these recordings once the thesis has been submitted. I have taken this responsibility seriously in order to protect the ethics of my research (see Appendix 2).

I sought further permission from the police to access the young people whose cases were already under the consideration of the Family Protection Department (FPD). However, when I went to the FPD to gain access to the participants, I was turned away as the cases with the FPD were still being tried at court. Hence, I was advised by the FPD to recruit my participants only from the care centres. The FPD also warned me about ensuring that the confidentiality of the participants be protected and that the research is conducted ethically.

I continued to negotiate multiple ethical steps before gaining access to my participants. Prior to meeting with the children and young people, their families, and social workers and psychologists, I had to present the interview questions to the care centre managers for review. This step was to ensure that all the questions were appropriate and did not breach the privacy of the participants and that the questions did not ask for a retelling of the abuse or ask for traumatic details regarding the abuse. Furthermore, I presented documents to the care centres that provided managers with the intention behind my research and the data generating practices that I would be employing. In addition, each care centre produced internal ethical commitment letters that safeguarded the right of the children and young people staying there, which they asked me to sign before being allowed access to the children and young people. Thus, on multiple levels, I had to demonstrate the ethical commitment of my study and my data generation process.

My position as a student in a Western university was met with suspicion and questions of trust at a number of stages of my recruitment process. I had to prove my intention behind conducting such sensitive research and earn the trust of the agencies and people in charge. I had to assure them that I was doing this research in the best interest of

children and young people, and that my intention was to contribute to child protection in Jordan. As a Jordanian researcher who had undertaken study in childhood and educational psychology at the University of Jordan, I learned about how to care for children and young people and their safety. I consider the safety and wellbeing of children and young people to be the highest priority.

In spite of all the letters I received from the Jordanian authorities in support of my research, and the permissions they granted, I could not access some care centres at first, especially after the care centre administration learned that my research procedure is to interview children and young people face-to-face. However, after I gained access to other centres, I was then able to return to centres that I could not access in the beginning. I met the administrative staff and I explained to them that I was granted access to other care centres and that I still wished to recruit some of the social workers, children and young people from their care centre. Finally, through care and persistence I got their trust and I had the opportunity to interview social workers, psychologists, and children and young people.

Some managers of care centres took the action of contacting the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) to confirm that I had been granted permission to interview children and young people face-to-face and to make audio recordings at the consent of the participants. The managers voiced their concerns about the children and young people, expressing a need to protect them from any harm that might come from being interviewed. Additionally, they were honest in regard to the high responsibility they carry, explaining that they would be held accountable if, by some mistake, my research harmed a participant in any way. I interviewed children, young people and families under the care centres' condition that a social worker would be present during the interviews. The care centres expressed the importance of this condition, as it demonstrates their overarching responsibility for the best interest of children's and young people's safety and protection.

Recruiting social workers and psychologists

By using this permission from the MSD, permission from the public security directorate and the permission letter from the directorate of legislative affairs, I approached all seven care centres registered with the Ministry of Social Development in Jordan. I requested their assistance in communicating with social workers and psychologists first, and then with parents, children and young people who are registered in these centres. I was

assisted in this process by a coordinator, an MSD official, who initially contacted all the care centres on my behalf to identify those care centres housing children and young people who had experienced sexual abuse. Through his inquiry, he directed me to three specific care centres where there were children and young people suited to my study. Following his lead, I then approached the suggested care centres. I arranged a meeting with the manager of each of the listed centres and sought their advice about which group of children, young people and parents to recruit as participants for my study. I specifically looked for participants who had been staying at the care centre for their safety for more than three months. I tried to approach the participants who had already received the support services following their traumatic experiences. Additionally, the time since the abuse would also give them the possibility to distance themselves from the traumatic experiences and hence provide me with rich data for my study.

Once I had the permission and support of the managers of the care centres, I scheduled face-to-face meetings with the social workers and psychologists working at the care centres with the sexually abused children and young people. During my preliminary meeting, I presented them with a short outline of my research and distributed the information letter and the invitation to participate in the study (see information and invitation letters in Appendices 4 and 5). This provided them with all the necessary information about my research. At the end of the preliminary meeting, I invited them to a follow-up meeting, if they consented to it. I met with the social workers and psychologists without the managers present so that the social workers and psychologists could agree to participate on their own accord and not because of any coercion. In the subsequent meeting I encouraged the social workers and psychologists to ask questions about my research project and discuss any concerns regarding their involvement. In addition, I requested them to help me access children and young people and their parents, who were registered with their centres. I also gave them the consent forms to complete (see consent forms in Appendices 9-12). I repeated this process with the social workers and psychologists at each of the chosen care centres.

Recruiting parents, children and young people

Initially, I had planned to gather contact information about the parents, children and young people from the care centres, after which I intended to send the parents the invitation letter to participate in my study, in a format that suited them the most. I would then wait for their reply highlighting their willingness to participate and on receiving a

positive reply would schedule a time for the face-to-face meetings. My plan was to present them with the consent form during the interviews and to seek further permission to interview their children. Due to the complexity of the process and the demand on the time of the families (including the multiple visits to the care centres that they would have to make), the managers of the care centres suggested that I take the help of the social workers to recruit the families as they not only were familiar with them, but also had a relationship of trust. The social workers then provided the families with the research information (see invitation letters in Appendices 6-8), following which some families consented to participate in my study. The invitation to participate in my study was conveyed orally by the social workers, who did not use the invitation letters and forms that I had prepared. Some participants had questions, which I was happy to clarify, at a meeting scheduled by the social worker. Thus, the meetings with the families were set up.

Participants' consent to participate in my research

All the interviews and discussions were conducted in Arabic, as it is the local language in Jordan. Gaining the written consent from my participants was extremely challenging. While they were happy to provide verbal consent, written consent made them anxious and hence they were unwilling to sign the consent form. This is because, culturally, Jordanians are sceptical about documents of any kind as they fear the information might be used against them. This fear was magnified in this case, as the topic we were discussing was extremely sensitive. Some of the participants were also anxious about recording the interviews. With families, children and young people, especially, I was advised by the social workers to forgo any attempts to get written consent as it would discourage them from participating in my research.

When I met with the families, I presented them with information about the study again and ensured that they were clear about all details. I read the consent forms aloud to them, to ensure they understood fully what they were agreeing to. They provided verbal consent to participate in the interview. Following the interviews, I requested to interview the children and young people of these families. All four families consented to having their children participate in my study. Once I met with the children and young people, I followed the same process. Despite the fact that the social workers initially spoke with the children and young people about their rights and consent, I read the consent forms aloud to them also to ensure they fully understood their rights and what they were

consenting to. The children and young people also provided verbal consent to be interviewed.

Participants' confidentiality and privacy

It is very important in sensitive research to take into account the rights of participants to privacy and anonymity. To ensure this, I kept all data confidential to myself and my supervisors. Before I reported anything from the data, I assigned pseudonyms to maintain privacy and non-identifiability. The initials assigned to the professionals were selected randomly by me in order to keep their names confidential. Furthermore, to protect the confidentiality of all professionals, I did not mention the positions they occupy, the names of their workplaces or which cities they work in. To ensure the confidentiality of the care centres, I did not specify which centres I visited or where they are located in Jordan. Protecting the confidentiality of the children and young people was my highest concern. I chose common names for them that are not associated with any particular province or tribe. The family's, children's and young people's backgrounds are not identified in my research. During my interview process, I assured my participants that their information would be confidential and their identities would not be revealed.

Potential harm to participants/risk of harm

The participants of this research are senior policy makers and managers, social workers and psychologists, families, and children and young people. To eliminate potential harm to each of these participant groups, several considerations were taken into account, as detailed below:

- Children and young people had the right to ask a (non-offending) person who supported them to attend the interview, such as mother, father, brother, sister, teacher or counsellor.
- I was aware that my research topic itself is sensitive since it involves children and young people who have been sexually abused. I was sensitive to their situation and empathised with them while listening to their accounts of the steps they took to speak up. As some of these accounts were emotionally disturbing to recall, I was mindful of giving them time to rest and take breaks when necessary from talking through their memories of and emotions relating to speaking up.
- It was important that the participating children and young people were ones who had received some support and therapeutic interventions, and had experienced

safety, to ensure that their vulnerability was reduced. When we met, I found that some of them were in high spirits with restored self-esteem.

- Since some children and young people who have experienced sexual abuse may be afraid of adults or strangers, I was sensitive to their experience and was mindful of any signs of distressful emotions during the interview. Where participants showed signs of discomfort, distress or reluctance, I chose to pause the interview and asked them how they were and whether they wanted to continue or take time to rest.
- The interview questions were focused on the process of how the children and young people spoke up. I wanted to learn more about their process of disclosure, including what then happened to them, how they dealt with the next step, and when, to whom and how they disclosed the abuse.
- I took into account participants' culture, and was sensitive to all my participants' family backgrounds and considered their values and principles during my whole data collection process in line with an ecological systems framework.
- I suggested conducting the interviews in the care centres themselves to ensure privacy and safety for the participants.
- I requested the care centres to offer participants a session with their counsellors, if the interview was unsettling or distressing to them. The care centre administrators obliged to cooperate and offered this additional support service to the children, young people and families.
- I ensured that I protected the reputation of the care centres and respected the rules and regulations that are institutionalised in the centres in which I conducted my research.
- I was mindful of respecting all social workers, their work schedules, collegial relationships, and respecting them as professionals.

Research interviews and ecological systems approach

Initially, I planned to interview three groups of participants:

1. I conducted seven individual interviews with social workers (five) and psychologists (two) associated with care centres. Each interview took between 60 minutes and 90 minutes.

2. I carried out four face-to-face interviews with members of non-offending families. Overall, I spoke to three mothers, one grandmother and one father. Interviews lasted from 45 to 60 minutes and were conducted with the parents/families of girls and young women. After interviewing them, I sought their consent to interview their children, too.
3. I received permission to interview children and young people from ages seven to 18. I was able to interview nine children and young people who had been sexually abused. These participants were between the ages of nine and 17 years. I had the opportunity to hear from six girls/young women and three boys/young men. Each interview took between 45 and 60 minutes.

Following my interviews with a social worker, a fourth group of participants was introduced into the study: senior policy makers and managers. The opportunity to interview them came about through a chance meeting with Her Excellency the Minister of Social Development, Reem Abu Hassan. She and her team of administrative members working for the welfare of victims of family violence expressed interest in my study and authorised me to speak with five senior policy makers and managers working in a range of sectors, including human rights, child protection, social services and education across various governmental and non-governmental agencies. Each of these face-to-face interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and granted me the opportunity to enrich my data through the inclusion of an additional layer in the child's ecological system.

Table 1 Participant Groups in Interviews

Group Name	Senior Policy Makers and Managers	Social Workers and Psychologist	Families	Children and young people
Number of Participants	5	7	4	9
			All families of girls/young women No parents of boys/young men	6 girls/ young women 3 boys/ young men
Designations/ Roles (if applicable)	Governmental services and non-governmental agencies	Employed by the care centres, supervising the care and counselling of children and young people	Mother Father Grandmother	Girls and Young women Aged 11-17 Boys/young men Aged 9-14

Children and young people who participated in the study are between the ages of nine and seventeen. The Jordanian law specifies particular age groups under which the children are classified. However, the terms used to refer to the age groups are in Arabic. In the table below, I have translated the Arabic classifications into English. Table 2 lists out the different age groups in my study, the respective Arabic terms and their corresponding English translations.

The Jordanian classification of age groups is in accordance with the Jordanian law/Juvenile Law No. (32) for the year 2014, article 2 (Public security directorate, n.d.).

Table 2 Age group of children and young people participants

Age Groups	Jordanian Classification	Translation of the Jordanian classification
7-12	Walad (ولد)	Boys/Girls
12-15	Moraheq (مراهق)	Adolescent young men/ Adolescent young women
15-18	Fata (فتى)	Young women/Young men

In this study, participants between the ages of nine and twelve years are referred to as children or boys and girls. Those aged between thirteen and seventeen are referred to as young people or young women and young men.

I heard the participants' accounts of the process of disclosure in person, through semi-structured, face-to-face interviews. These semi-structured interviews gave me the opportunity to hear the participants' accounts of disclosure (Elam & Fenton, 2003). Although semi-structured interviews contain a list of questions focused on the disclosure of abuse (see list of interview questions in Appendices 13-15), not all of the questions on the list may be used with all participants (Gray, 2013). Different questions often need to be called upon due to the varying accounts about and perspectives on the abuse, disclosure, responses and support. I adopted the flexibility when listening to and interacting with each individual according to their circumstances, with the focus on the elements noted earlier.

I called on appreciative inquiry, the landscape of action and the landscape of identity with questions that were shaped to appreciate the courage of children and young people speaking up under different circumstances. In this respect, I share the view of Speedy (2007) when she stated that "My interest as a researcher is creating a climate for co-researching unheard stories and discovering both myself and the possibilities that lurk beneath the surfaces of the 'statues' that have been made of them" (p. 57). With this focus, I worked to make the voices of my participants heard and to respect their courage

in speaking up. I aimed to make their actions of speaking up visible, since this has the potential to create a change in societal views and stigmas surrounding sexual abuse.

Data analysis

Research questions and theory suggest the relevant methods of analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006). My study and therefore my analysis was situated within the context of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which gave me the opportunity to organise my chapters according to the different layers of the ecological system.

I commenced analysis when I returned to Hamilton from Jordan. I first transcribed and translated the interviews. I then printed the transcripts and read all of these several times while reflecting back to the points I noted while in Jordan. I worked back and forth between field notes, reflective journals, voice recordings and transcriptions. I analysed the transcripts starting from a wider layer in the ecological system of children and young people, working my way from senior policy makers and managers (Macro), through social workers and psychologists, to families (Micro), and finally to children and young people. Following this order helped me to understand how children and young people are positioned to speak up and disclose sexual abuse according to the complexity and interactions between all of these layers. I examined the set of stories for each group in order to gain familiarity with and a holistic view of the child's/young person's experience of disclosure. I read the transcripts in ways that would help me to understand the roles of professionals and families in supporting a victim's action of speaking up and disclosing sexual abuse.

Narrative analysis was foundational to my research because it allowed me to retain the voices of the participants alongside my own understandings of their narratives and the wider context (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). A narrative approach takes stories as the unit of analysis and considers the structure, content and context of narratives (Esin, 2011). In this way, a narrative is more than just a chronology of events (Floersch, Longhofer, Kranke & Townsend, 2010); it is a story of the many complex and interwoven factors of human experience. As such, it is important in narrative analysis to identify the positionality of the storytellers in relation to their interpersonal interactions and the wider culture they inhabit (Esin, 2011). Reading and rereading the transcripts through the lens of narrative analysis, I became intimately familiar with the content of each interview. I examined professional perspectives on the roles of society, culture, law and religion in

actions of speaking up. Reading these narratives in such a way allowed me to extract connections between the different perspectives and construct an overall narrative about the complexity of speaking up about child sexual abuse in Jordan.

It is my responsibility as a researcher to offer a sensitive reading and representation of the participants' stories, especially within the context of the aligning and competing cultural discourses behind the presentation of these stories (Esin, 2011). Sensitivity does not stop after setting up the research and generating the data. I worked sensitively in the reading and retelling of the participants' stories by analysing each group with a particular focus on where that group is positioned in society. Each participant told their own story, commenting on their positionality within the systems that surround them, such as law, cultural practices, religion and social values. I had to sensitively write about the participants, offering my own understandings of their stories while thinking about the effects of what my formulation would have on those people and others to come. I needed to formulate what they said in a way that is respectful to how they are positioned. To complement this narrative approach, a thematic method of analysis was also implemented in my study.

Thematic analysis is often used to identify meanings produced by people, situations and events (Braun & Clark, 2006, 2013; Patton, 2002; Riessman, 2008). It is a flexible method that applies to a variety of fields of study. Due to its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis is said to provide a rich, detailed and complex account of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I learned from thematic analysis how to group ideas raised by the participants in their narratives, such as sex education and honour-killing, taking into account the multiple perspectives from all the participants I interviewed. Thematic analysis enabled vertical analysis of the groupings alongside the horizontal analysis from Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. The flexibility of thematic analysis allowed me to approach the transcripts from each group and examine the themes as they emerged. Identifying frequent connections between the different groups and their narratives of disclosure revealed the themes of this study. These themes gave coherence to my story, assisting in constructing the shape of the narrative of my thesis (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). I attempted to give these themes depth and complexity by "studying the transcripts repeatedly and considering possible meanings and how these fitted with developing the themes" (Thomas, 2006, p. 239). Together, the methods of narrative and thematic analysis allowed me to view the ecological systems and produce an overall

narrative that reflected the research participants' experiences of abuse, response and disclosure – as the four subsequent chapters tell.

In this chapter I have outlined the research method and the important ethical considerations in sensitive research including recruitment, privacy and potential harm. Formal ethical approval for this study was given by the University of Waikato's Faculty of Education's ethical committee. With my rationale, literature review and method discussion in place I now turn to the following chapters, which focus on my study's findings and then lead into my discussion.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings

Senior policy makers and managers of governmental services and non-governmental agencies

Introduction

This chapter offers an insight into the various factors that the policy makers and managers perceive as key to the process of a child or young person safely speaking up. I interviewed five senior policy makers and managers working in a range of sectors, including human rights, child protection, social services and education. In this thesis, in order to protect the privacy and anonymity of these policy makers and managers, I do not identify their places of work when I introduce the research material. Since they are a significant part of the child's ecological system, including senior policy makers and managers as participants in this study provides valuable understandings of the complexity of speaking up. These research participants demonstrated the challenges children and young people face when they navigate the layers of their ecological systems in order to be heard. The policy makers and managers highlighted the ethical dilemmas they face at work and also spoke about the difficulties that parents and families experience when reporting sexual abuse. The senior policy makers and managers also asserted the need for legislative amendments to mitigate the threat of honour-killing as well as a structured sex education curriculum and system.

Legislation for child protection in Jordan

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) was a turning point in Jordan's legal history. This convention saw Jordan making new laws to protect children, create social institutions for the care of children and, most importantly of all, make regulations in accordance with global movements to protect the rights of children.

Most of the senior policy makers and managers discussed the changes and improvements to the legal system in Jordan that were instituted to protect the interests of the children to improve their wellbeing. However, they observed that, despite developments to

legislation, the social pressures and cultural practices often limited the effectiveness of these improvements. Including the protection of children as a significant part of the legal system has produced important results. Manager CB insisted that there have been huge improvements in how Jordan has been functioning since 2003, when the new laws were instituted. These changes have all been well documented.

Protection of children is located in the Penal Code under the article of protection from family violence in 2017. It's also located in rights of people with special needs, and in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Policy Maker ZR).

We submit an annual report to clarify the current situation of human rights in Jordan to his Majesty King Abdulla II, parliament, government, ministers, legislative authorities and to the media. We had submitted fourteen reports, comparing the reports of 2003 and the child's right in report of 2017, we can see huge difference and developments (Manager CB)

Policy Maker ZR identified an important development: the specification of the different types of violence against children under the new amendments to the law. This change has been brought about as a result of Jordan signing the Convention of the Rights of the Child, which guaranteed protection against the sale of children, trafficking in children, child prostitution, child pornography and child sex tourism. A highlight of these amendments was the inclusion of neglect as a broad understanding of the forms that violence takes:

In Jordan we do know that there is physical, verbal or emotional and sexual violence...but the international agreements expanded the types of violence against children, such as considered even neglect as violence which expose children to various types of the harm, and internet violence (Policy Maker ZR).

However, despite the progress in the legal domains, Manager CB commented that the lack of a basic definition and awareness about sexual abuse could hamper the efforts to protect children.

We need to increase awareness of the definition of sexual violence, the process of reporting incidents and supporting the concerned parties to protect children of sexual violence (Manager CB).

Changes were also made to the juvenile code. While the amendments under this code are many and pertain to the protection of the children in general, some specific amendments refer to sexual abuse:

[in evidential interviewing, we now use] video recording of children who have been sexually abused to avoid any trauma that could come from making children repeat the details of the abuse. It could also help prevent the child from coming into contact with the abuser for proof (Policy Maker YH).

Another key recent amendment includes revoking the right of the father of the female victim from withdrawing his complaint regarding abuse of his child, including sexual abuse.

If a child is assaulted and the penalty is seven years against the abuser, if the father [on behalf of his daughter] withdrew the right of child, the penalty may be reduced to 3 or 4 years. Now the father has no right to do that because he is not the right holder, the child is the right holder but the father is guardian of him/her since the minor child is less than 18 years old. Thus, the father is not allowed to drop the right or withdraw the complaint anymore (Policy Maker YH).

Policy Maker ZR recollected a recent example where a father had withdrawn his complaint against the perpetrator, who had sexually abused the father's four-year-old daughter. As a result of the case withdrawal, the attacker had his sentence reduced from 9 years to 4 years and 8 months. The mother of the victim then sought psychological assistance from social institutions.

When the withdrawal of a complaint of sexual abuse occurs, the involved families reach an out-of-court settlement encouraged by the unofficial social tribunal that often plays a mediating role in settling such issues. Sometimes such settlements occur due to promises of financial benefits to the victim's family, social pressure on them as a step to prevent violence within or between families.

The social practice of Ejlaa'

A social practice of *Ejlaa'* undertaken in Jordanian society involves the concerned families moving away from their neighbourhood to a new place where they can start over. This term is not used to refer to family relocation in general but to specifically refer to those relocations that occur as a result of theft, violence, sexual abuse and other such incidents that could provoke bloodshed or compromise the safety of the community. In most cases it is the perpetrator's family that is forced to relocate. The community intervenes and forces the abuser's family to move – not just in order to prevent further bloodshed and prevent the victim's family from having to undergo the trauma of having to live alongside their perpetrator but also to preserve the safety of their own neighbourhood and to prevent something like this from being repeated. However, in the case of sexual abuse, the victim's families also engage in this process.

While not forced out through communal pressure, the victim's family also practices *Ejlaa'* to mainly escape the place where they were attacked and also to prevent the community from gossiping about the attack. Policy Maker ZR recalled one such example:

There was a case where a 6 year old was harassed by her neighbour. Upon noticing behavioural changes in her, her mother inquired and found out about the harassment. She took the matter to the Family Protection Department and the court. However, having to go to the court frequently meant that the family had to leave their daily work. Similarly, the child also had to miss school. This began affecting their family life and they decided to withdraw the case and willingly relocate to a new place. They did this to start fresh and for the psychological benefits of such a new start (Policy Maker ZR).

Additionally, the stigma of sexual abuse is not one that can be removed quickly and it is likely that it will haunt family members for generations to come – including preventing good marriage alliances for other members of the family, who merely by association with the victim could be considered tainted and unsuitable for marriage proposals. Such stigmas also last generations for the abuser's family where its members will be tainted by the action of the abuser frequently.

In some cases, prior to the amendments to legislation, victims' families withdrew their complaints with the police and relocated. However, revoking the father's right to withdraw the complaint has put an end to many of the different scenarios mentioned above. Family solutions, bribery and community-enforced *Ejlaa* are not worthwhile, since the amendment to legislation means that complaints made to the police cannot be withdrawn.

Articles of the Penal Code on sexual harassment and the cancellation of Article 308

Policy Maker ZR added that Jordan has taken protection of a child against sexual abuse so seriously that they have included various articles to the penal code (from Article 292 to 300) and introduced many new changes to make sure that no abuser goes unpunished due to loopholes in the system. The penal code now covers all the different consequences for abuse which takes into account the ages of the victim and the abuser. The punishment will be more severe if the abuser is 18 years or more and the victim is a young child. Policy Maker ZR reported the following:

Article 292 to 300 of the Penal Code, also referred to as the National legislation, includes:

All types of sexual exploitation which consist of three aspects:

- *Having sex with female, there are details regarding the age and punishment*
- *Anal penetration*
- *Rape, rape of female under 15 is related to article 308, which was cancelled this year. The article said if the rapist marries his victim, he will be exempt from punishment, but now this text has changed and the rapist must take his punishment (Policy Maker ZR).*

Existing laws have been repealed; according to Article 308 of the Jordanian Penal Code, rapists were free of punishment if they married their victim and remained married for at least three to five years. The cancellation of Article 308 on 15 March, 2017 prevented its misuse by abusers. Alongside its cancellation came an important amendment to the law: that the offender cannot draw on any mitigating causes to reduce the punishment for their

crime of assault if the victim was under 18 years of age at the time of the crime (Ministry of Justice, 2019).

While this law overtly benefitted the abusers, it is claimed that it also has been used as a means to save the victim and her family's honour (SIGI - Jordan, 2017). Many victims looked to this Article to 'correct' their situation. The amendment of this article has thus prevented victims from marrying their abusers and correcting the injustices inflicted upon them.

Honestly, people are divided about this cancellation. On the same day as the cancellation I received a call from a German journalist, who congratulated me for this development but also questioned how this would impact the future of the victim. This makes me wonder if the Jordanian legislator who approved this repeal even considered this gap in the law (Policy Maker ZR).

Policy Maker ZR further added that they agreed with punishing the rapist and would even support death penalty for the abusers. However, the repealing of the law had been done without any thought to the situation of the victims. It also neglected to propose alternative solutions for the victim and their future.

The minister of social development told me on the day [victims of rape] who were living in care centres were shocked by the cancellation of this article as they were waiting and hoping that their abusers would marry them (Policy Maker ZR).

Additionally, Policy Maker ZR also highlighted a social issue that led to misuse of Article 308. They said that many victims claimed rape after having had consensual sex with their lover. They do this because such sexual relationships with a lover outside marriage are frowned upon in Jordanian culture. Hence, according to Policy Maker ZR, claiming rape is a means for females to avoid receiving punishment from their family and society. ZR added that there are a number of such females in the care centres who were waiting for their abusers to marry them. When the Article was repealed, however, their fates became uncertain.

The fates of those victims who were duped in love also became uncertain.

Girls between the ages of 15 and 17 fall in love and engage in sexual relationships. However, once the guy has taken her virginity, he leaves her. Previously, these men were forced to marry the women they have cheated to escape punishment. Some of the victims looked forward to this marriage as it allowed them to right a wrong. But with the removal of the article, the victims' hope of marrying their abusers (lovers) is gone (Policy Maker ZR).

Victims and families alike were angry since they felt that the Article was repealed without taking into account the future of their daughter or their wishes. While previously this Article would have helped in providing an option that families and rape victims took up for the sake of what was considered honour, now the repealing of the Article leaves a gap that the families of victims do not know how to fill.

Even the families got angry with this. They are already sad about what happened to their daughter and were expecting their abuser will marry their daughter (Policy Maker ZR).

Females who have been sexually abused are frequently at risk of facing adversity from within the family. Legislation was laid down to improve the Jordanian laws of protection for children and families. However, these laws also reflect the complexity of the situation. While policy makers focus on a sense of justice, families might prefer to 'cover up' the situation, choosing marriage as an acceptable solution.

Mandatory reporting and protection against domestic violence

In 2008, the Jordanian Law for Protection against Domestic Violence Law Number (6) was passed as the first law to safeguard victims and their family members from all forms of violence. If there is a threat to a victim, this law prevents the defendant from getting access to the victim or any family member of the victim. The purpose of this law is to uphold family ties and provide relief to the family going through penal procedures. The Director of the Family Protection Department (FPD) takes the required precautionary measures to safeguard the victim and family members of the victim against the aggressor (Nasrawin, 2017).

As a follow-up to address the concerns of authorised parties regarding protection and reporting of abuse against those who may not be able to report it themselves, the

Jordanian Law for Protection against Domestic Violence Law Number (6) was further improved in 2017 by adding an amendment that makes it mandatory for officials to report any abuse.

With the new amendment, reporting of abuse against children became mandatory for all professionals and service providers in the health, education and social sectors, both in private and public spheres. They are required to report on behalf of minors as well as people who might not have the capacity to report. This included children, young people, seniors and people with mental and physical disabilities. Officials who fail to report would be imprisoned for up to a week and be fined up to 50 Jordanian Dinar. This law maintains the anonymity of the person reporting the abuse by ensuring that the identity of the reporter cannot be disclosed (Ministry of Social Development, 2019).

One of the key factors of this code is the emphasis it places on the family. Policy Maker YH emphasised that the focus on the family is crucial here as family is seen as the safe environment for all members and hence seeking to strengthen this unit is of highest importance. Thus, this code, while including child sexual abuse, also seeks to empower families and provide them with an option to become a resilient unit.

I would highlight here, when I talk about the protection concept, that includes all family members not just children or women. We are convinced that the family is the safe environment for all its members, so we are also seeking to strengthen the family system as part of our main objectives in the care centre (Policy Maker YH).

Policy Maker YH also commented that the introduction of this code made significant changes to the Jordanian context with regards to the protection of children and young people as it emphasised the need for mandatory reporting, particularly when involving children and young people under 18. Policy Maker YH listed the following as important improvements.

The code of protecting family from domestic violence made massive changes in our society, offering high protection for children that included:

- *Attempts to help families to settle and resolving the issue*
- *Non-negative penalties*

- *Parties to violence are requested to be under treatment of empowerment sessions psychologically and socially.*
- *Mandatory reporting by service providers to ensure protection of children and imposing penalties if a service provider fails to report an abuse against a child who is under eighteen.*

I would say we give priority to sexual abuse incidents due to the high risk the child could be in (Policy Maker YH).

This view is supported by Manager CB who observed that, following the mandatory reporting aspect of the Code, all the people who provide care and education services for children and young people (such as teachers, doctors) are now aware that it is their legal duty to report abuse to authorities. An improvement has been seen in reporting of abuse against children and young people:

After the recent amendments on the code of protection family from domestic violence was applied in 2017, reporting abuse became mandatory for service providers and it is included in their responsibility. Reporting could be from people who work with children such as teachers or doctors etc. Previously they were hesitant to report the incident, but after the amendment to the code, the employees knew that they would be questioned and penalised for noncompliance (Manager CB).

Policy Maker YH clarified that the increase in reported cases is in no way a reference to increased sexual abuse in the society. As reporting has become mandatory, more cases are now being reported.

The current situation is a lot better than before. The abusers are now aware that their violent attitude will be questioned. Similarly, the victims now know that they can approach us and as a result there is a huge demand for our services. There is an increase in the reported cases too. People might worry that sexual abuse has increased but it is not that. Before 2000, we had hundreds of such incidents but now the number is in the thousands. This is not because of an increase in sexual violence but an increase in awareness programmes and about

people's rights and protection services. People now trust us enough to seek our help and we have been able to provide them with our guidance and services (Policy Maker YH).

Additionally, the code's guaranteed protection of the identity of all parties, added Manager CB.

People who report abuses are protected. This point has been stated in the code of protection family from domestic violence. It offers high protection to witnesses without showing their identity. As we also receive anonymous reports, it is important for the FPD to confirm the reality of this report by conducting visits to the place. Only then can they know and decide if the situation of the child warrants action (Manager CB).

While the "Code of Protection Family from Domestic Violence" seems well structured, some professionals are of the opinion the code is insufficient to protect them when they report. Manager AS, particularly, questioned the issue of protection.

Who can offer us protection for 24 hours? It is impossible. If I decide to report and there is someone who calls me and threatens that "I know you, I know your kids and I know where you live" ... what I am supposed to do in this case? (Manager AS).

Manager AS raised questions regarding confidentiality. By questioning how it is possible to prevent information leaks and privacy breaches, even though the Code guarantees confidentiality for all people involved in reporting. Since sex and sexual abuse are taboo topics in Jordanian culture, reactions against the reporting of sexual abuse are not just directed at the victim but against the people who helped with the reporting too. Manager AS talked about how a school counsellor was once attacked by an abuser. The abuser was exempt from punishment on the basis of lack of evidence.

The counsellor reported a sexual abuse incident. As there was insufficient proof, the offender was out of prison within two weeks. He then returned to attack the counsellor and scratched and deeply tore her face. What benefit did she get from reporting the incident? We are scared to report such sensitive incidents, and still request further

protection for employees who are responsible for reporting (Manager AS).

The professionals are also at risk of facing aggression from enraged parents and caregivers who feel that the reporting of sexual abuse compromised their family honour. Thus, there are several things Policy Maker YH has to consider before making the decision to report a case.

Each incident is different...but we take into account the best interests of the child. In cases of sexual abuse incidents, we have a huge responsibility especially when dealing with rape and pregnancy. Then it is in the best interest of the child to report the abuse and inform the FPD to protect the girl from honour-killing (Manager AS).

Manager FE emphasised that implementing such Codes puts the employees at risk. It assumes all cases have the same level of privacy and does not account for how the time and manner in which a case is reported can lead to further problems.

Another worry is the safety of female victims' lives. The managers have to consider in detail whether reporting the abuse could pose a threat to the victim, either from her family or her abuser. This ethical dilemma with the mandatory reporting law concerns a potential privacy breach. Manager AS highlighted their concerns for victims:

If I would just protect myself, I can inform the FPD immediately without care for the family's feelings or priority given for the best interests of the child. For me my work is built on ethics more than just a job and salary (Manager AS).

The Jordanian government has brought about changes in legislation to make it easier for victims and their families to report crimes and assaults related to child sex abuse. Yet Manager CB pointed out that putting laws into writing is the easier part. The difficult part is to bring about practical changes in the society's perceptions and practices of reporting sexual abuse cases.

The biggest challenges we face in Jordanian society is getting people to report sexual abuse incidents when they notice it. When sexual abuse incidents happen, people keep silent as they are scared of

scandals. I think the problem is with our society and not with our legislation. The legislation gives us the right to report but the concern about what the society will say or regard for their culture stops people from reporting these (Manager CB).

On a similar note, Manager FE reiterated this reluctance on people's part to report child abuse.

It is a common reaction in our society for people to bury their heads in the sand like an ostrich (Manager FE).

Manager FE and Manager AS are well positioned to comment on the effect of changes in legislation for children, young people and families. They have witnessed the many changes as well as the loopholes in legislation, services in institutions, social practice complexities, and implementation gaps, which makes their point of view crucial for improvements in awareness to prevent sexual abuse. The distance between the legislation and its implementation is highlighted by Manager AS and Manager FE.

Professionals are aware of the complications involved when people avoid addressing sexual abuse and the rationale behind the behaviour of involved groups (such as parents, children, young people and police). Managers are unable to do anything to rectify the situation. Additionally, as Jordanians themselves, they know how deeply rooted this problem is within society. Managers are aware that blaming the social and cultural practices will not solve the matter or help them provide the help needed to support the victims and their families. Instead of blaming social and cultural practices, professionals want to understand the victims' and their families' points of view and devise a plan of action to work within all the cultural restrictions. Managers are looking for ways of improving the support provided to families and victims for dealing with abuse.

The situation in Jordan is complex and one with many challenges. While all professionals expressed a hope for change, they agreed that true change can only come from awareness and knowledge, which could then bring about change in practice in the society. Some professionals suggested that legislative changes will hardly have any impact without changes in society's perceptions and practices. Manager CB highlighted the common reaction of parents and their perspectives of sexual abuse, as follows:

How can I, as a mother, complain that my son has been abused by his father or brother or uncle? Won't people look at me like I've failed as a mother?

I have always said that amending legislations is the easy part. The real challenge is changing the culture for it will take many long years for that to happen (Manager CB).

Manager CB emphasised the general point they made earlier, about amending the legislation being the easy part, to highlight the challenges of social practices rather than legislative weaknesses. Despite the point that parents may be aware of their rights and support available through the law, they may not seek help because they fear the social pressures and taboos. Manager CB adds that gradual steps that can be taken to address this resistance start by including sexual education in the Jordanian education system.

Manager CB has conducted introductory campaigns that educate children and young people about safety. These awareness campaigns help make the children and young people aware of crucial sexual abuse issues while not steering away from Jordan's conservative culture.

We try to cover this issue as implement to make some balances between raising the awareness and keeping our conservative culture...so we start with programmes like how to deal with strangers and how we deal with differences of gender (Manager CB).

To manage the complexities of a conservative culture there are several challenges that needs to be addressed by the Jordanian government to support professionals in these kinds of sex education programmes that contribute to child protection.

Sex education: Policy makers' and managers' comments

In the Jordanian context, it is not just sexual abuse and its reporting but the topic of sex education also that is controversial and complex. There seems to be a general misunderstanding and fear about what the term sex education means. The mention of the word sex is taboo. In this section, I capture the opinions of the professionals about including sex education in the school curriculum and conducting awareness sessions for parents.

Manager AS said that despite vast improvements still needed in the delivery of sex education, students were being educated on how to seek help.

All the students know hotlines to report [Jordan River Foundation, Family Protection Department, Protection Department at Ministry of Education] or they can seek help from the school counsellor (Manager AS).

However, Manager AS suggested that in spite of the students knowing what to do in cases of abuse, the fear of opening up to someone or asserting themselves to the abuser might prevent them from reporting the abuse. Manager AS added that this fear was particularly strong in those students who have been victims of bullying.

Bullying has, in recent times, become a huge problem affecting the children and young people in Jordan, with many children and young people displaying maladaptive behaviour (Abu-Baker & Ayyd, 2018). Bullying can be in the form of spoken statements, physical attack, threat of any wrongdoing, inappropriate jokes, use of bullying language, making fun of others, public disapproval or embarrassment, degrading treatment or even facial gestures (Al-Raqqad, Al-Bourini, Al-Talahin, & Aranki, 2017). Manager AS commented that it was important to monitor this behaviour, as the bullies are more likely to take advantage of the fear they induce in others and sexually harass or even abuse them.

Manager AS spoke about a range of social skills that might be taught:

We have to teach students skills of self-affirmation, how to create supportive friendships and how to say “no!” because some students can’t say no due to bullying. Students also have to know that not all secrets should be kept; they should realise that (Manager AS).

Manager AS also noted the importance of teachers being aware of the rights of students and how to treat students according to these rights.

There is another guide book for teachers, which talks about a child’s rights. By using it, we train teachers on how to deal with students at different stages. The purpose of this training is to create awareness among teachers about students’ rights. There is another guidance book

which includes a child's rights, self-affirmation and how to protect oneself from abuses in general (Manager AS).

Daroza, Ayasrah, AlAjam, Almomani and Shishtawi published a guide book in 2003 called *The Educational Guide for Counsellors in Jordanaian Schools of Protection of Children from Abuse Aged 8-12*. These guidelines, mentioned by Manager AS, include chapters on protection from abuse, signs of abuse, child labour, violence in schools, misuse of the internet, skilful communication with children and young people, and skills for the care of children and young people. Each topic has an estimated time of completion, guidance on how to present the concept to children and young people, and suggested activities to involve children and young people in learning the material (Daroza et al., 2003). Although not prescribed by the curriculum, these topics are currently being covered by the school counsellors. Providing teachers with such guide books demonstrates the dedication and consistent efforts made by professionals wanting to bring positive changes to society.

Policy Maker YH's comments indicated that their work in policy has to be constantly developed in line with national and international guidelines.

We also try to connect our efforts and missions with the international vision but that should be shaped with our priorities and national framework. We work to enhance and empower the institutions to do their job with all taking responsibility regarding the protection system in our country (Policy Maker YH).

Changes are also being instituted at school level, with the school actively keeping track of student security. Manager AS highlighted some of the preventative measures possible.

Most school managers try to reduce sexual abuse incidents as a prevention step, by not allowing students to access the bathroom at the same time, checking if a student is delayed when visiting the bathroom, having separate toilets in mixed schools and teachers staying with students at the end of the day till they leave the school(Manager AS).

Manager AS emphasised the need for schools and school counsellors to equip their students with the skills of how to protect themselves which included: age-appropriate sex

education that applies to all genders and needs. Age-appropriate sex education involves the teaching of material that reflects the level of maturity of the students. AS explained:

If I teach students aged 11 or 12 about body borders why should I repeat that next year! We present these sessions until age 12 but after this age we start to talk about different topics like self-affirmation. We teach them self-affirmation concepts during all years with different methods (Manager AS).

Manager AS explained the work of school counsellors in teaching sex education:

With regard to school counsellors: they work on character development, preventative, and therapeutic aspects. The content of counselling topics is available in the educational guide for counsellors in Jordanian schools regarding of protection of children from abuse aged 8-12. The counselling sessions conducted by school counsellors include topics such as; body boundaries, how to deal with strangers, social distance, me and my body, definition of offenders, good and bad secrets and who can I trust. All these topics present in different classes and each one of them will take more than a lesson. We offered four classes a week for students at all grades, except for the final year when they have one lesson a week (Manager AS).

Manager AS discussed gender-appropriate sex education as a key aspect to successful sex education and how to respond to genders in a culturally appropriate manner.

Sessions dealing with different gender could be for ages 15 to 18. It's the mission of school counsellors to give students sessions regarding how to deal with the opposite gender. These sessions are mostly offered to female students (Manager AS).

Manager AS also strongly advocated a “need-based” sex education focused on the groups that require additional sex education. As the consequences of sexual abuse for females are more significant, preference is given to educating girls more than boys.

I gave orders to school counsellors in girls' schools to educate students about the consequences of having sex...to put students on track of all the social, psychological and health results they may face due to

relationships. However, we can't guide them how to have sex safely. We offer extra sessions for females' students as they will be the big loser in the end. It will destroy her life (Manager AS).

Thus, the above quote demonstrates how young women are held responsible for both prevention and the consequences of sexual abuse. Extra attention is also being paid to teach how to report sexual abuse. However, sex education does not necessarily guarantee protection.

In order to protect students, especially females, counsellors have made considerable efforts. However, despite the efforts that have been made to address child sex abuse by Counselling Departments and counsellors, all research participants I spoke to asserted that including sex education for all in the Jordanian curriculum would be an effective measure of prevention of sexual abuse. Manager FE noted that there is much resistance to workshops on the topic of sex education.

If professionals plan to conduct sex education workshops, I have noticed there is hesitation from schools and society. The reason behind hesitation is that the teachers, school counsellors and the administration take into account views of families. The teachers, counsellors and administration are also afraid of our [Jordanian] community and culture (Manager FE).

Manager FE also insisted that the social diversity of Jordanian society poses another challenge to these awareness programmes and campaigns. Regardless of how the campaigns are received, the managers understood that sustained efforts are required.

Our mission is to reach all community groups. We have urban, rural and Bedouins. The rural suburbs themselves may be narrow-minded or broad-minded communities. Consequently, sexual abuse does not relate to the location of those involved but rather the psychological aspect. Regardless of any socio-economic or other classification, it is important to study the individual's background to be successful in raising awareness regarding sexual abuse (Manager FE).

Another point raised by Manager FE was the need to design campaigns in a way that does not question Jordanian society's sensitivity towards sexual matters including abuse.

If this design is not taken into account, then professionals and school counsellors are more likely to be faced with resistance to all their efforts in this field.

By being aware of the available options in the society, professionals work within these boundaries to try and raise awareness. Managers have devised awareness campaigns by including support from all possible avenues, including involving influential personalities, such as Imams. Imams have a reach over the public and might be able to help convince people to be more receptive to the efforts of the managers. Manager FE pointed out this strategy, suggesting that a public awareness of sex education could be easier and more effective than their previous campaigns for women's rights and wellbeing.

Our work was about stopping all types of violence toward women. We can't hold awareness sessions to ask men to stop hitting women (wives, daughters, sisters). We knew people will not welcome our message immediately, therefore as a first step we approached the heads [reputed person] of each suburb to mobilise them and get them to support us (Manager FE).

It is very important that the intended message from these campaigns is taken in the right spirit, especially given social hesitation to what might be seen as Western concepts. Violence against women can be prevented if we collaborate with the influential people who preach righteousness. People who are accepted as leaders and guides in society, such as Imams, can play very important roles in approving and disseminating information about sex education. Manager FE spoke of their attempt to gain people's acceptance:

We try to avoid any confusion that would make them feel like we are trying to implement western ideology. We started from a religious standpoint, then we created programmes to coordinate with Imams (at mosques) and Ministry of Religious Endowments to address the issue in Khutbah and provide their support in stopping violence against women. We need to find the key of our society to approach people (Manager FE).

The role of Imams and their Khutbah (sermon before or after prayers time, especially on Friday or in some Islamic lessons at the mosques) has the potential to pave the ways for awareness and acceptance about sex education. Muslims seek guidance from Imams in religious matters as well as domestic problems, social concerns, and mental health issues.

It is expected that Imams will guide people by referring and interpreting The Qur'an and Hadith, which are Holy Scriptures of Islam (Ali, Milstein & Marzuk, 2005).

Ideas about gender and maturity make a difference to the effectiveness of sex education campaigns. It is difficult to create awareness about sex education for women in a society where women are held responsible for being victims of abuse. When asked about involving religious leaders (Imams) in Khutbah and the heads of some suburb in social events to raise awareness of sexual abuse against children and young people, Manager FE commented

I think it is more possible to raise awareness about sexual abuse against children as opposed to sexual abuse against women. As you know, women are always blamed for providing opportunities of sexual abuse to happen to them (Manager FE).

Manager CB observed that there is a marked difference in the acceptance and willingness to learn and change between students and their families at public and private schools. The population group of private schools were more receptive.

We can't deny there are differences between public and private schools. For example, some schools arrange parental meetings which include employees of social institutions and are aimed to enhance parents' knowledge and improve awareness. However, at some schools, the awareness programmes are still quite underdeveloped (Manager CB).

In Manager CB's view, a standard national curriculum includes education consisting of educational classes that help students identify potential sexual abuse threats, and protect themselves from harm. However, the tendency for private schools to be more receptive to sex education reveals a disparity between economic class. These private schools are equipped with more resources and wealth than public schools, thus demonstrating that more work needs to be done on the government's part to raise sex education awareness and include it in all public schools. The need for such a curriculum has been requested by the National Centre of Human rights, to the Ministry of Education.

For me, I can say here curriculum should play an effective role, which should include main steps of children protection as well as how to

defend themselves against any abuse or hurt they could face. For all above, there are demands to make amendments on the curriculum to be consistent with children's rights, concepts and human rights too (Manager CB).

Manager FE also echoed the need for curriculum change. They expressed that despite the Ministry of Education having amended the curriculum many times, they have not successfully addressed the requests by National Centre of Human Rights and some social institutions. In FE's view, these requests, which could potentially save the students' lives, have been consistently ignored and less important changes have been given priority. Manager FE suggested that these changes, if instituted from the kindergarten stages, could help in building an empowered generation that is aware of their body boundaries and is equipped with the skills needed to protect against any inappropriate behaviours.

I would recommend government managers from the Ministry of Education pay serious action to improve sex education in schools. The curriculum needs to have a section on how students can protect themselves. While there have been many amendments to the curriculum over the years it has not included sex education. I'm wondering why this doesn't include protection as this is the most important part to save students' lives (Manager FE).

Manager FE added that instituting these changes from kindergarten not only will empower children and young people in early stages, it will provide the professionals with an opportunity to expand and extend the concept of protection and awareness to include sex education in all of Jordan's school curricula.

We need to give children self-empowerment skills from kindergarten onwards. Teach them how to protect themselves, to defend against any physical and sexual harm they may suffer. They need to learn about the borders of their bodies. The next stage is to commence sex education. By so will make them more aware of their rights and become capable to protect themselves (Manager FE).

Manager FE argued that children and young people need to learn about what sexual abuse means before they become victims. Sex education would be beneficial, since children and young people will be armed with knowledge that will allow them to judge what is

right and what is wrong. Including sex education as a preventative aspect of the curriculum also reduces the pressure on professionals and service providers, who usually become involved after abuse has happened.

The effect of family reputation on reporting

Along with legislative measures against child abuse and awareness about sex education, another key factor highlighted in the discussion with the managers was the families' justification that every action they took following knowledge of abuse was in the best interest of the family. Here, the honour and reputation of the collective (family) is given precedence over the individual (child).

The focus for the family is on protecting the family honour, status and reputation. Often families try to erase all evidence of abuse in an effort to erase the abuse itself. They do not realise that in doing so they are jeopardising any legal case against the abuser.

People think if the clothes of the child are washed, the abuse will be erased from the memory. It is like throwing children and family rights in the bin. In reality, it is throwing the evidence which will confirm the crime on offenders (Manager FE).

This complicated situation (washing away of evidence) can be linked back to the social belief that not addressing a particular issue may be seen as the trauma disappearing. However, while this practice of washing the clothes may help the families make things appear alright on the surface, it does not address how or if it can help the children and young people deal with the trauma of abuse. Manager FE referred to this problem as “*a complicated issue*”. Since the professionals are Jordanian, they understand how both the Micro and Macro layers operate in children's and young people's ecological systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1994), particularly how family practices are influenced by social and cultural beliefs when families respond to sexual abuse.

Manager FE suggested the problem is a cultural issue, one they do not blame the parents/caregivers for. Manager FE portrayed the pressure that parents could face after they have discovered that their child has been sexually abused. It can influence the parents' responses toward abuse. Policy Maker ZR and Manager AS shared several examples where the mother worried about judgment about her capabilities as a mother. A mother may also fear the threat of divorce for her failure as a mother. Here the mothers

are seen as putting the family's preservation first and removing the factor that threatens to destroy the family, which is the experience of the victim.

Further in this context, Manager CB added that abuse has long-lasting effects on every member of the family unit and in particular the mothers as they are historically held responsible to look after the safety of children and young people. In such situations, families of the victim try to ignore the abuse for as long as possible. In doing this, they avoid the negative attention they will receive from society if the abuse is reported.

People might say that to report the abuse incident the victim may feel shame and it can become a scandal for the family, rather than punishment the abuser! (Manager FE).

The risk the managers identify is to the child or young person who experiences shame, as well as to the family when the abuse is known more widely. The family may become the object of gossip and scandal in community. The family fear is that they become identified or branded as a 'bad' family. To speak up is therefore very risky.

Regardless of punishing the abuser, people do not report due to the fear of scandal and community outlook.... (Manager CB).

The family of the victim is also afraid that the victim will be stigmatised, and not considered marriageable. Policy Maker ZR suggested this fear causes hesitance among parents to report the abuse.

No one prefers to report. Honestly, who will marry the girls who has been raped? No one! Even the rapist who is forced to marry her for one or two months will divorce her (Policy Maker ZR).

The practice of honour-killing is one of the main reasons for this fear in children and young people. Honour-killing has strict laws against it; however, even though it is legally punishable, the fear of honour-killing still remains, especially among girls and young women. Manager AS asserted that, despite the effort professionals take to save female lives,

There is no guarantee that her father or uncle or brother won't kill her if they learn that she has been abused or she is pregnant. Due to all

these reasons, I have to report the incident to save the girl's life (Manager AS).

These concerns were also supported by Policy Maker ZR who spoke about young female victims who prefer living at the child care centres for they fear that their lives might be in danger if they leave the shelters.

There are a number of females who will spend the rest of their lives in the care centre because they are sure that they will be killed if they will go out of the door of the centres (Policy Maker ZR).

Women, as the carriers of family honour, constantly find themselves victims—of abuse and honour-killing—while the male abusers may be left free. In some instances, the families follow the practice of ‘making things right’ by getting the female victim to marry their abusers. The victims in turn welcome such decisions for it means that their lives will be spared.

To marry the abuser and have babies is better than to live her life in care a centre or if she wants to return back to her family than to be killed on the door of the centre or court by her brother or father! (Policy Maker ZR).

Forced marriage to the abuser is especially likely in cases where the victims of abuse are pregnant as a consequence of the abuse. As the religion and law of Jordan does not allow an unwed woman to raise a child, children born from abuse are often removed from their mothers and become wards of the state. Additionally, babies are also prohibited from carrying either their mother's family name, or the father's family name without a legal marriage.

We do have this practice specially in pregnancies, it is also to give the baby the name of his/her father. I know it is not a perfect solution but at least it is a valid option for families (Policy Maker ZR).

Due to these naming restrictions and out of fear of losing their child, many victims agree to marry their abusers.

Difficulties preventing children and young people from speaking up

An abused child, male or female, may be intimidated and silenced in three ways: from the actual abuse, from fearing the abuser as well as fearing the family being alienated and shamed in the society due to the abuse. The situation is worse in case of girls and young women. Female victims are often forced to marry their abusers as society deems the marriage to the abuser as a chance for the abuser to 'correct' his mistake. Such marriages sometimes exist only on paper and a divorce follows immediately after but a marriage is still welcomed by families and being known as a divorcee is better for a female than being known as an abuse victim. In cases where the female victims become pregnant, the situation gets more complicated. If they remain unmarried, they are forced to give up their children, regardless of their wishes. Such babies who become wards of state, often end up as also victims of sexual abuse, for they are forcibly removed from their mothers, and do not carry the name of their fathers. And as mentioned earlier, above all these problems is the looming and constant threat of honour-killing, a threat exclusive to women. Thus, the female victims keep finding things out of their control – be it hwe future after abuse or, where there is a pregnancy, the future of her child, thus causing her to suffer over and over again.

The complexity involved in dealing with sexual abuse is affected by several factors as discussed by the professionals. In this study, alongside government officials, legislation and a need for sex education, managers assert that parents can play a vital role in dealing with difficulties involved in sexual abuse.

In an ordinary Jordanian family there is a hierarchy between children and parents and parents are typically not aware of the imporatance of communication to build confidence, trust and bonding with their children (Peleg-Popko, Klingman & Nahhas, 2003). Parents think children can talk to them whenever the children need to. However, children need parents to converse with and assist them in developing the skills required to convey how they feel about something. Jordanian parents usually think that their children do not need to know about the harsh realities and serious issues that one can face in every day life and hence avoid talking to them about such topics as sexual abuse. For parents, the world of children is surrounded by games, fun and innocence. They believe that their children would not face such difficulties and hence there is no need to scare them with harsh realities (Salih & Shreim, 2008). Manager FE concluded that when parents and children

do not freely communicate and share their feelings, children may assume that their parents are not receptive to bad news, as Al-Kindari (2019) also reported.

Manager FE made the following comment about parenting practices:

If there is no one to listen to them during normal days or when they talk to them about their issues, they [parents] mostly blame and hit them [children], how will children tell parents that they have been sexually abused? What will their parents' reactions be? (Manager FE).

Some parents also do not show interest or give importance to everyday problems their children face, considering these issues unimportant. As a result, their children develop the belief that they should not share their problems with their parents and that if they insist on doing so, they might run into trouble. This absence of communication results from culturally misinformed parenting practices. Manager FE argues that many parents hold the following position:

Whatever troubles you may face don't think to tell us or seek our help (Manager FE).

Though not verbally conveyed, this practice of the parents pushes their children into keeping silent and not speaking up when abuse occurs. This silence forms a vicious cycle, with the parents wondering why their children did not tell them what they were exposed to, and the children insisting that they wanted to speak but felt like the parents were not willing to listen.

How can we imagine or believe that children will tell parents immediately if the parents don't listen to their children at all, or if they even don't give children a time to share with them their daily affairs? Families could blame their children for small mistakes (Manager FE).

When parents respond harshly to children and their mistakes, especially when they are hurt, it can seriously affect how children behave and feel about reporting abuse. Managers highlighted the parent-child relationship as one of the main factors why children remain silent about sexual abuse. Although Manager FE does not name the cultural process, there is a familiar cultural parenting practice that is echoed here. Parents commonly use blame and shame to shape/control a child's behaviour. Offenders are

aware of this and take advantage of this practice to keep the child silent. The offenders often use what Manager FE referred to as “perpetrator traps”, in ensuring silence.

Perpetrator traps

Perpetrator traps are tactics through which the offender separates the child from their family and prevents the child from looking towards their family for support.

[An abuser says to the child]: *The family will blame you; they will believe that you wanted this to happen (Manager FE).*

These are predatory strategies “*that are common to offenders, that play on the psychology of the child*” (E). Manager FE also reported some of the common phrases that offenders use to silence children and young people:

There is no-one who will believe you, your family will hate you, your family won't accept you anymore (Manager FE).

The child will be thus trapped into being positioned as responsible for the abuse. The next step taken by the offender might be to focus on shame, and to make the child an object, to feel guilty for what has happened.

Your family will feel ashamed of you...they will look on you as a dirty child (Manager FE).

The fear of children and young people that stops them from sharing information with their parents means that offenders are able to take advantage of parenting practices that make it difficult for children and young people to speak. Manager FE made the case for helping children and young people to share problems and issues freely with their family.

If we have the friendly relationship between children and their families, whatever offenders try with the child, absolutely, that will not affect child's reaction toward telling his/her family (Manager FE).

Manager FE argues that parents have to work on building an open and communicative relationship with their child from the beginning.

Families should know if their children will share with them whatever they face in their daily affairs. Parents have to build up this relation

and communication channels with children from when they are little (Manager FE).

These gaps in communication between parents and their children demonstrate the potential contribution of child-affirming practices in Jordan. It is also important to teach parents on how to respond when their child speaks up to them about sexual abuse. Manager FE insisted that there is a need to educate the parents, as Jordanian culture does not follow what I call a child-affirming approach, and parents make decisions about the child without having consulted or listened to the child. Manager FE reiterated that it is the child's right to have parents listen to them and hear them out

Parents should know it is the right of their child to listen to him/her whatever they would like to say...at least parents are supposed to know their child is a victim and they have to listen to them (Manager FE).

Chapter summary

This chapter has covered four main areas in relation to child sexual abuse, as identified by the senior policy makers YH and ZR and managers CB, FE and AS. These research participants all hold varied designations and job profiles, working in the fields of human rights, child protection, social services and education. Since the policy makers and managers have an overview position, they are a significant part of the child's ecological system, thus offering unique insights to the current situation of child sexual abuse in Jordan. The key areas that they addressed are legislation, sex education and family practices.

Although Jordan has made legislative changes in response to disclosures of child sexual abuse, the analysis of the material from the senior policy makers and managers shows that they continue to face dilemmas because the changes do not provide a way for addressing the range of situations that arise. For example, the senior policy makers and managers revealed how the cancellation of Article 308 was done without considering the effects this would have on the future of victims, especially girls and young women who want to claim custody of their children. Clearly there are still gaps that need to be addressed to ensure that victims of sexual abuse receive justice as well as the appropriate support they need.

The policy makers and managers shed further light on the ethical dilemmas they face at work, highlighted the struggles that parents and families face in the process of reporting sexual abuse and discussed the pressure exerted on the victim, particularly if they are female. The need for comprehensive sex education aimed at protection and reporting has also been discussed. The policy makers and managers focused on the importance of creating awareness amongst children, young people and their families on prevention and reporting of sexual abuse. They commented that female victims of sexual abuse are looked upon as bringing dishonour to the family and honour-killings have been put forward culturally as a means of restoring honour. The policy makers and managers, while understanding the difficulty of the families, spoke at length about the ethical dilemmas that such practices brought with it. On one hand, while they want to offer the right legal help to victims, they have to be careful about how they report the case to ensure that the child is protected from such honour-killings. The policy makers and managers also urged the need for families to communicate openly and freely with their children, emphasising the need child wellbeing and protection to follow a child-centric approach.

CHAPTER FIVE

Findings

Social workers and psychologists

Speaking up about child sexual abuse, also called disclosure, is largely a socio-political process where children and young people will talk, provided they are given the safe opportunity to speak (Jensen, Gulbrandsen, Mossige, Reichelt & Tjersland, 2005). This chapter presents the findings from my interviews with social workers and psychologists who work closely as part of children's and young people's ecological systems. I review these participants' understandings of sexual abuse issues and the skills and strategies they apply to build trust to encourage children and young people to speak up, highlighting the challenges and difficulties they face when relating to communities. Social workers and psychologists working in the field of child protection in Jordan offered their perspectives on the actions of disclosure. They commented on the way different layers of the ecological system of children and young people affect one another. They considered the influence of families (Micro) as well as the impact of cultural and religious beliefs, legislation (Macro), and their own experiences as practitioners. These social workers and psychologists demonstrated, through their own practices, that, although there has been improvement in the system, more work needs to be done in order to help children and young people in seeking support and disclosing abuse.

Influence of culture and religion on parenting practices

When asked about the role of culture and parenting in how children and young people deal with sexual abuse, Psychologist M and Social Worker N expressed similar beliefs. They both suggested that being a part of a religious family which follows the principles of Islam would empower children and young people to speak freely about sexual abuse and make the families more supportive and attentive to the children's and young people's experiences.

Religious families who know which is Halal and which is not Halal, they will listen to their child and the child will talk to them freely (Psychologist M).

Similarly, Social Worker N said that when raised in a religious family, children and young people grow up with a strong understanding of what is right and wrong and hence can identify wrong quickly and alert their parents and family members to the wrong doing.

If the child grows up in a family which is strict with religion, cultural customs and are clear about what is acceptable or unacceptable behaviour, then the child will be conditioned accordingly (Social Worker N).

She also added that it is not just religion but the environment in which they are raised that shape their ability to speak up.

Such an influence of Islam in the psychological development of Muslims is reflected in the work of El Azayem and Hedayat-Diba (1994). They argue that by following the real Islamic principles, Muslims can live a balanced life and nurture their physical, mental, spiritual and social selves. Early learning of Qur'an and religious education is encouraged as religious teaching promotes healthy psychological maturation and a supportive family atmosphere. Additionally, religious teaching is also believed to protect children and young people and help them identify deviant behaviour (El Azayem & Hedayat-Diba, 1994). This is perhaps why Psychologist M and Social worker N observed that families that are deeply embedded in Islamic principles and work in accordance to these are more supportive of children and young people when they speak up about sexual abuse.

Psychologist C offered a different opinion and insisted that culture is more influential in the way families, children and young people approach the disclosure of sexual abuse. She said that the fear of social stigma determines families' reaction more than compassionate religious principles and values. As a result, children and young people when speaking up are often met with extreme disapproval which makes them hesitant to speak up at all.

In our society, people avoid reporting sexual abuse issues because it is considered the worst that can happen to a person. The stigma of sexual abuse is one that sticks forever and is never forgotten by the society. This makes families give a severe aggressive reaction when they learn that sexual abuse happened. I believe that it is culture which disciplines people, more than religion. They are more worried about culture and social practices than religious instructions (Psychologist C).

On this topic, Psychologist C's views on stigma were also supported by Social Worker K who quotes a Jordanian saying that *Death is better than shame*: (الموت ولا العار: *Al Mawt Wala Ala'ar*). This is a common saying, and it refers to the general belief in the Jordanian culture that it is better to be dead than carry the shame and dishonour of disrepute. In the context of sexual abuse, it is used to highlight that victims are better off dead than living with the stigma attached to sexual abuse. It could also be applied to the mental state of the families of the victims, who would prefer death rather than be faced with the disreputation that the abuse has brought on them.

Child sexual abuse and gender

Psychologist C opined that it is also important to note that such stigma affects female victims and their families more than the male counterparts. This is so because there is a general consensus in the society that female victims have invited the sexual abuse through their immoral behaviour and as such are deemed responsible for the abuse. Stigma is absent when it comes to male victims of abuse and they receive more support from their families.

The family will support their sons as they are males and there is nothing that will scratch them but the honour or shame stigma will stick with the females' family not with males' families (Psychologist C).

Social Worker K offered a similar observation.

I cannot deny we still have honour-killings in Jordan. We all know the influence of sexual abuse affect females more than males and that includes affecting physically, emotionally and socially...There is no

man in the Arab countries who would willingly marry a female who has lost her virginity even if the man knows that she was raped and that her virginity was taken without her consent (Social Worker K).

When asked about the obstacles in the path of children and young people reporting sexual abuse, the psychologists and social workers argue that both male and female victims had their own specific set of obstacles and stigmas preventing them from speaking up.

Social Worker K suggested that the major obstacle in the path of a male victim is the risk of emasculation. If a male victim discloses that he has been sexually abused, the society then begins to disregard him as a male. He has been attacked and hence made submissive and is thus likened to a female. This is the stigma that the male victim lives with.

You know in our society, it is really hard for a male to disclose that he has been sexually abused. Females could tell each other that they had sexual relationship or even if someone abused them but it is really difficult for a male to speak up or tell others that someone abused him sexually and treated him as a female (Social Worker K).

However, Psychologist C said that while both males and females are impacted by sexual abuse, the threat of honour-killings hangs only over the females and they live in fear of their lives.

Even though males find it hard to disclose that they have been sexually abused due to the social stigma around their manhood, they still can return to their normal lives after the abuse. This is not the case for females, who face the social stigma for all their lives and live in constant fear that they could be honour killed at any moment (Psychologist C).

This view was supported by Social Worker K, too, who argued that males, in general, tended to solve the problem without any reports and no fear of honour-killings.

Yes, if the victim and abuser are males, there is no honour-killing or there is no risk to the victim's life. Mostly, if the abuse is with males their families will solve the issue without reporting the abuse, which is unlike if the abuse happened to a female (Social worker K).

Social Worker R insisted that families try to cover up male sexual abuse more than female sexual abuse. It could be argued that this behaviour is because male victims still have a chance to lead a normal life after abuse, unlike female victims.

More attention is taken to cover the sexual abuse if the child is male. Families work to hide or deny the occurrence of the abuse of the male child because sexual abuse implies that his manhood has been attacked and that in itself could affect his life and his prospects of marriage (Social Worker R).

Additionally, Social Worker R said that in case of female victims, if they have been sexually abused by a male, there is the possibility of internally resolving the issue by getting the females married off to their male abusers. However, this is not a possibility with the male victims and hence is another contributing factor to families trying to cover up male sexual abuse.

It is easier to resolve the issue by marrying the offender or one of the relatives and resolving the matter internally if it is not reported. However, the situation with male children is more difficult and the parents tried to hide the abuse because it could be considered to destroy of his manhood (Social Worker R).

Islamic stereotypes of masculinity are promoted through cultural practices prevalent in a patriarchal society (Adibi, 2006). In Arab societies, which are patriarchal, male children are the preferred sex for a couple, especially since a boy can carry on the family name (Adibi, 2006). While the female children are expected to carry the family honour, it is the males who are entrusted with carrying the family line. Additionally, the manhood of an Arab male is considered prestigious and hence something that should not be tarnished (Inhorn, 2012). Being a victim to sexual abuse compromises the image of power and undermines the power of the patriarch (Harker, 1997). Consequently, when male children are sexually abused, there is great pressure on the victims and their families to solve the issue quickly and quietly without drawing any attention to it. Due to the social stigmas surrounding masculinity in Arab communities, there tends to be less help available to boys and young men and, consequently, less disclosure of sexual abuse.

Social pressure on the family of child sexual abuse victims

Though much of the focus around sexual abuse is on the victims, it is also important to recognise the pressures that their families undergo. Most social workers I spoke with justified the family's often aggressive reaction to disclosure of sexual abuse by explaining that the stigma affects all members of the family. The decision to encourage their children to disclose sexual abuse is a difficult choice for the families because on one hand doing so will attract society's scorn and impact the family's reputation and life. On the other hand, not doing so would be letting one's child down and let the abuser walk free. The head of the family also has to consider the impact of disclosure for each of the family members.

If the family has three daughters and one of them has been victim of sexual abuse, the chance of her sisters getting married is very low. Likewise, the victim's brothers could be refused marriage due to their sister being a victim of sexual abuse. For these reasons, the father when he makes the decision to report, has to think about the future of all family members and not just the victim (Social worker K).

Social worker A added that one of the causes for families' hesitance and panic when confronted with a sexual abuse disclosure is the fear of societal judgment and stigma.

The parents and family of the victims often feel unexplained nervousness because they fear the society. They fear that their child, and in turn themselves, will become unacceptable to the society (Social Worker A).

However, Psychologist M argued that the responsibility of the families remains to their children who are victims of sexual abuse. They owe it to their children to protect their rights and report abuse so that the abuser can be punished.

You cannot stop community gossip, scandal etc. People will talk irrespective of the situation and they will talk badly about the family to whom the abuse occurred. The important thing is for the families to ignore it and stand by their child and make sure that the abuser is caught and punished (Psychologist M).

Social positioning and family reactions to child sexual abuse

In order to understand how a family would react to information about sexual abuse, it is important to know about how they are positioned in the society. The relationships between families, their children and the wider community can be better understood according to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. At the Micro level, the relationship between parents and child have what Bronfenbrenner (1994) calls bi-directional influences, which means that, while the parents' beliefs and behaviour impact on the child, the child's beliefs and behaviours also affect the behaviour and beliefs of the parents. These bi-directional influences occur at all levels of the ecological system; however, they have the most significant impact on the child at the microsystem level. In Jordanian society people are positioned based on their place of living, whether Bedouin, rural or urban. Social Workers K and A say that knowledge of which location a victim comes from could help in making meaning of the family's reaction to sexual abuse. Such knowledge may enable the social workers to be informed and plan their actions:

There are many factors that influence a family's reaction such as education, awareness, the nature of the place that they live in and if it is multi-cultural or small community. For example, Bedouin is a tribal community. They look at it [abuse] as an attack on their customs, religion and morals. They follow a tribal law (Social worker K).

Social Worker A understood the differences between the groups and argues that it is impossible to change traditions. He insisted that it would be more beneficial for social workers to understand a family's background and support the victim and their family accordingly.

We cannot change our society because of its traditions and customs but what we can do is protect girls and sit with their families to talk to them to reduce the risk factors as much as possible. For example, if sexual abuse has happened within a tribe, we need to meet with the tribesmen to solve the issue, whereas in the urban area, we would report to the law. Bedouin and rural people mostly rely on the tribal law, but urban and high-class people they rely on the official law (Social Worker A).

He added that families from urban areas, as they are well educated, are more likely to empathise with the victim and support them in their process of disclosure.

If the sexual abuse happened in a high-class family, the father might tell his daughter “No worries honey, police will return your rights to you, do not worry” (Social Worker A).

This point was supported by Social Worker K too, who argued that education played a role in families encouraging victims to speak up.

With less access to education, the Bedouins prefer to follow the tribal law and to take revenge more than report the abuse and seek help from the police, whereas in urban areas people mostly will report sexual abuse and be unafraid of shame or stigma. Mostly they will report to punish the abuser and get justice for their children (Social Worker K).

At the same time, these location-based behavioural patterns of Jordanians are said to be changing (Alsadi & Khawaldah, 2016). With increasing patterns of relocation within the country and access to education and work, Bedouin and rural people are now moving to urban areas and acquiring education. This is reflected in their reaction to sexual abuse too.

Ten or fifteen years ago, most of female sexual abuse ended with the death of both the female victim and her abuser. However, now it is not so. I think people are becoming aware that whatever happened to the girl was not with her consent. They now look to her as a victim, unlike before (Social worker K).

Incest and the break in trust

Trust is another factor that influences victims' and families' decision to speak up. The notion of trust is not just related to the trust they have in the authorities when reporting sexual abuse, but it is also related to the breakdown of family trust in cases of incestuous abuse. Incest also poses a challenge to the social workers and psychologists for, as Psychologist C observed, it shakes the belief that families are supportive and have the best interest of the child.

If a child has been abused by a family member, mostly the family will hesitate to report the abuse as the abuser and the victim are relatives (Psychologist C).

Psychologist C added that incest is the hardest for children and young people to report. This is perhaps due to disclosure of incest posing further threat of negative consequences (Goodman-Brown, Edelstein, Goodman, Jones & Gordon, 2003). As Prior argued, “A child abused by trusted figures learns that the source of support and protection is simultaneously the source of threat and danger” (Prior, 2012, p. 217). As Psychologist M observed:

If the abuser is a family member, the family will not report the abuse and instead try to hide it. This makes it difficult for the victim as we constantly teach them that the family is a supportive unit and they have to trust their families and ask them whenever they need help, yet in their case, their families which are supposed to supportive them are not just unsupportive but also has the abuser in it (Psychologist M).

Social Worker G added that when the incest is committed by the father to his child, it adds extra pressure on the family to keep the abuse a secret and not report it. This is because in Jordanian culture the father is considered the head of the family. He is in charge of protecting them from harm and keeping them safe.

If the abuser is a family member like a father, brother or uncle who the child trusts, there is a low chance of disclosure (Social Worker G).

Incest is especially difficult because social workers and psychologists continually educate children and young people about the circle of trust (Goodman-Brown et. al, 2003). Psychologist M commented that these trust circles are used to encourage children and young people to speak up to one of the trusted people.

We teach the children about their trust circle. We teach them which people they can trust, such as their family members, teachers and friends. We also teach them to speak up and do not be silent because the abuse they received is not their fault (Psychologist M).

When faced with incest, children and young people are under enormous strain because the very people who they are supposed to speak up to are the people who have abused them. Additionally, the family members who know about the incest also refuse to report as they believe it would cause the entire family, including the victim and the abuser, ongoing harm (Abu-Baker & Dwairy, 2003).

Reporting incest could therefore be more difficult than reporting abuse by a non-family member.

It is more dangerous if the abuser is a family member. It confuses the child who might think that the sexual behaviour is normal and one that all children do with their father, brothers or uncles. In such a situation, how will the child tell? I feel that most cases of incest are not reported, unless the girl gets pregnant (Psychologist C).

Social Worker K confirmed this perspective and added that, if there is no pregnancy, then the chances of disclosure are lower.

Without pregnancy, most families are likely to remain silent. I can confirm that if the abuser is a family member, the parents mostly will prefer to keep silent and won't report to avoid bringing scandal to their family. However, if the victim gets pregnant and they are forced to go seek treatment at the hospital, then the parents have no choice but to inform the authorities about the abuse and name the abuser (Social Worker K).

When there is a pregnancy, the report may be made by a teacher, a neighbour or a doctor who notices the changes in the child or young person and reports to the authorities.

Doctors at hospital, when finding a child pregnant, have to report that to the FPD and the police have to protect the girl immediately from her family by sending her to female care centre (Psychologist C).

Social Worker K also highlighted how reporting of incest cases is often done by those outside the family.

If the abuser is a family member, the family mostly will not report the abuse while neighbours, teachers or doctors could report (Social Worker K).

The family members who know about the incest refuse to report as they believe it would cause the entire family, including the victim and the abuser, ongoing harm (Abu-Baker & Dwairy, 2003). Abu-Baker's research (2006, as cited in Abu-Baker, 2013) found that this practice of non-reporting incest was the safest option for families to deal with the issue without creating a scandal. The research also included two sets of responses from parents. The first group of parents in the study believed in being silent in order to help the child or young person forget and erase any difficult memories the child or young person may have about the abuse. The second set believed that silence about the issue would help to prevent harm to the child's future functioning. Both groups, chose silence, a finding consistent with what Social Worker K suggested.

While sexual abuse continuously brings the threat of honour-killing upon the female victims, such threats are less likely in a case of incest. This is because honour-killing would raise questions about sexual abuse and families would be forced to disclose the incest.

Honour-killing mostly happens if the abuser is from outside the family. But if the abuser is the father or some other relative, the family will not kill the female victim. If the father or brother has abused the girl, there is no risk for the girl. If the abuser is a member of the family, the parents will not take the assault on the girl seriously, as if the abuser was outside the family (Social Worker A).

Honour-killings are usually carried out as a means to restore the honour of the family but in incest, as the abuser is a family member who has destroyed the honour of the family, it is not undertaken. Given the particular difficulties in speaking up about incest, it is essential to raise educational awareness about sexual abuse and the importance of disclosure. Some steps are already being taken in Jordan to improve public understandings about children's and young people's safety and protection.

Professional practices in sex education

All educational awareness sessions about sexual abuse, provided by psychologist and social workers to children and young people who have experienced abuse, revolve largely around the concepts of body boundaries, protection skills and seeking help. The two psychologists and one social worker commented as follows:

We teach them body boundaries, and that they should not allow anyone to touch them on their private area. Also, we use play therapy and emotional discharging activities [for both individuals and groups as required]. Our concern is that children who experienced sexual abuse, they could face another abuse when they leave the care centre. So, we need to teach them and empower them with protection skills (Psychologist C).

We have to teach them that there is a private area no one can touch it except their mums in shower time, also they have to run from anyone who tries to touch them and to tell immediately the closet person to them (Social Worker N).

We teach them to scream, to run and to seek help from trusted people in the community. We teach them also if whatever happened they need to tell their parents or to people who the child trust, we teach them also trust circle (Psychologist M).

Social Worker A, however, argued that that more efforts need to be undertaken to support children and young people who have become a part of a growing rate of incest. He argued for increased support from the authorities to put in place processes that could help victims of incest.

The dynamic of our community is changing especially as more refugees move here and make it their home. We need to expand our administration and judicial boundaries to include incest and learn how to handle it (Social Worker A).

In situations of incest, authorities have a responsibility to offer more than only support; victims also need assistance in learning how to rebuild trust.

Building trust after sexual abuse: Social workers' and psychologists' perspectives

Social workers and psychologists have to go through several steps to carefully rebuild the trust of a sexual abuse victim, by providing therapeutic care and protection to create an environment where they can experience some hope. This creation of trust becomes even more challenging in cases of incest, as children's and young people's trust has been shattered already by someone close to them.

Psychologist M suggested that professional privacy was a key factor in gaining the trust of children and young people and helping them to speak up.

Promising the children privacy and telling them that no one else will know about our conversation are important. We do not want to force them to talk as we want to build trust. It could well be the third session before the child begins to talk to us and tell us their story. If the child is unable to talk, then we use drawings as a strategy to enable them to express their feelings (Psychologist M).

The importance of establishing trust is emphasised by Social Worker R and Psychologist C too. They speak from their own professional practice when they say:

Something as small as closing the door [of the office] is enough to give them privacy. Once I give the child that, they relax. Initially they might stutter and stammer but soon they will relax and talk freely (Social Worker R).

To get the child's trust, we need to show and convince them that we value their privacy and that their secrets are safe with us. We need to promise them that we won't involve someone else, unless absolutely necessary (Psychologist C).

As a worker based at a child care centre, Social Worker K insists that a good way to build trust is by establishing mutual interests during day to day interaction and activities at the centre.

I try and build a relationship of mutual interests with the child. I ask them to help me with something and show them how much I appreciate

and trust their help. I also hang out with them when we were outside doing activities so that they learn to trust me and share comments with me (Social Worker K).

Social Worker G's practice is to keep open channels of communication. She suggested that allowing the child or young person to talk about anything and everything establishes a safe and comfortable space for the child or young person to share their story of betrayal at an appropriate time.

It is a hard job to build the trust with children. We need to make them feel safe and comfortable. We also need to create a safe space where they can talk freely about anything. We need to stop asking them questions and just let them talk. Slowly they will open up to us. We also need to be careful about our reactions to their story. Even a slight hint of shock might stop them from sharing further as they fear that we might punish or judge them (Social Worker G).

These practices provide the opportunities for children and young people to speak about sexual abuse – either just after it has happened or at a later point in time when the children and young people are ready to speak about their past experiences. Social Worker G makes an important move in not subjecting the children and young people to questions; instead she demonstrates a willingness to listen and respond to whatever the child or young person chooses to speak about. I argue that this is a child-affirming practice and is essential for effectively understanding and helping children and young people. This thesis proposes that a child-affirming approach should be considered in every environment that houses, cares for, supports and teaches children and young people. Both Social Worker K and Social Worker R demonstrated similar child-affirming practices, discussing how the process of speaking up after sexual abuse largely comes about from developing enough trust in the social workers and the care system.

Reflections of social workers and psychologists

The main emphasis of the social workers' and psychologists' reflections were firstly the growth of trust in the Family Protection Department and secondly the need of ongoing professional development and specialisation.

Growth of trust in Family Protection Department

As reported in Chapter Two the Family Protection Department (FPD), a part of the police force of Jordan, was established in 1997 and it became as a separate unit in 2003. This department works to protect families from domestic violence, including sexual abuse. The FPD purposes are in accordance with the principles put forward by King Hussain and King Abdullah. They both emphasised the need to protect women and children, who they saw as being central to any society, from all forms of abuse. King Abdullah, has furthered the operating principles of the FPD by insisting that it is the ‘holy duty’ ‘واجب مقدس’ of all national agencies (including the FPD) to reach out to all of Jordan, including the rural, urban and Bedouin populations, to protect and ensure the wellbeing of families, women and children.

The FPD have been able to generate public goodwill and trust in their services by prioritising protection to women and children. By appointing special police women, and taking into account the sensitivity of the issues that this group might have, the FPD was able to demonstrate their respect to people’s privacy and their sensitivity to the Jordan’s cultural and religious values. These police women in the FPD are trained especially for talking with children, families and other women, and encouraging them to disclose. Additionally, they ensured clarity and transparency in how the reported cases were being handled. Confidentiality, which is an important concern in the society, was also guaranteed by FDP through the setting up of their special and confidential hotline to help affected people. Above all, the FPD used the words of their Kings which highlighted protection of people seeking help as their holy duty to enhance their work (Family Protection Department, n. d).

The trust placed by the children and young people in the social workers has resulted in families, their children and in turn the society at large trusting the FPD as a public authority:

People have more trust in the Family Protection Department for they now feel secure and assured that they complaints will be taken seriously. They now believe that the FDP has been created to protect them (Social worker K).

This view was shared by Social worker A too who pointed to an increase of public awareness about the work of the FPD. He suggested that the agency’s profile has helped

people become more assertive of their rights and more aware of the justice they can seek.

I can confirm that people now are more trusting of the FPD than before. They know what violence is and how to protect themselves. Earlier, a woman or a child would have kept silent when faced with violence or sexual abuse. However, now they are empowered. They know to take their child and complain to the FPD about the violence they are suffering from their husband (Social Worker A).

Social Worker A also highlighted an important change in the attitude of the families. The increased trust of the children and young people in the social workers and psychologists subsequently resulted in children and young people revealing information to them. This increased pattern of disclosure produced a change in how families now view the FPD.

Earlier, the protection that the FPD offered was looked upon negatively, as a means of robbing the father's power to control and discipline his family. However, this is changing. People now see that the FDP is protecting their rights and looking after their wellbeing (Social Worker A).

The growth in trust in the FPD was also observed by Professionals, as discussed in the previous chapter. There is also evidence in Chapter Seven on the ways through which an exchange of knowledge within the community contributed to the growing trust in the organisation. In Chapter Six, I present stories from families on how they have received help from the FPD to attain justice for their children. These stories highlight a significant improvement in the trust that families hold for the FPD.

Ongoing professional development and specialisation

While changes in the views of victims and their families demonstrate an increased willingness to report to authorities, social workers and psychologists hope for more changes to be implemented in the available forms of support for victims of sexual abuse. The first suggestion they put forward was the need for increased training of those already in the work, along with further recruitment of specialists, to deal with the case load and the nature of the professional work in Jordan. Many of the social workers felt that they were not adequately trained to deal with sexual abuse specifically.

We do not have qualified people who are specialist within this area, nor have we received any training to enhance our knowledge or skills to help these children with high level of support (Psychologist C).

We need to implement more guidance and social sessions. We need the Ministry of Social Development to create training workshops and courses to help us deal with children who are exposed to sexual abuse. Most available courses deal with domestic violence in general without any information on sexual abuse (Social Worker R).

In Jordan, we face pressures from huge caseloads. There is a lack of human resources with the right qualification (Social Worker A).

Social Worker G and Psychologist M emphasised updating of skills and training.

Even the specialists need training. They need to update their practices and keep with time because, it will not benefit their children if they retain the old-school thoughts. How can we help the children if we judge them for whatever happened to them and believe that it is their fault? (Social Worker G).

I hope they provide us with trainings and workshops to improve our skills for helping children. We also need to be updated with new research and strategies, especially about sexual abuse (Psychologist M).

The observations and requests of the professionals is consistent with the findings of Rader (2017) who highlighted the need to improve professionals' skills. Rader (2017) makes the crucial observation that often we focus on stranger danger while completely ignoring familiar danger, which is what the children are often more likely to be exposed to. The social workers and psychologists make a clear case for the need for high quality professional knowledge and skills in the sexual abuse area.

Chapter summary

In this chapter, I discussed the main ideas shared by social workers and psychologists in relation to child sexual abuse, as identified by five Social Workers and two Psychologists. I highlighted the professionals' views on the influence of culture, religion and social

positioning on parenting practices. I also captured social workers' and psychologists' experiences of the differences in social stigma based on the gender of sexual abuse victims, the social pressure on the families of victims, and the devastating effects of incest. I outlined the practices that social workers and psychologists adopt to build trust with victims. I also paid particular attention to the suggestions and reflections of these professionals in order to attain a more robust and skilled practice for dealing with child sexual abuse.

The social workers and psychologists argued that children and young people who were raised in a religious household with strong Islamic values were more empowered to speak freely about sexual abuse. They observed that these children and young people have an understanding of moral codes (or, what is acceptable and what is not) and, hence, can identify issues of sexual abuse quickly and seek help. Additionally, their families are also found to be more supportive and to listen to their children when they talk about sexual abuse.

However, some psychologists highlighted in some cases that cultural norms take precedence over religious practices, and what is culturally acceptable is given heed over what the religious principles dictate. The different effects of social stigma on girls and boys were also discussed. While both groups suffered from the trauma of sexual abuse, these interviews suggested that each victim had a different experience of stigma depending on their gender. The social pressures on the family of the victims were also highlighted, including significant effects on each member of the family. They also observed how different sections of the society tended to react to child sexual abuse differently and hence focused on the need to follow different practices when dealing with the families of victims. Incest was specifically highlighted to show the devastating effects on the breakdown of trust in the victims.

The social workers and psychologists shared the different methods through which they build the trust of the victims and create a safe environment to speak about experiences of sexual abuse. The interviews told how these efforts have begun to have positive results, with families and society on the whole having more trust in the Family Protection Department, and subsequently being more confident to report issues of abuse. The extent of the social workers' and psychologists' efforts goes above and beyond building trust; they played a pivotal role in supporting and empowering children and young people who

have been sexually abused. They brought their humanity to their roles, demonstrating that it is not only the critical and professional skills that are crucial in working with children and young people but also an ethos of care, compassion and nurture. Furthermore, the social workers and psychologists offered important suggestions, including making more training available and the need for recruiting more specialists, in order to strengthen the process of supporting victims of sexual abuse.

CHAPTER SIX

Findings

Families of children and young people who have been sexually abused

I spoke with the families of four girls and young women, including Amal's mother and father, Badriya's mother and grandmother, Samira's mother and Niveen's mother. Please see Table 3 in Chapter Seven for details of these children and young people.

Introduction

As I presented in the previous chapters, the families of the victims have a huge role to play if their children are to speak up about sexual abuse. Their influence can also be felt in the general reactions of children and young people towards sexual abuse. When I set out on my research on sexual abuse of children and young people, I knew from the onset that I wanted to talk to the families of the victims to grasp an understanding of how and when the families responded. Through the support of the social workers and the managers at the care centres, I had the opportunity to talk with four different families, all relatives of girls and young women who had been victims of abuse. I did not get the opportunity to talk with the families of boys or young men who had experienced similar trauma. Two of the girls and young women whose families I spoke with had been subjected to rape that resulted in unwanted pregnancies. Two others were subjected to sexual harassment and blackmailing. I interviewed one victim with intellectual disability and a victim whose father served a prison sentence on charges of honour-killing the abuser's brother. I had the opportunity to speak with a father who experienced pressure from family and neighbours to conduct an honour-killing of his daughter. However, he refused to kill his own daughter and his unborn grandchild. All interviews with the families happened in the presence of social workers and included parents and some grandparents.

Through my interviews, I was able to explore the relationship between the victim and their family, before and after the traumatic incidents. These interviews also helped me to

understand parenting practices in Jordanian society. Families shared with me the different ways in which they dealt with and responded to the information that their child had been sexually abused. They spoke about their experiences of being stigmatised. These experiences produced extreme despair and panic. The research interviews concluded with the families reviewing their experience and speaking about their guilt and shame regarding their inability to prevent such trauma for their daughters. Families emphasised the need to support children and young people to speak up freely about abuse.

Delayed help-seeking by children and young people

Each of the families commented on how this delayed help-seeking by their child affected the ability of the family to seek immediately appropriate assistance.

Sometimes, I think about how if my daughter told me about what had happened immediately, we may have not suffered like we are suffering now (Father, Amal's family).

I wish she had told me sooner. If she had, we could have avoided the scandal and wrapped the issue up. We could have spoken to his [abuser's] mum and brothers and sorted it out (Mother, Niveen's family).

If my granddaughter had been honest with me, we could have avoided the current situation. She was supposed to tell me about it immediately. This was the first step she should have taken (Grandmother, Badriya's family).

Alongside the hope and wishes the parents held that their children could have told them about the abuse, they also took the responsibility by acknowledging the mistakes they made that could have prevented delays in seeking help.

As a result of getting home late from work and being tired, I never gave much attention to what she said. I had no energy after my long hours at work to talk or discuss issues (Father, Amal's family).

I have not built my daughter's confidence in me. I used to shout at her and blame her for the smallest mistakes. So, she got scared of me. It is

my mistake that I scared her so much that is why she could not speak honestly and frankly with me (Mother, Niveen's family).

Amal's father and Niveen's mother lamented their inability to assist their daughters. In Amal's father's situation, it was economic circumstances and pressures about providing a good life to his family that prevented him from being available to offer timely help. In Niveen's mother's case, it was lack of skills and knowledge that prevented her from developing a trusting relationship with her daughter.

A crucial reason cited by some families for their children not seeking help sooner is the fear of domestic violence. Three families shared that the main reason their children chose not to speak freely with them was because of their fear of physical violence from family members. In each of the three families, there were members in the family, either brothers, fathers or mothers, who would resort to various forms of violence as a means of disciplining the child/young people:

Ever since her father died, her brothers have used violence and threats to discipline her. Perhaps if they had dealt with her like a friend, she might have communicated. She was scared of informing her brothers [about the blackmailer] because she did not want to anger them (Mother, Samira's family);

Ever since she was born, she has faced the wrath of her father. He destroyed her and he has never let her be happy. She was scared of his reaction (Grandmother, Badriya's family);

I am very tough on her and she is scared of me because when I'm angry, I sometimes break things like when I broke her cell phone when she spent too much time speaking with her fiancé (Mother, Niveen's family).

Parenting styles and family communication patterns stood in the way of the disclosure of sexual abuse incidents. In one case, a sister was prevented from speaking up because she feared the reaction of her brother. In another case, sexual abuse was prevented because the young woman chose to speak up when faced with blackmailing. Initially, though she kept silent, on realising that she was at severe risk of abuse, she opened up to her mother despite a fear of family violence, thereby preventing sexual abuse from happening.

She was being blackmailed by a man who could have abused her. She did not tell me about it for a long time because she was fearful of her brothers' reactions but, when the man started threatening her, she got scared of him and finally told me the story. I advised her to go to the Family Protection Department (FPD) to report it because they can protect both of us, not just from the man but from her brothers also (Mother, Samira's family).

It was due to both being better positioned in her relationship with her mother and experiencing a fear of being hurt that prompted Samira to seek her mother's support. Samira's response of keeping quiet until it was no longer possible to do so is consistent with the findings of Wyness (2013) who commented that families have an internal hierarchy wherein the children occupy lower levels of importance. Children are often not in a position to speak for themselves. They have to find ways which they can get the adults to listen to them, so that the adults can then speak or act on their behalf. This is the situation in the Jordanian family context too. Most of the families I spoke with showed evidence of having family hierarchies with the men as the head of the household and children having to follow parents' instructions. In Samira's case, she did not have the power or capacity to address the situation with her abuser herself. She therefore went to her mother, who advised her to seek help from the FPD and accompanied her to make a report about the abuse with the FPD.

Families' responses upon knowing about sexual abuse

The reactions of the families varied upon hearing about the sexual abuse. Samira's family, went directly to the Family Protection Department (FPD). Amal's family also approached the FPD, but only after they first attempted to solve the issue between her family and her abuser's family. Niveen's family and Badriya's family complained about the lack of choice they had in the process of approaching the FPD.

Amal's family first attempted to find a solution for the consequences of sexual abuse themselves. However, when their efforts were unsuccessful, they went to the FPD for help.

Our first reaction was to trap him but we were unsuccessful. In hindsight, it was the grace of God that we did not catch him because

there is no telling what we would have done to him. I also tried to speak with his [abuser] parents but they raised fingers at my daughter and so I sought the FPD's help to get justice (Father, Amal's family).

In the case of Niveen's family, the abuse only became known to them when the doctor referred her case to the FPD.

It is only when I took my daughter to the doctor for a check-up that, I learn that she was pregnant. From there onwards, the FPD took over. The doctor did not even allow me to talk to her until the FPD arrived, and when they did, they took her to the police and I followed. It was all a shock to me (Mother, Niveen's family).

Badriya's mother and grandmother also came to know about the abuse through the FPD:

It was only when we received a call that we came to know that our daughter was at the FPD. My first thought was that she has been raped or that she had committed suicide but only later we came to know that she wasn't. [Although she had sought to go to the FPD herself] when the FPD keeps a girl at their department, it raises unwanted talks in the society. We wanted to wrap up the issue but we couldn't (Mother, Badriya's family).

While Amal's and Samira's family got the FPD involved themselves, as they had no other option before them, Niveen's and Badriya's families played no role in getting FDP involved. Both Niveen's and Badriya's families stated that they could have dealt with the problem without involving the FPD. This reaction is indicative of the general preference of Jordanian society to solve matters internally. Many families choose to handle sexual abuse on their own terms, whether by marrying the daughter to her abuser or taking physical action against the perpetrator. In most cases, families opt for the protection of silence before speaking up or taking matters to the authorities. Indeed, some families only involve authorities as a last resort.

Seeking help from the FPD

Two of the families that I spoke with were initially hesitant to seek help from the FPD. However, even though they were initially sceptical about getting the FPD involved and turned to them only as a last resort, with time and from their experience of working with the FPD, there has been a marked improvement in their confidence in the FPD to offer them and their children support.

I am forever thankful to God for giving me the courage to go to the FPD. If I hadn't done that, I might have lost my daughter. My daughter is safe and happy at care centre more than when she was at home. She is not worried about physical harm from her brothers. I have even warned her step brothers to stay away and that if they try to approach me or my daughter, I would report them to the police (Mother, Samira's family).

Badriya's grandmother shared how the FPD involvement assisted in protecting her grandchild's life.

Initially we assumed that she went to the FPD to complain about her husband. Only later did we come to know the real reason [that her father used to be physically violent towards her and that he had threatened her to get her married to a guy with speaking and hearing disability]. Even though we thought the FPD would create more trouble, we are glad we sought help with them. Without the FPD, we could have lost her (Grandmother, Badriya's family).

Amal's father expressed his confidence in the FPD:

We have confidence in the police (FPD) that they will punish the abuser. Also, after talking with the social workers and managers at the FPD, I got much more relaxed as I was assured of Amal safety and security (Father, Amal's family).

Niveen's mother still remains unconvinced whether the FPD involvement was necessary, although she does acknowledge the value of their contribution.

While I would not have gone to the police (FPD) and would have instead solved it by getting my daughter married to him [abuser], which according to me would have been a suitable solution to the issue, the role of the FPD in protecting our rights and returning the family's honour, by proving that the baby is indeed his [abuser] and by imprisoning him, is undeniable. Thus, their involvement has helped us in some ways (Mother, Niveen's family).

The growing confidence in the FPD by the community was also identified by the professionals, social workers and psychologists, as noted in Chapters Four and Five. The beliefs of the families regarding the FPD support adds legitimacy to the professionals' observations.

Drawing strength: Families' support networks

While the FPD has provided children and young people with protection in keeping them removed from the danger of sexual abuse or family violence, and has assisted them in their fight for justice, support has also come from the children's and young people's families. The underlying commonality regarding these forms of care, support and protection was that each of the families wanted justice for their children and wanted to help them move on in life – even though, in some cases, families initially blamed the daughters for having been sexually abused.

Samira's mother main focus was on physically protecting her daughter from her brothers and cousins.

I need to ensure a peaceful life for my daughter. While my daughter is confident that the FPD will keep her safe, I am not taking any chances. I plan to keep her as far away as possible from her cousins and brothers who could harm her (Mother, Samira's family).

Amal's father pledged his total support and commitment to his daughter.

She need not worry as no harm will come to her as long as I am alive (Father, Amal's family).

Along with physical and moral support, some families have also promised financial assistance to their daughters in their fight for justice. Niveen's family's financial position

was not particularly sound, yet they have generated all possible funds to ensure the best interests of their girl child.

If I need to, I am happy to spend all my money on lawyers to ensure that she gets justice and that the wrongs done to her are righted. I've already sold all my furniture to finance this fight and I will happily take out more loans to help my daughter get through this (Mother, Niveen's family).

While the families were caring of their children, I learned through my interviews that families were also seeking help in this fight for justice for their children. There are three main places that families looked to for support. They sought assistance from the FPD: their growing confidence in the FPD means that they relied on the FPD extensively to support their fight for justice.

Another area that the families drew support from was their religious faith. They turned to Allah and the power of their faith to get them through their difficult times.

I am able to support my daughter because of my faith in Allah. I know that Allah will provide us with money, food and whatever else we need. He knows our intentions and how poor we are, so I know he will support us (Mother, Samira's family).

Making the decision to report the sexual abuse to the FPD was not easy. It was a big struggle but we were sure Allah would help us arrive at the correct decision, and we did. It is due to Allah's help that we were able to courageously report it (Father, Amal's family).

Another resource for strength came from people beyond their immediate family and in their wider community. The backing from the relatives and friends has been crucial in keeping the families focused in their fight for justice and in helping the children and young people move on from the trauma of child sexual abuse. Here, justice refers to the returning back the rights of both children and young people and their families, as the trauma of sexual abuse impacts both of them.

The support from the people around you is important. When I came to know about my daughter's difficulty, I was extremely troubled. I only calmed down after I had a chat with my relatives. They really supported

me. They told me that I had made the right decision by going to the FPD and that I had saved my daughter by doing so (Mother, Samira's family).

There are good people out there who understand my struggle and supported my efforts. They were able to see what happened to my daughter and see us victims in this situation. They did not put any pressure [such as honour-killing] on us as they were able to see the reality of the situation (Father, Amal's family).

I was depressed and in tears. My neighbours could see how distressed I was and they invited me along on their trip to the sea. They wanted me to have a change in setting and get some rest (Mother, Niveen's family).

Even though the care from friends and families is important in helping families persist in their fight for justice, the wider society has not always been of as much assistance. Families commented on how while some sections of the society were understanding of their situation, other groups within society not only chose to blame the children and young people for the sexual abuse, but also chose to blame the families for the situations of their daughters.

Societal pressures on the families

As I presented in the previous chapters, the stigma related to sexual abuse is a frequently highlighted concern. Although professionals, social workers and psychologists have been offering their services to children, young people and their families to deal with trauma and the pressures of stigma, victims and their families remain significantly affected. The families spoke about the pressure that they were subjected to following their children's traumatic sexual abuse experiences and how they dealt with it to protect themselves and their children.

Blame placed on mothers

The families highlighted a common practice prevalent in the society that directs anger towards the mothers and considers the child's sexual abuse as a direct result of the incompetence of the mothers.

Yes, the society blames mothers. All mistakes of the children come back to their mothers. It does not matter what the mistake is, it is always

returned to the mother. No one considers if the mother is really to blame or if she did everything she could do and still the child landed in trouble (Mother, Samira's family).

Badriya's mother argued that the blame directed at mothers is unfair; as women, mothers have less power than male members in the family. She wanted the responsibility for the child's welfare to be placed on both parents.

The society wants us to take an action but how can we when we cannot do anything without the support of the men in our family. The father also has to be aware about the on things that happen in their child's life. His responsibility is not just to get angry and go after and try and kill the abuser. He has to be supportive of the mother. In Badriya's case itself, I was unable to stop her blackmailer because the abuser did not listen to me as I am a female. If the men in my family had spoken to the blackmailer, he would never have dared to do what he did (Mother, Badriya's family).

Amal's father also shared a similar view regarding the blaming of mothers. He placed the responsibility of parenting on the shoulders of his wife. To him, child rearing is a mother's job and as such she is the one who should be aware of any changes in the child's life.

It is the mother who spends all the time with the children and so she is the one who should be aware if there are any changes happening to the child. I am busy working to give them a better life, while she [the mother] spends time at home with them [the children]. I never thought one day my child would face such an issue (Father, Amal's family).

The pressure of the stigma had an intense impact on the mothers. Amal's mother was so consumed by the shame that she attempted to take her child's life herself.

When I heard that she was pregnant, I took a knife from the kitchen and tried to kill her, but my relatives stopped me. I think I fell down and lost consciousness from the stress of the situation. At that moment, my worry was about how people would label me, about how I would face the society again (Mother, Amal's family).

While relatives protected Amal from her mother's attempt to harm her, for Niveen's mother, the stigma manifested in the form of threats and blame from relatives. It reached a point that she responded strongly on behalf of her own family.

When I informed my brother-in-law about the situation, I started receiving more blame and threats from them. Instead of supporting us, they attempted to control the situation and make decisions for us. So, I stopped them and defended us by pointing out that all of us have made mistakes and that they have no right to judge us. I tried to take back the control here (Mother, Niveen's family).

The societal pressure directed at mothers and the interference of relatives were well described by Badriya's mother:

Our society is such that the people around you will just not leave you alone. They will insert themselves in your life and talk behind your back when such situations happen. We will always get blamed for destroying our children's life (Mother, Badriya's family).

In many instances the social pressure on mothers is so crippling that they refuse to go out in public and instead prefer the practice of *Ejlaa'*: moving to a different location, far away from neighbours and friends who know about the sexual abuse (see Chapter Four). Niveen's mother recollected her experience of hiding herself and her daughter away from the public eye.

We did not go out anywhere, not even to the neighbourhood shops. She [Niveen] stopped going to school and we stayed together all the time. I wanted to move to some other place, so that she could go back to school and complete her study (Mother, Niveen's family).

Children's and young people's absence from home

The interconnectivity and high population of Jordanian society means that people are highly involved in each other's lives. Hence, the absence of children and young people from their homes is easily noticed and questioned. While the government supports the care centres in providing children and young people with a safe place to stay, and helps facilitate emotional and social wellbeing for the children and young people through professional counselling services, some people in society still believe that the best place

for the child or young person is at home, with their family. Hence the families I spoke with shared that they avoided letting their friends and relatives know about their children's stay at a care centre.

Amal's father complained that often this extra pressure is more stressful than the main sexual abuse incident itself.

Honestly, the pressure from our society and the people around makes us suffer more than the actual problem itself. When my daughter was at the care centre, my relatives and neighbours began to pressurise my family with questions about her. This constant questioning also began to influence the way we reacted towards her (Father, Amal's family).

Samira's mother shared that when Samira was at the care centre, she had to lie to her friends and neighbours about her whereabouts. She explained that she did this to protect Samira from the rumours that would otherwise be circulated.

Except for my family, no one else knew that my daughter was at the care centre. Everyone else thought that she was staying with her brother. I did this to protect her and myself too. If they knew that she was at the FPD, then they would start questioning about why and how she got there. There would be hundreds of harmful fake stories (Mother, Samira's Family).

The pressure from societal judgment is so intense that Niveen's mother explained that she actually preferred her daughter to be married and living with her abuser, rather than her staying at the care centre.

My daughter staying at the care centre is extremely stressful for me. Yes, I can see her weekly now but I would prefer her [to be] married and staying with her in-law's family where I know she will be well taken care of. If that happened then I would be happy and relaxed (Mother, Niveen's family).

While Niveen's mother strongly suggested that marriage to the abuser is the most appropriate solution to the situation, research shows otherwise. Arata and Lindman (2002) argued that marriage at a young age to the abuser could lead to revictimisation,

with the victim more likely to experience marital rape. Additionally, there is a strong possibility of divorce thereby making the victim more vulnerable.

Honour-killings

The pressure from the society is not always in the form of a social stigma. In some cases, these pressures are aimed at causing an aggressive action or violent response from the families. In order to restore the family honour, Badriya's father killed the abuser's brother (as the abuser was in prison) in order to avenge the crime inflicted upon his daughter. Samira's mother, fearing that her brothers would kill Samira in the name of family honour, took her to the care centre to ensure her safety. The pressure from society to restore the family's honour through violence is immense. Amal's father shared a unique insight into this pressure and told me how he was able to withstand it.

In the beginning, when my brothers realised that the honour of the family had been tainted, they were furious and wanted to restore it by killing my daughter. There was a lot of pressure on me to restore the honour [in this way]. However, once the truth about how my daughter was exploited by her abuser came out, they knew that she was innocent and we have to keep the spirit that is from God and placed in the bowels of my daughter however, none of us dare to touch it at whatever it cost (Father, Amal's family).

Amal's father shared with me an incident that affected him deeply, while also highlighting the terrible predicament that families face when they commit or plan to commit honour-killing. He explained that the child or young person trusts their family to protect them and take care of them. When a family commits honour-killing, they are letting this trust down and placing more importance on the honour of the family than on the child's life. A contradiction occurs here between what is seen as the best interests of the child or young person and what is seen as the best interest of the family.

I was sitting with my brothers and we were discussing what we could do to overcome this disaster. We were wondering if we should kill her [Amal] to save the family's honour or to report the abuse to the FPD. We were of two minds. And you won't believe this, but right then, as we were having a heated discussion, Amal came and hid behind my back and fell asleep. If she had heard what we were discussing, she wouldn't

have done that. She wasn't aware that her uncles and her dad were considering killing her. What made this even more heartbreaking for me is that my daughter is unlike the other girls of her age. She does not even understand what has happened to her or its consequences (Father, Amal's family).

While Amal's father describes the situation as heartbreaking for him, the decision he made to stand by his daughter was not looked upon with such care by society.

Everyone had an issue with my decision. They questioned my love for my daughter and said that if I cared about the family's honour, I would kill her. It really felt like everyone wanted me to kill my daughter immediately to please them. Initially this attitude depressed me, but later I knew I had made the correct decision. From then on, my focus was only on my child and her baby's wellbeing (Father, Amal's family).

Amal's father quoted a famous Jordanian saying to explain how this dreadful dilemma played out. The quote says “غلب بستيرة أحسن من غلب بفضيحة” – “Losing in private is better than losing in public”. This quote reflects, a conservative culture, where people believe that if losing is the only option in front of you, then losing in private is better than losing in the full view of others. Amal's father shared this quote which expresses the belief that people prefer to act in private, even by killing a child, and thus prevent the loss of the family's honour in public.

Amal's father also added how his religious faith helped him to face the pressure for honour-killing.

If I were someone else, I would not have hesitated to kill her, however I am a religious person and I know that it is a sin to kill two souls. While some people supported me in my decision, several others found fault with it and said that I was encouraging my daughter to misbehave and that I was happy with her current situation. They even said that I was ok with my family's dishonour. To them, I say that I am only answerable to God and I do not want to violate my faith in God (Father, Amal's family).

Amal's father's lived experience of having to decide whether or not to commit honour-killing to his young daughter with a disability throws light on an extremely difficult decision he had to make. His strong faith and his understanding that killing does not preserve honour but is instead a sinful act and a violation of faith is an important distinction that he makes. His decision was to not commit honour-killing and instead to fight for justice for his daughter and grandchild, while standing at the intersection of intense social pressure and strong religious beliefs. This contribution to my study highlights that honour-killing is not a religious solution for sexual abuse but a social practice.

Families' reflections

Parental Practices

The hard experiences resulting from the unexpected tragedy that befell their children have given families the opportunity to reflect upon their parenting practices. The families shared with me their thoughts about mistakes they made. While the families thought that they had raised their children in the best possible manner, upon reflection they believed that if they followed a different style of parenting or changed their communication styles, then they could have avoided the tragedy from happening to their children. The families expressed guilt and shared their remorse at not having been able to protect their children from sexual abuse.

From the different stories of the children and young people, each family highlighted a different element that they wished they had done differently. Badriya's mother suggested that girls should be given freedom to enjoy their life and should not be monitored all the time.

There is a feeling that young girls need to be monitored all the time, at home and outside. I disagree with this. They should be given some freedom and be allowed to enjoy their life. If we don't, then not only will they not listen to our advice, but they will completely ignore it. In order to just get away from the constant monitoring, they might get into trouble (Mother, Badriya's family).

Just as with Badriya, Niveen was also not given any freedom and was prevented from enjoying her life or having fun. Niveen's mother kept a close watch on her daughter and often blamed her and shouted at her when things went wrong.

I was very strict with Niveen. She was not allowed to go to any parties or even walk to the shop nearby. I thought I was protecting her and ensuring her wellbeing by doing so. I was also very strict with her and I used to yell at her in anger often. Later, I came to know that my daughter did not even tell me when she got into trouble because she was scared, I would yell at her. Thankfully, things have changed now. I don't treat her harshly and we have actually become good friends (Mother, Niveen's family).

Niveen's mother also shared how the hard experience helped her and her daughter to sit down and discuss the problems in their communication.

Niveen and I discussed why she did not tell me about the incident. I even blamed her for not telling me and causing such a big scandal. When I came to know that Niveen did not share her problems with me because she was scared of me, I admitted that I was harsh on her. I told her, "You are right, I used to scare you and maybe if I weren't so harsh then you would have been more honest with me". She told me, "Mum, you are a grumpy person. I was scared that if I told you, you would do something to me" (Mother, Niveen's family).

While's Amal's father was never harsh with his children, he suggested that he did not give them enough time or attention. He highlighted how he initially thought raising a child is a mother's responsibility but now he realises that it is not.

I always thought taking care of the child is the mother's duty alone as I am out working and making a living. However, now I know how difficult taking care of the child is. There are bad people everywhere, even on the street on the way to a shop. How is it possible for her mother to accompany her everywhere? I am now more involved and more careful about my children to avoid further disasters (Father, Amal's family).

Amal's father also spoke about how this painful experience has made him closer to God and Islam.

I consider this tragedy to be a test of Allah to check our faith and patience in him. As a parent, I think it is important to raise my children with religion and in accordance to the Islamic instructions (Father, Amal's family).

Another reflection was regarding effectiveness of communication. Samira's mother shared that communicating was not just about speaking to their children but was also about ensuring that their children understood and internalised what was being said to them. Samira's mother said that, while she always gave Samira good advice, she never made sure that Samira listened to what she advised. She did not communicate her concerns with Samira in a manner that appealed to Samira.

I hope that Samira has learned from this experience. She needs to learn to not trust people, even if they were women. I used to advise her about it, but she never listened. I need to ensure that Samira is listening to my advice and understand that it is for her own good (Mother, Samira's family).

Samira's mother here appears to continue to see communication as a one-way, hierarchical process.

Advice to other families

Having heard the stories of the different families, I wanted to understand what their advice would be to other families who might be going through the same hardships that they had faced.

Amal's father described his situation as being completely helpless as the choices in front of him regarding the future of his daughter were tough.

The choices are honour-killing or letting her [the victim] get married to her abuser. It is an extremely tough choice for a father to make. My advice to other families is try and avoid the issue by getting your daughters married to the abuser. At least, this can help avoid the scandal. If they are happy living together, then so be it. But otherwise, they can get a divorce (Father, Amal's family).

Samira's mother wanted to warn other families about the dangers of placing their trust in the wrong people. Her advice was to stay vigilant and to encourage their children to report if something untoward happened to them:

I was too naïve and my naivety cost my daughter hardship. My advice to all other mothers would be to never trust anyone. Misplaced trust is very harmful. It is important to remind the children about it. At the same time, it is also important to teach them what to do in case of such an emergency. My daughter came to me when she got into trouble and we were able to go to the FPD. There is no harm in seeking help from the FPD and I encourage other families to take the correct action (Mother, Samira's family).

The importance of open and free communication with children and young people was emphasised by Badriya's, Amal's and Niveen's families. The parents highlighted the need to understand and love their daughters and also spoke about the importance of listening to children and young people and not just speaking at them.

My advice to all families is to listen to their children. Listen to them when they come to you with a problem and help them solve it (Grandmother, Badriya's family).

You children should be able to talk with you and share their problems freely. I think the bond between a mother and her daughter is important. They should be like friends. A daughter might not be able to share everything with her father, so the mother has to have a good, open relationship with her daughter (Father, Amal's family).

My advice to other families is to offer your kids unlimited love and have patience towards their mistakes. We need to listen to them, and they need to communicate their problems with us (Mother, Niveen's family).

Marriage as a solution

An important observation that the families shared with me was about the heartbreak of getting their children married to their abusers. When unwanted pregnancies occur from sexual abuse, the state often keeps control of the baby when it is born out of marriage.

The babies are housed and looked after at the care facility. However, this process prevents the baby from carrying the family name of either of the parents and provides the baby a state assigned surname. For the families, marriage to the abuser is the only way to retain custody of the baby, and ensure that the baby carries the father's surname, thereby making it legitimate in the eyes of society, state and religious authorities. Such marriages also help restore a sense of the family honour.

The marriage is proof that he [the abuser] is the father of my daughter's baby. Once they are married and the baby has his surname, then we can take the baby and raise him normally without any one pointing any fingers at you (Mother, Niveen's family).

He is my grandson [the baby] and regardless of the situation, I want him growing up at my home. I will let my daughter marry that guy [the abuser], just so that the baby can have his father's surname. I don't want the baby growing up in a government care centre with a government name. We couldn't bear it (Father, Amal's family).

While marriage to the abuser was seen as a way to side-step the problems arising from having a baby out of marriage, the families also did not expect their daughters to stay married to the abuser. To most of the families, the marriage was just a temporary arrangement undertaken solely in the interest of the baby, with most of them preparing for divorce even as the marriage was being discussed.

We want the marriage to be documented first. After that, we can arrange the divorce. The marriage is only to prove that it was him [the abuser] who took my daughter's virginity and who is the father of their baby (Mother, Niveen's family).

Once the marriage is completed, it is up to them if they want to live together. If they want to, that is fine, otherwise they can divorce and we will have custody of the baby (Father, Amal's family).

The use of marriage as a solution to sexual abuse is not only something that is put forward by the families. The victims themselves also suggest this in order to retain custody of their children. Niveen's mother recollects a heartfelt conversation between Niveen and

her, which she says was a conversation between two mothers desperate to protect their children.

Niveen told me, “Mum, I want to tell you something but I want you to hear it as coming from another mother, and not your daughter”. I was intrigued by this and so I told her that she could speak freely. Then she asked me how I would react if someone took me away from her. I told her that I would be angry and that there is no telling what I would do. And then she said something that shocked me. She said, “If that’s your response, then how can you ask me to let go of my baby?” With this she started to cry (Mother, Niveen’s family).

Niveen drew on her and her mother’s shared experiences of maternity to defend her own maternal instinct to keep and care for the baby.

In general situations where there has been no unwanted pregnancy, getting married is looked upon as a way to provide the female victims with a fresh start.

I wanted my child to be able to start over and so I prayed to Allah for a good husband for her. Allah heard my prayers and today she has a good fiancé. Her focus should now be only on her husband and on taking care of him (Mother, Samira’s family).

Badriya’s mother, on the other hand, does not believe that marriage is the solution. Badriya was married to another man as a solution to end the threats she received from her blackmailer. However, despite her marriage she continued to receive the threats and remain exposed to harassment, until she went to the FPD for help.

We thought marriage would end the threats, but unfortunately, he [the abuser] has not stopped (Mother, Badriya’s family).

Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the poignant accounts of parents’ responses to their children’s disclosure of sexual abuse, including their experiences of panic, fear, shame and guilt. Starting with delayed help-seeking by the children and young people, which resulted in the adversities, the families shared their reactions to learning about the sexual abuse. I have discussed the struggles that the families faced in the process of seeking help from

the FPD and have detailed how they drew strength from social support and their faith to deal with stressing situations.

In this chapter, I have also highlighted the social pressures that families of victims face. Social pressures include the blaming of the mother, gossip and rumours around the victims' stay at care centres as well as their absence from homes. Another significant social pressure was to commit honour-killing in order to restore the honour of the families. I have highlighted the lived experiences of Amal's father as he navigated the dilemma between social pressure and religious beliefs. I concluded this chapter with a section on families' reflections on their painful experiences. Most families called for revision of parental practices in order to encourage a healthy and open relationship with their children. The choice of marriage as a solution to the consequences of sexual abuse was also discussed in the chapter. I highlighted the advice that the families offered to other families who might be going through similar hardships. Ultimately, they spoke to the benefits of a caring, nurturing and communicative relationship between parents and children. It was the unconditional love and support of families for their children that gave them the strength to face adversity together, despite the suffering they experienced.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Findings

Children and young people

Introduction

The chapter on children and young people is one of the most important chapters of my research as the main aim of my study was to produce new knowledge about how children and young people speak up after being sexually abused and the struggles they faced in the process of doing so. This chapter and its findings are also what sets my research apart from other research in this area. While I have interviewed professionals, psychologists and social workers, and families of the children and young people, the significance of my study is highlighted in this chapter. I had the opportunity to speak with nine children and young people, four of whose families shared their experiences in the previous chapter. Of the nine, six are girls and young women between the ages of eleven and seventeen, and three are boys and young men aged nine to fourteen. The children and young people come from different care centres and different family circumstances, such as those living with their families, or from single parent households. Some were raised in care centres from birth. Thus, my study included children and young people from widely various family environments. This range provided my study with data that encompasses a diverse demographic. The table below provides a brief biography of the girls and young women who participated in this study.

Girls and young women

Table 3 Brief biography of the girls and young women (participants)

Child's/Young Person's Name	Girls and young women
Amal, 14	Amal has intellectual and language disabilities. She gave birth to a baby as a result of sexual abuse. To keep custody of the baby, she had to marry her rapist to legitimise the child.
Badriya, 17	When she turned 15, Badriya's father forced her to marry a man with a disability to prove her purity and virginity after her father learned that she had fallen in love with another man. After she got married, she was blackmailed by her ex-lover, who threatened to send her photos to her father and husband. She was exposed to further sexual harassment from her ex-lover even after she obeyed his requests. Her father killed the older brother of the ex-lover to restore the family's honour and to take revenge.
Samira, 16	Samira has lived with her mother since her father passed away. She has step brothers. According to Samira's mother, the step siblings did not have a friendly relationship with Samira and she was always subjected to physical abuse from them. When Samira broke up with her ex-fiancé, he tried to take revenge by getting an older man to blackmail and threaten Samira, which led to the blackmailer using her for a sexual relationship. When she refused to obey his requests, he threatened that he would send her photos to her step brothers. Samira confided in her mother, who took her to the FPD to protect her daughter from potential honour-killing by her step brothers and further harm from her blackmailer.
Shaha, 16	Shaha was sexually abused by two drunk men when she was trying to sell things on the side of the road. She was admitted to the care centre several times.
Lojain, 11	Lojain, 11 years old, was a victim of incest. Her father abused her when he was intoxicated, which happened very often. When her parents separated, Lojain and her nine-year-old sister started living with their father. He used to ask her to have anal sex to keep her virginity. Lojain shared with me how difficult that was for her but that she preferred to sacrifice herself to prevent her father from abusing her younger sister.
Niveen, 14	Niveen, 14 years old, got engaged to a male relative but for legal reasons they couldn't document it in the court as she was under 15 years of age at the time. She got pregnant from her fiancé before documenting their marriage. Niveen had to stay at a care centre for her safety and the male relative is in prison.

My conversations with the children and young people helped me to understand many of the hurdles they faced when trying to speak up. One of my first understandings was about the dilemma they experienced regarding telling their families about their situation. Their concerns about the reaction of their family was one of the key reasons for their delayed help-seeking. They also shared the many thoughts and worries that ran through their minds before seeking help from their families. The children and young people reflected on the disadvantages of delayed help-seeking and highlighted how their families' parenting style and practices were central in their reluctance to seek help immediately. They also shared with me the reaction of the families when they finally mustered the courage to seek help and how families' responses impacted the children and young people. Some of the young women who became pregnant as a result of rape also shared their emotional experience of having to fight to keep their babies with them.

From their lived experiences of the sexual abuse, seeking help and the subsequent support they received, the children and young people were able to share their advice for other children, young people and families who might be in a similar situation. Despite their young age, and the severity of their situations and the hardships they suffered, it was surprising and heartening for me to see how excited and enthusiastic they were about giving advice that could be made available to other families, children and young people. They spoke of their concern and their determination to save other children and young people from similar experiences. They also displayed maturity in their understanding of the complexities of the relationship between families and their children and hence shared their views on what they wished would change about parenting styles to ensure that no other child or young person hesitate to seek help and speak up. The chapter ends on a hopeful note with the children and young people presenting their plans to move on in life.

In presenting my findings, the first set of reflections were from the girls and young women. I have followed this up with the reflections of the boys and young men. I have separated the children's and young people's reflections into two sections for one main reason. Most of my participants were girls and young women and, as such, their circumstances that lead to abuse and the implications from sexual abuse were markedly different to their male counterparts, and had a strong influence on their reflections.

Girls and young women, and the dilemmas of speaking up

Given that each participant's experience of speaking up was unique, when I spoke with the children and young people, most of them immediately connected their disclosure experience to the reactions that they anticipated from their parents. Their decisions to speak up were heavily influenced by how they perceived their parents would react. Girls and young women were worried about a negative reaction or blaming, the main reason for their delayed help-seeking.

There are several different reasons behind this dilemma of delayed help-seeking. For some, it was the care and concern for family and others outside the family that caused the delay, while for others it was fear. Perhaps these reasons can be attributed to the home environment of each child. Those with a more loving and supportive home environment displayed concern for family, while others with less supportive families exhibited fear about parents' reactions.

Care for family being the root of Shaha's dilemma is clearly evident from how was not able to resolve this even after six months of safety at the care centre.

I did not dare to tell him [my father]. I don't think there is any girl who can freely tell her dad about rape. Even after the care centre informed him about my situation, when he spoke to me, I denied everything. I just could not tell him what happened to me, because if I do, I am sure that he will panic. He is already sick and I did not want to further his sickness. If I told him the truth, he might die and I cannot kill my dad. I have a younger sister too and we both need him (Shaha, 16 years).

Niveen also shared how her concern for the people around her stopped her from seeking timely help.

I could not bring myself to tell my mother. I knew that if I did, a lot of innocent people around me could possibly be harmed. The men from both families would start shooting and kill each other. I did not want any honour-killing in my name. This is my issue, then why must other people have to pay the price for it (Niveen, 14 years).

Fear is another cause for delayed help-seeking. Both Badriya and Niveen, prior to seeking help, were extremely fearful of the reaction of their families. They expressed fear for their safety if they spoke up to their family about the abuse.

I wanted to tell my grandmother many times. I had many chances but I did not. I was certain that if I did, I would be the one who would be blamed. I would be the one they would be angry at. They will find all the mistakes I did to cause the abuse and find that I am in the wrong. They would say that the abuse is the result of all the faults I did (Badriya, 17 years).

I could not tell my parents because I knew they would not understand me. I knew they would hurt me. They could do whatever they wanted. I could not tell them anything as I was scared of them (Niveen, 14 years).

Further factors on the difficulty of disclosing sexual abuse are to do with self-preservation, anonymity, privacy, confidentiality and surveillance. I observed that many of the children and young people were worried that seeking help would draw attention to themselves and they wanted to avoid being exposed to further harm. Although fear of families' reactions could also be considered a mode of self-preservation, in the cases that I have highlighted, the reason for the hesitance to speak up appears to be connected with a concern about judgment from others.

I was worried everyone would get to know about my story. I really did not want everyone to be talking about me. We cannot stop them but I did not want to give them a reason to talk (Niveen, 14 years).

While most girls and young women experienced dilemmas in seeking help, some of them did not experience it at all and were able to approach their parents and speak up about the abuse with little worry that they would be supported.

The moment I realised I was at risk I knew I had to do something. He [the stranger who was blackmailing her] had too much power and I knew I needed to take control of the situation and protect myself. That's when I went to mum. My mum is my best friend. I don't have any siblings and so she is everything to me. She is my sister, friend and mother. So,

I told her and she believed me and she came with me to the FPD (Samira, 16 years).

Samira was able to speak openly and freely with her mother. However, she was quick to add that she would not have been able to do the same with her father.

My Dad was very conservative and would not allow me to go anywhere or enjoy time with my friends. Even when I got my first period, he got upset and blamed mum when she explained to me what having periods means. He did not want me to know about that. My step brothers are also the same. They are also conservative and they won't even allow me to make mistakes. If a girl brings shame to them, they would shoot her immediately (Samira, 16 years).

Samira's views were very important for highlighting the significance of parenting practices and the nature of the relationship in ensuring that children and young people were able to speak without fear to their family, when faced with challenging issues such as abuse. Samira's family demonstrated gender-based, traditional patriarchal parenting styles that discriminated against girls. While her mother was able to nurture a friendly and open relationship with her, her father and her brothers had a strict, conservative relationship that left her in fear of them.

The pain of incest that Lojain faced was different again. Lojain spoke up about the abuse on three separate occasions and to three separate people. However, it was only in the third instance that she was able to get help. In her case, it was not delayed help-seeking on her part but a delay in offering help on her mother's part.

It was my sister who told my mum the first time. I knew my mum would not believe me because I sometimes lie to her when I complain about my siblings. So, I made my sister tell mum about dad and mum believed it (Lojain, 11 years).

Even though her mum approached the FPD after learning about the abuse, she did not report the abuse but instead reported the father's failure to pay alimony to support his family. As a result, the father was imprisoned but only for two weeks, after which he returned home to his children.

After he came back from jail, dad started sleeping with me every night. Sometimes, I would spend the whole night with him and sometimes he would make me go back to my bed and put me to bed. My sister knew this. She has seen dad with me and asked me about it. She also asked me why I did not tell mum about it, but I did not because it had become normal. It was my new normal (Lojain, 11 years).

Lojain insisted that she did not speak to her mother again about the abuse as she did not want to cause more trouble. Her focus was on protection of others, particularly her younger sister.

My mum had so much trouble going to the FPD the first time. She could not even tell her family about it and said that she was going to buy potatoes, when she was actually going to the FPD. As for my sister, she is my younger sister and I did not want to worry her. I did not want to make them sad or make them be scared around dad (Lojain, 11 years).

Lojain's case is also more complicated as her parents were divorced and the abuser was her father. Additionally, Lojain's mother, as a woman, had low power to articulate her rights. This was perhaps why the mother hid from her family the fact that she visited the FPD to complain about her ex-husband not paying child support. Nonetheless, Lojain's mother took strategic steps to protect her daughter. However, these steps did not involve speaking up about the abuse that Lojain was subjected to by her father and therefore failed to provide Lojain with long-term safety.

The second time Lojain spoke up about the abuse, it was to her brothers. However, she did not want them to confront her father for she feared for their safety.

I told my brothers. However, I begged them to not ask dad about anything. Dad had already thrown them out of the house and he would hit them too. So, I knew that if they approached our dad about me, they would get beaten badly (Lojain, 11 years).

Lojain's actions here are consistent with my earlier observation about the dilemma that children and young people face about whether or not to seek help. The concern for other people, and the fear that the consequences of speaking up might impact them negatively, prevented Lojain from seeking timely help. While she told detail of the abuse to her

brothers, she insisted that they keep the information to themselves and not escalate the situation further. It was only after over two months of continuous abuse that she spoke up for the third time. This time, her confidant was her father's fiancée.

His fiancée has stayed with us for ten days during which time she saw dad hit us. They broke up over it. Once they had broken up, I knew I could confide in her as she was out of harm's way and my dad could not do anything to her. That is why I told her about it (Lojain, 11 years).

I took a bus to my dad's fiancée's house and I told her all about this. She took me to the FPD and I told them everything. The police then took dad to jail (Lojain, 11 years).

Lojain spoke up for the third time only after the father and his fiancée had ended their relationship. The time of disclosure indicated that, due to her concern about causing harm to others, she had chosen to quietly endure the abuse. Lojain's story raised the point that the many dilemmas involved in speaking up include the problem of seeking help from a trusted person who can provide the appropriate support. These challenges are what caused Lojain's (and perhaps other young people's) delayed help-seeking. Lojain sought help three times; however, it was the father's former fiancée who removed her from any danger from the father and was able to take her to the FPD and provide her with the necessary help.

Girls and young women, and delayed help-seeking

Along with sharing their experience of seeking help, the girls and young women also shared what they perceived to be the reasons of delayed help-seeking. The observations were embedded in their personal lived experiences.

Badriya shared how she could have avoided some of the difficulties if she had sought help as soon as the abuser got in touch with her. Badriya's abuser tried to keep the abuse up by forcing her to stay in touch with him through blackmailing. He threatened to send Badriya's pictures, which she had shared with him, to her husband and her father, thereby getting her into trouble.

My silence destroyed me. I now know the importance of being open about everything. Even if I break a cup, I need to tell my family about it. I was scared and worried about my grandmother and so I did not tell

anything. If only I had spoken out sooner, this whole situation could have been avoided (Badriya, 17 years).

Badriya also added how delayed help-seeking caused her to be blamed for the abuse and as such be revictimised.

I wish I had sought help sooner because then I would not have been blamed for everything [the abuse]. Because I delayed seeking help, people questioned me. Even at court my abuser blamed the abuse on me and said that it was all due to my mistake of riding in the bus with him (Badriya, 17 years).

However, not all participants' reflections were about regrets about disclosure. Niveen insisted that, even though she thought that timely help could have prevented the scandal that she and her family experienced, she nonetheless credited the experience of being believed and supported to her mother and family, thus strengthening their family relationship.

My mother and I did not have the best relationship. We never used to communicate freely and that is why I did not ask her for help. I was afraid they [her family] would not believe me. However, they did. Not only that, they supported me through it. Today, my mum and I are very close and I tell her everything (Niveen, 14 years).

Girls and young women: Reflections on their painful experiences

During my conversations with the girls and young women, they reflected on what impacted them, and what learning they took from their trauma. The children and young people spoke about how their parents' care and support shaped their relationships with them. It was also heartening to learn about their hopes and plans for the future.

Relationship with their parents

When asked about who they thought was the person who supported them the most, all girls and young women referred to their parents. However, some, like Badriya and Niveen, reflected on how their parents were not supportive in the beginning but had shifted over time as they suffered from the effects of the abuse together. What started out as a troubled relationship with minimal trust, is today a mutually respectful relationship.

I had a terrible relationship with my father. He did not trust me at all. In fact, I think it is mistrust from parents that pushed children into trouble. It was certainly so in my case. My father used to doubt me and question my every move. The more he doubted me, the more I got into trouble. When he found I had a lover, he took me off from school and forced me to get an arranged marriage [to a different man]. He destroyed my life. However, now, after this terrible experience, he is regretful of his actions. He understands that he was wrong and how harsh and painful his behaviour towards me was. Now, he warns our relatives to not blame or harm me. He understands that I deserve a second chance (Badriya, 17 years).

I never used to share anything with my parents. Nothing. Not even small things. They never asked me anything and I never told them anything. Even when we lived under the same roof, I hardly spent time with them or wanted to see them. So, when I got into trouble, I did not expect any support from them. I did not think they would believe me. I was wrong. Not only did they believe me, but they supported me with a smile. Now, I love them more than ever. I tell them everything and I am not scared at all (Niveen, 14 years).

Samira, Lojain and Amal insisted that nothing had changed and that their relationship with their parents continued to be as open and trusting as before the disclosing of the abuse.

My mum is my friend. As I do not have any siblings, she is everything to me. She is my mother, my sister and my friend. It has always been this way (Samira, 16 years).

I trust my mother. I know she will keep my secrets. I don't see her as my mother or my friend. To me, she is my sister (Lojain, 11 years).

Dad is special. He always sits with us after prayers and he teaches me and my sisters. I never cry around dad. I just have to hug him and I'm okay (Amal, 14 years).

Some of the girls also shared their belief that, despite the nature of one's relationship with parents, the parents will offer support when the child or young person is in trouble.

No matter what, our parents are the ones who care the most about us. We might be scared of their reaction but they will also be there for us (Badriya, 17 years).

Does not matter how our parents treat us, they won't give up on us or leave us alone with our troubles. I never liked my parents and I never thought they would support me, but I was wrong. They are really nice and treated me positively. Both mum and dad visited me weekly at the FPD (Niveen, 14 years).

Support from the Family Protection Department (FPD)

Following the disclosure of sexual abuse, all the girls and young women highlighted how the Family Protection Department played an important role in offering them support in dealing with the situation. In the previous chapters, I discussed how the FPD was successful in offering support and gaining the trust of friends, family and the close community. Through my conversation with the girls and young women, I was able to understand the support that the FPD offered them. The involvement of the FPD was different in each circumstance, and in each story of sexual abuse, but nonetheless played a crucial role in supporting the girls and young women. In the case of Lojain and Amal, the FPD intervened after the girls spoke up and was instrumental in keeping them safe and secure while their families calmed down. In all cases, the girls noted that the FPD was a supportive feature.

I have had the FPD's phone number for a long time. I kept it because of my brothers' violent attitudes towards me. Actually, it was my neighbours who gave it to me as they knew that my brothers used to hit me badly. I never reported them to the FPD as I knew that it would upset my dad, but when this [sexual blackmailing] happened, I knew I had to go to the FPD. I knew my life would be at risk and so I had to seek help (Samira, 16 years).

My mum had always encouraged me to go to the FPD to complain about my father and the husband he forced me to accept. I never did it

because I could not even think about complaining against my family even though I knew the FPD was there to help. So, when a situation arose where I needed help, I thought about them (Badriya, 17 years).

It was also interesting to note that some of the girls and young women had favourable expectations of the FPD, even before they sought help from them.

I knew the police are safe and I trusted them to protect my rights. In fact, I preferred telling the problem to them than telling my parents. Also, I could trust them to keep my secret and not spread any news (Niveen, 14 years).

I knew the FPD have great power. When I got into trouble, I knew I had to seek help from someone stronger than him [the blackmailer]. I needed the FPD's support to make him stop controlling me and to protect me from him (Samira, 16 years).

Even in situations where the girls were nervous about going to the FPD, they recollected how, once they approached the FPD, they felt safer.

I felt comfortable. I finally had peace of mind. I was no longer fearful of my brothers. It made me feel bad about the terrible attitude I had and I promised myself I would be more thankful of Allah once I leave the care centre (Samira, 16 years).

I felt safe. I still feel safe. I am learning a lot from the lectures here in the care centre. They teach us how to be aware about things around us. There are people here who I love and who love me. Also, compared to before, I actually spend more time with my mother and we have become close. I hope I can go back to her when I leave the care centre (Badriya, 17 years).

I feel very relaxed. I know I did the right thing by coming to the FPD. They assured me that no one would touch me anymore. I am happy and safe here with my sister. There are a lot of other children around my age and lots activities and sports for us to do (Lojain, 11 years).

I was very worried before I went to the FPD. They helped me calm down and I learned to trust them after they told me that I have done nothing wrong. They are here to support me so I and my baby will be safe and fine (Amal, 14 years).

Relief and pain after the traumatic experience

The girls reflected on the relief and pain they experienced after the trauma. Support from family and favourable changes in behaviour were described as a relief. However, staying away from family, honour-killing, loss of trust and community disapproval were shared as painful experiences.

Samira was grateful for the support she received from her family:

I am so happy that my mum helped me and stood by me. Sometimes only parents can find solutions to your problems (Samira, 16 years).

This opinion was shared by Niveen too.

I never expected my mum to support me, but she did. She supported me like never before. Now I share everything with her and I'm not scared of her at all (Niveen, 14 years).

In addition to support, the girls and young women also shared the self-development actions they embarked on.

I am more aware about my actions and its effects. I count to ten before doing even the simplest of actions. I now know that my actions have an effect on my family too and so I consider their wellbeing too. Even the manager of the care centre said that my behaviour has changed and that she is pleased with me (Shaha, 16 years).

I think I have a better understanding of real life. I understand the people around me and their intentions (Niveen, 14 years).

Amal, who became pregnant as a result of the sexual abuse, shared how she developed a deep care for her baby.

My baby makes me happy. I had a dream about him, his little hands and feet and his tiny clothes. I am most grateful for him (Amal, 14 years).

My conversation with Amal was extremely heartbreaking as Amal has mental and language disabilities. I realised that Amal had no understanding of the nature or seriousness of what happened to her and only knew that something ‘bad’ had happened. Nonetheless, during my conversation with her, she shared with me, through her limited words, how she now had a new responsibility to take care of her baby and wanted carry out this task well. She displayed a strong maternal care. My interaction with her was so moving that the social worker who was present for the conversation was unable to hold back tears and had to leave the room to compose herself.

The girls and young women shared some of the painful outcomes of the trauma of sexual abuse. Shaha said that she found the lack of mental stability and clarity to be extremely hard. Even though Shaha was at the care centre and received treatment from the psychiatrist during the time of the interview, she shared that, despite the medical assistance, her sense of her own wellbeing was low.

I don't know how to explain this. I know there is support and that there are people around me cheering for my wellbeing, but I cannot help feeling very lonely sometimes. I have had a difficult childhood. My mum left me when I was very young, after which I was raised by my grandfather. Now that he is dead, I feel like I've lost everyone. I feel defeated and like the world is against me. However, in spite of all the hardships, I'm still on my feet (Shaha, 16 years).

Lojain also expressed anxiety as a result of her experience and said that she worried about what would happen once she left the care centre.

Here I am with my sister, so I am happy but I am also worried because I know that when it is time for me to leave, we will be split up and that my sister will be taken elsewhere. This makes me worried (Lojain, 11 years).

Lojain recollected how horrific it was to pretend that the sexual abuse from her father was not affecting her. She insisted that she continued to pretend that the abuse was not affecting her, solely to protect her sister and to stop her from worrying.

Every night after he [her father] finished with me, I would cry in pain. I hid all of this from my sister. She was really young and I did not want to worry her. I also did not want to show my pain to my father because I was scared that he would turn to my sister then. I was not ok and I knew it was not normal but I did not show or tell my sister that to protect her (Lojain, 11 years).

Amal and Samira expressed that the physical distance from family was one of the most painful aspects of speaking up. Having had to stay at a care centre following the abuse, both of them felt removed and distanced from their family and expressed the desire to join them.

I am far from my mum and that saddens me. When I told her about my situation, she immediately believed me and took me to the FPD. Since then, I've been here. The only reason I reported [the abuse] was because I was unsafe. If not, I would not have reported and would have preferred living with mum (Samira, 16 years).

I thought I would only be here for a day and that after that I would be home, but the people here told me that I have to be here until I give birth. Now I have given birth, but I am still here. I just want to go back to my family. I don't know why I am still here (Amal, 14 years).

Many of the girls and young women mentioned the loss of trust as a heartbreaking outcome of betrayal and abuse.

The guy I trusted to begin a life with did this to me. Because of this I've lost everything – my studies, my family's trust, everything. People look at me like I have no morals, like I am evil. Now, I am carrying his baby and I have to marry him if I am to be able to keep my baby...but I don't know if he will treat me well. How can I ever trust him to do the right thing? Everyone prefers to believe him than me (Niveen, 14 years).

A similar emotion was expressed by Shaha too.

I was cheated by the very guy I loved and trusted. He played me and as result, my father is in prison. I had to live in a care centre. He really let me down (Shaha, 16 years).

Samira also spoke about the breakdown in trust, but the breakdown of trust in her immediate community. She shared her distress about how the society shunned her and blamed her for what had happened to her.

Neighbours and my relatives look at me with contempt, like I am a rude person. They think that whatever happened to me was with my consent. No one understands that I am a victim here. It is heart breaking to face this everyday (Samira, 16 years).

Niveen also expressed the lack of trust she experienced.

When I went to the FPD, I was told that no one else would know about my situation. That I would be married to him [the abuser] soon and everything would be back to normal. But that is not what happened. My uncles and relatives came to know about it and instead of believing in me and my mum, they believed him. No one chose to trust us (Niveen, 14 years).

Badriya added to the observations of Niveen and Samira regarding the loss of trust in both family and society. They all remarked on how, in the end, the girls and women remained the “biggest losers” as they face the most significant losses and the worst suffering.

It is not just me, I have listened to the stories of several other girls here and its true, we really are the biggest losers. Guys are special. Nothing affects them. These sexual abuse allegations won't even scratch their reputation They go on like before. However, this is not our case. Our lives, our reputation, our future, everything is destroyed (Badriya, 17 years).

The girls and young women also highlighted their tendency to blame themselves and the tendency of the immediate community and families to punish them for their mistakes.

I know I made a mistake. I understand that. However, my punishment should not be that he [her father] stops my studies and forces me to get married to a disabled man. By doing that dad is making me a victim over and over. How is stopping my studies or forcefully tying me to a bad marriage, a solution to my mistake? (Badriya, 17 years).

I was under the risk of being shot at sight. My brothers wanted me dead. They stopped me from going to school and finishing my education. Something bad happened to me and yet I keep on getting punished over and over again for it (Samira, 16 years).

Badriya spoke about honour-killing as one of the biggest dangers of sexual abuse. Honour-killing might extend to non-offending family members.

My dad is in prison now because he shot [the abuser's] brother. What was the reason for the killing? What did the brother do? He was a nice man with a young family. My father killed him to take revenge on his [the abuser] mother who questioned if I was actually my father's daughter. I wish this would stop. Why must innocent people lose their life? I would much prefer that I die instead (Badriya, 17 years).

While reflecting on their painful experiences, some of the girls and young women also highlighted a change in their view of the world, which was influenced by their trauma.

I learned that we should never trust people. I landed in so much trouble because I truly trusted people. We need to be smarter about it. Also, never trust men. They might say that they just want to be friends, but their intention is something else. Once I leave this care centre, I wish I never have to see another guy, except the guy who wants to marry me. Women are way more innocent. Men always have hidden agendas (Samira, 16 years).

I feel like I am looking at the world in a new light. I will definitely not trust any men. They only want one thing from us—sex—and once they get it, they have no hesitancy in discarding us. I will also be careful about trusting anyone in the society and that includes some of my relatives too (Niveen, 14 years).

Girls and young women, and their plans for the future

It was moving to note that some of the girls' and young women's plans for the future largely revolved around how they could be good mothers and how they could help their children grow up happily.

Once I have a daughter, I'll make sure that I am not just a mother to her but her friend too. I will make sure she can tell me anything she wants and is not scared of me. I see a lot of girls who are scared of their mums and don't share anything because they fear it will upset their mums. We won't be like that. I will make sure my daughter grows up in a safe environment (Samira, 16 years).

I had a bad relationship with my parents and my impression about them was totally negative. If this experience had not happened to me, I would have continued to have the same impression. However, this changed everything. I am more appreciative of my parents and I want my daughter and I to have the same relationship that I have with my mother. I want to share even the silliest details with my child. I want us to be very close (Niveen, 14 years).

Self-improvement also featured prominently in plans for the future. Most of the participants were eager to empower themselves through education and they were excited to take back control of their lives.

I have a beauty certificate and I am studying at the care centre. Once I leave here, I want to go back to school and make myself educated. I want to work and save money to support my father just like he supported me. I also want to get back the respect of my family. So many of them are still angry with me and blame me. I want to change their minds and make them love me and accept me again (Shaha, 16 years).

I want a fresh start. I stopped my studies after Year 7 and now I want to restart it. I want to learn new things, find work and make money. Maybe someday I will get married and if my husband allows me to work, I want to keep working. I want to delete everything that has gone wrong and start over (Samira, 16 years).

Taking back control of their lives, to some, meant breaking free of the relationships they had been forced to enter, while, to others, it meant entering into new relationships. Badriya, who was forced into a marriage by her father, wanted a divorce, whereas Niveen and Amal wanted to get married to the abuser in order to gain custody of their children.

I destroyed my life by agreeing to my father's wishes and marrying a man I did not like. I did this to prove my innocence to my father as he said that if I refused him, it meant that I was having sexual relations with my lover. Once I get out of here, I want to correct my mistake. I want to get a lawyer and get a divorce (Badriya, 17 years).

I need to be married to keep my baby. It is the only choice I have. I don't want my child to live in a care centre or be adopted by another family. I am his mum and I want to take care of him. The only way I can do that is by getting married to him [the abuser]. If that is what it takes, then I am ready to do that. I want my baby to be raised happy and that is with me (Niveen, 14 years).

I want my baby and I am ready to get married to get him (Amal, 14 years).

Girls and young women and their advice to other children and families

Based on their personal experience, girls and young women were happy to share words of advice on how other young people in situations similar to theirs might act. Additionally, they also advised other families on how they could support their children to get through the trauma.

All girls and young women insisted that the first step a child or young person must do when they become a victim of sexual abuse is to seek help. They underlined the importance of finding a person they trust and speaking up to them about it.

Tell your family or any person you can trust about your situation, otherwise it could become much worse. It is important to do this immediately or you could end with my fate or even have a far more terrible fate (Shaha, 16 years).

You need to find someone you trust and tell them about if you are unsafe (Samira, 16 years).

Speaking up as soon as possible is very important, especially for girls. This way no one can blame you later and say that had you spoken out sooner they could have done something (Badriya, 17 years).

Children should not delay telling their parents. I understand that it might seem scary but it is only because we assume they will be angry or that they will behave negatively. It is all just our assumptions (Niveen, 14 years).

They identified that fear could be one of the main reasons why children and young people delay help-seeking and hence highlighted the need for children and young people to push through the fear.

I would advise the girls to not be afraid, even if you don't have a strong character. You need to change and empower yourself to become stronger and defend yourself. Share your story with your mother or your sister...or anyone who can advise and guide you correctly (Niveen, 14 years).

You don't have to fear anyone, except Allah. No one else should make you afraid. If someone does, then shout at them, or hit them. Do anything except being afraid. If your mother is not there to help, then find someone else (Lojain, 11 years).

Girls also had advice for the parents. They requested parents to listen seriously to their children and believe them if they speak up about sexual abuse.

Parents just have to listen and believe their kids. No one wants to lie about such issues. Children are not creating stories from nothing. If they are telling you about such a terrible situation, then it will be true. Something terrible must have happened. Look at me, do you think I would say a lie to just send my dad to jail? I complained cause something happened to me (Lojain, 11 years).

I would advise the parents to believe in their kids. Don't assume that we are all liars and that our stories are lies. If they think that, then that is what they will get. Children will lose hope and faith in their parents' support (Badriya, 17 years).

Parents should not blame girls for something that happened without the child's consent. Instead they should teach her what is right and wrong so that the girl can take care of herself. It is a mistake to think that if you teach her about what is wrong and what is right, then she will be encouraged to go on the wrong path. It is really unfair of the parents to blame their children at the end, when they did nothing to teach them how to prevent it to begin with (Samira, 16 years).

The child is a victim here. Whatever happened is not her fault. She is small and cannot think about what has happened like an adult can. Parents need to understand this and support and believe their child. Do not assume that she is lying. She is coming and telling you everything to get help and support from you (Niveen, 14 years).

They [the parents] have to listen to their children and believe what they are saying. They also have to take their children to the FPD to solve the issue (Amal, 14 years).

The common thread in Lojain, Badriya, Samira, Niveen, and Amal's comments is the need for increased trust between parents and their children. All of the girls and young women highlighted the need for parents to listen to their children with an open mind and offer unconditional support. This need therefore emphasised the importance of developing a child-affirming approach in parenting practices. Consequently, when a child-affirming approach is applied to the Micro layer, its effects will be seen in all layers of the child's ecological system (Micro, Exo and Macro) and thus influences on the decision to speak up.

Shaha, speaking from her own experience, advised and requested all mothers to not abandon their children, blaming parental neglect for children coming in harm's way.

My advice to all mothers is to stay with their kids and not leave them behind. No one can take a mother's place in a child's life. My mother

left me when I was really small. Had she been around then, I would not have experienced sexual abuse (Shaha, 16 years).

Boys and young men

Having discussed the reflections of girls and young women in the section above, I now focus on the reflections of boys and young men. I spoke with three male participants, including a boy of nine years and two adolescent young men of fourteen years. Another boy was referred to me but he spoke about the abuse of his sister not himself. He was not included in this study. While two of the three boys and young men opened up to me about their traumatic experiences, one young man initially avoided talking to me about harassment. However, during our conversation, he opened up about his painful experience. Out of the three boys and young men, one boy was sexually abused and the two young men were sexually harassed. The following table provides a brief biography of the boys and young men that participated in the study.

Table 4 Biography of the boys and young men (participants)

Boy's/young man's name	Boys and young men
Ehsaan 14	Ehsaan, 14 years old, grew up in care centres since he was a newborn. He has a speech impediment and was followed by more than one abuser within two years. He kept silent for two years then he spoke up after the care centre administrative staff changed.
Mohsen, 14	Mohsen, 14 years old, was exposed to verbal sexual harassment as an invitation to him to get involved in sexual relations with a guy in the care centre. He hit the abuser and went to the manager of the care centre to complain.
Rami, 9	Rami, 9 years, was sexually abused by another young person (13 years) on the roof of their home building. The perpetrator recorded a video while he was abusing the child and then showed the video to Rami's sister.

Boys and young men: Reflections on speaking up

When discussing their process of disclosure and their reflections about it, this group of research participants shared that one of the main reasons that held them back and delayed their help-seeking was fear. The boys and young men were fearful of the reaction

including judgment of their families and of other people who held positions of power in their lives.

I did not want to be punished for something I did not do. I did not want to make a problem where I would be blamed. I did not want to miss school due to it. Also, I don't like others to know about me. Once they come to know, they will tell someone else and then everyone will come to know about it. I don't want other people to think that I am dirty or feel that they can easily take me. I did not want to be abused and I don't want people to think that I like it (Ehsaan, 14 years).

Ehsaan's words highlighted his fear of punishment, his fear of being blamed and his fear of revictimisation and ridicule. It also highlighted his fear of the immediate community's judgment and how people might think he enjoyed the abuse and is therefore available for further abuse. Thus, Ehsaan provided a complex set of statements as to why he delayed help-seeking. His statement reflected the kinds of survival strategies that children who have been sexually abused can adopt in order to overcome their fear of being revictimised (Horne, 2001).

Ehsaan's comments demonstrated the struggles that many children and young people expressed and experienced. The fear of consequences appears to be a key factor that prevented the boys and young men from seeking timely help. Ehsaan spoke about the traumatic internal struggle and suffering that arose during the delays in help-seeking.

I spent two years feeling afraid. I was worried that if I spoke up, they [the school's manager and the care centre's administration] would not believe me. I was always scared. I could not sleep and even when I tried to, I would just end up thinking about him [the abuser] and how I could escape him. I even lost my appetite (Ehsaan, 14 years).

Rami said that it was not fear in his case that delayed disclosure, but his feeling of shame at the prospect of talking to his parents about the abuse.

I would never have told anyone. I feel really shy to tell others about what happened to me. I only could speak about it because my sister told my mum about it. Then I told her [mum] everything (Rami, 9 years).

The boys and young men also shared with me the length of time it took them to speak up and who they talked to. Ehsaan waited for two years before he spoke up, and when he did, it was in careful steps.

I silently carried the sexual harassment for two years as I thought the guy would stop or leave my school. It did not happen and he continued to harass me. Finally, I got so angry that I told one of my close friends about it. He knows a lot of my secrets and so I knew this one would also be safe with him (Ehsaan, 14 years).

Again, Ehsaan highlighted the importance of trust and privacy in first telling a close friend. The first adult he told, a teacher, left the responsibility for managing the situation with Ehsaan.

I also spoke to my Arabic teacher about this and he advised me to keep away from the guy (Ehsaan, 14 years).

It took a third disclosure effort before Ehsaan was afforded the protection that he sought.

Mum [the social worker] was not here earlier, but once she came here, I complained to her about that guy [the abuser]. Mum then spoke to the manager of the care centre and they together went to the school's manager. I know they love children and that they care about us here (Ehsaan, 14 years).

Mohsen, too, was at a care centre at the time he experienced sexual harassment. He approached the manager immediately and spoke to him.

I knew that the manager would believe me, so I spoke up to him on the same day that it happened. He is a good person and I knew he would support me. He believed me and supported me as he knew how bad the other guy is (Mohsen, 14 years).

Ehsaan and Mohsen shared the conviction that disclosure can only occur if they have someone trustworthy in whom to confide – a person who they can rely upon to provide protection and support. This was crucial to their process of speaking up about abuse. The first person Ehsaan spoke up to was his friend who he was sure would keep his secret.

He did not expect him to get help. However, his Arabic teacher, who he thought would help, just advised Ehsaan to keep himself away from the harasser. It took Ehsaan a long time after this effort to find someone he trusted and, thus, it was only after a social worker he knew from his previous care centre (who he considered to be like a mother) joined his current team that he was able to speak up about the abuse and seek help. Mohsen too disclosed the abuse to a manager he considered to be a “good guy” and one he knew would support him and believe his story.

In the case of Rami, however, the speaking up happened spontaneously and without any preplanning. Rami was running away from his abuser, when he ran into the abuser’s brother. Upon informing the brother what happened, the brother took Rami with him back to the man who had abused him, and the brother punished the abuser for his actions by hitting him.

I did not want to tell him or choose him. I was running away from the guy [the abuser] when I saw his older brother. I told him what happened, he took me to the guy and hit him very hard in front of him. He told the guy that he will hit him more and punish him (Rami, 9 years).

Receiving support

Despite the internal struggles, suffering and dilemmas that the boys and young men experienced, they shared that, when they spoke up, they received support regardless of whether it was their intention to speak up or not.

When I told my mum, she asked me to change my clothes quickly, and my aunt advised her to take me to the FPD. I was happy as I knew that they would now punish the guy and send him to prison, but I did not know that they would make me stay at the care centre (Rami, 9 years).

After speaking up, I have peace now. The bad guy is no longer there and I feel safe and can walk around happy. My mother [social worker], my manager and the school authorities helped me. I feel like a hero (بطل) (Ehsaan, 14 years).

After speaking with the manager, I felt like a strong man who can defend himself. I feel like I can protect myself (أستطيع الآن أن أحمي نفسي). I also

advise other children on how to stay safe from the traps such people set (Mohsen, 14 years).

Reflections on the past and plans for the future

The boys and young men shared their reflections of their traumatic experiences. Rami, in particular, shared that he wished his mum had kept the knowledge of his sexual abuse to herself and had not shared the information with his aunt as it was on the aunt's advice that they went to the FPD.

I wish my mum hadn't told my aunt. It is because of this that I had to stay at the care centre away from my family (Rami, 9 years).

Rami's wish does not come from any unhappiness with the FPD but from the sadness over having to leave his family and live in a care centre. This consequence was unexpected and he shared his feeling that, if he had known of it, he would have tried to stop his family from going to the FPD, who then referred him to the care centre to keep him safe.

It is possibly due to Rami's young age (nine years old) that he was not aware about the seriousness of the abuse. When asked about what saddened him most about the trauma, he replied that it was the loss of his kite.

I lost my kite which I like to play with every day on the roof. My sister destroyed it because I was playing with my kite when the guy came and did bad thing to me (Rami, 9 years).

Rami expressed his disappointment over the lack of apology from his abusers.

I saw my abusers again at the FPD when I had to confirm that they are the people who hurt me, but even then, they did not say sorry to me (Rami, 9 years).

The male participants expressed sympathy toward their abuser/harasser(s). All the boys and young men showed concern towards them and tried to give them the benefit of the doubt and prevent harsh punishment from being inflicted on them. This sympathy is also reflective of another internal dilemma that the boys and young men struggled with. On the one hand, they want safety and security from abuse; on the other hand, they do not want their offenders to be harshly punished.

I felt very sad for them when he [the abuser] was being beaten up by his brother. His brother kept hitting and kicking him. It was hard (Rami, 9 years).

Both Mohsen and Ehsaan spoke about providing their abusers with the opportunity to redeem themselves. Mohsen requested his manager to not send the abuser to jail, reasoning that it was perhaps his perpetrator's first attempt at abuse. Ehsaan said that he gave his abuser two years' time to stop harassing him before reporting him.

When the guy tried to touch me, I hit him and ran to tell my manager. The manager told me that he would send him to jail but I requested him to not do that. I wanted to give him a chance. Maybe it was his first time, he did not abuse me, he only tried to before I ran away (Mohsen, 14 years).

I really tried to avoid him (أتجنبه) . For two years I did not complain. I kept giving him chances to leave me alone. It was only when he showed he will not stop following me then that I complained (Ehsaan, 14 years).

Despite the painful experiences that boys and young men went through, they did not lose hope for their futures. Ehsaan wanted to spend his life helping other children and young people.

I want to be an investigator when I feel that now I grow up. I want to help other children and people by catching the bad guys...I want to help give people their rights and to support them in their problems (Ehsaan, 14 years).

Rami, who loves to fly kites, wanted to become an Air Force pilot.

You know what, I wish when I grow up to be a pilot in Air Force (Rami, 9 years).

Boys and young men and their advice to other children and families

Understanding that seeking help from parents is a difficult task, the boys and young men suggested confiding in someone else outside of the family and using their support to seek help from parents as a solution.

I suggest finding a teacher you can speak to freely. It is better than directly telling your parents. Parents can get angry and they will not listen to the whole story, but teachers are not like that. They will listen to you and understand your situation and then call your parents to talk with them on your behalf. They can convince your parents that you are innocent. Also, they will keep your secret and not tell others about it (Ehsaan, 14 years).

Sometimes you might feel shy or scared to speak to your parents. If so, then find someone else who you can help you speak with your parents. Someone like your best friend who you know will be on your side (بِدافع عنك). If not your best friend, then anyone else who can speak to your parents and explain the situation to them will do (Mohsen, 14 years).

Ehsaan's and Mohsen's advice to other children and young people reflected their awareness of how difficult it is for children and young people to find the courage to speak up to parents and disclose sexual abuse. This reluctance to speak to family demonstrates the need for child-affirming parenting practices, which gives children and young people the opportunity to express themselves and be heard and believed by their parents. In Chapter Two, I discussed the bi-directionality of the Micro level in each child's ecological system, explaining that children's, young people's and parents' behaviours and beliefs impact most significantly on one another. If children and young people are given a safe space in which to speak freely with their parents, the children and young people will be assured that they will be heard, believed and supported. They will therefore not need to find an in-between person to inform their parents of the abuse. Rami offered different advice from Ehsaan and Mohsen, arguing that the best way for children and young people to speak up was to go to their parents as soon as possible.

Just tell your parents. The parents will know what to do. They will go to the FPD and the bad people will be punished (Rami, 9 years).

Mohsen also insisted that children and young people should repel their abuser in whichever way possible, including hitting them and running away.

Children should hit anyone who tries to touch them and then immediately go and complain to their families or the police. They have to do whatever they can to stop the bad guy (Mohsen, 14 years).

Mohsen also advised the parents on how to react when their child tells them about the abuse, suggesting the infliction of violence as a way to teach children and young people how to defend themselves.

If your child comes and tells you that he could not protect or defend himself against sexual abuse then you have to hit them hard (لازم يضربوه بقوة). No matter how powerful the bad guy is, the child has to do something to protect themselves. They could hit the person or throw stones at him or throw sand in his eyes. By hitting the child, the parents will be able to teach him how to act if someone tries to touch him (Mohsen, 14 years).

This advice from Mohsen, asking parents to beat their children up, is Mohsen's idea of a practical means for preparing children and young people to protect themselves. If parents hit their children and offer them the opportunity to fight back, their children will be better equipped to defend themselves from potential abusers. An observation of such violent parental practice has also been made in the girls and young women section of this chapter, where three of the girls and young women I spoke with shared their experiences of domestic violence. In Chapter Six, too, there is one family that spoke about how they use violence as a good disciplining tool.

Chapter summary

In this chapter, I discussed the main points that were shared by girls, boys, young women and young men. I presented their views in two different sections. The first section detailed the views of the girls and young women, following which I presented the views of the boys and young men. The girls and young women shared the dilemmas they faced when speaking up and the problems that arose as a result of their delayed help-seeking. They also reflected on their painful experiences of abuse.

The girls and young women I spoke with have navigated life-threatening situations and fears, and have faced intense internal struggle before speaking up. Despite these obstacles, the girls and young women demonstrated their skills and strength in navigating

these difficulties by mustering the courage to go to the FPD and disclose the abuse. Some girls and young women, like Lojain, were faced with the challenge of speaking up many times over and in different ways in order to be heard. For others, it took a long time to build the courage to speak up for the first time. The girls and young women remarked that, if had they had overcome this struggle and sought help sooner, then it would have protected them from much of the suffering they had experienced. In conversation with the girls and young women, I learned about their trauma and the effects of speaking up. Some girls and young women even found that speaking up helped contribute to an improvement in their relationship with their parents. They also discussed how their relationship with their parents prior to speaking up prevented them from sharing their thoughts and feelings freely. Many of them struggled with fear and accusations from parents and siblings. Some situations escalated. For instance, Badriya's father killed the abuser's brother. Yet, others were smoothed out, as was the case with Niveen and her improved relationship with her mother. Some girls and young women were faced with the pressures of forced marriage or blackmail. Badriya, for instance, was threatened that photos of her would be posted online all while experiencing fear of her father. Each girl and young woman faced a unique situation and had to make her own assessment of the potential consequences before deciding to disclose the abuse.

In addition to speaking about their parents and families, the girls and young women commented on all the layers in their ecological systems, including their relationships with, and support from, social workers, psychologists and the FPD. The girls and young women also spoke about the unexpected situation of needing to stay at the care centre for their safety. They talked about the process of disclosing and reporting abuse by approaching people at different layers in their ecological systems. The girls and young women also expressed their gratitude for the Family Protection Department (FPD) and the support they received in the process of speaking up. Some young people spoke of their surprise at the high level of support from the FPD and social workers while others said they were unprepared to leave their family homes.

The girls and young women shared their plans for their futures as well as words of advice for other children, young people and families who might be facing the same hardships as them. Overall, the girls and young women displayed remarkable maturity and were able to look beyond their suffering in order to stay hopeful for a happier future.

The boys and young men shared their reflections about speaking up and receiving support. They, too, reflected on their hard experiences and shared their plans for the future, expressing a similar gratitude for the support they received. The boys and young men offered their reflections on the tough situations they underwent, highlighting their fear and shame about the consequences of speaking up. They expressed a fear that people would blame them for the abuse, along with shame about fearing that their friends might bully and tease them for being abused. They shared their concerns that the community might think of them as easy targets for abuse. The boys and young men also spoke about the time it took them to speak up, with two of the three of them not speaking up for years after the initial abuse. They remarked on the different responses to their disclosure, including reactions of surprise and shock. The boys and young men also had vital advice for other children, young people and families in similar situations. An important finding from my conversation with the boys and young men was that they spoke compassionately about their abusers. Despite the harm done to them by their abusers, they still gave the perpetrators the benefit of the doubt and wanted them to be spared from harsh punishments. Thus, all the children and young people I spoke with provided unique insights into their process of speaking up and the emotions and understandings from it.

These very emotional accounts of children's and young people's experiences of disclosing sexual abuse in Jordan have revealed their pain of subjugation, silencing and disregard. Their inspiring stories demonstrated how their compassion, courage and resilience enabled them to rise above their suffering to break the silence surrounding sexual abuse. They showed that love wins; Niveen's protective and caring instinct for her unborn baby offers hope for a future in which all children and young people are loved and listened to unconditionally.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Discussion

Introduction

Professionals and researchers have agreed that the sexual abuse of children and young people is an international problem (Barth, Bermetz, Heim, Trelle & Tonia, 2013; Stoltenborgh, Van Ijzendoorn, Euser & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2011; Veenema, Thornton & Corley, 2015). There is an international interest in making it possible for children and young people to disclose sexual abuse. Many scholars agree that it is important to understand the cultural and social norms that affect the willingness of victims and their families to disclose abuse (Katz, Tener, Marmor, Lusky-Weisrose & Mordi, 2020). The professionals I spoke with demonstrated a similar understanding and appreciation of the Jordanian cultural context as well as the challenges that come with it.

Initially, when I set off to New Zealand from Jordan, I carried with me not just my luggage and other necessities, but also the trust and faith that my family, friends and colleagues had placed in me. I started my research with a relentless conviction to make heard the voices of the children and young people in Jordan who have been sexually abused. In New Zealand I was inspired by my supervisors, who believed in me and guided me in my research. During this journey, I frequently drew strength from my faith and the blessings of Allah, sometimes for guidance, sometimes for support and sometimes for a hand to urge me on.

This study is one of very few qualitative studies of child sexual abuse in Jordan and thus breaks new ground. In Chapter Three I detailed the many obstacles I encountered in my efforts to find appropriate ways to invite children, young people and parents to participate. Understandably, those with responsibilities to protect children and young people acted with caution because research data being generated in qualitative interviews poses a significant threat to the private aspects of people's lives. A great deal of care is therefore needed, especially when the research investigates children's and young people's lives (Ellis, 2007).

The findings are captured in four separate chapters, each representing what could be learned from each of the four groups I interviewed: senior policy makers and managers, social workers and psychologists, families (three mothers, a grandmother, one father),

and the children and young people. These chapters described the complexity of the process of disclosure, which encompasses more than just the act of actually speaking up. I detailed the comprehensive factors that influence the process of disclosure, such as legislation in Jordan, the social and cultural practices prevalent in Jordan, and parenting practices. The influences of patriarchy and hierarchy, and how children and young people are positioned within parent-child relationships, are a particularly significant focus.

Those four findings chapters, together with this discussion, respond to my two main research questions: *How do Jordanian children and young people speak up and break the silence when they have been sexually abused? What factors influence their actions towards speaking up?* In this chapter, I discuss the implications of this study and the key findings about the complexity of speaking up about the sexual abuse of children and young people in Jordan.

What I learned from sensitive research

How one goes about sensitive research when one is face-to-face with one's participants is so central to this study, and so important to me, that I shift to record a statement of belief and practice. To capture some of my contributions to sensitive research interviewing, I present this statement of belief and practice as though I am accountable directly to the children and young people for my research practice. Children and young people came to the interviews with different experiences of shame, blame and judgment, which I approached with care and sensitivity. In brief statements, I show the claims for how I undertook this research.

I sat with you.

I listened to understand your story.

I cared about what you told me.

I accepted what you told me.

I did not judge.

I cared for you.

I followed your story gently as you spoke.

I paused and thought before I asked you a question.

My senses were softly alive to your responses.

I was alert to the space where hurt and fear may find you – where shame, blame and judgment might touch or hurt you.

I believed you as you spoke to me.

I believe you now.

I cared; I saw your accomplishments.

I respected you.

Your story still matters to me.

Consequently, during the interviews,

I learned with you,

I was moved by your story,

I was changed and

You gave me hope.

It is difficult to convey on the page the skills applied to such sensitive encounters. The shift to this form helps me to demonstrate the relational qualities that I brought to the research interviews. What manifested from these interviews was my own increased sense of connection with the children and young people and their stories. The children and young people contributed to the researcher I became through this study.

This study is ground-breaking for children and young people in a Jordanian context, particularly in terms of offering a safe space in which the children and young people spoke openly about their disclosure. The interviews purposely avoided focusing on the trauma; however, when the children and young people spoke about their trauma, I called on my compassion and my therapeutic knowledge to listen in a way that respected the challenges and fears that they encountered in their painful experiences. I listened to the children and young people when they detailed the actions they took towards disclosure and they trusted me enough to share their thoughts and feelings. This trust has contributed significantly to the richness of the data that I generated from these interviews.

Participants were also given the opportunity to formulate their own analyses, with which they could look back to their actions of speaking up and consider these actions to be accomplishments that are a part of their identities. They have spoken up, stood strong and found a place for themselves. Ehsaan's statement that he felt at peace and like a hero after speaking up is one example of the children's and young people's assertions of identity.

In recognising their identities and accomplishments, the children and young people were able to reach a new recognition that expanded on their future hopes, dreams and plans. I applied a child-affirming approach in the interviews when I placed the participants in the role of consultant by asking them what they would advise other children, young people and families. Occupying this advisory role enhanced the children's and young people's understandings of their own value and strength.

Now I move my discussion from how this sensitive research was undertaken to a discussion of the implications of what the study found. My aim in presenting and highlighting the sensitivity in my discussion is to find options for navigating the hurdles that prevent so many victims of sexual abuse from speaking up.

Honour-killing

Sexually abused children and young people commonly experience continuing fear of being stigmatised, blamed or even punished because of the abuse they suffered (see, for example, London, Bruck, Ceci & Shuman, 2005). In addition to such fears, four of the girls and young women that I interviewed, Niveen, Samira, Badriya and Amal, expressed an additional fear of being revictimised and getting hurt by their own family's members; that is the fear of 'honour-killing'.

As discussed in the literature review, honour-killing is considered an extreme gender-based violence (Al Gharaibeh, 2016). Honour-killing is a punishable crime under Jordanian law. Nevertheless, it was a common concern raised by all participant groups. Senior policy makers and managers, social workers and psychologists, families, and the girls and young women themselves spoke about the threat of honour-killing as a main factor that influenced their actions and the process of disclosure. While sexually abused children and young people may be stigmatised, blamed or punished in any country, the

situation is particularly complex in Jordan because the girls who are victims of sexual abuse may be killed by men from their own families in the name of family honour.

Girls and young women

Despite improvements to legislation, governmental efforts to reduce honour-killings, and the noticeable decline in reported cases of sexual abuse, honour-killing remains a life-threatening practice in Jordanian society. There is still social pressure on the family to practise honour-killing. This affects sexually abused girls and young women and leads them to take different actions for disclosure after their traumatising experiences. Some of my study's participants, such as Niveen (14), Samira (16) and Badriya (17), said the fear of honour-killing dominated their thoughts. All these girls had previously experienced family violence, which amplified the fear of honour-killing. They had to use their own judgment to decide which would be the safest action to take, to speak up or not.

The children and young people had to put their pain of being victims of sexual abuse aside and think about making a decision about disclosing the abuse, which is not an easy feat when faced with such a complex situation. For instance, Samira asked her mother to find her help once she realised the serious situation and the risk of death. By contrast, Niveen and Badriya chose to wait until they found it safe to speak up and they reported their situations to the police (FPD). In Samira's case, fear of honour-killing encouraged her to disclose the abuse and seek help. For Niveen and Badriya fear of honour-killing led them into silence and a delay in seeking help. Perhaps Samira was able to speak about the abuse because she had a supportive mother who stood by her. When Niveen and Badriya spoke up they did so to the police, who they believed were more likely to offer protection and keep them safe from the perpetrators, and from harm at the hands of their families. Niveen knew her parents would hurt and felt safer with the police. The effect of the interaction between the child and the parents on disclosure can be understood through Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory.

As the parents are within the microsystem layer, closest to the child, the relationship between the child or young person and the family, and the belief and value systems learned from family, have a direct impact on the decisions the child or young person will make when speaking up. As victims, the children and young people have not done anything wrong, but they have clear knowledge of the risk to their lives. The child's

awareness of the threat of honour-killing is a result of the Macrosystem, which includes the social system and cultural beliefs. They knew that the threat of legal punishment, within the Exosystem, would not stop their family members—most often their fathers, brothers or uncles—from committing honour-killing. When children and young people fear that the consequence of speaking up about sexual abuse could be loss of their lives, they suffer through the trauma of sexual abuse in silence and they delay seeking help.

Families

While the victims' main fear was being revictimised and killed in the name of honour, the families feared being stigmatised by the community. They were concerned about facing their extended families, closer community and friends because sexual abuse carries such cultural and social shame (Macrosystem). Being a family of a sexually abused girl or young woman (Microsystem) may lead to a family being accused of disgracing the honour of the extended family (Exosystem). The families face the dilemma of choosing between living with dishonour, or removing what the wider family/community Exosystem considers ignominy, by killing the victim.

In a patriarchal social system, which puts men in charge of defending family honour in particular ways, there is a societal expectation that men take aggressive actions against those who, allegedly, destroy or disgrace the family's honour. Killing the person who brought disgrace to the family name is seen as 'washing away the shame of the sexual abuse' and regaining the acceptance of the extended family and the surrounding community, who are within the Macrosystem layer of the child's ecological system. The influence of the Macrosystem layer has a cascading effect in the interaction of all the other layers or ecosystems in the life of the girls and young women. For example, if the cultural belief or expectations of the Macrosystem is that the family should defend its honour by killing the victim of sexual abuse (the child), then it affects the parent's responsibility towards their child and their inherent duty to protect their child as is the expectation from the child's Microsystem. Here, the pressure of the Macrosystem may override the responsibilities of the Microsystem for care and protection of the child, resulting in the family becoming a threat to the child. This attitude and practice align with the findings of Abu-Baker (2013), who studied the reaction of Arabian parents in Israel towards child sexual abuse, concluding that the interests of the family were prioritised over the child, and, therefore, families worked towards covering up the abuse to prevent being stigmatised and marginalised.

A father's resistance to committing honour-killing

My study was enriched by the discussion of honour-killing and the complexity of the patriarchal system offered by Amal's father. I earlier described him as a tall man with a long beard, dressed in a long white robe; he embodies the core principles of the Islamic faith. Amal's father told how he had had to justify the innocence of his daughter who has cognitive and language difficulties to his brothers. The compassion that Amal's father has for her was expressed through care and love for his daughter (Microsystem). He was adamant that no harm would come to her for as long as he lives.

At the same time, Amal's father was under the pressure that he and his family would be subject to contempt from the surrounding community (Exosystem) if he did not react to the abuse by killing his daughter. Amal's uncles were influenced by the Macrosystem and therefore they argued for honour-killing. Amal's father, however, argued primarily on the grounds of compassion that Amal clearly neither misbehaved nor willingly had sexual relations and became pregnant. Meanwhile, he expressed to his brothers (Exosystem) his care for the family honour (Macrosystem) and therefore attempted to find a solution with the abuser's family. However, their denial of their son's crime made Amal's male family members take a collective decision to seek justice from the police (FPD) in order to punish the abuser, prove Amal's innocence as a victim, prove the filiation of the baby, and protect the life of both mother and baby. Amal's father's story is a compelling one. The father has compassion for his family and daughter. His responsibility was wide-ranging – to Allah, to himself now and on the day of judgment, to Amal and to the unborn child: *"it is a sin to kill two souls"* (Amal's father).

Amal's father was better positioned to act against cultural imperative/rule because he practised his religion faithfully and incorporated his beliefs into his everyday life. Amal's father brings together a combination of care and compassion, justice, Islam and a spiritual understanding of life. Although in some sections of Jordanian society it may be claimed that honour-killing derives from the instructions of Islam, Amal's father protected two lives in the name of Islam.

The story of Amal's father expressed an important sense of compassion that resists the cultural norms of society. As Weingarten (2003) asserted, compassion is best understood as suffering alongside another with the intention of relieving that person's suffering but not necessarily getting mired in it. Amal's father's gift of life is not only a gift to his

daughter and his grandson, and potentially other children and young people, but also a gift of life to my study. Here is the story of a father who has so much to teach: he resisted patriarchal pressure, he resisted social and cultural pressure and he resisted family pressure to engage in extreme violence.

My study benefits greatly from the example of Amal's father as a role model for a Muslim Arab father whose daughter is a victim of sexual abuse. He dealt with the situation wisely despite all the pressures on him. Because of his care and compassion for his daughter (Microsystem), his care for the family honour (Exosystem), and his commitment to his culture and religious beliefs (Macrosystem), Amal's father tried all the possible approaches to prevent further harmful consequences of the abuse. His approaches included negotiating with his brothers, talking with the abuser's parents, referring to the FPD, and protecting his daughter and her baby. Amal's father, when faced with his daughter's sexual abuse becoming public, exemplified the possibility of contributing to the education of both family and other men about the importance of love, care, compassion, and responsible understanding of the principles of Islam. Through his ability for complex thought, he deconstructed the cultural ideas and practices of what is just and what is honourable. He demonstrated what it means to be an honourable man.

As I described in Chapter Six, Amal's mother also experienced social pressure to consider the value of her daughter's life. While Amal's father had social power, his wife was less well positioned in terms of the patriarchal system of justice. In response to the patriarchal system, which would blame her for what happened to Amal, she responded to the disclosure by intending to kill her daughter herself. However, she was restrained by relatives, before losing consciousness. Amal's mother's thoughts went straight to the Exosystem when she demonstrated concern about the judgment her family would receive from society if they found out Amal was pregnant.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems helped to highlight the pressure from society that would have shaped Amal's mother's reaction to finding out her daughter had been sexually assaulted and consequently was pregnant. As a parent in the Microsystem, Amal's mother finds herself with a pregnant daughter, which poses the threat of judgment and disdain from the Ecosystem and Macrosystem. However, the fact that some of her extended family members restrained her from taking violent action demonstrates a deeper complexity at play within the family, immediate and extended. Since the

Microsystem does not exist independently of the surrounding Exosystem and Macrosystem, different decisions regarding Amal's life were being made for her at all the levels in her ecosystem. Although there was an imperative to kill, Amal and her baby remain alive. Amal's father saved more than two souls that day. He also saved some members of his extended family from committing murder.

Professionals

Honour-killing also affects the range of professionals to whom young people may disclose abuse. According to the mandatory reporting under the "Code of Protection Family from Domestic Violence" it is the responsibility of professionals to report any type of abuse that they notice, although they may be worried about risking children's and young people's lives to actions taken by their own families. Despite efforts to protect girls and young women, there is no guarantee that their lives can be saved from honour-killing. Manager AS expressed that the danger of honour-killing is the driving force behind the importance of reporting abuse, since doing so could save lives.

Professionals may also be threatened by abusers for reporting sexual abuse. Although the law of mandatory reporting grants the protection of identity for the reporter, participating professionals raised the concern that their identities could be leaked and become known more widely, which may put them at risk. Professionals who report sexual abuse, especially when the victims are girls, might be threatened by the abuser or the family of the victims who might feel that reporting the abuse compromised the family reputation.

Abu-Baker and Dwairy (2003) studied the cultural and legal intervention for treating incest within the Arab community in Israel. They stated that the direct implementation of the law against the abusers, without consideration of the culture, may threaten family unity and reputation, which may turn the family against the victim. Therefore, they developed a model in which cultural intervention, in a cooperative manner, precedes law enforcement for the sake of the victims and their families. Their model capitalises on the power of extended family before formally referring to the legal system. They argued that Arab and Muslim societies rely on a collective, authoritarian cultural system in which the family takes sole responsibility for the child's safety and survival. Abu-Baker and Dwairy have implemented this model in clinical cases with Arab families and recommended that the model be adopted by police workers, social workers and other professionals who are first to treat incest accusations. "When a mental health professional

receives information about incest, six stages are suggested” (Abu-Baker & Dwairy, 2003, p. 113). The first stage is verification of information, which involves identifying the indirect signs (such as a physical condition) of sexual abuse. The second stage is mapping the family, which requires a social worker to collect information about family members and family hierarchy in order to identify an appropriate “parental figure” who can support the victim. Abu-Baker and Dwairy noted that “It is crucial to find the ‘supportive parental figures’ immediately after the first disclosure of the incest” (2003, p. 115). The third stage is bonding with progressive forces, which requires the meeting of social workers, legal workers, community/religious leaders, supportive parental figures and social leaders such as teachers. The fourth stage is a ceremony which involves a condemnation, an apology, punishment and recognition. The fifth stage is treatment, which usually takes the forms of family therapy and individual therapy. Finally, the sixth stage is follow-up, which involves all parties involved so far, to ensure that the plan is being enforced.

This model suggested that the family is the main provider of victim protection, not the government. In the context of incest, Abu-Baker and Dwairy claim that, when law enforcement threatens to punish the perpetrators, the unity and reputation of the family will be threatened. Therefore, Abu-Baker and Dwairy suggested that culturally sensitive intervention may achieve the same objectives as the legal intervention. For this reason, their model might also prove valuable for helping other victims of sexual abuse who could benefit from improved cooperation between the layers in their own ecological systems. However, Fontes (2003) argued that this model neglected the fact that the perpetrators usually have more than one victim, and victims may be at risk of abuse from different perpetrators. He claimed the model prioritises the family interest and honour over the safety of the victim so the child or young person is not protected from future sexual abuse. Despite the limitations claimed by Fontes, the model provides an innovative and comprehensive approach to supporting victims of sexual abuse.

The six stages of the model reflected a similar movement to Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory: from the individual child (at the centre), reverberating through the layers, to the wider society (Macrosystem) and back to the centre again. This movement, if practised by the professionals who support victims of sexual abuse, maintains the capacity to give strength to the young person to speak up and to not pull back from therapeutic work. Furthermore, service providers can assist families and individuals to resist engaging in the life-threatening practices that many victims are exposed to. Niveen,

for instance, was at risk from her family once she became pregnant. When she went to the doctor, it was the doctor's legal obligation to report suspected sexual abuse, along with their history of cooperative relationship with the police (FPD). Niveen's trust in the police helped her to speak up about the abuse to police personnel, who referred Niveen to the care centres, where she was offered the support and safety she required.

For children and young people to learn trust, a process of cooperation must occur between all the systems and the main influential units within these systems. It is the responsibility of family, police, social workers and law makers, among others, to teach children and young people who they can trust. Building relationships based on trust creates assurance and security, boosts confidence in the child or young person and provides them with a supportive environment, instead of the isolation when faced with threats such as honour-killing. The importance of cooperation between the different layers of the ecological system was also highlighted during my interviews with the senior policy makers and managers, thus supporting the framework suggested by Abu-Baker and Dwairy. The professionals I spoke with emphasised that children and young people learning about trust can only be achieved through continuous cooperation between the different systems in Jordan, such as legislation, the Family Protection Department (FPD), the Ministry of Social Development (MSD), the Ministry of Education (MOE), the National Centre of Human Rights, the National Council of Family Affairs and the Jordan River Foundation (JRF). Cooperation between the authorities, NGOs, and professionals may provide more effective support with, perhaps, less harm for the victims and their families in Jordanian society. However, this cooperation between different systems does not necessarily produce or guarantee safety for victims, particularly in situations of incest.

Despite the benefits that Abu-Baker and Dwairy's model offered, stage two—identifying an appropriate supportive parental figure—will not necessarily be the safest option in most situations of incest. In my study, professionals argued that, while there was a low risk of honour-killing with incest, the opportunity to disclose abuse was also low. Reporting incest is most likely to happen if the girl gets pregnant or if professionals identify the abuse. Moreover, the family is unlikely to report the abuse if the abuser is a family member (see Chapter Five).

As mentioned in Chapter Seven, the complexity of Lojain's situation emphasised the limitations of identifying a suitable parental figure in circumstances of incest. After a

long period in which her parents were divorced, Lojain's father began to abuse her. Her mother, when she found out about the abuse, could not play the role of a confident parental figure since she herself was not in a position of power to act on Lojain's behalf. Lojain's mother could not report the father as the abuser but reported him for maintenance of their children instead. Even when going to the FPD for the first time, Lojain's mother could not tell her family about it and instead told them she was going to buy potatoes (see Chapter Seven).

Even though Lojain's parents were divorced and living in separate houses, the mother had no power, courage or bravery to report her ex-husband for the abuse. The place of women in society prevents them from being able to take a strong position where they can confront the male members of their family. Identifying a suitable parental figure in situations of incest, as suggested by Abu-Baker and Dwairy, therefore becomes complicated. Mothers (and other female family members) do not have enough power to support the victim. In order to identify a suitable parental figure, there needs to be a competent adult in a position of power who is either in the victim's wider family or outside of the family altogether. The challenges Lojain's mother confronted as a woman demonstrated that, perhaps, this figure may need to be a man in situations of incest.

Girls as the biggest losers

Within the Jordanian cultural context, girls and young women are seen as holders of the family honour. Their 'loss of virginity' before marriage is considered a disgrace to the family's honour. Additionally, loss of virginity leads to the loss of the girl's reputation. As Badriya emphasised, a girl's entire life and future can be destroyed. "*Girls are the biggest losers*" are words that I heard twice during my interviews, from both a professional and a young woman. As a Jordanian Muslim woman who is part of this conservative society, I understand the cultural norms, responsibilities and pressures that society puts on women to protect the family honour. Family honour is intrinsically tied to a woman's virginity and reputation: women are expected to remain virgins until they get married. The loss of a woman's virginity through sexual abuse is considered a disgrace and she is accused of maligning the family's reputation and honour. Hence, girls and young women are often revictimised through culturally imposed consequences (which are often life-long) within personal, family and social contexts.

Being victims of sexual abuse, the girls first experienced loss at the individual level: the loss of identity, the loss of autonomy and self-determination, the loss of self-esteem and personal honour, the loss of the hymen (in most cases), the loss of purity and the loss of hope. Their losses do not end here; they ripple out into their wider lives, affecting them at all levels of their Ecosystems. The girls experience loss at the Micro and Meso levels: loss associated with family and relationships (trust, care and belief), the loss of home (moving into care centres for their safety), the loss of education and the possible loss of friendships. Furthermore, the girls experience losses at the Macro level: loss of respect socially, culturally and religiously. They are seen as outcasts, responsible for the heinous abuse. Even neighbours might treat them with contempt, seeing them as amoral and constantly judging and blaming the girls for something they had no power or control over.

Consequently, the girls experience loss at the Chrono level. They lose possibilities for their futures; their lives are changed drastically by sexual abuse and they must rethink any life plan they had prior to their traumatic experiences.

Marriage without choice

Since the girls experience loss on most levels of the Ecological system, the effects may last their entire lives. For instance, their marriage choices are more limited. They find themselves in a position where everyone else gets a say but them. They have to follow what society, the community and the family expect. To protect family honour, a girl may be married off to her abuser, in an effort to save her reputation and keep the family honour intact; Niveen and Amal discussed this option. Marriage to the abusers was raised as a solution by some families. My findings reveal that such marriages have several underlying purposes.

In some instances, the marriage is contracted to make the abuser pay for the harm caused to the girl, especially if she has become pregnant from the abuse. The marriage may also help the young mother gain custody of her child, as the legal system in Jordan follows Sharia law, which grants custody of the child to the parents only if they are married; otherwise the child will be taken and raised as a ward of the state. In order to gain legitimacy for the child and to enable the child to carry their father's family name, girls and young women have to marry their abusers, as seen in the cases of Niveen and Amal. Marriage on these terms, however, not only deprives the girls of rights to self-

determination but also turns their lives upside down as they suddenly find themselves contending with a whole new position within their own ecosystem as well as that of the children they have conceived through abuse. Becoming mothers, they must attend to the Microsystem of their children rather than being at the centre of their own ecological system. I noticed the care and compassion that Amal and Niveen showed towards their babies during the interviews. They expressed their feelings towards their babies and their determination to protect their babies from further losses. For some, marriage is only carried out on paper and the girl soon gets divorced because, socially and culturally, it is more acceptable to be a divorcee than to be a victim of sexual abuse. In situations such as Badriya's, marriage is also seen as a method to prove one's virginity and purity, especially if there is a suggestion of romantic involvement.

While some families may not force girls and young women to marry their abusers, they are nonetheless motivated by marriage as a means to provide the girls with a fresh start, especially in cases where they were sexually abused but are still virgins. The impact of sexual assault on young Jordanian women is complex. Due to society's high value on virginity in a young woman, she is often seen as damaged and no longer marriageable. They must consider their safety in terms of ramus (gossip). Marriage is a viable solution for preventing gossip and thus fitting into the conservative expectations of Jordanian society, especially after sexual assault, which can be seen in the case of Samira. Ostensibly, these marriages are imposed as a solution for healing after sexual abuse and are at times used by the abused as the only way out. In reality, these marriages are not freely chosen and can have harrowing repercussions. Marriage to the abuser is more to repair the tarnished family reputation than to effectively recompense the sexual abuse. The marriage is a result of sociocultural pressure and family values, the Macro- and Exo-systems.

Loss (and gain) of education

Another significant way in which the girls' lives are impacted negatively is through education. When they are withdrawn from school, they lose one of their basic human rights – the right to learn. Most of the girls and young women I spoke with informed me that they had been unwillingly withdrawn from their school, their education discontinued or interrupted. Fear of loss of reputation and family honour, especially if the girl has become pregnant, prevents school attendance. In some cases, girls were able to continue their education after they moved to a different location where no one knew about their

situation. This practice of moving locations or ‘Ejlaa’, as discussed in Chapter Four, is a common practice for families as they face pressure from the extended families and immediate community. Several of the girls were able to resume their study once they moved to the care centres, as education is part of the support services offered to the children and young people by the Ministry of Social Development (MSD). This support reflects the positive effect that the Macrosystem has on the girls’ lives. The MSD offers social support and empowerment to girls and young women after their traumatic experiences. These girls and young women may have very limited choices after sexual abuse (as discussed earlier) and consequently lose many opportunities, such as education. In response to these losses, the ministry provides care facilities that offer education, which allows them to understand their rights, thereby potentially improving their welfare and contributing to their recovery. Whether they pursue their schooling or not, their social relationships are inhibited, often cutting the child’s connections with teachers and peers and impeding the relationship between teachers and parents.

Social losses

The Ministry of Social Development (MSD) works to improve the social welfare of those vulnerable groups, including victims of sexual abuse. MSD support should be applied in alignment with legislative approval and should be facilitated by state support services in Jordan. Legislation prioritises the best interests of the child, meaning that girls and young women should receive all their human needs, especially education. The arrangement provided by state support services and the MSD reflects the work being done by wider society (Macrosystem) to bring justice to victims of sexual abuse. The Macrosystem supports them legally and provides them with reporting services (such as hotlines and access to other family protection departments in the cities in Jordan) as well as a safe space and facilities to use (at care centres, for example). However, the Macrosystem does not support these girls in terms of the sociocultural expectations that are imposed upon them. This contradiction between laws/legislation and the cultural consideration at the Macrosystem level reflects the complexity of care and protection concerns in Jordan. Portraying the girls as victims is one of the challenges that the professionals I interviewed highlighted. Convincing families and relatives that girls are victims is very difficult because societal and cultural beliefs dictate that they are to blame, and accuse them of disobeying Islamic principles. As a result of the pressures of the Macrosystem, these girls also experience losses at the Mesosystem level.

As I reviewed their losses following sexual abuse, I realised how their future is shaped by society and how their options are limited by sociocultural norms and expectations. The young women's experiences of suffering are not just from the trauma of sexual abuse but because of the limitations following the abuse, revictimisation and the multiple losses that they suffer. These losses restrain the voices of the girls and affect their potential decision to speak up and report the abuse. The losses also deny them the opportunity to overcome the traumatic experience and move forward with their lives. Thus, they are hesitant to speak up and report the abuse because of the consequences they will face. The question that the study raises for service providers, families and society is, "Given the practices of the wider Ecological system, what reparative action can agencies and the wider society take to give these young people options for the rest of their lives?"

Girls and young women: Responses to these multiple losses

During my research conversations with the girls, they shared some heartbreaking stories. They experienced losses in each layer of their ecological systems: their autonomy, relationships, acceptance in society and their right to an ordinary life. Alongside the negative impact of these painful experiences, there were also reports of opportunities that care centres offered. In Badryia's words, the care centre used the language of the girls and young women's rights to empower the girls and help them to know their rights, to help them to know what they want and do not want for their lives.

Each participant had spent a different length of time at the care centre but they shared a common clarity about their futures. Although these girls and young women have been through intense trauma, the care centre provides them with a safe and stimulating environment in which to assess their options for their futures. They have a good understanding of what they want for themselves, particularly after they leave the care centre. They discussed their options for work, marriage and divorce. Furthermore, the girls demonstrate resilience and strength by knowing what they do not want. Badriya, for instance, knows that she does not want to be married. It should be noted that some of the things they want may not be possible. However, most of them had come to understand their rights as young women to have control over the choices in their lives relating to marriage, education and their sexual lives.

Education and empowerment at the care centres: Trust, life skills and future plans.

Traumatising experiences have changed the participants and have caused them to think again about trust. Niveen (14 years), for instance, spoke of seeing men in a new way, as people who cannot be trusted and only want to use girls and young women for sex. She also mentioned being more careful about trusting other figures around her, including relatives. While the girls and young women had lost the ease to trust, through supportive services from the care centre, they have also learned about trust and safety. They need to know who they can trust so they can protect themselves. Samira (16 years) told me she learned that she should never trust people. Samira and Niveen had found out about trust once their trust was breached. However, the care centre helped Samira and the other girls understand their feelings of mistrust towards men and review their knowledge and experiences of trusting and withholding trust, thus teaching them the kinds of interpersonal skills that might help make them feel safer and prevent them from further harm. Trust becomes something that the girls have the right to give or withhold and others must earn their trust. Trust is something learned slowly and over time through interactions with other people. A child or young person with a good understanding of trust likely has parents and teachers who show them who they can trust and who they should not trust.

It is very hard for victims of sexual abuse to trust others again since any stranger or new person could be seen as a threat. It is for this reason that trust should be taught within the context of sex education practices. Badriya (17 years) told me how she felt safe in the care centre and enjoyed learning there. At the care centre, the girls are protected and are provided with education about their rights, their bodies, their independence and sex education. This equips them with the agency to understand what options are available and to make decisions about their lives, including the possibility of completing their education once they leave. Although the care centre offers the girls a limited number of educational options like beauty, sewing and crafts, which are appropriate for Jordanian society's expectations of the place of women, the centre aims to teach skills that enable the girls to find work and become financially independent. The education the girls receive at the care centre is ultimately designed to empower them with the skills and knowledge necessary to move forward in the context of Jordanian society. It also helps them to focus on what they can do rather than what they have lost.

Many of the girls appear to be grateful for the preparation they receive at the care centre for pursuing their futures. Shaha (16 years) told me about her beauty certificate from the care centre and her dream to go back to school so she can get work and save money to support her father. The support the girls and young women receive encourages them to think about the changes they can make in their lives. The girls' self-esteem is greatly improved by the ideas that the care centre teaches them. The girls talk about their futures and potential jobs, how they want to help others (especially their families) and make their own lives better. One of the most valuable impacts the care centre services have is helping them to make the most of the limited options available to them in the wider society. Badriya wants to request a divorce after having been forced to marry by her father. Niveen and Amal want to marry their abusers so they can get custody of their babies. Furthermore, Niveen and Amal want to save their babies from the kinds of losses they experienced. They are now equipped with some ability to make decisions that affect their futures and their hopes, in the few socially acceptable options that are available to them.

Reflections on their parenting practices in the future

Many of the girls and young women at the care centre start to think about their futures as mothers and the kinds of parents they want to be. Samira (16 years) told about her plans to not only be a good mother to her daughter but to also be a friend who her daughter can be open with. Since their painful experiences, the girls and young women have become aware of the importance of their future mothering style and they understand the responsibility towards their children. The young women in this study want to love and support their children unconditionally, especially at potentially difficult times in the child's life. Their words reflect their awareness of the best interests of children and young people and the importance of creating a safe space in which children and young people can talk freely and share their thoughts and feelings without fear. This is what children and young people require from their parents (Jensen, Gulbrandsen, Mossige, Reichelt & Tjersland, 2005; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 1999). This care could equip the children and young people with the courage to speak up about any trouble they may face in the future, including unwanted sexual behaviours.

I asked the girls what they would advise other families in a similar position. They were really surprised by my question but it positioned them as having knowledge of value to others rather than being weak and destroyed. They surprised me with their wisdom. These

exceptional young women advised other families to stand beside their children. They suggested that other families think about the best interests of their children, in order to save other girls and young women from the losses they had experienced. Again, this is important knowledge that may come to shape the wider system. Their advice reflects the necessity for institutions to provide policies and accessible support that meet the specific needs of families in the wider community.

The evidence in this thesis is that the care systems in place in Jordan for young women and girls are effectively helping them to make better lives for themselves. From painful experiences and trauma, the young women and girls were able to begin to take steps toward hope for the future.

The implications of suffering for children, young people and families

Sexual assault is an unexpected crime, which occurs globally and across all kinds of settings. Recently, the emergence of the “#MeToo” movement (Bar’el, 2018) has extended from the west to Arab countries. Large numbers of well-known and respected women have been willing to speak up publicly in order to reduce blame and shame for all those who have experienced sexual assault. It is challenging to disclose abuse but a group movement can speak up. Moreover, people need to know that sexual assault may happen to anyone at any time and, while the abuse may cause suffering at the time, the consequences that follow the sexual abuse make the suffering worse. All the groups that I interviewed (senior policy makers and managers, social workers and psychologists, families, and children and young people) explained that the main causes of suffering for victims of sexual abuse and their families are blame and judgment, especially for girls and young women. While at the Micro level children and young people are scared of being blamed and judged by their families, the families are also scared about blame and judgment from extended family – the Exosystem. Therefore, each layer expects to be blamed and/or judged by the next layer. This vicious cycle of blame and judgment affects everyone in the family, including the extended family. Reporting sexual abuse involves a challenging contradiction between seeking justice and trying to avoid further suffering from the immediate community.

The complexity of disclosing sexual abuse is reflected by the legislation and sociocultural practice (Macrosystem). Legislation states that sexual abuse is a crime and

the victims of crimes are entitled to support. The State supports victims and families, and offers the social support they need as a vulnerable group. At the same layer in the ecological system, sociocultural practices blame and judge the victims and their families.

The implications of suffering for girls, boys and young people

The importance of virginity in the patriarchal system implies that the consequences of sexual abuse are mostly related to losing that virginity. Boy victims of sexual abuse, however, are judged in terms of their masculinity: their masculinity, safety and marriageability are threatened. Once they become victims of sexual abuse, they become targets for further sexual abuse and are assumed to be homosexual, which may result in propositions of same-sex relations. People may assume that boys and young men who are victims of sexual abuse enjoy or prefer sex with boys and men, or they may be considered feminine, thus damaging their sense of masculinity (see Harker, 1997). Ehsaan (14 years), when talking about how he is now seen as someone who is 'available', spoke of not wanting to be seen as dirty, easy or enjoying the abuse. Young heterosexual people continue to suffer as they have to defend their sexuality, insisting that they do not welcome homosexual relations.

The consequences of sexual abuse also include the futures of male victims and their opportunities of marriage. It is common in Jordan that, if the boy has been sexually abused, there are questions around his masculinity and ability to marry which become concerns of the girl's family. Boys and young men who are victims may not be considered to be 'proper' men; since their masculinity has been violated, they may be viewed as unable to live up to the expectations of a married man's role. There is a high possibility that a man will be rejected by a young woman's family once they ask about him and learn that he has been sexually abused during his childhood. It should be highlighted here that the tradition of marriage in Jordan is very family-centric (Al-Krenawi, Graham & Kandah, 2000); the girl's family will go to the man's place and ask people around them (immediate community, extended family, neighbours, shop men) about the family history. Therefore, if the girl's family learns about the sexual abuse, they are not likely to approve the marriage. In the collective society of Jordan the effects of sexual abuse are wide-ranging and families worry about judgment and blame from the wider community. It is therefore unsurprising that many families struggle with the decision about whether to speak up or not about sexual abuse.

The suffering of family

Regardless of the gender of the victim, families suffer. Extended family members and neighbours judge, blame and question the family about their parenting practices and their care of their children's safety: they accuse the parents of not being qualified to look after their children. This was discussed in Chapter Six in relation to Amal's parents and the pressure, blame and judgment they experienced from their extended family and neighbours. The girl's reputation coupled with societal pressure to remain a virgin until marriage has an impact on the family's image in the surrounding society (Exosystem). Moreover, there is further blame and judgment on the mothers of these girls (see Chapter Six, p. 63). Amal's, Niveen's, Badriya's and Samira's mothers explained how they got blamed, judged and consequently suffered from unfair treatment from the immediate community. Because mothers are considered to be the primary caregivers it is common to blame mothers and consider the child's sexual abuse a direct result of inept mothering. There is a Jordanian phrase "البنيت على أمها" – the daughter is like her mother, meaning that the behaviour of girls (whether good or bad) is the responsibility of the mother and will always be attributed to her. As a result, mothers take the brunt of the blame for what patriarchal society sees as girls and young women behaving unacceptably, including being subjected to sexual abuse.

There is also family responsibility. Sexual abuse will affect the family reputation and bring shame to the wider family as well, particularly siblings. The chances of marriage after sexual abuse are low: families will ask about a potential suitor's family history in order to keep their family reputation from being disgraced. If either family finds any transgression, or 'black stain' (نقطة سوداء), on the other family's history, this will decrease the chance that they will accept the marriage. A reputation of having been affected by sexual abuse will be associated with the family's name for the rest of their lives. Mostly it affects the sisters but it could also affect the victim's brothers. As a collective society, the decision for marriage is not related to the individual but the family, for both brides and grooms. Therefore, any stain on the family's history could prevent the marriage; even if the couple accepts the history and wants to get married, families can stop them.

The cumulative consequences on the families of victims add to the reluctance that victims and their families feel about disclosure; sexual abuse impacts on all of the layers of the victim's ecological system. Reviewing all the consequences that derive from sexual abuse, it is possible to see how the interactions between families and the wider society

operate (Micro- and Exo-systems). Furthermore, the Chronosystem sheds light on how the futures of victims, siblings and their families are affected after sexual abuse and how being a victim will have an ongoing effect on their lives and the lives of those close to them.

Considering how widely sexual abuse affects the lives of families, it is not surprising that many families choose to practice 'Ejlaa' (see Chapter Four) after the sexual abuse of a child. Although Ejlaa' is a practice predominantly forced upon the families of abusers, it is also adopted willingly by families of sexual abuse victims who want to avoid further suffering and prevent further oppressive consequences from affecting their lives. Families may want a fresh start away from blame, judgment and accusation and they can achieve this by relocating to a new place where the people do not know about the sexual abuse and so will not treat them as if their reputation has been tainted.

Public awareness and education need to be improved to reduce blame. Likewise, being the family of a victim does not mean that the parents care less about their children's safety, that they are unqualified as parents or that they have to be isolated from society. Sexual abuse can happen any time, any place and to anyone. Therefore, awareness and understanding of *care and compassion* (Gilligan, 1982), as opposed to judgment and blame, could prevent unnecessary suffering in the future for the victims and their families. These ideas are consistent with the Palestinian feminist scholar Shalhoub-Kevorkian's study of cultural and political practices and disclosure of sexual abuse:

Despite raised public awareness, as well as changes in social attitudes, behaviours, and definitions over time, sexual abuse remains a mechanism to oppress, suppress, and deny women of their humanity. Our case study...reveals how victims and helpers are affected by the sociocultural and political structures influencing the definition of sexual abuse (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 1999, p. 1290).

How people look at sexual abuse can shape its prevalence in society. If people are equipped with new social attitudes and behaviours, perhaps society's treatment of victims will be improved and the rate of oppression could be reduced for victims and their families. Victims and their families will be able to move on after their painful experiences because, instead of using sexual abuse as a mechanism to oppress and suppress and deny

humanity, society could offer care and compassion as a part of a movement towards social change.

In addition to raising awareness to reduce oppression, there is a need to raise awareness about what Islam teaches Muslim people to do once they know someone is in trouble or has had a difficult time. There are many verses in the Qur'an from Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) and the Hadith from prophet Mohammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم - peace be upon him) that clarify which practices people should adopt to help and support each other at difficult times. These verses teach that avoiding placing blame or judgment will bring rewards to those who offer their support:

يقول الله تعالى: (يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرْ قَوْمٌ مِنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِنْهُمْ)

“Oh you who have believed, let not a people humiliate/ridicule/mock [another] people; perhaps they may be better than them” (The Qur'an 49: 11).

يقول النبي محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم: "من نَفَسَ عن مؤمن كربة من كرب الدنيا نَفَسَ الله عنه كربة من كرب يوم القيامة. ومن يستر على معسر يستر الله عليه في الدنيا والآخرة. ومن ستر مسلماً ستره الله في الدنيا والآخرة والله في عون العبد ما كان العبد في عون أخيه"

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: Whoever supports or helps one another in a difficult time, Allah will help and support them in both life and the Hereafter. Don't distribute any information that will do harm to others and Allah will reward you for this. Allah will support the person as long as he/she supports others [Muslim].

These two verses from the Qur'an and Hadith reveal that kindness and compassion for others are ideal values to practice. However, the verses also suggest that there may be punishment for those who do place blame or judgment and cause further pain for others.

يقول النبي محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم: "لا تُظْهِرِ الشَّمَاتَةَ لِأَخِيكَ فَيَرْحَمَهُ اللهُ وَيَبْتَئِكَ"

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: “Do not express pleasure at the misfortune of a brother lest Allah should bestow mercy upon him and make you suffer from a misfortune” [Al- Tirmidhi].

Allah and the Prophet Mohammed teach us that human beings are not in the position to judge and blame one another. They guide us to show care, support and solidarity for our fellow human beings. Allah guarantees rewards for those who are kind, caring and supportive of others. Conversely, Allah threatens punishment (further suffering) on those who judge, blame and do not stand by others. These Islamic teachings form an important

resource to be used if Jordanian society is to take a more compassionate approach to the children, young people and families who suffer the humiliation of sexual abuse.

Parenting practices and the influence of patriarchy and hierarchy

Since family is considered to be the main source of personal identity and belonging in Muslim conservative culture (Al-Dousari & Prior, 2019), family honour maintains a significant influence on the reactions that family members experience in response to the different issues in their lives (Moller, Burgess, & Jogiyat, 2016), such as sexual abuse. Family honour and family reputation are some of the most important considerations in Jordanian society, and influence the decision to disclose sexual abuse and whether to report it or not. Additionally, parenting practice is a crucial aspect in the process of disclosure.

As discussed in Chapter Six families found the opportunity to reflect on how they raised their children, including mistakes they thought they had made. Although initially believing that they had raised their children appropriately, upon reflection they considered whether a different approach to parenting or communication could have prevented sexual abuse and the consequential delay in seeking help. Each family identified practices they would like to have done differently. Some parents use violence as a tool for discipline and protection; these forms of violence often stem from the pressure put on the family in various ways including on mothers who are considered responsible for raising children. Violence can be physical, psychological and verbal. Niveen's mother, for example, spoke of being strict with Niveen and trying to protect her by not letting her get out. When Niveen was abused, she did not tell her mother because she was scared of her mother yelling at her.

Niveen's fear reflects punitive parenting practices implemented by some Jordanian families, which scare children and young people and prevent them from speaking up about sexual abuse. Some parents believe they should discipline their children through corporeal punishment to toughen them up (especially for boys) or to teach them how to defend and protect themselves. Children and young people understand and share this belief, accepting violence from family and peers, and understanding that it is intended to teach them how to protect themselves. Mohsen (14 years) demonstrated the belief that

parents should hit their children in order for them to learn how to defend themselves from unwanted touch.

Following a patriarchal system, many Jordanian families believe that raising children is the mother's job and not the shared responsibility of both parents. In some situations and, for economic reasons, fathers spend less time with their children as they have to work long hours. Amal's father expressed this exact opinion; however, after his daughter's abuse, he became more involved with and careful about his children. Amal's father's views highlight wider societal expectations about the roles of men and women: men have the responsibility to provide for the family and women have the responsibility of caregiver and homemaker. Amal's father's views also demonstrated that he now has an awareness about his shared responsibility as a parent, valuing the involvement and care he can offer as a parent.

Improving communication between fathers and their children is challenging, considering the way that patriarchal and hierarchical systems minimise opportunities for children and young people to open up to their fathers. However, once communication is established, children and young people are likely to feel more comfortable seeking help from their parents if they are at risk. Samira said she was unable to talk openly with her dad due to the strict rules and the very conservative environment of her family but felt comfortable enough with her mum to speak freely with her. Samira (16 years) spoke of how her father would not let her go out or spend time with friends and how he got upset with her mum because he did not want her to tell Samira about what having periods means.

Samira's family adopt traditional and hierarchical parenting practices which are based on gender and tend to discriminate against children, especially girls. Family hierarchies, which place children at the bottom, prevent children from having or speaking opinions. Most of the families I spoke with showed evidence of having family hierarchies that position the men at the head of the house and children at the bottom (Wyness, 2013). The oppressive patriarchal and hierarchical structure of families means that the alarming effects of sexual abuse are often made worse by a lack of transparency and a lack of voice for children and young people. Undoubtedly, close relationships and regular, open conversations with parents give their children a reason to not be hesitant to speak up about sexual abuse. Although Samira had a strict and conservative limited relationship with her father and brothers, she had a nurturing, trusting, friendly and open relationship

with her mother, which enabled her to seek help and support from her mother when she was at risk. Samira and Lojain emphasised the significant role of their mothers in helping them to speak up. Samira spoke of her mother as also being like a sister and a friend.

Having confronted the reality of the sexual abuse of their children, parents reconsidered their practices with their children and questioned some of their own beliefs and behaviours. They advised all other families to listen to their children (whether they themselves listened to their children or not) and be close to them. The parents offering advice believed that kindness, compassion and open communication (especially listening) could potentially save their children or reduce their suffering from abuse. Niveen's mother advised other families to offer their children unlimited love and patience, to listen actively and encourage children to be open about their problems. Communicating effectively by listening to and understanding the child's perspective and using a child-affirming approach can help children and young people feel safe to share their thoughts and feelings. Parents could also equip children and young people with the confidence to speak up early if anything happens to them and thus prevent them from experiencing unnecessary additional suffering and further harm in the future. Children and young people also advised other families about the importance of listening to their children. Lojain expressed how important it is to not only listen but to also believe what their children say.

The professionals also emphasised the necessity of a child-affirming approach, arguing that the issue of not speaking up can be resolved by parents building an open and communicative relationship early in the child's development. It is also essential that parents are taught how to respond appropriately when a child or young person speaks to them about sexual abuse. The education of parents is necessary because Jordanian culture generally does not follow a child-affirming approach: parents make decisions about their children without having consulted or listened to them. Manager FE explained that parents are responsible for building a strong relationship and open communication channels with their children from when they are young.

The practices that lead to the oppression of children and young people are often carried out without any intention of hurting them. The use of violence and the lack of transparent communication has passed down from generation to generation. By reviewing what the parents, children, young people and professionals said about violence, parenting

responsibilities and a lack of listening, there is an obvious need to raise public awareness of the priority of the child or young person in parenting practices. Prioritising children and young people means paying more attention to them and sitting down to talk with them regularly. Families need to communicate openly and freely with their children, in order to help prevent or cope with sexual abuse. Further work needs to be done to put systems in place in Jordan that work towards empowering children and young people and allowing them to find their voices. In order for this to happen, a child-affirming approach needs to be introduced to everyday parenting practices. Doing so will help keep children and young people safe and their parents aware of their children's everyday lives, which in turn will contribute to the parents' role of protecting and supporting their children and could also improve the wellbeing of their children.

Furthermore, there is need to educate parents about shared responsibility in raising their children. It is not only the mothers' work but fathers also need to think of their responsibility to create friendships with their children, since their roles as fathers should be about more than just supporting them financially. Moreover, there is a serious need (more so than ever) to distinguish between violence and discipline with a child-affirming approach; there is a huge difference between teaching children and young people to build up their knowledge and awareness of the world that they live in and using violence to beat, accuse, and blame them (even though these actions are carried out with the assumption that they will assist in educating and protecting their children).

The negative impact of patriarchy can be witnessed in non-child-affirming approaches to raising children, unbalanced parenting responsibilities and harsh and, at times, violent disciplinary practices. It is surprising that these parenting practices are accepted when Islam speaks of the responsibility of parents to guide, raise and be kind to their children. The prophet Mohammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم - peace be upon him) said,

(علموا ولا تعنفوا ، فإن المعلم خير من المعنف)

“Teach others but do not be violent with who you teach” [Al Albani].

Sex education for children, young people and families

This research has highlighted the urgent need for sex education in Jordan and suggests it should be seen as a core subject in the education of young people.

There appears to be a misunderstanding about what sex education means, which impacts on people's views about sexual abuse and the consequential difficulties victims face in speaking up. Educating children and young people about the functions of their bodies and teaching them to respect their own bodies as well as the bodies of others has a strong correlation with the safety and wellbeing of children and young people (Kantor & Levitz, 2017). However, in many parts of Jordan, the word 'sex' is taboo. There exists a social anxiety about the topic of sex, which Samira highlighted when she argued how unfair it is for parents to blame their children for the abuse, especially when the parents did not teach them how they might prevent it in the first place. An effect of sex being considered taboo is that children and young people are not provided with the skills they need to protect themselves.

Just as a parent needs to teach safety rules to their children with everyday details such as crossing the road, we also need sex education programmes that offer skills in prevention for children, young people, families and the wider public. Just as we are not born with the knowledge of how to cross the road safely, we are also not born with the knowledge of how to keep ourselves sexually safe. For sex education to become normalised, Life Education, which teaches children and young people to know about and care for their bodies (Lenderyou, 1994), is important. This enables education about harm prevention and protection. It is every adult's, family member's and teacher's duty to empower children and young people with essential knowledge about sex education.

It is essential to equip children and young people with awareness about sexually abusive behaviour, as this knowledge will help them to protect themselves from abuse (Abdullah & Yawer, 2012; Barsheed, 2014). Bani Khalaf, Anagreh and Jarra's (2014) study suggests teaching children and young people sex education within the subject of biology and by offering appropriate training to biology teachers for how to teach students and answer their questions. Obidat and Tawalbeh's (2013) research also recommends that sex education be grounded in the curriculum and provided by people with expertise in biology, Islamic studies and psychology.

Therefore, sex education needs to be approached as a holistic subject that incorporates cultural, biological and religious perspectives. It should impart valuable life skills in a scientific and informative manner that will improve children's and young people's understandings of gender and sex within the religious and cultural context of Jordan.

Bani Khalaf et al. (2014) emphasise the need to teach sex education from both scientific and religious perspectives, in order for students to understand both biological development and how to cope with difficult situations relating to sexual abuse. Including and emphasising sex education practices across the curriculum is intended to arm students with the skills needed to protect themselves from potential abuse, and to live as healthy sexual beings.

Important steps in the provision of life and sex education have been taken by the Ministry of Education. Various materials relevant and appropriate to age and gender have been provided for schools to use (Daroza, Ayasrah, AlAjam, Almomani & Shishtawi, 2003). For example, Manager AS highlighted that girls and young women were offered extra sessions to learn how to protect themselves. However, there is no attention being paid to the teaching of boys and young men (who are predominantly the abusers) and the respect that they should show to others' bodies. There is desperate need for a specific sex education curriculum that teaches male students about how to respect others' bodies. The guidance sessions that are currently in place are limited and, as noted in Chapter Four, there is also a difference in provision between public and private schools.

Programmes need to be extended widely in the community, as Manager FE noted. Another step to the goal is collaborating with influential people. Manager FE spoke about seeking support from as many areas as possible, involving people of influence, such as Imams as religious leaders and heads of each suburb as social leaders. Involving religious and social leaders is a useful strategy for raising public awareness about accepting sex education in Jordan.

The Ministry of Education is committed to updating the academic curriculum in order to improve the quality of education but has yet to integrate sex education into the curriculum. Among the professionals, there was concern for a local version of the curriculum which would be in line with international standards but shaped according to Jordanian national priorities and frameworks. Policy Maker YH explained that their work involves enhancing and empowering institutions to take responsibility regarding the protection system in Jordan.

It is essential to negotiate between international and national systems and to negotiate between national systems and institutional systems. This means that people in the local context do what fits that context, as can be explained by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological

Systems Theory. All of these processes involve a dialogue between various layers of the system: immediate (Micro), direct (Meso), indirect (Exo) and sociocultural (Macro) influences as well as changes over time (Chrono). The dialogue between these different parts of the ecological system will enable programmes that educate young people in life knowledge and skills and will also give them skills to prevent sexual violence. Furthermore, it is not just protection for girls as victims but also education for men in respecting women's bodies, and teaching both genders about healthy sex.

Most of the sexual abuse studies undertaken in Jordan (see Chapter Two) emphasise the need for sex education. However, there have been few suggestions about implementation. This study highlights important aspects that should be considered in terms of teaching life and health education. A particular life skill highlighted is how young people learn to discern who to trust. Child-affirming parenting can support children and young people to have ideas and to speak about them, and to learn who to trust; they also will learn about their bodies and sex, which can lead to learning about where to go (trusted people and appropriate agencies and services) to speak up if something wrong happens to them.

This study suggests that inclusion of sex education in the school curriculum in Jordan is required and it is possible through the following recommendations:

- Change the name of this subject from sex education to 'Life and Health Education'. By replacing the taboo word 'sex' with more acceptable terms, it is more likely to overcome resistance and hesitation from the conservative public.
- Develop a clear definition of Life and Health Education in the Jordanian context that includes its purpose.
- Cooperation and collaboration between the responsible parties—such as the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Holy Places, and the official media—will encourage the acceptance of sex education in the curriculum. These national ministries can conduct public campaigns to raise awareness regarding the importance of this subject.
- A panel of experts from the Ministry of Education should create an inclusive yet culturally contextual curriculum for Life and Health Education that should start from kindergarten and continue until high school.

- Life and Health Education should not be considered a sub-topic in other subjects; it should be an independent subject. It must be made a mandatory subject for students at all levels of learning, adapting the content to suit each age group.
- Provide teachers with appropriate information, attitudes and teaching strategies on how to teach this subject.
- In addition to these necessary steps, it is important to think about how to teach students using a cumulative approach, which takes into account biological and physiological developments as well as how to deal with these changes. Students should be taught how to take care of their bodies and how to respect others' bodies. Life and protection skills, in particular, are an essential part of Life and Health Education. Students need to understand the concept of safe space, what trust means and who they can trust. Students also need to know about healthy relationships in order to be able to recognise if they are at risk; for instance, being able to identify blackmailing, threats, and controlling behaviours. This knowledge will better equip children and young people with the skills needed to keep themselves safe. Furthermore, Life and Health Education can inform students about who they can access for support, such as trusted counsellors, teachers and relatives. Finally, this education system should provide students with the information and support needed to report if they are, or someone else is, at risk (to the police and other higher authorities such as the Family Protection Department (FPD)).

Creating a Life and Health education curriculum will not only benefit Jordan but could also make some positive changes in other Arabic and Islamic countries. Many Arab countries already accept the Jordanian curriculum, because they consider it to be strong and thorough. Therefore, making these changes to the curriculum in Jordan will have a large impact on the lives of children and young people across the wider region.

ilies that still hold onto the cultural values and practices that silence sexual abuse.

The study's contributions

This study emphasises the complexity of speaking up about sexual abuse. Situating its investigation of the problem, of safely disclosing sexual abuse, within Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, the project highlights the dynamic interaction between each

layer of the system including the potentially devastating effects on speaking up within the sociocultural context of Jordan.

In showing the tragedy of the persistence of honour-killing practices, the study exposes the conflict between saving a life or restoring the family's honour in order to achieve social acceptance. While the study included both males and females who had been abused, it is clear that female victims are the biggest losses, bearing the blame and judgment that victims and families are exposed to from society. Their lives are impacted the most as they lose their main rights in life, to marriage and education. This study identifies the ongoing difficulties that families, children and young people are faced with, which could be equal to or even more than the trauma of sexual abuse itself.

Offering some hope, the study shows that intense experiences of trauma for victims and families have led some parents to express remorse, question their parenting practices and make new parenting commitments. Further, the study illustrates how families might call on their faith to find strength and support in times of trauma and suffering. It reflects on how the teachings of Islam offer guidance to Muslims about treating others with particular care and compassion instead of judgment and blame, particularly if they are in a vulnerable situation. The study suggests that a child-affirming approach, which prioritises the wellbeing and perspectives of children and young people, can make a significant difference in the relationships between parents and children, and in the lives of children. Encouraging children and young people to regularly share their thoughts and feelings, and listening to them openly and without judgment, can assist in building a relationship of trust and safety. Shaping a safe environment is essential so children and young people can express themselves and be heard, believed and supported without any potential risk of punishment or violence.

The suffering, blame and loss experienced by victims and their families reveals the urgent need for incorporating sex education into school curriculums, raising public awareness and involving collaboration between relevant social agencies and concerned parties. These are all necessary steps in the prevention, and safe disclosure, of sexual abuse, as well as the reduction of traumatic consequences. I therefore offer recommendations that could contribute strongly towards the inclusion of sex education in the Jordanian curriculum, which I call life and health education. I also provide suggestions for how to raise public awareness and reduce resistance towards sex education.

This study argues that it is not only sexual abuse and honour-killing that destroys lives but also gender-based violence and sociocultural practices which blame women and girls for breaching the principles of Islam and disgracing the family reputation and honour by being sexually abused. This study's findings, that in practice victims are often blamed despite abuse being the responsibility of perpetrators, therefore ask *how* do we make changes to sociocultural practices? As the experience in Jordan has already shown, changes can be made through amendments to law. However, this is clearly not enough. There also needs to be a focus on public health as well as education for children, young people, families and the wider community. Sexual abuse in Jordan is an educational problem, a sociocultural problem, a public health problem, a religious problem and a political problem. Therefore, ongoing public health, education and legislative changes need to continue in order to protect children and young people from harm. This study focuses on listening to children and young people and empowering them to speak up.

The study's use of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory of development assists in analysing the action of disclosure and understanding how laws, culture, religion, family, communities, schools and leaders are all woven together and all impact on the child's life. It is clear that there is a challenge going forward about how our society could decide to live according to the values we treasure and live by, that is ensuring the voices of children and young people are heard and that their safety and wellbeing are prioritised. It is necessary to put the value of children and young people first and above all others. Indeed, my study emphasises that a child-affirming approach can help to keep children and young people safe and healthy, enabling them to be ready to speak up if they ever need to.

My wish is for this study to contribute to the development of policy and practice in the field of prevention of sexual abuse of children and young people in Jordan. I hope for services that are readily accessible, that work to mitigate the challenges many children and young people face in speaking up and reporting abuse, and are child-affirming and so accept the truth of young people's disclosures. Further efforts need to be made to protect girls and young women, reduce honour-killing and educate the general population about sexual health.

This research has potential implications for senior policy makers and managers, social workers and psychologists, families, and children and young people. First, its findings

may help when senior policy makers and managers formulate policies and legislation to ensure children and young people step towards disclosure with necessary protection. Second, the findings highlight the therapeutic practices and complexity of the work of social workers and psychologists in effectively supporting and caring for children and young people. Third, the interviews offered the families the opportunity to reflect on their parenting practices and how that encouraged or prevented children and young people from speaking up. Those reflections have the potential to contribute to parenting education in the future. Finally, this study, once it is in the form of publications and workshops, may also empower other children and young people who are still suffering the effects of sexual abuse trauma to speak up and seek help. It may also enable their families to understand the support that their children require to mitigate their experiences of abuse.

If funding could be provided for workshops targeted at social workers and psychologists, this would be an excellent opportunity to inform these professionals about strategies they could adopt in their professional practice to encourage children, young people and families to open up more about their thoughts, concerns and challenges in order for social workers and psychologists to gain a better understanding of their needs and thus provide better support and services to help families, children and young people. These workshops would emphasise the importance of compassion and listening without judgment. Workshops targeted at senior policy makers and managers would also be greatly beneficial and could demonstrate how practitioners can listen to children's and young people's stories and make improvements to services for children and young people.

This study has potential applicability to other countries that share similar cultural values, collective societies and religious beliefs. In addition to translating the thesis into Arabic to make it accessible for readers in Arab countries, parts of the thesis will also be published in reputable journals for international audience. Publications that can circulate internationally would be of great value not only in traditional Arab/Muslim countries but also for service providers who work with immigrant families that still hold onto the cultural values and practices that silence sexual abuse.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Approval letter from the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) in Jordan



الرقم
التاريخ
الموافق

س 1 / 1439 هـ
1 / 1439 هـ
2018/ 11/ 11

مدير مديرية الاسرة والحماية
مدير مديرية الاحداث والامن المجتمعي

الموضوع: تسهيل مهمة

تحية طيبة وبعد،،،

اشارة الى كتابنا رقم س 1/13340 تاريخ 2017/8/14، والمتضمن الموافقة على تسهيل مهمة الطالبة "هلا ابراهيم برهوم" طالبة دكتوراة في كلية التربية في جامعة ايكاتو/ نيوزلندا، والتي تقوم باعداد دراسة بعنوان "كسر حاجز الصمت للاعتداءات الجنسية الواقعة على الاطفال/اليات الابلاغ" لاجراء الدراسة في دور الرعاية التابعة للوزارة، واستنادا الى موافقة اللجنة المشكلة للنظر في الدراسات المقدمة من الطلاب لغايات تسهيل مهامهم داخل المؤسسات والدور الايوائية. واشارة الى موافقة مدير الاحداث والامن المجتمعي على ادوات الدراسة المتضمنة المقابلات للفئات التالية:

1. الاخصائيين الاجتماعيين.

2. الاسر الداعمة.

3. الطفل الذي تعرض للاعتداء ذكور/ اناث (الفئة العمرية المستهدفة من 7_18 عام).

لتسهيل مهمة الطالبة في المراكز التي تقع ضمن نطاق اختصاص مدير نكم حسب الاصول، (مرفق كافة الموافقات المتضمنة اليات المقابلات).

وأقبلوا الاحترام،،،

وزير التنمية الاجتماعية

هاله بسيسو لطوف

الأمسكي العام
عمر حمزه

المللكة الأردنية الهاشمية

هاتف: 6792427 + 672 6 فاكس: 6799971 + 672 6 ص.ب 772 عمان 11118 الأردن - الموقع الالكتروني: www.mosd.gov.jo

Appendix 2: Commitment letter to participants' confidentiality

تعهد خطي

انا الموقعه ادناه واسمي : هلا ابراهيم محمد برهوم
وجنسيتي : اردنيه احمل اثبات شخصية : هوية احوال مدنيه رقم 8797448 قيد
مدني : مغتربين العاصمة 006/167 واحمل الرقم الوطني : 9852055108
وكوني قد احتصلت على موافقة معالي وزير التنمية الاجتماعية بموجب كتاب رقم
س /13340/1 تاريخ 2018/8/14 باجراء الدراسة البحثية على بعض منتفعي مراكز
الرعاية التابعه لوزارة التنمية الاجتماعية وذلك كمنطاب لانهاء دراستي الجامعية لدرجة
الدكتوراة.

فأني أتعهد وتحت طائلة المسائلة القانونية بان أحافظ على أية معلومة اطلع عليها
وإنني أقر بمعرفتي بان جميع ما سأطلع عليه داخل تلك المراكز يتسم بالسرية وعليه فأبني
أتعهد بالحفاظ على سرية كل ما سأطلع عليه وخاصة ما تعلق بالمعلومات الشخصية للمنتفعين
او الأهالي او العاملين بتلك المراكز متعهدا بعدم الإفصاح عن أية حالة اطلع عليها وعدم
الإشارة على أي تفصيل من تفاصيل الحالة قد يستدل منه على شخصية المنتفع او من ساقبله
وعدم توثيق ذلك بدراستي وان كنت ساستخدم التسجيل الصوتي فأبني أتعهد باستخدام التقنيات
الصوتيه والتي يتم من خلالها تغيير نبرة الصوت لمن ساقبله وبعد اخذ موافقته على ذلك وفق
انموذج خاص ساعده لهذه الغاية متعهدا باتلاف السجلات الصوتيه التي ساسجلها لمن ساقبلهم
بعد انهاء دراستي متحملا اية مسؤولية قانونية تنشأ بسبب تلك التسجيلات وعدم استخدامها الا
للغايات البحثية البحتة وعدم توثيق التسجيل الصوتي بشخص المنتفع او ذكر اسمه او عنوانه
فيه او اية معلومه من الممكن ان يستدل بها على شخص او شخصية المنتفع.

وعليه اوقع.

المتعهد بما فيه
الاسم: هلا ابراهيم محمد برهوم
التاريخ: 01/09/18
التوقيع: Hala Barhoum

تم توقيع التعهد بمعرفتي وبعد التثبت من هويتها:

مديرية الشؤون القانونية
الملكة اليزابيث الهاشمية
مروان الخطيب
وزارة التنمية الاجتماعية
MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
AMMAN
01/09/18

Appendix 3: Applicant Agreement

I agree,

- To ensure that the above-mentioned procedures concerning the ethical conduct of this project will be followed by all those involved in the collection and handling of data.
- In the event of this application being approved, to inform the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee of any significant change subsequently proposed, such as to the research questions, participant groups, or data collection methods, affecting the direction of the research and necessitating new ethical consideration.
- To submit for approval any amendments made to the research procedures outlined in this application, which affect the ethical appraisal of the project.

Signature of applicant: _____ **Date:** _____

I confirm,

- That this application has been reviewed by my principal supervisor, who has approved its submission.

Signature of applicant: _____ **Date:** _____

I agree,

- To support the student to follow the above-mentioned procedures concerning the ethical conduct of this project.

Signature of supervisor: _____ **Date:** _____

Signature of supervisor: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix 4: Information about participating in academic research

Dear Mr/Ms XXX

My name is Hala Burhoum and I am a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Education, University of Waikato (New Zealand). I am Jordanian, and have a Bachelor's and Master's degree from the University of Jordan. I am conducting research as a requirement of my Doctoral Degree.

About my research: The title of my research is “**Speaking up and Breaking Silence: Stories of Children who have been Sexually Abused in Jordan**”. The research has been given ethical approval by the Faculty of Education Human Research Ethics Committee. I have the approval of the Jordanian Ministry of Social Development to contact you to request participation...

My study will investigate how children and young people speak up and break the silence when they are sexually abused. What factors influence their actions towards speaking up?

Your involvement in my research:

In order to complete my research, I propose to undertake a series of interviews, first with social workers, then with non-offending parents and children. I would greatly appreciate your support to begin data collection at your centre.

I humbly request your permission to access social workers first, and then parents and their children who are registered in your centre. I request you to help me gain access to social workers. With their help, I hope to invite and communicate with parents whose children have been registered as sexually abused, and with their children who I would also like to interview. Following interviews with social workers, parents or family support and their children, I attach a flow diagram that shows the process that I propose, outlined here:

Step 1: Meeting with social workers to explain project, and to request that they pass on information about my study to children, young people and their families, including the attached letter;

Step 2: I interview the social workers or psychologist about speaking up in general;

Step 3: I interview the child's non-offending parent or family about speaking up.

Step 4: I interview the child about their speaking up;

Step 5: Children or young people, with support of family and social worker, agree to participate by contacting me.

Social workers', parents' and child's participation is voluntary. When I meet with them for the interview, I will first give them appropriate information and ask for their consent before proceeding. I will ask the non-offending parents' permission to interview their children.

Use of Information: I will take care of confidentiality, anonymity and privacy for the centre and the social workers, parents and children who participate in my research. Neither the centre nor any group of participants will be identified in my research. Research materials will be used in my PhD, and my research findings may be presented at conferences or professional meetings, or reported in journals or professional publications.

I am available to discuss any of this with you. If you would like further information, or have questions, please contact me via email at XXXXX or by phone at XXXXX.

My supervisors are also available by email, in English only:

Dr Elmarie Kotze elmarie.kotze@waikato.ac.nz Office phone no: +64 7 838 4466 ext. 7961

Associate Professor Kathie Crocket kcrocket@waikato.ac.nz Office phone no: +64 7 838 4466 ext. 8462

Thank you for considering my request. If you wish to support my research and allow me to conduct my research in your centre, kindly contact me at XXXXX or mobile XXXX to arrange a meeting.

Yours sincerely,

Hala Burhoum, PhD Candidate

Faculty of Education, University of Waikato

Appendix 5: Invitation letter to Social workers and Psychologists

Dear Prospective Participant Social workers,

My name is Hala Burhoum and I am a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Education, University of Waikato (New Zealand). I am Jordanian, and have a Bachelor's and Master's degree from the University of Jordan. I am conducting research as a requirement of my Doctoral Degree.

About my research: The title of my research is “**Speaking up and Breaking Silence: Stories of Children who have been Sexually Abused in Jordan**”. The research has been given ethical approval by the Faculty of Education Human Research Ethics Committee. I have the approval of the Jordanian Ministry of Social Development to contact you to request participation.

My study will investigate how children and young people speak up and break the silence when they are sexually abused? What factors influence their actions towards speaking up?

Your involvement in my research:

In order to complete my research, I propose to undertake one individual interview with you, for about 60 to 90 minutes. The questions will be forwarded to you prior to the interview. The interview will be audio-recorded. Before the research interview I will have an initial meeting with you to give you information and discuss my research with you. In this meeting, you will have time to ask questions and raise any concerns about involvement in my research. Your understanding of your involvement in my research is highly crucial for me to gain your voluntary participation. Please do feel free to ask any question regarding your participation. I will consider your comfort and confidentiality when conducting the interview with you. You are requested to read the consent form carefully and decide your participation.

As well as inviting you to take part yourself in my research, I also request your help to access a small number of (non-offending) parents and children to interview about their experiences of speaking up about child abuse. I will explain this further if you are potentially available to undertake this support of my research process.

Use of Information: I will take care of confidentiality, anonymity and privacy for the centre and the social workers, parents and children who participate in my research. Neither the centre nor any group of participants will be identified in my research. Research materials will be used in my PhD, and my research findings may be presented at conferences or professional meetings, or reported in journals or professional publications.

In order to help me to protect the privacy of families and children I ask you to agree not to disclose the identity of families who participate in my research.

I am available to discuss any of this with you. If you would like further information, or have questions, please contact me at XXXXX or by phone at XXXXX

My supervisors are also available by email, in English only:

Dr Elmarie Kotze elmarie.kotze@waikato.ac.nz Office phone no: +64 838 4466 ext. 7961

Associate Professor Kathie Crocket kcrocket@waikato.ac.nz Office phone no: +64 838 4466 ext. 8462

Thank you for considering my request. If you wish to participate in my research kindly contact me on the above-mentioned email or phone number to arrange a subsequent meeting. If I have not heard from you before then, I will be in contact to ask whether or not you are willing to be as a part of the participants of this study.

Yours sincerely,

Hala Burhoum, PhD Candidate

Faculty of Education, University of Waikato

Appendix 6: Invitation letter to Parents

(To be given to parents by social workers)

Dear Prospective Participant parent,

My name is Hala Burhoum and I am a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Education, University of Waikato (New Zealand). I am Jordanian, and have a Bachelor's and Master's degree from the University of Jordan. I am conducting a research as a requirement of my Doctoral Degree.

About my research: The title of my research is “**Speaking up and Breaking Silence: Stories of Children who have been Sexually Abused in Jordan**”. The research has been given ethical approval by the Faculty of Education Human Research Ethics Committee. I have the approval of the Jordanian Ministry of Social Development to contact you to request participation.

My study will investigate how children and young people speak up and break the silence when they are sexually abused? What factors influence their actions towards speaking up?

Your involvement in my research: In order to complete my research, I propose to undertake one individual interview with you, for about 45 to 60 minutes. The questions will be forwarded to you prior to the interview. The interview data will be audio-recorded. I will have an initial meeting with you if needed, to inform and discuss my research with you. In this meeting, you will have time to ask questions and raise concerns regarding the confidentiality of the data you share and discuss any potential harm by being involved in my research. Your complete understanding of your involvement in my research is highly crucial for me to gain your voluntary participation. Please do feel free to ask any question regarding your participation. I will ensure your comfort and confidentiality when conducting the interview with you. You are requested to read the consent form carefully and decide your participation after being fully understood of your involvement in my research. I will request agreement that the care centre will offer counselling sessions, if needed.

Use of Information: I will take care of confidentiality, anonymity and privacy for the centre and the children, parents, and social workers who participate in my research. Neither the centre nor any group of participants will be identified in my research. Research materials will be used in my PhD, and my research findings may be presented at conferences or professional meetings, or reported in journals or professional publications.

I am available to discuss any of this with you. If you would like further information, or have questions, please contact me at XXXXXX or by phone at XXXXXX

Social worker's email:

Office phone no:

Manager of care centre email:

Office phone no:

My supervisors are also available by email, in English only:

Dr Elmarie Kotze elmarie.kotze@waikato.ac.nz Office phone no: 07 838 4466 ext. 7961

Associate Professor Kathie Crocket kcrocket@waikato.ac.nz Office phone no: 07 838 4466 ext. 8462

Thank you for considering my request. If you wish to participate in my research kindly contact me on the above-mentioned email or phone number to arrange a time of interview or a meeting if needed. If I have not heard from you before then, I will be in contact through the social worker to ask whether or not you are willing to be as a part of participants of this study. I will ask you if I may interview your child after we complete the interview. If you agree to me interviewing your child please discuss this possibility with your child and please give him/her my invitation letter. If your child interested in meeting me I will discuss the letter with him/her later.

Yours sincerely,

Hala Burhoum, PhD Candidate

Faculty of Education, University of Waikato

Appendix 7: Invitation letter to Children above 12 years

(To be given to child by social worker or by parent and to be read to the child and explained by the parent or social worker)

Dear Prospective Participant, children

My name is Hala Burhoum and I am a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Education, University of Waikato (New Zealand). I am Jordanian, and have a Bachelor's and Master's degree from the University of Jordan. I am conducting a research as a requirement of my Doctoral Degree.

About my research: The title of my research is “**Speaking up and Breaking Silence: Stories of Children who have been Sexually Abused in Jordan**”. The research has been given ethical approval by the Faculty of Education Human Research Ethics Committee. I have the approval of the Jordanian Ministry of Social Development to contact you to request participation.

My study will investigate how children and young people speak up and break the silence when they are sexually abused? What factors influence their actions towards speaking up?

Your involvement in my research: I order to complete my research, I propose to undertake three phases of two individual interviews with you, each session lasting about 30-40 minutes. The questions will be forwarded to you prior to the interview. The interview will be audio-recorded. I will have an initial meeting with you if needed, to inform and discuss my research with you. In this meeting, you will have time to ask questions about my research. You do not have to participate. I will care for your comfort and confidentiality when conducting the interview with you. You are requested to read the consent form carefully and decide your participation. I will request agreement that the care centre will offer counselling sessions for you, if needed.

Use of Information:

I will take care of confidentiality, anonymity and privacy for the centre and the children, parents, and social workers who participate in my research. Neither the centre nor any group of participants will be identified in my research. Research materials will be used in my PhD, and my research findings may be presented at conferences or professional meetings, or reported in journals or professional publications.

Social workers will also keep private information they may have about who takes part in my research.

I am available to discuss any of this with you. If you would like further information, or have questions, please contact me at XXXXXX or by phone at XXXXXX

Social worker's email:

Office phone no:

Manager of care centre email:

Office phone no:

My supervisors are also available by email, in English only:

Dr Elmarie Kotze: elmarie.kotze@waikato.ac.nz Office phone no: 07 838 4466 ext. 7961

Associate Professor Kathie Crocket: kcrocket@waikato.ac.nz Office phone no: 07 838 4466 ext. 8462

Thank you for considering my request. Kindly contact me on the above-mentioned email or phone number to arrange a time of interview or a meeting if needed. If I have not heard from you before then, I will be in contact through the social worker to ask whether or not you are willing to be as a part of participants of this study. I will request you parents' consent to have interview with you.

Yours sincerely,

Hala Burhoum, PhD Candidate

Faculty of Education, University of Waikato

Appendix 8: Invitation letter to Children under 12 years

سلام طفلي الصغير (Informal language)

أنا إسمي هلا، رح أكون فرحانة بشوفتك

ماما وبابا حكولي إنه يمكن إنت حابب تحكي معي عن قصتك كيف انت كنت قوي وبطل وحكييلهم إنه في إشي مو صح صار معك

أنا بتمنى أنا وإياك نقدر نساعد الأطفال التانيين مشان يحكوا لما يشوفو إشي غلط وإنه الكبار يسمعوهم لما نلتقي بتقدر حبييتي/حبييتي تسألني عن أي شي فبالك حابب تسأله أو لماما وبابا.

سلام طفلي العزيز (Official language)

أنا هلا، سأكون سعيدة جدا لرؤيتك

والديك أخبروني انه قد تكون لديك رغبة للحديث معي ومشاركتي قصتك كيف أنك كنت قوي وبطل حينما أخبرتهم أن أمرا ما سيئ حدث معك.

وأتمنى بذلك أن نستطيع مساعدة الأطفال الآخرين للتحدث عن الخطأ إذا راوه وكذلك ليستمع إليهم الكبار عندما نلتقي عزيزي تستطيع أن تسألني عن أي أمر يخطر في بالك وكذلك يمكنك سؤال والديك

(Salam) Little kid:

I am Hala and I am happy to meet you, your parents told me you may want to talk with me about your story of how you were strong enough to tell people that is something bad had happened. I hope that together we can help other children to speak up help adult to listen.

When we will meet you can ask me why I do this work, you can ask me or you parent if you have any more questions.

Appendix 9: Consent form for Social workers and Psychologists

I would like to meet the researcher Hala to ask questions and discuss.

I have no questions and would like to begin an interview.

I _____ agree to the following statements:

Tick (✓) the box please

	Statements	Yes	No
1.	I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary		
2.	I agree to have an individual interview with Hala		
3.	I give my permission to Hala to make field notes during the interview		
4.	I agree that Hala will audio record the interview		
5.	I understand that Hala will make all necessary effort to maintain confidentiality of the information provided		
6.	I agree to receive a data check letter to view or amend if required		

7.	I agree that I can stop the interview or withdraw any data/information obtained from me but not later than two weeks after receiving data check letter.		
8.	I am aware that the findings of this research will be globally accessible		
9.	I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions.		
10.	I understand that only Hala and her two supervisors will have access to the full interview data collected for this research project.		
11.	I understand that Hala will keep the data very secure, and that she is required to retain it for academic purposes for five years.		
12.	I agree to keep private the identities of families and children who I refer to Hala's research or who I see in the centre when they attend research interviews.		

Participant: _____

Signature: _____

Researcher: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 10: Consent form for Parents

I would like to meet the researcher Hala to ask questions and discuss.

I have no questions and would like to begin an interview.

I _____ agree to the following statements:

Tick (✓) the box please.

	Statements	Yes	NO
1.	I understand that my participation in this research is totally voluntary.		
2.	I agree to have an individual interview with Hala.		
3.	I give my permission to Hala to make field notes during the interview		
4.	I agree that Hala will audio record the interview.		
5.	I agree that Hala will make all necessary effort to maintain confidentiality of the information provided.		
6.	I agree to receive a data check letter to view or amend if required		
7.	I agree that I can stop the interview or withdraw any		

	data/information obtained from me but not later than two weeks after receiving data check letter.		
8.	I am aware that the findings of this research will be globally accessible.		
9.	I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions.		
10.	I understand that only Hala and her two supervisors will have access to the full interview data collected for this research project.		
11.	I understand that Hala is required to keep the data very securely for academic purposes for five years.		
12.	I give my permission to Hala to interview my child.		

Participant: _____ Signature: _____

Researcher: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 11: Consent form for Children above 12 years

I would like to meet the researcher Hala to ask questions and discuss.

I have no questions and would like to begin an interview.

I _____ agree to the following statements:

Tick (✓) the box please.

	Statements	Yes	NO
1.	I understand that my participation in this research is totally voluntary		
2.	I agree to have an individual interview with Hala		
3.	I give my permission to Hala to make field notes during the interview		
4.	I agree that Hala will audio record the interview		
5.	I agree that Hala will make all necessary effort to maintain confidentiality of the information provided		
6.	I agree to receive a data check letter to view or amend if required		

7.	I agree that I can stop the interview or withdraw any data/information obtained from me but not later than two weeks after receiving data check letter.		
8.	I am aware that the findings of this research will be globally accessible		
9.	I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions.		
10.	I understand that only Hala and her two supervisors will have access to the full interview data collected for this research project.		
11.	I understand that Hala is required to keep the data very securely for academic purposes for five years.		

Participant: _____

Researcher: _____

Signature: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

PART B TO BE COMPLETED BY THE PARENT/GUARDIAN

I have read and understood the accompanying letter and information leaflet and give permission for the child (named above) to be included.

Name _____

Relationship to child _____

Signature _____

Appendix 12: Consent form for children under 12 years

<p>I agree to take part in Hala’s study to share with her of my speaking up story.</p> 		
<p>I agree to have an individual interview.</p> 		
<p>I know that the interview will be recorded.</p> 		

<p>I know if I agree to participate in this study, I have the following rights to say:</p> 	
<p>I do not want to answer this question.</p>	
<p>I do not want to share.</p>	
<p>I do not know the answer.</p>	
<p>I do not understand; can you explain that?</p>	

I want to stop the interview.	
-------------------------------	--

Child's Name _____ Child's Age _____

Signature/ First letter of the child's name _____

PART B TO BE COMPLETED BY THE PARENT/GUARDIAN

I have read and understood the accompanying letter and information leaflet and give permission for the child (named above) to be included.

Name _____

Relationship to child _____

Signature _____

Appendix 13: Semi-structured interview guide for social workers and psychologists.

I will interview social workers individually, just with one interview, lasting 60 to 90 minutes. In each interview, the following questions will be used as a guide:

Individual interview guide:

- How long have you worked here? How do you find your work here? How do you help children and families to speak about sexual abuse?
- How do you want the children to react when someone touches them inappropriately? What would be your advice children to do?
- In your experience do children talk about abuse immediately? What do you think the factors are that have children and their parents speaking up rather than keeping silent?
- What is the range of family reactions you have experienced when they find out about their children being sexually abused?
- What would you advise to families to do when they find out about their children's experiences? How do you encourage children and family members to be more open on speaking about these kinds of experiences?
- What do you think as a counsellor that might be possible advantages and disadvantages of speaking up about sexual abuse incidents?
- What do you think is the impact of culture and parenting on how children deal with sexual abuse?
- As you work in a care centre, has your centre conducted any kind of awareness activities that could help children and parents to address these factors?
- What do you think counsellors need that could improve your support to the children who have been sexually abused to speak up?
- Do you think children and parents receive what they have expected after speaking up?
- What support are there for children or families who speak up?
- Do you think that the educational institutions in Jordan have played a role to encourage children to speaking up if they have encountered abuse?

Appendix 14: Semi-structured interview guide for parents

I will interview parents individually, just with one interview, lasting 45 to 60 minutes, using the following questions as a guide:

- How did you learn that your child had been abused? How did you manage that? What was your first reaction? What did you do next? Did you listen or did you do something else? How did you know your child was telling the truth? The is the relationship between you and your child, how do you describe it?
- What seemed to be important to do in that time? What did you do next? Who else did you tell? How?
- How did you decide to tell another person? Were they from the family? How did you make the decision to seek help?
- Tell me what kind of help have you had received, if you have? What was helpful and what was not?
- What was the things that pushed you or let you do not feel hesitant to speak up? How?
- Did you have any idea of what might will happen from speaking up? Do you think the things happened in the way which you had expected?
- What have you received as advantages and disadvantages of speaking up about abuse?
- If you look back, would you want to do anything differently?
- What would you advise other children, parents who have a similar experience?
- Do you think that the educational institutions in Jordan have played role to encourage children to speaking up if they encountered to abuse?

Appendix 15: Semi-structured interview guide for children and young people

Indicative questions

(To be adapted for children of different ages, and in response to what I learn from social workers and parents when I interview them. Any adaptations will be discussed with my research supervisors, and where significant will be lodged with the Ethics Committee)

Notes:

- Children and young people will be interviewed individually, with the support of a caregiver if they wish, with last 30 to 40 minutes using the question guide, as illustrated in the below:
- My focus will be on what we try to learn from children, young people, parents and counsellors about speaking up about sexual abuse.

I will begin:

I am here to ask you about your story of speaking up when you needed help.

I heard you had some really hard experience of abuse and you spoke up about them.

And I am here to ask you some questions about speaking up, because that might help other children as well, and help adults to help other children. Can I ask you some question about what you told, how you told about speaking up so we can help other children?

With their consent, I will continue:

I understand that you told somebody, you spoke up about what happened to you, is that right?

How soon after the event, did you tell in the same day that happened or later?

How did you choose the time to speak up?

How did you choose the person that you would tell?

Why did you choose that person?

How did you know even if you did not choose, that it might be good idea to tell them?

When the person believed you, how is that for you? Was it important that they believed you?

Did you hope they would keep it secret? Or did you want them to tell someone else?

Did you trust them to keep it and not tell others about that?

Why you did not want them to tell others?

What did they do? Was it what you hoped they would do?

The relationship between you and that person, what name will you give it?

Did you have any idea of what might happen from speaking up?

Have you received this knowledge of how to speaking up if you get/feel uncomfortable? at school/house/somewhere else? How was that?

Did you get support/help?

What was that like for you? Did that work or not, or perhaps work in some ways but not in others?

If you look back, would you want to do anything differently in what you had done, with yourself, parents and people?

What might have been the things that stopped you from speaking earlier or had you hesitated to speak up?

What would you say to another child who had a similar experience? What would you advise them about speaking up?

What would you tell them about the best thing of your speaking up experience?

What would you tell them about the hardest thing of your speaking up experience?

What would you tell children about finding someone who is safe to tell?

What would you say to the parents that they should do if their child tells something like this?

This person believed you, do you want to advise that to the parents/others?