

**The Role of Residential Care Institutions for  
Children in Conflict with the Law in Jordan:  
Workers' and Children's Experiences**

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## **Abstract**

In Jordan, residential care institutions (RCIs) for children in conflict with the law are identified as various specialised state institutions which constitute a state formal response to youth crime, and specialise in taking care of children. This thesis examines the objectives of RCIs' programmes for children in conflict with the law in Jordan, as they attempt to reduce offending by convicted children, and whether these objectives meet children's needs, according to the view and experiences of children themselves (12-17 years). This study is based on qualitative methods, using data from individual and focus group interviews with institutional staff, and participant observation and individual interviews with children. Exploring the divergent claims made within childhood and youth crime theoretical perspectives, this thesis develops a nuanced understanding of institutions' crime-reduction programmes by drawing upon key theoretical concepts from these frameworks: children as 'socially becoming' and 'social beings'. RCIs provide four rehabilitative programmes to help reduce children's problematic and offending behaviour; namely, a family guidance programme (FGP), a poverty reduction programme (PRP), an educational programme (EP) and a child behaviour modification programme (CBMP). To a large extent, these programmes tended to provide policies of crime prevention which focus on re-socialising children according to the normative and cultural system of behaviour in which children were generally perceived as incompetent social actors, and where their best interest was not always acknowledged.

To a large extent, children's own perspectives and experiences of institutional

rehabilitative programmes revealed the institutional failure to treat their familial, economical, educational and behavioural problems. Overall, children thought such failure happened either because the institutional aims were not actually implemented, or because the methods of delivering the institutional programmes per se were ineffective. This finding reflects a contradictory picture between the RCIs' objectives and their actual practices, reflecting the institutional departure from a set of theoretical ideas regarding the prevention of youth crime. Focus group discussion with key informant staff referred to a variety of obstacles that contribute to their inability to address children's wider needs within the existing institutional aims. Parental refusal to participate in child abuse and supervisory neglect interventional sessions, short-term intervention for chronically abused children and institutional reliance on talking methods in promoting parental supervision over children's behaviour were all issues hindering effective institutional intervention within the familial environment. The institutional failure to meet children's educational and career training needs occurred because these programmes are scheduled at the same time. The seriousness of some children's crimes and the inability of some families to accompany their children to school were other issues preventing children from attending school. The lack of staff motivation, along with staff's interrelated roles, prevented child monitoring staff from fully carrying out the intended intervention of modifying children's negative behaviours.

Ultimately, the findings from this study indicate the inconsistency between RCIs' principles of rehabilitating children in conflict with the law and their actual practices, including the lack of policies in place to meet the institutional

objectives. This in turn meant that RCIs do not actually operate to rehabilitate children in order to reduce reoffending, but are largely punitive and operate to criminalise children and separate them from society.

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# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction**

### **Introduction**

This thesis is based on a qualitative study which examined the objectives of Residential Care Institutions (RCIs) for children in conflict with the law in Jordan, and how they tried to achieve their objectives in order to reduce offending by convicted children. The study is also concerned with exploring the perspectives and experiences of children themselves (12-17 years) in terms of the services provided for them in RCIs, and the extent to which the children considered the activities, programmes and services met their needs. This chapter introduces the main aims, the significance of the study, and the context and rationale. An overview of subsequent chapters is also given to assist the reader in navigating the thesis.

### **The Aim of the Study**

### **Significance of the Study**

There are three reasons why this study is important. First, in Jordan, an increasing political and public interest in the topic of youth crime can be observed, which has been fuelled by recent tragic incidents of youth violence. A growing fear within the population can be observed between residents and media coverage warning the public of an increase in youth crime – particularly

from children who persistently offend.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, the current debates raise concern based on “what works” principles, and make assumptions that nothing works for children who offend, –even with claims that offending could only ever be reduced by a small amount (Al-Majid, 2002; Rawahna, 2000; Bashiti, 1999). Some commentators claim that a lack of specialist programmes exists in RCIs, and that a lack of professionals to manage and work in these institutions might be the reason behind the RCIs’ failure to reduce child re-offending (Baradi, 2003; Al-Soudi, 1999). These claims, along with media images and public fears, draw attention to the importance of studying the role of RCIs for children, in order to investigate what goes on in these institutions and in what ways they attempt to reduce offending by convicted children.

Second, there is a lack of research exploring RCIs’ rehabilitative programmes for children in conflict with the law. Studies concerned with the rehabilitative programmes in RCIs have not typically considered the institutions’ specific objectives, or their theoretical underpinnings; rather, they have instead tended to focus on assessing the rehabilitative programmes in general by examining the link between the existing programmes and actual practices, utilising observational methods. This is a surprising omission given the contemporary concern within media and policy discourses focusing on the increasing number of crimes committed by children – particularly children who persistently offend – and the ineffectiveness of RCIs in reducing youth crime. This study sought to address this gap by providing a clear account of the institutions’ specific objectives and the ways through which RCIs deliver rehabilitation services to

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<sup>1</sup> Those children who commit four or more offences in any six-month period (MOSD, 1999).

children in conflict with the law, in an attempt to reduce children's opportunities to reoffend. By considering the issue of RCIs' objectives, this thesis contributes to understanding the theoretical underpinnings of these institutions' crime-reduction interventions. More specifically, this study attempts to theorise children's problems within micro and macro social structures from the sociological perspectives of childhood. This provides an opportunity to theorise youth crime. This study aims to then identify the functioning of RCIs and the systems they have in place to draw conclusions about practices that prevent youth crime.

Third, there has been no research aimed at specifically identifying the effectiveness of these programmes in terms of the children's own experiences and perspectives. Research addressing the rehabilitative programmes in RCIs has focused on examining the effectiveness of these programmes from the staff's point of view, without involving children who take part in them. This demonstrates a gap in the research in relation to children, which means that children, as the beneficiary group of the rehabilitative programmes, are marginalised in the research process, indicating that they have not been understood as competent social actors. In this study, examining children's own perspectives and experiences of the rehabilitation programmes provided for them is key in identifying the issues concerning the children themselves and their views on the extent to which they find these programmes are able to meet their needs. By exploring children's accounts of residential rehabilitation programmes, this thesis also contributes to a greater understanding of the complex and diverse responses which children have in relation to their best

interests and needs. Revealing the perspectives of children about matters directly affecting them is also considered important for its own sake, in accordance with the development of children's rights within and beyond youth justice (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989). This approach was also consistent with the sociology of childhood paradigm, which emphasises the need to include the perspectives of children as valid social actors (James & Prout, 1997). The views and experiences of children regarding their rehabilitation provide an opportunity to observe the theories RCI youth crime staff adhere to, and thus examine the convergence of theory and practice.

## **Terminology**

This thesis incorporates the following two key concepts, which need clarification before embarking on the literature: residential care institutions, and children in conflict with the law. These concepts are employed in different ways by different researchers. Since determining the concepts to be used in any research work is important, it is necessary to understand these concepts in relation to this particular piece of research.

### **Residential care institutions**

Residential child care institutions exist either for children who are at risk of violating the law or for those who are in conflict with the law;<sup>2</sup> this study is focused on studying the latter. Therefore, the term residential care institutions

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<sup>2</sup> While both categories of children are held in separate institutions, according to the youth justice principles in Jordan, both categories of children follow the same welfare based system, in recognition of the fact that those who are in conflict with the law and those who are at risk of offending have similar background difficulties (NCHR, 2001).

(RCIs) will be used in this study to refer only to those institutions for children in conflict with the law. RCIs are identified as various specialised state institutions which constitute a formal response in controlling youth crime, and specialise in taking care of children. These institutions address the crucial aim of reducing youth crime, as seen in their programmes designed to correct children's behaviour and their social, familial and economic conditions (NCHR, 2000). More specifically, RCIs are based on two fundamental approaches to changing a child's criminal behaviour: by changing children's way of dealing with their environment through changing the perceptions and thinking patterns that are relevant to their offending, and by changing the immediate social environments in which they operate (e.g. family). Accordingly, RCIs aim to provide children with proper social, health, religious, cultural, and psychological care in order to rescue them from offending factors and circumstances, enabling them to return to society as useful citizens, after their behaviour and circumstances have been corrected (Abid-Al-Rahman, 1998).

In order to successfully achieve the RCIs' objectives of rehabilitating children, Alaween and Matakah (2011) argue that residential staff must obtain at least a Bachelor's degree in social work in the areas of familial guidance, child education or child behavioural modification programmes. Otherwise, staff must receive extensive training on the skills and requirements of intervention with children who offend in different fields of rehabilitation. RCIs are affiliated with the Ministry of Social Development. Four governmental residential care institutions exist for all children in conflict with the law in Jordan; these are located in the biggest governorates in the Kingdom. This study has focused on

studying three institutions that held male children. While it would have been useful to look at the experiences of females, this was not a comparative study, as female children are only housed in one institution, separate from male children. Thus, the researcher expects that females are treated differently than males, and it was necessary to focus the study on one gender given the limitations of time and resources.

### **Children in conflict with the law**

This term is now being used by Jordanian legislation and law to define a child who commits different offences which are considered legally taboo and classified as crimes. The term can refer to varying behaviours, from petty theft to murder, and the court may decide to send the offending child to a residential care institution.<sup>3</sup> 'Juvenile delinquency' is a widely used term in both academic literature and media reports, but this term is being avoided and abolished by Jordanian law, as it has created a large stigma regarding children's identity (Aiasra, 2010). The term 'young offender' is widely used by different researchers in academic literature and is preferable to 'criminal', which carries significant stigma. 'Children in conflict with the law' will be used in this study because this term has less of a stigma than any other term used, and is in accordance with Jordanian law. This term in Jordan also refers to children who have reached the age of criminal responsibility, i.e. are aged 12 to 18. The term 'youth' is largely employed where the discussion is centred on the criminal behaviour of children (Jeffs & Smith, 1996). Hence, the term 'youth crime' will

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<sup>3</sup> Source: the modifications on Jordanian Juveniles Law number 24 for the year 1968.

only be used in understanding the problem of crimes committed by children, and not to denote the identity of a particular child.

## **Context and Background for the Study**

### **What is youth crime?**

### **Contemporary Developments**

#### **How 'Threatening' Are Children?**

In Jordan, crimes committed by children generated significant political, media and academic attention during the 1990s (MOSD, 2005). Anxiety and fear over issues related to anti-social behaviour,<sup>4</sup> gangs, street crime and rebellious children have all impacted the growing focus on children's behaviour by the public and the media (Al-Naser, 2003). Anti-social behaviour orders were introduced in 2001. Although these are not specifically aimed at children, much of the behaviour they target is most likely to be practiced by children (i.e. begging, street work, congregating in large groups, and underage drinking and smoking) (NCHR, 2008). The murder of head teacher Ali in 1991 by three twelve-year old boys caused outrage across Jordan, and the media fuelled public anxiety surrounding children and their involvement in violent crime (Al-

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<sup>4</sup> Anti-social behaviour is not defined in terms of individually proscribed behaviour, but rather as a set of acts, such as begging and working on the street, which are legally seen as anti-social behaviour (NCHR, 2003). Crime, on the other hand, is defined as any form of human behaviour that is designated by law as criminal and proscribed behaviour and is subject to a penal sanction (JHDR, 2000). Although criminal and anti-social behaviour are different, the thing that ties them together is that many of those involved in anti-social behaviour may end up engaging in criminal behaviour (Burnley, 2005).

Majid, 2002). Such incidents generate the image that children today are out of control, particularly in a case such as this one, where an adult was killed by children (Al-Ameer, 2000).

The story of Ali was exceptional; its unusualness made it newsworthy, and it became viewed as symptomatic of a prevailing youth crime wave (Al-Hadi, 2003). The tragic case raised public concern<sup>5</sup> (Yaseen, 2002). Thus, a growing fear within the population can be observed in citizens heightened by media coverage warning the public of an increase in youth crime – particularly by children who persistently offend (Shakhatreh, 2008). There is no evidence to suggest that this panic is in any way diminishing (Al-Saket, 2010).

### **Children as a Social Problem**

Mills (1959) defined a social problem as one that moves from being an individual problem to an issue that needs to be addressed by policy intervention. In order for something to be classified as a social problem, there has to be collective concern (Mills, 1959). It is a behaviour or event that threatens a healthy society, by, for example, threatening the economic climate, burdening the health service or impacting people's safety (Blumer, 1971). There has to be recognition that something is a social problem before it can be defined as such; this recognition usually comes from politicians, government

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<sup>5</sup> Majdalawi (2007) argued that although this case of murder has demonised children on a symbolic level through media presentation of children as evil, such demonisation did not reach the youth justice system, where the judge simply responded to the case as any other case (see also Chapter Four).

organisations and the media (Schneider, 1985). Once something has been defined as a social problem, the task is to intervene in an attempt to resolve the problem (Blumer, 1971; Schneider 1985). According to Al-Falahat (2005), in Jordanian society children are seen as a social problem when their behaviours and activities are socially and legally classified as threats to a healthy society. For example, the social construction of street children is seen as problematic and creates political and media panic about youth street crime, particularly in crowded areas (Baradiee, 2000).

However, children are also seen as deficient, vulnerable and deprived not only because of material conditions and power imbalances, but also due to a lack of moral standards, proper guidance, training and self-responsibility (Al-Saleh, 2001). Thus, children are viewed as being at a vulnerable stage, capable of being corrupted by all manner of evil influences and easily motivated to become involved in criminal activity, unless they are exposed to greater control, remedial resources and interventions (NCFA, 2010).

While Rashadi (2005) argued that the notion of children as a social problem both to society and to themselves is a product of media and youth research, NCHR (2010) argued that such an approach comes from the fact that children experience normal difficulties in making successful transitions from childhood to adulthood. Therefore, during the formative stage of development, children should be in line with societal values, morals and ideologies. They should be controlled and regulated because of their vulnerability and need for care and protection (Ratrout, 2006). As Abu-Lila (2005) argued, children are a key

method of measuring the stability and security in any society, and the corruption of children is the corruption of a whole society. However, it has been argued that children are being defined primarily as a problem rather than representing any actual positive or creative possibilities for the future (Ratrout, 2006).

### **The Extent and Nature of Youth Crime in Jordan**

The true extent of youth crime is unknown because there are no reliable statistical indicators (Al-Majali, 2001). It has been argued that the increase in youth crime rates since 2000 was due to changes in police practices that meant proceeding with cases that might previously have been dealt with informally, creating the impression of a youth crime wave (Directorate of Social Defense, 2009). Thus, the increase in the number of arrests and sentences of children does not represent actual changes in the level of youth crime, but rather changes in the capacity of the youth justice system to process individual cases (Criminal Statistics Department, 2011). Therefore, new legislation remains capable of ensuring the criminalisation of children, since their offences usually occur in the most visible places, such as the street (Al-Majali, 2001). This indicates that youth crime is socially constructed, as behaviours which are classified as criminal change over time due to changes in legislation and police practices.

Most youth crimes are classified as minor, and most children have been involved in petty offences such as property theft, handling stolen goods and property damage, which constituted 55% of all recorded youth crime in Jordan in 2011 (Criminal Statistics Department, 2011). Although violent crime against persons increased in Jordan by 13% between 1994 and 2007, it is important to

note that this increase is due to a rise in petty assault, with serious assault decreasing by 32%. This increase is attributed to registering all crimes and offences that were not previously registered (Criminal Statistics Department, 2011). Physical fights and crimes involving guns often lead to minor injuries, which constitute 25% of the total crimes committed by children (MOSD, 2011). Male children seem to be more exposed to violence in public areas (Yaseen, 2006), and violent crime has traditionally been associated with males and regarded as very much a masculine characteristic (NCHR, 2005). Other crimes committed by children are crimes against religion and family, which constitutes 3% of all crimes committed by children, and crimes against public safety, constituting 10.7% (Criminal Statistics Department, 2011). All statistics need to be interpreted with caution; still, they do provide an indication of crime trends (Al-Amani, 2003), and therefore youth crime in Jordan proves to be an area worthy of study.

Although official statistics imply that children have always been involved in petty offences, and that only 10-15 percent of all children arrested are persistent offenders (MOSD, 2007), youth researchers and self-reporting studies conclude that children's crimes are serious enough, and that persistent offending by children is far more widespread than the official statistics claim (Al-Humsi, 2006). Despite the fact that crime is socially constructed, official statistics still provide valuable insight into the extent and nature of youth crime (Al-Mohee, 2003). Youth crime constituted 12.58% of all crime in Jordan in 2000, but fell steeply to 10.71% in 2001. By 2002 the percentage reached 11%. A continuous increase was seen during 2003, reaching 11.40%, and another rise, to 13%,

was seen in 2004. Between 2005 and 2010 there was a 3% rise in youth crime, reaching a peak of 16% in 2010 (Criminal Statistics Department, 2011). Therefore, children commit 16% of crime in the kingdom (MOSD, 2010). To a certain extent, these figures support the media's articulated view that there has been a dramatic upsurge in youth crime, as it has increased every year since 2003, and the highest figure is the most recent, in 2010.

When referring to youth crime, the great gender difference must be mentioned. Official statistics always show a clear imbalance between offending by male children and female children, with the latter accounting for a far smaller proportion of recorded offences. Approximately 96% of offending children in Jordan are male (MOSD, 2010). Although the discussion here of the youth justice system does refer to both genders, the large majority of children in conflict with the law in Jordan are male (MOSD, 2007). Therefore, this research focuses predominantly on male children, with all of the study participants being male.

## **Thesis Structure**

Following on from this introductory chapter, Chapter Two explores theoretical frameworks of sociological perspectives of childhood and youth crime which have the potential to assist in understanding existing literature and the research findings presented in subsequent chapters. More specifically, understanding children within wider structures—both micro and macro social structures—and according to different theoretical approaches of childhood is important, as such

understanding assists in gaining an in-depth knowledge of different theoretical approaches to youth crime. It is proposed that the given explanations from childhood and youth crime perspectives provide a particularly useful framework for understanding and contextualising the current study. Chapter Three reviews sociological literature relevant to children's problems within wider social structures by highlighting the relation between these problems and youth crime from criminological literature understandings. Chapter Four then focuses on the Jordanian youth justice system in order to understand its approach to children in conflict with the law. This chapter explores which theoretical tradition or ideological position is dominant in the youth justice system in Jordan. This chapter concludes by identifying the role of RCIs in attempting to reduce offending by convicted children. In doing so, gaps within the literature are highlighted as the basis for the current study.

The methodological approach taken by this study is outlined in Chapter Five. The rationale for the chosen research strategy and design is presented before discussing how participants were recruited to take part in the study, and how the fieldwork unfolded in practice. The process of data analysis is then outlined in order to facilitate understanding of how the study findings were obtained. Adopting a reflexive approach, this chapter concludes by reflecting upon the challenges encountered during the research process – particularly within the context of adopting a child-focused methodological approach.

Chapters Six through to Nine present the findings of the study, based on participant observation, interview and focus group data. More specifically,

Chapter Six explores the different perspectives and understandings that RCIs in Jordan have regarding causes of youth crime, looking at causes from within both micro and macro social structures. The chapter considers explanations and understandings of why children commit crime, asking staff from each of the institution's treatment programmes in turn. Chapter Seven moves on to explore the objectives of the RCIs as they attempt to reduce repeat offending by convicted children, based on the explanations provided by the RCIs. This chapter begins by exploring the specific aims of each institutional programme; attention is also given to whether these aims and the perspectives of staff members regarding children are in line with traditional socialisation theory or contemporary perceptions of childhood. Staff techniques for delivering the aims of each programme are also examined, after presenting each programme's aims.

Chapter Eight documents children's own perspectives of the extent to which they find the programmes beneficial to changing their offending behaviours and thus meeting their needs. The consistency between the aims of the institutional programmes and the actual practices in place is examined alongside a discussion of the effectiveness of each intervention programme. Children's own perspectives of their circumstances, which go beyond current institutional understandings, are then explored, and attention is paid to what kind of support children need from the institutions in addressing their specific needs and problems. This chapter concludes by reflecting upon children's own perspectives on what they think the institutions actually intend to achieve and how relevant children perceive institutional goals of rehabilitating children in

conflict with the law. Chapter Nine, examines how social workers and child monitors, as key informant staff, explain the dilemmas that contribute to the challenges of addressing children's needs within family guidance and behaviour modification programmes and begins by exploring staff members' awareness children's own perspectives. Participants' experiences of the dilemmas they encounter while attempting to achieve the institutions' aims are also examined in the second part of this chapter. This chapter then concludes by listening to staff members' suggestions and recommendations of how the current interventions could be replaced or improved to meet children's needs.

Finally, Chapter Ten discusses the key findings from this study as presented in Chapters Six through Nine, and highlights the relevance of these findings to existing theory and literature. The chapter is structured around the key themes which emerged from the study findings, and is situated in the context of the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter Two. Theoretical perspectives of childhood and youth crime are drawn upon to facilitate a nuanced and theoretical understanding of the study findings. Chapter Ten concludes by highlighting the theoretical and empirical contribution of this thesis, including implications for future research, policy and practice.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Sociological Understandings of Childhood and Youth**

#### **Crime: 'Theoretical Perspectives'**

##### **Introduction**

This chapter explores the theoretical frameworks of sociological perspectives of childhood and youth crime which have the potential to facilitate understanding of the existing literature and the research findings presented in subsequent chapters. It is proposed that the given explanations, from childhood and youth crime perspectives, provide a particularly useful framework for understanding and contextualising this study. Essentially, theoretical frameworks of childhood and youth crime highlight the impact of inherent structures on children's everyday lives in terms of how children influence and are influenced by wider social structures. For the purpose of this study, the key theoretical concepts from these frameworks are: children as 'socially becoming' and 'social beings'. These concepts are explored within this chapter, and it is argued that understanding these concepts in relation to institutional structures and to youth crime is particularly important. In turn, the insights gleaned from institutional staff in this study with regard to RCIs' objectives provide an empirical lens through which to critically investigate the relevant ideas and concepts within theoretical perspectives of childhood and youth crime. Importantly, understanding the sociological theories of childhood is crucial for examining the social position of children within the RCIs' policies and practices, in order to draw conclusions as to how such understanding determines the effectiveness

or ineffectiveness of meeting children's needs within wider social structures. This will enable conclusions about the possibility of applying Western sociological approaches to childhood and youth crime within Jordanian contexts.

To this end, this chapter begins by examining a traditional socialisation approach, and then examines contemporary sociological theories of childhood. In these theories, the varying views of children are critically examined by identifying how children's relationships to social structures are defined within each model. Four approaches advocated by contemporary sociological theories of childhood (the socially constructed child; the social structural child; the tribal child; and the minority group child) informed the study in terms of understanding children's social actions and interaction with structural factors. Together, these theories of childhood enable the understanding and analysis of the impact of wider social structures on children, the extent to which children are constrained by structural factors such as age and class, and the extent to which they are endowed with agency to resist such constraints. This study is also interested in understanding the RCIs' objectives in attempting to reduce youth crime by convicted children. As long as the RCIs constitute Jordan's formal response to youth crime, it is important to understand the social position of children within these objectives and to analyse whether the RCIs' objectives of rehabilitating children perceive them as competent or incompetent social actors.

This chapter then moves to examine the sociological theoretical models of youth crime. Four criminological approaches in explaining youth crime have

informed the current study: control theories, social learning theory, strain theories and labelling theory. These theories have been chosen according to theoretical considerations of youth crime in Jordan. Attention is also given to considering the relevance of sociological theories of youth crime to the previous discussion of sociological theories of childhood.

## **The Sociological Theories of Childhood: 'Ways of Viewing Children'**

Children have been defined and understood in numerous ways throughout history and across cultures. Theories of childhood inform the ways that people think about children and speak to and interact with them. James, Jencks and Prout (1998) referred to varying concepts of childhood as theoretical models of childhood and identified two categories: traditional socialisation theory and contemporary theories of childhood. Traditional socialisation theories, of children and childhood, such as positivism and functionalism, view children in terms of becoming adults. Contemporary sociological theories, of children and childhood developed over recent decades, acknowledge children as agents in the here and now. In their relationship to wider structures, these two distinctly different theoretical views of children shape notions of 'social actors' as either a future status or as a current status respectively. The following is a discussion of a traditional socialisation approach and contemporary sociological theories of childhood.

## **Traditional Socialisation Theories**

In the traditional sociological approach to childhood, the traditional concept is socialisation, wherein children are not to be viewed as individuals, equipped to participate in a complex adult world, but rather as passive beings that have the potential to be developed into an adult world. Children are assumed to acquire the culture of groupings, in which they find themselves, and are positioned as incomplete social actors (James et al., 1998). Sociologists, in their definitions of socialisation, stress the importance of the “agencies of socialisation” such as family and other determined agencies, in which children have to learn how to fit into society and conform to social norms (James et al., 1998; Wyness, 2006). Traditional positivists, such as Comte (1966), along with functionalists such as Talcott Parsons & Bales (1955) and Durkheim (1982), stressed the importance of an integrated social order and a state of equilibrium, placing high value on the process of socialisation. In this respect, sociology’s understanding of social order, social stability and social integration and its reproduction depend largely on the efficacy of socialisation to ensure that societies sustain themselves through time. In essence, this involves the successful transmission of culture from one generation to another (James et al., 1998). This means that children are, in an absolute sense, helpless, powerless and dependent, and, by necessity, must rely on others to introduce them to society, and they must be in a position to take advantage of the support of a range of socialising agencies. Thus adults, over time, instil in children the capacity to be independent entities (Wyness, 2006). However, James et al. (1998) and Corsaro (1997) argued that, within these deterministic views of society and underestimations of the

agency of social actors, the potential for the expression of the child's intentionality is constrained by the inherent social structures. James et al. (1998) suggested that any research, following such a model, could not attend to the everyday world of children or their interaction skills and their individual worldview. Thus, it could be argued that these factors of discipline and control insist on obedience and limit children's agency of social interaction.

### **Contemporary Sociological Theories**

According to James et al. (1998), there has been rapidly growing sociological interest in and attention paid to children and childhood in recent times. As a result, there has been a shift away from traditional socialisation theories. Contemporary sociological understandings acknowledge children as agents, with "social, political and economic status as contemporary subjects" (James et al., 1998, p. 26); namely, as active actors and agents.

Socialisation, from a contemporary sociological perspective, is seen as "a process of appropriation, reinvention, and reproduction" in which "children negotiate, share and create culture with adults and each other" (Corsaro, 2005, p. 18). This new perspective perceives children as competent social actors and agents in constructing the social and cultural aspects of their lives, whilst acknowledging that they are constrained by existing social structures (Corsaro, 1997). This differs from early sociological theories (e.g. Parsons, 1955) which view socialisation as a matter of adaptation and internalization with children as passive in a process of becoming socialised to an adult world. Recent sociological theories, of children, view them as competent and capable social

actors in their relationships with wider social structures, in which they influence their social circumstances as well as being influenced by them (James et al., 1998).

In order to understand how recently formed theoretical sociological models of children have enabled children to be viewed as capable of social interaction, four major models, identified by James et al. (1998), are discussed:

1. The socially constructed child.
2. The tribal child.
3. The minority group child.
4. The social-structural child.

Acknowledgment of children's agency and social structures are common to each of these models; yet, they are conceptualised in different ways. The four models provide greater scope for the inclusion of children's voices in research and practice. According to James and Prout (1995, p. 78), by viewing "children as competent social actors – we can learn more about the ways in which "society" and "social structure" shape social experiences and are themselves refashioned through the social action of members". On the basis of this understanding, contemporary sociological theories enable the impact of society and social structures to be examined in theoretical models of children's interaction. These four sociological models, of children, are discussed in terms of children's active interaction with wider social structures.

## **The Socially Constructed Child**

A theoretical model of children, as socially constructed, emphasises the diversity of childhoods which are locally constructed (James et al., 1998). This approach is interested, then, in understanding the construction of children's childhood in different societies; this is understood to be influenced by context and culture (see Jenks, 1993). In this sense, the social construction of childhood is both culturally and historically determined (Goldson, 1997). Thus, the socially constructed child approach perceives children as active social agents who participate in the knowledge construction and daily experience of childhood, since children inhabit a world of meaning created by themselves and through their interaction with adults and other children (James et al., 1998). As Hendrick (2000) pointed out, this entails three important assumptions: children are capable of social action; areas in which children are socially active can be identified; and children are in relationships with other people and the world.

The concept of "children's culture" is central to the "socially constructed child" perspective which describes the different social structures which children encounter in their everyday lives (Jenks, 1993). However, children's culture is not seen as a determinant of social structures of children's social lives, but as a context within which children's social relations and interactions can be described. More specifically, a focus on children's culture examines the role that children play within society as co-constructors, and highlights children as agents and active contributors in the construction of their own childhood (Jenks, 1996). This demonstrates that the structural contexts in which children find

themselves not only constrain their actions but, also, enable them (Greetz, 1975; James et al., 1998).

The social constructionist perspective sees the child as structured always through constitutive practices, in either a strong or a weak sense (James et al., 1998). According to James et al. (1998, p. 25) a “strong” view of the child “sees the child as a product of his/her time and material conditions, a kind of Marxist child who is determined by his/her relationship to the means of production; the means of parenting; or even the means of educational provision”. However, a “weak” view of the child, such as the child’s dependency on adults, falls within the social constructionist perspective (Burman, 1994).

The “strong” view of the social construction of childhood, which sees the child as ‘a product of material conditions’, reminds us of James and Prout’s (1990, p. 8) statement:

*Childhood is understood as a social construction ... it can never be entirely divorced from other variables such as class, gender or ethnicity. Comparative and cross-cultural analysis reveals a variety of childhoods rather than a single and universal phenomenon*

This means that class and gender structures are socially constructed. In other words, the social constructionist approach assumes that children are bearers of their gender and class identity which determine and impact on the micro-realities of their everyday lives (Wyness, 2006; Davies, 1989). Although social constructionism acknowledges children’s agency to resist such structural constraints at specific times and spaces away from the authority of adults, it suggests, also, that children have no agency to resist them when they become

a relational process which determines their relationships with adults (see Corsaro, 1993; James et al., 1998).

James et al. (1998) generated the construction of the playing-child. Wyness (2006) argued that 'play' reflected that childhood was a period free of economic responsibilities. This lack of responsibility determines the distinction in status between child and adult, since play is attached to the child and work to the adult (James et al., 1998).

The "strong" view of the social construction of childhood, which sees the child as "a product of parenting and educational provision", indicates that social constructionists acknowledge children's rights such as to care; protection; and strong attachments within families and school domains (James et al., 1998). However, Kitziner (1997) argued that the social construction of child innocence; victimhood; and vulnerability kept children and their voices localized and secondary to adult control. Hence, the social constructionist approach was criticised as not dealing adequately with universal notions on a macro level, such as children's needs and welfare (Wyness, 2006). Woodhead (1990) argued that emphasis on the cultural basis of needs, by assuming that such needs had to be met by adults because of children's vulnerability on a micro level, made it difficult to identify the fundamental aspects of childhood on a global level. This made it easier for children to be exploited. Wyness (2006) argued that, within a social constructionist perspective, children were tied always to what adults did and thought. In this sense, social problems such as 'abused children' and 'street children' are created by adults who produce

children as social and cultural subjects.

### **The Tribal Child**

A theoretical model of children as tribal distinguishes difference between children and adults by suggesting that children possess a culture which is distinct from adult culture (James et al., 1998). In this approach, children are seen as practising their own culture with adults appreciative of children's views, differences and autonomy. Children are understood to inhabit an autonomous world separate from that of adults, with their own rules and agendas (James et al., 1998). Research, which views children as tribal, "offers potential for resistance to the normalising effects of age hierarchies, educational policies, socialisation theories and child rearing practices" (James et al. p. 215). This approach, focusing on children's agency, helps to explore their social actions in and through the particular social structures they encounter. In addition, it helps to investigate the resulting various forms of agency adopted by children in their everyday engagement with those structures (James et al., 1998).

A tribal view of children was critiqued by Morrow and Richards (2002), who claimed that such a view positioned children as unknowable to adults. They argued that research which viewed children this way could be potentially misleading. This is especially true if adult researchers suggest that they have suspended their adult status to enter into the world of children in order to claim knowledge of children's ways of being. A theoretical tribal model of children takes children seriously in their own right. Yet, as Morrow and Richards argued,

a child's account could never be presented unadulterated since the lenses of adult researchers invariably interfered.

### **The Social-Structural Child**

A theoretical model of childhood as a collective social structural entity recognises that children are a feature of all social worlds; though differences may exist from society to society (James et al., 1998). This model views childhood as a social phenomenon and promotes the commonalities of children and childhood across differing societies. Children are understood to be a body of social actors and as agents with needs and rights. They are seen as a constant group, or universal category, with acknowledgment of the influence of particular social structures on particular groups of children. This model differs from the theoretical model of children as socially constructed in that it recognises that there are certain universal characteristics in the structures of all societies. A view of children, as social structural entities, is based on some constant elements present in all children, as opposed to a view of children as socially constructed. The latter is based on the idea that childhood is determined both culturally and historically (James et al., 1998). In other words, the identification of universal characteristics across different societies offers scope for the development of frameworks or models of children's rights which could be applied in different societies, regardless of socio-cultural contextual circumstances.

The structural or macro perspective of childhood could be seen in the work of

Qvortrup (1991), whose approach was based upon three central assumptions. Firstly, childhood constitutes a particular structural form. By classifying childhood as a structural form, Qvortrup (1994) defined it as a category, or a part of society, such as social class, gender and age groups. In this sense, understanding childhood, as a social structure, aims to provide children and childhood with “conceptual autonomy” by making children the unit of observation and a category in their own right (Qvortrup, 1994). Secondly, childhood is exposed to the same societal forces as adulthood; this means that childhood is interrelated with other structural categories. In this sense, the structural arrangements of these categories and changes in these arrangements affect the nature of childhood. In modern societies, for example, changes in the social structure arrangements of categories such as gender; work; family; and social class have resulted in many mothers working outside the home. This has resulted in children undertaking more household responsibilities and spending more of their time in institutional settings such as day-care centres and after-school programs (Qvortrup, 1994).

Thirdly, children are co-constructors of their childhood and society. In their particular childhoods, children, like adults are active participants in organized activities including: contributing to society through participating in unpaid household chores resulting from the increase of working mothers; building and maintaining family relationships; taking care and responsibility for themselves and others (Mayall, 2002); participating in school affairs, policy and schoolwork (including homework) (Mayall, 2002; Morrow, 1994); and contributing through paid work, namely, economic production and consumption (Qvortrup, 1994). In

theory, children's work, outside the home, should have positive benefits which add to the experiences of childhood and prepare them for future work roles (Corsaro, 1997). Also, by distinguishing between work and labour, the structural child approach concentrates heavily on the exploitative nature of children's work. Children's work should mean light work which neither harms the health and development of children nor prevents them from meeting other essential needs such as for leisure; play; and education. Child labour is work which prevents these needs being met (Fyfe, 1989).

Alanen (2001) developed Qvortrup's work by referring more clearly to a generation as an independent variable, and aiming to incorporate a micro level analysis with an emphasis on structure. Along with Mayall (2002), Alanen (2001) promoted childhood in terms which were more foundational by positioning generation alongside social class; race; and gender as an explanatory social category. The generational perspective (Alanen, 1992; Alanen & Mayall, 2001; Christensen, 2002; James et al., 1998; Mayall, 2002; Qvortrup, 1991, 1994; Qvortrup et al., 1994) of childhood adds another important dimension to perceiving children and childhood in the social world. This approach takes it as a given that "childhood is a permanent [social] structure, even if its members are continually being replaced" (Qvortrup, 1991, p. 12). On the other hand, it acknowledges the generational processes (Mayall, 2002) which are both structured and structuring (Qvortrup, 1994), where the notion of generation is comparable to other structures such as gender and class. Mayall (2002, p.25) explained it as follows: "just as gender emerged as a crucial concept for analysing relationships between the sexes, so generation is

coming to be seen as key to understanding child-adult relationships". At all levels of analysis of the generational approach, the focus is on relational processes – how this thing has come about, how it is working out now and how it varies through space and time (Mayall, 2002).

It is precisely by focusing on the relational processes that the generational perspective assumes children are involved necessarily in constructing their own childhood, which itself is constructed relationally through other structural categories (e.g. adulthood; parenthood). Thus, although it is recognised that there are macro-structural constraints, it is assumed these do not determine solely the micro-realities of children's everyday lives. Instead, childhood assumes a social position which is produced and lived out by children as agents, albeit agents situated within the structural process that recurrently constructs childhood (Alanen, 2001). Agency need not be restricted to the micro-constructionist understanding of being a social actor; rather, it "is inherently linked to the 'powers' (or lack of them), of those positioned as children, to influence, organise, co-ordinate and control events taking place in their everyday worlds" (Alanen, 2001, p. 21). The generational perspective offers a way of exploring children as agents whilst also acknowledging that they are constrained by other structures. This approach refers to children's agency in discovering their ability to resist the existing structural constraints in their everyday lives.

## **The Minority Group Child**

A theoretical model of children as a minority group recognises that children, as a group, are positioned as powerless, disadvantaged and oppressed (Oakley, 1994). This approach sees all children as being exploited to different degrees and having their human rights exercised inappropriately (James et al., 1998). In this model, children are viewed as deserving the same rights as adults, yet rarely receiving them. In contrast to the theoretical model of children as tribal, where the differences between children and adults are celebrated, this model recognises many such differences as imposed disadvantages (James et al., 1998). Oakley (1994) proposed that children are a minority group in that they are positioned as less than adults, with terms such as “childish” and “childlike” often used in derogatory ways. Furthermore, children’s minority group status is presented through adults making decisions for them on the basis of the claim that it is ‘in their best interests’ (Alderson, 1994; Coady, 1996; Lansdown, 1994; Oakley, 1994). Adults, who view children as a minority group, act as advocates for (or ideally with) children by arguing that children should have the same rights as adults. One area, in which children are perceived as similar to adults but more likely to be exploited, is that of children’s work (Solberg, 1996). This approach stresses, also, the importance of maintaining children’s needs and rights to strong familial and educational attachment as well as care and protection (Mayall, 2002). If children are viewed as a minority group, their rights; needs; and interests are recognised as limited and constrained by social constructions. However, James et al. (1998) argued that this view grouped children together, proposing uniformity whilst ignoring variations. Invariably,

social and cultural variations may be glossed over by grouping all children together.

### *Why Analyse Constructs of Childhood? Why Analyse Structure?*

Whilst James et al. (1998, p. 217) remind us that the four approaches can overlap each other and fluidity between them exists, they suggest that movement between the socially constructed child and the structural child approaches is 'relatively rare'. Thus, the socially constructed child and the structural child approaches are linked in different ways. In these two approaches to children, adults question, analyse and reflect on the influence of social constructions and/or social structures respectively. In this sense, they are more appropriate for conceptualising this study, providing solid groundwork for thinking critically about how children's crises, within wider social structures, are shaped. More specifically, in social constructionism, children construct meaning through interactions with social structures and with others, including adults and peers. A prime reason for analysing constructions of childhood in this study is that these constructions can offer an explanation of how children are perceived in Jordanian society. Analysis of constructions of childhood can be a useful basis for identifying problems within different contexts. In structural child theory, childhood is understood to be a structural category which can be used as a unit of analysis, where children are interrelated with other structural categories. The structural child approach would be primarily useful for analysing how changes in particular social structures (e.g. family) and their structural arrangements create different crises for children; and for analysing the extent of children's

agency in resisting class and age structures as determinant factors of their relationships with adults.

The perspectives, of the socially constructed child and the social structural child, are structural approaches which are each reflected in the empirical versions of the minority group child (the politicised version of the social structural child) and the tribal child (the politicised version of the socially constructed child) (James et al., 1998). Thus, often, the tribal child and the minority group child perspectives are related closely to the socially constructed child and the structural child approaches respectively. Accordingly, in this study, any reference to the latter two approaches on how children shape and are shaped by social structures would be, also, a reference to the tribal child and the minority group child approaches. Collectively, an understanding of these four approaches to theorising childhood enables the analysis of structural influential factors which shape children's experiences in different areas, and how youth crime is understood in accordance with sociological perspectives of youth crime – both within the sociological perspectives appearing in the literature and the sociological perspectives found in the RCIs.

## **Sociological Theories of Youth Crime**

For over a century, people have been attempting to understand why criminal activity happens. On-going research, in the field of social science, seeks explanations as to why some people commit crimes whilst others are law-

abiding citizens. It is accepted widely amongst criminologists that no single root cause of crime exists; it is the outcome of the interaction of socio-economic factors (Henry & Milovanovic, 1996). Accordingly, four criminological approaches in explaining youth crime have informed this study: control theories; social learning theory; strain theories; and labelling theory. Two of these theories (control theories and social learning theory) have tended towards criminological explanations which view children as dependents whose agency or choices are not viewed as relevant in explaining youth crime. In contrast, the other two (strain theories and labelling theory) have tended towards criminological explanations of youth crime which put some emphasis on the agency and choices of children. In other words, these theories highlight the different ways in which children can react to structural constraints in their everyday lives, and attempt to explain youth crime.

In order to make some distinction between the sociological theories explaining youth crime, the researcher will use the terms 'traditional' and 'contemporary' theories only to distinguish whether youth crime causations result from children's 'power' or 'lack of power' within social structures. In the following section, traditional criminological and, then, contemporary criminological theories of youth crime are examined. In these theories, the varying views of youth crime are examined critically by identifying how children's problems, with wider social structures, are defined within each model.

## **Traditional Criminological Theories of Youth Crime**

## **Contemporary Criminological Theories of Youth Crime**

### **Social Strain Theories**

Merton's (1938) strain theory is derived from Durkheim's concept of anomie. It differs somewhat from Durkheim in that Merton argued that anomie was not created by a sudden social change (a breakdown of social norms which is necessary to regulate individual behaviours, or the dissociation of the individual from a general sense of morality of the times), as Durkheim proposed, but rather by a social structure which holds out the same goals to all its members without giving them equal means to achieve them (Merton, 1938). Merton borrowed Durkheim's notion of anomie to describe the breakdown of the normative system. As Agnew (1997, p. 37) stated, "For Merton, normlessness refers to regulating goal achievements, whereas, for Durkheim, it refers to those norms regulating goals." In this sense, Merton focused on the discrepancy between societal goals (e.g. economic success) and the legitimate means of attaining those goals (e.g. education, hard work). Therefore, Merton's (1938) strain theory argued that individuals committed crimes when they could not achieve social goals legitimately; thus, socially disadvantaged people are more likely to offend. He pointed out, also, that the class constraint of poverty did not cause crime; however, when it was combined with individual acceptance of cultural goals and illegality of chosen means, then, the possibility of criminal behaviour increased. Merton called this mode of adaptation 'innovation' where individuals reject the cultural means by innovating (designing) their own means to achieve their aspirations (e.g. through robbery; embezzlement; or other such

criminal acts<sup>6</sup> (Merton, 1957).

Strain theory was developed further in Cohen's *Delinquent Boys* (1955); this revolved around the frustration and strains experienced by working-class families, with particular emphasis on the all-male child criminal gang. Cohen elaborated upon Merton's strain explanation of criminal behaviour with his more specific subcultural theory that a large amount of criminal behaviour resulted from blocked goals and "status frustration". In the simplest of terms, Cohen argued that four factors—social class; school performance; status frustration; and reaction formation—contributed to the development of crime and criminal subcultures (1955). The theory states that children come to school either equipped or unequipped with the tools for success in an educational system, and this depends on their social class and level of socialisation. Students' failure can lead to status frustration which, in turn, prompts those failing to reject mainstream goals by either avoiding school altogether or engaging in criminal behaviour.

Cohen (1955), in his status frustration theory, contends that middle-class goals and benchmarks of success are universal goals pervasive throughout society.

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<sup>6</sup> Merton (1938) presented five modes of adapting to strain caused by the restricted access to socially approved goals and means. He did not mean that everyone who was denied access to society's goals became deviant. Rather, the response, or modes of adaptation, depended on the individual's attitudes toward cultural goals and the institutional means to attain them. Innovation is one mode of individuals' adaptation to the strain they encounter; other adaptations of strain are conformity; retreatism; ritualism; and rebellion (see Merton, 1938 for a summary of these adaptations).

Emphasis on these universal middle-class goals creates an environment in which some are more advantaged or disadvantaged than others. Specifically, he pointed out that lower-class or working-class children were at a distinct disadvantage since they were unlikely to possess skills or habits which could make them competitive in a middle-class world. Whilst this disadvantaged status would be cumbersome in many arenas of life, Cohen posited that it would be particularly evident in academics (1955). Explaining the theory, in the context of the classroom, he suggested that low-class children would not achieve success in a middle-class oriented education system. It would present them with an impasse since they would have internalised the middle-class goals imparted to them, yet been unable to reach them (Cohen, 1955).

The key variable, upon which strain depends for Cohen, is not success at achieving material wealth, as Merton suggested, but success at gaining status. Social class is a common variable in sociological research and is captured generally as a financial measure. However, Cohen (1955) had a more complicated view of how social class ought to be gauged, and believed that social class influenced directly students' school experiences. More specifically, the impact of social class, on children and youth crime, could be measured not only in terms of the failure of gaining monetary success but, also, in terms of academic, social and interpersonal handicaps which prevented children from living up to middle-class standards (Cohen, 1955).

This dilemma is what Cohen called *status frustration*, whereby lower-class boys recognise their inability to meet the standards of the middle-class measuring

rod. Then, in an attempt to resolve their status frustration, some children will engage collectively in *reaction formation*; this is the rejection of the middle-class standards. Through reaction formation, working-class children turn to criminal and/or antisocial behaviour (e.g. truancy) as a means of resolving the conflict presented by status frustration (1955). Such behaviours provide the means by which unsuccessful children can gain a sense of status amongst others who have failed, also, to achieve status according to middle-class values (Cohen, 1955).

Most recently, Agnew's general strain theory (1992) offers a more expansive application, of social strain explanations of criminal behaviour; this is capable of measuring crime among male and female children in all social classes. Agnew (1992) identified three major sources of stress which led to social strain:

1. Strain from the failure to achieve positively valued goals
2. Strain from the removal of positively valued stimuli from the individual
3. Strain from the presentation of negative stimuli

The first type of strain involves individuals' inability to achieve positively valued goals (Agnew, 1992). This strain is derived directly from Merton's and Cohen's classic strain theories. Children are more likely to commit crimes when they fail to achieve the positively valued goals of monetary success (as Merton proposed) and middle-class status (as Cohen proposed).

The second major type of strain involves the loss of positive stimuli. For children, this can be the death of a parent; the divorce/separation of a child's

parents; or suspension from school. The third type of strain involves the presentation of negative stimuli. Some examples, of negative stimuli which a child might face, are child abuse; neglect; adverse relations with parents and teachers; negative school experiences; adverse relations with peers; and homelessness (Agnew, 1992, p. 58-59). The last two types of strain deal with painful and stressful events and conditions. These represent Agnew's novel attempts to fill the theoretical gaps found in Merton's and Cohen's formulations of traditional social strain theory. General strain theory, however, does not focus on the *blockage* of pain-avoidance behaviour but, simply, on the experience of painful events/conditions. This shift was based on suggestions that painful events and conditions generate negative emotions and, sometimes prompt criminal coping even when a legal form of escape is possible (Agnew, 2001). At the same time, general strain theory does state that criminal coping is more likely when individuals lack the skills and resources to cope in a legal manner (Agnew, 1992).

General strain theory identifies various types of criminal actions as a way to relieve internal pressure caused by negative emotions; these include escapist (e.g., drug use); instrumental (e.g. property offences); and retaliatory (e.g. violent offences) outcomes (Agnew, 1999). Of the various types of negative emotions, anger was identified as playing a key role in mediating the effect of strain on criminal behaviour and violence. This is because anger "increases the individual's level of felt injury, creates a desire for retaliation/vengeance, energises the individual for action, and lowers inhibitions" (Agnew, 1992, p. 60).

## **Labelling Theory**

Labelling theory claims that crime is ordinary; natural; and widespread, and denies that criminal behaviour is driven by any particular motivation. Thus, crime requires no more special an explanation than any other everyday activity (Cohen, 1973). The labelling approach to crime is associated widely with the work of Howard Becker (1963) who claimed that deviance was not inherent in any action but was created when rules and sanctions were applied to behaviour considered to be offensive. Applying these rules of deviance to individuals or groups means labelling them as 'outsiders'. Becker (1963, p. 243) went on to argue that "deviance is not a quality that lies in the behaviour itself, but in the interaction between the person who commits an act and those that respond to it." Therefore, the 'deviant' is the one to whom the label has been applied successfully. Behaviour, which, in some way, is labelled as deviating from the 'norm', involves necessarily the value judgements of those powerful individuals who are in a position to impose such labels. Then, crime is socially constructed and subject to historical and social variables, dependent on a process of negotiation between policy makers and rule violators. The fact that behaviours are classified as criminal is problematic because crime arises only from the imposition of social judgments on others' behaviour by both the criminal justice system and the community at large. Labelling theory focuses less on the 'deviant act' itself, and more upon the societal reaction to that particular behaviour (Becker, 1963).

Lemert's (1967) work followed on from Becker's insights in recognising the

importance of the reaction of others in the explanation of deviance, whilst drawing a distinction between 'primary' and 'secondary' deviance. Primary deviance is the committing of criminal acts before the individual is caught and punished for them; secondary deviance refers to crimes committed due to the label society has placed upon an offender. From the labelling theorist's point of view, then, society's reaction to deviant behaviour is crucially important in understanding which person becomes labelled as deviant. Erikson (1962) discussed the ceremony that, typically, deviants go through once the decision to take official action has been made. Firstly, the alleged deviant is apprehended (arrested or taken into custody). Secondly, the individual is confronted, generally at a trial or hearing. Thirdly, the individual is judged (a verdict; disposition; or decision is rendered). Finally, the individual is placed (imprisoned; committed to an institution; or put back into society on probation). The result is that the individual is labelled officially as a deviant.

The media has been blamed for over-reporting and over-amplifying minor offences by children; creating moral panic with regard to children; and giving the impression of moral decline and a wave of youth crime (Cricher, 2003). Whilst many individuals commit deviant acts, only some are dealt with officially. Muncie (2004) argued that the media labelled particular groups of children — particularly working-class and black children — through redefining street robberies, now labelled as muggings, and such presentation became identified as worthy of public anxiety as well as police and judicial attention.

As criminality is seen as a product of society's reaction to an individual's

primary offence, once someone is convicted of a crime, they are labelled a 'criminal' and, thereby, acquire a criminal identity as their main identity. Furthermore, once the labelled person returns to society, s/he continues to be regarded as a criminal and, consequently, is rejected by law-abiding persons and accepted by others labelled as criminals. Becker (1963) noted that this process of segregation created "outsiders" who were cast out from society and, then, began to associate with other cast-out individuals. When more people begin to think of these individuals as deviants, they respond to them as such; thus, the deviant reacts to such a response by continuing to engage in further offences. Therefore, Lemert (1974, p. 19) emphasised that if "there is no official reaction, offending behaviour may dissipate or at least fail to accelerate, since the notion of a criminal career will not be established".

It is noteworthy that Downes and Rock (1998) critically noted the difference between labelling and subcultural theories of why working-class children commit crimes and thus are considered 'outsiders'. In subcultural theory, working-class children's criminal acts are only the product of the paradox between structural and cultural demands of achieving status and success in accordance with the dominant middle-class culture. It is in these key areas that working-class children's subcultures are involved in 'solving' their status frustration. In this sense, working-class children in their criminal subcultures are considered outsiders. In contrast, labelling theory suggests that lower-class children's criminal acts are caused by official agencies (e.g. police, courts) labelling them as a group as 'deviants' and 'outsiders', since their behaviours are considered to be offensive by law. Accordingly, the new deviant identity

attached to this group of children may lead them to commit further offences (Downes & Rock, 1998).

## **Summary**

This chapter identified two contrasting theoretical frameworks related to understanding the sociology of childhood and children's relations with social structures. Traditional socialisation theories position the child as passive in a process of becoming socialised to an adult world. In contrast, recent sociological theories of children view them as competent and capable social actors. The socially constructed child and the structural child approaches have mainly informed the study in terms of understanding how children shape and are shaped by social structures, and by aiming to identify children's problems within wider social structures. This first approach is concerned with the idea that concepts of childhood are constructed in different times and contexts, highlighting the limitations of some dominant constructions in adequately representing children's experiences, and emphasising the importance of children's agency. The second approach emphasises childhood as a particular structural form, and examines the position of children as a group within a society.

This chapter also identified different sociological theories of youth crime. Hirschi's social control theory contends that individuals who are tightly bonded to pro-social values, pro-social people and pro-social institutions are unlikely to commit criminal acts. It is these bonds that end up controlling one's behaviour

when one is tempted to engage in criminal or deviant acts. Accordingly, children, who have weak social bonds, are more likely to offend. Gottfredson and Hirschi's self-control theory contends that criminal behaviour is a consequence of a lack of self-control in the home. This is seen in ineffective childrearing; poor parental supervision; parental permissiveness; and disintegration of families. Thus, social control and self-control theories deny that outside forces lead the child into criminal behaviour. Rather, the absence of significant relationships with other individuals and groups, and parental failure to monitor and effectively sanction deviant behaviour, frees the child to engage in youth crime.

In contrast, social learning theory claims that the values and techniques, associated with criminal behaviour, have to be learned — a process which occurs largely through association with deviant others who reinforce differentially the child's criminal behaviour; and model criminal or deviant behaviour, and transmit criminal values which create the motivation to offend. Thus, the child commits criminal acts because group forces lead the child to view crime as a desirable or, at least, justifiable form of behaviour under certain circumstances. It could be argued that both control and social learning theories tended towards explanations which view children as dependents whose agency or choices, in social action, are not viewed as relevant in explaining youth crime. More specifically, control theories focus on the absence of significant relationships with conventional others and institutions; and parental supervision and discipline as the primary causes of youth crime. Social learning theory focuses on positive relationships with deviant others and deviant value systems

as motivations of youth crime. Therefore, these approaches fit within fairly traditional conceptions of childhood.

Social strain theories state that there are three major types of strains which children may face and which may force them to engage in criminal acts. The first type involves the goal blockage, experienced by lower-class children trying to achieve monetary and educational success, high levels of autonomy; and masculine status. The other two types of strain involve the child's inability to escape legally from painful situations and stressful events (e.g. parental divorce and physical punishment). Thus, strain may develop negative emotions in children; this may prompt criminal adaptations to relieve their internal pressure and frustration. In essence, general strain theory proposes that an increase in strain will lead to an increase in anger; then, this may lead to an increase in crime. In contrast to the previously summarised theories, which argue that the causes of youth crime lie within socio-economic circumstances, labelling theory portrays criminality as a product of society's reaction to the individual's primary offence. It claims that, once someone is labelled as a 'criminal', it will be difficult for him or her to act in any other way. Furthermore, the labelled person may be perceived by others as criminal and, consequently, may be rejected by law-abiding persons, thus leading them to commit further offences in keeping with their new deviant identity. It can be argued that social strain and labelling theories provide theoretical explanations which put some emphasis on children's agency in resisting the structural constraints in their everyday lives. Therefore, these theories fit fairly well within contemporary conceptions of childhood, wherein children's agency in relation to social action/reaction is

acknowledged.

Essentially, theoretical frameworks, of childhood and youth crime, highlight the impact of inherent structures on children's everyday lives. Thus, this thesis draws critically upon the given explanations of childhood and youth crime since they provide a particularly useful framework in understanding and contextualising the current study.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Locating Children within Institutional Structures**

#### **Introduction**

The design and implementation of the residential care institutions (RCIs) is influenced by an understanding of the position of children and their everyday experiences and problems within different contexts in Jordanian society. To this end, this chapter begins by understanding the social position of children in relation to wider social structures, particularly within the main institutions of socialising children (family, peer groups and school). Drawing upon a range of sociological and criminological literature, this chapter reviews literature relevant to children's problems within wider social structures by highlighting the relation between these problems and youth crime.

#### **Understanding Children in Relation to the 'Institutions of Socialisation'**

It is known that the family, peer group and school are the main agencies with which the child is in contact in their everyday lives; therefore, it is important to understand the social position of children within these agencies. We will start with the family, and then move to the peer group and school.

Before understanding how children are perceived within the social space of the

family, it is vital to understand what is meant by the term 'family'. In Jordan, the family is understood to exist in either nuclear or extended form.<sup>7</sup> It is a social institution and a basic unit where individuals who reside in the same household are directly linked by close blood relations and/or legal marriage (Sharabi, 1983). Hence, any other relations between individuals not meeting these criteria, yet residing within the same household, are not considered family, since such relations are against Islamic teaching (Barakat, 1993).

A family is considered the most common institution for the socialisation of children as functioning members of society (Amin, 1990). Among the most important duties of Jordanian families is to socialise their children according to cultural norms and religious beliefs (Sharabi, 1985). Children in families are socialised into social and economic dependency, and are taught to be completely reliant on the family and take on the aspirations of the entire group (Sharabi, 1999). This dependency present in Jordanian society is a product of cultural and Islamic religious beliefs; it is justified on account of children's vulnerability and their need for economic, social and emotional support from their families. Raising children is achieved with the parents' goals in mind, and the absence of autonomy inside and outside home, for most children, is evident in Jordan, since power relations are regulated.<sup>8</sup> Children live within rich,

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<sup>7</sup> The *nuclear family* is a household of one basic family unit residing together; the *extended family* is a household made up of more than one basic family unit residing together. The predominant family structure in Jordan today is the nuclear family, which is also characterised by extended kinship relations (Ma'ayta, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> It has been argued that although both parents have authority in socialising children according to societal norms and values, the control and disciplining of children is regulated to a certain extent according to the parent's gender; thus, fathers have more authority over male children

collectivistic and authoritarian cultures; they are not allowed to live on their own but rather taught to comply with their parents' rules (Timimi, 1995). However, Majali (2006) claimed that the issue of parental monitoring over a child's behaviour is determined by the child's gender; arguing that families in Jordan grant male children more freedom of mobility than females; thus, a male child's mobility outside the home is relatively unrestricted.

The peer group is another agency socialising children; parents play the main role in influencing the child's choice of peers (Amin, 1997). Through effective monitoring, parents keep track of their child's whereabouts and can limit where the child goes and who they associate with (Ahmad, 1999). Further, the prevailing cultural approach in Jordan is that boys and girls should follow different paths, which emphasises mixing in their own gender-specific cultures. At the same time, children, within their unique peer groups, should behave according to society's norms and rules (Sharabi, 1985). Ultimately, the family is perceived to be an important social institution that helps to maintain the social order through socialising children according to social, cultural and Islamic beliefs (Sharabi, 1985). This efficacy of socialising children in families is reinforced by the state, because it performs functions and transmits values that are important to the state (Barakat, 1993).

Alongside families, schools are important in regulating and controlling children's behaviour, since children spend long hours every day in school, under the supervision of teachers (MOE, 2006). The national curriculum is important

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than mothers (NCFA, 2000).

because it shapes and develops children's morality in different ways (MOE, 2003). It has been argued that although children are the largest group in school spaces, it is difficult to assume that children are social agents due to the limited role they play in constructing their education (Al-Karaki, 2000). Children are positioned within the school structure as passive recipients of structural forces, yet they are understood to be future social actors (Al-Nouri, 2003).

## **Family Influences on Youth Crime**

### ***Child Physical Abuse***

Child physical abuse has been legally defined as significant harm to a child by a parent or other caregiver after intentional physical contact. It is defined not by the acts, but by the results of the acts (e.g. bruises, burns, broken bones, scratches). Currently, there is no outright ban on smacking in Jordan, as smacking which might cause reddening of the skin is permitted by legal article 62; such smacking is considered mild and within 'culturally reasonable chastisement' (Al-Akad, 1999). This retaining of the legal article allows adults, particularly parents, to discipline children through a stipulated degree of force, including smacking, and only in cases of extreme physical abuse does the state intervene (MOSD, 2006). However, social organisations concerned with children's rights, such as the National Centre for the Protection of Children (NCPC) and the National Council for Family and Child Affairs (NCFCA), continue to campaign for a complete ban on all forms of physical punishment towards children (NCPC, 2000). Meanwhile, Abu-Darweesh (2001) argued that the inconsistency between legal and social policy definitions of what is

considered to be child abuse hinders social service interventions addressing the effects of abuse on children, since many parents might refuse to co-operate with social services in relation to a legally and culturally permitted act. This in turn leads children to be easily and continually abused, with their parents escaping legal sanction; ultimately, children's rights of care and protection remain unaddressed.

Sociological and criminological researchers see understanding and explaining the causes of physical child abuse as complex, as no single factor can adequately explain it (Al-Mousa, 2006). Child abuse relies on the socio-cultural context which emphasises the deep-rooted and continuing belief of the importance of unequal power relations between adults and children in maintaining the social order (Al-Habashneh, 2001). Child abuse occurs in all kinds of families; there is routine use of power by parents over children across all societal groups, since physical punishment is seen as appropriate, normalised and acceptable in society as a form of control and discipline (Hamdani, 1993). Advocates of child rights claim that cultural norms that sanction physical punishment are a cause of child abuse, and campaigns are currently being undertaken to redefine such norms (Aljmal, 2007).

Another explanation is related to economic context. People who live in poverty and material deprivation are more likely to experience economic and social stress, which may lead to parents taking out their frustrations on their children (Badran, 2000; Al-Naser, 2001). Domestic violence is considered another significant factor in predicting child abuse, as children are more likely to be at

greater risk of physical abuse where spousal abuse occurs (Aldweebi, 1998; Abuhejleh, 2004). Research consistently shows that adults who abuse their spouse are more likely to abuse their children (Al-Houmsi, 2004; Majdalawi, 2000; Al-Zou'bi, 1994) while parents who have poor impulse control in responding to child misbehavior may be less likely to consider the consequences of their actions (Alshoubaki, 2010).

Numerous studies have demonstrated a strong correlation between child abuse and youth crime. It has been argued that abused children are more likely to have a tendency to solve interpersonal problems with aggression, as they learn to imitate it as an acceptable means of achieving goals (Al-Masri, 1999; Al-Saied, 1998; Al-Abdullah, 2000). A review of research conducted by Family National Affairs investigated the role of corporal punishment experienced by children in the development of aggressive behaviour and youth violence (FNA, 2002). Child abuse also generates negative emotions, such as anger and frustration, which in turn might lead to increased aggression and a desire for revenge (Alrashdan & Banat, 2010). A review of research conducted by the National Centre for Human Rights (2011) indicated that children's exposure to violence and pervasive feelings of stress or not being safe encouraged their use of aggressive behaviour against their abusive parents as a way of adjusting to feelings of anger and living under the 'threat of violence'.

Chronic physical abuse is considered by Alaween et al. (2001) to weaken the connection between the child and his/her parents. With these connections weakened, the child's self-control decreases, as the child does not feel parental

intimacy and love, causing him/her to act out and to potentially engage in deviant behaviour. Research evidence found that abused children who committed crimes had weak and negative relationships with their parents (Sultan, 2000). Other studies showed that abused children often respond to repeated parental violence by leaving home for long periods, increasing the likelihood of their engagement in criminal activities, since they are unsupervised. They may then be criminalised as a result of crimes committed to survive (i.e. stealing food) (Akrobawi, 2000; Al-Zu'bi, 1998). A study conducted by NCFCA (2006) at the four residential care institutions in Jordan discovered that about one third of children were exposed to physical violence from their parents, leading them to roam the streets unsupervised and stay in constant contact with criminal peers.

### ***Child Poverty***

While Al-Zafiri (1999) argued that no single factor predicts youth crime, Al-Naser & Shtawi (1997) contended that crime is highly correlated with child poverty. Reviewing research about poverty, Al-Zgoul et al. (1999) conclude that large family size and single-mother families caused by divorce are strong factors associated with child poverty. Indeed, Al-Rabadi et al. (1994) argued that child poverty in large families is caused by the caregivers' inability to provide the necessary care due to a lack of financial resources, while child poverty in single-mother families is very often due to fathers' reluctance or refusal to provide care.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, understanding and explaining the link between child

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<sup>9</sup> According to the Islamic Affair Centre (2000), the legal system in Jordan gives a divorced

poverty and youth crime is a contentious and complex issue. Religious commentators have argued that religion decreases the impact of poverty on crime due to the effect religion has on shaping beliefs. Thus, poverty does not lead to crime, and only occurs when a child has a weak religious conscience (Al-Qthah, 1997; Al-Awaysheh, 1999; Kesnawi, 2001). Such weak religious beliefs, Al-Qthah (1994) argued, result from parental failure to instil religious values and self-control during the socialisation process. Research conducted by Al-Zgoul et al. (1999) indicates that poor children who were found to be more religious would be less likely than poor children without a strong religious affiliation to participate in criminal acts—particularly crimes of theft. However, it should be noted that such findings are not entirely conclusive, as other research has found otherwise. A large body of research found that children who committed theft crimes had strong religious beliefs, and argued that crime is primarily related to the class constraint of poverty, forcing many children to achieve their aspirations and goals through unacceptable means (Al-Housini et al., 1999; Rawahneh, 1995; Al-Rabadi, 2009). In their study on the effect of poverty on youth crime, Tarawneh et al. (2001) found that theft crimes are often committed by children as a group rather than individually, as poor children seek out others who share the same circumstances.

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woman the right to request a separate house for her and her dependent children, as the legal right to guardianship of a child is given to the woman until the child reaches the age of seven. After this age the child is given the right to choose which parent s/he prefers to live with. Official statistics (2010) show that approximately 80% of children from divorced families choose to remain with their mother. Although the law obligates a father to meet the child's physical needs (Hadidi, 2005), the lack of policies to ensure this leads to child poverty and thus more exploitative conditions, such as dropping out of school, starting to work as beggars and vendors, or practising theft (Al-Radi, 2009).

Child labour is another problem associated with poverty. There is evidence to suggest that in Jordan there are approximately 52,000 children between the ages of 11 and 17 involved in work under the worst conditions, including working as beggars and vendors of small items near busy traffic intersections. 90% of working children are males (DOS, 2010). AlRa'i (1999) contended that child labour is a widespread phenomenon in Jordan, and involves educational neglect, as many child labourers are obligated to work and forced to drop out of school by their families.<sup>10</sup> Regarding the correlation between child labour and youth crime, Al-Khawajah (2000) argued that a child labourer is often not at home or at school but rather on the streets, places that often lead to engaging in deviant behaviour as a result of a lack of adult supervision. A Ministry of Social Development study about the impact of the absence of parental supervision on child labourers' criminal activity (2009) indicated that many arrested children had been commercially exploited by adult criminals to sell different kinds of drugs on the street. Analysing the impact of the absence of school provision on child labourers' lives, Al-Dsuqi (1998) argued that children who are not engaged in educational settings have free time and energy for involvement in criminal activity.

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<sup>10</sup> Educational neglect, according to the Ministry of Social Development's definition, involves the failure of a parent or caregiver to enroll a child of mandatory school age in school, thus allowing chronic truancy. It also includes inattention to providing children with learning disorders and difficulties with special education (MOSD, 1997). In regards to enrolling a child of mandatory school age in school, Al-Baradi (2003) argued that although school in Jordan is compulsory up to 16 years of age, there are no policies which address parents who do not send their children to school.

More recently, Albasri et al. (2001) noted that poor children, particularly from large families, have a higher risk of experiencing indefinite expulsion from the home. As the number of children in a family increases, the household tends to become overcrowded, possibly leading to increased frustration, irritation and conflict, raising the likelihood of a child's expulsion from the home. In their extensive review of the link between child expulsion and youth crime, Saleh and Majdi (2007) concluded that children exposed to parental rejection had experienced frustration, emotional detachment from parents, low educational achievement and aggressive behaviour, all factors contributing to violent crime by children.

Rahahleh (1996) suggested that parental rejection may also affect the ways in which children behave towards others. Parents who fail to provide consistent guidance deprive their children of opportunities to gain approval by choosing to behave in accordance with societal rules, and to learn appropriate problem-solving skills. A study by Hamdani et al. (2000) showed that rejected children often reject their responsibilities, lack appropriate communication skills and lack empathy. These effects can cause children to be defensive and aggressive, and ultimately may contribute to some of the children participating in violent crimes. Conversely, religious writers claim that violent crimes are caused by a widespread deviant value system, in which many families teach children aggressive behavior by encouraging them to respond violently to peers' violence. This response is called 'revenge' by Islam, and it is against religious teachings which encourage individuals to be tolerant towards other people's mistakes, or to refer to the law in handling conflict (Ministry of Islamic Affairs,

1999). Al-Qthah (2000) contended that many families in rearing children have replaced the religious value of tolerance with the value of revenge, leading to children committing crimes of violence. Research conducted by Al-Majali (2002) concluded that children who have never learnt the pro-social and Islamic value of tolerance of mistakes were impulsive when dealing with their interpersonal problems, leading to violent crimes.

### ***Working Mothers***

Recent developments in gender equality and poor economic conditions in Jordan have led to changes in family structures, as many women go out to work and many Jordanian families are now dual-income (Khalif et al., 2002). The factor of working mothers, as Hoda (1999) claimed, lead to youth crime, presumably because it is expected that they would supervise and care for their children less well than would non-working mothers. Meanwhile, Hatab (2001) argued that the impact of working mothers on children could be measured according to the differences in children's social classes. Increasing numbers of school-aged, working-class children have to fend for themselves from when they return home from school until their parents return from work. Al-Azam (2000) argued that the phenomenon of working-class children home alone is seen as a problem, since they could practice a degree of autonomy, thereby making them more likely to engage in criminal behaviour. Many studies show that parents who do not know where their children are while they are at work, and who their friends are, tend to have children who are more likely to be involved in criminal activity (Dmour, 1994; Abu-Sarhan, 2000; Al-Umari, 1979).

A study by Al-Issa (1990) found that poor parental supervision over children from lower-class, working-mother families was a powerful predictor of both violent and property crimes.

On the other hand, upper- and middle-class working-mother families hire maids, often from countries such as the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Indonesia, to look after their children and household chores (Mahadeen, 2001). This reliance on maids is one factor creating changes in the functions and structure of the family, and in the value systems governing its relationships, as parents often ignore their responsibilities toward children, leaving them to be met by maids (Al-Faroki, 2003). It has been argued that children from families that employ maids are more likely to have poor parental relationships, which prevents them from learning how to conform to societal norms and values, as well as the pro-social behaviours accepted in society. When children never learn to conform to such norms, they are more likely to commit antisocial behaviour or criminal acts (Manasour, 2001). In a National Centre of Family Affairs study (1994), poor parent-child communication and low parental involvement in children's activities were strong factors associated with offending behaviour.

It has also been suggested that children who are not emotionally attached to parental warmth and love—particularly to their mothers—are more likely to offend (Gaith, 2009). Research conducted by Al-Karaki (2006) showed that children in families that employed maids had experienced emotional detachment and hence low self-control because of the absence of affectionate mothers in their upbringing, which in turn led them to violent crime. It has also

been claimed that parental failure to respond consistently to children's anti-social behaviour was prevalent in families which depended on maids; this was the most important predictor of youth violence (Al-Shareef et al., 1997; Al-Naser, 2000; Al-Zgoul, 1999).

### ***Parental Divorce and Remarriage***

Parental divorce is leading to changes in the ideal family structure and is becoming widespread in Jordan; many children experience parental conflict and divorce<sup>11</sup> (Khasawneh, 2002). Research consistently reveals that children from *broken homes*<sup>12</sup> offend more than those from intact families (Al-Darawseh, 1996). Once parents are divorced, children may experience stress and may blame themselves for the parental conflict and divorce, leading to feelings of guilt and frustration, which in turn might lead them to involvement in criminal acts (Al-Qaisi & Alawneh, 1997). Parental divorce may decrease the quality of parenting and interrupt emotional closeness between parent and child, weakening child-parent ties, causing the child to feel stressed and then to act out and engage in criminal behaviour (Abdullah & Makhamreh, 1994). It has also been suggested that children from broken families are at higher risk of

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<sup>11</sup> Divorce rates in Jordan have increased steadily over the last six years. Figures show that a total of 9,100 divorces were registered in 2004, compared to 12,013 divorces in 2007 and 15,065 in 2010. Seventeen percent of divorces registered involved dependent children (General Statistics Department, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> The term *broken homes* has been inconsistently operationalised, sometimes being used to refer to children living with just one parent, and other times referring to children living in families other than those with two biological parents (Al-Zgoul, 2000).

externalising their troubles and practising deviant behaviour—particularly with their peers in school, because of the anger they feel towards their parents (Ahmad, 2002). More recently, Majdalawi and Matakah (2000) carried out an interesting study of parental stress (caused by divorce) and youth crime, based on two surveys in Amman and Al-Zarqa. They concluded that parental stress produced parental depression, which in turn caused poor discipline and permissiveness towards children’s misbehaviour, which in turn caused children’s involvement in crime. Indeed, Alaween (1999) notes that parental permissiveness and ignorance in disciplining deviant acts is not limited to single-mother families, arguing that this is also prevalent in ‘intact’ families.

After children experience the large change of divorce, they generally face living in a single-parent family. Most studies of broken homes have focused on the loss of the father rather than the mother, because the loss of a father is much more common (Al-Khatib, 1991). Recent estimates indicate that single-mother families are the fastest growing family form, accounting for about 15 percent of all families (MOSD, 2009). It has been argued that the poorer outcomes experienced by children growing up in single-mother families are often attributed to the father’s absence. Lower economic status characterises mother-only families,<sup>13</sup> as does poor monitoring and supervision of children (Hadadeen, 1989; MOSD, 2003). Research by Kafafi (2002) showed that the absence of paternal supervision in single-mother families was a strong factor in children’s engagement in deviant behaviour. Indeed, mothers appeared to have less authority in controlling and disciplining children, particularly outside the home,

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<sup>13</sup> The impact of poverty on children living in single-mother families caused by divorce has been discussed earlier in this chapter.

reflecting the gender roles in Arab society regarding child rearing; this is mostly left to fathers (Abdallah, 2001). A child has sufficient knowledge of such gender role differentiation from a young age; therefore, children adhere to their mother's rules, supervision and control much less than to their fathers' (Al-Dakheel, 1990). Meanwhile, Ahmad (1995) argued that fathers have more influence than mothers in terms of which peers their child associates with. Through fathers' effective monitoring and discipline, a child's access to deviant peers is greatly decreased. However, in Bushnaq's (2001) study, a lack of paternal supervision in single-mother families led children to reject their fathers' opinions of their friends, and remain in contact with deviant peers.

Along with monitoring and disciplining, a strong father-child bond is also influential. There is evidence to suggest, however, that most fathers separated from their family detach themselves from their children's lives and stop visiting them, weakening father-child relations (Masarwah, 1992). Some studies indicate that children behave aggressively and consume alcohol in response to their frustration caused by feeling unloved and unsupported by their fathers (Mustafa & Rashidi, 1993). Claims that single-mother families produce child offenders comes from the common Jordanian belief that children learn how to behave responsibly by association with parents of their own gender (Obidat, 1994). Thus, male children reared without a resident father would be deprived of fatherly guidance and the association necessary for learning normative behaviour. As a result, children might overreact by asserting masculinity through deviant acts (Rawashdeh, 1995). More recently, Manasreh et al. (2007) noted that a child who has never learnt the norms of society and pro-social

behaviours, such as being considerate, helpful, polite, caring and cooperative, is more likely to have difficulties in school. These difficulties can range from being disruptive and not concentrating in the classroom to playground fights. These difficulties lead to rejection by conventional peers, and association with criminal peers. If the child is relatively unaffected by the opinions of parents, teachers and conventional peers, their new criminal friends will encourage them to participate in criminal activities. Such participation in deviance is a direct result of deviant peers, as deviant friends accept each other and their deviant actions.

Remarriage after divorce is also associated with an increased risk of youth crime, suggesting an undesirable effect of step-parents (Mahmoud, 1990). Bernardes (1997) argued that some tensions might occur in relationships between children and step-parents, particularly around the extent to which the child and step-parent 'accept' each other, and how much the child 'accepts' the adult taking on the role of mother or father. However, Al-Abadi (1994) notes that step-parents' disengagement from parenting is highly associated with poor children's lack of adjustment to the new family structure. Regarding children's difficulty in adjusting, Saleem and Rawajfeh (1991) argued that children might view the step-parent as a threat to their previously close relationship with their biological parent; thereby, children are more likely to be resistant to the step-parent. It has been also argued that the adjustment is particularly difficult for early adolescents, because they are adjusting to puberty and new sexual feelings, becoming more independent from the family and being exposed to new peer pressures to experiment with sexuality and drugs or alcohol (Al-

Salman, 1995). These multiple stressors make it more likely that the adolescent may react negatively to the new step-parent, making it difficult to build a relationship (Hanania, 2000a). Step-parents therefore may be hesitant to monitor adolescents for fear of threatening the relationship, and adolescents may reject step-parents' attempts at discipline; consequently, these adolescents may be more likely to get into trouble (Hanania, 2000b). However, there is evidence to suggest that overly harsh punishment is often used by a step-parent in response to a child misbehaving or a deviant act, leading a child to act out and/or consume alcohol (Al-Abadi, 1992). In terms of the correlation between remarriage and children's well being, Al-Salman and Shtawi (2000) concluded that children living in stepfamilies often experience complex difficulties, including physical abuse, emotional coldness toward resident and nonresident biological parents, supervisory neglect and lower educational goals, and these may be factors leading children to commit crimes.

### ***Crime Runs in Families?***

A parent is a model for their children, and research has shown that when parents adhere to societal norms, their child is more likely to emulate them (Fakhouri, 1999). However, if a parent acts against societal norms and values, the child is more likely to follow their parent's negative attitude and is also more likely to generalise this attitude to the rest of society (Mai, 1998). Parental criminality is considered an important factor encouraging children to commit crimes. A child growing up in a home where the parents routinely engage in criminal acts will grow up assuming that these acts are not as wrong as society

or the law claim. This caused children to view crime as something desirable, or at least justifiable in certain situations (Abo-Hani, 1997). The most famous research on the concentration of offending in families was carried out by the National Centre for Family Affairs (2004), and is a prospective longitudinal survey of 150 males aged 12 to 17. Having a convicted or arrested father was associated with children's criminal acts. Similar results were obtained in Al-Majali's study (2003), which showed that 14 percent of children practiced deviant activities during the same time period that their fathers committed offences, such as theft and murder<sup>14</sup>. Having a convicted older sibling was also a predictor of a child's later offending (MSD, 2003). It has been argued that younger male siblings tend to imitate the criminal behaviour of older male siblings, or perhaps older siblings tend to encourage younger ones to become involved in criminal activities (Al-Najar, 1994). In a National Centre for Human Rights study (2005), co-offending by brothers was common; about 10 percent of children who had brothers about the same age were convicted for a crime committed with their brother.

## **School Influences on Youth Crime**

According to the Ministry of Education, children's activities and their use of time and space at school are determined by the timetable and teachers in formal and informal ways (MOE, 2001). However, it has been argued that there are important differences in terms of the effects that schools have on children, as

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<sup>14</sup> There is no evidence to suggest that criminal parents directly encourage children to commit crimes or teach them criminal skills; on the contrary, a criminal father usually disapproves of his children's involvement in crime (NCFA, 2004).

teachers to a large extent deal with students according to their social class (Abu-Tarboush, 2002). Al-Louzi's (2006) findings on primary school children from different social classes demonstrated that children use time and space differently, as children from upper and middle classes are encouraged by teachers to develop their own identities and enjoy their freedom, as they are trusted. In contrast, teachers interact with working-class children in more authoritative ways, and these children's time is heavily restricted and controlled. Maher et al.'s (1992) study found that most working-class children with restricted opportunities to express themselves in school suffer from class frustration and low educational attainment, and use truancy as a way to resist teachers' authority and their own low educational achievement. They found that many crimes committed by poor children happened in the company of other children who strived to increase their self-esteem and high-status position by disregarding society's norms and taking part in deviant behaviour.

Majdalawi (2000) noted that children from low-income and fragmented families are usually characterised by low educational achievement and thus they are more likely to receive physical and emotional abuse<sup>15</sup> from teachers in response to their poor school performance. These children's poor school performance is almost always related to the profound effects of child abuse by parents, or to parental neglect in attending to their educational affairs (Ahmad, 2001). Either way, research consistently shows that poor educational achievement, along with teachers' abusive methods in response, leads children

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<sup>15</sup> Emotional abuse is defined as 'any attitude or behaviour which interferes with a child's mental health or social development'. Examples include: yelling, contempt, screaming, name-calling, shaming, harsh criticism and negative comparisons to others (MSD, 1998).

to practice truancy (Sarrawi et al., 1999; Al-Khatib, 2002). Dahad (2002) also noted that truancy also occurs among children with learning difficulties, because of teachers' inability to provide them with appropriate educational care.

Educational writers have three explanations for the correlation between the absence of school provision and youth crime. First, children who are not involved in educational settings often spend their time in criminal activities since they are free from school discipline and control (Hamdani, 2000; Al-Rashidi, 1999). Second, truancy prevents children from embracing moral and normative behaviour that conforms to the law, especially as this behaviour is taught through different school subjects; thereby truant children behave against society's norms and beliefs (Al-Faouri et al., 2004). Third, truant children might suffer from stress caused by their failure to meet their educational needs and goals; this contributes to their engagement in criminal acts, such as substance abuse, as a way to express their frustration (Al-Tarawnah et al., 1998).

## **Media Influences on Youth Crime**

### **Media Violence and Moral Panics**

In addition to schooling, another important agent that impacts on children's socialisation is the mass media (Berger et al., 1999). It exposes children, and older age groups, to a sometimes alien world (Buchholt & Mai, 1994). Virtually every child is exposed to violence and explicit sexual materials in the media—through television, the cinema and the Internet. Al-Ma'ani (2001) argued that children's access to media, in particular through computers, creates a growing

sense of anxiety and moral panic among adults, as children are more likely to be at risk due to a lack of adult guidance and supervision. Al-Masri (2003) contended that although parents have authority over children at home, and attempt to control them, children actively create their own subcultures at home. Media violence is routinely identified as the primary cause of a rise in youth crime (Al-Kutob, 2000). A recent example of moral panic and public fear in Jordan is the coverage of the murder of head-teacher Mahmoud-Ali in 1999 by three twelve-year old boys. It was revealed that the killing occurred after the boys viewed the film *School Hooligans*. According to Buckingham (2001), the correlation of media violence and violent crime is justified in that children are largely defined in terms of their inability to conform to adult norms and their inability to distinguish between fiction and reality.

Politicians in Jordan blame the media for promoting aggressive behaviour and explicit sexual materials, encouraging sexuality and sensationalism, and threatening the internal social order (Al-Kaher, 2004). However, Philo (1997) assumed that there are many who would dispute the charge that violent television leads directly to acts of physical aggression. Buckingham (2000) also assumed that ignoring children's relationships with media violence was a kind of irrational moral panic; it is important to understand how children and parents perceive media violence. Abdullah (2005) argued that media violence has negative emotional and psychological influences on young audiences, rather than causing behavioural problems. Further, a study conducted by Buckingham (2001) on children and parents from different social backgrounds concluded that parents' fear of media violence is related to protecting children from

material they might find frightening or upsetting, and not from fear that their children will become criminals. Other parents argued that children may copy what they have seen and commit crimes. Buckingham's (2001) study also showed that many children access video violence as a form of entertainment, and older children could understand that it is fiction. Younger children might copy what they watch; however, parents are to blame in this regard, for not helping children cope with media materials and empowering them to make decisions for themselves (Buckingham, 2001).

Abu Al-Ros (2001) argued that the problem of youth crime, particularly violent crime, has a variety of causes, with media violence one key factor amongst others, such as family breakdown. The responsibility for regulating children's access to media has mainly shifted to parents, due to dramatic technological changes which undermine the state's ability to regulate it (Malki, 2000). On the whole, it appears that understanding the link between violent media images and youth violence is a contentious and complex issue, since there is no agreement about whether media violence provokes early aggressive behaviour in children.

### **Media and the Demonisation of Children**

The media's portrayal of children's involvement in crime, either as perpetrators or victims, is central in creating and reinforcing public perceptions of childhood (Davis & Bourhill, 1997). Media concerns over a perceived breakdown in law and social order is actively creating moral panic over youth crime in Jordan (Al-Amouri, 2002).

To understand the process of demonising children who offend, it is worth mentioning here that Thompson (1998, p. 9) determined different characteristics of moral panic: the first is concern and anxiety, the second hostility and contempt:

*When the 'panic' is 'amplified' in the media and elsewhere, when it is represented as signifying a wider and deeper moral malaise, when the anxiety is explicitly connected with hostility and each of the critical 'elements' interacts, it is then that both the symbolic and the institutional responses are legitimised and consolidated.*

The case of the head-teacher murdered by three boys in 1999 caused outrage across Jordan, and the media fuelled public anxiety surrounding children's involvement in violent crime, reinforcing the prevailing public perception of youth crime (Al-Hadi, 2003). Indeed, this case marked the start of the press demonising children:

*In reality, children are mini-gangsters, devils, cunning, wicked and out of control. For now it is difficult to see children as vulnerable and innocent; adults need protection from crude children (Jordan Times 15 November 1999).*

Manawi (2000) argued that children are always causing problems in society; they are a source of political and adult anxiety; they are hooligans and crooks proficient in car theft, and as such, according to Manawi, children today are hated.

Al-Kindi (1999) discussed this furore resulting from negative portrayals of children in the media arguing that it is hardly accurate to focus on one case in order to demonise an entire generation. Children are always subject to, even as perpetrators, the social and economic crises that Jordanian society faces today,

and these problems deserve a higher level of discussion that seek to find solutions. Al-Ali (2000) contended that although crime is committed by children from all social classes, media representation stigmatises a particular group of children: children of working-class and single-parent families, who become identified as problematic, threatening to society and worthy of public anxiety.

It has been argued that media demonisation of children generates fear and contempt of children by the public (Al-Rashidi, 2004). This condition could explain persistent offending by children, as certain groups of children are labelled, and these portrayals make it difficult for children to engage normally again with wider society according to their new deviant identity (Bandari, 2000). Reviewing research about the impact of media demonisation on youth crime, Al-Rashidi (1999) found that children's reoffending was to an extent related to teachers', conventional peers' and sometimes parents' continual perception of them as criminals. Mansouri (2007) argued that the role of the media in keeping the public informed about societal problems is required as a means of awareness and preventing youth crime. However, the sensational and vindictive language that some sections of the press use in provoking an irrational moral panic particularly aimed at demonising and labelling poor children should be stopped (Mansouri, 2007).

## **Summary**

Within the main institutions of socialisation, children are positioned as incompetent social actors shaped and controlled by existing socio-cultural

structures. Understanding the problem of youth crime appears to be contentious and complex, as no single factor explains it. It is apparent that many familial factors influence youth crime, such as poor parental supervision, association with deviant peers, working mothers, parental criminality, poor discipline and parental impulsiveness, family size, child abuse and broken families. These factors tend to be not only interrelated but also related to other risk factors for youth crime, such as low family income, parental conflict and divorce, parental rejection of a child, weak religious beliefs in children, and poor educational performance and truancy.

Schools also influence youth crime in several ways. Teachers ignoring children with learning difficulties and abusing working-class children were found to be the main factors causing children to miss school and suffer from class frustration, and thus putting them at higher risk of offending. Explicit media, provoking sexuality and aggressive behaviour in children, and the media's ability to stigmatise children from working-class and single-parent families, have also been suggested as factors influencing youth crime.

## **Chapter Four**

### **The Youth Justice System in Jordan**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter explores the role of the youth justice system in dealing with children in conflict with the law in Jordan. More specifically, this chapter begins by describing juvenile penal law concerning activities that are prosecutable under the juvenile penal code. Attention is also paid to understanding the fundamental approach to youth crime and the law's response to it, and interventions and sanctions imposed on young people in conflict with the law in Jordan. This chapter concludes by identifying the role of RCIs as a response to youth crime. In doing so, gaps within the literature are highlighted as the basis for the current study.

#### **Juvenile Penal Law**

The juvenile penal law of 1968 is a piece of judicial council legislation and is considered a 'Special Penal Law' because it can be used to prosecute not only actions violating criminal law but also deviant and anti-social behaviour. Jordanian legislators suggest that there is no distinction between children in need of care and protection and children in conflict with the law, since they are considered to share the same environmental difficulties and are likely to have similar needs. A protective approach is considered appropriate for both groups. In Jordan, offending behaviour is considered to be the product of socio-economic and familial factors beyond the child's control; this approach

resembles a medical model which requires diagnosis of problems and recommendations for rehabilitation and care (Al-Humsi, 2005). It is noteworthy that the Jordanian youth justice welfarist approach for children who offend and those who are at risk of offending, and its understanding of offending behaviour, are also adopted by the Scottish youth justice system (see Muncie & Goldson, 2006 for further details).

Within the juvenile penal code, consequential actions following an offence are defined through the general term of 'sanctions' and subdivided into 'punishments' and measures. However, Section 2 of the Juvenile Penal Law states that the child's welfare shall be the court's paramount consideration in any proceedings (NCHR, 2000). Therefore, the Juvenile Penal Law does not advocate criminal punishment for children but rather 'treatment punishment'; that is, measures of intensive care, rehabilitation and supervision, with the ultimate purpose of social reintegration and the reduction of recidivism. Juvenile criminal law is to a large extent regarded as child-focused (in contrast to adult criminal law, which is offence-focused) and is based on the principle that early intervention yields better results in reducing child offending (NCHR, 2001). Thus, treatment for children should address their individual needs and should be applied as long as those needs exist (Zahran, 2003).

## **The Age of Criminal Responsibility**

The age of criminal responsibility in Jordan, the age at which the child bears the consequences of his/her actions, was raised from 7 years to 12 years in 2008. Children younger than 12 cannot be held responsible for criminal acts. Below

this minimum age, intervention with regard to children's behaviour is the responsibility of the parents. The child may be sent to one of his/her parents, relatives or legal guardians, who must provide the authorities with a written guarantee that they will keep the child away from anti-social behaviour and criminal acts. This guarantee is considered legally binding (NCHR, 2005). Juvenile penal law distinguishes between different age groups in an effort to recognise differences in children's maturity and their understanding of their actions, as follows:

- Birth up to age 12: These children cannot be criminally prosecuted.
- Adolescents from 12 to 14: Adolescents are responsible under what is called the Juvenile Penal Law, covered by a separate article in the penal code (no. 16) with restricted sanctioning powers (this will be discussed later in this chapter). This is because these children are considered by penal law as not fully and legally competent or aware of the consequences of their actions.
- Young people from 15 to 17: Any criminal actions committed by this group of children are prosecuted under the Juvenile Penal Law, covered by a separate article in the penal code (no. 17) with an extended option for sanctioning. At the ages of 15 and 16 children are either close to finishing or have finished compulsory schooling; thus, they are regarded as having reached a certain personal maturity, which increases their responsibility for their actions.

## **The Youth Justice Authority**

While the Jordanian Penal Code is a judicial council legislation defining the Juvenile Penal Jurisdiction nationally, the execution of the law is the responsibility of the juvenile court authorities. Four juvenile courts have been established in the four biggest regions of the Kingdom to deal with children in conflict with the law and those in need of protection and care. Each court has a similar number of juveniles' judges and court child behaviour monitors, who work on behalf of the child. Of the four regional Youth Justice Court Authorities, the one in the city of Amman is the biggest in the Kingdom, and employs eight juveniles' judges and eight child behaviour monitors (Al-Naser, 2004).

The juveniles' judges are a judicial body specialised in dealing with children. They are given great decisive and interventionist power by the Jordanian judicial council, and this power is justified with the argument that safeguarding children's welfare requires specialisation, which comes from professional expertise. Juveniles' judges represent the power of the state in responding to youth crime and perform the following tasks:

- They are the examining magistrates, conducting and leading the judicial investigation process and having overall responsibility for the court child behaviour monitors' investigations into the socio-economic conditions of children who offend.
- They hold the executive power, and are responsible for the execution of all sanctions. The judges usually delegate tasks to the court child behaviour monitors.

Whereas the judge is responsible for everything judicial, the court child behavior monitors are responsible for social inquiries and the social report indicating whether the child requires measures of care. Court child behavior monitors operate as agents in a judicial setting, combining social welfare and social control. They assist the juveniles' judges on all levels, such as residential and non-residential programming and supervision of children (NCHR, 2001). They act as representatives of the juveniles' judge, and are granted power by the court to intervene.

The referral of children's cases on offence grounds starts with the police and court child behavior monitors, where an initial and full investigation about the child's circumstances should be presented by the court child behavior monitors to the juvenile judge to arrange meetings<sup>16</sup> to discuss the child's case. These reports offer a professional assessment of the circumstances of children who violate the law, to detect the nature and causes of the offending behaviour; their purpose is to assist the court in determining the most suitable intervention and sanctioning method for the children. After hearing the case, the court authorities determine suitable interventions and sanctions for dealing with children who offend. Indeed, the juvenile court policies combine welfare and justice principles based on whether the offence is major or minor and the seriousness and frequency of offences (Al-Masri, 2000). The following sections highlight how the

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<sup>16</sup> These meetings should include the child, parents/guardians and the child's behaviour monitor, with the judge chairing all sessions. All sessions are considered informal and the judge plays a fatherly role, particularly for first-time offences but even with more serious crimes. Since the judge plays a tolerant role, issues of guilt and innocence are not taken into consideration (Al-Masri, 2003).

court deals with these different kinds of offences.

## First-Time Minor Offences

With first-time minor offences, the judicial investigation of the child's case by the judge in cooperation with the court child behavior monitors focuses on the child's needs rather than deeds, leading to one the following two possible reactions.

First, if the child who offends is in need of compulsory supervision, non-residential interventional supervision is provided and includes the following measures, which can be taken for adolescents from 12 to 14 (Article 16) and youth from 15 to 17 (Article 17):

- Supervision Order<sup>17</sup>: The supervision order under juvenile law stipulates the placement of juveniles under the supervision of the court conduct monitors according to the conditions which the court finds necessary to ensure the good conduct of the young person (e.g. assurance that he/she is sent to school). The conduct monitor follows up on supervision by submitting periodic reports to the judge, stating the extent of the progress achieved by the juvenile and his family. The period of supervision is not defined and depends on each individual's needs, but should be reviewed every six months by the court child behavior monitors (NCHR, 2005).
- Family Support Order: This is a court order involving the professional

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<sup>17</sup> The court's decision to place the child under the supervision of the conduct monitor cannot be appealed (NCHR, 2004).

social workers in the community, with the aim to support and advise the child and the family in all social and educational aspects, to be applied as long as those needs exist (Zahran, 2003). The local authority (social workers) are then responsible for ensuring this order is carried out, and should work towards meeting the needs of the child. Family support also requires helping low-income families with appropriate financial support from the National Aid Fund, or possibly through ensuring the child attends vocational training (NCHR, 2005).

- Placement Care Order: This happens in cases where a child comes from a criminal family environment or where parents are not qualified to provide appropriate care. The child will be placed with relatives or will be transferred to a residential care institution as a last resort.<sup>18</sup> With regards to placement with relatives, Al-Majali (2004) argued that such procedure is in line with Jordanian tribal culture, which rejects removing a child from a family clan, even in cases of chronic mistreatment.

Second, if no compulsory measures of supervision are required for a child, the following disciplinary financial sentences can be handed down for adolescents from 12 to 14 years of age (Article 16), and youth from 15 to 17 (Article 17):

- Fine Ruling Order: This constitutes the payment of a fine and is the responsibility of the parents/guardian, in order to compensate for the damage caused by the offence. The amount reflects the offence

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<sup>18</sup> This order also applies for children who receive residential supervision after court sentencing (MSD, 2000).

committed by the child and the financial circumstances of the child's father/guardian.

- Providing financial surety, imposed on the parents, conditional upon the guaranteed pro-social behavior of the child.

Besides these, the following disciplinary measures can only be set for young children between 15 and 17 years of age:

- **Reparation Order for the Victim:** This method, called 'Restorative Justice', places great emphasis on the involvement of the victims and aims at a compensational act from the child who offends towards the victim, to repay the harm or damage caused by the offence (Skelton, 2002). This method is currently connected with the Jordanian judicial court system and involves the child, the parents/guardian, the court child behavior monitor and the judge. Presence in court is considered important in order to formalise the restorative process between the parties, with the aim developing an action plan that may include financial compensation to the victim or a reparative task, such as involving the child in some work benefitting the victim. Once the action plan has been agreed upon, the parents are then required to provide the judge with written agreement concerning the contents of the restorative plan, ensuring that the plan will be put into practice (NCHR, 2010).

## **The Seriousness of Offences**

The youth justice system was severely criticised by the media and the public in the mid 1990s, following the tragic case of the murder of head teacher Ali in

1995 by three children. Public opinion supported more punitive measures against children and an end to rehabilitation practices (Rawashdeh, 2003). However, juvenile penal law and the judicial investigation stress the avoidance of the criminalisation of children—even for serious offences— with this avoidance based on the principle of ‘proportionality’ between the intensity of the intervention and the gravity of the offence, i.e. The more serious the offence, the more profound the child’s needs are determined to be (DSD, 1997). While residential custodial sentences are usually handed down when the child’s behaviour poses a risk to others, such sanctioning is not directly linked to the offence but rather aims to strike a balance between the child’s needs and deeds, the needs of public safety and the needs of the victim, in order to attain general deterrence (Al-Rahshdi, 2000). The length of the sentence depends on the severity of the offence, and can be between two and three years for 12-14 year olds, and between three and four years for 15-17 year olds, conditional upon the child being provided with rehabilitative measures and intensive cognitive behavioural programmes (NCHR, 2005). Residential institutions are responsible for carrying out these conditions, supervised by the Ministry of Social Development (NCHR, 2005).

An early release order is also available. Court child behaviour monitors have an important role in ending residential supervision sentences in what is termed early release and can supervise the remainder of the sentence outside the residential institutions. It is an accredited mechanism in juvenile law to lessen the sentence period for children who have shown good conduct. Early release

occurs after a period of no less than a third of the penalty given to them (NCHR, 2010).

## **Persistent Offending**

The Court Custodial and Community Service Order was introduced in 2000, mainly for children who persistently offend. It focuses on the child's deeds rather than needs, and public safety is placed above the best interests of the child (DSD, 2002). This shift from focusing on a child's best interests to that of the public reflects a punitive trend in the Jordanian youth justice system's attitude to offending children, resulting from moral panic and anxiety over the problems posed by children who persistently offend (MOSD, 2004). Referring the child to residential institutions is obligatory, and the decision cannot be appealed. The sentence lasts between two and three years for 12-14 year olds and between three and four years for 15-17 year olds. The first half of the sentence is spent in a residential care institution, and the second half is spent in part-time unpaid community work under the supervision of the court social workers; the child can live at home while working (NCHR, 2004). Community work sanctions are seen as highly useful, as the child who offends is not a passive receiver of a sentence, but plays an active role in restoring the harm caused by offending through a positive performance which benefits both the child and community (NCHR, 2008).

The Parental Order of 2000 is given to the parents/guardians of children who re-offend, forcing parents to take responsibility for their children's misbehaviour or truancy. It requires parents to attend counselling or guidance sessions, and

can impose conditions on them, such as attending their child's school or ensuring their child does not visit a particular place unsupervised and is at home at particular times. Failure to fulfill the conditions can be treated as a criminal offence, and parents can be prosecuted. It is worth mentioning that this order is only used in cases of reoffending (DPD, 2005).

## **The Role of Residential Care Institutions (RCIs) in Responding to Youth Crime**

A number of studies have given specific consideration to the extent of routine services provided for children in RCIs, including recreational and medical services (Mahasneh, 1997; Manasreh, 2000). However, these studies have not given specific consideration to the RCIs' rehabilitative programmes which attempt to reduce offending by convicted children. Conversely, research addressing the rehabilitative programmes in RCIs has focused on examining the effectiveness of these programmes from the staff's point of view, without involving children who take part in such rehabilitative programmes. The findings of these studies were based on quantitative questionnaire methods, and concluded that professional staff were satisfied with the rehabilitation programmes provided for children, and believed they were able to meet their needs (Bardan, 1994; Shunaq, 2002). This demonstrates a gap in the research in relation to children, where children, as the recipients of the rehabilitative programmes, are marginalised in the research process, indicating that they have not been understood as competent social actors.

Other studies concerned with the rehabilitative programmes in RCIs have not typically considered the institutions' specific objectives, or their theoretical underpinnings. Studies looking at RCIs' programmes have instead tended to focus on assessing the rehabilitative programmes in general by examining programmes in practice, utilising observational methods. These studies concluded that there was a lack of family guidance programmes (Al-Qasim, 1995; Hassa, 1998), a lack of children's participation in educational settings inside and outside the institution (Al-Masri, 1997; Hassa, 1998b), and a low number of poor children attended vocational training centres (Zahran & Gharaibeh, 2005). While this body of research makes a valuable contribution and draws attention to the inconsistency between the institutional programmes and the actual practices, it does not provide explanations of the possible dilemmas behind this contradiction. Further, it focuses predominantly on the kinds of rehabilitative programmes in general; it may, therefore, be less valuable in understanding the RCIs' theoretical explanations of youth crime and their specific objectives in responding to it. This represents a significant gap in research literature, in light of the considerable attention to youth crime within sociological and criminological literature concerning youth crime, and the Jordanian media's attention to the role of RCIs in preventing and reducing youth crime.

Al-Abadi (2004) critiqued existing research on RCIs on the basis that it typically ignores observations of the institutions' specific rehabilitation aims for children, and the extent to which these aims are realized in practice. In this regard, Manasreh (1999) argued that the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) has

established different rehabilitative programmes for children who offend, including a family-guidance programme, a poverty-reduction programme and a child-centered programme. These programmes determine the general objectives of intervention in RCIs and are employed and developed by residential staff (MSD, 2006). The aims of these programmes are discussed below.

### **Family Guidance Programme (FGP)**

The FGP, as Majdalawi (1995) argued, recognises that children's criminality is an outcome of a negative familial environment, and thereby stresses the need for changing those aspects of the family in order to help reduce problematic behaviour and offending. The programme aims to enhance socialisation in the family and improve the quality of parenting. Hussami (2000) argued that enhancing child-parent relations is vital in reducing the likelihood of a child's involvement in crime. Relationship enhancement typically emphasises positive communication between parents and children by increasing parents' knowledge of and belief in effective parenting skills and child-rearing methods (NCHR, 2007). These effective skills and methods include advising parents to provide adequate supervision and monitoring, using assertive rather than physical punitive disciplinary practices, increasing parental involvement in children's activities, promoting strong parent-child bonds, developing home-school connections and helping children develop skills to resist peer pressure (Ghaith, 2009). Developing positive child-parent relations also helps prevent emotional and behavioural problems in children by increasing parental attention to the

child, building warmth in family relationships and meeting the child's emotional needs (Alawnah, 2009).

The FGP also aims to support and assist families to promote positive parent-parent relations by advising parents to practice non-violence, reduce marital conflict, reduce defensive communication patterns, and increase supportive interactions and correct negative emotional experiences (MSD, 2008). Meanwhile, Hussaini (2003) stated that parents need to be advised in ways of mastering effective communication, particularly relating to anger and conflict, through education about understanding and managing stress and learning anger management techniques.

### **Poverty-Reduction Programme (PRP)**

This programme aims to help non-income and low-income families with their children. RCIs are responsible for enrolling children from non-income families in a vocational training centre in order to learn a career to support themselves after their release. With regard to children from low-income families, if the investigation of a child's economic background shows that the family suffers from severe poverty, or the responsible adult is unemployed and/or disabled, RCIs then contact the relevant party of the National Aid Fund, to provide the responsible adult with monthly financial support that keeps the child out of the labour market and able to focus on education (MOSD, 2007).

## **Child-Centered Programmes (CCP)**

Unlike the Family Guidance Programme, the CCP concentrates on direct intervention with children themselves. It includes the Educational Programme (EP) and the Cognitive Behavioural Modification Programme (CBMP). The Educational Programme aims to involve all children in daily educational classes, either in the institutional setting (literacy and cultural strengthening classes) or in public schools, according to each child's educational background. Involving children in educational settings, Masarwah (1997) argued, helps children bond with others and limits time during which a child can become involved in deviant activities. Fakhouri (1999) stated that educational social workers are required to improve children's study achievements and competency and support children with learning difficulties to help children continue their education after they return to the community. Meanwhile, Majali (1998) argued that improving a child's academic achievements requires establishing supportive communication between parents and teachers and ensures the child is involved in academic work.

The Cognitive Behavioural Modification Programme, on the other hand, is based on changing the way an individual child perceives the social settings they encounter and their actions in order to deter offending behaviour. Accordingly, this programme aims to teach children norms, religious beliefs, pro-social behaviours and consequences for rule violation to improve their developmental abilities and cognitive behaviours, enabling them to make more responsible decisions (MOSD, 2005). Further, children are considered to require positive

ways of coping with stressful situations and to learn new skills for forming relationships with positive peers, as well as problem solving.

### **An Overview of the Three Studied RCIs**

This study was carried out in three RCIs for children in conflict with the law; these institutions house children aged 12 to 17 years old who have been sentenced into custody in a secure environment where they can be rehabilitated. The following RCIs were approached in the current study:

- Amman institution is located in Amman governorate and has the capacity to house 90 children. During the study, it housed 15 members of staff and 75 children.
- Al-Russaifa institution is located in Al-Zarkah governorate and has the capacity to house 100 children. During the study it housed 17 members of staff and 65 children.
- Irbid institution is located in Irbid governorate and has the capacity to house 120 children. During the study, it housed 15 members of staff and 73 children.

All these institutions are semi-open institutions in order to facilitate children's ability to visit their families through home visits services (accompanied by a child monitor escort), and attend public schools, escorted by an adult family member. These institutions could be considered as the children's homes, since they were able to move between bedrooms, TV rooms and sports activities independently. Generally, there was an obvious lack of interpersonal relations

between children and institutional workers outside the interventional classes, and between staff and the managers of the institutions.

The three RCIs follow the same daily schedule with children and provide the same rehabilitative programmes. All children have to attend different educational settings either in institutional settings or in public school. However, the researcher frequently observed a considerable lack of children's involvement in different educational settings. This was clearly apparent among children who participated in the vocational training programme. It was also clear that children who were engaged in the vocational training programme were not able to participate in different educational settings, and vice versa, as both programmes were held at roughly the same time. Generally, the daytime activities for children in the current study often seemed uncontrolled and unstructured. There was also a lack of family participation in the family guidance programme and the behaviour modification programme. However, the religious programme was always implemented at the designated time, and the religious preachers and the majority of children all participated in religious classes. The observations of these institutions revealed a contradictory picture between the residential care institutions' objectives and their actual practices. Children implicitly and explicitly considered that the failure of treating their wider problems was the RCIs' way of punishing them for their crimes rather than rehabilitating them.

## **Summary**

The Juvenile Penal Code is a judicial council legislation determining which activities are regarded as criminal and prosecutable by law, and which sanctions are suitable responses to specific crimes. Under juvenile penal law, actions that violate criminal law are prosecutable, as are deviant and anti-social activities. To a large extent, juvenile law is intended to serve the welfare of the child, particularly in relation to low-risk offences, where the child's offending is explained by external factors and socio-economic difficulties that are beyond the child's control. The executive power for criminal youth justice lies with the Youth Justice Authorities, consisting of youth judges and court child behaviour monitors in charge of judicial investigations, social assessment and the execution of law.

Decisions regarding sanctions depend on investigation into the children's socio-economic and educational circumstances. Criminal youth law is child-focused, and sanctions are determined according to the needs and circumstances of the child rather than the gravity or seriousness of the offence. Although the youth justice system is beginning, in response to public fear, to use increasingly punitive methods, particularly for children who persistently offend, it appears that it still focuses on issues of child rehabilitation, minimising punitive measures and maximising community work service.

There is particular cause for concern over youth crime and the RCIs' role in reducing it. Yet, there is a lack of research which examines the RCIs' specific objectives, the consistency between objectives and practices, and, more importantly, children's experiences of rehabilitative programmes and the extent

to which they meet their needs. Studies which have addressed rehabilitative programmes in RCIs tend to focus on assessing the rehabilitative programmes in general by examining the link between the existing programmes and actual practices, or by examining the effectiveness of the RCIs from the staff's point of view. This study aims to address this gap within existing literature by exploring these issues from the perspectives of residential staff and children.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Researching the Lives of Children in Residential Care Institutions: Practice and Challenges Along the Way**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter outlines the methodological approach of this study. The rationale for choosing different research strategies and methods is presented, followed by a discussion of how participants were recruited and how the fieldwork unfolded. The data analysis process is then outlined in order to illustrate how the study findings were reached. This chapter concludes by reflecting upon the challenges encountered during the research process, and how the researcher overcame them.

This study aimed to identify the theoretical basis of interventions used in RCIs in Jordan. The researcher assumed that the objectives of RCIs would relate to general assumptions about the causes of youth crime. A review of the literature concluded that there are a number of different theories and explanations for why youth crime happens, providing a range of responses. It was useful to consider three interrelated types of theory in Jordan: academic theory, or how literature theorises youth crime; policy-making theory, concerned with different explanations for youth crime used by policymakers; and practitioner theory, regarding the youth crime theories used by RCI staff. The views and experiences of children provided an opportunity to examine the convergence of theory and practice.

Three residential care institutions in Jordan were approached.<sup>19</sup> Initial access arrangements with three RCIs were agreed upon with the major gatekeepers via a regulated process begun by sending a letter from the University of Jordan, which funds this study, to the Directorate of Social Defence and then to the Ministry of Social Development (MOSD), which agreed to officially endorse access<sup>20</sup>. When initial access had been granted, a similar letter was sent to a contact (I was advised by the MOSD to contact the senior manager, who was also asked to participate) within each RCI interested in participating. This letter outlined the aims of the study.<sup>21</sup> An information sheet indicating what the research involved was also provided. The senior managers were asked to contact the researcher directly by email or telephone if they were interested in taking part in the study. The senior managers were also asked to inform staff about the research and provide interested staff members with a copy of the information sheet. The managers and staff interested in participating were then asked to inform the senior manager of their interest. The senior managers were given details of who was interested in participating, and the researcher

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<sup>19</sup> Four governmental institutions provide for all children in conflict with the law; these are located in the biggest governorates in the kingdom. Access to the fourth institution in the Ma'an governorate was refused, with no reason given. This refusal may be linked to the gatekeepers' knowledge of the inferior structural position of women in comparison to that of men in the Ma'an governorate. More specifically, the dominant culture in the Ma'an governorate is the Bedouin culture, where women are subordinate to men's authority. Thus, women may not be expected to study with males, as authority is granted only to males, which makes it difficult to carry out research, because of the researcher's gender identity. My argument is based on Al-Rawashdeh's (2001, p. 17) assertion: "today, although women are improving their progress in education and employment they still occupy subordinate status to men's authority and this kind of structural dependency is widely reinforced by Bedouin culture".

<sup>20</sup> Along with these my letter was enclosed, to view a copy of this letter, see Appendix 1.

<sup>21</sup> To view a copy of this letter, see Appendix 2.

contacted each participant directly by telephone or email to arrange an appropriate time for the interviews, and gave them the opportunity to ask any questions.

A letter outlining the aims of conducting this research with children was sent to managers and staff, as the adult gatekeepers.<sup>22</sup> An information sheet was also provided, stating what the research involved. The contact person (the senior manager within each institution) was then asked to contact the researcher directly by telephone or email when access to children was granted. Following this permission, a letter outlining the research aims, written in accessible language, was given to the children. An information sheet was also provided, stating what the research involved. Children interested in volunteering were asked to inform the senior manager of their interest. The researcher then met with the senior manager within each institution to determine which activities the researcher would observe. The senior manager also had details of who was interested in participating in individual interviews. The researcher then contacted each participating child in person, negotiated through a senior manager, to set up the interviews.

To ensure the anonymity of these institutions and the individuals within them, they are referred to as Institutions A, B and C in this research.

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<sup>22</sup> To view a copy of this letter, see Appendix 4.

## Data collection: in the Field

Recruitment and fieldwork, in the form of interviews, participant observations and focus groups, was carried out over one year (February 2011 to March 2012). During this time, 47 residential staff from three institutions participated in interviews, 46 children from two institutions participated in participant observation, 66 children from three institutions participated in interviews, and two focus groups, one with social workers and the other with child monitors (with an average of four participants in each group), were carried out.

### Individual Interviews with Staff

A total of 47 residential staff across three institutions each participated in individual interviews lasting between 50 and 60 minutes. The following table shows the number of staff recruited from each institution:

<b>Staff Job Title</b>	<b>Institution A</b>	<b>Institution B</b>	<b>Institution C</b>	<b>Total Number of Recruited Staff</b>
Senior Manager	one	one	one	three
Junior Manager	one	one	one	three
Social Worker	three	three	three	nine
Religious Preacher	two	two	two	six
Social Supervisor	two	two	two	six
Child Monitor	two	three	two	seven
Educational Literacy Supervisor	two	two	two	six
Educational Supervisor for Truant Children	two	two	two	six
Overall Total of Recruited Staff	15	17	15	47

The large sample used in the current study provided a valuable opportunity to examine diverse perspectives on the causes of youth crime and the institutions' specific aims and methods in attempting to reduce re-offending by convicted children. All interviews with staff took place in RCIs; staff participated before or after their shifts or whilst on a break. The interviews were conducted in two phases: during the first phase the researcher interviewed the senior and junior managers,<sup>23</sup> and discussion focused mainly on revealing a clear account of institutional general objectives and the specific treatment programmes used for achieving the required goals. Beginning by interviewing senior and junior managers also helped build rapport and trust. During the second phase of interviews, the researcher interviewed the junior staff who implemented each programme; the discussion was based on exploring the specific aims of each treatment programme and the specific approaches used to achieve the programme aims. Understanding the institutional programme aims helped to understand what these aims tell us about the causes and solutions of youth crime, and how the position of children is perceived.

### **Focus Groups**

Two focus groups, each with four social workers and four child monitors, were carried out. Holding separate focus groups was important, as participants shared similar duties and interests, which helped keep the information focused

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<sup>23</sup> The researcher met with the senior and junior managers on different dates; each group was interviewed twice, as required by their job engagement, and each interview lasted around 30 minutes.

on shared experiences, as well as helping the researcher capture as many diverse perspectives as possible. All staff members were male and aged between 40 and 50. Factors such as age and sex are important in focus groups, as respondents can be affected by socio-demographic differences (Bryman, 2001).

It had originally been intended to have around six members in each focus group. However, logistical difficulties prevented this, and it became apparent that groups ran well with only four members in each group. One advantage of the smaller group size was the ease with which responses could be attributed to individual participants during transcription. Perhaps more significantly, however, was the ease with which participants appeared to share information with each other and with the researcher. Each focus group typically lasted two hours,<sup>24</sup> including a mid-way break. During the first part of the focus group, discussion focused mainly on dilemmas staff faced while delivering the services for children, which led to children's needs remaining unmet in family guidance and behavioural modification programmes. During the second part of the focus group, perspectives and views on how policies and strategies could be developed to meet children's needs were discussed.

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<sup>24</sup> Each focus group was carried out on a Friday, as staff do not work on Fridays. All focus groups took place in a location which was agreed upon by all participants. Care was taken to choose venues which were comfortable and convenient for the participants, while also providing a space where privacy and confidentiality could be assured. In practice, this meant that interviews were carried out in quiet rooms within cafés and restaurants.

## Participant Observation with Children

The researcher performed participant observation fieldwork with 46 children at residential Institutions B and C, lasting between a month and a half and two months at each institution.<sup>25</sup> At first, the researcher participated in sports activities with the children (basketball, table tennis and billiards); aiming to get to know them and building trust and rapport before participating in rehabilitation activities. All children in the sample participated in sports activities. Considerable time was spent building rapport with the children. The children often insisted on the researcher playing with them again. Thus, the researcher achieved a high degree of harmony with the children, as intended. The researcher then started participating in the following rehabilitative programmes with children: the educational programme, which includes literacy and cultural strengthening for truant children,<sup>26</sup> the religious programme<sup>27</sup> and the vocational training programme. More specifically, the researcher participated in the religious programme with 22 children, 10 from Institution B and 12 from Institution C. The researcher also participated in literacy classes with nine children, five from Institution B and four from Institution C. The researcher participated in truancy classes with eight children, five from Institution B and three from Institution C. She also participated in the vocational training programme with seven children at Institution B.

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<sup>25</sup> The children in Institution A refused to allow the researcher to participate in activities. Reflection on this refusal appears in the final part of this chapter.

<sup>26</sup> The names of these programmes are given by the residential institutions.

<sup>27</sup> The researcher chose to participate in these programmes based on consultation with staff the frequency with which children took part in them.

In these rehabilitative programmes, the researcher played the role of the teacher's assistant through assisting the teachers in activities such as distributing papers, paintings and cards and cleaning the board. In religious classes the researcher distributed information about the intended topics of discussion for each session, according to the preacher's plans, and turned the tape recorder on and off when children listened to the Qura'an. In the vocational training programme, the researcher helped the staff by providing children with the necessary instruments to work, such as thread, scissors and needles.<sup>28</sup> In practice, participant observation method provided a way to get to know children better and build trust. It was also an ideal opportunity to carry out informal interviews and talk about issues as they occurred, turning conversations to certain topics of interest.

In addition, semi-participant observation allowed the researcher to reach a greater understanding of children's activities and behaviours. The researcher had access to the children's views and could observe the extent to which they engaged with the treatments and services provided, as well as observing the techniques staff used while delivering the services. The researcher also witnessed the special skills the children acquired in order to do certain tasks, particularly in educational programmes, such as reading, writing and speaking skills. This helped the researcher determine the children's literacy levels and conversation skills. Active participation increased the depth of understanding through doing as well as observing.

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<sup>28</sup> The researcher stopped participating in this programme in order to take part in educational programmes; both programmes took place at approximately the same time. The researcher participated in this programme for two weeks.

## Interviewing Children and Task-Centered Activities

A total of 66 children participated in interviews, each lasting between 60 and 90 minutes: 20 children from Institution A, 25 from Institution B and 21 from Institution C. The researcher interviewed children from different age groups between 12-17 years; this helped obtain a variety of responses.<sup>29</sup> The discussion explored children's experiences and views of the aims of each treatment programme, the extent to which they found them beneficial in meeting their needs, and what they thought the programmes were actually trying to achieve. To aid discussion and to lessen the unequal power relations between the adult researcher and the child participants, "child-friendly" techniques of visual and written activities (drawing and writing diaries) were used during the interviews.<sup>30</sup> The children were given the opportunity to choose which type of activity they were interested in utilising to express themselves. 18 children preferred to draw, 22 preferred to write and 26 preferred to talk only.<sup>31</sup>

This meant that using task-centered activities was not necessary for all children, which proves that children have different competencies<sup>32</sup>. However, these

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<sup>29</sup> The researcher told adult gatekeeper staff that including different age groups in the sample would be helpful.

<sup>30</sup> In using these activities, the researcher bore in mind different factors, such as the child's age and competency, including limited literacy or verbal skills. The researcher brought drawing paper, coloured pens and pencils to enable children to perform the task-based activities of drawing and writing diaries.

<sup>31</sup> After the completion of participant observation with the children, the researcher prepared and designed sentence completion exercises for children with good literacy skills during the interviews, but none of the children preferred this activity and instead chose to write diaries.

<sup>32</sup> Given reports that children find one-to-one interviews with adults intimidating (Hood et al., 1996), structured activities may reduce any pressure on them to talk or maintain eye contact

participatory activities were implemented not only to create a fun atmosphere but, more importantly, to generate relevant data (see Punch, 2002).

With regards to drawings, a method which was only chosen by children with poor literacy skills, the researcher began the interview by asking the children to draw pictures on topics of their choosing, as well as two thematic drawings: My Life in the Care Institution and My Family. Using drawings with children can be creative and fun, and it can encourage children to be more actively involved in the research. The image can be changed and added to, which gives children more control over their form of expression, unlike a formal interview situation, where responses tend to be more immediate (see Shaver et al., 1993). In this research, drawings were used in an exploratory manner to discover what children considered important aspects of their lives, in order to avoid imposing adult-centered concerns (Sapkota & Sharma, 1996). In addition, drawings were an appropriate warm-up to more difficult activities, where the research questions were raised, as well as being effective as an initial task to enable the children to become more familiar with the adult researcher (Boyden & Ennew, 1997).

Finally, the drawings themselves are rich visual illustrations which directly show how the children see their world inside the institution and in their families. The researcher asked all the children, in an open way, to explain what their drawing meant to them and why they decided to draw it. The researcher used their explanations as an entrance into asking the designed questions in a way that

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with the researcher, enabling the participants to relax and help springboard the discussion (Harden et al., 2000).

gave children more control over their answers and modes of expression. Although the children's drawings were explanatory and representative, this method was not without drawbacks. Some children, particularly younger children, were slow in drawing, which meant that the interview time extended past the time allowed by the adult staff, and some children had to attend various programmes meaning that interviews could not be completed. After consultation with staff, the researcher interviewed those children over two interview sessions.

With regards to the diaries technique, this task was only chosen by children with very good literacy skills. This task gave children the opportunity to write a diary of their lives in the institution, recording what they usually do each day. In practice, the diaries allowed the researcher to compare the different sorts of activities mentioned; the diaries showed a range of different activities, from rehabilitation programmes to non-rehabilitation programmes. The diaries were also useful in reflecting how children's activities varied greatly between educational days, religious class days and weekends, which gave the researcher the chance to broaden the discussion about subjects raised by the children themselves. Most of the children seemed to enjoy creating a document of their daily lives which they were able to keep; therefore, this technique worked well, with no drawbacks. Drawings were most useful in the initial exploratory stages of the research, for investigating broad themes and seeing what children identified as important aspects of their lives. Diaries were used to examine the issues raised by children in more detail. These activities were integrated with the interviews to move the conversation along and explore

children's personal experiences and views of the different rehabilitation programmes.

By combining traditional methods used with adults (participant observation, interviews) and innovative techniques more suitable for use with children, the researcher sought to perceive children not as lesser beings than adults, but individuals with different competencies (James et al., 1998). Therefore, the researcher was flexible while interviewing children, and considered many potential ethical and methodological dilemmas during the research process. This research sought to conduct interviews within the framework of a coherent methodological strategy that could critically engage children and elicit thoughtful, reflective accounts, shedding new light on many aspects of children's social lives.

## **Research Participants**

This study focused on two groups of participants at three RCIs.

**Professional staff.**<sup>33</sup> This refers to individuals who provide the rehabilitation services and programmes in question to children. I have chosen to interview members of this group in order to provide background information and give a clear account of RCIs' objectives, and to put the material into a realistic context. The interviews revealed the professional staff's understanding of the methods

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<sup>33</sup> Individuals who are in direct contact with children (specialised staff) and deliver services and programmes for children, such as administrators, social workers, religious preachers, child behaviour monitors, and educational supervisors. All of these participants provide different rehabilitation services for children. Their duties are summarised in Table 1 in appendices.

and techniques they employ to rehabilitate children. The aim was to provide an overview of relevant present practices and the institutions' specific tasks.

Interviews with staff members also aimed at learning about their experiences of day-to-day work with children in conflict with the law. Since professional staff are expected to work towards achievement of the institutions' aims, and have experience in dealing with the system, it was also important to understand how they explained any difficulties that arose in acknowledging and fulfilling children's needs.<sup>34</sup> It was beneficial to speak with staff with different levels of experience, from new recruits to long-serving staff. Professional staff that have worked for the RCIs for longer periods of time would be able to discuss their personal experiences of the rehabilitation programmes and methods. Newly-recruited staff would provide insight into their recently completed training on the techniques and strategies of child rehabilitation processes. Hearing from new and long-serving staff was particularly important in focus group discussion, as it provided an in-depth understanding of perceptions of, and suggestions concerning, obstacles to meeting the institutions' aims, and their views on how approaches could be improved to meet children's needs.

**Male children.** The participating children were between the ages of 12 and 17. They had committed various crimes which led to their placement in an RCI<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> This was particularly important with social workers and behaviour monitors, where children's needs within family guidance programmes and behavioural programmes' aims had not been met. The focus of group discussion with such staff will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

<sup>35</sup> To view the institutional statistics of the kinds of crimes among children interviewed in this study see table 2 in appendices.

Children of this age group are considered to be legally responsible for their offenses, and most media attention identifies this group as a social problem that creates political and public anxiety (Bandari, 2004). Much recent research in Jordan has been carried out on, rather than with, children (see Al-Qasim, 1995; Shunaq, 2002), and is based on the assumption that children are often developmentally incomplete compared to adults (Mayall, 2000). Emerging sociological perspectives, on the other hand, view children as social actors in their own right (Mayall, 1999). In accordance with this view, this research was primarily concerned with reaching a deeper understanding of children's perspectives on the rehabilitation services and programmes provided for them in RCIs. This distinction was crucial, since how the researcher views children is fundamental to the development of a coherent methodological framework (Morrow & Richards, 1996).

Political changes have attempted to bring children to the fore; the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) states that children are entitled to have their voice heard regarding situations and contexts that affect them. This was important for the current study since the purpose of RCIs is to reduce crime and help children tackle the problems that could lead them to reoffend (MOSD, 2009). It was important to conduct the research with children who had experienced the rehabilitation services and programmes in question, and solved their problems before returning to the community. As noted previously, I have chosen to study male children, as female children are only housed in one institution, separate from male children. Thus I could expect that females are treated differently than males.

## Research Methods

***Research with professional staff.*** The qualitative element, interviews, was conducted with staff in two stages.

- **Individual interviews**

The researcher started by interviewing senior managers and staff, as this helped build trust and rapport. The researcher then interviewed more junior staff, in order to gain a clear account of the objectives of RCIs. The interviews provided an understanding of the methods and techniques used to meet the RCIs' aims. Qualitative interviewing is more than simply a method to get answers to questions; it is a technique in which interaction assists with generating knowledge about the social world (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997). The focus is on listening and appreciating personal issues, and enhancing the knowledge being produced and the way in which it is produced. Active interviewing considers how information is created and the manner in which interviewees respond, rather than just looking at what has been said (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997; Byrne, 2004).

The data is reliable, not because all the interviewees provide the same information, but because the data comes from personal experience and the way individuals attach meaning to their lives (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997). Critics of interviewing suggest that the method simply creates subjective realities about the social world; however, its strengths as a method provide researchers with an understanding of individual experiences and the ability to explore the social truths of others (Miller & Glassner, 1997).

Using qualitative interviewing could help interviewees explain their experiences and knowledge of the methods and techniques that are in place to fulfil an institution's aims. In contrast, quantitative methods would not provide in-depth understanding of the nature of these aims and the methods in place to meet such objectives (Byrne, 2004). Carrying out survey research with institution staff would have limited the quality of information in this research.

- **Focus group interviews with key informants**

### **Research with children**

### **Methods of Data Collection**

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with professional staff and children; this method was beneficial for obtaining the required in-depth information without restricting interviewees' answers. It was crucial to be flexible in the interviews; semi-structured interviews were considered the most appropriate tool to accomplish the interview goals (Barbour & Schostak, 2005).

A further advantage of semi-structured interviews is that they are a method "that is open to the reception of unanticipated information to be discussed, which may not have been highlighted in a structured interview" (Barbour & Schostak 2005, p. 42). A semi-structured interview is flexible because it neither restricts researchers' questions nor participants' answers. The interviewer can change the direction of the line of questioning in response to participants' answers, while keeping to the main topic of the interview<sup>36</sup> (Byrne, 2004).

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<sup>36</sup> To aid this process, a draft interview guide was drawn up, outlining the main discussion

All interviews were tape-recorded, with the consent of the interviewees, in order to get a precise record of the conversation. Qualitative researchers are normally interested not only in what participants say but also the manner in which they say it (Bryman, 2001). The researcher also took notes during the interviews to record key points and themes that arose during the discussion. The decision to record interviews was made because it increases the use of positive body language and good eye contact. Participants may feel uneasy if responses are written down during the interview, and in this study it was of the utmost importance for the researcher to remain focused on listening and body language. It would also be very difficult to note down everything the respondents said; therefore, it was best to have a recording of the full discussion.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations were paramount in the design of this research study. The researcher considered several ethical issues in regards to the two research participant groups addressed in this fieldwork (adult staff and children). These issues involved considering the potential benefits and harm of the research to the participants and to the researcher.

## **Benefits of the Research**

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topics. To view this interview guides, see Appendices 10 and 11.

This research contributes to an understanding of the various ways in which RCIs attempt to respond to youth crime, by investigating approaches employed by the professional staff. The research explores the links between the institutions' specific objectives and actual practices to identify whether RCIs meet their aims. According to the principles of the child welfare system in Jordan, RCIs work to reduce re-offending by providing children with services, skills and programmes that reduce the opportunity for re-offending (MSD, 2000). Therefore, it was expected that this research could contribute to identifying how the RCI system functions to draw conclusions about practices that either prevent youth crime or possibly lead children towards further involvement. It was hoped that participating residential staff would be keen to have their opinions heard and to share their personal experiences. Staff perspectives and suggestions of how practice could be improved would be important to help meet the institutions' aims.

Another intended benefit was to give children the opportunity to express their opinions on a subject where their behaviour is always scrutinised but their voices ignored. Understanding children's perspectives on whether RCIs are capable of meeting their objectives could help officials and policymakers develop techniques and implement methods that meet children's needs more effectively. Incorporating children's views in the research process contributes to a greater understanding of the reality of their lives and how their behaviour and social conditions can be improved. By taking children's perspectives seriously, this study could not only enhance academic knowledge, but provide data that could be utilised by policymakers in regards to rehabilitative programmes for

children in conflict with the law.

Feedback from both participant groups suggests that they welcomed the opportunity to take part in this study.<sup>37</sup> Prior to approaching any potential research participants or conducting fieldwork, the study design was submitted to the Department of Applied Social Science (DASS) Ethics Committee at the University of Stirling for ethical approval. Following submission of a research protocol detailing the study design, including the participant recruitment strategy and fieldwork tools, full ethical approval for the study was granted by the DASS Ethics Committee in February 2010.

### **Informed Consent**

The researcher identified different procedures for gaining consent from adults and children. According to the RCIs' principles, each adult in a public institutional setting is considered to be a gatekeeper<sup>38</sup> in terms of whether or not to take part in any research process (MOSD guidelines, 2005). With regards to children, based on the BSA principles of ethical practice, access to children within RCIs must be negotiated with adult staff gatekeepers, who are the designated protectors and carers of children.<sup>39</sup> However, both participant

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<sup>37</sup> See Appendix 1 and 2 for further details of participants' feedback.

<sup>38</sup> This means that each adult is responsible for deciding whether or not to participate in a research study, and is not required to obtain permission or agreement from those who have authority over them.

<sup>39</sup> Therefore, all managers and staff, as adult gatekeepers, were informed, verbally and in writing, of what the research with children involved, and given the opportunity to request further information about the study prior to, during or after the children's participation. This information sheet appears in Appendix 6. Access to children was granted by the adult staff who were asked to sign a written consent form stating that they accepted and understood the children's role in the research. In accordance with BSA (2003), the researcher also made

groups were required to give their consent to participating; therefore, particular care was taken to ensure that informed consent was secured from all participants. In effect, this meant that all participating staff and children were informed, verbally and in writing, of the nature and purpose of the study, and given the opportunity to request further information about the study prior to, during or after participating in the study.<sup>40</sup> It is worth mentioning that the children's information sheet was also read aloud by the researcher to children with limited literacy skills to ensure that they fully understood the research aims and methods, and their role in the research.<sup>41</sup> Participants were asked to give their written consent to take part in the study on the understanding that this would not infringe upon their right to withdraw from the study at any time, without any obligation to state their reasons for withdrawal.<sup>42</sup> Again, it is noteworthy that the children's consent form was also read aloud by the researcher to children with limited literacy skills to ensure that they fully understood the research aims and methods, and their role in the research.<sup>43</sup> In this regard, consent from staff and children was viewed as an ongoing agreement, which was actively negotiated throughout the research process.<sup>44</sup>

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clear to all adult gatekeepers that their consent was not equated with that of the children. To view a copy of the consent form used for this purpose, see Appendix 7.

<sup>40</sup> An information sheet was devised for all staff for this purpose; see Appendix 3.

<sup>41</sup> To view a copy of the information sheet for children, see Appendix 5

<sup>42</sup> To view a copy of the consent form for staff, see Appendix 4

<sup>43</sup> To view a copy of the consent form for children, see Appendix 8

<sup>44</sup> This approach to informed consent was considered essential in view of the chosen research methods: participant observation, semi-structured interviews and focus groups. It was anticipated that new issues for further observation and new themes for further discussion would emerge as the observation, interviews and focus groups progressed. It would have been impossible, therefore, to predict all of the topics for discussion and particular behaviours to observe prior to the start of the said methods. Clearly, this has particular implications for what is meant by informed consent (Lee, 1999).

## **Confidentiality**

It was essential that no harm came to any participants during fieldwork and data dissemination. Therefore, confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed to participants during data collection, data analysis, writing up and dissemination of findings. Data was stored in a password-protected computer that was kept in a locked storage space that only the researcher had access to. Data collected during the course of the study was stored in compliance with the Data Protection Act (1998), and, upon final completion of the study, data will be destroyed or stored in secure DASS archive facilities, as appropriate. In any reports produced as a result of this study, participants' responses and the names of their institutions have been anonymised through the use of pseudonyms and the removal of any identifying details.

The researcher was aware that the research topic could be regarded as sensitive by both adult staff and children. It was anticipated that some adult participants might find it distressing to discuss issues related to the efficacy of the programmes provided for children. Although no participants exhibited signs of distress, all participants were advised that they were not obliged to discuss anything they felt uncomfortable with, and were free to stop the interview at any time. Although protecting all research participants is important, "children are particularly considered vulnerable by virtue of factors such as age, social status and powerlessness" (BSA, 2002, paragraph 1(e)). This is particularly true for research with children regarded as non-conformist. Some participants found it

distressing to discuss painful experiences of family programmes, though the researcher discovered that they did want to reveal important information.<sup>45</sup> The respondents, therefore, were advised of two options: participating in an interview, with the knowledge that they were free to stop the interview at any time or choose not to discuss anything they felt uncomfortable with, or anonymously writing down what they wanted to say and putting it in a safe box.<sup>46</sup> (It is noteworthy that no child chose to withdraw from an interview.) Applying this technique was important because children, as well as adults, experience things that they are unwilling to divulge to an interviewer unless confidentiality is guaranteed (Wyness, 2006).

Researchers are required to protect all participants by keeping disclosed information confidential; however, confidentiality can never be fully guaranteed to children, as the researcher has a professional obligation to ensure no harm comes to anyone. If a participant child appears to be in a situation in which they could be seriously harmed, or reveals information, either directly or indirectly, about abuse or neglect, the researcher has a legal obligation to inform the appropriate authorities (Alderson, 1995). However, although no participants revealed a harmful situation that necessitated intervention, the researcher had

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<sup>45</sup> For example, when child participants were asked: Do you have any problems with one or both of your parents? What are these problems? How are your supervisors trying to solve these problems?

<sup>46</sup> This innovative technique is known as the secret box. The researcher began using it when she discovered that children want to reveal important information. This technique gives children a great sense of confidentiality, enabling them to write down any problems they have experienced or any important issues they want to reveal (Punch, 2002). The participants were assured that the disclosed information would not be passed on to staff or authorities.

planned not to take any action with any appropriate agencies without first discussing such disclosure with the person in question (see Alderson, 1995).

Procedures to minimise potential harm to the researcher were also incorporated into the research design. All the individual interviews with staff and children were carried out in the RCIs; this was safer than conducting interviews in unfamiliar locations. Attempting to conduct interviews elsewhere could also have proven problematic in terms of finding a convenient and private location.<sup>47</sup>

A further benefit of carrying out the interviews in the RCIs was that it would provide one location for several interviews, thus reducing the time spent on fieldwork. However, focus group interviews and observation of the vocational training programme in Institution B were held in a public café<sup>48</sup> and the vocational training centre, respectively. It was important, therefore, to inform someone of my whereabouts during the fieldwork and keep a mobile phone with me at all times. I did not give out any personal information, such as my address, to participants; only university contacts details were provided. It was also acknowledged that conducting research primarily as a lone researcher can be a difficult process (Lee, 1999), and that the potential for participants to disclose distressing information can compound these difficulties (Brannen, 1988). A supportive environment where the researcher was able to discuss any personal difficulties caused by carrying out the study was established through regular electronic contact with the researcher's supervisors at Stirling University, and regular meetings between the researcher and her supervisor in

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<sup>47</sup> The researcher had no option but to conduct the interviews with children in the care institutions. It was not realistic to request that interviews be conducted outside the institutions because children are sentenced to these care institutions and confined within them.

<sup>48</sup> This also ensured that the researcher was not working in an isolated environment.

Jordan.

### **Power Relations in Qualitative Interviewing**

Using qualitative interviewing reduces power imbalances, since participants can respond in their own way (Stroh, 2000). Power relations were addressed differently between the two groups in this study. At the outset of the fieldwork, the researcher anticipated that adult staff might regard themselves as having power over the researcher because of their gender and age, as the researcher was an average of 15 years younger than respondents and was the only female among an all-male staff group. It was anticipated that some staff members may attempt to control the interview situation or withhold information if they believed it would have negative repercussions. Although no participant seemed to do this, the researcher endeavoured to build good rapport with the participants to ensure that they understood that the researcher role was not to interrogate them but rather to generate an understanding of their experiences and an appreciation of their views.

Interviewing children tends to be seen as a specialised activity, different from other forms of interviewing. It has been argued that reflexivity should be a central part of the research process with children; this requires researchers to critically reflect and 'step back' from their own adult perspective, views and usual modes of practice to constantly question their role, assumptions, data interpretation, and choice of methods and their application throughout the research process (Mayall, 1994; Davis, 1998; Punch, 2002). One feature of

child research is that inequalities of power between children and adults are duplicated in the research process (Mahon et al., 1996). Children are not used to expressing their views freely or being taken seriously by adults because of their position in an adult-dominated society (Punch, 2002). Therefore, task-centered activities have been developed to facilitate and maximise children's capacity to freely express themselves when gathering data (Hill, 1997). These activities include encouraging children to express themselves through written and visual tasks; for example, through sentence completion exercises, writing diaries (Morrow, 1998), taking photos and drawing pictures (Punch, 1998).

Such methods are used to encourage children to express their views and opinions on the topics raised by the research, and it is expected that these techniques will foster rapport between the child and the researcher (Harden et al., 2000). However, as Hill et al. (1996) point out, there needs to be balance between the use of such techniques and straightforward conversation, the key to which is flexibility and sensitivity on the part of the researcher towards the individual child being interviewed. These methods are more valuable and less problematic if they are utilised as an occasion or stimulus for talk rather than as evidence in their own right (Harden et al., 2000). Since children tend to lack experience of direct contact with unfamiliar adults in one-to-one interviews, more innovative techniques, such as task-centered activities, can enable children to feel more comfortable with the adult researcher (Punch, 2002). Therefore, the researcher used some task-centered activities while interviewing children; these activities will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

When eliciting children's views, another difficulty which child researchers must

confront is that children may not be completely honest to a researcher by saying what they think the researcher wants to hear, in order to avoid disclosing a painful subject or through fear or shame (Ennew, 1994; Gersch, 1996). Therefore, to ensure the validity and reliability of children's accounts the researcher invested considerable time in building trust with the children (Punch, 2002). To handle the imbalance of power between the adult researcher and children, the researcher was cautious not to impose her views but instead to react to children's views positively and follow their lead, which also contributed to building rapport (Corsaro, 1997). Adults assume they already know and understand what children are like, and such assumptions can create methodological problems (Fine & Sandstrom, 1988; James et al., 1998). Therefore, the researcher abandoned assumptions that her knowledge was superior to that of the children (Alderson & Goodey, 1996), as adultist attitudes towards children can discourage them from providing valid and reliable data (Alderson, 1995).

Further questions exist regarding whether the researcher's interpretation of the data adequately represents the perspectives of the children involved in this study. Arguably, the choice of which data to include and how to interpret the data is in the power of the adult researcher (Punch, 2002). In addressing this power, critical reflection on issues of representing children's voices in research is an emerging theme in the literature. Spyrou (2011, p. 152) argues that:

*... A reflexive approach to child voice research needs to take into account the actual research contexts in which children's voices are produced and the power imbalances that shape them....*

The researcher, therefore, bore in mind the responsibility of not interpreting the

data collected from children according to her own worldview;<sup>49</sup> particular care was taken when interpreting children's views, because, as Mayall (1994, p. 11) points out, ultimately adult researchers analyse children's perspectives:

*However much one may involve children in considering data, the presentation of it is likely to require analyses and interpretations, at least for some purposes, which do demand different knowledge than that generally available to children, in order to explicate children's social status and structural positioning.*

Yet this can also apply to research with adults, who also participated in this research, because "If academic research is to produce anything more than lay understandings it must involve access to concepts, theories and scholarly knowledge unavailable to most research subjects" (Harden et al., 2000, p. 6). However, the difference when dealing with children is the added danger that: 'As "grown-ups", we are limited by our tendency to process their talk through our own view of the world' (Fine & Sandstrom, 1988, p. 9).

While it can be argued that individuals do not always have the knowledge and resources to be the best interpreters of their experiences (see Mayall, 1994; Harden, 2000), it could equally be argued that, on the basis of an interview and semi-participant observations, neither do I as the researcher. In this regard, I consider the task of interpreting the data and presenting findings based on my own understandings to be both a daunting responsibility and a privilege. In doing so, I acknowledge that my interpretation of participants' experiences may well differ from their own interpretations, and indeed those of other researchers.

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<sup>49</sup> David et al. (2005, p. 127) suggest that researchers need to "critically reflect upon their own assumptions, values and aims, data interpretation, the impact of each in shaping the research process, and the potential effect on those who are recruited as participants"

However, my conclusions are grounded in a thorough analysis of participants' views, and participants' interpretations of their experiences are also represented in their own words through the use of verbatim extracts from their interviews and focus groups, as well as the children's own interactions witnessed in semi-participant observation.<sup>50</sup>

A noteworthy difference between my own interpretation of children's experiences and their own interpretations lay with the tendency of participants to locate their experiences at an individual rather than a structural level. As an example, while children saw the problem of physical abuse as an individual experience, the researcher locates it as a common experience on a structural level, involving a powerless and oppressed group. Highlighting children's structural disadvantage through child abuse acts as a way of perceiving children as a minority group having their voices heard on issue affecting their lives. Empowering children as a minority group, and prioritising their own needs and rights, is a central tenet of contemporary childhood research, and an approach adopted by this researcher. Accordingly, the researcher considered the issues that children saw as individual issues at a structural level.

## **Data Analysis**

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<sup>50</sup>After completing the analysis, both children and residential staff were offered a summary report which provided them with the main findings of this study, and contained a comparative aspect identifying differences between children's responses, and differences between children's and residential staff's responses. This was beneficial for identifying areas where institutional practice did not meet the institutional aims.

Preliminary and regular analyses of data from interviews, semi-participant observation and focus groups were integrated with data collection into a process of continual reflection. Usually, interview transcripts and observation notes were completed before the next interview and participation occurred. Several analyses were undertaken so that the researcher could reformulate the research questions as the research progressed. For example, children's perspectives were analysed to identify common themes which could be brought to focus group discussions. Simultaneously collecting and analysing data also allowed for further exploration of new themes as they emerged. During participant observation, for example, issues regarding children's limited engagement in some activities emerged, allowing for further investigation of children's experiences and opinions of rehabilitation programmes in the interviews that followed.

With regard to the data analysis process, Strauss (1987) describes a three stage model: open coding, axial coding and selective coding. During the initial open coding process, data is organised into broad analytic themes and coded on that basis. At the axial coding stage, a second pass through the data develops the links between the emergent themes. During the third phase of analysis, extracts from the data which best illustrate the main themes are selected for inclusion in the final report. Broadly speaking, interview, semi-participant observation and focus group data from the current study were analysed in this way. However, this was not a linear or straightforward process, and I moved back and forth between these phases at various stages of the analysis process.

The qualitative data collected from interviews, semi-participant observation and focus groups was fully transcribed and coded using manual analysis of qualitative data text (MAQDT) (see Weitzman & Miles, 1995). The analysis process was started by identifying a broad set of thematic categories. These categories were derived from a number of themes which emerged from preliminary analysis of research methods data, an initial thorough reading of the data, and noticeable themes which informed the development of this study. These broad categories were translated into a hierarchical order on a large-sized card. During a second pass through the data, all transcripts were coded<sup>51</sup> on paper, and each code was identified by using a particular colour of highlighter, and links between themes<sup>52</sup> emerged alongside the development of new themes.<sup>53</sup> In this regard, the approach taken in this study cannot easily be described as 'inductive' or 'deductive' since data analysis was approached with theoretical concepts and themes in mind, although it was anticipated that new themes would emerge along the way.

For facilitating later retrieval of the quoted codes and other coded texts, the researcher used folders to gather materials that shared similar themes or

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<sup>51</sup> To facilitate this, the researcher formatted pages of data into three columns. The first and widest column contains the actual data – interview transcripts, field notes and focus group accounts. The second column contains space for preliminary code notes, while the third column lists the final codes. The second column's ruminations or first impressions may help provide a transitional link between the raw data and codes (see Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005).

<sup>52</sup> The researcher manually cut and pasted different pieces of text relevant to a single code onto pieces of paper and stored them in a file. This also involved cutting and pasting themes onto different coloured paper and reorganising them into sub-themes.

<sup>53</sup> The researcher also made analytic notes of emerging themes and concepts on 'memo card notes', which sometimes helped the progress of coding processes.

analytic ideas. This actually facilitates easy retrieval of such linked material. The matrix framework analysis method was also drawn upon, which allows data to be synthesised and charted in a way that allows the researcher to 'read across' data without losing sight of individual participants (Ritchie et al., 2003). This method was particularly useful for highlighting connections and contradictions within participants' accounts.

## **Challenges Encountered During the Research Process**

Conducting qualitative fieldwork research at residential care institutions was not without challenges. The researcher overcame a range of ethical issues raised during this research, partly from commitment to ethical practice and partly to raise the validity and reliability of the findings.

It has been argued that the crucial role that adults play in allowing children to take part in research is potentially problematic as it may make it difficult for children to refuse to take part in the research or to practice disclosure (Lee, 2001). Prior to engaging in fieldwork, the researcher had anticipated this type of predicament, and thought of how best to respond in this situation. However, the reverse happened in practice: all the children in Institution A refused to allow my participation in their activities. The actual challenge was when children asked the researcher not to inform residential staff of their refusal. They made this request because they feared they would be punished by the staff if they behaved in a way the staff considered undesirable while the researcher was present. The researcher considered that the key thing to bear in mind was that

this research should not harm, or lead to anyone being harmed. Therefore, the researcher suggested to staff that she could obtain sufficient material from interviews and therefore did not need to participate in the children's activities.<sup>54</sup>

After investigating what children meant by the punishments they faced, it was clear that this institution, as well as other institutions, used the method of punishment and rewards in response to children's behaviour.<sup>55</sup> Children who broke the institution's rules and regulations were punished. These punishments – as disclosed by staff and children – included, for example, not being allowed to leave the institution to spend a weekend or holiday with family, or being denied permission to participate in desirable recreational trips and sports activities.<sup>56</sup>

The children and the researcher all encountered two emotional challenges. First, during discussion of the children's experiences in the vocational training programme, three participating children got angry, as they felt unjustly treated due to their non-participation in the vocational training programme. They started to use indecent and obscene words in expressing their anger. This generated feelings of disgust and discomfort in the researcher; however, the researcher understood this as children venting their anger regarding the institution's policy,

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<sup>54</sup> It was important to adhere to the children's decisions for two reasons: first, to gain their trust, and second, to protect them from punishment.

<sup>55</sup> For this purpose, the researcher included an interview question for both staff and children, investigating what methods of punishment were in operation in the institution.

<sup>56</sup> These methods aimed to motivate children to develop positive behaviour and weaken negative behaviour. This information helped the researcher to understand what children meant by 'punishment'.

and the researcher was tolerant. After releasing their stress, those children continued to discuss their perspectives on the institution's aims (see also Liebling, 2001).

Second, during discussion of the children's experiences and perspectives on the family guidance programme, two of the children started to cry when they recalled painful family circumstances; this generated my profound sympathy for them and their familial circumstances (see also Jewkes, 2011). In addressing such emotional expression, the researcher provided them with different options: either not to talk about the family programme and withdraw from the research, or not to answer any question that made them uncomfortable. However, they insisted on completing their painful stories, stating:

*I prefer to only talk to you, and cry...you know, this will ease my pain.*

*My parents will never take care of me... at least I feel I can talk to you and relieve my pressure.*

Therefore, the researcher considered it appropriate to listen without interrupting until the children stopped talking by themselves. Subsequently, the researcher encouraged them to be more open with the staff about their feelings and not to be afraid to practice their right to express their familial needs, persuading them that this programme was created to serve them. Generally, children were more willing to disclose information about their familial problems to the researcher rather than to male staff. Recalling the issues relating to socialising children, the Jordanian literature indicated that males have more authority over male children than females. This structural differentiation between adult males and females in

terms of discipline and control over children's behaviour may have encouraged them to discuss their familial problems more freely with the female researcher than the male staff. This suggests a potential benefit of employing female staff in RCIs.

A personal challenge was the interview setting at Institution A. Complete privacy for the children had been secured, although this was unexpected before the actual research had taken place<sup>57</sup>. However, this created a degree of concern for my safety, especially as the children interviewed had committed more serious crimes, were physically larger and consistently re-offended (see also Liebling, 1999). This room only had one small window overlooking an abandoned small garden; it was impossible for any staff to stay by this window.<sup>58</sup> The researcher addressed this challenge by keeping her mobile phone with her and informing her husband of what time each interview started; he was also around the institution in case any problems occurred. However, no threatening situation occurred over the time the researcher used this room for interviews.

The researcher also faced a range of challenges during the participant

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<sup>57</sup> It has been argued that when carrying out interviews with children, it is normally desirable for a responsible adult (apart from the interviewer) to remain close at hand (Best, 2007). However, it is not necessary for the adult to actually be present in the same room (Best, 2007). Therefore, prior to engaging in fieldwork, the researcher had planned to arrange for interviews to be conducted in a room with windows, thus allowing the responsible adult to see inside the room. The intended aim was to keep the interviews private; to assure all children that the room was completely private and their responses could not be heard outside the room.

<sup>58</sup> Unfortunately, this was the only available room for conducting interviews with children. If any staff member had been in the garden it would have compromised the children's privacy, as they knew that this area is never used by staff because it is full of trees that have thorns.

observation. The researcher's initial presence affected the children's natural setting, and there was an obvious change in their behaviour.<sup>59</sup> The researcher considered it appropriate to adopt the role of teacher's assistant. The researcher did not want the children to see her as an authority figure; helping out with activities such as distributing papers, pencils and other relevant materials helped me achieve this. Children are not used to seeing adults doing only these tasks and not attempting to control or discipline the class. During my repeated participation, the children began to see the researcher as a visiting adult who came and left the site as she wished.

Also, to minimise the effect of the researcher's presence the researcher shared the children's social world and did not try to stand out or affect the natural flow of activity. The researcher behaved in a way similar to the people around her, such as praying in a religious setting, and the researcher also sat at a comfortable level for the children. The reviewed literature claims that most children who commit crimes are from lower classes; therefore, particular care was taken in terms of how the researcher dressed, as class is one factor that may affect the degree to which the researcher may interact with those being studied. All these steps encouraged the children to feel more comfortable in the researcher's presence, and maximised trust and the researcher opportunities to observe their activity without filtering effects of the subject's interpretation of the interactions.

Another dilemma faced during the researcher's participation in the children's

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<sup>59</sup> Prior to engaging in fieldwork, the researcher had anticipated this type of predicament and thought of how best to respond in this situation.

activities was that the educational supervisor in Institution B asked the researcher to lead an activity in his place, for two days, as he was busy presenting seminars for parents.<sup>60</sup> Prior to engaging in fieldwork, the researcher had anticipated this type of dilemma, where the potential of changing the nature of her role as a teacher's assistant to that of a responsible adult seemed problematic. Therefore, the researcher attempted to distance herself from a teacher's role by not disciplining unless someone was going to be physically harmed; no physical harm occurred. During the first day of leading the class, the researcher found herself being observed and evaluated by the children: some children started to shout in her presence, and did not listen to what she said, in ways they would not do in front of the educational supervisor. They were aiming to examine whether the researcher would report what they did to the responsible staff. Achieving the children's trust was the researcher first priority; therefore, she did not report anything to the educational supervisor and made no personal intervention because no personal harm occurred. The researcher noticed after a few days that the children started to behave naturally in her presence; trust had been achieved.

Ethical concerns regarding particularly sensitive issues were taken into account with adult and child participants. With regards to staff, it was possible that directly discussing their explanations and experiences of the challenges in meeting children's needs made them sensitive to this issue, making them feel overly defensive or introducing fears where none had existed previously. With regards to children, it was also possible that discussing their experiences of

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<sup>60</sup> This request occurred one day after the researcher starting participating with the children in this programme, which meant that the required level of trust had not been established.

physical abuse made them especially sensitive to this issue, and led them to focus more on their concerns about this issue than might otherwise have been the case. During focus groups and interviews with staff and children, particular care was taken not to ask direct questions about their experiences of the mentioned issues. For example, staff were asked initial questions such as, “What, if anything, do you think works well, or does not appear to work well, while delivering services to children in your programme?” This actually helped open up discussion and allowed the researcher to follow up with other, more specific questions.

Similarly, child participants were asked questions such as, “Do you have any problems with one or both of your parents? What are these problems? How are your responsible supervisors trying to solve these problems?” Care was also taken not to generate any potential risks to any participant, and to monitor participants’ reactions to issues discussed. However, some staff respondents did comment that they had not been asked about their experiences of the institution’s system and the obstacles they faced while delivering the services to children until that point:

*It highlighted the importance of our professional responsibility to honestly say what the problems in meeting children’s needs are, within a subject that we all deal with but have never been asked about before.*

*This research allowed me to talk about things I had not been able to discuss before. Yes, it is the voice of the children that made me talk freely.*

*I was happy to suggest how children’s needs could be achieved. I look forward to seeing the impact in the near future.*

*When you interviewed me individually I knew I would also be involved in your group discussion and I really felt that it would be the*

*best time to talk about what the problems and solutions are.*

Feedback from some child participants also suggested that the opportunity to reflect upon their experiences and opinions of the rehabilitation programmes allowed for their voices to be heard, which had never occurred before:

*I am glad that I was given a chance to give my opinion on issues that I have never been asked about before.*

*It was really good to find someone to listen to my views and needs. I hope that these will be considered and that my life will change for the better.*

*I was lucky in expressing my views on issues that I was always concerned about, and I really hope that my needs will be met before I return home.*

*I gained knowledge of my right to talk and give my opinion.*

This feedback from both participant groups could be regarded as a positive outcome of the research. Professional staff saw this research as an official opportunity to share their views and suggestions through group discussion. Child participants, on the other hand, may now be more aware of their right to express their needs on issues directly affecting their lives. Mason (1998) describes this as “ecological validity” within qualitative research. As this study was mainly designed to help children’s voices to be heard by policymakers, to enhance their life conditions and to keep them from re-offending, it is hoped that the current study makes a positive, if small, contribution to understanding the needs of children in relation to an issue which they themselves perceive as important within the context of their own lives. To this end, the following four chapters outline the key findings of this study.

## **Chapter Six**

### **The Perspectives of the Jordanian Residential Care Institutions on the Causes of Youth Crime**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter explores the different perspectives and understandings that underpin Residential Care Institutions (RCIs) in Jordan responses to youth crime, looking at causes from both micro and macro social structures. Research conducted by Jordanian academics suggests that youth crime results from children's interaction with different categories of social structures. It is argued that parental divorce generates negative feelings of stress, guilt, anger and frustration in children (Al-Qaisi & Alawneh, 1997), and weak emotional ties with parents (Abdullah & Makhamreh, 1994), which are all claimed to be factors leading children to act out and engage in criminal acts. It has also been argued that children who grow up in single mother, step-parent and working-mother families are less likely to learn normative behaviours (Obidat, 1994; Manasour, 2001), experience a lack of parental supervision and discipline (Kafafi, 2002; Hadadeen, 1989; Hanania, 2000), and have weak emotional ties with one or both parents (Masarwah, 1992; Mustafa & Rashidi, 1993), all of which are suggested as potential factors influencing youth crime.

Child physical abuse is also claimed to have a connection with youth crime. Child abuse generates children's anger and frustration (Alrashdan & Banat, 2010), and weakens the emotional ties between child and parents (Alaween et

al., 2001). Further, according to Al-Abdullah (2000), abused children have a tendency to handle their interpersonal problems with aggression; this could potentially lead to violent crimes. Abuse also leads children to escape from their home for long hours, during which they are unsupervised, and may come to the attention of the authorities while on the streets (Akrobawi, 2000). The literature also claims that a child's deviant peer group and parental criminality have an influence on youth crime. This is because the child learns deviant and criminal behaviour through association with 'criminal' others (Al-Salman, 1995; Majali, 2003).

Child poverty is proposed to be associated with youth crime, as poor children are more likely to achieve their material goals through illegitimate means because of their inability to achieve them through the acceptable means expected by society (Al-Rabadi, 2009). School truancy is seen as either related to poverty, as poor children skip school because they must work, or to teachers ignoring children with learning difficulties and abusing working-class children. School truancy influences youth crime in several ways. First, it is suggested that school truancy provides children with the time and energy to become involved in criminal activities (Hamdani, 2000). Second, truancy prevents children from learning the normative behaviours usually provided by different school subjects; thus, children who truant may be more likely to offend (Al-Faouri et al., 2004). Third, truant children experience unsupervised autonomy due to working in the street, leading them to become involved in criminality (Khawajah, 2000). Fourth, truant children experience stress and status frustration caused by their failure to meet their education goals, and thus use

criminality as a way to lessen their pressures (Al-Tarawnah et al., 1998). Explicit media images, provoking sexuality and aggressive behaviour in children (Al-Kutob, 2000), and the media's ability to stigmatise children from working-class and single-parent families, have also been suggested as factors influencing youth crime (Al-Rashidi, 2004).

Clearly, how children and youth crime are perceived in contemporary Jordanian society are contentious and overlapping issues. By drawing upon interviews with staff from within the institutions, this chapter explores this issue from the perspective of the staff members themselves. Worker's views of the various crises that children face in wider social structures, presented as the root causes of offending, are considered alongside their views on youth crime.

## **Families and Ineffective Child-Rearing Methods**

### ***Poor Parental Supervision: 'children amuse themselves in their own ways'***

The social workers across the three institutions all pointed out that crime is a consequence of families neglecting to supervise children's behaviour inside and outside the home. The participants noted that this supervisory neglect has a connection with youth crime because it provides circumstances that allow children to live uncontrolled and unsupervised lives at particular times and spaces, and thus commit crime:

*Khaldon (INT):* From my experience, poor parental supervision of the children's activities both inside and outside the home lead them to commit a variety of offences ... yeah, when there is no supervision

'children amuse themselves in their own ways' at some times and places and thus commit crime... yeah, poor supervision actually creates circumstances in which children can behave against social rules...I also note that those children are mostly looking to gain the direct and quick benefit of crime without thinking or caring about its negative consequences, such as the harm they cause to the victims; those children are rubbish!

Here, Khaldon explicitly indicated that children who offend are characterised by low self-control. This is seen in the impulsive desire to gain the immediate benefit of crime, and insensitivity towards others in terms of the harm their acts might cause to the victims. He noted that poor parental supervision is the main reason for the development of children's low self-control.

While the participants were in agreement that parental neglect in supervising children's behaviour does have a connection with youth crime, they identify different reasons behind such neglect. For the majority of participants, the changes in the ideal family structure and its structural arrangements, due to parental divorce and working mothers, respectively, have been identified as the main reasons behind poor parental supervision and thus youth crime. This is because these changes are related to the children's ability to exercise unsupervised autonomy, either at home or outside it:

Marwan (INT): ... the behaviour of those children is not supervised because they are left alone at home because their mothers are out at work [laughs]...

Mahmood (INT): ... yeah, many children after their parents are divorced choose to live with their mother, that's the modern kind of family [laughs]. Oh God, you know why, because children know they are now liberated from the authority of their father's control... those children in fact refuse their mother's control since their fathers are not there...

Yaseen (INT): ... they live with a step-parent who doesn't care about managing the children's behaviour in or out of the home because they are not the biological father, and mothers to feel it's their responsibility to supervise the children...this factor encourages children to behave completely independently both inside and outside the home ... children from these families have actually committed crimes and they are now our guests here...

Here Mahmood's statement highlighted the gender expectations of fathers and mothers regarding child-rearing, where fathers have ultimate authority over a child's behaviour, and the absence of this authority in single-mother families allowed children to live uncontrolled and unsupervised lives. Mahmood also alludes to the fact that children have sufficient knowledge of such gender role differentiation; therefore, they refuse to adhere to their mother's rules, supervision and control. This finding resonates with the construction of Jordanian culture, wherein mothers have less authority in controlling children, as this is mostly left to fathers. Conversely, Yaseen's assertion indicated that the absence of supervision over children's behaviour is associated with step-parents' negligence in practicing a parenting role. This finding challenges recent research (Saleem & Rawajfeh, 1991; Al-Salman, 1995; Hanania, 2000) which suggests that step-parents' disengagement from parenting is highly associated with children's lack of adjustment to the new family structure.

While Marwan, Mahmood and Yaseen linked poor parental supervision to the changes in a family's structure or its structural arrangements, two participants, in contrast, claim that poor parental supervision is mainly related to gender differences, wherein male children are socialised to be able to construct their own lives, away from parental control, and this freedom actually motivates

criminal behaviour. They suggested that gender differences directly affect the amount of supervision by all families and in all social classes, as parents to a large extent grant male children more freedom of mobility than females; thus, male children are less supervised than females. The following extract illustrates this point:

*Monther (INT):* ...honestly, the problem of poor parental supervision actually exists in most families and in all social classes. Such absence of a parental role is actually related to only one fact: that many parents provide their sons with more mobility than they do their daughters, yeah, this is because they are boys not girls! You know, boys receive little control from parents and this actually leads to juvenile crime...such families justify this by simply saying: 'the boy's misbehaviour does not bring shame to the family as much as daughters' bring'. You know, we in Jordan think in this way.

Recent studies (Al-Majali, 2006; Al-Zghoul, 2004) echo Monther's assertion regarding the gender expectation of boys, poor parental supervision and youth crime. These studies have considered the Jordanian cultural tradition of granting male children relative freedom of mobility problematic, as male children are then able to acting independently and thus to potentially engage in deviant behaviours.

On the whole, it could be argued that parental neglect in supervising children's behaviour represents a departure from the traditional concept of childhood, whether this neglect is related to changes in the family structure and/or its structural arrangements or to the gender identity of boys. In other words, such poor parental supervision challenges the traditional Jordanian notion of childhood, in which children are not expected to practice autonomy and to live independently but rather to live under their parents' rules, authority and control.

## **Child Physical Abuse**

The participating social workers all proposed child physical abuse as another explanation of youth crime. To facilitate an understanding of how the participants explain the link between physical abuse of children and youth crime, it is worthwhile to first understand the underlying reasons for child abuse which they proposed. The participants revealed a range of different explanations of why child abuse occurs:

*Sameer (INT) ... poor parents always take out the stress of their financial pressures on their children by hitting them every time for the slightest mistakes.*

*Moneer (INT): I think I'm correct in saying that 90% of families, that's all kinds of families, with no exceptions, they hit their children, yeah, they beat them to regulate their behaviour. Yeah, as you know, that's considered acceptable in our society, if you are a child, I have to beat you so you can learn! Some parents are also quick to anger, I mean can't control their anger over children's mistakes. This anger really prevents parents from thinking about the consequences of such violence on children...*

Here Sameer claimed that the amount of physical abuse inflicted on children is a result of their inferior position in the class structure, with parents taking out their frustrations on children. This finding resonates with the notion that the impact of class poverty on children's lives could be measured and understood as a relational process that determines child-parent relations, which is clearly apparent in child abuse. Conversely, Moneer claimed that child abuse is used and often occurs because children are powerless, because of their age, and is a culturally acceptable method of disciplining and regulating the behaviour of children. It could, therefore, be argued that child abuse in Jordan reflects the unequal power in child-adult relationships in social structures. Overall, the

structural and cultural meanings attached to child abuse would appear to represent a departure from contemporary childhood research, which has advocated children's rights of protection and care. Moneer also noted that parents also engage in physically abusive behaviour because they are unable to appropriately control and express anger.

Concerning the connection between child abuse and youth crime, the participants noted three different explanations of why abused children have the potential to engage in criminal acts. First, children who are physically abused have a tendency to solve their interpersonal problems with violence, as they have been taught it is a normal way of dealing with others. This is reflected in the following statement from Sami:

Sami (INT): When parents beat their children ... the parents have raised their children to think that beating people is a right and normal behaviour...yeah, many children copy the same violence they receive from their parents in their own problems with others. That leads to violent crimes.

Second, child abuse generates negative emotions in children; either by developing children's anger, since they do not feel loved and cared for by their parents, or by weakening children's affectionate bond with their parents, since they feel hatred towards their abusive parents. Either way, these negative emotions have a connection with youth crime:

*Marwan (INT):* abused children often feel angry because they do not expect to receive beatings from the closest persons to them [parents]. Actually, such children feel they are hated by their parents ...their feelings of anger lead them to be aggressive and thus commit

a variety of violent crimes...

*Ahmad (INT):* look, we are all the same, when we love our parents then we will care about not doing any bad things that upset them. I mean abused children particularly, who are generally frequently abused, do not love their parents, and this makes them behave without restrictions; what I mean is to commit crimes, because they consider their parents' reaction or feelings about their bad behaviour unimportant, so they are not dissuaded from committing criminal acts.

Both Marwan and Ahmad described how the negative emotion of anger and the lack of an affectionate bond with parents, generated by physical abuse, leads to youth crime. For Marwan, child abuse develops children's anger and aggression, caused by their feelings of not being loved or cared for by their parents, which in turn lead them to commit crimes of violence. For Ahmad, child abuse weakens the intimacy between children and parents, leading to a decrease in children's self-control, in turn causing them to engage in criminal acts.

Third, other participants claimed the link between physical abuse of children and youth crime is that children resist abuse by running out of the home onto the streets, and then behave without any constraints or supervision, which often leads to offending:

*Rami (INT):* Some children, in response to being hit ... they escape from the house for many hours. What do these families expect from a child who is abused and hangs out in the street as a result? Of course he will come back having committed offences ... you know, he is not supervised outside the home ... that leads to crime; for example, some of those children commit shoplifting crimes and then sell what they have stolen so that they can survive.

According to the assertions above, the causal relationships between child physical abuse and youth crime echo recent studies. These studies suggest

that abused children experience weakened ties with their parents and thus low self-control. They are exposed to deviant violent behaviour and anger, and they escape violence by roaming the streets unsupervised, all of which leads to offending behaviour. Furthermore, recalling that child abuse has cultural and structural meanings, the assertions articulated above by Marwan, Ahmad and Rami about the link between physical abuse of children and youth crime concur with the notion that children attempt to resist such constraints through involvement in criminal acts.

### **The Absence of Religious Beliefs: ‘Not having a conscience’**

The religious preachers in all three institutions suggest that youth crime is a consequence of the lack or absence of religious morality and a conscience, and this causes low self-control in children. The following extract explicitly illustrates this point:

*Majid (INT):* ... children may need money, or have sexual desires ... but with all of these desires ... I don't think that they are the direct reasons for crime. ... Actually, it's about the lack of religious morality and lack of conscience in children, yeah, a weak religious understanding and sense of right and wrong behaviours. ... Children want to commit crime and actually have chosen to ... they are only interested in receiving the benefits and do not care about others, because they do 'not have a conscience'. It is the duty of parents to teach children the religious teachings of what is wrong and what is right, and families actually fail to do this.

Majid acknowledged that children may be surrounded by different problems in their lives, and he gave the examples of “poverty” and “sexual desires”. However, he assumed that these conditions have no direct impact on crime, instead suggesting children choose to break the law, and make a conscious decision to obtain the benefits of their crimes, and that those children had no respect for people. The connection articulated here by Majid between the lack

of religious self-control in children and youth crime was echoed by recent religious studies (Al-Qthah, 1997; Kensawi, 2001), which have primarily explained youth crime as a result of children's inability to conform to the religious teachings of behaviour because of an absence of Islamic beliefs to guide children's behaviour. Majid rooted this in the failure of parents to perform their roles of socialising children according to social, cultural and Islamic beliefs and conscience. Again, this challenges the traditional notion of childhood, in which families are assumed to socialise their children according to societal normative behaviours.

Youth crime is also seen by all the participating religious preachers as a consequence of a lack of religious self-control in children, in part due to their handling of issues of conflict with victims. Children who chose to break the law were observed to be taking revenge against other people as a result of personal conflicts. Crime occurs because of individual children not acknowledging the state law as a religious method for resolving problems between conflicting parties; this is associated with a lack of religious spirit of tolerance in the individual child:

Ahmad (INT): ...the problem is that children are now being raised without the Islamic teaching of tolerance, ... tolerance of other people's faults ... not only are those children not tolerant, but also they use their own hands to fight for their rights as victims rather than accept the arm of the law to achieve it. This form of revenge is widely spread here and actually causes violent crimes ... Honestly, many families nowadays educate their children by saying 'who hit you, hit him' and teaching children that this way of dealing with others makes them strong and able to defend themselves. These families, in their rearing of children, really confirm and reinforce in children violence towards others [sad] ... actually those children were not religiously empowered to be tolerant or at least respect the state

laws regarding retribution. Yeah, weak religious beliefs in children finally lead them to crime because they don't know how to deal with their personal problems morally.

Ahmad's assertions highlighted that youth crime is caused by low religious self-control in children, which in turn is caused by the widespread deviant value system of revenge, in which many families teach children aggressive behaviour by encouraging them to respond violently to others' violence. This deviant value system of revenge, as Ahmad explicitly indicated, is reinforced in children by families during the socialisation process. This finding resonates with recent religious studies (Al-Majali, 2002; Al-Qthah, 2000), and also would appear to represent a departure from traditional notions of childhood, which have stressed the role of families in socialising children according to social, cultural and religious rules of behaviour.

## **Children and Class Structure**

### ***Child Truancy: 'It is caused by child labour'***

The participating social workers all suggested that school truancy was connected with the impact of poverty, which forces children to skip school, driven by the need to work in order to financially help their families. In understanding what causes child poverty, some participants indicated that poverty is related to large families and a father's unemployment, disability or lack of income, while others related it to fathers' neglect or refusal to financially support their children after divorce:

Jamal (INT): Well, many of those children had six, eight and sometimes ten other sisters and brothers, plus the father and mother ... the father does not have a job, has a disability or receives a very

low salary ..., you know, these factors push parents into not sending their children to school because they cannot cover the school costs; such parents actually push their children to work to help them with life expenses ... there are many children, you can certainly see them, selling gum, newspapers, blah, blah, blah at traffic signals.

Mouhsen (INT): Yeah, it's a problem in single-mother families where children suffer from severe poverty ... I mean, the father either completely ignores his duty of funding his children, or he supports them with a small amount, you know ... not enough even for food to eat, so what about educational costs? The children then have to go to work in the streets or ask people for help...certainly 'child truancy is caused by child labour'.

Jamal and Mouhsen's assertions draw attention to the fact that poverty has influenced children's lives in their relation with their schooling, given the absence of school from their lives and their presence in the street for work or begging. In their understanding of the causal relationship between school truancy and youth crime, the participants suggested the following connections:

*Adel (INT):* ...children who are not attached to schools commit different crimes ... you know, schools discipline, regulate and control children's use of time since they are sat in school for many hours every day, I mean that children who are attached to school spend their time in school activities ... this is absent from the life of unschooled children and as such gives them time to engage in crime... yeah, with the absence of school supervision, you know, offending behaviour is to be expected.

*Sameer (INT):* Well, poverty of course can lead children to be in the street, but I don't mean poverty leads to stealing, but where is the child? ...the child is really there, he is in the wrong place at the wrong time, he's in unwelcome situations of... and of ...of course children working in the street are led to engage in crime because they are unsupervised by adults, yeah, they are not at home or at school.

Adel's assertions indicated that children who are not engaged in educational settings have free time and energy for involvement in criminal activity. In contrast, Sameer claimed that child labourers are neither at home nor at school

but rather on the streets, places that often lead to engaging in deviant behaviour as a result of a lack of adult supervision. However, these findings challenge the other participants' views in this study. The participants who function as social supervisors all indicated that youth crime is a direct consequence of poverty, where children feel that stealing is an appropriate way to achieve their aspirations since they have limited opportunities to meet them through legitimate means. The following statement by Ali illustrates this point:

*Ali (INT):* Well, as children have no earning or funding opportunities and have limited resources from their parents or other adult family members, they certainly find that stealing is their only solution to meet their needs for ... and for ... [laughs], they are really victims of their own inability to live at a standard that society expects...

Ali's comment concurred with the contemporary notion of understanding children as capable of social action, since they have proved their agency to resist the class constraints of poverty through involvement in criminal acts. The participants go on to describe whether lower-class children commit theft crimes as individuals or as whole groups. Four of the participants commented that stealing was committed by children in groups, acting together as they suffer from the class frustration of poverty. Only two participants noted that property theft was committed by children as individuals:

*Maher (INT):* Noticeably, many crimes such as car theft, shoplifting, etc. were committed by children who needed money. Those children are really professional in the way they manage and plan their stealing, and then shared the spoils of ... yeah, sharing the benefits [laughs].

*Salim (INT):* ...children are really able to successfully complete individual crimes of stealing.

It was apparent that Maher's endorsements also resonated with some studies (Al-Housini et al., 1999; Tarawneh et al., 2001) which have mainly perceived youth crime as the behaviour of working-class children, since they find stealing is a solution for them to collectively achieve their material goals.

### ***Child Truancy as a Negative School Experience***

While the participating social workers and social supervisors noted the impact of class structure on children as a financial handicap, the participating educational supervisors noted that the class structure directly influenced children's school experiences in two different ways. First, the majority of participants suggested that most lower-class children fail to achieve academic success. This failure has been mainly explained by the lower-class families' negligence in educating their children the requirements of educational success during the socialisation process. The following statements by Salem and Tamer illustrate all these points:

*Salem (INT):* ...children from poor families actually have difficulties in reading ...in expressing themselves verbally because of an inability to use the vocabulary needed to fully express their thoughts, also ... they omit words when writing ... they quickly become tired out when writing, poor children with these difficulties actually failed in achieving the school standard of success...

*Tamer (INT):* While other children have very good literacy skills, they suffer from poor educational performance; noticeably, children from low-income families don't do all the exams or their homework or participate in class, yeah, those children have no ability to succeed in schooling and they have failed in education.

*I:* Well, but why are those children unable to succeed in schooling?

*Tamer (INT):* Honestly, their failure is only a product of their families' failure in teaching them how to succeed in school, such as teaching them to respect the importance of doing their homework, focus their thoughts on classroom activities and not make noise in class, listen

carefully to what the teachers say and follow their instruction during the learning process, participate in classroom activities and engage in the given lessons...yeah children from poor families, especially families where the father or mother is missing due to divorce are not taught these skills .

Here, Tamer asserted that children with low educational achievement are characterised as lacking intellectual and behavioural abilities within a school setting, due to their deficient socialisation, leading them to fail academically. It also seems that Tamer clearly recognised that those children were from lower-class families, particularly fragmented families. This suggests that low-class structure and changes to the family structure were behind the low educational attainment and thus the failure to succeed in school.

The second impact of class structure on children's school experiences was seen by three participants as a relational process which negatively determined child-teacher relations. More specifically, these participants claimed that children from lower-class families experienced exaggerated control by their teachers in terms of their time at school—particularly in extracurricular activities.

*Yaser (INT):* In fact, children from low-income families are overly controlled by their teachers at school, particularly in areas such as playgrounds, sports area, drawing, blah, blah, blah ..., this is because teachers often expect that poor children cause a variety of problems if they are given freedom... while children from rich and middle-class families are always given freedom to enjoy their time, they are always trusted by their teachers!

These comments explicitly indicate that children experience their childhood within the school setting differently—particularly in terms of expressing their autonomy—depending on their social status. Yaser demonstrated that such differences rest on the teachers' assumptions that if children from lower-class

families are given freedom, problems will arise. In contrast, children from upper- and middle-class families are trusted and therefore can freely express themselves. While the participants measured the impact of being from a lower-class family on children's school experiences differently, they were all in agreement that children who failed to achieve academic success and children with restricted opportunities to express themselves in school suffer from class frustration, and collectively use truancy as a way to resist teachers' authority and react to their academic failure:

*Salem (INT):* ...children who fail academically actually feel that they will never be able to pursue their school education like other students in class, particularly students from non-poor and non-divorced families ... this annoyance at failing pushes them to eventually decide to leave school from a very young age... I often see those children together jump and escape over the school fence [laughter].

*Rami (INT):* I think that children not only leave school because of their inability to succeed, but also their families and the school participate in their truancy. I mean, those poor and broken families don't cooperate with the schools, and although they know about their children's low achievement ... they ignore it. The teachers always punish the children by saying 'Are you a donkey?'... 'what a stupid child you are'... also they cane the child on the hands or let the child stand up for the whole lesson next to the rubbish basket ... then they also start to punish them by hitting them. Yeah, the family's ignorance of their child's educational situation, along with the punishments given out by the teacher, push the child to run away from school!

Rami's comments suggested that child truancy happens not only because of low educational achievement but also because of the different negative policies that both families and teachers use in handling such poor educational performance. Rami also claimed that children's poor educational performance, along with their family's negligence in handling them, and the emotional and physical abuse they face from their teachers in response to their low

achievements, motivated them to drop out of school. It would appear that although these findings resonate with research studies (Sarrawi et al., 1999; Al-Khatib, 2002), they challenge other views (AIRa'I, 1999) and findings in this study, which have primarily identified truancy as caused by children's trying to overcome the class constraint of poverty by the need to work.

The educational supervisors noted that the absence of education in a child's life can lead to youth crime. The majority of participants suggested this was a result of the absence of normative beliefs in children that an education provides; had they been present, they would have guided the children in how to behave properly. The participants clearly stated that conforming behaviour is instilled when children are educated in a range of different educational materials, helping them to distinguish between right and wrong:

*Nader (INT):* As you know, school provides not only education for children but also aims to rear children in line with societal norms of behaving. You know, school provides a variety of subjects which guide children to behave according to society's norms, which in turn form their normative behaviour; thus, children who are not in school have been prevented from learning how to behave appropriately. Those children then behave without guidance, and this of course leads them to misbehave and commit a variety of crimes.

## **Children, Media Materials and Peer Groups**

The participating child behaviour monitors all suggested that youth crime, in particular rape and violent crime, is learned, through children mimicking sexual and aggressive behaviour seen in the media, or through association with friends who display these behaviours:

*Zahi (INT):* ...those children really copy the sexual scenes they see on the Internet, these programmes stir up a sexual desire in them ... they also learned to be violent by watching aggressive scenes on the T.V, you know. They also learned this behaviour through contact with unrespectable children, unruly children ... criminal children, yeah, violence and rape are also learned through association with children who have lived with and experienced these crimes.

The issue of children mimicking sexual and aggressive scenes they have seen in the media is explained by the participants as a result of parental failure to help their children cope with such experiences and empower them to make decisions on their own behalf. Similarly, as children also learn to commit violent crimes through their association with criminals, the participants also referred to the parents' responsibility and their failure to empower their children to choose 'good' friends, according to cultural understandings of 'good'. These families relied only on controlling the amount of time their children spent with their peers, but not controlling who their peers actually were. The following extracts illustrate all of these points:

*Salah (INT):* ...instead of telling children 'don't watch this' ... 'don't watch that channel', I mean sexually explicit scenes, parents should answer the children's question of "why not?" This unexplained control really just creates a curiosity in them and pushes them to watch sexual material, you know, this material is available everywhere ... it would be a better and more effective method if ... I mean, teach them that society and culture actually reject and shame such sexually explicit material, and it shouldn't be viewed by children or adults ... With regards to violent material ... it is difficult to control children's access to it... as we ourselves like to watch violent stuff, but the problem is that parents don't explain to their children how to cope with this, understanding it's just for fun, fiction and not reality.

*Nezar (INT):* The children here are really the victims of their parents failure to help them choose good, culturally acceptable friends, ... their parents only focus on what time the child should come home after playing with his friends ... but aren't interested in who their children are actually playing with ... the children here really didn't know how to choose good friends!

Here, Saleh clearly indicated that children are prepared to reject parental control over their access to sexually explicit materials, particularly when the rationale for such restriction is not explained to them. Saleh also argued that the absence of the cultural values of shame in children, combined with parents' failure to empower their children with the ability to distinguish between fiction and reality in regards to violent material, together have a direct impact on a child's ability to cope with sexual and violent material. These findings demonstrate that preventing children from committing criminal acts does not simply happen through parental monitoring of the amount of time their children spend with their peers or what they do. Instead, it happens through teaching children how to choose good peers, and instilling in them the normative and cultural principles of behaviour.

Three participating child behaviour monitors in the three institutions note that the media also has an impact on youth crime:

Saher (INT): Yeah, those children are victims of people's refusal to deal with them ... a child's path in school, the labour market, in their relations with people around and even in their families are blocked. I mean everyone refuses to deal with them as normal children, they always get defined as 'little devils', 'dangerous' and 'criminals'. You certainly know that these are media words! Children hold onto such negative concepts and will therefore often repeat crimes time and again ... actually they are just poor children and children from fragmented families! The majority of children really only start by committing minor offences, but when given these new criminal identities, they became professional criminals, not only committing minor crimes but also violent crimes...

The link described here by Saher between media demonisation of children and

youth crime resonates with research studies (Al-Rashidi, 2004; Bandari, 2000; Al-Rashidi, 1999). Children re-offend because they are labelled as little devils, dangerous and as criminals by the media, and such portrayals cause people to refuse to deal with them as normal children in their everyday lives; this is particularly true of working-class children and children from 'broken' families. This stigmatises children's identity, and accordingly they choose to act and reoffend in line with their new label and identity.

## **Summary**

This chapter explores the different ways that RCIs in Jordan see the causes of youth crime, highlighting it as children's active interaction with micro and macro social structures. RCIs' understandings of youth crime appear to be contentious and overlapping issues. It was apparent that many ineffective child-rearing methods influence youth crime. It is suggested that poor parental supervision and children's weak religious morality and beliefs, due to deficient socialisation, create low self-control in children, which in turn leads them to engage in criminal acts. Child neglect is attributed to working mothers (child home alone), single mother families (the absence of paternal supervision), step-parent families (step-parents' refusal to supervise), and the social and cultural construction of male children's ability to exercise unsupervised autonomy.

It has been also suggested that youth crime, particularly crimes of violence, is due to low self-control in children, which is caused by a widespread deviant system of revenge, in which many families socialise children to respond to violence with violence. However, families also indirectly influence children's tendency to solve interpersonal problems with aggression, as abused children

learn to imitate abusive methods as an acceptable means of achieving goals; this leads to violent crimes. Also, it is claimed that child abuse weakens child-parent relations, which creates low self-control in children, leading them to act out and commit crimes. It was also apparent that abused children had the agency to resist parental abuse by committing crimes caused by their anger and frustration, or by escaping from home for long hours and then acting independently, away from adult supervision, and thus committing crimes.

Furthermore, youth crime is seen as children's way of resisting the class constraint of poverty in several ways. First, poor children suffer from goal blockage in achieving their material needs; therefore, they more likely to achieve them through illegitimate means. Second, poor children truant either because they need to work in the street, or because they are frustrated with their academic failure. The participants noted that school truancy influenced youth crime in several ways. First, truant children are prevented from learning the normative behaviours provided through different school subjects, and also behave independently and spend time in the street, where they work. These two factors are claimed to influence youth crime. Second, truant children are more likely to offend, as they have free time and energy to engage in criminal acts. Third, truant children express their frustration with their academic failure through crime.

Youth crime is also seen as a learnt behaviour, as children mimic the explicit sexual and aggressive behaviour they see in the media or among peers. A child's choice to reject parental control and watch sexually explicit material was

associated with the absence of the cultural value of self-control. A child's choice to watch violent programmes was considered a result of the parents failing to empower their children to distinguish between fiction and reality, which led to children copying the aggressive behaviour they saw. The participants suggested that children chose friends with criminal backgrounds because their parents did not help them to choose friends with good characters, in line with accepted cultural teaching. Youth crime is also related to the media's ability to demonise children who commit a first offence, particularly working-class children and children from broken families, pushing the child to reoffend, in line with this new deviant identity.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **The Objectives of Residential Care Institutions in Responding to Youth Crime**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter explores the methods used by the Residential Care Institutions (RCIs) in Jordan as they attempt to reduce offending by convicted children. There is a noticeable lack of research specifically addressing the institutions' specific rehabilitation aims from the perspectives of the institutional staff. Studies addressing RCIs' programmes have instead tended to focus on assessing the rehabilitative programmes in general by examining the link between the existing programmes and actual practices, utilising observational methods (Al-Qasim, 1995; Hassa, 1998).

However, the Ministry of Social Development (MOSD) has established a number of rehabilitative programmes for children who offend, including a family-guidance programme, a poverty-reduction programme and a child-centered programme (Manasreh, 1999). Accordingly, policy literature has highlighted the general objectives of these programmes, arguing that they must be employed and developed by residential staff to reduce children's opportunities to reoffend. A family guidance programme aims to improve parents' knowledge of and belief in effective parenting skills and child-rearing methods (NCHR, 2007), and promote positive parent-parent relations (MOSD, 2008). A poverty-reduction programme aims to help children from non-income families by enrolling them in a vocational training centre where they can learn skills to support themselves

after their release. Children from low-income families are also supported through providing the responsible adult with monthly financial support from the National Aid Fund, which keeps the child out of the labour market and able to focus on education (MOSD, 2007).

The child-centered programme includes the Educational Programme (EP) and the Cognitive Behavioural Modification Programme (CBMP). The Educational Programme aims to involve all children in daily educational classes, either in the institutional setting (literacy and cultural strengthening classes) or in public schools, according to each child's educational background. The Cognitive Behavioural Modification Programme aims to enhance children's socialisation and conscience by modifying their thinking patterns according to social, religious and cultural beliefs, enabling them to make more responsible decisions (MOSD, 2005). To a large extent, these programmes tend to focus on re-socialising children according to the dominant normative and cultural system of behaviour.

This chapter begins by first exploring the specific aims of each institutional programme; attention is also given to whether these aims are in line with traditional socialisation theory or contemporary perceptions of childhood (minority group approach). This chapter also explores the question of 'What approaches are presently in place to meet the institutions' aims?' The institutional techniques for realising the aims within each programme are then examined from the experiences of the residential staff undertaking this task.

## The Family Guidance Programme

### Encourage Parental Supervision

The social workers all aimed to urge families to control their child's behaviour inside and outside the home, offering this as one solution for youth crime. As discussed in Chapter Six, this aim was a response to the lack of parental control over children's behaviour in working-mother, step- and single-mother families, and to the gender identity of 'boys', which provides them with relative freedom of mobility to construct their own lives:

*Marwan (INT):* to stop child offending we actually suggest to working mothers and their husbands to let their children, after the school day, go and stay with one of their grandparents or with other adult relatives ... yeah, that's to keep the child's behaviour under adult control since mothers are not home...

*Rasheed (INT):* ... my aim is to influence step-parents to start to control their children's behaviour and consider them as their actual children ... yeah, taking the role of a father or mother to control their behaviour wherever and whenever. As other children are only living with their mothers, I also aim to reactivate the father's role in controlling and follow up their children's behaviour at specific times and spaces.

*Mohammad (INT):* ... I really advise those families not to allow their children just to do whatever they want, or to just go wherever they want only because they are boys. Parents should know that children's behaviour should be supervised and that parents should act and think on their behalf ... that's what I aim to achieve ...

The participants' views suggest that encouraging adequate parental supervision increases children's levels of self-control and thus behavior, in anticipation of the consequences of 'misbehaving', such as parental punishment. The following extract confirms such understanding more explicitly:

*Ma'en (INT):* ... you know, parental supervision makes a child behave properly, yeah, and control himself from making any mistakes because he knows that his behaviour is observed; thus, he

will not misbehave to avoid punishment from his parents.

It is noteworthy that the institutional aim of reducing children's opportunities to reoffend by encouraging parental supervision over their children's activities is consistent with the participants' explanations, noted in Chapter Six, that poor parental supervision is connected to youth crime. Further, the above extracts illustrate that children are clearly seen as incompetent members of society that must be shaped and guided by adults in order to become fully functioning members.

To promote parental supervision over children's behaviour, the participating social workers use different techniques, according to the family structure:

*Faris (INT):* ...you know, when anyone of us sees a child behaving as he wants ... in his own way ... we ask ourselves who the parents are, yeah, those parents of course lost their authority over their children ... as you know, that means here parental failure, and leads to a poor reputation ... that is a big disgrace ... yeah, this is the best way to work with fatherless and working-mother families.

*Marwan (INT):* To encourage a step-parent to engage in parenting, I say ... 'this child is very weak and it really breaks our hearts ... and... do you think that we should let him also lose his future! ... *It* is not enough that he misses his right to live with both parents! ... does it mean he should be left damaged for his whole life, as he lives without control and supervision... please take care of him... his life really is in your hands, as he really is the victim of his parents' mistakes...

As the above extracts illustrate, there is a cultural view that it is shameful for parents to fail in their responsibility to control their children's behaviour. Therefore, the social workers use the approach of 'highlighting the cultural shame' of the parents' inability to use their authority to control their children's behaviour. The participants widely use this technique to shame parents from

fatherless and working-mother families. On the other hand, to encourage step-parents to control their step-children's behaviour, the participants use a method of encouraging sympathetic feelings towards a step-child.

### **Resolving Child Physical Abuse: "Save Children from Abuse"**

The participating social workers all aim to resolve child physical abuse through two interventional aims with families. First, some participants aim to instil parental awareness of the ineffectiveness of physical abuse in rearing children by highlighting its negative consequences on the child's personality and offending behaviour. They also aim to urge families to use effective disciplinary methods such as dialogue, persuasion and setting meaningful rewards (e.g. agreeing to trips), and non-physical punishment (e.g. denying trips):

*Sameer (INT):* We actually work to save children from abuse, yeah, from the cultural acceptance of it... we educate parents to use dialogue and persuasion and also sign a contract with their children, so that if they behave in a positive way they will gain something desirable to them, such as going on a trip, but if they behave negatively then they will not go on the trip etc... these are really effective ways to discipline children, which of course helps reduce the risk that parents will use physical abuse again ...

Second, other participants aim to educate impulsive parents about anger management techniques useful in responding to children's negative behaviour. The goals of anger management include reducing stress levels during challenging parenting situations, and reducing the probability that parents will have uncontrolled emotional reactions:

*Kareem (INT):* Children really need protection from abuse... so we aim to help parents to remain calm and control their anger towards children's mistakes. We teach them the proper methods for managing their anger ... by helping parents reduce the growing levels of tension when they find themselves facing stressful situations due to their children's negative behaviour, and also to reduce the likelihood of an uncontrolled emotional response towards their

children's behaviour.

Sameer and Kareem's aims in tackling child physical abuse are consistent with the findings from the current study, where the participants have cited the cultural acceptance of physical child abuse as a method of disciplining and regulating the behaviour of children, and parental anger towards children's negative behaviour, as causes of child abuse. Further, the institutional aims in treating child physical abuse are also consistent with contemporary understandings of childhood, which acknowledge children's right to protection from harm. Kareem encapsulates this point when he asserts that "children really need protection from abuse". Such positioning challenges traditional views of children, where the notion of child protection is not considered or addressed. The participants explicitly indicate that the institutional aims in addressing physical abuse of children also seek to develop child-parent emotional attachment, which in turn minimise children's opportunities to reoffend:

*Rami (INT):* Well, if families adhere to our aims of managing their anger and using our advice of effective discipline, ultimately our children will not be abused, and thus their emotional relations with parents will be strong and they will not reoffend.

In delivering the aims of educating parents about effective discipline and anger management methods in response to children's misbehaviour, the participants teach parental training skills and use guidance videos:

*Maher (INT):* We use films ... showing a child displaying negative behaviours ... and then how parents can positively control their anger through listening to music, watching TV, doing exercise ... yeah, it's about relaxation. The films train them to recognise when they are angry before they lose control of their emotions, helping them to think in positive ways and remain cool.

*Nader (INT):* Yeah, these videos train parents to use methods of dialogue and persuasion to help children identify their wrong

behaviour ... these also demonstrate the use of rewards with children when they display correct behaviours ... these rewards are preferred by children themselves ... the scenes at the end of the videos deliver a message to parents on how children can conform to required behaviour without the need to use abusive methods.

It is clear that the approach of providing training and skills to parents gives them plenty of opportunities to observe other parenting techniques for treating children's misbehaviour. These techniques can be used to manage their anger, by training parents in the use of relaxation methods, helping them identify when they are angry before their emotions get out of control and helping them stay calm.

### **Poverty-Reduction Programme**

As discussed in Chapter Six, the participating social workers claimed that child poverty led to child truancy and labour, while the participating social supervisors claimed that poverty led children to steal. While these participants were not in agreement on how poverty influences children's lives and thus youth crime, the social workers offered three interventional aims to reduce child poverty. First, some participants aim to help children from low-income families learn a vocation, which facilitates their ability to engage in the labour market after their release from the institution. In delivering this service, the social workers make registration arrangements for those children with the manager at the vocational training centre and then arrange for the children to be accompanied to the centre:

*Ramiz (INT):* ... where the father or the responsible adult has a low income ... we then aim to empower children with a vocation ... then they can find work when they return into society. Yeah, children can actually work and study at the same time ... we contact the manager at the vocational training centre to inform him about a child's

economic situation...once gaining the approval to be registered ... we as social workers give the list of children's names to the social supervisors, you know, to prepare them and accompany them to the centre...

Second, other participants aim to encourage absent fathers in single-mother families to fulfil their responsibility to meet all the material needs of their children. To put pressure on fathers to take on this role, the social workers apply the technique of cultural shame against fathers who ignore their financial responsibility towards their children. The following statements from Khaled and Faris illustrate these points:

*Khaled (INT):* Yeah, those fathers should not stop their financial support towards their children ... does divorce mean a father can ignore his responsibility to support his children [sadly laughs], this is the message what we all aim to deliver to those ... fathers!

*Faris (INT):* I told such fathers, what do you want people to say about you ... leaving your child to search for others to support him instead of you ... leaving your child to work and beg while his father is still alive ... don't you want to be respected by your child and society as you take responsibility to support him? You know, fathers' ignorance of this is really shameful in Jordan...

Third, other participants pointed out the need to support families with a state monthly salary – particularly non-income families and families in which children are physically abused due to parental strain of poverty that might lead to parents taking out their frustrations on children. In delivering this aim, the social workers contact the National Aid Fund and inform the manager of the family's economic situation, and provide a letter recommending that therefore the National Aid Fund should provide them with appropriate funding support:

*Magdi (INT):* ... for children from non-income families whose fathers don't have work or have some sort of disability, a state monthly allowance is given to these families ... This is also provided to abused children to avoid them receiving a beating from their parents.

In doing so, we inform the manager there about the family's circumstances and the child's condition ... we also include a letter requesting an appropriate level of funding.

Obviously, all the above endorsements present two opposing perspectives regarding the position of children in relation to their career development. By teaching children careers, Ramiz assumed that children can actively participate in profitable employment and improve their economic circumstances. However, Khaled indicated that children should depend on their fathers to meet their material needs, and Magdi discussed offering state funding for children abused due to parental frustration of poverty, and children from non-income families. This alludes to the thinking that children are defined in relation to social dependence and economic irresponsibility. Those children have been prevented from learning a career and hence becoming part of the solution to poverty, although these services exist within the institutions' plan for reducing poverty. However, these institutional aims of reducing child poverty seek to meet children's material needs, in turn preventing children from offending:

*Magdi (INT):* ... our methods of poverty reduction actually aim to prevent crime through stopping children from working in the street or begging, and instead remaining in school and being supervised.

*Maher (INT):* When children learn a career, then they can work after returning to their home; this of course will help them quit stealing [laughs].

*Ahmad (INT):* ... these ways of resolving poverty avoid physical punishment from parents and protect children from the stressful situation of violence. If there is no source of anger and aggression, then children will not commit crimes...

These assertions indicate that the institutional methods of combating poverty aim to keep children involved in educational settings, remove the negative

emotional impacts of physical abuse on children and help children achieve their material needs through legitimate means, which all serve to prevent children from reoffending. These aims highlight the views of workers that an inability to meet material needs, child truancy and labour and child abuse were all seen as factors associated with child poverty and thus youth crime.

### *How are Poor Children Empowered in Practice to Learn a Vocation?*

To help children acquire a career, the participants who function as social supervisors across the three institutions aim to provide children with the opportunity to learn a career according to their interests:

*Mousa (INT):* To support children learning a profession, we provide different career options, such as sewing and carpentry...and children then choose which one, or perhaps two, of these they are interested in learning.

It seems that this aim not only acknowledges children's ability to participate in economic production but also recognises children's right to express their interests regarding which career they would like to learn. In helping children acquire a career, the social supervisors provide children with three services.

First:

*Maher (INT):* I accompany them three times weekly to the vocational training centre ... the children should receive training for a minimum of six months and maximum of one year; after this they will be given a certificate proving their ability to do the learned career; this of course is important for the employers ...

Second, they attempt to 'remove obstacles to learning a career' by giving extended hours of training or career options in co-operation with the profession trainer:

*Mousa (INT):* ... some children have difficulty in grasping the required skill for a career; therefore, I advise the trainer to give the child more time, or, if the child prefers, to let them choose another profession...

Third, the participants also allow the children to sell their own work in a public market, an approach that encourages the children to feel that their learning is providing some financial benefit, which encourages them to keep working in their particular profession after their release from the institution:

*Maher (INT):* During the period of intense training, and afterwards ... we sell the children's productions in the public market. You know, this gives them the exciting feeling that they are starting to receive benefits from their work.

## **The Educational Programme**

### **The Literacy and Cultural Strengthening Programmes**

#### **Keeping Children in School: 'Working with Children'**

The educational supervisors for literacy (LSs) and cultural strengthening (CSSs) classes across the three institutions all aim to develop children's educational achievements and thus school attachment. In doing so, the literacy supervisors work to help children overcome their literacy difficulties, both in reading and writing, and to make literacy progress. The cultural strengthening supervisors work to help children with good literacy skills reduce the educational gap that developed due to their truancy:

*Saher (INT):* ... I aim to develop children's understanding of a teacher's oral instructions about how to read, and their ability to spell words correctly, understand the meaning of the reading texts and grasp all the vocabulary needed to creatively express their ideas ... I also aim to help them write correctly and clearly. I also aim to help them to build sentences in a structured way, you know, grammatical constructions that make sense ... they also need to know how to plan to write small essays and then review their writing by themselves ... I do this to help children make progress, to encourage

them to continue their education in cultural strengthening classes to learn a variety of subjects ...

*Ali (INT):* ... as children with good literacy skills left school a long time ago ... therefore I aim to help them compensate for what school subjects they missed, and help them continue their education like other children in school ...

As Saher indicated, activities to develop reading skills include improving children's understanding of the teachers' verbal instructions for reading, spelling words, recognition of vocabulary and reading comprehension skills. Activities to develop writing skills include developing proper and clear handwriting skills, sentence structure, and planning and revising writing. Developing children's literacy skills aims to prepare children to continue their education in cultural strengthening classes. In helping children develop their educational achievements in literacy and cultural strengthening classes, both kinds of educational supervisors use a range of techniques. First, all children are required to daily attend literacy and cultural strengthening classes, with each class lasting one hour. The literacy supervisors all work to develop children's literacy skills by enabling children to choose learning topics according to their interests. In contrast, the educational supervisors for cultural strengthening classes across the three institutions use the curriculum set by the Ministry of Education to help children close the achievement gap that occurred due to their truancy:

*Maher (INT):* Well, to develop children's literacy, I give children daily literacy class for one-hour periods. I always select the teaching materials on the topics of children's interests, yeah, I involve students in selecting materials for the classroom activities to encourage them to learn and make them interested to engage during the learning process...

*Ali (INT):* Those children should attend cultural strengthening classes

for one hour every day ... I follow the curriculum determined by the Ministry of Education Truancy Reduction Policy Department. The curriculum is divided into six subjects, such as history, science, social sciences, etc ... I use the planning guide set for each subject and what the child should understand at the end of the course in each subject. All the materials are easy to understand and are pitched at the correct level for truant children.

The above excerpts highlight children's position within educational settings. By giving children the opportunity to express their own interests about learning topics, children are seen as political social actors and agents in constructing their education. However, this understanding was not reflected in the second response, where children who participate in cultural strengthening classes have to depend on the school curriculum in order to improve their educational competency.

Second, the educational supervisors use the approaches of praise and encouragement to build children's confidence in their capabilities and establish a 'can do' attitude:

*Abdullah (INT):* To remove children's sense of 'I can't do it', I try to help them to be confident ... when the child doesn't perform the given task properly, then I show admiration for his work and start to say what a beautiful job you have done ... what you've done is fine, but I suggest you do this. ... This approach encourages them to develop in what they are able to do.

Third, the educational supervisors also work to help children with serious learning difficulties by addressing obstacles that may impede their educational progress through providing children with homework, as well as individual support from the teachers and follow-up supervision:

*Khalid (INT):* ... during the activities some children face problems in understanding particular issues, so I really work to help them

address these difficulties by giving them homework activities while explaining how to achieve them with specific advice. Then, in personal meetings, I continue to monitor their progress in order to continue the tasks successfully and reach the intended level of progress.

Abdullah and Khalid's endorsements implicitly indicate that the educational supervisors not only aim to strengthen children's academic success as a method to encourage children to pursue their education, but also to provide educational care for children with a negative attitude towards their educational ability and with special learning difficulties. This is because children are perceived as a minority group who have their own educational needs which should be addressed, remembering that they are children.

### **Keeping Children in School: 'Working with Families and Schools'**

As discussed in Chapter Six, the educational supervisors claimed that school truancy among lower-class children and its associated impacts upon youth crime were an outcome of children's interaction with a negative social environment within families and school settings. Therefore, the educational supervisors' role also includes working with families and schools in order to help provide them with proper techniques for tackling a child's low educational achievements. The aim of family involvement is to encourage parents to look after their child's educational progress through contact with teachers to tackle their child's low educational achievements as soon as they are noticed. The participants noted that developing a home-school connection would help families identify and address the reasons behind children's poor academic performance:

*Ashraf (INT): ... what I do is encourage lower-class parents to follow*

up their child's educational *progress* by making regular contact with teachers. Such connection will provide parents with the reasons behind their children's low achievements and thus help tackle them ... In doing so, parents have to teach children principles of success, such as making sure they are doing their homework, and teaching them to be polite, participate in class activities and not make noises, etc... this of course will help children to make educational progress and achieve school success, which in turn keeps children in school.

As Ashraf indicated, encouraging parents' early intervention in tackling a child's low educational achievement requires families to teach their children the requirements of school success. This will enhance children's educational achievements and thus maintain school attachment. This institutional aim resonates with the findings from the current study, where the participating educational supervisors referred lower-class children's school failure and truancy to their deficient socialisation in learning the requirements of school success, as well as families' negligence in responding to their low educational achievements. To encourage parents to look after their children's educational progress through contact with teachers, the participants use an approach of stimulating cultural jealousy with working-class families:

*Rami (INT):* I tell parents ... do you want other people's sons to be better than your son? ... Do you like to see them educated and making progress while your son is not doing the *same*?

With regards to school involvement, all the participating educational supervisors aim to provide management teams and teachers in public schools with indirect and direct positive and encouraging methods, instead of abusive methods. The indirect method includes seeking to help develop in children a sense of belonging to a school by involving them in different activities. This method gives

children high visibility in school and maintains their strong school attachment. The direct method includes initiating awards programmes for children, which helps children meet the school standards for educational achievement. The following quotes from Rami and Mousa illustrate these points:

*Rami (INT):* Instead of using abusive methods ... I usually advise teachers to give children the chance to see themselves as helpers in their school ... participating in *managing* different kinds of activities, such as putting posters on walls ... this really helps to keep great attendance in school ... of course this will encourage children to keep their grades high and keep participating in class ... staying within the school standards for good performance ... I try to deliver this message to teachers.

*Mousa (INT):* ... to encourage those kinds of children to develop their level of school performance ... we advise teachers to provide them with bumper stickers and maybe *post* their names on their schools' website ... they can also name the award winners on the school radio in the morning, such methods of course will encourage them to make educational progress.

Obviously, the participants' aim to encourage teachers to use the indirect and direct positive methods that improve children's school performance is consistent with their previous claims that teachers' abusive methods in response to children's low achievement motivated them to drop out of school. To encourage school personnel to use these positive methods, all the participants use a practice of encouraging schools to compete for the status of 'Best School':

*Ali (INT):* I always tell them that encouraging children to develop their educational *achievement* not only benefits the students themselves, but also creates a chance for the school itself to be ranked among other good schools, yeah this is our way to encourage schools ... to keep aiming to enhance children's achievements.

Three participants across the three institutions indicated that keeping children in school also required advising teachers to practice just methods with all children, regardless of their class. They noted that preventing school truancy among working-class children required providing them with the same relative autonomy

within the school setting as that given to children from middle- and upper-class families. In doing so, the participants raise awareness of the impact of unjust practices on child truancy and thus youth crime:

*Hasan (INT):* To keep those children, I mean lower-class children, attending school, I advise teachers to provide them with the same level of autonomy in school as other children, by making the teacher aware of how injustice leads to truancy.

All the participating educational supervisors indicated that the institutional aim of addressing a child's educational achievements through intervention with children, families and schools seeks to keep children in school in order to reduce youth crime. More specifically, they indicated that school attachment helps children to learn normative behaviour which comes through education, which in turn reduces children's opportunities to reoffend:

*Ali (INT):* Children who are attached to school are provided with different educational subjects that teach them the normative behaviours which in turn make them law-abiding people...

This multi-systematic institutional intervention in treating children's negative school experiences is consistent with the findings from the current study, where participants claimed that lower-class children who failed to achieve academic success and those with restricted opportunities to express themselves in school suffer from status frustration, and collectively use truancy as a way to resist teachers' authority and react to their academic failure. Further, the participants widely acknowledge that children's need for education is not limited to children being in school but is also about children's right to developing educational achievements and to receiving a good-quality education. This view lies within the minority group approach, which advocates children's right of care. One of its

applications here is the children's educational care:

*Rami (INT):* ... it is not enough to say that children are in school to learn ... we should also ensure that their educational needs are being met properly and understand each child's special needs ... children really need care in education that should not be violated.

## **The Behavioural Modification Programme**

### **Developing Children's Self-control**

The religious preachers across the three institutions all aim to deter certain behaviour in children, such as stealing, desire for illegal sexual activity<sup>61</sup> and taking revenge on others. They aim to do this by encouraging children to develop religious faith and self-control, since these behaviours are prohibited in Islam:

*Hani (INT):* It was proven that the Prophet Mohammad said "that taking money from others without permission is forbidden in Islam". That's why I was trying to instil in them the religious understanding that taking other people's money is forbidden in Islam; this of course will help to control their tendency to steal ... it will be their own decision to quit committing robbery [laughs].

*Majid (INT):* I aim to encourage them in their religious faith ... sexual relations outside marriage or homosexual relations are banned by Islam. This will help the teenager become an observer of religion for himself ... internal prohibitions will help deter their sexual desires...

*Monther (INT):* ... we aim to instil a spirit of tolerance in children, you know, that's actually the identity of a Muslim ... also, children don't have any other option to resolve their conflicts with people other than the law, you know, revenge is prohibited by God, that's what I also aim to do with children.

Monther's endorsements indicated that treating the deviant cultural system of revenge is not limited to helping children recognise that such behaviour is

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<sup>61</sup> This term refers to sexual desires prohibited by Islam and Jordanian law, which is based on Islamic teaching, such as sex outside marriage or homosexual relationships.

prohibited in Islam. Other key religious methods for handling conflicts with people are to remind them of the Islamic religious value of tolerance for people's mistakes, and encouraging them to resort to the courts to resolve their disputes.

It is noteworthy that the religious programme's aim of developing children's self-control is a response to children's low self-control in handling their desires; the participating religious preachers cited this as the main reason for children's engagement in crime. This view clearly sees children as immature members of society who should be socialised according to religious beliefs. The religious programme represents a determined religious agenda from the state, which assumes that children require religious teaching to handle their desires and develop their self-control, which in turn makes them law-abiding citizens. The following extract demonstrates this point more explicitly:

*Majid (INT):* ... children should only follow and practice the Islamic rules for behaviour ... there is no space for children to set their own boundaries ... Islam is a red line that shouldn't be crossed ... children's adherence to these Islamic values will eventually terminate their criminal acts since self-control has been established...

To help children develop self-control and use their religious faith to handle their desires, the religious preachers use a range of different approaches derived from Al-Qur'an and Al-Sunnah<sup>62</sup> texts:

*Monther (INT):* ... what I do is let the children fear God's anger and his severe punishment if they rob, have illegal sexual relations, or use revenge and harm to resolve their conflicts with others ... many of the texts in the Qur'an explain God's punishment of such

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<sup>62</sup> The narrated practices of the Prophet Mohammad, and what he taught regarding guidance and deeds in the world, which are not mentioned in the Qur'an.

behaviours both in life and after death.

*Majid (INT):* You know, prayer is another way to help ensure individuals' self-control in every aspect of life, yeah, an inner guidance for individuals ... prayer prevents the individual from making mistakes that may provoke God's anger, so I use this policy of encouraging prayer to help children discipline their own behaviours ...

As the excerpts above demonstrate, the participants use the approaches of fear of God's punishment and prayer in developing children's religious self-control in order to handle their desires. Moreover, the participants also use the awareness approach (encouraging children to resort to the courts in order to resolve their disputes with others) and the stimulus policy (encouraging children that people who are tolerant of the mistakes of others will have "high status and receive awards from God"):

*Majid (INT):* I remind children ... you know, what God said in the Qur'an: "God made from retribution, the life and progress of society".<sup>63</sup> That means a state punishment, yeah, punishment as a result of the decisions of the courts.

*Monther (INT):* ... yeah, it is what our Prophet Mohammad said to humans: "be tolerant when you can ... as tolerant people will have a high status and receive an award from God" ... this is the way I encourage children to be tolerant.

### **Lessen Media Influences on Youth Crime**

The child monitors across the three institutions aim to help children conform to social norms and values in order to positively cope with sexually explicit and aggressive media images:

*Saeed (INT):* All of us here tell children that when they see aggressive scenes... they should consider them as just fiction and for fun, and not to apply these in real life ... they should conform to

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<sup>63</sup> This means that the punishment of crime through the courts is a deterrent against criminal behaviour, and therefore leads to safer communities.

correct behaviour, yeah, that's our behaviour.

*Mahmoud (INT):* Well, I aim to empower children to decide ... I mean, broaden their minds, as such sexually explicit material is a disgrace here, accessing it or imitating it ... yeah, to encourage self-control in children to decide not to access it ... you know, that's really shameful in Jordan.

As the excerpts above illustrate, the solution for treating violent crime is through helping children to process aggressive scenes as fiction and conform to adult rules of behaviour. Instilling in children the 'cultural values of shame and self-control' regarding their access to sexually explicit material is the solution to treating rape. However, it seems that both aims clearly indicate that children should follow the existing cultural rules and social order of normative behaviour. Such positioning contrasts with views of children as competent members of society who are able to construct their own lives. In delivering these institutional aims, the participants use a method of observing a healthy model of normative behaviour by presenting videos which show how children can positively deal with sexually explicit material and process aggressive media images as fiction:

*Mahmoud (INT):* I show them videos where pro-social children control themselves by not watching available sexual scenes on the Internet, although they are home alone ... other videos also show them how children process aggressive scenes as fiction.

As discussed in Chapter Six, three participating child behaviour monitors in the three institutions indicated that children reoffend because they are labelled as criminals by the media, and such portrayals cause other people to refuse to deal with them as normal children in their everyday lives. Therefore, they aimed to rebuild the confidence of these children and promote a positive self-identity instead of a 'criminal identity', as this will reduce children's sensitivity to

negative media and public portrayals:

*Saher (INT):* Yeah, it's about building confidence in them and removing the negative image they hold about themselves, I mean a 'criminal identity'... that of course occurs *through* helping them to discover an inner positive identity that refuses crime, and then promote this identity ... replacing the negative self-concept with a positive one. This will help reduce their sensitivity to negative descriptions by the media and the public, and then adhere to their new identity that refuses crime.

To achieve this aim, the participants use a 'sensitivity-reduction strategy' that promotes self satisfaction with one's behaviour regardless of negative media portrayals:

*Saher (INT):* ... within the group sessions with the children I tell them the popular proverb: 'you'll never please everyone', in the sense that you must be satisfied with yourself first, maintaining correct behaviour. No matter what people say and think about you, you must be confident in yourself.

### **Lessen Peers' Influences on Youth Crime**

The participating child behaviour monitors claimed that children also learn to commit violent crimes or rape by associating with criminals. The participants aim to guide children to choose 'good' friends, according to a cultural understanding of 'good':

*Nader (INT):* ... it is well known in our culture, 'tell me who your friends are, I then will tell who you are, whether you have good or bad behaviour'. This is the message that I aim to deliver to children regarding choosing their friends ... meeting good friends will help a child to behave correctly [laughs].

Here Nader's assertion alludes to the fact that choosing friends with good characters is a cultural rule that children should adhere to in order to treat the problem of learning sexual and violent crime from criminal peers. Thus, within

this institutional aim children are described as socially and culturally dependent as having no choice to construct their own lives and choose their own peers. To help children properly choose peers with good characters, the participants use an approach of 'modelling films' that show two contrasting models of peers: the first pressures children to offend and the second guides them towards good behaviour:

*Hashem (INT):* When displaying two different groups of friends on video ... one group leads the child into criminal behaviour, whereas the other encourages godly behaviour, then we let the children observe and discuss the scenes and make comparisons between them... of course children will be impressed with the second set of clips, yeah, the friends who guide the child towards correct behaviour, not those who lead him to crime.

## **Summary**

The findings of this chapter identified that RCIs provide different intervention programmes which aim to resolve children's problems within micro and macro social structures in their attempt to reduce offending by convicted children. These aims stem from the RCIs' perspectives on the causes of youth crime. Essentially, RCIs provide four different rehabilitative interventions, namely a family guidance programme, a poverty-reduction programme, an educational programme and a child behaviour modification programme.

The family guidance programme aims to encouraging adequate parental supervision in order to increase children's levels of self-control in conforming to positive behaviours. Treating child physical abuse is also encouraged by educating parents about effective discipline and anger management methods in order to develop positive child-parent relations, which in turn minimises

children's tendency to commit crime. The poverty-reduction programme aims to help children from low-income families to learn a career, while the service of obtaining monthly financial support from the National Aid Fund agency is offered for children from non-income families. Obtaining monthly financial support from the state is also provided for children who are physically abused by their parents due to class frustration. Further, this programme also aims to encourage absent fathers to financially support their children. All of these institutional methods of reducing child poverty aim to keep children in school, reduce the incidence of theft and maintain positive child-parent relations by solving child abuse caused by parental class frustration.

The educational programmes, both as literacy and cultural strengthening classes, aim to keep children in school, in order to help develop normative behaviour through education. Three interventions are used. First, the educational supervisors aim to develop children's educational achievement by improving their literacy skills and closing the educational gap. Second, they aim to advise parents to follow up with the school regarding their children's education and tackle poor educational performance by teaching their children the tools for academic success. Third, they encourage the schools' management teams to create a positive school environment by practicing just methods with working-class children in terms of their use of time in school, and providing educational care for children with poor educational achievement.

The child behaviour modification programme aims to prevent youth crime by developing children's conscience, beliefs and self-control in dealing with their

desires and the consequences of misbehaviour. This programme also aims to help children cope with and process aggressive scenes as fiction rather than not reality, choose peers with good characters and develop in themselves the cultural values of shame and self-control in regards to sexuality explicit material. All of these interventions seek to help children conform to cultural rules of behaviour, rebuild their confidence and promote a positive self-identity instead of a 'criminal identity' resulting from the public's refusal to treat children who offend like normal children. Schools and members of the public are encouraged to help children positively reintegrate into the community, which is another institutional aim in treating youth crime. To a large extent, these institutional programmes tend to focus on re-socialising children according to the normative and cultural system of behaviour, in which children are generally perceived as incompetent social actors, and where their best interests are not always acknowledged.

## **Chapter Eight**

### **Children's Perspectives and Experiences of Institutional Rehabilitative Programmes**

#### **Introduction**

The ultimate objective of residential rehabilitative programmes is to solve children's wider problems within micro and macro social structures in their attempt to reduce offending by convicted children. This chapter explores whether the existing institutional rehabilitative programmes are perceived and experienced by children as beneficial in resolving their problems and thus meeting their needs. There has been no research aimed at specifically identifying the effectiveness of residential rehabilitative programmes in terms of the children's own experiences and perspectives. Research addressing the rehabilitative programmes in RCIs has instead focused on examining the effectiveness of these programmes from the staff's point of view, without involving children who take part in such rehabilitative programmes, and has not examined consistency between the residential care objectives and actual practices (Badran, 1994; Shunaq, 2002). Nevertheless, these studies consistently showed that responses to poor parental supervision and child abuse have failed within the family guidance programme (Al-Qasim, 1995). Other studies have revealed the absence of a vocational training programme (Zahran & Ghraibeh, 2005) and educational settings for most children (Hassa, 1995).

This chapter begins by first examining children's own perspectives of the extent to which they find their familial, behavioural, economical and educational

problems are addressed through the various institutional aims. The consistency between the aims of the institutional programmes and the actual practices in place is examined alongside children's experiences of each intervention programme. Children's own perspectives, which go beyond current institutional understandings are also explored, and attention is paid to consider what kind of support children would like to see from the institutions in response to their specific needs and problems. This chapter concludes by reflecting upon children's own perspectives on what they think their institutions actually intend to achieve.

## **Children and Familial Environment**

### **Children's Perspectives of their Crime Causation**

Although the main focus of this study was to understand children's perceptions of whether the institutional rehabilitative interventions are supportive and beneficial in treating their problems and meeting their needs, a noticeable number of participants frequently documented different problems which have not been addressed by their institutions. These disclosed problems were assumed to have influenced their criminal acts, and were mainly related to the impacts of parental divorce, spousal violence, indefinite expulsion from the home and parental criminality. These issues are discussed below.

#### ***Parental Divorce: 'It's my Parents' Fault'***

13 participating children experienced the impact of parental divorce. For some children, divorced parents neglecting to provide them with affection, love and security led them to skip school because of their unwillingness to continue their education; instead, they spent time in the street, which motivated them to

commit criminal acts. These issues were first disclosed in drawings and diary techniques chosen and used by the children, and further explained during the interviews:

*Adam 16 year (INT):* Before my dad and mom divorced I was always feeling their love and warmth, but after their divorce I missed such feelings... I missed their love, I felt and continue to feel scared as they [parents] engage in their own lives...I hated school and no longer enjoyed studying; therefore, I stopped going to school without my parents' knowledge.

*I:* So when you left school, where would you spend your time?

*Adam (INT):* With my new friends each day in the street during the school day and then back *home* at the end of the school day... actually, my friends asked me to follow a beautiful group of girls with them and we started to shout in a sexual manner and made sexual comments and then the police caught us. I was very sad as I did not want to make trouble for my parents. I did that only for fun and to fill my time.

The above extract illustrates a complicated picture, where the absence of school and parental supervision and the presence of peer pressure could both be cited as causes of youth crime. However, Adam's emotional neglect caused by divorce was the direct factor behind his truancy. Thus, it could be argued that the absence of school supervision could be considered the main motivation for children's offending for two reasons. First, as Adam indicated, such absence put him in constant contact with peers, whose pressure made him commit the crime of sexual harassment. Second, school truancy provided him with time and energy to become involved in criminal acts, time which would otherwise have been spent in a school educational setting. Adam encapsulates this point when he asserts "I did that only for fun and to fill my time". Significantly, the above assertion indicates that children's behaviour of sexual harassment is criminalised by the law and as a result children imprisoned by the youth justice system-rather than dealt with in another way.

Other participants disclosed an inability to positively adjust to divorce, either in discussion or by utilising the secret box technique; however, this inability was experienced differently:

*(SBT, 12 year):* I feel guilty, I think my parents have divorced because of my rubbish behaviour, I made them fight, oh my God, for this reason I committed a crime, yeah, I have used drugs and alcohol since that date to forget my feelings of guilt...

*(SBT, 14 year):* It's my parents' fault, when they got divorced I tried to encourage them to return to each other. I found criminality to be the best way to make them think of *me*...

*Nezar 15 year (INT):* I don't know why I became very angry after my mom and dad divorced; I was dealing with my friends aggressively and could not control myself to stop such stupid ways. I am here for attempted murder...

Clearly, these comments present three different ways parental divorce has influenced children's criminal acts. First, some children blamed themselves, as they thought that they made their parents argue and that is why they divorced. Those children used alcohol and drugs as a result of this self-blame. Second, some children thought that they should do something to make their parents stay together; therefore, they committed different kinds of offences, as they found criminality to be a way to draw their parents' attention back to them in order to return to each other. Third, other children expressed feelings of anger and became quickly angry and aggressive in their interpersonal relations, a condition that led them to commit different violent crimes. It is worth noting that although this evidence of the impact of divorce on children's criminality is echoed in recent research, it is not reflected within the institutional understandings, which primarily see the effect of divorce on children as causing an absence of parental supervision over children's behaviour.

## **Spousal Abuse, Parental Criminality and Children's Expulsion from Home: 'Why do I have to be Speechless'?**

14 participating children documented, either in discussion or by utilising the secret box technique, that they had experienced spousal abuse, parental criminality or indefinite expulsion from the home, all of which were cited as key reasons for their involvement in criminal acts. The impact of spousal abuse on children was articulated in the following way:

*Saleh 14 year (INT):* My parents are always fighting and hitting each other in front of me... I did the same with my best friend – I hit him very hard and caused bleeding in his brain...

Here, Saleh's assertions indicate that children's exposure to violence in the family contributes to the way in which they learn that violent behaviour is an 'appropriate' method of solving their interpersonal problems. While this finding resonates with recent research, it contradicts the other views within this study, which suggest that children who behave aggressively are those who are physically abused at home or who mimic the explicit aggressive behaviour they see in the media or among peers.

Parental criminality and indefinite expulsion of children by parents also proved to be other factors explaining children's different offences:

*(SBT, 12 year):* I learned crime from my parents, from when I was very young until now, when I am 16. My parents continued to commit different crimes, so I have grown up learning that crime is not wrong... Why do I have to be speechless? ...that is the truth...

*Zaher 13 year (INT):* My father always kicked me out of the house...although it was not permanent, often I was kicked out for several days and did not even worry about where I was. Then I would...this expulsion led me to steal so that I could eat.

I: But why do you think you were exposed to such expulsion?

*Zaher (INT):* Because my father consumes alcohol and is not aware of his *behaviour*.

Other participants echoed these assertions about the link between parental criminality and children's expulsion from the home. It is implied by Monther, however, that parental criminality has taught him deviant behaviour and law violation. Although this finding echoes recent research on this issue, the RCIs did not name this as a reason why children commit crime. Zaher indicated that his father's actions caused his hardship; thus, stealing was his means of survival. On the whole, children claimed that their expulsion from the home was related to parental characteristics such as alcohol consumption and criminality. Again, this finding does not resonate with the RCIs' views on youth crime. Thus, the children's problems remain unresolved.

When children who faced expulsion and parental criminality were asked about the kind of support they wished for in order to treat these familial circumstances and the associated problems, all of them expressed their desire to be removed from their families and placed with one of their relatives, as chosen by them:

*Ali 17 year (INT):* I want to move away from my family to live with my uncle. I trust him; he will take care of me... also, I will be away from any pressure that might push me to reoffend...

### **Will child abuse and supervisory neglect continue?**

Children's perceptions of problems of parental supervisory neglect and physical abuse, and the extent to which they are addressed, revealed diverse responses. While the child participants implicitly perceived that addressing

parental abuse and supervisory neglect would be beneficial, none of them believed that these circumstances would actually be resolved. 25 participants out of 40 stated that they will continue to be neglected and abused as long as their parents do not go to the rehabilitative sessions provided by their institutions for handling these issues:

*Abdullah 14 year (INT):* ...Yes, I should do what my dad and mom tell me to do. I don't want to *behave* in my own way, as I really damaged myself and this is why I am here...but I always go and do what I want and my parents do not mind about that, so I think I am going to live in the same way when I come back home, because although my parents each time come to visit me here [in the institution], they don't go to see the social worker, I don't know why...

*Nadeem 15 year (INT):* It is good if they [parents] stop hitting me, as they are responsible for my crime... I don't think that my parents will stop beating me, as I have never *seen* them come to sit down with my supervisor...I think this means that they will continue to hit me again and again...they always see themselves as right in the way that they deal with me...

Abdullah and Naseem's assertions that parental absence from the rehabilitative session addressing parental abuse and supervisory neglect were behind these issues remaining unresolved were echoed by 23 of other participants. It could be argued that families' negligence in attending the institutional sessions addressing these issues may be referred to the cultural conceptualisation of children and Jordanian families. Raising children is considered to be a private family issue, in which the parents' views are prioritised, and thus state intervention may not be accepted or encouraged. Nadeem alludes to this thinking when he asserts that "my parents always see themselves as right in the way that they deal with me". However, the failure to address parental abuse and supervisory neglect challenges the institution's intended aims with regards to these issues, and reflects the inconsistency between the RCIs' objectives

and their actual practices, since they are not actually implemented for the majority of participants.

15 participants described their previous experiences of physical abuse and neglect; their parents always attended these treatment programmes but continued to abuse and neglect them after each release. For this reason, participants considered these problems ever-present:

*Hashim 16 year (INT):* Although my parents currently meet with a specialist supervisor, I am sure that they will continue to hit me. Honestly, this is my fourth offence, and each time my parents met with the social worker, but after each release they continued to *beat* me ... as my parents are used to meeting with the supervisor and then again hitting me, after this release the same thing will happen...

Hashim's assertions about why he believed that parental abuse remains unresolved were echoed by other participants in terms of parental neglect. This finding may suggest that the lack of success in response to child abuse and neglect might be because the methods of delivering these interventions per se are ineffective, rather than ineffectively implemented.

## **Children and Issues of Socialisation**

### **Children and Conscience: 'It is good to have a religious knowledge'**

As discussed in Chapter Seven, children whose crimes were viewed as caused by lack of religious self-control over their desires and a belief that stealing, rape and taking revenge on others are appropriate ways for achieving their goals, are targeted by religious intervention. 16 participating children out of 20 considered that the religious classes have supported them in developing a

religious conscience and beliefs, and moral reasoning:

*Morad 14 year (INT):* Previously I behaved without thinking of what is right and wrong, yeah, I thought that I can behave in my own ways, but now I have realised that practicing sexuality before marriage is wrong, yeah, banned and makes God angry..., it is good to have a religious knowledge...

*Ahmad 14 year (INT):* I was thinking that poor people who steal are not going to be punished by God as they don't have money to get their needs but my supervisor taught me that this is wrong, yeah, that is actually wrong... I really benefitted from this programme.

*Mahmoud 12 year (INT):* ... My parents never sat down and taught me that revenge is banned by God. Just didn't give me the support I needed. This place has done that. Told me that violence is not the solution to my conflicts with others, and made me understand how tolerance of others' mistakes would keep my away from crime...

These comments indicate that the religious interventional aim of developing children's conscience and beliefs has been implemented and delivered effectively, as the participants were in agreement that this intervention helped them develop their religious beliefs, which were previously absent from their lives. However, during several observations of the religious class, four participants either showed little engagement during the religious activities or did not participate on a regular basis. Interviews with them revealed the following reasons for this behaviour:

*Bashar 17 year (INT):* I don't always attend this class because it is boring...the supervisor always chooses the subject materials he wants to teach us rather than asking us to choose subjects we are interested in to discuss the same issues...I have missed several classes; therefore, I have not learned how I can discipline my tendency of stealing...

*Moa'iad 14 year (INT):* I see myself as the chair in the class... just listen, listen and listen to what is being said by the supervisor... this made me feel sleepy in the class *and* mostly I do not focus on or listen to what the supervisor says; I don't participate in the class, such as by reading a story in front of my classmates, writing some points on the board or preparing some posters on the wall that shows how revenge is banned by Islam...

It is implied by Bashar and Moa'iad that the absence of teaching methods in which children choose the subject materials for discussion or participate in the teaching process makes it difficult to stimulate and engage children. Participants indicated that this prevented them from developing a religious conscience.

### **Children, Media Materials and Peer Groups**

The discussion with 15 participating children as to whether their negative experiences with aggressive and sexuality explicit material in the media has been addressed by their institutions revealed different responses. In regards to children's experiences of aggressive media behaviour, eight out of eight children stated that the current institutional intervention that sought to help them process aggressive scenes as fiction was not useful because their violent crimes were not learned through media portrayals of aggressive behaviour. This is because children considered themselves mature enough to distinguish between fiction and reality:

*Hidar 13 year (INT):* No, my crime was not caused by aggressive films...I am 12 years old, not 4 or 5 years, so I can distinguish between reality and fiction, I already knew that these things are fiction and just for entertainment...this is not the real cause of my crime...

The above assertion indicates that the current institutional aim of responding to aggressive media behaviour is ineffective, since it does not target the real cause of children's criminal acts, as Hidar demonstrated. In regards to the children's experiences of sexuality explicit materials, seven out of seven participating children were in agreement that their institutions were able to instil

in them the cultural values of shame and self-control in terms of accessing sexually explicit material:

*Wa'el 16 year (INT):* My supervisor has helped me learn how I can discipline my *tendency* of seeing sexual materials, yeah, it is helpful to learn how to deter ourselves from seeing these sorts of things, yeah, it is against our culture.

*Saleem 14 year (INT):* This programme let me know what I did not know before; I thought that seeing sexual materials was not shameful for boys but now I became aware that is really shameful.

As the above extracts indicate, the participants have become aware of the cultural value of shame in terms of accessing sexuality explicit media imagery, and accept it as a way of helping them regulate their problematic behaviour. Developing this cultural value resonates with the institutional method of lessening the possibility of rape crimes caused by the impact of sexual explicit materials, as discussed in Chapter Seven, and may indicate that such method has been effectively delivered in practice.

17 of the participating children discussed their problems of the public refusing to see them as normal due to their previous crimes, and of association with criminal peers, in various ways. However, none of the participants revealed that these problems have been addressed, and two explanations were given as to why this was the case:

*Ali 15 year (INT):* No, I've not learned how to avoid boys' influences, yeah, how to choose good friends. I have not benefited from this programme. ...I have been here for one year, and the supervisor met with me and my friends only once, and showed us one 10-minute film about good and bad friends. From that time until now he has not met with us...just 10 minutes, really not long enough to learn sufficiently...

*Rami 13 year (INT):* People always refuse to see me as a good person, or at least someone *who* wants to be good person like other

good children. Their continuous refusal led me to offend each time, and I think I will always be a criminal, since they want to see me like that. This institution has not helped me to cope with such refusal because I have never attended the class to help me to deal with such refusal. My friends and I went to class many times but the supervisor was not there, I don't know why, so how I can benefit!

Ali and Rami's explanations about why they believed that their needs for treatment for peer influence and their labelled identity as 'criminals' remain unmet were echoed by other participants. Some participants felt that the short-term intervention provided meant they were not able to adequately benefit, while others felt that their needs remained unmet due to the absence of children participating in these programmes. These assertions highlighted that the institutions' failure to achieve their suggested aims to guide children to choose peers with good characters and to rebuild the confidence of these children and promote a positive self-identity instead of a 'criminal identity' was either because these interventions are not actually practiced or because they are not effectively implemented. This contradicts other findings from the current study, which considered these issues as causes of youth crime and thus core areas for intervention, as discussed in Chapter Seven.

### **Child Poverty: Is it on the way to being reduced?**

The discussion with children from poor families as to whether they feel supported by their institutions in terms of reducing their poverty elicited various responses. However, 40 out of 52 of participating children indicated that their problems of poverty remain unresolved, and a variety of explanations were provided as to why this was the case. Six of the participating children from single-mother families held the view that the current institutional method of

encouraging their fathers to meet their material needs would not be helpful in reducing their poverty. This belief stemmed from the participants' refusal to depend on their fathers' material support. Two main reasons for this way of thinking emerged. First, most children related this refusal to their ability to work and actively participate in economic production:

*O'rwā 15 year (INT):* Why should I have to rely on my father to support me while I can both work and study? I am not a baby who should be fed by his father, I don't like *this* kind of solution...also, I will not accept my father's support now, as he left me several years before. He is not a good father since he is the only one responsible for my presence here [in the institution]...I hate him and don't want his support at all...

It is worthwhile to note from the above extract that children's refusal to accept their fathers' financial support is also associated with the participants' difficulty in perceiving their fathers as 'good role models', since they blamed their offences on their fathers' previous negligence in supporting them. Second, other children claimed that their previous experiences of their fathers humiliating them when providing them with money, along with their belief that their fathers will continue to insult them after their release, were other reasons behind their refusal to be financially dependent on their fathers:

*Esam 13 year (INT):* This service is not helpful at all, as I know what my father is like, not *the* people here [in the institution]. I mean that he always made me feel humiliated when giving me money, and he will continue to be like that; therefore, I will never and never accept any money from him again and will not live under his mercy again...

All the above statements confirm that the institutional methods of reducing children's poverty through reactivating the fathers' role in meeting all their children's material needs were not perceived by the participants as effective. This ineffectiveness was exemplified by the children's refusal to accept it as a means to eliminate their poverty. Esam has stressed such rejection by saying "I

will never and never accept any money from my father again". It could, therefore, be argued that poverty within this group of children remains unresolved.

Nine participating children from non-income families, particularly those whose fathers are unemployed or disabled, and children who are abused by their parents due to parental stress of poverty, were all in agreement that the state financial support service does not meet their needs and thus their poverty problems remain unresolved. For most participants, this was related to the small amount of money that their families received, which was insufficient to meet their material needs:

*Maher 17 year (INT):* Oh my God, they only give my father a sum not exceeding one *hundred JD*, no one could say that this is enough to eat, especially as my father does not have a job.

Other participants stated that they require state support but their families have never received any money from the state:

*Zahi 14 year (INT):* My problem with poverty still exists because my parents have never *received* any money from the National Aid Fund,...as my supervisor told me that my parents hit me because of poverty, why they don't give us money? I don't know why.

28 children from low-income families who are targeted by their institutions to attend career training disclosed two opposite experiences. Almost half of them stated that they have not actually attended the vocational training centre to learn a career. The dominant explanation for this was related to the scheduling conflict between the educational and vocational training programmes, in which children's choice to attend educational settings made it difficult for them to also attend the vocational training centre. In contrast, the other children had actually

attended career training and stated that their career needs have been met through the vocational training programme. The following quotes from Nehad and Taher illustrate these points:

*Nehad 13 year (INT):* I have chosen to attend a cultural strengthening programme rather than benefit from learning a career, though I also need that...in order to *benefit* from both programmes one leg should be here [education] and the other should be there [vocational centre]...these programmes are run at the same time [sadly]...

*Taher 14 year (INT):* I am happy as I have learned sewing so I can work when I come back home.

Overall, the above assertions make clear that the RCIs have failed in practice to achieve their intended aim of reducing child poverty, since the majority of children indicated that their poverty remains unresolved. However, while the participating children provided different explanations as to why their material needs remained unmet, all of them expressed their desire to access career training as a way to address their poverty:

*Bandar 12 year (INT):* If this institution really wants to treat my poverty then they should help me learn a vocation; then I can work without missing my education.

## **Children and Education**

### **Are Children Participating in Educational Programmes?**

The investigation of whether children experience educational settings either within the institutional programmes (literacy and cultural strengthening classes) or in public school revealed that 39 out of 66 of participating children do not actually receive an education. 14 of those children were from low-income families and were targeted to attend a vocational training centre by their institutions, with the aim to address child truancy and labour or theft crimes.

However, they all indicated that their attendance at the vocational training programme prevented them from attending the educational programmes. As stated in the previous section, the dominant explanation for this was also related to the scheduling conflict between the educational and vocational training programmes, in which children's choice to attend the vocational training centre made it difficult for them to also attend educational programmes:

*Ayham 14 year (INT):* No, I am not attending any literacy classes, although I need that ... but instead I have chosen to learn sewing, so that I can work when I come back home. This is because both programmes are held at the same time.

Ayham's assertion about why he was not able to attend literacy classes was echoed by other participants whose educational backgrounds required them to attend cultural strengthening classes or public school education. 23 participating children with school educational needs indicated why they were not able to attend school. Two key explanations emerged: first, some of participants indicated that they had not completed a legal reconciliation document with the victim's family and thus were not able to exit the institution to attend school:

*Mahdi 15 year (INT):* I can't go to school because I don't have a legal reconciliation with the family of the girl that I raped...

The second reason was related to their families' negligence in taking them from the institution to school:

*Shaheen 16 year (INT):* Neither my dad nor my mom comes here to pick me up for school...they don't care about my education at all.

Only one participant indicated that he has decided not to join school because he was worried about negativity from teachers and students:

*Ahmad 14 year (INT):* I have chosen not to go to school as I cannot stand boys and teachers looking at me. Yeah, they would probably see me as a criminal...

It is apparent that RCIs also failed to meet children's educational needs despite their objectives, which aim to meet children's educational needs in order to help them use their energy and time within the educational setting, and learn normative behaviour through varied school subjects. Further, children's failure to participate in school during their time in the institutional setting was considered by 23 participants as hindering their ability to resume their school education after their release:

*Zahi 13 year (INT):* As I have been prevented from attending school while I am here [in the institution], I will not be able to complete [my education] when I return *home*...this is because my crime is murder, and from now until my release I will have spent more than two years out of school ... the educational system does not allow me to attend school after more than two years out...

*Bilal 15 year (INT):* As I do not currently attend school, I have no desire to continue my education.

These comments represent two crises caused by the RCIs' failure to meet children's need to attend school, and explain why the children thought that their chances of returning to school in the community had faded. The first crisis refers to the Jordanian educational system, which refuses school admission to children who have dropped out for longer than two years. As Zahi illustrates, this is the case among children with serious crimes; thus, the period they have to spend in the institutional settings means they are absent from school for longer than the permitted time. The second crisis happens at an individual level, where the children's current absence from school makes them unwilling to restart their education.

These comments indicate that the RCIs have not only failed to keep children in school during their stay in the institutions but also contribute to preventing them from continuing their education when they return to the community. While school attendance is an institutional precautionary measure to prevent future crime, the above assertions show that the RCIs did not actually put such prevention measures into practice. Only two participants indicated that they actually received a school education; thus, in their view, their educational needs had been met through the institutions:

*Shehab 13 year (INT):* Yeah, I go to school every day and I'm very happy as I have not missed my *education*. My offence has not been a barrier.

### **How Do Children Experience their Education within the Institutional Settings?**

Although the children who participated in literacy or cultural strengthening classes experienced a different kind of education, the majority were satisfied with the educational support they received in these programmes. The participants were satisfied either because they had actually grasped 'literacy skills' and 'filled their education gap' in the literacy and cultural strengthening programmes, respectively, or because they had made educational progress in these areas, making them optimistic that they would successfully complete these educational requirements at the end of the course:

*Khalil 12 year (INT):* This programme [literacy] has helped me because I am now able to read and spell words correctly, and understand the meanings of paragraphs I read. I can now write, yeah, construct sentences and paragraphs and express my ideas by writing. Without the encouragement of my supervisor, who always tells me 'continue, you can do it', I would never be able to learn what

I have learnt...

Sohaib 13 year (*INT*): I am very satisfied with the literacy class as I see improvements in my reading and writing. I still need to learn more but I think I am on the right track, as my supervisor always helps me with the serious difficulties I face while I am learning....

Although the above extracts are from children who receive literacy education, their message was also echoed by other participants who receive cultural strengthening education. However, the above assertions indicate that a 'can do' attitude and following up on children's individual needs, particularly children with serious learning difficulties, were the supervisors' methods while delivering the educational services for children. As discussed in Chapter Seven, these methods resonate with the educational supervisors' approaches for achieving the educational programmes' aims, and with the notion that children as a minority group have the right to receive educational care. On the whole, the above statements indicate that the literacy and cultural strengthening programmes' objectives have been effectively implemented, since children's educational needs have been met.

However, the researcher's repeated observations of children's behaviour and interactions during the course of educational activities revealed that four participants either showed no or little engagement or felt uncomfortable with what was being said in the class. The interviews found that such behaviours were children's ways of expressing their dissatisfaction with their education. These participants believed that their educational needs have not been met, since their specific needs have not been taken seriously by the educational supervisor:

*Morad 12 year (INT):* I have difficulty understanding different subjects, such as Math, but the *supervisor* does not care about me at all... my educational knowledge has not improved.

While the majority of participants agreed that their educational needs had been met, the children's ability to engage in education after their release was measured according to their economic status. All the children whose poverty problems remain unresolved demonstrated that their poverty constitutes a barrier which will prevent them from continuing their education. The following extracts from the secret box technique illustrate this point:

*(SBT, 14 year):* I will not continue my education as I do now [here at the institution]...I will return to beg in different areas in Amman. At least I will gain much money...

*(SBT, 12 year):* I will probably do what I have done previously, I will sell newspapers and gum at the traffic signals...I will not be able to continue my education.

These assertions highlight that the RCIs' failure to treat children's poverty has negatively influenced the effectiveness of the current educational programmes. The children explicitly confirmed that they will stop their education in order to beg or work in the street. This confirms that the current institutional objective of controlling children's behaviour through school supervision has failed.

Conversely, 12 participating children, whose truancy was only caused by their low educational achievement, all demonstrated that they are planning to continue their education once they return to the community:

*Amjad 13 year (INT):* When I complete my educational course here [at the institution], I will *continue* my education after my release. My educational supervisor sat down with my parents..., I mean it is good as to keep doing my homework and not making noises in class in order to keep doing progress but I still worry that teachers would hit me again if I have difficulties in doing any tasks as required.

*Naseem 16 year (INT):* The first thing that I will do when I return home is continue my school education...yes, I am concerned that my teachers will continue to, I mean, overly limit my use of time during the entertainment activities.

Amjad and Naseem's assertions highlighted a variety of issues which were also echoed by other participants. Amjad's assertion implicitly indicated that the institutional intervention with families with regards to encouraging families to develop a home-school connection and educate their children about the tools for academic success (e.g. doing homework) has been successfully delivered in practice, since he perceives these tools as effective for his educational progress. Nevertheless, he expressed concern that the teachers in the community may continue to physically abuse him if he faces learning difficulties that may hinder his academic success. Similarly, Naseem highlighted his concern of experiencing exaggerated control from his teachers in terms of his time at school – particularly in extracurricular activities. However, both groups have been informed by the researcher that their institutions are working to address these concerns with their schools by advising them to create a positive school environment by practicing just methods with children in terms of their use of time in school, and providing educational care for children with poor educational achievement. Accordingly, both groups of children voiced their satisfaction with such methods of encouraging them to develop a positive perception toward their school experiences:

*Monther 12 year (INT):* Thanks for letting me know, that of course makes me like my school [laughter].

*Mouhsen 12 year (INT):* Really! I feel excited to experience a new school environment.

## **Residential Care Institutions: An Implicit and Explicit Belief in Punishment**

Participants drew conclusions about what they thought their institutions were actually trying to achieve in responding to their wider problems. Apart from a few children who thought that these institutions meant to rehabilitate them, since they found that their problems have been resolved through different intervention programmes, the majority of children believed that their institutions aimed to punish them for their crimes rather than treat them:

*Mahmoud 14 year (INT):* Although my staff have addressed my problems, they do nothing, as they put me here [in the institution] just to eat and sleep and then return to my home to face the same problems I had previously, which led me to offend.

*Basheer 13 year (INT):* I am sure that I am here to be punished for my crime, because the people here not only left my problems unsolved but also made new problems for me. Before entering this institution I had no problems with my education, as I regularly went to school, but now I cannot continue my education. This institution has damaged my life instead of correcting it...

*Hadi 15 year (INT):* My real problems remain unknown to staff as they have never tried to talk to me to know what my issues are. I am in prison, not a care institution, so I think I'm only here until the completion of my prison sentence.

The assertions highlight three key themes why children believed that the RCIs aimed to punish them for their crimes. The first belief was related to the failure of institutional programmes to treat children's wider problems; the second was related to the staff's ignorance of children's actual problems. The final belief was referred to the fact that their institutions have created new crises. This was

especially echoed by children who can no longer attend school.

## **Summary**

The evidence reviewed in this chapter suggests that the residential care institutions have failed to treat children's wider problems within the micro and macro social structures which were assumed to be the core areas for consideration in attempting to reduce reoffending by convicted children. Parental neglect and physical abuse were perceived as key factors behind youth crime, and these problems remain unresolved. Participants' accounts of why these problems remain unaddressed either referred to their parents not taking part in institutional treatment sessions, or to the ineffectiveness of the interventions or the methods in delivering them, and claimed that their families frequently continued to neglect and abuse them.

Institutional methods of addressing children's poverty by empowering them to learn a career, activating their fathers' role in meeting their material needs in single-mother families or receiving a state monthly allowance all failed to eliminate child poverty. Three key themes emerged as to why this was the case. First, some children experienced little financial support from the National Aid Fund organisation, and their needs could not be met through this small amount. Second, some participants perceived that encouraging support from their fathers was ineffective, since they believed they could work while studying. Third, one group of children did not actually attend the career training centre, as they were attending different classes. This latter point also explained why other

children did not attend educational settings, since they participated in the vocational training centre to learn a career. The dominant explanation was the scheduling conflict between the educational and vocational training programmes, which made it difficult for children to attend both programmes. Other children did not actually attend public school, either because they did not have a legal reconciliation document with the victim's family and thus their exit from the institution could expose them or others to risk, or because their families did not pick up them from the institutions and take them to school.

Children believed that their needs of learning how to choose peers with good attributes, rebuilding their confidence and promoting a positive self-identity instead of a 'criminal' identity had not been met. Because of this, some children never experienced these programmes, and those that did felt they were too short to be beneficial. This chapter also explores children's own perspectives of why they committed crimes. Emotional neglect caused by parental divorce and children's inability to positively cope with parental divorce, spousal abuse, indefinite expulsion from the family home and parental criminality were all cited by children as factors behind their involvement in crime. Children implicitly and explicitly considered that the failure of treating their wider problems was the RCIs' way of punishing them for their crimes rather than rehabilitating them.

The findings of this chapter reveal a contradictory picture between the residential care institutions' objectives and their actual practices. This also raises questions about whether the professional staff encounter dilemmas while attempting to achieve their institutions' aims. The following chapter will address

this point with social workers and child monitor staff as key informant staff who can shed light on the discussed failure to treat children's familial and behavioural problems.

## **Chapter Nine**

### **Staff Perspectives on the Dilemmas in Meeting Children's Familial, Educational and Behavioural Needs**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter examines the perspectives and experiences of social workers and child monitoring staff, revealed in focus groups, regarding the obstacles that contribute to their inability to address children's wider needs within the existing institutional aims, and identifying other key causal factors of children's involvement in crime and ways to effectively intervene.

It has been argued that in order to design an effective intervention programme one needs to know what key factors contribute to children engaging in crime; without causation there can be no prevention (Wikström & Butterworth, 2006). Further, even if a programme or intervention is effective in principle, if it is not properly implemented and delivered, there is no reason to expect it to have any greater effect (Lipsey & Landenberger, 2006). These arguments concur with the situation of children within the residential care institutions, where the lack of knowledge of causal factors of crime, along with the ineffectiveness of most of the current programmes, prevents children from receiving appropriate institutional intervention.

To this end, this chapter begins by first exploring the staff's experiences of the dilemmas they encounter while attempting to achieve the institutions' aims in treating children's familial, economical, educational and behavioural problems.

Participants' perspectives of the obstacles to understanding children's perspectives of why they committed crimes, particularly in relation to children's familial and behavioural problems, are examined in the second part of this chapter. Attention is also given to describing staff members' suggestions and recommendations of how current interventions could be improved to meet children's needs, alongside the discussion of the dilemmas in achieving the institutional aims and ascertaining children's crime causations

## **Barriers to Meeting Children's Needs within the Existing Institutional Aims**

### **Child-Rearing is a Private, Family Issue**

The participating social workers gave various responses when asked whether they face difficulties implementing and delivering their institutional aims with families. However, none of them indicated that the institutional aims in treating physical child abuse and parental supervisory neglect were effective. This failure was seen in families who did not take part in child abuse and parental supervisory neglect intervention sessions, and even in families who did participate in such sessions. These initial disclosures were in line with children's responses, as discussed in Chapter Eight. However, in regards to families who did not take part in child physical abuse and supervisory neglect sessions, all the participants referred this to parents' refusal to attend. Two key explanations emerged: first, with regards to child abuse treatment interventions, parents' refusal to take part was associated with the legal acceptance of hitting children as a method of rearing them:

*Ahmad (FG):* The majority of families refuse to attend the treatment of child abuse sessions...they actually justify their refusal by our law

that considers hitting children an acceptable way of rearing children. In this way we're helpless to act.

*Jamal (FG)*: It's true, I still remember parents who told me: "how do you want me to *participate* in treating hitting while the law accepts it? If that's wrong, why does the law not hold families accountable for it?" Yeah, therefore, we will never influence intervention as long as the law accepts physical abuse.

*Nader (FG)*: This contradiction will keep child abuse ever-present.

This group exchange illustrates that the legal acceptance of physical abuse as a method of rearing children has empowered absent families to avoid undergoing treatment; thus, social workers are not able to follow any course of action with such families. Ahmad summarises this point when he asserts that "in this way we're helpless to act". The inconsistency between the law and institutional definitions of child physical abuse made the institutional intervention ineffective. This disagreement among definitions, as Nader clarifies, ultimately allows abusive families to continue their abusive methods of rearing children.

Second, with regards to families' refusal to attend the institutional interventions that encourage parental supervision over children's behaviour, three participants refer this to the cultural view of families in Jordanian society. In Jordan, families hold the view that rearing children is a private issue, determined by the parents' preferences. This cultural understanding has empowered families to challenge state interventions in terms of child-rearing issues.

*Fares (FG)*: These families don't come to our sessions that encourage parental supervision, *because* you know how families think here [in Jordan], I mean that parents are used to considering their children as their property and think they have the right to rear them according to their preferences; therefore, they do not come to our sessions.

In contrast, limiting the implementation of child abuse and supervisory neglect sessions to within the institutional settings is perceived by one participant to be inappropriate for all kinds of families. In the following extract, Jamal indicates that other families were unable to participate in the institutional interventions with regards to child abuse and neglect because their circumstances prevented them from attending. There are no other means of delivering these interventions to such families:

*Jamal (FG):* There are other families that cannot come to the institutions to participate either because they have work or because they live far away. In fact, we do not provide other options that suit the circumstances of those families...

In responding to all the discussed dilemmas, the participants recommend the following ways of promoting families' attendance at the institutional interventional sessions:

*Nader (FG):* There is a legal obligation to help prevent every child from being abused. Even mild hitting should be prohibited. Once such a law is enforced, the law should also punish abusive parents or any abusive adult. In this way, children will be less likely to be abused, as families may suffer legal consequences.

*Ahmad (FG):* Definitely, and also suggest the law obligates families to attend guidance lectures about supervision and monitoring of children's behaviour before *circulating* the cases of children who suffer from neglect to us. Parents who refuse to take part in our interventions should also face punishment.

*Jamal (FG):* I also suggest making home visits for families who can't come to the institution so that they can benefit from our support...

This group discussion provides three suggestions. First, changing Jordanian law to prohibit child abuse and setting out appropriate legal penalties for abusive adults seems necessary, as this legal shift may force families to stop their abusive methods to avoid legal action. Second, Jordanian law must

obligate families to attend institutional interventions with regards to child supervisory neglect, while setting out an appropriate legal penalty for families who violate this obligation. Third, to ensure the delivering of abuse and supervisory neglect interventions, providing a home-based intervention service seems necessary for families who cannot get to the institution.

As stated earlier in this section, the participants also noted the ineffectiveness of these institutional interventions even for families who did participate in such sessions. In explaining this failure, the participants refer to the following obstacles:

*Ahmad (FG):* Most cases of abused children are really deep-seated...having a long history of physical abuse...what I mean is that we only provide short-term intervention for abused children...that's not consistent with the long history of abuse these children have experienced. The support we provide here is terminated when abused children return to their normal life, yeah, later care within community services is not provided for children who receive support in our institutions, and then parents soon return to abusing their children.

*Fares (FG):* I think the reliance on the talking method in advising families to supervise children may make parents feel bored and unmotivated during the meeting; then they stop attending or do not engage well with the service, and fail to benefit from our programmes in this regard.

Ahmad and Fares' explanations about what makes the current institutional interventions against child abuse and supervisory neglect ineffective was echoed by other participants. However, Ahmad's assertions point out that chronic abuse of children cannot be stopped by the short-term interventions within the institutional settings, as later care services in the community are not provided for children who receive support within the institutional settings. The

participants contend that these families receive short-term intervention and that client support is then terminated when the child returns to his normal family life, where the child abuse resumes. On the other hand, Fares believed that the institutional reliance on talking methods in promoting parental supervision over children might make families lose motivation to attend and then drop out or fail to engage well with the given service. However, to ensure the effectiveness of abuse and supervisory neglect interventions, the participants made the following suggestions:

*Nader (FG):* We should provide later care intervention in local services after children return to their normal life...yeah, for cases with a long history of abuse we can promise effective treatment.

*Jamal (FG):* To effectively motivate parents to supervise their children and engage with our aim, I suggest providing several visual films that help parents observe positive models of parental monitoring in different times and spaces.

## **Logistical Constraints**

### **Lack of Fiscal Stimulus and Human Resources**

As discussed in Chapter Eight, the majority of children demonstrated that the existing institutional interventions meant to help them choose suitable peers, rebuild confidence and promote a positive self-identity have failed. This is true for children who participate in these intervention programmes, as well as those who do not. The participating child monitors explain this by referring to a range of key implementation hurdles. First, with regards to the ineffectiveness of these interventions among children who did participate in them, all participants agree

that the short-term duration of the intervention provided is behind its failure to positively modify children's behavioural problems:

*Ali (FG):* Honestly, we only provide short guidance sessions, particularly in terms of children's relations with peers and the public's refusal to treat them like normal children. I think that's not enough to influence the children's behavioural problems.

*I:* But *what* do you think are the reasons behind this short-term intervention?

*Ali (FG):* Honestly, this is because we are actually not motivated to work, yeah, we receive 180 JD, are they kidding us? Yeah, such salary is of course consistent with short-term intervention.

*Various (FG):* That's true.

Accordingly, the participants argued that effective intervention requires replacing the current short-term intervention with long-term intervention periods, and they need to be financially motivated to do so:

*Monther (FG):* The duration of our intervention should be longer than it is now.

*Ali (FG):* And for this we need to receive higher salaries.

*Various (FG):* Yeah [laughter].

With regards to children who did not actually participate in these intervention programmes, the participants refer to the following barriers:

*Monther (FG):* That's because there are so few of us, and at the same time we are required to play multiple roles and the additional roles the manager asked us to perform; this means we can't always practice the programmes regularly.

*Majid (FG):* Yes, we must also accompany children on home visits and sometimes to *the* vocational training centre at the same time that we should be in class implementing the behavioural intervention programmes. Therefore, children come to class and can't find us...

Employing additional staff or removing their roles outside the institutions were the participants' recommendations in order to ensure the effectiveness and

actual implementation of institutional aims with regards to modifying children's behaviour:

*Hassan (FG):* It is important either to hire additional staff, or remove our duties outside the institutions to enable us to implement our interventional aims at the specified time.

*Various (FG):* Definitely.

### **Issues around the Lack of Financial Resources**

As discussed in Chapter Eight, the majority of children demonstrated that their needs in attending different educational settings or in reducing their poverty have not been met by their institutions. With regards to children from poor familial environments, one group of children indicated that they did not actually attend the career training centre, as they were attending different educational classes. This latter point also explained why other children did not attend educational settings, since they participated in the vocational training centre to learn a career. In explaining why this was the case, all the participating social workers referred to the scheduling conflict between these programmes, which made it difficult for children to attend both programmes:

*Ahmad (FG):* It is the problem of times conflicting...the reality is that these programmes take place at the same time.

*Ali (FG):* Yeah, that's the truth...low-income children should decide which one benefits them more [sadly].

However, the participants advanced this point further by discussing the reasons behind the poor scheduling:

*Hassan (FG):* There are no special vocational training centres for children due to a lack of financial resources. What I mean is that the existing vocational training *centre* was originally created for adults who are not willing to complete their education in universities or colleges; therefore, mornings are only suitable for adults. Yeah, children have been included despite the fact that they should be in different educational settings at that time...this makes it difficult to

coordinate a time that suits these two groups.

Various (FG): Yes.

In addressing this scheduling conflict, all the participants recommend that government and non-government organisations financially support the establishment of a separate vocational training centre for children, and provide training in evening sessions. This will help meet children's training and educational needs, and ensure that all referred children are able to attend both programmes:

*Fares (FG):* I appeal to both government and non-government organisations to financially support children by establishing a separate training centre for children, and training should be provided in the evenings so that we can ensure that all low-income children are able to benefit from both education and career training.

Another group of children stated that the National Aid Fund was not able to treat their poverty either because their families receive little financial support or because their families have never received such state support. The participants refer this to the following barriers:

*Jamal (FG):* Actually, many children were refused for two reasons: first, this state organisation lacks funds, and second because it is established to support different kinds of families, with and without children...this actually makes it difficult to accept all the referred cases...

*Fares (FG):* And for these reasons even those who are selected only receive small amounts of money. This organisation supports poorer children.

This exchange clearly shows that the lack of funding that the National Aid Fund receives from the government, along with its responsibility to support different segments of society other than families with dependent children, are behind the failure to solve children's poverty. These issues either lead to supporting

children's families with small salaries, as Fares states, or, as Jamal asserts, or to the refusal to support other children because this national organisation only chooses to help the poorest children. However, in order to meet children's material needs through state support, the establishment of a children's agency fund is recommended. The funding resources of this agency should be provided through government and non-government organisations:

*Nader (FG):* We actually need a specific agency for funding poor children, and to be funded by both government and non-government organisations, as this will increase the ability to fund a wide range of children, and will ensure that all referred children are accepted. Of course, children will then gain more and better funding.

*Various (FG):* Definitely.

Funding from government and non-government organisations was recommended, on the understanding that this will ensure the acceptance of all referred children, and increase the level of financial support they receive. However, as discussed in Chapter Eight, children from non-income and single-mother families and those who were abused due to parental stress of poverty all identified learning a career as the best way to treat their poverty, rather than the other existing institutional solutions. Their interest in learning a career was voiced to the participating social workers. In responding, they advocated children's views in choosing their own ways of addressing their poverty, and appealed to those with authority to take children's interests in this regard seriously:

*Ahmad (FG):* As children express their needs of learning a career, we put our hands on theirs and appeal to those with authority to take their interests seriously. This confirms our suggestion to establish a separate vocational training centre for children.

*Various (FG):* Yes.

## **The Absence of Adequate Planning**

The participating social workers reflected upon other hurdles they face while aiming to connect children, with public school education. Two key obstacles emerged: first, some children had committed serious offences and had not reconciled with the victim's family; hence, they cannot attend public school. Leaving the institution could expose them or others to risk, and for this reason they are prevented from attending public school education. Second, other children were not able to attend school education as their families were unable to take them from the institutions to school and then return them to the institutions:

*Nader (FG):* In fact, there is a group of children whose crimes are classified as serious, and the victim's families have refused to sign a reconciliation document with the perpetrator's family...in such cases we cannot send a child to school as this may *put* his life in danger or may expose others to risk...but also, other children do not go to school as their families cannot come to take them from institution to school and then return them, because they are either at work or live far away.

*Ahmad (FG):* Right, and those groups of children are prevented from getting an *education* because of the absence of institutional arrangements or preparations for tackling their circumstances; actually, we do not have other options anymore.

It is apparent that the given explanations about the seriousness of children's crimes, and children whose families do not accompany them to school, are echoed in children's responses on this topic. However, these two obstacles were attributed to the absence of institutional policies and arrangements for helping these groups of children exercise their right to education, because there are no means in place for delivering an education to children. However, to meet children's educational needs, the participants recommend establishing

educational classrooms within each institutional setting and equipping them with teachers qualified to teach the public school curriculum. Providing school classrooms within the institutional setting is seen by the participants as a promising solution for children who have committed serious crimes and children whose families do not accompany them to school. These children will then be able to benefit from education at the institution:

*Jamal (FG):* I suggest opening school classes in each institution and staffing them *with* teachers who are qualified to teach the same curriculum given in public schools.

*Fares (FG):* You are right, opening such classes is the solution for both groups of *children...*I mean those who cannot leave the institution, as well as those whose families do not take them to school.

*Various (FG):* Certainly.

## **Barriers to Identifying Children’s Familial and Behavioural Problems**

### **The Primacy of Adult Accounts and Cultural Issues**

As discussed in Chapter Eight, a noticeable number of children claimed that emotional neglect due to parental divorce, spousal abuse, indefinite expulsion from the home by their parents and parental criminality were all factors behind their different offences. The participating social workers had different responses to these factors. The flawed investigative policy, which goes through the parents themselves and avoids involving children who experience familial problems, was seen by all the participants as obscuring some of the children’s familial problems. This assessment policy only considers parents’ perceptions of familial problems and their impact on children:

*Nader (FG):* We only interview parents about the familial problems the child encounters in the home, and even the effects of those problems on children are only shared according to parent's perceptions...That's the problem, yeah, this makes children's views of their problems unknown.

*Various (FG):* Yeah, yeah.

*I:* Why do you think children are not involved in the assessment process?

*Jamal (FG):* Because we are not used to taking children's views seriously, we always see them as unable to assess their problems and thus their assessments as unreliable.

The above assertions, in particular Jamal's statement, indicate that children are considered incomplete members of society who cannot express themselves regarding their problems or issues affecting their lives. This limited view means children's wider familial problems go unacknowledged. The participants explicitly explain why parents do not disclose particular familial problems during the investigative process, offering two explanations. First, all the participating social workers claimed that the issues of child emotional neglect and spousal abuse are not culturally considered as factors influencing youth crime, and thus parents might not disclose them:

*Fares (FG):* In fact, we are all live in a society that does not consider the absence of love and affection toward the child and parental violent acts as problems or even issues influencing or leading to youth crime; therefore, parents don't talk about these issues and they remain unknown...

*Nader (FG):* That's right, but don't forget that we as staff also hold such views because we have never asked parents about the levels of emotional warmth they provide for their children, or investigate the extent of positive relations between the couples...we limit our investigation to finding familial circumstances that have a direct impact upon children's crimes [laughter].

*Various (FG):* Definitely, that's right.

Nader's assertions indicate that what keeps children's problems of emotional neglect and spousal abuse unknown is the flawed investigative process itself, in which staff neither investigates the extent of emotional attachment between parents and their children nor the positivity of relations between couples. Overall, this focus group exchange clearly displays that emotional neglect of children and spousal abuse are socially constructed, as they are not perceived as problematic, nor are they seen to have a direct impact upon youth crime. Ahmad and Jamal go so far as to describe the cultural pressure towards spousal violence, where this issue is confined to the privacy of the home. Disclosing incidents of domestic violence or allowing strangers to intervene in cases of disclosure is considered culturally shameful; hence, it is difficult to track or treat:

*Ahmad (FG):* Families themselves hide any incidents of domestic violence because such issues are related to the privacy of the home, and it is culturally *shameful* to disclose them to strangers...

*Jamal (FG):* Yeah, and, equally, it is considered shameful to allow strangers to *intervene* even if incidents of parents' violent acts have become known.

*Various (FG):* Yes.

Second, the flaws in the system of removing the child from the family when issues of parental criminality or children's expulsion from home become known to staff is perceived as motivating parents to intentionally withhold information about such behaviour. This system was seen as problematic, since the construction of the Jordanian tribal traditions rejects the removal of a child from his family clan, even in extreme familial conditions or cases of maltreatment. The following exchange between Fares, Jamal and Nader illustrates these points:

*Jamal (FG):* Doing the assessment solely through parents leads them to intentionally not admit to their criminal behaviour and their expulsion of their children from home. So these issues remain unknown to us...

*Nader (FG):* Yeah, exactly, because the problem rests on the system we provide; that is, the removal of a child from his clan and his placement in residential care for child protection after completing his court sentence here...you know, this is not consistent with our family tribal mores, which refuses such intervention even within extreme family conditions and abuse.

The above extracts make apparent that the removal of a child from his family clan in cases of chronic mistreatment or when parents are not qualified to provide appropriate care contradicts the court Placement Care Order, discussed in Chapter Four. This court order basically encourages placing the child with relatives, and the order is seen as a last resort. However, all the above endorsements indicate that a failure to disclose issues of child emotional neglect, spousal abuse, parental criminality and children's expulsion from home during the investigative process with parents is attributed to cultural dilemmas. In their attempt to treat these dilemmas, the participating social workers make a variety of recommendations. Involving children during the investigative stage was seen by the participants as helpful in identifying and building up a realistic picture of their actual familial problems. This identification requires training staff on how to encourage children to speak about their problems during the assessment interview, particularly about sensitive familial problems, as Jamal asserts:

*Ahmad (FG):* I think that children should also be involved in the assessment stage, as they are experiencing these familial issues, so they can give a more accurate picture of what their life is like.

*Jamal (FG):* But we also need training on how to encourage them to talk about their *familial* problems, particularly about sensitive familial

issues.

Once children's familial problems are determined, particularly with regards to child emotional neglect, increasing parental attention to the child, building warmth and meeting the child's emotional needs, the participants suggested promoting strong parent-child bonds, which in turn reduce children's involvement in antisocial and criminal acts:

*Nader (FG):* When cases of emotional detachment are disclosed by children, I think we need to advise divorced parents to look after their children's emotional needs by *achieving* emotional gratification for the child, yeah, intimate emotions. This reduces the child's opportunity to act out

The participants continued to provide recommendations for addressing the effects of spousal abuse on children's criminal acts. Media awareness programmes were seen as necessary in helping to reduce marital conflict and parents' defensive communication patterns by providing awareness programmes for families. This awareness included educating parents about the impact of violent acts on children and their criminality, and advising them to promote effective communication patterns by using dialogue and persuasion and learning anger management techniques in managing their conflict issues and stress. This suggested solution stemmed from the participants' view that direct intervention with regards to the issues of spousal abuse would not be accepted by families due to the refusal to allow strangers to intervene in marital issues:

*Fares (FG):* In fact, direct intervention with regards to parents' violent acts will not be accepted by families as it seen as shameful, so the only way is to use indirect intervention through media, particularly T.V. I mean awareness programmes that educate parents about the

possible impacts of spousal abuse on children and their criminality while also encouraging them to use positive ways of handling their marital stress, such as dialogue, persuasion and anger management techniques in order to reduce their aggressive communication methods.

Providing a kinship foster care programme until the child reaches adulthood was also suggested by participants as a way of keeping children away from extreme familial conditions of parental criminality and chronic maltreatment, which in turn would reduce children's opportunities to re-offend. To make this happen, potential foster families would need to be trained on how to provide effective care and supervision for children in order to be legally licensed as children's caregivers:

*Ahmad (FG):* For those children who live with criminal parents or are expelled from the home by their families I suggest opening a kinship foster care programme in which children should be cared for by a foster family until they reach adulthood, as I understood this solution reflects children's interests.

*Nader (FG):* Yes, and it would also be a solution that matches our lifestyle, I mean extended family members are increasingly likely to exercise their *responsibility* of caring for children...but I also suggest that ensuring effective kinship placements requires foster relatives to be legally licensed to become the children's caregivers. In doing so they should participate in training sessions here [at the institutions] on how to provide useful care and supervision for a child.

The suggestion of providing a kinship foster care programme was perceived as a solution that was in the children's best interests of remaining within their family clans, as children disclosed in Chapter Eight, as well as being consistent with the norms of Jordanian families, in which "members of extended family are increasingly likely to exercise their responsibility of caring for children", as Nader asserts.

## **The Imbalances of Power and Sensitivity to Talk**

While the participating social workers referred the failure to identify children's familial problems and their effect on youth crime to the silencing of children's voices during the investigative process, all the participating child monitors referred this failure to their lack of skills in encouraging children to express their problems during the investigative process:

*Hassan (FG):* During the assessment stage I asked children if they had problems in their family lives that made them offend...they said no but at the same *time* I felt that many of them had something to say but were not disclosing it...I don't know how to let them to talk about it.

*Ali (FG):* Yeah, the same occurred with me... I noticed they felt frightened and worried about talking to me, and wanted to stop the investigation.

*Monther (FG):* Definitely yes, and especially with divorce issues. I think they may feel anxious talking directly about painful situations...yeah, we are not qualified to actually run investigations with children.

This group exchange clearly indicates that the failure to target children's behavioural problems influenced by parental divorce rests with the staff's lack of skills in encouraging children to express their problems. This is because children of divorced parents may either feel powerless next to the adult staff, as Ali states, or may be anxious about talking directly about divorce, as Monther asserts.

As children's inability to adapt to parental divorce is displayed in different forms of negative feelings, identifying those different feelings towards divorce is required in order to provide appropriate intervention. The participants recommended the need for adequate training in ways of encouraging children

to express their specific feelings about divorced parents during the investigation process:

*Majid (FG):* As children express their feelings towards parental divorce *differently*, it is important to identify these feelings in order to provide appropriate help...and in order to do this we actually need to be trained on how to encourage children to express their feelings related to divorce...

*Various (FG):* Exactly, that's it.

However, the majority of participants go so far as to state that even if they have knowledge about children's behavioural problems in adjusting to parental divorce, they are unable to successfully use this knowledge to design effective interventions. This is because of the absence of academic knowledge and staff training on how children could be helped to positively cope with parental divorce. Therefore, they suggested that policy-makers could provide them with training on what kind of effective intervention they should practice, the period of intervention and the mode of delivery:

*Ali (FG):* I can't suggest what kind of support those children have to receive in helping them adjust to divorce in positive ways... because we do not have academic knowledge or training about the *social* work with children's behavioural problems. We also need policy-makers to provide us with the training required on what kind of support and effective intervention we should provide, the period of intervention and the way of delivering the intervention.

*Hassan (FG):* You are right, although we have acquired practical experience during our current work in the institutions, we have no training on how to do immediate intervention when we discover new behavioural problems in children, yeah, that's the truth.

It is apparent that the above assertions contradict the typical requirements of the social work profession in terms of supporting children. These requirements

stress the need for either academic knowledge or staff training on effective interventions to address children's behavioural problems. However, only one participant was able to suggest a variety of interventions to help children develop effective coping skills in response to divorce:

*Majid (FG):* Children who blame themselves for parental divorce need to get rid of their guilt...in order to change their negative thoughts and feelings. Yeah, and children who intentionally commit crimes to prevent parental divorce need help to change their misconceptions toward divorce...yeah, to know that their parents could not fix their problems and weren't happy together anymore...divorce is better than being together with no love... but that does not mean that they don't love the [child]. And we need to teach other children to practice techniques for safely expressing anger...

Majid suggests providing different interventions to help children adjust to divorce. For children who blame themselves when their parents' divorce, or who express anger and behave aggressively, he suggests intervening to ease their guilt, and teaching children several strategies for expressing anger appropriately. Majid also suggests clarifying divorce-related misconceptions for children who think that criminality is a way to make their parents stay together.

## **Summary**

The evidence reviewed in this chapter suggests interrelated and complicated obstacles faced by the participating staff in their attempts to achieve the institutions' aims, and in identifying the causes of children's involvement in crime.

Within the familial environment, the legal acceptance of hitting children, along

with the cultural understanding that child-rearing practices are considered private family issues, made the institutions' efforts to prevent child abuse and supervisory neglect ineffective. To practice effective intervention, rewriting Jordanian law to prevent physical child abuse and setting out legal texts obligating families to attend institutional interventions with regards to child supervisory neglect are recommended. Limited delivery of child abuse and supervisory neglect interventions within the institutional settings, short-term intervention for chronically abused children and the institutional reliance on talking methods in promoting parental supervision over children's behaviour were other issues hindering effective intervention. Therefore, providing home-based intervention, longer-term intervention within community social services for chronic cases of child abuse, and visual films regarding parental supervision of children's behaviour were all recommended by focus group participants.

The failure to identify that child emotional neglect and spousal violence are factors which may influence youth crime returns us to the cultural issue, which does not perceive these conditions as having a direct impact upon children's criminal behaviour. This cultural perception limits the investigation of particular familial problems, and these circumstances remain unaddressed. Failure to involve children in the assessment process also prevents the identification of child emotional neglect, spousal abuse, parental criminality and physical expulsion of children from the home.

In addressing these problems, the participants suggest involving children in the assessment stage; this also requires staff to be trained in how to encourage

children to speak about their problems during the investigative process. In response to child emotional neglect, the participants suggested promoting strong parent-child emotional bonds. Media awareness programmes were viewed as necessary in treating spousal abuse by educating parents on effective communication patterns and anger management techniques. In response to the impact of parental criminality and children's expulsion from the home, a kinship foster care programme was suggested by the social workers as a solution that takes into account children's interests and Jordanian tribal culture.

Children fail to benefit from both education and career training because these programmes are scheduled at the same time, and because the vocational training centres were originally established for training adults, where the scheduled morning sessions only benefit adults, not children. In addressing this issue, the participants recommended establishing a separate vocational training centre for children from all financial backgrounds, and providing the required training in evening sessions, as this lies within children's interests. The absence of a reconciliation document from the victim's family for children who committed serious crimes was another obstacle preventing some children from attending school, because their exit from the institution could expose them or others to risk. The inability of some families to accompany their children to school was another issue that hindered the children's education. In surmounting these hurdles, the participants recommended the establishment of educational classrooms within each institutional setting, equipped with teachers qualified to teach the public school curriculum.

The institutions failed to address the impact of parental divorce and children's inability to adjust to it because of the staff's lack of knowledge, training and skills in how they could encourage children to express their problems during the investigative process. Small salaries and understaffing, along with the staff's interrelated roles, prevented staff from implementing effective interventions in terms of modifying children's negative behaviours. In addressing these hurdles, training staff on techniques that could encourage children to express their problems with parental divorce, motivating staff and employing more staff were recommendations made to ensure the effectiveness and actual implementation of the existing behavioural intervention programmes. One participant recommended helping children adjust to divorce, getting rid of guilt, teaching children to express anger in appropriate ways and clarifying divorce-related misconceptions. To this end, these findings indicate the inconsistency between the RCIs' principle of rehabilitating children in conflict with the law and their actual practices, including the lack of policies in place to meet these aims.

## **Chapter Ten**

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

#### **Introduction**

The aim of this study was to understand the objectives of residential care institutions (RCIs) in Jordan for children in conflict with the law as they attempt to reduce offending by convicted children, and to consider whether these objectives meet children's needs, according to children's own perspectives and experiences. The children who participated in the study were aged 12 to 17 years old and sentenced to RCIs. This study was based on qualitative methods, using data from 47 individual interviews with residential staff; two focus groups, one with social workers and the other with child monitors (with an average of four participants in each group); participant observation with 46 children from two institutions; and 66 individual interviews with children. This chapter discusses the key findings from this data, as presented in Chapters Six to Nine of this thesis, and highlights the relevance of these findings to existing theoretical and empirical knowledge. This chapter is structured according to the key themes which have emerged from the study findings, and is situated in the context of the theoretical frameworks of childhood and youth crime outlined in Chapter Two.

Traditional and contemporary theoretical perspectives of childhood and youth crime are drawn upon to facilitate a nuanced and theoretical understanding of the study findings. These theoretical frameworks share a common interest in

the concepts of children as 'socially becoming' and 'social beings', although they offer contrasting possibilities for the application of these concepts to children's lives. Essentially, these theoretical frameworks highlight the impact of inherent structures on children's everyday lives by examining the ways in which children influence their social circumstances, as well as the ways in which they are influenced by them. By reflecting on the study findings in the context of differing ideas found in childhood and youth crime theoretical frameworks, the validity of these contrasting ideas is evaluated as a means of understanding workers' and children's experiences of the residential care institutional objectives as they respond to youth crime.

The central themes which have emerged from this study are grounded in an understanding of policy-making theories concerned with different explanations of youth crime used by policymakers, and practitioner theories used by RCI staff, as well as the convergence of theory and practice according to children's views and experiences of the institutional objectives. As such, this chapter begins by discussing the RCIs' objectives within wider institutional structures in the context of youth crime prevention theories. Children's own perspectives and experiences regarding whether the institutional rehabilitation programmes are beneficial in meeting their needs are then discussed in the context of the theoretical frameworks of crime prevention used by the RCIs. Particular consideration is given to identifying which theories of crime prevention (if any) the RCIs adhere to. The perspectives and experiences of social workers and child monitoring staff regarding the obstacles that contribute to their inability to address children's wider needs are also discussed. This chapter concludes by highlighting the theoretical and empirical contribution of this thesis, including the

implications for future research, policy and practice.

## **Children and Familial Interventions**

### **The absence of children's voices: the absence of realities of youth crime causation**

Parental divorce, spousal violence, indefinite expulsion from the home and parental criminality were familial circumstances experienced by a significant number of children in this study. Despite the fact that these familial problems were assumed to have influenced their criminal acts, they had not been addressed by the institutions. For some children, divorced parents neglected to provide them with affection, love and security, causing them to skip school because of their unwillingness to continue their education; instead, they spent time in the street, which motivated them to commit criminal acts. This finding concurs with the work of Abdullah & Makhamreh (1994), which suggests that parental divorce may decrease the quality of parenting and interrupt emotional closeness between parent and child, weakening child-parent ties and causing the child to feel stressed and then to act out and engage in criminal behaviour.

Other children in this study had experienced an inability to positively adjust to parental divorce, which developed in them the negative emotions of stress, frustration, anger and self-blame, in turn prompting criminal adaptations to relieve their internal pressure and frustration. This finding resonates with existing research evidence which suggests that children may experience stress and may blame themselves for parental conflict and divorce, leading to feelings

of guilt and frustration, which in turn might lead them to become involved in criminal acts (Al-Qaisi & Alawneh, 1997). Further, Ahmad (2002) argued that children from broken families are at higher risk of externalising their troubles and practicing deviant behaviour, particularly with their peers in school, because of the anger they feel towards their parents.

Other participating children also suggested that witnessing spousal violence contributed to them learning that violent behaviour is an appropriate way of solving their interpersonal problems. This finding qualifies and moves beyond existing research which claims that adults who abuse their spouse are more likely to abuse their children (Al-Houmsi, 2004; Majdalawi, 2000; Al-Zou'bi, 1994). The participating children also indicated that parental criminality had taught them deviant behaviour and law violation, echoing existing research evidence (Abo-Hani, 1997; NCHA, 2004; MOSD, 2003; NCHR, 2005).

Other children stated that they had experienced indefinite expulsion from the home due to parental characteristics such as alcohol consumption and criminality, which created their poverty because it caused an absence of adequate financial support; stealing was their means of survival. This finding contradicts the work of Albasri et al. (2001), which related children's indefinite expulsion from the home to overcrowded households and large families.

Difficult family backgrounds and challenging social circumstances which had been experienced by children in this study, and which may have impacted on the children's criminality, did not appear to be reflected in the institutional understandings of youth crime. Significantly, the flawed investigative policy, in

which social workers talk only to parents and avoid involving children who experience familial problems, was seen by the participating social workers as obscuring children's familial problems so that they remained unknown and unaddressed. The findings from the current study contradict the existing Jordanian national legislation, which provides children with freedom to express their views and the right to participate in all matters affecting them, and social policies that aim to promote the participatory role of children, such as the Children's Parliament and Youth Voices campaign (NCHR, 2005; UNCRC, 2006). Further, the refusal to listen to children's views regarding their own life experiences within the RCIs' administrative proceedings is also in conflict with Jordan's obligations under the provisions of the UNCRC, which stress the importance of ensuring the best interests of the child in all administrative decisions, programmes and services which have an impact on children (UNCRC, 2006).

Significantly, the findings from the current study demonstrated that children were not involved in the assessment process because the participating social workers hold the public view that children are incompetent members of society who cannot express themselves regarding their problems or issues affecting their lives. Moreover, all the participants claimed that the issue of child emotional neglect and spousal abuse are not culturally considered as factors influencing youth crime. Therefore, they neither investigate the extent of emotional attachment between parents and their children nor the positivity of relations between couples during the investigative process with parents. This finding reflects the suggestion made by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, that respect for the views of the child in Jordan remains

limited, owing to traditional societal attitudes towards children within the family and the community at large (UNCRC, 2006). Critically reviewing the ideas of the socially constructed child perspective, the issue of children's needs and welfare is always presented through adults making decisions for children on the basis of the claim that it is in 'their best interests' (Alderson, 1994; Oakley, 1994). Further, it is argued that emphasising the cultural basis of needs by assuming that children's needs have to be met by adults because of children's vulnerability and children's deficient level of personhood, makes it difficult to identify the fundamental aspects of children's lives (Woodhead, 1990). On the whole, it would appear that although the participating social workers in this study are aware of children's needs for a healthy familial environment, their understandings of such needs remained culturally determined, since adults were mediated to speak on behalf of children and since ideas of child self-mediation and children's interests were not established (James et al., 1998). Thus, this deterministic view of children on the part of the participating social workers makes it difficult to reach a deeper understanding of children's lived experiences and renders the complexities of their wider familial problems unacknowledged, in turn denying them their right to receive effective care interventions from their institutions.

While the problem appears to be cultural, it could be argued that social workers were not expected to work with a critical understanding of these cultural constraints. But in fact, it was expected that staff would work with an awareness and recognition of children's rights in order to make the principle of child rehabilitation within RCIs more effective, logical and reasonable. This finding is significant in light of the recognised concern regarding the lack of

adequate and systematic training on children's rights for professional groups working with and for children in Jordan, such as institution administrators and social workers (UNCRC, 2006).

Paradoxically, the findings from this study suggest that the participating child behaviour monitors had involved children during the investigative process in order to identify whether children have behavioural problems in dealing with stressful situations that might be relevant to their offending behaviour. Nevertheless, they were unable to target children's inability to adjust to parental divorce because of their lack of academic knowledge, training and skills in how they could encourage children to express their problems during the investigative process. This is because children of divorce may either feel powerless next to the adult staff, or anxious about talking directly about divorce.

Essentially, the absence of any professional education or social work training with children for the majority of institutional workers contributed to their inability not only to address the imbalances of power between adults and children during the assessment process, but also to provide immediate and appropriate interventions when children did disclose their familial problems. These assertions contradict the typical requirements of the social work profession with children, which stress the need for either academic knowledge or staff training on effective interventions to address children's behavioural and environmental problems (Mataukah, 2011).

Reflecting on the study findings, it is apparent that employing under-qualified workers to manage the issues of child rehabilitation within RCIs has created

substandard services, particularly in the face of institutional claims to provide a complex and demanding service for children in conflict with the law. Also, disagreement between the institutional staff regarding the competency or incompetency of children in expressing their own views and needs did not actually reflect the seriousness of the RCIs' formal and informal policies for addressing the complexities and challenges of the familial circumstances of children who offend. Indeed, how caregivers understand the position of children is crucial in determining the ways that they think about children and speak to and interact with them. Morrow & Richard (1996) argue that acknowledgment of children's competency is fundamental to the development of a coherent methodological framework by those who are working for and with children. Thus, through the silencing of children's voices and/or the inability to address the imbalances of power between children and adults during the investigative process by child caregivers, the RCIs are violating children's rights by failing to identify and establish a realistic picture of their actual problems in order to address them. As such, it is difficult to assume that RCIs actually aim to correct children's negative experiences within their familial environment in order to reduce their opportunities for further involvement in criminal acts. In this regard, it could be argued that if RCI workers adhere to children's right to voice their views regarding situations and contexts that affect their lives, and if they use child-friendly methods (e.g. drawings) during the investigative process, institutional practices of child rehabilitation would be more effective and promising.

***Addressing child abuse and supervisory neglect: Is it just an illusion?***

The participating social workers aim to resolve child physical abuse largely, although not exclusively, by urging families to exercise dialogue, persuasion, setting meaningful rewards and non-physical punishment as effective disciplinary methods in responding to their child's behaviour. This finding echoes the existing Jordanian and Western policy literature, which suggests advising parents to use assertive rather than physically punitive disciplinary practices (Ghaith, 2009; James et al. 1998). This aim is the participants' attempt to tackle the Jordanian cultural acceptance of physical punishment as a method of disciplining and regulating the behaviour of children and protecting children from harm. Participants' responses indicated their views that child physical abuse occurs because of the Jordanian socio-cultural context, which emphasises the deep-rooted and continuing belief in the importance of unequal power relations between adults and children in maintaining the social order (Al-Habashneh, 2001).

Further, Hamdani (1993) argued that there is routine use of power by parents over children across all social groups, since physical punishment is seen as appropriate, normalised and acceptable in Jordan as a form of control and discipline. However, the RCIs' aim of tackling the Jordanian cultural acceptance of child physical punishment concurs with the aim of Jordanian social organisations which advocate children's rights to protection, and currently campaign to redefine the cultural norms and power dynamics that sanction child physical punishment (NCPC, 2000; NCFA, 2005). Essentially, parents are encouraged to exercise effective disciplinary methods to develop child-parent emotional attachment in order to prevent the negative emotion of anger which may result from experiences of familial violence; ultimately as a way of

preventing youth crime. This finding resonates with Alawnah's (2009) suggestion about the importance of preventing emotional and behavioural problems in children caused by their maltreatment.

The participants also indicated that tackling child abuse prevents children from roaming the streets, as they would remain under parental supervision, which in turn minimises the possibility of their engagement in criminal acts. Reflecting on the study findings, it is argued that the phenomenon of street children in Jordan is socially and legally classified as a social problem (Al-Flahat, 2005; Baradiee, 2000) since it generates societal panic about youth street crime, thereby requiring state intervention in an attempt to resolve it (Blumer, 1971; Schneider, 1985; Al-Flahat, 2005). This is to say that addressing child abuse among children who escape violence by leaving their home and roaming the streets will also help avoid them attracting the attention of the authorities (e.g. the police) and thus being criminalised by the youth justice system.

The participating social workers in this study also aimed to urge families to control their child's behaviour inside and outside the home. This aim involved reactivating the father's role in single-mother families, encouraging step-parents' engagement in parenting roles and advising lower-class working-mother families to place their child with relatives after the school day. Encouraging parental supervision over children's behaviour was the institutional method of preventing youth crime. This is because adequate parental supervision was perceived as necessary in increasing children's levels of self-control and thus their conformity to positive behaviour, since they would be able to anticipate the long-term consequences of their misbehaviour. This finding is

reinforced by Ghaith (2009), who suggests that adequate parental supervision and monitoring of children's behaviour helps prevent youth crime.

Although the measures adopted by RCIs with regards to addressing parental abuse and supervisory neglect were aimed at preventing youth crime, all the participating children indicated that these problems remain unresolved. This, they suggested was mainly due to their parents lack of participation in institutional sessions for handling these issues. This finding clearly challenges the institutions' intended aims with regards to promoting effective child-rearing methods, and reflects the inconsistency between the RCIs' objectives and their actual practices. To a certain extent, the findings from the current study concur with the work of Al-Qasim (1995), who claimed that addressing poor parental supervision and child abuse has failed within the family guidance programme in RCIs, although the findings of that study were not based on children's views, but rather on observation. During the focus group discussion with the participating social workers, it was apparent that parents' refusal to attend institutional interventions regarding child abuse and parental supervisory neglect was associated with the cultural view of families in Jordanian society, in which rearing children is considered a private issue, entirely up to the parents. This finding is confirmed by the National Council for Family Affairs (2005). Further, the institutional failure to promote adequate parental supervision over children's behaviour also referred to the absence of legislation obligating families to participate in institutional interventions that aim to raise families' awareness on this topic.

Significantly, the cultural and legal acceptance of hitting children as a method of

raising them has empowered families to avoid child abuse treatment sessions. The participants indicated that the inconsistency between the law and institutional definitions of child abuse made the institutional interventions ineffective. This finding is significant in light of the existing debate over the cultural acceptance of physical punishment of children in Jordan and Article 62 of the Penal Code, which permits parents to discipline their children within the limits established by “general custom” (UNCRC, 2006; NCHR, 2007). In this regard, it is argued that neglect and violation of children’s rights are surface manifestations of problems stemming from complex and deep-rooted societal norms which emphasise the powerless status of children on a structural level (NCFA, 2006). Nevertheless, awareness-raising programmes about the issue of child physical abuse have not been regularised or effectively supported with practical interventions to change public attitudes to, and behaviour with, children.

Indeed, the lack of public education and awareness of children’s rights to protection from harm contributes to the reinforcement of cultural acceptance of corporal punishment of children within the family domain (UNCRC, 2006; NCHR, 2006). Reflecting on the study findings, it is apparent that the cultural and legal acceptance of physical punishment of children renders ineffective the institutional interventions that aim to stop it. Indeed, the disagreement between the social, cultural and political contexts in Jordanian society regarding the concept of child physical abuse makes it difficult to assume that child abuse in Jordan is seen as a social problem; in order for something to be classified as a social problem, there has to be collective societal concern (Mills, 1959).

If the problem is addressed as a public issue then the collective responses should combine to study the power differentiation between the two generations for highlighting the dimensions of the problem (Punch, 2002). In this regard, it could be argued that although RCIs understand children's rights to protection from harm and aim to address child physical abuse, such understanding has not reached all social contexts; therefore, it is difficult to assume that children in Jordan are seen as a minority group and category with their own rights and needs. Rather, the absence of an integrated national strategic framework and action plan to address the powerless status of children on a structural level, and to support the RCIs' aim to address physical punishment and its impact on youth crime, highlights that child physical abuse in Jordan is still socially constructed since it is encouraged by both cultural and legal acceptance (James et al., 1998).

On the whole, it would appear that the complexities and contradictions that characterise the institutional attempts to address child abuse and supervisory neglect demonstrate the difficulty of effectively implementing the institutional aims of promoting adequate parental supervision, developing child-parent emotional attachment and protecting children from violence. This in turn demonstrates the institutional departure from youth crime prevention ideas found within Agnew's strain theory and self-control theories. Further, notwithstanding the absence of integrated strategies that require RCI workers to intervene in some family situations, RCIs continue to intervene in families' methods of child-rearing. It could, therefore, be argued that the non-acknowledgment by RCI policy makers of the reality of Jordanian cultural and

legal contexts that stress that child-rearing practices are decided privately within the family domain and the extent to which these ideologies might hinder the workers' attempts to intervene within families raises suspicion around the RCIs' stated aims of child rehabilitation.

Indeed, some children in this study indicated that parental abusive methods against them remain unresolved due to their previous experiences, where their parents attended the physical abuse interventional programme but continued to abuse them after each release. This is because, as the participating social workers indicated, chronic abuse of children cannot be stopped by short-term interventions within institutional settings, as later care services in the community are not provided for children who receive support within the institutional settings. The participants contend that these families receive short-term intervention and that client support is then terminated when the child returns to his normal family life, where the child abuse resumes. On the whole, it is apparent that the institutional failure to address corporal punishment of children is not only limited to the absence of a culturally and legally supportive environment for RCIs' objectives in this regard but also to the absence of state plans that ensure 'follow-up care' in terms of social work teams in the community continuing the interventions required to address the needs of children.

### **Children and Issues of Socialisation: Religious and Cultural Instruction**

The religious preachers in this study all aimed to instil in children the religious beliefs that stealing, desire for illegal sexual activity and taking revenge on

others are all behaviours prohibited in Islam, thus developing children's religious faith and self-control. Further, the participants indicated that dealing with the negative culture of revenge is not limited to helping children recognise that such behaviour is prohibited in Islam. Other key religious methods for handling conflicts with people are reminders of the Islamic religious value of tolerance for people's mistakes, and encouraging them to resort to the courts to resolve their disputes. In general, these findings resonate with the recommendations made by the MOSD (2005), which suggest teaching children norms, religious beliefs, pro-social behaviours and consequences for rule violation to improve their developmental abilities and cognitive behaviour, will enable them to make more responsible decisions. On the other hand, the participating child monitors aimed to instil in children the cultural value of shame regarding their access to sexually explicit material in order to develop their self-control, thus preventing violent and rape crimes, reflecting the suggestions made by the MOSD (2005).

Significantly, children in this study considered that the religious and cultural classes have supported them in developing a religious conscience and cultural beliefs, as well as moral reasoning. Developing these religious and cultural values resonates with the RCIs' aims to help children positively deal with their monetary and sexual goals and interpersonal problems. It could, therefore, be argued that RCIs actually adhere to the self-control theory of crime prevention, which suggests that effective child-rearing involves developing a conscience in children during the socialisation process in order to develop their level of self-

control, enabling them to resist engaging in criminal acts (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Institutional measures of crime prevention also included the aim of advising children to choose peers who display good attributes. Choosing peers with good characters is seen as a cultural demand that children should meet in order to present conforming behaviours by associating with peers who also practice such conforming behaviours. This finding concurs with the suggestion of the Ministry of Social Development, which is that children need to learn new skills for forming relationships with positive peers (MOSD, 2005).

Further, the RCIs also aimed to rebuild the confidence of children labelled as criminals, and promote a positive self-identity instead of a criminal identity. In doing so, the participants use a sensitivity-reduction strategy that promotes satisfaction with one's behaviour regardless of negative media and public portrayals, in turn preventing youth crime. This aim was based upon the participants' belief that children reoffend because they are labelled as criminals by the media due to their first offences, and such portrayals cause other people to refuse to treat them like normal children; this is particularly true of working-class children and children from divorced families. This stigmatises children, and accordingly they choose to act and reoffend in line with their new label and identity. This articulated link between media demonisation of particular groups of children and youth crime is corroborated by existing research evidence (Al-Ali, 2000; Al-Rashidi, 2004; Bandari, 2002; Al-Rashidi, 1999).

Reflecting on the current study findings, it would appear that the participants over-simplify the process of demonising children who offend in Jordanian society by focusing solely on the symbolic demonisation of children by the

media as the ultimate cause of reoffending. The participants thus ignore the reality that symbolic demonisation of children caused by public anxiety over the issue of youth crime has reached the youth justice institutions (police and juvenile courts) where children go through a variety of official procedures in which they are perceived as deviant due to their criminal acts (NCHR, 2001; Al-Amouri, 2002). This reflects the argument made by Goldson (2001, p. 39), who argued that “the symbolic demonisation of children raised anxieties about childhood per se and in doing so provided the legitimacy for a correctional emphasis in law and policy. It is at this juncture that the symbolic meets the institutional demonisation”. Further, the institutional method of preventing reoffending by rebuilding the confidence of children labelled as criminals contradicts the findings from the current study, since the participants cited people’s insistence on perceiving children who offend as criminals as the core reason for children’s reoffending. It could therefore be argued that this institutional aim seems unrealistic; it is difficult for children to build a positive self-identity when people perceive them as deviants and criminals. This is particularly true as long as children in conflict with the law experience symbolic and institutional criminalisation by the media and the youth justice system. Indeed, Lemert (1947, p. 19) emphasised that if “there is no official reaction, offending behaviour may dissipate or at least fail to accelerate, since the notion of a criminal career will not be established”.

However, children in this study indicated that their need to address peer influence and their labelled identity as criminals remains unmet. This failure happens either because these interventions are not actually practiced or because they are not effectively implemented. This finding highlights the

institutions' failure to achieve their suggested aims, which seek to guide children in choosing peers with good characters, and rebuild the confidence of labelled children by promoting a positive self-identity instead of a criminal identity. The participating child monitors claimed that small salaries and understaffing, along with their interrelated roles due to a lack of staff, prevent them from implementing effective interventions to modify children's negative behaviours. This finding may reflect the argument which suggests that the lack of financial incentives for RCI workers leads to the reluctance of many people to apply for jobs in these institutions, particularly as such work entails risk and difficulty in dealing with children in conflict with the law (NCHR, 2011). Reflecting on the study findings, it could be argued that policy-makers have not carefully thought out fiscal stimuli for institutional workers and adequate human resources in helping the child monitors effectively administer and implement the objectives of the behaviour modification programme.

### **The Continued Socio-Economic Impoverishment of Children: Complexities and Contradictions**

The social workers in this study aimed to tackle school truancy caused by child poverty by offering three interventional methods of combating poverty. First, some participants aimed to connect children from low-income families with vocational training centres in order to learn a career to help them participate in the labour market when they returned to their community. Second, other participants aimed to support children from non-income families with a state monthly salary by connecting their families with the National Aid Fund. Third, other participants aimed to encourage absent fathers in single-mother families

to fulfil their responsibility to meet all of their children's material needs. This aim was based on the participants' understanding that child poverty is caused by fathers' neglect or refusal to financially support their children after divorce, echoing the approach of Al-Rabadi et al. (1994). Reflecting on the findings from the current study, it could be argued that the participants' aim to encourage absent fathers to financially support their children contradicts the participants' view, in which fathers are clearly seen as being part of the child poverty problem in single-mother families. It could, therefore, be argued that this institutional method of reducing child poverty seems to be an unrealistic solution.

The institutional methods of treating child poverty discussed above have been suggested by the MOSD (2007), except for encouraging absent fathers to meet their children's material needs; thus, this is a new theme emerging from this study. Indeed, the Ministry of Social Development determined the general objectives of institutional programmes to be employed and developed by residential staff (MOSD, 2006). Fundamentally, the existing institutional measures of reducing child poverty seek to prevent youth crime. It is argued that reducing child poverty helps children achieve their material goals through legitimate means, in turn helping prevent property theft crimes, and helps prevent child truancy influenced by child labour by keeping children involved in school settings. School involvement was seen as a prevention measure for youth crime, since children's energy and time would be spent on education, and they would be under school supervision. This finding concurs with the belief of Masarwa (1997), who argued that involving children in educational settings helps them become committed to learning and limits the time in which they can

become involved in deviant activities.

Further, the participants in the current study indicated that school attachment helps children learn pro-social, normative behaviour through education, which in turn reduces their opportunities to reoffend. This reflects the belief of the Ministry of Education (2003), which highlights the importance of the national curriculum in shaping and developing children's morality. To prepare children to continue their school education after their release, the participating social workers in this study also aimed to involve all children in daily educational classes, either in the institutional setting (literacy and cultural strengthening classes) or in public schools, according to each child's educational background. This aim is consistent with the Ministry of Social Development's recommendation (MOSD, 2009). Critically, it can be argued that children's involvement in educational settings and eliminating child poverty also protect children from being drawn into the youth justice system, as school truancy is legally defined as anti-social behaviour which requires the intervention of official agencies (e.g. the police) to prevent the possibilities of children engaging in criminal acts (NCFA, 2010).

However, these institutional aims that attempt to reduce youth crime have failed in practice, since the views gleaned from children indicate that poverty and school truancy remain unresolved. With regards to the institutional failure to reduce child poverty, three key themes emerged as to why this was the case. First, all the participating children from single-mother families held the view that the current institutional method of encouraging their fathers to meet their material needs would not be helpful in treating their poverty. This belief

stemmed from the participants' refusal to depend on their fathers' material support because they consider themselves able to work and actively participate in economic production, or because they want no financial help from their fathers, who they perceive as poor role models. This reflects the absence of policies acknowledging children as political social actors with the right to express their interests and opinions on methods of reducing their poverty.

This finding resonates with the work of the National Council for Family Affairs, which suggests that child economic developmental intervention is often planned without consulting the intended beneficiaries and their families, leading to ineffective outcomes (NCFA, 2006). Second, the lack or absence of state financial support for children's families contributes to the failure to reduce children's poverty. This was referred by social workers to the lack of funding that the National Aid Fund receives from the government, along with its responsibility to support different segments of society in addition to families with dependent children. It is argued that the Jordanian government experiences challenges in improving the standard of living of poor families and their dependent children due to a lack of natural resources and political pressure caused by immigration from neighbouring states, which have negatively affected Jordan's economic situation (NCFA, 2006). This may reflect the existing observations and concern regarding the very low standard of living of many children, especially in the governorates of Mafraq, Zarqa and the north-east of Amman (UNCRC, 2006). In this regard, it is apparent that the RCIs' formal policies have ignored the fact that the National Aid Fund is not the solution to child poverty, due to the poor economic situation in Jordan and the resulting lack of financial resources available for this state agency.

The third issue related to the failure to address child poverty was the scheduling conflict between the educational and vocational training programmes, in which children's choice to attend educational settings made it difficult for them to also attend the vocational training centre. This scheduling conflict proves that vocational training centres were originally established to train adults, where the scheduled morning sessions only benefit adults, as children have to be in different educational settings at that time. Reflecting on the study findings, it is apparent that RCIs' formal policies have not actually planned effective approaches to meeting children's career needs. Critically, one could argue that such scheduling conflict should be known to RCI policy makers, and this situation raises suspicion around the RCIs' intentions to reduce child poverty through empowering children with a career. This argument is particularly true in light of RCIs' claims to provide vocational training services to children from different age groups and to provide them with official certificates that facilitate their working in their communities, although Jordanian Labour Law prohibits the employment of children under the age of sixteen (MOL, 2006).

The complexities of the scheduling conflict between the educational and vocational training programmes further emerged when children in the current study indicated their inability to receive education either in institutional settings or in public school due to their participation in the vocational training centres. Other children were not able to attend public school education either because their families were unable to accompany them to school or because they had committed serious crimes; hence, leaving the institution could expose them or others to risk. This latter finding is supported by the National Centre for Human Rights' (2011) study which indicated that children who are convicted of murder

or indecent assault do not continue their education because of the risk that they may be exposed to during their exit from institutions; this deprives them of a continuing education, which is incompatible with the mandatory education noted in the Constitution, and the relevant national legislation. However, it is also argued that the Education Law does not include any clear statement making parents, guardians and caregivers responsible for sending children to school as a means of enforcing compulsory education (NCFA, 2012).

Reflecting on the study findings, it would appear that the institutional failure to meet children's educational needs is attributed to the absence of adequate social and legislative policies and arrangements for delivering an education to children within RCIs. Similarly, the failure to reduce child poverty was due to the absence of integrated and realistic policies that ensure children's right to participate in profitable employment and economic solutions. This is particularly true in light of the participating children's refusal to depend on their fathers to provide them with material needs, and poor economic conditions in Jordan that render the state fund for children in poverty ineffective. Children in the current study clearly expressed their desire to access career training as a way to address their poverty. On the whole, it is apparent that RCIs' methods of addressing children's needs for education and material goals are secondary to adult control; therefore, RCIs failed to meet these children's needs. This finding is a reflection of the socially constructed child approach; although acknowledging children's needs and rights to express their wishes, it also stresses the notion of children's vulnerability and innocence, in turn keeping children's needs and voices subordinate to what adults do and think about them (James et al., 1998). Thus, the institutional reliance on the socially constructed

child approach, particularly seen in the absence and lack of policies that ensure children's needs are met on a macro structural level, creates exploitative conditions for children regarding their needs and rights to education and a good standard of living.

Significantly, the institutional failure to meet children's educational and material needs challenges the RCIs' aims to address child truancy in order to ensure children's school attachment and keep them under school supervision to prevent youth crime. It also challenges the institutional aim to improve children's economic conditions in order to help them meet their material needs legitimately. Further, it would appear that the discussed complexities that characterise the institutional aims of addressing child truancy and poverty, found within social control and strain theories, reveals the difficulty in applying these theories of crime prevention within the Jordanian context. As long as children's problems of truancy and poverty remain untreated, poor children in the current study may continue to experience injustice due to their educational and material deprivation. While the participating workers acknowledged children's agency to resist poverty through different methods (e.g. school truancy), it could equally be argued with the failure to reduce child poverty children may return to anti-social behaviours (e.g. child labour), thus being criminalised by the youth justice system. Indeed, the participating children in this study explicitly confirmed that due to the failure to meet their material needs, they will continue to practice school truancy in order to beg or work in the street.

## **Conclusion**

This study sought to explore the objectives of RCIs for children in conflict with the law in Jordan to draw conclusions about the institutional policies attempting to reduce offending by convicted children. This study also sought to explore children's own perspectives and experiences of whether the institutional rehabilitation programmes are beneficial in meeting their needs. RCIs provide four different rehabilitative interventions; namely, a family guidance programme, a poverty-reduction programme, an educational programme and a behaviour modification programme. Indeed, the objectives of the RCIs and the theoretical underpinnings of these objectives are very similar to mainstream Western accounts of youth crime and responses to it (see James et al. 1998; Muncie, 2004). However, the findings from the current study demonstrated a range of complexities, tensions and contradictions between RCIs' aims and the cultural, social and political contexts which in turn contribute to the institutional failure to address children's familial, educational, economic and behavioural needs (see also Muncie, 2004; McLaughlin et al. 2003).

Within the familial environment, RCIs aim to promote adequate parental supervision in order to increase children's level of self-control in conforming to positive behaviour, and effective disciplinary methods to help eliminate stressful situations of violence and associated negative emotional problems. Children's experiences and perspectives of these institutional aims indicated that their problems of parental supervisory neglect and child abuse remained unresolved. This is largely, although not exclusively, referred to families' negligence in attending the institutional sessions addressing the issues. Significantly, the legal

and cultural acceptance of hitting children, along with the cultural understanding that child-rearing practices are considered private family issues, empowered families to refuse RCIs' attempts to intervene. This in turn resulted in inconsistency between the RCIs' formal policies, which aim to promote effective child-rearing practices in families, and the Jordanian cultural and legislative ideologies, which refuse and challenge state intervention. Indeed, the non-acknowledgment by RCI policy makers of the reality of Jordanian cultural and legal contexts, which stress that child-rearing practices are decided privately within the family domain, and the extent to which these ideologies might hinder workers' attempts at intervention, raises suspicion around the RCIs' stated aims of rehabilitating children.

Further, the findings from the current study demonstrate that employing under-qualified staff to work for and with children results in the institutional failure to acknowledge and address children's problems of emotional neglect, spousal abuse, parental criminality and physical expulsion from their home. Through the silencing of children's voices and/or the inability to address the imbalances of power between children and adults during the investigative process by child caregivers, the RCIs are violating children's rights by failing to identify and establish a realistic picture of their actual problems in order to address them. As such, it is difficult to assume that RCIs actually aim to correct children's negative experiences within their familial environment in order to reduce their opportunities for further involvement in criminal acts.

With regards to children's behavioural problems, RCIs aim to encourage children to choose peers with good attributes, build confidence and promote a

positive self-identity instead of a criminal identity caused by the public's refusal to treat them like children from non-criminal backgrounds. However, the insights gleaned from children demonstrate that their institutions have failed to achieve these aims, showing inconsistency between the institutional objectives and actual practices. The lack of fiscal stimuli and understaffing, along with the workers' interrelated roles, prevents child monitoring staff from implementing effective interventions in addressing children's behavioural problems. This in turn means that policy makers have not carefully thought out fiscal stimuli for institutional workers and adequate human resources in helping the child monitors effectively administer and implement the objectives of the behaviour modification programme.

With regards to children's needs for education and economic stability, RCIs aim to tackle child truancy caused by child labour by enrolling children in different educational settings while also providing them with a career, obtaining state monthly support for families and encouraging absent fathers in single-mother families to financially support their children. These institutional methods of combating poverty aim to help children achieve their goals legitimately, and to keep children in school. However, these institutional attempts to reduce youth crime have failed in practice, since the views gleaned from children indicate that their poverty and truancy remains untreated. More specifically, the absence of integrated and effective policies that ensure children's right to participate in profitable employment and economic solutions contributed to the institutional failure to reduce child poverty. This is particularly true in light of the participating children's refusal to depend on their fathers to provide them with their material needs, and poor economic conditions in Jordan that make the state fund for

children in poverty ineffective.

There was also a scheduling conflict between educational and vocational training programmes, where children's choice to attend educational settings made it difficult for them to also attend the vocational training centre. This latter point also explained the inability of other children to attend different educational settings due to their participation in the vocational training programme. Other children were not able to attend public school education either because their families were unable to accompany them to school, or because they had committed serious crimes; hence, leaving the institution could expose them or others to risk. Significantly, the institutional failure to meet children's educational and material needs is attributed to the absence of adequate social, financial and legislative policies and arrangements for delivering education and career training to children within RCIs.

On the whole, it was apparent that children as seen by institutional methods and practices remain socially constructed. This is because of the absence of social, cultural and political contexts that ensure the meeting of children's needs and their rights to protection from harm, social and educational care, and material stability on a structural level. Overall, the children's views and experiences regarding their rehabilitation demonstrates that RCIs have failed to treat their wider problems within institutional structures, which were assumed to be the core areas for consideration in attempting to reduce offending by convicted children. This failure highlights the inconsistency between RCIs' objectives of preventing youth crime and their actual practices, including the lack of policies and resources in place to administer and meet their aims.

Indeed, the apparent complexities that characterise the Jordanian cultural, social and political contexts make it difficult to facilitate RCIs' attempts to achieve their wider objectives for children within micro and macro social structures.

The disjuncture between the RCIs' different policies and the mainstream cultural-political contexts contributed to the failure to meet children's wider needs within micro and macro social structures. This in turn explains the difficulty in applying the minority group child approach, as well as control, strain, labelling and social learning theories adopted by RCIs' aims within the different Jordanian contexts. However, it is assumed that RCI policy makers have carefully thought out the ideological approaches and logistical resources within different Jordanian contexts in order to effectively implement and deliver their rehabilitation aims. It could, therefore, be argued that RCIs do not actually operate to rehabilitate children in order to reduce reoffending, but are largely punitive and operate to criminalise children and separate them from society. Children in this study implicitly and explicitly considered that the failure to treat their wider problems was the RCIs' way of punishing them for their crimes rather than rehabilitating them. This finding resonates with current debates which raise assumptions that nothing works for children who offend in RCIs— even claiming that offending could only be reduced by a small amount (Al-Majid, 2002; Rawahna, 2000; Bashiti, 1999). The criminalisation of children by RCIs also reflects media and public doubt of RCIs' ability to reduce youth crime by convicted children (NCHR, 2008).

## **Implications for policy and practice**

A range of suggestions and recommendations have been made by staff members as to how the current institutional policies could be improved to meet children's needs. Within the familial environment, changing Jordanian law to prohibit child abuse and setting out appropriate legal penalties for abusive adults seems necessary, as this legal shift may force families to stop their abusive methods to avoid legal action. It is also suggested that Jordanian law must obligate families to attend institutional interventions with regards to child supervisory neglect, while setting out an appropriate legal penalty for families who violate this obligation. To ensure the delivery of abuse and neglect institutional interventions, providing home-based interventions is suggested for families who cannot get to the institution. Further, to ensure the effectiveness of abuse and supervisory neglect interventions, providing long-term interventions within community social services for families who chronically abuse their children and providing visual methods that promote parental supervision of children, respectively, are also recommended.

Involving children during the investigative stage was seen as helpful in identifying and building a realistic picture of their actual familial problems, echoing the minority group child approach in this regard. This identification requires training staff on how to encourage children to speak about their problems during the assessment process. Media awareness programmes seem necessary in treating spousal abuse and its impact on youth crime by educating parents on effective communication patterns and anger management techniques. This suggested solution stemmed from the participants' view that

direct intervention with regards to the issue of spousal abuse will not be accepted by families, as they may refuse to allow strangers to intervene in marital issues. In treating the impact of parental criminality and children's expulsion from the home, a kinship foster care programme is recommended as a solution that lies within children's interests and Jordanian tribal culture.

In treating child emotional neglect caused by parental divorce, the participants suggested promoting strong parent-child emotional bonds in order to reduce children's involvement in antisocial and criminal acts, echoing the social control theory approach in this regard. In treating children's inability to adapt to parental divorce, the majority of participants recommend policy-makers provide them with training on what kind of effective intervention they should practice, the period of intervention and the mode of delivery. However, one participant recommended that helping children positively adjust to divorce requires helping them getting rid of guilt, teaching them to express anger in appropriate ways and clarifying divorce-related misconceptions.

In reducing child poverty and ensuring children receive an education, the participants recommended establishing a separate vocational training centre for all poor children as this lies within children's interests, and providing the required training in evening sessions, allowing children to also attend different educational settings in morning sessions. As the participants in the current study indicated, the seriousness of some children's crimes and the inability of some families to accompany their children to school hindered the children from attending school education. Therefore, they recommend the establishment of educational classrooms within each institutional setting, equipped with teachers

qualified to teach the public school curriculum. Motivating staff and employing more staff are recommendations made towards the effectiveness and actual implementation of the existing behavioural intervention programmes, particularly with regards to children's relations with criminal peers and public perception of them as criminals.

The participating children in this study were in general more willing to disclose information about their familial problems to the researcher than to male staff. Recalling the issues relating to socialising children, the Jordanian literature indicated that males have more authority over male children than females (NCFA, 1994; MOSD, 2000). This structural differentiation between adult males and females in terms of discipline and control over children's behaviour may have encouraged them to discuss their familial problems more freely with the female researcher than the male staff. This suggests a potential benefit of employing female staff in RCIs.

### **Contribution of this thesis and ideas for future research**

Concern within the media and public discourses about the increasing number of crimes committed by children—particularly children who persistently offend—have raised assumptions that nothing works for children who offend—even the claim that RCIs are ineffective in reducing youth crime. The implications of these claims for understanding the role of RCIs in responding to youth crime have received little consideration. Indeed, there is a lack of research exploring RCIs' rehabilitative programmes for children in conflict with the law. Studies concerned with the rehabilitative programmes in RCIs have tended to neglect a nuanced understanding of institutional objectives and their theoretical

underpinnings. This study sought to address this gap by providing a clear account of the institutions' specific objectives and the ways in which RCIs deliver rehabilitation services to children in conflict with the law, in an attempt to reduce children's opportunities to reoffend. By considering the issue of RCIs' objectives, this thesis contributes to understanding the theoretical underpinnings of these institutions' crime-reduction interventions. More specifically, this thesis identifies the functioning of RCIs and the systems they have in place, and draws conclusions about practices that prevent youth crime.

In Jordan, there has been no research aimed at specifically identifying the effectiveness of RCIs' programmes in terms of the children's own experiences and perspectives. Research addressing the rehabilitative programmes in RCIs has focused on examining the effectiveness of these programmes from the staff's point of view, without involving children who take part in them. This demonstrates a gap in the research in relation to children, which means that children, as the beneficiary group of the rehabilitative programmes, are marginalised in the research process, indicating that they have not been understood as competent social actors. In this thesis, examining children's own perspectives and experiences of the rehabilitation programmes provided for them is key in identifying the issues concerning the children themselves and their views on the extent to which they find these programmes are able to meet their needs.

By exploring children's accounts of residential rehabilitation programmes, this thesis contributes to a greater understanding of the complex and diverse responses which children had regarding the institutional failure to address their

wider needs and interests within the existing institutional objectives, and identifies children's perspectives of why they committed crimes. By making children's voices heard by institutional staff regarding the failure to address their best interests and needs, this thesis also contributes to understanding the staff's views and experiences of the dilemmas in achieving the institutional aims and ascertaining children's crime causation. Accordingly, a range of recommendations have been made by the RCI staff as to how policies can be improved to meet children's needs. Significantly, the core contribution of this thesis is an understanding of the disjuncture between the rhetorical representations of the RCIs regarding child rehabilitation issues and the operational realities, which clearly demonstrate that RCIs in practice have tended towards criminalising children rather than rehabilitating them.

As noted previously, children in general were more willing to disclose information about their familial problems to the female researcher than to male staff. This highlights the importance of a nuanced understanding by future research of the impact of male gender identity on communication between children and staff, and the children's ability to express their problems and their needs to staff within RCIs. Further, during the execution of this study, the researcher noted that a significant number of children had committed minor offences, yet had been transferred to residential care institutions through court custodial sentences. This contradicts a principle of the Jordanian youth justice system, which suggests alternative sentences and non-custodial sentences for children who committed minor offences (NCHR, 2011). This area is worthy of investigation by future research in order to examine how the practices of the youth justice system fits with its policies.

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## Appendix 1: Draft Letter to the Ministry of Social Development

Room 22A  
Institute of Social Work  
University of Jordan  
Amman  
Telephone: 0777 144104  
E-Mail: [a.najdawi@ju.edu.jo](mailto:a.najdawi@ju.edu.jo)  
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Directorate of Social Defence (DSC)  
The Ministry of Social Development (MSD)  
King Abdullah Street  
Amman-Jordan  
Attachment: A Letter from Jordan University

*Date*

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a postgraduate research student at the University of Stirling embarking on a research project funded by the University of Jordan. My research will examine the role of Residential Care Institutions (RCIs) for children in conflict with the law, looking at what works for them in reducing the number of re-offend by convicted children. I would like first to begin with speaking to staff members who are interested in sharing their experiences of RCIs system through one-to-one interviews, to shape a clear account of the objectives of each RCI, and the policies and strategies they use to reach their goals. At the same time I would then want to conduct participant observation with children to build up trust relations with them and to gain understanding of the extent they are engaged with their activities. Only after I have a clear account from staff about what the objectives of the institutions and strategies are, I would like to begin interviewing children themselves, to understand their perceptions of the rehabilitative programs and whether or not such programs are fulfilling children's needs from their perspectives. Finally, I want to gather the common themes found in the responses of children across three RCIs in a focus group discussion with key informant staff. This is necessary to make children heard and to help children voice their opinions and attitudes about issues that affect them.

I am writing to request your permission to carry out interviews and participant observation with people from three institutions in Amman, Al-Rousaifa, and Irbid. Listening to staff experiences will contribute to the understanding of the various ways in which RCIs attempt to reduce the chances of a child reoffending and whether the staff encounter any dilemma while they attempt to achieve the institutions' aims. The views of children will be very important to help children's voice heard by policymakers in helping professionals develop

their strategies to match children's needs. This will help in reducing the number of re-offending, which is beneficial for both the children themselves and the community as well.

I would like to speak with staff of varying length of service, from new recruits to longer standing staff to obtain perceptions from individuals with varying experience. I would like to conduct approximately 25 informal interviews with staff—either in one-to-one interviews or in focus group discussions. Individual interviews would take place in the RCIs while group discussions would take place outside RCIs, both at a convenient time for staff. Concerning the children, I'd like to conduct participant observation with children by voluntarily participate in and help adult staff with some of the activities that children engaged with through playing the role of teacher's assistant. I will use written notes to record the data collected from participant observation, at the end of the activity or during break time. Once I have built good rapport relations with children, I will terminate my participation and observation. Then I would like to conduct approximately 50 interviews, inside RCIs at a time convenient for participants. During the interviews with children I might ask children with limited talk skills to express themselves through completion sentences or writing diaries to maximise their ability to talk and lessen the power differentiation between myself as an adult and them. It is hoped that by sampling children there will be different age groups involved in the research in order to gain as much as varieties of responses. The interviews with all participants will be tape recorded to provide an accurate account of the information and last no longer than 1 hour. Participation in the research is entirely voluntary and each person would be provided with an outline of the research prior to agreeing to participate. The personal identities of the participants and the institution's name and place will be kept anonymous.

Each participant will be provided with an information sheet about the aims and what the research will involve along with a consent form to ensure that they understand their role and agree to participate. Regarding the participation of children in the research, I have to sought the consent first from the adult staff as the carers and protectors of children, once this has been secured I have then to secure the consent from children themselves.

I am currently being supervised by Dr. Margaret Malloch and Dr. Niall-Hamilton-Smith from the University of Stirling, who are both professionals in social research. The potential supervisor in Jordan will be Professor Abdelmahdi Al-Soudi, also a professional in social research. I have included their contact details below should you have any concerns. All of my contact details below should you have any concerns.

All of my contact details are provided should you require further information. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Ann Al-Najdawi

Supervisors:

Dr Margaret Malloch: Tel, 01786 467723 or Email, [m.s.malloch@stir.ac.uk](mailto:m.s.malloch@stir.ac.uk)

Dr Niall-Hamilton-Smith: Tel, 01786 466435 or Email, [niall.hamilton-smith@stir.ac.uk](mailto:niall.hamilton-smith@stir.ac.uk)

Professor Abdel-Mahdi-Al-Soudi: Tel, 53550000 24889 or Email, [alsoudi@ju.edu.jo](mailto:alsoudi@ju.edu.jo)

## Appendix 2: Draft Letter to Each RCIs

Room 22A  
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[a.m.alnajdawi@stir.ac.uk](mailto:a.m.alnajdawi@stir.ac.uk)

*Name*  
*Address*  
*Date*

### Dear Senior Manager

I am a postgraduate research student at the University of Stirling embarking on a research project funded by the University of Jordan. My research will examine the role of Residential Care Institutions (RCIs) for children in conflict with the law, looking at what works for them in reducing the number of re-offend by convicted children. I would like first to begin with speaking to staff members who are interested in sharing their experiences of RCIs system through one-to-one interviews, to shape a clear account of the objectives of each RCI, and the policies and strategies they use to reach their goals. At the same time I would then want to conduct participant observation with children to build up trust relations with them and to gain understanding of the extent they are engaged with their activities. Only after I have a clear account from staff about what the objectives of the institutions and strategies are, I would like to begin interviewing children themselves, to understand their perceptions of the rehabilitative programs and whether or not such programs are fulfilling children's needs from their perspectives. Finally, I want to gather the common themes found in the responses of children across three RCIs in a focus group discussion with key informant staff. This is necessary to make children heard and to help children voice their opinions and attitudes about issues that affect them. This is important in helping professionals develop their strategies to match children's needs, and thus reducing the number of re-offending, which is beneficial for both the children themselves and the community as well. I have received approval from DSC and MSD to carry out this research and your minister has shown interest in participating.

I will begin by conducting one-to-one interviews with managers and staff which will be held in the RCI. This can be done either before or after the shift or whilst on a break. Then I would like to carry out focus group discussions with key informant staff who share the same duties, which will take place outside the RCI as the respondents are across three RCIs make it difficult to hold the interviews inside one institution. All the interviews will last no more than one hour and the interviews will be tape recorded to provide an accurate account of the

information disclosed. The names of participants and the institution name will be kept confidential throughout the research. I have enclosed information sheets for you and to hand out to your staff in order to determine who would be interested in participating.

The research has received full ethical approval from the University of Stirling's ethics committee. I am currently being supervised by Dr Margaret Malloch and Dr Niall-Hamilton-Smith from the University of Stirling, who are both professionals in social research. The potential supervisor in Jordan will be Professor Abdelmahdi Al-Soudi, also a professional in social research. I have included their contact details below should you have any concerns. If you and your staff would like to participate in this research please contact me by email or telephone. I can come to the institution to discuss arrangements for the interviews and answer any questions you may have.

I will look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Ann Al-Najdawi

Supervisors:

Dr Margaret Malloch: Tel, 01786 467723 or Email, [m.s.malloch@stir.ac.uk](mailto:m.s.malloch@stir.ac.uk)

Dr Niall-Hamilton-Smith: Tel, 01786 466435 or Email, [niall.hamilton-smith@stir.ac.uk](mailto:niall.hamilton-smith@stir.ac.uk)

Professor Abdel-Mahdi-Al-Soudi: Tel, 53550000 24889 or Email, [alsoudi@ju.edu.jo](mailto:alsoudi@ju.edu.jo)

## **Appendix 3: Information sheet for staff participants**

### The Role of Residential Care Institutions for Children in Conflict with the law

- **THE STUDY**

My name is Ann Al-Najdawi and I am a PhD research student at the University of Stirling. I am carrying a piece of research that explores the ways in which Residential Care Institutions (RCIs) attempt to reduce future offences by convicted children.

The aim of the research is to understand the objectives, policies, and strategies that are used to meet the institution's aims and also to explore the extent to which rehabilitative programs are fulfilling children's needs from their own perspectives and experiences. I am also interested in consolidating the common themes responses of children across the three sample RCIs in order to form focus discussion groups made up of various staff. The aim is to help children voice and their opinions be heard on issues that affect them, as well as to discover the perceptions and experiences of staff as far as fulfilling children's needs, and any dilemmas the staff face while delivering their services. Gathering the data in this regard will help to improve the policies to the point of meeting children's needs and fulfilling the aims of the RCI.

- **YOUR ROLE**

I would like you to volunteer to take part in an individual interview as well as group interview discussion. One-to-one interview will be held in the RCI at a time that is most suitable for you. The participants of the focus groups will be from three RCIs, who share the same duties and background with you in order to keep the discussion focused on particular issues. The location of the interviews will be held outside the institutions at a time convenient to you and other staff, as the participants are not from the same RCI, the interviews are expected to be held on Fridays. All interviews will be tape recorded to give an accurate account of your experiences. The interviews are entirely voluntary and you are not obliged to speak of anything you feel uncomfortable with. The main topics of individual discussion are as follows:

- What are the objectives inside your institution? From where these are drawn upon?
- What kinds of treatment programs are presently used in responding to youth crime? Why?
- What are the specific aims of your treatment program? Are these aims take into consideration each individual child needs? If so, in what ways?
- What policies and strategies those guide your work while delivering the services for children? Are these policies are differ by the difference of the needs of each individual child? How this could be achieved?

**The main topics of group discussions are as follows:**

- What do you think the dilemmas you were encountering at your program which had led in the lacking of fulfilling children's needs?
- To what extent do you find the existed policies are practical in meeting your program's aims?
- Do you think that children could be another useful source in conceptualizing the strategies for achieving their needs? Why?
- Do you think that you need to employ your own experiences for meeting children's needs rather than following the standard policies limited by your program? If so, in what ways?
- Do you have any recent training of how the existed strategies could be developed or replaced?

***Confidentiality***

Your identity will be kept confidential and although I may use quotations from the interviews, your name, department and institution will be not documented in the final thesis. All the information you provide me with will be kept in a secure place and password protected computer. Only I, my supervisors, a transcriber and interpreter will have access to the data. The transcriber will be required to sign a confidentiality clause and will not be given your name.

***How the information will be utilized***

The information you supply will be written in the doctoral thesis, but no identifiable information will be used. The findings may be used for journal articles, conference presentations and assisting in future research. The transcribed and interpreted interviews will be stored in a secure DASS archive facility but will be kept anonymous.

***Interested in participating?***

Please inform your senior manager if you would like to participate and provide him with a contact telephone number or email address. I will contact you to arrange a suitable date and time for the interview.

**Thank You For Your Interest.**

## Appendix 4: Consent Form For Residential Staff



UNIVERSITY OF  
STIRLING

### The Role of Residential Care Institutions for Children In Conflict with the Law

#### Research Study Consent Form

This consent form is to ensure that you understand your role in the research and consent to participate. The research is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time during the interview. You should sign this consent form once you have read and understood the information sheet and been given the opportunity to ask any questions.

The interviews either in one-to-one interviews or in focus group discussions will be tape recorded for the purpose of recording accurate information, the tape recording will be kept in a secure location that only the researcher has access to. The tape recordings will be transcribed and interpreted by an individual from the University of Jordan, who will be required to sign an agreement that they will keep the information confidential. Your name and institution will not be disclosed at any stage in the research unless you reveal information that I believe will either put yourself or someone else in imminent danger. The transcribed and interpreted interviews will be archived by DASS at the end of the research but these will be anonymous.

By signing the form you agree to take part in a tape recorded interviews to discuss your experiences of the RCI aims, strategies and policies as well as to share your experiences to explain any possible lack or dilemma of acknowledging and fulfilling children's needs in regards common themes responses of children across three institutions.

---

I have read and understood the information sheet

I agree to the individual interview and group discussion being tape recorded

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions

I agree to volunteer to take part and for extracts of the interview to be used in the write up

I agree to the transcription and interpretation being stored by DASS archive

Name.....

Residential Care Institution.....

Date.....

Signature.....

## **Appendix 5: Letter to institutional adult gatekeepers to gain Access to Children**

Room 22A  
University of Jordan  
Institute of Social Work  
Amman-Jordan  
E-Mail: [a.najdawi@ju.edu.jo](mailto:a.najdawi@ju.edu.jo)  
[a.m.alnajdawi@stir.ac.uk](mailto:a.m.alnajdawi@stir.ac.uk)

Dear Managers and Staff,

I am a postgraduate research student at the University of Stirling embarking on a research project funded by the University of Jordan. My interest is to examine how Residential Care Institutions (RCIs) deal with children in conflict with the law in Jordan, and what methods they use to reduce re-offending by convicted children. I am interested in understanding children's experiences of the treatment and rehabilitative programs provided for them, and to what extent they find such services fulfill their needs. Since children are considered to be competent social actors having their own needs and interests, it is important to incorporate children in the research process in order to understand their experiences of the programs from their perspective. I have received approval from DSC and MSD to also carry out this research with children and shown interest of children participation.

I am writing to request your permission, as the caretakers and guardians of these children, to carry out participant observation and one-to-one individual interviews with children. Concerning participant observation I would like, before any interviews take place with them, to voluntarily participate in and help adult staff with some of the activities that children engaged with through playing the role of teacher's assistant, until I have built good rapport relations with children. Giving me the opportunity to build trust with the children as an unfamiliar adult researcher is essential, as is the chance to become aware of the children's views of the services provided. Understanding what the children aspire to become and what their talents are would be beneficial as well. The participation and observation will help me to understand the extent that children engaged with the activities. I will use written notes to record the data collected from participant observation, at the end of the activity or during break time.

I also ask your permission to conduct informal, one-to-one, tape recorded interviews with children, which will last no more than one hour and take place in your RCI. This can be done at a time convenient for children which maybe either before or after the activities that children engaged with. I would like to conduct approximately 17 interviews with children and it is hoped that by sampling children there will be different age groups involved in the research in

order to gain as much as varieties of responses. The views of children will be very important to establish knowledge of the extent that children find the services provided are fulfilling their needs and best interests. This will allow their voices and opinions to be heard by policymakers, thereby enhancing strategies and methods to meet children's best interests. As children may have different levels of expressing themselves, I may use some innovative techniques during the interviews such as a secret box or asking the child to express his thoughts through completion sentences, drawing or writing their dairies as away to break the ice and to encourage him to express views freely. I am aware of the vulnerability of children, particularly children who violate the law, so participation in the research is entirely voluntary and all personal and institutional identifications will remain anonymous. If the access to research children has been agreed upon by you, you will need to sign the consent form enclosed to you here. I will also require the verbal and written consent of the children themselves to decide whether to agree to take part in this research. I have enclosed the information sheet that will be given to the children and a copy of the consent form to ensure that they understand their role and agree to participate.

My research has received full ethical approval from the University of Stirling's ethics committee. I am currently being supervised by Dr Margaret Malloch and Dr Niall-Hamilton-Smith from the University of Stirling, who are both professionals in social research. The potential supervisor in Jordan will be Professor Abdelmahdi Al-Soudi, also a professional in social research. I have included their contact details below should you have any concerns. If you agree to research children in this research please contact me by email or telephone to introduce myself to children and to provide them with the information sheet may they have any questions before they give their written or oral consent which depends on children's literacy ability.

All of my contact details are provided should you require further information. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely Yours,  
Mrs. Ann Al-Najdawi

Supervisors:

Dr Margaret Malloch: Tel, 01786 467723 or Email, [m.s.malloch@stir.ac.uk](mailto:m.s.malloch@stir.ac.uk)

Dr Niall-Hamilton-Smith: Tel, 01786 466435 or Email, [niall.hamilton-smith@stir.ac.uk](mailto:niall.hamilton-smith@stir.ac.uk)

Professor Abdel-Mahdi-Al-Soudi: Tel, 53550000 24889 or Email, [alsoudi@ju.edu.jo](mailto:alsoudi@ju.edu.jo)

## Appendix 6: Information sheet for participants children

Room 22A  
University of Jordan  
Institute of Social Work  
Amman-Jordan  
E-Mail: [a.najdawi@ju.edu.jo](mailto:a.najdawi@ju.edu.jo)  
[a.m.alnajdawi@stir.ac.uk](mailto:a.m.alnajdawi@stir.ac.uk)

*Name*  
*Address*

*Date*

Dear Children,

I am a student at the University of Stirling, embarking on a research study funded by the University of Jordan. My aim is to understand what your institution do for you, how your problems are solved and your interests are fulfilled by your staff. I would like to speak with your staff through one-to-one interviews to gain understanding of what their exact role for helping you meet your needs and solving your problems to prevent you not returning back to care institution. Then I will be interested to listen to your opinion of the activities you are in. The main question of my research is if you find the rehabilitation programs provided to be fulfilling your needs and interests. It is your right to take part in this study, giving your opinion freely about the rehabilitation programs you are in.

I am writing to request your permission for the following:

- To participate with you with some of the activities you are in, by directly assisting your teacher in your program. As we interact in these activities we can build rapport and know each other before moving on to one-to-one interviews. I hope also to gain an understanding of what you do and your role in the activity you are in. I will write some notes about the extent of your interactions of the activity. This could give me the chance to gain understanding of what you are interested in and what you are looking for to gain.
- To conduct informal, one-to-one, tape recorded interviews which will last no more than one hour.

These interviews will take place in private, though visible, rooms at your institution. None of your answers will be heard by others, nor will your name be given with your answers later on. We can arrange to start the interviews at a time suitable for you either before or after your activity or whilst on a break.

Through these interviews I hope to gain a more in-depth understanding of the programs you are in, and how well you think they work and what you think that your institution is trying to achieve. I would like to listen to your opinion about what of the activities you think is helpful to gain your needs and what not. I am also interested to listen to your specific needs and interest that you wish to be provided for you.

It is important to know that you are not only being voluntary asked to participate in my study but there are also other children from your institution and two other institutions. Your participation along with other children participation will help you to share your views, needs and interests with other children who you are not know. After finishing interviewing all of you at each institution, I will present your opinions along with other children who share you the same opinions across three institutions, for group discussion with staff across three institutions. These common responses for discussion will not refer to one of you or your institution. I aim to let your opinions and other children's opinions heard by the responsible adults who are looking after you in order to develop any possible lack in fulfilling your needs.

Although I have obtained permission from your caretakers and guardians for your participation in this research, I also need your consent. I have enclosed information sheet for you in order to decide if you want in participating. My research with you has been agreed by the University of Stirling by ensuring that all your personal information and identity and your institution will be kept confidential. If you would like to participate please inform your senior manager. I can come to you to arrange when you want me to participate with your activities and held the interviews.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Ann Al-Najdawi

## **Children's experiences of the institutional rehabilitative programs**

### **This research will:**

Explore your experiences and opinions of the rehabilitative programs provided for you and whether such programs are fulfilling your best interests and needs.

### **Questions you might want to ask me:**

#### ***Who are you?***

I am Ann Al-Najdawi, and I am a student at the University of Stirling. My research aims to understand what your institution do for you, how your problems are solved and your interests are fulfilled by your institution. I would like you to volunteer to take part in this research to listen to your experiences and opinions of the rehabilitative programs.

#### ***How you will do your research:***

1. By participating with you with some activities you are in.
2. By asking you to talk about your opinions and views by one-to-one interviews, you may also need to express yourself during the interviews through completion sentences, drawings or writing your diaries and to choose which of these are of your interest (All of this will be private).

***What will your participation in my activities be like?***

I will assist your teacher in some activities you are in such as distributing sheet of papers, paintings, cards, clean the board, open and close the registrar device when you listen to Qura'an in your religious activity. My participation will help to know each other and build rapport relations before moving to one-to-one interviews. My participation will also help me to gain understanding of what you are interested in and what you are looking to gain. I will write some notes about the extent of your interactions of the activity either after the activity or whilst on a break. I may also need to write brief notes during the activity, so I can remember the details afterwards (all of this will be kept private)

***What will the interview discussion be like?***

We will discuss your opinions and experiences of the rehabilitative programs and how such programs are able in fulfilling your needs, like what of the activities you feel that meet your needs and what of other activities are not and why? We'll also discuss if you are able to express your needs and interests of the activities you are in, with home and in what ways? How do you think that your institution is trying to achieve for you and what do you think it is not trying to do for you? How much you feel that you are benefit from of the activities you are in, in a way that could assist you not to go back to residential care. The interviews will be at your institution at a suitable time for you. This can be done either before or after the activity, and will last about an hour. If you agree, I will tape recorded it, so I can remember the discussion afterwards.

***What will you do with the tape?***

I'll listen to the discussions we made through the tape, I will use transcription device to transfer the tape recording discussions to written format and the data will be anonymised before as much as before being passed for transcribing .The transcription will be done by a person from the University of Jordan, who will be required first to sign an agreement that they will keep the information confidential. Then all the transcribed data will be interpreted to English Language but I will change your name, identity and institution name before being passed for interpretation and then I'll write a report about the views of children about the rehabilitative programs.

***Will my name be used?***

No, I'll give you a different name, so we can describe what you think without anyone knowing it's you.

***What do you want to know about me?***

I will ask you about your specific needs that you wish to be provided for or any problems you may face during the activities you are in.

***Will this go into the report?***

Yes, but I'll change your name, the name of the institution, and anyone also you talk about, so that no-one reading the report knows who you really are.

***Is it confidential?***

Yes. You can tell anyone you like about the research, but I will treat what you say or write as confidential. Though I may use your words from the interviews and your interactions at your activities, none of these will be identified as yours. Only if you say something that makes me very worried for your safety would I talk to anyone else. I would not do this without talking to you first.

***How the information will be utilized?***

The information you give will be written up in my doctoral report. The results of research may be used for Journal articles and other presentations but never your name or institution name will be used. The transcribed interpreted data will be stored in my department at the University of Stirling but will be kept anonymous.

***Will I see the report you write?***

It takes me a long time to write a final report about my research and I may lose track of you, but I will send you a copy of the report to your institution when it is finished.

***Can I ask you more about your research, or change my mind about taking part?***

Yes, of course, you can contact me by telephone or you can talk to me when I am in the institution. Your participation in the research is entirely voluntary. You do not have to answer any question you are uncomfortable with, and you can withdraw from the research at any time without giving your reason(s). This leaflet gives you information about the research to help you think about whether you'd like to take part.

***Interested in Participating?***

If you fully understand the aim of the study and what will involve and want to participate please inform your senior manager. I can come to your institution to arrange when you want me to participate with your activities and held the interviews.

**Thank You For Your Interest**

## **Appendix 7: Consent Form For Residential Staff To Research Children**



### **Children's experiences and opinions of the rehabilitation programs**

#### **Research Study Consent Form**

This consent form is to ensure that you understand children role in the research and consent to their participation and you can withdraw your consent at any time. Your consent will not equate with that of the children. Children will be given a letter outline the aims of the study. Along with this letter an information sheet will be provided that states what the research will involve. I will also verbally informing children about the aims of the study and the methods that will be used to ensure that they fully understand their roles in the research to decide whether to agree to take part and give them the opportunity to ask any questions. Children consent will be in writing and oral depends on the children's literacy ability and the oral consent will be tape recorded. The research is entirely voluntary and children are free to withdraw at any time either during the participant observation or one-to-one interviews. You should sign this consent form once you have understood the children's role of this research and been given the opportunity to ask any questions.

The data collected from participant observation with children will be fully written down either the activity or whilst on a break. Some brief supporting notes will be taken during the activity I participate with, to be expanded upon in detail, at the end of the activity or during break time. My participation and observation will last no more than three months.

One-to-one interviews will be tape recorded for the purpose of recording accurate information, the tape recording will be kept in a secure location that only the researcher has access to. The tape recordings will be transcribed and interpreted by an individual from the University of Jordan, who will be required to sign an agreement that they will keep the information confidential. A child name and his institution will not be disclosed at any stage in the research unless the child reveal information that makes me very worried for his safety would I talk to anyone else. I would not do this without talking to the child about it first. The transcribed and interpreted interviews will be archived by DASS at the end of the research but these will be anonymous. The interviews will be use some innovative techniques such as completion sentences, drawings or writing diaries that depends in each child interest. These techniques are for the purpose to maximize children's ability to express themselves freely during the interviews.

By signing the form you agree to children to take part in a written notes participant observation and a tape recorded interviews to discuss their

experiences and opinions of the rehabilitative programs and the extent they find such programs are fulfilling their needs and best interests.

---

I have read and understood the children roles in this research

I agree to the participation being written and interviews being tape recorded   
I agree that my consent is not equate with that of the children

I agree for the children to be given the opportunity to understand the aims of the study and providing with an information sheet and given the Opportunity to ask any questions

I agree for children to decide whether to agree to take part

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions

I agree to children to take part and for extracts of the participant Observation and interview to be used in the write up

I agree to the transcription and interpretation being stored by DASS archive

Name.....

Residential Care Institution.....

Date.....

Signature.....

## Appendix 8: Consent Form For Participants Children



### Children's experiences and opinions of the rehabilitation programs

#### Research Study Consent Form

This consent form is to ensure that you understand your role in the research and consent to participate. Although I have obtained permission from your caretakers and guardians for your participation in this research, I also need your consent. The research is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time either during my participation with your activities or during the interview. Once you have read and understood the information sheet and been given the opportunity to ask any questions, you should give me your consent either by signing this form or given your oral tape recording consent if you have limited literacy.

The data collected from my participation with your activities will be written down either after the activity or whilst on a break. Some brief supporting notes will be taken during the activity I participate in with you, to be expanded upon in detail, at the end of the activity or during break time. My participation and understanding of our interaction in your activities will last no more than three months.

One-to-one interviews will be tape recorded for the purpose of recording accurate information, the tape recording will be kept in a secure location that only the researcher has access to. The tape recordings will be transcribed and interpreted by an individual from the University of Jordan, who will be required to sign an agreement that they will keep the information confidential. During the interview, you may choose to express yourself through drawings and completion sentences which create more fun atmosphere, while keeping our discussion. Your name and institution name will not be disclosed at any stage in the research unless you say something that makes me very worried for your safety would I talk to anyone else. I would not do this without talking to you about it first. I also need to gain your consent if you will be happy to present your opinions along with other children who share you the same opinions across three institutions, for group discussion with staff across three institutions. These discussions will not refer to one of you or your institution.

By signing the form or saying your oral tape recording consent, you agree to take part in written notes participation and interacting with your activities and a tape recorded interviews to discuss your experiences and opinions of the rehabilitative programs and the extent they find such programs are fulfilling your needs and best interests.

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I have read and understood the information sheet

The information sheet and this form have been read to me by the researcher and I have understood what the research will involve

I agree to the researcher participation being written and interviews being tape recorded

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions

I agree to volunteer to take part and for extracts of the researcher written notes of participation and interactions during my activities and of the interview to be used in the write up

I agree to the transcription and interpretation being stored by DASS archive

I have agree that my opinions that could be similar to other Children's' opinions being presented for group discussions with staff

Name.....

Residential Care Institution.....

Date.....

Signature.....

Oral tape recording consent.....

## **Appendix 9: Interview and focus group topic guide with RCI Staff**

### **Individual interview guide**

**Research Question: In what ways do residential care institutions in Jordan attempt to reduce offending by convicted children in conflict with the law?**

Below are the main topics that discussed during the interviews:

#### **Explore the general objectives inside RCI:**

1. What the objectives are inside your institution? From where these are drawn upon?
2. Are these objectives aim to reach each individual child needs? If so, in what ways?
3. What guide your institution works? Are there any current guidelines in place? What are these? In what ways these guidelines helping conceptualize the treatment programs for children?

#### **Explore the specific treatment programs and its specific aims:**

1. What is your relation with children? What are the duties you hold in the institution?
2. What kinds of treatment programs are presently used in your institution in responding to youth crime? Why these particular programs are provided?
3. What are the specific aims of your treatment program? Are these aims take into the consideration each individual child needs, how?
4. Are all children in residential care are benefit from your program or that depends on each individual case?
5. Are children playing an active role in conceptualizing your program aims, in what ways?

#### **Explore the specific policies used and the link between these and program's objectives**

1. What policies and strategies those guide your work while delivering the services for children? Are these policies are differ by the difference of the needs of each individual child? How do you arrange these policies?

2. What is your daily routine with children? With whom you deal to help achieving your program aims?
3. If a child express his specific needs and interests how this could be achieved?
4. Do you think that children have the ability to help you find the strategy for fulfilling his needs, why/why not?
5. What do you think that is (are) the most common needs for children in your program, why? How you treat their needs?
6. Is a family's child are always take part of your treatment program with children, why? Which techniques you use to stimulate them to be more cooperative in helping meeting their child's needs?
7. Is a family's child was responsible of his offending behavior? In what ways you attempt to arrange between the parties in your program? In what ways do you attempt to solve a child's family problems?
8. What do you do for the children who do not have family or their families are not qualified enough to look after their children? Are there any arrangements tackling these circumstances and how?
9. In what ways you handle the problems that children encounter in your program and with whom? Do you follow each child's needs to assure that these takes place? In what ways and with whom?
10. How do you deal with the children who have more complex and difficult personal and family backgrounds? Are there any supervision arrangements between you and other staff holding other types of programs? In what ways these arrangements take place?

|

## Focus group guide with Staff

**The Main Question: How do the specialised staff members explain any inability to meet the children's needs (if applicable)? What are the dilemmas they encounter as they attempt to achieve the institutions' aims?**

There are six main topics that will be discussed during the group interviews:

- What dilemmas do you think you were facing at your program that led in the lacking of fulfilling children's needs?
- To what extent do you find the current policies are practical in meeting your program's aims? What of these you think that need to be more developed, how and why?
- Do you think that children could be another useful source in conceptualizing the strategies for achieving their needs? Why?
- Do you think that some of recent policies are not properly linked to each individual child circumstances and needs, in what ways?
- Do you think that you need to employ your own experiences for meeting children's needs rather than following the standard policies limited by your program? If so, in what ways?
- Do you have any recent training of how the existed strategies could be developed or replaced?

## **Appendix 10 : Checklist Guide for Participant Observation**

The participant observation is designed to gain and understand the following issues:

1. How has the researcher's first presence affected the nature of the children's setting, and how has the children's behavior changed over time? Which children are happy about my presence and which are not?
2. How do children feel during the activity engaged with and what are their behaviours and expressions?
3. How do children act to achieve the goals of the activity, and what strategies do adult staff use to support the children in this?
4. What is the nature of interpersonal relations and daily routines in the setting?
5. What do children in the program do?
6. What is it like to be a participant in the setting observed?
7. Which activities have been practicing most frequently by children in each particular program?
8. How is the activity produced or the interaction started? Which children are present at the beginning? How do children respond or react to what is being said?
9. Which children are always or actively engaged? Which have little or no engagement?
10. What are the variations in how participants engage in the same activity? How do behaviours and interactions change over the course of the activity?
11. Does the behavior of children who are actively engaged in one particular program change in other programs? Do those who have little engagement in one program participate more in the other?
12. Which children are more interested in writing skills? Who has limited literacy?
13. Which children are more comfortable talking to express themselves? Which are fearful, shy or confused when starting to talk?
14. What are the signals that the activity or interaction is ending? Which children are more comfortable with the ending activity? Which are more upset? How do children generally react to the end of the activity? How is the completion of a particular activity related to other programs?
15. Are children given the opportunity to explain their opinions and interests during the activities?
16. What types of nonverbal forms of communication do children practice

with each other and staff?

## **Appendix 11: Individual interview guide with Children**

### **The Main Question: To what extent do children find the services and programs they receive beneficial in fulfilling their needs?**

Below were the main topics that discussed during the interview:

1. What types of programs and activities you are in? Why? Have you decided that?
2. Which kinds of activities you are more engaged with and why? Do you feel that there are developments of meeting your needs through the subsequent activities in comparison with previous one?
3. In which treatment programs you feel more comfortable? In which you feel upset? Why?
4. Which of the activities you are in you feel that meet your needs and what of other activities are not? Why?
5. Are you able to express your needs and interests of the activities you are in? What are these needs and in which program? How your staff respond to your expressed needs?
6. What are the main interests that you wish to be provided for you before returning home? Do you think that your institution is able to meet these interests?
7. If you have any problems in a particular program, do you choose to talk with your supervisor? Why? Why not?
8. How do you think that your institution is trying to achieve for you and why?
9. What is your opinion about the ways your staff use in trying to achieve your needs?
10. Do you think that sometimes you would be able to advice your staff about the best way to follow in order to meet your needs? Do you go to share your ideas with staff? How they respond to you?
11. Do you feel that you are supported enough through the treatment programs in a way that could assist you not to go back to residential care later on?
12. Do you know where and with whom you are going to live after your releasing from the institution? How do you feel about that?

13. Do you have any problems with one or both of your parents? What are these problems? How your responsible supervisors are trying to solve these problems?
14. Do you think that there are any barriers of completing your studying when you come back home? Why? Do you think that your institution is able to meet your education needs?
15. Do you have any concerns after releasing form the institution? What are these?
16. What do you plan to do when your return to your home?

## **Appendix 12 : Participant worker feedback form**

### **PhD Research Study**

### **The Role of Residential Care Institutions for Children in Conflict with the Law**

#### **Feedback Form for Participants**

Thank you for taking part in this study. If you would like to provide some anonymous feedback about your experience of participating in an interview, please complete this form. Your feedback is important and will be used to inform best practice for this study and future research studies.

1. Were you provided with enough information before you took part in this study?

Yes / No (If no, what would you have liked more information about?)

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2. Was there anything you particularly liked about participating in this research?

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3. Was there anything you particularly disliked about participating in this research?

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**Please return this form to Ann Alnajdawi at the end of your interview. Thank you.**

## Feedback from Staff Interview Participants

50 out of 50 participants completed an anonymous feedback form. A sampling of responses to each question on this form is detailed below.

**Were you provided with enough information before taking part in the study?**

Yes 50

No 0

**Was there anything you particularly liked about participating in this research?**

- *Really interesting subject; valuable.*
- *I was proud to talk about my experience of working with children as part of such valuable research.*
- *This is an important research topic about children, particularly how institutions work for children who offend.*
- *It was important to talk about the aims and methods we use to help children stop offending.*
- *It was my first opportunity to participate in research through one-to-one interview. It was a great opportunity to describe what we do for our children.*
- *It is a very good subject to study; this was the first time I talked about what we do for children although I have been here a long time.*
- *I was glad to provide information along with other staff about what works for children who offend.*
- *I was very happy to talk about our aim of giving children the opportunity to voice their opinions; I look forward to seeing the findings.*
- *It was very interesting to see children give their opinions on our aims.*
- *It was good to talk about my daily experience of rehabilitating children.*
- *It was good to give children the chance to express their views on the aims of my institution.*
- *I was glad to speak with you about children's problems and how we work to solve them.*
- *It was a great opportunity to discuss a subject concerning us and our children.*
- *Your research was the first chance for me to express my experiences and methods of treating children's problems.*
- *It was very nice to say what the problem of youth crime is and what the solutions are!*
- *Ann was very approachable and I appreciated the one-to-one interview technique and the way she appeared to take my experiences and views seriously.*

- *It was a great chance to talk about a serious topic and have my comments valued.*

**Was there anything which you particularly disliked about participating in this study?**

- *No, I thought it was very well done.*
- *Nothing really, it was quite a positive experience.*
- *I felt that I didn't really see how I was helping.*

## Feedback from Group Interview Participants

Eight out of eight participants completed an anonymous feedback form. The responses to each question on this form are detailed below.

### **Were you provided with enough information before taking part in the study?**

Yes 8

No 0

### **Was there anything you particularly liked about participating in this research?**

- *I enjoyed hearing the views of other staff as well as discussing my own views.*
- *Very comfortable and informal. Everyone seemed quite at ease once the conversation started.*
- *The relaxed atmosphere. It just feels like you are having a chat. It was a good way of hearing other people's opinions and responding to them.*
- *Finding out other people's attitudes on issues related to children's opinions was really interesting.*
- *It was useful to hear the views of friends on child rehabilitation issues and to hear other explanations of the obstacles we face in meeting children's needs*
- *Sharing views with others and hearing new explanations and suggestions about meeting children's needs.*
- *Interesting to hear other people's point of view on topics which affect not only children but ourselves, as we are here to help children treat their problems!*
- *It was a good way to sit down and chat about a subject that we all deal with but have never been asked about!*

### **Was there anything you particularly disliked about participating in this study?**

- *No, not at all actually.*
- *All was interesting. Look forward to seeing the findings. I thought it was very good.*

### **Any other comments?**

- *It was a great chance to talk about a serious topic and have my comments valued alongside those of my colleagues, regarding why children's needs have not been met! This was really my first chance to discuss this.*

- *It highlighted the importance of our professional responsibility to honestly say what the problems in meeting children's needs are, within a subject that we all deal with but have never been asked about before.*
- *This research allowed me to talk about things I had not been able to discuss before. Yes, it is the voice of the children that made me talk freely.*
- *I was happy to suggest how children's needs could be achieved. I look forward to seeing the impact in the near future.*
- *When you interviewed me individually I knew I would also be involved in your group discussion and I really felt that it would be the best time to talk about what the problems and solutions are.*

## Appendix 13: Participant child feedback form

### PhD Research Study

### Children's Experiences and Opinions of Rehabilitation Programmes

#### Feedback Form for Participants

Thank you for taking part in this study. If you would like to provide some anonymous feedback about your experience of participating in semi-participant observation and an interview, please complete this form. Your feedback is important and will be used to inform best practice for this study and future research studies.

1. I participated in participant observation / interview / both (*delete as appropriate*)

2. If you participated in an interview and participant observation, please say which (if any) you preferred, and why.

3. Were you provided with enough information before you took part in this study?

Yes / No (If no, what would you have liked more information about?)

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4. Was there anything you particularly liked about participating in this research?

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5. Was there anything you particularly disliked about participating in this research?

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**Please return this form to Ann Alnajdawi at the end of your interview.  
Thank you.**

## Feedback from Semi-participant Observation and Interview Participants

63 out of 66 participants completed an anonymous feedback form and anonymous tape-recorded feedback. A sampling of responses to each question on this form is detailed below.

**Were you provided with enough information before taking part in the study?**

Yes 63

No 0

**If you participated in semi-participant observation and an interview, please say which you preferred and why?**

- *Both were enjoyable. In the interview I was able to convey my own views more, though.*
- *Interview – the topic has always been something I have been interested in and I felt I could give my opinion.*
- *Participating with me in activities was enjoyable as your presence made the atmosphere more interesting. You really change the boring atmosphere we are used to.*
- *I preferred the interview because I was able to voice my own opinion rather than what my behaviour tells you.*
- *I liked both: when you see what I do in activities I able to voice my opinions more freely.*
- *Both were really interesting and I have never used them before.*
- *I was happy with both as I thought I was helpful in providing important information for your study.*
- *I preferred the interview, as much more detailed info could be discussed, which I can't share through behaviour.*
- *Both were enjoyable. In the interview I was able to say why I behaved the way I did during the activities.*
- *I liked the interview as I was able to practice my hobby of drawing and talk about the meaning of my drawings. It was very interesting.*
- *Interview – I was able to think of what I considered important and write a dairy which I was able to keep.*
- *In the interview I learned to keep writing my diaries forever.*
- *Interview – I like talking. I know I am talkative!*
- *I liked both. I act as I always do, even without your presence; this helped me to talk more about my opinions on the activities.*
- *Interview – because of the drawings I didn't feel when or how the interview stopped.*

**Was there anything you particularly liked about participating in this**

## research?

- *Yes – understanding my own views. I felt that my voice was valued, an opportunity that has never been given to me before.*
- *It really made me think about the issues in a way I never had before, especially my opinion of the family programme.*
- *It was interesting to say what I like and dislike about issues related to my life.*
- *Your research empowered me to always say my opinion of how I need my life to be.*
- *Ann – I would like to thank you for the chance you have given me to say what is in my mind without fear.*
- *I am now more confident of my rights and of what is beneficial or not – yes, this is my life that I seek to change for the better.*
- *Yes – sharing my opinions on all programmes I take part in and I now know what is good for my life.*
- *My participation really let me feel that I am here and can talk.*
- *I liked the topic because I can express my own opinion on different programmes, which I have never done before.*
- *More awareness of how to say yes and no – thanks, Ann.*
- *I gained knowledge of my right to talk and give my opinion.*
- *You let me know about some programmes I didn't know about before.*
- *I am now able to think about my life rather than follow what staff think is better for me.*
- *I was able to address my real problems in a way I was not sure about before.*
- *The fact that it got me thinking about many issues I was not informed about before! And the opportunity to ask questions about the issues.*
- *It was interesting to have an adult hear my problems and to say what I want to achieve.*
- *I am used to older persons only thinking on my behalf but now I am able to express my voice without fear and talk about issues damaging to my life.*
- *It was all enjoyable. It also made me think of several factors which I had never considered before (e.g. saying that I want to be educated).*
- *I am glad that I was given a chance to say my opinion on issues that I have never been asked about before.*
- *It was really good to find someone to listen to my views and needs. I hope that these will be considered and that my life will change for the better.*
- *I was lucky in expressing my views on issues that I was always concerned about, and really wish that my needs with other children will be met before returning home.*
- *Talking about my actual needs was one of my dreams, which eventually occurred, but hope these will be influenced.*

**Was there anything you particularly disliked about participating in this**

**study?**

- *Nothing at all.*
- *I just want to thank you for this opportunity, as you gave me the message that I am a human being and no one can address my actual problems like I can.*

## Appendix 14: Institutional Statistics of Resident Children and Their Crimes

Types of Crime	The number of interviewed children according to the type of crime	Age of interviewed children according to the type of crime	The number of children who were previously offend according to the type of crime
Rape	8	12/15/16/17	4
Attempted rape	7	13/14/15	3
Murder	9	12/13/14/16/17	2
Attempted murder	8	12/14/15	3
Property theft	12	12/13/14/15/16/17	9
Property damage	7	14/15/16/17	3
Selling of stolen goods	5	12/14/16	2
Selling drugs	4	13/14/15/16	1
Drug usage	6	12/14/15/17	4
Overall	66	-----	31

## Appendix 15: Duties and Professional Qualifications of Institutional Staff at the Three Sampled RCIs

Job Title	Professional qualification/ Training	Staff Duties
Senior Manager  Assistant Junior Manager	Management  Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing the staff with the MOSD's general aims for each rehabilitation programme.</li> <li>• Monitoring the staff to ensure that rehabilitation programmes are given at the required time.</li> <li>• Managing the social supervisors' morning and night shifts.</li> <li>• Solving any problems that may occur between staff and children or between children.</li> <li>• Informing the MOSD about any child escaping, and making the necessary inquiries with the child's family, in cooperation with the ministry, to find the child and return him to the institution.</li> <li>• Corresponding with the MOSD to request any updates and repairs required for the institution.</li> </ul>
Social Workers	Seven qualifications in sociology and two qualifications in social work/ received training on the existing aims of the family guidance programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Studying the child's familial, economical and educational conditions to determine the reasons behind his offending, and opening a file for each child.</li> <li>• Meeting with the child's parents or guardian to gather the above information.</li> <li>• Contacting schools to gather necessary information about a child's education, in cooperation with families.</li> <li>• Making the required arrangements with public schools to register the child and transfer his file from the previous school to the new one.</li> <li>• Assessing all children's educational levels through examinations, and officially writing to educational supervisors to include the children on their student lists.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinating with the children’s families to send their children to public school, after their pledge to return the child to the institution at the end of the school day.</li> <li>• Making registration arrangements for poor children with the manager of the vocational training centre and then providing social supervisors with a list to accompany the children to the training centre.</li> <li>• Contacting the National Aid Fund to ensure that children in poverty and those whose fathers are unemployed or disabled receive a monthly allowance.</li> <li>• Solving children’s familial and relational problems, such as child abuse and parental neglect, through arranging lectures with these families.</li> </ul>
Social Supervisors	All six social supervisors were in high school education and none had received training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping a secure environment in the institution, particularly among the children, and making arrangements during the night shift to prevent children escaping from the institution.</li> <li>• Treating any problems that may occur between children and informing the manager in writing about serious problems.</li> <li>• Taking notes on the children’s daily behaviour and periodically writing reports to the management and child behaviour monitors.</li> <li>• Ensuring children attend their rehabilitation programmes regularly.</li> <li>• Informing the manager of the institution and the child monitors of the names of children who do not attend any treatment programme, and verifying the reasons for this.</li> <li>• Supervising and controlling children’s behaviour during non-rehabilitation programmes, such as sports activities.</li> <li>• Providing appropriate medical help for children during the night, and calling the hospital when necessary.</li> <li>• Accompanying children to vocational training centres.</li> </ul>
Educational	All Six (ELS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching the children reading and writing</li> </ul>

Literacy Supervisor (ELS)	had first university degree/ received training on the existing aims of the literacy educational programme	skills in both Arabic and English.
Educational Supervisor for Truant Children (ESTC)	All Six (ESTC) had first university degree/ received training on the existing aims of the cultural strengthening programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addressing the education gap for children due to their truancy.</li> <li>• Working with families to encourage them to be involved in their children's education through regular contact with schools.</li> <li>• Introducing policies families can use to encourage children's attachment to learning and educational progress.</li> <li>• Working with schools to introduce positive policies to treat children's low educational achievements.</li> </ul>
Religious Preacher	Three/ first university degree in Religion / no training has been received	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instilling religious faith and self-control in children to handle their needs and desires.</li> </ul>
Child Behaviour Monitors	Sociology and history/ received training on the existing aims of the cognitive behavioural programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping children change their criminal behaviour resulting from media and peer group influences.</li> <li>• Accompanying the children on home visits.</li> <li>• Applying punishments and rewards according to reports from other staff.</li> </ul>