

# **Reasons for Abused Women's Reluctance to Seek Help from Institutions concerned with protecting them in Jordan**

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## Abstract

The Jordan Population and Family Health surveys for the years 2012, 2017 and 2018 indicate that the majority of abused women in Jordan refrain from asking for help from institutions concerned with protecting them. This calls for studying the reasons behind such reluctance. Therefore, this study undertakes this task using its qualitative method. The results revealed that this reluctance is caused by four main reasons including the characteristics of individuals, families, local communities and social culture. Those reasons include 44 sub-reasons with a rate of 11 sub-reasons for each main reason. The most repeated sub-reason at the individual level was abused women's fear of the consequences of seeking help. At the family level, the most repeated sub-reason was abused women's lack of support from their families (parents). Moreover, at the community level, the most repeated sub-reasons were the reluctance of women's protection institutions to address women's issues from the perspective of scientific research results and the poor services of the women protection system. The most repeated sub-reason at the cultural level was adherence to social norms related to the husband's abuse of his wife.

**Keywords:** Violence against women, protecting women from abuse.

## Introduction:

Women throughout the world are subjected to physical, sexual and psychological violence and neglect by men associated to them. Abuse against women has its causes as explained by theories addressing it. On one hand, theoretical theories attribute it to organic, psychological and social factors, whereas, modern theories attribute it to social rejection, lack of public services responding to gender inequality, social culture, developmental deficit and stark violations of human rights. Violence against women results in grave consequences touching all aspects of abused women's lives. Violence against women can be addressed and intervened in according to the cognitive perspective used. The reasons for violence against women, its consequences and ways of controlling or eliminating it are clear; this violence is still taking place in many countries around the world at high rates and most cases go unreported in their capacity as punishable crimes by law. This is confirmed through the results of various surveys and studies. For example, the 2017-18 Jordan Population and Family Health Survey revealed rates of violence against women, the characteristics of abused women and their rates of

request for help from institutions concerned with protecting them. With regards to rates of violence against women in Jordan, the survey indicated that those rates depended on the form of such violence of which physical violence showed the highest rates. Moreover, regarding the characteristics of abused women in Jordan during 2017, the survey revealed variations according to the form of violence. For example, women subjected to physical violence from their husbands were primarily married, rural, residents of the central region's governorates and poorly educated women, whereas, women subjected to sexual violence were older women who had been previously married, were undereducated and lived in the central region. With regards to the rate of abused women's request for help from institutions concerned with protecting them, the survey revealed that the rate of women who did not ask for help (67%) was higher than their counterparts who did ask for help (19%). Women requested help from their families, their husbands' families, their neighbors and both governmental and nongovernmental social work organizations at rates of 77%, 21%, 6% and 6% respectively. Also in Jordan, the 2012 Population and Family Health Survey mentioned that 59.3% of women refrained from seeking help and that most of them were sexually abused, in their forties, married, had at least five children, unemployed, illiterate and lived within poor families (Department of Statistics, 2013, p. 185). It should be taken into consideration that the issue of reluctance of abused women to seek help is not only present in Jordan, but in other countries with various levels of economic and social development such as the United States, the United Kingdom and Egypt (ESCWA et al, 2017, p. 22). For example, a study conducted on women who were subjected to physical abuse in Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Cambodia, Chile, Egypt and Ireland revealed their rates of request for help which were nonexistent in some cases and which varied from 68% in Bangladesh to 18% in Canada (WHO, 2002, p. 98).

The remaining part of this study helps us understand the reasons behind most abused women's reluctance to seek help in Jordan from community institutions and helps us interpret, control and predict those reasons.

## 1. Study Problem and Elements:

This study has six elements as follows:

- 1.1 **Justifications:** the study has justifications for conducting it which are as follows:
  - 1.1.1 The Population and Family Health surveys failed to investigate all factors related to the low rate of abused women's request for help in Jordan from institutions concerned with protecting them.
  - 1.1.2 The World Report on Violence and Health, its regional Arab counterpart lacked any theoretical premises or analytical frameworks related to abused women's reluctance to seek help from institutions concerned with protecting them.
  - 1.1.3 To use the indicator of abused women's reluctance to seek help from institutions concerned with protecting them in Jordan in assessing the effect of Jordanian national policies in protecting women against violence.
- 1.2 **Importance:** The importance of this study stems from its expected results or outputs as follows:
  - 1.2.1 To provide a matrix of (individual, family, communal and cultural) factors affecting abused women's reluctance to seek help from institutions concerned with protecting them.
  - 1.2.2 To provide a text on the advantages of the integrated method (combining between the quantitative and qualitative methods) in detecting the reasons behind abused women's reluctance to request help from institutions concerned with protecting them and also on the disadvantages of the unilateral approach (quantitative or qualitative).
  - 1.2.3 To provide a decision about the features of the effect of Jordanian national policies on protecting women from violence using the indicator of abused women's reluctance to seek help.
- 1.3 **Objectives:** This study has two types of objectives. The first are general objectives related to the study's attempt to answer its main question stating: What are the reasons for abused women's reluctance to seek help from institutions concerned with protecting them in Jordan? The second group of objectives is specific and involves the study's attempt to answer its sub-questions as follows:
  - 1.3.1 What is the analytical framework related to abused women's reluctance to seek help from institutions concerned with

protecting them of which the data is derived from field study results?

- 1.3.2 What are the reasons behind abused women's reluctance to seek help in Jordan from the viewpoint of some of those concerned with protecting those women?
- 1.3.3 What is the factor distribution of the reasons for the low rate of abused women's request for help in Jordan as derived from the results of the 2012 and 2017 Population and Family Health surveys and what are the viewpoints of some of those concerned with family protection?
- 1.3.4 What are the features of the effects of Jordanian national policies on protecting women against violence using the indicator of abused women's reluctance to request help from institutions concerned with protecting them in Jordan?
- 1.4 **Study Problem:** Scientific evidence drawn from the results of international and Jordanian surveys mentioned in this study's introduction and second part indicates a variation in the levels of abused women's request for help from institutions concerned with protecting them in favor of those that do not request help in least developed countries such as Bangladesh and Cambodia and developing countries such as Egypt and Jordan. As a result of this data, this study was conducted with the aim of answering its main question and four sub-questions mentioned in the "Objectives" item.
- 1.5 **Terminology:** The study has three terms as follows:
  - 1.5.1 Abused woman: A female aged at least 15 years who claims that she has been subjected to one or more forms of violence including physical, psychological or sexual violence or neglect by any of those connected to her.
  - 1.5.2 Reasons for abused women's low rates of request for help: A group of reasons that prevent abused women's request for help.
  - 1.5.3 Institutions concerned with protecting abused women: A group of institutions that may have a social origin and character, or civil and voluntary character or governmental institutions.
- 1.6 **Methodology:** In order for the study to answer its main question and four sub-questions, the qualitative method was used in its two forms of documents content analysis and semi-structured interviews analysis. The first method was applied to analyzing the reports of international, regional and local

surveys mentioned in this study's introduction and second part and which amounted to a total of nine reports. The second method was applied to an intentional sample of individuals concerned with family protection based on their practical experience consisting of eight individuals with an average experience of 24 years. A guide was used to interview each person consisting of three open questions.

## **2. Previous Studies and Theoretical Framework:**

Abused women's reluctance to or refraining from requesting help from anyone has its subjective and objective reasons which may be drawn from the results of the field studies and the theoretical frameworks.

### **2.1 Reasons for abused women's reluctance to seek help according to field study results:**

Numerous field studies have been conducted on abused women's reluctance to seek help. Qualitative studies involving intentional samples of abused women in Africa, Asia, Europe, South America and the United States revealed many reasons for the silence of abused women towards their abuses in general and included fear of punishment, the lack of alternative means of support, fear for their children, lack of support from family and the remaining hope of changing the man. Qualitative study results also revealed that women in developing countries are subjected to a social stigma related to not being married. This shaped an additional barrier leading to women failing to distance themselves from abusive relationships and abused women's reluctance to go out and seek help under the effect of feeling rejected and neglected and out of fear from social denial.

On the other hand, quantitative studies conducted on random samples of women exposed or subjected to physical violence in ten countries with various economic and social development rates revealed that the levels of abused women's reluctance to seek help in those countries were as follows: Bangladesh (68%), Egypt (47%), United Kingdom (38%), Nicaragua (37%), Cambodia (34%), Chile (30%), Canada (22%) and Australia (18%), (WHO, 2002, p. 98).

Other qualitative and quantitative studies mentioned that women do not report abuse they are subjected to for reasons varying from one country to the other. For example, sexually abused women in the United States fear revenge, whereas, in the United Kingdom, the reasons were that abused women were not satisfied with the legal system, they believed that their cases were unserious, that the police

showed a negative behavior and that they feared that their children would lose their fathers if convicted. In some Arab countries, the reason was that abused women believed that the police would not listen to them or provide them with any support on the basis that their abuse was a private family matter. For example, in Egypt, the reason was the rejecting, oppressive and neglectful attitudes of concerned officials and abused women's feelings of the negative consequences of divorce if they were to request it. In Jordan, the reason was that abused women feared a more complicated situation in case of divorce and they feared the reactions of dominant males within their families (ESCWA et al, 2017, p. 22).

According to a recent study, this reluctance is consistent with the many obstacles facing social service offices at the Family Protection Department (Nassar, 2019). It is also worth mentioning that the cases of abused women addressed by the social service offices at the Family Protection Department are extremely serious. A recent study conducted on a sample of 155 women who filed official complaints against their husbands in the Amman Governorate revealed that the majority of those women were subjected to (sexual, physical and psychological) violence, were married and had low incomes and were abused by their husbands due to the interference of their husbands' families in their lives (Heyasat, 2016).

A recent qualitative study on women and legal aid services in Jordan indicates that the majority of women requesting legal aid services are among the categories of married and poor women, housewives and Jordanian nationals (Nassar, 2020).

## **2.2 The most appropriate theoretical framework for interpreting abused women's reluctance to request help:**

The ecological model of understanding the violence of closely related peers against their victims and its exploration of the nature of the relationship between victims of violence and their multidimensional contexts has been dominant among the global research community since the early 1970s (WHO, 2002, p. 13). Results revealed the extensive use of the ecological model in exploring the reasons for violence taking place against women, as opposed to not using it to determine the underlying causes for the reluctance of many victims to report their cases. The implementation of this model may help victims of violence and ensure the positive effect of the law's protection (Freidman, 2020, pp. 129-245).

According to the above-mentioned, the model subject of study shall be built in the first sub-result item mentioned below by relying on the field studies.

### 3. Study Results and Recommendations:

By applying its methodology, the study was able to answer its main question and its four sub-questions. This resulted in formulating its results and recommendations as explained below:

#### 3.1 Results:

The study produced four sub-results and a main result arranged as follows:

##### 3.1.1 First Sub-Result:

The study reached its first sub-result. Table (1) refers to the contents of the analytical framework related to the reluctance of abused women to seek help from institutions concerned with protecting them with data extracted from the results of field studies. There are four large factors comprising 64 sub-factors with a rate of 16 sub-factors for each main factor.

According to the above-mentioned, the study would have answered its first sub question by stating that: the analytical framework related to abused women’s reluctance to seek help from institutions concerned with protecting them drawn from the results of field studies includes four main factors comprising 64 sub-factors with 16 sub-factors for each main factor.

**Table (1): The analytical framework related to abused women’s reluctance to seek help from institutions concerned with protecting them**

Serial No.	Components of Analytical Framework			
	Individual Factors	Family Factors	Communal Factors	Cultural Factors
1	Women’s age	Male heading the family	Male dominance of the departments of law enforcement institutions	The spread of values enhancing female subordination to males.
2	Women being on their first marriage	A dominance of authoritative upbringing methods	Law enforcement institution employees deal with women’s issued based on their own values and perspective	The spread of values consolidating gender-based discrimination
3	Women’s low education levels	Gender-based discrimination between family members in favor of males	The absence of the independent regulation of the performance of law enforcement institutions	The absence of moral conventions among workers in law enforcement institutions

Serial No.	Components of Analytical Framework			
	Individual Factors	Family Factors	Communal Factors	Cultural Factors
4	Women's immigration from their own countries or seeking asylum under pressure in another country	The family's immigration from its country or seeking asylum under pressure in another country	The failure to structure family protection legislations according to results of scientific studies	Combating the culture of human rights
5	Women's residence in a local Bedouin or rural community	The family's residence in a local Bedouin or rural community	The noncompliance of women's protection plans and strategies with the preparation regulations and standards of those plans	The lack of women's upbringing on values of freedom, justice and self-dependence
6	Women's lack of paid employment	The family's low income or high social welfare levels	The poor performance of systems protecting women from violence	The lack or poor consideration of women's protection interventions within social culture requirements
7	Women having five or more children	The fear of Bedouin or rural families from stigma	The spread of stigma among Bedouin and rural communities	The spread of a culture of negative peers
8	Women's reliance in their economic lives on a peer or their receipt of social aid services	The prevalence of violence within the family and its effect on more vulnerable members	The rising levels of low income	The absence or poor reliance of concerned institutions on the values of positive science
9	Women's feelings of fear from threats, divorce, revenge, loss of a provider and social rejection	The large number of family members	Rising unemployment rates	Women clinging to hopes that their men's behaviors will improve despite them abusing them
10	Women's illogical thinking	The family's fear of a bad reputation among its relatives	Increasing rates of crime, corruption and disintegration.	The spread of a non-standard legal culture
11	Women's lack of knowledge of their rights stipulated in effective legislations	Marital family and not households	The absence or lack of free legal aid services	The absence or poor levels of social responsibility

Serial No.	Components of Analytical Framework			
	Individual Factors	Family Factors	Communal Factors	Cultural Factors
12	Women's acceptance of marriage to escape their families' problems and to avoid being socially stigmatized as spinsters	The family's receipt of social aid services	The harsh conditions from benefiting from social aid services	The spread of a culture of demonizing the other
13	Women's exposure to sexual violence	The family's fear of a bad reputation among its neighbors	Peer pressure	The absence of a culture of institutional work integration
14	Women's rejection of their painful reality	The family's lack of friends or low levels of support from friends if present	The absence or uncommonness of a human rights culture	The failure to eliminate discriminative content from academic curriculums
15	Women's patience with their husbands' behaviors	The family's residence in developing or middle-income countries	The low rates of economic development	The spread of a culture of social stigmatization, especially in local Bedouin and rural communities
16	Women's lack of confidence in their capabilities and protection systems	The legal pursuit of economically active family members	The absence or low effectiveness and efficiency of communal awareness programs	The spread of a non-standard planning culture
Total	16	16	16	16

### 3.1.2 Second Sub-Result:

The second sub-result was reached by the study by responding to its second sub-question. This was performed by interviewing eight persons concerned with family protection as a result of their professional experience on an individual basis. Table (2) reveals the responses of those individuals to the causes behind abused women's reluctance to request help.

Based on the afore-mentioned, the study would have answered its second sub-question by stating that: there are 30 reasons behind abused women's reluctance to seek help in Jordan from the viewpoint of some parties concerned with protecting them, the most repeated of which was women's fear of the consequences of requesting help.

**Table (2): Reasons behind abused women’s reluctance to seek help in Jordan from the viewpoint of some of those concerned with protecting them**

Serial No.	Reasons behind abused women’s reluctance to seek help	Repetition	%
1	Women bearing the responsibility of their children	5	7.14
2	The lack of support provided to a married woman by her parents during family crises due to their inability to cope with her children and the small space of their house	3	4.28
3	The presence of a married woman’s parents outside the country	1	1.42
4	The women’s lack of evidence proving her abuse	1	1.42
5	Adherence to the social culture of the husband’s abuse of his wife	4	5.71
6	The request from a married woman by her parents to bear with her husband in his worst conditions	2	2.85
7	Women’s lack of economic self-reliance	5	7.14
8	Women’s low level of education	1	1.42
9	The rigidity of legislations such as the personal status law and the penal code	1	1.42
10	The absence of moral conventions for workers in law enforcement institutions as they address women’s issues from the perspective of their own personal values	4	5.71
11	The poor spread of a culture of human rights	1	1.42
12	The absence of mental health programs targeting women	2	2.85
13	The weak belief of workers in law enforcement institutions in their profession’s mission and their institutions’ tasks	1	1.42
14	Women’s fear from losing their children and their fear of divorce, separation, revenge, stigma and legal pursuit	8	11.42
15	The lack of capabilities such as safe shelters, the number of workers in the Family Protection Department is low compared to the large numbers of service recipients, societies work on a regional and not a national level and there are no psychological support programs	2	2.85
16	Women bear the responsibility of choosing their husbands	1	1.42
17	Women hope to improve their husbands’ behaviors	2	2.85

Serial No.	Reasons behind abused women's reluctance to seek help	Repetition	%
18	Women not sacrificing for the sake of their marriages and families	1	1.42
19	Women's lack of knowledge of the services provided to protect them	1	1.42
20	The lack of effective social awareness campaigns	2	2.85
21	The failure of institutions concerned with violence against women to act according to the results of scientific studies	4	5.71
22	The absence of social work professionalism	2	2.85
23	The failure of concerned institutions to vary methods of dealing with social subcultures	1	1.42
24	The failure of concerned institutions to review their roles and tasks in light of the analysis results of their internal and external environments	2	2.85
25	Women's low confidence in service providing institutions	3	4.28
26	The failure to activate legislations concerned with women's protection and the frequent change of those legislations such as the Law of Protection from Domestic Violence of 2008 which was replaced with another law issued in 2017.	1	1.42
27	The poor women protection system in areas such as access to services, rehabilitation and reintegration.	4	5.71
28	Provided services fail to take into account the needs of women and their children	2	2.85
29	The failure of concerned institutions to consider women's viewpoints when beginning to design their operations, services and programs	1	1.42
30	Women's low awareness of their rights protected by the law	2	2.85
<b>Total</b>		<b>70</b>	<b>100</b>

### 3.1.3: Third Sub-Result:

The study reached the third sub-result by answering its third sub-question through pairing between some individual factors affecting the reluctance of abused women to seek help as mentioned in the 2012 and 2017 Population and Family Health surveys and the perceptions of those concerned with family protection of the reasons behind abused women's reluctance to seek help. The outcome of that pairing was distributed on a factorial matrix as explained in Table (3).

Based on the afore-mentioned, the study would have answered its third sub-question by stating that: the analytical framework on the reluctance of abused women in Jordan to seek help from institutions concerned with protecting them includes four main factors comprising of 44 sub-factors with a rate of 11 sub-factors for each main factor.

**Table (3): Factors extracted from the most recent results of Population and Family Health surveys and from the perceptions of some of those concerned with protecting the family of the reluctance of abused women in Jordan to seek help**

Serial No.	Factors			
	Individual	Family	Community	Cultural
1	Women's age	The absence of support for a married daughter from her parents	The rigidity of legislations such as the personal status law and the penal code	Adherence to the social culture of husbands abusing their wives, especially in local Bedouin and rural communities
2	Married women, especially those on their first marriage	The presence of a married woman's family abroad	The poor spread of a human rights culture	The absence of moral conventions for workers in law enforcement institutions
3	Women's low level of education	Family pressure on the daughter to bear with her husband while in his worst conditions in order to maintain her honor	Local Bedouin and rural communities	Concerned institutions fail to vary their methods of dealing with sub communities
4	Women immigrating from their countries or seeking asylum under pressure in another country	The family living in a local Bedouin or rural community	The low belief of workers in law enforcement institutions of their professional missions and their institutions' tasks	Workers in concerned institutions rely on their personal values to deal with the issues of service recipients
5	Women living in local Bedouin or rural communities	The family's response to the culture of marrying females to preserve their honor	The low capacities of governmental and nongovernmental institutions concerned with family protection	The spread of social stigma, especially among local Bedouin and rural communities

Serial No.	Factors			
	Individual	Family	Community	Cultural
6	Women taking responsibility of their children	Families with cases of sexual assault	The absence of effective social awareness campaigns	The spread of the culture of marrying females to protect their honor and consequences resulting from this
7	Women lacking evidence on being abused	Low-income families and families with above-average welfare levels	The distancing of concerned institutions from the results of scientific studies despite the availability of those studies	
8	Women lacking economic self-reliance for not working with a wage or having their own work.		The lack of professionalism in social work	
9	Women's fear of reactions such as loss of their children, getting divorced, separation, revenge, stigma, legal pursuit or family destruction		Concerned institutions fail to review their roles and tasks in light of the results of their environment's analysis and fail to assess their interventions periodically	
10	Women bearing the responsibility of choosing their husbands and the consequences of their choices		Failure to activate legislations concerned with women's protection and the frequent change of those laws	
11	Women hoping to improve their husbands' behaviors		The absence of associations providing services at the national level	
12	Women lacking knowledge of the services provided to protect them		Low effect of women's protection systems regarding access	

Serial No.	Factors			
	Individual	Family	Community	Cultural
			to services, rehabilitation and reintegration	
13	Women's low trust in service-providing institutions		Lack of consideration of provided services of the needs of women and children	
14	Abused women's lack of contribution to the design of the activities provided by institutions concerned with providing them with services and programs		Concerned institutions do not consider the viewpoints of abused women when beginning to design their activities	
15	Women's low awareness of their rights ensured by the law		The lack of international experience sharing programs in the area of women's protection	
16	Women exposed to sexual abuse			
Total	16	7	15	6

### 3.1.4 Fourth Sub-Result:

The study reached its fourth sub-result by answering its fourth sub- question through extracting it from the indicator results of surveys and studies on the women protection system and through collecting the perceptions of parties concerned with protecting the family towards the efficiency levels of community interventions into violence against women. With regards to the performance indicators data, a rise in the rates of physical violence against women was noticed from 32% in 2007 to 34% in 2012 and a fall to 21% in 2017, indicating a fluctuation in this form of violence. Also noticed was a rise in the rates of abused women who refrained from seeking help between the years 2012 and 2017 with a positive change rate of 12.98%. There was also a fall in the rates of abused women who were referred to the Dar Al Wifaq Al Osari Home in Amman out of the total numbers of women who received services from the Social Services Centers at the Family Protection Department during the period from 2007 to 2015 reaching 8.75%. This rate also fluctuated

from one year to another, indicating the poor performance of the women protection system in Jordan.

With regards to the level of efficiency of communal interventions into cases of violence against women, seven out of the eight participants in this study, or a rate of 87.5%, viewed that communal interventions related to countering violence against women are inefficient and fail to produce desired results.

Based on the above-mentioned, the study would have answered its fourth sub-question by stating that: the effect of national Jordanian policies on protecting women from violence is very poor.

### **3.1.5 Main Result:**

The study has utilized and combined its answer to its four sub-questions to answer its main question. The outcome was the following statement: most abused women in Jordan refrain from seeking help from institutions concerned with protecting them for four main reasons related to their individual, family, local community and cultural characteristics. These reasons include 44 sub-reasons distributed among them with eleven sub-reasons for each one. The most repeated sub-reason at the individual level was abused women's fear from the consequences of seeking help. At the family level, the most repeated sub-reason was abused women's lack of support from their parents. At the community level, the most repeated sub-reason was the failure of women protection institutions to deal with women's cases from a scientific research perspective, the fragility of the women protection system with regards to service accessibility, rehabilitation and reintegration. The most repeated sub-reason at the cultural level was adherence to social norms related to a husband's abuse of his wife.

This result coincides with previous results mentioned in this study's theoretical framework which attributed the reluctance of the majority of abused women throughout the world to seek help from institutions concerned with protecting them to their fear of punishment, their fear of social stigmatization, their dissatisfaction with the legal system and other reasons. This result also coincides with the study's ecological analysis framework, which attributes the abuse happening and being reported to the characteristics of the abuser and the abused, their domestic interaction contexts, the degree of social efforts in combating abuse, and to their cultural backgrounds which may encourage abuse as mentioned in the first item of the second part of this study.

### 3.2 Recommendations:

Based on its results, this study recommends the following:

1. The Inter-Ministerial Committee for Women's Empowerment should prepare an executive plan to control the factors affecting abused women's reluctance to seek help.
2. The Department of Statistics should use the analytical framework of factors affecting abused women's reluctance to seek help.
3. The National Council for Family Affairs should update the contents of the National Framework for Family Protection against Violence.

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# **Organizational Requirements to Combat Trafficking of Orphaned Children**

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