

## **The Concept of the Family from the Lebanese Social Work Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

*The concepts of marriage and Family overlap in their meanings and contents. Accordingly, they constitute a network of relationships governed by societies' cultures that determine who precedes whom. Based on that, this research seeks to identify which considerations social workers must take during acting within the Lebanese context and what family definition they adopt when performing their duties.*

*An ethnographic methodology used to collect data in two settings prostitution, Palestinian, and Syrian refugee camps gathered 612 notes about visitors over the period of 20 years responding to What is the definition of the Family adopted by Social Workers in Lebanon?*

*The research explains the diverse forms of classical and unclassical forms of the "family" assessed by the researcher. Consequently, social workers should consider the family as any two people who present themselves as a family which represents a challenge in sensitive cases i.e. homosexuality that is marked in Lebanese society.*

**Keywords:** *Family, marriage, Lebanese Social Work.*

### **Introduction**

Lebanon: is a country that is located on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, and its capital is Beirut. Lebanon is bounded by the Arab Syrian Republic to the north and east, to the south by Palestine, and the west by the Mediterranean Sea, with a total area of 10,230 square kilometers; its official language is Arabic. The estimated number of Lebanon's total population is 6.8 million (World Bank, 2021).

Accordingly, men comprised 48.4% of the residential population, while women comprised 51.6%. Furthermore, the 2019 data on marital status by age group and sex revealed that 8.5 percent of residents were either widowed, divorced, or separated, while 55.1 percent of residents were married, and 36.4 percent had never been married. Less than 4% of residents and 7% of women in this age group were married before 18, respectively.

Additionally, there are around 1.266 million households in Lebanon. According to estimates, only 10% of households consisted of just one person, the most prevalent type of household composition being 4 people on average. Moreover, 80% of residents were Lebanese nationals, according to the Lebanese Republic-Central Administration of Statistics (CAS) 2018-19 Lebanese census, compared to 20% non-Lebanese. Statistics show Lebanon was the home to 1.5 million Syrian and Palestinian refugees as of November 2020. In addition to the 257,000 Palestinian refugees who had already settled there (Lebanon crisis response plan, 2021, p:8). The political system is parliamentary democratic with a unique political system called confessionalism which aims at sharing

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power based on religious groups.

Social work profession in Lebanon: There are four levels of institutions that provide social work services and hire social work professionals: (a) global organizations, including the UN agencies, (b) international non-governmental organizations, (c) national non-governmental organizations, and (d) national governmental organizations.

The Lebanese Syndicate of Social Work adopts the International Federation of Social Work definition which defines it as " a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by social work, social sciences, humanities, and indigenous knowledge theories, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing" (Global Definition of Social Work – International Federation of Social Workers, n.d.).

The main areas for practitioners are awareness raising and prevention; social intervention with individuals, families, communities, and society; empowerment and rehabilitation; and planning, advocacy, and lobbying for reform.

The vision of the Lebanese Social Work Syndicate, established by the Ministry of Labor Decree No. 1/41 of February 1, 1997, highlighted that the mission of social work is to protect both professionals and beneficiaries through developing professional competence and the promotion of the profession itself (swslb.com).

Academically, six institutions train social workers: the Lebanese University, the Lebanese American University, Haigazian University, Aljnan University, Modern University for Business and Science, and Saint Joseph University.

Family: it has undergone numerous transformations over the centuries, whether in its formation or structure, structure, and functions. It is reflected in the definitions of the Family as a reservoir of human resources that ensures its long-term viability. Researchers' definitions of the Family are unique due to the backgrounds from which they come, as they base their keywords on it. Biologists have focused on the Family's functions, such as reproduction and social, educational, psychological, demographic, and economic perspectives, according to their specialization. The Family is the first window through which an individual sees the features of his environment and considers it his natural, biological, and social field. It ensures continuity by providing food, drink, shelter, warm or cold nurturing, and life is forbidden and permitted elements. Thus, the Family distinguishes the child from the animal child, who adapts to weaning and independence solely based on its instinctive composition. (Makki, 2007).

The Family is considered the primary individual's social affiliation and the unit by which society reproduces itself and preserves its existence (Powell et al., 2010). Religious origin explains the most prominent definitions of the Family, which requires a heterosexual couple living with their biological children under the same roof (Gavriel et al. 2016). "The family begins its formation with marriage, which does not represent a contractual bond between husband and wife only, but is a heavy charter in the Qur'anic description, as it is the start of a covenant partnership, which not only involves the rights and duties of both parties, but goes beyond that to extend to the pastoral, protective and educational role for future generations, and even doubles the pastoral role in many cases to include caring roles for extended families" (Doha International family institute, 2019).

In sum, the Family means, from a sociological point of view, the living of a man and a woman entering sexual relations approved by society and having rights and duties such as the care and upbringing of children, respectively, those who come because of these relations, consequently, the Family consists of individuals linked by kinship (Bayoumi, 1988).

There are two main types of families:

1- The nuclear Family is a small Family that includes the husband, wife, and children who live in one house. It is now considered a global social phenomenon in connection with essential functions. It is defined as "the human community consisting of the husband, the wife, and unmarried children, who live with them in one dwelling." The structure of the nuclear Family is based on the principle of the prohibition of marriage with incest, and it does not last long, as it is limited to two generations. (Bayyouni, 1988).

2- The extended Family: It "constitutes a common pattern in primitive and non-industrial societies, and it is a solidary group, in which the ownership is common, and the authority is assigned to the head of the Family or the great-grandfather, or in other words, it is the group that consists of several related families, and they live in the same house" (Bayyouni, 1988). It also refers to the large Family that includes the husband, wife, children, and relatives who live in one house, who have strong kinship relations and share in managing its activities, raising children, and facing the burdens of life. In this setting, the father is viewed as a leader and a guide, and he makes decisions that affect the Family's future. (Al-Karkhi, 2009).

Marriage<sup>2</sup> : Societies agree and differ in determining the time of marriage and demanding: Who precedes whom? It is generally accepted that temporal precedence is granted to marriage with distinction. However, after the examinations on the ground of multiple societies, this remains an issue that we cannot generalize. However, premarital childbearing in Lebanese society cannot be denied as a phenomenon, and it often remains confined strictly and is treated secretly and away from people's eyes and ears.

Thus, we find that there is a simple and complex combination linking marriage and childbearing, which often go hand in hand from the point of view of society's acceptance of them. The issue of marriage without childbearing and childbearing without marriage remains at stake, and they are subject to the estimations of those societies themselves (Makki, 2007).

Marriage begins with an oral and written contract by a religious or civil authority. Usually, the relationship between spouses continues throughout life, and sometimes, for various reasons, this link is broken by divorce through mutual consent of the two parties or the courts (Al-Daheri, 2008). In addition, it is a general system with multiple forms, as humanity has known the system of polygamy and husbands (Al-Jawhari et al., 1980).

Regarding marriage, there are two essential kinds: mono and polygamy, which are allowed only for Muslims in Lebanon (Makki, 2007).

Childbearing: It is defined as the biological process aimed at human reproduction and generation through which the sexual relationship between male and female emerges, thus contributing to the preservation and continuity of the human species. Previously, childbearing was a biological process that occurred spontaneously. The economic, social, and cultural conditions had the most important impact on the increase in the number of children, as mothers were proud of many of their children. The same was true for men, who considered many children a symbol of pride and masculinity (Bayyouni, 2008).

Many changes have taken place in human society, such as the shift from agriculture to industry and migration from the countryside to the cities that changed the form of the Family from the extended to the nuclear, as children became a tremendous economic burden on

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2 - In Lebanon, family law matters are governed by 18 separate religious courts (Christians with Muslims and other minorities). Marriage in Lebanon is performed under the authority of a Christian or Muslim religion. Each couple must apply to the personal status laws that he/she belongs to and be referred to their religious courts once needed. Civil marriage is considered another form of marriage, and it is recognized but could be executed abroad. However, Lebanese Christians and Muslims religiously and strongly reject this kind of marriage.

some families, which prompted the direction of making childbearing a subject to voluntary choice. Many societies examined how to determine the reproduction process to regulate the number of family members and launched the so-called "family planning" process. This term became associated with using a method of birth control and organizing children's birth at spaced intervals for health and social considerations related to the mother and the child, in general. This concept was also associated with "family planning," centered on "adopting a certain way of life." The individual feels fully responsible for his offspring (Al-Khawli, 1986).

### **Research question.**

The research question is: What is the definition of the Family adopted by Social Workers in Lebanon and which they consider in their work?

### **Methodology**

An ethnographic methodology was used to collect data for current research. Ferguson, H, 2016 highlights that "social work researchers have adopted various ethnographic methods to reach different degrees of closeness to social work practice encounters. While 'ethnography' is often synonymous with participant observation, it also encompasses a repertoire of techniques that include one-to-one interviews, discourse analysis, personal documents, and vignettes". The research uses a qualitative method that is based on the cumulative scenes that were experienced by the researcher in the worst settings within the prostitution and refugee context for twenty years in the Dar Al Amal organization (DAA)<sup>3</sup> located in Beirut where worked as director of the center which dedicated to providing services for victims of prostitution regardless nationalities, age, and in National Institution for Social Care and Vocational training known as Beit Atfal Al Somoud (NISCVT) where worked as director of the social work department and has premises in all Palestinian camps in Lebanon<sup>4</sup>. Note that I marked DAA as X and NISCVT as Y in the figures.

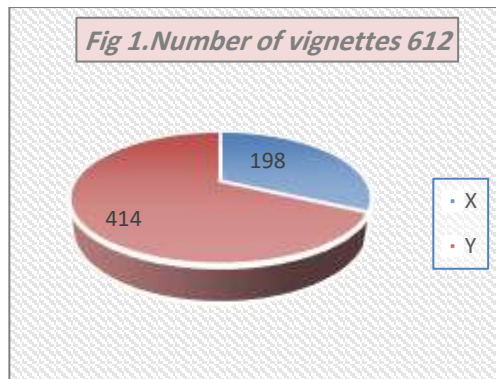
The researcher found many cases that visited DAA and NISCVT to seek help, where the absence of one of the family's pillars: human or paper-legal was marked. Therefore, the researcher decided to write down details describing the form in which the family presents itself as a "family". She recorded these observations within lists divided into lists that include families that do not comply with the classical definition (without official marriage and the absence of one of its human pillars: spouses or biological children). Thus, the categorization led to the identification of two lists. The first list included models of families in which there is no element of the legality or legitimacy of marriage (religious in Lebanon). As for the second list, it contained models with an absence of the husband or biological children, but it may include adopted children as well<sup>5</sup>.

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3-Dar Al Amal is a Lebanese NGO "founded in 1970, recognized as a public utility (by decree number 9176 dated 8-07-1974) run by a multidisciplinary professional team, with the collaboration of volunteers, and works in partnership with the public and private sectors, both nationally and internationally, for the development of the prevention and protection of vulnerable children and the empowerment of weakening young girls and women "(dar-alamal.org).

4- Social Care and Vocational Training (NISCVT, Beit Atfal Al Somoud) is a humanitarian, non-sectarian NGO, established on August 12, 1976, working for the orphaned children who lost their parents (license no. 135/AD given on February 18, 1980) intervening in all Palestinian camps in Lebanon by providing services for the Palestinians and non-Palestinians disadvantaged people living in the camps or around. NISCVT aims to contribute to the development of the Palestinian community in Lebanon and provide services to respond to the needs of the families and empower the refugees through various gender-balanced projects that give potential and build skills of the children, youth, women, and parents or guardians (socialcare.org).

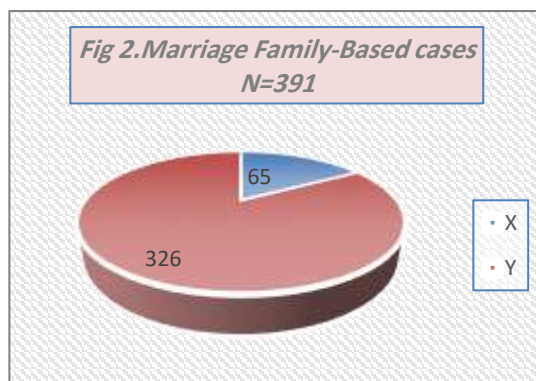
5 - The work on the two lists throughout the twenty years of the researcher's work in the direct professional practice in each of the two institutions included taking 612 notes related to the families that visited the centers: 198 vignettes for DAA and 414 vignettes for Y to request services, then she sorted and analyzed data to reach the results listed below. The large difference in numbers between the two instances is due to the nature of the institutions' work, especially since NISCVT specializes in targeting women in prostitution, while Y focuses on working for Palestinian refugees as a whole population and serves poor families in need of support.



### Findings and Results

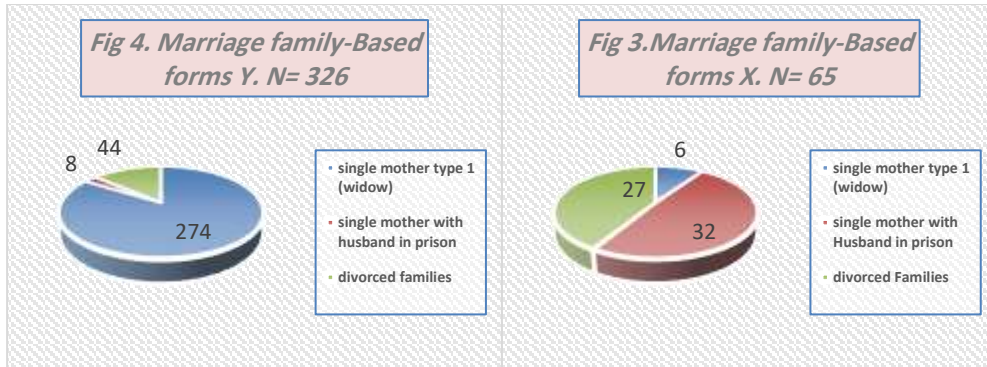
There are various types of "human gathering manifestations" beneficiaries involved. People visited centers and asked for services necessitating professional interventions at different levels. One of the most critical problems and concerns is treated as a family-based approach. Social workers are urged to intervene with beneficiaries' families at this level, which must support their different members. Therefore, the list below explains distinct sort of these following "family forms":

1. Marriage-based cases
2. Non-marriage cases
3. Direct/indirect biological kinship
4. non-biological kinship
5. Spouses without children
6. same-sex couple cases



1. Marriage-based cases

The total number of the vignettes shows that 65 single mothers are widows and 38 divorced women visited DAA. However, most families (326) who visited NISCVT are widows since this category comes at the top of the target groups for social workers.

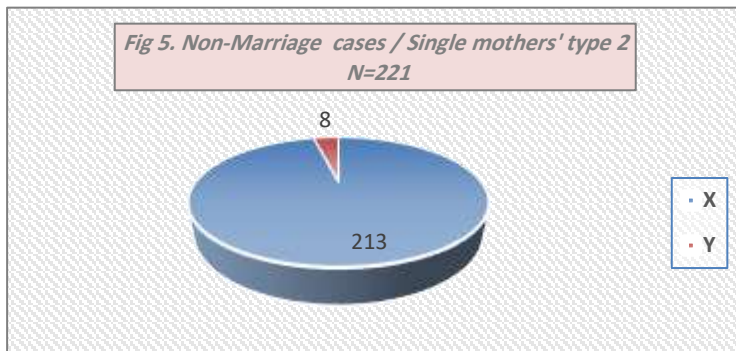


- Single mothers' type 1: the mother can visit the social work offices to ask about a specific service as she is responsible for her orphaned children because of her husband's death. Likewise, a single mother may be responsible for raising her children, given that the husband is a prisoner. The graphs indicate that the number of prisoners' husbands in the DAA setting is four times more than in NISCVT due to the correlation between prostitution and crimes.

- Divorced families: a mother likely visits social work offices being a divorced single mother who raises her children alone, or on the contrary, a father may come and ask for service since he is responsible for raising his children, for many reasons such as the death of the mother or due to her marriage to another man<sup>6</sup>.

2. Non-marriage cases

- Single mothers' type 2



This case could be described as it could include the mother and or her children who came from a non-legal sexual relationship which means without legal frameworks, where no official marriage occurred. The pregnant woman keeps her baby, gives birth, and cares for her baby alone. The identity of the father remains unknown.

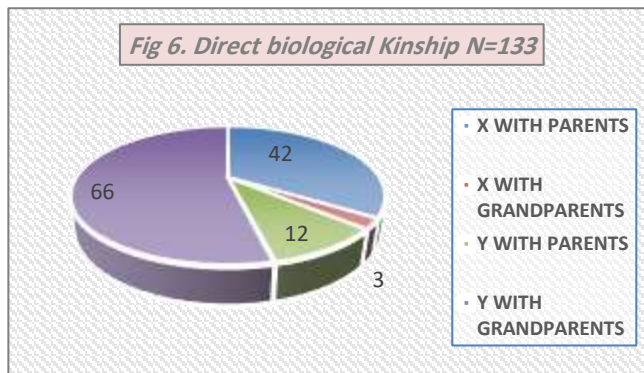
The graph's numbers could explain the influence of cultural repercussions on childbearing which necessitates the existence of legal marriage. Therefore 8 "families" (consisting of a man, woman, and their children / without marriage) are marked in NISCVT compared to 213 cases seen in DAA. Noting that prostitution is likely related to illegal pregnancy. Back to my experience as director of the DAA center, this type of single mother frequently occurred. I often encountered cases of women who became pregnant and gave birth because

6 - In these cases, the social worker may support families and provide various services such as the provision of food, cash assistance, rent, housing fees, and schooling charges. In addition, social workers may emphasize mothers' strengths by designing activities that unfold capacity-building programs to be autonomous. These two types of families are accepted by Lebanese society since they are derived from a legal marriage in which some Lebanese religious men legalized the "sexual relationship" between a woman and a man (either Christian or Muslim couples).

of their work in prostitution, all through sexual relations without prior knowledge of the "client" who buys the service (street prostitution). There are also many cases of women who have repeatedly aborted to not give birth to children of an unknown father's identity, noting that the situation followed in Lebanon for official registration of children is family subordination to the father's name. However, suppose the woman keeps the newborn. In that case, she can grant Lebanese nationality to her child after being subjected to comprehensive security and judicial procedures and registering the newborn in her proper name. This procedure is only available to the mother who holds Lebanese nationality exclusively. In contrast, registering the newborn remains pending if the mother is non-Lebanese or does not possess identification papers, i.e., the cases of Syrian or Palestinian refugees.

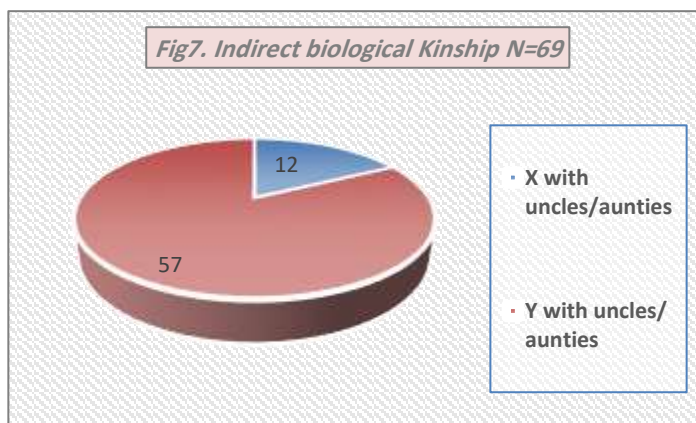
3. Direct/indirect biological kinship

- Direct biological kinship



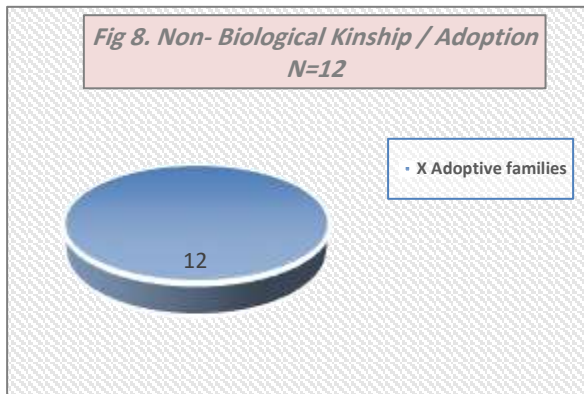
This type could be known as the classical form of the Family, which consists of parents and their direct biological descendants. Grandparents could be annexed as an extended family. In NISCVT 12 grandparents are considered as Children's caregivers since the social workers are keen to support widows with children otherwise, they target the grandparents (extended family) once they face challenges like a widow's death, divorce, and getting married to someone else. However, the children of poor families in both NISCVT and DAA are likely raised by their mothers.

- Indirect biological kinship

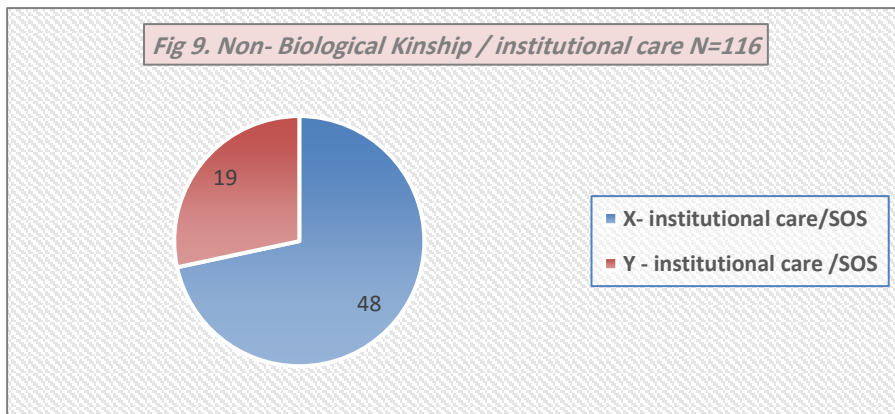


It could be considered when the cousins (uncles and aunties) become children's caregivers due to unavoidable circumstances, like the death of both biological parents and grandparents.

4. Non-biological kinship



- Adoptive families: In Lebanon, adoption is allowed strictly for Christian spouses, considering that the Islamic religion inhibits the adoption and substitutes it with an alternate presented by the custody system. The difference between adoption and custody is that the first acquires the child's full-real name of the adoptive Christian spouse and could be registered under their proper name. In contrast, in the case of custody, which is applicable for Muslim spouses who will be responsible for covering all expenses needed without legal registration. These cases are almost seen in DAA since NISCVT is a Muslim community and as mentioned above adoption is only permitted to the Christians.



- Institutional-based caregivers (shelters): This case may be dedicated to orphans and other social hardship cases such as broken families or foundlings. It is possible to deal with several cases of orphanhood and family disintegration, where we find that the Family does not contain parents, grandparents, uncles, and aunts but rather contains only brothers and sisters. the most followed and standard models in Lebanon are Institutional care<sup>7</sup> and SOS villages<sup>8</sup>.

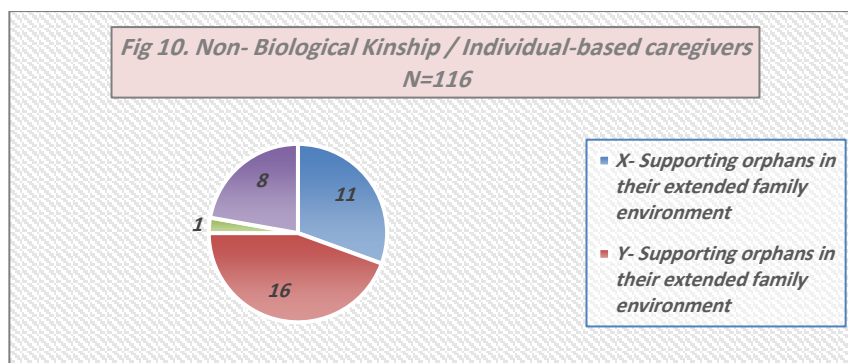
- Individual-based caregivers: cases could be presented as follows:

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7 - Institutional care, central institutions: These institutions attract all types of orphans of all categories (i.e., those whose parents have died, whose parents are unknown, and children of broken families) and raise them from birth until age eighteen. It is ordinary and familiar for any child to grow up, grow, and spend his first years in his Family - except in cases with unusual circumstances - so his personality will undoubtedly be directly affected by the condition in which he lives in his Family. However, sometimes many reasons prevent growing up and undertaking care and reform.

8 - SOS Children's Villages: The principle of this form of care is based on providing the minimum level of parental care lost to orphans by securing a kind of family atmosphere that is almost like real families in which children feel security and safety meaning since their early childhood. The children live in the village with a surrogate mother who gives them love and tenderness. She devotes her life to the children she cares for, and through the mother, children learn the meaning of love and security.





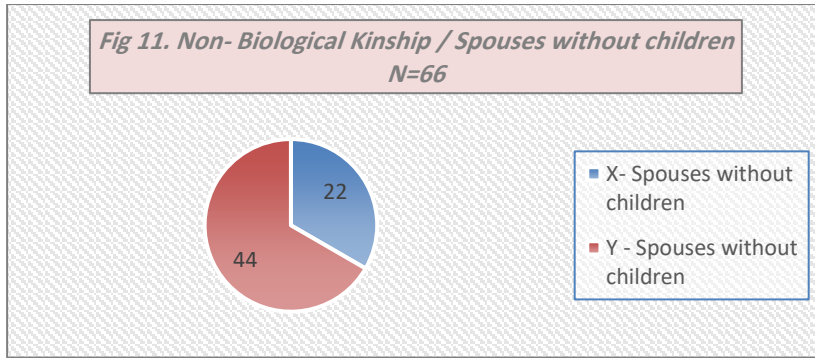
(a) Sometimes, children miss their biological parents and become orphans. In specific situations, like refugees, neighbors could be the caregivers (death or missing of both parents while fleeing from one country to another). This case is frequently seen among the Syrian refugees in Lebanon (unaccompanied children). There are many cases of minors, males, and females, among the ranks of the Syrian refugees who came to Lebanon with neighbors, came on their own, and joined one of the families who sympathized with them or accompanied one of the families that had no relation to them.

(b) Care in the alternative Family: Adoption or Sponsorship (KAFALA): This form of care is limited to children of unknown parents, and it is widespread among Western countries and in some Arab countries, especially within Christian environments, including Lebanon, where Christian religious institutions supervise the adoption process, and therefore it takes place under the supervision of the Church and with a license from it and Christian courts only. In comparison, there is another form of sponsorship, called KAFALA, in the Muslim communities, which may not exceed sponsorship by contributing part of the entire expenses of a child or a group of children within the care institutions.

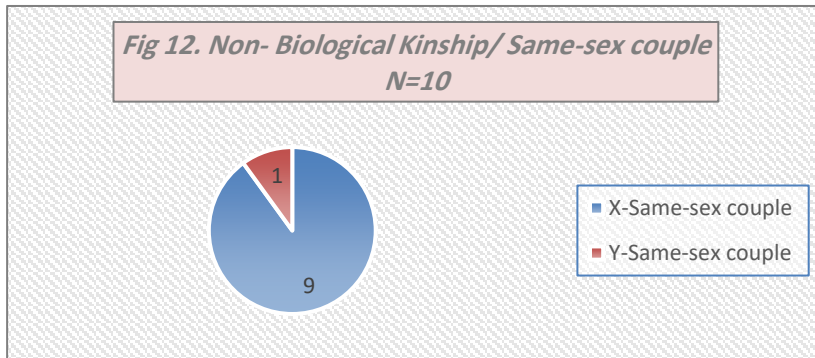
(c) Supporting orphans in their extended family environment: Children who benefit from this care are orphan children (the father has died) and children of fractured families. It gives the most prominent value to the family concept. It searches for an alternative family at the level of kinships, such as grandfather/grandmother, uncle/aunt, or maternal uncle/aunt... The research goes to the cousins and the aunt... because no family can provide a normal family upbringing more than the extended Family. Perhaps it is more suitable and effective than others on all levels, especially the emotional, cultural, and social needs. At this level, the Family has the most prominent role in the cohesion of the Family and supporting each other. Thus, the social worker seeks to assess the situation of the extended Family (considering it a children's Family) and choose what is most appropriate for the upbringing of the orphan child through an intervention program that includes a plan to support the selected Family and help them bear the expenses resulting from hosting the child in their care and the specialized social follow-up that may entail<sup>9</sup>.

5. Spouses without children, which consists of a married couple who do not have children. Often, these families may ask for the social worker's support: marital disputes, unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, capacity-building programs, etc. Noting that NISCVT provides services for the elderly, which explains the difference between the numbers allocated for both institutions.

9 - It should be noted that some other care pillars can provide orphans with some inclusive services, away from the solution that requires providing shelter services for children. We mention, for example, but are not limited to hosting an orphan child in a friendly family. They provide him with emotional support (even if partially) during holidays or on religious occasions and holidays. It allows the child to live in a friendly family that provides him with safety and family warmth, even for a limited period, which is the social worker's main role in acting in such a setting.



6. Same-sex couple cases



These cases consist of two homosexual adults (males/females) who decide to live together in the same house and consider themselves husband and wife. These kinds of couples are not easily declared. They are only seen when the relationship with the social worker is highly trusted. Tens of such cases were seen in DAA much more than in NISCVT (Syrians and Palestinian camps). Most of their demands from the DAA experience, were to ensure protection from their parents, whereas, from NISCVT were to provide refugees with cash assistance and ask for facilitate and refer them to UNHCR for travel to another safe country (Asylum Seeker Program).

**Discussion**

As shown in the research, social workers have seen many kinds of "human gathering forms" based on close interaction with clients in several care settings.

According to family concepts and research findings, it is essential to define and describe Family from two perspectives: a legal status, which means marriage, and a direct kinship, which means blood relations. Returning to the research question about what kind of family social workers consider in their professional intervention in the Lebanese context? The answer will be as follows:

The social worker must adopt different forms of the Family's concept regardless of the characteristics highlighted in the Family's definitions. So that counseling represents the basic role that the social worker plays in such matters, as could be defined as a set of services that aim to help the individual understand himself and his problems and to take advantage of his own and environmental resources so that he sets goals that are consistent with the capabilities, such as desires, readiness, his social environment, and others. The goal is to solve problems with practical solutions that lead to adaptation with the individual and his society to reach the maximum possible growth and integration in his personality (Tabbara,2000).

1. It was not limited to the existence or non-existence of marriage, as in a single mother who gave birth without marriage. i.e., several girls and women who were victims of Prostitution visited the DAA organization to have illegal children and gave birth to their babies without marriage. This was the consequence of sexual intercourse with

unknown sexual partners. Thus, if the mother is Lebanese, she could provide Lebanese nationality to her baby with an "unknown father's identity" after pursuing a complex juridical investigation process.

1.1 It was not restricted to the biological mother and father, as is the case with raising a child in a shelter or orphanage or with neighbors in the country of origin. In this case, kinship, as stated in the family definitions shown previously, did not constitute a condition for the care and support of non-biological children. In addition to the adoption and custody, which constitute another kind of children care i.e. The professional intervention at the National Institution of Social Care and Vocational Training (NISCVT) in all Palestinian camps around Lebanon, has shown several cases of Palestinian refugees who fled from Syria upon the crisis to Lebanon, of unaccompanied children where their neighbors in Syria represented their caregivers.

1.2 A few cases of broken families and/or divorced families who visited Y consisted of mothers with children or fathers with children depending on the Family, whether it be a father-based or mother-based breadwinner.

1.3 The spouses without children's cases were also seen in NISCVT. It could be intentional for family planning purposes or unintentional, such as the inability to have children (sterility), or for health, such as hereditary transmission diseases, the most common ones in Lebanon are thalassemia and diabetes.

These clarifications urge professional social workers to reevaluate the classical way to define the Family and examine any entity consisting of any form of membership that considers itself a "family". Therefore, Social work practitioners are urged in such settings to assess the case of the Family based on the relationship and the interaction between each other regardless of the marriage-based and the biological-based conditions.

In conclusion, how would the Family describe itself? These are the starting questions that professional social workers in Lebanon must take into consideration during their professional interventions within the family context, and they must reflect the Family in the same way that the "family" describes itself in form and content, whether there were either a marriage or a kinship or not. In this meaning, the concept of the Family from the social work perspective must be seen as a "flexible" concept and has no limits, considering the different forms and types of the families listed above. Thus, the priority of concept understanding goes to the actual cases from what the field teaches us, away from the legal and official considerations.

It is not enough for us as social workers to adopt all the definitions that affect the Family, as we have witnessed - and we may witness - in our professional lives many patterns that rise above the biological relationship represented by the non-biological child that the Family adopts as its son, such as formal or informal adoption (KAFALA). We present the most prominent observations on multi-layered approaches that dealt with the Family.

#### First: Family definitions approach

a. There is confusion between marriage and the Family. The Family is not a bond between a man and a woman. Otherwise, how do we explain the relationships between the children of the same family and what unites brothers and sisters?

b. The absence of the pillars of the Family in some definitions that described the Family and presented its nature only. Moreover, what about the families of same-sex couples with their children classified by adoption?

c. How do sexual relations unite only between the extended family members of ancestors and descendants?

d. What about separated spouses? With/without children? Moreover, in the case of children, who is considered a family? Is the spouse the breadwinner and/or the

partner who lives with the children?

e. Where are the families in which there is an absence of one of the parents or spouses, either materially or morally, as it may spread in some Western and Arab societies, for example, the phenomenon of single mothers consisting of a mother and her children only, and it is possible that the mother herself does not know the identity of the father if she gives birth through the vital bank based on giving women (who desire motherhood without marriage), the opportunity to become pregnant and have children? Thus, we see that the process of forming a family in some societies can challenge the process of marriage, as it has become easy to form a family in which there is no realistic image of a father. The question that arises strongly is what the definition of this form of attachment is. Does it fall within the family framework, given that there is a mother who gives birth? So where does the classification of this form come from among the family patterns?

f. Where do we classify families consisting of two spouses without children? Of Homosexuals?

g. Where is the Family - whose members are not linked by blood or biological ties, such as Lebanese Christian spouses who adopt children?

h. What is the consideration of the couple consisting of a man, a woman, and their children who live according to cohabitation (without legal marriage)?

There is no doubt that the definition of the Family is subject to several criteria that change in different societies and cultures and vary in their cultural diversity. However, we intended to propose a definition of the Family that is in line with what is accompanied by social workers and considers all the observations:

"A social structure that brings together at least two individuals who share a life cycle and is connected at least by one blood or upbringing factor. "

#### Second: Relational interactive-based approach

This approach appears by revealing the interactive relationships that govern its members, such as the interrelationship of parents, between members of the extended Family, between children of the same sex, and between brothers and sisters. At this level, we must analyze the patterns of authority used: the authority in decision-making, the process of decision-making, is it unilateral? Bilateral (the parents)? Or participatory (all members)?

#### Third: A problem-solving approach

Social workers grant great importance to the Family: starting from collecting data and building a genogram history, which leads to analyzing the problem and developing appropriate action plans, reinforcing the influential role that the Family provides in solving it, especially in cases that show influential and therapeutic family functions such as drug addiction, stigmatized diseases, and deviations, delinquency and, the social reintegration of prisoners ...

#### Fourth: Behavior modification approach

The Family represents the first spatial and environmental framework in which the child is brought up and from which he derives his ethical and social standards. These behaviors are often expected by imitating the parents and following their rules. If these standards are consistent with society, he grows up properly and adopts good values. However, if those standards are deviant, an incorrect upbringing arises, affecting the child's ability to track the resilience process. Then the child resorts to practicing actions and behaviors that need familial intervention to modify them and ensure they are not repeated.

So, the bottom line is that the family, from the perspective of social workers, represents the basic unit. It is not possible to carry out the due process of intervention with the individual without going back to the individual's family and revealing the dynamics of the relationship in it, which reflects positively on the individual's psychological, social, and educational health. Taking this into consideration, cases in which the family is negatively affected become a threat to its children, especially in cases of incest or forced prostitution by a member of the family.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

In Conclusion, based on the importance of family members' support for each other, especially during obstacles and crises, social work professionals are requested to rethink the concept of the Family regardless of the legal and reproductive determinants that are imposed by Lebanese society and seek to understand the issue as per case by case. In the same context, the Syndicate of Social Workers in Lebanon is requested to clarify the concept of the Family once used in its Code of Ethics and to declare the flexibility of this term whenever practitioners need to intervene as a family-based approach. The term family/families appears six times in the professional ethics of social workers in Lebanon without defining the term, noting that the client is defined as a person, Family, group or persons, incorporated body, association, or community on whose behalf a social worker provides or agrees to provide a service or to whom the social worker is legally obligated to provide a service" (Code of ethics of social workers in Lebanon, 2018). On the other hand, the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA), which represents the official umbrella for social work in Lebanon, does not have a clear and concrete definition for the family concept, even though MOSA launched the National program to support the poorest families (NPTP). However, still, the Ministry did not mention any elements that should be included as a meaning of the family concept. Stating that Lebanon has not yet reached the acceptance of marriage between homosexuals and does not respect their desire to form a family, which constitutes a new and real dilemma in front of the social workers' community and in front of the entire Lebanese society. As a result, social workers must consider any human relationship that represents itself as a family, including the relationship between men and women with or without legal marriage, with or without children, and single mothers in addition to the family classical-based approach consideration. Furthermore, same-sex relationships (men-men and/or women-women), must be taken into consideration in such context. Therefore, the Ministry of Social Affairs is urged to invite relevant stakeholders that include but are not limited to, the practitioner social workers, muslim, and Christian religious, syndicate of social work in Lebanon to elaborate deep discussions and workshops for a better understanding and a clear attitude towards this unclassical and "unfamiliar" behavior and to agree and come out with a "social work family declaration" covers the decision that has both a human rights-based and culture respectful eyes. In addition, the syndicate of social work in Lebanon must insert and mark the family declaration acceptance that fits in its code of ethics.

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