

**The Effect of Remaining Unmarried on Self-
Perception and Mental Health Status: A study
of Palestinian Single Women**

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Community Studies, School of Nursing and
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By

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my husband Mohammad, my daughters Quds and Amanda, and my brothers and sisters. I also dedicate this thesis to the souls of my parents. Finally, I dedicate this thesis to the women of Palestine.

Declaration

I declare that no portion of the work referred to in this study has been submitted in support of any application for other degree or qualification to this or any other university or other institution of learning.

Najah M. Manasra

2003

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Abstract

A triangulated design was used to investigate the influences of remaining unmarried on Palestinian women's self-perception and mental health status. Three-hundred, never-married women between the ages of 25 and 50 years were selected using a convenience sampling technique. All these unmarried respondents filled in the Derogatis SCL-90-R (a self report measure of mental health symptomatology) by themselves. One hundred and sixty three participants of the 300 were successfully interviewed by means of a face-to-face, semi-structured, tape-recorded interviews with 15 open-ended questions. The SCL-90-R was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 10, guided by Derogatis's (1983) booklet guide. The 163 interviews were transcribed verbatim, typed on Microsoft Word and analyzed qualitatively using thematic and content analyses according to the guidelines of the phenomenological method. Descriptive statistics, Kruskal-Wallis Tests, Spearman Correlation Coefficients, and multiple regressions were used to analyze the Derogatis SCL-90-R. A comparison of the major findings of the current study with the findings of relevant previous national and international research was presented.

Analyses of the SCL-90-R indicated that unmarried Palestinian women in the current study have more psychological problems as represented through the 3 indices and 9 symptom dimensions of the SCL-90-R, than do Palestinian women in general, and more than the female normative group studied by Derogatis (1983). The findings indicated that about one-third of the respondents complained of moderate and above rates of psychological distress on the SCL-90-R's 'global severity index' and the eight of the nine symptom dimensions. Being highly educated and being in employment were associated with better mental health among the unmarried respondents in the current study. The lower the educational level of the unmarried woman, the more emotional and psychological complaints she is likely to have. Unemployed and poorly educated participants were likely to have more psychological problems than employed and highly educated women. Other independent variables were significant under some circumstances, including family composition, place of living and the age of the participants.

The analysis of the interviews indicated that there were multiple reasons for remaining single in the Palestinian society that included sociocultural, psychological, financial, familial, and personal factors. On the other hand, most of the respondents approved that marriage is better than singlehood despite its difficulties and excessive responsibilities. The majority of the respondents were harassed, restricted in living and movement, were censured by their families and society in general, which augmented their feeling of estrangement and alienation in their society. The respondents of the current study varied in their feelings and self-perception as a reaction to remaining unmarried. Some were proud, satisfied, and assertive about themselves, while the others had feelings of sadness, inferiority, worry, over-sensitivity, loneliness, insecurity, pessimism or uncertainty about their future and their families. Somatization, withdrawal,

interpersonal difficulties, aggression, and escape mechanisms were common reactions and behaviours that were reported by the respondents. However, the feelings and reactions of the unmarried women to remaining unmarried were related to the manner in which they were treated by society and their families, and their own attitudes about remaining single.

In terms of how they compared themselves to other women, there were no consistent findings as some respondents believed they were more fortunate or less fortunate than other women in their communities. Being educated, employed, independent, assertive and getting one's family's support and understanding had positive influence on the self-perception of the respondents in the current study. Despite the negative feelings that were reported by many respondents, very few had ever consulted a mental health professional or sought counseling. Special consideration should be given to the emotional needs and psychological problems of unmarried Palestinian women. This is a challenging area for mental health professionals and family health care providers. Implications were discussed in relation to mental health practice, social systems and social organizations, and further research with emphasis on gender in health care was recommended.

This was the first study in Palestinian society that explored self- perception and the mental health state of the unmarried women. In addition, the present study could be the first study of its kind in Arab countries as far as the literature shows, which investigated "remaining unmarried after age 25" among women and focused on the state of their mental health.

Abbreviations

ANOVA	One Way Analysis of Variance
SCL.90-R	Derogatis L. Symptom Checklist 90 Revised
GSI	Global Severity Index
PSDI	Positive Symptom Distress Index
PST	Positive Symptom Total
M	Mean
MS	Mean Square
NGOs	Nongovernmental Organizations
SD	Standard Deviation
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
UNRWA	United Nation Relief and Work Agency
USA	United States of America
EC	European Community
SS	Sum of Squares
SOM	Somatization
O-C	Obsessive-Compulsive
DEP	Depression
INS	Interpersonal Sensitivity
PSY	Psychoticism
ANX	Anxiety
PHA	Phobic Anxiety
PI	Paranoid Ideation
H	Hostility
WHO	World Health Organization
ICN	International Council of Nursing

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Chapter 1

The research problem

I. Aims of the investigation

This study focuses on the state of being unmarried and its influence on Palestinian women's self-perception and mental health status. The general aim of this study is to explore how unmarried Palestinian women perceive themselves and to investigate their mental health status.

Specific aims include the following:

1. Explore the self-perception of unmarried Palestinian women.
2. Identify sociocultural factors in the Palestinian Society that contribute to the mental health of unmarried Palestinian women.
3. Explore the most prevalent emotional and psychological problems of unmarried Palestinian women.
4. Propose recommendations for helping unmarried women who suffer from mild mental health problems.
5. Highlight therapeutic roles of mental health nurses with unmarried women, their families, and society in general.

II. Research questions

The following general research questions are proposed in this study:

1. What is the mental health status of Palestinian unmarried women after age 25 and how does it compare to other women?
2. How do unmarried Palestinian women in the present study view marriage and remaining single?
3. How do the respondents in the present study feel about being unmarried and how do they perceive themselves?
4. In what way does society's treatment of unmarried women influence their views of themselves?

6. How do unmarried Palestinian women in the present study perceive the role of mental health specialists in relation to them?

III. Hypotheses of the study:

The study has two main hypotheses:

1. There are no significant differences in mental health status among the unmarried respondents in the present study in relation to level of education; place of residence; district of residence; employment; living arrangement ; age or whether they were interviewed or not.
2. There is no significant difference in self-perception between the respondents who exhibited high level of psychological distress and those who reported low levels of psychological distress.

IV. Basis and need for the investigation

Women's health is a relatively new concern in nursing. According to Johnson (1993), most of the focus of nursing in relation to women's health was directed toward childbearing women and to physical illness. In Palestinian society, many of the studies done on women have been about their roles in political and national struggle and on working women (Lange & Mhanna, 1992; Quota, 1999; Abu- Daleb, 1978; Fleischman, 1993; Sayigh, 1992; Warnock, 1991; Al-Khalili, 1977; Daraghmeh, 1991).

In the Arab World, there is much literature that has discussed the general living conditions and social status of women including Al-Sa`adawi (1977), Al-Marneisi (1997), Abbass (1987), Al-Sebai`(1985), Al-Khouli (1989), Al-Sa`adawi (1974), Al-Raies (1995), Banani (1993) and others. Only a few authors have talked about unmarried Arab women such as Zahran, (1982), Sansur, (1995), (Heiberg & Qvensen, (1993), Yehia, (1997) and Yasin, (1987). These authors did not explore in depth the living conditions and problems of unmarried women; their perceptions or emotional problems. There is a need to study the mental health status of unmarried women because no known studies have been conducted about this dimension across the Arab World including Palestine. It is interesting to note that a large segment of Palestinian women, (approximately 9%) remain unmarried (Palestinian Bureau, 1996), but they have not been considered by researchers before.

The international debate on women's health focuses particularly on sexual and reproductive health (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs in Norway, 1999). An exploratory study on women's health was done by the European Healthy Cities Project to review policies

and programs that have been carried out in 12 European cities on gender issues concluded that the work on women in all these cities was restricted to breast and cervical cancer, family planning, sexual health, and maternity services (Kennedy, 1998). Gender was absent from the detail of policies of the 12 cities (Kennedy, 1998).

Nurses are patient-focused or illness-oriented in their practice, and this is true for psychiatric-mental health nurses (Johnson, 1993). The role of mental health professionals working with the women who have difficulties adjusting to social values and cultural beliefs is still limited and poorly conceptualised in the mental health literature (Johnson, 1993; Kneisl & Wilson, 1992; Sargent & Brettell, 1996). Psychiatric-mental health nurses should be prepared to work towards changing the social and political systems, and must be involved in activities that promote and maintain women's mental health (Kneisl & Wilson, 1992). More specifically, the role of mental health nurses with unmarried women needs to be conceptualised and verified both preventively and therapeutically.

There is a lack of relevant research and knowledge about women's health in general and amongst Palestinian society in particular. In addition, there is a need for knowledge about the interaction between gender, economic and sociocultural processes and about women's health in various societies and cultures (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs in Norway, 1999; Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998). A gender perspective could be taken into account in analyzing and planning of proposals and projects (Hedman, Perucci, & Sundstorm, 1996; WHO, 1992; Ministry of Health and Social Affairs in Norway, 1999). Indicators on gender issues that are usually presented in statistical data are important tools to promote equality, through contributing to knowledge about women's situations in societies, eliminating stereotypes, and helping to formulate policies geared towards full equality.

In Palestinian society, there is a lack of gender differential research in some core areas such as children-rearing practices, psychosocial health and cognitive development. These play a big part in the development of attitudes, knowledge, and behavior of Palestinians regarding gender issues (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998). Anthropological research is also needed to gain a better understanding of gender relations and roles within the Palestinian society, to provide necessary information for planning of programs geared towards reduction of gender disparity and raising women's status.

Within Palestinian society, marriage is considered the primary and most preferred system for establishing family and social relationships (Al- Khalili, 1977; Warnock, 1990; Idrees, 1992; Sayigh, 1992; Manasra, 1989). It is also seen as fulfilling the emotional and sexual needs of women and gives the opportunity to produce legitimate children (Al-Khouli,

1989; Shukri, 1981). Marriage becomes extremely important, especially in very traditional societies like the patriarchal Palestinian Arab society, where the status of women is correlated with having children and serving their husbands and children (Al-Khalili, 1977; Warnock, 1990; Manasra, 1994). Palestinian women grow up with the belief that marriage and children are the most important things in life, and happiness comes with children, a satisfied husband, and an independent home (Daraghmeh, 1991; Sayigh, 1992; Lange & Mhanna, 1992). Therefore, remaining unmarried may influence the psychological state of women who view their life and happiness only through marriage.

This study will be significant not only to mental health nurses, but also to society at large. Mental health nurses should be equipped with the knowledge and skills that are necessary to help people adjust to daily life problems and difficulties. The mental health nurse is in a position to use her expertise as a counselor, and a change agent with unmarried women who have developed emotional problems. Palestinians, whether policy makers, family members, women themselves, educators, sociologists, and other professionals should consider all the variables that influence women's mental health status, especially those related to being unmarried in order to understand them and provide the help and support needed.

This study intends to shed light for the first time in Palestinian society on a segment of the population that has been usually forgotten by researchers. The study is original research that starts from almost scratch and builds on general social concepts and principles, and previous research about women and society. This investigation will be the first of its kind in the Palestinian society, and may be in the Arab countries as far as the investigator knows.

V. Definition of terms

The following definitions are used in this study:

The self: is the totality of actions and behaviors of an individual. It represents the summation of what he/she is behaviorally, and it represents the perception of what he/ she is (Mc David & Harari, 1974).

Self-perception: refers to the person's views, feelings, and thinking about self and behavior, in interaction with the social environment. According to Brehem & Kassin (1992), we become aware of ourselves by watching what we do, or do not do in certain circumstances. Self-perception is mirroring of oneself.

Mental health status: is the psychological, emotional, social, and physiological state of the individual (Zahran, 1982). In this study, the mental health status of unmarried Palestinian women, age between 25–50 years will be explored.

Unmarried Palestinian women: women who are living in the West Bank who have never been married before.

Summary:

This chapter includes the introduction, research questions, hypotheses, definition of terms, and the rationale of the study. Chapter 2 presents the literature review and talks about women in general, women's mental health and the significance of marriage. In addition, chapter two includes a section about the conceptual framework of the study.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

The literature review provides a conceptual context or framework for the researcher and for the research. Reviewing literature helps the investigator to become familiar with related work and facilitates the assessment of the feasibility of the proposed study (Polit & Hungler, 1983). Various resources were searched for the literature, which included the internet and web sites; international journals and magazines; books, Arabic journals, local newspapers, studies and research reports, newsletters, NGO reports; conferences and workshops reports and proceedings; interviews with specialists; students' seminar papers; local and satellite TV stations and programs; hospitals and health centers records and sometimes grey literature.

Only literature written in English or Arabic was used as the two languages were perfectly understood by the investigator. All kinds of resources were carefully examined and scrutinized by the investigator. Because the issue of remaining single in women is an extraordinary phenomenon and was not addressed by authors and researchers of the Arab World, it was difficult to find literature. Therefore, the investigator encountered great difficulty in finding scientific literature and selected what was available. Any article that talked about women, marriage, or social views of women was read. In addition, the original literature was picked when available. On very rare occasions, secondary resources were used as well. All the articles were appraised using the following criteria:

1. The article should be published in a well known local or international journal.
2. The name (s) of the author(s) is/are present with the article.
3. There is a clearly stated year of publication.
4. When the article is a research, there should be a clear statement of the sample, sampling process, purposes, methodology, results, discussion and recommendations.

5. If the article is not a study, there should be a clear presentation of an introduction, comprehensive body, and well organized conclusion. Other conditions also apply, such as conceptual framework, literature review, and clear purposes.

Nevertheless, many times the investigator accepted kinds of literature that did not meet the above mentioned criteria. This usually happened with some literature taken from Arab sources, where less emphasis was paid to the international criteria for publication. This was also true about the internet literature, especially articles which talk about women in Islam and women in the Arab World. However, in regards to books, often some sections were read that were related to either of the issues of the current study. At other times, a whole book was read if the investigator found that necessary. Some quotes were taken and appropriately cited from these books as needed. The same was done with conference reports and surveys.

Bibliographic cards were used to write the required summaries from all literature that has been used in the current study. These cards were classified according to certain issues. For instance, a box was selected for the literature that talks about methodology. A second box was selected for the literature that talks about women in the Arab World, a third was for the literature about the conceptual framework. All the original literature was kept until the end of the study.

The researcher used literature dated before data collection. This means that most of the literature about the variables that influenced the respondents' mental health status was before the Al-Aqsa Uprising. However, some more recent literature was added after the end of the data collection, to give the reader an idea about the general socioeconomic and political living conditions of Palestinian people.

The literature review was presented in sections, which were organized to provide a background about the phenomenon under study. Each section of the literature review presented aspects important to shed light on a dimension of the study. The following are the literature review sections: women in the world, women in the Arab World, women in Palestine, the significance of marriage for women, women's mental health, and conceptual framework.

I. Women in the international domain:

Introduction:

In many parts of the world, women are historically seen as second in status to men. The secondary status of women is reflected in their educational, vocational, social, and

political situation as Tomaseveski (1998), Al-Marneisi (1997), Hedman et al (1996), Sharabi (1987) and many others believe. Many international conferences have indicated a de-facto discrimination against women, such as the Nairobi conference in 1985; the Beijing conference in 1995, and the Women's World conference in Norway in 1999. According to these conferences, discrimination against women has not yet been successfully eliminated anywhere in the world, according to Tomaseveski (1998), WHO (1992), Strickner (1998), Nordic Council of Ministers (1999) and Nielsen (1999).

In the world, prejudices and customary practices against women are based on an assumed inferiority of women and are reinforced by religious and societal norms in the viewpoint of Tomasevski (1998), Strickners (1998), and Fernea (2000). Women are still discriminated against in most spheres of life including work, political life, education, and family. Tomasevski (1998) attests that "*the grounds of discrimination against women are sex, pregnancy and child bearing; motherhood, marital status, family status, household and family duties; societal and religious norms*" (P. 5). There is one thing that did not change over time in most societies of the world, the submission of women to men. This is historically connected to decades of oppression and ownership (Kortshajina & Sorokina, 1985). Contemporary Marxist theory attributed the role and status of women to capitalism, which trapped men in wage labor and kept women in low-paid work or unpaid domestic labor (Mayers, 1986).

On the other hand, feminist theory suggested that the situation of women is typically an outcome of the traditional patriarchal society that prevailed in the world for centuries (Mayers, 1986). Feminist theory has suggested that patriarchy colluded with capitalism to push women to the margins of economy and general life, which in turn made man superior to women and in control of their lives (Mayers, 1986; Encarta Encyclopedia, 1997).

The ancient civilizations had been overtaken by male-deity-worshipping, patriarchal cultures in which men were political, religious, and military leaders and women were kept in subordination, excluded from public life (Gay, 1998). According to Lewis (1984) and Flandrin, (1986), the societies in Europe were traditionally patriarchal where women were deprived of property, education, and legal status and were made the responsibility of their husbands if married or of their male relatives if not. The father was the sole master of the family, which is the tradition in patriarchal societies, and he claimed ownership of all property inside family (Flandrin, 1986). According to Kortshajina and Sorokina (1985), men in the past owned land, authority, and the assets of the society; women were one of the assets of men, thus they belonged to men in their social identity, decisions, and production.

Women in Europe were overworked in the fields and homes and were treated as subordinate and inferior to their men folk until the first half of the 19th century. Moreover, men in France decided whom their related women should elect and sometimes they used to elect the political representative instead of the woman until the second half of the 18th century (Flandrin, 1986). Until the early 20th century, the women's movement campaigned for equal rights for women, especially the right to vote (Gay, 1998). Married women were expected to take care of their husbands' needs and comfort them, while men were alienated from their wives and knew little about their suffering and pains (Lewis, 1984). Women were to remain at home raising children and running the house while men were expected to be successful income-producers and providers to their families (Mayers, 1986). Today, many women still have secondary value for men and are dependent on them for living and decision-making, whether single or married. Women were struggling for equal pay, equal education, equal opportunities in work, financial and legal independence, freedom from violence and sexual coercion, and freedom to define their own sexuality (Gay, 1998).

Broad spectrums of social practices have been used in various communities to subdue women, which include child marriage; female genital mutilation; neglect of female children and preference of sons rather than daughters; marginalization and other forms of discrimination based on gender. Women in general have limited resources for living; few working opportunities and intense surveillance by family and other social organizations (Al-Marneisi, 1997; Al-Saadawi, 1990). Women are doubly marginalized; some by race and sex while others by sex and economic status or else. They are oppressed by material conditions as well as social relations and family structure.

The traditionally socialized girl is a conforming person, bound by cultural values and social expectations. According to Williams (1993), women in a traditional society are defined by the image of their domestic responsibilities as actual or potential wives and mothers exclusive of other roles. In the traditional Western societies, unmarried women were viewed as misfits according to Williams (1993). This situation of woman was the norm all over the world until the beginning of the women's movement during the 50s and 60s of the 20th century (Williams, 1993).

Young girls have been socialized into the feminine roles from infancy. Baby girls are raised as passive, dependent, gentle, fragile and emotional, which prepares them to become traditional women (Williams, 1993). Girls are frequently reminded to act lady like or girl like and not to be a tom-boy. They are trained on housekeeping activities and feminine roles and are warned not to be rough or aggressive because this might scare away boys and men in the

future (Williams, 1993). In accordance with the expectation that they would devote their lives to others, women were trained to be sensitive, kind, and giving (Williams, 1993). During adolescence and later during adulthood, passivity and dependence of the female child build into learned helplessness and if it is severe into depression (Mayers, 1987).

Today, women can be grouped into three kinds. The first is a group of women who continue to defend the traditional roles of women as wives, mothers, and home makers and they consider such a role as fulfilling, rewarding, and important (Williams, 1993). The second group of women is one who is liberated from the confines of tradition, views women's roles as changing and non-traditional. However, the third group of women is caught in the middle between traditionalism and modernization. This group of women has internalized the traditional role of women but is not satisfied by this and would like to improve women's status and roles in the society (Williams, 1993). Such situation places these women in ambivalence in feelings and behavior, which could be transferred to their children especially girls. This third kind is the most vulnerable to conflict and ambivalence.

Nevertheless, the women's movement succeeded in drawing public attention to inequality between women and men; has influenced culture through mass media; has challenged perception of women's skills, which resulted in women's entry to non-traditional areas of employment (Gay, 1998). In addition, the women's movement has tackled the problem of sexual harassment; had led to the reconsideration of women's roles in economy; had highlighted the traditional structures in societies that belittled and militated against women, and has emphasized that women are human beings who have interests and concerns (Gay, 1998). Nowadays, women are more educated and they are relatively more independent financially (Hasan, 1981).

Although women were found to have superficial changes such as in their dress and hairstyle and to improved level of education, their status in society remained secondary (Kortshajina & Sorokina, 1985). The following section explains the situation of women in regard to several domains of life.

A. Women in political life:

Parliamentary and political participation of women reflected the location of women in decision-making process and policy-making. There is a low participation of women in parliaments, which was not related to the decrease in efforts or nomination of women; rather it is due to low selection by people and attack of men on women who nominate themselves

(Fernea, 2000). Women's political participation varies from one region to another in the world.

In the Scandinavian countries, little variation exists between women and men in the various dimensions and spheres of life. For instance, the highest rate of political representation in the world is present in the Swedish parliament; where women constitute 43% of its members (Ministry of Industry, Employment, and Communication, 1999). In addition, women constitute 48% of municipal and country councils, and 40% of the regional authorities in Sweden (Ministry of Industry, Employment, and Communication, 1999).

The situation in other Nordic countries is somewhat similar to that of Sweden (Nielsen, 1999). For instance, in Iceland, women gained the right to vote and elect in 1909 and it has been said that equality is nearly achieved in Iceland and that women have transcended the glass ceiling (Statistics Iceland, 1998). In addition, women constitute 32% of the elected representatives in towns and 29% of district councils (The Office of Gender Equality, 1999). On the other hand, in the judicial system, only one-third of the district court judges and one of the nine Supreme Court judges are women in Iceland (The Office of Gender Equality, 1999). However, Nielsen (1999) believes that these numbers could be misleading to the reader because a closer analysis of Nordic countries reveals a pattern of under-representation, discrimination, and sexism similar to those found elsewhere.

On the other hand, other countries have lower levels of women's representation in their political bodies. For instance, in Africa, women's participation and membership in parliament was 25% in South Africa; 5% in Ethiopia and 3% in Kenya (Tomaseveski, 1998, p. 62). However, women's parliamentary share was 22.8% in Cuba; 18% in Canada; 11% in USA; 16.3% in Nicaragua; 26.2% in Germany; 12% in Belgium; 9.2% in Israel and 6% in Greece according to the report of Tomaseveski (1998). It seems that there is no association between the rate of women's participation in political bodies in a given society and its economic and political orientation. Even in developed countries, women are still underrepresented.

The picture is somehow not different among the ex communist countries. For instance, women's representation in the parliaments was 11% in Albania and Bulgaria; 8.3% in Hungary; 18% in Lithuania and 13% in Poland according to Purvaneckiene (1998). Women occupied 20% of the seats in the European Parliament after the elections of 1989 with an increase of 3% since 1984 (SCB Statistics Sweden, 1992). Unless women are proportionally represented in decision-making bodies, their political agenda will not be affirmed and their status will continue to be secondary.

Women's participation in political bodies in many countries in the world did not make the anticipated change in women's socioeconomic conditions (Fernea, 2000). According to Fernea (2000), elected women in countries such as Pakistan, Britain, Israel, USA, and Palestinian Territories did not have feminist agenda on their political programs; rather they worked as any elected man, only as politicians.

B. Economic involvement of women:

Controlling finance and the means of production usually entails a great power in any given society (Al-Marneisi, 1997; Banani, 1993; Adams, 1982; Hale, 1990). Those who control the economy of the society will determine its policies and manner of living. This was emphasized by socialism and capitalism in equal scale. Marxist theory has emphasized the positive correlation between the economic involvement of women and their social status at the end of the 19th century (Kortshajina & Sorokina, 1985). Marx and Engels believed that paid work represents a means to female liberation (Mayers, 1986). Many theorists support this view such as Hale (1990), Al-Marneisi (1997), Al-Sa`adawi (1990), and Sharabi (1987).

The work of women has been economically vital for all societies, although their contribution have varied from one society to another and from one era to another (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia, 1998). According to social researchers, it was undesirable for married women to work outside home and their work was considered shameful until the 50s of the 20th century (The Open University Press, 1986). Now it is more accepted for married women to work when they do not have little children or a sick family member to take care of, and when their families need their work.

Employment has its advantages for the woman and her family however; paid work has also some adverse effects. Women's participation in the labor force and the economic development of their countries are considered core features of their social status as attested by Purvaneckiene (1998), Al-Sa`adawi (1990), WHO (1992), Nielsen (1999), and the Office of Gender Equality (1999). Employment outside the home can provide self-esteem, companionship, social contact, and physical needs. According to Badura and Kickbunsch (1991), women who work have better physical health than housewives however; paid work can potentially damage women's health. This risk of paid work is mainly caused by the over burdening of women with house chores, in addition to her work outside home. Married women who are employed in paid jobs are vulnerable for physical exhaustion, loss of well-being, tiredness, emotional stress, and anxiety (Badura & Kickbunsch, 1991). The

investigator believes that women's work can threaten men's self-image and power within the family because men see women as competitive to their role as breadwinners.

The way the world economy is run has deep implications for the relationship between women and men, just as the way a household is managed says a great deal about gender (Thomas, 1997). The subordination of women is expressed in placing women in lower rank jobs than men and the ascribing of inferiority to women (Thomas, 1997). Feminists believe that patriarchy contributes to female under achievement. According to Dale Spender, the author of "Invisible women", *"many men can argue genuinely-from their position as men that there is no prejudice, that there is no discrimination, that women have equal access to their system but choose not to take the right subject to obtain the necessary qualifications to gain the right experience. If men perceive their standards based on their experiences,...then it is reasonable for them to argue that women simply do not "measure up" in their terms"* (Mayers, 1986, P. 21).

There is certainly evidence that sex roles have changed but there is also evidence that they remain remarkably stable (Mayers, 1986). Despite the increasing members of women entering paid work there are still many who firmly believe that women's place is in home. Legislation, which ensured equal opportunities for girls, has brought about only little significant change in the members of young women entering engineering or scientific and technical spheres of employment (Mayers, 1986).

Women's and men's positions in the labor market are still clearly horizontally segregated where women work in care and service-related jobs and men work in private enterprise especially manufacturing (Purvaneckiene, 1998), even in Baltic and Scandinavian countries. According to Encarta Encyclopedia (1998), there are four generalizations that can be made about women's paid work:

1. Women have worked out of economic necessity when their families or husbands are unable to support the family alone.
2. Women have done work similar to their work at home.
3. Women are the sole care-taker of children, regardless of their work outside home.
4. Women have been paid less than men and have been allocated lower-status work.

There is a steady increase in the proportion of women in the labor force due to a higher level of education; a decrease in family responsibilities as families become smaller and the advance of technology; an increase of the number of middle and upper class women working for pay and job satisfaction (Encarta Encyclopedia, 1998). Despite the fact that women constitute

more than one-third of the world's labor force, they remain concentrated in a limited number of traditional occupations that are low paid (Encarta Encyclopedia, 1998). Women are concentrated in the lower professional ranks and earn less than men even when they work the same number of hours as men (Hale, 1990). It was observed that in Canada the proportion of adult women in labor force doubled between 1940 and 1980 however; women are concentrated in a small number of occupations including clerical, services, sales, health, and teaching (Hale, 1990). "*Women are in the majority of jobs paying less than \$25,000 while men predominate in jobs that pay more than \$35,000*" (Hale, 1990, p. 366). Women have not yet achieved parity of pay in the workplace in any place in the world (Encarta Encyclopedia, 1998).

The share of women in executive and managerial positions is one measurement of women's opportunity for power and influence in any society, as proposed by Hedman et al (1996), Ministry of Health and Social Affaires (1999) and The Center for Gender Equality (1998). It was observed that typical segregation in the labor market takes place in the form of women's employment in non-managerial jobs, whereas men make up the majority of top managers and heads (Bianchi & Spain, 1996). Even in Scandinavian countries such as Sweden, only 22% of the general managers are women (Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communication, 1999); compared to 28% in Iceland (The Office of Gender Equality, 1999). In Bulgaria, 78% of textile workers are women but only 25% of the engineers are women (Encarta Encyclopedia, 1998). In the Soviet Union, these figures were 74% and 40% respectively (Encarta Encyclopedia, 1998).

Women's representation in high status professions, such as judges, physicians, university professors, engineers and so on, is lower than for men even in industrialized countries (Tomaseveski, 1998; The Office of Gender Equality, 1999). It is obvious that there is occupational stratification where men control and rule over women in most businesses (Mayers, 1986). For instance, at the University of Iceland, 7.7% of the professors and 27% of the associate professors are women (Office of Gender Equality, 1999 p. 10). In addition, all the five research professors at the Icelandic Research Council are men (Office of Gender Equality, 1999 p. 11). In addition, whilst the majority of nurses are women, 33% of the nursing directors and managers are men (Mayers, 1986). Moreover, another example from Canada shows that women university professors increased in number from 750 in 1960 to 6000 in 1985 whereas male university professors increased from 5700 to 29000 for the same period (Hale, 1990 p. 366).

There is variation in the income of women in comparison to men, which influence their ability to effectively participate in the economy of their societies. In Nordic countries, there is an 11-12% difference in pay for men compared to women working in industry (Nordic Council of Ministers, 1999). This situation is not better in the CEE and Baltic countries. For instance, women's monthly pay relative to men's was 75% in Bulgaria and Latvia, 74% in Estonia, 73% in Poland, 85% in Slovenia, 91% in Yugoslavia, and 76% in Romania (Purvaneckiene, 1998, p. 31). In Nordic countries, some women are still economically dependent on their husbands even though nearly 80% of Nordic women of working age have jobs outside the home because they are paid 10-20% less than men on average (Nordic Council of Ministers, 1999).

In paid work, women face a persistent wage gap and they are poorly represented in well-paid occupation (Ringstrom, 1997). In relation to working status of women in Scandinavian countries, 42-62% of the employed women work full-time jobs compared to 68-85% of the men (Nordic Council of Ministers, 1999, p. 6). In these countries, women constitute 60-90% of part time workers especially after marriage. Half of the women in Norway are working in part-time jobs and their incomes are lower than the incomes of men (Nielsen, 1999). Nevertheless, in Britain, 88% of part-time employees were women in the early 80s; 55% of married women work part-time compared to 4% of married men (Beechy & Whitelegg, 1986).

One important reason for the variation of payment between men and women is the decreased working hours of women as they have to perform both their professional and family roles. In addition, women earn lower wages for the same number of work hours as men. Therefore, their contribution to the country and family income is less, even though their efforts could be similar to men. In Japan, women's participation in the workforce is slightly behind levels in most Western European countries and they are also expected to leave work when they have young children (Encarta Encyclopedia, 1998). In most African, Asian, Middle Eastern, and Latin American countries women participate highly in the agricultural economy but their contributions are unrecognized. Even in countries where some equality has been achieved, problems of unemployment and low payment affect women adversely (Encarta Encyclopedia, 1998). Taking into account the previous discussion, it is not strange to see that women on average receive lower wages than men even in countries with extensive protection against gender discrimination.

Variation in wages between single and married women is another form of discrimination based on social status. In Australia, single women earn 91% in proportion to

men compared to 69% for married women (Tomaseveski, 1998). In Germany, single women earn 103%, compared to 57% for married ones (Tomaseveski, 1998). However, in the USA and UK, single women earn 95% in proportion to men, compared to 60% for married women (Tomaseveski, 1998). It seems that other factors are significant when we talk about the work of married and single women. Married women are more likely to do part-time jobs and have to work fewer hours because they have to take care of children and house. In addition, it was observed that men typically work for pay approximately twice as many hours per week as women, whereas women spend twice the time as men in child care (Bianchi & Spain, 1996 p. 40). It is difficult for the woman to be a superwoman where she succeeds equally as a full-time professional and as a mother and domestic worker as well. Most women will not and cannot give up family life for their work.

Childbearing and child-rearing restrict women's choices; segregate women in the institution of private, domesticated motherhood; force them into economic dependence on men or into secondary wage-earning status; subject women to a restricted notion of sexuality (Hale, 1990). Working outside home added to the agony of women at home. Today, women take care of family chores and responsibilities in addition to meeting the needs of their paid work. Women continue to play the role of mothers and wives in addition to working efficiently outside home.

Some conventional, traditional theorists rationalize women's secondary position in the economy and their subordinate status to men's superiority resulting from women's poor abilities, poor education, lower merit, and fewer competencies (Hale, 1990). This conclusion according to Hale (1990) does not stand up to empirical test. The actual reasons for women's poor representation in social and economic life fundamentally originate in discrimination against women in all spheres of life. Usually, men have a significant career advantage over women because they have been able to put in such long hours of work primarily because their wives have absorbed the bulk of their domestic responsibilities. However, most women do not have other adults at home to look after children and do the house chores. Therefore, they tend to leave work or do part-time jobs even when they are holding academic degrees. In addition, there are higher rates of unemployment amongst women than amongst men (Mayers, 1986). Because more women are part-time workers, they are the first to be laid off when their employers encounter financial difficulties.

To attain employment equity for women, employment policies have to be modified and the patriarchal mentality of companies and managers of business should be challenged by women. This could include reproductive freedom, adequate day care, and new vision of

health care and child care, economic independence, and flexible working time for women (Hale, 1990; Al-Sa`adawi, 1990). According to Mayers (1986), *"any notion of women's competing fairly and effectively with men is nonsensical unless their husbands assume half the domestic responsibilities. Women often seek undemanding and part-time work to ease this double burden. Such work is rarely an avenue to promotion"* (p. 46). Women need to become more assertive in their work and to build feelings of self-worth and value. They need to challenge the social stereotypes of women as less intelligent, unskilled, subordinate, incompetent, and incapable of competing with men. In addition, women need to believe that their work is essential for their families and their countries and that their work is not a reserve. They have to educate themselves, update their knowledge, and build their working skills. Women have to believe in themselves and cease feeling guilty about their families when they work in paid labor.

C. Women and education:

Education is perhaps the single most important step that can be taken to ensure full integration of women in development, because it raises the self-image of women and improves their social status (WHO, 1992). Education for women helps them to achieve at the personal and national levels. It equips women with skills and knowledge to raise their children better and to become socially competent individuals. In addition, education delays marriage and provides better opportunities for paid work.

The right for education is accepted by all nations as a main component of basic human rights. Free mandatory education is a right for every child, and should be at least until 10th grade as UNICIF and UNISCO claim (Jerusalem Media & Communication Centre, 1995). On the other hand, other scholars claim that mandatory education should end with secondary education because the tenth grade does not allow female students the opportunity to pursue university or college education if they wish to do so (Jerusalem Media & Communication Centre, 1995).

Nowadays, many families in the world are still hesitant to invest in girls' education, which is reflected in lesser rates of literacy among girls and less skilled jobs (WHO, 1992; Strickner, 1998). Unfortunately, some teachers believe that a boy's education is more important than a girl's education (Mayers, 1986). Statistical data from Tomaseveski (1998) show that in developing countries, girls' access to primary schools is lower than that of boys. There are high rates of dropout for girls which are associated with early marriage and

pregnancy. Girls still do not achieve the same success as boys, particularly in the subjects required to gain entry to high-status occupations.

There is a big gap in rates of education for males and females around the world. WHO figures (1992) revealed that the literacy rate for men was 79%, compared to 65% for women world-wide. In developed countries, the rate of literacy for both sexes is 98% compared to 72% for men and 51% for women in developing countries (WHO, 1992). However, in developing countries the picture varies dramatically. For instance, literacy rates for adult women range from 15% in Afghanistan to 91% in Viet Nam. Nevertheless, literacy rates for men vary from 45% in Nicaragua to 97% in Viet Nam (Tomaseveski, 1998).

Lower rates of literacy of both sexes are observed when they reach secondary and university level everywhere in the world. For instance, about 52% of the males and 57% of the females attain 12-17 years of education worldwide (WHO, 1992). The highest level of university education in the world for both sexes was reported in North America with a rate of 98% and the lowest was in Africa with a rate of 55% for males and 38% for females (WHO, 1992). These were general rates that did not specify if they refer to elementary or secondary levels. Fortunately, the enrollment ratio for girls has increased substantially in the world, which has raised literacy rates of females (WHO, 1992). Still, a lot has to be done until equality in educational opportunities is achieved for both sexes.

D. Women in the social sphere:

Generally speaking, the world is family-orientated. According to Fawcett (1993), Friedman (1986) and Hasan (1981), the family is the person's reservoir of economic stability and security; social support and belonging, and psychological comfort (Shukri, 1981). Without a family the individual feels worthless, lonely and lacking in social support (Hasan, 1981; Abbas, 1987). Social acceptance, love and belonging are essential needs that are primarily sought in the family, then through the social contacts of the individual (Millikan, 1987). The family is the basic habitat where people either feel wanted or rejected. There in the family, the woman first finds her identity and meaning before she encounters others in the outside world.

Gender is comprised of biological identity, cultural symbols and structure (how the distribution of power, resources, work...etc. are systematically linked with one's sex) (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 1999). *"Gender is a concept that explains how sex differences are translated and interpreted in everyday life"* (Mayers, 1986 p. 2). Gender

determines to a great extent the differences between women's and men's roles, life experiences, and the degree of power, prestige and status an individual has (Mayers, 1986).

According to Weeks et al (1996), gender relations embody multidimensional ideals and interactions among women and men, including those associated with power and dominance, sexual behavior, social relationships, social roles and behaviors. In addition, it includes expectations of women and men regarding reproduction (pregnancy, childbearing and childrearing) and most aspects of family life. Gender and power are concepts that are directly associated with women's status and position in any society. According to Mayers (1986), it is possible to estimate the chances of being a patient at a mental hospital, a victim of violence, and one's educational achievement and potential earning when we know the sex of the newborn baby. This could indicate that by being a female, chances for being abused, unemployed, poorly educated, or being vulnerable for many mental disorders is higher than if an individual was born a male.

The social nature of gender is evident in the variation between attributes and activities considered appropriate for men and women based on culture, class, ethnic group, and time (Ringstrom, 1997). Culture is an important basis for the social division of labor in household, work, or church (Ringstrom, 1997). Gender is largely determined by society. Babies are assigned a gender role and socialized according to their society's concept of gender. It does seem that babies arrive to be greeted with preexisting, gendered definitions about them, which means that implications for sex role socialization are obvious (Mayers, 1986; www.cyberparent.com). *"Being born male or female has implications far beyond the possibility of somebody being a father or a mother. On the basis of an individual's sex, predictions can be made about areas of his/her life quite remote from their potential parenting activities"* (Mayers, 1986, p. 2). The socialization process within one's culture influences one's gender identity. *"The differential socialization experiences reduce conventional sex-role stereotype and limit the extent to which change is possible"* (The Open University Press, 1985, p. 76).

Sex-role socialization theories stress that early socialization experiences will direct boys and girls towards certain behaviors and expectations of their future lives as women and men (The Open University Press, 1985). By observing adults in their environment and through reinforcement from parents, teachers and peers, they learn to behave in ways that will bring them approval (The Open University Press, 1985). Children grow up surrounded by images and examples of sex-appropriate behavior (Mayers, 1986). Girls encounter various

definitions of womanhood however; most of the images of womanhood that the girls are exposed to are stereotypical where woman should be feminine, conforming, and dependent. Girls receive signals which indicate that personal worth and acceptability depends upon their beauty and appeal to men (Mayers, 1986). On the other hand, girls who are encouraged to be self-directing persons may come to realize that pursuit of that goal might invoke a mass of disapproval, for it will mean the adoption of some masculine qualities and may mean shedding of the feminine trait of conformity, passivity and dependence (Mayers, 1986).

Gender relations mirror status of men and women in the society. In relationships, the super-ordinate person initiates the interaction, while the subordinate responds more (Hale, 1990). In mixed groups, women talk less often than men; initiate fewer conversations; are interrupted more often than men; agree with others more but their suggestions are agreed with less than men (Hale, 1990). In the domestic domain, couples talk about what the man wants to talk about more than what the woman wants. It is still common that the man is the one who initiates dating, sex, and conversation with women.

In an American study that analyzed children fiction books that aims at discovering gender bias, the researcher Zaplinski found that sex stereotyping was predominant in these books; that in some books women were invisible; that women were portrayed only as wives, mothers, and aunties (Mayers, 1986). In addition, Marion Scott analyzed the content of textbooks used in secondary schools and found that where women were mentioned at all, it was often very stereotypical (Mayers, 1986). In schools, Belotti observed that even though most teachers profess support for equal opportunities, but in practice, they repeatedly treat the girls and boys quite differently (Mayers, 1986).

Leghorn and Parker have classified societies into three types in relation to the amount of control and power women have (Mayers, 1986). The first subtype of society is characterized by minimum power for women. In this type of society, women have no control over their own lives. The second subtype is known as the 'token power society', where women are allowed some freedom but they ultimately depend on men. However, the third subtype of society is called by Leghorn and Parker the 'negotiating power societies' where women have power and control that cannot be taken away by men (Mayers, 1986).

According to feminist scholars such as Al-Sa`adawi (1990); Al-Marneisi (1997); Banani (1995) and Sharabi (1987), women are connected to one single fine thread that unites them in one image; they feel subordinate and inferior to men. In many countries, women are seen as weak, submissive and dependent on their men for living and decisions. In most developing countries, women are treated as permanent minors and are thus prevented from

entering into any contracts in their own names (Al-Marneisi, 1997; Banani, 1995). This is literally the main characteristic of patriarchy.

Patriarchy is the absolute sovereignty and control of men in their families (Shukri, 1981). The patriarchal system puts the woman in a lower status than men and deprives the man of his humanity because he has to live under the pressure of staying in control and ready to confront any crisis or problem (Sabella, 1983). Authority is concentrated on the father while the woman is placed in an inferior level both at the social and legal contexts. People have a heritage of deep-rooted gender prejudice which has resulted in discrimination against women in the family and society (Ken Phin, 1997).

The patriarchal system is represented in all aspects of social and familial living. Violence and discrimination against women at home and the social and vocational fields are outrageous examples for patriarchy. Violence and discrimination against women occur in work settings, educational system, health care and legislations as reported by the UNFPA (www.aman.htm). The report of UNICEF of the year 2000 declared that half of the women in the world are being abused physically or sexually (www.aman.htm). Female circumcision is one form of violence directed to young girls. About 2 million women are circumcised yearly in Africa, Middle East and Asia according to a United Nations report.

As girls, the female is discriminated against even in the womb, and there is discrimination against women every where in the world from birth to death. The norms and values of the world's society have given men superior power especially within family (Beechey, 1980). The family is an area of ambivalence for women. On one hand, the family provides love, belonging and support, while on the other hand it puts pressure and it oppresses women (Beechey and Whitelegg, 1986).

The patriarchal pattern of society have degraded the value of women and augmented the value of men. Women's roles are patterned in predetermined moulds including; housekeeping, procreation, and sex (Khater, 2001). People who believe in conservatism want the woman to stay home and to live in the shadow of the man. These people want the woman to be passive, dependent, silly, superficial, empty-headed, a sex-object, and unproductive in the economy and social life of her community (Khater, 2001). Supporters of this trend are coming from Islamic as well as western societies.

Within the patriarchal society, the father's authority prevails in all the social systems such as the family, clan, caste, ethnic group and tribe. Sharabi (1987) says: "*the patriarchal society, whether progressive or conservative, is characterized by the dominance of the father who controls and organizes the life of the family. The relationship of the father and his*

children is similar to the relation of the governor and his people, whereby one is ruled by the other. In the family, the father's will and wishes are absolutely respected and obeyed by all members" (p. 22).

In patriarchal societies, children are named according to their father's family. After marriage, the woman also receives the family name of her husband, which is known as being patri-nominal. Many women today, especially feminist ones, refused to be patri-nominal and lobbied to change the civil laws of naming. In western societies, kinship laws are patri-nominal. However, the family in general is mother-centered (Shukri, 1981).

The strength of the power of men in patriarchal families varies from one society to another. For instance, in old societies such as the Romans and traditional Arab communities, the father had an exceptionally extreme authority. However, in modern societies, the authority of the father is not absolute and this varies from one culture to another (Shukri, 1981). For instance, in Latino culture, the man is a king in his home. He is superior, has full power and control; his children and wife should obey him and nobody could question his behavior or criticize him (Weeks et al, 1996). The man's needs are placed before the women's needs. Women are subordinate and should accept physical abuse and extramarital sexual relationships of her husband without complaining (Weeks et al, 1996). The woman should not work unless her husband permits that. The household as well as public decision-making is dominated by men in Latino societies (Weeks et al, 1996).

On the other hand, African American have contradictory image of "good" and "bad" role model of women (Weeks et al, 1996). The "good" image of woman is one who conserves her family, works hard, marries and has children (Weeks et al, 1996). Nevertheless, a "Bad girl", is a sexually promiscuous woman, who seeks pleasure in multiple sexual relationships; is open about sexual pleasure and casual about giving sex or exchanging sex for money (Weeks et al, 1996).

African American women are perceived by some researchers as very independent, strong, assertive in their relationships with men, while other studies presented African American women as submissive; abused by their men, and are socialized to believe that their self-worth depends on their relationship with men (Weeks et al, 1996). The most widespread image of black women that has obtained a negative connotation is their decision-making power in the family, especially as the single head of household (Weeks et al, 1996). This picture indicated that black women have too much power and control in the home, which could be considered to be a strength in the context of economic deprivation and sexual discrimination (Weeks et al, 1996). On the other hand, some sociologists considered black

women's dominance at home as a pathology as believed to be transformed into causes of family disorganization and unhappiness, disoriented youth who lack strong male role-models in the home (Weeks et al, 1996).

One elementary thing that unites the women of the world is that they are deprived of their rights and have to fight to get these rights (Amnesty International, 1995). Women are deprived of their right to education, work, and freedom to select their husbands. Women are deprived of the right to self-determination and the right to be treated as human beings similar to men. They make a limited contribution in civil life and to building of their countries and are deprived of economic independence in many societies (www.amanjordan.org).

Women in developing countries continue to struggle for their right for work, equal wages, and the right to decent living, according to Miaari (2000). Thingoi Metnisto, a parliament member in South Africa, said that: *"while the woman in the West demands that it is her right to leave the kitchen and to join the workforce, the woman in the Third World still demands to have her own kitchen"* (Miaari, 2000 p. 7). Women carry on their shoulders the three main responsibilities of the family, reproduction, house chores, and children rearing. Although women in developing countries have the biggest responsibility for maintaining the family, they don't have the power to determine the living pattern of their families or themselves.

Violence against women is a strong indicator of discrimination against women and patriarchy. According to Dr. Samalouti, the dean of sociology department at Al-Azhar University in Egypt, violence against women has historical, political, economic and sociocultural roots (www.amanjordan.org). Men abuse women because they own everything in the family and they believe that they also own the women. In addition, men believe that they are free to manage their properties as they wish (Al-Saadwi, 1990). This situation is typical in traditional, conservative, patriarchal societies whereby men and some women agree to give men full authority in the home and society (www.aman.htm).

In patriarchal societies, violence is practiced against women as a means to enforce authority and the control of men over the life and destiny of women (www.amanjordan.org). Moreover, people in traditional societies accept the battering of women as if it were a rectification measure for those women who act improperly; irritate or disrespect their men; act irrationally or do not accept their house responsibilities from the point of view of the man (Johnson, 1997; Hasan, 1981). In short, violence against women corresponds to the mentality of ownership and control that men have over women in traditional and patriarchal societies.

Power over women and violence against women through physical strength are examples of women's subordination (Mayers, 1986).

Violence and battering against women are practiced widely in developing as well as developed countries (Johnson, 1997). The UNFPA report stated that most of the assaults against women occur in East Asia, North Africa, the Middle East, and China. According to the report of UNFPA in 2001, one-third of the women of the world are either physically or sexually abused by a man who is known to the woman (www.aman.com.htm). According to UNICIF, about half of the women in the world are abused and two-million women are circumcised yearly (www.aman.com.htm). In a report that was distributed by the World Bank, 40% of Indian women are physically or sexually abused; 30% of American women and 6% of Canadian women are abused by their husbands (www.aman.com.htm). In Nicaragua, 52% of the women have been abused by their partners, and 26% of the women in Zimbabwe are forced by their husbands to have sex (www.aman.com.htm). About 30% of American women and 6% of Canadian women are physically abused by their husbands (www.aman.com.htm).

The legislation about the abuse of women varies from a country to another. In most developed countries, abusing women is a felony that could result in arrest. On the other hand, in many developing countries, the abuse of women is considered a natural thing and sometimes seen as a necessity for disciplining them (www.amanjordan.org ; Al-Sadawi, 1990). Sometimes, police neglect complaints about women's battering because they consider it a private issue or they are biased towards men.

Women are abused as children then as adolescents. When they get married, they are also abused by their husbands. If they do not get married, they are abused by their brothers and fathers and sometimes their employers (www.amanjordan.org). When the woman is divorced or widowed, she is sometimes abused and maltreated by her family of origin, her husband's family, and sometimes by the whole community.

Researchers gave multiple reasons for the battering of women and abuse. These reasons are classified as political, financial, social, cultural, etc. Starvation, poverty, inflation, unemployment and difficult living conditions are some of the economic causes of violence. Familial problems and marital discord; substance abuse and crimes are some of the social causes of violence against women. On the other hand, political conflicts, wars, national struggles against occupations and colonization are some of the leading factors for the rise in violence in societies according to Dr. Mohammad, a clinical social psychologist at Abu-Azayem hospital (www.amanjordan.org). Wars, poverty, ethnic conflicts, class and caste

conflicts are associated with the meaning of the concepts of masculinity and femininity and the patterns and philosophies of child rearing and socialization (www.amanjordan.org).

There are millions of women who saw the 1990s as years of poverty and terror, where they have to struggle for their lives, fairness, and equity (Amnesty International, 1995). According to Dr. Laftieh Al-Sabei, women are the main victims of rape; discrimination based on gender and genital mutilation. They pay the highest price in wars and armed struggles (www.amanjordan.org). Women are excluded from public life and segregated from the domain of men in many countries, which could be seen as another form of social control (Mayers, 1986; Al-Marneisi, 1997). Moreover, in the world of fashion and beauty, the standards are predominantly determined by an industry that is male dominated.

Since World War II, dramatic changes have occurred in the world including the situation of women. Major changes happened in the reality of marriage, prescribed roles of women, and their social status. For instance, middle class women became more active, had greater mobility and freedom and had more legal rights, although men continued to act as dominant partners (Lewis, 1984). The educational level of women improved and more and more women joined the workforce to help themselves and their families.

The social status of women in the contemporary world has changed and continues to change, but at a slow rate. The change in gender relations that is happening today has influenced the social organization, cultural attitudes and creation of gender identity in humankind world-wide as Nielsen (1999), AL-Khouli (1989), Sharabi (1987) and Fernea (2000) believe. In Western societies, patriarchal control has greatly diminished as some authors believe (Nielsen, 1999; Fernea, 2000; Miaari, 2000). Husbands and wives today are believed to choose each other freely on the basis of romantic attraction; they are more or less equal in status; have more or less equal say in decisions; they share in income and spending, and they share in house responsibilities and children care. For some societies like the developed countries, women's status has improved. However, there are millions of women who have observed only trivial changes in their lives. Nevertheless, women's participation in wage labor and the democratisation of domestic labor are considered yardsticks to measure female emancipation in developed countries as well as in poor countries.

The new trends of feminism brought new roles for women and men (Mayers, 1986). Women became more competitive in the man's world and also apart from men. There is a shift from their traditional roles as home makers to active roles in their economies and the political lives of their societies. Men as well as women reexamined their assigned roles and a proportion of men accepted the new roles of women and were willing to adjust themselves to

these new demands (Mayers, 1986). Arguably, women are now seen as individuals rather than as either victims or angels, as they were seen in the past (Nielsen, 1999).

In a panel conducted at Future T.V station about modern and traditional mothers and women, Dr. Jowail, a female sociologist from Lebanon proposed that the modern woman has the following positives or strengths:

- Is able to express her ideas and feelings.
- Takes care of herself, dress, body, and shape.
- Plays the role of a friend to her husband and is more capable to share with him his plans and ambitions.
- Well educated and productive inside and outside home.
- Is more capable of raising her children using modern and systematic approaches of disciplining.
- Knows the needs of her family (children and husbands) and could give individualized care to each child according to his/her personality (Future T.V, 2004).

However, some changes were identified that were seen as 'negatives and shortcomings' in the modern woman in the view of Dr. Jowail (Future T.V, 2004), which are:

- Freedom of abortion.
- Cannot adjust self to needs of family and work obligations.
- Extra freedom of dress, sexual life, and social life.
- Believes in single motherhood and claiming no need for men.
- Cohabitation and out- of -wedlock children.
- Over concern with her needs and private life.
- Bickering with her husband.
- Excessively belligerent and complaining with her husband.
- Very nervous and irritable. This makes the house a hell for everybody (Future T.V, 2004).

The investigator believes that women have the positive points as Dr. Jowail proposed, but the so-called 'shortcomings' may well emerge from the fact that they are looking for individual fulfillment in a world that only knew them as givers. In addition, women are exhausted and overburdened by home responsibilities and outside work, and they do not get help from men as much as might be supposed. Moreover, there is a tremendous pressure that is placed over women in all societies regardless of their economic system and level of progress.

II. Women in the Arab World

A. Arab women and political life:

There is limited participation and involvement of women in political life within Arab countries. Therefore, they are under-represented in parliaments and political bodies. The Arab World is still controlled by the traditional, patriarchal mentality not only in the social domain but also in political life. Ghasoub (1991) and Fernea (2000) believe that Arab women are rarely nominated by political parties and that these parties do not have a 'women's agenda'. One of the reasons for this under-representation of women in political bodies in Arab countries is that women are seen as less qualified to lead their societies. Thus, they are not supported enough by voters and political bodies. One Muslim religious leader talked to MBC TV about the rationale behind women's exclusion from political life and said: "*women are emotional and they cannot make good judgments. Men are more equipped to make logical and balanced conclusions. In addition, women got periodic changes of mood due to the menstruation cycle thus they lose good judgment. We are not in favor for total exclusion of women from political life if such participation is based on Islamic laws*" (MBC TV, 2004). In Islam, women are forbidden from becoming judges, leaders of prayer or "Imams"; presidents or governors; Khalif or "Amir Mou'mneen" because these roles are very sensitive and need wisdom and sophistication, which contradicts what many fundamentalist Muslims believe to be the soft nature of women (MBC TV, 2004; Al-Khatib, 2003).

Representation of Arab women in political bodies varies from one country to another. For instance, women's rate in political bodies was 10.8% in Iraq, 9.6% in Syria and 2.2% in Egypt in 1997 (Tomaseveski, 1998). There are 35 women in the Moroccan parliament (MBC TV, 2004). In 1999, the Kuwaiti parliament dropped the prohibition of women's participation in political life (MBC TV, 2004). According to Tunisian ambassador of Lebanon, women constitute 21% of the Tunisian parliament members and 11.5% of the ministers (Future T.V, 2004). In Lebanon, women's first involvement in political life was in 1963. Today, there are three women in the Lebanese parliament (www.hudeib.oman.htm). In addition, in 2000, there was 68 women judges out of 264 in the judicial system and there is one judge in the consultation council in Lebanon (www.hudeib.oman.htm).

Nevertheless, some Arab countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and United Emirates, don't have any woman in their parliaments. In these countries, women are deprived of the right to vote and participate in political life (www.Akar.net). Woman's active participation in political and decision-making bodies is not as should be. This is related to sociocultural, legislative and electoral factors.

B. Arab women and economic involvement:

Women in the Arab world are still not involved enough in the economy or the work force of their countries. In reality, women only share at minimal levels in income generating projects and careers. For instance, in 1980 women's employment comprised 25% of the labor force in Lebanon, 18% in Iraq, 15% in Jordan, 8.2% in Libya and 20% in Syria (Abbas, 1987). The situation in Iraq after the Gulf War decreased the rate of women's employment from 18% in the 80s to 6% in 1992 (Abu-Zeid, 1996).

Slow progress was observed in Arab countries in relation to women's employment. For instance, the rate of women's employment increased from 25% in the 80s to 27.8% during the 90s in Lebanon and from 5.6% during the 60's to 25% in the 90's in Tunisia (Strickner, 1998). In Jordan, 15% of the lawyers and physicians are women but they are not represented in decision-making bodies (Jordan Satellite TV, 2004). According to Subhieh Al-Maali, a member of the Jordanian Parliament, about 50% of the university graduates are females but they are specialized in conventional and traditional specialties (Jordan Satellite TV, 2004). Women in Tunisia account for 43% of the medical workers; 33% of the physicians; 57% of the dentists; 63% of the pharmacists; 18% of the veterinaries; 52% of the paramedical workers and 22% of the university faculty members (Strickner, 1998 p. 18). According to Hasaneen (www.amanjordan.org), women's participation in the labor force in Kuwait increased from 3% in 1970 to 33% in 1999. Hasaneen believes that about 35% of the women who are over age 14 are employed however; the majority of them are working either in education or health sectors (www.amanjordan.org).

Women's employment in Egypt has its peculiarities. Egyptian women are a majority in agriculture and education and constitute 67% of the work force in these fields (Strickner, 1998). Half of those who work in agriculture in Egypt are women. In services, women are about 15% of the work force; 41% of office workers; 32% of the professionals, and 26% of the selling jobs (Strickner, 1998). Only 11.7% of the workers in private sectors in Egypt are women and 20% of them are working as directors and heads of their work settings (Strickner, 1998, p. 5).

In the Arab World, women's work is met with various controversial opinions (Ahmad, 1990; Banani, 1993). In a study done by Ahmad (1990) about attitudes of Saudi and Egyptian societies towards women's work, the researcher found that Egyptian women had more positive attitudes than men toward the work of women. Employed women had more positive attitudes about the work of women than unemployed ones, and single women had more positive opinions about the importance of work for women than married ones (Ahmad, 1990).

In Saudi society, men had less favorable attitudes than women towards the work of women. Married men and women in Saudi Arabia and Egypt tend to support the work of women more than singles. However, married men in both societies carried less favorable attitudes toward the work of women (Ahmad, 1990).

Generally speaking, Arabs believe that the man is the only future of the woman and that education is a bridge for marrying. Many women disseminate these stereotypical ideas through their behavior and they leave work when they get married. If not, they do that after having their first child. Other women choose to work part-time or leave their jobs for few years until their children become old enough to depend on themselves. In all of these situations, Arab women's work is seen as a reserve for the family and the man is the main breadwinner of the family.

Nevertheless, women's work is not counted or rewarded as worthwhile when it is done at the family's business or land (Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994; Tomaseveski, 1998). Unfortunately, over the world, women's work on their land or home is not considered as part of the labor force and only out-of-home work is calculated in the national figures. This picture is not different from that observed among the countries most advanced in technology and economic development.

The work of the woman was evaluated as secondary to the work of men in the Arab world. In a Jordanian chat group on MBC.2 TV, the boys believed that men's work is more important than women's work (chattheplanet.com). The boys supported their viewpoints by a typical patriarchal reasoning. They said that it is the man who is the bread-winner and the protector of the family. Therefore, he should be given the first choice in employment opportunities. However, some girls and boys of the chat group admitted that Jordanian society has witnessed observable changes. For instance, two girls declared that they would not leave their work after marrying if their husbands ask them to do so (www.chattheplanet.com).

In order for the woman to become competent as a decision-maker and planner in her society, she has to lead her society in work and public services. Until today, Arab women are not involved in jobs that are essential for building their societies. Women are poorly represented in professions that could lead the woman to the top of the career ladder. Most women retire early and leave work. Many leave work for familial and social reasons. Some jobs are totally restricted to men because Arab society considers these jobs unsuitable for what is believed to be the kind nature of women (Jordan Satellite TV, 2004).

C. Arab women and education:

In most Arab countries, women are still struggling for equal rights to education especially at academic levels. In Arab countries, families favor university education for their sons rather than for their daughters. This becomes more obvious when the family has to choose between educating their son or their daughter. In a chat group at MBC.2 TV, all three girls in the group and two of the four boys admitted that the family usually chooses to educate their sons rather than their daughters even when the girl is smarter and very good in school. However, when girls are sent to college or university, they are directed to study arts and social sciences whereas boys are instructed to study physics, math or engineering (www.chattheplanet.com).

Nevertheless, the number of female students in higher education has increased during the last decade in Arab countries, including professions that were traditionally male-dominated (Strickner, 1998). Despite this reality, the majority of female students choose to enter the caring professions, traditionally associated with female roles (Stickner, 1998; Palestinian Ministry of Higher Education, 1998). In Egypt, the statistics of university graduates in 1990 show that 49% of the pharmacology, 44% of medicine, 41% of dentistry, 16% of architecture, 16% of technology, and 7% of electronics students were female (Strickner, 1998 p. 6). In Jordan and Tunisia, the rate of female enrollment at universities was 45% and 49% respectively (Strickner, 1998). In Lebanon, 44.2% of the students of the universities are women, but most of them are enrolled in conventional fields such as literature, media, education, health, and social sciences (Strickner, 1998). In Kuwait, women who had earned university degrees were estimated to constitute 9.8% of the women in the state according to Hasaneen (www.amanjordan.org).

It seems that female university students constitute a relatively high number, which reflects progress in Arab world in relation to women's education. However, a lot should be done until equality is attained among sexes. It is not easy for a working Arab woman to prove herself in a society that holds stereotypical views about women. The general atmosphere of work is charged with hostility and competition against women and the woman finds herself obliged to make additional efforts to prove herself and to gain the approval of her employers. A second barrier that women encounter in the world of work is the sociocultural constraints (Al-Sa`adawi, 1990). Family laws in Arab countries give the husband full rights to prevent his wife from working, traveling, and leaving home. Therefore, a woman should not work without the approval of her husband and if she does so, she is considered "disobedient" or

"Nashez" as it is called in Islam. If the woman worked against her husband's will, she loses her right to living allowance and her husband is not obliged to maintain her financially.

Waves of change are invading Arab countries in regards to women's work (Al-Sa`adawi, 1990; Banani, 1995). A few Arab countries including Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Tunisia developed civil laws that allowed women to work without the approval of their husbands. However, Islamic family laws in these countries have not changed (Al-Sa`adawi, 1990). Al-Sa`adawi (1990) says: "*it is ironical to see that Arab politicians and social leaders contest for the importance of including women in the economy of their societies; however, these leaders do not make enough efforts to change the family laws in their countries that confine women to house walls and prevent their development and emancipation*" (p. 824).

Women have the right to document conditions in the marriage contract; one could be the right to education and work (Al-Sa`adawi, 1990; Khader, 1998). However, many women do not benefit from this right because they are poorly educated and are uninformed of their basic rights. On the other hand, many women record the right for work and education in the marriage contract but later their husbands make their lives difficult and it becomes impossible for them to continue their education or start working.

Unemployed Arab women are the responsibility of their fathers and brothers. After they marry, their husbands become their supporters. After marriage, women are rarely given their inheritance and they are treated as subordinate to their husbands. If they leave their marriage house due to martial problems, they could be returned by force to their husbands even if they hate them or if they are abused by them. As long as the husband is capable financially, the woman cannot ask for divorce even though, she was given the right for divorce by Islam (Khater, 2001). Khater, who was analyzing the options of Imam Al-Ghazali about women in Islam, believes that men do not comprehend the value of women as builders and contributors to their society and country (Khater, 2001). Al-Ghazali, as Khater believes, ignored many phrases in Quraan because they support women's welfare.

D. The social sphere of Arab women:

Today's Arab woman is a product of the historical changes that happened to women in previous centuries (Al-Marneisi, 1997; Sharabi, 1987; Al-Sa`adawi, 1990; Abbas, 1987). The social and political changes that happened in the Arab world influenced the life of women until today. Years of colonization by ancient empires and European countries left major marks on the life of Arabs. Islam also left its key marks on the social and economic life of Arab countries. Therefore, the prevailing social and cultural values and norms in Arab

countries are an outcome of the exchanges of all civilizations that passed through the Arab World (Abbas, 1987).

The Arab countries share language, heritage, religion, social values, perspectives about family life and relations and other paradigms. Some variations and discrepancies are observed among Arab countries in relation to customs and traditions. However, there are common grounds about the attitudes and beliefs in relation to the family domain, and especially to women (Abbas, 1987). Despite some variations in localities and districts, the picture of women in the Arab world is nearly the same.

The general environment in the Arab region during the past thirty years has been geared towards a culture of war, in which women's issues on the whole were not a priority (Osseiran, 1996; Manasra, 1994; Jad, 1991; Najjar & Warnock, 1992). Since the 1967 war between the Arab countries and Israel, the Arab societies have been busy with one main goal, which is liberating the occupied lands from the Israeli occupiers. The main slogan was that land comes before any other secondary aim and everybody has to delay their private goals until liberation is achieved. This viewpoint was shared by Manasra (1994), Jad (1991), Daraghmeh (1991), Ghassoub (1991) and other Arab and Palestinian researchers. Women carried the slogan of land liberation and postponed their issues for many years and they still do in many Arab countries especially those in the frontlines with Israel.

On one hand, Arab individuals are raised with emphasis on tribal and sectored views and beliefs (Sharbi 1975). On the other hand, individualism and concern of one's interest are key value in Arab culture, as Professor Sharbi believes. During adult life, contradiction and conflict continuously exist between what an Arab individual likes or wishes and what the society wants (Sharbi, 1975). In the end, the social and cultural interests dominate the life and the individual gives in for the welfare of others. However, in other times the individual chooses to defy the society and makes individualistic choices. Nevertheless, the price in the second situation is high and might lead to death in extreme conditions of breaking social rules and cultural morals.

The social values and norms of Arabs were more powerful than religion and they influence various spheres of life of Arabic and Islamic societies until today (Khater, 2001). For hundreds of years, women in the name of Islam, were deprived of education and were isolated from social participation (Khater, 2001). When the woman has to leave home, it should be for significant reason and she should only do that while veiled. The veil became a stipulation and a symbol for true belief in God and Prophet Mohammad. The woman is imprisoned both in home and outside it in the veil.

As indications for the low value of women, people in Islamic societies consider two women for one man in several situations. For instance, two women equal one man in legal issues including witnessing, inheritance, “Diyeh” which is money paid as reparation for killing a person (Khater, 2001). Khater (2001) believes that all the claims to disfigure the role and value of women in modern societies are based on misinterpretations of Quraan and "Hadeeth" (Prophet Mohammad's statements). In addition, the author believes that the fundamentalists and the conservatives picked up what matched their opinions from the phrases of Quraan out of context and history.

Men, physically and emotionally, abuse women using different claims. They abuse women to discipline them and shape their behavior; women are not knowledgeable or sophisticated enough to fit the man; they are irrational in their actions; disrespect men and aggravate them; are imperfect as mothers and housewives in the man’s perspective (www.mohamoud.aman.htm). Fundamentalist Muslims defend women's beating by saying that God allows it in the Quraan, therefore, it is the man's absolute right to discipline, and correct the behavior of his wife. Other Islamic scholars oppose this viewpoint and say that even though the Quraan talked about women's beating as a disciplinary technique; it should not be used as the first approach. Rather, other more humane methods should be used with the woman who disobeys her husband first, before using beating (Abdel Sattar, 2001).

In the Arab world, violence against women takes various forms including domestic physical and sexual violence; circumcision; killing for family honor. Men in patriarchal societies, whether brothers, fathers, or husbands, have authority and they enforce this authority by using violence on women. According to Al-Rahbi, women are victims of emotional abuse that is practiced by Islamic family laws, and it includes the following issues (www.amanjordan.org):

1. The woman is not considered as a competent, mature person, and she needs a guardian in marriage; the mother has no right to custody of her children even when she raises them by herself.
2. If the woman wants to divorce her husband, she should return the dowry that the husband paid her.
3. After divorce, the woman has no right for family properties and assets even if she was employed.
4. The man has absolute right for divorce.
5. The divorced woman does not have right for custody of her children after adolescence years.

6. The husband has full right to prevent his wife from traveling
7. One condition for marriage is that the man should be equivalent to the woman.
8. There is no legislation that protects women from abuse and harassment in the family.
9. The legal age of marriage is less than 18 years.
10. The woman receives half the man's share of inheritance from the dead parents, even though many women today have full financial responsibility for themselves and their families.
11. The judge has the right to prevent a man for marrying for the second time if he is not financially competent.
12. Women might not get divorced if their husbands abuse them or rape them.

Abusive behavior is widely practiced by men in all communities of the world despite religion, socioeconomic class, ethnic background, employment status, or education (Kevorkian, 1998; Al-Sa`adawi, 1990). In Jordan, 47.6% of Jordanian women are continuously abused by their husbands. A Jordanian study on 544 women concluded that 72.5% of them are abused by their family members (www.aman.htm). Brothers constituted 29.5 of the perpetrators who abuse women in Jordanian study; husbands constitute 28.6% of the perpetrators; fathers constitute 22.3% of the perpetrators (www.aman.htm). Sexual abuse against Jordanian women was reported as a major subtype of violence against women.

In the Palestinian Occupied Territories, it is reported that 27% of Palestinian women are forced to have sex by their husbands, and 52% have been physically abused by men in their families (www.aman.htm). In Egypt, 35% of the women have been abused physically at least once by their husbands. In a joint study on 100 men and 500 women in Egypt, 66% of the women reported encountering sexual harassment in their work setting, and (www.aman.htm). In addition, 88% of the women were prevented from having independent viewpoints and opinions; 69% were prevented from traveling; 82% were prevented from leaving home; 93% were forced to have sex with their husbands (www.aman.htm).

The most outrageous form of violence, according to Lamis Naser, is female circumcision (www.aman.htm). This tradition has been practiced by Muslims and Christians for many centuries and aims at conserving the chastity and honor of women through excising their external sexual organs, which is popularly believed to render them asexual. The circumcision of girls is practiced in 26 countries in the world according to a United Nations report of 2001 (www.aman.htm). Physicians and psychologists attest that circumcision of

women leads to physical and psychological complications including; infections, trauma, frigidity, disfiguration of vulva, bleeding, depression and death from complications (Al-Sa`adawi, 1990).

Women should be emancipated, but this does not only mean going to school, taking off the veil, dressing modern clothes, or offering a few civil and vocational rights. Emancipation of woman according to Sharbi (1975) requires change of the man-woman relationship and change in the roles and status of women in their societies. Thus, women emancipation according to Sharabi is essential for man's and society's emancipation as a whole.

Even women in Arab culture who appear to conform to traditions and submission find ways to achieve their goals through skilled manipulation, and they act as informal decision-makers in their families. In a sense this also represents a camouflaged way of perpetuating the inferior status of women, and the manner in which women manipulate men to obtain what they want is similar to that employed by both men and women toward people in authority. It is believed to stem from the colonial tradition of patron-client relationships (Weeks et al, 1996).

III. Women in the Palestinian society

A. Palestinian women and political life:

Palestinians have never given up their right to self-determination and for many generations women devoted their lives to the struggle against Israeli occupation, aggression, and dehumanization (Palestinian Working Women Society, 2002). Palestinian women were actively involved in the national struggle for the liberation of Palestine since the establishment of Israel. However, organized struggle of Palestinian women started in the late seventies (Palestinian Working Women Society, 2002; Najar & Warnock, 1992).

Within the Palestinian women's movement, there is diversity in ideological orientation. The leftist women groups relied on the Socialist Marxist theory which connects women's liberation to liberation of the whole society. On the other hand, the Palestinian traditional leadership and women's organizations stressed the importance of adhering to conservatism and cultural values in the face of the Israeli occupation (Palestinian Working Women Society, 2002).

The Palestinian women's struggle formed a pivotal tool in the liberation process of Palestinians. Palestinian women took outstanding political, economic, and social roles during the early years of struggle against Israeli occupation

(www.nazweb.jeeran.com/intifada). During the first Intifada, women achieved a significant presence in public and political life. They were in the front lines confronting the Israeli soldiers. Women were active in popular committees and they did their mothering role as rescuers of injured youth. When soldiers caught stone-throwers, women attacked soldiers and rescued the young men (www.nazweb.jeeran.com/intifada). In addition, women of all age groups and socio-economic strata participated in demonstrations and protest against Israeli occupation (Palestinian Working Women, 2002).

The continuous Israeli occupation of Palestinian land demanded unity in the struggle of men and women. The Palestinians used all possible means to fight back including strikes, mass demonstrations, tax revolts, protest, armed struggle, trade boycott, stone-throwing and other methods to defend their right to existence; self determination, freedom, and an independent state. Women participated in non-violent struggle using marches, demonstrations, breaking curfews and siege. Palestinian women took prominent political, economic, and social roles during the years of struggle and delayed their social agenda until achieving liberation (Manasra, 1994; Najjar & Warnock, 1992).

Unfortunately, women's active struggle at the political level was not paralleled by a struggle at the sociocultural level (Palestinian Working Society, 2002; Manasra, 1994). They were shy to confront the prevailing traditional and conservative ideology and mentality of the Palestinian social systems and they delayed their social agenda until achieving liberation (Manasra, 1994; Najjar & Warnock, 1992). In turn, this strategy delayed the development of women until today.

Out of 25 Palestinian women engaged in the first parliamentary elections, five won and became members. In the Palestinian parliament, women constitute 5.7 % of the 88 members, and 3% of the ministers (Palestinian Central Bureau, 1998). In 1999, 22 of the 3439 (0.6%) members in local councils in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are women (Palestinian Working Women Society, 2002). Indeed, these numbers of women do not reflect the actual contribution of women in the society. The five elected women did not have a feminist agenda and did not have a special program to deal with Palestinian women's core issues. They were supported by political parties. Therefore, it is not surprising to see that they rarely lobbied for the women's agenda (Mu'alem, 2003).

The low percentage of women's parliamentary participation is related to the social and cultural nature of Palestinian society, which is traditional and patriarchal. A study done by the Jerusalem Centre for Media and Communication after the end of the first Palestinian Parliament elections in 1996 showed that about 16% of women who did not

participate in the elections were prevented from doing so by their husbands, fathers or brothers (Mu`alem, 2003). In addition, the Palestinian women's movement did not succeed in educating women to play an active role in the election as, Mu`alem (2003) believes.

Most of the political factions within the Palestinian society regarded women's rights as secondary to the national agenda. A prominent example about the exclusion in political life was the exclusion of women from the technical committees of the peace negotiations. Consequently, women leaders formed their own technical committees in order to increase women's involvement in the peace process (Palestinian Working Women Society, 2002). Second, a women's council was presented to President Arafat in 1995, but the project was not approved (Palestinian Working Women Society, 2002). In addition, when we look at women's share in political parties, we notice that 5% of the members of the central committee of Fateh; 15% of the members of the central committee of the Popular Front; 30% of the Fida party central committee, and 15.5% of the members of the central committee of the Democratic Front faction are women (www.pnic.gov.ps).

There is an important lesson that political bodies should learn from the first parliament elections, that is there is a need to incorporate gender issues in development plans and projects at the national and local levels. Without this, women will not take their suitable roles and the Palestinian society will not progress and prosper. Political parties need to assign a certain member of chairs in their leading boards for women. In addition, political parties have to prepare the public to support nominated women through advocacy programs and educational panels. However, nominated women need to equip themselves well for political life.

Nevertheless, Palestinian women nominees in political bodies may not win the battle without collaborating with women's movement and women's organizations (Said, 1996). In a study done by the Women's Affairs Technical Committee in 1996, 72% of the participants believed that women should be elected in the municipal bodies because this ensures their involvement in development of their societies (Said, 1996). Seventy-eight percent of the participants in Said's (1996) study said that they would vote for qualified women if they ran for local community councils.

However, to guarantee winning in the future elections, women need to cooperate among themselves in addition to attaining the support of liberal men. In the end, the benefits that Palestinian society gets from getting women representatives in political bodies are for all the society (Said, 1996). It is obvious that there are political, economic, and social changes in

Palestinian society in the last years. Therefore, the Palestinians are more willing to elect women to political bodies than in the past.

Men and women participated hand in hand in the national struggle for liberation in Palestine and in exile. Palestinian women have a crucial role in the revolution and they contributed a great deal in the struggle for liberation and independence. During the first uprising, the lives of women and their loved ones were constantly at risk. They struggled side by side with men to secure independence and to achieve respect and a dignified life for themselves and their children. They are still struggling for dignity, liberation, and freedom (Manasra, 1989; Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994). While they mourn their children, husbands, brothers and relatives, Palestinian women refused to give up their right to a decent living in an independent state of Palestine.

Women's participation in the national struggle beside men did not ensure equality, freedom, or status as it did for men as observed by Manasra (1989), Heiberg & Qvensen (1994), Najjar and Warnock (1992), Jad (1991) and Kevorkian (1998). The situation of Palestinian women is similar to that of women in Algeria who did not gain status, in spite of their sacrifices and contribution in the revolution (Ghosoub, 1991). Palestinian women are still struggling for liberation, dignity, and freedom. The Palestinian women only recently started to raise their special issues after the Palestinian Authority took over in 1993 (The Image Parliament, 1997).

Women's equal participation with men in the national struggle resulted in more confidence and power to face social conditions. Consequently, qualitative changes took place in the women's status and roles within the Palestinian social sphere. Issues of women's rights, gender equity, violence, empowerment, emancipation of women became key concepts in the agenda of women's movement in Palestine.

B. The influence of the political situation on Palestinian women:

Palestinian women held pivotal roles in the society. This made them more vulnerable to suffering in various aspects of their life. They were the caretaker of their families and they were placed in a situation that was extremely difficult to handle. They had to look after other family members and in the same time take care of themselves. The Israeli occupation harmed and endangered the life of the entire Palestinian society. Thus, women's agony and grief reached high levels.

At the moment of the eruption of the Aqsa Intifada in September 2000, the Palestinian women started another kind of struggle. Women participated in non-violent struggle using marches, demonstrations, breaking curfews and siege. In response, the Israeli army used live ammunition, tear gas, and rubber bullets against demonstrators and killed and injured thousands of the Palestinians.

The continuous boiling political situation in Palestinian territories has placed huge burdens and unbearable psychological pressures on families. It is unrealistic to say that there is one Palestinian who did not suffer from the Israeli occupation. Hence, mothers, sisters, and daughters suffered as well as fathers, brothers, and sons. Women were killed, injured, arrested, harassed and prevented from travelling from place to another. Palestinian women lost their houses, properties, and loved ones. Many mothers and grandmothers have not seen their children and grandchildren for months as the Israeli barriers prevent movement and travelling between Palestinian controlled zones.

Palestinian women suffer particularly as their children, husbands, and other family members are being killed injured or arrested. Such a situation has great impact on their emotional well-being as well as their socioeconomic status. When their bread winners and main supporters are no longer present, women of these distressed families are obliged to find work in a society that offers poor chances for employment. In addition, women still have to take care of households, look after children and other relatives who live in the house. Most of the time, women do not receive any kind of support or help and they are not compensated for their losses (The Palestinian Working Women Society, 2002).

Innocent women died at checkpoints while waiting for soldiers to allow them to go to hospitals. In addition, many women died during bombing and shelling of houses or during demonstrations. Pregnant women who were in labour were denied access to hospitals and several mothers and fetuses died in front of soldiers who paid no attention to their screaming and crying. In the first two years of the Al-Aqsa uprising 376 women were killed; 37 of these women were in labour and died at the checkpoints while waiting for the soldiers to let them pass to hospitals for delivery, which led to the death of 29 fetuses (www.muslema.com).

Both men and women suffered from the Israeli occupation in different degrees. Women as well as men were victims of imprisonment, harassment, torture, martyrdom, injury, humiliation, exile, and all the other forms of infringements of human rights. Thousands of Palestinians were imprisoned especially during the years of the uprising. Thousands of others were injured from all age groups and both sexes. Still, thousands more were martyred and deported. It is believed that every single household in Palestinian society

was affected in one way or another during the uprising. The living conditions are considered very stressful for all Palestinians. Common outcomes for these living conditions include post traumatic stress disorder, reactive depression, anxiety, anger, and aggression.

However, sometimes women suffered more than men, especially when their men were away from home. At those times, whether married or not, women were everything and everybody to the family. Women constitute 7% of the martyrs in the Palestinian society between 1987 and 1997, and 9% of the registered injured people in the same period (Palestinian Central Bureau, 1999).

Health care providers observed a rise in the rates of stillbirth, miscarriages, and delivery complications that were caused by tear gas, poor health services and inadequate antenatal care (The Palestinian Working Women Society, 2002). In addition, there was an increase of home deliveries and a decline in women's attending to postnatal care during the seven years of the first uprising (The Palestinian Working Women Society, 2002).

The continuous aggression of the Israeli army against Palestinians has strained Palestinian women as they usually look after the physical and psychological well-being of other family members. In addition to maintaining their own safety, Palestinian women were responsible for looking after other family members; maintaining food and water, assuring security and safety of children; reassuring their beloved ones during stressful situations; checking up on neighbors and relatives, and taking care of injured and sick family members (www.nazweb.jeeran.com/intifada/women.htm). Such situations were certainly burdensome to Palestinian women and added to their emotional vulnerability. Consequently, it was not surprising to see that a high level of Palestinian women suffered from extensive psychological distress. On the other hand, prolonged occupation and exposure to various kinds of political violence pressed Palestinian women to search for consolation from their harsh conditions and provided them with strength and meaning through political and religious beliefs (Palestinian Working Women Society, 2002).

C. Palestinian women and the economy:

An additional variable that influences women's social status in Palestine is their low contribution to the economic development of the society. Between 1995 and 1997, the rate of women's participation in the labor force never rose beyond 12.3% among the working age female population, compared to 67% for men at the lowest rate (Palestinian Central Bureau, 1998). Women's participation in the development and work force was limited to 11% in 1996

(Palestinian Central Bureau, 1998). Today, the picture is not much different as only 12.3% of Palestinian workforce is women (Al-Sahli, 2003).

Palestinian women own very little and they contribute modestly to the economy of their families and their society. Financially, men have full responsibility for family's expenses and needs in Palestinian society. Very few women are economically independent and have full financial responsibility for their families. According to Palestinian Bureau (1999), women head 7.7% of the families in Palestinian society. The percentage is smaller in Heiberg & Qvensen's study (1994), which reported that only 4% of Palestinian households are led by women. About 8.0% of the women over age 18 own a house or a property in Palestinian society compared to 52.0% of the men (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1999). Palestinian data indicates that 87.3% of the women over age 18 do not have any contribution to the family budget compared to 18 % of men (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1999). In addition, 74.1% of the women in the West Bank and 47.1% of the women in the Gaza Strip over age 18 have their inheritance, however; less women in urban than rural areas receive their inheritance (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1999).

Palestinian women are concentrated in a very limited number of economic activities compared to their male counterparts. Women work mainly in traditional jobs that are commonly done by women everywhere else in the world. Most of these women are employed in education, teaching, and administrative positions. Many women living in rural areas are working in farming. Unfortunately, they are not considered as an income resource in statistics (Palestinian Working Women Society, 2002). Thirty percent of all employed Palestinian women in the West Bank work without pay due to the dominance of agriculture as a source of female employment, especially in the West Bank (Palestinian Central Bureau, 1998, p. 9).

Women are present mainly in agriculture and education, which accounts for 56% of all employed women in the West Bank and Gaza (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998, p. 9). Farming is the main area of work for Palestinian women with a rate of 40% (Abu-Ghdaib, 1992). Women constitute a minority of employees in the services sector with a rate of 28.4% in the West Bank and 15.7% in the Gaza Strip (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998, p. 9). In the Gaza Strip, 48% of the employed women are working in professional and technical jobs (Palestinian Central Bureau, 1998, p. 10).

Palestinian women still prefer to work at traditional jobs like other women in the world. Palestinian women constitute 41% of the employees in education; 35% of the employees in health and social services and 19% of the work force in personal and community services (Ministry of Labor, 1997). Eleven point four percent of the working

Palestinian women are employed in industries such as the clothing industry and embroidery (Abu-Awwad, 1997; Ministry of Labor, 1997, p. 43). For instance, women constitute 22% of those employed at mini industrial jobs (Abu-Ghdaib, 1992).

Palestinian statistics show that women are a minority in professional and non-traditional jobs. For instance, 11.7% of the medical doctors, 8.5% of the lawyers and 7.4% of engineers were women in 1997 (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998, p.11). In 1999, Palestinian women comprised 7.7% of the trade, 2.9% of judges, 7.4% of the lawyers and 20% of the journalists (Palestinian Working Women Society, 2002). In general, women constitute 12% of the engineers, lawyers, and physicians; 3% of those holding Masters or PhD degrees are females (Program of Development Studies at Beirzit University, 1999). The Heiberg and Qvensen (1994) reported that 88% of the women in their study had no skill for a specific trade, and only 15% were employed in the public sector.

Other studies reported lower rates of Palestinian women's working in governmental versus private sectors. For instance, the Palestinian Working Women Society (2002) reported that women constitute 22% of the employees in the non-governmental sector. However, while women constitute 41.7% of the workers in the Ministry of Health, only 3% of the physicians, 3% of the head nurses and 18% of the pharmacists were females (Women's Voice, 1999). In addition, while women are employed in all governmental agencies and ministries, they are mainly working in traditional roles (secretaries, typists, clerk, etc) (Al-Qazzaz, 1998). When asked about the preferred job for women, 52% of the respondents of the Panorama study that was conducted on 1201 adult Palestinians preferred the woman to work as a teacher and 31% preferred her to be a housewife (Musleh et al, 2003). Only 5.2% of the respondents in this study said that they preferred the woman to work as a nurse, which contradicts other researchers' viewpoint (Musleh et al, 2003).

Only 15% of the employed women in the West Bank and 9% in Gaza are business proprietors (employer and self-employed) (Palestinian Central Bureau, 1998, P. 9). According to Al-Hurani (1998), 11% of the employed women either own their business or work for themselves compared to 29.5% of the men. Thus, most of the women who have jobs are working in paid jobs.

Eighty four percent of Palestinian females, over the age of 14 compared to 32% of males are considered to be outside the labor force (Palestinian Central Bureau, 1998). This rate fluctuates through time but has remained high. For instance, a study by Al-Najjah University (1989) show that an average of 72.6% of the unemployed in the West Bank and 75% in the Gaza Strip were women. In a study of the Shati refugee camp in the Gaza Strip,

Lange and Mhanna (1992) found that only 38% of the women in their study were employed either formally or informally.

In the media, there is only one woman who works as a general director compared to 8 men, and 2 women managers compared to 24 men (Women's Voice, 1999). There is no woman who works as an editor or chief editor in all the newspapers in Palestine (Women's Voice, 1999 p. 3). The study of Panorama (2003) on a random sample of 1201 adult Palestinians reported that 10% of the respondents liked women to be reporters or journalists. However; in reality only a small minority of women actually enter these professions (Musleh et al, 2003). There is fascination in Palestinian society with the reporters and journalists who covered the activities and events of the uprising, which gave glory to the profession, however; it is not easy to find such job for young adults.

Women in Palestinian women receive lower wages than men for the same jobs. However, for other careers such as professional jobs, there is no difference in wages between men and women except for married men who usually receive childrens' allowances. However, the general income of women in the national economy is lower than that of men. According to Palestinian Working Women Society (2002), women earn 66% of the men's average salaries.

Culturally speaking, Arab men controlled by their patriarchal mentality consider women's work and sharing in the family's expenses as undignified and embarrassing to them. They usually consider themselves as the main supporters and breadwinners of their families and they might not allow the work of their wives and sisters. On the other hand, when the woman marries, she expects the husband to support her financially. Women who have reservations about women's work are concerned that their wives might become commanding and control them if they became financially self-sufficient. The same is true for sisters who are expected to depend on their brothers for living. In many Palestinian families, sisters' work is more condemned than wives' work because all the brothers should support their sister whether the father is alive or not. The same is also relevant for mothers.

The findings of the study of the Palestinian Family Planning Society (1997) supported above mentioned viewpoints. Only 6.8 % of the 76 men who participated in the study would accept the employment of women if they are not married according to the Palestinian Family Planning Society (1997). Twenty-one point six percent of the men in the study of the Palestinian Family Planning Society (1997) completely rejected women's work.

Palestinian researchers hold contrasting viewpoints about women's work. Some believe that women's sole job is childbearing and taking care of house chores. However, others believe

that women should work outside the home as a means to achieve status and emancipation (Najjar & Warnock, 1992; Manasra, 1990; Abu-Ghdaib, 1992; Banani, 1993). The inquiries of Fleischmann (1993) and Heiberg and Qvensen (1994) on Palestinian working women showed that fear of condemnation is the main reason for keeping women out of the workforce, as their families are very skeptical when the workplace has a mixture of men and women. In addition, the political and social atmosphere in Palestinian society plays an essential role in women's work. Obaidat (1998) believe that land confiscation, illiteracy, role strain, low rates of specialized education among women, high fertility rates, decline in official support for women's involvement in the economy and social development are some of the factors behind the retreat of women's participation in the Palestinian national economy and development.

Women working outside the home are generally increasing, but are still not welcomed by all communities. Most men prefer women to stay home and take care of their children. For instance, the Panorama Center study about the societal views of Palestinian women reported that 83.3% of the 1201 respondents accepted women's work if they were single, and 77.3% accepted women's work if they are married and do not have children (Musleh, 2003). However, when the woman is married and has children, the rate of those who supported women's work dropped to 47.5%. This indicates that women's best job in the Palestinian society is still is a housewife even if she is educated in a university, which is common sense in a traditional society like Palestinian society.

Palestinian women have their special reasons for working outside home. They including, political factors such as the absence of the men from the family due to exile, arrest, travel, or death. Another reason for the work of Palestinian women in paid jobs is financial and it includes factors such as living in large families and the poor financial conditions of the family. A third reason for women's work in Palestinian society is their wish to contribute to the political and the social development and economic building of the new Palestinian society (Abu-Ghdaib, 1992; Abu-Awwad, 1997; Daraghmeh, 1990).

On the other hand, we start to observe that an increasing number of women want to work to support themselves and to become independent and assertive. Therefore, many women choose to work outside home as denote to achieve status and liberation (Najjar & Warnock, 1992; Manasra, 1990; Abu-Ghdaib, 1992; Banani, 1993). This is especially true for new graduates who want to try professional life until they get married. After that, some of them continue to work while others stop working after they have their first child.

Because the man is the head of the family, it is believed that he is also the decision-maker concerning the woman's work. The majority of Palestinian men perceive women as incapable of taking leading roles, and they treat them according to this perception. The Palestinian Family Protection and Planning Association (1997) conducted a study on 76 male participants using focus group method to investigate their perception of family planning and reproductive health issues, and women's empowerment. In their study about men's perception about women's empowerment and freedom, the researchers of the Palestinian Family Protection and Planning Association (1997) reported that 55.4% of the respondents think that women cannot make decisions about their education, work, marriage, and social mobility. This indicates that more than half of the men do not see women as competent to manage their lives thus they rely on men for such responsibilities. However, these viewpoints might be correct or incorrect but the reality could not be known unless women are placed in decision-making roles and raised to be independent and assertive.

The man's educational level and place of residence have little influence on women's freedom to work. Men, whether educated at university or to secondary level only; or living in rural or urban places did not vary much in their views about the importance of the work of women. This was supported by the Palestinian Family Protection and Planning Association (1997) that was conducted on 76 men using focus group method. This study reported that 56 of the respondents see the women's main roles as housewives and mothers. In addition, only 9 out of the 76 respondents in the above-mentioned study accepted women's work without conditions, whether married or single (Palestinian Family Protection and Planning Association, 1997). Heiberg and Qvensen (1994) had a different viewpoint and they reported that that the higher the level of education and social awareness, and politicization of the man, the higher the probability that the woman had been employed.

In conclusion, women are the poorest in the world and Palestinian women are no exception. The phenomenon of feminization of poverty is applicable to the Palestinian case as well. Palestinian women do not own a lot; they are a minority in paid jobs and they contribute very little to the economy of the Palestinian society (Obaidat, 1998). Palestinian women have little say when it comes to their right for work and property, and inheritance and most of them surrender to the wishes of men in their families. When they marry, their responsibility is transferred from their brothers and fathers to their husbands. After they are divorced, they have no right for any of the assets of their families even if they were employed. Their responsibility goes back to their fathers and brothers if they are unemployed.

D. Palestinian women and education:

It is believed that education is one of the cornerstones for raising the status of an individual in his or her society (JMCC, 1995; Manasra, 1994; Daraghmeh, 1991). This is also true for Palestinian women. Palestinians have always claimed that they have higher educational levels in comparison with other Arab countries (Abed Al-Hadi, 1990; Kanaaneh, 1983). This emphasis on education is due to the fact that Palestinians considered education as a compensation for feelings of inferiority due to loss of property after the Israeli occupation (Daraghmeh, 1991). In addition, the Palestinians place high emphasis on education because it becomes an instrument for economic and social mobility and as a symbol of resilience and persistence against Israeli occupation.

There is a dialectical relationship between women's educational status and their status in society. Access to education at all levels has increased for Palestinians as evidenced by literacy rates and enrolment statistics, despite adverse sociopolitical conditions. According to the Palestinian studies, the general literacy rate among males is 91.5% and 77% among females (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998). Despite these variations in levels of literacy between sexes, one can also note a slight increase of female enrollment in education in the last twenty years. In the year 1996, females accounted for 49% of the students at all educational levels compared to 43% in 1975 (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998; Daraghmeh, 1991). In the year 2001, females constitute 49.95 of the students of all levels in the West Bank and 49.8% at the Gaza Strip (www.pnic.gov.ps). This means that almost half of the school students are females.

Literacy levels vary according to age group, residence, gender, and phase of education. Studies of literacy levels among Palestinians showed that while there are equal degrees of literacy among boys and girls at the primary level, the percentages drop sharply as the level of education rises (JMCC, 1995; Manasra, 1994; Abed Al-Hadi, 1990). Among children of age 6-11 years, 92.1% of girls are at schools in the city, 91.6% in the villages, and 89.9% in the camps (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998; Palestinian Working Woman Society, 2002). The percentages drop a little as age increases. For instance, among children in the age group 11-18, 53.7% girls and 56.4% boys are enrolled in secondary school (Palestinian Working Women Society, 2002, p. 8). This indicates that a large number of students of both sexes leave school before the end of secondary education. On the other hand, there were variations in the level of secondary education in relation to residence within Palestinian society. For the 15-17 age group, the enrollment rate in schools in the cities was 69.1%, 57.7% in villages, and 66.2% in camps (Palestinian Central Bureau, 1998). According

to Palestinian figures, 33% of the males and 36% of the females in the age group 16-18 are not enrolled in schools (Palestinian Central Bureau, 1999). In addition, the Palestinian data show that women's illiteracy rate over the age of 15 is 20.3% compared to 7.8% of men (Palestinian Working Woman Society, 2002, p. 8). These data indicates that the older the age of the Palestinian female, the less the level of education she is likely to have undertaken.

Various factors play roles in the decline of the rates of education among Palestinian youth. It is believed that the highest rates of drop-out occurred during the first Palestinian uprising between 1987 and 1992, due to the closure of schools and universities by the Israelis (Abed Al-Hadi, 1990; Manasra, 1994). Therefore, since the arrival of the Palestinian Authority in 1993, the level of dropouts from schools has declined considerably (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1999). While Abed Al-Hadi (1990) reported a dropout level from schools for girls at secondary levels of about 70% in 1989, the JMCC (1995) reported a dropout rate of 84% in the year 1990. The figures illustrate the educational situation of Palestinian youth during the years of the first uprising. During the uprising, there was a decline in women's recruitment to the Palestinian universities because many girls did not complete secondary education due to the difficulties accompanied the uprising work and counteractions of Israeli occupation.

The second reason for many girls leaving school is early marriage. Most Palestinian researchers including, Abed Al- Hadi (1990), Kuttab (1991), Khader (1986) and Manasra (1989) believe that early marriage among Palestinian girls is one of the most important factors behind the decline of the rates of secondary education. About 3% of females leave school to marry in the 10th grade and another 3% in the 11th grade (Palestinian Central Bureau, 1999). The study of Manasra (1989) and others indicate that the traditional and conservative attitudes of Palestinian society about young girls make families pull them out of school to prepare them for marriage. This strategy is more common among rural families according to Manasra (1989).

On the other hand, male students leave school after the 8th grade to go to work. About 2.2% of the males left schools in the 8th grade, 3.2% in the 9th grade, and 2.5% in the 10th grade for the year 1997/98 (Palestinian Central Bureau, 1999). Adolescent boys who came from poor families find themselves obligated to cut their education to assist their fathers and other older brothers in supporting their families. This strategy is well- accepted by Palestinian families because there is a strong cultural belief behind it. Therefore, it is not strange to see a 14 or 16 years old boy working as any man in black labor in Israel especially when his father is dead or does not earn enough.

Although elementary and secondary education shows differences in relation to gender, gender variation is miniature in high education in regards to numbers of the enrolled students in colleges and universities. Palestinian figures show that during the 90s, 46.9% of the university students and 42.9% of the high colleges are women (www.pnic.gov.ps). In the study of Abdallah and Al-Zeir (2004), 49.8% of the students of Al-Quds University are females. The picture at other Palestinian universities is somehow the same.

It is obvious that higher education in the Palestinian society has witnessed dramatic changes in the rates of female recruitment. However, within specialties, big variations could be detected among male and female students. There are still gender variations in the rates of education in relation to specialty. Today, more females are recruited in Arts and health specialties that could prepare them to get jobs in traditional occupations (teaching, nursing and allied health professions, administrative jobs), while less numbers of female students go to engineering, medicine and law (www.pnic.gov.ps; Manasra, 1994).

Differences in education in relation to gender have the greatest variation in the area of specialized education, which can be observed among university faculty members. In the year 2000, there were 228 female teachers in the universities compared to 2493 male teachers. According to Palestinian Ministry of Higher Education (1998), female educators constitute 12.7 % of the faculty members in universities. This ratio is related to many factors including, lack of opportunities for postgraduate education; social and cultural restriction imposed on women; marriage and family responsibilities; constraints about studying abroad; families' reluctance to spend money on postgraduate education of women; discrimination against women among universities' decision-makers. Therefore, it is not surprising to observe that the ratio of male to female PhD and MA teachers in Palestinian universities was 9:1 (Palestinian Ministry of Higher Education, 1998).

Some Palestinian men believe that women do not need, or cannot be educated like men. The actual results of university students' achievement contradict this conservative viewpoint. Dr. Tayseer Abdallah and Dr. Abd Al-Hameed Al-Zeir (2004) conducted a study on 5055 of Al-Quds University students and they investigated the relationship of gender to students' achievement. They concluded that female students got higher grades and that most of the deans-list students were females.

In the Palestinian Family Protection and Planning Association study (1997), 51.4 % of the men supported university education for women, while 43.2 % did not believe that woman's education could change her family life or capabilities. Only 6.8 % of the men in the above study would accept employment of women if they are not married and 21.6 % of them

completely rejected women's work. The study of the Panorama center on a random sample of 1201 people over age 18 concluded that about 50% of them preferred university level of education for women, which supported the findings of the Palestinian Family Protection and Planning Association (1997).

On the other hand, 26.6% of the 1201 respondents in the study of the Panorama center believe that secondary level of education is the ideal level for women (Musleh et al, 2003). It is known that an education of less than university or college level cannot guarantee a job for the woman and that a secondary level of education means that the woman will have one choice which is to be a housewife. If the woman did not get married without achieving the right education, she will either become dependent on her male relatives for a living or look for an unskilled, poorly paid job.

Despite the impressive improvement in school enrollment over the past decade, gender roles and responsibilities have not changed as expected. Research in Palestinian society indicated that students perceive education as a mechanism to prepare young women to care for their families rather than to get a career (Ghali, 1997). This implies that education is seen as a prestigious and luxurious value rather than a necessity in the Palestinian society. This might be true for women because even after they gain a higher level of education, they do not use it to get employed. In addition, their families do not allow them to work, or their society does not provide them with good opportunities for work. The three reasons are all valid and this is relevant in Palestinian society.

E. Social sphere of Palestinian women:

The Palestinian woman is affected by a triple constraint to her freedom, which consists of the cultural limitations, gender discrimination, and the constraints imposed by military occupation (Sansur, 1995). Consequently, cultural practices, political situations and gender-based discrimination affect her physical and mental health state. The living condition of Palestinian and Arabic women resemble those of European women during the 50s and 60s of the 20th century.

Despite measures of comparative freedom among women of certain socio-economic strata in Palestinian society, there is a widespread exploitation of women as well as discrimination in all aspects of life (Najjar & Warnock, 1992; Manasra, 1994; Wad Atta, 1986; Jad, 1991). The social and psychological strains on Palestinian women are the same throughout different residential areas. For instance, women are not allowed to live alone in an independent house whether employed or not, young or mature, or whether they are living

in a city or village. They are unwilling to choose to work, pursue education, or traveling outside the country. Palestinian women are restricted in their social mobility not only outside the country but also inside their towns and villages. The society closely observes women and keeps them under surveillance all the time.

Men in Palestinian society perceive women as incapable of taking leading roles, and they treat them according to this perception. In their study about men's perceptions about women's empowerment and freedom, the Palestinian Family Protection and Planning Association (1997) reported that 55.4% of the men think that women cannot make decisions about their education, work, marriage, and social mobility. On the ground, men do not allow women to make decisions. According to the reports of Palestinian Working Women Society (2002), only 2.1% of women said that they are decision-makers in their families. The official Palestinian data support other researchers in their viewpoints about the social opinion about women's poor capabilities in self-management. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (1999) reported that 28% of males and 35% of females over age 18 believe that women are competent to manage their properties and life. This means that the majority of Palestinians still do not trust women to direct self. The irony is not in how men perceive women, but rather in how women perceive themselves. Women in the study of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (1999) view themselves as incompetent and unequipped to manage their lives, which indicate negative self-perception and poor self-esteem.

There are more liberal attitudes toward Palestinian women in middle class urban areas, and a more conservative approach in the rural hinterland, provincial towns and among lower middle social strata (Sayigh, 1992). Women in the cities have more freedom and are more liberated than their sisters in the villages or camps. This is related to better chances for education, work and social mobility (Sabella, 1997; Najjar & Warnock, 1992, Taraki, 1990; Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994). There are more liberal attitudes toward women in Palestinian middle class urban areas. On the other hand, there are more conservative attitudes in the rural hinterland, provincial towns and among lower middle social strata toward women (Sayigh, 1992).

The level of freedom of movement of an individual is one of the indicators for his or her independence and self-control. Within Palestinian society in the West Bank and The Gaza Strip, people are not free to move about due to the political situation and the restrictions imposed on them by the military government of Israel. However, the situation of women is more complicated as they encounter doubly constraining restrictions on freedom of movement. On one hand, they face the same restrictions of movement as everybody else by

the Israeli army. On the other hand, they encounter restrictions on their social mobility and freedom that are imposed by their families and community. This is dependent on several factors including, age, marital status, residence, and educational and vocational status (Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994).

People in general believe that the education of women and men has a significant influence on women's freedom of social movement. When the Palestinian woman is studying in university and if she is employed, she has a relative freedom of movement more than the housewives. However, the educated and employed women have less freedom of movement during the night. The study by Heiberg & Qvensen (1994) postulated that the age of a woman rather than her education determines her freedom of movement. The number of hours of a woman staying outside her house is also associated with her age (Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994). For instance, Palestinian women of the age group 15-19 felt the most restricted in their freedom of movement among all women who were studied by Heiberg & Qvensen (1994).

Women's freedom of movement is basically determined by the possibility of her having sexual and intimate relationships with men. The less chance for intimate relationships for the woman, the more freedom she gains. Therefore, women in Palestinian society are more restricted in their movement within society especially if they are not married. According to Heiberg and Qvensen (1994), 54% of the married women and 90% of the widowed men they studied were free to move in society, compared to 32% of the unmarried. However, when they get older, unmarried women gain more freedom of movement and they become socially mobile.

The place of residence of the woman has a significant influence on her freedom of movement. According to Heiberg and Qvensen (1994), women in the Gaza Strip feel significantly less free to move than their West Bank or Jerusalem counterparts. Among all women, the unmarried felt the most restricted in freedom of movement in the three areas. However, there was no significant difference among women living in the West Bank or the Gaza Strip (Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994). In addition, there was no significant difference in the degree of freedom of movement between the women living in the refugee camps, villages, and cities of the West Bank. Nevertheless, women in the refugee camps of the Gaza Strip reported more freedom of movement than their counterparts in the villages and the cities (Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994).

There is a reciprocal relationship between women's actions in the community and their status in the family. Palestinian women's contributions to the community, whether through political or professional activity, changed their relations with their families, strengthened their

influence, and created the ground for a greater degree of independence (Najjar & Warnock, 1992; Kanaaneh, 1983). This has led to major changes in Palestinian women at the personal and the collective levels. According to Najjar and Warnock (1992), Kanaaneh (1983) and Al-Khalili (1977), constraints on women's freedom and mobility have been loosened, but at the collective level, women are still living under social oppression around the Arab world. However, the patriarchal structure of Palestinian society, which is manifested in cultural, legal, and socio-political practices, continues to disempower women, subordinate them, and weaken their status (Kevorkian, 1997; Sharabi, 1987; Manasra, 1989).

It is believed that the spread of education and professional employment means that some Palestinian women have other options beside marriage and motherhood. Nevertheless, the effects of the Intifada (uprising) and the loss of lives and the rise in cases of disability have added a new argument in favour of large families and marriage, (to compensate losses by killing) (Najjar & Warnock, 1992; Giaceman, 1994). The national struggle of Palestinians has helped women to win some social gains through continuous struggle with the occupiers and the family itself (Najjar & Warnock, 1992; Jad, 1991).

In general, the Palestinian women are not different than other women in the world in their status and socioeconomic conditions except in degree. Palestinian women have low representation in economy, political bodies, and social status. However, Palestinian women are still located far away from women in industrial and developed countries. Palestinian women need to engrave themselves on the economic and the political map of the Palestinian society in order to prove themselves as competent and equal to men, and to contribute actively to the development process.

F. Family structure in Arab society:

The Arab family is characterized by being extended, patriarchal, man-centered, man-related in kinship and lineage, and polygamous and endogamous in marriage. In the last thirty years, some changes were observed in these characteristics but the process of change is slow (Sabella, 1983). For instance, extended family patterns are changing to nuclear, and polygamous and endogamous marriages are declining (Sabella, 1983; Hasan, 1981; Shukri, 1987). However, the patriarchal pattern is still dominant with its main characteristics (Hasan, 1981; Shukri, 1981).

The nuclear family is the most predominant type in the world. In Arab societies, nuclear families are present side by side with extended families (Hasan, 1981). However; the nuclear family is the most common form of families (Hasan, 1981). Even in urban areas

where industry and trade are the main source of income, one could see that extended as well as nuclear families are present side by side (Shukri, 1981; Abbas, 1987). On the other hand, the extended family is the main form of family structure in the Arab world, especially in rural areas (Hasan, 1981; Al-Khouli, 1989; Abbas, 1987; Kuttab, 1995). Arab society believes that the extended family is the ideal form of family however; this form is no longer the norm (Sabella, 1983).

The transition from extended to nuclear family in Arab countries is not entirely based on economic conditions. Social and political factors have a role in the decline of the rate of extended families. The nuclear family has become more widespread in urban areas and in the middle and upper classes of Arab society (Hasan, 1981; Abbas, 1987; Al-Khouli, 1989). In the two forms of family, extended and nuclear, the survival of the family unit is of primary importance no matter who is the breadwinner (Najjar & Warnock, 1992).

The pattern of social and familial relationships in nuclear families in Arab countries is different from that observed in western countries. For instance, even though the nuclear family lives alone in its house and has its separate income and expenses, its members still have very strong social relationships with their relatives in the village and city. In addition, the family of origin and relatives have strong ties and common interests as well as visitation and sharing with the nuclear family (Shukri, 1981). Therefore, at the social and emotional levels, the nuclear family in Arab society is intimate and cohesive, and they share with their extended family and relatives all happy and sad events. In this regard, the clannish and tribal mentalities are still strong in extended as well as nuclear families.

Arab society is a patriarchal society where older men make decisions for the family. According to Sharabi (1987), the patriarchal society existed in Europe and Asia before industrialization and capitalism, but it still exists in Arab societies and some of the developing countries. The traditional patriarchal society, such as the Arabic society, is indulged in religion and belief in superpowers; bureaucracy and authoritarianism; domination of men and tribalism (Sharabi, 1987).

The father in the extended family is the leader and decision-maker and he has power and authority over all members (Sabella, 1983). The man in Arab family feels that all family members should obey his orders and comply with his demands. He thinks that his masculine role demands that he should be the sole bread-winner and supplier of his family and that he should not show his weakness to others especially his wife and children (Sabella, 1983).

Because the man is the center of the Arab family, he does not think that he has to interact with his children, teach them or solve their problems and get involved with their daily

life issues (Sabella, 1983). The role of the father is mainly restricted to disciplining and maintaining order. The man in Arab patriarchal family rarely shares with his wife in her social activities. Most of the activities that the husband shares with his wife are family or friend-related such as weddings, funerals, feasting, visiting, dining, etc. Even in these social events, the man has a different role than the woman and there is a division of responsibilities where the man always has dominance over women (Sabella, 1983). Sabella (1983) says: *“The woman in the Arab family does anything to please her husband and satisfy him. Her value is connected to being a mother for male children who are the men in the future. The wife and mother in Arab society develop only through serving her house and man rather than through exploration of her abilities and personal tolerance. This does not involve the wife alone but also extends to the sisters and brothers. Sisters give up their education to give the chance for their brothers”* (p. 198).

The central role of the fathers in Arab families entitles them to make all key decisions in the family. In the patriarchal society, the elder son takes the role of his father after death. However, the mother becomes responsible for her family when her children are young or when she is employed and economically independent. Taking into account this centralization of the father in Arab family, it is not surprising to see that he signs all contracts and official documents for family members including, marriage documents for his daughters and sisters; business contracts; school documents; passports of children; bank account of his minor children and others (Sabella, 1983).

The Arab family is characterized by the following:

1. Loyalty: Children are wealth of the family. Male children are the backbone of the family, but the females are a burden on the family. Children should be loyal to their family, clan, and parents.
2. Maintaining the tradition in the family where that male is the most powerful and has the strongest authority in the family. Mothers mediate between children and fathers.
3. Focusing on masculine power and feminine inferiority, the parents are called by the name of the eldest son. The birth of the female causes sadness, while the birth of a male child is a joy for all family members.
4. Female-male segregation.
5. Mate selection for children is done by their families (Abbas, 1987).

The woman's situation in Arab countries varies from one country to another depending on the family's structure, financial conditions, and the emergent sociocultural changes in that country. Dependence and submission are considered desirable qualities in women. In many Arab communities, women cannot make their own decisions about the basic issues of life such as mate selection, education, and career selection and have to accept men's choices in these matters as part of the traditional values and norms (Al-Marneisi, 1997; Manasra, 1990; Al-Khalili, 1977; Sharabi, 1987).

In some Arab communities where fundamentalist Islamic law is harshly practiced, women are not free to move, travel, or live anywhere they like and are not allowed to go visiting unless escorted by the husband or another female relative. The gulf counties and Saudi Arabia are the richest countries in the Arab World, but unfortunately they are the least progressive in women's rights, according to Ghasoub (1991). In some of these countries, there is gender-splitting in education; widespread veiling; forced and early marriage, and prohibition of women's traveling abroad without a guardian (Ghasoub, 1991).

Women in Arab societies are less valued in the family's hierarchy of importance and value. The status of women in the Arab world is still secondary to men regardless of their age, socio-economic conditions or education (Al-Marneisi, 1997). In many countries women remain minors throughout their lives and are considered the property of their fathers, husbands or sons (Al-Sa`adawi, 1990; Strickner, 1998; WHO, 1992; Manasra, 1994).

The man in the patriarchal society, whether in the nuclear or extended family, controls the life of women and the family and determines all aspects of their lives. The brother is raised by his family and other social organizations to act as the protector and guardian for his sisters (Manasra, 1994). Even when he is a few years younger than his sister, he still determines her style and quality of living. The brother decides what his sister should wear and the kind of dress she should put on when leaving the home (Al-Khalili, 1977). The brother-sister traditional relationship within the Arab society was emphasized by a group of male and female youth on MBC.2 T.V station, who discussed the social values and norms in the Jordanian society (www.chattheplanet.com). Four youth (girls and boys) in this chat program defended the traditional values and norms of the Jordanian society and emphasized that the man's surveillance of the woman is important to protect her and to maintain the family dignity and unity (www.chattheplanet.com). According to the females of the chat group, the boys are freer to move around in the society and could sleep overnight at their friends' house or come home late at night without problems or harassment from the family (www.chattheplanet.com).

Many times there is a gap between constitutionally proclaimed equality and the actually practiced social laws that view women as minors under the guardianship of their men. In some Arab countries, women are not permitted to hold a passport without the consent of their guardian, even after the age of 18 (Abu- Zeid, 1996; the Image Parliament, 1997). In addition, in some Arab countries like Saudi Arabia, women are not allowed to drive a car alone and thus they cannot hold a driving license.

In Arab folk literature, women are stigmatized and harassed verbally and emotionally (Daraghmeh, 1991; Yehia, 1997; Jarbawi, 1993; Zamel, 1992; Salameh, 1994). This is exemplified in poetry, art, and folk proverbs. The following proverbs reflect Arab society's attitudes towards women and females in general: *Women are created from a short rib; women have half a mind; Find a husband for your daughter before your son; if you spoil your son he will reward you, but if you spoil your daughter, she will shame you; When they said I got a son I felt supported, but when I got a girl I felt devastated* (Daraghmeh, 1991, p. 35; The Palestinian Working Women Society, 1998, p. 19). In early pre-Islamic Arab tribes, female infanticide was practiced in some communities. Today, aborting female fetuses in China is a form of female infanticide.

In most Arab countries women are restricted from leaving their countries without the escort of a male family member. The situation is more complicated if the woman is single (Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994). In some upper and middle class families, single women can study abroad, but should return to their countries after finishing their studying. They are expected not to interact emotionally or sexually with men while abroad.

Women are viewed as weak, emotional, sensitive, tender, inferior and dependent. These views indicate that a powerful force should protect women, that is, men who rationalize their control of the lives of women based on such views (Taraki, 1990). On the other hand, some Arab authors perceive women as omnipotent and dangerous if left without surveillance or control (Tantawi, 1996; Al-Jamaily, 1997). Nevertheless, Al-Marneisi (1997) and Ghassoub (1991) postulate that men's anxiety and concern about women is related to their concern that women could be a potential influential force if they were socialized differently and given the chance to exercise power in their societies. Islamic societies such as Arabs used all kinds of control such as threats, social siege, confinement at home, social surveillance, veiling and segregation as ways to control the power of women (Al-Marneisi, 1997; Kevorkian, 1997).

There are several indications of the discrimination against girls and the preferential treatment of boys in Arab societies according to (Farah, 1992). One indication for discrimination against girls is the lack of warmth and intimacy toward girls, which could

cause shyness, fear, frustration and inferiority feelings. Second, it was observed that mothers tend to leave baby girls to cry whereas they tend to hold and cuddle baby boys during crying. Third, Arab families tend to spoil their boys while being harsh and firm with their girls. Fourth, Arab mothers usually breast feed their baby boys longer than their baby girls and provide better food for the boys. Fifth, families usually use more punitive measures to discipline girls and are more liberal and pleasant to boys. Sixth, there is early involvement of the girl in house responsibilities and taking care of their younger siblings and older relatives. Seventh, Arab families tend to force girls to leave school early while encouraging boys to remain in school regardless of their academic achievements. Eighth, the girl is more deprived of her rights than boys including the right to talking, share and participates in social activities. Ninth, families control the life of the girl, continuously supervising and guarding her (Farah, 1992). However, the boys have more freedom to leave the house and move about in society; playing and building friendships (Farah, 1992).

In Islam, there are certain practices and behaviors that are believed to lead the woman to hell according to Dr. Murad (1999) a faculty member in Al-Azhar University. These things are: believing in other god(s); believing in magic or using magic; abstaining from prayer; acting and dressing like men; wearing make up or applying perfume in public; loose walking and posture; wearing revealing or partially naked clothes; committing adultery or prostitution; gossiping; refusing to allow her husband to have sex with her (Murad 1999). In addition, there are other practices that could send the woman to hell which include, crying for the dead and tearing clothes on dead people; wailing for dead people; talking behind family members; homosexuality; accepting rectal sex; having sex during menstruation; spreading marital secrets; taking a man from his wife; having sex with divorced husband; requesting to be divorced without reasonable reasons (Murad 1999).

The Arab woman is bound to two contradictory images. The first image is the perfect mother and wife, and the second image is a loose, seductive person (Al-Raies, 1995; Al-Sa`adawi, 1977; Kevorkian, 1997; Orabi, 1990). This view is not exclusive to traditional men and women but also educated and elite men. Men, whether husbands, brothers, fathers, children, employers, or partners abuse the traditional value system of Arab culture to control women and manipulate their lives (Al-Siba`i, 1985; Manasra, 1994; Abbas, 1987; Manasra, 1990; Al-Khalili, 1977).

Arab countries have double standards in dealing with women. On the one hand, these countries call for equal involvement and participation of men and women in the economy and the building of the society and state, and on the other hand, Arab countries continue to place

women in well-established social moulds that confine women to their maternal roles. Civil law in many Arab countries considers women as equal to men in status and qualifications, but this is only hypothetical (Women Image Parliament, 1998).

Reviews of Arab studies about women reflect the conflicting perspectives they have. This diversity has been expressed in the manner in which some scholars perceived issues such as marriage, sexuality, veiling, and domesticity (Al-Sa`adawi, 1990; Ahmad, 1992; Kevorkian, 1997; Al-Marneisi, 1997; Orabi, 1990). According to Shuman (2001), there are three different images for women in the media. The first is the traditional, which views women as housewives with less freedom and rights and as submissive to men. The second group is the progressive trend, which calls for the equality of both sexes and respect for women's roles and body. The third is the moderate, which takes an intermediate position between the first and second group, and considers the woman as a mother and as socially and publicly active in the same time.

Islam is the main religion in Arab society. The Arab-Islamic heritage influenced all spheres of life in the Arab world (Orabi, 1990; Kevorkian, 1997; Abu-Zeid, 1993; Al-Marneisi, 1997; Al-Raies, 1995, Al-Sa`adawi, 1990). In Islam, men, due to presumed qualities given to them by God, are considered more capable of taking leading roles and of caring for families and women (Al-Nissaa' chapter, phrase 35; Al-Qazzaz, 1978). The nature of Arab-Muslim societies facilitates control and abuse of women through issues such as honor, shame, female virginity, genital mutilation, veiling, and sexuality (Al-Sa`adawi, 1990; Kevorkian, 1997). Veiling is more common in small towns and rural areas than in the cities (Fleischmann, 1993; Al-Marneisi, 1997).

Moreover, most of the countries in the Arab world profess in their constitution to be Islamic, consequently they follow the Family Status Law in regard to women's rights; responsibilities and obligations (Al-Marneisi, 1997; Al-Sa`adawi, 1990; Abbas, 1987; Salameh, 1994; Orabi, 1990; Hinf, 1993). The Family Status Law is based on the Quraan and the prophet Mohammed's statements and behaviors in regards to life issues including family relationships, marriage, finance in the family and society, and so on. Family Status Law is used in Share'a Courts to regulate all issues related to the relationship of men and women (Al-Marneisi, 1997; Banani, 1993; Abbas, 1987).

Men were given the absolute right to control and oppress women from the Islamic laws and Quraan. This view is supported by the Quraan's verses that are translated as: "*Men have authority over women because God has made them superior to the other, and because they spend their wealth to maintain the women. Good women are obedient. As for those from*

whom you fear disobedience, admonish them and send them to beds apart and beat them if necessary. Then if they obey you take no further action against them" (Al-Nissa' Chapter: Phrase 34).

Arab societies tend to retreat to religion after revolutions or defeats in wars (Abu-Zeid, 1993; Kanaaneh, 1983). This was obviously observed after the June 1967 war; Egypt-Israeli peace treaty in 1977, and after the Gulf war (Abu-Zeid, 1993; Ghasoub, 1991; Al-Marneisi, 1997). Nevertheless, there is a change from one generation to another in relation to commitment to Islam. In Islamic countries, there is a polarization of people either as secular or as fundamentalist as it is the case in Turkey, Iran, and some Arab countries (Akpnar, 2000).

The search for Islamic identity came into action as a way to defend against the movement toward modernization, globalization, and liberalization of Islamic societies (Akpnar, 2000). For instance, the head cover revived as a political identity for men and women in countries with an Islamic majority (Akpnar, 2000). In such societies women who are unveiled may be despised and disrespected as happened during the first Palestinian uprising between 1987 & 1992 (Fleischman, 1993; Manasra, 1994; Al-Marneisi, 1997).

Islam, Christianity, and Judaism are based on a patriarchal philosophy (Gudmundsdottir, 1997). These religions inherited the male-centered notion and continued the tradition of male domination since their inception. Women in Scripture have chiefly been responsible for three activities, which are the care of families, the maintenance of communities, and the production of income (Thomas, 1994). However, men were responsible for the production of income and ordering of public life (Thomas, 1994). According to Gudmundsdottir, (1997), the Old Testament and the Bible have been used by Christian society for centuries to suppress and restrain women.

In the New Testament, there are clear statements about the superiority of men including, the husband is superior to his wife; the women must cover her head; the woman is the glory of the man; the woman should stay silent during prayer meetings; women have to submit themselves to their husbands as to the Lord (Gudmundsdottir, 1997). In Islam and Judaism, women are not allowed to lead prayer or to be Imam or Rabbi while in Christian church; a limited number of women become pastors (Ken Phin, 1997). According to Ringstrom (1997), only one-third of the Lutheran clergy is female however, most of the worshipping community is women.

In Judaism as well as in other religions, the intricate dialogue between conservative, traditional, and secular modern scholars is transferred to women (Rapoport & El-Or, 1997).

For example, women in rabbinic courts are not considered equal to men; cannot testify; cannot become judges; are judged by males; pray behind a veil in a separate room; and are disqualified to be leaders or rabbis (Aharoni, 2000). The Israeli parliament, the army, and the labor unions perceive a woman's status through her roles as a wife and mother as proposed by Rapoport and El-Or (1997). For instance, equal civil status for women in Israel is justified early on account of their being an actual or potential mother or as soldiers' mothers or wives. For ultra orthodox community, a "*pure modest body*" of the woman is favored for the "*free modern body*" according to Rapoport and El-Or (1997 p. 578). Conserving the women's "*purity*" takes certain practices such as covering their bodies while moving outside home as a protective measure against the temptations of secular society.

In most religions, women are seen as a symbol for seduction, sexual promiscuity, the source of all evil actions on earth; are viewed negatively and connected to sinful behaviors (Salameh, 1994). The traditional interpretations of Quraan, Bible, and Scripture present women as inferior to men. In the Bible, the girls sacrifice their lives and needs for those of their fathers, and women are advised to look for solutions in endurance rather than looking for solution in resistance (Thomas, 1994).

Women are regarded as the property in the patriarchal societies and as such they are potential victims of abuse. Abuse is justified by the Bible and the Rabbis, Midrash, and Quraan (Graetz, 2000). Violence is silenced, ignored and sometimes backed by Biblical, Quraan, or Scripture interpretations (Graetz, 2000; Ringstrom, 1997). In some phrases, there is reference for using some disciplining for wives in the three holy books (Gudmundsdottir, 1997).

Despite that, God call for respect and love of the mothers, and treating women gently as wives and daughters. Ringstrom (1997) believes that there is a solid theological basis for equality between sexes however; theology has contributed and is contributing to sex discrimination. If we want to stop discrimination against women in the world, there should be an updated interpretations of religious books should be placed into context of the time in which they were written.

Secular women have quite different standards of living as it is the case in other parts of the world. In Israel, the kibbutz is one of the spheres where secular people live and share a life based on socialist ideology (Palgi, 2000). Rapoport and El-Or (1997) propose that the kibbutz discourse expects women to act like men in order to be recognized as productive individuals with prestige and status within the public sphere, which is not the case in the Jewish religious community. Although women have higher education than men in the

kibbutz, there is still gender disparity in the kibbutz (Palgi, 2000). Certainly, many changes have occurred for both secular and fundamentalist Jewish women. This does not imply that the lives of women in the kibbutz have changed considerably, or that the lives of orthodox Jewish women have remained the same in the last 50 years.

Taking into consideration all these forms of discrimination against girls in Arab families, it is not surprising to see that many girls wish that they were born as boys and that girls like to imitate boys in playing and dress. Many girls feel unlucky and miserable because they are born in an Arab country and wish that their families had a Western origin.

Arab society is a society in constant change. Many factors have brought change in Arab society including, the independence of the Arab countries, modernization, urbanization, and political and economic changes which has occurred over the last thirty years (Sharabi, 1987; Orabi, 1990; Abbas, 1987; Hasan, 1981). In rural Arab families, little change has occurred in the family structure, the roles of men and women, and marital relationships (Hasan, 1981). However, in urban families, major changes happened (Hasan, 1981). Some changes have occurred in Arab families and influenced women as well. These changes include the participation of women in the economy of the family; nuclear family evolution; the decline of the tribal values; the spread of education and schools; the women's liberation movement; and the decline of traditional marriage (Abbas, 1987; Al-Khalili, 1977; Sharabi, 1987).

The above-mentioned changes had a positive impact on the life of Arab women. More women joined the workforce and earned university degrees. Women started to campaign for their rights in most sectors of social life and many became politicians and community leaders (Manasra, 2003). Moreover, more and more women practiced their right to select their husbands and to live in an independent house away of the extended family (Shukri, 1981; Abbas, 1987). In addition, women actively participated in family meetings and discussions and pressured their families to listen to them and to respect their rights. In a study of 508 University students at the Bachelor's level in Jordan, Khairi (1991) reported a decline in the family's control and interference in the lives of children except in issues concerning the honor of the family. The author discovered that females are more supervised and restricted than males when it comes to selection of a career or friends, selection of clothes, and traveling. In relation to marriage and sexual relationships, both sexes were restricted and controlled by the father's authority.

Nevertheless, in some Arab communities women gain more power when they get older or when their sons become mature men and are capable of defending their mothers

against their fathers. In addition, some women earn power when their husbands are sick, dead or not home especially if their older sons are very young. In such situations, women play the role of the leader and decision-maker for their families. After women participate in labor market, the family in some societies becomes "biarchal" where men and women share the responsibilities for children and house chores (Al-Isawi, 2003). In few Arab countries, women today have the right to keep their family names (Shukri, 1981).

The historical, economic and political environment of the Middle East have sometimes hindered and at other times enhanced progress and change around the Arab World (Kanaaneh, 1983; Sharabi, 1987; Orabi, 1990). This situation created a gap in the social status of Arab women and stalled their participation and productivity (Orabi, 1990; Al-Marneisi, 1997; Al-Sa`adawi, 1990; Kayyal, 1993; Sharabi, 1987). The world of the contemporary Arab woman differs from the past. The traditional cultural values and beliefs are in transition. Today, more women are educated, employed, and involved actively in new spheres of life (Orabi, 1990; Kanaaneh, 1983; Jad, 1991; Shukri, 1981; Al-Khouli, 1989). Nevertheless, the Arab world in general is still predominantly shaded by the same views about men and women. According to Orabi (1990), these traditional values and norms stalled social and political changes in the Arab world.

According to Sharbi (1975), Arab women are oppressed since birth and live an inhumane life. He believes that as long as Arab women are living in misery, Arab society will not prosper and thrive. In Arab societies, girls are placed in a situation where they early start to learn social and family obligations and responsibilities, which is not usually done by boys (Sharbi, 1975). Therefore, girls are prematurely equipped to think and acting independently in college and universities as observed by Dr. Hisham Sharbi. However, this does not make their society respect them and treats them as competent and capable persons.

In general, the woman's case can be summarized in the following points according to Al-Seba`i (1985):

1. The status of women is a problem concerning the two sexes and the manner in which they interact.
2. The women's case has religious and national dimensions.
3. The women's status is changing over time and in different ways and in various societies.
4. It is connected to general socio-economic conditions.
5. Legal rights are not respected when they are practiced by women.
6. Women are abused, oppressed, and used by the men of the family.

7. The political, national economic and historical conditions of the Arab world influence the life of women (P. 11).

Many researchers support Sabri (1985) in his analysis of the situation of Arab women. The factors proposed by Sabri continue to influence women's life everywhere in the Arab countries as well as many developing countries. Therefore, changing the overwhelming living conditions of women demands changing several things including political situation, religious practices, economic conditions, cultural practices, as well as male-female relations.

G. The dress of Arab women:

It is an individual's right to select the kind of dress that an individual wants to wear. However, dress style may indicate discrimination based on religion especially in a society that judge people as either infidel or authentic based on their dress (Akpnar, 2000). Head covering becomes a political identity for men and women and it is widely practiced in Islamic countries (Akpnar, 2000).

When Islam came to the Arab Peninsula, it made great efforts in order to limit sexual freedom of women and preserve the family and society. One of these measures is the veiling of women (Hijab). In more than one phrase in Quraan, God ordered Muslim women to veil themselves. Veiling, which was ordered for the Prophet Mohammad's wives and believer women, is a controversial issue. Today we still see that there is disagreement among Muslim scholars about the meaning and the characteristics of the appropriate veil (Hijab) (www.amanjordan.org). Some Muslims say that all Muslim women should wear it while others say that it is only ordered to the wives and daughters of Prophet Mohammad.

The veil, nowadays dressed, should wrap the whole body of the women without showing any part of her body except for her face and hands. The veil includes covering the body with a "decent" dress that should be dark, preferably has one colour, not decorated, wide, and not showing the body contours. The head of the woman should also be covered and no hair should be showing out. On the other hand, other Muslims believe that the woman should cover hair, face and hands if she is very beautiful but this is not the norm in most Islamic societies. In addition, women are ordered to conceal their make up and not to show their jewelry to men except for their husbands, fathers, sons, brothers, father in laws, and close relatives (Al-Nur, phrase 31; Abdel Al- Sattar, 2001).

On the other hand, some Muslim women wear "moderate Islamic dress", which consist of long pants, skirt or dress, and long sleeve shirt or blouse that should not be transparent, in addition to hair cover. Most young women select "moderate Islamic" dress and their families approve it because it is comfortable and the woman can wear colored and decorated clothes, and select styles of clothes that are especially made for Muslim women. In many Arab communities, "hijab" is considered appropriate as long as the hair and the neck of the woman are covered and her body is clothed, however it does not matter in some communities if the pants of the woman are very tight and her thighs and buttocks are squeezed in them.

Nevertheless, in many Arab countries, the government and specialized Islamic surveillance commanders determine the appropriate clothing of women. For instance, in Iran and Saudi Arabia, women have little choices in their dress and make up and if they break the rules of the "appropriate" dress, they are punished in the streets in front of people (Khowah, 1995). In turn, the style of women's dress is one of the measures that have been used to control women in Arab and Islamic societies. The investigator observed that the freedom of dress is one of the freedoms that only liberated women have the right to select. On the other hand, the style of women's dress is the choice of men in the family. The dress of unmarried woman is determined by her father or brothers. Nevertheless, when she marries, her dress is determined by her husband.

As for Christian women in Arab countries, they have more freedom of dress however; their dress should not be revealing. They do not wear veils but they should not wear clothes that expose their bodies or which would be provocative. Nevertheless, Arabs always considered Christians as more liberal in their dress and behaviors especially in urban areas. However, in rural areas, it is believed that Christian women should be modest and conservative in their dress and makeup.

Quraan phrases order Muslim women to wear the veil in order to be protected from adultery and sinful behavior. Unveiled women are perceived by fundamentalists as seductive to men and they sabotage the morals of the society. Women who are not veiled are despised and disrespected in a religiously polarized society. In addition, those women who show their body are threatened to be punished. This is not restricted to Islam; body covering is also one of the pillars of Christianity and Judaism. However, in the three religions, we see more liberal attitudes toward women's dress in secular families and countries that have secular economic scheme and political governments.

Veiling and style of dress of women are considered as a means to control women. When the dress of women becomes an issue of control on their freedom and when it becomes

a symbol for chastity, it is no more perceived as a choice. On the contrary, women's dress is now viewed as identity phenomena for Islamic societies. Therefore, the moment people see a woman in a veil, they develop a cognitive schema about her and they deal with her accordingly.

Some very conservative Islamic scholars say that women should not leave home, even to school. This trend was practiced in Afghanistan by Taliban who destroyed the schools and the universities and prohibited women from working or participating in any social events except prayer and religion classes. During Taliban rule, women in the name of Islam were beaten when they disobeyed their husbands, fathers, or brothers.

Veiling of the women does not include keeping the woman in her house or concealing herself from meeting men (www.amanjordan.org). Nevertheless, many Muslim men expanded the concept of veiling to prevent their wives, sisters, or daughters from leaving the house without their permission. In such families, the woman cannot visit her parents or go to the doctor for treatment unless her husband approves it. Of course, these women are not permitted to pursue education or work without the consent of their men.

In Palestinian society, there was an outbreak of the practice of veil-wearing during the first uprising. The Palestinians retreated to the old traditions and values to conserve their society during the difficult years of the uprising. In turn, women paid the price and they were forced to wear the veil by Islamic leaders. Those who did not wear the veil were attacked fiercely in the streets by people who claimed that they are militant Islamic leaders. Many women got scared and complied with the orders that were usually distributed on flyers and leaflets. Even Christian women in the Gaza Strip were forced to wear veils. The situation at Gaza Strip, the villages, and the Northern cities of the West Bank was harsher and almost all women there wear veils. After the end of the first uprising and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, many women who never believed in the veil took it off. However, many continued to wear it because it became part of their identity and social behavior.

Today, in a class that has 20 female students at Al-Quds University, the investigator counted 16 girls who wear veils. The veil became a fact in the life of Palestinian and Arab women however; it does not prevent them from entering college or getting jobs after graduation. On the contrary, for some women, wearing the veil facilitated their entry to education and social living because they conform to the social values and cultural believes of Arab Islamic world.

H. Women and the honor of the Family:

The family constitutes an important social unit in Arabic culture. The unity of the family is crystallized through the unity of identity among family members where they share each others' achievements and failures; their happiness and sadness; their honor and disgrace. Every member of the family is not only responsible for himself/herself but also for the behavior of others within the family. Therefore, when the woman does a dishonorable behavior, it is reflected on every member in her family. The behavior of women is reflected on the whole family therefore; when this behavior is shameful in the perspective of family members, they defend their honor by killing the woman or girl (Kuttab, 1995).

Women were seen as innocent, poorly educated, childlike, and vulnerable to doing wrong; thus they needed protection in relation to property and sexuality. Most societies see women as potential seducers; therefore they are raised to be moral guards at home and are blamed for the men's sexual behavior (Lewis, 1984). During the late years of 19th century and early 20th century, the social laws in European countries were harsh with women and were mainly practiced to maintain moral values and to control women's sexual behavior (Lewis, 1984). Social condemnation and exclusion were used to reproach women who shamelessly engaged in sexual behavior and those women who have children without marriage (Mayers, 1986; Abbas, 1987).

Nowadays, some societies with patriarchal households have double standards about the sexual behaviors of men and women. Men in general are free to have extramarital and promiscuous premarital sexual relationships while married women are expected to remain monogamous. Men might not be punished for their sexual relationships, and sometimes are rewarded through praise of their friends and families. The double standards of the world in regard to men's and women's sexual behavior continue to prevail in various societies. For instance, in USA, African-American women still value traditional sexual roles that permit men to have sexual freedom but censure women for the same activities (Byers & Esparza, 1997).

In traditional patriarchal societies, control over women is practiced through control and surveillance over their sexual behavior. In these societies, the honor of the men is unswervingly linked with reputation of the women in their families whether sisters, wives, or daughters (Al-Sa`adawi, 1990; www.phrmg.org/arabic/monitor). In the past, the picture about family honor in Europe and North America was similar to that exists now in developing countries (Abbas, 1987). For instance, women who have engaged in shameful sexual or moral behavior were shunned by their societies and their families lost their reputation. In addition,

many families used to kill women for the honor of the family (Lipman, 1988; Mayers, 1987). However, when men practice adultery, their families used to ignore it and their wives have no right to revenge for her dignity (Abbas, 1987).

It was observed that cultures who value equality between sexes sometimes adopt more liberal notions about sexual freedom and they tend to be more open about accepting premarital sexual relationships of both sexes, as proposed by Byers and Esparza (1997). Despite increasing tolerance of sexual activity outside marriage in the West, women's sexuality is still strongly tied to marriage or the intention to marry. The sociologist Jay Teachman suggested that premarital sex and cohabitation are acceptable as part of the path to marriage (Health on the Net Foundation, 2003). Teachman inquired about women in the National Survey of Family Growth in USA, and found that about 82% of them were involved with premarital sex and cohabitation. Nevertheless, some authors and researchers consider premarital sex as disadvantageous. Sharon Berry (1996) considered pregnancy as the worst outcome of premarital sex. The choices for such pregnancy are limited to abortion, "shotgun" wedding, or single-mother parenting. The three choices have negative consequences and ramifications for the women and the society.

In Arab culture, family honor is the most precious value people have. In Arab countries, the concept of honor of the family has a different meaning compared to that predominant within Western societies. The honor of the family is connected directly to the honor of its women. Women in Arab societies should avoid any behavior or situation which could be seen to jeopardize their purity, decency, and honor. Chastity and tribute (Sharaf) are very important values in Arabic culture where the body of women becomes a symbol for her purity (www.phrmg.org/arabic/monitor). For married women, honor and purity means avoidance of extramarital relationships, and remaining loyal to the husband whether alive or dead (Al-Marneisi, 1997; Al-Sa`adawi, 1990). However, for unmarried women in the Arab world, remaining a virgin and avoiding sexual issues and intimate relationships with men are essential elements in purity as found by Al-Sa`adawi (1990), Al-Marneisi (1997), Kevorkian (1998) and Manasra (1994).

To preserve the purity of its women, the family and society use preventive and punitive means such as veiling, sex-segregation, early marriage, house-confinement, and surveillance (Al-Sa`adawi, 1990; Manasra, 1990; Abu-Zeid, 1993). Men, as well as women inside the family system and the clan usually use these practices as means of social control, to compel young women to abide by the social values of honor and chastity. Arab men, on the other hand, are free to travel, stay out until late, sleep over at friends' houses, and study and

work anywhere they like, and they are relatively free in their dress and movement (Al-Sa`adawi, 1990; Abbas, 1987).

When the woman commits a dishonorable and disgraceful act, she is killed to wash away her shameful behavior. Here, the killing is done to meet the common laws and values of Arab society (www.phrmg.org/arabic/monitor). These values are determined by men in patriarchal societies and they satisfy their wishes and perspectives. Killing for the family honor is a very common practice in the countries with an Islamic majority (www.BBCOnlineNetwork). Killing for family honor is not exclusive to Islamic countries. Killing of women for family honor constitutes 55.8% of the crimes against women (www.aman.htm). There is a rise in these crimes in non-Islamic countries such as Britain, Italy, Israel, Sweden, Uganda, Brazil, and India (www.arabiaonline). However, many of the killing for family honor possibly committed by muslim men. The number of crimes that are done to defend family honor is increasing in Turkey, Pakistan, and Jordan as reported by the United Nation (www.arabiaonline). For instance, 25 women are killed in Jordan for family honor every year (www.arabiaInform) and 300 in Pakistan (www.arabiaonline). Other researchers reported that about 55% of the crimes that are directed towards women in Jordan happen as killing for family honor (www.phrmg.org/arabic/monitor). The offenders in these crimes are usually young men who are poorly educated (www.phrmg.org/arabic/monitor). The men who committed these crimes are considered heroes by their society because they conserved their honor and the honor of the society. They are usually punished by light sentence and modified punishments (www.Arabia.com; Rashmawi, 1986). In Arab countries, the laws are flexible with men who kill their wives, daughters, or sisters who committed adultery. In all Arab countries, the men who killed women for the honor of the family are sentenced with 6 months to three years. There is an excuse for the man because he is said to have “lost his nerves” or he killed the woman during an episode of anger and “boiling blood” (Al-Sebai, 1985; Amnesty International, 1995) (www.arabiainform).

Despite social restrictions and possible penalty, many men and women sometimes practice sexual relationships secretly in Arab society. Yasin (1987) reported that in Syria, sexual needs might be fulfilled at limited levels among university students, intelligent bourgeois, and those who are affected by western ideologies. Even though some sexual relationships may be practised secretly in Arab societies, having children out of wedlock is completely despised and punished by extreme measures (Manasra, 1994; Kuttab, 1995; Yasin, 1987; Najjar & Warnock, 1992; Warnock, 1990; Abbas, 1987; Lipman, 1988). Having a sexual relationship or delivering an illegitimate child may expose the woman to the death

penalty if she is discovered. Marriage is the only accepted and legitimate way to have children and to achieve sexual fulfilment within Arab and Islamic countries. This is true to some extent in many developing countries.

Nowadays, the women's movements in Islamic countries denounce "killing for the honor of the family" and call for a harsh penalty of the offenders and using effective protective measures to control such practices, which contradict Islamic laws. According to Islamic laws, the single woman is punished by a beating in public if she commits adultery. However, for the married woman, she is killed in public for adultery. Adultery should be proved by four witnesses or the confession of the woman. When a married man and a married woman commit adultery, they should receive the same punishment without discrimination.

Unfortunately, many women were killed for family honor without confirming that they have actually had sex. This occurs when no solid proof is provided. In many instances, girls were killed but after autopsy they were discovered virgin. It was reported that about 80% of the women who have been killed by their families in the so called, "honor defense killing" were virgin in Egypt in the year 2003 (Al- Mustaqbal TV, 2003). In addition, many young women were killed because their families suspected that they had a love affair or they found love letters in her belongings. These girls were mostly minors and would not have known for sure what was acceptable or loathed in their culture.

The situation in Palestinian society is not different than in other Arab countries. The social values about family honor and women's purity are Arab, Islamic therefore they are similar to those present in Arabic World. The social and common laws are also the same and the civil laws are derived from the Jordanian laws therefore, the punishment for the offenders is the same. Kevorkian reported that in 1996/1999, the Palestinian police documented 38 cases of killing for family honor out of which, 12 occurred in the West Bank and 26 in the Gaza Strip (www.phrmg.org/arabic/monitor). These crimes were mostly committed by first-degree male relative of the victims. In addition, Kevorkian reported that most of the killing for family honor happened in Hebron, which is a conservative community, and that the majority of these crimes occurred in rural areas (www.phrmg.org/arabic/monitor).

IV. Significance of motherhood in woman's life:

The very absolute function of the family is reproduction, as suggested by Dr. Bernard Sabella, a sociologist at Bethlehem University (1983). For some sociologists, a couple is not considered a family unless they have children (Shukri, 1981). Therefore, the man is not a father and the woman is not a mother until they have the first child. Couples who have no

luck in having children could not experience the feelings of motherhood and fatherhood unless perhaps they adopted children or raised children who are not theirs.

The first commandment that god gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. *"God's commandment for people is to multiply and replenish the earth remain in force. The children, according to most religions, should only be brought between a man and a woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife"* (www.interactivemom.com/thought.html). Children are a heritage of the Lord; therefore people should not refrain from having them (www.interactivemom.com/thought.html).

Motherhood is seen by some researchers and theorists as an instinct in any woman. However, others consider it as a learned sensation and function. For instance, psychodynamic theorists perceived motherhood as instinctual. Therefore, they believe that all women are born with a drive to become mothers (Mayers, 1986). Oakley found that 61% of women believe that they have a maternal instinct. However, only 36% actually had the feeling when they were confronted with their own babies (Mayers, 1986). On the other hand, learning and social theories perceive motherhood as a growing energy that gradually forms and is learned within the woman after she marries and become pregnant for the first time (Hasan, 1981).

Child-bearing and motherhood are significant experiences for the woman (Williams, 1993). Women were traditionally socialized to become mothers and wives. Child-bearing and parenting are natural and expected norms of adult female functioning. *"Having a baby is the most wonderful, exiting, challenging, process that women will ever go through"* (www.interactivemom.com, p. 1). According to the author of the web page, she has learned more about life and living and the time value of living since and partially because of having her children. Children mean that you have accomplished something beautiful, you help in making miracles happen and new life comes out (www.interactivemom.com). The woman becomes part of the miracle machine because pregnancy occurs in her body; she learns and shares her self and her body (www.interactivemom.com). Pregnancy and childbearing are great experiences for women who like children and are eager to become mothers.

Child-bearing and motherhood provide several purposes for married women. First, by being a mother, the woman maintains conformity with sociocultural values of the society. All societies value children because they represent continuity and legacy of family, and they carry the family name and inherit its wealth and prestige. In addition, people bring children because this is the norm for married people. It is expected that married couples should have at least one child. When this does not happen, the couples start to undergo social pressure because people around them question them and request that they should reproduce. When

pregnancy of a married woman is delayed, relatives and friends urge her to inquire about possible reasons. In the social networks of the married couple it is believed that remaining childless is their responsibility, therefore they advocate for reproduction.

Many people have children to gratify their emotional needs for parenthood as men strive for fatherhood and women for motherhood. Some people believe that the main reason for their marriage is to fulfill their needs for parenthood. They long for children who could give them meaning and goals for their lives. These people have passion for their children and they believe that having children is a gift of God and life.

In addition, people bring children to preserve the future as they take care of their parents during aging and illness. People in the West raise their children to be independent and self-sufficient. However, when they get old or become ill, they expect their children to look after them. People who do not have children worry about their future; especially in countries where there is no social security payment given to elderly and disabled people, i.e. Arab and developing countries.

Both external and internal factors influence women's decision to have children and become mothers. In the 70s of the 20th century, nine out of ten married American women in their 40s had at least one child (Williams, 1993). However, during the 80s, 10% to 25% of women do not want to have children (Williams, 1993). In western countries, women have fairly good chances to become mothers without marrying. However, having children out of wedlock is not easily welcomed by the western societies. When pregnancy happens to an unmarried woman, she contacts the father to inform him about it and in many cases the man and woman marry to guarantee a stable and normal living for the baby or they share each another in looking after the baby even if marriage did not happen.

Child-bearing and reproduction are the main components of being feminine in Arab as well as many other societies. Arab society is patriarchal and males are favored in many respects (land inheritance, holding family legacy, protecting family and looking after older parents...etc). Reproduction for the woman is important and is perceived as a natural product of marriage (Farah, 1992). In an Egyptian study on female college and university students in the 70s, the researcher reported that 32% of them saw their sole roles in life as wives and 32% others saw themselves as potential mothers (Farah, 1992).

Usually, the couple expect to have the first child within the first two years of marriage unless they have plans or if they have marital or fertility problems (Hasan, 1981; Farah, 1992). To have no children is annoying and could lament the family. Men and women are threatened by infertility and many of them consider child-bearing as indicative of masculinity

and femininity (Farah, 1992). Men expect sons to continue their line of patrilineage, while women expect their sons to care for them when they are old. Therefore, it is uncommon for a couple who are infertile to accept it without making actions and plans to change it. Reproduction is an important mean that provides Arab women with feeling of self-confidence, security, and social status. Children and familial life are the meaning of life for some Arab women as Abbas (1987) theorizes. It is commonsense for Arabian men to remarry if their first wives are sterile. However, divorce is not legally accepted by the society if the woman asked for it when her husband is sterile or infertile (Farah, 1992).

Women, more than men, need their children to take care of them in Arab society. Because the majority of women in Arab countries are not employed, they usually rely on their husbands and male children for living. It is not surprising to hear women talking about their wishes to have children to safeguard their senescence. Therefore, when a woman remains unmarried, she becomes worried about the future especially when she does not have brothers to rely on in later life.

Arabs believe that marriage and motherhood protect women from adultery and sinful behavior. People think that when the woman is married, she satisfies her need for sex, which prevent her from committing adultery. On the other hand, children and maternal feelings safeguard women and keep men away. Nevertheless, marriage and children do not always prevent adultery in women. Indeed, it is believed to be more prevalent in marriages that have problems and where the couples are unhappy.

Some feminist scholars challenge the above-mentioned viewpoints. For instance, Al-Sa`adawi (1990) proposed that educated and financially competent women do not rely on their reproductive ability to build status and the feeling of meaning in life. Women should build their working abilities and contribute to the economy of their countries rather than being mothers alone. This could be true for women who had not got married yet. However, for married women, reproduction becomes one of the valuable events in their lives.

Fertility is primarily determined by the cultural values that a certain society has about the significance of children, family type and the perception of the family of children (Hasan, 1981). The number of children that a woman bears is determined by many factors. One factor is the woman's educational and employment status. It was noticed that highly educated and employed woman have fewer children than housewives and poorly-educated women (Sabella, 1983). The observations of the investigator indicate that working mothers usually bear a small number of children in order to be able to look after them. Although educated and empowered

women have a choice in the number of children that they want to bear, this choice may be challenged if they have no sons.

The sex of the children determines to a great extent the number of children a woman might have in Arab families. It is clear that Arab families prefer having boys to having girls (Hasan, 1991; Farah, 1992; Al-Sa`adawi, 1990; Abbas, 1987). The value of boys is paramount in patriarchal societies similar to Arab countries. Therefore, the woman should have one or two sons before she makes up her mind to restrict the number of children she wants to produce. When the woman has daughters only, she continues to reproduce until the son comes; sometimes one son is not enough to satisfy the father and his family who has the last word on the number of children (Manasra, 1994).

Not only men, but also women prefer male children because they improve their social status (Ayyoush, 1994). This is not exceptional for Arab society. Oakley found that where women do express any sex preference for their first baby, they are twice as likely to choose a boy (Mayers, 1986). Continuing the family line through the male still seems to be valued (Mayers, 1986). Having male children strengthens the status of the mother in the family because she is no more threatened by divorce or polygamy, which could happen to women who produce female children only (Ayyoush, 1994; Manasra, 1994). In a study that has been done by Dahlan about Palestinian women's views of family planning, 14% of the respondents wanted to have many children to prevent their men from remarriage (Ayyoush, 1994).

Economic conditions have a vast impact on the number of children that are borne by the family. For instance, agricultural societies depend on a big number of workers, thus they usually bear many children to help in family work and farming (Al-Khouli, 1987). However, in industrial societies, children are not needed for work because the work depends on machines and technology. Therefore, the family has fewer children. On the other hand, sociologists report that poor families bear a big number of children compared to other families of middle and high socioeconomic class (Manasra, 1994). This could be related to poor education and a lack of knowledge about family planning techniques.

Religion plays an important role in determining the number of children a couple might have. Arab society considers the main function of women to be reproduction and marriage (Farah, 1992). The Prophet Mohammed encouraged Muslims to have as many children as they could and believed that Muslim pride originates in a large number of children. Religiously-committed people usually have many children, perhaps ten or more (Hasan, 1981). This is relevant for Muslims, Christians and Jews. In a study that has been done by

Ahmad Dahlan about Palestinian women's views of family planning, 61% of the respondents refuse family planning because they believe that it is banned by Islam (Ayyoush, 1994).

The Palestinian society places great emphases on the reproductive role of women. In Palestinian society, reproduction and high fertility have a national importance. In a study that has been done by Ahmad Dahlan about Palestinian women's views of family planning, 42.5% of them refuse to restrict the number of children because they believe that reproduction is a political tool against the Israeli occupation (Ayyoush, 1994). Palestinians believe that one way of maintaining their existence in the area is through demographic balance with the Jews who live in Israel. Israel adopted several strategies to maintain a demographic map for the favor of Jews. Israeli governments deported and killed thousands of the Palestinians since 1948 to free the land of the Palestinians and millions of Jews were brought from all over the world to settle in the occupied Palestine. Therefore, Palestinian political, religious, and some community leaders, who were conscious of the intention of the Israeli Zionist governments, urged Palestinian women to reproduce in order to compensate for the lost lives during the wars and struggle with Israel occupation.

High fertility in the Palestinian society is considered a positive phenomenon. It is viewed as a measure that maintains the continuity of the Palestinians during a war situation. Taking into consideration the large number of deaths during wars and political struggle with Israel, it is difficult to introduce family planning into Palestinian society in the West Bank and The Gaza Strip (Palestinian Red Crescent Society, 1994).

V. The significance of marriage for women

Marriage is seen by some people as the usual way of establishing independence for young people. Gilder says that: "*any adult needs to know how to take care of others besides himself in order to be credible as an independent person at all*" (www.hppub.com). Getting married and building a family is a moral obligation of adults according to Gilder (www.sing13.htm). Family living affords a means for the nurture and care of children in addition to legitimizing the marital relationship and the children who are the natural product of marriage. Historically, the stability and security of family life has been valued in all societies (Kalugar & Kalugar, 1979).

Despite the controversial opinions about the advantages of marriage, sociologists and psychologists have emphasized its value to human beings (Al-Khouli, 1989; Abbas, 1987; Hall, 1975; Sader, 1996; Nilson, 1978; Shukri, 1981; Zahran, 1982). The importance of the marriage system as a main component in the development of the family is emphasized by

contemporary sociologists and anthropologists (Shukri, 1981; Al-Khuli, 1989; Al-Qaradawi, 2004; Hall, 1975; Sader, 1996).

Marriage provides happiness if there is common ground for the partners and collaboration, and if the two spouses agree with each another. This does not happen accidentally but needs hard work and the persistence of the spouses. Happiness in marriage requires achieving many things such as sexual harmony; common interests between the spouses; help and collaboration; honesty and loyalty; good communication; intimacy, tolerance and acceptance of the spouses by one another (Al-Isawi, 2003).

In addition, a successful marriage needs a mature personality, mutual trust and satisfaction about the spouse; respect among spouses; honor and chastity; willingness to sacrifice; activity and energy; letting go in some situations; sharing and catharsis; forgiving, patience and being persistent (Al-Isawi, 2003). However, if marriage is based on materialism and superficial exhibitionism and excessive spending, it does not guarantee equity for men and women (Al-Isawi, 2003).

Today's women's roles as wives are derived from the capitalist social trends that dominate western societies, where women are socialized to become wives as a main role (Anderson, 1999). People always expect the woman to be a wife and mother, which makes her dream all the time about marriage throughout her teenage and university education years. Because marriage is an institution of society, most women prepare themselves emotionally for the roles of wife and mother (Anderson, 1999).

Between 1850 and 1950 in England, marriage for women conferred a higher status than singlehood, which connoted failure (Lewis, 1984). Prior to World War I, unmarried women faced loneliness, marginalization, and poverty especially for working women who received low wages that couldn't fulfill their needs (Lewis, 1984). Between 1870 and 1950 the preparation of adult females who got married reached 60-75% (Lewis, 1984, p. 3). Imbalance in the sex ratio post World War I and II caused considerable anguish because it became inevitable that some women would not marry and become mothers (Lewis, 1984). The figures of unmarried women over age 30 jumped from 27% in 1871 to 35% in 1931 (Lewis, 1984, p. 4). About 50% of the women who were single in their late 20s in 1921 in England remained unmarried 10 years later, compared to 30% of the men (Lewis, 1984, p. 4). Statisticians say a woman who has remained single for 40 years is unlikely to get married (www.mentahelp.net).

During late 19th and early 20th centuries, women had different views about the advantages of marriage. Working class women saw marriage as a practical necessity that

provided economic support, children, and the hope for decent life (Lewis, 1984). On the other hand, for women of middle class in England, marriage brought romantic love, verbal and sexual intimacy, and children (Lewis, 1984). However, for all groups of women, marriage was preferred to being "left on the shelf" (Lewis, 1984, p. 8). Being single was a special problem among young adults 50 years ago (www.mentahelp.net).

Despite its constraints, marriage has its positives. Marriage has psychological, mental, social, spiritual, physical, and moral benefits for the two spouses and children. In societies where marriage and family life are a central value, being married gives meaning and significance to daily life, promotes a sense of well-being and is a source of social and emotional support (Scambler, 1997). The couples do not have to live alone or eat alone; they belong to the marital majority; they feel as a whole person and they enjoy couple relationships (Beechey and Whitelegg, 1986). Marriage brings love, happiness, tranquility, passion, kindness and intimacy to the couple (Al-Isawi, 2003). In addition, marriage provides for economic security, recognition, new experience, emotional security, escape from loneliness, companionship, money, social position and prestige, gratitude, home and children (www.angefire.com). Researchers believe that the marital life influences the psychological state and life styles of people. For instance, single people have higher mortality rates than married people and married people tend to be happier and more satisfied with life than the unmarried (Scambler, 1997).

Today, because social and religious prohibitions against divorce are fewer, because people have fewer children, because economic conditions are better, and because women are personally and economically more independent, they are much freer to change partners if they are not getting what they want out of the relationship (www.mentahelp.net). If a woman is divorced in her 20s, there is a 75% chance she will remarry; if divorced in her 30s, 50% chance; if in her 40s, a 30% chance (www.mentahelp.net). According to Anderson (1999), most women agree that a good marriage is better than single parenthood.

Marriage for a woman means fulfillment of her needs for motherhood, sex, status and security. In marriage, women could enjoy sex safely with minimal hazards and anxiety. Even though Western women today have better chances to become mothers and to enjoy sex with less social punishment, many still prefer safe sex and stable life for their children through marriage (Mayers, 1986). Although only 1 in 3 high school seniors believe people are happier and have fuller lives if they marry, 9 out of 10 say marriage and family are important to them (www.mentahelp.net). In fact, even if people marry and suffer through a divorce, 80% of them will get married again. Although singles retain the hope of finding a suitable

marriage partner, they also are aware of the fact that life-long marriage is becoming more difficult.

According to Epstein and Bronzaft (1972), marriage and children are considered by the majority of women as a good way of uplifting their status. Nilson (1978), who proposed that marriage would continue to be a good method to achieve a better status for women, also supported this view. Marriage provides respect, status and authority for women more than is provided by education and work, as explained by Iranian women (Khouah, 1995).

People usually identify various reasons for their marriage. A socially induced reason for marriage is conformity (Kalugar & Kalugar, 1979). The single person finds himself or herself different because the majority of their peers are married. Many times, the single person is pressured into marriage by his/her friends and relatives (Kalugar & Kalugar, 1979). In addition, the individual may marry for satisfaction of ego needs; to feel wanted more than anyone else and to be of value to the other person, which are important needs for some people (Kalugar & Kalugar, 1979).

Nevertheless, marriage has its values and benefits for most men. Marriage fulfils men's sexual needs and the need for intimacy (Shukri, 1981). Marriage maintains stability and companionship in the life of men (Hasan, 1981; Al-Khuli, 1987). Men look for a lasting, fulfilling, loving relationship in marriage, which is not different from what women seek in marital life (www.angelfire.com). Marriage provides pleasure, happiness and peace of mind on account of satisfaction and satiation through interaction with the partner.

On the other hand, the man marries because he needs a woman to compensate him for things that he cannot get from work or social life. He needs love, warmth and catharsis; someone to talk to; have sex and care and someone to look after his daily things (Al-Isawi, 2003). Most men, according to Gilder, need families to support and wives to civilize them, to give them a purpose in life and a sense of individuality (www.sing13.htm).

Marriage is commitment for women more than for men according to Barry (2004). Many men of middle and high socioeconomic classes are afraid of the marriage commitment because they worry about losing their freedom. Therefore, they delay marriage as much as they can but eventually get married. These men view marriage as a trap or “necessary evil” and repeatedly mention this when they get married and start to complain about marital problems and constrictions. To retain some of their premarital freedom some men put conditions before the woman so as to continue living their life as they wish. Others make compromises and modify their living to meet the commitments of marital life.

Marriage is seen as a choice rather than a necessity for women in the West, especially when they have a chance to become mothers without the commitments of marriage. Because of the increasing difficulties of maintaining a stable marriage in addition to many social and financial problems of legal marriage, an increasing number of singles in the West are exploring new options to marriage (Mayers, 1987; www.sing13.htm). Many have decided to live-in arrangements, others are involved in serial relationships hoping that this might provide them with personal growth and fulfillment over time (www.sing13.htm).

Marriages today are started for love and survival. Spouses are now asked to be more than "good providers" and "good homemakers," they are expected to be faithful lovers, fun companions, best friends, co-parents, and wise, understanding mutual helpers. Marriage for self-maintenance became less evident than in the past. Women started to view marriage as a mean to fulfill social and psychological needs, social status and prestige (Hasan, 1981). Many women in the West did not find the fulfillment they dreamed of in marriage and they realized that romantic love is unrealistic. Therefore, they no longer saw marriage as their ultimate goal (Mayers, 1986). Today there are four times as many singles; 1 in 5 adult Americans are single (www.sing1.htm). About 33% of the Americans over age 18 are singles (www.sing1.htm). Singlehood is no longer a stigma.

Marriage in women's view has its responsibilities including children, housework, and husband. Marriage was not always seen as a source of comfort and happiness. Unfortunately, marital life could become boring, irritating, depressing, frustrating and disappointing to the couple, if they do not know each another and do not make necessary effort to please one another (Al-Isawi, 2003). In addition, some researchers believe that many women end up in a neurotic double-bind hating and fearing both dependence and independence when they are married (The Open University Press, 1986). These women feel frustrated and angry at being nurturing and dependent, yet they search for love, reliance and protection. Therefore, they subordinate themselves to men through marriage (The Open University Press, 1986). Moreover, some researchers found that marriage for rural French women was a source of misery and fatigue rather than a source of freedom and happiness because a good wife was one who was strong enough to do house chores and fieldwork (Flandrin, 1986).

Some theorists believe that marriage does not improve a women's health rather it increases their already present health problems. Therefore, many women in the West now select to stay single parents rather than marrying with no security or confidence in marriage (Anderson, 1999; Mayers, 1986). On the other hand, feminists criticize marriage because they

believe that the tasks in the home are not evenly divided; men only help in the house work when they have time and when the wife is employed (Mayers, 1986).

A majority of the Arab communities still consider marriage as the only choice for women to achieve status and approval. Women have to adhere to inherited values, in order to be accepted in society as potential mates. In the Arabic language, the word “Aness” means unmarried and is used for women who did not marry before the preferred age of 25 years. The word “Aness” is a painful and humiliating term for the woman. It also means social exclusion, bitterness, perplexity, and chronic feelings of emptiness and rejection (Sader, 1996; Zahran, 1982; Abbas, 1987). As for the girl, she is destroyed emotionally and physically (Al-Jomaili, 1997). Women who remain unmarried after age 25 are affected by gossiping and her parents worry because they see that their daughter is vulnerable for seduction (Al-Jomaili, 1997).

Generally speaking, people marry because this is the norm in Arab societies. Marriage, according to Abbas (1987), aims at freeing and enriching the two personalities of the couple. Both men and women are pressured to marry in Arab societies but in different levels. They are frequently asked by friends and colleagues about their reasons for remaining single. People want the single man or woman to marry in order to conform to cultural values of Arab society. In Arab societies, marriage is the only official means for sexual-marital life. Marriage is seen as the social contract for building a family, producing children, and protecting the society from sexual chaos and immorality (Khater, 2001).

Some scholars do not see marriage as the only source of status and contentment for women in the Arab World. Today, many women see themselves as independent, self-reliant individuals who have other purposes in life. Abbas (1987) said: *Marriage is not any more a means of reproduction in the nuclear families in the Arab countries. Today young adults consider marriage as a means for active involvement in relationships in all life spheres* (p. 50). In Syria there is a tendency towards delaying marriage and refusing it completely. In 1960, 20% of the people over age 14 were found to be unmarried compared to 28.5% in 1970 (Yasine, 1992). Many educated and employed women perceive themselves as competent in other roles besides being mothers and wives. They value themselves as human beings rather than as wives and mothers alone.

The Palestinian society is not different than other Arab societies in its perspective of the importance of marriage for the family as well as for the individual. Al-Khalili (1977) studied social conditions of Palestinian women in refugee camps in Lebanon using interviews and questionnaires. He reported that 50% of the women he studied believed that marriage

provided them with emotional and sexual stability. It is common sense that a woman or man would want to marry and build a family of their own in Palestinian society. About 25% of the respondents in Al-Khalili study thought that marriage was the social norm for women and 9% thought that marriage is the only legitimate method of interacting with men.

Palestinian families look forward to marrying their daughters and sons because they believe that marriage is an essential component of religious and cultural values. About 4% of the women interviewed by Al-Khalili (1977) believed that they wanted to marry because this is a family wish that is expressed from one time to another to their daughters. Because the family chores are the responsibility of girls, many girls believe that marriage is a relief from such responsibilities. According to Al-Khalili, (1977) 2% of the interviewees wanted to marry to liberate themselves from family burden and control. Although motherhood is one of the dreams of many women, having children was not a major reason for marriage for the interviewees of Al-Khalili, as only 3% of the subjects said it was.

Personal interviews by the investigator with Palestinian men indicated that their main reason of marriage is the fulfillment of sexual desires. Sex was the first reason mentioned by Palestinian men when they were asked about their reasons for marrying. This is relevant in a society where sexual relationships outside marriage are prohibited. Unfortunately, sex and lust are mistakenly evaluated as love and intimacy by some young men. Consequently, after few months, marital life becomes boring and full of routine and the couple feels frustrated and cheated.

According to Khouli (1989), marriage occurs for various reasons, such as:

- The exchange of love with others.
- Social and financial security.
- Independence.
- Reproduction.
- Emotional intimacy and security.
- Fulfilling sexual needs.
- Escape from loneliness.
- Companionship
- Compliance with the wish of the family.
- Escape from house chores and the burdens of a big family (p. 141).

Marriage is a social system that involves a group of well-known social values, customs, attitudes, and opinions. Marriage is not a contract between two individuals but a contract between two families. This is relevant not only in traditional societies but also industrial societies as well (Shukri, 1981; Nilson, 1978; Sader, 1996). Marriage is one of the family affairs that concerns individuals, families, and the community in general. The preferred marriage in most of the world's countries and especially in developing countries has its traditions and regulations that should be respected and applied (Shukri, 1981).

Laws of marriage and family are based mainly on men's dominance and superiority in the family. The man usually asks for the hand of the woman and she remains passive until her family asks for her opinion. The man usually proceeds in the wedding, in well-known social protocols that vary slightly from one country to another (Al-Khouli, 1977; Shukri, 1981; Manasra, 1990; Al-Safadi, 1993). Marriage protocols are culturally and economically-determined. An individual usually has little choice in marriage in societies that are traditional and patriarchal. Fredrick Engels says: *"Full freedom in marriage can become generally operative only when the abolition of capitalist production, and of property relations created by it, has removed all those secondary economic considerations which still exert so powerful influence on the choice of partner"* (Mayers, 1986 P. 67).

Dowry or bride wealth is money or property that is paid by the wife's family to the groom or is paid by the husband to the bride and her family. Dowry was one of the tradition and customs of marriage for Arabs, Hindus, Chinese, Japanese, Native Americans, and some African societies (Shukri, 1981). Bride wealth is still a fundamental part of certain African cultures, whereas dowry payments are predominantly practiced in Islamic countries, Middle East, South Asia, and some European societies (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia, 1998).

Some Western societies see dowry as the bride's price. However, most cultures see otherwise (Shukri, 1981). Al-Sa`adawi (1990), believes that dowry turns women into the property of their husbands and/or the husband's family. However, Islamic scholars contradict Al-Sa`adawi as they believe that the dowry symbolizes the right of women to property and financial security. Dowry, according to Shukri (1981) and Shiekh Al- Qaradawi (2004), is a symbol for legitimizing the marital relationship and children. In addition, the woman could use the money in business or trade to safeguard her future as Sheikh Yousif Al- Qaradawi proposes (www.amanjordan.org/home). Moreover, the dowry may also serve as insurance against bad treatment or unjustifiable divorce that is usually practiced by men against their wives (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia, 1998).

Recently, the Islamic court in Egypt legitimized divorce of women from their husbands under the condition that they return the dowry to their husbands, give up their legal and financial rights, and announce to the judge that they cannot stand their husbands and do not want to live with them (www.alwatan.com.sa/daily/2003/consultation.htm). This procedure was known during early Islamic time as "Kholei", which resembles separation; however the implementation of it was frozen for centuries. For feminists, this confirms the belief that the dowry is the price for having sex with the woman. The "Kholei" is not yet accepted in all Arab or Islamic countries because there is a strong debate about it in some of these countries (www.arablaws.org/arab/mag/02/n7.htm).

In most countries of the world, it is the man who usually spends on the wedding preparation, furnishing of the house of the couple and other things. Therefore, the man is also responsible for collecting and paying dowry for his bride. However, in India, the woman's family usually pays a dowry for her husband. A similar picture that nearly matches the Indian society that is of Egypt, where the family of the bride has to furnish the house of the couple and buy clothes and equipment for their daughters (www.amanjordan.org.home). In these two societies, the female becomes a financial burden, especially when there are many girls in poor families.

The women's movement and the reformist social movement aim at changing the dowry system in developing countries because they believe that the man should not pay special money for the bride (Manasra, 1994). Rather than paying dowry, the couple should share in the wedding expenses before marriage, then share living expenses after that. However, this is only applicable when the woman is employed and self-reliant.

VI. Marriage forms and legal conditions:

Marriage has various forms, including monogamy, polygyny, consanguineous marriage, endogamy and exogamy, secret marriage, arranged marriage, exchange marriage, early marriage, pleasure-based (temporary) marriage...etc. There are three main conditions for marriage, which are legitimacy, declaration, and the intention for sustainability (Al-Qaradawi, 2004).

The announcement or declaration of marriage takes more than one form. The first is wedding parties; the second is the involving the family of the married couple in social life of the couple and the third is child-bearing and the acceptance of the children by the families of origin of the couple (Shukri, 1981). However, some people refrain from celebrating the marriage and consider signing marriage documents and living together enough for

legitimizing marriage (Shukri, 1981). In Arab society, most families do not consider signing marriage papers as enough. Therefore, undisclosed marriages are considered illegitimate (Shukri, 1981).

An important condition in marriage is the continuity and sustainability of the marital relationship. Some people marry for a short time and the man and women do not have the intention to stay together for long duration, which is known as a pleasure or temporary marriage. Temporary marriage is rejected and considered illegal but is still practiced in many Arab countries, especially in Gulf countries (Al-Khuli, 1987).

Exchange marriage (Badal marriage) occurs when a family gives their daughter in marriage to a man without paying dowry. Instead of this dowry, the second family gives their daughter to the first family to marry one of their sons. Sometimes, the father who wants to marry again would give his daughter to another family as an exchange for his bride. In this situation each family gets a bride from the opposite family but without paying dowry. The main purpose of the (Badal) marriage is to decrease expenses of marriage as each of the two families would buy gold and clothes only for their daughter. Usually, the family will not spend a lot of money on their daughter, which saves money to do other things for the new couple. The negative aspect of exchange marriage is that when one couple has problems the second couple is influenced and sometimes divorced if the first couple is separated, even if one of them is happy.

Arranged marriage is one that is primarily planned by others (family, relatives, and friends) for the couples. Arranged marriage is preferred by families because it looks after the procedural aspects of the system, whereas the love marriage is arranged by the individuals for themselves and the procedures of marriage are ignored (www.angefire.com). In arranged marriage, the family of the groom seeks another family which has relatively similar socioeconomic status, culture, and religion (Al-Khuli, 1987).

Arranged marriage has three forms. Prearranged marriages could be planned by fathers or mothers in the families of young people. The first occurs when two families plan to wed their children to each another. In the past, a young girl is promised for a son of another family. This is done among the fathers of two families, related either through kinship or friendship. When the two children grow up, they are married by their families to one another whether they like or not. This kind of marriage is known as “the grave gift” or “crib marriage” (Abbas, 1987).

The second approach to arranged marriage occurs when a mother, an aunt or elder sister of a young man make a deal with the mother of a girl, to marry them to each another

(Shukri, 1981). The two families in this kind of marriage are either relatives or friends. The mother or aunt of the potential groom makes the first move to test the intentions of the family of the bride. The two mothers plan the meetings of the young man and the girl and they supervise the whole process either covertly or openly. When some kind of acceptance happens between the girl and the young man, marriage is planned and implemented under the supervision of the two families.

In families where the mother is powerful and has courage, she plays an important role in marriage arrangements and negotiations. These mothers could influence their husband's decisions and change their minds or convince them to accept or reject a marriage proposal. They also play a vital role in convincing their daughters to accept a certain man or reject him. Many times, powerful mothers determine the amount of dowry or gold that a groom has to buy for their daughters and could also make the groom promise to live in an independent house away from his parents. Unfortunately, the mother's interference is not always positive and could turn against the welfare of their daughters.

The approved marriage occurs when the couple accepts and likes one another. Approved marriage does not occur when marriage is based on the common interests of the two families. Interest marriage is the third form of arranged marriage. It occurs when the father rather than the mother arranges the marriage (Shukri, 1981). This is like a bargain for the two families, which usually happens between wealthy families where the two fathers decide to strengthen their business and maintain common interest through marrying their offspring to one another. Usually, the girl and the young man have no control of what is happening and are pushed to accept the marriage (Al-Khuli, 1987). The two fathers believe that the common interests of the two families are more important than the feelings and opinions of their children.

Legitimization of marriage comes from several conditions. One is the religiosity of the contract. Marriage should be legalized by its approval by a certified religious man who usually makes the marriage contract. Secular marriage is not legal in Arab countries even though it is practiced in some countries such as Egypt. Secular marriage does not happen unless social factors prevent religious marriage. For instance, when a man is married and does not want or cannot divorce his first wife, he could marry a second woman secretly, which might be either a secular or a religious marriage. In some Arab countries, the court is obligated to inform the first wife if her husband intends to marry again (Abbas, 1987). In such situations the man has only one choice which is marrying for the second or third time but

through a secular marriage. Thus, his wife would not know about the second marriage of her husband except by coincidence.

Levirate marriage is a form of marriage that occurs when a man marries the wife of his brother after his death. It is present in Arab countries but it is less common than in the past (Shukri, 1981). However, sorority marriage occurs when a man marries the sister of his deceased wife (Shukri, 1981). Sorority marriage is still present in so-called primitive communities, as Shukri (1981) noted. These two forms of marriage usually occur when the deceased man or woman in the first marriage left young children who need care and supervision. Today, the young man and women have the choice to refuse levirate and sorority marriage if they are assertive and self-determined.

Secretive marriage occurs when the marriage is not announced publicly. Secretive marriage is condemned in Arab society, even though it is still practiced in all Arab countries. Women more than men are influenced by secret marriage because the woman loses some her rights (Al-Qaradawi, 2004). Her children may not be acknowledged as legitimate in the society. On the contrary, men prefer this kind of marriage especially when they are married to other women, since the secretive marriage is not known to his first wife. The second wife is treated as a mistress and the first wife is socially respected and probably has children. Such a marriage is usually based on sex and infatuation but it lacks an important condition of legal marriage, in that it is not announced (Al-Qaradawi, 2004).

A second risk for secret marriage is that the second wife might not get a fair chance to meet with her husband, and he has little time with his new family. The reputation of the second wife who lives in a secretive marital relationship is threatened because people in the local community might think that the woman is involved in adultery (Al-Qaradawi, 2004).

Civil marriage is not accredited by many Arab societies because the woman loses all her rights and privileges in this marriage. Syria, Egypt, and Tunisia are examples of Arab countries where civil marriage is accepted (Abbas, 1987). According to Sawsan Abd Al-Latif, most of the girls who marry through secular marriage contracts are minors who marry older men (www.amanjordan.org). In Palestinian society, civil marriage is prohibited and is regarded as adultery.

Approval and acceptance of the couple is a legal condition to legitimise the marriage. Sheikh Qaradawi says that the family should consult their daughter about the man who proposed to her and should not force her to marry someone whom she disapproves or dislikes (www.amanjordan.org). In some communities, adolescent girls are forced to marry without their consent. Usually, the family members threaten the girl if she opposes them with

secluding her at home and depriving her of education. Because most of these girls are minors, they do not know their rights and if they do, they cannot resist family's pressure until the end.

There is a controversy about the issue of "forced marriage". Imam Ahmad Bin Hanbal, Imam Malik, and Imam Shafiei approve of forced marriage for women. However, Imam Abu Hanifeh does not approve forced marriage. Imams who allow force in marriage accept it only for young girls below age 18, however, adult virgin women might not be forced into marriage rather they should be consulted and their approval is necessary (Al-Jumaili, 1997). Al-Jumaili (1997) claims that the family of the girl has the right to force her to marry even if she is educated because they defend her welfare, and they have more experience than she does. When the girl is young, her family has to convince her by gentle and warm talking and should not force her for marrying (Al-Jumaili, 1997).

Inter-religious marriage is not preferred in the Arab world, due to possible social and religious consequences. In general, a Muslim man can marry a woman from another religion, but the opposite is not at all accepted. Muslim women who break the laws and marry a Christian man may be punished in most of the Arabic countries (Abbas, 1987). On the other hand, some countries will allow marriage of a Muslim woman to a non-Muslim man if he converts to Islam. Palestine is one of these countries (Sabri, 1998).

Marriage in Arab societies mainly happens between families. The family of the man usually asks for the hand of a woman. The girls are predominantly passive and play the role of receivers in the marriage process. Some exceptions occur among educated and high status and middle class families. For example, in Egypt, 26 % of the youth select their mates by themselves and 20 % of them marry after a love affair (Abbas, 1987). Women are seen as part of the men's wealth and they are manipulated according to their wishes, therefore, most of the marriages in Arab society are prearranged marriages (Shukri, 1981; AL-Khouli, 1989; Al-Sa`adawi, 1990).

Women do not wed without the consent of their guardian. Guardianship is a condition in marriage and without it the marriage is not legitimate. The guardian should be a male relative of the woman whose age is 18 years at least. The prophet Mohammed says: *no marriage without the consent of the guardian* (Al-Marneisi, 1997; Abbas, 1987). Mothers are not permitted to marry off their daughters unless there are no male relatives close to the bride. In this situation, the Judge will be the guardian. Nevertheless, men under age eighteen can marry without the consent of their guardian (Al-Sebai, 1985; Al-Khouli, 1989). Arab countries that follow Imam Ahmad Bin Hanbal permit marriage of the woman without the consent of a guardian after ages 21.

VII. Age of marriage:

The age of marriage is another distinctive factor in determining the level of equity in a given society (Tomaseveski, 1998; Manasra, 1990; Manasra, 1994). Around the world, there is much variation in the age of marriage. Young people in USA get married between 28 and 35 years of age (mental help.net.update, 1999). In Japan, the average age of marriage was 28 years for men and 26 for women (International Communication Department. 1997). On the other hand, in EC countries the average age of marriage for women is 24-31 and 26-34 years for men (SCB Statistics Sweden, 1992, P. 17).

In most societies, there are norms for the preferred age difference between the couples. The age of the groom is better be few years older than the bride. Although we see young women who marry men much older than they are. Researchers believe that the man should be 3-5 years older than the woman (Shukri, 1981; Al-Khuli, 1987). Sociologists theorize that girls mature a few years before boys. Thus, they are more capable of marriage and holding household responsibilities (Al-Khuli, 1987; Mayers, 1986). In addition, women mature at a comparatively younger age than men and enter menopause during their forties. Therefore, they should marry during years of high fertility if they want to have enough children. Nevertheless, there are women who marry men whose ages are double their ages. Such situations usually occur through arranged marriage because it is not reasonable for a woman in her 20s to marry a man in his 50s or 60s out of love, except for some exceptional cases.

Because marriage is seen as a social behaviour that conserves the honour and chastity of the women, most Arabs prefer to marry off their daughters after “maturity”, before the girl starts to think about sex and intimate relationships with men. In Arab countries, marriage laws are part of family laws, which are primarily based on Islamic laws. According to Islamic laws, “maturity” is the determinant of the appropriate age of marriage for girls and boys. There are contradictory opinions about the meaning of “maturity” in the Arab world. For some conservative communities, “maturity” means the first menstruation for girls and the first ejaculation for boys. Early marriage is preferred in Arab countries because it protects the honour of the family (Al-Sa`adawi, 1974; Orabi, 1990; Khouli, 1989).

The right to free and full consent to a marriage is recognized as one of the human rights of an individual. Nevertheless, we still see that a large number of girls are forced to marry at a very early age where they are too innocent to know what marital life is. Usually, the bridegroom is about the same age of the bride or few years older however; it is not extraordinary to see that a man in his 20s or 30s marries a girl under age 18.

Early marriage (below 18 years) is a phenomenon in developing countries. Some countries consider age 15 as appropriate, such as Palestine, and Jordan, while in Tunisia it is 20 years, 18 in Iraq, 15 years in Morocco, and 16 years in Yemen, 21 in Algeria (Abbas, 1987). Al-Marneisi (1997) reported that the age of marriage in Egypt and Tunisia was 22 years for females, compared to 27 years for males; 19 years for females compared to 25 years for males in Algeria; 20 years for females compared to 27 years for males in the Gulf countries. The age of marriage does not vary much between Muslims and Christians. Among Arab Christians, young people do not marry until the woman is 17 years old and the man is 18 (Abbas, 1987; Abu-Hashish, 1997).

Some variations exist in the rates of early marriage among countries where it is still practiced. The practice of marrying girls at a young age is most common in Sub-Saharan African and South Asia however, in the Middle East, North Africa and other parts of Asia, marriage at or shortly after puberty is common in traditional communities (www.unicef-icdc.org/publications). Marriage of girls between the ages of 16 and 18 is common in parts of Latin America and in pockets of Eastern Europe (www.emro.who.int). The rate of early marriage in Africa was about 23% in North Africa; 40% in West Africa, 28% in East African countries, 34% in middle African countries and 26% in Southern African countries (WHO, 1992). The rates of early marriage were not much different in Latin America as it was 23% in middle Latin American countries and 15% in Southern Latin American countries (WHO, 1992). The rates of early marriage were 41% in Southern Asian countries, 12% in South East Asia and 3% in East Asia. The rates are much lower in Western countries. They were 8% in North America, 10% in Eastern European countries and 9% in southern European countries (WHO, 1992 P. 6). Other studies supported WHO data about the high rates of early marriage in developing countries. Tomaseveski (1998) reported the rate of girls' early marriage in Niger to be 53%, 28% in Kenya, 47% in Bangladesh, 25% in India, 42% in Uganda, 35% in Nigeria, and 28% in Guatemala

Palestinian studies reported high rates of early marriage among women. About 40% of married woman in 1998 were under the age of 18. Men are not exposed to early marriage as much as women. The national Palestinian figures show that 17.5% of the women were married between 15-19 years compared, to 2% of men in the same age group (Palestinian working woman, 2002).

It is well documented in the Palestinian literature that early marriage (below 18 years) is preferred by all sectors of the society. Local studies done by Sansur (1995), Heiberg and Qvensen (1994), Gaza Community Mental Health Centre (1996), Manasra (1989), Al-Safadi

(1992), and Gaza Islamic Court (1995) concluded that the majority of Palestinian women marry before they become 20 years of age. These studies observed that the percentages of early marriage range from 50%-80%. The Heiberg and Qvensen (1994) study reported a 48% rate of marriage below age 18 among Palestinian women. Similar percentages were reported by Manasra (1989) with a rate of 47.6%; Al-Safadi (1992) with a rate of 77%, and Lange and Mhanna (1992) who reported 56.7% rate of marriage below the age of 18.

There is no significant difference between Palestinian Muslims and Christians in regard to the legal age of marriage. The age of marriage according to the Catholic Church in Palestine is 14 years for the female, and 16 years for the male (Abu-Hashish, 1997). There is no major difference in the age of marriage of women in the cities, villages and camps (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998). For example, the average age of marriage of women in the three localities is 18 years. There is no great difference in the number of unmarried women for all age groups in relation to area of living. There is an average of 32.3% unmarried women in cities, 31.3% in villages, and 30.2% in camps for all age groups (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1996).

Studies in Palestinian society confirmed the reciprocal relationship between level of education and age of marriage. Unmarried Palestinian women of the age group (30-39) had higher education than their married peers, and were usually employed (Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994). Higher education and employment can be seen as causal factors or outcomes for not marrying at an earlier age among Palestinian women (Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994; Abbas, 1987).

Palestinian statistical data reported that education rises the age of marriage for men and women. The mean age of marriage among those who had secondary level of education was 16.6 years for females and 22.5 years for males. Among those who finished a minimum of a Bachelor's degree of education, the mean age of marriage for females was 18 years and 25 years for males (Palestinian Central Bureau Report, 1998).

On the other hand, there are some variations in the rates of unmarried women among the various age groups in Palestinian society. For instance, for the age group 25 - 29 years 18.3% of the women are unmarried in the cities, 20.6% in the villages, and 20.9% in camps. Nevertheless, for the age group 45 - 49, the rates of unmarried women are 9% in the cities, 6.5% in the villages, and 9.4% in the camps (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1996). The probability of marriage over 25 years of age is limited as only 3.5% of the women marry between ages of 25 - 34 years (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1996). Women's

chances for marrying usually drop as they become older, therefore, remaining unmarried after the age of 25 years raises many questions for Palestinian women.

It was observed that during the first uprising, early marriage increased dramatically in Palestinian society in the occupied territories (Manasra, 1989). This was due to the following reasons as many researchers noted:

- ◀ Low costs and dowry since there were no wedding parties and celebrations.
- ◀ Families believed that marriage for politically active men could prevent them from participating in actions of the Intifada.
- ◀ People believed that marriage provides psychological stability during turmoil.
- ◀ Families worried about their sons who could be arrested and tortured, which could lead to handicap; their chances for marrying decline after being released from prison (Lang & Mhanna, 1992; Manasra, 1989; Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994).

There are various reasons for early marriage. One reason for early marriage is the family desire for having large families. When the girl is married early, she has higher fertility, and she will have as many children as the family of her husband wants thus a large family size is guaranteed. In traditional societies, social status and security of family is maintained through children especially boys.

Poverty of the family of the girl is one of the major factors underpinning early marriage (Manasra, 1989). When poverty is acute, the young girl is regarded as an economic burden. Therefore, her marriage is seen as a survival strategy for the family and a benefit for the girl herself. Many times, the family of the poor girl marrying their daughter to a wealthy older man under the influence that he would help them financially as often happen in Egypt (Al-Sa`adawi, 1990).

A third essential reason for early marriage is preventing premarital sex. Many societies prize virginity of the woman and require that the girls should remain virgin as long as she is not married. To ensure that the girl will not get involved in sexual activity, many families prefer to marry their daughters early as a protective procedure. In Islam, Prophet Mohammad says that when one's son or daughter starts to think about sex, it is better to marry them off, otherwise, they have to pray and fast until God opens the gate of marriage for them (Al-Jumaili, 1997).

In addition, another important reason for early marriage for girls is fear of independence of them if they get older or become educated and assertive. In traditional and conservative societies, the independent sense of self that a girl may develop during

adolescence and early adulthood is not welcomed (Al-Sadawi, 1990; Mayers, 1986; Jad, 1995). In these societies, women are required to be obedient to the wishes of their husbands, brothers and fathers for their own good. If they continued their education and became self-reliant, it would be difficult for their families to control them and manipulate their lives. Therefore, it is better to marry them early.

Early marriage has its negative physical, intellectual, social, and psychological consequences for women. Early marriage means cutting education, diminishing employment opportunities, high fertility, depriving the girl of her rights and needs, denying the girl her right for living her childhood and adolescence, and hindering the chances of the women from participating in social and economic development (Manasra, 1989; www.emro.who.int/publications; www.unicef-icdc.org/publications). Early marriage also has implications for the well-being of families and societies. Where girls are ill-educated and not ready to become mothers and wives, the social, economic, health, and emotional costs are tremendous for their children, communities, and the nation in general.

VIII. Mate selection:

There are several reasons for selecting a mate for marriage. In each society, certain factors generally affect and explain who marries whom. Certainly laws, religion, age class, and race are factors that influence the choice of mates. Kalugar and Kalugar (1979) suggested several theories for mate selection, which include:

1. Proximity Theory: people who are usually meet each other in some form of close association such as work, school; college, church, neighborhood, etc. tend to gravitate together because of familiarity.
2. Ideal mate theory: A person with this approach makes a list of characteristics or qualities they desire in the mate. When they find a person who fits these qualities, they accept him/her as a spouse
3. Theory of complementary needs; people are attracted to others who have the characteristics they have always wished they had themselves or who can help them to be the person that they want to be.
4. Homogamy theory: Couples respond readily to each another if they have similar economic, racial, and socio cultural characteristics.
5. Theory of compatibility: Couples, who can enjoy a variety of activities together, can communicate, understand and accept each other could go along better (P. 380).

There are a number of sources of personal and social satisfaction in areas other than marriage and family. *"Of all the new approaches to adulthood, "singlehood", when the individual chooses to remain unmarried and unencumbered, is the one new style of life and living that is most rapidly emerging in Western societies and seems to be the most acceptable to those who wish to remain single"* (Kalugar & Kalugar, 1979 P. 393)

According to Deaux, Dane, Wrightsman (1993), there are potential characteristics that are considered essential in mate selection for college unmarried students. These characteristics include emotional stability, dependable character, pleasure disposition, and mutual attraction. The married group of people 18 – 40 years old listed the following characteristics as most important in mate selection in a study done by a group of researchers in USA (Deaux, Dane & Wrightsman, 1993). These are, being a good companion, consideration, honesty, affection, dependability, kindness, being interesting to talk to, loyalty, and intelligence. It seems that compatible mating, where the couples have common characteristics, is important in succeeding in getting married; similarity in the couples makes them remain in marriage longer (Deaux, Dane & Wrightsman, 1993). In addition, it also seems that people with high ambitions and strong achievement needs tend to have less stable marriages (Deaux, Dane & Wrightsman, 1993).

Usually, men make the first move towards women in love and marriage. Women are generally passive and never ask for the hand of the man. However, sometimes women give signals to men to encourage them to propose for marriage. When a man proposes to a woman, she could accept or refuse the proposal (Al-Khuli, 1989). Thus, it is her decision in the end. It is common in Arab society to select a bridegroom for the bride without asking for her consent however this is a necessity as claimed by three of the approved Islamic "Imam" or scholars (Khater, 2001).

Women usually wait in their homes for the right or the most suitable man to marry (Shukri, 1981). However, things are not as simple as it seems. In certain circumstances, a man would propose to a woman and she would refuse him but we see later that she married him. In other situations, a man wants to marry a woman and she wants him but her family disapproves the marriage. On the other hand, many times a woman loves a man and she gives him signals and clues about her wish but the man refuses her because he does not consider her the right woman. It is difficult for most men and women to find the best mate that matches their outlook and attitudes.

Nowadays, the youth prefer to marry someone whom they know. However, love increasingly becomes a condition in the new marriages everywhere in the world where their

societies no more punish them for it. In the 1990s, 90% of college students would not consider marriage if they were not "in love". In the 1960s, however, 33% of college men and 75% of college women would have considered marrying someone they did not love (www.mentahelp.net). This is probably because college women have become much more secure and independent; they are more confident that they eventually can find love with someone (www.mentahelp.net).

Mate selection is a difficult task for many reasons: each person may pretend to be something he/she isn't, each may honestly describe him/herself but change later on, each may change his/her mind about what he/she wants. Both men and women agree that mutual attraction, dependable character, and emotional stability are the most important traits. However, men and women disagree about the importance of certain other characteristics, e.g. men value good looks more than women and women value good financial future and ambition more than men (www.angelfire.com). Looking good is a major asset for women and having a promising future increases a man's appeal. Looks have always been valued, but in recent decades, the physical attractiveness of the partner has become even more important to both sexes (www.angelfire.com). About 28% of single males consider themselves attractive; they are among the more socially active and assertive and about 13% of single females consider themselves to be pretty (www.angelfire.com) .

According to Sheikh Al-Isawi (2003), an individual's selection of a mate in marriage depends on several traits or characteristics that include:

1. Being socially extroverted or introverted.
2. Being independent or dependent.
3. Financial condition of the mates.
4. Sociocultural background of each side.
5. Educational level of the mates.
6. Having a domineering attitude or not.
7. Ambitions of each mate.
8. Age of each partner.
9. Familial conditions before marriage.
10. Psychological and emotional problems before marriage.
11. Cultural and religious background.

Certain characteristics are considered favorable in the future husband in women's opinion. For Iranian women, a good husband is one who respects his wife, understands her, is not as

ashamed to help in rearing his children and sharing in house chores, discusses things with her, is honest and sincere, cares and nurtures his wife, is accountable, and is trustworthy (Khouah, 1995). In addition, most of the educated Iranian women request a husband who is educated to the same level as the women or even more (Khouah, 1995). Hasan (1981) has similar viewpoints as Khouah; he believes that highly educated women have high standards for their future husbands and they rarely marry men who are less educated than they are. They believe that marital happiness is more guaranteed when the couples belong to similar cultural background and values.

It is popularly believed that in the Arab world men tend to marry women of moderate levels of education. Men are reluctant to marry women who are better educated than they are or have higher status (Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994; Yasmine 1992). They are afraid that strong and assertive women would be competitive with them, which is usually not accepted except by a minority of men (Yasmine, 1992; Al-Quds newspaper, 2000). A study of the social and economic conditions of women in Syria reported that 70 % of university graduate men married women who only had elementary or preparatory levels of education and 81% of the husbands who have secondary education married women who have elementary education (Yasin, 1992).

Palestinian women have less freedom in choosing their mates than their male equivalent. Wad Atta (1986), reported that 56 % of Palestinian men compared to 6% of Palestinian women choose their spouses. In the study by the Panorama center (Musleh et al, 2003), 71.8% of the respondents agreed that the girl has the right to select her husband but this choice should be shared by the family; 14.2% said that selection of the husband is the girl's absolute right; and about 14% said that it is the absolute right of the parents to select the future husband for their daughter. This study shows that while the Palestinian society agree about the girl's right for have a say in her future husband, but it still does not perceive the woman as competent and efficient enough to wholly decide who should be her husband.

In Palestinian society, the family of the man usually selects the bride for him. In all marriages, the family should approve the bride or the marriage will not happen. When a man decides to marry against the will of his parents, he is often punished and his family does not participate in wedding ceremonies, which by itself is considered a shameful and dishonorable thing. Even when he loves a woman, it is not definite that he would marry her, because if the family members have a different viewpoint than their son, they will probably stand against his wish.

Women's participation in the Palestinian national struggle began to affect the image of marriage, the timing, the choice of spouse, and the conjugal relationship (Najjar & Warnock, 1992; Manasra, 1990). In urban middle class families, some women refuse forced and arranged marriages, and may choose to stay single. On the other hand, in more conservative families such as in villages and camps, girls may be able to reject a specific marriage match that is proposed by their families, but they cannot refuse marriage itself. The strength of family ties and the lack of alternative bases of economic and social independence mean that girls do not rupture with their families and leave the home if their families force them to marry against their will (Sayigh, 1992). Palestinian families have the last say in the marriage of their daughters. In the study of Al-Khalili (1977), 78% of single women believe that their families have the main role in their future marriage.

IX. Endogamous versus exogamous marriage:

One of the bases for marriage is the relative level of relatedness and kinship between the couples. Endogamy and consanguineous marriages are two forms of related marriage. On the contrary, exogamy is a marriage that is only legitimized if it occurs among unrelated partners. Consanguineous marriage is the marriage that occurs between blood relatives who have at least one common ancestor no more than a great grand parent (Al-Khuli, 1987). Related or consanguineous marriage occurs between first degree and second degree cousins. Another form of related marriage occurs among people who belong to the same tribe, clan, or (*Hamoleh*). The (*Hamoleh*) consists of relatives who belong to the same ancestors of first, second, or third degree relatives.

Consanguineous marriage is sometimes more common in certain socioeconomic groups than others. Consanguineous marriage is common in developing countries and the eastern Mediterranean region. In the Eastern Mediterranean region, the preference for consanguineous marriage is not restricted to Islamic communities. First cousin marriage is also common in some Christian and Jewish communities (Al- Khauli, 1987). In the eastern Mediterranean region, cousin marriage is performed in traditional, rural, and Bedouin communities (AL- Khauli, 1987). Consanguineous marriage is the most common form of endogamous marriage in Arab societies (Shukri, 1981).

Endogamy has various bases including marrying in the same religion, sector, caste, tribe, nation, ethnic group, color or socioeconomic class (Al- Khouli, 1987). Arabs do not encourage exogamous marriage. Therefore, they might refuse marriage among Muslims and Christians; poor and rich people; black and white people; Arab and Europeans; Arab and

Asian; Catholic and Armenians; Shia and Sunni. Nevertheless, some breakthrough happened in endogamous marriage among the youth especially those who studied or worked abroad and married there (Sabella, 1983). Sabella (1983) believes that exogamy is more prevalent in open and industrial societies than agricultural and conservative societies.

Arab society is a tribal society where cultural values of kinship are predominant. Related and consanguineous marriages are strong examples for the tribal mentality of the Arabs. Therefore, endogamy in marriage is preferred in Arab countries. Despite the socioeconomic changes in the Arab countries in the last 50 years, cousin marriage is still very common (Shukri, 1981). Endogamous and consanguineous marriages, occurring either among first or second-degree cousins, are high among Arab families (Yasin, 1987; Al-Shoumali, 1992; Manasra, 1990; Lange & Mhanna, 1992). Islam discourages consanguineous marriage; however Arabs prefer it (Al-Isawi, 2003).

Endogamous marriage has its advantages and disadvantages. On one hand, endogamous marriage helps in the stability of the family because all members are familiar with one another including the couple who get married. For the vast majority of people living in the Eastern Mediterranean region, the family remains the main source of social security and support. Therefore, choosing a cousin marriage maintains the family's properties and strengthens the ties among families, in addition to conserving the rights and security of the relatives (Al-Khauili, 1987). Marriage between first-degree cousins strengthens family ties and enhances the feeling of belonging and keeps family's property and inheritance together.

There was always a preference for endogamy in the Arabian Peninsula in order to conserve a family's wealth and inheritance inside the clan or extended family (Yasine, 1997). Consanguineous marriage maintains the family's wealth and land, strengthens the clan and extended families' relationships, and keeps the women under the protection of their relatives. Many families prefer related marriage because the dowry in this case is less than that for a woman from outside the clan (Shukri, 1981; Al-Shoumali, 1992). Women in the two families usually arrange the marriage because they know all the girls in the family, tribe or village. After marriage, the two families have common interests, land, business, and kinship, which are strengthened more by the marriage (Shukri, 1981).

The disadvantages of endogamy are mainly health-related. Endogamy increases genetic disease and disabilities. A thesis that was done by a Master degree student at Al-Quds University about the impact of consanguineous marriage in Gaza Strip showed that there is an association between socioeconomic conditions and the prevalence of consanguineous marriage (El-Kariri, 1999). According to (El-Kariri, 1999), consanguineous marriage was

higher among families of very high socioeconomic status, poor families, less educated people, and couples who married very early. Health problems in families of consanguineous married couples include maternal morbidity, infants' and children's mortality, high fertility that leads to pregnancy complications; congenital abnormalities, and infant diseases (El-Kariri, 1999).

On the other hand, exogamy is present in Arab societies in certain socio-economic strata (Al-Khouli, 1989; Shukri, 1981; Hasan, 1981; Abbas, 1987). For instance, exogamous marriage increased in Arab countries as many young men travelled abroad for study or work (Oman's Satellite TV, 2001). In these countries, exogamy takes three forms: first, a man marries a woman from a different family or clan. Second, a man marries a woman from a different Arab country. Thirdly, a man marries a Muslim or non-Muslim woman from a foreign country (Oman's Satellite TV, 2001).

Nevertheless, many people do not encourage exogamous marriage that occurs between an Arab man and a foreign woman because it decreases Arab women's chances for marriage, which in turn increases the rate of singlehood in Arab countries (Oman's Satellite TV, 2001). In addition, intercultural (exogamous) marriage has its inherent problems and complications both for children and couples especially when the wife is non-Arab and non-Muslim (Al-Khouli, 1989; Shukri, 1981).

Related marriage is very common in the Palestinian society. Forty-nine percent of the marriages in Palestinian society occur between members of the same clan and 28.8% of marriages occur among first-degree cousins (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1996). In Palestinian society, endogamy and consanguineous marriages are the norm. Among all marriages that occurred between relatives, cousin marriage constitutes 60.2 % of the marriages that have been studied by El-Kariri (1999) in Gaza Strip. In 1995 more than 52% of all marriages in the West Bank and 47% of the marriages in Gaza Strip were between cousins and relatives as reported by the Palestinian Working Woman Society (2002). In addition, a study carried out in Gaza Strip reported that 37% of the marriages happened among first-degree cousins (Husnieh, 1994). Lange and Mhanna (1992) reported a 45 % rate of related marriage in Al-Shati refugee camp in Gaza Strip and observed that 60% of the women who married at young age were not related to their husbands. However, cousin marriages were more common among woman who got married at an older age.

Palestinian families sometimes refuse to marry their daughters outside the village or clan, even if the outcome is to remain unmarried. Exogamy is restricted in the Palestinian

society due to limitation of movement to nearby countries and the impossibility of uniting the family after marriage under the current political circumstances.

X. Monogamy versus polygamy and remarriage:

Within human societies, there are various forms of marriage. Monogamy and polygamy are based on number of women who are married to one man. In monogamous marriage, a man marries a woman and refrains from getting married for the second time until his first wife is dead or divorced. Monogamy is the most widespread form of marriage in the world including Arab countries (Shukri, 1981; Al-Khuli, 1987). Monogamy could be absolute as the man marries one woman during his life; or it could be proportional as the man marries again after his first wife died or divorced. Absolute monogamy is less common than proportional monogamy all over the world (Shukri, 1981).

Monogamy (one man-one woman) marriage is the basic and traditional form of marriage around the world according to sociologists and anthropologists (Al-Khouli, 1989; Shukri, 1981). However, in many old cultures and some of the contemporary societies, polygamy is practiced side by side with monogamy (Hasan, 1992; Al-Khouli, 1989; Shukri, 1981).

Polygamy is a form of marriage in which a person has more than one mate and it has two basic forms (Shukri, 1981). The first is called polyandry, which is the marriage of the woman to more than one man (usually brothers) (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia, 1998). Polyandry, according to Shukri (1981) is very rare today and prohibited by law in most countries.

The second form of polygamy is known as polygyny, which means marrying of one man to more than one woman (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia, 1998; Shukri, 1981). Polygamy was very common in the world in the past and is legal in many countries today. Polygyny was always present in the human societies before the existence of religions and is common among Islamic societies as well as other tribal societies (Al-Sharbini, 2002). Al-Khouli (1984) reported that 554 of the world's subcultures and ethnic groups accept polygamy as a choice in marriage. Polygyny was and still is widespread in many communities in the world. Kings, emperors, tribe leaders used to have many wives and mistresses (Shukri, 1981; Abbas, 1987). Today, Polygyny is still practiced in some African tribes and the gypsies in Europe (Shukri, 1981). Polygyny is encouraged in communities where the number of women exceeds the number of men. This situation is common during wars, exile, and migration (Yasin, 1997).

Polygamy according to the UN is considered a violation of the equal rights convention and the constitutional rights of women (Tomasveski, 1998). However, polygyny is accepted by Islam and is practiced in all Arab countries except in Tunisia. During the 70s of the 20th century, Islamic laws were challenged in Tunisia and polygyny was delegitimized by the president of the country (Al-Mernisi, 1997).

Polygyny is accepted and legitimized by the Islamic laws and sometimes is encouraged by fundamentalist Muslim leaders. The Quraan says: *"and if you fear that you will not be just in dealing with the orphans, then marry other women as many as agreeable to you, two, or three, or four, and if you fear you will not be able to do justice, then marry only one or marry what your hands possess"* (Al- Nisa'a, phrase 4).

Polygamy, as Sheikh Al-Sadees (2003) believes, is one of the solutions for "singlehood" and "spinsterhood". Single women have better chance to get married if they accept marrying married men. According to Sheikh Qaradawi (www.amanjordan.org), it is better for the woman to have "half a man" than to have nothing. This viewpoint was supported by Al-Dallati (www.lahaonline), who proposed that polygyny should be encouraged among Muslims because it solves the problems of single women in societies where there are more women than men. In this situation, divorced, unmarried or widowed women will eventually find a husband, which enhances these women's social status, according to Al-Dallati (www.lahaonline). Children of divorced or widowed women get new fathers and the woman finds someone to rely on and support her. Moreover, a society which approves polygamy has lower rate of divorce because the man could marry a second wife while keeping the first wife and her children. It seems that Nigerian women hold similar viewpoints of Al-Sadees and Al-Dallati as they believe that polygyny is one good solution for women who remained unmarried (www.Islamonline.net).

The above mentioned viewpoint was also approved by several women who were interviewed by journalist Naheh Bashteh (www.amanjordan.org). Women in this study accepted polygamy because it is approved by Islam. However, they do not believe that it could solve the problem of unmarried women as most men who marry a second or a third time select younger women and leave those who are in their thirties or forties. Unfortunately, men frequently abuse the right of polygamy by being unfair in their treatment to their wives, which leads to feeling of inferiority, discrimination, and anger in women living in polygamous marriages according to Bashteh (www.amanjordan.org). In Arab societies, it is unusual for a man to refrain from marrying again after the death or divorce of his first wife, especially if the man is sexually active.

Nevertheless, polygyny is restricted to a maximum of four women in Islamic (Quraan, AL-Nis'a). Before Islam, the man used to marry as many women as he wanted. One basic condition for polygyny in Islam is the economic ability of the man to open 2-4 houses and to look after the needs of them. Few men in every society could support four houses without being biased. In addition, in Islam the man should be competent to support and sexually and emotionally fulfill his four women equally if he wants to marry more than one woman. No man could love and cherish three or four women equally, which threatens the bases of polygamy in Islamic laws. Usually women living in polygamous marriages complain the most about unequal treatment by men and their unavailability when they are needed, as related by Bashteh (www.amanjordan.org).

Some Muslim men accept polygyny without reservation, while others only accept it under certain conditions. In the past, all women used to marry because polygamy was well accepted in Islamic and non-Islamic societies (www.Islamonline.net). Nevertheless, some women also accept polygyny with or without reservations. For instance, two-thirds of Nigerian women accept polygyny compared to one-fourth of Nigerian men (www.Islamonline.net). Contrary to Nigerian women, the majority of Saudi women do not accept polygyny. However, a majority of Saudi men accept it (www.news.bbc.co.uk).

Polygyny is declining everywhere in Arab and Islamic countries due to socioeconomic factors and ideological changes in the new generation; change in women's statues and rules; legislative changes (Shukri, 1981). Polygyny decreased remarkably in the Arab world in the last 20 years due to changes in social values, modernization, improved education, and the sociopolitical conditions of the Arab countries (Hasan, 1981; Al-Khouli, 1989; Yasin, 1997). There has been a continuous decline in the level of polygyny, especially among young people (Abed Al-Jawwad, 1990; Abbas, 1987).

Polygyny is still present in various degrees within Arab society but it is more common in rural areas and among the Bedouin. Polygyny is less common among highly educated people and in urban areas in Arab countries (Sabella, 1983). Sabella reported that polygyny was more common among farmers, businessmen and politicians. During 1970s, polygyny was estimated to be 2 % in Lebanon; 4 % in Syria, and 8 % in Jordan (Sabella, 1983). Polygyny is now delegitimized in Turkey and Tunisia. In addition, restrictions on polygyny are placed in some Arab and Islamic countries, such as Syria, Egypt, Morocco and Iraq (Abbas, 1987). In Syria, Al-Sharbini (2002) reported a 5% rate of polygyny in 2000. A study of polygamy in Egypt reported that 5% of the men are married to more than one woman compared to 8% in

the Gulf countries (Al-Sharbini, 2002). Al-Sherbini believes that the actual rates of polygyny in the Arab countries are higher because they do not include secret and secular marriages. Some people might think that it is weird for the woman to accept the sharing of her husband with another woman or women. However, many women accept this situation because they do not have alternatives. Sometimes, the woman has to choose between getting divorced and living in a polygamous marriage. Since there is so far some stigma surrounding divorce in the Arab society, some women prefer polygamous marriage to divorce (Manasra, 1990; Idrees, 1992; Abu-Ghdaib, 1992; www.Islamonline.net).

On the other hand, women who were the second or third wives in Bashteh's study considered marrying a married man an appropriate choice. They are satisfied in their marriages. These women accepted polygamous marriage because they got older; they had social and familial problems; had failed in previous marriage, and wanted mature and economically competent husbands (www.amanjordan.org). On the other hand, a study conducted by Al-Krenawi and Slonim-Nevo (2003) on Bedouin families, reported that women living in polygamous families revealed more difficulties in most mental health measures; their self-esteem was lower than that of monogamous women. In addition, polygamous women reported more problems in family functioning and less satisfaction with their marriages compared to monogamous women (Al-Krenawi & Slonim-Nevo, 2003).

In industrial countries men and women have equal freedom to marry after their ex-spouses are divorced or dead (Shukri, 1981). On the contrary, in Arab societies, men have better chances for remarrying than women despite their age. However, in some Arab communities a young divorced or widowed woman might have a good chance for remarrying if she is fertile. However, the second husband of the widowed or divorced woman usually is married except in very rare cases. Nevertheless, it is common today to see that a divorced or widowed man marries divorced or widowed woman if she is in her 20s or 30s.

Men marry the second or third wife for multiple reasons. One important reason is having children when the first wife is sterile or has only delivered female children. A second reason for polygyny is the previous early marriage of the man (www.amanjordan.org). The man who married for the first time at young age tends to repeat the marriage when he matures and discovers that the choice of his family for the first wife does not suite him. Usually, the second wife will be chosen by the man himself and probably after a love affair. These men are motivated by a need for passion and self-determination, which was not fulfilled in the first marriage. Other reasons for polygamy enumerated by Saudi men in Bashteh's study include terrible temper and character of the first wife; age variation; absence of love and passion in

marital life; the preoccupation of the women with her children and the neglect of the husband; economic independence of the woman (www.amanjordan.org).

Although polygyny is legal and accepted by Islam, it has its ramifications. One outcome of polygyny is divorce, which happens when the first wife refuses to live in a polygamous marriage. Islamic courts allow the first wife to ask for divorce if she does not agree to live in a polygamous marriage and if she recorded this condition in the marriage certificate. A Saudi study that was done by a student at King Su`oud, concluded that 55% of the divorces occur because of polygyny (www.news.bbc.co.uk).

There are diverse debates about polygyny in Arab countries, which extends from legal rejection as in Tunisia to lobbying for it as in Sudan (Al-Sharbini 2002). The respondents in the study of Al-Sharbini (2002) believed that polygyny is an instinctual trait of men. Therefore, if they don't marry more than one woman, they tend to get involved in extramarital sexual relationships and adultery. Dr. Lutfi Al-Sharbini (2002) studied the psychological effects and causes of polygyny in a study of Egyptian women. The author observed that psychological distress is common among first wives whose husbands married for the second time. Symptoms of this psychological distress in first wives include anger, irritation, resistance to accepting the second marriage and wife; then gradual acceptance, which takes 6 months to 2 years (Al-Sharbini, 2002).

Polygyny is the only form of polygamy that is considered legal by Islamic and Palestinian norms and values. Palestinian studies reported a 3.6 % rate of polygamy among Palestinian families (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1996). In Palestinian society, it is observed that men who want to marry a second or third wife will tend to seek them from among women who passed the socially preferred age of marriage (Zahran, 1982; Abu-Ghdaib & Al- Safadi, 1992; Abbas, 1987). Therefore, men who are currently married and want to have a second or third wife, or those who are divorced or widowed usually approach unmarried older women. When an unmarried older woman refuses to live in polygamy or remarriage, she may remain single all her life.

Polygyny is accepted in the Palestinian society because it is legitimized in Islam. However, the rate of polygyny is somehow low in the Palestinian society. In relation to attitudes towards polygamy, 54% of the Palestinian men studied by the Palestinian Family Planning (1997) supported polygamy because it is allowed socially and religiously. However, younger and educated women in urban areas do not accept living in polygamous marriages to the same degree rural women do (Al-Safadi & Abu- Ghdaib, 1992).

In the Palestinian society, polygyny has several reasons. One important reason is having more children, having male children, or having children when the first wife is sterile. In a study of Palestinian women living in polygyny, Al-Shuomali (1992) postulated that 56.5 % of these women got married into polygamous marriages because the first wives were sterile or conceived only female children. Therefore, their husbands married the second wife mainly to have children or to reproduce male children. In a study by the Palestinian Family Planning Association (1997), 52.6% of the 76 respondents accepted polygyny for health reasons, one of which was reproduction.

Early marriage of men is a second reason for polygamy. Al-Shoumali (1992) reported that 69.6 % of the remarried Palestinian men in her study were between 16 and 20 years old at the time of their first marriage. Another reason for polygamy is the variation in financial and socio-economic status. In a study about polygamy in Nablus, Al-Safadi and Abu-Ghdaib (1992), reported that 38 % of the marriages to a second wife occurred after the men became wealthy.

Arranged and traditional marriages are important reasons for polygyny and remarriage among Palestinian men. It is believed that men who have married early tend to marry again when they are mature enough to recognize that they want to make their own choices in the second marriage (Al-Safadi & Abu-Ghdaib, 1992).

New trends of marriage and family started to invade the Arab world in the last 30 years, as modern Arab countries moved to a new era of liberation, education, employment, political activation of women, and urbanization (Manasra, 1990; Daraghmeh, 1991; Shukri, 1981; Hasan, 1981). Nowadays, we observe a decline in the number of extended families; an increase of free-will marriage and acceptance of love marriages; a decline in the rate of temporary and pleasure-based marriage; an increase in the rate of exogamy; a decline in polygyny and a decline in exchange marriage (Al-Khuli, 1989; Shukri, 1981; Abbas, 1987).

XI. The unmarried women:

The refusal of marriage or singleness is an increasingly observed phenomenon in the West. The "single" include women who are divorced, widowed, and never been married, with or without children. Delayed marriage is a growing American trend where 20% of the women aged 30-35 and 30% of the men of the same age group have never married before (Roger & Solo, 2000). One quarter of the Americans over 18 have never been married and for every three married women there are two singles (McConnell, 1998). After age 23, there are more women than men in USA; a total of 7 million more marriageable women than men. The U.S.

Census shows 99 single males for every 100 single females of the age group 15-24-year; 89 single males for 100 single women of the age group 25-34, and 67 single males for 100 single women of the age group 35-45 years (www.mentalhelp.net).

The number of marriages in European Community countries (EC) has decreased since 1972 (SCB Statistics Sweden, 1992). Delaying of marriage has reduced the rate of first marriage in USA from 93 marriages per 1000 in 1970 to 58 marriages per 1000 in 1990 (Bianchi & Spain, 1996 p. 41). In 1996, 20% of women and 30% of men ages 30-34 had not yet married compared to 6% and 9% in 1970 (Bianchi & Spain, 1996 P. 41).

In the last 15 years, the number and percentage of singles have increased in USA. Today, more than one-third of people in the USA over the age of 18 years are single (divorced, widowed, and never been married) (www.sing1.htm). In USA, there were 46 million single women compared to 38 million men over age 18 (Arnst, 1998, p. 1). It is observed that in Western countries, fewer people marry than 20 years ago (Arnst, 1998). For instance, 90% of American women marry now in comparison with 95% ten years ago (Bianchi & Spain, 1996, P. 41).

There is more freedom for young men and women to delay marriage in the West. By the age of 30, most women who are still unmarried are building up economic independence, have investment in their work, and want to prove themselves. The social pressure to get married in the West is not as strong as it used to be (Kalugar & Kalugar, 1979). Unmarried young adult woman has more freedom to travel, change jobs or leave home. Career opportunities for woman have increased and many are choosing to enter the job market before or instead of married life (Kalugar & Kalugar, 1979).

In developing countries, single women are no longer seen as unmarried "old maids" as in the earlier stereotype (Arnst, 1998). Unmarried women now live different lives, buy houses, drive cars, bear or adopt children, write books, sit in positions of influence, etc (Arnst, 1998). According to Arnst (1998), single life has its positives as well as marriage. Most single women who were interviewed by Arnst have nothing against marriage. They are neither sitting at home feeling miserable nor reveling in their solitude; these women adopted coping techniques to suit themselves and to be accepted in their own world by others (Arnst, 1998). These are possibly some of the reasons why more and more women are refraining from marrying nowadays in the West.

There are several reasons for singlehood and there are some more specific reasons for each gender. One of the reasons that stand behind singlehood for women and delayed marriage for men in Western countries is cohabitation. Cohabitation is a common

phenomenon in today's Western world which exists as an alternative to traditional marriage. Living together or cohabiting couples increased by 45% between 1970 and 1990 in the USA (www.mentalhelp.net). In the USA, in the mid 1990s 23.6% of white births are to unmarried women and 68.7% of all black births are out of wedlock (Monthly Vital Statistical Report, 1995). In Germany 15% of the births are out of wedlock compared to 13% in Italy, and 1% in Japan; 30% in USA, France and UK (Bianchi & Spain, 1996, p. 39). Living together provides companionship, sex, and the trial of marriage as a possibility.

Cohabitation among unmarried couples has increased in EC countries with a simultaneous increase of the number of children born to unmarried parents (SCB Statistics Sweden, 1992). For instance, in Sweden and Denmark, 1 in 2 children are born to unmarried parents and in Greece it is 1 in 50 (SCB Statistics Sweden, 1992 p. 26). In Ireland, almost 8% of all households consist of women living alone with children. In Sweden 3% of households are run by women who live alone with children (SCB Statistics Sweden, 1992 p. 26). These single-parent families are not necessarily outcomes of never being married women and their children, as divorced or widowed women might establish their own families alone as well.

Another reason for the increased numbers of singles in the Western countries is delaying marriage until the early 30s, until the individual establishes themselves in education and career, which improves the possibility of maintaining a successful marital life. Employed and professional people tend to live a life that is highly competitive where they struggle hard to prove themselves. Many individuals feel that the single state affords them more personal opportunities and life style advantages (www.sing1.htm).

Many people reject marriage because they fear divorce and separation, are uncomfortable with the institution of marriage, do not have the desire to marry, cannot stand living with one permanent partner, choose a homosexual life pattern, do not want to commit themselves to marriage responsibilities, or do not have available chances for marriage (Miller & Solot, 1998). Rogers and Solo (www.solosingles.com) mentioned ten reasons for remaining unmarried among Americans, which are:

1. The decreased social pressure and social stigma of singlehood
2. Decreased religious pressure on sex, living together and pregnancy of single mothers
3. Acceptance of delayed marriage
4. Fear of marriage due to high divorce rates and concerns of mates about marriage commitments.
5. Wishing to get education and career leaving little time for marriage and family.

6. Economic security of women leading to independence, which lessened the chances of marriage for financial reasons.
7. Increased life expenses and financial demands made it more difficult for a family with children.
8. Freedom of single life.
9. Difficulties in finding suitable places to meet partners
10. Difficulties in trusting others and marrying them.

Women in industrialized countries now delay their marriage because of their improved education, high participation in the labor force, and the increased acceptance of cohabitation (Bianchi & Spain, 1996). In England, professionals tended to delay their marriage more than laborers during the first half of the 20th century (Lewis, 1984). Many women choose singlehood over marriage because being single is easier for dating, traveling, having friendships, changing boyfriends and spending vacations. Some single women prefer their lives because they got used to living as singles and they are afraid to change while others stay single because they cannot commit themselves to long-term responsibilities and relationships (www.solosingles.com).

“Spinsterhood” and “singlehood” in Arab societies is a relatively new phenomenon according to Sheikh Abdel-Rahman Al-Sadees (Ishaonline, 2003). The phenomenon of “spinsterhood” or “Onouseh” as called in Arabic language threatens the stability of the society because it mainly touches the most important social systems that is the family (Al-Sadees, 2003). Marriage is one pillar in Islam therefore; refraining from marrying is disbelief and infidelity according to Muslim scholars.

Al-Rameithi believes that the phenomenon of “spinsterhood” and “singlehood” is increasing in Arab countries, mainly in Gulf countries to the extent they became the natural outcome of the economic and political conditions of these countries (www.amanjodran.org). These phenomena, according to Al-Rameithi have social, psychological, and moral consequences. Singlehood is enforced on women in Arab societies through measures such as: limitation of sexual relationships except by marriage, forcing conditions in marriage, and determination of the preferred age of marriage (Yasin, 1992).

It was observed that the number of unmarried women in Arab countries is increasing in the last 20 years. In Jordan, the rate of unmarried women over age 15 increased from 25.5% in 1979 to 38.7% in 1998, compared to 38.3% and 48% in sequence for men of the same age group (www.amanjodran.org). Abu-Danoun observed that there was an increase in

the rate of unmarried women by about 11% for the age group 30-50 between the years 1979 and 1998. In Saudi Arabia, one-third of the women over age 14 have never been married (www.amanjodran.org). Women who have never been married are increasing in numbers in Arab Emirates where men tend to marry foreign women or women from other Arab countries (www.amanjodran.org).

There are several reasons for the phenomenon of “singlehood” and “spinsterhood” in Arab countries. These reasons are historical, personal, ideological, financial, and familial according to Al-Sadees (2003). Socioeconomic factors can cause singlehood in Arab countries. Singlehood is a phenomenon prevailed in the second half of the 19th century and afterwards in Greater Syria, especially in wealthy and very conservative families (Yasin, 1992). Rich families, who worry about their wealth, refuse marriage of their daughters outside the extended family as a means of maintaining land and property within the clan or family of origin (Yasin, 1992). Therefore, they use various excuses to reject men who proceed to ask for the hand of their daughters, which in turn decreases their chance of marriage in the future, as the woman becomes older (Yasin, 1992).

The high cost of marriage is one of the main reasons for delaying the marriage of men and the decline in women’s chances of marriage (Yasin, 1992; Al-Marneisi, 1997; Oman’s Satellite T.V, 2001; www.naseejuha.com; www.amanjodran.org). Marriage expenses vary from one country to another and from one family to another. The man has to pay for all the expenses of the engagement party, dowry and gold for the bride, wedding ceremony, and clothes in addition to furnishing the couple’s new house (Daraghmeh, 1991; www.naseejoha.com; www.amanjodran.org). Yasin (1992) reported that the dowry is usually high for women whose age is 15-24, then drops afterwards.

Sometimes the bridegroom needs to build a new house if one is not available. Usually, the woman does not share in the expenses of marriage except if she is employed and when she believes in mutual participation of the spouses in family building. In this situation, the man will need many years until he saves the required money for marriage and to establish his house, which means that he will marry at an older age but to a younger woman. Older women remain unmarried unless they are willing to marry as second or third wives.

The economic situation of the family of the girl plays an important role in delaying their marriage. For instance, many families refuse to marry their daughters to poor men, who have low social status and work in low status jobs even when they are respectable, religiously-committed and moral men (Al-Sadees, 2003). On the other hand, many families bargain on their daughters and refuse marriage proposals because they want their employed daughters to

support the family financially. Because Muslim women cannot wed without the approval of their guardians, these women remain unmarried as long as their fathers or brothers are alive. In most patriarchal families, mothers have no formal decision making power and cannot change the decision of their men.

The high cost of marriage is a well-known reason for delaying marriage for men. The man is responsible for all the expenses of marriage in Arab countries, except in Egypt. There, the family of the girl shares in these expenses. When dowry and wedding expenses are very high as the case in all Arab countries, the man spends years working until he collects the needed money. Men whose salaries are low and whose families could not share the expenses of marriage need 3-5 years to collect the needed money for marrying.

Appropriate basis for marriage according to Sheikh Yousif Al-Qaradawi (2004):

1. The right selection: This is important for the man and woman to choose the partner who best fits him/her. The man or woman should consult others who have knowledge and experience about marriage and human nature, to guide him or her to the right choice.
2. Rights of women: Every woman should receive a dowry that she has full right to spend or save. Some fathers ask for a very high dowry and take all or part of it for themselves, which is against Islam.
3. Announcement of marriage: secretive marriage is not legal. Announcement is usually done through wedding parties and celebrations.
4. Good marital relationship.
5. Decent and respectable relationships of the partners for each another.
6. Sexual satisfaction and fulfilment.
7. Intimacy: The man and woman should build an intimate relationship; listen to each another; share feelings; be kind and tender and respect one another.

Many women do not get married for psychological reasons. These reasons could block their minds and make marriage a difficult choice. Dr. Abu-Danoun proposed various psychological reasons for singlehood among Arab women; they include:

1. Being a perfectionist woman in her conditions for acceptance of the man.
2. Narcissistic personality who sees herself as better than others.
3. Being introverted and shy, and reluctant to socialize with others.
4. People who have a phobia of marriage and sex.
5. Enuresis in females that doesn't disappear at adolescence.

6. Passive identifications where the woman refuses to marry someone who is similar to her father.
7. Chronic depression (www.amanjodran.org)

Most families in the Arab world try their best to help their daughters to marry. There is always a fear that their daughters may remain unmarried after the age of 25 (Sader, 1996; Zahran, 1982). This fear is related to the concern that this situation may become permanent because men tend to marry younger women (Manasra, 1989; Warnock, 1990; Sayigh, 1992; Sader, 1996). In addition, families worry about their unmarried daughters because of the negative social stereotype about the old unmarried women in Arab society. They are perceived as complicated, dysphoric, hostile, and jealous (Sader, 1996).

Staying unmarried is not always a free choice for the woman. The woman usually waits for the appropriate man to ask for her hand. If this does not happen, she may remain unmarried. In some families a girl may compulsorily remain unmarried because there is no one to take care of her old parents, after the other siblings are married (Al-Khouli, 1989; Sansur, 1995; Sader, 1996). In addition, some women do not marry because of disability or body disfigurement, previous failure in love affairs or engagement, loss of trust in men or people in general, being busy in education or work, fear of marriage and its responsibilities, and the ideological belief that marriage is a prison or constraint for women (Zahran, 1982; Al-Khouli, 1989).

A controversial cause for not marrying among Arab women is their high level of education. The high level of education has a negative influence on the chance of a woman marrying. This is observed in most Arab countries including Palestine. In a study of unmarried women in Syria, Yasin (1992) reported that 53% of unmarried women had university degrees and 19% had secondary education. This study also reported that educated women delayed their marriages but usually married before age 30. Only 6 % of the Syrian women married after age 30 (Yasin, 1992).

Social isolation and ethnic disparity play significant roles in reducing the chances of marriage for women in Arabic countries. This is observed in isolated ethnic communities and remote villages (Abbas, 1987). Marriage for Christian women is also limited due to the low percentages of Christians in Arabic countries and the restrictions and the complications of inter-religious marriages (Abbas, 1987; Daraghmeh, 1990; Warnock, 1990; Sader, 1996); as well as the high rate of emigration of the younger Christian Arab men (Sabella, 1997).

A. The unmarried Palestinian women:

The number of unmarried women varies slightly between the different age groups of Palestinian society. A number of women may choose to remain single after they reach a certain age. The Heiberg and Qvensen study (1994) observed that women of the age group 30-39 have a low chance of marrying due to fewer opportunities or their voluntary refusal of marriage. Palestinian studies reported 19.8% unmarried women in the age group 25-29, 16.3% for the age group 30-34, 12% for age group 35-39 years, 9 % for the age group 40-44, and 8 % for women whose ages are between 45-49 (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1996).

Political and cultural factors are considered potent variables in any social phenomenon within the Palestinian society. In her study Rammous (1998) reported the following as reasons for singlehood: migration of young men during the years of Israeli occupation, difficult living conditions, negative cultural values and attitudes about late marriage of women, the high educational level of women, negative views about women's work, and the high expenses of marriage (Rammous, 1998).

Married women are treated more respectfully than single women in Palestinian society. The unmarried woman feels restricted because she knows that her family and community are observing her all the time. Al-Khalili (1977) reported that 59 % of the unmarried Palestinian women in his study said that their families created problems for them and controlled their movement from home. The figures in the Heiberg and Qvensen (1994) study show that unmarried young women have the lowest rate of freedom of movement in all districts of Palestine. Working women had more freedom of movement regardless their marital status (Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994). Although the study of Al-Khalili was old, the findings of Heiberg and Qvensen (1994) were consistent about how the unmarried women perceived their families and societies. The investigator believes that some changes occurred on the living conditions of women however, there are still limitations and constrictions on unmarried women.

The control of unmarried women in the Palestinian family takes different forms depending on their social status. Daughters are carefully guarded after puberty and married at an early age in parentally arranged unions that reproduce clan, class and sectarian ties (Warnock, 1990; Sayigh, 1992). This control is justified by the language of honor; making a girl's purity an issue that concerns not only her near family, but also the whole community (Manasra, 1994; Najjar & Warnock, 1992; Wad Atta, 1986; Warnock, 1990; Manasra, 1990). In a study of Palestinians in Lebanon, Al-Khalili (1977), reported that 86% of the men

believed that the woman should remain with her family under their protection until she marries, despite her level of education or employment. In this study, Al-Khalili (1977) observed that 38 % of the men he studied accepted killing the girl if she had a love affair with a man, and 51% believed that the girl should be forced to terminate her love relationship.

Nevertheless, single women in Palestinian society also put limitations and constraints on themselves, which may be stricter than their families (Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994; Al-Khalili, 1977). Unmarried women guard themselves and restrict their friendships and home leaving to preserve their reputation. Sometimes, the family of the single woman encourages her to go visiting and to join the family for social occasions, but she refuses to do so. In some families, unmarried girls do not leave their houses except if escorted by their sisters or mothers. They believe that they are censored by their society. Therefore, they take safety measures to protect themselves from gossiping and social annoyance. Al-Khalili's (1977) study of 100 Palestinian women in Lebanon reported that 55 % of these women preferred to live with their families under the guardianship of relatives, because they believed that living with the family preserved their dignity and honour and protected them from social harassment and possible harm.

Although the studies of Al-Khalili and Heiberg and Qvensen are somewhat old, there is still relevance in them to Palestinian society in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Even today, younger unmarried women who have no job are closely observed by their families and society and their movement and freedom are restricted. However, unmarried women in Palestinian society in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem have better chances to pursue university education and work and have relative freedom of dress and social life.

Marriage is believed to be a mode for liberating Palestinian women from the control and suppression of their families. Some studies supported this viewpoint (Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994; Lange & Mhanna, 1992; Sansur, 1995; Punamaki, 1988). Women in Lange and Mhanna's study (1992) reported more freedom after marriage than when they were single. Freedom of movement is easier for married women than for unmarried women. This was supported by the Heiberg and Qvensen study (1994), which reported a 54% degree of freedom of movement for married women, 90% for widows and 32% for unmarried women. This belief probably contradicts that of western women who view marriage as a constraint rather than a facilitator (Mhanna & Lange, 1992).

Freedom of movement and age of the woman are interrelated according to some authors (Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994; Sayigh, 1992). While the age group 15–19 years is the mostly restricted in freedom of movement because it is believed that they are more sexually

vulnerable, the women of age group 40 and above had the highest degree of freedom of movement. These women are believed to be the least vulnerable due to pre-menopausal and menopausal changes. When young unmarried women were excluded, the differences between unmarried and married women were significantly reduced with regard to freedom of movement. The level of education was not a major differential factor in the degree of freedom of married and unmarried women (Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994).

A study conducted by three senior social work students at Bethlehem University on 150 students from three Palestinian universities concluded that 86% of them believed that delay of marriage for women occurs due to the high expenses of marriage, 66.7% due to the age factor; 71.3% due to the low presence of women in everyday social life (Abdeen, Qassiesi & Zahdeh, 1999). About 68% of the Palestinian students did not believe that the education of the girl has a role in delaying marriage for the woman. About 78% didn't think that the socio-economic status of the family of the girl plays a role in decreasing the chance of marriage for Palestinian women (Abdeen, Qassiesi & Zahdeh, 1999). However, 52% believed that bad relationships with relatives decrease women's chances of marriage and 48% believed that the woman's beauty has an influence on her chances for marriage. In addition, 87.5% of the students who live in refugee camps; 88.2% of those living in villages; 81.1% of those living in cities denied the influence of the place of residence on women's chances for marriage (Abdeen, Qassiesi & Zahdeh, 1999).

A study done by a student nurse at Al-Quds University on 20 nurses whose ages were 25 years and above (Al-Khatib, 2000). She reported that 75% of them didn't marry because they wanted to pursue higher education. They delayed marriage until they finished their university education, but then men found them older than the preferred age of marriage (Al-Khatib, 2000). About 85% of these women didn't marry because they waited to find a better educated man and 65% believed that the high costs of marriage delayed marriage of Palestinian men who usually got married to a young woman (Al-Khatib, 2000). In this study, 80% of the subjects believed that the nature of the nursing profession (shift work, mixing with men, sleeping outside home), influenced their lives negatively and decreased their chance for marriage. However, 70% of the married women in the second part of the study said that they married after becoming nurses and receiving employment as such. Nevertheless, 70% of the married nurses in this study are married to men whose incomes are higher than their wives and 70% married men whose education was beyond secondary level, which is lower than the education of their wives (Al-Khatib, 2000).

The studies of Al-Khatib and Abdeen, Qassiesi and Zahdeh (1999) were done on educated subjects. Therefore, their results could be biased. There is a need to do comparative studies between educated and non educated women and men to examine their attitudes and beliefs about marriage and singlehood. Such studies should be based on scientific research principles and use random samples so that their results could be generalized.

Taking into consideration the previously mentioned dimensions, it is not likely for Palestinian women to elect to stay single all their lives. Nevertheless, a certain percentage of women remain unmarried for various reasons, such as the family's wish for the daughter to care for her parents, financial factors, the inability to find the appropriate husband, being unattractive, having a disability or a disease, previous failure in a love affair or failed engagement, living in a very conservative family which limits the chances of meeting men, the early marriage of young women, and the high level of education of women (Shukri, 1981; Al-Khuli, 1989; Rammous, 1998; Yasin, 1992).

B. Effects of singlehood on society and women:

There are controversial viewpoints about the advantages and disadvantages of singlehood and remaining unmarried in the world. In the past centuries, remaining unmarried was considered an extraordinary event because almost all women and men got married at least once in life. Today, we see singlehood and never being married as a phenomenon in most modern societies, however there is variation in the rates of those who are single from one society to another. For some conservative scholars, singlehood is considered a threat to the society because the unmarried women are more prone to adultery.

Girls who remained unmarried in the western countries during the pre- industrial era usually stayed at home, worked for the good of the whole family, and had strong ties with their nephews. When they died, they left their savings to their siblings and nephews (Flandrin, 1986). This is what usually happens when a woman remains unmarried in Arab countries.

A study done by Hooper (1987) on American women and examined the influence of personal and social factors on 816 single women concluded that never married women were better educated, healthier, less lonely, and had a more positive outlook than widows and divorced. Health and loneliness were the most predicative factors in the women's outlook and perception of happiness. Race, level of education, social network, and personal resources were also predicative factors in Hooper's study (1987) but with less weight. Contrary to Hoover's finding, a 13-years American study of middle-aged women found that married

women who had happy lives were less likely to develop cardiovascular disease and were healthier than unmarried women or women who had unsatisfactory marriages (www.hon.ch/News/HSN).

A study by Lewis, Spring & Moon (1997) to explain the experience of single women in midlife years found that single women were aware of the advantages and drawbacks of being single but were ambivalent about the reasons for their singleness. Among all women studied by Lewis et al (1997), single mothers and women with no explicit life roles were the most emotionally vulnerable. Dr. Hiten Patel, a psychiatrist at Williams Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak, Michigan says that the mental and physical health of married people, especially men, tends to be better than singles (www.hon.ch/News/HSN). A study done by University of Florida researchers of 524 young men after they had been paroled found that ex-convicts who got married were less likely to commit another crime (www.hon.ch/News/HSN).

Single women in the above mentioned study reported certain advantages to being single such as freedom from caretaking roles and freedom in decisions and behaviors. However, single women were concerned about how others would perceive them and their feelings. They always felt that others pitied them, considered them failures, or blamed them for their singleness (Lewis, Spring, & Moon, 1997). Some single women felt that it was better to be divorced than never married and felt responsible for their singleness (Lewis, Spring, & Moon, 1997). However, half of these women said that it was their choice to remain single, and half wished that they were married than remaining single. Single women in the above study very commonly used self-blaming responses about wasting their good chances of marrying and marrying younger when they were wanted the most by men.

Feelings of loss and grieving about not being a mother were commonly expressed feelings of single women in the study of Lewis, Spring and Moon (1997). Another related major loss for the respondents of the study was the lack of guarantees about their future in singlehood and experiencing impending ambiguous losses. For these women, there was no point where they could know for sure if they would marry or not in the future (Lewis, Spring & Moon, 1997). This situation of uncertainty and ambiguity led to ambivalence about singleness, which was often kept unconscious, unrecognized and/or unresolved (Lewis, Spring, & Moon, 1997). Miller and Solot (1998) and Lewis, et al. (1997) complemented the findings of Lewis, Spring and Moon and they reported that married people were healthier and happier than singles, because of the societal support they received and their financial stability. On the other hand, some authors believe that single people are happier and less strained than married people (www.sing13.htm). Some researchers believe that there are a lot of things that

married people disagree over, which make their lives unbearable and distressing. However, singles have no obligations towards children and spouse and are free to spend time, travel, and socialize. The only advantages to marriage in the viewpoint of the author are children and companionship (www.sing13.htm). Nevertheless, for older women in their forties, being single is difficult because they feel lonely and men are not interested in them. These women spend time with their female friends, socialize during church meetings, involve themselves in charitable activities, and get involved with others and house and work activities. However, for those singles who withdraw into themselves, living alone is hell-on-earth (www.sing13.htm).

Some singles thrive on freedom and live full, active, satisfying lives and are well-adjusted singles. However, others cannot cope effectively with remaining single, or make use of it, and may sink into dejection and loneliness. Women who do not marry are reported to be more vulnerable to depression, anxiety, worry about the future, loneliness, isolation, low self-esteem and negative self-image, suicide, hysteria, addictive behavior, and to be living in fantasy about love and marriage (Al-Quds newspaper, 2000). Being a well-adjusted single takes a special kind of person and certain qualities including social and psychological abilities, self-reliance, economic capacity to be self-supporting; efficient communication abilities; true preference for a single life, and the ability to be in touch with one's attitudes and feeling (www.sing13.htm).

There are three types of single women who complain about their lives (www.sing13.htm). The first are people who have not taken responsibility for their lives and blame others for their misfortune and problems. The second group is people who lost direction and goal; are afraid of failure and criticism; are lonely, and are too lazy to pull themselves together. The third group is physically inactive women who could be overweight and living a sedentary life (www.sing13.htm).

In the past, singles were seen as dropouts or let-out from the normal marriage state. Today's singles are different. Many individuals feel that the single state affords them more personal opportunities and life style advantages (www.sing1.htm). Today's singles are said to have rejected the phoniness of the "cool 50s, the super sensitive, get all your feeling out" of the 60s and the "macho" attitudes of the 70s. The singles of the 90s are a mixture of all the earlier years (sing1.htm p. 2).

The verses of Quraan indicate negative destiny for women who get old without being married. The following verse reflects this notion: *Such elderly women as are past the age of marriage, there is no blame on them if they lay aside their outer clothing without displaying their beauty. But to abstain even from that is better for them. And Allah is all-hearing, all-*

knowing (Chapter Al-Nur, Verse 60). Delaying marriage to authentic Muslims has its terrible consequences and it is considered disgraceful according to Al-Muheisen (www.kalimat.htm). However, Muslim scholars argue that getting married or staying single is in the end predestined. According to Al-Jumaili (1997), God divides the fates and he decides that a certain woman marries or not, for a wisdom he only has therefore, women who remain unmarried should not get upset or feel sad because this is their fate.

There are psychological, economic, social, moral and behavioral consequences for singlehood and spinsterhood in Arab society as many scholars believe. Sheikh Al- Sadees (2003) proposed dangerous consequences for “spinsterhood” and “singlehood” including social immorality, sadness for women, sexual seduction, extramarital sexual behavior, looseness in morals; feeling of unfairness and humiliation in young men and women. The author believes that it is acceptable for young men to delay marriage until they complete their university and post-graduate education. However, for women, they regret that they wasted their chance for marriage and motherhood by claiming high education (Al-Sadees, 2003). Al-Sadees (2003) believes that women’s distrust and uncertainty about the future makes them seek employment and academic degrees but this cannot compensate for marriage benefits.

Unmarried Arab women are more censored and observed by their families than in western societies, where women live alone with minimal familial links and have more freedom to move, travel, work, study, and have sexual relationships and children (Lange & Mhanna, 1992; Adam, 1982; Al-Marneisi, 1997; Al- Khouli, 1989; Lewis et al, 1997). Therefore, the suffering and harassment of Arab unmarried women are expected to be paramount and their psychological well-being might be badly affected if they do not equip themselves with effective coping skills.

Some Arab countries use counteractive measures to encourage men to marry indigenous women and to refrain from marrying foreign women who do not usually require a high dowry and cost a lot. For instance, in Arab Emirates, the prince donated \$5,000 to every man who marries an Emirate woman over age 30. In addition, the prince restricted the dowry to \$ 5,400 to encourage men to marry women from the Emirates (www.naseejoha.com).

In the Arab world when a woman does not marry but wants to, she and her family become worried and concerned. Her parents will continuously hope to marry their daughter and may accept any man even if he does not suit her. The unmarried woman also thinks that she may not marry at all, thus she loses hope and gives up her dreams about motherhood, independent living and an intimate loving relationship. Socially speaking, “singlehood” is a

burden for the family and the society which feels obligated to take care of these women in their old age (Zahran, 1982; Yasin, 1992; Sansur, 1999; Sader, 1996).

In every Christian society, there are people who remain unmarried for spiritual reasons. These people become priests, monks and nuns and choose a life that is free of sex and material wishes. Some unmarried Arab Christian women become nuns either during adolescence or early adulthood and are respected by the society. However, Christian Arab women who do not marry for social or psychological factors are treated similar to unmarried Muslim women and they are sometimes less lucky in getting married than their Muslim peers (Abdeen, Zahdeh, and Qassisi, 1999). This social attitude towards unmarried women indicates that singlehood might not be considered a choice for Arab women.

In societies where marriage is the only hope for a decent life, unmarried women feel helpless and hopeless, which makes them desperate to the extent they seek magical solutions (Sader, 1996). Some women indulge themselves in prayer, reading the Quraan, and fasting to bring peace to themselves. Women escape to magical life because it is part of their cultural and religious beliefs. Women who believe in demons and magic influence on their lives will consult wizards and fortune tellers to free themselves from wicked work or untie the presumed magical work (Sader, 1996). However, some other unmarried women go to the extreme and they become an impious and infidel because they think that God is unjust and does not look after them.

The Palestinian family which has an unmarried relative finds itself obligated to take care of her and to support her financially especially if she is unemployed. Heiberg and Qvensen (1994) reported that relatives such as fathers and brothers support 85% of unmarried women financially. Other forms of financial support such as charity, loans, or welfare money are limited to 15% of unmarried women compared to 22% for married women (Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994).

It is important to study the circumstances of unmarried Palestinian women because it is believed that their socioeconomic and personal factors may influence their mental health status. There is a concern that some women who cannot get married may develop mental health problems that remain undiscovered and untreated (Zahran, 1982; Sader, 1996).

XII. Women's mental health:

Women's mental health is, to a great extent, a function of how society treats and regards married and unmarried women; divorced and widowed women; poor and minority women; childless women and those who only bear female children; aged and disabled women

(Hadassah Data Book, 1999). Mental health in the world is defined in terms of the attributes valued in men, such as autonomy, assertiveness, independence, etc. Dr. Eileen Hoffman said; *" we cannot talk about mental health in women without acknowledging the impact of living in a male-dominated society, with its accompanying power-relation manifested in all aspects of woman's lives including, intimate relationships, family, educational institutions, places of worship, workplace, professional life, the legal system, governmental bureaucracies and the health care system"* (Hadassah Data Book, 1999, P. 154).

Mental disorders, according to sociological approaches, result from the interchange of many socioeconomic and cultural factors (Davis & Janosik, 1991). Mental disturbances occur due to faulty public policies and the contradictory norms and values that exist in society and the confusion that these contradictions sometimes create (Davis & Janosik, 1991). Thus, the sociological approach to mental health is a collective approach that examines social groups, processes, and institutions in order to identify the effects of variables such as social class, gender differences, and place of residence (Davis & Janosik, 1991).

An individual's response to stress is predominantly individualized. The meaning of the event and the level of social cohesiveness are crucial factors in determining how stressful a situation can be to each individual (Johnson, 1997). A person's perception of threat varies according to many factors, which include sociocultural background, financial resources, support system, education, self-esteem building, and previous experience with change (Johnson, 1997; Murray, 1987; Burgess, 1990).

Life events and stressful conditions may have positive effects, or may contribute to the development of an illness (Burgess, 1990; Rifa'ei, 1982; Johnson, 1997). Living conditions usually create difference for individuals to find meaning and coherence in their own lives, and they are correlated with health status of people (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 1999). Life event studies generally show that people experiencing a high number of negative life events have high morbidity and more health problems (Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994; Millikan, 1987). Role change, conflicts, and distress can produce physiological and psychological disorders for people who were exposed to severe emotional or social hardships (Sansur, 1995; Johnson, 1997). When anything threatens one's self-concept, anxiety usually increases, self-image and self-esteem are threatened, the person feels distressed, and he/she strives to restore self-concept and adapt to the situation (Millikan, 1987; Johnson, 1997).

The person's attempts to adapt to stress may be either successful or unsuccessful. The individual will depart the stressful situation either as adaptive or as sick. Unsuccessful adaptation may lead to withdrawal from the situation, aggression, or illness. Illness could be

either physical, psychological or both. Physical illness might include conditions which are believed to involve a psychophysiological component such as hypertension, ulcer diseases, skin diseases, musculoskeletal conditions, endocrine illnesses, cardiovascular disease, and others (Johnson, 1997; Feldman, 2000). Emotional and psychological disorders that might result from poor adjustment to crisis and stressful events include hyperactivity, mental disorders, insomnia, mood disorders, anxiety disorders, substance abuse, suicide and others (Millikan, 1987; Johnson, 1997).

Mental health researchers and specialists found that inferiority and subordination take direct and serious toll on the mental health of those who feel powerless, self-depreciation and misery; have low self-esteem and shame, and have too much daydreaming (Hale, 1990). In addition, feeling inferior and experiencing inequality affects heavily those people who withdrew from life and responsibly; shut themselves off from life; have threatened senses of self worth; have depression; lost interest in life and experience decreased energy; lost concentration and have inability to accomplish tasks; have erosion of motivation and ambitions (Hale, 1990). Archibald draws the conclusion that the social experience of subordination and humiliation damages people to such a degree that they can become mentally ill (Hale, 1990).

Mental illness affect equal number of women and men, but patterns and types of illness differ profoundly (Davis, 1995). The Funds' Commission on Women's Health Studies in the USA conducted a study about the incidence and prevalence of mental disorder in women, their use of mental health services, and the treatment they receive (Davis, 1995). According to this study, women encounter great difficulties in seeking mental health care. Symptoms that might not conform to diagnostic thresholds are often not treated properly in women (Davis, 1995). Passive attitudes, concern about stigma, low self-esteem, obligations to family, and work responsibilities create real constraints on seeking care for women who have psychological problems and illness (Davis, 1995). Absence of health insurance coverage and limits on mental health services, are major financial barriers for seeking mental health care among women who were studied by The Funds' Commission on Women's Health Studies (Davis, 1995)

There are many factors behind women's mental health problems. Some of these factors are sociocultural, biological, cognitive, or psychological. It is mainly women who are responsible for satisfying their families' needs, nurturing and caring, and compensating for their pains and frustrations. Most women are also responsible for emotional well-being of other family members. Women find themselves obligated to deal with the stressors and

strains of other family members and hold together both the individual and the group during emotional crisis (Badura & Kickbunsch, 1991). In the end, the women take care of everybody else but they are left with nobody to take care of their needs and support them. In addition, researchers observed that most psychiatric symptoms in women are reported when they are going through family life experiences including, getting married, having babies and caring of their children, which means that family life has particular strain for women (Meyers, 1986).

Some mental disorders are more common in women than in men. The great women of history had a few things very much in common with many young women today (<http://health.yahoo.com>). The national institute of mental health epidemiologic catchments area project found that women have significantly higher rate than men for depression, panic disorder, phobia, and anxiety disorders (Betemps & Ragiel, 1994). Other researchers reported similar findings about the prevalence of psychological disorders among women. For instance, Davis (1995) reported that major depression, phobias, generalized anxiety, and panic disorder are twice as common among women as among men. According to Hadassah Data book about women's health in Israel (1999), 64% of those admitted with a diagnosis of affective disorder are women, while 60% of those admitted with schizophrenia and paranoia are men. In addition, women have a high incidence of eating disorder, depression and psychosomatic illness (<http://health.yahoo.com>). Researchers found that high school female student have significantly higher rates of depression, anxiety disorders, eating disorders and adjustment disorders than male students who have higher rates of behavioral disorders, according to the National Institute of Mental Health (2004). Moreover, a national survey of risk behaviors among youth in Israel found that 21% of the girls compared to 14% of the boys whose ages are between 15-16 years had suicidal thoughts (Hadassah Data Book, 1999).

Mental health needs are greatest among women in their 20s and 30s however, utilization of mental health services is greatest among women over 65 (Davis, 1995). Women are more likely than men to receive prescription for psychotropic drugs; one-half of all women aged 35 and above have used tranquilizers medically in USA (Davis, 1995). In addition, more women seek help than men for psychological and emotional problems, use psychiatric services, and take tranquilizers (Badura & Kickbusch, 1991).

A study has been conducted on 206 women to screen for the presence of mood and anxiety disorder among women who have premenstrual syndrome (Bailey & Cohen, 1999). Mood disorders in the sample were twice as common as anxiety disorders; 39% of the respondents met criteria for anxiety disorders, mood disorders or both (Bailey & Cohen, 1999). The most common disorders in the respondents were dysthymia, depression, panic

disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, bipolar disorder, and obsessive-compulsive disorder (Bailey & Cohen, 1999).

A study was done by Tawfique (2000) on 402 Bahraini high school and university student, to identify the characteristics of obsessive-compulsive disorder and the influence of gender and age. The results of studies should that female university students manifested higher prevalence of obsessive-compulsive symptoms than male university students however; there were no significant differences in the level of obsessive-compulsive disorder among high school student in relation to gender (Tawfique, 2000).

According to most researchers, women are more prone to have depression (www.naseejoha.com; www.nimh.nih.gov). In developed nations, major depression and dysthymia affect twice as many women as men across a number of racial or economic backgrounds (National Institute of Mental Health, 2004). Depression is the most common mental health problem in women of the industrialized countries (International Council of Nursing (ICN), 1995; Gagliano, 1996; Johnson, 1997). International epidemiological studies reported that there is a ratio of 2:1 women to men for depression (Culbertson, 1997; ICN, 1995; Johnson, 1997; Gagliano, 1996). About 12% of American women complain of depression yearly compared to 7.9% of men (www.naseejoha.com). In addition, it seems that symptoms of depression are more severe in women than in men.

People from various cultural backgrounds may view depressive symptoms in a different way. There is some indication that major depression and dysthymia may be diagnosed less frequently in African and slightly more frequently in Hispanic than in white women (<http://www.health.yahoo.com>). The prevalence of depression in African American and Hispanic women remains about the same as for men (<http://www.health.yahoo.com>). On the other hand, African Americans are more likely to report somatic symptoms, such as appetite change and body aches when they are distressed (<http://www.health.yahoo.com>). Possible differences in symptom presentation may affect the way depression is recognized and diagnosed among minority groups.

Biological vulnerability, environmental stressors, and psychological factors are involved in the onset of depression (www.nimh.nih.gov). Studies attributed the high ratio of depression in women to various factors such as: biological reasons, rearing environment, social roles, low economic and social opportunities, and large families (ICN, 1995); abuse and torture (Yehia, 1997; Kayyal, 1993). Other possible causing factors are: stress, helplessness, worthlessness, feeling of weakness, and hormonal factors (www.naseejoha.com). It was noticed that people who have pessimistic view about

themselves and their lives usually develop depression (www.health.yahoo.com). Specific factors that might contribute to a high rate of depression in women include reproductive and hormonal factors, abuse and oppression, interpersonal factors and certain psychological and personality characteristics. However, scientists are not certain about the actual causes of depression in women (www.nimh.nih.gov).

Working-class women have higher rates of depression than middle-class women because they have more vulnerability factors in their life (Scambler, 1997). In a study of working-class English women living in the London area, Brown and Harris identified some factors that are predictors of clinical depression, which are lack of social relationships, premature loss of mother, poor housing, unemployment, and having three or more young children (Jenkins, 1996). Scambler (1997) reported quite similar results. Depression in women is associated with long term stress, absence of confiding social relationships, unemployment, and having three or more children who are less than 15 years of age living at home (Scambler, 1997).

One of causes of high rates of depression among women is hormonal changes. Researchers observed that hormonal fluctuation during menstruation, pregnancy and menopause leads to depression, and fatigue and mood changes in some women (www.health.yahoo.com). After puberty, females are twice as susceptible to depression (Marano, 2003). In addition, depression starts to increase among adolescent girls than boys after the age of 15 (www.nimh.nih.gov). This might indicate that hormonal changes in female adolescents have some role in causing depression. After the 50s, depression decreases in women, which indicate that depression is more prevalent among women of childbearing age (Marano, 2003).

According to Silverstein who did biographical research on 36 women who achieved greatness, body image problems are the main consideration of women. Body image problems are more common amongst women who have high needs for achievement and who are well educated and are working in professional jobs (www.health.yahoo.com). Mental health clinicians believe that eating disorders among women are high because they are associated with the woman's view of her body (Johnson, 1997).

Another disorder that always existed in women and was described by Hippocrates is eating disorder. Some authors believe that eating disorder occurs as a result of an intrapsychic dynamic in women who express regret about being born female (www.health.yahoo.com). However, others believe that anorexia and bulimia occur as a reaction to the social pressure on women as they are criticized for not being beautiful (Johnson, 1997). According to

Silverstein, the eating disorder of anorexia is more evident in daughters of extremely eminent men because they could not identify with their mothers as these mothers are submissive, weak and less powerful (www.health.yahoo.com). Some researchers believe that eating disorder is more prevalent in environments and in societies where there is strong emphasis on body esthetic and beauty (Johnson, 1997; Betemps & Ragiél, 1994).

An article that was published on an Islam online webpage reported that women tend to go to wizards and warlocks more often than men and that they tend to believe in magic and demons more than men (www.islamonline.net). Most of the problems that women consult wizards about are connected with intimate issues such as preventing their husband from marrying a second time, wanting to marry, keeping other women away from husbands, conception, bringing male children, sexual problems and so on. An Egyptian study that has been conducted by Mohammad Abdul Utheem found that almost half of the Egyptian women believe in magic, mythology, the influence of evil spirits and fortune reading (www.islamonline.net). Samia Al-Saati believed that the reasons behind some women's belief in magic include lack of education and consciousness, escape from unhappy realities, lack of purpose and meaning in life, women's 'shallow mentality' and belief in superstition (www.islamonline.net). These reasons for women's belief in superstitions and magic are also implicated in women's higher vulnerability for emotional conditions.

Women are more prone to depression, which is connected to low self-esteem and negative self-evaluation (Sansur, 1995; Johnson, 1997). Depressed people do not perceive themselves correctly and evaluate their circumstances in a realistic way. They become depressed because they are socialized to believe that their efforts have no effect on changing their situations (Myers, 1993). This is typically how traditional women were socialized in the Arab world and in Palestinian society. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (www.health.yahoo.com), the reasons for high rates of depression and other disorders in females include:-

1. Stressors of adolescence such as forming an identity, emerging sexuality, separating from parents, and making decisions for the first time, in addition to other physical, intellectual, and hormonal changes. These stresses are generally different for boys and girls, and may be associated more often with depression in females.
2. Adult relationship and work roles: this view indicates that depression in women does not occur due to greater biological vulnerability but rather it is associated with particular stresses that many women face including, major responsibility at home and work; single parenthood, and caring for children and aging parents. Depression is

higher among men and women who are single and it is lowest amongst married people. The quality of marriage may contribute significantly to depression. Lack of intimate, confiding relationships as well as overt marital disputes are related to depression among women.

3. Reproductive events: women's reproductive events such as the menstrual cycle, pregnancy, menopause and infertile post pregnancy periods, are believed to yield fluctuations in mood that could include depression for some women. Hormones are believed to have effects on brain chemistry that controls emotions and mood. Some women experience feeling of anger, irritability, sadness, nervousness and other emotional and behavioral changes during reproductive events. Infertility may subject women to extreme anxiety or sadness. On the other hand, motherhood may be a time of heightened risks for depression because of the high demands it imposes. Menopause is not associated with depression unless the women had previous depressive episodes.
4. Victimization: women molested as children are more likely to have clinical depression at some time in their lives than those who do not have such history. Women who have been raped have higher incidence of depression than those who did not. Physical abuse and sexual abuse during childhood increase the incidence of developing depression in women who experienced them. Abuse may lead to depression by fostering low self-esteem, a sense of helplessness, blame, and social isolation. About 28% of women who use mental health services have experienced sexual abuse of some sort (Davis, 1995)
5. Poverty: low economic status brings big stresses, including isolation, uncertainty, frequent negative events, and poor access to helpful resources. Sadness and depression are more common among persons with low income and those lacking social support. However, research did not yet establish direct connection between depression and environmental stressors.

An important reason for the elevated rates of some psychological disorders among women is that women seem to get stressed more easily than men, according to Kenneth S. Kendler, the director of the Virginia Institute of Psychiatric and Behavioral Genetics at Virginia Commonwealth University (Marano, 2003). On the other hand, men are more stressed by work problems, while women are more stressed by social network problems. Moreover, lab results show that women's bodies respond to stress differently than men. Women are believed

to secrete higher levels of so called 'stress hormones' over sustained periods of time. Women ruminate more over upsetting events especially if these events are related to social relationships and they are often caught in a downward spiral of hopelessness and despair if they feel they have failed in interpersonal relationships (Mareno, 2003). However, women experience additional stressors if they are working outside home because they have to take care of house work in addition to their paid jobs (Mareno, 2003). This is believed to be true for married as well as unmarried women.

Through gender role socialization, women have learned to suppress anger, which may lead to somatization and a denial of the sense of self (Davila, 1999). Somatization is manifested through somatic symptoms such as headaches, hypertension, overeating, and loss of appetite, nausea, abdominal pain, muscle aches, palpitation, insomnia and others (Johnson, 1997). Anger is still perceived as a masculine emotion that is necessary for male success in personal, professional, and political roles however, in women anger is perceived as unattractive therefore, it should be suppressed (Davila, 1999). Women usually suppress their anger in an attempt to maintain and enhance interpersonal relationship in their lives (Davila, 1999). This does not happen often in men because they express their anger to the extent they sometimes become aggressive and destructive.

A study has been conducted by Rajab Mohammed (1995), on 694 subjects between age 14 and 38 years, to investigate coping abilities during stressful situations. The researcher did not find statistically significant differences in relation to gender (Mohammed, 1995). This study indicated that men and women used relatively similar coping skills and strategies when they encounter daily stressors. Lazarus and Folkman (1980) reported similar results to Mohammed (1995) even though their studies were conducted in different societies. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1980) there is no big difference in appraisal of distress or in emotion-focused coping among gender. The result of Mohammed (1995) and Lazarus and Folkman (1980) negate the stereotypes about men and women, which say that women are more emotional and men are practical. Women and men do not differ in their coping. However, they do differ in the contexts in which their stressful encounters occur (Lazarus & Folkman, 1980).

Self-concept and self-perception determine to a great degree the mental state of the individual (Al-Zieud, 1998; Zahran, 1982). Acceptance of self, sex, and capabilities are essential components in the mentally healthy people (Johnson, 1997). When an individual rejects his/her body or sex this could indicate self-hatred, shame, low self-esteem, and negative self-image (Millikan, 1987; Johnson, 1997). According to Johnson (1993), each

woman perceives herself in terms of what she would like to be and what she expects herself to be which includes some sense of power or control over her being. If she is unable to fulfill her expectancy and self-ideal, she will feel powerless and helpless. Therefore, women who have negative self-concept and self-image are more vulnerable to emotional illness, especially depression (Burgess, 1990; Brehm & Kassin, 1992). Kayyal (1993) supported the notion about the positive association between self-concept and self-acceptance, and mental health. In her study, Kayyal reported that 65% of Egyptian neurotic women refused their sex roles and identity compared to 46.6% of non-neurotic women. In addition, there was a rate of 68.5% of gender refusal among educated Egyptian women compared to 47.5% among the less educated (Kayyal, 1993). This means that women in general refuse their gender whether sick or not, educated or not.

Positive self-evaluation and realistic self-concept are important contributor to one's mental health (Johnson, 1997; Millikan, 1987) A study on women done by Gobe and Mail in 1987, reported that being devalued and oppressed lead to poor self-esteem, low levels of aspiration about work and self-achievement, and the the tendency of the woman to accept what she is offered (Hale, 1990). When such feelings are combined with poverty and domestic violence, they contribute substantially to depression and anxiety which increases women's vulnerability to suicide in Canada (Hale, 1990).

Learned helplessness is a well known causing factor for mood disorders. According to Kneisl and Wilson, learned helplessness is defined as: "*a condition in which a person attempts to establish and maintain contact with another by adopting a helpless, powerless stance*" (Kneisl & Wilson, 1992, P. 995). Learned helplessness is defined by Suzan Lego (1984) as, "*a presumed powerlessness brought about by the lack of reward for assertive behavior and the extinction of assertiveness*" (Lego, 1984, P. 642). Learned helplessness is a psychological problem that is created by raising the individual to become dependent, weak, and powerless (Johnson, 1997; Burgess, 1990; Brehm & Kassin, 1992).

Learned helplessness is a theory created by Martin Seligman who theorized that people who are exposed to negative reinforcement unrelated to their action learn that their voluntary behavior has no effect on their destiny and life (Davis & Janosik, 1991; Deaux et al, 1993). As a result, these people learn to be helpless and their survival instincts are extinguished, and they become depressed. According to the theory of Learned Helplessness, depression is caused by one's belief that one cannot control the important events in one's life (Kneisl & Wilson, 1992). When the individual attribute his/her failure to personal weakness and shortcomings, he or she feels helpless and his or her self-esteem is lowered thus

depression is the outcome (Deaux et al, 1993; Brehem & Kassin, 1992). Reactive depression, according to Lego (1984), is a belief in one's helplessness that an individual develops when he/she makes effort but it is not rewarded.

Walker has integrated the patriarchal nature of society into her theory of learned helplessness (Davis & Janosik, 1991). She believes that the very fact of being a woman automatically creates a situation of powerlessness. Women are systematically taught that their personal worth, survival and autonomy are not the result of their hard work and efforts; rather it originates in their beauty and appeal to men (Davis & Janosik, 1991). Therefore, women develop learned helplessness as they grow and are socialized in their families and society. Women who are raised as helpless and dependent easily become submissive and fragile, and they are unprepared to manage daily life problems and crises.

In his study of housewives Archibald found that they tend to be submissive, less independent, less adventurous, more easily influenced, less aggressive, less competitive, more excitable in minor crises, their feelings easily hurt, and they are more concerned about their appearance (Hale, 1990). More than half of the housewives in the study were feeling restless, grouchy, worn out, tense and nervous (Hale, 1990). Cultural values and beliefs, marriage laws, economic realities, and physical inferiority all teach women that they have little control over the circumstances of their lives and that they have to depend on men for most of their needs (Davis & Janosik, 1991). Women usually do not reward or praise themselves for good things that they achieve and they use positive self-serving biases less frequently than men (Myers, 1993).

Women in the Arab world are trained by their patriarchal societies in learned helplessness as part of the socialization process (Al-Sa`adawi, 1990; Sharabi, 1987; Al-Raies, 1995; Al-Merniesi, 1997). Arab women have little control over their lives and their fate, and they have no independence and privacy. The respect that Arab women gain is proportional to the suppression of her wishes and her capitulation to men's will and desires (Al-Siwar, 1997). Sansur (1995) reported that learned helplessness in Palestinian women is exacerbated by a cultural belief that women who are assertive and strong are more masculine than feminine. Therefore, it is believed that the woman should appear meek and submissive to preserve her femininity.

Nevertheless, Kayyal (1993) listed the following reasons for Arab women's psychological problems:

1. Deprivation and suppression.

2. Poor self-understanding.
3. Discrimination in legal and human rights.
4. Low self- confidence and self-value.
5. Lack of psychological security.
6. Family pressure and control.
7. Over involvement in thinking, illogical beliefs and ideas (p. 30).

Mental health is considered as a priority area in the Palestinian National Health Plan (1994). The main objective for policy makers regarding this issue is: *to serve the community with a system of services appropriate to the needs of all persons at risk of, or suffering from mental and/or emotional disturbances or disabilities, by the year 1998* (Palestinian National Health Plan, 1994, p. 78). Ten years after the National Health Plan, the Palestinians have not moved one step forward in achieving their mental health objectives (Manasra, 1997; Al-Lahham, 1997).

There are around 20-25,000 registered patients with mental health problems in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Bethlehem mental hospital records (1999) show that there are 22,563 registered clients. The exact number of females and males is not reported officially. There was always a problem of registration and reporting within Palestinian society due to historical and political factors that prevail in the area. Formal studies about the prevalence rates of mental disorders among females in Palestinian society are not available.

Palestinian women like other women in the Arab world are raised with negative feelings about self-value and status. Society starts to discriminate against women from infancy and continues the process until old age. A study done by Al-Alami (1983) on Palestinian adolescents reported that 57.6% of the girls suffered from problems and conflicts with their parents and siblings, medical problems, and emotional problems, compared to 43.2% of the males.

Palestinian women lack control over their lives and destiny and are manipulated by men in their families. This situation of the women may lead to feelings of helplessness and powerlessness. Feelings of powerlessness and low self-esteem are strongly connected to depression (Johnson, 1997). This notion was also supported by Sansur (1995), who reported that 50% of the Palestinian women he studied who had clear indications of low self-esteem also had depressive features.

Palestinian women are not different from other women in the world in terms of the risk of domestic violence and battering. In his study of more than four thousand women

Yehia (1997), reported that about half of the women are maltreated and 22% are physically abused. In relation to single women, Yehia (1997) reported that 35% of them were maltreated, 30% were physically abused, and 5% were sexually assaulted or raped by a relative. In addition, Mahmoud reported that 52% of Palestinian women are physically abused by men in their families and 27% are forced to have sex with their husbands according to UNFPA report of 2001 (www.amanjordan.com). Women are abused more often during the first Palestinian uprising according to Zamel (1992). This suggests that political problems increase men's psychological distress, thus they displace these feelings more often towards women.

The socio-economic status of the Palestinian women has a significant influence on their mental health. This was highlighted by the results of Punamaki (1988) that found the least adaptive women are those who are poor, uneducated, unemployed, and housewives. Being educated, single, coming from high social classes, living at camps, being a mother of a small number of children (1-3), and being religious increases the adaptability of women. Being religious has a positive influence on women's mental health. This was shown in Punamaki's (1988) study, which indicated that both very strictly religious and strictly unreligious women had more satisfaction in life than the women who are moderately religious.

Few studies have tried to investigate the mental health status of Palestinian women (Sansur, 1995; Punamaki, 1986; Khamis, 1998; Punamaki, 1988; Punamaki, 1986; Qouta, 1999, and Gaza community Mental Health Center, 1997). These local studies reported data that may highlight direction for gender variations in regards to prevalence of mental illnesses. Nevertheless, most of these studies investigated the influence of war conditions and the activities of the Israeli occupation on the wellbeing and mental health status of Palestinians.

The researcher Raya Liena Punamaki has done several studies about the influence of political situation on the mental health of Palestinians. Two of her studies were on Palestinian women. The first study was published in 1986 and it investigated stress among Palestinian women who live under military occupation and their coping modes, and their mental health state. The second study was published in 1988 and it investigated the mental health conditions of Palestinian women under occupation using open-ended questions and a questionnaire that were developed by her, in addition to the Holmes and Rahe Stress Measurement Scale. The researcher compared the mental health of Palestinian women in the Occupied Territories with those of Palestinian women who live in Israel and were less exposed to political traumas (Punamaki, 1988). Punamaki (1988) used open open-ended

interviews, a questionnaire to evaluate coping behaviors, and the Holmes and Rahe scale to measure stress levels of the respondents (Punamaki, 1988). In addition, Dr. Sameer Qouta studied the social, economic, and psychological conditions of Palestinian women in the Gaza Strip in 1994 and published it in 1999. Qouta used a questionnaire and the Guilford Depression Scale in his study.

On the other hand, Dr. Vivian Khamis (1998) investigated psychological distress and well-being among 305 traumatized Palestinian women at the end of the first Palestinian uprising. The researcher investigated the extent to which differences in the presence of trauma, political and normative stressors, family resources, family coping, and family hardiness could account for variation in women's psychological distress and well-being (Khamis, 1998). In addition, the researcher examined the degree to which women's psychological distress and well-being are influenced by family roles, marital status, occupation, as well as geographical location of the woman (Khamis, 1998). Khamis used Derogatis SCL-90.R; family Inventory of life Events and change; Family Inventory of Political Stressors; the family inventory for Resources for Management; the Family member Well-Being Index to assess subjective well-being of women; the family Crisis Oriented Personal Evaluation Scale to evaluate the cognitive and behavioral coping strategies families use when they encounter stress; Family Hardiness Index to measure the characteristics of hardiness and adaptation of families (Khamis, 1998).

Another Palestinian study that investigated the mental health of Palestinian women was conducted by Sansur (1995). Dr. Michael Sansur (1995) investigated the mental health conditions and coping abilities of 1500 Palestinian women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Sansur used three tools, Derogatis SCL-90.R, a semi-structured interview, and the Holmes and Rahe scale to investigate the women's mental state after the Palestinian first uprising.

Gaza Community Mental Health Program (1998) usually publishes a report of the cases the Centre treats ever year. Table 2-5 presents the percentages of cases treated by gender and diagnosis in 1998. The table indicates that more women sought treatment for depression, anxiety disorders (panic attacks and obsessive-compulsive disorder); eating disorder, conversion disorder, and dissociative disorder than men. However, more men than women sought treatment for psychosis mainly schizophrenia and paranoia; phobia, organic brain disorders, personality disorders, sexual disorders, substance abuse, speech problems, and hypochondriasis (Gaza Community Mental Health Program, 1998). The figures of Gaza Community Mental Health Program are quite similar to those reported by mental health

researchers elsewhere in the world, which indicate that the Palestinian population is similar in this respect to other nations of the world.

Depression has also been reported to be the most predominant problem among Palestinian women (Sansur, 1995; Khamis, 1998; Qouta, 1999). According to Sansur (1995), 14% of the women admitted having major psychological disorders in themselves, and 17% actually have depressive features. Depression is present in 15% of women of the Gaza Strip as reported by Qouta (1999). Khamis (1998) also reported high rates of depression among Palestinian women with a mean of 1.49 compared to 0.44 for non-patient “normal” of Derogatis (1983). Arab women in Israel reported higher rates of depression than Jewish women with a ratio of 2:1 (Hadassha Data Book, 1999).

Palestinian women also manifested higher rates of anxiety with a mean of 1.19 compared to 0.37 for non-patient “normal” of Derogatis as reported by Khamis (1998). Local studies consistently show that depression and anxiety are the most common psychological complaints of Palestinian women (Punamaki, 1986; Punamaki, 1988; Khamis, 1998; Sansur, 1995; Qouta, 1999). These results differ from Western data. For example, U.S.A data reported a 7 % rate of depression among women in general (Bell, 1991). Palestinian researchers attribute the high rates of depression and anxiety among Palestinian women compared to other women to the intense and long-standing political stressors, social and cultural factors, daily-life stressors and responsibilities; and poor economic conditions. It is not clear which of these factors have more effect on the mental health status of Palestinian women; however the researchers believe that a combination of all factors is relevant (Punamaki, 1986; Punamaki, 1988; Khamis, 1998; Sansur, 1995).

According to Sansur (1995), Palestinian women reported higher rates of all the 9 symptom dimensions when compared with those measured for female non-patient that were reported in the SCL-90 manual (Derogatis, 1983). However, two-tailed tests comparing the scores of Sansur and the SCL-90 revealed no statistical significant differences between the mental health conditions of the general Palestinian female population studied by Sansur and the normative group of Derogatis.

Table 2 - 1

Percentages of treated cases in Gaza Community Mental Health Program by gender and diagnosis (1998)

Diagnosis	Male		Female		Total (M + F)	
	No	%	No.	%	No.	%
Organic Brain syndrome.	113	55.94	89	44.06	202	2.05
Schizophrenia	277	68.73	126	31.27	403	4.09
Delusional disorder (paranoia)	114	76.51	35	23.49	149	1.51
Brief Reactive psychosis.	31	54.39	26	45.61	57	0.58
Schizo-affective	18	54.55	15	45.5	33	0.33
Schizophrenia form	2	66.67	1	33.33	3	0.03
Bipolar Mania	154	56.83	117	43.17	271	2.75
Bipolar Depression	15	46.88	17	53.13	32	0.32
Major Depression	552	44.37	692	55.63	10244	12.61
Anxiety disorder	357	47.22	399	52.78	756	7.67
Panic Disorder	54	40.60	79	59.40	133	1.35
Obsessive-compulsive	80	48.19	86	51.81	166	1.68
Phobia disorder	26	70.27	11	29.73	37	0.38
Conversion reaction	149	27.24	398	72.76	547	5.55
Hypochondrias	40	72.73	15	27.27	55	0.56
Dissociative-Hysteria.	0	0.00	2	100	2	0.02
Personality disorder	116	84.06	22	15.94	138	1.40
Sexual disorder	30	90.91	3	9.09	33	0.33
Drug dependence	250	99.21	2	0.79	252	2.56
Stuttering	43	78.18	12	21.82	55	0.56
Eating disorder	0	0.00	3	100	3	0.03
Tic disorder	11	73.33	4	26.67	15	.15
Functional enuresis	404	50.69	393	49.31	797	8.08

Resource: Gaza Community Mental Health Program (1998), Clinical Report, p. 2.

Some Palestinian researchers found that the marital status of an individual has an impact on his/ her mental health status (Sansur, 1995; Al-Sa`adawi, 1983; Khamis, 1998). For instance, Davis (1995) noted that married women have higher rates of depression than unmarried women do everywhere in the world however, other researchers reported otherwise. According to Sansur (1995), unmarried Palestinian women had higher rates of depression than married women did. This finding was significant for most symptom dimensions, the strongest with

depression ($r = -0.17$, $p < 0.001$). Somatization was the only symptom dimension where married women scored significantly higher than single women $\{F [1, 1359] = 14.6, P < 0.001\}$ (Sansur, 1995). This observation was not congruent with Khamis (1998) findings who reported higher levels of psychological distress among married Palestinian women with a mean of 1.41 compared to 1.09 for single women.

According to Khamis (1998), married women have a rate of 47.87 of well being compared to 43.01 for single women. Shaines (1974) reported observations similar to Khamis, in that married women have higher rate of depression because they tend to suppress their feeling for the sake of maintaining their marriages. Biological and hormonal changes due to pregnancy and childbearing increase the prevalence of depression among married women (WHO, 1992; Maslamani et al, 1999). Moreover, researchers noticed that married women are more vulnerable for psychological disorders because they are overworked and exhausted by household and childcare responsibilities (Sa`adawi, 1990; Johnson, 1993). This is especially true for women who are employed in paid jobs and take full responsibility for home and children. In addition, married women are exposed to stressors that unmarried women do not experience, such as abortion, still-birth and miscarriage; infertility, post-partum emotional distress; problems with in-laws; high fertility and bringing up many children; marital discord and conflicts, wife battering; and sexual difficulties (Sansure, 1995; Maslamani et al, 1999).

To the contrary, Punamaki (1988) reported results similar to Sansur (1995), Heiberg and Qvensen (1994), and Lange and Mhanna (1992). Punamaki found that the unmarried women and women with a small number of children (1-3 children) tend to use more adaptive techniques to cope with psychological distress than married women who have big families. It seems that large families add to the stressors of women who already suffer from stressful social, financial, and political situations such as the Palestinians.

In addition, some researchers believe that married women are more vulnerable for depression and other emotional disorders than single women, because they are exposed to marital conflicts and familial disputes, which are less evident in the lives of unmarried women (Al-Raies, 1995). Because all women studied by Khamis encountered political traumas of some sort, those who are single do not worry about their children and husbands safety and needs, and the same is partially true for married women who have fewer children to worry about. During political conflicts, large families mean more suffering, more worry, bigger responsibilities, and higher rates of possible injuries and damage. On the other hand,

an unmarried woman is relatively less stressed by political trauma except for what might happen to her siblings and parents, in addition to herself.

Table 2 - 2

Means of symptom dimensions of Palestinian women of Sansur compared to Derogatis SCL-90-R normative sample

Symptom dimension	Palestinian Women	SCL-90-R normative sample
Somatisation	0.62	0.36
Interpersonal sensitivity	0.66	0.29
Obsessive- compulsive	0.97	0.39
Depression	0.86	0.36
Anxiety	0.67	0.30
Hostility	0.67	0.30
Phobia	0.54	0.13
Paranoia ideation	0.62	0.34
Psychoticism	0.37	0.14
GSI	0.70	0.31
PSDI	1.85	1.32
PST	32.30	50.17

Source: Sansur (1995). Palestinian Women & Mental Health, p. 36.

Table 2 - 3

Means of symptom scores of married and single women as reported by Sansur:

Marital status	Somatisation	Obsessive-Compulsive	Depression	Anxiety
Single	0.44	0.93	0.93	0.72
Married	0.65	0.98	0.85	0.69

Source: Sansur (1995), Palestinian women and mental health,, p.54

The social and psychological strains on Palestinian women vary only in degree rather than in type, when it comes to demographic variables. For instance, Najjar and Warnock (1992) observed that unmarried Palestinian women cannot live alone in an independent house whether they are working or not, old or young, living in the city or village. These women are unable to choose their work type or location. Women may also be monitored by their families concerning leaving home, being out late, freedom to use their salaries, and choosing their style of dress (Sayigh, 1992; Manasra, 1990; Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994; Najjar & Warnock, 1992). Palestinian women are living under multiple stressors. It is sometime difficult to tell which factors play the major role in developing psychological distress for Palestinian women.

Demographic variables are believed to influence one's mental health state (Khamis, 1998; Sansur, 1995; Hassan, 1981; Punamaki, 1988). There is a belief that the place of residence has influence on the individual's mental health conditions (Sansur, 1995; Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994; Punamaki, 1988; Sansur, 1999). According to Sansur (1995), the place of residence was more significantly correlated with anxiety than other symptom dimensions. Women living in cities showed significantly higher mean scores on symptom dimensions than those living in villages or refugee camps, most notably in depression (Sansur, 1995). This variation may be related to the pressure of living in urban areas with more demands for women to share in the financial burden of the family, in addition to stress due to political problems. Women living in urban areas suffered poverty and crowding in housing, which indicate that the situation in the home matters more than the outside problems or stressors (Sansur, 1995).

On the other hand, Khamis (1998) reported that women from rural areas have higher scores than refugee and city women in relation to the levels of psychological distress, however; there were no significant differences in relation to well-being. This means that even though women who live in rural areas are more stressed and burdened by life and home responsibilities, they learned to adapt well and they are highly resilient. On the other hand, Punamaki (1988) reported that women who live in refugee camps were the most hopeful, more social and politically active, and less anxious than women who live in cities and villages ($p < 0.01$). One positive characteristic of the Palestinian society that people claim they have is high adaptability and resilience.

Table 2 – 4

Means of symptom scores for locality for Palestinian women as reported by Sansur:

Locality	Somatization	Obsessive-compulsive	Depression	Anxiety	General symptom distress
City	0.74	1.0	1.0	0.87	0.82
Village	0.60	0.92	0.76	0.62	0.65
Camp	0.54	0.98	0.86	0.67	0.65

Source: Sansur (1995), Palestinian women & mental health, p. 48

Education is believed to influence the life and coping abilities of the individual. Secondary and above level of education has good effect on women's sense of well-being (Sansur, 1995; Khamis, 1998; Punamaki, 1988). Khamis (1998) reported that low education, old age and low income of the family were positively correlated with high scores of psychological distress and

low well-being. Symptoms of distress in Palestinian women increased with urbanization, crowding, poor housing, and reduced income (Sansur, 1995).

Punamaki (1988) reported that well-educated Palestinian women were more adaptive and used active life and social and political activities to confront their psychological problems and crisis. On the other hand, Sansur (1995) reported that Palestinian women with six years and less of education showed significantly higher mean symptom dimensions than those with more years of education. Poorly-educated women showed significantly more symptoms of somatization, depression, and obsessive-compulsive symptoms (Sansur, 1995). The older single women with poor education and socioeconomic status, and lack of social or family support, show the highest symptom intensity scores (Sansur, 1995). This result of Sansur contradicted Al-Sa`adawi's (1983) findings who reported that younger and educated Egyptian women have more depression and/or anxiety. Negative life events and daily life problems according to Khamis (1998) and Punamaki (1988) were more predictive of psychological distress and well-being than the presence of a trauma or political stressors.

In Palestinian society, women have more psychological problems and distress than men in all categories according to Heiberg and Qvensen (1994), Al-Alami (1983), and Gaza Community Mental Health Program (1997). For instance, Al-Alami (1983) reported that 67.2% of Palestinian adolescent girls suffer from psychological problems in comparison to 59% of the males. Table (2-9) shows rates and percentages of symptoms of distress by gender as observed by Heiberg and Qvensen (1994).

Researchers believe that there is a significant influence of the political situation on women's mental health (Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994; Khamis, 1998; Khamis, 2000; Punamaki, 1986; www.swmsa.com/modules.php). War situation, armed struggle and political conflicts could lead to bad psychological conditions of those who live through them. Unfortunately, civilians are the mostly affected by wars and armed conflicts. Political struggle is characterized by endangering lives of civilians where masses of people are victimized and oppressed. Wars, political struggle and armed conflicts significantly influence a large number of people whether soldiers, civilians, militants, and enemies.

The United Nation set agreements to protect women during war situations. Geneva conventions III and IV attest that women should be protected during war situation by all countries. Of course, these conventions of the UN are often breached and women pay high price byt all means (www.swmsa.com/modules.php).

Table 2 - 5

Percentages of symptoms of distress by gender as reported by Heiberg & Qvensen

Symptoms of distress	Men %	Women %
Headache	36	47
Fatigue & tiredness	47	52
Depression	28	30
Impaired memory	20	28
Impaired concentration	25	27
Sleep disturbance	34	36
Irritability & nervousness or/ and Anxiety	44	49

Source: Heiberg & Qvensen (1994), Palestinian society in West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Arab Jerusalem, p. 122.

Women are victims of discrimination and prejudice in war and peacetime. The influence of wars and other political crisis on women vary according to nature and severity of danger that they are exposed to, in addition to duration of the crises (www.swmsa.com/modules). Women and girls usually are victimized during war situation because both the enemies and the revolutionary use and /or abuse them. Political struggles usually negatively influence women's health, and economic, social and psychological state. For instance, most of the refugees are women and children, and they are the mostly victimized (www.swmsa.com/modules). Women are raped and sexually harassed; kidnapped and arrested; tortured and injured during armed struggles and wars (www.swmsa.com/modules). Women may find themselves in awkward position as they have to adjust to high level of crisis themselves in addition to maintaining their families and protecting their children.

During wars and armed struggles, insecurity and lack of safety are common feelings on the part of civilians (www.swmsa.com/modules). Military conflicts lead to devastating outcomes for women at the psychosocial level. Women especially, feel insecure and distressed because of uncertainly about the future of their families and the absence or missing status of their male relatives (www.swmsa.com/modules). Absence of men as breadwinners drives women to the labor market. However, many might not be ready for this change. They find themselves suddenly responsible for taking care of the children and older relatives; have to support their families financially and socially and have to prove themselves as competent leaders of their families and societies (www.swmsa.com/modules).

A common outcome of armed conflicts is the regression of societies in postwar years. Usually, women pay the highest price when social regression occurs. Some societies try to return to pre-war times socially and economically. In turn, women are pushed back within the walls of their houses and communities, which negatively influence women. They are taken out of their work and leadership roles in economy and social-political positions and are replaced by the men who survived the war situation. This situation reverses women's status and places them in an inferior status. They feel betrayed and exploited by their communities and political leaders (www.swmsa.com/modules).

On the other hand, the shortage of men threatens women's chance for marriage because wars always lead to high casualties between men. As a result, the societies living under political conflicts have sex ratio variation where women numbers exceed those of men especially among younger generations who actively participate in political activities (www.swmsa.com/modules).

Most societies in a war situation expect women to increase their fertility rate to compensate for the lost lives. In turn, this has negative influence on women's health. Such situations drive women into a vicious cycle where they live in big families with limited resources and poor health while men are away of house as most men are either killed, injured, arrested or taking a role in armed struggle and war activities (www.swmsa.com/modules).

Women are not always victims in wars and armed struggles. They might be militants, soldiers, revolutionaries, or supporters of their countries or political parties. They participate in various activities of armed conflicts, some of which are honorable while others could be shameful to them and their societies. Women help their countries during wars and national struggle through participating in the fight, rescuing activities, carrying and transferring medical and food supplies, replacing men in factories; guiding fighters through villages and cities; carrying messages and information; distributing leaflets and brochures; spying; housing and hiding militants and soldiers; doing suicide and martyrdom activities; political socialization of their children and transferring the culture of nationalism and liberation.

On the other hand, women sometimes participate in dishonorable activities either willingly or under force. Women sometimes sell sex to the enemies as away of protecting self and earning their living. Others encourage their men to kill for revenge or pleasure and to destroy the morale of the enemy. Unfortunately, sometimes the so called enemies are civilians or militia of a nearby village or tribe who live on the same land. During religious and political parties' disputes, the two parties belong to one society and they are caught in a draining civil war or conflict. In such situations, the two parties lose and the whole society is devastated and

all people live in a nationwide tragedy. Moreover, women may become collaborators, traitors, or spies for the enemy, which could happen willingly or through infidelity and betrayal of others; that is known as "Isqat" in Arabic languages. These two forms of treachery and espionage are practiced by Israeli intelligence forces to destroy Palestinian society.

In stress research, it is generally accepted that the meaning given to and the appraisal of traumatic experience are important to their outcome therefore, people develop psychological symptoms because of their psychological appraisal of the world (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987). When a person perceives an event as tragic and devastating to his/her life, he/she would react to this event in a dramatic way. For instance, some people consider losing one's land as more traumatic than death of a family member. On the other hand, others consider loss of significant person is the most devastating in life.

A study was done by group of researchers to evaluate the influence of war situation and exile within south Sudan on 112 women from three ethnic backgrounds, Arabs, Nili and Nubi (www.swmsa.com/modules). The results of the study show that most women had good adaptability and a small number of psychological symptoms and that there was no significant difference among women of the three ethnic backgrounds. Duration of exile has significant negative effect on women's adaptability to war situations because long-term stress eventually hinders their lives. For instance, in the above study on Sudani women, they seem to adapt well to war situations because their early lives were pleasant and they learnt good coping skills during times of peace. In addition, the years of the political struggle taught women to adopt new skills in dealing with stressful living (www.swmsa.com).

Yaqoub (1999) proposed that people who are exposed to traumatic events do not always develop psychological distress or post-traumatic stress disorder if they have previous good coping abilities and strong support system. In addition, people who integrated traumatic experience in their cognitive system and learnt to cope with future traumatic events do not become emotionally ill (Yaqoub, 1999). Studies of survivors of detention camps and torture indicate that only 51% of the distressed and 65% of the tortured people experience post-traumatic symptoms (Yaqoub, 1999). In a study done on Salvadoran women who were exposed to political traumas, they did not show complete diagnostic criteria of PTSD however; they have symptoms or partial PTSD (Jenkins, 1996). The rationale could be that these women lived chronic situational distress therefore stress becomes a daily thing and they become accustomed to it (Jenkins, 1996). The women according to Jenkins repressed their pain and feelings and they learned to adapt to the long-term traumatic situation. This explains

why Sudani and Salvadoran women in the above studies were highly adaptive despite the pervasive traumatic life they lived in.

Palestinian women live in a society that is known for its high exposure to violence in the streets and within the houses. The enormous political and social pressures in Palestine have added new responsibilities to women in addition to the old ones, which added stressors and conflicts to their lives (Punamaki, 1985; Jad, 1991; Najjar & Warnock, 1992). The study of Khamis (1998) indicated that cumulative life changes have a major impact on the psychological well-being of traumatized women. This is understood in a society where women have role constraints as the men are absent due to political violence.

Events that happen suddenly, without prior notice are considered to be the most traumatic for human beings. Expected events usually have less damage on the individual, but this does not mean that they cause no pain and suffering for the survivors. Usually, the Israeli army suddenly attacks the villages, refugee camp, and highly crowded neighborhoods in cities and this mostly happens at night while people are asleep. Almost every time the Israeli army invades the Palestinian occupied Territories, they create terror and insecurity in the Palestinians whose only weapon is praying that the army withdraws with minimal devastating effects.

Life stressors that exceed an individual's tolerance have been recognized as critical determinants in the development of psychological distress (Khamis, 2000). Within Palestinian society, women are more exposed to stressful experiences including exploitation at work, inequality in social resources, continuous exposure to trauma and stress due to political situation, role strain and constraint; all these things make it difficult for women to manage the hardship and difficulties of transitions and crisis (Khamis, 2000). Being a female has been associated with psychiatric symptoms according to Khamis (2000).

Post-traumatic stress disorders are more common among women who were released from prisons and those who were in direct contact with torture, abuse, violence and harassment by the Israelis (Al-Amad, 1996; Punamaki, 1988; Punamaki, 1986). In her voluntary work with adolescent Palestinian girls who have actively participated in demonstrations and other revolutionary activities against the Israeli occupation, Al-Amad (1996) noted that these women complained of depression, anxiety, hypervigilance, post-traumatic stress disorder, panic disorder, and loneliness. Al-Amad reported that the single women who are over age 20 suffered of low self-esteem and were frustrated about their lives. This was possibly because they were not married and they wondered if they have something wrong in themselves.

Khamis who has done a study on 900 men and women who have been exposed to political trauma, said: "*although post-traumatic reactions arise as a direct result of the experience of political traumas among afflicted family members, the chronicity and severity of reactions are also a function of other psychosocial factors. In particular, the support received from others; the person's appraisal of his or her social, economic, and political condition; the life events experienced in the post trauma environment may all exacerbate symptoms*" (Khamis, 2000 p. 100). Khamis (2000) found that 35% of the sample of Palestinian families she studied met full criteria for PTSD diagnosis after they have been exposed to traumatic political events.

Experiencing a family member killed had a higher rate of PTSD than those having a family member imprisoned, a house demolished, a family member injured or undergoing more than one traumatic event (Khamis, 2000). According to Khamis (2000), the prevalence of PTSD was higher in women than men. However, age and religion was not relevant. Among those who met full criteria for PTSD, 61.3% of women had PTSD compared to 38.7% of men (Khamis, 2000). Significant differences were found between PTSD rates and marital status ($\chi^2 = 16.05$, $df = 3$, $p < 0.001$) (Khamis, 2000 p. 42). The widowed and the divorced had the highest rates of PTSD compared to the married people. Significant differences were found between PTSD status and occupation. Homemakers and unemployed Palestinians had the highest rates of PTSD compared to employed people ($\chi^2 = 26.9$, $df = 5$, $p < .001$) (Khamis, 2000 p. 42). No significant difference in the rate of PTSD were observed in relation to residence (city, village, refugee camp), however Jerusalemites had a lower rate than the residents of the West Bank (Khamis, 2000). Nevertheless, a markedly higher rate (47%) was observed in the Gaza Strip residents according to the results of Khamis. This indicates that the more severe the exposure to traumatic experiences, the higher the prevalence of PTSD. In addition, living conditions and sociocultural factors do influence people's mental health when they are exposed to traumatic experiences. Since residents of Jerusalem relatively have better living conditions and less exposure to political traumatic than the citizen of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, they experienced lower levels of PTSD. "*The Palestinian definition of a trauma may vary according to the perceived magnitude and nature of the events*" (Khamis, 2000 p. 53). Being imprisoned is perceived as better than being killed, and being deported is viewed as less drastic for the Palestinian family than being imprisoned (Kkhamis, 2000).

The results of Khamis (2000) study indicated that lower socioeconomic level or lesser educational attainment was associated with greater symptoms of cognitive disturbance,

depression, anxiety, and despair, whereas being single, unemployed or a house-wife was associated with PTSD in people exposed to traumatic political conditions (Khamis, 2000). The Gaza Strip has considerably more political unrest and violence, including arbitrary unrest, beatings, raids, and torture in addition to poverty and overcrowding which may elevate rates of post-traumatic stress disorder. However, in the West Bank, communities and distance between them are greater than in the Gaza Strip, which makes life easier and socioeconomic condition better, thus emotional problems are less prevalent.

Social and political factors do affect the coping and mental health of Palestinian women (Punamaki, 1986). Exposure to violence of the Israeli occupiers during the years of direct contact increased the rates of emotional illnesses among Palestinian women. Women tend to adjust to the daily life difficulties of the political situation by becoming more active socially, using defense mechanisms, anxiety, aggression, and withdrawal (Punamaki, 1988). Punamaki reported emotional illnesses such as depression, psychosomatic illnesses, anxiety, inferiority, low self-esteem, feeling of victimization, being over stressed, dependency, and helplessness among Palestinian women even before the Uprising of 1987-1992. Fifty five percent of the women in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip suffer from serious psychological symptoms compared to 21% of Arab women in Israel, who have low exposure to political violence and harassment (Punamaki, 1988).

Women also manifest emotional problems, especially those who were exposed to house demolition, arrest, land confiscation, beating by soldiers, house search etc. When compared with Palestinian women who live in Israel with limited exposure to the infringements of the Israeli occupiers, the women of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip had more psychological problems. Palestinian women who live in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip had higher rates of anxiety, anger and aggression, hostility, and sleep disturbances than their sisters living in Israel where there are less political and traumatic experiences (Punamaki, 1988). These data reflects the eventual and imminent influence of continuous trauma and political harassment on the well-being of Palestinian women as reported by Punamaki (1988).

In a study that have been done by Quota, Punamaki, and EL-Sarraj (1997) on the influence of house demotion on mental health of 47 adult Palestinians, victims and witnesses, it was found that women expressed more anxiety, paranoia, and depression than men in the loss and witness groups, whereas no sex differences were found in the control group. The researchers concluded that witnessing violence could be as traumatic as being its victim for

some people, and that depression was a common reaction to loss of one's house or property (Quota, Punamaki, & El-Sarraj, 1997).

Punamaki, Qouta and El-Sarraj (1997) have done a study on Palestinian children in the Gaza Strip during the first uprising (Intifada), to investigate association between traumatic events, children's gender and political activity, and parenting style among 108 Palestinians of 11-12 years of age. The results showed that the more the children were exposed to traumatic events, the more they perceived both their parents as strictly disciplining, rejecting, and hostile. The boys perceived both their parents as treating them more negatively than the girls (Punamaki, Quota & El-Sarraj, 1997). Traumatic events increased the perceived parental rejection and hostility only among the Palestinian boys in the study, and the perceived strict disciplining only among the girls (Punamaki, quota & El-Sarraj, 1997).

Table 2 - 6

Symptoms and psychological problems among Arab women living in Israel compared to Palestinian women living at West Bank and Gaza strip.

Symptom	Arab women in Israel	West Bank /Gaza
Anxiety (frequently)	35 %	66 %
Anger / Aggression	12 %	35 %
Depression	48%	50 %
Hostility	16 %	31 %
Sleep disturbance	18 %	65 %
Irritability exhaustion	Not reported	75 %

Resource: Punamaki (1988). Mental Health of Palestinian Women under the Israeli Occupation, p. 109 –111.

Some changes toward more positive attitudes have occurred in the last 10 years after the eruption of the Palestinian uprising. People started to understand the emotional and psychological problems and minor mental disturbances, such as depression, anxiety, and violence, as logical outcomes of the continuous war situation and Israeli occupation in the area. Palestinians started to accept psychological treatment of emotional illnesses that are war-produced, which indicate that some changes are emerging in the mentality of Palestinians.

Unmarried women may suppress their feelings of pain and bitterness because they are afraid of being scrutinized by others around them. When these feelings are released, the woman projects her suppressed feelings in her relationships at work, with men and women, and at home with those who live with her (Yasin, 1992; Sader, 1996). They also tend to envy and criticize married women and the way they run their lives and houses (Yasin, 1992; Sader, 1996).

After her 40s, the unmarried woman is accused of being hostile, lives in misery and brings despair and misery to her family (Sader, 1996). Sader believes that this psychological state of the unmarried Arab women is caused by loss of youth and health; lack of hope and goals in life; negative societal attitudes and views, and bad treatment of the unmarried woman.

Mental health professionals need to understand socioeconomic and cultural conditions in which the Palestinian unmarried women live. Changing women's living conditions can improve their mental health and prevent emotional distress. Professionals and policy makers need to develop preventive, intervention, and counseling services to help women who fail to cope with their living conditions. The health system has to incorporate gender issues in its policies to meet the needs of unmarried Palestinian women.

Understanding the role of gender in psychological problems requires being aware of gender-role-constructs, which may affect the type of psychological problems, existed in a particular society and their associated symptoms, and people's response to their problems. Moreover, there is a clear need for more research on the mental health services that are appropriate to women and the circumstances of their every day live.

XIII. The theoretical framework

Modern researchers in social sciences emphasize theoretical orientation in research. This is essential to increase knowledge of a specific phenomenon or to produce new theories based on research findings (Polit & Hungler, 1995; Lininger, 1992). Nursing as a science has borrowed from other social theories various constructs and concepts which are essential for the understanding of human beings as social objects (Lininger, 1992; Fawcett, 1989). The theory of symbolic interactionism was derived from the social interpretive theories that prevailed during the first half of the 20th century (Kneisl & Wilson, 1992; Deaux et al, 1993). Symbolic interactionist theory was developed by George Herbert Mead and refined by other sociologists, and was broadly used by social science researchers and scientists (Charon, 1989).

The symbolic interactionist perspective holds considerable promise for the construction of nursing knowledge. This theory, according to Kneisl and Wilson (1983), integrates most of the variables that contemporary mental health nursing needs to address; the person, the environment, and behavior. The symbolic interactionist perspective perceives human beings as creatures who define and classify situations including themselves and who choose ways of acting towards them. It is oriented towards understanding people as social beings (Benoliel, 1977). It provides a perspective on human behavior that makes a good fit with the researcher's interest in the effects of social interactions on the development of social identity, such as being unmarried as a woman in Palestinian society.

The symbolic interactionism explores the reflexive character of all interpretations of the meaning of the action of others. The social environment of an individual has tremendous influence on the individual (Bherm & Kassin, 1992; Al- Zieud, 1998; Zahran, 1982; Deaux et al, 1993; Williams & Sheffe, 1989). According to Charles Horton Cooley, who originated the concept of the "looking glass self", *we learn that we can influence other people, and we are also deeply concerned with how others see us. We learn to see ourselves as objects through the eyes of others* (p. 34). This reflective image according to Hale (1990), invokes feeling of shame or pride, self-acceptance or self-rejection.

The self and others are connected and inseparable. The more the others are significant to us, the more they will influence our self-development and self-concept (Davis & Janosik, 1991). People are important to self-development but not exclusively, because our experiences, our actions, and the results of these actions, will help us define our self - concept (Deaux et al, 1993).

The self, according to Mead (1964), develops in the given individual as a result of the process of social experience, activity, interaction and relations to that process as a whole, and to other people within that process. One must distinguish between the experience that actually took place and one's own organization of it into the structure of the self (Deaux et al, 1993). The self, therefore, is reflexive and indicates that it is a combination of both subjective and objective experiences.

George Herbert Mead (1963) conceptualized the self as comprising both the "I" and the "Me". The "Me" is: *the internalized other and is formed through the common set of attitudes and definitions of our significant others* (Hale, 1990, p. 34). On the other hand, the "I" represents *the uniqueness of the individual, the impulsive, spontaneous, and reflective aspects of the person* (Hale, 1990, p. 34). According to McDavid and Harari (1974), *self is the totality of actions and behavior of the single individual. The self represents the summation*

of what an individual is behaviorally, thus it represents the object of perception that he/she is (p.157).

Self-concept is an important construct in personality development (Millikan, 1987). Self-concept is: *the composite of a person's beliefs and feelings about himself or herself at a given time. Self-concept is formed from the perception of others' reactions, and it directs one's behavior* (Johnson 1993, p. 883). According to McDavid & Harari (1974), *Self-concept includes elements of sheer perceptual recognition, which do not necessarily always correspond fully to the reality of the self, because various distortions in self-perception may occur* (p.157).

The nature of self-concept automatically influence other constructs of the self including, body image, self-esteem, self-worth, personal identity, and life roles (Rawlins & Heacock, 1993). In addition, social scientists and psychologists have emphasized the strong relationship between one's self-concept and behavior. When an individual has positive self-concept, he/she feels assertive and confident, and the actions of this person reflect his/her inner self (Millikan, 1987). On the other hand, people with negative self-concept will be hesitant, dependent, powerless, and lack confidence of self and their behavior reflect such feelings.

The interrelationship of self-concept, self-perception, and behavior was strongly conceptualized by the symbolic interactionism perspective (Deaux et al, 1993). Symbolic interactionism explains human behavior in terms of meaning and embodies perceptions of the situation (Morse & Field, 1987). Symbolic interactionist perspectives propose three main premises that are associated to this discussion:

- 1. Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meaning that things have for them.*
- 2. The meaning of things in life is derived from the social interactions a person has with others.*
- 3. People handle and modify the meanings of the things they encounter through an interpretative process* (Kneisl & Wilson, 1983, p. 4).

People are supposed to have a neutral self-concept, which is congruent with their daily life experiences of success and failure (Millikan, 1987). Those who encountered successes more often tend to develop positive self-concepts, and visa versa (Millikan, 1987). In turn, we find three kinds of people according to (Millikan, 1987), who are:

- 2- People who are realistic in their self-concept and they have either positive or negative self-concepts. One group of these people perceive themselves realistically as achievers and self-confident because they succeeded in life and evaluate themselves positively. The second group evaluate themselves negatively because they fail in tasks and responsibilities, and they undervalue themselves; thus they have negative self-concept.
- 3- People who have an idealistic self-concept, which is incongruent with their reality. These people perceive themselves as important and have big value in life however; their achievements do not match their self-evaluation. These people are arrogant, snobbish and over value themselves (Johnson, 1997). Nevertheless, others around these people do not have similar opinion and they do not value them as they value themselves. Unfortunately, people who overvalue themselves and overestimate their abilities eventually become disappointed because their social environment does not reward or reinforce their self- perception.
- 4- The third group of people consists of those who degrade themselves and their achievements. These people do not appreciate their abilities and successes and they undermine their progress thus they feel inferior and losers.

Self-perception is one's evaluation and perception of self, new experiences, feelings, and behavior (Charon, 1989). According to Charon (1989), the self-perception and the self-concept is one thing, and sometimes self-perception is known as the "individual's self-concept". The self-perception is the synonym of looking-glass self in a mirror (McDavid & Harari, 1974). One's self-perception reflects the social values and beliefs that were transferred from the social systems to the individual through socialization process (Charon, 1989). Self-perception is selective and is based on interpersonal feedback. Therefore, a positive self-perception is correlated with acceptance of others, approval of significant others, and respect and appreciation of the social environment of the individual. According to Baryl Bem, we learn about ourselves through observing the reaction of others (symbols) toward us and our behaviors (Brehma & Kassin, 1992). In the end, we see ourselves as we think our significant others see us, which is called by Mead "assuming the role of the significant other" (Charon, 1989, P. 159). On the other hand, we also learn about ourselves through self-perception when the situation we encountered is new, and then we interpret our behavior to infer meaning for this behavior (Brehm & Kassin, 1992).

Social psychologists have debated the relationship between the self-perception of an individual and his / her social environment (Millikan, 1987; Williams & Shefe, 1989). Self-concept development is affected by social values as well as an individual's perception of his/her behavior in the social context. Values and opinions of others, especially in the early years of childhood, play an important part in the development of a person's self-concept (Rawlins & Heacock, 1993). Through identification with others, the individual formulates a perceptual system of norms, values, and behaviors.

The socialization process is the core source for developing one's personality and self-concept (Millikan, 1987; Al-khouli, 1989; McDavid & Harari, 1974). The self-concept of an individual is influenced by an individual's social relationships, friendships, education, culture, and experiences in life (Millikan, 1987; Davis & Janosik, 1991). The most important source for the development of self-concept is home. There in the home, the individual develops his self-concept and self-value through the socialization process. *"The home is the first and most effective place for children to learn the lessons of life, truth, honor, virtue, self-control, the value of education, honest work and the purpose and privilege of life. Nothing can take the place of home in rearing and teaching children, and no other success can compensate for failure in the home"* (www.interactivemom.com).

People vary in how much they value social relationships however; we cannot deny the importance of family opinion and values on our self-perception. When we are loved and respected by our parents, we tend to feel worthy and valued thus we develop positive views about our world and ourselves (Hale, 1990). The opposite will happen in those of us who did not receive signals that tell them that they are loved, appreciated, and respected by their significant others. Thus, these people are more vulnerable for negative self-concept construction and might hate themselves and their world (Hale, 1990; Millikan, 1987).

One is likely to approve or disapprove the elements and aspects of self that others approve or disapprove. When one feels he/she is rejected or not accepted in the social group, he/she develops low self-esteem, because approval and acceptance by others is essential for one's liking and approval of self (Millikan, 1987; Myers, 1983). Negative self-concept is based on a set of values that tend to develop on perceived failure to perform adequately in general, and on belittling responses from people particularly significant others (Rawlins & Heacock, 1993). Negative self-esteem or self-worth is reflected on an individual's sense of successes or failure to achieve at a level of performance consistent with his own expectations or ideals and those of others (Rawlins & Heacock, 1993).

Nevertheless, because self-perception includes elements of sheer perceptual recognition, which do not necessarily always, correspond fully to the reality of the self, various distortions may occur to one's self-perception (McDavid & Harari, 1974). Examples of distortion in self-perception include self-serving bias, self-deception, self-serving attributions, self-congratulatory comparisons, projection, paranoia, and self-handicapping (Myers, 1983). According to Myers (1983), people who have low self-esteem and negative self-perception tend to compensate for these feelings as away of coping through using self-serving bias.

Altered self-perception has consequences on the individual. People with an altered sense of self do not do things that are in their own interest but rather thing that maintain their self-image (Davies & Janosik, 1991). People who have negative self-concept and low self-esteem live in constant fear of rejection and failure, incompetence, inadequacy, inferiority, and self-defeating behaviors (Rawlins & Heacock, 1993; Davies & Janosik, 1991). According to Davies and Janosik, (1991) people with an altered self could become close-minded, compulsive, rigid, hostile, clinging and dependent, exploited or exploit and manipulate others; oriented toward fame and prestige; alienated and feel estranged to self. Researchers believe that many people with low self-esteem are passive, dependent, anxious, and occasionally depressed, and that negative self-concept is associated with major mental disorder such as depression, anxiety disorder, personality disorder as well as other conditions (Rawlins & Heacock, 1993).

Some theorists such as Millikan (1987) and Charon (1989) believe that the self-concept and self-perception of an individual remain virtually the same over the years, whether positive or negative. Millikan and Charon hypothesize that once self concept has established in the first six years of life, it does not change much during adulthood years. On the other hand, other researchers believe that self-concept could change with time and adulthood experiences (Hale, 1991)

Self- schemas are beliefs about oneself that guide the processing of self-relevant information (Brehma & Kassin, 1992). *"Self-schemas are important because they lead people to interpret and recall their life experiences according to certain personality relevant themes"* (Brehma & Kassin, 1992, P. 65). Usually, we view others through the lenses of our self-schemas. If we are over weight, we start to observe others around as who are also over weight and we compare ourselves with them (Brehma & Kassin, 1992). When we are single, we identify with those who are unmarried, we ask why they are not married, whether they are happy or not, and if they are going to marry in the future or not (Brehma & Kassin, 1992).

Self-awareness is an important component of self-concept. People often become aware of themselves; their thinking, feeling, and behavior by watching what they do or not do and the circumstances in which this behavior occurs according to Deaux et al, (1993). This process of self-observation leads to the development of certain feelings and cognitions about self. Through self-observation and internalization of feeling and thinking, people discover that they either have a negative self-evaluation or a positive self-evaluation. A negative self-evaluation usually leads to depression, anxiety, and low-self esteem, anger, or guilt (Deaux et al, 1993; Johnson, 1997; Burgess, 1990).

People usually evaluate themselves in comparison to others of similar sex, status, age, or social belonging (Deaux et al, 1993). In turn, the individual comes to term with self either accepts it or hates it; feels happy or feels angry and disappointed with self. Self-awareness pressures people to reduce self-discrepancy by matching their behavior to personal or societal standards, or withdrawing from self-awareness to self-deceptive behaviors and excessive use of defense mechanisms (Brehm & Kassin, 1992).

The “Reference group” as Davies and Janosik (1991) and Charon (1989, p. 126), called it, or the “Generalized other”, as named by Hale (1990, p. 134), represents the most significant group in one’s life whose standards are used to evaluate aspects of self. Reference groups are those groups whose perspectives are shared with the individual. Human beings identify with a number of social worlds (reference groups), and learn through communication (symbolic interaction) (Charon, 1989). The perspectives (symbolic/conceptual framework) of these social worlds are used to define or interpret situations that one encounters (Charon, 1989). Individuals interact with their reference groups and formulate perspectives about life that are turned into behaviors and actions. According to Charon (1989), good ways to understand people are through analysis of their behavior and understanding of their mind, symbols, and self.

People usually act and react according to their expectations of what is accepted or not by the social group they belong to (Brehm & Kassin, 1992). Interaction with people may affirm one’s actions and reality or may change it by objectifying doubts. Social stability depends on accurate analysis of the behavior of other people, and on the capacity of the person to regulate his or her own behavior to fit the group’s standards and to conform to his or her social group (Williams & Sheffe, 1989).

Conformity and adhering to the rules, norms, and values of the majority preserves social control and enhances feeling of belonging of the individual. This is done either because people have accepted these standards, or because they respect the powerful institutions

(family, school, law, church), that have the means to punish (Davies & Janosik, 1991; McDavid & Harari, 1974). It is the majority in the structure of social reality who decides what behavior is accepted or not (McDavid & Harari, 1974; Feldman, 2000). When an individual does not conform to the wishes or demands of the social majority, he or she exposes him or herself to social sanctions. In certain cases, the desire to be totally identified and affiliated with the dominant social majority may lead to perceptual distortion in self-concept (McDavid & Harari, 1974).

The self-construct represents the relation between the individual and his/her social environment and the meaning the individual gives to others. Self-construct is developed through socialization in one's particular culture and is shaped and formed through gendered social interaction, gender-typed social roles, and gender-related expectations (Cross & Madson, 1997). Consequently, specific self-representations reflect the core principles that underlie the self-construct.

People in general are either independent or interdependent in their self constructs. While interdependent people, according to Cross and Madson (1997), see the self as part of others and others as part of the self, independent people view others as separate from the self. It is believed that individuals with independent self-constructs behave primarily as a consequence of their internal attributes that are distinguished from representations of others or the social context (Cross & Madson, 1997).

People with an interdependent self-construct value social groups and relationships and they care a lot about others. Their self-representations are woven together with others within the social context (Cross & Madson, 1997). The primary goal of an individual here is to develop self-defining relationships and to maintain connectedness with others. People who have interdependent self-construal may develop low self-esteem and depression if their relationships with others are damaged or they feel unrelated or disconnected to others. This is probably the reason for the high rates of unipolar depression, fear, and nervousness in women, since they are more affected by dissolution of interpersonal relationships (Cross & Madson, 1997).

Individuals from collective cultural backgrounds such as Palestinian society are more socialized to develop interdependent self-construal (Sabella, 1982; Sharabi, 1987; Al-Kalili, 1977). The behavior of Palestinians is shaped and directed by responsiveness to the needs and wishes of close others and through a negotiation of the demands of important roles. As a result, the Palestinians have sensitivity to the situational constraints that influence their own and others' behavior (Sharabi, 1987; Kanaaneh, 1983). Therefore, Palestinians care a lot to

what happens to their neighbors and relatives and their social behavior is characterized by sharing others their pains, sorrow, and happy events. They also care a lot about how they are perceived by others in the society thus they try hard to preserve their reputation.

One construct was added to the theory of symbolic interactionism is that of "Labeling" (Hall, 1987, p. 88). People who have power and authority impose labels upon others in certain situations and they classify others into categories of performance, appealing, wrong and right; and they set boundaries and lines of value and deviance. People who have power determine the fate and future of those who are subordinate to them. According to "labeling theory", deviant behavior lies as much in the perception of the onlooker as in the actual behavior thus, once labeled, the person is typified in a way that will strongly influence how others react to him (Hale, 1990). Therefore, when important community figures label a person as deviant, stranger, or bizarre, others in the community start to react and interact with the labeled person according to the label. In turn, the person who has the label is expected to act in a certain way that confirms the label (Hale, 1990).

The state of mind influences the perception of daily life events. When we value something, we tend to see it as important and as bigger than it is in reality (Johnson, 1997). Apparently, one's motives, emotions, values, and goals cause the individuals to emphasize those incidents that had personal significance for them (Davidoff, 1983; Rajeh, 1978). Accordingly, an individual will respond to her/his environment not as it is in reality, but as he/she perceives it.

XIV. Gender and the self-concept:

Deaux et al, (1993) conceptualized gender as almost an inevitable part of one's self-concept because it is a visible characteristic. Through the socialization process people learn implicitly or explicitly the cultural beliefs and values that are associated with their gender (Sharabi, 1987; McDavid & Harari, 1974; Al-Khuli, 1989). As a boy or girl, gender identity influences one's roles, occupational choices, playmates, self-concept and self-perception (Deaux et al, 1993). Both men and women do assert a claim to self-esteem, much of which is derived from gender identification (www.cyberparent.com/gender).

Young girls have been programmed and socialized into the feminine role from infancy. Girls are taught to have low aspirations and decreased ambitions, and they grow with a feeling that whatever they do, it will not be satisfactory enough for others (Williams, 1993). They have been told that too much education, success, and empowerment may scare away the men therefore; these qualities are not essential for women. They are raised as less valued than

their brothers; as weak and who need protection, and as vulnerable and fragile. The social and familial behaviors directed toward girls increase the likelihood that they would build negative self-concepts, and when they become older, they become emotionally sensitive and they live dependent lives (Williams, 1993). In turn, many women live as dependent, inferior, and submissive and they believe that these qualities are original in themselves. Other women defend such qualities and when they become mothers, raise their daughter to be like them (Williams, 1993).

Disproval and rejection of the girl by her family especially the parents lead to negative self-perception and low self-evaluation. Girls who live in families where they hear daily that they are not wanted; they are a burden on the family; they are weak and fragile; they are not smart and have "no brains"; have no rights but only obligations; were born to serve others; do not deserve to be educated; have to be controlled and supervised,...etc. will grow with the believe that they are worthless, inferior, powerless, dependent, helpless, and shameful of self. Later when these girls go to school and join other social activities, they encounter cultural patterns similar to those found in their families, and the self-construct that was established at home is exaggerated and reinforced.

Self-concept and self-evaluation vary among families and gender. Studies done on girls' and boys' self-description reported that being a female is an important feature of the self-concept of girls whose families included more males than females (Deaux et al, 1993). Girls of these families tended to differentiate themselves as females more often than in families where there are more female children present than male children (Deaux et al, 1993). In a study on Egyptian working women, Adam (1982) observed that women have role-conflict and are unable to adapt to pressures of family life and paid work when they perceive themselves negatively. On the other hand, women who had positive self-perception were more able to confront social conflicts and to rebuild their roles rather than just comply with expectations of the men or the society (Adam, 1982).

Women and men have different self-constructs. The studies of McGurine, Clancy and Dollinger show that boys usually draw themselves alone, while girls draw themselves with family members or others (Deaux et al, 1993). Women are more likely to evaluate themselves in interdependent relationships, while men are more likely to evaluate themselves as independent, strong, powerful, and self-sufficient (Cross & Madson, 1997).

Research confirms that parenting styles vary according to the gender of the child (Puanmaki, Quota & El-Sarraj, 1997). Mother-child relationship is relatively warm, active and responsive while father child interaction is more likely to be punitive, firm, and

restrictive (Punamaki, Quota & El-Sarraj, 1997). Palestinian fathers tend to treat their sons by punishment and discipline whereas they use more caring and emotional involvement with their daughters (Punamaki, Qouta, & El-Sarraj, 1997). However, when it comes to building positive self-concept and body-image, the girls are raised to feel less worthy and valuable than their brothers, which usually have negative influence on the construction of the self-concept of the girl.

The position of an individual occupies in the social hierarchy is related to his or her conception of himself/herself. Female role models depicted in Arab literature, movies, TV series, and media are often emotional, dependent thinkers, seductive, irrational, and irresponsible. They have low self-esteem; negative self-evaluation; and they lack confidence of themselves. The Arab woman was best fitted in the mold of a wife and mother. The woman's ultimate status in the media would be dependent on her husband's skills and competence in leading home and making decisions. In turn, it is expected that women in Arab society, who are raised in their social systems as inferior and disvalued to have negative self-perception or self concept. This situation becomes more complicated for the unmarried women who are only valued as wives and mothers, and who might be excluded from their societies just because they are located outside the common majority. Of course, this is dependent on how each unmarried woman perceives herself within the larger society and her group of reference in particular.

Realistic and positive self-perception is essential for the mental health of the individual. Positive self-perception means high self-esteem, which is associated with being adaptive; low vulnerability to neurosis and drug addiction; positive view of others; self-efficacy and happiness, and health (Myers, 1983; Millikan, 1987). On the other hand, people who were abused; were deprived of basic biological and emotional needs, and encountered social and economic oppression are more vulnerable for negative self-concept (Rawlins & Heacock, 1993). People who are disapproved, rejected, disrespected, and humiliated by others around them will be vulnerable for having negative self-concept and self-perception, low self-esteem and self-evaluation, and distorted identity formation.

Mental health professionals noted that unrealistic self-perception leads to self-deception, projection and blame of others; resistance to change; rationalization; inferiority and envy; paranoid ideation, and ineffectiveness (Myers, 1983; Zahran, 1982). A person who has an altered self-concept may show features of rigidity, dependency, alienation, estrangement to self, hostility, loss of control, insecurity, inferiority, and vulnerability (Davis & Janosik, 1991).

Based on symbolic interactionism perspectives and self-concept models, it is expected that the unmarried Palestinian women will react to the issue of marriage in accordance to their perception of this issue. Since being married is highly stressed and valued by Palestinian society, it is believed that remaining unmarried is perceived negatively by single women, and this will be reflected negatively on their self-perception, self-esteem, and mental health. Since the symbols and interactions of the social environment of the unmarried girl are expected to be congruent with the traditional believe about marriage and "unmarried women", it is expected that unmarried women will sense that and react to it. The reaction could be destructive or constructive depending on personal, familial, and sociocultural variables under which the girl lives. The investigator expects that the mental health and self-perception of the Palestinian women of the present study will be significantly influenced by the attitudes and reactions of their social environment.

When the unmarried woman think that she is unwanted or unlucky, that she might not achieve her dreams of becoming a mother and wife; is probably going to live alone; that her community will look at her as "a spinster", she might try to reduce her sense of self-devaluation by either becoming self-centered or socially inhibited. According to Brehm & Kassin (1992), the strategies of self-centeredness and social inhibition are usually used unconsciously by people who have self-discrepancies when they discover that their realities are dissimilar to their wishes and dreams. These women will feel disappointed, frustrated, unfulfilled, and sad (Brehm & Kassin, 1992).

For unmarried women in Arabic Palestinian society, the strong need to identify with the majority of women may lead to negative self-concept as they see themselves as different from the norm. Thee unmarried women may try to improve their self-image by finding a reference group in the local community to whom they relate and belong. This reference group is probably composed of other unmarried women in their local communities.

The way the unmarried woman perceives herself positively or negatively, worthy or unworthy, inferior or equal to others, usually influences her expression of her needs and her attitudes towards meeting those needs (Johnson, 1993). The traditionally socialized women (like those of the Palestinian society), have continuously learnt to seek the approval of others, and that approval is crucial for the development of their self-concept (Williams, 1993). These women are at risk of developing feelings of inferiority, low self-esteem, negative self-perception and evaluation, anxiety, withdrawal, and even depression if they have failed to adjust to societal and familial demands and challenges as single women.

There is a need to have studies on emotional disorder across life cycle and across cultures. There is also a need to know the multiple factors that contribute to the various disorders that are more prevalent among women. Cross-cultural research will prevent researchers from making erroneous assumptions and inferences about psychological disorder as well as illuminate cultural variables that either contribute to or mitigate against these disorders particularly gender differences (Culbertson, 1997). Feminist nurses should go beyond caring for pregnant and childbearing women, and they have to tackle issues such as preventive health, aging, occupational health, mental health, and sociocultural issues of women. In addition, it is crucial that women's health movement incorporates gender-related issues in their programs and plans in order to tackle issues such as singlehood.

Women in Palestinian society are treated by inexperienced practitioners who have prejudice and misconceptions of women and who are unable to understand women's problems from a gendered perspective (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 1999). Sufficient health care and services in psychiatry and psychology for gender differences in mental health are not present in Palestinian society. It is necessary to develop better services and to strengthen the primary health services that are gender specific about mental health.

Therapists may perpetuate the glamorization of the single life by reiterating the advantages of being single and the reality that a woman can live a successful, productive, and a happy life without a husband (Lewis, Spring & Moon, 1997). Mental health professionals have to deal with each single woman in term of her own comfort with her singleness. The professional needs to consider possible causes for psychological conditions of the unmarried woman. In addition, health professionals need to help single women recognize their underutilized resources and strengths and recommend that they use them (Lewis, Spring & Moon, 1997).

Nurses have to understand the various needs and conflicts of women (Johnson, 1993). In order to do this from a symbolic interactionist perspective, they have to understand the meaning of marriage in Palestinian society and become familiar with the symbols and meanings associated with being unmarried as a woman in that society. All concerned with social changes in Palestinian society need to collaborate and organize their efforts to make changes in the sociocultural variables that influence the adaptation and homeostasis of various social groups in order to build a more mentally healthy society. Women are one of the groups at high risk in the Palestinian society and require special attention by mental health specialists and other professionals.

Family therapists and counselors need to understand singleness in order to help single adults to accomplish the developmental tasks of singleness (Lewis, et al, 1997). Nurse therapists have to understand how singleness interacts with relationship networks and how it is influenced by such relationships (Lewis, et al, 1997). It would be necessary for the mental health nurse who works as a family therapist, to help many single women recognize and /or resolve their contradictory feelings about being single, if these feelings exist (Lewis, et al, 1997). Therapists may need to consider possible causes of single women's depression and grief and help in treatment.

This study explored the influence of “remaining unmarried” on the feelings and self-perceptions of unmarried Palestinian women and how this affected their mental health status. The study sheds light for the first time on the social life of the unmarried Palestinian women and their opinions about their reasons for remaining unmarried. In addition, the sociocultural aspects of the life of women were discussed with emphasis on the influence of education, employment, residence, and social support on their mental health state. The study also highlighted suggestions to help women adjust to those sociocultural variables that probably affected their homeostasis and altered their lives. The study discussed policies for families, educators, policy-makers, and health professionals to incorporate gender issues in their daily practices and long-term strategic plans for the new Palestinian state.

Summary

This chapter reviewed literature concerning women in relation to the Arab world, Palestinian society, significance of marriage, mental health and women, and conceptual framework. The third chapter will discuss the setting of the study.

Resource: www.logosjournal.com/bronner_31.htm



Chapter Three

Setting of the study

Introduction

Palestine is located in the west side of Asia on the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Palestine is bordered from the north by Lebanon; from the east by Jordan and Syria; from the south by Egypt; and from the west by the Mediterranean Sea. It is a small land with a length of about 430 kilometers and a width of 51-70 kilometers in the northern part and 117 kilometers at the southern part (www.nazweb.jeeran.com).

Palestine connects the three continents Asia, Africa, and Europe, which makes it very strategic at the historic and political levels (Badwan, 2002). However, this by itself had its advantages and disadvantages. On one hand, the area was active and advanced in trading and civilizations and was the land of the three monotheistic religions (Islam, Christianity, & Judaism). However, on the other hand, the strategic location of Palestine fascinated the conquerors of the world in old and recent times who tried to control it for their own interests. The political developments engraved its marks on the future of the whole Middle East and sometimes the world. Unfortunately, the old history still influences the area and people of this holy land have not had lived in peace since ever. The Arab nation paid a very high price for surviving the oppression and hostility of the old and new colonization.

The area of Palestine is 27009 square kilometers (10429 square miles) (nazweb.jeeran.com). Palestine was a united land until the Arab-Israel war of 1948. In November 1947, the General Assembly of the UN voted for the partition of Palestine into an Arab and Jewish states. The Palestinians at that time were two thirds of the population and possessed most of the land. Therefore, they rejected the resolution known as resolution 181. In May 14th 1948, the British withdrew from Palestine and David Ben Gurion, the Jewish leader at that time, declared the state of Israel on Palestine. A protest of Palestinians and Arabs led to the first Arab-Israeli war, which resulted in the destruction of 531 Palestinian villages and towns and erased them from the map. The Jewish military activities, the massacres and expulsion of Palestinians resulted in 800,000

Palestinians refugees in the neighboring Arab countries (Palestinian Working Women Society, 2002; Fararjeh, 1997).

After that, the West Bank was annexed to Jordan and ruled by the Hashemite Royal family and the Gaza Strip was administered by Egypt. The remaining part, which constitutes 78% of Palestine, was occupied and confiscated by the Israeli army and transformed into State of Israel (nazwab.jeeran.com).

The partition of Palestinian land continued until the June 1967 war, when the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were occupied by Israel. The West Bank is the eastern middle part of Palestine that was united with Transjordan in 1950. The area of the West Bank is about 5800 square kilometres, which is predominantly hilly and rocky. The climate is Mediterranean with hot, dry summers and mild, wet winters.

The Gaza Strip is a narrow strip of land, 363 square kilometers, which formed part of Mandatory Palestine until the Israeli occupation in 1948 (Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994). Until the War of 1967, the Gaza Strip was ruled by the Egyptians. The Gaza Strip is a coastal land on the Mediterranean Sea, which makes it a good agricultural area. The West Bank and Gaza Strip remained under Israeli occupation until the Oslo peace accord in 1993 when small parts of these areas were handed to the Palestinian Authority. Today, the Israeli occupation controls 72% of the West Bank and 37% of the Gaza Strip (www.awe.org.jo).

The Gaza Strip and the West Bank are separated by the Palestinian land occupied during the Arab-Israeli war of 1948, which later became the State of Israel. Therefore, there is no continuity of the Palestinian land, which created big problems for the Palestinians in regards to mobility, work, identity, and liberation. Today, the Palestinians residents of the West Bank cannot go to the Gaza Strip and visa versa unless they work with an international NGO who manage to get them special permits to enter either of the two areas.

The Palestinians are those who lived in Palestine before the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948. Since the war of 1948, the Palestinians have never again lived in one area because the Israeli government has exiled them to various Arab countries and other parts of the world. Over the years 1947-1948, Israel expelled about 800,000 Palestinians from 531 villages and cities. They live as refugees in Arab countries, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and other regions of the world (Abdel Al-Khaleq, 2003; Fararjeh, 1997). For instance, about 90 thousand Palestinians were expelled to Syria in the year 1948 and constitute 3% of the Syrian residents nowadays (Al-Sahli, 2003).

In 1967, about 400,000 Palestinians were expelled from Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip after the defeat of Arab armies in the June 1967 war (Abdel Al-khaleq,

2003). There are about 2.5 millions Palestinians in Jordan, of which about 1.7 millions are refugees (www.nazweb.jeeran.com). In 1994, Palestinian refugees constitute 32% of the population of Jordan according to UNRWA reports (Abu-Al Helu, 1997). In Lebanon, almost all the Palestinians who live there are refugees whether they live in refugee camps or not (www.nazweb.jeeran.com). Nowadays, there are about five millions Palestinian refugees living in the Diaspora, according to "Shamel" Center for Research (Abdel Al-khaleq, 2003).

The first modern census of Palestinians was conducted in the third quarter of 1997. According to this report, the population of the Palestinian land (the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem) was 2,895,683 of which 1,470,506 are males and 1,425,177 are female. The population of the West Bank was 1,873,476, of which 951,693 (50.8%) are males, 921,783 (49.2%) are females. The population of the Gaza Strip was 1,022,207 of which 503,394 (49.2%) are females and 518,813 (50.8%) are males (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1999, p: 23). In general, 52% of Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are residents and 41.4% are refugees (www.nazweb.jeeran.com). However, not all the refugees live in refugee camps as some of them rented houses in the cities and towns or bought a piece of land and built their own houses.

There has been a low rate of migration from neighboring Arab countries to the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Emigration increased during the years of the first uprising, especially among Christians (Sabella, 1997). On the other hand, after the return of exiled army personnel and their families to Palestinian Authority land, there was an increase of the residents of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (1996), there has been approximately a 6% rate of migration to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip between 1987 and 1993. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau (1997), about 90% of the Palestinians now living in the occupied territories were born and grew up there. Therefore, 10% of the residents of Palestinian Territories came back from other Arab countries as returnees after the first Gulf War in 1991 and after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1993, after the Oslo accord.

According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (1998), there is only 0.8 % internal migration within the occupied territories, which has been observed among persons who are socially and upwardly mobile. The Heiberg and Qvensen (1994) study concluded that educated and middle-class people tend to move from village to urban residence; from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank, and from the north of the West Bank to the middle regions.

The cities of the West Bank are neither completely urbanized nor ruralized. They are in the process of urbanization, which makes them different from urbanized cities in Western

societies. People living in the West Bank are distributed within medium sized urban centers and villages. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics of 1997, 53.12% of Palestinians live in cities and towns; 31% live in villages; 15.9% live in refugee camps (www.nazweb.jeeran.com). In Palestinian society, the majority of the urban population (residents of camps, towns, and cities), that is about 75%, are concentrated in three major urban areas, Nablus, Hebron, and the greater Jerusalem area (including Bethlehem & Ramallah) (Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994; Palestinian Bureau, 1998).

There is a steady increase of rate of urbanization within Palestinian society since the beginning of Israeli Occupation. The Heiberg and Qvensen's study (1994) reported 62% rate of urbanization among Palestinians in the West Bank. However, Israeli data in 1987 suggested that 47% of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories lived in urban areas (Sabella, 1994).

Many factors, such as the Israeli occupation and land confiscation, which led to the loss of agricultural land; internal migration; education; availability of transportation; and other factors facilitated the process of urbanization (Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994; Sabella, 1997; Taraki, 1990). In 1967, there was only a 30 % degree of urbanization in the West Bank (Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994). Generally speaking, the marked degree of urbanization is due to the 1948 and 1967 wars and the massive influx of refugees. The last thirty years are considered an era of tremendous change and social mobility for the Palestinians (Taraki, 1990).

On the other hand, Palestinian society has witnessed a steady and even growth in the size of rural and urban localities due to the proximity of the cities and towns to satellite villages; educational opportunities and easy transportation between villages and cities (Sabella, 1997; Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994). These social and economic changes created a more homogenous society, whether urban or rural. Nevertheless, most Palestinians who reside in rural districts are not considered peasants because they do not entirely depend on their farms for their living (Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994; Taraki, 1990). Small trading, workshops, and factories dominate the West Bank towns, which are considered as centers for selling crops and shopping for the surrounding rural hinterland.

There are nineteen refugee camps across the West Bank and eight camps on the Gaza Strip (Faysal, 1996; Sabella, 1994; Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994; Palestinian Bureau, 1998). There are some variations in the exact numbers of refugees within the Palestinian population. This is due to discrepancies between the UNRWA estimates and the national figures. In addition, there is no consensus about the definition of a "refugee" between the UNRWA and

the Palestinian Authority. Refugees inside and outside camps constitute 26.5% of the population of the West Bank and 65% of the Gaza Strip population (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998). However, Faysal (1996) estimated that refugees constitute about 37% of the total population of the West Bank and 67.8% of the Gaza Strip population.

About 41% of the population of the West Bank resides in the northern region (Jenin, Nablus, Tulkarem, Qalqilia), and 33% of the population lives in the middle region (Ramallah, El-Bireh, and Jerusalem area) (Sabella, 1994; Palestinian Central Bureau, 1998). Palestinian demographic studies have reported that the district of the Occupied Territories with the highest populations is Hebron and the smallest is Jericho (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998). Table 3-1 shows the population by district and growth in the years 1967 and 1997 as estimated by Sabella and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.

I. Characteristics of Palestinian population in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip:

A. Population and family size

The age structure in Palestinian society is similar to that in many developing countries. The population pyramid has a wide base and a narrow top. Almost half of the Palestinians are young and located in the base of the population pyramid and are under the age of 15 (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998). According to Sabella (1997) and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (1998), 47% of the population of the West Bank and 48% of the population of the Gaza Strip are below the age of fifteen. Children of the age group 5-14 years constitute 28.6% of the population (www.nazweb.jeeran.com). However, those below age 4 years constitute 18.4% of Palestinian population (www.nazweb.jeeran.com).

Like other families in the Arab world, Palestinian families are relatively large. The Palestinian family is big with an average of seven members for the nuclear type and the population growth rate is about 5% (Palestinian Family Planning Society, 1997). The family size in the Gaza Strip is slightly larger than that of the West Bank, ranging from 6 in the West Bank to 7 in the Gaza Strip (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1999). The Palestinian National Health Plan (1994) reported a mean family size of 6.9 for the West Bank and 7.2 for the Gaza Strip. Other Studies have reported bigger mean for the family size in the Gaza Strip reaching 7.8 members during the Palestinian Uprising (Heiberg & Qvensen 1994; Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1996). Short space between births, early marriage and limited use of contraceptive methods are the most common reasons for the high fertility rate among

Palestinian women. According to Palestinian Working Women Society (2002), 98% of Palestinian woman are familiar with contraceptive methods, but only 45% use them.

Children have significant meaning in Arab culture as well as in the Palestinian society. Children support their parents and help them in farming, which saves money for the family. During crisis and turmoil, children support each another and help their parents to survive. During senescence, grown-up children look after their parents and act as social welfare for their parents. Therefore, we infrequently see elderly people who have adult children living in a care home in the Palestinian society (Palestinian Family Planning Society, 1997). In addition, children are seen as significant players in the political factor of demographic conflict of the region (Palestinian Central Bureau, 2001). This is the main reason for politicians for encouraging high fertility during the last 30 years, especially during the first and second uprisings.

Several reasons stand behind the peculiar population distribution of the Palestinian society. The large family size in Palestinian society is connected to various political and sociocultural reasons. The first reason is the high birth rates within the society. It is observed that Palestinian women have a high fertility rate. However, there is a slightly higher fertility rate in the Gaza Strip (Al-Sahly, 2003). The crude birth rate of the Palestinian population was 40.02 per 1,000 for West Bank and 51.53 for the Gaza Strip (Palestinian Central Bureau of statistics, 1997).

Indicators of Palestinian Population show that birth rates in the Palestinian society are the highest in the world with 51 births for 1,000 persons (Palestinian Family Planning Society, 1997). The Palestinian society had the highest rate of population growth in the Arab world in the 90s of the last century (the Palestinian National Health Plan, 1994). For instance, the population growth rate in Palestine was 3.97% in 1997 and 4.08% in 1998 (nazweb.jeeran.com). It was estimated that the population growth rate would reach 4.95% by the year 2010 (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1997). In contrast, the population growth rate was 3.2% in Jordan, 2.6% in Israel, and 2.2% in Egypt (the Palestinian National Health Plan, 1994).

Secondly, the Palestinian society witnessed a marked decrease in infant mortality rate in the last ten years. The infant mortality rate dropped from 57.9 per thousand to 33.2 per thousand between 1984 and 1994 (Palestinian Central Bureau of statistics, 1998). Because of the improvement of health care and the decline in the rate of epidemic diseases in the occupied Palestinian Territories, children have better chances to survive.

A third reason for high fertility among Palestinian women is early marriage which is a predominant cultural practice (Maslamani, 1999; Giacman, 1994). The earlier the woman marries, the more children she could bear. Since the rate of early marriage is high in Palestinian society, the fertility is high among Palestinian women. About one-third of women aged 19 years in the Palestinian Territories are already mothers or pregnant with their first baby (Palestinian Central Bureau, 2001). It was observed that 32.0% of the women in urban areas are young mothers whose ages were 15-19 years compared to 28% of those in villages (Palestinian Central Bureau, 2001). These data look strange because researchers always believed that the picture is reversed when it comes to fertility rates among Palestinian women. A fourth reason for high fertility of Palestinian women is poor orientation about the disadvantages of high fertility and lack of knowledge about family planning practices or rejection of family planning by the husband. Usually, the man determines the number of children he wants his wife to have (Manasra, 1994). Therefore, the man predominantly has the last word about whether his wife should or should not use family planning practices. A study of 76 married Palestinian men from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip that explored their attitudes about family planning and their cultural values about family size, reported that half of them do not practice family planning but might consider it after getting the appropriate number of children (5 or more) with the condition of having male children (Palestinian Family Planning Society, 1997).

In their study about men's perspectives of family planning and women's empowerment, the Palestinian Family Planning Society (1997) found that despite men's knowledge of family planning programs, they continue to refrain from using them or allowing their wives to use them. One reason, according to the participants was that they would like to have a relatively big family with an average of 4-5 children (Palestinian Family Planning, 1997). The study also concluded that the pressure of relatives, extended family, and friends influenced men's decision about the right number of children they would have as they advocate big families that provides support and backing, especially in difficult times and during social conflicts.

A fifth factor for high fertility in Palestinian society, which could be the strongest, is religion. Islam, the dominant religion in Arab world, advocates high fertility for women and condemns family planning, sterilization, and abortion. However, partition of pregnancies is more welcomed as a strategy for family planning. This is also the case in the Palestinian society. Many Arab women including Palestinians believe that it is sinful to restrict the

number of children and that it is God's will to control such a thing. In this situation, the woman might know about family planning but she abstains from using it.

A sixth factor that increases the fertility rate among Palestinian women is the political situation. The chronic political situation in the Palestinian society has undoubtedly influenced the family size (Al-Maslamani, 1999; Giacman, 1994). During the first uprising, Palestinian society has witnessed an increase in the rate of martyrs and casualties. Some Palestinian political leaders advocated compensating for the life losses during Palestinian-Israeli struggle and wars by having more children and this was welcomed by the general public, especially religious people (Palestinian Family Planning Society, 1997). The number of live births increased over the years of the first Intifada because of political instability and the widespread of traditional and fundamentalist ideology, which encouraged reproduction to compensate for the lost lives of the Palestinians. Therefore, it is not surprising to hear many women talking about their wish to have more children to feed the national struggle that most Palestinians believe it will continue for many years. Researchers noticed that the gross rate of births was 46.7 per 1,000 person in the first uprising but it decreased to 42.7 per 1,000 person during the years after the Palestinian Authority came and there was peace (Palestinian Central Bureau, 2001).

Health workers observed that improved health status of women and accessibility of good health care usually increase fertility rate, according to Giacman (1994). Thus, the infant mortality rate decreases and children have more chances to survive in the first five years of life when health care services are good and pregnant mothers and infants receive the care they need.

Education and employment status of the woman play significant role in determining the number of children she might have. The Palestinian data indicates that the higher the level of education of the woman, the less the number of children she would have. When the woman pursues university education, it is likely that she will marry in her early 20s, which lowers her fertility years (Giacman, 1994). This does not mean that a woman has total freedom to decide that she wants to have one child (Palestinian Central Bureau, 2001). On the other hand, employed women usually have fewer children than housewives (Palestinian Central Bureau, 2001). Again, this does not indicate that the woman is free to refrain from having children or having only one or two children. Therefore, the woman has a say in how many children she wants to have, but a certain number is preferred, which is at least 3 children and among them there should be males.

Culturally speaking, a large family with many male children is preferred for Palestinians over age 40 years, which guarantees social power and social respect (Palestinian Family Planning Society, 1997). Families play a major role in determining the number of children of the couple. Male children reserve the family name and provide an additional source of income when they join the labor market (Palestinian Central Bureau, 2001).

Generally speaking, there are slightly more men than women in Palestinian society. According to Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (1999), 50.8% of the Palestinians are males. The gender ratio is 103.2 males for every 100 females (Palestinian Central Bureau, 1999). There are slight variations between age groups. There are 100 females for every 108 males in the age group 1- 9 years; 100 females to 110 males for the age group 25-29; 100 females to 105 males for the age group 35-39 (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998; Sabella, 1994). On the other hand, there are more women than men in the age group 50+ years.

Taraki (1990) also reported variations in the ratios of men to women in various age groups between 1977 and 1982. The male to female ratio proposed by Taraki was different than what was observed more recently by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. Taraki (1990) estimated that there were 759 men per 1000 women in the year 1977 as compared to 844 men for each 1000 woman in the year 1982, for the Palestinian population. It seems that the general political and economic situations in the Palestinian society influenced the men to women ratio as was observed after the Gulf war, Oslo agreement, and the wars of 1948 and 1967 (Kanaaneh, 1983; Sabella, 1994; Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994).

It was observed that in post-war years, huge numbers of Palestinians either fled or migrated to neighboring Arab countries. On the contrary, a few thousand Palestinians returned to their hometowns after Oslo Agreement and Gulf wars. In both situations, men rather than women were moving to and from the Palestinian Occupied Territories. However, women remained in their houses to raise children and to look after the land. In addition, women rarely travel abroad for work or studying because this is not well accepted by the conservative Palestinian society. Nevertheless, a man's traveling either for work or study is welcomed especially for those who are young adults. Therefore, it is expected that among certain age groups such as the young adults, one might find more women than men in the society.

B. The economic situation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip:

Palestinian society in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is considered a poor society with few resources. The Israeli occupation destroyed the economy, social, geographic, economic, and demographic, and structure of Palestinian society. The lack of land has driven Palestinians to the labor market in Israel, and thus more people immigrated internally to nearby cities. After 1967, the economy of Palestinian society in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip was attached to Israeli economy (Samarah, 2003). On the other hand, Israel did not develop the economy inside the Occupied Territories. Rather, the Israelis acclimatized the Palestinian economy and controlled it, thus it was restricted and underdeveloped (Samarah, 2003).

The Israeli occupation prohibited the traffic relations of Palestinian merchants, and linked them with its economy and authority. Thus, Palestinian's trade, imports and exports were only done through Israeli merchants. The Palestinian farmers planted the crops that were required by the Israeli market and exchanged and bought only from and through them. Consequently, most of the Palestinians belong to the low socioeconomic class that depends on the income of the breadwinner who usually works in the labor force in Israel.

Employment in the labor market and farming are the main source of society's income. Individualist's ownership characterizes the Palestinian economy since the 19th century (Samarah, 2003). Small trade and industry are the second source of income in the Palestinian society in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Al-Mensi, 2000). The majority of the Palestinian laborers of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip work in Israeli factories or settlements. They depend for their livelihood on the daily low paid jobs in Israel. There are very limited employment opportunities in the Palestinian society of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. On the other hand, women's chances of employment in Israeli market are very limited compared to those of men. About 96% of those working in Israeli market are males (Al-Mensi, 2000). Thus, if the woman did not find a job in the Palestinian Authority areas, it is unlikely that she would be employed elsewhere. This explains partially the reason for the low contribution of women to national economy.

Table 3-1

The West Bank and the Gaza Strip districts and their total population in 1967 and 1997.

District	1967	1997
Hebron	118,104	390,272
Bethlehem	48,228	132,090
Jerusalem	71,300	324,105
Jericho	8,980	31,501
Ramallah & El-Biereh	88,661	205,448
Nablus	151,917	251,1392
Tulkarem & Qalqilia	72,127	198,298
Jenin	78,075	195,299
Gaza City	118,272	359,941
Jabalia	34,604	144,890
Khan Younis	52,997	196,662
Rafah	49,812	120,386

Source: Sabella, 1994, p: 5-6; Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1997

Daily life expenses of Palestinians in West Bank and the Gaza Strip are relatively similar to those of Israelis. However, the income of families in Israel is incomparable to these of Palestinians. The Israeli employee with similar credentials earns two or three times as much as the Palestinian. The Israeli community has high purchase power compared to the Palestinian community (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998).

Poverty is very high in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The income rate in Palestinian society in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is low with a range of 15-20 dollars / day, \$1578 per year, which is a little bit higher than Jordan and Egypt but only 10.8% of the total per capita income in Israel (IEC, 1998). The poverty line for the developing countries is less than \$2 per person per day (Al-Mansi, 2000). When using the poverty line of developing countries as a measurement, 23% of the Palestinians are poor (Al-Mansi, 2000). Other researchers reported relatively higher rates of poverty for the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. For instance, Mass (1997) and IEC (1998) indicated that about 50% of the Palestinians live below the poverty line, which is \$ 650 per person / year. Other studies reported that more than half of them live below poverty line (Palestinian Family Planning Society, 1997).

Poverty levels vary through the years and political conditions. The poverty rate reached 50% during the first uprising (Al-Mensi, 2000). It is believed that the poverty is 18% in villages; 14% in refugee camps and 12% in the cities of the west Bank (Program of Development Studies at Beirzit University, 1999). The rates of poverty are higher in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank. The rate of poverty in the West Bank was 16% compared to 38% in the Gaza Strip in the 1990s (Program of Development Studies at Beirzit University, 1999). More poor people are living in the camps and the villages of the Gaza Strip with a rate of 42% in comparison with 31% for the cities. There was a 15% decrease in spending on living in 1996 from that of the 1993, with a deficit higher in West Bank than in the Gaza Strip (Mass, 1997).

In relation to economic level of living, 22.4% of Palestinian families live in the high economic living; 46.3% are in the middle level; and 31.2% are in the lower level (Al-Mansi, 2000). Looking at these figures does not indicate that the Palestinians living conditions are better than the neighboring countries. The standards of living and the expenses of the Palestinian society in the west Bank and the Gaza Strip are very similar to those of the Israeli society even though the income is much lower for the Palestinian families. This could indicate that the Palestinian families have other resources for spending in addition to their salaries. They might have a piece of land, a property (rented house or apartment), or outside assistance that were not reported as source of income in the studies of living conditions.

Unemployment is a very serious problem in the Palestinian society. Rates of unemployment vary throughout the year and during difficult political conditions and closure. For instance, before the Al-Aqsa uprising, about 300,000 laborers were employed in Israel. However, during strict closure of the Palestinian territories, unemployment among the Palestinian laborers reached 60-80% and two-thirds of Palestinians were living below the poverty line (www.alburaq.net). In the years 1995 and 1997, the rates of unemployment were 18-20% which is higher than the regional levels (IEC, 1998).

Other studies estimated higher rates of unemployment among Palestinian men with a rate of 57.7% in the West Bank and 61.4% in the Gaza Strip in 1997 (Palestinian Family Planning Society, 1997). The variations of rates between different studies are related to estimation of numbers of laborers that is usually done by researchers. In addition, the rates vary over the months as some weeks witnessed closure of the occupied territories, which directly influenced unemployment rates. While most of the unemployed women are college or university graduates with a rate of 56.4% of unemployment, the majority of unemployed men are those with less than secondary education.

Nevertheless, most of the unemployment studies did not include women's unemployment because men are the main breadwinners in the Palestinian patriarchal society. Unemployment is exceptionally high among Palestinian women. This is due to several variables, including sociocultural factors and values, the unstable political situation, economic conditions in the Palestinian society, and scarce vocational opportunities. Therefore, it is not surprising to note that 91.2% of eligible Palestinian women are unemployed (Palestinian Central Bureau, 2001). The rate is somewhat higher in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank. Before the Al-Aqsa uprising, about 84% of Palestinian women over the age of 14 are considered outside the labor force compared to 32% of males (Palestinian Central Bureau, 1998). A study by Al-Najjah University (1989) supported the national figures during the years of the first uprising, which show that an average of 72.6% of the unemployed in the West Bank and 75% in the Gaza Strip were women. In a study of Shati refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, Lange and Mhanna (1992) found that only 38% of the women in their study were employed, which is higher than the national rates.

Financially, men have full responsibility for the family's expenses and needs in the Palestinian society. Very few women are economically independent and have full financial responsibility for their families. According to the Palestinian Bureau (2001), women in the Palestinian society head only 8.8 % of families. There are 6.4% of families led by a woman in the Gaza Strip compared to 8.3% in the west Bank, according to Palestinian Central Bureau (2001). The percentage was smaller in Heiberg and Qvensen's study (1994), which reported that only 4% of the Palestinian households are led by women. These women became single parents either because they were divorced, widowed; were living alone with their children after the husbands left to work abroad; or their husbands were in prison. Therefore, these families are usually poor because the women who support them are doing this alone. Thirty percent of the families led by women are poor compared to 22% of those led by men (Program of Development Studies at Beirzit University, 1999). Nevertheless, when the family had a grown up son, the responsibility of the family went to him. In their study of 187 Palestinian families at the Shati refugee camp, Lange and Mhanna (1992) found that the oldest son usually replaced his father in managing the family's life after the father died.

Unemployment places unique stress on the individual and families. Besides, unemployment increases health problems and health care needs of the society. Psychologists in the Palestinian society believe that there is a high correlation between unemployment and anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, domestic violence among Palestinians (Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994).

Palestinians always emphasized the importance of education for the society. This is mainly due to loss of land and properties, which made education as a compensatory tool for them. Educational level is relatively good among Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Eighty-nine point two percent of the children between age five and fifteen are enrolled in schools (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2001). The rate of education is higher among males with a rate of 94.4% compared to 83.9 % among females (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2001). This variation is due to low level of education among rural females. Palestinian families in the villages tend to prefer boy's education. In addition, families in rural areas tend to marry their daughters before they finish their secondary education. Moreover, in many remote villages, there is a shortage in girl's schools especially at secondary level, which decrease their chance for higher education.

C. Social classes in Palestinian society:

Palestinian society is socially stratified like any other society. The social stratification in Palestinian society is not distinctively and clearly differentiated, as it is the case in other countries (www.mic-pal.info). This is mainly due to the occupation, which unified Palestinians in the face of it. There are different ways of classifying the social classes within the Palestinian society. One way is classifying them into urban and rural. From an anthropological standpoint, there are peasants and they live in villages and small towns; refugees who either live in refugee camps or not; Bedouins who live in small gatherings or villages; and city inhabitants or residents.

A second approach is classifying Palestinians into socioeconomic classes. The high social class would include the capitalists who own large pieces of land, factories, or trade. In addition, most of the political figures who act as ministers or key decision-makers in the Palestinian Authority would belong to this high class. However, the middle class looks like any other middle class in the world, and it consists of the petit bourgeois (professionals, administrators, lawyers, small merchants, employees in companies and agencies, shops owners etc.). The third class consists of the laborers and small farmers. Given that the Palestinian society in the Occupied Territories is poor; this is the largest social class in the Palestinian society.

This situation was not always the case in Palestinian society. Some investigators found that the middle class was the largest socioeconomic class in Palestinian society in the last 20 years. For instance, Heiberg and Qvensen (1994) classified Palestinians into four classes; the high class, lower, upper middle, and lower middle. They reported that the middle

class was the largest in Palestinian society during the 1980s. Heiberg and Qvensen's (1994) believe that the social structure of Palestinian society has been dramatically transformed by war, migration, and emergence of new avenues of mobility such as education and enhanced working opportunities, which moved the majority of families to the middle level of the economic hierarchy.

Broadly speaking, the West Bank is different from the Gaza Strip in the structure of the socioeconomic status. For instance, the lower class in the two areas is not the same. Disparities also significantly exist between urban, rural, and refugee camps (Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994). Poverty levels among those in the lower socioeconomic class are not the same in the two areas. The refugee camps in the Gaza Strip are considered worse than those of the West Bank. On the other hand, the loss of land in rural areas rendered peasants as poor as refugees. Moreover, the location of a certain family in one socioeconomic class or the other varies with time and political conditions. It was observed that during the Al- Aqsa Uprising, many families moved from middle class to lower class, and those who are in lower class stood below the poverty line.

D. Housing and dwelling:

Palestinians prefer to live in an independent house which they own. Historically, they used to build their own houses on their land. Nowadays the picture is different because a large portion of Palestinians lost their land during the 1948 and 1967 war. In addition, large portions of the land were confiscated by the Israeli's, which left only a small part especially in the Gaza Strip.

After "El-Nakba", the 1948 war with Israel, refugees were given small houses to live on temporary basis, as they were told. These houses consist of 2-3 rooms without bathrooms or kitchens. Shared bathrooms were built for the use of groups of families. Later, families added their own bathrooms when they could. Lines of rooms were built and shared walls, which made them look like boxes of matches or cigarettes. No spaces were left between houses except for small alleys and roads. There are no spaces for planting a tree or a flower, or for children to play. Since the land is owned by the UNRWA, expanding the camps was prohibited unless the family could afford to buy a land near the refugee camp.

The houses in refugee camps are crowded, small and unhealthy, have no privacy, and not supplied with water or electricity. The average size of a Palestinian house in the refugee camps is 50 square meters; about 100 square meters in Gaza city; 76 square meters in villages of the Gaza Strip (Al-Maslmani. 1999). A home of 12-14 square meters houses 5-10

members. The houses in the West Bank villages and cities are a little larger than those in the Gaza Strip because the area is larger. However, in the refugee camps, the situation of houses is not much better than that present in the Gaza Strip.

During late 1970s, the houses in the refugee camps were connected to water and electrical supply. After 1967 war, the Palestinians recognize the reality that they are not going to be returned to their homes and land in Israel. Therefore, those who could afford it started to build new rooms and renovated their old UNRWA units. Many bought a small piece of land, built new houses and moved to them. However, the majority of the refugees remained in the camps.

People who continued to live in their villages and cities have some changes in the structure and sizes of their dwellings. Housing is no longer homogenous in structure and standard. While most families who owned their houses continued to live in them in Palestinian cities and villages, people who used to rent a house built their new house or migrated to other cities. Many people added new apartments or built new houses for their expanding families and newly married sons. The agricultural land gets smaller as it was used for housing building and projects.

After the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, Palestinians became comparatively freer to build in their villages and cities. Therefore, a huge wave of construction was observed everywhere in the lands controlled by the Palestinian Authority. Housing projects were built in the Gaza Strip to solve the problem of overcrowding. The same was happening in the West Bank but less intensely. However, within the areas that are still controlled by Israelis, people are not permitted to build new houses and their houses are demolished if they do so without getting approval of the military administration in the area.

In the new middle class Palestinian houses, the organization of rooms and furnishings have changed dramatically in the last 30 years. The use of space has also changed. We could see more rooms that have special uses and activities; one room for guests, another for dining, while there are bed rooms, kitchen and bathrooms. When a relative lives with the nuclear family, he/she has his/her own room. The houses are furnished with all necessities. You rarely see a house whether in rural or urban areas that does not have a TV, refrigerator, washing machine, and other kitchen facilities. However, among the poor, rooms are often multipurpose but they also have the main items of equipment.

Generally speaking, the households in urban areas are better than those in rural areas, and those are better than housing in refugee camps. The Palestinian data show that in 1999, 95% of Palestinian children live in homes that have electricity supply; 84% have piped water;

and 33% have public sewage connection (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1999). The picture is worse in refugee camps and villages than in cities. This situation jeopardizes the health of Palestinians and increases their environmental problems.

E. Religion

Palestine is a holy land whereby the three monotheistic religions originated. Muslims, Jews and Christians always lived in Palestine side by side until the Israeli occupation. Ever since the Israeli occupation, Palestinians from the three religions were never again one nation. The Jews moved to live in Israel and the Christian and Muslims continue to live in the occupied territories. Some live in Israel as well. However, within the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, there are also Jews who live in settlements that were built on Palestinian confiscated land. Nevertheless, there are neither Muslims nor Christians in the Jewish settlements.

Today, the majority of Palestinians living in the occupied territories are Muslims. Heiberg and Qvensen's (1994) study reported that 96% of Palestinians are Muslims. The Christian population is concentrated mainly in East Jerusalem where they constitute 15% of the population and in Bethlehem where they are 13% of the population (Bethlehem Municipality, 1999). The remainder of the Christian population is found in Gaza City, Jenin, Birzeit, Ramallah, Nablus, Tulkarim and some of their villages.

F. The Sociocultural characteristics of Palestinian society:

Generally speaking, Palestinians share a common history, culture, language, and religion with Arab world. The values and customs of the Palestinians vary from one area to another. However, commonalities still exist. There is continuity with the past in culture and traditional beliefs combined with transformations, especially with respect to gender relations in the Palestinian society in the Occupied Territories (Palestinian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation & UNICEF, 2000).

The Palestinians who remained in the West Bank preserved most of their original values of course, with some modifications as time passed by. They were rarely influenced by the Jordanian's values because they constituted a majority in the West Bank and in Jordan. Therefore, one could notice that it is the Jordanians who were more influenced by the Palestinian way of living rather than the opposite (Jaradat, 1996). This influence is observed in dress, food habits, cooking style, folklore, architect, wedding ceremonies, social life and others.

Nevertheless, the Palestinians in Jordan blended with the Jordanians and developed a combination of Arab-Islamic-Jordanian-Palestinian values (Abed Rabeh, 1996). Conversely, the Palestinians in Lebanon or Syria have another combination of values that emerged as they blended with the residents of these countries. In addition, the Palestinians in Europe or the USA have their peculiarities and continued to hold Palestinian-Arab-Islamic values plus some of the Western values. However, the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip got a blend of Egyptian and Palestinian values and customs.

The family in Palestinian society is an economic and social production unit, with all of its members depending on each another. The achievements and failures of the family are shared by all members. Therefore, the individual is not only accountable for self but also for the whole family. A high level of commitment, devotion, and cooperation are essential in the family and are emphasized especially by older members. Decisions are family-based rather than individualized. Therefore, it is risky for one member to contradict the majority. This is especially applicable when the family member is young, unemployed, dependent or passive. If the woman fits these criteria, it is unlikely that she would be given the right to determine her destiny and manage her life (Kuttab, 1995).

The Palestinian society in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is conservative, developing and has strong family ties. The Palestinian society, wherever it is located, is a patriarchal society. Within families, boys have a different position in the power structure compared to their sisters. Males dominate females and older people have authority over younger ones in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Women are dependent on men for living, decision making, and social and familial affairs. The man is responsible for protection, looking after his family, and providing all its needs. Therefore, he is the main decision-maker in the family. Men in Palestinian society make the final decisions on almost all family issues including girl's education; wives' and daughters' work; number of children that the wife should have; critical financial decisions, and whom the sons, daughter and sisters should marry (Palestinian Family Planning and protection Association, 1997).

On the other hand, women hold a peculiar position within the Palestinian culture. On one hand, gender roles remain the basis of social life and a fundamental organizing principle of Palestinian society. On the other hand, women are the backbone of the family and play central roles in the economic, social, and political life of the society. Like other women in the world, Palestinian women take care of their families; do house chores; assist in the family business; educate and raise their children and do all the other traditional roles of women. Women are doubly burdened with responsibilities because of the effect of violence, dispersal

and economic migration, even though they are not equipped to take on the tasks involved (Palestinian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation & UNICEF, 2000). Nevertheless, Palestinian women are not always seen as passive victims. They played and continue to play a key role in the national struggle of their society. They are brought up as strong, determined, and enduring people, rather than as passive and weak. To a certain extent this has led to three interlocked images of Palestinian women today- as superwomen, as mothers of martyrs and freedom fighters, and as a symbol for national autonomy and national honor (Palestinian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation & UNICEF, 2000). These are heavy burdens for the Palestinian women and they sometimes are not prepared well to bear them.

Because the Palestinian society is a patriarchal, conservative, religious society, it is expected that men, in the name of religion, are controlling the society and the family life. Women and men in the Arab Palestinian society hold traditional roles in the family and society where women are responsible for childbearing and household activities while men are the bread winners and leaders of the families. If married, women depend financially on their sons, even if they are young. Unfortunately, this situation worsens when the mother is not educated and does not hold a degree. She had to do unskilled jobs in factories, cleaning or agriculture, which provide very low salaries especially in the Palestinian labor market.

The traditional Palestinian society pressures and strains both men and women. The society's values and norms strain Palestinian women and men but in varied levels and forms. However, the degree and patterns of distress varies among them. Palestinian society is a pluralistic society where individuals have little control over factors in their lives such as selecting education, marrying, traveling, and the number of their children, building social relationships, or place of living. The "*hamula*" or the clan is still present as a concept in the minds of people and associated with solidarity across space and time, even across national borders (Palestinian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation & UNICEF, 2000). Nevertheless, a powerful "*hamula*" in particular still has influence over its members. As a result, the Palestinian individual always feels oppressed, trapped, and strongly enmeshed with his/her society. This situation has its advantages as it supports the individual and provides him/her with intimacy and belonging. On the other hand, it has disadvantages as it increases the psychological distress and social burden on the individual.

The social values and customs in Palestinian cities are relatively similar to those of the villages and camps (Sabella, 1997; Taraki, 1990). Family norms and values toward women in the cities are a little more liberal than in the villages and refugee camps (Taraki, 1990;

Kanaaneh, 1983). However, many values remain unchanged especially those related to male-female relationships. For instance, the brother-sister bond and authority structure remained hierarchical. Brothers have authority, the right, and responsibility to mould and discipline their sisters (Palestinian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation & UNICEF, 2000). After marriage, women continue to belong to their original families, and the brother-sister relationship is reinforced. The sisters are often regarded as an extension of their brothers; they protect them and the girls uphold the family honor (Palestinian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation & UNICEF, 2000).

It is believed that education and emigration to cities for daily wage labor have induced economic mobility, but not necessarily social mobility for more deprived people (Heiberg & Qvansen, 1994). Social change is very slow and difficult in traditional societies, especially when it comes to women's issues (Najjar & Warnock, 1992; Al-Marneisi, 1997; Jad, 1991; Mayers, 1986; Hale, 1990).

The Palestinian society still believes in supernatural, the evil eye, demons, and magic as sources of disease and problems. Mental illness is considered a social stigma for the Palestinian people. Many people still believe that demons, the evil eye or other metaphysical power are causes of mental illness. Traditional healing practices are widely used side by side with medical treatment including using of Quraan reading, magic, spiritual practices, and shamanism.

G. Types of family structure in Palestinian society:

The most common type of family in Palestinian society today is the traditional nuclear family (Palestinian Family Planning Society, 1997). Seventy-seven point five percent of Palestinian families are nuclear in the year 2000 (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2001). It is observed that the number of nuclear families in the Palestinian society in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is increasing. For instance, there was 69.4% rate of nuclear families in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1995, the rate rises to 73.2% in 1997 (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2001).

Many wealthy Palestinian families are considered semi-extended. This means that they share income and expenses but do not share the same house. It was observed that the number of extended families increased dramatically during the first uprising due to the difficult political and economic situation. Single-parent families that are mother-centered and blended families that are father-centered are also present but in small rates in the Palestinian society. The main forms of marriage are monogamy, endogamy, and early marriage in the

Palestinian society. Only 2.6 % of Palestinian families have polygyny (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998). Related or consanguineous marriage is relatively high with a rate of 48.3% (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2001). The rate is higher in the Gaza Strip (52.5%) than in the West Bank (46.1%) (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2001). Palestinians still adhere to certain beliefs about marriage. Palestinians should marry Palestinians; Muslims should marry Muslims; refugees should marry refugees and peasants should marry peasants; marriage is better occurring among people living in the same village or camp, and within the same patrilineal descent group '*hamula*' (Palestinian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation & UNICEF, 2000).

Divorce rates are relatively low in Palestinian society. Divorce rates vary between 1.5 and 3.2 % of women aged 20 years and above (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2001). This is mainly due to the negative social and cultural views of divorce. However, divorce rate increased after the first uprising due to the increase in early marriage and the difficult political and socioeconomic situations.

H. The political situation in Palestine:

Palestine and the Arab World have witnessed four wars and two uprisings in the last 100 years. These are the Arab-Israeli wars of 1948, 1967, 1973, 1982; the uprising of 1988-1993 and the current Al-Aqsa uprising. This year the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian land completed 56 years.

In November 1947, the General Assembly of the UN voted for the partition of Palestine into an Arab and Jewish states. The Palestinians at that time were two thirds of the population and they possessed most of the land therefore they refused the resolution known as resolution 181. In May 14th 1948, the British withdrew from Palestine and David Ben Gurion, the Jewish leader at that time declared the state of Israel on Palestine. A protest of Palestinians and Arabs led to the first Arab-Israeli war, which resulted into destruction of 531 Palestinian villages and towns and erased them from the map. The Jewish military activities and the massacres and expulsion of Palestinians rendered 800,000 Palestinians refugees in the neighboring Arab countries (Palestinian Working Women Society, 2002; Fararjeh, 1997).

The Arab-Israeli wars occurred with the intention of defending Palestine and returning Arab lands that were lost during wars with Israel. Although the four wars were not long, their ramifications were tragic for the Palestinians and the Arab world. All Middle Eastern countries suffered a lot because of these wars, but the Palestinians were the main victims.

For the past 56 years, Palestinians continuously suffered both from the failures of the Arabs in the four wars and from the endless Israeli occupation. Between 1948 and 1967, the Jordanians ruled the West Bank and the Egyptians controlled the Gaza Strip. The two regimes oppressed and undertook all kinds of military exercises and persecutions to subdue the Palestinians who incessantly struggled for their liberation and independence (Al-Budeiri, 1982; Kanaaneh, 1983).

The Palestinians were victimized and harassed not only in Israel but also in many Arab countries. For instance, Palestinians were victims of discrimination in Lebanon where they lived for more than 50 years. This is especially true during the last 20 years. Today, Palestinians in Lebanon are forbidden from working in 70 careers; are restricted in movement and leaving refugee camps and are not given Lebanese citizenship (www.aafag.org).

Unfortunately, the situation got worse during the first Gulf War and the Al-Aqsa uprising when additional restrictive measures were taken against Palestinians in many Arab countries and in the world in general. The irony was that when the Palestinians needed the support of their Arab brothers the most, these brothers restricted their entry to their lands and contributed to their suffering and agony. The Palestinians were restricted from entering Jordan except under special conditions and the same was true of Egypt. During these years, the Palestinians became prisoners in their houses and districts and their refugee relatives were not permitted to visit them from neighboring Arab countries due to the massive restrictions imposed by Israel, Jordan and Egypt. In addition, after the Gulf War of 1991, the Kuwaiti government forced the Palestinians who lived in Kuwait for many years to leave without their properties and money to punish them for the political position of the PLO, who supported Iraq in the war (www.albayan.co.ae).

From 1948 until today, the Jordanian and the Egyptian administration and guardianship influenced all spheres of life of the Palestinians in the West Bank and The Gaza Strip. For instance, the residents of the West Bank carried Jordanian passports and citizenship. In addition, Palestinians intermingled with the Jordanians after the war of 1967 and constituted a majority of the Jordanians (Al-Budeiri, 1982; Jaradat, 1996). They were allowed to buy houses and land in Jordan and they could live anywhere. In Jordan and Syria, Palestinians are considered citizens and allowed to own property and blended more easily in these countries (aafag.org).

On the other hand, the residents of the Gaza Strip carried Egyptian document but were not considered Egyptian citizens. When they traveled, the residents of the Gaza Strip encountered great difficulties and only travel through Egypt. Today, the Palestinians living in

the West Bank and the Gaza Strip hold their own passports but those living in East Jerusalem are carrying Jerusalem identification cards and still hold Jordanian Passports.

One essential area where the Jordanian and Egyptian administrations still influence the Palestinian's life is the judicial system. Today, the practiced laws in the West Bank are the Jordanian laws and the practiced laws in the Gaza Strip are the Egyptian laws of 1967 (Qatamish, 1999). Even though the Jordanians and the Egyptians made significant changes on their civil laws, the laws that are practiced within the Palestinian land remained the same. This is due to the continuous Israeli occupation that prevented any updating of the laws even after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority.

A second area that was influenced by the Jordanian and Egyptian administrations was school curricula. From 1948 until 1998, the school curricula were Egyptian in the Gaza Strip and Jordanian in the West Bank (Al-Numari, 1991; Saleh, 1988). However, in Jerusalem, the private schools followed the Jordanian educational system while the governmental schools used a combination of the Jordanian and Israeli systems of education (Al-Numari, 1991). Nevertheless, in the Gaza Strip, the Egyptian system of education was implemented until the Palestinian Authority took over during the last five years of the 20th century. This fragmentation in the identity of the educational system unconstructively influenced the Palestinian life because the supervisors of the educational system were not Palestinian and they viciously worked to alienate the Palestinians and isolate them from their values and priorities (Al-Numari, 1991). Until the year 2002, the pupils read about Amman, Jerash, and Aqaba in Jordan and Cairo and other Egyptian cities in school books. The Arabic literature books used to talk about the heroes and geography of Jordan and Egypt and rarely speak about the nature and history of Palestine. Today, the Palestinian Authority introduced some changes into school curricula but on fractional bases. A few more years might be needed until tangible changes are made on perspective and on teaching strategies.

The third area of influence on the Palestinian society is the social value system, daily living practices and customs. West Bankers travel to Jordan for shopping and leisure and move there for work and study. On the other hand, the Gaza Strip residents travel to Egypt rather than Jordan for similar reasons. The residents of the Gaza Strip speak an Egyptian accent and they use Egyptian phrases and expressions. However, the residents of the West Bank and Jerusalem basically conserved their original Palestinian accent. Nevertheless, the second and third generations of Palestinian immigrants in the Arab World speak the accent of the residents of the countries they reside in.

Financially and politically, the Palestinians are still connected to Jordan, Egypt and Israel as suggested by Saleh (1988), Al-Budairi (1982) and others. Today, Israel controls the life of the Palestinians at all levels. The Palestinians, outside the Palestinian Authority land, cannot build a house, dig a well or pave a street without permission of the Israelis. Israel controls the borders and the movement of people and goods to and from the Palestinian Authority areas, in collaboration with the Jordanians and the Egyptians. For instance, the three parties decide who is allowed to leave the Palestinian land or not and at what age. They all impose reservations and constrictions over the movement of the Palestinians either as visitors or residents. Israel decides what and how much goods are imported or exported from the Palestinian land and Jordan determines how much goods are allowed to pass through Jordan (Saleh, 1988).

At the political level, the two regimes, the Egyptian and the Jordanian, always involve themselves in the Palestinian affairs. They sometimes do that to defend Palestinian rights, as they claim, or to influence the direction and stream of negotiations about the Palestinian-Israel conflict, which could determine the future of the whole region (Samara, 1999). Whether visibly or furtively, the two regimes incessantly pressured the Palestinian leadership to accept whatever solutions they believed appropriate for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and they both had peace treaties with Israel.

The life of Palestinians and Arabs at all times was controlled by Israeli occupation. Israel holds sovereignty over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and it controls borders, means of communication, security, trade, traveler's movement, import and export of goods, and water and energy resources. Consequently, the political conditions had dramatically influenced the whole Middle East.

I. Life of Palestinians under Israeli occupation:

Since the beginning of Israeli occupation in 1948, the Palestinians struggled incessantly to liberate their land and paid high price; but without tangible results. However, in 1987 the Palestinians rose up to liberate their occupied land. Their uprising continued for almost six years. The first uprising ended with the Oslo Agreement, which led to liberation of part of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. However, the remaining occupied Palestinian territories were supposed to be handed to the Palestinians but Israel did not execute its commitments up until today.

In the year 2000, the second Palestinian uprising erupted to defend the Al-Aqsa mosque after Ariel Sharon and some of his followers made a visit to it with permission of the Israeli cabinet. The Palestinians considered this visit as an attempt to conquer the Islamic holy places and revolted against Sharon's visit and the Israeli government policies in the Occupied Territories. The Aqsa uprising is still active and took different routes than the first uprising. Israel has violated rights of the Palestinian people since 1948. Since the establishment of the Israeli State in 1947, Israeli policies endlessly violated International Law and the Fourth Geneva Convention. During the first uprising, 1550 Palestinians were killed; 70,000 were injured and 100,000 were arrested (www.nazweb.jeeran.com). In addition, 822 Palestinian houses were demolished or closed as a punishment for families of demonstrators and stone-throwers, and 1800 houses were demolished under the claim that these houses were built illegally (www.nazweb.jeeran.com). Since the occupation of the Palestinian territories in 1976, Israel has deported and arrested thousands of Palestinians, especially young men (Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994). More than 3.7 million Palestinian refugees are still denied the “right of return” and compensation for their losses (The Palestinian Working Women Society, 2002).

Collective punishment was one of the most extreme measures that have been massively used by Israeli army against Palestinians. The Israeli occupation has practiced all forms of war crimes against Palestinians, including genocide and ethnic cleansing; mass massacres; torture and harassment; discrimination and apartheid and all other forms of human rights infringements. The Israeli bulldozers regularly uprooted the land of Palestinian farmers, confiscated their lands, drained Palestinian water and destroyed their agriculture. The Israelis intentionally used lethal force, including high velocity ammunition, used excessive force in a breaking-bone strategy, and undertook the bombing of houses and infrastructure of Palestinian society to subdue the struggle of Palestinians. The Israeli shelling of the Palestinians led to the killing and injury of thousands of civilian citizens (The Palestinian Working Women Society, 2002).

The restrictions on Palestinians' movement and freedom took various forms. These forms include day and night curfews; closure and siege of Palestinian villages, refugee camps and cities; checkpoints on main roads and streets; blockade of territories; the closure of passages between Jordan and Egypt and Palestinian territories and detention of men for unlimited durations.

Movement restrictions prevented Palestinians who required medical treatment from reaching health care services, thus sick people were either forced to go home or left to die at

checkpoints. The worst situation occurred to cardiac patients, kidney failure patients who need dialysis, and diabetic and oncology patients who needed chemotherapy. Rescue ambulances were bombed, crashed with bulldozers and tanks, and denied access to villages and neighborhoods during curfews and siege. In addition, soldiers prevented first aid teams from rescuing injured people and removing dead people from the streets.

Palestinian losses on properties of land and houses were enormous. Since 1976, the Israeli occupation authorities have demolished over 6,000 Palestinian houses as a punitive measure. Currently, the Palestinians are prohibited from building in 60% of the West Bank and 87% of Jerusalem (The Palestinian Working Women Society, 2002). Ironically, since the start of the "Peace Process" in 1993, Palestinians have witnessed the influx of 50,000 new Israeli settlers into the Occupied Territories. They have built about 30 new settlements on the land of the West Bank alone; demolished more than a thousand houses; paved more than 400 kilometers of roads on confiscated lands (The Palestinian Working Women Society, 2002).

During the rough political situation and military operations of the Israeli army, goods, services and workers were not allowed to enter from Israel or vice versa, which negatively influenced the Palestinian economy. During the siege, work in the Israeli market was not permitted. Unemployment rates increased dramatically in such conditions which in turn raised the rate of families in poverty. About 60% of the Palestinians live under the poverty line (The Palestinian Working Women Society, 2002).

Constantly threatened by Israeli aggression, the harsh living conditions have led to economical, social, physical, and psychological disruption in Palestinian society. For more than 50 years of occupation, Israel was responsible for the economic dependency, the social restraints and the emotional torment of the Palestinians (The Palestinian Working Women Society, 2002).

Israeli violence against Palestinians has direct as well as indirect and long lasting social and psychological effects. Due to the night shelling of Palestinians houses and buildings, hundreds of families have been forced to abandon their homes and find refuge with other relatives and friends. Consequently, many families lost the feeling of security and safety, which adds to the emotional vulnerability of children and women. Symptoms of anxiety, fear, victimization, nervous breakdown, sleep problems, disturbed appetite, depression, anger and aggression have increased among Palestinian children and adults.

All the Palestinian youth were born during the years of occupation. The majority of those youth have witnessed all forms of aggression of the Israeli occupation. About 42% of the witnessed beating of their fathers and brothers before their eyes; 92% of them were exposed to tear gas ; 85% witnessed night raids and shelling; 19% were detained; 23% were injured (Palestinian Working Women Society, 2002). Despite that, Palestinian children preserved a positive self-concepts, a high level of self- esteem, and a relatively good resilience.

More devastating measures were taken by Israel against the Palestinians in the Al-Aqsa uprising. Therefore, the damage was massive and the suffering of the Palestinians was outrageous and immeasurable. Thousands of civilians were injured, killed and arrested. In the Aqsa uprising, which started in September 2000, more than 600 people were martyred and about 30,000 injured up to June 2001, according to reports of the Palestinian Ministry of Health (Palestine TV, 2001). However, the years 2002 and 2003 were more dramatic for the Palestinians. Until January 2003, 2556 Palestinians were killed by the Israeli army (www.muslema.com).

The infrastructure of the Palestinian cities, villages, and refugee camps were intentionally and purposefully destroyed and the Palestinian land, farms and trees were damaged by the Israeli bulldozers under the eyes of the whole world. Total curfews and sieges were placed on cities and towns and no body could leave home or go to work or hospital for treatment. The houses of the imprisoned and martyrs were demolished and their families were harassed or arrested. Checkpoints were placed on roads, which prevented people from moving around or traveling to other districts. The Israeli army used live ammunition, tear gas, and rubber bullets against demonstrators and killed and injured thousands of men, women, and children. The worst events were the bombing of the houses of the citizens and the Palestinian government buildings by the Israeli army aircraft and helicopters. This was done to assassinate Palestinian political and revolutionary leaders and to terrify people.

Under these circumstances, every Palestinian became victimized and traumatized. Children as well as adults suffered from the Israeli military measures. Palestinians were victims of imprisonment, harassment, torture, humiliation, injury, martyrdom, and all the other forms of infringement of human rights. Family members who lived in the Palestinian Authority areas were forced to live apart under the claim that they did not hold documents that proved their identity. Thousands of wives and children were forced to leave Jerusalem,

the Gaza Strip, or the West Bank and to live apart from husbands and fathers because they did not have Israeli documents and their visiting visas were expired (www.nazweb.jeeran.com).

Summary of the negative outcomes of Israeli occupation on the socioeconomic life of the Palestinian society, according to Kuttab (1991), Saim (2003) and Jad (1991):

- Drop in the level of education due to the closure of schools.
- Increase of the rate of early marriage.
- Retreat in the status of women.
- Decrease in the rate of women's employment in paid jobs.
- Women are forced to wear veil as a way of protecting them.
- Increase of the workload and burden of house responsibility, which are mainly done by women.
- Destruction of Palestinian economy through damaging the agricultural land, land confiscation, and closing the occupied territories and preventing laborers from working in Israel
- Return to related and early marriage to protect girls and the family.
- Reemergence of extended families due to unemployment, poverty, and siege.
- Spread of fundamentalist Islamic movement that called for keeping women at home, veiling, and forbidding sex mixing even during demonstration and political activities.
- Spreading of horrific stories about raping and molestation of Palestinian revolutionary women in Israeli prisons, which forced families to prevent their daughter from participating in the activities of the uprising

According to Jad (1991), the following are the main developments within the West Bank and the Gaza Strip since the Israeli occupation of 1967:

- Increase of son's independence from the family.
- Decrease of the rates of exchange marriage and somewhat related marriage.
- Rise in consulting the girls about their marriage.
- Improvement in the living status of families.
- Emergence of nuclear family.
- Retreat in tribal thinking in comparison to the past.
- Increase of the concern about education, especially for females.
- Combating of the traitors and the drug dealers.
- Decrease in marriage expenses.

- High solidarity of the society
- Boycotting of Israeli merchandizes and products.
- Mass participation of the public in the national struggle.

II. Setting of the study:

The setting of the study will be the West Bank's cities, villages, and refugee camps. The Gaza Strip is not included due to difficulties associated with the political situation. The Palestinian society of the West Bank is small and semi-closed due to limitations on freedom of movement to neighboring countries and within the area itself (Sabella, 1993).

Summary

This chapter provided general information about the setting and research environment of the study. It explained the characteristics of the Palestinian society in relation to composition, size, family's structure, religious background, and social structure. In addition, the chapter explained the situation of women in the Palestinian society in relation to education, employment, social status, and living conditions. Chapter four discusses the methodology, instrumentation, sampling, data collection and data analysis of the study.

Chapter Four

Study methodology

I. Study design:

Triangulation of qualitative and quantitative designs was used in this study. Triangulation of research design according to Bailey (1997) and Knafel and Gallo (1995) is accepted in modern social research. The reason behind triangulation is to enhance the investigator's confidence in the study results through the use of multiple measures to confirm findings (Knafel & Gallo, 1995). Triangulation is also used to achieve a more holistic contextual portrayal of the studied phenomena that is particularly relevant for qualitative research (Dawson & Couchman, 1995; Roe & Webb, 1998; Stevens et al, 1993).

There are five major types of triangulation, which include investigator triangulation, data source triangulation, methodological, theoretical, and triangulation of unit of analysis (Knafel & Gallo, 1995). A study is triangulated when it uses any one of these triangulations. In addition, some researchers use multiple triangulations, which means that the researcher used more than one type of triangulation in the same study (Knafel & Gallo, 1995). Multiple triangulations are useful in studying complex phenomenon, and when one method is not enough to clarify the issue or subject under study (Knafel & Gallo, 1995). In the current study, the investigator used one type of triangulation that was triangulation of methodology. The investigator used semi- structured interviews in addition to a close-ended questionnaire to collect data about the unmarried women participants. The use of two methods for data collection intended to confirm the participants' experience of being unmarried in the Palestinian society in the West Bank.

Choice of methodology is determined by the subject and purposes of the research (Dawson & Couchman, 1995; Polit & Hungler, 1995; Stevens et al, 1993). In this study, it was not possible to use experimental or quasi-experimental approaches because the study could not measure causal relationships. Non-experimental design was one of the alternatives for this study.

Methodological triangulation was utilized in this study by using quantitative and qualitative methods to collect and analyze data. This included the use of semi-structured

interviews with probing, in addition to a more structured data collection technique of standardized close-ended checklist form questionnaire that was used to evaluate the Mental Health State of the respondents. Quantitative research is concerned primarily with the measurement of facts about people and establishing relationships between variables (Couchman & Dawson, 1995). Knafel and Gallo (1995) propose that when the study is deductive and is based on existing theory, quantitative methods have a predominant role and qualitative methods are complementary. The process of using different data collection techniques to study the same construct enhances validity of the instrument and the study (Bailey, 1997).

A non-experimental ex post facto design was used to investigate the mental health status of the subjects of this study. Ex post facto design is a non-experimental research method used when the event or the independent variable has occurred and the researcher intends to describe existing relationships between variables (Talbot, 1995). This design describes characteristics of a sample without manipulating or controlling of them, as they already occurred and the researcher has no influence on them (Bailey, 1997; Polit & Hungler, 1995). Ex post facto research could infer relationships and correlation between variables, but does not indicate causality (Talbot, 1995). Because it was not possible to randomize, manipulate, or control the variables of the study, a non-experimental design was utilized to study the state of the mental health of unmarried Palestinian women.

There are several designs for the ex post facto methodology. These include descriptive correlational design, retrospective, prospective, path analysis, and predictive design (Talbot, 1995). For this study, descriptive correlational design was selected to determine relationships between independent and dependent variables. There was no randomization of sample or manipulation of the independent variable. One advantage of the descriptive correlational design is that it is not very expensive and can be done quickly (Talbot, 1995). However, its main disadvantage is that it determines correlation rather than causation, which means that the researcher cannot tell for sure what exactly caused the phenomenon under study.

In the current study, little if any information is available about the subject of the study. The investigator is using the qualitative methodology to develop insight about the sociocultural conditions and environment of the unmarried Palestinian women and their perceptions of self and others. This purpose cannot be achieved through quantitative methods alone. Qualitative findings, according to Bailey (1997), Knafel and Haward (1984), are important because of the richness and detailed data they can provide which give the reader an

understanding of the subject's social world. Polit and Hungler (1995), Artinian (1988), and Tuck (1995) supported the notion that qualitative research is best when knowledge about humans is not possible without describing the human experience of subjects under study. The exploratory descriptive approach is a logical beginning for obtaining extensive and global data necessary for understanding and examining the problem under study.

Qualitative inquiry according to Lininger (1992), is useful to generate rich descriptions and insights about unknown or vaguely known phenomena (P: 398). In addition, qualitative research can be used to generate findings for "Action Research", in which one can use the findings of the study to improve human conditions (Lininger, 1992 p: 399). Another venue where qualitative research is useful is applied research (Couchman & Dawson, 1995; Marram & Stetler, 1976). According to Marram & Stetler (1976), "applied research uses social psychology theories and aims at increasing our understanding of events in the real world and/or finding solutions to real problems (p. 564). Through qualitative research, professionals can improve human living conditions that could be related to gender issues, cultural practices, family problems, oppression, and faulty institutional practices (Lininger, 1992). Research results should be utilized as tools for change.

For research to be congruent and in harmony with human needs, it is essential that clinical practice be based on research findings, and that research conclusions about the effectiveness of treatment to be close to clinical reality (Goldfried & Wolfe, 1996; Marram & Stetler, 1976). In Morse's and Field's (1987) view, qualitative inquiry helps the investigator examine the totality and unifying character of the phenomenon being studied, while focusing on the interdependencies of the variables rather than cause-effect relationships (p. 416). The qualitative approach, according to Morse & Field (1987), assumes that realities are multiple, interrelated, and determined within a context. In this study, the experience of women under investigation is accepted as it is without requiring external validation.

The purposes of qualitative design according to Polit & Hungler (1995) are to:

- 2- Describe a group or phenomenon when little is known about it.
- 3- Generate hypotheses.
- 4- Understand relationships between variables.
- 5- To gain a different perspective when the existing quantitative methods do not capture the phenomenon under study.
- 6- Study an area of human experience over time or history.
- 7- Theory development as in grounded theory approach (p. 518 – 519).

It is believed that sociocultural values and beliefs influence a woman's perception of herself and her life (Al-Mernesi, 1997; Johnson, 1993; Deaux et al, 1993). The perception and experience of each woman constitutes her social context. *The qualitative approach helps in identifying the multiple realities found in the data, and is able to identify the mutually shared factors, and variables that possibly interacted and influenced the social context of the people who are studied. Qualitative research offers a unified view of objective and subjective realities, and better describes the complexity of lived experiences* (Polit & Hugler, 1995, p. 517). By identifying the factors and variables that can contribute to the emotional problems and distress of unmarried women, we can modify or change them, or help women adjust more effectively.

There is no research in Palestinian society in relation to self-perception and mental health status of unmarried Palestinian women. Recent studies of the mental health of Palestinian women that were conducted by Sansur (1995), Khamis (1998), Heiberg & Qvensen (1994), Punamaki (1988), Qouta (1999) and Gaza Community Mental Health Program (1998) only talked about comparative data of married and unmarried women on a narrow basis. Not one of these studies has investigated the relationship of "remaining unmarried" and its influence on women's self-perception and mental health status.

A number of alternative methodologies in the qualitative tradition may also be used to study human subjects in their natural social environment. One distinctive approach of these methods is the phenomenological approach. The phenomenological method consists of a set of steps or stages, which guide the researcher in studying specific phenomena. It is used to study how and why people act or do the things the way they do (Polit & Hungler, 1995; Stevens et al, 1993; Talbot, 1995). Phenomenology aims to provide presuppositionless descriptions (Knaak, 1984). This is accomplished by explicitly setting forth the investigator's presuppositions (Knaak, 1984). A search for meaning is the final characteristic of phenomenological research, in which the method is used to interrogate the phenomena itself in the search for meaning. Phenomenology does not intend to infer causal relationships between independent and dependent variables (Stevens et al, 1993). This approach was used in the present study because remaining unmarried is an increasing phenomenon in the Palestinian society, which was not investigated before in depth by researchers.

A second approach in qualitative research is ethnography in which, the researcher focuses on studying an ethnic or social group that has similar characteristics (Stevens et al, 1993; Roe & Webb, 1998). Ethnographers believe that phenomena can be only understood if

studied in the context wherever they happen (Tuck, 1995; Roe & Webb, 1993). Therefore, the researcher usually lives the experience of the people he/she studies and observes and documents findings (Stevens et al, 1993; Cobb & Hagmaster, 1987). According to Webb and Roe (1993), the nurse ethnographer may for example, study a unit of a hospital or a health care facility to explain its services or activities. An ethnographic approach was not suitable for the present study because the unmarried Palestinian women are not an ethnic group or a society by itself, and they live everywhere and they are heterogeneous.

A third kind of qualitative research that can be used in social settings is the descriptive approach. This approach mainly focuses on describing or explaining certain phenomena as they occur in the setting in a systemic organized way without theoretical inference (Polit & Hungler, 1995). Therefore, the descriptive mode is used when the investigator intention is purely to present what is happening in a particular group of subjects and help us understand their experience (Artinian, 1988).

A fourth well-known kind of qualitative research is the Grounded Theory approach (Polit & Hungler, 1995; Stevens et al, 1993; Tuck, 1995; Knafl & Howard, 1984). In the Grounded Theory approach, the researcher builds a theory based on observations of what is happening in reality (Stevens et al, 1993). Therefore, the researcher develops a new theory through a systematic set of procedures that are accompanied by frequent analysis, and re-validation (Polit & Hungler, 1995; Stevens et al, 1993; Bailey, 1997). It is a theory, which emerges out of data grounded in the observation and interpretation of phenomena without being influenced by the present knowledge (Stevens et al, 1993; Bailey, 1997; Artinian, 1988). The investigator did not originally intend to generate theory or propositions. Therefore, the Grounded Theory approach was not used.

On the other hand, exploratory research aims at either developing a general theory or the formation of hypotheses (Stevens et al, 1993). The researcher in exploratory research starts from a theoretical framework and attempts to find connections between different sets of results which then lead to the formation of a theory and verifiable hypotheses (Stevens et al, 1993; Couchman & Dawsom, 1995).

Symbolic interactionism is one of the relevant frameworks for qualitative inquiry (Mariano, 1995; Steven et al, 1993). According to Tuck (1995), *Symbolic Interactionism explains human behavior in terms of meaning and embodies perceptions of the situation, which is closely related to theoretical underpinning of grounded theory, phenomenology, and ethnography* (p. 349). The symbolic interactionist theory emphasizes that people react to

events things and experiences on the basis of meanings that these things have for them (Tuck, 1995). This theory was selected as the conceptual framework for this study.

The phenomenology design has been used to study the main constructs of the current study, self-perception, perception of marriage, and social perspectives about unmarried women. This design was used because the investigator was curious to learn about the lived experience of the unmarried Palestinian women and how their lives are constructed. Because the investigator had limited knowledge about the views and perspectives of unmarried Palestinian women, phenomenological approach was selected to gain as much understanding and knowledge as possible on the issue under investigation. It is more logical to use phenomenology as an approach to study the influence of being "delayed in marriage" on the self-perception and the mental health status of these women.

Phenomenology is not just a research method as proposed by Morse and Field (1996). It is a philosophy and an approach that was developed by German philosophers Husserl and Heidegger, and the French philosophers Sartre and Merleau-Ponty (Talbot, 1995). According to Morse and Field (1996), *in phenomenology the researcher seeks a deeper and fuller meaning of the experience of the participants of a particular phenomenon. Phenomenology offers a descriptive, reflective, interpretive and engaged mode of inquiry.... Phenomenology tries to describe the experience as it is and to describe it directly without the various causal explanations* (p: 24).

One main assumption of phenomenology is that people know and can talk about their lived experiences and can explain the meaning of these experiences in a relatively understandable way (Talbot, 1995). The researcher who is using phenomenology transforms the lived experience into textual expression of its essence (Morse & Field, 1996). Phenomenological writing may be descriptive or interpretive, and it is presented in text, which is open to interpretation of the reader (Morse & Field, 1996).

In phenomenology, the researcher tries to understand how people attend to the world and interpret it (Morse & Field, 1996). According to Munhall and Oiler, The main aim of phenomenological research is to describe the experience rather than define categories, explain or interpret it (Talbot, 1995). Nevertheless, phenomenology is not purely descriptive; it could be interpretive as well. The researcher interviews the participant without presuppositions. The researcher tries to imagine the experience of the respondent from all aspects in order to find out what is essential for the phenomenon to be (Morse & Field, 1996). The main question asked is, how does it feel to live a certain experience?

There are four existentials that guide phenomenological reflection. These are, lived space (spatiality), lived body (corporeality), lived time (temporality), and lived human relations (relationality) according to Van Manen (Morse & Field, 1996). Our perception presents us with evidence of the world not as we think of, but as it is lived. Therefore, our perception of things differs because our experiences about them are different (Morse & Field, 1996).

II. Sampling:

In nursing research, the predominant approach to sampling is non-probability sampling. This approach is preferred due to ethical consideration and the type of population that is used in specific studies (Talbot, 1995; Swenson et al, 1996). In qualitative research, purposive, convenient sampling is the most preferred form of sampling (Swenson et al, 1996). Swenson et al (1996) postulated that 40% of qualitative studies used convenience sampling techniques. Because this study did not intend to infer direct causal relationship and association between independent and dependent variables, convenience sampling was the choice. The investigator is aware of the fact that non-randomized sampling decreases the generalizability of findings, and that some segments of the population may be underrepresented (sampling error).

A common concern throughout Palestinian studies is the lack of reliable and comprehensive aggregate data. Prior to the establishment of the Palestinian authority, one census of the Palestinians was conducted during the British Mandate in 1936 and the other was done immediately after the 1967 war (Taraki, 1990; Sabella, 1997). Until the data collection, there had been no recent official registration of the Palestinian population. In 1997, the Palestinian Authority came and conducted a population census but it was impossible to access the raw data by the investigator. Zacharia (1996) suggested that the problems of accurate and adequate demographic data are not exclusive to the Palestinians. Randomization was not possible in this study because there was not reliable registration of all unmarried women in the West Bank. Access to unmarried women in the Palestinian society, especially the remote areas, was also very difficult. Convenience, purposive sampling is an accepted approach in sociocultural studies (Cobb & Hagmaster (1987).

The non probability, convenience, disproportional quota sampling method was selected for this study. Basically, 300 women were studied from the West Bank. The sample size was relatively acceptable in this study. All districts of the West Bank and all residential localities were represented in the sample. There were participants from the north, the south, and the middle regions of the West Bank, and there were participants from cities, villages and

refugee camps. However, the rates of these women were not exactly similar to the rates of the population within the West Bank. In addition, employed and unemployed participants; and those who belonged to various age groups were represented in the sample.

In exploratory qualitative and quantitative research, small samples are enough (Polit & Hungler, 1995; Talbot, 1995). In addition, if the population is homogenous as it is the case in this study, a small sample will suffice (Talbot, 1995). Attrition rate and the type of statistical analysis needed for the study also influence sample size of any study (Talbot, 1995). In this study the attrition rate was high because the data collection was face- to- face and the subject of the study was sensitive. Furthermore, replacement of subjects who refused to participate is one freedom that characterizes convenience sampling methods. In this study, the investigator continued the selection process of the respondents until the right proportion was achieved. Therefore, the investigator selected the sample from nearly all districts of the West Bank in order to have more confidence in representing the target population

Snowball sampling was also used, in which the investigator locates new subjects through participants who have already been interviewed. This is sometimes used by qualitative researchers (Talbot, 1995). Another method of selecting participants is opportunism sampling. According to Talbot (1995), in this method the researcher follows new leads during fieldwork, taking advantage of the unexpected flexibility. Therefore, the investigator located unmarried women through women's groups, youth clubs, interviewees themselves, social and charitable organizations, and agencies for economic development. Contact people were utilized in each area as resources in order to locate potential participants. The investigator is aware of the limitations of convenience sampling technique such as the limited credibility, limitation of generalizability, and the possibility of having poor cases (Talbot, 1995; Polit & Hungler, 1995).

A. Description and characteristics of the sample of the study:

Criteria for inclusion of participants in the study:

Any woman who meets the following criteria was a possible subject for the study:

- 2- Has never been married.
- 3- Between 25-50 years.
- 4- Good verbal and reading abilities.
- 5- Voluntarily agrees to participate in the study.

B. Exclusion Criteria:

Participants whose characteristics could contaminate the results of the study should be excluded from the sample (Talbot, 1995). In this study, the following were excluded:

- 2- Currently engaged women.
- 3- Women with learning difficulties.
- 4- Illiterate women.
- 5- Deaf and blind women.

The sample was conveniently selected for this study. This was easier and saved time and money. Certain groups of women were excluded from the current for reasons. Illiterate women were excluded because they cannot complete the questionnaire by themselves. In all self-report questionnaires, the participant should be capable to fill it by himself/herself. In addition, good verbal and hearing abilities were important for communication. Therefore, women who had any reason that negatively could influence their abilities in understanding, reading, conversing with data collectors were excluded from the current study. While it is commonsense to exclude engaged women, and women with learning difficulties from the study however, exclusion of illiterate women means that a certain rate of the unmarried women was improperly represented. This, of course threatens the generalizability of the current study. In turn, the results of the study are only generalized on the participants, rather than the unmarried women in the West Bank.

III. Demographic data:

A. District of living:

About 41% of the population of the West Bank resides in the northern region (Jenin, Nablus, Tulkarem, Qalqilia), and 33% of the population lives in the middle region (Ramallah, El-Bireh, and Jerusalem area) and 26% live in the south region (Sabella, 1994; Palestinian Central Bureau, 1998). Originally, the investigator intended to divide the 300 respondents into three groups; each with 100 women from each of the districts of the West Bank (North, South, and Middle).

Table (4-1) summarizes the distribution of the participants by region of living. Thirty-five percent of the respondents lived in the northern region of the West Bank, (32.3%) lived in the middle region, and 98 (32.7%) lived in the southern region. Table (4-2) shows the distribution of the participants who were interviewed by region of living. Because the sample

of the present study was not random, the rates of the respondents varied from that of the Palestinian population in the West Bank, which decreases the chance for generalizability.

Table 4 – 1

Distribution of the 300 respondents by region of living or residence

Residence	Frequency	Percentage
north region	105	35.00
middle region	97	32.33
south region	98	32.67
Total	300	100%

Table 4 -2

Distribution of the 163 interviewees by region of living or residence

Residence	Frequency	Percentage
north region	38	23.31
middle region	54	33.13
south region	71	43.56
Total	163	100%

B. Residence and living area:

To represent women of urban and rural areas, a non-probability convenience sample was taken from cities, refugee camps, and villages. According to Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (1998), about 16% of the Palestinians live in refugee camps, 54% live in cities, and 30% live in villages. In relation to living area or residence, 138 (46%) respondents lived in urban areas that included cities and large towns, 118 (39.3%) respondents lived in rural areas and 44 (14.7%) respondents lived in refugee camps (see table 4-3). Table (4-4) show the distribution of the respondents who were interviewed in relation to living area. The ratio of participants in cities, villages, and refugee camps somewhat varied from the ratio of the Palestinian population in the three localities. This was because the sample was convenience rather than proportional, which place limitation on generalizability of the results.

Table 4 – 3

Distribution of the 300 respondents by area of living

Residence	Number of participants	%
City	138	46.00
Village	118	39.33
Refugee Camp	44	14.67
Total	300	100%

Table 4 – 4

Distribution of the 163 interviewees by area of living

Residence	Number of participants	%
City	82	50.31
Village	58	35.58
Refugee Camp	23	14.11
Total	163	100%

C. Age of the respondents:

Only unmarried women whose ages were between 25 and 50 years were included in the present study. The age range 25-50 years was selected for number of reasons. Previous studies show that the preferred age of marriage for Palestinian women is 17-20 years with a mean age of 18 years, although many women marry earlier than this age (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1996; Manasra, 1989; Giacman, 1994; Family Planning and Protection Association, 1981; Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994). Most of these investigators noticed that the chance of marriage decreases with age. In addition, the findings of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (1998) confirmed a negative relationship between age and the chance for marriage. The study reported that 19.8% of the women aged 25-29, 12.1% of age 35-39, and 8.1% of the age group 45-49 are not married. These numbers indicate that a small percentage of women (about 4%) will have a chance to marry before falling into the next age group. The cultural trend in Palestinian society reflects men's wish to marry women below 20 years of age. Many women whose age is over 25 years still expect to get married, but their chances are small.

The respondents of this study were grouped into four age groups. One-hundred and forty-five (48.33%) respondents belonged to age group 25-30 years; 96 (32%) in the age

group 31-36; 36 (12%) respondents belonged to the age group 37- 42 and 23 (7.67%) in the age group 43-50 (see table 4-5). Table (4-6) explains the distribution of the respondents who were interviewed by age group.

Table 4 – 5

Distribution of the 300 respondents by age group

Age group	Frequency	%
25-30 years	145	48.33
31-36 years	96	32.00
37-42 years	36	12.00
43-50 years	23	7.67
total	300	100%

Table 4 – 6

Distribution of the 163 interviewees by age group

Age group	Frequency	%
25-30 years	88	53.99
31-36 years	50	30.67
37-42 years	16	9.82
43-50 years	9	5.52
total	163	100%

D. Work and employment:

Palestinian data indicates that 87.3% of the women over age 18 do not have any contribution to the family budget (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1999). Women constitute a minority of employees in the services sector with a rate of 28.4% in the West Bank (Palestinian Central Bureau, 1998, p. 10). Eleven point four percent of the working Palestinian women are employed in industries such as the clothing industry and embroidery (Abu-Awwad, 1997; Ministry of Labor, 1997, p. 43). Palestinian statistics show that women are a minority in professional and non-traditional jobs. In general, women constitute 12% of the engineers, lawyers, and physicians; 3% of those holding a master or PhD degrees (Program of Development Studies at Beirzit University, 1999).

Employment status in the current study was classified into four categories that included: professional and paraprofessional jobs; industrial and agricultural jobs; services; and housewives or unemployed. One-hundred-seventeen (39%) respondents were housewives or unemployed at the time of data collection, 88 (29.33%) respondents were employed in professional or paraprofessional jobs that need a minimum of college degree; 48 (16%) respondents were employed in industrial or agricultural jobs and 47 (15.67%) worked at places that provide services to people such as cleaning, secretarial, managerial, clerical work etc. Table (4-8) explains the distribution of the respondents who were interviewed by employment status.

Table 4 – 7

Distribution of the 300 respondents by employment

Employment	Frequency	%
house wife/ unemployed	117	39.00
Professionals paraprofessionals	88	29.33
industrial jobs	48	16.00
Services	47	15.67
Total	300	100%

Table 4 – 8

Distribution of the 163 interviewees by employment

Employment	Frequency	%
house wife/ unemployed	57	34.97
Professionals paraprofessionals	47	28.83
industrial jobs	30	18.40
Services	29	17.80
Total	163	100%

E. Educational level of the participants:

According to the Palestinian studies, the general literacy rate among females was 77% (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998). In the year 2001, females constitute 49.95 of the students of all levels in the West Bank and 49.8% at the Gaza Strip (www.pnic.gov.ps). Studies of literacy levels among Palestinians showed that the literacy rates are relatively good among females in primary school however, the percentages drop sharply as the level of education rises (JMCC, 1995; Manasra, 1994; Abed Al-Hadi, 1990). For instance, Palestinian figures indicted that 33% of the males and 36% of the females in the age group 16-18

dropped out of schools (Palestinian Central Bureau, 1999). In addition, the Palestinian data show that women’s illiteracy rate over the age of 15 is 20.3% (Palestinian Working Woman Society, 2002, P. 8). Palestinian figures show that during the 90s, 46.9% of the university students and 42.9% of the high colleges are women (www.pnic.gov.ps). These data indicates that the older the age of the Palestinian female, the less the level of education she might get.

About half (50.34%) of the 300 participants of this study had more than 12 years of education with a minimum of college level (at least one years of education after secondary level). However, 79 (26.33%) respondents finished between 1-9 years of schooling, which resembles an elementary education. In addition, 70 (23.33%) participants earned between 10-12 years of education. Table (4-10) shows the distribution of the interviewees by education.

Table 4- 9

Distribution of the 300 respondents by educational level

Educational level	Frequency	%
1-9 years	79	26.33
10-12 years	70	23.33
more than 12 years	151	50.34
Total	300	100%

Table 4- 10

Distribution of the 163 interviewees by educational level

Educational level	Frequency	%
1-9 years	47	28.83
10-12 years	37	22.7
more than 12 years	79	48.47
Total	163	100%

F. Composition of the family where the participant lives:

Among the 300 participants of this study, 154 (51.33%) participants lived with both parents and sibling(s); 99 (33.0%) lived with one parent (usually the mother) with or without other siblings. Nevertheless, 24 (8%) participants lived with a sibling only or/and close relatives after the death of both parents. In addition, 10 (3.33%) participants lived with both parents without any other sibling; 6 (2%) participants lived either by themselves or with female friends; 5 (1.7%) lived with a parent (mostly the father) who married for a second

time; and 2 (0.67%) subjects lived with a second-degree relative at the time of the data collection. Table (4-12) shows the distribution of the interviewees by living arrangements.

Table 4 – 11

Distribution of the 300 respondents by living arrangement

Living arrangement	Frequency	%
with parents and a sibling or siblings and/or other relative	154	51.33
with one parent with or without siblings	99	33.00
with a parent who married for the second time	5	1.67
with siblings and other relatives	24	8.00
with parents without siblings	10	3.33
A lone or with friends	6	2.00
with relatives	2	0.67
Total	300	100%

Table 4 – 12

Distribution of the 163 interviewees by living arrangement

Living arrangement	Frequency	%
with parents and a sibling or siblings and/or other relative	81	49.7
with one parent with or without siblings	54	33.13
with a parent who married for the second time	3	1.84
with siblings and other relatives	12	7.36
with parents without siblings	7	4.29
A lone or with friends	6	3.68
with relatives	0	0
Total	163	100%

IV. Instrument Development

A. The qualitative method: The interview

In this study, triangulation of data collection tools was used. Two assessment tools were used in this study. The literature search that was done by the investigator revealed no previously developed interview guides on self-perception, social and cultural views of unmarried women. Therefore, it was a necessary to develop interview questions to meet the

purpose of this study. Jacobson (1988) proposed that instrument development should be based either on a conceptual framework or a theoretical model. Instrument developers, according to Jacobson, may select concepts and models from other disciplines that are compatible to nursing or may design their own instruments to operationalise nursing perspectives. Jacobson (1988) postulated that 37% of the nurse-researchers have developed their own research tools. In this study, the investigator used the symbolic interactionism perspective and sociocultural concepts to develop the interview questions.

The first data collection tool was a semi-structured interview guide that was developed by the investigator (Appendix A), with the consultation of mental health professionals and other professionals. The interview guide questions are directed towards evaluating self-perception of unmarried women as it is reflected through their social context. Bailey (1997) and Talbot (1995) emphasized the use of interview guides in qualitative research to help the interviewer enter into the interview with some idea about the research area.

The investigator used the following steps to build the interview guide: First, the investigator determined the main issues that she needed to investigate based on the research questions. Six main issues evolved and they were the core of the interview guide. The six issues were: women's perception of marriage; attitudes and viewpoints of family and society about the unmarried women; self-perception and feelings of the unmarried women; reasons for remaining unmarried; impact of remaining unmarried on the life and mental health state of women; the need of the unmarried women for professional help.

In the second stage of interview guide development, a number of probing questions were developed for each of the main issues mentioned before. Seven questions were developed in the first round. After revisions by the local advisor, the academic adviser, a sociologist, and an educator, five more questions were added to the interview guide. In the third step, seven people from the health and social science fields evaluated the interview guide questions for consistency, language, structure, reliability, and content validity. This approach of using experts to evaluate content of instruments during their development is emphasized by Grant and Davis (1997) who postulated that this process increases content validity of research instruments. Content review of the interview guide included structural elements such as item content, item style, and comprehensiveness (Grant & Davis, 1997).

In the fourth step, all responses of the seven professionals were analyzed and evaluated by the investigator and the local adviser to come up with consistent points. The

suggestions of the experts were integrated and necessary changes and modifications were made. Therefore, by the end of this stage, 12 probing questions were ready for piloting. Each of the main issues of the research questions got two or more probing questions.

The final draft of the interview was piloted on 15 unmarried women and additional modifications were introduced afterwards. During analysis of the pilot, the investigator found that the questions about how the women evaluated themselves in their social context were not enough. Therefore, three additional questions were added to the interview guide to enrich this dimension. The following was a representation of the main issues and the probing questions:

- Perceptions of the unmarried woman about marriage: question 5, 6, 12 and 13.
- Attitudes and viewpoints of the family and society of the unmarried women: question 3 and 4.
- Self-perception of the unmarried women: question 7 and 8.
- Reasons for remaining unmarried: question 1 and 2.
- Impact of remaining unmarried on the life of the woman and mental health state: question 9, 10, 11, 14 and 15.

The interview guide was first written in English, then translated into Arabic by the researcher and was double checked by four persons who were fluent in Arabic and English. The interview was conducted in the Arabic language and was tape-recorded, after obtaining the consent of the participants. Confidentiality was maintained and the identity of the participants was kept anonymous by erasing the recorded tapes after the viva.

Face-to-face interviews were used to collect data about the social living conditions and self-perception of the research subjects. Qualitative data takes the form of verbatim interviews and / or field note transcriptions (Knafl & Haward, 1984). Therefore, data collection is done in a way which pays more attention to the perceptions and meanings placed on events by the subjects of the research than to comparability or generalizability (Pearson, 1997). Open-ended questions were utilized as they provide broader information about the participants and help to enrich data (Artinian, 1988; Linninger & Warwich, 1975; Zahran, 1982). The interview approach has multiple advantages such as:

- 2- They yield a better sample of the population.
- 3- They have a relatively high response rates.
- 4- People like to talk rather than write.
- 5- They are better for illiterate people.

- 6- There is less misunderstanding and more chance for clarification.
- 7- There is more time to express self in details.
- 8- There is a chance to express emotion-laden information.
- 9- Probing is possible for added details when the response is incomplete.
- 10- More preferred for open-ended questions and complex questions
- 11- Makes observation of respondent's response and reaction easier (Seltize et al, 1976; Lininger & Warwick, 1975; Bailey, 1997; Talbot, 1995 and Haroni, 1976).

The investigator believes that the interview was helpful to provide extensive and detailed information about the specific experiences of each woman. Qualitative data is best acquired through qualitative, descriptive methods of data collection (Polit & Hungler, 1987). Polit and Hungler (1983) highlighted this notion in the following statement: *Because the data are words or texts placed in the context of the particular research problems, the primary instrument of data gathering in the qualitative research becomes the researchers themselves rather than questionnaires* (p.415).

Various forms of interviews could be used to collect data in qualitative research (Bailey, 1997; Polit & Hungler, 1995; Talbot, 1995; Stevens et al, 1993). Semi-structured and unstructured interviews are quite helpful especially when questioning subjects about sensitive issues (Bailey, 1997; Talbot, 1995). In addition, the interviewer has a chance to reword or reorder questions, introduce additional questions, and to proceed according to the base of the participant (Talbot, 1995). The interviewer may ask the questions in the same manner to all the respondents or can be free to interject questions as they best fit the interviewee's line of thought.

Limitations of the interview:

The following are some of the difficulties of using interviews in data collection according to Bailey (1997) and Talbot (1995):

- They are money and time-consuming.
- Need expert interviewers.
- Need appropriate places to conduct them.
- Are difficult to organize and analyze.
- Are not comparable from one subject to another.

Interviewees are encouraged to discuss their opinions and feelings with the interviewer (Bailey, 1997; Talbot, 1995). The interviewer should not use too many close-ended questions and should use probe follow-ups to increase detailed exploration (Stevens et al, 1997; Talbot, 1995).

B. The quantitative method: testing Mental Health state:

A self-reporting checklist was used to evaluate the mental health state of the women under study. Self-reporting questionnaires and scales are suitable for evaluating personal feelings, behaviors, and thinking patterns of human beings and to discriminate among people with different traits and needs (Polit & Hungler, 1995; Brehem & Kassin, 1992; Bailey, 1997). The self-report symptom inventory is one of the good means of operationally defining normality versus abnormality (Derogatis, 1983). According to Derogatis (1983), self-report provides certain information that is unavailable through other assessment channels because it reflects information from the individual who is the most experienced about himself/herself. External observers cannot share this experience in the same depth.

Nurse researchers commonly use scales. About 31% of nurse researchers used scales as tools for data collection (Jacobson, 1988). Nevertheless, scales and standardized self-report measures have their weaknesses. The main problem of these tools is response set where subjects respond to items in a characteristic way regardless of the content of the item, which may threaten validity (Polit & Hungler, 1991; Jacobson, 1988). Another influence on responses is the social desirability response set, in which individuals misrepresent their attitudes or feelings by giving answers that are consistent with prevailing social norms (Polit & Hungler, 1991; Talbot, 1995). Still, other respondents may choose the most extreme response or always select middle range alternatives (Polit & Hungler, 1991). Polit and Hungler suggested the following to counteract the problems of response set and the social desirability response set:

1. Encourage frankness.
2. Provide anonymity of respondents.
3. Use indirect questions.
4. Build trust atmosphere.
5. Word questions carefully.

On the other hand, self-report questionnaires and checklists require that the participant should fill them by himself or herself. This means that the participant should be literate to a level that entitles him/her to do this task. One disadvantage for that is the exclusion of illiterate people from the study, which limits its generalizability.

1. Description of Derogatis L. SCL.90-R:

The Derogatis Symptom Check List 90-Revised (L.SCL.90-R) (Appendix B) was developed by R. L. Derogatis (1983) through clinical research. This tool has been used by physicians and psychologists for assessment or research purposes, but may be easily used by paraprofessionals and nurses as well (Derogatis, 1983). Jacobson (1988) observed that 53% of nursing research used non-nursing tools to collect data.

The SCL-90 is a measure of current psychological symptom status not a measure of personality, except indirectly (Derogatis, 1983). It measures psychological state and assesses for the presence of psychological and psychiatric disorders in the participant. The SCL-90 is a norm-referenced tool that differentiates non-patient respondents from individuals with psychiatric disorders (Derogatis, 1983). According to Jacobson (1988), a norm-referenced framework is used when the aim of a study is to evaluate a group of individuals in relation to other individuals in a specific norm group. According to Peirce (1995), norm-referenced measures compare each subject's performance or score to norm group that was determined by the instrument developer(s). In this, SCL-90 was appropriate since unmarried Palestinian women's mental health state was compared with other Palestinian women and women in the world.

The "SCL" testing tool consists of a 90-symptom check-list, close-ended questions that evaluate the mental state and the presence of emotional or physical disorders in the participant. Answers for each item of the test are recorded on a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from 0-4 where zero represents "Not at all" or "no complaint" and four stands for "Extremely" (Derogatis, 1983, p. 2). The '90' is scored and interpreted in terms of nine primary symptom dimensions and three global indices of distress (Derogatis, 1983). The following are the symptom dimensions:

1. Somatization.
2. Obsessive-Compulsive.
3. Interpersonal sensitivity.
4. Depression.

5. Anxiety.
6. Hostility.
7. Phobic anxiety.
8. Paranoid ideation.
9. Psychoticism.

The Derogatis SCL. 90-R is accompanied by a set of standardized written instructions. Demographic data about each participant in the study were presented in the first and second pages of the symptom checklist (Appendix B). Demographic data included age group, residential area of living, and location for living, work, education, and the families' structure where the respondent lives.

2. Definition of the SCL. 90-R indices:

There are three indices of the SCL, 90-R. These indices are used to communicate the level or depth of the individual's psychopathology. The three indices are described as follows according to Derogatis (19983):

1. Global Severity Index (GSI): represents the best single indicator of the current level or depth of the disorder and should be utilized in most instances where a single summary measure is required. It combines information on numbers of symptoms and intensity of perceived distress.
2. Positive Symptom Distress Index (PSDI): is a pure intensity measure that helps in identifying the severity of symptoms.
3. Positive Symptom Total (PST): is simply a count of the number of symptoms the participant reports as positive (Derogatis, 1983 p.11).

3. Inclusion and exclusion criteria of the SCL. 90 -R

The SCL. 90 can be used for normal people and for patients of various types of diagnosis (Derogatis, 1983). The followings are exclusion criteria of the SCL. 90– R:

1. *Floridly psychotic patients*
2. *Delirious patients*
3. *Patients with learning difficulties*
4. *Severely disabled individuals*
5. *Illiterate people (Derogatis, 1983. P. 5).*

4. Time set for SCL.90- R:

The standard time for which the respondent should answer the items of SCL.90 is 7 days including the day of data collection, but it could extend to two weeks (Derogatis, 1983). The major rationale behind this selection concerns the fact that, "*the most recent 7 days in a client's time frame usually provide us with the most relevant information as to his/ her current clinical status. Longer time referent begin to introduce noticeable distortions, both as a result of memory process, and also the natural validity of psychological symptoms across periods of this duration*" (Derogatis, 1983, p: 3). Therefore, each respondent was told to focus her responses within the last seven days and the day of the data collection. In addition, instructions on the first page of SCL.90 provided similar guidance in case the data collector forgot to mention them.

C. Reliability and validity of the research instruments:

1. Reliability of the SCL.90 – R:

Reliability, according to Talbot (1995), is defined as the ability of the instrument to create reproducible results. Reliability of the SCL.90 – R is of two types, internal consistency and Test-Retest (Derogatis, 1983). The internal consistency was calculated from the data of 219 symptomatic volunteers, using coefficient alpha. *All of the co efficiencies in the present test were quite satisfactory ranging between a low of (.77) for psychoticism to a high of (. 90) for depression* (Derogatis, 1983; p.14). The Test-Retest coefficient was obtained from a sample of 94 heterogeneous psychiatric outpatients who were assessed during an initial evaluation visit and reassessed one week later (Derogatis, 1983). *Co- efficiencies were between (.80) and (. 90), which is an accepted level of reliability ranges for measures of symptom construct* (Derogatis, 1983, P: 15).

2. Validity of the SCL.90- R:

According to Knaak (1984) and Jacobson (1988), validity means the extent to which an instrument measures what it intended to measure. Validity may be evaluated by face validity, content validity, criterion-related, and construct validity (Jacobson, 1988). The SCL-90 was evaluated by criterion-related validity and construct validity by the tool developer (Derogatis, 1983). Comparisons were made between the SCL-90 and other scales and tests such as the MMPI, Wiggins, Cluster scale and others (Derogatis, 1983). Results reflected a

high degree of convergent validity for the SCL.90-R (Derogatis, 1983). Validity measurement of the SCL.90-R was done to evaluate the factorial invariance of the items of each symptom dimension (Derogatis, 1983). *The SCL.90-R has demonstrated an excellent level of invariance for all nine symptom dimensions across the parameters of sex, social class, and psychiatric diagnosis* (Derogatis, 1983; p.16).

Construct validation of the SCL.90-R was tested by Derogatis and Cleary (Derogatis, 1983), with very good results. These researchers concluded that the empirical analysis matched the theoretical structure of the SCL.90 quite well on just about all the 9 dimensions (Derogatis, 1983). In addition, criterion validity for the SCL.90-R was high according to tool developers and the external validity of the SCL.90 is good with high generalizability potentials (Derogatis, 1983).

The SCL.90-R is a popular self-report symptom inventory and is used both in research and clinical fields (Derogatis, 1983). The Derogatis L.SCL. 90-R has been translated into Arabic and has been proved reliable by many Palestinian researchers such as Sansur (1995), Khamis (1998), Awwad (1998) and others. The SCL.90-R was successfully used by local and international researchers and investigators such as Walker et al (1998); Randolph et al, (1986); Weissman et al, (1976); Brown et al (1979); Summers and Hersh (1983); Sansur (1995); Khamis (1998); Todd et al (1997); Awwad (1998); and others.

The SCL-90 was used successfully by Sansur (1995) in his study of Palestinian women's mental health status, which concluded that the Derogatis SCL.90 could be used effectively to measure the mental health state of Palestinian women. Awwad (1998) also used the SCL. 90 to study the mental health state of 1000 Palestinian children in the Gaza Strip. The SCL. 90-R was effectively used by the National Mental Health Society (1989) for studying the mental health- state of the Palestinian youth. Todd et al (1997) studied this tool to examine if it is effective for evaluating adolescents' and adults' emotional state. Todd and his colleagues declared that, *"the SCL-90-R, Derogatis is efficient and widely used for both clinical and research purposes, and can be used for evaluating the psychological symptoms of outpatient adults and non patient adults. This tool can differentiate people with psychological problems from unscreened or normative groups"* (p. 300).

The SCL.90-R was effectively used by Walker et al (1998), to test the mental effects of sexual trauma on children; by Moore et al (1987), to evaluate psychosomatic symptoms in parents after the death of a child. Khamis (1998) also used two dimensions (Depression and Anxiety), of the SCL. 90-R in her study of the mental health status the Palestinian women in

the Occupied Territories. In addition, the SCL.90-R was effectively used by Al-Krenawi and Slonim-Nevo (2003) to investigate the mental health state of Bedouins in Negev in Israel. The investigator believes that the SCL.90-R self-reporting check-list is an acceptable tool for data collection of the mental health status of the unmarried Palestinian women.

3. Consideration of using foreign tool for Palestinian society:

In cultural and social research, it is preferable to use culturally sensitive tools of data collection. There are some drawbacks for using foreign and western tools for assessing people of other cultures. When a foreign tool is used, there is a risk that the wording of the questions of the questionnaire means different things to the respondents who come from another culture. The questions may not be understood by the respondent even when they are translated. In addition, foreign tools might not appropriately reflect the construct under study for another society, ethnic group, or culture. The items of the tool sometimes ask specific questions that are relevant only to the culture of the tool developer (s). Hence, when the respondents answer the questions of the tool, they may fail to answer appropriately. Thus, the scores of the respondent will be altered. The solution is on translating the tool to mother tongue of the respondents; clarify the ambiguous statements, and rephrasing the tool items to be culturally sensitive. This should be done without influencing the validity of the tool.

There are usually variations in how people react to their illness. In some cultures, people exaggerate their physical and emotional complaints, while in other societies people conceal and minimize their illness and pains. Thus, the mental health professional might diagnose a person as healthy but in reality he/she is sick. The opposite is also possible and people are misdiagnosed because they express their feeling in an augmented or diluted way. There are always some risks in the mental health field about misdiagnosing sick people or labeling and diagnosing those who are not actually disturbed just because they met the diagnostic criteria that were developed by Western professionals.

Mental health professionals believe that the decision about diagnosis of a person should be based on more than one test because no test could provide an understanding of the complexity of one's personality (Fredman, 2000). There should be additional consideration of other sources of information and frequent meetings with the respondent. To overcome this problem of misdiagnosis, the investigator used interviews to learn more about the respondents' thinking and feelings and how they perceive marriage and their lives. The use of the qualitative method was done to validate the results of the quantitative method, which improves the validity of the study.

There are universal criteria for diagnosis in the mental health field. The DMS-IV- revised and the ICD-10 are examples of well-known and reliable differential diagnostic tools in the mental health field. These tools are used over the world for all nations. An Arab, a Japanese, or an American client has the diagnosis of depression if they met the criteria for depression in the DSM-IV-Revised. However, some variations could be observed in the level of severity of symptoms across cultures. This is left for the physician to decide. Nevertheless, the DSM-IV-revised and ICD- 10 continue to be valid by the majority of the mental health professionals everywhere in the world, including in Arab countries.

Tests have norms and standards that are used to compare a person's or a group's scores with those of the norm (Feldman, 2000). There controversy around the question of whether different norms should be established for members of various racial and ethnic groups (Feldman, 2000). The first opinion approves using non-normative tools. Supporters of this approach suggest that norming is problematic. The first problem is the difficulty in establishing norms for all tests and tools of research. In addition, researchers of this group believe that race norming raises profound and intense feelings that may come into conflict with scientific objectivity (Feldman, 2000).

Those who agree on this viewpoint believe that a separate set of norms for a racial group may be used for the diagnostic tool or data collection tool. Therefore, rather than using the pool of all people who tool the test, the scores of the respondents from the ethnic or target group of the research are compared only with the scores of their native people. Proponents of race norming argue that norming procedures are affirmative action tool for the ethnic group. In addition, if the tool or test is not adjusted to meet ethnic norms, they are not useful in predicting the studied phenomenon (Feldman, 2000). Another problem according to Feldman (2000) is that the test might stigmatize ethnic groups as they have more pathology than the general population, which could inflame racial bigotry (Feldman, 2000).

There are no known quantitative data collection tools for the mental health state that are invented by Arab researchers. Arab researchers usually translate foreign tools to Arabic language and use them. However, regarding qualitative tools, each researcher develops his/her tool for the specific research population.

The investigator of the current study selected Derogatis SCL-90-R because it was proved reliable by several Palestinian and Western researchers; translated to Arabic, and had high validity as reported by its developers. The interview method was used to enhance the validity of the findings of the quantitative approach and to provide deep understanding of the differential effects of remaining single for Palestinian women. Responses to the interview

questions and observations during data collection were utilized to elicit rich, detailed, and holistic information that can be used in qualitative analysis. Selltiz et al, 1976; Cobb and Hagemaster, 1987; Artinian, 1988 and Haroni, 1976 stressed the value of interviewing and observation when collecting data about the psychological aspects of respondents.

4. Reliability of the SCL .90 –R for the current study:

The reliability of the SCL.90-R for this study was established by examining the tool through two basic methods, which are Internal Consistency and Split-Half techniques. One hundred and thirteen filled questionnaires were used to test the tool for reliability. Equal length Spearman-Brown was calculated for the SCL.90. Reliability coefficients were (.94) for Equal Length Spearman- Brown, (0.88) between forms, and (0.94) for Unequal-Length Spearman- Brown. Guttman Split- Half was also calculated for the SCL.90. Alpha for part one was 0.92; 0.95 for part two, and 0.93 for the tool in general. Internal consistency measurement was done for the 9 dimensions and resulted in the following coefficient values:

Dimension 1-Somatization, Alpha = 0.88

Dimension 2-Obsessive - Compulsive, Alpha = 0.78

Dimension 3-Interpersonal Sensitivity, Alpha = 0.70

Dimension 4-Depression, Alpha = 0 .80

Dimension 5-Anxiety, Alpha = 0.82

Dimension 6-Hostility, Alpha = 0.73

Dimension 7-Phobic Anxiety, Alpha = 0.72

Dimension 8-Paranoid Ideation, Alpha = 0.74

Dimension 9-Psychoticism, Alpha = 0.80

The reliability coefficient Alpha for the whole tool was .97, which was a very good level of reliability. The lowest coefficient was 0.7 and the highest was about 0.9. These results are quite similar to the values produced by Derogatis and his colleagues (1983), which in turn enhance the tool's reliability. Stevens, et al (1993) postulated that an acceptable correlation of reliability should be above 0.8 therefore, the SCL.90-R is considered a reliable tool for this study.

5. Validation of the tools of the current study:

The validation measurement for the SCL.90 for the current study was difficult to perform therefore; the investigator accepted previous studies that were done by tool designers

and other researchers who used this tool. As for the interview guide questions, content and face validity assessment were done by consulting experts on qualitative research, who reported that the questions suit the aim of the study and are appropriate for the interview. Because the interview questions are open-ended, it was not possible to measure internal validity statistically.

V. The data collection process:

A. Timing of data collection:

The data collection started on June 1999 and ended on May 2000. Data collection started in the north region followed by the south, and ended in the middle region. Because data of this study was composed of a questionnaire and a face-to-face interview, the process was tedious and time-consuming. In addition, the investigator had to do most of the data collection because the effort to hire assistants was not very successful.

Data collection ended before the Al-Aqsa Uprising. Therefore, the political situation on the Palestinian land did not influence the process of data collection. However, later on and after the eruption of the uprising in September 2001, other work on the thesis was greatly influenced by the general political situation in the area.

B. Time needed for filling the questionnaire and conducting the interview:

Completing the questionnaire required 15-40 minutes with an average of 27 minutes. With regards to the interview, it took 25-40 minutes with an average of 30 minutes. Highly educated respondents needed less time to complete the questionnaire than less educated ones. Nevertheless, the length of the interview depended on the respondent's willingness to share information and feelings rather than on their educational level.

C. The data collectors:

The investigator was the main data collector of the study. The sample size for this study was relatively large for one data collector. Therefore, two female data collectors were trained by the investigator to assist in data collection especially in remote areas. Female data collectors are preferred in conservative societies. Palestinian health workers like nurses and social workers are good candidates for data collection since they already have acquired the necessary interview skills during training and work.

The first assistant data collector was a nurse who holds a Masters degree in Maternal-Child Nursing and works at Jenin Public Health Clinic in the North of the West Bank. The second data collector was the field supervisor for village health workers and the coordinator of the environment project in the Center of Primary Health Care Development at the north district of West Bank. The data collectors were trained in interviewing skills, explaining items of the questionnaire for those who may need it, taking consents, tape-recording, and selecting and locating appropriate participants. The data collectors refused reimbursement for the data collection and agreed to work as volunteers.

To maintain quality and reliability of data collected by the two data collectors, the investigator kept open lines of communication with the data collectors where they shared opinions, asked questions, gave feedback about their work, and discussed any problem related to data collection with the investigator. At the end of data collection, the investigator held separate meetings with each data collector to receive information about the process and outcomes of the interviews. In addition, reports were received regarding notes and observations during data collection and were added to the typed transcriptions.

Several people participated in locating and arranging meetings with potential respondents. Prior to field trips to each district the investigator contacted friends, community figures, women's group activists, colleagues and other resource people to help in laying the ground for meeting potential subjects and to plan the data collection itself.

The two assistant data collectors were very helpful in recruiting subjects for the questionnaire. The first data collector collected 15 (5%) questionnaires out of which there were six (3.68%) interviewees. Originally ten women agreed to be interviewed by the first data collector, but later four refused because of embarrassment or lack of desire to be tape-recorded. Two of those who were actually interviewed were uncooperative with the data collector, which resulted in brief and shallow interviews. On the other hand, the second data collector collected 45 (15%) questionnaires, but no interviews. By the end of data collection, the two data collectors collected 60 (20%) questionnaires, out of which there were six interviews.

During the process of data collection, the assistant data collectors failed to convince the women to sit for the interview due to the sensitivity of the subject under study. Therefore, the investigator completed the data collection alone in order to improve the acceptance rate among the targeted subjects. Two-hundred and nineteen (73%) questionnaires were collected by the investigator. In addition, 157 (96.32%) interviews were conducted by the investigator.

In addition, village health workers, nurses, and nursing students at Al-Quds University helped in distributing and collecting questionnaires after gaining basic training that was provided by the investigator. These people collected 21 (7%) questionnaires. None of these people conducted any interviews. In all localities of the north and some of the middle region of the West Bank, the investigator stayed overnight at friends' houses and worked during the evening to speed the process of data collection.

On few occasions, participants were skeptical and suspicious of the questionnaire and needed detailed information and reassurance about confidentiality and the purposes of the study. That was customarily provided prior to filling the questionnaire. Three participants totally refused the interview and were very firm about it. The assistant data collector appreciated their participation and respected their wishes for not participating in the interview.

Table 4 – 13

Distribution of questionnaires collected by persons who did data collection

	Frequency	%
By the investigator	219	73
By the first data collector/ Jenin	15	5
By second data collector/ Nablus	45	15
By student nurses/nurses/ village health workers	21	7
Total	300	100.0

Table 4 – 14

Distribution of interviews collected by persons who did data collection

	Frequency	%
By the investigator	157	96.32
By the first data collector/ Jenin	6	3.68
By second data collector/ Nablus	zero	0
By student nurses/nurses/ village health workers	zero	0
Total	163	100.0

Table 4- 15

Distribution of respondents by agreement and disagreement to be interviewed

Agreement/disagreement to be interviewed	Frequency	%
Interviewed	163	54.3
refused interview	79	26.3
Couldn't conduct interview	58	19.3
Total	300	100.0

D. Sites of meeting for data collection:

Data collection was conducted at any place that was found convenient to the respondent. The main setting for data collection was the home, especially for evening and night meetings. One-hundred and sixty-five meetings (55%) were done at the homes of respondents. The second most common place for data collection was the place of work in which 83 (27.66 %) meetings were conducted. The remaining 52 (17.34%) meetings were conducted at either a friends' houses; a community center; a school or a kindergarten; or a clinic.

E. Recording the interviews:

Almost all interviews were tape-recorded on a small tape-recorder. Eight respondents agreed to be interviewed but refused the tape-recording for religious reasons or feeling shy to talk in a recorded interview. These interviews were hand-written by the investigator. Hand-recording of the interviews was not an easy or convenient task. It was difficult to record all verbal and non-verbal behaviors and communications that occurred while simultaneously running the interview. Therefore, the investigator immediately recorded notes and comments after the end of each interview, which was added to the printed interview later.

F. Time frame of the study:

This study was initiated in 1997 where the investigator built the research problem and got the approval from Staffordshire University to proceed with the research. During 1998, the investigator prepared the proposal and basic literature review, and planned for the data collection. However, data collection did not start until fall, 1999 after the research committee of Staffordshire University transferred the investigator from M Phil level to PhD level of study, which happened on May, 1999.

Data collection and analysis was done during 1999 and 2000. This was before the Al-Aqsa Uprising in the Palestinian Occupied Territories. Therefore, the events of the uprising did not influence the respondents' mental health status or the social views of marriage. Nevertheless, after the eruption of the Al-Aqsa Uprising, the political situation had tremendous influence on the investigator and her course of study. Therefore, the investigator was delayed from finishing her study for more than a year.

G. Obstacles, problems, and comments on the data collection process and progress:

Taking into consideration the sensitivity of the subject of the study in the Palestinian society, one can say that data collection generally went well. Completion of the SCL-90-R questionnaire was done with minimal difficulties. In general the respondents were willing to complete the questionnaire, although some were reluctant to do so even after explaining the purposes of the study and emphasizing the confidentiality of information. It was difficult to tell how many refused to participate in this study, as those who didn't agree were not introduced to the investigator in the first place.

One-hundred and thirty-seven women of the 300 who filled the questionnaire were not interviewed either because they refused to do so, or due to other reasons such as no privacy, shortage of time, and disturbance of colleagues at work place. Seventy-nine (26.3%) of the 300 participants totally refused the interview because of being religious; not liking to be tape-recorded; embarrassment about talking about their feeling to a stranger; or not being convinced of the use of the tape-recording. On the other hand, 58 (19.3%) of the participants were not interviewed due to time constraints as it was the case for 23 (7.7%) of them; inappropriateness of the setting for the interview as occurred in 15 (5%) of the cases. However, 16 (5.3%) respondents were not interviewed because they lived in remote areas, which made it difficult to meet them in person, thus their questionnaires were collected by nursing students or nurses. In addition, 4 (1.3%) interviews were spoiled due to bad recording.

Some women who had a low level of education asked about the meaning of one or two items of the checklist and were answered by the data collectors who were well aware of the meaning of each item. Immediately after filling in the questionnaire, the data collector checked to see if any question was not answered and if the questions were marked appropriately. Any note or comment was written on the first page of the questionnaire immediately after the subject left the place of data collection.

In relation to interviews, some events occurred during recording, which could reflect the people's curiosity and skepticism about studying social phenomenon such as singlehood in Palestinian society. For instance, family members asked about the purpose of this study and the reason for selecting their sister or daughter for the study. On other occasions, mothers or sisters of participants wanted to sit in the room to listen to the interview as it took place. In addition, family members interrupted the interview to answer a phone call or to bring in beverages as happened in most of the interviews that occurred at homes. This was a common observation in rural areas and in conservative families. The investigator and data collectors made it clear that privacy was important for proper data collection, and asked family members to leave the room.

In spite of the events mentioned, interviews that occurred at home were more comfortable and easygoing than those occurred at work places. Contrary to home interviews, work colleagues and telephone calls interrupted the data collection, and sometimes, the interview was stopped for a short time then was regained after the end of the interruption. These situations were sometimes embarrassing to the participants and to the investigator.

For some participants, the interview was a chance to share feelings and to ventilate to someone, whom they believed, was concerned with their issues and problems. Four women declared that they would like to talk to someone about their bitter feelings and problems. The investigator listened to them and provided support, then referred them to a counselor in their district. Many of the women who were interviewed expressed their desire to continue the discussion after the end of recording. The investigator discussed their issues and opinions and suggested specialized people for those who felt the desire to meet with such persons. At the end of each questionnaire or interview, the investigator expressed her gratitude to the participant and apologized for being unable to provide therapy or counseling for those who wanted it and explained that she was doing a study rather than providing services.

Some situations were emotionally charged and difficult for both the investigator and the respondents. The most difficult situation for the investigator was the time when some respondents cried after being asked the question, "Are you worried about the future?", or "what will happen to you after your parents die?" However, about 15 subjects cried for other reasons as they recalled how their families treated them, and the negative view of their communities towards them. During the crying episode, the investigator stopped the recording and the questions and kept silent to give the respondents time to express feeling and to resume talking when she wanted without outside infringements. After the end of crying, the investigator expressed her concern and stated that it must be hard to feel lonely, sad, or disparate etc. This kind of response encouraged the respondent to share with the investigator if she felt the need to do that.

Remaining unmarried was a common event in certain families and communities. In about 27 houses the investigator found that more than one woman was not married. A few houses had two sisters and five others had up to four sisters who were never been married before. In addition, in some houses an aunt was single plus her nieces. In such a situation, the investigator picked up two subjects from each house if that was acceptable to them. The aim of this action was to evaluate if there were differences among unmarried sisters in their perception and viewpoints about marriage and singlehood.

The issue of sexuality was not directly mentioned very much by the majority of participants. Usually, it was implicitly brought during talking about the advantages of marriage. However, after the end of the interview and without tape-recording, 15 subjects asked the investigator about sexual issues in their lives and wanted to know if their feelings were normal and whether they managed the situation appropriately. However, sexual subjects that were brought by the participants included masturbation, which was mentioned by three

women; sexual harassment at work, which was mentioned by five women; men's treatment of unmarried women as sex objects who could be easily seduced without marriage commitment, which was mentioned by ten participants. In such situations, the investigator listened to the participant; told her that this is a common experience of single women and directed those who needed further help to women's centres or a counselor.

A few participants were concerned about their psychological well-being, and wanted to know whether they were "*normal or healthy*" and if they differed from other interviewees. For instance one participant wanted the investigator to analyze her personality because she wanted to know the strong and weak aspects of herself. A second participant questioned whether her answers were similar to others or not. Instead of answering their questions, the investigator discussed the social views of unmarried women within the Palestinian society and how people perceived marriage. In addition the investigator urged these women to read some books about human psychology and mental health to help them answer their questions. Illiterate subjects were not included in this study because they could not fill the checklist by themselves. However, five participants with elementary education found it difficult to understand some of the items of the questionnaire, although they expressed their willingness to participate. The investigator explained the meaning of difficult items for these women and helped them to mark the questions appropriately.

Six (2%) participants had some kind of physical disability that they considered as causal factors for their singlehood. Two of these had post polio in one or the two legs and they used crutches for walking. Another two had congenital hip dislocation, which caused mild limping during walking. The fifth participant had poor visual ability due to congenital cataracts in both eyes. The sixth subject had a squint in her left eye, which made her shy and embarrassed and she mentioned that this problem made her isolated in her social relationships, which lowered her chance for marriage. Four of these handicapped respondents were successfully interviewed and the other two were not. The investigator found it emotionally difficult for her to discuss the issue of marriage with the two respondents who had post polio in their legs. Therefore, they were not interviewed.

H. Issues of rigour:

According to Morse and Field (1996), four criteria for evaluating trustworthiness of research are applicability, consistency, credibility, and neutrality. Qualitative research emphasizes the uniqueness of human situations and variation in experience rather than identical repetition (Morse & Field, 1996). Therefore, it is not easy to replicate qualitative

studies because people differ from each another even if they live in the same place. Qualitative researchers assure credibility by reporting the perspectives of the informants as clearly as possible (Polit & Hungler, 1987). To increase the credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research, the researchers usually use prolonged observation and contacts with the respondents whom they study (Morse & Field, 1996).

To ensure rigor of the current study the investigator reported the experiences and perspectives of the respondents as they are, spent about an hour with each respondent in privacy, and emphasized the uniqueness and variation of the experience of the Palestinian unmarried women within the traditional Arab society. The finding of the society under study may be applicable to other Arab countries and some Islamic countries that share common beliefs, norms, and value systems.

VI. Data Analysis:

To facilitate the data analysis process, each of the 163 tape-recorded interviews was transcribed verbatim. In addition to the investigator, five senior nursing students helped in transcribing the tapes as part of their voluntary community service at Al-Quds University. To assure high quality of transcription of the interviews, the investigator compared each printed interview with its audiotape and made necessary changes or added any omitted information. The transcribed interviews and the mental state assessment checklist forms were coded and attached together until the data analysis started. In the end 1500 typewritten pages were prepared for the qualitative analysis of the interviews.

The interpreting and reporting of qualitative research depend mainly on a clearly stated and formulated goals and aims that help the reader to formulate realistic expectations when evaluating qualitative research (Lininger, 1992; Knafl & Howard, 1984). In qualitative research, the subject descriptions are analyzed from the explicit perspective determined in the conceptual framework, and interpreted in relation to the research question or objectives. (Parse et al, 1987). To illustrate the meaning of descriptions or relationship of variables, facts and percentages of the occurrence of an observation are incorporated through introducing scripts from the qualitative material as a proof or a support for an idea (Polit & Hungler, 1987). Quasi-statistics which involve tabulation of the frequency with which certain themes are supported by the data are used by some researchers (Polit & Hungler, 1987).

Quasi-statistics according to Polit and Hungler (1987), would allow the investigator to accept or negate certain null hypotheses and make conclusions to accept a theory. Quasi-

statistics are another approach to insure validation of themes and it involves tabulation of the frequency of the occurrence of a specific theme or category (Polit & Hungler, 1995). Nevertheless, these frequencies cannot be interpreted in the same way as it is the case in quantitative studies

On the other hand, other researchers argue against any quantification of qualitative data and they base their argument on the notion that qualitative materials are richer than numbers and offer more potential for understanding relationships and meanings (Polit & Hungler, 1987). However, Polit and Hungler (1987) believe that an understanding of human behavior is best when a combination of both qualitative and quantitative data analysis is used judiciously and that these two approaches can be combined in the same study.

Generating results were done with emphasis on roles of mental health nurses, policy makers, and society. Theoretical and intellectual analysis of the unmarried women's mental health state and self-perception were carried out based on the principles of gender-sensitization of mental health.

A. Thematic analysis of the interview:

Qualitative research utilizes thematic analysis, coding system, and categorization to reflect the subjects' views and perspectives (Knafl & Howard, 1984; Knafl & Webster, 1987; Polit & Hungler, 1987). In qualitative research analysis, coding is a distinguished method of analysis and is a mean to the researcher's ultimate goal of identifying and delineating major descriptive themes in the data (Knafl & Webster, 1987; Cobb & Hagemaster, 1987; Polit & Hungler, 1987). According to these authors, regardless of the mean that have been used, data should be analyzed and interpreted in relation to the research questions.

Morse (1994) suggested four stages for data analysis: comprehending, synthesizing, theorizing, and re-contextualizing. In addition, Polit and Hungler (1995) and Pearson (1997) proposed certain steps for analyzing qualitative data. These authors proposed that the investigator should first examine the recorded data for the themes and ideas. This may be done through content analysis approach, noting the number of times a particular activity or idea was mentioned. Then, the researcher should develop a category system for classifying unites of contents. This may enhance the scientific validity of the study by making the operation more systematic and objective (Polit & Hungler, 1987). In the following step, the themes are synthesized into groups of thoughts, indicating possible links and gaps. Fourth, themes and grouped ideas are recorded in concept maps, tables, or index cards. In the fifth

step, the investigator builds up a picture of how the various themes and ideas are connected in order to generate a hypothesis about their interrelationship. While the major categories or themes reflect broad topical areas of the data. The subcategories reflect narrower topical areas of the major categories (Knafl & Webster, 1987).

Table 4- 16

Distribution of the transcribed interviews by person

Person who transcribed the interview	frequency	percentage
The investigator	40	24.6 %
Student nurse 1	28	17.2 %
Student nurse 2	18	11 %
Student nurse 3	25	15.4 %
Student nurse 4	30	18.4 %
Student nurse 5	22	13.4 %
subtotal	163	100%

The phenomenology design has been used to study the main constructs of the current study; self-perception, perception of marriage, and social perspectives about unmarried women. Phenomenological writing could be descriptive or interpretive, and it is presented in text, which is open to interpretation of the reader (Morse & Field, 1996). According to Munhall and Oiler, the ultimate goal or aim of phenomenological research is to describe the experience rather than define categories, explain or interpret it (Talbot, 1995). Nevertheless, phenomenology could be interpretive rather being purely descriptive. The investigator who analyses data using phenomenology usually interprets what he/she heard or read in order to arrive to the essence of what the participants say (Morse & Field, 1996). To achieve that, the investigator follows certain steps of interpretation. The following are the steps of interpretive phenomenology as conceptualized by Boyd, Ray, and van Manen (Morse & Field, 1996, P: 125-126).

1. Intuitive: developing one's consciousness through looking and listening

2. Analyzing: identifying the structure of the phenomenon under study; this occurs through conversation between the researcher and the participant.
3. Describing the phenomenon: description is important because it directs the listener to explore his/her own experience of the phenomenon. This facilitates insight development.
4. Watching mode of appearing: observation of how the participant explains the phenomenon and under what conditions it becomes clearer.
5. Exploring the phenomenon in consciousness: at this stage, the researcher reflects on the relationships of the phenomenon to other variables, in addition to studying the nature of the phenomenon.
6. Suspending belief: also known as phenomenological reduction. In this stage, the researcher tries to exclude all unrealistic or illogical meanings of phenomenon.
7. Interpreting concealed meaning: interpreting and describing the lived experience in a way that can be of value in informing our practice and science.

There are four different schools for data analysis recommended for phenomenological research (Tuck, 1995). These were invented by Spielberg, Van Kaam, Giorgi, and Colaizzi (Tuck, 1995). There are common phases that were suggested by the four researchers. For instance, Spielberg suggested that when analyzing interviews and communication using phenomenological approach, words or phrases that describe some aspects of the lived experience are listed separately. Similar expressions are grouped and labeled and irrelevant expressions are eliminated. Then groups of expressions that bear close relationships to one another are clustered and labeled. The identified core of common elements is checked against a selection of original descriptors obtained in conversation with the participants. If there is a discrepancy, the investigator should revisit the analysis again (Tuck, 1995).

On the other hand, Colaizzi suggested somewhat a different approach for analyzing quantitative data (Tuck, 1995). The first step is to read all descriptions and extract phrases or sentences that directly pertain to the phenomenon. Secondly, the researcher formulates the meanings of each significant statement; organizes the aggregate formulated meanings into clusters of themes. Thirdly, the researcher validates the clusters with the original descriptions and note discrepancies in themes. In the last phase, the researcher integrates the results in an exhaustive description that represent unequivocally a statement of the essential structure of

the phenomenon (Tuck, 1995). This approach suggested by Colaizzi was used by the investigator of the current study to analyze the qualitative data.

Validation of the thematic explanation is important in the data analysis, according to Polit and Hungler (1995), Pearson (1997) and Knafl and Webster (1987) because the researcher has to make sure that the themes inferred from the data accurately represent the perspectives of the subjects. To improve the internal validity of the themes of the analysis of the interviews of the current study, expert triangulation has been used. Three experts participated in thematic analysis of the interviews to see if they matched each another. The first expert was a nurse who holds a Masters degree in public health, analyzed 31 interviews. The second expert, a statistician with a Masters degree in statistics, analyzed 38 interviews. The third had a PhD in clinical psychology and analyzed 24 interviews. In addition, the investigator analyzed 23 interviews. The four experts analyzed 116 interviews and the major themes were summarized then compared and contrasted, in preparation for content analysis. Indexing and coding have been done manually by the four data analysts. Revisions of the themes were done as necessary.

Two of the data analysts were single women, one of which was a participant in this study. The clinical psychologist and the investigator are married. It was interesting to see how married and single experts perceived the phenomenon of this study.

Table 4- 17

Distribution of thematic analysis of the interview by the experts who did them

expert	Frequency	percentage
The investigator	23	19.83
The clinical psychologist	24	20.68
The public health nurse	31	26.73
The statistician	38	32.76
subtotal	116	100%

Data analysis of the interviews of the current study was done qualitatively using different methods in order to elicit explication of the themes and patterns of phenomenon under study. Because the investigator used semi-structured questions, each question was analysed alone, categorized, then subcategorized. This approach was emphasized by Morse and Field (1996) who suggested that this process could be done either manually or on computers. Codes derived directly from data were used in reference to identified themes.

A coding system according to Polit and Hungler (1987), Pearson (1997), and Knafl and Webster (1987) enable the researcher to classify data along relevant dimension of content. To prevent the loss of the richness of the original data, numerous supporting excerpts directly from the narrative material were included in data analysis. Cases that do not fit the states categories were reported as well as those that fitted the general mode of the responses. Morse and Field (1996) assert that negative cases that refute an emergent theory or proposition are important as they help to clarify additional causal properties, which influence the phenomenon under study. Other methods of data analysis that have been used in the current study were content analysis, analytic induction, and interpretation analyses. These approaches were emphasized by Couchman and Dawson (1995), Knafl and Webster (1987), Cobb and Hagemaster (1987).

To make the work easier and better organized, filing was done on computer using a Microsoft Word program. There were no Arabic packages for analyzing qualitative data unless the transcribed data is translated to English. The investigator found that translating more than 1500 printed pages from Arabic to English as inconvenient and complicated. Therefore, the only choice was to use the Word program.

Each question of the interview was saved on a separate file then was analyzed according to the previously determined themes and categories. The following were the steps taken by the investigator to come up with the themes and categories of the qualitative data based on Knafl and Webster (1987) and Polit and Hungler (1995) guidelines:

1. The investigator and another three experts independently examined samples of the transcribed interviews for themes and common perceptions and ideas. This was done through content analysis, noting if a particular activity or idea was mentioned. The data analysts categorized each one of the themes into categories, and subcategories as appropriate. When saturation reached, the themes and categories were synthesized into groups of thoughts, indicating possible links and gaps.
2. A meeting was held with each of the experts to discuss the themes emerged out of the data and to compare their coded categories.
3. The themes, categories and subcategories were recorded as a description grid and were coded and numbered.
4. Different colors of markers were used to pinpoint the different themes, categories and subcategories on the printed script. The themes and categories were written on the margins of the transcripts.

5. The investigator used the agreed upon themes, categories and subcategories to analyze the interviews.

To illustrate the process and methodology of thematic analysis and coding system of the interview questions of the current study, question two was taken as an example, which states:

"What are your personal reasons for remaining unmarried until now?"

The main theme was:

The specific reasons for remaining unmarried:

The categories were:

1. Familial reasons

Subcategories:

- Financial reasons
- Family rejection of men who proposed to the girl
- Bad experience of relatives in marriage

2. Personal reasons

Subcategories:

- Rejecting marriage as a choice
- Rejecting / fear of polygamy
- Having physical disability
- Being unattractive / not beautiful
- Romantic view of marriage
- Not finding the right person
- Previous bad experiences with love or engagement
- Wanting to pursue education

3. Not knowing the reasons of remaining single

Subcategories:

4. Have no idea
5. God knows why
6. Being puzzled
7. Wondering about reasons of remaining single
8. Possibly evil power inhibited marriage

In the second phase of data analysis, the investigator used the interpretive phenomenological approach to finalize the data analysis of the interviews. The approach proposed by Colaizzi was used by the investigator of the current study to analyze the qualitative data. The following are the steps used by the investigator according to Colaizzi (Tuck, 1995):

1. Read all descriptions and extract phrases or sentences that directly pertain to the phenomenon. Themes emerging from analysis were conceptualized into meanings to help in understanding the phenomenon under study.
2. The researcher formulated the meanings of each significant statement; organized the aggregate formulated meanings into clusters of themes.
3. The researcher validates the clusters with the original descriptions and noted discrepancies in themes. A simple counting of the presence or absence of the theme or subcategory was done to quantify them. A count was made for the number of statements that contain positive views against those that has negative views or did not contain the viewpoint.
4. The investigator built up a picture of how the various themes and ideas are connected, in order to answer the research questions and infer conclusions about their interrelationship.
5. The researcher integrated the results in an exhaustive description that represented unequivocally a statement of the essential structure of the phenomenon. The investigator wrote descriptive paragraphs about the categories and looked for relationships among categories.
6. The final analysis of data entailed many returns to the interview transcripts for clarification and contextual information.

The purpose of the above steps was to translate the interview data into a form which would facilitate accurate and complete description of the viewpoints of the respondents and allows for comparison of their answers. In addition, a matrix was formed to look at relationships between the various categories and subcategories. After saturation of the themes for every interview question, all sub-categories that had similar concepts were grouped together. The following example illustrates this process in coding and categorizing of question 7, which asks: "*How do you see yourself in comparison to other single women?*"

Main theme: perception of self in comparison to other women.

Categories:

1. Unmarried respondents view self as better than other unmarried women in their community.
2. Unmarried respondents view self as worse than other unmarried women in their community.
3. Unmarried respondents view self as similar to other unmarried women in their community.
4. Unmarried respondents view self as better than married women in their community.
5. Unmarried respondents view self as worse than married women in their community.
6. Unmarried respondents saw no difference between themselves and married women in their community.

To illustrate the interrelationship of sub-categories to each another and to the main theme, the first theme was analyzed more thoroughly. If a respondent said any of the following: **Is living in better living conditions; has freedom of movement; was given chance to pursue education; is respected by her family; has freedom of dress or work or other similar answers, she was listed under category 1 of question 7.** The sub-category that the respondent used was recorded as well. In the end, the category and its subcategory looked as follows:

Major category or theme: *The unmarried respondents view self better than other unmarried women.*

Reasons for this positive view (subcategories):

1. Good treatment and respect of the family.
2. Being educated.
3. Being employed.
4. Being self-reliant, assertive, and independent.
5. Being free in living and movement.
6. Not worried about the future.
7. Having a strong personality.
8. Not being miserable or sad like other women.

In the final stage of analysis, the researcher weaved the thematic pieces together into an integrated whole. The various themes were integrated connected together in order to provide

an overall structure to the entire body of data. The investigator used both numeric and description and content analysis to indicate the frequency of the occurrence of a theme or an idea and the rates of an occurrence or frequency of the theme was presented. However, Morse and Field (1996) postulate that *the number of times specific concepts are discussed and repetitions may influence the descriptive statistics as these variables are not constant for all the participants* (p: 112).

At the end of data analysis, relationships between the independent and dependent variables were examined. For instance, the relationship between educational level and the Mental Health State of the respondent was examined. A second area of comparison was self-view of the unmarried respondent in relation to Mental Health State. In addition, Mental Health Status of the respondents was evaluated in relation to feeling and view of the future. These relationships were valuable in formulating tentative propositions and in interpreting the data (Morse & Field, 1996). Moreover, these comparisons helped in examining the interrelationships between self-perception and the Mental Health State of the unmarried respondents of this study.

B. Statistical analysis of the SCL-90-R:

Computer analysis of the data helped in facilitating the process, conserved time, and organized work. The Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) was used to analyze data related to SCL.90-R. Quantitative and qualitative analysis of the interview and the SCL.90 checklist were done according to criteria. The means and standard deviations of the SCL.90 were calculated for the three indices and the 9-dimension symptoms, using the Derogatis (1983) manual.

Kruskall-Wallis tests were used to evaluate the relationships of the mental health status with the independent and demographic variables which included age, residence, level of education, region of living, employment, living arrangements, and agreement or disagreement to be interviewed. The Kruskal-Wallis test is usually used in non-parametric studies where parametric tests of significance cannot be used (Agresti & Finlay, 1997; Witte, 1985; Daniel, 1983). Kruskal-Wallis test is used when the data are organized into groups or numerical ranks. This test is used to test differences between two or more groups whereas some of the variables are ordinal (Witte, 1985). According to Witte (1985), "*Kruskall-Wallis is used when there is no basis for speculating about whether the population is normally distributed with equal variances*" (p. 288).

Rinehart and Winston (1985) supported the above-mentioned perspective about the use of Kruskal-Wallis test. They proposed that, *when original observations are numerical ranks, there is no basis for speculating about whether the populations are normally distributed with equal variances, as assumed in ANOVA* (P:288). In these situations, Kruskal-Wallis H test is used, which retains its accuracy even though the populations are not normally distributed and the variances are not equal (Rinhart & Winston, 1985). When using Kruskal-Wallis test, *the combined sample of three or more groups are ranked from 1 to $n_1 + n_2$ and the means of the ranks are computed for observations in each sample* (Agresti & Finlay, 1997 p: 232).

Because the distributions of the nine dimensions were not normal, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used to test relationships between the independent variables and the 9- symptom dimensions and the three indices of the SCL-90-R. Therefore, instead of using T and F tests to compare the means of groups, Kruskal-Wallis was the alternative choice (Witte, 1985; Daniel, 1983; Rinehart & Winston 1985; Agresti & Finlay, 1997). The rules of using Kruskal-Wallis test according to Rinhart & Winston (1985) stipulate the following:

- 2- When ties between ranks are present, comparisons should be made between mean ranks.
- 3- When the sample sizes are unequal, comparisons of mean ranks of the various groups are made.
- 4- The null hypothesis will be rejected only if the observed H equals or is bigger than the critical Chi- Square.
- 5- If the populations are assumed to have roughly similar variances and shapes, the rejection of H_0 will signify that the populations differ in their central tendency.
- 6- The larger the differences in ranks among groups, the larger the value of H and the more suspect the null hypothesis will be rejected.
- 7- The H test is Non- Directional similar as F and χ square.

Nevertheless, using Kruskal-Wallis test creates a problem in the possibility of acceptance or rejection of the null hypothesis. Any kind of inequality between populations could contribute to the rejection of the null hypothesis (Witte, 1985). However, the rejection of the null hypothesis indicates that the groups examined differ without saying in what way, which places limitations on the ability to understand groups' or populations' contributing factors for differences (Witte, 1985; Rinhart & Winston, 1985).

Multiple regression analysis was used to examine the influence of the independent and demographic variables on Mental Health State of the unmarried subjects of the current study represented through the three indices and the 9-symptom dimensions of the SCL.90-R.

Regression or correlation analysis is usually used when the independent and dependent variables are numerical or interval scale; to measure relationships between them (Daniel, 1983; Agresti & Finlay, 1997). In the multiple regression models, it is assumed that a linear relationship exists between the dependent and the independent variables; that the subpopulations of Y values are normally distributed; the variances of the subpopulations of Y are all equal; the Y values are independent (Daniel, 1983). According to Agresti and Finlay (1997), regression analysis uses equations to test correlation between variables and the notion of a straight line to develop a prediction.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) is usually used where a difference between groups is tested for a normally distributed variables (Agresti & Finlay, 1997). ANOVA in regression models could be used for testing relationships among a group of variables and a dependent variable through stepwise regression. Stepwise regression, according to Munro and Page (1993), is used to determine the independent variables that contributed the most to the change in the dependent variable.

Nominal data cannot be entered to the regression equation as they are. When coding data for multiple regression analysis, *nominal variables should be coded using dummy variable methods. Each variable takes only two values 1 and 0 and indicates whether an observation falls in a particular group* (Munro & Page, 1993 p: 206). The dummy variables, according to Agresti & Finlay (1997), identify the group than an observation representation. Dummy variable coding is used for race, marital status, residence, political affiliation etc. (Munro & Page, 1993). When interpreting the results of the regression analysis, *the b-weight represents the difference between the mean of the group represented by that b and the group assigned 0s throughout* (Munro & Page, 1993 p: 207).

Correlation analysis is usually used to gain insight into the strength and the direction of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables (Daniel, 1983; Agresti & Finlay; 1997; Munro & Page, 1993). Parametric and non-parametric correlation tests are usually used as appropriate to the type of data. Pearson correlation test is used for normally distributed data. Otherwise, Spearman rho formula is used (Munro & Page, 1993).

Munro and Page (1993) indicate that correlation analysis should be done before regression analysis because predictions cannot be made if a positive or a negative correlation does not exist between the independent and dependent variables. The presence of a relationship between the dependent and the independent variables indicates a presence of a connection among them but not necessarily a causal relationship (Daniel, 1983; Agresti & Finlay, 1997; Munro & Page, 1993). In large samples in human research an r of "*Little of any*

relation which ranges from 0.00 to 0.25 is statistically significant because high correlation is usually hard to find" (Munro & Page, 1993).

C. Deduction of answers to the research questions and hypotheses:

SPSS was used to enter the data of the SCL-90-R into the computer. After data entry, calculations were made to extract the three indices and 9 dimensions of the SCL-90 for each participant using Derogatis (1983) guide. The general Mental Health state of the respondents of the current study was estimated by extracting the Global Severity Index (GSI) value of each of the respondents and then calculating the mean value of the 300 respondents. The same procedure was made to extract the value of the 9 symptom dimensions and the other two indices of the SCL.90-R. The SCL.90-R checklist scale is analysed according to the following three indices which reflect aspects of psychological disorder (Derogatis, 1983):

- 2- Global Severity Index (GSI): is the total of the summed distress scores for all the 9 dimensions divided by 90.
- 3- Positive Symptom Total (PST): is the number of all non-zero responses made by the respondent.
- 4- Positive Symptom Distress Index (PSDI): the results of dividing the grand total by the PST.

Descriptive statistical analysis was done to compute means, and standard deviations of the three indices and the 9 symptom dimensions. The results of the statistical analyses were shown in Table 5-1. Table 5-2 shows the results of the statistical analysis of the SCL.90-R with reference to the results of Sansur (1995) and Derogatis international data (1983).

To understand how the Mental Health State of the unmarried Palestinian women of the current study looks like, two kinds of procedures were done. First, the scores of the respondents of the current study were compared and contrasted with the general Palestinian women studied by Sansur (1995); the scores of normative group of Derogatis (1983); Female inpatients of Derogatis (1983) and the female outpatients of Derogatis (1983) using common sense and analytic induction without reference to any statistical tests. This approach was utilized because it was not possible to make statistical analysis of these groups without having complete information about the characteristics of the groups studied by Sansur (1995) and Derogatis (1983) or having the raw data of these studies. Secondly, a descriptive analysis using percentages and rates was done for a subject whose scores were higher than normal level for the Global Severity Index (GSI) and the 9-symptom dimensions of the SCL.90-R.

The criteria for deciding to include a respondent in a specific diagnostic category, was based on transforming the mean scores obtained from each of the indices and dimensions of the SCL.90 into discrete values. This was based on five point scale of distress (0-4) of the SCL.90-R symptom inventory, as follows:

- All mean scores of 0 to 0.49 were considered "0" or symptom not at all present.
- Mean scores of 0.50 to 1.49 were given a score of "1" or mild symptoms.
- Mean scores of 1.50 to 2.49 were given a "2" or moderate symptoms.
- Mean scores of 2.50 to 3.49 were given "3" or severe symptoms.
- Mean scores of 3.50 and above were assigned "4" very severe or extreme symptoms.

Only respondents with scores of 2 and above were included in the diagnostic group. This procedure was used to identify cases of psychological disturbances that might need interventions and help. Usually, people who have moderate symptoms will continue to show them at least for some duration and they feel distressed by their psychological condition. These people might be diagnosed if they sought medical treatment or counseling.

VII. Piloting the research tools:

Pre-testing of the tools of data collection is emphasized and required for all kinds of research (Lininger & Warwick, 1975; Polit & Hungler, 1995). Piloting the research instruments is important to assure that the study could be completed and that the reliability and the internal validity of the instrument are maintained. The two data collection tools were piloted on 15 unmarried women who had the same selection criteria to the study's general population. These women were not included in the sample. The following were the questions that the pilot explored based on Lininger & Warwick (1975) suggestions :

- 2- Did the respondents understand what the study is about?
- 3- Was the wording of the items clear and what questions were confusing?
- 4- Were the answers obtained adequate for the purpose of the study?
- 5- Were there differences in the interpretation of the questions?
- 6- Was the question guide too long?
- 7- Were the instructions clear?

Selection of the participants for the pilot was done conveniently. The participants were selected according to research criteria, from the south region of the West-Bank, where the two data collectors live. Any woman who met the criteria and agreed to participate in the

study was a target participant. Five women agreed to fill the checklist, but refused to be interviewed because they felt uneasy in talking about their feelings in a recorded interview. These women were excluded from the pilot.

The fifteen unmarried women completed the SCL.90-R checklist, after signing the consent form. The data collector explained the purpose of the study and the process of data collection, and then the checklist was given to the participant. After the completion of the checklist, the interview was conducted. This arrangement was done to avoid any influence from the interview on answering the checklist questions. Some interviews were done later in separate sessions according to the wishes of the participants. The investigator found that the participants could complete the checklist anywhere, but the interview needed special arrangements.

The interviews were recorded on a small tape recorder. Privacy, comfort, no interruption or distractions were assured before recording. Various settings were used for data collection. Eight interviews were conducted at the work setting of the participants, in a private room; five interviews were conducted at the houses of the participants or their friend's houses; and two at the university or college where the participants study. All the locations for the interviews were selected by the participants themselves. Two data collectors shared in data collection; one of them is the investigator of this study.

The duration for filling the checklist ranged from 20-30 minutes, and 20-35 minutes for the interview. Thirteen participants completed the questionnaire by themselves and two with the help of the data collectors. Clarifications were provided as necessary. The data collector stayed close to the participants during the filling of the checklist, for possible explanations. There were few questions asked by the participants. These were answered and marked with notes by the data collector.

Pilot summary:

The respondents of the pilot reported that the Derogatis L.SCL. 90-R was easy to understand. The questions of the interview guide were understood well by all the participants. The interviews went smoothly, and the participants were comfortable during the interviews. Explanations, probing, checking out meanings and answers were used when appropriate. A few participants required explanation about some questions of the checklist. The first group of questions was about symptoms of psychosis, which include number 3, 6, 7, 23, 50, 62 and 73. These questions were not familiar to people who do not know the terminology of mental illness. The second area of concern was the questions that ask about changes in sexual

activity, which were question 5 and 84. This was a sensitive area for the Palestinian unmarried women who came from conservative families. Therefore, the investigator believed that these two questions should be rephrased as follows:

Question 5 - Loss of sexual interest.

Change to - Loss of interest in sexual issues or subjects.

Question 84 - Thoughts about sex that bother you.

Change to- Having thoughts about sexual issues that bother you.

Modifications were added to the introduction of the SCL.90-R, which matches those presented in the Derogatis (1983) guide, English copy. The instruction is stated as follows: *“below is a list of difficulties people sometimes have. Please read each one carefully and select one of the numbered descriptors that best describe how much discomfort that problem caused you during the past 7 days, including today. Place the number in the open block to the right of the problem. Do not skip any item, and print your number clearly. If you change your mind, erase your first number completely”* (Derogatis, 1983 p. 3). These changes can help clarify the instructions and decrease possible confusion. In addition, numbers and words were used to indicate severity of the complaint on all pages of the SCL.90-R questionnaire.

Some questions aroused resistance and hesitance from the participants, but no one refused to answer any question. These questions were number 6: **“how do you feel about being unmarried”**; number 11: **“in your opinion do you have difficulties in adjusting to being unmarried”**; number 12: **“do you believe that you need assistance of professionals to help you adjust with being unmarried”**? The investigator believed that question 11 may be better rephrased in the following way: **“in your opinion, what are the difficulties that unmarried women face in your society”**?

Inter-rater reliability was established for the interview guide. Two experts and the local adviser examined the interviews done for the 15 respondents of the pilot and declared that the guide was reliable and valid. After analysis of the pilot interviews, two additional questions were added to the guide. The first question clarified the self-evaluation of the unmarried women; and it stated: **“how do you evaluate yourself in comparison to other women in your society”**? The second question asked about the self-concept of the woman: **“what strengths and weaknesses do you have as a woman”**? These questions were added because the investigator believed that more exploration was necessary for self-perception which might be evaluated through some direct questions. These two questions were examined

for reliability by trying them on five women of the pilot to see if they were clear, understood well by the subjects, and if they reflected the actual feeling of the participants. These two questions were clearly understood and answered without difficulties by the five subjects therefore; they were added to the interview guide.

VIII. Ethical approval of the study:

The study was submitted to Helsinki Committee at Gaza Health Services Research Centre/Palestinian National Authority-Ministry of Health for ethical approval. The committee ethically approved the study and signed the required papers, and sent the investigator a copy of their report. The report was attached to the study (appendix).

IX. Ethical approval of the participants:

Consent for participation in the study was obtained at the beginning of the interview. A letter for the participant was read and comprehended by each participant before signing the consent form. Every participant signed the consent form (Appendix E). Refusal to participate was accepted without judgment.

Summary:

This chapter talked about the study's methodology with reference to sampling, instrumentation, data collection and analysis plan, and piloting of the tools. The following chapter will include the results of the study.

Chapter Five

Results of the quantitative data

Introduction:

Two tools have been utilized to collect data for the current study. The Derogatis SCL-90-R is a self-report questionnaire that was used to assess the psychological and mental state of 300 unmarried Palestinian women who lived in the West Bank during the time of data collection. The participants were selected by convenience clustered sampling methods from three districts of the West Bank of Palestine. The participants first filled out the questionnaire after signing the consent forms. Next, those respondents who accepted the interview were interviewed. One-hundred and sixty-three unmarried women (54.35%) were successfully interviewed. The results of the SCL.90-R were presented in the following section and were used to answer the research questions and hypotheses. The results of the qualitative data will be presented in chapter six.

I. Research question one:

What is the mental health state of Palestinian unmarried women after age 25 and how does it look in comparison to other women?

This question was answered through the results of SCL-90-R. According to Derogatis (1983), any subject who has a GSI score (on the non-patient norm) greater than or equal to T-score 63, is considered a positive diagnosis or a case. However, since the raw data of Derogatis is not available, a mean score of 1.50 or above, which represents a moderate level of symptoms was taken as a base for diagnosis as mentioned earlier. After coding of the data obtained from the 300 respondents, simple calculations of the severity of symptoms of the GSI, PSDI, and the 9-symptom dimensions were made in order to identify the prevalence of psychological complaint among the respondents of the current study.

The Global Severity Index (GSI) is the main indicator of the Mental Health State of the respondent as proposed by Derogatis (1983). The majority (73.3%) of the 300 respondents met the criteria of "not at all present" or "mild" GSI. The remaining respondents fell either within the "moderate" group or the "severe symptom" group (see table 5-2). In

regards to Positive Symptom Index (PSDI), (69%) participants complained of "moderate" level of psychological symptomatology and (18.7%) participants had "very severe" psychological symptoms (see table 5-2).

Table 5-1

Descriptive statistics of the 9 dimensions and the 3 indices of the SCL.90

9 dimensions & 3 Indices	Means	S.D
GSI	1.13	0.61
PST	46.70	19.34
PSDI	2.07	0.51
Somatization	0.93	0.72
Obsessive- compulsive	1.35	0.70
Interpersonal sensitivity	1.30	0.89
Depression	1.38	0.72
Anxiety	1.04	0.76
Hostility	1.14	0.88
Phobic Anxiety	0.66	0.63
Paranoid Ideation	1.29	0.83
Psychoticism	0.89	0.71

However, when looking at the 9-symptom dimensions, the majority (78.3%) had "not at all" or "mild" levels of somatization, (24.7.6%) respondents complained of "moderate" somatization, (4.3%) complained of "severe" levels of somatization. However, (36.7%) complained of "moderate" level of obsessive-compulsive symptoms, 13 (4.3%) had severe level of obsessive-compulsive symptoms and two had "very severe" symptoms. In regards to interpersonal sensitivity, (25%) respondents complained of "moderate" level of interpersonal sensitivity, and (9%) had "severe" or "very severe" levels of interpersonal sensitivity. Nevertheless, in regards to depression, (32.3%) participants reported "moderate" depression and 24 (8%) had "severe" depression, which is relatively a very high rate.

On the other hand, (21.7%) of the respondents reported having moderate level of anxiety, compared to 15 (5%) who complained of severe anxiety. However, when looking at phobic anxiety, (7.7%) of the 300 respondents complained of "moderate" level of phobic anxiety compared to (2%) who had "severe" phobic anxiety. Concerning hostility, (23.3%) respondents reported having "moderate" levels of hostility compared to 24 (8%) who had "severe" or "very severe" levels of hostility. Conversely, 87 (29%) of the respondents reported having "moderate" levels of paranoid ideation and 32(10.7%) had "severe" or "very

severe" levels of paranoid ideation, which is a high prevalence. As for the last symptom dimension, psychoticism (16.7%) of the respondents reported having "moderate" levels of psychoticism, and 10 (3.3%) participants reported having "severe" levels of psychoticism.

The investigator was curious to see if there were significant differences between the respondents who were interviewed and those who were not interviewed. Among those who have been interviewed, 35 (23.3%) reported having moderate levels of psychological complaint or GSI; (2.5%) reported having severe level of psychological distress. However, when considering the severity of psychological distress (PSDI), 74.2% reported having moderate levels of psychological distress and 16.0% reported having severe levels of psychological distress or PSDI. Table (5- 4) report the severity of complaint for the respondents who were interviewed concerning the 9-symptom dimensions.

Out of those who we successfully interviewed, (20.2%) of the respondents reported moderate levels of somatization and 6 (3.7%) reported having severe symptoms; (36.2%) reported having moderate levels of obsessive-compulsive symptoms and (5.5%) had severe levels of obsessive-compulsive symptoms; (24.5%) reported having moderate levels of interpersonal sensitivity compared to 16 (9.89%) who had severe levels of interpersonal sensitivity; 57 (35%) had moderate depression and 10 (9.8%) had severe depression.

On the other hand, 33 (20.2%) reported having moderate levels of anxiety compared to 11(6.7%) who complained of very severe anxiety; (6.7%) of the interviewees complained of moderate phobic anxiety and (1.8%) had severe levels of phobic anxiety. However, in regards to hostility, (22.1%) had moderate hostility and 15 (9.2%) had very severe levels of hostility; (33.7%) had moderate paranoid ideation and (7.4%) had severe Paranoid Ideation. Nevertheless, 25 (15.3%) of the interviewees reported moderate and (3.7%) had severe levels of psychoticism.

The data indicated that the majority of the respondents did not have psychological symptoms that are diagnostic. However, the rates of those who complained of moderate psychological distress were still high. This was true for all the symptom dimensions except for Phobic Anxiety. The participants who reported moderate levels of distress in any of the nine symptom dimensions might need psychiatric treatment or interventions if their emotional state did not improve by itself. On the other hand, there were low rates of those who had severe and very severe levels of psychological distress. Nevertheless, those who had severe symptomatology might have benefited from professional help.

Table (5-1) summarized the results of the SCL-90.R for the respondents. When someone looks to table (5-1), he/she does not recognize the significance of the numbers

without reference to the norm or criterion of evaluation. The SCL-90 is a norm-referenced tool that differentiates non-patient respondents from individuals with psychiatric disorders (Derogatis, 1983). According to Jacobson (1988) and Peirce (1995), norm-referenced measures compare each subject's performance or score to norm group that was determined by the instrument developer(s). The means and standard deviation about the Mental Health State of the sample presented in table 5-1 have meaning only when compared to other participants of similar characteristics. Nevertheless, comparison between the sample of the present study and previous studies in the region and in other countries was difficult because other studies inevitably included different samples in different times and circumstances. Therefore, the investigator compared the results of the unmarried Palestinian women with those studied by Sansur (1995), although the characteristics of the samples and the timing of data collection were different. In addition, the investigator compared the results of the unmarried respondents of the current study with those of Derogatis (1983) who represented the norm for comparison for the SCL.90-R. The comparison was made to place the results of the unmarried Palestinian women in perspective in order to examine if their mental health state was ordinary or not.

In relation to the mental health state of the respondents in contrast to other women, the respondents in the current study had higher scores for the three indices and the nine symptom dimensions in comparison to the general Palestinian women in Sansur's (1995) study. When compared with the unmarried women in Sansur's (1995) study, the respondents of the current study reported higher scores for Somatization, Obsessive-Compulsive, Depression, and Anxiety (table 5-5). The other indexes and symptom dimensions were not reported by Sansur. In addition, the respondents of the current study reported higher scores for the three indices and the 9 symptom dimensions in comparison to Derogatis' (1983) female (non-patients) normative group. The comparison of the scores of the respondents of the current study with those of Derogatis female outpatients (1983) indicated very little difference in scores among the two groups in relation to somatization, hostility, obsessive-compulsive symptoms, phobic anxiety, psychoticism, interpersonal sensitivity, and paranoid ideation.

In comparison to Derogatis (1983) psychiatric female inpatients, unmarried Palestinian women in this study reported lower scores for Obsessive-Compulsive symptoms, Depression, Anxiety, Phobic Anxiety, Psychoticism, Global Severity Index, and Positive Distress Index. On the other hand, the respondents of the current study had quite similar scores to those reported by Derogatis's (1983) female inpatients for Somatization, Interpersonal Sensitivity and Paranoid Ideation. However, the respondents of the current study reported higher scores than Derogatis's (1983) female inpatients for Hostility.

Table 5-2

Frequencies and rates of the indices and 9-symptom dimensions as classified to severity of complaint for 300 respondents:

Index / dimension	not at all present	Mild symptoms	Moderate symptoms	Severe symptoms	Very severe symptoms
GSI Frequency %	48 16.0	172 57.3	74 24.7	6 2.0	0
PSDI Frequency %	1 0.3	35 11.7	207 69.0	56 18.7	1 0.3
Somatization Frequency %	94 31.3	141 47.0	52 17.3	13 4.3	0
Obsessive-Compulsive Frequency %	28 9.3	147 49.0	110 36.7	13 4.3	2 0.7
Interpersonal Sensitivity Frequency %	46 15.3	152 50.7	75 25.0	25 8.3	2 0.7
Depression Frequency %	35 11.7	144 48.0	97 32.3	24 8.0	0
Anxiety Frequency %	83 27.7	136 45.3	65 21.7	15 5.0	1 0.3
Hostility Frequency %	73 24.3	133 44.3	70 23.3	21 7.0	3 1.0
Phobic anxiety Frequency %	150 50.0	121 40.3	23 7.7	6 2.0	0
Paranoid Ideation Frequency %	45 15.0	136 45.3	87 29.0	30 10.0	2 0.7
Psychoticism Frequency %	96 32.0	144 48.0	50 16.7	10 3.3	0

Table 5-3

Comparison of Means and Standard Deviation for the current study, Palestinian women in Sansur's study (1995), and Derogatis International study (1983)

three indices & 9-symptom dimensions of the SCL- 90- R.	The current study		General Palestinian women Sansur's study		Derogatis female normative group		Derogatis female out-patients		Derogatis female Psychiatric inpatient	
	X	SD	X	SD	X	SD	X	SD	X	SD
Somatization	.93	.70	0.62	0.65	.36	.42	.87	.75	.99	.84
Obsessive-Compulsive	1.30	.70	.79	.71	.39	.45	1.47	.91	1.45	1.0
Interpersonal sensitivity	1.30	.89	.66	.62	.29	.39	1.41	.89	1.32	.97
Depression	1.38	.72	.86	.71	.36	.744	1.79	.94	1.74	1.08
Anxiety	1.04	.76	.67	.68	.30	.37	1.47	.88	1.8	1.05
Hostility	1.14	.89	.67	.62	.30	.40	1.10	.93	.94	.95
Phobic Anxiety	.66	.63	.54	.58	.13	.31	.74	.80	.96	1.03
Paranoid ideation	1.9	.83	.62	.68	.34	.44	1.16	.92	1.26	.98
Psychoticism	.89	.71	.37	.54	.14	.25	.94	.70	1.11	.85
GSI	1.13	.61	.70	.54	.31	.31	1.26	.68	1.30	.82
PSDI	2.01	.50	1.85	.64	1.32	.42	2.14	.58	2.15	.73
PSI	46.7	19.30	32.30	17.96	50.17	18.98	50.17	18.98	50.3	23.4

Derogatis (1983), Table (18) p: 39.

Sansur (1995), Table (1) P: 36

Table 5-4

Frequencies and rates of the indices and 9-symptom dimensions as classified to severity of complaint for 163 interviewed respondents

Index / dimension	not at all present	Mild symptoms	Moderate symptoms	Severe symptoms	Very severe
GSI Frequency %	21 12.9	100 61.3	38 23.3	4 2.5	0
PSDI Frequency %	0	16 9.8	121 74.2	26 16.0	0
Somatization Frequency %	44 27.0	80 49.1	33 20.2	6 3.7	0
Obsessive-Compulsive Frequency %	16 9.8	79 48.5	59 36.2	9 5.5	0
Interpersonal Sensitivity Frequency %	25 15.3	82 50.3	40 24.5	16 9.8	0
Depression Frequency %	19 11.7	77 47.2	57 35.0	10 6.1	0
Anxiety Frequency %	44 27.0	74 45.4	33 20.2	11 6.7	1 0.6
Hostility Frequency %	34 20.9	77 47.2	36 22.1	15 9.2	1 0.6
Phobic anxiety Frequency %	83 50.9	66 40.5	11 6.7	3 1.8	0
Paranoid Ideation Frequency %	23 14.1	71 43.6	55 33.7	12 7.4	2 1.2
Psychoticism Frequency %	48 29.4	84 51.5	25 15.3	6 3.7	0

II. Hypotheses testing:

Hypothesis one: there is no significant difference in mental health state of the unmarried respondents of the present study in relation to level of education; place of residence; district of living; employment; living arrangements; age; being interviewed or not.

In the following section a comparison among the unmarried respondents of the current study was done based on seven independent variables. These were: educational level, employment, age, residence, living arrangements, region of living, and being interviewed or not. The dependent variables that were tested against the seven independent variables were: the Global Severity Indices (GSI), the Positive Indices Distress (PSDI), somatization, depression, interpersonal sensitivity, anxiety, phobic-anxiety, hostility, psychoticism, paranoid ideation, and obsessive-compulsive symptoms.

Table 5-5

Comparison of finding of the current study with those of Sansur for unmarried Palestinian women for the 9 symptom dimensions and the 3 indices of the SCL.90

9 dimensions & 3 Indices	means of the current study	Means of Sansur's unmarried women
GSI	1.13	NA
PST	46.70	NA
PSDI	2.07	NA
Somatization	0.93	0.44
Obsessive- compulsive	1.35	0.98
Interpersonal sensitivity	1.30	NA
Depression	1.38	0.93
Anxiety	1.04	0.72
Hostility	1.14	NA
Phobic Anxiety	0.66	NA
Paranoid Ideation	1.29	NA
Psychoticism	0.89	NA

Source: Sansur, M (1995). Palestinian Women and Mental Health. P: 54

Because the distributions of the three indices and the nine dimensions of the SCL-90.R were not normal, Kruskal-Wallis test was used to examine relationships between the independent and the dependent variables. Kruskal-Wallis test was used to evaluate the relationship between the 7 independent variables in relation to Mental Health State represented through the 9-symptom dimensions and the three indices of the SCL-90-R.

A. Mental health state among the unmarried women in relation to level of education:

A statistically significant difference was observed amongst the three groups of education for Global Severity Index (GSI) ($P < 0.001$). The mean rank of Group 1 (1-9 years of education) was the highest (177.47); therefore this group had the highest psychological symptoms or GSI. Group 2 (10-12 years of education) had a mean rank of 169.08, thus it came second in psychological symptoms. The lowest mean ranks was reported by group 3 (more than 12 years of education) therefore, this group had the least GSI and psychological symptoms (see appendix G). It seems that the higher the level of education of the woman, the less the psychological complaint she might have.

There was a statistically significant difference among groups of education for the Positive Distress Index (PSDI) ($P < 0.001$). Since The mean rank for group one (1-9 years) was the highest, therefore it scored highest for Severity of symptoms (PSDI). Group 2 mean ranks was second in order, thus it scored second for PSDI. The lowest in mean ranks was group three (more than 12 years of education) and it had the lowest scores for PSDI.

In regards to the 9-symptom dimensions of the SCL.90-R, there were significant differences among groups of education for somatization (SOM) ($P < 0.001$); interpersonal sensitivity (IS) ($P < 0.001$); depression (DP) ($P < 0.001$); anxiety (AN) ($P = 0.003$); phobic anxiety (PA) ($P < 0.001$); paranoid ideation (PI) ($P = 0.003$); and psychoticism (PS) ($P < 0.001$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected for groups of education for these dimensions. Educated unmarried women of the present study had fewer psychological complaint in the dimensions mentioned above than those who had low level of education. However, there were no significant differences among the three groups of education for obsessive-compulsive symptoms (OC) ($P = 0.092$) and hostility (H) ($P = 0.119$). Thus, the null hypothesis was accepted for education groups for these two dimensions.

Further examination of the differences in groups for education revealed that group one (1-9 years of education) had the highest mean ranks for somatization (177.27); interpersonal sensitivity (183.61); depression (173.91); paranoid ideation (171.26); anxiety (168.59) and psychoticism (173.85). Therefore, the respondents of this group had more psychological symptoms in relation to the above mentioned dimensions than women of the other two groups of education. Group two of education (10-12 years) scored second in mean ranks for somatization (158.94); interpersonal sensitivity (168.94); depression (169.44); paranoid ideation (163.01); Anxiety (166.09); and psychoticism (164.25). Therefore, the respondents

of these groups came second in severity of symptoms for each of the five dimensions. However, group three of education (more than 12 years) came in the third order in mean ranks thus it had the least symptomatology.

Regarding phobic anxiety, Group 2 (10-12 years of education) reported the highest mean ranks (171.56) therefore this group scored higher than the other two groups for phobic anxiety. Group 1 (1-9 years of education) was second in mean ranks (167.87). The lowest mean ranks were for group 3 (more than 12 years of education) therefore this group scored least in phobic anxiety.

The above data indicated that the respondents who had the highest level of education manifested the lowest scores on the Global Severity Index and almost all the 9-symptom dimensions. These results indicated that the higher the level of education the unmarried woman had pursued, the less the likelihood of her developing psychological disturbance. It seems that education could safeguard the unmarried women from psychological distress, at least to some extent.

B. Mental health status among the unmarried women in relation to place of residence:

The Kruskal-Wallis test indicated that there were no statistically significant differences among respondents who lived in cities, villages or refugee camps for the three indices of the SCL.90-R and the 9 symptom dimensions. The P value for the Global Severity Index (GSI) was 0.768; 0.218 for Positive Distress Index (PSDI); 0.313 for somatization; 0.501 for obsessive-compulsive symptoms; 0.211 for interpersonal sensitivity; 0.595 for depression; 0.861 for anxiety; 0.738 for hostility; 0.585 for phobic anxiety; 0.492 for paranoid ideation; 0.942 for psychoticism. Thus, the null hypothesis was retained.

C. Mental health state amongst the respondents in relation to district of living:

There were no statistically significant differences among groups of region of living or residence for Global Severity Index (P = 0.108); Positive Symptom Total (PST) (P = 0.413); Somatization (P = 0.342); Obsessive-Compulsive (P = 0.479); Depression (P = 0.078); Anxiety (P = 0.119); Hostility (P = 0.266); Phobic Anxiety (P = 0.530); Paranoid Ideation (P

= 0.222) and Psychoticism ($P = 0.170$). Therefore, Region of living was not significant for these dimensions and indices and the null hypotheses for these groups were retained.

Nevertheless, significant differences were observed among the three groups of residence for Positive Symptom Distress (PSDI) ($P = 0.031$) at the 0.05 level of significance. The group living in the south region of the West Bank scored the highest in mean ranks for PSDI (168.04) therefore this group scored the highest in PSDI. The mean ranks of the respondents who lived in the north region of the West Bank was second in the sequence (147.55) thus, this group came in the second level in PSDI. The respondents who lived in the middle region scored the lowest in mean ranks (135.64) and they had the lowest level of Positive Symptom Distress (PSDI). The null hypothesis was rejected for groups corresponding to areas of residence for PSDI. The results indicated that the respondents living in the south region of the West Bank had the most severe levels of psychological distress, compared to those living in the middle region who had the least severe level of psychological distress.

In addition, a significant differences were observed among the three groups of residence for interpersonal sensitivity ($P = 0.049$) at the 0.05 level of significance. Region of living was significant for interpersonal sensitivity. The mean ranks of the group who lived in the north region of the West Bank were the highest (168.13). Therefore, they scored highest in interpersonal sensitivity. The respondents who lived in the middle and the south regions of the west bank had quite similar mean ranks (142.00 & 141.89). Therefore, they had the comparable scores in interpersonal sensitivity and the null hypothesis was rejected for interpersonal sensitivity for residence.

D. Mental health state amongst the respondents in relation to employment:

There were statistically significant differences among groups of employment for Global Severity Index (GSI) ($P < 0.001$) at the 0.05 level of significance. Employment was significant for GSI. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected for employment. The respondents of group one (house wife) and group three (industrial jobs) had higher mean ranks than the other groups and also had no significant differences in mean ranks (170.87 & 171.97) thus, they scored highest for GSI. Group two (professionals and paraprofessionals) and group four (services) had quite similar mean ranks (125.86 & 124.01) and they score second in GSI and psychological complaints.

There were statistically significant differences between employment groups for Positive Symptom Distress (PSDI) ($P < 0.001$). Group three (industrial jobs) had the highest mean

ranks for PSDI (178.08) therefore it scored highest for PSDI. Group one's (unemployed) mean ranks was 169.85 and came second in mean ranks therefore it scored second for PSDI. However, group two (professionals and paraprofessionals) and four (services) were quite similar in mean ranks (124.78 & 122.30) and they scored second for PSDI or severity of psychological complaints.

In regards to the 9 symptom dimensions of the SCL.90-R, employment groups differed significantly on somatization ($P < 0.001$); obsessive-compulsive ($P = 0.010$); interpersonal sensitivity ($P < 0.001$); depression ($P = 0.005$); anxiety ($P = 0.019$); phobic anxiety ($P = 0.001$); paranoid ideation ($P = 0.001$); psychoticism ($P = 0.004$), therefore the null hypotheses were rejected for employment groups. However, employment groups did not differ significantly in terms of hostility ($P = 0.074$) at the 0.05 level of significance and the null hypothesis was retained for employment groups in relation to hostility.

A thorough examination of the groups of employment in relation to the 8- symptom dimensions that were found to be statistically significant was made. Group one and group three had relatively similar mean ranks (170.00 & 169.23) and they had higher ranks than the other groups therefore they scored the highest in somatization. Group 2 and four had rather similar mean ranks (126.78 & 127.29) and they scored second for somatization.

Regarding obsessive-compulsive symptoms, Group one of employment (unmarried) had the highest mean ranks (169.68), scoring highest for obsessive-compulsive symptoms. Group three of employment was the second in mean ranks (152.16), thus it scored second for obsessive-compulsive symptoms. Since group two had the third level of mean ranks (135.73), it scored the third in obsessive-compulsive symptoms. Group four (services) had the lowest mean ranks (128.71) and showed the lowest level of obsessive-compulsive symptoms.

Groups one and three of employment had relatively similar mean ranks (173.59 & 174.74) and they had higher ranks than the other groups therefore, they scored the highest in interpersonal sensitivity. Group two and four of employment had similar mean ranks (121.83 & 121.96) and they scored second in interpersonal sensitivity.

Concerning depression, group three (industrial and agricultural jobs) had the highest mean ranks (171.40) therefore it scored the highest for depression. Group one (unemployed) had the second level of mean ranks (164.40), thus it scored second for depression. Since group two (professional and paraprofessionals) had the third level of mean ranks (132.24) so it scored third for depression. Group four (services) had the lowest mean ranks (128.74) and it was the least for depressive symptoms.

Group one and group three of employment had relatively similar mean ranks (164.03 & 166.59) for anxiety and they had higher ranks than the other groups therefore, they scored the highest for anxiety. Group two and four of employment had somewhat similar mean ranks (133.89 & 131.49) and they scored second for anxiety.

Concerning phobic anxiety, group one and three of employment had quite similar mean ranks (169.10 & 167.58) and they had higher ranks than group the other groups therefore, they scored the highest for phobic anxiety. Group 2 had the second level of mean ranks (129.58) therefore this group scored second for phobic anxiety. Group four of employment had a value of 125.70 mean ranks thus; it scored the least for phobic anxiety.

Nevertheless, when looking at employment groups for Paranoid Ideation, group one (unemployed) had the highest mean ranks (170.50) thus, it scored the highest for paranoid ideation. Group three (industrial jobs) had the second level of mean ranks (159.65) therefore; they scored second for paranoid ideation. Group four came in the third level for mean ranks (140.85) and they scored third for paranoid ideation. The lowest mean ranks (124.08) were for group two (professionals and paraprofessionals) thus, this group scored the lowest for paranoid ideation.

Concerning psychoticism, group one (unemployed) and group three (industrial jobs) had relatively similar mean ranks (167.38 & 166.68) and they had higher ranks than the other groups, therefore they scored the highest for psychoticism. Group 4 had the second highest level of mean ranks (134.78) thus; it scored second for psychoticism. The lowest mean ranks (128.19) were for group two (professionals and paraprofessionals) thus, this group scored the least for psychoticism.

E. Mental health state amongst the respondents in relation to living arrangement:

There were no statistically significant differences among the seven groups corresponding to seven types of living arrangements for the three indices and the 9 symptom dimensions of the SCL.90-R; except for paranoid ideation ($P = 0.047$). Therefore, living arrangements yielded significant differences only for paranoid ideation. The observed value of P for GSI was 0.364; 0.719 for PSDI; 0.305 for PST; 0.858 for somatization; 0.218 for obsessive-compulsive; 0.118 for interpersonal sensitivity; 0.798 for depression; 0.885 for anxiety; 0.175 for hostility; 0.186 for phobic anxiety and 0.237 for psychoticism, this failing to achieve and 0.05 level of significance.

On the other hand, comparison of the seven groups of living arrangements for paranoid ideation revealed that respondents of group three (living with a parent who married for the second time), had the highest mean ranks (231.80). Therefore, this group scored highest in paranoid ideation. Group six (living alone or with friends) and group five (living alone with parents) had the second highest level of mean ranks (170.25 & 170.25) therefore; they scored second in paranoid ideation.

There were no relatively significant difference in mean ranks among group one (living with parents and siblings) and group four (living with siblings) (157.79 & 159.90). Therefore, these two groups scored third highest for paranoid ideation. On the other hand, group two (living with one parent) who had mean ranks of 137.33 scored fourth in paranoid ideation. The lowest mean ranks were 22.25, which was for group seven (living with relatives), thus this group scored the least in paranoid ideation. It seems that only paranoid ideation was associated with the living arrangements and household composition of the respondent.

F. Mental health state among the respondents in relation to age group:

There were no statistically significant differences among the four age groups for Global Severity Index at an 0.05 level of significance and 3df ($P = 0.106$). In addition, there were no statistically significant differences among age groups for PSDI ($P = 0.723$); obsessive-compulsive ($P = 0.075$); depression ($P = 0.439$); anxiety ($P = 0.298$); hostility ($P = 0.059$); paranoid ideation ($P = 0.724$) and psychoticism ($P = 0.099$). Therefore, age was not significantly related to the above mentioned indices and dimensions, and the null hypotheses were retained for the relationship between age group and symptomatology.

However, the age groups differed significantly for somatization ($P = 0.045$) at the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypotheses were rejected for these dimensions. Group four (43-50 years) had the highest mean ranks (191.22) thus it scored highest in somatization. However, age group one (25- 30 years) and age group three (37-42 years) had relative similarity in mean ranks (152.72 & 154.79). Thus, they were not significantly different in their scores of somatization and they came second in order of the severity of symptoms. Since the mean ranks of the age group two (31-36 years) was the lowest (135.78), it scored the least in somatization.

In addition, age was significant for interpersonal sensitivity ($P = 0.011$) at 0.05 level of significance. The mean ranks for age group one (25-30 years) were the highest (166.51). Therefore, this group scores significantly highest for interpersonal sensitivity. On the other

hand, respondents in age group four (43-50 years) had the second mean ranks (145.37), thus they scored second in the level of interpersonal sensitivity. Group two of age (31- 36 years) had the third level of mean ranks (138.94), thus they scored third in interpersonal sensitivity. However, age group three (37-42 years) had the lowest mean ranks (120.11) and they scored the least in interpersonal sensitivity.

G. Mental Health State amongst those respondents who were interviewed and those who were not interviewed:

Participants who consented to be interviewed were not significantly different in their mean ranks than those who refused the interview or those who had no chance to be interviewed in regard to the Global Severity Index ($P = 0.278$); PSDI ($P = 0.529$); somatization ($P = 0.198$); obsessive-compulsive symptoms ($P = 0.221$); psychoticism ($P = 0.313$); interpersonal sensitivity ($P = 0.344$); hostility ($P = 0.496$); phobic anxiety ($P = 0.764$); paranoid ideation ($P = 0.186$); and anxiety ($P = 0.280$).

However, there was a statistically significant difference among the three groups of participants in relation to depression ($P = 0.029$) at the 0.05 level of significance. The participants who refused the interview had the highest mean ranks (161.48), thus they scored highest for depression. The group of respondents that had been interviewed had the second level of mean ranks (154.63), thus they scored second in the level of depression. However, the group whom it was not possible to interview was the lowest in mean ranks (123.95) and they scored the least in depression.

H. Relationship between the independent variables (demographic characteristics) and Mental Health Status of the respondents:

Multiple regression analysis was used to examine the influence of the independent and demographic variables on Mental Health State of the unmarried subjects of the current study represented through the three indices and the 9 symptom dimensions of the SCL.90-R. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to examine the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variables through stepwise regression. Stepwise regression, according to Munro and Page (1993), is used to determine the independent variables that contributed the most to the change in the dependent variable.

Only age and educational level were used in the correlation analysis because the remaining five were nominal. The distribution of the data was not normal therefore; Spearman correlation analysis was calculated to evaluate the effect of the independent variables age and education on the dependent variables (GSI, PSDI, somatization, obsessive-compulsive, anxiety, phobic anxiety, paranoid ideation, interpersonal sensitivity, hostility, psychoticism, and depression).

Concerning the three indices of the SCL.90-R, the results of the correlation analysis indicated that a negative correlation was found between educational level and Global Severity Index (GSI) ($r = -0.093$, $p = 0.108$) and Positive Symptom Distress Index at 0.01 level of significance. This data indicate that the higher the level of education of the respondents, the less severe the psychological complaint they have.

With regards to the 9-symptom dimensions, there were statistically significant negative correlations between educational level and somatization ($r = -0.22$, $p < 0.001$), interpersonal sensitivity ($r = -0.304$, $p < 0.001$), depression ($r = -0.237$, $p < 0.001$), anxiety ($r = -0.187$, $p < 0.001$), phobic anxiety ($r = -0.203$, $p < 0.001$), paranoid ideation ($r = -0.194$, $p < 0.001$) and psychoticism ($r = -0.217$, $p < 0.001$) (see table 5- 6). These results indicated that the higher the level of education of the respondent, the least the prevalence of the psychological complaint for each dimension.

However, there were no significant correlations between age and the Global Severity Index and PSDI. However, regarding the 9-symptom dimensions, there were statistically significant negative correlations between age and obsessive-compulsive disorder ($r = -0.146$, $p < 0.001$), psychoticism ($r = -0.114$, $p = 0.048$) and interpersonal sensitivity ($r = -0.175$, $p = 0.002$). The data indicate that the younger the age of the respondents, the higher the prevalence of obsessive-compulsive, interpersonal sensitivity, or psychotic symptoms among them.

Multiple regression analysis was performed for the independent variables to test their effects and to assess which of them has a major influence on the mental health of the respondents. The six independent variables that were entered into the regression analysis were: age, educational level, residence, area of living, employment, living arrangements. Four variables, residence, area of living, employment, and living arrangements were recorded as dummy variables before entering them into the multiple regression analysis. This process is essential for nominal data as emphasized by Agresti and Finlay (1997), and Munro, and Page

(1993). Residence was recorded so city was recorded as one and living elsewhere as zero. Area of living was recorded such that living in the north region was recorded as one and living elsewhere as zero. Employment was recorded as being unemployed or a housewife as one and being employed as zero. Finally, living arrangement was recorded as living with the two parents and siblings as one and living in any other form of arrangements as zero.

The results of Multiple Regression Analysis of six independent variables in relation to the three indices and the nine dimensions of the SCL-90-R indicated that there was a statistically significant positive correlation between employment and the Global Severity Index $r = 0.190$, $p < 0.001$. There was a statistically significant negative correlation between the Global Severity Index and educational level $r = -0.224$, $p < 0.001$. In addition, there was a statistically significant positive correlation between the Global Severity Index and living arrangements $r = 0.102$, $p = 0.038$ at 0.05 level of significance. However, there were no statistically significant correlations between the Global Severity Index (GSI) and age; region of living, or living area.

A stepwise regression analysis of the six demographic variables indicated that only educational level and living arrangements significantly predicted the Global Severity Index. Educational level was weakly and negatively correlated with the Global Severity Index ($r = -0.161$, $p < 0.001$). The Global Severity Index decreases 0.161 for one unit measurement change of educational level. Variance in education alone accounted for 5% of the variance GSI, which was a weak correlation. When all the independent variables were held constant, the correlation with a negative r indicated an inverse relationship between educational level and the Global Severity Index. This means that the higher the level of education of the respondent, the less the GSI or psychological distress she has.

However, the Global Severity Index increases 0.151 for one unit measurement change of living arrangement, $p = 0.028$. Together, educational level and living arrangements accounted for 6.5% of the variance in the Global Severity Index. Psychological distress (GSI) is more prevalent among poorly educated respondents who live with their parents and siblings.

There was a statistically significant negative correlation between educational level and the Positive Distress Index (PSDI) $r = -0.289$, $p < 0.001$. In addition, there was a statistically significant positive correlation between employment and the Positive Distress Index (PSDI) $r = 0.176$, $p = 0.001$. Therefore, unemployed respondents had worse psychological complaints

than those who were employed. However, the remaining four demographic variables were not correlated with the Positive Distress Index.

Stepwise regression analysis of the six demographic variables in relation to PSDI indicated that only educational level predicted the Positive Distress Index. Educational level accounted for 8.9% of the variance in Positive Distress index. The Positive Distress Index decreases 0.18 for each unit change of educational level therefore, the higher the level of education, the less the severity of the psychological distress or PSDI.

Stepwise regression analysis of the six demographic variables in relation to somatization indicated that employment and educational level predicted somatization. There was a significant positive correlation between somatization and employment ($r = 0.181$, $p = 0.001$). Somatization increases 0.220 for one measurement unit change in employment. Unemployed respondents had the highest level of somatization.

There was a significant negative correlation between somatization and educational level ($r = - 0.210$, $p < 0.001$). Somatization decreases by 0.210 for one measurement unit change in educational level. An inverse relationship indicated that the lower the level of education, the highest the degree of somatization. Nevertheless, when all the six independent variables were introduced to the regression model, three variables predicted somatization, which were educational level, employment, and living area. When the other independent held constant the three independent variables accounted for 8.0% of the variance of somatization ($p = 0.016$). Somatization was more prevalent among the respondents who were poorly educated, unemployed and live in cities.

Multiple Regression Analysis of the six independent variables in relation to obsessive-compulsive symptoms indicated that four variables were significantly statistically correlated with obsessive-compulsive symptoms. First, age was negatively correlated with obsessive-compulsive symptoms $r = - 0.146$, $p = 0.006$. Obsessive-compulsive decreases by 0.122 for one unit change in age thus, the older the age of the respondent the less the severity of the obsessive-compulsive symptoms.

Secondly, employment was positively correlated with obsessive-compulsive symptoms $r = 0.184$, $p = 0.001$. Obsessive-compulsive increases by 0.316 for one unit change of employment. Consequently, the unemployed respondents had the highest level of obsessive-compulsive symptoms. Thirdly, educational level was negatively and weakly correlated with obsessive-compulsive symptoms $r = - 0.097$, $p = 0.047$. Obsessive-

compulsive scores decrease by 0.097 for each one-unit change of educational level. Finally, living arrangements were positively correlated with obsessive-compulsive symptoms $r = 0.119$, $p = 0.019$.

Table 5- 6

Spearman correlation of educational level and age variables with the three indices and 9-symptom dimensions of the SCL.90:

	Dependent variables	Age by group	Educational level
1	GSI Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	-0.093 0.108	-0.261** <0.001
2	PST Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	-0.138* 0.017	-0.120* 0.038
3	PSDI Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	0.029 0.613	-0.341** <0.001
4	Somatization Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	0.029 0.613	-0.221** <0.001
5	Obsessive-Compulsive Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	-0.146* <0.011	-0.107 0.064
6	Interpersonal Sensitivity Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	-0.175** 0.002	-0.304** <0.001
7	Depression Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	-0.091 0.117	-0.237** <0.001
8	Anxiety Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	-0.059 0.309	-0.187** <0.001
9	Hostility Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	-0.108 0.062	-0.111 0.054
10	Phobic Anxiety Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	-0.074 0.204	-0.203** <0.001
11	Paranoid Ideation Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	-0.027 0.647	-0.194** <0.001
12	Psychoticism Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	-0.114* 0.048	-0.217** <0.001

* Correlation is significant at 0.05 levels (2- tailed).

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 levels (2- tailed).

Nevertheless, when all the demographic variables were entered into the regression model, only age, employment, and living area predicted obsessive-compulsive scores. These three variables accounted for 7.3% of the variance of obsessive-compulsive ($p = 0.011$). Obsessive-compulsive symptoms were the highest among young, unemployed respondents living in cities and towns (table 5-13).

Multiple regression analysis and Pearson correlations indicated that there was a significant negative correlation between age and interpersonal sensitivity $r = - 0.144$, $p = 0.006$. Age predicted interpersonal sensitivity ($r = - 0.161$, $p = 0.006$) (table 5-14). Therefore, interpersonal sensitivity decreases by 0.144 for each one-unit change in age. An inverse relationship means that the level of interpersonal sensitivity decreases as the age category of the respondent increases.

In addition, there was a statistically negative correlation between educational level and interpersonal sensitivity $r = - 0.252$, $p < 0.001$. Therefore, educational level predicted interpersonal sensitivity. Interpersonal sensitivity decreases by 0.252 for one measurement unit change of educational level. An inverse relationship indicated that the higher the level of education the least the level of interpersonal sensitivity. In addition, a statistically significant positive correlation was observed between employment and interpersonal sensitivity. Therefore, employment predicted interpersonal sensitivity ($r = 0.203$, $p < 0.001$). Interpersonal sensitivity increases by 0.203 for one unit measurement change of employment. Interpersonal sensitivity is less severe among respondents who are employed.

In addition, a statistically significant positive correlation was observed between living arrangement and interpersonal sensitivity ($r = 0.153$, $p = 0.004$). Therefore, living arrangement predicted interpersonal sensitivity. The respondents who live with their parents and siblings had more interpersonal sensitivity than those who live in other forms of living arrangements. When all the independent variables were entered into the regression model, only three variables predicted interpersonal sensitivity, which were educational level, living arrangements, and age. The three independent variables accounted for 11% of the change in interpersonal sensitivity ($p = 0.026$). Interpersonal sensitivity is the highest among the respondents who were poorly educated, young, and live with their two parents and siblings.

Table 5-7

Correlation of six demographic variables with the three indices and 9- symptom dimensions of the SCL.90:

	Dependent variables	Age by group	Educational level	Region of living 1	Living Area 1	Employment 1	Living arrangement 1
1	GSI Correlation coefficient Sig. (1-tailed)	- 0.070 0.113	- 0.224 <0.001	- 0.075 0.098	- 0.012 0.417	0.190 <0.001	0.102 0.038
2	PSDI Correlation coefficient Sig. (1-tailed)	0.020 0.363	- 0.298 <0.001	- 0.035 0.272	- 0.065 0.129	0.176 <0.001	-0.036 0.267
3	PST Correlation coefficient Sig. (1-tailed)	- 0.118 0.021	- 0.108 0.031	- 0.061 0.146	0.034 0.280	0.155 0.004	0.128 0.013
4	Somatization Correlation coefficient Sig. (1-tailed)	0.072 0.106	- 0.210 <0.001	- 0.049 0.199	0.065 0.132	0.181 <0.001	0.015 0.396
5	Obsessive-Compulsive Correlation coefficient Sig. (1-tailed)	- 0.146 0.006	- 0.097 0.047	- 0.031 0.297	0.055 0.173	0.184 <0.001	0.119 0.019
6	Interpersonal Sensitivity Correlation coefficient Sig. (1-tailed)	- 0.144 0.006	- 0.252 <0.001	- 0.041 0.241	- 0.059 0.154	0.203 <0.001	0.153 0.004
7	Depression Correlation coefficient Sig. (1-tailed)	- 0.074 <0.100	- 0.213 <0.001	- 0.037 0.263	- 0.045 0.216	0.128 0.013	0.065 0.132
8	Anxiety Correlation coefficient Sig. (1-tailed)	- 0.038 0.257	- 0.150 0.005	- 0.092 0.056	- 0.017 0.387	0.125 0.015	0.048 0.202
9	Hostility Correlation coefficient Sig. (1-tailed)	- 0.031 0.294	- 0.096 0.049	- 0.042 0.232	-0.006 0.460	0.154 0.004	0.079 0.086
10	Phobic Anxiety Correlation coefficient Sig. (1-tailed)	- 0.020 0.365	- 0.189 <0.001	- 0.043 0.231	- 0.002 0.489	0.173 <0.001	0.069 0.116
11	Paranoid Ideation Correlation coefficient Sig. (1-tailed)	-0.015 0.396	-0.171 <0.001	-0.051 0.191	- 0.012 0.416	0.182 <0.001	0.093 0.054
12	Psychoticism Correlation coefficient Sig. (1-tailed)	- 0.082 0.077	- 0.189 <0.001	- 0.036 0.269	0.018 0.381	0.148 0.005	0.100 0.042

Table 5-8

Stepwise regression analysis for Global Severity Index and employment

	Coefficient B	Std. Error	t value	Sig.		
Constant	1.034	0.044	23.435	<0.001		
Employment 1	0.236	0.071	3.335	0.001		
Source of variation	Analysis of variance ANOVA					
	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean square	Sig.	F	R square
Regression	3.960	1	3.960	0.001	11.122	0.036
Residual	106.092	298	0.356			

Table 5- 9

Stepwise regression analysis for Global Severity Index and educational level

	Coefficient B	Std. Error	t value	Sig.		
Constant	1.486	0.044	15.289	<0.001		
Educational level	-0.161	0.041	-3.961	<0.001		
Source of variation	Analysis of variance ANOVA					
	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean square	Sig.	F	R square
Regression	5.504	1	5.504	<0.001	15.690	0.050
Residual	104.547	298	0.351			

Table 5- 10

Stepwise regression analysis for Global Severity Index and living arrangements and educational level

	Coefficient B	Std. Error	t value	Sig.		
Constant	1.422	0.101	14.099	<0.001		
Educational level	-0.169	0.041	-4.174	<0.001		
Living arrangements 1	0.151	0.069	2.205	0.028		
Source of variation	Analysis of variance ANOVA					
	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean square	Sig.	F	R square
Regression	7.189	1	3.594	<0.001	10.783	0.065
Residual	102.863	298	0.346			

Table 5- 11

Stepwise regression analysis for Positive distress Index and educational level

	Coefficient B	Std. Error	t value	Sig.		
Constant	2.476	0.080	31.045	<0.001		
Educational level	-0.180	0.033	-5.392	<0.001		
Source of variation	Analysis of variance ANOVA					
	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean square	Sig.	F	R square
Regression	6.869	1	6.869	<0.001	29.076	0.089
Residual	70.400	298	0.236			

Table 5-12

Multiple regression analysis for Somatization and three independent variables

	Coefficient B	Std. Error	t value	Sig.		
Constant	1.110	0.141	7.851	<0.001		
Living area 1	0.243	0.086	2.845	0.005		
Employment 1	0.220	0.091	2.416	0.016		
Educational level	-0.169	0.053	-3.199	0.002		
Source of variation	Analysis of variance ANOVA					
	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean square	Sig.	F	R square
Regression	12.235	3	4.078	<0.001	8.583	0.080
Residual	152.888	296	0.475			

Table 5 -13

Multiple regression analysis for Obsessive-Compulsive and four independent variables

	Coefficient B	Std. Error	t value	Sig.		
Constant	1.345	0.098	13.707	<0.001		
Age	-0.316	0.043	-2.851	0.005		
Living area 1	0.215	0.084	2.565	0.011		
Employment 1	0.316	0.084	3.751	<0.001		
Source of variation	Analysis of variance ANOVA					
	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean square	Sig.	F	R square
Regression	10.666	3	3.555	<0.001	7.730	0.073
Residual	136.142	296	0.460			

Multiple regression analysis and Pearson correlation of the six independent variables indicated that there was a statistically significant positive correlation between employment and anxiety $r = 0.125$, $p = 0.015$. Anxiety increases by 0.125 for one unit measurement change of employment. Therefore, anxiety is higher among unemployed respondents. In addition, there was a statistically significant negative correlation between educational level and anxiety $r = -0.150$, $p = 0.005$. Anxiety decreases by 0.150 for one unit measurement change of education. Educational level accounted for 2.3% of the variance in anxiety, which was a very weak relationship.

There was an inverse relationship between anxiety and education. Therefore, the higher the level of education of the respondent, the lower the level of anxiety she got. Nevertheless, when the two independent variables were entered to the regression equation, only educational level predicted anxiety. When employment was held constant, a negative correlation of 0.150 was observed between education and anxiety. Anxiety is higher among poorly educated participants.

Multiple regression analysis and Pearson correlation of the six independent variables indicated that there was a statistically significant positive correlation between employment and depression $r = 0.128$, $p = 0.013$. Thus, employment predicted depression. Depression increases by 0.128 for each one unit measurement change of employment. The unemployed respondents were likely to report more depression than employed respondents.

Table 5 - 14

Multiple regression analysis for Interpersonal Sensitivity and 3 demographic variables

	Coefficient B	Std. Error	t value	Sig.		
Constant	2.044	0.191	10.679	<0.001		
Age	-0.123	0.055	-2.238	0.026		
Educational level	-0.294	0.058	-5.025	<0.001		
Living arrangement 1	0.251	0.103	2.433	0.016		
Source of variation	Analysis of variance ANOVA					
	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean square	Sig.	F	R square
Regression	26.183	3	8.728	<0.001	12.181	0.110
Residual	212.077	296	0.716			

Table 5 - 15

Multiple regression analysis for Anxiety and educational level

	Coefficient B	Std. Error	t value	Sig.		
Constant	1.339	0.123	10.907	<0.001		
Educational level	-0.135	0.051	-2.626	0.009		
Source of variation	Analysis of variance ANOVA					
	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean square	Sig. <0.001	F 6.896	R square 0.023
Regression	3.858	1	3.858			
Residual	166.727	298	0.559			

In addition, educational level was significantly and negatively correlated with depression $r = -0.213$, $p < 0.001$. Therefore, educational level significantly predicted depression. Depression decreases by 0.213 for each one-unit measurement change of educational level. There was an inverse relation between educational level and depression. Therefore, the higher the level of education of the respondent, the lower the level of depression she was likely to have (table 5-16). However, stepwise regression analysis of the two independent variables show that only educational level actually predicted depression $r = -0.182$, $p < 0.001$. Education accounted for 4.6% of the variance in depression. Highly educated participants were likely to report fewer depressive symptoms than poorly educated participants.

Table 5-16

Multiple regression analysis for Depression and educational level

	Coefficient B	Std. Error	t value	Sig.		
Constant	1.788	0.116	15.446	<0.001		
Educational level	-0.182	0.048	-3.771	<0.001		
Source of variation	Analysis of variance ANOVA					
	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean square	Sig. <0.001	F 14.221	R square 0.046
Regression	7.077	1	7.077			
Residual	148.295	298	0.498			

Multiple regression analysis and Pearson correlation of the six independent variables in relation to psychoticism indicated that there was a significant positive correlation between

psychoticism and employment $r = 0.148$, $p = 0.005$; a significant negative correlation between educational level and Psychoticism $r = - 0.189$, $p = 0.001$; a significant positive correlation between psychoticism and living arrangements $r = 0.100$, $p = 0.042$. Psychoticism is more prevalent among unemployed, poorly educated respondents who live with both parents.

Stepwise regression analysis of the three variables indicated that only educational level and living arrangement predicted psychoticism. The two variables accounted for 4.9% of the variance in psychoticism ($p = 0.001$), which was a weak relationship (table 5-17). Psychoticism decreases by 0.189 for each one-unit change in the level of education and increases by 0.100 for each one-unit measurement change in living arrangements. Therefore, psychoticism is likely to be more prevalent among poorly educated respondents who live with their parents and siblings.

Multiple regression analysis and Pearson correlation of the six independent variables in relation to paranoid ideation indicated that there was a significant negative correlation between educational level and paranoid ideation $r = - 0.171$, $p < 0.001$. Thus, paranoid ideation decreases by 0.171 for each one-unit change of educational level. Since there was an inverse relationship between educational level and paranoid ideation, the higher the educational level the less likelihood of the respondent reporting paranoid ideation

Table 5-17

Multiple regression analysis for Psychoticism and two independent variables

	Coefficient B	Std. Error	t value	Sig.		
Constant	1.175	0.119	9.884	<0.001		
Educational level	-0.168	0.048	-3.511	0.001		
Living arrangement 1	0.169	0.081	2.086	0.038		
Source of variation	Analysis of variance ANOVA					
	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean square	Sig.	F	R square
Regression	7.442	2	3.721	0.001	7.728	0.049
Residual	143.005	297	0.481			

Table 5-18

Multiple regression analysis for Paranoid Ideation and employment

	Coefficient B	Std. Error	t value	Sig.		
Constant	1.174	0.060	19.516	<0.001		
Employment 1	0.308	0.096	3.199	0.002		
Source of variation	Analysis of variance ANOVA					
	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean square	Sig.	F	R square
Regression	6.775	1	6.775			
Residual	197.334	298	0.662			

In addition, there was a significant positive correlation between paranoid ideation and employment $r = 0.182$, $p < 0.001$; and a positive correlation between paranoid ideation and living arrangements $r = 0.093$, $p = 0.054$. Therefore, paranoid ideation increased by 0.182 for each one-unit change of employment, and by 0.093 for each one-unit change of living arrangement. Nevertheless, stepwise regression analysis of the three independent variables educational level, living arrangement, and employment in relation to paranoid ideation indicated that only employment predicted paranoid ideation $r = 0.308$, $p = 0.002$). Employment accounted for 3.3% of the variance in paranoid ideation. Paranoid ideation was the highest among unemployed, poorly educated respondents who lived with their parents and siblings (see table 5-18).

Multiple Regression Analysis and Pearson correlation of the six independent variables in relation to phobic anxiety indicated that there was a significant negative correlation between educational level and phobic anxiety $r = -0.189$, $p < 0.001$. Therefore, phobic anxiety decreases by 0.189 for one unit change of educational level. An inverse relationship means that the highest the level of education, the least the phobic anxiety.

On the other hand, there was a significant positive correlation between employment and phobic anxiety $r = 0.173$, $p = 0.001$. Therefore, phobic anxiety increases by 0.173 for one unit change of employment. Stepwise regression analysis of the two independent variables in relation to Phobic Anxiety indicated that only educational level predicted phobic anxiety $r = -0.142$, $p = 0.001$. Educational level accounted for 3.6% of the variance in phobic anxiety, which was a weak relationship (see table 5-19). Phobic anxiety was more prevalent among poorly educated participants.

Multiple regression analysis and Pearson correlation of the six independent variables in relation to hostility indicated that there was a significant negative correlation between

educational level and hostility $r = - 0.096$, $p = 0.049$. Therefore, hostility decreases by 0.096 for each one-unit change of educational level. An inverse relationship means that the highest the level of education, the least the hostility.

Table 5-19

Multiple regression analysis for Phobic Anxiety and educational level

	Coefficient B	Std. Error	t value	Sig.		
Constant	0.982	0.102	9.616	<0.001		
Educational level	-0.142	0.043	-3.326	0.001		
Source of variation	Analysis of variance ANOVA					
	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean square	Sig.	F	R square
Regression	4.283	1	4.283			
Residual	115.403	298	0.387			

On the other hand, there was a significant positive correlation between employment and hostility $r = 0.154$, $p = 0.004$. Therefore, hostility increases by 0.154 for each one-unit change of employment. Nevertheless, stepwise regression analysis of the two independent variables in relation to hostility indicated that only employment predicted hostility $r = 0.278$, $p = 0.008$. Employment accounted for 2.4% of the variance in hostility, which was a very weak effect. Unemployed respondents had more hostility than employed ones.

Table 5-20

Multiple regression analysis for Hostility and employment

	Coefficient B	Std. Error	t value	Sig.		
Constant	1.029	0.065	15.931	<0.001		
Employment 1	0.278	0.103	2.688	0.008		
Source of variation	Analysis of variance ANOVA					
	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean square	Sig.	F	R square
Regression	5.514	1	5.514			
Residual	227.420	298	0.763			

In conclusion, it seems that educational level predicted GSI, PSDI, somatization, interpersonal sensitivity, anxiety, depression, psychoticism, paranoid ideation, and phobic

anxiety. On the other hand, employment predicted paranoid ideation, hostility, obsessive-compulsive, and somatization. However, age predicted obsessive-compulsive symptoms and interpersonal sensitivity. Moreover, living arrangements predicted psychoticism, paranoid ideation, and interpersonal sensitivity. In addition, living area significantly predicted obsessive-compulsive disorder and somatization. However, the magnitude of the effect of the independent variables was not great and did not exceed 11%. Therefore, these results mean that other factors may have significantly influenced variance in the mental health state of the respondents.

III. Hypothesis two: There is no significant difference in self-perception among the respondents who exhibited high level of psychological distress and those who reported low levels of psychological distress.

To evaluate this hypothesis, a qualitative analysis was done for respondents who had higher than normal level of Global Severity Index (GSI). Because the GSI mean value was 1.13 and the moderate level of symptomatology was 2, as mentioned earlier, any respondent whose GSI mean score was 1.50 or above was considered as suffering from clinically significant symptoms. Out of the 300 respondents, 79 (26.33%) reported moderate to very severe manifestations of psychological complaints or GSI.

Only the respondents who were interviewed were picked for further analysis of self-perception. Out of the 163 who were interviewed, 41 respondents (25.15%) met the above mentioned criteria. After picking up these respondents, their transcribed interviews were examined thoroughly for their self-view and self-evaluation. Only the questions which were related to self-perception were examined. These were questions seven and eight.

Out of the 41 respondents who met the criteria for moderate to very severe Global Severity Index, 23 (56.10%) respondents reported having negative self-evaluation and low self-esteem compared to 18 (43.90%) who have positive self-views and self-esteem. Positive self-evaluation was expressed in responses such as: "*I am happy in my life and see myself better than other girls*"; "*I am lucky because my family loves me and I am respected by others*"; "*I am not like other girls who got no education or work*"; "*I am proud of my self because I embrace a total responsibility in my home. I stand like a man and do every thing my parents need*"; "*I am free to travel, work, and visit friends and my family trust me and I preserve this trust*"; "*I have essential roles in my home and every body respect my opinion*"; "

My life is full with serious activities . I help other girls in the work and they come to me when they have problems. I see that I have good things to do".

However, negative self-evaluation was clearly stated by some of the participants. The following phrases represent some of the negative views of the participants of themselves: *"I wish I am like other girls who are educated"; "I see myself to the left side of the others. They are better than me"; " I envy other girls who are employed and self-reliant"; " Other girls are better than me"; " My life is useless and I don't do any thing except working as a servant to my sister-in-law and her children"; " After the death of my mother I lost everything and my life turned upside-down. Girls whose parents are alive live a better life"; "My father and brothers are very strict. They don't allow us to visit relatives or work. My life is different from others".*

Although more respondents who had psychological problems also had negative self-evaluation, there was no consistency in the relationship between self-evaluation and self-perception and mental health state of the respondents. Therefore, either the interview questions did not reflect the reality of the self-perception of the respondents, or that the respondents were reserved in their answers about their self view and self-evaluation.

A. Relationship of high levels of psychological complaints to perceived negative factors and weakness among the respondents:

Perception of one's strength and weakness was the second area that was explored and connected to Mental Health Status of the respondents. As stated earlier, only the respondents who were successfully interviewed and had a Global Severity Index of 1.5 or above were picked up for further analysis of this issue. The findings indicated that out of the 41 respondents who had high GSI, 10 (24.39%) respondents considered being employed and financial independence as their source of power. Another 7 (17.07%) respondents considered themselves powerful because they had strong personalities and self-confidence.

Eight (19.51%) out of the 41 respondents considered their persistence and strong will as their points of strength and power. In addition, 6 (14.63%) respondents reported being sociable and having strong social relationships as positive areas in their lives. Nevertheless, few respondents reported one or two of the following positive characteristics in themselves: high morality, freedom of movement and traveling, boldness and courage in expressing self, being educated, humility, forgiveness, kind-heartedness, willingness to help and give to others, and being humorous. However, 6 (14.63%) of the 41 respondents reported having no

positive characteristics in self and 4 (9.76%) others could not tell what were their areas of strength or positivism.

Regarding the negative characteristics of the 41 interviewees who had higher than standard levels of Global Severity Index, 10 (24.39%) of them reported being nervous and easily aroused and irritated. In addition, another 7 (17.07%) respondents reported being impulsive, irrational and reckless in their behaviour. However, being destructive to household objects when angry and out of control was reported by one of the 41 respondents.

The second theme of weakness was related to being avoidant and using escape mechanisms to deal with life's responsibilities. For instance, 4 (9.76%) respondents reported being socially isolated, reclusive, or having poor social interactions as their negative points. In addition, suppression of feelings was reported by five (12.11%) respondents; escape to sleep reported by two (4.88%) respondents; excessive forgetting reported by two respondents; indecisiveness reported by two respondents.

Few respondents reported other forms of negativity and weaknesses in their characters. These included oversensitivity reported by 4 (9.76%) respondents; self-ignorance reported by four participants; poor education reported by three respondents; weak personality structure reported by five respondents; lack of trust in others reported by two respondents; lack of beauty reported by 5 (12.11%) respondents; and high emotionality reported by two respondents. In addition other characteristics were reported by individual respondents, which included: excessive kind-heartedness, inferiority feeling, obsession, laziness, shyness, irrational fear, stubbornness, jealousy, having no family, feeling love and hate without reason, being unmarried, and dependency. On the other hand, six (14.63%) respondents reported having no weaknesses or negative points. Moreover, two respondents did not know what their weaknesses were, and one of the respondents had not previously thought about her weaknesses.

Being employed and having financial independence; strong personalities and self-confidence were perceived as main sources of empowerment for the respondents. In addition, being sociable and having strong social relationships were other positive areas in the lives of Palestinian unmarried respondents. On the other hand, weakness to the respondents meant being nervous, impulsive, and having aggressive tendencies. Additional weakness in the respondents included avoidance and using escape mechanisms; social isolation; oversensitivity and high emotionality; lack of beauty, and poor education. The sources of empowerment and characteristics of weak people as perceived by the respondents were typical of what mental health professionals usually consider strengths or weaknesses too.

Summary:

This chapter presented quantitative findings from the present study and discussed the results of the two hypotheses of the study. Chapter six will present qualitative findings in relation to interview questions.

Chapter six

Qualitative results

I. Analysis of the interview questions:

The second tool of data collection was a semi-structured interview guide consisting of 15 open-ended, probe questions that have been developed by the investigator. The interview guide was used to assess the respondents' perspective about marriage and their perception of themselves as unmarried women in the Palestinian society. The interview was used to give the investigator a more comprehensive understanding of the life of the unmarried participants. The quantitative approach was not adequate to enlighten the investigator about the specifics of the lives of the respondents. Thus, the interviews were aimed at filling this gap. The interview questions were based on the five general research questions. Each research question was addressed by one or more questions of the interview. Question one was answered in chapter five through analysis of SCL-90- R. This following chapter describes the results of the analysis of the interview responses, based on the remaining four research questions:

A phenomenological interpretive approach was used to analyze the interviews. Three main phenomenon were investigated which were, singlehood (spinsterhood), self-perception, and mental health among the 163 unmarried Palestinian women in the sample. According to Parse, Coyne, and Smith (1987), the researcher in phenomenological approaches uses intuition, analysis, and description to uncover the meaning of the lived experience of the participants. The meaning is brought to the surface as themes are identified and synthesized into a structural definition of the lived experience, which is a hypothetical proposition generated from the phenomenological study (Parse et al, 1987). A search for meaning is the ultimate goal of phenomenological research (Knaak, 1984). In the end, conclusions were drawn relative to the research questions.

To reveal the meaning or to understand the experience of the participants Knaak (1984) suggested three strategies, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and interpretation. Phenomenological reduction is exemplified in setting aside the suppositions of the investigator to more fully understand the meaning of the phenomenon to the participants in the study (Knaak, 1984). The second technique, imaginative variation consists of imagining the appearance of a phenomenon against other meanings of experience in an

attempt to determine what the phenomenon means. On the other hand, the third strategy encompasses articulation of meanings as they emerge in the phenomenon (Knaak, 1984).

Data analysis of the interviews was done based on Colaizzi's seven-step model as described in the methodology chapter (Tuck, 1995; Knaak, 1984). The investigator analyzed each question according to the themes that were determined by the four independent data analysts. For every theme, there were categories and sometimes subcategories. Analysis was done in accordance with research questions.

II. Research question two: How do unmarried Palestinian women of the present study view marriage and singlehood?

Several interview questions were used to answer the above research question. Every question got major themes and few categories and sometimes subcategories. The questions were as follows:

A. General causes for singlehood among Palestinian women as perceived by the respondents:

Various factors emerged from the data of the answers of the above question. These included not getting married because of political factors; remaining unmarried due to economical factors of the family of the girl; sociocultural and familial factors; remaining unmarried due to psychological factors; demographic factors; emancipation of women, and personal variables. Each of the above-mentioned factors had subcategories.

Under sociocultural and familial factors for remaining single, the most frequently reported factor for being unmarried after age 25 was incompatibility between the conditions that were proposed by the woman for accepting the man and the characteristics of the man who requested to marry her, which was reported by 63 (38.65%) of the respondents. For instance, if the girl would like to marry a rich man and all the men who proposed to her were poor, she would probably refuse them. In addition, 45 (27.60%) respondents mentioned that some girls request certain features in the man or in his socioeconomic status. Examples of these characteristics included wanting an educated man, wanting to marry a handsome man, looking for a man who lives in a separate house from his family of origin; wanting to marry a mature man and so on. To illustrate, a respondent aged over 43 years, living in a village in the north region of the West Bank, educated with less than secondary level, and employed in an industrial job said: *"Today, the girl wants a separate house and an independent living. When the right man does not come, the girl waits longer and sometimes this man does not*

eventually come". A second respondent whose age was below 30 years, unemployed, living in one of the refugee camps of the south region, who had received a secondary level of education said: *"maybe, the girl did not find the man who provides her with love and respect; one whom she could live happily as she once dreamed of"*. A third respondent whose age was below 30 years, unemployed, educated to secondary level, and living in one of the cities of the south region of the West Bank said: *"Some girls have certain conditions for marrying. They want a furnished house and clothes. Others don't give a damn for these things and only look for comfort and respect from the man"*. On the other hand, a university educated respondent, whose age was over thirty, employed in services, and living in one of the cities of the north region of the West Bank said: *"Age difference, variation in educational level of the man and the girl, mental and cognitive disparity of the man and the woman might be causative factors for singlehood for women. In my situation, if the man is not educated to the university level and mentally sophisticated and knowledgeable, I will not accept to marry him"*.

The second theme was that of Palestinian women remaining unmarried due to the economic situations of their families. One economic category was coming from a poor family and a second was coming from a wealthy family. Seventeen (10.43%) of the respondents believed that coming from a poor family means that the girl might be obliged to work to support her family, which in turn delays her marriage or removes the possibility totally. A respondent whose age was over 35 years, had university education, professional, and living in a city in the north with her parents and sibling said: *"some girls have special home problems and they have to work to support her parents if they are sick and she has no brothers or her brothers are not in the country"*. Another respondent who was employed, college educated, over age 30, living in city in the south region said: *"When the girl is working and she devotes her life for her young brothers and sisters, she forgets her need and her life passes year after the other without being attentive to her own needs"*. A third participant said: *"I have a girlfriend whose parents refused all marriage proposals because they want her to work and support them financially"*.

In contrast, 20 (12.26%) of the respondents were of the opinion that coming from a wealthy family could sabotage the chances of marriage. They believed that many men were reluctant to marry from rich families because wealthy families are expected to ask for high standards of marriage, which are usually difficult to for a regular man who works as an employee or laborer to provide. Nine (5.52%) respondents believed that in rich families where girls could inherit land or other assets, they refuse to allow marriage of their daughter

in order to preserve these assets within the family of origin. However, if a cousin were to ask for the hand of his cousin, it is welcomed. A respondent whose age was over 40, employed, educated to college level, and living in one of the cities of the north region supported the above viewpoint and said: *"some families prevent their daughters from marrying because of the land and property. They don't want the money or property to go to strangers or to be inherited by someone from outside the family"*. A second respondent said: *"Some rich people refuse marrying of their daughters so the inheritance of their daughter would not resort to the stranger family"*. A respondent whose family was rich said: *"In our family, most of the girls remained single. People see us differently and do not dare to ask for our hands. My parents and uncles think that men might want to marry us because they are greedy and seek our money and land. I do not have a cousin to marry him thus, I remained single. I say that a son is better than all the money of the world, but they would not listen. Finally, they died and left us alone"*.

The third category of economic factors concerned the high expenses of marriage. Twenty-three (14.11%) respondents reported that the high expenses of marriage could be a factor in delaying marriage for men. A respondent aged less than 30, who was unemployed, had elementary education, and was living in one of the refugee camps in the south said: *" this is caused by the father who asks for a high dowry for his daughter, therefore people who ask for big dowry stand against the future of their daughters"*. A second respondent aged over thirty, educated and worked as a professional, and lived with her nuclear family in a city in the south region said: *" the family of the girl asks for many things, gold, furniture, and cloths and the man see that this is too much, and then he looks for another bride who is cheaper "*.

On the other hand, 15 (9.20%) respondents believed that the high expenses of marriage do not prevent marriage, but delay it for men who usually marry younger women after becoming financially capable. The following statement that was mentioned by a respondent over 30, educated to college level, employed in paraprofessional job, living in a village in the south of the West Bank: *" Some girls do not marry because men cannot afford marriage high expenses. The families ask for a big dowry, furnished house, gold, and wedding party. How many years should the man work to fulfill these high expenses"*? A second respondent aged over 40, with an elementary education, employed in industry, and living in one of the cities of the middle region said: *" Marriage expenses prevent or delay marriage when the man is still young. When he is ready to marry and open a house, he seeks younger girls and the more mature women are overlooked"*. A third respondent said: *"sometimes the man had no money*

or has very little money because he is poor. The girls' families say: if you don't have money, you don't need to marry".

Another factor for the increase of the numbers of the unmarried women in Palestinian society as reported by nine (5.52%) respondents was the tendency of men to marry women who are foreigners or carry an Israeli I.D. This is usually made as an opportunistic intention because the man believes he will have a better chance of getting a job or to traveling abroad when he acquires a foreign citizenship. When this happens in large numbers, Arab women will be left without potential husbands or as unmarried. A respondent whose age was below 30, with an elementary education, who was a housewife and lived in a village in the middle region said: "*men in our society kill themselves to marry a woman from America or Israel. They want the I.D and this helps them to have work and live away of the West Bank. This is a trend in my community and you hear young men talk about it every day".*

Nevertheless, few respondents believed that men might look for women who are employed in order to help them with living expenses and family responsibilities. This was a new trend within the Palestinian society as proposed by 9 (5.52%) respondents. A respondent, aged between 31 and 35 years, with an elementary education, working in industry, and living in a city in the south said: "*some men prefer the educated woman who has college or preferably university degree. They want an employed woman to help them with living expenses".* A second respondent, who had an elementary education, was unemployed, living in a village in the south, and aged over 30 said: "*today, men turn towards materialistic life. They want educated women who could bring cash. I see this is increasing around me".* However, 10 (6.13%) respondents believed that high levels of education, empowerment, and assertiveness on the part of women could deter men, because men fear this kind of women. To illustrate, a respondent who said: "*when the girl is older and knowledgeable, she does not accept any man and not any man satisfies her. The man cannot control her in the same way as the younger women. When women are employed, they have a say in the family decisions. Men are afraid of educated and strong women so they prefer to marry younger women to control them".*

Another theme emerged from the question about reasons for remaining unmarried for Palestinian women included the sociocultural values such as a preference for younger women, a desire to marry beautiful women, and early marriage. First of all, 40 (24.54%) respondents believed that the Palestinian men tend to marry younger women aged between 15 and 23 years. A respondent whose age was under 30, with less than six years of education, who was unemployed, and living in one of the cities of the south region of the West Bank said: "*Here*

in (...) men marry very young girls who did not finish high school. They like girls who are 15 or 16 years of age". A second respondent aged under 30, with more than a secondary level of education, who was employed, and living in a village in the south region of the West Bank said: *"In my community, people say that the highly educated woman is not appropriate for marrying and they want a young girl of 15- 18 years so they will train her as they like. This could lead to divorce in my opinion".*

Secondly, 20 (12.27%) respondents believed that men tend to marry beautiful women, especially those who have white skin, blond and long hair and colored eyes. When the woman is not beautiful or has any kind of disability or illness, she has fewer chances for marriage as reported by 11 (6.7%) respondents. On the other hand, 11 (6.7%) subjects said that if the girl has a disability or she is not attractive her chances of marriage do not disappear but they are reduced. The following response illustrates this viewpoint: *"Men want tall, blond, white and young women. When the girl is not beautiful, she may not marry because men do not approach her. I am not married while my young sister who is five years younger than me got married at age 18 because she is white and has long hair".* A respondent aged under 30, with a secondary education, who was unemployed, and lived with her nuclear family in a city in the south region said: *"Maybe the girl is not beautiful or has a problem in her body. Men look for superficial things thus, plain women remain unmarried."* A third respondent said: *"Sometimes the girl has moral or behavioral problems that deter men, which keep her unmarried".*

Thirdly, endogamous marriage that occurs within the clan, tribe, or village is preferred by Palestinian families as mentioned by 15 (9.20%) respondents. One of these respondents said: *"Most families in my village wed their daughters to their relatives or to men from the village. I have no cousins therefore, I stayed single and my mother refused all men who came from other places. She says that she wants me to be close to her".* Another respondent said: *"Wealthy families do not want a stranger to share them their inheritance. They want close relatives to marry their daughters".* A respondent in the 31-36 year old age group, educated to secondary level, was working in industry, and living in a city in the south said: *"Related marriage is the most common kind of marriage in the villages. The girl either marries her cousin or someone from the clan".*

One of the old values in the Palestinian society is the conviction in mystical power and superstitions and their influence on people's destiny. Three (1.84%) respondents believed that an evil eye or spirit, or magical powers control the life and fortunes of the woman and could block her chances for marriage. One of these respondents who had more than secondary

education, who was employed in services, living with her nuclear family in a city in the middle region said: *"Some girls think that one of their relatives made evil spell for them so as not to marry. I know a girl in my work who believes that and she went to the shaman to remove the spell"*.

Polygamous marriage was seen as problematic by some of the respondents in the current study. Five (3.07%) respondents attested that refusal of polygamous marriage could leave some women as unmarried after a certain age. A respondent aged under 30, educated to elementary level, employed in services, and living in a village in the north said: *"Many girls refuse to marry an already married man. There are lots of problems in this kind of marriage. I prefer to stay as I am rather than marrying a man who is married and has children"*. Another respondent whose aged was under 30, with an elementary education, who was unemployed, and living in a village in the south said: *"Married men propose to girls who are still young, maybe in their 20s. These girls say that they are young and have good chances therefore, they turn down these proposals. If nobody later comes to ask for the hand of the girl, she will remain single or accept to marry men who are married and have children. I know a girl who married a man of her father's age. If some man like him proposes to me, I will kill myself"*.

Another theme was that women refuse to marry because of psychological reasons. Sub-categories within this theme included being afraid of marriage, having had previous failures with love, experiencing parental conflicts, and fearing the loss of one's freedom and independence were the main psychological factors behind refusing marriage. Ten (6.13%) respondents suggested that some girls reject the whole idea of marriage because they grew old, hated marriage or did not trust men. Previous bad experiences in love or engagement which could leave psychological scars in women and prevent them from accepting marriage and/or men were reported by 10 (6.13%) respondents. A respondent under 30, with a university education working as a professional, living in a city in the south region said: *"there are girls who don't want to marry. I do not want to marry now. I discarded the whole idea"*. A second respondent under 30, with a college education, who was employed in services, living in a village in the south region said: *"some girls do not trust the other sex and they refuse marriage for that reason"*. Two (1.23%) respondents believed that fear of marriage responsibilities and obligations may make the girl refuse the idea of marriage. One of these women aged below 30, with an elementary education, employed in services, living in a village in the middle region said: *"the girl might not fear marriage itself but its responsibilities. She is afraid to lose her freedom if she gets married"*.

A common theme for remaining unmarried was families' control of the life and choices of the respondents. Familial factors play major roles in delaying or diminishing the likelihood of marriage. Fifty-two (31.90%) respondents believed that the families of the girls would refuse the man who asked for the hand of their daughters if he doesn't fit their standards of "the good husband". Categories of a good husband in the respondents' view were: being rich, having a famous and prestigious family, being handsome, having a good reputation, being educated and employed. A respondent illustrated this viewpoint by saying: *"In some families, problems between parents about who is the right husband for their daughters could prevent marriage from occurring because each one holds a different opinion"*. A second respondent aged below 30, with a college education, who was unemployed, living in a village in the south region said: *"Sometimes the family refuses the man who proposes to their daughter because of certain conditions they want in him"*. A respondent whose age below thirty, with a secondary education, unemployed, living with her nuclear family in a city in the south region said: *"There are families who are discriminatory against other social classes. They want husbands to their daughters who are from a high class, a rich husband, or someone who has no mother or lives away of his family"*.

Four (2.45%) respondents believed that Palestinian families usually oppose marriage after love affairs that were discovered and became known to the public. Such a decision is usually made to preserve the reputation of the girl and the family. A respondent whose aged under thirty, educated to university level, employed in services, and living in a village in the south region said: *"the family may refuse to let their daughter marry her beloved man and they want to force her to marry her relative, who she dislikes and is not convinced with. She refuses the mirage and she could have a complex due to this problem and refuse marriage totally"*. In addition to the above mentioned familial factors, 5 (3.07 %) respondents believe that bad reputation on the part of the girl's family might block her chances for marriage. One of these respondents with an elementary education, who was unemployed, living with her nuclear family in a village in the south region said: *"if the girl's mother is problem-maker or her father is a traitor or has bad reputation, nobody will ask for her hand"*.

Parental conflicts and problems, divorce or separation of the girl's parents was usually believed to have undesirable effects on the girls' chances for marrying as reported by 6 (3.68 %) of the respondents. A respondent aged under thirty, with an elementary education, who was unemployed, living with her nuclear family in a village in the south region said: *"there are girls who have familial problems that reflect on them adversely. Their parent got marital discord and this complicates her life and makes her refuse to marry so that she would not get*

problems in her marriage". In addition, 3 (1.84%) respondents believed that social isolation of the girl and her family decreases her chances of meeting men, which decreases her chance for marriage.

Another reason for delaying marriage or decreasing the chances of its occurrence among the Palestinian women was believed to be demographic variables. Two (1.23%) participants believed that a disproportionate male to female ratio occurring due to migration to nearby countries, imprisonment and the martyrdom of Palestinian men, led to a decrease in the number of men in relation to women.

A woman's ambitions about education, employment, and freedom were considered as legitimate reasons for delaying marriage among the Palestinian women. Forty (24.54%) respondents believed that the women's wish to pursue education to college or university levels would delay their marriage, thus they become older than the preferred age for men. However, 9 (5.52%) respondents thought that poor education on the part of women could adversely influence women's chances for marriage. A respondent aged over thirty, with a university education, employed as professional, living in a city in the south region of the West Bank said: *"education of the girl delays her marriage. When she finishes the university education, she will be 22 or 23 or older if she wants to pursue higher education. Men want to marry younger women. The woman who is 25 or 27 is old for them. At this age, only married men propose to these women"*. A second respondent aged over thirty, who was highly educated and working as a professional, living in a village in the middle region said: *"Here if the girl likes education and she refuses marriage proposals, people say that this girl does not like to marry and after some time nobody proposes to her. When she is highly educated, people say that she wants an educated man only. But educated men look suspiciously to marrying women who are perceived as strong and have independence. This is not preferred by men"*.

Palestinian women are experiencing changes in their view of marriage as evidenced by participants' responses in the current study. Seventeen (10.43%) of the participants believed that women's emancipation and freedom of work and movement made them less eager to marry. Twelve (7.36%) respondents reported that today's women do not see marriage as their destiny and that marriage may deprive them of their chances for work and freedom of movement, which were considered advantages of singlehood. A respondent aged below 30, who had received a university education and was working as a professional, living in a city in the middle region of the West Bank said: *"In the past girls saw marriage as an access to freedom and liberation from house and family's pressure. She used to marry as an escape*

even if the husband was not good. She has no opinion and did not participate in family affairs. Today, the contrary is true. The girl is educated, has work and is financially independent. She is relatively free and has her opinion in her family, certainly this is not absolute". A respondent aged below 30, who had received a college education, who was employed as paraprofessional living in a refugee camp said: *"When the girl grow and matures, she does not accept to marry any man. She is independent and can select better. She could decide if she wants to marry and hold the responsibility of a family. It is more difficult to make up her mind because she is worried about her freedom and achievements. She has to be careful in her selection because not any man suites her".*

Thirty-four (20.86%) participants explained that bad luck or God's will are the causes of remaining single. This was the first typical response to the question: "Why do you think some women remain unmarried in your society?" However, 10 (6.13%) respondents couldn't identify the possible causes of spinsterhood in their society and they responded with the following answer: *"I don't know"* or *"I never thought about this issue"*.

Finally, 9 (5.52%) respondents believed that many girls stay single simply because nobody had ever proposed to them. One of these respondents aged over thirty, with a college education, who was employed as a paraprofessional living in a refugee camp in the middle region said: *"maybe the girl has never been approached by any man and nobody noticed her"*.

B. Specific factors for singlehood among the respondents:

When asked about their specific reasons for remaining unmarried the first most typical answer was *"it is my luck"* and *"it is my fate"*. Probing into this area revealed various reasons that were classified into 20 specific reasons. These 20 reasons were classified into broader factors. The first reason was that the right person or the perfect match between the girl and the men who were available to her was not found, which was reported by 73 (44.78%) respondents. Many women answered in terms of the following statements: *"I didn't find the man who suits me"*; *"I didn't find the right person for me"* or *"it was God's will"*. A respondent aged below 30 with a college education, working as a paraprofessional and living in a city in the middle region said: *"I want to marry a religious and committed man. I did not find this man yet"*.

The familial factor was the second main reason behind delayed marriage for the participants. Sixteen (9.8%) subjects talked about their parents' refusal of certain men, their family's interference in their decisions over the choice of the right man, their family's conditions placed upon marriage, or the family's preference for related and endogamous

marriages. The following response illustrated the above viewpoints: *"My father refuses all men who proposed to me. When I ask my mother, she says that they are not appropriate for me"*. A second respondent who lived in a village in the middle region said: *"I knew a man and he asked for my hand. My brother refused him because he lives in another region. I will not forgive my brother for that"*. A third respondent aged under 30 with an elementary education, working in industry; living in a city in the south region said: *"I know that people come to my house to ask for my hand but my family refuses them without asking for my opinion"*. A fourth respondent aged over 30 who was unemployed and living in a refugee camp in the south region added: *"My mother does not want me to marry. She says: if you get married, I will kill myself"*.

Another familial factor for remaining unmarried was the participant's need to look after old or sick parents and/or young siblings, which was reported by 12 (7.36%) of the respondents. This was especially true for girls who were the oldest or the youngest among their siblings. A respondent aged under 30 who had a secondary education and no work, living in a village in the north region said: *"I am the youngest among my sisters. All got married and left me with my old and sick parents. I cannot leave them at this age"*. Another respondent who lived in a refugee camp in the north region and had a secondary education but no work said: *"My mother died and left six children for me. One of them was a baby and I had to be their mother because I am the oldest"*. In addition, familial factors such as a presumed 'bad reputation' on the part of the family, and coming from a conservative family were mentioned by four (2.45%) of the participants. A respondent who lived in a town in the south region, with a secondary education and who was employed as a paraprofessional said: *"Our brother is the cause of our problems. Nobody gets close to our family because my brother has a bad reputation in the village. People say that I and my sister have no shortcomings, but what shall I say"*. A second respondent who had preparatory education and no work and who was living with her nuclear family in a village in the south region said: *"My family is difficult. They don't allow me to visit anybody. Even to my uncle's house, my father says no. I wish I would die and get relieved from this misery"*.

In addition to the reasons mentioned above, a very few of the participants mentioned less common factors for their singlehood such as their family's greed for the salary or property of the single woman that led to their refusal to let them marry. This was reported by 3 participants; their brother's sabotage of attempted marriage in order to control inheritance of land or money; their relatives' attempts to ruin potential chances of marriage due to interfamilial conflicts; refusing early marriage or polygamy. A respondent under 30 living in

a city in the middle region said: *"The only thing that my family thinks about is me and my sister working to support them because my father stopped working for years and he depends on us"*. Another respondent said: *"If I had wanted to marry at an early age, I would have ten children by now. I refused the idea of early marriage. Marriage is not a game, you know"*.

A third factor for remaining unmarried for the respondents was personal. For instance, 11 (6.75%) of the respondents mentioned that they delayed marriage because they wanted to pursue education at university or college. These women refused to marry early in order to have better chances for education, work, and to become independent. A respondent aged under 30 living in a city in the north region said: *"I like education and I refused to marry before finishing university. Now I have graduated and got a job, but people look at me as an old woman and men seek young women between age 15 and 17"*. Nevertheless, 9 (5.52%) subjects believed that being unattractive, short, dark-skinned, or having a handicap were possible factors for men's reluctance to marry them.

Being financially independent and living a fulfilled and active life made some respondents more reluctant to select marriage as a choice, especially when potential husbands who may provide a good compensation are not available. Therefore, 8 (4.9%) women willingly refused marriage unless the man was capable to provide freedom and respect, financial stability, and a decent life. One respondent commented: *"I have everything a woman needs. My family is good with me. I am educated and working. I don't want to marry just to be married. If I don't find a man who respects me and could prove happiness for me, why should I marry"*? Another respondent aged over 30 and who had a university education and was employed, living with her mother and sister in a city the middle region said: *"I have total freedom and I go wherever I want. I even traveled to France with my sister. I am afraid that if I got married, I might lose all of that. Most men would not accept that their wives could travel without them"*.

Table 6-1

General causes for remaining unmarried among Palestinian women as perceived by the respondents:

Themes	Categories	No.	%
incompatibility between the man and the woman	- Poor match of men and women	63	38.65
	- request certain features in the man	45	27.60
economic situation of the Palestinian families	- coming from a poor family	17	10.43
	- coming from a wealthy family	20	12.26
	- high expenses of marriage	23	14.11
	- men look for women who are employed	9	5.52
	- men marry women who are foreigners or carry an Israeli I.D	9	5.52
sociocultural values	- high education, empowerment, and assertiveness of women scare men away	10	6.13
	- Early marriage of girls	40	24.54
	- preference of men for perfect- looking women	20	12.27
	- endogamous marriage	15	9.20
	- mystical power influence on girls' destiny	3	1.84
	- refusing polygamy	5	3.07
psychological reasons	- Previous bad experiences in love or engagement	10	6.13
	- don't trust men/ hate marrying	10	6.13
	- fear of marriage responsibilities	2	1.23
Familial factors	- families of the girls refuse the man	52	31.90
	- families oppose marriage after love affairs	4	2.45
	- bad reputation of the girl's family	5	3.07
	- Parental conflicts and problems	6	3.68
	- social isolation of the girl's family	3	1.84
demographic variables		2	1.23
change in women's view of marriage	- women's wish to pursue education	40	24.54
	- women's emancipation	17	10.43
	- concern that marriage deprives women of their chances for work and freedom	12	7.36
bad luck or God's willpower		34	20.86
couldn't identify the possible causes of singlehood		10	6.13
nobody had ever proposed to the girl		9	5.52

On the other hand, psychological factors for remaining unmarried were mentioned by 15 (9.20%) participants, which included fear of marriage; fear of failure; fear of the responsibilities of marriage and family; and having negative feelings about marriage. A frequently stated reason for the above-mentioned fears was the information that the respondents received from their near relatives or friends about marriage as an unhappy event. A respondent aged over 30 who had a college education and was working as a paraprofessional living in a town in the south region said: *"When I look at the married women and see that they are always busy with house chores, children, cooking, and their husbands' demands, I tell myself that I am better without this burden"*. A second respondent, who lived in a city in the middle region, had a college education and worked in services said: *"I met one of my classmates the other day and we talked. She asked me about my news and when she knew that I am still single, she said: you don't want this life"*. A third respondent aged over 30 who had a secondary education and worked in services, living in a city in the south region said: *"My sister visits us and she always comes with her four children who are noisy and make a mess in our home and she does not give a damn . I think about her life and tell myself: no I don't want to be like her"*.

Previous failure in love or engagement was another psychological factor for some subjects to refuse marriage as reported by 9 (5.52%) respondents. For some respondents, previous failure made them more cautious in their choices, while for some others they dropped the whole idea of marriage altogether. A respondent aged over 35 with a preparatory education and no work living in a village in the north said: *"Many years ago, I knew a man and I loved him a lot. I was shocked when I found that he married his cousin. Men are not faithful"*. Another respondent who lived in a village in the south region, with a university education and no work said: *"Now I know a man but I don't want to marry him. He promised to ask for my hand but he never did. I told him: I will not believe you even if I see you at my family's house"*.

However, 13 (7.97%) participants were puzzled by the fact that they were not married without knowing the possible reasons for it. They talked about *"not knowing why"*, or *"not knowing the reason's for remaining single"*. Four (2.45%) respondents believed that an evil eye or evil acts could be the reasons for their being unmarried. They mentioned that they went to a shaman who informed them about the evil act that was done against them, which in turn blocked their ways towards marriage. A respondent aged under 30 with a secondary education and no work living in a village in the south region said: *"My sister went to the Sheikh to see why all the men who asked for my hand never came back. He told her that an*

evil act was made by someone to sabotage all my chances for marriage". Finally, 2 (1.2%) participants said that they were not married because their families have never been approached by any man as far as they knew. Therefore, these participants didn't experience any situation where they could think about possible reasons for remaining unmarried. A respondent aged over 35 with a secondary education, working in services and living in a village in the south region said: "*How could a woman get married if no man asked for her hand? I don't know why I am not married and no man has noticed my presence*".

Generally speaking, several reasons were mentioned for Palestinian women remaining single as perceived by the respondents of the current study. These factors were political, socio-cultural and familial, psychological factors, personal variables, demographic factors, and gender-related factors. The causative factors for remaining single among the respondents themselves did not vary much from those they perceived to be the case for the general population. However, the respondents were more able to talk about their individual reasons behind remaining single because they knew their own circumstances better. Nevertheless, it was easier for the respondents to say that "*I did not find the right man*" as an answer for remaining single than to search their minds for other possible reasons behind remaining single.

C. Possibility of marrying among the respondents:

Two main categories emerged from the answers of the respondents. The first was that the respondent had a reasonable chance of getting married. The main theme was "relative confidence" about marrying. One hundred and twelve (68.7%) subjects reported that they still get marriage proposals but less frequently than when they were younger, and the men who ask for their hands were less appealing. The first category of men who ask for the hand of the women who passed age 25 were the old, married, divorced and widowed as reported by 95 (58.3%) of the respondents. These types of offers were considered unsuitable for the respondents, therefore they were rejected. A respondent aged over 30 with a secondary education who was unemployed, and lived in a city in the north region said: "*in our society, when the woman is over 25 she hardly ever marries a single or young man. They look to her as an old woman, a spinster and only men over 50 propose to her*" A second respondent aged over 35, who was a homemaker living in a city in the north region said: "*I will not accept it if a man proposed to me. All those who propose to me are old and I don't like that*". A third respondent said: "*A month ago, a man proposed to me but I refused him; he was very old for*

me. He wanted a nurse rather than a wife". A fourth respondent aged over 30 with an elementary education, who was unemployed, and living in a refugee camp in the south region said: "those who come to ask for me are either married or windowed. They want me to look after their children. This is something that I refuse; it is impossible for me to marry a married man".

Table 6-2

Specific factors for singlehood among the respondents

Themes	Categories	No.	%
incompatibility between the man and the woman	- Poor match of men and women	73	44.78
sociocultural values	- mystical power influence on girls' destiny	4	2.45
psychological and personal reasons	- fear of marriage responsibilities, fear of marriage, fear of failure, and negative feelings about marriage	15	9.20
	- wanted to pursue education	11	6.75
	- being unattractive or having a handicap	9	5.52
	- Previous bad experiences in love or engagement	9	5.52
Familial factors	- families of the girls refuse the man	16	9.8
	- the subjects' need to look after old or sick parents and/or young siblings	12	7.36
	- family's greed for the salary or property of the single woman	3	1.84
	- bad reputation of the girl's family	4	2.45
change in women's view of marriage	- Being financially independent and living a fulfilled and active life	8	4.9
bad luck or God's willpower		150	92.02
couldn't identify the possible causes of singlehood		13	7.97
nobody had ever proposed to the girl		2	1.2

The second theme was "optimism" about getting married. Sixty-five (39.9%) respondents expressed their hopefulness and optimism about getting married in the future, and they are not against marrying decent, courteous, and competent men. In addition, 28 (17.2%) believed that they still have very good chances for getting married to young, unmarried men. These respondents reported that they were ready to accept marriage proposals if the man who proposes fit their standards of the good husband. A respondent aged over 40 living in a village in the north region said: *"If a good and decent man came, I may accept to marry him. If I find in him the characteristics that I wanted, why not agreeing. I want a man who is respectable, religious and respects me and I could accept"*. A second respondent aged under 30 with a university education, who was employed and lived in a city in the south region said: *"Of course I have a good chance to marry. I get marriage proposals from young, single, and well-educated men. I may accept if the man who proposed to me is good"*.

However, 26 (16%) respondents reported that although they thought good chances still existed, they deliberately refused the idea of marrying altogether. This opinion was expressed in the following statement: *"I don't want to marry even if someone proposed to me. I have deleted marriage from my mind. Now my brother is at the university and I think helping him financially is more important to me than getting married"*. Getting old with lower chances for childbearing made 17 (10.4) subjects drop the idea of marriage totally. A respondent aged over 40 who lived in a city in the north region said: *"For what reason I will marry at this age? In the past I wanted to become a mother, but now there is no use in marrying"*.

The third theme was "lost hope" of marrying. Thirty-five (21.5%) respondents described having lost hope of getting married because nobody had proposed for a long time, although they were not against marriage. These subjects believed that they were not appealing to men because they were not young, or people were thinking that they have rigid conditions for accepting marriage since they refused many offers in the past. The following statement from a respondent aged over 30 who had a university education and was employed as a professional indicated this view: *"People think I am showing off and they say that maybe I want to marry a doctor or a rich man"*. A second respondent aged under 30 with a secondary education living in a village in the south region said: *"Frankly speaking, I have no chance to marry. Within the last two years, nobody proposed to marry me"*. A third respondent said: *"After I broke my engagement, nobody who is good proposed to me. No man wants me. Sometimes I get desperate about getting married or not. However, I sometimes become optimistic and tell myself not to worry"*.

The fourth theme was "uncertainty" about the future. Twelve (7.4%) of the respondents were uncertain about their real desire of marrying or not. A respondent aged over 40 living in a city in the south region said: *"These days I am confused. There are many marriage proposals for me, but I don't know whether to accept or not. I am afraid that in the future I may regret my decision"*. In addition, eight (4.9%) respondents answered by: *"I don't know" or God knows whether I will marry or not*"; *"Who knows if I will marry or not?"* However, some participants reassured themselves by asserting that they will eventually marry when God wants that, which was expressed by one of the participants: *"I am sure that it is Gods wish and wisdom for keeping me unmarried until now"*.

Ten (6.1%) respondents said that they could accept marriage with any man without conditions. They reported that after the age of 30 they had changed their previous opinions about the *"most suitable man"* and had become more willing to marry any man. A respondent aged over 35 who was educated to secondary level, was employed and lived in a city in the middle region said: *"I accept to marry a married man and I will not make any trouble for him. I just want him to explain to me his reasons for marrying me. I want him to be considerate and knowledgeable"*. A second respondent aged over thirty who was unemployed and lived in a city on the middle region said: *"my chances for marrying became smaller. I still have self-confidence and believe that I am wanted. However, I feel that I need to give up on some of my previous conditions about the perfect man if I want to find a man. I guess, if a man proposed to me to accept because after I got older, I feel that I need things that I have never thought about before"*. On the contrary, some participants reported that when they were young they would have accepted marriage to any man to get rid of their family's control and responsibilities, but later they changed their views.

In general, the respondents were optimistic and had "relative confidence" about getting married in the near future. They were willing to consider marrying if the men who ask for their hands are appropriate. However, most of the respondents admitted that they experienced a decline in marriage proposals recently, as they got older. Nevertheless, loss of hope of marriage and uncertainty were increasingly evident among a prpoprtion of the respondents, especially those who were above thirty years of age.

Table 6-3

Possibility of marrying among the respondents

Themes	No.	%
relative confidence" about marrying	112	68.73
optimism" about getting married	65	39.9
have very good chances for getting married to young and unmarried men	28	17.2
refused the idea of marrying altogether	26	16
"lost hope" of marrying	35	21.5
"uncertainly" about the future chances of marrying	12	7.4
accept to marry any man without conditions	10	6.1

D. Characteristics of the appropriate husband from the respondents' point of view:

The majority of the respondents were not against marrying. *"Getting married was the norm"* for Palestinian women, as perceived by the respondents. However, marrying has its conditions if happiness was to be achieved. One hundred and sixty (98.2%) respondents said they would accept marriage under certain conditions. This condition included the man's respect and decent treatment of the woman; being capable to provide an independent home for his wife; and is considered decent and respectable by the society. In addition, 48 (29.4%) respondents said that they would accept marriage if the man had liberal opinions about women's work and education; was open minded and educated; was able to accept the woman as she is; had high morals; was financially competent; belonged to a decent family; was good looking; was willing to share life and communicate respectfully with the woman. However, 38 (23.3%) respondents proposed that the preferred husband should be few years older than the woman, should be mentally and cognitively mature, and self-reliant and assertive. A respondent who lived in a village in the middle region and who had an elementary education and no work said: *"Few days ago a man came to ask for my hand. When my brother called me to see him I found he is in the age of my father. After five years or so he will die and leave me. Do I want to become his nurse?"* A respondent aged under 30 who was educated and worked as a professional, living in a town in the south region clarified her opinion in the following statement: *"The man should be mature to handle life issues and problems. I want a man who is older than me; not very old, but he understands life and has experience. I want a man who does not want his mother to decide for him like my ex fiancé".*

Eighty of the respondents who would accept marriage under the conditions they stipulated believed that emotional stability, mutual respect and understanding, and high moral standards on the part of the man were more worthy than wealth or prestige. Therefore, these participants negated the principle of marrying for the sake of marriage. The following was a typical statement from these respondents: *"I don't want to marry because this is what the society wants. If I wanted to marry anyone, I would have ten children by now"*. On the other hand, 18 (11%) respondents agreed to marry only wealthy men who would not need their wives to work. Some of these respondents are currently employed and want to depend on their husbands for living because they wish to give up work.

Nevertheless, 34 (20.9%) respondents wanted to marry strictly religious and committed men. Some of these women would not object to wearing the veil or staying home if that were the wish of their future husband. However, three of these women mentioned that they do not mind marrying a religious man if he is not very rigid and would not confine the woman at home. One of these respondents said: *"I want to marry a committed man who knows God and does not drink or do sins. The last man who proposed to me was religiously strict. He asked me to cover my face and I accepted this. However, when he said that he does not like me to leave the house I thought again about it. I said no; I am not going to live in a prison"*.

Conversely, 40 (24.5%) of the respondents attested that they would marry a decent man but only if he was not previously or currently married. They refused polygamous marriage because they believed that it does not bring happiness for them. Nevertheless, 15 (9.2%) subjects would accept the idea of marrying a married man if he does not have children and his wife was divorced or dead. On the other hand, 12 (7.4%) respondents would agree to marry a man who is currently married and has another wife if his wife is sick or is treating him inappropriately. These respondents accepted polygamous marriage because it is culturally and religiously accepted in the Palestinian and Arab society. A respondent aged over 30 with a secondary education working in industry and living in a city in the north region said: *"A young man will not come and marry me. He will seek a young woman unless we love each another. He will be married. I am sure of that. But this can be a problem for me"*. A second respondent aged over 30 with a preparatory education and no work, living in a village in the middle region said: *"I don't like this situation but this could be my luck, who knows? When I look and see many women marry married men, I tell myself I am like the others. If this man does not marry me, he will marry another woman. I can live my life and she would do the same. Leave her alone, I tell myself. Sometimes I think about this choice, why not?"*

Endogamy is preferred in Palestinian society and this is not limited to certain socioeconomic class. A few respondents reported that they would only marry if the man is living in the same village or district. Ten (6.1%) of the respondents rejected marriage proposals that came from men whom they do not know and who live in remote villages. A respondent who lived in a village in the middle region and who had an elementary education and no work expressed this viewpoint in the following statement: *"before three months, a man who had all what the woman wants in a man came to my family. He was a good person, but my brother refused him because he lives in (...) and it will be difficult for my family to visit me when they like. In addition, it will be hard for me to look after my old mother"*.

Seventeen (10.4%) respondents rejected marrying altogether, whether the men who proposed to them suited them or not. This was either due to their getting old and not being able to conceive, having a dependent family, being sick, or having a personal aversion to marriage. The following statement represented this point of view of a respondent: *"I put aside the idea of marrying even if a good man proposed to me. I have a sick mother who needs me beside her"*. A second respondent aged over 35 who had an elementary education and no work and was living in a village in the middle region said: *"I cannot marry because my family depends on me for living. I am the oldest daughter"*. A third respondent aged over 35, who had a secondary education and worked in industry said: *"Why to marry at this age? I am free to do what I want. I am better without the burden of children and family responsibilities"*.

In summary, most of the respondents were not against marrying but felt this should not be merely for the sake of marrying. They wanted to guarantee happiness though selecting a compatible husband. Summing up the general tenor of the results here, a compatible husband would be a single, financially competent, respectable person, who was knowledgeable, understanding, passionate and religiously committed. However, polygamy and exogamy were also acceptable to some respondents provided other conditions were met.

Table 6-4

Characteristics of the appropriate husband in the respondents' perspective:

Themes	No.	%
Accepted to marry under certain conditions	160	98.2
Accept to marry if the man has liberal opinions about women	48	29.4
Preferred a husband who is mature, self-reliant and assertive.	38	23.3
Wanted a man who is emotionally stable, understanding, and has high moral standards	8	4.90
Wanted to marry wealthy men	18	11
Wanted to marry strictly religious and committed men	34	20.9
Would marry a man if not previously or currently married	40	24.5
Accepted the idea of marrying a married man if he doesn't have children	15	9.2
Accepted to marry a man who is currently married and has another wife if his wife is sick or is treating him inappropriately	12	7.4
Preferred endogamy	10	6.1
Rejected marrying altogether	17	10.4

E. Advantages and disadvantages of marriage:

1. Advantages of marriage:

The responses to this question were clustered into financial, social, emotional, spiritual, and psychological advantages; each theme several categories. At the financial level, 27 (16.56%) interviewees believed that marriage insures them and provides them with economic stability and somebody to depend on (the husband or and children) in the future if they are not employed or lose their capacity to work. Few currently-employed participants looked at marriage as a financial alternative where they could stop working if they choose not to. A respondent aged over 30 with an elementary education and who worked in industry said: *"I want financial security. I don't want to work anymore because I am tired"*. Another respondent who lived with her nuclear family in a city in the south region and was employed as a paraprofessional said: *"You will live with someone who understands you. You have your own house and nobody interferes in your life. There is a person who supports you financially whether you are working or not"*.

On the other hand, the second subcategory of financial protection was related to safeguarding living standards after the death of one's parents. Nineteen (11.66%) respondents reported that marriage secures their future life after the inevitable death of their parents. A

respondent who lived with her parents and siblings, had an elementary education and was unemployed said: *"My parents will not stay with me for ever. It is better for me to marry so as not to stay alone"*.

The second theme was to do with preferring marriage for social and cultural reasons. Twenty-three (14.11%) respondents believed that marriage protects the single woman from social harassment and irritations of neighbours and relatives. A respondent aged over 35 who lived in a city and was educated to university level and employed said: *"Marriage became the social passport for the woman. I wish one day this passport will be worn to shreds and our society changes its look to the unmarried girls"*. Another respondent aged over thirty with an elementary education, employed in services said: *"marriage keeps the eyes of people away and protects me; helps me express myself in full capacity without fear"*. In addition, 19 (11.66%) respondents believed that marriage conserves the woman's reputation and honour - "Al- sharaf" - and protects her from doing anything disgraceful which could ruin her valued sense of purity and chastity in Arab societies. A respondent illustrated the above mentioned protection and said: *"Marriage is very important for some girls because it protect her from doing wrong things. Also, she will be protected in her husband's house if her parents are dead"*.

Marriage was preferred because it protects the girl from her family's unfairness, exploitation, control and maltreatment. For instance, 14 (8.59%) respondents looked at marriage as a refuge from a woman's family's exploitation, her being overburdened with household responsibilities, and familial conflicts, especially with brothers and their wives. The following statement illustrates the protective role of marriage as perceived by a respondent who lived with her mother in a city in the middle region: *"Marriage gives me an independent home and life. I will have children and my own family. This is better than living with my brothers and their wives. Living with your parents is different than living with others who may not respect you or may not want you in their house"*. Another respondent who lived with her brothers in a village in the south and was educated to elementary level and unemployed added: *"Some girls marry to fulfill sexual needs or to dress in nice clothes but I like to marry so I will not stay with my brother and sister-in-law. I want to have my own house, to have children. I don't want to end as a piece of furniture in my brother's house"*.

Nevertheless, 10 (6.13%) other respondents believed that marriage could provide comfort and tranquility away from familial problems and tribulations. A respondent who had little education was unemployed, and lived with her nuclear family in a village said: *"I want to marry because I want to feel free to do what I want; nobody hassles me or controls my life;*

nobody asks me to do things except my husband; I don't worry about others' needs and wants".

Another category of social reasons was related to acquiring social status, prestige, and belonging through marriage. Ninety (55.22%) respondents believed that marriage gives the woman a chance to build a family of their own and to have own house where they can live independently and freely. However, 9 (5.52%) respondents believed that marriage provides social prestige and respect from others in a society that looks suspiciously at unmarried women. A respondent who lived in a refugee camp with her parents and siblings, and was unemployed said: *"When the woman is married, the social view to her is different. Nobody looks to her in suspicion. When she is married she is free to dress what she wants, she is free to go anywhere. You are relaxed and live consistently"*. A second respondent who was employed in services, and lived with her father in a city in the middle region said: *"I prefer to marry and to have my own house even though I now live happily at my father's house. In your own house, your husband helps you, you speak to him about your problems, and he supports you. He will be responsible for his wife's living expenses. She provides passion and takes care of his needs and he protects her"*. A third respondent said: *"Marriage provides you with a social and familial life. You build your own house. You live independently and do whatever you like in your home"*.

On the other hand, freedom of movement, dress, and work were reported as privileges of marriage by 22 (13.41%) respondents. Sharing one's life with someone who is understanding and passionate was another reason for wanting to marry for 27 (16.56%) respondents. Moreover, 11 (6.75%) respondents believed that one advantage of marriage is friendship with someone who is trustworthy. A respondent aged over 35 who was educated and employed, and lived with her mother in a city said: *"when you marry, you have someone who understands you, speaks with you and you share with him and he knows what you want"*. A second respondent who lived with her siblings in a city; employed as a professional said: *"when the girl gets married, she has someone to talk to; he supports her and provides her with love and protects her"*.

Psychological advantages were the most commonly repeated responses of the respondents in the current study. For instance, emotional stability and balance and consistency in living, reported as advantages for marital life by 82 (50.31%) respondents. In addition, 26 (15.95%) respondents believed that marriage provides intimacy and nurture for couples who live happily. A respondent whose age was over 35, educated to college level and employed; lived with her parents in a city said: *"The good things about marriage are emotional stability,*

independence at home, and fulfilling my sexual and emotional desires". A second respondent said: "when you marry, your life becomes stable and you no more search or wait for the right man. You feel established, and your emotions are based on a stable land".

Other kinds of advantages for marriage were: living a purposeful and meaningful life reported by 15 (9.20%) respondents; being happy reported by 14 (8.59%) respondents; protection from loneliness reported by 10 (6.13%) respondents; feeling worthy and valuable reported by 10 (6.13%) respondents. A respondent who lived with her parents in a village in the south region, who was educated and worked as a paraprofessional illustrated this viewpoint by saying: *"I want to marry to feel worthy and useful. Children make a purpose for my life"*.

Independence in living and decisions was reported as an advantage by 30 (18.41%) respondents. These respondents wanted to have their own houses where they would feel in control and have full authority over their lives. A respondent who had a preparatory education and was without a job and lived with her nuclear family in a city said: *"The woman will be free to do what she likes in her house. Nobody irritates or bothers her, and only her husband asks her to do things"*.

Emotionally, 90 (55.22%) respondents reported motherhood as the main emotional need, which could be fulfilled only through marriage in Palestinian society. One of the respondents explained her opinion about marriage advantages by saying: *"The girl marries to have a son who will bring security and comfort for his mother"*. On the other hand, 14 (8.59%) respondents believed that having children was not their main goal of wanting to marry. A respondent aged over 35 living alone in a city in the middle region expressed this opinion in her statement: *"I may or may not have children. After all this is God's will"*.

In addition, marriage was perceived as a means that provides love and sexual fulfillment as reported by 26 (15.95%) respondents. This area was not easy to talk about and many respondents avoided it totally. A respondent who had a university education and lived in a city in the middle region said: *"marriage fulfills the woman biologically and this is natural to happen if you are married"*.

The need for protection was another reason for wanting to marry from the point of view of the respondents. There were few categories for protection as expressed by the respondents. The first was protection from uncertain future. This viewpoint was expressed by 25 (15.34%) respondents who wished that they marry in order to have children to look after them when they get old or become sick. A respondent who was educated and worked as a professional illustrated this viewpoint by saying: *"marriage may lead to stability and security. As older*

women say, you will have a son who is useful for you when you get old". A second respondent who lived by herself; educated to college level and employed confirmed the same viewpoint as she said: *"the child protects his mother from loneliness. She finds someone to support her when she becomes sick or disabled"*. Nevertheless, feeling protected and depending on a man was reported by eight (4.91%) respondents, as an additional advantage of marriage.

At the spiritual level, nine (5.52%) respondents looked at marriage as a necessity to come with terms with their religious obligations. This viewpoint synchronizes with the religious view that considers marriage as "half belief in God" and that the Muslim is not a perfect believer if not married. A respondent who lived in a refugee camp in the north region and was employed as a professional said: *"marriage is a fate and it is part of religious obligations"*.

In contrast, 13 (7.98%) respondents were unable to determine what the advantages of marriage were. This was expressed in statements such as: *"I don't know about the good things about marriage. I didn't marry yet, so I cannot tell"*. Nevertheless, three respondents did not believe that marriage has advantages and that it was not a necessity for all women. Finally, most of the respondents connected the happiness and usefulness of marriage to perfect matching of the couple. They believed that unless the woman and man were mature and suitable for one another, marriage could be a disaster.

Marriage therefore has some advantages from the point of view of the respondents. The respondents believed that marriage has psychological, social, economic, and spiritual advantages. Through marriage, the woman could create a family and have legitimate children, fulfill her sexual needs, perhaps live more freely and independently, get protection and support, find someone to look after her when she becomes older and sick; acquire social status and prestige, have companionship and avoid loneliness, feel worthy and valuable, amongst other things.

Table 6-5

Advantages of marriage as perceived by the respondents

Themes	Categories	No.	%
Financial advantages	- marriage insures them and provides economic stability	27	16.56
	- safeguarding living after death of parents	19	11.66
Marriage has social and cultural advantages	- marriage protects the single woman from social harassment and irritations of neighbors and relatives	23	14.11
	- marriage conserves the woman's reputation and honor	19	11.66
	- protects the girl from family's unfairness, exploitation, control, and maltreatment	14	8.59
	- marriage provides comfort and tranquility from familial problems and tribulations	10	6.13
	- marriage gives the woman a chance to build a family	90	55.22
	- marriage provides social prestige and respect	9	5.52
	- marriage provides women with freedom of movement, dress, and work	22	13.41
Psychological advantages	- Sharing life with someone	27	16.56
	- Marriage gives chance for building friendship with someone who is trustworthy	11	6.75
	- Marriage provides emotional stability and balance, and consistency in living	82	50.31
	- Living a purposeful and meaningful life	15	9.20
	- Protection from loneliness	10	6.13
	- feeling worthy and valuable	10	6.13
	- Independence in living and decisions	30	18.41
Emotional advantages	- Motherhood	90	55.22
	- Provides love and sexual fulfillment	26	15.95
	- Marriage provides intimacy and nurture for couples	26	15.95
Marriage protects the woman	- Protection from uncertain future	25	15.34
	- Feeling protected and depending on a man	8	4.91
Spiritual advantage	- Marriage is a necessity to come with terms with religious obligations	9	5.52
Unable to determine what the advantages of marriage		13	7.98

2. Disadvantages of marriage:

Several disadvantages and problems associated with marriage were reported by the respondents. These problems emerged from personal, sociocultural, financial, or interpersonal dimensions. Many potential problems of marriage are caused by men's control of the life of the woman after marriage. The first theme was *"loss of freedom"*. Married women are not free to work, study, travel, dress, move about, or socialize, in the view of most of the respondents. At the woman's personal level, 72 (44.17%) respondents believed that marriage places limitations on women. About half of the respondents believed that marriage limits the movement and freedom of the woman. A respondent aged below 30 who was educated to college level and employed in services, living in a city in the north region said: *"In marriage the woman is not free. She has children and husband and she cannot go out easily or visit her family without her husband's approval"*. A second respondent who was educated to college level and employed, living in a city in the middle region said: *"Married women cannot participate in social activities, and if they do it will be for a short time"*.

Decreased chances for maintaining work or being forced by the husband to leave work were the second kind of problems of marriage in the view of 26 (15.95%) respondents. A respondent who was employed as a professional and lived in a city in the middle region illustrated her viewpoint by saying: *"The husband might ask his wife to stop working and she cannot refuse because he is the master in the family"*. On the contrary, four respondents believed that the husband might exploit his working wife by forcing her to work and support him when she does not want it. A respondent aged over 30 who was employed and lived in a village in the north region said: *"I may worry about my financial stability if I get married. No time my father asked for my salary now. On the contrary, he gives me if I need. I see that all married people live on loans, so there is no insurance about the future. The first thing men do after marriage is to ask for the salary of their wives"*.

A third kind of problem that could result from marriage was possible change in women's behavior and character manifested through weakness of personality and helplessness, which was reported by 20 (12.26%) of the respondents. In addition, 14 (8.59%) respondents believed that marital life limits the intellect and restricts ambitions of the married women. A respondent aged under 30 who was educated as a professional explained her opinion by saying: *"marriage limits the thinking and judgment of women. They are over indulged with house life and children and do not make enough efforts to develop themselves"*. Another respondent who was employed as paraprofessional and lived in a refugee camp in the middle region talked about wives' dependence and submission in the following statements: *"the main*

problem in marriage is selecting the right man who will respect you and understands your personality as a partner rather than being a follower and shadow to him. I prefer to stay single than to live this kind of life where I have no personality and no opinion".

In addition, another category of possible limitations and restrictions of marriage was the control of the dressing style of the married woman by her husband. Nine (5.52%) respondents reported that the married woman is not free to wear what she likes because this is her husband's choice. A respondent, whose age was over 30, had university education and worked as a professional illustrated this viewpoint: *"Many husbands force their wives to wear the veil and do not allow them to wear pants".* A second respondent said: *"I see that single women are freer in their dress; they wear what they want. However, married women always wear "dishdash" or a long dress and do not dress in short dresses or pants. Their husbands and their in-laws stick their noses in their dress ".*

Moreover, limitation of chances for education was reported by nine (5.52%) of the respondents because this is also the husband's ultimate decision. A respondent aged over 35 who lived in a village in the south region and had a college education but was unemployed explained this issue by saying: *"If she marries before she goes to college, he may not allow her to continue her education".* A second respondent who had an elementary education and was without a job, living with her nuclear family in a village in the middle region said: *"I heard about men who stopped their wives in the middle of their education".*

Another theme that emerged from the answers to the above question was "marriage burdens". Forty-two (25.77%) respondents believed that marriage increases the house-chores and responsibilities of the woman especially after having many children. A respondent who worked as professional and lived in a city in the north region explained this viewpoint by saying: *"I see married women in my work and I think their lives are full with work. They are tired and do not think of any social life except their children. They come to work late and say that their children are the cause. In work, they do not stay 10 minutes extra and they are running to home to cook or take their children from kindergarten. They are dying from work and home".* On the other hand, six respondents believed that early-married women are ignorant of their household responsibilities and children's needs because they marry before they get the right preparation for motherhood and marital life. A respondent said: *"Married women ignore themselves. They are not clean and tidy. Their children stay in streets most of the day while the mothers spend their time chatting with the neighbors".* Finally, 10 (6.13%) respondents believed that married women tend to sacrifice their wishes and dreams for the sake of their children and husbands and they lose themselves in the process. On the other

hand, a respondent believed that single women had more responsibilities than married women because they have to take care of themselves and to stand strong in the face of loneliness and negative societal views.

The second kinds of potential problems in marriage were social and interpersonal ones that were expected to come from either their potential spouses or their families. Sixty (36.80%) respondents believed that marital discord, disharmony, and unhappiness could be the worst problems of marriage if there is poor matching between the two spouses. A respondent living with her parents in a city in the south region who had a college education and worked in services said: *"When there is disagreement between the spouses, the individual lives in vicious cycle of unhappiness and conflicts. Therefore, selecting the right man is not easy"*. Another respondent who had a university education and a job as a paraprofessional, living in a city in the middle region explained her views by saying: *"I say that love does not remain as it is. This is an opinion that I hold after what I see around me. There are arguments and conflicts between the husband and wife. Besides, children also have their problems. The woman cannot do anything except tolerating all of these issues if she wants to stay married. Isn't that the choice"?*

Nevertheless, twenty-eight (17.18%) respondents expected problems to occur within the family of the husband especially between the wife and her mother in law. The following was a statement that reflected negative opinions about the outcomes of unhappy marriages, expressed by a respondent who lived in a refugee camp in the middle region and who had a college education and was employed: *"The mother-in-law may interfere in the life of the wife. If the husband doesn't have a strong personality, he will believe his mother and mistreats his wife who accepts this situation because of her children or because she doesn't want to end as a divorced woman. You know what kind of life divorced women live."*

The third factor for potential problems in marriage, in the view of the respondents, was a poor selection of husband. Thirty (18.41%) respondents were concerned that immoral or bad-tempered husbands might be a big disappointment for a woman who married without enough knowledge or misleading information about the husband. In addition, incompatibility between the spouses was perceived as a leading factor in marital problems as reported by 8 (4.91%) respondents. A respondent aged over 35 years living with her nuclear family in a village in the middle region, who was educated to elementary level and had no work said: *"There two possible causes for misery in marriage. One is that the husband turns to be a bad person. The second is that he might die and leave his wife alone with the children"*. A second respondent aged over 30 living with her nuclear family in a refugee camp in the middle region who was

educated and worked as a professional added: *"The disadvantages are that the man would be immoral such as he drinks alcohol or has bad peers with whom he stays late at night"*. This kind of marriage would lead to maltreatment, humiliation, and abusive behavior directed toward the married woman as reported by 14 (8.59%) respondents.

In addition, seven (4.21%) respondents believed that a very jealous or suspicious husband would render marriage miserable for the two spouses. A respondent who lived with her parents in a village in the middle region who was educated to preparatory level and employed illustrated her opinion by saying: *"in the center where I work, some women ask me for a receipt to give for their husbands. They say that this proves that they were getting treatment. I get stunned when I heard this. How could a husband distrust his wife to that limit"?*

The fourth kind of marital problem was financial in nature. A few respondents expected that there would be financial difficulties in married life, especially if the husband became unemployed or incapable of supporting his family. Seventeen (10.43%) respondents believed that marriage would have its financial problems, which would threaten the happiness of the couple and children and deprive them of their basic needs. A respondent who was employed in industry and lived in a city in the north region explained her viewpoints by saying: *"Sometimes there will be changes on the financial level of the family or the husband stops working. These things make me worried about the future"*. A second respondent who lived in a city in the north and was employed as a paraprofessional said: *"If the husband could not work because he became handicapped in the first uprising, his wife has to work to support her children. I say no, I will not work because he is the man and he should support me"*.

The couple might face other less common problems that could be foreseeable or anticipated. These problems include infertility reported by 8 (4.91%) respondents; birth of abnormal children reported by 5 respondents; early widowhood of the woman reported by 4 respondents; adultery reported by 4 respondents; sexual problems reported by 6 respondents; lack of independence for the woman due to living with her in-laws, reported by 5 respondents; single motherhood if the husband traveled abroad reported by 3 respondents; early marriage reported by 4 respondents; birth of female children reported by two respondents; conflicts and responsibilities of step-children reported by two respondents; and delivery of a small number of children reported by one respondent. Infertility, according to the respondents, is a major threat to the family's stability as it could lead to divorce,

polygamy, unhappiness and misery of the spouses. Delivery of female children has similar effects to infertility.

Socially speaking, the respondents believed that marital discord and problems could lead to adultery, emotional problems for children, substance abuse, and destruction of the society. However, 28 (17.18%) respondents were concerned that marriage could end with divorce as a result of all the previously mentioned problems of marriage. A respondent who had secondary education and worked in industry said: "*The problems we see these days make the person afraid. I read about marital problems and how they lead to divorce and misery of the two*". Another respondent who had college education and was employed as a paraprofessional said: "*There are many divorces these days and the marriage does not stand for months. I think this is caused by early marriage. The victim in all of that is the child*".

Nevertheless 11 (6.75%) participants could not identify the disadvantages of marriage either due to lack of information or no experience with married people. On the other hand, five respondents mentioned that there are no disadvantages of marriage. A respondent aged below 30 living in a city in the middle region with a college education and was employed as a paraprofessional expressed this view by saying: "*I don't know what to say about marriage. I never went through it*".

Moreover, six (3.68%) respondents were not sure whether marriage was good or not and they had contradictory viewpoints about it. They compared marriage with the water melon as a way to express uncertainty about marriage. A respondent aged under 30 living with her parents in a city in the north region who was employed as a paraprofessional said: "*Marriage is like a water melon. You cannot tell how it will be like until you experience it*".

Whether marriage is useful or not, or has disadvantages or not, depended upon many factors. These factors included the man's characteristics and personality; the man's family and his and mentality; the age of the woman when she married; the level of education and intellect of the woman; the mode of marriage and whether it was arranged or selected; the financial status of the new family; the adaptability and readiness of the woman to bear responsibilities, and the expectations of the man from his upcoming wife and visa versa. Therefore, these factors could determine if a man married to a certain woman led to happiness or misery for the couple.

Table 6-6

Disadvantages of marriage a perceived by the respondents

Themes	Categories	No.	%
Personal disadvantages	- Marriage places some sort of limitation on women' life	72	44.17
	- marriage limits the movement and freedom of the woman	80	49.07
	- Decrease chances for maintaining work or being forced by the husband to leave work	26	15.95
	- Marriage possibly changes women's behavior and character	20	12.26
	- Marital life limits the intellect and restricts ambitions of women	14	8.59
	- Control of the dressing style of the married woman by her husband	9	5.52
	- Limitation of chances for education	9	5.52
	Marriage had big burdens	- Marriage increases the house-chores and responsibilities of the woman	42
- Married women sacrifice their wishes and dreams for the sake of their families		10	6.13
Social and interpersonal disadvantages	- Marital discord, disharmony, and unhappiness	60	36.80
	- Possible problems within the family of the husband	28	17.18
	- Immoral or bad-tempered husbands	30	18.41
	- Incompatibility between the spouses	8	4.91
	- Possible divorce	28	17.18
Financial problems	- Financial difficulties in marital life	17	10.43
Less common problems	- Infertility	8	4.91
	- Birth of abnormal children	5	3.06
	- Early widowhood of the woman	4	2.45
	- Adultery	4	2.45
	- Sexual problems	6	3.68
	- Living with her in-laws with little privacy	5	3.06
	- Single motherhood if the husband traveled abroad	3	1.84
	- Early marriage	4	2.45
	- Birth of female children	2	1.22
	- Conflicts and responsibilities of step-children	2	1.22
Couldn't identify the disadvantages of marriage		11	6.75
No disadvantages of marriage		5	3.06
Had contradictory viewpoints about		6	3.68

In summary, marriage according to the respondents has its disadvantages for women. These disadvantages were personal, socio-cultural, financial, and interpersonal. These disadvantages were dependent on the type of man who could marry the woman, personality build up of the woman, age of the potential spouses, type of family of the spouses, educational and employment status of the spouses and others.

III. Research question three: how do the respondents of the present study feel about being unmarried and how do they perceive themselves?

A. Feelings of the respondents about remaining unmarried:

Two major themes emerged out of the responses of the subjects. The first was that being unmarried did not influence the psychological state of the respondent. Fifty-two (31.9%) of the interviewees reported that they were not influenced by being unmarried and considered themselves adaptive and to show no adverse psychological manifestations. These respondents explained that they were happy, content, living a normal life, that they were satisfied, and self-confident, and did not worry about living as single women.

The respondents believed that the mental health of the unmarried woman is dependent on several factors including, her family's circumstances and manner of treating their unmarried daughter; the living area, her employment status, broader socio-cultural values, and her personality. For instance, 28 (17.18%) respondents believed that they were not badly affected by remaining unmarried because they were employed and financially independent. In addition, having a strong and assertive personality and having self-confidence were reported as the main factors behind being emotionally content and satisfied by 11 (6.75%) respondents. A respondent aged over 40 living in a city said: *"my life is ordinary if I marry or not. I have money and I work in embroidery. Nothing will happen to me and nobody influences me"*. A second respondent aged over 30 who lived with her nuclear family in a city in the north region said: *"I am not influenced and I am happy in my life. I am strong and independent in home and I work to support myself"*. A third respondent aged under 30 with a college education, who was employed in industry and lived with her mother and siblings in a village in the south region said: *"I hear neighbours' talking but do not pay attention to it because I have confidence in myself. I believe one day the right man will come and if this did not happen, it is not the end of the world. I am working and living independently"*. Another participant aged under 30 who had a secondary education and worked in industry, living in a refugee camp in the middle region said: *"I have a friend who is 37 now and she is happy and*

funny. She has a spirit of a 20 years old girl. I don't think that getting old with remaining single could affect the woman and make her complicated or sick".

Nevertheless, families' understanding, good treatment and support reported by 15 (9.20%) respondents as the main reasons for being satisfied in their lives. In addition, having university or college education was reported by 13 (7.98%) respondents as an important factor in being happy in life even if they remained single. The following quote from a respondent who worked as a paraprofessional and lived with one parent and siblings in a city in the south region illustrated this viewpoint: *"I feel good. I don't care if I get married or not because I am educated and my family treats me well"*. On the other hand, believing in fate was reported by 23 (14.11%) respondents as the main factor for their satisfaction in life. A participant who had an elementary education and no work and who lived in a refugee camp in the middle region said: *"For me, I am not influenced by not marrying. Maybe the girls are jealous and compare themselves with others who had engaged or got married. As for me, I see that marriage is contingent on God"*. Even when this respondent was not educated or employed, she relied on God for support and empowerment.

The nature of the social environment has significant influence on the life of the unmarried respondent of the present study. For instance, living at a neighborhood where there were other unmarried women was reported by 11 (6.75%) respondents as a factor in not being negatively affected by remaining unmarried. In addition, having a comfortable and pressure-free life were reported as important factors for being satisfied with being single by 15 (9.20%) of the respondents. Moreover, being socially active and living a fulfilled and active life was reported by 8 (4.91%) respondents as significant reasons for being satisfied and happy even if not married. A respondent aged below 30 with a secondary education and was employed living in a refugee camp in the south region of the West Bank illustrated the above viewpoint when she and said: *"I heard about girls who became complicated because they did not marry. They do not work, do not leave the home and do not socialize. I have an active life and I am free to go where I like"*. A second respondent said: *"If the girl is oppressed by her family and her sisters-in-law control her life or her mother and father are dead, she lives at her brother's house, she will be psychologically distressed"*. A third respondent aged under 30 who had a college education but was unemployed who lived in a refugee camp in the north region said: *"In my neighborhood, every house has one or two unmarried girls. It is a normal situation for me to be single"*.

Although 12 (7.36%) respondents reported being relaxed and satisfied because they still had some hope of marrying, 12 other respondents reported being relaxed because they had

given up hope of marrying and had surrendered to the prospect of remaining single forever. A respondent aged over 35 who had a college education and who worked as a paraprofessional, living in a village in the south region illustrated this viewpoint in the following statement: *"I am not irritated by what people say. I made up my mind and forgot the whole issue of marriage. Because it is my own decision not to marry, I trained myself to live alone and freely. When I see failed marriages, I thank God for my life"*.

The second theme concerned the possibility that respondents were negatively influenced by remaining unmarried. There were four categories for this theme, which were emotional/psychological, cognitive, behavioral and psychosomatic. Sixty-eight (41.72%) respondents stated that remaining unmarried could cause emotional illness to the woman. At the emotional/psychological level, respondents reported having several psychological manifestations. For instance, 50 (30.68%) had worries, anxieties and fears about their future; 36 (22.09%) reported that they were psychologically hurt; 32 (19.63%) respondents had inferiority feelings and a sense of worthlessness; 25 (15.34%) respondents felt psychological exhaustion; 24 (14.72%) felt sadness and despair; 20 (12.26%) were oversensitive, embarrassed, annoyed and irritated by people's remarks and questions; 17 (10.43%) were frequently angry, had aggressive episodes and were impulsive; 16 (9.82%) felt jealous of married women; 14 (8.59%) felt lonely; 13 (7.98%) missed the feeling of motherhood; 13 (7.98%) felt they had a negative self-image and low self-esteem; 15 (9.20%) suppressed their own feelings and did not express them to others; 9 (5.52%) lived an unstable and empty life; 8 (4.91%) cried frequently; 7 (4.29%) blamed themselves and regretted the lost chances of marriage. Moreover, being worried about one's future after the death of one's father was a common reaction that was reported by 30 (18.41%) respondents. A respondent aged under 30 with an elementary education and no work who lived with a single parent family in a village in the south illustrated the feeling of the participants: *"when someone asks me if I am married or not, I get irritated. I am hopeless because most of the girls who are younger than me got married already and have children"*. A second respondent aged over 40 with an elementary education working in industry who lived with her parents in a city in the south region said: *"I worry a lot about my future and feel afraid if my parents die and I don't know where to go"*. A third respondent aged over thirty who lived with her mother and siblings in a city in the north region who had an elementary education but was not employed said: *"when I think about my life I feel lonely. I ask myself about the reasons behind my situation. What is wrong about with me? I am a good looking girl, educated and employed so how come I am not like the other girls"*? A fourth respondent aged over 30 with an elementary education, who

worked in services and lived with her nuclear family in a village in the middle region said: *"I despise myself when I look around and see younger girls married and have many children. My sister-in-law is many years younger than I am and she had two... I spend long time in praying for God to look at me"*.

Other less frequently reported feelings were: wanting to die, reported by three respondents; hopelessness, reported by two respondents; boredom and uselessness, reported by five respondents; feeling unprotected, reported by three respondents; losing trust of others and the future, reported by two respondents; hating one's parents and family, reported by four respondents. The following statement mentioned by a respondent aged below 30 who lived with her nuclear family in a village in the south region and had no work, with an elementary education illustrated some of the above-mentioned emotions: *"sometimes I wonder what the purpose of living is and why I am here. Why I didn't get married like other girls?"* Another respondent said: *"Many times I cry from loneliness and boredom. I see myself all day working as a slave"*. A third respondent who had a secondary education and no work who lived with her mother in a refugee camp said: *"After my father's death. I started to worry about the future"*. A participant whose aged over thirty who had a secondary education and worked in services, living with her nuclear family in a village in the middle region expressed her feeling of lack of value by saying: *"Nobody thinks about me or worries about what happens to me. I feel that I live at the margin of my family's life. When my married sister visits us all the family surround her wanting to know about her news"*.

In terms of the cognitive dimension of these negative aspects of remaining unmarried the respondents reported various kinds of manifestations. For instance, 30 (18.41%) respondents reported having ruminations about the reasons behind staying unmarried; 24 (14.72%) respondents reported being preoccupied with marriage and its issues; 21 (12.88%) respondents wondered about the future and whether marriage will ever happen; 8 (4.91%) believed that they were wretched and unfortunate; had thoughts of death, reported by five (3.07%) respondents; 10 (6.13%) respondents believed that they were not "normal" and four respondents avoided marriage issues altogether. The following statement mentioned by a respondent aged over 30 who lived with her stepfamily in a village, who had an elementary education and worked in industry illustrated these cognitive effects of remaining unmarried: *"The girls always talk about men and marriage when they sit alone or gather in girls' meetings"*. A second respondent aged under 30 who had a secondary education but was unemployed and lived with her nuclear family in a city in the south region said: *"I wonder what is wrong in me and what is missing but find no answers"*. A third respondent aged over

30 who had a college education and worked as a paraprofessional who lived in a city in the south region said: *"The girls say that we missed the train of marriage and we become spinsters. We joke about our life sometimes and other times we discuss the reasons behind our situation"*. A fourth respondent aged over 35 who had a secondary education but was not employed who lived with her siblings in a city in the south region said: *"I think a lot about my life. We are four sisters who are not married. I am worried about my sisters and want them to marry so the story is not repeated again with them. I don't want to see them suffer as I did"*.

At the somatic level, the respondents believed that some of their physiological symptoms were connected in some way to their remaining unmarried. Psychosomatic manifestations in the respondents included poor sleep, changes in appetite, gaining or losing weight; tachycardia; sweating, tightness at throat, stomach and muscle pains; general weakness; tingling and numbness, and headache. In addition, preoccupations with sexual issues were reported by four respondents which were exemplified through excessive masturbation. These somatic symptoms were believed to be caused or exacerbated by the psychological agony that the respondents have especially when someone talks about marriage or asks questions about it. To illustrate, a respondent said: *"I spend many nights thinking about my life and cannot sleep. I ask myself what the problem is and why nobody comes to ask for my hand. I am afraid to lose my mind"*. A second respondent who lived in a village in the south region said: *"I get annoyed when a woman asks me how many children you have. My heart jumps and I get dizzy and wish that the earth swallow me. I go home and my head wants to explode. This is very difficult for me"*. A third respondent aged under 30 who had a college education and who worked in services and lived in a city in the middle region said: *"marriage is the right situation for the woman and if it did not occur you feel that something is missing. You need to get that need. There are girls who have hunger for sex and they want to have it. They masturbate because they did not marry. This is a limitation in their lives and could have negative impact on them"*.

Table 6-7

Feelings of the respondents about remaining unmarried

Themes	Categories of influence	No.	%
Not influenced by being unmarried and shown no psychological manifestations		52	31.9
Had emotional and psychological manifestations	Boredom and uselessness	5	3.06
	hate their parents and family	4	2.45
	worried about one's future after the death of father	30	18.41
	had worries, anxiety and fear about their future	50	30.68
	psychologically hurt	36	22.09
	had inferiority feelings and worthlessness	32	19.63
	felt psychological exhaustion	25	15.34
	felt sadness and despair	24	14.72
	oversensitive, embarrassed, annoyed and irritated by people's remarks and questions	20	12.26
	frequently angry, had aggressive episodes and were impulsive	17	10.43
	felt jealousy of married women	16	9.32
	felt lonely	14	8.59
	Missed the feeling of motherhood	13	7.78
	Had negative self-image and low self-esteem	13	7.78
	Suppressed their feelings	15	9.20
	Lived unstable and empty life	9	5.52
Cried frequently	8	4.91	
Had self-blame and regretted the chances they lost of marrying.	7	4.29	
Cognitive manifestations	ruminated about the reasons behind staying unmarried	30	18.41
	preoccupied with marriage	24	14.72
	wondered about the future	21	12.88
	believed that they were wretched and misfortunate	8	4.91
	had death ideation	5	3.07
	believed that they were not "normal"	10	6.13
avoided marriage issues	4	2.45	
Psychomotor/ social manifestations	psychomotor agitation reported	5	3.07
	restlessness or laziness	5	3.07
	social isolation and withdrawal	6	3.68
	staying at the margin of family's life	6	3.68
	insecurity when leaving home alone	4	2.45

Concerning the psychomotor and behavioral dimension, the respondents reported manifesting various symptoms. They include social isolation and withdrawal, insecurity when leaving home alone, and staying at the margin of the family's life, as reported by six respondents; psychomotor agitation reported by five respondents; restlessness or laziness as reported by five respondents. A few of these respondents said that they are afraid to go out alone or that they do not like to walk alone in the street, therefore they prefer to leave with one of their female relatives. A respondent whose age was under 30; had preparatory education and worked in services; lived in a city in the north region expressed her viewpoint in the following statement: *"I am not used to leaving to the market by myself. I don't like to walk alone and I feel embarrassed to do so. I would take my sister or sister-in-law when I go shopping or attend a wedding"*.

However, some subjects reported using joking and laughing when they met other unmarried girls and they make fun of themselves. This could be an adaptive or a defense mechanism that occurs in order to handle the stress of remaining unmarried. A respondent aged over 35 who had a secondary education and who worked in services living in a refugee camp in the middle region explained her viewpoint by saying: *"when I come back from work, I stay home. I don't like to visit anybody, even my uncle's house. I prefer to stay away from people and like this I avoid problems"*. A second respondent aged over thirty, employed in industry and living in a city in the north said: *"I know girls who do not talk about their lives but I could tell from their behaviors that they are miserable. They infrequently share other workers in conversation and they look distant"*.

Many of the respondents in this study rationalized and explained the causal factors behind the negative feelings of unmarried women. People in Palestinian society, according to the respondents of this study, hold negative views about the unmarried women. Fifty-five (33.74%) respondents believed that social pressure, people's gossiping and talking about the unmarried women are major causes of negative feelings in the respondents. Negative feelings, as they conceptualized, are the product of the way people treat unmarried women in Palestinian society. In addition, 26 (15.95%) respondents reported that people see unmarried woman as "spinsters", "left behind" or "deserted".

Table 6-8

Factors that leads to adjustment and mental well-being among the respondents

Factors lead to adjustment to being unmarried	No.	%
- employment and financial independence	28	17.18
- having a strong and assertive personality and having self-confidence	11	6.75
- families' understanding, good treatment and support	15	9.20
- having university or college education	13	7.98
- other unmarried women present in one's neighborhood	11	6.75
- having a comfortable and pressure-free living	15	9.20
- being socially active and living fulfilled and active lives	8	4.91
- have some hope of marrying	12	7.36
- gave up hope of marrying and surrendered to the reality	12	7.36

Moreover, 56 (34.36%) respondents mentioned that they were irritated by the interrogation and questions directed to them by people at work, street and neighborhood. The following statement reflected the above-mentioned viewpoint: *"It is not a problem for the woman to remain unmarried. The problem lies in the family's way of treatment to the girl. If nobody talked about it, the girl will live a normal life without any problem"*. A respondent who lived with her nuclear family in a city in the south clearly stated this notion in the following statement: *"I see signals on the faces of people in the neighborhood and the village and I read their thoughts about us"*. Another respondent aged over 40 who had an elementary education, worked in industry and lived with her parents in a village in the middle region supported this viewpoint in the following statement: *"If people would leave the girl alone everything will be fine. It is other's responses that irritate us rather than being unmarried itself"*. A third respondent aged under with a university education, working as a paraprofessional and living with her nuclear family in a city in the south region said: *" I get nervous from questioning of people...I worry about the future and when I get old and no-one look after me. In my work place, they tell me that I will go nuts and go to the mental hospital. They say that I will become complicated, lose people's respect, and feel inferior"*. A fourth respondent aged under 30 who lived in a city in the middle region; had a university education and who worked as a professional said: *"In our society it is expected for single women to be influenced emotionally. People have a strange look in their eyes to the unmarried women as if these*

women did a mistake by not marrying". A fifth respondent said: *"My mother used to tell us that some teachers who get old and not marry become complicated and beat the children as a revenge of the society. People say that to treat "a sick teacher" find her a husband"*.

On the other hand, social and cultural circumstances also lead to psychological distress among the unmarried women. For instance 36 (22.09%) respondents felt bad about themselves because they observed that their peers had got married and had children and owned houses while they did not, therefore they felt unfortunate and inferior. On the other hand, 13 (7.98%) respondents felt bad because they noticed that younger women got married while they had been abandoned and were never approached by men except those who wanted to marry for the second time. A respondent aged over thirty who had an elementary education and no work and was living with her siblings in a village in the south region clarified her view point by saying: *"All my classmates got married at younger age. My two young sisters are engaged now. Men are blind and marry very young girls and leave mature women. Our society has preference for early marriage"*.

On the other hand, maltreatment from one's family and finding oneself in a negative position were considered important factors for the unmarried women's psychological distress and irritation. For instance, 27 (16.56%) of the respondents mentioned that their families' maltreatment made them feel bad about being unmarried. In addition, 14 (8.59%) respondents explained that their family members harass them frequently because they rejected marriage proposals or they refused to comply with families' wishes. Nevertheless, 17 (10.43%) respondents were irritated by their sisters-in-law who nag a lot and denounce and criticize their unmarried sisters-in-law for staying unmarried. These sisters-in-law usually live in the same house especially after the death of the parents of the unmarried girl. Moreover, 13 (7.98%) respondents mentioned that problems and conflicts between family members increased their distress and irritation as unmarried women. A respondent aged over 30 who had a college education and who worked as a paraprofessional living with her parents in a village in the south region said: *"Everybody blames me and people ask me, are you still single? This irritates me a lot because they do not understand me"*. A second respondent aged over 30 who had a university education and who worked as a paraprofessional and lived with her nuclear family in a city in the north region said: *"I get irritated a lot. I have bitterness inside me... I still have full strength and work and support myself. Sometimes you feel that your brother who is younger than you or your father controls your life, your movement... This restricts your life and makes you live in continuous struggle... Girls are surrounded socially"*. A third respondent aged over 30 who lived with her mother and siblings in a city in the

middle region and had a college education and worked in services said: *"Some girls create problems for their sisters-in-law. They fight with them and interfere in the way they cook and dress. They live in the same house because their parents died and had to move to live with their married brothers"*.

Personal and individual factors also influenced the lives of the respondents and increased their suffering. For instance, 15 (9.20%) respondents felt bad as they became older and their chances of marriage faded. In addition, 6 other interviewees felt bad because men who were old and married asked for their hands, which make them feel unlikable and unwanted. One of these respondents aged over 35 who lived with her parents in a village in the north region who had a college education and who worked in industry said: *"I don't think to marry at this age because only married or divorced men ask for my hand. I am not that old to marry just for the sake of marrying. I would rather stay single forever than marry a man to become his nurse or babysitter for his children"*. Another respondent aged over 30 who had a secondary education and who worked in services, living in a village in the north region said: *"The girls feel bad when men of the 50s ask for their hands. Why this is happening? The girl is in her 20s or 30s and men in her father's age ask to marry her. I may have a breakdown if this happens to me"*. A respondent aged over 30 who had an elementary education and no job, living with her mother in a city in the north region explained the relationship between age and mental health of unmarried women: *"I have an aunt who is 47 years old and not married. She is always angry, frustrated, irritable, and rejecting to everything. She does not like to socialize and she always nags. My mother says that we have to be considerate for her because she is not married. If the girl becomes old and she exceeded the age of 40, she may become psychologically complicated"*.

On the other hand, 20 (12.26%) other respondents felt bad because they were not employed and have to rely on others for their living expenses; have problems at their workplace; or have no assets or properties to use in the future. In addition, 6 (3.68%) respondents felt bad as unmarried women because they lived alone without relatives or support systems. A respondent who was employed as a professional and lived in a city in the middle region said: *"when the girl is at home doing nothing and has no work, she feels as a piece of furniture that is left aside and has no use"*. Another respondent said: *"I do not worry like the unemployed girls. They are worried about their living and ask themselves from where to spend for living and who will look after them when they get old without education or work"*. A third respondent aged under 30 who had a secondary education and worked in services living with her nuclear family in a city in the north region said: *"in my opinion, if the*

girl stayed in the home without work and she becomes thirty or forty, she could become complicated psychologically". A fourth respondent who lived in a village in the middle region; had an elementary education and worked in services said: *"I know a girl in my neighborhood who was normal and has no problems when she was young, But when she become old without marrying, people said that she lost her mind and attacked her mother with a knife"*. A fifth respondent aged over 35 who had a university education and who worked in services, living with one parent and siblings in a city in the south region said: *"Indeed remaining unmarried affect the girl especially if she is educated and respectable but nobody looks at her. She lives in agony and she asks herself why I am not like other women"?* A few respondents reported that they felt bad about their lives and themselves not because they were unmarried, but because they are women. This was expressed in the following response from a respondent who was educated, worked in services and lived in a city in the middle region: *"we women feel that whatever we do is always criticized. Whether we are married or not women are victims of the society in general and men in particular; even my brother who is five years younger than me asks me questions about where I am going and where I have been"*. A second respondent said: *"I do not think that the psychological problems of the girls are caused by singlehood. Maybe, the girl has other problems in her personality; her way of thinking is not right; has problems in her family. Remaining unmarried is not the main reason"*.

Some respondents were reluctant to talk directly about their own feeling but they found it easier to talk about unmarried women around them. They talked about how terrible the life of their friends or relatives who are unmarried was, and how lucky they were in comparison to them. A common statement that reflects this situation was expressed by a respondent under 30 who lived with her nuclear family in a refugee camp in the north region and had a college education but no work: *"I am okay. I have everything I need. I know some girls live awful lives and their brothers beat them and take their salaries"*. A response from a participant under 30 who lived in a refugee camp in the middle region of the west Bank, who had a university education and worked as a professional also reflected this viewpoint: *"Being married or not is the same nowadays because the woman now can work and be self-reliant. I am not influenced emotionally by being unmarried, but I know some girls who were affected by it"*. Another respondent aged over 35 who had a university education and who worked as a professional said: *"in the hospital, there is an employed girl who is not that old. When her friend got married, she started to act strangely and she had a bad temper. People in the hospital said if she marries, she would improve. She was good before her friend married"*. A

third respondent who was employed in industry and lived with her mother in a village in the south region said: *"I know a girl in the company who is humiliated by her mother. She calls her "Bayreh" (means unmarried or left behind). This is very painful. At least in my home, nobody says this to me and they ask for my opinion in all the family issues "*. A respondent under 30 who lived in a refugee camp in the north region and worked as a paraprofessional explained her opinion by saying: *"I heard that some girls became psychologically complicated because they did not marry. These girls are not working, do not leave home and do not socialize. They are jealous of their sisters-in-law.*

Table 6-9

The causal factors behind the negative feeling of the unmarried women as perceived by the respondents

Factors lead to poor adjustment to being unmarried	No.	%
- Social pressure, people's gossiping and talking about the unmarried women	55	33.74
- Negative attitudes of people of the unmarried woman	26	15.95
- Irritation of people through interrogation and questions	56	34.36
- Peers got married and had children and owned houses	36	22.09
- Girls younger than them got married	13	7.98
- Families' maltreatment	27	16.56
- Family's harassment	14	8.59
- Problems and conflicts between family members	13	7.98
- Became old	15	9.20
- Old and married men ask for their hands	6	3.68
- Unemployment and financial dependence	20	12.26
- Living alone without relatives or support system	6	3.68
- Being a woman	5	3.06

Two major themes were identified in response to the question. The first theme was *"remaining unmarried could cause psychological disturbance"*. Although most respondents admitted that they knew unmarried women who are complicated and emotionally distressed, they denied that they themselves suffered from any emotional problem because they were not married. There were several reasons proffered by the respondents for these emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and psychosomatic manifestations in the unmarried women. Psychological distress among unmarried women was interrelated with other factors such as getting old, being uneducated, being unemployed, having uncertainty about the future, being uncertain about why they are single, and being worried about their chances of marrying. In

addition to these factors, some respondents believed that when a woman gets offers of marriage from old men or men who are married or divorced, she would feel bitter and humiliated as this makes them start to feel unattractive and unwanted.

Some respondents connected possible emotional disturbance of unmarried women to the social living conditions and the social atmosphere. These include living in a traditional family or community, not being given respect in one's family or community and living under pressure and with harassment from family and friends. As these subjects believed, there is a reciprocal relationship between potential emotional disturbances in the unmarried woman and the way she is treated by their families and people in their local communities. In summary, the following were the reasons given by respondents as being behind the negative feelings:

- ◆ People's negative viewpoints and stereotypical attitudes about unmarried women, and suspicion on the part of society about the behaviour of unmarried women.
- ◆ Seeing pity in the eyes of others.
- ◆ Pressures from families toward the unmarried women, financial exploitation, embarrassment and bad treatment.
- ◆ Changes in the life of the unmarried women after the death of her father or parents.
- ◆ Societal and familial scrutiny and censoring of the unmarried women.
- ◆ Not being educated enough.
- ◆ Being unemployed and living a dependent life.
- ◆ Neglect of the family to the needs of their unmarried female relative.
- ◆ Aging of the women.
- ◆ Familial problems
- ◆ Frequent sexual harassment at work and social events.
- ◆ Physical and emotional abuse from the family of the unmarried daughter; using name calling such as "spinster", "left over", "left behind".. etc.
- ◆ Losing hope of marrying while being relatively young.
- ◆ Not knowing the reasons behind remaining single.

Indications of psychological disturbance, according to the respondents of this study, included feeling inferior, feeling abnormal, preoccupation with sexual issues, preoccupation with marital issues and children; being nervous, rebellious, angry, and irritable; feeling sad, miserable, depressed, isolated and socially withdrawn; talking badly about married women,

jealousy of other married women, envy of other girls who got married; being anxious and worried; excessive crying, and the potential to break social norms and values.

The second theme was "*remaining unmarried does not lead to psychological problems*". Most of the respondents mentioned that they did not suffer because they are single and they live happily. The respondents believed that the mental health state of the unmarried woman is dependent on several factors including their family's circumstances and manner of treating their unmarried daughter; living area, employment status, having a university or college education, sociocultural values, the personality structure of the woman, the employment status and financial conditions of the unmarried woman, in addition to having a strong and assertive personality, and having self-confidence.

In summary, the respondents admitted that some unmarried women felt bad because they were improperly treated by their families and society; lived dependent lives; got little support from their families; had weak personalities; had little education; suffered as a result of other people's negative viewpoints and stereotypical attitudes about unmarried women, and other reasons. Being influenced by remaining unmarried was manifested psychologically, behaviourally, cognitively, physiologically, and socially in the respondents. However, each woman responded differently.

B. Self- evaluation of the respondents

1. Points of power and strength as perceived by the respondents:

While most of the interviewees reported more than one dimension of power or strength, some stuck only to one characteristic. The first theme or area of power was having a strong personality. Characteristics of a strong personality in the perspective of the respondents, involve being self-confident, and displaying assertiveness, curiosity, and stability, being settled, bold, strong willed, persistent, patient, having freedom to make decisions, having high adaptability and resilience, being independent, having freedom, being smart, and being knowledgeable. A common response to the question 'what do you consider as points of strength in yourself?' was "*I have a strong personality*"; "*I have self-confidence*" that was reported by 56 (34.36%) of the interviewees

On the other hand, 18 (11.04%) respondents considered being patient, persistent, and having a strong will as their points of power. Boldness and courage in expressing one's viewpoints and opinions were important elements of powerfulness in the view of 19 (11.66%) respondents. Moreover, 16 (9.82%) respondents considered having freedom to make

decisions and independence in life as points of power. On the other hand, 9 (5.52%) respondents reported being highly adaptive and resilient as strengths. In addition, 6 (3.68%) respondents reported having strong influence on others as their area of power. To illustrate, a respondent aged over 30 who had an elementary education and no work and was living with her parents in a village in the south region of the West Bank said: *"I have a strong personality and I say what I want freely. I am happy because my parents listen to me and I get what I want"*. A second respondent aged over 30 living with her nuclear family in a city in the south region who had a secondary education and who worked in services said: *"I am free to say my opinion even if it is wrong. I do not hesitate to tell my father or my employer about my views"*. A third respondent aged over 30 who had preparatory education and no work and who lived with her nuclear family in a city in the north region added: *"I have a strong personality; I have good relationship with others and I go wherever I want with no problems"*.

The second theme was financial independence and self-reliance. Forty-six (28.22%) of the interviewees believed that being financially independent, productive, and being in employment were sources of power for themselves. However, 10 (6.13%) respondents considered being loyal to work and being a hard-worker as an area of strength. A respondent over 40 with an elementary education who worked in industry and lived with her father and siblings in a village in the north explained her viewpoints by saying: *"My strength is in my work. I am productive and do not have to depend on my father or brother for living. Thank God"*. A second participant aged over 30 who lived with her mother in a village in the south region, had an elementary education and worked in industry emphasized the same issue by saying: *"I am working as a merchant and sell clothes. I am self-reliant and I am responsible for the house expenses like any man"*.

A third theme was sociability. Sociability was perceived by the respondents as being socially active, having several friends, and having strong familial ties and a social support system. The respondents connected feeling powerful with family's cohesiveness including having a loving and respecting family and having good familial relationships. For instance, having excellent social relationships and social activities were reported as strong points by 21 (12.88%) respondents. Twelve (7.36%) respondents considered their family's love and respect as points of power in their lives. In addition, 4 (2.45%) respondents considered having clear and important roles in their families as one of their strengths. Six other (3.68%) respondents reported having plenty of friends as a source of strength. In addition, social openness to others was considered as strength by 5 (3.07%) respondents. A respondent, aged over 30 who lived with her mother and siblings in a city in the south region and who had an elementary

education and who worked in services, explained her viewpoint by saying: *"I am sociable and people love me. I mix with men and women normally. Maybe in the beginning I will be shy but later I talk as I want and become involved in discussions"*. Another respondent aged under 30 who lived alone in a city in the middle region and who had a college education supported the same position by saying: *"I have many friends and my students like me. I am socially active and I am involved in a union for women"*. A third respondent aged over 35 who had an elementary education but no work and who lived with her mother and siblings in a refugee camp in the south region said: *"My brothers are my strength and backbone and they give me what I need"*. Other statements such as *"My family trusts and respects my decisions"*; *"The best thing in my life is that my family loves me"* are some examples of perceived strong points that emerged from families of the respondents. Although most of the respondents considered themselves lucky because they have many friends and they socialized well with people, two respondents considered staying away from people and avoiding social contacts as a strength.

A fourth theme was personal characteristics. Several characteristics came under this theme, which include freedom, education, beauty, calmness and kindness, passion, decency and chastity, forgiveness, religiosity, handy in house and others. For instance, being educated was considered as an area of strength for 15 (9.20%) respondents and being intellectually and mentally sophisticated was considered strength by 8 (4.91%) other respondents. In addition, 19 (11.66%) respondents reported freedom, which included freedom of movement, work, and traveling as one issue of power in their lives. Other humanitarian characteristics included humbleness, kindness, forgiveness, tranquility and calmness as reported by 21 (12.80%) respondents. Competency in doing house chores and responsibilities was another issue of strength that was reported by another eight participants. In addition, being honorable and decent, having morals and a good reputation in the community were reported as strengths by nine (5.52%) of the interviewees. However, very few respondents mentioned other kinds of potentials such as being cautious or careful in dealing with people; being beautiful or good looking; being religious, sacrificing for others, being smart and having a political affiliation. A respondent aged under 30 who lived in a city in the south and had a university education and worked as a professional explained her opinion about personal strength by saying: *"My education gave me some sort of independence. I travel anywhere and mix with people. I depend on myself in all my activities and this gave me a sense of peculiarity and self-confidence"*. A second respondent who lived in a city in the middle region; had college education and worked as a paraprofessional said: *"I am committed to my religion and rely on God in everything and he does not fail me. Secondly, I am good in house chores. I cook very*

delicious food.... In addition, I work now and I progress well in my work". A third respondent aged under 30 who lived with her nuclear family in a village in the middle region, who had a university education and who worked as a paraprofessional said: *"what is good about me is that I am humorous and like people. I am humble and I am open with my family. When I come home from work, I fill the house with energy and fun. If I was late, I use jokes and nice words with my parents to avoid their questions. I don't like them to surprise me because this gets on my nerves".* This response indicates that the respondent was smart and manipulative in her social relation and she is not open, as she claimed. A fourth respondent aged under 30 who had a college education and who worked as a professional, living with her nuclear family in a city in the middle region said: *"I am open and frank with people and this could be positive and negative. In our society, people like to give compliments and they are hypocrites. I hate these things and try to express myself honestly and this sometimes is not accepted by people around. I am humble and simple; not arrogant or paranoid".*

Nevertheless, 15 (9.20%) respondents were unable to identify their points of power and were puzzled by the question and reported that they never thought about their strengths or sources of power. A respondent aged under 30 who had a university education and worked in services, living with her mother and brothers in a city in the middle region illustrated her viewpoints by saying: *"I could talk about my weakness but I am unable to say what my positive things are. Other people see me better and they can say what my good things are".* Moreover, 6 (3.68%) others reported having no points of power or strength. Finally, one respondent refused to answer the question about her strengths or weaknesses.

In summary, feeling strong and empowered came from being educated, employed and self-sufficient, having a good support system; being free in living and movement, and having good personal characteristics, and strong and assertive personality. When these qualities are present, the unmarried woman will see herself as a competent and confident person and this may have significant influence on her mental health state.

2. Weakness of the respondents:

Themes of weakness and disempowerment were more difficult to identify by the respondents. Some of them were expressed verbally while others were expressed non-verbally. Common responses to the question "what things don't you like about yourself?" were: *"I don't know "*; *"I don't know what to tell you"*; silence; hesitation; a sigh; an astonished look. From those who answered this question, few themes were identified.

The first theme was personal characteristics. In category one, weakness of personality structure and temperament included several subcategories: mood type, body structure, interpersonal skills, level of adaptability, sensitivity, emotionality and so on. Fifty-seven (34.97%) respondents disliked themselves because they were excessively nervous, easily irritated and annoyed, were prone to temper and anger outbursts, and jumpiness. Twenty (12.26%) respondents admitted that they were impulsive and irrational in their emotional reactions. In addition, 9 (5.52%) respondents reported that they were moody and had frequent mood swings. On the other hand, six (3.68%) respondents considered themselves disempowered because they had weak personalities and reduced self-confidence. The following response that was given by a woman who lived with her parents in a village in the south illustrated respondents' perceptions of their weaknesses as being vulnerable and nervous: *"I am a nervous person. For any simple reason I lose my temper and mind"*. A second respondent aged over 30 who lived with her parents in a city in the north region and had a college education but who was unemployed added: *"I don't like people to take things that I own without asking me. I am over sensitive to any humiliation. If I hate a person, I would step on him/ her with no mercy. This is one thing I hate in myself"*. A third respondent aged below 30 who lived with her nuclear family in a city in the south region, who had a secondary education and no work said: *"I have a bad temper. When I become angry and nervous I do not care who will be in my face. Even my mother and father fail to calm me down"*. Moreover, a respondent who lived with her parents in a city in the middle region, who had a university education and worked as a paraprofessional talked about her weak personality by saying: *"Sometimes I feel that my personality is weak. I cannot make decisions in my life. I noticed that my will is fading away lately"*.

Nevertheless, five (3.07%) other respondents reported exhibiting aggressive outbursts in the course of which they directed attacks at furniture and household equipment and objects after being aggravated by others or being frustrated. A respondent aged under 30 who lived with her mother in a refugee camp in the south region and had a secondary education and worked in services said: *"I get angry a lot. When this happens, I get mad and start to break objects"*.

Table 6-10

Points of power and strength as perceived by the respondent

Major themes	categories	No.	%
Having a strong personality N = 56 % = 34.36	- Being patient, persistent, and having a strong will	18	11.04
	- Boldness and courage in expressing one's viewpoints	19	11.66
	- Having a free decision-making and independence	16	9.82
	- Being highly adaptive and resilient	9	5.52
	- Having a strong influence on others	6	3.68
Financial independence and self-reliance	- Financial independence, productivity, and employment	46	28.22
	-Being loyal to work and being a hard-worker	10	6.13
Sociability and family 's support	- Social relationships and social activity	21	12.88
	- Family's love and respect	12	7.36
	- Having important roles in their families	4	2.45
	- Having plenty of friends	6	3.68
	- Social openness	5	3.07
Personal characteristics	- Being educated	15	9.20
	- Being intellectually and mentally sophisticated	8	4.91
	- Humanitarian characteristics	21	12.80
	- Having morals and a good reputation	9	5.52
Unable to identify strength points		15	9.20
Have no points of power or strength		6	3.68

Excessive sensitivity was reported as another aspect of having a weak personality. Oversensitivity was the leading factor for irritability and sadness for 12 (7.36%) respondents in the current study. In addition, six (3.68%) other respondents explained that one of their weaknesses was excessive tendency to criticise and sneer at people with whom they live or work. Moreover, stubbornness was a weakness reported by four respondents who believed that they should change this characteristic because it is problematic in social relationships. Finally, three respondents admitted having vengeful and vindictive attitudes towards people who have caused them pain and two others reported excessive kindness and humbleness as negative characteristics in their personalities. A respondent aged over 30 who had a college education and who worked as paraprofessional, living with her nuclear family in a village in the middle region expressed her sensitivity in the following statement: "*My weakness is in being very sensitive. My external personality varies a lot from my internal side. I am very emotional and get touched easily when I hear problems of others*". A second respondent whose age was less than 30; lived with her parents in a village in the north region said about

her personality: *"I am very stubborn. Most of my decisions I make without considering the opinion of others. Sometimes my parents say something to me and I keep my opinion despite what I have been told. I know that but it comes late"*. A third respondent said: *"I usually do not forgive those who make a mistake with me. I become mean and insist in getting even"*.

In other cases, avoidance, intellectual withdrawal and escapism were the features of a weak personality identified by respondents. These mechanisms included suppression and repression of one's feelings and a reluctance to share with others, which was reported by 9 (5.52%) respondents; avoidance of difficult and challenging situations, reported by 6 (3.68%) other respondents; hesitation and uncertainty about making decisions, reported by 11 (6.75%) respondents; social isolation and poor social and familial affiliation, reported by 11 (6.75%) respondents; dependency on others, reported by four (2.45%) respondents; procrastination concerning responsibilities, reported by four other participants; forgetfulness, reported by two respondents, and excessive sleepiness, which was reported by another two respondents. A respondent aged over 30 who had an elementary education and no work, living with her relatives in a village in the south region illustrate the perception of some of the respondents of their weaknesses: *"I am not happy. I am always nervous and irritated because I stay home and spend the day either watching TV or reading Quraan"*. A second respondent aged less than 30 who had an elementary education and no work, living with her nuclear family in a village in the south region said: *"I am a person of suppression. I do not express my inside feeling thus my nerves get tired. When I find nobody to talk to, I go to sleep. Sleep became my life these days"*. Although nine respondents considered suppression of feelings to be a weakness, two respondents had opposite viewpoints. One of these respondents said: *"I am tolerant and patient of others. I do not express my feeling to others because I do not want them to know what is inside me. This is one of my good points"*.

The third theme was *"social shortcomings"* in the respondents. This weakness or negative point was related to respondents' need to feel socially accepted and approved. Twenty-six (15.95%) respondents complained about not being able to socialize with friends and relatives due to family and social constraints. In addition, 12 (7.36%) respondents avoided people because they do not want people to interfere in their lives or irritate them with embarrassing questions. A respondent, whose age was over 30; lived with her siblings in a city in the north region had college education and worked in services illustrated her viewpoints by saying: *"I am not sociable. I would rather stay home when I return from work. I see no value of making headache for myself by getting involved with the agony of others"*. A

second respondent said: *"I have shortage in many things, I don't like to involve myself in social activities, I don't mix with people in social events"*

On the other hand, some respondents considered themselves weak because they were obliged to do certain activities and responsibilities just to please others such as family members, neighbors and friends. For instance, 10 (6.13 %) respondents reported giving-up for others and self-sacrifice in favor of family's affairs and interests as weaknesses in their personalities. A respondent aged less than 30, living with her nuclear family in a refugee camp in the north region who had a college education but no work illustrated her viewpoint by saying: *"I have more weaknesses than strengths. I am willing to do any thing for my siblings. I don't do a lot of things for myself"*. On the other hand, five respondents considered sacrificing for the others as strength rather than weakness.

The third theme was *"emotional and psychological build up"*. A few respondents reported weaknesses that were psychological in nature. For instance, 11 (6.75%) respondents considered themselves very emotional, which rendered them weak and vulnerable. Nine (5.52%) respondents believed that being extra humble and kindhearted were weaknesses in their personalities. A respondent aged under 30 who lived with her nuclear family in a village in the south, had a college education and was employed said: *"I don't like in myself my emotionality. Indeed I study the situation using my mind but when I choose I go back to my heart. I am very hesitant in my decisions that I wish I can change"*. A second respondent said: *"I guess I am excessively kind-hearted and this is a weakness in me"*. A third respondent aged under 30 who lived with one parent and siblings, had a college education and who worked in industry said: *"I am emotional more than I should be. My heart is very kind and I do favors for people who do not deserve them"*.

Four respondents reported being suspicious and having no trust in people as an emotional weakness, and four others said that they were obsessive, which was irritating to them and their families. One of these respondents said: *"I am always obsessed with safety. I want to secure the house, to secure the mini-factory. I go back to home from street to make sure that I locked the door and windows"*. A second respondent who lived with her single parent and siblings in a city in the middle region, who had a university education and worked as a paraprofessional said: *"I get easily irritated. When a girl says a word that I don't like, I ruminate about it for days"*. Another two respondents viewed themselves as jealous of other women who lived happier, better lives. One of the respondents said: *"When I see a girl who is better than me or she is handier, I get jealous. I don't want to harm her but I would like to be in her place"*. Two respondents were over-involved in masturbation and hated themselves for

it. Some other weaknesses were reported by individual respondents such as laziness, irrational fear, selfishness, unexplained love or hate for others, and shyness. The following response of a participant who lived with her nuclear family in a village in the middle region, had a secondary education and worked in services illustrated this kind of emotional state: *"I have feelings towards others that I cannot understand. Sometimes I like a person without knowing why, sometimes I hate people with no reason"*. A second respondent said who lived in a village in the south region, had a secondary education and no work talked about her anxiety: *"I get afraid without any reason. When I get up in the morning, I find that I am anxious but I don't know why"*.

Moreover, five (3.07%) respondents considered themselves irrational in confiding in others, who took advantage of them. Another form of hunger for approval was directed toward men. This was reported by five (3.07%) of the respondents. This was expressed through impulsive and improper confidence in men and in rushing into love affairs that ended in dramatic ways when the woman discovered that the man sought sex and lust rather than marriage. A respondent aged under 30 living in a refugee camp in the south who had a preparatory education but was not employed said: *"I like to make relationships with people but sometimes I regret these relationships later. Many times I find myself sinking into irrational relations with men who do not meet my ambitions"*.

Feelings of guilt over wasting their chances of marrying were reported as weakness by four (2.45%) respondents. One of these respondents explained her opinion in the following statement: *"When I sit by myself at home and think about the future after my parents die, I tell myself that I spoiled many chances of marrying. Even if the girl has 10 brothers, nobody can replace her parents. I always worry about the future and this is my weakness"*.

Feelings of shame were experienced as weaknesses by 7 (4.29%) respondents who felt ashamed at their not being sufficiently educated. On the other hand, being financially dependent on relatives was considered a weakness and led to feelings of shame as well. These situations led to feeling of inferiority as expressed by one of the respondents who said: *"I am less than the other girls because I am not educated. If I finished my education, I would be now employed and do not have to ask my brother to buy me things. As you know, sometimes we women need things the men do not understand. I will be ashamed to tell my brother so I go to his wife. This is still more humiliating to me"*.

The fourth theme was *"body structure and build"*. A small number of respondents choose to talk about certain features in their bodies as weakness. Being overweight or underweight was one category of these physical characteristics. The second category was not

fulfilling beauty standards, which was considered as a main weakness by eight (4.91%) respondents. In addition, being short, having a disability or a shortcoming in the body, and not being good looking were reported as weaknesses by nine (5.52%) participants of the current study. A respondent aged under 30 who had a secondary education but was not employed living in a city in the south region explained her viewpoint: *"I hate being obese. Maybe this is why men do not seek me. I tried to lose weight but I do not have a strong will. I wish I was thinner"*. A respondent who lived in a city in the south, who had a secondary education and who worked in industry explained her opinion about beauty by saying: *"My problem stems from being short and having a dark skin. All my sisters got married even the one who is younger than me, because they were taller and white. I ask myself why God did this to me"*. In addition, being dissatisfied by one's dress style or living pattern were other kinds of weaknesses that were reported by a very few respondents.

Overall, 18 (11.04%) respondents reported having no weaknesses at all and six (3.68%) respondents mentioned that they have no idea about what their areas of weakness are. In addition, five respondents stated that they never thought about their weaknesses and negative points and that the whole issue was puzzling to them. One respondent represented this difficulty in the following statement: *"It never came to my mind before. I never asked myself about my strengths and weaknesses. Usually others say these things to you but we do not discuss this with ourselves"*. A second respondent aged below 30 who had a secondary education and no work, living with her nuclear family in a village in the south region said: *"I don't have weakness or negative things in my life. I am okay, thanks to God. Everything seems fine in my life and in me"*.

In conclusion, the respondents were able to name their weaknesses and shortcoming. It seems that having a weak personality structure, being over-sensitive and nervous, suppressing feelings, showing impulsivity, avoidance and hesitance, and being socially inactive were considered significant problems for the respondents. These characteristics were not necessarily caused by remaining unmarried; rather they could be part of the personality make up of the participants and perhaps a result of the socialization process of woman in Arab society.

Table 6-11

Areas of weakness as perceived by the respondent

Major themes	Categories	No.	%
Personal characteristics	- Nervousness, easy irritation, temper and anger outbursts, and jumpiness	57	34.97
	- Impulsivity	20	12.26
	- Being moody	9	5.52
	- weak personality and reduced self-confidence	6	3.68
	- Oversensitivity	12	7.36
	- Stubbornness	4	2.45
	- criticism and sneering of people	6	3.68
	- Having revengeful and vindictive attitudes towards people	3	1.84
	- Suppression and repression of feeling	9	5.52
	- Avoidance of difficult and challenging situations	6	3.68
	- Uncertainty about making decisions	11	6.75
	- Social isolation	11	6.75
	- Dependency on others	4	2.45
	- Procrastination	4	2.45
	- Forgetfulness	2	1.22
	- Over sleepiness	2	1.22
Social issues	- Not being able to socialize	26	15.95
	- Avoid people to protect self from embarrassment	12	7.36
Emotional and psychological build up	- Extra humble and kindhearted	9	5.52
	- Emotionality	11	6.74
	- Being suspicious of people	4	2.45
	- Being obsessive	4	2.45
	- Jealousy of other women	2	1.22
	- Over involvement with masturbation	2	1.22
	- Irrational in confiding with others	5	3.07
- Improper confidence in men	5	3.07	
Being poorly educated		7	4.29
body structure and build up	- Being overweight or underweight	7	4.29
	- Lacking beauty	8	4.91
	- Having a disability or a shortcoming in the body	9	5.52
Having no weaknesses		18	1.04
Have no idea about where is their weakness		6	3.68

C. Self - views of the respondents in comparison to other women**1. Self - views of the respondents in comparison to other unmarried women:**

When comparing themselves to other single women, the respondents' answers were clustered into four major themes, namely; being more privileged and lucky than other women; being worse than other unmarried women; being the same as other unmarried women; being undecided or uncertain about themselves in relation to other women. Ninety

(55.22%) of the interviewed respondents believed that they live in a better situation and their circumstances and social conditions were easier than those of other unmarried women in their neighborhood and district. For instance, 59 (36.19%) respondents felt lucky due to various factors such as having freedom of movement, traveling, visiting, work, dress, and education. However, 57 (34.97%) interviewees believed that they were better than other single women because they were well treated and loved by their family members; 30 (18.40%) interviewees felt that their advantage lay in their being employed and financially independent; 22 (13.49%) interviewees identified open mindedness and intellectual abilities as their advantage; 11 (6.75%) respondents mentioned having a high level of education; and 10 (6.13%) interviewees felt themselves to be advantaged because they had broad and strong social relationships.

Some respondents expressed their positive views of themselves in comparison to other unmarried women in statements such as the following: *"My life is not easy as I have to work and support myself. I also have to work at home and to take care of my sister. I have to protect myself and to conserve my reputation as well"; "Because I am self-reliant and employed, I depend on myself rather than on my brothers who only care about their own families. I see that I am living in a better life than other girls who do not work and have to take money from their brothers".* Another respondent said: *"I am doing well. I don't worry or think about children and marriage as other girls do. I don't have the fears of the other girls. Other girls are worried about the possibility of not marrying and becoming unmarried".* One other respondent said: *"I am not better than other girls but I am living a more comfortable life. I saw my friends who live with their younger married brothers and their daughters in low and children. They have problems. The unmarried girl is very sensitive to anything happens at the family therefore, they feel that they are a burden. Thank God, I am living in a separate house".* Another said: *"The older unmarried women are usually very worried to miss the train of marriage. One of my friends came the other day and cried to me. She was sad because a man whose age was 52 asked to marry her. She refused. Her family said to her: "why you are showing off? You are 30 years old now"! My friend was sad because only previously married and divorced men came to ask for her hand. It seemed, as she no more was appealing to younger men. This attitude hurts us".* One other participant said: *"Last week we went for a picnic from work. Three girls didn't join us because their brothers refused to let them come. One of the girls said that her younger brother controlled her life and he refused to let her go to a picnic where men and women mix*

Nevertheless, 80 (49.08%) of the interviewees perceived themselves to be luckier and at an advantage compared to other women, which was expressed through talking about the bad living conditions of their peers rather than talking about their lives. Some of these respondents talked about the bad treatment and humiliation of other girls at home; constrictions on the girls' movements; reproach, disgrace and blaming of the woman for being unmarried; physical and verbal abuse; domination, control and attempts at suppression from their brothers and their wives, affecting the lives of unmarried women. For instance, 50 (30.68%) interviewees believed that other unmarried women are restricted and constrained by their families. Another 40 (24.53%) respondents reported that other less fortunate women are badly treated by their families. The bad treatment includes taking the salaries of working women as reported by 16 (9.82%) respondents; not allowing women to work reported by 20 (12.27%) respondents; being overburdened by house chores and responsibilities reported by 15 (9.20%); psychologically harassed and degraded by their sisters-in-law reported by 18 (11.04%) respondents. One of the respondents who perceived herself as a lucky person said: *"My sister and I are not married yet. My sister says that our father is harsh to us. I tell her: look at other girls around us, we live a better life than other girls. We got our salaries for us and we are allowed to work. Yet we believe that our family is not fair to us because they are biased with my brothers. We will see when they get married how their wives will treat the family!"*

In addition, 22 (13.49%) respondents considered themselves to be more privileged than other unmarried girls because they observed that other girls are desperate about their future and always think about marriage, children and men. One respondent expressed this viewpoint by saying: *"I know girls who would accept to marry any man who proposes to them even if he is a cleaner or an old man. I myself had similar thought in the past. At that time I had many problems and was less mature and lack experience. Now my mind is different. I am working and got a salary of my own and became more educated. I will not accept to marry for the sake of marriage or just because people want me to marry".* Another respondent said: *"I see some of my colleagues are preoccupied with marriage. It becomes a complex for them. They always talk about having a house and children. Thank God, I don't worry like them. Sometimes I wonder if I will also think in the some way after some years. I ask God not to let this happen".* However, 8 (4.90%) interviewees considered themselves lucky because their families maintained a stable and comfortable financial future for them, by providing for physical and material needs.

The second theme was that 24 (14.72%) respondents viewed themselves not as good as other women. Fifteen (9.20%) of the respondents believed that they are dejected and live a miserable life because they are mistreated and not respected by their families. Thirteen (7.97%) of the respondents believed that other unmarried women are not censured and spied on by people in their neighborhoods therefore, they live more happily and have positive view of themselves. One respondent explained why she felt bad by saying: *"Some girls are more restricted than me but they are more comfortable in their families. In my home, I cannot pray quietly or relax while my younger brother puts on the radio very loud and always makes a mess around me. My mother always asks where I have been and I answer her. I know that some girls are obliged to give their salaries to their families; thank God mine is not doing this to me."* A second participant said: *"There are girls who are better than me and others who are worse. Some girls pursue their education and do not have to work. I wish I could continue my study like them. I see that the conditions of the girls who are not studying or working very bad. They spend the time watching TV or doing house chores. They die from boredom. They have silly interests such as watching movies and TV series and fashion".*

On the other hand, 12 (7.36%) respondents had a negative view of themselves and felt their lives were unhappy, because they were unemployed and had to depend on others for living. One of these respondents said: *"When I look to other girls and see that they are educated and get a salary from work I wish I am like them and that I don't have to beg my brother to give me the money I want"*. Moreover, 9 (5.52%) respondents believed that other unmarried women have more freedom of movement, to travel, socialize, and in their choice of dress; and have more education, as reported by 7 (4.29%) of the respondents. Another 7 (4.29%) respondents felt that other women live with families who look after them better. Nevertheless, 35 (21.47%) of the interviewees did not see that their lives were different from those of other unmarried women whom they know. This view was expressed by one of the respondents who said: *"I see myself as the same as other girls. They are not better or worse than me. We have similar problems and conditions"*. However, 40 (24.53%) respondents believed that some of the unmarried women whom they know were contented and satisfied and some were not.

Table 6-12

Self - views of the respondents in comparison to other unmarried women

Major themes	categories	No.	%
Being more privileged and lucky than other girls	- Lived in better situations and social conditions than other unmarried women	90	55.22
	- Had freedom of movement, traveling, visiting, work, dress, and education	59	36.19
	- Well treated and loved by their family members	57	34.97
	- Being employed and financially independent	30	18.40
	- Open mindedness and had intellectual abilities	22	13.49
	- Having high education	11	6.75
	- had wide and strong social relationships	10	6.13
	- Were not desperate about their future and marriage	22	13.49
	- Their families maintained a stable and contend financial future for them	8	4.90
Being worse than other unmarried women	- Viewed self not as good as other girls	24	14.72
	- were mistreated and disrespected by their families	15	9.20
	- Being censured and spied on by people in their neighborhoods	13	7.97
	- Unemployed and had to depend on others for living	12	7.36
	- Lack freedom of movement, travel, socialize, and dress	9	5.52
	- Were poorly educated	7	4.29
	- families do not look after them	7	4.29
Being the same as other unmarried women		35	21.47

Five respondents were hesitant and undetermined about whether they are better or worse than other unmarried women in their communities. A respondent said: *"I am confused and uncertain about myself. I wonder if I live a better life than other unmarried women"*. These respondents explained that they sometimes see themselves better and sometimes worse off than other unmarried women.

2. Self-view of the respondents in comparison to married women:

The respondents connected their responses to this question to the kind of life the woman might live if she got married. Seventy (42.95%) respondents believed that in comparison to married women whose lives are troublesome and full of responsibilities and

burdens of children and family affairs, the lives of unmarried women are more comfortable and happier. In general 50 (30.68%) respondents thought that they lived better lives than married women because they have more freedom in movement, work, dress and socialization; that they had less responsibilities and obligations towards their families reported by 30 (18.40%) respondents; they had more free choices in their personal lives and decisions as reported by 24 (14.72%) respondents. Therefore, these respondents perceived themselves as better off than married women. They believed that married women pay the price of living secure lives and enjoying motherhood by giving up their freedom and personal interests, and by living according to the husbands' preference. The following was an example of the responses of the participants who believed that marriage brings happiness and burden in the same time: *"There is no absolute good and bad in singlehood and marriage; both have their good and bad. When you are married and have children, you feel great because you are a mother .You created a family and they are all around you. On the other hand, there are sacrifices. You are paying a price; a price from your age, strength, time, and your ambitions in life. Sometimes you cancel a social activity or a business trip if your son is sick or have exam".* Another respondent said: *"My friend is married and was happy until she had her first child. She works but cannot balance her responsibilities inside and outside home. She gave up every personal interest. She has to cook, clean and care for the child. She stays home and her husband goes to his friends and to his family without her.* In addition, another respondent shared with a personal experience, she said: *"My sister, who is younger than me, got married to my cousin. She married after she finished college. My sister says: you are living better than me. Sometimes she has problems with her husband and they fight, then everything gets back to normal".*

Fifteen (9.20%) respondents believed that they are better than married women because they think that married women probably have financial problems if their husbands are not working or are unable to support their families. Moreover, 10 (6.13%) other participants believed that married women complain of social and familial problems especially with their in-laws who control the life of the daughter-in-law and her husband. One of these respondents explained her viewpoints about the disadvantages of the life of married women by saying: *"Marriage limits your freedom. When you are married, you become two persons. You are responsible for yourself, your husband, children and home. You are obliged to do things that you do not like. There are things and activities that you have to perform whether you like them or not".*

Ten (6.13%) respondents believed that they were better off than married women because married women in their view have lost their independence, freedom, self-confidence and self-determination. Six (3.68%) other participants believed that they are better than married women because they are more educated and mentally sophisticated. One of the respondents said: *"Married women are committed to what their husbands and children want. When he comes home from work she has to wait for him to eat together. She should prepare his clothes and bath. This is a big responsibility and I have to think about it if I want to get married. . Today I work and it's my choice to share in the house expenses or not, but when I get married I cannot work without my husband's approval. Then, my salary may end in his pockets and he controls my life"*. Another respondent said: *"My married friends envy me for my life. They marry and start to have children without thinking or planning. The wives are incapable of pleasing or comforting their husbands; their houses are messy and disorganized; she does not know how to raise her children; the husband becomes tired and the marriage turns miserable for the man and the woman"*.

Nevertheless, 33 (20.25%) respondents felt that married women are better than them and are happier than single women. They attributed their feelings to the privileges that marriage gives to married women, which included having children and enjoying motherhood reported by 20 (12.27%) respondents; financial stability and dependence on husband for living reported by 18 (11.04%) respondents; stability and emotional comfort reported by 15 (9.20%) respondents; social prestige and respect reported by 14 (8.59%) respondents; having one's own house and living a meaningful life, reported by 18 (11.04%) respondents; living freely reported by 16 (9.82%) respondents. One respondent expressed her preference for marriage in the following statements: *"I wish that I can live like other women. I am not working and I want to buy many things and my family doesn't give me money. I am worried about my future. Marriage is better for me because it brings security. My brother and sister-in-law may not accept me but if I have my own children, I will feel secure and intimate with someone"*. A second participant said: *"I feel that I am empty inside because I am not married. I would like to become a mother, and hold a baby that is mine"*. A third participant said: *"Marriage is commitment and had its limitations but it also has its gain. These are children, belonging and love of others. For the sake of these, I will tolerate marriage commitments and restrictions"*. A fourth participant said: *"On the long run, the unmarried woman has more responsibilities than the married woman. She has to embrace all the financial load of her family in addition to household tasks. She cannot leave her work and depends on someone else for living like the married women. She worries about her living in the future, whether*

living alone or with her brothers. She is always at risk of not being able to live independently".

Nevertheless, 22 (13.49%) participants believed that married women are better off than those who are unmarried only if they live happily and comfortably. These respondents explained that marriage is a better choice for a woman in Palestinian society when the right conditions could be maintained in order to achieve happiness. One respondent explained her opinion when she said: *"I look at my classmates and see that they had daughters who are engaged and going to marry soon, I envy them. I also wish that life for myself."* A second respondent said: *"I become astonished when I see my classmates and neighbors married while they are not beautiful or competent in housework. How come they got married and I am not? I am better and brighter"*.

Twenty-seven (16.56%) participants were ambivalent about whether married women are better or worse off than they are. They thought that the positives and negatives of marriage and singlehood are relative rather than absolute. In addition, 9 (5.52%) respondents reported that they do not contrast their lives or themselves with those of married women. They related this position to the fact that married women have completely different lives and worlds than married women and that there is no basis for evaluation.

D. Views of the respondents to their future life if they remained unmarried:

Three themes emerged out of the answers of this question. The first theme was "pessimism" about the future. Sixty-three (38.65%) respondents reported being worried, anxious, afraid, concerned or preoccupied with the future and what might happen to them if they did not get married. Category one included respondents who were uncertain about their lives if they did not marry. For instance, 24 (14.72%) respondents reported being over-concerned that nobody would look after them especially after the inevitable death of their parents. In addition, 18 (11.04%) respondents reported fearing senility and aging alone if they remained unmarried after the death of their parents. The following statement from a respondent who lived with her nuclear family in a refugee camp in the south region and was unemployed, reflected this preoccupation about the future, she said: *"I think about the future and what may happen to me all the time. It does not leave my mind. I am going nuts. I worry especially because I do not have good relationship with my sister-in-law. She says that I am jealous of her.... She is still young and empty headed"*. Another respondent who lived with her nuclear family in a city in the south region, had an elementary education and was

unemployed said: "Sure I worry about the future. I ask myself how will I behave if I do not marry and what will happen to me. There are no guarantees in life especially after my father dies".

Table 6- 13

Self-view of the respondents in comparison to married women

Major themes	categories	No.	%
Perceived themselves as better than married women N = 70 % = 42.95	- Had more freedom in movement, work, dress and socialization than married women	50	30.68
	- Had less responsibilities and obligations towards their families than married women	30	18.40
	- Freer in decisions and choices than married women	24	14.72
	- Married women have financial problems	15	9.20
	- Married women complain of social and familial problems	10	6.13
	- Had more independence, freedom, and self-confidence than married women	10	6.13
	- More educated and mentally sophisticated than married women	6	3.68
Perceived self as worse than married women N = 33 % = 20.25	- Married women have children and enjoying motherhood	20	12.27
	- Married women have financial stability and dependence on husband for living	18	11.04
	- Stability and emotional comfort of married women	15	9.20
	- Social prestige and respect of married women	14	8.59
	- Married women own houses and live meaningful lives	18	11.04
	- Married women live freer than single women	16	9.82
Ambivalence about whether married women are better or worse than unmarried women		27	16.56
did not contrast self with married women		9	5.52

In category two, there were respondents who were worried about their independence and freedom if they become old without being married. For instance, fear of dependence on others for care and living were reported by 15 (9.20%) respondents. In addition, fear of loneliness and isolation were reported as concerns by 8 (4.90%) respondents if they did not marry in the future. A respondent aged over 35, who had an elementary education and worked in industry,

living with one parent in a city in the middle region said: *"my neighbor (...) says that she is afraid to live alone after her mother's death. How can she live like this? I cannot imagine myself in that situation. I do not like to be alone. Poor (...), she has nobody left for her"*. Another respondent who was unemployed and lived with her siblings in a refugee camp in the south region expressed her feeling of loneliness and worry about the future when she said: *"nobody care about what happen to me now. Nobody does any thing to me. When you are married, your children look after you. They are better and more intimate than the brothers or fathers. I started to worry about myself when I reached the 30s. I see that I am getting older now, and this makes me more afraid"*.

Several reasons have been mentioned by the respondents for their pessimism and insecurity about the future if they remained single. One reason was that they currently live an unhappy life with their relatives or families. Most of the respondents were concerned about the complication of living with their married brothers and sisters-in-law. For instance, 77 (47.24%) respondents reported that they were not planning to live with their brothers and want to live in a private house or in the family's house. Thirty-seven (22.7%) respondents were concerned that if they lived with their married brothers, their sisters-in-law might reject them or treat them badly. A respondent aged less than 30 who lived in a village in the middle region and was employed as a paraprofessional illustrated her preference for living by herself when she said: *"I think to live alone. My sister-in-law will not accept me in her house. She wants to be free in her house"*. In addition, many respondents explained that they do not trust their siblings who might take care of them in the future when they get old. They were concerned that the younger generation does not believe that their role is to look after their aunts who are old and single. A respondent said: *"Sure I think about the future. I say that I have to marry because I am worried about what may happen to me after my mother dies. Now our generation takes good care of the old people but the new generations are not like us"*.

However, some respondents were worried about their future because they were not employed currently or did not have a career, which meant that they had to depend on their relatives for living, which is not always maintained as they would wish. For instance, 23 (14.11%) respondents were worried that they could be a burden on the family of their brother or that they could lose their independence and free living. On the other hand, 18 (11.04%) unemployed respondents were uncertain about their financial situation and reported having no resources for living, which rendered them helpless and anxious about their future. A respondent aged over 35 who had an elementary education, no work and lived with her

brother in a city said: *"I do not want to be a burden for my brother or relatives. I am afraid that I will lose my freedom and independent living"*.

On the other hand, 23 (14.11%) respondents refused the whole idea of living with their married brothers or sisters because they believed that they would be made to work as servants and get exploited by their sisters-in-law and nephews. A respondent who lived with her mother in a city in the south region of the West Bank and who had a college education and was employed in services said: *"my brothers are occupied with their children and wives, and if I went to live with any of them, I will be their servant and I have to do all the house chores"*. Some respondents were concerned that their brothers would control or manipulate their lives after the death of their parents. One respondent illustrated her concerns about the place of living if she did not get married: *"living with your brothers is not always easy. Their wives might be good but you may not feel comfortable"*. A second respondent who lived with her nuclear family in a refugee camp in the south and had undertaken higher than secondary education but who was unemployed said: *"I will stay in my parents' house, this house where we live now. I am working but may need the help of my brother"*. A third respondent who was educated to university level and employed in services, living with her mother in a city in the south region confirmed the above viewpoint by saying: *"I will live with my parents. If they passed away it is impossible for me to live with my brothers, why? Because, they interfere in my life and may limit my freedom. Besides, they are busy with their children"*.

Six respondents said that they would choose to live in a nursing home rather than live with relatives and a Christian respondent said that she would prefer to live in a convent when she becomes old rather than living at her brother's house with his children and wife. A respondent, who lived with her mother in a city in the middle region and was educated to university level and employed as a professional, said she would choose to live in a nursing home: *"I will live in a nursing home when I get old. I have a brother but I am not sure how his wife will treat me. When I sit alone, I always think about what might happen to me"*. Nevertheless, two respondents thought that they would migrate to a foreign country to spend their later years if they remained unmarried. These respondents hold citizenships for other nations and wanted to find nursing homes to look after them instead of staying in their present homes where they were not sure of their future. A respondent who had a university education and who worked in services, living with some relatives in a city in the middle region and choose to migrate said: *"I will travel to (...) because I have a citizenship. I will live in a nursing home. There they have a health insurance and everything is provided for the elderly"*.

Nevertheless, 31 respondents reported that they would live with their brothers' families in their own private room if they remained single after the death of their parents. These respondents believed that they could live a decent and respectable life if they did not interfere in the lives of their brothers and their wives and if their sisters-in-law were mature and friendly. A respondent who was employed as a paraprofessional, living with her brother in a city in the middle region said: *"I live with my only brother and his family. I have my own room and TV. When I come back from work, I go for rest and watch TV, and then had some sleep. When I get up, I come out of my room and play with the children. I never interfere in their business or ask what my sister-in-law cooked or done in her house"*.

The second theme was "optimism" about the future. Forty (24.53%) respondents reported being optimistic and unafraid of their future if they remained single. These respondents believed that if they did not get married, they would continue to live their current life without problems and will adapt to reality. However, 13 (7.98%) respondents said they would resume further education to improve their chances of employment if they remained unmarried. Furthermore, 20 (12.26%) respondents believed that they would get married in the future and live as other married women in society; therefore they were not worried about their future. One of these respondents illustrated this opinion in the following statement: *"I will marry any man. I don't want to live alone"*.

Various reasons were reported for being optimistic by the respondents. These included being employed and financially independent; having a house or properties; and feeling confident about themselves and their social network. One of the optimistic respondents who had a university education and worked in services, living with her parents and siblings in a city in the south region expressed her feelings about the future and said: *"If I did not marry, I will continue my education and get a work. I will have a house of my own, save money and secure my life"*. A second respondent who had a college education and was employed as a paraprofessional, living with one of her parents in a refugee camp said: *"I do not worry about the future because I depend on God and my work. Unemployed women might worry and has to stay home and depends on others for living"*.

Sixteen (9.82%) unemployed respondents reported being confident and secure about their future life because they lived with their married brothers and their families. These respondents believed that living with their married brothers would secure their lives and protect them from any danger or risk. They accepted living with their brother's families because they believed that their nephews loved and respected them and would look after them when they were aged or got sick. A respondent aged under 30 who had a secondary education

and who worked in industry, living with her nuclear family in a village in the north region said: *"I have nobody except my brother. I will live with him at his house when he gets married. He will give me a room of my own. When he builds his new house, I will stay at the old house. Here in our area, it is the custom to leave the old house for the unmarried girls in the family"*. Another respondent who lived in a city in the south region and was employed in services said: *"I will work and support myself from sewing clothes. My nephews will not forget me and will take care of me when I get old or sick. Now we take care of my aunt who is not married and she is 80 years"*. A third respondent whose age was over 30; educated and worked in services said: *"Currently, I live with my family, brothers and sisters. I am not worried about my future life because I have a full and active life. I delayed thinking about the future"*.

In terms of their personal finances, the respondents in this study proposed various scenarios for their future life if they remained unmarried. Sixty-four (39.26%) respondents believed that they would live in financial independence by continuing to work and being self-sufficient. A respondent who was educated to university level and employed as a professional, living with her nuclear family in a refugee camp said: *"when the woman is educated and employed, she will not be afraid at all if she did not marry. I am confident of myself and will be financially independent"*. A second respondent, who lived with one parent in a city, was educated to secondary level and employed in industry said: *"I will live with my sister at our family's house. I like to be free and independent and not to interfere in the life of my brother or his wife. I am working and would like to live alone as others do"*. A third respondent who was employed in industry and lived with her mother in a city in the middle region said: *"I work and support myself... if I did not get married, I will live by myself after my parents die.... I do not want my brother to interfere in my life... He has no right to do so... My parents gave me full freedom"*.

Twenty-five (15.34%) respondents believed that their brothers would support them financially and provide for their living. A respondent aged over 40, employed as a paraprofessional who lived with her sibling in a city said: *"I have a brother and he is good to me. I do not think he will neglect me. He always asks me if I need money or something"*. In addition, 22 (13.41%) respondents mentioned that they started to save money for the future. Moreover, 8 respondents mentioned that their fathers would leave some money or properties for them before dying in which would be used to support themselves. A respondent who had elementary education and no work; lived in a village in the north region said: *"I will be with my parents until they die. After that, I will be with my brothers. My father owns a big land*

and also he is wealthy, so when he dies I will receive some of that money and support myself". However, 4 respondents hoped that their relatives would help them financially because they did not have brothers or other resources for sustaining a living.

The third theme was "avoiding thinking about the future". Thirty-seven (22.7%) respondents mentioned that they did not think about the future and aging or they delayed the issue altogether. In addition, 18 (11.04%) respondents believed that they are unclear about their future and that only God knows what will happen to them. The following are some of the typical responses of the respondents who avoided thinking about their future life: "*when aging comes I will think about it*"; "*I hope not to become old or sick so not to need any body*"; "*I don't like to think about the future and what might happen*"; "*I wish to die before that day comes*"; "*I surrender my life and future to God who will look after me*"; "*I may not live until I become old*".

In general, the respondents were pessimistic, optimistic, or undecided about their future if they remained unmarried. The respondents who were employed and financially independent, and had supportive families, looked to their future with optimism. However, those who did not work and had no financial security; lacked family support and understanding; or had weak personalities, were pessimistic or uncertain about the future. The majority of the respondents wanted to live independently in their family houses away from the control and interference of their brothers and sisters-in-law, if they did not get married.

IV. Research question four: How do unmarried Palestinian women perceive their social environment and in what way society's treatment of the unmarried women influenced their view of themselves?

A. The respondents' perception of their social environment:

1. The respondents' perception of their families and relatives

Four major themes emerged from the interviews as responses to this issue. The first was family members had "*positive and favorable reactions*" towards the respondents. One good indication of favorable attitudes on the part of families was freedom to decide over their own living arrangements, including freedom to work, learn, travel, and move about in the society. Eighty (49.08%) of the interviewees said that they did not face any kind of restrictions or limitations imposed by their families. They reported having total freedom to travel, work, move about, dress, share in social activities, and stay free of excessive

household chores. In addition, the majority of the respondents who mentioned that they had no restrictions on their lives put this down to trust and confidence from their families. For instance, the respondents reported that their freedom emerged from the democratic families they lived in and the trust and confidence their families had in them. Freedom in living was expressed in this response from a respondent who lived in a refugee camp in the middle region, had a university education and worked as a professional: *"My family let me travel to one of the Gulf countries where I stayed for one month with my brother's family. I study at the university and do what I want, but of course, I respect the values of my society"*. Another subject aged over 30 and was educated and employed in services, living in a city in the middle region said: *"Every year I go to a different country in my vacation. I work and my family does not ask me how much I take. My father says that my salary belongs to me and I am free to spend it as I wish. I am afraid to marry so as not to lose my freedom"*. A third respondent aged under 30 who had a university education and worked as a paraprofessional, living with her stepfamily in a city in the north region said: *"I have more freedom than other girl. I can travel alone and visit my friends without any problem...employed women have more freedom than unemployed one's. If I have a meeting at work, I only will phone my mother and tell her where I am and when I will be back home. I consider myself lucky"*.

The second set of indicators of favorable treatment of the unmarried woman by her family were respect, trust, and acceptance. The majority (80%) of the respondents attested that remaining unmarried was considered a common trend in the Palestinian society these days. They mentioned that in many households there was more than one single woman and that in their neighborhoods several girls were unmarried after age 25. This made staying single and remaining unmarried appear to be an increasingly commonplace phenomenon in Palestinian society. Acceptance of one's fate and the possibility of remaining unmarried was expressed in statements such as: *"people's opinion is not important to me. It is not a problem for me to be single since I am not alone in the society"*.

Table 6-14

Views of the respondents to their future life if they remained unmarried

Major themes	Categories	No.	%
Pessimism about the future	- Being worried, anxious, afraid, concerned or preoccupied with the future	63	38.65
	- Being over concerned that nobody would look after them	24	14.72
	- Fear of senility and aging alone	18	11.04
	- Fear of dependence on others for care and living	15	9.20
	- Fear of loneliness and isolation	8	4.90
	- Sisters-in-law might reject them or treat them badly.	37	22.7
	- Might be a burden of the family of the brother (s)	23	14.11
	- Uncertainty about the financial situation for unemployed single women	18	11.04
	- Believed that they would work as servants and be exploited by their sisters-in-law and nephews	23	14.11
	Optimism about the future	- Would continue to live their current life without problems	40
- Would resume further education		13	7.98
- Would get married in the future		20	12.26
- Living with their married brothers		16	9.82
- Would live financially independent by continue working		64	39.26
- Brothers would provide financial support		25	15.34
- Fathers would leave money or properties for them		8	4.90
- Relatives would provide financial help		4	2.45
Avoiding thinking about the future		37	22.7
Unclear about their future/ God knows what will happen		18	11.04

Table 6-15

Where would the participant live if she remained unmarried?

Major themes	No.	%
Wanted to live in a private house or in the family's house	77	47.24
Would live with their brothers' families in a private room	31	19.01
Would live in a nursing home	6	3.68

Thirty-two (19.63%) respondents reported that their families respected their choices, accepted them without conditions; accepted their decisions about not marrying and allowed them a free choice about marriage. Twenty (12.27%) respondents believed that their brothers consider singlehood on the part of their sisters to be a normal event that does not require any intervention, and they accepted it as a normal phenomenon. A respondent aged over 30 who had a college education and worked as a paraprofessional and who lived with her parents in a village in the south region said: *"When someone asks for my hand, my father says it is your decision to accept or not. They have never forced me to accept an offer. Maybe, if they did I would be married now"*. A second respondent aged under 30 who had a university education and worked in services, living with her nuclear family in a city in the middle region said: *"you know, God blessed me with my family. They are sweet with me, do not fuss about me being unmarried. They do not make it the Middle East problem. This helps me a lot. I have a stable income and depend on myself... I appreciate their stand because I am free in my life"*. A third respondent aged over 40 who had an elementary education and who worked in industry living in a village in the north region said: *"being unmarried does not worry my family because I am not the only single girl in the neighborhood"*.

Some families were reluctant to talk about marriage to their daughters probably because they do not want to hurt them. Thirty-eight (23.31%) respondents said that their families do not discuss the issue of marriage with them. However, 11 (6.75%) of the respondents believed that their family members discuss marriage behind their backs in order not to irritate or annoy them. A respondent aged under 30 who had a secondary education but no work and lived in a village in the south region said: *"we are three sisters who are not married. My family does not bring the issue of marriage in front of us and my mother says there is no problem if you stayed single. My aunts do not discuss marriage with us... Maybe they talk behind our backs ... I believe they would talk but not before us"*.

Nevertheless, 4 (2.45%) respondents said that their families sometimes agree with them and sometimes do not in regards to marriage as a choice. This was probably because the parents of these respondents were old and they needed someone to look after them. A respondent aged over 40 who had an elementary education and worked in industry, living with her mother in a village in the north region explained this viewpoint in the following statement: *"my mother doesn't want me to marry because she is sick. Her life is dependent on me and I look after her needs. She does not like the subject of marriage"*.

The third set of indicators of favorable attitudes on the part of the families of the respondents was care and concern. Families of respondents utilized different approaches to

express their care and concern to their unmarried daughters. This included caring about their unmarried daughters, supporting them financially and psychologically and looking after their needs. For instance, 8 (4.90%) respondents were convinced that their families comforted them and used all possible means to please them and ease life's difficulties. In addition, 6 respondents reported that their families used different approaches to protect them from pain and discomfort by avoiding the whole issue of marriage, and refraining from telling them about men who proposed to them, and supporting them. A respondent who was educated and employed in services and lived with her nuclear family in a city in the south region said: *"my family always supports me and understands my situation. They like to know about my work and life... everything is all right... My life is good"*. A second respondent aged under 30 who had a university education and who worked in services, living with her nuclear family in a city in the north region said: *"my family is not crazy about marriage. They are like any family who wants their daughter to be happy. They trust me and they do their best to make me comfortable at home"*. However, three (1.84%) respondents reported that their parents considered high levels of education of their unmarried daughters as a protection in life, in case marriage did not occur. A respondent aged less than 30 who lived in a city in the south region said: *"My father says that if it is God's will for me to remain single, my education will remain a weapon in life after my parents go"*.

In addition, 25 (15.34%) respondents reported that their parents and relatives frequently pleaded and begged God to help their daughters to marry. A common response that was usually pronounced by the relatives of the unmarried woman when they visited the family was: *"Let God open your way and protect you"*. In Arabic language, the word *"Sutrah"* has a deeper meaning than protecting or conserving the woman's honor and chastity. Usually the relatives and friends of the family plead for God to protect the unmarried girls by saying: *"May God covers you with his compassion and kindness"*; *"Allah yustor aliki"*.

The second theme elicited in response to this question was that families had "unfavorable reactions" towards the unmarried female relative. Unfavorable attitudes and reactions toward unmarried respondents in the current study were expressed in several categories. The first involved attempting to impose some sort of limitation on the respondents. The first group of respondents reported living under moderate levels of limitations and the second group confronted very strong limitations.

Eighty-three (50.92%) respondents reported various levels of restrictions and limitations. Various forms of constraints were mentioned by the interviewees. Limitation of the unmarried woman's social mobility was the first kind of limitation imposed by families of

the respondents, as reported by 25 (15.34%) of the interviewees. The families restrict the visiting of relatives and friends and the woman's ability to go to weddings or parties, as reported by 19 (11.66%) of the respondents. Forty-seven (28.83%) of the respondents reported that their families had imposed limitations on leaving their houses and they were not free to do so unless their families accepted it. These respondents reported that they had to ask for permission before leaving the house and have to phone if they want to visit a friend or be late home. In addition, 48 (29.45%) respondents said that their family members or relatives did not allow them to be late in going back home especially after nightfall. The following quotes illustrated the above-mentioned limitations of movement. A respondent aged under 30 who had a secondary education and worked in services, living with her mother in a refugee camp in the south region said: *"I am free to go anywhere after my mother agrees. I never go anywhere without my family's permission"*. A second respondent aged under 30 who had a secondary education and who worked in services, living with her nuclear family in a village in the middle region said: *"I can go anywhere I want but I have to tell my family about everything after I go home"*. A third respondent aged over 30 who had a college education and worked as a paraprofessional, living with her single-parent family in a village in the middle region said: *"Of course there are restrictions on every girl. I have a car but I cannot go to the place I like with my girl friend (...) unless my parent approves it and they know where and for how long I will leave. Isn't that a humiliation?"*

The second area of limitations and restrictions was personal freedom. Limitations on personal freedom included not allowing the woman to work, reported by 15 (9.20%) respondents; no freedom to wear the clothes they like or wear make-up reported by 15 (9.20%) respondents; not permitting the respondents to work at places where there would be mixing with men, mentioned by 11 (6.75%) respondents; forbidding the woman from studying at college or university reported by 10 (6.13%) respondents; and not allowing the respondents to travel by themselves to other countries, mentioned by 7 (4.29%) respondents. For instance, a respondent aged over 35 with an elementary education and no work who lived in a city in the north region said: *"My family does not allow me to visit friends or relatives except with permission from my eldest brother"*. A respondent aged under 30 who lived with her nuclear family in a village in the south region with a college education and who worked as a paraprofessional illustrated the above viewpoints: *"there are some constraints on me. If I go to the city of (...) at 11 am and came back at 4 pm they say this is too much. My mother hassles me and calls my brother who also shares her ... I am not free to wear what I want and I have to wear a veil. I should not talk to men but the most difficult situation for her is getting*

late because we live in a small area and people talk about the girl.. Where was she, and from where she came"?

Some respondents reported more restrictive measures on leaving home having been imposed by their families. For instance, 19 (11.66%) respondents reported that they were not allowed to leave home, to visit friends or relatives, or to shop unless they were escorted by a family member. In addition, being censored, observed, spied on and watched over by family members and relatives were very irritating for 35 (21.47%) respondents. Moreover, 34 (20.86%) of the respondents said that they were frequently questioned and interrogated by their families about where they were going and what they were doing. These respondents mentioned that they were hurt by the attitudes and behaviors on the part of their families, especially their mothers who were expected to be more sympathetic and compassionate with their daughters. A respondent aged under 30 who had a preparatory education and no work, living with her nuclear family in a village in the south region verified the familial restrictions in her statement: *"My family is very strict with me. I wish I can live by myself but I cannot because of our society. I wish I go home one day and find none of my family members present. Not hear any criticism, hear no question of where have you been or why you are late? I wish nobody ask me these annoying questions"*. A second respondent aged over 40 who had a preparatory education and no work, living in a city in the north said: *"my family always restricts my life and they question me when I am late for home. Sometimes I lie to them when I go somewhere with my friend or go shopping. I tell them that the taxi had a flat tyre or broke down to explain why I was late. I do not do wrong things... I feel bad because I have to lie, but I cannot tell them the right thing because they don't let me do what I want"*. These responses reflected the kind and extent of the social and familial constraints that are placed on the unmarried respondents in the current study.

Nevertheless, 34 (20.86%) respondents believed that the distrust of their families was not necessary. The respondents said that they control and watch their own behavior in order not to provide the chance for others to blame them or think badly about them. A respondent aged under 30 who had a preparatory education and no work, living in a village in the south region explained her opinion by saying: *"I do not put myself in ambiguous or questionable situations. I am self-controlled because I know my society very well"*.

Few respondents mentioned other less common constraints that are usually imposed by family members especially men (fathers and brothers). These included forbidding the respondents from staying overnight at a friend's house, reported by 6 respondents; their family taking their salaries if they were employed, reported by 4 respondents; not allowing

them to drive a car, reported by 2 respondents; overburdening of the unmarried woman with household chores, reported by 4 respondents; preventing them from sharing in family meetings or discussions, reported by 2 respondents.

There was a second category of negative indicators which suggested unfavorable attitudes and reactions on the part of the family and disclosed that they were feeling bad about the life of the unmarried daughters. These aspects could be directly or indirectly expressed by families. The respondents' families had a broad spectrum of feeling about their unmarried daughters. These negative feelings were usually transmitted to the respondents through interactions and communications, behaviors, and daily living. These feelings were: being worried, blaming the girl for remaining unmarried, annoyance, making them feel guilty, blaming them, feeling pity for their daughter, occasional humiliation, and ignorance. Fifty-five (33.74%) respondents reported that their mothers, fathers, or siblings urged them to marry because they were anxious and worried about their future life. In addition, 17 (10.43%) respondents reported that their families tried to frighten them about losing the opportunity of getting married as they became older and less appealing to men. In this way, they used pressure and preaching to enforce marriage as the best choice for their daughters. Moreover, 10 (6.13%) respondents expressed their families' apprehension about their future after the inevitable death of their parents. A respondent aged under 30 who lived with her step-parent family in a village in the south region, having a preparatory education and no work illustrated the above viewpoints in the following statement: *"my mother is dead and my father does not say anything. After my mother died, my married sisters said: you have to get married. Do you want to become a nanny and servant for your sister-in-law? You don't know what might happen to you in the future"*. A second respondent aged under 30 who had a secondary education and was unemployed, living in a village in the south region said: *"sometimes my relatives say that I become old and I will not find a husband at this age. They say that I did not marry yet and I am "left behind". I heard this word twice in my ears... I fee upset and this hurt me a lot. When I go to a wedding, I ask myself if the bride is prettier or whiter than me. Why she married and I did not"*.

The families of the respondents were reported as frequently questioning and probing for possible reasons for their daughter refusing marriage, prompted by enquiries from other relatives. Sixty- three (38.65%) of the respondents said that their families were always trying to convince them to accept the men who proposed to them and to marry as soon as possible. Teaching the unmarried woman about the advantages of marriage and disadvantages of singlehood was a second approach that was used to persuade the respondents to marry. A

respondent aged under 30 who was educated and employed, living in a village in the south clarified the viewpoints of her family by saying: *"my mother always talk to me about marrying especially when someone asks for my hand. She asks me to bring coffee for the visitors and to sit and get to know the man. She tries to convince me but... the problem is that they think like the old days. They just want any man. When I tell her that I did not like the man, she gets pissed off and fights me"*.

The third class of indicators of the unfavorable reactions of the families and relatives of the respondents was blaming. Seven (4.3%) of the respondents said that their relatives blamed them for wasting their previous chances of marriage. A respondent whose age was below 30 and who had an elementary education and no work, living in a village in the south region said: *"When I have no money and I ask my brother to lend me some, my mother says you are to blame. If you had married, you would have a husband to support you"*. A second respondent aged over 30 with a secondary education, working in services and living in a village in the middle region said: *"since a year no man asks for my hand. My mother says you deserve it; you refused all who proposed to you because you wanted a better chance. Now, no-one is there and you will remain single all your life"*.

Table 6-16

The respondents' perception of their families and relatives

Major themes	Categories	No.	%
Family members had positive and favorable reactions towards the respondents	- Freedom of living including freedom to work, learn, travel, and move about in the society	80	49.08
	- Family respects, trusts, and accepts the unmarried woman	32	19.63
	- Family members consider singlehood as a normal event	20	12.27
	- Families do not discuss the issue of marriage with them	38	23.31
	- Avoid irritating the unmarried woman	11	6.75
	- Families comfort the unmarried woman, please them and ease life difficulties	8	4.90
	- Protect them from pain and discomfort	6	3.68
	- Parents and relatives plead to God to help their daughters to marry	25	15.34
Families had unfavorable reaction towards the unmarried woman	- Families impose limitation and constraints on the unmarried woman	83	50.92
	◆ Limitation of social mobility	25	15.34
	◆ Restricting visits of relatives and/or friends	19	11.66
	◆ Limitations in leaving the house	47	28.83
		48	29.45

	◆ Family members do not allow them to be late in going back home		
	◆ Not allowing unmarried women to work	15	9.20
	◆ Limited freedom of dress	15	9.20
	◆ Prohibit them from working at jobs where men exist	11	6.75
	◆ Forbidden from studying at university	10	6.13
	◆ Not allowing the respondents to travel by themselves abroad	7	4.29
	◆ Not allowing the unmarried woman to leave home unless if escorted by a family member.	19	11.66
	◆ Being censored, observed, and spied on	35	21.47
	◆ Frequently questioned and interrogated by their families	34	20.86
	◆ Forbid the unmarried woman from staying overnight at a friend's house	6	3.68
	◆ family's taking the salary of the unmarried woman if employed	4	2.45
	- Families urged the single women to marry	55	33.74
	- Families frighten them about losing the opportunity of getting married	17	10.43
	- Families' were apprehensive about the future of the unmarried women after the inevitable death of their parents	10	6.13
	- Families urge the unmarried women to accept the men who propose to them	63	38.65
	- Relatives blamed them for wasting the previous chances for marriage	7	4.29
	- Families belittled, reproached, or insulted and treated them badly	17	10.42
	- Mothers lost hope about their daughters' marrying	8	4.90
Mothers' ambivalence about their daughters	- Mothers' refusal of their daughters' marriage	10	6.13

The fourth set of indicators for the unfavorable reactions of the families and relatives of the respondents was humiliation and disregard of the respondent. Seventeen (10.43%) of the respondents reported that their families belittled, reproached, or insulted and treated them badly because they remained unmarried. A respondent aged under 30 who had an elementary education and no work, living in a city in the south region said: *My mother calls me "spinster" when I argue her about my right to visit my friends or when I refuse to do the house chores when I am tired. They do not want to see me around.* In addition, eight (4.91%)

respondents reported that their mothers had lost hope about their daughters' marrying and used the words "*the train passed by and you missed it*" to express their hopelessness.

Another theme was the mothers' ambivalence about their daughters remaining as singles. Ten (6.13%) respondents described this concept as expressed in the mothers' refusal of their daughters' marriage because they want their daughters to remain at home or they need someone to take care of them as they aged. A respondent aged over 40 living in a village in the middle region and who had a job in industry illustrated this viewpoint in the following statement: "*people blame my parents because they do not want to let me marry. The other day, people came to ask for my hand and my father shouted at the people and said: I will set fire to myself if she marries. The woman asked him why he did that. He said: why now? Her mother and I are very old now and she wants to leave us for whom? My mother fought with him and he beat my mother*". Another respondent said: "*My mother says: if you marry I will kill myself. Who would look after me and your father at this age if you left us alone?*"

2. The respondents' perception of their society:

Neighbourhood and local community responses to the participants' delay in marriage were reflected in two major themes. The first theme was that the neighbours and society "*had favorable attitudes and reactions*" about unmarried women, which was expressed in various reactions and behaviour. These favorable attitudes included showing interest, concern and care; avoiding aggravating the respondent; avoiding talking about marriage issues; and accepting the woman. For instance, 7 (4.3%) subjects believe that neighbours and people in the community accepted them without any problems because there are many girls who are old and unmarried in their local community and Palestinian society. In addition, 20 (12.27%) respondents believed that sometimes neighbours and friends refrained from talking about marriage or asking questions about it. Moreover, 12 (7.36%) respondents believed that their neighbours were concerned and worried about their welfare and their future and wanted them to live in a secure life. A respondent aged over 30 who had a secondary education and no work who lived with her nuclear family in a village in the south region said: "*I never had a problem with my neighbors and they never asked me why I am not married or something personal*". A second respondent aged over 30 who had a college education and worked in services, living with her siblings in a city in the south region of the West Bank said: "*in our neighborhood, people are okay with me; never question me. In my work, my peers make jokes about me and I don't feel that they talk wickedly behind my back or something*".

The second theme was that the respondents believed that their neighbours and society had *"unfavorable attitudes and reactions"* towards them. The first indicator for the unfavorable attitudes and reactions towards the unmarried women was irritating questioning. For instance, 76 (46.63%) respondents reported that people consistently question them about the reasons for remaining unmarried, which usually occurred during social occasions and visits. Many of these respondents reported that people anywhere embarrass them with snooping questions about remaining unmarried. A respondent aged over 30 who had an elementary education and was not employed living in a village in the south region said: *"people especially men ask me a lot why I am not married yet. They ask me about the reasons and they want to know the reasons"*. In addition, 20 (12.27%) respondents reported that their girlfriends always pressure them to marry soon in order to catch-up with them and avoid staying single and being dependent on relatives. Moreover, people responded by explaining the bad consequences of getting old and losing the chance of marrying. A respondent aged under 30 with a university education and who worked in services living with her nuclear family in a city in the south region said: *"my married girlfriends always talk about their children and husbands. They want me to marry. They say that nobody will look after me when I become old and that my brothers and their wives may feel overburdened by my presence in their houses"*.

The second indicator for the unfavorable reactions society had towards the unmarried women was manifested in placing some sort of limitations and restrictions on them. One-hundred and twenty (73.61%) of the respondents believed that their society puts limitations on their movements and freedom. However, demographic variables were connected somehow to the level of social restrictions placed on the unmarried respondents in the current study. For instance, 11 (6.75%) subjects believed that there are more social restrictions on poorly educated and unemployed single women. One subject expressed this opinion in the following statement: *"I am lucky because I go out everyday to the university. I feel sorry for one of my neighbours. She visits me and cries because her family forced her to leave school at 10th grade."* Another subject who works as a merchant said: *"I travel alone without any problem. I went to Egypt to buy goods. My family trusts me and I conserve and nurture this trust I don't give a small chance for anybody to say a bad word about me"*.

The place of residence was related to the level of limitation and constraint imposed upon the single women. Ten (6.13%) respondents believed that the restrictions on unmarried women are more severe in villages and remote areas. On the contrary, two other respondents believed that the limitations and restrictions are stronger in the city rather than the village. A respondent aged over 35 who had a college education and who worked as a paraprofessional,

living with her single-parent family in a city in the middle region said: *"In the city, there are more restrictions on the life and movement of the single woman. In the village, the unmarried woman is judged as unmarried and they allow her to go out, as she likes because nobody looks at her or might exploit her. She is not sexually active but in the city people perceive her differently. There in the city they assess her and watch out for her whenever she leaves home"*.

The age of the unmarried woman was connected to the level of social restrictions and constrictions that were perceived to be placed on her. For instance, four older subjects noted that the older they became, the less intense the limitations became. They believed that society and family trusted older single women because they know their society better and they adhere to the social norms and values more carefully than young unmarried women who might want to live more freely and have love affairs and sex. A respondent aged over 30 who had a secondary education and no work, living in a village in the south region illustrated the above viewpoint by saying: *"I think that the age determines what a girl might dress or do more than being educated or employed or not. When you get older, you feel that you have to respect yourself before others respect you"*.

In the respondents' perspective, people in society react in various negative ways toward the unmarried women. They believed that people avoid, observe, harass, frighten, belittle, and annoy unmarried women; spread rumors about unmarried women; accusing them of being masculine and disobedient; accusing them of being arrogant and paranoid; blaming them for being single and blaming their families. For instance, 20 (12.27%) respondents reported that their ex-classmates avoided them when they met in the street and acted as if they did not see them. In addition, 12 (7.36%) respondents believed that their neighbors talk badly behind their backs, gossip about them and treat their behaviour with suspicion. Moreover, 6 (3.68%) respondents reported that they have been sexually harassed in their work setting. A respondent reflected painfully upon an event that happened recently. She said: *"I was passing the street when my classmate (...) was holding her baby on her arms and her other child was walking beside her. She looked at me in a glance then continued to walk without talking to me or say hello. I wonder why? Is it marriage that made her like this? Does she think that she is better than me?"*

Another common reaction that was reported by a few respondents was that people in their local community pity them because they are not married. For instance, seven (4.3%) respondents stated that people in their community see the unmarried women as unfortunate and pathetic. In addition, five (3.07%) respondents believed that people feel sorry for the

unmarried women in the Palestinian society. A respondent aged under 30 who had an elementary education and no work, living in a city in the south region said: *"in the wedding of brother, I heard women saying: 'ya haram', poor (...) she remained... why she is not married and so on. This hurts the person, you know'*. A second respondent aged under 30 who had a university education and worked as a paraprofessional, living in a refugee camp in the middle region said: *"all my neighbors and relatives ask and talk about us because we are three unmarried sisters. They say these girls have a bad luck; gee, these pitiable girls are not married; 'ya haram' ' ill-fated etc"*.

The fourth indicator of the unfavorable attitudes of people towards the respondents was holding negative stereotyped ideas about unmarried women. Twenty (12.27%) of the respondents believed that people thought that the unmarried women are complicated or abnormal. Nevertheless, some respondents were treated by other people who did not know them well as if they were already married and had children because this is the norm for women in their age group. For instance, five (3.07%) respondents reported that on many occasions people treated them as if they were already married. The respondents in such cases acted either as if they were indeed married or corrected the false information. A respondent aged over 30 living in a refugee camp in the north region said: *"one day I was in the market with my sister in-law. The shopkeeper thought that she was my daughter. I pretended that he was right and did not correct him."* A second respondent aged over 30 living in a city in the middle region who had a college education and worked in services said: *"sometimes in wedding parties or at work, people call me "Om so and so", meaning mother of (...) because they think that I am married and have children"*. In Palestinian society, usually the woman is called by the name of her eldest son; they say *'Om Mohammad'* or *'Om Ahmad'* etc.

Conversely, some respondents believed that nowadays there are less familial and social restrictions on single women than might have been the case previously. These respondents believed that Palestinian society is changing especially after the first uprising. A respondent who lived in a city in the north region said: *"Today's women are free to study and work. Here in the factory most of my colleagues come from nearby villages without problems"*. However, other respondents had contradictory viewpoints. Some interviewees believed that Palestinian society is a conservative society and it places constrictions on all women, whether married or single. A respondent aged under 30 who had a university education and who worked as a professional living with her nuclear family in a refugee camp in the middle region illustrated her viewpoints by saying: *"it is not because I am single that I am restricted. In our society, both married and single women are facing the unfairness of the society. There are many*

things that it is inappropriate for women to do according to our norms. For example, I like to have fun in the night and stay out until late. If I do that, people will gossip about me... see where she has been; she does not respect anyone; her brothers have no word on her; her brothers do not bother of her behavior". Nevertheless, two respondents believed that there was a reactionary movement in Palestinian society since the first uprising and it was becoming more fundamentalist and conservative.

On the other hand, a few respondents believed the restrictions on unmarried women are the fault of the girls themselves. They thought that many girls misused their freedom, which adversely influences all women in the society. For instance, six respondents believed that when the girl is repressed in her family and she is suddenly released, she would tend to abuse the trust and freedom given to her by having love affairs, roaming around with bad friends, and getting home late. A respondent aged over 30 with a secondary education who worked in services, living in a city in the south region exemplified this viewpoint by saying: *"some people talk about girls who go out and say things about them. Maybe, ten girls go out but only few would misuse their freedom while the others do not. Some girls exploit the freedom and they hang with guys...some girls are very restricted in everything and would like to feel free to do things, you know".*

B. The influence of society and families' treatment on the respondents:

Being influenced or not was dependent on several balancing variables in the lives of the respondents. These balancing variables included type of family the woman lives with; the educational level of the respondent; employment status of the respondent; the level of freedom the respondent has; the age of the respondent; her personality structure and level of experience the respondent has; and the type of neighborhood and community where the respondent lives.

Table 6-17

The respondents' perception of their societal attitudes and reactions to them as remaining unmarried women

Major themes	Categories	No.	%
Neighbors and society had positive and favorable reactions towards the respondents	- Neighbors and people in the community accepted the unmarried woman	7	4.3
	- Neighbors and friends refrain from talking about marriage	20	12.27
	- Neighbors were concerned and worried about their welfare	12	7.36
Neighbors and society had unfavorable reaction towards the unmarried woman	- People consistently question the unmarried women about the reasons for remaining unmarried	76	46.62
	- Girlfriends always pressure them to marry soon	20	12.26
	- The society puts limitations on the movements and freedom of the unmarried women	120	73.61
	◆ More social restrictions on poorly educated and unemployed single women	11	6.75
	◆ More social restrictions on unmarried women living in villages	10	6.13
	◆ Less intense the limitations on older unmarried women	4	2.45
	- Ex-classmates avoided the unmarried women	20	12.27
	- Neighbors talk badly behind their backs	12	7.36
	- Been sexually harassed at work	6	3.68
	- People in their community see the unmarried women as misfortunate and pathetic	7	4.3
	- People feel sorry for the unmarried women in the Palestinian society	5	3.07
People hold negative stereotypical ideas about unmarried women	- People think that the unmarried women are complicated and/or abnormal	20	12.27
	- People treated them as if they are married	5	3.06

Two major themes emerged in relation to the above issue. The first was that the respondents reported themselves to be "not significantly influenced" by the reactions of their society. Some respondents mentioned that they did not bother themselves with what people say because they had self-confidence and they were sure of what they wanted in life. A second group of respondents took a firm stand about their society and decided not to allow others to discuss their personal lives. Responses such as: "*I don't care about what people say as long as my family supports me*", "*I don't care about what people say*" reflected the viewpoints of the respondents. On the other hand, several respondents mentioned that they were not influenced by people's talk because they believed in destiny and fate. A respondent aged

under 30 who had an elementary education and worked in industry, living in a village in the middle region clarified her opinion by saying: *"I have a strong belief in God and last year I went to pilgrimage. I say that I will accept God's will. He puts us in difficult experiments to test us. He gives some girls good husbands and others he does not"*. Some respondents trained themselves well to encounter potentially negative societal views by adopting an adaptive attitude. These respondents said that they got used to what people say and they did not let the others influence them. A respondent aged under 30 who had an elementary education and worked in industry, living in a city in the north region said: *"when people talk about marriage to me I just laugh at them. They are busy with something that does not worry me. I am not compelled to answer them"*.

The second theme concerned cases where the respondents said they were "significantly influenced" by the reactions and treatment from their families and society. Being negatively influenced by the way the family and the society treat unmarried women was manifested in various ways. For instance, 14 (8.59%) respondents chose to impose limitations on themselves and they preferred to stay away from other people. They rationalized their approach to social life as a measure that assures comfort and protects them from social harassment. A respondent aged under 30 who had an elementary education and no work, living in a village in the south explained her viewpoint by saying: *"I do not like to go to weddings or visit my uncle's family. Sometimes my father insists and pushes me to go out to weddings and I fight with him. I prefer to stay home because I like to be with myself away from others"*.

Another approach that respondents reported using to respond to societal attitudes and treatment was avoiding people in order to avoid the subject of marriage. Twelve (7.36%) of the subjects were reluctant to discuss the issue of marriage with people in the community in order to protect themselves from social and familial harassment. In addition, 10 (6.13%) respondents said that they did not socialize with neighbors and the neighbors did not interfere in their private lives, thus nobody discussed the issue of marriage with them. A common example of avoiding others was: *"I avoid the issue of marriage when my relatives and family talk about it"*. Responses such as *"I hear people talk but I act careless"* and *"I avoid sitting with people because they may talk about marriage"*, reflect the above-mentioned standpoint. A respondent aged over 30 who had a university education, worked in industry and lived with her siblings in a city in the south region explained her response in the following statement: *"I do not like to socialize with my neighbors. After I come back from work, I spend my time*

working in the home. Issues like marriage and children are not interesting to me. When women open this subject, I hate to talk about it".

In general, societal pressure on the respondents had a negative influence on their feelings and behavior. Some respondents reported becoming nervous and occasionally aggressive because of the social pressure. Others repressed their feelings and chose to swallow their bitterness, concealing their feeling from others. However, some respondents felt ashamed, inferior, hurt and humiliated by the attitudes and treatment of people toward them. Moreover, some respondents became worried and afraid of eventual loneliness and loss of control over their lives. A respondent aged over 30 who had a preparatory education, no work and lived in a village in the south said: *"people embarrass me in the street and weddings. They ask me why I am not married. Why my sisters who are not more pretty got married and I haven't. I get annoyed from this thing. If they say this in private, it would be easier on me"*. A second respondent aged under 30 who had a secondary education, was not employed and lived in a refugee camp in the south region said: *"the girls are restricted in their dress and movement. If she is not irritated by herself, other people annoy her and people hassle her. Single women have to conserve their honor and chastity because when they go out a lot, people talk about them. They say look, she is late; look, she went out for no reason... etc. My father says that the family who has a single girl is having a bomb"*. Another respondent aged over 35 who had an elementary education, no work and who lived with her single-parent family in a refugee camp in the middle region said: *"some girls are influenced psychologically because they are not married. They get jealous of their sisters-in-law; want to buy the same clothes like them and put make-up. They become tired emotionally and they make trouble for their families"*.

A relatively large number of the respondents believed that women who get old, live alone without social and familial support, crave for motherhood, who were the only girl who remained unmarried in her local community would feel inferior and be continually comparing herself with others who had got married, and would therefore be more vulnerable to psychological distress. In addition, unmarried women who are socially harassed; restricted in their lives and movements; disrespected by their families and society; live with their married siblings after the death of their parents without respect and freedom, are more susceptible for emotional and psychological distress.

The respondents believed that single women who were free in their movement and living; who were educated and employed; who had supportive families and had strong personalities were more resilient and less influenced by the societal pressure on them. In

addition, younger single women and those living in rural areas were believed to be more prone to societal pressure, thus they could be influenced more by the negative attitudes and treatment from their society. Moreover, unmarried women who lived in open-minded and understanding families and liberal communities are less prone to psychological disturbance. They could adapt well to being unmarried despite their educational and employment status and they have a good chance to live normally.

C. The respondents' perception of their support system as a source of help during times of distress:

Two major themes emerged in responses to the above question. The first theme was that the participants trusted their significant others and were willing to share with them their problems and life difficulties. There were two main categories of people that the respondents shared with. The first category was significant others including, family members and relatives. One-hundred and thirty-nine (82.82%) respondents reported that they liked to share with someone their general living problems and daily hassles. Female family members such as mothers, sisters, sisters-in-law and second-degree female relatives were family members with whom the respondents usually share their feelings. A respondent who had elementary education was unemployed and lived with her mother said: *"I like to talk to my mother and she comforts me. I know that if I am upset or aggravate my mother, she will accept me"*. Female relatives, especially single ones, were mentioned as confiding individuals with whom the respondents liked to talk. A respondent aged under 30 who worked as a paraprofessional and lived with her nuclear family said: *"I like to talk with my cousin. She is not married like me. We understand each another. I tell her about everything and we talk about our lives and she advises me"*. A second respondent, aged under 30 who had an elementary education, was unemployed and who lived with her stepmother and father said: *"I trust my sister- in-law. She is like my sister. All my sisters are married and live away, but my sister- in- low lives with us in the some house. She understands me and advices me to accept to marry. I trust her and I think she is a very good person"*.

On the other hand, male relatives were also mentioned as source of support for some participants. Eight (4.91%) respondents would share their feeling with their fathers or brothers, uncles or male cousins. A respondent who was educated, worked as a professional and lived in a city in the north said: *"I talk to my father and tell him about my relations and*

what happens to me at work. He trusts me and I bring my male friends to the home and they meet my family. My friends call me at home and my father answers them without a problem".

On the other hand, the second category of confiding people in the perspective of the respondents was friends who could be females or males. However, very few respondents preferred to share their problems with male friends rather than females. Two of these respondents explained that their male friends are more mature and trustworthy than their female friends or colleagues. A respondent, who lived in a city in the north region, was educated to university level but unemployed said: *"I prefer to talk to male friends rather than females because I can communicate better with them".*

On the other hand, 13 (7.98%) respondents said they would trust others but not entirely. They believed that one should not say everything to others because people gossip to others and do not keep each others' secrets. Therefore, one should select what to share or not, and with whom sharing should be done. A respondent who was employed, educated to college level, and lived in a city in the south region said: *"I talk with my mother or sisters. I talk about what happens in work or with my friend to my sister, but I don't tell them everything".*

The second theme was not confiding to anybody regardless of their relationship to the respondent. Twenty-four (14.72%) participants believed that one should not confide in others and they do not share personal information with anybody even family members. These respondents preferred not to talk to anybody and would prefer to keep all their problems, discomfort, and feeling for themselves. The reasons behinds this approach were mistrust of others; having no belief that sharing could be beneficial to them; having avoidant, withdrawn, and introverted personality characteristics. A respondent who was employed in services and lived in a village in the south region said: *"I don't like to talk to anybody. When you say anything to your friend or neighbor, they spread it to others. I do not need them because I manage like this. Why causing headache to my self".* A participant aged over 40 who was unemployed and lived with her siblings in a city in the north said: *"I like to stay alone. I do not like to talk to anybody. My life is mine as well as my secrets and I do not like any body to know how I feel. I suppress my feeling inside and that is why I am nervous ".*

However, two respondents who do not need to talk to others about their problems and discomforts, preferred to consult a book on psychology, read an interesting book, or listen to music when they are irritated or distressed. Three other participants would pray or read the Koran when they are upset or in distress because they retreat to God for asylum.

Table 6- 18

The respondents' perception of their support system as a source of help during times of distress

Major themes	Categories	No.	%
The participants trusted their significant others	Would like to share relatives and friends with their general living problems and daily hassles	139	82.82
	- Would share their feeling with male relatives	8	4.91
	- Would share with a friend	39	23.92
	- Prefer to share with a sister or mother	72	44.17
	- Ask for help of a female relative	21	12.88
Would trust others but not entirely		13	7.98

V. Research question five: how do the unmarried Palestinian women of the present study perceive the role of mental health specialists with them?

The responses to this question were classified into three main themes. The first was the respondents did not *"believe they need the help of mental health experts"*. Eighty-two (50.31%) subjects said they had never consulted such a specialist in their lives. This attitude was related to several reasons. First, the respondents did not believe that they had big problems that needed treatment, as reported by about 50% of them. Therefore, they preferred to consult a family member or a friend when they were distressed or irritated. A respondent who lived with her parents and siblings in a city in the north region said: *"I do not think that I will ever need the help of specialized people. If I need help, I have my sister and brothers and they could help me"*. A second respondent who lived with her nuclear family in a village in the south region said: *"I do not like to talk to anybody. Even my mother, I rarely talk to her. It never came to my mind to talk to a professional because I count on God"*. A third respondent aged over 35 who was educated, employed, and lived with her parents and siblings in a village in the south region said: *"I have not thought to talk to a counselor. Thanks to God I do not have big problems that need outside help"*.

The second reason for not consulting mental health experts was unavailability of such practitioners when the respondent had psychological or social difficulties, which was reported by 13 (7.98%) of the respondents. One respondent said: *"I never went to a psychologist; I don't know where to go."* The third factor was that some respondents were hesitant to consult mental health practitioners because they were worried about the stigma that is connected with

mental health professionals, which was reported by seven (4.29%) respondents. A respondent who had university education, was employed and lived in a city in the north region said: *"I did not think to see a doctor. This is out of question in our society. Maybe in the Western countries, you could do it. Here, if someone went to see a psychiatrist, people say he is crazy even if he has no problems"*. Finally, the last group of respondents preferred to seek answers for their questions in a specialized book or a popular magazine rather than going to a specialist with the risk of stigma and/or possibly not getting the needed help. A respondent, who had secondary education, was employed in services, and lived with her parents and siblings in a city in the north region said: *"In the home, I do not like to talk about my problems. I wish that I could speak to someone about my problems but I do not do that. Here people are inconsiderate. When I encounter a dilemma or a problem, I try to find the solution by myself I read a psychology book and try to understand and help myself"*.

The second theme was *"lack of confidence in mental health practitioners"*. Fourteen (8.58%) respondents believed that mental health experts could not help them with their difficulties, which is a common attitude in Palestinian society. A respondent, who was unemployed, educated to secondary level, and who lived with her nuclear family in a village in the south region said: *"Once I talked to a social worker and found that she studied something that was not her interest and when I asked her about certain things, I found that she was not knowledgeable and poorly experienced. I did not like her analysis"*.

The third theme was *"belief in the benefits of the mental health practitioners"*. A group of the respondents were convinced about the benefits of having counseling or psychotherapy for people who suffer from psychological problems, thus they said that they might consult practitioners of these disciplines if necessary. For instance, 21 (12.88%) respondents would go to see a professional if they felt the need for that. However, 30 (18.41%) respondents thought many times about going to a specialist but did not make the first step. In addition, 23 (14.11%) respondents wanted to talk to someone who is trustworthy and competent to help them to uncover their mysterious parts of their personalities and help them to find solutions for their problems. They wanted someone who is an expert and who is available in their area of residence. These respondents were hesitant and uncertain about where to go and whom to approach. A respondent who lived with her siblings in a village in the middle region said: *"I thought about seeking help from an expert because I sometimes feel I need to talk with someone who understands me, but here in my area there is nobody to consult with"*. A second respondent who had received an elementary education, worked in services and lived with her single parent in a city in the south region said: *"I tried to call a radio program that answers*

problems and questions of the public but I failed". A third respondent who was unemployed, had elementary education, and lived with her nuclear family in a refugee camp said: "I wanted to go many times but I don't know where I can find the psychologist. I wanted to vent things inside me to somebody who understands and could help me. I frequently feel irritated and cry from unfairness but don't know where to go". A second respondent aged under 30 who had elementary education and no work, and lived in a village said: "I have been waiting for someone like you to talk to. When my friend (...) told me that you are coming, I said that I have to see you. You don't know how much I needed to vent to somebody who could listen".

On other hand, 31 (19.01%) respondents reported that they would definitely consult a psychologist or counselor but not a psychiatrist. They believe that they have minor problems that need simple counseling and guidance, which could be managed by a psychologist rather than a doctor. A respondent, who had college education, was unemployed and lived in a refugee camp in the north region of the West Bank reflected this point of view in her statement: *"I don't mind going to a psychologist if I feel the need. Our problems are simple. Maybe I am nervous and break things sometimes, but this does not need a doctor. Doctors treat mad people who are in difficult conditions".*

Table 6-19

Perception of the respondents to the role of mental health specialists

Major themes	Categories	No.	%
The respondents did not believe they need the help of mental health experts	The respondents never consulted a specialist in their lives why?	82	50.31
	- Do not believe that they had big problems that need treatment	81	49.69
	- Unavailability of the practitioners	13	7.98
	- Being worried about the stigma	7	4.29
	- Believe that mental health experts could not help them	6	3.68
Lack of confidence in mental health practitioners		14	8.58
Believe in the benefits of the mental health practitioners	- Would go to see a professional if they feel the need	21	12.88
	- Thought about going to a specialist but did not make the first step	30	18.41
	- Felt the need to talk to someone who is trustworthy and competent	23	14.11
	- Would definitely consult a psychologist or counselor but not a psychiatrist	31	19.01
	- Consulted mental health experts in the past and would do so again	9	5.52

However, a few participants had actually consulted mental health experts in the past and would do so again if they felt they needed it. Nine (5.52%) of the 163 participants went to a specialist, had a few meetings and they considered them helpful. Three participants were taking medication that was prescribed by a psychiatrist or a neurologist. A respondent, who had a university education, was employed, and lived in the north region said: *"once I talked to a social worker about my obsessions and he listened to me very well"*. A second respondent said: *"few weeks ago, I went to see a psychiatrist but I did not tell my family. I needed to talk to an expert because I felt strangled from my life.. I felt that all my life turned upside down and my mood was changing. It was not me and I felt that life was tasteless. The doctor prescribed some medication to me and asked me to go back to him when I need "*.

In summary, most of the respondents did not think that they had serious psychological problems and difficulties that require intervention by a mental health expert. They preferred to consult a friend or a family member if they needed a consultation. In general, the respondents had negative attitudes about mental health experts especially psychiatrists. This was not strange because the Palestinian society has consistent views. However, it seems that some changes have occurred in the younger generation. They started to seek help when they encounter unusual situations that could not be solved through friends and relatives.

Summary:

This chapter presented the results of the qualitative analysis of the interview data, based on the research questions. This research project has provided a conceptual understanding of the factors that influence the mental health of unmarried women in Palestinian society. It has also highlighted the opinions and perceptions of the unmarried women and their evaluations of themselves. The investigator believes that this analysis was able to address and answer the research questions and explore the self-perceptions of the unmarried Palestinian women, and their mental health status. Moreover, this chapter analyzed the current sociocultural and living conditions of the Palestinian unmarried women within the global international view and vision of women. Similarities and differences were discussed and some generalizations were made as possible.

Chapter seven presents discussion of the finding of the study with emphasis on the theoretical framework that has been used in the study. In addition, the mental health of the participants, their self-perception, their views of marriage, their reasons for remaining single

in Palestinian society, will be analyzed in relation to demographic variables and cultural and societal values and opinions about unmarried women. It will also present the results of the qualitative and quantitative data and their relatedness and interface.

Chapter Seven

Discussion

Introduction:

This chapter presented the interpretation and discussion of the findings of the existing study. Critical analysis of the methodology and design, tools, data collection and method of data analysis were presented first. This chapter presents a critical analysis of the respondents' characteristics in comparison to the general population. The respondents' self perception in relation to their Mental Health State will be discussed with reference to societal perspectives on marriage and symbolic interactionist perspectives. Moreover, the Mental Health State of the respondents will be explained and discussed in relation to the Palestinian context and in reference to the international literature. The chapter also encompasses a discussion of the influence of remaining unmarried on the Mental Health State of the respondents with reference to other variables. Limitations of the study will be presented in the last section of the chapter.

I. Revisiting the aim of the study

The main aim of this study was to investigate the influence of remaining unmarried on Palestinian women's self-perception and Mental Health State. The self-perception and Mental Health State of the participants were explained with reference to six demographic variables: educational level, age, residence, region of living, living arrangements and employment. A comparison was made between respondents who were interviewed and those who were not. In order to achieve these aims, two major hypotheses and five research questions were formulated.

II. Methodological considerations

A. Methods and design:

A non-experimental ex post facto design was used to investigate the Mental Health States of unmarried respondents in the current study. This design described characteristics of the sample without control or manipulation of the independent variables (Baily, 1997; Polit &

Hungler, 1995). The qualitative part of this study owes much to Stevens et al (1993), who suggested that qualitative research, such as the current study, starts from a theoretical framework and finds connections between sets of results, which lead to formulation of a theory, and verifiable hypotheses. The phenomenological approach used in the current study was a logical beginning for obtaining knowledge about unexplained phenomena (Being unmarried after the age of 25) within Palestinian society. Linninger says, "Qualitative inquiries are useful to generate rich descriptions and insights about unknown or vaguely known phenomena" (p. 398).

Despite the limitations of the qualitative design, it was chosen for the present study because little information was available about unmarried women in the Palestinian context. The phenomenological design was used because the investigator was curious to learn about the lived experience of unmarried Palestinian women and how their lives are constructed. The investigator believed that the phenomenological design would initiate baseline knowledge about the population of unmarried women in Palestinian Society. Polit and Hunger (1995) say: "Qualitative research offers unified view of objective and subjective realities, and better describes the complexity of lived experiences of subjects" (p. 517). Hence, since remaining unmarried is a relatively new phenomenon in Palestinian society, it was logical to use the phenomenological approach to study it.

The phenomenological approach was selected to gain as much understanding and knowledge as possible on the issue under investigation. However, the phenomenological approach has its limitations. On one hand, phenomenology helped the investigator understand the lived experience of the respondents. A search for meaning is the final characteristic of phenomenological research, in which the method is used to interrogate the phenomena themselves in the search for meaning. However, phenomenology does not mean that the researcher should approach the data with presuppositions. On the contrary, phenomenological investigators should set aside their presuppositions and instead deduce suppositions from the qualitative data collected from the respondents (Knaak, 1984).

The phenomenological approach was useful for the investigator because it helped her understand the phenomenon of remaining unmarried among Palestinian women. It was possible for the investigator to learn about the lives of the respondents and to understand their viewpoints and the circumstances under which they were living. In addition, the investigator was able to infer some suppositions from the qualitative and quantitative data, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

On the other hand, the phenomenological approach does not facilitate inference of

causality or precise relationships between the variables under study (Knaak, 1984). Phenomenology does not intend to infer causal relationships between independent and dependent variables (Stevens et al, 1993). It was not possible for the investigator to determine which variables had more influence on the mental health or self-perception of the participants in the present study. Therefore, propositions and hypotheses could be inferred but causality was impossible to deduce. Further research using positivistic methods, random sampling, and control of certain variables is recommended so as to be able to infer causal relationships between variables. Other research methods could also be used to infer causality. This is a recommendation for future research.

Triangulation of approaches was used in data collection and analysis. A self-report checklists and face-to-face semi-structured interviews were used in data collection. According to Bailey (1997), using different data collection techniques to investigate the same construct enhances the validity of the study. Triangulation was also used in data analysis. Data analysis was done quantitatively and qualitatively. Correlational and regression analyses were used to analyze quantitative data and the interpretive phenomenological approach was used to analyze the qualitative data. The Spearman rank-order correlation coefficients, multiple regression analysis and Kruskal-Wallis test were used to address the hypotheses of the present study. Qualitative analysis was also used to answer the research questions. A quantitative correlation design was used to examine the relationship between educational level and age, and mental health state of the respondents. Correlation studies are used to predict relationships among variables (Polit & Hunger, 1995). However, in this study prediction of relationships between dependent and independent variables was not the main goal therefore; qualitative and quantitative analyses were incorporated to infer associations between self-perceptions and the mental health state of the respondents. Knafel and Gallo (1995) attest that triangulation in data analysis enhances the credibility of the findings of the study and helps in achieving a holistic contextual portrayal of the studied phenomena (Dawson & Couchman, 1995).

B. Tools of data collection:

Two tools were employed in the data collection. The first was Derogatis Symptom Checklist 90-Revised (L.S SCL.90-R), developed by Derogatis and administered to evaluate the mental health state of the respondents. The second tool was a semi-structured interview guide composed of fifteen probing questions. The investigator developed the guide in

consultation with mental health professionals and two academic supervisors. The participants' viewpoints and opinions about marriage, their reactions to being unmarried and their self-perception were evaluated by means of this guide.

Internal consistency and split half techniques were used to test the reliability of the SCL-90-R for the current study. Reliability coefficients were 0.93 for equal length Spearman Brown; 0.95 for part one and 0.95 for part two. Therefore the test had a very good level of internal reliability. Content validity of the SCL-90-R was difficult to obtain, thus the investigator accepted the results of previous studies, which used the tool internationally and within the Palestinian context. Seven experts evaluated the interview questions for content validity, clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness. Comments, made by experts, were incorporated into the interview guide. Additional changes were made and a final form of the guide was constructed after piloting.

Three research experts in addition to the investigator oversaw the validity of the thematic analysis of the interview. The investigator and the three experts approved the final version of the themes and subcategories. Thematic analysis in qualitative research was emphasized by Pearson (1997), Knafl and Webster (1987) Morse and Field (1996). The interpretative phenomenological approach was used to analyze the qualitative data. This approach was appropriate to provide clear and concrete themes and categories for each of the interview questions.

Demographic data was collected in categorical form. This was an issue of concern for future research; as such data might have confounded the results and led to the loss of information. In addition, the categorical nature of the data limited the types of statistical analysis that could be used in the present study.

C. Sample size

A non-probability disproportional quota sample was used in the present study. In qualitative research, convenience sampling is most common kind of sample selection and is well accepted by qualitative researchers. The convenience sample was used based on the characteristics of Palestinian society (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998). The characteristics of the sample place limitations on the generalizability of the findings of this study. The non-random quality of the sample, which was caused by the lack of any official registration of the Palestinian population led to uncertainties as to whether the sample is representative of the Palestinian population as a whole. There may be weak representation of

certain population groups including educational level, age, and residential groups (urban & rural). Non-probability sampling limits the generalizability of the research as some segments of the population may be under represented (Swenson et al, 1996).

Three hundred unmarried women between age 25 and 50 were selected for the present study. They came from the three districts of the West Bank of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Sample size should be considered in any research; however, a large sample is needed for correlation studies (Burns & Grow 1997). In multiple regression analysis, 10 to 15 participants per independent variable is an appropriate ratio to aim for. Some researchers suggest a 5:1 ratio of participants to independent variables for a large effect size and a 20:1 for a small effect size (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989). The Mental Health State was correlated and regressed with six independent variables. The sample size was 300; therefore the ratio of subjects per independent variable was 50:1. The sample size was very good for this quantitative aspect of the study. One-hundred-sixty-three respondents were interviewed. This was a relatively large sample size because in qualitative research a much smaller sample is usually considered to be sufficient (Talbot, 1995). The sample size was relatively acceptable for a PhD thesis and the number of respondents who were interviewed was large, which enhanced the credibility of this study.

D. Statistical analysis

Computer analysis of quantitative data was done using SPSS. The SCL-90-R was analysed according to the Derogatis's (1993) manual. For the purpose of this study, Spearman rank-order correlations and multiple regression analyses using stepwise elimination procedures were used to analysis the SCL-90-R in relation to demographic and independent variables. The correlation coefficient measures the degree of linear association between two variables (Shott, 1990). Correlation analysis was used to gain insight into the direction and the power of the relationship between the demographic variables and Mental Health State. Parametric and non-parametric correlation tests are used according to type of data (Murno & Batten, 1993). In this study, the Spearman rho formula is used because the data is presented in sets of ranks (Murno & Batten, 1993).

Multiple regression provides a means of measuring the effect of several factors on one dependent variable (Brink & Wood, 1998). Multiple regression analysis using the stepwise method was used to examine the influence of the demographic variables on the mental health state of the participants (Agresti & Finlay 1997). Stepwise regression analysis is used to

determine the independent variables that influence the dependent variable the most (Munro & Page, 1993).

The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to evaluate the relationship between the demographic variables and mental health state. Kruskal-Wallis is a test used in non-parametric studies where data is organized into groups or numerical ranks and for ordinal data placed in percentages, frequencies and proportions (Witte, 1985). In addition, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used in the present study because scores on the nine symptom dimensions were not distributed normally. Using the Kruskal-Wallis test may yield problems, because any kind of inequality between populations would lead to rejection of the null hypothesis without knowing the basis of such rejection (Witte, 1985).

Thematic and content analyses were used to analyze the interview with reference to research questions. The result of the analysis was reported qualitatively and triangulated with the results of the SCL-90-R. Quasi-statistics, according to Polit and Hungler (1995), allow the investigator to accept or negate certain null hypotheses or a theory. Polit and Hungler support the use of combinations of qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods in research; because this helps us better understand human experiences (Polit & Hungler, 1995). In regards to the interview questions, only simple calculations and percentages were performed to the various themes and subcategories of each question without using statistical analyses.

III. Annotations on the characteristics of the participants:

Forty-eight point three percent of the respondents were in the age category 25-30 years; 32% had ages of 31-36 years; 12% belonged to the age group 37-42 years and 7.7% in the age group 43-50 years. The Palestinian studies of currently married women show that 5.6% of the age group 25-29 got married after age 25; 10.7% of the women of age group 49-45 got married after age 25 (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1997, p. 24). According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (1998), 16% of the women of the age group 35-39; 20% of the women of the age group 25-29 and 12% of the women aged between 35-39 were unmarried (Palestinian Central Bureau, 1998, p. 17). This reflects that the older the woman, the less likely she will remain unmarried. The chances of marriage still exist but a certain number of women eventually remain single. According to Sader (1996), many Arabic women accept marriage to previously married men to avoid remaining unmarried after they reach their 30s.

Thirty five percent of the respondents lived in the north region of the West Bank;

32.3% lived in the middle region and 32.7% lived in the south region. Forty-six percent of the participants came from urban areas, 39.3% came from villages, and 14.7% lived in refugee camps. Despite the variation in population density, the rate of women being unmarried was approximately the same (31%) among the three residential localities of the Palestinian land (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998)

The demographic data of the participants indicated high levels of education and employment compared to the general population of Palestinian women. Thirty-nine percent of the participants were unemployed; 29.3% worked in professional or paraprofessional jobs; 16% worked in industrial and agricultural jobs; 15.7% were employed in services. These findings indicated that 61% of the participants were financially independent. Financial independence ensures security and enhances the individual's self-esteem (Rifa'i, 1982; Schnabel, 1986; Mc David & Harari, 1974). However, the high rate of employment among the participants did not match the national figures, as women constitute 11.3% of the Palestinian labor force (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998). In the Palestinian society, there is a negative relationship between employment and age. The older the unmarried woman, the less chance she would be employed. This represented the cultural belief about women as dependent on men. In the Palestinian studies, 37% of the employed women have never been married (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998). This data reflected the eagerness of women to seek employment when they remain unmarried. Unmarried women who are employed could support themselves and be independent, which avoid burdening their families with their expenses.

Fifty-point three percent of the participants earned college or university degrees; 23.3% completed secondary education and 26.3% completed elementary education. A thorough analysis of the educational background of the participants shows that they were well educated. This possibly has three reasons. First, unmarried women in Palestinian society choose to continue their education to the highest level possible when they do not get married, which leads to a high levels of education. The second was that the women who pursued higher education may be more likely to reject unsuitable marriage proposals. Therefore, they remain single. In addition, the exceptionally high level of education of the participants relates to the exclusion of illiterate participants from this study. Higher education decreases Palestinian women's chances of marriage because it delays the age of marriage (Jad, 1995). Exclusion of illiterate women from this study limited its generalizability because it did not represent all sectors of the population of Palestinian unmarried women.

Although education is important and valued in Palestinian society, there remains a stronger emphasis on the education of men. However, education for women has improved in the last ten years (Daraghmeh, 1990; Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994). Women represent 42.5% of the university graduates and 51% of community college graduates (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998 p. 68). The high level of education of women is a positive indicator for their social status as well as for their chances of employment. However, not all participants in the current study who received higher education had good chances of getting high-quality jobs. The results of the present study indicated that 9.7% of the participants who had university degrees were temporarily unemployed. This was not extraordinary as 50 % of the unemployed females in the West Bank had obtained more than 13 years of education (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998 p. 144). The high levels of unemployment among highly educated women possibly related to the scarcity of employment chances, cultural beliefs about women's work, and limited opportunities of working in non-traditional jobs.

Fifty-four point seven percent of the participants lived with both parents, with or without siblings; 33% lived with one parent with or without siblings; 8% lived with siblings; 2% lived alone or with female friends, 1.7% lived in step-parent families; 0.7% lived with second-degree relatives. This result is congruent with the Arabic culture, which views women as vulnerable persons and in need of protection, and that their families are responsible for their livelihood (Al-Sa'adawi, 1990; Al-Marneisi, 1987; Abbass, 1987; Sader, 1996). Arabic society socializes women to be dependent on men and family (Anderson, 1999; Al-Marneisi, 1987; Abbass, 1987; Manasra, 1990). Despite their age, educational level and employment status, women are not free to live wherever they like and it is often believed that they should remain with their families. Even when their parents are dead, single women live with siblings, second degree relatives, or friends. On the other hand, living with family or friends has its advantages because the single woman has a social support system and has less threat of feeling lonely. Social support decreases the vulnerability to psychological distress and prevents relapse (Johnson, 1997). Nevertheless, qualitative support does not come from having a large family; rather it emerges from confidantes being available when the person needs them, accepting one another in the family, and empathic understanding (Millikan, 1987).

IV. Revisiting the theoretical framework:

The symbolic interactionist perspective was appropriate for the present study and helped the investigator to comprehend the lived experience of the unmarried Palestinian women. This made a good fit with the researcher's interest in the effects of social interactions on the development of social identity among unmarried women in the Palestinian society. However, the symbolic interactionist perspective was insufficient to explain the influence of other variables on the mental health and self-perception of the unmarried women including the influence of intrapsychic and biological variables.

V. Research questions and hypothesis testing:

A. Reasons for remaining unmarried among the participants

The participants remain unmarried for various reasons, including sociocultural, familial, and personal factors. At the personal level, 66.3% of the participants mentioned a "poor match" between the potential husbands and the girls' expectations. The participants believed that certain characteristics in the man who proposes to them were essential to ensure happiness and sustainability of marriage. These characteristics were broad and general and they match what any woman would say about the "appropriate husband" for her. In addition, 31.9% respondents believed that the Palestinian families sometimes refuse the men who proposed to their daughters if they don't fit their standards of "the good husband" thus, this delays or diminishes the possibilities of marriage for their daughters.

A good husband, according to the participants, is mature; financially competent to support a family; independent and assertive; lives in a separate house; is religiously committed; respects his future wife and treats her well; has experience in life and could manage daily-life obligations; is loyal to his wife; is open-minded and flexible; and is a kind and loving. The respondents wanted idealized husbands to maintain their happiness and avoid problems that they observed happening to their sisters and peers. These characteristics of the good husband were proposed by sociologists and family theorists as positive factors for achieving happiness for couples (Hasan, 19981; Al-Khouli, 1989). Waiting for the "best fitting" husband year after year usually leads to delayed marriage and eventually singlehood especially when the woman is not sure about what she wants or when other factors exist in her life that have delayed her marriage. In addition her family's conditions and objections about the potential husband of their daughter add to the difficulties of some women.

It is taken for granted that a single woman in the Arabic society is not always free to

select her husband and that her family has a substantial influence in the choice of potential husbands for her (Farah, 1992; Al-Khouli, 1984). Since Palestinian society is typically patriarchal, the father or the oldest brother decides who the appropriate husband is for the woman. Therefore, when someone asks for the hand of the girl, her family decides to inform her or not about it. When they ask for her opinion, she may be able to accept or refuse the man. Usually, the girl practices her freedom of choice after her family's initial approval of the man, which means that the decision is within the hands of the family (Farah, 1992). In fact, the girl does not know about all the men who propose to her unless she knows beforehand that someone is going to ask for her hand, which is not always possible in a traditional society like Palestinian society.

On the other hand, most of the respondents wanted husbands who are not currently married, or if so, do not have young children. They preferred to stay single rather than marry a man who is already married. They were worried about the complications of taking care of children who are not their own because this is a big responsibility and also would jeopardize their happiness. There is a negative cultural stereotype about marrying an already married man who has children. Therefore, it was not surprising to see that the participants were skeptical about polygamy and step-parenting. However, marrying a bachelor man could be relatively difficult after the woman reaches her 30s. Therefore, women who are eager to marry accept marrying already married men even if they have children. Despite the complications of polygamy or step parenting, unmarried women accept these choices to avoid remaining "unmarried" with the entire negative stereotype connected to it. About 3% of the respondents attested that refusal of polygamous marriage could leave some women as unmarried after certain age. Nevertheless, two alternatives are there for those who refuse polygamy. One alternative is to accept being single and adjust to it, and the second is to remain unmarried while hating it with the possibility of suffering from the bad treatment and social harassment. Taking into consideration the low level of polygamy in Palestinian society, one could assume that more women refuse it as a choice nowadays.

Emotional and psychological factors were common reasons for remaining single as reported by many participants. These psychological factors included previous bad experiences in love or engagement that were reported by 6.1% respondents; fear of marriage, fear of failure, and fear of the responsibilities and obligations of marriage reported by 9.2% of the participants; having negative feelings about marriage; and not trusting men. Negative experiences with love and men left psychological scars on some respondents and made them refuse marriage and men. However, the negative feelings were not necessarily caused by

being single; rather they were outcomes of disappointments about marrying and motherhood. In addition, some women might hate men and marriage to defend their self image against further failure and rejection by men who have in any case stopped asking for their hands. Remaining unmarried and having negative experiences with love and men leads to a vicious circle of bitterness and disappointment for those women who are anxious about marrying.

At the familial level, the economic conditions for the girl or her family were mentioned by 16% of the respondents as factors leading to remaining single. When the girl's family is poor and she is the breadwinner, she willingly refuses to marry to continue this obligation. On the contrary, when the girl's family is wealthy they may turn down marriage proposals for their daughter unless the man is a close relative. Wealthy families may fear loss of their property and wealth if their daughters select an unrelated man. Nevertheless, cousins are not always available and they may marry women who are not related to them. As a result, the woman remains unmarried whether she came from a very poor or a very rich family. She either sacrifices her happiness for the interests of her family, or she is manipulated to give up her happiness for the welfare of her family. In both situations, many girls swallow their pain and agony and give up their dreams. When asked about their opinions, the respondents claim that they chose their destiny and are happy with the sacrifices made. In reality, the socialization of the Arab girl prepares her for these sacrifices. She is raised to give up her needs and wishes, and to comply with the wishes of her family (Manasra, 1994; Al-Sa`adawi, 1990). Although most of the Palestinian women do not take their inheritance, for those who are wealthy, their families use their authority to sabotage the girls' chances for marrying by claiming that it is the family's right to conserve their assets and wealth.

Another familial factor which resulted in women remaining unmarried was the respondents' need to look after old or sick parents or young siblings, which was reported by 4% of the respondents. This was especially true for girls who were the oldest or the youngest among their siblings. In patriarchal societies, an important role of women is looking after other family members especially her brothers and parents. Again, it is the woman who sacrifices for her family even when she has brothers. In Arab culture, men are financially and socially responsible for their parents and young siblings. However, in many families, sons get married and move to separate houses and leave their sisters to look after their parents and young siblings. In such situations, the sister becomes obligated to sacrifice her happiness for the welfare of her family, whether she likes it or not.

At the sociocultural level, the high operating costs of marriage were considered a relevant factor for delaying or stalling marriage by 23.3% of the respondents. In the Arab

society as well as in some other countries, men are responsible for furnishing the house of the newly married couple and paying all the expenses of the marriage party, gold for the bride, and dowry. Therefore, many men cannot afford these expenses and spend years saving money until they are ready to marry. This might take a number of years, which means that they would marry at a late age. Although they are over 30, they seek women who are about 10 years younger than they are. Unfortunately, older women who are mature and well developed to be wives and mothers are left behind and rarely approached by men looking for a wife. These findings were supported by the respondents who talked about early marriage as a factor causing Palestinian women to remain single. Twenty-four point five percent of the respondents believed that early marriages, which happen to women before the age of 18, is a major factor in singlehood in Palestinian society. The rate of early marriages in Palestinian society ranges from 40% to 80% (Manasra, 1989; Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994; Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998; Al-Safadi, 1992). It is noted that men tend to marry young, beautiful, white women who have no disabilities or shortcomings; who are less educated than they are; and ready to leave work when their husbands request that they do so.

On the other hand, 5.5% of the respondents thought that men prefer to marry well-educated and employed women to help in family responsibilities. Well-educated and independent women have better opportunities to select potential husbands. Therefore, these women find men who are poorly educated and unsophisticated unsuitable as potential marriage partners (Farah, 1992). They select men of whom they have previous knowledge, perhaps a colleague at work or university. This is not always possible, as many men prefer to marry less educated and more dependent women. Men in patriarchal societies such as Palestine prefer to marry women who obey them and comply with their orders and wishes (Farah, 1992). They marry women whom they could control easily as they want to be decision-makers in their families. Therefore, few men choose to marry assertive and emancipated women (Al-Sa`adawi, 1990; Al-Marneisi, 1997; Ahmed, 1992). Palestinian men are similar to other Arab men. They feel threatened when they live with women who are independent and competitive and they might not tolerate this kind of marital relationship (Kevorkian, 1998; Johnson, 1993; Orabi, 1990).

Another sociocultural reason for remaining single among Palestinian and Arab women is endogamy and consanguineous marriage. Endogamous marriage is one of the reasons for remaining single among Palestinian women as mentioned by 9.2% respondents. Palestinian society prefers endogamy especially among first-degree cousins. The rate of endogamy in Palestinian society is 49% (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998). Endogamous

marriage preserves family's wealth and land and conserves the extended families in the society. Therefore, most of the Palestinian families prefer to give their daughters to their first degree relatives and if not available to second degree ones. These findings indicate that when the woman does not have a close relative to marry, she probably stays unmarried unless a man proposes to her from another clan or village. Unfortunately, many women in villages do not leave their villages easily due to cultural and social constraints, which decrease their chances of meeting men and marrying. However, educated and employed women have better chances for marrying because they have more freedom of movement and social interactions.

A financial factor for the increase of the numbers of unmarried women in Palestinian society was the tendency of men to marry women who are foreigners or carry an Israeli I.D, which was reported by 5.5% of the respondents. This is usually done with an opportunistic intention because some men believe that they have better chances of getting a job or to travel abroad when they acquire a foreign citizenship. This situation happens because of the bad political and economic situation of Palestine under occupation. Most Palestinian men do not have permanent jobs and, if they do, they are not well paid. Therefore, they seek desperate solutions to support themselves and their families. If this phenomenon happens widely, many women living in the Palestinian Authority land will be left with fewer potential husbands. Fortunately, this is still not a widespread phenomenon and only began after the first uprising. Women's emancipation and freedom of work and movement may have made them less eager to marry as 10.4% of the participants said. One way to emancipate women is through higher education (Mayers, 1986; JMCC, 1995). Twenty-four point five percent of respondents believed that the women's wish to pursue education to college or university levels would delay their marriage, thus they become older than the preferred age for marriage in Palestinian society. Being financially independent and living a fulfilled and active life made some respondents more reluctant to select marriage as a choice, especially when potential husbands who may provide good compensation are not available. Acquiring higher education and pursuing employment and financial stability enhances women's self-esteem and renders them more assertive and self-confident. Therefore, about 3% of the respondents willingly refused marriage unless the man was capable of providing freedom and respect, financial stability, and a decent life. Today's women do not see marriage as their destiny and they think that marriage may deprive them of their chances for work and freedom of movement, which is one of the advantages of singlehood.

Few respondents gave spiritual reasons for being single. Twenty point nine percent of the respondents believed that it was their destiny or fate, and it was God's will for them to remain single. In addition, a few other respondents related their singlehood to the evil eye or demonic influence upon them. When people do not know the reasons of their problems, they sometimes refer to supernatural as possible causes of illness or misfortune (Al- Raies, 1995; Al-Quds Open University, 2000). This is sometimes a relief to the individual because he or she does not blame him or herself or feel guilty for causing the problem. Such a mechanism is temporarily adaptive for individuals and reduces their stress. However, when the individual is not relieved by his or her spiritual beliefs, he or she retreats to mysterious thinking and reasoning such as believing in the influence of jinn and evil spirits.

Nevertheless, some women may give up the idea of matrimony when they lose their hope for motherhood. About 6% of the respondents suggested that some girls reject the whole idea of marriage because they got old. In Arab society, there are fewer chances for marrying as the woman gets older because she cannot conceive. In the Palestinian society, there is glory connected to having many children. This is the reason behind having big families in Palestinian society. The fertility rate in the Palestinian society is 6.06 children per woman (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998). On the other hand, many women might think about marrying even if they got old because they wanted someone to look after them, support them, and accompany them through senescence. Since fear of loneliness was one of the frequently mentioned fears of the respondents, one could conclude that at least for some unmarried women, marriage was preferred to singlehood even if it happened at a late age.

In addition, 5.5% of the respondents believed that many girls stay single simply because nobody had ever proposed to them. This finding is interesting because previously it had not been widely thought that such a thing could happen. However, personal experience of the respondents suggests otherwise. It seems that some women were not noticed in society and had never been considered as potential wives by men, at least not to the extent that would tempt a man to propose marriage. This could be related to individual characteristics, familial factors, or for unknown reasons. Whatever the implicit factors, these women may well feel abandoned and unwanted. Every human being needs to be acknowledged and approved by others (Millikan, 1987). Women may wish to feel 'feminine' and one way for that is through acknowledgment by people of the opposite sex. Therefore, women who have never been acknowledged by any man may feel neglected and unattractive. Such feelings are painful indeed for any woman and may lead to more psychological distress if they do not find help or compensation.

Unsurprisingly, 6.1% of the respondents couldn't identify the possible causes of singlehood in their society; 4.3% were unaware of the factors that lead to their singlehood. Logically speaking, nobody could determine the exact reasons behind this phenomenon in Palestinian society. Therefore, this response is not surprising. Indeed, multiple reasons may underlie singlehood among Palestinian women, and the respondents talked about possible and potential factors but no one could identify the reasons with any degree of certainty. However, the respondents mentioned the reasons for remaining unmarried as they perceived them, but we cannot tell how realistic this perception is.

B. Perceptions of marriage:

Marriage was considered an essential and important event in the life of the participants. Even the respondents, who listed various disadvantages of married life, considered that their lives would be better and easier if they were to get married. Most of the respondents viewed marriage essentially as advantageous, thus they believed that it has the power to improve their living conditions and makes them happier.

At the economic level, 16.6 % of the interviewees thought that marriage provides economic stability and security especially for unemployed women. In addition, 11.66% of respondents reported that marriage would secure them financially after the death of their parents. However, some employed respondents wanted to marry to get relief because they were exhausted by their work. Whether the woman was employed or not, marrying a financially stable man provides for her needs and protects her from an uncertain future. Although an increasing number of educated, financially independent, and assertive women are choosing single life, fear of isolation drives these women to look for marriage to synchronize with social expectations and mainstream cultural norms (Farah, 1992). Therefore, it is not unexpected to see that the bulk of independent women accept conventional marriage as an alternative to remaining unmarried and falling into a negatively valued role within their society.

However, marital life is not always free of financial problems as reported by 10.43% of the respondents. A number of respondents expected financial difficulties in married life especially if the husband were to become unemployed or incapable of supporting his family. These respondents believed that marriage involves financial problems, which threaten the happiness of the couple and children and deprives them of their basic needs. In a society like Palestine, when only 12% of the labor force is female (Palestinian Central Bureau of

Statistics, 1998), it is understandable that most women see that a decent living is achieved either through work or, more likely, through marrying a man who is able to support his family. Women in patriarchal society depend on men for a living, but when they are married, they depend on their husbands. Until a Palestinian woman becomes actively involved in the labor market, she has to rely on her brother, father or husband to maintain her living standards; a life that depends on men.

Marriage was perceived as a means of protection for the participants. First, at the social level, 14% of the respondents believed that marriage protects women from social harassment and irritation from others, which was a reason for preferring marriage over remaining single. When the woman is married, she could move freely in the society and no one would scrutinize her judgementally or suspect her behaviour. People think that married women would protect the name of their husbands and they will be concerned about their children, therefore they will conform to a narrow remit of socially acceptable behaviours. Married women are freer to leave the house to do things for their children and household, to a greater extent than single women. They could go shopping, visiting and share in social activities under the claim of doing things for their families or the family of their husbands.

Second, protection from an uncertain future was an important goal for marrying as expressed by 15.34% of the respondents, who wished to be married in order to have children to look after them when they get old or become sick. For unemployed respondents, it was important for them to marry so their forthcoming children would look after them. However, for those who were employed, many respondents wanted to marry because they were worried about senility and illness, as they would age alone. This was exceptionally true for the respondents whose parents were dead because they feared dependency on brothers and their children. In a society where there is no insurance for the elderly, unmarried women is very likely to get worried about the future and the possibility of living under many reduced circumstances.

The third kind of protection was protecting the honor of the woman as 11.7 % of the respondents believed. Since marriage was perceived as a means that provides love and sexual fulfillment as reported by 15.95% of the respondents, it was therefore believed to prevent adultery. The respondents believed that marriage conserves the woman's reputation and honor "Al-sharaf" and protects her from doing disgraceful behavior which could ruin her purity and chastity. In Arab and Islamic countries, the honour of the family is connected to the honour of women. The honor of the woman is connected to being decent, and maintaining her virginity for an unmarried women. Therefore, the unmarried woman should refrain from having sexual

relationships. It is believed to be shameful for a woman to have sex without marriage and this shame is a shame for the whole family. If the woman had sex and the family finds out about it, she may be punished by being killed (Kevorkian, 1998). This killing is known as "*killing for the honour of the family*". One of the males in the family usually does the killing, and the purpose is to cleanse the dishonour with blood (Kevorkian, 1998). In collective cultures such as Palestinian society, the issue of honour is an essential issue. Honour is the "face" of the family rather than the individual (Al-Sa`adawi, 1974). Therefore, when the face of the family is disfigured, plastic surgery should be done; in this situation, the girl who disfigured the face of the family is punished by killing, and the face of the family is purified again (Al-Sa`adawi, 1974).

When the life of the unmarried woman at her family's house is not comfortable, about 15% of the participants believed that the only escape and refuge for them is marriage and moving out from the family. Many girls marry to get rid of heavy household chores and responsibilities, exploitation by the family, and maltreatment. Those women who remained unmarried had to live under difficult circumstances if their families treated them badly. Nevertheless, the unmarried women were ignorant to fact that married women are also burdened by household responsibilities and they may be exploited and maltreated in marriage as well as when they are single. Family studies lead to the belief that women are abused despite their marital status and socioeconomic background (Johnson, 1997; UNICEF, 2000).

Marriage provides social status and respect as reported by 55.2% of the respondents. In addition, independence in living and decision making was reported as an advantage by 18.41% of the respondents. The respondents wanted to have their own houses where they can feel in control and have full authority over their lives. The married woman is more valued and respected in Palestinian society. The respondents believed that married women are freer in their living and decisions because they manage their houses alone or with consultation of their husbands. However, these viewpoints could be misleading. In patriarchal society, men control the lives of women and children and they make the main decisions in the family. Nevertheless, in some issues such as childcare and household responsibilities, women are freer to make decisions. In the end, if the man likes the way his wife manages the house, he will leave her alone and if not he may interfere and gives different orders.

Moreover, 13.4% respondents believed that marriage provides more freedom of social mobility for the women. This freedom includes freedom of dress, work, to move around, and socialization. However, this opinion was opposed by 44.2% respondents who thought that marriage places limitations and restrictions on women. These restrictions included limited

chances for education, work, and social activity; control of the dressing style of the married woman by her husband, which were interesting findings. Decreased chances for maintaining work or being forced by the husband to leave work were other kinds of problems of marriage in the perspective of 15.95% respondents. Many potential problems in marriage are caused by the man's control of the life of the woman. In patriarchal societies, men control and manipulate the lives of women in the family. Their level of control may extend to deciding what a woman wears, where and when she could work, whether she is free to travel or not, and whether she could pursue her education during the engagement and after marriage.

The findings of the present study were congruent with Al-Sa`adawi (1990) who found that married Egyptian women were more stressed by house and children responsibilities, which increased their psychological complaints. It seemed that married women had certain freedom that unmarried women do not have and the opposite is true. Unmarried women are freer in social movement if they are not busy with house responsibilities. However, single women are free to move around if their families allowed them to do that. In addition, single women are free to dress only according to what their families approve, while married women are free to wear what their husbands approve. Again, in patriarchal societies, the level of freedom a woman has is determined by the type of family she has. If her father, brother, or husband is liberal, the woman is exposed to certain levels of freedom of social mobility, dress, and work.

At the emotional level, marriage in the view of 16.6% of the interviewees' perspective provides passion and companionship where the couples share their happiness and problems. In general, about 16% of the respondents believed that marriage provides intimacy, friendship, nurturance, and someone to share life with. However, these needs can be fulfilled through the family and work colleagues for unmarried women if they are supportive and understanding to the needs of the woman. Therefore, except for sexual needs and motherhood, other social and emotional needs of the unmarried woman can be met successfully outside the marital relationship. Actually, many respondents mentioned that they fulfilled their social needs from their peers, friends and family members.

At the psychological level, half of the respondents perceived marriage as a preservative and balancing factor for the woman. This means that as long as the woman is not married, she feels incomplete and unsettled. She always searches for the right man or waits apprehensively for a future husband. This situation could lead to feelings of anxiety, irritability, anguish, hypervigilance, and worry.

At the spiritual level, (5.52%) respondents looked at marriage as a necessity to come to terms with their religious obligations. This viewpoint synchronizes with the religious view that considers marriage as "half belief in God" and that the Muslim is not a perfect believer if not married. Although Palestinian society is naturally religious, most of the respondents did not have a religious perspective about marriage. However, most of the respondents considered marriage as a destiny or fate that was controlled by an outside power. They believed that getting married or remaining single was a matter of luck or fate, which is a kind spiritual belief. In the Palestinian society, most of the people believe in the supernatural and God's will, thus they wait for marriage to happen by their deity's good will. If marriage does not happen, women surrender to God's wishes and live adaptively or wait for salvation.

Motherhood is a traditionally connected to women. Fifty-five point two percent of the respondents consider the most important and the greatest advantage of marriage is having children and establishing their own families. This finding supported the findings of Sayyed Ouais who studied college students' perception of the roles they would like to perform in life (Farah, 1992). Ouais found that 32% of the sample saw themselves as mothers and wives (Farah, 1992). Because Arab women are not able to have children out of wedlock, their hope for motherhood declines if they are not married. When marriage does not happen, the unmarried women absorb their pain and try to compensate for their longing for children by loving and caring for their brothers' offspring.

It was interesting to note that the need for motherhood was mentioned here as a highly valued advantage for marriage in general, whilst it was not mentioned frequently by the respondents when they talked about their own reason for wanting to marry. For instance, about 10% of the respondents did not consider having children as their main reason for wanting to marry because other needs were more important to them. Marriage therefore was more important to women because it potentially brings children as a natural outcome. It seems that having children as a product of marriage is a socially and culturally expected outcome so that everybody merely assumed it would occur. However, wanting to become a mother was not a prominent idea in the minds of single women who were not sure if marriage would occur or not. A second explanation was that children require hard work and effort and they deprive the women of her freedom of mobility, education, and work. Therefore, children were not perceived as very essential for all the respondents.

While interviewing the respondents, many older women reported having passion and nurturance for the children of their brothers and sisters. Some respondents believed that the special relationship between them and their nephews made them feel secure and assured

about the future. They believed that their nephews would look after them when they become old or sick. In Palestinian society, unmarried women are the responsibility of their brothers after the parents die. The girl is expected to live at her parents' house and her brothers should support her if she is not employed. An alternative would be that the unmarried woman moves to the house of one of her brothers where she lives under his attention and care. Collective societies often find ways of looking after weak members. Unmarried, unemployed, old and sick women receive care from their brothers if they exist. If not, the girl faces the unknown, which could be very distressing, especially for unemployed and lonely women.

The respondents of the present study were torn apart and had ambivalent feelings when it came to choosing marriage or remaining single. They held controversial opinions about advantages and disadvantages of marriage. Both marriage and staying single have their potential pros and cons. Pessimistically speaking, almost 43% of the respondents believe that marital life and family responsibilities make the life of the married woman difficult and possibly unhappy, limited in freedom and choices, loaded with responsibilities and fenced in with barriers from which they cannot escape. In addition, about 26% of the respondents believed that marriage increases the household chores and responsibilities of the woman especially after having many children. Married women pay the price of living a secure life and future and enjoying motherhood. They give up their freedom for the sake of the family.

Another set of potential problems in marriage were social and interpersonal difficulties that were expected from either the spouses or their families. About 17% of the respondents expected problems to occur within the family of the husband, especially between the wife and her mother-in-law. One major problem in marriage in Arab societies according to Hasan (1981) is conflicts between in-laws and the new wife. These conflicts usually occur as the new bride is learning to adjust to the laws and regulations of her husband's family and they learn to accept her as a member in their family. When the bride is unable to adjust to the new laws of her in-laws family or she refuses to change her personality and behavior to please them, marital and familial problems occur (Hasan, 1981).

In traditional societies, women should not have independent personalities and they need to adjust themselves to whatever kind of family they marry into (Hasan, 1981). Therefore, women with powerful personalities usually encounter more difficulties if they marry men who capitulate to the control of their families. On the other hand, women with less dominant personalities may change their behavior and character and become helpless, which was reported by 12.26% of the respondents. They sacrifice their dreams and ambitions for the sake of keeping their marriage. About 9% of the respondents believed that marital life limits

the intellect and restricts the ambitions of married women. Even though marriage has the risk of limiting the lives of ambitious women, educated and employed women still perceive it as a source of security as men need women to protect them psychologically and socially instead of living alone and confronting life's difficulties on their own (Farah, 1992).

Arab women have limited choices when they get married to powerful men who believe in men's sovereignty in the family. Either these women give up the struggle, surrender to their husbands' wishes or they get divorced. Most women who have children select the first choice and remain in the marriage. By this, they lose their identity and freedom, become dependent on their husbands, and live in the shadow of their husbands. However, those who select divorce are not free from suffering, as there is still stigma connected to being a divorcee in Palestinian society. Nevertheless, as the rate of divorce increased after the first uprising, more women accepted divorce as a choice instead of living miserably over the risk of losing oneself in the marital relationship.

One important factor for potential problems in marriage, in the view of the respondents, was if the husband turned out to be a poor selection. For instance, 36.80% of the respondents believed that marital discord, disharmony, and unhappiness could be the worst problems of marriage if there is poor matching of the two spouses. About 18.41% of respondents were concerned that immoral or bad-tempered husbands might be a big disappointment for a woman who married without enough knowledge or misleading information about the husband. A good husband, in the view of the respondents is one who is financially independent, understanding, knowledgeable, passionate, independent, respectable and mature. The question here is how can the woman know for sure that a certain man is suitable for her or not when society forbids intimate pre-marital relationships? Accepting marriage with a man without prior knowledge is the norm in Arabic societies (Shukri, 1981). However, such a situation entails risks that many women take. Otherwise, they might remain unmarried or they defy their society and go out with men without the approval of their families. Both of these choices are risky and they have bad consequences for the woman, family, and the society.

The respondents who believed that marriage is their choice in life were not very satisfied because of some persistent worries and fears. These fears are rational because in Palestinian society, women have few chances to get to know their future husbands. They are warned by their families not to date men or to meet privately with men, which makes it difficult to know men in depth, a situation that risks marital relationship later.

On the other hand, the respondents expected certain difficulties and problems that couples might encounter but they were less common. These problems could be foreseeable or anticipated in any marriage, even those that occurred after mutual acceptance of the partners. These problems included infertility, the birth of abnormal children, early widowhood or divorce; adultery and sexual problems; birth of female children or a small number of children, and conflicts and responsibilities relating to stepchildren. The respondents believed that the above-mentioned problems could lead to marital discord, adultery, emotional problems for children, substance abuse, and the destruction of the society. However, 17.18% of the respondents were concerned that marriage could end with divorce because of all the previously mentioned problems of marriage. Arab sociologists and family theorists support the viewpoint of the respondents (Hasan, 1981; Shukri, 1981; Kayyal, 1993). In a patriarchal society like Palestine, infertility, having female children, and having a small number of children could lead to polygamy or divorce because children have such importance in the society. Male children preserve the family name and wealth, maintain the society, and provide prestige and power (Farah, 1992). Therefore, when the woman is infertile, bears females, or gives birth to 'only' two or three children, she threatens the family status and existence. In turn, the man in a patriarchal society is obliged to remedy the situation through polygamy. When a woman disapproves of polygamy, she might ask for a divorce, which is not always accepted under Islamic family Law.

Alternatively, stepparent families have negative stereotypes in Arab society. The stepmother is perceived in Arab societies as a wicked woman who hates her stepchildren and harms them (Al-Khouli, 1989). As well, stepchildren are socialized to hate their stepmother, thus they try to get rid of her by all means. This image of the stepmother is pervasive stereotype in Palestinian society and is reinforced by movies and TV series. Palestinians are socialized to perceive stepmothers negatively. Therefore, the unmarried women in the present study thought that if they were to marry a previously married man, he should be single and childless. They were worried about the complications of marrying a man who has other children, as they did not want to be hated by these children. In addition, they did not want to be burdened by the responsibilities of stepchildren when they could marry men who have better circumstances.

Optimistically speaking, 45% of these respondents believe that married women are happier than single women because they have children, enjoy a stable life and financial security, are emotionally stable and content, have social prestige and respect, live freely, and have a meaningful life. Therefore, these respondents preferred to marry even if they might

suffer from its ramifications. The stigma of singlehood and the social pressure on unmarried women made them choose marriage over being single. It seems that women whose lives were constricted as singles looked at marriage as a liberating force. The contrary was true for those women whose lives were free and flexible.

Although educated and employed women who work in high status jobs are respected in Palestinian society, this respect is missing an important aspect, namely marriage. This position could be illusive because there are thousands of women who are married, employed, and educated but still disrespected and badly treated and abused by their husbands and families. Indeed, being married in a traditional and patriarchal society is valued more than singlehood, but that does not mean that staying single is devastating. Therefore, being single or married is not by itself the key factor in women's empowerment and value; rather the woman's personality, education, and employment are all significant variables in the wellbeing of married as well as unmarried women.

The symbolic interactionist theory postulates that the individual develops perspectives about everything in his/her social environment (Charon, 1989). These perspectives become the yardstick through which he or she judges the world, and they guide experiences (Charon, 1989). Hence, the individual reacts to the world and social norms as he or she perceives them (Deaux et al, 1993). Unmarried Palestinian women were raised in a society that values marriage and the married women. The society has a specific perspective concerning married and unmarried women, which is taught to young girls very early in life.

According to symbolic interactionist theory, the individual learns what actions are accepted and preferred by his or her society, through the socialization process. In addition, Palestinian girls learn through interaction with others how a woman should act, what roles she should play and what the roles are for men; who has the authority in the family and so on. Consecutively, women act in the way their social system expects them to, which is conceptualized through the symbols they received from their parents and relatives. They learn socially appropriate behaviours as wives or single women and they are expected to comply with these expectations (Charon, 1989). Girls in Palestinian society are raised to value marriage and to wait for it to happen. They are taught that married women are more respected and that unmarried women are not trustworthy.

Palestinian society pressures girls to marry early and to have many children because this is the norm. Therefore, for women who accept the identified identity of wife and mother, it is commonsensical to believe that marriage maintains status for women and provides respect for the married women. Palestinian girls are socialized to become future wives, thus

they tend to behave as potential wives and live for this goal. For those women who accept the identified identity of wife and mother, remaining unmarried means that they feel helpless and hopeless as they have lost their main identity: that of being mothers and wives.

Being married or single is connected to cultural images in the minds of girls. Culturally speaking, marriage is preferred to staying single because of its advantages including, motherhood, conserving family, religious preferences, conserving the stability of the society, and ensuring the happiness of the individual and others. Therefore, the girl who views herself as potentially married would feel bad about remaining single. However, the girl who perceives herself as being valuable apart from being married, will not be distressed and will be able to find meaning in life outside the mothering role. In addition, unmarried women who continuously hear negative comments about being single and the unhappy future for those who remain single, may want to conform to the majority who are married even though there is a strong possibility of difficulties and problems in marital life (Deaux et al, 1993). The unmarried Palestinian women wanted to belong to a new reference group, the "married", because this would enable them to escape the social pressure and harassment.

Conversely, 10.4% of the participants believed that women's emancipation and liberation changed women's attitudes about marriage as a destiny for each woman. Some participants denied the advantages of marriage and believed that they were adjusting well to being unmarried. They claimed that marriage is not an end by itself and is not essential. They were trying to live adaptively and live a normal life. However, even in western societies where women are relatively more emancipated and have freedom of in their sexual lives, most women eventually marry because they still see advantages for it and when they get divorced, they get married again for the same reasons. Unfortunately, Palestinian society continues to define the unmarried women differently and perceives them as complicated, paranoid, and old "spinsters". Nevertheless, an increasing number of unmarried women have found alternative means to feel worthwhile and gain respect. It seems that the Palestinian society will eventually accept the increasing numbers of women who remained unmarried, whether that was their choice or not. After all, remaining unmarried is not a phenomenon that is caused by a single factor.

Whether marriage is useful or not, or has disadvantages or not was connected to many factors. These factors included the man's characteristics and personality; the man's family type and mentality; the age of the woman when she got married; the level of education and intellect of the woman; the mode of marriage; the financial status of the new family; the adaptability and readiness of the woman to bear responsibilities, and the expectations of the

man from his wife-to-be and visa versa. Therefore, these factors could determine whether a man marrying a certain woman would yield happiness or misery.

In sum, marriage according to the respondents has its disadvantages for women. The disadvantages of marriage were dependent on the type of potential husband who might marry the woman; the personality makeup of the woman; the age of the spouses; the type of family of the spouses, and the educational and employment status of the spouses, to name but a few. Future research could explore these variables more thoroughly and investigate which ones have significant effects on marital wellbeing.

Several important findings can be concluded from this study. First, the respondents were aware of the advantages and drawbacks of being unmarried. Secondly, they were aware of the possible reasons for remaining unmarried among Palestinian women in general, but they were not sure of the exact reasons that lead to their remaining single. However, the findings indicated that most of the time the unmarried women blamed their families or circumstances for their remaining single. Thirdly, many of the unmarried women in the current study were optimistic about getting married in the future, although they acknowledged that their chances were declining with age. Fourthly, the findings indicated that most of the unmarried women were selective in whom they would marry. They would not accept marriage from any man just for the sake of marrying. However, as they got older, more and more women accepted the idea of polygamy as an alternative to living alone with no financial security, intimacy and no prospect of motherhood.

In general, the participants' perception of marriage was influenced by a number of variables. These variables were personal, sociocultural, familial, and interpersonal. However, the relative importance of each variable was not identified in the present study. Further research could explore more deeply the causes of these phenomena and study them in relation to the localities and districts in the Palestinian society.

C. Societal and Familial reactions to the unmarried women:

People in the social environment of the unmarried Palestinian women were described as having two contradictory reactions; one was "favorable" and the second was "unfavorable". A good indication of the favorable attitudes of some families was freedom of living including freedom to work, learn, travel, and move about in society, which was reported by 49.07% of the interviewees. The majority of these respondents related their freedom to the democratic families they lived in and the trust and confidence their families

had in them. When the family of the woman appeared to love and respect her and allowed her a degree of freedom in her living arrangements, she felt relaxed and supported. Thus, she could confront the pressure of the surrounding society with confidence and self-assertion.

The second indicators for favorable treatment of three participants by family and neighbours was when they were described as avoiding aggravating the respondent; avoiding talking about marriage issues; accepting the woman as unmarried, and respecting the respondent. Around 20% of the respondents reported that their families and neighbors respected their choices, accepted their decisions about not marrying and allowed them a free choice about marriage. In addition, 12.27% of the respondents believed that sometimes neighbours and friends refrained from talking about marriage or asking questions about it. Moreover, 7.36% of respondents believed that their neighbors were concerned and worried about their welfare and their future and wanted them to live a secure life. The position of the family and significant others of the girls has three possible explanations. One was that these families acceded to their daughters' decision about not marrying after they had probably tried in the past but failed to change the situation. A second explanation was that these families avoided talking about the issue of marriage with their daughters in order not to hurt and irritate them. A third possible reason was that remaining unmarried is increasingly becoming a normal phenomenon in Palestinian society as believed by 80% of the respondents. Acceptance by others is important for accepting oneself as the individual feels that he or she belongs to a social group (Millikan, 1987). The unmarried woman who looks around and finds several women who are also unmarried would be more likely to feel that she is part of an identifiable and positively valued reference group. She would no longer feel isolated and abandoned. This becomes easier when the 'significant others' of the single woman send messages that tell her that she is accepted unconditionally. In the three situations, the families' wish to see their daughters married, happy, and being part of mainstream life in the society like any other young woman.

A third indicator of favorable reactions on the part of the families of the respondents was when they were described as showing interest, concern and care. Families of the respondents utilized different approaches to express their care and concern to their daughters who were not married, which included supporting them financially and psychologically and looking after their needs; comforting them and using all possible means to please them and ease life difficulties; protecting them from pain and discomfort by avoiding the whole issue of marriage, and refraining from telling them about men who proposed for them. According to Brehm and Kassin (1992), social perception is based on a painstaking analysis of behavior of

others. Individuals may steer their interactions with others along a path defined by their impression of them. The above-mentioned actions of the families and friends of the unmarried women suggest love and concern for the respondents. Such actions inform the respondent that she is not alone and could rely on her significant others for help and support, which in turn maintains her self-esteem and mental health state. Social support is one of the balancing factors during crisis and stressful situations (Johnson, 1997). Thus, it is important for the unmarried woman as well as any other human being.

The second kind of reaction of the significant others and social environment of the respondents was "negative and unfavorable". The majority of the respondents disclosed that their relatives, family members and friends urged them to marry and sometimes blamed them for wasting the chances of marriage. Significant others of the respondents were anxious and curious to know about the reasons behind the respondents' refusal to marrying. Family members, relatives, and neighbours continuously promote marriage and undertook all kinds of manoeuvres to convince the unmarried women to marry and tried to push the single women into marriage. This included using pulling and pushing strategies and tactics; trying to persuade the woman to conform to social standards and norms which see women only as mothers and wives; tried to frighten the unmarried women of what would happen in the the future; and lobbying for marriage.

One way of influencing people's actions, according to symbolic interactionist theory, is to cast them into roles that we want them to play so they think of themselves in that manner and behave accordingly (Charon, 1989). Casting others into identities that make sense to us means that we control the situation and determine the type of interaction that we do with them (Charon, 1989). However, the individual may not believe others' definition of his or her roles and the identity they attach to him or her, and may declare a different identity (Charon, 1989). People cast women into stereotypical identities as wives, nurturers of their families, homemakers, dependent, weak and needing protection, as mothers, sacrificers, honour-keepers and so on. They are treated as potential wives and mothers and are expected to prepare themselves for these roles. When they chose to define themselves differently and refuse to play their traditional roles, people reject them and sometimes accuse them of being masculine. Unsurprisingly, this explains why family members and people in society continually urge the unmarried women to marry. People want the unmarried women to synchronize with the predetermined identity of the Arabic woman that is being a wife and mother.

According to the symbolic interactionist perspective, when an individual interacts with others they influence him or her, and this affects the person's self-esteem and decision-making (Charon, 1989). Then, the individual evaluates the actions of people, interprets the meaning of their actions in terms of what they symbolize, and makes decisions based on these interpretations (Charon, 1989). Single women sense the negative views held by society about single women through interacting with neighbors, peers, and relatives. When the unmarried woman interacts with people in her community, she analyses their behaviour and actions towards her; interprets their behavior, and decides how to proceed with them and with her life. A woman who is respected and supported by her social system is able to conserve a measure of freedom, and is able to live her life with freedom and high self-confidence.

Nevertheless, 6% of the respondents said that their family members, especially parents were selfish because they chose to sacrifice the happiness of their daughters. Parents or older brothers kept the unmarried girl at home to look after parents when they are old or sick. In this case, the daughters remained single against their will, which increased their misery and feelings of victimization. It is the norm in the Arabic society for women to take care of old and sick people (Farah, 1992). In turn, the daughter complies with the social norms whether she likes them or not. When she does not accept the responsibility for her parents, other siblings enforce it on her. The consequence is that the unmarried daughters remain alone after the death of their parents. After having spent their early adulthood looking after parents they may be considered too old for marriage, and they feel hopeless and helpless, especially if they are not educated and employed. Eventually, these women may move to live with one of their brothers, and have to cope with whatever circumstances they confront there. These women could encounter social stigma in addition to becoming a financial burden on their brothers, if they are not employed.

One crucial indication of the unfavorable reactions of families of the respondents was placing limitations on their freedom and social movement. Eighty-three (50.92%) respondents reported various levels of restrictions and limitations. The families restrict the social movement of the women including their visiting of relatives and friends and going to weddings or parties; restrict their ability to leave the family house without prior approval; oblige the woman to phone if they want to visit a friend or to be late for home; and do not allow them to be late in going back home especially after nightfall. Other forms of restrictions included lack of freedom of dress, constricting the woman's freedom of education, and limiting her freedom to travel. Arab women, whether married or single, encounter various levels of restrictions of movement. This is one way of controlling the life of women, as

described by feminist scholars including Al-Sa`adawi (1990), Al- Al-Marneisi (1990), Manasra (1994) and Kevorkian (1998). In patriarchal families, the level of freedom granted to women is in the hands of men, thus it was not surprising to see that the respondents felt they were restricted in living, freedom, and movement.

Moreover, 20.86% of the respondents said that they were frequently questioned and interrogated by their families about where they were going and what they were doing. In addition, they were censored, observed, spied on and watched over by family members and relatives as 21.47% of the respondents reported. A few respondents mentioned other less common constraints that are usually imposed by family members especially their fathers and brothers. These included taking their salaries if they were employed; not allowing them to drive a car; overburdening the unmarried woman with household chores; and preventing them from sharing in family meetings, discussions or decisions. These respondents mentioned that they were hurt by the attitudes and behaviors of their families especially their mothers, who were expected to be more sympathetic and compassionate with their daughters.

The families of the respondents had a broad spectrum of feeling about their daughters who were not married. About 34% reported that their mothers, fathers, or siblings urged them to marry because they were anxious and worried about their future life. In addition, 10.43% of the respondents reported that their families tried to frighten them about losing the opportunity for getting married as they became older and less appealing to men. Therefore they used pressure to enforce marriage as the best choice for their daughters. Moreover, 6.13% of the respondents disclosed that their families' were apprehensive about their future after the inevitable death of their parents.

Nevertheless, 10.33% of the respondents reported that their families belittled, reproached, or insulted them because they had remained unmarried. In addition, some respondents reported that their families and significant others blamed them for remaining unmarried, annoyed them, made them feel guilty, felt pity for them, occasionally humiliated them, and ignored them. These negative feelings were usually transferred to the respondents through interactions and communications, behaviors, and through daily living. The respondents understand the feelings of their significant others as they interacted with them and listened to their comments. As the unmarried women understand their parents' and friends', they are more able to predict their behaviors and judge their viewpoints and thinking processes (Brehm & Kassin, 1992).

The efforts of the family and social network of the unmarried women were purposeful. People in the social network of the respondents felt that it was their obligation to

accomplish an essential task, that is, to find every woman a husband and a home. Finding husbands for single women is a social task and responsibility for every family in these societies because if women remain single this is seen as a failure for the society. When one of the daughters of the family remains unmarried, her family members are likely to be unhappy. The relatives become worried, annoyed, sad, angry, and sometimes guilty. They usually express these feeling to their daughters either directly or indirectly. For instance, the respondents were humiliated and reproached by their families because they refused marriage or sabotaged the marriage efforts of their families. In addition, some families displace their negative feelings onto their unmarried daughters. They blame, ignore, humiliate, harass and sometimes abuse them for refusing marriage. However, on other occasions, significant others reach to God for help and they ask God to change their daughters' destiny and way of thinking or view point about marriage. These reactions on the part of family members might indicate guilt, embarrassment, shame, or simply poor adjustment to the reality of having one or more unmarried daughters in the family. The families defend themselves by attacking the unmarried woman. They think that their attack would change the viewpoint of their daughters, thus the problem would be solved and everybody would be happy. Unfortunately, their daughters are often hurt by these efforts and do not always understand the reactions of their families.

Neighbors, friends, and colleagues were not very much different from family members in this respect. In the respondents' view, people in society react in various negative ways toward unmarried women. Forty-six point six percent of the respondents reported being questioned and embarrassed by people for being unmarried. They believed that people avoided, harrassed, frightened, belittled, and annoyed unmarried women; spread rumours about them; accused them of being masculine and disobedient; accused them of being arrogant and paranoid; blamed them for being single and blamed their families for the problem.

Another reaction reported by 7.37% of the respondents was that people in their local community pitied them, felt sorry for them, and thought they were unfortunate and pathetic because they were not married. Neighbours and friends were concerned and worried about the single woman's future if marriage did not happen. Living as a "left behind", as the Palestinian society views the unmarried women, could be painful and insecure. Those unmarried women who were insecure and had low self-esteem lived silently in pain and distress.

A less commonly reported indicator for the unfavorable attitudes of people towards the respondents was holding negative stereotyped ideas about unmarried women. About 12% of

the respondents believed that people thought that unmarried women are complicated or abnormal. They stereotype them and view them as complicated and emotionally sick. Having these kinds of preconceptions simplifies the process of forming impressions. By believing that all members of a category share common attributes, it is easy to overlook the unique and individual characteristics of the individuals within a category (Herm & Kasson, 1992). When people view all unmarried women in the same way, they deprive them of their uniqueness.

According to symbolic interactionist theory, people react and interact with others based on their perception of them (Charon, 1989). In addition, the Arabic culture holds negative views and attitudes about unmarried women (Sader, 1996). People in Palestinian society were therefore congruent with this in their perception and perspective on unmarried women. Moreover, they do not accept the phenomenon of being single because it is relatively new, thus they resist it and consider it unwelcome in a traditional society like Palestinian society.

In addition, most of the respondents believed that their society places limitations on their movements and freedom and that other people scrutinise, censor, and treat their behaviour suspiciously. However, all these restrictions and limitations are not the same in severity. About 7% of the respondents believed that poorly educated, and unemployed single women are more socially restricted in their lives and movements than educated and employed ones. In addition, 6.13% of the respondents believed that the restrictions on unmarried women were more severe in villages and remote areas. In contrast to this, two other respondents believed that the limitations and restrictions are stronger in cities rather than villages. The results of Heiberg and Qvensen (1994) suggested no significant difference among unmarried women in relation to area of living. In Heiberg and Qvensen's work there appeared to be no significant difference in level of freedom between unmarried Palestinian women living in camps, villages or cities.

The age of the unmarried woman was connected to the level of social restrictions and constrictions that are placed on the unmarried woman. The respondents believed that the older the unmarried woman, the less intense the limitations became. This finding is congruent with the findings of Heiberg and Qvensen (1994) who reported that younger Palestinian women had less freedom of movement than older ones. It is believed that the society and family trust older single women because they are believed to adhere to the social norms and values more than younger unmarried women, who may be more inclined to have love affairs. Women who have the potential for sexual activity are more restricted in their movement and are intensely censored by their families. In Arab society, men observe the behavior of their

sisters and daughters, because men are the guards of family honor. Mothers, on the other hand, should educate their daughters about the right ways to preserve their reputation and honour.

Several respondents believed the restrictions on unmarried women are the fault of the women themselves. These respondents talked about women abusing freedom by getting involved with love affairs and sexual relationships. Aligned with this, some participants believed that there should be limitations on the level of freedom for single women. For instance, some respondents believed it was a good idea for the woman to go back home before nightfall, to restrict the number of hours she spent outside the home, and to refrain from having love affairs. These respondents believed that many young women misuse their freedom, which adversely influences all women in the society. Therefore, when a woman exploits the trust of her parents by defying them, she is no longer a trustworthy woman and her family should reduce her freedom.

People label others based on what they do, how they are dressed, what they have heard about them, and according to the identity they announce about themselves (Hale, 1990). It is commonsensical for the society to stereotype unmarried women and to label them because they antagonize the values of the "generalized others" (Hale, 1990). According to symbolic interactionist theory, people in authority give themselves the right to impose labels on others, which sometimes are difficult to change (Hale, 1990). In the social context of the present study, older people have the authority to label unmarried women. Therefore, when an unmarried woman comes home late or is suspected of having a love affair, she is labeled as immoral and loose and people react to her accordingly. In addition, the behaviour of one girl becomes a "comparison model" or a perspective for families. Families use the behavior of "bad girls", according to the respondents, to restrict the movement of their daughters. Consequently, the "good girls" and the "bad girls" are treated the same by their families and society and have to live under the same kinds of restrictions.

Nevertheless, many respondents were not influenced by this process because their parents trusted them and gave them more freedom. These respondents admitted that there are "bad" role models of single women, but that this did not influence the perception of their families. According to Farah (1992), when the families respect their daughters, trust them and prepare them for the challenges of life, they have more guarantees that their daughters will be ready to behave according to the norms of their culture.

It was interesting to note that many respondents reported monitoring themselves, avoiding ambiguous situations, and doing their best to maintain the freedom that was given to

them. As conceptualized by symbolic interactionism theory, self-judgment makes the individuals capable of assessing and monitoring their own behavior, censuring themselves when they are bad, and congratulating and rewarding themselves for their good behaviour (Charon, 1989). According to Mead, our self-direction and self-control are guided by the perspectives of significant others, a generalized other, and reference groups (Charon, 1989). The “generalized other” perspective is the standard the individual uses to control his or her actions (Charon, 1989). For unmarried Palestinian women, the 'generalized other' is provided by the norms of their social context. They follow the morals and standards of their society to gain social approval. When an unmarried woman defies the moral perspectives of Arab society, she is marginalized and punished by that society. Since the unmarried woman is an object of society's suspicion and mistrust, she always has to prove otherwise. She is guilty until she proves that she is innocent to her “generalized others”.

However, other respondents had contradictory viewpoints. Some interviewees believed that Palestinian society is socially conservative and places constrictions on all women, whether married or single. This opinion resonates with those expressed by Palestinian scholars including Najjar and Warnock (1992), JMCC (1995), Sabella (1983), Kevorkian (1998), Manasra (2000) and others. Palestinian society, like any other patriarchal society, oppresses women, does not trust them and suspects their behaviors, and does not give them freedom of work, dress, travel, or in choosing their mates.

Conversely, some respondents believed that nowadays there are less familial and social restrictions on single women than in previous years. These respondents believed that Palestinian society is changing especially after the first uprising. Although some changes occurred in Palestinian society in relation to the treatment of women, there is still some level of discrimination against unmarried women. The qualitative data suggest that people still hold negative stereotyped viewpoints about the unmarried women in Palestinian society. People, in the view of the respondents, still hold negative feeling about unmarried women. They believe that unmarried women are complicated, abnormal, arrogant, paranoid, depressed, troublemakers for their families and for society. In addition, the respondents believed that people are suspicious of unmarried women; pity and feel sorry for them; blame them; scorn and belittle them; scrutinize them carefully and question their behavior; and consider them pathetic and unfortunate. These negative feelings and opinions are transmitted to the unmarried women in daily life activities and social communication; the unmarried women think about these social opinions and stereotypes, react, and interact with them. The result is further feelings of pain, sadness, anger, mistrust, avoidance, anxiety, and hypersensitivity.

Literally, the social reactions towards unmarried women are the main cause for the negative feelings and the psychological distress they have. As one of the respondents put it, "If people leave us alone, we are all fine".

The perception that the unmarried woman has of her significant others determines to a certain extent whether she will request their help and support during stressful situations. Thus, one could assume that if the respondent felt that her family and friends respected and accepted her, she would trust them and share her problems and pains with them, and visa versa. Qualitative support during stressful and difficult situations is essential in adjustment and problem-management (Johnson, 1997; Murray & Huelskotter, 1987).

About 85% of the respondents reported that they like to share their general living problems and daily hassles with family members. Female family members such as mothers, sisters, sisters-in-law and second degree female relatives were potential family members with whom the respondents usually share their feelings. However, male relatives were also mentioned as source of support for 4.91% of the participants. On the other hand, friends who could be females or males were the second category of trustworthy people as perceived by the respondents. When respondents encounter difficulties and stressors in their daily life, they often search for someone to share them with. A trustworthy relative or family member could be very helpful in difficult times and their availability means a lot to many of the respondents.

In contrast to this, some believed that it is not wise to disclose to anybody no matter how close they are. About 15% of the participants believed that one should not confide in others and that they do not share personal information with anybody, even family members. Nevertheless, about 8% of the respondents preferred to be selective in confiding in others, including family members and friends. These respondents were worried about people's gossip and the possibility that they would spread the secrets to others. These respondents preferred not to talk to anybody and chose to keep all their discomforts to themselves. The reasons behind this approach, according to the respondents, were mistrust of others, having no belief that sharing could be beneficial to them; having avoidant, withdrawn, and introverted personalities. When the unmarried woman does not trust others, fears them, suspects their intentions, and does not believe in social support, she is expected to become lonely and isolated, and to suppress her feelings and pains. The expected outcome for this situation would be negative for the woman and her family. She is deprived of possible chances for help and support. On the other hand, her family may feel that they do not know anything about her feelings and they may feel that they do not understand her and do not know what is happening to her.

An important function of the family that appears to survive through all social changes is its role in the provision of affection and emotional support to all its members (Hasan, 1981). The affective function of the family includes gratification of the psychosocial needs of its members - protection, support, understanding, affection, and happiness. In addition, the individual's self-image, sense of belonging, the meaning of their existence, approval, and identity are all derived through interaction with family members (Freidman, 1986). Therefore, when the families of the unmarried women do not fulfill the psychological needs of their daughters, these daughters feel abandoned, lonely, neglected, disempowered, rejected, and insecure. This kind of family threatens an individual's mental health and self-evaluation.

Health care providers should consider the affective function of the families of unmarried Palestinian women when they work with them. According to Friedman (1986), health counselling and education are critical strategies that could help families meet the affective needs of every family member. The families of the unmarried woman need to understand the dialectical relationship between their actions and the psychological state of their daughter, and should employ different methods of treatment of their unmarried daughters. This would improve their relationship with their daughters and prevent unnecessary psychological distress.

This study was able to foreground respondents' accounts of social and familial views and reactions towards them. The data suggested that people hold negative opinions and attitudes about unmarried women in Palestinian society. These negative views and attitudes could be expected to adversely influence the self-perception and mental health state of the respondents. In addition, negative attitudes of significant others drive the respondents and their relatives away from each another and deprive the respondents of their support and help. However, many families displayed positive reactions and held supportive attitudes towards their unmarried daughters. These positive reactions were helpful for the respondents who needed the support of their families and friends. Families' understanding and respect for their unmarried daughters made them more confident of the help and the support of their families during stressful situations, which could enhance their mental health state.

Nevertheless, some questions remained unanswered in this section. For instance, was there a direct relationship between social support and family reactions, and the self-perception of the respondents? Was there a direct relationship between social support and family reactions, and the mental health state of the respondents? How do Palestinians perceive unmarried women? Future research, using quantitative methodology and random samples in

order to produce findings which can be generalized, may be used to investigate these questions.

D. Self-view and self-perception

Many respondents denied that they were exposed to maltreatment and social harassment. However, they admitted that they knew other unmarried women who suffer. Fifty-five point two percent of the respondents perceived themselves positively and believed that they were better off than other unmarried women in their local community. These respondents considered themselves luckier than other girls in their community. The reasons behind such a positive self view in the perspective of the respondents include being socially free to move, dress, work, travel, and visit; being respected and treated well by their families; being able to pursue employment and financial competence; independence and assertiveness; being educated; and having wide social contact and social life.

On the other hand, respondents conceptualized themselves as being lucky and fortunate in comparison to the living conditions of other girls who were described as being miserable; badly treated, abused, and humiliated; restricted in movement and work; suppressed and exploited by family members; and overburdened with household chores and responsibilities. When individuals believe themselves to be fortunate, they perceive themselves positively. Symbolic interactionism reiterates that our judgment of self is determined with reference to our reference group and significant others (Charon, 1989). The reference group for the unmarried woman is other unmarried women who live in her community. Therefore, she judges herself in reference to them and compares her living conditions with those of other unmarried women.

Indeed, the lucky and privileged respondents felt comfortable and satisfied, maintained a decent living standard, and gained enhancements in self-esteem; thus, they were psychologically and emotionally content and happy. On the other hand, those who were treated disrespectfully, disgraced, or otherwise badly treated by their families and communities, or who were unemployed and had financial problems; were dependent and submissive; or were poorly educated and had poor social contact and social support, were prone to negative self-perceptions and self-evaluations.

Fourteen point seven percent of the respondents viewed themselves negatively and worse off than other peers, for several reasons. One was to do with being restricted in social mobility, dress, and work; or to do with living in a conservative community which always watched them. The study of FAFO suggested that Palestinian unmarried women reported

limited freedom of movement, leaving home, and dress compared to married women (Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994), which complements the findings of the present study. Since men in the Palestinian society determine the level of freedom that women might have, it is eventually men who control the lives of unmarried as well as married women. In the study of FAFO, men were more conservative in their attitudes towards women's dress, work, and leaving home than women were (Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994). Similar findings were reported in the study of the Palestinian Family Planning Society which investigated men's perception of women' freedom and work (Palestinian Family Protection and Planning Association, 1997). The significance of the strictures placed on women's freedom in Palestinian society is not entirely related to the definition of appropriate roles for them rather, it is significantly related to control over them despite their roles. In general, the level of freedom that a woman might enjoy is defined in terms of her likely sexual capacity. Since Western dress and freedom of social movement of single women is believed to connote relaxations in sexual morality, this is believed to threaten family honour (Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994). Consequently, the family and society restrict the lives of unmarried women and keep them under observation to limit their possibilities for becoming sexually active. In such situations, the family takes precautions to protect their honour "Al-sharaf" or "social face".

In addition, many respondents felt bad about their lives and perceived themselves negatively because they were poorly educated, unemployed and dependent on relatives for their living. These feelings were predominantly expressed by those respondents who had a low level of education, which meant that they would have more difficulty finding employment, or would be employed in low status jobs. Education and financially independent living are crucial for women's empowerment (JMCC, 1995; Manasra, 2003; Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994; Hale, 1990). Therefore, it was interesting to find that employed and self-reliant respondents were happier and felt luckier than their counterparts who were not.

Few other respondents perceived themselves negatively because they believed that they had empty lives and no purposes in living. A woman who is not employed, not married, is not free to socialize, has no social activities and spends most of her time at home might be expected to feel that she has an empty life. This feeling is augmented when the unmarried woman believes that she could change her life if her family and society were to allow her to do that. Therefore, the more the unmarried woman is controlled and restricted, the more severe her negative self-perception would be.

Furthermore, other respondents perceived themselves negatively because they were badly treated by family members, abused, or harassed. These women were punished for being

disobedient or for breaking the rules and regulations of their families. In addition, some unmarried women are commonly abused in Palestinian society as part of the bad treatment and degradation of women in general. Women's maltreatment and battering are present in the Palestinian society comparable to other societies in the world (Kevorkian, 1997; Heiberg & Qvensen, 1994; UNICEF, 2000). Predictably, these weaknesses and shortcomings lead to dejection and negative self-evaluation amongst these respondents.

Twenty-one point five percent of the respondents viewed themselves as being similar to other unmarried peers in their community. They believed that they lived similar lives and had relatively similar social circumstances and problems. Believing that they have similar circumstances means that either they knew very well the circumstances of other unmarried women, or they just assumed that they were comparable. This situation may or may not lead to similar psychological conditions. In the end, an individual's perception and appraisal of her circumstances would lead to psychological distress or adaptation as symbolic interactionist theory might predict (Charon, 1989). The woman who perceives her life as hell on earth will feel miserable and would react to her world accordingly (Millikan, 1987). On the other hand, the woman who perceives her life as free and reasonable would consider herself fortunate and privileged, thus she might feel pleased and fulfilled.

On the other hand, a very few respondents were uncertain of themselves and were unable to tell whether they were better or worse off than other unmarried women. They sometimes saw themselves as worse off than other women and sometimes as better than them. This uncertainty could indicate ambivalence and uncertainty about oneself, which might be threatening to one's self-integrity and lead to more confusion and ambiguity about the self.

According to symbolic interactionist theory, each person perceives him or herself from the standpoint of the group with which he or she interacts (Charon, 1989). During their childhood, girls are brought up to be submissive, dependent, weak and powerless, obedient, vulnerable, sentimental, easily irritated and disturbed, and so on (Farah, 1992; Mayers, 1986). Through socialization and interaction with their families and society, girls grow to believe that they are incapable of making decisions regarding their lives; that they have to sacrifice themselves for the welfare of their families; and that they have to be obedient and compliant to the requests of their families. In addition, through feedback of family members or what Cooley called looking-glass-self, the girl either feels shame or pride (Hale, 1990). Moreover, the girl "takes the role of the other", which means that she develops a concept of herself through trying to see herself as she appears to others (Hale, 1990; Charon, 1989). Through the reflexive interaction, Arab girls grow up to develop certain conceptions of themselves and

their abilities. Taking into consideration the kind of socialization Arab girls receive, the result will be women who have a negative self-concept or self-perception.

Taking the above discussion further, it becomes possible to explain how the respondents feel about themselves and how they perceived themselves. Through interaction with families and other people, the unmarried woman comes to perceive herself from the standpoint of her family and society, which yields a predominantly negative view in Palestinian society. In addition, through negative feedback from family members or what Cooley called “the looking-glass-self”, the girl feels shameful, inferior, embarrassed, and inadequate. Consequently, she develops a negative concept of herself through observing how her family and others judge her. However, it is not the judgment of others per se that affects our self-judgment; rather it is our perception of people's judgment that matters (Charon, 1989). Therefore, the unmarried Palestinian woman perceives herself positively if she believes that her family loves, respects, and accepts her even if she remains unmarried. On the other hand, she perceives herself negatively if she believes that her family and neighbors reject her, hate her, do not respect her, or distrust and suspect her behavior. The respondents who suffer from negative self-perception are also expected to have low self-esteem, might engage in self-depreciation, have feelings of worthlessness, and experience helplessness, which could lead to depression, anxiety, social isolation, and self-destructive behavior.

Sometimes, the individual's judgment of themselves is almost entirely controlled by others who have power over the physical and social environment of that individual. When rigid families isolate their daughters, limit their freedom, and restrict their social contacts, they develop self-rejection and negative self-perception (Charon, 1989). This was the situation that several respondents in the present study talked about when they complained about the restrictions their families placed on them. They felt degraded and distrusted because their families and society did not have confidence in them, which resulted in feelings of bitterness, sorrow, and anger.

The main question here was whether the self-perception of the respondents that was reported in this study resulted from being a woman or from being unmarried. Perhaps it was a combination of the two. From qualitative data, the investigator was able to identify how the respondents perceived themselves as unmarried. However, in the current study the responses to the interview questions did not allow the researcher to distinguish whether being a woman or being unmarried had the more significant influence on the respondents' self-perception. In addition, other factors that possibly influenced respondents' self-perceptions were not investigated in the present study. For instance, although data related to demographic variables

was present, the investigator did not investigate it in relation to self-perception, yet this could be explored in future research. Qualitative tools could provide accurate evaluations of an individual's self-perception. However, only an interview would help to identify the factors that influenced that self-perception.

E. Mental Health Status of the participants

The findings indicated that 26.7% of the respondents had moderate and above scores on the Global Severity Index of general psychological distress. This finding was lower than that reported by Qvensen (1994) who reported a 37% prevalence of high levels of psychological distress and a 52% prevalence rate of moderate psychological distress among Palestinian woman in general of the age group 31-50 years after the first Palestinian uprising. In addition, the findings of the present study were consistent with the result of Punamaki (1988) who reported a rate of 29% of psychological distress among traumatized Palestinian women. Nevertheless, the respondents had lower rates of psychological distress than that observed by Heiberg and Qvensen (1994).

Although Sansur (1995), Punamaki (1988), Khamis (1998), Quota (1999) investigated the mental health of Palestinian women, their findings are not comparable to the findings of the current study. These researchers conducted their studies during different sociopolitical circumstances; used different methodologies; and sometimes used other tools for data collection. In addition, the target population for each of the above studies was different as Punamaki (1988) and Khamis (1998) studied the influence of traumatic political conditions on women's mental health, whereas Sansur (1995) and Quota (1999) investigated Palestinian women in general. Moreover, the above-mentioned Palestinian researchers claimed that they used random sampling; however, the investigator doubts whether this could have been possible. Taking into consideration the above comments, the investigator sometimes referred to the findings of the Palestinian researchers in order to put the results of the present study in a frame of reference and perspective.

A common observation in the findings is that the respondents had higher mean scores for psychological distress than Derogatis's (1983) female normative group in relation to three indices and all symptom dimensions of the SCL-90.R. In addition, the respondents whose results are described here reported higher mean scores on the three indices and all symptom dimensions of the SCL-90.R, and had higher rates of psychological distress for all the

symptom dimensions than the results obtained for the sample of Palestinian women studied by Sansur (1995).

The findings indicated that 21.6 % of the respondents had moderate and above levels of somatization. Sansur (1995) and Khamis (1997) also found that somatization was a common psychological disorder among Palestinian women. Some people tend to repress their feelings and do not express them, while others become vulnerable to somatic disorders due to their personality structure (Millikan, 1987; Davies & Janosik, 1991). Women are believed to tend to somatize their stresses as a way of coping with their negative feelings and circumstances (Johnson, 1997, Kayyal, 1993; Al-Sa`adawi, 1990; Farah, 1992). In addition, they are raised to use somatic symptoms to attract attention; thus, they usually report more somatization than men do. The results of the present study complemented the viewpoints of above-mentioned researchers.

In addition, 40.3% of the respondents had moderate and above levels of depression. These rates were higher than the rates reported by Quota (1999) who discovered a rate of 15% among a sample of Palestinian women in the Gaza Strip. Moreover, the rate of depression among the respondents was higher compared to those reported by Heiberg and Qvensen (1994), who reported a rate of 30% of depression among Palestinian women. The findings indicated that depression was higher among poorly educated and unemployed respondents.

Depression has frequently been reported to be the most prevalent psychological disorder among women (Johnson, 1993, ICN, 1995; Al-Sa'adawi, 1990; Gaza Community Mental Health Program, 1998; Davies & Janosik; 1991; Kayyal. 1993). However, other researchers have discovered that depression appears to be more prevalent among those who are married rather than singles (Shines, 1974; Al-Sa`adawi, 1990; ICN, 1995), which contradicted the findings of the present study. Wood and Mitchell (1996) connected depression among women to stressful life events, lack of social support, aging, and social learning. However, Scambler (1997) postulated that depression in women is associated with long-term stress, absence of a confiding relationship, unemployment, and poverty. Therefore, the findings of the current study supported the views of Wood and Mitchell (1996), and Scambler (1997).

There was a dialectical relationship between social support and level of freedom among the respondents and their feeling of sadness and despair. In addition, the qualitative data suggested that women whose families were not supportive and those who were financially dependent felt sad, frustrated, humiliated and doomed in life. Therefore, the

respondents whose families were harsh, disrespectful, and unsympathetic to their needs and circumstances expressed relatively more sadness, frustration, pessimism, and were more likely to say they wished to die.

The findings of the present study illustrated that depression was the most severe in the participants who refused the interview. Highly depressed participants refused to be interviewed more than less depressed ones. A common observation in all depressed people is their unwillingness to communicate to others; thus, it is not surprising to see that the participants who were the mostly depressed were likely to refuse the interview.

The findings of the current study indicated that 27% of the respondents had moderate or higher levels of anxiety. The level of anxiety among the respondents was lower than that reported by Heiberg & Qvensen (1994) who reported a 49% rate of anxiety amongst Palestinian women in general immediately after the first uprising. The findings complemented the viewpoints of other scholars. For instance, Davies and Janosik (1991) postulated that women have high rates of anxiety and Kayyal (1993) reported high rates of neurosis and nervous breakdown among women.

Qualitative data demonstrated that many respondents were anxious and worried. They were worried about financial security, growing old alone, not having a chance to become mothers; living alone after the death of their parents; losing control over their lives; losing their freedom and independence and being humiliated and disrespected. However, these responses were more common among the participants who were unemployed and/or poorly educated.

On the contrary, the participants who were highly educated and employed in high status jobs were less anxious and worried. Being well-educated and financially independent increases self-confidence of the woman and assures her about the future if she remains unmarried. Well-educated unmarried women are independent and financially able to support themselves despite the socioeconomic status of their families. The current study confirmed the finding of Punamaki (1988) who found higher rates of anxiety among Palestinian women who were homemakers as opposed to employed women. The perception of being secure about the future was a strong predictor of mental well-being among unmarried Palestinian women. When they are educated, employed, and have cohesive families who are supportive and understanding, the unmarried women have good mental well-being.

Qualitative findings show that having a strong personality structure, a supportive and loving family, and many friends were crucial factors in reassuring the respondents about their lives and their futures. Qualitative social support was indicative for mental well-being of the

respondents. This supports the proposition that qualitative aspects of social relations may be determinant of mental health and positive self-perception of the unmarried women. Disrespect, rejection, and humiliation of the unmarried woman by her significant others may account for their negative self-perception, their pessimistic view of life, and their poor mental health. These findings were consistent with those of other researchers including Sansur (1995), Punamaki (1988), Hoeffler (1986) and Khamis (1998) who connected the mental well-being of women with education, social support, independent living, and high adaptability.

The findings show that 9.7% of the respondents had moderate and above levels of phobic anxiety. Sansur reported a 6.5% rate for moderate to severe phobia among Palestinian women in general, which was a little bit lower than that observed by the investigator of the present study. Phobic anxiety was the least prevalent symptom dimension among the respondents. However, the respondents had a higher mean score for phobic anxiety than Derogatis' (1983) female normative group, but a rate very similar to that reported by Sansur (1995) for Palestinian women as a whole.

Phobic anxiety, according to psychoanalytic theory, results from unconscious mechanisms that usually start early in childhood (Johnson, 1997). The participants did not bring up the issue of phobia during the interview. Therefore, the investigator could not connect this symptom dimension to remaining unmarried. However, future research could explore this issue more thoroughly.

In addition, 29.0% of the respondents had moderate and 10.7% had severe or very severe paranoid ideation. The findings indicated that unemployed participants had exceptionally severe manifestations of paranoid ideation compared to the rest of the sample. However, the respondents who got professional or paraprofessional jobs had lower levels of paranoid ideation. Being employed, self-reliant and financially independent seems to protect the unmarried Palestinian women from paranoid ideation to a certain degree. Employment status accounted for 3.3% of the variance in paranoid ideation, which was a minute influence. Therefore, perhaps other variables would have a more significant influence on this variable.

Qualitative findings indicated that a great bulk of the respondents were living in a social environment filled with restrictions and limitations; surveillance and censorship; suppression and harassment both at home and community. This untrustworthy and oppressive society drives the unmarried woman to suspect herself and her environment. Mental health theorists such as Johnson (1997), Kneisl and Wilson (1983), and Davies and Janosik (1991) suggest that paranoid ideation is a defense mechanism for feeling inferior and insecure. In addition, paranoid ideation develops as a defense against feeling inferior and uncertain of

oneself (Burgess, 1990; Johnson, 1997). Thus, those unmarried women who felt inferior, worthless, and insecure adjusted to these unbearable feeling by developing paranoid ideation. Therefore, instead of feeling depressed and gloomy, which are the natural reactions to the poor conditions they lived in, the respondents develop paranoid ideation.

Remaining unmarried under oppressive social circumstances and in the face of difficult cultural values could leads to oversensitivity, irritability, mistrust, projection, isolation, and delusional thinking on the part of unmarried women who have no balancing factors to help them adjust. These are the core symptoms of paranoid ideation (Johnson, 1997).

The findings indicated that 16.7% of the respondents had moderate and 3.3% had severe psychoticism. Since psychoticism could arguably be taken to indicate the degree of potential for psychosis among the participants, mental health practitioners should take a rate of 20% moderate to severe psychoticism seriously. This rate does not indicate that all those in this category were mentally ill; rather this rate was a critical indicator that needs further investigation.

Educational level and living arrangement predicted psychoticism. The two variables accounted for 4.9% of the variance in psychoticism, which was a weak effect. Psychoticism was higher among poorly educated participants who lived with their parents. As observed in other symptom dimensions, education has significant influence however; its influence was small. Other variables possibly influenced the level of psychoticism that was observed among the respondents.

It seemed that living with both parents increased tension and stress in the life of the participants. The qualitative findings indicated that parents express their worry and fears to their daughters and persistently overwhelm and annoy them. When parents continuously irritate and frightened their daughters about their bleak future, warning them that if they do not "catch the train of marriage", eventually the psychological wellbeing of the girls would be threatened. If we add into this picture the social harassment and negative signals that other people are continuously sending to unmarried women, one could expect the worst to happen. Nevertheless, future research is needed to explore in depth whether other variables could possibly lead to high psychoticism among unmarried Palestinian women.

The findings also indicated that 41.7% of the respondents had moderate and above levels of obsessive-compulsive disorder; 34% had moderate and above levels of interpersonal sensitivity; and 31.3% of the participants had moderate and above levels of hostility. These

findings represent the rate of moderate, severe, and very severe levels of distress for each symptom dimension among the respondents.

Although the majority of the participants were healthy, mental health professionals and policy-makers should not take the above-mentioned rates of psychological distress lightly. The participants with high mean scores for any of the symptom dimensions and the Global Severity Index could be considered "cases" that need some kind of intervention. However, according to Derogatis, "*a simple self-report inventory such as the SCL-90-R which should not be considered sufficient to achieve conclusion. The "90" can be extremely useful in providing diagnostic syndrome profiles*" (Derogatis, 1983, p. 29). Additional psychological tools should be used by mental health professionals to confirm any suspected diagnosis of mental disorders among the participants. The high rates of psychological disorder should ring alarm bells for mental health professionals and social organizations. They should plan helpful strategies for unmarried women in Palestinian society.

It was interesting to observe that most of the respondents were able to identify their feelings and psychological complaints. It seemed that at least some participants felt that they needed help or counseling. Overall, 5.52% of the interviewees said that they had consulted a mental health professional to ask for help and a few were taking minor tranquilizers. However, half of the interviewees did not think that they needed professional help, which complemented the quantitative findings of the study.

F. Mental Health Status in relation to indicators:

The spectrum of structural, cultural, political, and socioeconomic variables is related to mental health of Palestinians. Khamis (1995), Punamaki (1988), Punamaki (1986), and Sansur (1995) postulated similar viewpoints. The findings of the present study indicated that the educational level of the unmarried woman predicts her mental well-being. Educated unmarried Palestinian woman had better mental health than poorly educated unmarried women. Educational level predicted the general mental health condition of the respondents as measured by the GSI and symptom dimensions relating to somatization, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety, phobia, and psychoticism on the SCL-90. Although the influence of educational level was statistically significant, its influence did not exceed 7% of the variance in the psychological state of the participants. Nevertheless, the weak correlation between the independent variables and the participants' mental health state indicates that other factors played a part in causing psychological distress.

The findings explain why many participants considered their education as strength and being poorly educated as weakness. The perception of being well-educated was a predictor of good mental health. Feeling privileged by high education leads to positive self-perception. Kayyal (1993) reported high rates of somatization among women in general; however, she did not indicate the variables that could lead to it. The findings of the present study supported those of Khamis (1998) who found that Palestinian women who had low incomes and less education were more psychologically distressed and had worse mental well-being.

The general conclusion that could be drawn from these findings is that the participants who are at high risk of psychological distress are those who are poorly educated, unemployed, young, and live with their nuclear families in the cities and towns of the West Bank. Nevertheless, the positive findings of the unmarried women of the present study should be cautiously interpreted since the majority of the participants were highly educated. Thus, the high level of education enjoyed by the participants may represent a biased population in terms of mental health.

The findings indicate that the higher the level of education of the respondents, the lower the degree of phobic anxiety they had. Here again, education seems to protect women from psychological distress at least partially. However, further exploration of the difference between groups in education indicated that the respondents who had undertaken 10-12 years of education had the highest rate of phobic anxiety compared to those who had undertaken more than 12 years of schooling and those who had the lowest level of education. This result had no logical explanation judging from the background literature; it possibly occurred due to coincidence or chance.

The findings of the present study indicated that living arrangements predicted the general mental health state of the participants, interpersonal sensitivity and psychoticism. The participants who lived with their parents and siblings had the highest prevalence of psychological complaints. The findings of the SCL-90 contradicted those of the interview. The interview findings indicated that the parents were believed to be the main support system for the participants who considered themselves lucky because their parents were alive. Absence of parents was taken to indicate that the freedom of the unmarried woman was threatened, that she was insecure and worried about her future life, and that others were more able to interfere in her affairs.

The qualitative findings indicated that the family structure and number of members was not enough in terms of social support. Rather, the quality of support that is provided by family members made the difference for the respondents. However, the presence of first-

degree relatives was believed to be essential for the psychological well being of the respondents. For instance, the findings indicated that the effects of remaining unmarried were more likely to psychologically influence the participants who had no close family members. Future research is required to investigate the nature of the relationship that exists between living arrangements and the general psychological state of unmarried Palestinian women.

The symbolic interactionist perspective suggests that people are more likely to believe that they understand the perspectives of those with whom they frequently interact than those they do not (Rosenberg, 1984). Therefore, the unmarried women expect their significant others to understand them and to acknowledge their feelings because they live together or they interact frequently. When this does not happen and the family members and friends criticize and disrespect the unmarried women, they get irritated and feel dissatisfied with others and with themselves. The qualitative findings of the present study indicated that a large number of respondents believed that their families were not supportive and lacked understanding of their feelings. Consequently, lack of social support and excessive social harassment may lead to social isolation and loneliness as predicted by symbolic interactionism (Charon, 1989). The reciprocal relationship between social interaction and social support, and participants' view of themselves may explain why the general psychological state of the unmarried women in the present study was influenced significantly by their living arrangements and the type of family they belong to.

The findings of the present study show that the participants' age predicted their symptoms of obsessive-compulsive disorder and interpersonal sensitivity. The younger unmarried women complained of obsessive-compulsive disorder more than the other age groups. Although young unmarried women have more chances to marry, they are more uncertain about their future. They may perceive that they have little chance of marrying a young single man, thus they have to consider marrying an already-married man. Polygamy is less common in cities but is more prevalent in the Palestinian villages around Hebron and the north region of the West Bank (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998). This situation of uncertainty about the future might lead to worrisome, obsessive thinking, rumination, and anxiety.

By contrast, older women may have given up on the idea of marriage and have accepted their destiny. Therefore, they might tend to be more relaxed and confident, thus they might have less anxiety and obsession. Moreover, never-married women have probably prepared themselves and adapted themselves to life-long singlehood through saving money, acquiring a job, and building up a social network, which is not usually done by younger

unmarried women who still hope to marry. This result was congruent with those reported by Rodger and Woodworth who found that single, older American women who are well educated and have supportive social networks, have a positive sense of well-being (Hoeffler, 1987). However, this finding contradicted those of Sader (1996) who suggests that unmarried women become hopeless, powerless and feel frustrated as they get older. However, the unmarried woman who gets older and has a good education and stable income would feel better and is more likely to be mentally healthy.

The Kruskal-Wallis test indicated that the youngest (25-30 years) age group and those over age 42 had higher levels of interpersonal sensitivity. Being young or being older seemed to increase the sensitivity of the unmarried woman to social disapproval and scrutiny. Being young means that there is still a chance of marrying however, the respondents were not confident about this possibility. As the single woman approaches 25 years of age, she may become more worried about marrying. She knows that her chances are declining in a society that believes in early marriage and she might not marry the man of her dreams. The qualitative findings indicated that the majority of the respondents admitted that their chances of marrying became less with age.

Being an older woman means having very low chances of marriage. As the unmarried woman gets older, she may give up on the idea of marriage and instead thinks about how to grow old alone, and she may worry about supporting herself and looking after her health. Older unmarried women in Palestinian society are perceived as 'spinsters' who missed 'the train' of marriage. Although they are freer in their living conditions and movement, they are socially stigmatized. In their communities, they are perceived as complicated and oversensitive. When such image is widespread as is the case in Palestinian society, older unmarried women may feel abandoned and have negative self-perception as suggested by the symbolic interactionist theory (Charon, 1987).

The findings of the present study indicated that many respondents hold negative viewpoints and attitudes about older unmarried women. Symbolic interactionist theory implies that people will interpret the behavior of the actor as deviant or abnormal if they do not comprehend it. Thus people in general, and younger unmarried women in Palestine have unfavourable perceptions of the actions and behavior of older unmarried women, thus they call it "complicated", "wired", or "eccentric".

Interpersonal sensitivity was highest among young, poorly educated participants who lived with relatives other than their two parents. It seems that young unmarried women were not tolerant of comments and criticisms from others, especially when they lived with their

brothers' families or relatives after the death of their parents. Therefore, they reacted with great sensitivity and resentment towards this, perhaps as a way of coping.

The symbolic interactionist perspective indicates that when people fail to understand the perspective of the actor, they interpret the behaviour or feelings of that person as abnormal (Charon, 1987). Therefore, when the unmarried woman refuses marriage, refuses polygamy at the age of 30, or elects education rather than marrying and having children, people do not comprehend her behavior and consider her deviant or strange. Other people and family members blame the unmarried woman for wasting her chances to marry. One helpful action here is to explain to people how unmarried women think and feel. Teaching in family circles and the community could help people comprehend the perspectives of the unmarried woman and improve the relationship between her and significant others.

Most of the interviewees were concerned that their lives might become miserable if they became old and lost their independence. They were pessimistic about the future especially for those who were poorly educated and unemployed. This is an issue that the mental health professional should consider. It is important to provide social support and employment opportunities for unmarried Palestinian women. Social support is an essential element in adaptability and played important role in the well-being of Palestinian women studied by Khamis (1998). Similar findings were observed by Sansur (1995) and Heiberg and Qvensen (1994).

One approach that oversensitive people use to prevent social embarrassment is avoidance of social occasions and gatherings (Johnson, 1997). About 14% of the respondents mentioned that they avoided social gathering and isolated themselves to avoid people's looks and opinions of them. The unmarried women were sensitive to other people's opinions and the stigma of being single, thus they used escape mechanisms to shield themselves from social annoyance and the potential hurt inflicted by others who might persistently and curiously question them about marriage.

Societal attitudes and the mode of treatment of unmarried women influence their self-evaluation and self-perception, in line with symbolic interactionist theory (Charon, 1989; Rosenberg, 1984; Hale, 1990). Societal reactions to the behaviour of unmarried women determine whether they will be considered to be adaptive, or sick and disturbed. The qualitative findings indicated that there was a connection between how respondents saw societal attitudes and mode of treatment of unmarried women and their perceptions of others and of themselves. Good treatment of the unmarried woman by her family members and friends tends to make her respect herself and become more open to socializing with others.

Interpersonal sensitivity might also be related to a lack of social skills, poor coping abilities, unrealistic expectations of others, inappropriate socialization, as well as social discrimination and stereotyping of unmarried women (Brehm & Kassin, 1992; Hale, 1990; Deaux et al, 1993). The significant others of the unmarried Palestinian women in the study should be careful about what they say or do to the unmarried women, and should avoid sending negative signals and cues that could distress them. Families need to communicate with their daughters in order to be able to understand them well, to comprehend their perception of a happy marriage, and the meaning and advantages staying single has for them. This is an important recommendation for families and mental health practitioners who might work with unmarried women or with their families.

The results of the present study indicated that the area of residence predicted somatization and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Psychological complaints were more prevalent among unmarried women living in cities and towns. This finding complemented the findings of Punamaki (1988), Sansur (1995), and Khamis (1997) who found variation in women's mental health state among Palestinian women in relation to residence. There are higher demands on women in cities than in rural areas. The unmarried woman has to maintain her standard of living and sometimes lives alone when her parents die. In addition, unmarried women in cities and towns encounter more social pressure when it comes to being independent and assertive in living.

The social life in Palestinian cities is becoming more individualistic and the families are increasingly likely to be nuclear rather than extended (Sabella, 1983). This situation weakens social support for unmarried women, which is more likely to be available in rural areas. Therefore, fears and preoccupation increase among unmarried women in urban areas, especially those who do not have a good social support systems and work. However, in rural areas, where the unmarried woman lives with her extended family, her relatives may not leave her alone. The strong social network in Palestinian villages and refugee camps indicates to the unmarried women that they are not alone. An unmarried woman who lives in a village either would move to her married brother's house or continue to live at her parents' house supported by her brothers. This offers them the opportunity to relax and experience less worry about the future. Consequently, they have lower anxiety and less obsessive thinking.

However, there were no differences between women in terms of their living arrangements and limitations practiced in cities, villages, or refugee camps of the West Bank, except for the respondents who were employed. Whether the unmarried woman lived in a city, a refugee camp, or village, she encountered limitations on her social movements and

freedom. This finding is not surprising since other investigators have found the same (Heiberg & Qvensin, 1994). Although unmarried women living in cities might seem freer in their living, mobility, work, and education, this is not necessarily the case because their freedom is under the control of their families. This may add to a woman's distress especially when she is not employed.

The weak relationship between area of residence, somatization, and obsessive-compulsive disorder indicates that other variables also influence the prevalence of these two disorders. Further research could explore this area more thoroughly. Differences among groups resident in different areas could be explored through qualitative or quantitative measures. In this study, the investigator did not explore differences in the limitations placed on respondents in relation to their area of residence, although a few respondents talked about possible differences.

Employment status was predictive for somatization, obsessive-compulsive disorder, hostility, and paranoid ideation. It was interesting to observe that the participants who were unemployed or employed in industrial and agricultural jobs had more somatization their equivalents working in services and professional or paraprofessional jobs. The results of the current study supported those of Punamaki (1988) who found higher rates of somatization among unemployed Palestinian women as opposed to employed women.

Professional and paraprofessional jobs are more prestigious than other jobs because they require more years of education and pay better. Therefore, the unmarried women who have professional or paraprofessional jobs are likely to be more educated, financially secure and independent in their living. These jobs are more respected in society because women mostly work in the education or health sector, which is the tradition in Palestinian society. However, industrial and agricultural jobs do not require high levels of education, pay low salaries, and are fatiguing and unstable. Thus, the unemployed single woman has fewer financial resources and will probably depend on her family for her living expenses, which is likely to increase her feeling of helplessness, uselessness, dependency, anxiety, and distress. In turn, she may suffer somatization to adjust to her problems and to attract the attention of others.

Obsessive-compulsive disorder was more prevalent among unemployed participants who lived in cities and towns. An unmarried woman who lives in a city probably does not own a house, land, or property to support herself. Therefore, she depends on her family for living expenses. This situation could be distressing, especially when her parents are dead. It is humiliating to ask brothers or other relatives for money especially when the family is poor.

The qualitative findings indicated that most of the participants perceived their employment and financial independence as a strength. In turn, the unemployed unmarried woman may become anxious and worries about her current life and the future, which could lead to obsessive thinking.

The findings indicated that employment predicted hostility. Hostility indicates a wish to hurt those who caused pain to the individual (Millikan, 1987; Johnson, 1997). Employment accounted for 2.4% of the variance in hostility. The unemployed participants had marginally higher levels of hostility. The results of the present study confirmed those of Punamaki (1988) who reported higher rates of hostility among unemployed Palestinian women as opposed to employed women. Various factors could be behind the high level of hostility among the participants of the present study. Sader (1996) connected the excessive hostility and aggressiveness of unmarried women to social and family harassment and community censure directed towards them. Among the present study's respondents, those who were unemployed had more reasons to become angry, frustrated, and aggressive, which might have led to hostility. Unemployed people, whether married or not are likely to be easily angered and aggravated because they feel helpless and useless. They have needs that they cannot meet because they are unemployed.

In the present study's data data, some respondents mentioned that a high tendency for aggression directed towards family members or property was a weakness. These respondents talked about being easily irritated and annoyed, which was a characteristic they would like to change. The social and familial treatment and attitudes of the unmarried women may have led to this frustration and anger, which would be either suppressed or expressed into their social environment. If the woman suppresses her feelings, she would leave her anger and frustration to pile up until they blow up. However, if the woman was an expressive person, she would find expression for her anger into her environment, which results in acting out behaviors manifested through destructive and hostile episodes. Families of unmarried women need to be educated about the best ways of managing these "out of control" episodes on the part of their daughters. An important role for health care providers is to teach families about how to understand the emotional state of their unmarried daughters and to learn the best ways of assisting them.

The area of residence of the respondents (north, middle, and south) did not correspond to their state of mental health in the present study. This finding contradicted those of Sansur (1995) who reported higher rates of psychological distress among Palestinian women in the south region of the West Bank compared to others living elsewhere. The above findings were

supported by qualitative findings, which indicated no significant variations in social values and the perceived treatment of unmarried women in three districts of the West Bank. This may reflect homogeneity on the part of Palestinian society regarding sociocultural values concerning marriage and singlehood. This finding supported those of other researchers who believed that women are treated the same and receive similar social feedback wherever they live in Palestine (Jad, 1991; Najjar & Warnock, 1992; Sabella, 1994). Future research using random sampling might investigate the influence of residence on the mental health of unmarried women.

Symbolic interactionism helps us to understand why remaining unmarried in a patriarchal, traditional society produces profound maladjustment in some women who remained unmarried (Rosenberg, 1984). Maladjustment may be manifested through the inability of unmarried women to socialize; or it may be felt in the isolation, aggression and oversensitivity, helplessness and sense of worthlessness they experience. These experiences are predictable in a society that does not understand the thinking, behavior, and feelings of unmarried women. Symbolic interactionism suggests that the unmarried woman is expected to act in a certain way and to conform to the role expectations of her family and society. She is supposed to accept marriage with any man, to show eagerness to become a mother, to behave according to society's standards, to dress and move around carefully, to protect her honour, and to censure herself. She is placed under tremendous pressure from herself, her family and her society. This situation leads to psychological distress in some unmarried women. However, some of them develop more intense symptomatology or become sick.

The findings of the present study indicated that the participants manifested high rates of psychological symptomatology in relation to all symptom dimensions except for phobic anxiety. The findings of the present study confirmed the results of Sansur (1995) who reported higher levels of all the SCL-90-R-symptom dimensions among single Palestinian women, compared to married Palestinian women. Therefore, unmarried women in the present study were more psychologically distressed than other Palestinian women as well as women in other nations. However, the findings of the current study contradicted those of Khamis (1998) who found less psychological distress among Palestinian single women.

The findings of this study indicate that a relatively high percentage of the participants had psychological distress that reached clinically significant levels on the nine symptom dimensions of the SCL-90-R. Certain independent variables such as educational level, employment status, living arrangements, and occasionally age and area of residence were statistically significant and influenced the mental health state of the participants.

In addition, the findings suggest that remaining unmarried increased the vulnerability to developing psychological distress but other factors possibly played additional roles. Being a woman by itself encompasses more stressors and higher vulnerability for emotional disorders (Johnson, 1993; Sansur, 1995; Punamaki, 1988). Kayyal (1993) reported high rates of neurosis, somatization, nervous break down, and depression among women, which could be linked to various factors including familial and social oppression, deprivation; socialization of the woman to regard herself as inferior; inequality and deprivation of legal rights; and cultural limitations and restrictions. The findings of the current study supported Kayyal (1993) and other researchers. The high prevalence of emotional disorders among unmarried Palestinian women could be related to a combination of factors. These factors include the general living conditions under the pressure and oppression of occupation; familial factors, cultural and social factors; and remaining unmarried in a society that condemns sexual relationships without marriage, and places a high value on having children.

The unmarried Palestinian women in the present study were different from Palestinian women as a whole in their psychological conditions. They faced a peculiar situation of being women in addition to being single, which magnifies their problems and psychological distress. The unmarried women have high susceptibility to emotional illness because their families pressure them in particular and their communities pressure them in general.

Unmarried women are encouraged to feel inferior, worthless and useless; are alienated from their peers who have married, and feel lonely after their parents die. Loneliness is a painful feeling that most single women suffer (www.solosingles.com/sslonely/feel.htm). The qualitative findings indicated that many participants felt lonely and abandoned after the death of their parents, especially after the death of their fathers. One's father's death means losing financial support for those unmarried woman who are unemployed and losing one's freedom for those who are employed and were previously free to move around. The findings indicated that following a woman's fathers' death, brothers who sometimes are more conservative and argumentative than the father control the life of the unmarried woman.

Therefore, when considering the stress of remaining unmarried in a patriarchal society that stresses marriage and motherhood, it may well mount to intolerable levels. This situation leads to psychological distress and illness for those who have few personal and social resources and are degraded and socially harassed. Being a woman in addition to remaining unmarried, could lead to psychological distress such as that observed in this study.

More and more marriage is seen as a choice rather than a necessity for women. Today, some Palestinian women who are employed and live in a state of financial independence, and

have an active social life chose to remain unmarried. Many respondents believed that marriage has more disadvantages for the independent and assertive woman. They believed that marriage burdens the woman with family responsibilities and household chores, kills her ambitions for education and social activity, and limits her freedom. However, their families and social networks often disapprove of these viewpoints on the part of unmarried women and do not accept their choice of remaining single easily. Kayyal (1993) suggests that unmarried women who have strong personalities and chose to live freely, to work and become independent, to entertain and socialize, and to pursue higher education are made to feel alienated and estranged from their communities. Thus, unmarried women may suppress their feelings and live according to the values of their societies rather than according to their wishes or needs. Being ambivalent about marriage as a choice leads to psychological difficulties, nervous breakdown and other emotional disorders (Kayyal, 1993).

Marital status has an influence on the psychological state and lifestyles of people (Scambler, 1997). The findings indicated that marriage seems to decrease the prevalence of some emotional illness among Palestinian unmarried women. This finding supports those of Sansur (1995), (Nilson (1978) and Scambler (1997) but contradicts those of Khamis (1998). Remaining single deprives women of the chance to improve their social status and attain prestige (Nilson, 1978). In addition, single women are more vulnerable to social isolation and are less satisfied and happy than married women (Scambler, 1997). This is especially true in societies where marriage and family life are central values. In these societies, being married gives meaning and significance to daily life and promotes a sense of well-being in addition to providing good social and emotional support. This is especially true in Arab societies including Palestinian society.

There is a social and cultural subjugation that unmarried Palestinian women have to endure in patriarchal societies, which includes exploitation; lack of freedom; lack of control over one's destiny; constant humiliation; feeling insecure, and uncertainty. Women are taught that their personal worth and autonomy depends mainly on their physical beauty and appeal to men and are socialized to see marriage as the main means of achieving acceptance within their society (Devies & Janosik, 1991). Therefore, when they do not get married, some of them feel rejected, unfortunate, and useless and live without a purpose in life especially when they are not employed and educated.

Educated, employed, well-articulated, knowledgeable women have more freedom to marry whom they want. However, marriage is not always the girl's choice even for well-educated women. Women are usually passive when it comes to selecting husbands as they

tend to wait for the men to make the first move. Even for an educated and assertive woman, it might not be feasible for her to decide who her husband will be. However, some women have better chances to meet men if they are educated and employed than if they were to sit at home.

Women working at high status jobs had better mental health than less educated women who had fewer chances to find decent jobs with a good income and job security. These findings may have occurred because unemployed women stay home most of the time; have no purposes or goals in life; and feel useless and powerless. It is important to be employed and financially independent, but this is even better if the individual is working at a respected job that provides higher wages and social status, especially for women who work to support themselves. Work provides women with financial security, independence and improves their social status (Kayyal, 1993). However, according to Kayyal (1993), educated and employed women have ambivalent and contradictory attitudes towards work. On one hand, work ensures independence and financial security, while on the other hand, it exhausts them and exposes the woman to unfavourable social scrutiny.

Paraprofessional and service jobs usually require a diploma or a university degree after finishing secondary school. Therefore, these women are likely to be better educated than other women who are unemployed or employed in jobs that have lower social status such as agricultural and industrial jobs. It seems that the unmarried women tend to seek poorly paid jobs in agriculture and industry when they do not have a certificate from an institution or college. Almost all the employed participants considered employment a strength, irrespective of the kind of job they have. Although some variation existed among the participants in relation to the type of work or employment, previous literature did not explain the psychological basis for such variation.

The findings indicated that being financially stable and independent was not adequate to protect the unmarried woman from psychological distress unless she had also pursued a high level of education. Higher education in college or university facilitates employment after graduation, which in turn might raise the woman's self-esteem and social status. Many participants considered their education a strength, and being poorly educated as weakness. They preferred to pursue academic education instead of marrying at an early age, which decreased their chances of marrying. This supports Nilson's (1978) viewpoint who proposed that women who succeed in their career and education, and attain social status tend to remain single. In this study, the majority (73.7%) of the participants was well educated; however, the sample was obtained on the basis of convenience, which may have introduced bias.

A great number of Palestinian women choose to pursue higher education if their families permit it. Women in Palestinian society perceive education to be a tool for empowerment and future employment and independent living. This might explain why many of the highly educated women in Palestinian society are single. Palestinian figures show that about 46% of the university students are females (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998). The findings of the study supports feminist theorists' standpoint about the significance of women's education and employment for their emancipation (Al-Sa`adawi, 1990; Mayers, 1986; Manasra, 2003).

Higher education is strength for people in general and for women in particular. Higher education equips the individual with the knowledge and skills to cope with problems and to feel powerful and assertive. Educated women according to Punamaki (1988) use social and political activities to cope with life stress and have less anxiety than less educated women do. Education also facilitates an individual's integration into society and in working life. Therefore, it is not surprising to see that the higher the level of education, the less the psychological distress in the participants. However, other researchers have reported contradictory results. Al-Sa'adawi (1983) found a high level of depressive symptoms and anxiety among young, better educated, married Egyptian women. Kayyal (1993) also supported Al-Sa`adawi, reporting higher rates of neurosis among educated women.

Parents and siblings are the most intimate and closest people to the individual. If they understand, love and care for the unmarried woman, they are the best source of support and comfort for her. The findings indicated that good treatment and the love of the family are important sources of empowerment for unmarried Palestinian women. Therefore, when families are unconcerned and cold; cruel and nagging; intrusive and rigid, they are perceived as disempowering and threatening to the mental health and self-perception of the unmarried women.

The findings of this study indicated that many participants perceived their siblings, parents, and stepparents as unsupportive, intimidating, oppressive, and domineering. Therefore, the participants mistrusted them and mistrust other people as well. This finding was significant during stressful and difficult times, when the individual needs family support and understanding the most. About 23% of the participants refrained from seeking help from their families during periods of distress and preferred to suppress their feelings and discomfort. They did not want to share their feelings and pains with someone who was cruel and intimidating. Women who have poor social support had more hostility than those who have strong social support (Punamaki, 1988). Therefore, under these circumstances, paranoid

ideation, hostility, and interpersonal sensitivity eventually develop into mistrust and increased isolation, and social support and self-esteem decrease, in the lives of single women. The result of the above situation is depression; anxiety; somatization; social problems and interpersonal conflicts with family members; obsession; social isolation; and eventually psychotic symptoms. These disorders occur as a reaction to living a restricted life without freedom of choice, movement, or social activity; being insecure; being treated disrespectfully; having poor confidence in one's family and the future; and financial insecurity and dependence.

Nevertheless, many participants made themselves less sensitive to the social pressure and maltreatment from their families. These respondents accepted the reality of staying single and adjusted themselves to this reality. Those who were self-confident and assertive lived quietly and managed well in life. On the other hand, others expected to have to accept marrying any men who proposed to them in order to escape from their bad living conditions. Perhaps, if they were not to get married, they might become preoccupied with the issue of marriage, men, and sex; issues which are usually discussed privately in girls' gatherings.

Only small variations existed in the prevalence of psychological distress among both those who were interviewed and those who were not, which was an interesting finding. There were no significant differences in mental health state among the respondents who were interviewed or not except for depression. Depression was the most severe in the participants who refused the interview.

Although some of the independent variables exerted statistically significant influences, the magnitude of their effect was weak. This indicated that other variables that were not examined in the study might have had larger influences on the mental health state of the participants. However, it was not clear what socioeconomic and cultural variables would carry more weight, and to what extent each variable might influence the independent variables of this study. Therefore, there is a need for quantitative research that could identify the specific influence of other variables on the self-perception and the mental health of unmarried Palestinian women. Comparative studies could be useful to investigate mental health and self-perception of women among various socioeconomic groups and groups of different marital status.

Given that resources are very scant for Palestinian women who need mental health care, it is imperative to know which coping resources are more likely to have the greatest

impact on women's mental health. In order to advance what is known about unmarried Palestinian women, it is important to look at them in various contexts or situations. It is also important to investigate thoroughly the influence of multiple stressors on the mental health of unmarried women.

The results suggest that efforts of mental health practitioners and decision makers should be directed toward increasing women's education and employment opportunities; improving their problem-solving strategies; there should be more involvement of unmarried women in social activities; and more should be done to support and empower them. The outcomes of the study suggest that it is essential to mainstream unmarried women in all life spheres and to increase their resilience, to prepare them to live independently and adaptively, and to enhance their mental and physical well-being.

E. Relationship of mental health state to self-perception

Only the respondents who were interviewed were subject to further analysis of self-perception. Those interviewees who had moderate and above levels of psychological distress, and were considered to have clinically significant features were included in the discussion here. Out of the 163 who were interviewed, 41 respondents (25.15%) met the above-mentioned criteria.

The findings of the study indicated that 56% of the interviewees who had high levels of emotional distress also had negative-self evaluation and low self-esteem. This finding indicated that positive self-perception is predictive of mental well-being of the unmarried women in the study. The findings support previous literature that linked mental health to positive self-evaluation and self-perception (Johnson, 1997; Sansur; 1995; Kayyal, 1997). Several variables are essential for an individual's mental health and for them to maintain a positive view of themselves. Social researchers and feminist theorists perceive employment, education, and financial independence to be empowering to women, and this would make them feel good about themselves (Al-Sa'adawi, 1990; Al-Merniesi, 1997; Johnson, 1993; Jad, 1995). In addition, the building up of the positive self-concept of the girl during childhood influences her positive self-perception and mental health state, as she becomes a woman (Johnson, 1997; Kayyal, 1993; Al-Marneisi, 1997).

Qualitative findings from the present study indicated that positive self-esteem and self-perception was connected to the level of education and financial stability that the unmarried woman has; the quality of social acceptance and respect she receives from

significant others; the degree of freedom the unmarried woman enjoys, and level of optimism about getting married. When any of the above-mentioned factors are absent, self-esteem is threatened.

A well-educated single woman who is capable of supporting herself and living independently would feel more positive and confident about herself and her future. She would be knowledgeable and would have more freedom to leave home and to socialize than an unmarried woman who is poorly educated and stays at home to cook and clean the house and might spend the time wondering about her life and future. The unmarried, unemployed Palestinian woman might well see that her only hope is in marrying and leaving the family home. When this does not happen, she might feel useless, hopeless, worthless, and desperate. This situation could lead to self-pity, self-hatred, and negative self-esteem.

The findings indicated that even when one is psychologically distressed, being educated and employed act as a buffer system against distress. For instance, 24.4% of the participants who had high levels of psychological distress, considered themselves strong because they were well educated, employed and financially independent. Here again, a well-educated woman who is employed feels good about self because she could live independently despite her psychological state.

The perception of being strong and assertive; loved, valued for oneself, accepted unconditionally, and respected by others were associated with having a positive self-perception and healthy mental state amongst the participants. This finding is congruent with the symbolic interactionist perspective, which connects self-perception with acceptance by significant others of the individual (Charon, 1989).

In addition, living without unnecessary limitations and constraints was an essential component for a positive self-perception and a favourable mental health state on the part of the unmarried women. The unmarried woman who is free in her living, dress, social mobility, and work usually feels good about herself and her family. She feels that she is a trustworthy person and her family loves her and has confidence in her. Thus, she feels empowered and assertive, whether she was married or remained single.

Moreover, positive self-evaluation is associated with the belief that remaining unmarried is an acceptable phenomenon in society since many women live normally without marriage. A woman who looks around and finds no other unmarried women present feels lonely, unfortunate and "left behind". Her self-evaluation would be negative because she believes that something wrong in her has kept men away. By contrast, when the unmarried woman connects herself to a larger group of unmarried women, she might feel attached to this

'reference group' and more 'normal'. According to Charon (1989), reference groups give identity and provide feelings of belonging.

There were several indicators of negative self-evaluation in the unmarried women, who also manifested higher than usual levels of psychological distress. For instance, about 42% of them described themselves as nervous, easily irritated, impulsive, irrational, reckless, and having destructive behavior. This behaviour on the part of the unmarried women indicates poor adjustment and lack of self-control. In addition, this behaviour is indicative of aggression towards the social and physical environment, which reflects the respondents' frustration and dissatisfaction with their lives and their families. Several authors postulate that being psychologically distressed encompasses feeling irritable; impulsivity; irrational thinking; and destructive activity (Johnson, 1997; Burgess, 1990; Davis & Jansoik, 1991; Dreogatis, 1983; Sansur, 1995).

In addition, about 27% of the highly distressed participants described themselves as avoidant and introverted, socially isolated, and withdrawn, in addition to using escape mechanisms such as over sleeping, procrastination, indecisiveness, and excessive forgetfulness. When the woman is socially harassed, rejected from her family and friends because she is not married, and is restricted in her life with little freedom, and treated as worthless and invaluable, it becomes natural for her to isolate herself and live at the margin of her family. For some people, escape into sleep and withdrawal are protective mechanisms (Burgess, 1990; Millikan, 1987). Through isolating oneself, avoiding social gatherings and avoiding married people, the unmarried woman may get an illusory feeling of security and protection. When she refrains from socializing with people, the unmarried woman avoids unnecessary embarrassments that married women and other people give whether accidentally or on purpose.

Qualitative findings from the present study indicated that personal characteristics and living conditions of unmarried women have an impact on their self-evaluation. Some of these characteristics appeared to be deep-rooted such as weak personality structure, stubbornness, mistrust and oversensitivity to others, excessive emotionality, shyness, lack of self-confidence, stubbornness, and unexplained love or hate of others. These difficulties are amenable to change and modification through counseling and psychotherapy if the woman were to seek such approaches. Aspects such as self-neglect, feelings of inferiority, emotionality and dependency might be susceptible to modification. However, many of the remaining features were related to poor socioeconomic status that could be transient or situational if their circumstances were to improve.

Moreover, the findings reflected the negative self-evaluation and self-image of the women, which could be indicative of poor mental health. Some respondents described themselves as inferior, lacking in status, and unappealing to men. Inferiority feelings may indicate negative self-evaluation, which is usually observed in depressed and paranoid people (Johnson, 1997). The unmarried woman who compares herself with other women who are married and had children, although they do not have any special characteristics may feel inferior and rejected. She would probably feel sad for herself and frustrated because she has no control over her destiny.

Several theorists connect negative self-perception to gender role socialization (Mayers, 1986; Al-Sa`adawi, 1990; Williams, 1993; Davis & Janosik, 1991). They theorize that the very fact of being a woman automatically creates a situation of powerlessness. Others connected learned helplessness and low self-esteem to the socialization of women as inferior, dependent, passive, and weak (Farah, 1992; Williams, 1993).

The qualitative findings of the study lead to the postulation that being a woman, in addition to remaining unmarried; feeling insecure; being uncertain about the future; and living in a bad social atmosphere have influenced the Mental Health State of the participants. It is reasonable to believe that when the families of the unmarried women urge them to agree to marry, frighten them with singlehood and blame them for wasting previous chances of marrying, they will develop negative self-perceptions. In addition, when the unmarried women are belittled and reproached by their relatives, are insulted and humiliated by family members, they will feel bad about themselves and their world. In addition, when the unmarried woman receives marriage proposals from old, married, divorced, or widowed men; and if they are uncertain about the future and whether they will or will not get married, they might well feel unhappy and develop feelings of no value and low self-esteem.

The findings indicated that there was some contradiction between the measured mental health state of the respondents and their evaluation and views of themselves. It was interesting to note that 44% of the interviewees with high psychological distress described themselves as self-confident and as having strong personalities because they were bold and courageous in social relationship and communication. One possible reason for such a contradiction was that the unmarried women concealed their real feeling about themselves and reported self as powerful and strong. The second reason could be that the respondents were not conscious of the contradiction between their psychological state and self-evaluation. A third possible reason would be that they were using excessive compensation and

intellectualization and were acting omnipotent and powerful to defend themselves against feeling inferior and worthless.

Interestingly, 14.6% of the respondents who had high level of psychological distress were unable to identify their weaknesses or strengths, or reported having no positive or powerful areas. In addition, 22% of the unmarried women denied having any weakness, which is unrealistic because no human being is perfect. Since all the participants were mature, it was interesting to see that some of them have never evaluated themselves in this way before. These findings indicate that a relatively high number of the unmarried participants were unfamiliar with this kind of insight into oneself and one's problems. Another possible explanation is that they were protecting themselves by avoiding answering the question and thinking about their weakness at all. In either case, these unmarried women would be expected to have negative self-evaluations. Self-understanding and the individual's ability to evaluate themselves in this way is believed in Western psychological literature to be an essential characteristic of mentally healthy adults (Davies & Janosik, 1991). However, some people reach adulthood without undertaking this kind of self-evaluation. Even those who undertake self-evaluation of this kind may not perceive themselves appropriately (Millikan, 1987). Some people might underestimate themselves, whilst others may augment or overvalue themselves. In both situations, they are misperceiving themselves.

There were inconsistencies in the relationship between self-perception and the mental health state of the respondents. Therefore, either the interview questions were insufficient to reflect the self-perception of the respondents, or the respondents were not open enough to talk frankly about their feelings and their self-view. In any case, future research could explore more thoroughly the self-perception of unmarried Palestinian women using quantitative tools. In addition, future research may investigate the relationship between the nine symptom dimensions of Derogatis and the self-perception of unmarried women in order to evaluate their influence, which was not done in the current study.

The findings of the present study indicated that the social environment of an individual has a significant influence on the individual, which is supported by sociologists and social psychologists (Bherm & Kassin, 1992; Al- Zieud, 1998; Deaux et al, 1993; Williams & Sheffe, 1989). This influence of people on us happens because others are important to our self-development (Deaux et al, 1993). The self-development of the unmarried woman starts first with her development as a girl. A girl who has developed a positive self- concept during her childhood will tend to continue to have it in her adulthood.

Social scientists have emphasized the strong relationship between one's self-concept and behaviour. The interrelationship of self-concept, self-perception, and behaviour was central to the symbolic interactionist perspective (Deaux et al, 1993). Therefore, when a girl has a positive self-concept, she feels assertive and confident. In addition, her actions will tend to reflect her inner self (Millikan, 1987). On the other hand, if she has a negative self-concept she will be hesitant, dependent, powerless, and lacks confidence in herself, and her behaviour will reflect such feelings.

The self-perception of the woman reflects the social values and beliefs that were transferred to her from the social systems such as family, school, neighbors, and her extended family through the socialization process (Charon, 1989). Therefore, a positive self-perception on the part of the woman is correlated with acceptance from others, approval from significant others, and respect and appreciation from people in her social environment. However, the most important source for the development of self-concept is the home. We cannot deny the importance of family opinion and values on our self-perception. When the unmarried woman is loved and respected by her parents, she tends to feel worthy and valued thus, she is more apt to develop positive views about her world and herself (Hale, 1990). The opposite will happen in those unmarried women who do not receive signals that tell them that they are loved, appreciated, and respected by their significant others. Thus, these women are more vulnerable to negative self-perceptions and might hate themselves, feel worthless, become depressed, and hate their world.

Disproval and rejection of the woman by her family, especially her parents may lead to negative self-perceptions and low self-evaluations. Girls who feel they burden their families with expenses; where their families treat them as vulnerable, weak and fragile; where they appear to have no rights and have to give everything to their families; where they are given the impression that they do not deserve education and inheritance; where they are controlled and supervised, and suspected even if they are veiled, are likely to grow up with the belief that they are worthless, inferior, powerless, dependent, helpless, and shameful. In addition, when Arab women socialize with others and attend social activities, they encounter cultural patterns similar to those found in their families, and the self-construct that was established at home is reinforced.

The findings indicated that many respondents felt bad about themselves and their lives and hated their society. The participants hated being unmarried, uneducated, unemployed, and feeling constricted and limited in so many aspects of their lives. This mental picture in the unmarried women is supported by researchers who studied the self-concept. The individual

who feels he or she is rejected or not accepted in the social group tends to develop low self-esteem, because approval and acceptance by others is essential for one's liking and approval of oneself (Millikan, 1987; Myers, 1983; Charon, 1989). Negative self-concepts are based on values that tend to be based on perceived failures to perform adequately, and on belittling responses from other people, particularly significant others (Rawlins & Heacock, 1993). The unmarried woman who feels rejected and unappealing to men, and who is reproached by her significant others because she is not married, tends to perceive herself negatively, especially when she has built up the notion that she will get married and becomes a mother and a wife.

The findings indicated that self-perception is a predictor of mental health and being unmarried in a traditional society as the Palestinian society could also be predictive of both the mental health state and the self-perception of the unmarried Palestinian women. A great majority of the participants who described themselves as weak and disempowered also had relatively higher than usual psychological distress. When a girl has a negative self-concept and during adulthood she remains unmarried, her already negative self-value is augmented. She feels that she is rejected both as a woman and as a potential wife and mother.

In addition, a large group of the respondents were angry and had aggressive tendencies, or used the opposite reactions such as escaping and withdrawal to adapt to feelings of inferiority and rejection and the familial and social harassment. According to Davies and Janosik, (1991), people with an altered self-concept could become closed-minded, compulsive, rigid, hostile, clinging and dependent, exploited or apt to exploit and manipulate others; oriented toward fame and prestige; alienated and feel estranged from themselves. Although the participants did not disclose that they had tendencies toward manipulation and self-centeredness, many of them explained that they knew or heard about unmarried women who become difficult, rigid, arrogant, and self-absorbed especially when they got old. Nevertheless, some participants indicated that many unmarried women in their communities became quarrelsome with their sisters-in-law because they were jealous of them, which suggests aggressive tendencies and bitterness.

The findings indicated that about one-third of the participants had anxiety and fears of the future, felt insecure, and unfortunate. They lived in constant worry and were preoccupied with their lives and circumstances, and undertook frequent mental comparisons between themselves and other women of their age who were married. This indicates that they felt inferior or unfortunate. People who have negative self-concept and low self-esteem live in constant fear of rejection, failure, incompetence, inadequacy and inferiority, and may exhibit self-defeating behaviors (Rawlins & Heacock, 1993; Davies & Janosik, 1991). Researchers

believe that many people with low self-esteem are passive, dependent, anxious, and occasionally depressed, and that negative self-concept is associated with major mental disorders such as depression, anxiety disorder, personality disorder as well as other conditions (Rawlins & Heacock, 1993).

One important finding in this study was that when there are other unmarried women in the neighborhood, the respondents felt better about themselves. Single women tend to identify with those who are unmarried, ask why they are not married, whether they are happy or not, and if they going to marry in the future or not. Brehma and Kassin (1992) who postulated that belonging to a reference group enhances feelings of belonging and "normalization" supported this finding. Other researchers argue that people usually evaluate themselves in comparison to others of similar sex, status, age, or the social groups to which they belong (Deaux et al, 1993). In turn, the individual comes to terms with themselves and either accepts it or hates it; and accordingly feels happy or angry and disappointed with themselves.

Individuals from a collective cultural background such as Palestinian society are socialized to develop an interdependent self-construal (Sabella, 1982; Sharabi, 1987; Heiberg & Qvensin; 1994). The behavior of Palestinians is shaped and directed by a desire to be responsive to the needs and wishes of others who are close to them, and through negotiation of the demands of significant others. The findings reflected the strength of the influence of other people on the self-perceptions of the women studied here. Family members, friends, and neighbours' attitudes and viewpoints had great deal of influence on most of the participants. However, when the unmarried woman is assertive, has a strong personality, is educated and employed, the influence of other people on her is minimized.

Based on symbolic interactionist perspectives and self-concept models, the unmarried Palestinian women reacted to the issue of marriage in accordance with their perception of it. Since being married is highly valued by Palestinian society, remaining unmarried negatively influenced the single women and reflected negatively on their self-perception, self-esteem, and mental health. The reactions of the Palestinian society towards the unmarried women were congruent with the traditional belief about marriage and "unmarried women". Therefore, the unmarried women feel that they are not conforming to important social standards and unfortunate, and they react to being unmarried accordingly. Personal, familial, and sociocultural variables were predictive of the mental health state and self-view of the unmarried women.

Realistic and positive self-perception is essential for the mental health of the individual. Positive self-perception means high self-esteem, which is associated with being

adaptive; having low vulnerability to neurosis and drug addiction; having a positive view of others; showing self-efficacy, happiness, and health (Myers, 1983; Millikan, 1987). The findings indicated that bad treatment of the unmarried woman, lack of the family's love and respect, imposing limitations, and being suspicious of the behaviour of the woman lead to a negative self-perception on her part and low self-esteem.

Mental health professionals have noted that unrealistic self-perception leads to self-deception, projection and blame of others; resistance to change; rationalization; inferiority and envy; paranoid ideation, and ineffectiveness (Myers, 1983; Zahran, 1982). A person whose self-concept has changed for the worse may show features of rigidity, dependency, alienation, estrangement to self, hostility, loss of control, insecurity, inferiority, and vulnerability (Davis & Janosik, 1991). People who were abused; were deprived of basic biological and emotional needs, and encountered social and economic oppression are more vulnerable to having a negative self-concept (Rawlins & Heacock, 1993). People who are disapproved of, rejected, disrespected, and humiliated by others around them are more vulnerable to developing a negative self-concept and self-perception, low self-esteem and distorted identity formation.

The way the unmarried woman perceives herself, either positively or negatively, worthy or unworthy, inferior or equal to others, usually influences the way she expresses her needs and her attitudes towards meeting those needs (Johnson, 1993). The traditionally socialized woman, like those in Palestinian society, has learned to seek the approval of others, and that approval is crucial for the development of her self-concept (Williams, 1993). These women are at risk of developing feelings of inferiority, low self-esteem, negative self-perception and evaluation, anxiety, withdrawal, and even depression if they have failed to adjust to societal and familial demands and challenges as single women.

The findings indicated that the majority of the participants acknowledged their weaknesses and shortcomings, which reflects a realistic self-evaluation. No matter what kinds of weakness were mentioned by the participants, they indicate a good level of self-evaluation and awareness. Having a clear self-understanding and an ability to undertake realistic self-evaluation are strengths that many people do not have. They are essential for further helpful steps to be taken. This is an issue of concern for mental health professionals who might work with unmarried participants who seek help.

The general findings indicate that the majority of the participants maintained a clear state of thinking and awareness, which means that they were not psychotic and mentally confused. However, this does not erase the reality that about one-fourth of the participants met

the criteria of diagnosis. It is desirable for mental health practitioners to locate those unmarried women who met the diagnostic criteria and provide the necessary help for them.

The findings of the present study indicated a lack of confidence on the part of the unmarried Palestinian women in mental health professionals, especially psychiatrists. A previous study that was conducted by the investigator demonstrated that Palestinians hold negative attitudes towards conventional psychiatric treatment for psychological and mental disorders (Manasra, 1988). It seems that although Palestinian society is now more exposed to psychological illnesses due to the severe political and economic problems, they still hold onto the old negative viewpoints regarding psychiatric treatment.

Taking into consideration the above discussion, mental health practitioners are facing a major challenge when dealing with unmarried women. They need to provide help for unmarried Palestinian women who might need it; however, their interventions should not involve traditional approaches such as giving medication or recommending hospitalization. This situation suggests that the mental health experts should use culturally acceptable measures, in addition to mild forms of psychoeducation and teaching. In addition, they need to encourage the use of natural approaches that could facilitate adaptation, including prayer, reading holy books, walking, relaxation techniques that could be taught to women, and other techniques that are convenient for women.

In addition, since most of the participants approach their family members or friends for advice and for someone to confide in, the efforts of health care providers should be also directed towards these people. Simple teaching, guidance, and possible counselling for family members who live with the unmarried woman, could be useful to improve communication and relationships among family members, and would guide them to the best ways of dealing with their daughters.

In both clinical work and research, there is a significant gap in understanding the growing numbers of unmarried women in Arab society. This study presented here is one-step toward filling that gap in Palestinian society. The study will be useful and helpful for mental health practitioners because it explains the experiences of unmarried women in the West Bank of the Palestinian occupied territories. The study explained the experience of being unmarried as a woman between age 25 and 50, from the perspective of the women themselves. The study also investigated unmarried women's perceptions of familial and societal influence on their images of themselves as being unmarried. A qualitative method was utilized because the area of investigation was new and the focus of the study was therefore phenomenological and exploratory. In addition, a quantitative method was used to

investigate the mental health state of the unmarried women in the study because mental health could be evaluated using reliable and valid tools that are available for researchers and clinicians.

This section investigated the relationship between self-perception and the mental health state of the participants, The Global Severity Indices were used as an indicator of participants' general mental health state (Derogatis , 1983), with two interview questions investigated self-perception. Some inconsistency was observed in the responses of the participants, which might correspond to the discrepancy between the two constructs (mental health state & self-perception). Therefore, future research is needed on the issue that could investigate self-perception using structured tools. In addition, since this study did not explore the relationship between the self-perception of the participants and the 9 symptom dimensions, future research could do this. This kind of analysis might be helpful in understanding the relationship and interrelatedness of other independent variables such as depression, paranoia, anxiety and self-perception.

The study was able to answer most of the research questions. Questions one, two, three, four, and five in addition to the hypothesis were discussed in the results chapters. However, limitations included the issues that the study could not totally explore owing to the type of sample used, the lack of control over the variables, and methodological considerations.

Because a major part of this study was a qualitative investigation based on a convenience sample and self-report data, no firm conclusions regarding causality could be drawn. However the self-reported outcomes cannot be considered trivial for the unmarried women concerned. The importance of this study lies in developing recommendations that could guide policy makers, mental health practitioners, and future research.

The present study is an original study conducted for the first time in Palestinian society. This is neither a comparative study nor an exact replication of any research done before. In Palestinian society, there were no previous pieces of research that investigated the influence of remaining unmarried after the the age of 25 on unmarried women's mental health state and self-perception. The review of the literature on other Arab countries did not locate any previous in-depth research on unmarried Arab women of the same category, as far as the investigator knows.

VI. Limitations:

Various issues in the current study place limitations on possible generalization of the findings of this study. These include:

1. Using convenience sampling techniques breached one of the main conditions of the generalizability of research.
2. Exclusion of illiterate subjects from this study because they could not fill in the SCL.90-R.
3. The use of the interview for data collection. Some subjects agreed to be interviewed but refused the tape-recording for religious reasons or through feeling too shy to talk in a recorded interview, which made the investigator hand-write notes. It was difficult to record all verbal and non-verbal behaviour and communications that occurred while simultaneously running the interview.
4. The setting of the interviews: when data collection was conducted at home, family members wanted to inquire about the kinds of questions being used and asked about the purpose of this study, and the reason for selecting their sister or daughter. On other occasions, mothers or sisters of participants wanted to sit in the room to listen to the interview as it took place mainly in rural areas and where conservative families were involved. In addition, family member interrupted the interview to answer a phone call or to bring beverages. However, even though the interviews were conducted in private settings as far as possible; the interruptions negatively influenced the rhythm of the interview.
5. When data collection occurred at work, colleagues and telephone calls occasionally interrupted the data collection. In these circumstances, the interview was stopped for a short time then was restarted after the end of the interruption. These situations were sometimes embarrassing to the participants and to the investigator.
6. Most of the interviews were done by the investigator. This had an advantage and a disadvantage at the same time. On one hand, when all data is collected by the same person they are more reliable. On the other hand, making 159 interviews in all districts of the West Bank was very exhausting and time and money consuming.
7. Participation of more than one individual in the data collection as happened for the SCL.90-R. Even though any of those who shared in distributing of the SCL.90R were taught about its items and got training on data collection, variation in style and communication skills could still threatens the reliability of the data obtained.

Summary:

This chapter discussed the findings of the present study with reference to a review of methodology, research methods, and data analysis methods. In addition, the mental health of the participants, their self-perception, their views of marriage, and reasons for remaining single in Palestinian society, were analyzed in relation to demographic variables and cultural and societal values and opinions about unmarried women. It also presented the results of the interview in connection to the results of the analysis of the SCL-90- R.

The last chapter presents the implications of the present study for future research, mental health practice, and social and women's organizations. In addition, recommendations are presented for mental health practitioners, women's organizations, and families of the single Palestinian women. Furthermore, it highlights suggestions to help the unmarried Palestinian women who failed to adjust to remaining unmarried.

Chapter Eight

Implications and recommendations

Introduction

In this study, the investigator explored the mental health state and self-perception of 300 unmarried Palestinian women between the ages of 25 and 50 using a triangulation design. This was an original study conducted for the first time in Palestinian society and it investigated the constructs of marriage and singlehood in reference to mental health of the unmarried women in the Palestinian society. This was neither a comparative nor a replication study. In Palestinian society, no previous research has been conducted to investigate the mental health state or self-perception of unmarried women over the age of 25. The review of the literature on other Arab countries did not locate any previous in-depth research on the constructs of the present study, as far as the investigator knows.

Based on the findings of the present study that have been discussed with reference to the international and Arabic literature, the researcher identified major implications and contributions of this study. These contributions were derived from the findings in relation to nursing research, mental health services, and social organizations. Recommendations and conclusions will be provided as well.

I. Contribution of the study to the body of knowledge:

The study added to the knowledge about women within Palestinian society especially those who did not marry after the expected cultural age for marriage. This study added to the understanding of the concepts of mental health, self-perception, and marriage in a community that usually does not discuss them, except for marriage, which is usually taken for granted as a natural and inevitable event in the life of each woman. Additionally, the study could be helpful for the families of unmarried women and mental health practitioners, in addition to women's organizations, to better understand the attitudes and beliefs of unmarried Palestinian women. Moreover, the study could be helpful for social organizations and women themselves to better understand the consequences of remaining unmarried for the lives of women; their families and communities, as well as for other traditional societies similar to Palestinian society.

Although numerous dramatic political changes have taken place in Palestinian society since the start of this study six years ago, its basic premises and findings will be relevant as long as inequality and discrimination continues to exist against women in general and against unmarried women particularly. The researcher believes that this study will contribute to the work that has been done to eliminate social discrimination against unmarried Palestinian women through the information it had provided. Very few data were available about unmarried women in Palestinian society; therefore this study came as an attempt to fill the existing gap.

This study contributed to the proposition that being unmarried after the age of 25 could lead to psychological problems and negative self-perceptions among women. Psychological distress and having a negative self-perception should be considered as outcomes of stereotypical cultural beliefs and negative societal attitudes towards unmarried woman. Stereotyping and discrimination against unmarried women are common in Arab countries and some other traditional and developing countries (Sader, 1996; Moss, 1991; Miller & Solot, 1998; Keynes, 1986; Lewis et al, 1997).

The findings of the present study supported some of the previous work of other researchers who compared married and unmarried women, but contradicted others. For instance, the participants reported higher rates of mental distress than women studied internationally and nationally (Sansur, 1995; Derogatis, 1983). However, other researchers reported fewer psychological symptoms among the unmarried women compared to married women (Al-Sa`adawi, 1990; Punamaki, 1988; Khamis, 1998). Further research is needed using higher levels of control and random sampling to help experts negate or support the findings of the present study.

Despite all the disadvantages of marriage that were mentioned by the participants in the interview, most of them would prefer to be married rather than to remain single. This finding supported the cultural and societal views about the value of married life and the social respect and security that married women enjoy. Married women are perceived as happier because of the societal support they receive and the welcome they get from their families. Eventually, most women get married even if to an already married man, to avoid staying single in a society that accords enhanced worth to married women. This is true in other societies as well (Miller, 1998; Lewis et al, 1997; Sader, 1996; Feldman, 2000; Schnabel, 1986).

The present study concluded that there was a positive relationship between the mental health state and self-perception of the respondents and their educational level, employment status, the quality of social support they received, and the strength of their social network. Previous literature supported the positive relationship between education and employment and the woman's self-image and self-esteem (Kayyal, 1993; Al-Marneisi, 1997; Farah, 1993). The findings of this study were consistent with the literature about the Symbolic Interactionism theory, which attests that the mental health state and self-perception are connected to societal and familial treatment and opinions of the individual. One's self-evaluation relates to the way the others treat and act toward us as males or females (Jensen, 1999; Charon, 1989; Clunn, 1991; Kayyal, 1993; Kuhn, 1970). The symbols disseminated by others create the picture that each of us holds about ourselves (Charon, 1989; Deaux et al, 1993). Therefore, the respondents' self-perception was an outcome of the societal attitudes and treatment of them. This was emphasised very well by the participants during the interview.

Any individual is part of a system, or family. As a subsystem, the individual is affected by her/his environment (society) and his or her micro-system (family) (Clunn, 1991; Feldman, 2000; Deaux et al, 1993). The unmarried woman is influenced by her family as well as her society. Therefore, if she is treated well, she will be strong, competent, and mentally healthy. If not, she will suffer from self-doubt, inferiority, victimization, and mental distress or illness, especially if she has no balancing factors in her life. The balancing factors include independent living, having a strong personality make up, high levels of education, good coping abilities, a supportive family and social network, and financial security. These were important messages for women themselves; their families and communities. Palestinian women need the understanding of others and the acceptance of their families and communities as individuals who have value as human beings whether married or not.

The study inferred that age of the woman was significant for the women who participated in the study. There is a belief in the Palestinian society that says older unmarried woman become difficult and may develop mental illness or psychological distress. This belief was emphasized by the participants who thought that the older the woman gets without getting married, the more likely she would develop mental problems. This finding indicates that the unmarried women themselves hold negative stereotypes about their peers. The findings of the study contradicted the above viewpoint because there were no significant differences between young and old participants except for Interpersonal Sensitivity and Somatization. Somatization was higher among older participants, while Interpersonal Sensitivity was higher among younger participants. It is possible that when a woman gets old

without marrying, she could develop somatic symptoms as a way of coping. However, older unmarried women accept their reality and adjust to it and they are less bothered about what people think. This was contrary to what younger unmarried women thought as they were more sensitive to people's opinions.

On the other hand, residential area was significant for some psychological disorders. It seems that city residents were more vulnerable to psychological distress than others. This finding was surprising because Palestinians believed otherwise. It was thought that city residents have more freedom and better chances for education and work. However, when women are not educated and employed, their lives will be different. It seems that the unmarried women who live in the villages and refugee camps adapted themselves to the reality of staying single and accepted living dependently on their relatives. However, for those living in the city, it is more precarious to depend on brothers because they tend to live in small houses and nuclear families, which increases the possibility of living alone without economic support. The findings about age and living area were new and added a new vision to what has been in existence for some time. However, the knowledge about the significance of education and employment on women's lives has been emphasized. There is a need for more research on the influence of demographic variables on the mental health status of women in general and unmarried Palestinian women in particular.

II. Contribution to mental health services:

Mental health practitioners provide help for people who have psychological problems and those who have failed to adjust to daily living conditions. Health practitioners in Palestinian society are mainly oriented towards disease treatment and management. However, in the last 10 years, some mental health practitioners such as psychologists and social workers have started to direct their services towards battered women. The unmarried women are rarely approached even in women's centers. Very little attention has been paid to the social or environmental aspects of women's health.

Mental health services are impoverished in regards to preventive measures; health promotion strategies, and treatment regarding single women. Within the mental health field, there is a substantial ignorance and poor orientation to the special circumstances and problems of unmarried Palestinian women. Health care professionals lack information about unmarried women's living conditions and their mental health status. Therefore, mental health practitioners need to know about the existing problems among unmarried Palestinian women,

and have to sensitize and educate themselves about the psychological problems of unmarried women. The findings of the present study could be helpful to educate mental health practitioners about the needs of unmarried Palestinian women.

It was observed that most of the participants mentioned that they had not consulted a specialist before and might not do so in the future. This finding has implications that should not be overlooked, which are that people in the Palestinian society are very sensitive to psychiatric illness and mental health care providers because of the stigma attached to them. Therefore, any help or intervention should be provided in a place that safeguards the reputation of the client. Health services might be provided at women's centers, youth clubs, counseling offices or elsewhere rather than regular community or private psychiatric clinics that are connected to the stigma of insanity.

Today, no measures have been developed to meet the specific needs of Palestinian unmarried women. Health services are important to women as consumers, workers, and care providers (Doyal, 1991). Nevertheless, these services currently do little to promote health of women including unmarried ones. There is a need to open community clinics that are equipped with staff to work with health issues of women, building on the concepts of gendering health care. As well, community health services should be supported and expanded to meet the social and psychological needs of single women and the staff need training on existing methods of management of women with emotional problems that suit unmarried Palestinian women. Special services should be planned and geared to these women who usually search for help but don't find the right answers. Women need to have information about mental health services and mental health practitioners who could help them.

The findings of the present study place challenges before mental health practitioners and mental health agencies. Mental health practitioners need to understand what it means to be single in order to help single women accomplish the tasks of singlehood (Lewis et al, 1997). According to Lewis et al (1997), these tasks include creating new roles, accepting ambiguity, challenging familial and cultural stereotypes, and acknowledging sexual needs and feelings.

The mental health services and professionals need to develop socially appropriate strategies for Palestinian unmarried women that could help them adjust to the tremendous social pressure enforced on them and the stigma of remaining unmarried. Emphasis may be directed to preventive services such as health education, physical check ups, counseling, assertiveness and empowerment training; self-help groups and others. These services help women to develop their knowledge and understanding; raise their awareness; facilitate self-

confidence and responsibility-sharing, and provide them with supportive services at primary and secondary levels.

It was noticed from the findings of this study that unmarried Palestinian women have a specific epidemiological picture regarding emotional disorders. These problems intensify with distressing living conditions and social circumstances, as this study has attempted to show. The participants reported that most of the pressure comes from their families and communities. Mental health practitioners have to understand the relationship between single women and their social networks. Although the findings of this study cannot be generalized in a strong form due to methodological constraints, they could be used to guide mental health practice.

III. Contribution for social organizations

A. Socially:

This study contributes to the proposition that women are living under oppression and they suffer emotionally and socially because of multiple discriminations. Palestinian unmarried women suffer additionally due to their remaining single in a society that sees women only as wives and mothers. Women in the family are exposed to more pressure and restrictions when they are not married (Sader, 1996; Zahran, 1982; Rogers, 2000; Beechey & Whitelegg, 1986). The participants complained of bad treatment from their families for two major reasons; being a woman and being single. The situation gets worse when the woman is poorly educated and financially dependent.

It was observed that emotional and psychological distress and disorders are more prevalent among poorly educated and unemployed women. These women feel underprivileged because they are dependent on others; passive and unassertive; insecure, afraid, and uncertain of their futures; and have interpersonal and familial problems. By contrast, when the unmarried woman is educated and employed; is independent in her living arrangements; lives freely with minimal social constraints; and is respected by her family members, she is protected from psychological distress, lives happily, and has a positive self-concept even if she is not married. Adam (1982) found that Egyptian women have poor adaptability when they have negative self-concepts and low self-esteem, and when they are young and poorly educated. Therefore, unmarried women in the Palestinian society should be supported by social organizations and policy-makers who need to consider the needs of these

women in order to protect them from emotional distress and psychological illness, through the provision of educational chances and employment opportunities.

The findings of this study illustrated to the families in Palestinian society the best method to treat their daughters who remained unmarried. They need to love, respect, acknowledge, and to give some freedom to their daughters. This is essential to protect these women from emotional illness. The last thing that the single woman wants is a family who is insensitive and negligent to her feelings and needs, which adds to the social pressure on the unmarried woman.

Women's employment is still seen as a service and reserve in the family. However, for the unmarried woman, work is perceived as a protector from financial dependence on family members and relatives, thus it protects women from feelings of inferiority and humiliation. Families need to encourage their daughters to learn and to pursue a degree that prepares them for working life and a career. In this way, the unmarried woman can work and support herself. The most painful situation according to most of the unemployed participants was when they had to ask their brothers for money. This humiliating situation drags the woman towards inferiority and despair. The entire society, especially men, must recognize the importance and value of women's work both for themselves and for social development more generally.

B. Legally:

The law plays a special role in supporting the development of women, where it contains provisions to ensure gender equality. Palestinian society needs to recognize the rights of women to education, economic independence, freedom of thought and decision, and the right to emancipation from all forms of prejudice. In addition, Palestinian society should respect women's right to choose marriage, choose their own husbands, or to refrain from marriage without being punished for their choices.

To ensure these rights of women, Palestinian women need committees of women specialized in law to study all existing laws and legislature, educate women about the law, and lobby for laws that could improve women's status and affect them positively. The demand for laws to protect the rights of women and help to empower them is a consistent one (JMCC, 1995).

C. Education:

In almost all the literature about women in the world, education and financial independence were considered women's weapons. Higher education was a positive factor in preventing psychological distress in the participants. Families, policy-makers and the Palestinian educational system should consider this finding. These organizations are responsible for encouraging girls' education, especially at college and university level. A poorly educated woman has less chance for finding a decent job and probably feels insecure and inferior. Therefore, if we want the woman to be independent in her living, it is better to provide her with a good education that equips her well for independent living especially if she does not get married.

Palestinian families need to equip and arm their daughters with education that exceeds the elementary level. Compulsory education nowadays terminates at the 9th grade in Palestinian society. At that age, the girl is 15 years old, which is the age of legal marriage according to Islam. About half of the families in Palestinian society still prefer early marriage for their daughters (Manasra, 1994; Giacman, 1994; Al-Safadi, 1992).

Early marriage is a sensitive area because it is encouraged by Islam. Therefore, there is a great need to change the Family Law that is currently employed in marriage. Efforts of women's organizations in the past failed to rise the age of marriage because they were alone in the battle. This change requires the collaboration of social and community organizations in addition to contemporary Islamic scholars. Legislators and women's organizations need to take the lead toward fighting early marriage and rising the legal age of marriage to 18 years at a minimum. They should fight early marriage because it kills women's chances for education, employment and decent living.

Teachers and education policy-makers should facilitate education, especially among girls. Mandatory education is an important requirement for women's development and should be enforced by law. Mandatory education has to be extended to the end of the secondary stage, particularly for females because young women after the age of 15 are viewed as ready for marriage.

Schools and the educational system have obligations towards young girls as well. They have to work together to increase the age of marriage and age of compulsory education to 18 years as it is the age of legal marriage in some other parts of the world. When this is achieved, girls will not be forced to leave school for marriage. Moreover, girls who finish

secondary school should have the option of university studies and getting a job afterwards if they choose to do so.

There is a top priority for creating a Palestinian curriculum that prepares women to be actively involved in building their society. The curriculum should not be biased towards men; should enforce women's dignity and equality; enhance the right of girls for education, employment, and freedom of choice and self-determination. Women should not be presented exclusively as mothers or wives in the school curriculum, but rather as active participants in all spheres of the life of their society.

Education should be free, so families with low incomes do not have an excuse for only educating male children. This also gives good opportunities for females to complete their education to all stages. Female students must have the opportunity to continue their university education in non-traditional fields.

D. Politically:

Until today, the women's agenda was delayed for political or social reasons. The issue of women has been frequently postponed until the time when reforms can be attained. Women activists have been aware of the need to improve the status of women in their society, but they were concerned that the pressure for their rights could weaken the Palestinian struggle (Najjar & Warnock, 1992). It is time for women to clearly specify their demands and strategic needs and to affirm them in the constitutional laws, and to clarify their future role in the Palestinian society.

The Palestinian women are encountering marginalization in decision-making bodies similar to that which happened for Algerian women post-revolution (The Image Parliament, 1997). Today, Palestinian women are fighting their battle of existence for acknowledgment by their leaders and communities. They should not hesitate to fight until the end because until they do, they will not harvest what they have sown and they may come to a situation when they will once again be marginalized in the forthcoming Palestinian state.

Women must be integrated into all levels of political life and be represented in decision-making bodies of the Palestinian state. The presence of women in decision-making position could help create change in legislation in fields that concern women in particular. Women have the right to equal representation in parliament and other legislative and judicial state systems in addition to holding public positions.

Constitutional rights must be backed up by a strong women lobby, which itself is carried and supported by a wide consensus of opinion amongst all social classes. Women's organizations and leaders need to lobby for their social agenda. This includes their right for education, work, selecting their mates, freedom of dress, social mobility and so on. To achieve this, information must be provided by researchers and health and social leaders, about the facts concerning women's living conditions and the status of women in development, education, social constitutions, and labor force.

IV. Implications of the study to research:

Research that ignores real differences between the sexes or makes erroneous judgments about women's lives is unlikely to succeed in producing knowledge beneficial to women's health (Doyal, 1991, p: 285). Research on gender issues is still in the embryonic stage in Palestinian society. A tremendous amount of work needs to be done in this area. Research projects about women exist as blueprints and are not systematized or implemented (JMCC, 1995). However, these research projects show and bring to light what is available and what is needed.

This study gave a realistic picture concerning the lives of the respondents and the oppression they encounter in Palestine's patriarchal society. The study simply formed a blueprint for future research on unmarried Palestinian women. However, there is a need to study the influence of poor education of mothers on children's health; the influence of work of the wives on households; the relationship between demographic variables and mental health of women; and the effects of early marriage on spouses and children. In addition, comparative research is needed between Palestinian women and women in other Arab countries and also with women worldwide. Moreover, there is a need to study the status of women within patriarchal societies such as Palestinian society, and how that affects the various aspects of their lives.

According to Goldfried and Wolfe (1996), there is strong evidence that researchers and therapists have to develop new research methods and paradigms and collaborate for the benefit of both research and practice. Basic research is needed to study in depth each of the psychological problems of unmarried women. Process research that focuses on the variables that contribute to change in the psychological state of unmarried women is needed as well.

Studies are also needed to identify the readiness and expertise of mental health practitioners to work with the unmarried women. There is a need to study the effectiveness and validity of traditional and non-traditional therapies for the unmarried Palestinian women. In addition, programs designed to meet the identified needs of the unmarried woman will require outcome evaluation.

V. Recommendations:

- There is a need to provide sufficient health care and services in psychiatry and psychology which are sensitive to gender differences in mental health.
- There is a need to understand the origin of unmarried women's emotional problems.
- It is necessary to develop good services that provide gender-specific knowledge about mental health.
- There is an urgent need to prepare mental health professionals who are qualified enough to deal with unmarried women's psychological and social problems, using a gender-sensitive perspective. Grants for research and training should support initiatives which have a gender perspective. Special grants should be directed to studies on unmarried women.
- Women should be involved in decision-making, policy building, and legislative bodies in order to place women's agenda at priority levels.
- The role of women in the community should be enhanced by developing them personally and professionally in order to become active participants in their families and communities.
- National conferences should incorporate the specific issues of unmarried women in particular and gender issues in general.
- Universities should increase specialty areas concerning gender issues. The issue of unmarried women should be incorporated in these specialties.
- Preventive, diagnostic, and intervention services should be established for women who complain of emotional distress. Counseling services for women in general and the single women specifically should be established.
- Families, social organizations and policy-makers need to encourage women's education and participation in development of their society.
- In mental health care, gender-specific expertise and facilities must be improved and the facilities be made accessible.

- Publications about gender and health should be funded and supported by the Palestinian government and NGOs. This will provide information to concerned people and women themselves when they plan for activities and lobbying.

Areas to be considered for policy-makers and women's organizations that must be incorporated into government policies and the educational system, research, and health practice:

- Decision- making processes.
- Development and distribution of knowledge.
- Violence and abuse of the unmarried women.
- Welfare schemes and work places.

VI. Conclusions:

The study was based on interviews and self-report checklist questionnaire with 300 unmarried Palestinian women between age 25 and 50, who live in the West Bank of Palestine. The findings of this study indicated that unmarried women in Palestinian society were not the same in regards to living conditions and mental health conditions. There were two main groups of them. One group of women was satisfied with their lives and did not suffer from emotional distress as a result of being unmarried. On the other hand, the second group complained of psychological distress because they were poorly educated, unemployed, and maltreated by their families and society.

A number of obstacles faced unmarried women in Palestinian society, which included legislation, traditional understanding of society, and the women's socialization process. Some potentially destructive and unfavorable social variables negatively affected the mental health of unmarried Palestinian women. Any intervention with these women should take into consideration the above-mentioned social variables if we want to change their current mental health status.

There was a positive correlation between women's education and mental health status. Generally speaking, improved education for women contributes to their ability to make decisions about their own lives, delay marriage age, and increases their opportunities to participate in the social and economic spheres. However, remaining unmarried after the accepted age in this society puts limitations and constraints on the unmarried woman, which in turn cause psychological distress and unhappiness.

In Palestinian society women's opportunities to improve their physical intellectual, emotional, and social competencies and skills are lacking. Therefore, women should be given the freedom and chance to build their coping and problem-solving capacities. The success of women in maintaining a healthy physical and mental state depends on their abilities to adapt to the cultural and traditional demands of their society as well as maintaining an active and fulfilling living in their families and communities.

The changes in the lives of women over the past century have been complex and contradictory. The last century has brought many emancipatory benefits to women, but these benefits have been obtained at the cost of new mental and physical problems. Today, there is more awareness and better understanding of gender issues in Palestinian society, but the work is not yet finished. There are needs for supporting women in their struggle for freedom, non-discrimination, and respectful living. This is especially vital for unmarried women who encounter more social discrimination than married women do

Summary:

This chapter has integrated implications and recommendations based on the main findings of the study. In addition, the chapter presented the main themes of the project's research contributions, which included implications for general knowledge and understanding, social organizations, and mental health services. Each of the themes was discussed in relation to gender and some suggestions were provided for specialists in health, policy-making, and social institutions.

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Appendix A

Interview guide

1. In your opinion what are the reasons behind staying single (unmarried), for women in your society?
2. What are your own reasons for staying unmarried?
3. What does your family say about you being unmarried? What is the opinion of your neighbors, and friends?
4. What are your chances for marrying at this age? How strongly do you think that you will marry?
5. If some one proposed a marriage for you, would you consider it? Explain your reasons.
6. How do you evaluate yourself in comparison to other women in your society?
7. What strengths and weaknesses do you have as a woman?
8. How do you feel about being unmarried in your society?
9. What limitations are put on you because of being unmarried?
10. How do you think your life will be like after years or when you become old if you did not marry?
11. In your opinion what are the advantages of marriage?
12. What are the disadvantages of marriage?
13. In your opinion, what difficulties do unmarried women in your society have?
14. Do you believe that some women suffer emotionally because they remained unmarried? Explain.
15. Do you think that you might need help professional help to assist you to face problems and to adjust for not being married? Explain.

Appendix B

Questionnaire

Questionnaire number and code: _____

Date of data collection: _____

Name of data collector: _____

Demographic data

- Age group. (Please circle one choice).
 1. 25 – 30 years
 2. 31 – 36 years
 3. 37 – 42 years
 4. 43 – 50 years

- **Residence (please circle the right choice)**
 1. North region
 2. Middle region
 3. South region

- **Where do you live? (Please circle the right choice).**
 1. City / Town
 2. Village
 3. Refugee camp.
 4. Elsewhere (specify).

- **Occupation (specify briefly)** _____

- **Education level : (please circle the right choice)**
 1. Less than six years
 2. 6-9 years
 3. 10-12 years
 4. College / diploma
 5. University
 6. Post-graduate or graduate studies.

- **With whom do you live? (circle one choice)**
 1. Both parents and siblings.
 2. Parents, siblings, and other relatives.
 3. With one parent without siblings.
 4. With one parent and other siblings.
 5. With one parent who married a second time.
 6. With siblings alone, and one brother heads the family.
 7. With sibling, and I lead the family.
 8. Alone
 9. Others (specify): _____

The Derogatis L. SCL.90-R test:

Information:

Below is a list of difficulties and complaints people sometimes have. Please read each one carefully and select one of the numbered descriptors that best describes how much discomfort that problem has caused you during the last 7 days including today. Place the number in the open block to the right of the problem. Don't skip any item, and print your number clearly. If you changed your mind, erase your first number completely. The following is your guide in answering each complaint:

- 0 - Not at all.
- 1 - A little bit.
- 2 - Moderately.
- 3 - (quite a bit).
- 4 - Extremely.

Please make sure to mark one answer only.
If you have any question, ask the data collector about it.

No	SCL-90-R Symptoms	Not at all	A little bit	moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely
1	Headaches					
2	Nervousness or shakiness inside					
3	Repeated unpleasant thoughts that won't leave your mind					
4	Faintness or dizziness					
5	Loss of interest in sexual subjects or issues					
6	Feeling critical of others					
7	The idea that someone else can control your thoughts					
8	Feeling others are to blame for most of your troubles					
9	Trouble remembering things					
10	Worried about sloppiness or carelessness					
11	Feeling easily annoyed or irritated					
12	Pains in heart or chest					
13	Feeling afraid in open spaces or on the street					
14	Feeling low in energy or slowed down					
15	Thoughts of ending your life					
16	Hearing voices that other people don't hear					
17	Trembling					
18	Feeling that most people cannot be trusted					
19	Poor appetite					
20	Crying easily					
21	Feeling shy or uneasy with the					

	opposite sex					
22	Feeling of being trapped or caught					
23	Suddenly scared for no reason					
24	Temper outbursts you cannot control					
25	Feeling afraid to go out of your house alone					
26	Blaming yourself for things					
27	Pains in lower back					
28	Feeling blocked in getting things done					
29	Feeling lonely					
30	Feeling blue					
31	Worry too much about things					
32	Feel no interest in things					
33	Feeling fearful					
34	Your feeling being easily hurt					
35	Others people being aware of your private thoughts					
36	Feelings that others don't understand you or they are unsympathetic					
37	Feeling that people are unfriendly or dislike you					
38	Have to do things very slowly to insure correctness					
39	Heart pounding or racing					
40	Nausea or upset stomach					
41	Feeling inferior to others					
42	Soreness of your muscles					
43	Feeling that you are watched or talked about					

44	Trouble falling asleep					
45	Having to check and to double check what you do					
46	Difficulty making decisions					
47	Feeling afraid to travel on buses, subway, or trains					
48	Trouble getting your breath					
49	Hot or cold spells					
50	Having to avoid certain things, places, or activities because they frighten you					
51	Your mind going blank					
52	Numbness or tingling in parts of body					
53	Lump in your throat					
54	Feeling hopeless about future					
55	Trouble concentrating					
56	Weakness in parts of your body					
57	Feeling tense and keyed up					
58	Heavy feelings in your arms or legs					
59	Thoughts of death or dying					
60	Overeating					
61	Feeling uneasy when people are watching or talking about you					
62	Having thoughts that are not your own					
63	Having urges to beat, injure, or harm someone					
64	Awakening in early morning					
65	Having to repeat actions e.g. touching, counting, washing					

66	Sleep restless or disturbed					
67	Having urges to break or smash things					
68	Having ideas and beliefs that others don't share					
69	Feeling very self – conscious with others					
70	Feeling uneasy in crowds, such as shopping, at a movie. etc					
71	Feeling everything is an effort					
72	Spells of terror or panic					
73	Feeling uncomfortable about eating or drinking in public					
74	Getting into frequent arguments					
75	Feeling nervous when you are left alone					
76	Others not giving you proper credit for your achievements					
77	Feeling lonely even when you are with people					
78	Feeling so restless you couldn't sit still					
79	Feelings of worthlessness					
80	The feeling that something bad is going to happen					
81	Shouting or throwing things					
82	Feeling afraid you will faint in public					
83	Feeling that people will take advantage of you if you let them					
84	Having thoughts about sex that bother you a lot					

85	Idea you should be punished for your sins					
86	Thoughts and images of a frightening nature					
87	The idea that something serious or wrong with your body					
88	Never feeling close to other person					
89	Feeling of guilt					
90	The idea that something is wrong with you mind.					

Thank you for your co - operation and time.

Appendix C

SCL.90- R. Checklist Guide for Analysis

There are nine symptom dimensions for the CSL.90- R (see appendix F); they are:

I. Somatization (SOM): It is composed of 12 items or symptoms, and includes questions 1, 4, 12, 27, 40, 42, 48, 49, 52, 53, 56, and 58.

II. Obsessive - Compulsive (OC): It is consisted of 10 symptoms that include questions 3, 9, 10, 28, 38, 45, 46, 51, 55, and 65.

III. Interpersonal Sensitivity (IS): It is composed of 9 items that include questions 6, 21, 34, 36, 37, 41, 61, 69, and 73.

IV. Depression (DP): It consists of 13 items that include questions 5, 14, 20, 22, 26, 29, 30, 31, 32, 37, 54, 71, and 79.

V. Anxiety (AN): It comprises of 10 items that include questions 2, 17, 23, 33, 39, 57, 72, 78, 80, and 86.

VI. Hostility (H): It is consisted of 6 items that include questions 11, 42, 63, 67, 74, and 81.

VII. Phobic Anxiety (PA): It is consisted of 7 items that includes questions 13, 25, 47, 50, 70, 75, and 82.

VIII. Paranoid ideation (PI): It is consisted of 6 items that include questions 8, 18, 43, 68, 76, and 83.

IX. Psychoticism (PS): It is composed of 10 items that include questions 7, 15, 35, 62, 77, 84, 85, 87, 88, and 90.

Additional items:

These are questions 19, 60, 44, 64, 59, 66, and 89. These items are not listed under any particular symptom dimension, but they are important clinically, and are calculated into the global scores of the “90” (Derogatis, 1983).

The three indices of distress of the SCL. 90 – R:

The SCL.90 – R checklist scale is analysed according to three indices which reflect aspects of psychological disorder (Derogatis, 1983):

1. Global Severity Index (GSI): is the total of the summed distress scores for all the 9 dimensions divided by 90.
2. Positive Symptom Total (PST): is the number of all non – zero responses made by the respondent.
3. Positive Symptom Distress Index (PSDI): the results of dividing the grand total by the PST.

Appendix D

Letter to the Participants

Dear Participant:

I am a Ph.D. student at Staffordshire University in Britain. I am carrying out a study of “self-perception of unmarried Palestinian women and its relationship to their living conditions and Psychological states”.

For the purpose of collecting data for this study, you have been selected to be a participant. I am asking for your approval to participate willingly by filling the questionnaire given to you, which evaluates your living conditions and emotional state. The questionnaire will need (20-30) minutes to be completed.

There is a tape- recorded interview for (20-30) minutes that is conducted by one of the study’s data collectors. The tape will be destroyed at the end of the study.

I assure you that all information you are going to give will remain confidential and will be only used for the research purposes.

There is no need to write your name on the questionnaire or to mention it in the tape.

Thanks for your co- operation and time

Najah Manasra
Al-Quds University
College of Health Professions
El-Bireh

Appendix E

Consent Form

I hereby agree to be interviewed and to fill the questionnaire provided by Mrs. Najah Manasra or one of her data collectors; for the thesis; Self-perception of unmarried Palestinian women and its relationship to their mental health status. The data collector explained to me how to fill the questionnaire and I understand it well. I also understand the guidelines of the interview.

My responses and answers will remain confidential. I have the right to turn off the tape recorder and to talk with no recording, or to refrain from answering any question if I feel so. I will have a code number on my answers, and my name cannot be identified.

Signature -----

Date -----

Appendix F

Kruskall-Wallis test for educational level groups:

Educational level groups	N	GSI Mean rank	PSDI Mean ranks	SOM Mean ranks	O-C mean ranks	IS mean ranks	DP mean ranks	An mean ranks	H mean ranks	PA mean ranks	PI mean ranks	PS mean ranks
1- 9 years	79	177.47	192.04	177.27	157.89	183.61	173.91	168.59	160.46	167..8	171.26	173.85
10-12	70	196.08	163.09	158.94	165.04	168.94	169.44	166.09	161.34	7	163.01	164.25
more than 12 years	151	127.77	122.99	132.58	139.89	124.63	129.47	133.81	140.26	171.56 131.65	133.84	131.91
Total	300											
Test statistics												
Chi- square		21.214	34.844	14.657	4.810	28.154	17.980	11.314	4.255	14.571	11.597	14.464
Degree of freedom		2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.		<0.001	<0.001	0.001	0.090	<0.001	<0.001	0.003	0.119	0.001	0.003	0.001

Appendix F - continue

Kruskall-Wallis test for employment groups:

Employment groups	N	GSI Mean rank	PSDI Mean ranks	SOM Mean ranks	O-C mean ranks	IS mean ranks	DP mean ranks	An mean ranks	H mean ranks	PA mean ranks	PI mean ranks	PS mean ranks
House wife	117	170.87	169.85	170.00	169.68	173.59	164.40	164.03	166.43	169.10	170.50	166.68
Professional/ paraprofessional	88	125.86	124.78	126.76	135.73	121.83	132.24	133.89	137.05	129.58	124.08	128.19
Industrial jobs	48	171.97	178.08	169.23	152.16	174.74	171.40	166.59	147.35	167.58	159.65	167.38
Services	47	124.01	122.30	127.29	128.71	121.96	128.74	131.49	139.26	125.70	140.85	134.78
Total	300											
Test statistics												
Chi- square		20.875	23.381	18.133	11.277	26.784	12.655	10.007	6.944	16.417	15.554	13.295
Degree of freedom		3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.		<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	0.010	<0.001	0.005	0.019	0.074	0.001	0.001	0.004

Appendix F - continue

Kruskall-Wallis test for age groups:

Age groups	N	GSI Mean rank	PSDI Mean ranks	SOM Mean ranks	O-C mean ranks	IS mean ranks	DP mean ranks	An mean ranks	H mean ranks	PA mean ranks	PI mean ranks	PS mean ranks
25-30	145	160.53	149.16	152.72	163.99	166.51	159.00	157.34	161.76	158.28	153.31	162.44
31-36	96	139.71	148.74	135.78	139.39	138.94	142.95	142.27	139.20	142.15	148.37	137.47
37-42	36	129.75	147.83	154.79	133.85	120.11	142.08	134.93	126.51	136.19	137.97	134.19
43-50	23	164.78	170.46	191.22	137.91	145.37	141.59	166.11	164.20	158.70	161.3	155.15
Total	300											
Test statistics												
Chi- square		6.108	1.325	8.030	6.909	11.166	2.705	3.678	7.430	3.276	1.322	6.272
Degree of freedom		3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.		0.106	0.723	0.045	0.075	0.011	0.439	0.298	0.059	0.351	0.724	0.099

Appendix F - continue

Kruskall-Wallis test for Agreement / disagreement to be interviewed groups:

Interviewed / not	N	GSI Mean rank	PSDI Mean ranks	SOM Mean ranks	O-C mean ranks	IS mean ranks	DP mean ranks	An mean ranks	H mean ranks	PA mean ranks	PI mean ranks	PS mean ranks
Interviewed	163	155.10	153.04	157.66	151.58	153.72	154.63	155.12	155.32	147.42	154.68	156.58
Refused	79	152.96	153.73	147.66	160.13	154.80	161.48	152.86	148.21	155.99	155.99	148.02
Could not be interviewed	58	134.24	138.97	134.24	134.35	135.59	123.95	134.30	140.08	140.08	151.69	136.79
Total	300											
Test statistics												
Chi- square		2.558	2.275	3.239	3.015	2.135	7.076	2.549	1.402	0.538	3.366	2.321
Degree of freedom		2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.		0.278	0.529	0.198	0.221	0.344	0.029	0.280	0.496	0.764	0.186	0.313

Appendix F - continue

Kruskall-Wallis test for residence groups:

Residence groups	N	GSI Mean rank	PSDI Mean ranks	SOM Mean ranks	O-C mean ranks	IS mean ranks	DP mean ranks	An mean ranks	H mean ranks	PA mean ranks	PI mean ranks	PS mean ranks
North region	105	141.21	147.86	144.55	148.38	142.00	146.96	139.12	143.20	146.28	143.73	146.78
Middle region	97	145.42	135.64	146.37	144.34	141.89	138.68	149.06	146.80	146.94	145.28	140.63
South region	98	165.47	168.04	160.96	158.88	168.13	166.00	164.11	161.98	158.55	162.91	162.26
Total	300											
Test statistics												
Chi- square		4.456	6.952	2.144	1.470	6.021	5.112	4.255	2.647	1.270	3.008	3.929
Degree of freedom		2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.		0.108	0.031	0.342	0.479	0.049	0.078	0.119	0.266	0.530	0.222	0.140

Appendix F - continue

Kruskall-Wallis test for Living area groups:

Living area groups	N	GSI Mean rank	PSDI Mean ranks	SOM Mean ranks	O-C mean ranks	IS mean ranks	DP mean ranks	An mean ranks	H mean ranks	PA mean ranks	PI mean ranks	PS mean ranks
City	138	148.76	141.83	157.15	156.87	143.70	146.33	1448.97	148.74	149.56	148.63	152.24
Village	118	154.69	160.81	148.60	144.89	161.45	156.83	153.75	154.94	155.53	156.83	149.56
Camp	44	144.70	150.06	134.74	145.55	142.44	146.60	146.58	144.10	139.97	139.41	147.57
Total	300											
Test statistics												
Chi- square		0.528	3.048	2.324	1.384	3.114	1.037	0.300	0.609	1.073	1.417	0.120
Degree of freedom		2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.		0.768	0.218	0.313	0.501	0.211	0.595	0.861	0.738	0.585	0.492	0.942

Appendix F - continue

Kruskall-Wallis test for living arrangements groups:

Living arrangements groups	N	GSI Mean rank	PSDI Mean ranks	SOM Mean ranks	O-C mean ranks	IS mean ranks	DP mean ranks	An mean ranks	H mean ranks	PA mean ranks	PI mean ranks	PS mean ranks
Parents and siblings	154	158.86	149.28	151.66	159.00	162.04	156.91	155.31	158.87	157.38	157.79	158.20
One parent and siblings	99	140.36	153.54	153.70	135.94	138.86	143.42	146.14	141.52	142.44	137.33	138.38
A parent who married for a second time	5	174.60	206.80	125.60	151.80	178.70	174.50	150.20	215.00	217.20	231.80	163.80
With siblings	24	133.88	141.71	140.25	150.42	117.19	134.65	138.44	143.67	132.73	159.90	141.67
Alone with parents	10	153.35	128.20	160.70	156.10	154.95	139.90	140.40	123.90	146.10	170.25	162.45
Alone or with friends	6	174.42	167.83	136.75	194.25	171.17	167.25	177.83	133.25	163.67	170.25	191.92
With relatives	2	62.75	118.00	78.25	55.00	83.25	140.25	110.50	56.50	48.75	22.25	45.75
Total	300											
Test statistics												
Chi- square	6.559	3.686	2.590	8.277	10.163	3.090	2.349	8.973	8.794	12.789	8.013	
Degree of freedom	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	
Asymp. Sig.	0.364	0.719	0.858	0.218	0.118	0.798	0.885	0.175	0.186	0.047	0.237	

Appendix G

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Appendix H

Appendix I

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Derogatis L.SCL.90-R

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Appendix J

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Palestinian National Authority
Ministry of Health
Helsinki Committee



السلطة الوطنية الفلسطينية
وزارة الصحة
لجنة هلسنكي

Date: 22/6/2000

التاريخ:

Mr/Mrs/