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DURHAM UNIVERSITY

Young People Leaving Care in Saudi Arabia: What Needs To Be Done?

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Doctoral Thesis

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School of Applied Social Sciences

Durham University

**May 2022**

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**Abstract**

Institutionalization presents adverse effects on the developmental outcomes and well-being of abandoned children and young people. This research explored the problems of abandoned young people in, and out of, residential care systems in Saudi Arabia. The key purpose was to explore the value of more support for this vulnerable population. The study provided a summary of the present state of knowledge of abandoned young people in Saudi Arabia, and the progress made towards a comprehensive understanding of the scope and nature of the issue. Seven main research questions were identified, with data being collected from all players in the residential care systems, including abandoned young people in residential care, staff at residential care, care leavers, and employees at Ekha'a. A mixed-methods approach was applied to gather the needed information, mainly based on questionnaires and interviews. Thematic analysis was utilized as a method of data analysis to determine patterns and trends. In particular, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) tool applied for generating results. Present programmes in Saudi Arabia are not well-suited to address the plight of abandoned young people in and out of care institutions. Suggestions are made as to what steps are necessary in the future to enhance and expand the Kingdom's provision of care to tackle this challenge.

## Acknowledgments

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## Glossary of Terms

*Abandoned Young People (AYP)*: While the expression 'abandoned' might not be used or acceptable in the UK, it is the standard terminology in Saudi Arabia (Alhazmi et al., 2021). Therefore, I will be applying this term throughout the thesis. In this study, this refers to female orphans who were born to unknown parents (in Saudi Arabia, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD), refers to such individuals as "orphans with special circumstances") who are officially under the supervision of the MHRSD in residential institutions, or who live in charitable housing or alternative families and were returned to government institutions for some reason(s).

*Care leavers (CLS)*: In this study, this refers to abandoned young women who were born of unknown parents but who have officially left care or left their alternative families, or who are getting a divorce and are going back to an institution. All these individuals are under the official supervision of Ekha'a.

*Friend family*: This is a programme launched by the MHRSD, which enables a family to take care of an orphan child and provide all the support and love for the orphan child by visiting and going out with him/her on holidays and picnics on official holidays, in addition to providing financial support as well as all of the needs and requirements of the child on a monthly basis. For instance, a friend family takes care of an orphan by providing items such as food, drink and clothing, as well as housing, during those visits. However, the orphan stays in the residential care institution in most cases. If a family wants to adopt an orphan child, it should make an application and meet the MHRSD's conditions to get approval. The program is for orphaned children who have not previously had any opportunity to be embraced by some alternative families. Through this program, the orphan child can be hosted with the family sponsoring him/her on a specific number of days, and it can be on weekends, holidays, or other special days or times, after which the child must return to his/ her institution.

*Alternative family (orphan sponsorship) (kafala)*: This is a program launched by the MHRSD to allow a family to take care of an orphan. It is about caring for orphaned children and providing for their needs. However, the orphan does not take the alternative family's name, and instead keeps his/her name that was given to them by the MHRSD. In most instances, the orphan stays in their institution, but if a family wants to adopt them, it can apply for it and meet the ministry conditions to get approval. This program differs from the Friend Family Program, in which the child is a new member of the alternative family and lives with them, but according to Islamic and cultural rules.

*The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD), formerly known as the Ministry of Labour and Social Development (MLSD).*

The ministry is in charge of the general administration for orphan welfare, and the Undersecretary for Social Welfare and the Family is responsible for, and supervises, all orphans' affairs and care in residential institutions, and follows up on their care within alternative or friend families. The ministry provides its services through two specialized technical departments, the Department of Orphans Affairs and the Department of Residential Institutions.



### *Ekha'a*

Ekha'a is an organization that provides services to orphans and has a complementary role with the MHRSD in caring for those who have left care, including married, divorced, widowed, and those who have returned to the residential institution after divorce.

*Breastfeeding:* The feeding of a child by a woman through natural means (using their breasts) is an important consideration in Saudi Arabia, as it allows a child who does not belong to a family to become part of a family. Breastfeeding needs to happen at five distinct times, after which they family can go to a doctor to get a certificate to say that the child is now part of their biological family. This allows for the change of the child's status from being an outsider (non-mohram) to a mohram (one who belongs). If breastfeeding is not possible, then the family can go to a doctor to get hormone treatments which would allow for breastfeeding, after which a certificate is given by the doctor as described previously.

### Abbreviations

AYP : Abandoned Young People

CLS: Care leavers

MHRSD: The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development

LAC: Looked After Children

CLCA : Children (Leaving Care) Act

## Chapter 1: Introduction

In recent years, there has been a significant renewal of professional and scholarly writing pertaining to residential care, albeit generally focused on the Western Nations. Current literature has largely focused on the United Kingdom, highlighting practice problems and examining research approaches and evidence for effective care (Dixon, 2008; Dixon et al, 2019; Akister et al, 2010; Adley & Jupp, 2017). Additionally, some publications address the systemic landscape regarding how residential care and treatment integrate professional offerings for young people (Adley & Jupp, 2017). This research project reflects a common preoccupation with the prevalent ideology of direct preference for family-oriented care and a strong inclination towards utilising relational strategies as practice-based proof for effective interventions (Ferguson & Woodward, 2009; Walker, 2011; Thoburn & Sexton, 2015; Wong & Chan, 2015; Knorth et al, 2008). In 2020, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD) reported an increase in the number of abandoned young people<sup>1</sup> (Muhammad, 2020). A significant number of these individuals is currently under the supervision of the MHRSD in various parts of Saudi Arabia (Muhammad, 2020). More specifically, there are approximately 20 government-operated and 15 voluntary non-profit institutions exist within Saudi Arabia, including the MHRSD and Ekha'a (Albar 2016). These entities provide residential care for orphans and abandoned children and young people. According to a 2020 national study, there are well over 4,000 abandoned young people and children in Saudi Arabia in institutions and under supervision from agencies (Unpublished National Study, 2020).

### 1.1. Background

In countries such as Australia and the UK, the literature has focused on the transition of young people to adulthood as they leave care (O'Donnell et al. 2020; Dima & Skehill, 2011; Mann-Feder & Goyette. 2019; Hiles et al. 2013; Dixon & Wade. 2007). Harder et al. (2020) found a potentially high threat of negative outcomes for care leavers. In addition, evidence from empirical studies focusing on children's experiences in care programs indicates that abandoned young people who left care suffered the most from social exclusion afterwards. Furthermore, this group has poorer levels of education, health outcomes, and less employment opportunities compared to their counterparts living at home (Mendes & Snow, 2016; Van Breda, 2018). Such evidence confirms the need for policies directed towards young women's transition from care in Saudi Arabia.

In this project, readers are presented with the intricacies of residential care in various settings. Furthermore, they are exposed to residential care systems that operate on limited financial resources and that are significantly unimaginable in most jurisdictions. Readers acquire knowledge of residential care strategies in distinct settings, including violence, poverty, and ecological harm, all amid cultural values and guidelines that confront any bureaucratic presumptions that people make about effective program implementation. Another apparent factor for the significance of the study is that it contributes to the

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<sup>1</sup> Defined by the agency as individuals born in a state of orphanhood to unknown parents

community of scholars and learners, who are concerned about residential care systems. These people lack opportunities to express their concerns.

When individuals are leaving care, it is important to consider their voices to improve their care outcomes and enhance the agencies effectiveness and practices. Furthermore, these individuals should be provided with support to meet their varied needs and equip them with skills while in care, during transition, and after their departure (Harder et al., 2020; Stein & Munro, 2008; Biehal, 1995). For this reason, the preparation and readiness process is necessary to address challenges faced by abandoned young people and care leavers, particularly young women. These issues include financial matters, limited support, a clear understanding of rights and duties, responsible entities and their personnel, supervision, follow-up process, and whether these women continue their education or secure employment.

## 1.2.Rationale

This study attempts to engage learners and professionals situated in diverse settings, people who have experienced low access to opportunities and services, as well as individuals keen on diversity and social issues. As a former assistant researcher, I previously worked on developing a 2014 national study for the MHRSD on vulnerable youth of unknown parents. With a background in the care system, specifically on youth in care, I became aware of the immensely important topic of what happens to individuals when they leave care and seek to integrate into society. Through that work for the MHRSD. I made visits to residential care organisations within Saudi Arabia and identified various issues pertaining to the experience of young people under care. I also became interested in their outcomes after their departure from the care. Despite the importance of this topic, I found few studies that were geared towards similar events in Saudi Arabia and in social work in general. There is a clear dearth of data about young people's needs and issues, especially in terms of what happens when such individuals embark on the transition to life outside of care (Albrithen & Briskman 2015). This issue prompted me contribute potentially valuable insights to the research literature on this issue, especially considering in regard to young women who are particularly vulnerable.

Subsequently, I proposed the following research goals that can contribute significantly to the research on the topic. One of the first fundamental aims is to identify the needs and concerns of abandoned young people in Saudi Arabia, both from their own perspective as well as from the perspective of other stakeholders in the residential leaving care system in Saudi Arabia. While there is abundant research on this topic applied to other regions or countries, there is a lack of research focusing on Saudi Arabia, thus leaving a significant research gap.

Within this framework, another of the main research goals is to assess the outcomes for care leavers in Saudi Arabia using similar parameters for evaluation as those used in the prevalent international research on the individuals leaving state care. In this case, this research will use outcomes in the UK as a comparative point of reference, asserting the theory that similar outcomes would be plausible in Saudi Arabia if the proper conditions were institutionally provided.

Subsequently, another aim is to present an overall evaluation of the state of the care system and processes in Saudi Arabia. This will include not only examining the inherent challenges that the system faces here, but also focus on examples of successful outcomes. Focusing on current strengths may be an important part of creating a model of care and care leaving that is adapted and applicable to the unique case of Saudi Arabia. Fundamental to this analysis is identifying both the positive and negative outcomes for care leavers in Saudi Arabia and relating these outcomes relation to different aspects of the care system. This will facilitate the identification of areas that need to be addressed at both the practice policy level. Finally, the research will analyse the relationship between different stakeholders in the residential care and leaving care system in Saudi Arabia.

This population and personnel working in residential care organizations and social homes are the major participants in this research. Based on their lived experiences, solutions are necessary to address the identified problems. Key stakeholders should develop responsible and financially independent care leavers in the country. These conclusions were achieved by employing a methodology involving both qualitative and quantitative methods. Both staff members and individuals leaving care were surveyed for their opinions and experiences. The results are in the corresponding section.

While implementing this study, I faced various problems, which impacted on the data gathering activity. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been challenges in identifying enough abandoned young people to complete research questionnaires and participate in interviews. This situation has further been intensified by a novel online class schedule, which means that prospective participants have limited time for interviews or tilling questionnaires. As a result, the issue has led to a declined gathering of information despite availing myself throughout the day to simplify the task for abandoned young people to express their views. This stands out as a main study limitation. At the same time, another of the main limitations is the focus on women rather than men. On a more positive note, there has also been a more streamlined collection of information from staff regarding abandoned young people.

For care leavers, challenges were experienced when I found that Ekha'a had provided me with a list of older individuals, rather than the anticipated young women. This scenario necessitated a larger sample to meet the study criteria, given the basis of the sampling approach. In addition, I encountered some reluctance from Ekha'a's management in providing information about care leavers; this obstacle meant that I had to spend more time and resources to gain the institution's trust was also an important element in enhancing connections with care leavers, who cited that they did not want to collaborate with the government or the institution due to a presumed lack of support from these stakeholders. However, my position as a university researcher simplified the entire process, enabling me to gather the necessary data eventually.

This study is comprised of eleven chapters as follows: Chapter I presents the introduction to the study and establishes the context. This part discusses the rationale for implementing the research to explore the factors and impacts of residential care systems on abandoned young people within, and out of care, in Saudi Arabia.

Chapter 2 provides a discussion of the rights of the child in Saudi Arabia and the care system in the country. The chapter will examine the plight of abandoned children and young people in Saudi Arabia as well as their care within residential institutions and non-governmental/ or voluntary sector. Specifically, the role of alternative families and the Orphan Sponsorship Programme are discussed.

Chapter 3 explores the situation for the UK care leavers to provide a contrast to the Saudi care system. This section focuses on policies and practices in the UK, assistance to care leavers, an evaluation of their needs, as well as the desired outcomes of pathway plans.

Chapter 4 is geared towards the outcomes of pathway planning in Saudi Arabia. It describes strategies and guidelines related to the care of abandoned young people. Other issues linked to policies and practices for abandoned young people in the Saudi Care System are also examined.

Chapter 5 presents the concept of young people and-delineates the study's context. A clear definition of the term is provided, along with the characteristics of most young people. Major challenges prevalent among these populations are also highlighted.

Chapter 6 provides a theoretical framework pertaining to feminist ideals and the ethics of care and justice, focal theory and associated challenges.

Chapter 7 reflects the study methodology, which entails an overview of the scope of the research, research strategies, validity and reliability, sampling, and data analysis. The chapter presents the specific research questions about the needs of individuals leaving care, the levels of care provided, the role of public and private agencies in facilitating leaving, and other key questions. A mixed methods approach has been selected to best answer the research questions. The primary qualitative approach that has been applied is data collection using interviews as the main research tool. The main quantitative tool used in the research is questionnaires.

Chapters 8 and 9 present the findings for quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis, respectively. This section provides a discussion of different study outcomes, including the identified themes and participants' views. The study identifies three key qualitative themes in Chapter 9, namely preparation, marriage, and specialist support required for young women.

Chapter 10 provides a discussion of quantitative and qualitative findings. Research findings are categorized into two separate sections. The first one explores the experiences of abandoned young people and care leavers, in and out of care systems respectively. The second part focuses on responsible agencies and organizations. The study builds on other young people's reflections, assisting in illustrating the conceptual framework for each theme.

Chapter 11 provides a summary or conclusion of the overall study. This final part presents the study limitations, contribution to the field, policy implications, and recommendations, and ends with a conclusion.

The following section of this study provides a conceptual framework beginning with a discussion of children's rights in Saudi Arabia. At the same time, the next section examines the role of the care system in the country and how the care of children is integrated within it.

## Chapter 2: Saudi Arabia

### 2.1. The Rights of the Child in Saudi Arabia

In Saudi Arabia, the rights of children can be observed in the Kingdom's efforts to utilise both alternative and foster families in the care of abandoned young people and individuals who come from special circumstances, such as young people with learning disabilities, all with the goal of creating and strengthening family bonds. The Kingdom places considerable importance on the welfare of all children, including those born outside marriage. As a collectivist society, Saudi Arabia reflects an interwoven Arab background and Islamic values, as well as compliance with hierarchical order in the community. In September 1995, under Royal Decree No. M/7, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia agreed to abide by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (though noting potential difficulties with reference to concepts of Islamic law), which is flexible enough to allow most states around the world to uphold the rights of children. This not only strengthened its international cooperation but also maintained conformity with Islamic laws in terms of respecting a child's well-being from its embryonic stage of development until adulthood. The convention was useful in this regard, as the Kingdom, through utilisation of audio-visual and written material, widely disseminated its contents to its people through television and radio programmes such as *Sisters* and *Children's radio* (United Nations, 2000), in order to raise social awareness of abandoned young people.

As part of its agreement to abide by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Saudi government took action to monitor the implementation of the convention by continuing to develop and promote the usefulness and importance of assisting abandoned young people through orphan guardianship and alternative families<sup>2</sup>. Associated with this is the Saudi government's ensuring that the naming regulations for children, to ensure that abandoned young people can lead a safe and secure life free from abuse and equal to other children, are applied universally, without reference to considerations such as birth-right, disability, or gender. In addition, the Kingdom's Family and Child Welfare Department looks after the well-being of at-risk abandoned young people, such as those children and young people of unknown parentage who need alternative care. These children are looked after in a considered manner until they become adults, at which time their continued care is reviewed (United Nations, 2000).

In addition, the State has created a well-funded and supported – using financial aid and education processes managed by professionals such as social workers – '*Kafala* of Islamic Law' (guardianship system). This system ensures that abandoned young people can have the same privileges and benefits of other citizens, in order to promote the child's development and enable them to develop their own unique skills and abilities over time. These are ideas

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<sup>2</sup> As they are known. Yet, the terms used for this demographic are: orphans, orphans with special circumstances (to emphasise that they are more in need than normal orphans who lost one or both of their birth parents), and orphans with unknown identity. The last two terminologies are commonly used at official and academic levels. Other terms, such as 'laqet' (i.e. foundling), are mainly used by religious scholars in their texts and speeches and by the public.

supported in Article 4/1 of the Sixth Development Plan, which seeks to establish a system of foster and alternative families to support abandoned young people. In such circumstances, compliance with Islamic law has necessitated the creation of conditions by the Saudi government to manage *kafala* and alternative families and protect the well-being of abandoned young people in care. For example, any woman or family assuming the role of a *kafala* must be healthy and of good character while also being a positive role model and financially secure, with any additional financial assistance dependent upon how well they meet the government's expectations as care givers, so as to not lead to the mistreatment of abandoned young people (United Nations, 2000).

While the government of Saudi Arabia, under Royal Decree No. 19 of 1962, operates and manages a variety of residential services and care programmes to look after abandoned young people and assist them in becoming independent upon leaving care, it also, through the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, operates well-being programmes to ensure that abandoned young people receive care which looks after all of their physical, emotional, and social needs and concerns, no matter their origin or background. As much as possible, a family environment is provided through residential institutions and the care they provide, with professional and financial support all aimed towards the goal of giving abandoned young people in care a chance to become contributing citizens in wider society once they leave care.

In order to ensure the safety and well-being of abandoned young people, the government of Saudi Arabia has implemented conditions for child fostering. The foster family must, as either husband and wife or as just a single mother, be emotionally, mentally, physically, and financially sound as caregivers; meanwhile the child in care is given an appropriate name by the government prior to being put into foster care.

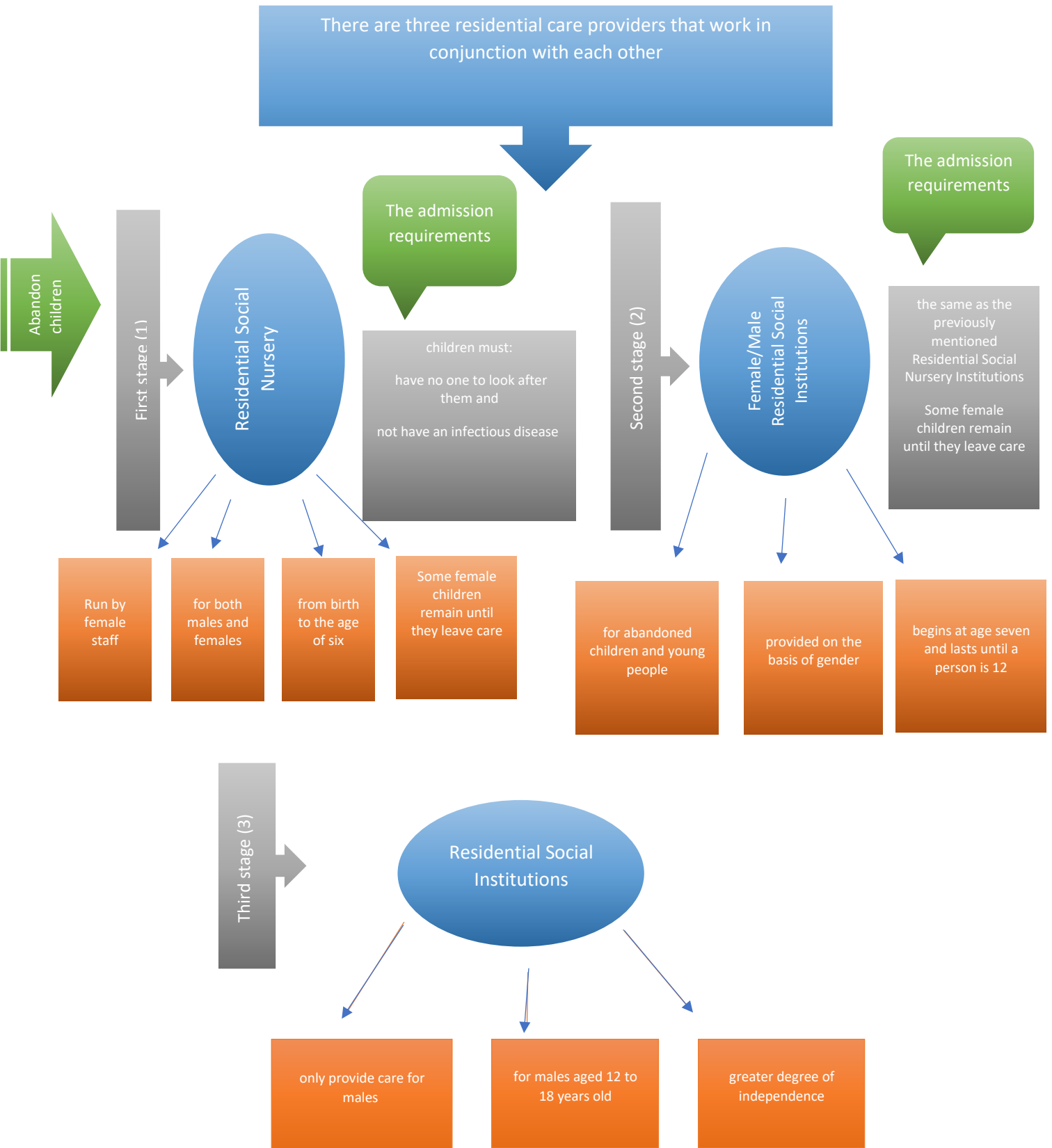
The same ideals are also evident in the rules which the government of Saudi Arabia, through the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, has put in place to ensure the general welfare of abandoned young people in care from birth until the age of six (at which point they are moved to other education centres or institutions), namely that the care provided to these individuals must address their emotional, physical, mental, and financial needs and concerns. In the latter instance, this would take the form of pensions provided to orphaned children by the government. Altogether, these measures and rules allow abandoned young people to leave care with skills and knowledge to allow them to be part of wider society and to fulfil their potential in accordance with their personal goals and ambitions (United Nations, 2000).

## 2.2. The Care System in Saudi Arabia

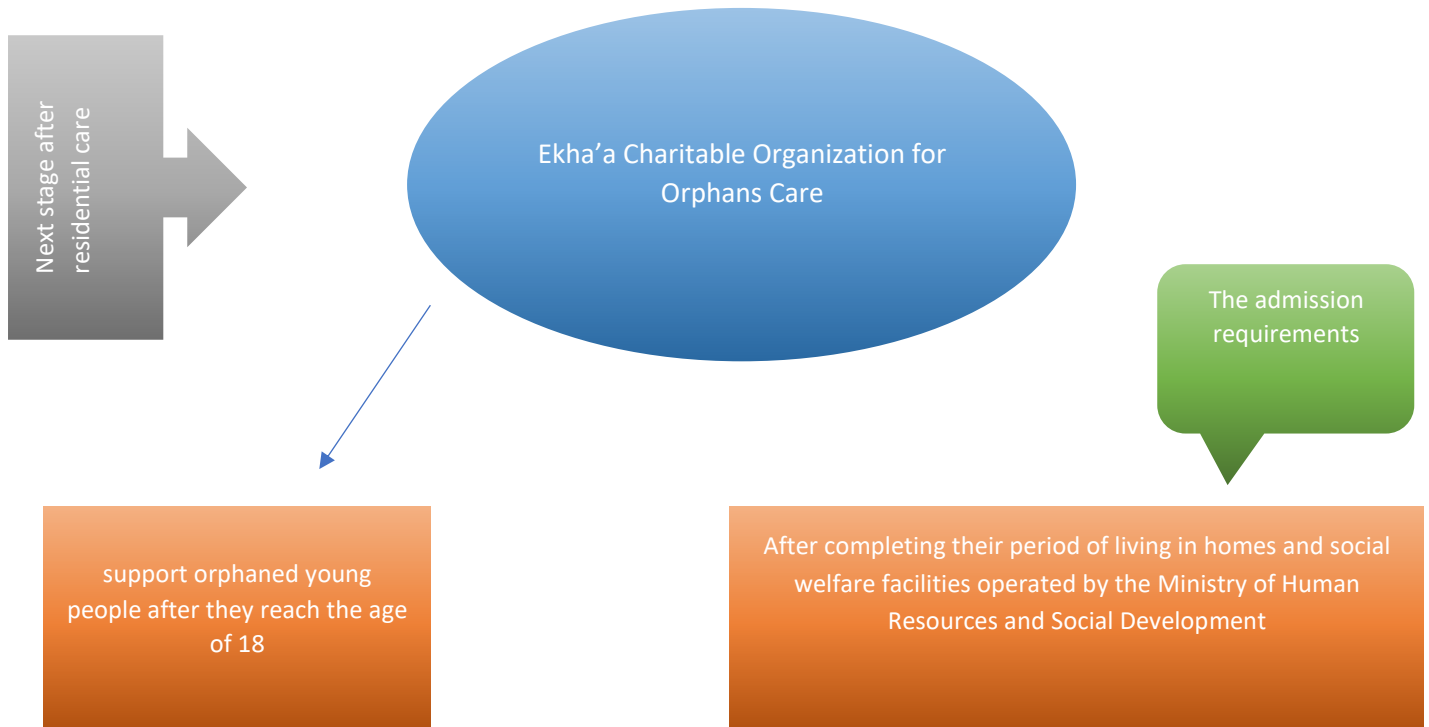
The Care System in Saudi Arabia  
In Saudi Arabia, care for abandoned young people and children is provided through residential institutions or alternative families and lies with the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, as noted in the following charts (United Nations, 2000).



Care System in Saudi Arabia  
 Figure 1.1. Care System in Saudi Arabia



## Non-Governmental/Voluntary Sector



In order for someone to be provided with care in non-governmental institutions or alternative families, they must be of Saudi nationality, which means that only families and voluntary organisations of Saudi origin are allowed to provide care for at-risk individuals (Assemblage of Legislations and Regulations of the Labour and Social Affairs Agency, 2009).

### 2.3. The process involving abandoned children in Saudi Arabia, and their care

If an abandoned child or new-born is found by a member of the public, the child must be taken or reported to a local police station. After that, a member of the police department will take the child to a medical centre, where a medical report will be completed about the case (with records kept by the centre or hospital). Then, the child is handed over to either the local Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development office or to a children's home. In locations where a police station or medical centre is difficult to locate, the community head, in cooperation with a local judge, will place the child with a family that agrees to look after them for a short time. The next step is for the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development to be informed of what has happened so that the child can be placed in a public or volunteer children's home (Assemblage of Legislations and Regulations of the Labour and Social Affairs Agency, 2003).

### 2.4. Residential Institutions in Saudi Arabia

In 2010, a total of 3,700 orphaned children were not placed with families. Of this number, 1,300 were under the direct care of the Ministry of Labor and Social Development, while the remainder were being cared for by various charities. In addition, 8,600 children were found placements with foster parents. In such instances, the provision of care is the responsibility

of the Ministry's Agency for Social and Family Welfare (<https://mlsd.gov.sa> as cited in the Ministry of Social Affairs Portal, 2018).

According to the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (2010 cited in Awni, 2013), there were 380 children (ranging from new-borns to six-year-olds) who resided in orphanages in 2010, with 83 located in orphanages in Riyadh. Ranging in age from 7 to 23, almost 800 children (777) throughout Saudi Arabia were placed in orphanages, 155 of whom were in residential settings in Riyadh. As mentioned previously, authorities in the Kingdom have encouraged kafala for the fostering of abandoned young children, and in 2010, a total of 5,995 individuals were being cared for in this system, with 1,404 in Riyadh (Alkathiry, 2014)

The Agency for Social and Family Welfare promotes the independence of children in shelters around the country. It strives to give all children the opportunity to be part of a family environment with appropriate clothing and food as well as the chance to engage in different types of everyday leisure and educational activities (Assemblage of Legislations and Regulations of the Labour and Social Affairs Agency, 2009; United Nations, 2000).

As Aldamage (2011) points out, alternative families and residential care institutions are the most common aspects of orphan care in Saudi Arabia. Orphans, children, and young people are given residential care in various types of institutions in the Kingdom. The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development operates all in-care institution processes, from admission to discharge. There are three residential care providers that work in conjunction with each other (Assemblage of Legislations and Regulations of the Labour and Social Affairs Agency, 2009; United Nations, 2000):

1. Residential Social Nursery: This first stage of care (run entirely by female staff) is for both males and females from birth to the age of six who are not placed with an alternative family (Assemblage of Legislations and Regulations of the Labour and Social Affairs Agency, 2009; Albar, 2008). However, it is common for many of the children in this level of care to remain in these homes until they reach the age of ten, when they are then shifted to the next stage of residential care. Some female children remain until they leave care entirely (Assemblage of Legislations and Regulations of the Labour and Social Affairs Agency, 2009; Albar, 2008).

Due to the presence of female staff in this stage of care, male children are moved into Male Residential Social Institutions, while females move to Female Residential Social Institutions. Prior to their move, children in these homes are encouraged to visit other children and staff in different institutions (Ministry of Labor and Social Development, 2011).

In Saudi Arabia, there are four public Residential Social Nursery Institutions that provide residential care for young boys and girls. In 2014, the total number of residents at these four institutions classified as 'born of unknown parents' was 827 (Unpublished National study, 2014).

Only children who do not receive adequate care from their birth or alternative families are allowed to enter a Residential Social Nursery. To enter such facilities, children must have no

one to look after them, born either from parents who are unknown or unable to look after them or as a result of illegal marriage (Assemblage of Legislations and Regulations of the Labour and Social Affairs Agency, 2009; Albar, 2008). Children must also not have an infectious disease – in cases where a child is infected, the Ministry of Health Affairs would assume responsibility for providing care. Admission is secured only when an alternative family is either inadequate or unwilling to continue fostering a child and a social assessment report, written by a social worker, is then created (Assemblage of Legislations and Regulations of the Labour and Social Affairs Agency, 2009; Albar, 2008).

2. Female/Male Residential Social Institutions: These institutions comprise the second stage of residential care for abandoned children and young people. In contrast to the Residential Social Nurseries, care for individuals in these institutions is provided on the basis of gender, meaning that female staff provide care for female individuals, while male staff look after male individuals (Albar, 2008). The admission age of these institutions usually begins at age 7 and lasts until a person is 12. The admission requirements of both types of institutions are generally the same as the previously mentioned Residential Social Nursery Institutions, with some abandoned children and young people being admitted after having left alternative families. However, to be admitted, applicants or transferred abandoned children and young people must be over 6 years old and less than 12 years old (Albar, 2008; Assemblage of Legislations and Regulations of the Labour and Social Affairs Agency, 2009).

Males remain in care from the age of 7 until the age of 12 or even after that, especially if the city where the care is located does not have a Residential Social Institution. Females who are not adopted may remain in their respective institutions until they get married (Ministry of Labor and Social Development, 2011). In total, there are nine male Residential Social Institutions across the country, with males likely moving into these institutes in the final stage of their residential care (Assemblage of Legislations and Regulations of the Labour and Social Affairs Agency, 2009).

3. Residential Social Institutions: These institutions, which only provide care for males who are transferred from Male Residential Social Institutions or who have left their alternative families, represent the third and final stage of institutional care in Saudi Arabia. Generally, admission to these institutions is for males aged 12 to 18 years old, though often residents stay until their 20s. While in care, residents are able to receive comprehensive residential care and services that have less limitations than those of the previously mentioned residential institutions. Residents have a greater degree of independence as they prepare to live life on their own through education and training to enter the workforce (Assemblage of Legislations and Regulations of the Labour and Social Affairs Agency, 2009; Unpublished National study, 2014). At present, there are only two public Residential Social Institutions in Saudi Arabia that provide services for young male individuals (Assemblage of Legislations and Regulations of the Labour and Social Affairs Agency, 2009).

Residential care can negatively affect orphans in different ways. Firstly, within this system, orphans live in isolation from the rest of society. Even if they try to integrate into society, there seem to be difficulties, especially when they socialise with people who have similar social circumstances (Albar and Abofraj, 2011; Aldamage, 2011; Alzahrani, 2015). Secondly, orphans have poor social skills and bad experiences due to living in residential institutions, which contribute to an inability to communicate with others when they leave care or get married, as they are used to interacting in official relationships (Aldamage, 2011; Alzahrani, 2015). However, these problems can be alleviated through other forms of residential care.

Small Villas/Social Homes:

These institutions, such as Aldyafah's Villas established in 2003, provide independent residential services that give young people a greater degree of security and privacy and provide the feeling of a family environment (United Nations, 2000). In one example, six abandoned children (two males under eight years old, as well as four females of various ages) were placed together in one villa with a substitute 'mother' who lived with the children around the clock for five days a week and, on weekends, a substitute 'aunt' who assumed the role of the substitute mother. In these institutions, each family has brothers and sisters, and every villa has unique furniture to enhance the residents' privacy (Albar, 2008; Assemblage of Legislations and Regulations of the Labour and Social Affairs Agency, 2009; Unpublished national study, 2014).

According to a Saudi Gazette report, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development intends to develop social homes (in the form of villas or apartments) for orphans in all parts of the Kingdom in the future. These homes will be created in place of new orphanages to improve the quality of orphans' lives by providing experiences that mimic a family environment as closely as possible and allowing each orphan to receive the care they need from that 'family'. Social workers and sociologists will also be provided to better develop the orphans' personal skills and abilities. In this social housing, boys over the age of 12 will live with a foster father. A sociologist will oversee a group of girls during working hours, which gives the females in care more freedom than they would normally receive in an orphanage (Saudi Gazette, 2016).

## 2.5. Non-Governmental/Voluntary Sector

While the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development directly operates and financially supports residential institutions, care for young people is also provided through the actions of non-governmental organisations as well as through volunteer organisations, which are supervised and partially funded by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development and, as is the case with the Alwedad Charity Foundation, assist in helping orphans and abandoned children and young people to be looked after by alternative families. Additionally, Alwedad works to cement the connection between orphaned infants and their foster families through an agreement with the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development to issue breastfeeding certificates and follows up with the children until the age

of 18 by visiting the foster families and helping them better ensure the safety of the children in their care (www.wedad.org, n.d.).

Another organisation, the Ekha'a Charitable Organization for Orphans Care, works to support orphaned young people after they reach the age of 18. Ekha'a was founded under the council of the Minister's decision No. 14 (dated 17/03/2003), and plays an important role in caring for orphans after they have completed their period of living in homes and social welfare facilities operated by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (www.ekhaa.org,n.d.).

## 2.6. Alternative Families and the Orphan Sponsorship Programme

Alternative families<sup>3</sup> meet those needs of orphans that cannot be met by the aforementioned residential care institutions (United Nations, 2000). However, there are some challenges. Firstly, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development should make sure that alternative families that are willing to adopt a child are not experiencing poor physical and mental health, which might lead to negative reactions towards and from the child and leave them less able to integrate into society in the future. Secondly, some alternative families may not be caring and only interested in the financial assistance offered by the government. Thirdly, some alternative families may face unexpected problems that can lead them to abandon a fostered child, which may make the child more likely to develop future psychological and social problems. Fourthly, the orphaned child may face psychological and social problems when they hear about their social situation from a member of the alternative family. Therefore, this program needs more continuous follow-ups to ensure that an alternative family offers a good environment in which to raise an orphaned child (Aldamage, 2011; United Nations, 2000).

In general, families that look after orphans must provide care as if they (the orphan) were a member of their own family (United Nations, 2000). Two different sponsorship programmes exist: alternative families that look after orphans without specifying a period, and 'friend families' that, for a certain duration of time, provide care for the children. The Family Friend programme also aims to give orphans who do not have the opportunity to be with an alternative family a chance to visit and stay with such a family during the weekends and holidays. This gives the young person a more secure sense of self, as they can be considered a member of the family (Assemblage of Legislations and Regulations of the Labour and Social Affairs Agency, 2009). In both instances, foster (or alternative) families are given monthly financial assistance (Ministry of Labor and Social Development, 2011).

However, according to Albar (2008), some families do not wish to care for teenage orphans and will instead ask the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development to look after the young person. The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development gives the foster

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<sup>3</sup>In Saudi Arabia, 'orphan's kafala', which is very similar to fostering, is strongly recommended as a religious background. The name of the family is not given to the fostered child, so adoption is not used as a term in the Saudi care system. Instead, the system uses alternative or nursing family.

or alternative family a high financial sum as a gift for their kindness (Assemblage of Legislations and Regulations of the Labour and Social Affairs Agency, 2009; MHRSD, 2019 ; MHRSD, 2022). The government extends full support to foster families, for example, providing monthly allowances to take care of a child (GOV.SA, 2021). The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development launched the Family Foster Care Program within Vision 2030 with a clear focus on quality care of orphans (Muhammad, 2020). The MHRSD demands that the wife of the foster family be between 25 and 50 years (Ministry of Human Resource and Social Development, 2022). The family must also reflect stable economic positions and be free from transmissible illnesses and mental issues. In Saudi Arabia, public institutions caring for individuals with disabilities are not necessitated to go through an official registration process since they are formed and funded by the government (Cravens, Zettler, Zazar & Nauk, 2019). For private institutions, registration procedures involve licensure from the social/labour ministries, with the approval of the Ministry of Health also being required.

In summary, the Saudi Arabia government has focused on efforts directed towards ensuring that the rights of children are upheld. Residential institutions, alternative families, and foster families are utilized in the provision of care to abandoned young people. The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development is primarily responsible for the welfare of this population, thus, administers their care under different institutions. One must be of Saudi nationality to receive care in non-governmental institutions or alternative families. The process of care for abandoned children in Saudi Arabia is a key role of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, which decides whether the child is placed in a public or non-governmental institutions. Generally, distinct families and institutions provide care for the abandoned children and young people in the country. While this chapter has focused on Saudi Arabia, the next section focuses on research from other countries.

## Chapter 3: The UK

### 3.2. Policies and Practices in the UK

#### *Assisting Care Leavers*

The basic objective of the system and process put into place by the CLCA 2000 and the Children Act 1989 is to ensure that the LAC leaving care receive the same assistance and care that they would from a parent by essentially functioning as a corporate parent to care leavers in their area of jurisdiction as noted in the Children and Social Work Act of 2017 (Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000; Children Act 1989; Stein, 2012; Children and Social Work Act, 2017). In this way, responsible local authorities provide various opportunities for the successful transition to independence as an adult through the creation of pathway plans with the full participation of care leavers in the process and professionals (social workers when a care leaver is under 18 years of age and personal advisers when they are over 18) employed by the local authorities to manage the development of the plan (Department of Education, 2010). This transition planning must occur for all LAC who have reached the ages of 16 or 17 and who have, as noted previously, been looked after since they age of 14 for at least 13 weeks. It must include at least 24 hours of care after reaching 16 years of age and can last until the age of 25 at the latest as per the Children and Social Work Act of 2017 (Children Leaving Care Act Guidance, 2001; Department of Health, 2001; Department of Education, 2010).

#### 3.1 Care Leavers in the UK in Legislation

As mentioned in the Department of Health's Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 Regulations and Guidance (2001), the objective of the Children (Leaving Care) Act (CLCA) of 2000 is to ensure that the lives of Looked After Children (LAC) leaving care are as balanced as possible. In effect, the act was designed to ensure that the LAC leaving care receive the best possible opportunities to become productive and confident members of society and that their voices are heard as they are informed and assisted, a point that is vitally important to care leavers (Department of Health, 2001; Stein, Sufian and Hazlehurst, 2001; Children Leaving Care Act Guidance, 2001; Baker, 2017). In order to provide the best possible assistance to the LAC leaving care, all levels of government must participate and coordinate their efforts, and local councils play an important role in this regard. Local councils must, among other actions, ensure that the LAC leaving care have access to appropriate accommodation, employment, educational opportunities, and financial assistance (Department of Health, 2001; Stein, Sufian and Hazlehurst, 2001; Children Leaving Care Act Guidance, 2001; Hertfordshire County Council, 2018). This support is provided to young people leaving care through a system of needs assessments and pathway planning, which is informed by the relevant legislation.

In the UK, the CLCA of 2000 recognises distinct groups of care leavers (i.e., eligible relevant and formerly relevant children and persons qualifying for advice and assistance) and applies to any young person age 16 and over looked after by a local authority (council) since they were 14 years old for at least 13 weeks (Children Leaving Care Act Guidance, 2001; Department for Education, 2010). The 13 weeks of care can be either consecutive or comprised of different periods of being in care that add up to 13 weeks but do not include



any placements for respite care on a short-term basis (Children Leaving Care Act Guidance, 2001; Department of Education, 2010). The CLCA of 2000 serves to amend the Children Act of 1989 with a number of new provisions, including one in which a pathway plan must be created for all eligible relevant and formerly relevant children, with these children all having a personal advisor and their care and support needs met by the responsible local authority (Children (Leaving Care) Act, 2000; Children Leaving Care Act Guidance, 2001).

As previously noted, while the CLCA of 2000's guidance and associated strictures applies also to Wales, England's Department of Health produces separate guidance and regulations. Additionally, Scotland has its own arrangements for looking after care leavers living at home, and Northern Ireland has adjusted its own legislation to reflect the new ideals of the CLCA of 2000 (Department of Health, 2001; Children Leaving Care Act Guidance, 2001; Children (Leaving Care) Act (Northern Ireland), 2002; Department of Education, 2014; Children (Leaving Care) (England) Regulations, 2001; Wales, 2001; McGhee et al., 2017). There are also differences in what an LAC is defined as in each part of the UK (Department of Education, 2014), as well as how preventative rather than reactive policies are in terms of LAC, with Scotland being more proactive in this regard (The Scottish Government, 2015; Children and Young Persons, The Support and Assistance of Young People Leaving Care (Scotland) Amendment Regulations, 2015; Scottish Government, 2016). However, all regions of the UK follow the same basic structure for assistance given to care leavers (Department of Education, 2014; McGhee et al., 2017), which will now be outlined.

### 3.3. Needs Assessments and Pathway Plans

The pathway plans created by local authorities, set to begin from a care leaver's 16<sup>th</sup> birthday and reviewed at prescribed intervals with records kept up to date at all times (Department of Education, 2010), are meant to be part of a more holistic process of preparing care leavers for adulthood while they are in care. Before creating the pathway plan, a proportionate needs assessment will be carried out which takes into account the domains of needs (i.e. developmental needs, parenting capacity, and family and environmental factors) of a care leaver and considers a care leaver's health and emotional/behavioural development, the practical skills they must develop to be an independent adult, education and training, employment, relationship building and maintenance, accommodation, personal identity, family/social relationships, and financial capabilities (Department of Health, 2001; Department of Education, 2010; Stein, 2012). This assessment will then inform the development of the pathway plan for the care leaver – with both the pathway plan and needs assessment based on an analysis of the evidence available – concerning the care leavers continued need for the items previously mentioned and utilise the care plan of the LAC to better develop the pathway plan itself, thereby reflecting a pathway plan's status as a living document (Department of Education, 2010).

As noted previously, a pathway plan has many different criteria which draw upon information collected in the needs assessment of a care leaver so that there is a definite correlation between what a care leaver needs in order to succeed and what needs to be done for the

care leaver to succeed. Stein (2012) noted that there are dimensions of needs which link to the three distinct domains of a care leaver's needs: developmental needs, parenting capacity, and family and environmental factors. In terms of a child's developmental needs, these dimensions would include education, training and employment, health and development, emotional and behavioural development, identity, family and social relationships, and practical (among other) skills necessary for independent living (Stein, 2012). Regarding a care leaver's parenting capacity, the dimension of needs would include assessing the relationships the care leaver has with their close and extended families and the relationships with their peers as well as how these relationships could help them in their transition to adulthood (Stein, 2012). In terms of family and environmental factors, a care leaver's dimension of needs would consist of the same needs as their parenting capacity and include additional aspects such as suitability of accommodation, education, training, employment, and necessary financial arrangements (Stein, 2012).

The care leaver's social worker and personal adviser have important roles to play in the pathway plan's success, as their communication and skills better allow for care leavers to understand what is being put in place for them so as to take best advantage of the opportunities as well as how to incorporate all aspects of a care leaver's environment, such as teachers, family members, and friends, to create a system of support for the best chance of success at successfully transitioning to adulthood (Stein, Sufian and Hazlehurst, 2001; Department of Education, 2010). In the case of formerly eligible children, local authorities are not primarily responsible for their care, so personal advisors become even more important, as they serve as the link to a successful transition to adulthood while allowing for a degree of independence that eligible children may not receive as early in their transition (Department of Education, 2010).

#### 3.4. Desired Outcomes of Pathway Plans

As mentioned previously, it is the role of local authorities across the UK to be corporate parents, fulfilling the role and responsibilities of parents for care leavers in their area while adhering to the seven core corporate parenting principles as noted in the Children and Social Work Act (2017). As such, each council has an obligation to create and support programmes to address care leavers' health and emotional/behavioural development, the practical skills they need to develop to be independent adults, their education, training, and employment, their building and maintaining of relationships as well as their own identity, issues with accommodation, and their financial capabilities. They must also ensure that individuals leaving care have had their views heard and respected and that they have been encouraged to voice their opinions and feelings while being protected and prepared for a successful transition to adulthood and independent life (Goddard and Barrett, 2008; Department of Education, 2012; Children and Social Work Act, 2017; Adley and Kina, 2017; Liabo et al., 2017 ; Shelter Legal England and Wales, 2018).

These aspects form the desired outcomes for LAC leaving care in the UK, and the local authorities have been doing well in both attempting to meet these outcomes and in training

people who work with care leavers to help them throughout the process (Stein, Sufian and Hazlehurst, 2001; HM Government, 2016). For instance, Hertfordshire County Council created an easy-to-understand outline of the aforementioned procedures, one which makes it clear what needs to be done by the council and what a care leaver should expect as the council works to meet their obligations and responsibilities (Hertfordshire County Council, 2018). Other councils, such as Conwy County Borough Council (2013), Suffolk County Council (2017), and East Dunbartonshire Council (2011), have created financial guidance documentation that standardises the approach to looking after care leavers financially and makes it clear who is in charge of what financial obligation towards care leavers under the scope of the Children (Leaving Care) Act of 2000.

While some documentation may be more robust than others and entitlements for certain items may differ, it should be recognised that these (and other) councils have made the effort to flesh out their obligations to make it easier for care leavers to know what their financial rights are if they reside in each council's area of jurisdiction (with reference to education, accommodation, employment, and personal support) and to help their own employees meet those rights and needs (Conwy County Council, 2013; East Dunbartonshire Council, 2011; Suffolk County Council, 2017). The simple act of getting one aspect of transitioning to an independent adulthood, such as accommodation, correct for a care leaver with appropriate preparation and support on the part of a local authority and its professionals can play a significant role in providing positive housing experiences for care leavers compared with other young people in difficulty (Simon, 2008).

### 3.5. Actual Outcomes of Pathway Plans

While the desired outcomes of pathway planning and the associated needs assessments have already been noted, the actual effects of the aforementioned systems and processes have been varied for care leavers across the UK, which is expected given the range and backgrounds of care leavers as well as the effectiveness of those who work with them (Browne, 2008 ; Department of Education, 2010; Baker, 2017). However, regarding some negative issues having been noted by care leavers (Browne, 2008; Department of Education, 2010; Ofsted, 2012; Baker, 2017), solutions have been created as part of the system, as have processes which can be accessed by care leavers to make their transition to life as an adult much more satisfactory. For instance, in terms of issues such as emotional support, care leavers have noted that local authorities need to do more to support them so as to not put them into positions in which they find themselves isolated from the rest of society because they are now expected to do things for themselves without any support or are arbitrarily cut off from support for various reasons (Browne, 2008; Ofsted, 2012; Adley and Kina, 2017; Baker, 2017).

Furthermore, many care leavers feel that the financial support offered to them upon leaving care could be fairer or greater in value. In recognition of these issues, there are things care leavers are entitled to that are specified on websites such as [www.rights4me.org](http://www.rights4me.org). Pathway workers are also available to assist care leavers in better adjusting to an independent life, and

care leavers are able to ask their councils for £2000 as a leaving care grant (Ofsted, 2012). A local authority complaints procedure also exists for care leavers to utilise to address these (and other) issues (Ofsted, 2012). There is also evidence that care leavers are getting the support they need while in care to be better able to live confidently and independently as adults, with one study showing that 61% of care leavers felt that life in care had been positive in terms of improving their lives and had given them an advantage in getting ready to be independent upon leaving care (Ofsted, 2012). Additionally, in terms of mental health support for care leavers, there is overall support for the services and assistance provided by the care workers (The National Foundation for Educational Research, 2009).

All of this indicates that the systems and processes put into place under the Children (Leaving Care) Act of 2000 have led to improvements in how care leavers prepare for and enter into independent life (Department of Education, 2010; Browne, 2008). Therefore, it would appear that the weaknesses in the UK care leaver system concern the fact that not all care leavers know enough about their rights when leaving care and that many care leavers do not have a pathway plan which was adhered to or supported by the appropriate authorities such as a personal adviser (Browne, 2008; Ofsted, 2012). However, these weaknesses are not the result of a lack of positive legislative intent, as reflected in the Guidance for the Children (Leaving Care) Act of 2000 (2001) and the report from the Children's Commissioner for Wales (2017).

Such guidance and reports, as well as continuing revisions to existing legislation as it applies to care leavers in the form of the Care Matters White Paper and the Children and Young Persons Bill, reflect the ever-changing dynamic in looking after care leavers in the UK. As long as the government continues to take an active interest and role in assisting the LAC leaving care, the results can improve aspects such as how care leavers feel they are ready for an independent life and how many of them possess a set identity and are resilient enough to deal with an independent lifestyle in a confident and healthy manner (Stein, 2005; Browne, 2008; Ofsted, 2012; HM Government, 2013; HM Government, 2016). Essentially, the goal for the system would be a standard of, and stability in, assistance and experiences for all care leavers that provides everyone with the same chances for success. Such aims should be based on legislative intent as well as personal needs and concerns so as to promote resilience among care leavers rather than experiences and levels of care which differ from individual to individual, something which continued research and studies of care leavers will inform in the coming years (Stein, 2005; Akister et al., 2010; Ofsted, 2012; Baker 2017).

Ultimately, it will be fundamental for research to examine gaps between policy and practice in this respect, in order to conceptualize ways of increasing policy effectiveness. To this extent, a focus on transitions, a key moment within the process with impacts of future outcomes will be fundamental. Pathway planning, an important tool in facilitating effective transitions for those who leave care, is the focus of the following chapter.

## Chapter 4: Applying UK Practices in Saudi Arabia

### 4.1. Pathway Planning in Saudi Arabia

The best solution to the lack of preparation given to abandoned children and young people as they leave care in Saudi Arabia is the use of the aforementioned system of holistic care utilised in the UK, which provides a standard of care and assistance for all care leavers regardless of their individual situations and is able to be adapted as a living process instead of being prescribed as an inflexible set of rules and regulations to be followed no matter what. Part of the problem faced by carers in Saudi Arabia when looking after abandoned children and young people is not a lack of ability or desire to undertake their duties but is instead a lack of policies and standards to support carers and those individuals who are in, or leaving, care. While it has already been noted that some difficulties do exist for the LAC leaving care in the UK, such as coordinating care across organisations for those individuals who experience mental health difficulties, these problems can be addressed through greater financial support used to hire experts who can best manage the problems these individuals face on a daily basis (The National Foundation for Educational Research, 2009) from a supportive government that designs legislation which allows for such a system to be utilised. There are many other examples available concerning how problems can be addressed in such a system of assistance for care leavers.

### 4.2. Outcomes of Pathway Planning in Saudi Arabia

#### **Possible Outcomes of Pathway Planning**

For the previously mentioned abandoned children and young people who are not prepared to pursue educational opportunities upon leaving care, a UK-style pathway planning system would, through associated needs assessments, better identify what those individuals would be able to do. Combined with discussions with the LAC leaving care, various employees (such as personal advisors and carers), and governmental agencies, this would allow for the creation of pathway plans which could better aid the LAC in achieving their desired careers. This could be achieved through the provision of training by local authorities, financial support from the Ministry of Labor and Social Development, and opportunities to gain skills and experience from mentors (Clayden and Stein, 2005).

In addition, mentors can play an important role in assisting care leavers as they work through their pathway plan as they do in the UK as social workers and personal advisers. The provision of mentors by the state who can relate to care leavers at their level of understanding and trust could also positively affect care leavers' development of important practical and useful life skills, which would allow for a more positive sense of self and identity as they transition to adulthood (Clayden and Stein, 2005; Stein, 2005; Browne, 2008). This is important because, while LAC in the UK may have family members as part of their environment, the same is not true in Saudi Arabia except in terms of foster and friend families, which do not have the same close connection as biological family members (Ministry of Labor and Social Development, 2011).

In addition, companies and organisations transferred from the government to, or coordinated with, the private sector (Stein and Dixon, 2006) could also provide opportunities for individuals leaving care to better address both their needs and those of society. The idea of corporate parenting is also important in this regard, as a greater involvement of local authorities as well as of voluntary and private agencies in Saudi Arabia in helping LAC as they leave care would allow for better coordination of assistance for these individuals across society. Provisions concerning their continued emotional and behavioural development and opportunities to attain better accommodation would assist in reducing the stigma associated with having been in care as well as give all care leavers a better chance at having a good life as an adult (Stein and Dixon, 2006; Albar, 2008; Alzahrani, 2015).

In a society such as Saudi Arabia, where the government is willing to financially support a more organised and structured system which provides more benefits to care leavers than is currently the case, the aforementioned system and processes could allow for even better outcomes than in the UK. Care leavers would have degrees of stability in placements and could become as resilient as possible to help them become productive members of society, which is something they currently do not have (Stein, 2005; Ministry of Labor and Social Development, 2011). However, this utilisation of a UK-style care leaver system of assistance must go hand-in-hand with a reconsideration by Saudi authorities on the benefits of having information available on the backgrounds of the children to better inform the pathway planning and needs assessment processes as a whole. The lack of this information has caused the UK to have some issues in fully determining whether the needs of care leavers are being properly met (McGhee et al., 2017). This information may also assist in mitigating issues related to the stigma of being an abandoned child or young person and, in the case of the pathway planning process itself, help to better inform the assessment of care leavers and how best to meet their needs through the pathway plan itself (Stein, 2012; Alzahrani, 2015). Additionally, care leavers themselves may feel more secure in their own identities as a result of knowing about their background, something which care leavers in the UK may not have to deal with if they still have parents or other family members as guardians.

To conclude, the pathway planning system in the UK has a lot to offer to the care system in Saudi Arabia. Needs assessments and cross-societal coordination of actions and programmes to support the LAC leaving care is important in ensuring that they have a good chance of success as adults in society. Having all levels of society contribute to the LAC leaving care can only help the abandoned children and young people in Saudi Arabia become more productive and confident parts of their society.

#### 4.3. Strategies and Policies Related to the Care of Abandoned Young People

In 2012, the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development launched a care development strategy for abandoned young people. The strategy had five main points: implementation of regulations and laws for residential care, implementation of education and training programmes (including the preparation for marriage), creation of indoor and outdoor activities, such as picnics, which give abandoned young people social skills, integration into

daily life, amelioration of alternative care and provision of services for abandoned young people (Orphan Care Development Strategy Ministry of Social Welfare and Family, 2012).

The Ministry's vision for this strategy was to develop the life skills of children in care and young people in residential institutions across Saudi Arabia. This was done in order to allow these people to become productive and active members of their society and enable them to enjoy a greater degree of stability and also allow for social and psychological adjustments within their community. These skills would help them to meet their living, educational and functional needs and be helpful and capable of caring for themselves, their community and their country (Orphan Care Development Strategy Ministry of Social Welfare and Family, 2012).

The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development has pointed out that this strategy was meant to improve the social, psychological, educational, health and cultural services provided for abandoned young people within institutions. The Ministry re-evaluated, developed and implemented regulations and programmes of care and education in order to achieve a high level of care, social adjustment and national belonging. The Ministry wanted to assist the care services, programmes and leisure activities in residential care buildings in order to provide an environment similar to that naturally found in a family home, according to scientific standards (Orphan Care Development Strategy Ministry of Social Welfare and Family, 2012).

#### 4.4. Aims of the Strategy

The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development launched a strategy for the development of care for abandoned young people. The aim of this plan was to highlight many of the disadvantages of care provided by residential institutions, such as the inadequacy of some of the places and spaces available for residents, the lack of clear and continuous plans and programmes for activities, and the existence of non-specific programmes in residential care, put in place to integrate abandoned young people into the wider community (Orphan Care Development Strategy Ministry of Social Welfare and Family, 2012). The ministry identified weaknesses in programmes and activities in a large number of residential institutions. Most of the problems were due to the lack of supervisors for sports and social, recreational and educational activities. It was also noted that some residents had difficulties in communication and challenges in being self-reliant (Orphan Care Development Strategy Ministry of Social Welfare and Family, 2012).

The Ministry stressed that the programmes and activities of thirteen residential institutions had been inspected. The team noticed the absence of professional facilitators in activities and programmes in five of the institutions. In addition, some institutions lacked sports, social and entertainment activities. These findings draw attention to the importance of hiring professional workers, e.g. facilitators, who are able to design and implement programmes and activities in a way that sustains the wellbeing of abandoned young people. Such findings necessitate policy changes to improve and strengthen the care provided. The young people



must be assessed while in care and have an individual pathway plan created based on their needs (Orphan Care Development Strategy Ministry of Social Welfare and Family, 2012).

These findings also demonstrate the need for government policies, to provide the services and programmes required to promote the success of pathway plans and needs assessments. The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development team found an absence of supervisors for programmes and activities in almost half the residential institutions visited. Most supervisors were not trained. The lack of trained staff in the required programmes and recreational activities makes it difficult to effectively instruct and rehabilitate abandoned young people in these institutions (Orphan Care Development Strategy Ministry of Social Welfare and Family, 2012). A further issue was the low number of computer supervisors (three) in the thirteen residential institutions visited by the ministry, meaning that 77 per cent of residential institutions had no qualified computer supervisors (Orphan Care Development Strategy Ministry of Social Welfare and Family, 2012).

The Ministry also pointed out that there were no qualified sports coaches in eleven of the residential institutions visited. There was only one coach in all of the male residential social institutions in Riyadh, and also only one coach in all of the male residential social institutions in Makkah. This lack of qualifications means that neither of the coaches was able to provide a sports programme. Abandoned young people were deprived of this option, and it demonstrated the inability of residential institutions to provide sports programmes for this population (Orphan Care Development Strategy Ministry of Social Welfare and Family, 2012). To some extent, these shortcomings highlight the importance of a rights framework, which in this case, appears absent.

During their field interviews with abandoned young people, it became clear to the Ministry's strategy leaders that some of these young people have communication and self-reliance problems as well as problems with the numerous sources of authority within the institutions. Some abandoned young people do not feel secure, as their carers are constantly changing through promotion or moving away. This has an effect on their psyches, mental disorders, poor self-esteem, and lack of reinforcement and privacy. It is important that the Ministry works as hard as possible to give all abandoned young people a chance to develop in environments that closely reflect normal family life (Orphan Care Development Strategy Ministry of Social Welfare and Family, 2012).

The strategy also noted that, due to the overcrowding in residential institutions, those in charge had difficulty meeting the basic needs of residents, such as the implementation of recreational activities, the provision of appropriate health and food resources, the provision of accommodation, and the implementation of education and training programmes. It specifically pointed out that in residential institutions the female staff's functional capacity was weak and that they, therefore, required further training (Orphan Care Development Strategy Ministry of Social Welfare and Family, 2012).



The functional capacity of staff in residential institutions is very important, as it affects the professionalism of the care givers, especially among the social and psychological specialists, dealing with abandoned young people. This has also resulted in the weakness of periodic professional follow-ups of the abandoned young people's cases, as well as the monitoring of their daily and monthly behaviour. There have also been weaknesses in the activation of the supervisory authority role in residential institutions—in preparing the necessary minutes from institutional reports, in creating programmes for children that assist them in becoming more self-dependent, and in following-up the work of the supervisory bodies within the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (Offices of Social Affairs and the Offices of the Supervision of Females). The strategy highlights shortcomings in the actual planning for the initial treatment of abandoned young people's behaviour, as well as in the care provided for the large number of unmarried girls over the age of eighteen in residential institutions. There is no database for females of marriageable age, little in place to follow up on family disputes between spouses or to address the difficult demands of those wishing to marry a female abandoned young person (Orphan Care Development Strategy Ministry of Social Welfare and Family, 2012).

The strategy also noted that the school environment is the first to work with abandoned young people outside the home (i.e., Institution). It is one of the most important areas in the successful integration process of abandoned young people into wider society. It developed some of the requirements to deal with these difficulties, including the definition of reality through a planned psychosocial programme, based on the situation of each child. It would take into account the non-abuse of their parents but would assume that there were circumstances that led to their abandonment of care.

The strategy added that focus should be placed on trying to choose the names of the abandoned young people, according to the society in which they live. It also stressed the importance of deleting the individual's affiliation to residential institutions from any government documents and to not provide any identifying familial links on documents that identify abandoned young people. This also extended to the removal of the name of a residential institution from a bus used, or hired, for transportation of an abandoned young person (Orphan Care Development Strategy Ministry of Social Welfare and Family, 2012).

The aforementioned information demonstrates the need for government policies in Saudi Arabia. The policies could help to provide the services and programmes that are necessary in the development and future outcomes of essential needs assessments and pathway plans. Through such processes, abandoned young people would have the best chance to successfully integrate into the wider society, thereby avoiding many of the previously mentioned issues. These processes would also assist in other areas of care for abandoned young people, such as their transfer between institutions.

#### 4.5. Transfer of an abandoned young person (orphan):

The specialist social worker will meet the abandoned young person, listen to them, try to understand their position and the motives behind their behaviour, while taking into account their previous records in their social case file. The social worker will fill out the case study of the abandoned young person and assess the situation, based on their psychological and social history, the type and nature of the observed behaviour, and an individual interview. Based on this information, the social worker determines if the situation needs psychological or social intervention and develops a suitable treatment plan that will be implemented and mentioned on the form. As part of this process, a psychologist can be consulted when needed (Standard Procedural Handbook for Abandoned Young People, (2018).

#### 4.6. Procedures for the preparation of transfer:

According to the guide for the transfer of an orphan to another institution, six months before reaching the legal age for transfer or any other reason requiring a transfer, the social worker, in cooperation with the psychologist, should prepare the abandoned young person to be transferred. Under this process, the social worker will submit a request to the ministry branch's director general. The name of the abandoned young person and the reason for the transfer will be attached to the request, along with the abandoned young person's social and psychological report. The ministry branch's director general will respond with the identification of the receiving institution. The social worker then sends a letter with a specific date to the ministry with a record containing all of the abandoned young person's items (their personal files, money and clothes). The social worker will contact the receiving institution and determine the transfer date (as mentioned in the letter to the ministry) and will accompany the abandoned young person on the specified day. Finally, a record is made of the arrival of the abandoned young person with all their belongings. The transfer to the new institution is finalised electronically, through the orphan care system, by the social worker in the old residential institution (Standard Procedural Handbook for Abandoned Young People, (2018).

The aforementioned transfer process could be made more comfortable for abandoned young people. It would make a difference if the process included plans with benchmarks and standards for their successful integration into society once they leave care. It would also help if their individual skills and abilities as well as their needs and concerns were recognised. The Al-Issa study (2013) recognised that it is only through the recognition and inclusion of the abandoned young person in the care system that they will have the best chances for success later in life.

The Al-Issa study (2013) identified the extent of the identical or model Housing project capacity within Ekha'a facilities (an aftercare programme provided by the foundation), which cares for and satisfies the social needs of abandoned young people. The study recommended the importance of reviewing and ensuring the relevance of the programme, presented by the foundation in 2011, to prepare abandoned young people to be transferred from residential social institutions to its residential institutions. The study found that there is a need for abandoned young people to be better prepared for the transition. This was supported by

those working with abandoned young people in the implementation of this programme and was prompted by the difference in care in institutional practices within social institutions.

The study also stressed the importance of activating specific and targeted programmes and activities for abandoned young people, as almost half of the sample has a university level education. It is important for this group to receive different programmes from those who are at a lower educational level. It is also important that social institution staff receive specialised training, so that they have the necessary skills to design programmes, which best meet the needs of abandoned young people and contribute to the reduction in the problems they face. The training and skills development would also provide social institution carers with the ability to design different programmes for abandoned young people, who live within a social accommodation programme, in order to increase their integration into society. However, the quality of supervision is not the only problem. Albar (2018) pointed out that some psychologists have issues with the way in which care workers interact with abandoned young people, as well as the politics, visions, and strategies involved in the care. All of this can contribute to the dispersion of orphans and, thus, a loss of their confidence and credibility.

The study also highlighted the importance of providing abandoned young people, who benefit from the model Housing programme services, with qualified and responsible individuals to serve as their advisors and also with life skills which could help their integration into society, expand their social relations, and give them a sense of well-being and personal satisfaction. The study also recognised the importance of involving abandoned young people in the design, implementation and evaluation of various charity programmes according to their needs, so that these programmes reflect the actual requirements of the beneficiaries.

The importance of the Al-Issa study (2013) lies in its highlighting of the need for a clear pathway plan for abandoned young people, as well as the presence of a personal advisor working with them to achieve their goals and satisfy their various needs. The government of Saudi Arabia needs to enact policies relating to the care of abandoned young people, which show the relationship between the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development and other organisations, which provide care for abandoned young people, such as Ekha'a. This would ensure that these individuals have the best chances for success after they leave care and become responsible members of society. It would also recognise the importance of their positive participation in and views on the services and programmes provided for them, as there are many issues that can affect their successful integration into society.

#### 4.7. Other Issues Related to Policies and Practices for Abandoned Young People in the Saudi Care System

The existence of some poorly designed policies and practices, regarding the care of abandoned young people in residential institutions, may be due to a lack of consultation with the relevant government departments, social institutions or staff and only a limited involvement by the beneficiaries of these programmes and policies. This has created many problems, and even increased the gap between policies and practices. For instance, the

abolition of the Alashbal section (a preparation time for young males, before living in a male-only residential institution), in the residential institutions for males, has had a negative impact on abandoned young men. The negative impact is due to the ineffective separation and transition period. The direct transfer of abandoned young people from residential social nurseries to male residential social institutions, without any preparation, poses a huge challenge to males, as they move from a women's section to a male-only section in the care system (Albar, 2018).

Albar (2018) also noted that some charity institution directors pointed to the existence of an administrative gap between the associations and the Ministry of Labor and Social Development. A lack of policies and guidelines has weakened the role of charitable associations and other residential institutions. This has contributed to the continuation of some administrative and professional problems, with no solutions in view. As Albar (2018) noted, some employees in the Office of Social Supervision see the importance of a clear and stable system that does not change with people, as this care system only serves to exhaust workers, reduces care efficiency, and represents a financial waste for the government.

Finally, Albar (2018) also highlighted the Ministry of Labor and Social Development's recent tendency to merge social supervision offices with its branches (which are managed by the region's branch director), thereby helping to address the poor practices in caring for abandoned young people by limiting abuses and facilitating communication between the administration and the branches. Thus, the Ministry has improved the relationship between itself and Ekha'a, enhancing its work in social affairs by helping it to address the needs and concerns of abandoned young people.

In conclusion, there are many problems in the care of abandoned young people in Saudi Arabia, as outlined by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development and in reports such as Al-Issa (2013), and by authors such as Albar (2018). The integration of abandoned young people, into the wider society, could be greatly enhanced through the provision of clearer and more effective care policies, better defined relationships between government and charitable institutions, such as Ekha'a, and the provision of pathway plans and needs assessments. When not properly integrated, such young people end up with social, emotional, and developmental issues that are detrimental to them as well as to society (Albar, 2018). Subsequently, an improved focus on successful integration could make the lives of abandoned young people after they leave care much more successful and secure. The next chapter defines and explores a fundamental concept for this context, which is that of young people in care.

## Chapter 5: Young People

### 5.1. Introduction to Young People

#### **The Characteristics of Most Young People**

Around the world, most young people have many issues, concerns and influences which affect their development as individuals as they mature, ranging from relationships with others, educational opportunities (or lack thereof), and their personal health and well-being (or, again, their lack thereof), among others (Thomas, 2005; Spence, 2003; Smith, 2008). The ability of these young individuals to persevere and be resilient in the face of such issues is the direct result of an upbringing which is positive in nature, even from as early an age as infancy (Berk, 2012; Spence, 2003; Thomas, 2005; Chell and Athayde, 2009; Stein, 2005).

However, if some of these effects are not positive in nature, they have the potential to determine the path of a young person in terms of developmental delays as well as emotional and behavioural problems (Berk, 2012; Thomas, 2005; Smith, 2008; Calder et al., 2017). While many of these issues are evident even in most young people who are facing the challenges of growing up and becoming an adult, moving from a dependent childhood to an independent life as an adult, they are especially evident in those children who go into residential care (Smith, 2008; Stein, 2005). Moreover, even if a young person goes into care with a positive outlook on life, the difficulties they can encounter while in care, and in their subsequent life after leaving care, can result in being ill-prepared to be safe and secure as an independent member of society in contrast to those individuals who are able to lead a confident, independent life with the support of family and others around them and due to having a solid foundation of abilities and skills to build upon (Chell and Athayde, 2009; Berk, 2012; Stein, 2005; Smith, 2008). This is especially so if the needs and concerns of a young person as they perceive them are different than what society and state caregivers perceive them to be, a problem which can happen in everyday life for most young people, but even more so for young people in care (Smith, 2008; Stein, 2005).

Many of the elements of a typical young person's (someone who matures within a safe and secure family structure outside of the care system) foundation are laid from when a child is born to their maturation before going to school (Smith, 2008). As Berk (2012) notes, the abilities and perceptions of an infant are directly related to what is happening around, to and for them. The more a young child has love and positive attention and opportunities to engage in observation and learning given to them, and has their needs addressed at appropriate times by a family network when necessary, the greater the chance that they will have the ability to look after themselves and interact with their environment in confident, self-sufficient manners (Berk, 2012). For instance, if a child's reflexes, motor abilities, and perceptions of the world around them develop typically within the support and attention of a loving family, then that child will be better able to make sense of the world around them, putting different ideas and reactions into appropriate concepts of, for instance, right and wrong, and would be more open to new opportunities and knowledge as they mature (Berk, 2012; Thomas, 2005). This understanding would translate naturally into assisting in the development of a sober young person, who would be able to move confidently into their school years and their later life outside of school as a result of positive behavioural practices and social skills (Spence, 2003; Thomas, 2005; Smith, 2008). It would also allow for potential problems, such as vision issues or psychological disorders, to be picked up on and addressed

at ages which would not necessarily affect their future lives as adults within the wider society (Berk, 2012; Jobe and Gorin, 2014; Thomas, 2005).

In comparison, a young person who is raised outside of the aforementioned influences, such as in a poorer socio-economic community which has limited opportunities for family and financial support of a young person (Berk, 2012) may face extreme childhood experience. This context leads situations in which these abandoned young people may be placed into care due to a perceived inability by caregivers to look after or deal with them or due to developing disorders associated with their negative upbringing (Millward et al., 2006; Thomas, 2005; Stein, 2005; Maïche et al., 2017).

For those young people who were raised in a care system, these problems can be even more pronounced than in most young people (Stein, 2005). For instance, the lack of time for staff to look after all of the needs and concerns of the population of abandoned young people, and the inability of the system to adequately fund opportunities for addressing their needs and concerns, will leave many abandoned young people worse off in terms of their emotional, physical and mental development and well-being than their counterparts (Millward et al., 2006; Thomas, 2005; Stein, 2005). If they cannot form positive, nurturing and fulfilling relationships with their caregivers, then the young person's life could be severely impacted (Jobe and Gorin, 2014; Millward et al., 2006). As a result, when they leave the care system, they often do not have the ability to function effectively as contributing members of the wider society.

The idea, then, is to have programmes and options available to those young people in care to help provide the opportunities to address their needs and concerns to allow for them to lead more typically lives, to compensate for what is missing in their developmental background. This approach can be done through the use of pathway planning and needs assessments, as well as the appropriate funding and provision of services and care which give young people in care the opportunities to reach their potential and become confident and secure members of society, just as most young people can do within family structures and formal educational opportunities (Chell and Athayde, 2009).

## 5.2. Theories of Young People

Two theories can be used to demonstrate how the upbringing of young people in care facilities influences their independent life: ethics of care and the focal theory. The former ascertains that caring relationships should be maintained by promoting and contextualizing the well-being of caregivers and care receivers. As such, care involves meeting the needs and maintaining the world of ourselves and others (Held, 2006). It encompasses attentiveness (identifying other's needs and taking care of them), responsibility (having the obligation to care for), responsiveness (requires carers to picture themselves as care receivers for better understanding), and integrity (examining the political and social context, and potential conflicts or dilemmas entrenched within) (Holland, 2010). The latter, on the other hand, argues that young people manage their situations by handling them one at a time (Stein, 2006). Throughout their adolescent years, young people only attempt to resolve one issue at a given period making the resulting stresses to be scattered all through, rather than being concentrated at a particular time (Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016; Stein, 2006). However, this

is not usually the case for most children in public care who have to face a multitude of challenges. These two theories will therefore unfold the approach needed to enhance their livelihoods after leaving these facilities.

### 5.2.1 Ethics of Care

The ethics of care model, as indicated by Holland (2010) overall shows that human relationships are interdependent. Using examples from a qualitative study, Holland (2010) points out that care is more often found in relationships surpassing formally assigned caregivers and that the relational interaction features with carers are essential, even though opportunities to develop these relationships are minimal. According to the study's findings, children under care should be given a chance to establish and sustain long-term care relationships with social workers and carers as well as their family and informal networks. This is because people with a continuous caring relationship tend to have better well-being. Besides, Mikulincer et al. (2003) denote that the attention and care provided to a child are more important than the by-products and material benefits they receive. This theory, therefore, advocates for continuous interest and concern from caregivers even after they are no longer formally part of the young people's lives.

Furthermore, caregivers play an essential role in helping young people gain a clear understanding of the society in which they live and the expectations required of them in society as they mature (Thomas, 2005). Based on this concept, caregivers should be trained and provided with adequate time to have closer and more direct interactions with young people, instead of solely focusing on conducting assessments and commissioning other individuals to deliver direct services. They should also be encouraged to value those simple unnoticed acts of caring just like they pay attention to the formal tasks of a caregiver (Holland, 2010). Carers in residential institutions can also be reminded to value various care relationships, including those treasured by young people. These relations will be beneficial in addressing the needs and concerns of young people when they are independent. Close, stable and adaptive relationships with them will also facilitate better guidance through the different challenges they will face as adults while taking into account their various needs and concerns (Thomas, 2005; Stein, 2012; Tucker and MacKenzie, 2012). Furthermore, the caregivers should recognize that in addition to being passive recipients of care, young people may as well be caregivers and thus need their care experience to be actively shaped in recognition of this (Holland, 2010).

### 5.2.2. Focal Theory

One of the principal tenets of the focal theory is that despite facing multiple challenges and changes as adolescents and during early adulthood, young people address these challenges in succession rather than having to simultaneously solve them (Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016; Stein, 2006). This sequence of problems enables them to avoid being bombarded with stress. However, evidence from Hollingworth and Jackson's (2016) study shows that when applied to young adults with a background in public care, this notion is inconsistent. Besides, extensive global literature on young people receiving and leaving care has highlighted the diverse disadvantages and tough life experiences faced by most of them as they join care,



during their time in the system, and in the period at which they are required to leave and begin their independent lives (Stein, 2012). Hollingworth and Jackson (2016) found that about two-thirds of young care leavers were either neglected or severely abused. Also, most of these individuals had experienced issues, such as the death of either or both parents, drug addiction, parental mental illness, family breakdown, or seeking asylum unaccompanied at a very young age. Moreover, issues associated with changing family composition and crises in families resulted in unstable and disordered childhoods, which further affected their education, such that they lacked concentration on schoolwork which substantially affected their overall education outcomes (Hollingworth and Jackson, 2016).

A proposition that is related to the focal theory is that adolescents are at risk of more negative outcomes by having to deal with a variety of simultaneous transitions. Besides, even most care leavers who are successful academically admit that they faced instability, interruptions, and unpredictability in their education due to ill-treatment and being in and out of care among other factors (Hollingworth and Jackson, 2016). Care leavers also find it challenging to develop stable relationships with their caregivers or even friends due to frequent placement moves. During their change into post-care, care leavers experience multiple challenges which are enhanced by the accelerated and compressed transitions (Hollingworth and Jackson, 2016; Stein, 2006). Unlike most of their peers who stay at home into their twenties, these young people are forced to begin independent life at only 16 or 17 (Stein, 2006). This shortened period of leaving care and external pressure to survive independently means that care leavers must face major life challenges without any support that their non-care peers often receive.

Another essential finding associated with Hollingworth and Jackson's (2016) study is that a significant number of care leavers who were able to overcome their problems did so due to the presence of support and help. Even those who were successful in their education stated that although they may have been overwhelmed and felt like dropping out, the presence of support helped them overcome their challenges (Hollingworth and Jackson, 2016). Noteworthy, this regard aligns with the ethics of care model which requires caregivers to show concern for young people after they begin being fully independent. Besides, care leavers who received continuous support even after moving to university or independent living were considered to have the most successful transitions. Hence, caregivers need to be solicitous with care leavers in order to give them the best chance at overcoming their various challenges as they become young adults.

### 5.3. Young People in Saudi Arabia

#### **How Regulation is Pursued by the Care System in Saudi Arabia Through Transitions In and Out of Care**

In Saudi Arabia, all aspects of care for abandoned young females of Saudi nationality according to the principles of the Saudi government are supervised and operated by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (and its Department of Orphan Care) and provided through residential care institutions and, subsequent to leaving care and getting married, up to the age of 30, by charity organizations such as Ekha'a (Albar and Farah, 2015; Almubarak, 2010). For females not placed with alternative families, specialized care and



training is provided in social institutions from the age of six until the age of marriage, with follow-up programmes and measures provided as an individual gets married and a subsidy given to the female individual upon her marriage, of £12,407 (Albar and Farah, 2015; Almubarak, 2010).

Non-governmental organisations and alternative or foster families of Saudi origin also provide care for abandoned young females under the kafala system (Orphan Care Development Strategy Ministry of Social Welfare and Family, 2012), especially in terms of follow-up care even after marriage, supervised by Ekha'a under the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (Ministry of Labour and Social Development, 2012), with the goal of the Department of Orphan Care being to assist the upbringing of an abandoned young person in a healthy, positive, family-style environment as much as possible to promote positive psychological, mental and social growth of the individual in care (Albar and Farah, 2015; Unpublished National Study, 2014).

In general, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development's strategy to improve the care of abandoned young females is to limit the number of individuals who can be cared for while providing the appropriate support needed to ensure that they develop their skills and abilities to the fullest extent possible (Orphan Care Development Strategy Ministry of Social Welfare and Family, 2012).

In terms of different stages of institutional care, healthy abandoned young females who are not placed with an alternative family or who do not receive care from their own birth family due to an illegal marriage or having unknown parents (Albar, 2008; Albar and Farah, 2015) begin life in the Saudi care system in one of the four residential social nurseries, run by female staff, from birth until the age of 6 (Albar, 2008). Some females may remain in this stage of care until they are 10 years old, or may remain there until they leave care, but the general focus in these nurseries as supervised by the Department of Home Care under its goal of creating a stable family-style environment for abandoned young females is to provide a social and psychological environment which promotes the healthy development of an abandoned young female in lieu of having a positive family environment to mature in (Albar, 2008; Albar and Farah, 2015). Prior to moving to the next stage of care, abandoned young females can pay visits to other institutions (Ministry of Labour and Social Development, 2011).

The goal in these nurseries is to provide an environment in which the institution, its staff, and the internal and external programmes and activities it provides (such as weddings and concerts, and sports and cultural activities, respectively), serves as an alternative parent to abandoned young females, thereby giving them the ability to develop the emotional, mental, physical and social skills and abilities they need in order to progress in their maturation into young adults (Albar and Farah, 2015; unpublished National Study, 2014). Essentially, the health, psychological, academic, and social needs and concerns of the abandoned young females are looked after and addressed while they are in the nursery, supported with the assistance of social workers and psychologists who assess and address the needs and concerns of abandoned young females, as well as with monthly subsidies also provided by the government (Albar and Farah, 2015; Orphan Care Development Strategy Ministry of Social Welfare and Family, 2012). In this way, abandoned young females are as best prepared as possible to move on to the next stage of care, though it is also recognized that more could be done to assist abandoned young females through the help of an advisor who assist with social problems faced by these individuals (Al – Masood, 2005; Unpublished National Study, 2014).

The next stage of care for abandoned young females once they leave a residential social nursery is a female residential social institution, where they may remain until they are married (Albar, 2008; Ministry of Labour and Social Development, 2011). Here, a young female is admitted on the same criteria as for entering the residential social nursery, though there may be some females who enter the institution after an unsuccessful experience with an alternative family, and is looked after by female staff only from the age of 7 to the age of 12 (Albar, 2008; Ministry of Labour and Social Development, 2011).

In addition to the aforementioned stages of institutional care, there are also social homes (villas) in which abandoned young females may live with “uncles” and “aunts” who provide around the clock care for the most part, in an attempt to create a family-style atmosphere which will allow for a more seamless integration into society once they leave care (Albar, 2008; Orphan Care Development Strategy, 2012; Aldamage, 2014; Alburaq, 2012). Abandoned young females may also be placed in alternative or friend families which look after them for unspecified and specified period of time, respectively, with the Family Friend programme also being utilised as a way for abandoned young females to experience a family-style environment for short periods of partial care, such as for the duration of a holiday, with families compensated through a government gift or subsidy for their service (Ministry of Labour and Social Development, 2011; Albar, 2008; Albar and Farah, 2015; Unpublished National Study, 2014).

The goal of these family-like environments is to help develop socialization and emotional skills and abilities which will better allow for an individual, especially one who is at-risk, to adapt to an independent life or a married life outside of care, and the fostering and alternative families given the opportunity to care for abandoned young females are carefully chosen with those criteria in mind (Albar and Farah, 2015; Unpublished National Study, 2014). In addition, the government is, in the future, looking to place more abandoned young females in such environments due to issues with overcrowding and, as a result, a lack of privacy and opportunities for education and socialisation, in social nurseries and social institutions (Orphan Care Development Strategy Ministry of Social Welfare and Family, 2012; Alburaq, 2012; Aldamage, 2014). Albar and Farah (2015) also note that there is a need for a planned programme for abandoned young females in care, from early to late childhood and into their teenage years, to meet all of their needs and concerns, to best develop their social and life skills to better integrate with others around them and, later on, to cope with, and live independently and confidently in, the wider society.

Additionally, for those abandoned young females who are placed in alternative or friend families after they are vetted and proved by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, their care is also directly supervised and partially funded by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development while being provided by organisations such as Ekha’a (Ekhaa.org.sa, 2003). This is in contrast to the situation in foster families, where a lack of supervision on the part of the Ministry can lead to issues with abuse and neglect of abandoned young females in some foster families (Aldamage, 2014). Generally, Ekha’a looks after the needs and concerns of abandoned young females after they leave care due to marriage or having reached a specific age (Albar and Farah, 2015; Ekhaa.org.sa, 2003).

In terms of transitions, it can be said that Ekha’a’s role the life of an abandoned young female is to assist in the transition from care to an independent life, ensuring that they have the social, emotional and psychological stability, skills and security necessary to be contributing

members of the wider Saudi society (Albar and Farah, 2015). It does so by providing general support and services but also targeted support, such as financial and housing assistance if necessary and also assisting in providing training and educational opportunities, such as teaching women how to take care of themselves and, after pregnancy, their newborn babies (Albar and Farah, 2015).

More generally, in terms of aiding in the transition between unmarried and married lives, all of the aforementioned institutions and organisations, and especially the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, seek to ensure that abandoned young females are self-reliant, and have sufficient standing within a marriage to make it a successful relationship and lifestyle (Albar and Farah, 2015). This is possible given the Ministry's role as the legal guardian of an abandoned young female, and the vetting process via a Marriage Committee which needs to be undertaken by a male seeking to marry an abandoned young female in care, to better ensure the good character, financial stability, work and personal history and health of the groom, as well as the compatibility and suitability of the intended marriage (Albar and Farah, 2015; unpublished National Study, 2014). The subsidy which the Ministry gives to abandoned young females who are getting married also further allows the Ministry to ensure that the married couple gets off to a strong start in their life together (Albar and Farah, 2015).

#### 5.4. The Care of Abandoned Young People in Saudi Arabia

The Saudi government has assigned to The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development the responsibility of caring for abandoned young people by implementing the goal of looking after, as thoroughly as possible, the welfare of abandoned young people in accordance with diverse programmes. Social Welfare and Development, which was established in 1960, is one of the two agencies working for the Ministry of Social Welfare and is responsible for looking after this group and providing them with what they need for a decent life in all fields (MLSD, 2018). In addition, the General Directorate of Orphans Care is a public administrative office that operates under the Social Welfare and Development agency, developing public policies for the care of orphans, children of a similar status, and abandoned children and young people. It provides care primarily via foster families and residential institutions. For care leavers, care is provided through a follow-up programme. It also provides services through two specialised technical departments: the Department of Orphan Affairs and the Department of Residential Care (Assemblage of Legislations and Regulations of the Labour and Social Affairs Agency, 2009; Aldamage, 2011).

#### 5.5. The Role of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development

The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, represented by the Department of Orphan Affairs, has established a standard procedural handbook for abandoned young people, written by a qualified team from different specialties (developmental, educational, psychosocial, social and familial). It involves unified labour policies and operating procedures to facilitate serving abandoned young people benefiting from their access to residential care institutions until they leave (Al-madina, 2018; Daralakhbar, 2018).

The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development has indicated that one of the most important objectives of the procedural handbook is to develop administrative and procedural work in the care institutions and for the staff working there. The handbook facilitates the training of new employees in how to properly work, by allowing for the faster completion of

transactions, easier access to information, improving the service provided to beneficiaries (abandoned young people and foster families), the standardisation of procedures and working with an established mechanism in all regions of Saudi Arabia, reducing the need for personal judgments on the part of workers in the field, and tightening supervision by following up the progress of work and implementing procedures according to the adopted correct method. After having been trialled in the social nursery school in Alisha in Riyadh, the work in the handbook will now be applied to all care institutions in Saudi Arabia as part of the Ministry's objectives in achieving the Vision of 2030 of the Saudi State, to improve and develop the services provided to its beneficiaries, including abandoned young people, and recognising them as an integral part of Saudi society (Ministry of Labour and Social Development; Almadina, 2018).

In 2012, the General Department of Orphans care held meetings in the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development. The first meeting was held on 28 April 2012 for both social workers and specialists involved in Residential Social Nurseries and Residential Social Institutions for Females and Males working with abandoned young people in Saudi Arabia. In this meeting, discussions took place around the duties of workers with abandoned young people and the procedures of the social department and how to develop it, as well as the importance of monitoring abandoned young people and preparing social research, and the problems faced by orphaned students related to integration issues in schools or areas of employment (Saudi Press Agency, 2012).

By addressing the difficulties faced by social workers and the programme in terms of preparing orphaned children who are moving between social institutions and reviewing the successful models in dealing with the problems of abandoned young people, recommendations could have been set by these meetings. This would highlight the importance of these meetings in understanding the conditions which abandoned young people face and finding out accessible and affordable ways to serve them through specialists and observers working with them (General Department of Orphans Welfare, 2012). In terms of government involvement in the care of abandoned young people, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development attempts to activate and develop strategies for the work of the public administration pertaining to care leavers. This is in order to achieve its objectives and carry out its responsibilities toward the targeted categories of abandoned young people both in care and other groups who have left care and need to be looked after until they are adapted and settled down in the community. This is carried out through organising some workshops to produce a number of suggestions and recommendations that the administration seeks to benefit from in the activation and the development of aftercare programmes (General Department of Orphans Welfare, 2012).

Through such feedback, it has become clear that it is important to support after-care programmes (for individuals who have left care) with trained human resources, providing specialised training courses for them on the job, and benefiting from successful experiences at the Arab and international levels, taking into account that these experiences need to be consistent with the cultural specificities of Saudi society. It also highlighted the need for

partnerships with civil society organisations and institutions and support for research and studies on after-care, as well as the use of modern technology to facilitate the process of communicating with those who need after-care by creating a web platform on the internet that deals with this aspect of looking after abandoned young people (Saudi Press Agency, 2017).

### **Current Issues Associated with the Care of Abandoned Young People**

When abandoned young people reach the age of 12, they are transferred to Residential Social Institutions until they have completed their studies in schools or are assigned to a suitable job or prepared to live independently in society. Females remain in Residential Social Institutions for girls until they are prepared to form a family and get married, so that are capable of creating a decent family life (Ministry of Labour and Social Development; Almubarak, 2010). It should be noted that Residential Social Institutions are based on planning various care programmes and activities. The implementation and follow-up of these activities are supervised by a technical committee formed for this purpose, where coordination of social and cultural activities, sports and leisure time with useful hobbies and organising study times occurs (Ismail, 2011).

One of the characteristics of the care system in Saudi Arabia for this population is that abandoned young people, both males and females, stay in care institutions for a long time. This emphasises the importance of establishing the appropriate foundations and programmes (which many care institutions lack) in terms of skills, social values, and activities, to ensure their integration into society at an early age, with the care offered by residential institutions affecting the previously mentioned pathways of care (Albar and Abofraj, 2011). Yet, the level of adaptation of abandoned young people and their reluctance to leave an environment they are familiar with for a society that they do not necessarily have the skills for (Almubarak, 2010; Albar and Abofraj, 2011) determines the extent of the success of policies and programmes established for their care and the operation of the care institution, and their integration into their community at an appropriate age.

Abandoned young people move from one institution to another, beginning by entering a Residential Social Nursery and then being transferred to female/male Residential Social Institutions. After that, males will be moved to Residential Social Institutions, while females remain in their institutions until getting married. For males, reaching 18 years old means transitioning to another institution, which emphasises the importance of having a clear pathway plan to help them along their journey. This can contribute to satisfying their psychological and social needs and does allow them to receive support in solving and coping with their problems to have a better quality of life.

Studies that have been conducted about this population indicate several drawbacks of the care system and point out challenges that abandoned children and young people in care and out of care have. Muflehi (2011) pointed out that within the allocation of all programmes for abandoned young people in the care institutions of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development there was a lack of educational programmes. This made the educational

process in the institutions of charitable societies dependent on the extent of effort and activity provided by the association, resulting in a disparity in the level of education among abandoned young people in favour of those in residential institutions operated by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development. Muflehi (2011) also highlights the lack of a guide in most care institutions as to how its rights and services should be obtained. She mentions that there is a shortage of staff who specialise in the care of abandoned young people, and a lack of workers tasked with assisting these individuals in general.

#### 5.6. The Challenges of Caring for Abandoned Young People

Some important recommendations have come out of the first Saudi Conference of Orphans, which mapped the restrictions of welfare programmes for abandoned young people. These suggestions recommended the involvement of abandoned young people in both formulating their problems and expressing their needs in the form of papers and research, as well as engaging with them so that they can better trust and understand their rights and evaluate the success of care programmes (Aljazirah, 2011).

In addition, the basic needs of this group – including disabled individuals in each part of Saudi Arabia (according to its medical, educational, cultural or training resources) – should be identified and better understood by society as a whole from as early an age as possible, with a database being created for such information and the government being proactive rather than reactive in social welfare policy creation and implementation, including closer supervision of all systems and processes being implemented (Albar, 2018). These proactive measures should extend to ensuring that alternative mothers for abandoned young people are properly trained by specialists with experience using many modern methods of treatment, including behavioural, real, family and self-psychology, to help them expand their relationships with others by providing them with life skills and enhancing their self-confidence. This will help them to accept their social reality and change their awareness of the community (Almaili, 2011).

The Saudi government is also currently considering the idea of providing social homes for care leavers, so that these individuals can have a degree of shelter and care as close to a normal family lifestyle as possible, which better enables them to take part in society in a confident manner (Alayed, 2014). The basic regulations of social homes have made it a priority to accept abandoned young people whose parents have not been covered by foster care, as well as males who have reached the age of nine. The residents of social homes shall be paid monthly expenses in accordance with internal regulations, with tuition fees resulting from their admission into universities and civil institutes also being paid by the government. A social house is divided into sections by age group, and a house must include residential units so that the capacity of the social house does not exceed 30 persons and the capacity of each housing unit does not exceed six persons. Social housing would be terminated in a number of cases, such as a female's marriage, or a male's independence or having reached 25 years of age (ibid.).

There is also a growing recognition that civil society organisations can work to overcome obstacles facing abandoned young people. For instance, Kahatin is a non-profit charity for the care of orphans, and its branches include Makkah, Al-Madinah and Al-Taif Governorate. It is concerned with ensuring that abandoned young people receive their share of comprehensive social, educational, health and recreational care, and training, to both meet the employment needs of the labour market and to ensure that care leavers have a successful, independent life (Alkhataf, 2018). Kahatin provides follow-up programmes for their education and creates opportunities for those wishing to complete their tertiary studies at various levels. In addition, it provides them with the skills that can benefit them in their lives, as well as employment options in the public and private sectors after they graduate. It also operates courses in computer and mobile phone maintenance as other employment opportunities (Hisham, 2017).

All of Kahatin's activities and programmes correspond with the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development's previously mentioned measures to lift the ability of abandoned young people to become independent once they leave care. The Ministry has also formed a committee to evaluate and develop orphan programmes in the Ministry and the departments of the Ministry to cooperate with the committee, and provide them with information, data and documentation to ensure that all activities related to abandoned young people can achieve the objectives of the programmes and initiatives adopted in the national transition programme 2020, 2030 (Alhaidari, 2017).

The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development has also followed up on the progress of abandoned young people after leaving care. For instance, according to the Female Social Supervisory Office, a branch of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development in Riyadh, the educational statistics on female graduates of high or secondary schools and university with a Bachelor's degree comprised 90 females in total, with 34 female employees, and five individuals with a Master's degree in the fields of nursing, management, human resources, psychology, sociology, and other fields, all of which allow them to serve their country and participate in its development, and become more independent. The Ministry has also found that young people who leave care to pursue theoretical studies are enrolled by obtaining 65% of the total grade of the primary certificate at the Residential Social Institutions in Riyadh for orphans. The other cases shall be studied and handled by the Ministry in accordance with their suitability and readiness, either by transferring them to labour offices for employment or ensuring attachment to vocational institutes, so as not to leave any case unaddressed. For females leaving care, in terms of the role of education for this group, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development offers some programmes for females who train them for successful and independent lives, in addition to the continuation of follow-ups on females still engaged in studies (Ministry of Labour and Social Development, 2011).

### 5.7. Marrying Off of Abandoned Young People

The Ministry's Agency for Social Welfare and Development continues its efforts in taking care of abandoned young people by establishing special programmes within residential care to look after and assist orphan girls, where a girl might stay until they get married. These programmes consist of beneficial training that female orphans can learn from before leaving care. The programme started its services by providing a subsidy from the beginning of the fiscal year 1975/76. The subsidy has ranged from an original amount of £1,036 for each girl until it reached £12,371.44 on 15 October 2006, then the Council of Ministers' decision to increase the allocations to abandoned young people on 19 January 2007, with males who are intending to marry included in this decision. The Saudi Ministry makes sure this process is supervised by reliable individuals in order to ascertain the equity between the future marital partners and to provide them with all the means to establish an upstanding family in society (Almubarak, 2010; Albar and Farah, 2015; Aldagheater, 2016).

This is in line with the Agency's desire to give abandoned young girls greater social and psychological awareness, to assist them to get married. The government has paid attention to this matter and provided every support to promote and apply it widely and has assigned the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, represented by its Social Affairs agency, to carry out this endeavour while taking into account prevailing cultural precepts and social customs (Alriyadh, 2010). Additionally, the Department of Orphan Affairs receives the applications from gentlemen who want to marry any of the orphan girls living in residential care institutions. The applications can be submitted in any of the Ministry's branches (Alriyadh, 2010).

### 5.8. Agencies

#### **Ekha'a**

The Orphan Charity Foundation (Ekha'a), taking care of 2,055 abandoned young people in nine branches within the cities of Saudi Arabia, namely Riyadh, Mecca, Al Madina, Jeddah, Dammam, Hail, Al-Qussaim, Abha, and Shakraa. Ekha'a was established for the purpose of assisting young people who left care via enhancing the welfare of abandoned young people through a variety of programmes and activities, especially after having finished their stay in residential care institutions. It comes under the supervision of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, along with community participation to provide care and attention to abandoned young people (Ekha'a, 2017).

The Foundation's objective is to support abandoned young people, to care for them and to build their character, to better allow them to contribute to their community as they take part in building their society. Ekha'a relies on the various programmes and training opportunities that are provided to care leavers within the care institutions under the observation of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, with the provision of appropriate environments to ensure the social and psychological stability of abandoned young people (Ekha'a, 2017; Ekha'a, 2019).



Ekha'a also seeks to connect with all segments of Saudi society and its institutions, to participate in providing assistance to, and protecting, care leavers in need through its various programmes, which focus on housing, education, scholarships, training and employment, family care, awareness, financial and in-kind assistance, such as the purchase of cars. This is in order to create psychological and social stability for orphans. Ekha'a works to harness all of its energies to serve abandoned young people, to guarantee that they have decent lives and full psychological comfort for themselves and their families without any need for other forms of assistance (ibid.).

Ekha'a has a diverse set of goals to look after the welfare of abandoned young people. One important goal is to provide full social care for orphans who have completed their stay in residential social institutions under the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, with care continuing until they reach the age of 30. Another goal is to provide suitable accommodation in residential neighbourhoods to help orphans integrate into the community and its customs and traditions. This involves guidance and awareness through counselling and training courses to acquire positive behaviours and avoid negative ones so as to build successful individuals who can contribute in providing services to their community and be good examples in various fields. Ekha'a also promotes the acquisition of skills that help care leavers become self-reliant and enhance their self-confidence. It also develops their ambition through continuous motivation and encouragement and through the creation of programmes that assist care leavers, of both genders, to help them overcome any difficulties they may face in a positive manner (Ekha'a, 2017; Ekha'a, 2019).

There are also specific programmes that Ekha'a utilises to assist care leavers. In terms of accommodation, Ekha'a's programmes serve as an extension to the services provided by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (while remaining under Ministry supervision) to abandoned young people in care, providing fully furnished and equipped adequate housing that serves as a way for care leavers to adjust to a more independent way of life after having left care. There is also a community partnership and agreement between Ekha'a and the Ministry of Housing as part of Ekha'a's strategy for 2020. This agreement comes within the framework of the community partnerships that Ekha'a has built with the State and private sectors, aiming to serve abandoned young people with comprehensive care (Ekha'a, 2017).

Furthermore, Ekha'a works with young people leaving care to help create a positive atmosphere, which also assists them in adjusting to an independent lifestyle, utilising a "Family Care programme", which works to protect these individuals by strengthening their social and psychological backgrounds. Ekha'a seeks to empower care leavers to shift from dependence to responsibility and autonomy, through paying attention to enabling care leavers, both males and females, to own their housing units. More than 106 families of this population have settled in their own homes through community partnerships with institutions in the tertiary education sectors. The most notable among these are the non-profit association named Bunian and the Al Rajhi Humanitarian Foundation, which in

partnership with the Ministry of Housing will provide housing for 2,000 orphans within the next four years (Sabq, 2017).

With regard to training and employment, Ekha'a strives to have a significant effect in raising and educating those under its care, in order to develop their skills and to improve their own experiences. In order to do so, it has prepared training and employment programmes according to strategies with clear objectives and deliberate steps, thereby allowing care leavers to achieve the autonomy necessary to give them self-confidence and the ability to integrate positively within their society (Ekha'a, 2019).

Further education for care leavers is a focus for Ekha'a, to not only better achieve the desire of the vast majority of care leavers to complete their education and obtain the qualifications they hope for, but also to achieve positive and real integration within society and to have increased self-confidence as well. The Foundation of Ekha'a also offers the names of young people under its care to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques' Overseas Scholarship Programme and follows up on their progress once they have begun their studies within the programme. In addition, Ekha'a also assists care leavers in gaining a better awareness of their culture and society and their own circumstances, despite not being raised in a family (Ekha'a, 2017).

Ekha'a also provides financial assistance to care leavers who are registered in its records, with its main concern being to provide them (and their family members) with a life of dignity, in accordance with specific regulations and conditions, to ensure the fair and transparent disbursement of funds from its civilian benefactors. This positive relationship with civilian benefactors in Saudi Arabia has allowed Ekha'a to receive many types of assistance, such as food, furniture, clothes, cars and so forth, thereby allowing it to invest such in-kind assistance to better allow for the provision of its services to care for, and fulfil, the needs of abandoned young people (Ekha'a, 2019).

### **Cooperation with other NGOs**

Ekha'a, in collaboration with the Tamkeen Association, also operate the Josour (bridges) programme, which defines the framework for the safe social transition (applied by supervisors) of abandoned young children – through the definition route, the stability route, the skilful route, the application route, and the entertainment route; (Ekha'a, 2019). The after-care programme, which is provided by Ekha'a when they reach the age of 18, prepares them for their new lives through an effective integration into society. The Josour programme aims to identify the abandoned young people themselves. In meeting their expectations in their future lives, it indicates the most important services that Ekha'a provides for them. In this programme, the rights and the duties of targeted young people are identified. In order to motivate young people and instil a positive image of after-care life, young people are helped to recognise the success stories of former individuals who left care, and to choose suitable housing, while furnishing them according to their needs. In addition, the programme helps to develop the self-confidence of this group of individuals, to enhance their human values and

social relations, and to strengthen their relationships with their colleagues and implementers of their various programmes. Essentially, the Josour programme looks to contribute to the elimination of the obstacles and difficulties faced by abandoned young children as they work through preparing for integration into society (Ekha'a, 2019).

There is also a cooperation agreement between Ekha'a and the women's charity Kayan for the care of care leavers of both genders with special circumstances, such as orphans with unknown parents, aiming to contribute towards the purchase of houses for such families under the terms and conditions of the Tamkeen project for housing the families of care leavers implemented by Ekha'a. Kayan is a charitable organisation concerned with the development of the environments that service abandoned young people in all of their developmental stages, supporting them in their community and enabling them to reach the highest levels of stability by providing them with all aspects of care. It was established in 2016 under the supervision of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, with a view to support orphans in terms of prevention, development, and rehabilitation, enabling them to contribute effectively to national knowledge and societal development (Ekha'a, 2017; Sabq, 2017).

Kayan also works to encourage the participation of non-profit sectors in taking the initiative of providing suitable housing for families of care leavers who cannot afford it. In order to achieve cooperation, solidarity and support efforts between them, the two parties have agreed to coordinate together in order to achieve a high degree of harmony, to provide the best level of services and define the framework of financial support for such individuals (Ekha'a, 2019; Halabi, 2018). There is also a cooperation agreement between Kayan and Ekha'a for the Makken project, to house orphans with couples and families with special circumstances. This contributes to supporting housing purchases for these families covered by the terms and conditions of the Tamkeen project for housing young people who have left care and their families.

The Tamkeen Association for the Care of the Eastern Orphans was created to support abandoned young people with special circumstances, as well as to provide them with comprehensive care in terms of health, social, educational and psychological needs, and to integrate them with work, so that they can provide them with both social stability and a decent level of independent living. It provides developmental services such as capacity building for individuals, voluntary work, scholarships, vocational rehabilitation, employment training, empowerment of individuals and projects, independence, and employment. In addition, it provides relief services, which include rent, living expenses, marriage costs, treatment costs, car maintenance and purchasing costs, coupons for medicine and medical care coupons, school supplies, bill payment costs, and emergency cash assistance. In order to accomplish these services, Tamkeen has established alliances and partnerships with relevant parties, and has worked to ensure the sustainable development of financial and human resources, as well as environments that support the positive development of abandoned young people (Tamkiin.org.sa, n.d; Ekha'a, 2019).

The next chapter, Chapter Six, presents a framework for considering the ethics and justice of care.

## Chapter 6: Theoretical Framework

### **A Framework for the Care of Abandoned Young People**

The study by Albar and Abofraj (2011), which focused on abandoned young people in their teen years, said that 21.6% of such individuals spend their free time alone in their care institutions, at a time seen by the authors of the study as the most important stage in their lives, when they are vulnerable to psychological and social issues. The study also highlights the importance of developing policies and programmes for psychological support for each of these domains separately. Moreover, a framework is being developed to report the cases of those who spend their free time on their own in a care institution, with programmes and activities being designed to support those who suffer from isolation and a lack of integration into society. For those individuals who often spend their free time with others outside a care institution, it is better to develop programmes and activities to ensure continuity with wider society. In this context, abandoned young people should not be treated as a single group, but as distinct categories within the group as a whole, each with its own appropriate programmes and policies to assist in supporting those who find it difficult to integrate into society. This highlights the need for a comprehensive assessment of their needs and problems (such as the pathway plan and needs assessment used in the UK) to make that integration easier, because, as the Alburaq (2012) study demonstrates, abandoned young people can encounter many of their most urgent needs after leaving care, and a lack of preparation by care institutions makes these issues much worse for the care leaver.

A suggestion to assist abandoned young people to better integrate into society is, as Albar and Abofraj (2011) indicate, to have the staff of care institutions mentor abandoned young people in the manner of a big brother, communicating with them and visiting them as necessary to help them work through identity problems or through feeling awkward in various social situations. This highlights the importance of a personal advisor, as seen in the UK, who may help abandoned young people to develop a pathway plan that reflects their different needs and work to satisfy their needs and concerns, and to achieve their objectives in a realistic manner.

Alburaq (2012) also stresses the importance of meeting the needs of abandoned young people after leaving their residential institutions, helping them to create and find an independent personality through their upbringing within these care institutions, while providing continuous medical and health care for adults with unknown parentage after leaving residential care. In addition, the study urges that attention should be paid to providing for the educational needs (such as career guidance and training) of care leavers, pointing out the importance of providing training courses for abandoned young people while providing for a sufficient number of social workers to work in care institutions.

A Saudi national study has recognised the need for the assignment of a personal advisor to each group of abandoned young people, who will be contacted periodically to help to solve the social, psychological, educational and economic problems that may confront them (unpublished National Study, 2014). The national study also points out the need to train abandoned young people in basic life skills from an early age, to learn how to act in various social situations they will face, and to equip them with the necessary skills in this regard. At

present, there are good practices, such as the allocation of study places and the provision of an educational supervisor to follow up with care leavers. Drivers and vehicles are also provided to transport abandoned young people to schools, with support classes provided as necessary and study encouraged through prizes and financial rewards.

It also indicates a need to change some of their beliefs and knowledge because these can serve as a barrier to their integration within their community (ibid.), as these individuals can suffer from a lack of skills and methods of socialisation, such as independence, self-confidence, responsibility, social skills and a lack of knowledge of, and requirements for, being married. This demonstrates the importance of providing more support and training, recruiting and engaging in voluntary and paid work (such as working during school holidays to gain experience and connections with the labour market), as well as providing more direct support and specialised advice on a permanent basis and from multiple sources, to prepare abandoned young people to leave their care institutions (ibid.).

In addition, the study also highlights the importance of preparing abandoned young people for different educational and life stages by clarifying their duties and responsibilities and defining the institution's policies. For instance, individuals could benefit from being better educated on the benefits of financially saving at an early age through some shopping programmes, which identify the prices of goods and times and places appropriate to purchase, enabling them to buy by themselves at an early age, under the supervision of female workers, which better prepare them for a life after leaving care (ibid.). Moreover, abandoned young people leaving care would benefit from plans of action put in place by authorities that specify the physical, moral, educational and economic needs they will require (ibid.). A good practice currently seen is the provision of comprehensive health insurance for all abandoned young people, which enables them to benefit from health care programmes in private and public hospitals.

Once again, this may highlight the importance of making a pathway plan for all abandoned young people that identifies their goals and needs and qualifies them to meet the challenges they face outside of care institutions. For instance, in terms of marriage, one of the most important difficulties that abandoned young females face when married is the husband's low income. This is related to the lack of income-earning jobs that suit their new life requirements because of their average level of education, as well as the husband's possible status as the sole earner in the family, which means that the total income earned may not cover the cost of renting a house and other family requirements (Almubarak, 2010; Alzahrani, 2015). In contrast, other abandoned young people may be motivated to marry early because of emotional deprivation and social stability in order to satisfy their need to form a family, which may compensate for the loss of a family atmosphere, which they suffered earlier in their lives, or even due to an incomplete understanding of what it means to be married to someone, or problems faced in divorce by females, which may lead to a return to residential care or an interruption in aid (Almubarak, 2010; Alzahrani, 2015; Albar and Farah, 2015). Indeed, Alzahrani (2015) pointed out that some abandoned young people may even face stronger conflicts when confronted with a new life that does not succeed in addressing their social, psychological and sexual requirements. The existence of a pathway plan for abandoned young

people can help to support them through education and training at an early age, to avoid such difficulties in the future.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that, overall, there has been very little research on abandoned young people in Saudi Arabia, with Albar 's (2018) representing one of the only comprehensive studies available on the topic. Albar (2018) stated that there are some policies and good practices regarding the care of abandoned young people. Most abandoned young people in special circumstances are assigned to foster families or alternative families, an ongoing trend over many years, which reduces the chances of long stays by abandoned young people in care institutions and seeks to assign their support to one of the families. However, the continuation of the relationship between the branches and the supervisory body (the Ministry) – with its authoritarian hierarchical image in its decisions regarding abandoned young people and residential care institutions – without involving the departments of the institutions and its employees (except to the narrowest extent), has resulted in the emergence of problems such as a lack of roles for social workers, and has even increased the gap between policies and practices (Albar, 2018).

For instance, Albar (2018) referred to the absence of a comprehensive assessment of an abandoned young person that illustrates the basic needs at the personal, health, educational, psychological and social levels, as well as applicable trends and hobbies, including the professional aspect of the person, to be carried out at different ages during their individual development. This highlights the importance of developing policies related to the existence of a pathway plan for abandoned young people, preceded by a comprehensive assessment of all their needs, through realistic goals that qualify abandoned young people to live independently in society. Such a programme can be found in the UK in the welfare system for looked after children who are expected to leave their orphanages and leave care, and which may be considered absent in the social welfare system in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, some studies have spotted some gaps in policies and programmes related to abandoned young people. This highlights the need to develop and activate policies regarding the existence of a comprehensive assessment and a pathway plan for each orphan, as is the case in the UK, taking into account the social and cultural differences of Saudi society. The study pointed out that some records and personal files of abandoned young people are not comprehensive and sufficient for the situation in terms of problems and needs and other information that benefit the individuals in care as well as institution employees and the institution itself (Albar, 2018).

One of the challenges cited in the Albar study is that the group of people working with abandoned young people has observed a kind of rebellion by some individuals in their care at the age of 18, in a failure to comply with the regulations of their residential care institution. However, this problem only appears with male individuals under the care of Ekha'a, as females stay in a care institution until they get married. This may be due to the lack of support for this group at an early age, as well as not taking into consideration changes that may occur in the different stages of their ages, especially in the case of males remaining in care in Ekha'a, as some individuals stay in care for such a long time (until the age of 35 in some instances) that they may become dependent on the government or charities for their care (ibid.). This is the result of both a lack of qualified and suitable workers to work in the field of abandoned

young people and not having a pathway planning and needs assessment process in place, leading to problems that may affect their independence in the future.

Albar (2018) noted that there are efforts and budgets for the programmes and activities that are provided to abandoned young people in care institutions. However, there are problems related to identity, social integration, lack of social skills, and insecure attachment problems due to multiple movements and instability, with poor independence and self-reliance widespread among adults and those who have left care for marriage or are still under care in Ekha'a. Many programmes and activities are practised within the care institutions and among abandoned young people themselves, which further reduces the opportunities for friction and exposure to situations in mainstream society. In addition, one of the most important disadvantages of collective institutional care is the dependency of abandoned young people on others (ministries, residential institutions, and Ekha'a), resulting in care leavers who are rarely independent and self-reliant. Thus, this may require early intervention to avoid these challenges that prevent abandoned young people from self-reliance and being comfortable in lives outside of care.

Albar (2018) also indicates some good practices by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development that show the involvement of workers in some aspects related to abandoned young people, such as regulations and programmes. The report pointed to the existence of a series of attempts and actions that are carried out through the efforts of employees and female personal workers, including preparing females for marriage and another follow-up and training, as well as preparing the child to move from one care institution to and following up on their progress. However, there is no clear policy to follow and apply to individuals in such situations, highlighting the lack of coordination of programmes among the various levels of care, and resulting in confusion among care leavers of their rights.

That is to say, there seems to be administrative gaps between Ekha'a, residential settings and the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, which is responsible for looking after abandoned young people with various policies and procedures. This weakens the foundations of institutions and their roles and contributes to the continuation of some administrative and professional problems, according to the opinion of some workers in institutions. In addition, abandoned young people face a number of difficulties in not only knowing their rights as care leavers but also in adjusting well to an independent life. The creation of a process utilising pathway planning and needs assessments, as seen in the UK, could be extremely beneficial in addressing these issues, as well as allowing for the emergence of personal effort in the social welfare system in Saudi Arabia, thereby giving abandoned young people the best chance for success as confident, contributing independent members of Saudi society in the future.

### 6.1 Feminism

The behaviour of humans, in terms of the choices which they make, is dictated by the moral principles which they have or do not have (Singer, 2011). While ethics can cover a range of



various approaches and beliefs, throughout human history, given the central role of males in societies and cultures around the world, generally, paternal ethics have held a paramount role in determining the behaviour of humans and actions taken (Friedman & Bolte, 2007). This has meant that, up until recent times, many of the experiences and viewpoints of females have been discounted or ignored to varying degrees in Western countries, with cultural differences and beliefs in other societies further discounting the role and rights of women in the wider world (Arat, 2009).

In the field of caring for children, and social work in general, the caring for the needs of others has, historically, fell largely to women, as they were seen as the natural, nurturing caregivers of society (Sevenhuijsen, 2003; Sevenhuijsen, 2003; Orme, 2002). Of course, the idea of nurturing encompasses emotions and actions based on compassion, trust (between the mother and child), respect and close, intimate connections between individuals, forming the ethics of care (Clement, 1996; Sevenhuijsen, 2003; Sevenhuijsen, 2003; Holland, 2010). The ethics of care, therefore, were one-sided or one-dimensional in nature in terms of being linked specifically to females, which supported the important role which mothers have in the early development of their children, and for children in care, served to reinforce the stereotypes of women as mothering figures first and foremost (Clement, 1996; Sevenhuijsen, 2003; Sevenhuijsen, 2003; Berk, 2012; Holland, 2010; Orme, 2002). The large number of female caregivers in social work further supported the central role of women as caregivers, a view further enhanced when the lack of a family support network for children in care is taken into account, which means that any nurturing such children may experience while in care may only come from their caregivers, all of which served to give social work a distinctly feminine flavour (Dominelli, 2002; Stein, 2012; Hicks, 2015; White, 2006; Gringeri et al., 2010; Davis, 1986; Orme, 2002).

However, from the late 1960s onward, second wave feminism and the women's movement, or the idea that women have the same rights as men and that they should not be tied to traditional views of what they could, began to affect the way in which women around the world saw their role, status, skills and responsibilities (Sevenhuijsen, 2003; Sevenhuijsen, 2003). The pursuit of freedom from male perceptions of what women should be doing became of paramount importance, and this was seen quite clearly in the field of social work (Sevenhuijsen, 2003; Sevenhuijsen, 2003).

Essentially, the women's movement (feminism) supported the idea that the central role of women working in care fields, as well as what happens within those fields, needed to be revalued, taking into account a sharing of responsibilities between men and women, and needed changes in the nature of care, to better free women from their historical role as caregivers so that they could be equal participants in other activities (Sevenhuijsen, 2003; Sevenhuijsen, 2003; Smith, 2010; White, 2006; Hicks, 2015; Dominelli, 2002; Davis, 1986). In this manner, which could be described as the ethics of justice, women could become more self-fulfilled as individuals, and share caregiving with men on a professional rather than menial basis (Sevenhuijsen, 2003; Sevenhuijsen, 2003; Clement, 1996). Eventually, women came to understand that their role was not one of fighting the system and their historical role as caregivers, but rather, one of becoming more able to be free to do what is perceived as

right and necessary in a field where ideas and responsibilities have normally been dictated by males (Sevenhuijsen, 2003; Sevenhuijsen, 2003).

As a result, social work has become more focused on the immediate needs of the children and the promotion of stability in their experiences to help them become more self-sufficient, rather than what needs to happen to the children's model of care (Stein, 2012; Sevenhuijsen, 2003; Sevenhuijsen, 2003). In this way, while the previously mentioned nurturing ethics of care still exist, they have been seen by some to have been subsumed within the liberal nature of feminism and the ethics of justice, of fighting for the freedom and rights of children in care (Sevenhuijsen, 2003; Sevenhuijsen, 2003; Clement, 1996).

### 6.1.1 Feminism, Ethics of Care, Justice

There are many issues related to the idea that ethics of care and ethics of justice are at odds with each other, and that justice has taken precedence over care since the advent of the women's movement, not the least of which are the effects that such contrasts in ethics have had on the care of children, and in the field of social work as a whole (Clement, 1996; Sevenhuijsen, 2003; Sevenhuijsen, 2003). The idea of what is best for a child in care can range greatly in such an environment, moving from believing that, because a child is female, she can take better care of herself than a male child, to the belief that all children need equal amounts of love and attention to be able to reach their fullest potential (Hicks, 2015; White, 2006; Dominelli, 2002; Davis, 1986; Sevenhuijsen, 2003; Clement, 1996).

However, it must be noted that the aforementioned changes in the ways in which females in the field of social work perceived their roles and responsibilities in the field have also meant that the policy makers in the field of social work have needed to change the ways in which social work was managed. For instance, whereas in the past the care of children was left largely to female caregivers due to their aforementioned ascribed nurturing nature, in order to gain the freedom, fairness and equality sought as part of the women's movement, legislation needed to be written and passed which regulated change to occur (Orme, 2002; Sevenhuijsen, 2003). In turn, this reinforced the feminist ideals of personal independence and the freedom to do things outside of strictures implemented by male authorities, giving rise to the perception that children themselves also had equal rights (Orme, 2002; Sevenhuijsen, 2003; Sevenhuijsen, 2003; Clement, 1996). At the same time, there have been a wide range of changes and developments occurring in the wider society over the same period of time, with no relation necessarily to issues of gender but, rather, economic, educational and cultural in nature, and the possibilities presented as a result of such change (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007; Orme, 2002).

While the women's movement would welcome such changes as necessary to upend the paternalistic nature of society, policy makers have also sought to balance these ethics of justice with the ethics of care in how they approach social work and the care of children (Sevenhuijsen, 2003; Clement, 1996; Furlong and Cartmel, 2007; Orme, 2002). In many countries, such as the United Kingdom, children are looked after on the basis of what they need, with provisions made within the law for them to have enough resources and support to be independent members of society, but within a family environment, be it state or biologically provided, being necessary to ensure a child's proper development (Coles, 2005;

Orme, 2002). Additionally, standards and measures of progress have been implemented to ensure that there is an efficient transition to independence by children in care, thereby measuring the effects that legislation and policy have had on their development (Holland, 2010). Some of the features identified by these measures include relationships (friends and family), happiness (living a life worthwhile and sense of a future), environment (school, home, neighbourhood), life and overall appearance, and safety (Wood & Selwyn, 2017).

Indeed, legislation in the United Kingdom and the United States which has instituted such wraparound care and services have come about after the advent of feminism, which demonstrates a link between what feminism is looking for in developing personal freedom and autonomy, and in how policymakers have responded to such ideas in the field of social work (Coles, 2005; Goodkind et al, 2011). Nowadays, while young people in care in the United Kingdom and other countries undergo many transitions as part of their being in the care system, the system itself has been restructured to develop young people in care as much as possible to become more confident and responsible members of society, while also giving them the skills and abilities to make their own decisions and to make use of services and resources available to them for their future, independent lives outside of care and, hopefully, not suffering neglect of care along the way (Fitzpatrick et al, 2019; Coles, 2005; Goodkind et al, 2011). Males and females are treated equally in theory, though in reality, that is not always the case, as legislators continually work to address deficiencies in care systems through new requirements for remaining in care and services provided to those in care by caregivers and policymakers alike (Fitzpatrick et al, 2019; Goodkind et al, 2011).

In contrast, in Saudi Arabia, gender inequality in favour of males has a cultural basis, and this has served to, in a patriarchal society with a segregated residential care system, marginalize the experiences of abandoned young people as well as the efforts and experience of female caregivers to a greater degree than in the West (Faryan et al, 2019; Albar and Farah, 2015; Al-Kathiry, 2014; Almubarak, 2010; Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2015; Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2016). On a cultural basis, then, while children in Saudi Arabia have had rights, those rights and their recognition did not apply to abandoned young people fairly and equally in any standardized, written form, and no amount of expertise or ethics of care could affect that to any great degree (Faryan et al, 2019; Al-Kathiry, 2014).

However, this does not mean that the ethics of care as well as the ethics of justice are not valued or acted upon in Saudi Arabia. Indeed, in recent years, the government of Saudi Arabia has worked to put greater amounts of resources and attention on child-focused policies and legislation, to ensure that all abandoned young people in care receive the care and skills needed to become fully functional members of society as independent adults, as is their right (Faryan et al, 2019; Unpublished national study, 2014; Al-Aiban, 2016; Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2015). Such measures range from providing new opportunities for education and training, to more accommodation options, to financial subsidies for living expenses and marriage, to the support and establishment of various organisations and alternative or friend families to give abandoned young people as close to a family environment for their upbringing as possible, as well as the training for social workers

necessary to be efficient and effective in their roles (Faryan et al, 2019; Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2015; Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2016). In addition, there are various charitable organisations who also look after the needs and concerns of older abandoned young people (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2015; Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2016).

### 6.1.2 Feminism: Impact Social Work

In conclusion, the women's movement and feminism have influenced the social work sector in various countries, with the end result being a distinct competition between the ethics of care and the ethics of justice. However, In Saudi Arabia, this competition has been contained within a larger, culturally based distinction between the roles of men and women, in the favour of men. The Saudi government has sought to address this somewhat through targeted policies and legislation. However, the feminist theory model targets the existing structures and systems of power that work against sex, gender, and equality to develop discrimination and exclusion among societies (Sanden & Egbert 2019). Through the actions of feminists, oppression and power are acknowledged and disrupted to equally benefit all individuals. This promotes understanding, advocacy and positive change in different systems.

Research in the field of social work pertaining to abandoned young children has often taken a more general perspective, looking at young males and females as an entire population in order to determine appropriate methods of care as well as to deal with issues such as depression, insecurity, abuse, and a diminished sense of self-esteem and worth (Albar, 2008; Al-Kathiry 2014; Stein, 2012; Ashaalan & Al-zeiby, 2015; Hicks, 2015; Dominelli, 2002). Indeed, within the field of social work research itself, the value of gender (the male and female perspective) as a characteristic to be researched and taken into account when formulating conclusions as to best practice for abandoned young people of both genders has often been treated as a given, with some kind of set outcome or result on the basis of the problems encountered by an individual in care on the basis of their gender, or the gender of the person helping individuals in care determining the nature and type of care offered (Hicks, 2015; White, 2006; Al-Kathiry, 2014; Dominelli, 2002). In this way, gender as it applies to abandoned young people relates to perceptions of who has the power within a care system, who needs to be empowered, and in what manners, with care options dictated as a result of these factors (Hicks, 2015; White, 2006; Dominelli, 2002; Gringeri et al., 2010; Smith, 2010).

The above ideas have developed in part due to the rise of feminism and feminist theory within the social work sector in the past few decades, and the importance of attachment theory (and the mother-child bond) in childcare, resulting in a perception that feminism, and the feminist perspective, has an important role to play in ensuring that all abandoned young people are looked after in the best manners possible (Dominelli, 2002; Berk, 2012; Stein, 2012; Hicks, 2015; White, 2006). This idea has been linked to the fact that there is a majority of female workers within the sector, leading to the perception of heightened female influence within the care of abandoned young people, despite evidence to the contrary (Davis, 1986; Dominelli, 2002; White, 2006; Hicks, 2015; Gringeri et al., 2010). It is also linked to the feeling that social work, as a profession and with its links to caring for others, is perceived as being a more "motherly" or female-oriented undertaking, even while it has not been as highly valued

as other professions historically, similar to teaching not being highly valued in many countries (Davis, 1986; Hicks, 2015; White, 2006; Morrison, 2015; Dominelli, 2002).

As a result, gender and its influences in care are valued in social work, but the nature of how that perspective should be utilized and recognized in determining best practice in a care system is contentious, leading to differences in opinion on the manner of care given to abandoned young people, and to which voice, male or female (or both together) should be the dominant one in determining best practices and theoretical approaches (Smith, 2010; Gringeri et al., 2010; Davis, 1986; White, 2006; Hicks, 2015; Measure Evaluation, 2017; Dominelli, 2002). Indeed, the very opening of new paths of discussion and research as a result of feminist ideals and values has also made the use of gender studies within social work a volatile one, based on confronting sources of oppression, such as male domination within the sector, in search of fairness in research and practice (Smith, 2010; White, 2006; Hicks, 2015; Dominelli, 2002; Davis, 1986).

This is an important consideration, as Stein (2012) notes the importance of stability for young people while in care, which allows for better experiences in socialization, education and work (among other things) upon leaving care. It is clear that stability in the care of abandoned young people cannot be achieved without a cohesive approach to best practice in care for all abandoned young people, and recognition of differences between genders within the community of abandoned young people, not just gender playing a role in determining the nature of care, will help in achieving that stability.

As a result, over the years within the field of social work, while the number of feminist-based theories and ideas of best practice in the care of abandoned young people have grown, allowing for better general care of young people while in care systems, they have not necessarily allowed for distinctions in care for young females, who can experience significantly different experiences and have challenging needs and concerns all of their own, but can be expected to succeed where males may fail simply on the basis of their female resilience (Hicks, 2015; Measure Evaluation, 2017; White, 2006; Dominelli, 2002; Davis, 1986).

### 6.1.3 Gender Issues

The addressing of differences between genders of abandoned young people is necessary in all care systems, not merely from a theoretical perspective, but in terms of actual, hands-on practice as a result of verifiable and valid data gathered from both male and female individuals in care. There is clearly an important role for a feminist perspective in a care system, as research from a feminist perspective better allows social workers to understand abandoned young people, and to assist them in utilizing and accessing those programmes, services, institutions and individuals which meet their needs and concerns, which can only improve the care system as a whole. However, the addressing of differences between genders for those young people in care also needs to take into account the very real differences in backgrounds for male and female individuals in care, an approach which can allow for greater empathy and care toward abandoned young females, thereby helping females especially to better settle in to care environments (Measure Evaluation, 2017; Dominelli, 2002; Davis, 1986).

While the aforementioned can apply to care systems in all countries, in Saudi Arabia, it is of vital importance, as the issue of a lack of research into abandoned young females is quite pronounced. Currently, there is a very limited amount of research that has dealt with abandoned young females as a group of individuals separate from all abandoned young people<sup>4</sup> However, the reason for this lack of research is most likely linked not just to the theories which researchers hold and to who is doing the research, but also to Saudi culture itself, as the stigma attached to being an abandoned young person (Albar, 2008; Al-Kathiry, 2014; Wagner, 2011), in conjunction with the segregation of genders within care, creates a group of abandoned young people (females) who are not well understood or appreciated, thus affecting their well-being as well as the well-being of the entire care system.

Generally, the care system for abandoned young people in Saudi Arabia consists of residential institutions as well as alternative families and other charitable organizations such as Eka'a (Al-Kathiry, 2014; Aldamage, 2011; Albar, 2008; Ekhaa.org.sa, 2003; Ashaalan & Al-zeiby, 2015). Within residential institutions, abandoned young people can be quite isolated, leading to socialization issues later on when entering wider society after leaving care (Albar and Abofraj, 2011; Aldamage, 2011). Even though other types of care, such as alternative families or social homes, aim to alleviate those problems (Albar, 2008; Unpublished national study, 2014; Saudi Gazette, 2016; Al-Kathiry, 2014), it is definitely the case that being in care can pose issues for males and females alike (Al-Kathiry, 2014).

However, in Saudi society, males have the dominant role (Al-Kathiry, 2014; Murphy, 2014; Wagner, 2011), and as such, the question of what is to be studied by researchers or addressed by government policies is necessarily seen through the eyes of males in positions of authority and power, and voiced using a male perspective, thereby leading to set ways in which research and practice is determined and acted upon (Smith, 2010; Davis, 1986; Ashaalan & Al-zeiby, 2015; Al-Kathiry, 2014; Murphy, 2014). However, this does not mean that the male view is the only one, as the Saudi care system does operate on gender lines after certain ages, meaning that there is a strong female presence and voice within the female portion of the care system, one which can assist young females in care to better adapt to their care environments (Albar, 2008; Ministry of Labor and Social Development, 2011; Al-Kathiry, 2014). What it does mean, though, is that this female voice is undervalued by the males in charge within a male-centric care system, further reinforcing the underlying assumption of feminist researchers that science operates in a male-dominated system (Smith, 2010; Gringeri et al., 2010; Davis, 1986). Add to this the segregated education system in Saudi Arabia as well as the limited nature of educational opportunities in some respects, thereby ensuring that the focus of research is predominantly determined by males (Alsubaie & Jones, 2017), and it is evident that the male voice and perspective is the dominant one in the Saudi care system.

As a result, while the effect of not having birth parents and a family name for social interactions affects both abandoned young males and females (Al-Kathiry, 2014), given the

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<sup>4</sup> Al-Otaibi, B. (2015). Social problems caused by orphanhood and loss of identity for people with special circumstances in the role of social education in Riyadh. An applied study on girls and supervisors. Issue 9, pp. 163-221; Alssad, N., 2004. *Evaluate and improve provided social services at female residential social institutions in Saudi Arabia*, Unpublished Study.

dominant role which males hold within Saudi society, it is abandoned young males who have generally had the better opportunity to overcome the challenges associated with this stigma through the greater effort and research put into creating better outcomes for them, as well as the opportunities more available to them when they mature (Al Hassani, 2003; Alzahrani, 2015). This has begun to change in recent years, with the Saudi government putting more resources and a greater focus on ensuring that all abandoned young people receive the best care possible to be able to leave care as responsible, contributing members of Saudi society (Albar and Farah, 2015; Almubarak, 2010; Unpublished national study, 2014).

However, the research into abandoned young females has not increased, which demonstrates the need for this PhD research study. By discerning the needs and concerns of abandoned young females, the inferences and conclusion of my research can be utilized by the various actors within the Saudi care system to ensure that all abandoned young people receive the necessary support to allow them to reach their full potential as citizens within Saudi society, instead of simply becoming long term residents of the Saudi care system (Albar and Farah, 2015; unpublished National Study, 2014; Measure Evaluation, 2017). Similar to what I have outlined as desirable in Western care systems, the data and the inferences and conclusions drawn from it will better allow social workers to understand abandoned young females, and to help them access services and programmes which best meet their needs as females, and as individuals, leading to better outcomes for the care system as a whole, not just for females. It will also better allow abandoned young females to overcome the stigma associated with their social position.

For instance, abandoned young females in Saudi Arabia face a large number of problems in terms of being able to leave care. While they do receive information about marriage and raising children, in today's world, there are other opportunities open to young females besides simply getting married. However, it can often be difficult for ambitious young females to either access opportunities such as educational or training programmes due to their unavailability or inability to take courses, or not being aware of them through a failure on the part of social and care workers and care organizations such as Eka'a to inform them (Alsubaie & Jones, 2017).

This is a non-recognition on the part of educational providers and workers/actors that there are differences in the nature of abandoned young females and males, not only in the roles which they have traditionally played within Saudi society, but in the possibilities which may appeal to the different genders. Education may now be seen as a desirable outcome by many young females, but because there is no data to lend credence to that idea, it is not acted upon, or not recognised as valid or meaningful (Albar and Farah, 2015). In addition, without any programmes or guidelines to follow, it will be difficult for young females to integrate into society after leaving care, leaving them overly reliant on a system which, as mentioned previously, is predominantly focused on achieving best results for males in care (Unpublished National study, 2014; Albar 2012).

The system of sponsorship (kafala) with the care system itself (Al-Kathiry, 2014; Rotabi et al., 2017) also poses a problem, because while it is a manner of caring for abandoned young people which is accepted and utilized within Saudi society, the benefits of being looked after

in such situations may not be given to abandoned young females as much as males (Al-Kathiry, 2014; Rotabi et al., 2017; SOS Children's Villages Canada, 2011). Ashaalan & Al-zeiby (2015) have also shown that abandoned young people have different responses to various methods of care. These methods of care are important, in that they can often determine positive or negative outcomes for individuals later on once they leave care (Ashaalan & Al-zeiby, 2015). However, given that there is no data on which of these methods of care would most benefit females in care, as there is no clear understanding of which method best address the needs and concerns of abandoned young females, this means that the advised strict guidelines for care recommended by Ashaalan & Al-zeiby (2015) would not be able to be fully implemented, which could lead to ineffective and inefficient care.

While there has been an effort in Western countries to incorporate a feminist perspective in care systems for abandoned young people, to help ensure that both abandoned young males and females receive the best chance possible to leave care as responsible and functioning members of society, the stigma of being an abandoned young person in Saudi Arabia, as well as the cultural dominance of males within Saudi society, has meant that research into the needs and concerns of abandoned young females has not been widely conducted. This highlights the need for research such as my own study, which will provide verifiable information for actors within the Saudi care system to utilize and act on to best ensure the most positive outcomes for abandoned young females as they leave care.

## 6.2 Attachment and Pathways

In the United Kingdom, pathway plans can be seen as living documents within the care system, tools which can be used and added to in order to guide abandoned young people and care leavers in terms of developing their skills and abilities so as to reach their full potential as independent, confident members of their respective societies (Department of Education, 2010; Stein, 2012). There are many elements which comprise a pathway plan, but in general, it should be based on what comes from an associated needs assessment, determining what an abandoned young person or care leaver needs, and then drawing upon various resources, opportunities and experiences both inside and outside of a care system to bring those needs to fruition (Dixon et al., 2006; Dixon et al., 2004; Stein, 2012; Frimpong-Manso, 2018).

A pathway plan should include arrangements in terms of meeting the employment, education and training, personal, family, relationship, accommodation and financial needs and concerns of an individual (Cocker et al., 2013). As part of this process, goals should be set as benchmarks for addressing such needs and concerns, with progress toward the achievement of these benchmarks reviewed on a regular basis, usually in conjunction with the advice of a personal advisor (Department of Health, 2001; Department of Education, 2010; Stein, 2012; Child Law Advice, 2019; Stein, Sufian and Hazlehurst, 2001; Cocker et al., 2013). Of course, the care leaver/abandoned young person would be involved in the drafting of the pathway plan itself, and when someone leaves care, it is the responsibility of their local council (municipal authority) to ensure that the various aspects of the pathway plan are followed and added to as necessary until they are deemed to be outside of the aegis of their council (the age when they finally leave all aspects of the care system or, beyond that, when they



complete their education) (Child Law Advice, 2019; Goddard and Barrett, 2008; Department of Education, 2012; Children and Social Work Act, 2017; Adley and Kina, 2017; Liabo et al., 2017; Shelter Legal England and Wales, 2018; Stein, 2012).

Applying the previously mentioned aspects of a UK-style pathway planning regime in care services within Saudi Arabia may have some potential challenges, but the benefits of such actions are likely to far outweigh any drawbacks. For instance, the UK has legislation such as the Children Act 1989, the Children Leaving Care Act 2000, and the Children and Social Work Act 2017, and their various revisions, as well as practising such things as corporate parenting, and outlining and supporting the different elements of a pathway plan and determining how it should be utilised (Stein and Dixon, 2006; Albar, 2008; Alzahrani, 2015). This could easily be put into practice by the government of Saudi Arabia given its desire to gain more benefits for care leavers and abandoned young people through greater support (Ministry of Labour and Social Development, 2011). Furthermore, a UK-style pathway plan could help to identify better what care leavers and abandoned young people need to contribute as personally empowered members of society (Clayden and Stein, 2005; Browne, 2008). In addition, given that there is room for improvement in the current care system in Saudi Arabia and its outcomes (Albar, 2018), utilising an idea from another developed country which, like pathway planning, has been proven to have positive outcomes is highly desirable as Saudi Arabia looks to secure the future of its country and society while not excluding anyone from being a contributing member of the wider society.

The theories behind how best to address the needs and concerns of care leavers all link back to the real danger of care leavers being excluded from wider society, the stigma of being in care coupled with the lack of development in the ability to form relationships based on trust and empowerment, as well as being able to cope with the challenges which need to be faced both in and out of care (Stein, 2012; Cocker et al., 2013). In terms of the theory of attachment, Stein (2012) notes that it is through the formation of relationships that care leavers are able to have the support necessary to actively seek and engage with services and opportunities which would allow them to cope with their challenges, needs, and concerns, especially related to the stigma of being a care leaver faced by those leaving care in countries like Saudi Arabia, among others (Frimpong-Manso, 2018). It is also noted that the very quality of these relationships is important, as a relationship in and of itself does not guarantee positive outcomes for care leavers facing situations as an independent member of the society (Stein, 2012; Cocker et al., 2013). Rather, it is the participation of care leavers in making decisions about services, opportunities, and care offered to them which engenders the trust and empathy necessary for a care leaver to see positive outcomes in their lives in aspects such as accommodation, employment choices and opportunities, health and well-being, and other similar things after leaving care (Stein, 2012).

Essentially, giving care leavers stable placements and stability in their relationships with those around them is important in giving them a strong foundation for success after leaving the care system (Stein, 2012; Cocker et al., 2013). This also allows for more successful social

transitions, as care leavers would have less relationship-based issues (such as a lack of trust or a diminished sense of well-being and identity due to stresses experienced with no emotional support to draw upon) to work through with more stable relationships and care environments to draw upon, allowing for more positive transitions from care to integration into the wider society, rather than having to face the expectation of being an adult instantly without adequate preparation or support (Stein, 2012).

Stein (2012) also notes the importance of resilience in terms of giving care leavers the strength of purpose in their lives to be able to find ways to address their needs and concerns no matter what type or strength of challenge they may be facing (Stein, 2012; Cocker et al., 2013). It is the care leaver's surrounding environment, all of the social, educational, and behavioural network, and foundations of support in the care leaver's personal and unique ecology that helps to determine the ability of a care leaver to cope with any challenges they face as they leave care (Stein, 2012; Cocker et al., 2013). Resilience and attachment in terms of relationships which care leavers form with individuals around them express themselves in the form of quality relationships with others and in helping others, all while building a sense of trust in what they are doing and what others are doing for them (Stein, 2012; Cocker et al., 2013).

Therefore, the benefits of pathway planning, needs assessment, and the implementation of plans or interventions lie in their representing a holistic way of addressing the needs and concerns of abandoned young people and care leavers so that they are able to contribute to a society in a confident and meaningful manner while having their needs and concerns addressed as fully as possible (Cocker et al., 2013). In terms of the needs and concerns of abandoned young people and care leavers, it is recognised that care leavers have many difficulties early in their lives in terms of challenges they face with accommodation, employment and education, health, and forming relationships with those around them (Dixon et al., 2004; Van Breda, 2015; Frimpong-Manso, 2018; Coler, 2018). This can be due to, among other factors, multiple movements between care institutions, creating a sense of instability and lack of a sense of personal well-being, or an inability to form relationships with others due to issues in upbringing prior to entering care (Dixon et al., 2006; Van Breda, 2015; Ferguson, 2018; Frimpong-Manso, 2018; Coler, 2018).

### 6.2.1 The Value of Resilience

In addition, the stigma associated with being a product of a care system also poses a challenge, that of ensuring that care leavers have a rewarding, independent lifestyle after leaving care, as the values and cultures within a care system can vary greatly from those of the wider society, along with the perception that people in the wider society have of individuals coming from a care system (Al-Kathiry, 2014; Frimpong-Manso, 2018; Coler, 2018; Ferguson, 2018). Albar (2008) notes that there are problems which stigma creates for care leavers in terms of forming attachments (strong and meaningful relationships with those around them) and given that a lack of attachments can have a negative effect on being able to cope with changes and challenges, this is a daunting problem (Stein, 2012).

In this respect, the idea of building resilience and fostering attachments in individuals who are part of the care system is a central aspect of pathway planning. In terms of resilience, this is the idea of responding to risks and challenges by not being broken by them but, rather, working through them (Van Breda, 2015). Developing and utilising protective factors, such as having the support of others as well as skills which can be used to solve problems rather than being overwhelmed by them, mitigates risk factors and can allow care leavers to better cope with challenges (Frimpong-Manso, 2018; Van Breda, 2015; Dixon et al., 2006; Dixon et al., 2004; Cocker et al., 2013). In other words, building an ability to cope in care leavers allows for a care leaver to be successful as an independent member of society rather than a casualty of the care system (Frimpong-Manso, 2018; Stein, 2012; Cocker et al., 2013).

Part of building the ability in a care leaver to be more resilient is to allow him/her to build a clear sense of identity (Ferguson, 2018; Dixon et al., 2006). The legislation in the UK, all of which is geared toward garnering better outcomes for care leavers in general, allows for this to occur by both assessing personal needs and concerns, and then by ensuring that those needs and concerns are developed to allow a care leaver to be more empowered, to basically have a clearer and more secure sense of self and well-being (Ferguson, 2018). Just as important, a sense of identity should be fluid and changing rather than static (Ferguson, 2018). Therefore, the more stability and opportunities for development rather than the challenges and risks that a care leaver can experience, the more well-rounded their sense of identity can become (Ferguson, 2018; Stein, 2012).

The 'Staying Put' policy in the UK, introduced in 2013, also allows a clearer sense of purpose and self to develop by giving care leavers a chance to stay within foster care even after they legally become adults (Ferguson, 2018). The theory that a good sense of self and identity affords care leavers the opportunity to achieve positive outcomes upon leaving care is an essential part of the resilience theory, and as a result, pathway planning. The more stability a care leaver enjoys, the more possible outcomes can be managed to create the conditions for a positive life outside of care (Ferguson, 2018; Van Breda, 2015).

### 6.2.2 Transitions in Care: Theories

Ethics of care theory and the focal theory also have a definitive role in understanding how a care leaver can cope better with their challenges, needs, and concerns. Concerning ethics of care, it can be argued that showing concern and providing support to care leavers, where possible, play a significant role in helping young individuals adapt to their independent life (Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016; Holland, 2010). Caregivers offering a sense of security and comfort for care leavers is a key part of allowing a care leaver to deal with the many challenges present in the environment in which they find themselves both in and out of care (Ferguson, 2018; Aldamage, 2011; Al-Kathiry, 2014; Dixon et al., 2006; Stein, 2012).

Furthermore, the theory supports findings showing that young abandoned people require competent, reliable, and skilled staff who would treat them with respect and equality while incorporating them in decisions of their concern. Research on looked-after people also shows

that these individuals often express the wish to have enduring relationships with social workers and children's rights staff (Holland, 2010; Aldamage, 2011). They were also able to handle much of life's challenges during transitions since they had someone they could confide in and trust for support. Caring relationships between caregivers and care receivers leads to better outcomes once they become independent (Barnes, 2012; Holland, 2010).

The focal theory of adolescence helps explain how young individuals manage the different transitions in their lives. Established by Coleman, the focal model suggests that most looked after children experience compressed and accelerated adulthood transitions that impact their ability to develop resilience. They are denied the opportunity to focus and deal with transitions over time; thus, losing the ability to deal with the challenges and problems they encounter (Stein, 2006; Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016). Besides, increased risks and opportunities help in increasing financial, emotional, and practical support. However, young people in care have a problematic rather than supportive upbringing. For instance, they do not undergo the stages of social transition: disengagement, transition, and integration into a varying social state. Instead, young abandoned people leave care instantly into adulthood, therefore missing out on the critical preparation stage and the freedom to explore, reflect, or search for their identities (Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016). The focal model argues against these practices and states that young people are more successful in adulthood if they are given educational opportunities and allowed to handle different life challenges one at a time, as they occur (Stein, 2006; Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016).

Indeed, trust and a sense of empowerment can allow someone to confront and grapple problems which they would otherwise possibly shy away from, and a lot of the feelings and aspects of a care leaver's identity are created and developed by the people who looked after and associated with them while in care (Ferguson, 2018; Dixon et al., 2006; Stein, 2012). Placement stability is a key part of this idea, and the more stable a care leaver's experiences, the better able they are to meet the challenges of an independent life after leaving care (Cocker et al., 2013).

It does not help matters that care leavers face a multitude of transitions as they leave care, ranging from adapting to a new lifestyle to starting a family, pregnancy, and employment, amongst other challenges (Coler, 2018; Stein, 2012). In order to help care leavers best meet these challenges, pathway planning is essential in that it can help to give care leavers the tools to address personal needs and concerns, which allow them to successfully tackle these challenges, both during and after care (Coler, 2018; Stein, 2012). For instance, while care leavers can use many different personal pathways and means to deal with challenges from their past as they transition to a new life outside of care, transition points in these pathways and means are seen as crucial to becoming able to live independently outside of care successfully. A care leaver's life needs to be taken into account as having an important effect on how they perceive life and deal with its challenges and their own needs and concerns (Van Breda, 2015; Stein, 2012; Horrocks, 1999; Cocker et al., 2013). By working to develop the skills

and abilities of abandoned young people, pathway planning and associated needs assessments allow the successful navigation of these transition points.

The aforementioned theories and policies all highlight the importance of abandoned young people and care leavers building their abilities and skills while addressing their needs and concerns through dedicated actions via needs assessments and pathway planning (Stein, 2012). In doing so, an individual's social capital is increased, as their relationships and network with others builds to the point where they can avoid difficulties, such as health and stress issues, by having a personal safety net of support, information, and trust through strong bonds with those around them (Stein, 2012; Cocker et al., 2013). Having these resources of social capital gives an individual a better sense of empowerment and well-being, making them much more able and likely to succeed in the wider society as a citizen.

This is the ultimate goal of a country like Saudi Arabia – to enable anyone who is in care services to be able to transition between care institutions and leave care as productive members of the society. By allowing for the proper protection and welfare of children through measures such as the provision of a family name and the use of alternative and friend families (among other measures), the government of Saudi Arabia gives care leavers opportunities to create a stronger sense of self and personal identity, an ability to create attachments with caring individuals both in and out of care and to develop the skills and abilities needed to be more resilient in the face of the challenges they face while in care and after leaving care, such as multiple movements between institutions and accommodations, and employment concerns, respectively.

### 6.3 Challenges and Stigma

There are a variety of challenges which young people in general face as they mature into young adults, ranging from peer pressure to the dangers of social influences on their behaviour and actions, to living on their own and choosing the best educational pathways to succeed in their chosen careers, among others (Thomas, 2005; Spence, 2003; Smith, 2008). These challenges have been compounded by changes in the society in which they find themselves, from the nature of work opportunities, and their expectations, offered to young people, to the costs of living independently having risen so much that living at home is often a better choice as a young adult than living independently (Irwin, 2013). Taken in its entirety, all the preceding could be best described as the various aspects, and challenges, of a young person's transition from dependency to being independent. While many issues facing young people and abandoned young people can be generalized across a variety of cultures and societies, the distinctive effects they have on abandoned young people, and abandoned young females specifically, in Saudi Arabia will be examined later in this discussion, after generalizations have been addressed.

In terms of accommodation, as a young person matures, they feel the need to find their own place in the world, to forge their own identity and to become self-sufficient (Cordon, 1997; Stein, 2012; Berrington & Stone, 2013). This often means moving away from the family home, to have personal freedom, accountability and responsibility (Cordon, 1997; Irwin, 2013).

However, this aspect of maturation has been limited in recent decades by the ever-increasing costs of living as well as the rising level of skills and abilities needed by individuals to hold a job (Cordon, 1997; Irwin, 2013). Without the required level of income to live by themselves, young people can find themselves stuck at home well into their middle age, thereby putting off the starting of families and relationships, straining family structures, and causing personal issues such as a lack of security and personal well-being (Irwin, 2013; Cordon, 1997; Goodkind et al., 2011). In short, adulthood is “delayed”, which can have consequences for the self-esteem and well-being of young people (Irwin, 2013; Cordon, 1997; Aronson, 2008; Berrington & Stone, 2013).

Indeed, in the case of finding their own way (emotionally, financially and physically) in today’s world, the lack of their own place in the world due to financial and accommodation challenges can often lead to personal dissatisfaction among young people with their lifestyle and lot in life, and toward the people around them (Irwin, 2013; Goodkind et al., 2011). This dissatisfaction can be expressed by some young people in their search for release from such pressures and stress through risky lifestyle choices, such as drugs and alcohol (Cordon, 1997). As a result, many young people today remain dependent not just on the help of others, but also on chemicals and other similar items which make their life seem more bearable, but which can lead to later issues such as alcoholism, addiction, and social behavior and actions while under their influence, which can serve to further delay their becoming independent or responsible members of society (Cordon, 1997).

This dissatisfaction is also seen in many countries today with complaints about young people not being able to get a good job or buy their first home due to being “stopped” from doing so by the presence of older generations or competing interests (Irwin, 2013). This did not used to be the case, as young people in the past could enter the workforce with limited experience and education and then, through hard work, move up to better paying positions and more responsibilities, which would enable the purchase or renting of accommodation as well as provide the ability to start a family (Irwin, 2013). However, the need for higher level skills and a more educated workforce has taken this pathway to success away from young people, or at least made it that much harder to achieve, which has made becoming independent much harder, and made long term dependency on the assistance of others, be it family or the government (through unemployment or welfare programmes), even more necessary (Irwin, 2013; Albar, 2008).

This need for a higher skill level in today’s labour market has therefore led to more young people staying in school for longer periods (Cordon, 1997), resulting in both longer term and heavier levels of debt which can further restrict their ability to start a family or find accommodation once they finish school. However, this may not result in greater happiness or even satisfaction, as more education in a field not to your liking can lead to greater frustration or even anger (Cordon, 1997). In addition, longer durations of times spent in academic institutions can also lead to continued or even increased levels of dependency or response to peer pressure within an individual’s social circle (Parade et al., 2010). This could serve to further delay adulthood and prolong dependence on others (such as parents or friends) for financial and moral or emotional support (Parade et al., 2010; Cordon, 1997).

Another issue which can affect young people as they transition from dependency to being independent is the lack of separation between the different spheres within their lives. If the family still plays an important role as a necessary economic and accommodative support structure for young people today, that very support can affect the nature of relationships and working arrangement for young people. In short, it is very hard for young people today to lead their own careers and lifestyles while still living at home with their parents or depending upon parents for support in some manner, even though some cultures may make it more acceptable than others to do so (Irwin, 2013; Cordon, 1997). This can be even more influential in a young person's life if the family itself is having issues with providing care and support for them, such as financial strife, divorce, grief, or drug and alcohol addiction on the part of family members, or even disagreements on how to raise a family or conduct a relationship (Kilkenny, 2012; Aronson, 2008; Berrington & Stone, 2013)

This challenge has been further compounded by the effect of the changing roles of young people within society. As the roles of women have become more independent, leading to greater options, so too have expectations become greater and more challenging, which can become frustrating to many young women if what is expected of them cannot be achieved due to the preceding restrictions, a sentiment which would undoubtedly be shared by many young men, especially as they try to adjust to changing needs and expectations within society as a whole, possibly without realizing or recognizing everything that they need to do or know (Davis, 1986; Irwin, 2013; Aronson, 2008).

While the aforementioned challenges in the transition from dependency to being independent are daunting for young people in general, they can be navigated with a supporting care network via family and friends, support from people who have influence in a young person's life and choices (such as educational institutions and governments), and a focus on listening to the ambitions, needs and concerns of young people, rather than leaving them to their own devices (Stein, 2012). However, young people in care have even more challenges than these given, among other reasons, a lack of opportunities which may be provided to them, a lack of qualified supervision and assistance, a lack of family support and information about important personal matters such as pregnancy and marriage, and not only any possible stigma attached to them from their social status as abandoned young people, but also abuse or neglect suffered as an abandoned young person before or during care (del Valle et al., 2011; Albar, 2008; Al-Kathiry, 2014; Wagner, 2011; Mendes & Moslehuddin, 2006; Goodkind et al., 2011; Stein, 2012; Coler, 2018; Kilkenny, 2012).

There have been attempts to look after the needs and concerns of abandoned young people, to ensure that opportunities for success are provided despite not having a family structure or support to necessarily draw upon. For instance, countries such as the United Kingdom have utilized targeted legislation and programmes as well as delegated responsibilities for aspects of care to community agents, such as local councils, and to care professionals, to better ensure that all needs and concerns are being addressed to the fullest extent possible, despite issues such as multiple movements between institutions while in care (Casey et al., 2010; Department for Education, 2010; Thomas, 2005; Stein, 2012; Tucker and MacKenzie, 2012;

Cocker et al., 2013; Department of Health, 2001; Stein et al., 2001; Dixon et al., 2004; Dixon et al., 2006).

In other countries such as Spain, ensuring that abandoned young people have some sort of kinship support allows for better educational and social outcomes than would otherwise be the case, thereby helping to avoid social exclusion or feelings of inferiority due to a lack of educational achievements (del Valle et al., 2011). However, this has not led to universal or even general success for abandoned young people, as underfunding or a lack of support by authorities and organizations in many countries has meant that underlying personal issues are not adequately addressed, leading to a continued dependence on external assistance to function in society even after leaving care, and even a willingness on the part of some abandoned young people to leave care early to achieve what they perceive as independence given that they are not receiving the assistance while in care to address their needs and concerns (Mendes & Moslehuddin, 2006; Goodkind et al., 2011).

### 6.3.1 The Role Care Overcoming Stigma

In addition, different theories have been developed to highlight the need for positive attachment relationships between children and parents for the most supportive care possible from as early an age as possible, as well as the development of resilience (Berk, 2012, Stein, 2005; del Valle et al., 2011; Kilkenny, 2012). The idea behind these theories is that, if the love which develops from caring relationships is not present in a young person's life from an early age, if they do not occur or develop appropriately, then the risk of emotional and developmental issues is higher than normal, which would be even more so for those young people who do not have a true family to draw on in times of need, thereby leaving them unable to draw upon the skills and knowledge necessary to successfully navigate the transition between dependency and independence (Berk, 2012; Stein, 2005; Thomas, 2005; Smith, 2008; del Valle et al., 2011). Care workers play an important role in this regard, as their knowledge, experience, and empathy can fill in many of the things missing for abandoned young children (Davis, 1986).

In fact, if the young person develops the confidence and positive approach to life and its challenges given their supportive developmental environment, then it becomes possible for them to much easily to deal with potential issues in terms of things like educational and career choices, as well as for potential problems to be noticed before they become an issues, such as impairment with social or mental dispositions (Spence, 2003; Thomas, 2005; Smith, 2008; Berk, 2012; del Valle et al., 2011). Indeed, self-confidence and assurance are highly desirable things for an abandoned young person to have, to deal with the stigma of being a product of a care system as well as the aforementioned inability of the care system to, at times, address their needs and concerns to the point that they can be fully independent upon leaving care (Albar, 2008, Stein, 2012; Frimpong-Manso, 2018; Coler, 2018; Al-Kathiry, 2014).

Ideally, then, a transition from dependency to independence needs for abandoned young people needs meaningful care and support from a variety of actors in the care system, which takes the place of the more traditional, family-focused support network of past years. However, in the case of Saudi Arabia, while the government may want to do the best it can in legislative and policy terms for the benefit of all abandoned young people within combined



or segregated care institutions and alternative families and alongside the care offered by charitable organizations such as Ekha'a, the realities of the culture and society make it challenging for abandoned young people, especially females, to be confident and empowered members of society, or for their needs and concerns to be addressed, though alternative families and other programmes to assist in the development of socialization skills for abandoned young people can help (Ekha'a.org.sa, 2003; Albar, 2008; Albar and Farah, 2015; UNICEF Annual Report, 2017; Al-Fayez, 1997; Al-Kathiry, 2014; Shehata, 2011; Al-Hariri, 2014).

For instance, while the same difficulties of other young people around the world can be faced by young people in Saudi Arabia, the stigma and realities of being an abandoned young person, even in terms of the language used to recognize and in forms of address deprive young people in care of having the family support network which other young people have (Albar and Abofraj, 2011; Albar, 2008; Al-Kathiry, 2014; Wagner, 2011). In turn, this can cause the transitions which were mentioned earlier in terms of moving from dependency to being independent to be much more fragile in nature, dependent mainly on the quality of care extended to them by care institution staff and childcare professionals, such as social workers (Shehata, 2011; Al-Baqmi, 2013). This is especially a problem when unqualified care workers such as alternative mothers (who may not have adequate training or move between institutions quite often) do not know how to deal with abandoned young females or play favourites with individuals in their care, leading to issues for abandoned young people in terms of confusion regarding their roles and responsibilities, low self-esteem, and fear for their future prospects upon leaving care (Al-Otaibi, 2015; Al-Rabi, 2011; Jambi, 2008; Alssad, 2004; Shehata, 2011; Al-Shaalan, 2013).

The lack of a family structure, and the corresponding need for institutional care, also means that abandoned young people in general in Saudi Arabia do not have the socialization or behavioural skills necessary to function within relationships such as marriage, or even within their own family structure, in the future (Almubarak, 2010). This means that they encounter problems which affect their future well-being and sense of self-confidence, as they feel a lack of attention to, or understanding of, their needs, with the resulting negativity in their attitudes and actions affecting their transition from dependency to being independent by slowing it down considerably, such as in education institutions by slowing down their progress (Al-Ghamdi, 2015; Almubarak, 2010; Al-Fayez, 1997; Alssad, 2004). Essentially, their very fear of the future and what it holds affects their ability to transition into adulthood and becoming an independent member of society, leading to psychological trauma and anxiety issues around things like continued education (Wajdi, 2010; Shehata, 2011; Al-Reish, 2008).

The predominant role of males within Saudi society (Al-Kathiry, 2014; Murphy, 2014; Wagner, 2011; UNICEF Annual Report, 2017) also has an effect on the ability of abandoned young children to become productive members of society, as their lack of a family name or history can serve to close opportunities to them which other young people with the usual family structures would be able to access much more readily, such as being able to marry well and to start a family (Unpublished national study, 2014; Wagner, 2011; Aronson, 2008; Al-Kathiry, 2014). This, coupled with the isolation felt by abandoned young people due to their status

within Saudi society, makes it that much harder for them to form supportive and loving relationships with those around them (Albar and Abofraj, 2011; Aldamage, 2011).

The fact that abandoned young females are also seen as less important than their male counterparts can make it that much more difficult to access educational programmes or other types of support, especially if appropriate methods of care are not targeted according to the needs of females and males, rather than abandoned young people as a whole (Ashaalan & Alzeiby, 2015; Alsubaie & Jones, 2017; Albar, 2012). In addition, if knowledge of the education available to them is not passed on by care givers, or the care givers themselves do not have the expertise to assist abandoned young females in their educational ambitions and related needs and concerns, then the educational achievements of abandoned young females will be much lower than their more catered-to male counterparts (Al-Baqmi, 2013; Albaz, 2001; Alssad, 2004; Alzahrani, 2015; Alhahrany, 2013).

The lack of educational and career opportunities can have far-reaching consequences in the resulting lives of females. For instance, the lack of a perceived future can lead to emotional consequences such as depression, loneliness or frustration with their lack of freedom of opportunities, which could possibly manifest themselves in family environments or in relationships with others (Ballan, 2011; Gordon et al., 2008; Sheiby, 2005). It could also lead to a lack of social mobility in terms of being able to function within the wider society as a confident and independent individual (Gordon et al., 2008). In addition, the lack of independence financially would also serve to prolong or even set in stone a female abandoned young person's dependency, because if there is no home support due to the lack of a family, while a male abandoned young person could forge their own path in society and start a family with some difficulty due to the strength of the male voice and role in Saudi society, dependency would not end for a female abandoned young person, as they would be dependent on their husband for financial support as well as being recognized as an individual as part of their husband's family unit (Wagner, 2011; Al-Kathiry, 2014; Abu-Shamaleh, 2002). Essentially, while the Saudi government tries its best to create an environment in which abandoned young females can become self-reliant and have a successful role within society (Albar and Farah, 2015), the realities of Saudi culture and society make it extremely hard for an abandoned young female to become truly a truly independent individual.

In conclusion, while young people around the world face many challenges in their journey from dependency to being independent, that journey is much more difficult for abandoned young people in Saudi Arabia, especially females, due to cultural and social considerations. Some of the principal obstacles include lessened educational or career opportunities as well as gender biases against women. In the following chapter, the methodology for this study is explained and discussed.

## Chapter 7: Methodology

My research focused on the issue of abandoned young people who are in, and leave, residential care in Saudi Arabia. The purpose of the research was to highlight the need for additional assistance to be provided for abandoned young people in care and care leavers in Saudi Arabia. The objectives of the research were as follows:

- To identify the needs and concerns of abandoned young people in Saudi Arabia, both from their own perspective as well as from the perspective of other actors in the residential leaving care system in Saudi Arabia,
- To assess the outcomes for care leavers in Saudi Arabia with reference to the outcomes in the UK, thereby showing that those outcomes would work well in Saudi Arabia,
- To examine the care system and processes in Saudi Arabia and the inherent challenges and successful outcomes,
- To identify the positive and negative outcomes for care leavers in Saudi Arabia in relation to missing areas that need to be addressed in practice and at a policy level, and
- To analyse the relationship between all actors in the residential care and leaving care system in Saudi Arabia.

### 7.1. Study's objectives and research methods

The following table outlines the research questions of the study and research methods:

<b>Research questions</b>	<b>Methodology</b>	<b>Methods</b>	<b>Sampling and Samples</b>
1. What are the needs, concerns and challenges that face individuals about to leave care and care leavers?	quant/qual	Questionnaire Interviews	Social survey + purposive sampling Care leavers Workers at Ekha'a Young people in RC Workers at RC
2. What is the currently provided care for young people about to leave care, and care leavers?	quant/qual	Questionnaire Interviews	Social survey + purposive sampling Care leavers Workers at Ekha'a

			Young people in RC Workers at RC
<p>3. A. From a care leaver's perspective, which programs would best assist care leavers to be independent after leaving care?</p> <p>B. From the perspective of people working within residential care institutions, which programmes or policies would best assist young people to be independent after leaving care?</p> <p>C. From the perspective of Ekha'a or a charitable organization's staff, which programs would best assist care leavers to be independent after leaving care?</p> <p>D. From the perspective of the people in charge at the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD), which programs would best assist care leavers to be independent after leaving care?</p>	quant/qual	Questionnaire Interviews	<p>Social survey + purposive sampling</p> <p>Care leavers</p> <p>Workers at Ekha'a</p> <p>Young people in RC</p> <p>Workers at RC</p> <p>People in charge of residential care and leaving care at the MHRSD.</p>
4. How does the partnership between Ekha'a and the MHRSD effectively assist individuals about to leave care and care leavers?	quant/qual	Questionnaire Interviews	<p>Staff in charge at Ekha'a</p> <p>Staff in charge at MHRSD</p> <p>Care leavers</p>

5. What are the policies missing from the residential care system which, if they existed, would enable young people to become independent and stable both while in care and after care?	quant/qual	Questionnaire Interviews	Social survey + purposive sampling Care leavers Workers at Ekha'a Young people in RC Workers at RC Staff in charge at MHRSD
6. What can new processes and programmes, such as pathway plans and needs assessments, offer to individuals about to leave care and care leavers, to help them on their journey towards independence and stability?	quant/qual	Interviews	Staff in charge at MHRSD Staff in charge at Ekha'a Staff in charge at RC Care leavers Young people in RC
7. What needs to be done in the Saudi leaving-care system over the next few years?	quant/qual	Questionnaire Interviews	Social survey + purposive sampling Care leavers Workers at Ekha'a Young people in RC Workers at RC

Table 1

Table 1 outlines the research questions of the study and research methods

## 7.2 Choice of Methodology

### Why mixed methods and data triangulation?

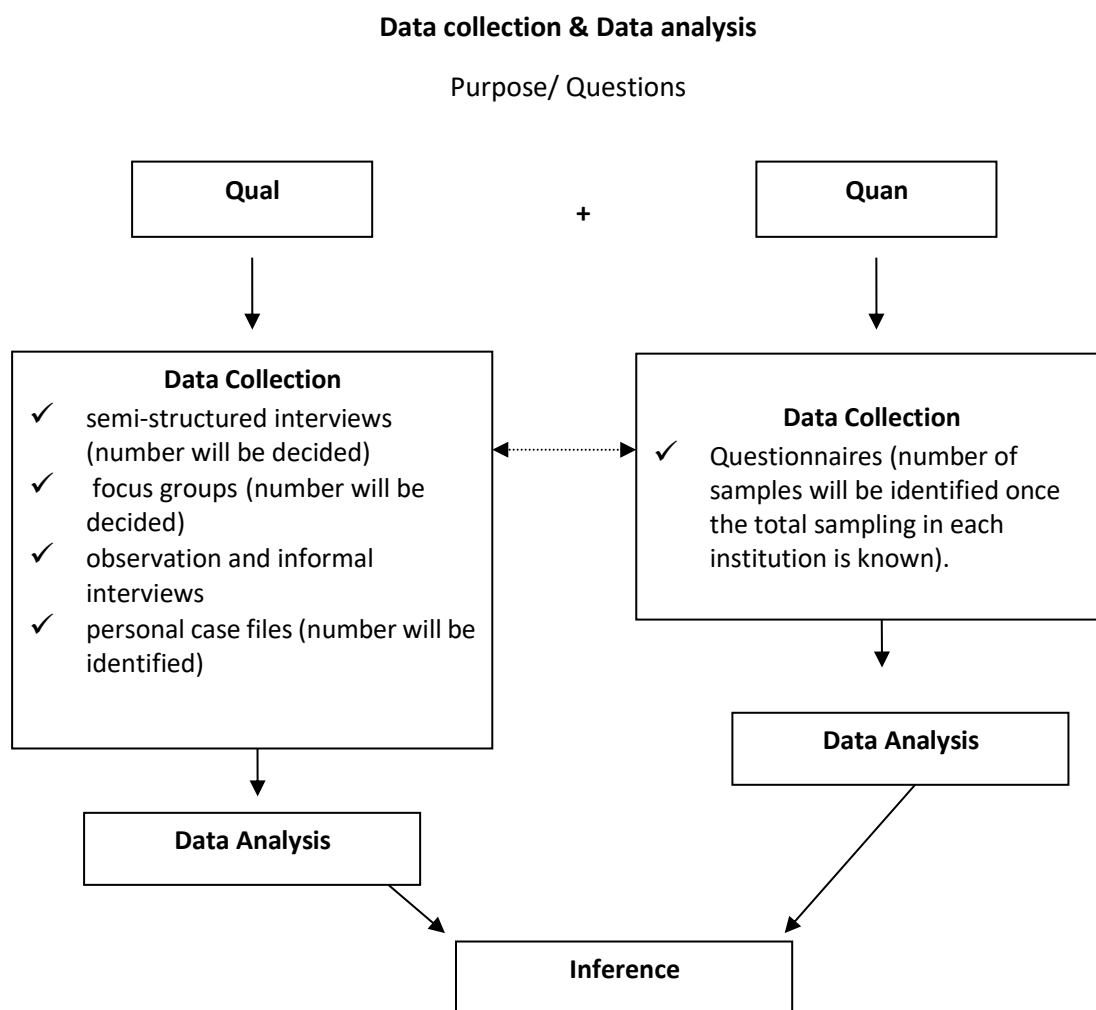
This study utilised a variety of different data collection methods (mixed methods). In terms of the gathering and analysis of data, I made a number of decisions as to the nature of the research after I examined the associated literature (Lune & Berg, 2017). At present, there is a lack of research in the area of abandoned young people in Saudi Arabia. Given this lack of information but recognising that the number of cases may exceed the scope of this study (Bryman, 2004), the main purpose of this research was exploratory. As such, its design was best served with 'a triangulation multiple-sites case study', in which a multi-case (Stake, 1998, 2005) was used to investigate various units of analysis. In this process, the study

demonstrated and examined how different facts and events appeared in various situations and the reasons they appeared in those ways (Yin, 2003 and Stake, 2006). To perform this investigation, both typical and atypical cases were chosen from within or across different instances (Stake, 2006).

### 7.3 Research Strategies

Figure 1.1 illustrates the mixed-research model that were used in this study (Creswell, 2003) and its sampling design. Concurrent designs are useful when the ordering of data being gathered is not necessary, when data need to be gathered in a set period, or when allowances need to be made for possible new information being seen in the data which would necessitate changes in how the data are collected (Creswell et al., 2003; Teddlie and Yu, 2007).

As parallel or simultaneous mixed-method designs, both sets of data were collected at the same time and analysed in a complementary manner, to better inform the study itself while not being affected by the strengths and weaknesses of different types of data collection (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998; Miller, 2003: 435; Patton, 2006; Small 2011). Then, based upon the data generated, general inferences were made, with similar questions used to generate numerical and narrative data (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998, 2003). This allowed for a number of approaches to data gathering that focused on the problems being analysed and on the consequences of the data examined (Swanson and Holton, 2005).



**Figure: Concurrent mixed-methods design (triangulation strategy)**

*Figure 2 Concurrent mixed-methods design*

Adapted from Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003)

When considering whether to utilise a single method of research or utilising a mixed methods approach, I wanted to choose the option which gave me the best chance to, at the end of the research study, have data which was both meaningful and useful as a result of being fully examined and analysed, not just in terms of the meaning of the data itself, but the big picture of the data itself. This would allow for a more holistic and complete understanding of what the data meant and the contexts which informed it, which would, ultimately, lead to valid and reliable outcomes and conclusions (Terrell, 2012; Bazeley, 2012).

Given the 13 steps involved in the different phases (the conceptualization, planning, and implementation) of the research of the mixed methods research process, as seen in Figure 1 (Onwuegbuzie & Combs, 2011), I knew that using this method would allow me to fully examine all of the data which I collected. Essentially, while more scientific (or quantitative) data collection methods allowed me to make sense of a large amount of data from various units of analysis in short order through the data analysis software SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, as noted below), social issues were also addressed using qualitative methods of data collection, as it allowed for the emotional content of the questions asked to be taken into account and be recognized as a valid part of the data and the context in which it was gathered. This added even more value to outcomes and conclusions than if I had simply looked at pieces of data without integration (Teater et al., 2017; Bazeley, 2012).



Figure: 13 Criteria of Onwuegbuzie and Combs (2010)

*Figure 3 Criteria of Onwuegbuzie and Combs (2010)*

Onwuegbuzie and Combs (2010) recognized 13 criteria that researchers using mixed methods must take into account prior to, as part of, and at the conclusion of their mixed analyses (Onwuegbuzie & Combs, 2011). In fact, the use of mixed methods in the study using a concurrent triangulation strategy (Terrell, 2012) reduced the risk of the data gathered in the research being interpreted incorrectly, or through a lens of bias or according to stereotypes or the result of stigmatization (Denzin, 1978; Jick, 1979; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998; Gorman and Clayton, 2004; Patton, 2006; Small, 2011; Wald, 2014; Weyers et al., 2008). Indeed, in recognizing the purposes of mixed methods research, namely, triangulation, complementarity, development, initiation and expansion, and incorporating these in my research by way of examining ideas and perspectives using multiple points of data, comparing the information from different sets of data, comparing the information which will be gathered across different sets of data, examining the different perspectives brought out in the different data sets, and being able to assess differences in responses of participants through various



means, respectively, the overall coherence and validity of the results was increased (Teater et al., 2017; Onwuegbuzie & Combs, 2011; Weyers et al., 2008).

#### 7.4 Type of research

In terms of how mixed methods were utilised in my study, they were employed throughout the data-gathering and analysis process of the study, and all findings were combined by myself using both quantitative and qualitative methods. By doing so, mixed methods allowed me to avoid the possible weaknesses of any one specific type of research method (Denzin, 1978; Jick, 1979; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998; Gorman and Clayton, 2004; Patton, 2006; Small, 2011; Wald, 2014; Creswell, 1994). It also ensured that any inferences and outcomes as a result of the research, as well as the views and perspectives which were inherent in the data gathered and which came to the fore during the research, were as varied and flexible as possible, which made my resulting inferences, and the outcomes of my study, as valid and objective as possible (Patton, 2006; Creswell, 1994; Brannen, 2005).

To better analyse the data which was gathered as part of the study, relationships between independent variables (the gender and age of individuals as well as types of institutions and cities in which they are located) and selected dependent variables were measured through the use of a variety of quantitative (questionnaires) and qualitative (interviews and observations) tools within the design of a triangulation multi-site case study (Creswell, 2003; Patton, 2006; Tashakkori and Creswell, 2007). More specifically, given the lack of studies in my field, but in recognition of the fact that the number of studies could exceed my study's scope (Bryman, 2004), I knew that the exploratory nature of my study lent itself well to 'a triangulation multiple-sites case study', using a multi-case (Stake, 1998, 2005) to investigate various units of analysis from both typical and atypical cases and how and why certain end results are evident (Yin, 2003 and Stake, 2006). I also considered that a concurrent design was useful given that the respondents were providing data in both my quantitative and qualitative data sources, and to better allow for the raw data to be gathered over a set period as well as to facilitate changes if necessary once any new or unexpected data became evident over the course of the research (Creswell et al., 2003; Teddlie and Yu, 2007; Driscoll et al., 2007).

As a result, the use of data triangulation, in taking into account its five purposes and motivations, allowed for the gathering and comparison of different yet complimentary data in the form of disparate views and perspectives from the various participants in the study (Stake, 1998; Gorman and Clayton, 2004; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005; Axinn and Pearce, 2006; Patton, 2006; Wald, 2014; Moskal et al., 2014; Plano Clark, 2017; Morgan, 2017; Teater et al., 2017). Once the data was collected, the information was analysed and then inferences made on the basis of the data gathered, with the assistance of analytical software such as SPSS and In Vivo (more on this below). Taken as a whole, this study design enabled me to better highlight the strengths and challenges which were evident in different settings within the research, and to make more informed inferences and

outcomes pertaining to the Saudi leaving-care system which could be considered by the Saudi government as a way forward for the leaving care system in the future (Denzin, 1970, 1978; Greene et al. 1989; Mason, 2002; Flick, 2006; Axinn and Pearce, 2006; Patton, 2006; Small, 2011; Moskal et al., 2014; Weyers et al., 2008).

### **Quantitative and Qualitative Methods**

Given the previously mentioned issues and the resulting decision on my part to conduct a mixed methods study with data triangulation, it made sense to use specific types of qualitative and quantitative methods to gain the richest sets of data possible with valid and reliable information.

With reference to quantitative methods of data collection (in my study, questionnaires), they are used to make it easier and faster for a researcher to gain large amounts of data in a short period of time, and to assess or compare that data in an efficient manner (Nardi, 2018). For my research, I needed to take into account the private (anonymous) nature of what was being discussed, and the fact that many participants did not want to share personal ideas or opinions. I felt that a questionnaire could be used to ensure the anonymity of respondents as well as enable participants to answer questions in a place they felt most comfortable, rather than in a public forum (Nardi, 2018; Lune & Berg, 2017).

The researcher also needs to take care in designing questions so that they are not too restrictive or culturally insensitive, to ensure that there is no awkwardness encountered by a participant when completing it (Nardi, 2018). As a result, I took great care in the wording of my questions, by studying the literature related to abandoned young people and care leavers and examining their needs and concerns, their relation to my research aims and questions, and then giving the resulting rough draft of a questionnaire to an expert in the field of leaving care in Saudi Arabia for feedback, which I then utilised in the writing of the final draft of the questionnaire (Lune & Berg, 2017). Ultimately, this helped respondents to not feel offended by the questionnaire and its contents.

Another consideration for the researcher is the design of the questionnaire itself, in that it should be easily readable and understandable, while not being overly long to avoid the potential for missed, skipped, or ignored questions (Nardi, 2018; De Vaus, 2016). To address these issues, I took care to restrict the number of questions on the questionnaire, limited the complexity of the questions asked, and made the font size of wording large enough to avoid eye strain and tiredness, thereby helping respondents to not feel overwhelmed when filling out the questionnaire.

In terms of how the questionnaires were conducted, due to the pandemic, some changes had to be made to ensure the health and safety of the girls in care. Rather than introducing myself directly to participants and outlining the aims of my research to the participants and the

research process, I needed to talk to the social workers in institutions, who would then forward the questionnaires and the information to the girls in their care. If they (the girls) had any questions about the process, the research or the questionnaire itself, they had my number to contact me for further information. After that, I took their consent to participate, and explained the various types of questions from beginning to end, and how the ranking system for specific questions worked, to make them as comfortable as possible when filling out the questionnaire (Nardi, 2018; De Vaus, 2016). As part of this “comfort factor”, during the course of filling out the questionnaire, if anyone had a problem, I was available to assist them. The questionnaire itself consisted of questions which reflected the experiences of the participant filling it out (for instance, questions relating to experiences within care for abandoned young females, and questions relating to policies regarding abandoned young females for Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development and Ekha’a officials).

In contrast to quantitative methods of data collection, qualitative methods (in this study, interviews) were used to avoid an overly standard and even scientific method to inquiry, to allow for things not picked up in quantitative methods, such as emotions, to lend even more “flavour” to the information being gathered (Berg, 2007; Lune & Berg, 2017). Essentially, I saw interviews as having great potential to garner useful data through purposeful conversations (Berg, 2007; Lune & Berg, 2017). While the researcher needs to have quite developed social skills when conducting interviews, to put the person being interviewed at ease while also making them comfortable enough to offer useful information for your study, the researcher also needs to consider that the interview is a discussion rather than a type of therapy for participants (Berg, 2007; Shaw and Gould, 2001; Lune & Berg, 2017).

As a result, I made a point of practicing different manners of speaking with individuals (for instance, quiet and comforting tones, or more direct questioning when appropriate), and structured the interactions within the interview in a more-narrow manner rather than leaving discussions to be wide reaching with the possibility of going off on tangents or getting into personal experiences. Choosing to conduct interviews in a more semi-standardized (somewhat structured) form, rather than in a standardized (formal) or unstandardized (unstructured) manner, helped in my gathering of reliable and meaningful data, as it allowed me to be flexible with the wording of my questions when necessary as well as how I expressed ideas during the interview itself (Berg, 2007; Shaw and Gould, 2001; Lune & Berg, 2017).

I had originally planned to conduct interviews in person, but had to adapt my approach as a result of the impacts of and restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. This included changing to telephone interviews. However, there were many distinct advantages in using call interviews during my research. By speaking on the phone and scheduling such interviews by messaging applications and using videoconferencing technologies, interviewees from a range of backgrounds and ages felt more relaxed being able to participate in an environment and using a method of their own choosing depending on their availability and skills using

technology, and therefore felt more free to give an unbiased opinion given that they were not visually distracted by, and unable to judge, me (the interviewer) (Vogl, 2013; Opdenakker, 2006, Tucker and Parker, 2014, Mealer and Jones, 2014). In fact, the call interview was conducted on a more formal, professional level, as a rapport between myself and the interviewee could not develop (Glogowska et al., 2011, Vogl, 2013). This led to a feeling of privacy and anonymity which would not have otherwise been the case in a more standard interview environment (face-to-face). While visual cues which could have helped myself guide an interview were not available, and it was possible that the call itself could be problematic due to a bad connection or signal, in my opinion, these were outweighed by the aforementioned benefits of the call interview, and such issues were overcome through the use of detailed notes and callbacks on my part (Qu and Dumay, 2011). In addition, as I conducted interviews, I was able to adjust the interview questions themselves in terms of wording and ordering, to make the process run more smoothly (Shuy, 2003, Mealer and Jones 2014, Chapple, 1999). Thus, the telephonic interview can provide rich data, an important consideration for qualitative studies (Sturges and Hanrahan, 2004).

A researcher also needs to be able to distinguish between what is being said in the interview by participants and the context it is being said in, to better understand the reliability and, therefore, the validity of the information being gathered according to its potential social interpretations (Shaw and Gould, 2001; Lune & Berg, 2017). In order to do so, I made the questions as clear as possible, while informing participants in the interview process that the questions and their content would be the only focus of the interview, while noting that there would be time for further expressions of opinions and ideas in other forums later on, such as focus groups (Gorman and Clayton, 2004; Nardi, 2018).

A note here regarding focus groups and my research. They give researchers a chance to see what is being asked about and studied in a social environment, allowing for participants to be more comfortable than just in a one-on-one interview, and a consensus can often be seen during such discussions (Shaw and Gould, 2001; Nardi, 2018). Nevertheless, a researcher must be careful of setting an inappropriate framework or either too many or not enough limitations on the scope of the focus group's discussions focus, making it less than a true and frank discussion of all issues within the topic or field, especially if the focus group itself consists of participants with no real "stake" or interest in the topics being discussed (Shaw and Gould, 2001; Nardi, 2018).

For this research, I considered that focus groups offered me, as the researcher, a good chance to see how the different perspectives and opinions on, and from within, the care system both supported and conflicted with each other, allowing for a better assessment of all information. However, as my fieldwork took place during an ever evolving and progressively more stringent set of rules and regulations in Saudi Arabia regarding close personal contact between individuals, I was informed early on that the focus groups I had planned to conduct were no longer able to take place.

As a result, I put a lot of focus on the interviews questions themselves. A researcher must take care in how the questions themselves are phrased, keeping in mind that the types of questions (open or close ended) and the way in which they are written (too hard to understand for the targeted sample groups) lead to useful raw data if utilised appropriately (Lune & Berg, 2017; Berg, 2007; Nardi, 2018). Indeed, the richness of the information gathered, if analysed in appropriate ways, can lead to more complex and valid outcomes (Shaw and Gould, 2001; Nardi, 2018). In my consideration, as long as the questions were utilized effectively and the interview was well-structured and conducted in a more sociable and less scientific manner, the resulting answers gave greater validity to my study's aims and objectives as well as its outcomes, as most people want to be honest during interviews (Berg, 2007; Lune & Berg, 2017). Therefore, given the unavailability of focus groups, interviews offered the most effective way to gather rich sources of information to analyse and evaluate as I sought to make meaningful inferences and conclusions in this study.

In terms of the process followed as interviews were conducted, I made certain to, at the beginning of the interview, introduce myself and repeat information about the nature of the research, to aid in giving participants a sense of comfort and ensuring their anonymity (Nardi, 2018; Lune & Berg, 2017; Berg, 2007; Gorman and Clayton, 2004). After that, I repeated the steps which I had taken to ensure the confidentiality of the interview, again making sure that the interviewee was comfortable (Nardi, 2018; Berg, 2007; Gorman and Clayton, 2004). Then, I began the interview process itself, which consisted of open-ended questions which progressed from easy to difficult in nature (Nardi, 2018; Lune & Berg, 2017).

During the process, ample time was given for the interviewee to express their ideas and opinions without being rushed to complete the interview or missing important questions, with transitions used when moving between topics to ensure that participants knew that a new discussion was starting, and clarification asked for by myself when needed if slang or idiomatic structures were used by participants (Nardi, 2018; Lune & Berg, 2017). The interview concluded with a chance for the interviewee to add any information which they wanted to about the topics which had been discussed, with myself making clear and complete notes about what was discussed and what occurred during the interview and then typing them concisely and clearly on the computer to aid in their later analysis (Berg, 2007; Gorman and Clayton, 2004; Nardi, 2018; Lune & Berg, 2017). The interview process with all participants in a sample group was stopped if the saturation point was reached in terms of information provided (Lune & Berg, 2017).

A final type of qualitative data collection which I made use of was in the form of observations and documentation within residential institutions. In terms of observations specifically, and also my research in general, I needed to keep in mind the need for consistency not only across my write-ups but also in my analysis as I researched and analysed my findings in Arabic and then, subsequently, translated them into English. This also meant that I needed to take care

in how the opinions and thoughts of participants were written down, to avoid confusion when I later analysed them.

There is also the potential for a researcher to become perceived by those they are observing as something other than a researcher, which can colour the manners in which data is given by those observed and analysed by the researcher at a later time (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984). In my case, as I made my presence an official one before the research process began and gave everyone involved in the research information about what it entailed, there was no confusion as to my role and my presence in an institution. This allowed me to have the ability to record what was evident, and to then either make reference to it afterward in interviews or use what I had seen to compare with what participants in the interviews said was supposed to be done, which was very useful in making inferences based on the data gathered as well as my eventual conclusions (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984). It also allowed me to interact with potential participants in the interviews on a professional or personal level as the situation warranted, which made those later processes clearer for both the researcher and the participants (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984).

To avoid any potential confidentiality issues, any personal documentation sighted by myself in an institution was, of course, seen under strict conditions of privacy as per my agreement with the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development. I also made it clear in my introductory remarks to all potential participants, and subsequently in forms and in both interview and discussion environments, that the privacy and security of personal information was of paramount importance, with all information destroyed at the conclusion of my research and to be used only by the researcher.

### 7.5 Sampling

While snowball sampling offered the potential to gain the most participants who had experiences and knowledge which were most linked to my research aims and questions (Lune & Berg, 2017), the issue of privacy and confidentiality made it applicable only in specific circumstances (when participants approved of sharing information about each other). Therefore, the majority of my sampling was of a purposive nature, as that represented the best way to use my own knowledge and experiences in the field to gain a wealth of information about the participants in my study (Lune & Berg, 2017). In doing so, I ensured that people who should be in my study were included as participants, and that there was a rich source of information and opinions to draw on for later analysis (Lune & Berg, 2017).

**Site selection:** As the study targeted female young people at residential institutions and care leavers at several sites, the sample will include the following:

Participants	Sites	City
<p><b>Female young people in care (aged 18+)</b></p> <p><b>The workers (directors, social workers, psychologists, nurses, and alternative mothers)</b></p>	<p>Public residential institutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Female Residential Social Nursery (Daar Alhadanah) (Riyadh)</li> <li>2. Female Residential Social Nursery (Daar Alhadana-Aldyafah Villas ) (Riyadh)</li> <li>3. Female Residential Social Institutions( Daar Altarbia ) (Hasa)</li> <li>4. Female Residential Social Nursery (Daar Alhadana) (Damam)</li> <li>5. Female Residential Social Institutions (Daar Altarbia ) (Jeddah)</li> <li>6. Female Residential Social Nursery (Daar Alhadana) (Jeddah)</li> </ol>	
<p><b>Female care leavers (who left care in the past one to two years upon the start of the study (Plan A) or longer if the period needs to be prolonged (Plan B)</b></p> <p><b>The workers (directors, heads of relevant administration at Ekha'a, social workers, and significant staff)</b></p>	<p>Supervised and cared for by Ekha'a agency</p>	<p>Riyadh Damam Hasa Jeddah</p>
<p><b>Methods</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Questionnaire</li> </ol> <p>A) It included <b>91</b> female young people at residential institutions within the selected criteria (aged 18+, born of unknown parents,</p>	

	<p>and about to leave care) (both public and non-governmental sites).</p> <p>B) For care leavers, purposive sample of females the number of participants was <b>102</b>.</p> <p>2. Interviews</p> <p>A) Purposive sample of female young people in care (n = 10).</p> <p>B) Purposive sample of the workers at residential selected institutions (n = 4).</p> <p>C) Purposive sample of female care leavers (n = 12).</p> <p>D) Purposive sample of the workers of Ekha'a who are in charge of leaving care programs (n = 4).</p> <p>3. Purposive sample of selected experts, administrators, and policy makers at the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development who are in charge of the targeted population in this study (abandoned (orphaned) young people in care and out of care)(n=4).</p>	
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2-0 Table

**Table 2. Site selection**

Female individuals were the unit of analysis of this study. Other units of analysis, such as the documentation from institutions, were also utilised when relevant, accessible and appropriate. In addition, the staff of institutions, such as general institutional staff as well as



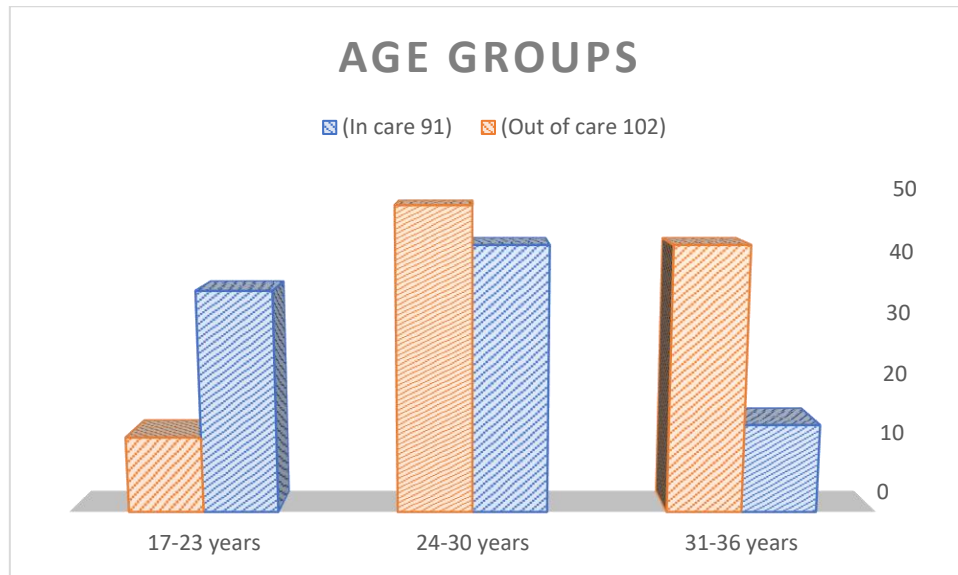
professionals like social workers and psychologists, were also included. In my mind, this ensured that the number of units of analysis used during the research process would make the outcomes of the research more valid and relevant in scope.

In terms of the collection of data for my research, the research itself occurred over a 5-month period. Participants were recruited through a letter requesting permission to conduct research sent to the Saudi Arabian Cultural Bureau in the United Kingdom, which then forwarded the letter to the researcher's university in Saudi Arabia, which then sent a letter to the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development in Saudi Arabia. Once agreement to conduct research had been granted, a letter was sent to each institution selected in the researcher's sampling procedures (public residential institutions to allow for the collection of information in each institution: residential social institutions in Aldayfah Section (Riyadh), Hasa, and Jeddah; nursery institutions in Riyadh, Aldayfah Villas (Riyadh), Damam and Jeddah. The coordinator of each institution assisted the researcher to select people who met the target criteria (Plan A: female abandoned young people who lived in residential care from the age of 17 and those who left care within two years from the start of the study; or Plan B: abandoned young people who were 18 years or older and still in residential care, as well as students in college or residents who were employed. For care leavers, the period was prolonged to include care leavers who had left care within the previous five years and were still cared for by Ekha'a) for interviews and questionnaires.

### Demographic Data:

This section contains a breakdown of the demographic characteristics of the study's focus subjects. More precisely, the chart shows age-related demographics.

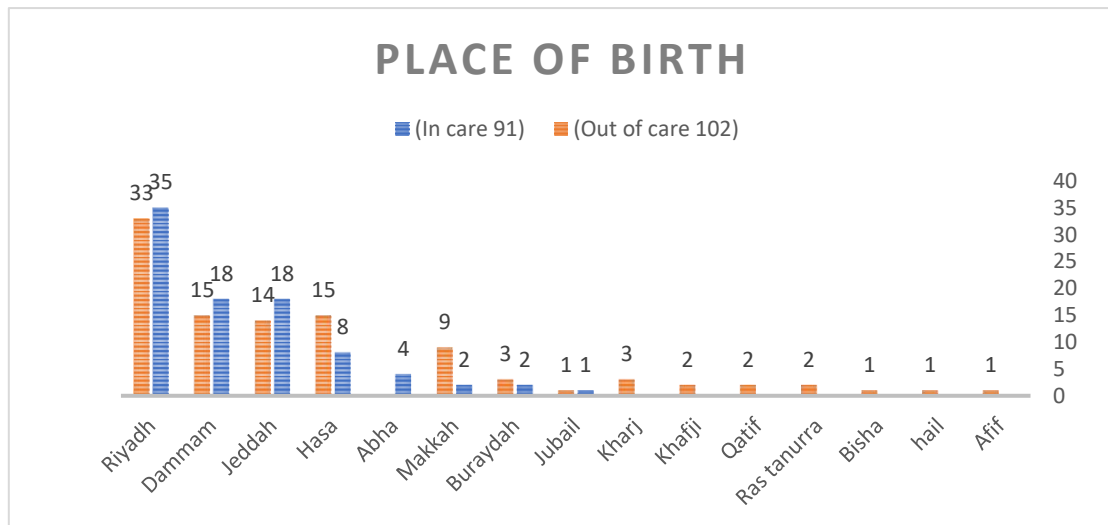
**Chart 1 (Age Groups):**



*chart 1*

The above chart (Chart 1) shows two groups of individuals: abandoned young people and care leavers. Out of the 91 abandoned young people in institutions, a total of 35 girls are in the 17-to-23 year age group, with 42 in the 24 to 30 year age group and 14 in the 31 to 36 year age group. Out of the 102, 12 of them are in the 17 to 23 year age group, followed by the highest number of care leavers (48) aged between 24 to 30, and 42 in the 31 to 36 age group. In both care leavers and abandoned young people, the highest number of participants are in the 24 to 30 year age group.

**Charts 2 (Places of Birth):**



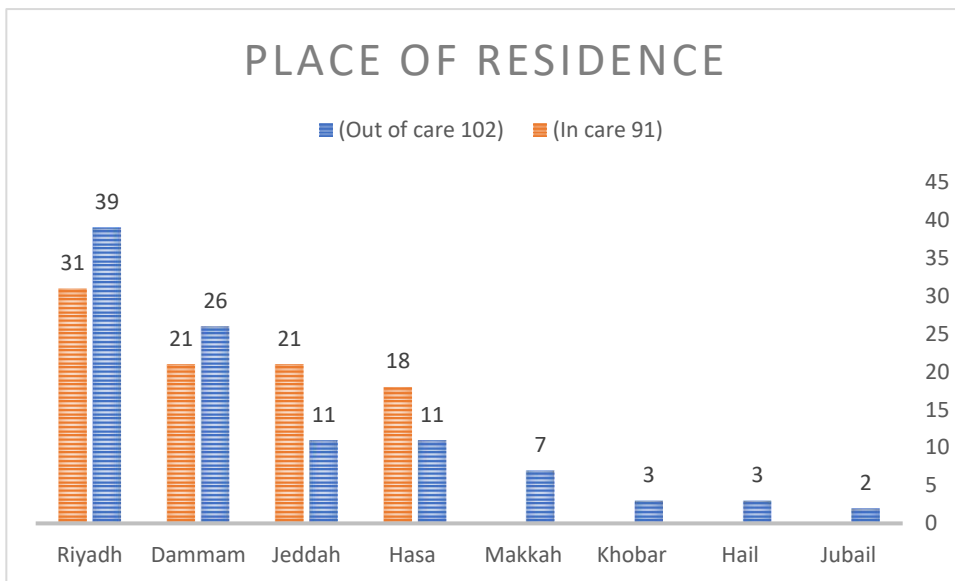
*2 chart*

The above chart (Chart 2) shows information regarding the places of birth for both care leavers (102 individuals in total) and abandoned young people (91 individuals in total). Generally speaking, the majority of both care leavers and abandoned young people are born in Riyadh.

For abandoned young people, 35 individuals are born in Riyadh, followed equally by the cities of Jeddah and Dammam, with 18, and the lowest number for the cities of Unaizah, Saihat ,Khobar, and Saihat, with 1 each.

As for care leavers, 33 individuals are from Riyadh, followed by Dammam and Hasa with 15, Jeddah with 14 and Makkah by 9, with the lowest number for the cities of Jubail ,Bisha, Hail and Al-Afif , with 1 each.

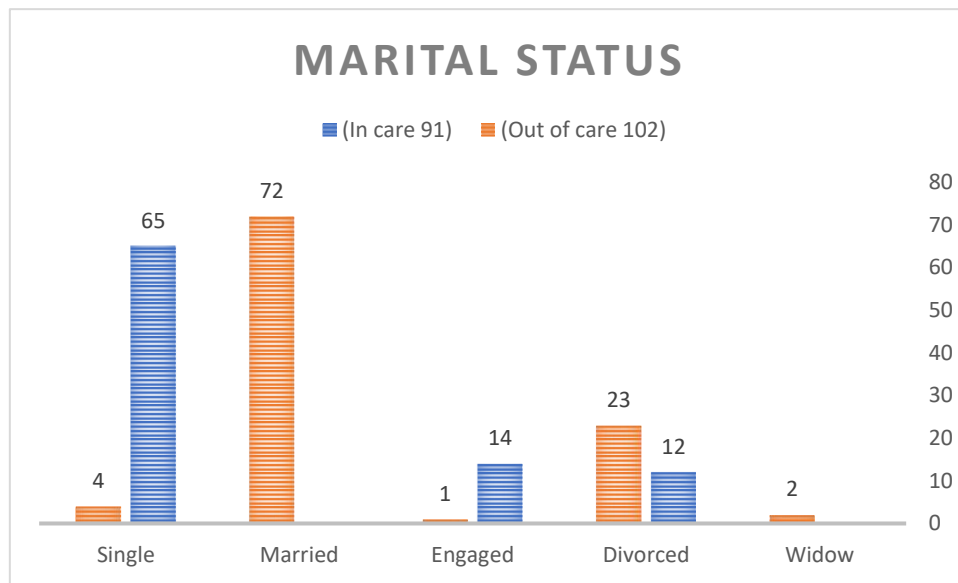
**Chart 3 (Place of Residence):**



*chart 3*

The above chart (Chart 3) shows information regarding the place of residence for both care leavers (102 individuals in total) and abandoned young people (91 individuals in total). For abandoned young people, there are 31 participants in the Al-Rabwah and Alisha institutions in Riyadh, followed by the Dar Al-Safa, Al-Naseem and Al-Salam institutions in Jeddah with 21 participants, followed by the city of Dammam with 21 girls in nursery institutions and 18 girls from educational institutions in Hasa. For care leavers, there are 39 in the city of Riyadh, followed by 26 in Dammam and 11 in both Jeddah and Hasa, and 3 participants in each of Khobar and Hail, and 2 in Jubail.

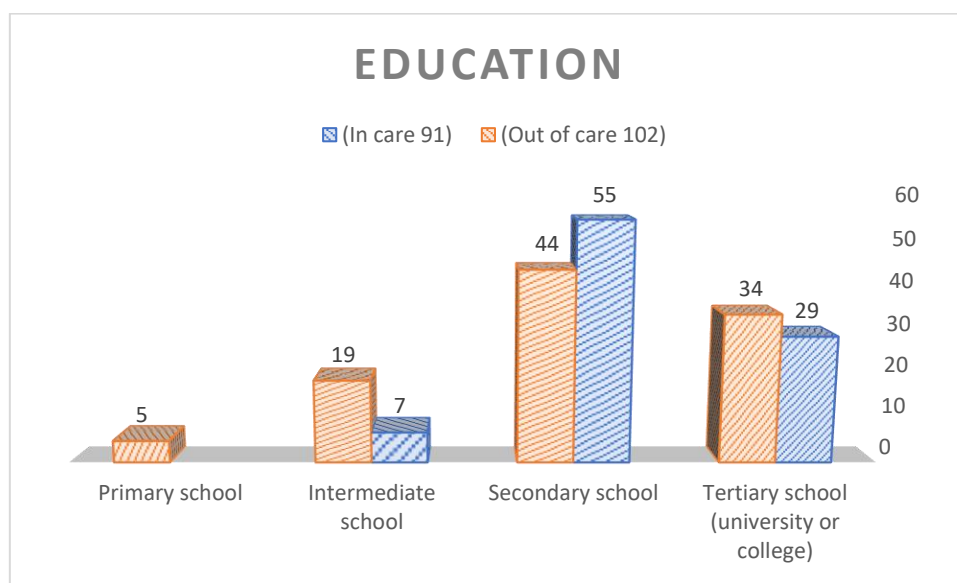
**Chart 4 (Marital Status):**



*chart 4*

The above chart (Charts 4) shows information regarding the marital status for both care leavers (102 individuals in total) and abandoned young people (91 individuals in total). For abandoned young people, there are 65 unmarried girls, 14 engaged girls and 12 divorced girls. For care leavers, the highest percentage is represented by married women, with 72, followed by 23 divorced women, 4 single girls, two widows and one woman that is engaged.

**Chart 5 (Education):**

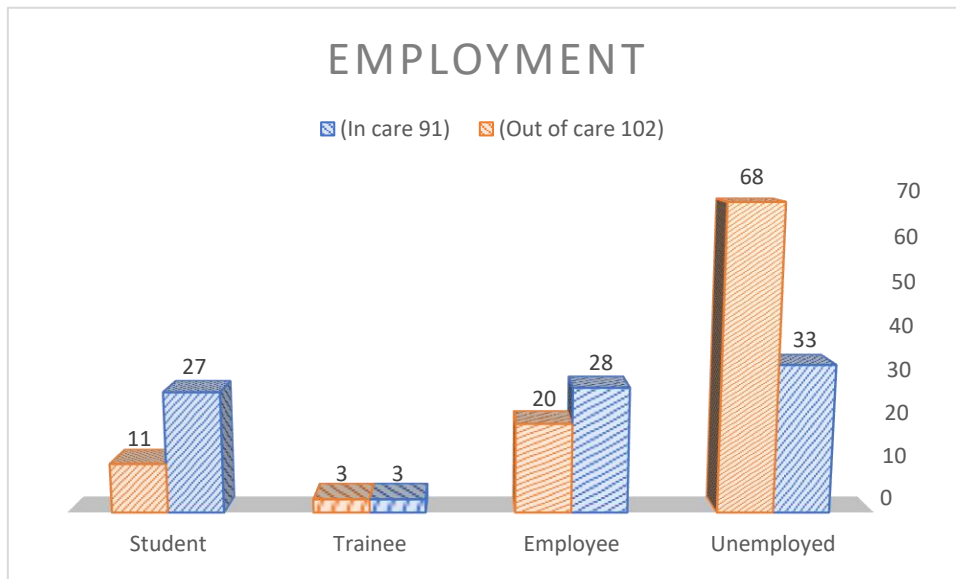


*5 chart*

The above chart (Charts 5) shows information regarding the education of both care leavers (102 individuals in total) and abandoned young people (91 individuals in total). In terms of abandoned young people, the highest number is 55 for girls who have a secondary school education, followed by 29 for girls who have some tertiary (university or college) education. The lowest number is 7, for girls who have intermediate school education.

As for care leavers, the highest percentage is of participants who have secondary school education, with 44, followed by 34 for care leavers who have some tertiary (university or college) education, and then 19 with intermediate school education and 5 with a primary school education.

**Chart 6 (Employment):**

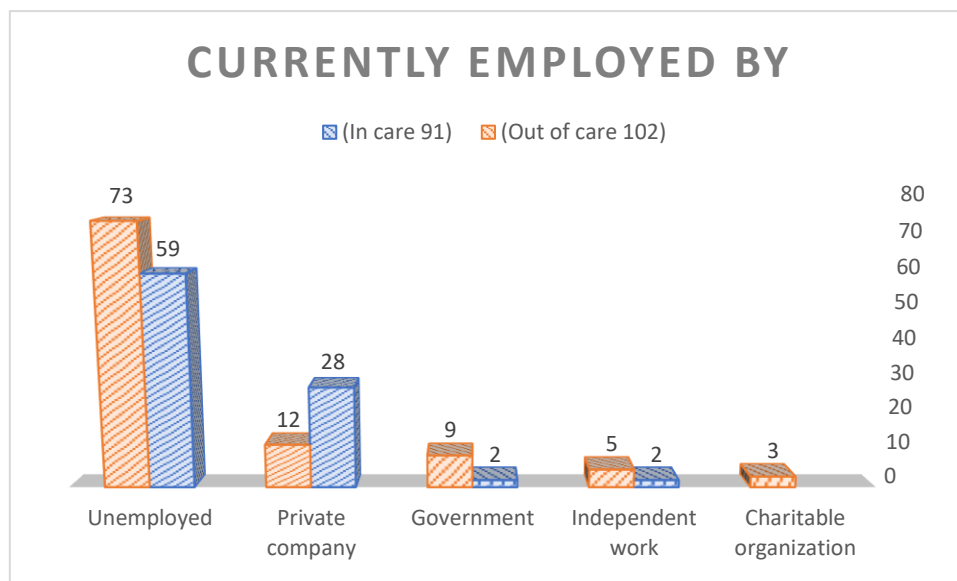


*chart 6*

The above chart (Chart 6) show information regarding employment for both care leavers (102 individuals in total) and abandoned young people (91 individuals in total). For abandoned young people, there are 27 students, 28 female employees, 3 trainee girls, with the highest percentage represented by the 33 girls who have no employment.

As for care leavers, the highest percentage of participants is represented by those who are unemployed (68), followed by 20 individuals working in jobs, 11 students, and 3 trainees (the lowest number overall).

**Chart 7 (Currently Employed by):**



*chart 7*

The above chart (Chart 7) shows information regarding who employs both care leavers (102 individuals in total) and abandoned young people (91 individuals in total). In terms of abandoned young people, 28 work for private companies, with 2 in government work and 2 working independently. The highest percentage is represented by the 59 individuals who chose “unemployed” for unemployed.

In terms of care leavers, 73 care leavers have no employment (the highest percentage of participants), with 12 working in private companies, 9 in government jobs, 5 working independently, and 5 work in associations and organizations.

## 7.6 Data Analysis

### **The process of analysis**

Analysis is, basically, the idea of better understanding a big idea or lots of information by breaking it down into chunks of information, and then thinking critically about it in order to better understand and draw inferences and conclusions from it (Bazeley, 2017; Landim & Sánchez, 2012; Lune & Berg, 2017). Generally, analysis goes through a process which begins with getting the data to be analysed ready for analysis through actions such as coding (thereby beginning the integration of the data itself), then exploring the data to begin to organize it into coherent categories or types, describing what has been found in the form of notes and summaries, comparing information to link back to the questions being asked in the research, investigating any patterns or trends resulting from the previous parts of the process, and finally making inferences and conclusions based on what had been found and investigated (Bazeley, 2017; Onwuegbuzie & Combs, 2011; Lune & Berg, 2017). While there are six recognized types of analyses (Smith, 2013), as mentioned previously, it was my consideration that mixed methods analysis offered the best opportunity for me to make valid inferences from the data which I gathered during my research, given the robustness of its 13 steps as



well as meeting all five purposes of triangulation, complementarity, development, initiation, and expansion (Onwuegbuzie & Combs, 2011).

In fact, the amount of data gathered over the course of my research was vast. Not only did I have to separate information into defined categories of responses, but I also had to make sense of two different sets of data, one which was more scientific in nature but lacking in follow-up (quantitative), and one which has lots of emotion and detail, but which was widely disparate from each other (qualitative). This challenge, when added to other challenges inherent to each type of data when I tried to make sense of them, such as assigning codes to qualitative data to better categorise it, led to categories of number and letters but no added understanding of the information which was gathered (Berg, 2007; Lune & Berg, 2017).

So, in order to deal with these different issues, for my quantitative data, I used the computer software SPSS to organise and categorise my data into various subsets (Bala, 2016). SPSS offered many different statistical features which I utilised to make sense of my data, and allowed me to choose, depending on the nature of the questions, and as long as I defined the variable set involved and then used the data to create cases for the software to work with, for descriptive and bivariate statistics, predictions for numerical outcomes and identifying groups, and analysis which involved sampling of data, and also allowed for data management and documentation (Bala, 2016; Lune & Berg, 2017).

For my qualitative data, I worked to make sense of the raw data by focusing it into summaries and themes to better discern patterns and trends, to better “link” the data (Berg, 2007; Bazeley, 2012; Lune & Berg, 2017). In order to do so more effectively, I utilised NVivo coding, which allowed me to better understand the meaning and context involved in the words used by participants (Manning, 2017). I also had an operational process which kept information efficiently and effectively filed and compared and contrasted items systemically (through an efficient and effective coding system) before moving into a detailed analysis of the organised data itself (Berg, 2007; Lune & Berg, 2017). At all times, I kept in mind the need to manage, as best as possible, the data I gathered, to make it easier to effectively analyse and verify, which I did by checking and rechecking my inferences and conclusions (Berg, 2007; Lune & Berg, 2017).

In general terms, analysis is the process of making sense of sets of information (data) by putting it into more manageable chunks, critically thinking about those chunks to better understand them, and then drawing inferences and conclusions from that understanding (Bazeley, 2017; Landim & Sánchez, 2012). For the analysis of the qualitative data gathered through my research, while there are many different approaches which can be taken in order to make sense of the data which is gathered (Clarke and Braun, 2014), it was my consideration that thematic analysis (this term will be used to avoid confusion with “reflexive thematic analysis”) in the manner outlined by Victoria Clarke and Virginia Braun (Clarke and Braun,

2014; Braun and Clarke, 2019; Braun and Clarke, 2012) offered the best way forward in terms of best making sense of the data which was gathered.

Thematic analysis, a method of data analysis developed by Gerald Holton, used alongside other types of analysis such as content, and later outlined and developed further by Clarke and Braun as a six-phase process, can be used to discern patterns and trends across data, and with them allow for inferences and conclusions as to their meaning, thereby relating the data to the researcher's questions while telling a story about what it means (Clarke and Braun, 2014; Richards and Hemphill, 2018; Javadi and Zarea, 2016; Clarke and Braun, 2016; Nowell et al., 2017; Braun and Clarke, 2012). Before going into detail about the phases which comprise thematic analysis, and how I applied it to my own research, possible limitations of such analysis (and how I have addressed those in my own research), as well as the reasons (its strengths) why I chose it for my own research, must first be explored in greater detail.

### **Limitations**

One limitation of thematic analysis is that it can easily fall into the trap of being limiting in its outcomes than its flexible nature would seem to indicate (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Clarke and Braun, 2016). If the researcher tries to analyse data while seeking to discover (as a result of personal or academic biases or assumptions) rather than uncover themes to be analysed, then the idea of exploration inherent to true thematic analysis is lost, and the end results may not be useful or desirable (Braun and Clarke, 2016; Javadi and Zarea, 2016). In my analysis of gathered data, rather than coding for themes alone (and thereby limiting the viability and credibility of the resulting inferences and conclusions), I undertook the analytical process with no preconceptions, and allowed the coding and coding process of data to create analysis which suited the questions asked in my research (Braun and Clarke, 2016; Javadi and Zarea, 2016). This allowed the responses of participants to speak for themselves, and let themes present themselves more organically as a result (Braun and Clarke, 2016; Javadi and Zarea, 2016). This is vitally important, as a researcher can very easily get lost in trying to best define what a theme is, or how to go about "getting" a theme from or for data being analysed (Javadi and Zarea, 2016).

Another challenge which faces thematic analyses is the predetermining of relevant themes before conducting research, which has the effect of limiting sample sizes because the researcher knows that what is being looked for will not be present in specific groups of individuals, which appears to be more quantitative rather than qualitative in nature (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Javadi and Zarea, 2016). In my research, there was no predetermination of sample sizes used, just an age range and on the basis of experiences (Ando et al., 2014). If more people need to be included in the research due to information which arose as the research was being conducted, then that was taken into account within the study, to gain a better understanding of what was being mentioned by the participants as a whole. As well, in this way, potential issues with data saturation were avoided, as limitations on numbers of participants were based on parameters outside of the researcher's control (Ando et al., 2014).

The previous potential limitations of thematic analysis, if not addressed by the researcher, can lead to inferences and conclusions which do not stand up to informed scrutiny (Javadi and Zarea, 2016). This may also cause situations in which the researcher embarks on tangential explorations or data which have no meaning or applicability to the research questions at hand (Javadi and Zarea, 2016). Such problems can be linked to researchers not fully understanding what thematic analysis actually is or how best to utilize it, or even what it represents, and thus not using it to its fullest and most positive potential (Clarke and Braun, 2013; Joffe, 2012). To address these problems, my research was ordered and organized, and follow the phases of thematic analysis as outlined by Clarke and Braun (more on this below).

### **Strengths**

The very nature of the thematic analysis as outlined by Clarke and Braun is what gives it its usefulness, as it is not tied in any way to a prescribed outline or framework of ideas or rules which must be followed, yet makes active use of, and is able to be used within, various frameworks of theory (Clarke and Braun, 2014; Braun and Clarke, 2013.; Javadi and Zarea, 2016; Clarke and Braun, 2013; Clarke and Braun, 2018). Essentially, qualitative research is used to gather information to be uncovered and explored, and be better understood through exploration, rather than simply recorded and categorized as quantitative research can often do (Braun and Clarke, 2016). The simplicity of this approach allows for more researchers to better access their data's contents, as well as run the analytical process itself (Javadi and Zarea, 2016; Nowell et al., 2017).

#### **7.7 Thematic analysis process**

As Clarke and Braun (Clarke and Braun, 2014; Clarke and Braun, 2016) note, thematic analysis is widely applicable to most types of qualitative data, as well as being unconstructed in its applicability to small or, especially, large amounts of data, and not limited in the questions which it can be used to analyse (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Nowell et al., 2017). In addition, there is no set or one way to define or construct a theme, as it depends on each researcher and the nature of the research as well as what is being coded for, to allow for various interpretations and meanings to emerge and be analysed in their various aspects (Braun and Clarke, 2016; Nowell et al., 2017; Joffe, 2012).

Add to this its ability to aid in theorizing about the data being analysed, and in allowing for deeper and richer meanings to readily emerge (Clarke and Braun, 2014; Clarke and Braun, 2022.; Braun and Clarke, 2012; Terry et al, 2017; Byrne, 2021), and it was my consideration that thematic analysis as outlined by Clarke and Braun best suited the data which I was gathering, as well as gave me the best opportunity to garner deep and holistic meaning from the gathered data through analysis. The additional benefit of using all information given by participants in the analysis of data, and having their various voices heard in the resulting inferences and conclusions, meant that those outcomes would be much more easily understood by the wider public, and not just the scientific community (Javadi and Zarea, 2016; Nowell et al., 2017).

Clarke and Braun's process of thematic analysis consists of six distinct but interrelated phases. In order of usage, the first phase consists of a researcher becoming familiar with the data

being gathered and studied (Clarke and Braun, 2014; Clarke and Braun, 2013; Braun and Clarke, 2012; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). The researcher does so through immersion in the data, reading it, rereading it, and categorizing as well as identifying different aspects of it (Clarke and Braun, 2014; Clarke and Braun, 2016; Braun and Clarke, 2012; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). In my research, I did this myself after its conclusion, taking a number of weeks to re-familiarize myself with the data which I had gathered, and reminding myself of what had happened at the time of the various interviews which I had been conducting to avoid any confusion regarding the meaning of the gathered data (Berg, 2007; Nowell et al., 2017).

The next phase is the generation of initial codes, to better allow for the data which has been gathered to be identified as meaningful to the questions being researched, no matter how important or trivial the information may seem, thereby allowing the researcher to read between the lines of the data for dual or hidden meanings wherever possible (Clarke and Braun, 2014; Clarke and Braun, 2013; Braun and Clarke, 2012; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). As I analysed my research, I used the computer software NVivo to both categorize and organize my data, as it offered a variety of features which allowed me to make sense of what the data meant while best managing and organizing the data to not lose track of critical information along the way (Berg, 2007; Bazeley, 2011; Manning, 2017; Nowell et al., 2017).

After having completed the initial coding of information, the next phase of thematic analysis is searching for themes (or, generating themes on an initial basis), or a meaning for and of the data which can be utilized in answering or addressing the questions posed for the research (Clarke and Braun, 2014; Clarke and Braun, 2016; Braun and Clarke, 2019; Braun and Clarke, 2012; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). In this phase, the researcher takes an active role in the construction of the themes of the data, and interprets the usefulness of data and ideas through their own perspective and understanding of the research questions, with the end result being a number of potential themes which have evident connections, and data which can be coded to individual themes (Clarke and Braun, 2014; Clarke and Braun, 2016; Braun and Clarke, 2012; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). In my research, I analyzed my data (and linked it to my research questions) through the use of NVivo coding, which gave me a more thorough understanding of the meaning and context of what participants were saying in the various interviews (Berg, 2007; Bazeley, 2011; Manning, 2017; Nowell et al., 2017).

Once the researcher has finished searching for themes, the potential themes need to be reviewed for coherence and viability (that they are clearly delineated and have an organized concept to work with), to ensure that they make sense when compared to all of the data gathered and with regard to the research questions (Clarke and Braun, 2014; Clarke and Braun, 2016; Braun and Clarke, 2012; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). Once this phase is completed, a final set of themes will be the result. In my research, as mentioned previously, my use of NVivo coding allowed me to gain a better understanding of the data, and part of that understanding was its systemic comparison and contrast as part of the coding process, which helped to ensure that the resulting themes were “correct” (Berg, 2007; Manning, 2017; Nowell et al., 2017).

The researcher can now move on to the next phase of thematic analysis, defining and naming, in which the researcher more fully explores the themes which have been settled upon by defining them as thoroughly as possible (Clarke and Braun, 2014; Clarke and Braun, 2016; Braun and Clarke, 2012; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). The data chosen will fit into each theme, and represent a story of how the information links with its hidden meanings and messages, and each theme will have content which coherently and in a nuanced manner addresses the research questions, with a proper name of each theme being another way to both make sense of the data as well as lend a better understanding of the research itself (Clarke and Braun, 2014; Richards and Hemphill, 2018; Clarke and Braun, 2016; Braun and Clarke, 2012; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). As part of my analysis, I checked and rechecked my data and how it fit under each of my final themes, to make sure that they were credible and meaningful at all times and lent themselves to verifiable and meaningful inferences and conclusions (Berg, 2007; Nowell et al., 2017).

The final phase of Clarke and Braun's thematic analysis is the actual production of the report, where final decisions are made to the analysis which has been almost completed by this point in time, such as the final ordering of the themes used and making sure that the information presented is as valid as possible (Clarke and Braun, 2014; Richards and Hemphill, 2018; Clarke and Braun, 2013; Braun and Clarke, 2012; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). In my research, given the work I had already completed by the time I reached this phase, my main goal was to take a final read through everything that had been analysed and the resulting inferences and conclusions, to ensure that what I had asked at the beginning of the research had now been addressed in a meaningful and deep manner (Berg, 2007; Nowell et al., 2017). For instance, my qualitative research findings assisted me to gain a clearer insight into raw data from participants. In this view, I was able to develop precise themes and summaries to highlight key trends. Additionally, the quantitative data complemented the results from the qualitative research, thereby allowing for better data synthesis.

While there are some perceived limitations when using thematic analysis as envisioned by Clarke and Braun, as long as those concerns are addressed by the researcher while analyzing their data, its flexibility as an analytical method far outweighs any potential drawbacks. For the sets of qualitative data which I analyzed, thematic analysis offered the best manner through which I could gain a deeper understand of my research and its meaning on a variety of levels.

### 7.8 Ethical considerations

It was fundamental for this study to be present in the settings and the cultures within the institutions that were part of my research. However, it was equally important to be there to listen and not to evaluate or judge, and therefore not to be judgemental of the policies, programmes, systems, staff, and clients of the institutions (Gorman and Clayton, 2004). To get access to the field and participants, this required a considerable awareness of the settings, as well as the stakeholders' and clients' culture, so as to present myself in a manner that both suited the people involved and helped to obtain 'bottom-up' access — access cannot be regarded as a one-time permission (Gorman and Clayton, 2004). As part of this process, I offered general feedback from my research on non-private matters as a trade-off for being

given access to individuals, as appropriate. I was aware that gaining the trust of both gatekeepers and young people was the only way to meet some of the participants and gather some of the information (Gorman and Clayton, 2004). A key consideration as a researcher prior to entering into a participant's environment was for me to ensure that all formed links (relationships) between myself and participants consisted of respect, trust and a maintaining of privacy at all times (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Stutchbury and Fox, 2009; Moskal et al., 2014; Hammersley, 2015; Cyr, 2017; McKenna and Gray, 2018).

Among the key considerations was providing informed consent research participants to ensure that they were aware of their rights regarding their participation. This entailed informing them of the nature of the study and ensuring that their consent was granted freely and fully. The general parameters of the study were discussed with participants. In addition, there were special considerations that had to be taken into account due to the pandemic. Measures to reduce or altogether eliminate the possibility of exposure to Covid were taken, including the use of virtual conversations and other remote tools. Furthermore, privacy was protected through the use of anonymous data gathering and a guarantee of the non-distribution or misuse of data. The overall determinations were made of a very low risk of releasing confidential information, very low risk of Covid transmission, and very low risk of subject harm or discomfort.

## 7.9 Strengths and Limitations of this research

### **Limitations of this research and ways in which they were addressed**

Some residential institutions were not able to provide a suitable number of participants for the researcher, and some potential participants and workers did not want to cooperate. In these cases, alternative locations in different cities were identified before the research commenced, and authorisation for the research was obtained before it commenced. If necessary, problematic interviews outside of residential institutions (using calls) were also arranged in coordination with, for instance, an Ekha'a branch's coordinator. Reticence on the part of participants due to perceived privacy issues was also a limitation, but this was addressed through appropriate ethical practices such as the data coding of information by the researcher and not mentioning names or places in research notes except in the form of pseudonyms.

The researcher also addressed potential biases in the data gathered by using a mixed-method design for this research, which took into account possible limitations or variations in the perspectives of participants in the sample groups, and addressed possible misconceptions of their role in gathering data by making it clear that they were not working at or for the ministry, but were only looking to convey their voices and messages to the people in charge at the ministry and not to make decisions. In addition, any issues with potential adverse reactions by research participants to particular questions and topics was mitigated by formulating and asking questions in an empathetic and professional manner.

### **Strengths of the research**

The study consisted of triangulating a variety of evidential sources while in the process of gathering all data, with the information gathered then comprehensively analysed with reference to the research objectives as well as its questions. The main sources of evidence consisted of questionnaires and interviews (recognised as important in terms of expanding ideas gathered as part of triangulation, as per Moskal et al. (2014), while complementary evidential sources comprised documents and various observations. As a result of using this simultaneous triangulation, complementary yet different

outcomes were attained (Axinn and Pearce, 2006; Patton, 2006; Morse, in Plano Clark and Creswell, 2008; Small, 2011; Moskal et al., 2014).

Owing to the involved nature of the study and the fact that there are no unambiguous criteria for who should participate in the study, there was a Plan A and a Plan B. In Plan A, the focus was on female abandoned young people who had lived in residential care from the age of 17 or who had left care within the last two years (from the start of the study). If this was found to be untenable, then Plan B was put into action. In Plan B, the focus was on abandoned young people who were 18 years or older and were still in residential care, as well as students in college or residents who were employed. This allowed the researcher to have access to enough data via an adequate number of research participants and allowed for greater flexibility if difficulties were encountered in gaining access to the rights group of individuals for sampling purposes.

There was a dearth of literature focusing on abandoned young individuals in the context of Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the scarcity of data led to an exploratory study, which acknowledged that the quantity of case studies may extend beyond the research scope (Bryman, 2004). In addition, the study design applied 'a triangulation multiple-site case study' to explore distinct units of analysis (Stake, 1998; 2005). In this view, the overall investigation portrayed how facts and events occurred in different settings, as well as the causal factors for such appearances (Yin, 2003; Stake, 2006). To conduct this research, both typical and atypical cases were selected from diverse situations (Stake, 2006).

As parallel or concurrent mixed-method approaches, both datasets were gathered at the same time and analysed in an aligning way to provide deeper insight into the research. The goal was to avoid the impacts of the strengths and limitations of various forms of data collection (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998; Miller, 2003: 435; Patton, 2006; Small 2011). Subsequently, general conclusions were made based on the generated information. Further, similar enquiries were made to derive data, both numerical and narrative (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998; 2003). This move enabled several strategies of data collection, with attention being directed towards the issues being assessed, as well as on the implications of the analysed data (Swanson and Holton, 2005).

If I were doing this study again, I would conduct my quantitative research first, analyse it, and then use that analysis to inform the creation of my qualitative research. This would make the information more meaningful and detailed.

### 7.10 Summary

I used a multi-case triangulation study due to the amount of data which I collected during the course of my research. This large amount of data also made it more efficient to use a mixed methods approach, using SPSS and In Vivo software, to both fully analyse the data as well as make meaningful inferences and conclusions.

My study aimed to offer a future direction for the Saudi in-care system. It demonstrated that work has been done to look after the needs and concerns of abandoned young females while in and out of care, on the part of the government and Ekha'a as well as residential institutions themselves.

The outcomes of my study are presented in the chapters which follow. My findings have been put into categories which clearly show trends and patterns in terms of the beliefs participants in my research had regarding the perceived needs and possible future direction of the Saudi in-care system. The following two chapters present firstly the findings of the analyses of both the quantitative and qualitative elements of this study.

## Chapter 8: Findings from Quantitative Analysis

### **Descriptive Analysis:**

This section deals with the descriptive analysis of the data collected through the questionnaires during the research process. Descriptive statistics provide a summary of a given set of data representing a sample of a population, or a general population (Mann,1995). These statistics enable the simplification of vast amounts of data related to the identified study variables (Igual & Segui, 2017).

The questionnaire applied for gathering descriptive data from young females in residential institutions is within the selected criteria :individuals aged 18 years and above, born of unknown parents, about to leave care, and care leavers. In this questionnaire, several concerns are considered, including the needs of young individuals about to leave care from residential institutions, and care leavers. Key needs for individuals about to leave care and care leavers are identified as :health needs, education and training, accommodation, social needs ,personal growth, and marriage and family.

Strategies to address these demands are vital in Saudi Arabia's residential care systems. It is critical to ascertain whether or not the presently delivered care in care institutions is adequate. On this note, the views of both young people under care and care leavers must be acknowledged to collect relevant information.

Moreover, various challenges facing young adults about to leave care and care leavers have been determined. These include accommodation challenges, social and personal issues, and financial and health awareness challenges. To respond to these issues, some level of care is extended to individuals about to leave care and care leavers ,including financial support, health care, accommodation, continuing education, rights and obligations, and family and relationships .

Descriptive analysis incorporates calculation of statistical measures such as mean, standard deviation, including minimum (min) and maximum (max) values (Ali& Bhaskar, 2016). Means were compared to assess the reliability of scales. The value ranges between 1 to 5 and mean is 3. Generally, it is thought that a mean value more than 3 is a positive response, a mean value of 3 means an adequate response, and anything less than 3 is a negative response. Therefore, if the values are above 3, it can be concluded that the scales are reliable (Fisher& Marshall,2009).

Means were compared to assess the reliability of scales. The value ranges between 1 to 5 and mean is 3. Generally, it is thought that a mean value more than 3 is a positive response, a mean value of 3 means an adequate response, and anything less than 3 is a negative response. Therefore, if the values are above 3, it can be concluded that the scales are consistent (Fisher& Marshall,2009).

For this purpose, 'Five Point Likert Scale' questions were asked to the respondents which scaled from 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (Uncertain), 4 (agree) and 5 (strongly agree) for all variables in survey research (Allen& Seaman,2007). The number of respondents (N) in each question item was 91 and 102 for each questionnaire, for abandoned young people and care leavers, respectively.



Statements related to each domain and their overall descriptive statistic, which shows the agreement level of the respondents, are shown below.

**Abandoned young people and care leaver responses:**

**First Axis: The needs of individuals about to leave care and care leavers**

**A. Health Needs Domain: (HN)**

Code	Statements	In care		Out care	
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
HN1	I have medical insurance to get access to health care.	4.34	.819	3.74	1.414
HN2	I have opportunities to see a doctor for health concerns and issues on a regular basis.	4.30	.767	3.55	1.369
HN3	I have access to information about marriage or family issues	3.95	1.058	3.17	1.343
HN4	I have access to medical counselling for issues like drugs, alcohol, smoking, and so on, when needed.	3.82	1.179	3.19	1.340
HN5	I have opportunities to have regular exercise.	4.20	.897	3.30	1.184
HN6	When facing challenges and hardships, my mental well-being is looked after by medical professionals, psychologists and social workers.	3.92	1.088	2.29	1.317
	<b>Health needs of orphans</b>	<b>4.09</b>	<b>.743</b>	<b>3.21</b>	<b>.884</b>

Table 4-1 pooled Descriptive Statistics of Health Needs for abandoned young people and care leavers

Individuals about to leave care and care leavers are put in the position of not being able to do things for themselves. These groups lack the requisite skills and experiences to live an independent life, while looking after their well-being, particularly due to the absence of health insurance and aid. The results in Table 4.1 show the descriptive statistics of an individual item and as Health Needs for abandoned young people and care leavers as an entirety. There are six statements used to measure the health needs. Each of the two groups' respondents submitted their responses in the five-point Likert scale. The Table 4.1 shows that the items representing abandoned young people who are in care have a mean value ranging from 3.82 to 4.34 (i.e. the response is positive), while the items representing care leavers have a mean value ranging from 2.29 to 3.74 (i.e. the responses are positive except HN6, which showed a negative response). This means that there is an issue with the amount of care and support given to care leavers once they have left care.

The table shows that, among the abandoned young people in care, HN1 has the highest mean and HN4 has the lowest. The highest mean of 4.34 indicates that it is the most agreed statement, thereby stating that abandoned young people have medical insurance to get access to health care. The lowest mean of 3.82 shows that respondents agree less with the statement, thereby showing that abandoned young people can access medical counselling for issues like drugs, alcohol, smoking when needed.

With reference to care leavers, the table shows that HN1 has the highest mean and HN6 has the lowest. The highest mean of 3.47 indicates that it is the most agreed-with statement, stating that care leavers have medical insurance to get access to health care. The lowest mean of 2.29 shows that respondents are in less agreement with the statement, thereby demonstrating that care leavers face challenges and hardships in having their mental well-being looked after by medical professionals, psychologists and social workers under Ekha'a's direction.

Additionally, the table shows that HN4 has the highest standard deviation, whereas HN2 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation in terms of the statement "in care individuals access medical counselling for issues like drugs, alcohol, smoking when needed" (i.e., the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average of in care responses). This reflects a lack of preparation for abandoned young people in terms of being ready to look after their own well-being.

The table shows that HN1 has the highest standard deviation, whereas HN5 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation with the statement "Having medical insurance to get access to health care" (i.e., the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average).

The aggregate means of HN is (4.09) and (3.21), with a standard deviation of (0.743) and (0.884), respectively.

#### **B. Continuing Education and Training Domain: (CE&T)**

Code	Statements	In care		Out care	
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
CE&T1	I feel that females in an institution can achieve a good level of education.	4.15	.714	2.63	1.234
CE&T2	I receive advice from staff in terms of what choices I have for a future career, employment or educational opportunities.	4.20	.792	2.59	1.254
CE&T3	I can receive training in a work programme which, after completion, will enable me to receive permanent employment in that field.	3.91	1.007	1.57	.907
	Continuing Education and Training needs of orphans	4.09	0.838	2.26	1.132

Table 4-2 pooled Descriptive Statistics of Continuing Education and Training Needs for abandoned young people and care leavers

For this theme, the educational contexts of abandoned young people under care systems, and care leavers, is clear. Care leavers portray negative remarks, usually with a score of less than 3; this value implies that this group perceives discouragement from staff pertaining to attaining a significant education level. There was also a perception that more needed to be done in this regard to develop the potential of the girls. These staff fail to offer the needed

support in terms of what future career choices, employment, or educational opportunities are available to the group.

The results in Table 4.2 show the descriptive statistics of an individual item and for the entirety of Continuing Education and Training Needs for abandoned young people and care leavers. There are three statements used to measure the needs beside (yes /no) sentences. Each of the two groups' respondents submitted their responses in the five-point Likert scale. Table 4.2 shows that items related to abandoned young people have a mean value ranging from 3.91 to 4.20 (i.e., the response is positive), while the care leaver items have a mean value ranging from 1.57 to 2.63 (i.e. the responses are negative).

The table shows that, among abandoned young people, CE&T2 has the highest mean and CE&T3 has the lowest. The highest mean of 4.20 indicates that it is the statement which met with the most agreement, demonstrating that abandoned young people receive advice from staff in terms of what choices they have for a future career, employment or educational opportunities. The lowest mean of 3.91 shows that respondents are in less agreement with the statement, thereby indicating that abandoned young people receive training in a work programme which, after completion, will enable them to receive permanent employment in that field.

With reference to care leavers, the table shows that CE&T1 has the highest mean and CE&T3 has the lowest. The highest mean of 2.63 indicates that it is the statement, which was agreed with the most, showing that care leavers feel that females in care can achieve a good level of education. The lowest mean of 1.57 shows that respondents are in less agreement with the statement, indicating that care leavers receive training in a work programme which, after completion, will enable them to receive permanent employment in that field.

Additionally, the table shows that CE&T3 has the highest standard deviation, whereas CE&T1 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation with the statement "can receive training in a work programme which, after completion, will enable me to receive permanent employment in that field" (i.e. the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average for the responses from abandoned young people).

The table shows that CE&T2 has the highest standard deviation, whereas CE&T3 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation with the statement "receive advice from staff in terms of what choices I have for a future career, employment or educational opportunities" (i.e. the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average). The aggregate means of HN is (4.09) and (2.26), with a standard deviation of (0.838) and (1.132), respectively. This shows that there are varied views among abandoned young people regarding the idea that continuing education and training provides better choices for having a future career.

Out of 91 abandoned young people, only 21 (23.1%) completed volunteer work for an organization, compared to 19 (18.6%) for care leavers.

Out of 91 abandoned young people, only 58 (63.7%) feel that the education and training assistance and information given will provide an individual with a good start in life living independently, compared to 40 (39.2%) for care leavers. This demonstrates that, although

there is some positivity among abandoned young people regarding the educational support they get while in care, later responses show that, in actuality, the opinion of abandoned young people toward the educational and training opportunities they receive is not that good overall in terms of being able to lead an independent life. In addition, the data also demonstrates that care leavers have an overly negative opinion of their own educational and training support, leading to less opportunities for them to be able to function independently in the wider society.

**C. Accommodation Needs Domain: (ACCON):**

**Accommodation needs for abandoned young people**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Statements</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D</b>
<b>ACCON1</b>	<b>I feel that the living arrangements within my institution meet my needs.</b>	<b>4.01</b>	<b>.901</b>
<b>ACCON2</b>	<b>I am being provided with the skills to understand contracts and bills.</b>	<b>3.04</b>	<b>1.349</b>
<b>ACCON3</b>	<b>I am being provided with the ability to manage daily needs and concerns, such as shopping and maintenance of accommodations.</b>	<b>3.98</b>	<b>1.043</b>
<b>ACCON4</b>	<b>I am being helped financially to purchase furniture for my living quarters when necessary.</b>	<b>3.69</b>	<b>1.180</b>
	<b>Accommodation needs of abandoned young people</b>	<b>3.68</b>	<b>.815</b>

Table 4-3 Descriptive Statistics of Accommodation needs for abandoned young people

Generally ,abandoned young individuals agree that their accommodation needs are met while they are in care. Nonetheless, this perspective changes once they leave care, since care leavers felt that their accommodation demands were not addressed. Primary concerns such as an inability to understand contracts and bills, and limited financial support are mentioned. The results in Table 4.3 show the descriptive statistics of both general and individual items related to Accommodation needs for abandoned young people. There are four statements used to measure the content. Each of the 91 respondents submitted their responses in the five-point Likert scale. The Table 4.3 shows that the items have a mean value ranging from 3.04 to 4.01 (i.e., the response is positive).

The table shows that ACCON1 has the highest mean, and ACCON2 has the lowest. The highest mean of 4.04 indicates that it is the statement most agreed with, that living arrangements within an institution meets the needs of abandoned young people. The lowest mean of 3.04 shows that respondents are in less agreement with the statement, demonstrating that respondents feel that they are not provided with the skills to understand contracts and bills once they leave care.

Additionally, the table shows that ACCON2 has the highest standard deviation, whereas ACCON1 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation with the statement “respondents provided with the skills to understand contracts and bills

(i.e., the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average). The aggregate mean of Accommodation needs for abandoned young people is 3.68, with a standard deviation of 0.815. This shows that the respondents agree that arrangements within institutions do not fully meet their needs, that there is a lack of skill development related to reading contracts and bills, thereby affecting their independence in the wider world once they leave care.

**Accommodation needs for care leavers:**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Statements</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D</b>
<b>ACCON1</b>	<b>I feel that the accommodation which is provided for me meets my needs.</b>	<b>3.62</b>	<b>1.117</b>
<b>ACCON2</b>	<b>I have been provided with the skills to understand contracts and bills.</b>	<b>1.94</b>	<b>1.133</b>
<b>ACCON3</b>	<b>I have been provided with the ability to manage daily needs and concerns, such as shopping and maintenance of accommodations.</b>	<b>2.28</b>	<b>1.102</b>
<b>ACCON4</b>	<b>Up to now, I have been provided with partial financial support which has helped me to rent accommodation which suits my needs.</b>	<b>1.96</b>	<b>1.242</b>
<b>ACCON5</b>	<b>I have been helped financially to purchase furniture for my accommodation.</b>	<b>1.89</b>	<b>1.297</b>
<b>ACCON6</b>	<b>I have been assisted to purchase my own house.</b>	<b>2.07</b>	<b>1.484</b>
<b>ACCON7</b>	<b>In case of an emergency, I am able to access temporary accommodation (hotels, a friend’s house, previous institutions, etc.) assistance if necessary .</b>	<b>2.21</b>	<b>1.374</b>
	<b>Accommodation needs for care leavers</b>	<b>2.28</b>	<b>1.250</b>

Table 4-4 Descriptive Statistics of Accommodation needs for care leavers

Care leavers demonstrate negative responses, which are less than 3 in value. This scenario shows that they do not feel that additional support and skills have been provided to understand contracts and bills. Further, they disagree that they have been offered the opportunity to manage everyday needs and issues. This group is unable to access temporary accommodation assistance where applicable. The results in Table 4.4 show the descriptive statistics of both general and individual items related to the Accommodation needs for care leavers. There are seven statements used to measure the content. Each of the 102 respondents submitted their responses in the five-point Likert scale. Table 4.4 shows that the items have a mean value ranging from 1.89 to 3.62 (i.e., most of the response is negative except ACCON1, which showed a positive response).

The table shows that ACCON1 has the highest mean, and ACCON5 has the lowest. The highest mean of 3.62 indicates that it is the statement that respondents agreed with the most, that the accommodation which is provided for them met their needs. The lowest mean of 1.89

shows that respondents are in less agreement with the statement, demonstrating that respondents have been helped financially to purchase furniture for their accommodation.

Additionally, the table shows that ACCON6 has the highest standard deviation, whereas ACCON3 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation with the statement “respondents have been assisted to purchase my own house” (i.e., the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average).

The aggregate mean of Accommodation needs for care leavers is 2.28, with a standard deviation of 1.250. This shows that the respondents look forward to having their own accommodation and see it as a way to gain greater independence. Taken as a whole, these responses demonstrate that accommodation is a big theme for care leavers, and it needs to be more thoroughly addressed by organizations like Ekha’a to ensure that care leavers can function well as part of the wider society.

**D. Social Needs Domain: (SN):**

**Social needs of abandoned young people**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Statements</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D</b>
<b>SN1</b>	<b>I am forming relationships outside of residential care with people who do not have the same social background as me.</b>	<b>4.29</b>	<b>.958</b>
<b>SN2</b>	<b>The staff of residential institutions give me the confidence to communicate with people who do not have the same background as me.</b>	<b>3.98</b>	<b>.966</b>
<b>SN3</b>	<b>The staff of residential institutions encourage me to undertake volunteer work in the wider society.</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>1.116</b>
<b>SN4</b>	<b>I am able to stay in touch with my Friend Family.</b>	<b>3.16</b>	<b>1.522</b>
<b>SN5</b>	<b>I maintain relationships with my sisters in other residential care institutions.</b>	<b>3.88</b>	<b>1.228</b>
<b>SN6</b>	<b>I visit my sisters who married and left care institutions</b>	<b>3.64</b>	<b>1.418</b>
	<b>Social Needs of abandoned young people</b>	<b>3.83</b>	<b>1.20</b>

Table 4-5 Descriptive Statistics of Social needs for abandoned young people

There was a feeling among abandoned young people that they needed the support of individuals who understood the challenges they encountered while in care. Abandoned young people felt that, while many of their needs were met while in care, and they could form relationships with those around them not in care, they needed to know more and to possess skills prior to leaving care. This step would assist them in living independently or while married. The results in Table 4.5 show the descriptive statistics of an individual item and of social needs for abandoned young people. There are six statements used to measure the content. Each of the 91 respondents submitted their responses in the five-point Likert scale.

The Table 4.5 shows that the items have a mean value ranging from 3.16 to 4.29 (i.e., the response is positive).

The table shows that SN1 has the highest mean, and SN4 has the lowest. The highest mean of 4.29 indicates that it is the most agreed upon statement, that abandoned young people form relationships outside of residential care with people who do not have the same social background as them. The lowest mean of 3.16 shows that respondents agree less with the statement, that respondents can stay in touch with their Friend Family.

Additionally, the table shows that SN4 has the highest standard deviation, whereas SN1 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation with the statement “respondents able to stay in touch with their Friend Family” (i.e., the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average).

The aggregate mean of in care Orphans Social needs is 3.83 with standard deviation of 1.20. This shows that the respondents agree that staff of residential institutions do not give completely them the confidence to communicate with people.

#### **Social needs for care leavers**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Statements</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D</b>
<b>SN1</b>	<b>I am forming relationships with orphans who leave residential care</b>	<b>3.74</b>	<b>1.151</b>
<b>SN2</b>	<b>I am forming relationships outside of residential care with people who do not have the same social background as me.</b>	<b>3.60</b>	<b>1.204</b>
<b>SN3</b>	<b>The staff of residential institutions give me the confidence to communicate with people who do not have the same background as me.</b>	<b>2.64</b>	<b>1.225</b>
<b>SN4</b>	<b>The staff of residential institutions encourage me to undertake volunteer work in the wider society.</b>	<b>2.95</b>	<b>1.254</b>
<b>SN5</b>	<b>I am able to stay in touch with my Friend Family.</b>	<b>3.02</b>	<b>1.476</b>
<b>SN6</b>	<b>I maintain relationships with my sisters in other residential care institutions.</b>	<b>3.38</b>	<b>1.456</b>
<b>SN7</b>	<b>The staff of residential institution stay in touch with me</b>	<b>2.58</b>	<b>1.619</b>
<b>SN8</b>	<b>Access psychologists helping me with emotional, social and psychological issues</b>	<b>2.29</b>	<b>1.411</b>
	<b>Social needs of care leavers</b>	<b>3.13</b>	<b>1.34</b>

Table 4-6 Descriptive Statistics of Social needs for care leavers

While care leavers agreed that they were able to establish connections with individuals leaving care and felt some level of security, they faced several problems. Key issues were that staff working in residential care institutions failed to not give them enough confidence to communicate with diverse people in the community, as well as enable access to psychological intervention when needed. The results in Table 4.6 show the descriptive statistics of an individual item and of social needs for care leavers. There are eight statements used to

measure the content. Each of the 102 respondents submitted their responses in the five-point Likert scale. The Table 4.6 shows that the items have a mean value ranging from 2.29 to 3.74 (i.e., the response fluctuates between negative and positive).

The results in Table 4.6 show the descriptive statistics of an individual item and of social needs for care leavers. There are eight statements used to measure the content.

Each of the 102 respondents submitted their responses in the five-point Likert scale. The Table 4.6 shows that the items have a mean value ranging from 2.29 to 3.74 (i.e., the response fluctuates between negative and positive).

The table shows that SN1 has the highest mean, and SN8 has the lowest. The highest mean of 3.74 indicates that it is the most agreed upon statement, that respondents formed relationships with care leavers. The lowest mean of 2.29 shows that respondents agree less with the statement, that respondents access psychologists who can assist them emotional, social and psychological issues. This means that there is a lack of assistance offered by Ekha'a in this regard for care leavers.

Additionally, the table shows that SN7 has the highest standard deviation, whereas SN1 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation with the statement "The staff of residential institution stay in touch with me" (i.e., the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average).

The aggregate mean of social needs for care leavers is 3.13, with standard deviation of 1.34. This shows that the respondents disagree that staff of residential institutions give them the confidence to communicate with people and facing life out residential institution.

Out of 91 abandoned young people, 48 (52.7%) feel that social needs are being addressed and a good start to life independently, compared to 30 (29.4%) for care leavers out of a total of 102.

**E. Personal Growth Domain: (PG)**

Code	Statements	In care		Out care	
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
PG1	I have opportunities to gain a better understanding of my personal rights, to better facilitate my integration with society.	4.05	.993	3.22	1.279
PG2	I have opportunities to gain a better understanding of my freedoms as I integrate with society.	4.03	.948	3.44	1.174
PG3	There are opportunities available to provide a better understanding of my obligations, to better facilitate my integration with society.	3.70	1.197	3.60	1.237
PG4	I feel that my personal Information is dealt with and secured by staff in a confidential manner.	3.79	1.243	3.07	1.307
PG5	I am cared for, and assisted by, staff to allow me to develop and reach my potential.	4.03	1.038	2.82	1.238



<b>PG6</b>	<b>I am given privacy when necessary.</b>	<b>3.89</b>	<b>1.069</b>	<b>3.01</b>	<b>1.397</b>
<b>PG7</b>	<b>The staff understand my needs and concerns.</b>	<b>3.71</b>	<b>1.267</b>	<b>2.50</b>	<b>1.295</b>
	<b>Personal Growth needs of orphans</b>	<b>3.89</b>	<b>.913</b>	<b>3.09</b>	<b>.880</b>

Table 4-7 Pooled Descriptive Statistics of Personal Growth needs of abandoned young people and care leavers

Abandoned young people did not feel supported by staff in residential care institutions, as well as other support staff, including social workers and specialists, in preparation for life after care. Given an approximate mean of 3, this group's responses are almost negative. In addition, care leavers are prone to several issues, such as lack of staff' understanding of their concerns, and limitations to better integration with society.

The results in Table 4.7 show the pooled descriptive statistics of an individual item and of the Personal Growth needs of abandoned young people and care leavers. There are seven statements used to measure the content. Each of the two groups' respondents submitted their responses in the five-point Likert scale. The Table 4.7 shows that the items have a mean value ranging from 3.70 to 4.05 (i.e., the response is positive for abandoned young people, while care leaver responses fluctuated between negative and positive, and the mean value ranged from 2.50 to 3.60).

The table shows that for abandoned young people, PG1 has the highest mean and PG3 has the lowest. The highest mean of 4.05 indicates that it is the most agreed upon statement, that respondents had opportunities to gain a better understanding of their personal rights, to better facilitate their integration with society. The lowest mean of 3.70 shows that respondents agree less with the statement, that respondents had opportunities available to provide a better understanding of their obligations, to better facilitate their integration with society.

Additionally, the table shows that PG7 has the highest standard deviation, whereas PG2 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation with the statement "The staff understand my needs and concerns" (i.e., the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average).

The table shows that for care leavers, PG3 has the highest mean and PG7 has the lowest. The highest mean of 3.60 indicates that it is the statement most agreed with, that respondents have opportunities available to provide a better understanding of their obligations, to better facilitate their integration with society. The lowest mean of 2.50 is a negative response, and shows that respondents agree less with the statement, that staff understand their needs and concerns.

Additionally, the table shows that PG6 has the highest standard deviation, whereas PG2 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation with the statement "I am given privacy when necessary" (i.e. the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average).

The aggregate mean of the Personal Growth needs of abandoned young people is 3.89 with a standard deviation of 0.913, compared to a mean value of 3.09 with a standard deviation of 0.880 for care leavers.

**F. Marriage and Family Domain: (M&F)**

Code	Statements	In care		Out care	
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
M&F1	I am receiving some programmes to tell me about marriage and married life.	3.04	1.374	2.04	1.185
M&F2	I am receiving information about my rights and responsibilities before I get married.	2.95	1.353	2.41	1.403
M&F3	I am receiving information about how to deal with my spouse before getting married.	2.93	1.365	2.31	1.274
M&F4	I am receiving information about how to raise a child.	3.07	1.227	1.93	1.204
M&F5	I am learning skills to deal with difficult situations prior to getting married.	3.58	1.165	2.04	1.297
M&F6	I know that it is up to me to take the decision to get married.	3.99	1.069	2.92	1.126
	<b>Marriage and Family needs of orphans</b>	<b>3.26</b>	<b>1.292</b>	<b>2.28</b>	<b>1.298</b>

Table 4-8 pooled Descriptive Statistics of Marriage and Family needs for abandoned young people and care leavers

Generally ,abandoned young people and care leavers perceived a lack of preparation, skills, and follow-up regarding marriage. They felt that there was limited preparation for marriage, or what happens after marriage, and that there is a lack of follow up currently. In addition , participants felt that no comprehensive programs are presently offered .The results in Table 4.8 show the pooled descriptive statistics of an individual item and of Marriage and Family needs for care leavers and abandoned young people. There are six statements used to measure the content. Each of the two groups' respondents submitted their responses in the five-point Likert scale. The Table 4.8 shows that the items have a mean value ranging from 1.93 to 2.92 (i.e., the response is negative for care leavers, while abandoned young people responses fluctuated between negative and positive and the mean value ranging from 2.93 to 3.99).

The table shows that for abandoned young people, M&G6 has the highest mean and M&G3 has the lowest. The highest mean of 3.99 indicates that it is the most agreed upon statement, that respondents know that it is up to them to take the decision to get married. The lowest

mean of 2.93 is negative, and shows that respondents agree less with the statement, that respondents receive information about how to deal with their spouse before getting married.

Additionally, the table shows that M&G2 has the highest standard deviation, whereas M&G6 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation with the statement "receiving some programmes to tell her about marriage and married life" (i.e., the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average).

The table shows that for care leavers, M&G6 has the highest mean and M&G4 has the lowest. The highest mean of 2.92 is a negative response and indicates that it is the most agreed upon statement, that respondents know that it is up to them to take the decision to get married. The lowest mean of 1.93 is also a negative response, and shows that respondents agree less with the statement, that respondents receive information about children and how to raise a child.

Additionally, the table shows that M&G2 has the highest standard deviation, whereas M&G6 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation with the statement "I am receiving information about my rights and responsibilities before I get married" (i.e., the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average).

The aggregate mean of marriage and Family needs for abandoned young people is 3.26 with a standard deviation of 1.292, compared to a mean value of 2.28 with a standard deviation of 1.298 for care leavers.

Out of 91 abandoned young people, 35 (38.5%) feel that they have been given information and advice about marriage and family compared to 30 (29.4%) for care leavers out of a total of 102.

### **Second Axis: Addressing the needs of individuals about to leave care and care leavers**

This axis reflects various risk aspects related with abandoned young people in care and care leavers. These elements range from poor nutrition to limited financial and family support, thus, creating behavioural, emotional and psychological problems for the group. Care leavers are better able to function in society when they have access to robust support structures, for example, family and close relationships with friends. This context may not be readily available within residential care systems, leaving abandoned young individual and care leavers with reduced resilience and a less-developed range of capabilities to build upon for a sustainable and independent life.

#### **Addressing the needs of abandoned young people Domain :(ANIC)**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Statements</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D</b>
<b>ANIC1</b>	<b>Mentoring (a person with experience who offers advice to you as you live an independent life, such as training and employment opportunities, personal support)</b>	<b>3.87</b>	<b>1.147</b>

<b>ANIC2</b>	<b>Needs assessments (a plan which shows your skills and abilities which need to be further developed, such as knowledge pertaining to marriage, education, and employment, etc, to succeed as an independent person)</b>	<b>4.03</b>	<b>.924</b>
<b>ANIC3</b>	<b>Comprehensive assessments (to better develop your social, psychological and physical well-being)</b>	<b>3.85</b>	<b>1.095</b>
<b>ANIC4</b>	<b>Professional intervention (for example, social workers working with you, to assist you in social and challenging matters, psychologists working with you to help with emotional and psychological issues, and marriage guidelines for my life after leaving care)</b>	<b>3.79</b>	<b>1.091</b>
<b>ANIC5</b>	<b>communicate with alternative families and/or friend families</b>	<b>3.37</b>	<b>1.443</b>
<b>ANIC6</b>	<b>Having the opportunity to create and maintain links with a group of recently married sisters while in care and after leaving care</b>	<b>3.70</b>	<b>1.225</b>
<b>ANIC7</b>	<b>Having access to various types of assistance (for instance, financial, accommodation, training assistance, or staff following up with you on a regular basis) after leaving care which enable you to work through challenges you may face and various options to better live independently.</b>	<b>3.63</b>	<b>1.253</b>
<b>ANIC8</b>	<b>Empowering you to join the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development's programmes after leaving care, which improve your self-esteem/confidence</b>	<b>3.80</b>	<b>1.195</b>
	<b>Addressing the needs of abandoned young people</b>	<b>3.76</b>	<b>1.172</b>

Table 4-9 Descriptive Statistics of Addressing the needs of abandoned young people

In the perspective of abandoned young people, a clarity in terms of understanding what to anticipate through better preparation when in care, who they can trust with their needs and concerns, and what assistance can be accessed once they have left care is needed. The results in Table 4.9 show the descriptive statistics of an individual item and of Addressing the needs of abandoned young people domain. There are eight statements used to measure the content. Each of the 91 respondents submitted their responses in the five-point Likert scale. The Table 4.9 shows that the items have a mean value ranging from 3.37 to 4.03 (i.e., the response is positive).

The table shows that ANIC2 has the highest mean and ANIC5 has the lowest. The highest mean of 4.03 indicates that it is the most agreed with statement, that respondents agree that the idea of a plan which shows them skills and abilities needs to be further developed to succeed as an independent person. The lowest mean of 3.37 shows that respondents agree less with the statement, that respondents communicate with alternative families or friend families.

Additionally, the table shows that ANIC5 has the highest standard deviation, whereas ANIC 2 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation with the statement "communicate with alternative families and/or friend families" (i.e., the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average).

The aggregate mean of addressing the needs of abandoned young people is 3.76, with a standard deviation of 1.172. This shows that the respondents agree that staff of residential institutions do their best to address the needs of abandoned young people.

Out of 91 abandoned young people, 47 (51.6%) see that care services and authorities who look after their needs while in care provide them with the necessary information to access services and create a good life for themselves after they leave care.

Moreover, out of 91 abandoned young people, 81 (89%) feel having a plan (a pathway plan) for their future independent life and the associated opportunities would be of benefit, along with having a personal advisor to assist in working through options which are available.

**Addressing the needs of care leavers Domain :(ANOC)**

Code	Statements	Mean	S.D
ANOC1	Mentoring (a person with experience who offers advice to you as you live an independent life, such as training and employment opportunities, personal support)	3.62	1.516
ANOC2	Needs assessments (a plan which shows your skills and abilities which need to be further developed, such as knowledge pertaining to marriage, education, and employment, etc, to succeed as an independent person)	3.49	1.433
ANOC3	Comprehensive assessments (to better develop your social, psychological and physical well-being)	3.55	1.354
ANOC4	Professional intervention (for example, social workers working with you, to assist you in social and challenging matters, psychologists working with you to help with emotional and psychological issues, and marriage guidelines for my life after leaving care)	3.46	1.376
ANOC5	Dealing with psychological and emotional needs and problems.	3.38	1.456
ANOC6	Providing family and marriage counseling.	3.61	1.624
ANOC7	Linking me with a friend family or allow me to communicate with my friend family or alternative family (if any).	2.77	1.585
ANOC8	Linking you as a care leaver to a group of recently married sisters.	2.41	1.485
ANOC9	Following me up by Ekha'a employees or the supervising authority.	3.66	1.576
ANOC10	Following me up by the employees of my previous institution.	3.66	1.686
ANOC11	Empowering care leavers to join Ekha'a programmes which improve their self-esteem/confidence	3.89	1.378
ANOC12	Ensuring that the communication between Ekha'a and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development is positive in looking after the needs and concerns of care leavers.	3.96	1.489
	<b>Addressing the needs of care leavers</b>	<b>3.46</b>	<b>1.497</b>

Table 4-10 Descriptive Statistics of Addressing the needs of care leavers

Care leavers felt that they are put in the position of not being able to support themselves independently, as well as lacking the necessary experiences and capabilities to manage their well-being, pursue further education, access accommodation support, among others. The

results in Table 4.10 show the descriptive statistics of an individual item and of addressing the needs of care leavers domain. There are twelve statements used to measure the content. Each of the 102 respondents submitted their responses in the five-point Likert scale. The Table 4.10 shows that the items have a mean value ranging from 2.41 to 3.96 (i.e., the response is positive except ANOC7 and ANOC8).

The table shows that ANOC12 has the highest mean and ANOC8 has the lowest. The highest mean of 3.96 indicates that it is the most agreed upon statement, that ensuring that communication between Ekha'a and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development is positive in looking after the needs and concerns of care leavers. The lowest mean of 2.41 shows that respondent agree less with the statement, that you should be linked as a care leaver to a group of recently married sisters.

Additionally, the table shows that ANOC10 has the highest standard deviation, whereas ANOC3 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation with the statement "Following up by the employees of my previous institution" (i.e. the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average).

The aggregate mean of addressing the needs of care leavers is 3.46, with a standard deviation of 1.497. This shows that the respondents agree that staff of care institutions provided them with the necessary information to access services, creating a good life for themselves outside of care.

Out of 102 care leavers, 36 (35.3%) see that care, services and authorities who look after their needs create a good life for them after leaving care.

Moreover, out of 102 care leavers, 81 (79.4%) feel that having a plan (a pathway plan) for their future independent life and the associated opportunities would be beneficial, along with having a personal advisor to assist in working through options which are available.

### **Third Axis: challenges that face individuals about to leave care and care leavers**

Various challenges are prone to abandoned young people about to leave care, and care leavers. In the given context, three main issues are identified ,including accommodation problems, social and individual concerns, and financial and health awareness difficulties. Most care leavers felt that they received limited or no support from the staff in residential care institutions to develop and reach their potential, and they rightly felt the personnel's lack of comprehension of their needs and challenges ,resulting in issues when trying to integrate into the community .

#### **A. Accommodation challenges Domain: (AccommCh)**

Code	Statements	In care		Out care	
		Mea n	S.D	Mea n	S.D
AccommCh 1	A lack of opportunities on your part to access the proper type of living space after leaving care.	3.57	1.335	3.33	1.388

<b>AccommCh 2</b>	<b>A lack of understanding and appreciating personal rights as you will become an owner or renter of property.</b>	<b>3.37</b>	<b>1.189</b>	<b>3.46</b>	<b>1.412</b>
<b>AccommCh 3</b>	<b>Possibility of unstable accommodation due to personal financial difficulties.</b>	<b>3.77</b>	<b>1.309</b>	<b>3.51</b>	<b>1.370</b>
	<b>Accommodation challenges of orphans</b>	<b>3.57</b>	<b>1.105</b>	<b>3.44</b>	<b>1.167</b>

Table 4-11 pooled Descriptive Statistics of Accommodation challenges for abandoned young people and care leavers.

For abandoned young individuals in care, the mean is above 3. This situation implies that participants agreed to negative statements regarding a lack of opportunities to access the proper type of living space after leaving care, as well as a lack of clear comprehension of personal rights, including property ownership. Key players need to recognize these challenges to enhance the experience of abandoned young people and care leavers.

The results in Table 4.11 show the pooled descriptive statistics of an individual item and of Accommodation challenges for abandoned young people and care leavers. There are three statements used to measure the content. Each of the two groups' respondents submitted their responses in the five-point Likert scale. The Table 4.11 shows that the items have a mean value ranging from 3.33 to 3.51 (i.e. the response is positive for care leavers, while for abandoned young people the responses are positive, with the mean value ranging from 3.37 to 3.77).

The table shows that for abandoned young people, AccommCh3 has the highest mean and AccommCh2 has the lowest. The highest mean of 3.77 indicates that it is the most agreed upon statement, that there is a possibility of unstable accommodation due to personal financial difficulties. The lowest mean of 3.37 shows that respondents are in less agreement with the statement, that there is a lack of understanding and appreciation of personal rights as they become an owner or renter of property.

Additionally, the table shows that AccommCh1 has the highest standard deviation, whereas AccommCh2 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation with the statement "lack of opportunities on your part to access the proper type of living space after leaving care" (i.e., the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average).

The table shows that for care leavers, AccommCh3 has the highest mean and AccommCh1 has the lowest. The highest mean of 3.51 indicates that it is the most agreed upon statement, that there is a possibility of unstable accommodation due to personal financial difficulties. The lowest mean of 3.33 shows that respondents are in less agreement with the statement, that there is a lack of opportunities on their part to access the proper type of living space after leaving care.

Additionally, the table shows that AccommCh2 has the highest standard deviation, whereas AccommCh3 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more

deviation with the statement “lack of understanding and appreciating personal rights as you will become an owner or renter of property ” (i.e., the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average).

The aggregate mean of Accommodation challenges of abandoned young people is 3.57 with a standard deviation of 1.105, compared to a mean value of 3.44 with a standard deviation of 1.167 for care leavers.

**B. Social and Personal Issues challenges Domain: (SPICH)**

Code	Statements	In care		Out care	
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
SPICH1	Being offended when you are referred to as an “orphan” or an “abandoned young person”.	2.98	1.350	3.50	1.426
SPICH2	A personal urge to know who your birth parents are, which causes stress and other emotional issues for you.	2.99	1.346	3.22	1.376
SPICH3	A feeling of shame if other people know that you are in care.	3.10	1.309	3.05	1.569
SPICH4	Feeling insecure due to frequent movements and separations.	3.33	1.375	2.23	1.168
SPICH5	Having to work through social perceptions of your status within society.	3.05	1.205	3.65	1.166
SPICH6	Not understanding what options and assistance are available to me when I leave care.	3.18	1.296	3.66	1.331
SPICH7	A worry about being lonely due to a lack of close personal relationships.	3.05	1.223	2.72	1.360
	<b>Social and Personal Issues challenges for orphans</b>	<b>3.10</b>	<b>1.301</b>	<b>3.15</b>	<b>1.342</b>

Table 4-12 pooled Descriptive Statistics of Social and Personal Issues challenges for abandoned young people and care leavers.

Both abandoned young people in care and care leavers face several social and individual issues. With an average mean of 3 for both groups, it is clear that most felt insecure and unfamiliar with forming close relationships. The significance of attachment and its influence on the development of resiliency and the ability to cope with challenges and changes on the part of abandoned young people and care leavers is apparent.

The results in Table 4.12 show the pooled descriptive statistics of an individual item and as a whole of Social and Personal Issues challenges for abandoned young people and care leavers. There are seven statements used to measure the content. Each of the two groups' respondents submitted their responses in the five-point Likert scale. The Table 4.12 shows that the items have a mean value ranging from 2.98 to 3.33 (i.e., the response is positive for abandoned young people except for SPICH1 and SPICH2, which show negative response, while



care leaver responses are positive except for SPIC4 and SPIC7, which show negative responses and a mean value ranging from 2.23 to 3.66).

The table shows that for abandoned young people, SPIC4 has the highest mean and SPIC1 has the lowest. The highest mean of 3.33 indicates that it is the most agreed upon statement, that respondents felt insecure due to frequent movements and separations. The lowest mean of 2.98 shows that the statement has less agreement, of offence being felt when they are referred to as an “orphan” or an “abandoned young person”.

Additionally, the table shows that SPIC4 has the highest standard deviation, whereas SPIC5 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation with the statement “Feeling insecure due to frequent movements and separations” (i.e., the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average).

The table shows that for care leavers, SPIC6 has the highest mean and SPIC4 has the lowest. The highest mean of 3.66 indicates that it is the most agreed upon statement, that respondents do not have an understanding of what options and assistance are available to them when they leave care. The lowest mean of 2.23 shows that respondents are in less agreement with the statement, that they felt insecure due to frequent movements and separations.

Additionally, the table shows that SPIC3 has the highest standard deviation, whereas SPIC5 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation with the statement “feeling of shame if other people know that you are in care” (i.e., the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average).

The aggregate mean of Social and Personal Issues challenges for abandoned young people is 3.10 with a standard deviation of 1.301, compared to a mean value of 3.15 with a standard deviation of 1.342 for care leavers.

### C. Financial and Health Awareness challenges Domain: (FHACH)

Code	Statements	In care		Out care	
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
FHACH1	I have an understanding of how to budget expenses and payments for my lifestyle after leaving care.	3.32	1.290	2.74	1.281
FHACH2	I can look after myself.	3.78	1.052	3.87	1.114
FHACH3	I can earn a good income without educational opportunities.	2.89	1.295	2.20	1.259
FHACH4	I can have a stable family environment without a good income.	3.11	1.149	2.86	1.379
FHACH5	I feel stable personally without a good income.	3.26	1.290	3.23	1.258

<b>FHACH6</b>	<b>I feel that my life in care is as good as how I would live outside of care.</b>	<b>3.36</b>	<b>1.160</b>	<b>3.84</b>	<b>1.426</b>
	<b>Financial and Health Awareness challenges for orphans</b>	<b>3.29</b>	<b>1.206</b>	<b>3.12</b>	<b>1.286</b>

Table 4-13 pooled Descriptive Statistics of Financial and Health Awareness challenges for abandoned young people and care leavers.

Both abandoned young people and care leavers perceived they needed adequate educational opportunities to earn a stable income once they left care .Further, care leavers affirmed facing challenges of budgeting for living expenses, coupled with the difference in the quality of life in and out of care. The results in Table 4.13 show the pooled descriptive statistics of an individual item and of Financial and Health Awareness challenges for abandoned young people and care leavers. There are six statements used to measure the content. Each of the two groups' respondents submitted their responses in the five-point Likert scale. The Table 4.13 shows that the items have a mean value ranging from 2.89 to 3.78 (i.e. the response is positive for abandoned young people except FHACH3, while care leaver responses fluctuated between negative and positive, with the mean value ranging from 2.20 to 3.87.

The table shows that for abandoned young people, FHACH2 has the highest mean and FHACH3 has the lowest. The highest mean of 3.78 indicates that it is statement with the most agreement, that respondents can look after themselves. The lowest mean of 2.89 shows that respondents are in less agreement with the statement, that respondents can earn a good income without educational opportunities.

Additionally, the table shows that FHACH3 has the highest standard deviation, whereas FHACH2 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation with the statement "I can earn a good income without educational opportunities" (i.e., the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average).

The table shows that for care leavers, FHACH2 has the highest mean and FHACH3 has the lowest. The highest mean of 3.87 indicates that it is the most agreed upon statement, that respondents can look after themselves. The lowest mean of 2.20 shows that respondents are in less agreement with the statement, that respondents can earn a good income without educational opportunities.

Additionally, the table shows that FHACH6 has the highest standard deviation, whereas FHACH2 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation with the statement "I feel that my life in care is as good as how I would live outside of care" (i.e., the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average).

The aggregate mean of Financial and Health Awareness challenges for abandoned young people is 3.29 with a standard deviation of 1.26, compared to a mean value of 3.12 with a standard deviation of 1.286 for care leavers.

#### Fourth Axis: level of care provided to individuals about to leave care and care leavers

In this axis, an examination of the present care level directed towards abandoned young people about to leave care, and care leavers, is made. Six components are considered for this exploration, including financial support, health care delivery, accommodation, continuing education, rights and obligations, and family and relationships.

##### A. Financial Support Domain: (FS)

Code	Statements	In care		Out care	
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
FS1	I know how to use a bank and its facilities.	3.89	1.100	3.43	1.432
FS2	I know how and when to use credit cards.	3.86	1.207	3.83	1.259
FS3	I am being taught how to budget.	3.56	1.335	3.14	1.393
FS4	I am being shown how to read a bill/invoice/receipt.	3.75	1.216	2.66	1.564
FS5	I know how to invest my money	3.79	1.160	2.31	1.320
	<b>Financial Support for orphans</b>	<b>3.77</b>	<b>1.203</b>	<b>3.074</b>	<b>1.394</b>

Table 4-14 pooled Descriptive Statistics of Accommodation challenges for abandoned young people and care leavers.

The results in Table 4.14 show the pooled descriptive statistics of an individual item and as a whole of Financial Support for abandoned young people and care leavers. There are five statements used to measure the content. Each of the two groups' respondents submitted their responses in the five-point Likert scale. The Table 4.14 shows that the items have a mean value ranging from 3.56 to 3.89 (i.e., the response is positive for abandoned young people, while care leaver responses varied between negative and positive, with the mean value ranging from 2.31 to 3.84).

The table shows that for abandoned young people, FS1 has the highest mean and FS3 has the lowest. The highest mean of 3.89 indicates that it is the most agreed upon statement, that respondents knew how to use a bank and its facilities. The lowest mean of 3.56 shows that respondents are in less agreement with the statement, that they are taught how to budget.

Additionally, the table shows that FS3 has the highest standard deviation, whereas FS1 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation with the statement "I am being taught how to budget" (i.e., the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average).

The table shows that for care leavers, FS2 has the highest mean and FS5 has the lowest. The highest mean of 3.83 indicates that it is the most agreed with statement, that respondents

knew how and when to use credit cards. The lowest mean of 2.31 shows that respondents are in less agreement with the statement, that they know how to invest their money.

Additionally, the table shows that FS4 has the highest standard deviation whereas FS2 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation with the statement "I am being shown how to read a bill, invoice and receipt" (i.e., the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average).

The aggregate mean of Financial Support for abandoned young people is 3.77 with a standard deviation of 1.203, compared to a mean value of 3.074 with a standard deviation of 1.394 for care leavers.

### B. Health care Domain: (HC)

Code	Statements	In care		Out care	
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
HC1	I am being shown how to live hygienically (for example, personal or sexual hygiene).	4.15	.906	4.22	.961
HC2	I am being taught information about ways to avoid pregnancy.	3.60	1.134	1.95	1.269
HC3	I am being taught about potential health issues which could affect me, such as drugs, smoking, alcohol or sexually transmitted diseases.	3.95	.970	2.22	1.340
HC4	I am being taught about potential social and mental health issues, such as stress, anger management, phobias, depression, conflicts, and so on.	4.02	1.000	2.09	1.220
	<b>Health care provided for orphans</b>	<b>3.93</b>	<b>1.003</b>	<b>2.62</b>	<b>1.198</b>

Table 4-15 pooled Descriptive Statistics of Health care provided for abandoned young people and care leavers.

The results in Table 4.15 show the pooled descriptive statistics of an individual item and as a whole of Health care provided for abandoned young people and care leavers. There are four statements used to measure the content. Each of the two groups' respondents submitted their responses in the five-point Likert scale. Table 4.15 shows that the items have a mean value ranging from 3.60 to 4.15 (i.e., the response is positive for abandoned young people, while care leaver responses varied between negative and positive, with the mean value ranging from 1.95 to 4.22).

The table shows that for in care, HC1 has the highest mean and HC2 has the lowest. The highest mean of 4.15 indicates that it is the statement with the most agreement, that

respondents are shown how to live hygienically. The lowest mean of 3.60 shows that respondents are in less agreement with the statement, that respondents are taught information about ways to avoid pregnancy.

Additionally, the table shows that HC2 has the highest standard deviation, whereas HC1 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation with the statement “respondents being taught information about ways to avoid pregnancy” (i.e., the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average).

The table shows that for care leavers, HC1 has the highest mean and HC2 has the lowest. The highest mean of 4.22 indicates that it is the most agreed upon statement, that respondents are shown how to live hygienically. The lowest mean of 1.95 shows that respondents are in less agreement with the statement, that respondents are taught information about ways to avoid pregnancy.

Additionally, the table shows that HC3 has the highest standard deviation, whereas HC1 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation with the statement “taught about potential health issues which could affect me, such as drugs, smoking, alcohol or sexually transmitted diseases” (i.e., the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average).

The aggregate mean of Health care for abandoned young people provided is 3.93 with a standard deviation of 1.003, compared to a mean value of 2.62 with a standard deviation of 1.198 for care leavers.

For the majority, 82 (90.1%), of abandoned young people, their health insurance is provided through the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, while 9 (8.9%) health insurance is provided through their work.

For care leavers, health insurance is provided through different organizations as follows:

42 (41.2%) through the orphan husband’s work, 34 (33.3%) through the Ekha’a organization, 18 (17.6%) have health insurance provided through their own work, and 8 (7.8%) have insurance provided through the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development.

### C. Accommodation provided Domain: (AP)

Code	Statements	In care		Out care	
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
AP1	I am learning the skills necessary to manage accommodation.	3.70	1.130	3.72	1.102
AP2	I am learning how to understand rental agreements or house ownership documentation.	3.24	1.223	3.05	1.518
AP3	I am learning how to manage my own home.	3.64	1.060	4.05	.979
	Accommodation provided for orphans	3.53	1.138	3.61	1.200

Table 4-16 pooled Descriptive Statistics of Accommodation challenges for care leavers and abandoned young people.

The results in Table 4.16 show the pooled descriptive statistics of an individual item and as a whole of Accommodation provided for abandoned young people and care leavers. There are three statements used to measure the content. Each of the two groups' respondents submitted their responses in the five-point Likert scale. The Table 4.16 shows that the items have a mean value ranging from 3.24 to 3.70 (i.e., the response is positive for abandoned young people, while care leaver responses are positive, with the mean value ranging from 3.05 to 4.05.

The table shows that for abandoned young people, AP1 has the highest mean and AP2 has the lowest. The highest mean of 3.70 indicates that it is the statement with the most agreement, that respondents learn the skills necessary to manage accommodation. The lowest mean of 3.24 shows that respondents agree less with the statement, that respondents learn how to understand rental agreements or house ownership documentation.

Additionally, the table shows that AP2 has the highest standard deviation, whereas AP3 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation with the statement "respondent learning how to understand rental agreements or house ownership documentation" (i.e., the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average).

The table shows that for care leavers, AP3 has the highest mean and AP2 has the lowest. The highest mean of 4.05 indicates that it is the most agreed upon statement, that respondents learn how to manage his own home. The lowest mean of 3.05 shows that respondents agree less with the statement, that respondents learn how to understand rental agreements or house ownership documentation.

Additionally, the table shows that AP2 has the highest standard deviation, whereas AP3 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation with the statement "respondent learning how to understand rental agreements or house ownership documentation" (i.e., the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average).

The aggregate mean of accommodation provided for abandoned young people is 3.53 with a standard deviation of 1.138, compared to a mean value of 3.61 with a standard deviation of 1.200 for care leavers.

**D. Continuing Education provided Domain: (CEP)**

Code	Statements	In care		Out care	
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
CEP1	I have access to training courses that help me in my career.	3.96	.942	2.95	1.389

<b>CEP2</b>	<b>I am learning how to access educational opportunities for different types of work.</b>	<b>3.84</b>	<b>.847</b>	<b>2.83</b>	<b>1.483</b>
<b>CEP3</b>	<b>I am learning how to write a CV and fill out a job application.</b>	<b>3.74</b>	<b>1.052</b>	<b>3.20</b>	<b>1.421</b>
<b>CEP4</b>	<b>I am learning how to up skill myself for different occupations.</b>	<b>3.84</b>	<b>.958</b>	<b>2.53</b>	<b>1.362</b>
<b>CEP5</b>	<b>I am learning how to use a computer and different types of software.</b>	<b>3.53</b>	<b>1.139</b>	<b>3.62</b>	<b>1.169</b>
	<b>Continuing Education provided for orphans</b>	<b>3.78</b>	<b>0.988</b>	<b>3.03</b>	<b>1.365</b>

Table 4-17 pooled Descriptive Statistics of Continuing Education provided for abandoned young people and care leavers.

The results in Table 4.17 show the pooled descriptive statistics of an individual item and of Continuing Education provided for abandoned young people and care leavers. There are five statements used to measure the content. Each of the two groups' respondents submitted their responses in the five-point Likert scale. The Table 4.17 shows that the items have a mean value ranging from 3.53 to 3.96 (i.e. the response is positive for abandoned young people, while care leaver responses fluctuated between negative and positive, with the mean value ranging from 2.53 to 3.62).

The table shows that for abandoned young people, CEP1 has the highest mean and CEP5 has the lowest. The highest mean of 3.96 indicates that it is the most agreed upon statement, that respondents have access to training courses that help in their career. The lowest mean of 3.53 shows that respondents are in less agreement with the statement, that respondents learn how to use a computer and different types of software.

Additionally, the table shows that CEP5 has the highest standard deviation, whereas CEP2 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation with the statement "respondents learning how to use a computer and different types of software" (i.e., the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average).

The table shows that for care leavers, CEP5 has the highest mean and CEP4 has the lowest. The highest mean of 3.62 indicates that it is the statement with the most agreement, that respondents learn how to use a computer and different types of software. The lowest mean of 2.53 shows that respondents are in less agreement with the statement, that respondents learn how to up skill themselves for different occupations.

Additionally, the table shows that CEP2 has the highest standard deviation, whereas CEP5 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation with the statement "respondents learning how to access educational opportunities for different types of work" (i.e., the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average).

The aggregate mean of Continuing Education provided for abandoned young people is 3.78 with a standard deviation of 0.988, compared to a mean value of 3.03 with a standard deviation of 1.365 for care leavers.

**E. Rights and Obligations Domain: (R&O)**

Code	Statements	In care		Out care	
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
R&O1	I know about my obligations as a citizen/member of society.	3.78	1.218	2.68	1.380
R&O2	I know about my rights while in care and after care.	3.66	1.157	2.55	1.398
R&O3	I know which organizations and services across Saudi Arabia could provide me with assistance after leaving care.	3.44	1.275	2.61	1.358
R&O4	I know what is required from me to gain access to services to support me after leaving care.	3.30	1.188	2.34	1.278
	<b>Rights and Obligations of orphans</b>	<b>3.55</b>	<b>1.209</b>	<b>2.55</b>	<b>1.354</b>

Table 4-18 pooled Descriptive Statistics of Accommodation challenges for abandoned young people and care leavers.

The results in Table 4.18 show the pooled descriptive statistics of an individual item and as a whole of Rights and Obligations for abandoned young people and care leavers. There are four statements used to measure the content. Each of the two groups' respondents submitted their responses in the five-point Likert scale. The Table 4.18 shows that the items have a mean value ranging from 3.30 to 3.78 (i.e., the response is positive for abandoned young people, while care leaver response is negative, with the mean value ranging from 2.34 to 2.68.

The table shows that for abandoned young people, R&O1 has the highest mean and R&O4 has the lowest. The highest mean of 3.78 indicates that it is the most agreed upon statement, that respondents know about obligations as a citizen/member of society. The lowest mean of 3.30 shows that the statement receives less support, that respondents know what is required from them to gain access to services to support them after leaving care.

Additionally, the table shows that R&O3 has the highest standard deviation, whereas R&O2 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation with the statement "respondents know which organizations and services across Saudi Arabia could provide them with assistance after leaving care" (i.e., the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average).

The table shows that for care leavers, R&O1 has the highest mean and R&O4 has the lowest. The highest mean of **2.68** indicates that it is the statement with the most agreement, that respondents know about their obligations as a citizen/member of society. The lowest mean of 2.34 shows that respondents are in less agreement with the statement, that respondents



know what is required from them to gain access to services to support them after leaving care.

Additionally, the table shows that R&O2 has the highest standard deviation, whereas R&O4 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation with the statement “respondents know about my rights while in care and after care” (i.e., the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average).

The aggregate mean of Rights and Obligations for abandoned young people is 3.55 with a standard deviation of 1.209, compared to a mean value of 2.55 with a standard deviation of 1.354 for care leavers.

#### F. Family and Relationships Domain: (F&R)

Code	Statements	In care		Out care	
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
F&R1	I know how to socialize with people around me.	4.14	.864	3.98	.933
F&R2	I am being given information about how to raise a family in positive manners.	3.73	1.012	4.04	.943
F&R3	I am being given information about how to look after my needs and concerns while pregnant.	3.47	1.259	3.85	.989
F&R4	I am being given information about how to look after my child/children and family.	3.31	1.226	4.06	.993
F&R5	I am being given information about the rights and responsibilities which are part of the relationship between a husband and a wife.	3.26	1.324	3.52	1.216
F&R6	I can form relationships with people around me.	4.11	.888	3.25	1.214
	<b>Family and Relationship assistance for orphans</b>	<b>3.67</b>	<b>1.096</b>	<b>3.78</b>	<b>1.048</b>

Table 4-19 pooled Descriptive Statistics of Family and Relationships for abandoned young people and care leavers.

The results in Table 4.19 show the pooled descriptive statistics of an individual item and as a whole of Family and Relationships for abandoned young people and care leavers. There are six statements used to measure the content. Each of the two groups' respondents submitted their responses in the five-point Likert scale. The Table 4.19 shows that the items have a mean value ranging from 3.26 to 4.14 (i.e. the response is positive for abandoned young people, while care leaver responses are positive, with the mean value ranging from 3.25 to 4.06).

The table shows that for abandoned young people, F&R1 has the highest mean and F&R5 has the lowest. The highest mean of 4.14 indicates that it is the most agreed upon statement,

that respondents know how to socialize with people around them. The lowest mean of 3.26 shows that respondents are less supportive of the statement, that respondents are given information about the rights and responsibilities which are part of the relationship between a husband and a wife.

Additionally, the table shows that F&R5 has the highest standard deviation, whereas F&R1 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation with the statement "respondent given information about the rights and responsibilities which are part of the relationship between a husband and a wife" (i.e., the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average).

The table shows that for care leavers, F&R4 has the highest mean and F&R6 has the lowest. The highest mean of 4.06 indicates that it is the most agreed upon statement, that respondents are given information about how to look after children and family. The lowest mean of 3.33 shows that respondents are less supportive of the statement, that respondents can form relationships with other people around them.

Additionally, the table shows that F&R5 has the highest standard deviation, whereas F&R1 has the lowest standard deviation. This means respondents have more deviation with the statement "respondent given information about the rights and responsibilities which are part of the relationship between a husband and a wife" (i.e., the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average).

The aggregate mean of Family and Relationships for abandoned young people is 3.67 with a standard deviation of 1.096, compared to a mean value of 3.78 with a standard deviation of 1.048 for care leavers.

### **Summary of Chapter**

Generally, participants generate distinct responses with varying scores. Abandoned young people and care leavers provide differing answers to similar questions, indicating diverse needs and challenges. For example, responses from care leavers depict that they are less prepared, with abandoned young people affirming that they feel safeguarded while under care. However, it is clear that the transition process for abandoned young people is quite complex. Perhaps, this relatively low score for care leavers implies that abandoned young people lack a clear comprehension of the real world events or experiences. On a scale of 1 to 5, most responses fall within the range of 3, which shows a neutral position in terms of preparedness and a lack of it .

Several descriptive illustrations depict these differences between abandoned young people and care leavers. In Table 4.2, for instance, an exploration of the theme of continuing Education and Training Needs is positive for abandoned young people, but negative for care leavers .Table 4.8 shows the theme of marriage and family needs for abandoned young people and care leavers. From the results, it is clear that care leavers generate negative sentiments, while abandoned young people's views fluctuate between negative and positive having a mean value ranging from 2.93 to 3.99. Further, results in Table 4.15 regarding health portray positive and negative responses from abandoned young people and care leavers, respectively.

Other needs and challenges apparent among these groups are also highlighted. In Table 4-18, Rights and Obligations, abandoned young people generate positive responses, while care leavers' responses are majorly negative. The personal growth needs of abandoned young people and care leavers show that the items have a mean value ranging from 3.70 to 4.05, respectively. Here, the views of care leavers fluctuate between a mean of 2.50 and 3.60. These descriptive examples will be examined further and in more detail in the next chapter.

Despite residential care being found to be a part of the issue, as opposed to the intervention, the study reflects a proportion of abandoned young people for whom this system is a primary alternative. However, it is important to offer comfortable and secure places to live to make residential institutions favorable for this group. This context implies delivering care by directing attention towards the needs and dignity of abandoned young people in care. As a highly vulnerable population, residents of these care systems need to feel part of the home in organizing policy and offerings, thereby perceiving themselves as more responsible in later life while out of care. Various internal and external programs should be considered for residents to make them more engaged.

As proposed from the findings, employing individuals from major entities such as the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD) and other institutions, alongside professional social workers, might assist in developing and executing improvements. Abandoned young people in care need to be inspired to express themselves as a way of establishing a sense of autonomy and privacy. Furthermore, these individuals need to be connected with local agencies and entities within their communities through volunteering or obtaining membership. By supporting young individuals to implement something different through voluntary acts, they can expand their networks in the society, as well as promote their self-efficacy, self-esteem, and a sense of belongingness. Abandoned young people out of care may improve their coping capabilities and develop resilience through interacting with other community members.

A majority of challenges prone to abandoned young people out of care can be addressed if individual and emotional stability are acknowledged from an early period. Instability in childcare placements is a key determinant of poor results in adulthood transition. For example, the quantitative findings show that respondents disagree with the statement that they receive information regarding how to cope with their spouse prior to getting married. Stability acquired by residents while in care can advance higher achievement of young people. In accordance, practices and policies still need to be designed, with a clear focus on stability for each young individual.

Overall, the study results in both the quantitative sections depict a general agreement between the outcomes of the responses of caregivers with regard to the approaches adopted for dealing with abandoned young people. As will be stated in the discussion chapter, it is crucial to develop an efficient and effective landscape for abandoned young people to facilitate their positive growth. Similarly, quantitative results from this chapter show that challenges and issues arising from the care system render prevailing interventions inefficient.

Generally, the needs of this vulnerable population, including those in care and out of care, are overlooked, mainly due to their limited social and professional skills.

This consistency in findings will be demonstrated in the discussion chapter where a detailed description will be made. Efforts to assess and enhance the quality of care should initially focus on staffing, thus, enabling effective residential care. For that reason, residential institutions need to be managed and staffed by individuals who are well trained, competent, and dedicated towards working with abandoned young people. Managers and leaders in these institutions should have precise and suitable objectives linked to how to appropriately manage such systems, as well as possess the capabilities to inspire personnel towards set goals. Nonetheless, in correspondence with such needs, a sense of independence should be shared by all elements of the care system, including residents, staff, and people in charge or management.

In summary, this chapter offers an overview of the residential care offerings for abandoned young people. There is a dire need to establish broader connections for abandoned young people in Saudi Arabia to advance their relationships with others within their societies. After listening to the opinions of abandoned young people in care systems and out of care, it is clear that many of the problems are yet to be resolved.

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS: KEY THEMES**

#### **Introduction**

As a researcher, I have interacted with diverse people in distinct contexts with the goal of understanding the plight of the individuals, both within and outside the social care facilities. Given these opportunities, I feel that I have the necessary experience to both understand their actual situations and determine appropriate interventions. Abandoned young people need empathetic care and attention; their situation requires those who work with individuals in care to understand them at a personal level. In particular, care leavers should have access to quality education to help acquire requisite skills and live independently after having left care. Overall, the challenges and needs of abandoned young adults and care leavers need to be identified to develop effective solutions. In the following sections, I will describe the major themes observed from the experiences of staff and abandoned young people within social care systems. I will also explore the predicaments of care leavers living outside of care. In these sections, I will describe the narratives of abandoned young people, workers, and care leavers in detail and provide the research context for individual themes. After evaluation of the available data, three key themes are identified: preparation, marriage, and specialist support required for young women. Based on the study results, the researcher offers an overview of the different challenges and experiences of abandoned young people and staff in social care systems as well as the situations encountered by care leavers. These experiences are complemented by the participants' personal narrations.

#### **Theme 1: Preparation**

The first major theme focuses on the concept of preparation. In this regard, the researcher offers a description of the preparedness of care leavers for life and challenges outside institutions. The primary problem is that these individuals are still dependent on the services provided by the social facilities. When fully independent, most of them face the challenge of completing various responsibilities and duties since they may have left care without essential preparations for the life ahead. This study provides an overview of their characteristics to validate abandoned young adults and care leavers as the principal focus. Different issues arise from their experiences in and outside the institutions.

Preparation for a life outside of institutional care is something that is perceived differently by those within the system (workers and abandoned young people) as well as those who have left care (care leavers). In terms of abandoned young people, some feel that they need someone who understands them and gives information about moving to social homes as well as how to live independently. This is because many of them feel that they cannot be independent, as the staff of the institution both do everything for them but, at the same time, does not offer the quality of, or even the necessary and age-appropriate, courses to help them be ready for an independent life outside of care.

This concept also affected the readiness of care leavers in terms of their gender roles and functions. A substantial number of care leavers agree more strongly on the point that an understanding of their rights and responsibilities, as well as of what is expected of, or available to, them once they leave care, would be one of the biggest needs of girls while they are in care so that they can lead an independent life outside of care or even be able to access assistance when necessary. In fact, being able to get a job once out of care is seen by care

leavers as instrumental in being able to maintain their dignity and family security once out of care, as the following quote indicates:

*I will be independent if I have a guaranteed job. I mean, not in a company, not if they can fire me at any moment. If it is guaranteed, then for sure, I will be independent. because now jobs are asking you to register for insurance, but if I register, I lose my social security. I fear they will take me out of it, and then I will lose my only income (CL 7)*

This example also illustrates how most care leavers were afraid when leaving care. The fear was a result of the abrupt and unprepared move out of care. The individuals lacked the required skills to survive independently, such as cooking, shopping, or managing finances. If this support and preparation for an independent life were in place prior to leaving care, as care leavers feel is necessary, it would also help abandoned young people feel more confident in their abilities. Besides, many of these individuals see themselves facing an isolated and insecure life outside of care without the support of both the workers in the institutions as well as their sisters. This can be even more important when the person they marry has the potential to be a husband of questionable character, which could mean a potential return to care if the marriage fails, which is not ideal, particularly for women with children. This idea of insecurity and isolation is best illustrated in the following quote:

*I see that they made us like this. In the beginning, there is no going out or visits, and they go with us for everything. We are afraid that we will go alone. We are used to going and doing everything with them. It is a logical result that we do not integrate with other people. Now, the girls have begun to see other people, but according to the specialist, some of the girls are allowed to sleep at her friend's house. No one can do anything with her, and some of the specialists did not agree with everything, so some of them do not go with you. However, for the young girls, they should pay attention to them. Sometimes, she gets to know a bad boy or a bad group of girls, which has ruined her at a young age and she does not know. But, because of her frustration and fanaticism, they let her go. (AYP 2)*

Care leavers also expressed that the preparation for leaving care is a short exercise in which they were not adequately involved. As such, some of the highlighted that the caregivers did not involve them when establishing plans for their futures. For some of the care leavers, their expressed wishes or preferences were not considered during the development of their future plans. Since their plans were not in line with their aspirations, the care leavers felt that their career paths were largely affected, hence also affecting their emotional well-being. Even those in care indicate their fear of leaving care unready as expressed in the quote below:

*There are no official courses, but there are optional courses. But, even if you leave the institution, there is no program that you can enter in order to be ready to leave. I mean, the institution is supposed to see the problems of our sisters when they went out, and logically they must work on solving them by creating a program for the girls about to leave the institution, so that they can be ready. But, I do not see this thing happening in the institution. This scares me. I feel they want us to come out, but that it is not important if we are ready. (AYP 1)*

Many abandoned young people also feel that the majority of their daily needs are looked after often for them by institution staff while they are in care. This makes it difficult for them

to do things themselves once they leave care because they do not understand what needs to be done. By the time they are leaving care, young people tend to be over-protected such that they are unaware of their rights, duties, and obligations, they lack the ability to follow up on their own health and face significant challenges securing accommodation.

In regard to rights and duties, there is a lot of disagreement in terms of what exactly abandoned young people and care leavers should know before leaving care, on the part of all actors in the care services in Saudi Arabia. In addition to the idea of fairness in care, which abandoned young people want, and better preparation for life outside of care, which was highlighted by care leavers, care leavers also made it clear that some issues which they faced in life were not able to be taught, but better demonstrated on the part of workers, managers or alternative family members. As one care leaver said,

*Rights and duties are clarified from life. When someone tells you such and such, this is your right, this is what you are responsible for. Then, you start to understand it. It is not something that is studied; it is a need that you learn in your daily life. I see that it is dependent on the managers who like to sit with the girls and talk about your rights and your responsibilities. Likewise, it is from alternative mothers who are with you in the institution, and old workers, that you start to understand. But, there are some institutions that are not concerned about the girl, who they let do whatever they, even if she is wrong. There is no punishment. So, how can she understand the right to her and her responsibilities? She does not understand whether it is correct or not. Because of this, it is important that the managers pay attention to such things in management, and make sure that the alternative mothers talk about it with the girls, because the alternative mother sits more with the girls. (cl 10)*

Essentially, care leavers wanted to know their rights and obligations before leaving care at an early age and feel that the MHRSD has a key role to play in this regard given the perception of the MHRSD as being the controlling authority in the care system. One respondent felt that, if such knowledge was imparted to girls before leaving care, they would be able to live on their own, as understanding their rights would enable them to better understand their situation, and as such, they would focus on gaining an education that helped them to find a suitable job and to develop their personality as well as be more successful in socializing with others. This respondent also felt that this would allow them to have a better chance to own an apartment which, when taken with the other factors, would help them and their family to live a decent life without having to return to Ekha'a if problems arose because they would be content and independent.

Furthermore, these young individuals are over-protected to the point that they cannot take care of the issues involving their health status. Some abandoned young people say that health appointments are made for them by the clinic in the institution, and they can't do it by themselves because it is part of the institution's system, once again indicating that there is a weakness in allowing girls to gain independence and confidence in matters relating to self-care skills. This is seen in the following quote:

*How can they help me? To be independent, to be by myself. I am 23 years old. If I go to the hospital, the nurse or any worker will go with me. She is the one who makes the papers. I just go when she has finished everything. Even if I go to the mall, the alternative mother or aunt*

*goes with us and walks with us and watches us, as if we are children. This is something that makes you independent, to depend on yourself. You know, I became very nervous when I was accepted into college, and I became tense, because the workers do everything for me. They go with us in the school, they register us, they finished all the papers. Now, they say that we need to go to social homes. Okay, if we go and we don't know what we are doing, we will be afraid. Frankly, it is difficult for us to rely on ourselves, day and night (AYP 1).*

Care leavers have more to say on the issue of health. Many individuals indicated that they face issues accessing care and did not have adequate assistance and knowledge about such matters either before or after leaving care. For instance, when some care leavers needed medical insurance and ask for it from Ekha'a, they were told that insurance is no longer available, or found that they had the wrong type of insurance (for single girls), which they could not use if they were married. They are also generally unsure regarding whether they can actually access counselling or medical assistance from Ekha'a. All of this adds to the stress of living either independently or as part of a family, as they feel insecure and unstable as a result of the lack, or perceived lack, of health care, and support from both the MHRSD and Ekha'a is seen as necessary in these areas to mitigate such issues.

On the issue of accommodation, while workers in the MHRSD, Ekha'a, and institutions did not have anything to say on this subject beyond the previously mentioned changes to the way in which abandoned young people were looked after from institutions to social houses, there were some issues noted by both abandoned young people as well as care leavers. Some abandoned young people felt that they have no idea what to do regarding buying or renting a house once they leave care, and worried that they would be ridiculed by others due to their lack of knowledge. There was also an expectation that, once they leave care, someone would be available to help them in such matters, another reference to abandoned young people having things done for them and, as a result, not being ready to live independently once they leave care. Many care leavers also felt that it was difficult to find appropriate accommodation due to there being a lack of available options, or even in knowing that there were options available, as noted in the following quote:

*I will be honest with you; they are not clear, and the system is not clear, too. But I see that the problem is not the system, but Ekha'a itself. It allows the girls to shout at them and raise their voices. They give them everything, but for someone like me, they give me nothing. I do not know. I mean, some of them pay a down payment, and some of them do not. I don't know why. I hope they are clear, and put down clear conditions. If they do, I will feel that there is justice for all girls (CL6).*

Abandoned young people and care leavers offer diverse views pertaining to the issue of accommodation. Unfortunately, these perceptions appear to have been somewhat neglected by workers in the residential institutions and by those working in Ekha'a. To better address the needs and concerns of these groups, the current housing system and ownership requirements should be reviewed to align them with the needs of care leavers and abandoned young people. Knowledge of rights and responsibilities and daily life duties and obligations should also be provided to young people to ensure they can fully fend for themselves once they leave care.



## **Theme 2: Specialist support required for young women**

The second theme emphasizes the importance of specialist support for young women. These individuals require someone they can trust and depend on psychologically as they begin their independent lives out of care and even in marriage. Continuity of care is also important for many abandoned young people, as there is a feeling that the continuous transferring of specialists and the abandoned young people themselves between institutions by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD) makes it hard for girls to find and trust the assistance offered in institutions. Since developing a relationship takes some time, breaking it only to re-establish it with another care giver leads to suspicion and a lack of trust and demonstrated in the following comments:

*I wish the ministry did not transfer the specialist, because it is difficult to get used to a person and then she will move. It is very difficult, because she understands your situation, and then they bring another specialist who cannot understand you, and then you cannot understand what your situation is? It becomes difficult to communicate with her. (AYP 3)*

*I was in the institution in Makkah when I was 12 years old. Then, I moved to an institution in Jeddah, when it was decided by the ministry that we must move, so I moved between two institutions. The transfer was negative because we loved our institution and the female specialists in the institution. (AYP 6)*

A need for equal opportunities, guidance, and support provided to many young people living with their families should as be given to care leavers. Enabling these individuals to leave care when ready and providing them with simultaneous post-care financial, therapeutic, and emotional support may lead to more enhanced outcomes. At the same time, there have been some areas for improvement noted. Indeed, staff in charge at Ekha'a say that, if Ekha'a's administration has not helped orphans to depend on themselves, they will be considered to have failed in one of their organization's key visions, which is to enable girls to depend on themselves. In this respect, Ekha'a can be seen to be aware of the potential of not being able to meet their vision and the need for improvements. People in charge of residential care also say that there should be clarity and fairness in dealing with girls in the system, something which can help to foster the independence of girls when they leave the institution. There is also awareness among the people in charge of residential care that the offered programs need to be updated after identifying the various problems facing girls outside the institution, and started at an early age so that the girls can benefit more as they get older, as noted in the following quote:

*Certainly, they need this, but I see that most people do not know from their young age, and this is a defect of the system or the specialists who applied the system to them before. The result of this is that, when they grow up, they want everything by force, because they are not accustomed to knowing what is a right, a duty, and a responsibility, and who should teach them how to take responsibility. There was overprotection for them by female specialists who carried out their duties, due to a feeling of increased pity for them by those who work with them because they are orphans. This policy is a defect in their personalities because the specialists did not deal with them in normal manners. Now, we hear words from them like. "You serve us". This is the result of such negative practices from those who previously worked with them (psychologist in an institution).*

The idea of fairness is important to those individuals in charge of residential care institutions, who say that care leavers need to know their rights and obligations before leaving care and understand that they have reached a specific stage in their life where different rights and obligations are needed and mandatory given what they have experienced and will experience in the future. As they get older, girls became more aware, but the manager of their institution may not apply rules and regulations evenly, meaning that some girls may grow up to be unreasonable, or lacking in knowledge, which makes it even harder for them to understand their rights and obligations. As one staff member noted, *“All girls should be treated in the same way, across all institutions, so that all girls have an equal knowledge of their rights and obligations”*.

Furthermore, specialist care for young women is required to ensure they are well-equipped to be independent. The women also require ongoing mentorship within and after they leave care institutions to ensure they are motivated to face the challenges experienced in society as well as marriage. However, some care leavers were of the opinion that the institutions abandoned them at some point. This problem is exacerbated by inequalities in care within the institutions. Specialists and many abandoned young people also felt that a unified care system with standards, along with dedicated marriage mentors (as noted by people in charge of residential care), would help to solve this issue, as an abandoned young person noted when she said the following:

The girl needs it before she comes out of the institution, so that she can be independent and know how to make her situation better, and it should be from a competent person, who wants her to get benefits.

### **Theme 3: Marriage**

In the third theme, the researcher provides a background of the marriage contexts for care leavers and abandoned young individuals (particularly young girls) in institutions. Different challenges are described by the participants. Mainly, these individuals assist in portraying the theme of marriage among young girls within and outside social care systems.

Marriage is a key area in which abandoned young people, care leavers, and staff at the MHRSD differ in their opinions on what is, and is not, working. For many of the MHRSD staff, there is a feeling that the process of getting married is quite robust. Many respondents noted that, if a girl wants to get married to a man, he would go to the marriage committee, which would ask him about his salary, his work, and other personal information as well as give him information about the girl who wants to get married. Then, the committee’s team, which consists of a psychologist, a social worker, and a person from the institution in which the girl is living, will spend some time with the man to ask him for a blood test to ensure he is of good health as well as to test him for emotional, psychological and financial problems.

Some staff in charge at MHRSD also note that Ekha’a is responsible for girls if they marry from social homes, but not a girl who marries from an alternative family or an institution, as the MHRSD is responsible for them. In general, Ekha’a is responsible for married women, divorced women, and widowed women.

However, while the process of getting married may be stringent with clearly portrayed details, as mentioned previously, the understanding of the girls themselves is seen as quite poor by many of the people in charge of residential care, as they feel that some girls in care do not

want to understand or enter the optional courses offered regarding marriage, so the overall turnout for such courses is weak. The quality of the courses themselves is also questioned by some staff members, with one noting that they are not all-inclusive and do not start early enough for the ages of the girls in care, a feeling shared by abandoned young people and care leavers alike.

Most of the young people expressed their disinterest in being married at young ages. For some, this perspective was based on the fact that marriage is directly related to stopping education, as a young person noted:

*No, I wouldn't want to have a family while I am still young. I don't know whether I will continue with my education or they will just pull me out of school. I want to finish school; it is the best chance I have to become fully independent.*

Others also highlighted childbearing and domestic duties as some of the factors that prevent girls from rejoining school even if they would want to resume their education later in a marriage.

A similar view was aired by the staff who noted that being in school was more advantageous for the girls since it protects and benefits them in multiple ways. For instance, the school enables girls to gain social networks and acquire significant information and skills that enhance their communication ability, hence enabling them to negotiate their best self-interests and also take part in decisions impacting their life. In addition, educated girls tend to be more stable and are able to contribute more to society compared to a girl who is married off without any education. In regard to health, non-married girls develop fewer health problems compared to child brides who experience health issues, especially after peer isolation or abandonment.

Even though they were not fully supportive of early marriages, staff members also denoted that there was not much they could do about it, since it is a practice ingrained in the culture and traditions of the nation. Some religious practices also support marriage for young girls, a practice that is difficult to stop without proper effective legal systems. Moreover, gender inequality and the paternalistic society in the country, which is dominated by beliefs that girls and women are inferior to boys and men, were indicated as factors facilitating child marriage.

Many care leavers identified a lack of financial assistance, or preparedness to seek such assistance when seeking and renting accommodation prior to marriage. In addition, some felt that their psychological preparedness for marriage was not as good as it could have been due to an unwillingness on the part of alternative mothers who live in institutions to talk about such matters with them, as well as a lack of appropriate courses at appropriate times in institutions about such matters. As such, the care leavers tend to join marriages without knowing the factors and challenges involved. Consistent with other studies, some of the reasons they are ready to take this risk are; to feel like they have full control over their lives, being bored or unhappy at their placements, or have unstable and disruptive relationships between them and their caregivers (Hung & Appleton, 2016; Munro et al., 2012; van Breda et al., 2020).

Besides, some of them admitted that they could neither trust nor rely upon their care givers to help them when leaving care. When they requested help during the times they were worried or scared, they felt that their alternative mothers were not willing or interested in helping them out. One care leaver noted the issues she faced as follows:

*There must be a follow-up system for married girls. Also, it is necessary for girls who register their names for marriage to be trained and taught about married life, their rights, and how to act in the difficult situations they face. For example, if your husband hits you, what is the solution? Or, if there is a problem in your house, how do you deal with it, and who can you ask for help? These things are not clear for us, because workers in the institution only focus on entertainment and parties while we are there. This is not what will benefit us when we leave the institution and enter the real world.*

In contrast, many abandoned young people feel it would be unwise to leave their secure lives in an institution for an uncertain life once married, as they have seen what has happened to their sisters once they get married without adequate or useful preparation through optional courses. They know that such a lack of preparedness could leave them shocked by their new situation and facing problems, such as separation and divorce further on in their lives, which they do not know how to address or who to approach for assistance. Indeed, one abandoned young person indicated this when she noted:

*We need openness. We are used to the world outside the institution, and we experience problems if our income is not enough, or if there are no jobs for you. I mean, the girls who are employees and do not want to stay in the institution will have accommodation found for them outside the institution because they have an income and they do not want to be in the institution. Well, if someone studies, like me, they need to be at the institution. If I leave the institution, I must marry, and if there are problems between me and my husband, the institution will not ask about me, because I am married. Life is difficult. They want us to go out, but how do we go out when we are neither financially able nor do we have the ability to spend on ourselves? This is all because the ministry wants us to leave the institution, but they do not think about whether we are ready. Not everyone has a high degree and is employed or financially able to spend on herself. This scares us, and makes us feel that we are under pressure, and we will be transferred. I mean, we do not know what will happen next? This is something that scares us the most. (AYP 6)*

In fact, many abandoned young people felt that they were actively being pushed into this uncertain life by the MHRSD and Ekha'a, which did not make them view marriage as a choice that offered a lot by way of security and comfort but simply as a way for the MHRSD or other actors in the care system to relieve themselves of the burden of caring for abandoned young people as soon as possible. This made many abandoned young people feel, very ironically, abandoned by the system they were in as well as by those meant to help them in that system.

The feeling among care leavers and abandoned young people that they should have a greater awareness about marriage and what they can expect or do in marital life was also seen in more general terms regarding their lives, as both groups felt that they needed to know more about their rights and obligations in the wider society. Many care leavers, for instance, feel that they have little to no understanding of what they need to know or do when they leave

their alternative family's care and feel that they should have specialist care and advice once they leave their alternative family instead of just being asked to fill out paperwork to be married. In contrast, while abandoned young people do feel that they have support from the MHRSD and institutions, some feel that it may be lacking in terms of the amount of financial assistance offered or in terms of the quality of the social and psychological assistance which is available. Similar to outcomes among care leavers in the United Kingdom, the proportion of care leavers also expressed they lacked knowledge of money management, budgeting, or bill payment which are duties that may be needed in marriage. Many of them stated that they often felt isolated and lacked anyone to turn to for help after they left care. In the UK, a significant number of looked-after children outlined that they did not have anyone to contact in case of an emergency (Ofsted, 2022). These factors can cause problems in the future such as feelings of insecurity or alienation. Besides, care leavers were worried about finances for most of their time which caused them to feel unsafe or end up in financial issues, such as debt. Care leavers also felt that they were not told enough about what to expect once they left care, as the following quote demonstrates:

*I did not know a lot of things. In the institution, the workers were focusing on entertainment, and my money was controlled by my social worker, so I did not know how to manage my budget. Then, after I was married, my husband realized this problem, and he started to teach me these skills. Sometimes, I felt that he underestimated me. If the workers in the institution taught me some skills before I got married, I would be aware of a lot of things and nobody would have underestimated me. I think that I would be independent (cl 1).*

Care leavers should be adequately prepared before joining marriages. They should be assigned alternative others who are keen on understanding their needs and providing support that equates to these necessities. This may help in ensuring care leavers have the financial, psychological, and emotional help they need to be prepared and make better decisions about their future.

### **What next?**

The path forward for care services in Saudi Arabia is one that will be determined by the government, but there are many voices to be heard in this regard within the care sector. The staff in charge at the MHRSD believe that there is a perceived need to focus on the after-care committee, which is not currently being done. As one individual noted, this committee "helps to produce plans in the field of employment and education, and for the various needs of orphans, because the follow-up allows the specialists to understand the situation better and, on the basis of it, there will be clear programmes to assist the girls. Also, there should be more focus on the programme of preparing divorced women, so that they can rely on themselves". This indicates that the MHRSD feels that a way forward is already in place, but that it just needs to be activated and progressed.

In contrast, people in charge of residential care say that Ekha'a is to blame for there being no path forward for care leavers, as there is no follow-up available to them. This is supported by care leavers, as shown previously, but in the eyes of care leavers and abandoned young people, institutions have not done enough to support girls to become more independent and to help them better socialise with the wider society when they leave care. As one care leaver notes:

*It helps girls, but I see that it should be early. I mean, if the girl is at the beginning of her studies and she is guided correctly, then certainly she can continue studying and she knows that this is something she wants. But, for example, if she is guided after high school, then what is the benefit? Neither her grade helps her, nor does she feel that time is on her side. It is correct. It is supposed to be specific to female specialists because they are the closest. But, you know, not all female specialists have a sense of direction in a good way. I mean, with respect, some people say the same things, that you will regret things. This kind of conversation makes the girl stubborn because it is not in a positive manner. I mean, encouragement and motivation are important in guidance. If they focus on this thing, I see that there will be a good result. There should definitely be continuous follow-ups. I suggest that they focus on who to direct and how to direct. But the ministry must choose the right specialists who will have a positive influence on the development of services (cl12).*

This is why the idea of pathway planning and needs assessments, as well as on-going follow-ups after secondary school, were widely supported by both abandoned young people and care leavers, to enable those girls unsure of their future or unaware of the possibilities available to them to become better able and prepared for life outside of the care system.

Abandoned young people have a lot of ideas as to what is needed in the care system in Saudi Arabia. Many felt that the MHRSD needs to take a more active role in terms of making sure that girls are ready for life in the society, rather than relying on the opinions of those in the institutions, especially given the lack of privacy and interest many feel that they have in institutions from those supposedly taking care of them. In addition, while the idea of a pathway plan was seen in a positive light, again, it needs to be done by specialists outside of the institution, and actually followed-up on and utilized as a source document to create suitable programs for those about to leave care.

For the group which has direct experience with the difficulties of integrating into wider society, the views are mixed and diverse. There was a lot of support for courses to prepare girls for an independent life, to know their rights, to be trained and have skills developed as much as possible, and to be responsible for themselves, prior to leaving care. Mentoring by professionals who do not invade a girl's privacy was seen as a positive idea, because as one individual mentioned, *"Mentoring is good and helps the orphan to be understanding and able to discuss his/her ideas from a young age, and this gives her skills"*. However, just as importantly, follow-up by the Ministry and Ekha'a was seen as necessary, as well as clear areas of responsibility and full understanding of the situations and issues involved, so that care leavers know who to approach and where to go for assistance and advice after leaving care and get honest, private and meaningful assistance from specialists and officials who know what is needed by which individuals. In addition, the need for official and mandatory (as compared to optional and voluntary) employment and educational support and both pathway planning and comprehensive assessments from an early age and continuing throughout their time in care for the most benefit and in an equal and fair manner was widely mentioned, as late and inadequate support in institutions was seen as a case of too little, too late by many care leavers and, as a result, not widely supported. As one care leaver noted:

*It is good. I think this helps the orphan to be understanding and able to discuss his/her ideas from a young age, and this gives him skills and people close to him/her. For example, if in the institution the employee who sits with him/her is there for a longer time, it becomes easy to discuss your life because he /she understand what you are going through and what your system is. The follow-up will be according to what the orphan needs, I mean according to his/her personality, because it is differentiated from one person to another. Some people prefer regular follow-ups, and some people prefer from period to period (CL2).*

## **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, the researcher discussed the key qualitative findings, including the identified themes and participants' perceptions. The study identifies three main themes: preparation, marriage, and Specialist support required for young women. Abandoned young people, care leavers, and staff working in Ekha'a, residential institutions and the MHRSD are the key participants in this study. Based on the groups' experiences, interventions are designed that can be used respond to the main challenges. The responsible institutions and individuals should develop responsible, socially capable and financially-independent care leavers in Saudi Arabia .The next chapter, Chapter 10, moves provides a discussion of the quantitative and qualitative findings.

## Chapter 10: Discussion of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The research questions of this study were designed to focus the efforts of the researcher in her fieldwork. This work aims to highlight possible paths forward for the care system in Saudi Arabia in terms of its care of abandoned girls aged 17 and over who are in the care of institutions, alternative families or friend families. It also gathers the opinions of girls who have left the institutional care system but still receive institutional, organisational or governmental assistance in some form (care leavers over the age of 17 or those who have married), by asking them for feedback on their experiences in, and out, of care.

In the process of this fieldwork, other actors in the Saudi care system, such as social workers, residential institution staff, non-governmental staff working for charitable organisations such as Ekha'a and staff at the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD), were also asked for their opinions about the needs of girls who were in or out of the Saudi care system. These data were then compared with information offered by various other researchers, as well as the care system of the United Kingdom (UK), with reference to how it looked to assist Looked After Children (LAC – their version of abandoned young people and care leavers (AYP and CLs)).

The data gathered from the fieldwork led to some interesting findings, which are in line with many of the theories applied to the needs of individuals in care: that residential care can affect abandoned young people and care leavers in negative ways, thereby making it difficult for them to fully realise their potential. The following discussion will examine the data gathered during the fieldwork using the aforementioned outline, with information offered in the form of themes.

### **A Note on the Research Findings: Key Themes**

#### **Introduction**

The primary purpose of this research thesis is to examine young people's daily lives and practices as comprehensively as possible in order to gain greater insight into the incidences, features, and effects of dependence on staff working in the Saudi care system. Given my experience and interaction with a considerable number of young people and practitioners across distinct settings within diverse contexts, a rich data set emerges from my review. Thus, I am able to assess the situation continually, while identifying key themes. It is critical to establish a favourable environment for this population in order to promote their positive growth. Nonetheless, challenges and problems arising from the care system itself render current solutions ineffective. In general, the needs of abandoned young people and care leavers are disregarded, especially because of their limited or lack of knowledge and professional capabilities.

In the following chapters, I will describe the substantive themes that can be observed from the information received from young, abandoned individuals, social workers, residential institution staff, and non-governmental staff working for charitable organisations such as Ekha'a and staff at the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD), and from my own views and reflections as I interact with this group. My three key themes will provide a detailed analytical account of the core issues facing these individuals and care leavers.



The main themes; preparation, specialist support required for young women, and marriage will be discussed based on the perceptions of care leavers and abandoned young people as one group and perceptions of staff workers from Ekha'a and the MHRSD as another. As such, the findings will be classified based on the experiences of young abandoned people and care leavers, in and out of care systems, and the responsible agencies and organisations concerned with the welfare of these populations. Within the former classification, the researcher examines young people's stories in detail, offering the situational context for each constructed theme. As it progresses, the study builds on other young people's reflections, assisting in illustrating how each theme is conceptualised. My second classification shifts the focus from abandoned young people to the agencies and institutions responsible for ensuring that care management of this group is efficiently and effectively implemented. Within this context, the researcher shares the experiences of diverse staff workers, which help to illuminate the complex relationship between abandoned young people's contexts under care systems and the assistance they receive from supporting organisations.

A discussion and conclusion regarding the findings will then be offered by the researcher.

### **The Needs of Abandoned Young People and Care Leavers**

The focus of this introductory section is to provide context and background, including the problem statement and study rationale. In addition, this part highlights the theoretical framework guiding the overall research. I outline my working definition of abandoned young people and care leavers while comparing these distinct understandings. By revealing how epistemological discrepancies create disparities in practice, I emphasise a dire need for a significant inquiry into abandoned young people's experiences in care and out of the care of residential homes.

The data gathered reflect many of the theories on the needs of individuals in care: residential care may negatively affect AYP and CLs, thereby making it difficult for them to fully realise their potential. As Albar and Abofraj (2011), Aldamage (2011), and Alzahrani (2015) note, the fact that abandoned young people live in isolation from the rest of society can create socialisation issues and, consequently, difficulties in their integration into the wider society. It can also generate poor behaviour and bad or limited experiences, which can further damage these individuals' ability to become productive members of society.

These issues are not created solely by being in care, as individuals can come into care after having faced a variety of issues earlier in their lives, such as abuse or neglect, or emotional or mental difficulties, leading to feelings of insecurity and inadequacy, rather than a sense of not belonging to society as a whole (Albar, 2008; Almaili, 2011; Alburaq, 2012; Alkathiry, 2014; Alzahrani, 2015; Unpublished National Study, 2014). This leaves them unable to form relationships with others as they enter care, and if these feelings and issues are not addressed while in care through a continuous caring relationship with their caregivers, they lack resiliency and find it difficult to integrate into the wider society (Aldamage, 2011; Alkathiry, 2014; Albar & Abofraj, 2011; Holland, 2010). Besides, a study by Fylkesnes et al. (2021), indicates that the satisfaction of young abandoned people, in regard to relationships with social workers, is based on the degrees of their involvement. Trustworthiness, information sharing, and availability were also emphasized by children across different countries. Lastly, some of the young individuals highlighted personal qualities such as kindness, humor, and

non-judging attitudes among the social workers made the more satisfied with the care provided (Fylkesnes et al., 2021).

These young people's suggestions align with the four tenets of care as highlighted by Holland (2010): caring about, care-giving, taking care of, and care receiving. The former involves understanding and concentration on individuals' need for care. Care giving, on the other hand, refers to competently providing good care while taking care of necessitates a care giver to meet their obligation of providing caring responsibly Holland (2010). The latter being aware and responsive to susceptibility within the power relationships between caregivers and care receivers. This perspective of care also emphasizes the benefits of having supportive networks between carers and abandoned young people. Good care should thus, studies show that social support, the feeling of inclusion and availability, and felt security in care are among the key predictors of good care leaver outcomes (Holland, 2010; Fylkesnes et al., 2021).

Indeed, there are many risk factors associated with children who enter the care system, ranging from inadequate nutrition resulting in developmental delays in a variety of areas to being raised in a poor socio-economic environment that provides limited financial and family support, thereby creating behavioural, emotional and psychological issues (Berk, 2012; Alkathiry, 2014; Albar, 2008). In contrast, while LAC do not necessarily share the same social identity and background (have no family), they may face similar issues as they mature and develop as individuals. They are better able to function in society if they have good access to support structures, such as family and close relationships with friends, among others. This is something that is not readily available in a care system and it leaves individuals in care with less resiliency and a less-developed range of skills and abilities to build upon for future success, compared to those not in care (Berk, 2012; Spence, 2003; Thomas, 2005; Chell and Athayde, 2009; Stein, 2005).

Ethics of care theory emphasises the importance of developing lasting relationships between abandoned young people and care givers and family and friend networks. According to Barnes (2012), this theory comprises four essential components of care (a) caring about, which entails understanding and paying attention to individuals' needs of care; (b) care-giving, which involves the competent provision of good care; (c) taking care of, which needs the care giver to meet their obligation towards responsible care; (d) care receiving, which involves being aware and responsive to the vulnerable power relationships between the care receiver and care giver. Studies reveal that young people under care often demonstrated a wish for a 'lasting relationship' with social workers (Barnes, 2012). Moreover, these individuals valued workers who treated them respectfully were friendly, and listened to them. Unfortunately, this is sadly lacking for many abandoned young people given their experiences with, among other issues, neglect and abandonment.

This leaves abandoned young people very dependent on the staff within the care system to create an environment conducive to their positive development. However, this raises problems, as the care system itself has carers who may underestimate the needs and concerns of abandoned young people due to their own lack of knowledge and professional skills. In addition, they may not be trained well enough to deal with issues, or do not want to form close relationships with the girls they care for (these problems are also seen with boys in care, but to a much lesser extent given the greater number of resources and attention given to that sector under the male-centric society of Saudi Arabia, as will be touched upon shortly) (Ashaalan & Al-zeiby 2015; Albar and Farah, 2015). These carers may also not be adequately

supported or managed by the government to allow them to best fulfil their roles. Given these issues, the challenges faced by abandoned young people when they leave care will multiply as the love, attention and empathy they should have had were not available (Berk, 2012; Morgan, 2009; Millward et al., 2006; Thomas, 2005; Stein, 2005; McLeod, 2012). Essentially, the abandoned young people who enter care have (more than likely) not had the close attention and trusting relationships they needed in order to be able to make sense of the world around them and to be able to develop positive emotional, psychological and behavioural qualities.

### **The Current Situation in the Saudi Care System**

There was a wide range of thoughts and feelings on the part of various groups participating in the Saudi care system over what care is currently provided to abandoned young people and care leavers that adequately meets their needs and addresses their problems in various domains.

In recent years, the government of Saudi Arabia, through the MHRSD, has focused on creating, implementing and properly resourcing more child-focused policies and legislation, to better ensure that all care leavers, not just males as has predominantly been the case in the paternalistic Saudi society (Al Hassani, 2003; Alzahrani, 2015), will have the necessary skills and support to become fully functional members of Saudi society (Faryan et al, 2019; Unpublished National Study, 2014; Al-Aiban, 2016; Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2015; Albar and Farah, 2015; Almubaraki, 2010). The measures undertaken by the MHRSD include a range of initiatives. For example, they provide greater educational and training opportunities, financial subsidies for living expenses and marriage, and more accommodation options (including the new social homes accommodation model). They also support the training and upskilling of social workers to be more effective agents of assistance within institutions, and they supervise and support various organisations and alternative or friend families to give abandoned young people the opportunity to be raised in positive, family-like environments (Faryan et al., 2019; Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2015; Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2016). This move to ensure better trained and qualified social workers in the Saudi care system is an important one, because while nurturing and care are still prevalent in the field (the ethics of care), through the effects of feminism and the ethics of justice, social work has become much more focused on what children need, and on ensuring stability in their various experiences while in care. This helps them to become more self-sufficient as they mature and become adults, rather than focusing on what needs to happen to the children (Stein, 2012; Sevenhuijsen, 2003; Clement, 1996; Berk, 2012; Holland, 2010; Orme, 2002).

In a male-centric society like Saudi Arabia's (Al-Kathiry, 2014; Murphy, 2014; Wagner, 2011), this has led to the aforementioned increased focus on the right of all individuals leaving care to be able to be contributing, fully functional members of the wider society. There is also an increased recognition of the fact that all actors within the care system can have an enormous influence on the success of abandoned young people after leaving care. However, this is as seen through the eyes of males in positions of responsibility and it is voiced using a male perspective, which has led to set ways in which research and practice are determined and acted upon (Smith, 2010; Davis, 1986; Ashaalan & Al-zeiby, 2015; Al-Kathiry, 2014; Murphy, 2014). While it is true that the gender-segregated nature of care institutions in Saudi Arabia after a certain age provides room for some female voices in the care system itself, it also

means that this experience is undervalued by those in charge, and it generally allows boys more freedom than girls in the care system itself (Albar, 2008; Ministry of Labor and Social Development, 2011; Al-Kathiry, 2014; Smith, 2010; Gringeri et al., 2010; Davis, 1986).

To assist with “picking up the slack” left by the fact that these practices leave a gap in official care services (the previously mentioned devaluing of the abilities of female care workers), there are also various civil society charitable organisations that serve the needs and concerns of more mature abandoned young people. One of these is Ekha’a, whose functions and goals have been mentioned previously (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2015; Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2016; Saudi Press Agency, 2017; Albar, 2018; Ekhaa.org.sa, 2003; Albar and Farah, 2015). However, these organisations may also have their own issues related to what previous care system users perceive that they are able to do or not do (this will be looked at in more detail later in this discussion). Generally speaking, there are some systemic issues inherent to the Saudi care system, and while the government and other agencies have been attempting to address these in recent years, the effects on abandoned young people and care leavers themselves are varied.

### Abandoned Young People and Care Leavers

In this section, the researcher organises the findings by themes to determine the experiences and needs of abandoned young people and care leavers, as well as the challenges they face within the Saudi care system. In particular, the focus is on young girls, whose well-being is perceived as insignificant by the highly male-dominated Saudi society. The findings portray several experiences and issues among abandoned young girls and care leavers (aged 17 years old and above) within the care system. In the following section, the researcher presents the findings using the themes identified in the participants' narrations and direct quotes. Several illustrations are provided as an overview of the outcomes.

In Saudi Arabia, abandoned young people and care leavers face a range of challenges, ranging from a lack of trained and empathetic care workers and a male-centric care system to needs and concerns that are not addressed or sometimes even not understood by actors within the Saudi care system. Some of these points have already been touched upon in this discussion, but they all negatively affect the resiliency of abandoned young people and care leavers, making it harder for them to integrate into wider society upon leaving care. However, in terms of the specific challenges identified by abandoned young people and care leavers themselves, there are a few domains to consider.

#### Theme 1: Preparation

The first key theme of preparation provides an overview of the gaps in preparation that affect young people as they leave care. Due to the extensive content provided on this theme, the researcher will discuss this theme on the basis of health and well-being, education, and accommodation preparations among young people leaving care.

#### ***Health and Well-Being***

In regard to health and well-being, the researcher provides an overview of the welfare of participants residing within care systems in Saudi Arabia, as well as those who have left such care but are still dependent on their services. The research provides a profile of the features that qualify these abandoned young people and care leavers as the target population.

#### **Needs**

The research data reflect these risk factors and issues very clearly. While abandoned young people do feel to varying degrees that they have the support of professionals and health insurance programmes to assist them with maintaining their health and well-being, this very support also makes them feel as if they have no control over what they do and cannot improve themselves. This in turn leads to feelings of inadequacy and insecurity. As one abandoned young person noted:

*How can they help me? To be independent, to be by myself. I am 23 years old. If I go to the hospital, the nurse or any worker will go with me. She is the one who makes the papers. I just go when she has finished everything. Even if I go to the mall, the alternative mother or aunt goes with us and walks with us and watches us, as if we are children. This is something that makes you independent, to depend on yourself. You know, I became very nervous when I was accepted into college, and I became tense, because the workers do everything for me. They go with us in the school, they register us, they finished all the papers. Now, they say that we need to go to social homes. Okay, if we go and we don't know what we are doing, we will be afraid. Frankly, it is difficult for us to rely on ourselves, day and night (AYP 1).*

Similarly, the quantitative evidence shows that there is a problem with the care and support provided to care leavers once they have left residential care systems. The results in Table 4.1 depict that care leavers are prone to the challenges of having their mental well-being examined by medical practitioners and social workers under the guidance of Ekha'a. This portrays a lack of preparation for this vulnerable group with regard to being prepared to look after their well-being

### **Challenges**

As a result, care leavers are put in the position of not being able to do things for themselves and not having the necessary experiences and capabilities to live independently while looking after their well-being, especially given the lack of health insurance and assistance they seem to face. In general, the mean for health and well-being for abandoned young people is 4.09 and positive, while for care leavers the mean is 3.21. There is clearly a large difference in their respective health needs and the extent to which they are being met (refer to Table 4-1). As a consequence, it is no surprise that the care leavers felt very strongly that there was a lot of room for improvement in this regard. This is related to the fact that individuals in care have all of their needs and costs covered by the MHRSD, while those who have left care are dependent on Ekha'a. This results in differences in the level and attention to care that they receive and, consequently, gaps in the care and assistance offered.

However, it is unfortunate that the staff of residential institutions, Ekha'a and the MHRSD made no comments on this matter. The fact that institutional staff look after the health needs of individuals in care by ensuring that they receive proper nutrition in terms of meals and that medical appointments are made on their behalf suggests that the system itself is not broken but that rather the way in which matters are carried out is inadequate. It could be that allowing girls to take a more active role in looking after their health and nutritional needs could help them to become more independent after they leave care, and this is something that could be a key aspect of pathway planning and needs assessments.

### **Education and Stigmatisation**

Based on the issue of education, the researcher presents an overview of the educational and stigmatisation contexts of the participants living under care systems. Educational background includes specialised training, education, and work experience related to abandoned young girls. Generally, social work participants can help to explicate the challenge presented by education among staff working in care institutions.

### Needs

Comments were made, however, on the issue of education by institution staff as well as Ekha'a and MHRSD officials, some of which were contradictory. While some at the MHRSD felt that the working relationship with the Ministry of Health helped to identify girls who needed assistance, there was also a feeling that more needed to be done to develop the potential of the girls themselves and to assist with their integration into society upon leaving care. As the quantitative evidence reflects in Table 4.2, abandoned young people receive advice from staff pertaining to what choices they make regarding their future career, employment, or education. The lowest mean of 3.91 shows that participants are in less agreement with the statement that they obtain training in a work programme which, after completion, will enable them to get a permanent employment in a particular field. However, this opinion was not shared by the Ekha'a officials, who felt that the difficulties faced by girls after they left care were caused by getting married before finishing their studies. Therefore, in their view, the onus was on the girls to finish their education and understand the importance of education.

The importance of being adequately and appropriately educated before leaving care was identified by Alsharif (2010) and Alburaq (2012), with Alzahrani (2015) noting that those individuals who leave care may do so with inadequate skills and abilities for the needs of the labour market. This makes it even more difficult to overcome the stigma of having been part of the care system and not knowing who their parents are for many care leavers. It also places them in an undesirable position vis-à-vis those who come from "normal" families or even alternative families. Care leavers themselves recognise that they are better prepared for life in wider society in alternative families than in institutional care, although there may be issues with inappropriate behaviour and attitudes within families who are intent on taking advantage of the alternative family system for financial gain. This could lead to feelings of neglect and social isolation, and even abuse, in such environments (Albar, 2008; Aldamage 2011; Stein, 2012; Cocker et al., 2013).

As Albar (2008) noted, the effects of stigmatisation on individuals born to unknown parents can lead to a lack of trust and an inability to enjoy stable and meaningful relationships, even after marriage. This difficulty extends to those people who are available to guide them in their development while in care, such as specialists and social workers (Orphan Care Development Strategy Ministry of Social Welfare and Family, 2012; Stein, 2012; Cocker et al., 2013). One care leaver noted that *"The ministry should change the name add AL to our last names, especially for their children, as they do not want their children to feel that they are different and suffer like them, which makes their integration difficult, especially if someone asks them for the name."* Another care leaver mentioned the following:

*A girl's feeling that she is an orphan is dependent on her. If she wants to become a successful person, she must believe in the idea in order to believe in it for those around her, or she will*

*become a victim of the idea that she is an illegitimate mistake and had selfish parents. She is responsible for this negative idea.*

Stigma can also play a role in the perceptions that “normal” people have of individuals coming from the care system, or even in terms of the different values and cultures within institutional life compared to those of the wider society (Al-Kathiry, 2014; Frimpong-Manso, 2018; Coler, 2018; Ferguson, 2018). Institutional staff and those people around abandoned young people are key to their success in living in wider society when they leave care in the future. As noted previously, the role of the carer in helping abandoned young people to become more resilient as they develop is an important one. Alkathiry (2014) noted the importance of carers in looking after individuals in care, highlighting the fact that a positive, family-like environment can assist in creating nurturing, supportive relationships that can be depended upon in challenging times (Alsaad, 2004; Hamza, 2011; Alshahrany, 2013; Albar and Farah, 2015).

Problems are created, therefore, when staff are not suitably trained or educated for their roles in the care system (Alsaad, 2004; Alshahrany, 2013), which highlights a need for effective training and up-skilling of staff who work in institutions, and even for alternative mothers in the new social homes. They also need to possess a greater awareness of the needs and concerns of abandoned young people and care leavers, something that can be well-supported by pathway planning and comprehensive needs assessments. Abandoned young people and care leavers should be given opportunities to gain skills and experience from permanent rather than transitory mentors (Clayden and Stein, 2005; Orphan Care Development Strategy Ministry of Social Welfare and Family, 2012; Almaili, 2011). If this is not undertaken then, as Albar (2018) notes, the end result could be a loss of confidence in abandoned young people and care leavers, lost opportunities to teach abandoned young people important life skills in a positive family-like environment like the new social homes, and a corresponding decrease in their ability to deal with challenges after leaving care.

## **Challenges**

For their part, institutional staff feel that stigmatisation represents a barrier that abandoned young people need to overcome when constructing their own individual identities, especially at schools among peers, teachers and administrators. This affects their educational achievements, with one individual noting that the MHRSD needs to have better coordination with the Ministry of Education to help girls in care become better socialised while engaging in coursework that is appropriate for their needs. Another psychologist in the institution said that girls do not have the courage to tell others that they are an orphan, and that, *“I think that it is not easy for them to integrate into, and be accepted by, society. Yes, they have become more aware than before, but it remains hard for them to tell details about their personal background to others”*.

As Alssad’s study (2004) noted, staff felt that girls in care were being adequately prepared for education while in care. Motivation was given in the form of rewards, or recognition and support were given in the form of special tutors in various subjects. This, as Albar and Farah (2015) discovered, led to half of the girls in care being awarded Bachelor's degrees.

However, this is in direct contrast to the findings of this research, which shows that 60.4% of abandoned young people and 43.1% of care leavers have graduated from secondary school (the highest percentage for both respondents), and 26.4% of abandoned young people have a university degree while 33.3% of care leavers have a tertiary school degree. Many

abandoned young people felt that they did not have access to beneficial training courses for their careers, or opportunities to upskill themselves for different occupations. This feeling was echoed by care leavers, and in terms of employment, 66.7% of care leavers were unemployed (refer to Chart 6 for more details on the employment and unemployment data for both abandoned young people and care leavers). This indicates that differences in educational achievements may be related to personal and environmental factors.

It would also appear that the programmes and preparation offered by staff at care institutions and, by extension, the MHRSD, prepare girls for marriage. This suggests a lack of set policies or procedures to assist all abandoned young people with preparing to leave care and to live independently, and it leads to confusion, one abandoned young person noted:

*Because we are in the institution, the administration can settle many things on the girl's behalf, so that the girl does not need to do it by herself, or so she is not exposed to problems. But, if the girl leaves, who will do everything for her? It will be difficult for them. Even if the girls marry, they do not know anything when they come out. So, it will be difficult for her to bear responsibility when she leaves the institution. (AYP 2)*

Indeed, given the information from Albar and Farrah (2015), it would appear that care leavers achieve educational success through their own efforts rather than those of institutions or outside actors. This is evidenced by the fact that there was a lack of advice on employment and educational opportunities, and access to training opportunities that would increase the chances of full-time employment was an issue.

This is not to say that there is no support for higher educational achievement and success, as the Philanthropic Institution for Orphan Care also helps to prepare them through the use of financial support and further training opportunities when appropriate. This ensures that some support exists for those leaving care to give these young people the best chance of obtaining employment in the future. Abandoned young people also acknowledged that, while accessing employment opportunities was an issue, they received advice while they were in care.

In general, the mean for abandoned young people in this domain is 4.09 which is positive, while for care leavers the mean is 2.26 and is negative (refer to Table 4-2). From the quantitative findings, it is clear that despite having positive thoughts regarding receiving educational support while in care, abandoned young people view such opportunities as being rare.

This observation implies that the group feels that they are unable to live an independent life while out of care. Furthermore, care leavers depict a negative perception of educational and training support, resulting in fewer opportunities for sustaining an independent life when integrated into the broader community. These results are consistent with different studies in England which indicate that looked-after children achieve low academic outcomes compared to their counterparts in home settings. After collecting data from over 65000 looked-after children in England, Sebba et al. (2015) found that about 70% of children attained the expected reading level at the culmination of Key Stage 1 (age 7 years). This figure was lower in writing and math where they achieved 61% and 72% respectively (Sebba et al., 2015). The combined outcomes were lower compared to the results achieved by all children in those subjects: reading 90%, 86% writing, and 92% maths. The gap widened at the end of the next Key Stage (age 11 years) where only about fifty percent of abandoned young people in care achieved the anticipated mathematics and English levels in contrast to over 75% of all



children. As the children aged, the attainment gap continuously increased to a point that only 6% of looked-after children attend higher learning compared to about 55% of young individuals in the general population.

A more recent study by Berridge et al. (2020) indicates that children in care and children in need in England have significantly lower educational attainments than other learners. Although there were over 399000 children in need and about 80000 children in care at the time of this study, Berridge et al. (2020) highlight that the attainment gap between these individuals and other learners without special education needs is roughly 30% at both Key Stage 1 and 2 and about 25% at key stage 4 (age 16 years). Young people who are, or have been, in care are therefore among the lowest-performing groups in regard to educational results globally.

This disadvantage in educational performance also impacts their careers. According to Sebba et al. (2015), young people leaving care have decreased employment prospects and adverse health conditions compared to the general population. A large difference, hence, exists in the continuing education and training needs of the two groups. This may be because care leavers encounter certain difficulties once they enter a wider society, while those in care do not. This group is also overrepresented in prison and homeless populations, yet limited information is available regarding the aspects that promote or limit educational progress for these individuals (Sebba et al., 2015; Berridge et al., 2020). Besides, care leavers expressed their concerns about this issue as one of them noted:

*I see that the girls are improving, trying to complete their university studies, and a large number of them are here at the institution who complete their education, because they see the situation that without a university education, it is difficult for you to rely on yourself. For example, when I separated and returned to the institution, I applied for jobs with my high school certificate, and they do not accept me but I found that prompted me to complete a university, so that I can settle and be financially independent with my daughter from the institution (CL7).*

This comment also demonstrates that children in care encounter much more problems compared to the general population. While this population has higher dropout rates, suspension rates, and increased utilization of special education services, Pears et al. (2018) posit that different potential reasons can explain this phenomenon. To begin with, his population is highly likely to experience adversity in terms of maltreatment and frequent transfers between and among caregivers (Pears et al., 2018; Clemens et al., 2018). Furthermore, experiences of family instability, domestic violence, high mobility, and poverty, which are prone to looking after children facilitate low educational attainment (Clemens et al., 2018).

Children in need require enhanced overall support in learning institutions and the community. Just like the focal model illustrates, the children should be tasked with challenges simultaneously to help them spread the adaptation process over multiple years (Stein, 2012). Care receivers transiting from being looked after to being independent provides a strong illustration of the contextual stress these individuals have to deal with. To compound this adversity on abandoned young people is a lack of job opportunities and limited housing options. This points to a lack of preparation on the part of institution staff and MHRSD

officials, a preparation that would be an integral part of the pathway planning and associated needs assessments. Young people in care should be given adequate support that helps them focus on challenges one at a time for more successful educational and life outcomes.

### **Accommodation**

Lastly, the issue of accommodation is based on the participants' perceptions of securing a safe place for care. This perspective supports the idea of facilitating socialisation in this group by establishing safe havens in which meaningful interactions can occur. The participants discussed their thoughts and feelings pertaining to their accommodation needs during and out of care.

### **Needs**

Accommodation is one area in which positive change, in the eyes of government officials, is occurring. As Albar and Farrah (2015) note, the new social homes model has been introduced to better promote the development of socialisation skills and behaviours, while at the same time allowing for more privacy and independence among abandoned young people. The hope in government is that this will lead to greater success among care leavers in terms of integrating into wider society. The alternative and friend family programmes are implemented in the same vein, looking to give abandoned young people a safe place to grow and develop free from both abuse and the aforementioned stigmatisation of being an abandoned young person. Vetting and check-ups by the MHRSD ensure that these programmes are free from the abuse suffered by some abandoned young people in the foster family system (Aldamage, 2014). As part of its role in ensuring that care leavers can make an orderly transition to an independent life after leaving care, Ekha'a looks after their accommodation needs through the provision of financial and housing assistance.

Abandoned young people do agree that their accommodation needs are met while they are in care. However, once they leave care, their view changes, as care leavers feel that their accommodation needs were not met. They encountered difficulties with understanding contracts and bills (a point also noted by abandoned young people) related to renting or owning a home, or even with just navigating daily needs and concerns like shopping. They also felt that the financial support they had been given to rent or buy suitable unfurnished or even furnished accommodation was not enough, with very low levels of emergency accommodation available to them.

In general, the mean for abandoned young people in this domain is 3.68 and is positive, while for care leavers the mean is 2.28 and negative (refer to Table 4-3 for more details). This shows that there is a large difference in the accommodation needs of both groups. Similarly, quantitative evidence in Table 4.3 shows that accommodation needs for abandoned young people are not fully met or do not align with their needs. There is a lack of skill development in terms of reading contracts and bills, which influences the autonomy of care leavers as they engage with the wider society. Overall, accommodation is a significant theme for care leavers, and necessitates thorough focus from major institutions, such as Ekha'a, to promote the proper functioning of care leavers.

### **Challenges**

As mentioned previously regarding accommodation issues, a lack of access to useful knowledge regarding renting or buying a house, as well as financial support, was keenly felt

by care leavers. In fact, it was the expectation of many abandoned young people that someone would help them with these issues when they left care, and they were disappointed to find that this was not the case when they were looking for places to live. For abandoned young people, that assistance could come from alternative sources (though not everyone can access such support), such as alternative or friend families. Care leavers did recognise the benefits of such an upbringing in terms of knowing about what to do when living independently, but they also felt that other sources of assistance, such as Ekha'a, were haphazard at best and ineffective at worst. This was especially true for divorced women, as assistance was dependent on which Ekha'a branch they were dealing with at the time and their ability to understand what they were being told (highlighting the lack of preparedness provided by institutional living).

In general, the mean for abandoned young people in this domain is 3.53 and their response is positive, while for care leavers the mean is 3.61 and positive – slightly higher than that of abandoned young people (refer to Table 4-16 for more details). It is almost negative and not very high for all abandoned young people and care leavers with regard to learning how to understand rental agreements or house ownership documentation.

## Theme 2: Specialist Support required for Young Women

The second key theme is the specialist support required for women. This theme illustrates the participants' perspectives in response to the special needs women require as they transition from living under care to marriage or independent living. During this period, these girls face multiple challenging life issues that require support from specialists to overcome. Furthermore, the social and personal concerns of abandoned young people will be addressed under this theme. Chiefly, it highlights the issue of extending support to care leavers to guarantee proper support mechanisms in the long term. The participants share their experiences of living in care systems and explain the conditions outside these institutions.

### Needs

In the domain of social needs, there was a feeling among abandoned young people, and more specifically among care leavers, that they needed the support of individuals who understood the problems they faced and would face in the future, both in care and after having left care (respectively), indicating that the support received was not appropriate to their needs. For abandoned young people, there was a distinct feeling that, while many of their needs were met while in care, and they could form relationships with those around them not in care, they needed to know more and to possess skills before leaving care, to succeed in living independently or while married, as they saw the difficulties faced by their sisters once they had left care. As one abandoned young person notes:

*There are no official courses, but there are optional courses. But, even if you leave the institution, there is no programme that you can enter in order to be ready to leave. I mean, the institution is supposed to see the problems of our sisters when they went out, and logically they must work on solving them by creating a programme for the girls about to leave the institution so that they can be ready. But I do not see this thing happening in the institution. This scares me. I feel they want us to come out, but that it is not important if we are ready. (AYP 1)*

This finding is consistent with quantitative evidence in Table 4.5 showing that abandoned young people assert that staff in residential institutions fail to allow them the opportunity and confidence to engage with others.

For care leavers, while they agreed that they were able to form relationships with individuals leaving care and felt some security in that regard, they noted several issues. These included the fact that the staff of residential institutions did not give them enough confidence to communicate with people who did not come from a background of not knowing who their parents were and the fact that they found it difficult to access psychological help for emotional and psychological issues. In the quantitative section, Table 4.5 demonstrates that there is a lack of assistance provided by Ekha'a for care leavers. Care leavers also felt quite strongly that there were difficulties with the staff of residential institutions actually staying in touch with them, something that abandoned young people did not feel that strongly about, perhaps because the specialist help in institutions was available to them. Indeed, the emphasis for abandoned young people was on the need for privacy in such relationships and when seeking assistance.

In general, the mean for abandoned young people in this domain is 3.83 and it is positive, while for care leavers the mean is 3.13 and their response fluctuates between negative and positive (refer to Table 4-5 for more details). This observation is consistent with the qualitative findings, and the general point about the limitations of preparation for life after care.

### **Challenges**

In terms of challenges related to social and personal issues, the idea of continuity in care was felt to be extremely important by both care leavers and abandoned young people, as many felt that their transfer between institutions, as well as the transfer of specialists and other workers with whom they could have formed close relationships, made it hard for girls to find and trust the assistance offered in institutions (Biehal et al, 1995: 115; Palmer, 1995; Whelan, 2003, page 28-29). Indeed, if a relationship is created over time and then broken, necessitating the formation of new relationships that may or may not be as good as the original one, a lack of trust and suspicion is often the end result. As one individual noted:

*I wish the ministry did not transfer the specialist, because it is difficult to get used to a person and then she will move. It is very difficult, because she understands your situation, and then they bring another specialist who cannot understand you, and then you cannot understand what your situation is? It becomes difficult to communicate with her. (AYP 3)*

Another individual mentioned the following:

*I was in the institution in Makkah when I was 12 years old. Then, I moved to an institution in Jeddah, when it was decided by the ministry that we must move, so I moved between two institutions [in two different cities]. The transfer was negative because we loved our institution and the female specialists in the institution. (AYP 6)*

As mentioned previously, the effects of the stigma of being born to unknown parents were also keenly felt by both abandoned young people and care leavers. Being stressed and insecure about not knowing your own background and having feelings of shame and anger towards others knowing their backgrounds were reported by both groups. This also led to a perception among many girls in and out of care that having opportunities for socialisation was

a problematic area. They felt that they needed the tools to not only cope with their backgrounds as individuals but also to cope with societal expectations after leaving care by learning what to do and how to do it so as to fit in the best they could. As one abandoned young person noted, “*It is a logical result that we do not integrate with other people, because the girls are used to seeing orphans around them in the institution*”, while a care leaver said the following:

*Rights and duties are clarified from life. When someone tells you such and such, this is your right, this is what you are responsible for. Then, you start to understand it. It is not something that is studied; it is a need that you learn in your daily life. I see that it is dependent on the managers who like to sit with the girls and talk about your rights and your responsibilities. Likewise, it is from alternative mothers who are with you in the institution, and old workers, that you start to understand. But there are some institutions that are not concerned about the girl, who they let do whatever they want, even if she is wrong. There is no punishment [or accountability]. So, how can she understand her rights and her responsibilities? She does not understand whether it is correct or not. Because of this, it is important that the managers pay attention to such things in management, and make sure that the alternative mothers talk about it with the girls, because the alternative mother sits more with the girls. (cl 10)*

The feelings expressed in this study by the respondents indicated that this could be done more effectively within institutions through volunteering programmes or social excursions (though these can be limited due to a lack of available staff and an unwillingness among those in care to engage in such activities). Young people could also be shown how to look after their own needs themselves, as well as their basic responsibilities and social values. It should be noted that, out of 91 abandoned young people in this study, only 21 (23.1%) completed volunteer work for an organisation, compared to 19 (18.6%) care leavers. Stein and Munro (2008) highlight the importance of professional and personal support in improving the lives of young people after leaving care. According to Stein and Munro (2008), care leavers categorized as survivors – those who experience heightened levels of instability, movement, and disruption after leaving care – were more likely to face increased periods of homelessness, unfulfilling work, and poorly paid casual or short-term work.

Furthermore, this group had issues in their personal and professional relationships due to patterns of dependency and detachment from others. However, Stein (2008) found that those who received professional and personal support from their specialist and key workers had a positive impact on their lives. These individuals may mentor care leavers to help them succeed towards independence while offering personal relationship support that will help them both psychologically and socially in their lives after care. Besides, care leavers felt that there was a clear distinction between life in an institution and life with an alternative friend or family, with the latter options being better in terms of gaining opportunities for socialisation, and growing up with social skills and knowledge about general life. More work is therefore needed to ensure that girls who leave care are given proper specialist support until they can fully manage their adult lives. The specialists will provide them with both professional and personal support that enables the young people to overcome poor starting points experienced when leaving care.

The need for specialist attention also calls for emphasizing the ethics of care theory. This theory underscores the importance of connection and relatedness (Holland, 2010; Barnes, 2012). It argues against morality that relies on rights only and instead claims that human

beings are not independent and autonomous but they rely on each other for care (Holland, 2010). According to Barnes (2012), research on young people receiving public care shows that they constantly express the wish of having a lasting relationship with social workers. In particular, these individuals preferred friendly staff members who listened to their issues and treated them with respect. Similarly, participants in this study articulated that they need an individual to trust and depend on psychologically as they start their independent lives.

Accepting that all humans are interdependent and they are all care receivers for a significant part of their lives can somehow lead to a reduction in 'othering' abandoned children in care because of their care-receiving status (Holland, 2010). It also enhances the view that these individuals are not just 'care recipients' but may as well be caregivers based on how their care experiences are shaped. The ethic of care theory, therefore, aims at emphasizing the significance of lasting individual relationships between looked-after children and their social workers, caregivers, and family and friend networks (Holland, 2010; Barnes, 2012). Other studies have also vouched for trusting and honest relationships between social workers and looked after children. Such relationships empower young people to take part in decisions regarding their care alongside responsible adults, leading to better care outcomes (Barnes, 2012).

The current social care system does not promote these beneficial relationships since both abandoned young people and specialists are often transferred across institutions by the MHRSD. This may be due to the market-based culture that has made social services be operated as quasi-businesses, where social workers just play the role of care managers without any emphasis on finding time to develop relationships with those they serve (Barnes, 2012). Rather than focusing on showing accountability by keeping extensive records alone, professional social workers should also concentrate on establishing long-term relationships with looked-after children to improve their psychological and social lives during and after the transition to adulthood.

In general, the mean for abandoned young people in this domain is 3.10 and their responses are positive, while for care leavers, the mean is 3.15 and is positive (refer to Table 4-12 for more details). This shows that it is nearly negative and not that high, highlighting differences in the social and personal issues and challenges faced by abandoned young people and care leavers.

### Theme 3: Marriage

The final key theme is marriage. The researcher reviews this theme based on the viewpoints of abandoned young people and care leavers to understand how their fare in a new life without their usual care givers. In particular, the theme is focused on identifying the rights of this group in terms of accessing help from responsible organisations, such as Ekha'a and the MHRSD. Overall, abandoned young people and care leavers expressed varied sentiments about this issue and how it determined their ability to receive care.

### Needs

In the domain of rights and obligations, both care leavers and abandoned young people strongly felt that they needed more information about their rights and responsibilities, not only as members of society in general but also for specific parts of their lives, like marital choices. Care leavers especially felt that they lacked an understanding of what they needed to do or be able to do upon leaving care, or even who to approach for assistance (Ekha'a or

the MHRSD), what the criteria were to gain access to assistance, or even what assistance was available and who was in charge of granting such assistance.

In fact, most of the young people felt that they were been forced into marriage by the MHRSD and social workers. The individuals expressed that they felt abandoned by the systems and by the people required to help them within the system. The care receivers may choose to leave the care facility as a result. A similar scenario is witnessed in the UK where financial pressures due to embarrassment and poor relationships with caregivers cause looked-after children to leave care facilities (Munro et al., 2012). Some children felt embarrassed that they could not acquire similar things as their peers causing them to leave school and seek money (Munro et al., 2012). Deteriorated relationships between care receivers and caregivers also caused young people to leave care.

These were issues that abandoned young people did not feel were a problem because they felt that their needs were being looked after while in care, a feeling that has become even stronger in recent years under the social homes model of care. In this model, girls are learning to take responsibility for themselves and, as a result, take more of an interest in their rights and obligations in society as they prepare to leave care. Care leavers could also see a clear difference between themselves and individuals coming from alternative families, while abandoned young people clearly saw the struggles that some of their sisters had in adjusting to living independently or to being married, and as a result, they were uneasy about leaving institutional care. Quantitative findings from Table 4.18 portray that for abandoned young people, the highest mean of 3.78 implies that respondents understand their obligations as a citizen or members of society. Conversely, the lowest mean of 3.30 means that abandoned young people are in less agreement with the statement that they know what is required from them to gain access to services that could support them in life while out of care.

In general, the mean for abandoned young people in this domain is 3.55 and it is positive, while for care leavers the mean is 2.55 and their response is negative (refer to Table 4-18 for more details). This shows that there are differences in how abandoned young people and care leavers perceive and understand their rights and obligations.

## **Challenges**

Discussing rights and obligations, care leavers once again touched on the problems of dealing with Ekha'a, how its staff did not know what their needs were or how best to help them, and how their perception was that it was actually the MHRSD, not Ekha'a, that was in charge. It was therefore believed that the MHRSD should be taking more of a lead role in this aspect of care so that those in care were at least aware of the necessities of life once they left care. One respondent felt that, if such knowledge was imparted to girls before they left care, they would be able to lead more successful and independent lives, as a greater appreciation of their rights would lead to a better understanding of what was needed to succeed in the future. For example, being able to access higher education would lead to a better-paid job and mean that the girls could afford their own accommodation, as well as provide more opportunities for socialisation.

On the other hand, courses about marriage may be offered to those in care, but their suitability is questioned even by those working in the institutions, with one noting that they

are not all-inclusive and do not start early enough for the girls in care, a feeling shared by both abandoned young people and care leavers. In fact, many abandoned young people felt that they were actively being pushed into this uncertain marital life by the MHRSD and Ekha'a. They felt that these organisations did not make them view marriage as a choice that offered a great deal in terms of security and comfort but simply as a way for the MHRSD or other actors in the care system to relieve themselves of the burden of caring for abandoned young people as soon as possible. Ironically, this issue of paternalism made many abandoned young people feel abandoned by the system they were in as well as by those meant to help them in that system.

Paternalism refers to the interference of an individual with another person, against their will, and defending the intrusion by claiming that the individual interfered with will fare better and be shielded from any harm. Although this is the case in Saudi Arabia, Nylund (2020) explains that our current image of children and childhood has changed from seeing young people as dependent and in dire need of protection, to viewing them as able individuals or capable subjects conferred with rights and knowledge. Young people should be treated as human beings with diverse and evolving desires and capabilities than adults. They should also be identified as autonomous agents, who have the right to make errors. In addition, young people should be respected now rather than being emphasized as future investments. Although they need protection, this necessity should not stop them from practicing self-determination, choice, and voice. Therefore, young girls receiving care should be more autonomous and allowed to make their choices like other human beings.

Care leavers as a whole felt that they were underprepared, if not unprepared, for life outside of institutional care as a whole. They felt that the courses provided were too late (should have been offered at earlier ages) and too limited in scope, and that the people available to assist them, such as alternative mothers, care workers or specialists, did not readily share their experiences or opinions about topics like marriage. As one individual noted:

*There must be a follow-up system for married girls. Also, it is necessary for girls who register their names for marriage to be trained and taught about married life, their rights, and how to act in the difficult situations they face. For example, if your husband hits you, what is the solution? Or, if there is a problem in your house, how do you deal with it, and who can you ask for help? These things are not clear for us, because workers in the institution only focus on entertainment and parties while we are there. This is not what will benefit us when we leave the institution and enter the real world.*

This led to a feeling on the part of many care leavers that their psychological well-being was not being looked after by either institutions or the MHRSD, leaving them unprepared for life outside institutions. Care leavers did offer some suggestions for improvements to this system, such as having workers spend time with them during the engagement period before marriage to discuss what married life would be like and to ensure that they understood their marital and individual rights as well as their responsibilities. They also felt that follow-up by the MHRSD and Ekha'a was necessary after marriage, to ensure that they felt supported rather than abandoned.

In general, the mean for abandoned young people in this domain is 3.67 and which is positive, while for care leavers the mean is 3.78 and their response is positive and higher than that of abandoned young people in this domain. However, it is still not high in relative



terms (refer to Table 4-19 for more details). This shows that there are differences in family and relationships between abandoned young people and care leavers. For instance, young people had better socialization and relationship-building rates with individuals around them compared to care leavers. In terms of raising a family, however, care leavers received more information regarding proper pregnancy practices, looking after children, and raising a family in contrast to abandoned young people still in care. Care leavers were also given more knowledge regarding husband-and-wife relationships, unlike other young people. However, this knowledge was not enough to help them through the marriage life as some of the care leavers denoted. For this reason, a better education curriculum and improved support are required to help care leavers better cope with these transitions.

### **Conclusion**

In this first section of the project, the researcher provided a variety of results, including the themes and the participant' quotes, as well as a summary of the findings. Generally, the participants were engaged during the interview sessions. The researcher identified seven key themes during the data analysis. Abandoned young people, care leavers, and institutional staff participated in the study. These individuals belong to distinct backgrounds and have worked in diverse settings. Overall, the participants described their experiences and the issues they faced when receiving care from relevant facilities and when outside these institutions (as in the case of care leavers). In this section, the researcher organised the findings around the primary themes related to the main research aim.

There are a number of recommendations or best practices that could be offered to address the above concerns, with a focus on ensuring positive future outcomes for care leavers and abandoned young people in Saudi care systems. These will be discussed in greater detail in the discussion that follows.

## Agencies and Organisations

### Introduction

In this section, the researcher organises the findings by specific issues to determine the experiences, needs, and challenges of abandoned young people and care leavers in Saudi Arabia's care system. In particular, the focus is on young girls, who are often overlooked in the highly male-dominated Saudi society. The findings indicate several experiences and issues that staff workers in major institutions, including Ekha'a and the MHRSD, encounter on a regular basis. In the subsequent part, the researcher presents the findings using the themes identified in the participants' stories; several examples are provided as an overview of the findings.

### Ekha'a

A special mention needs to be made here of Ekha'a, its role in providing for the needs of care leavers, and how it works or does not work, with the MHRSD. Ekha'a operates under the supervision of the MHRSD, and it is responsible for the provision of appropriate environments to ensure the social and psychological stability of abandoned young people. It connects with different actors in Saudi society to assist and protect care leavers in terms of housing, education, scholarships, family care, training and employment, awareness, and both financial and in-kind assistance (Ekha'a, 2017; Ekha'a, 2019). It has a special focus on education for care leavers, to not only achieve positive and greater integration within society and a better sense of self-confidence and well-being but also to meet the desire of most care leavers to complete their education and obtain their qualifications to secure better jobs (Ekha'a, 2019; Ekha'a, 2017).

It could be assumed that, if Ekha'a is acting on behalf of care leavers in such diverse areas, they would be knowledgeable about what abandoned young people need before leaving care and, in addition, what care leavers need. They would also work in concert with the MHRSD to best allow care leavers to be successful, independent members of society. However, in the eyes of the girls being looked after by Ekha'a and the MHRSD, that is not always the case. Many care leavers felt that there were many problems with how Ekha'a dealt with their needs and concerns, with a lack of support and follow-up (a point reinforced in the study undertaken by Albar (2018), and they encountered a great number of difficulties when dealing with them. As an example, one individual noted that there was an element of unfairness and inequality in Ekha'a's operations, saying, *"There is no equality. Services do not meet our needs"* (CL 4), while another care leaver explained the following:

*I heard about girls who own their house. Some of them are married to orphans, and some of them not. When I told them that there are girls who own their house while they were married to non-orphans, they told me there is a system of points. If they complete all points, then they will own a house. I told them that I was told that there was no house available for me because my husband is not an orphan. I was never told about a points system (CL6).*

Many care leavers also felt that it was difficult to talk to staff at Ekha'a about personal issues due to the lack of a trusted relationship such as the one they would have had in the institution with a specialist. This problem was exacerbated by a lack of confidence in what Ekha'a was saying, and whether it was actually correct. In fact, many care leavers believe that it is the MHRSD that actually controls what happens in the care system, not Ekha'a, as they are in charge of what happens in residential institutions. This would indicate that greater

transparency is needed in terms of the relationship between Ekha'a and the MHRSD, so that both abandoned young people and care leavers understand who is in charge of what. They can then access the assistance they need in a timely manner, rather than being left to depend on the empathy of care workers, who may not be up to the task for a variety of reasons.

### **The Relationship Between Ekha'a and the MHRSD**

The reality of the relationship between Ekha'a and the MHRSD, however, is that it is not a strong partnership with positive, effective outcomes for those in care; rather, it is one with ambiguous if not negative outcomes, depending on how well the two staff groups and sets of policies and programmes mesh together. The structure of both entities dictates how they interact with each other. This was highlighted by one Ekha'a staff member when she said that, while Ekha'a itself is an independent entity, with MHRSD's oversight if necessary, the ministry considers the Minister to be the chairman of the board of directors at Ekha'a, and it is this which serves as the common point between the MHRSD and Ekha'a. One MHRSD worker noted the same relationship, with the MHRSD taking the leading role, when she said the following:

*"Letters are sent to him [(the Minister)] as the chairman of the board of directors to Ekha'a, and their [(the MHRSD's)] relationship with Ekha'a is only supervisory. There are some complaints. We have our own partnerships and they have their partnerships, and we sometimes benefit from their partnerships. But, the main dependence is on partnerships that are made with Ekha'a".*

For their part, staff in charge at Ekha'a say that there is excellent cooperation between themselves and the MHRSD, with Ekha'a being in charge of requesting and disbursing the aid provided by the MHRSD. However, some staff did note a lack of transparency or credibility on the part of some of the ministry's employees regarding aid.

As a result, while Ekha'a (as well as other charitable organisations) is theoretically independent and expected to follow and carry out MHRSD policies and directives, they are in fact directly supervised and resourced by the MHRSD. This leads many care leavers to feel that it is not Ekha'a that can give them timely assistance; rather, this role falls to their guiding entity, the one that looked after their needs when they were in care: the MHRSD itself. This can make cooperation and communication problematic, and workers at both the MHRSD and Ekha'a noted that there were ongoing difficulties with understanding the aims and goals of each other. This had an impact on the outcomes of abandoned young people and care leavers, especially when, as one social worker noted, the voices of those in the care system itself, such as the social workers and the abandoned young people and care leavers themselves, were not taken into account in any meaningful way. Furthermore, in the case of social workers, they were prevented from accessing courses and information given to MHRSD specialists.

Many care leavers also felt that, when trying to obtain assistance from either the MHRSD or Ekha'a, the system itself did not allow for such requests, even when exemptions from regulations were requested by staff at Ekha'a. As an Ekha'a staff member noted, this can be a problem for individuals, as they may or may not understand their rights, and may or may not be receiving help while in care from specialists who are effective at what they do, or staff in institutions who care enough about the girls to share their experiences and opinions with them.

In addition, the information received at Ekha'a from the MHRSD regarding a care leaver may not be complete. This lack of information makes it more difficult for Ekha'a to offer assistance to care leavers and leads to Ekha'a being viewed in a more negative light by both care leavers and abandoned young people. They see how girls who have left care are being treated and feel that the MHRSD should be the ones to approach when in need of assistance, as they looked after their needs while they were in care.

The highest mean of 3.96 in this domain (refer to Table 4-10 for more details) indicates that it is the most agreed-upon statement. Both groups agree that it is important to ensure that communication between Ekha'a and the MHRSD is positive in terms of looking after the needs and concerns of care leavers. As quantitative findings in Table 4-10 reflect, most respondents agree that it is vital to ensure positive communication between Ekha'a and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development to take better care of care leavers. In addition, the table shows that respondents (care leavers) disagree with the statement that there is follow-up by the staff of responsible institutions such as Ekha'a.

### Theme 1: Preparation

This theme aims at revealing whether organizations play a critical role in ensuring young people are well prepared before leaving care. The researcher largely focuses on care leavers, who are at a greater risk of failing to achieve significant personal growth. For abandoned young people, support is readily available from residential institutions acting as care systems. This fact is consistent with the idea that care leavers need to comprehend their basic obligations, rights and roles. Through support care from distinct members of staff in residential facilities, young individuals, especially girls, are able to understand what is expected of them and they strive to live an independent life while obtaining help when they deem it necessary. The participants, specifically care leavers, discuss their own expectations of what will happen when they leave care. They identify financial security as an important part of their autonomous personal growth.

### Needs

Perhaps the biggest difference between care leavers and abandoned young women is how independence is perceived by care leavers, be it after marriage or when they are living by themselves. While abandoned young women have long-term support into adulthood provided by residential institution staff, care leavers appreciate that a detailed understanding of their rights and responsibilities and what is expected of them would definitely help them to achieve an independent life outside of care, or even enable them to access assistance when necessary. In Table 4.3, care leavers cited a need to be provided with the capability to manage daily needs, as the following quote indicates:

*I will be independent if I have a guaranteed job. I mean, not in a company, not if they can fire me at any moment. If it is guaranteed, then for sure, I will be independent. because now jobs are asking you to register for insurance, but if I register, I lose my social security. I fear they will take me out of it, and then I will lose my only income. (CL 7)*

Being able to get a job when they leave care is seen by care leavers as an instrumental factor in being able to maintain their dignity and family security. For this reason, both MHRSD and Ekha'a should support the girls as they transition to adulthood. This quote also illustrates that care leavers tend to be afraid of leaving care, an aspect associated with being unprepared or

abruptly exiting care institutions. Providing support and preparation to young people before leaving care will help them have enhanced confidence in their abilities.

Noteworthy, this aspect aligns with the focal model, which emphasizes the need for improved recognition of how the timing and nature of transitions from care influence young people's lives. A significant proportion of the participants explained that they often felt that their lives out of care would be insecure and isolated due to the lack of institutional support and their sisters as well. This fear can be alleviated by applying the focal model to give every child an opportunity to have more normative transitions. This theory argues that young people should be given the practical and emotional support they require in their early adulthood years (Stein, 2006). Rather than compressed and accelerated transitions often provided in the current system, care receivers should be given psychological space to handle different challenges over time. This approach will help care leavers reflect and search for their identity, which in turn enables them to effectively deal with problems and challenges as they occur in adulthood.

Another need exists where care leavers consider preparation for leaving care to be a short exercise in which their involvement is minimal. This group highlighted that caregivers were unwilling to discuss their own futures and plans with them. In some cases, their preferences were noted by caregivers but were not included during the planning of their futures. This action negatively influenced the relationship between the caregivers and looked after children. Some of the young people also expressed that the negative impact on their career paths also affected their emotional well-being. This challenge necessitates the application of the ethics of care theory, which underscores the importance of establishing and sustaining long-term care relationships between looked-after children and caregivers, social workers, family, and informal networks among others. Such relationships enhance the overall well-being and health of children in care.

Besides, the attention and care children receive are more significant than any material benefits they may receive (Mikulincer et al., 2003). Caregivers should be more considerate in establishing appropriate relationships with young people. According to Stein (2012), social care professionals should learn to value not only care relationships but also the relationships treasured by looking after children as a way of enhancing how they handle their needs and concerns once they are independent. Close, adaptive, and stable relationships facilitate proper guidance for young people as they face challenges in their adulthood (Thomas, 2005; Stein, 2012; Tucker and MacKenzie, 2012).

### **Challenges**

That does not mean, however, that abandoned young women do not feel the pressure of life, married or otherwise, after having left care. They think about it a lot while in care, imagining themselves facing an isolated and insecure life outside of care without the support of either the workers in the institutions or their sisters. This is even more important when the person they marry is of questionable character, which could mean a potential return to care if the marriage fails. This is not ideal for women with children.

### **Theme 2: Specialist support for Young Women**

The study highlighted the importance of an ethic of care for looking after young women in their relationships with professional workers. As found in other studies, they needed competent, reliable workers who would listen, respect them, treat them as equals and

promote their participation in decisions. For this reason, the study focuses on forging coping mechanisms for abandoned young people and care leavers. In this theme, the researcher integrates multidimensional views from both groups. These views indicate the importance of tangible and emotional support for both populations. The study examines the different forms of social assistance that are necessary for the well-being of care leavers. As interviews with the participants progressed, differing views between care leavers and abandoned young individuals emerged.

### **Needs**

Generally speaking, abandoned young women and care leavers have a myriad of needs that must be recognised and addressed if they are to be independent and confident members of society upon leaving care. The ethics of care theory promotes improved care that meets these needs to maintain the world of care leavers. Holland (2010) highlights that care is both ethical and practical. As such, while care relationships are not often open in public life, the interdependency in care relationships and recognition that every individual is a care-receiver and care-giver is essential. By emphasizing these aspects, the theory normalizes and destigmatizes in the aim of restoring it to the core of public life rather than viewing it as a private act for only the needy and vulnerable.

Through it, abandoned children can develop long-term relationships with their care givers. Without quality, trusting and secure relationships, care leavers and abandoned young people do not have access to the support they need to become less independent and then productive in terms of living in their own way. They lack attentiveness, responsibility, integrity, and responsiveness to help them face day-to-day challenges like their peers in well-structured and caring families. The problem faced by this researcher when trying to answer this specific question was that there were similar yet different feelings among and between both abandoned young people and care leavers.

For instance, as has already been indicated, both abandoned young women and care leavers felt that more needed to be done to prepare them for life outside of the care system. Many issues were indicated in terms of not being able to do things for themselves and not being given the right information or preparatory programmes at the right time to help them address these issues. These are some of the reasons why the ideas of pathway planning and needs assessments were widely supported by both groups of respondents. They seem to offer an informed and supported way forward for both groups as they prepare to live independently in wider society, a way that care leavers see strongly as necessary, given the difficulties they perceive and experience with being adequately prepared for life outside of care. Nevertheless, ethics of justice is now needed to provide better and more responsive care to female children and youths. The Saudi care system is built upon structural gender inequalities that exclude and undervalue the voices of female caregivers in decision-making and policy. These inequalities are significant in the employment sector where women face challenges such as limited growth and development opportunities, gender discrimination in the place of work, gender stereotyping, increased workload due to poor family-work balance, limited growth opportunities, and gender-based issues associated with pregnancy (Al-Asfour et al., 2017).

Rather than providing care based on an ethics of care perspective, female workers provide tend to provide care to abandoned young females because they are inclined to perform this role. However, this should not exclude them from contributing elsewhere to improve the responsiveness of the Saudi care system. They should be involved in decision-making, policy design, and the creation of procedures as proposed through the ethics of justice. Each child or youth's care should be differentiated individually based on his or her needs, rather than homogenizing the type of care given.

### **Challenges**

Indeed, care leavers felt very strongly that they would benefit from being linked to a group of “sisters”, a similar population, after leaving care, and from having greater contact with their friends and alternative families, as a support network. They also needed more follow-up from the MHRSD and Ekha’a with an adaptable rather than rigid system of policies, procedures and programmes, which to them included more sharing of information to better track the progress of care leavers. This last point is important, as Albar (2018) noted that many policies and practices exist in the Saudi care system due to a lack of consultation between government departments, social agencies and their staff. This is something that the MHRSD is attempting to address by merging social supervision offices with its branches to better address poor practice through better communication and coordination.

However, at the same time, abandoned young people also felt that many of their needs and concerns were being addressed within institutions. This could be seen as confusing, but in reality, when everything is done for you within your care environment, while you may feel a longing or wish to do more for yourself and can see what happens when people you have lived with have issues after leaving care, it is understandable that abandoned young people have this apparent duality in their opinions.

Quantitative evidence in Table 4.5 shows that most respondents (abandoned young people) established relationships when out of care with people having diverse social backgrounds from them. Additionally, the table reflects that respondents highly disagreed with the idea that they were able to maintain contact with their close ones, including family and friends. Overall, there is a general consensus among respondents that staff at these residential institutions fail to create favourable environments for interactions with other people outside the care systems.

In general, the mean for abandoned young people in this domain is 3.76, and their responses are positive. For care leavers, the mean is 3.46 and positive except for issues related to being linked to a group of recently married sisters and receiving follow-up from Ekha’a staff or the supervising authority (refer to Table 4-9 for more details). This shows that there are differences in how the needs of abandoned young people and care leavers are addressed, but that security in relationships is seen as a key factor, an idea reflected in findings from other countries which have looked at the value of things like kinship support in helping to avoid social exclusion or feelings of inferiority (del Valle et al., 2011).

### **Theme 3: Marriage**

The final theme, marriage, is intrinsically connected with the social welfare organisations' data regarding their staff's perception of forsaken young people and care leavers. This subject drew distinct views from workers and those in care, including the abandoned young people

within care systems. Here, the participants share their thoughts about the marital life decisions of neglected young girls.

### **Needs**

Marriage is a key area in which there seems to be a disconnection between what staff feel that abandoned young people need, the perceptions of abandoned young people themselves, and the reality that care leavers face when they leave care. The MHRSD and its Social Affairs agency, with the goal of giving girls greater social and psychological awareness, have the responsibility of finding suitable partners for abandoned young people, checking their backgrounds, selecting marriage candidates for girls to choose from, and giving girls a financial subsidy to start marital life (Almubarak, 2010; Albar and Farah, 2015; Aldagheer, 2016; Alriyadh, 2010; Unpublished National Study, 2014). Some staff in charge at MHRSD also note that Ekha'a is responsible for girls if they marry from social homes, but not for those girls who marry from an alternative family or an institution, as the MHRSD is responsible for them. In general, Ekha'a is responsible for married women, divorced women and widowed women.

The considerations regarding the suitability of a partner, however, may not extend to their income-earning ability, a key consideration for abandoned young people, given that the income earned by the sole breadwinner in the family (the man, as per cultural norms in Saudi Arabia), may not be sufficient to cover all accommodation costs or the expenses associated with raising a family (Almubarak, 2010; Alzahrani, 2015). Considerations before arranging a marriage may also not extend to understanding what is motivating a girl in care to get married rather than finish her studies, such as emotional deprivation or a sense of loneliness. This may not be satisfied after marriage and may lead to dissatisfaction, divorce, and a return to institutional life (Almubarak, 2010; Alzahrani, 2015; Albar and Farah, 2015). This is not assisted by the view in Ekha'a that *"the most important thing for us is that the girl is socially integrated, that her education is no less than high school, and that she has a job. As for marriage, this is up to her"*. This indicates that individualism is valued by Ekha'a, but as mentioned previously, it is not encouraged in institutional life. Despite this, the staff in institutions perceive that the girls have a poor understanding of their situation in care, due to their reluctance to want to understand or attend the optional courses offered on marriage. They acknowledge that the courses are lacking in quality, but nothing is done to change the learning environment related to marriage for abandoned young people.

### **Challenges**

The aforementioned information demonstrates that authorities both within and outside of institutions neglect to pay attention to the needs of girls in care before they are married. As a result, not only are girls not well-informed in a timely or detailed manner, if informed at all, of their rights and duties as a married individual, but also there seems to be a lack of attention given to the quality of the men who look to be married to an abandoned young female. Indeed, in terms of the former issue, the lack of information given to girls in institutions prior to marriage has led to distinct feelings of abandonment and isolation on their part. One respondent voiced these issues as follows:

*No. I wanted to come out of the institution [care], so I accepted the person who proposed to me and got married. They helped me with marriage, but it was not enough. They paid attention to the formalities, but with less concern to marital life and rights for the wife and*



*children. I am honest; I did not know many things. That is because of the institution and, of course, the ministry. They only want to get us married. (cl 6)*

Similarly, quantitative findings portray that abandoned young people, mainly girls, agree less with the statement that they get information regarding how to cope with their spouses prior to getting married. Moreover, Table 4.8 shows that respondents have more deviation with the statement that they obtain programmes involving marriage. For care leavers, quantitative evidence is clear in demonstrating that they understand their sole responsibility and decision-making when it comes to issues of marriage.

While there are marriage programmes offered to girls in institutions who are about to get married, these courses are not looked upon in a positive way by the girls themselves. Indeed, generally speaking, marriage (or the lack of preparation for it), has been a particular problem experienced by many respondents. The programmes that are supposed to assist girls with preparing for marriage are not appreciated or supported by the girls, as they are provided in a voluntary and unofficial manner. One girl noted the following:

*I don't know. No, there is no preparation for girls. There are basic sessions [courses], but they tell us something and to do something. For example, they say you must rely on yourself, but then they go with us wherever we go, even if it is simple. Where is the confidence? Where is the self-reliance? Now, we have three engaged girls. They do not have any programmes, which [makes us feel] that they want to get rid of them. I mean, girls will leave the institution and get lost and cannot do anything, like our "sisters" before. No one knows about them. (AYP 1)*

These courses are also perceived as not being offered at the right time, as by the time they are offered, the girls are too busy with their new relationships to attend such a course. In contrast, they would be happy to attend preparatory courses prior to their marriage. This causes girls to leave care without preparation, and the same problems occur in other areas, despite similar preparatory courses. This was a problem noted by many respondents as something that forced them to learn through trial and error. In such cases, follow-ups were seen as necessary by the majority of the respondents to ensure that girls were not lost or feeling abandoned after leaving care.

In fact, if marriage is the end goal of those in authority, and other topics that would serve the girls well in their future lives as independent and contributing members of society are not expressed or taught, then how can the girls be expected to succeed in basic undertakings like renting an apartment or understanding a contract, or even going to see a doctor at a hospital? This issue was mentioned previously, when touching upon the issue of workers doing things for girls in institutions rather than helping them to learn valuable knowledge about what life is like outside. However, the effect can be even more insidious because of the issues that this could create for a girl trying to integrate into society. Indeed, many respondents voiced their dissatisfaction with not being able to do things for themselves, or even being given the chance to try something for themselves. They pointed to the fact that institutions did everything for them, on their behalf, as the root cause of this problem. For example, they were not allowed to go to a doctor's clinic or a mall by themselves, or even to school. As one respondent noted:

*It is difficult for us. See, they are still doing everything for us, like paying the bills. I sincerely tell you that I depend on them for everything. A year ago, a girl withdrew from her alternative family [foster family]. I don't know the reason. She was 21, younger than me, and knew how*

*to settle many things because her alternative family taught her and understood her. But this hasn't happened to me while being in care at a residential institution. The workers here don't give us a chance to rely on ourselves, even though they say we must. Only the girls who have "a bad tongue" and scream are able to go without having anyone with them. But, girls like us have no voice. (APY 1).*

This brings us back to the importance of early preparation for abandoned young people, supporting their education process and providing them with practical life skills that increase their life chances and link to their goals (needs), in addition to the question of who is actually giving them that assistance and support. Care leavers specifically felt that they did not receive adequate information about marriage and marital life prior to marriage. Furthermore, the decision to get married and to whom was out of their control, and they received little to no support after being married. In contrast, while abandoned young people also felt that they received little information about how to behave in a marriage or about marital life itself, they did at least feel that they were the ones making the decision regarding when to get married, rather than being pushed into it. They also felt that support was offered within institutions, which indicates that experiences are more important than expectations with regard to living in care rather than living independently outside of the care system.

The ethics of justice approach advocated for care leavers to be well informed when preparing to join marriage. This approach emphasizes universality, rights, and autonomy in the practices and policies of looked after children. Holland (2010) postulates that the ethic of justice mainly focuses on issues involving individual rights, fairness, abstract principles, equality, and their consistent application. These concerns are deliberately aimed at improving the daily lives and outcomes of young people in care. In this regard, the ethics of care approach underpins the importance of including children in making decisions that affect them (Holland, 2010). Furthermore, all young people have a right to gain adequate experience from the care system to help them continue with their lives either in marriage or independently. This will ensure that care leavers have the financial, psychological, and emotional needs required to prepare and make informed decisions about their future.

### **Best Practice**

People in positions of authority within residential care institutions mentioned that clarity and fairness are important when dealing with girls in the system, as this could help to develop their independence when they leave the institution. However, this does not seem to be followed in practice, as abandoned young people themselves noted that their responsibilities and obligations upon leaving care were not made clear to them while in care because everything was done for them. This made it difficult for them to understand what they needed to do to be truly independent after leaving care. Both they, along with people in positions of authority within institutions, agree that a mentor of some kind (for example to discuss marital life) would be beneficial, along with a unified care system with wraparound care. As one individual noted, *"The girl needs it before she comes out of the institution so that she can be independent and know how to make her situation better, and it should be from a competent person, who wants her to get benefits"*.

This environment of dependency, in the eyes of those in charge of institutions, also created a situation in which many girls felt ungrateful for what they received. As one respondent mentioned:

*They always feel that they lack something and always need things, and as specialists, our job has been to provide them with everything they wanted free of charge. This is always what they say in an impolite way, that you are here for their comfort. So, despite offering some courses for things like marriage, this is the reason for their attitude; it is as a result of their lives when they were young in the institution, and the resulting deterioration of their psychological personality structure due to all of the problems they faced when they were young. That made them try to live without goals, and with a weak desire for change.*

The idea of fairness and unity was also highlighted by those in charge at institutions, as they not only felt that care leavers definitely needed to know their rights and responsibilities prior to leaving care, but also that there were differences in the quality of care for abandoned young people. They pointed to the unbalanced ways in which rules and regulations were applied by institution managers, which were problematic for individuals with different expectations and experiences who were trying to fit into society after having left care. As one staff member noted, *“All girls should be treated in the same way, across all institutions, so that all girls have an equal knowledge of their rights and obligations”*.

### **Ekha’a**

Ekha’a wants to ensure that all the individuals it assists reach their fullest potential after leaving care, and are able to lead successful, independent lives as members of the wider society. As a result, Ekha’a workers want to hear the voices of those in care, and they undertake regular visits to branches to ensure that the quality of care and programmes is as high as possible. However, while those are the goals, Ekha’a workers themselves indicated that there were issues with the fairness of who was listened to and how their opinions were followed up, with the emphasis being placed on those who acted out in care, not those who were silent but still needed similar levels of support and attention.

This means that, in practice, Ekha’a does not have a good understanding of what abandoned young people or care leavers need or want, as demonstrated by one individual who noted, despite all of the aforementioned information, that:

*Care leavers do not need mentors, because there is a psychologist and a social worker for each married woman. I mean, I do not see that there is a need for mentors, especially now with the opening of social homes and the cancellation of the institutions permanently because they had too many problems.*

It is obviously the hope of those working at Ekha’a that the social homes model of care will solve problems related to fairness and quality of care, while those in care and who have left care see the need for more hands-on care from Ekha’a.

### **The MHRSD**

The aforementioned views of care leavers are not supported by staff at the MHRSD. They feel strongly that the support they need is available to them in the form of preparatory programmes and courses, as well as workshops in institutions that support the transition of those in care to the new social homes, which will better serve the girls in terms of developing life skills for independent living. However, they also recognised that such courses needed updating and to be offered at an earlier age than is currently the case, as noted in the following quote:

*Certainly, they need this, but I see that most people do not know from their young age, and this is a defect of the system or the specialists who applied the system to them before. The result of this is that, when they grow up, they want everything by force, because they are not accustomed to knowing what is a right, a duty and a responsibility, and who should teach them how to take responsibility. There was overprotection for them by female specialists who carried out their duties, due to a feeling of increased pity for them by those who work with them because they are orphans. This policy is a defect in their personalities, because the specialists did not deal with them in normal manners. Now, we hear words from them like, "You serve us". This is the result of such negative practices from those who previously worked with them (psychologists in institutions).*

The elements that the MHRSD feel are important for abandoned young people and care leavers, and what they are perceived as being in charge of by those same individuals and staff at Ekha'a, have already been touched upon at various points throughout this discussion. However, generally speaking, officials at the MHRSD feel that they perform well in addressing the needs and concerns of those in care or who have left care. For example, they ensure that prospective marriage partners are suitable through robust background checks, and they provide financial subsidies for those in care.

However, the MHRSD definitely wants care leavers and abandoned young people to know their rights and responsibilities prior to leaving care, thereby following up on the findings of the Al-Issa study (2013), which saw the need for greater preparation of abandoned young people for their transition into social settings. That is one of the reasons why the model of care in the Saudi care system was changed from institutional settings so social homes, to allow for such knowledge to be gained by girls before they needed it in family-like settings. In fact, many respondents were in favour of using technology to make such knowledge more efficiently accessible. They suggested setting up a portal that could be accessed by those in care and those who have left care so that requests for financial assistance or treatment in a hospital, among other items, could be streamlined and addressed more quickly than is currently the case. This would still leave the girls themselves in charge of knowing and following up on their own needs and concerns.

This focus on life skills, however, does leave the MHRSD open to criticism in terms of an under-provision of educational programmes. Indeed, Muflehi (2011) pointed out a lack of educational programmes for abandoned young people in the care institutions of the MHRSD. As a result, whatever educational assistance charitable organisations could provide was dependent on their own efforts and activities, resulting in a disparity in the level of education received by abandoned young people, in favour of those in residential institutions directly operated by the MHRSD.

There could also be criticism of the MHRSD's practices in terms of who benefits from educational assistance. While girls who are studying are well supported by the MHRSD, those who leave care to get married before they finish their studies fall under the supervision of Ekha'a (Ministry of Labor and Social Development, 2011). Again, this points to a disparity in the quality of care within the Saudi care system, and it highlights the need for a robust partnership between Ekha'a and the MHRSD in terms of assisting abandoned young people and care leavers.

On a side note, the MHRSD has established, through the Department of Orphan Affairs, a standard procedural handbook for abandoned young people, one written by a qualified team

from different specialties (including developmental, educational and social fields). The idea behind this handbook is to unify labour policies and operating procedures so that they better serve abandoned young people, who should benefit from their access to residential care institutions, and now social homes, until they leave (Al-madina, 2018; Daralakhbar, 2018). This is recognition of the information reported by Albar and Abofraj (2011), who found that individuals in care are vulnerable to psychological and social issues, and that different needs and concerns are presented by those in care, thus necessitating a more nuanced and personalised approach to care practices, possibly through the mentoring of individuals. The fact that these efforts on the part of the MHRSD do not seem to translate into direct care practice within institutions themselves, or to be seen as effective by either abandoned young people or care leavers, once again highlights a lack of transparency and communication between the different actors within the Saudi care system, something that pathway planning and comprehensive needs assessments can address.

## Discussion

The research findings show that decision making in social work should be intuitive; this requires social workers to depend on past experience and knowledge to make informed verdicts. This study elicited mixed views from the key participants, including care leavers and abandoned young people in care systems or facilities. In this discussion section, the researcher provides a broad evaluation of the key themes identified from the two chapters. The perspectives of the forsaken young people and care leavers are assessed based on the highlighted themes. In particular, the focus is on the experiences of these groups in and out of care support. The aim is to determine potential recommendations to address the issue by empowering the study's target populations.

*It is correct. It is supposed to be specific to female specialists because they are the closest. But, you know, not all female specialists have a sense of direction in a good way. I mean, with respect, some people say the same things, that you will regret things. This kind of conversation makes the girl stubborn because it is not in a positive manner. I mean, encouragement and motivation are important in guidance. If they focus on this thing, I see that there will be a good result. There should definitely be continuous follow-ups. I suggest that they focus on who to direct and how to direct. But, the ministry must choose the right specialists who will have a positive influence on the development of services (CL 12).*

Indeed, many respondents felt that the courses were offered at the wrong times in a girl's life, and that they should be offered when the girls were more mature and not involved in studies. This interference with the studies undertaken by girls actually negatively affected their potential ability to adapt to life outside the institution prior to leaving it, as they were deprived of an important source of important knowledge and skills. This was pointed to by many respondents as an important consideration when preparing girls for life outside residential institutions. There was widespread agreement over the positive potential of ensuring that there is an official plan for the girls as they mature within the institution. This is best voiced in the following response:

*When we deal with the outputs of the institutions, I will be honest with you: they are completely pastoral. They need to enable the girls so that they can rely on themselves. This is what happens, except for some cases that they have worked on themselves. This is the reason behind the decision to create social homes, a house that includes girls from 5 to 15 years, and from 18 to later ages, in the same home. Dividing houses are to be modelled after a family*

*environment, as an example of brotherhood and age rapprochement. We try to empower them because this is the current trend for orphans. (Psychologist in Ekha'a)*

This was an idea reinforced by the care leavers themselves:

*They need to be ready to understand what is life outside the institution. They need to understand a real society, not what they have imagined in their minds about life outside the institution. They have to understand what they need to know and what they have to do, like how suitable housing can be obtained and how to deal with others in their work or social lives. Yes, I mean life skills and livelihood. All of this is necessary to know before leaving care. Specialists must work on these points so that the orphan will not be shocked when she comes out of the institution, and can be dependent on herself when she emerges from the institution. (CL 6).*

From the aforementioned information, in the opinion of both care leavers and abandoned young people, the best things that could be offered to them would be clarity in terms of knowing what to expect through better preparation when in care, who they can trust and speak to about their needs and concerns, and what assistance can be accessed once they have left care. Besides, evidence has shown that as young people leave care, they often experience a multitude of issues through their journey to adulthood (stein 2008). One of the main challenges they face is social exclusion, where they are unable to fully converge with the rest of their normally brought up peers due to the differences in care and support they receive. The best path forward for these individuals, and for the Saudi care system as a whole, is therefore pathway planning and comprehensive needs assessments, to address the needs and concerns of girls in and after care, while ensuring that their voices are being heard. Indeed, without effective preparation and a supportive pathway plan that is, in turn, supported by explicit policies and regulations on the part of the government of Saudi Arabia rather than the experiences and efforts of personal carers, it will be very difficult for abandoned young people to integrate themselves into wider society when they leave care.

Care leavers also expressed that the preparation for leaving care is a short exercise in which they were not adequately involved. As such, some of the highlighted that the caregivers did not involve them when establishing plans for their futures. For some of the care leavers, their expressed wishes or preferences were not considered during the development of their future plans.

Some abandoned young people felt that they have no idea what to do regarding buying or renting a house once they leave care, and worried that they would be ridiculed by others due to their lack of knowledge. There was also an expectation that, once they leave care, someone would be available to help them in such matters, another reference to abandoned young people having things done for them and, as a result, not being ready to live independently once they leave care

Using the corporate parenting model seen in the UK as an example, under the legal basis of The Children Act of 1989, a variety of actors within the care system work together to ensure that individuals in (and leaving) care receive the best possible opportunities for success. They achieve this by ensuring that young people have access to the assistance and objects they need to be independent, such as accommodation, education and financial assistance (among

others), all while having their voices heard within that care system (Department of Health, 2001; Stein, 2012; Department of Education, 2014). Support is provided and informed by a system of needs assessments and pathway planning, with the assistance of personal advisors to ensure that care leavers understand what is happening around, and for, them (Department of Health, 2001; Stein, Sufian and Hazlehurst, 2001; Children Leaving Care Act Guidance, 2001; Baker, 2017; Hertfordshire County Council, 2018). The needs assessments first set a baseline for an individual in care, taking into account their various needs and backgrounds, after which the pathway planning document is developed and continuously referred to through the individual's time in care. This creates a living document, one that will ultimately, in the case of care leavers in the UK, be addressed at a local level by city councils through the necessary support programmes and forums for feedback (Department of Education, 2010; Goddard and Barrett, 2008; Department of Education, 2012; Children and Social Work Act, 2017; Adley and Kina, 2017; Liabo et al., 2017; Shelter Legal England and Wales, 2018).

In terms of how this model of care could be implemented in Saudi Arabia, abandoned young people have a wealth of ideas on what is needed in the Saudi care system in the form of new processes and programmes that would help them on their journey towards independence and stability. Many felt that the MHRSD needs to take a more active role in making sure that girls are ready for life in society, rather than relying on the opinions of those in the institutions, especially given the lack of privacy and interest many feel they have in institutions from those supposedly taking care of them. Moreover, the institutions should allow the girls to handle some challenges by themselves as Hollingworth (2016) advises. While young people undergo multiple changes in their early adulthood and adolescence, the focal theory notes that these individuals deal with these changes in succession. This theory identifies that young people develop resiliency and the ability to handle different problems as they grow by tackling each at a time. The ability to address challenges as they occur gives the young people time to avoid or ameliorate stressful difficulties that may impact them if all problems occurred at a go. This approach will motivate care leavers to survive independently as many of the challenges they may face, such as money management, forming relationships and finding accommodation, will have already been experienced while under care.

In addition, while the idea of a pathway plan was seen in a positive light, some respondents thought that it needed to be done by specialists outside of the institution, and actually followed up on and utilised as a source document to create suitable programmes for those about to leave care. This highlights the importance of caregivers needing to understand what exactly each individual needs or is missing when forming close relationships with children, to give them the best chance of overcoming their various challenges as they become young adults. Many respondents felt that this would happen with pathway planning and needs assessments, as these would help them to discover and then work to address on a personalised, secure and trusted basis the needs and concerns of an abandoned young person. This in turn would mean that it was more likely that they would become a responsible and confident member of their society (Cocker et al., 2013; Tucker and MacKenzie, 2012; Stein, 2012). In addition, many responses from people in charge at the MHRSD noted the importance of focusing on the care leaver's social worker and personal adviser's communication and skills, to help people about to leave care and those who have left to understand what is being put in place for them. They would then be able to take best advantage of the opportunities presented to them, and utilise all the aspects of their environment, such as teachers, family members and friends, to create a system of support for

the best chance of successfully transitioning to adulthood (Stein, Sufian and Hazlehurst, 2001; Department of Education, 2010).

These actions would facilitate this successful transition to adulthood while allowing for a degree of independence. The respondents also felt that, when applying pathway planning and needs assessments, they should take into consideration some issues related to workers who deal with orphans. For example, there is a shortage of staff who specialise in the care of abandoned young people, and a lack of workers tasked with assisting these individuals in general, problems that have been highlighted by some studies (Muflehi, 2011). This has shown the need for pathway planning and needs assessments in Saudi Arabia, in order to give abandoned young people and care leavers a strong foundation for achieving a successful transition to adulthood and an independent life in wider society.

These aspects form the desired outcomes for LAC leaving care in the UK, and the local UK authorities have been doing well in both attempting to meet these outcomes and in training people who work with care leavers to help them throughout the process (Stein, Sufian and Hazlehurst, 2001; HM Government, 2016).

By using the outlined holistic care in the UK, care can be given to all abandoned young people and care leavers in an adaptable, developing manner that is not currently possible in Saudi Arabia due to the current system of inflexible rules and regulations. One way in which such a system helps is by making the obligations of each actor within the care system as clear as possible for both abandoned young people and care leavers, leaving no room for ambiguity in questions about what financial assistance is available, and who should be approached to gain access to it (Conwy County Borough Council, 2013; Suffolk County Council, 2017; East Dunbartonshire Council, 2011. Indeed, as Simon (2008) notes, just getting a single aspect like this correct in the transition to adulthood for abandoned young people and care leavers will help them immensely to live an independent life, even when not engaged in further education.

Both pathway planning and needs assessments would also allow for the constant revising of programmes and policies based on what is, and is not, being achieved in the care system. This would weed out problematic policies and programmes or refresh them so that they become more meaningful and useful, while supporting and expanding those that work well. In this way, the gap between the in-care and after-care system in Saudi Arabia can be filled, helping abandoned young people to move from dependency to independence, and helping care leavers to enjoy a rich and rewarding life in wider society. Having a model of a care system like the one in the UK to refer to will help the Saudi care system when applying pathway planning and needs assessments. It will clarify what needs to be done at a local level and what a care leaver should expect as the authorities who are responsible in Saudi Arabia work to meet care leavers' obligations and responsibilities.

In fact, many of the respondents (whether abandoned young people, care leavers or people in charge at the MHRSD, institutions or Ekha'a) did feel that mentors would benefit care leavers in terms of allowing them to be independent, because such assistance would help them to be able to understand and discuss his/her ideas from a young age, which would give them new skills. Of course, this would require the MHRSD to provide mentors who can relate to care leavers at their level of understanding and trust, but if done correctly it would positively affect their development of important practical and useful life skills. This in turn



would facilitate a more positive sense of self and identity as they transition to adulthood (Clayden and Stein, 2005; Stein, 2005; Browne, 2008).

The specialist mentors will play a significant role in guiding the young people, not just by orienting them on how to live an independent life, but also providing adequate support as they cut across the challenges of adulthood. This support will improve the outcomes of young people by well-equipping them to meet their social and emotional needs (Stein, 2008; Browne, 2008). For instance, the UK has specialist leaving care schemes that respond to the key needs of care leavers. This includes assisting them with health and health and well-being, accommodation, education, finances, and personal support. Every young person is assigned a personal advisor through whom the needs assessment and pathway plans are carried out (Stein 2008). By using this approach, young people are able to establish positive and supportive relationships, further their social networks and build their self-esteem.

Looked after children in the UK also have 'corporate parents' who share their parental responsibility with the local authority (Holland, 2010). Much of this responsibility and policies are, however, centred on the formal responsibilities of corporate parents such as ensuring the child receives education and quality health care as well as placement finding. Most of the young people in Holland's (2010) study preferred these settings over the formal care systems due to aspects, such as court orders and care plans, and other issues such as the marginal role played by social workers in the lives of the young individuals. Care givers tend to play a minority role in engaging in the daily lives and care relationships of young people under care (Holland, 2010; Muflehi, 2011; Stein, 2005). The interpersonal care relationships of these individuals profoundly impact their individual pathways towards becoming autonomous and self-sufficient adults like their other young peers. In contrast with many other young people, however, abandoned young people often have complex care relationships which affect them after transiting to independent living as adults.

This perspective is also supported by Neagu (2021) who posits that the social environment and family-based relationships are able to provide young people with their context for development. This plays a significant role in forming their identity. Moreover, these relationships serve as a place where the young individuals manifest their feelings and withdraw from frustrations and anxieties they accumulate in the larger world. They can also breach or renegotiate rules and reshape boundaries in these relationships, hence enabling them to develop their autonomy, trust, identity, and initiatives that assist them in becoming functional adults. As for abandoned young people and care leavers, care givers that have strong bonds with them act as their advocates in relation to institutions.

While LAC in the UK may have family members as part of their environment, the same is not true in Saudi Arabia, except for foster and friend families, which do not have the same close connection as biological family members (Ministry of Labor and Social Development, 2011). This highlights the importance of having mentors assisting care leavers as they work through their pathway plan. In this study, 81 out of 91 (89%) abandoned young people and 81 out of 102 (79.4%) care leavers felt that having a plan (a pathway plan) for their future independent life and its associated opportunities would be beneficial, along with having a personal adviser to assist with working through the available options. These results highlight the fact that they (abandoned young people and care leavers) miss the connection with their biological family

members and, due to the cultural environment which is focused on keeping in touch with family, they also feel the absence of those connections with untrained or reluctant care workers. This is exacerbated by a lack of follow-up by Ekha'a after they leave care.

This reflects the importance of hiring qualified and empathetic workers to work with care leavers, as they would be better able to engage in mentorship while not invading the girls' privacy. Such findings necessitate policy changes to improve and strengthen the care provided, with young people being assessed while in care and having an individualised pathway plan based on their needs (Orphan Care Development Strategy Ministry of Social Welfare and Family, 2012).

This finding broadly supports the work of other studies in this area, confirming that there are some issues in the Saudi care system. Indeed, the MHRSD itself recognised that most of the problems were due to a lack of supervisors for sports and social, recreational and educational activities. It was also noted that some residents had difficulties with communication and faced challenges to being self-reliant (Orphan Care Development Strategy Ministry of Social Welfare and Family, 2012). The MHRSD specifically pointed out that, in residential institutions, the female staff members' functional capacity was weak and that they, therefore, required further training (Orphan Care Development Strategy Ministry of Social Welfare and Family, 2012). The functional capacity of staff in residential institutions is very important, as it affects the professionalism of the care givers, especially among social and psychological specialists, when dealing with abandoned young people.

In addition, providing follow-up for girls by the MHRSD and Ekha'a once they have leave care is very important for care leavers, as demonstrated by their responses. They believe that this will help and support them by enabling them to better understand their responsibilities and various situations and issues. They would then know who to approach and where to go for assistance and advice after leaving care, and how to obtain honest, private and meaningful assistance from specialists and officials who know what they require. This would make it easier for them to fit into society instead of suffering from a lack of support by governmental or non-governmental agencies. This may explain the results highlighted by the Orphan Care Development Strategy of the Ministry of Social Welfare and Family (2012), as it mentioned the weakness of periodic professional follow-up of abandoned young people's cases, as well as the poor monitoring of their daily and monthly behaviour. There have also been weaknesses in the activation of the supervisory authority role in residential institutions — in preparing the necessary minutes from institutional reports, in creating programmes for children that assist them with becoming more self-dependent, and in following up the work of the supervisory bodies within the MHRSD (Offices of Social Affairs and the Offices of the Supervision of Females). All of this points to a need to consider how pathway planning and needs assessments can help with these shortcomings.

Researchers have pointed out that some psychologists have issues with the way in which care workers interact with abandoned young people, as well as the politics, visions, and strategies involved in their care. These issues could contribute to the dispersion of orphans and, thus, a loss of self-confidence and credibility (Albar, 2018). In addition, there is a lack of guidance in most care institutions on how its rights and services should be obtained (Muflehi, 2011), and shortcomings in the actual planning for the initial treatment of abandoned young peoples' behaviours. There are also weaknesses in the care provided for the large number of unmarried girls over the age of 18 in residential institutions. There is no database for females

of marriageable age, and little is in place to follow up on family disputes between spouses or to address the difficult demands of those wishing to marry a female abandoned young person (Orphan Care Development Strategy Ministry of Social Welfare and Family, 2012). Given that Saudi Arabia is a male-centric society, this problem may prolong until a pathway plan based on concepts of the feminist theory is adopted (Al-Kathiry, 2014; Murphy, 2014; Sanden & Egbert, 2013; Wagner, 2011). These concepts, as identified by Sanden and Egbert (2013) include equality, discrimination, sex, and gender. The different systems and structures currently in place work against the equity and equality of abandoned young people in the nation. By denying them an opportunity to be fully educated or express their views on marriage, these individuals are disadvantaged from a young age, hence affecting their adulthood independence. The pathway plan will focus on the right of all individuals leaving care to be able to be full contributors and functional members of the wider society.

The need for both pathway planning and comprehensive assessments from an early age and continuing throughout girls' time in care, in an equal and fair manner, was widely mentioned by the respondents since the support in institutions was seen as too little and too late as perceived by many care leavers. A significant number of them admitted that they lacked knowledge or ideas on how to pay essential bills or acquire accommodation after they transitioned from care. A need for preparatory programmes, therefore, exists to support and prepare girls for an independent life. They should know their rights, be trained and have their skills developed as much as possible, and be responsible for themselves, prior to leaving care. In addition, Stein and Munro (2008) elucidate that abandoned people leaving care should be given adequate opportunities to gradually transition from care. As such, they should have fewer accelerated and compressed transitions or extended and abrupt to ensure they have enough psychological space to enable them to prepare for the responsibilities and challenges associated with adulthood. Since gradual transition was found to be best provided through placements, where the care receivers are settled and closely supported by their carers (Stein & Munro, 2008), the pathway plan should incorporate transitional supportive arrangements that will ensure similar transitions are applied for these young abandoned people.

Abandoned young women should also be given an opportunity to learn how marital relationships work as they develop, rather than being transitioned into marriages at a go. Coleman's focal theory argues that young people solve issues progressively as they grow. These problems occur in levels based on their age, thus making it simpler for them to overcome changes. For instance, young individuals will worry about their personal appearance and relationships with peers at an earlier age compared to when they begin raising concerns over their preferred career choice. While these issues may overlap in their young lives, they do not cause as many psychological challenges as those faced by care leavers who are forced to cope with multiple life changes at a particular time (Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016; Coleman, 2011). By directly getting into marriage, these girls transition into adult roles that are more demanding, yet they lack the appropriate skills and knowledge to handle such responsibility.

Through this feedback, it has become clear that it is important to support after-care programmes for individuals who have left care with trained human resources and specialised training courses for them on the job. This would enable them to benefit from successful experiences at Arab and international levels, taking into account that these experiences need to be consistent with the cultural specificities of Saudi society. The feedback also highlighted the need for partnerships with civil society organisations and institutions, and support for

research and studies on after-care. The participants also suggested the use of modern technology to facilitate the process of communicating with those who need after-care by creating a web platform that deals with this aspect of looking after abandoned young people (Saudi Press Agency, 2017).

The discussion indicates the lack of a clear intervention framework for care leavers. These individuals, in particular, cite the absence of a follow-up programme as the main obstacle to their personal and career development. Care institutions have failed to provide social and career assistance to abandoned young girls to help them become more independent and to integrate into society. A practical approach to addressing these issues is to prepare these individuals to work and solve personal problems independently; this level of autonomy guarantees the sustainability of care programmes. Key stakeholders, including individuals, care institutions and the general Saudi care system, should adopt a clear pathway for planning and evaluating needs holistically. Significant focus needs to be directed towards responding to the concerns of abandoned young people in and out of care as well as ensuring that the rights of care leavers are respected. Responsible organisations, including Ekha'a and the MHRSD, need to take a more proactive role in ensuring that abandoned young people, mainly girls, are adequately prepared for living autonomously. For example, these organisations can equip individuals with the skills that enable them to earn an income. Nonetheless, while a pathway plan appears feasible, the need for an efficient community integration scheme cannot be overemphasised.

## **Conclusion**

The preceding chapters and discussion have demonstrated that agencies and organisations, as well as those that work within them, may have vague and ambiguous systems that do not provide concise information or transparency in general to confused abandoned young people or care leavers. This problem is exacerbated by a lack of agreement or even responsibility for the process of checking up on abandoned young people and care leavers or, in the instance of marriage, on the viability of a partner. Many respondents did not feel that they received support from either Ekha'a or the MHRSD in this regard. In fact, many respondents felt that this lack of support by both parties extended to a lack of support outside of the institution in general.

There was also a general consensus among the respondents that Ekha'a was not doing its job well in terms of following up girls or even providing adequate financial support for abandoned young females who had left care. In addition, when girls go to the MHRSD and ask about various services and forms of support, some workers tell them that any lack of support is not the fault of the ministry but Ekha'a itself, even though this is not true. This reinforces the negative image of Ekha'a among girls in institutions, as Ekha'a is the main organisation in charge of after-care programmes for this population. This further undermines the ability of Ekha'a, and the confidence of care leavers, to engage in actions that would lead to positive outcomes such as full integration into wider Saudi society.

In fact, many girls feel that the status of Ekha'a is simply that of an organisation, and that it only does what the MHRSD wants it to do. From their perspective, Ekha'a has limited abilities and powers to assist them. In addition, there was also a feeling that the MHRSD was not doing an adequate job in terms of providing the support necessary for Ekha'a to do its job, and that the MHRSD did not explain why things happened clearly enough at times.

The lack of support from Ekha'a and the MHRSD extends especially to the issue of divorced women. This group of respondents felt that their needs and concerns were not addressed at all by either party, leaving them to fend for themselves with inadequate knowledge to draw upon to be able to function independently in the wider society. Indeed, many respondents pointed to a lack of preparation in the institutions themselves as a huge cause of them experiencing difficulties after leaving care, in terms of having people interested in their progress and in how they were doing and offering assistance when it was needed.

Due to the absence of a clear strategy and policies in this regard, resolving the issues is dependent on the workers' vision and primarily on the personal efforts of workers who may or may not be able to assist abandoned young people in addressing their needs and concerns. These issues have been further exacerbated by unqualified or indifferent staff who do not understand the needs and concerns of abandoned young people and care leavers. This can lead to programmes and assistance being offered that do not meet their needs or concerns, and to a reluctance on their part, especially care leavers, to ask for assistance or guidance when difficulties are encountered.

It is the opinion of this researcher that the best result for the in-care and after-care systems in Saudi Arabia is the implementation of pathway planning and needs assessments measures. While the MHRSD has been working to solve issues with the care system through its introduction of social homes, the bigger issue of how to best address the variety of needs and concerns facing both abandoned young people and care leavers can only be focused on through the combined efforts of the MHRSD, Ekha'a, institutional staff, individuals in care and those who have left care. Doing so under the auspices of a pathway planning model and ongoing needs assessments will, ultimately, leave abandoned young people and care leavers in the best possible positions for leading successful lives in the wider society of Saudi Arabia.

In the following chapter, the conclusions from the research and study components are discussed.

## Chapter 11: Conclusion

### Implications for policy and practice

The broader implications for the Saudi care system as a result of this research are grim. The most important thing that can be seen from the remarks by participants and actors within the care system is that the care system is not functioning to its fullest potential. The research has outlined many deficiencies within the care system itself, ranging from inexperienced or untrained workers to a lack of transparency and clear areas of responsibility for various actors to a lack of voice in terms of outcomes and practices on the part of abandoned young people and care leavers. These shortages means that the system itself has a variety of endemic and systemic failures at present.

An implication of this is that there is a need to focus on the use of the aftercare committee under the supervision of Ekha'a, which up to now has not been fully activated to help produce plans in the field of employment and education for the various needs of abandoned young people and care leavers. This will help to address some of the issues these individuals face when they leave care, instead of just giving financial subsidies without any coherent way to support their independent lifestyles or being dependent on unqualified workers for advice and support.

In terms of the workers themselves, there is an acute need to have qualified, well-trained and more communicative workers in all aspects of the care system. Not only will this allow for the implementation of mentoring programmes which have meaningful outcomes for individuals in the care system, but also allow for better follow-up care, to know the situation of care leavers better and hear their voices, so as to produce programs that meet girls' needs and to assist them.

There is a need to focus on the programmes and policies for divorced women, to create their own pathway plans. This step will allow them to better rely on themselves with their own children without the need to return to the institution and feel instability. This focus on preparatory programmes should also extend to other girls in different situations, to better prepare them as well for life outside of an institution or social home.

The MHRSD and Ekha'a and all actors need to have clear and transparent areas of responsibility and a full understanding of the situations and issues involved within the care system for those in care. They need to apply the idea of pathway planning and needs assessments, supported by both abandoned young people and care leavers, in order to help them move from dependency to independence, and to take a more active role in terms of making sure that girls are ready for life in wider society.

There needs to be clarity among care leavers and abandoned young people about what to expect upon leaving care, through better preparation when in care, voicing of their needs and concerns, and being more knowledgeable regarding the assistance they can access once they have left care. There is also a need for partnerships with civil society organisations and institutions, and all actors with ministries, to have smooth policies for abandoned young people and care leaver pathway plans, which can serve to guarantee the level of autonomy and sustainability of care programmes.

## **Contribution to knowledge**

In a system which is male-centric in terms of authorities in charge and the way care systems and outcomes are managed, this research, conducted using a mixed methods approach, has brought a different perspective and a wealth of insights, which will add to the body of knowledge regarding females both in care and after leaving care. Thus, it has opened the door for more researchers to better understand what the needs and concerns of females within the Saudi care system are. At a time when the Saudi government is trying to improve outcomes for all of the individuals in care and who have left care, a better understanding of what females need in order to succeed in a life outside of care, whether it be better preparation, more specialized advice, mentoring, or any of the other points raised in this discussion, is invaluable in terms of setting a pathway forward for the care system and its various actors and participants in the years to come.

In addition, having a model of a care system like the one in the UK to refer to will help the Saudi care system when applying pathway planning and needs assessments. It will clarify what needs to be done at a local level, as well as what a care leaver should expect as the authorities who are responsible in Saudi Arabia work to meet care leavers' obligations and responsibilities. One can also actually make meaningful contributions to knowledge in this sector by using a pathway plan from the UK's care system as an approach to solving trending issues in Saudi care and out of care system, to fill the gap between in care and after care as has been made clear in the results of this research.

## **Priorities for future research**

There is a need to focus on divorced women and their needs, as well as to update both policies regarding who returns to the institutions after getting divorced, especially those women with children while taking into account how this experience affects them and their children, as well as practices in official documentation such as pathway plans.

Additionally, more attention should also be focused on divorced women in general, as they represent a group most vulnerable to suffering as well as a lack of adaptation. More work also needs to be done to investigate ways forward in some challenges which face abandoned young people and care leavers, including a lack of preparation and limited support from actors in areas like accommodations, jobs, the completion of studies and financial assistance. Policies and practices should also be investigated to apply a pathway planning approach to enhance the provision of services, and to fill the gaps between care and leaving care.

Future research could thus focus on all sectors providing services for orphans among ministries and organisations to assess for change, especially the transition from care to leaving care (Atkinson, Goodhall & Kelly, 2019; Hyde & Atkinson, 2019). Future research could also seek to capture the perspectives of young females themselves about social homes, as it is a new transition for them in the Saudi care system. In addition, it might be useful to look at other countries experience in all care levels (in care - through care - leaving care - aftercare), such as the UK, Europe and the US. Ideally, collaborations are needed to improve policy and practice and address gaps in knowledge.

Longitudinal research should also be conducted on social homes to deal with the negative outcomes and improve the positive outcomes on this new experience for orphans in the Saudi care system, as well as to investigate young care leavers' expectations of their future after discharge from care. As the informants' expectations for the future provide a different picture. Research focusing on a life course perspective, where what the orphans want for their future can be better understood in terms of the different stages of their transition process, and how problems could be solved and addressed according to their experiences, should also be undertaken (Biasin and Evans,2019). Attention should be paid to those receiving support and services in the transition from care under supervised ministry (institutions), often experience challenges, concurrent to transition to adult services as care leavers under supervised (Ekha'a), which are guided by different service models which can create a care gap between services.

### **Recommendations:**

The recommendations below entail collaborations between abandoned young people and staff at residential care systems.

- The voices of the abandoned young people should be heard by residential care staff when developing plans and designing programs as a clear policy that clarifies their actual needs. This strategy can be facilitated using a committee of young people to help build a structure within which their voices can be best heard.
- Monitoring is important to help abandoned young people in getting education and employment, since it helps them to be independent and self-reliant; completing their studies guarantees them stability after leaving care.
- Coordination among the Ministries of Labour and Social Development (MLSD), Health, and Education to guide efforts to make a comprehensive plan that has policies that do not conflict with each other at all levels is necessary. This move could help in the formulation of a pathway plan for the life of the abandoned young person, and is constantly reviewed by specialized agencies to avoid gaps in the life path of the abandoned young individual in care and after leaving care.
- The voices of both staff at residential care systems and abandoned young people should be heard to clarify effective policies and programs from an early stage to avoid the aforementioned problems, for example, sense of unfairness in service provision and lack of transparency. As a result, practices and policies presented and developed can be assessed.
- An updated statistics and their presentation on the official website is critical to ensure transparency in the data and services, as well as accessibility for agencies and researchers as in developed countries.

Social homes are a good option, as recommended by some studies, such as (Albar and Farah,2015; Unpublished National Study, 2014) but some important points must be taken into account in order to avoid the problems and negatives that exist in the institutions, as the outputs that came out of the institutions were transferred to the social houses, and therefore there are some important considerations that may help social homes to be successful:



- The abandoned young person should take responsibility for her daily affairs at home through training in skills related to shopping, cooking and cleaning, going to the hospital, making appointments by herself, and dealing with others during these tasks. Also, they can acquire several skills through volunteering or working in the summer, which may contribute to exposure to situations in society, interacting with others, and not feeling isolated.
- Committees comprised of the MLSD and the Ekha'a need to be established to review policies and services for their fairness and equality. This approach implies employing qualified individuals to provide professional services, and developing policies that clarify the tasks and roles of staff to avoid employee ineffectiveness in job performance. Such ineffectiveness may lead to a lack of sense of justice and equality among abandoned young people in terms of getting assistance and services, with MLSD workers feeling an inability to provide services.
- Staff at residential care systems need training on an ongoing basis to follow up on the latest developments in the field and be involved in discussing important issues that abandoned young people may experience.
- Technology should be applied to providing services in a way that guarantees justice and equality for abandoned young people, as well as clarity of the standards and conditions for services for staff at residential care institutions. A unified portal for abandoned young people needs to be established to guide the application process and deliver services.
- A personal advisor in the life of abandoned young people is vital to evaluate the path plans for this group and to help them understand life situations and realities after leaving care. As an independent person with a family, relationships, and work demands, getting earlier guidance to be highly inspiring in terms of living an independent life both socially and financially.
- Policies that allow formal communication with the former specialist responsible for the abandoned young people in the institutions are crucial. This proposal could contribute to the abandoned young people's feeling of confidence and trust in the institution, thereby feeling more freely to express their concerns with staff, for instance, social workers in Ekha'a.
- Official preparation for life in general among abandoned young people should be considered, starting at an early age in order to deal with situations, for example, in school, which may result in instability and withdrawal. In this view, focus needs to be on the strengths of abandoned young people in initiating the change process and balancing them.
- Focus on privacy issues related to orphans is necessary through activating the privacy policy by employees. It is not discussed except with exceptions benefitting the case of the orphan.
- An electronic system that explains the interventions for the abandoned young people, the agreement between them and the social and psychological specialist, as well as the review of objectives to avoid ambiguity in the interventions is needed.

## **Recommendations related to Mentoring**

### *Lack of preparation*

One problem is a lack of preparation for leaving care. Participants felt that mentoring would better assist them to be able to understand and discuss his/her ideas from a young age, thereby giving them necessary skills as well as individuals close to them who could be trusted. In general, participants felt that an employee who sits with them, taking the time to get to know them, is much easier to speak with, as it becomes easy to discuss items of interest because they understand what individuals in care are going through as well as your own personal needs and concerns.

### *Lack of follow-up*

Another problem is a lack of follow-up and monitoring of care leavers. Participants felt that it helps those who are outside of institutional living more than those who are still living in an institution. They also felt that this was an important consideration, especially for those girls about to leave care. Additionally, participants felt that it helps to feel that someone is worried for them, and that a keen interest is shown in their needs and concerns, because when someone follows your progress, you will feel that someone is interested in your development. Participants felt that the follow-up should be done according to what the girl needs, in the form of regular, consecutive follow-ups.

### *Lack of qualified workers*

A further problem is a lack of qualified workers in institutions. Participants felt that mentoring should be provided by someone from the Ministry, an expert who knows how to deal with individuals in care, so that girls can accept their advice and gain benefits from working with them. Participants also felt that mentoring would work best with an expert from outside the institution, as that person would be seen as more reliable. Participants felt that it is like a routine hearing from the current female specialists in institutions. In contrast, it would be good if a new person from outside the institution, who has a different style, was able to provide mentoring opportunities. Some participants also felt that many female specialists are not qualified in helping them. So, while comfort is perceived in having a female specialist available to talk to, actual positive outcomes may not be forthcoming.

Participants had a few suggestions in this regard. They thought that the workers who have experience with orphan girls can mentor well because they understand our character and our life. Participants also felt that female specialists should be the one involved in mentoring, as they are the ones who would best understand their needs and concerns, and there would be no potential awkwardness from some girls if the specialist was male.

### *Lack of awareness of educational opportunities*

Another problem was a lack of awareness of educational opportunities among girls to obtain a good job. Participants felt that this is important after secondary school, because it does not necessarily work well when a girl is young and cannot appreciate the opportunities which such assistance can offer. This is even more important because participants felt that there is no

focus on study and job opportunities in current assistance provided by those in positions of authority within the care system .Participants also felt that mentoring would help married women, especially when they have left an institution but still need someone to talk to who can understand their needs and concerns .

### *Transferring workers*

### *Lack of preparation, skills and follow-up*

There was a perception among participants that care resulted in a lack of preparation, skills and follow-up. Participants felt that there was limited preparation for marriage, or what occurs after marriage, and that there is a lack of follow up at present. Participants also felt that comprehensive skills would be part of such a plan, with skill development starting from a young age, and that such a plan would need to be in place before engagement and marriage. Participants felt that no comprehensive programs are currently offered, only random sessions, and that the current situation cannot be called a plan. Finally, participants felt that, even if you are leaving an institution, there is no program that you can enter to prepare you for what happens after having left care.

In terms of suggestions, participants felt that, because there are girls in alternative families, they also need some preparation for living independently as married girls. They pointed out that alternative families cannot always cover everything. The program should be useful and official for everyone and will contribute greatly to those in charge knowing what girls need at different stages. Participants also felt that this plan will help girls who are in the institutions, so that they will not suffer. They would be better able to understand life, their rights, and what things they should care about, such as being educated to get a good job. If a girl understands such ideas, they would pay more attention to the information being presented to them.

The timing of preparatory programmes was also seen as an issue by participants. They felt that just before marriage is a wrong time to engage in such preparation, as the girl is busy in a new relationship and with her fiancé and is unwilling to enter into any courses even if it will benefit her. So, such assistance would be of limited benefit.

Participants suggested that such sessions and their timing should be reviewed. Participants felt that this should happen for a girl from the age of 10 or 12, because at this age it is easy for the girl to gain benefits from assistance which is offered. This program will help the girl to be aware and develop skills and knowledge before she grows up and leaves the institution only to be shocked. However, if this is only done when a girl is older, then out of necessity the institution will need to intensify her courses, which would not be useful for her. Participants also felt that it should be formal and be flexible, for all ages, an important consideration because most of the courses in the institution focus on adult girls. Further, participants felt that, if such assistance is focused on all ages, the younger girls will feel excited, especially if someone encourages them, or if the speaker of the session has good skills to deal with them. Then, they will definitely attend subsequent sessions, so they will develop understandings on many topics from an early age. Finally, participants felt that the courses should contain experiences, stories, or things that we can apply in life.

### *No official programme*

Another problem was the one of no official programme depending on the personal efforts of workers. Participants felt that, if there was an official program, it would make a difference for girls and female specialists. It would be a kind of commitment, and they would learn both negatives which need addressing as well as positives which can be further developed. Participants also felt that, in the end, success in such courses and the aforementioned issues is based on personal effort. Finally, participants felt that courses currently offered in institutions are mostly theoretically, and are not suitable, or of limited benefit to them.

In terms of suggestions, participants felt that the institution is supposed to see the problems of care leavers, and logically they must work on solving them by creating a program for the girls about to leave the institution, so that they can be ready for an independent life outside of care. Participants also felt that it should be supervised by the Ministry and offered for girls who leave the institution. There should be information about their rights, as well as skill development, which can help them in their home and family lives, as well as after marriage. Additionally, participants felt that the expert who designs the program should be a specialist who understands what a girl needs when she comes out of the institution.

Further, participants also felt that the Ministry should supervise all the programs and make sure that programs and laws apply in all institutions by workers, because laws are different from one specialist to another, or from one institution to another. They felt that it is important that it is an official program, that it is generalized to those who leave the institutions or alternative families, and that there should be an official file for every girl that contains the programs she needs, with support for every girl according to her capabilities and preferences. This program should be recorded with details, so that they can clearly help the girls and lead them to achieve equality and justice. Participants felt that, at present, nothing official is done to ensure that an individual in care is given the best chance for success after having left care. There are only optional courses, which is not enough. Finally, participants felt that it is an important element in providing a way forward for individuals in care and, later, those living independently outside of care.

There was also a perceived problem in terms of inequality in services. Participants felt that services should be equally and transparently provided for all girls, which would lead to improved provision of services. A proposed solution was that the specialist should remain with the girl, even if she gets married. Participants felt that this would allow for ease of communication with someone who knows them, to better enable them to complete their studies and develop their abilities.

### *Missing a caring environment*

Another problem was missing a 'caring' environment. Participants felt that it is important, as such a process would be helpful for girls in an institution, because having lost a normal family, they need someone to help them, to better understand what life awaits them once they leave care. If there was something like this, girls could begin to understand and develop their strengths. Such an environment will serve as support for the girl, enabling her to leave the institution when she is independent and ready.

These recommendations may lead to narrowing the gap between care and aftercare. At this phase, the orphan feels confused and is unable to face life independently with the lack of clarity of services as a person leaving care.

### **Recommendations related to pathway plan and needs assessment**

#### *Lack of preparation, skills and follow-up*

There was a perception among participants that care resulted in a lack of preparation, skills and follow-up. Participants felt that there was limited preparation for marriage, or what occurs after marriage, and that there is a lack of follow up at present. Participants also felt that comprehensive skills would be part of such a plan, with skill development starting from a young age, and that such a plan would need to be in place before engagement and marriage. Participants felt that no comprehensive programs are currently offered, only random sessions, and that the current situation cannot be called a plan. Finally, participants felt that, even if you are leaving an institution, there is no program that you can enter to prepare you for what happens after having left care.

In terms of suggestions, participants felt that, because there are girls in alternative families, they also need some preparation for living independently as married girls. They pointed out that alternative families cannot always cover everything. The program should be useful and official for everyone and will contribute greatly to those in charge knowing what girls need at different stages. Participants also felt that this plan will help girls who are in the institutions, so that they will not suffer. They would be better able to understand life, their rights, and what things they should care about, such as being educated to get a good job. If a girl understands such ideas, they would pay more attention to the information being presented to them.

The timing of preparatory programmes was also seen as an issue by participants. They felt that just before marriage is a wrong time to engage in such preparation, as the girl is busy in a new relationship and with her fiancé and is unwilling to enter into any courses even if it will benefit her. So, such assistance would be of limited benefit.

Participants suggested that such sessions and their timing should be reviewed. Participants felt that this should happen for a girl from the age of 10 or 12, because at this age it is easy for the girl to gain benefits from assistance which is offered. This program will help the girl to be aware and develop skills and knowledge before she grows up and leaves the institution only to be shocked. However, if this is only done when a girl is older, then out of necessity the institution will need to intensify her courses, which would not be useful for her. Participants also felt that it should be formal and be flexible, for all ages, an important consideration because most of the courses in the institution focus on adult girls. Further, participants felt that, if such assistance is focused on all ages, the younger girls will feel excited, especially if someone encourages them, or if the speaker of the session has good skills to deal with them. Then, they will definitely attend subsequent sessions, so they will

develop understandings on many topics from an early age. Finally, participants felt that the courses should contain experiences, stories, or things that we can apply in life.

#### *No official programme*

Another problem was the one of no official programme depending on the personal efforts of workers. Participants felt that, if there was an official program, it would make a difference for girls and female specialists. It would be a kind of commitment, and they would learn both negatives which need addressing as well as positives which can be further developed. Participants also felt that, in the end, success in such courses and the aforementioned issues is based on personal effort. Finally, participants felt that courses currently offered in institutions are mostly theoretically, and are not suitable, or of limited benefit to them.

In terms of suggestions, participants felt that the institution is supposed to see the problems of care leavers, and logically they must work on solving them by creating a program for the girls about to leave the institution, so that they can be ready for an independent life outside of care. Participants also felt that it should be supervised by the Ministry and offered for girls who leave the institution. There should be information about their rights, as well as skill development, which can help them in their home and family lives, as well as after marriage. Additionally, participants felt that the expert who designs the program should be a specialist who understands what a girl needs when she comes out of the institution.

Further, participants also felt that the Ministry should supervise all the programs and make sure that programs and laws apply in all institutions by workers, because laws are different from one specialist to another, or from one institution to another. They felt that it is important that it is an official program, that it is generalized to those who leave the institutions or alternative families, and that there should be an official file for every girl that contains the programs she needs, with support for every girl according to her capabilities and preferences. This program should be recorded with details, so that they can clearly help the girls and lead them to achieve equality and justice. Participants felt that, at present, nothing official is done to ensure that an individual in care is given the best chance for success after having left care. There are only optional courses, which is not enough. Finally, participants felt that it is an important element in providing a way forward for individuals in care and, later, those living independently outside of care.

There was also a perceived problem in terms of inequality in services. Participants felt that services should be equally and transparently provided for all girls, which would lead to improved provision of services. A proposed solution was that the specialist should remain with the girl, even if she gets married. Participants felt that this would allow for ease of communication with someone who knows them, to better enable them to complete their studies and develop their abilities.

#### *Missing a caring environment*

Another problem was missing a 'caring' environment. Participants felt that it is important, as such a process would be helpful for girls in an institution, because having lost a normal family, they need someone to help them, to better understand what life awaits them once they leave

care. If there was something like this, girls could begin to understand and develop their strengths. Such an environment will serve as support for the girl, enabling her to leave the institution when she is independent and ready.

These recommendations may lead to narrowing the gap between care and aftercare. At this phase, the orphan feels confused and is unable to face life independently with the lack of clarity of services as a person leaving care.

### **Criticism of the Concept of Pathway Planning**

The multiple merits of pathway planning have been highlighted in this study. Among them, young abandoned people will be able to benefit from mentoring programmes that enable them to live meaningful livelihoods after the transition from care. Hung and Appleton's (2016) study, however, disapproves of the effectiveness of this methodology highlighting that most participants that undergo pathway planning experience fractured reflexivity. Based on Archer's modes of reflexivity, Hung and Appleton (2016) aimed at understanding the extent to which care leavers aged 19-24 can plan their lives ahead. The ideal modes of reflexivity as discussed by Archer include; a) meta reflexivity: subjecting our inner conversation to self-criticism in order to critique whether actions are effective before acting; b) autonomous reflexivity: having a lone inner conversation that does not need confirmation with others before acting; c) communicative reflexivity: having internal dialogue that require confirmation with others before acting; and d) fractured reflexivity: having inner conversations that increase our distress leading to inaction (Goodman, 2017). Similar to how the focal theory explains young people's outcomes based on the challenges they continuously face in life; reflexivity also depends on circular relationships based on cause and effect. The way young people are brought up has an impact on the mode of reflexivity they adopt.

This attribute is better illustrated in one additional mode, survival-oriented reflexivity, which was developed and discussed in the study as having inner dialogue that is partially driven by day-to-day survival (Hung & Appleton, 2016). This mode resulted from strict self-reliance experienced by participants while in foster care among other care institutions. Almost all the participants in the study had elements of fractured reflexivity. Furthermore, most of those who illustrated rich internal conversations were found to be largely self-reliant. The majority of the participants lacked the enthusiasm to plan their lives. Hung and Appleton (2016) explain that the young people did not look too far ahead based on health, housing and homelessness, and education contexts, thus questioning the impact of pathway planning. This means that even though mentorship programs and specialist support identified will help most of the abandoned young people survive most challenges and responsibilities involved with adulthood, they may lack the ability to plan further ahead in their lives. The proposed pathway plan, therefore, requires to deeply recognise the reflexive 'starting positions' young people take individually and elaborate on the specific details of support required by the young person when undertaking different projects in challenging environments to ensure they are able to plan beyond day-to-day living.

### **Conclusion**

In this study, different problems regarding the experiences of abandoned young people in care and out of care were discussed. The research focused on key areas that determine the

quality of life of these vulnerable populations and enable them to cope with different challenges while in and outside of care institutions. While various services and efforts have been delivered by several organisations and agencies responsible for caring for abandoned young people, official guidelines are lacking. Practical approaches adopted by some of these organisations need to be tailored to distinct settings and life realities.

To this extent, the research has shown that residential care institutions for abandoned young people vary depending on the scope of their practice. According to Ashaalan and Al-zeiby (2015), the Saudi Arabian case demonstrates that there are several aspects fundamental for practice, including qualification level and experience of caregivers and other personnel, the reduction in the experience of some staff, as well as the discontinuity among professionals, supervisors, and resident mothers, who are usually less qualified despite their extensive interactions with children. Training initiatives for residents and psychologists have had positive outcomes in enhancing the approaches of care and interactions with young people. Adherence to previous care strategies differ due to the common framework in various institutions, which allows for the change in caregiver per individual depending on the system of rotation. This practice is contrary to the intervention programs focused on minimising the rate of changing caregivers during the clients' duration in a related organisation (Ashaalan & Al-zeiby 2015). It facilitates the development of more intrinsic and interactive connections, which reflect the general development of the young individual. Extant studies, on the other hand, have found that children and young people living in residential institutions may be prone to greater compatibility and mental health disorders, including anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and poor physical health compared to those living with their natural parents (Ashaalan & Al-zeiby 2015).

The impacts of mental and physical consequences of residing in residential care systems may be due to interactions of several elements, for instance the social cultural characteristic of institutions in modern societies and the level of dedication of the organisations' leaders, in terms of the approaches of care grounded on equality, acceptance, and justice. Overall, a lack of vast data in this topic, specifically within the Saudi Arabia context, implies the absence of focus on guidelines and methods in the area of transition (Ashaalan & Al-zeiby 2015). In this study, insights into United Kingdom (UK) institutions' experience in handling associated problems are provided. The research demonstrates that a mixed-methods approach is ideal for developing an improved understanding of the key concerns.

Given the interactions among youths from different contexts, the major aim of this thesis was to assess the group's lived experiences and welfare in different settings. This focus will assist in understanding distinct events that arise during their life and effects of reliance on working staff in care institutions in Saudi Arabia. The outcomes of this study portray differences in the degree and focus on care and, consequently, the disparities in care and aid offered to abandoned young people and care leavers in care and out of care respectively. Individuals in care have all their needs and costs covered by The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, while those who have left care are dependent on Ekha'a. However, the lack of welfare policies to address the gaps between these different phases is evident. Consequently, care leavers encounter challenges once they rejoin their communities, which contrasts with the situation for those in care. These problems imply a lack of readiness for Ekha'a personnel



and MHRSD officials. Furthermore, the group's poor outcomes negatively influence their adult life when they become independent. According to Sulimani-Aidan (2015), sufficient income plays a significant role in assisting young people to cope with challenges and life while out of care. The researcher emphasizes the importance of future anticipations as a source of resilience and motivation. Therefore, it is necessary to explore initiatives that respond to care leavers' self-perception and long-term outlook and prepare them to transition successfully to adult life. To guarantee the general welfare of abandoned young people, equal treatment must be delivered without any form of discrimination.

Additionally, equal treatment should be guaranteed to promote the welfare of abandoned young people. Given the varying levels of interactions among individuals from diverse settings, this study focused on evaluating the populations' lived experiences and welfare across different environments. By directing attention towards abandoned young people, caregivers can understand varied events that occur during their life, as well as the influence of too much dependence on staff and managers within care institutions in Saudi Arabia. Accordingly, research outcomes reflect variances in the level and focus of care and, consequently, the gaps in care and support offered to abandoned young people and care leavers. In particular, MHRSD has a key role in meeting the needs and costs of abandoned young people in care within residential institutions, while Ekha'a manages the affairs of this group while out of care.

Nonetheless, the dearth of welfare guidelines and policies for responding to existing disparities between these transitions is clear. This situation implies that care leavers face difficulties once they rejoin the society. Such negative outcomes adversely affect their adult life as they cope with social and economic challenges. I would argue that financial independence is necessary for young women after leaving the care of residential care systems in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, this study stresses the need for long-term expectations as an impetus of resilience, determination, and inspiration. Examining programs that address care leavers' needs and perspectives is vital to prepare them to integrate into the community with minimal obstacles. These issues, on the other hand, demonstrate a lack of preparedness among staff and officials in both MHRSD and Ekha'a.

The need to listen to the voices and perspectives of abandoned young people in and out of care is quite significant. This approach would improve the care outcomes of this group and enhance the effectiveness of responsible agencies and institutions. Moreover, abandoned young people should be offered support to address their distinct needs and equip them with requisite life skills while in care, during transition, and after they leave care. In this view, I have argued that the group's readiness, especially abandoned young women, for life in the three contexts is critical to help them respond to arising challenges. Identified problems include limited support from staff officials and managers in these institutions, lack of a clear comprehension of rights and privileges, lack of or poor supervision within these entities, minimal follow-up and monitoring of care leavers, and financial incapacity. Overall, abandoned children and young people struggle considerably with their identity, care, and life out of residential care. Interestingly, the study shows that young women have a more challenging experience and appear to stay in care longer given their limited opportunities.

This situation is further illustrated by reduced employment opportunities among abandoned young people, who leave care without the necessary skills and knowledge.

Early preparation initiatives are required to provide the needed skills and continuous support after leaving care as well as design a clear vision for care leavers to become independent. For this reason, this study affirms the significance of establishing care policies and practices and a clear pathway map for abandoned young people prior to leaving care institutions. It is clear that this objective is directed towards determining the population's ease of accessing aid from appropriate entities, including MHRSD and Ekha'a. This goal necessitates an increased degree of transparency within key institutions and agencies, including MHRSD and Ekha'a. This study has synthesised existing research emphasizing this pathway as an effective approach to maintaining clear communication between these organisations. The literature points to the fact that the needs and welfare of individuals leaving care is paramount to their successful integration in their communities.

To address these pressing and prevalent issues. Saudi Arabia has enacted various policies to regulate formal state welfare and care provided for children by alternative families and institutions. This research has demonstrated that at present, residential care in the country is more of a theoretical concern than a practical solution; nevertheless, this type of care is the sole option for abandoned children and youths. This study subsequently asserts that that relevant care facilities and institutions need to guarantee more secure and favourable settings for abandoned children and young people. Concretely, this collective should be connected to local agencies and communities through diverse programs to help care leavers develop the right social and practical work capabilities.

Apart from formulating policies within residential care systems in Saudi Arabia, the concept of pathway planning should be considered. This decision requires the participation of abandoned young people and care leavers to understand their specific individual needs. Staff working in these institutions must assist in pathway planning activities and guide their clients in their transitions by instilling in them the self-help capabilities necessary for independent living. Furthermore, residential institutions should have a clear and comprehensive idea of the group's skills and demands. To this end, they should also hire social work personnel to assist in guiding the pathway planning process. Other collaborators and professionals with similar interests should also be involved.

Importantly, this research has underscored the need to engage scholars and professionals involved in social work practices, as well as those working actively in the management of the issues being faced by abandoned young people in and out of care. The focus of this study was inspired by the identified population's experiences. The overarching objective was to identify the group's needs, especially young women.

The main recommendations are summarized below. These suggestions are all-inclusive and should be executed in a methodical manner to address the challenges that abandoned young people encounter during and after leaving care. The three key categories of recommendations are needs assessment, pathway planning, and mentoring.

Needs assessment:

- Abandoned young people in care require a welcoming environment similar to a family setup. In such contexts, abandoned young people can develop positive attributes and capabilities way as they receive the needed support. The MHRSD would also be able to implement programs that can facilitate self-development.
- Abandoned young women, both in care and out of care, need to be aware of a personalized plan for them to develop their skills and abilities. To this end, the MHRSD needs to collaborate with female specialists to promote positive relationships between young women and staff.

#### Pathway plan:

- Abandoned young people, especially young girls, need to be prepared for marriage or unpleasant life events, including divorce. The development of comprehensive skills is necessary from a young age, leading to engagement and marriage. Further, preparatory sessions and their timing should be reviewed.
- Official programs should be established, mainly for girls and female specialists. These programs enable abandoned young people in and out of care to be committed to gaining more skills to cope with life out of care. Specialists should remain with young women, even after marriage.

#### Mentoring:

- Regular and consecutive follow-up should be conducted for care leavers, especially young women.
- Care institutions must hire the right people to care for vulnerable populations, including abandoned young people. This recommendation ensures that only competent individuals are hired able to address the needs of this group.
- Knowledge on mental health issues is necessary to obtain aid from relevant parties, while addressing adverse cultural views.
- Care leavers need awareness of educational opportunities to live an independent life and access employment opportunities after leaving care.
- Fairness in the provision of services by Ekha'a, MHRSD, and specialists is vital to address issues of service inequality.
- Social work specialists should for abandoned young people not be changed frequently since they influence the continuity of care.
- Freedom of expression among abandoned young people should be encouraged, both in and out of care.

The Saudi government plays a key role in supporting care services in the nation. Nonetheless, the views of other major stakeholders within the care sector, including MHRSD and Ekha'a staff, is necessary. Such collaborations would streamline the process of initiating employment and education programs for the identified group and follow-up to ensure a clear understanding of the situation. For personnel in residential care, a path forward for care leavers should be established to provide support and aid to care leavers, primarily young women, as they integrate into the wider community.

Nevertheless, to realize these outcomes, the research has shown that early preparation programs are essential to provide requisite skills, continuous support after leaving care, and a clear vision of the most prominent life aspirations. Therefore, this fact confirms the

importance of having care policies and practices as well as a clear pathway plan (map) for young women before they leave the institution. This goal is focused on identifying the group's ease of accessing help from responsible organizations, such as Ekha'a and MHRSD. Hence, greater transparency is needed in portraying the connection between Ekha'a and the MHRSD. Research suggests that this pathway is a well-recognized approach that ensures effective communication between Ekha'a and the MHRSD, which is important in determining the needs and welfare of care leavers.

In this project, a thorough discussion of the issues prevalent to abandoned young people in residential care was made with regard to Saudi Arabia. This study explored the challenges faced by these groups, in particular young women. The needs of abandoned young people and care leavers based on their contexts were also clearly highlighted.

Based on the preceding discussion, this study attempted to determine the scope to which the caregivers, social staff, and specialists working in residential care institutions and Ekha'a in Saudi Arabia adhere to care approaches. Initially, there was almost a total lack of a Saudi national policy for leaving care and initiatives that prepare young people to become financially independent. This problem demonstrates the need to understand the group's experiences across diverse settings and to identify key areas of focus. More studies focusing on abandoned young people in and out of care are needed to provide additional insights into the distinct social and cultural challenges that these individuals encounter.

Several recommendations for future research have emerged from the findings of this study.

- Expanding research frameworks for charities and non-profits to improve their connection to support care leavers in different regions of Saudi Arabia, making it easier for care leavers to receive assistance in the area that they prefer.
- Continuing to conduct gender-focused research on abandoned youths but focusing on men rather than women.
- Developing an advanced preparation scheme from the perspective of abandoned young people, care leavers, and other stakeholders. This move should recognise social and cultural elements pertinent to Saudi society, as well as collaboration between government agencies and non-profits such as Tamkiin and Kayan.
- Develop policy recommendations that might improve the handling of abandoned youths in Saudi Arabia

These recommendations reflect the experiences of abandoned young people and care leavers, while in care and out of care, respectively. These proposals are expected to contribute positively to the transition and development of this vulnerable group in Saudi Arabia. Essentially, these insights provide impetus for positive change among key stakeholders.

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## Appendices

### Appendices 1 : participant demographics AYP and CLs

#### Abandoned young people

Previous and current accommodation ?	Feelings About the Movements	marital status	Level of Education	Place of Birth	Age	
In a government institution	No multiple movements.	Single	Secondary	Riyadh	23	AYP 1
She was in an alternative family from birth, and after that, problems developed between her and the alternative family. It happened just two years ago. After that, she came to the institution.	The institution is better for her than the alternative family.	Single	Middle school	Riyadh	21	AYP 2
In a government institution	There was one movement. The movement was negative.	Single	High School and the first year of Technical College	Riyadh	25	AYP 3
In a government institution	She moved to the nursery institution in Riyadh because of her job in Riyadh.	Single	Bachelor	Riyadh	25	AYP 4
She was with an alternative family from her childhood, but they brought her to the institution for about one year because of some bad behavior on her part.	She was more comfortable with her alternative family than the at institution.	Single	Middle School	Riyadh	23	AYP 5
In a government institution	The transfer was negative.	Single	Middle School	Jeddah	24	AYP 6

In a government institution	No multiple movements.	Single	Last year in technical college	Riyadh	25	AYP 7
In a government institution	No multiple movements.	Single	First year in King Saud University	Riyadh	23	AYP 8
In a government institution	The transfer was negative.	Single	Diploma from Princess Nora University	Abha	24	AYP 9
In a government institution	The transfer was negative.	Single	Last year of high school	Dammam	18	AYP 10

#### Care leavers

Previous accommodation?	Feelings About the Movements	marital status	Level of Education	Place of Birth	Age	
In a government institution	From the age of 5, she was with a family. When she was 8 years old, her alternative mother passed away and she returned to the institution.  The return to the institution was difficult.	Married	Secondary School	Riyadh	25	CL 1
She was with an alternative family.	No multiple movements.	Married	Master; no job	Riyadh	33	CL 2
She was with an alternative family.	No multiple movements.	Married	Bachelor; a nurse	Dammam	28	CL 3
In a government institution	She moved between two institutions in Jeddah. The	Married	Secondary school; no job	Jeddah	26	CL 4

	transfer was negative.					
She was in a government institution.	No multiple movements.	Discovered	Secondary school; no job	Jeddah	29	CL 5
In a government institution	She was moved at a young age from the education institution. It was difficult at first, but after a while she got used to it, because her specialist was better than the one who was responsible for her in the nursery institution.	Married	Secondary school; no job	Riyadh	25	CL 6
She returned to the institution after the divorce.	She moved between two institutions.	Discovered	Secondary school	Dammam	29	CL 7
In a government institution	No multiple movements.	Divorced	Secondary school	Dammam	30	CL 8
In a government institution	The transfer was negative.	Married	Secondary school	Al Ahsa	21	CL 9
She was in a government institution.	The transfer was negative.	Married	Bachelor	Dammam	28	CL 10
She was in a government institution.	The transfer was negative.	Married	Bachelor	Dammam	28	CL 11
She was in a government institution.	The transfer was positive.	Married	Bachelor	Riyadh	31	CL 12

## Appendix 2 - Information Sheet

### Questionnaire Sheet

**From: Eman alhaji**

**To: All Potential Research Participants**

Introduction:

This research has been approved by both my university as well as the Ministry of Labor and Social Development in Saudi Arabia. I have also taken into account all potential ethical considerations while designing the research, so if you are concerned in this regard, please feel free to ask me for more information. In terms of confidentiality, all information gathered during the course of the research will be securely kept and accessed only by myself as the researcher, will remain anonymous at all times, and will only be utilized for the purposes of this study. Information will only be gathered and used with your consent as a participant. If, at any time, you feel uncomfortable or unable to continue with the questions, please let me know, and the process will be stopped. In addition, if you would feel more comfortable with answering questions in a setting other than where we currently are, arrangements can also be made in that regard.

The focus of my research is to enhance the leaving care system by highlighting the pathway planning and needs assessment process in the UK, and seeing if it can be transferred into the Saudi leaving care system in a way which will allow care leavers to better prepare for, and be successful in, their lives.

I am very interested in hearing your views on what needs to be achieved in the field of care services for care leavers. As part of this process, a recording will be made to enhance the notes which I will be making as we speak with each other. All recordings will be destroyed at the conclusion of my research.

Having heard what I have had to say about the research which I am looking to undertake, do you have any questions that you would like to ask? If you would like to proceed with taking part, please feel free to confirm your understanding of my research and your participation in the interview process by filling out the attached consent form. Thank you, and I look forward to hearing your views.

Information about myself

Contact information.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Role: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix 3 - Participant consent form

Participant Consent Form

Before you agree to participate in this research study, please fill in this consent form.

**Please circle 'yes' or 'no'.**

1. I understand what this research project is and have read the information sheet.	Yes	No
2. I acknowledge that I can, even after agreeing to participate in this research, change my mind about my participation.	Yes	No
3. I understand that the interview will be recorded either by tape recording or by hand notes based on approval from myself and my institution.	Yes	No
4. I understand that nothing which I say will be used in any way other than for the purposes of the research study, and will only be accessed and kept secure by the researcher in an anonymous manner.	Yes	No
5. I agree to take part in the research.	Yes	No

Signed:

Print name:

Date:



## **Appendix 3 - Interview for Yonge girls in care / Care Leavers**

### **Example 1**

Date of Interview: (3/12/2020)

Place of Interview: call

Tape recorded: Yes / No

Place where interview was conducted: \_\_\_\_\_

Time:2:00 am/pp to 3:30 am/pm

### **Introduction**

- 1. Say who you are, what your research is about, and hoped for outcomes. Say to the person to be interviewed why they have been selected.**
- 2. Talk about the interview process itself, with associated notes about privacy and ethical considerations, and that interview can be stopped at any time for any reason.**
- 3. Ask for consent for interview and for tape recorder to be used or notes can be taken during interview.**

Thank you for agreeing to hear more about my research on the topic of improving the leaving care system for female care leavers in Saudi Arabia. My name is Eman Alhaji, and I am a PhD student at university of Durham. Before I explain what I am looking to do as a result of my research, I would like to say a few words about the research itself.

This research has been approved by both my university as well as the Ministry of Labor and Social Development in Saudi Arabia. I have also taken into account all potential ethical considerations while designing the research, so if you are concerned in this regard, please feel free to ask me for more information. In terms of confidentiality, all information gathered during the course of the research will be securely kept and accessed only by myself as the researcher, will remain anonymous at all times, and will only be utilized for the purposes of this study. Information will only be gathered and used with your consent as a participant. If, at any time, you feel uncomfortable or unable to continue with the questions, please let me know, and the process will be stopped. In addition, if you would feel more comfortable with answering questions in a setting other than where we currently are, arrangements can also be made in that regard.

The focus of my research is to enhance the leaving care system by highlighting the pathway planning and needs assessment process in the UK, and seeing if it can be transferred into the Saudi leaving care system in a way which will allow care leavers to better prepare for, and be successful in, their lives.

I am very interested in hearing your views on what needs to be achieved in the field of care services for care leavers. As part of this process, a recording will be made to enhance the notes which I will be making as we speak with each other. All recordings will be destroyed at the conclusion of my research.

Having heard what I have had to say about the research which I am looking to undertake, do you have any questions that you would like to ask? If you would like to proceed with taking part, please feel free to confirm your understanding of my research and your participation in the interview process by filling out the attached consent form. Thank you, and I look forward to hearing your views.

### Information about myself

Contact information.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Role: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

## Participant Consent Form

Before you agree to participate in this research study, please fill in this consent form.

**Please circle 'yes' or 'no'.**

6. I understand what this research project is and have read the information sheet.	Yes ( <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> )	No ( <input type="checkbox"/> )
7. I acknowledge that I can, even after agreeing to participate in this research, change my mind about my participation.	Yes ( <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> )	No ( <input type="checkbox"/> )
8. I understand that the interview will be recorded either by tape recording or by hand notes based on approval from myself and my institution.	Yes ( <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> )	No ( <input type="checkbox"/> )
9. I understand that nothing which I say will be used in any way other than for the purposes of the research study, and will only be accessed and kept secure by the researcher in an anonymous manner.	Yes ( <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> )	No ( <input type="checkbox"/> )
10. I agree to take part in the research.	Yes ( <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> )	No ( <input type="checkbox"/> )
6. I have agreed to record the interview.	Yes ( <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> )	No ( <input type="checkbox"/> )

Signed:

Print name:

Date:

## PERSONAL INFORMATION

*I would like to begin our interview/focus group by asking a few questions about yourself. Could you please tell me about:*

**Your Age:** 24

**Place of Birth:** Jeddah

**What is your highest level of education attained?**

If the individual is a student, what is their current academic level?

*Middle school.*

**Have you ever been married / divorced (choose one)?** Yes / No

If the answer to marriage is yes, how old were you at marriage?

**Current Employment:**

*Trained.*

**How long were you in a care institution?** 10 Years ago

**Where were you living before leaving care (choose one)?**

In a government institution   In a charity institution   With an alternative family   Other:

Whatever option is chosen, I will then ask about the reason for moving, if the movement was repeated (and her feelings about the movements, whether they were negative or positive, and why they happened), why she was in that situation, the time she stayed in that situation, and how this has impacted her life.

*I was in the institution in Makkah when I was 12 years old. Then, I moved to an institution in Jeddah, when it was decided by the ministry that we must move, so I moved between two institutions. The transfer was negative because we loved our institution and the female specialists in the institution.*

**Why did you leave the care institution?**

Marriage   Work   Continue my university studies   Other:

If “marriage” is chosen, I will ask how old she was when she left care and how old she was when she was married. If other options are chosen, I will ask about the reasons for leaving care.

**What were your biggest needs while in care, and after leaving care?**

**Note: I am looking for general survey information to look for patterns in what each group interviewed feels is being addressed within the care system for care leavers.**

*I need the ministry to be fair in the treatment in all institutions and among all orphans. There are girls who take their rights and girls who don't. When we ask the specialist, they tell us that the specialist is responsible for each girl, and each girl has a specialist. On occasions, we would see girls from another institution treated as if they were not in an institution. Why were they treated differently? We all are orphans. Why are there some orphan girls who are better than others, or some orphan girls who deal with things better than the rest? This thing makes us angry. There must be justice in the system, and it should not be something that is left up to the specialist or the director..*

*We need openness. We are used to the world outside the institution, and we experience problems if our income is not enough, or if there are no jobs for you. I mean, the girls who are employees and do not want to stay in the institution will have accommodation found for them outside the institution because they have an income and they do not want to be in the institution. Well, if someone studies, like me, they need to be at the institution. If I leave the institution, I must marry, and if there are problems between me and my husband, the institution will not ask about me, because I am married. Life is difficult. They want us to go out, but how do we go out when we are neither financially able nor do we have the ability to spend on ourselves? This is all because the ministry wants us to leave the institution, but they do not think about whether we are ready. Not everyone has a high degree and is employed or financially able to spend on herself. This scares us, and makes us feel that we under pressure, and we will be transferred. I mean, we do not know what will happen next? This is something that scares us the most.*

**Marriage**

**What is supposed to be offered to you which you feel would help you to become self-sufficient?**

Is marriage the only reason that made you leave the residential institution?

Do you think that marriage will help abandoned young people to meet many of their psychological, social and financial needs? Can you explain why?

*I mean, if they want us to leave, they can help us by buying an apartment for us, or by supporting someone with the proper certificate to get a job. If they want us to go out of the institution, but without support, we will go, but the problems will increase. I mean, we will have debts because we do not have enough money and are not financially prepared. It is possible for someone to take advantage of the girls and their need for money in bad ways.*

*The ministry must take this into consideration. I mean, we need to be ready in order to leave, and being ready financially is the most difficult.*

(Question for girls in a residential institution)

Are you married to someone from the same background or not? Why?..

*I prefer to marry a non-orphan, because frankly, orphans have many problems. For example, some of them are addicted or have different sexual orientations, and psychological problems. They do not know about dealing with a girl. For me, a non-orphan is better.*

### **Nutrition**

**What are your most important needs (in both institutions and other environments)?**

**What prevents you from achieving that? Did you ask for support and were you supported?**

**In your opinion, how can the service you received while in care be improved and developed? How can that be developed?**

*Honestly, I do not have a problem with eating, but I see that the girl who takes care of herself must take care of her eating. There is no need to use force. You must love yourself.*

Do you feel that there is a focus on nutrition within care services in Saudi Arabia? Yes/No Explain (probe)

*Yes, they do a course on healthy food, and what the disadvantages are of fast food.*

How, as a care leaver/MLSD official/Ekha'a official/staff member, do you think this can be improved?

*I mean, the courses give you a general picture of this subject. I mean, the teacher will answer you and explain the damages of this kind of food, which can affect your health even after many years. This makes you think about your food and your health.*

What is the most important thing in nutrition (for instance, proper diet) that you, as a care leaver, feel you need as a skill? How can this be best implemented?

*I see that I am attentive to food and my health, except when everything is messy at the time of exams or stress. But, after those times, I will go back and pay attention to my food. I mean, this is a personal thing that is necessary. I understand that this food will affect my health. It is not the institution that says what to eat or not; they only explain things to you, and you are responsible for yourself.*

## **Financial**

**What are your most important needs (in both institution and other environments?)**

**What prevents you from achieving that? Did you ask for support and were you supported?**

**In your opinion, how can the service while in care be improved and developed? As a girl staying in an institution, was the financial situation sufficient to meet your needs? Why? How much do you receive?**

**As a girl leaving an institution, was the financial situation sufficient to meet your needs? How much did you receive?**

*900RS is given to me. It is not enough, especially with the high prices that are occurring. I mean, you go to buy your things, and you have to pay double the price. I mean, they have to increase the subsidy. It was sufficient, but is not appropriate for changes and the taxes that happen now.*

**What are your sources of incomes or support (individual to choose one)?**

**Financial guarantee  
employee**

**Reward**

**Institution reward**

**University student**

**For those in an institution: Do you think that if you leave the house you are facing financial difficulties, or are you ready for that stage?**

*I mean, I go out with the girls to a coffee shop or a restaurant and they charge me. It is difficult to tell the girls that I do not have enough money or that I cannot go out. The ministry should increase the subsidy to suit our needs.*

Can care leavers look after their financial well-being after leaving care (pay rent, buy a house, read contracts, use a bank account, etc)? Why/why not?

*The employee can do it, but for someone who is unemployed, of course not. Even if she has an apartment, how does she spend her money, and what if she has no income? Divorced girls suffer from their low subsidy, especially when it stops without warning. Why? It must be in a steady source of income in order to be able to meet their needs.*

## **Health**

**Are you experiencing any physical or psychological health problems? What is the problem ... and how is it handled?**

*No.*

**Do you have medical insurance? What is your insurance company? Who gives you insurance? Does it cover most of your health needs?**

*Yes. I have health insurance from the ministry, and it covers my needs.*

**What are the most prominent mental health problems (psychological problems) that a girl may face after she leaves an institution?**

**What do you need to deal with?**

*I do not know.*

Do you find that health care and access to health care is an issue for care leavers? Yes/No Explain

(probe)

I do not know.

Are care leavers able to look after themselves properly once they leave care (go to a doctor/hospital; access health care; etc)? Why/why not?



*Of course, everyone can go to the hospital and take care of themselves unless if there is a problem. Then, someone might need help, but the remaining girls can take care of themselves.*

### **Education**

**What do you think about the educational level of girls? Is it low or high in terms of school stages? Can you explain more? In your opinion, why is it high/low?**

*It is high. There is encouragement from the ministry and also from the institution, and the girls want to be independent. I mean, if she completes her studies, she will be employed and after that, she can save her money and leave the institution. Most of the girls who are employed do not like to stay in the institution. They would prefer to have an independent apartment and start a private life in it.*

*There are ordinary difficulties. For example, this subject is difficult for me, but there are rewards for girls who succeed. Also, school things are bought for you by the institution, so you do not pay for them from your expenses. So, girls want to compete and succeed in their studies in order to leave the institution.*

What opportunities do care leavers have to access tertiary studies or upskill themselves in different ways (computers/technology/CV writing/etc.)?

*No.*

In your opinion, do care services actors plan enough for care leavers to gain sufficient educational qualifications to be successful independently after leaving care? Yes/No Explain

*Certainly, the ministry is keen that girls have a high degree, and they encourage them, but there are some of them that find studying to be difficult, like me. I mean, it is not easy to succeed. The ministry takes this thing into consideration, that for some girls there needs to be training opportunities which can lead to employment, after high school, for example. It helps all girls, not just the outstanding ones.*

Do you enroll in educational and training programs that prepare you for jobs required in the community?

*There are no programs like this.*

### **Accommodation**

**For girls who left an institution: What is the place where you first lived? Were there enough options for you? Were there any problems which you faced?**

*I don't know. There are no options. If there is no housing, I will communicate with someone who can help me if there is a problem. I have not experienced living outside the institution, but there are some girls who are able to live independently, and most of them are female*

*employees because their finances are good. But, if you do not have a job and have financial problems, this will be hard on you.*

(probe)

What place will you stay in after you leave the institution? (for those in an institution)

*I do not know.*

How are care leavers able to access accommodation options when they leave care?

*I have no idea.*

### **Social Needs**

**Is it true that an orphaned girl is less integrated into society than non-orphans?**

**No.**

**If the answer is yes, ask what most helped her to integrate into society, and with whom did she integrate more?**

**If the answer is no, ask for her point of view: What does she suggest to help a girl to integrate into society? Are there specific programs that can help her, such as working on vacations ... part-time jobs ... volunteering ... friendly family ....**

*Because now, with openness and social media, all people have become more acquainted with each other. It is easy to get to know people, easy to go out, and easy to know more about people. I suggest that the girl does not isolate herself, and that she should go out and live her life.*

What do you feel are the most important qualities or abilities a care leaver needs to be able to successfully and confidently integrate into society after leaving care?

*Self-confidence, self-reliance and being strong.*

(probe)

Are there enough opportunities provided to care leavers to facilitate their integration into Saudi society after leaving care? Yes/No Explain

Of course, there are chances, but a girl needs to be an employee in order to participate in society.

*They do not isolate them. They help them get employed and to have relationships, even if they leave the institution.*

What do you think about the Friend Family program ... and the embracing program ... in terms of satisfying the need for social circumstances? What do you suggest to make it better than it is?

*Families satisfy the needs of girls, more than the institution can if the family is good. We saw girls who returned from the families and got tired in the institution, and they were telling us about their family life, and how it was, and how returning to the institution is a shock. I mean, it will affect your mental health. Or, if the family is bad, the orphan might be tortured if the ministry does not communicate with her or does not follow her.*

*I suggest that the ministry should communicate with families.*

*I mean, most girls are fostered while they are children. If the ministry communicated with the family and made sure of the safety and health of the girl, you would know that the family is good because the child cannot call and communicate with the ministry. But, the ministry can reveal this from its visits to the family.*

How do care services actors best enable care leavers to address their needs and concerns regarding integrating into society after leaving care?

*As I said, the friend family program helps, and also volunteering, but it is according to the girl's interests. The institution is supposed to be keen on choosing the program or activity that suits the girl, taking into account their experience with the girl. This is certain to positively affect her when she leaves the institution.*

Do you feel that care leavers experience social difficulties after leaving care? Yes/No Explain (stigma of being an orphan, giving an example, a suggestion on how to limit it, and possible solutions; unknown parents; relating to people; feelings of instability and inadequacy; etc). How can these challenges be best addressed, and by whom?

*Yes, there are difficulties at school, and even between us at the institution. When a girl is upset, she can say hurtful things. But, is there any solution? No. Should we let it go? Do not think about it and just live your life.*

## **Personal Growth**

**Who is close to you? If you are happy or sad, will you talk to her and ask for help?**

**Write the name of someone you like. Who is this person (for example, one of the social female workers ... or a colleague... or an orphaned girl)? Why did you assume that they are close to you?**

*My sister is with me at the institution, because she stands by me in my problems, and she hears me and I do the same for her.*

**Can you remind me of your rights and responsibilities? Who told you about them?**

*It is my right to go out and buy my items. I have the right to practice my hobbies. I have the right to take a reward. I have my right to have no one interfering with my privacy and my responsibilities. I will not cause problems for anyone at the institution. If there is a problem, I tell the specialist or someone who is present at the time. I keep my room clean. I do not cause problems when I go out. The specialists tell me what to do in the institution ..*

(probe)

Whose job (which care service actor) is it to provide care leavers with the most effective understanding of their rights and freedoms, to facilitate their integration into society? Which one, and why?

What is the most important thing, in your opinion, that care leavers need to fully develop as individuals before leaving care (for instance, financial skills, social skills, etc)?

*She works on developing herself and finishing her studies, and thinks about some ways that she can save money that would benefit her if she left the institution. She would behave properly, and when she has a problem, she does not give up her rights to anyone.*

*Social skills are very important in order to be able to live outside the institution, because you communicate with people in the hospital and in the malls. I mean, you must be able to deal with them in a good manner, not the same style as when you are in the institution, by shouting and raising your voice.*

Do you think that care leavers understand their rights and obligations as members of society?

Yes/No Explain

*There are some girls who are aware, and there are some girls who are not. I see that there are some girls who know their rights and there are some girls who do what others tell them to do, whether it is the right or wrong thing to do.*

Do you think that care leavers have the skills and abilities to look after themselves? Yes/No Explain

*Some of them have good skills, especially those who are employed. As for the married women, they left the institution and they have no experience and cannot deal with their husbands or their lives. We see some girls when they come to the institution, who do not know how to deal with others or to handle her family life, or is afraid of her husband or of*

*forfeiting her rights. She does not know what her rights are, and what needs to be done in order to overcome the problems.*

**How can the needs of individuals about to leave care and care leavers be best addressed?**

(probe)

What is your opinion of the following, in terms of assisting individuals about to leave care and care leavers to best meet their needs? (for each option, ask who should be offering the option, and why)

Mentoring (offering advice for pathways in life, such as training and employment opportunities;

Can you suggest specific people who are supposed to do this? Why did you prefer this option?

What kind of follow-up would you like to have?):

*Yes. There should be a person who specializes in these subjects who comes to the institution, because if she is from the outside of the institution, it will be more efficient and girls are more interested in it. Follow-up should be continuous.*

*There should be a team from the ministry to make sure that the girls are ready to go out, or if they need support. They do not depend on the opinion of the institution.*

Pathway plan (a plan to develop a care leaver's skills and abilities to succeed as an independent person after leaving care; Is there a written or formal preparation and initializing program so that a care leaver is prepared before leaving the residential institution? If yes, can you think of other important things?):

*There is no official program, but if it was there, it would help girls to be ready, especially if it was supervised by the ministry.*

*The Ministry should supervise all of the programs, or unite programs with laws, because laws are different from one specialist to another, or from one institution to another.*

Needs assessment (a plan which shows a person's skills and abilities which need to be further developed to succeed as an independent person):

*It should be from the specialist. I mean, because she knows your situation better than others.*

*There should be support for the girl so that she can leave the institution when she is independent and ready.*

Comprehensive assessment (to better develop a person's social, psychological and physical well-being; Have your needs been assessed comprehensively, so that you as a care leaver know what you need in terms of financial/psychological and social/educational/career/health/etc support):

*Yes, this will help the girls, and the specialist should be responsible for it.*

*There should be support for the girl from the ministry if she needs it.*

*The girl should understand her situation, not just the specialist who sends a letter about her situation to the ministry, and then the girl is the last to know. For example, if the girl has a problem, the specialist must explain to her all aspects of the problem, to make sure that the girl understands. But, she deals with a problem routinely, as if there is nothing wrong. So, the girl does not have a clear understanding about her problem and her situation, or that she is in trouble, and sometimes she moves to another institution, where she may not know that this is because of her behavior.*

Professional intervention (for example, social workers working with care leavers to assist them in social and challenging matters, and psychologists working with care leaver to help them with emotional and psychological issues; What are the professional programs and interventions that specialists provide to you to deal with psychological, emotional, familial and marital issues? Is there any consultation, and are there sessions of intervention, treatment or guidance? If yes, like what? If no, in your opinion, what should be presented and what do you suggest? Is Ekha'a the organization which is supposed to allocate special sections for counseling psychological, social, educational and functional issues, so that care leavers can receive professional advice if it is needed, or if they encounter a problem?):

*The specialist arranges a session with the girls. I mean, for example, if I have a problem, she will sit with me until we solve it. There must be a program from the ministry, which the institution implements with the girls, and which the ministry will supervise and make sure of the results and the needs.*

Fostering and alternative /friend families (are these options important for abandoned young people in their development; What do you think about the importance of the alternative program? Does a female need a friendly and large family? Does the female need to contact her previous foster family?):

*Yes, it is important, but it needs supervision from the ministry in order to fulfil the needs of the girl. Then, there will be no problems. Of course, if she returns to the institution, I*

*expect some of them to communicate with their alternative families even if the alternative mother dies. There should be contact from the ministry with the alternative family.*

Breast feeding information and assistance (for fostering, are you certified with a Breastfeeding Condition, and why?):

*Yes. I mean, the girl has a family. Certainly, this is positive.*

Other possible assistance and guidance for care leavers (ask what options they think should be offered, by what service, and why; What are the main advantages/disadvantages of the residential institution? What do you think you will lose when you leave the residential institution, and why? What are the main advantages/disadvantages of leaving the residential institution? What do you think you lost when you left the residential institution, and why?):

*There should be fairness among all institutions and among all the orphan girls in the programs, laws and decisions. I will miss the institution and the girls when I leave the institution. The thing that disturbs us is that we feel that there is no justice among all the girls in the same institution or among all the institutions. I suggest that there should be there a unified system for all of the institutions from the ministry.*

Thank you very much for your time and co-operation.

## **Example 2**

Date of Interview: (29/11/2020)

Place of Interview: call

Tape recorded: Yes / No

Place where interview was conducted: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: 5:00 am/pp to 6:36 am/pm

### **Introduction**

- 1. Say who you are, what your research is about, and hoped for outcomes. Say to the person to be interviewed why they have been selected.**
- 2. Talk about the interview process itself, with associated notes about privacy and ethical considerations, and that interview can be stopped at any time for any reason.**
- 3. Ask for consent for interview and for tape recorder to be used or notes can be taken during interview.**



Thank you for agreeing to hear more about my research on the topic of improving the leaving care system for female care leavers in Saudi Arabia. My name is Eman Alhaji, and I am a PhD student at university of Durham. Before I explain what I am looking to do as a result of my research, I would like to say a few words about the research itself.

This research has been approved by both my university as well as the Ministry of Labor and Social Development in Saudi Arabia. I have also taken into account all potential ethical considerations while designing the research, so if you are concerned in this regard, please feel free to ask me for more information. In terms of confidentiality, all information gathered during the course of the research will be securely kept and accessed only by myself as the researcher, will remain anonymous at all times, and will only be utilized for the purposes of this study. Information will only be gathered and used with your consent as a participant. If, at any time, you feel uncomfortable or unable to continue with the questions, please let me know, and the process will be stopped. In addition, if you would feel more comfortable with answering questions in a setting other than where we currently are, arrangements can also be made in that regard.

The focus of my research is to enhance the leaving care system by highlighting the pathway planning and needs assessment process in the UK, and seeing if it can be transferred into the Saudi leaving care system in a way which will allow care leavers to better prepare for, and be successful in, their lives.

I am very interested in hearing your views on what needs to be achieved in the field of care services for care leavers. As part of this process, a recording will be made to enhance the notes which I will be making as we speak with each other. All recordings will be destroyed at the conclusion of my research.

Having heard what I have had to say about the research which I am looking to undertake, do you have any questions that you would like to ask? If you would like to proceed with taking part, please feel free to confirm your understanding of my research and your participation in the interview process by filling out the attached consent form. Thank you, and I look forward to hearing your views.

### Information about myself

Contact information.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Role: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

## Participant Consent Form

Before you agree to participate in this research study, please fill in this consent form.

**Please circle 'yes' or 'no'.**

11. I understand what this research project is and have read the information sheet.	Yes ( ✓ )	No ( )
12. I acknowledge that I can, even after agreeing to participate in this research, change my mind about my participation.	Yes ( ✓ )	No ( )
13. I understand that the interview will be recorded either by tape recording or by hand notes based on approval from myself and my institution.	Yes ( ✓ )	No ( )
14. I understand that nothing which I say will be used in any way other than for the purposes of the research study, and will only be accessed and kept secure by the researcher in an anonymous manner.	Yes ( ✓ )	No ( )
15. I agree to take part in the research.	Yes ( ✓ )	No ( )
6. I have agreed to record the interview.	Yes ( ✓ )	No ( )

Signed:

Print name:

Date:

## PERSONAL INFORMATION

*I would like to begin our interview/focus group by asking a few questions about yourself. Could you please tell me about:*

**Your Age:** 30

**Place of Birth:** Dammam.

**What is your highest level of education attained?**

If the individual is a student, what is their current academic level?

Middle School.

**Have you ever been married / divorced (choose one)? Yes / No**

If the answer to marriage is yes, how old were you at marriage?

I was 17 years old.

**Current Employment:**

**How long were you in a care institution? 17 years.**

**Where were you living before leaving care (choose one)?**

In a government institution. In a charity institution. With an alternative family. Other:

Whatever option is chosen, I will then ask about the reason for moving, if the movement was repeated (and her feelings about the movements, whether they were negative or positive, and why they happened), why she was in that situation, the time she stayed in that situation, and how this has impacted her life.

*I was in the Al-Ahsa educational institution. I did not transfer because I was in the same institution until I left it. I was 17 years old. I wanted to complete my studies, but they pressured me to marry an orphan who was with us before in the institution when he was young. I refused because I knew him; he was bossy when he was young and has some issues, and I told them, but they said to me he was a boy and now he grew up and changed and became a man. They said he was their son, and you should marry him, and I couldn't refuse.*

**Why did you leave the care institution?**

Marriage. Work. Continue my university studies. Other:

If "marriage" is chosen, I will ask how old she was when she left care and how old she was when she was married. If other options are chosen, I will ask about the reasons for leaving care.

## **What were your biggest needs while in care, and after leaving care?**

**Note: I am looking for general survey information to look for patterns in what each group interviewed feels is being addressed within the care system for care leavers.**

*A girl needs to be aware and understand life outside the institution, because awareness helps her to gain independence when she comes out of the institution. She needs to understand what is required of her, and how to act. She should not act randomly.*

*I wanted to rely on myself and be able to help myself and live a good and comfortable life. I had difficult circumstances, and I got divorced.*

*I was the spoiled girl in the institution. I just ate and drank, and told them I wanted to go out. They allowed me to do this. When I got out of the institution, I was shocked. I became pregnant. I became responsible for the house and the child, and the responsibilities became more and more difficult for me to bear. I mean, in the institution, I was responsible, but within limits. For example, I was responsible for my notebooks, my school uniform, my items, and my bed, but everything was mine, not about other people.*

*When I left the institution, the responsibilities became rougher. I did not even know anything about a husband's relationship with his wife. I did not know how to cook or clean the house. I was learning, so I was hoping that they would make me aware of something like this before. They told me about the special things between me and my husband when I was in the hotel, on the day of my marriage. On the same day? What do you think? Is this normal? What did they expect from me? it was difficult days for me in the beginning, but I wish I understood more before I left the institution, about what I should do.*

*You know the environment of the institution, it is for women; the only men we know are the drivers. I was afraid to talk to this man, the man who would become my husband, because I did not deal with men of my life. Even when we got married and he always sat with me, I asked him, "Are we always going to be together?" He told me yes, I am your husband, and I cried. I clearly did not understand the nature of the relationship between spouses. Days passed, and I began to get used to it. I wish I had more awareness about this relationship before marriage, and how to deal with a husband and how to depend on myself. I wish I knew how to clean and cook, even just the basics.*

*No, there was no preparation. I did not know what life outside the institution was like, and I said the days passed and I learned. I was not aware of this.*

*Girls can feel that marriage gives them freedom, and that freedom is not in the institution. I mean, when you marry, you travel and go out. In fact, when you leave the institution, the financial conditions of the husband can or cannot allow him to achieve the dreams that you expect from marriage. It is true now, with the new changes in the regulations in Saudi Arabia, there has been a positive effect on girls and things have become more open. But, when we went to the institution and we had problems and were under pressures, we talked about that. Girls became afraid of getting married. Certainly, every marriage has problems, but our problems had a negative effect on the girls who did not marry, because we have no place we can go for help except for the institution. I mean, if there is a place we can when we have a problem, then we can be helped away from the institution. This will alleviate the girls' fear of marriage, marital life and responsibility.*

## **Marriage**

### **What is supposed to be offered to you which you feel would help you to become self-sufficient?**

*I will be independent if I have a guaranteed job. I mean, not in a company, not if they can fire me at any moment. If it is guaranteed, then for sure, I will be independent. because now jobs are asking you to register for insurance, but if I register, I lose my social security. I fear they will take me out of it, and then I will lose my only income.*

Is marriage the only reason that made you leave the residential institution?

Yes.

Do you think that marriage will help abandoned young people to meet many of their psychological, social and financial needs? Can you explain why?

*It may meet psychological needs, but not financial ones, because most husbands have a difficult financial situation. Regarding social needs, it depends on the girl. Is she able to form relationships? Is she social? Does she like communicating with people?*

(Question for girls in a residential institution)

Are you married to someone from the same background or not? Why?

(Questions for married girls)

Are you married to an orphan or a non-orphan?

*I am an orphan. I was focusing on studies. but I was pressured by the administration and got married and also became pregnant. So, how do I continue studying? Where will I put my child, especially since I became pregnant with the second child? I mean, when I had my first child, my husband was happy with the girl, but when I was pregnant with the second one he was angry, and he told me I have no money, so how can I pay for all of this. Once, he even pressed on my stomach in order to make me abort. However, I had the second girl and the days have passed.*

How was the marriage done?

*It was a simple ceremony in the institution. All the costs of the marriage were from my dowry, but the band was from the institution, and we got married.*

Were you prepared for marriage?

Can you talk about what has been done, and how it was done?

*I told you that I was pressured by the administration to marry this man. I tried to live with him and adapt to him. but it was difficult to live with him.*

Can you suggest better solutions than what is available now, which can help orphan girls to adapt and succeed in marital life?

*I suggest that there will be honesty from the man and the woman before marriage. I mean, the administration praises men in an imaginative way, to the point where the girl feels that this man is the man of her dreams. But, when she marries him, she is shocked. I mean, the girl is supposed to be frank, to say that she does not know how to cook. But, I learned, so that he was not shocked. He should also be frank with her. This helps the girl and the boy to reach an understanding before marriage and before they have children, so it will be difficult to separate. For example, I had a problem at the beginning of my marriage, and I went to the supervision office in Dammam. They were shocked that I had married this person because he was an orphan from the Dammam institution and had problems, but at that time, I got married. I had a daughter and I was pregnant. It was difficult for me to separate.*

## **Nutrition**

**What are your most important needs (in both institutions and other environments)?**

**What prevents you from achieving that? Did you ask for support and were you supported?**

**In your opinion, how can the service you received while in care be improved and developed? How can that be developed?**

*I did not know how to cook, and my husband was really closed-minded, I mean, I could not, like today, open a website and cook using a recipe from it. But, I was social and visited the neighbours, and when they offered some dishes, I asked them how they had made it, and I began to learn. Now, I cook for my children, but if they ask me to order for them from restaurants, I do not prevent them as much as I can. I have tried to teach them the things that I missed in the institution, for example, the nature of healthy food and hygiene. They help me according to their abilities and their ages.*

Do you feel that there is a focus on nutrition within care services in Saudi Arabia? Yes/No Explain.

(probe)

*Now, of course, they are keen that they provide healthy food and help the girl who wants to lose weight. They make a specific diet that suits her with the nutritionist.*

How, as a care leaver/MLSD official/Ekha'a official/staff member, do you think this can be improved?

*Frankly, I see them interested in the institution. The institution is very interested in healthy food. In it, as I said, there is a nutritionist, and you go to her and tell her what you want and she helps and they bring you special food that suits you. In terms of nutrition, the services are good.*

What is the most important thing in nutrition (for instance, proper diet) that you, as a care leaver, feel you need as a skill? How can this be best implemented?

*The most important thing is that there will be food that is not mostly fried or sugary. It focuses on vegetables, protein, and things that benefit the body. No. The truth is that I focus on food that is at home and is varied and healthy.*

## **Financial**

**What are your most important needs (in both institution and other environments?)**

**What prevents you from achieving that? Did you ask for support and were you supported?**

*I received from 1850RS from social security. No, it is not enough for me. I have 3 children and I am divorced. Their father gives them 700RS each, meaning 2100RS for all, but it is not covered given the high taxes. It is difficult to cover all of our needs as a family.*

**In your opinion, how can the service while in care be improved and developed? As a girl staying in an institution, was the financial situation sufficient to meet your needs? Why? How much do you receive?**

**As a girl leaving an institution, was the financial situation sufficient to meet your needs? How much did you receive?**

*No. Now, I do not receive anything because I am an employee.*

**What are your sources of incomes or support (individual to choose one)?**

**Financial guarantee.  
Employee.**

**Reward.**

**Institution reward.**

**University student.**

**For those in an institution: Do you think that if you leave the house you are facing financial difficulties, or are you ready for that stage?**

Do you feel that care leavers are looked after well financially as they integrate into the wider Saudi society? Yes/No Explain.

(probe)

How can the financial care provided for care leavers be improved, and by whom?

*I went to associations to help me, but when I tell them that I am an orphan, they say that we cannot help you, because Ekha'a is responsible for you. But, Ekha'a has not helped me, I mean, imagine that I need a heater for the house. I asked for 4 months, but I have just received it. They used to say that they are waiting for a donor. But, such equipment is essential. The ministry is supposed to provide it, not force us to wait for a donor.*

*The ministry is in charge of us. How many times do I have to ask for help? They tell me you can depend on yourself. Ok, but help me until I get a job, and then I can depend on myself. I mean, for example, once Ekha'a called me to say that there is a job which had a two-year training period. I registered and got excited. Then, they told me that it was cancelled. Why? I don't know. There was no answer, even though they were the ones who offered me this job.*

Do you think that a low income can cause challenges for care leavers trying to integrate into society (such as instability and feeling inadequate)? Yes/No Explain.

*Of course. Do you expect 1850RS to be sufficient for electricity? Internet? Food? What about if my kids go out to have fun? Impossible! I mean, imagine that I am asking my children that I can spend their money. I mean, instead of giving it to them, I take it from them. The truth is difficult. How can this be settled and how can I rely on myself? Well, with regard to integration, right, they give courses in order to integrate, and they ruin it themselves. For example, I was participating in a club. I said to myself that this will help me to get to know and integrate with people, and at the same time, to take care of my health. So, I went to Ekha'a and told them to contribute some money to me for the payment. They gave me a letter. It said that this girl is one of the girl orphans with special circumstances, and we hope to help her by having her joining the club and assessing her circumstances. Everyone in the club knew that I was an orphan, and there were looks of compassion. Why would you write the letter in a way that contains pity and sympathy? This does not work. This does not help us to integrate, just the opposite. I escaped from the place. Even when I applied for a license to be able to work for Uber or Careem, they wrote a letter the same way. When I was waiting with people, the employee came up and told me that you are the presenter of a letter of an orphan with special circumstances. Welcome! This is a method which they think is a kind of compassion, to treat you differently than other people. Why does this make me integrate? Of course not. On the contrary, I feel embarrassed.*

Can care leavers look after their financial well-being after leaving care (pay rent, buy a house, read contracts, use a bank account, etc)? Why/why not?

*No. Of course, it is difficult for us. but we can use the ATM card and pay bills. But, with regard to contracts, we cannot do it. This is a difficult thing for us, especially since I have not completed my education. I have no experience, so I try to ask someone to help me.*



## Health

**Are you experiencing any physical or psychological health problems? What is the problem. and how is it handled?**

*No.*

**Do you have medical insurance? What is your insurance company? Who gives you insurance? Does it cover most of your health needs?**

*I have insurance from Ekha'a, and my children have insurance from their father's job. In general, I don't have problems.*

**What are the most prominent mental health problems (psychological problems) that a girl may face after she leaves an institution?**

**What do you need to deal with?**

*You need someone to hear you and guide you, because most of our problems are because we do not know how to act about it.*

Do you find that health care and access to health care is an issue for care leavers? Yes/No Explain.

*No for me it is ok.*

(probe)

Are care leavers able to look after themselves properly once they leave care (go to a doctor/hospital; access health care; etc)? Why/why not?

*This is essential. I mean, it is necessary. We all go to hospitals and have to make appointments.*

How are care leavers able to access health care and counselling both privately and publicly?

*I do not know.*

To what extent do you think access to health care influences a care leaver's ability to live independently (can ask about psychological health/physical health/dietary issues)?

*Everything is ok for me in terms of health services.*

## Education

**What do you think about the educational level of girls? Is it low or high in terms of school stages? Can you explain more? In your opinion, why is it high/low?**

*It is high. In the institution, I see that most girls are in university.*

*There is interest from girls that they complete their studies, especially when they see our situation. We face problems because we have not completed studies, and I believe that there is support from the institution for girls to complete their studies.*

*When I got married, it was difficult for me to continue studying. Who will take care of my children, especially since I am now divorced? But, if I get employed, I think I can provide them with someone who can take care of them.*

What opportunities do care leavers have to access tertiary studies or upskill themselves in different ways (computers/technology/CV writing/etc.)?

*There are only courses on life skills.*

In your opinion, do care services actors plan enough for care leavers to gain sufficient educational qualifications to be successful independently after leaving care? Yes/No Explain.

*They were interested in marriage because they felt that marriage was a solution to the girl's problems and that the girl became settled with marriage. This is not planning and so far from being independent, especially if the purpose was just marriage to anyone. Then, the girl would return to the institution, and if she had children, she would have more problems than before.*

Do you enroll in educational and training programs that prepare you for jobs required in the community?

*Of course, I tell them. But, nothing has reached me yet.*

Do you think that care leavers find it difficult to find job and training opportunities after leaving care? Why/why not?

*I told you that they told me once about a two-year period of training, after which there would be a job. But, then they cancelled it, and I don't know the reason.*

In your opinion, do care leavers receive enough support from care services actors? Yes/No Explain.

*No, it is not enough, because we need a job. Form when I was divorced until now, I did not get any job, and when I go to Ekha'a, they tell me that I must complete my studies. How do I complete my studies when I have children and responsibilities of my own because I am divorced? My financial situation is difficult.*

### **Accommodation**

**For girls who left an institution: What is the place where you first lived? Were there enough options for you? Were there any problems which you faced?**

*I lived in an apartment after marriage. but I had land granted from the ministry. After I got married, I was given 60,000RS as a benefit, and it helped me to build my house. Also, there were donors who supported me. Now. I am staying in my house.*

**Were you prepared to be independent, and knew how to behave if there was a problem? Did you know where to go if there was a problem?**

**Was the institution suitable? Can you suggest a place for married women, or for those women who are having trouble with their husbands, to visit?**

*No, I was not ready. I used to have problems with my husband. He used to beat me, and he was bossy and violent. I had felt this from him before when he was 12 years old, when we were in the institution together, and because of this, I refused to marry him. But, in the end, I couldn't reject him. Even so, I did not want a divorce, but he divorced me. I tried to fix our problems for my children. but he refused. I spoke to Ekha'a and told them to intervene and talk to him, and we met with him and a specialist. But, Ekha'a evaded my situation and did not solve my problem. Then, he divorced me, and I tried to live on my own with only my house. My situation was difficult, as at that time he did not give me money for the children. Then, he told me to go to Social Security, that they will help you. So, I went to them and they gave me financial aid because I was divorced. There should have been a place we could go to besides the institution, but there isn't. I separated, but I had a house. This helped me.*

*There was no place to go when there was any problem. Also, when you tell them about your problem, they evade you and do not want to solve the problems. I was refusing to separate and was trying with Ekha'a to talk to my husband, but in the end, they did nothing.*

(probe)

What place will you stay in after you leave the institution? (for those in an institution)

How are care leavers able to access accommodation options when they leave care?

*Housing was not a problem for me. Rather, it was just difficult for me to live. I don't have a job and a steady income that would suffice for me and my children.*

*Because I had the land grant, when I was in the institution and when I left, I tried to benefit from it and settled with it.*

Do you think that care services actors give care leavers enough skills and knowledge to live independently after leaving care? Yes/No Explain.

*I do not know.*

Are the types of accommodation available able to meet the needs and concerns of care leavers? Yes/No Explain. Did the stay meet your needs? Did you need anything else? Were you supported to own a house? What do you suggest? There are those who own a house, whether they are women or men. how do you own a house? What is the mechanism for that? What do you suggest?

*I don't know. Because I had a house. I have no idea.*

What skills do you think care leavers are missing in terms of being able to obtain and utilize a type of accommodation that best suits their needs? (able to read a contract, pay rent, etc). If she is an employee, ask if she is comfortable with her work? Also: Who helped her to get the job? What kind of job is she working in? What are the difficulties the girl may face in her work? What are the solutions for the difficulties which she faces?

*I don't know, as I did not deal with them in order to have a house. I don't know.*

### **Social Needs**

**Is it true that an orphaned girl is less integrated into society than non-orphans?**

Yes.

**If the answer is yes, ask what most helped her to integrate into society, and with whom did she integrate more?**

**If the answer is no, ask for her point of view: What does she suggest to help a girl to integrate into society? Are there specific programs that can help her, such as working on vacations. part-time jobs. volunteering. friendly family.**

*It is possible. As I said, this may contribute to the fact that girls do not integrate with people. It is the image that Ekha'a shows other people regarding orphans which causes pity and embarrassment.*

*The thing that helped me was that I had friendships from people who were not orphans who used to visit the institution, and I used to go along with them. There was communication between us, and I started to get to know more people through them.*

What do you feel are the most important qualities or abilities a care leaver needs to be able to successfully and confidently integrate into society after leaving care?

*She should be self-reliant, and able to make her own decisions. She should be confident of herself.*

(probe)

Are there enough opportunities provided to care leavers to facilitate their integration into Saudi society after leaving care? Yes/No Explain.

*Frankly, no. I mean, when I go to the traffic division to apply for the driving license, when they knew that I am an orphan with special circumstances, they told me that they had stopped the requests of girls with special circumstances. Why? Because the girls in the institutions had created problems. I mean, there was a problem between the girls and the driving instructor. Well, it is due to the behaviour of a single person, so why does it affect the whole population of orphans? Does this make you feel that there are opportunities for girls to integrate with people while I am excluded from things which should be my right? Where are the opportunities? I do not see any opportunities.*

What do you think about the Friend Family program. and the embracing program. in terms of satisfying the need for social circumstances? What do you suggest to make it better than it is?

*I don't agree. Do not ask me why, but I do not like this idea.*

How do care services actors best enable care leavers to address their needs and concerns regarding integrating into society after leaving care?

*They change society's view of us, through Ekha'a's accounts and because of their donations and letters.*

Do you feel that care leavers experience social difficulties after leaving care? Yes/No Explain. (stigma of being an orphan, giving an example, a suggestion on how to limit it, and possible solutions; unknown parents; relating to people; feelings of instability and inadequacy; etc). How can these challenges be best addressed, and by whom?

*Of course, there are difficulties and there is a feeling of inferiority. This is because of the pitiful look that the ministry and Ekha'a themselves cause. They do not help us, as they make people pity us.*

*I see that they are changing society's perception of us, whether through speeches or the media.*

## **Personal Growth**

**Who is close to you? If you are happy or sad, will you talk to her and ask for help?**

*My friend.*

**Write the name of someone you like. Who is this person (for example, one of the social female workers. or a colleague. or an orphaned girl)? Why did you assume that they are close to you?**

*A friend. She can hear me as I consult with her. She can advise me with sincere advice, and even help me financially. When Ekha'a stopped the financial support and I had no income, she would help me monthly. I consider her a sister, not just a friend.*

**Can you remind me of your rights and responsibilities? Who told you about them?**

*I did not know my rights because they were limited. I mean, when I was in the institution I took care of myself in terms of eating and drinking. But, when I got married and had children. I started wanting to know my rights. There are things that I knew and there are things that were not clear. It is my right, for example, if I divorce that I have help from Social Security. But, if my ex-husband did not say this to me, perhaps I would not know even now, and my financial situation would deteriorate.*

(probe)

Whose job (which care service actor) is it to provide care leavers with the most effective understanding of their rights and freedoms, to facilitate their integration into society? Which one, and why?

What is the most important thing, in your opinion, that care leavers need to fully develop as individuals before leaving care (for instance, financial skills, social skills, etc)?

*She needs someone to support her, especially if she is a divorced woman. I mean, when I ask Ekha'a for help, they always tell me to wait for a donor. This is not acceptable, as they are supposed to support me, not a donor. For example, two years ago, I had pain in my teeth and I needed to go to a dentist, but the dental clinic is expensive. I went to Ekha'a, as I did not have insurance, and they said to me, "Ok, try to pay for it, then bring a bill to us and we will compensate you." So, I borrowed 5,000 RS, paid it and brought a bill. Do you know how much I was compensated? 800 Riyals! They said that this is what we can afford! Is this support? Is it sufficient? Of course not. I see social and life skills as being the most important things, because they are important in life for every person.*

Do you think that care leavers understand their rights and obligations as members of society?

Yes/No Explain.

*No. As I told you, there are things that I wish we could understand or be made clear to us, and there are things like Social Security which our entitlement to was not made clear. But, we learned from our experiences.*

Do you think that care leavers have the skills and abilities to look after themselves? Yes/No Explain.

*Life teaches us that we need to help ourselves since we have left the institution, because before we went out, we did not learn anything.*

## How can the needs of individuals about to leave care and care leavers be best addressed?

(probe)

What is your opinion of the following, in terms of assisting individuals about to leave care and care leavers to best meet their needs? (for each option, ask who should be offering the option, and why)

Mentoring (offering advice for pathways in life, such as training and employment opportunities; Can you suggest specific people who are supposed to do this? Why did you prefer this option? What kind of follow-up would you like to have?):

*This is an excellent thing! For example, there are girls who have bad ideas about men. It is possible for a psychologist to deal with girls, to understand and direct them, but the truth is the girls are disgusted by the psychologist. I mean, they say we have nothing wrong with us, that we do not have psychological problems. So, why then do we talk to a psychologist? This may be because our culture denies psychological problems, as it is something not acceptable.*

*It may be that, if she deals with them without saying that she is a psychologist, she can help girls, because the social worker cannot understand the girl's psyche and what is in her mind as a psychologist.*

Pathway plan (a plan to develop a care leaver's skills and abilities to succeed as an independent person after leaving care; Is there a written or formal preparation and initializing program so that a care leaver is prepared before leaving the residential institution? If yes, can you think of other important things?):

*No, there is no plan. If the ministry agreed to this, they can implement it. The decision is up to the ministry.*

*I suggest that this happens for a girl from the age of 10 or 12 years, because at this age is easy for the girl to benefit. This will help the girl to be aware before she grows up and leaves the institution to be shocked. For example, she can be taught how to solve a problem that she faces.*

Needs assessment (a plan which shows a person's skills and abilities which need to be further developed to succeed as an independent person):

*I don't see that there is a clear plan in the institution. The evidence is that many girls have problems when they leave. They face problems and try to solve them themselves.*

Comprehensive assessment (to better develop a person's social, psychological and physical well-being; Have your needs been assessed comprehensively, so that you as a care leaver know what you need in terms of financial/psychological and social/educational/career/health/etc support):

*There is not. Maybe there is now, but I am not sure of this. But, only the ministry can implement it.*

*They need to accept that there are problems and they try to solve them. If they deny them and hold the girls responsible, our problems are repeated. They must be aware that there is something wrong in their plans, and they must review it.*

Professional intervention (for example, social workers working with care leavers to assist them in social and challenging matters, and psychologists working with care leaver to help them with emotional and psychological issues; What are the professional programs and interventions that specialists provide to you to deal with psychological, emotional, familial and marital issues? Is there any consultation, and are there sessions of intervention, treatment or guidance? If yes, like what? If no, in your opinion, what should be presented and what do you suggest? Is Ekha'a the organization which is supposed to allocate special sections for counseling psychological, social, educational and functional issues, so that care leavers can receive professional advice if it is needed, or if they encounter a problem?):

*No, there is nothing. When I asked Ekha'a to intervene, to solve my problems with my husband before a divorce happened and, after, to fix our problems, they used to evade, to say ok but without any result. They do not have programs that can help us solve our marital and family problems.*

*I suggest that there should be a specialist's schedule, for example, a certain day when she can ask about so-and-so, especially for those who have marital problems and have asked for help. She can then visit and bring the girl together with her husband in a session where the aim is to solve their problems, or in which solutions to their situation can be found even if divorce has occurred. There will be no problems.*

Fostering and alternative /friend families (are these options important for abandoned young people in their development; What do you think about the importance of the alternative program? Does a female need a friendly and large family? Does the female need to contact her previous foster family?):

*No comment.*

Breast feeding information and assistance (for fostering, are you certified with a Breastfeeding Condition, and why?):

*No comment.*



Other possible assistance and guidance for care leavers (ask what options they think should be offered, by what service, and why; What are the main advantages/disadvantages of the residential institution? What do you think you will lose when you leave the residential institution, and why? What are the main advantages/disadvantages of leaving the residential institution? What do you think you lost when you left the residential institution, and why?):

*The positivity in the institution is that you are comfortable. and this will become negative when you leave the institution because, unfortunately, you did not learn something to benefit from when you left the institution and, now, you have a family and children. I suggest that they be realistic with us. I must assume some kind of responsibility in the institution. I should learn to cook and clean, basic things. I didn't know anything when I left the institution. So, problems will arise because of this. I mean, for example, marital rights. You do not know your responsibilities or how to deal with a man.*

**For each of the following sections, only ask the set of questions which applies to their background (care leaver/care institution staff/ Ekha'a or charitable organization official/Ministry of Labor and Social Development official)**

**A. From your (a care leaver's) perspective, what is your view about the following?**

**Care services are adequately able to look after the needs and concerns of care leavers.**

*As a divorced woman, no. It is not enough. They need to focus on the situation of divorced women and what they need because they are with their children alone. It is a difficult situation and needs support, whether material or moral.*

Care leavers need employment and educational advisors.

Of course. because education is the basis for getting a job. It will make you independent, even if you divorced. You will be safe.

Care leavers need mentors.

*Certainly, because they are in a new situation. and as you see there was no good preparation for us. This allows us to experience situations that need patience because of different pressures, but we do not know what to do. It is here that a mentor will help you, who can at least make sure that you are thinking the right way. What things should I focus on? I mean, you can rest assured that someone with you is interested in you, and is asking about you and your situation. It is very comfortable to have such a thing like mentors, especially for divorced women, who need them.*

Care leavers need a voice in planning for different aspects of their life after leaving care (for instance, financial support, employment, training, health, social needs, and so on; Is there a follow-up mechanism after leaving the residential institution? Can you explain how this is done? Who is responsible for this? Are there follow-ups and ongoing visits?).

*Of course it is needed, because the needs of the divorced woman are not the same as the married woman. Everyone has different needs. The ministry is the official in charge, because it is the one who supervises Ekha'a, because they refer to the ministry in everything. There are no follow-ups, and because of this, they do not understand our situation. If they follow us, of course they will understand our situation and help us on this basis.*

Care leavers need to know their rights and obligations before leaving care (at an early age; What are the most important rights and responsibilities that a female needs to know?)

*This is good from a young age, giving the girl a chance to gradually take responsibility. They should teach her the basics of life, such as cooking and cleaning, as well as how to solve her problems. it will not take longer to understand, because she is young.*

Care leavers have adequate assistance and knowledge before leaving care.

*No. Life has taught us. there was no preparations for us.*

Care leavers have adequate assistance and knowledge after leaving care.

*Not for everything. There are things that we learned and knew when we suffered from material problems, such as the right of a divorced woman to get social security. But, there are things so far that are not clear.*

Care leavers face a positive future after leaving care.

*If they pay attention to education and employment, there will be a bright future. Without them, there is no future.*

*Which of the following are the most important for care leavers to be strong in before leaving care? After leaving care? Why?*

Financial support? Accommodation? Education? Training? Family and relationships? Health?

Personal rights? Life skills? Enough preparation for life after leaving care? Continued follow-ups after leaving care?

*She needs skills in family and relationships. Of course, before that, education must be number one, in order to be able to find a job that supports her and helps her to become independent.*

What should the future focus of the government of Saudi Arabia be for care leavers before leaving care? After leaving care? Why?

Financial support? Accommodation? Education? Training? Family and relationships? Health?

Personal rights? Life skills?

*They focus on ensuring that the girl has skills in life, knows her rights, and how to deal with her husband and people. Also, of course, they should support her with getting a job, so that she will not return to them again with bigger problems, because a job allows her to become independent and to depend on herself.*

## Appendix 4 - Durham University Ethics Form

### SECTION A: INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

<b>A.1. Name of researcher(s):</b>	<b>Eman Alhjaji</b>
<b>A.2. Email Address(es) of researcher(s):</b>	<b>eman.alhjaji@durham.ac.uk</b>
<b>A.3. Project Title:</b>	<b>Young People Leaving Care: What Needs To Be Done?</b>
<b>A.4. Project Funder (where appropriate):</b>	
<b>A.5. When do you intend to start data collection?</b>	
<b>A.6. When will the project finish?</b>	
<b>A.7. For students only:</b> Student ID: Degree, year and module: Supervisor:	<b>000736897</b> <b>Phd,2019</b> <b>Professor Roger Smith, and Dr Hannah King</b>
<b>A.8. Brief summary of the research questions:</b>  The research, conducted in Saudi Arabia and in Arabic, will use questions which will identify the challenges, needs and concerns of young people about to leave care at residential institutions and care leavers, as well as how to best address them, in Saudi Arabia. They will also identify whether the currently provided care is adequate in Saudi Arabia. The perspectives of both young people and care leavers, as well as care providers, are considered. Such objectives and research questions are more likely to determine not only the provided care, programs and policies, but also those which are missing ones as well as those that need to be suggested to benefit the Saudi care system.	
<b>A.9. What data collection method/s are you intending you use, and why?</b> Questionnaires, interviews and focus groups will be used in the course of the research, because through the use of mixed methods, it is both appropriate and suitable for the individuals and topic being researched as well as flexible enough to enable the gathering of data which can be analysed simultaneously, to best inform the study while avoiding the weaknesses of heavily relying on one method. These will be conducted on a virtual basis via phone and video calls and emails due to the ongoing risk presented by the coronavirus Covid-19 (please see risk assessment for further information).	

### SECTION B: ETHICS CHECKLIST

While all subsequent sections of this form should be completed for all studies, this checklist is designed to identify those areas where more detailed information should be given. Please note: It is better to identify an area where ethical or safety issues may arise and then explain how these will be dealt with, than to ignore potential risks to participants and/or the researchers.

	Yes	No
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a). Does the study involve participants who are <i>potentially vulnerable</i> <sup>i</sup> ?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b). Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge/consent (e.g. covert observation of people in non-public places)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c). Could the study cause harm, discomfort, stress, anxiety or any other negative consequence beyond the risks encountered in normal life?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Does the research address a <i>potentially sensitive topic</i> <sup>ii</sup> ?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e). Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f). Are steps being taken to protect anonymity and confidentiality?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g). Are there potential risks to the researchers' health, safety and wellbeing in conducting this research beyond those experienced in the researchers' everyday life?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### **SECTION C: METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION**

#### **C.1. Who will be your research participants?**

Abandoned young people in care who are about to leave care and care leavers, as well as the workers from the Ministry of Labor and Social Development and Ekha'a who are involved in looking after these individuals. In terms of the interviews, 30 would be the approximate sample number, depending on the availability of participants. In terms of the questionnaire, it will include **ALL** female young people at residential institutions within the selected criteria (aged 18+, born of unknown parents, and about to leave care) and **ALL** targeted workers (social workers, psychologists, and managers of care institutions) within the institutions (both public and non-governmental sites). For the questionnaires, 80 would be the approximate sample number for young people and care leavers, and 30 would be the approximate number for staff of residential care institutions and Ekha'a.

#### **C.2. How will you recruit your participants and how will they be selected or sampled?**

Research participants will be drawn from abandoned young people who have lived in residential care aged 17 years and over, as well as from care leavers who have left care within the last two years (beginning from the start of the study). Participants will be recruited through a letter requesting permission to conduct research sent to the Saudi embassy in the UK, which will then forward the letter to the researcher's university in Saudi Arabia, which will then send a letter to the Ministry of Labour and Social Development in Saudi Arabia. Once agreement to conduct research has been granted, a letter will be sent to each institution selected in the researcher's sampling procedures (public residential institutions: Daar Altarbia including Aldayfah Section (Riyadh); Daar Alhadanah (Riyadh); Daar Alhadana-Aldyafah Villas (Riyadh); Daar Altarbia (al-Ahsa'a); Daar Alhadana (Damam); Daar Altarbia (Jeddah); Daar alhadana (Jeddah); and non-governmental residential institutions: Fatat AlEhsaa (al-Ahsa'a); Daar Alzahra (Jeddah)), to allow for the collection of information in each institution. The manager of each institution will assist the researcher to select people who meet the target criteria (Plan A:

female abandoned young people who have lived in residential care from the age of 17 or who have left care within the last two years from the start of the study; and Plan B: abandoned young people who are 18 years or older and are still in residential care, as well as students in college or residents who are employed. For care leavers, the period will also be prolonged to include care leavers who have left care within the past five years and are still cared for by Ekha'a) for focus groups, interviews and questionnaires.

C.3. How will you explain the research to the participants and gain their consent? (If consent will not be obtained, please explain why.)

Any participants who will be involved in the research (abandoned young people or staff within residential institutions) will be informed by their residential institution's director and staff in charge to cooperate with me as a researcher who is conducting a study that is relevant to them. Participants will be met and contacted, and as part of this process, I will identify myself to potential participants, explain my credentials and approval, and then explain the importance and objectives of my research, its expected duration, and its applicability to creating positive outcomes for care leavers and abandoned young people in Saudi Arabia. In addition, before conducting interviews and focus groups, a time will be given to explain the main idea of the study and the sort of questions which will be covered. This will be written in a form and handed in before each interview, and will be posted on the cover sheet paper of the questionnaire.

C.4. What procedures are in place to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of your participants and their responses?

Their privacy will be respected by keeping their personal information (past and present, in terms of the identity of institutions, places, past experiences, and people) anonymous at all times, and they will understand that the data gathered will not be used in any way which will invade their personal privacy, or be subject to any biases on the part of the researcher. Any individual can choose to not participate, in terms of the questionnaire within 7 days of the research process beginning, provided that the researcher is notified, and in terms of the interview prior to the date of the interview or within one week after the interview, provided that the researcher is notified. In terms of any risks and possible challenges associated with their participation, these will be respected and addressed by the researcher at all times. This means that no information will be divulged, neither during the data gathering process, nor when analyzing the data. In addition, when needed and under the request of the participant, agreement will be made with the participant to discuss any relevant portion of their questionnaire, interview or focus group discussion which may be discussed in conversations with staff and people in charge, and will be delivered in an appropriate and safe way.

C.5. Are there any circumstances in which there would be a limit or exclusion to the anonymity/confidentiality offered to participants? If so, please explain further.

As mentioned in C.4, agreement will be made with the participant to discuss any relevant portion of their questionnaire, interview or focus group discussion which may be discussed in conversations with staff and people in charge, and will be delivered in an appropriate and safe way. In addition, if a risk exists for participants or anyone else involved in the research (such as outbursts or anxiety about the questions posed), the interview process will be stopped and effort will be taken to inform those individuals who are affected that such information needs to be discussed with relevant authorities (the manager of their institution or a supervisor from the Ministry of Labour and Social Development).

C.6. You must attach a **participant information sheet or summary explanation** that will be given to potential participants in your research.

Within this, have you explained (in a way that is accessible to the participants):	Yes	No
a). What the research is about?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

b). Why the participants have been chosen to take part and what they will be asked to do?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c). Any potential benefits and/or risks involved in their participation?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) What levels of anonymity and confidentiality will apply to the information that they share, and if there are any exceptions to these?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e). What the data will be used for?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f). How the data will be stored securely?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g). How they can withdraw from the project?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h). Who the researchers are, and how they can be contacted?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**SECTION D: POTENTIAL RISKS TO PARTICIPANTS**

You should think carefully about the risks that participating in your research poses to participants. Be aware that some subjects can be sensitive for participants even if they are not dealing explicitly with a 'sensitive' topic. Please complete this section as fully as possible and continue on additional pages if necessary.

What risks to participants may arise from participating in your research?	How likely is it that these risks will actually happen?	How much harm would be caused if this risk did occur?	What measures are you putting in place to ensure this does not happen (or that if it does, the impact on participants is reduced)?
1. The potential release of confidential personal information.	Very low	None because all information would be coded and inaccessible to anyone except the researcher.	The researcher has full and secure control over all gathered data; the data is coded so that only the researcher can access the information. For any data which needs to be published or mentioned, careful consideration will be taken to ensure that no names of places or people will be mentioned. That is to say, all participants and places are given in the form of pseudonyms when analysing the data. This will include materials made by the researcher (such as transcriptions, tapes and other notes) in a safe place.
2. The potential infection by the coronavirus Covid-19	Very low	According to the Ministry of Health in Saudi Arabia, the virus can cause a range of problems in people with compromised health or immune systems, including fever, cough, and shortness of breath, as well as leading to problems such as pneumonia (as per <a href="https://www.moh.gov.sa/en/awarenessplatform/VariousTopics/Pages/COIVD-">https://www.moh.gov.sa/en/awarenessplatform/VariousTopics/Pages/COIVD-</a>	I will ask that all participants work with me in a virtual capacity, such as via email or phone and video calls, to avoid physical contact. As the virus is spread through close



		19.aspx). To prevent infections, it is recommended that individuals regularly wash their hands with water and soap, cover their facial areas when sneezing and coughing, and avoid contacting anyone who displays such symptoms (as per <a href="https://www.moh.gov.sa/en/awarenessplatform/VariousTopics/Pages/COVID-19.aspx">https://www.moh.gov.sa/en/awarenessplatform/VariousTopics/Pages/COVID-19.aspx</a> ).	contact without protection, this will eliminate any possibility of infection.
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### **SECTION E: POTENTIAL RISKS TO RESEARCHERS**

You should think carefully about any hazards or risks to you as a researcher that will be present because of you conducting this research. Please complete this section as fully as possible and continue on additional pages if necessary. Please include an assessment of any health conditions, injuries, allergies or intolerances that may present a risk to you taking part in the proposed research activities (including any related medication used to control these), or any reasonable adjustments that may be required where a disability might otherwise prevent you from participating fully within the research.

1. Where will the research be conducted/what will be the research site?

Research will be conducted in public residential institutions in: Daar Altarbia including Aldayfah Section (Riyadh); Daar Alhadanah (Riyadh); Daar Alhadana-Aldyafah Villas (Riyadh); Daar Altarbia (al-Ahsa'a); Daar Alhadana (Damam); Daar Altarbia (Jeddah); and Daar alhadana (Jeddah). Research will also be conducted in non-governmental residential institutions in Fatat AlEhsaa (al-Ahsa'a) and Daar Alzahra (Jeddah).

What hazards or risks to you as a researcher may arise from conducting this research?	How likely is it that these risks will actually happen?	How much harm would be caused if this risk did happen?	What measures are being put in place to ensure this does not happen (or that if it does, the impact on researchers is reduced)?
1. Outburst from individual being asked	Very low	Limited harm due to data being gathered in secure settings.	Questions and interviews will be formulated and asked in an

questions or interviewed			empathetic and professional manner.
2. The likelihood of being asked to conduct interviews at participants' places (e.g. home, work, public places....)	Very low	Limited harm due to working with the coordinator of the Ekha'a branch in terms of the suitability of the arranged interview site and time.	Interviews will be arranged in coordination with the Ekha'a branch's coordinator.
3. Some might think that I have the authority to represent the Ministry of Labor and Social Development.	Very low	Limited harm due to foreknowledge by all concerned of my credentials.	All individuals involved in the research will know that I am a researcher and not working at or for the Ministry, and I will assure them that I am looking to convey their voices and messages to the people in charge at the Ministry, not to make decisions.
4. Participants get worried or anxious when asked questions during the interview	Low	Limited harm due to interview being conducted in a safe and comfortable environment (eg. residential institution, home, etc.).	Questions and interviews will be formulated and asked in an empathetic and professional manner. The questions during the interview will be explained in as much detail as possible when any anxiety or nervousness is expressed by a participant, to put them at ease to answer the question. If the question is seen as too difficult to answer by the participant, or if they desire the interview to end, then it will be made clear to the participant that the question does not need to be answered and the

			interview will be concluded, respectively.
5. The potential infection by the coronavirus Covid-19	Very low	According to the Ministry of Health in Saudi Arabia, the virus can cause a range of problems in people with compromised health or immune systems, including fever, cough, and shortness of breath, as well as leading to problems such as pneumonia (as per <a href="https://www.moh.gov.sa/en/awarenessplatform/VariousTopics/Pages/COIVD-19.aspx">https://www.moh.gov.sa/en/awarenessplatform/VariousTopics/Pages/COIVD-19.aspx</a> ). To prevent infections, it is recommended that individuals regularly wash their hands with water and soap, cover their facial areas when sneezing and coughing, and avoid contacting anyone who displays such symptoms (as per <a href="https://www.moh.gov.sa/en/awarenessplatform/VariousTopics/Pages/COIVD-19.aspx">https://www.moh.gov.sa/en/awarenessplatform/VariousTopics/Pages/COIVD-19.aspx</a> ).	I will work with all participants in a virtual capacity, such as via email or phone and video calls, to avoid physical contact. As the virus is spread through close contact without protection, this will eliminate any possibility of infection to myself.

## **SECTION F: OTHER APPROVALS**

	Yes, document attached	Yes, documents to follow	No
a). Does the research require ethical approval from the NHS or a Social Services Authority? If so, please attach a copy of the draft form that you intend to submit, together with any accompanying documentation.	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b). Might the proposed research meet the definition of a <i>clinical trial</i> <sup>iii</sup> ? (If yes, a copy of this form must be sent to the University's Insurance Officer, Tel. 0191 334 9266, for approval, and evidence of approval must be attached before the project can start).	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c). Does the research involve working data, staff or offenders connected with the National Offender Management Service? If so, please see the guidance at <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-offender-management-service/about/research">https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-offender-management-service/about/research</a> and submit a copy of your proposed application to the NOMS Integrated Application System with your form.	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d). Does the project involve activities that may take place within Colleges of Durham University, including recruitment of participants via associated networks (e.g. social media)? (If so, approval from the Head of the College/s concerned will be required after departmental approval has been granted – see guidance notes for further details)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e). Will you be required to undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service (criminal records) check to undertake the research?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f) I confirm that travel approval has or will be sought via the online approval system at <a href="http://apps.dur.ac.uk/travel.forms">http://apps.dur.ac.uk/travel.forms</a> for all trips during this research which meet the following criteria:  For Students travelling away from the University, this applies where travel is not to their home and involves an overnight stay.  For Staff travelling away from the University, this applies only when travelling to an overseas destination.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>		No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## **SECTION G: SUBMISSION CHECKLIST AND SIGNATURES**

When submitting your ethics application, you should also submit supporting documentation as follows:

Supporting Documents	Included (tick)
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Fully Completed Research Ethics and Risk Assessment Form	✓
Interview Guide (if using interviews)	✓
Focus Group Topic Guide (if using focus groups)	✓
Questionnaire (if using questionnaires)	✓
Participant Information Sheet or Equivalent	X Oral or Written
Consent Form (if appropriate)	x
<i>For students only:</i> Written/email confirmation from all agencies involved that they agree to participate, also stating whether they require a DBS check. If confirmation is not yet available, please attach a copy of the letter that you propose to send to request this; proof of organisational consent must be forwarded to your Programme Secretary before any data is collected.	✓

Please indicate the reason if any documents cannot be included at this stage:

(Please note that any ethics applications submitted without sufficient supporting documentation will not be able to be assessed.)

### **Signatures**

Researcher's Signature:

Date:

Supervisor's Signature (PGR students only):

Date:

**Please keep a copy of your approved ethics application for your records.**

**If you decide to change your research significantly after receiving ethics approval, you must submit a revised ethics form along with updated supporting documentation before you can implement these changes.**

**PART F: OUTCOME OF THE APPLICATION**

<u>Reject</u> The application is incomplete and/or cannot be assessed in its current format. Please complete the application fully.	
<u>Revise and Resubmit</u> The application cannot be approved in its current format. Please revise the application as per the comments below. Please complete the application fully.	
<u>Approved, with Set Date for Review</u> The application is approved and you may begin data collection.  A date for further review of the project as it develops has been set to take place on: _____  The anticipated nominated reviewer will be: _____	
<u>Approved</u> The application is approved and you may begin data collection.	

Comments:

I approve this Ethics and Risk Assessment application and I have no conflict of interest to declare.

First Reviewer's Signature:

First Reviewer's Name:

First Reviewer's Role:

Date:

If applicable:

I approve this Ethics and Risk Assessment application and I have no conflict of interest to declare.

Second Reviewer's Signature:

Second Reviewer's Name:

Second Reviewer's Role:

Date:

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<sup>i</sup> **Potentially vulnerable groups** can include, for example: children and young people; those with a learning disability or cognitive impairment; those unable to give informed consent or individuals in a dependent or unequal relationship.

<sup>ii</sup> **Sensitive topics** can include participants' sexual behaviour, their illegal or political behaviour, their experience of violence, their abuse or exploitation, their mental health, or their gender or ethnic status. Elite Interviews may also fall into this category.

<sup>iii</sup> **Clinical Trials:** Research may meet the definition of a clinical trial if it involves studying the effects on participants of drugs, devices, diets, behavioural strategies such as exercise or counselling, or other 'clinical' procedures.