

TECHNICAL REPORT

WOMEN AND VIOLENT RADICALIZATION IN JORDAN



اللجنة الوطنية الأردنية لشؤون المرأة
The Jordanian National Commission for Women

 **UN
WOMEN** 

TECHNICAL REPORT

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UN WOMEN AND THE JORDANIAN NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR WOMEN

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INTRODUCTION

Like many countries around the world, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan faces risks from “violent radicalization,” often defined as a process through which a person comes to embrace the use of violence to serve an ideology, religion or political goal. Violent radicalization may lead to violent extremism and terrorism, therefore threatening the rights and well-being of citizens. The ways in which violent extremism affects women—both as victims and participants—are rarely discussed and remain underexplored. As Jordan moves toward taking new efforts to combat violent extremism within its borders, it is necessary for all involved to have a deeper understanding of how women in Jordan play roles in preventing or promoting such radicalization.

This study was commissioned by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) as part of an effort to support the Jordanian National Commission for Women and the Government of Jordan in developing a National Action Plan for implementing UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 (2000). The research was conducted by Al-Hayat Center for Civil Society Development and Search for Common Ground in February and March 2016.

UNSCR 1325, passed on 31 October 2000, called for the United Nations (UN) and Member States to promote women’s inclusion in decision-making processes about peace and security and to recognize the ways in which conflict affects women. Recently, counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism have come to be seen as linked to issues of women, peace and security,¹ as articulated through UNSCR 2122 (2013) and UNSCR 2422 (2015). Resolution 2122 reiterated the United Nation’s commitment to devoting resources and attention to the women, peace and security agenda while calling for increased women’s leadership and representation within these efforts. Resolution 2422 called for countries to continue integrating their programmes addressing women, peace and security, counter-terrorism, and countering violent extremism, while ensuring that gender concerns were mainstreamed throughout.² Jordan’s efforts to create a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and its subsequent

resolutions, therefore, should have a critical focus on issues related to terrorism and violent extremism.

This study aims to understand how women and men define “radicalization” and “violent extremism” in Jordanian communities and examine their attitudes and behavior regarding the phenomena. The focus was on examining radicalization among Jordanians and not among refugee communities. The study aims to evaluate whether or not there is a risk of radicalization for women and girls in Jordan and whether or not there are different “push and pull” factors for women and girls versus men and boys. The research also focused on understanding whether or not women’s places in their communities give them a unique position to observe or take part in either the radicalization or deradicalization process. It also aims to evaluate whether or not ongoing or planned deradicalization efforts by governmental and non-governmental organizations targeting Jordan are gender sensitive.

To achieve those research objectives, the research conducted for this study attempted to answer four research questions:

1. Do women and men believe there is a problem with “radicalization” in their communities? What are the different ways that someone could be thought of as radicalized (other than going to join an armed jihadist group)? Do women and men view radicalization differently? How do they define radicalization?
2. Are any women and girls in Jordan at risk of or going through a process of radicalization? If so, what

¹ GNRD News 2014.

² UNSCR Resolution 2122 (2013), S/RES/2122; UNSCR Resolution 2422 (2015), S/RES/2422.

is the existing or potential impact on their everyday lives? In what ways is the process of radicalization (and the push and pull factors) different for women and girls versus men and boys? In what ways are they the same (taking into account voluntary and coercive measures)? Is there any evidence of men and women being trafficked out of Jordan as a result of radicalization efforts (e.g., to go into Syria)?

3. Do women occupy positions in their communities that enable them to get a closer look at the radicalization and deradicalization processes for men or women?
 - What roles do women play, or could they play, in the radicalization process (of women or men) in Jordan?
 - What roles do women play in the deradicalization process in Jordan? Is there potential for women to intervene?
4. Are current efforts at deradicalization in Jordan properly taking gendered concerns into account? If so, in what manner? If not, how could we encourage that? How could we encourage and increase the role of women in the deradicalization process?

To address these questions, the research utilized data obtained through interviews and a focus group discussion. The findings include quantitative data, qualitative data, relevant anecdotes and analysis to help understand the respondents' insights. Based on the findings, this study presents clear policy and programmatic recommendations to ensure gender-sensitive analysis and programming related to radicalization in Jordan that would benefit the country's creation of a National Action Plan.

Methodology

The study incorporated three main tools: a literature review, a series of 47 semi-structured interviews and a focus group discussion.

The literature review involved a wide-ranging review of research that had been conducted on issues related to women and violent radicalization around the world. As there is no unified field of research on women and radicalization, the literature review covered writings on: women, peace, and security; terrorism; and

preventing and countering violent extremism. The literature review provided the backdrop to frame the field research conducted in Jordan.

The semi-structured interviews used open-ended questions in order to gather information about the current situation in Jordan from different target groups at the grassroots and national level, as well as from government figures and international experts. For each interview, the researchers engaged in a conversation with the interviewee, using a set of guiding questions to direct the discussion. Through the semi-structured interviews, the researchers were able to hear from a diverse set of stakeholders, including many whose voices might otherwise not be heard on this issue. These interviews were held in private and safe settings, so that interviewees could speak safely and candidly about sensitive issues.³

To summarize the research findings, responses were categorized into two groups of interviewees that were not mutually exclusive. They are defined as follows so that the terms are clear throughout the research findings:

- The term “respondents” includes 39 respondents: women in rural and urban areas (6), men in rural and urban areas (6), women activists in Amman and at the grassroots level (10), women in leadership positions (3), women from religious minorities (3), a relative of one victim who joined a radical group (1), and university students (10).
- The term “parents” includes 28 respondents: women in rural and urban areas (6), men in rural and urban areas (6), women activists in Amman and at the grassroots level (10), women in leadership positions (3), and women from religious minorities (3).

When relevant, responses were also sometimes categorized in terms of the respondents' position, such as university student, expert or government official.

The focus group discussion was held with representatives from 11 local civil society organizations (CSOs) that work on issues relevant to deradicalization in Jordan. The researchers moderated the session, asking

3 All respondents were Jordanian citizens, with the exception of two of the five experts consulted

guiding questions to lead the discussion while providing space for the participants to discuss among themselves and share ideas. A separate questionnaire was developed for this group.

Challenges and limitations

This study was limited by a tight timeline. Moreover, while the researchers initially intended to meet with victims of violent radicalization or the families of victims, efforts to do so proved more difficult than anticipated and yielded only one respondent. While the researchers identified multiple potential respondents through their local networks, almost all of them refused to be interviewed for the purpose of this research, as a result of fears and security restrictions. Moreover, due to the short timeline, the researchers were unable to hold a second focus group with women *Imams*, or *Wa'edaat*.

While the research from this study provides important insights and helpful anecdotes on the lives of women and men in Jordan and their relationship to the phenomenon of radicalization, there is a need for more grassroots research of this type to add texture and depth to the knowledge on the topic. Regarding the quantitative data, while the overall number of respondents was large enough to indicate qualitative trends, in most cases it was not large enough to yield statistically significant insights about the broader population that could be generalized. This report however, expresses some of its results as percentages only when the number of respondents is more than 20; this is done for ease of analysis of the fieldwork presented here.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Key findings

Radicalization in Jordan

- All respondents interviewed reported that radicalization is an important issue worth paying attention to in Jordan, and most believe that it is growing and expanding in Jordanian communities and universities. Respondents said they were witnessing an increase in inter- and intra-religious conflicts that they linked to radicalization in Jordan. These tensions should be actively addressed.
- 62 per cent of respondents believe that individuals could radicalize without necessarily turning violent.
- 85 per cent of respondents (without a notable gender difference) believe that radicalization is occurring in Jordanian communities, and 74 per cent of the respondents believe it is occurring in universities. In particular, the areas of Zarqa, Ma'an, Salt, Irbid and Rusaifa were noted as areas prone to increased radicalization; 26 per cent of the respondents connected this with religion in general, and 13 per cent directly connected radicalization with the so-called Islamic State (ISIL) or other terrorist groups. While the majority of respondents supported the opinion that there is radicalization occurring in Jordanian communities and universities, only 38 per cent indicated that women in particular are adopting radical viewpoints and ideologies.
- 82 per cent of respondents believe that social and economic pressures encourage men and women in Jordan to join radical groups or engage in radical ideologies.
- The Jordanian tribal system proved to be a divisive issue among interviewees in terms of its relationship with radicalization. Some interviewees perceive it to be a protective shell against external dangers and a wall that keeps women from being exposed to radical ideologies, while others view it as one of the factors driving people toward radicalization.

Gender analysis of perceptions of risks from radicalization

- 71 per cent of respondents believe that women are more at risk from radicalization in their communities than men, noting that increased radicalization could exacerbate existing limitations on women's freedom and access to their rights, including a heightened sense of responsibility (and blame) for their children's actions.
- While male respondents believe that the key threats posed by radicalization concern their aspirations and futures—personal freedoms, the future of their families, and the quality of work opportunities—women's fears about the impact of radicalization relate directly to their daily activities—their day-to-day freedom of movement outside the home, their ability to find a job or an educational opportunity, increased violence within the home, and decreased opportunities for engagement and volunteering with their communities.

Gender analysis of indicators and factors of radicalization

- Only 13 per cent of respondents believe that women face more pressure to radicalize compared to men, while 31 per cent believe men face more pressures, and 53 per cent believe these pressures impact women and men equally.
- While both women and men view intolerant statements as a clear indication of radicalization among Jordanians, women respondents—and especially women university students—were much more likely to view conservative dress as an indicator. Women living outside urban centres also highlighted the marginalization of women's role in society as an indicator of radicalization. Many feel that indicators of women's radicalization are related to adopting more conservative religious practices and behaviors.

- Respondents cited several distinct factors as potential triggers for women and girls' radicalization, including economic and financial pressures (69 per cent), followed by social and family problems, which included domestic abuse and the prevention of women accessing their rights, such as inheritance (34 per cent).

Leveraging trusted messengers

- Respondents indicated that Jordanians discuss issues of radicalization in different settings. They believe that men often play a more active role in these discussions than women. Most respondents said that fathers encouraged discussions on radicalization in the family, and such discussions involved mostly the male family members.
- Trust of religious leaders was mixed: 46 per cent of respondents said they would refer to a religious leader if in doubt about radical religious ideas, while 21 per cent (all of them women) said they would not trust a religious leader in such cases.
- Civil society actors (both women and men) received many questions from young people or people in their community related to radicalization and extremist practices in other countries.
- Parents expressed skepticism as to the ability of the state security institutions to help them respond to the risk of their children becoming radicalized; 7 per cent said they would report their child's suspicious behavior to state security as their first choice—which is not a surprising finding given the potential criminal implications of violent radicalization.
- While respondents identified traditional and social media as one aspect driving the radicalization process in Jordan, many (31 per cent) also saw it as a tool that could be used to test the validity of controversial religious ideas.
- Respondents noted that those who are radicalized may be isolated from the broader community and information sources, either collectively (e.g., children of radical families being home schooled together, separated from their peers and outside of the official education system) or individually (e.g., trapped in a "spiral of silence" by which individuals who feel that they hold dissenting or minority views may

feel pressured to keep silent about their opinions, further marginalizing them and driving them to further withdraw from their peers).

Perceptions of mothers and radicalization

- 79 per cent of parent respondents and 50 per cent of student respondents believe that mothers have a great impact on their children's ideologies.
- 82 per cent of respondents indicated that child rearing has a direct impact on children's ideologies, stating that some mothers' approaches are producing radicalization in their children. Meanwhile, a small portion of mothers interviewed (9 per cent) reported that they felt in some instances that they have contributed to their children having radicalized ideas, such as their belief that women should only hold traditional roles (wife, mother) and that they should not speak with men or work outside the home.
- Women are seen as the primary pillars and influencers of their families; thus, they are thought to be targeted by radicalized groups to impact their ideology as a first step to influencing the entire family.

Deradicalization programmes

- All respondents and CSOs agreed that women have an important role to play in the deradicalization process. However, none of the respondents who knew about deradicalization activities were aware of any gender-specific focus of these current activities—indicating a clear gap.
- In general, respondents showed interest in deradicalization programmes, regardless of whether or not they were organized by the government, local civil society or international organizations: 79 per cent of respondents said they would participate in governmental or local deradicalization efforts, and 95 per cent said they would join deradicalization programmes led by international organizations, as long as such programmes are legal and conducted in a transparent manner, do not challenge religious norms, and focus on more than just research and interviews.

- CSO respondents stressed the importance of having more efforts by the government, especially the Ministry of Religious Endowments, to build the capacity of its *Imams* and *Wa'edaat* (women preachers) to frame positive narratives and having a national strategy to counter radicalization.
- Respondents called for more of a focus on rehabilitation and social programmes for those who have joined violently radical groups and wish to integrate back into society.
- The vast majority of respondents (95 per cent) perceive the importance of women's involvement in deradicalization efforts as stemming from their traditional social roles as mothers and their position within their families. This was echoed by additional explanations about the importance of women's roles in prevention or deradicalization efforts; 41 per cent directly mentioned that mothers are more effective at influencing their children, and 23 per cent stated that mothers are more closely bonded to their children. The overwhelming focus of respondents was on women's role as mothers, which is an essential role and opportunity to influence children, however it reaffirms traditional stereotypes and neglects the broader community and societal positions women hold that can help to prevent radicalization. A woman's role outside of the family was mentioned by 21 per cent of respondents who stated that women are often socially well-connected and well-educated

Recommendations

The key findings of this research lead to a number of recommendations for scholars, CSOs, international organizations, and the Jordanian government to address violent radicalization in Jordan in a gender-sensitive manner.

Cross-cutting recommendations:

- **Increase women's leadership:** Empowering women as leaders—and in particular, recognizing women as active agents in combatting radicalization—is critical for decreasing the risks that violent radicalization poses to both women and society. Respondents noted the need to uphold positive examples of women as role models, support moderate female religious leaders, and change the harmful stereotypes of women prevalent in society. Those working to counter radicalization should recognize and address the role that women have to play, not only as mothers and community members, but also as professionals, decision-makers and influencers of public opinion.
- **Support male champions:** Deradicalization efforts will prove more effective if women and men are able to work together as equal partners. Such efforts should include meaningful partnerships with men, increasing their awareness of the issue of radicalization of both men and women. Moreover, women's increased leadership in this field can be made more possible by enlisting male support. This would include their acceptance and promotion of women's professional roles in the community as well as participation in efforts to prevent violent radicalization, in which women participate or take leading roles.

Policy recommendations:

- **Engage CSOs and the government in partnerships for local deradicalization:** Jordan should establish a national strategy to counter violent extremism in the country. It is essential that such a strategy be developed through a participatory approach that gathers a diverse range of actors, including youth (male and female), women activists, women community members, CSOs, religious leaders, tribal leaders and government officials working on the local level (i.e., mayors, governors and heads of governmental directorates). It should build on the research already conducted in Jordan on violent extremism and radicalization.
- **Address the gendered aspects of radicalization and its prevention in the National Action Plan on 1325 and its subsequent resolutions,** as is currently under draft by the Government of Jordan.
- **Provide safe channels to report radicalization:** Create a safe channel between citizens and security to report risks and challenges citizens face from their families or community members. Use these channels to provide resources to citizens to help them mitigate these risks and prevent harm to their communities. Softer approaches (alternatives to detention) would help encourage such reporting.

- **Amplify credible voices against violent radicalization:** Respondents and CSOs noted the importance of increasing conversation and dialogues about the issue of radicalization in Jordanian society. Programmes should amplify existing credible voices and moderate influencers who are able to spread alternative narratives using television shows, social media and in-person events. Initiatives can also present real stories of people who faced the risk of radicalization and describe their disillusionment with violent radicalization, as those individuals can share powerful examples and have credibility among those who may be considering radical ideologies. This approach can also enhance community awareness about the progression of radicalization and possible signs of radicalization. Currently, many of the individuals writing and speaking about women's experiences with radicalization are from institutions in Europe and North America. While important, they must be supplemented with a multiplicity of women's voices and experiences on these issues.

Programmatic recommendations:

Deradicalization and prevention programmes should cover all governorates in Jordan, especially rural areas and refugee camps. Furthermore, deradicalization programming must not overlook women as *both* possible champions to prevent radicalization and as at-risk for radicalization. Priority areas of programming identified by this research include the following:

- **Offer rehabilitation and victim's family education:** Boost support for rehabilitation and social programmes for those who have joined violent radical groups and wish to integrate back into society. Make sure that these programmes are well known to people who might need them or want to refer others to them—especially mothers.
- **Build the capacity of formal and informal *Imams* and *Wa'edaat* (female *Imams*),** as they are valuable resources. Understand that it is critical for these figures to maintain the trust of their communities and for them not to simply be (or be perceived to be) co-opted. Support initiatives to build their capacities in ways that strengthen their engagement with their communities. Consider opportunities for networking between *Wa'edaat* and women activists.
- **Enhance schools' curricula and teachers' education:** Education was a frequent area identified by respondents that could be used to prevent radicalization in Jordan and elevate women's roles in deradicalization. Improving education, including the curriculum content, could minimize the risk of radicalization to women. Some of the CSOs that work in schools stated that sometimes while working on raising the awareness of the students, they faced a challenge with the radical ideas of some teachers, which made achieving their objectives more difficult; respondents suggested targeting teachers via capacity-building and awareness programmes.
- **Target women via awareness-raising initiatives:** Increase awareness of the risk of radicalization through a variety of platforms and activities, such as social media, television shows and community events. These programmes could specifically target women and mothers—particularly those with fewer opportunities for engaging with the broader community, such as housewives. Awareness materials and activities should be made available in frequented locations, such as popular shopping centres, mosques, churches and schools. These activities should encourage parents to monitor their children's behavior and attitudes, taking care to become aware of any indications of radicalization so that parents can intervene. Most importantly, interventions should include structured programmes for parents to encourage their children to be open to other cultures and religions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Definition of radicalization and violent extremism

The term “radicalization” has no commonly agreed-upon definition. In literature on the subject, radicalization is often used to mean evolution toward violent extremism and terrorism⁴ and often specifically connotes “Islamist terrorism.”⁵ However, some use the word “radical” to describe those whose views differ from existing social norms⁶ and seek to change their societies in accordance with their personal ideologies.⁷ There is growing consensus that efforts to counter radicalization should focus on preventing people from harming the security and welfare of those around them, while protecting people’s legitimate rights to hold their own views and beliefs.⁸

This report focuses specifically on violent radicalization, which it defines as the escalating process by which a person begins accepting or promoting violence to change the ideological norms of their surrounding society.

This violence can materialize either as physical violence (such as injuring or killing) or cultural or structural violence (i.e., implementing systems that deny people their rights and the opportunity to prosper).⁹ In determining what types of activities may constitute structural or cultural violence, existing frameworks and norms for protecting human rights can serve as guidelines that already have significant recognition and legitimacy. This definition of violent radicalization, therefore, covers all situations where people seek to limit others’ abilities to live and thrive.

1.2 Women’s roles in radicalization: Beyond victimhood

Much of the early literature on women and violent radicalization focused on the ways in which women suffered at the hands of radical groups, either as victims or unwilling participants in their violent actions. However, viewing women as victims betrays a serious underlying bias that men are responsible for their actions while women are either unwilling participants or victims.¹⁰ More recently, there has been a shift to recognize that women can play active roles¹¹ both in peacebuilding—as highlighted by UNSCR 1325 (2000), UNSCR 2122 (2013), and UNSCR 2422 (2015)—and violence.¹² It is now commonly recognized that women can play many roles with respect to violent radicalization with many typologies such as “sympathizer, mobilizer, preventer, perpetrator”¹³ or “participants, enablers, and preventers.”¹⁴ The breadth and diversity of these typologies demonstrate that women play many different roles supporting or countering violent radicalization.

1.3 Women as participants in violent radicalization

The literature on radicalization, violent extremism, and terrorism has suggested dozens of reasons why women become radicalized toward participating in violence. Much of this literature focuses on men and/or does not present an explicitly gendered view, but it suggests that, “most of the same factors that prompt men to become terrorists drive women in the same way.”¹⁵ Until recently, two of the most widely discussed “root causes” were poverty and religiosity. However

4 Modirzadeh 2016.

5 Nasser-Eddine et. al. 2011, p. 15.

6 Nasser-Edine et. al. 2011, p. 13. See also Hannah et. al., p. 2, quoted in Nasser-Edine et. al. 2011, p. 13.

7 Noor and Hussain 2009, p. 1.

8 OSCE 2013, p. 1.; Modirzadeh 2016; Noor and Hussain 2009, p. 1; Khouri 2015; Coomaraswamy 2015, p. 222.

9 Galtung 1969, p. 168-172; Corlazzoli and White 2013, p. 11.

10 Nagarajan 2016.

11 Couture 2014, p. 1, 10.

12 Shepherd 2011, cited in: Pratt and Richter-Devroe 2011, p. 494; D’estaing 2015, p. 3.

13 Bloom 2011, cited in: Fink et al. 2013, p. 4.

14 Hearne 2009.

15 Fink et. al. 2013, p. 3.

TABLE 1**Observed factors leading to potential radicalization**

Political	Religious
• Perceived wrongs committed against one's group • State oppression • Perceived humiliation or oppression by an outside country or force • A desire for recognition of an identity group • Strong feelings of solidarity with other struggles	• A desire to spread one's religion to create a supranational community, or to bring about an apocalyptic event • A desire to purify and renew a religious society • Anger that the government fails to respect the religion • Animosity toward other religious groups
Socioeconomic	Personal and identity
• Poverty and lack of education • Perceptions of inequality, either within or between countries • Need for social services from extremist groups • Lack of opportunities and hopelessness for the future	• Searching for a sense of personal purpose and fulfillment, a sense of adventure, a sense of respect, or a feeling of belonging • A desire to find protection from domestic abuse • Response to gendered motivations, such as a desire to fulfill a vision of masculinity

research has challenged these ideas by pointing to numerous examples of radicalization where the people were neither poor¹⁶ nor especially religious.¹⁷ After broader research exploring ideological, socioeconomic and personal reasons, researchers have agreed that there is no one set of root causes that can explain why men or women would become violently radicalized.¹⁸ However, a number of observed factors have been identified, and may be relevant causes depending on the context. Some of observed factors are outlined in Table 1.

In addition to these general causes, there are also factors that are thought to apply specifically to women. Hypotheses are noted in Box 1.

In cases where women adopt violently radical ideologies but choose not to engage in violent activity, they may also work to encourage people to join violent activities. Often in their roles as mothers and wives, women can have “ripple effects” in their families as they motivate others to violence¹⁹ or encourage young men toward radicalization by leveraging popular conceptions of masculinity or the value

of engaging in violent struggle. By understanding violent radicalization more broadly than simply directly participating in hostilities, practitioners and researchers can more appropriately develop efforts and programmes to prevent and counter violent extremism.

1.4 Women as victims

Women suffer from many forms of violent radicalization and violent extremism. They are frequently the targets of physical violence, sexual violence, structural and cultural violence, and the destruction of homes and families. As violent extremist groups come to influence or control territory, they often wage “targeted, strategic attacks on women’s rights and freedoms, including the ability to move freely, engage in public life, access education and employment, enjoy health services, express themselves without the fear of repercussion and live as equal citizens.”²⁰

It is also the case that, at times, women are brought into violently radical groups against their wills.²¹ While this can happen for both men and women, women are often more vulnerable than men to coercive methods

16 Nasser-Eddine et. al. 2011, p. 29.

17 Bielefeldt 2014, p. 5; see also: Mercy Corps 2015, p. 5.

18 Choudhury 2007, p. 5; see also: Beyler, quoted in Noor and Hussain 2009, p. 5; Nasser-Edine et. al. 2011, p. 22-31.

19 Zeiger 2015, p. 2.

20 Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates to The United Nations and the Georgetown University Institute for Women, Peace, and Security (Undated), p. 3.

21 Noor and Hussain 2009, p. 6.

BOX 1

Potential factors leading to radicalization of women

- A search for opportunities to participate socially and politically²²
- Gender-based inequality and discrimination in society, leading women to seek other ways to assert their identity and independence or, alternatively, making women more susceptible to becoming passive victims of recruitment²³
- Domestic abuse and violence against women, leading women to seek means of escape²⁴
- Lack of educational opportunities for women, which may make them more vulnerable to recruitment efforts²⁵
- Essential social services and protection offered by radical groups in unstable areas where women have unmet needs for those services²⁶
- A desire for companionship or romance, or a desire to have control over one's familial and relationship situation²⁷
- Revenge for the death or arrest of family or community members and a desire to avenge that loss²⁸
- Being single, divorced or widowed and lacking the social standing and protection that comes with having a male spouse or guardian²⁹
- Having close ties or relationships with radicalized men³⁰
- Women's suffering under poor economic conditions, which may often be more acute than that of men³¹

22 OSCE 2013, p. 3.

23 Badran 2006.

24 OSCE 2013, p. 3.

25 Ibid.

26 ICAN 2014, p. 3.

27 Saltman and Smith 2015.

28 Nagarajan 2016; Noor and Hussain 2009, p. 4.

29 Badran 2006, p. 7.

30 Ibid.

31 Jennifer Klot points out that the women, peace and security agenda includes an important focus on the effect of macroeconomic situations on women's security. See: Klot 2007. Sarah Ladbury, quoted in Nagarajan, identifies this as an important area of research for future efforts.

such as being “drugged, raped, physically coerced, and emotionally and socially blackmailed.”³² Moreover, a woman's autonomy in marital relationships may be constrained in ways that coerces her to “follow” her husband or other male relatives' direction. Women can also be victimized once inside radical groups, where they often find that men are in charge and do not see them as equals.³³

A number of organized efforts at the grassroots level seek to provide care and services to women who have been victimized by violent radicalization, yet these efforts are often overlooked as a crucial strategy to fighting radicalization itself.³⁴ There has also been a growing discourse, dominated by women from the global South (whose voices have largely been under-represented in the general discourse on countering violent extremism), that points out that the fight against violent radicalism, particularly counter-terrorism measures, have harmed women by destroying their lives and societies or by turning radical groups against them.³⁵

1.5 Women against violent radicalization

Research on women countering radicalization has primarily focused on the roles that women can play or are already playing against radicalization,³⁶ particularly in their roles as mothers and wives.³⁷ In these family and community roles, women are uniquely placed to see “early warning signals” of violent radicalization³⁸ and they often play strong persuasive roles in the lives of their family and community members that allow them to de-escalate radicalization processes.³⁹ Some scholars have posited that women tend to resist violent radicalization because they tend to do more long-term thinking and planning for the future of

32 Fink et. al. 2013, p. 3, 6; GNRD News 2014.

33 Badran 2006, p. 4; Noor and Hussain 2006, p. 5.

34 Edwar 2015, p. 6-7. Zainab Bangura, former UNSG Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict, quoted in Strasser 2015.

35 CHRCJ 2011, p. 23-26.

36 D'estaing 2015.

37 Couture 2014, p. 11-12.

38 O'Reilly 2015, p. 3-4.

39 Choudhury 2007; Zeiger 2015, p. 2; Fink et. al. 2013, p. 4.

their families⁴⁰ and because they themselves are often victims of radical violence.⁴¹ There is also evidence from the larger field of peacebuilding that women tend to be perceived as less threatening, more honest and less corrupt.⁴² Research from the Syrian conflict found that women who were respected in their communities made effective peacebuilders.⁴³

The heavy focus on the potential that women have through their roles as family members has been criticized for ignoring what women do in more formal roles and contributes to their marginalization.⁴⁴ Women have been influential actors in combating violent radicalization in decision-making and leadership roles, such as in the government, the police and other official institutions.⁴⁵ In addition, countless women have been working on a number of fronts to assert their right to interpret Islam and to redefine local interpretations of Islam that will enhance their empowerment in society.⁴⁶ Both of these areas remain underexplored in the literature on women and radicalization.

Cases where women play a role in organized efforts against radicalization reveal the diversity of grassroots and government-sponsored efforts that women are taking across the global South. Well-documented examples include a women's organization in Pakistan that helped families intervene when their children show signs of radicalization;⁴⁷ a government programme in Bangladesh where the government targeted poverty reduction efforts;⁴⁸ and a programme in Morocco where the government trained local women religious leaders, *mourcidates*, on how to help turn people away from radical paths.⁴⁹ Other women religious leaders, such as the *ustanis* of India and the Sufi storytellers of Niger, can also serve as examples.⁵⁰ It is clear that there are opportunities for international partners to cooperate with national, local, informal and formal partners in supporting efforts

against radicalization,⁵¹ but the success of these efforts will require that women at the grassroots level take the lead.⁵² Publications by the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE)⁵³ and the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) offer suggestions for organized efforts that are rooted in the real experiences of women's groups across the world. A sampling of these is included in Box 2.⁵⁴

BOX 2

Opportunities for organized efforts by women against radicalization

- A search for opportunities to participate socially and politically¹
- Raise awareness about religious interpretations and beliefs and open space for further discussion about Islam and faith.
- Work with the media to promote respectful and pluralistic freedom of speech and religion.
- Move beyond a sole focus on anti-terrorism and military solutions and incorporate development goals and initiatives into deradicalization and counter-terrorism efforts.
- Integrate peace education, including civics, and the importance of human rights and democratic laws into school curricula.
- Engage indigenous women's movements to develop new strategies to support their efforts in promoting women's rights.

1.6 Women and radicalization toward structural and cultural violence

As defined above, structural and cultural violence is how institutions, structures, values and perceptions can disadvantage one group and/or impair their ability to prosper. Structural and cultural violence has been almost entirely neglected by the literature on radicalization. This is, in part, due to the fact that

40 See discussion in Couture 2014, p. 4.

41 Fink et. al. 2013, p. 4.

42 O'Reilly 2015, p. 5-9.

43 Ghazzawi et al. 2015, p. 26.

44 Huckerby 2015; Hudson 2013; Dufour-Genneson and Alam 2014, p. 2.

45 O'Reilly 2015, p. 4; ICAN 2014, p. 9.

46 ICAN 2014, p. 9. Badran 2006, p. 4.

47 ICAN 2014, p. 10-11.

48 Couture 2014, p. 9.

49 Ibid, p. 5.

50 Badran 2006, p. 9-10.

51 OSCE 2015, p. 3; OSCE 2013, p. 8.

52 OSCE 2013, p. 8.

53 OSCE 2015.

54 ICAN 2014, p. 10-11.

determining what constitutes structural and cultural violence is political, contestable and not as clear-cut as recognizing physical violence. A limitation of the term is that what constitutes marginalization of communities and infringements on their rights and welfare is often framed by a community's own sociocultural context. However, existing international human rights norms and treaties can help define what such violence encompasses.

Relevant scholarship on radicalization outlines how structural and cultural violence is experienced by women around the world, who can be particularly disadvantaged by groups with radical ideas. This research tends to focus on how structural and cultural violence can often be a more imminent threat to women than immediate physical violence.

One example of this work is research conducted by ICAN, which focuses on how extremist ideologies work to create the “normalization of [an] intolerant social environment.”⁵⁵ ICAN's research situates increasing religiosity in the Middle East in terms of the resurgence of Islamism (political Islam, which seeks to apply Islamic religious values in all parts of life) and the spread of Wahhabism and Salafism that occurred in the 1970s.⁵⁶ This has gone hand-in-hand with what ICAN calls “misogyny as ideology,” whereby religious extremists try to marginalize the traditionally respected roles of women in the society, while portraying feminism and women's empowerment as foreign colonial imports. As ICAN points out, women's roles in the public are receding in many places, creating new challenges for women hoping to preserve their rights.⁵⁷ Another example of this work is that of Algerian feminist author Karima Bennouna, who has conducted wide-ranging research on women's efforts to resist structural and cultural forms of radicalization. Her work is based on interviews with nearly 300 people in 30 countries, with a major focus on the Middle East. Bennouna argues that women are often the first ones to speak up against ideological forces that promote structural and cultural violence, because they are often the first to be affected by that violence. Bennouna's work examines a number of political movements with a focus on women's struggles

to organize politically against religious forces in their countries that seek to impose what she sees as extremist ideologies on their societies.⁵⁸

Researchers, activists and policymakers should further investigate the ways in which political or community actors and processes can help prevent radicalization leading to structural and cultural violence, without letting the importance of the issue be obscured by the fact that the concepts of this field are not yet clearly defined.

1.7 Deradicalization versus disengagement

The literature has relatively few practical contributions to offer on the subject of women and deradicalization. Although there is a large volume of writing on the concept of deradicalization,⁵⁹ most of it focuses on how people can be brought to disavow involvement with terrorist groups, with a focus on programmes run by state security agencies.⁶⁰ In this, however, there has been more of a focus on preventing further violent activity, and not enough attention paid to whether or not people are changing their ideas and reintegrating into society.⁶¹ There has been little attempt to distinguish between coercive and non-coercive efforts⁶² and little of it has addressed women as either actors who can facilitate deradicalization or as subjects of deradicalization efforts.⁶³ In addition to defining the goals of deradicalization programmes, there is a need for more empirical evidence about how such programmes work. Horgan argues that there is a need for more field research integrating insights from the fields of psychology and criminology. It is necessary to find out why men and women disengage from radical groups, and whether or not deradicalization is the opposite process of radicalization—as is often assumed.⁶⁴ On a deeper level, however, Horgan points out the inherent contradiction in trying to explore deradicalization without having an agreement about what radicalization means in the first place.

58 Bennouna and Kandiyoti 2015.

59 Nasser-Eddine et. al. 2011, p. 48-49.

60 Ashour 2015.

61 Horgan 2008.

62 CTITF 2006, p. 2.

63 MacKenzie 2009.

64 Horgan 2008.

55 Ibid., p. 8.

56 Ibid., p. 4.

57 Ibid., p. 7.

1.8 Issues moving forward

The literature has recently been filled with calls to avoid two damaging trends arising in the field: the instrumentalization and the securitization of women and their rights, which takes place when women's empowerment is portrayed as a means to an end—achieving security. The instrumentalization of women's empowerment can have a dangerous implication: if women's empowerment is primarily important for security, it may not be important outside of the security context,⁶⁵ raising concerns that governments may barter away women's rights when negotiating with political or militant groups.⁶⁶ In addition, “weaponizing” women as a means of fighting violent radicalization can put “the entire project of gender equality... at deadly risk,”⁶⁷ as such efforts associate women's rights with counter-terrorism and invite violent backlashes against women from violent extremists.⁶⁸ The best way to avoid this is to promote a rights-based and inclusive approach to women's empowerment, supporting women in leadership roles

at the grassroots level and beyond so they can determine what is best for their communities.⁶⁹

In addition, there have been critiques that the approach of UNSCR 1325 to view security through a gender lens neglects half of that lens: masculinity.⁷⁰ Similar critiques have called for more gender analysis on the roles of men and militarized masculinities in violent radicalization.⁷¹

Finally, the literature on women, peace and security has contributed a final, essential critique to the literature on women and radicalization: women's identities are a complex amalgamation of many factors, of which gender is only a part. Nationality, ethnicity, sexuality, political leanings and a host of other factors also influence women's experiences and the choices they make.⁷² It is crucial, therefore, not to assume that women—even from the same demographic group—comprise a monolithic bloc when analysing why women radicalize and the roles they can play in deradicalization.

65 Huckerby 2015.

66 OSCE 2013, p. 5.

67 D'estaing 2015.

68 Huckerby 2015.

69 D'estaing 2015.

70 O'Connor 2014.

71 OSCE 2015, p. 2.

72 Pratt and Richter-Devroe 2011, p. 494.

WOMEN AND RADICALIZATION:

JORDAN CASE

1.1 Radicalization: The concept and relevance

1.1.1 The concept

The aim of this section is to understand how women and men in Jordanian communities conceptualize radicalization and violent extremism. For this research, the researchers used the Arabic term “فرطتلا قيلمع” (*amiliyya a-tatarraf*) for “radicalization” and “فرطتلا قينعلا” (*a-tatarraf al-'aneef*) for “violent extremism.”⁷³ In discussing the concept, respondents referred to religion, politics, traditions and customs, and ideologies while defining radicalization. Of the respondents, 13 per cent directly connected radicalization with ISIL or other terrorist groups, while 26 per cent connected it with religion in general, and 5 per cent connected it with traditions and customs. On the other hand, 5 per cent of the respondents identified radicalization as something that goes against the state.

Given the widely differing definitions of radicalization, it is not surprising that the respondents differed on their opinion of the relationship between radicalization and violent extremism: 38 per cent of the respondents believe that radicalization necessarily leads to violent extremism, while 62 per cent of the respondents believe individuals could radicalize without necessarily turning violent, depending on certain conditions.

1.1.2 Relevance within communities and universities

Of the respondents interviewed, 85 per cent believe that radicalization is occurring in Jordanian

communities and 74 per cent of the respondents believe it is occurring in universities. Respondents believe this is especially clear in certain areas, such as Zarqa, Ma'an, Salt, Irbid and Rusaifa. Among the 10 university students interviewed, 9 believe radicalization is going on in their communities and universities. In general, men were more likely than women to believe that radicalization is happening in Jordan. While it is unclear whether or not this reduced perception among women is based on a difference of definition or perspective, it suggests perhaps that men are more engaged in discussions and dialogue on radicalization.

Of the respondents who stated that radicalization is going on in Jordan, 72 per cent shared anecdotes of people who had left Jordan to fight with violent extremist groups: 33 per cent of those sharing anecdotes had witnessed them in their communities, 21 per cent had heard about them from other people, and 18 per cent heard about them on the news. Anecdotes could not be independently verified, and many of their details remain unclear. Nonetheless, their type and variety served to inform this study as to the many push and pull factors toward radicalization and other people's perceptions of those factors.

Most of the anecdotes were related to men joining ISIL in Syria and Iraq and the results of this action. Respondents shared stories of men deciding to join ISIL or other violent extremist groups and subsequently either getting killed in Syria and Iraq, being apprehended by security before leaving Jordan, or becoming convinced by their family, friends, and religious and community figures not to leave. Respondents also told stories of some men joining ISIL who then defected and returned home. Stories showed that while some succeeded in getting back to Jordan, others were killed by ISIL for changing their minds and trying to defect. Some stories mentioned people continuing to be radicalized after their prison sentences ended, turning into prominent figures in violent extremist groups. The people mentioned in the anecdotes were

⁷³ The research team began each interview by asking the respondents to define in their own words radicalization and its relationship to violent extremism before explaining to them the definition used for the purpose of this study. The answers were quite varied, revealing that there is little consensus on how the term is used in everyday practice.

from different backgrounds: some were educated (including in graduate, undergraduate, medicine or engineering schools) and others did not have higher education; some were respected characters in their communities and others were convicted criminals who turned to extremism; and some came from poor families and others came from wealthy families. The anecdotes indicated that different tools were used in the recruitment process, including face-to-face interaction and social media. Anecdotes also included people radicalizing and then attempting to recruit others from their surrounding communities, especially among young people. They also mentioned the social impact on the families of the men joining ISIL, in particular, where some families found themselves isolated from their communities due to shame and stigma. Others were reportedly very proud of their children's involvement in extremist violence, calling their late children "martyrs."

Different explanations were given by those respondents who believe there was no radicalization occurring in Jordan, including the context and nature of the Jordanian society as being built on tribal systems, which facilitate strong family bonds and protection against external dangers. Some respondents felt the tribal systems provide enough assistance to overcome any individual problem. The skills and capacity of the public security sector in Jordan, and the awareness of the community, were also cited as reasons why there was no radicalization in Jordan.

1.1.3 Radicalization among women

It is interesting that while a majority of respondents supported the opinion that there is radicalization going on in Jordanian communities and universities, only 38 per cent indicated that women in particular are adopting extremist viewpoints and ideologies, leaving 54 per cent who think they are not and 8 per cent undecided. Of these, men were much less likely to agree that women are adopting radical views. Moreover, women activists and women in leadership positions were most likely to believe that women were being radicalized. This could be because these individuals have the most interaction with communities due to their position and activities. It could also be explained that these groups tend to be more liberal and more likely to call for women's freedom from what they

may view as radicalized social structures, which for other communities may be considered as accepted social norms. Government officials generally refuted that women in particular were becoming radicalized. This may suggest that the radicalization of women, if indeed taking place, may present a blind spot in government perceptions.

Representatives of CSOs did not believe that there is a significant trend of women's violent radicalization across Jordan. However, they believe that there is a trend of religious conservatism among women, which sometimes leads them to become radical in ideology or behavior (including their dress code). However it was reported that women whose husbands and family members had been killed in Syria tended to be fearful of engaging with national authorities. This highlights an unwillingness of women affected by radicalization to engage with the government, often from fear of the unknown or lack of understanding of potential processes. This is a challenge that should be considered, and addressed, when designing state deradicalization programmes.

There were few anecdotes about women joining radical groups. In the same context, respondents talked about the fact that the nature of Jordan's tribal society does not expose women to radical ideologies in the same ways that men are. The respondents believe that women tend to engage themselves with issues closer to the family and home, preserving their traditional values and avoiding radicalization. This stands at odds with the often very personal and private nature of radicalization.

1.1.4 Indicators and signs of radicalization

Respondents who agreed that there was radicalization occurring in Jordan communities and universities were asked closely related open-ended questions about what indicators (What behavior and ideologies would make you think that a person is become radicalized?) or signs (What is the point where you start to suspect that someone is approaching radicalization?) would allow them to recognize violent radicalization. The most common indicators, mentioned by 51 per cent of respondents, were the statements made by people at family gatherings and in public events, as well as on social media. Respondents believe that

statements showing a lack of tolerance and failure to accept others' views serve as evidence of radicalization. Similarly, 69 per cent of the respondents believe that interfering in others' freedoms or criticizing their ideologies or activities is a sign that could make them suspect that someone was turning radical. Ways that a radicalized person might interfere in others' lives included criticizing the types of media programmes they watch, type of people they associate with, their relationship to the state, their type of dress, and their religious ideas and opinions.

The above indicators and signs—showing a lack of tolerance and failure to accept others' views—were mentioned by all men from rural and urban areas. Interestingly, 28 per cent of the respondents—mostly women not in leadership positions and living in communities outside wealthy urban centres—believe that attempts to marginalize women's roles in their society and community is an indicator of radicalization.

Dressing in a more conservative way (scarf and/or veil for females, traditional robes for males) and attempting to judge women's clothing choices and impose conservative Islamic dress codes on them was a commonly referenced indicator by women—in particular women in university—though only cited by one man.

Violence on university campuses, including tribal and demographic conflicts, was reported as an indicator of radicalization by 21 per cent of respondents (all male students).

Of respondents, 15 per cent specifically identified voicing support for radical groups such as ISIL in public settings or through social media as an indicator of radicalization. Similarly, 13 per cent identified verbally supporting radical groups or attending suspicious meetings with some well-known radical groups within the community as a sign of radicalization.

Additional indicators included: calls for religious, interreligious and tribal conflicts (reported by 15 per cent); fighting between groups and parties based on different ideologies (reported by 10 per cent); and recruitment of students at universities through provision of services and/or financial support (reported by 10 per cent).

Respondents highlighted some specific indicators for women's radicalization: changes in dress; signs of piety,

such as praying with prayer beads; stopping some practices that might be considered *haram* (forbidden under Islamic law), such as congratulating Christians on Christmas; picking up new religious practices and following them closely; expressing feelings related to a lack of citizenship; and expressions of extreme religious opinions. One male university student, as an example of this kind of behavior, talked about when he was canvassing on his university campus for student elections, and a women student refused to speak to him, saying that she believed it was *haram*.

Experts and government officials identified some of the indicators and signs respondents noted above, in addition to some additional indicators, such as domestic violence in families, believing that use of violence is permitted in Islam, and refusing to believe tolerance is a central part of Islam. This group noted that additional signs of radicalization include isolation of an individual within a radical group. One expert pointed out that there might not always be clear indicators of radicalization among individuals because of the so-called "spiral of silence" by which individuals who feel that they hold dissenting or minority views may feel pressured to keep silent about their opinions, further marginalizing them and driving them away from their peers. Such individuals may keep up a facade of normalcy while actually drifting further from those around them.

CSO participants focused more on small religious conflicts, which have started to occur on the local level, where they observed that both Muslim and Christians lose patience with each other and sometimes create conflicts about issues in their daily life activities, such as having the call to prayer at the mosque play loudly. Moreover, they mentioned that the practice of sending Muslim children to Christian school, and vice versa, was diminishing. Participants also offered stories of intra-religious conflict among Muslims, where some people start to call others non-believers just because of some practices that they do not accept. CSOs and experts also pointed to the fact that many young people believe Islam is built on the concept of *jihad*, and they believe that the only way to defend Islam is to act strong in defending it and make it the superior religion.

Participants from the CSOs noted that sympathy and support for violent extremist groups is prevalent at local community levels. Moreover, CSOs highlighted the fact that radical groups tend to create their own system of living and services. For example, one man stated that the community of people he perceives as extremists in Rusaifa is very close knit and that families who support ISIL in Rusaifa tend not to send their kids to schools because they believe it is an institution of non-believers; instead, they send their children to a collective home school where they are taught the Qur'an and Islamic teachings by unqualified teachers who may not have even finished high school.

1.1.5 Discussions around radicalization

The researchers asked the respondents if and when they discussed topics related to politics and ideologies with their families and friends. All respondents discussed these topics with their friends, neighbors, relatives and coworkers. While nearly all of the respondents preferred to talk about such topics with other people of their own gender, 79 per cent of the respondents believe that conversations about politics and ideology are more likely to happen among men, 15 per cent believe that they are equally likely to happen between both men and women, and only 5 per cent of them believe that conversations are most likely to happen among women.

1.2 Causes and impacts of radicalization

1.2.1 Radicalization as a threat to the community

Even though 15 per cent of respondents believe that radicalization is not occurring in Jordanian communities, all respondents reported that radicalization is an important issue worth paying attention to in Jordan and that it constitutes a threat. The majority referred to radicalization as a potential cause of chaos and violence, impacting people's security, their freedoms, social and economic development and reform, and productivity of both the state and young generations. People also believe that radicalization would curtail people's rights and lead to more discrimination and hate speech. Experts and government officials also believe that radicalization deserves attention not

just because of its capacity to lead to violence, but because radicalized ideas themselves seek to impose a certain lifestyle on individuals and limit the freedom of citizens to choose the best lives for themselves.

Of respondents, 85 per cent indicated that if members of their communities adopted radical views, it would affect their daily lives.

It is crucial to note that the respondents who did not feel the impact of radicalization on their daily lives were mostly young men. Only one male student reported that he would feel impacted, and even in this case, he said that this impact was linked to his fear for his sisters: "I wouldn't feel impacted, except for my two sisters who study in my university. I'd have to keep an eye on them, which will limit my daily activities."

1.2.2 Factors driving radicalization

Eighty two per cent of the respondents believe that social and economic pressures encourage men and women in Jordan to join radical groups or engage in radical ideologies. Of these respondents, 53 per cent believe these pressures are impacting women and men equally, compared to 31 per cent who stated that men are facing more pressures, leaving only 13 per cent who believe that women face more pressure than men do—all of them women. Government officials did not, for the most part, support the idea that women face more pressures.

Among the respondents who confirmed that women are at risk from radicalization, 71 per cent stated that women face greater risks from radicalization and radicalized communities compared to men, which is discussed further in the next section. However, among respondents who believe that Jordanians face pressures to radicalize, only 13 per cent believe that women face more pressure than men do. This demonstrates the belief that the risk to a woman from radicalization is greater than the danger of her becoming radical.

The most common factor that was cited as pressing women and girls to become radical was economic and financial pressures (69 per cent). The second most common factor was social and family problems, including domestic abuse and the prevention of women from accessing their rights, including inheritance (34 per cent). Other factors mentioned included

unemployment (13 per cent) and an excess of free time with no activities or goals to work toward (3 per cent).

CSOs raised the issue of divorce and unmarried women, which can pressure those women to join radicalized groups to feel valuable and effective. Moreover, they focused on social and family problems, including preventing women from claiming their rights, such as inheritance.

Experts discussed the pressure on women to become radicalized from the viewpoint that women may just want to conform, so if the community moved toward radicalization, they may not have the capacity to fight. They believe this may be the case in Jordanian society, where women are encouraged to follow the men in the family. However, the experts also noted that the pressure to conform faces both women and men.

1.2.3 Radicalization: A risk to women

Respondents tended to react strongly to the risks radicalization poses to women. In general, 87 per cent of the respondents believe women are at risk from the effects of radicalization, of which 71 per cent stated that women face a bigger risk than men.

Reasons why women face a bigger risk from radicalization, according to respondents:

Existing limitations on women's freedom and access to their rights: Women already enjoy limited freedom in most societies around the world, including Jordan, and radicalization by community members would further harm their place in society. Radicalization could increase limitations imposed by norms to stay at home, be veiled and/or not speak with non-relative men.

Women's feeling of responsibility toward their children's actions: It was reported that women often feel more responsibility for their children's behavior than men. Women are socially blamed if their children are radicalized, which places them under more pressure by their communities.

Decreasing women's capacity to work and be productive by encouraging women to spend more time focused on their family and children, since according to social norms, women are primarily responsible for child rearing. Similarly, radicalization impacts the

possibility for women to exercise leadership roles in their communities, including their participation in community work and volunteerism. Radicalization in society can prevent women and girls from engaging in voluntary and community work—outlets for civic engagement and youth empowerment—by relegating them instead to their traditional roles as wives and mothers only.

Increasing social frustration, domestic violence and divorce: Radicalization could increase male violence against women, as it raises the perception that women are second-class citizens rather than equals to men in life. It could create a great deal of conflict if women defend their freedoms while being marginalized by radical trends. Given the fact that a radicalized husband often imposes his ideas on his wife, this could create conflict that could lead to separation or divorce.

Decreasing access to government resources: The threat of radicalization may keep the government's time and financial resources focused on countering violent extremism, which will divert resources away from development of the community members, especially women.

1.3 Feeding radicalization

1.3.1 Trusted sources of information

Traditional and social media

According to the respondents, traditional and social media play a role in driving the radicalization process in Jordan. While there is a wide spectrum of media channels and campaigns countering radicalization, there are many messages that encourage radicalization. Of respondents, 31 per cent believe that social media and the Internet could be used to determine the validity of controversial religious ideas; 15 per cent said that they would look for information offline by using religious books as references. Religious talk shows are trusted by 26 per cent of respondents as a secondary source of information. It is interesting, however, that some of the presenters on these shows are considered controversial figures for views that are considered radical by some. Experts believe that these shows play a role in encouraging women to become radical. In their opinion, radical media outlets have

been praising women martyrs, and the absence of positive role models and the fear of nonconformity are making women more likely to adopt radicalization.

The respondents indicated that they often receive messages through social media containing religious messages that may contain radical ideas. In a hypothetical situation where respondents received a message with radical content, 46 per cent said that they would delete the message and never discuss it with the sender, even if it was someone they knew; 18 per cent stated that it would depend on the situation and their relationship with the sender; 21 per cent said that they would respond and engage the sender in discussion; 15 per cent said that they would inform security forces; and 13 per cent said they would inform security forces only if they sensed danger.⁷⁴

Religious leaders

Religious leaders and preachers can play a significant role in encouraging or preventing radicalization due to their influence on community members, especially at the grassroots level. Of respondents, 46 per cent reported that they would refer to a trusted religious figure in their family or community in order to determine the validity of a controversial religious idea, making this source of information the most popular. Respondents identified different figures including: local male preachers, *Imams*; women preachers, *Wa'edaat*; the wives of the *Imams*; Sharia professors; and religious relatives or neighbors. It is interesting that nearly all of the female students, women in rural and urban areas, and women activists at a grassroots level all gave this answer. At the same time, 21 per cent of the respondents (all women) reported that they did not trust *Imams* and other religious authority figures as a reference. This shows a significant debate about whether or not religious leaders can be referred to in such cases, especially among women. It is important to highlight that *Imams* and *Wa'edaat* are sometimes officially hired by the Ministry of Endowment and Islamic Affairs as staff and therefore have a more formal role in the community. However, some *Imams* and *Wa'edaat* are not hired by the Ministry but are religious individuals who voluntarily play the role of a

religious guide, gaining respect from the surrounding community due to their religious behavior.

Most participants in the CSO focus group believe that most of the community would want to speak to “someone religious in their surrounding community.” At the same time, some of the CSO participants (women and men) indicated that they themselves receive many questions from young people or people in their community related to radicalization and extremist practices in other countries. For example, one CSO worker was asked by a community member if it is really permissible in Islam to have women as slaves, as ISIL is doing in the areas they occupied.

While experts interviewed believe that young people would be more likely to look for answers online and less likely to trust religious figures’ answers, 6 of the 10 university students answered that a religious person in their family or community would be their first choice for information.

Moreover, while the government has a facility specifically to answer religious questions through official religious figures (the Mufti’s Office), only 8 per cent of the respondents claimed to use that as a first reference, and 13 per cent claimed to use it as a second reference. According to CSOs, this lack of usage is due to lack of confidence or lack of knowledge about the Mufti Office’s resources.

1.3.2 Women as a tool for radicalization

Respondents clearly indicated that a woman is the primary pillar of the family in Jordan. Thus, she may be targeted by radicalized groups to impact her ideology first and then to use her as an influencer on her family and other people in her community. An expert said that the biggest danger is when a woman adopts radicalized ideology and becomes a tool to encourage the rest of her family to conform to that ideology. Women’s radicalization could be facilitated by the stereotype that women tend to be more religious and conservative, so their community and family may support them going to Qur’an study clubs or joining a women’s religious group. This may be viewed as a positive change in a woman’s behavior, but respondents believe it could also be the unassuming start or furtherance of her radicalization.

⁷⁴ Respondents were allowed to choose more than one option for the question on messaging with radical content.

1.3.3 Community education

Social education within the family can be an important factor to encourage and discourage radicalization. Discussion among family or peers in university or at work could influence a young man or women toward or against violent extremism. Despite the fact that all respondents indicated they do discuss topics relevant to radicalization in their work and social settings, 46 per cent of the parent respondents stated that they would not encourage their children to discuss such topics in their study or work places; 14 per cent do not prefer their children to discuss radicalization outside the home, but do not directly warn their kids against such discussions.

Parents who encouraged the discussions (39 per cent) focused on their roles in increasing the awareness of their children on this issue to avoid any temptation of radicalization. “My husband and I encourage our children to talk about these topics and listen to each other’s points of view,” a women respondent said. On the other hand, parents who do not encourage such discussions said that they felt these topics were too complicated. In addition, some parents expressed concern that talking about radicalization could lead their children to want to explore these issues more, creating problems for their futures.

It is noteworthy that parent and student respondents had different opinions when it comes to discussing topics relevant to radicalization within their immediate families: 86 per cent of the parent respondents stated that they engage in such discussions in their families, compared to 50 per cent of students who said they do.

According to respondents, the family discussions often happened after listening to the news in the media or on family gatherings over the weekends. “We gather every Friday as a family and we talk, chat, and listen to the news,” said one woman respondent. “My father warns us and talks to us about radicalization and the current situation in our country,” said a student respondent, “and tells us we should stand with our country at this point.”

According to respondents, fathers encourage such discussion in the family more than mothers do, and

discussions are often happening with more concern towards the males in the family.

1.3.4 Mothers’ child-rearing

Respondents also tackled the impact of child-rearing on individuals’ susceptibility to radicalization: 79 per cent of the parent respondents and 50 per cent of the students believe that mothers had a great impact on their children’s ideologies.

Among the parents, 9 per cent (all mothers) admitted that they felt in some instances that they have contributed to their children’s character to be radical. In the words of one woman respondent:

I always encourage my son to pray, because I believe that if you pray, everything goes well in your life and religion makes you able to differentiate right from wrong. However, even though I respect being religiously committed, lately my son has been taking things a bit too far. I got worried, so I talked to him about it, and he was wondering if I thought he was going to join ISIL. He wasn’t and we resolved it; still, he has some extremist views regarding some of his sisters’ behaviors, which I couldn’t change by discussing with him.

These sentiments were shared across religions. For example, a Christian parent admitted such unintended consequences of parenting:

My daughter is a bit extremist in her thinking when it comes to religion. She often gives opinions as if they are concrete religious facts and insists that you automatically agree with her. She has a wide knowledge when it comes to religion. She tells me all the time that I raised her to be extreme, for example, by disapproving of her spending time with boys. So now, if she doesn’t say hello when a male colleague of her passes and I ask her why, she tells me that I raised her in this way.

Of respondents, 82 per cent believe that—from what they see in the daily life—some mothers’ ways of raising their children might be encouraging radicalization. They believe that some mothers raise their children to hate other people just because they belong to a different area, tribe or religion. Some mothers reportedly also raise their children to refuse to explore other cultures and religions and believe that Islam is the

only true religion. They encourage their children to use violence to defend their ideologies rather than discussing it. Some respondents believe that mothers also promote the idea of the superiority of men, especially with their sons, and that they start to ignore the role of women in their community. It is noteworthy that respondents who said that they did not experience any women raising their children in a radical way came from a rural background, where the traditional role of women and more conservative religious ideologies may be part of the social norms in their communities.

1.3.5 Hard choices by parents to protect their children

The researchers asked the respondents what they would do if their child left home to join a radical group and if they would act differently toward their male and female children. When asked what they would do if their children engaged in violent extremism, many respondents thought deeply, hesitated to answer, and needed to rethink their initial responses. Some were shocked at the question, laughing in the beginning then turning serious and denying that this was even a possibility for their children. It is interesting that when the respondents shared stories about others they knew who had joined radical groups, they frequently mentioned that the families of those men and women never expected it to happen, but the possibility that they may ever have the same experience did not seem to cross their minds.

Respondents' answers indicate that there is a gap in trust between the community and security sector, a lack of safe channels to connect with the state about possible radicalization, and a lack of awareness and education on how to act in such situations (see Figure 1). Culture may play a role in women's responses to such incidents. Mothers are considered to be responsible for the behavior of their children, so their concerns about their image in the community may cause them to fail to acknowledge radicalization or seek help. That could be one reason why only 45 per cent of the women said they would seek their husband's help and inform him if they had concerns about their daughter, while 64 per cent said they would seek their husband's help and inform him regarding their son. It is not clear if women feel more responsible to assist

their daughters alone, or if they are less concerned about radicalization in their daughters. While many of the mothers would not tell their husband and try to solve the problem alone, only two of the six men said they would not tell their wives because they are emotional and may not act properly.

While all respondents would speak with their daughter directly and try to resolve the issue as a first choice, 71 per cent of them believe they would do the same for their son. This indicates that due to the position boys and girls possess in the community, parents would act differently with some options. For example, while 7 per cent of the respondents indicated that they may tell security as first choice if it regarded their son, none indicated that they would do so for their daughter. Also, parents felt that their daughter could be influenced more by a family or a friend, compared to their son. Moreover, while parents would seek local religious men to help their sons, this was not suggested to help their daughters.

Parents seemed to lack trust in the state to help them resolve the problem. Only 7 per cent thought of seeking the help of security as a first choice—and only if they were concerned about their sons. Only 29 per cent and 39 per cent would seek the help of the security if other options were unsuccessful for their sons and daughters, respectively. The Jordanian government should find other channels to offer help for the families that may face such cases.

1.3.6 Community actions upon observing radicalization

Although most of the respondents believe radicalization is worthy of attention and many efforts should be conducted to address the issue, they indicated little willingness to personally address signs of radicalization they may observe in their community. They would rarely act, for example, to provide advice to other mothers on their way of child rearing or to act if they felt a peer of their children moving toward radicalization. This indicates a need to increase the feeling of social responsibility within Jordan to positively and proactively address radicalization.

While 82 per cent of the respondents confirmed that they have seen mothers raising their children in a way that could encourage radicalization, only 26 per cent

of them stated that they have tried to provide advice to those mothers based on their relationship with them. Some stated that they only tried to use indirect messages or subliminal messages on social media pages in order to express thoughts without direct confrontation. Reasons for not interfering included their concern about facing disapproval from society or their feeling that it is none of their business.

Similarly, only 18 per cent of the respondents stated that they would interfere directly to try to help their children's peers if they sense they are turning radical or joining a radical group (see Figure 2). The most common option, cited by 71 per cent of parents, is to speak to the girl's or the boy's family, but only if they have a direct relationship with them. They stated that due to the community context, they did not feel it was a good idea to inform a family they don't know that their daughter or son is becoming radical or joining a radical group. They were concerned that the other family would deny it and would be suspicious about their personal interest in intervening. Instead, some parents would require their child to cut off friendship with anyone they suspected of radicalizing. There was minimal support to report the friend to security as a first, with slightly more as a last choice, with reporting their son's friend a more likely reaction.

1.4 Deradicalization

1.4.1 Efficiency of current efforts

Over the past two years, many international and local organizations have been working on countering violent extremism and deradicalization in different communities in Jordan. The Government of Jordan has also created many strategies and initiatives in this regard, especially after the execution of a Jordanian pilot by ISIL in February 2015.

Recently, a Directorate for Countering Extremism and Violence was created under the umbrella of the Ministry of Interior. According to its director, this directorate will be working to develop a national strategy to counter extremism that will engage different actors across Jordan, with a special focus on young people. The directorate will also coordinate the different governmental actors working in this field. Most recently, the Public Security Directorate launched a mobile app

in March 2016 to report any incidents or suspicious activities related to violent extremism and radicalization.

Of respondents, 45 per cent indicated they had heard of activities related to radicalization, including lectures (the most common response), television shows, conferences and religious dialogues. Of these, 83 per cent indicated that they had received invitations to participate in these activities. This indicates that much of the knowledge of the activities came through direct personal experience. It is worth mentioning that most rural and urban women (four out of six) and all five women activists at the grassroots level did not report any awareness of any efforts for deradicalization, while all women activists in Amman and women in leadership positions reported both their own awareness as well as participation. This indicates that programmes are predominately focused on and engaging with women located in Amman or who are in leadership positions, rather than reaching diverse partners and participants across all of Jordan.

Conversely, most of the respondents had positive perceptions of the deradicalization efforts they knew about. Different respondents believe these efforts were good for raising the awareness of families and young people who might not talk about these issues with their parents. All respondents said that these efforts should be expanded.

Representatives of CSOs also stressed the importance of enhancing work in this area to prevent violent extremist actions in Jordanian communities. They encouraged more efforts by the government, especially the Ministry of Religious Endowments, to build the capacity of its *Imams* and *Wa'edaat* (women preachers) to influence people. Representatives of CSOs believe that the government should be more engaged in combatting radicalization and complained that, until now, they have not seen seriousness on the part of the government in dealing with this issue beyond security-heavy responses. CSOs stressed the importance of developing a national strategy to combat radicalization. They also said that they are willing to help the government by implementing common projects and bridging the gap between the government and the citizens, given that some citizens lack trust in or fear the government's actions on deradicalization activities. Finally, CSOs emphasized that groups working in this field should build strong relationships and

FIGURE 1

Parents' actions in case their daughter or son faced the risk of radicalization

ACTION		
	DAUGHTER	SON
Talk directly to her/him, including simply observing her/his behavior	100%	71%
Women—inform the husband (out of 22 women)	46%	64%
Tell security as first choice	0%	7%
Tell security as a last choice, if other options are unsuccessful	29%	39%
Get help from influential family or friend	29%	25%
Tell university administration as a last choice, if other options are unsuccessful	29%	11%
Seek help from local religious men	0%	14%

develop credibility to enable communities to trust and communicate with them about their challenges and needs.

One priority of the respondents was to develop rehabilitation and social programmes for those who have joined violently radical groups and wish to integrate back into society. Some CSOs mentioned that they receive families with foreign fighters who consult them about whether or not there will be a way for their sons to come back and reintegrate into Jordanian society if they returned.

1.4.2 Between local and international actors: Who to trust?

Respondents were asked if they would be interested in taking part in governmental and non-governmental programmes to combat radicalization. While 79 per cent of them indicated they would be interested in taking part in government and local organization

programming, 95 per cent indicated they would be interested in international organizations' programming. This indicates Jordanians' willingness to be engaged with such programmes regardless of the organizing entity, which is consistent with their opinion about the seriousness of radicalization in Jordan as indicated in Section II. However, they also stressed some preconditions for their participation: first, activities should be conducted formally and be visible to the public; second, they noted that activities should go beyond interviews and research; and third, activities should be legal and licensed and should not go against religious or social norms.

A final point is that activities should not pose a threat to young people in terms of establishing new ideologies. This issue was raised by parents and indicates fears of their children being exposed to new ideas or groups. This could be the reason why a few of the parents in this research stated that they would not encourage their children to participate in

FIGURE 2**Parents' actions in case their daughter's or son's peers faced the risk of radicalization**

ACTION		
	DAUGHTER	SON
Cut off friendship with daughter/son	39%	32%
Tell her/his family if they have a direct relationship with them only	71%	71%
Tell security as first choice	18%	21%
Tell security as a last choice, if other options are unsuccessful	25%	39%
Tell university administration	21%	25%
Interfere and try to fix situation	18%	18%

any programmes, and 3 out of 10 university students believe their parents would not encourage them to be engaged in such programmes—no matter the background of the organizer. The few parents who declined to encourage their children to participate in such programmes also noted their lack of confidence in the government as an actor for this kind of work, or accused local and international organizations of implementing a foreign agenda.

Most of the respondents were not concerned with who was organizing activities countering radicalization, as long as the preconditions they identified were met. However, when asked about their preferences in order, they tended to indicate a preference for the Jordanian government, followed by local organizations, and finally, international organizations. At the same time, 95 per cent indicated they would participate in international non-governmental organization programming.

Public confidence in the deradicalization programmes was also mentioned by CSOs. The opinion of some local communities that CSOs are foreign policy implementers is one of the main challenges they face while implementing such programmes. It is quite

interesting though that, while CSOs indicated in Section 4.1 that many citizens may lack trust in the government actions on deradicalization activities, the government was the most trusted body to implement deradicalization programmes according to the respondents. Perhaps this is due to the sensitivity of the topic and its relationship with public security. This indicates that CSOs should work more to partner with the government to gain citizen's confidence in their activities.

1.4.3 Women's role in countering radicalization

All respondents and CSOs agreed that women have an important role to play in the deradicalization process. However, none of the respondents was aware of any gender-specific focus of any deradicalization activities. In addition, CSO activities that were described in the CSO focus group—such as training for school students, awareness and discussion sessions for young people on relevant topics, and using participatory theatre in schools and universities—have targeted both females and males with no gender focus.

Most of the respondents perceive the importance of women's role as stemming from their typical social roles of being mothers and their position within their families or communities. This was evident by 95 per cent of the respondents who indicated that mothers are the pillar of the family. Additional explanations about the importance of women's roles in counter or deradicalization efforts included 41 per cent who directly mentioned that mothers are more effective at influencing their children and 23 per cent who stated that mothers are more closely bonded to their children; 5 per cent stated that mothers were well poised to notice change in family members and 5 per cent believe that children might confide in mothers more easily than in fathers. The overwhelming focus of participants was on women's role as mothers. This is an essential role and opportunity for a woman to influence her children, but it neglects the broader community and societal positions women hold that can help to prevent radicalization. A woman's role outside of the family was mentioned by 21 per cent of the respondents, who stated that women are often socially well-connected and well-educated.

Respondents and CSOs were directly asked to provide ideas of how to invest in women's roles in deradicalization efforts. They mainly focused on raising awareness of women as mothers, describing it as the basic tool to counter radicalization. Awareness activities could include: the use of social media and television shows for programmes specifically targeting mothers; creating videos, especially to reach housewives with limited mobility; distributing awareness brochures in shopping places; and using lectures designed for women

and led by female preachers in mosques, churches and schools in addition to traditional workshops and lectures. These awareness-raising activities should focus on follow-up with their children to track their behavior and attitudes in order to prevent their movement toward radicalization and to encourage them to be open to other cultures and religions by reinforcing what respondents called "moderate Islam" within their behavior and ideologies. Most respondents and CSOs placed importance on having such activities across Jordan, especially in rural areas and refugee camps.

It is interesting to note that the type of activities respondents proposed were consistent with women's typical social role of being mothers, as indicated above. However, Resolutions 1325 and 2250 (on Youth, Peace, and Security) stress the need to reframe Member States' engagement with women and youth, seeing them as partners and leaders in devising solutions to issues of peace and security, rather than traditional perceptions of women and youth as passive participants or victims. Many of these traditional perceptions are visible through the interviews and the focus group conducted in Jordan. The question remains: do practitioners and researchers play to those perceptions, or transform them? Indeed, respondents discussed some recommendations that tackle all of women's community roles in general. These ideas were included in the recommendation part of this study. However, it seems that there is a need for more research to discuss the viability and effectiveness of different types of interventions before actually launching them.

CONCLUSIONS

This study sought to respond to four research questions about violent radicalization in Jordan. The questions and answers derived from the research are summarized below.

1. What is radicalization, and is it a problem in Jordan? Do women and men view radicalization differently?

The majority of Jordanian women and men interviewed believe that radicalization is a problem in their communities. Respondents' definitions of radicalization referred to religion, politics, traditions and ideologies. Many of the respondents' explanations of radicalization were not only about radicalization toward physical violence, but also about radicalization toward cultural and structural violence. Common indicators of radicalization cited by both women and men included intolerant statements, a failure to accept others' views and marginalization of women. Women were more likely to perceive conservative dress codes, judging other women's clothes and attempting to marginalize women's roles in their community as indicators of radicalization. Respondents also noted specific indicators of women's radicalization that related primarily to increased religiosity.

2. Are women at risk of radicalizing and/or are they at risk from radicalization? In what ways?

Respondents believe that women are at less risk of radicalizing but are at more risk *from* the radicalization of others in Jordan, noting that increased radicalization could exacerbate existing limitations on women's freedom and access to their rights. While male respondents believe that the key threats posed by radicalization concerned their personal freedoms, the future of their families, and the quality of work opportunities, women's fears about the impact of radicalization were related to their daily activities and fears of increased limitations on women's freedoms, decreased ability to work or study, decreased community engagement and volunteerism, and increased domestic violence.

3. What roles do women play, or could they play, in radicalization or deradicalization processes in Jordan?

Women's influence within their families, and especially among their children, was identified as a potential arena in which women could participate in the radicalization of others. All respondents agreed that women have an important role to play in deradicalization and prevention efforts, but they primarily perceived the importance of women's involvement as stemming from their traditional social roles as mothers and their position within their families. The overwhelming focus of respondents was on women's role as mothers, which does highlight one important focus for intervention, but it also reaffirms traditional stereotypes and neglects the broader community and societal positions that women hold that can help to prevent or reverse radicalization.

4. Are current efforts at deradicalization in Jordan taking gendered concerns into account? How could we invest in women's roles in deradicalization processes?

This study found no evidence that deradicalization efforts take gender concerns into account, as no respondent was aware of any gender-specific activities. Opportunities to invest in women's roles must empower women as leaders, recognizing them as active agents in combatting radicalization. Respondents noted the need to uphold positive examples of women as role models, support moderate female religious leaders and change the harmful stereotypes of women prevalent in society. Those working to counter radicalization should recognize and address the roles that women have to play not only as mothers and community members, but also as professionals, decision makers and influencers of public opinion. Furthermore, the voices of Jordanian women should be amplified in decision-making bodies, policy fora and academia—both within Jordan and globally. Finally, specific programme ideas for engaging women in prevention or deradicalization efforts in Jordan include building the capacity of *Wa'edaat* and increasing awareness among women—including mothers—through targeted interventions designed specifically to reach them.

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