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Labour Market Transitions in Jordan: Understanding Young People's Subjectivities

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Abstract

Jordan has encountered complex challenges in facilitating youth transition from education to work (The Prime Ministry, 2015). Despite governmental initiatives, the duration of this transition has significantly extended, reaching nearly 60 months (Amer, 2018). While there is extensive literature on youth transition within Western contexts, the MENA region, especially Jordan, has attracted little attention. In developing countries, prevailing literature predominantly comprises quantitative studies, overlooking the significance of understanding youth transitions from their own perspectives.

This study aims to bridge these gaps by qualitatively examining young Jordanians' transitions from their standpoint, transcending Western paradigms. It specifically examines the most common transition pathways, Jordanian young people's understanding of successful transition, and their views regarding their key success determinants.

The study conducted semi-structured interviews with 32 Jordanians aged 20 to 29 with prior work experience. It elucidated the interplay of subjectivity, structural determinants, and contextual dynamics in Jordan. It explores variations in these determinants across gender, class, and locality. It identifies five key transition pathways: transitioning from compulsory education, transitioning from vocational education, transitioning from tertiary education to the public sector, transitioning from tertiary education to the private sector, and returning to education. While acknowledging the relevance of structuration and forms of capital theories, the study underscores the necessity of context-specific considerations. Emphasising the inadequacy of singular explanatory, the study uses an ecological framework encompassing individual, familial, local, national, and global factors to understand youth transition determinants comprehensively.

It also highlights determinants specific to Jordanian youth transitions, including local customs, patriarchal norms, and the pervasive influence of nepotism, known as 'Wasta'. In addition to offering a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics shaping young Jordanians' transitions, the study gives valuable insights for formulating effective policies tailored to Jordan and the wider MENA region.

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Thank you, Mother, for your prayers. I wish my father were present today to witness the completion of this dream. May his soul rest in peace. Thanks to all my brothers and sisters for their support and encouragement. Finally, my appreciation goes to all the young people who stepped in and participated in the study interviews. Thank you all for being part of this dream.

Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: Mohammad Saleem Al-Batayneh DATE: 11 July 2024

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research Context

Jordan, classified as an upper-middle-income country (UMIC), grapples with a scarcity of natural resources and a fragile, highly fragmented economy in a politically and economically precarious region. From 2004 to 2022, the country's population more than doubled, soaring from 5 million to over 11 million people (Department of Statistics, 2004 and 2022b). Notably, 31% of the present population are non-Jordanian citizens, encompassing Syrian refugees (approximately 1.3 million), Palestinian refugees, and Egyptian workers (about 630 thousand for each nationality) (Department of Statistics, 2022b). Jordan's average population growth reached 4.2% in the last decade, a significantly higher rate than the average in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region (1.8%) and globally (1%) (World Bank, 2022). Despite this demographic expansion, the economic growth experienced during the same period has proven inadequate in generating sufficient employment opportunities or elevating living standards for this rapidly growing population (World Bank, 2023a).

Due to the population surge, the Syrian refugee crisis, and protracted economic challenges, Jordan has experienced numerous public protests arising from worsening economic conditions (Seeberg, 2018; Zakharov & Issaev, 2022). Key concerns of the demonstrators included notably the decline in the quality of public services such as health, education, and transportation and removing government subsidies, which has notably resulted in substantial price increases and higher inflation (Atamanov *et al.,* 2017; Albatayneh *et al.,* 2023). The influx of refugees and population growth has intensified competition within the labour market, contributing to lower wages and a lack of employment opportunities (Fakih & Ibrahim, 2016). This upheaval is reflected in a significant spike in unemployment, now reaching a staggering 23%, particularly affecting youth (Department of Statistics, 2022a). The unemployment rate for youth (15-24 years) reached 47%, the percentage of people unemployed for more than a year reached 51%, and the duration of unemployment

increased significantly between 2010 and 2016, specifically for women, for whom the average duration surged from 16 to 57 months, while for men from 13 to 52 months (Amer, 2018; Department of Statistics, 2022b).

Young Jordanians have faced complex challenges in transitioning from education to work. The latest statistics show that the average transition period from full-time education to first job is more than 31 months for Jordanians, while on the global level, it was just above 19 months in 2015 (ILO, 2015). Although youth unemployment and the transition from education to work have long been complex issues in Jordan, recent adverse developments have exacerbated the situation. This deterioration persists despite the government's continued efforts to tackle the problem, as evidenced by a more recent study indicating that the transition to employment increased to 57 months for young women and 52 months for young men (Amer, 2018).

The Jordanian government has instituted various policies and strategic initiatives to enhance individuals' transition from education to work, particularly among the youth (Hjazeen *et al.,* 2021; World Bank, 2023a). Despite these concerted efforts, the youth transition has shown a troubling deterioration. Only 8% of young people were likely to move into employment in the first 12 months after completing their education, increasing to 24% after 24 months and 40% after almost 60 months (Amer, 2018). This research endeavours to understand the reasons behind the persistent challenges in tackling problems in young people's transitions.

The subjectivity of young people is crucial for informing policy applications, as many government policies aim to influence public choices (Macmillan, 2006). Initiatives like Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and activation policies are designed to facilitate behavioural changes, specifically targeting the decisions made by young people. Therefore, to grasp the significance of subjectivity, it is essential to examine how young people's choices relate to social structures from both theoretical and policy perspectives. This study's exploration of the structure-agency debate highlights the importance of understanding subjectivity (Archer, 2013). Consequently, a thorough analysis of the transition from education to the workforce is necessary, focusing on youth perspectives. Critical areas of inquiry include identifying when young people consider their transition successful, determining key factors that influence success, understanding

the determinants behind extended transition periods, and assessing how these insights can shape and enhance strategies and policy responses.

Following my master's degree, I joined the United Nations in a role that supported the Jordanian government in policy development, particularly on issues like poverty, unemployment, and youth transitions into the workforce. Over nearly five years, I observed a recurrent pattern: many governmental policies, strategies, and programmes were formulated without incorporating young people's perspectives. This omission not only influenced the effectiveness of these policies but also contributed to a notable disillusionment among youth, who often felt disconnected from government initiatives, especially in addressing their employment challenges. These insights, deeply rooted in the Jordanian context, inspired my choice of research focus as I sought to understand and address the critical gaps affecting young people's transition experiences. Still, obviously, my position and background can potentially impact the research results, which are discussed in the method section.

1.2 Research Aims and Significance

Existing literature indicates that the youth transition from education to work has been extensively researched in Western countries (Woodman & Bennett, 2015; MacDonald & King, 2021). In their latest book, "*School-to-work Transition in Comparative Perspective*," Buttler *et al.* (2023: p.4) noted that "*the existing research on SWT focuses almost entirely on developed economies and Western societies.*" However, there is limited literature on understanding young people's transition in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, including Jordan (Assaad, 2014; Brown et al., 2014; Assaad & Krafft, 2016).

An examination of the existing body of work in the MENA region reveals a predominantly quantitative focus, with most studies utilising quantitative methods to investigate youth transition (Mryyan, 2014; Amer, 2018; Pastore & Choudhry, 2022). This quantitative emphasis is justified as most studies are conducted by the government, which prioritises this research to monitor demographic, education, and labour market indicators that provide broad patterns and trends across large populations. Additionally, this preference is influenced by methodological preferences, practical advantages, and existing expertise in the MENA region, in contrast to qualitative research

approaches. This study aims to bridge this gap by investigating youth transition in Jordan from a qualitative perspective.

Indeed, the scarcity of qualitative studies indicates that the existing literature shows that young people's voices were not heard or addressed in developing initiatives that tackle their transition to work challenges. Capturing young people's perceptions is fundamental to understanding their transition processes. It provides a comprehensive and nuanced view of their experiences and influences objective individual outcomes and social structures (Chapter Five provides further details).

This study will apply an ecological approach to explore young people's own views on the topic and develop a comprehensive understanding of how they transition successfully. In addition, this study aims to explore young people's subjectivity and its role in their understanding of successful transition and its determinants, structural constraints, and interactions. This study will provide an opportunity to influence Jordanian policies, strategies, and projects. This will result in a set of policy recommendations derived from the study findings to inform the design of these initiatives and make them more human-centred.

1.3 Thesis Structure

This thesis is structured into nine chapters, each contributing to a comprehensive exploration of Jordan's youth transition and its determinants. Chapter One presents an overview of the study and its anticipated aims and contributions. Chapter Two examines youth transitions in Jordan, addressing challenges such as prolonged transitions, unemployment, job creation, and the impact of refugees. It also describes the educational system and government responses to transition challenges.

Chapter Three reviews theories of youth transition, understandings of successful transition, and their scholarship on the determinants, such as structural and agentic factors and their interplay. It also reviews existing conceptualisations and theories about successful transition determinants, such as individualisation theory, forms of capital, and others. Chapter Four presents an empirical review of determinants affecting youth transitions drawing from Western and MENA region literature.

Chapter Five outlines the research design, methodology, and method, covering data collection and management, sampling strategy, sample recruitment, research method, instrumentation, and fieldwork processes. Chapter Six describes Jordanian young people's pathways to transition, providing descriptions and evaluations of each pathway. Chapter Seven explores the determinants affecting Jordanian youth transitions based upon drawing on ecological analyses of individual, familial, local, national, and global factors.

Chapter Eight evaluates Jordanian young people's perceptions of successful transition determinants, considering the interplay between agency and structural factors. Finally, Chapter Nine concludes the study, summarising the key findings and research contributions and suggesting policy implications and avenues for future research.

Chapter 2: Youth Transitions in Jordan

2.1 Introduction

This chapter contextualises young people's transitions in Jordan, focusing on their labour market and educational circumstances. Section 2 starts by exploring what constitutes 'youth' in the Jordanian context. Section 3 describes the youth transition from education to work in Jordan, and Section 4 focuses on the Jordanian labour force. Section 5 covers youth and unemployment with sub-sections covering the problem of job creation programs, labour migration, informality, refugees and foreign workers and their impact on Jordanian youth transitions. Section 6 sets out the educational context in Jordan. Section 7 addresses the government's response, initiatives, and policies. Section 8 explores responses from supra-national bodies about unemployment and youth transitions, and Section 9 closes this chapter with a conclusion.

2.2 Who Counts as the Youth in Jordan?

Major international organisations define the category of youth to encompass individuals aged 15 to 24 years for statistical purposes (United Nations, 1981; UNDP, 2000; USAID, 2012). However, it was defined as "*... a life stage, one that is not finite or linear*" (USAID, 2012: p.4). Still, in the realm of policy and programming, numerous countries and organisations have opted to extend this range to acknowledge the wider spectrum of adulthood and different cultural contexts between countries. Moreover, for statistical purposes, the United Nations organisations defined youth as individuals aged between 15 and 24 years, with due consideration to alternative definitions provided by Member States (United Nations, 1981).

In Jordan, youth was defined by the National Youth Strategy 2005-2009 as encompassing young Jordanians aged between 12 and 30. According to the Strategy, in this age group, people move from childhood to adulthood and from dependence to independence (Higher Council for Youth, 2004). The Jordanian National Human Development Report argued that:

> "*Jordan youth stands at a critical crossroads in their personal lives as they navigate the challenging passage from childhood to adulthood. Most of them are making the shift from being recipients of society's care and services to becoming contributors*

to society's growth and development. In a fast-changing world, they are the generation of Jordanians that must make the fastest changes to exploit new opportunities, meet fresh challenges, and vanquish old constraints" (UNDP, 2000: p.8).

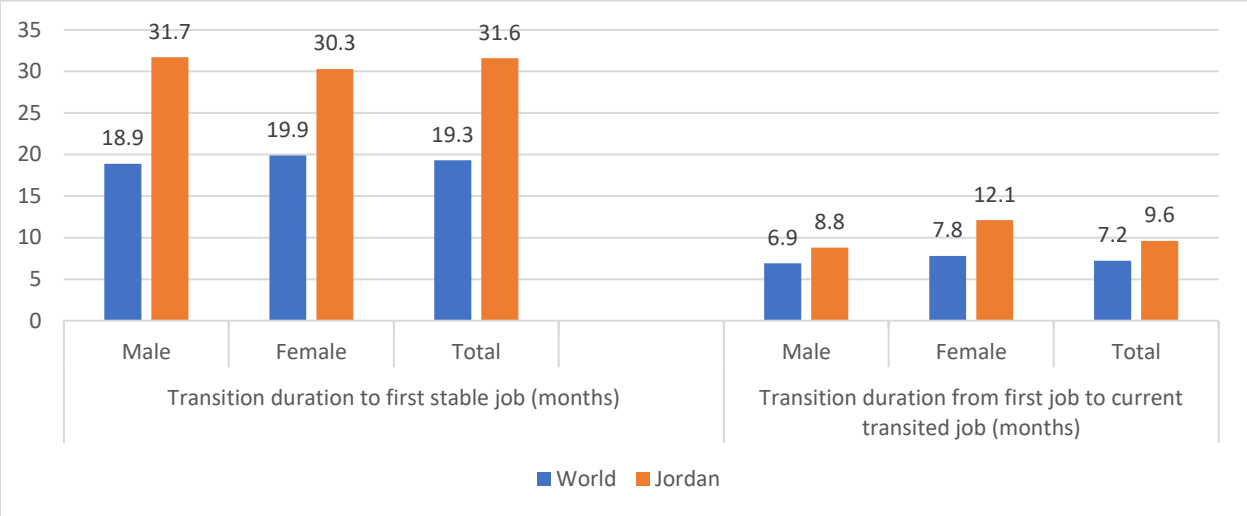
Most of the youth definitions focused on understanding the youth from a biological development perspective only, i.e., by defining the youth as individuals in a specific age cohort. However, as discussed in Chapter 3, the concept of youth is not simply defined in terms of biological development but rather as a social construction understood in terms of social and behavioural change. In other words, youth is understood not only by age but also by how they interact with society and how their societal behaviours and roles evolve during this period.

2.3 Youth Transition from Education to Work

The pivotal juncture of transitioning from school to work marks a critical milestone for young people, encapsulating their initial exposure to temporary job experiences and subsequent progression towards stable employment or satisfactory self-employment (ILO, 2022a). Stable employment is typically defined by its duration and consistency, with at least three years of continuous work in the same field (ILO, 2018). In this study, however, it will be defined based on the perspectives and experiences shared by the research participants. The provision of essential skills and knowledge to students during the educational phase becomes instrumental in facilitating seamless transitions, contingent upon market demand. This life stage is recognised as a key determinant influencing an individual's likelihood of escaping poverty (ILO, 2015).

As shown in Figure 1 below, the global average duration of completing full-time education to securing a stable job was 19.3 months in 2015, with values of 18.9 months for young men and 19.9 months for young women. Conversely, in Jordan, this transition period extended to 31.6 months, 31.7 months and 30.3 months for young men and women, respectively (ILO, 2015). Additionally, first job to current transited job (including youth with formal education only) in Jordan averaged 9.6 months, comprising 8.8 months for young men and 12.1 months for young women, compared to the global average of 7.2 months (6.9 and 7.8 months for young men and women, respectively) (*ibid.*).

Figure 1: Transition average periods from school to first job and from first job to current transited job in Jordan and the world (gender disaggregated) (ILO, 2015)



Moreover, the ILO (2013) outlined that the average duration of transitioning from education to employment in Jordan is above 52 months, which is considered a mid to lengthy transition since a substantial share of youth were unemployed or in a temporary job before obtaining a stable job. The transition period in the Arab region, including Jordan, varies among young people considering their education level, skills mismatch, gender inequality, lack of job opportunities, especially for educated youth, and provision of enabling factors, such as access to quality education, socioeconomic status, and social connections that facilitate their transitions, where some are making swift progress from education to work. In contrast, others experience a longer transition, leading to an extended period required to achieve work stability (Fakih *et al.,* 2020).

A recent study by Amer (2018) observed a noteworthy escalation in the duration of transition in Jordan between 2010 and 2016. The duration increased from 16 to 57 months for young women and 13 to 52 months for young men. The percentage securing employment within the first 12 months post-education was 12% for young men and 5% for young women. This percentage rises to 25% for young men and 13% for young women after 24 months, reaching 50% and 31% for young men and women, respectively, after 59 months. The study indicated that this sharp increase in the transition duration for both men and women was due to a substantial influx of Syrian refugees into Jordan, resulting in an economic shock and a longer and more challenging transition to the workforce. In addition, the study explained this increased transition duration in terms of a

decline in public sector job opportunities and a fragmented private sector unable to create job opportunities (*ibid.*).

Most research on youth transition from education to the labour market has primarily been in developed nations, particularly those in the Western hemisphere (refer to section 4.3 for a comprehensive discussion). In contrast, within developing countries and specifically the MENA region, existing literature primarily revolves around policy responses addressing prolonged transition periods, often neglecting the subjective perceptions of youth. Furthermore, investigations into the MENA youth's transition from education to work have predominantly adopted a quantitative approach, lacking emphasis on qualitative dimensions (Kabbani & Kothari, 2005; Assaad & Krafft, 2016).

Over the past two decades, Jordan has earnestly formulated long-, medium, and short-term strategies, along with policy responses aimed at mitigating unemployment rates and truncating the duration required for youth to integrate into the labour market. These strategies have encompassed initiatives such as vocational training, private-sector employment, entrepreneurship, and engagement in mega projects. Despite these concerted efforts, there has been a dramatic surge in unemployment, coupled with prolonged transition periods for youth entering the labour market (The Prime Ministry, 2015). This policy failure was attributed to several factors, including weak economy, lack of job opportunities, fragmented private sector, and external factors such as Syrian refugees influx into Jordan (Brown *et al.,* 2014; Amer, 2018; Assaad *et al.,* 2018; Alazzawi & Hlasny, 2022). Still, young people's perceptions were not considered previously to understand this policy failure.

2.4 Youth and the Labour Force

The labour force (employed and unemployed persons) in Jordan has increased by 97% from 1.5 million in 2004 to 2.8 million in 2022, where youth (15-29 years old) constitute around 39% of this labour force (Department of Statistics, 2004; Department of Statistics, 2015; World Bank, 2022). However, this sharp increase in the labour force was due to an influx of non-Jordanians, especially Syrian refugees, as their number increased by more than 400%. In comparison, the Jordanian labour force increased by 50% (World Bank, 2022).

Jordan's labour force has increased rapidly in the previous decade, and the large proportion of young people in it represents a unique opportunity for achieving Jordan's long-term objectives and enhancing its prosperity (Prime Ministry, 2015). This was explained through what is called "Jordan's demographic gift" stage, where the working-age population will increase from 3.4 million in 2009 to 6 million in 2030, but it seems that Jordan is reaching this point at a faster pace than expected; this means, next decade, the working age population in Jordan will be larger than the dependent population (The Higher Population Council, 2009).

The above can be explored by the dependency ratio indicator, which is the ratio of persons who are out of the labour force to the total labour force. As this ratio increases, the economy is less productive and struggling with a dependent population and pensions. This will directly impact government financial expenditures on pensions, social security and financial needs to enhance education and health infrastructures for a population under 15 years old. In Jordan, the dependency ratio reaches 66% compared to 47%, which is the maximum in European countries, for example. Still, suppose the real economic dependency ratio was taken into account (i.e., the percentage of the actual working population). In that case, the dependency ratio reaches around 80%, which means that every worker provides for himself in addition to four other persons (the real dependency ratio is 5:1) (The Higher Population Council, 2009).

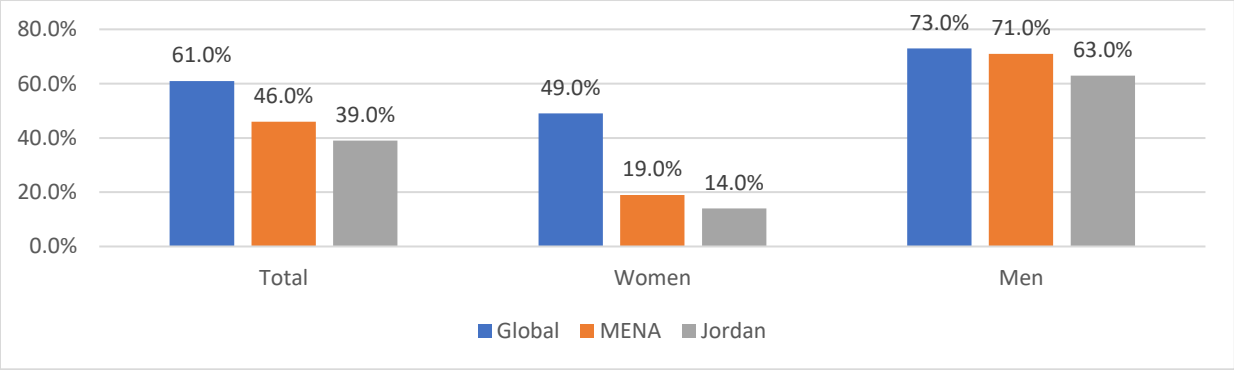
However, should Jordan not be adequately prepared to receive this gift, the bestowed blessing may become a burden, particularly impacting the young generation. This, in turn, could exacerbate the challenges of transitioning from education to the workforce and further contribute to the deepening of poverty within the country (Ministry of Labour, 2010). The Higher Population Council in Jordan explained these figures by referring to the low level of economic participation of the population, especially women. Moreover, young women's participation in the labour force has witnessed no significant change between 2010 and 2022 despite all government efforts to increase women's education and labour market participation (Department of Statistics, 2010a; Department of Statistics, 2022b).

This was demonstrated by the 'refined' economic activity rate, i.e., the total labour force (employed and unemployed) relative to the total population of age 15 and above, which declined by almost 18% from 39.5% in 2010 to 33.4% in 2022. It dropped for both men and women from 63.5% and

14.7% in 2010 to 53.1% and 13.9% in 2022, respectively (Department of Statistics, 2010b, Department of Statistics, 2022b).

As can be seen from Table 2, on global and MENA region levels, the labour force participation rate reached 61% and 46% in 2023, respectively, both significantly higher than the labour force participation rate in Jordan (39%). Similarly, women's economic participation rate reached 49% and 19% at the global and MENA region levels, surpassing Jordan's women's labour force participation rate (14%). Additionally, the economic participation rates for men were 73% globally and 71% in the MENA region, considerably higher than the Jordanian men's labour force participation rate of approximately 63% in 2023 (ILO, 2023; World Bank, 2023b).

Figure 2: Labour force participation rate comparison between Jordan, MENA, and globally, gender-disaggregated in 2023.



Source: ILO, 2023; World Bank, 2023b.

The latest 2023 World Development Indicators report by the World Bank ranks Jordan as the fourth lowest country in the world in terms of female labour force participation rates (14%), just before Iraq, Yemen, and Afghanistan's female percentage of the labour force (11% and 5% respectively for both countries) (World Bank, 2023b).

Indeed, the labour force participation rate in Jordan, especially for women, is considered one of the country's most prominent challenges. That it is amongst the lowest in the world is also reinforced by Jordan's ranking on the Gender Inequality Index of 118th out of 191 countries (UNDP, 2022) and ranked 126th of 146 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index (World Economic Forum, 2023). The limited engagement of Jordanian women in the labour force has been attributed to enduring patriarchal systems, entrenched national norms and traditions, unreliable public

transportation, and an economically fragile environment incapable of generating employment opportunities aligned with the needs of women (Mehtap *et al.,* 2016; Kaasolu *et al.,* 2019). Furthermore, women's average wage is about 12% lower than men's across all types of jobs (Department of Statistics, 2022b). Moreover, when it comes to the youth category (15-24 years old), the Jordanian youth labour force participation rate is 25%, which is equivalent to the MENA youth labour force participation rate and significantly lower than the world labour force participation rate, which stands at 40% (World Bank, 2023b).

The variations in labour force participation in Jordan compared to global and MENA region are attributed to multiple factors, including a weak economy, limited private sector investment, gender disparities, geographical location, educational attainment, marital status, patriarchal system, and a lack of job opportunities. These factors complicate individuals' transitions to the workforce (Brown *et al.,* 2014; Alawad *et al.,* 2020; Alazzawi & Hlasny, 2022). Additionally, Syrian refugees (Assaad *et al.,* 2018) and global events such as the 2008 financial crisis, the Arab Spring, and the COVID-19 pandemic have further negatively impacted labour force participation (Fakih *et al.,* 2020).

2.5 Youth and Unemployment

The government of Jordan considers unemployment and poverty the country's most complicated and critical problems. These two problems have been mentioned and explained by almost all Jordanian policies and strategies, Parliament speeches, and national research. In addition, they have been linked with most other structural issues in the country, including poor governance, corruption, inequality, poor public services, crime, and extremism (Prime Ministry, 2015). For example, in Jordan, around 2,500 citizens have joined the terrorist groups in Syria as a result of religious beliefs and a desire to escape their living circumstances due to poverty and unemployment (Benmelech & Klor, 2020). Several studies have shown that youth unemployment and poverty could become a significant source of threat to the overall community from social, economic, political, and psychological perspectives, where they could turn into agents of instability in the community and foster extremism and terrorism (McEvoy-Levy, 2001; Loza, 2007; Bell & Blanchflower, 2010). Moreover, youth unemployment and poverty can lead to other effects, including but not limited to depression, delay of marriage age, hostility (Hussainat *et al.,* 2013), social exclusion, and prolonged youth transitions (Moore, 2005).

Overall, Jordanian unemployment has dramatically increased by almost 82%, from 12.5% in 2010 to 22.8% in 2022. It fluctuated around 11% and 22% for men and women in the previous decade but increased to 20.6% and 31.4% for men and women, respectively, in 2022 (Department of Statistics, 2010a; Department of Statistics, 2022b).

In Jordan, unemployment is defined according to international statistical standards as people aged 15 and above who are not working, are available for work, and are actively seeking employment (Department of Statistics, 2018). However, Jordan lacks an unemployment social safety system for individuals who have never worked or who have worked in the informal sector. Instead, Jordan operates a contributory unemployment insurance scheme, providing financial support to eligible individuals during periods of unemployment. To participate, individuals must contribute 1.5% of their monthly income to the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) (Al Sondos, 2019). Eligibility for support under this scheme depends on the duration of social security contributions: individuals with over 180 months of contributions receive up to six months of support, while those with less than 180 months qualify for a maximum of three months (Social Security Corporation, 2014).

Table 1 below shows that a concerning trend exists when correlating the Jordanian unemployment percentage with varying levels of education. The data reveals that the unemployment ratio increases with increased educational attainment. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced among young women, where unemployment for those holding bachelor's degrees and higher has surged to an alarming 80% in 2022. In stark contrast, young men experience a considerably lower unemployment rate of 27% for the same educational bracket. This disturbing reversal in the relationship between education and unemployment has intensified over the past decade, exacerbating the challenges faced by graduates. To illustrate, in 2010, the unemployment ratio for individuals with bachelor's degrees or more stood at above 34%, but this figure has since escalated to above 42% in 2022. This significant increase underscores a deepening crisis in the employment landscape for highly educated young people, especially women.

This was explained by the weak economy and the scarcity of job opportunities for graduates, an increased mismatch between education outputs and labour market demand, especially for university graduates and their lack of practical experience, and high parental and family

expectations of young people regarding the necessity to complete their higher education (Alawad *et al.,* 2020; Ismail *et al.,* 2020; Khlifat & Al Khateeb, 2023).

Furthermore, it is disturbing that the unemployment ratio for those with educational attainment below secondary education has remained persistently high, hovering around 45%, throughout the previous decade. This stagnant trend highlights a pervasive and enduring challenge for individuals with lower levels of education, indicating a need for targeted interventions to address the systemic issues contributing to their employment struggles (Department of Statistics, 2010a; Department of Statistics, 2022b).

Table 1: Jordanian unemployment percentage by educational level disaggregated by gender 2010 – 2022.

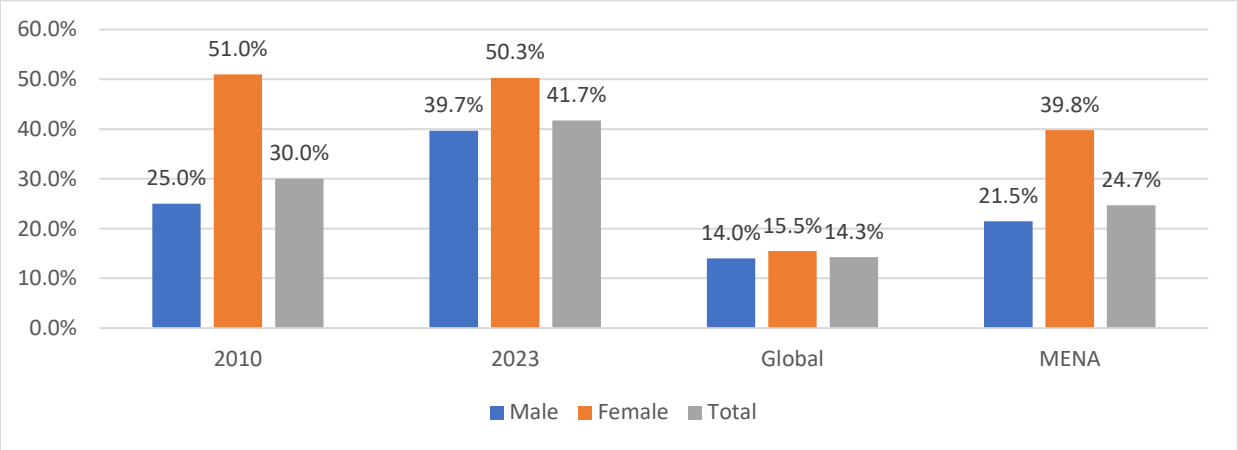
Education Level	2010			2022		
	Male	**Female**	**Total**	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**
Illiteracy	1.2	0.1	0.8	0.6	0.0	0.4
Less than Secondary	62.1	9.8	45.4	59.7	5.7	44.1
Secondary	9.7	5.1	8.2	8.0	2.6	6.4
Diploma	5.8	23.6	11.5	4.9	11.8	6.9
Bachelor and above	21.2	61.5	34.1	27.0	79.8	42.2
Overall	**10.4**	**21.7**	**12.5**	**20.6**	**31.4**	**22.8**

Source: Department of Statistics, Employment and Unemployment Databases 2010, 2022

Youth unemployment is a stagnant and persistent issue in Jordan, where almost half of the unemployed persons are youth. The proportion of persons unemployed for more than a year has increased dramatically from 34.3% in 2010 to 51.2% in 2022, which means that unemployment becomes more persistent and young people have increasing difficulty finding a job when they become long-term unemployed (Department of Statistics, 2010a; Department of Statistics, 2022b). However, the percentage of self-employed and paid employees has increased from 9.2% and 83.5% in 2010 to 13.3% and 86.2% in 2022, respectively. (*ibid.*). The rise in the percentage of self-employed individuals among young people can be seen as a response to their difficulty in moving into paid employment. Many young people have started their own businesses as a means to generate income and avoid unemployment.

Youth unemployment in Jordan surged from 30% in 2010 to nearly 42% in 2023. During this period, unemployment among young men increased by almost 60%, while the unemployment rate for young women remained relatively unchanged (World Bank, 2023). Figure 3 below highlights the substantial differences between Jordanian youth unemployment rates (for young men and women aged 15-24) in 2010 and 2023, compared to global and MENA youth unemployment rates for the same age group in 2023. The figure reveals that youth unemployment in Jordan (41.7%) is almost three times the global average of 14.3% and significantly higher than the MENA average of 24.7%. The gender-specific unemployment rates in Jordan are also notably higher compared to global and MENA averages, with the unemployment rate for young women in Jordan exceeding three times the global average.

Figure 3: Youth unemployment rate in Jordan 2010 and 2023 vs. Global and MENA rates by gender*.



* Data sources (World Bank, 2023)

Following the above discussions on labour force status in Jordan, the increased youth unemployment and the prolonged youth transition from education to work have continued to be complex problems in Jordan. The Government of Jordan has developed several strategies and policies to mitigate these challenges. Still, these issues keep deepening, and the youth transition period is increasing to more than double the global average (International Labour Organisation, 2015). The below sections explain youth unemployment and its effects in prolonging transitions in relation to key challenges, including job creation in the country, labour migration and informality, refugees, and foreign workers.

2.5.1. Youth and Job Creation Problem in Jordan

As shown in Table 2, the net created jobs in Jordan decreased by 8% from 62,813 jobs in 2010 to 58,079 jobs in 2021. This decline indicates a slowdown in the country's economy and an increase in unemployment rates, ultimately affecting young people's transitions from education to work. However, it has been found that men acquired more than 60% of the net-created jobs during the previous years. Moreover, youth's (age group 15-29) share of the net created jobs increased by 5% from 56,989 jobs in 2010 to 59,874 jobs in 2021. However, the Jordanian nationals' share of net created jobs decreased by 8% from 55,296 jobs in 2010 to 50,716 in 2021 (Department of Statistics, 2010b; Department of Statistics, 2021a).

Moreover, Table 2 shows that Amman, the capital of Jordan, hosts more than half of the net created jobs, followed by Irbid governorate in the north of Jordan with 13% of the net created jobs annually. Analysing the net created jobs by educational level in the previous decade shows that most of the net created jobs are for people with secondary education or less and with bachelor's degree and above, 48% and 44% on average, respectively. People with vocational apprenticeships acquire a very low percentage of the net created jobs, only 1% on average in the previous decade, where women have almost no created jobs in this field (*Ibid.*).

Table 2: Net Job Creation Indicators 2010 – 2021

Indicator	2010			2021			Change
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Net created jobs	39,336	23,477	62,813	35016	23,063	58,079	-8%
Net created jobs (15-29 years)	37823	19166	56989	42109	17765	59,874	5%
% of 15–29-year net created jobs	96%	82%	91%	120%	77%	103%	
Net created jobs for Jordanian	36383	18913	55296	31005	19711	50716	-8%
% of net created jobs taken by Jordanian	92%	81%	88%	89%	85%	87%	-1%
Net created jobs in Amman	20729	13621	34350	18014	10810	28824	-16%
Net created jobs in Irbid	3711	2683	6394	5446	4360	9806	53%
Net created jobs for secondary education and less	22095	8298	30393	20789	7389	28178	-7%
Net-created jobs for vocational apprenticeship	916	26	942	-32	0	-32	-103%
Net created jobs for intermediate diploma	3384	2392	5776	559	1493	2052	-64%

Net created jobs for bachelor's degrees and above	12942	12762	25704	13700	14182	27882	8%

* Data sources (Department of Statistics, 2010a; Department of Statistics, 2021a)

In 2010, the national employment strategy in Jordan indicated that Jordan's economy creates annually, on average, 50,000 new jobs; around 60% of these new jobs were taken by youth in the age group 15-24 while at the same time, around 40,000 students on average graduated annually from universities and colleges, which leaves more than 35% of graduate students without job opportunities (Ministry of Labour, 2010). The situation worsened in the previous decade when the number of higher education graduates increased to reach about 60,000 (Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, 2016), as people's interest in completing their education increased as a solution to finding a job, but with the same level of net created jobs, which amplify the difficulties for young people in finding a job and making young people's transitions from education to work more challenging. Several drivers led to these results, starting with the increased number of people who complete their education in college and universities, but mainly in fields not required or fully saturated in the labour market, in addition to a weak economy that is unable to expand and create more job opportunities (Ministry of Labour, 2010, The Prime Ministry, 2015).

2.5.2. Youth, Labour Migration and Informality

Jordan exhibits an unusual labour migration profile influenced by its role in channelling skilled and educated workers to the Gulf region and globally while simultaneously drawing in unskilled and low-educated workers to engage in agriculture, industry and services sectors, as explained in Jordan's national employment strategy (NES) (Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation & Ministry of Labour, 2011). According to the 2011-2020 NES, labour migration and how it affects the Jordanian economy and society are not understood and debated in Jordan. However, Jordanian governments have supported the policy of sending skilled workers to the Gulf and the rest of the world, considering the positive impact of their remittances on the country's economy. The government's main interest is to increase and enhance the economy through the direct effect of remittances that supplement Gross National Income (GNI), the balance of payment, household incomes and expenditures due to direct family support through remittances. Moreover, the migration of skilled workers has helped reduce youth unemployment, especially among university and skilled graduates ('brain drain'). At the same time, it has started to become a pattern among

youth to migrate to get better opportunities (*Ibid.*).

However, the current pattern of sending skilled and educated workers and receiving unskilled or semi-skilled workers is not sustainable for the country's economy. It is susceptible to changing Jordan's political relations with the receiving countries and their economic progress, especially since these countries depend on oil prices to sustain their economies. Moreover, the costs associated with the brain drain include transferring youth workforce with high productivity to the receiving countries, transferring government education subsidies invested to the receiving countries, labour shortages among highly skilled and talented workers, professionals, entrepreneurs and managers, creating superficial consumption pattern among households based on the remittances they receive, i.e., insecure income streams, and raising unrealistic youth expectations as a result of comparing the receiving countries' wages with the local wages and becoming more dependent on the monthly remittances they receive from family members (Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation & Ministry of Labour, 2011).

The dynamic of the current youth labour migration has affected Jordan's labour force productivity within the country and hampered the building of its human resources base towards a knowledge-based economy, which was the aim of the National Agenda 2006-2015.

However, Jordan's economy is services-oriented, accounting for almost 79% of workers, 12% in the industry sector, 7% in construction and 2% in agriculture. In addition, nearly 46% of total employment in Jordan is informal (with 85% of non-Jordanians working informally), constituting more than 25% of the economy's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Sobh, 2017). The informal sector includes all economic activities, excluding illicit activities, that remain unregistered and, consequently, are excluded from official GDP calculations (*ibid.*). This definition extends to informal employment. In this study, informal work refers to young individuals employed in unregistered enterprises or those not enrolled in social security schemes. Informality influences Jordanian job growth towards low-skilled and low-value-added sectors, such as the service sector, where most jobs are created. Indeed, informality is a challenge in the MENA region as it constitutes almost a third of its GDP and employs around 65% of the labour force, compared to 13% in developed countries (Gatti *et al.,* 2014).

2.5.3. Foreign Workers and Refugees

With high unemployment rates, especially among youth, Jordan estimated that more than 658,000 of the labour force are foreign workers. Still, unofficial figures estimated this figure to be almost one million, with nearly two-thirds working in the informal sector, where they work mainly in construction, agriculture and manufacturing (41%, 38% and 37% of respective workforces in each sector) (The Prime Ministry, 2015). In 2015, as a result of the Syrian refugees' influx and other nationalities who are working already in the country, the non-Jordanian labour force (almost one million) reached 34% of the total labour force (2.86 million), most of them being Egyptians and Syrians (Department of Statistics, 2015).

To lower the pressure on the available scarce jobs, the government of Jordan has committed to an ambitious programme to create 200,000 jobs for Syrian refugees, conditional on sufficient international support that can boost the country's economy and provide more jobs for Jordanians (World Bank, 2016). This was likely to result in a dramatic surge in competition between Jordanian workers and other foreign workers, given the very limited and scarce available jobs, and might have the effect of inflaming outrage among Jordanian youth, deepening unemployment amongst Jordanian youth, and enhancing social disintegration (ILO, 2017a).

However, based on the latest figures, more than 100,000 Syrian refugees have working permits in Jordan (The Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 2016), which increased to 230,000 in 2021 (Stave *et al.,* 2021). Nevertheless, there are over 486,000 Jordanians registered in the Civil Service Bureau (CSB), the public entity in charge of public sector employment, who are on a waiting list for a public-sector position because of the very positive perception of public sector job security and related benefits such as health insurance, social security and social status (The Prime Ministry, 2015; Civil Service Bureau, 2023). This scheme is available only for young Jordanian people with a college or university education level. In contrast, others with less or no education have minimal chance of getting a job in the public sector, so their leading employers are the private sector, family businesses, or the informal sector. Hence, foreign workers, including Syrian refugees, have a high impact on job availability for Jordanian young people seeking jobs in agriculture, construction, industry, and mainly in the service sector jobs as the leading employer in the country.

The number of foreign workers in Jordan has rapidly increased, especially after the influx of Syrian refugees. Most of them work in agriculture, manufacturing, trade and services sectors, noting that less than 7.5% of these workers have vocational certificates, and more than 90% have less than high school education (Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation & Ministry of Labour, 2011). This intense competition for scarce jobs resulted in more extended transition periods from education to work for men and women across the country.

2.6 Jordanian Education System

The Jordanian education system starts with two years of pre-school education (Kindergarten 1 and 2) for the ages 4 and 5, respectively. This pre-school level is followed by ten years of compulsory education (grades 1 to 10) for ages 6 to 15. After completing compulsory primary education, students have two options for secondary education: comprehensive secondary education (academic) or applied secondary education (vocational), where they can spend two years between the ages of 16 and 17 (Abu-Ghaida, 2016). After completing secondary education, students can continue into their tertiary education based on their secondary education grades. This tertiary education level is divided into college (usually two years) or university (4 to 5 years) tracks (Abu-El-Haija & Alkhader, 2017).

Jordan's education system is recognised as a pivotal asset, significantly contributing to the nation's human capital assets (The Prime Ministry, 2015). However, in the latest decade, the Jordanian education system has declined in its quality and scope, as indicated by several researchers, due to the growing number of entrants into the education system, the impacts of Syrian refugees, low investment in the public education system, and the declining standard of teaching in the country (Bataineh & Montalbano, 2018; Assaad *et al.,* 2023; Hicks & Duan, 2023). Indeed, net enrolment in basic education declined from 98% in 2014 to 94.5% in 2022. In contrast, net secondary educational enrolment increased from 74% in 2014 to 77% in 2022, mainly due to female students' participation, which increased from 78% to 83% between 2014 and 2022 (Ministry of Education, 2014; Ministry of Education, 2022).

Furthermore, Jordan maintains a mandatory system, legally obliging families to ensure the enrolment of their children. Thanks to the government's commitment to promoting education, female student enrolment has witnessed significant improvement over the past two to three

decades, achieving a female-to-male student ratio of more than 100 in both basic and secondary education stages (Department of Statistics, 2010a; Department of Statistics, 2022b). Moreover, the female-to-male student ratio at the university level increased from 103.5 in 2010 to 125 in 2022, and the illiteracy rate among the population aged 15+ years declined significantly from 7% in 2010 to 4.9% in 2022 for both men and women (*Ibid.*).

Indeed, with the latest influx of Syrian refugees to Jordan and the huge pressure on the education sector infrastructure, the government has struggled to sustain positive education sector outcomes. The available evidence discussed above shows that Jordan's education system has begun to decline, particularly in the public school system. However, the demand for public schools has increased by almost 10%, from nearly 70% of students in 2010 to above 79% in 2022 (Department of Statistics, 2004; Department of Statistics, 2022). This resulted from increased private school fees beyond middle-class families' financial capacity and diminished financial assets due to the country's high inflation rates and cost of living (UNICEF, 2020).

Nevertheless, in the face of the abrupt surge in demand triggered by the influx of Syrian refugees and insufficient financial backing from regional and international communities to address this crisis, the Jordanian education sector showed higher resilience in absorbing new students. Over the past decade, the average number of students in a classroom has remained relatively stable, consistently hovering around 26 at the primary level. Similarly, the students-to-teacher ratio at both the basic education and secondary education phases has remained stable, maintaining levels of approximately 17 students per teacher at the basic education level and 11 students per teacher at the secondary education level (Department of Statistics, 2010a; Department of Statistics, 2022b).

The education outcomes represented by the quality and excellence of students who graduated from public schools have declined. This was demonstrated by Jordan's overall trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) at the basic and secondary stages, which fell by 5%, whilst almost all comparable economies improved their scores between 2011 and 2015 (National Centre for Human Resources Development, 2017). Furthermore, Jordan's universities are falling short of producing graduates with the skills and experience employers require. This is underscored by the prevailing focus of Jordanian universities on academic curriculum instead of vocational

education and training, which is one of the key skills needed in the labour market (Prime Ministry, 2015). Indeed, TVET's importance was indicated by several policies and strategies in Jordan, but it still faces several challenges, including the public's unwillingness to enrol in this track.

2.7 Jordanian Government's Responses to the Problems of Youth Unemployment and Transitions

As discussed above, youth unemployment and transitions have been stagnant and persistent issues in Jordan for decades. The government established a set of measures to resolve these issues by stimulating economic growth and creating jobs. Economic and social reforms in Jordan began in the early 1990s through five-year plans to make Jordan an investment-driven and knowledge-based economy to enhance the welfare and standard of living of the Jordanian population, especially the poor (The Prime Ministry, 2015).

Initiated in 2001, the Social and Economic Transformation Programme (SETP) aimed to enhance human resources and improve public service quality and efficiency, including through privatisation. However, the country's economic and physical improvements were marginal, and issues such as poverty, unemployment, and budget deficits persisted (European Training Foundation, 2006).

To address these, the Prime Ministry launched a three-year plan, the National Social and Economic Plan (NSEP), focusing on poverty alleviation, sustainable growth, and public sector enhancement. This included completing privatisation, encouraging private investment, and tackling unemployment, particularly among youth. Complementing this, the National Agenda 2006-2015 aimed to improve physical and financial conditions and public services and create jobs through Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) (The Prime Ministry, 2015).

The National Agenda's first phase (2006-2012) focused on labour-intensive growth and eradicating structural unemployment. The second phase (2013-2017) aimed to enhance the industrial base with a skilled labour force. The third phase (2018 onward) targets transforming Jordan into a global knowledge economy competitor (The Prime Ministry, 2005). However, despite recognising TVET's importance, the economy struggled to absorb the growing number of job seekers, as evidenced by the increased unemployment percentage and youth transition duration (Amer, 2018;

Department of Statistics, 2022b).

The National Agenda 2006-2015 recognised the importance of TVET, where one theme in this strategy was allocated to employment support and vocational education and training. It shows that the Jordanian economy has developed but has not absorbed the increasing annual inflow of new job seekers. The National Agenda explained it by the fragmentation and inefficiency of the job placement agencies network, poorly trained and uncommitted graduates from the vocational training sector, and lack of private sector collaboration with vocational training centres, which widened the gap between private sector needs and vocational training and education graduates' skills. The National Agenda 2006-2015 explained the failure to resolve this issue due to fragmented solutions and programmes and the lack of a holistic approach. As a result of the national agenda 2006-2015 diagnosis of unemployment, especially youth unemployment, it has provided three objectives to pursue, including adequate training programmes aligned with market needs to increase workforce employability, less stringent labour laws to improve labour force flexibility and productivity with the introduction of safety nets and effective job placement and activate the economically inactive population, especially women, to increase workforce size (The Prime Ministry, 2015).

Several initiatives were introduced to achieve employment support and vocational training goals, including restructuring institutional frameworks, establishing councils for strategy and oversight, matching labour force demand, creating insurance schemes for job seekers, and increasing public awareness about vocational training (The Prime Ministry, 2015). The "*We Are All Jordan*" document (2006) emphasised private sector participation in designing vocational education and training systems (The Prime Ministry, 2006).

Jordan's National Employment Strategy (NES) 2011-2020 aimed to improve employment, wages, and productivity. It highlighted the mismatch between labour supply and demand and the public sector's attractiveness over the private sector. NES also pointed out TVET's fragmentation and the slow pace of reforms (Ministry of Labour, 2011).

In 2011, Jordan's National Employment Strategy (NES) 2011-2020 was developed based on the overall vision laid out by the National Agenda 2006-2015, with a focus on employment generation and improving standards of living for Jordanians through increased decent employment, wages,

benefits and productivity gains. It investigated investment policies, fiscal and monetary policies, education and higher education, vocational education and training and social welfare from the perspective of their impact on employment. NES complements the National Agenda 2006-2015, focusing on employment issues (Ministry of Labour, 2010).

NES analysed the mismatch of supply and demand in Jordan's labour force, where around 120,000 students take the high school "Tawjihi" exam every year, and about 50% pass it. Around 45,000 students enrol in universities, and around 6,000 in community colleges, considering that Jordan University graduates around 40,000 students yearly. Jordan's economy has dramatically declined the number of jobs created in the last decade, as explained previously, whereby in 2016, only almost 51 thousand jobs were created. Only 36% of these jobs went to university graduates and above (more than 18,000 jobs), and 4% went to diploma graduates (less than 2,000 jobs). Accordingly, around 25,000 university graduates become unemployed or economically inactive yearly (Ministry of Education, 2016/2017, Department of Statistics, 2016).

Nevertheless, NES did not analyse the 60,000 students who did not pass the high school exam, whether they joined the unemployed or became economically inactive. Furthermore, vocational education graduates took only 520 jobs, with 1.0% of net created jobs and no jobs for women in 2016 (Department of Statistics, 2016).

However, NES suggested that the mismatch is not only in quantity but also in the quality of graduated students, especially humanities and social science students who are not equipped with the skills they need in the workplace and even in the scientific, technological, and engineering fields. NES also showed that the public sector, at that time, was creating jobs in large numbers and was the first employee choice, especially for youth. Their analysis reveals results that differ from the notion of a "*culture of shame*" surrounding vocational jobs. It shows that entry-level wages, benefits, working hours, and working conditions drive employees' choices. The public sector offers more advantages than the private sector, making it more attractive to job seekers, especially youth. Moreover, solving labour supply by balancing sending creative, professional and skilled workers and receiving less-skilled foreign workers has contributed to more difficulties in building Jordan's human resource base towards a knowledge-based economy (Ministry of Labour, 2011).

TVET in Jordan exhibits notable weaknesses and a fragmented structure comprising four distinct

public segments. Firstly, *community colleges* fall under the purview of Al-Balqa Applied University[1]. Secondly, secondary vocational education is for 11th and 12th-grade students, overseen by the Ministry of Education (MOE). The third segment is the *Vocational Training Corporation* (VTC), under the Ministry of Labour's (MOL) jurisdiction. The fourth segment, the *National Employment Training Company* (NET), was abolished in 2015 while under the supervision of the Armed Forces (Mayen *et al.,* 2006). Additionally, various private and non-profit entities contribute to TVET in Jordan.

Community colleges are the primary source of technical and vocational graduates, although the enrolment of young people in these programs remains low. In 2016, vocational college students were below 15,000, increasing to over 34,000 by 2020. However, most college students are still enrolled in humanitarian and applied tracks, with less than 12% of young women participating (Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, 2016; Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, 2020).

Furthermore, data from 2010 indicates that the total number of MOE vocational track students in 11th and 12th grades was approximately 24,000, constituting around 12% of the total high school student population (Ministry of Education, 2010). Despite a slight increase in total vocational track students in 2021, surpassing 27,000, the percentage of vocational track entrants relative to overall high school entrants continues to decline, falling to just above 10%.

According to 2011-2020 Jordan's National Employment Strategy (NES), students in the MOE vocational stream can specialise in four main training fields: industry, agriculture, home economies and hotel management. NES explains the main challenges faced by students in the MOE vocational streams as academic failure stigma associated with the vocational stream, inefficient facilities, obsolete equipment, apathetic instructors, lack of applied and hands-on training, and no involvement of the private sector (Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation & Ministry of Labour, 2011).

Vocational Training Centre (VTC) was launched in 1976 to serve and enhance economic growth by preparing a human cadre specialised in vocational occupations. From 1976 to 2021, VTC

[1] It is the only University in Jordan responsible about TVET by law.

graduated around 420,000 students, an average of about 9,000 annually. These centres currently serve students who fail in the public vocational schooling system and others interested in learning vocational occupations provided by the centres with educational levels. VTC has 42 centres across the country: 10 in the north, 22 in the centre, and 10 in the south regions. In 2021, more than 10,000 students (36% of whom were women) were enrolled in different vocational occupations provided by the centres, such as plumbing and central heating, electronics, computer and information technology, textiles and leather industry, pharmaceutical and tourism services where 66% of the enrolled students graduated (42% women) (Vocational Training Corporate, 2021).

Jordan has initiated several attempts to absorb its labour force by promoting foreign direct investment (FDI) in Jordan, creating jobs through private sector growth encouragement, and initiating and activating several other strategies to boost employment, including the National Employment Strategy 2011-2020. However, despite the importance of TVET as one of the key solutions for youth unemployment that can enhance their transitions from education to work, as indicated by the government, the above shows very low youth enrolment compared to other education streams in the country.

2.8 Responses from Supra-National Bodies

The World Bank conducted a study to address Jordan's labour market paradox of simultaneous economic growth and high unemployment. The study identified three key factors contributing to labour market mismatches: geographical, employability, and expectations factors. The geographical factor refers to new jobs being located far from prospective workers. The employability factor highlights employers' preference for foreign workers due to their productivity and workplace behaviour, despite Jordanian workers having adequate education, vocational training, and experience. The expectations factor points to Jordanian workers' unrealistic optimism about employment prospects and earning potential (World Bank, 2008).

The World Bank study provided a strategy to resolve this unemployment paradox by aligning employment policies with the National Agenda 2006-2015 goals to make Jordan a knowledge-based economy. According to the World Bank study, this will be achieved in the long term by removing all legal and regulatory distortions, using skilled Jordanian workers, discouraging the use of unskilled foreign labour, and encouraging the creation of new businesses. In the short term,

incentives for Jordanian workers need to be increased with a social protection system in place, the removal of incentives and benefits discrepancies between public and private sectors, and the promotion of the notion that all types of work are respectable through social marketing and broad dissemination of labour market data.

Moreover, the government of Jordan has developed strategies and policies to ensure Jordanian youth education and skills match the demand of the regional and international labour force, especially in the Gulf region. This was done through a dedicated government department (Outplacement Department) to study regional and international labour force demands and align them with Jordanian education outcomes. The government of Jordan has implemented several measures to support job seekers and improve the labour market. These include designing an insurance scheme to help job seekers stay in the labour force and motivate the economically inactive population to join the workforce. This initiative also aims to provide accurate unemployment figures. Additionally, a licensing and accreditation council was established to regulate the vocational training sector and align training programs with market needs. Efforts have been made to raise public awareness about vocational education and training, gradually replace foreign labour, reduce the informal sector, and increase the participation of disabled individuals and women in the workforce (The Prime Ministry, 2006 and The Prime Ministry, 2015).

The measures the Jordanian government has taken to address youth unemployment and transitions reflect a comprehensive policy agenda. However, persistent high unemployment and lengthy transitions indicate that these policies may be ineffective. To improve outcomes, it is crucial to integrate young people's perceptions and address the socio-economic factors influencing youth unemployment and transitions. This approach will help the government better tailor its strategies and policies, ultimately enhancing youth transitions and reducing unemployment.

2.9 Conclusion

Despite Jordan's ambitious efforts to enhance young people's transition experience, reduce unemployment rates, increase labour force participation rates for women, and transform the economy into a knowledge-based one, the figures indicate no significant improvement. The transition of youth from education to work remains a significant challenge. To address this, considering youth perceptions is essential for evaluating policy responses to ensure they are

relevant and aligned with young people's actual needs, aspirations, and challenges.

By incorporating youth perspectives, policies are more likely to address the real issues young people face, making them more effective and relevant. This inclusion fosters a sense of ownership and engagement among the youth with the policy outcomes. Youth perspectives offer valuable insights into barriers and challenges that may not be apparent to policymakers, helping to identify the root causes of issues like youth unemployment and long transitions, leading to more effective interventions.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Review: Successful Youth Transitions and their Determinants

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive theoretical framework to guide the analysis of the study results. It covers the theoretical understanding of youth, youth labour market transitions, and the determinants of 'successful' transitions. It also examines different theories on these transitions, their strengths and weaknesses, and current knowledge gaps.

Section 3.2 explores the concept of youth, its theoretical definitions, and the definition used in this thesis. Section 3.3 discusses the conceptualisation of youth transitions, the theoretical framework for defining them, and how this definition applies to the study. Section 3.4 addresses the concept of successful youth transitions, including its measurement and theoretical perceptions, and how it will be used in this study. Section 3.5 examines key determinants of successful transitions, focusing on structural factors, agency, and their duality.

Section 3.6 reviews various theories on the determinants of youth transitions from education to work, including labour market segmentation, social cognitive career, structuration, individualisation, and forms of capital theories. It also discusses these theories' implications, strengths, and weaknesses for this research. Section 3.7 presents a comprehensive theoretical framework to inform the analysis of the study results, and Section 3.8 is the Chapter conclusion.

3.2 Defining Youth

In the previous chapter, ‘youth’ in the Jordanian context was defined according to how it is operationalised in the key policies and strategies in the country. In defining youth in Jordan, the main factor was their age, ranging from 12 to 30 years, which is the typical duration of their move from childhood to adulthood. Still, for the purpose of this research, the targeted youth age is from 20 to 29 years (see Chapters 2 and 5) to ensure that the young people have moved into the labour market and can respond to the needs of this study. A sociological definition of the youth is key for this research based on young people’s understanding of their social roles and behaviours from a theoretical perspective.

Youth is a life stage defined not solely by biological development but by social behaviour changes and social constructs, such as transitioning to adulthood and independence (Galland, 1991; Schäfer, 2015). Researchers argue that categorising youth based on age needs a theoretical foundation (White & Wyn, 1996). Understanding youth sociology requires a framework explaining social and economic transitions, like moving from education to work, forming a family, or entering the labour market (Allen, 1968). Conceptualisations of youth are extending, recognising that youth are not homogeneous and come from various social backgrounds (Jones, 1988). By the late 20th century, youth definitions expanded to include social, cultural, economic, and educational circumstances (Wallace & Kovacheva, 1995).

Thus, Youth is marked by transitions from dependence to independence and childhood to adulthood, encompassing education to work, leaving the parental home, and forming a family (Mitterauer, 1993). However, these transitions vary by location, gender, and economic situation (Bernardi *et al.,* 2005; Scherger *et al.,* 2016). Youth is a relational and dynamic concept influenced by social, cultural, political, and economic contexts (White & Wyn, 1996; Walther, 2006). Recently, conceptualising youth has become more complex and unpredictable, particularly in the MENA region (Assaad *et al.,* 2019; AlAzzawi & Hlasny, 2020), including Jordan (Amer, 2018).

For example, suppose the transition to work conceptualises youth. In that case, this transition phase might not be linked to a specific age group (15-30 years old, for example), as it has been delayed and has become more complex (Furlong & Cartmel, 2006; Raffe, 2008; Roberts, 2009). Similarly, young people's transition from education to work, in addition to other stages of transition such as forming a family or moving out of the parental home, can be highly gendered and different for young men and women (e.g., in the MENA region) (Assaad & Krafft, 2016). Moreover, leaving education and moving to work becomes more challenging as some people move into the labour market, but sometimes, they have to reverse their transition and return to education (Mizen, 2004; Schoon *et al.,* 2009; Nilsson, 2019).

Researchers from social and psychological perspectives criticised the conceptualisation of youth in terms of transition stages occurring within a particular generation (Cohen, 1997; Wyn & Woodman, 2006). The social generations theory that conceptualised youth in relation to their transition stages shed light on the changing contexts that influenced the opportunity structures for

young people in specific generational cohorts (Wyn & Woodman, 2006; Roberts, 2007, 2009), but according to Mannheim (1952), there are key elements that conceptualise a generation such as sharing the location, i.e., it is not only about sharing the same period/time but about sharing the same social conditions, experiences and challenges, and that generations shape people's subjectivity, i.e., the location can influence individuals' actions, such as their transition from education to work, feelings and expressions (MacDonald, 2022). However, although a generation can share the location and subjectivity, this does not mean young people share the same beliefs and values (Woodman, 2016).

In the MENA region, defining youth in relation to generational cohort changes in transitions from education to work was evident within various studies that examine young people's transitions from a quantitative perspective (Assaad & Krafft, 2014; Amer, 2018; Assaad *et al.,* 2019), and also Chapter Four provides further details. These studies explained young people's transition structure during the previous and the current centuries and how these transitions were changing over time from one generation to another in relation to the different socioeconomic, political, cultural, and labour market contexts (Assaad & Krafft, 2016; Assaad *et al.,* 2019).

Defining youth based on their transitions presumes 'normative expectations' such as moving into the labour market, having their own place, and starting a family, which researchers consider '*faulty'* if young people do not meet these expectations (Henze, 2014). This is related to the opportunity structure theory, which explains young people's education to work transition "now" and "then" with reference to the differences between periods (Roberts, 2009). It explains the inter-relationships between the different factors, such as young people's education, family background, location, gender, labour market processes, and employer practices. Moreover, young people with greater structural advantages or individual attributes have better chances of entering the labour market with more control over their options and choices. This indicates they have greater agency and access to higher structured opportunities (Hitlin & Elder, 2007).

Youth is a life stage that is characterised by moving from childhood to adulthood or dependence to independence, i.e., having a source of income that facilitates forming a family, getting married and living in a separate house from parents (Silver, 2007). However, these transitions have become challenging and uncertain because of the increased number of young people seeking jobs,

declining job opportunities, and the increased number of young people with higher education (Furlong *et al.,* 2003). As a result, some studies, especially for developing countries and the MENA region, called this period "waithood" (Salehi-Isfahani & Dhillon, 2008; Assaad *et al.,* 2019), where young people stay in a waiting period to move into their adulthood. Moreover, other researchers studied young people's life stages called the duration before transition into a satisfactory job, the "Exploratory Stage" (Super, 1957) or "Initial Period" (Miller & Form, 1964), or the "Tentative Period" (Ginzberg *et al.,* 1951). Furthermore, these periods fall in the "early adulthood" stage, without a specific start or end timing point for youth-related concepts (Crites, 1976). However, early adulthood is a critical phase for young people that can define the success of their transitions. Still, these changes in young people's transitions demonstrate the difficulty of conceptualising youth in relation to their age and transition stages, considering that generations' transition contexts have significantly changed (Côté & Bynner, 2008).

Indeed, the literature confirmed that young people's transition stages could overlap, be reversed, or occur without order, which indicates that defining youth in relation to these transition stages could be misleading when defining youth should be linked to their socioeconomic, political, and cultural conditions (White & Wyn, 1996). From the researcher's point of view, conceptualising youth theoretically in this research depends on their roles of moving from dependence to independence and how they are affected by the different structural and agentic factors as explained above, where they move from education to work and start getting a source of income that facilitate their other transitions such as having their own place and forming a family.

The employment statistics in Jordan for 2021 revealed a significant trend where nearly 95% of the newly generated jobs were secured by individuals aged 20-29. Specifically, 54% of these jobs were held by those in the 20-24 age group, while the remaining 41% were taken up by individuals aged 25-29 (Department of Statistics, 2021b). Section 2.4.2 provides comprehensive insights into job creation. Given the pronounced concentration of job opportunities in the 20-29 age group, the researcher has chosen to focus on individuals in this demographic for this research; this age range is widely recognised for statistical and policy considerations, particularly as it marks the transition of youth from education to work in Jordan. Consequently, this demographic aligns with the project's criteria, as individuals within this age group possess valuable experience related to their transitions into the workforce.

3.3 Conceptualising Youth Transitions

As explained in the previous section, the transition is a concept associated with or that defines the youth phase. Literature has explored five key transitions for youth: leaving education, finding employment, leaving home, setting up a house, and marriage (Mitterauer, 1993; Bagnall, 2005; Goodwin & O'Connor, 2009; Furlong, 2017). However, researchers concluded that their approach to explaining youth using transition stages was inaccurate since a hierarchy of those stages could occur differently between young people, especially if they consider young people's gender, location, and socioeconomic differences.

This section explores different conceptualisations of young people's movements from education to work. The youth transition concept started gaining momentum by the 1980s when young people's movement into employment in Western societies became more challenging due to decreased job opportunities and later mass expansion in higher education (Te Riele & Wyn, 2005; Furlong & Cartmel, 2009). Before that period, most researchers explored transition as a linear movement from education to work (Bynner & Roberts, 1992; Roberts, 2018). However, researchers shifted their discussion because of the challenges young people face in their transition to explain that this transition is not linear anymore, i.e., young people could continue with an education stage, move into employment, and then return to education. Still, they could move back to education or be in different stages simultaneously (Te Riele, 2004). However, the transition theory did not explain these processes well (Worth, 2009).

The post-war structuralist accounts justified such conceptualisations of youth transition; they explained traditional youth labour market transitions during that generation of "baby boomers", where young people leave school at an early age, take training, and join the labour force (Bynner & Roberts, 1992; Riddell, 1998; Ahier & Moore, 1999). However, post-structuralists criticised how modernist theorists conceptualise transition as simple, cumulative, linear, and irreversible (Baron *et al.,* 1997; Baron *et al.,* 1999; Worth, 2009), while it no longer reflects the reality of young people's changing transition circumstances. Moreover, from the early 1970s onwards, the social structure, global economy, education, culture, political, and labour market dynamics began to change in many Western societies, resulting in a more complex and uncertain youth transition from education to work (Harvey, 1989; Raffe, 2014; Bynner *et al.,* 2019). Those researchers added that

these changes might complicate the transition for some young people, but they opened new opportunities for others, deepening social exclusion for marginalised and disadvantaged youth (MacDonald, 2008). As a result, more young people have started to remain longer in education, move into training modules, and face periods of waiting and challenges for finding a pathway to join the labour market (Bynner, 1987; Roberts, 1995; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997).

Similarly, in the MENA region, before the 1950s, young people's transition from education to work was linear and straightforward; most young people moved into family businesses, nonskilled jobs, and agricultural jobs with minimum education or training. However, the MENA region witnessed an increased number of jobs in the public sector by the third quarter of the previous century, where young people started to be more interested in 'modernised transitions' into public sector jobs and formal employment (Amer, 2014; Assaad *et al.,* 2019). Hence, families focused on educational attainment and training, and marriage was delayed. Still, by the beginning of the 1990s, the number of jobs provided by the government through the public sector could not absorb the increased number of young people who completed high school and moved into tertiary education, where their transitions became challenging and uncertain (*Ibid.*).

However, youth transition was conceptualised as a reproduction process of social and cultural differences (Schwartz, 1978; Hall, 1993; Jefferson, 2002). Therefore, young people's transitions can be explained by social and cultural reproductions, i.e., a generation reproduces its social and cultural (in)equalities over time, considering the key factors that could shape young people's transition routes, such as family background, social, economic, and cultural capitals provided by the family, and educational attainment (Humphries & Rubery, 1984; Bourdieu, 2018). Furthermore, from a structuralist lens, social and cultural reproductions are about maintaining or reproducing social and cultural structures and systems between generations/families (O'Reilly *et al.,* 2017). In the MENA region, although they are limited, some studies explored families' socioeconomic status by examining parents' education and occupation status and how education-to-work transitions are changing across generational cohorts. Still, these studies did not explicitly discuss social or cultural reproduction (Assaad & Krafft, 2014; Assaad *et al.,* 2019).

Indeed, several researchers highlighted that understanding youth transition could be affected by different family characteristics, such as gender and social class, from a social and cultural

reproduction lens (Ashton & Field, 1976; West & Newton, 1983; Berloffa *et al.,* 2015). Furthermore, different transition routes can be explored considering young people's experiences and the development of a structuralist perspective (Roberts *et al.,* 1987). Still, it was noticed that young people's agency or aspirations were not fully integrated into these studies (Bynner *et al.,* 2019). However, most MENA region studies discussed youth transitions without reference to social and cultural reproductions. These studies explained the relationship between young people's transitions and their families' characteristics, but they did not delve into understanding how youth transitions can be explored by social and cultural reproductions (Sultana, 2017; Dibeh *et al.,* 2019; Assaad *et al.,* 2019).

In understanding how youth transitions were conceptualised, the concept of agency (discussed in Section 3.5.2 in detail) was introduced and started to gain some attention from psychologists and sociologists by the end of the previous century (Bourdieu, 1977a; Beck *et al.,* 1994; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Rudd & Evans, 1998; Evans, 2002; Marshall, 2000). The individual agency was defined by people's capacity (including their actions that are derived from their identities, beliefs, thoughts, capabilities, experiences, intentions, and aspirations) to overcome their environment's constraints and limitations to define and shape their life course (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Bandura, 2001), i.e., more agency young people have meant more resilience to structural limitations and constraints where they can influence and form social environment by their own actions (Loyal & Barnes, 2001). However, despite the importance of individual agency as a key concept in life course theory, there was no consent on its definition, how to utilise it, and its theoretical status as a less valued concept in sociological theory (Fuchs, 2001; Loyal & Barnes, 2001; Schoon & Lyons-Amos, 2017).

However, many studies have explored agency and its influence on young people's transitions from education to work. Despite this, researchers have not yet fully understood why young people take specific pathways in their transitions or the relationship between structure and agency in these choices (Lehmann, 2005; Schoon & Lyons-Amos, 2017). Attention to the agency has increased because youth transitions have become complex, requiring critical decisions that can define their life course (Schulenberg & Schoon, 2012). These decisions include whether to continue with education or enter the labour market, what type of work to choose, the risks and opportunities they may face and how to mitigate and benefit from these opportunities. A qualitative research approach

is paramount in answering these questions and understanding young people's perceptions, experiences, and the factors influencing their transitions.

However, individual agency is not independent of young people's environment as it is influenced by their opportunity structures, forms of capital, and institutions. At the same time, it can impact their environment (Hitlin & Elder, 2007). This explanation of individual agency means that young people are not passive objects in their social environment as they can shape and influence it mutually, and the agency may compensate for young people's disadvantages (Shanahan, 2000; Schoon & Heckhausen, 2019). Nevertheless, researchers explained that agency could be limited or restrained by structural factors, such as forms of capital, policies, and institutions, so individuals cannot exercise their agency in their transitions, which was explained as a 'bounded or structured agency' (Shanahan, 2000; Evans, 2002; Evans, 2007).

Furthermore, the role identity approach is critical in understanding young people's transitions. Young people with various role identities are better prepared to enter the labour market (Reitzes & Mutran, 2002; Vignoles *et al.,* 2006). These role identities, which are significant societal roles, help define their self-efficacy (Stryker & Burke, 2000; Hogg, 2004). Thus, the more young people engage with prominent roles and understand their expectations over time, the more likely they are to experience key changes in their identities, which are reflected in their attitudes, norms, and behaviours (Suh, 2002).

Sociological researchers have shown an increased interest in agency to provide a theoretical framing for their empirical research. In contrast, psychological researchers consider agency a key concept in their empirical study but did not provide enough evidence on how it is linked to structural factors (Bandura, 2006). Moreover, economists examined youth transition from a supply-demand side of the labour market, focusing less on cultural and social structure perspectives (Walther, 2009; Jones, 2009). The critical point is that researchers have agreed that youth transition from education to work should be based on a comprehensive framework that considers the interconnection between structural and agentic factors (Elder, 1998). Moreover, several theorists criticised using existing theories to conceptualise young people's transition from education to work as they were created in a specific cultural and socioeconomic context, making them less relevant to conceptualising young people's transition process (Brown, 2000).

In developing countries, the concept of young people's transition was used to explore and compare young people's experiences (Morrow, 2013), but it requires understanding the broader context (Raffe, 2008; Raffe, 2014; Evans & Furlong, 2019; MacDonald & King, 2021). Indeed, young people's transition in the MENA region, including Jordan, has faced challenges where they encounter delays in their movement from dependency to becoming independent despite critical investment in education, which are not reflected in smooth labour market transitions (Salehi-Isfahani & Dhillon, 2008). Moreover, most studies on the MENA region did not comprehensively conceptualise youth transitions. Instead, these studies focused on understanding youth transitions by addressing the macro socioeconomic status of the MENA countries, such as global economic and other changes for specific countries, such as demographic changes in Jordan because of the Syrian refugees' influx to the country and its changing labour market characteristics (Amer, 2018).

Furthermore, most studies in the MENA region discuss youth transitions simply by moving into any job using quantitative methods (Amer, 2014; Assaad & Krafft, 2014; Asaad *et al.,* 2019). Therefore, in this research, youth transition from education to work will be conceptualised by considering that young people's transitions are not simply linear, cumulative, and irreversible, especially those in the MENA region, including Jordan.

3.4 Measuring Success in Youth Transitions

This section aims to review current understandings of success in the context of young people's transition from education to work, how it is measured and proposes an approach to conceptualising a successful transition that will be used in this project. Like the concept of youth transition in the previous section, conceptualising a 'successful' youth transition is complex. It requires researchers to explore several considerations and criteria such as access to employment (Smyth *et al.,* 2002; O'Higgins & Pinedo, 2018), skills and education matching (Schupp *et al.,* 1994), job benefits (Marsden & Ryan, 1991), and meeting their expectations and aspirations (Alam & de Diego, 2019).

Furthermore, exploring the successful transition from education to work by understanding job satisfaction or young people's perceptions of their successful transitions was not thoroughly investigated until transitions to work became a challenge (Hannan *et al.,* 1996; Elder & Koné, 2014). Some researchers define a framework for understanding successful youth transition in relation to the objective outcome of their transitions, for example, their employment and job

benefits (Mane, 1999; Kerckhoff, 2018), gaining skills and their utilisation in the labour market, i.e., productivity (Green, 2006), and other indicators and criteria of a successful transition. However, with the recent generations' compounded challenges for youth transition, these criteria for successful youth transition are increasingly inadequate (Dooley & Prause, 2004).

Indeed, successful youth transitions from education to work were conceptualised by two key criteria: the process of finding a job and the outcome of this process (O'Higgins & Pinedo, 2018; Nilsson, 2019). Firstly, researchers explained their findings as they defined the process of finding a job by demonstrating how easy it was and measured the time it takes young people to move into the labour market. Secondly, they explained the outcome of the job they found, whether they consider it satisfactory, stable, and provides good income and benefits, i.e., whether the job responds to young people's minimum requirements and aspirations. Still, the concept of the minimum requirement varies among young people and, accordingly, their definition of a successful transition (*Ibid.*).

Moreover, some researchers explored successful youth transitions from education to work using objective criteria such as becoming employed, job performance, and stability or from a subjective perspective such as job satisfaction (Ng *et al.,* 2005; Heslin, 2005). Notwithstanding, several researchers tried to establish a consensus on conceptualising the successful transition by focusing on the outcome perspective, i.e., moving into a satisfying and decent job (Elder & Koné, 2014).

Furthermore, there is little distinction between successful youth transition and career success as an outcome of the successful transition. Still, career success is considered an integral part of the conceptualisation of successful youth transition (Van der Horst *et al.,* 2021). It is also key to differentiate between career satisfaction and career success. The key difference is that several factors, such as time and social context, are not considered when exploring career satisfaction. Still, for career success, these factors are critical in its conceptualisation (Gunz & Mayrhofer, 2011). Career success is a crucial element in understanding the transition of youth from education to work because it exemplifies the role identity approach in explaining this process (Morrison, 2002; Ng & Feldman, 2007). The role identity concept was briefly discussed in the previous section to demonstrate its significance in understanding young people's transitions, and it is vital for examining successful transitions for several reasons.

First, it is a predictor of success, meaning how a young person perceives and internalises their role can forecast how well they transition into the workforce. Second, it functions as a mediator of successful transition factors. For instance, educational achievements and experiences can be better understood, and their impacts can be more accurately assessed through the lens of role identity. Third, it serves as a moderator by interacting with other role identities, such as the roles of parents or mentors. This means that a young person's role identity can influence and be influenced by, thereby shaping the transition process (Ng & Feldman, 2007). Understanding career success through the role identity approach provides a comprehensive framework for analysing the multifaceted process of young people transitioning from education to work. It highlights the predictive, mediating, and moderating roles of personal and social identities in achieving successful transitions.

Several career success theories incorporate the concept of successful transition, focusing on key success criteria related to structural, socioeconomic, and individual factors. For instance, social cognitive career theory connects young people's resources and opportunities with their successful transition. These resources, such as family socioeconomic status and background, can significantly influence their self-efficacy and cognitive development (Hsieh & Huang, 2014).

Researchers have emphasised that a broad range of success criteria should be considered. While family socioeconomic status is essential, other factors like young people's personality and family income also play critical roles in their successful transition and career success (Xin *et al.,*2020). Additionally, from a social-psychological perspective, family background and socioeconomic status provide young people with resources, opportunities, and role identities that shape their perceptions and actions. The behaviours, attitudes, and beliefs of family members and the local environment can influence young people's personality, self-efficacy, and cognition, thereby affecting their successful transition (Hsieh & Huang, 2014). Further details on theorising these success criteria for young people's transitions from education to work can be found in Section 3.5.

The researcher believes that a successful transition marks the beginning of career success. Understanding successful youth transitions requires exploring success criteria from structural and individual agency perspectives. For instance, researchers have found that successful transitions can differ significantly between young men and women (King & Mason, 2001). The

conceptualisation of successful youth transitions is influenced by key factors such as social class, gender, geographic location, education level, age, and individual agency. Numerous studies have shown how socioeconomic inequalities impact young people's successful transitions. For example, inequalities in education and training, labour market structures, or the broader economic context can adversely affect young people's ability to transition successfully (Schupp *et al.,*1994; Ng & Feldman, 2007; Ulil *et al.,*2017).

In the MENA region, including Jordan, conceptualising successful transition was mainly investigated based on the timing of transition and job benefits, such as job income, health insurance, social security, and others (Assaad, 2014; Assaad & Krafft, 2016; Manacorda *et al.,* 2017; Gardiner & Goedhuys, 2020). Still, opportunity structures are key in understanding successful transitions, as most developing countries, including Jordan, are characterised by higher population growth, unemployment, and poverty, as explained in chapter two (Amer, 2014; Assaad & Krafft, 2016; Assaad *et al.,* 2019). Therefore, the timing of moving into the labour market is critical, as young people's ultimate target is to find a job because of their socioeconomic situation (Manacorda *et al.,* 2017). However, this reduced or expedited process of movement into the labour market means that young people may be less concerned about the quality and benefits of their jobs as their main concern is to move into any job and have an income source.

In conclusion, conceptualising a successful transition from education to work is complex as it varies from one perspective to another. Furthermore, objective criteria were previously used to define successful transition, for example, getting a job or not, whereas subjective criteria are about young people's attitudes towards their transition outcome and their perceptions of success (Blustein *et al.,* 1997; Morrison, 2002). However, this project conceptualises successful transition as the movement from education (regardless of the level or type of education) to a job where young people feel satisfied with their transition process, outcome, and benefits from their perspectives. Still, this definition implies highly stratified outcomes, for example, by class, gender, and location, and satisfaction is not a well-established concept as it varies from person to person. That is why this research sought to elicit young people's subjective opinions about what success entails through qualitative interviewing (see Chapter Five for more details).

3.5 Determinants of Success

The transition from education to work has become complex, extended, and unpredictable because of the changing and challenging context in the previous decades. Therefore, young people's transition becomes a crucial life stage defining their adulthood entrance (Hogan & Astone, 1986; Buchmann & Kriesi, 2011). Young people's transitions can be complex, with several attempts and pathways or smooth ones with no challenges or waiting periods (Schoon & Silbereisen, 2009). However, socioeconomic status and social roles can significantly affect young people's successful transition (Caspi *et al.,* 1998; Bynner & Parsons, 2002; Schoon & Bynner, 2017). Still, these determinants affect young people's transitions, considering their socioeconomic conditions, education, gender, and location (Schoon & Silbereisen, 2009). Therefore, youth transitions have been studied by various sociological, psychological, and economic theorists to provide a conceptualisation of successful transition determinants with a focus on the key determinants that influence the transition, where each approach has its own methodology focusing on specific determinants that they consider critical.

For example, from a theoretical economic lens, youth transition from education to work focuses on individual skills, employability, and labour market conditions (Andrews *et al.,* 2002; Schmid, 2008). Psychological theories focus on personal traits, such as young people's engagement in self-exploration and self-knowledge, that may help young people's transitions to work (Mary & Peter, 2000). Sociological theories focus on inequalities and exclusion by studying young people's characteristics (gender, education and training, and individual agency) and their environment (family, location, and institutions) that could affect their transition (Herr, 1999; Brown, 2000; Furlong *et al.,* 2003; Behrman & Sengupta, 2005; Lehmann, 2005; Jones, 2009).

3.5.1. Structural Determinants

To advance understanding of the structural factors that affect young people's transition from education to work, it is essential to explore how researchers have defined and studied the "structure" concept in relation to labour market transition studies. In "Constitution of Society", Giddens defined structure as,

> "*Structure. Rules and resources, recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems. Structure exists only as memory traces, the organic basis of human knowledgeability, and as instantiated in action*". (1984: p.377).

Structures are influences that do not originate from the individuals' own actions or attitudes; they come from the surrounding environment, i.e., external influences beyond their own control (Côté & Bynner, 2008). However, this definition has been under debate by several researchers with no consensus, as there was an agreement that defining structure is not a simple task and embedded several complexities, especially when exploring sociology and anthropology studies (Sewell, 1992; Schoon & Silbereisen, 2009).

In studying young people's transition from education to work, several researchers defined structural factors as factors external to young people's actions and beliefs that shape and influence their transitions, such as the country's economic situation, education system and policies, labour market conditions, social norms, geographical locations, class, and gender (Gynnild, 2002; Lehmann, 2005; Schoon & Lyons-Amos, 2016). Moreover, structural factors were defined in relation to an individual's opportunity structure:

> *"Structural factors, as mediated by the family and local opportunity structures, continue to have a commanding place in the shaping of youth transitions".* (Côté & Bynner, 2008: p.255)

Literature indicates that young people's transition from education to work is mainly influenced by their opportunity structures. These studies defined opportunity structures by the interrelationships between family background, education, labour market conditions, geographical location, gender, and ethnicity, where these structures influence and impact young people's transition (Roberts, 2009).

Moreover, literature indicated that structural factors impact young people's transition to work differently based on location, class, gender, and age (Kerckhoff, 2001; Heinz, 2009a; Schoon & Lyons-Amos, 2016). Studies showed they are interdependent (Lehmann, 2005; Schoon & Silbereisen, 2009; Schoon, 2015). Moreover, structures were defined as constraints and facilitators that, at the same time, influenced young people's transitions to work. They could be limiting factors

for individuals with specific characteristics while facilitating factors for others (Giddens, 1979; Gynnild, 2002; Chiasson & Saunders, 2005).

One of the key structural factors that were explored is the country's economic and production status, where countries with liberal market economies, such as the Western countries that are characterised by their production and industrial systems, provide better opportunities for their young people in their transition from education to work (Hannan *et al.,* 1996; Pollock, 2008; Pastore, 2019). However, studies revealed that it is not only the country's economy that matters for a successful transition to work but also other aspects, such as the education system and labour market conditions (Rubery, 1994; Rubery *et al.,* 2009). Indeed, several studies explored structural factors such as the education system and labour market structure to explore their impact on young people's transition to work.

Education systems and policies are key determinants for young people's transition to work as they are linked to the country's philosophy and rules in terms of their degree of educational inclusiveness and timing (Schoon & Heckhausen, 2019). Looking at the other side of the equation, labour market status, conditions, and policies influence young people's transition from education to work and decide their transition pathways. Indeed, the literature indicates that economic structure, the labour market demand, and available jobs impact young people's transitions to work in Western countries (Banks *et al.,* 1992; Bynner & Roberts, 1992; Roberts, 2003; Pollock, 2008). Additional factors related to labour market structures encompass the significance of family-based economic activities, the proportion of public sector employment, and the relevance of local labour markets in contrast to national or international ones (Hannan *et al.,* 1996; Duffy *et al.,* 2016).

The literature covers several socioeconomic factors, such as family class, socioeconomic status, i.e., family income and wealth, education and occupation levels, and social networks (Bourdieu, 2005; Duncan & Murnane, 2011). Family background is a key factor affecting young people's transition to work, linked to the education young people receive and their families' expectations (Roberts, 2009; Ling & O'Brien, 2013). Indeed, family socioeconomic status can play a crucial role in young people's transition, where it can influence young people's education decisions, choices, and attainment, career choice and development, and their levels of self-confidence and aspirations (Kenny & Medvide, 2013; Masdonati *et al.,* 2022). In addition, the socioeconomic

status of a family plays a key role in shaping the social networks and connections available to young people as they navigate their transition into the workforce (Bynner & Parsons, 2002; Heinz, 2009b; Schoon *et al.,* 2012; Schoon & Lyons-Amos, 2017; Schoon & Heckhausen, 2019).

Gender is another factor the researchers have explored in the literature on young people's transition to work (Evans, 2002; Woolley, 2004; Furlong & Cartmel, 2006). Literature also indicated that young people's parents' expectations about their educational attainment and transition to work vary by cultural context, social class, ethnicity, and gender (Buchmann & Kriesi, 2011; Corijn & Klijzing, 2013). Moreover, gender intersects with other key structural factors, such as social class and ethnicity. For example, ethnic minority communities' gender norms and values strongly influence individuals' motivations, aspirations, and social trajectories (Keskiner, 2019). In addition, the literature showed that young men have more flexibility to work within their country or outside it compared to young women from rural, peri-urban, or vulnerable families. This demonstrates the impact of gender on young people's mobility within or outside their countries through their transition from education to work (Weiss *et al.,* 2021).

Global factors, such as the economic downturn, the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and conflicts, are key structural factors that impact young people's transition to work. However, studies show that these structural factors have a different impact on young people from different social classes and are affected by young people's gender, location, and age (Heinz, 2009a; Schoon & Heckhausen, 2019).

3.5.2. Agency

To gain insight into the perspectives of young people as they navigate the transition from education to work, it is crucial to consider their individual agency (Woolley, 2009). Nevertheless, it is equally important to delve into the evolution of this concept, its definition, and its application in empirical research literature. After the 1960s, researchers started focusing on youth development and studies due to the young generation's changing economic status and employment patterns (Willis, 1976; Elder *et al.,* 2015). Like structures, individual agency was defined by several researchers with no consensus on its definition (Fuchs, 2001; Loyal & Barnes, 2001). For example, agency was described by Giddens as *"the capacity to make difference"* (1984: p.14), while in another study, it

was defined as "*influences from individuals' own decision-making process without external pressures"* (Rudd & Evans, 1998: p.39). Giddens defined agency as,

> *"The stream of actual or contemplated causal interventions of corporeal beings in the ongoing process of events-in-the-world".* (1976: p.75)

Yet, Giddens redefined his explanation and definition of agency as

> "*Agency refers not to the intentions people have in doing things but to their capability of doing those things in the first place.*" (1984: p.8)

In the sense of understanding that agency is an individual's control of their actions, Woolley defined agency as,

> *"Personal agency refers to the scope that people feel they have to shape their own lives, or in other words one's sense of control. It is manifest in behaviour as well as in dispositions to act and may be signalled, for example, by the presence of confidence, independence, and proactivity in pursuing personal interests and plans."* (2009: p.10)

However, agency is not fully an agreed or accepted concept by researchers as some consider that it has no theoretical or empirical existence in sociological theory (Fuchs, 2001; Loyal & Barnes, 2001; Campbell, 2009), while others consider it just a Western concept for individual influences (Alexander, 1992; Cahill, 1998; Martin *et al.,* 2009). On an empirical level, life course studies adopted the agency concept in their analysis, considering it essential for social action (Burke *et al.,* 2003; Macmillan, 2006; Hitlin & Kirkpatrick, 2015). Indeed, some researchers have not fully agreed with these definitions. They explained that agency is about individuals' own actions and beliefs and the degree of control over their life course and its outcomes (Bandura, 2001), and it is an interconnectedness with individuals' external environment factors (Evans, 2002; Hitlin & Elder, 2007).

To better understand agency, Schoon asked, "*What motivates young people to set themselves ambitious goals and to get ahead in a changing society?*". She discussed young people's goals related to their actions, behaviours, and aspirations, which are informed by their "*past experiences,*

current concerns, and an anticipated future" (Schoon, 2021: p.50). Indeed, agency was defined as "*a process in which past habits and routines are contextualised and future possibilities are envisaged in the contingencies of the present moment*" (Evans, 2007: p.85). This discussion explored the importance of agency as a multidimensional construct that includes several dimensions, such as young people's intention, reflection, self-efficacy, foresight and expectations of success, self-regulation, and self-awareness (Alexander, 1992; Bandura, 2001; Mortimer & Shanahan, 2007).

Agency was explored by identifying four fundamental facets, including intentionality, which involves crafting action plans and strategies to bring intentions to reality; forethought, encompassing goal setting and anticipation of potential outcomes; self-reactiveness, the skill to monitor and adjust progress; and self-reflexivity, the capacity to contemplate and derive from personal experiences (Bandura, 2008). Indeed, self-efficacy as an essential dimension of individual agency was defined broadly as "*The confidence that one can, on balance, make a difference in situations through persistence and strategic thinking*". (Yorke & Knight, 2007: p.160)". However, the interactions between these dimensions constitute individual agency (Schoon & Lyons-Amos, 2017). Moreover, because it is a time-based concept, agency is considered essential for empirical research (Evans, 2002).

To shape a personalised transition from education to work, young people try to prioritise the planning and decision-making aspects within their agency framework. This entails the development of "*planful competence*", as this competence plays a pivotal role in selecting pathways that align with their aspirations and skills (Heinz, 2009a: p.391). Indeed, existing literature offers robust evidence of the significant impact of self-efficacy and career adaptability on young people's transitional process and outcomes as they move from education to work (Duffy *et al.,* 2015). Furthermore, self-efficacy stands out as one of the central concepts in the psychological literature closely linked to young people's transition (Ng & Feldman, 2007). Moreover, agency serves as a vital catalyst in achieving life goals, encompassing "*an active process of choosing appropriate institutional involvements, organisational memberships, and interpersonal relationships*" (Shanahan, 2000: p.675).

3.5.3. Duality of Structures and Agency

As explained in the previous sections, during the latter part of the proceeding decade, the transition to work has become complex as a result of countries' changing economic contexts, educational systems, labour market conditions, and technological development, which have led to more focus on young people's agency and how it is linked to social structures. The literature has engaged in a persistent debate regarding the interplay and duality between social structures, which offer opportunities and constraints for young people in their transitions to work and the autonomy of individuals, i.e., their agency. Although understanding the interplay between structures and agency is not well-researched (Mortimer & Shanahan, 2007; Gutman & Schoon, 2013), this debate has a rich historical context, with Karl Marx (1968) contributing to this discourse over a century ago. In his writings, Marx asserted,

> "*Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past.*" (Marx, 1968: p.5)

Literature has introduced innovative concepts and terminology to elucidate the intricate relationship between social structures and individual agency. Notable examples include Berger and Luckmann's social construction of reality (1971), Giddens' structuration theory (1984), Bourdieu's habitus (1977a), Habermas's theory of communicative action, and the lifeworld (1985, 1987). Despite variations in definitions and interpretations of the interplay between structure and agency, they share a common objective. On the one hand, they seek to challenge the notion that structures operate independently of human actions, rejecting the idea that human behaviour is merely a mechanical consequence of objective structures. On the other hand, they contest the perspective that human activity remains unaffected by the structural dynamics within society (Giddens, 1979; Turner, 1986; Layder, 2005; Bryant & Jary, 2014; Sztompka, 2014).

Giddens (1981) advocated the duality between structure and agency; he suggested that structures serve as both the framework and the results of the actions that shape social systems. In other words, structures influence the practice of individuals. Still, it is also the practice of individuals that shape these structures, i.e., they are not opposing forces as they presuppose and depend on each other. Indeed, previous research on the transition from education to work has indicated that structural

factors can influence the choices and progress of young people. For example, in their book, "*An Introduction to Reflexive Sociology*", Bourdieu and Wacquant discussed the duality of structures and agency by discussing the concept of habitus definition:

> *"Habitus is not the fate that some people read into it. Being a product of history, it is an open system of dispositions that is constantly subject to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structure."* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: p.133)

Habitus is associated with understanding young people's perceptions as it refers to "*the system of durable and transposable dispositions through which we perceive, judge, and act in the world*" (Wacquant, 2008: 267). Our past and current circumstances influence this concept and "*generate practices, beliefs, perceptions, feelings and so forth in accordance with its own structure*" (Manton, 2008: p.51). Literature indicates that class, education, and gender are significant aspects of individuals' habitus as they affect young people's judgements, beliefs, perceptions, attitudes, choices, feelings, and actions in their transitions from education to work (Gos, 1995; Heggen, 2008; Nyström, 2009; Smart *et al.,* 2009; Reay, 2018; Schoon & Evans, 2023). Further details are provided in Section 3.6.5.

Moreover, the concept of "*bounded agency*" was introduced to acknowledge that young people's agency is situated within a broader socio-historical context and limited by social constraints where they formulate goals and devise plans for their transition to work, but they operate within boundaries that shape their lives and influence their beliefs and expectations (Shanahan, 2000; Evans, 2002; Hitlin & Long, 2009; Schoon, 2021). Evans defined it as

> *"Bounded agency is socially situated agency, influenced but not determined by environments and emphasising internalised frames of reference as well as external actions"* (Evans, 2007: p.92)

The literature underscores the significance of structural factors in shaping the "*action space*" within which individuals can exercise their agency to make choices regarding their transition pathways (Heckhausen & Buchmann, 2019: p.4). Nevertheless, the exploration of how young people make decisions about their educational and career paths and the variations in their transition

experiences has been a subject of study aimed at unravelling the intricate interplay between structural factors and individual agency (Lehmann, 2003; Schoon, 2021). For instance, the theory of individualisation has gained prominence as researchers have discovered that structural factors, such as family background and gender, do not exert a uniform influence on young people sharing the same structural location (Leisering & Leibfried, 1999; Furlong & Cartmel, 2006). Consequently, in the individualisation theory, individual agency has more influence and carries a more significant impact (Pollock, 2008; Giddens, 2020).

Nevertheless, the literature has demonstrated a reciprocal relationship between young people's agency and their structural circumstances (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Furstenberg, 2008; Schoon & Silbereisen, 2009; Helve & Evans, 2013; Gugushvili *et al.,* 2017). These studies have shown that a young person's socioeconomic status is pivotal in shaping their educational and labour market opportunities. Factors such as the financial and social support they receive from their families, the social networks and connections they can access, and their physical environment all exert considerable influence on their self-confidence, motivation, aspirations, and actions (Heinz, 2009a; Schoon & Lyons-Amos, 2017; Schoon, 2020).

3.6 Existing Conceptualisations of the Determinants of Success

This section explores various conceptualisations of the determinants of a normatively successful transition. Its key aim is to analyse how various relevant theories explain determinants that affect young people's transition from education to work. It also concludes with a comprehensive theoretical framework that will be used to analyse the project results.

The following sub-sections discuss theories that could help the researcher develop a theoretical framework that can inform the project results analysis. They include labour market segmentation theory, social cognitive career theory, structuration theory, individualisation theory, and forms of capital. These theories will explain youth transition by assessing their strengths, weaknesses, determinants, and alignment with the research questions and aims. The main aims are to explore these theories discussed in the literature, understand how their determinants were perceived, and assess these theories to develop a comprehensive literature framework for this project.

3.6.1. Labour Market Segmentation Theory

Labour market segmentation theory explains the transition from education to work by dividing the labour market into segments that differ in employment benefits and characteristics. It describes young people's transitions by exploring the structural characteristics of the labour market that could enable or constrain youth resources, choices, and actions (Edwards *et al.,* 1975; Reich, 2008). This theory's importance comes from its ability to explain how young people attain jobs in the labour market, offering different working conditions, career prospects, wages, and job locations in relation to their socioeconomic status. From an economic socialisation perspective, if individuals' economic and social status increases, they should acquire more skills, education, knowledge, and access to job opportunities, which facilitate their transitions (Grayson, 1997). Indeed, it links the different people's characteristics (gender, sex, education level, etc.) with labour market segmentation and division (Reich *et al.,* 1973). Furthermore, the economic socialisation perspective and its implications are also linked to 'social reproduction' in exploring young people's transitions to work (Rudd, 1997). Still, this theory was criticised for being simple and limited in its attempts to understand young people's transitions, focusing on social class and passive frameworks (Willis, 1976).

However, segmentation theory is about the differentiation between submarkets within the labour market, characterised by varying factors related to labour market conditions, wages, and benefits. The labour market segmentation can be extended to cover the segmentation of primary and secondary sectors, segmentation within these sectors, and segmentation based on class and gender (Reich *et al.,* 1973). This theory divides the labour market into two key sectors: the primary sector, which encompasses high-paying, prestigious, and good jobs, and the secondary sector, which comprises low-paying jobs with little to no career advancement opportunities (Griffin *et al.,* 1981). However, some researchers found no mobility between these segments (Edwards *et al.,* 1975; Reich, 2008). However, young people's transition into these two sectors was linked to socioeconomic and structural factors that significantly influence their degree of social exclusion or inclusion.

Indeed, this theory was used to explain young people's transition from education to work (Bauder, 2001; Quintini *et al.,* 2007). However, most of these studies concentrated on how labour market segmentation impacted youth transition from an institutional perspective and did not consider the

impact of youth agency and aspirations on labour market segmentation (Brzinsky-Fay, 2014). Therefore, the researcher believes this theory can help explore how young people move into different labour market segments or pathways, but it will not provide a comprehensive understanding.

3.6.2. Social Cognitive Career Theory

Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) was developed to understand individuals' career interests and choices (Lent *et al.,* 1994). Social cognitive career theory explains youth transitions by considering their transition cumulatively, i.e., the youth transition is gradual and is built on their cumulative experiences during education and after employment. The key explanation that social cognitive career theory provides is that youth transition should be gradual. It is mainly about understanding how individuals' career or transition pathways interests are initiated, on what basis they are selected, and their performance and satisfaction. This means that youth transition is conceptualised throughout their educational careers and after they move to working life, not at the end of their education, regardless of the education level (*Ibid.*). It is about continuously and gradually preparing youth for entering the labour market, even after they begin work (Lent *et al.,* 1999).

This theory addresses three variables that affect youth transitions from education to work; the first is self-efficacy (Hackett & Betz, 1981), which was explained in terms of youth confidence/judgments on their abilities to achieve a task. The second is outcome expectation, which is about the youth's beliefs that doing specific activities/behaviours will lead them to a rewarding result. The third is goal-setting, which is about the youth's goals of having a specific job, completing their education, or continuing training (Bandura, 1986).

In addition, Lent and Brown (2006) expanded this theory by incorporating job satisfaction as a significant factor. They pointed out that there is a relationship between self-efficacy and outcome expectations, suggesting that young people who have confidence in their abilities (self-efficacy) and positive beliefs about the outcomes of their efforts (outcome expectations) are more likely to experience job satisfaction. This relationship is crucial as it helps address the youth's levels of satisfaction, identifies potential barriers they may face, and shapes their beliefs during the transition from education to the workforce.

Indeed, this theory explains that self-efficacy and outcome expectations are linked to young people's interests, similar to the career choice approach/model. This similarity implies that in the career choice model, young people's interests are linked to their goals and are affected by their family's socioeconomic status (Kelly, 2009). Furthermore, the career choice model links education with self-efficacy and outcome expectations and is influenced by young people's personal characteristics, such as gender and class (Lent *et al.,* 1994). Still, some researchers found that family socioeconomic status does not affect self-efficacy (Gonzalez *et al.,* 2013; Xin *et al.,* 2020).

Social cognitive career theory is more focused on education and young people's decisions, represented by their self-efficacy, outcome expectations and goal-setting behaviours, and it perceives young people's transitions as a gradual process (Lent *et al.,* 1994). Still, it does not consider the institutional and policy contexts that affect young people's transition from education to work, such as labour market conditions, the role of institutions, and time complexity, as this theory is based on cumulative youth experiences (Mary & Peter, 2000). It also does not consider the cultural differences and the contextual factors which make conceptualising young people's transition difficult or limited by this theory (Brown, 2000). Therefore, this theory might have some limitations in linking the social and economic levels to better explain the Jordanian youth transition framework and its determinants, considering the context of young people's transition explained in Chapter Two. Still, the researcher believes that this theory can provide a baseline for understanding key determinants that affect Jordanian young people's transition, such as their experiences, job satisfaction, interests, family socioeconomic status, confidence in transition "self-efficacy", education and training "outcome expectations", and their planning "goals setting".

3.6.3. Structuration Theory

Structuration theory was used to explain the transition from education to work, where young people exercise agency in their decisions despite being restricted by structural factors (Rudd & Evans, 1998). Furthermore, structural factors can influence agency, i.e., individuals' actions can produce and reproduce structure (Jones & Karsten, 2003). As a result, structure and agency should not be dealt with independently as they are interconnected. This explanation was clearly stated by Layder et al. (1991: p.447):

> "*Structuration theory rejects both the reduction of structural phenomena to action predicates and the reduction of activity to structure. Both structure and action are inextricably interwoven and should be given an equal analytic weighting. For Giddens, action and structure are related through the 'duality of structure' wherein structures are viewed as both the medium and outcome of social activity*."

This theory was borne out of the critique of social theory, which explained the dualism between structure and agency in a simple and unrealistic way by exploring structure and agency interdependently (Giddens, 1984). Giddens asserted that positivists focused on the macro level, i.e., the structural level, beyond the individual actors influencing the structural level. On the other hand, relativists focused on the micro-level, i.e., individual reflexivity, which is not structurally driven. Therefore, Giddens' structuration theory sheds light on the social theory by overcoming the dualism between agency and structure and between subjective and objective factors, suggesting that social structures and individual agency are interdependent. The term "structuration" was used to explain that agency is not only a response to social structures but can influence them (*Ibid.*). It is about understanding how social action is shaped by interactions between human actors and societal structure (Turner, 1986).

Proponents of the structuration theory consider individuals' agency as an active agent that can be limited or shaped by opportunity structures (Mignot, 2000). Still, structural opportunity influences individuals' actions, and their actions can change or (re)confirm opportunity structures as a recursive interaction (Yates & Orlikowski, 1992). Indeed, sociologists focused on the knowledge production justification through epistemological lenses, whereas Giddens shifted this focus towards social life nature from an ontological perspective where he stated (1984: p.2):

> "*The differences between these perspectives on social science have often been taken to be epistemological, whereas they are in fact also ontological*".

However, several researchers critique structuration theory due to Giddens' assertion that individuals' actions are the primary reason behind the existence of structural factors. Some researchers, such as Layder et al. (1991), argue that structural factors can directly affect and influence young people's decisions simultaneously. Thus, while young people's agency can guide them along their desired pathways, their successful transition might also depend on luck or the

influence of external structural factors (Rudd & Evans, 1998). Furthermore, several contemporary researchers suggest that agency is not necessarily a response to structural conditions but can significantly impact actions as part of an evolving developmental process, which is neither fixed nor predetermined (Smith, 1997; Marshall, 2000).

Similarly, Turner (1986) suggested that individuals are not necessarily reflexive or purposive in their agency, meaning they do not constantly monitor their own actions or those of others, contrary to Giddens' argument that individuals act with awareness. Furthermore, this theory has been criticised for ignoring the relationship between agency, ideology, and culture (Archer, 1995). Archer also emphasised the importance of the impact of culture, such as traditions, on individuals' agency.

Despite the scarce and limited research on using structuration theory to explore young people's transition to work in the MENA region and developing countries, the researcher believes that structuration theory can help in explaining the results of this study by understanding young people's agency and how it is affected by and affects structural factors. In addition, this theory may explain the duality and interdependency between structure and agency for the Jordanian youth.

3.6.4. Individualisation Theory

Individualisation theory, introduced by Beck (1992), examines the "structural inequalities" that affect youth's lives, including the transition from education to work. It investigates how new social risks associated with changes in labour markets, education systems, and work requirements are difficult to predict and how these structural factors can impact young people's transition (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). In addition, this theory discusses the relationship between structural factors and youth transitions (Leisering & Leibfried, 1999), considering that their relationship is loosening, and the role of individuals' agency is increasing (Côté & Bynner, 2008). Moreover, this theory focuses on the social and economic transformations resulting from new social and economic systems. For example, factors such as changes in social norms (e.g., around gender), labour market instability, and the declining significance of class identities are considered key factors that affect youth transition from an individualisation theory perspective (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), unlike the structuration theory.

For some, individualisation theory is about increasing young people's agency relative to structural determinants (Côté & Bynner, 2008). Still, this interpretation seems against the dominant conceptualisation of the theory itself, as it is about new risks that come from changes in structural determinants (Lehmann, 2004; Woodman, 2009). Individualisation theorists explain that global economic and social changes yielded several transition pathways for young people with more opportunities to construct their biographies and life courses (Furlong & Cartmel, 2009; Giddens, 2020). This means that new risks may bring new opportunities or threats that are linked to changes in structural factors (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). However, the increasing importance of agency in youth transition is not a replacement for the importance of structural factors and the risks that emerge from them (Beck, 1992).

Côté (2002) explained that understanding structure and agency dualism could help strengthen individualisation theory. Still, understanding the structure-agency dualism or resolving its contradictions might be complex and conditional to the research goals and aims (Connor, 2011). However, this theory focuses on youth options and choices they can choose from, where sometimes these options might be limited, and youth have no freedom in their choices or options due to structural factors (Budgeon, 2011). Furthermore, for some researchers, this theory might underestimate the importance of young people's social context and how it can affect their decisions and choices, in addition to the importance of structural factors that influence their transitions (Sewell, 1992; Côté, 2002).

Several researchers have used this theory to explore young people's transitions to work and other sociological topics in the MENA region and developing countries (Bhat, 2013; Gilbert & Brik, 2022). Moreover, the changing social and economic conditions in these areas pose additional risks and challenges for young people during their transition, which this theory might help explain. Despite the scarcity of job opportunities and the impact of structural constraints on Jordanian youth's transitions from education to work (see Chapter 2), they strive for freedom by pursuing paths aligned with their interests and aspirations, highlighting the growing significance of their agency (Kanaan & Hanania, 2009; Amer, 2018). This raises the question of whether the importance of structural factors is diminishing relative to the agency of young people in Jordan, which would challenge structuration theory. Consequently, the researcher believes this theory can enhance our understanding of young people's transitions in the MENA region and developing countries,

including Jordan, by emphasising the increasing importance of individual agency. In this study, the transition of Jordanian youth is explored through their perceptions, which may reflect their hopes for a successful transition.

3.6.5. Forms of Capital

Numerous studies have examined young people's transition from education to work, considering that structural factors and individual actions could both influence the success of their transition to work (Lehmann, 2005; Schoon & Lyons-Amos, 2016; Schoon, 2021). Researchers often heavily depend on the human capital theory as a key theory to explain individuals' differences in transitions to work, job income, status by behaviours and knowledge (Farkas *et al.,* 1997), and skills and productivity (Becker, 1964). Still, the human capital theory was challenged by the increased importance of the various determinants influencing individuals' successful transition (Becker, 2009). Furthermore, in exploring the relationship between structure and agency, three forms of capital (economic, social, and cultural) have been investigated (Bourdieu, 1986). Still, these three forms of capital are not static or fixed; they allow us to study the social world dynamically, where resources change and can be converted from one form of capital to another (Keskiner, 2019).

However, the concept of capital needs to be addressed before explaining each form of capital. According to Bourdieu, "*capital is accumulated labour (in its materialised forms or its "incorporated," embodied form)*", where it takes time to accumulate and comes in different types that create the social world (Bourdieu, 1986: p.1). In other words, capital is individuals' resources (material and non-material) that they accumulate throughout time from their families and beyond (Clark *et al.,* 2011; Keskiner, 2019). In the sections below, forms of capital (economic, social, and cultural) will be discussed to explain how this theory can explain determinants that affect young people's transition from education to work and assess its usefulness for the purposes of this study.

Cultural Capital

Bourdieu introduced this form of capital to explain differences in education achievement originating from individuals' social differences (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986). He introduced cultural capital to describe it as a critical source of inequality, where he defined it as "*familiarity with the legitimate culture within a society*" (Bourdieu, 1984: p.319). Moreover, he stated that cultural capital could exist in three forms: the first one is the "*embodied state*", i.e., cultural capital,

persistent dispositions of the mind and body acquired over time, such as language and preferences; the second one is the "*objectified state*", i.e., cultural capital that is materialised in the form of cultural goods such as pictures, books, dictionaries, and machines, and the third one is "*institutionalised state*", i.e., cultural capital related to educational qualifications such as education credentials and qualifications (Bourdieu, 1986: p.15).

However, Bourdieu (1986) emphasised the distinction of cultural capital as a theoretical hypothesis used to explain unequal educational achievement from different social classes, which leads to differential access to the labour market related to the cultural capital of each class. Forms of capital are dynamic and convertible, and the capital of culture can be linked to economic and social capital (*Ibid.*).

Individuals' actions are believed to be linked to unconscious determinants such as cultural practices (Bourdieu, 1977a; 1977b). The habitus concept was introduced, and one of its applications focused on young people's transition from education to work (Hodkinson *et al.,* 1997; Keskiner, 2019). The habitus is defined as peoples' norms that unconsciously influence their behaviour, identity, actions, choices, and thinking (Bourdieu, 1977a; 1977b; 2018). Habitus is also defined as "*the system of durable and transposable dispositions through which we perceive, judge, and act in the world*" (Wacquant, 2008: p.267). Therefore, it is influenced by individuals' structures and experiences that establish their perceptions, feelings, beliefs, and practices (Manton, 2008). Habitus is similar to character, but the difference is that it is non-natural as it is a result of social conditions. Moreover, another difference is that habitus can change over time as it is not a static character which can be influenced or changed by new experiences, education, and training (Bourdieu, 2002).

Indeed, habitus was introduced to explain the embodiment state of cultural capital related to individuals' dispositions, skills, manners, and knowledge gained over time influenced by their social class and experience (Bourdieu, 1984). He (re)defined it as

> "*System of dispositions, that is of permanent manners of being, seeing, acting and thinking, or system of long-lasting (rather than permanent) schemes or schemata or structures of perceptions, conception and action*" (Bourdieu, 2002: p.27).

Several researchers have noted that cultural capital can influence individuals' decisions and actions in choosing a specific pathway, such as transitioning into work. This influence persists even when individuals are aware of the options and choices available to them, including those that are unconscious (De Schepper *et al.,* 2023). However, Bourdieu's definition of habitus is believed to have fluid boundaries and is considered wide as it includes unconscious and pragmatic actions (Eroglu, 2016).

The researcher believes cultural capital and habitus can be critical in understanding this study's results. Cultural capital can refer to young people's formal skills obtained through schooling/university education, such as languages they learned and knowledge, and informal skills obtained through lifelong learning and lived experiences, such as their behaviour, skills, and norms. Moreover, habitus can be defined in this research as young people's dispositions that shape their actions and behaviours. However, to successfully transition into work, individuals should acquire and master the society's dominant culture, i.e., young people have the relevant cultural capital for the workplace they move to (Burke, 2015).

Economic Capital

This is the second form of capital that Bourdieu included in his research on the forms of capital. The dominant type of capital is defined as "*immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalised in the form of property rights*" (Bourdieu, 1986: p.243). In other words, it includes all material resources that can be transformed into money, directly or indirectly, to help individuals reach their goals. It can cover a wide range of economic assets such as monetary income, financial assets (for example, bank accounts, jewellery, and exchange stocks), and non-financial assets (for example, dwelling, land, and car) (Eroglu, 2016). However, Bourdieu mentioned that other forms of capital, such as cultural and social capital, can be converted, disguised, or derived from economic capital under certain conditions, where the direct change of economic capital is considered one of the necessary means of reproduction (Bourdieu, 1986).

Several studies show the importance of economic capital for young people's successful transition, as it can facilitate their transition directly and indirectly. For example, young people with high economic capital can enrol in costly training courses from high-ranking education entities (Stuber, 2009; Crawford *et al.,* 2016), study abroad (Bathmaker *et al.,* 2013), or financially endure unpaid

internships (Leonard *et al.,* 2016; Lehmann, 2019). Moreover, economic capital can be the centre of all other forms of capital, and other capital can be transformed into economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). If an individual has no economic capital, the probability of different forms of capital existence is low (Hurst, 2018). In this study, the researcher believes that economic capital can be useful for its purposes.

Social Capital

Social capital is known to be first explored by Bourdieu and Coleman, who introduced the term social capital at length and within the context of forms of capital (Häuberer, 2011). It is more about resources generated from a person's social or relationship networks and family class (Poon *et al.,* 2012). Bourdieu defined it as

> "*Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition - or in other words, to memberships in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital, a "credential" which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the world*" (1986: p.248).

In other words, it is about the social relations that an individual maintains for an expected return (Lin, 2001). However, the volume of any individual's social capital is determined by the size of the network of connections, whether they can be effectively mobilised, and the volume of other forms of capital (economic and cultural) acquired by these networks of connections (Bourdieu, 1986). Furthermore, the network of connections can be a product of conscious and unconscious actions as they can be associated with the agent's family background, ethnicity, religion, culture, and membership in a professional association (Lehmann, 2019). Furthermore, according to Bourdieu's concept of social capital, these networks of connections and relationships can manifest as mutual acquaintanceships. Within such networks, benefits can be reciprocal and established over time through mutual recognition and interaction (Bourdieu, 1986).

Social capital was also introduced as a distinct type of resource within social structures, defined by its function and utility within network connections. It is productive towards achieving specific

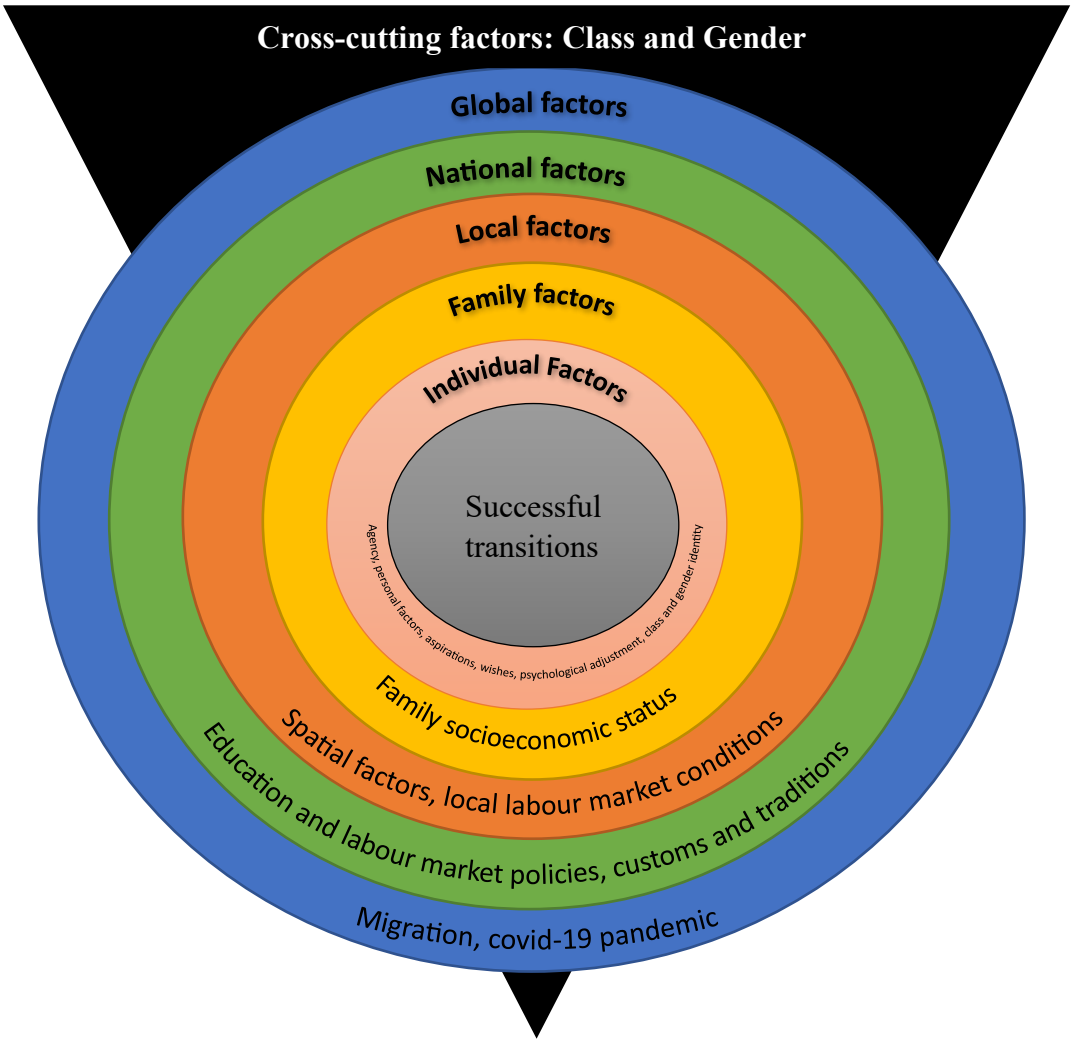
expected outcomes (Coleman, 1988). However, different disciplines have used and applied the concept of social capital; still, they used it indiscriminately without explaining its boundaries or providing an operationalisable definition (Eroglu, 2016). It is confirmed that social capital is neither a collective nor an individual good as it is characteristic of both; it is a metaphorical concept that indicates agents' investment in social connections and relations for anticipated returns (Lin, 2001; Eroglu, 2016). Moreover, alternative definitions of social capital were developed in a less theoretically informed way, for example, by David Putnam in "*Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*". He found that social capital is declining in the United States and some parts of Western countries. However, social capital was explored from social trust and social networks, including outside individuals' networks, such as joining social groups or organisations, volunteering, and civic engagement. This argument can explain the role of social capital in young people's transitions from education to work (Putnam, 2000).

The researcher posits that in this study, social capital is best conceptualised as the network of connections and relationships that provide access to resources and support, echoing the definition put forth by Bourdieu and others. This conceptualisation aligns with the Jordanian context, where social capital is crucial in social life (see Chapter 4). Unlike broader social connections, social capital in this study encompasses the specific benefits and resources derived from various affiliations, such as tribal, familial, community, racial, ethnic, and religious groups. The study will investigate how social capital, in both its positive and negative forms, influences the transitions of young people, thereby highlighting its distinctive role and impact.

3.7 Theoretical Framework

The researcher believes that no single theory captures all the determinants that he considers key to understanding the success or failure of youth transitions within the Jordanian context. Hence, the researcher proposes the theoretical framework below to inform the data analysis.

Figure 4: A proposed theoretical framework



The theoretical framework outlined above identifies the key factors that can potentially influence young people's successful transitions based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Renn & Arnold, 2003; Evans, 2020; Hayes *et al.,* 2022). Previous theories discussed indicate that various factors can affect or influence the success or failure of young people's transitions from education to work. However, no single theory can comprehensively explain all the factors influencing Jordanian young people's transitions to the workforce.

The proposed framework categorises the key factors into five levels, with additional cross-cutting factors such as class and gender. This theoretical framework is descriptive in nature and aids in understanding participants' responses regarding the key factors affecting their successful

transitions. Moreover, exploring the extent of integration and interaction between all factors is critical to fully understanding their influence on young people's successful transitions.

The first level is individual factors, which include aspects such as young people's agency, personal factors, aspirations, desires, psychological adjustment, class and gender identity, and other related attributes. It is important to emphasise that these factors pertain to young people's individual actions, efforts, and autonomy. The factors at this level can be explained using labour market cognitive theory, which accounts for young people's individual dispositions. However, structuration and individualisation theories, or concepts related to forms of capital, could also explain how these factors interlink with other factors. For instance, individual educational performance and training fall under this level, while education policies do not.

The second level encompasses familial factors, focusing on the family's social and economic status. Various theories could explain the influence of these factors on young people's transitions, notably labour market segmentation theory, structuration theory, and theories related to forms of capital. This level includes factors related to the family's economic and social status, such as wealth, assets, and social connections.

The third level pertains to local factors, which include elements related to young people's geographic location and how this location influences their successful transitions. Factors affected by spatial considerations, such as local labour market conditions, are included here. Theories such as labour market segmentation, structuration, or forms of capital can explain the factors at this level.

The fourth level involves national factors, which encompass national education and labour policies, customs and traditions, social security policies, and assistance mechanisms at the country level. These factors can be explained through structuration theory or concepts related to forms of capital.

The fifth level addresses global factors, which include influences related to migration and the COVID-19 pandemic. Factors at this level can be explained using structuration theory or forms of capital.

Class and gender are considered cross-cutting factors affecting all levels of factors. Their importance lies in their ability to highlight the influence of class and gender across individual, familial, local, national, and global factors. It is crucial to note that these levels of factors are mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive, yet their relationships can be bidirectional. For example, individual factors can influence and be influenced by family and local factors, and vice versa.

3.8 Conclusion

The table below summarises the theories discussed, their strengths and weaknesses, and the key determinants they covered.

Table 3: Summary of previous theories and their conception of key determinants

Theory	Key Determinants involved / strengths	Weaknesses / Gaps
Labour market segmentation theory	The key determinants are labour market segments and employment benefits, such as working conditions, income, job opportunities, working environment, and education—structural factors such as patriarchy and systematic racism.	There is little emphasis on mobility between segments and young people's agency and aspirations.
Social cognitive career theory	Work experience, family socioeconomic status, education, training, outcome expectations, interests, confidence in transition, self-efficacy, planning, and goal setting.	Lack of focus on labour market conditions and the role of institutions.
Structuration theory	The central focus is on structure, agency and the interactions between them.	Lack of focus on linkages between agency and culture.
Individualisation theory	Considering the diversification of lifestyles, traditional/religious norms, values, beliefs, and increased market dependency.	Reduced emphasis on the role of structures such as class.
Forms of capital theory	Introduction of cultural capital and how the three forms of capital can be transformed between each other.	Problems with conceptual boundary setting and operationalisation.

Chapter 4: An Empirical Review: Determinants of Successful Youth Transitions from Education to Work

4.1 Introduction

This Chapter will provide an overview of research findings about the determinants of success in young people's transition from education to work. It starts by reviewing relevant research from across the world. This will be followed by a more detailed review of the findings from the MENA region. The Chapter is organised as follows. Section 4.2 presents the literature search strategy underpinning the empirical review. Section 4.3 summarises the findings from the broader literature, emphasising the determinants studied in the Western literature. Section 4.4 focuses on the qualitative research evidence. Section 4.5 reviews research focussed specifically on young people's transitions in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, especially Jordan, and Section 4.6 is the chapter conclusion.

4.2 Literature Search Strategy

The main aim of this review is to map out what is currently known about the determinants of success in young people's transition from education to work. In addition, this review will explore if any previous study has researched how Jordanian young people perceive successful transitions and the determinants that affect their successful transition from their point of view. A semi-systematic approach has been taken to review the relevant literature. As illustrated in Appendix I, four key concepts were used in this research: youth, transition, education, and work. Under each concept, their synonyms have been identified through several attempts at finding the most commonly used terminologies and their combinations in the literature. The empirical literature review methodology explores the key determinants that affect young people's transition. This includes studies on young people's transition from education, starting from those who drop or graduate from high school, vocational education and training centres, community colleges, or universities and moving into the labour market as paid employees or self-employed.

The inclusion criteria for all relevant literature reviews included the following:

1. A full-text paper published in a peer-reviewed journal,

2. Academic books,
3. Papers presenting the results of primary and secondary empirical studies,
4. Studies using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methodologies,
5. Policy and research documents prepared by the government, non-governmental and inter-governmental organisations (i.e., grey literature),
6. Studies written in English or Arabic.

The research used various databases to retrieve the materials that fit the aforementioned inclusion criteria. These databases include the Web of Science, which incorporates peer-reviewed journal articles; Scopus, which ensures comprehensive coverage; International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBBS), which captures academic books; and Google Scholar, which retrieves grey literature.

The synonyms subsumed under the key concepts were combined and then entered into search engines of the databases to obtain relevant publications. During the initial research, all databases were searched in a way that explored relevant publications. Keywords were used with their synonyms to ensure the inclusion of all studies, starting from the youth transition from education to work subject, focusing on keywords and their synonyms such as transition, young people, youth, adulthood, education, school, university, vocational, training, work, employment, job, labour market, career, and others using critical concepts provided in Appendix I to check all possible combinations of search terms, such as school to work, education to employment, university to labour market, training to job, and others.

However, this methodology could be exhaustive and time-consuming, with a large and complex number of results that might not be possible to review in a timely way. To sift the materials obtained from these database searches and conduct a quick, trusted, and comprehensive review, a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) tool has been used (Khangura *et al.,* 2012; Thomas *et al.,* 2013). This requires developing a framework for scanning the materials (Thomas *et al.,* 2013). The framework used is adapted from Spencer *et al.* 2003 and is outlined in Table 4.

Table 4: Rapid Evidence Assessment Framework (REA)[2]

	Questions
Design	How can you describe the research design? - Rational of the study, - Clear research questions, - Data sources, - Research method, - Limitations of the study
Sample	Did the study use an appropriate sampling strategy? - Targeted population, - Study location, - Sample used, - Coverage of the sample, - Sample design methodology,
Data collection	Was the data collection method appropriate? - The methodology used for data collection, - Who did the data collection, - Documentation and procedures,
Analysis	How well was the analysis of the collected data? - Rationale of analysis method chosen, - Depth of the analysis method, - Interpretation of the analysis
Reporting	How clear is the reporting? - Linkages between data analysis and conclusion, - Discussion of the conclusion and results,
Ethics	Is there any ethical consideration? - Documentation of consent procedures, - Confidentiality of the data, - Discussion on any potential harm and how it is avoided.

The researcher chose this framework because of its rigorous development process, which included a thorough review of the literature on qualitative research methods, an examination of existing frameworks, and an evaluation of its practicality. This framework is specifically designed to assess the quality of qualitative evaluations related to social policy.

The data searches performed on the Web of Science database are detailed in Appendix II, along with the search queries used. Initially, the researcher conducted a generic search for studies containing keywords relevant to this research, such as youth, transition, education, and work. After

[2] This matrix is derived from Spencer *et al.*, 2003.

reviewing some key studies, the researcher compiled a list of synonyms for these keywords. Using these synonyms in the second query reduced the number of related studies from over 8 million to about 7,500. In the third query, the researcher combined all possible variations of the fundamental concepts of education and work, narrowing the relevant results to 1,860 studies.

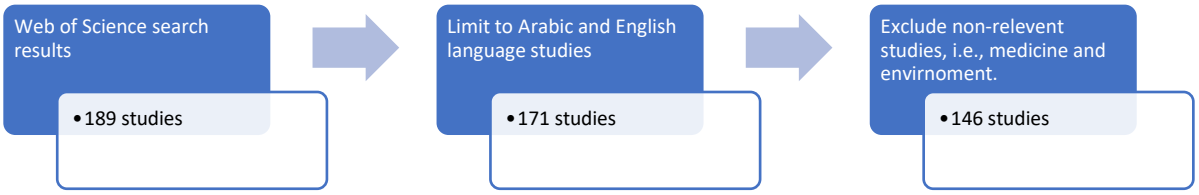
The next step was to merge the second and third queries to identify relevant studies, which further reduced the number to 776 studies. To gain a global perspective on the topic, the researcher included terms like "determinants" or "factors" in the final query, focusing the search and lowering the number of relevant studies to 189. The syntax used for this search can be found in Appendix III.

Out of the 189 relevant studies retrieved, 171 were in English, with none in Arabic. By excluding studies unrelated to the subject category, such as those on medicine and environmental research, 146 studies remained relevant to the researcher's focus.

These studies primarily focused on Western contexts, with 126 covering countries like the US, UK, Australia, Canada, Italy, and Germany. Only two studies addressed the MENA region, specifically Egypt and Lebanon. Most of these studies were from fields such as psychology, business economics, educational research, interdisciplinary social science, and sociology.

They mainly addressed topics like career development, disability studies, unemployment, intergenerational mobility, wages, and other issues related to reduced inequality, quality education, decent work, and economic growth. However, they did not provide a comprehensive overview of youth transition determinants in a single study or cover issues like successful transition, particularly in the MENA region. The graph below provides an overview of the Web of Science database search results:

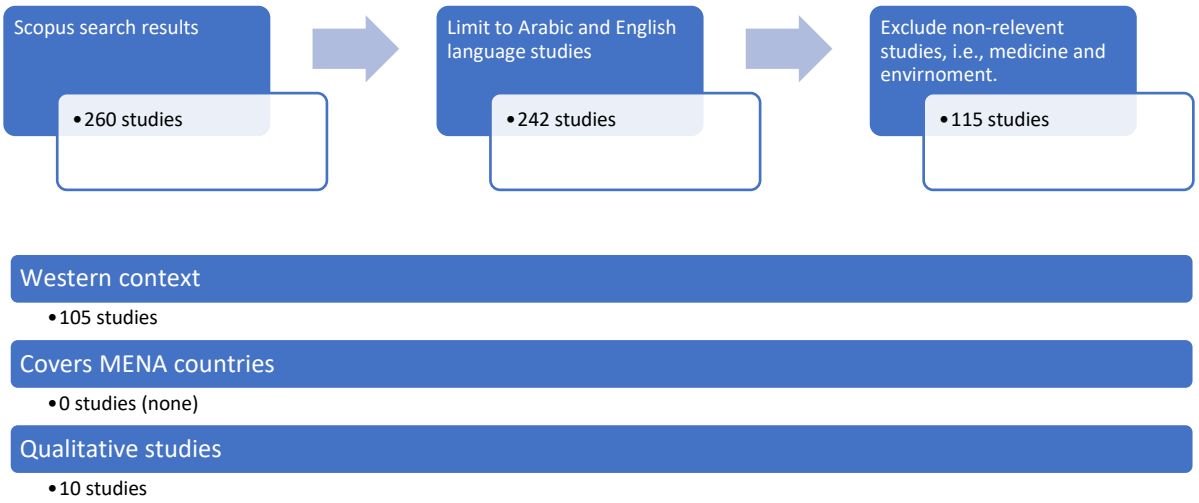
Figure 5: The Web of Science database search results details.



Similarly, the researcher conducted a semi-systematic review of the relevant literature using the Scopus database to find literature related to this study that might not be included in the Web of Science database. To that end, the researcher used a syntax (query), which resulted in 115 studies after refining his search to only English studies (no Arabic language studies were found) and excluding subject areas such as medicine and environmental science; the syntax used is provided in Appendix IV.

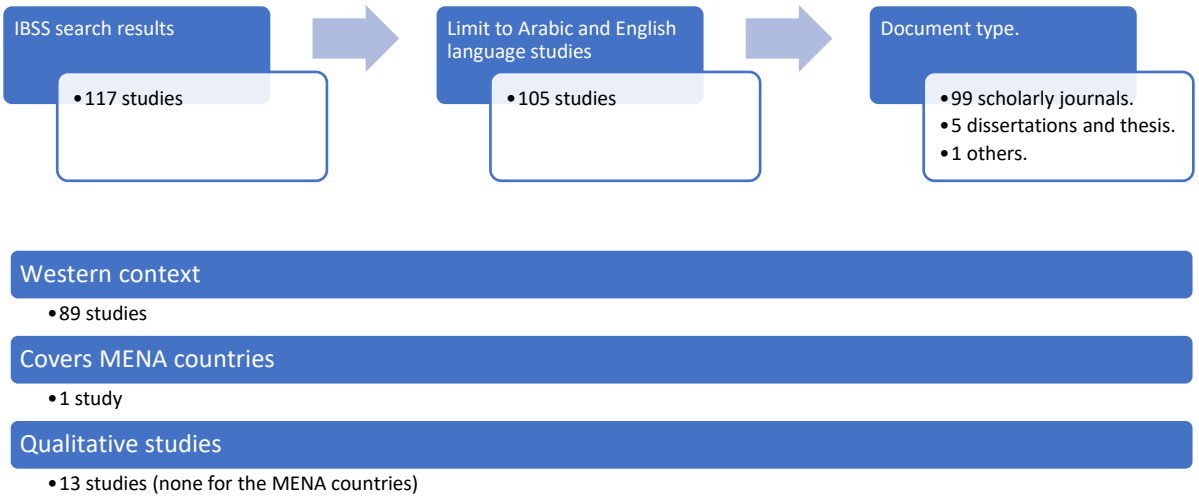
However, the search found that 105 studies focused on Western countries, 10 of them qualitative studies, and none covered the MENA countries. Most of these studies cover the social sciences, psychology, and economics. Most studies explored determinants that influenced young people's transition, but few provided a comprehensive picture of these determinants.

Figure 6: The Scopus database search results in detail.



The researcher used the IBSS database using ProQuest to explore academic books. The search generated 105 studies after restricting it to English languages (no Arabic studies were found). Appendix V provides the query used for this search. These studies focused on employment, youth, labour market, education, school-to-work transition, unemployment, career and life transitions, youth employment, and labour force subjects. The Figure below explains the results of the IBSS database research.

Figure 7: The IBSS database search results in detail.



The researcher scanned the studies for each database search and checked their relevance to the research topic to decide whether they should be included using the abovementioned REA framework. Moreover, Google Scholar was used to search for the relevant grey literature. However, the researcher noticed that the semi-systematic search was not comprehensive, as he found relevant articles that were not included in the search results from the above databases. Accordingly, he used citation tracking within the search strategy, where when he finds a relevant article or Chapter, he checks the related articles and the research cited in this article.

By examining the search results, the researcher reviewed 146 studies from the Web of Science, 115 studies from Scopus, and 105 results from the IBSS database, totalling 366 studies. After accounting for duplicates, 39 studies employed mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative), and three studies specifically focused on MENA countries. While identifying duplicates, the researcher

found 28 overlapping studies between the Web of Science and Scopus, seven between Scopus and IBSS, and 30 between IBSS and the Web of Science. This left 307 unique studies for consideration.

Notably, most of these studies utilised a quantitative approach, with only a limited number of qualitative studies addressing the research topic (Gaupp, 2013; Blokker *et al.,*2023). Additionally, this review highlighted the uniqueness of the study, as the researcher did not find any similar research exploring Jordanian young people's perceptions of their successful transition from education to work or the factors influencing it.

4.3 Review of the Western Literature on the Determinants of Successful Transition to Work

The empirical literature has investigated various determinants that can affect young people's transition from education to work. However, the previous section indicated that most of the empirical literature on successful young people's transition was mainly from Western countries, including the UK, US, Australia, Canada, and EU countries (Franz *et al.,* 2000; Lassibille *et al.,* 2001; Lenton, 2003; Müller & Gangl, 2003; Nguyen & Bradley, 2004). In the previous two decades, studies have been conducted to cover other countries (Genda & Kurosawa, 2001; Choudhry & Pastore, 2023), and other studies with geographical coverage extended to the MENA region and other developing countries generally (Rosso *et al.,* 2012; Nilsson, 2019; Selwaness & Roushdy, 2019). The discussion below will first focus on the literature in Western countries.

4.3.1. Changing Landscape of Transition from Education to Work

Young people's transition from education to work has been researched extensively in the last three to four decades because of the critical importance of this phase for young people and its effect on their life outcomes, such as their employment pathways, family establishment, economic independence, and their wellbeing (Hogan & Astone, 1986; Buchmann & Kriesi, 2011; Schoon & Bynner, 2017). Due to global social and economic changes, transitions have become difficult and more complex, affecting youth employment and lifestyles (Pollock, 2007; Dorsett & Lucchino, 2014). The transition from education to work has changed from a trivial phase in young people's lives at the beginning of the 20th century to a complex and challenging phase that can affect young people's overall life (Worthington & Juntunen, 1997; Blustein *et al.,* 2002; Damon, 2009; Assaad *et al.,* 2019; Pastore & Choudhry, 2022).

In the UK, for example, the transition from education to work during the 1950s and 1960s was smooth and uncomplicated but stratified by class origin (Goodwin & O'Connor, 2005), where young people "*felt in control of their own destinies*" (Roberts, 2009: p.357). A generation ago, leaving education early to get a job was not an indication of failure for young people by their families or the community in the UK, unlike for the current generation, where families have different expectations of young people and not completing your education becomes a stigma (Bynner & Parsons, 2002; Ling & O'Brien, 2013). However, young people's transition changed dramatically at the beginning of the 1980s in the UK, where several studies explored the rising unemployment among youth and the key determinants that affected this transition to work (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007). Several determinants, such as family, education, and employment, were considered key in influencing young people's transition in Western countries (Roberts, 2009).

Studying young people's transitions from education to work has focused on reviewing comparative research papers about Western countries to explore the key determinants that affect young people's transitions (Hannan *et al.,* 1996; Buttler *et al.,* 2023). For example, Müller & Karle's (1993) study covered nine Western countries, including the UK, with a sample of more than 67,000 participants born before the end of World War II. They collected data on participants' classes, education completed, and their nationality (country), among other variables. The study found that class inequalities and gender impact young people's education participation, and the effect of these factors varies by the level of a country's education and labour market systems.

The literature demonstrated that the transition from education to work is greatly affected by various structural and individual factors, such as the macroeconomic condition of their location (location as a country or within a country), national labour market conditions, job availability, family influence, household class, individual's agency, social perspective and benefits, gender, ethnicity, and institutional structures (Schoon, 2008; Schoon & Silbereisen, 2009; Roberts, 2018). The subsequent sections will provide an overview of the previously identified key factors in terms of the proposed ecological framework with a focus on quantitative studies, and a separate section will focus on qualitative studies.

4.3.2. Individual Determinants

The transition from education to work is shaped by a complex interplay of individual factors, including decisions regarding continued education, employment, and social mobility. This section synthesises the empirical literature on these transitions, focusing on individual factors such as agency, aspirations, social class, and gender. The analysis groups the evidence methodologically, offering a comprehensive overview of how these factors influence young people's educational and career trajectories.

Agency, or the capacity to make independent choices, has been identified as a critical determinant in the transition from education to work. Several studies have employed qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate the role of agency in shaping young people's career paths.

Research has shown that agency significantly affects the decisions young people make regarding their educational and career trajectories. In a qualitative study, Anisef *et al.* (2000) explored the transition of high school graduates in Canada. They found that these young people had significant autonomy in choosing their education and career pathways. Similarly, Evans (2002) conducted a mixed-methods study in the UK and Germany, revealing that broader socio-economic contexts, including labour market conditions, social class structures, and gender norms, profoundly influenced agency. These studies highlight the importance of contextual factors in shaping the agency of young people.

Quantitative studies have further elucidated the relationship between agency and educational transitions. For example, Furlong (2009) explained how changes in education systems and labour market contexts have ostensibly increased agency among youth. Their findings indicate that while the agency has expanded, structural inequalities related to social class, gender, and age persist (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). This suggests that increased autonomy alone does not mitigate these disparities, highlighting the need for a nuanced understanding of how the agency interacts with structural factors in shaping educational and career outcomes.

High aspirations and strategic career planning are essential components of successful transitions from education to work. Empirical research has utilised both qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate the impact of these factors.

A notable quantitative study by Holtmann *et al.* (2017) employed panel data from the German National Educational Panel Survey (NEPS) to examine the determinants of transition for 3,417 young people with minimal or no educational attainment. The study revealed that individuals with high aspirations, a vocational orientation, and robust career planning were more likely to secure training opportunities and enter the labour market, even when their cognitive and non-cognitive skills or family backgrounds did not predict these outcomes. This finding underscores the significance of personal aspirations and planning in facilitating successful transitions, independent of other individual or familial attributes.

In a large-scale quantitative study across ten Western countries[3] and Turkey, Simões *et al.* (2022) surveyed 20,008 young people aged 18-35 years and their parents to investigate the impact of individual, parental, and social factors on transitions to work. The study found that individual factors, such as aspirations and career intentions, were pivotal in shaping young people's entry into the labour market. Interestingly, the study noted that enrolment in education did not hinder young people from adjusting their career aspirations or seeking more advanced job opportunities. This highlights the dynamic nature of aspirations and the critical role they play in navigating the transition from education to work.

Social class and economic factors are crucial determinants of young people's educational and career outcomes. Empirical research has demonstrated that these factors significantly influence the transition from education to work.

A comprehensive study in England by Schoon and Lyons-Amos (2017) investigated the influence of agency and structural factors on young people's transitions from school to the workforce. The study employed face-to-face questionnaires with 9,558 young people and their parents, revealing a compelling link between social class and young people's sense of agency. The findings indicate that young people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds reported a diminished sense of control over their actions, expectations, and attitudes, which adversely affected their transitions to the workforce. This underscores the impact of social class on shaping young people's educational and

[3] These ten countries include Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

career trajectories, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to support disadvantaged groups.

Furthermore, the research highlighted the pivotal role of agency in shaping young people's transitions from education to work. It stressed that individuals with a high degree of agency, evidenced by lofty educational aspirations, strong self-efficacy, and well-defined career goals, were less inclined to pursue vocational education or enter the workforce prematurely. Additionally, the study shed light on the impact of gender on these transitions, revealing that early enrolment in vocational education or quick entry into the workforce was more prevalent among men. Similarly, ethnicity played a significant role, with young people from non-white ethnic backgrounds demonstrating a greater likelihood of pursuing further education but facing challenges in securing successful work transitions.

Curiously, the study found no direct correlation between young people's agency and their family's socioeconomic resources. Instead, the influence of an individual's agency on work transition outcomes was evident when other factors such as gender, ethnicity, family background, geographic location, and academic level were considered. Notably, the research observed no significant differences in self-efficacy between highly educated individuals and those classified as Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET), raising the possibility of overestimating their abilities and competencies. Nonetheless, other studies found similar conclusions: self-efficacy is the strongest predictor of youth optimism and educational resources, especially for their successful transition from education to work (Schoon & Cook, 2021; Keating & Melis, 2022).

Despite several studies indicating that gender differences in education and training were diminished in most Western countries (Shavit & Blossfeld, 1996), gender differences are still noticed in the type of education and training they select (Hannan & O'Riain, 1993). Indeed, until the end of the previous century, gender was a deciding factor in the type of education or occupation an individual takes. For example, in Germany and Canada, by the beginning of the 21st century, only around 2% of women were enrolled in apprenticeships (Lehmann, 2007). However, the literature showed that young women face more challenges in their transition, and when they get a job, they usually get lower pay (Quintini *et al.,* 2007; Schoon & Bynner, 2019). Moreover, gender was influencing young women unconsciously since while they strived for higher education and

career prospects, they were also concerned about their future domestic responsibilities and potential motherhood roles (Lehmann, 2007; Walther, 2015).

A mixed-methods study by Lehmann (2005) highlighted the role of gender in shaping young people's transitions to work, education, and agency. The study found that traditional beliefs about gender roles influenced young women's decisions, with many expressing concerns about balancing educational and career aspirations with potential domestic responsibilities and motherhood roles. This finding underscores the ongoing influence of gender norms on young people's educational and career decisions, highlighting the need for policies and interventions that address these disparities. These findings highlight the need for continued efforts to promote gender equality in education and employment, particularly in fields where women are underrepresented.

In summary, the transition from education to work is shaped by a complex interplay of individual factors, including agency, aspirations, social class, and gender. Empirical research has employed a variety of methodological approaches to investigate these factors, providing a comprehensive understanding of how they influence young people's educational and career trajectories. The evidence highlights the importance of fostering agency and high aspirations, addressing social and economic inequalities, and promoting gender equality to support successful transitions from education to work.

4.3.3. Familial Determinants

Literature in Western countries indicates that successful youth transition is not only about country context, such as their education system or the labour market structure, as some young people might complete their higher education but struggle in their transition to work because they come from a lower socioeconomic background (Trusty *et al.,* 2000; Blanden *et al.,* 2002; Ling & O'Brien, 2013). The social class background impacts successful young people's transition from education to work, as indicated by several Western-focused studies. Young people from affluent families get more education and are more likely to get jobs more smoothly than those from less affluent backgrounds (Breen, 1998).

For example, family socioeconomic status and class can play a role in young people's transition to work by securing employment opportunities through informal social networks (Jones, 1986;

Schoon *et al.,* 2001; Schoon & Lyons-Amos, 2016). Conversely, parental influence might limit young people's agency by constraining their choices, aspirations, and actions (Pollock, 2008; Schoon *et al.,* 2009). Indeed, numerous studies have demonstrated that socioeconomic status, with a particular emphasis on educational and occupational achievements, is one of the most influential factors impacting the transition of young people in Western countries (Davies, 1999; Krahn, 2004; Lleras, 2008). More studies have confirmed the influence of socioeconomic status ties on educational and occupational achievements and how these affect young people's transition to work (Krahn, 2004; Weiss, 2013). Other factors such as ethnicity and gender can also have an impact on young people's transition to work, particularly a negative influence when prejudice and discrimination from employers, trainers, or educational institutions come into play, which affects young people's choices and actions (Smith, 2009; Aaltonen, 2013; Schoon & Lyons-Amos, 2017).

Indeed, family's socioeconomic status has a significant influence on young people's transition to work; for example, in the UK, young people from a lower socioeconomic status have a higher probability of leaving school and moving into the labour market early compared to those who come from higher socioeconomic status backgrounds (Ferri *et al.,* 2003; MacDonald & Marsh, 2005; Fahmy, 2007; Pollock, 2008; Schoon & Silbereisen, 2009; Schoon & Lyons-Amos, 2017). Similar studies conducted in Canada show that socioeconomic status impacts young people's transition to work, where disadvantaged youth face a higher probability of problematic transition (Côté & Bynner, 2008).

One of the prominent research efforts was conducted by Lehmann (2005), who used a mixed-methods approach, including semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and surveys. The study aimed to compare two cohorts of high school students transitioning into the workforce: one in Alberta, Canada, and the other in Bremen, Germany. It primarily focused on the experiences of 65 young people pursuing apprenticeships. The findings highlighted the significant impact of familial background and parental education level on these young people's decisions to enter apprenticeship programs. Additionally, the research emphasised the critical role of workplace environments, particularly favourable working conditions and personal reflections on manual labour, in shaping their transitional choices. This research underscores the importance of understanding the social and cultural capital that families of higher socioeconomic status possess and how it aids in navigating educational and occupational landscapes.

A scholarly debate study examined the transition from education to work and found that family background, individual factors such as self-efficacy and career adaptability, and the conditions of education and labour market systems significantly impact young people's transitions (Masdonati *et al.,*2022). However, this study primarily focused on school-to-work transitions and indicated that this model of understanding young people's transitions to work is predominantly based on Western countries.

Moreover, social connections influence young people's successful transition in specific education and labour market contexts, such as in the USA, but with less impact in other contexts, such as Germany, which has more standardised education and labour market systems which emphasise the social class influence in youth transitions to work and how it varies by the context.

Trentin *et al.*'s (2011) investigation in Italy focused on a cohort of 1,593 students aged between 18 and 20, with equal gender representation, aimed to assess the impact of socioeconomic class on the decision-making processes concerning education and career pathways and how it influences young people's transition from education to work. This evaluation examined academic alternatives, future career aspirations, and income expectations. The research sought comprehensive insights by employing a questionnaire supplemented by additional inquiries capturing participant characteristics, self-efficacy indicators, decisional ability indicators, and self-representation in the work environment. The study's outcomes revealed that family background and the gender of young people play a pivotal role in shaping their transition from education to the workforce.

The literature indicates that familial factors, including socioeconomic status, social networks, and parental influence, play a significant role in shaping young people's transitions from education to work. This methodological review provides a nuanced understanding of how these factors influence educational and career outcomes. Addressing the disparities created by these familial factors is crucial for supporting successful transitions and promoting social mobility.

4.3.4. Local Determinants

Local determinants, including spatial factors, local education and labour market policies, and local customs and traditions, profoundly influence the transition from education to work. Rather than

focusing on individual studies, this review methodologically groups the evidence to analyse how these local factors interact to shape young people's career trajectories.

Spatial factors, encompassing both regional and local variations, are critical in understanding youth transitions from education to work. Research indicates that geographic location significantly affects educational and employment opportunities, leading to disparities in youth outcomes (Bradley & Nguyen, 2004; Weßling, 2016; Choudhry & Pastore, 2023).

A body of quantitative research has focused on regional disparities within and between countries. For instance, Scandurra *et al.* (2021) utilised the Eurostat database to analyse regional differences in the school-to-work transitions of young people aged 20 to 34 across Europe from 2005 to 2016. Their findings reveal significant variation in transition outcomes, highlighting how local labour market conditions and educational infrastructures impact youth employment prospects. This comprehensive dataset allowed for a nuanced examination of how regional economic health and educational systems influence the timing and quality of young people's transitions into the workforce.

Similarly, studies like those by Bradley and Nguyen (2004) and Weßling (2016) emphasise the importance of local economic conditions and the availability of educational resources in shaping youth transitions. These studies identify trends and disparities at the regional level, illustrating how young people in economically disadvantaged areas face greater challenges in securing stable employment. These findings suggest that policy interventions need to be tailored to address regional inequalities and improve local job market conditions.

Local education policies, including the availability of vocational training and apprenticeships, are crucial in shaping youth transitions. Studies employing comparative policy analysis, such as Ryan’s study (2001), reveal that regions with robust vocational training systems and strong links between education providers and employers tend to facilitate smoother transitions for young people. These studies often utilise longitudinal data to track the outcomes of different policy environments, highlighting the effectiveness of integrated education and labour market policies in supporting youth employment.

It also examines how cultural norms and values impact youth transitions. For example, in regions with strong cultural expectations around gender roles, young women may face additional barriers to accessing certain types of education and employment. These cultural factors can limit the range of acceptable career choices and impact young people's aspirations and opportunities.

Additionally, local education and labour market policies play a pivotal role in facilitating or hindering the transition from education to work. For instance, research by Choudhry and Pastore (2023) highlights the impact of local labour market policies on youth employment outcomes. Using a revision of selected papers from different countries, the study shows how regions with proactive labour market policies, such as job placement programs and vocational training initiatives, exhibit higher rates of successful transitions among young people. These findings underscore the importance of local policy environments in shaping the opportunities available to young people and suggest that targeted interventions can significantly improve transition outcomes.

Local factors, including spatial disparities, education and labour market policies, and cultural influences, play a critical role in shaping youth transitions from education to work. Methodologically diverse research highlights the complex interplay between these factors and underscores the importance of tailored policy interventions to address regional inequalities and support successful transitions. By focusing on the local context, policymakers can develop more effective strategies to improve youth employment outcomes and promote social mobility.

4.3.5. National Determinants

The literature explores several national determinants influencing young people's transition from education to work in Western countries. For instance, national contexts, characterised by varying education and training systems, economic statuses, labour market structures, and socio-demographic features, are highlighted as factors affecting youth transitions (Hannan *et al.,*1996). Differences in national contexts and education systems explain the contrasting youth transitions observed in countries like Germany and the USA (Schupp *et al.,* 1994). Additionally, numerous studies examine cross-national variations in youth transitions to work, considering factors such as economic levels, education systems, and labour market conditions (Smyth & Surridge, 1995). However, Hannan *et al.* (1996) emphasise that family background, class, and gender significantly

influence successful transitions. Other studies focus on the impact of labour market structures on young people's transitions to work, noting that the types of jobs, salary settings, and labour market conditions can either constrain or facilitate these transitions (Marsden & Ryan, 1991; Edwards *et al.,* 2016; Lewis & Heyes, 2020).

The literature identifies education systems and policies as key determinants in young people's transitions to work. Findings consistently show a positive relationship between well-structured education systems and smoother transitions into the workforce (Lauer, 2005; Ling & O'Brien, 2013). For example, Germany's education system is highly structured and closely linked to the labour market, providing clear pathways for students. In contrast, the education system in the UK is less structured, and employers do not place the same emphasis on educational credentials as in Germany. Consequently, the UK has a higher percentage of early school leavers, exceeding 10%, who face significant challenges transitioning to work (Scherer, 2001; Ashton & Bynner, 2011; Schoon & Lyons-Amos, 2017).

A study by Ryan (2001) utilised findings from various micro-econometric studies in the UK, Germany, France, Japan, Sweden, the Netherlands, and the United States to explore a cross-national perspective on the school-to-work transition. The study found that national contexts, educational systems, and education policies and regulations significantly impact young people's transitions from education to work. For instance, the emphasis on vocational education and training in Germany and Japan and broader policies and regulations related to education and labour markets played a crucial role in facilitating these transitions.

A different investigation scrutinised the patterns of labour market entry across 11 European nations, drawing insights from the outcomes of their respective national labour force survey questionnaires. The findings underscored that each country's educational and employment systems play a pivotal role in shaping the transition of young people from education to the workforce (Wolbers, 2007). Noteworthy components of these systems encompassed the legislation of their employment protection systems and the specificity of vocational systems embedded within national educational frameworks. However, the study showed that the influence of these institutional features exhibits significant variation contingent upon the educational level under consideration.

Indeed, young people's education-to-work transitions usually happen after high school, especially when education is linked to vocational education and training, such as in Switzerland. In contrast, in other countries focusing more on a higher education level, these transitions happen later in the educational stage (Masdonati *et al.,* 2022). Ultimately, the key lies in strengthening the national context to empower institutions to provide young people with high-quality education and skills, thereby increasing the likelihood of a successful transition to work (Shanahan, 2000; Ng & Feldman, 2007; Saks, 2018).

4.3.6. Global Determinants

Young people's transition from education to work has become more complex. This complexity was compounded by the effect of globalisation on the education-to-work transition (Schoon & Silbereisen, 2009; Pastore & Choudhry, 2022), the global economic, financial, and health crises (Farčnik & Domadenik, 2012; Pastore & Choudhry, 2022). Indeed, literature on the 2008 recession and the global COVID-19 pandemic indicated that the economic downturn and low social mobility emphasised the influence of economic and labour market status on young people's transitions to work (Vespa, 2017; Schoon & Heckhausen, 2019; Major & Machin, 2020). The intricate nature of young people's transition, compounded by these determinants at the global level, has led to heightened adverse effects on economic output and the labour market. This translates into sluggish economic growth, diminished job prospects, and intensified competition for the limited available employment opportunities (Hemming & Hofmann-Lun, 2023).

For example, a nationally representative study in England covered 3,737 young people between ages 17-18 and 22-23 from a longitudinal survey and interview data (sample of 101 young people) who left school at 18 and those who graduated from higher education were examined to explore their pathways into employment, and the factors that affected their transitions (Hoskins *et al.,* 2018). The study revealed that, amid an economic downturn, individuals with higher education encountered more difficulties transitioning to employment than their less educated counterparts, a situation very similar to Jordan's context (Mryyan, 2014; Assaad & Saleh, 2018). The research attributed this trend to a scarcity of job opportunities during the economic recession, causing those with higher education to struggle to find preferred jobs aligned with their education and providing job security. Moreover, the study found that family background, including young people's financial

and social support, played a key role in young people's successful transition to work during the economic recession.

A further investigation was undertaken to examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people's transition from education to the workforce. This study involved a comprehensive analysis of pertinent literature about the intersection of education-to-work transitions and the implications of COVID-19 on the labour market. The findings revealed that young people worldwide experienced substantial challenges in their educational-to-professional transition, manifesting in elevated rates of unemployment, underemployment, job losses, and salary reductions as a direct consequence of the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic (Pastore & Choudhry, 2022).

Studying education to work transitions has become the focus for several national and international organisations, such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Bank, and many others. For instance, a UNICEF study using various data sources incorporating an extensive desk-based review of over 150 documents, studies, and records at global, regional, thematic, and country levels. The study synthesised and analysed both primary data, derived from education-to-work surveys, Multiple Indicators Cluster Surveys (MICS), Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), among others, and secondary data, drawn from consolidated databases like ILOSTAT, Human Capital Index (HDI), World Development Indicators (WDI), and others. This comprehensive approach investigated the fundamental drivers of global school-to-work transitions (Alam & de Diego, 2019).

The study found that the country's context and economic status significantly impact young people's transitions to work. In addition, it was found that labour market status and conditions are key factors, such as the quality and type of jobs available, employers' practices, availability of job opportunities, and share of the informal sector. Moreover, the study addressed global-level indicators, such as labour market technological advancement, globalisation, climate change, and green economy. It also included the educational system and rules, such as availability and access to education, the type of education offered, and the lack of government support and investment in education systems. Moreover, the study addressed the underlying factors that affected young

people's transitions to work, such as lack of work experience, lack of information and social networks, weak public employment services, inconsistent recruitment practices, inadequate access to financial capital, gender roles, and access to social protection. However, the study highlighted the importance of these factors influencing young people's transition to work as they differ per country and its economic and social context.

4.4 Review of Qualitative Evidence

Upon critically reviewing existing qualitative studies on the transition of young people from education to the workforce, it becomes evident that these studies are not only limited in number but often lack comprehensive alignment with the intricacies of the current research topic. The depth of analysis regarding the determinants affecting youth transitions is often inadequate, and there is a need for more holistic and nuanced investigations.

For instance, a qualitative study conducted by Gellermann and Fuchs (2022) on 32 young people aged 18 to 25 who faced challenges transitioning into the German labour market offers some insights but also highlights the gaps in the current literature. This study aimed to explore the role of autonomy and other influencing factors, drawing on a diverse sample in terms of background, education, location, and gender. The research identified two primary factors affecting youth autonomy: dysfunctional parent-child relationships and entrenched traditionalism.

The study critically examined how dysfunctional relationships, characterised by a lack of parental support and familial conflicts such as divorce, neglect, or death, led to low confidence, insufficient self-efficacy, and insecurity among young people. These factors significantly hampered their ability to transition successfully into the workforce. The findings suggest a critical need to address familial support systems and mental health to facilitate smoother transitions. Another critical determinant was traditionalism, where parental expectations pressured young people to adhere to specific educational or career paths, regardless of their interests or socio-economic context. This often constrained their autonomy and negatively influenced their transition outcomes. The study calls for a re-evaluation of cultural norms and family expectations to better support young people's career aspirations.

The study also recognised additional factors, such as socioeconomic status, migration background, and early parenthood, which further influenced young people's transitions. These findings underscore the complexity and multifaceted nature of the transition process, suggesting a need for broader and more inclusive research frameworks that consider these varied influences (Gellermann & Fuchs, 2022). However, the researcher found that this study was not comprehensive as it did not address other key factors, such as the country's context, national education and labour policies, and global factors.

A historically significant study titled "*Adjustment of Young Workers to Work Situations and Adult Roles,*" conducted in Leicester between 1962 and 1964, provides valuable insights into the nature of work transitions during that period (Goodwin & O'Connor, 2005: p.2). The study, involving 1,150 individuals from an initial sample and completing 882 interviews, revealed that many of the transitions were neither linear nor straightforward. The rediscovered data, including 851 original interviews, including those of 260 women, indicated that job changes were common and often characterised by uncertainty and inadequate training.

The study highlighted that frequent job changes and a lack of clarity about future prospects marked youth transitions in the 1960s. This finding challenges the assumption of homogeneous or straightforward transition pathways and suggests that contemporary transitions might also benefit from understanding these historical complexities. The rediscovered data provide a valuable lens to re-examine how young people navigated their early careers and the role of systemic factors in shaping their experiences. This historical perspective emphasises the need for modern research to consider the fluid and varied nature of youth transitions.

Research by Lamamra *et al.* (2013) in Switzerland focused on the school-to-work transition among young people who discontinued vocational education and training. This two-stage qualitative study, involving initial interviews with 46 participants and follow-up interviews with 16 individuals four years later, underscored the critical role of social connections and networks.

The study found that robust social networks played a pivotal role in supporting young people during their transition phases. These networks provided crucial resources and support, helping individuals navigate challenges and facilitating smoother transitions into the workforce. The expansion of social connections over time also proved valuable in enhancing young people's

employment prospects. These findings highlight the importance of social capital and the need for policies that support the development of strong, supportive networks for young people (Lamamra *et al.,* 2013). Methodologically, this study demonstrates the effectiveness of longitudinal qualitative research in capturing the evolving nature of social influences on youth transitions. However, it was limited to a specific youth category (who dropped vocational education and training) and did not provide a comprehensive picture of their determinants.

The cultural context of youth transitions, as explored by Schoon and Lyons-Amos (2017), highlights the role of local traditions and social expectations in shaping the pathways available to young people. Their research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative analyses to investigate how cultural attitudes towards work and education influence youth transitions. The findings indicate that local cultural norms can either facilitate or constrain young people's career aspirations, depending on the alignment between these norms and the available educational and employment opportunities. This study underscores the significant impact of cultural expectations on the timing and nature of youth transitions, emphasising the need for context-specific policy interventions (Schoon & Lyons-Amos, 2017). For instance, regions with robust vocational training systems and integrated education and labour market policies tend to facilitate smoother transitions for young people, a conclusion supported by comparative policy analysis and longitudinal data (Schupp et al., 1994).

Further, research by Hannan *et al.* (1996) and Schoon & Lyons-Amos (2017) consistently shows that young people from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds face considerable challenges when transitioning to the workforce, regardless of the national context. Both studies highlight the critical influence of family background and social class on youth transitions. Using longitudinal data and socio-demographic analysis, they reveal that youth from less affluent families are more likely to leave school prematurely and struggle to find stable employment. Conversely, those from more privileged backgrounds benefit from superior educational opportunities, leading to more seamless transitions into the workforce. These findings underscore the necessity of addressing socioeconomic disparities to support equitable youth transitions.

The limited scope of existing studies highlights the need for broader, more inclusive research frameworks that consider the diverse influences on youth transitions, including family dynamics,

cultural norms, social networks, and policy environments. By adopting a critical perspective and employing diverse methodological approaches, future research can provide a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of youth transitions and inform the development of targeted interventions to support young people in their journey from education to the workforce.

4.5 Review of Evidence from the MENA Region

In this section, the researcher will focus on studies (both qualitative and quantitative) concerning the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, including Jordan. Given the limited research specifically on Jordan, the review is broadened to encompass MENA countries, which share similarities in young people's transitions from education to work. However, countries in the Gulf region, such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, and Oman, are less relevant due to their distinct economic and labour market conditions. These Gulf countries are characterised by high incomes from oil and gas industries and a significant presence of foreign workers, which makes their context different from Jordan (Salehi-Isfahani & Dhillon, 2008). Still, these countries have some similarities with Jordan in terms of the country's demographic structure, institutional failures, local customs and traditions, use of social connections, nepotism, *Wasta* (influence), favouritism, clientelism (Lust, 2009; Egan & Tabar, 2016), and youth preference for public sector jobs (Salehi-Isfahani & Dhillon, 2008).

Young people in the MENA region grapple with novel challenges that were non-existent a generation ago. In traditional and predominantly rural MENA societies of the past, transitions from education to work were primarily guided by familial and communal support systems. These systems helped young people follow the paths of their parents, be it in the realm of employment, agriculture, professions, or the establishment of their own businesses (Mryyan, 2014; Assaad & Krafft, 2016). Through economic development, the influence of market forces and state institutions was increased, particularly impacting the lives of the youth, as these controlled employment opportunities and the educational system. However, these market and state entities have encountered difficulties fulfilling their fundamental role of providing the necessary resources and support for young people's transition into work.

Furthermore, they have struggled to adapt to evolving global conditions (Dhillon & Yousef, 2011; Choudhry *et al.,* 2012; Fakih *et al.,* 2020). Over the past three decades, rapid economic and social

changes have occurred, partially driven by the influx of oil revenues to the Gulf region and remittances received by exporting labour countries. Meanwhile, productivity growth and human capital accumulation have lagged behind (Salehi-Isfahani, 2013; Alnaser, 2018; MacDonald & King, 2021).

Studies showed that the MENA region faces intensified demographic pressures that further magnify institutional shortcomings because of the inflexible education systems and labour market, which demonstrated limited effectiveness in facilitating young people's successful transition from education to work (Salehi-Isfahani & Dhillon, 2008; Assaad & Saleh, 2018). Several studies indicated that young people from affluent families undergo a distinct transition to work compared to their counterparts from middle- and lower-income backgrounds (Salehi-Isfahani & Dhillon, 2008). They have the option to pursue higher education, utilise family resources (financial or social) to start their own business or get a job.

MacDonald and King's (2021) study underscored the economic challenges facing MENA countries, including weak economy, underdeveloped private sector, limited and distorted investment, and heavy reliance on the public sector. The study concluded that youth perspectives vary significantly due to their national contexts, resulting in greater heterogeneity among youth in the MENA region. Moreover, common concepts related to youth differ between MENA and Western countries, such as "insecurity", and factors influencing youth transitions in Western countries may not apply to the MENA region, particularly in the realm of education.

The study also revealed that a weak economy adversely affects both the quantity and quality of jobs available for young people in the MENA region. This situation contrasts sharply with Western countries like the UK, where the unemployment rate among educated individuals is relatively low at 4%. In contrast, the rates are significantly higher in MENA countries, reaching 51%, 49%, 47%, and 70% in Lebanon, Morocco, Egypt, and Palestine, respectively (Calder *et al.,*2017).

Indeed, over the last three to four decades, the MENA region has witnessed a significant surge in educational attainment, which is attributed to substantial public investments in the education sector (Saleh, 2016). This has led to an exponential increase in educational attainment among youth in the MENA region, including women (Barro & Lee, 2013; Assaad & Saleh, 2018). However, this educational achievement and attainment increase has not translated into comparable advancement

in young people's transition to work, income, or social status mobility in countries such as Egypt (Binzel & Carvalho, 2013) and Jordan (Assaad & Saleh, 2018).

A research initiative undertaken jointly by the Education Training Foundation (ETF) and UNESCO encompassed eight countries in the MENA region: Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Lebanon, and Palestine. Employing a quantitative methodology, the study utilised transition surveys conducted by the ETF and UNESCO on school-to-work transitions. One of the study's primary objectives was to investigate the socioeconomic and demographic factors influencing young adults' transition from education to work (Rosso *et al.,* 2012). The research identified common factors affecting the transition of young people in MENA countries, with varying severity among these countries. Economic status emerged as a pivotal factor, manifested through challenges such as a weak business environment, bureaucratic hurdles in establishing businesses, and deficiencies in the financial sector. The study also shed light on unfavourable labour market conditions, including inadequate job-matching services and fragmented labour market information systems. Consequently, many young people in these countries rely on social connections to secure employment.

Moreover, the study revealed that insufficient work experience posed a barrier for young people entering the labour market, attributed to limited job opportunities and fierce competition. The informal sector became a common recourse for many due to their lack of experience and limited job opportunities in the formal labour market. The education systems and approaches in these MENA countries were confirmed as crucial influencers in the transitions of young people to work. Factors such as skills mismatch, a shortage of soft skills (key competencies), and low levels of qualifications and enrolment in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) were identified as key contributors to the challenges faced by young people. The study suggested that these issues could be traced back to shortcomings in the education systems. Indeed, other studies in the MENA region considered education and labour market mismatch as one of the key factors affecting young people's transition (Assaad & Krafft, 2015), and the same conclusion was proposed in relation to Jordan (Mryyan, 2014).

Additionally, the research underscored geographical disparities among the countries, with variations in job availability across and within nations. Notably, the study emphasised the

pronounced difficulties faced by young women in their transitions to work, citing discrimination in labour market access, low pay, unfavourable working conditions, limited networking opportunities, the patriarchal system, restricted mobility options, and constraints imposed by local customs and traditions (Assaad & Krafft, 2016; Fakih *et al.,* 2020). Indeed, despite increasing educational attainment levels in the MENA region, including young women, unemployment remains high among young people, especially higher education graduates, as they face challenges in transitioning to the labour market (Alnaser, 2018; MacDonald & King, 2021).

A separate quantitative investigation delved into the transitions of young Palestinians from education to work, examining the factors shaping this transition (Sayre, 2017). Utilising the 2012-2013 ILO school-to-work transition survey, the study encompassed 2,236 individuals aged 15-29 who had concluded their education. Findings revealed that the country's economic and social policies, institutional barriers (such as a reliance on standardised education systems), and labour market regulations significantly impacted the pathways of young people entering the workforce. The study highlighted the influence of limited job opportunities on the transitions of young people to work, stemming from factors like insufficient economic growth, weak economic integration with the MENA region, and a fragmented private sector. Additionally, the research affirmed that education, family background, and gender played pivotal roles in shaping the transitions of young Palestinians into work.

Research in this field has consistently shown that the age of young people plays a pivotal role in influencing their employment status and the progression from education to work (Assaad, 2007; Mryyan, 2014; Fakih *et al.,* 2020). According to Assaad and Krafft's (2016) study, those in the 20-24 age bracket experience the highest unemployment rates and encounter more intricate challenges during their transition from education to employment, particularly in the MENA region. In this region, young people often extend their education in pursuit of job opportunities, viewing this period as their initial entry into the workforce, where they can accumulate valuable experience and build social connections. Nevertheless, the research suggests that as young people age and acquire more education and experience, their likelihood of successfully transitioning from education to employment increases (*ibid.*).

Indeed, a significant disparity exists between the education systems and the demands of the labour market in countries of the MENA region. A quantitative study delved into this misalignment and the underlying factors impacting the transition to work for highly educated young people in Egypt and Jordan (Assaad *et al.,* 2018). The study focused on individuals aged 25 to 40 in 2012 who had graduated from specific fields, were either presently employed or had prior work experience, and resided in urban areas. Data were gathered through official labour force surveys in Egypt, employment and unemployment surveys, and household income and expenditure surveys in Jordan. The study encompassed a sample of 1,616 in Egypt and 1,418 young people in Jordan.

Results indicated a structural issue within the labour markets of both countries, characterised by a lack of clear signals regarding the requisite skills. This ambiguity confuses the education system, students, and their families. Furthermore, hiring practices in the labour market were identified as influential factors affecting the transitions of young people. Notably, labour market demand primarily prioritised educational credentials over skills (Amer, 2014). The study also underscored the significance of family background and social networks as critical variables for successful transitions from education to work in Egypt and Jordan. These factors were deemed more crucial than the specific type of education or credentials possessed by individuals.

The literature indicated that the distribution of job opportunities between urban and rural areas in the MENA region is an essential factor that impacts young people's transition from education to work, especially educated young women, as indicated above. Moreover, literature attributed challenges in the transition of educated youth in rural areas compared to urban areas to the constrained mobility in the rural areas, the limited choices they have, and the more conservative values of rural communities (Assaad & Krafft, 2016).

Drawing on a quantitative study examined the relationship between school-to-work transitions and socioeconomic status among school leavers in Egypt, Jordan, and Tunisia. The study utilised the Labour Market Panel Surveys (LMPSs) conducted by the Economic Research Forum (ERF) in these countries: the 2012 Egypt LMPS (28,770 individuals), the 2016 Jordan LMPS (33,450 individuals), and the 2014 Tunisia LMPS (40,377 individuals), totalling approximately 102,597 individuals (Assaad *et al.,* 2023). The findings indicated that these countries share common factors affecting young people's transition from education to work, though the impact varies in intensity.

These factors include limited job opportunities, an increasing number of school leavers, gender, family background, the labour market and education systems, and a weak and fragmented private sector. While existing literature highlights the prevalence of youth unemployment and the challenges they encounter during their transitions, the underlying causes remain inadequately researched and understood (Kabbani & Kothari, 2005; Dhillon & Yousef, 2011; Assaad, 2014; Mryyan, 2014).

A prominent qualitative study by RAND[4] explored young people's transitions from education to work in Jordan. The study was carried out as an initiative for Middle Eastern youth to help improve policy and decision-making (Brown *et al.,* 2014). It is worth mentioning that RAND is a key vehicle for the USA's global policy, so its agenda might not be completely neutral. This study conducted 13 focus groups, 6-8 participants at each, and 14 individual interviews with young Jordanians aged 15-30 to explore their perceptions of their transitions into adulthood, including their aspirations for work and family, fairness in the labour market, and barriers to employment. The study covered two locations: Amman and a less urbanised area near Zarqa governorate. Although this study did not investigate the successful transitions and the determinants that affected young people in their transitions, it provided an understanding of these factors. The study findings indicated weak economic growth that led to low job creation in the country. Still, the created jobs are concentrated in construction and manufacturing (mainly garments) subsectors not desired by Jordanian youth because of their low income and employers' preference for foreign workers.

The study findings also indicated that the education system was another key factor. They explained that education coverage is expanding, but the quality of education is still not relevant or focused. Education systems do not focus on skills; they are more academically focused on literature and humanitarian fields (Ismail *et al.,* 2020). Moreover, gender emerged as another factor where young people explained that there is a general expectation from the family and the community based on their common gender role, i.e., the type of education or job they can select as they deem appropriate by local customs and traditions. In addition, young people expressed frustration with the government and society's response to the challenges faced during their transitions to work (Brown *et al.,* 2014).

[4] For more information about RAND corporation, you can check https://www.rand.org/.

The empirical literature search reveals a gap in examining young people's perspectives on successful transitions and the determinants influencing them utilising qualitative research methods. This gap is evident in Western countries and particularly pronounced in the MENA region, encompassing Jordan. Existing literature suggests that both global and regional factors, such as the 2008 financial recession, the 2011 Arab Spring, and the COVID-19 pandemic, play pivotal roles in shaping the transition of young people from education to work and influencing their employment status (Cairns *et al.,* 2014; Salvà-Mut *et al.,* 2016; Selwaness & Roushdy, 2019; Kebede *et al.,* 2020). Notably, research indicates that after global and regional crises like those mentioned, the transition to work for young people becomes more challenging and intricate, contributing to heightened levels of social exclusion, inequality, and unemployment (Choudhry *et al.,* 2012; MacDonald *et al.,* 2024).

Furthermore, a quantitative study delved into the analysis of school-to-work transitions in Jordan from 2010 to 2016, specifically evaluating the impact of the influx of Syrian refugees into the country (Amer, 2018). Utilising Jordan's LMPSs of 2010 and 2016, encompassing a sample of 2,788 individuals aged 15-34, the study revealed a significant shock to the Jordanian economy due to many Syrian refugees. This shock led to a notable shift in population distribution within the country and a sharp rise in unemployment. The findings highlighted that the Syrian refugee crisis, combined with the repercussions of the 2008 financial recession, very negatively affected the transitions of young people into the workforce in Jordan. Moreover, recent research underscored the substantial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Jordanian labour market, including the transitions of young people from education to employment (Raouf *et al.,* 2020; Pastore & Choudhry, 2022; ILO, 2023).

4.6 Conclusion

This Chapter presents a comprehensive examination of the factors empirically demonstrated to impact the transition of young people from education to work, both in Western countries and the MENA region, with a specific focus on Jordan. In the Western context, structural elements, including economic conditions, education systems, labour market dynamics, geographical contexts, class, and gender, have been identified as influential determinants. These factors create opportunity structures that shape the experiences of young people during their transition, either

positively or negatively. Additionally, individual agency, characterised by goal-setting, decision-making, self-efficacy, and self-reflection, plays a crucial role in navigating young people's transitions.

Research on young people's transition from education to work is still emerging in the MENA region, particularly in Jordan. While Western countries have been extensively studied, there is a noticeable research gap in the MENA countries, including Jordan. Limited studies indicate that the factors influencing young people's transitions in this region may differ significantly due to unique socioeconomic, cultural, and political contexts. The youth in the MENA region are more heterogeneous and socially divided, and key concepts may be understood differently compared to those in Western contexts (Alnaser, 2018; MacDonald & King, 2021). Jordan faces specific challenges and opportunities in youth transitions, shaped by its unique economic conditions, education systems, labour market dynamics, and social norms (Assaad & Saleh, 2018).

The previous discussion affirms that the transition model for young people in Western countries, including Jordan, differs significantly from that in the MENA region. For instance, unlike some Western countries, cultural and familial expectations significantly influence young people's choices in the MENA region. Moreover, the emphasis on social connections is more pronounced in the MENA region. Understanding these determinants is crucial for addressing Jordanian youth's specific needs and aspirations as they transition into work.

Transition pathways in Western countries are generally smoother than those in the MENA region, attributed to differences in contextual factors, job availability, and education and labour market systems. Class, gender, and locality still influence transition pathways in both regions, with a more decisive impact in the MENA region. Existing frameworks developed for understanding young people's transition in Western countries may provide an incomplete picture when applied to the MENA region, especially Jordan, due to variations in influencing determinants. Unlike Western countries, the literature review reveals a scarcity of qualitative studies in the MENA region, particularly concerning young people's perceptions. This research will use qualitative approaches to offer more insightful knowledge about young people's views on their transition and choices, particularly in the MENA region.

Chapter 5: Research Methodology, Design and Method

5.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology, design, and methods for investigating transitions from education to work in Jordan. Section 5.2 introduces the research design and approach, explaining and justifying the use of a qualitative methodology and detailing the researcher's methodological stance. Section 5.3 describes the data collection methods, including the instruments used and the pilot study conducted to refine these tools. Section 5.4 discusses the sampling strategy, while Section 5.5 explains the sample recruitment process. Section 5.6 describes the fieldwork, Section 5.7 provides details on data preparation, and Section 5.8 introduces the framework analysis employed in the study. Section 5.9 outlines the criteria for assessing the quality of the qualitative data collected. Finally, Section 5.10 concludes with a discussion of the ethical considerations relevant to the research.

5.2 Research Methodology and Design

Previous chapters have confirmed that studies on the transition from education to work in the MENA region, including Jordan, are much less prevalent compared to those in developed countries. Most existing research is quantitatively focused and primarily conducted in developed regions (Blustein *et al.*, 1997; Gaupp, 2013; Johansson, 2017; McPherson, 2020; Blokker *et al.*, 2023; Kabbani, 2019). The importance of studying young people's transition to the workforce has been emphasised, highlighting the predominance of quantitative research methods (see Sections 3.5, 4.3, and 4.4). This underscores a significant methodological gap in the use of qualitative approaches, particularly in Jordan and similar contexts.

Evans and Furlong (2019) argue that capturing young people's attitudes and beliefs is essential when studying youth transitions. Understanding these subjective perspectives is crucial because they provide deeper insights into the personal and societal factors influencing how youth perceive and navigate their transition to adulthood and work. Understanding the perspectives of young individuals is essential for shaping effective policy interventions (as explained in Section 1.1), as government strategies often seek to guide public decision-making (Macmillan, 2006). Programs such as Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and various activation policies

are crafted to encourage behavioural adjustments, particularly focusing on the choices of the youth. To fully appreciate the role of subjectivity, it is vital to investigate how the decisions made by young people intersect with social structures from both theoretical and policy viewpoints. This study's examination of the structure-agency dynamic underscores the significance of recognising individual subjectivity (Archer, 2013).

This study aims to qualitatively examine young people's perceptions in Jordan regarding their transition from education to work. The previous chapters also highlighted that young people face various challenges during this transition, and existing studies have not fully explored what constitutes a successful transition from their perspective or the factors that contribute to it.

The literature indicates that an overemphasis on quantitative approaches in youth studies, particularly those examining transitions to work, tends to focus primarily on external environment factors such as structural conditions. This approach often neglects the role of individual agency, the dynamic interaction between structures and agency, and how these influence each other (Lehmann, 2005; Goodwin & O'Connor, 2007; Schoon & Lyons-Amos, 2016). Rudd and Evans state:

> "*Many studies of youth transitions underestimate the degree of choice or agency evident in such processes and there have been few attempts to explain the apparent incompatibility between young people's perceived feelings of autonomy and control and the alleged over-arching often unmediated, influence of 'deterministic' social structures on their lives*". (Rudd & Evans, 1998: p.60)

Adopting a qualitative methodological approach, emphasising depth, subjectivity, and specificity, emerged as a fundamental choice for this study (McPherson, 2020). Furthermore, investigating young people's perspectives, experiences, aspirations, and emotions were most effectively explored through a narrative biographical (life history) approach (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995; Schoon *et al.,* 2001). Indeed, by adopting a narrative biographical approach, this study can generate rich data about the research problem to understand young people's views regarding their transition from education to work, more specifically, what successful or problematic transition means for them and what they consider to be the key determinants that affect their successful transition (Ecclestone, 2007; Hu *et al.,* 2022).

Moreover, Woolley (2009) emphasised the importance of considering young people's perceptions to better understand their transitions from education to work. This is crucial because young people's perceptions provide valuable insights into their experiences, motivations, and challenges. This understanding influences young people's objective outcomes and social structures. These perceptions reflect how they interpret and react to external factors such as economic conditions, social expectations, and policy environments. By understanding these subjective viewpoints, researchers can gain a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the transition process, which is often missed by focusing solely on quantitative measures.

The literature chapters revealed that most previous research on young people's transition from education to work used quantitative methods and statistical techniques to assess and measure their transitions (Bynner & Chisholm, 1998). In developing countries, including Jordan, most researchers used quantitative methods to understand what influences young people's transition to work and when they consider it a successful transition. However, they did not consider young people's views or beliefs about these social issues for several reasons, including that this approach was viewed as relatively new and not a priority for the researchers, different political and economic priorities, limited research funding, and the lack of political will to incorporate young people's views into policies (Rosso *et al.*, 2012; Ayadi *et al.*, 2017).

The literature review chapter also highlighted a significant knowledge gap in using qualitative research approaches for studying youth transitions, particularly in Jordan and other developing countries (see Chapter 3 for more details). This gap underscores the importance of adopting a narrative biographical (life history) qualitative research approach. Such an approach captures young people's perceptions and attitudes towards their transitions to work in Jordan, offering a more comprehensive understanding. Exploring their subjectivity and agency makes it possible to develop more effective policies. The following key research questions are addressed:

Q1) What do Jordanian young people view as constituting successful youth transitions from education to work in Jordan?

Q2) What are the perceptions of Jordanian youth concerning the key determinants that affect the success of their transition from education to work?

Given the research questions derived from a thorough examination of both theoretical and empirical literature discussed in previous chapters, a narrative biographical (life history) approach with a retrospective design is deemed the most appropriate. Employing a retrospective design to investigate young people's transitions from education to work offers several key advantages, such as providing access to rich historical data, being cost-effective, and yielding valuable insights into long-term outcomes (Pastore *et al.,* 2021). However, this approach is not without its challenges. It is prone to recall bias, complicates the establishment of causality, and often depends on pre-existing data (Cook *et al.,* 2024). Additionally, there is a theoretical risk in considering the individualised voices of young people, which could be perceived as an "*epistemological fallacy*" (MacDonald & King, 2021, p. 23). Despite these limitations, a retrospective design remains a powerful tool for youth transition studies, offering meaningful insights and effectively addressing the research questions of this study.

The researcher asked young people in the life stage 20 to 29 years old how they moved from their education to work, not their future, so it is a retrospective design (Masdonati *et al.,* 2010; Wolontis, 2022). Moreover, the literature showed that when examining transitioning from school to work, it is essential to incorporate retrospective components in the data as it allows for the investigation of evolving patterns in the transitions and their influences (Fetsi & Johansen, 2008). In addition, this design also emphasises the importance of exploring individual agency in young people's transition, considering agency as "*an umbrella term for retrospective analysis of decisions made at turning points and transitions*" (Hitlin & Long, 2009: p.138). However, noting the critical realist perspective, qualitative design is a pivotal approach to studying human behaviours, experiences, decisions, attitudes, and beliefs (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Still, Creswell's definition was convenient since it includes a comprehensive explanation of qualitative research:

> *"Qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or*

presentation includes the voice of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change." (Creswell, 2013, p.44)

The research objectives and the researcher's philosophical assumptions guide its methodological position (Kelle, 2001). Indeed, in this study, the researcher explored young people's perceptions. Still, he did not assume they had the full awareness or knowledge of their conditions, potentials and constraints. He examined their situation as objectively as possible, which is why he have taken a critical realist approach to this inquiry (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999). As a critical realist, the researcher assumed, as stated by Easton, that there is "*an ontology that assumes that there exists a reality out there independent of observers*" (2010: p.120). Simultaneously, he acknowledged that apprehension of reality is, to some extent, shaped by societal influences.

The researcher's critical realist methodological positioning recognises the coexistence of subjective reality, which is shaped or interpreted by individual agency, and the objective reality of social structure, regardless of whether individuals are aware of it or not (Bhaskar et al., 2005; Peter et al., 2023). Indeed, from a critical realist perspective, his philosophical assumption is that there are various epistemological interpretations of successful or problematic transitions from education to work, and these interpretations need to be explored and reflected upon by the researcher.

5.3 Data Collection Method, Instrument, and Pilot Study

As explained in the previous section, a narrative biographical qualitative study using retrospective design was considered the most convenient approach to studying young people's transition from education to work. There are several data collection methods to apply the qualitative approach, such as semi-structured interviews or focused group discussions. Still, since this is a narrative biographical study, a focus group is not a suitable option because of the nature and objectives of this study approach, its emphasis on individual stories, privacy and sensitivity, in-depth exploration, and diverse experience, so the semi-structured interview technique is the most convenient method (Longhurst, 2003; Harrell & Bradley, 2009).

Moreover, the semi-structured interview method does not require pre-approval from the government as this study is for scientific purposes only (as indicated by the Department of

Statistics (DOS) official letter, see Appendix VI-5). The researcher can ensure a higher participation rate as he will be flexible with the participants' time to conduct the interview and ensure women's participation in semi-structured research interviews. Moreover, the semi-structured interview method gives more freedom for interviewees to express their ideas, beliefs, opinions, and perceptions with less direction by the researcher (McSweeney & Williams, 2019; Gill, 2023). Indeed, the literature indicated the effectiveness of adopting a retrospective life history approach, particularly by utilising methods such as semi-structured interviewing, to gain profound insights into past events (Elder, 1998). Using semi-structured interviews within a life history approach underscores the significance of interpreting events and biographies rather than merely presenting factual accounts of these events. It strongly emphasises individuals' agency and views about these events (Worth, 2009).

Indeed, semi-structured interviews are an efficient tool for getting in-depth and detailed information about the research topic, which allows for an open and flexible discussion and dialogue with participants (Bryman, 2016). As discussed above, youth perceptions were not considered in government policy responses in Jordan despite the literature showing they have significant added value in understanding youth transitions from education to work and ensuring the inclusion of individual perceptions and beliefs in exploring youth transitions. The depth of information that will be collected is important due to the method used. Semi-structured interviews ensure that young people can elaborate on the research questions by providing detailed explanations of their transition experiences. Hennink *et al.* (2011) offer various justifications for using the interviewing method, including determining how people make decisions, what influences their behaviours and motivations, and examining their perceptions while considering their lived context.

This study used face-to-face semi-structured interviews as the data collection method. This choice was informed by its successful application in prior qualitative research exploring young people's transition from education to work (Mortimer *et al.*, 2002; Perrone & Vickers, 2003; Tomlinson, 2007; Al-Waqfi & Forstenlechner, 2012; Gardiner & Goedhuys, 2020; Dougherty, 2022). The semi-structured interview method was deemed ideal due to its conversational and informal nature, which fostered a more relaxed and open interaction between the interviewer and participants (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). Opting for a semi-structured interview method provides the flexibility

to adapt the interview to the interviewees' needs and focus, allowing for more clarification of the questions, gaining flexibility in addressing research topic complexity, engagement with the participants, and delving deeper into participants' viewpoints and perspectives by focusing on particular themes while safeguarding methodological reliability and minimising bias through the incorporation of semi-standardised questions (Bryman, 2016; Thomas, 2021).

Considering the above discussion points, the researcher concluded that semi-structured interviewing is the most appropriate method for this study, with the interview guide as the primary tool for data collection. The interview guide was developed based on previous similar research in the literature (Miles *et al.*, 1994; Huberman, 2014), focusing on the MENA region and the researcher's experience of the country with his supervisors' support. The researcher reviewed these research tools and instruments to check if the questions could be used and tailored to the aim of the research and Jordan's context.

The interview guide was divided into eight parts to cover the key themes that facilitate understanding young people's perspectives on this topic. However, the researcher provided participants with flexibility in answering the semi-structured interview questions as their experiences differed in terms of education, transition pathways, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The researcher allowed respondents flexibility in providing further relevant details as these responses were informative in exploring young people's understanding of their transition to work. However, this semi-structured interviewing method is theoretically linked to the narrative biographical approach as it emphasises the importance of stories and narratives that shape young people's identities and delves into rich knowledge about participants' life histories (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995; Hu *et al.,* 2022).

The first part of the semi-structured interview was an opening for the interview. It was more of an introduction about the researcher, the research, and its objectives. The second part included the interviewees' background information, such as their age, gender, place of living, current employment status, type of housing where they live and with whom, their monthly income, parents' educational level, employment status, and what they do in their free time. The third part included open-ended questions about their educational background. The fourth part covered the employment history of the participants. The fifth section discussed how participants defined their

transition to work. The sixth section covered the factors that affected their transition from education to work. The seventh section covered their opinion about the transition in Jordan without focusing on their experiences. In the eighth section, I asked the participants if they had any thoughts, questions, or views to add anything to the discussion. The topic guide for the semi-structured interviews is included in Appendix VI-4.

The researcher conducted a piloting phase for the research instrument, inviting two young people (a man and a woman) to participate in the research through his local connections. During the piloting phase, the researcher clarified the semi-structured interview questions for the participants, the questions' sequence, and whether the questions required any modification, addition, or change. Moreover, the researcher checked the timing of the interview and how best to distribute the timing for each question.

The interview started with an explanation of the aims of the study, how the interview will be conducted, the type of questions, approval for recording the interview and confirming to the participants, the confidentiality of the research and its results, and that they have the full freedom not to answer any question, to stop the interview, and not to continue at any time during the interview. The researcher benefitted from the pilot study by testing interviews, which provided valuable insights about the sequence of the questions, explaining some terminologies and time considerations, and adding some probe questions.

For example, the introduction was shortened to focus only on presenting the research aims and interviewee confidentiality and freedom of participation. The researcher also changed some terms, such as failed transition, as he felt the participants did not receive it well and held them back from telling their stories. In addition, he added more probe questions to get more in-depth narrative knowledge about their understanding of successful transitions and the determinants that affect their transitions, such as mentioning a list of successful transition characteristics, for example, job salary or benefits, working in the public or private sector, and adding a question on the government policies that might contribute to more successful youth transitions to work.

As a result of this piloting phase, the researcher developed the interview guide, which lists the interview sections and their questions and probe questions to ensure consistency of focus across interviews. He allocated specific time for each section to use the time effectively during the

interview (Patton, 2014). The interviews typically lasted around sixty minutes on average. Despite the length, the participants remained fully engaged and expressed no concerns about the duration. In some cases, the researcher had to gently steer the conversation to keep the interview within a reasonable time frame.

Considering the researcher's gender, age, experience, and background, my positionality inevitably influences the research results. While the researcher's sharing of cultural and national identity with participants provides a strong foundation for understanding and interpreting their perspectives, it also introduces complexities. These differences could influence the research process, from the dynamics of the interviews to the analysis and interpretation of data.

To mitigate these effects, the researcher drew upon theory and evidence to actively reflect on and address power imbalances and social inequalities in the researcher-researched relationships. This reflexivity included continuously examining his own assumptions and biases, adopting a stance of humility and openness to participants' lived realities, and ensuring that their voices drive the findings. The researcher aimed to ensure that the research authentically captures the subjectivities of young Jordanians, recognising the complex interplay between their agency and structural constraints.

5.4 Sampling Strategy

Initially, the researcher contacted the Jordanian Department of Statistics (DOS) to obtain their approval to conduct this research and seek access to a sample of young people from the latest census conducted in 2015. They confirmed that any research for academic reasons requires no approval from DOS, and by the Jordanian DOS law, they cannot provide any individual or household data. The only help they can offer is a sample on the block level where each block contains 80-120 households without any details about these households, and they can provide the researcher with approval to conduct his research and get access to the targeted sample (check Appendix VI-5 for Department of Statistics official letter). However, this approach was not possible due to the complexity of such an approach, cost, time constraints, and considering that the researcher will be the only field worker.

Therefore, the researcher opted for non-probability purposive sampling, in which the sample selection relies on specific criteria, such as key characteristics encompassing gender, age, educational level, prior work experience, and location. The choice of purposive sampling aligns with the researcher's focus on young people with distinctive attributes, seeking to capture their perceptions and views on their transition from education to work. The inclusion criteria for the sample were employed, as shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Sample selection criteria

Criteria for inclusion	**Rationale**[5]
Young people aged between 20-29.	This is the age period where most young people in Jordan move from education to work.
Education levels are high school or less, intermediate diploma, university or above, and vocational education.	These are the most common education streams in Jordan.
Gender: males and females	To ensure that both young men and women are included throughout the study.
Employment status: currently working or unemployed but worked before at least for a year.	Participants should have at least one year of work experience to provide their views on their transition to the labour market.
Location: Amman and Irbid governorates	The study selected two locations (governorates): Amman, the capital of Jordan, where most jobs are concentrated, and Irbid, in the north of the country, the second-populated governorate with a high unemployment rate and less job availability.

Non-probability purposive sampling is deemed a fitting method for this study because it emphasises deliberately selecting individuals with particular characteristics. It was defined as a "*deliberately non-random method of sampling which aims to sample a group of people or setting with a particular characteristic*" (Bowling, 2014: p.209). Similarly, Cohen *et al.* (2007) explained this method as "*handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought*" (2007: p.114).

A non-probability purposive sampling method was employed to address specific practical considerations. The researcher ensured that the sample accurately represented the typical demographics of young people in Jordan, including age, gender, education level, and location, to

[5] More explanation is provided in the discussion below.

enhance the generalisability of the research findings. To address the practical recall issue, the researcher emphasised the importance of a relatively short recall period when asking participants to describe their transition from education to work, which helped mitigate potential memory biases.

The researcher aimed to ensure the study sample was representative of Jordanian youth by selecting participants that reflected the demographic characteristics of this group. However, certain populations were excluded, such as refugees, migrants living in Jordan, and Jordanian youth working abroad. The study specifically targeted young Jordanian individuals, and thus, non-Jordanian youth were not included due to their differing characteristics, which would necessitate an entirely different theoretical and methodological approach. Additionally, Jordanian youth working abroad were excluded because their experiences and characteristics differed significantly. This exclusion also introduced the potential for a selection bias, as these individuals often follow more successful transition pathways.

Family class is a key factor in understanding young people's transitions from education to employment. Various studies have defined family class using indicators such as parents' education, income, occupation, and wealth (Goodman et al., 2000; Harrington, 2015). In this research, participants were categorised into three class groups based on their households' income: lower class, middle class, and upper class. Families were classified as lower class if their monthly household income fell below 600 JOD (856 USD), aligning with the household poverty line in Jordan (Department of Statistics, 2022a). Middle-class families were defined as those with a monthly household income between 600 JOD and 1000 JOD, while upper-class families had a monthly household income exceeding 1000 JOD.

Determining the number of qualitative interviews required for a study is a nuanced issue, as discussed by Baker *et al.* (2012), who concluded that "*it depends*." There is no definitive formula for the optimal number of qualitative interviews, but most researchers recommend a sample size ranging from 12 to 60 participants. The total sample size is influenced by the number of relevant comparison groups necessary for the research (Malterud *et al.*, 2016), such as those defined by education level and gender, which are crucial for shaping the study's discussions and conclusions.

To investigate young people's perceptions regarding their transition from education to work, the research sample includes participants aged 20 to 29 who are either currently employed or have prior work experience. Additionally, the sample aims to ensure representation from four distinct educational levels: high school or less, intermediate diploma graduates, university graduates, and vocational training graduates residing in Amman or Irbid governorates. These criteria for participant selection align with the overarching goal of the research, which seeks to comprehensively study young people's perspectives on transitioning within the context of Jordanian education and labour dynamics (refer to Table 5).

Age was considered to ensure that only young people were targeted in this study and that they had completed their education and moved to the labour market (Robinson, 2014). Using the latest results of the job creation survey conducted by the Jordanian Department of Statistics, we find that 94.8% of the created jobs were taken by the youth in the age category 20-29 years (54.1% for 20-24 years and 40.7% for 25-29 years) (Department of Statistics, 2021a). The other key variables considered for this research sampling are gender, educational attainment, and the participants' locations. These variables are considered key for various reasons in this research, which are explained in the discussion below.

The two locations (Amman and Irbid governorates) were selected to allow variation in the factors that affect young people in these two locations, such as labour market conditions (Ritchie *et al.*, 2003; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). For this study, two locations were selected; the first is the capital of Jordan, Amman, which constitutes almost 40% of the population and is where most public and private jobs are available. The second location is Irbid governorate in the North of Jordan. It is the second most populated governorate in Jordan but has fewer job opportunities as most young people move to Amman to find jobs (Barcucci & Mryyan, 2014). These two locations were chosen to describe the young people's transition status from education to work based on the population size, labour market access, and geographic location. According to the latest results on job creation distribution by governorates, Amman was the highest with almost 50% of the created jobs, and Irbid was second with a sharp drop down to 17% (Department of Statistics, 2021a). On the other hand, using these two locations will be essential to conduct a comparison study to reflect on the importance of the location and labour market access determinants that affect youth transition.

Moreover, gender was considered to capture the differences between men and women in their transition and the factors that affect their transition from education to work (Andres, 2002; Ritchie *et al.*, 2013). This research also considered educational attainment to capture its impact on young people's transition to work and explore other key factors, such as social class, that affect their transition (Simmons, 2011; Roberts, 2018). The total target sample for this research was 32 participants distributed by gender, location, and educational attainment, as shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Target sampling distribution amongst key variables (educational attainment, gender, location)

	Location				**Total**
	Amman		**Irbid**		
Educational Attainment / Gender (M: male, F: female)	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**	
High school or less	2	2	2	2	8
Intermediate Diploma graduated	2	2	2	2	8
University graduated	2	2	2	2	8
Vocational training graduated	2	2	2	2	8
Overall Total					**32**

5.5 Sample Recruitment

The literature suggests many factors, such as gender, ethnicity, disability, education, family background, and external environment, that could influence plans for sample recruitment for youth transition from education to work studies (Isengard, 2010; Crawford *et al.*, 2013; Dorsett & Lucchino, 2013). Different approaches and steps were used to recruit the participants using non-probability purposive sampling for potential participants in this research.

At the project's inception, the researcher took a proactive approach by reaching out to his network, which included his former colleagues and friends in Amman and Irbid. This was to identify and recommend young people who met the study criteria (see Table 5) and were willing to participate in this research. Despite the initial challenges in finding a sufficient number of willing participants, especially among vocational education and training graduates, the researcher was able to overcome this hurdle. This was achieved by leveraging his professional connections with the Vocational Training Corporation (VTC), facilitated by a former colleague who holds the director position.

The VTC director played a crucial role in establishing communication with vocational training centres in Amman and Irbid, outlining the research's objectives, and enlisting their assistance in reaching out to their graduates, encouraging their participation. As a result, the researcher compiled a roster of young people who met the study criteria for the research sample. However, it is important to note that the use of a non-probability purposive sampling method introduces certain biases and ethical considerations, which will be addressed in Section 5.10.

To initiate contact with participants, the researcher made phone calls approximately one week before the scheduled interviews. During these calls, the researcher provided a comprehensive overview of the research's objectives and sought their initial consent for participation. Following this initial approval, the researcher offered various options for the interview location, including meeting at the participant's workplace, visiting their homes, arranging a meeting at the researcher's office (located in the United Nations building), or selecting a vocational education training centre located near to the participant's residence.

After indicating their interest in participation in the study, the researcher sent some materials about the research aims and questions in advance through email, WhatsApp, or any other preferred means of communication to secure the informed consent of the participants. These materials include a Participant Information Sheet (PIS), which consists of a snapshot about the researcher, the purpose of the study, why they were invited to take part in this research, what happens if they participate, the confidentiality of the data, and contact details of the researcher and his supervisors in case they request further information (see Appendix VI-1). The recruitment letter was also one of the documents shared in advance with the potential participants (see Appendix VI-3), along with the consent form (see Appendix VI-2) and the topic guide for the semi-structured interviews (see Appendix VI-4). In some cases, when necessary, the researcher offered the transportation cost for the participants to ensure their participation. However, this was only provided for one woman participant as the transportation cost was an obstacle to meeting with her.

Moreover, the researcher ensured all interview materials were available in Arabic and English because the semi-structured interview was conducted, transcribed and analysed in Arabic. Key and relevant excerpts and quotations were then translated into English. The researcher asked an accredited translator to ensure the quality of all the translations to ensure no information was lost

during the translation stage by the researcher. Indeed, a practical consideration was the researcher's decision not to translate the full transcribed interviews into English as translation will delineate the meaning of his interviewees' discussions, such as the mistranslation of concepts or ideas and loss of meaning during the translation (Aycan *et al.,* 2007). Moreover, translation affects data interpretation as it replaces key terminologies in another language (Smith, 2009; Wong & Poon, 2010). It is recommended that researchers conduct their studies in their original language, especially in qualitative studies, as translation is about interpretation, and translation adds another layer of interpretation that will affect the meaning (Van Nes *et al.,* 2010).

5.6 The Fieldwork

When the researcher got initial approval, he requested their email address so that he could send all the materials related to the study. Usually, the study materials were sent to the potential participants within 24 hours of the first phone call to provide more details about the study and the reason for the meeting. Once the participants provided initial consent to participate, an agreement on a specific interview location, date, and time was confirmed. The researcher also contacted the participants on the same day to confirm their attendance at the meeting. At the beginning of the interview, it used to be informal, where the research aims and what is expected from the participants were explained. This step was important to establish a connection and trust with the participants and make them feel comfortable discussing their experiences and views (Harrell & Bradley, 2009; Gubrium *et al.,* 2012). The researcher then ensured that all participants signed the consent form, which included approving the interview audio recording. He conducted all interviews in Jordanian Arabic to make it easier to explain the questions to the participants so they do not feel restricted by the language and are more engaged in the discussion by using their accents. This engagement encouraged participants to be more relaxed in the interview to provide more in-depth, truthful information about their education-to-work transition experiences and views.

The researcher clarified to the participants that participation in this interview is entirely voluntary, and they could withdraw at any time during the interview if they did not feel comfortable with the questions or for any other reason. He also explained to the participants that their interviews would be audio-recorded so he could later transcribe them and conduct the analysis. He explained that the recording would help him reflect on their views accurately and reliably. Still, they had to give

their consent to record the interview. During this introductory phase, the researcher also confirmed the confidentiality of the interview information. Their names or any information that might identify them were not used in the research or shared with third parties, e.g., other researchers interested in their data. Once the participants fully understood the research aims and consented to participate and use the audio recording, the researcher started the recording and began the interview.

During the interview, the researcher ensured that participants had the flexibility to answer the semi-structured interview questions while considering the time and the study focus to ensure that the meeting did not exceed one hour. However, this did not work for all participants, as many interviews took more than sixty minutes to provide detailed information about their transition to work, which indicated participants' engagement and comfort in the interview (Prescott, 2011). Still, the researcher used to intervene when he felt the participants drifted away from the research aims and topics through a follow-up question that put them back on topic. He noticed a prominent question between the participants about the usefulness of such research, how this research could contribute to changing the situation in Jordan, and whether someone is reading such documents or listening to the young people's opinions or views. The researcher explained that this research is for academic purposes and has no affiliation with the government. Still, he explained that he would try to publish his research results when ready, hoping to reach relevant decision-makers in the country. The above emphasises the need to listen to young people's voices and perhaps indicates that they are not currently being heard by the government (Rosso *et al.*, 2012; Bell *et al.*, 2016; ILO, 2017b; WorldSkills, 2019), especially in Jordan.

At the beginning of the fieldwork in 2020, the world was hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, including Jordan, so based on the University of Bristol's decision, the researcher had to stop his fieldwork during that period. However, Jordan rapidly responded to the pandemic by closing most economic and social activities and imposing curfews with national vaccination against COVID-19. The country had started to reopen partially by June 2020, so the researcher resumed fieldwork by the end of June 2020. However, COVID-19 delayed the fieldwork by almost six months, as the following interviews were conducted while taking full measures to protect the researcher and the participants. These measures included asking the participants if they felt any symptoms before the interview, selecting the interview location, ensuring physical distance, and sanitising the location before and after the interview. The researcher also asked the participants to provide their views

while thinking before the pandemic, as the pandemic had affected their transition. This helped ensure that the COVID-19 pandemic had no threats to the credibility of the research results. More details about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic are included in Section 5.10.

5.7 Data Preparation

As discussed above, all interviews were conducted in Jordanian Arabic, and audio recordings were made while taking notes during the interviews. After each interview, the researcher transcribed the audio recording verbatim in Arabic. After completing the transcribing process, the researcher used the data directly in their original language without translation in his analysis as he did not want to squander the rich knowledge in translation. The researcher provided further details about translation in section 5.10, covering ethical considerations. However, the researcher translated only selected quotes used in the study directly. To ensure that the researcher did not miss any information and familiarised himself with the data, he read the transcribed interviews several times while listening to the audio recording. This was also combined with note-taking and checking the notes he wrote during the interviews.

The researcher used qualitative software, "ATLAS.ti[6]", for his analysis. The qualitative software provides free training sessions and video tutorials, which were helpful in the research analysis. After transcribing all interviews and checking the translation, the researcher revised a version of the interviews where he removed all participants' names and replaced them with pseudonyms, any company names, and any other information he believed they referred to a well-known entity or a person because of his knowledge of the country (see Appendix VII for an interview sample). The final step in the data preparation was to import the interviews into "ATLAS.ti" software.

5.8 Framework Analysis

The researcher employed a qualitative analysis approach to explore young people's transitions from education to work experience. This approach was chosen due to the interpretative nature of the research questions, which sought to understand young people's perceptions, thoughts, and attitudes regarding their transition. By adopting a qualitative approach, the researcher aimed to

[6] To check the software website, please check https://atlasti.com/.

delve into young people's detailed experiences and stories rather than limiting them to responses to pre-defined questions.

Framework analysis was selected as the most suitable qualitative method due to its flexibility and lack of commitment to a specific epistemological stance (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002). It is similar to thematic analysis, allowing for a flexible and comprehensive examination of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This study employs framework analysis to identify and report patterns or themes in the data collected.

Framework analysis involves a systematic process that includes developing a thematic framework, indexing the results, and summarising them in a matrix format (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002). This approach was used to map and interpret the experiences of Jordanian youth transitioning from education to work (Berg, 2004). The analysis provides insights into the different types and categories of transitions, which are further detailed in Chapters 6 and 7.

The data collected comprised narratives and stories about the experiences and perceptions of young people as they transition from education to work. The aim was to explore their thoughts, opinions, and feelings regarding this transition and understand how their environment influences it. This led to using framework analysis, which was selected in consultation with supervisors (Parkinson *et al.*, 2016). Framework analysis was chosen because it captures commonalities and differences in qualitative data, identifies themes, and explains their relationships (Gale *et al.*, 2013). It is particularly appealing because a pre-existing theoretical framework does not restrict it and aligns with a realist methodological position and retrospective research design (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The researcher used the steps Ritchie and Spencer (2002) outlined for this framework analysis, including data familiarisation, coding, grouping, identifying a framework, and interpretation. The familiarisation step started with the data preparation phase during the audio recording, listening, and transcribing of interviews. Listening and transcribing the interviews helped the researcher understand how young people in Jordan moved from education to work, what challenges they faced, what type of factors they mentioned that influenced their transition, how they defined their successful and problematic transition, and other aspects related to the research topic. For example, the researcher felt an evident frustration arising from the economic conditions in the country, and

the lack of job opportunities greatly affected young people's transitions. During this stage, the researcher started writing down a list of codes, based on the literature review, that could be used in the data analysis. However, the interview transcripts were read many times until the researcher felt fully immersed in young people's experiences of their transitions.

The second stage included data coding and organising. The coding stage is when the researcher transforms the raw qualitative data into a set of labels summarising the contents. It is about selecting relevant pieces of information within the interview, such as a word, sentence, or paragraph, and labelling them to summarise their meanings. For example, I labelled participants' responses when they spoke about their families' lack of financial resources, which affected their transition to work by "financial support" and "financial restrictions" codes. However, Ritchie and Spencer outlined that identifying a framework is the second step for a framework analysis (2002). Still, the researcher found that might impose some limitations and difficulties as he wanted to understand the data better, organise them, and then identify a framework. Moreover, he found that placing a framework using the literature review at this stage could be helpful for data management but not interpretations, as this will come later during the analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The researcher began coding the interviews individually, ensuring no significant data was overlooked by repeating the coding process as necessary. Although there are numerous coding methods, as Patton noted, "*Because each qualitative study is unique, the analytical approach used will be unique*" (2002, p.433). The researcher applied general coding criteria in the initial stage, resulting in more than 400 distinct codes. Recognising the need for more focused and manageable data, the researcher embarked on a systematic refinement process, which was crucial for identifying broader themes and interpretations later on (Saldaña, 2021).

Guided by the research questions, a comprehensive literature review, and supervisor feedback, the researcher carefully revised and consolidated the initial 400 codes into 70 refined codes that encapsulate the essential information from the participants' interviews. This refinement involved systematically labelling each piece of data, such as "government laws on education," "government laws on labour," "education strategy," and "other government strategies." Multiple reviews grouped these codes into broader categories, such as "government policies and strategies."

The consolidation process entailed merging related codes to reflect key aspects of youth transitions, such as “family support,” “financial constraints,” “gender,” “class,” “education and training,” “nepotism,” and “self-reliance.” This reduced redundancy and facilitated the identification of patterns and key factors influencing youth transitions in Jordan. A complete list of the refined codes can be found in Appendix X. This approach enabled the researcher to systematically group similar codes, thereby revealing patterns in respondents' perceptions of their transitions from education to work.

The researcher analysed the codes assigned to the interview transcripts during the grouping stage to identify meaningful patterns. For instance, the researcher grouped the respondents' key pathways for transitioning from education to work. These pathways included transitioning early to work, transitioning from vocational education, transitioning late to the public sector, transitioning late to the private sector, and returning to education. The researcher then explored the respondents' assessments of each pathway using these pathways. This analysis involved examining why Jordanian young people take specific pathways and identifying the criteria they consider important for a successful transition.

Moreover, this coding and grouping helped the researcher identify the participants’ views on the key determinants that affected their transition from education to work. These factors were classified into five levels: individual, familial, local, national, and global factors, in addition to class and gender as cross-cutting factors. See Section 3.7, which introduced the theoretical framework for the research analysis results developed during the theoretical review.

Indeed, coding is not just labelling; it is an explanatory approach where raw qualitative data can be transformed into a meaningful interpretation of the data. Richard and Morse indicated, “*It leads you from the data to the idea, and from the idea to all the data pertaining to that idea*” (2007, p. 137). However, the above theoretical framework was developed using Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system theory, which, as indicated in Chapter 3 above, offers a comprehensive framework to understand young people’s transition in Jordan (Hayes *et al.*, 2022). Besides its comprehensiveness, Bronfenbrenner’s ecological framework emphasises the interaction between various factors and their impact on human development, including transitions to work (Evans, 2020). Bronfenbrenner’s framework is divided into five key systems: microsystem, mesosystem,

exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem, which helped the researcher to explore and understand the interplay between the many factors that affect Jordanian young people's transition to work, such as class, gender, education, socioeconomic status, jobs availability, and many others. Based on Bronfenbrenner's framework, the researcher analysed the interactions between young people's views on the determinants that affected their successful or problematic transition from education to work and related analysis of individuals' agency and structural factors (presented in Chapter 8).

5.9 Criteria for Assessing Quality of Qualitative Data

The suitability of criteria commonly used to assess quantitative research, such as validity and reliability, has been debated when evaluating qualitative research (Baxter, 2009; Yardley, 2015; Mandal, 2018). Various researchers have discussed this matter, highlighting that in qualitative research, validity is about scrutinising the accuracy and precision of features envisioned to describe or explain, while reliability is about the stability or uniformity of a measuring instrument (Hammersley, 1992; Long & Johnson, 2000; Noble & Smith, 2015). Alternative criteria like credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability have been proposed to ensure the quality and trustworthiness of qualitative research (Lincoln *et al.*,1985). Other researchers suggest criteria such as clarity, credibility, communication, and contribution to assess the quality of qualitative research and its data (Finlay, 2007).

In this study, Yardley's criteria were employed to evaluate the quality of the qualitative research. Yardley's approach includes four key criteria: sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, coherence and transparency, and impact and importance (Yardley, 2015). This approach was chosen because it uniquely aligns with the aims of this research in several ways:

- **Sensitivity to Context:** Yardley emphasises the importance of understanding and reflecting on the socio-cultural context of the participants, which is crucial for this research on the transition of Jordanian youth from education to work. This criterion ensures that the study respects and accurately represents the cultural and social nuances of the participants' experiences, which is often overlooked in more rigid frameworks.
- **Commitment and Rigour:** Yardley's approach demands a thorough and committed engagement with the research topic and data. This is particularly important for this study,

which seeks to deeply understand the multifaceted nature of youth transitions in a specific cultural context. Other frameworks might not emphasise the need for such in-depth and dedicated analysis.

- **Coherence and Transparency:** Yardley advocates for a clear and transparent connection between the research questions, methodology, and analysis. This coherence ensures that the research process is logical and that the findings are presented transparently, allowing for greater scrutiny and understanding of the research process and outcomes. This criterion offers a level of methodological clarity that is often less explicitly addressed in alternative frameworks.
- **Impact and Importance:** Yardley's framework evaluates the research's practical and theoretical significance. This focus on the research's broader implications ensures that the findings are academically sound, relevant, and valuable to the community and field of study. This impact aspect is crucial for research aimed at informing policy or practice, as is the case with this study on youth transitions.

By choosing Yardley's criteria, this research ensures a comprehensive and culturally sensitive evaluation of the qualitative data, leading to reliable, credible, contextually relevant, and impactful findings. The table below further explains how each of Yardley's criteria was applied to ensure the quality of this qualitative study.

Table 7: Criteria used for ensuring the quality and trustworthiness of the study

Core principles	**Measures used to apply these principles during the research**
Sensitivity to the context	- The researcher fully understands the socioeconomic and cultural context of the participants. - The research gave young people flexibility in their participation in this research, with the option to withdraw from the interview at any time without any justification. - The researcher understands gender sensitivity, so he provided extra measures for women's participation to ensure their safety and privacy, such as how he can contact them and the location of the interview.

	- The research considered participants' perceptions and views, so the researcher ensured that the subjects remained the same during the interview.
Commitment and rigour	- The researcher ensured his commitment and rigour in the research sampling by purposively sampling 32 participants to cover two geographical locations, gender balance, class and family backgrounds, and educational attainment.
Coherence and transparency	- The researcher ensured coherence between the methodological position, the research questions, the research method, and the data collection tool. - Transparency was ensured by providing sufficient details on the data collection process, preparing data for analysis, coding, thematic development, and analysis of the results. For example, using enough quotations from the data demonstrates transparency. - To ensure coherence across the study, the researcher ensured that all qualitative comparisons of any key code or theme were included in the research results.
Impact and importance	- This core principle is demonstrated by the knowledge gap covered in this research, the key conclusions, the suggested questions for further research, and policy implications.

* Source: (Yardley, 2015: pp.243-250)

Moreover, the research design and its methodology enhanced the research's internal validity. Using the narrative biographical approach to generate rich data increases the internal validity of the study findings. The choice of a sample that represents typical characteristics of young Jordanians who can reflect on their education tracks, gender, and locations enhanced the external validity of the research (Lewis *et al.,* 2003). In addition, to strengthen the reliability of this study's results, the researcher applied the topic guide consistently across the sample and ensured data collection procedures were standardised (Morse *et al.,* 2002).

It is important to note that the researcher did not aim to generalise the research results using a qualitative method. Instead, the focus was on capturing and representing the typical characteristics of Jordanian youth. This approach enhances the external validity and generalisability of the

findings to some extent, offering a deeper understanding of the transition of young people from education to work in Jordan (Polit & Beck, 2010; Creswell & Clark, 2017).

5.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were the guiding principle throughout this study, beginning from its inception. Given the qualitative nature of this research, ethical issues were carefully addressed, including during the sample development and the preparation for interviews with young people (Fossey *et al.,* 2002; Heath *et al.,* 2009). Participants were thoroughly informed about the research aims, objectives, data confidentiality, and their rights, such as their freedom to decline to answer any question or to stop the interview at any time without needing to justify. They were also assured that their consent was essential for audio recording the semi-structured interviews and were briefed on how their data would be utilised.

One of the primary ethical concerns during the interviews was the possibility that participants might disclose personal or politically sensitive information (Schelbe *et al.,* 2015). To mitigate this, the researcher emphasised the confidentiality of the research, ensuring that no personal information would be shared and that all participants were reminded of this through the consent forms, highlighting the limits of confidentiality.

Potential issues such as confidentiality, data sharing, and data used in the research were also discussed with participants (Heath *et al.,* 2009). It was explained that all data would be anonymised, with no participant names disclosed or appearing in the study, and that the results would be presented in aggregate form without referencing any specific individual. Pseudonyms were used for all names in the research. This study received ethical approval on 14 May 2019 from the SPS Research Ethics Committee, ensuring it did not harm the research participants (see Appendix VIII for the approval letter).

Face-to-face meetings with women in Jordan, especially in public places, presented specific ethical challenges due to local customs and traditions that could put both the researcher and the women at risk. To address this, the researcher decided to hold meetings in safe and culturally acceptable locations, such as their workplace, the researcher's workplace or government buildings like the vocational education centre.

The fieldwork was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, necessitating a temporary halt in accordance with university guidelines and the national situation. Once conditions improved and the government allowed face-to-face research to resume, the researcher sought approval from the Faculty Committee for Research Ethics to continue the fieldwork. The committee requested further information on safety measures to protect both the researcher and participants, including the location of interviews, physical contact protocols, and monitoring participants for symptoms. After submitting the required details, the committee approved to resume fieldwork by the end of June 2020 (see Appendix IX). The researcher strictly followed all recommendations and guidelines provided by the committee for safely conducting face-to-face research during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chapter 6: Findings and Analysis – Successful Youth Transitions in Jordan

"I consider my transition to be very successful because I received an opportunity that many people in Jordan still have not. Simply finding a job here is an achievement." (Amal, a mid-20 woman with a bachelor's degree from a middle-class family living in Amman)

6.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the first research question, "What do Jordanian young people view as constituting successful youth transitions from education to work in Jordan?" by exploring their evaluations of their transitions, beginning with identifying and describing typical pathways young people navigate and the success factors influencing their trajectories. Section 6.2 is divided into five sub-sections, each describing a different transition pathway based on the respondents' biographies, exploring the reasons behind these pathways and how various factors shaped their transitions, including the respondents' evaluations of their transitions, their criteria for success, and whether they consider their transitions successful, concluding with a summary for each pathway. Finally, Section 6.3 summarises the chapter's overall findings.

6.2 Typical Transitions Pathways

To elucidate the transition experiences of young people in Jordan, biographical accounts were created summarising their journey through education and into the workforce, indicating the contextual factors shaping their assessments (refer to Annex XI). The discussion will outline the derivation of these pathways, emphasising the interplay between individual choices and socioeconomic circumstances. Through a narrative approach, the study distilled five distinct pathways, analysing them in relation to socioeconomic and educational backgrounds. Considering the previous analysis of the transition pathways observed in this study, the following five mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive pathways were identified:

1. **Pathway 1: Transitioning from compulsory education,** i.e., completing high school education at maximum to attain a job in the private sector or become self-employed.
2. **Pathway 2: Transitioning from vocational education,** i.e., obtaining a vocational qualification from the school, a vocational education centre, or a vocational intermediate diploma to get a job in the private sector or become self-employed.

3. **Pathway 3: Transitioning from tertiary education to the public sector,** i.e., attaining an educational qualification at the intermediate diploma level or above to get a job in the public sector.
4. **Pathway 4: Transitioning from tertiary education to the private sector,** attaining an educational qualification at the intermediate diploma level or above to get a job in the private sector.
5. **Pathway 5: Returning to education,** i.e., moving to a different education level to enhance their skills/experiences and improve their chances of better employment in salaried parts of the labour market or to become self-employed.

Subsequent sections will elaborate on the five main pathways, serving as the foundation for understanding how young people in Jordan perceive a successful or problematic transition from education to work and the associated criteria.

6.2.1 Pathway 1: Transitioning from compulsory education

This pathway involves young people leaving school prematurely to join the workforce, leading to varied outcomes such as employment in the private sector or starting their own businesses. Approximately 16% of respondents pursued this route, with 80% originating from lower-class backgrounds. Among this subgroup, around 80% are male, and 60% reside in Amman. Merely 40% of these individuals regarded their transitions as successful.

Story of Abdullah[7]

Abdullah is a young man in his mid-20s who lives in Amman with his parents and comes from a lower-class family. He moved early into work instead of pursuing further education because he aimed to learn a vocation early on to achieve economic independence. Despite his family owning a carpentry shop, he opted to work as a butcher due to his preference for that field and an injury he suffered while working in the family business. Abdullah explored various workplaces to gain experience in his desired vocation.

From a young age, Abdullah sought independence and found a job as a cleaner and helper in a butcher shop. Determined to become a butcher, he switched careers to learn the profession. Over

[7] All names used in this research are fictitious.

two years, he worked in different places, including a mall-based butcher shop, to diversify his experience. Afterwards, Abdullah settled in another butcher shop, where he had been employed for three years.

Key factors influencing Abdullah's choice included his desire for early economic independence and a lack of interest in continuing formal education. Growing up in a lower-class family with a family business, he was inclined to work early, having helped his family during vacations. Abdullah's proactive personality and residence in a bustling area facilitated his job search by walking around the neighbourhood.

Abdullah perceived his transition as successful because he enjoyed his vocation, aligning with his passion. Initially uninterested in income or job benefits, he focused on accumulating experience. When he was asked whether his transition was successful or not, he said:

> *"Yes, it is a successful transition. I am confident that if I complete my education, I will find a job. As long as I have the desire to work, opportunities will be available. One of my friends, who has an accounting degree, told me he could not find a job. This was not convincing because there are opportunities in the labour market. I found a job for him as a cashier, but he quit after two weeks, saying it was not suitable for him."*

Despite his friend's struggles with finding a job after obtaining an accounting degree, Abdullah remained confident in the job market's opportunities. He believed the desire to work, family support, self-confidence, and skills development contributed to his successful transition. He emphasised that success criteria included his passion for work, family backing, self-belief, and skills gained. When evaluating his transition, Abdullah also explained that his successful transition resulted from his planning and efforts, which led to a job with a good income and benefits. It is noticeable that he is not evaluating only his current job but also the journey that brought him to where he is now.

Story of Hammam

Failing to pass high school or obtaining low grades prevented further education, prompting some young people to enter the workforce early. Hammam, a young man in his mid-20s living in Amman

from a lower-class background, faced this situation. Despite completing high school, his grades were insufficient to pursue further education, leaving him no choice but to join the labour market. Many who took this route highlighted the need for training to secure or enhance job opportunities.

Since he did not pass high school and his family had financial issues, Hammam worked in a blacksmith's shop for a short period, but he did not like it, as it was a difficult job for him. He pursued a short hospitality training course. Following the training, he worked in various restaurants and hotels, favouring hotel positions for better benefits and job security. An overseas job in Iraq was short-lived due to issues with the employer, which led Hammam to return to Jordan, where he eventually found employment at a coffee shop.

Some participants on this path recognised the importance of education for better job prospects in Jordan, as Hammam did. They contemplated returning to education for higher qualifications, driven by career prospects and societal perceptions. The lack of family support, according to Hammam, accelerated his entry into the workforce. He emphasised the significance of personality, desire to work, practical experience, and training in young people's transitions. However, limited job opportunities in the labour market forced many into undesirable jobs with low income and no prospects, merely for experience and financial support.

Hammam deemed his transitions problematic due to job dissatisfaction, prioritising his most recent job evaluation. His success criteria shifted towards achieving a higher education level, securing a public sector position, or obtaining a job in a reputable company for a stable career, job security, and favourable income and benefits. In his words:

> *"I am not satisfied with his transitions. Education is a powerful tool. I had the ambition to become a nurse, but my grades and family circumstances prevented it. My job at the coffee shop lacks a career path and job security. I prefer to work in the public sector, as it offers more stability and a future."*

Story of Shams

Shams, a young woman in her late 20s, hails from a lower-class family and lives in Amman with her mother. Due to financial and social challenges in her divorced parents' family, Shams struggled to complete her high school. To support her family and achieve economic independence, she

underwent secretarial and data entry training, which was essential for her entry into the job market due to her insufficient education and skills.

Despite her training, Shams believed traditional education did not suit her since she had educational difficulties. During her training, she worked in a mall for financial support and interned at a company but could not secure a permanent position due to a lack of social connections. Shams perceived societal stigmatisation for those not completing their education or pursuing vocational paths. After spending eight years in a jewellery shop, she decided to work with her uncle in the USA, but financial issues forced her to return to Jordan, plunging her into a job search-induced depression. She eventually found employment in a company, which unfortunately had to let her go during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, Shams is actively seeking new job opportunities.

While assessing her transitions, Shams considered her move to the jewellery shop successful because it provided a job opportunity despite challenges like commuting and lacking job security, career prospects, or substantial income. However, her overall evaluation was problematic, focusing on the absence of job benefits as failure criteria. Shams reflected on the job opportunities she received rather than the transition itself.

> *"It was a successful transition to the jewellery shop, even though it was far from where I live. I had to take four buses to get there, but I got the job through my training. However, it has no job security and no career prospects. Overall, my transition was not successful."*

Shams said that luck can influence young people's transitions, emphasising the substantial impact of social connections, '*Wasta*', on success.

Story of Tamer

In his early 20s, Tamer lived in Irbid with his parents and belonged to a middle-class family. He left school early to work with his father in a coffee kiosk, but the business closed, prompting Tamer to take on various temporary jobs as a daily-hired worker. Later, he collaborated with his uncles in a carpentry shop, eventually opening their own successful business that has been operating for over four years.

He explained that his challenges in education were due to family issues, particularly his parents' conflicts. These issues led him to leave school prematurely and enter the workforce. Tamer argues that the limited job opportunities for university graduates made joining the labour market early more practical than pursuing further education and starting from scratch after completing school. Despite these challenges, he emphasised the importance of education, recognising its role in changing community perceptions and securing better job opportunities.

Tamer viewed his transition as successful, especially in his current job. Despite facing challenges after leaving school and working temporary jobs, he was fortunate to have family support in learning a vocation and establishing a thriving business. Tamer perceived success in terms of having a job and a decent income. He acknowledged that working in his own business provided better financial returns compared to public-sector employment. Tamer believed that learning a vocation early is preferable, citing examples of university graduates in his age group struggling to find jobs while he had successfully established his own business. He said when asked if his transition was successful:

> *"Relatively successful. Working in your own business is not the same as working in the public sector because the income is lower. However, it is my shop. I believe it is better to have a vocation from an early age and complete your education later. Compared to family members my age who have completed university but still do not have jobs, I have my own business."*

He mentioned being relatively successful because, despite having his own successful business, he still believes that education is essential for his future, career, and community outlook.

An Overall Assessment of Pathway 1 from Young People's Viewpoint

Several factors led young people to choose this pathway, primarily driven by a desire for early financial independence. This inclination stemmed from their family's economic situation, motivating them to enter the workforce early to support themselves and their families. For those with family businesses, the experience of helping out in their family enterprises fuelled a quick transition to work, exemplified by individuals like Abdullah, mainly where they were not interested in completing their education.

Education is crucial in influencing young people to enter the workforce prematurely. Some lacked interest in education, while others faced challenges qualifying for further studies, leading them to seek employment. The sense of inferiority arising from incomplete education, influenced by family and community perceptions, motivated them to consider completing their education to enhance their transitions. Social and family issues, such as parental divorce, lack of family support, parental death, or family violence, also contributed to steering young people toward early entry into the workforce. These issues impacted their educational achievements and compelled them to pursue employment. Significantly, these compelling reasons for early work entry were often intertwined with their family background, particularly among those from lower-class families.

Young people defining success criteria in this pathway highlighted their willingness, desire to work, and ability to secure a job and financial independence. Their aspirations included personal satisfaction and the possibility of starting their own businesses. Success, as perceived by young people, involves factors like family support, self-belief, skill development, capabilities, and accumulated experience. Conversely, those who viewed their transitions as problematic cited a lack of education, absence of job security, limited career development, insufficient job benefits, modest income, and the perceived need for social connections, 'Wasta' to secure employment as the primary problematic criteria from their perspective.

6.2.2 Pathway 2: Transitioning from vocational education

The pivotal factor influencing this trajectory is respondents' involvement in vocational education. They embark on this journey by participating in school-based vocational education programs, enrolling in dedicated vocational education centres, or pursuing vocational professions at the intermediate diploma level. This path is characterised as an early entry into the labour market, with vocational education as the initial step in the transition for young people. Among the sampled population, 25% opted for this pathway. Notably, nearly 63% of these individuals reside in Amman and hail from lower-class backgrounds. Additionally, 63% are men. Of the men, 40% experienced a successful transition, while all three women in this category achieved a successful transition.

Story of Haneen

In her late 20s, Haneen, a young woman from Amman, faced challenges pursuing her passion for culinary arts due to family objections rooted in local customs. Despite completing high school in

a field she disliked, she remained determined to study culinary arts and become a chef. Haneen encountered resistance from her family, starting in high school, when they opposed her decision to study culinary arts at high school. Despite graduating in an IT field at school she was not passionate about, she pursued her dream of studying culinary arts.

Despite family disapproval, Haneen pursued vocational training in culinary arts, working as an assistant chef. Her journey included a detour into the IT branch in high school, a field she was not passionate about, but her family opposed her desired focus on hotel management. Unhappy in various private-sector jobs after graduation, Haneen prioritised gaining experience to fulfil her dream of opening a restaurant. When Haneen was asked if she considered her transition successful or not, she said:

> *"I consider my transition successful and feel satisfied with it because success means being in a place where I can find myself, be productive, think about improving my career, gain experience, and develop my skills. For me, this is a successful transition."*

Despite family objections, Haneen viewed her transition as successful due to her passion and determination to pursue culinary arts. Her interest in culinary arts was sparked during a school visit to a college that provided professional training. For Haneen, success lies in achieving her dream of opening a restaurant and focusing on the transition process, not just her current job. She valued self-discovery, productivity, career improvement, and skill development as measures of success in her journey.

Story of Ahmed

In his mid-20s, Ahmed, who lives in Amman with his parents, completed the tenth grade and pursued vocational training in turnery. He hails from a lower-class family. Financial difficulties prompted him to enrol in a vocational education centre to learn turnery while he aimed for economic independence and family support.

After finishing the tenth grade, Ahmed opted for turnery, aware that continuing formal education was not feasible due to financial constraints. Influenced by family and friends in the same field,

he believed early vocational training was more practical than pursuing higher education, which had limited job opportunities after graduation.

Facing financial constraints, Ahmed worked in various turnery shops after training, eventually starting his own business. Despite partnering in a shop that lacked proper equipment, he transitioned to another shop and continued working for a year. Ahmed evaluated his transition as successful, emphasising the importance of studying a vocation he enjoys, feeling satisfied, and achieving his dream of owning a business. He stated:

> *"I consider my transitions from education to work generally successful. In this country, education is good, but after graduating, you often end up waiting years for a job that matches your education. Instead, entering the labour market early is a better option, as it prevents wasting time on education that may not lead to immediate results."*

For Ahmed, success was not solely measured by job income or benefits but by skill development and experience. He valued the practicality of transitioning into the labour market early, asserting that in Jordan, despite the quality of education, the transition from education to work could be prolonged. He believed entering the labour market sooner was a better option, avoiding the potential waiting period after traditional education.

Story of Zidan

In his early 20s, Zidan, a resident of Amman from a lower-class family, completed an intermediate diploma in hotels specialising in culinary arts (chef assistant). He is the only research respondent pursuing a skilled profession with an intermediate diploma level. Zidan pursued this pathway based on his passion and eagerness to study culinary arts. However, he encountered challenges securing a job, as employers often preferred foreign workers with experience due to longer working hours and lower salary expectations.

To boost his chances of employment, Zidan pursued a professional intermediate diploma, which included a practical internship to acquire hands-on experience. Despite moving between several culinary jobs to enhance his skills, Zidan faced a setback during the COVID-19 pandemic when

his restaurant job significantly reduced his salary, leading him to seek alternative employment in the culinary field.

Zidan initially worked in furniture upholstery from an early age but found it unsatisfying due to the lack of passion and low income. After completing his intermediate diploma, he struggled to find a culinary job because he did not have the experience. Eventually, he secured a satisfying position, but the pandemic forced him to return to furniture upholstery for better income. Despite these challenges, Zidan considered his transition successful because he pursued his passion for culinary arts, even though he faced difficulties finding a job. He clarified:

> *"It was a successful transition because I followed specific steps, but I faced challenges that made me doubt it, especially when I could not find a job. However, it is my desire to develop my career and gain experience."*

For Zidan, success lies in following specific steps towards his desired career pathway despite the challenges encountered. His success criteria prioritised working in a vocation he enjoys, feeling satisfied, and prioritising skill development and experience over initial job income and benefits. Zidan remained optimistic about overcoming the hurdles and continuing to develop his career in the culinary field.

An Overall Assessment of Pathway 2 from Young People's Viewpoint

Several factors influenced young respondents who embarked on this pathway, with a crucial role played by their eagerness and inclination to pursue vocational education and skilled professions. Their perspective on the limited job opportunities for graduates from higher education institutions also contributed to their preference for this pathway. Their families' financial status emerged as another significant determinant, as they perceived it as a means to secure employment, attain economic independence, and support their families.

Engaging in discussions with family and friends, some received support for their decision to take this pathway, while others encountered resistance. Family objections were often rooted in local customs and traditions, with some viewing vocational education as inferior to academic pursuits.

Among those who opted for this pathway, all young women considered their transitions successful, while 60% of young men found their transitions problematic. The primary criteria for success included working in a vocation they enjoyed, gaining experience, developing a career, and eventually establishing their businesses. Despite facing career challenges, some respondents in their early twenties expressed dissatisfaction with low incomes that barely covered living expenses. Economic shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, further complicated their situations, resulting in job losses or the need to accept temporary positions against their preferences.

6.2.3 Pathway 3: Transitioning from tertiary education to the public sector

The defining characteristic of this pathway was the goal of young respondents to secure positions in the public sector. Despite being categorised as a late transition, with all participants having prior experiences in multiple private-sector jobs or facing difficulties obtaining employment, this pathway represented less than 10% of the participants. This underscores the challenges and limitations of accessing opportunities in the public sector. Young people on this pathway mainly originated from lower-class families, with 67% residing in Amman and predominantly male. Notably, all individuals who pursued this pathway perceived their transition as successful.

Story of Najwa

In her mid-20s, Najwa, a married young woman from a lower-class family residing in Amman, completed an intermediate diploma in human resources administration. Despite achieving the top rank in her college, Najwa faced a four-year struggle to secure a position in the public sector through the Civil Service Bureau (CSB). Although she was highly ranked on the CSB list, she encountered challenges due to what she perceived as the influence of nepotism, or 'Wasta', and social connections in the labour market, significantly impacting her transition.

After graduating, Najwa spent nearly four years exploring job opportunities in the private sector but was unsuccessful. It took her more than four years to finally secure a job in the public sector. She explained how her transition was successful from her point of view:

> *"I am satisfied with my transition, but it is not fully successful because education often lacks practical application; experience is crucial. Moving to the labour*

market after a prolonged job search can mean losing the knowledge gained in education. Additionally, the salary scale in public sector jobs is often meagre."

While Najwa considered her transition successful, she acknowledged the challenges. She highlighted the crucial role of social connections and "Wasta" in securing employment. Additionally, she pointed out the theoretical focus of the education system, its disconnection from practical applications in the labour market, and employers' prevalent requirement for practical work experience. Najwa's success criteria included obtaining a job. Still, she acknowledged the problematic aspects such as the rigid academic education system, the necessity for work experience, low salary scales, benefits, and the influence of social connections and "Wasta."

Story of Ayman

Ayman, a young man in his early 20s who lives with his grandfather in Amman, comes from a lower-class family and holds an intermediate diploma in engineering. He did not apply to the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) and secured his job independently by responding to job advertisements in local newspapers and undergoing a competitive selection process. He felt fortunate that the position matched his education and experience and faced fewer challenges related to nepotism or "Wasta."

Ayman did not anticipate a career in the public sector. His educational background and diverse work experiences guided him toward this pathway. He initially worked in the private sector, diversifying his experiences through various engineering-related jobs such as solar power projects and technical operations. Supported by his father, Ayman secured a short-term position in the private sector before transitioning to a public sector job. Currently employed in the public sector, Ayman also works as a taxi driver after hours to supplement his income, which he finds insufficient.

Ayman considered his transition successful, attributing his satisfaction to his hard work and mastery of various professions. He valued job security, the opportunity to work in his desired field, and public sector benefits like government health insurance and social security. He appreciated the shorter working hours in the public sector, which allowed him to pursue additional employment or start his own business. However, he acknowledged the incompleteness of his success, mainly due

to income-related factors. During the transition to work, Ayman emphasised the importance of understanding the country's economic situation, working towards desired jobs, and considering key factors like personality, patience, family support, and social connections. Ayman observed that many young people become easily frustrated, failing to grasp that a successful transition requires time and effort. He clarified:

> *"I am genuinely satisfied with my transition because of my hard work and mastery of several professions. I am confident in my ability to perform well in any role. However, I consider my transition not fully successful due to concerns about income."*

Story of Musa

In his mid-20s, Musa lives in Irbid and comes from a lower-class background. With a deceased father, he possesses an intermediate diploma in air conditioning and refrigeration. He secured his job independently by responding directly to job advertisements in local newspapers and undergoing a competitive selection process, as he did not apply to the Civil Service Bureau (CSB). Musa considered himself fortunate that the advertised positions aligned with his education and experience. Because these positions were at the professional intermediate diploma level, he faced fewer challenges related to nepotism or "Wasta."

Musa did not initially foresee a career in the public sector, as he considered it very difficult to get. However, his educational background and pursuit of better job opportunities led him to this pathway. Despite the low salary scale for intermediate diploma employees in the public sector, which necessitates additional sources of income, Musa deems his transition successful. He is satisfied with his job, appreciates the opportunity to work in his desired field, and values job security and benefits like government health insurance and social security.

Reflecting on his experience, Musa expressed contentment with the professional expertise gained and achieving his desire, especially when comparing himself to unemployed engineers in his area. He shared:

> "*I am satisfied and consider it successful due to the professional experience I gained and accumulated. When I compare myself with others, I see engineers are still without jobs.*"

An Overall Assessment of Pathway 3 from Young People's Viewpoint

The young participants attributed their entry into public sector roles to their educational background, work experience, and strategic pursuit of suitable job opportunities. However, they acknowledged the influential role of social connections, nepotism "Wasta", and the significance of young people's personality and patience in navigating this pathway. Despite being one of the most desired pathways among the sample, only three of the study respondents moved into this pathway.

Success for those who followed this pathway was measured by various factors, including job security, benefits associated with public sector employment such as social security and public health insurance, relatively shorter working hours, and the community's positive perception of individuals working in the public sector. Despite these advantages, all respondents voiced concerns about the low salary scale, prompting the need for additional income sources from the private sector or simultaneous business ventures.

6.2.4 Pathway 4: Transitioning from tertiary education to the private sector

This pathway involved young people transitioning into private sector jobs and holding at least an intermediate diploma. It emerged as a predominant route in this study, with 25% of respondents moving into this pathway, evenly split between young men and women.

Among those who pursued this pathway, 75% had a bachelor's degree, and over 62% came from middle- and upper-class families. Additionally, 75% of these respondents considered their transitions successful. Notably, every participant from middle- and upper-class backgrounds deemed their transition successful, and all young women who followed this pathway also regarded their transitions as successful.

Story of Majdi

Majdi, a young man in his late 20s from a lower-class family, lives with his parents in Irbid. He holds a diploma in air conditioning and refrigeration. Despite initially aspiring to pursue a bachelor's degree, financial constraints forced him to enter the job market after completing his diploma. Majdi gained experience in painting and home decoration and worked briefly with a company before accepting a job offer in the Gulf region. His entrepreneurial attempt abroad faced setbacks, leading him to return to Jordan, where he eventually secured a job in the private sector and continues to work.

Majdi expressed dissatisfaction with the Jordanian education system, criticising its overly academic focus and its disconnect with the labour market. Despite the challenges, including losing his career abroad, Majdi views his transition as successful. He explained:

> *"Given the current situation in the country, it is definitely a successful transition. Many young people in the same field have not sought to gain experience or new skills. At any time, I could secure a contract abroad with better income and benefits."*

Majdi remains optimistic about his future opportunities, emphasising the importance of acquiring new skills and experiences to secure better job prospects.

Story of Lana

Lana, a young woman in her early 20s, resides in Amman with her divorced mother and comes from an upper-class family. She holds a diploma in business administration. Due to her inability to secure high grades for university admission, Lana opted for an intermediate diploma, acknowledging the rigidity of the education system and its disconnect with the labour market. Despite her wealthy background, Lana aimed for financial independence and shifted between various private-sector jobs to gain experience.

Lana also criticised the Jordanian education system for its excessive academic focus and lack of practical alignment with the job market. Despite these challenges, she considers her transition successful. She explained:

> *"I consider my transition successful because studying and working simultaneously has been beneficial for me. It has made me more responsible and capable of self-management, especially given the unpredictability of financial situations. Moreover, I can build on my current experience for a better future, which is crucial at this stage of my life."*

Lana valued the experience she gained from various jobs and viewed it as essential for her future prospects. She acknowledged the low salary scale and lack of job benefits in the initial phases of her private-sector transition. However, she remained focused on leveraging her current experience for a better future.

Story of Ayser

In his mid-20s, Ayser lives in Amman with his family. He hails from an upper-class background and has a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering. Ayser acknowledged securing his job through social connections and nepotism "Wasta", emphasising that resorting to such measures became necessary to overcome the challenges of job acquisition.

Expressing dissatisfaction with the outdated content of university education, Ayser found the quality of education primitive and preferred training courses as they provided better knowledge suitable for the labour market. However, he worked various jobs, even starting a business unrelated to his field. Still, he had to close his business due to issues like long working hours, low income, and high operational costs. Subsequently, Ayser found employment in a communication company, facilitated by his uncle's support.

While social connections played a crucial role in Ayser's job transitions, his evaluation is a mix of satisfaction with his current role and dissatisfaction with the overall process. Job security remained a significant concern, a common challenge for those choosing the private sector pathway, as Ayser pointed out. He elaborated:

> *"I consider my transition successful because I achieved what I aimed for. However, working in the private sector lacks job security, which means waking up one morning without a job. Many young people who studied with me chose to travel*

abroad because they recognised the lack of job opportunities here, opting to build their careers elsewhere."

Ayser's success criteria encompassed securing a job aligned with his education, realising his aspirations, ensuring job security, and valuing a positive work environment. However, he noted the demanding nature of the private sector, where young professionals face challenges finding supportive mentors and are expected to prioritise work over personal and social life.

Story of Mahmoud

In his mid-20s, Mahmoud lived in Amman with his parents and held a bachelor's degree in finance and banking science from a lower-class family. His transition was significantly influenced by his high school grades, as his desire to study engineering was hindered by not meeting the qualifying grade. Consequently, he pursued a field (financial and banking science) that did not align with his preferences, impacting his transition pathway.

Mahmoud's work experience began in restaurants during school vacations, and he continued this during university to financially support himself. After graduating, he secured a banking job facilitated by the bank's contact with universities for recruitment. Despite the favourable income and benefits, Mahmoud found the job unsatisfactory, leading to personal problems and a period of imprisonment. He did not provide details about this incident, but it marked a significant turning point, as he mentioned. After its resolution, Mahmoud embarked on a job search, ultimately landing a position in a college canteen through his uncle's assistance, where he has remained for over four years.

He emphasised the role of family orientation and parental background in shaping young people's transitions, mainly when they originate from lower-class families who lack experience guiding them toward a suitable education field. Mahmoud also highlighted the impact of a lack of social connections, nepotism "Wasta," and significant life events, such as financial difficulties, on his decision-making.

Mahmoud appraised his transition as problematic due to studying a field contrary to his preferences. However, he expressed satisfaction with his current job, citing its favourable income, benefits, comfortable work environment, and short working hours. Nevertheless, the absence of

job security, health insurance, and career prospects made it fall short of being deemed an entirely successful transition. He elaborated:

> *"If I had studied the field I truly liked and believed in, despite the challenging circumstances in the country, I would have found my opportunity. However, since I did not pursue this field, I lacked the energy to search for job opportunities, making my transition unsuccessful in my experience."*

Mahmoud acknowledged a lack of energy to explore job opportunities given his unexpected educational path, leading to an assessment of his transition as less successful. Mahmoud's success criteria included securing a public sector job offering job security, irrespective of income considerations.

Story of Yasmeen

Yasmeen, a woman in her mid-20s from Irbid, comes from an upper-class family and holds a bachelor's degree in economics. During her university years, Yasmeen recognised the importance of practical experience and engaged with a local Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) that offered valuable internships. In her final year, she decided to defer one semester to undertake training at a bank through this local NGO. This experience gave her insights into the labour market, contrasting sharply with her academic experience.

Despite her satisfaction with the training, Yasmeen faced challenges securing the promised job due to a lack of social connections. She observed that university education is disconnected from the labour market. After a four-month job search, she eventually secured a position in a company, leveraging her training experience and the support of her social connections.

Yasmeen explained:

> *"I consider my transition successful because I have a job close to home, with good income, social security, health insurance, and a contract without an end date. However, it is unsuccessful because it lacks job security and is not aligned with my education."*

Story of Amal

Amal, in her mid-20s, lives in Amman with her family and holds a bachelor's degree in media. Coming from a middle-class background, she recognised the importance of practical experience and engaged with local NGOs offering internships. Amal received training through an NGO during university, preparing her for the labour market. Her final-year internship provided valuable insights into the job market, which differed from her academic studies.

Amal encountered challenges in her transition, particularly with relocating to Amman for her job. She had to convince her family to accept the move and faced commuting difficulties and the challenge of adhering to local customs. Despite these hurdles, her family's support was crucial to her success. The training and internship provided by the NGO led to her current job, enabling her to navigate the labour market successfully.

Amal considers her transition very successful, emphasising the significance of securing a job in a challenging market. She appreciates the decent income, social security, and health insurance benefits. She stated:

> *"I consider my transition very successful due to the opportunity I have secured—a chance that many people have not had to this day. Simply finding a job is considered an achievement here in Jordan."*

However, Amal expressed dissatisfaction with the long working hours, particularly after marriage and having children. She also faced initial difficulties as a young woman from a different governorate with traditional customs and beliefs, compounded by a challenging work environment and irregular public transportation. Her family's support was pivotal in overcoming these challenges and ensuring her successful transition.

An Overall Assessment of Pathway 4 from Young People's Viewpoint

Transitioning to the private sector was the most prominent route for young people in this study. This route was influenced by educational attainment, family background, and personal drive and flexibility. Participants emphasised that having the right educational qualifications is crucial for securing private-sector job opportunities, though they expressed frustration with employers prioritising credentials over skills and competencies.

Young people also highlighted the significant role of family background in providing support systems and access to job opportunities, making the transition smoother. Despite this, they stressed the importance of gaining experience across various jobs and sectors to improve job prospects and advance their careers.

Several challenges were noted in this pathway, including a disconnect between the education system and the job market. Many young people emphasised the lack of benefits in private-sector jobs, particularly the issues of job security and long working hours. Additionally, they underscored the importance of social connections and nepotism "Wasta" in obtaining job opportunities, which can be a major obstacle for those from less advantaged backgrounds.

Success criteria for those following this pathway included securing a job, gaining experience, and achieving financial independence. Ideally, young people aimed to align their jobs with their education, but the scarcity of opportunities meant that any job was considered successful. Young people in their late 20s expressed more confidence in their transitions, believing in their skills, education, and experience, particularly if they secured jobs abroad, such as in the Gulf region.

In general, those who considered their transitions successful emphasised the importance of a comfortable workplace environment, a decent income, and benefits such as social security and health insurance, which contribute to career development.

6.2.5 Pathway 5: Returning to education

This pathway included young people who decided to return to education to facilitate their transition to the labour market. The study revealed that 25% of participants opted for this transitional pathway. Notably, over 87% of these individuals were young women, with a particular focus on those re-entering vocational education. Similarly, almost 88% of those who pursued this pathway hailed from lower-class backgrounds and lived in Irbid. However, less than 13% perceived their transition as successful.

Story of Khawla

Khawla, a woman in her early twenties living in Irbid with her parents, initially pursued an intermediate diploma in graphic design and concurrently studied cosmetology at a vocational centre. Hailing from a middle-class family, Khawla faced challenges in her field of graphic design,

struggling to secure a job in the face of family resistance to employment outside their community's norms.

Despite completing her intermediate diploma, Khawla encountered difficulties finding suitable employment in graphic design. Family objections to jobs beyond her local area, in opposition to community customs, prompted her to shift gears. Undeterred, Khawla transitioned to cosmetology through vocational education, aiming for job opportunities closer to home and more aligned with familial expectations.

Following her diploma, Khawla worked briefly in a beauty salon. Still, its closure led her to a job in a printing factory, which her family rejected due to its distant location and low income. Despite her efforts, the COVID-19 pandemic further hindered her job search. To enhance her job prospects, Khawla decided to return to education, enrolling in a cosmetology program at a vocational education centre.

Khawla highlighted the lack of job opportunities, family constraints, and the aspiration for economic independence as primary factors driving her decision. Unlike some of her friends who entered the labour market with family support, Khawla found herself compelled to resume her studies in cosmetology near her residence and with family approval. When asked if she considered her transition successful or not, she said:

> *"It was not a successful transition for me. Two of my college friends moved into the labour market, securing jobs in printing companies through social connections and Wasta, while I did not."*

Despite setbacks, Khawla defined her criteria for transition success as obtaining a job with a good income, benefits like social security and health insurance, a positive workplace environment, reasonable working hours, and a sense of recognition.

Story of Amina

In her mid-20s, Amina lived in Irbid with her family. She had lost her father and belonged to a lower-class background. Falling short of completing high school, Amina entered the medical services sector to alleviate her family's financial struggles following her father's demise. Driven

by the need for economic independence and family support, she found employment in medical support services, a domain for which she had a genuine interest and passion.

Despite lacking formal education or training, Amina worked in various health clinics, facing challenges due to her limited educational background. Recognising the importance of augmenting her skills and securing a formal education in her field, Amina returned to education to pave the way for a more stable career, legal recognition, and a promising future transition.

Amina highlighted the financial constraints and family issues that hindered her high school success. Her earlier jobs in health clinics provided meagre income and no benefits, prompting her pursuit of high school completion for better opportunities. Despite facing difficulties, Amina secured a job in a clinic with informal training, albeit illegally. To rectify this and improve her prospects, she enrolled in vocational education for medical services provision, aiming for legality, improved income, and benefits.

Amina emphasised the impact of family and school guidance during her formative years on young people's educational and vocational choices. She identified various factors, including a scarcity of job opportunities, social connections, nepotism "Wasta", restrictive social norms, restrictive gender roles as a woman, and personal considerations, as influential in young people's transitions. When asked whether her transition was successful or not, she linked her successful transition with education:

> *"From a practical standpoint, it has been successful, but it lacks job security. If I were to continue without further education, this transition would not be successful in the long run. Therefore, returning to education is necessary for me to achieve true success."*

Amina acknowledged the challenges in assessing her transition, citing the absence of a well-paid job with benefits like social security and job security. However, she considered her experience in the medical support services field a success, even without a formal educational background. Amina emphasised the significance of education as a crucial criterion for a successful transition. She underscored the importance of proximity to the workplace, particularly for a young woman working late hours in her field.

Story of Samira

In her early twenties, Samira lived in Irbid with her lower-class family after not completing high school, prompting her entry into the labour market. The quest for suitable employment proved challenging, given her limited education and the need for a job aligning with familial and local customs. After completing high school, Samira faced challenges finding employment that adhered to family and community norms due to her limited education and experience. With support from family and friends, she secured a secretary position in a clinic, though the job offered minimal income and no benefits. Encouraged by her mother, Samira decided to pursue vocational training in healthcare provision, seeking an educational background to facilitate future transitions to more lucrative jobs with improved benefits.

The absence of job benefits such as social security, health insurance, job security, and low income has led Samira to perceive her transition as problematic. Despite this, she gauges her success based on her ability to secure employment and achieve financial independence. Recognising the limitations of her current job, Samira has decided to further her education by studying elderly medical care provision in a vocational education centre. This decision aims to enhance her skills, acquire a relevant educational background for her current role, and potentially improve her job benefits or open doors to better job opportunities. When asked whether her transition was successful or not, she explained:

> *"I consider my transition both successful and unsuccessful. It's successful because I found a job and can support myself independently, without relying on family. However, it is not successful because the job lacks benefits like job security, social security, and a decent income, and it is far from where I live. Comparing my situation with my friends, none of them have jobs due to the scarcity of opportunities, and they are facing challenges in their job search. Despite these challenges, I have managed to work for almost a year, which is a positive outcome."*

Samira reflects on her transition as a blend of success and challenges. She contrasted her situation with friends facing similar challenges in the job market. She expressed gratitude for having secured employment for almost a year, emphasising the significance of her accomplishment in light of the prevailing job scarcity.

Story of Nadia

Approaching her thirties, Nadia, a young married woman living in Irbid with her family, belonged to a lower-class background. Despite completing her bachelor's degree in psychology, Nadia faced difficulties finding a job aligned with her education. Unfulfilled by various unrelated roles in the private sector, she encountered additional challenges managing her time and securing a suitable job after getting married and having children. To pursue her passion for cosmetology, Nadia decided to return to education and enrolled in a vocational education centre.

After three years of graduation, Nadia secured her first job in a company. Still, she found it unsatisfactory due to its lack of benefits, such as social security, health insurance, job security, low income, and inconvenient working hours, especially considering her marital and maternal responsibilities. Motivated by her desire for cosmetology, Nadia faced the challenge of limited proximity to vocational education centres, but when a new centre opened nearby, she promptly enrolled. Post-graduation, Nadia established a home-based beauty salon, initially promoting it through a Facebook page. Despite planning to expand into the market, the COVID-19 pandemic prompted her to postpone this venture.

Struggling to find a job in her field with a bachelor's degree, Nadia sought a solution that would allow her to support her family while managing her familial duties financially. Discussing her decision to study and work from home with her husband, Nadia envisioned opening a beauty salon once she gained sufficient experience and clientele. Eventually, she successfully launched her own business, providing a new income source for her family and enabling her to balance motherhood and business responsibilities. When asked if she considered her transition successful or not, she responded:

> *"The success of my transition is solely attributed to vocational education, not my bachelor's degree. The bachelor's degree did not contribute to my transition; it merely served as a certificate on my resume for job applications. I did not find work in my field of study."*

Nadia stood out as the sole respondent who considered her transition successful among those who followed this pathway. Her criteria for success included the prosperity of her business, the

acquisition of a new income stream, the fulfilment of her passion, and the ability to control her working hours.

Story of Maher

In his mid-20s, Maher lives in Irbid with his late father's family, having completed a master's degree in economics and belonging to a lower-class background. Maher, the sole young man following this pathway, faced challenges after his attempts to secure a job aligned with his bachelor's degree proved unsuccessful. In response, he decided to further his education with a master's degree to improve his job prospects. Despite briefly working in a position unrelated to his education, Maher's frustration with the job search led him to pursue higher education to enhance his chances.

After completing his education, Maher encountered difficulties finding a job, citing the absence of social connections and nepotism "Wasta". He worked in house painting to cover his daily expenses during school and university, with aspirations to work in the banking sector. Although he secured an internship through a youth empowerment organisation, his lack of social connections hindered him from securing a permanent position. Maher eventually found temporary employment in a public sector project, prompting him to pursue a master's degree to boost his job opportunities. Juggling work at the university and weekend house painting, Maher recently graduated with a master's degree but remains unsuccessful in finding a job.

Maher attributed his decision to take this pathway to the lack of job opportunities and the inability to secure a position in his desired banking sector. Despite financial challenges, he believed education was the key to achieving financial independence. The lack of social connections and nepotism significantly impacted Maher's transition, preventing him from receiving the support necessary for career progression. Comparing his situation to peers with less education but better transition prospects, Maher acknowledged a certain level of success in having worked for a brief period but expressed dissatisfaction due to the absence of a stable job with future prospects. In his own words:

> *"To some extent, my transition can be considered successful because there are still people who have not found work. I feel fortunate to have worked even for this short*

period. However, it was not entirely successful because I lack a stable job with future prospects. Many of my university friends also have not seen their education field affect their transition positively. Ultimately, having connections who can help secure jobs seems most crucial."

Reflecting on his transition, Maher considered it problematic, yet he recognised his luck in securing employment for a short period. His criteria for success centred on obtaining a fixed job aligned with his education within his desired field, offering a good income and benefits such as job security and a favourable workplace environment.

An overall assessment of Pathway 5 from young people's viewpoint

The primary motivation for young people opting for this pathway was pursuing employment. Returning to education became a strategic means to improve their job prospects. Conversely, those who had secured jobs but faced challenges such as low income and lack of benefits, such as job security, health insurance, and social security, decided to re-engage with education. This was driven by a desire to elevate their education level, enhance skills and experience, or acquire a relevant educational background, aiming for career advancement or better job opportunities with improved income and benefits.

Critical factors prompting the choice of this pathway included a shortage of job opportunities, prolonged waiting periods for job placement, and a lack of family support due to financial constraints or social issues, such as the loss of a parent. Additionally, pursuing education in their preferred field, insufficient educational attainment, adherence to restrictive local customs and traditions, a lack of family support and social connections, and nepotism "Wasta" played essential roles in steering individuals toward this pathway.

Over 87% of those who took this pathway considered their transition problematic. Only one respondent, Nadia, evaluated her transition as successful despite already holding a bachelor's degree. Her success criteria focused on obtaining a job or establishing her own business in a sector she was passionate about. Her goals included securing a source of income to support herself and her family, managing her working hours as a mother, and ensuring proximity to her job location.

Generally, it became evident that most respondents evaluated this particular pathway primarily focused on their current job rather than the transition process itself. Those who perceived their transition as problematic emphasised success criteria related to securing a job with sufficient income and benefits. Key considerations included job security, social security, health insurance, alignment with their education, a favourable working environment, reasonable working hours, recognition, and proximity to their residence, all contributing to achieving financial independence.

6.3 Conclusion

Table 8 presents the pathways young people took and summarises their justifications for taking these pathways and their success criteria.

Table 8: Summary of young people's justifications influencing their transition pathways and success criteria.

Pathways	Justifications to take the pathway	Success criteria
P1: Transitioning from compulsory education	Lack of job opportunities Family financial status The desire for financial independence Lack of family support Lack of education attainment	To have found a job Acquiring new skills Gain experience Family support Become financially independent
P2: Moving early with vocational education	Lack of job opportunities Family financial status The desire for financial independence Lack of family support Lack of education attainment Desire to study vocational education Vocational education enhances their chances of getting a job	To have found a job Acquiring new skills Gain experience Family support Do work related to their passion Become financially independent Start a career or set up their own business
P3: Transitioning from tertiary education to the public sector	Lack of job opportunities Family financial status Got it by luck Social connections and nepotism "Wasta" Job benefits (social security, health insurance, job security, short working hours, community perception, and career development)	To have found a job Become financially independent Get the job benefits (social security, health insurance, job security, short working hours, and career development) Gain experience
P4: Transitioning from tertiary	Most job opportunities are in the private sector	To have found a job Become financially independent Gain experience

education to the private sector	The need for social connections and nepotism “Wasta.”	Job benefits (social security, health insurance) Start a career
P5: Returning to education	Lack of job opportunities Long waiting time to get a job Enhance their probability of getting a job Get an education background in their jobs Get a job with better benefits Advance and back up their job with an educational background The need for social connections and nepotism “Wasta.”	To have found a job Become financially independent Self-actualise in a field of interest Job Benefits Family support Acquiring new skills Gain experience Start a career or set up their own business

The transition of young people from education to the workforce has been categorised into five distinct pathways based on their initial education levels and eventual work outcomes. This chapter explores the rationale behind moving into these pathways, providing a deeper understanding of how respondents evaluate their transitions and the criteria they consider for success. Despite the different pathways, the central motivations for young people’s transitions consistently revolve around securing employment and achieving financial independence.

The first pathway, **"transitioning from compulsory education,"** primarily attracted young men from lower-class backgrounds. These respondents often cited social and family issues, such as limited financial resources and inadequate family support, as compelling reasons for entering the workforce early. Many sought employment to attain financial independence at an early stage. Typically, they initially pursued any available job without specific career goals but gradually transitioned to more strategic career-building efforts. Their limited educational attainment was a key factor in moving into this pathway, which restricted their opportunities for further education. Success in this pathway depended on the desire for employment, financial independence, and critical factors such as family support, self-belief, and skill development. Those who viewed their transition as problematic emphasised issues like low educational attainment, a lack of job opportunities, insufficient income, and the absence of key benefits such as job security and health insurance.

The second pathway, " **transitioning from vocational education,"** mirrored the first but involved respondents with a vocational education background. These young people expressed similar

motivations, including pursuing financial independence, addressing family financial issues, and opting for vocational education based on personal ambition. Despite facing resistance due to local customs and traditions, all young women on this pathway considered their transition successful. They focused on pursuing their passions, gaining experience, initiating careers, and potentially starting their own businesses. Despite family objections, they viewed this pathway as crucial for entering the labour market.

The third pathway, **" transitioning from tertiary education to the public sector,"** was highly desirable due to perceived benefits such as job security, a stable career, health insurance, and positive community perceptions. Those who considered their transition to this pathway successful aligned their success criteria with these benefits. Although only a few pursued this pathway with an intermediate diploma, they raised concerns about low salaries. However, these issues were seen as manageable through alternative options such as starting a business or seeking additional employment.

The fourth pathway, " **transitioning from tertiary education to the private sector,"** stood out as a prevalent choice given the sector's dominance in the job market. Young respondents following this path often faced challenges securing a job, leading them to accept any available opportunity to achieve financial independence. Success criteria for this pathway included securing a job, gaining experience, and strategically planning for career progression. Challenges in the private sector included a lack of job security, long working hours with social connections and nepotism "Wasta" playing pivotal roles in shaping the transitions of respondents.

The fifth pathway, **"returning to education,"** was predominantly chosen by young women from lower-class backgrounds in Irbid, highlighting social inequalities in their transitions. Motivations for this pathway included a lack of job opportunities, extended waiting times for employment, and the desire to enhance their chances by obtaining additional educational qualifications. Most respondents following this pathway found their transition problematic, citing insufficient job opportunities, meagre income, and a lack of benefits. However, one young woman succeeded by studying her desired field, cosmetology, at a vocational education centre. She started her own business, achieved financial independence, and gained better control over her working hours.

Young people often evaluate their success based on their current job situations rather than the transition process itself. Those who found their transitions problematic highlighted challenges such as a lack of job opportunities, insufficient job benefits, long working hours, a challenging workplace environment, and unfavourable job locations. Success criteria varied but frequently centred around achieving financial independence, securing a job aligned with their education, and gaining access to essential benefits such as health insurance, social security, and job security.

From the analysis, it is clear that young people's criteria for success are practical and context-driven (Mariano, 2014). They prioritise securing employment and financial independence due to the economic pressures they face. Additionally, the emphasis on job alignment with their education and access to benefits like health insurance and job security reflects a desire for stability and career progression. However, the reliance on social connections and the influence of family support indicate structural barriers that impact their ability to transition smoothly into the workforce. Addressing these barriers and aligning educational outcomes with market needs could significantly improve the success and satisfaction of young people in their career transitions.

From the researcher's perspective, the young people's criteria for success reflect a pragmatic response to the socio-economic challenges they face. Their focus on immediate employment and financial independence underscores the pressing economic realities that shape their career choices and aspirations. The key reflections can be summarised in the below:

1. **Necessity vs. Aspiration:** The immediate need to secure a livelihood often trumps longer-term career aspirations, particularly for those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. This highlights the critical importance of improving economic opportunities and support systems to allow young people to pursue career paths that align with their interests and education (Schoon & Parsons, 2002; Heinz, 2009a).
2. **Systemic Barriers**: The reliance on social connections and nepotism reveals systemic barriers that hinder merit-based job access. Addressing these barriers requires creating more equitable job market conditions and enhancing transparency in hiring practices (Hughes & Smith, 2020).
3. **Educational Relevance**: The critique of the education system underscores the need for better alignment between educational programs and labour market demands. Enhancing

vocational training and integrating practical skills into education can help bridge this gap and improve job readiness among young graduates (Borlagdan *et al.,* 2015).

4. **Supportive Networks**: The significance of family support and social networks in determining success suggests that policies aimed at fostering community support and creating professional networks can be crucial in facilitating smoother transitions into the workforce (Lamamra *et al.,* 2013).

In conclusion, young people's criteria for success are shaped by a complex interplay of economic necessity, social networks, educational background, and personal aspirations (Schoon & Heckhausen, 2019). Addressing the structural challenges and enhancing support systems are essential for enabling young people to achieve their career goals and redefine success more equitably and meaningfully.

Chapter 7: Determinants of Successful Labour Market Transitions: Participants' Accounts

7.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the key determinants that shape young people's accounts of their transitions from education to work from their own perspective. It will address the research question, "What are the perceptions of Jordanian youth concerning the key determinants that affect the success of their transitions from education to work?". Drawing on the theoretical framework developed in Chapter Three, the chapter will present the key factors operating at five different ecological levels, i.e., individual, family, local, national, and global.

7.1.1 Individual Factors

This section will present the Individual factors identified by the respondents themselves, including agency, desires, aspirations, motivations, wishes, psychological adjustment, and class and gender identity roles.

Most respondents stated that their desire for **economic independence** was the main driving factor that influenced their successful transitions. They referred to several interpretations of economic independence, such as not taking money from their parents. However, they might still live in their parent house or use their own income for recreational activities without asking for extra money from their parents, as they explained. Respondents indicated that this desire for economic independence encourages some from an early age or during their education to move into the labour market and get a job, any job without preference, to get a source of income, despite some family members not fully agreeing:

> *"I asked my father to take me to the carpenter shop, but he refused. So, after school, I began searching for any job I could find. I ended up working as a porter in the market to earn income."* (Abdullah, a mid-20 man with a high school education or less from a lower-class family living in Amman)

Respondents attributed significant value to economic independence because they believed they had to support their families, even young people from upper-class backgrounds. They explained that life is difficult and costly, and they have several siblings that the family alone cannot support.

> *" During high school and university, I worked part-time as a waiter in a hotel. This allowed me to earn extra money for my recreational activities without needing to ask my family for financial support."* (Ayser, a mid-20 man with a bachelor's degree from an upper-class family living in Amman)

For those young people, economic independence was explained by self-reliance and the responsibility to share the family's financial burden. They could start with a job with minimum benefits. However, they elaborated that a successful transition was a gradual process of gaining experience and moving into better jobs with time. For example, this factor influenced some young people's decision to enter a vocational and training centre and enter the labour market early.

> *"I moved to a vocational education centre after completing the tenth grade. My father is a skilled worker, and such a vocation will help me earn income. The family financial situation did not allow me to complete my education … so I had to move early into work and help the family."* (Ahmed, a mid-20 man with a vocational and training centre education from a lower-class family living in Amman)

On the other hand, some young people's accounts indicated Individual factors that resulted in problematic transitions from their perspectives. For example, most aspired to be economically independent, but **academic performance**, represented by their lack of desire for education, low educational achievement, and poor educational choices, contributed to problematic transitions.

> *"My ambition was to become an engineer, but after failing to pass high school and repeating the class twice without success, I transitioned to vocational education. Despite this shift, I struggled to secure a job"* (Majid, an early-20 man with a vocational education from a lower-class family living in Irbid)

> *" If I had studied the field I truly liked and believed in, despite the challenging circumstances in the country, I would have found my opportunity."* (Mahmoud, an end-20s man with a bachelor's degree from a lower-class family living in Amman)

Moreover, other young people believed that moving early into the labour market was better than completing their education and struggling to get a job. They explained their belief that the labour market offers no job opportunities, especially for university graduates. This belief resulted from observing their friends or family members' experiences in the labour market. In addition, they witnessed their peers' frustration of not finding a job or moving into jobs that do not require a university education, so they decided to learn a vocation or open their own business from an early age.

> *"Comparing myself with family members, most of whom have completed university education but are still unemployed, unable to find jobs, I find that I have started my own business, whereas they have achieved nothing."* (Arkan, an early-20 man with a high school education or less from a lower-class family living in Irbid)

Furthermore, some respondents explained that they did not like school or education in general. They explained that this feeling resulted from their low academic performance or belief that their education would not help them successfully move to the labour market. Hence, they decided not to pursue further education, such as an intermediate diploma or university, and preferred training or vocational education, which was perceived as facilitating their transitions to work.

> *"I was not convinced about pursuing further education. After tenth grade, I wanted to study in the beauty field, which I am passionate about. However, due to my low grades, I could not pursue formal education in this field. Instead, I underwent some training and eventually opened my own beauty shop."* (Amira, an early-20 woman with a high school education or less from a lower-class family living in Irbid)

On the other hand, some young people believed that academic performance was critical to successful transitions. They explained that high academic achievement could improve their ranking or chances of being selected for public-sector jobs or noticed by private-sector employers. Hence, it increased their chances of getting job interviews and entering the labour market.

> *"I can confirm that high academic performance helped my transitions; your academic performance is a key point many companies consider important. It is also important for the civil service bureau as it is calculated in your ranking for public sector jobs. The top five of my class moved into public sector jobs out of more than 500 graduates"* (Najwa, a mid-20 woman with an intermediate diploma education from a lower-class family living in Amman)

Respondents perceived **personality traits** such as persistence, communication skills, patience, and strength of personality as critical determinants for a successful transition. These traits were viewed as helping young people transition and face challenges during and after their transitions. In addition, participants indicated that personal qualities are essential for successful transitions and being accepted in a job.

> *"I consider my transitions successful … it depends on personal qualities firstly, if they [young people] can endure job challenges that they face during transitions or the job itself, they can be successful in their transitions. I faced challenges in work beyond my ability but overcame them."* (Yasmeen, a mid-20 woman with a bachelor's degree from an upper-class family living in Irbid)

Similarly, **psychological adjustment** was perceived as a critical factor in young people's successful transitions. This was explained by young people's resilience and adaptation to transition challenges. They explained that it reflects young people's ability to overcome challenges and adapt to changing circumstances during their transitions. For example, some young people lost their jobs, could not move back to the labour market, and lost their savings and source of income, but in their interviews, they explained that they faced these challenges with optimism and hope until they overcame these setbacks.

> "*I wanted to start my own business in the Gulf with a local partner. At his suggestion, I left the country to obtain another visa, but once I left, I could not return, and my savings with him were lost. Despite this setback, I consider my transition successful because I remain open to securing another contract at any time.*" (Majdi, an end-20 man with an intermediate diploma from a lower-class family living in Irbid)

Moreover, some young people indicated that they developed resilience to cope better with transition challenges through social support from family, positive thinking, adjusting their expectations, seeking new opportunities, and a sense of purpose.

> *"When my father opened the business for me, he told me that its success or failure depended on my efforts. This instilled a strong sense of responsibility and purpose. Despite facing challenges and needing to adapt, I successfully launched my first shop and have since expanded to open another. It all began with my father's initial support."* (Arkan, a mid-20 man with a vocational education from a middle-class family living in Irbid)

For example, some young people indicated that they must strengthen their mental health when they become frustrated by moving into jobs they do not like or are not aligned with their education or ambition. In addition, they faced complex life events such as their parents' divorce and losing their jobs or their savings.

> *"I moved into a job that I did not like, and I had to be imprisoned for a while after that ... but, with family support, I decided to overcome these times and find another job"* (Mahmoud, a mid-20 man with a bachelor's degree from a lower-class family living in Amman)

> *"You should have the mentality to be responsible; you never know what could happen; my parents got divorced, and my father lost his fortune, so I had to adjust to my new status and move into the labour market"* (Lana, an early-20 woman with an intermediate diploma from an upper-class family living in Amman)

Despite the challenges respondents faced, some successfully managed to move into the labour market, demonstrating their resilience and adaptation, they explained. In addition, many respondents repeated the quote, *"Love what you do, so you do what you love",* especially when asked about their psychological adjustment and how they dealt with their transitions.

> *"The psychological adjustment is key for me; you should have it; not all jobs will fit your preference without challenges; you have to adapt to what you get"* (Lana,

an early-20 woman with an intermediate diploma from an upper-class family living in Amman)

Moreover, respondents confirmed that tenacity was a key trait influencing positive transitions. For example, this was demonstrated by overcoming obstacles and staying committed to their goals to study their passion field or move into a job they like. In addition, this tenacity was shown by self-encouragement to break all their challenges and constraints.

> *"In the beginning, my parents did not agree with me to study culinary arts to become a chef, but in the end, they accepted it because of my tenacity … still, they were hesitant at the beginning of my transition"* (Haneen, an end-20 woman with a vocational and training centre education from a lower-class family living in Amman)

Moreover, young people mentioned a lack of tenacity, motivation, and patience, moving into jobs not aligned with their education, and a sense of frustration as Individual factors led to problematic transitions.

> *"It is a problematic transition because I temporarily worked in a job not aligned with my education and specialisation … you know, you feel sorry about your education … I studied four years and spent money and efforts … then I could not find a job"* (Maher, a mid-20, man with a bachelor's degree from a lower-class family living in Irbid)

Some respondents indicated that **gender identity** plays an essential role in their transitions. They linked their gender identity to the type of work they got or its tasks and income.

> "*Gender identity influences young people's transitions; some employers prefer women because they get lower salaries than men, and others prefer men because they can handle all types of jobs and tasks*". (Arwa, an early-20s woman with a high school education or less from a lower-class family living in Amman)

Moreover, some respondents indicated that gender identity could impact their transitions to work depending on the type of job, i.e., if the type of job is suitable for men or women. In addition, some

respondents indicated that men have better opportunities in the labour market because they have fewer limitations in their movements to the labour market than women.

> "*Women have their field of work, not similar to men. For example, in the turnery field, you cannot find women … other types of jobs such as tailoring, beauty, bakery, hotelling are suitable for them*". (Ahmed, a mid-20s man with a vocational education from a lower-class family living in Amman)

> *"Men can work in any job, but women cannot do the same. You can find men working in restaurants, gas stations, and anything else, but women cannot work in such jobs"* (Nadia, an end-20s woman with a vocational education from a lower-class family living in Irbid)

> "*Gender could impact your transitions only in jobs related to factories, i.e., handy jobs; in other job opportunities, I do not see a difference*". (Huda, an end-20s woman with a bachelor's degree from an upper-class family living in Amman)

> "*Men have better opportunities to get a job than women. They could develop social connections easily … they could stay late at work, but women could not do this*". (Khawla, an early-20s woman with an intermediate diploma from a lower-class family living in Irbid)

Similarly, respondents indicated that **class identity** is essential in young people's transitions to work. They explained class identity in terms of their families' financial backgrounds and social connections and how this class background could affect their transitions to the labour market.

> "*Family class is an essential factor … it is about family financial status, knowledge about the labour market and social connections they have … if you come from an upper-class background, everything would be different, your level of thinking, the environment where you live, and the support you get*". (Mahmoud, a mid-20 man with a bachelor's degree from a lower-class family living in Amman)

Moreover, respondents explained that class identity is linked to young people's families' ability to support them in starting a business, getting training, studying in private schools or universities, or sending them abroad, making them more desirable in the labour market.

> "*Class background has an impact on young people's transitions to work. For example, suppose you completed a bachelor's in accounting. In that case, you should have certificates to facilitate your transitions to work, but they are costly, so it is easier for young people coming from an upper-class background.*" (Ayman, an early-20 man with an intermediate diploma from a lower-class family living in Amman)

> "*It has a strong impact on young people's transitions. For example, there are training courses if I take them, I will move into the labour market directly, but they are costly, which I cannot afford*". (Nadin, a mid-20 woman with a bachelor's degree from a lower-class family living in Irbid)

In addition, some respondents indicated the power of their class by linking it to an ethnic background, such as belonging to a tribe or region, considering Jordan is a tribal country. The linkages between ethnicity and class are demonstrated by the support some people get because they are affiliated with a family or tribe, as their members can support each other to get a job.

> "*For example, I am coming from a simple family, not a tribe … the tribe has people inside the government, and they have connections everywhere, so young people from this tribe can get a job easier than me*". (Tamer, an early-20 man with a high school education or less from a middle-class family living in Irbid)

> "*Yes, it influences young people's transitions to work. It exists in the country's south, i.e., tribes in the south*". (Khawla, an early-20s woman with an intermediate diploma from a lower-class family living in Irbid)

7.1.2 Familial Factors

This section will review the family factors young people consider significant for their labour market outcomes, namely family socioeconomic status, cultural background, support, structure, and parental education and expectations.

The participants confirmed the importance of **family support** for successful transitions. Family support for young people was about psychological support, i.e., emotional support, encouragement, guidance, and social and financial support. Young people's accounts focused on the emotional support from their families; for example, the family's confidence in their decisions about their transitions and family encouragement and guidance were critical for their successful transitions.

> *"One key factor that contributed to my successful transitions was family support. Consulting with parents is crucial—they advise on what steps to take and encourage you to work. For instance, my father often told me there is no shame in taking up handy jobs, emphasising the importance of work and its income."* (Ayman, an early 20s man with an intermediate diploma education from a lower-class family living in Amman)

Another young person, Musa, confirmed that his successful transitions resulted from his father's advice and guidance to study a vocational field despite his grades qualifying him to study sciences. However, his family disagreed with his father's advice to study this field.

> *"My grades qualified me to study the scientific branch in school, but my father advised me to study the vocational field. My father helped me in finding my current job, which he found in a newspaper and told me to apply as it fits my qualifications."* (Musa, a mid-20s man with an intermediate diploma education from a lower-class family living in Irbid)

Still, Musa received criticism from his family, including his mother, when he chose the vocational field, but his father's encouragement and psychological support helped him overcome that period. The above account also indicates how a family's cultural background can influence young people's transitions. For example, some cultures value certain types of education and occupations,

reinforcing parental expectations for their sons and daughters to get prestigious jobs. However, most accounts indicated that their parental expectations reflect community and family expectations, which could be stressful and unrealistic and might not agree with young people's desires or ambitions.

> *"Young people become tired of the situation; if they want to open a small business, such as a vegetable kiosk, no one provides support … even the family will not like it as it is not their expectation, especially if you have an education degree."* (Ayser, a mid-20s man with a bachelor's degree from an upper-class family living in Amman)

Moreover, some young people explained the importance of family support in responding to exclusionary national customs and traditions, especially for young women. For example, using public transportation or moving to live in another city is considered a taboo for women in some families and communities in Jordan, so without family support, Amal could not have a successful transition, as evidenced below:

> *" My family's crucial support facilitated my successful transition into work. Despite living in Irbid and working in Amman, their encouragement to use public transportation enabled me to secure employment. They later backed my decision to relocate and live independently in Amman, a choice that other families might find challenging or difficult to accept."* (Amal, a mid-20s woman with a bachelor's degree from a middle-class family living in Amman)

On the other hand, some participants faced family rejection when they failed to complete their education or moved into a job they considered not aligned with national customs and traditions. For example, taking a job requires using public transportation or moving to another city alone, which was viewed as problematic, especially for young women. For example, Samira explained that family was a limiting factor that led her to reject job offers.

> *" Families can play both supportive and restrictive roles. While they encourage education completion, they may disapprove of jobs outside the local area or not in line with national customs, especially for women, posing obstacles to career*

transitions." (Samira, an early 20s woman with a high school education or less from a lower-class family living in Irbid)

Moreover, for some young people's accounts, it is the absence of parents due to the death of one of them, especially the father, or their divorce and living in a broken family. This has made their transitions problematic as they could not find financial or psychological support or guidance, forcing them to leave school and find a job to provide income for the family.

> *"I had no choice; after my father's death, I had to leave school and find a job to support our income. As a result, I ended up with a low-paying job because I did not finish my education."* (Yasir, an early 20s man with a vocational education from a lower-class family living in Amman)

Some respondents mentioned that **parental educational and occupational background** (hence parental social class) impacted their labour market transitions. For example, they come from a family with skilled labour, or business prospects matter. Most young people from lower-class family backgrounds with skilled jobs or businesses (for example, carpenter, turnery, and air conditioning and refrigeration) indicated that their families' jobs and businesses inspired them. As a result, these respondents often worked during school and became mentally more prepared for future transitions to work.

> *"I used to juggle work and study simultaneously. My father owns a carpenter shop, where I learned the trade from a young age. Despite my family's objections, I was determined to acquire vocational skills and enter the workforce."* (Abdullah, a mid-20 man with a high school education or less from a lower-class family living in Amman)

Moreover, young people's accounts indicated how the success of a transition depends on the family's financial status. However, other young people's accounts considered that weak family financial status was a factor that influenced and motivated them to have successful transitions. It was a motivation and encouragement factor to become financially independent.

> *"After completing tenth grade, I had to pursue vocational education due to our family's financial constraints and my father being a skilled worker with many*

siblings. This path enabled me to secure a job and facilitated successful transitions in my career." (Ahmed, a mid-20s man with a vocational and training centre education from a lower-class family living in Amman)

Some young people from better-off families indicated that familial financial resources facilitated their education in private school or access to expensive training that contributed to their successful transitions to work. Huda, for example, took expensive training courses related to her education field, which might have been difficult to take without her family's support. Eventually, her education and training contributed to her successful transitions.

"I attended a private school throughout my education. After graduating from university with a degree in accounting, my family supported me in obtaining two costly training certificates in CMA and CPA. These certifications played a crucial role in my successful transition to work." (Huda, an end-of-20s woman with a bachelor's degree from an upper-class family living in Amman)

Similarly, Ayser attended part of his education in a private school and gained admission to the university through the "Parallel Program," which allows students to study without national competition but with higher tuition fees. His family's financial situation and social connections were crucial for his education, and he later transitioned into the labour market.

" I did not achieve the required grade in high school to study engineering at university. So, I enrolled on the parallel program. After graduation and several unsuccessful job attempts, I reached out to my uncle, who knew a manager at a company. With his help, I applied and was hired." (Ayser, a mid-20s man with a bachelor's degree from an upper-class family living in Amman)

In addition, Arkan indicated that his father supported him in opening his barbershop, which facilitated his successful transition to work.

" Having not passed high school, I decided to pursue a vocational path with my father's guidance. When I eventually chose to open my own barber shop, he provided the financial support I needed." (Arkan, a mid-20s man with a vocational and training centre education from a middle-class family living in Irbid)

Nadia faced financial struggles after marrying and having two children, prompting her to return to education to study cosmetology and increase her family income. She emphasised the vital role of her family, who cared for her children while she pursued training and work.

> *" After I got married and became a mother of two, life became harder. Knowing my interest in the beauty field, I returned to study cosmetology. My successful transitions would not have been possible without my parents' support in caring for my children during my training and work."* (Nadia, an end-of-20s woman with a vocational and training centre education from a lower-class family living in Irbid)

Conversely, some young people cited financial constraints that forced them to leave education prematurely and enter the job market, leading to unsatisfactory transitions or limited career prospects.

> *" I faced challenging transitions. I had dreams of becoming a nurse, but our family's financial situation forced me to leave school and find work."* (Hammam, a mid-20s man with a high school education or less from a lower-class family living in Amman)

Other accounts from young individuals highlighted the impact of inadequate parental guidance and limited parental education on their transition experiences. Some noted that their families, lacking higher education themselves, struggled to provide informed advice on education and career choices.

> *" The family's role is crucial. They should guide us in our educational and career decisions, drawing from their experiences and understanding of the country's situation. Coming from a lower-class family, I did not receive the guidance I needed."* (Mahmoud, a mid-20s man with a bachelor's degree from a lower-class family living in Amman)

> *"Yes, family dynamics can significantly influence one's ability to transition to work. I have a friend who completed her education, but her family insisted that she stay home and not seek employment. They emphasised finishing her education but*

opposed her pursuing a job." (Nadin, a mid-20s woman with a bachelor's degree from a lower-class family living in Irbid)

Some young people's accounts explained their problematic transitions by **family actions** when they were negatively compared with family relatives. For example, families compared their children with others who were successful in their transitions or underestimated their education and job selections. This was noted especially for vocational education, as it did not meet family expectations, and they considered it inferior to an intermediate diploma or university degree. Moreover, young people mentioned their family's culture of shame if they could not pass high school or ended up on a vocational education track, as they consider it a stigma.

" For me my father still feels ashamed that I do not have a bachelor's degree. He used to compare me to our relatives who graduated from university, implying that my lack of a degree is why I have not pursued work." (Shams, an end-of-the-20s woman with a high school education or less from a lower-class family living in Amman)

Most participants emphasised the significance of **familial social connections**, including those based on class, tribe, religion, geography, and social networks. They highlighted that the absence of these connections significantly hinders their transitions. Participants noted that in Jordan, family social connections are crucial for securing employment, regardless of one's educational background or experience. These connections are seen as essential for facilitating successful transitions.

"I took all the steps to get a job … from education to training … but you should have family social connections, so you do not have problematic transitions." (Zidan, an early 20s man with an intermediate diploma from a lower-class family living in Amman)

"I could not find a job till today … because there are no jobs and lack of family social connections … if you have social connections, it becomes straightforward transition" (Mazen, a mid-20s man with a bachelor's degree from a lower-class family living in Irbid*)*

> *"I had my first transition to work through a social connection … it plays a key role … there are excellent companies that do their recruitment based on who sends the CV; I believe 80 to 90% if you have social connections, you guarantee the job"* (Huda, an end-20s, woman with a bachelor's degree from an upper-class family living in Amman)

However, some young people indicated that the lack of social connections is a key challenge in their transitions to work. Unfortunately, these resources were not available to all study participants.

> "*You should have social connections to get a job. Sometimes, they can help you with your application to reach human resources to consider it. So, you will need social connections only to consider your application for a job opportunity in some companies. Because I have no social connections, I still have no job*". (Maher, a mid-20s man with a bachelor's degree from a lower-class family living in Irbid)

These familial factors were evident across the study respondents. Still, young women were more affected as it is linked to expectations regarding their gender role, the influence of patriarchal systems, and national customs and traditions.

7.1.3 Local Factors

This section will present the local factors identified by respondents, including the geographical influence of their local labour market opportunities and conditions, the distribution of educational facilities, the transportation system, and the cost of living.

Young people's accounts explained that local factors impacted their successful transitions to work. Ten young people said they had successfully transitioned to work in Amman, whereas only six expressed this view in Irbid (out of sixteen respondents for each governorate). The study respondents agreed that the local **labour market opportunities and conditions** were key factors that influenced their successful transitions to work. For example, most young people said that Amman has the most job opportunities where the government and private sector job opportunities are centralised, and jobs are scarce elsewhere in the country, including Irbid governorate.

"Amman is the capital of Jordan where job opportunities are available … you can find a job. Irbid has some job opportunities but not similar to Amman and not for all levels of education." (Tamer, an early 20s man with a high school education or less from a lower-class family living in Irbid)

"Place of living is significant for successful transitions; I mean, you might find a job in Amman, but if you live outside Amman or in a remote area, there are no job opportunities." (Nadia, an end-of-20s woman with a vocational and training centre education from a lower-class family living in Irbid)

Young people also explained that finding a job in or on the outskirts of Amman will involve challenges related to transportation, low income, and high cost of living.

"If you live outside Amman, for example, in Irbid, you will not find a job easily … and if you come to Amman, you face challenges related to transportation and cost of living." (Lana, an early 20s woman with an intermediate diploma from an upper-class family living in Amman)

Some young people in various localities, whether in Amman seeking work within the city or in Irbid navigating jobs both locally and elsewhere, highlighted that transportation and living costs significantly impact their transitions. They explained that traffic is a massive issue in Amman, where travelling to your job location might take the same time if you come from another governorate. They added that the lack of regular public transportation that covers economically prosperous areas in Amman or between governorates and its high cost affects their transitions. Moreover, transportation issues are compounded by other factors, such as national customs, norms, and traditions, as not all families prefer public transportation, especially for women.

"Honestly, the traffic in Amman is one of the most difficult issues; sometimes it takes me one hour and a half to reach my workplace when I take public transportation; if I use a taxi, it is costly; I cannot afford it." (Abdullah, a mid-20s man with a high school education or less from a lower-class family living in Amman)

"Many people suffer from public transportation. I have a friend who lives in a remote area; she faces a problem with public transportation. She finishes at 8 p.m.,

and her work in another place continues till 10 p.m. She has no public transportation to return home except using a taxi, which is expensive and unacceptable in a conservative community." (Arwa, an early-20s woman with a high school education or less from a lower-class family living in Amman)

Moreover, most young people's accounts with successful and problematic education-to-work transitions indicated that decent jobs, i.e., jobs that are aligned with their education, reasonable income, and include health insurance and social security, especially for young people with bachelor's degrees and above, are mainly concentrated in Amman.

"All my university colleagues got a job because they live in Amman. One of the graduates who lives in Amman worked in a company for a couple of months without a salary as training; he took the experience and got a job; he was able to do that because he lives in Amman, but we cannot do that in Irbid, because of the cost of living and lack of such opportunities." (Nadin, a mid-20s woman with a bachelor's degree from a lower-class family living in Irbid)

"The private sector is concentrated in Amman. When young people start a job, they get a low salary, it will not be sufficient because they have to use public transportation or maybe they will have to relocate, which means extra cost, so it is better to stay home". (Mazen, a mid-20s man with a bachelor's degree from a lower-class family living in Irbid)

Geographical distribution of education facilities was also a local factor mentioned by young people's accounts that affected their transitions to work. They mainly mentioned vocational education and training centres; for some accounts, the availability of these centres helped in their successful transitions. However, for other accounts, the absence of these vocational and training centres or the respondents' remote areas of residence led to their problematic transition, especially for young women.

"After completing my tenth grade in the school, I wanted to study the agricultural field in high school; it was my passion, but there was no close school offering this field; the only school was in another area, so the family did not approve it."

(Khawla, an early-20s woman with an intermediate diploma from a lower-class family living in Irbid)

"I was interested in the beauty field; I asked my husband and my family to take a vocational education, but we did not have such a vocational centre for women in my area, so when it opened, I registered directly." (Nadia, an end-20s woman with a vocational education from a lower-class family living in Irbid)

7.1.4 National Factors

This section will outline the several national factors that young people considered to have influenced their transitions to work, namely the country's economic status, education, labour market status (benefits) and policies, government projects, support and oversight, national cost of living, customs and traditions, and corruption and nepotism 'Wasta'.

The majority of the study respondents cited the **lack of job opportunities in the country**, expressing frustration and a sense of hopelessness due to the economic situation.

"There are no jobs, you cannot find a decent job, even non-decent jobs are not available these days … you need a job, so you will give up any benefit because you need an income." (Nadia, an end-20s woman with a vocational education from a lower-class family living in Irbid)

"What the government have done for us … there are no jobs … you complete your education and know you will end up without a job … there is no labour market to find a job opportunity … sometimes you have the money, social connections, Wasta, and education but you cannot find a job." (Ayser, a mid-20s man with a bachelor's degree from an upper-class family living in Amman)

There is indeed a common frustration among respondents with the country's economic status and the government's actions and policies. Many participants linked their situation with **corruption and ineffective public administration**. They provided examples of projects worth millions of Jordanian dinars. Still, when it comes to implementation, they found that no projects are

implemented on the ground, are not proportional to the amounts invested, or have no impact on increasing job opportunities.

> *"You get frustrated because of the lack of job opportunities … sometimes it is linked with government corruption … when the government do a project, for example, build a place to generate job opportunities, if there is no corruption or less corruption, this means more projects and more job opportunities, but it is not the current situation"* (Mahmoud, a mid-20s man with a bachelor's degree from a lower-class family living in Amman)

Many display mistrust of government institutions and actions. For example, Jordan has a Civil Service Bureau (CSB), a governmental body that supervises public sector job opportunities and recruits public sector staff. However, most participants indicated their mistrust of this institution. Respondents expressed their frustration at the workings of nepotism as follows:

> *"My sister graduated, and for more than six years, her application to the CSB was number one, i.e., on the top of the list for government recruitment; others graduated in the same field got a job before her by the CSB because they have Wasta."* (Arwa, an early-20s woman with a high school education or less from a lower-class family living in Amman)

> *"Social connections and nepotism play a critical role in transitions to work; for example, I know people who graduated with me from the same university and with the same grades; they had a call from the CSB for a government job … they had a call, and I did not; a tribe supports them, their family, Wasta, or have connections … other people graduated with us with better grades, but did not resort to nepotism, they are still without a job".* (Mahmoud, a mid-20s man with a bachelor's degree from a lower-class family living in Amman)

Indeed, many participants indicated that **nepotism "Wasta"** had become a standard practice in their communities. For others, nepotism is mandatory when looking for a job and entering the labour market. They explained that the government states it is completely against nepotism but draws on it mainly for public-sector recruitment.

"In Jordan, without social connections and nepotism, you cannot find a job … it is mandatory to use nepotism to get a job". (Adib, a mid-20s man with a high school education or less from a lower-class family living in Irbid)

"For example, the government confirms that there is no nepotism in the public sector job applications, and you find that they use nepotism." (Arwa, an early-20s woman with a high school education or less from a lower-class family living in Amman)

"People start to see nepotism as a normal behaviour; for example, my friend graduated and got a job because she has social connections and used nepotism while another friend, with the same field, is still looking for a job". (Same respondent above)

As young people indicated, it is the same for the private sector. Nepotism "Wasta" become the most essential tool for a successful transition. Success is not about your education, experience, or training as long as you have someone to facilitate your entry into the labour market.

"Nepotism is essential for transitions to work … I have five years' experience and am trying to find a job. Without Wasta, you cannot find a job". (Amal, a mid-20s woman with a bachelor's degree from a middle-class family living in Amman)

On the other hand, accounts from other young people suggested that nepotism "Wasta" can assist individuals in securing jobs within the public sector and, to some extent, in the private sector. However, nepotism is constrained in the private sector because these organisations are profit-oriented and must hire individuals capable of effectively performing their roles, particularly in vocational positions.

"Social connections and nepotism can help your transitions to work; still, in the private sector, it is less, not like the public sector as there is no supervision, you do nothing and take your salary … but in the private sector, you need nepotism to get a job, but if you are lazy, they will not keep you, in the end, private sector works for a profit" (Ahmed, a mid-20s man with a vocational education from a lower-class family living in Amman)

Respondents mentioned the **education system and/or policies** as key national factors affecting young people's transitions. They explained that, in their view, the education system in Jordan, at all levels, does not prepare young people for the labour market. It is disconnected from the labour market, does not provide the skills needed, and is not well-aligned with the changing and progressive economy. Moreover, they indicated that it is theoretically orientated and lacks mandatory training that prepares young people for the labour market.

> *"Education does not help with the transition to work because our education is theoretical, very rigid, unlike the education system in the international schools and universities."* (Huda, an end-20s woman with a bachelor's degree from an upper-class family living in Amman)

> *"Education is not linked to the labour market ... labour market needs experience, not a certificate only ... it will not benefit you in the labour market, it gives the basics only ... it is a waste of time as eventually regardless of whether you are educated or not, you will have no job opportunity"* (Adib, a mid-20s man with a high school education or less from a lower-class family living in Irbid)

Young people's accounts compared the public and private education systems, the importance of training, and how these institutions influence their transitions to work. They indicated that education provided by the private sector is better linked to the labour market as it gives students skills that can facilitate their transition, such as communication skills, focus on the English language, and writing and presentation skills. In addition, they explained that private sector education prepares young people for the labour market by providing internship opportunities. Young people have to work in a company during their university time, which puts them in a better position to move into the labour market by understanding the labour market environment, how to apply for jobs, and gain work experience. Moreover, they considered training a key national factor that, if provided sufficiently, would make a difference in their transitions.

> *"My university education was not useful at all in my transitions to work ... training, on the contrary, was beneficial as it combines theoretical and practical expertise".* (Amal, a mid-20s woman with a bachelor's degree from a middle-class family living in Amman)

"For sure, the government should provide job opportunities; they should dedicate one year of training courses, not volunteering for a day or two; it has to be mandatory during or after education as it facilitates the transition to work". (Huda, an end-20s woman with a bachelor's degree from an upper-class family living in Amman)

The study respondents also highlighted that **employers' requirement for work experience** significantly affects their job transitions. They explained that while most employers demand work experience, they also expressed frustration that gaining this experience becomes a challenging cycle to break without a job. For example, Zidan complained:

"*I tried to find a job. You apply personally or online, but if you have no work experience, you will not be considered. I want to work, but I do not have the experience, or I could not have it*". (Zidan, an early 20s man with an intermediate diploma from a lower-class family living in Amman)

In addition, Amal explained the importance of work experience and how it advanced her career:

"*I have advanced my career because of my experience; I noticed it in my personality and how I deal with others. I have changed from the first year of my work as I gained five years of experience*". (Amal, a mid-20s woman with a bachelor's degree from a middle-class family living in Amman)

Regarding the **role of government policies and employment practices** in education and the labour market, most young people indicated that they are outdated, are not responding to the latest economic and labour market changes, and do not fit the current economic conditions. For example, suppose your family receives national aid from the government because they have no income or sick parents. If you get a job and register in the national social security, the government will stop your parents' aid, Majid and Arwa explained:

"I could not register with the social security … if I registered, they would deduct my share from my father's aid … so what you take as an income from work, you have to give it back to your father". (Majid, an early-20s man with a vocational education from a lower-class family living in Irbid)

"There should be a follow-up on the government policies and laws; I mean, current policies are outdated; the new generation requires new policies and laws." (Arwa, an early-20s woman with a high school education or less from a lower-class family living in Amman)

Most respondents indicated that the labour market job opportunities lack minimum benefits. For example, they mentioned that most jobs in Jordan have meagre salaries, regardless of educational level, and a lack of job benefits. On the other hand, they mentioned several job benefits such as health insurance, social security, legal contracts, job security, work environment, and reasonable working hours. They explained that these national factors impacted their successful or problematic transitions.

"Income is the most important factor in our transitions … still, jobs salaries are meagre with long working hours … some people work 12 hours a day for 300 JOD (422 USD monthly), this is very difficult … there is no health insurance and social security which makes transition not worth it" (Ayman, an early-20s man with an intermediate diploma from a lower-class family living in Amman)

"There is no job or social security … I do not have health insurance, so I donate blood every six months to get health insurance in the public sector" (Arkan, a mid-20s man with a vocational education from a lower-class family living in Irbid)

"You get a meagre income with long working hours, but the cost of living is very high, so you live miserable living conditions … no legal contracts so they can at any time expel you." (Adib, a mid-20s man with a high school education or less from a lower-class family living in Irbid)

However, most accounts complained about the lack of government oversight on the labour market, including their job salaries, legal contracts' provision, work conditions, and health insurance and social security coverage.

"Government has no oversight on the labour market; for example, if you sign a contract to work in a private school with a salary of 220 JOD (309 USD monthly), you get 150 JOD (212 USD monthly), and if you complain, they will expel you from

work." (Arkan, a mid-20s man with a vocational education from a middle-class family living in Irbid)

"I had an injury during the work ... I had to be hospitalised, and an operation was done for my hand, the social security did not help me ... it should be a job injury, but I had to pay all expenses, I had a partial dysfunction in my hand for more than three months, so I had to do physical therapy for a year. I felt like I was begging them for my rights." (Haneen, an end-20s woman with a vocational education from a middle-class family living in Amman)

Moreover, there was agreement among respondents on the government's lack of support in finding jobs or opening their own businesses. For example, there is no support for vocational education, as most equipment is outdated and not working. There is no place to support new young business owners, and there is no legislation for such support.

"Government should provide young people with job opportunities, and they should support vocational education system ... they should support distinguished students ... why the government do not support them to open their own business, and they can recover their cost later". (Arkan, a mid-20s man with a vocational education from a middle-class family living in Irbid)

"Government should support business owners; for example, the high taxes they take ... taxes become a priority over staff salaries because if they do not pay taxes or social security payments, the company will be closed, but not if the staff salary stopped ... it is not logical". (Amal, a mid-20s woman with a bachelor's degree from a middle-class family living in Amman)

However, some respondents mentioned that they moved into the labour market through the support they obtained from non-governmental organisations that offer training and internships for youth to enhance their chances of getting a job and their employability. Amal explained:

"*I took training through Loyac. I got my job opportunity because of this training.*" (Amal, a mid-20s woman with a bachelor's degree from a middle-class family living in Amman)

Similarly, Yasmeen confirmed the importance of such NGOs as they helped her receive training and internships during her education, facilitating her later transitions to work.

> "*I thought about postponing the last term of my bachelor's degree and applying for an internship to understand the labour market better. I applied through the Internet, but no one accepted me as they asked me for an official letter from the university, which was very difficult, so I applied to an NGO that facilitated finding an internship for me … later this training was a reason for my transitioning to work*". (Yasmeen, a mid-20s woman with a bachelor's degree from an upper-class family living in Irbid)

7.1.5 Global Factors

Most young people's accounts mentioned global factors that affected their transitions to work. However, they mainly focused on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as the fieldwork was carried out during that period and in the aftermath of the arrival of Syrian refugees, as Jordan hosts more than 1.2 million Syrian refugees (Alshoubaki & Harris, 2018).

Young people's accounts mentioned that the presence of **Syrian refugees and Egyptian labourers** affected their transitions from education to work. They indicated that they felt strong competition for the few jobs in the labour market, primarily since it is known that Syrians are often skilled workers. Moreover, they could work for lower salaries as they get financial support from national and international organisations because they are refugees.

> *"For many people, Syrians impacted their jobs. Most Syrians who fled their country dominated skilled jobs, such as electricians, carpenters, and hospitality. They work for lower salaries and get financial support from the United Nations as refugees."* (Mahmoud, a mid-20s man with a bachelor's degree from a lower-class family living in Amman)

> *"It affected young people's transitions to work greatly. However, it affected mainly vocational job opportunities, not academic ones. Syrians have financial support for their food, accommodation, and bills, so if they work for half the salary, it is extra*

money for them" (Maher, a mid-20 man with a bachelor's degree from a lower-class family living in Irbid)

Still, other respondents considered the Syrian refugees' case as an example to learn from. They mentioned that despite leaving their country because of war and losing their jobs and belongings, they could find a job in a country with scarce job opportunities. Therefore, Syrian refugees' experiences have become a motivation for some young people and a self-criticising factor for others. For example, some respondents asked, "*How could they find a job and we could not?*". They explained that some young people are not serious about finding a job or seeking white-collar jobs. Other respondents linked it with a "culture of shame" for young people, who do not accept doing routine manual or handy jobs.

> *"Listen to me; I believe that we [Jordanian youth] should learn from them [Syrian refugees]. They came from a war, but you cannot find a Syrian without a job … if we really want to have a job, we will find an opportunity … I work in a shop with a Syrian; he works really hard, and he becomes a motivation for me."* (Abdullah, a mid-20 man with a high school education or less from a lower-class family living in Amman)

> *"Syrian refugees have an impact, why? Because our young people have a culture of shame, i.e., they do not want to do any job; they want an office job, unlike the Syrian refugees."* (Amina, a mid-20 woman with a high school education or less from a lower-class family living in Irbid)

The **global COVID-19 pandemic** also affected young people's transitions to work. They mentioned that the COVID-19 pandemic had paralysed the country's fragile economy, where many enterprises and livelihoods had to close down (Kebede *et al.,* 2020). As a result, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, some respondents indicated that they lost their jobs and experienced a cut in their income. In addition, they mentioned that they could not apply for jobs because there were no job opportunities available, and COVID-19 also affected their job opportunities outside Jordan, especially in the Gulf countries.

> *"Moving to the labour market is very difficult; I have a friend who completed his education and graduated with a bachelor's degree in special education. He used to work in special needs centres, but with COVID-19, all centres closed, so he works as a labourer in a mall."* (Ahmed, a mid-20 man with a vocational and training centre education from a lower-class family living in Amman)

> *"I had a friend who told me about a job opportunity … I was going to get that job because the engineer working there was planning to travel to Saudi Arabia, but because of COVID-19, he could not travel, so I did not get that job."* (Nadin, a mid-20s woman with a bachelor's degree from a lower-class family living in Irbid)

As respondents explained, there were clear linkages between COVID-19 and the economic status of the neighbouring countries in the Gulf and their impact on young people's transitions to work in Jordan. They mentioned that they lost possible job opportunities there, as Nadin discussed above. Still, they added their concerns about the people who would return to Jordan after they lost their jobs because of the COVID-19 pandemic and its implications for them.

> *"There are no jobs … the COVID-19 will have implications when many employees outside Jordan, especially in the Gulf, return to Jordan because their companies are closing down, in addition to companies closing in Jordan."* (Maher, a mid-20 man with a bachelor's degree from a lower-class family living in Irbid)

7.2. Conclusion

This chapter examined young people's responses regarding the main factors influencing their transition from education to employment based on their perspectives—the ecological analysis aimed to understand their perceptions regarding the extent of these factors discussed in the chapter. Overall, respondents agreed that their personal agency plays a significant role in determining the success of their transitions into the workforce. These agentic factors encompass their own choices, abilities, aspirations, and beliefs, which are highlighted as individual factors in this chapter. For instance, these factors include their desire for economic independence, demonstrated through self-reliance, a sense of responsibility, perseverance, resilience, and adaptability. Furthermore, respondents identified personal qualities such as persistence, strong character, psychological

adjustment, and patience as crucial factors. Additionally, they acknowledged that gender and class identities also influence their transitions into the workforce.

At the family level, these factors included financial support, guidance, parental education and occupation backgrounds, and family social connections. They also highlighted local-level issues such as regional disparities in job opportunities, local cost of living, availability of public transportation, and access to educational facilities. Furthermore, respondents identified national factors impacting their transition to work, including the overall economic situation, distrust of government institutions, corruption, and nepotism 'Wasta'. They also mentioned the absence of government support and oversight, cultural norms, an inadequate and disjointed education system, the requirement for work experience among new graduates, and the lack of quality job opportunities and benefits such as health insurance, social security, job security, legal contracts, reasonable working conditions, and appealing work environments.

Moreover, respondents pointed out global factors affecting their transitions, such as the presence of Syrian refugees and Egyptian labourers in the workforce and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter provided a comprehensive overview of Jordanian young people's perceptions of the key determinants affecting their transitions. In the subsequent chapter, the researcher will objectively reflect on respondents' perceptions of success and the factors that determine it.

Chapter 8: Reflections on Young People's Understanding of Success and its Determinants

8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the researcher's reflections on young people's subjective views regarding successful transitions from education to work. It identifies the key factors contributing to both successful and failed transitions from education to work. It also explores the relevance of these findings within a broader theoretical context. Section 8.2 examines the perspectives of Jordanian youth on the success factors at each level of the ecological model and how these factors interact. It also reflects on how young people understand their successful transitions. Section 8.3 offers a detailed discussion of the relationship between agency and structure, evaluating existing theories' relevance in understanding Jordanian youth's transition experiences. Finally, Section 8.4 provides a conclusion to the chapter.

8.2 Young People's Views on Determinants of Success and their Interactions

8.2.1. Individual Factors and their Interactions

The researcher observed that most respondents emphasised their aspiration for economic independence as the primary factor shaping their successful transitions to work. For some participants, this desire not only influenced the direction of their transitions but also led them to leave school and enter the labour market. Several factors fuelled this pursuit of economic independence, including the family's financial status and lack of government support, which compelled individuals to join the workforce. Additionally, a lack of interest in education and low educational attainment contributed to this drive. These factors, whether arising from family circumstances or national conditions, intertwined and significantly influenced the young respondents' desire for economic independence (Heinz, 2009a).

For example, Ahmed, a man from a lower-class family, said, *"The family's financial status did not allow me to complete my education,"* which led him to leave school early and pursue vocational training as a turner. Similarly, Abdullah, another man from a lower-class background, shared that his family discouraged him from working during school, even within the family business. Nonetheless, he worked after school to cover his expenses, stating, *"I worked as a porter in the*

market to earn an income." The aspiration for economic independence appeared to be a crucial part of young people's identity development, distinguishing them from their parents (Geldens *et al.,*2011; Mannerström *et al.,*2019).

The researcher observed a distinct class-based disparity among young respondents, particularly men, which created an obligation for those from lower- and, to some extent, middle-class backgrounds to follow specific paths or make certain decisions. Young men from lower-class families often felt compelled to enter the workforce immediately after completing their education, regardless of their personal aspirations. This compulsion was driven by economic necessity and the need to provide financial support to their families. Similarly, while enjoying slightly more flexibility, those from middle-class backgrounds still faced societal pressures to secure stable employment and contribute to their household's financial well-being. These class-based pressures constrained their choices and influenced their career trajectories, perpetuating a cycle of limited socioeconomic mobility (Heinz, 2009b; Smith *et al.,* 2016). In contrast, respondents from upper-class backgrounds pursued economic independence primarily to cover personal expenses, including leisure-related ones, without the need to contribute to family expenses. The aspiration for financial independence was a motivating factor for lower-class youth.

For example, Maher, a man from a lower-class family, shared, *"Starting in the tenth grade, I worked in painting to earn money and support the family."* Other respondents from similar backgrounds, such as Ahmed, Hammam, and Arwa, echoed this sentiment. In contrast, individuals from upper-class families, like Ayser and Lana, decided not to depend on their parents for personal expenses. This inclination toward financial independence and responsibility was particularly significant during the transition process, especially for those from lower- or middle-class backgrounds who opted for vocational education. Ahmed, a man from a lower-class family, illustrated this by explaining, *"The family's financial situation did not allow me to complete my education, so I had to move early into vocational education to get work and help the family."*

These examples illustrate how young people's desire for economic independence is deeply intertwined with their behaviours, actions, and choices, which are significantly influenced by their family's class background (Lehmann, 2005; Côté & Bynner, 2008). While financial independence is important for both young men and women, gender disparities still limit women's choices and

actions. For instance, Haneen could not pursue a culinary job due to her family's objections, and Khawla faced restrictions against working away from home. These social class-based distinctions particularly affect women from lower and middle-class backgrounds, in contrast to their upper-class counterparts (Chisholm & Bois-Reymond, 1993; Furlong, 1998; Reay, 1998; MacDonald *et al.,* 2010). Arwa, a woman from a lower-class family, exemplified this when she stated, *"After completing high school, because of my father's death, I did not have any source of income, so I had to move into the labour market."*

While some respondents expressed a desire for economic independence, they also acknowledged that their lack of enthusiasm for education, low academic attainment, and suboptimal educational choices influenced their transitions into the workforce. Additionally, respondents highlighted local and national factors, pointing out that the education system and policies were inflexible, overly theoretical, lacked practical experience, and suffered from the unequal distribution of resources, with a curriculum disconnected from labour market needs. The intricate connections between these factors suggest that inadequate and disjointed education systems contribute to young people losing interest in education and eventually dropping out (Bynner, 2001; Ryan, 2001; McCoy *et al.,* 2014).

The researcher argues that this phenomenon led respondents from both lower and middle-class backgrounds to lose interest in education and prioritise entering the labour market early, driven by the desire for economic independence. For example, from a lower-class family, Amira explained, *"I dropped out of school because I'm not interested in education, I am not convinced by it, and I wanted to study and work in the beauty field."* Similarly, Haneen, from a middle-class family, clarified, *"I did not pass high school because I studied a field I didn't want to pursue."*

The preceding discussion highlights how certain young people from lower and middle-class backgrounds decided to end their education and join the labour market, regardless of gender. It emphasises how factors such as social class, family financial status, and educational achievements influenced the decisions of these respondents (Blustein *et al.,* 2002). Moreover, some respondents from lower-class backgrounds perceived education as lacking practical utility for their transition into the workforce, attributing this perspective to limited job opportunities at both national and local levels. For instance, Arkan, a man from a lower-class family, asserted, *"Comparing myself to*

my family members, most of whom have completed university education and still do not have jobs, I have my own business, while they have achieved nothing."

Interestingly, despite sharing similar beliefs with some respondents from upper-class families, this did not hinder their determination to complete their education and achieve successful transitions, irrespective of gender (Bynner, 1998; Blustein *et al.,* 2002). For instance, Lana, a woman from an upper-class family, recounted, *"I pursued an intermediate diploma in business administration because my grades initially did not qualify me for university admission... However, upon completing the diploma, I plan to continue my studies for another two years to obtain a university degree."* Lana's resolve to pursue higher education remained steadfast despite initial academic challenges. Similarly, Ayser, a man from an upper-class family, explained, *"Although my high school grades did not meet the requirements for studying engineering, my preferred field, I was able to enrol in university through a parallel system."* Ayser's family's financial stability enabled him to access educational opportunities through a parallel admission route, which typically incurs three times the cost of regular student admission.

Some respondents emphasised the significance of personal qualities in successful transitions (Charner, 1988). These qualities encompassed traits such as tenacity, ambition, patience, strength of personality, and communication skills. However, respondents also linked these personal attributes to factors such as familial class, educational background, work experience, and local environment (Gaupp, 2013). For instance, from a lower-class family, Mahmoud noted, *"Family financial status and the social environment where you live make a difference; they affect your mindset and personality."* Similarly, representing a middle-class family, Amal underscored the importance of personal qualities, tying them to education, family background, and locality. She remarked, *"Your outlook, sense of humour, education level, proficiency in languages like English and Arabic, and your geographic location all play crucial roles in shaping your personality, which in turn influences your transitions into the workforce."* Moreover, Yasmeen, from an upper-class family, highlighted the necessity of patience, strength of character, and tenacity as crucial personal traits for successful transitions into work. She explained, *"Achieving a successful transition depends significantly on the strength of your character and your ability to persevere; I faced challenges in my career journey that not everyone could endure."*

Moreover, many respondents pointed out Individual factors such as tenacity and self-motivation as crucial in overcoming challenges stemming from familial and societal expectations (Dweck *et al.,* 2014). Haneen, hailing from a lower-class family, articulated her determination to pursue culinary arts despite facing familial opposition, thereby highlighting the conflict between her personal aspirations and traditional gender roles. She recounted, *"My family didn't support my decision to study culinary arts and become a chef. They questioned how I, being a woman, could enter the hospitality industry and work in a restaurant."* She further elaborated, *"My parents were concerned about our family's reputation and what the community would think of us."*

As explored in the theoretical chapter, the insights above can also be associated with the concept of cultural capital. Young respondents indicated that factors such as language proficiency or accent (such as proficiency in English), personal qualities, and behaviours influenced their successful transition into the workforce, highlighting the impact of embodied cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986; De Schepper *et al.,* 2023). However, it is important to note that economic capital also plays a critical role in determining the acquisition of cultural capital and vice versa. Economic capital is crucial for obtaining educational qualifications or accessing cultural resources, illustrating the complex interplay between economic and cultural capital in this context (Bourdieu, 1986; Ecclestone *et al.,* 2010). The personal attributes of young people often reflected culturally specific traits tied to their social class backgrounds. Moreover, career choice theory emphasises the importance of individual characteristics in shaping career decisions (Lips-Wiersma, 1999), a theme I will delve into further in subsequent discussions.

Furthermore, some respondents from lower- and middle-class families, regardless of gender, emphasised the significance of psychological adjustment, positive mindset, parental guidance, and emotional and financial support from their families in shaping their expectations and exploring new opportunities during their transitions (Blustein *et al.,*2000). For example, Arkan, a man from a middle-class family, described how his father's advice encouraged him to pursue vocational education, leading to the successful establishment of his own barbershop. His father's words instilled a sense of responsibility: *"My father told me that success or failure depended on my efforts. This sense of responsibility motivated me to overcome challenges and adapt."* Similarly, Najwa, a woman from a lower-class family, recounted her brother's experience: *"My brother graduated with a degree in electrical engineering but struggled to find a job. He eventually started*

working in a restaurant and gradually rose to become a chef. He convinced himself to adjust psychologically to his new role."

Respondents emphasised the importance of passion in their career paths, stating, *"Love what you do, so you do what you love."* These discussions highlight the relevance of career choice theories in understanding the transitions of young people (Johnson & Mortimer, 2002). Career development theory and social cognitive career theory specifically address factors such as self-efficacy beliefs and resilience, which play crucial roles in navigating familial and societal expectations, particularly for individuals from lower- and middle-class backgrounds (Ali *et al.,* 2005; Bandura, 2006). In contrast, individuals from upper-class families often benefit from greater resources and support systems, which facilitate smoother transitions into the workforce (Kelly, 2009).

The researcher concludes that many young men from lower-class backgrounds emphasised the importance of psychological adjustment in dealing with the challenges of limited job opportunities, low wages, and the absence of benefits like social security and health insurance in the labour market (Gniewosz & Gniewosz, 2020). They frequently echoed the sentiment, *"Love what you do, so you do what you love,"* as a way to maintain optimism despite facing employment difficulties. For example, Mazen, from a lower-class background, highlighted the significance of finding fulfilment in one's work, even though he struggled to secure a job that matched his education and provided adequate benefits. He remarked, *"You should love what you do, so you do what you love. Unfortunately, there are no job opportunities."* Abdullah, also from a lower-class family, similarly expressed, *"Honestly, there are no job opportunities; you should love what you do, so you do what you love."* Many respondents adapted to their circumstances and accepted available job opportunities in the labour market. However, others became frustrated due to the lack of job prospects, leading to problematic transitions into work.

However, respondents from upper-class families had contrasting experiences, encountering fewer challenges in securing desirable job opportunities (Hughes & Smith, 2020). Despite facing initial hurdles, they managed to transition swiftly into jobs of their preference. This underscores how privileged access to resources enhances self-efficacy among individuals from upper-class backgrounds, thereby shaping their pathways into the workforce (Mortimer *et al.,* 2016). For instance, Huda, a woman from an upper-class family, reflected, *"I entered the labour market, but*

in my first job, I actively sought better opportunities because I preferred not to work long hours for low pay, so I changed jobs several times." Indeed, the ample resources available to upper-class families bolstered young people's self-efficacy beliefs, influencing their successful transitions into work (Xin *et al.,* 2020).

The forms of capital theory provide insights into how education and training are crucial for successful youth transitions. Young respondents emphasised the indispensability of education and training, yet their availability was closely tied to their socioeconomic backgrounds (Borlagdan *et al.,*2015; Chesters, 2020). Structuration theory further elucidates how education and training play a pivotal role in successful transitions by highlighting how structural factors can limit young people's aspirations (Giddens, 1984). Indeed, challenges such as educational quality, economic barriers to higher education and training access, and cultural norms are significant obstacles faced by young people in their pursuit of successful transitions

Education and training have emerged as critical factors influencing the transition of young people from education to work. However, individuals from lower-class backgrounds often attribute their career aspirations to parental guidance or the influence of their family's educational and professional backgrounds, especially among young men pursuing vocational education (Bedson & Perkins, 2006; Hughes & Smith, 2020). For example, Ahmed, from a lower-class family, explained, *"My father is a professional, so I aimed to follow his path."*

Moreover, financial circumstances within their families often prompt some individuals to pursue vocational education at an early stage. Despite these challenges, many respondents stressed the importance of education in achieving successful transitions, noting its role in enhancing job opportunities, providing better benefits, and supporting career advancement. Despite being employed for several years, Amina, from a lower-class family, recognised the significance of education, expressing regret about what she perceived as an unsuccessful transition to work: *"I feel the need to return to high school and pursue my passion."*

However, the researcher concludes that most respondents prioritise training over academic education, viewing it as more practical and directly relevant to job market demands. Nevertheless, academic qualifications remain essential for certain positions. For example, from an upper-class

family, Huda noted, *"Training is crucial; I notice this when comparing graduates from the German Jordanian University with others because they emphasise training and developing students' skills."*

However, there is a noticeable class-based disparity, with respondents from lower and middle-class backgrounds emphasising the importance of training while lamenting its prohibitive costs, especially for professional development (Aronson, 2008). For instance, from a lower-class family, Nadin explained, *"There are training courses that could help me secure a job more easily, but they are expensive. I don't have the money to pay for these courses unless I find a job and save up."* Similarly, Maher, from a lower-class family, pointed out, *"Training can qualify you for a job, but it depends on the training provider and its cost. It could cost around 500 JOD, which is a significant amount that I cannot afford."*

Respondents from lower-class families acknowledged the critical role of education in shaping their transitions. For instance, from a lower-class family, Najwa affirmed, *"My intermediate diploma is why I ranked first on the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) list; my grades were very high, which helped me secure a job. If my grades were lower, I would still be unemployed."* This underscores the significance of formal educational qualifications as a form of cultural capital, influencing young people's pathways (Hughes & Smith, 2020; Aksakal & Schmidt, 2021).

Moreover, participants exhibited reflexivity in their responses to social structures, evaluating their capabilities and aspirations within their opportunity contexts (Giddens, 1984; Beck *et al.,*1992). Perspectives from forms of capital and structuration theory resonate with the participants' accounts and will be further examined in the upcoming section. Indeed, most respondents, particularly from lower and middle-class backgrounds like Amira, Najwa, and Arkan, demonstrated awareness of how social structures impact their opportunities (Rudd & Evans, 1998).

Furthermore, young respondents, regardless of gender and socioeconomic status, demonstrate awareness of their familial class background and its influence on their entry into the workforce (Bynner, 1998; Schoon *et al.,* 2001). Those from lower-class families acknowledge the importance of prioritising specific occupations, such as vocational education and jobs, to support their families and achieve financial independence. In contrast, respondents from upper-class families benefit from resources such as financial and emotional support, which facilitate smoother transitions into employment.

However, the researcher observed variations in the criteria for successful transition among young people from different socioeconomic backgrounds. For instance, most individuals from lower and middle-class families, regardless of gender, define successful transition as securing a satisfying job with a decent income. They view "satisfying jobs" as ones that provide personal satisfaction, clear career progression, or the opportunity to start their own businesses. On the other hand, respondents from upper-class families define successful transition criteria as obtaining a well-paying job with both intrinsic and extrinsic benefits, such as health insurance, social security, job stability, recognition, and a comfortable work environment. This underscores how structural factors such as gender and class identity influence successful outcomes, with women from lower and middle-class backgrounds often experiencing more challenges (Ecclestone *et al.,* 2009; Chisholm, 2013).

The researcher contends that respondents showed greater awareness of gender differences compared to distinctions based on social class, which were more closely associated with specific geographical locations like Amman and Irbid. Notably, class disparities are less pronounced outside Amman, where most families are employed in the public sector, and opportunities in the private sector are limited. In contrast, successful transitions in Irbid primarily involve individuals from lower-class families, whereas, in Amman, upper-class families are more prevalent.

Young women, particularly from lower-class families, often encounter discouragement or face optional participation in the labour market due to their family's financial circumstances and marriage expectations. Khawla and Arwa, two women from lower-class families, emphasised the importance of self-motivation in navigating these circumstances. They articulated:

> "*Since we are living in a village, some people are still very conservative; as a woman, no need to go out of the home, no need to work ... you finished your education, stay home until you get married*". (Khawla)

> "*I have a friend who completed her education, but her family did not allow her to work ... I know families consider education important for their daughters, but there is no need for her to work; she can get married later, and her husband will take care of her*". (Arwa)

However, there are exceptions, particularly among young women from middle- and upper-class families residing in Amman. For example, Amal revealed that she moved to Amman with her parents' support long ago to challenge the restrictive national customs and traditions, especially those pertaining to women. This underscores a clear recognition of respondents' gender identity, as they expressed how structural factors such as national customs and traditions affect them differently (Ng & Feldman, 2007). Unlike young men, who typically enjoy greater freedom of movement not constrained by national customs and traditions, young women face distinct limitations irrespective of their socioeconomic status.

Furthermore, the researcher observed that study respondents showed awareness of gender identity in relation to the availability of job opportunities across various sectors, such as manual labour, vocational trades, service industries, and educational and managerial roles. They acknowledged that certain professions were inaccessible or discouraged for women due to perceived unsuitability, physical demands, or societal norms influenced by national customs and traditions. For instance, Nadia, a woman from a lower-class family, stated, *"There are many job sectors available, but as a woman, you are directed towards beauty or tailoring rather than fields like electrician or mechanical work."*

Moreover, respondents pointed out that gender could significantly influence their job prospects based on specific job requirements. Huda, originating from an upper-class family, highlighted, *"Gender may impact job opportunities depending on the job's demands. For example, roles requiring late hours may favour men over women, as there is a perception that women are less capable of handling extended or late shifts."*

Additionally, Arwa highlighted disparities in the employment transitions between young men and women, noting that some employers prefer hiring young women due to their lower expected salaries compared to young men. This observation is consistent with findings from the literature review chapter, which documents significant income disparities between men and women across both public and private sector employment (Department of Statistics, 2022b). On the other hand, some employers prefer men because they are perceived as capable of working longer hours, reflecting societal norms related to childcare responsibilities and the physical demands often associated with male-dominated roles. As a result, she remarked, *"I see the labour market divided*

into two parts: the first part employs women because they accept lower salaries than men, while the other part employs men because they are seen as more capable of handling tasks than women."

Furthermore, Arwa pointed out that certain young women, particularly those from lower and middle-class backgrounds, face challenges securing employment because their education is often considered suitable only for men. For example, Arwa mentioned, *"I have friends who graduated in civil engineering, but this field is perceived as male-dominated. Many female graduates remain unemployed because civil engineering requires them to work in construction, which is not seen as suitable for women."*

The researcher believes that these constraints are not solely attributable to gender or class disparities but also broader structural factors such as national customs, traditions, the patriarchal system, and regional differences. These findings resonate with Jordan's societal norms, where there is a prevailing expectation that young men should plan their futures as primary earners capable of supporting a family and eventually marrying, contrasting sharply with societal expectations for women. The research reaffirms that in Jordan, gender roles and identities are shaped by patriarchal norms, where men are expected to be the main providers. In contrast, women are expected to fulfil nurturing roles within the family (Shteiwi, 2015). Indeed, the individual agency operates within these social structures and is influenced by them, with young people's choices and actions being significantly shaped by gender expectations and class differences (Lehmann, 2004).

The preceding discussion provides evidence supporting the theories discussed in Chapter Three. For instance, the emphasis on job satisfaction and career fulfilment among lower and middle-class families underscores the crucial role of cultural capital in shaping aspirations and outcomes (Bathmaker, 2021). Conversely, the focus of upper-class families on job benefits highlights the influence of economic capital in securing advantageous positions (Bourdieu, 1986; Strathdee, 2001). Giddens' structuration theory further elucidates how structural factors such as gender and class mediate agency and constrain opportunities, which is evident in the distinct career expectations and constraints faced by young women from diverse backgrounds (Giddens, 1984; Schoon & Lyons-Amos, 2016). This is illustrated by national customs and societal norms influencing gender-specific access to professions, as highlighted by respondents who cited limitations for women in fields like engineering and manual labour.

Moreover, the concept of individualisation, emphasising individuals' increased responsibility in navigating life paths amid declining traditional social structures, resonates with experiences such as Amal, who actively challenged restrictive norms by relocating to more progressive environments (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). This theoretical framework underscores the intersectionality of gender and class in shaping individual agency and the varied strategies adopted by young people in achieving successful transitions to the workforce (Harris & Idriss, 2024).

8.2.2. Familial Factors and their Interactions

Young respondents from lower and middle-class backgrounds emphasised the significant influence of parental guidance, educational achievements, and financial circumstances on their transitions. Despite some expressing autonomy in their educational and career decisions, the researcher argues that their choices were largely shaped by their families' socioeconomic status and class positions.

The study participants expressed a strong desire for economic independence. However, those who reported successful transitions across all classes, regardless of gender, often attributed their achievements to overcoming restrictive national customs with the support of their parent's financial and emotional backing. Indeed, family support—both financially and emotionally—played a crucial role in shaping the decisions of young people, transcending gender and class boundaries. The absence of such support contributed to more challenging transitions for many (Kovacheva, 2010; Du Plessis *et al.,* 2012). This was illustrated by Amal in the previous chapter when she explained her successful transition to her parents' support in using public transportation and moving to live in Amman despite all local customs and traditions constraints.

Amal’s example illustrates the interplay between gender and class identities on one hand and national customs and traditions on the other. As one's socioeconomic status improves, particularly for women, increased family support diminishes the influence of national customs and traditions on their successful transition (De Valk, 2006; Karollil, 2023).

Furthermore, regardless of their socioeconomic background, most women respondents emphasised the significant role of gender identity in their transitions, particularly in relation to national customs and traditions. For instance, Khawla cited the conservative family values as a barrier to her employment prospects, as explained in the previous chapter. Furthermore, Nadin mentioned losing a job opportunity due to gender norms that prevented her from moving to Amman and living

independently, which goes against national customs and traditions. Additionally, she lacked family support in this matter. She said:

> "*I got an opportunity in Amman as a fresh graduate. They gave me a good salary, but my father disapproved. He said, how come you live by yourself in Amman? This is against our national customs and traditions, especially since you are a woman*".

The previous examples included women from working and middle-class backgrounds, but this was also extended to participants from upper-class families, as elaborated by Yasmeen,

> "*Many things affected my transitions negatively. Most jobs are in Amman, but working and living in Amman would not work for me as a woman from Irbid. My family will not approve it because of the national customs and traditions*".

The study findings provide a comprehensive exploration of how economic independence, family support, and cultural norms intersect with gender and class identities to shape the transitions of young people, particularly women, in Jordan. This intricate interplay can be theoretically framed using feminist scholarship, which offers a robust lens for understanding the intersectionality of gender, class, and cultural norms (Thomson, 2011; Crenshaw, 2013; Karollil, 2022). Feminist theorists argue that family dynamics and support systems are pivotal in comprehending women's economic and social pathways (Gerson, 2004; Moghadam, 2004; De Valk, 2006). As articulated by Nadin and Yasmeen, traditional family structures often mirror and reinforce broader societal patriarchy. Women's roles within these structures are typically defined by domestic responsibilities and dependency, factors that can curtail their economic opportunities. Amal's narrative underscores the importance of family support—both financial and emotional—in facilitating women's journeys towards independence. This support can mitigate the restrictive impacts of national customs and traditions.

Mahmoud, a man from a lower-class family, attributed his mismatched educational trajectory to his parents' limited education and financial challenges, underscoring the influence of economic capital (Lehmann, 2019). His dissatisfaction with his chosen field of study affected his transition into the job market, as he stated:

> "*I did not get my desired education field in university because of my grades; I got frustrated; my family's financial situation was not good enough to get me a university seat by the parallel system (an approach for getting a seat at university for lower grades, but they have to pay more as tuition).*"

He further emphasised the significant impact of his family's educational background, stating, *"The level of education within the family makes a difference in their advice, experience, and guidance towards what is best for their children."* He highlighted how social structures influenced his choices, decisions, and actions (Strathdee, 2001).

Similarly, Nadin, a woman from a lower-class family, disclosed that she had considered changing her field of study while at university but refrained due to financial constraints within her family. With other siblings to consider and unable to seek financial support for training courses, she experienced negative impacts on her transitions. The researcher suggests that these experiences can be elucidated through capital theory. Mahmoud's inability to pursue his desired field of study due to financial limitations underscores the critical role of economic capital. His comments on the influence of his family's educational background also emphasise the importance of cultural capital. Similarly, Nadin's inability to switch fields due to financial constraints illustrates how economic capital shapes educational paths, while her family's lack of experience and cultural resources in the educational realm hindered their ability to support or encourage such a transition, highlighting the influence of cultural capital and ultimately limiting her career prospects (Helve & Bynner, 2007; Bourdieu, 2018).

However, to some extent, this was not the scenario for individuals from upper-class families, as their socioeconomic status often facilitated their decision-making processes. Nonetheless, for certain upper-class respondents, particularly women, their cultural capital, including educational achievements and academic performance, played a pivotal role in shaping their educational and career trajectories. For example, Lana, a woman from an upper-class family, shared, *"I aimed to study law at university, but I didn't meet the admission requirements right after school, so I pursued an intermediate diploma to qualify for university later."*

Moreover, parental expectations emerged as a significant factor influencing the transitions of young people (Tao *et al.,* 2019). As mentioned earlier, different forms of capital affect the ability

to access educational and career opportunities. The persistence of aspirations for higher education, despite financial limitations, inadequate grades, or social connections, highlights how economic, social, and cultural capital—or their absence—constrain educational choices. Similarly, structural factors such as family expectations and societal norms limit individual agency, as articulated in structuration theory (Chiasson & Saunders, 2005).

For example, Arwa, a woman from a lower-class family, expressed, "*I know young people who did not pass their education or did not get the grades to qualify for university; it was devastating for them as they did not meet their parents' expectations, so they had to repeat high school or take a job they did not like."* This quote illustrates how respondents' educational aspirations and decisions were influenced by factors such as social class, parental influence, and academic performance. Clearly, their perceived choices were significantly shaped by these factors. Due to these constraints, individuals from lower and middle-class backgrounds often encountered limitations in exerting agency over their educational and career transitions (Ecclestone *et al.,* 2009).

Indeed, many young women respondents from lower and middle-class families mentioned parental expectations and community perceptions, particularly if they did not complete higher education, pursued vocational training, or took up jobs unrelated to their education, which were viewed as lacking prestige in their community. For instance, Shams, a woman from a lower-class family, stated, *"There is a culture of shame; if you do not have a bachelor's degree, you are seen as illiterate in the community. My family made me feel inferior to other women because I did not have a bachelor's; my father used to say I was not working because I lacked education."* Many respondents, especially from lower and middle-class backgrounds, felt pressure when their families compared them unfavourably to others and believed they had disappointed their parents.

Moreover, in Jordanian society, families and communities often discourage women from pursuing certain occupations like carpentry, plumbing, or driving. This reluctance stems from concerns about women's vulnerability to exploitation in the labour market and conflicts with entrenched national customs and traditions (Masadeh *et al.,* 2018; Koburtay *et al.,* 2020).

Arwa and Shams' experiences highlight how parental expectations, social class, and cultural norms intricately shape educational and career transitions. These narratives can be better understood

when viewed through theoretical frameworks such as forms of capital theory and structuration theory, offering insights into both structural and individual influences on young people's life paths.

For instance, these accounts resonate with structuration theory, which was discussed in the theoretical chapter. Some young women demonstrated reflexivity in their actions, navigating external factors like the patriarchal system, restrictive national customs and traditions, and broader structural constraints. These challenges empowered certain young women to confront societal norms through their choices and actions (McRobbie, 2008). Haneen's determination, for example, enabled her to pursue studies in culinary arts despite familial objections. This ultimately led to her successful integration into the labour market and the establishment of her restaurant, eventually gaining her family's support.

In contrast, the experiences of most young men, regardless of social class, diverged as they faced fewer constraints from national customs and traditions. Instead, they often encountered pressure from their families' high expectations, particularly when their career paths differed from their educational backgrounds. For instance, men from lower-class families indicated minimal impact from national customs but significant pressure to navigate labour market challenges and secure employment for income generation. From a lower-class background, Ayman reflected this dynamic by stating, *"My parents supported my education and career transitions without imposing restrictions. Although I earned an intermediate diploma in engineering, they encouraged me to gain work experience in any available job."*

Notably, unexpected life events such as the death of a parent, divorce or sickness often forced some respondents to abandon their education and enter the workforce (Umberson, 2003). These life events can impact young people's transition pathways and their agency (Bussi *et al.,* 2023). For example, Yasir, a man from a lower-class family, experienced the sudden loss of his father, leaving the family without a source of income. He recounted, *"I had no choice; if I didn't work, we wouldn't have had any income after my father's death ... I had to drop out of school and find a job."* Similarly, Najwa, a woman from a lower-class background, had to give up her university seat due to her father's illness. She explained, *"I had excellent grades in high school and secured a spot at university, but my father fell ill, and I had to take care of him. In the end, I couldn't attend*

university." Had she come from a more affluent family, her circumstances might have been different when she lost her university seat.

By situating the findings within the framework of life course theory, we gain a nuanced understanding of how sudden life events and socio-economic constraints shape the educational and career transitions of individuals like Yasir and Najwa (Schoon & Bynner, 2017). Life course theory provides a valuable lens to analyse the interplay of timing, agency, and social context in influencing life trajectories, particularly in how these factors combine to produce divergent outcomes based on socio-economic status (Evans *et al.,* 2010; Rusconi *et al.,* 2013). The experiences of these individuals underscore the importance of considering both the individual and structural dimensions of life course transitions.

8.2.3. Local Factors and their Interactions

As discussed in Chapter 7, local factors encompass location-specific conditions that influence young people's transition into the workforce. Respondents highlighted significant issues both at the local level, including geographical factors related to the availability of job opportunities, high living costs, low wages, lack of job benefits such as social security and health insurance, and expensive and irregular transportation, all of which profoundly impact their transitions (Danziger & Ratner, 2010; Weßling, 2016; MacDonald, 2022).

Regardless of gender or socioeconomic status, young respondents emphasised that job opportunities at the local level often come with insufficient wages and minimal benefits. Mazen, for example, expressed his dissatisfaction as a man from a lower-class background:

> "*You know, I got a job as a teacher in a private school, and they offered me a 160 JOD monthly salary with no health insurance. With this salary, I cannot cover my transportation costs."*

Moreover, this theme carried greater weight among women residing outside Amman, regardless of their socioeconomic status. For example, Arwa, originating from a lower-class family, pointed out:

> "*I have a friend from outside Amman; she faces a challenge in her transportation to work as the public transportation stops at 7:00 pm, but her work ends after that. She could not use taxis as it is not acceptable in her community. It is also expensive, and she cannot afford it since her salary is insufficient".*

Yasmeen, hailing from an upper-class family, further elaborated:

> *"I got a job opportunity in Amman. Still, I did not take it because I cannot live there alone, and if I want to live alone, the salary will not be enough for renting and living in Amman*".

Geographical disparities between Amman and Irbid were notably observed. While respondents from both areas expressed concerns about the high cost of living, irregular transportation, low salaries, and lack of benefits like health insurance and job security, these challenges were particularly pronounced for young women outside Amman, compounded by national customs and traditions affecting their transitions.

Respondents also linked personal attributes to their geographical context, considering factors such as their place of residence and local environment (Fouad & Bynner, 2008; Webb *et al.,* 2015). Amal explained, *"When I first worked in Amman, it was challenging as a woman from Irbid; appearance, English proficiency, Arabic accent, residency location (Amman or elsewhere), and personality all make a difference."* She emphasised, *"Your outlook, sense of humour, education, the accent of your English and Arabic languages, and residency impact your personality, which in turn influences your transition into the workforce."*

This concern was particularly salient among young people from lower-class backgrounds, regardless of gender, who felt the need to enhance personal qualities to improve their chances of successful workforce integration. From a lower-class family, Mahmoud underscored this link, stating, *"The social environment where you reside influences your mindset and personality."*

In contrast, respondents from upper-class families, regardless of gender, noted refining their personal attributes through access to private education, exposure to socio-cultural environments, and residency in Amman. Lana, from an upper-class family, remarked, "*My private education*

prepared me for the workplace by enhancing my personality, and living in Amman further developed my outlook and understanding; it's not the same for those outside Amman."

Living in Amman exposes young people to diverse backgrounds, nationalities, and cultures, enriching their perspectives and personalities. This exposure influences their suitability for job applications and adaptability, aligning with social cognitive theory where diverse environments foster interpersonal skills and attitudes through observational learning, enhancing self-efficacy and employability (Bandura, 2001; Mortimer *et al.,* 2016).

To contextualise these experiences using theoretical frameworks, we see how local and national factors influence transitions from education to work. Forms of Capital theory elucidates struggles with inadequate salaries and high living costs, highlighting the lack of financial resources hindering smooth transitions (Bourdieu, 2018; Lehmann, 2019). Yasmeen's challenge affording Amman living expenses underscores economic capital's role in securing suitable living conditions for successful transitions. Geographical social capital differences, such as those between Amman and Irbid, affect social networks and connections, exemplified by Lana's enhanced opportunities due to upper-class background and Amman residency, reflecting strong social capital enabling better job access (Strathdee, 2001).

Mismatched educational qualifications and low-paying jobs suggest an underutilisation of cultural capital in the job market. Structuration theory contextualises constraints like inadequate transportation and limited job benefits faced by Arwa and Mazen, illustrating how structural factors significantly restrict agency (Chiasson & Saunders, 2005; Bryant & Jary, 2014).

8.2.4. National Factors and their Interactions

The study participants identified several national factors influencing their transition from education to employment, including the weak economy, lack of job opportunities, disconnected education systems, fragmented labour structure, national customs and traditions, nepotism 'Wasta', and lack of government support and mistrust.

The majority of respondents cited the weak economy and scarcity of job opportunities as the primary obstacles to their transitions (Ryan, 2001; Furlong, 2015; Grotti *et al.,* 2019). From a lower-class background, Mazen expressed his frustration, stating, *"Despite holding a university*

certificate, I could not find suitable employment due to the lack of job openings." Adib echoed this sentiment: *"There are no solutions, no job opportunities in the labour market ... You want to work to survive, but the country's economy is collapsing, and there is no support."*

However, the impact of these challenges varied across different socioeconomic levels (Berloffa *et al.,* 2016; Du, 2018). Economic and social capital often facilitated smoother transitions for individuals from more affluent backgrounds. Huda acknowledged, *"Although job availability is crucial, I faced challenges securing employment despite applying for numerous positions."* Nonetheless, Huda was able to secure a job relatively quickly compared to her peers from lower- or middle-class backgrounds. This observation can be contextualised through forms of capital theory, illustrating how economic, social, and cultural capital influence successful youth transitions.

The lack of work experience emerged as a significant barrier for young respondents entering the national workforce, particularly for men from lower and middle-class backgrounds seeking employment in the private sector (Russell & O'Connell, 2001; Schoon & Bynner, 2019). Zidan exemplified this challenge: *"I struggled during my job search because most positions required prior experience. I applied for a restaurant job, but they insisted on experience. I met with the chef and explained my situation, asking how I could gain experience if no one would hire me."*

This issue is compounded by the inadequate quality of education and the absence of practical skills necessary for preparing young people for the job market. Across all socioeconomic strata, individuals emphasised the importance of practical experience in achieving a successful transition. For instance, Huda, from an upper-class background, explained, *"I accepted a job to gain experience and avoid staying idle at home, particularly because the company had a strong reputation."*

However, the impact of respondents' lack of work experience varied significantly based on their socioeconomic background (Russell & O'Connell, 2001; Bradley & Nguyen, 2004). While it posed a substantial challenge for individuals from lower and middle-class families, it carried less weight for those from upper-class backgrounds. Young people from affluent families, like Huda and Ayser, leveraged their social and economic capital to mitigate this challenge and achieve a smooth transition into the workforce.

Nevertheless, two female respondents from middle- and upper-class backgrounds highlighted the pivotal role of support from national Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in facilitating youth training and job placement. Amal, from a middle-class family, recounted, *'During my final year at university, I participated in an NGO program that helped me secure my job.'* Similarly, Yasmeen engaged in an NGO training course to prepare for the demands of the labour market. The successful transitions of these women can be attributed to the support they received from such organisations.

However, the researcher noticed that many respondents did not mention these organisations in their discussions, possibly due to limited awareness of the assistance available from these entities. This gap may be explained by the concept of capital, where individuals with cultural capital—such as education, training, and access to education-employment initiatives—played a crucial role in facilitating successful transitions, particularly among those from upper-class backgrounds, regardless of gender (Aksakal & Schmidt, 2021).

Young people also emphasised the importance of familial and social networks and the use of nepotism, known as 'Wasta,' as solutions to various challenges in labour market transitions. As discussed in the literature, 'Wasta' involves leveraging social and economic connections to secure job opportunities, encompassing practices like nepotism, favouritism, tribalism, clientelism, patronage, and corruption (Cunningham & Sarayrah, 1993; Al-Ramahi, 2008). This practice is entrenched within Jordanian society and is seen as a necessary means to bypass personal obstacles in both the public and private sectors (Baranik et al., 2023).

Wasta has strong linkages with people's class and gender as it benefits young people from wealthier, influential backgrounds, allowing them a smoother transition to work. Conversely, those from lower or middle backgrounds face significant obstacles due to their limited access to powerful networks. This dynamic exacerbates class-based inequalities, as individuals without Wasta are often left with few opportunities for upward mobility, leading to widespread frustration among lower and middle-income youth. Wasta also has strong linkages with gender, where women, particularly from conservative families or regions, may face cultural restrictions that limit their mobility and job options, making their reliance on family connections and Wasta even more critical (Alsarhan et al., 2021; Baranik et al., 2023).

Indeed, the researcher found that familial social connections and 'Wasta' are essential for facilitating employment transitions for young people, irrespective of gender or social class. For example, from a middle-class background, Arkan affirmed, *'Social connections and nepotism can secure a job; otherwise, you'll face difficulties.'* Conversely, Maher, from a lower-class background, lamented, *'Despite receiving excellent feedback during my bank internship, others with social connections or nepotism were hired, leaving me without a job opportunity.'*

Arwa, a woman from a lower-class family, highlighted the normalisation and necessity of these practices, stating, *'Social connections and nepotism have become essential for securing employment.'* However, the majority of young people from lower and middle-class families, regardless of gender, cited the lack of familial and social connections and nepotism as barriers that adversely affected their labour market transitions. Mahmoud, from a lower-class family, elaborated:

> "*Social connections play a key role in transitions to work. Let us be honest: social connections and nepotism play key roles. I know people who graduated with me, same university, and same grades, but they got a job in the public sector or another reputable place.*"

Tamara, hailing from a middle-class family, expressed:

> "*If you have a social connection or nepotism, you will get a job easily, even if you just graduated, and know nothing about your educational field; you would move into the labour market before the ranked first in your college*".

Conversely, young people from upper-class backgrounds, regardless of gender, emphasised the importance of familial social connections and nepotism without expressing any concerns about their absence. Instead, they underscored these factors as crucial for successfully entering the workforce. For example, Ayser, a man from an upper-class family, commented, *"I owe my position in a prestigious company to my uncle's connections. He facilitated my entry into the role I had aimed for. Without his support, such an opportunity would have been inaccessible."*

Similarly, Yasmeen, a woman from an upper-class family, recounted, *"Through my father's acquaintance in the company, I was swiftly recommended for a job. Within two days, I secured employment. Without this connection, I might still be searching for a job."*

In addition to social connections and nepotism, young respondents, irrespective of gender and social class, expressed concerns about corruption and a lack of trust in government institutions and their operations. For instance, Arwa, a woman from a lower-class family, elaborated:

> "*My sister graduated, and for more than six years, her application to the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) was number one, i.e., on the top of the list for government recruitment; others graduated in the same field and got a job in the public sector before her by CSB, is not that corruption*?".

Adib, a man from a lower-class family, complained:

> "*Government officials consider Amman their priority; all jobs are in Amman, and these jobs are for their sons, cousins and relatives; it is a corrupted country*".

He added,

> "*The country's economic situation is fragile, so if the government wanted to do a project, they budgeted it for five million JOD, but when it comes to reality, you found a project cost way less than the budget, where did the money go?*".

Furthermore, Yasir, a man from a lower-class family, highlighted the impact of absent government assistance on his transition, noting that his family did not receive adequate financial support after his father's passing. He explained, *"Despite my difficult circumstances, we received minimal aid. I applied for government support multiple times with little success. Eventually, we were granted only 45 JOD monthly, which was insufficient."* Yasir also mentioned that this support ceased once he secured a job with social security insurance due to income incompatibility. The researcher emphasises that such practices will redirect young people in such situations into the informal sector to maintain the minimum grant their families get from the government. Respondents from lower and middle-class backgrounds consistently emphasised how their family's financial status and

social standing influenced their transition paths. This underscores the insights that can be gained by adopting a capital perspective, a topic I will explore further in Section 8.3.

Moreover, young respondents voiced concerns about public sector corruption and government trustworthiness. However, individuals from affluent backgrounds or with social connections found these networks, nepotism, and governmental corruption advantageous in facilitating their employment transitions, as demonstrated by Ayser and Yasmeen's experiences. The social capital inherent in privileged backgrounds, including access to influential networks, positively influenced their transitions, unlike their counterparts from lower and middle-class families lacking such connections, regardless of gender. This discussion underscores the potential explanatory power of capital theory, a subject I will delve deeper into in subsequent sections. Nevertheless, the pervasive lack of trust in institutions such as CSB resonated among all respondents, transcending class and gender, with their responses to this challenge proving crucial in understanding their pathways into the workforce.

8.2.5. Global Factors and their Interactions

The literature emphasises that global dynamics significantly influence the transition of young people from education to work. These dynamics include factors such as global economic conditions, technological advancements, political instability, and migration patterns (Ryan, 2001; Martin & Quintini, 2013; Pastore, 2015; Doruk & Pastore, 2020). Responses from young people underscored how these global factors, particularly the influx of Syrian refugees and foreign workers (Alshoubaki & Harris, 2018; Assaad *et al.,* 2023), and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, closely aligned with Jordan's contextual landscape during the study period (Kebede *et al.,* 2020).

For example, many respondents from lower and middle-class backgrounds, regardless of gender, discussed how Syrian refugees and foreign workers negatively affected their employment opportunities. Adib, from a lower-class family, elaborated:

> *"Syrian refugees impact young people's job prospects. They receive financial support, allowing them to accept lower wages than Jordanians."*

Ahmed, also a man from a lower-class family, echoed this sentiment:

> *"Most Syrian refugees have vocations, so whenever there is a job, if you ask for a 100 JOD salary, the Syrian refugee accepts 50 JOD, so they take Jordanian job opportunities.*"

However, this impact was mostly felt in specific sectors and occupations. Haneen, from a middle-class family, explained:

> "*They affect some sectors, such as sales shops and non-skilled, vocational, and informal jobs that do not require formal education or legal agreements. They accept lower wages, competing with the Jordanian.*"

Additionally, respondents noted that the presence of Syrian refugees indicated job availability within the labour market. However, Jordanian youth are reluctant to engage in manual labour or accept low-wage jobs due to cultural norms, parental expectations for white-collar jobs, and societal stigma (Fakih & Ibrahim, 2016). Lana, from an upper-class family, clarified:

> "*We have some job opportunities, but our young people do not want to work in any job. We have the "culture of shame". Check the workers in the cleaning sector; they are all foreigners. Why? Because it is a shame for our youth to work in such jobs.*"

Respondents from upper-class families, regardless of gender, believed that Syrian refugees and foreign labour primarily impacted manual labour rather than the public or formal private sectors. As Haneen mentioned earlier, this perspective was influenced by Jordanian labour laws.

Given the influence of global factors, forms of capital theory can contextualise these findings. Foreign workers and Syrian refugees often have support networks that facilitate job access. Ahmed's experience illustrates how social capital among these groups helps them secure jobs that might otherwise go to Jordanians. The reluctance of Jordanian youth to take manual labour jobs due to the "shame culture" reflects the role of cultural capital (Yom, 2019). Lana noted how societal expectations discourage certain types of work, affecting job opportunities for Jordanian youth. From a structuration theory perspective, the influx of refugees and foreign workers, combined with the pandemic's effects, creates structural barriers to employment for Jordanian youth. Haneen's remarks on sector-specific impacts highlight how structural factors shape labour market dynamics. Despite these constraints, individuals must navigate their career paths. Some young Jordanians

avoid manual labour due to cultural norms and parental expectations, demonstrating how the agency is constrained by societal structures (Schoon & Heckhausen, 2019).

Moreover, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, young respondents highlighted its adverse impact on their employment transitions. They expressed concerns about limited job prospects domestically and potential repercussions in Gulf countries, which are significant destinations for Jordanian labour (Alsahi, 2020; Thompson, 2020). This disproportionately affected lower and middle-class respondents, who faced barriers to entering the job market due to pandemic-related closures, business setbacks, income reductions, and layoffs.

For instance, from a lower-class family, Amina shared, *"I lost my job due to COVID-19, and it took me a while to find another one."* Amal, also from a lower-class background, added, *"My employer cut my salary by 30% because of COVID-19."* Ahmed, a man from a lower-class family, provided another example: "*I had a friend who lost his job during the COVID-19 pandemic, forcing him to take up employment as a cleaner in a mall.*"

Respondents highlighted the possibility of Jordanian labourers returning to the country due to business closures abroad, leading to increased demand for limited job opportunities and heightened competition. This scenario also entails the loss of employment opportunities outside Jordan, particularly in the Gulf region. For instance, Maher, a man from a lower-class family, speculated, "*Imagine if Jordanian migrant workers returned due to the pandemic; job opportunities would become scarce, especially considering their experience.*"

Fewer than a million Jordanian workers reside outside Jordan, with the majority situated in Gulf countries, constituting approximately 11% of the country's population (Jordan Strategy Forum, 2018). Consequently, any economic downturn or political instability in these host countries could result in hundreds of thousands of individuals returning to Jordan for employment, reminiscent of the influx experienced after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, when Jordan received over 300,000 returnees (El-Abed, 2021).

However, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic varied significantly among respondents depending on their job sectors and occupations (Kebede *et al.,* 2020). Public sector employees, regardless of gender or social class, reported minimal job disruptions. Conversely, individuals from

lower and middle-class backgrounds faced substantial challenges in the private sector, adversely affecting their employment opportunities. Furthermore, the pandemic predominantly affected the informal sector and specific roles within the private sector, particularly concentrated in Irbid.

For example, Abdullah and Haneen, working in the food and catering sectors, experienced little impact from COVID-19 as their sectors remained operational. In contrast, industries like tourism, event management, and customer service faced substantial disruptions. Abdullah noted, *"COVID-19 did not affect me; my work in catering continued."* Nadin, a woman from a lower-class family, highlighted the dramatic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on her employment transitions. She was supposed to get a job replacing an engineer who would travel to the Gulf, but because of the COVID-19 pandemic, his plan was cancelled, resulting in her losing that opportunity.

Indeed, numerous respondents encountered difficulties entering the labour market as several economic sectors faced closures during the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in widespread job losses. However, it was evident that individuals from lower and middle-class backgrounds were disproportionately affected compared to those from upper-class families, who often had the means to preserve their employment or transition to alternative positions, emphasising class inequality and its effect on young people's transition (Lehmann, 2007).

These challenges can be interpreted through forms of capital theory. For instance, the economic downturn caused by the pandemic disproportionately affected those with limited financial resources. Amina's job loss and Amal's salary reduction illustrate how insufficient economic capital amplifies vulnerability to economic shocks. The pandemic's impact on sectors like tourism and event management, which require specific cultural capital, reveals how disruptions in these industries disadvantage individuals lacking adaptable skills, as seen in Nadin's lost job opportunities. Moreover, the pandemic imposed structural constraints such as business closures and reduced job opportunities, particularly in the private sector, which structuration theory can explain. These constraints constrained the choices of individuals like Ahmed, who had to accept lower-paying jobs to make ends meet.

The preceding discussion illuminates how various factors influence young people's transition from education to employment, revealing their intricate interplay. These factors were categorised into structural and agency factors, laying the foundation for a deeper exploration of their dual nature in

the subsequent section. This analysis evaluates the significance of broader theoretical frameworks emphasised throughout the discussion.

8.3 Agency and Structure in Labour Market Transitions

In this section, the researcher aims to conduct a thorough analysis based on the insights provided by the respondents, seeking to understand the complex interplay between individual agency and structural influences. This includes exploring how the respondents' narratives contribute to the broader discourse on agency versus structure, as outlined in the literature review, and further examining the applicability of previous theories. Additionally, the researcher will address discernible reflections on class and gender disparities.

Drawing upon the theoretical insights in this chapter, the researcher aims to contextualise the key findings within a theoretical framework. By delving into theoretical perspectives such as social cognitive career theory, labour market segmentation theory, the concept of various forms of capital, individualisation theory, and structuration theory, and by examining gender and class disparities, the researcher seeks to elucidate the implications of the gathered data. This theoretical scrutiny also allows for a nuanced evaluation of the agency versus structure debate, facilitating the formulation of more coherent conclusions.

Numerous researchers have examined the relationship between agency and structural dynamics concerning young people's transitions to work. There is an ongoing debate about which exerts a greater influence on social circumstances and choices (Elder, 1994; Shanahan, 2000; Schoon, 2007; Eccles, 2008). In the preceding chapter, young respondents discussed the factors shaping their transition to work from their perspectives. The prior section emphasised pivotal factors, highlighting the interaction between individual agency and structural elements, and the researcher briefly highlighted some theoretical possible explanations.

Linking the study findings to the theoretical perspectives reviewed earlier underscores the importance of considering both agency and structure in understanding young people's transitions (Côté & Bynner, 2008; King *et al.,* 2016). Theoretical debates often emphasise the tension between individual choices and the constraints imposed by broader societal forces. For instance, Bourdieu's theory (1986) of habitus and capital provides a framework for understanding how social and

economic capital influence educational and career decisions. Similarly, Giddens' structuration theory (1984) highlights the dynamic interaction between individual actions and social structures (Lehmann, 2019); see Chapter Three for further details. By situating the respondents' experiences within these theoretical frameworks, we can better understand how their transitions are not just shaped by personal ambition or lack thereof but are also deeply influenced by structural factors that limit their opportunities and choices, as explained by the structuration theory (Giddens, 1984; Bryant & Jary, 2014).

This intricate web of interactions underscores the theoretical complexity characterising the relationship between agency and structure (Lehmann, 2005; Hitlin & Elder, 2007; Elder *et al.,* 2015), a discourse further explored in the following discussion.

Undoubtedly, the primary objective for young people during their transition to the labour market is to achieve economic independence. However, this goal is significantly influenced by various institutional and social structures that affect their ability to attain financial autonomy. As illustrated in the previous chapters, this aspiration was limited by several structural factors, including economic conditions, labour market dynamics, educational frameworks and policies, geographical contexts, social networks, and gender and class disparities. For instance, while most respondents from lower and middle-class backgrounds understood the importance of education for securing employment opportunities, not all were able to pursue higher education due to financial constraints or other barriers related to their educational attainment. In stark contrast, respondents from upper-class families could invest in their education and training, leading to more successful transitions. This disparity highlights the crucial role of education in determining the success of young people's transitions, reflecting Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). The ability of upper-class families to support their children's education clearly demonstrates the influence of economic capital, which is often lacking among young people from lower and middle-class backgrounds.

Indeed, the researcher believes that the extent of individuals' transitions hinges significantly on the accumulation of various forms of capital—economic, social, and cultural—acquired from familial backgrounds and developed over their transitions. The acquisition of these resources markedly increases the likelihood of successful transitions, underscoring the pervasive influence of social class across all levels of analysis. Many respondents, especially those from lower and middle-class

backgrounds, felt compelled to discontinue schooling or pursue vocational education to achieve financial independence. While they described this as a personal choice, closer scrutiny revealed the significant influence of the aforementioned structural factors.

Moreover, this underscores the interdependence of young people's agency and structural factors, as explained by structuration theory (Turner, 1986). However, the above also highlights that while young people's agency is relatively increasing, it remains constrained by structural factors, which can also be explained by individualisation theory (Côté & Bynner, 2008).

The researcher contends that most respondents were aware of gender disparities, with women being perceived as more vulnerable during the transition to work (Turner *et al.,* 2006; Amer & Atallah, 2019). However, both men and women demonstrated limited recognition of class distinctions. Women from lower and middle-class backgrounds displayed a comparatively higher awareness of their class positioning than men. The findings suggest that this discrepancy is due to women recognising the constraints on their transitions, which are notably shaped by societal norms, traditions, and the patriarchal system prevalent in Jordan (Moghadam, 2004). Conversely, men encountered fewer constraints in their labour market decisions and were not subject to similar societal pressures. This can be explained by structuration theory, but it is not in alignment with the individualisation theory, where young people's agency decreases and the importance of gender and class increases (Côté, 2002).

Nonetheless, women faced multiple barriers when transitioning to work, including gender biases, restrictive societal norms, and patriarchal systems, as well as gendered expectations in education and the job market. For example, women's stories highlighted the challenges they faced when trying to enter fields considered "male-dominated," like electrical engineering or culinary arts. These challenges were not just perceptions but reflected deeply rooted social realities (Wyn *et al.,* 2017). Moreover, societal expectations often dictated that women pursue roles deemed appropriate by their families and communities, such as administrative or teaching positions, rather than jobs requiring physical strength or diverging from national norms and traditions. The above can be explained by the labour market segmentation theory, as the labour market can be divided into segments characterised by job benefits, class, and gender (Reich *et al.,* 1973).

Indeed, female respondents from various social backgrounds highlighted constraints in their labour market options, noting specific jobs inaccessible to them and employers favouring low-paying roles lacking physical demands or stereotypically linked to women. Many women, particularly those from lower and middle-class backgrounds, recognised the impact of gender and class identities on their decisions and choices during their transition into the workforce. Therefore, structuration theory elucidates how gender identity limits women's behaviours and preferences in the labour market.

However, to some extent, comparable constraints were evident among respondents from upper-class families, albeit with fewer difficulties and more substantial parental support. For instance, their parents typically offered financial and emotional support if they encountered academic setbacks or could not secure their desired education or employment. This assistance often facilitated a smooth transition into the workforce, sometimes through alternative educational pathways such as the Parallel education system, as mentioned by Ayser and Lana.

These accounts indicate that young people from affluent backgrounds often have access to additional resources, including private tutoring, career coaching, and financial support for education and training. These advantages enable them to overcome setbacks more effectively and pursue alternative paths to achieve their career goals (Bourdieu, 1984; Lareau, 2018). Thus, while upper-class respondents face constraints, their ability to leverage familial resources often buffers these challenges and enhances their transition outcomes. Forms of capital theory can explain the above, as it illustrates how young people can use their economic capital to facilitate their successful transitions.

The researcher further confirms that male respondents generally encountered more favourable opportunities and transition prospects across all social classes. In contrast, women faced significant constraints imposed by societal structures such as national customs, traditions, and entrenched gender roles. This underscores the deep-rooted patriarchal system in Jordan, where men have greater agency in shaping their transitions and accessing resources.

According to Giddens' theoretical framework, cultural norms and expectations can be interpreted through structuration theory, which posits that norms and societal expectations play a significant role in shaping the actions and decisions of young people. This perspective illuminates how

cultural norms regarding the use of social connections and nepotism influence the behaviours and choices of young people as they transition into the workforce (Giddens, 1984; Schoon & Heckhausen, 2019).

As previously discussed, the influence of national customs and traditions on labour market choices can be effectively analysed through structuration theory. They described how their employment opportunities and decisions were limited, especially for women. Furthermore, parental expectations, gender and class identities, and family attitudes toward young people's education and employment were crucial in shaping their transitions, regardless of social class. These factors, rooted in national customs and traditions, align with the framework of structuration theory.

The geographical context also significantly impacted how agency and structural factors interacted (Weßling *et al.,* 2015). For instance, youth in Irbid faced more constraints than those in Amman. This difference was due to stronger adherence to national customs and traditions, fewer job opportunities, and lower economic activity in areas outside the capital, like Irbid. In contrast, respondents in Amman experienced less influence from traditional norms, which can be attributed to the city's diverse population and central economic activities, leading to more job opportunities.

However, despite the study findings indicating a disparity based on gender and class emerged from the respondents' narratives, the geographic location seemed to have minimal impact on the transition success of men from affluent backgrounds. Additionally, the researcher observed that respondents' educational paths, vocational training, career choices, and personal characteristics were shaped by structural factors such as class, gender, education, and geographic location, as supported by existing literature (Gaskell, 1992; McDowell, 2009; Ulil & Utomo, 2017; Nilsson, 2019; Masdonati *et al.,* 2022). This can be explained by structuration theory, where young people's aspirations are influenced by the structural factors they face, including their location. Still, young people from affluent backgrounds were less impacted, which can be explained by the forms of capital theory.

Despite the structural constraints, some respondents mentioned instances where they could change the course of their transitions through personal agency, such as determination and ambition. Cases like Haneen's demonstrate how individuals can navigate these societal barriers, highlighting the interplay between social structures and individual agency. However, the majority faced significant

structural barriers, with the impact varying based on their gender and class, thereby reinforcing social inequalities (Andres & Krahn, 1999; Lehmann, 2005). These narratives are good examples of young people's relatively increasing agency despite the limiting structural factors, which can be explained by individualisation theory. The narratives highlighted how gender and class identities, social networks, and nepotism played crucial roles in shaping the actions and behaviours of respondents, particularly among women and those from lower and middle-class backgrounds.

Some respondents showed a limited understanding of their available opportunities and, as a result, struggled to navigate the labour market effectively. Respondents from lower and middle-class backgrounds expressed plans for their future employment, but many could not achieve these goals due to significant challenges encountered during their transition. These challenges primarily arose from structural barriers such as limited job opportunities, economic constraints, and social expectations.

This disparity was particularly pronounced among women from lower and middle-class families outside Amman, highlighting the need to understand better their capabilities, available opportunities, and the structural obstacles they face. To address this, the researcher recommends a balanced approach that combines perseverance, adaptability, and willingness to learn from setbacks. This approach can help enhance their chances of success by equipping them to navigate and overcome the obstacles they encounter. The above can be explained by social cognitive theory, where young people have to balance their self-efficacy (Hackett & Betz, 1981) with rational outcome expectations to increase the likelihood of their job satisfaction (Lent & Brown, 2006).

The study findings indicated that suboptimal educational decisions among respondents—decisions seemingly within their control—were influenced by a lack of parental guidance, limited educational attainment, and insufficient institutional support for career planning. However, the absence of parental guidance was shaped by familial financial constraints and the parents' educational background. Thus, young respondents' frustration or lack of motivation cannot be solely attributed to their actions or behaviours. Instead, it is intertwined with broader systemic issues such as limited job opportunities in the labour market, restricted social networks, nepotism, and inadequate familial support. This can be explained by structuration theory, as it illustrates the interdependency between agency and structural factors (Turner, 1986).

Throughout this chapter, the evidence demonstrates how different forms of capital impact young people's ability to navigate the labour market. For instance, economic capital allows individuals to invest in education and training, which are crucial for securing higher-paying jobs. Social capital, manifested in networks and connections, provides access to job opportunities and insider information. Cultural capital, including knowledge and skills acquired through education and upbringing, shapes individuals' confidence and ability to succeed in professional settings.

However, the differential access to economic, social, and cultural capital among respondents from lower and middle-class families perpetuated their disadvantages, often resulting in the reproduction of their social positions. Despite these challenges, some individuals from these backgrounds successfully navigated structural barriers and moved to more advantageous social positions, illustrating Bourdieu's theory of capital and highlighting the adaptability and reflexivity in their experiences (Bourdieu *et al.,* 1999).

The study findings reveal that respondents aspiring to enter preferred occupational fields, especially those requiring academic qualifications, often relied on their socioeconomic resources to navigate structural barriers. This highlights the ongoing debate regarding the relative influence of individual agency versus broader social structures on young people's transitions (Bradley & Nguyen, 2004; Heinz, 2009a; Furlong, 2009). However, the study findings align with Côté's perspective, which emphasises young people's dependence on familial resources to achieve agency (Côté, 2014a, b).

Furthermore, the researcher applied career choice theory to interpret the respondents' motto, "*Love what you do, so you do what you love.*" This emphasises the process of career development and links to theories such as career development and social cognitive career theory, where young people's self-efficacy beliefs and expectations about outcomes influence their career decisions (Kelly, 2009). However, one could argue that this is a case of adaptive expectations—psychological adjustment to structural constraints—where individuals rationalise their choices. This can be contextualised with structuration theory, as young people's aspirations are bounded by structural constraints (Bryant & Jary, 2014).

Nevertheless, this sentiment was not uniformly shared among respondents from upper-class families. Although they faced challenges securing desirable employment, their psychological

adjustment was temporary as they quickly obtained desired jobs. They viewed exploration as a strategy to uncover additional opportunities, particularly given the nation's fragile economic landscape and limited job prospects. In doing so, they shaped their self-concept by exploring their abilities, interests, preferences, and values, influenced by various social structures such as socioeconomic status, educational systems, and labour market conditions (Lent & Worthington, 1999; Marshall *et al.,* 2013; Searle *et al.,* 2022). In addition to the forms of capital theory, the above can also be understood through structuration theory.

The country's slow economic performance has resulted in insufficient job opportunities, significantly hindering the labour market transitions of young people. Respondents from all social classes, regardless of gender, expressed dissatisfaction with the scarcity of job openings, offering low wages that fail to cover living expenses or transportation costs. Furthermore, they observed that available positions often did not match their educational qualifications and lacked essential benefits such as legal contracts, health insurance, and social security.

However, these challenges had a more pronounced impact on respondents from lower and middle-class backgrounds. In contrast, those from upper-class families were less affected, using family support to navigate their transition successfully. This disparity can be understood through the framework of capital forms, where labour market conditions and economic factors influence respondents' ability to act. Indeed, the transitions of respondents from wealthy families were facilitated by their access to financial resources (economic capital), a concept explained by the theory of capital forms (Bourdieu, 1984).

Furthermore, social connections and nepotism, known as "*Wasta,*" emerged as crucial factors shaping the transitions of young people entering the workforce. However, respondents from lower and middle-class backgrounds, regardless of gender, expressed dissatisfaction with the reliance on social connections and nepotism due to their limited access to these resources, which adversely affected their transitions. In contrast, respondents from upper-class families, regardless of gender, emphasised the importance of social connections and nepotism in securing employment opportunities.

The forms of capital theory provide insight into this phenomenon by highlighting the role of social capital, which includes social connections and nepotism, in influencing respondents' transitions.

The researcher noticed that successful transitions were often observed among individuals who utilised their families' social connections or benefited from nepotism, as respondents from affluent backgrounds exemplified. In contrast, the absence of such resources led to challenging transitions, particularly among those from lower and middle-class families.

Global factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Syrian refugee crises in Jordan exerted significant influence on young people's transitions into the workforce. Structuration theory offers a framework to comprehend these phenomena, as these overarching factors reshaped the labour market landscape, reducing job opportunities and disrupting individual businesses. Consequently, these structural shifts affected the decisions and actions of respondents, influencing whether they entered the labour market or pursued entrepreneurial ventures. This impact was particularly profound among respondents from lower and middle-class families, regardless of gender.

In contrast, respondents from upper-class backgrounds experienced a different impact. During this period, they leveraged their families' financial resources and social connections as a buffer, facilitating successful transitions. This observation aligns with the theory of forms of capital, where economic and social capital play pivotal roles in shaping individuals' pathways and outcomes during periods of societal upheaval.

As explained above, the interplay between agency and structural constraints is central to understanding young people’s transitions and their prospects of social mobility. Respondents consistently articulate aspirations for upward mobility, underpinned by their educational and career choices, with variations in their expectations for mobility by gender and class. Despite the agency expressed by some, structural barriers, such as Wasta, gender, and national customs and traditions, especially for women, heavily constrain their transitions.

Although structures dominate, young people exhibit remarkable adaptability and resilience. Some participants described strategies to navigate structural barriers, such as pursuing entrepreneurship, migrating to Gulf countries, or leveraging informal networks. However, these strategies are not equally accessible to all and often reinforce existing inequalities. For example, migrating for better opportunities requires financial resources and familial support, which are typically available to wealthier individuals.

Social mobility, broadly defined as the movement of individuals or groups within a social hierarchy, i.e., intergenerational relative mobility, is significantly constrained in Jordan due to entrenched structural barriers. Economic stagnation, limited job creation, and labour market segmentation inhibit upward mobility, particularly for youth. For example, the phenomenon of Wasta (nepotism) undermines meritocratic ideologies, favouring individuals with social connections and leaving others marginalised regardless of their qualifications (Sakijha & Kilani, 2002). Furthermore, patriarchal norms restrict women's participation in the labour market, compounding structural disadvantages for half the population (Mehtap et al., 2016). The educational system, while improving access, often fails to equip graduates with skills aligned with labour market needs, perpetuating a mismatch that stifles opportunities for economic advancement (Assaad & Krafft, 2016). This context underscores the necessity of structural reforms to promote equitable opportunities and create pathways for genuine social mobility.

This discussion highlights the inherent complexity in understanding the transitions of young respondents, as no single theory can offer a comprehensive explanation. Instead, the interaction of various theoretical frameworks provides insights into the multifaceted nature of these transitions (Mary & Peter, 2000; Nayak & Kehily, 2013; Schoon, 2021).

8.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter illuminates the intricate dynamics influencing the transitions of young respondents into the workforce, highlighting the pervasive influence of structural factors alongside individual agency. Despite their aspirations for economic independence, respondents' pathways were significantly shaped by various structural determinants, including the country's economic challenges, labour and education systems, social networks, and other factors discussed throughout the chapter. Additionally, respondents' class backgrounds and the patriarchal system exerted substantial impacts on their transitions across all levels of analysis.

The research findings suggest that structural factors played a more dominant role than individual agency in shaping young respondents' transitions to work. Despite their aspirations, many encountered formidable barriers that hindered their ambitions, particularly individuals from lower and middle-class families, contrasting starkly with their counterparts from upper-class backgrounds who experienced greater success. Indeed, disparities based on social class were

evident, with those lacking capital facing more daunting transitions compared to the privileged few from affluent families.

Moreover, the patriarchal system significantly impeded women's successful transitions, especially among those from lower and middle-class backgrounds. While respondents acknowledged gender differences, awareness of class disparities was less pronounced. The study underscores the complexity of young people's transitions from education to work, revealing multifaceted processes that no single theoretical framework can fully explain. Instead, multiple theoretical perspectives offer insights into the diverse factors shaping these transitions, emphasising the need for a comprehensive understanding informed by various theoretical lenses.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1 Research Aims, Scope and Significance

Despite Jordan's economic growth and development over the past two decades, improvement in labour market policies, increased educational attainment, and expanded private sector investment, the transition from education to work among Jordanian youth has deteriorated, and youth unemployment has risen sharply. This research aimed to investigate the experiences and perceptions of young people navigating their transitions within a less-studied country in the MENA region like Jordan. This study is the first to qualitatively investigate Jordanian young people's transitions from their own perspectives by focusing on their personal biographies.

The research shed light upon the various pathways young Jordanians typically take in transitioning from education to work, the challenges they face, the meanings they attach to success and the factors affecting it. It demonstrates that there is a crucial requirement to investigate and theorise the experiences and perceptions of young people in diverse cultural and geographical settings. This expansion is imperative to broaden and enrich the limited knowledge and understanding of youth beyond the Western context and incorporate young people's subjectivities (Alnaser, 2018; MacDonald & King, 2021).

9.2 Major Contributions to the Academic Literature

This section will detail the study's significant contributions to the academic literature, encompassing theoretical, empirical, and methodological aspects. The study makes a distinctive contribution to the field in several ways:

a) **Applies Narrative Biographical Method to an Understudied Context:** This research employs a narrative biographical method to explore youth transitions in Jordan, an understudied country in the MENA region. Focusing on individual life stories offers a nuanced understanding of how young people navigate their pathways from education to work.
b) **Develop a Typology of Transition Pathways Specific to Jordan**: The study creates a framework that categorises the various pathways young Jordanians usually follow during

their transition from education to work, providing insights into the unique socio-economic and cultural factors at play.

c) **Conceptualises Success Criteria Based on Youth Perspectives**: It introduces a set of criteria for evaluating successful transitions, incorporating young people's own understanding and views of what constitutes success in the context of their transitions.

d) **Offers a Comprehensive Analysis of Key Determinants**: The study examines the main factors influencing youth transitions and extends the existing debate on the structural and agency interplay.

e) **New insights into the relevance of existing theoretical perspectives in Jordan**: The study enriches theoretical understanding by applying several theories to analyse youth transitions in Jordan's context. It is about applying existing theories in the Jordanian context to shed more light on their adequacy and relevance.

9.2.1 Application of Narrative Biographical Method to an Understudied Context

This study aimed to investigate Jordanian young people's perceptions of successful transitions from education to work, employing a novel narrative biographical approach (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995; Woodman, 2009). This approach focused on understanding young Jordanians' subjective experiences and decision-making processes, shedding light on the factors that influenced their transitions uniquely within the Jordanian context.

One significant contribution of this study was its application of narrative biography, which allowed for an in-depth exploration of how young Jordanians navigate their transition from education to work. By emphasising subjective experiences and personal narratives, the study revealed how individuals interpret and prioritise various determinants such as economic conditions, job opportunities, family support, educational attainment, social norms, nepotism ‘Wasta’, and other structural constraints. These elements collectively shaped a transition typology specific to Jordan, illustrating how young people conceptualise and navigate their transition pathways in a challenging socio-economic environment.

Moreover, this research addressed a notable gap in the literature, particularly within the qualitative domain, regarding young people's perspectives on educational-to-work transitions in the MENA region, with a specific focus on Jordan (Fehling *et al.,* 2015; Fakih *et al.,* 2020). By adopting a

qualitative methodology, the study provided nuanced insights that quantitative studies often overlook (Brzinsky-Fay, 2014; Hendricks, 2014), thereby enriching the understanding of youth experiences beyond Western contexts (Alnaser, 2018; MacDonald & King, 2021).

Furthermore, the study's findings underscored the interplay between young Jordanians' subjective perceptions and the objective socio-economic circumstances influencing their choices. It highlighted how these perceptions varied across different social strata, genders, and geographical locations within Jordan, thereby contributing empirically to the understanding of socio-economic dynamics in the region.

Western studies often prioritise the development of empirically supported theories to elucidate their research findings, a trend less common in literature originating from MENA countries. Recognising this disparity, the current study fills a crucial gap by delving into the transitions of young people outside Western contexts. It provides theoretical frameworks and incorporates biographical accounts, enriching the understanding of their transitions to work. This approach aims to bridge the empirical divide between Western and MENA literature, offering a comprehensive exploration and explanation of the experiences of young people transitioning from education to work and their forms of successful transitions.

For cross-contextual studies, particularly those comparing the Global South and North, addressing conceptual equivalence and translation is vital. Conceptual equivalence pertains to ensuring that terms and constructs used in one cultural or regional context retain their meaning when applied in another. For example, concepts like "youth transitions," often grounded in Western academic frameworks, may not translate directly to the MENA region, where socio-economic, familial, and cultural dynamics differ significantly (MacDonald & King, 2021). This complexity arises as notions like "transition success" or "youth agency" can embody distinct priorities and interpretations shaped by local norms, economic realities, and education systems. Scholars underscore the importance of contextualising these terms to align with the lived realities and perspectives of populations in the Global South (Nilsson, 2019; Krieger et al., 2020; Murphy & Sika, 2021). In this study, qualitative engagement with Jordanian youth was pivotal in eliciting their interpretations of these concepts, exploring how they are shaped by national contexts and diverged from Western paradigms.

Translation in research extends beyond language to encompass the transfer of ideas, concepts, and meanings across contexts. For instance, while transitions are often framed as linear progressions from education to employment in Western contexts, the reality in the Global South is more non-linear. Youth in Jordan frequently navigate back and forth between education, work, and other life stages due to socio-economic challenges, family expectations, and reliance on social capital strategies like Wasta. This non-linearity necessitates adapting research methodologies to capture the complexity of these trajectories accurately, ensuring that the study reflects the unique dynamics and priorities of Jordanian youth (Kabbani, 2019).

This approach to bridging the empirical gap between Western and MENA literature is pivotal for several reasons. Firstly, it acknowledges the diversity of experiences and contexts faced by young people transitioning from education to work across different regions. While Western studies may offer valuable insights, they may not fully capture the complexities and nuances of the MENA region. By incorporating perspectives from MENA countries, the research becomes more inclusive and representative of the global landscape of youth transitions.

Secondly, it fosters a more holistic understanding of the factors influencing successful transitions. The socioeconomic, cultural, and political contexts in MENA countries often differ significantly from those in Western nations. Therefore, examining transition experiences solely through a Western lens may overlook critical factors specific to MENA contexts, such as the role of family networks, cultural norms, and government policies. By integrating perspectives from both regions, researchers can uncover a broader range of influences shaping young people's transitions. It also contributes to answering the question posed in the title of Macdonald and King's 2021 study: "*What can youth studies in the global north learn from research on youth and policy in the MENA countries?*"

Finally, by recognising and incorporating the unique perspectives of MENA youth, researchers can contribute to more culturally sensitive and contextually relevant policies and interventions to support their successful transition from education to work. By acknowledging the diverse transition pathways and their interpretations of success, this level of granularity facilitates a more nuanced analysis of the influencing factors, providing valuable insights into the distinct challenges and priorities associated with each pathway (to be discussed in the following sections).

The literature emphasises the pivotal role of national context in shaping the transitions of young people from education to work. This context encompasses many factors, ranging from macroeconomic conditions and the structure of the education system to labour market dynamics and sociodemographic characteristics (Müller & Karle, 1993; Schupp *et al.,* 1994; Hannan *et al.,* 1996). However, prevailing research predominantly centres on Western contexts (Müller & Gangl, 2003; Nguyen & Bradley, 2004), often overlooking other nations (Choudhry & Pastore, 2023).

This study's unique contribution lies in exploring a developing country in the MENA region, filling a significant knowledge gap about the factors affecting successful transitions for young people. Section 9.2.4 provides more details on these factors. Unlike research focused on Western countries, this study highlights the specific challenges in the MENA region, such as a weak economy, limited private-sector investment, high youth unemployment, few job opportunities, labour migration, and refugee influxes. It also considers the impact of societal norms and gender inequalities. Additionally, the study explores how insufficient government support, ineffective education, and employment policies create unique contexts that shape the factors influencing young people's successful transitions.

In conclusion, through its innovative use of narrative biography and qualitative analysis, this study not only illuminated the intricacies of young Jordanians' decision-making processes but also advanced scholarly understanding of educational-to-work transitions in non-Western contexts. By contextualising these transitions within the specific socio-economic realities of Jordan, the research offered valuable insights into how subjective perceptions shape individual transition pathways and broader socio-economic outcomes.

9.2.2 A Typology of Transition Pathways

The study findings revealed that Jordanian young people's transition pathways were significantly influenced by a range of factors that shaped their available choices (Chin *et al.,* 2011; Schoon & Lyons-Amos, 2016). Despite the uniqueness of each individual's biography, commonalities across these narratives delineated distinct transition pathways. Specifically, the study identified five principal pathways undertaken by Jordanian youth in their journey from education to work: transitioning from compulsory education, transitioning from vocational education, transitioning

from tertiary education to the public sector, transitioning from tertiary education to the private sector, and returning to education (see Section 6.2 for details).

These pathways were shaped by the subjective perceptions of economic conditions, job availability, educational and labour market policies, cultural norms, gender and class identities, social networks, nepotism 'Wasta', and the patriarchal system. Notably, the study focused on the typology of these pathways, highlighting their variety and the nuanced ways in which young people navigated their career transitions within the specific socio-economic context of Jordan.

The study emphasised that these transition pathways were influenced by the prevailing opportunity structures accessible to young Jordanians and the collective experiences shared within their peer groups (Roberts, 2009). This collective shaping of 'life biographies' underscored youth's diverse strategies to achieve successful transitions despite constraints such as limited job opportunities. The detailed examination of these pathways highlights individual experiences and emphasises the importance of considering factors like gender, class, and location in understanding these transitions.

In contrast to the extensive Western literature that primarily uses qualitative methods like biography to explore young people's transition pathways (MacDonald *et al.,*2001; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Furlong *et al.,*2011; Woodman & Bennett, 2015; Schoon & Lyons-Amos, 2017; Roberts & Antonucci, 2018; Heckhausen & Buchmann, 2019), the MENA region, including Jordan, has been notably underrepresented in such studies, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. Therefore, the study's focus on the typology of transition pathways in Jordan significantly contributes to the literature. It enriches our understanding of how Jordanian youth navigate their career choices amidst specific socio-economic conditions, thereby adding a critical perspective to the global discourse on youth transitions.

Additionally, the study offers a significant contribution by documenting for the first time in Jordan how young people navigated the challenges and barriers they faced during their transition from education to work (Chapters 7 and 8 provide further details). For example, some young Jordanians adopted a returning-to-education pathway to get a job or work while studying to gain experience to facilitate their entrance to the labour market. Others decided to move into the labour market early or faced restrictive social practices and norms with determination to achieve their goals and

desires in the labour market. In summary, young Jordanians began aspiring for avenues beyond the public sector due to their economic circumstances and the scarcity of employment opportunities. Additionally, they highlighted societal prejudices, as those pursuing such pathways or engaging in manual occupations were often deemed inferior based on the nature of their work. Notably, this phenomenon had a more pronounced impact on young women due to the prevailing patriarchal system and traditional gender roles expected by both family and society.

The study highlights a spectrum of perspectives among Jordanian youth, with some valuing entrepreneurship as a fulfilling pathway. In contrast, others see migration to developed countries or the Gulf region for job opportunities as equally meaningful achievements. Notably, these diverse pathways to successful transition are prevalent within the Jordanian context. These pathways emerge as specific to Jordanian youth, shaped by the country's circumstances, structural influences on decision-making, and the belief in their efficacy for a satisfactory transition.

Interestingly, migration is considered a viable transition pathway in the Jordanian context. Recognising migration as a common strategy for successful transition among Jordanian youth adds depth to our understanding of transition dynamics, shedding light on nuances that transcend both Western and non-Western contexts. The study revealed that despite the hurdles encountered by young Jordanians, many successfully transitioned from education to work, drawing on factors such as their education, family networks, perseverance, ambition, and 'Wasta'. This transition was exemplified by securing decent jobs, as perceived by them, offering essential benefits like health insurance, social security, and a fair income.

9.2.3 Conceptualising Success Criteria

A key aim of this study was to understand what young people in Jordan consider a successful transition from education to work. A thorough review of the literature underscored the complexity of defining success, presenting both objective and subjective evaluations focused on the process of securing employment, its outcomes, and overall satisfaction (O'Higgins & Pinedo, 2018; Nilsson, 2019). Furthermore, the literature highlighted the challenges in understanding what constitutes a successful transition, particularly in terms of satisfaction, pointing out the absence of a well-established concept of satisfaction that accounts for variations across class and gender (see Section 3.4 for a detailed discussion).

While existing literature in the MENA region primarily interprets successful transitions in terms of transition timing and job-related benefits such as health insurance, social security, and income (Amer, 2014; Assaad *et al.,* 2019), this study revealed that the majority of young people in Jordan considered their transitions successful simply by securing employment and becoming financially independent, regardless of the specific transition pathways. This research provides an in-depth examination of each transition path, considering young people's class and gender identities and their location, highlighting nuanced perspectives on what constitutes a successful transition for their perspectives.

This study's empirical significance lies in its detailed exploration of how Jordanian young people perceive successful transitions from education to work across different pathways. Those who chose to enter the workforce early prioritised financial independence and finding a job that matched their passion without necessarily emphasising the transition timing, the process, or job benefits beyond income. In contrast, respondents who moved early into vocational education described a successful transition as finding a job they enjoyed, gaining experience, developing their careers, and potentially starting their own businesses.

Respondents who made a delayed transition to the public sector emphasised the importance of job benefits such as social security, health insurance, job stability, social status, and favourable working conditions, viewing these elements as crucial for a successful transition. This perception aligns with existing literature on the MENA region, suggesting that young people across these countries share similar priorities when opting for public-sector employment (Assaad *et al.,* 2019).

Young Jordanians who transitioned later into the private sector understood success as securing employment, gaining experience, and achieving financial independence. Ideally, they sought jobs aligned with their educational backgrounds, but they placed less emphasis on the transition process, timing, or specific job benefits, indicating a preference for immediate job opportunities. Additionally, those who chose to return to education considered a successful transition as finding a job or starting a business that provided a decent income and essential job benefits such as social security, health insurance, and job stability. Notably, young women in this group placed significant importance on the proximity of the workplace to their homes and having control over their working hours as key factors for a successful transition (see Chapter 6 for further details).

The significant contribution of this study lies in its nuanced application of existing frameworks to the context of Jordan, providing a fresh perspective on the criteria for successful transitions among young Jordanian individuals. This study goes beyond previous research by critically examining young people's subjective views on what constitutes a successful transition, considering their specific pathways and how these are shaped by factors such as class, gender, and locality. While earlier research has explored various conceptualisations of successful youth transitions, this study specifically focuses on the perspectives of Jordanian youth, offering new empirical insights into how their transitions are perceived and the influences at play. This fills a gap in the academic literature by providing specific evidence from Jordan, a context that has been under-researched in this regard (Salehi-Isfahani & Dhillon, 2008).

This pathway-specific analysis deepens our comprehension of the multifaceted nature of successful transitions. It offers valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and employers to address the varied needs of young people across different career trajectories (see section 9.6 for further details). The study highlights the importance of recognising how gender stratification affects perceptions of successful transitions (Ng & Feldman, 2007; Brzinsky-Fay, 2015). Specifically, it reveals that young Jordanian women, especially those returning to education, have distinct views on what constitutes a successful transition, prioritising factors like proximity to home and flexible working hours. It also underscores men's awareness of their gender privilege. These perspectives challenge traditional definitions of success and emphasise the necessity of adopting a more comprehensive understanding that goes beyond conventional metrics. The findings of this study contribute to ongoing discussions about gender equality and advocate for the development of inclusive policies and environments in education and employment that cater to the diverse needs of young people.

Similarly, this study offers a new perspective on the impact of locality on young people's perceptions of a successful transition to work (Rudd & Evans, 1998; Jentsch, 2017; MacDonald, 2022). It highlights how young people's perceptions in Amman differ from those in Irbid. Young people in Amman emphasise job benefits, career advancement, and the work environment. While those in Irbid also consider these factors important, they prioritise securing a job with a decent income as their primary concern for a successful transition. These differences in understanding

successful transitions underscore the significant impact of the local context and an indication of economic disparity in the country.

Additionally, the study highlights how conceptualisations of successful transitions differ across social classes (Blustein *et al.,* 2002; Kogan & Unt, 2005). Respondents from various socioeconomic backgrounds exhibit distinct priorities depending on their career pathways: some emphasise job benefits, while others prioritise financial independence or alignment between job roles and their educational background. This class-based variation underscores the significant impact of socioeconomic factors on individuals' perceptions of what constitutes a successful transition.

9.2.4 A Comprehensive Portrayal of Key Determinants of Success

This section underscores the unique findings of the research on key factors influencing successful transitions among young Jordanians. Traditionally, studies have mainly focused on understanding the factors affecting the shift from education to work in developed countries, often neglecting the importance of young people's own actions and decisions (discussed further in Chapter 4). This research is groundbreaking as it integrates these factors across various levels—individual, family, local, national, and global (see Section 3.7 and Chapter 7 for detailed insights).

Limited research has thoroughly examined the factors affecting the educational-to-work transitions of young people in developing countries, particularly from a qualitative viewpoint (Fehling *et al.,* 2015; Fakih *et al.,* 2020). An exception is Nilsson's 2019 study, which qualitatively investigated the determinants of young people's transitions, grouping them into external factors, individual factors, and education. However, this study was somewhat superficial, as it did not explore the complex details of transition pathways or consider factors beyond these categories.

Based on the participants ' perspectives, this study aimed to explore the main factors that shape the successful transition of Jordanian youth from education to work. The findings revealed many structural and individual factors influencing these transitions differently, with notable differences based on social class, gender, and geographical location. Despite economic challenges, such as a weak economy and limited job opportunities, Jordanian youth showed a strong determination to enter the workforce and achieve financial independence. This reflects the ideological pressure within the country's context, demonstrating that Jordanian youth are resilient and committed to

pursuing financial independence through workforce participation, even under challenging conditions. However, the study also acknowledges the barriers created by external factors, such as societal norms and traditions, which can hinder their ability to achieve their goals.

Mentioning societal pressures and deeply rooted local customs and traditions points to a broader set of beliefs that can restrict young Jordanians, especially women, in their educational and career goals (Shteiwi, 2015; Alawad *et al.,* 2020). These pressures come from cultural expectations about gender roles, family duties, patriarchal system, and social norms, which limit the opportunities available to young people, particularly women, as they move from education to work. So, while the statement emphasises the determination of Jordanian youth, it also highlights the impact of cultural and ideological pressures on their dreams and opportunities. This shows the complex relationship between social factors and personal choices in their journey to adulthood and employment.

Through a qualitative examination of five different pathways, Jordanian youth consistently highlighted the factors affecting their transition, which varied based on socioeconomic status, gender, and geographic location (see Chapter 7). For example, the research showed that young people from wealthier backgrounds were less affected by the country's economic challenges and poor job market compared to those from working or middle socioeconomic backgrounds. Additionally, economic hardships had less impact on youth in economically prosperous areas like Amman, the capital, where most businesses are located, compared to regions like Irbid governorate. Furthermore, the study emphasised how the country's economic situation differently affects young men and women, influenced by local customs, expected gender roles, and the prevailing patriarchal system.

The findings above corroborate existing literature regarding the significance of a country's economic circumstances and job availability as pivotal factors influencing the transition of young people into the workforce, alongside the impact of social class, gender, and location (Griffin *et al.,* 1981; Isengard 2010; MacDonald, 2022; Simões *et al.,* 2022). Nonetheless, the study provides an exploration of how the youth transition model in Jordan diverges from Western studies. As highlighted earlier, Jordanian and Western contexts present different challenges, leading to distinct factors affecting young people's pathways for transition (MacDonald & King, 2021). For instance,

this study identifies “Wasta” as a crucial determinant for successful transition within the Jordanian context. Conversely, prevailing research in Western literature has not extensively examined the significance of nepotism and related concepts in shaping outcomes in labour market transitions.

Moreover, the study results focused on social capital, robust connections, social practices and norms, the patriarchal system, and local factors linked to geographical locations that influence young Jordanian people. These factors affected young people differently regarding class, gender, and location. Despite these factors being common in Western studies (Kramarz & Skans, 2006; Jukarainensc, 2013; Miller & Davey, 2020), they were not fully researched in a different context, like Jordan.

The study found that "Wasta" primarily benefits young people from affluent backgrounds, helping them transition more easily. On the other hand, young people from middle and lower-class families who lack these influential connections face more significant challenges. This use of “Wasta” increases social inequality among Jordanian youth, leading to widespread frustration and a belief that the government is unable to address this issue effectively, which negatively impacts their transition into adulthood (Al-Ramahi, 2008; Baranik *et al.,* 2023).

The research also showed that successful transitions for Jordanian youth are influenced by local factors related to their geographical location. The findings emphasised that the place where young people live plays a crucial role in their successful transitions. Living in a dynamic and economically vibrant area was identified as a key factor for success. This was evident in the personal stories of the respondents, which highlighted the impact of their geographical location on their transition experiences. However, local factors had a more significant effect on the transitions of young women, especially in the Irbid, supporting existing findings from both Western and MENA studies about the importance of locality, particularly for women (Evans, 2008; King *et al.,* 2016; Weßling, 2016). The study findings indicated how these successful transition factors differ across Jordanian youth’s transition pathways.

The research confirmed that young people in Jordan face significant obstacles when trying to achieve their goals and successfully transition into work. These obstacles include a lack of job opportunities, problems with the education system, issues with the labour market and its benefits, parental expectations, gender roles, and local customs and traditions. This aligns with established

literature that underscores the centrality of opportunity structures and emphasises the importance of aligning young people's aspirations with the available opportunities (Roberts, 2009; Schoon & Lyons-Amos, 2017).

Previous Western studies have underscored the importance of structural elements such as a country's economic condition, education system, and labour market dynamics, often focusing on the agency of young people. Conversely, this study highlights the heightened significance of structural factors in determining the success of young people in Jordan, with less emphasis on individual agency. However, the researcher contends that this increased influence of structural factors limits the desires and aspirations of Jordanian youth. For instance, the study revealed instances where young Jordanians desired alternative opportunities or career paths, yet familial and broader social structures hindered their pursuit of these. This suggests a growing trend towards individualisation in Jordan, albeit one constrained beneath the surface by social and institutional barriers, potentially leading to a volatile situation (MacDonald, 1997; Hilker & Fraser, 2009).

For instance, the study found that many young Jordanians face societal stigma if they move into vocational education or jobs traditionally seen as manual labour. Some respondents expressed interest in pursuing these paths, but parental opposition was a major obstacle. They explained that parents worried about stigma and uncertainties about their children's future, including marriage prospects. This challenge was even greater for young women, who often face societal expectations against vocational education and such careers, leading to strong opposition from their families (Barcucci & Mryyan, 2014; Alfarhan, 2015; AlAzzawi & Hlasny, 2020). Despite these challenges, many young people managed to study and work in their preferred fields, showing that Jordanian youth have increased agency in their choices. However, their freedom to choose is largely restricted by structural barriers.

9.2.5 Relevance of Existing Theoretical Perspectives in Jordan Context

This study makes a significant theoretical contribution by using an ecological framework (see section 3.7 for detailed insights) based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Guy-Evans, 2020; Hayes *et al.,* 2022). This framework is a unique addition to the existing literature because no previous study has used it to explain labour market transitions in the MENA region, including Jordan. The ecological framework provides a comprehensive way

to understand the factors that influence young people's transitions from education to work. Although these factors have been discussed in Western literature, the study's primary contribution lies in applying them within a new context, focusing on the impacts of social class, gender, and geographical location.

The study also highlights the limitations of using a single theory to fully explain the transitions of young Jordanians from education to work (see the following section for details). However, structuration theory and the theory of forms of capital emerge as the most relevant for understanding these transitions, primarily because they offer a nuanced view of the interaction between individual choices and societal structures (Chapter Eight provides further details).

Anthony Giddens' structuration theory suggests that social structures shape individuals through their actions and interactions. In the context of young Jordanians transitioning to work, this theory helps us understand how societal norms, economic conditions, and institutional frameworks influence their decision-making and opportunities (Giddens, 1984). On the other hand, Pierre Bourdieu's theory of forms of capital highlights how different forms of capital—economic, social, and cultural—affect individuals' access to resources and opportunities (Bourdieu, 1986). For young Jordanians, this theory explains how factors like family connections, education, and cultural background influence their career paths and their ability to overcome transition challenges.

Additionally, the study touches on the theory of individualisation, which is relevant to understanding young Jordanians' evolving aspirations and behaviours. Individualisation theory suggests that in modern societies, individuals increasingly see themselves as responsible for shaping their own lives rather than being guided by traditional roles or social expectations (Beck, 1992; Shanahan & Longest, 2009). This theory is particularly important in the context of Jordan, where young people are beginning to prioritise personal goals and career aspirations over traditional family or societal expectations, as explained in young people's accounts in Chapters Six and Seven. Indeed, the study finds that despite structural constraints like limited job opportunities and societal norms, Jordanian youth are showing a trend towards individualisation. They increasingly seek pathways such as entrepreneurship, further education, and even migration to develop their careers, reflecting a shift towards more personal agency in their life choices. However, the extent of this individualisation is tempered by persistent social and institutional

barriers, particularly for young women, who face additional challenges due to the persistent patriarchal system and gender norms and expectations.

Drawing on these theoretical frameworks, this study comprehensively analyses the complex dynamics involved in Jordanian youth's transition from education to work. It underscores the need for a multidimensional approach that considers individual agency and structural constraints in understanding and addressing the challenges they face in achieving successful transitions.

9.3 Implications for Policy

The study's findings provide a valuable opportunity to develop policies that specifically address the perspectives of Jordanian youth on successful transitions and the factors that influence them. These policies can also be applied to other MENA countries, such as Lebanon, Tunisia, and Palestine, in contexts similar to Jordan. Unlike the dominant quantitative methods in existing research, using qualitative biographical methods enriches the literature by providing detailed insights into the personal experiences of Jordanian youth (Berg, 2004; Hennink *et al.,* 2011; Creswell, 2013). Policymakers should recognise the importance of qualitative research in understanding the diverse and context-specific challenges that young people face during their transition, as well as their views on success and the factors that shape it (Wyn & Dwyer, 1999; Gaupp, 2013; Paniccia *et al.,* 2019).

Identifying five main transition pathways among Jordanian youth underscores the need for tailored policies addressing each pathway's unique challenges and opportunities. Policymakers should develop targeted programs and interventions supporting youth across diverse transition trajectories. It is crucial to emphasise the significance of fostering a supportive environment, including encouraging entrepreneurship and providing resources and support for youth seeking opportunities abroad.

Moreover, the study highlights the crucial need for programs that improve economic opportunities, especially in areas with limited job prospects. Policymakers should focus on fostering entrepreneurship by providing training, mentorship, and financial support. This would help young people start their own businesses and create job opportunities rather than solely relying on the traditional job market. Recognising migration as a valid career pathway is also important. Policies

should offer resources and support for those looking to work abroad, helping them navigate the complexities of migration and employment in foreign countries.

In regions where migration is a viable option, providing information and support services can help individuals make informed decisions and prepare for the challenges of working abroad. This might include language training, information about legal requirements, and guidance on finding reputable employers.

Notably, young women on the pathway of returning to education emphasised the importance of proximity to residence and control over working hours as essential criteria for a successful transition. This sheds light on the distinct considerations shaping transition experiences for young Jordanian women, emphasising the need for a more holistic understanding of success beyond conventional metrics.

A comprehensive approach recognising and supporting different success forms is crucial for promoting inclusive economic development. The study's ecological framework categorises factors at various levels, offering a broad perspective on what influences successful transitions. Policymakers should adopt a holistic strategy that considers individual, familial, local, national, and global factors. It’s important to acknowledge how class, gender, and locality impact these transitions to create effective and fair policies.

Understanding how opportunity structures affect different career paths is key to crafting effective policies. The study found that what counts as success can vary widely depending on factors like career path, gender, social class, and location. This underscores the need for flexible and inclusive policies that cater to Jordanian youth's diverse needs and circumstances.

Policymakers must recognise that success is not one-size-fits-all and must tailor their interventions to meet individuals' unique priorities and challenges within each career pathway. For example, in areas with limited job opportunities, providing targeted training and resources for local entrepreneurship can empower young people to create their own jobs. Additionally, implementing mentorship programs can help young entrepreneurs develop the skills they need to succeed.

The study highlights the significant role of structural factors, such as economic conditions and job opportunities, in shaping young people in Jordan's paths. Policymakers should aim to create an

enabling environment that empowers individuals to exercise agency and make informed choices. This can be achieved by the following:

- **Improving Access to Education and Training:** Provide diverse educational opportunities, including vocational training, to equip young people with skills that match the demands of the labour market. This can help them make better-informed career choices and reduce dependence on limited job options.
- **Encouraging Entrepreneurship:** Implement programs that support young entrepreneurs through access to funding, mentorship, and resources. This empowers individuals to create their own job opportunities rather than relying solely on traditional employment.
- **Promoting Job Creation and Economic Stability:** Develop policies that stimulate job creation in various sectors and ensure economic stability. For example, investing in infrastructure projects or supporting small and medium-sized enterprises can provide more job opportunities and a stable economic environment.
- **Addressing Societal Stigma:** Launch awareness campaigns to change negative perceptions about certain career paths, such as vocational education and manual labour. Highlight successful individuals in these fields to shift public opinion and encourage more young people to pursue these options without fear of stigma.
- **Supporting Parental Education:** Educate parents about the value and opportunities available in various career paths, including non-traditional or vocational ones. This can help reduce resistance and support young people in pursuing their chosen careers.
- **Improving Career Guidance and Counselling:** Provide robust career guidance services in schools and communities to help young people understand their options and make informed decisions based on their interests and the labour market.

The comprehensive account provided by the study regarding the choices of Jordanian youth and the factors influencing these choices is pivotal for policymakers. It enables them to explore the underlying drivers of youth decisions and design tailored policies that affect their transition from education to work. For instance, despite many expressing a desire to pursue vocational education, it remains the least favoured pathway, particularly for young women, due to societal perceptions. To address this, policymakers must combat societal biases against vocational education and manual occupations, advocate for educational reforms promoting diverse career paths, and

challenge gender stereotypes. Ensuring the alignment of the education system with evolving youth aspirations is essential, including providing a practical curriculum linked to the labour market and equitable distribution of vocational education facilities, especially for young women.

Addressing societal stigma and parental resistance, particularly towards vocational education, requires specific actions. Targeted interventions such as public awareness campaigns, community workshops, and policy reforms can significantly empower youth. For instance, showcasing success stories of individuals who have thrived in vocational careers can help challenge stereotypes and build acceptance among parents and society. By doing so, young people can feel more confident pursuing various educational and career paths, leading to a more empowered and versatile workforce.

For those pursuing traditional employment, policies could focus on improving the quality and availability of job training programs to match better the skills needed in the labour market. Offering internships and apprenticeships can also provide valuable work experience, making young people more competitive candidates for available jobs.

Recognising and addressing the specific needs of different groups is essential. For instance, women may face unique barriers due to cultural norms and expectations. Policies to support women's employment might include creating safe and supportive work environments, promoting gender equality, and offering childcare services to help women balance work and family responsibilities.

By highlighting the gendered nuances in understanding successful transitions, the study contributes to broader discussions on gender equality. The study offers empirical evidence challenging traditional, gendered concepts of success and emphasises the critical need to recognise and confront gender disparities during the transition from education to employment. This insight carries significant implications for policymakers, educators, and employers striving to cultivate an inclusive and supportive environment that meets the diverse needs of all young people, regardless of gender, particularly in settings influenced by patriarchal norms and traditions.

Developing gender-inclusive policies that recognise the unique challenges faced by young women, including societal expectations and patriarchal norms, is another key policy suggestion derived from this study’s findings. Support initiatives are needed that empower women to pursue diverse

pathways and challenge traditional, gendered notions of success. The gender-specific perspective highlights the need for tailored approaches to address young women's unique challenges in transitioning from education to work. The findings contribute to fostering gender-inclusive policies and support systems that recognise and respond to young men's and women's distinct aspirations and concerns.

By adopting a nuanced approach that considers Jordanian youth's diverse experiences and challenges, policymakers can ensure that their strategies are relevant and effective. This holistic and inclusive approach will help foster economic growth and give young people the tools and opportunities they need to succeed in their chosen paths.

Grasping the complexity of class dynamics in shaping successful transitions is paramount for effective policy formulation. Policymakers must leverage this understanding to devise strategies that actively bridge existing socioeconomic divides, guaranteeing equitable access to opportunities and resources for all. By evenly confronting and remedying the diverse needs of individuals across socioeconomic strata, policies can be crafted to foster enhanced social mobility and mitigate inequalities in the transition from education to work. The insights explored in this study should be leveraged to revamp career guidance programs, infusing them with a robust consideration of socioeconomic factors. Armed with this knowledge, career counsellors can offer tailored guidance that accounts for the distinct challenges and aspirations of individuals from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

This precise and targeted approach empowers young people and ensures that their career trajectories align with pragmatic pathways to success, irrespective of socioeconomic status. These programs may involve targeted mentorship programs, financial assistance initiatives, or skills development opportunities tailored to each class's unique circumstances, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of transition support.

Furthermore, the study emphasises the importance of crafting policies sensitive to local contexts and recognising how geographical location significantly affects job opportunities. This means that while investing in economically vibrant regions can improve the chances of successful transitions, it is equally crucial to address the specific challenges faced by young people in less developed areas to avoid exacerbating regional disparities. Policymakers must ensure that economic growth

benefits all regions by implementing targeted interventions that cater to the unique needs of each area, thereby creating more balanced opportunities across different locations. Key policy recommendations from this finding include ensuring a balanced distribution of job creation initiatives across regions and addressing transportation and educational infrastructure disparities in each area.

Moreover, policymakers must acknowledge the influence of 'Wasta' in the Jordanian context and implement strategies to mitigate its effects on social inequality. This can be achieved by promoting transparency and fairness in hiring processes to 'level the playing field' for young people who lack influential connections. The study underscores the need for tailored and inclusive policies to aid Jordanian youth in transitioning from education to employment. Recognising the diverse pathways, success criteria, and determining factors enables policymakers to craft interventions that cater to the distinct challenges encountered in different contexts. By aligning policies with the nuanced insights provided by this study, Jordan can cultivate a more inclusive and supportive labour market environment for its youth, thus advancing the nation's economic and social progress.

9.4 Research Limitations and Questions for Future Research

The study's findings open the door for further exploration into the perspectives and aspirations of young Jordanians as they transition from education to work. Through its qualitative approach, this study provides valuable insights into individual experiences and carefully selects a sample representative of the typical features of Jordanian youth. However, given the study's relatively small sample size, which was constrained by time, cost, and study objectives, the findings have limited generalisability.

It is important to note that some groups were excluded from this study, including refugees, foreign labourers living in the country, and Jordanian youth living and working outside Jordan. While this is acknowledged as a limitation, the study explains that its focus was solely on Jordanian youth residing in the country. These excluded groups possess different characteristics, and their inclusion would necessitate a different theoretical and methodological approach (see section 5.4 for further details).

Despite the richness of qualitative methods in capturing detailed personal experiences, they often lack the external validity necessary for broader generalisations (Maxwell & Chmiel, 2014). This limitation suggests a need for future research to explore other methodological avenues. While qualitative methods excel at uncovering in-depth insights, their limitations in generalisability should not imply that surveys alone can address this gap. Surveys might struggle to grasp the nuanced and context-specific issues that qualitative research reveals. Instead, future studies should consider using mixed-methods approaches, combining the in-depth understanding of qualitative methods with the wider scope of quantitative surveys to create a more comprehensive view of the factors influencing youth transitions in Jordan. This blend of methodologies would provide both the detailed personal narratives and the broader statistical trends necessary for a holistic understanding of the topic (Gaupp, 2013).

The study concentrated on the Jordanian context, necessitating caution in extrapolating findings to other cultural and socioeconomic settings. While similarities exist between the Jordanian context and the perceptions of youth in countries like Palestine, Lebanon, and Tunisia, it is essential to recognise that the study's findings may not apply directly to Gulf countries and Egypt due to differing economic and contextual factors. Despite some shared characteristics, such as national customs, traditions, patriarchal systems, and the prevalence of nepotism and 'Wasta,' these regions possess unique nuances. Future research should explore similar themes across diverse settings to confirm and build upon the study's findings.

This also extended to the policy implications discussed in the previous section, as they are based on the study's findings. Still, the actual impact of these policies should be empirically examined. Future research could assess the effectiveness of these policy interventions on youth transitions, providing policymakers with valuable feedback for continuous improvement. This can be conducted by investigating the alignment of policies with the aspirations and challenges of young people, which could offer insights into potential policy reforms that better cater to young people's needs.

The study offers an avenue for future research to examine the experiences and determinants of youth transitions in Jordan compared to other MENA countries by investigating cross-cultural variations to provide a more in-depth understanding of the region's unique challenges and

opportunities. In addition, conducting a MENA comparative analysis of the pathways can uncover unique challenges and successes associated with each, guiding policymakers in tailoring interventions for specific groups. Moreover, the study highlighted the various transition pathways that Jordanian young people adopted. This provides an opportunity to conduct longitudinal studies to track young people's transitions over an extended period.

The study findings reveal that family dynamics, such as parental expectations and the provision of financial and emotional support, play a crucial role in shaping young people's transition choices from education to work. This raises the question of whether educational systems and career planning initiatives effectively engage with parents. It suggests that there could be valuable lessons for how schools and colleges offer advice and support to better involve families in the transition process.

Future research should delve deeper into the role of family in shaping transition choices and how educational institutions can better engage with parents. Understanding how to incorporate family perspectives and support into career planning and guidance offered by schools and colleges could enhance the alignment between young people's aspirations and the expectations and resources available at home. This integration could lead to more supportive environments that facilitate smoother transitions for youth.

Additionally, the study highlights the need to examine ongoing educational reforms and vocational training initiatives to ensure they align with young people's aspirations. Evaluating the effectiveness of these reforms is essential for guiding future policy adjustments that can better prepare youth for the evolving job market. This involves not only assessing the current educational offerings but also understanding how these programs meet the real-world needs of students and their families, ensuring that they are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary for successful transitions.

The long-term consequences of Wasta on social inequality among young Jordanian people should be examined. This could be achieved by investigating the persistent influence of social connections and 'Wasta' in the labour market to inform strategies that mitigate inequality and enhance transparency.

The Jordanian young people mentioned the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, economic downturn, and Syrian refugees and foreign labour in the country on their successful transition. This is a whole era of future research to thoroughly examine the impact of these factors and inform policy responses. The study included only young Jordanian people, so future research could include young people from other nationalities residing in the country as refugees or foreign workers.

The study findings also highlighted that all theories mentioned in Chapter Three were relevant and useful for understanding young people's transitions in Jordan, especially structuration and forms of capital theories. However, the study raises questions about how these theories can be integrated to fully explain young people's transitions to work by posing questions such as what the points of similarity and differences are and to what extent these issues can be resolved to combine such diverse theories.

In conclusion, this thesis has illuminated critical dimensions of young Jordanians' transitions from education to work, offering valuable insights into the complexities and dynamics shaping their pathways. By employing a qualitative approach and carefully selecting its sample, the study has provided a nuanced understanding of individual experiences while acknowledging the inherent limitations of generalisability. The findings underscore the need for tailored policy interventions that address the diverse aspirations, challenges, and contextual realities faced by Jordanian youth. Ultimately, this thesis contributes to a broader discourse on youth transitions in the MENA region. It also provides a new avenue for Western researchers to expand their perspectives on youth studies in the South.

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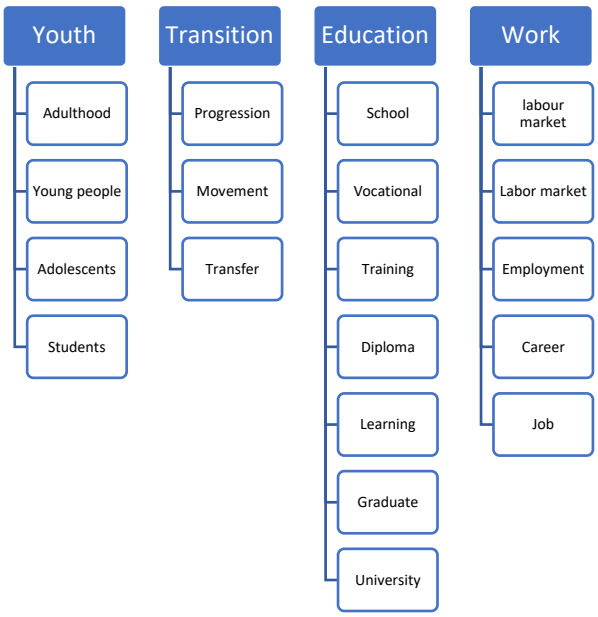
Appendices

Appendix I: Key concepts used in the empirical literature review.



Appendix II: Search query and results for the “Web of Science” database.

0/6 | Combine Sets | Export | Clear History

6	#4 AND #5	189	Add to query
5	TS=(determinant* OR factor*)	7,450,678	Add to query
4	#3 AND #2	776	Add to query
3	TS=(“school to work” OR “school to employment” OR “school to job” OR “school to labour market” OR “school to labor market” OR “school to career” OR “education to work” OR “education to employment” OR “education to job” OR “education to labour market” OR “education to labor market” OR “education to career” OR “university to work” OR “university to employment” OR “university	1,860	Add to query
2	TS=((youth OR adolescent* OR “young people” OR adulthood) AND (transition OR transfer OR integration OR move OR moving) AND (education OR school OR university OR training OR vocational OR diploma) AND (work OR employment OR job OR career OR “labor market” OR “labour market”))	7,515	Add to query
1	TS=(youth OR transition OR education OR work)	8,320,178	Add to query

University of Bristol

Appendix III: The syntax used for the "Web of Science" database.

1. TS=(youth OR transition OR education OR work)
2. TS=((youth OR adolescent* OR "young people" OR adulthood) AND (transition OR transfer OR integration OR move OR moving) AND (education OR school OR university OR training OR vocational OR diploma) AND (work OR employment OR job OR career OR "labor market" OR "labour market"))
3. TS=("school to work" OR "school to employment" OR "school to job" OR "school to labour market" OR "school to labor market" OR "school to career" OR "education to work" OR "education to employment" OR "education to job" OR "education to labour market" OR "education to labor market" OR "education to career" OR "university to work" OR "university to employment" OR "university to job" OR "university to labour market" OR "university to labor market" OR "university to career" OR "training to employment" OR "training to job" OR "training to labour market" OR "training to career")
4. #2 AND #3
5. TS=(determinant* OR factor*)
6. #4 AND #5

Appendix IV: The query used for empirical literature review in the Scopus database.

TITLE-ABS-KEY ((youth OR adolescent* OR "young people" OR adulthood) AND (transition OR transfer OR integration OR move OR moving) AND (education OR school OR university OR training OR vocational OR diploma) AND (work OR employment OR job OR career OR "labor market" OR "labour market") AND ("school to work" OR "school to employment" OR "school to job" OR "school to labour market" OR "school to labor market" OR "school to career" OR "education to work" OR "education to employment" OR "education to job" OR "education to labour market" OR "education to labor market" OR "education to career" OR "university to work" OR "university to employment" OR "university to job" OR "university to labour market" OR "university to labor market" OR "university to career" OR "training to employment" OR "training to job" OR "training to labour market" OR "training to career") AND (determinant* OR factor*))

Appendix V: Search query and results for the "IBSS" database.

Advanced Search | Command Line | Recent searches | Thesaurus | Field codes | Search tips

University of Bristol Library

	"school to work" OR "school to employment" OR "school to job" OR "school to labour market" OR "school to labor market" OR "school to career" OR "education to work" OR "education to employment" OR "education to job" OR "education to labour market" OR "education to labor market" OR "education to career" OR "university to work" OR "university to employment" OR "university to job" OR "university to labour market" OR "university to labor	in	Anywhere
AND	youth OR adolescent* OR "young people" OR adulthood	in	Anywhere except full text — NOFT
AND	transition OR transfer OR integration OR move*	in	Anywhere except full text — NOFT
AND	education OR school OR university OR training OR vocational OR diploma	in	Anywhere except full text — NOFT
AND	work OR employment OR job OR career OR "labor market" OR "labour market"	in	Anywhere except full text — NOFT
AND	determinant* OR factor*	in	Anywhere

Add a row Remove a row

Appendix VI: SPS Research Ethics Application

University of BRISTOL
School for Policy Studies

SPS RESEARCH ETHICS
APPLICATION FORM: STAFF and DOCTORAL STUDENTS

- This proforma must be completed for each piece of research carried out by members of the School for Policy Studies, both staff and doctoral postgraduate students.
- See the Ethics Procedures document for clarification of the process.
- All research **must** be ethically reviewed before any fieldwork is conducted, regardless of source of funding.
- See the School's policy and guidelines relating to research ethics and data protection, to which the project is required to conform.
- Please stick to the word limit provided. **Do not attach** your funding application or research proposal.

Key project details:

1. Proposer's Name	*Mohammad Al-Batayneh*		
2. Proposer's Email Address:	*ma16401@bristol.ac.uk*		
3. Project Title	Successful youth transitions from education to work in Jordan		
4. Project Start Date:	*9/2016*	**End Date:**	*4/2023*

Who needs to provide Research Ethics Committee approval for your project?

The SPS REC will only consider those research ethics applications which do not require submission elsewhere. As such, you should make sure that your proposed research does not require a NHS National Research Ethics Service (NRES) review e.g. does it involve NHS patients, staff or facilities – see http://www.hra-decisiontools.org.uk/ethics/

If you are not sure where you should apply, please discuss it with either the chair of the Committee or the Faculty Ethics Officer who is based in RED.

Social care research projects which involve NHS patients, people who use services or people who lack capacity as research participants need to be reviewed by a Social Care Research Ethics Committee (see https://www.hra.nhs.uk/planning-and-improving-research/policies-standards-legislation/social-care-research/). Similarly research which accesses unanonymised patient records (without informed consent) must be reviewed by a REC and the National Information Governance Board for Health and Social Care (NIGB).

Who needs to provide governance approval for this project?

If this project involves access to patients, clients, staff or carers of an NHS Trust or Social Care Organisation, it falls within the scope of the Research Governance Framework for Health and Social. You will also need to get written approval from the Research Management Office or equivalent of each NHS Trust or Social Care Organisation.

When you have ethical approval, you will need to complete the research registration form:

http://www.bristol.ac.uk/red/research-governance/registration-sponsorship/study-notification.html

Guidance on completing this form can be found at: http://www.bristol.ac.uk/red/research-governance/registration-sponsorship/guidance.pdf. Contact the Research Governance team (research-governance@bristol.ac.uk) for guidance on completing this form and if you have any questions about obtaining local approval.

Do you need additional insurance to carry out your research?

Whilst staff and doctoral students will normally be covered by the University's indemnity insurance there are some situations where it will need to be checked with the insurer. If you are conducting research with: Pregnant research subjects or children under 5 you should email: insurance-enquiries@bristol.ac.uk

In addition, if you are working or travelling overseas you should take advantage of the university travel insurance (see http://www.bristol.ac.uk/secretary/insurance/travel-insurance/).

Do you need a Disclosure and Barring Service check?

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) replaces the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA). Criteria for deciding whether you require a DBS check are available from:

https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service/about

You should specifically look at the frequency, nature, and duration of your contact with potentially vulnerable adults and or children. If your contact is a one-off research interaction, or infrequent contact (for example: 3 contacts over a period of time) you are unlikely to require a check.

If you think you need a DBS check then you should consult the University of Bristol web-page:

http://www.bristol.ac.uk/secretary/legal/dbs/

5. If your research project requires REC approval elsewhere please tell us which committee, this includes where co-researchers are applying for approval at another institution. Please provide us with a copy of your approval letter for our records when it is available.

For this project, the researcher contacted the Jordanian Department of Statistics (DOS) to get their approval on conducting this research and for a sample from the latest census in 2015. They confirmed to him that any research for academic reasons requires no approval from DOS and by the Jordanian DOS law, they cannot provide him with any individual/household data. The only help that they can provide him is a sample on block level where each block contains 80-120 household without any details about these household, but it is allowed for the researcher to knock the doors of these household to find the sample this research is intending to interview. However, due to the complexity of such approach, cost, time constraints and considering that the researcher will be the only field worker, this approach was not possible, and it was agreed with the researcher supervisors to use non-probability sampling as detailed in section 3 below. Attached is the Department of Statistics official letter that the researcher received when requesting their approval and the sample for this research in appendix 5.

6. Have all subcontractors you are using for this project (including transcribers, interpreters, and co-researchers not formally employed at Bristol University) agreed to be bound by the School's requirements for ethical research practice?

Yes		
No/Not yet		Note: You must ensure that written agreement is secured before they start to work. They will be provided with training and sign a detailed consent form.
Not applicable	**x**	

7. If you are a PhD/doctoral student please tell us the name of your research supervisor(s).

Dr Eldin Fahmy

Dr Sebnem Eroglu-Hawksworth

Please confirm that your supervisor(s) has seen this final version of your ethics application?	
Yes	**x**
No	

8. Who is funding this study?

50% University of Bristol

50% Self-funded

If this study is funded by the ESRC or another funder requiring lay representation on the ethics committee and is being undertaken by a member staff, this form should be submitted to the Faculty REC.

Post-graduate students undertaking ESRC funded projects should submit their form to the SPS Research Ethics Committee (SPS REC).

9. Is this application part of a larger proposal?

No	**x**
Yes	

If yes, please provide a summary of the larger study and indicate how this application relates to the overall study.

10. Is this proposal a replication of a similar proposal already approved by the SPS REC? Please provide the SPS REC reference number.

No	**x**
Yes	

If Yes, please tell us the name of the project, the date approval was given and code (if you have one).

Please describe any differences (such as context) in the current study. If the study is a replication of a previously approved study. Submit these first two pages of the form.

ETHICAL RESEARCH PROFORMA

The following set of questions is intended to provide the School Research Ethics Committee with enough information to determine the risks and benefits associated with your research. You should use these questions to assist in identifying the ethical considerations which are important to your research. You should identify any relevant ethical issues and how you intend to deal with them. Whilst the REC does not comment on the methodological design of your study, it will consider whether the design of your study is likely to produce the benefits you anticipate. **Please avoid copying and pasting large parts of research bids or proposals which do not directly answer the questions.** Please also avoid using *unexplained* acronyms, abbreviations or jargon.

1. IDENTITY & EXPERIENCE OF (CO) RESEARCHERS: Please give a list of names, positions, qualifications, previous research experience, and functions in the proposed research of all those who will be in contact with participants

Mohammad Al-Batayneh, a second year PhD student in social policy with bachelor's degree in mathematics from Hashemite University, Jordan and master's degree in Statistics from Yarmouk University, Jordan. Mr Al-Batanyeh will undertake the proposed fieldwork and subsequent qualitative analysis of recruitment, design of the survey, interview transcripts, data cleaning and coding, and analysis.

Previous research experience:

2016-2018 PhD program

- Philosophy and Research Design in the Social Sciences (SPS),
- Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods in the Social Sciences (SPS),
- Further Qualitative Methods,
- Researching Poverty, Inequality and Social Exclusion.

2015-to date:

Regional results-based management and evaluation specialist with United Nations Development Program (UNDP), supporting 18 countries in the Middle-east and North Africa in core development and humanitarian projects for better results-based reporting, management, and evaluation.

2010-2015:

Working for the UNDP Jordan office as project manager for support to poverty analysis and monitoring including enhancing household surveys, poverty analysis, multidimensional poverty, employment and unemployment survey, and strengthening Jordanian department of statistics. Preparing the national poverty strategy 2010-2020 and provide policies and strategies on better employment. Conduct a special household survey to assess the impact of the Syrian refugees' influx on the hosting community in Jordan, build the social accounting matrix (SAM), the Jordanian input output tables (JIOT), general equilibrium modelling, and in addition to benefitting from social administrative statistical records

From 2013-2015, I worked also for the World Bank office in Kuwait as statistical expert for developing and implementing their household income and expenditure survey and the labour force survey. In addition to prepare analysis for more efficient national social safety net and removing national subsidies on gas and food.

2009-2010

Consultant for the Management System International-USIAD Jordan (MSI-USIAD Jordan), and for several other private companies in different statistical and economic analysis subjects, strategic planning and M&E. Provide training for government, private and local organization on program management, RBM approach, M&E, strategic planning, survey implementation, sampling, SPSS, statistical analysis, social analysis and policy formulation.

Current Publication

1. Albatayneh Mohammad (2013), Maximum Entropy Control Charts, ISBN: 978-3-659-42193-8, LAMBERT Academic Publishing - Saarbrücken, Germany.
2. Co-author of "Comparison 2002-2010 Quality of Life Index report for Jordan", DoS, MoPIC, ESCWA and UNDP, shared publication. 2012.
3. Co-author of "2010 Analysis Quality of Life Index report for Jordan", DoS, MOPIC, ESCWA and UNDP, shared publication. 2012.
4. Co-author of "Thinking differently about the poor: findings from poverty pockets survey in Jordan", DoS, MoPIC and UNDP, shared publication. 2012.
5. Co-author of "Poverty Reduction Strategy 2013-2020 for Jordan", MoSD, MoPIC and UNDP, shared publication. 2012.
6. Co-author of "Impact of Syrian Refugees Influx on hosting communities-analytical study based on household expenditure and income surveys 2010 and 2013", MoPIC and UNDP, shared publication. 2014.
7. Co-author of "Jordan National Youth Assessment", USAID/Jordan Monitoring & Evaluation Support Project (MESP) and Management Systems International (MSI), shared publication. Feb. 2015.

2. STUDY AIMS/OBJECTIVES [maximum of 200 words]: Please provide the aims and objectives of your research.

This study aims to understand youth views/perceptions on their transition from education to work in Jordan. It will explore the literature and the evidence on youth transition from education to work, what are the determinants that affect transition quality, and how these determinants are experienced by Jordanian youth. Moreover, this study will develop a concrete framework with milestones on the determinants that affect Jordanian youth transition, while including exploring the differences with similar Upper Middle-Income Countries, in terms of the economic and social determinants of youth transitions. The age, gender, family and housing transitions, gender, education, poverty, social norms, and youth's perception will be investigated for better understanding of the youth transition and how these determinants affect it.

The research objectives are to focus on youth perceptions, as this was not fully researched in the previous literature, especially in Jordan and similar UMICs. Using qualitative semi-structured

interviews with young people that will help in gaining in-depth knowledge about when they consider their transition as a success and what are the relevant determinants that affect this success or failure from their perception. This study will investigate the disadvantaged youth transition as well to explore their transition. Finally, this research will explore how youth perception on their transition can inform policy development, with considering the appropriate policy responses to disadvantaged youth transition.

RESEARCH WITH HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

(If you are undertaking secondary data analysis, please proceed to section 11)

3. RESEARCH METHODS AND SAMPLING STRATEGY [maximum of 300 words]: Please tell us what you propose to do in your research and how individual participants, or groups of participants, will be identified and sampled. Please also tell us what is expected of research participants who consent to take part (Please note that recruitment procedures are covered in question 8)

This study will use a qualitative approach for answering its research questions. Semi-structured interviews will be used to avoid potential barriers arising from facing difficulties in grouping the targeted youth at the same time and place, and the cultural difficulties on the gender aspect where this could lead to low female participation or unwillingness to speak up about their issues.

The sampling method will be a purposive for selecting the participating youth in the semi-structured interviews. The researcher tried to get a sample from the Department of Statistics in Jordan, but he could not as explained in the letter he received attached in Appendix 5. Non-probability purposive approach will be used in this research where the sample will be selected based on the variables of the study such as gender, age, level of education, household income, and the location. This sampling strategy is used because the researcher could not get a sampling frame from the Department of Statistics in Jordan, it is cheaper, easier, and helpful in selecting the targeted participants to obtain their opinions and perceptions. The researcher will ensure in his selection criteria to reduce bias where the target sample will be identified through range of different contacts.

Total sample size is determined by the number of key variable groups that should be considered during the sampling. For this research, considering that we have three key variables; gender, educational attainment, and the location (two governorates in Jordan; Amman and Irbid), with fixing the age to be from 20-29 years old. The sample for this research will be 32 participants, considering 2 participants per group.

After selecting the targeted participants through range of different contacts, first they will be reached through phone calls to explain the idea behind this research and check their initial approval to be part of it. After their initial approval, the researcher will send them all relevant materials by email/mail and then propose different options for meeting with the recruited participant, such as meeting in their work place, visiting them at their home, or asking them to meet with the researcher's work place (United Nations building).

The expectation of research participants who consent to take part is a semi-structured interview for 60-90 minutes. The participants will be asked open ended questions, the answer will be based

on their experience and opinions/perceptions. Finally, the interviews will be recorded by digital voice recorder and a fieldwork diary will be used.

4. EXPECTED DURATION OF RESEARCH ACTIVITY: Please tell us how long each researcher will be working on fieldwork/research activity. For example, conducting interviews between March to July 2019. Also tell us how long participant involvement will be. For example: Interviewing 25 professional participants for a maximum of 1 hour per interview.

The interviews stage

- The process of recruitment will take place in May-July 2019,
- The interviews will be conducted between May- October 2019. The interviews will last for 60 to 90 minutes.
- Transcribing and preparing data will take place in June-November 2019.
- Data cleaning and coding will take place between November 2019 – February 2020.
- Analysis of the data and derive the thematic structures January 2020 – May 2020.

5. POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND TO WHOM: [maximum 100 words] Tell us briefly what the main benefits of the research are and to whom.

This study is contributing to the development of a better understanding of the Jordanian youth transition from education to work. It includes the youth perception which was never studied in similar research in Jordan and aims to build a new framework to diagnose how the youth are moving from education to work, what are the determinants that affect their transition and when do they consider it as a success. This research is also key in exploring strategies and policy responses and how the results of this study might lead to a transformational change in the policy development. The researcher once the study is completed will share its results with the Ministry of planning and international cooperation, Ministry of labour and the Prime ministry to hopefully consider its recommendation in their strategies and policies responses. Moreover, this study will improve the youth opportunities in a smoother transition from education to work and help in lowering youth unemployment and poverty implicitly.

6. POTENTIAL RISKS/HARM TO PARTICIPANTS [maximum of 100 words]: What potential risks are there to the participants and how will you address them? List any potential physical or psychological dangers that can be anticipated? You may find it useful to conduct a more formal risk assessment prior to conducting your fieldwork. The University has an example risk assessment form and guidance : http://www.bristol.ac.uk/safety/media/gn/RA-gn.pdf and http://www.bristol.ac.uk/safety/policies/

RISK	HOW IT WILL BE ADDRESSED

Youth may share strong political sensitive statements during the interview that could endanger them legally	The researcher will ensure the focus of the participants on the aims of the study, their perceptions on their labour market experience and transitions. This might be through sub-questions move their focus to the research interests. However, the researcher will confirm on the confidentiality of this research, no personal information will be shared, where this information will be shared with all participants through their consent forms and to remind them on the limits of the confidentiality.
Female interviewing with the researcher might endanger her reputation	This might be a concern for the females' participants in Irbid governorates as it is more conservative area. The researcher will ensure to meet with the females' participants in a safe location (depending on what safe location means for them, her work or home or researchers' work place). The researcher will ask the females' participants, if she feels that there is a safety concern, to get the family approval for this interview, or to accompany her one of the female staff from the researcher work at the United Nations to be in the interview, or to accompany the female one of her family.
Participants might get emotional, stressed, or furious because they might feel deprived of their work opportunities.	The researcher will ensure when the situation gets harmful to the participant to ask the participant if they wish to stop the interview, postpone it, or cancel it if necessary.

*Add more boxes if needed.

7. RESEARCHER SAFETY [maximum of 200 words]: What risks could the researchers be exposed to during this research project? If you are conducting research in individual's homes or potentially dangerous places then a researcher safety protocol is mandatory. Examples of safety protocols are available in the guidance.

RISK	HOW IT WILL BE ADDRESSED
Conducting the interview at participants' homes might endanger the researcher	The researcher will follow the safety protocols by leaving the interview location sealed with his family and colleagues to open it and know where he is if the interview duration exceeded the agreed time and to keep calling call him if necessary to check on his status. He might use a symbol statements to be agreed on if he is in danger or need help. For more information, please check appendix 6: research safety protocol.
Interviewing females' participants might endanger the researcher too	The researcher will ensure to meet with the females' participants in a safe location (depending on what safe location means for

by misunderstanding their meeting for example.	him). The researcher will ask the females' participants, if she feels that there is a safety concern for her, to get the family approval for this interview, or to accompany him one of the female staff from his work to be in the interview, or to accompany the female one of her family. For more information, please check appendix 6: research safety protocol.

8. RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES [maximum of 400 words]: How are you going to access participants? Are there any gatekeepers involved? Is there any sense in which respondents might be "obliged" to participate (for example because their manager will know, or because they are a service user and their service will know), if so how will this be dealt with.

This study will select young men and women aged 20-29 years recruited from two diverse governorates (Amman and Irbid). The researcher has reached the Department of Statistics (DOS) in Jordan to get the sample based on the criteria explained below, but his request was declined due to Jordan department of statistics law (check letter received in Appendix 5). It was agreed to use purposive sampling for this study where the researcher will select the sample with the help from a range of different contacts to ensure minimizing the bias as much as possible. The criteria for selecting this sample is to interview youth in the age 20 to 29 years old, that they are graduated from the education system (high school, vocational education and training centres, diploma, and University), have working experience (employed, unemployed, and inactive), and with considering their gender (males and females) and location (Amman and Irbid).

Initially, the researcher will inform range of contacts about the research aims and the criteria for the sample inclusion, those contacts will be as my gatekeepers to contact the sample where brief information about the research will be shared with the contacts, they will share the information with the sample and get their consent to be part of the research, once those potential participants agree their participation, the contacts will share their contact details so I can contact them directly. The potential agreed sample from the contacts will be contacted through phone first to explain for them again the idea behind this research and if they confirm their interest to participate, the researcher will check again on their eligibility to be part of this research by asking questions about their age, education, work status, and location. If they fit the sampling criteria, the researcher will send them the research materials in advance at least seven-days before their meeting by email/mail to ensure that they have sufficient information about the research and the questions they will be asked. The researcher will make a follow-up phone call to check if the potential participant has read the shared material and to confirm their consent to be part of the research. When the potential participant confirms their interest to participate in the research, the researcher will propose different options for meeting with the potential recruited participant, such as meeting in their work place, visiting them at their home, and asking them to meet at the researcher's work place (United Nations building), taking into consideration the cultural issues and norms in the country. In some cases when necessary, the researcher will offer the transportation cost for the participants to increase the participants presence likelihood.

For this study, two locations will be selected, the first location will be the capital of Jordan, Amman, where young adults constitute almost 40% of the population and where most public and private jobs are available. The second location will be Irbid governorate in the North of Jordan where it is the second populated area in Jordan but with much less jobs opportunities as most youth

move to Amman to find jobs. These two locations were chosen as the best to describe the youth transition status from education to work based on the population size, labour market access, and geographic location.

9. INFORMED CONSENT [maximum of 200 words]: How will this be obtained? Whilst in many cases written consent is preferable, where this is not possible or appropriate this should be clearly justified. An age and ability appropriate participant information sheet (PIS) setting out factors relevant to the interests of participants in the study must be handed to them in advance of seeking consent (see materials table for list of what should be included). If you are proposing to adopt an approach in which informed consent is not sought, you must explain in detail why this is not considered to be appropriate. If you are planning to use photographic or video images in your method, then additional specific consent should be sought from participants.

For the interview with the participants, the researcher will contact the purposive sample by phone to explain the aim of the research and their interview and get their initial consent to participate. The participant information sheet (PIS), the written consent form, the questions and the support information for participant will be sent to all consented participants by email or mail at least 7 days in advance to allow time for them to consider and confirm their participation. Before the interview, the researcher will call the approved sample to check if they have read the shared information and confirm their participation or they need more time to check the materials and then call them again. Once they confirm their participation and the location of the interview is confirmed, before starting the interview, the researcher will again briefly inform the participants about the research aims, objectives, and the ethical issues (confidentiality, anonymity, and withdrawal right) where the written consent form will be signed by the research participants.

Please tick the box to confirm that you will keep evidence of the consent forms (either actual forms or digitally scanned forms), securely for twenty years.	x

10. If you intend to use an on-line survey (for example Survey Monkey) you need to ensure that the data will not leave the European Economic Area i.e. be transferred or held on computers in the USA. Online Surveys (formally called Bristol Online Surveys) is fully compliant with UK Data Protection requirements – see https://www.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/

Please tick the box to confirm that you will not use any on-line survey service based in the USA, China or outside the European Economic Area (EEA).	NA

11. DATA PROTECTION: All applicants should regularly take the data protection on-line tutorial provided by the University in order to ensure they are aware of the requirements of current data protection legislation.

University policy is that "personal data can be sent abroad if the data subject gives unambiguous written consent. Staff should seek permission from the University Secretary prior to sending personal data outside of the EEA".

Any breach of the University data protection responsibilities could lead to disciplinary action.

Have you taken the mandatory University data protection on-line tutorial in the last 12 months? https://www.bris.ac.uk/is/media/training/uobonly/datasecurity/page_01.htm

Yes	**x**
No	

Do you plan to send any information/data, which could be used to identify a living person, to anybody who works in a country that is not part of the European Union?
See https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/data-protection-and-brexit/data-protection-if-there-s-no-brexit-deal/the-gdpr/international-data-transfers/)

No	**x**	
Yes		If **YES** please list the country or countries:

Please outline your procedure for data protection. It is University of Bristol policy that interviews must be recorded on an encrypted device. Ideally this should be a University owned encrypted digital recorder (see http://www.bristol.ac.uk/infosec/uobdata/transcription/).

If you lose research data which include personal information or a data breach occurs, you MUST notify the University immediately. This means sending an e-mail to data-protection@bristol.ac.uk and telling your Head of School. See additional details at http://www.bristol.ac.uk/secretary/data-protection/data-breaches-and-incidents/

The UK Data Protection Act (2018) include potential fines of up to €20,000,000 for not protecting personal data – so please provide details about how you plan to ensure the protection of ALL research data which could be used to identify a living person.

The collected data will be stored in a Password-protected devise, where all notes taken, and the recorder of the interview will be kept safe with the researcher. The data will be securely stored on the UoB data server where possible and it will be saved anonymized without any personal information.

The collected data will be closed for access where no other researchers will be able to use them. This will be explained to all participants in the research considering that the use of the data by other researchers might endanger the participants by publishing their quotations that might be politically sensitive or strong. If the collected data will be used again by other researchers, this should be made clear for participants which might lower their willingness to participate in this research.

All collected data in the field including the interview recording (audio files) and the researcher notes taken will be kept safe with the researcher during and after the interview. The audio files will be moved directly after the interview from the recorder to the password-protected devise and all other documentations will be scanned and saved too then destroy them. After uploading all documents to UoB server, the researcher will remove and destroy the files he has.

12. CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY	**Yes**	**No**
All my data will be stored on a password protected server	**x**	
I will only transfer unanonymised data if it is encrypted. (For advice on encryption see: http://www.bristol.ac.uk/infosec/uobdata/encrypt/device/)	**x**	
If there is a potential for participants to disclose illegal activity or harm to others you will need to provide a confidentiality protocol.	**x**	
Please tick the box to **CONFIRM** that you warned participants on the information and consent forms that there are limits to confidentiality and that at the end of the project data will be stored in a secure storage facility. https://www.acrc.bris.ac.uk/acrc/storage.htm	**x**	

Please outline your procedure for ensuring confidentiality and anonymity.

All collected data will be saved to a password-protected devise where they will be anonymized to cover all personal information by sampling codes. No personal information will be shared or disseminated during the research, after its completion, or in the thesis analysis. The researcher will ensure using quotation from participants in vague and anonymised approach. All data will be encrypted when transferred to UoB server. The collected data will be protected through "Password protected computer" and it will be encrypted when transferred to university server. The researcher will ensure to delete the collected data from his devise when transferred to the university server.

DATA MANAGEMENT

13 Data Management

It is RCUK and University of Bristol policy that all research data (including qualitative data e.g. interview transcripts, videos, etc.) should be stored in an anonymised format and made freely and openly available for other researchers to use via the data.bris Research Data Repository and/or the UK Data Archive. What level of future access to your anonymised data will there be:

- Open access?
- Restricted access - what restrictions?
- Closed access - on what grounds?

This raises a number of ethical issues, for example you MUST ensure that consent is requested to allow data to be shared and reused.

Please briefly explain;

1) How you will obtain specific consent for data preservation and sharing with other researchers?
2) How will you protect the identity of participants? e.g. how will you anonymise your data for reuse.
3) How will the data be licensed for reuse? e.g. Do you plan to place any restrictions on the reuse of your data such as Creative Common Share Alike 2.0 licence (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/uk/)
4) Where will you archive your data and metadata for re-use by other researchers?

1. Collected data will not be shared with other researchers (check section 11 above)
2. The data in this research will be anonymised by using a code to cover the participant's identities and other specific details such as their names and identities, place names, and the names/identities of third parties.
3. All data will be restricted access and will not be available for re-use by other researchers according to researcher's explanation in section 11 above.
4. All the data will be stored for 20 years within a secure facility at University of Bristol regarding the UK Data Protection Act 1998. Data will not be re-used by other researchers as explained in section 17 above.

SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS

14. Secondary Data Analysis

Please briefly explain (if relevant to your research);

(1) What secondary datasets you will use?
(2) Where did you get these data from (e.g. ESRC Data Archive)?
(3) How did you obtain permission to use these data? (e.g. by signing an end user licence)
(4) Do you plan to make derived variables and/or analytical syntax available to other researchers? (e.g. by archiving them on data.bris or at the UK Data Archive)
(5) Where will you store the secondary datasets?

NA

PLEASE COMPLETE FOR ALL PROJECTS

15. DISSEMINATION OF FINDINGS [maximum 200 words]: Are you planning to send copies of data to participants for them to check/comment on? If so, in what format and under what conditions? What is the anticipated use of the data, forms of publication and dissemination of findings etc.?

For this study, no data will be sent to participants for checking and comments. The final thesis will be submitted to the University of Bristol. A summary of the thesis including results and recommendations will be shared with Ministry of planning and international cooperation, Ministry of Labour and the Prime ministry in Jordan.

16. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Please identify which of the following documents, and how many, you will be submitting within your application: Guidance is given at the end of this document (appendix 1) on what each of these additional materials might contain.

Additional Material:	**NUMBER OF DOCUMENTS**
Participants information sheet (s)	1
Consent form (s)	1
Confidentiality protocol	NA
Recruitment letters/posters/leaflets	1
Photo method information sheet	NA
Photo method consent form	NA

Support information for participant	NA
3rd party confidentiality agreement	NA
Researcher safety protocol	1

Please DO NOT send your research proposal or research bid as the Committee will not look at this

SUBMITTING AND REVIEWING YOUR PROPOSAL:

- To submit your application you should create a **single Word document** which contains your application form and all additional material and submit this information to the SPS Research Ethics Administrator by email to sps-ethics@bristol.ac.uk
- If you are having problems with this then please contact the SPS Research Ethics Administrator by email (sps-ethics@bristol.ac.uk) to discuss.
- Your form will then be circulated to the SPS Research Ethics Committee who will review your proposal on the basis of the information provided in this single PDF document. The likely response time is outlined in the 'Ethics Procedures' document. For staff applications we try to turn these around in 2-3 weeks. Doctoral student applications should be submitted by the relevant meeting deadline and will be turned around in 4 weeks.
- Should the Committee have any questions or queries after reviewing your application, the chair will contact you directly. If the Committee makes any recommendations you should confirm, in writing, that you will adhere to these recommendations before receiving approval for your project.
- Should your research change following approval it is your responsibility to inform the Committee in writing and seek clarification about whether the changes in circumstance require further ethical consideration.

Failure to obtain Ethical Approval for research is considered research misconduct by the University and is dealt with under their current misconduct rules.

Chair: Beth Tarleton (beth.tarleton@bristol.ac.uk)

Administrator: Hannah Blackman (sps-ethics@bristol.ac.uk)

Date form updated by SPS REC: January 2019

Appendix 1: Suggestions of what might normally be included within additional materials and some brief guidance

Material	Information to include/brief guidance

Participant Information Sheet (PIS)	• What is the purpose of the study? • Why have I been chosen? • What will happen if I take part? • What will happen if I don't take part? • Anonymisation • Limits of confidentiality • What will my information be used for • Further contact details for general enquiries and for any complaints about the research practice – this should not be the chair of the REC • What anonymised data will be available for future use by researchers • That respondents have the right to request erasure of their personal data. Information sheets should be appropriate to the age and ability of the potential participant. The 2018 Data Protection Act provides everybody on the planet with a new right of erasure and to object to the processing of their personal data. We have to respect these new rights (however inconvenient they may be to our research plans), inform participants about their rights and not attempt to limit or curtail these rights. To be specific everybody now has a right to ask for their data to be deleted at any time and for any reason. It may be possible to refuse a request for erasure for a range of reasons - such as the data have been anonymised. Please ensure that your participant information sheet and consent forms are complimentary – ie the key information on the PIS is also covered on the consent form.
Consent form(s)	• Participants has read/understood the participant information sheet (PIS) and are happy to take part • Understand the research is confidential and any limits to confidentiality are made clear • Can withdraw from the research - you must inform participants that they have a right to request that their personal data are erased. • Are happy for interviews to be digitally recorded or notes taken • That the data will be anonymised (identifying features removed) • How the data will be used • How data is stored • Whether anonymised data will be available for future use Consent forms should be appropriate to the age and ability of the potential participant. Only children aged 13 and older can provide informed consent – research with younger children requires the consent of their parent or guardian. Please see the ESRC Data Archive's model consent forms (below) and at https://www.ukdataservice.ac.uk/manage-data/legal-ethical/consent-data-sharing/consent-forms The 2018 Data Protection Act provides everybody with a new right to to ask for their data to be deleted at any time and for any reason. If they do this then it may be possible to refuse their request for a range of reasons - such as the research has

	already been published. However, this does not mean that you can include on a PIS or consent form that you will refuse any such erasure rights request - under all circumstances - in advance of such a request being made. Therefore, the following wording is suggested for use on consent forms; 1) "I understand my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason" 2) "I understand that I have the right to request that all information held about me is deleted" In the PIS, you should make it clear that it may be impossible to delete information once data have been anonymised.
Adverts for recruitment	It may be necessary to provide information on how you intend to advertise for participants. This should provide enough information for you to target the relevant participants.
Confidentiality Protocol	This will be more important for those research topics which might result in participants talking about issues where confidentiality might need to be broken. Whilst you have a responsibility to uphold the confidentiality of your interviews there may be occasions when you also have a duty to warn about harm to the participant or to others. This should be considered prior to the research and a procedure put in place. In most cases this procedure would involve the following: • Ensure that participants are aware that there are limits to confidentiality; • That you will discuss any issues which arise with your research supervisor/colleagues as soon as possible after an incident; • That your supervisor or the project PI is in a position to make a decision about whether confidentiality needs to be broken;
3rd party confidentiality agreement	Confidentiality statement which might be used when using a transcriber or interpreter to ensure that they will adhere to principles of confidentiality. This may be needed if using other co-researchers such as focus group co-facilitator.
Photo Methods PIS and consent forms	If you are using photo methods then there are additional considerations about consent to use visual images. You should take the University data protection tutorial to ensure that you get appropriate consent and store the data appropriately. We highly recommend that you look at previous examples of PIS and consent forms prior to designing your own.
Support for participants after the research	If may be necessary to give participants information about support available to them at the end of an interview or focus group. This should be relevant to the topic you are researching. You should check that services are still running and that you have the right contact details on them.

Appendix VI - 1: Participant Information Sheet (for interviewees)

Participant Information Sheet (PIS)

Research project: Successful transitions from education to work in Jordan

This document provides general information about the research and what is involved. It explains the confidentiality and data storage arrangements and gives details about how the research has been reviewed. Please read the following information, and if there is anything unclear, or if you wish to have further information, please get in touch with the researcher or researcher's supervisor. Note that this research is being conducted for academic purposes and will not cover any clinical or medical issues.

1. **Who is conducting the research?**

Mohammad Al-Batayneh is a second-year PhD student at the School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol, with a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Hashemite University, Jordan and a master's degree in Statistics from Yarmouk University, Jordan. This research is part of a doctoral dissertation from the School for Policy Studies, Faculty of Social Science and Law, University of Bristol, United Kingdom.

2. **What is the purpose of the study?**

This study aims to understand better youth views/perceptions on moving from education to work in Jordan. It will help understand youth labour market experiences, the determinants that affect their work, and why and when they consider themselves moved to a satisfying job. This research will explore how youth perception/opinion on their labour market experience can inform policy development by considering the appropriate policy responses to disadvantaged youth transition.

3. **Why have you been invited to take part?**

You have been invited to participate in this research because you have been referred to by a range of contacts who were gatekeepers for your participation. The researcher seeks to interview youth with different labour market experiences, educational attainments, and work statuses and from only Amman and Irbid locations.

4. **What will happen if you take part?**

If you decide to participate in this interview, it will take 60-90 minutes of your time; you will be asked an open-ended question in the Arabic language that is based on your labour market experiences and perceptions, such as what is your work experience, how was your transition from education to work, what was your best job, and why, how important do you think that education,

income, location, etc., are key factors and essential in your transition to work, with similar questions. Please note that all questions will be sent to you in advance at least seven days before the interview, noting that you will be asked to consent to participate in this study by signing the consent form, where the interview will be recorded by a digital voice recorder. You have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time during the interview.

5. **How is data stored and managed? What will happen to all the information you provide?**

The digital recording and interview transcript of the interview data will be securely stored on a password-protected server at the University of Bristol, whereby the end of the project, the data will be stored for 20 years according to the Data Protection Act 1998 and used anonymously in this PhD research and other publications such as academic articles and conference presentations. The data will not be re-used or shared with other researchers.

All the interview data will be kept in a secure location and be anonymized, where excerpts from the interview transcript and some parts of policy documents will be used to interpret and demonstrate the findings; all quotes will be used in the research outputs but anonymized in a way that the interviewees cannot be identified. All participants can request to delete their information, but it will be impossible once data have been anonymized. Only the researcher and his supervisors can access the audio files. The researcher will disseminate and use the study findings only for academic purposes. Excerpts from the interview transcript and some parts of policy documents will be used to interpret and demonstrate the findings.

6. **Will your interview be confidential and anonymous? What is the limit of confidentiality, and how can it be minimised? What happens if you do not take part?**

Yes, your *interview* and personal data will be treated confidentially. The identification of the interviewees will be protected by using a code to cover the interviewees' names and other specific details, which could expose participants to be identified. All interview data will be kept securely within the University of Bristol's research storage drive, a secure facility. All data will be stored with password protection and saved into the researcher's secure file server at the University of Bristol.

Please note that the data will be kept confidential unless someone is at risk of harm; then, confidentiality will be broken, and this should be communicated to the participants with a detailed explanation of why confidentiality was broken.

Once you read and understand the participation information sheet (PIS), you can decide to participate. If you did not want to participate in this research, it is your right with no judicial or legal consequences.

Ethical Review

The research has been approved by the University of Bristol's School for Policy Studies (SPS) Research Ethics Committee (REC).

Contact for further information

If you have any questions or concerns regarding any aspects of this research, please get in touch with the researcher, Mohammad Al-Batayneh, via email at ma16401@bristol.ac.uk or call the researcher at Jordanian mobile number +962 (79) 5747468 (the Professional Number). If you have further questions after speaking to the researcher, then please get in touch with my supervisors, Dr Eldin Fahmy or Dr Sebnem Eroglu-Hawksworth, about issues with this study practice:

Dr Eldin Fahmy

Senior Lecturer, School for Policy Studies, (eldin.fahmy@bristol.ac.uk)

University of Bristol, UK. 8 Priory Rd. Bristol, BS8 1TZ

Dr Sebnem Eroglu-Hawksworth

Senior Lecturer, School for Policy Studies, (s.eroglu@bristol.ac.uk)

University of Bristol, UK. 8 Priory Rd. Bristol, BS8 1TZ

All interviews will be conducted with strict adherence to ethical considerations of anonymity, confidentiality, and respect for participants.

Appendix VI - 2: The Consent Form

Informed Consent for [Youth transition from education to work in Jordan]

Please tick the appropriate boxes	**Yes**	**No**
1. Taking part in the study		
I have read and understood the study information dated **[**DD/MM/YYYY**]**, or it has been read to me. I have been able to ask questions about the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.	☐	☐
I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to answer questions and I can withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason. I have the right to request that all information held about me is deleted only before their anonymization.	☐	☐
I understand that taking part in the study involves asking questions related to my labour market experience, education, and my perceptions and opinions where the whole interview will be audio recorded, and it will be transcribed as text.	☐	☐
2. Use of the information in the study		
I understand that information I provide will be used for academic purposes only by the researcher in his thesis, articles and conferences.	☐	☐
I understand that personal information collected about me that can identify me, such as my name or where I live, will not be shared beyond the University of Bristol.	☐	☐
I agree that my information can be quoted in research outputs.	☐	☐
3. Future use and reuse of the information by others		
I confirm that the researcher explained to me that my information will not be re-used by others.	☐	☐

4. Signatures

_____ _____ _____

Name of participant [IN CAPITALS] Signature Date

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant and, to the best of my ability, ensured that the participant understands to what they are freely consenting.

MOHAMMAD AL-BATAYNEH _____ _____

Name of researcher [IN CAPITALS] Signature Date

5. Study contact details for further information

If you have any questions or concerns regarding any aspects of this research, please contact the researcher **Mohammad Al-Batayneh** via email at ma16401@bristol.ac.uk or call the researcher at Jordanian mobile number +962 (79) 5747468 (the Professional Number). If you have further questions after speaking to the researcher, then please contact my supervisor:

Dr Eldin Fahmy, Senior Lecturer, School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol, 8 Priory Rd. Bristol, BS8 1TZ, UK. (eldin.fahmy@bristol.ac.uk). **Dr Sebnem Eroglu-Hawksworth,** Senior Lecturer, School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol, 8 Priory Rd. Bristol, BS8 1TZ, UK. (s.eroglu@bristol.ac.uk).

Appendix VI - 3: The Recruitment Letter

The recruitment letter

Date

Name of potential participant

Address of the participant

Subject: Inviting to participate in a research study

Re: Successful youth transitions from education to work in Jordan

Dear

I am contacting you to invite you to participate in a research study which aims to better understand youth views/perceptions on their labour market experiences and their moving from education to work in Jordan. This study will explore what are the factors that affect youth labour market experiences such as family, gender, location, education, social norms and youth perceptions and opinions. When do youth consider that they moved to a satisfying job and why.

If you decide to take part you will be contacted to arrange an individual interview, at a time of your preference. The interview will take about 60-90 minutes. You will be asked 7-8 open-ended questions, the answers to which will be based on your experience and opinions. The questions will be sent to you to read before the interview takes place if you agree and all other relevant materials to read about this research. If you agree, the researcher will record the interviews by digital voice recorder and take notes.

Your replies will be treated confidentially, all information will be kept in a secure location and anonymized. The study findings will be disseminated only for academic purposes by the researcher. You have the right not to participate at all or to leave the interview at any time.

Contact for further information

If you have any questions or concerns regarding any aspects of this research, please contact the researcher **Mohammad Al-Batayneh** via email at ma16401@bristol.ac.uk or call the researcher at Jordanian mobile number +962 (79) 5747468 (the Professional Number). If you have further questions after speaking to the researcher, then please contact my supervisor:

Dr Eldin Fahmy, Senior Lecturer, School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol, 8 Priory Rd. Bristol, BS8 1TZ, UK. (eldin.fahmy@bristol.ac.uk). **Dr Sebnem Eroglu-Hawksworth,** Senior Lecturer, School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol, 8 Priory Rd. Bristol, BS8 1TZ, UK. (s.eroglu@bristol.ac.uk).

Your sincerely,

Mohammad Al-Batayneh,

PhD candidate, School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol

Appendix VI - 4: Semi-Structured Topic Guide Interviews

Topic Guide - Successful youth transition from education to work in Jordan

I. Opening comments

My name is Mohammad Al-Batayneh, and I am a PhD student at the School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol. I will be interviewing you with your consent, but I'd like to start by saying a little more about the research before we begin.

In the past two decades, unemployment in Jordan has increased, especially for youth, despite all government efforts to lower unemployment and educate/train young people. Youth unemployment and young people's passage from education to work have become a key policy issue in Jordan. Journalists and politicians have a lot to say about it, but I am interested in discovering the youth's views and perceptions. Today, I will ask you about your work history, what a "successful" passage from education to work means to you, and the factors affecting your education-to-work transition. I will also ask about your views on the Jordanian youth's transitions to adulthood in general.

Please remember that during the interview, you do not have to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable. To provide an accurate and reliable account of your views, I would like to record our interview if you consent. I will, of course, treat this interview as confidential and will not use your real name anywhere in the transcript or the report. I would like to begin recording now - is this all OK and clear?

II. Introduction (5-10 minutes)

Interviewee background

Q1: I would like to start by asking you to introduce yourself; tell me a little about yourself and how you like to spend your time. Probs (please check below):

Probes - questions	**Answers**
Name	
Age	Number or birthday date
Gender (implicit)	M or F
Your place of living	Governorate
The highest level of education achieved	Before secondary, vocational education, secondary, diploma, bachelor, and post-graduated
Your current employment status	Employed, unemployed, do not want to work, self-employed.
Type of your housing	Apartment, regular house (Dar), Villa, other
Household composition: with whom do you live	Alone, with parents, with the whole family, others
Your monthly income (estimate)	JOD
Your parent's education level	Illiterate, read and write, primary, vocational education, secondary, diploma, bachelor, Master, PhD

Your parent's employment status	Employed, unemployed, self-employed
Your parent's monthly income (estimate)	JOD

III. Education background (10-15 minutes)

Thank you for this information. So, I will now ask a few questions about your educational background.

Q2: Let's start with your education. Please tell me the history of your education. *Probe: Subject field, year of graduation, which university, college, vocational training centre, school, or training programme, and whether they were through work or self-development.*

Q3: How far do you think your education equipped you to transition to work? In what ways did your education prepare you for this transition?

IV. Employment background (10-15 minutes)

Moving from school to work happens differently; some get a job right after graduation, while others take months or years to get their first job. I would like to ask you about your views on your own passage from education to work.

Q4: Can you please tell me a bit about your work history? *Probe: What was your first job after graduation? How long did it take you to get this job, and how easy or difficult was it to find? What were your income and working benefits and conditions? How relevant the job is/was to your education or training? Were you satisfied?*

Q5: Let us now speak about your subsequent jobs. *Probes: How did you get these jobs? How long did it take you to move to these jobs? How did you get them? Were you satisfied/happy? Why or why not? Types of jobs, relevance to their education, and benefits received. In your opinion, have these jobs' experiences contributed to your transition to better/worse jobs?*

V. Defining youth transitions (10-15 minutes)

I will now ask you a few questions to understand what satisfying or successful passage from education to work means to you.

Q6: Overall, do you consider your transition to work successful or unsuccessful? Why do you think so? *Probe: working directly after graduation, good salary or benefits, close to your living area, family, private or public sector, relevant to your education, your dream job, job security, and job with future development.*

Q7: How do you compare your transition from education to work with other young people you know? Probe: *reasons; education, gender, location, family, acquaintances, class, wealth, others.*

VI. Determinants of youth transitions (15-20 minutes)

So many factors could affect young people's passage from education to work. I will now ask your views on the key factors.

Q8: In this question, what key factors positively or negatively affect your transition to work?

Q8.1: I will mention some factors that could positively or adversely affect your passage from education to work. Let us discuss them one by one. Which were most influential in addition to the other factors you mentioned earlier?

- What role did your parents have in your transition to work?
- What about structural factors such as job availability, location, social and demographic inequality,
- Different experiences between young men and young women – gender,
- Psychological adjustment and orientation, personal factors,
- Academic performance and training,
- Are there any other factors, in your opinion that we didn't discuss?

VII. Youth transition in Jordan and government interventions

Q9: So far, we have been focusing on your situation, thinking more widely about youth in Jordan today; what are the main problems young Jordanians face in their transition from education to work, in your opinion?

Q10: In your opinion, what should the government do to ensure they successfully move from education to work? *Probe: government policies and strategies, education and training, vocational education, and job opportunities.*

Q11: Back to you now; what does a decent job look like for you? Probes: good pay, location, type of jobs, etc.

Q12: What do you think the government can do to help you get this kind of job? *Probes: change policies, better salaries, work conditions, etc.*

VIII. Interviewee space for concluding thoughts/questions

Q13: I thank you for participating in this interview. Is there anything that you would like to say or ask me before we close the interview?

Appendix VI - 5: Official letter from the Department of Statistics

DEPARTMENT OF STATISTICS

Ref.No 5/1/2/1219
Date 1/4/2019

Monday April 1st, 2019

To: Mr. Mohammad Al-Batayneh

Re: your request for an approval to conduct field research for a sample to be drawn from the latest 2015 national census for your PhD research, "Youth transitions from education to work in Jordan" with an approval to re-contact this sample.

Department of Statistics in Jordan thanks you for contacting us to conduct this research and we would like to inform you that no official approval is needed from the Department of Statistics since your research is for academic purposes. For the sample requested, please note that by law of Jordanian Department of Statistics, we cannot provide you with a sample on individual or household levels, as this is a breaching for these families' data confidentiality. We can offer you a sample on the block level through a map, where each block contains 80 to 120 families on average that you can interview from, but with no details or information about these families, only boundaries from where you can interview.

We wish you all the success in your research and look forward to receiving a copy of your final thesis for inclusion in our library database.

Best regards,

[redacted]**em said Al-Zoubi**
Director General of Statistics

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Appendix VI – 6: Research Safety Protocol

Successful youth transitions from education to work in Jordan

1 Research design

The objectives of qualitative fieldwork are to:

- To undertake qualitative fieldwork to explore the youth's perceptions of their labour market experience and their transitions from education to work

2 Risks

This protocol is concerned with avoiding risks to researcher associated with the conduct of semi-structured interviews with the targeted sample. It is not possible to foresee all potential difficulties that may occur but risks to researcher may arise for a number of reasons including:

- Participants may be in conflict with government policies towards youth employment and researcher may be viewed as in some way 'representing' government
- Participants perceptions that researcher is 'out of touch' with the experience of unemployment and the material and emotional harms it causes
- Participants may recall life experiences associated with episodes to distress, unemployment and social exclusion and this might cause some emotional distress

3 Physical safety

In order to minimize the risks to their personal safety, researcher will:

- Where feasible, interview participants in public settings
- Never disclose to participants their own personal details (e.g. home address, telephone number, etc)
- Always carry a mobile phone with sufficient credits
- Only take minimal and necessary valuables to the research site (e.g. sufficient cash to cover the cost of a taxi, digital recorder) and keep these with him at all times
- Inform a colleague (contact person) of the timing and expected duration of fieldwork interviews, the full address and telephone number of the fieldwork site, the researcher's mobile phone number, an emergency contact number for the researcher (someone known to the researcher who is willing to be contacted in case of emergency), and arrange to telephone the colleague as agreed when the session is likely to be completed.

What to do in situations where the researcher has indicted that he feels unsafe or where the contact person has not been able to get in touch:

- If contact is made with a researcher and s/he feels unsafe, the words "can you cancel my appointment on Monday", will indicate a need for immediate help. If this code is stated, the contact person should call 911 at the end of the call
- If the contact person does not get a call from the researcher at the agreed time, s/he will phone the researcher's mobile telephone. If there is no reply, the contact person will call the fieldwork site contact telephone number. If there is no reply, the contact person will call the

emergency contact number. If it is still not possible to establish contact with the researcher, the contact person must phone 911, giving the address of the fieldwork site.

4 Emotional wellbeing

Researcher will be made aware that this kind of work can be emotionally taxing, and the following steps will be taken to ensure that they are adequately supported for this work.

- Researcher will plan time after each fieldwork visit where they can routinely debrief about the visit and the interviews undertaken with his supervisors by telephone or Skype call, ideally within 48 hours of the visit.
- In regular meetings with the researcher supervisors, the researcher will discuss any emotional aspects of the work and address any particular issues which have arisen. Where he has experienced a difficult situation, he will seek support from his supervisors.

If after debriefing and further meetings with supervisors, the researcher is still in need of support or if the occurrence has such a serious effect on the researcher that he would like to speak to a Counsellor, he is free to do so at any point. Work-based counselling services are available by contacting the Staff Counselling Service.

Appendix VII: Interview Sample - HXXABFA20O interview

The time of the interview was 1:06:54

Researcher: Okay, now we have started the recording; of course, after starting the recording, I would like to start with a note that my name is Mohammad Al-Batayneh, PhD student at the College of Policy Studies at the University of Bristol. I will conduct this interview with your consent, but I will discuss this research before I start. In the past two years, that is more than twenty years, unemployment has increased in Jordan. This is something known especially to young people; despite all government efforts to reduce unemployment, improve education, and train young people, unemployment remains high. Unemployment was in the year 2004 about 11% and currently about 20%; youth unemployment, poverty, and the transition of young people from education to the labour market are significant issues in Jordan. Even in all royal and government speeches, these problems are mentioned. Politicians and journalists have a lot to talk about, but in this research, I am interested in knowing your own opinions and the views of young people. According to the information I provided previously, I will ask you about the developments that have occurred for your work and study in general and what a successful transition from education to work means to you. I want to remind you that during the interview, you do not have to answer any question you do not want to answer or feel uncomfortable with; I remind you that this interview is recorded, and of course, I will deal with it confidentially.
Interviewee: Okay.
Researcher: Okay, I will start with the first question; I would like you to introduce yourself, which is general information, that is, information about your background in general, and just suggestions that I will give you, and I will ask you the following to introduce yourself. The name:
Interviewee: HXXA.
Researcher: Age?
Interviewee: 29 years.
Researcher: Gender is female (this question is not asked; it is directly documented)
Researcher: Where do you live, in what area?
Interviewee: Amman, Um Al-Summaq
Researcher: The highest education you got?
Interviewee: I have a bachelor's degree in accounting, but I have other certificates in accounting. I have a CMA.
Researcher: What is your job status?
Interviewee: I am currently working
Researcher: What type of residence do you live in?
Interviewee: I live in a separate house
Researcher: Do you live with anyone?
Interviewee: with my family
Researcher: As an estimation, how much is your monthly income from Jordanian dinars?
Interviewee: one thousand Jordanian dinars.
Researcher: What is your parents' highest academic achievement?
Interviewee: My father has a bachelor, and my mother has a diploma
Researcher: Are your father and mother currently working?
Interviewee: My father is retired, and my mother is a housewife

Researcher: as an estimation, how much did your father enter?
Interviewee: I don't know exactly
Researcher: what are your expectations for their income?
Interviewee: about 2500 to 3000 Jordanian dinars, I expect this number.
Researcher: Currently, we have generally taken information about you. How do you usually spend your time? That is, how do you divide your time now?
Interviewee: I usually sit with my family; during the weekends, I go out with my friends and my family, and during the week, I prefer to have some time for myself personally, either by studying or reading, not necessarily related to my work, but I read in general and do sports in the health club.
Researcher: Okay, we have now taken general information about you, and I will now ask some questions related to your study and educational background. To start with your education, tell me your education record or history. I mean that from your school to the highest educational attainment. In your case, you have a bachelor's degree; which year did you graduate, and what college did you study in? Please detail your information.
Interviewee: I spent my school in XXX School from pre-school until I finished the Tawjihi (high school) stage, meaning I spent 12 years in the same school. I consider it a good and not good thing at the same time, knowing that my studies were on the national system, as I consider it good because my studies at the same school made my educational level steady and helped me get used to the people around me where the education was excellent and also the school environment. Still, I did not feel much benefit due to my presence in the same environment and the length of study in my school, where the new students were the ones who mixed with me and not the other way around. It is possible that this affected me personally, especially in the stage of university education; when I entered the university, I felt that everything was different, whereas, in school, I was accustomed to the nature of life and the place because I used to be in the same environment and place. While at university, it was strange because everything was new to me.
Researcher: When did you complete the secondary stage (Tawjihi)?
Interviewee: in 2008.
Researcher: What was the branch you studied at that point?
Interviewee: Information Technology
Researcher: Okay, you finished high school and enrolled directly at the university?
Interviewee: Yes.
Researcher: At which university?
Interviewee: The University of Jordan majored in accounting. Frankly, I did not want this major, but because my rate was very high, I thought about entering it and changing it. The problem with our education is that in the first two to three years, we take almost the same subjects at the university, which are common subjects with different specialisations. You start taking specialisation subjects at the beginning of the third year. You feel that the first two years of your studies were only for general common subjects with different specialisations. When I finished my first two years, I thought that I had finished most of the subjects and that there was no reason to change my major, so I completed my studies in accounting. I finished university in 3 and a half years, almost 2012.
Researcher: During the university and beyond, did you take certificates or courses to develop yourself in some matters that pertain to your studies?
Interviewee: Frankly, during university, I did not take courses, as I was focusing on the university subjects only, but I was thinking and reading about the courses that I needed to take after university

studies that pertain to my studies, but I did not do during university studies. After I finished my university studies, I became very interested in the courses by trying to find out their nature and the centres where they are training, in the sense that I made a plan for myself. After two years of work, I registered at a centre and took a course, and currently, I am taking a second course.
Researcher: Is this course CMA, right?
Interviewee: I have completed the CMA course and started the CPA.
Researcher: Okay, the question is, to what extent do you think your education helped you transition to the job market? I mean, in what ways did your education prepare you for this transition? Was education really a reason you moved to the labour market, or do you feel the courses also contributed to this? What do you think in general?
Interviewee: Frankly, no, and I am focusing on this sentence because our teaching … and I am talking here about education in my time, my education was what I called it ... eh
Researcher: theoretical?
Interviewee: Yes, and very rigid in the sense that you do not make a presentation, not like for those generations these days, especially the international study, where the focus is how to make them strong, give them the space in the field, they are actually working, they have activities, travel and this, of course, builds your personality and develops how you behave with people. Education was very rigid in my time and only related to the book you studied. I believe my education contributed 50% to only general information and knowledge, and even knowledge of the job is totally different from what you study, even though I did not take 100%.
Researcher: Okay, you mean that education, as you feel, didn't affect your transition to work?
Interviewee: It can be helpful to inform you that you are committed to your work, meaning that you wake up early and go to work; it teaches you, for example, the general information, especially the basics, how to write an email, but only the basics. But how do you deal with personalities, how do you manage yourself, and how do you manage your time? I mean, all things come with experience. For example, it is possible that training courses or workshops can help you with this information and how to manage yourself, but education as accounting education didn't help me.
Researcher: Do you mean that you feel that education helped you transition as a certificate but not as a full package?
Interviewee: Yes.
Researcher: Okay, you explained that education gave you a basic understanding of how you understand studying, and this is a very important point so that we can understand more than just education. After concluding the bachelor's degree, of course, we will talk about your work experience, but what certificates other than the CMA or CPA did you take during the post-bachelor's degree period? You take them because you know about accounting, so you went towards this topic or because they really, will provide you with work?
Interviewee: It was for two reasons. First, I wanted to take something in my specialisation, and second thing because I am frankly thought about that young people advanced in their education, and you have to be up to date with these things; I mean, I will not reach old age, and the one who is younger than me is superior to my education and personality, and even I have a certificate. Still, I thought a little about the future; at least I must be safe. If it doesn't help me now, it may benefit me long-term. When I started working, I started learning about other courses, not only in my speciality, so I looked at management courses related to time management and setting priorities. I love things related to psychology and how to understand who is standing in front of you.
Researcher: Okay, let's get into the outcome of education. The main goal is work, so the transition from education to the labour market occurs differently, especially in Jordan. Some people get a job

directly, meaning after graduation, they work directly, and some people spend months, I mean, maybe two months, three and ten months until they work, some people spend years, I mean by sitting one year, two years, five and ten possibly until they get the first job. I want to ask you about your views on your transition from your education to the labour market. Tell me a little about your work history or record. I mean, was the first job you did immediately after your graduation? How long did it take you to transition, and what was your point of view about the job you wanted? What are the reasons? Tell me in general, and of course, I will ask you during your answer to understand your work history.
Interviewee: I graduated, as I remember, in December of 2012, and then, almost a week after graduation, I started distributing the CV till April 2013; my first job was in April.
Researcher: You mean that your first job took you about four months?
Interviewee: Yes, but during this time, I used to do interviews with companies, but they didn't work because, for example, they told me that you would work from 6 am or 7 am and with a low salary, I mean, it is not logic I start my work life like this, and sometimes I wouldn't say I liked the nature of the work.
Researcher: Okay, you mean that your first job was after four months of graduation; in your opinion, was it difficult or easy to get this job?
Interviewee: I found it difficult at first, and I didn't expect that situation because I was a new graduate, and we have the principle that the new graduate can work with the lowest salary and exhaust him, but I didn't want this to happen for me, and I was shocked of the situation and how they think. When I took my job in April, it was because they wanted a new graduate and were Urgently looking, so I took it.
Researcher: Why did you take it? Why this job? What were the reasons that made you accept that job?
Interviewee: The first thing is it is a very good company. I was in XXX company, so the name is very good and has good experience, and with an accountant, but the problem was that it long working hours, but I said it is okay, no problem, then I worked there but didn't last long, only three months.
Researcher: Three months. Okay, when they offered you the contract, what were the conditions? I mean, how much was the salary, for example?
Interviewee: I remember it was about 300 dinars.
Researcher: Was the income, for example, or conditions or benefits of the work your reasons for accepting this work?
Interviewee: The reason for my acceptance was that I did not want to stay at home without work, and the name of the company is good, and the experience that I would get only, but because the working hours were long, and I still don't know so I said I want to work and learn about the work environment. When I worked there, I wouldn't say I liked the job; the working hours were very long, which was a problem for me. The second thing is that I did not feel it was the experience I wanted. Maybe I rushed it over as I thought that the new graduate would work and be innovative in his speciality, like accounting, but it appears that this is not the case. Slowly, you can do it. Then, I left and moved to the XX Bank.
Researcher: You mean you felt no linkage between your education or training and the job?
Interviewee: there is a connection, but because I was rushing to learn everything and it was not the case, maybe because I was a new graduate, they wanted to give me some information slowly, but I felt bored and not what I wanted.
Researcher: Does that mean you were satisfied or not satisfied with your work?

Interviewee: No, I was not satisfied. If I were satisfied, I would have stayed, I think.
Researcher: Okay, you left your XX job while you were there. Did you use to apply for other jobs, or were you not applying in the first one or two months?
Interviewee: No, I expect I started applying for jobs possibly last month or a month and a half.
Researcher: Did you feel uncomfortable with your job in the last month or a half?
Interviewee: Yes, because it took me one month to know that it was not the job I wanted.
Researcher: You mean when you spent three months in your first job, directly moved to the second job, or stayed at home for a while?
Interviewee: No, directly.
Researcher: You worked at XX Bank; how did you get this job?
Interviewee: I applied for it on the website. They called me, did a test, and did an interview. There was more than one candidate; we all took the exam and did the interviews.
Researcher: you mean that you got the job by following up on the job advertisements, applying, and passing through tests and interviews until you got it. How long did it take you from when you applied to when you got the job?
Interviewee: Frankly, to be accurate, I do not know precisely when I applied for the job, but I remember that in one month, the exam, the interview, the job offer, and my response were in one month, of course, because the XX Bank is fast and its procedures are reasonable.
Researcher: Were you satisfied with this job?
Interviewee: Yes, I was satisfied and liked it.
Researcher: Why did you like it?
Interviewee: Because it is the XX Bank, its experience and name are good; I mean, as a company that serves you in your CV and my salary was higher and the working time is comfortable till 3:30 pm, it was a likeable experience, and the type of accounting that I work is what I love, and also it can be a trivial reason, but for example in the bank you have a dress code, so you feel that you are really going to work, it is not an important reason, but you feel yourself separating between your work and your hanging out.
The researcher: you mean, the second job that you were doing in the XX Bank was accounting, which is related to your education and training, and it was a better salary, and there were benefits you felt good about, meaning it encouraged you to take that job in addition that it is a well-known bank?
Interviewee: I also remember that there were people I know working there, so you feel that you have some people you know from your acquaintances and friends in work, so you would feel that since my friends are there, then this means the environment is good and relaxing to deal with them, and the working circle was smaller than the company, in the company the whole floor is you circle where in the bank you're your department which is less and you feel that you can deal with them comfortably.
Researcher: do you feel that that job contributed to your movement to other jobs, meaning the jobs after it?
Interviewee: Yes, very much, and I confirmed this when I applied for another job; they read my CV, and I sensed the importance of the place I worked and their questions about that experience.
Researcher: How long have you stayed in the job?
Interviewee: two years.
Researcher: meaning from 2012 to 2014, after that?
Interviewee: After that, I went to the XX School and returned to my school.
Researcher: You went back to your same school; what was the nature of your work?

Interviewee: I returned frankly in accounting because they talked to me and said come, we need you. My experience in the bank was in a particular department in accounting that was not available anywhere, meaning needed. They told me to come to work with us as we have a specific project, and we would love you to work with us. I liked the idea, frankly, and I am the type who loves to change; they give me a reasonable offer, and of course, school is more relaxing because you have vacations, you have more flexibility, and the circle returns smaller. If your work is minor, you can take on more significant tasks, unlike the bank when working in a large institution. Your job is specific tasks that you keep doing.
Researcher: This means that during your work, the school called you, and you agreed with them, resigned, and moved directly to the new job.
Interviewee: Yes, I moved directly.
Researcher: Did you get this job because they knew you?
Interviewee: Yes, someone gave them my CV.
Researcher: This means it depended on acquaintances, it didn't take time to move, and you were satisfied.
Interviewee: Yes, and I spent five years from 2014 to 2019.
Researcher: Why were you satisfied with it?
Interviewee: I was satisfied because I felt after the bank my work became broader and I became more familiar with the things from here and here and the nature of the work smoothest, because in the bank you feel it is very precise, and it is, of course, accounting like this as it is my speciality, but felt more comfortable and enjoying it more. The environment was relaxed, and the people working with me were very good. It was a space for development, meaning when I left that job, I was responsible for a team and reached a responsible position. So, I was able to develop, and in the last year, I was responsible for a whole department. It was good that you kept looking forward that I will become like this after two years.
Researcher: This means that there are always plans for development at work.
Interviewee: Exactly.
Researcher: And of course, it was related to your education and has better benefits than your previous job in general?
Interviewee: Yes.
Researcher: Do you really think your work in the school contributed to your transition to the following job after that?
Interviewee: here, honestly, no, because everyone has an idea that if you work for a school, this means that the work is weak; because of this, when I took the certificate (CMA), I felt it strengthened me, meaning it empowered me, meaning it balanced the situation, meaning if someone told me that your work is not strong, although my work at the school was too much, in return I rely on my experience and certificates so it changes this view.
Researcher: During this period, did you take CMA?
Interviewee: Yes, it is a certified management accounting certificate.
Researcher: To be at a higher level, okay. Now that was the work stage in XX school, how did you move from there?
Interviewee: After that, honestly, in the last year, I felt that I wanted to go to XXX organisations. I don't know why, because I used to see so many families from XX organisations, and many people told me to apply; the work is very comfortable and likeable, there is accounting, and I had in my mind that I do not want to work in companies, because frankly, I was applying and interviewing. Still, most companies have long working hours till 7 or 8 pm. Also, it was auditing jobs, and this

doesn't work with everyone, and maybe I have no power to work till 7 or 8 pm, so I thought about XX organisations; I focused on XX organisation by luck, perhaps because their website is easier to use, so I applied, and maybe after one or two months they sent me a job offer.
Researcher: While you were in your previous job, were you applying?
Interviewee: Yes, in the last period.
Researcher: so, you started your new job in the middle of 2019, and you currently work for the XX organisations; you got this job by applying on the website, and it took you almost two months to get the job.
Interviewee: Yes, about two months.
Researcher: Okay, satisfied and happy with your work?
Interviewee: Yes,
Researcher: Why are you satisfied? What are the reasons? What is different from the previous jobs?
Interviewee: A good salary, a good environment, and in particular that you will deal with people completely different from you and different nationalities and the experience of XX organisations is excellent, other than any experience, meaning, if I work in another company, it will be similar to my old job, and I will not benefit anything in terms of experience.
Researcher: Is this related to your education, you feel?
Interviewee: To some extent, it differs because we the accounting work for profit, and a small part we study on the basis of non-profit organisations, and so on, so now I take information that I didn't take in the university from my job here.
Researcher: It has benefited from social security, health insurance, etc., and you feel this job will contribute to your transition to a better job?
Interviewee: Yes, correct.
Researcher: Okay, here we understand your education and work experience. Now, I will ask you some questions on the topic of youth transition so that we understand the satisfactory or successful transition from education to the labour market; in general, do you consider your transition from education to the labour market successful or unsuccessful?
Interviewee: Mmm ... meaning yes.
Researcher: successful, why do you consider it successful? I want to give you some ideas: I moved directly from education to the labour market, my transition did not take time, and I have a good income and benefits. And we here are talking about your transition in general after your graduation; it is closed to my area of residence, closed to my family, working in the private or public sector, has to do with your education, your dream job, for example, many young people have dream jobs, a job with job security, and a job with a career in the future, I mean you can discuss all these things.
Interviewee: now I see that success is relative, meaning that I sometimes talk to myself that why did it take me time, sometime I feel I'm successful, that I moved to work and like this, like everything you just mentioned I used to feel them too, but at least I have worked, but others did not work directly and others stayed at home for a year, I had better luck or destiny than others, even as a salary, and lucky in work environment, and the most important thing the people I work with, meaning, it is possible that you handle the pressure of work, but can't handle if you have people working with you and you feel not comfortable, but at the same time, you see other people and you say that I am not successful, because they might be less education than me, but they took an opportunity in a good company, taking a higher salary, taking more benefits, so by looking at it as a proportion and comparison, meaning, how much you are satisfied with your work, you put all

the points, and based on it, it can be in points that you are not satisfied with, but in return, and in general, you have the result that it is okay thanks to God.
Researcher: Now, what about the job location? For example, if you have a great, far-away job, is it possible to be in another governorate or outside Jordan? So, do you think that work location and being near the place of your residence and family are essential factors?
Interviewee: Yes, proximity is essential.
Researcher: Working in the public or private sector, does it impact you? If you worked in a public sector job, is it different from a job in the private sector, in your opinion, or the same thing?
Interviewee: Frankly, I do not know; I did not try, but with a certain expectation that they are different because when I moved to school work, and it was a private sector, and I was before in a bank, and it is also a private sector, but when you change from field to field within the private sector, they differed from each other, so how do you think when you change from private sector to public, I expect, yes, it will vary, but I can't evaluate as I have not tried it.
Researcher: Are the jobs that you worked with or the current job, could any of them be called your dream job?
Interviewee: No.
Researcher: No, till now, so what is your dream job?
Interviewee: I feel that the dream job is a combination of more than one thing. Now, it is impossible to find something perfect and satisfied with it 100%, but I expect that there are several key points one must focus on; you will be very sure that the job is related to your education, and your job will be in your speciality, a well-known company, meaning, you might be in a company … Meaning so many times I used to see so many people, I was responsible for accepting team members, I saw people in very well-known companies, in fact, they do not know certain things in the field of work, on the contrary, some people in non-know companies, but you find them much more intelligent. They know how to answer questions and are more committed to their work than others who have worked in well-known companies.
Researcher: This means it is not about the name of the company.
Interviewee: I don't care about the name, but unfortunately, we have this thinking that if someone is working in this company, this means he is good, but it is possible that they are not.
Researcher: What about job security? Or the future of the career? Meaning was job security important for the jobs that you did? And the future of your career?
Interviewee: Frankly, yes, because of this, when I took my current job as I'm working as a service contract, I was hesitant because of the job security, yes my contract is annual, and it is possible to be renewed or not, this makes you think million times before you sign the contract because it is not guaranteed, but in return, you might endure working in a company telling yourself I guarantee my position in this company, so this is very important.
The researcher: Now that we have talked about you, I would like to ask about your peers, which means your colleagues and friends. How can you compare your transition from education to the job market with other young people you know? I mean, here, on the level of the school, family, and your area, how do you compare yourself with them? Generally?
Interviewee: meaning … what do you mean here?
The researcher: for example, you have your reasons for transition, such as education, as it was one of the reasons that your transition was different from the peers in your area; maybe the location of the residence has an effect, meaning that possibly you know someone who is living in far governorates who are in your age category, but till now or they were late in transition to the labour market because they residence of living is far, they have no job opportunities, maybe it is the

subject of gender (males and females), to be a female has an effect in your transition to the labour market in Jordan in your opinion? Or, in Amman, as we talk about your area, the family, does the family have an impact on acquaintances, social status, and wealth? Do you think from the above, you can compare it with the level of peers in your surroundings, your school, and your area?
Interviewee: I want to compare myself with others, but it depends on where you want to work. I mean, we have companies here in Jordan. I know them very well … when people apply, they focus a lot on what car they have, what they wear, how they talk, and what their lifestyle is, and this I heard and saw; I mean, it is possible that two persons are applying: one of them is brighter, but on the other hand, they take who fits their thinking. Now I have moved because I played it safely, even though many of my friends take risks, many travel and work, some of them don't want to work, they want to open their own work, I feel ... I don't know how to evaluate it honestly, you should take it from more than one angle and on what basis, but I feel that I am limiting myself with specific things because I am playing it safely… I must have a job secured with a job, and particular things are present, such as health insurance, which limits your choice of company...
Researcher: meaning, for example, education; do you feel it made a difference with your transition compared to your peers?
Interviewee: No, frankly, because I, for example, have female friends who are educated from the school and the university, and some of them have certificates, and till now we almost have the same salary, with slight variation, even work sites are the same, the difference can be life, one gets married or travels, and so on ... but as a level of education It is possible to tell that it is normal ... It is possible these days that education makes a difference. For example, some people I know do not have the same education as me. Still, we learned in the same university that some people took jobs that could be better than mine, and some didn't, so it had no effect.
Researcher: And gender, male or female, do you feel it has an impact on this topic? For example, you are at the same level as a female, and there is a male where both of you are the same, but you feel that this male moved forward just because he is a male?
Interviewee: No, frankly, I don't feel like this except in factory-related work, yes, but other than this, no.
Researcher: The place of residence, we said, is important; the family and acquaintances are to some point; what do you think about the wealth?
Interviewee: for the wealth, I go back to what I mentioned on how the company is working; it is not something that affects you, but if the company is interested more about where you are from, what you have and what you wear …
Researcher: The social status, let's say ...
Interviewee: Yes, but if you decide on your job, no, for the company, it sees who you are or on what basis it takes you if you are fulfilling its conditions. As for the family, I feel it is a limiting factor ... meaning for example, my family decided that my work will be in Jordan; for example, you can't work abroad, meaning my friend at the same school, same work and education, but her family have no problem if she works abroad, I feel that family can be a limitation than be …
Researcher: helper ...
Interviewee: Yes.
Researcher: Okay, acquaintances?
Interviewee: It plays a huge role, but it is not a measure because you can't hire acquaintances in some companies; you have to apply and check, but there are excellent companies that depend on who your reference in the CV. I believe that 80 to 90% if you have acquaintances inside the company, you guarantee your job 100%.

Researcher: This means it is a significant factor.
Interviewee: Yes. I feel it is the most important point.
The researcher: okay, we talked about youth transition, and we understood your point of view. I want to ask you about determinants or factors; what factors or determinants may affect the youth transition? Of course, so many factors and determinants could affect youth transition from education to the labour market; I would like to know your point of view about the main factors and determinants. Of course, I would like to ask you in general, and then we go into some details. In your opinion, in general, what factors may affect, negatively or positively, the transition of young people from education to the labour market?
Interviewee: Factors meaning it could be ...
Researcher: Anything you can think about, possibly personal, family, financial, regional or geographical ...
Interviewee: Okay... Let us say the case that I told you about, for example, the subject of girls that are working in the same country, even males who have no brothers or sisters, their families do not want them to travel abroad, and this might stop an opportunity for him that it might be good for him. There are other factors …. Meaning that I am one of the people who used to say it is impossible that I work in jobs with long working hours and low salary ...
Researcher: We would like to talk about you here. Think about the factors that affect you, such as long working hours.
Interviewee: okay, long working hours, after the work …
Researcher: these are negative things ...
Interviewee: we have positive things, for example …
Researcher: Positives, for example, the role of the family, your personality, your education ...
Interviewee: I did not focus; we talked about what factors exactly ...
Researcher: What positive and negative factors may affect your transition from education to the labour market? What factors affected your experience and transition from education to the job market from 2012 to 2020? What are the factors that impacted positively and negatively?
Interviewee: Okay, what has a positive impact is the nature of the work, the quality of the experience that you have, and also, a strange thing is the problems that happen with you at work. I believe that they don't affect you negatively; on the contrary, they affect you positively because you become aware of how to deal with moving forward and face problems that happen to you...
Researcher: Education?
Interviewee: I feel education is important, but not the university's education … work experience ...
Researcher: training courses?
Interviewee: The training courses are at the second level, and the third level is university education.
Researcher: This means you are saying that the first thing is work experience, the second is training courses, and the third is university education.
Interviewee: I can tell you that our university education is not very strong ... For example, the German university's education, why I love it, because they gave you a year to travel abroad, you work there, so they prepare you … I studied at the University of Jordan for three years and a half, at the same university and same quality of education, so I feel that didn't understand it a lot.
The researcher: okay, now I will tell you some factors that can positively or negatively affect your transition from education to the labour market; we would like to discuss them one by one where you can give me your opinion, of course, and what is the most one that has an influence in addition to other factors that you mentioned earlier, or it is possibly to say here. Meaning I will start by

asking you about five points; the first is your parents' role in your transition to the labour market. Is it positive or negative? What is your opinion in general?
Interviewee: When I started working, it was positive because they were telling me, especially my father because he has experience with work, he advised me that I should find things related to my education, find work that is appropriate for a girl, for example, stay away from auditing because if you started with it, you would stay in it, when I change a job, he advises me to think, it might be harmful, it might be far from home, how long will it takes me … meaning he gave me … meaning he knows not only about work but also his knowledge in life, they may tell me things I'm not aware of, especially when I have started working because I didn't know how to discuss, on what to be aware of from specific things, meaning you care that you are working, but you are not aware of other things.
Researcher: Okay, what about structural factors such as job availability, place of residence, and social and demographic inequality, which means class differences, male and female? Do you think that these things were influencing you? First, we will start with the job availability.
Interviewee: Yes, job availability is essential. Because I remember when I first graduated, everyone wanted accountants; even my mother told me that it was the best decision I made that I studied accounting, but there was a time when the accountant market was on halt, meaning the market had no demand for accountants, I applied and applied, and no one talked with me, even though my grades are excellent, my is school is good, but all these things have no meaning if the market has no jobs.
Researcher: okay, and you feel that place of residence is essential; we discussed this …
Interviewee: Yes.
Researcher: Social and demographic inequality?
Interviewee: No, it is not that important.
Researcher: Okay, what about the different experiences between young people because of gender, male or female? Do you feel that this may affect you?
Interviewee: I feel that for some jobs, it doesn't affect them, and it depends on the type of job. In a job, it is possible that a male serves better than a girl. The girl may serve better than the male … also this gives you other dimensions, meaning the male can be late at work, but not the girl and the male may be nervous, but the girl not ... so, it depends on the type of job and who can serve you more in this field.
Researcher: okay, there is a point that you might have talked about before, which is psychological adjustment, orientation, and personal factors. Do you consider them very important in the transition process?
Interviewee: This is the most important point; I feel that you are capable ... but what do you mean here?
Researcher: Psychological adjustment is preparing myself psychologically for the transition; I work in anything on the basis that I will get something better, orientation internal and external, from the family, from friends, and me personally, and personal factors are light skills for example communication, leadership and management skills and many others that could affect … meaning, before you mentioned nervousness, for example how to control my nerves when dealing with people, do you consider them important in your transition from education to the job market?
Interviewee: Yes, very important, and this has affected me because, as I told you, at the university, they don't prepare you psychologically, no one helps, even our doctors, no one tells you that you have to start with this, take training, it was about self-education, I mean. So if you don't seek and check for things, you will stand in your place, meaning that you go to work and go back home only

… and there is another thing that some people think that they have no problems, meaning I was one of the people who became tense when I have work pressure, I did not feel this, but this with experience and work you know it, at that time I had a supervisor who told me that I am under a lot of pressure, so try to do this, change your mood, meaning, there is someone who directs you in the labour market ... in the education, no one would tell you to do this.
Researcher: Academic performance and training, do you feel that they are essential in the transition process?
Interviewee: Academic performance not that much, because it is not a measure, because someone else in education is not good, but in work life, how to deal with people and make relationships, he is better than me, but I feel that training is essential. I saw this, meaning who graduated from a German university because they travel a lot and get training, I feel their personalities are stronger. As a new graduate, when they work, they feel familiar with the work environment, they are faster, and those who are moving from university to work directly are more closed to themselves and do not have much enthusiasm, especially if their personalities are like this.
Researcher: Any other opinions? Other factors? Meaning that we didn't talk about it or didn't mention it?
Interviewee: We talked about it, but I feel that the availability of job opportunities is linked to the economy. But I can provide you with twenty job opportunities. Still, in return, I will not give you a good salary, so the one has to work in ten jobs so that he can get the salary that he can through it ... especially if he has commitments ... and this we find in people who work abroad, some people work abroad with a good salary. Still, when you calculate it, it is the same as you are working inside, so it is not only about job opportunity availability, but we need to have proportion. We have an equivalence between the opportunity you gave and the salary that corresponds to it.
Researcher: so good income is very important …
Interviewee: I hope it is equivalent, meaning I don't work a million hours for … Also, there is another thing; sometimes some people don't find a job … meaning they will try to find another job ... for example, an accountant in a mall, here I'm talking about accounting, it is possible that his family refuses, or to work in retail as an accountant, even though his income may be better than my income while I work in a company ...
Researcher: meaning that there is a view that …
Interviewee: This means that he might get a high salary, but in return, you should not work in a place behind the cache (the family says). Even though I know people who were with me in the university and the cashier salary reached 1,000 dinars and it was a full-time job, and I did not get that number, it varied, of course, because if you start as a new graduate in a company, you will not reach this income, but in return, even with this amount, they tell you don't work these jobs.
Researcher: meaning family are not happy or satisfied with these jobs …
Interviewee: Yes, this might be from a family way of thinking.
The researcher: from all we have discussed, what do you feel was the most crucial factor that affected your transition from education to the labour market?
Interviewee: meaning positive factor I had … I guess how it is linked to my education and my experience...
The researcher means the collective experience you have contributes to a better transition.
Interviewee: Yes.
The researcher: okay, now I want to ask you about the youth's transition from education to work in Jordan and government interventions. So far, we have focused on your experience, but if we think about it in general, we might discuss these topics through the examples you mentioned. From

your point of view, what are the main problems young people face in their transition from education to the labour market?
Interviewee: The main problems ... It might be lack of job opportunities with comfortable factors, meaning if there is a job, it means there is a problem in that job … this is how I feel, meaning it might have long working hours, or it is temporary, or another reason … this is how I feel … most jobs opportunities are like this ... maybe we mentioned low wages, and also maybe the type of jobs are not relevant to your education … someone may talk with you where he has a job opportunity, but part of it is accountant and the rest of the work is administrative ... I faced this situation ... meaning they need one employee to do two employees' job ... meaning, he is good in accounting, but he is also an administrative, so they hire only one employee who covers everything with lowest salary ...
Researcher: In your opinion, what should the government do to ensure the successful transition for youth from education to the labour market? Policies, strategies, education and vocational training, and job creation? I'm providing you with examples here ...
Interviewee: for sure, provide job opportunities .... It has a compulsory one year for training courses unrelated to their specialisation. It is not enough that they work as a volunteer for a day or two; no, it must be for a certain period, and part of it is compulsory. I think that in some universities they have started in this subject, but I'm not sure. Still, it needs to be mandatory... It is also possible... I'm not that good at policy subjects. Still, you may enlarge jobs, meaning you have more branches and can share with external companies or exchange experiences, and it is not necessary to be inside Jordan ....
Researcher: Vocational Education and Training? What is your opinion? Do you feel that the government should focus more on them ...?
Interviewee: Yes, but I do not know how it is possible to focus on them more, and I feel that they should be compulsory because if they are voluntary, people will not participate and don't know how I did not join because in the university we took everything … but during the work and training courses I took, I began to know that there are essential and good things, so I feel if they are not compulsory, especially the first stage when someone is transitioning to the work ...
Researcher: Okay, let's talk about you now. This is a general question. What does a good job mean to you?
Interviewee: A good job is more than one factor, meaning a good company, a reasonable salary aligned with the job, a respectable environment and the people are respected, being close to my house or at least a place far from the transportation traffic, this is not a scale but preferred, a job that I know in the future its experience will help me, not a routine job every day, it has a job development, and job security, but it is also not a measure, because it is possible to take a good job for three years, but it gives you better job after that, so it serves you for your future ...
Researcher: Okay, now, from all that you mentioned about a good job, what can the government possibly do so you can get this type of job? These are their policies towards salaries, improving working conditions, etc.
Interviewee: Of course, improving salaries … meaning every company partners with another company ... I don't know ... but there is an exchange of experiences ... Frankly, I don't know what the government can do ...
Researcher: meaning, you feel that it is not the role of the government, it is possibly the role of companies that could make it better …
Interviewee: meaning, the role of government is to participate … universities do something from their end ... they supply companies with students based on a specific approach … companies know

who to attract from universities ... the government contributes to the salary scale and job opportunities ... I feel it is a common topic … Even the person himself seeks and takes courses … It is an integrated topic; each one has a function ...
Researcher: Okay, we concluded the interview; thank you for participating. Do you have anything you would like to tell or ask me about before the end of the interview? Do you have any questions?
Interviewee: does it work to make a summary by the end of the interview or like surveys of the result?
Researcher: No ... because the result is not based on a single survey, because I collect all the interviews I do, then I do the analysis ...
Interviewee: This means you don't know what the results are.
Researcher: From one person, no ...
Interviewee: No, from more than one person?
Researcher: When I collect the data and finish writing, analysing, and validating, I will have the results.
Interviewee: When you conclude, tell me what the results are.
Researcher: Sure, if you wish, after I complete the research, I will definitely share the final report with you.
Interviewee: Yes, I would love to know the final results,
Researcher: Sure, thank you. Now, I will stop the recording.

……..

The end.

Appendix VIII: Committee for Research Ethics Approval Letter

School for Policy Studies

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14 May 2019

Mohammad Al-Batayneh
School for Policy Studies
University of Bristol
8 Priory Road

Dear Mohammad

Project Title: Successful youth transitions from education to work in Jordan
Reference number: SPSREC/18-19/036

The School for Policy Studies Research Ethics Committee has reviewed your application regarding this project, and we have received your responses to our requests for clarification. As such I am happy to provide Research Ethics Committee approval for this project.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

(on behalf of)

Beth Tarleton
Chair of the SPS Research Ethics Committee

Appendix IX: Committee for Research Ethics Approval Letter – After Covid-19

University of BRISTOL

Faculty of Social Sciences and Law
Committee for Research Ethics

University of Bristol Faculty of Social Science and Law,
Senate House,
Tyndall Avenue, Bristol
BS8 1TH
Tel: 0117 331 7472

Mr Mohammad Al-Batayneh
School for Policy Studies
Social Science Complex
8 Priory Road
Bristol
BS8 1TZ

20th June 2020

Dear Mr Al-Batayneh,

SPS ref: SPSREC/18-19/036
Study Title: Successful youth transitions from education to work in Jordan

Thank you for responding to the issues raised by the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law Research Ethics Committee (FREC) as stated in our letter dated 16.07.2020 in relation to your request to resume face-to-face research for the above-named study in Jordan. I can confirm that your response has been reviewed by the Chair of the FREC and that your request has received a favourable ethical opinion.

The committee recognises your positive engagement with the research ethics process and in responding to the ethical issues in preparation for your research.

Good luck with the continuation of your research.

Yours sincerely
Liam McKervey
Research Governance and Ethics Officer
pp

[redacted]

Dr Emma Williamson,
Faculty Research Ethics Officer, Faculty of Social Science and Law

Appendix X: List of Codes

○ Academic performance and training	○ Other extrinsic benefits
○ Availability of jobs	○ Other intrinsic benefits
○ Awareness	○ Perseverance
○ Career	○ Personal factors
○ Corona pandemic	○ Psychological adjustment
○ Customs and traditions	○ Public vs. private sectors
○ Desire	○ Q1: Interviewee background
○ Discrimination	○ Q10: Government interventions
○ Dream job	○ Q11: Good job meaning
○ Education curriculum	○ Q12: Government interventions for good job
○ Education for transitions	○ Q2: Education background
○ Education matters	○ Q3: Education and transitions
○ English is an issue	○ Q4-5: Working experience
○ Experience for transitions	○ Q6: Defining youth transitions - Successful or not
○ Experience matters	○ Q7: Defining youth transitions - Youth transition comparisons
○ Family status	○ Q8: Determinants of youth transitions
○ Family support	○ Q9: Challenges of youth transitions
○ Financial constraints	○ Race
○ Frustration	○ Recognition
○ Gender	○ Self-employment
○ Government distrust	○ Self-reliance
○ Government policies and strategies	○ Sense of shame
○ Government's projects monitoring	○ Social networks
○ Health insurance	○ Social security
○ High cost of education	○ Successful transitions or not
○ Job and education relation	○ Syrian refugees impact
○ Job pay	○ Time use
○ Job satisfaction	○ Training for income generation
○ Job search	○ Training for skills development
○ Job security	○ Transportation and traffic
○ Labour laws	○ Travel for work
○ Life environment	○ Vocational education
○ Life events	○ Workplace environment
○ Nepotism	○ Workplace proximity
○ Orientation	○ Youth support

Appendix X: Summary of the Study Respondents' Biographical Accounts

Respondent ID / Pseudonym	Summary of biographical account	Pathways / Perception of Transition
AXHMNA24 Abdullah	Abdullah, a young man in his mid-20s residing in Amman with his parents, hails from a lower-class family with parents who have received a high school education or less, earning between 400-600 JOD. Despite having completed high school or less, Abdullah's initial inclination was to work with his family's carpentry business. However, he sought employment elsewhere due to an injury sustained during work and his preference for direct social interaction. Abdullah's proactive approach led him to secure a job as a cleaner and helper in a butcher shop, although he aspired to become a butcher. Despite facing challenges such as a lack of training opportunities and the absence of benefits like health insurance or social security, Abdullah persisted and eventually transitioned to various butcher shops to diversify his experience. His journey included shifts to different workplaces due to unfavourable conditions or the environments until he found stability in a butcher shop where he worked for over three years. He relished the conducive environment, skill enhancement opportunities, and stable income. Abdullah attributes his successful transitions to his self-reliance and commitment to work, dismissing factors like family influence, gender, or social contacts. He highlights the importance of personal factors, experience, and psychological adjustment in navigating transitions, emphasising the lack of planning among many young people, leading them to make impulsive decisions that may result in difficulties. Abdullah identifies the main challenges facing youth transitions as the lack of experience in handling job-related issues, customers, or employers. He suggests that a conducive workplace environment, decent income, and accessible transportation are key elements for a successful transition. Additionally, Abdullah proposes that government intervention in addressing transportation issues could further facilitate youth transitions.	**Pathway 1: Transitioning from compulsory education / Successful**
HXMMNA26 Hammam	A young man in his mid-20s, residing in Amman with his parents, comes from a lower-class background, with his father holding a diploma and his mother having completed high school or less, with a family income ranging between 400-600 JOD. Despite completing high school, Hammam's employment journey began in a coffee shop, earning between 600-800 JOD, driven by family financial pressures after not passing high school exams. Recognising the value of education, Hammam aspired for better opportunities but faced setbacks, including being declined in a marriage proposal due to educational disparity. He briefly worked in a blacksmith shop before undertaking a hospitality training course, followed by internships in restaurants. Finding stability in a hotel job for over two years, Hammam enjoyed the favourable workplace environment and benefits but resigned due to personal reasons. Subsequent employment in restaurants and a brief stint in Erbil, Iraq, followed by job searches in Jordan, led to temporary roles with varying job security. Hammam feels dissatisfied with his current job in a coffee shop, yearning for opportunities in the public or renowned private sector for career growth and security, which he believes education could have facilitated. Reflecting on his journey, he emphasises the influence of family status, personal aspirations, and the importance of training, practical experience, and parental education on youth transitions. He highlights challenges such as training availability and job security, emphasising the significance of secure and rewarding employment in the public or reputable private sectors.	**Pathway 1: Transitioning from compulsory education. / Problematic**

Respondent ID / Pseudonym	Summary of biographical account	Pathways / Perception of Transition
AXLFNA20 Arwa	In her early 20s, a young woman from Amman lives with her mother, as her father has passed away. Coming from a lower-class background, both her parents have no more than a high school education, and the family's income ranged between 200 and 400 JOD. She completed high school and is currently pursuing a diploma while working at a promotion company, earning between 400 and 600 JOD. She began working while still in school to achieve financial independence and support herself. To gain experience and community exposure, she participated in various training courses and volunteered. After high school, she faced financial difficulties and couldn't afford to attend university, especially following her father's death, which left her without a source of income. As a result, she had to take on various jobs and complete several trainings to find employment that would enable her to continue her studies. She believes that starting to work at a young age helped her build connections and secure a job, with her accumulated experience being crucial for her career transitions. During her high school years, she worked in promotion jobs to support herself financially. As a veiled woman, she faced challenges in securing jobs in the promotion field, where employers preferred unveiled females. Despite this, she took on freelance promotion work and was eventually offered a full-time position even before finishing high school. Currently, she works without a contract, social security, or health insurance, but enjoys the job for its positive environment and good relationships with her colleagues and employer. She hasn't focused much on whether her career transitions were successful, as her primary concern has been earning an income. Her work experience has helped her engage with the community, enabling her to understand her preferences and needs better while balancing work and studies. Her goal is to continue her education and personal development, regardless of whether her job is in the public or private sector or related to her field of study. She prioritizes a job that offers a good salary and benefits, including a comfortable work environment, health insurance, and social security. When comparing her career transitions to those of others, she feels her experience has facilitated smoother transitions. However, she acknowledges that customs, traditions, and transportation issues, particularly for females, can negatively impact youth transitions. She highlights the importance of family support, particularly her father's, along with personal resilience and psychological adjustment, as positive influences. She believes vocational education is crucial but notes it is often male-dominated and should be more accessible to females. She views the lack of job opportunities, gender-biased education, and nepotism as significant challenges for youth. She advocates for increased government support for youth through job creation projects and investments in vocational education and training. To her, a good job means a comfortable workplace, decent income, health insurance, social security, and being close to home.	**Pathway 1: Transitioning from compulsory education. / Problematic**
SXQFNA29 Shams	A young woman in her late 20s, living in Amman with her mother (her parents are divorced), comes from a lower-class background. Both of her parents have diploma-level education and are retired, with a household income between 200-400 JOD. She has completed high school or less and has undergone training in secretarial work. Currently unemployed, she is actively searching for a job. She finds that traditional education doesn't suit her, as she requires a more individualised approach, making her school years difficult and unpleasant. Additionally, she believes that her parents' divorce and the family's financial struggles have significantly shaped her personality. She was	**Pathway 1: Transitioning from compulsory education. / Problematic**

Respondent ID / Pseudonym	Summary of biographical account	Pathways / Perception of Transition
	particularly weak in mathematics and, due to financial constraints, couldn't afford private tutoring. Consequently, she decided to pursue training in secretarial work and data entry instead. During her training, she got her first job at a mall, where she worked for two years to earn some money. Simultaneously, she interned at a company but couldn't continue due to a lack of social connections that could help secure her a permanent position. She feels that in her community, there is a stigma associated with not completing a formal education or considering vocational training. She faced this stigma from her family, co-workers, and potential employers. With the assistance of a training centre, she then secured a job at a jewellery shop, where she worked for about eight years. She enjoyed this job due to its dynamic environment, which allowed her to interact with people and offered a good income and benefits. During this time, she managed to buy her first car and an old, small home, eventually moving to a better apartment in a nicer area. However, she always felt that working in a family business had a ceiling on her career advancement. Seeking better opportunities, she applied for a U.S. visa and moved to work with her uncle. After a few months, her uncle faced financial difficulties and had to close his business, forcing her to return to Amman. Upon her return, she fell into a deep depression and struggled to find a job. She eventually found work at a company, but with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the company faced financial issues and had to let her go. She is now unemployed but continues to look for job opportunities. She considers her experience at the jewellery shop a successful career transition due to the valuable experience, good income, and positive workplace environment it provided. When comparing her situation to others, she believes that luck plays a role, but nepotism is a crucial factor in determining one's fortune. She sees the availability of jobs and government policies as key determinants of youth career transitions. She also believes that family support and guidance are important, along with one's gender and social connections. From her perspective, the main challenges for youth in transitioning to stable careers include frustration, nepotism, social networking difficulties, and a lack of job opportunities. To her, a good job offers a positive work environment, social security, and intrinsic benefits, ensuring personal comfort and satisfaction.	
TXRMNI20 Tamer	A young man in his early 20s, living in Irbid with his parents, comes from a middle-class family. His father has a high school education or less, while his mother holds a bachelor's degree, and their household income ranges between 600-800 JOD. He completed high school or less and is now self-employed in a carpenter shop, earning between 400-600 JOD. He didn't complete his education due to attendance issues and instead trained in a bakery, a vocation he enjoys, though he is not currently working in that field. Despite this, he still aspires to return to school, complete his high school education, and eventually attend university, especially as he observes how the community perceives uneducated youth. His family environment was turbulent, with frequent parental conflicts, making him uncomfortable within his community. After leaving school, he initially joined his father in running a coffee kiosk. However, when the kiosk was closed, he took on several temporary jobs as a daily worker. Later, he worked with his relatives in a carpenter shop, where his father eventually joined him. After gaining some experience, they opened their carpenter shop, which they have successfully run for over four years now. He is satisfied with his current job, having built a good reputation in the market.	**Pathway 1: Transitioning from compulsory education. / Successful**

Respondent ID / Pseudonym	Summary of biographical account	Pathways / Perception of Transition
	He considers his career transition relatively successful due to the decent income, even though it comes with higher expenses compared to public sector jobs. He believes public sector jobs, despite offering lower incomes, provide more comfort, and he sees the value in holding a public job while also running a private business. However, he is critical of the country's labour laws, which allow others to replicate his work without repercussions. When comparing his career path to others, he feels that entering the labour market early was more beneficial than completing his education and then facing the same job market challenges or waiting for a job that might not come. He views the lack of family support, financial constraints, and the negative impact of the school environment as key factors that adversely affect youth transitions. He identifies the lack of job opportunities as the primary challenge facing young people today. For him, a good job is characterised by social security, health insurance, a good income, a positive workplace environment, and job security.	
AXDMNI24 Adib	A young man in his mid-20s, living in Irbid with his parents, comes from a lower-class family. Both of his parents have no more than a high school education and are currently without income, making him the main breadwinner with an income between 400-600 JOD from his self-employment. He completed high school or less and has strong opinions about the education system in Jordan, particularly the procedures for the final high school year exams. During his final high school exams, he was arrested and imprisoned due to a riot he claimed he wasn't involved in, resulting in a two-year suspension from education. During this time, he completed training to work in goods and customs clearance for companies. Before high school, he helped his father in a business that eventually failed. After his suspension from education, he underwent training to find employment, but he noted that it was time-consuming, expensive, and heavily reliant on social connections and nepotism "Wasta". His first job, after several months of searching, was with a customs and goods clearance company in Aqaba, where he worked for a year before moving to another company in the same field for better pay. He spent two more years there until the company faced financial difficulties and shut down. He explained that his income was not sufficient to live independently while supporting his family, especially since he became the sole income earner after his father stopped working. He views work experience and social connections as essential for job promotions or securing better employment opportunities. However, due to the country's economic situation, he struggled to find a job for a year. He then started his own business transporting goods between Syria and Jordan. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic led to border closures, severely impacting his business. He is currently searching for jobs while continuing some small-scale goods transportation work on his own. He believes that successful transitions are challenging in Jordan due to government regulations that can halt projects, lack of funds to start a business, and scarce job opportunities in the labour market. He added that working in the public sector requires a certain level of education. Still, job opportunities are limited, and obtaining even a low-level job often requires nepotism "Wasta", which offers insufficient income. He compared his situation to his peers, explaining that most are in similar circumstances, waiting for better opportunities regardless of their education level. He noted that success often depends on family wealth and the ability to start a business or secure a good job through social connections or nepotism. He also pointed out that women face greater	**Pathway 1: Transitioning from compulsory education. / Problematic**

Respondent ID / Pseudonym	Summary of biographical account	Pathways / Perception of Transition
	challenges due to customs and traditions, which limit their rights and opportunities, making it easier for men to navigate the community. He feels that his family's financial situation and his two-year suspension from education negatively impacted his career transitions. He identifies the lack of job opportunities, especially in Irbid, low job incomes, and societal customs and traditions as significant barriers to youth transitions. He believes the key challenges for young people include lack of experience, nepotism "Wasta", weak social networks, and government distrust. For him, a good job primarily means a good income.	
SXLFNI21 Samira	A young woman in her early 20s, living in Irbid with her parents, comes from a lower-class family. Her father has a diploma, and her mother has a high school education or less, with the family's average income ranging between 400-600 JOD. She completed high school and now works at a healthcare clinic, earning less than 200 JOD per month. After finishing high school, she began looking for jobs, but it wasn't easy. Her family was against her working in fields such as clothing, restaurants, or services. A friend informed her about a job opportunity as a secretary at a dentist's clinic, where she could also assist the dentist. Her mother suggested she take training in healthcare provision, which she started while working at the clinic. She has mixed feelings about her career transition. On one hand, she considers it successful because she found a job and became financially independent. On the other hand, she feels it is not successful due to the lack of health insurance, low income, and the job's distance from her home. Comparing her situation to others, she noted that no one around her has found a job, highlighting how difficult it is to secure employment. She believes that a lack of job opportunities and motivation are major factors affecting the success of youth transitions. She also thinks family support is crucial for finding jobs and relocating between governorates, while psychological resilience is necessary for job searching. She identifies the lack of job opportunities as the primary challenge facing young people in their career transitions. For her, a good job is characterized by a decent income, a positive work environment, proximity to her home, health insurance, and social security.	**Pathway 5: returning to education / Problematic**
AXNFNI25 Amina	A young woman in her mid-20s, living in Irbid with her family after the death of her father, comes from a lower-class background. Both of her parents had a high school education or less, and the household income averages between 200-400 JOD. She has completed a high school education or less and currently works in the medical sector, earning less than 200 JOD per month. After failing her high school exams, she pursued a certificate in networking and IT engineering. She later realized this was a poor decision made without enough consideration, as it went against her interests and offered limited job opportunities, especially for females, in the labour market. She attributes her failure in high school to the family problems she was experiencing at the time. Additionally, during her IT studies, her father passed away, leading to financial difficulties that forced her to work to support herself. She initially worked as an assistant at a dentist's clinic, a role aligned with her passion. Despite considering repeating her high school exams, financial constraints prevented her from doing so. She values work experience more than formal education or certifications. Her first job ended after she had to leave the clinic due to mistreatment by the dentist. She spent over six months looking for another job before finding a position at a medical clinic, thanks to a friend's help. She underwent informal training there for three months before securing the job. Although she enjoyed this	**Pathway 5: returning to education / Problematic**

Respondent ID / Pseudonym	Summary of biographical account	Pathways / Perception of Transition
	job, she always considered going back to complete her high school education because her current job was informal and lacked proper certification or training. She had to stop working temporarily due to her mother's illness, but after her mother recovered, she found another job at a different dental clinic. This job was short-lived as the dentist closed his clinic, and the COVID-19 pandemic struck, complicating her situation further. After the lockdown was lifted, she found another job at a different clinic where she is currently employed. She has also started pursuing a certificate in medical services provision. She views her career transitions as successful from an experience standpoint but not in terms of job security and income, which remain low. She emphasizes that proximity to her workplace is crucial, especially since she often works late hours, a concern heightened by her gender and safety considerations. Despite these challenges, she is passionate about working in the medical field. She hopes to eventually complete her high school education and study dentistry or nursing, which she would consider a successful transition. When comparing herself to others, she acknowledges the importance of both education and experience. Some of her friends secured jobs abroad due to their educational qualifications. She believes that career orientation during school is vital in helping young people discover their interests and guiding them toward fulfilling careers. She identifies several factors that impact young people's career transitions, including the lack of job opportunities, racial and gender biases, social connections, and nepotism "Wasta". She also believes that insufficient school and family guidance regarding future career planning and job acquisition are major challenges. For her, a good job would involve completing her high school education, studying her desired field in the medical sector, and securing a position in that area, providing her with a sense of security and fulfilment.	
YXNMTA21 Yasir	A young man in his early 20s, living with his family in Amman, lost his father and comes from a lower-class background. His parents had a high school education or less, and their average income was less than 200 JOD per month, making him the primary breadwinner. He completed high school or less and earned a barbering certificate from a vocational education centre. Currently, he works two jobs as a cleaner and a barber, earning an average monthly income of less than 200 JOD. He used to enjoy school but had to leave early after his father's death to support his family, initially by selling vegetables on the street. At 18, he began looking for more stable employment and eventually secured a job as a cleaner at the vocational education centre through a private contractor. It was there he discovered an interest in barbering, recognising it as a skilled trade that could supplement his income. After completing his barbering certificate, he began working at a barbershop in addition to his cleaning job. He also completed a digital marketing course online but found it did not provide sufficient income. Despite the hardships he has faced, he considers his transition to his current role a success, as he has found a job that sustains him. For him, a truly successful transition would be securing a position at a reputable barbershop with good income, job security, and social insurance. When comparing his situation with others, he notes the scarcity of jobs and the importance of education for employment opportunities. He believes that a family's financial status can compel young people to leave school to work, especially if they lack interest in studies. Additionally, family support, job availability, experience, and personal factors play significant roles in young	**Pathway 2: Transitioning from vocational education / Problematic**

Respondent ID / Pseudonym	Summary of biographical account	Pathways / Perception of Transition
	people's transitions. He sees a good job as one that offers a decent income and job security.	
AXNMTA24 Ahmed	A young man in his mid-20s, residing in Amman with his parents, hails from a lower-class family where both parents have a high school education or less and an average income between 400-600 JOD per month. He completed high school or less and pursued vocational training in turnery at a vocational education centre. Currently self-employed, he earns between 200-400 JOD monthly. After finishing tenth grade, he was compelled to enrol in a vocational education centre due to his family's financial constraints. Family friends recommended turnery, and he embraced the two-year training program, which included one year of school-based learning and another year of hands-on practice. He is ambitious and eager to train on more advanced turnery machines, as they are in demand in the market. However, he noted that these training programs are costly, and the machinery is very expensive. He lamented the lack of government support, such as subsidised training courses or tax-free access to machinery for young entrepreneurs. Upon completing his training at a turnery shop, he stayed on for an additional year to gain more experience despite the low pay and lack of benefits. His primary goal was to learn and acquire skills. He later opened a shop with an engineering partner. Still, issues with the shop's electrical capacity, which was crucial for turnery work, forced him to move to another shop with a different partner. He is content with his current job as he values working independently, even though it offers low income and few benefits. He regards his career transition as successful, as he is building a future in a field he is passionate about rather than continuing an education that might not lead to job opportunities. He prefers his self-employed work over a public sector job because it offers more opportunities, even if the income is not guaranteed. Comparing his journey to others, he mentioned that some of his friends completed their education only to find themselves jobless or in low-paying positions. He believes the location of one's residence, particularly proximity to industrial areas, can influence career transitions. He noted that gender has a slight impact, as females tend to work in fields like cosmetology, baking, tailoring, and hospitality. Social contacts and nepotism can aid in securing private sector jobs to some extent, but ultimately, job performance is what matters, unlike in the public sector. He stressed the importance of job availability, especially in the industrial sector, and the need for adequate training and access to machinery. For youth transitions, he considers the provision of adequate income, social security, and benefits like paid leave, along with improved labour laws, to be crucial. He identifies key challenges such as youth frustration, low income, unpaid training, and lack of government support as significant obstacles. To him, a good job means providing affordable machinery, sufficient income, social security, and health insurance for young people.	**Pathway 2: Transitioning from vocational education / Successful**
HXAFTA24 Heba	A young woman in her mid-20s, living in Amman with her family and married, comes from a middle-class background. Her father has a bachelor's degree, while her mother has a high school education or less, and the family has an average income of 600-800 JOD per month. She completed high school or less and pursued vocational training in cosmetology at a vocational education centre. Currently self-employed, she earns between 400-600 JOD monthly. After initially studying cosmetology in high school, she found the curriculum too theoretical and not practical enough, so she switched to a program in clothes production to obtain her high school	**Pathway 2: Transitioning from vocational education / Successful**

Respondent ID / Pseudonym	Summary of biographical account	Pathways / Perception of Transition
	diploma. Upon graduation, she worked briefly at a car rental company. Still, she disliked the job due to the negative societal perceptions of women working in such environments, which she felt was unsuitable for her as a female. Her passion for beauty led her to train at a beauty salon, which she found to be a more appropriate and fulfilling field for her. She discovered a nearby vocational education centre offering cosmetology training and enrolled. After completing her studies, the centre facilitated an internship at a beauty salon, where she was later offered a job. She was satisfied with this position as it allowed her to gain experience in her desired field, providing a sense of accomplishment and fulfilment. Seeking to start her own business, she initially offered beauty services through a Facebook page, providing home visits. However, she found this risky due to potentially uncomfortable situations as a female. Consequently, she decided to open her beauty salon, which offered her a safer and more stable environment. She views her career transitions as successful, particularly given the economic situation in the country. Compared to peers still searching for jobs, she believes she has navigated her transitions well. She values self-employment over other jobs as it allows her greater comfort and personal fulfilment. She identifies lack of family support, workplace proximity, and the distribution of vocational education centres as negative factors that can hinder youth transitions. Conversely, she believes that personal desire, psychological resilience, and proximity to vocational training can positively influence youth transitions. She sees the primary challenges for young people as a lack of awareness and guidance in choosing the right education and career paths and understanding their desires. For her, a good job is defined by a decent income, a comfortable workplace environment, and a sense of achievement.	
HXNFTA29 Haneen	A young woman in her late 20s, living in Amman with her parents, comes from a middle-class family where her mother has a bachelor's degree and her father has a high school education or less, with a family income between 600-800 JOD per month. She completed high school or less and underwent vocational training in culinary arts to become an oriental chef assistant. She is now self-employed, earning between 400-600 JOD monthly. In high school, she studied IT, though her true interest was in the hospitality field. However, her family, adhering to traditional views and societal norms regarding women in certain professions, did not support her pursuit of this passion. She did not pass her high school exams and subsequently took courses in English and computer skills. Her interest in the hotel and food service industry was sparked during a school visit to a specialized college for food industry training, which aligned with her original passion. Despite her family's disapproval, she was determined to pursue a career in this field. Her career began in a call centre as a secretary, a position she held for less than two years but found unfulfilling due to its lack of alignment with her passions. She then took another secretarial job at a research centre, which also failed to satisfy her career aspirations. During this time, she learned about vocational education centres by chance, not realizing such opportunities were available. Defying her family's objections, she enrolled in one of these centres. After graduating, she was sent for training at a hospital, where she was later offered a job. However, she quickly left due to the long hours and low pay. She then worked in a domestic kitchen but was dissatisfied with the very low income, although she valued the experience gained. She eventually found a job at a Chinese restaurant, where she worked for three years. She appreciated the supportive work	**Pathway 2: Transitioning from vocational education / Successful**

Respondent ID / Pseudonym	Summary of biographical account	Pathways / Perception of Transition
	environment and the recognition of her efforts, but a workplace injury required hospitalization and an eight-month hiatus. This injury was a turning point, as she felt the restaurant and social security did not adequately support her. Upon recovery, she took a job at an Italian and international food restaurant for six months before deciding to open her restaurant. She considers her career transitions successful because she is working in a field she loves, building her career, and achieving her goals while gaining valuable experience. She believes that one's living location has little impact on career success, though it may help in securing a public sector job. She acknowledges that social connections and nepotism can play a role in job acquisition but sees the primary issue as the general lack of job opportunities. She identifies cultural norms, lack of family support, gender biases favouring men, and the proximity of workplaces as negative factors affecting youth career transitions. She views job income, additional benefits, personal factors, training, and experience as positive influences. She believes that gender, family dynamics, environment, societal traditions, workplace proximity, nepotism, and financial situation are significant challenges facing young people in their career transitions. For her, a good job is one where she feels appreciated, has a supportive workplace environment, earns a good income, enjoys social security and health insurance, is close to her home, and aligns with her passions.	
MXDNORMTI20 Majid	A young man in his early 20s, living with his parents in Irbid, comes from a lower-class background where both parents have a high school education or less, with an average family income of under 200 JOD per month. He completed high school or less and underwent vocational training in mobile maintenance at a vocational education centre. He currently works at a mobile maintenance shop, earning less than 200 JOD monthly. He aspired to become an engineer and pursued an industrial track in high school, but after three attempts, he was unable to pass the high school exams. He views education as an important asset, offering a sense of respect and security, though he believes practical experience holds more value. Due to his family's financial struggles, he took on various low-skill jobs, such as working in a library or assisting his father during summer vacations or after school. Driven by his interest in engineering, he chose to train in mobile maintenance. After completing his vocational training, he found a job at a mobile maintenance shop. He is content with his current job, seeing it as a stepping stone to develop his skills and grow his career. He believes that even if he had succeeded in high school and pursued higher education, it wouldn't necessarily lead to employment, given the lack of job opportunities. Therefore, he feels that acquiring a practical skill has been a better path for him. He acknowledges the importance of social security, health insurance, job security, and a good income in any job. Although he didn't succeed academically, he considers his transition into vocational training and subsequent employment to be a successful move, especially since it aligns with his interests. Comparing his situation to others, he points out that the primary issue is the lack of job opportunities in the market, regardless of one's qualifications or circumstances. He believes that key determinants affecting youth transitions include family financial constraints, such as his father's inability to afford private tutoring to help him pass high school, as well as having social connections or "Wasta" (nepotism), personal factors, self-reliance, and the need to improve his financial situation. From his perspective, the main challenge facing youth in their career transitions is the scarcity of job opportunities. For him, a	**Pathway 2: Transitioning from vocational education / Problematic**

Respondent ID / Pseudonym	Summary of biographical account	Pathways / Perception of Transition
	good job offers a reasonable income, health insurance, and a fair work environment free of favouritism.	
AXBMTI24 Arkan	A young man in his mid-20s, living with his father in Irbid after his mother's passing, comes from a middle-class family where his father holds a bachelor's degree or higher and his mother had a high school education or less. The family's income ranges between 800-1000 JOD per month. He completed high school or less and pursued vocational training to become a barber at a vocational education centre. Now self-employed, he earns between 200-400 JOD per month. Lacking the motivation to continue his education after failing his high school exams, he decided to learn a trade and, following his father's advice chose to become a barber. Before enrolling in vocational training, he briefly worked in his father's business but found it unsatisfying. After completing his vocational training, he opened a small barber shop in a village with financial support from his father while also working at another barber shop in the city. He acknowledges the difficult economic situation in the country and believes that job opportunities are scarce without connections or "Wasta" (nepotism). He emphasizes the importance of patience, perseverance, and gaining experience for a successful career transition. Despite his successful transition into self-employment, he considers having a public sector job important. He believes that a public sector job offers job security and social security benefits, which are crucial if unforeseen circumstances arise. Moreover, he thinks that public-sector employment positively influences community perception and can impact personal life decisions, such as marriage, as many families prefer a partner with stable public-sector employment. He views his career transition as successful, noting that he hasn't had to ask his father for financial support since starting his business. Compared to others, he sees nepotism as a significant factor influencing youth transitions. He believes that customs and traditions, such as how the community views one's education level, family support, lack of job opportunities, and social connections, are key determinants affecting youth transitions. From his perspective, the main challenges facing young people are the lack of job opportunities and the influence of nepotism. For him, a good job means having a public sector position that provides a stable income and job security, alongside running his own business.	**Pathway 2: Transitioning from vocational education / Successful**
AXAFTI21 Amira	A young woman in her early 20s, living in Irbid with her parents, hails from a lower-class family where her father has a diploma and her mother has a high school education or less, with a family income between 400-600 JOD per month. She left school in the tenth grade as she was not interested in continuing her formal education and had a keen desire to pursue a career in cosmetology. She later completed vocational training in cosmetology at a vocational education centre and is now self-employed, earning less than 200 JOD per month. Her initial attempt to pursue a cosmetology education was thwarted due to her school grades, which did not qualify her for further study in the field. At the age of 15, she started working in a beauty salon, but due to her young age, she was assigned to manage customer reception and appointments rather than perform beauty services. After a year, she got married, but her husband disapproved of her working in the beauty salon due to cultural norms and societal perceptions regarding women working in such environments. Consequently, she stopped working. Her marriage was short-lived, ending in divorce, and she gave birth to a child. Her family supported her through this difficult period, encouraging her to enrol in a vocational education centre to earn a certification in cosmetology.	**Pathway 2: Transitioning from vocational education / Successful**

Respondent ID / Pseudonym	Summary of biographical account	Pathways / Perception of Transition
	Following her training, she continued working at the same salon where she had done her practical training, as arranged by the vocational centre. She eventually decided to open her beauty salon, where she continues to work today. She is satisfied with her job because it aligns with her passion, and she is eager to develop her skills and grow in this career. Reflecting on her experiences, she believes that self-reliance and confidence in one's choices are crucial. She acknowledges that gender plays a significant role, as societal norms restrict the types of jobs available to women. She also highlights the importance of family support and the impact of nepotism on youth career transitions. She identifies the lack of job opportunities and the challenge of maintaining motivation and desire as the primary obstacles facing young people in their career transitions. Without sufficient job opportunities, many young people become discouraged and give up on their career aspirations. For her, a good job aligns with her passion, provides a decent income, and includes social security benefits.	
NXAFTI29 Nadia	A young woman in her late 20s, living with her family in Irbid, is married and comes from a lower-class background. Both her parents have a high school education or less, and the family's average income ranges between 200-400 JOD. She completed a bachelor's degree and also underwent vocational training in cosmetology at a vocational education centre. Currently, she is self-employed and earns between 400-600 JOD per month. In high school, she studied housing economy and managed to pass on her second attempt. A family member advised her to pursue a degree in psychological and educational guidance at university. However, after graduation, she struggled to find a job in that field. Three years post-graduation, she secured her first job at an electronics company. Still, she left within a year due to the job's lack of benefits, low income, and unsuitable long working hours, especially since she had just gotten married and had a baby. After another year of unemployment, she moved to Amman with her husband due to his job. There, she took up a data entry position at a company run by one of her husband's relatives. She left after three months, dissatisfied with the long hours and lack of benefits like social security and health insurance. When her husband's job took them back to Irbid, she decided to follow her initial passion for cosmetology. The challenge had been that vocational centres offering this specialisation were not nearby, but when a new centre opened close to her home, she immediately enrolled. Upon completing her cosmetology training, she started her own business from home, with plans to open a beauty salon. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, she decided to postpone opening her salon. She regards her vocational training as a success, noting that her bachelor's degree did not facilitate her career transitions. Her satisfaction with her career stems from working in a field she is passionate about, achieving financial independence, managing her own time, gaining experience, and developing her career. When comparing herself to others, she believes that the type of education, the availability of job opportunities, the need for experience, one's living location, social contacts, nepotism, and cultural customs and traditions all influence young people's career transitions. She identifies her responsibilities as a married woman and the need for an additional source of income as key factors affecting youth career transitions. She also recognises that a lack of job opportunities, family support, proximity to the workplace, cultural norms, gender issues, psychological adjustment, and personal factors can impact these transitions. She views the main challenges facing youth in their career transitions as the scarcity of job opportunities,	**Pathway 5: Returning to education / Successful**

Respondent ID / Pseudonym	Summary of biographical account	Pathways / Perception of Transition
	low incomes, and additional transportation costs if jobs are far from home. For her, a good job means having a sufficient income that covers her needs for the entire month, aligns with cultural norms, and is close to where she lives.	
ZXDMDA23 Zidan	A young man in his early 20s, residing with his parents in Amman, comes from a lower-class family where both parents have a high school education or less. The average household income is between 400 and 600 JOD. He holds a diploma in hospitality as a chef's assistant and currently earns between 200 and 400 JOD per month. Before high school, he spent his summer vacations working in furniture upholstery, a job he continued for another year after graduating. However, he found this work unsatisfying due to his lack of passion for it and the low income it offered. Driven by a keen interest in the culinary arts, he began searching for jobs in restaurants. It took him over two months to secure his first position because he lacked experience, and many employers preferred hiring foreign workers who accepted longer hours for lower pay. After a brief stint in the restaurant, he decided to pursue a diploma in hospitality, specialising as a chef's assistant. The college facilitated a three-month unpaid internship in a restaurant and subsequently offered him a job opportunity outside of Amman. He declined this offer because of the distant location and insufficient pay. The struggle to find a job continued, with many restaurants requiring prior experience. Eventually, he found a position at a barbecue restaurant, where he worked for less than a year. Although he appreciated the experience gained, he sought opportunities to diversify his skills by moving to other branches, a request the restaurant denied. This led him to transition to a seafood restaurant to expand his culinary experience further. He enjoyed this job due to its benefits, such as paid overtime. However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic forced the restaurant to cut his salary nearly in half and eliminate benefits, prompting him to resign. He returned to his previous work in furniture upholstery, finding it offered better income and more flexible working hours. Reflecting on his career transitions, he considers them successful because he took deliberate steps to secure a job in his desired field, even though he faced challenges such as the need for social connections or "Wasta" to find employment. He made a point of not leaving a job until he had another one lined up. For him, landing a job in the culinary field, which offers job security, reasonable income, and career growth through experience, is a mark of success. He views his return to upholstery as a temporary situation due to the pandemic. Comparing himself with others, he believes his focus on gaining experience sets him apart from those unwilling to work long hours. He notes that having social connections or "Wasta" can lead to well-paying jobs regardless of one's experience. He suggests that the government should align educational opportunities with labour market demands to prevent young people from studying fields that lack job prospects. He identifies family support, social networks, nepotism, personal drive, and individual factors as key influences on youth transitions. The main challenges he sees for youth transitioning into the workforce include studying in fields not in demand, the influence of nepotism, and the necessity of experience to secure a job. To him, a good job entails job security, opportunities for gaining experience, relevance to one's education, a reasonable income, and a positive work environment with fixed working hours.	**Pathway 2: Transitioning from vocational education / Problematic**
AXDMDA23 Ayman	A young man in his early 20s, living with his grandfather in Amman, hails from a lower-class family. His father holds a diploma, and his mother has	**Pathway 3: Transitioning**

Respondent ID / Pseudonym	Summary of biographical account	Pathways / Perception of Transition
	a high school education or less, with the family's average income ranging between 400-600 JOD. He has completed a diploma in engineering and currently works in the public sector, earning an average income between 200-400 JOD. During high school, he focused on industrial studies, inspired by his passion and his father's influence. He successfully graduated from high school and chose to pursue a diploma in engineering. While in high school, he assisted his father with work, and after graduating, he spent six months working in a car repair shop to gain experience. He decided to take a break from working until he completed his diploma. Upon graduation, he faced a challenging job market and spent about three months searching for employment. Eventually, he secured a short-term position in a renewable energy project focusing on solar power, where he worked for three months. After the project ended, he struggled to find a new job and briefly worked at a supermarket, a role that did not align with his education and offered low pay, leaving him dissatisfied. Subsequently, he found a job as a technical and operational assistant in a private company, where he worked for six months before leaving due to poor treatment by his manager. He then returned to a solar power project with a friend for another two months. Following this, his father suggested he apply to a private company where his father had retired, and he worked there for two months. He then received a job offer from the public sector, where he has been employed ever since. He chose the public sector role despite its lower pay due to the job security it offered. To supplement his income, he takes on short-term jobs after hours and also drives a taxi for the family. He views his career transitions as successful, attributing his perseverance and the diverse experiences he has gained in various roles. He measures his success primarily by the income he earns, which he considers crucial for evaluating the success of his transitions. In comparing his journey with others, he emphasizes that success isn't about nepotism or social connections but rather about the willingness to accept and work in any available job. He believes that this mindset distinguishes him from others. Key determinants for youth transitions, according to him, include family support—highlighting the importance of heeding parental advice—the socio-economic conditions of one's community, and the family's financial capacity to provide support. He also notes the role of customs and traditions in shaping community perceptions of young people, as well as the importance of psychological resilience. The main challenges he identifies for young people in transition are the scarcity of job opportunities and the frustration that comes from graduating and being unable to find employment. For him, a good job is characterized by a decent income, which he sees as the foundation for all other benefits, a positive workplace environment with reasonable working hours in relation to income, and the provision of health insurance and social security.	**from tertiary education to the public sector / Successful**
LXNFDA23 Lana	A young woman in her early 20s resides in Amman with her mother, having come from an upper-class background where both parents possess a high school education or less, with an income exceeding 1000 JOD. She holds a diploma in business administration and works in the private sector, earning between 400-600 JOD. Educated entirely in private schools, she completed high school on her second attempt before pursuing her diploma, as her grades didn't meet university admission requirements. Despite her interest in law, she opted for business administration due to its proximity to her desired field. Reflecting on her education, she feels her schooling prepared her personality-wise for the job market, but her diploma didn't offer the	**Pathway 4: Transitioning from tertiary education to the private sector / Successful**

Respondent ID / Pseudonym	Summary of biographical account	Pathways / Perception of Transition
	same preparation. Her career journey began during high school when, after failing initially, she secured a position at a research centre for four months, where, unfortunately, she wasn't paid, recognizing it was fraudulent. With the help of a friend, she transitioned to a beauty salon where she trained and worked for nearly a year, though she was dissatisfied with her manager's treatment. Moving to another salon provided her with a positive experience for nearly two years, appreciating the supportive environment and the opportunity to pursue her diploma concurrently. Subsequently, she briefly worked in a family-owned clothing store but left after encountering issues with her manager. She then transitioned to organizing events at a children's play area, a position she's held for over three years. She considers her career transitions successful, emphasizing the importance of working and studying simultaneously to achieve financial independence. Her current income satisfies her for her age, viewing her current roles as stepping stones toward her ultimate career goals. Comparing her journey with others, she acknowledges that geographical location, family support, social networks, nepotism, and cultural background can significantly influence young people's career paths. She identifies personal factors, community environment, societal norms such as dress codes and gender roles, and the availability of job opportunities as critical determinants impacting youth transitions. Key challenges she highlights include nepotism and the role of social networks in job placement. For her, a "good job" entails either establishing her own business utilising the experience she's gained or securing a position that offers substantial income and aligns with her career aspirations.	
NXAFDA26 Najwa	A young woman in her mid-20s resides in Amman with her family, is married, and hails from a lower-class background where her father, deceased, had no income, and both parents had a high school education or less. She holds a diploma in human resources administration and works in the public sector, earning between 200-400 JOD. Her journey began after completing high school with aspirations to study languages at university, a plan interrupted by her father's illness, which required her to care for him until his passing. Following her father's death, she learned about a scholarship offered by a royal fund and successfully applied for a diploma program at a college fully covered by the scholarship. The fund guided her towards fields of study deemed advantageous. After completing her diploma, she achieved the highest ranking in her field nationwide and registered with the government's Civil Services Bureau to seek employment. Despite her top ranking, securing a job in the private sector proved challenging, lasting nearly four years, attributed to the prevalence of social connections and nepotism “Wasta” in hiring practices. She views her transitions as satisfactory but not fully successful, citing the gap between academic education and practical experience crucial for entering the job market. Frustrated by companies' demands for prior experience when hiring fresh graduates, she believes young people should swiftly transition from education to employment to capitalize on their newly acquired knowledge and energy. She also laments the disparity in salaries between diploma holders in the public sector compared to those with bachelor's degrees or higher. Comparing her experiences with others, she emphasizes the role of academic performance and the relevance of one's education to labour market demands in securing employment. She underscores the impact of societal norms, familial expectations, social networks, nepotism, racial factors, and family financial stability on young	**Pathway 3: Transitioning from tertiary education to the public sector / Successful**

Respondent ID / Pseudonym	Summary of biographical account	Pathways / Perception of Transition
	people's career paths. Key challenges she identifies include the lack of practical training and job opportunities, particularly concentrated in Amman. For her, a "good job" encompasses fair compensation aligned with educational qualifications and job responsibilities, workplace proximity, additional benefits like transportation and training opportunities, and comprehensive social security and health insurance coverage.	
MXDMDI25 Musa	A young man in his mid-20s resides in Irbid with his mother following his father's passing. He comes from a lower-class family where his father holds a bachelor's degree and his mother completed high school. The average household income ranges between 400 and 600 JOD. He attained an intermediate diploma in air conditioning and refrigeration and currently works in the semi-public sector, earning between 200 and 400 JOD monthly. His academic journey was influenced by his father's guidance and his desire to pursue a career in mechanics. Despite facing criticism from his family for choosing the industrial branch in high school—a path traditionally viewed as less esteemed—he remained focused on his goal, believing it could eventually lead him to engineering studies with additional courses. Post-high school, due to moderate grades, he opted for a diploma in air conditioning and refrigeration, envisioning future completion of a bachelor's degree. During school breaks, he worked under strict guidance from his father, focusing primarily on education during academic terms. After high school, he began working with a construction company involved in electrical installations for apartments, with his father's approval to ensure it didn't hinder his studies. This experience proved invaluable in both education and skill acquisition. Subsequently, he joined his brother's business, installing security cameras for approximately 7 months. However, dissatisfaction with income prompted a brief stint in online product sales before returning to his brother's business for better earnings. Simultaneously, he secured a position in a semi-governmental company, where he continued to work for nearly two years, balancing this role with his responsibilities in his brother's shop. He views his career transitions as successful, having secured a job aligned with his passion and accumulating vocational experience to launch his own venture in the future. Comparing his journey to others, he highlights the challenges faced by engineering graduates who remain unemployed despite their qualifications, underscoring the importance of understanding market demand, family support, social networks, and the influence of nepotism and financial stability in shaping career paths. He identifies societal perceptions, familial backing, social connections, and personal attributes like patience and strategic planning as pivotal factors influencing youth transitions. Key challenges he identifies include impatience among youth, societal judgments, and inadequate long-term planning or ambition. He advocates for patience and methodical progression in career development, emphasizing the need to align ambitions with financial capabilities rather than rushing into unsustainable financial commitments like car loans. For him, a "good job" entails acquiring valuable experience while enjoying job security.	**Pathway 3: Transitioning from tertiary education to the public sector / Successful**
MXDMDI29 Majdi	A young man in his late twenties, residing in Irbid with his parents, comes from a lower-class background. Both parents have a high school education or less and earn an average income between 400-600 JOD. He has completed a diploma in air conditioning and refrigeration and currently works in the private sector, earning between 200-400 JOD. He initially chose the scientific track in high school and passed on his first attempt.	**Pathway 4: Transitioning from tertiary education to the private sector**

Respondent ID / Pseudonym	Summary of biographical account	Pathways / Perception of Transition
	However, due to an issue with university registration, he was not accepted. His goal was to study engineering, so he repeated high school to improve his grades, but he still was not admitted to university. Eventually, he enrolled in a diploma program for air conditioning and refrigeration, hoping to transition to an engineering degree later. Financial difficulties within his family, however, prevented him from continuing to a bachelor's degree. After high school, he pursued painting and home decoration as a hobby and developed his skills using the internet until he became proficient. Following his diploma, he took a short training period with a company and simultaneously searched for jobs without success. He stayed with the company for less than two years despite the low salary, as he appreciated the positive work environment and the experience gained. He received a job offer in his field in the Gulf region, where he worked for over a year before deciding to start his own business there. He was satisfied with his job due to the good income and benefits, such as transportation and housing. He partnered with a local citizen to establish a company. Still, he was eventually defrauded, as his partner asked him to return to Jordan, promising to send a visa that never came. This experience left him depressed and financially strained, leading him to resume work in painting and home decoration. After a year, he secured a job with a private company in Jordan, where he remains employed and is content with his work despite the low income. He considers his career transitions successful, given the current economic climate. Compared to peers from his college and friends, he feels he has been more proactive in seeking employment, gaining valuable experience that allows him to secure job offers easily. He notes that social contacts, nepotism "Wasta", race, gender, and cultural traditions, such as restrictions on women's mobility, can significantly influence the career paths of young people. He contrasts the public sector's job security with the private sector's limited benefits, such as only 14 days of sick leave before salary deductions begin and weaker health insurance. He believes that desire, work experience, education, family support, personal factors, and job security are key positive influences on youth career transitions. Conversely, he identifies negative influences such as workplace distance, lack of job opportunities, low wages, nepotism, and the impact of Syrian refugees on the job market. He criticizes Jordan's education system for contributing to youth unemployment, as it produces a surplus of graduates without sufficient job opportunities and fails to guide youth towards fields with better employment prospects. To him, a good job involves a positive work environment with effective management, recognition, appreciation, competitive pay, and career development opportunities.	**/ Successful**
KXAFDI21 Khawla	A young woman in her early twenties, living with her parents in Irbid, comes from a middle-class family. Both her parents have a high school education or less, with a combined income of 800-1000 JOD. She completed a diploma in graphic design but is currently unemployed with no income. Her initial passion was to study agriculture in high school, but the nearest school offering this program required a commute, which her family did not approve of. As a result, she studied cosmetology instead. She had plans to join the army after high school, but registration was closed at the time. She couldn't retake her high school exams to improve her grades for university admission due to her family's financial constraints, so she opted for a diploma in graphic design. She explained that her college education did not adequately prepare her for the job market, as the software and techniques taught were outdated compared to industry standards. While	**Pathway 5: Returning to education / Problematic**

Respondent ID / Pseudonym	Summary of biographical account	Pathways / Perception of Transition
	pursuing her diploma, she briefly worked in sales for a mobile company but left after a month because she disliked the job. After completing her diploma, she worked at a beauty salon, but it closed down shortly after she started. Through these various jobs, she was exploring her interests and learning what it meant to be employed. Despite her efforts, she struggled to find stable employment. Her college eventually helped her secure a job at a print factory, but her family refused to let her take it due to its distance from home and the low salary. Her family prefers that she secure a job in the public sector. She continued to search for a job without success, and the outbreak of COVID-19 further diminished her chances of finding employment. Consequently, she enrolled in a vocational education centre to pursue a certificate in cosmetology, which she is still studying. She views her career transition as a valuable experience, particularly her time at the beauty salon near her home, though she aspires to secure better jobs in the future. She believes that factors such as social contacts, nepotism, the need for experience, and the location of one's residence significantly influence young people's career transitions. She considers education and its environment, social connections, psychological resilience, and personal factors as positive determinants in youth transitions. Conversely, she identifies the quality of education, lack of family support, location, and gender as negative factors. The primary challenges facing youth in their transitions include a lack of motivation, nepotism, and weak social networks. For her, a good job is characterized by a decent income, a positive workplace environment with reasonable working hours commensurate with the job's pay, recognition for her efforts, social security, and health insurance.	
TXMFDI22 Tamara	A young woman in her early twenties, residing in Irbid with her parents, hails from a middle-class family where both parents have a high school education or less and earn between 800-1000 JOD. She completed a diploma in medical administration and coordination and currently works in the private sector, earning between 200-400 JOD. She attributes her decision to pursue a field she didn't enjoy in high school to a lack of guidance and awareness from both her school and family. The poor quality of education at her school, characterised by a lack of follow-up on students' academic progress and challenges, also played a role. She did not pass high school on her first attempt and had to retake it. Due to her grades, she was unable to enrol in a public university, and her family could not afford private university tuition, leading her to pursue a diploma instead. During her diploma studies, she began to discover her capabilities, and she was supported emotionally by her family and fiancé despite her father's health issues at the time. She graduated at the top of her field in the country, but this achievement did not translate into job opportunities. After graduation, she aspired to pursue a bachelor's degree but found only two university options that would not support her dream of specializing in medical administration. She then began job hunting, initially with no success. She recalls this period as difficult, unable to further her education or secure a job. Eventually, she found a position as an administrator at a medical centre and simultaneously enrolled in a vocational education centre to enhance her administrative skills. Her dream job is with the Royal Medical Services, but she acknowledges that securing such a position requires social connections and nepotism, and the application process is currently closed. After completing her diploma, she spent a year applying for jobs and receiving offers for positions unrelated to her field, such as sales and marketing,	**Pathway 5: Returning to education / Problematic**

Respondent ID / Pseudonym	Summary of biographical account	Pathways / Perception of Transition
	which did not align with her ambitions. She is happy with her current job, appreciates the recognition and positive management, and hopes for income improvement when circumstances allow. However, she prefers a public sector job with lower pay due to the job security it offers. She considers her career transition not entirely successful, as she struggled to find a job aligned with her education and interests. Although she is content with her current job, she feels her transition is better than having no job at all, especially given the job security and limited market opportunities. Comparing her experience to others, she notes her strong desire for improvement and employment, unlike some peers. She highlights that factors such as social contacts, nepotism, and gender can significantly influence career transitions. For example, her male friend secured a job requiring travel, but her family would not permit her to take a similar opportunity due to cultural norms and traditions. She identifies nepotism, family support, gender, cultural norms, family financial status, the need for experience, lack of job opportunities, and geographical location as key factors influencing youth transitions. She believes the lack of job opportunities is the primary challenge facing young people today. To her, a good job means one that offers a decent income, job security, relevance to her education, health insurance, social security, and a conducive workplace environment with reasonable working hours.	
MXDMBA26 Mahmoud	A young man in his mid-twenties, residing in Amman with his parents, comes from a lower-class family where both parents have a high school education or less and earn between 400-600 JOD. He holds a bachelor's degree in financial and banking science and currently works in the private sector, earning between 400-600 JOD. He believes that the environment he grew up in and his family's financial situation affected his educational performance in school. Although he chose the scientific track in high school and passed on his first attempt, his grades were too low to qualify for an engineering program at university, which was his preferred field of study. He also feels that his family's lack of awareness about his educational desires and university options negatively impacted his career transitions later on. Due to his low grades and financial constraints, he had to settle for a degree in financial and banking administration, a field he had never considered before. During his time at university, he tried to find interest in his studies but struggled because he did not enjoy the subject or the university environment. He mentioned working during summer vacations while in school and continued working throughout university to support himself as his family faced financial difficulties. His jobs were flexible positions in restaurants and hotels, allowing him to balance work and academic commitments. After graduation, he secured a job at a bank, a process that took him three months. He explained that he did not actively apply for this job; instead, the bank contacted his university for graduate details and offered available positions. He worked at the bank for less than a year, despite the good salary and benefits, because he could not adapt to the job and found it unfulfilling. This period culminated in a significant issue that led to his imprisonment, which he describes as a major turning point in his life, though he did not provide further details. This incident impacted him for almost a year, during which he was unable to work. Once he resolved this issue, he began searching for jobs again, and with the help of his uncle, he found a job at a college canteen. Shortly after, he moved to another canteen where he has worked for over four years. He is satisfied with this job due to its good salary, low transportation costs, complimentary	**Pathway 4: Transitioning from tertiary education to the private sector / Problematic**

Respondent ID / Pseudonym	Summary of biographical account	Pathways / Perception of Transition
	meals, and comfortable work environment. However, he is also discontented, feeling that he is wasting his life in a job that does not allow him to build a career or start his own business. He also lacks social security and health insurance. He believes that if he had studied a field he was passionate about, he would have pursued job opportunities more vigorously despite the challenging economic situation in the country. He feels that studying a field against his desire demotivated him, making his career transition unsuccessful. Although he enjoys his current job, it lacks job security, social security, and health insurance. The good income and positive work environment provide some comfort, as the short working hours and proximity to his home give him time for personal care and reduce transportation issues. He prefers a public sector job for its job security, even though it would offer lower income. Comparing his experience to family members and friends, he observes that they have had better transitions because they studied fields they were interested in, were prepared for the job market, and had access to social contacts, nepotism, and financial resources. They lived close to job opportunities and could afford training, giving them an advantage. He believes that family support, including guidance, financial stability, living environment, social security, health insurance, job availability, psychological adjustment, personal factors, and cultural traditions significantly influence youth career transitions. He notes that customs and traditions particularly impact young women, who may face restrictions on university attendance and workplace environments due to societal norms. The primary challenges for youth in their career transitions include poor quality education, which he criticizes for its outdated teaching methods that fail to engage students. He also cites a lack of job opportunities, corruption leading to fewer job-creating projects, the high cost of public education that many families cannot afford, and the frustration of graduating with significant debt and no job prospects. For him, a good job is defined by job security, social security, health insurance, and proximity to the workplace, as transportation is costly and problematic in the country.	
AXHMBA27 Ayser	A young man in his mid-20s lives in Amman with his family and is married. He comes from an upper-class background where both parents hold at least a bachelor's degree and earn an average income above 1000 JOD. He holds a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering and works in the private sector, earning more than 1000 JOD per month. Reflecting on his education, he mentioned that he excelled in school and was offered a scholarship to attend a private school during his secondary education. However, his family's financial difficulties prevented him from accepting it initially. He later received another scholarship for high school, which he accepted. He completed high school with a focus on the scientific track and was admitted to a university program in electrical engineering, his desired field of study. During his time at university, he engaged in training related to his field and participated in voluntary work through NGOs. He observed that the university's education quality was outdated, with a focus on obsolete systems not used in the modern labour market. He noted that relevant training courses outside the university were more aligned with current industry needs despite their cost. Throughout his university years, he worked various jobs in hotels as a waiter, not out of financial necessity but to supplement his income. In the last two years of university, he joined a local gym and eventually became a trainer there. After graduating, he struggled to find a job in his field. He applied to the Civil Service Bureau	**Pathway 4: Transitioning from tertiary education to the private sector / Successful**

Respondent ID / Pseudonym	Summary of biographical account	Pathways / Perception of Transition
	for public sector positions. He took several exams, which he found exceptionally difficult, suggesting that success required being overqualified or having strong social connections. He explained that many young people aspire to public sector jobs because they provide a solid foundation of experience, making it easier to transition to the private sector later. Conversely, starting directly in the private sector often leaves young people without the necessary support or guidance. Unable to secure a job in his field, he decided to invest in the gym where he trained, partnering with friends to buy it. However, he was dissatisfied with the gym's financial burden, including significant operational expenses and debts owed to the previous owner, prompting him to sell the gym to repay his debts. He then worked briefly at a clothing store but found the job unsatisfying due to low income and long hours. Frustrated by his job search, he experienced depression. His family suggested he consider joining the army, but this did not align with his career aspirations. Eventually, through his uncle's help, he secured a position at a communications company. However, he left after a month due to an unwelcoming work environment, where he felt he was treated poorly because his employment was perceived as a result of nepotism. The work did not match his qualifications. He then worked at another company for three months, where he gained valuable experience thanks to a manager who encouraged him to take relevant training courses and engage in practical work. Subsequently, he returned to the same communications company, again with his uncle's assistance, but this time, he insisted on working in a specific field that suited his expertise. He remains in this position today and feels satisfied with his transition, as he has achieved professional growth, gained valuable experience, and enjoyed a good income with benefits. Despite these successes, he still worries about job security, a common issue in the private sector where layoffs are a constant threat and benefits like sick leave and proper vacations are limited. He considers his career transition both successful and unsuccessful: successful in that he has reached a satisfactory position with good income and professional growth, but unsuccessful due to the lack of job security and stability. When comparing his experiences with those of others in his family and among his friends, he noted that many chose to leave the country due to limited job opportunities. Those who stayed either worked in family businesses or started their ventures. He feels fortunate in his situation, believing that many young graduates are willing to take any job that offers a decent salary, even if it's challenging, as long as it meets basic living needs. However, low-paying jobs often don't justify the effort required, leading to frustration and demotivation. He pointed out that family pressure on highly educated youth to secure certain types of jobs, especially in the public sector, can negatively affect career transitions. Key factors influencing youth transitions include the lack of job opportunities, reliance on social contacts and nepotism, psychological adjustment, personal circumstances, and the high costs of education and training. He believes that the primary challenge facing young people is the lack of job opportunities. For him, a good job is characterized by a sense of accomplishment, recognition, adequate income, and job security.	
AXLFBA27 Amal	A young woman in her mid-20s lives in Amman with her family, and she is married. She comes from a middle-class background; her father holds a bachelor's degree, and her mother has a diploma, with a family income ranging from 600 to 800 JOD. She completed a bachelor's degree in media (Radio and TV) and currently works in the private sector, earning between	**Pathway 4: Transitioning from tertiary education to**

Respondent ID / Pseudonym	Summary of biographical account	Pathways / Perception of Transition
	400 and 600 JOD. Initially, she chose to study business administration in high school, which she passed on her first attempt, and subsequently, she was accepted into a university to study media. During her university years, she joined an NGO that provided training related to the labour market, which she found crucial as she felt the university education did not adequately prepare students for employment. Coming from the conservative North of Jordan, the NGO also played a significant role in helping her adapt to the labour market by offering training programs that bolstered her confidence and professional skills. After graduating, the NGO helped her secure an internship in a private sector company in Amman to gain practical experience. She continues to work at the same company where she interned, as they offered her a job following the completion of her training. Although her job is not directly related to her media education, it aligns with the skills she acquired through the NGO's training programs. Being a woman from a conservative community, she initially faced several challenges in her job, such as adapting to a mixed-gender workplace, using English regularly, and dealing with different customs and traditions. However, she noted that with time and experience, she managed to overcome these issues. She described working in the private sector as demanding, emphasizing that proving oneself and demonstrating value is essential for career advancement. Despite increased responsibilities, she mentioned that job income and benefits often do not reflect the additional workload. Nevertheless, she accepts this as part of the job and believes she has limited options for change. She views her career transition as successful, as she secured a job relatively quickly with the NGO's assistance, a privilege not many young people in Jordan experience. She feels fortunate to have a job with a decent income and benefits like social security and health insurance. The only downside is the need to relocate to Amman for work, which was a significant shift from her home region. Initially, she had not considered working in the public sector. Still, after getting married and having children, she started to see the appeal of job security and a more predictable work environment. The private sector, in contrast, often demands more than expected without adequate compensation. Comparing her experiences to those of her university peers, she believes that gender does not play a significant role in job transitions, but geographical location does. Those living in Amman or abroad found it easier to enter the job market. She identifies several factors that can impact youth transitions into the workforce, including the location of one's residence, appearance, English proficiency, accent, personality, family support, financial situation, social connections, nepotism "Wasta", psychological resilience, high transportation costs, and guidance about the labour market. Her family's support, particularly their willingness to let her move to Amman despite conservative customs, played a crucial role in her transition. She highlighted that university curricula often fail to align with labour market needs and do not foster personal skill development, such as soft skills and English language proficiency. She also noted that adapting to different lifestyles and environments, such as the contrast between Amman and other regions, is a significant challenge for young people entering the workforce. For her, a good job offers a reasonable income relative to the effort required and job security. Given her current status as a married woman with children, she prefers public sector jobs for their defined working hours, vacation days, and guaranteed salary despite these jobs not aligning with her initial ambitions or aspirations.	**the private sector / Successful**

Respondent ID / Pseudonym	Summary of biographical account	Pathways / Perception of Transition
HXAFBA29 Huda	A young woman in her late 20s resides in Amman with her parents. She comes from an upper-class family, with her father holding a bachelor's degree or higher and her mother possessing a diploma. The family's average income exceeds 1000 JOD. She has a bachelor's degree in accounting and works in the private sector, earning over 1000 JOD. She attended the same private school throughout her entire education, focusing on the IT branch in high school, which she passed on her first attempt. While her consistent educational environment provided stability, she noted that it limited her exposure to diverse peers. It affected her social adaptability when she transitioned to university, where she found everything markedly different. After excelling in high school, she was accepted to study accounting at university despite it not being her preferred field. Initially, she planned to switch specializations after the first two years, as many courses overlap within the faculty. However, she decided to stick with accounting. She expressed that university education was disconnected from the labour market. Consequently, she did not pursue any training during her university years but took two specialized accounting courses post-graduation, which she found more beneficial for her career. Upon graduating, she began job hunting. Although she received several offers, she declined them due to their long hours and low pay. Four months after graduation, she accepted a position with a reputable company. She chose this job for its alignment with her education, potential for experience, and opportunity to understand the workplace environment. However, she quickly realized that the job was not as relevant to her studies as she had hoped and left after a short period. She then moved to a well-known bank, where she worked for two years. She enjoyed this role, as it provided experience in a specific area of accounting that she liked and had a positive work environment with friends. Later, she returned to her alma mater to work on a project. This job offered flexibility, vacations, and career advancement opportunities, fitting her needs well. After five years, she transitioned to an international organisation where she currently works. She appreciates the good income, positive work environment, and diverse colleagues, although she is concerned about job security due to her one-year contract, which may not be renewed. She views her career transitions as relatively successful. Unlike many graduates who struggle to find employment, she feels fortunate to have secured jobs with good incomes and positive work environments. However, she sometimes reflects on others with less educational achievement who work in prestigious companies with higher salaries and better benefits. Comparing her experiences with her peers, she believes that many companies prioritise superficial factors such as appearance, type of car, and social status over education or experience. Social contacts, nepotism, and customs and traditions also play significant roles. For instance, her family disapproved of her travelling for work, which influenced her career decisions. She emphasizes that gender and educational background do not significantly impact youth transitions. She identifies several factors affecting youth transitions, including gender, customs and traditions (e.g., restrictions on travel for women or only children), workplace environment (e.g., long working hours), type of experience gained, availability of training courses, family support, lack of job opportunities, and psychological and personal factors. She also notes that low job income and societal stigma against accepting certain jobs can hinder career progress. She believes that a good job should provide a positive work environment, reasonable income aligned	**Pathway 4: Transitioning from tertiary education to the private sector / Successful**

Respondent ID / Pseudonym	Summary of biographical account	Pathways / Perception of Transition
	with the job's demands, proximity to one's residence, opportunities for career development, and job security.	
MXDMBI26 Maher	A young man in his mid-20s lives in Irbid with his mother following the passing of his father. He hails from a lower-class family where both parents completed high school or less, and the family income ranges between 400-600 JOD, largely supported by contributions from his brothers. He holds a bachelor's degree in economics but is currently unemployed and without income. During high school, he pursued an IT track, which he completed on his first attempt. His initial aspiration was to study accounting, but his grades were insufficient to qualify for that specialization, leading him to study economics instead. He described the university education system as rigid and impractical, with little relevance to the labour market. He initially struggled with English but gradually developed a liking for his specialization and improved his language skills. Post-graduation, he encountered significant challenges in finding job opportunities. He lacked information about labour market requirements, as the university did not provide such guidance. Additionally, he had no social contacts or "Wasta" (nepotism) to facilitate his transition, and employers demanded experience he could not acquire without first securing a job. He acknowledged that training could enhance employability but noted that the value of training depends on the certification's prestige and cost, which is often prohibitively expensive. Throughout school and university, he worked in house painting with a neighbour to cover his daily expenses without relying on his family. He continued his job at the university to fund his transportation and daily needs. His post-graduation goal was to work in a bank. He secured a three-month internship at a bank through support from a youth empowerment company, but despite his outstanding performance, he did not receive a job offer. He emphasized that securing a job in such places often requires social contacts to push your resume forward or Wasta. He received several job offers in sales, which involved strenuous efforts to sell difficult products, with no fixed salary as compensation was commission-based. Uninterested in such roles, he continued house painting to support himself. He later found a temporary public sector job, which lasted less than a year. Despite its short duration, this job provided him with a steady income, social security, and health insurance and helped him understand the labour market. The experience also strengthened his personality. When his contract ended, he decided to pursue a master's degree in economics. He saved money to start his education and worked as a university assistant to cover his tuition fees. During weekends, he continued house painting to fund his transportation and daily expenses. He recently completed his master's degree and is still seeking job opportunities without success. He views his career transitions as moderately successful. Unlike many, he managed to find a job, albeit temporary, which allowed him to complete his master's degree. He appreciates the income, proximity to his home, and comfortable work environment. However, he feels his journey lacks success due to the absence of a permanent job that offers security and aligns with his education. Comparing his experiences with others, he believes that job acquisition is less about education or location and more about having social contacts or wasta. He considers academic performance, social contacts, personal adaptability from early work experience, psychological resilience, family support, limited job opportunities, and gender and cultural factors, such as family restrictions on job locations for females, as key determinants of youth transitions. He also notes that Syrian refugees add to the	**Pathway 5: Returning to education / Problematic**

Respondent ID / Pseudonym	Summary of biographical account	Pathways / Perception of Transition
	competition for jobs. He identifies the lack of job opportunities, limited youth experience in the labour market, and gender discrimination, including biases against women based on their dress (e.g., veiled or not), as major challenges facing young people. To him, a good job provides happiness, job security, sufficient income, social security, health insurance, and a suitable work environment that matches one's education level.	
MXDKMBI26 Mazen	A young man in his mid-20s lives in Irbid with his parents. He comes from a lower-class family where both parents have a high school education or less, and the family income ranges between 200 and 400 JOD. He holds a bachelor's degree in English linguistics and is employed in the private sector, earning between 200 and 400 JOD. During high school, he pursued an IT track, which he completed on his first attempt. He chose to study English at university, recognising its value in the labour market. He believes education is crucial for young people's futures, as it provides the necessary qualifications to apply for jobs. He also thinks that education, both in school and university, prepares youth for transitions by enhancing their knowledge and shaping their personalities. From an early age, he worked with his father in the family business, continuing this work until he graduated from university. After graduation, he struggled to find a job and continued working with his father while also selling products online. Eventually, he secured a part-time job at a call centre for a brief period. He appreciated this job as it was his first paid position, offering him insight into the labour market and valuable experience despite its low income and lack of job security. He then decided to visit his brother abroad in hopes of finding employment. Although he travelled, he was unable to secure a job and returned to Jordan. He mentioned being disappointed by the low salary offers he received, which did not justify the expenses incurred during his education. Upon returning, he worked in the family business and later started transporting goods between Jordan and Syria. However, his activities ceased when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the country. During and after the pandemic, the family business suffered, prompting him to seek other employment opportunities in his area. He eventually found a job as a cashier in a supermarket, where he continues to work to this day. He is dissatisfied with this job, feeling that the income is very low compared to his experience in the family business and that it is not related to his education. He does not consider his career transitions successful because he has not worked in his field of study, has forgotten much of what he learned at university, and has faced significant disappointment due to the lack of job opportunities, low income, and job insecurity after graduation. He believes that young graduates, full of energy, are often met with disillusionment. Comparing his experience with others, he explained that success in transitions is not necessarily linked to education but to the availability of job opportunities, social contacts, nepotism "Wasta", and geographic location. His colleagues in Amman, for instance, have smoother transitions due to more job opportunities. He also notes that family support, financial situation, and even race can affect young people's transitions. He identifies several key determinants that affect youth transitions: lack of job opportunities, a weak economy, the intervention of social contacts and nepotism, family support, psychological adjustment, frustration, personal factors, academic performance, high training costs, and lack of experience. He believes that more support for youth, such as government-backed projects for youth employment or agricultural initiatives, could help, but he notes that such opportunities are currently lacking. The primary challenges	**Pathway 4: Transitioning from tertiary education to the private sector / Problematic**

Respondent ID / Pseudonym	Summary of biographical account	Pathways / Perception of Transition
	young people face in their transitions are a lack of job opportunities, nepotism, and their geographic location. For him, a good job means feeling comfortable in the workplace and receiving a reasonable income that aligns with his efforts.	
NXAFBI25 Nadin	A young woman in her mid-20s, living with her parents in Irbid, comes from a lower-class family where both parents have a high school education or less. The family income ranges between 200 and 400 JOD. She holds a bachelor's degree in biotech and medical engineering but is currently unemployed and without income. She initially pursued a scientific track in high school, completing it on her first attempt. She was accepted to study networking and security engineering at the university. Still, after two years, she realized it wasn't her passion and switched her major to biotech and medical engineering, which aligned more closely with her interests. She felt that her university education was inadequate and needed to supplement her studies with additional learning through reading, watching YouTube channels related to her field, and enrolling in costly training courses. According to her, university education in her country does not adequately prepare students for the labour market due to its lack of practical experience. She didn't take any further training courses after graduation because she aimed to become financially independent. During her university years, she worked in the library to support herself financially and also briefly offered tutoring classes to new university students. Her first job after graduation was at a clothing factory in her area, where she worked in the quality control department. However, she disliked the job because it was unrelated to her field of study, the workplace environment was uncomfortable, and the income was low. She decided to pursue a training course in medical administration coordination at a vocational education centre, which she is currently completing while actively applying for jobs. Still, so far, she has had no luck. She hopes this training will help her secure a position in medical administration, as the centre indicated they needed someone in that role, and she is determined to prove herself to get hired. She doesn't consider her career transitions successful since she hasn't worked in her desired field of biotech and medical engineering, where she believes it could be highly creative and passionate. She had planned to continue her education to reach higher levels in her specialisation. She added that her family prevented her from taking some good job opportunities because they were in Amman, and they refused to let her move there alone due to customs and traditions. She prefers to work in the public sector, where she believes there is greater job security. When comparing her situation to that of her peers, she noted that her colleagues living in Amman had smoother transitions into the labour market, with family support that allowed them to undergo training without immediate income. Factors such as social contacts, nepotism, race, and gender can significantly impact the career transitions of young people. She believes that family support, the lack of job opportunities in the Irbid governorate, social contacts, nepotism, gender, customs and traditions, the high cost of training courses, personal factors, and psychological adjustments are key determinants affecting youth transitions. She also highlighted a sense of shame that arises from customs and traditions, which discourages young people from accepting jobs perceived as below their educational level and noted that societal perceptions can hinder job acceptance. Other key challenges for youth in their transitions include a lack of job opportunities, transportation difficulties, and traffic congestion. For her, a good job means	**Pathway 5: Returning to education / Problematic**

Respondent ID / Pseudonym	Summary of biographical account	Pathways / Perception of Transition
	having a decent income. In this comfortable workplace environment, she feels at ease with her colleagues and superiors, recognized and appreciated at work, has health insurance, social security, and job security, and has the opportunity to build a career.	
YXAFBI25 Yasmeen	A young woman in her mid-20s resides in Irbid with her parents, hailing from an affluent background where her father holds a bachelor's degree or higher, and her mother has a diploma, with an income exceeding 1000 JOD. She completed a bachelor's degree in economics and currently works in the private sector, earning between 400-600 JOD on average. During high school, she pursued the IT branch, which she enjoyed and excelled in on her first attempt. Initially aspiring to study law at university, her grades directed her towards accounting, which she studied briefly before settling on economics as her major. In her final year at university, she deferred one semester to undergo training at a bank with support from an NGO aimed at gaining practical insights into the labour market. She found this training crucial in developing her interpersonal skills and preparing her for professional challenges. Post-graduation, despite initially returning to the bank where she trained, she eventually secured her first job in the private sector after about four months. This opportunity arose due to her training experience and connections facilitated by her father. She remains in this position but finds it challenging, particularly due to her responsibilities in the field, such as loan collection, which can be awkward and difficult within her conservative community. The current COVID-19 situation has exacerbated these challenges, with community members sometimes reacting negatively to loan collection efforts, affecting her professional standing. Considering her career transitions, she views them as partly successful due to her resilience, proximity to home, adequate income, social security, and health benefits. However, she feels unsatisfied as the job lacks security and career prospects and does not align with her ideal career path. Comparing her experiences with peers, she highlights the significant impact of social connections, family financial support for training opportunities, and the geographic challenges of living in Irbid, such as high transportation costs and traffic hindrances. She identifies several key factors influencing youth transitions, including limited job opportunities that match educational qualifications, societal norms restricting female independence in cities like Amman, the influence of social connections and nepotism, family support dynamics, gender-related challenges, psychological adjustments, and personal circumstances. Challenges such as inadequate job opportunities in Irbid, lack of support for youth training programs, low job salaries, transportation costs, and traffic congestion further complicate these transitions. For her, a good job entails proximity to home, competitive pay, a supportive work environment with reasonable hours, health insurance, social security benefits, and opportunities for career growth.	**Pathway 4: Transitioning from tertiary education to the private sector / Successful**