

# Boundary Ambiguity and its Relation to the Sense of Responsibility among Family Reconciliation and Reform Offices' Female Consulters

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## Abstract

The current study aims to explore the relationship between boundary ambiguity and sense of responsibility among consulters of Family Reconciliation and Reform Offices. The study sample consists of (250) consultations. The Boundary Ambiguity Scale and the Sense of Responsibility Scale have been used to achieve the study objectives. The study findings indicated high boundary ambiguity and a low sense of responsibility among the sample members. The results also showed a positive and significant relationship between boundary ambiguity and sense of responsibility. Finally, the study found that there are significant differences in sense of responsibility among the sample members, which are attributed to the duration of marriage. These differences were in favour of the category from 5-10 years. Some of the research's most important recommendations are designing counselling programs to enhance the sense of responsibility among Female consulters of Family Reconciliation and Reform Offices, and conducting training courses and seminars to clarify the role of the leader in the family.

**Keywords:** Boundary ambiguity • Sense of responsibility • Consulters of family reconciliation • Reform offices

## Introduction

The family was and still is of interest to many specialists in various disciplines, especially the Social Sciences and Humanities, for its importance and since it is considered the first and primary cell that makes up society. It is the first social unit that man had known since the first marital family- Adam and Eve- and the emergence of the family groups that evolved into many different social organizations.

Family is the base of social structure. The more the family is cohesive and built on firm foundations, the more it builds a cohesive and strong society. In this sense, the family becomes organized, and every family member is aware of their rights and duties. However, female consulters of the Family Reconciliation and Reform Offices face a lot of family and social pressure in addition to the burden of the procedures at courts and Family Reconciliation and Reform Offices. Therefore, this category is worth studying.

Moreover, by examining the Supreme Judge Department's statistics for the year 2020 regarding cases of the Sharia Public Prosecution, it was found that the cases and reports amounted to 21878 cases compared to 16794 in 2019, with a clear increase of 30%. It was also found that the total cases of marital discord and dispute, in which the Prosecution decides a mandatory or voluntary intervention, reached up to 21380 cases; this is 32% higher than 2019, which recorded 16138 cases. Such an increase must be taken into consideration and the numbers indicate a disorder in the family system in general.

The concept of hierarchy denotes authority within the family. The member at the top of the hierarchy holds the most authority in the family relationship and has greater decision-making authority than other family members have. In a family that performs its functions/duties with clarity and balance, members enjoy different levels of authority, which everyone agrees upon. However, when family boundaries are ambiguous, this leads

to a disorder in the family's functions [1].

Furthermore, a number of researchers did not prefer the concept of hierarchy within the family to express marital personal measures. It indicated that the balance in family roles reflects happiness, contentment, and psychological health in the family. Besides, hierarchy has been associated for a long time with organizing marital relationship in ancient times, where the husband was at the top of the hierarchy. He did not only control financial matters and his wife's behaviour, but also imposed his desire through violence, and the wife would accept to stay married in an uncomfortable condition because she was afraid of the alternatives. Psychologists also use "family hierarchy" to describe the desirable and necessary family structure.

The presence of a leader in the family makes its system remarkable. Structural Family therapists suppose that a member or a group of members must take the role of leadership in the family in order to solve its problems and ensure that the family members perform their duties successfully. People in leadership roles enjoy greater authority and control in adopting the decisions that rest of the family members make.

The husband and wife are equally at the top of the hierarchy, and children come below them. Everything within the family results from a high-level relationship between the husband and the wife. Therefore, hierarchy exists in all human relations including family and marital relations. Through the family hierarchy, each person will have the authority that has been granted to him or that he sought to earn; this power is associated with decision-making in the family, and it is granted to individuals on basis of age, circumstance, and aptitude. Boundary ambiguity appears through the question of who makes decisions or is influential in everyday situations, and who makes decisions by authorization from one spouse. These problems may lead a spouse to refrain from consulting his/her partner in the decisions he/she takes alone. Such issues may also have negative effects on the other spouse [2].

The problems of family hierarchy include verbal, physical and sexual

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abuse that is linked to the hierarchy system by a spouse who likes to control the other spouse or through strong feelings of dependence, anxiety, and despair by those do not have an aptitude for leadership. Another problem of family hierarchy is the regular coalition of some family members against another member. This inflexible coalition is known as alliance, and it leads to disorder in the family hierarchy and balance. For example, the husband may resort to an alliance with his son instead of dealing with the problem he has with this wife. Another problem is not developing subsystems of leadership because of the excess parental feelings towards their children that make punishment when children misbehave or separation from them difficult. This in turn makes it difficult to meet children's needs. In addition, the system of 'the child fits in the father's place' is problematic when the child is not aligned with the father appropriately, plays roles within the parenting system, is unwilling to take responsibility, and fails to undertake activities and experiences that require an older age. This is the fourth and most important problem in the study, which is related to hierarchy and is determined by who has authority, who attempts to influence and the members' relationship with people around them [3].

When examining boundary ambiguity and its causes, which fall within the inconsistent boundaries, when family members do not act in ways appropriate to their ages or roles towards each other, and need to correct and reorganize interaction between them in ways appropriate to the family relationship. Boundary ambiguity also appears in chaotic families, and ambiguous authority, where neither spouse has any authority or knowledge of how to make decisions, and there are no convenient rules to explain who talks about what. They are far from ideal collaborative structure where spouses play active roles at different times and circumstances, which generate in fact, ambiguity of marital authority is a result of the ambiguity of patriarchal rules related to the husband's hierarchical position [1].

Moreover, the definition of power or influence remains ambiguous, making it a source of confusion in understanding the nature and consequences of conflicts over authority between spouses in marital communication, or determining authority through various gender perceptions. Therefore, it is necessary to define the division of power in certain aspects of decision-making; without this, it will be difficult to understand or predict the behaviour of either spouse in their relationship on the long term. Besides, there may be attempts of interference and influence by families or friends to encourage and support one spouse to dominate the other, or to encourage the dominated person to resist attempts for influence by the influential spouse, or act inappropriately or differently [4].

This explains some people's understanding of hierarchy as the boundary that distinguishes the leadership's sub-system in family hierarchy, i.e., decision-making and influence between the spouses. Hierarchy varies with different responsibilities associated with task of meeting certain needs in a certain condition. Boundary ambiguity arises when it is not clear who influences and makes decisions between the two spouses. Thus, they do not form a single hierarchical unit [1].

On the other hand, these views are contradicted by broader and more contemporary views. For example, argues in her article that marital hierarchy does not clash with love and its needs. She emphasizes a better marital hierarchy as a person may love someone who teaches, guides and has more authorities than them.

This was also shown by several studies, which indicated a high level of convergence and a medium level of divergence. The results also indicated a positive, significant relationship between boundary ambiguity and emotional cut-off. Another study, Drewelies showed that the negatively perceived authority of the partner has negatives effects on marital life and everyday routine. As for the relationship between hierarchy and other variables, conducted a study that indicated the presence of low-level boundary ambiguity and emotional cut-off. The findings of their study also showed that there was no significant relationship between boundary ambiguity and emotional cut-off.

A successful family begins with choosing a successful partner, where

there is a minimum consensus on some issues of marital life, in terms of cultural, social and class agreement, and the ability to take responsibility. The sense of responsibility plays an important role in the family's stability because it generates a feeling of satisfaction and happiness among all the family members. This results from their awareness of each one's rights and duties so that their lives become happier, stable, and free of family conflicts [5].

The sense of responsibility refers to the individual's obligation and commitment of the individual before himself and the group to which he belong. Hence, the individual monitors and holds himself accountable through a personal and moral responsibility. It is also an internal obligation for deeds of a social character or dominated by social influence. This means the ability to meet personal needs in a way that does not deprive others of the ability to fulfil their own. As a result, failure to take responsibility is a considered a failure to meet basic needs and achieve emotional and behavioural balance [6].

As societies move to democratic style in parenting and taking responsibility, it has become necessary for parents to abandon the idealist parenting style and replace it with responsibility parenting style, which is concerned with developing feelings of responsibility and self-confidence in the child more than the image expected by society. The responsible parent is the one who gives the child multiple options that make him live the experience, make choices, and bears the consequences of his choice [7].

Several studies examined the concept of responsibility, including whose results indicated a positive relationship between sense of responsibility and the sense of psychological security. The results of Al-Momani showed that the level of social responsibility was moderate among the students of the University of Jordan. In the results indicated that the students of King Saud University have a high level of social responsibility, which means that families develop social responsibility among their children. As for the study found that there is no significant relationship between social responsibility and psychological conflict and self-affirmation. Finally he showed the efficiency of the professional development program in developing the social responsibility of rural women towards the surrounding problems [8-12].

Because of the recurrence of family problems linked to boundary ambiguity and sense of responsibility, the Supreme Judge Department decided to establish Family Reconciliation and Reform Offices and provide them with specialists to deal with these problems. Work in family reform is carried out by family reconciliation offices in the areas of jurisdiction of the Sharia courts. A reconciliation office consists of a chief-officer who is either a judge or an employee at the department, a secretary, and a cooperative administrative staff. In each office, a number of persons are appointed and known as the members of the family reform, mediation and conciliation offices, provided that the person's qualification is not less than an undergraduate university degree Sharia, Law, Education, Psychology or Sociology.

The Family Reconciliation and Mediation clerk in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan deals with a range of different family problems and disputes, including alimony, medical expense, child support, relatives' support, house rent, nursery expenses, paid and deferred dowry, and travel permission. The office also provides family counselling services by specialists since the women who consult the Family Reconciliation and Reform offices are wives who suffer from one or more of these problems.

Therefore, the present study has a theoretical importance since it addresses a sample of the category of female consultants of Family Reconciliation and Reform offices in Jordan who are subjected to great pressures from families and society, in addition to the burden of frequenting the courts. The significance of studying this sample is that it particularly addresses the problems of such category. The paper dealt with boundary ambiguity and sense of responsibility. Any defect in the family hierarchy, or the absence of the leader the father at the top of the hierarchy causes a defect in the family system. This also shows the empirical significance of the study since it provides specialists in the educational field with data that

contribute to the preparation of educational programs for this category, and measurement tools with high reliability and validity that help counsellors and decision-makers prepare programs in family fields, particularly improving the nature of communication among family members. With the argument above, the current study aims to reveal the relationship between boundary ambiguity and sense of responsibility in female consulters of Family Reconciliation and Reform offices in Jordan.

### Study questions

- What is the level of boundary ambiguity and sense of responsibility in female consulters of Family Reconciliation and Reform offices in Karak governorate?
- Is there a significant relationship at ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) between boundary ambiguity and sense of responsibility in female consulters of Family Reconciliation and Reform offices in Karak governorate?
- Are there significant differences at ( $0.05 \geq \alpha$ ) in boundary ambiguity and sense of responsibility, attributable to the duration of marriage?

## Materials and Methods

This section presents the study's methodology, the sample's members and the methods of their selection. It also illustrates the procedure followed to achieve the study's objectives, the tools that have been developed and used: the ways of testing their validity and reliability, and the procedures of their application and correction, as well as statistical treatment of data to find out the study's results. The research methodology of this research is as follows:

### Study members

The members of the present research are the wives who consult Family Reconciliation and Reform Office in Karak and suffer from family disputes, according to Family Reconciliation and Reform Offices in Jordan 2020. The study sample also includes female consulters of the family specialist in the office. The number reached (850) consultations. The researchers selected the sample easily with the help of a family specialist in Family Reconciliation and Reform Office in Karak, which was (250) consultations. Table 1 shows the distribution of the sample according to the reason of consulting the Family Reconciliation and Reform Office in Karak.

**Table 1.** Distribution of the sample according to the reason of consulting the Family Reconciliation and Reform office in Karak.

Family consultations cases	Court-referred cases	Self-referred cases	File for divorce	Child marriage
cases	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31
15	150	20	40	25
Total	-	250 Cases	-	-

Table 1 shows the distribution of the sample according to the reason of consulting the Family Reconciliation and Reform Office in Karak. There were 15 family consultations, 150 court-referred cases, 20 self-referred cases, 40 file-for-divorce cases, and 25 child marriage cases. The total number of consultations is 250 cases. As for the exploratory sample, which was selected to test the psychometric properties of the scales used in the present research, there were (25) consultations, chosen from and from outside the study population.

**Boundary ambiguity scale:** The boundary ambiguity scale designed by Al-Tamimi was used. The scale consists of (31) items in its initial form, distributed over two dimensions. The first is the dimension of marital decision; it is related to who is responsible for making decisions, on different life matters. Second, the dimension of marital influence. It is one of the components of authority in the family hierarchy. It is the direct or indirect

words and behaviours that one of the spouses uses to bring about change in the other spouse. However, the scale in its final form consisted of (30) items divided into two dimensions, the marital decision, which included items (1-12), and marital influence, which included items (13-30).

**Scale validity:** two types of validity were used to assess the scale's validity: content validity and construct validity. In content validity, the scale was presented to 10 members of the teaching staff at Mu'atah University to indicate the appropriateness of the items to measure the family boundary ambiguity in female consulters of Family Reconciliation and Reform Offices and the clarity of their language. They were also asked to suggest any modifications they find appropriate. The agreement of 80% or more has been adopted as a criterion on the appropriateness of an item, and the agreement of 30% or more as a criterion of its modification. Thus, some items have been rephrased based on the opinion of the experts as well as the removal of item No. 21.

The researchers also assessed the validity of the scale through construct validity. The construct validity of the boundary ambiguity scale used in the study was assessed using internal consistency through the assessment of correlation coefficient between the item and its scope and degree and the existence of a significant correlation between all the items of the boundary ambiguity scale and the domains to which they belong. The values of the correlation coefficients ranged between 0.756 - 0.964. In addition, there was a significant correlation between the items and the total score of the scale, and the correlation coefficients ranged between 0.973-0.756, and there was a significant correlation between all the dimensions with a total score of the boundary ambiguity scale, as the correlation coefficient for the marital decision dimension was 0.969 and the marital influence dimension 0.987.

**Scale reliability:** The test-retest reliability was used, with two weeks' time difference. The scale was applied to 25 consultations from and from outside the study population. The scale's test and retest value were 0.624, the score of the marital decision dimension 0.506, the value of the marital influence dimension 0.557, and the Cronbach alpha value of the scale was 0.976, and the value of the marital influence 0.557. Cronbach's reliability for the marital decision dimension 0.976 and the value for the marital influence dimension 0.983.

**Assessment of the boundary ambiguity scale:** Two scores were given for the answer to an item in the scale through the (one/both) option; the option (not sure) was given one score; the total score of the scale ranged from 30-60. The marital decision dimension's score ranged from 12-24, while the marital influence dimension's score ranged from 18-36. The negative items 15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,25,27,28,30 reverse the scores of these items, while the rest of the items are positive.

**The sense of responsibility scale:** The researchers developed The Sense of Responsibility Scale by exploring a number of studies and scale of sense of responsibility the theoretical literature on responsibility. After examining these studies, the researchers designed the dimensions of the scale, which are personal responsibility and social responsibility. Then the researchers wrote the items and distributed them over the two dimensions. The scale in its initial form consisted of 30 items, and 24 items in its final form divided into two dimensions: social responsibility and personal responsibility. Personal responsibility's dimension items are 1,2,3,5,7,9,11,13,15,17,19,21,23, and social responsibility's dimension items are 4,6,8,10,12,14,16,18,20,22,24; the negative items are 4,8,9,10,12,17,18.

In order to assess face validity, the scale was shown to (10) faculty members at Mu'atah University, and they were asked to indicate the appropriateness of the items to measure ambiguous boundaries among visitors the Family Reconciliation and Reform Offices, and the clarity of its language. They were also asked to suggest any modifications they see appropriate. The agreement of 80% or more was adopted as a criterion on the relevance of the item, and the agreement of 30% or more was the criterion to modify it. Thus, some items have been rephrased based on the opinion of the experts as well as the removal of items No 2,8,18, 20, 27, 28.

The researchers also assessed the validity of the scale through construct validity. The construct validity of the sense of responsibility scale was assessed using the internal consistency method, through finding out the correlation coefficient between the item and its scope and the total score.

There was a significant correlation between all the items of the sense of responsibility scale and the domains to which they belong. The values of the correlation coefficients ranged between 0.910-0.486. There was also a significant correlation between the items and the total score of the scale, and the correlation coefficients ranged between 0.861-0.600. Besides, there was high correlation coefficients between the dimension and the total score, where the correlation coefficient of the dimension of personal responsibility 0.898, and the dimension of social responsibility 0.859.

The test-retest method was used to assess the scale's reliability, with a time difference of two weeks. The personal responsibility dimension was 0.849, and social responsibility dimension value 0.837. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  equation was used. The value of the equation for the scale reached 0.962. The dimension of personal responsibility reached 0.959, and the dimension of social responsibility 0.959. When assessing the sense of responsibility scale, the answer to the items was through a five-point scale: strongly agree (5), agree (4), neutral (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1) for positive items; and these values are reversed in the case of negative items.

### Study procedures

The researchers conducted a set of procedures to complete the research. A review of the theoretical literature for each variable of the study was done to help develop the tools of the present study. The validity of the tools was assessed by distributing them among 10 specialists, asking them to evaluate the appropriateness of the tools, and modifying and deleting any items. Validity was assessed through construct validity method. Reliability of the tools was assessed by selecting a survey sample from and from outside the study population, which consisted of 25 consultations from Al-Karak Family Reconciliation and Reform Office. The first test was conducted, and after a two-week interval, the second test was performed. The correlation coefficient between the two tests was calculated and then assessed by the Cronbach  $\alpha$  equation.

The researchers also submitted application form of facilitating researcher's task to the university administration, directed to the Family Reconciliation and Reform Office, to facilitate the task of collecting data. After obtaining the application of facilitating researcher's task, the researcher visited the Supreme Judge Department to get a task facilitation to collect the required data. Finally, the researchers calculated the number of sample members required for the study, and determined the office required for tools distribution, collected the tools back and fed them into SPSS, found out the results, and wrote the recommendations.

Presentation of the results of the study's first question: What is the level of boundary ambiguity and sense of responsibility among female consulters at Family Reconciliation and Reform Offices in Karak?

Table 2 shows arithmetic means and standard deviations, and the level of ambiguity. In the first rank was the dimension of marital decision with an arithmetic mean of 1.97, a standard deviation of 0.1048, and a level of ambiguity of 66%. This is a high level of ambiguity. In the second place comes the dimension of marital influence, with an arithmetic mean of 1.74, a standard deviation of 0.204. Finally, the mean of the overall arithmetic mean was 1.83 with a standard deviation of 0.1427, and a level of ambiguity 61%. Based on the data in the previous table, this is a high level of boundary ambiguity.

**Table 2.** Arithmetic means and standard deviations of boundary ambiguity scale and its dimensions.

Dimension	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviations	Level of ambiguity
Marital decision	1.97	0.1048	66%
Marital influence	1.74	0.204	58%
Total	1.83	0.1427	61%

Table 3 illustrates the arithmetic mean and standard deviation the sense responsibility scale's dimensions, where in the first rank was the arithmetic mean of personal responsibility dimension, which was 1.50, and a standard deviation of 0.445. Secondly, the dimension of social responsibility has an arithmetic mean of 1.34, and a standard deviation of 0.54. Finally, the overall arithmetic mean reached 1.45, and the standard deviation was 0.484. This indicates a low-level sense of responsibility.

**Table 3.** Arithmetic means and standard deviations of the sense of responsibility scale and its dimensions.

Dimension	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviations
Personal responsibility	1.50	0.445
Social responsibility	1.34	0.543
Total	1.45	0.484

Presentation of the results of the study's second question: Is there a significant relationship ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) between boundary ambiguity and sense of responsibility in female consultants of Family Reconciliation and Reform offices in Karak governorate?

It is evident from Table 4 that there is a positive significant relationship between the boundary ambiguity and sense of responsibility. The correlation coefficient of 0.360\*\* means that the higher the boundary ambiguity, the greater is the wife's sense of responsibility. It is also clear from the table that there is a significant positive relationship between the dimension of marital influence and responsibility. The correlation coefficient of 0.485\*\* means that the higher the wife's ability to influence the husband, the higher her sense of responsibility is. As for the marital decision-making dimension, there was a negative correlation relationship with the sense of responsibility. This is evident from the correlation coefficient -0.190\*\*, which was a weak correlation, which means that the more the wife is exclusive in taking marital decision, the lower sense of responsibility she has.

**Table 4.** Pearson's correlation coefficient of the relationship between boundary ambiguity and sense of responsibility.

Dimension/variable	correlation coefficient	Sense of responsibility scale
boundary ambiguity	correlation coefficient	0.360**
	significance	0.000
	number	250
Marital decision-making	correlation coefficient	-0.190**
	significance	0.003
	number	250
Marital influence	correlation coefficient	0.485**
	significance	0.000
	number	250

**Note:** Correlation coefficient \*\*=0.360

Presentation of the results of the study's third question: Are there significant differences ( $0.05 \geq \alpha$ ) in boundary ambiguity and sense of responsibility, attributable to the duration of marriage?

Arithmetic means and standard deviations of the scale of boundary ambiguity and sense of responsibility for the sample members were calculated in relation to the variable of marriage duration.

Table 5 shows apparent differences in the arithmetic means, in both boundary ambiguity and sense of responsibility, in relation to the duration of marriage. MANOVA analysis was used to test the significance of these differences.

**Table 5.** Arithmetic means and standard deviations of the scale of boundary ambiguity and sense of responsibility for the sample members were calculated according to marriage duration.

Number	Categories	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	Number
250	1-3 years	1.853	0.16944	100
	5-10 years	1.832	0.12647	117
	15-20 years	1.790	0.09437	32
250	1-3 years	1.3942	0.44573	100
	5-10 years	1.5593	0.52439	117
	15-20 years	1.2526	0.34908	32

Table 6 shows that there are no statistically significant differences in boundary ambiguity with relation to the duration of marriage, where F value is 2.382 with a significance of 0.94. There are no statistically significant differences in the sense of responsibility with regard to the duration of marriage, where value of F is 6.561 with a significance of 0.02. It is also evident from the table that there are statistically significant differences in the sense of responsibility attributed to the duration of marriage, where the value of F is 6.561 with a significance of 0.02. To find out to whose favour these differences are, Post Hoc Tests were used in Scheffé's method.

**Table 6.** The results of manova to find out differences between the average performance of the sample members in boundary ambiguity and sense of responsibility according to the duration of marriage.

	Source of variation	SS	DF	MS	F	Significance
Duration of marriage	Boundary ambiguity	0.096	2	0.048	2.382	0.94
	Sense of responsibility	2.952	2	1.476	6.561	.002
Error	Boundary ambiguity	4.974	246	0.020	-	-
	Sense of responsibility	55.344	246	0.225	-	-
Overall	Boundary ambiguity	843.699	249	-	-	-
	Sense of responsibility	584.414	249	-	-	-

It is evident from Table 7 that there are statistically significant differences in sense of responsibility attributed to the duration of marriage, where the value of F is 6.561, with a significance of 0.02. To figure out in whose favour are the differences, Post-Hoc Tests were used in Scheffé's method as shown in Table 7. The differences in sense of responsibility according to the duration of the marriage are in favour of the category from 5 to 10 years, where the arithmetic mean was 1.5593, which is the largest arithmetic mean with the other categories in duration of marriage variable.

**Table 7.** Results of Scheffé's test to find out to whose favour are the differences in boundary ambiguity according to the duration of marriage.

Variable	Duration of Marriage	Comparisons	Means difference	Significance	
Sense of Responsibility	1-3 years	5-10 years	0-.1650	0.40	
		15-20 years	0.1416	0.341	
		5-10 years	1 -3 years	0.1650*	0.040
	5-10 years	15-20 years	0.3067*	0.006	
		15-20 years	1-3 years	0-1416	0.341
			5-10 years	0-3067	0.60

Note: Significance \*=0.02

## Results and Discussion

### Discussion of the first question

What is the level of boundary ambiguity and sense of responsibility in female consulters of Family Reconciliation and Reform offices in Karak governorate?

One of the important reasons for ambiguity in marital authority is the ambiguity of masculine rules related to marital hierarchy.

The definition of power or influence remains ambiguous, making it a source of confusion in understanding the nature and consequences of conflicts over authority between spouses in marital communication, or determining authority through various gender perceptions. Therefore, it is necessary to define the division of power in certain aspects of decision-making; without this, it will be difficult to understand or predict the behaviour of either spouse in their relationship on the long term. Besides, there may be attempts of interference and influence by families or friends to encourage and support one spouse to dominate the other, or to encourage the dominated person to resist attempts for influence by the influential spouse, or act inappropriately or differently.

Based on the discussion above, the reasons for boundary ambiguity are summarized in the ambiguity of the rules within the family and the wrong perception of the authority by either of the partners. The findings of the present study agree, which showed that the negatively perceived authority of the partner has negatives effects on marital life and everyday routine. On the other hand, it disagrees with Al-Tamimi which claimed the presence

of low-level boundary ambiguity and emotional cut-off. The findings of their study also showed that there was no significant relationship between boundary ambiguity and emotional cut-off.

With regard to the second part of the first question, which is related to the variable of sense of responsibility, the study showed that the sense of responsibility among the sample members is low. This is attributed to the absence of the leader in the family since the father is responsible for the family, physically and ethically. He is the one who bears the family's responsibility. Moreover, the leader is the one who clarifies the roles and distributes responsibilities among individuals within the family according to the level of authority.

The reason for the low sense of responsibility among female consulters of Family Reconciliation and Reform centres is the absence of women's role in the family. Besides, the absence of family planning, since the families from which the consulters come are characterized by disputes and instability, explains the low sense of responsibility among female consulters of Family Reconciliation and Reform centres on the personal and social levels. The low sense of responsibility among the sample members can also be attributed to the fact that it is easy to find a scapegoat, or evading responsibility would be more comfortable. It may also be due to a lack of self-awareness, or that it requires courage to face the idea of making mistake. It is also worth noting that taking responsibility requires effort. There are other reasons such as truth denial, learning only blame, avoiding embarrassment that may come from failure [7].

We can also explain the low sense of responsibility among the study sample through Adler's view, who explains the term responsibility through

his view of the human being as a social being, and his concept of social concern. The individual fulfils the requirements of taking responsibility towards himself and society through his/her sense of belonging to his/her family society. According to this view, consultants of Family Reconciliation and Reform centres have weak sense of belonging to family because of family disputes and conflicts. In addition, low sense of responsibility can be explained by the idea that taking responsibility requires the self-confidence and the individual's ability to plan their life. Female consultants of Family Reconciliation and Reform offices lack these requirements because of their unsuccessful family experience, which results in their lack of self-confidence and inability of life planning.

This finding relatively agrees with, whose results indicated that a moderate level of social responsibility among the students of the University of Jordan. However, it disagrees with Bin, whose results showed that the students of King Saud University enjoy a high level of social responsibility, which means that the family enhances its children's social responsibility [8].

## Discussion of the second question

Is there a significant relationship ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) between boundary ambiguity and sense of responsibility in female consultants of Family Reconciliation and Reform offices in Karak governorate?

The first part of the question concerns the existence of a positive relationship between the level of ambiguity of the hierarchy and bearing responsibility on the total degree of the scale, based on the correlation coefficient of 0.360\*\*. This indicates that the increase in the boundary ambiguity leads to a high sense of responsibility among consultants of Family Reconciliation and Reform offices. This can be attributed to the wife's loss of confidence in the husband, which makes her feel responsible for herself and meet her needs on her own. She also feels responsible for her family members since the high boundary ambiguity among consultants of Family Reconciliation and Reform offices makes them feel the absence of the role of the family's leader. This also makes them feel the need to bear the responsibility of themselves, their family, and children.

Boundary ambiguity appears in chaotic families and ambiguous authority since neither spouse has any power, the spouses do not know how to make a decision, and there are no clear rules explaining whom to talk about what. They are far from the ideal collaborative form where the spouses play active roles in different times and circumstances (Berg-Cross, 2001). Hence, the wife's role in bearing responsibility emerges in the absence of the leader, who is responsible for the family, i.e., the father. When there is a problem in the function of the husband's rules, boundary ambiguity emerges, which forces the wife to play this role instead of the husband. Hence, the main element in the relationship between boundary ambiguity and sense of responsibility is the ambiguity of the masculine rules related to the hierarchy of marriage.

The items of the scale used in the present study present justifications for the wife's taking responsibility in the absence of the leader's role in the family; for example, items like "I decide the names of the children with my husband", "I decide to purchase electrical appliances and furniture", "I decide the family budget", "I decide on raising the children and choosing their school." All these matters that were touched upon in the scale need collaboration in decision-making, i.e., they need a mutual opinion from the husband and wife. However, in the absence of the role of the leader and his failure to take responsibility for these matters moves the wife to play this role and bear responsibility instead. This finding agrees with results, which showed that the participation of women in decision-making is more than ever, and that the means of communication helped in re-arranging powers based on positive and negative assertive strategies. Wives used assertive communication styles significantly, while men used more withdrawal communicative patterns. The wife is generally more powerful than the husband is. The study also agrees with, whose results showed that there is authority has an impact on happiness in marital life and found an indirect relationship between authority and happiness in marital life. The present study, however, differed with Tannos, whose results indicated the presence

of low level of boundary ambiguity and a low level of emotional cut-off. Also claimed that there was no statistically significant relationship between boundary ambiguity and emotional cut-off.

Regarding the dimension of the marital decision, the correlation between it and the sense of responsibility was inverse weak with a correlation coefficient of -0.190\*\*. This means that the higher the level of the marital decision of the wife, the lower the level of responsibility she has. That is, whenever the wife has to make fateful decisions instead of the husband, her sense of responsibility decreases. This may be attributed to the husband giving up his role of taking the responsibility for decision-making, and the wife has to play this role despite her feeling that this role is not her duty. Hence, she tries to evade this responsibility. The husband then authorizes his wife to make decisions on his behalf for several reasons. For example, he may occupy high professional positions with high incomes and long working hours or the wife is affected by the cultural context. Ambiguity also appears in decision-making authority. The reason of the inverse correlation between marital decision and the wife's low sense of responsibility is the husband's abandonment of his role and the authorization of his wife to play a role that is not from her duties.

As for the marital influence dimension, the results indicated a positive significant relationship between the marital influence dimension and sense of responsibility with a correlation coefficient of 0.485\*\*. This means that the higher the wife's ability to influence her husband, the higher her sense of responsibility. The efficiency of the different strategies and techniques of influence depends on the type and amount of authority that the influencing party has and its impact on the targeted party. Strategies of influence have many techniques such as coercion, causality, manoeuvring, and autocracy that are selected to help reach goals of higher levels [4].

However, the ideal position of covert or indirect power, such as the spouses' use of verbal or behavioural gestures, such as the movement of a hand or shifting the sense of guilt to the other, must be accompanied by a minimum of general authority. The authority between spouses is due to several factors like gender, social culture and emotions. There are differences between spouses in the use of influence approaches, where women use indirect influence styles. This is especially in traditional families because it is not common or appropriate for the wife to be dominant or more influential than her husband is, because he is "the man of the house", or he is older than her, knows more, or because this would raise the suspicions about his masculinity. The spouses implicitly accept the situation, by accepting the cultural image drawn before them and not paying attention to each other. It is believed that it is not acceptable to exceed this role.

## Discussion of the third question

Are there significant differences ( $0.05 \geq \alpha$ ) between boundary ambiguity and sense of responsibility, attributable to the duration of marriage?

The absence of significant differences between boundary ambiguity and sense of responsibility, attributable to the duration of marriage can be attributed to the fact that this imbalance in the family hierarchy starts from the beginning of the marriage, that is, from the first moment of the formation of the family. In other words, the family suffers from the absence of the leader from the beginning in addition to the ambiguity in the role of the leader within the family. This leads to the ambiguity of masculine norms related to the marital hierarchy. That is, boundary ambiguity and dysfunctional boundaries, two concepts that overlaps with each other. The absence of the leader or the head of the family leads to dysfunctional and unclear boundaries; this is not related to the duration of marriage because the problem is in the ideas carried by the wife, the nature of her family upbringing, and the nature of her treatment of her husband.

The presence of significant differences in the sense of responsibility in relation to the duration of marriage, and that the differences are in favor of the category of (5-10) years is because this period is the period during which the spouses are exhausted of looking after children who go through adolescence and the associated challenges. Children at this stage need double the time and effort from the parents. We live in a society characterized

by progress in the field of technology and open-mindedness in the field of social networking programs, which make children vulnerable to deviation after many things considered dangerous at their age, without clear control from the parents on these websites. This imposes additional responsibilities on the wife, other than her responsibility for home and husband, which is to look after children and understand the psychological, physical and cognitive changes they are going through. This explains the impact of the duration of marriage on the sense of responsibility among female consultants of Family Reconciliation and Reform centers. The wife's responsibilities change as the duration of marriage changes. From the first year until the third year of marriage, parents have fewer responsibilities. The duration of marriage of (5-10) years entails double physical and ethical responsibilities.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Training female specialists working in Family Reconciliation and Reform Offices on the methods of Social Constructivism and other family counselling theories such as Bowen's theory. Conducting training courses and seminars to consultants of Family Reconciliation and Reform Offices and explaining the concept of the leader and their role in the family. Designing counselling programs to enhance the sense of responsibility among consultants of Family Reconciliation and Reform Offices.

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