Royaume des Pays-Bas

unicef

Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices Survey on child protection mechanisms and alternatives to deprivation of liberty in Kasserine

JANUARY 2021

SEARCH
FOR COMMON
GROUND

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Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

CDIS	Center for Defense and Social Integration
CIJE	Center for Youth and Child Integration
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
ILF	International Legal Foundation
KAP	Knowledge Attitudes and Practices

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Executive Summary

This study seeks to support the project "***Towards the empowerment of adolescents in Kasserine and the prevention of their association with violent group***" by exploring the knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) around child protection mechanisms and alternatives to the deprivation of liberty for children among the inhabitants of the Kasserine, a governorate in the southwest of Tunisia.

This KAP study applied a mixed-method approach of quantitative attitude survey and qualitative interviews. The survey collected data from a representative sample of 1500 residents in the Kasserine governorate, including all 13 delegations. In addition, 10 interviews were conducted with child protection professionals who work in the Kasserine governorate. These qualitative interviews were used to compliment and provide analytical depth to the broad quantitative survey results. Data was collected in September and October 2020.

Key Findings

Risk factors facing adolescents: knowledge and attitudes of the Kasserine population

Knowledge and perceptions of risk factors

- *School dropout is a common occurrence in the Kasserine governorate*: 71% of survey respondents knew a child who dropped out of the school in their community and 77% believed dropping out of school would put the child at-risk.

- *Child labor is a **main risk factor***: 68% of respondents reported that they knew at least one child who worked in their community, with most working in agriculture. Child labor is seen as normal: four in five respondents indicated they would not react to seeing a child working.

- The most common risk behaviors highlighted by survey respondents were consumption of illegal drugs, violence, and organized crime.

KAP towards at risk children or children in conflict with law

Attitudes towards corporal punishment

- *Problematic use of corporal punishment:* Qualitative interview data found that domestic violence against children was a major problem in Kasserine and that the majority of cases handled by interviewed professionals concerned children as the victims of violence. This colleralates to the 38% of survey respondents who believed that physical punishment was an adequate method for education and raising a child.

Perceptions towards "Children in conflict with the law"

- *Children as victims of circumstance:* 82% of survey respondents considered *"Children in conflict with law"* to be victims, and only 18% thought that they should be held accountable for their actions.

Child protection mechanisms

Knowledge of existing protection mechanisms

- *Low knowledge of child protection mechanisms and institutions***:** Only 14% of respondents reported familiarity with child protection mechanisms in Tunisia. Respondents also failed to link the legal protection mechanisms to the services provided by relevant legal actors; most commonly family judges, and therefore they confused legal protection mechanisms with the social ones. The qualitative data indicated that the request-for-protection services differed from one area to another, in particular from rural to urban. Only one quarter of respondents reported that they knew child protection institutions, with 33% of these noting the child protection delegate and 21% noting the family judge as the main institutions.

Attitudes and Practices towards protection mechanisms

Reporting abuses

- *Low knowledge of the law:* Although reporting on child abuses is an obligation by law for all Tunisian citizens, only 2.5% of respondents reported that they would alert the relevant authorities if they witnessed a child conducting violent behavior and 2.7% reported that they would alert the authority if they witnessed a child being a victim of abuse.

Alternative mechanisms to deprivation of liberty for children

- The majority of respondents supported the use of alternative mechanisms: 61% of respondents were against a child getting deprived of his liberty. The other 38% considered the deprivation of liberty to be a viable solution to correct a child's risky behavior.

- *Low knowledge of alternatives:* the vast majority of respondents (87%) did not know that alternative mechanisms to detention and the deprivation of liberty existed. Respondents (21%) with higher levels of education were likely to report that they knew about the alternative mechanisms.

- *Various alternatives suggested:* When asked to give examples of the alternative mechanisms to deprivation of liberty respondents suggested vocational training (19%), community services (17%), and rehabilitation and follow up (14%). On the other hand, 2.8% of respondents suggested finding jobs for *"children in conflict with the law"*. The findings also indicated that two thirds of respondents thought that supervised liberty and mediation could be effective as alternative mechanisms to the deprivation of liberty, while one quarter of respondents reported that they "did not know" whether these two alternative mechanisms could be effective or not in their community.

1. Background Information

1.1 Introduction

Tunisia is considered one of the leading Arab states that have allocated efforts and resources in favor of children's rights and protection. For years, Tunisia has shown its support to adhere to the international standards and rules in the child protection field through its national legal framework and its international outlook.

- *Legal Framework*

On 30 January 1992, Tunisia ratified the convention on the rights of child (CRC), followed by the optional protocol to the convention on the sale of children child prostitution and child pornography and the optional protocol to the convention on the rights of the child on the involvement of children in the armed conflict (CRC-OP-AC) in 2002 and 2003 respectively.[1] However, Tunisia has not yet joined the 1993 or 1996 Hague Child Protection Convention. At the national level, domestic laws (including the Code for the Protection of the Child [CPE] of 9 November 1995, Act of 4 March 1958 on public guardianship, legal guardianship [kafalah] and adoption) reflect improvement in the child protection field and the commitment of the state to provide adequate legislative framework to guarantee children's rights.[2] Moreover, the Tunisian constitution of 2014 includes specific articles targeting children and youth, in particular, Article 47 where the state pledges to provide all types of protection for Tunisian children and guarantee all rights to dignity, health, education and care along with the parents.[3] This state commitment to children's rights can also be seen in the adoption of the law of 3 August 2016 on preventing and combating human trafficking, and its subsequent implementing texts.[4]

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[1] United Nations Human Rights Treaty Database. Available at
https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=178&Lang=EN
[2] Marei, S.F. Rekik, N. and Marakchi, A.H. (2016) 'Child rights in light of the constitution'. Dar Mohamed Ali Lilnasher. Available at https://tinyurl.com/y5ayt9xe .
[3] The Tunisia's Constitution of 2014. (2014). Constitute project. Available at
https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Tunisia_2014.pdf
[4] Act No.61 of 2016 on preventing and combating human trafficking. Available at
http://www.legislation.tn/sites/default/files/news/ta2016611.pdf

● *Socio-economic conditions for children in Kasserine*

Following the 2011 revolution, Tunisia has taken numerous measures and signed different conventions to protect children's rights, decrease the school dropout rate and improve the living conditions for children and adolescents across Tunisia, particularly in marginalized and excluded regions. However, no improvements have been made in the Kasserine governorate. Suicidal behaviors are increasing in Tunisia among children. In 2017, Kasserine recorded the highest number of suicidal children under 15.[5] Furthermore, children in Kasserine, Jendouba, Kairouan, Seliana and Sidi Bouzid have been affected the most from the school dropout phenomenon due to poverty, deteriorating social conditions and lack of pedagogical assistance for children.[6] Additionally, in Kasserine school dropout rate reached 63% in 2016.[7] Based on the Tunisia poverty map report, three main localities from the region have the country's highest poverty rate: Hassi Ferid at 53.5 %, Djedeliane at 53.1 %, and El Ayoun at 50.1%.[8] Poverty and poor social conditions in Kasserine might result in the increase of school dropout rate and pushing several children to seek different alternatives to earn a living to support their families. In fact, those alternatives might not always be safe for those children,[9] and school dropouts are more likely to be at risk of radicalisation or smuggling.[10]

● *Judicial and legal protection mechanisms*

Several agreements were signed between the Tunisian government and other partners to strengthen the judicial mechanisms for children in conflict with law, such as the agreement that was signed by the Tunisian government and the European Union on 2 October 2012 to finance a project

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[5] Directinfo.Tunisie (2017) FTDES : Kasserine enregistre le plus grand nombre d'enfants suicidaires de moins de 15 ans.Available at https://tinyurl.com/y533b76y

[6] Al Arab (2019). The increase of School Dropouts exacerbates the troubles of public education in Tunisia. Available at https://alarab.co.uk/ارتفاع-الانقطاع-المدرسي-يفاقم-متاعب-التعليم-العمومي-في-تونس

[7] Directinfo.Tunisie (2017) – Abandon scolaire: 63% à Kasserine et 37% à Gafsa.).Available at https://directinfo.webmanagercenter.com/2017/04/19/tunisie-abandon-scolaire-63-a-kasserine-et-37-a-gafsa/

[8] L'Institut National de la Statistique (INS);La Banque Mondiale (2020)"Carte de la pauvreté en Tunisie". Available at https://tinyurl.com/y3ojzxy3

[9] Ibrahim, Abdalla, Jafer, Abdelgadir, & de Vries (2019). Child labor and health: a systematic literature review of the impacts of child labor on child's health in low- and middle-income countries, *Journal of Public Health*, 41: 1, pp.18–26,

[10] Institut Tunisien Des Etudes Stratégiques (ITES) (2018) Assessing the Threat Posed by Tunisian Foreign Fighters. Available at http://www.ites.tn/fr/english/Assessing-the-Threat-Posed-by-Tunisian-Foreign-Fighters/15

implemented by UNICEF aiming to ensure an effective judicial system and execution of laws with respect to the rights of children in conflict with law.[11]

Additionally, the Child Protection Code includes a series of provisions that deal with principles that are promoted by international child-specific instruments. It emphasizes "taking decisions or choosing measures meeting the best interests of the child", which means that the "imprisonment penalty and especially those for a short term shall be as possible avoided."[12] This may imply the application of different measures, including:

- Mediation that "can be carried out from the date on which the offence was committed until the date on which ends the enforcement of the decision taken against the child whether the said decision is a penal sanction or preventive measure."

- Warning the child ('judicial warning');

- "if the child has money, impose a fine";

- Probation" ('guarded freedom system')

- "Delivering the child to his/her parents or to his/her guardian, to his/her guardian or to a trustful person";

- "Placing him/her in an authorized public or private institution specialized in education and professional training";

- "Placing him/her in an authorized medical center or in an authorized educational medical center."

Nevertheless, these laws and procedures were not effectively implemented due to the failure of establishment of an independent body or institution to monitor the execution of laws and legal mechanisms, as highlighted in the article "Tunisie: Les droits de l'enfant, quelles réalités

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[11]The National Committee for Coordination, Preparation and Submission of Reports and Follow-up of Recommendations in the Field of Human Rights (2017). The combined report of the fourth, fifth and sixth periodic reports of Tunisia on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Available at .https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CRC/Shared%20Documents/TUN/CRC_C_TUN_4-6_6743_A.doc.

[12] "Child Protection Code-Article 13" The Republic of Tunisia: The presidency of the government, Available at https://tinyurl.com/y65dxb6r

aujourd'hui ?" by Nawaat.[13] If this independent body had been implemented, it would have served as a supervising entity to ensure the smooth execution of laws and legal mechanisms that take into account children's best interests.

- ● *Alternative mechanisms to detention*

The Tunisian legal system in relation to *"Children in conflict with law"* entails two main preventive mechanisms that could help in reducing the deprivation of liberty issues and be used as alternatives to detention. Those mechanisms are "supervised liberty" and "mediation".[14] For supervised liberty, specific delegates will be selected to supervise the children in conflict with law and will report to the relevant judge in the case of misconduct or if obstacles to carry on the surveillance are encountered.[15] As for mediation, the law gives the child protection delegate the authority to mediate between the offenders or their representatives and the victims or their representatives to reach a reconciliation.[16] Thus, these two preventive mechanisms can be used by the relevant parties to prevent the deprivation of liberty of *"Children in conflict with law"*.

Nevertheless, these alternative mechanisms (supervised liberty and mediation) are not commonly used.[17] For mediation, the *Annual report of child protection delegates* indicates that in 2019 only 9 mediation requests were made in Kasserine, which represented only 1.4% of the total mediation requests in relation to *"children in conflict with law"* at the national level.[18] Additionally, all the requests were made for boys, with no requests for girls. As for the supervised liberty, this mechanism has not been implemented[19] due to the needs for several resources (human and financial) to monitor the process and report to the relevant authorities.

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[13] Baraket, A (2015). Tunisie: Les droits de l'enfant, quelles réalités aujourd'hui? Nawaat. Available at Available at https://nawaat.org/2015/02/19/tunisie-les-droits-de-lenfant-quelles-realites-aujourdhui
[14] Court of Accounts (2018). Annual Report N.31:Reforming Children in conflict with the law. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/y3ywnmjw
[15]DEI-Belgique (2017). "Manuel sur Les droits de l'enfant et la Justice des Mineurs". Available at:https://tinyurl.com/y5rep5pv
[16] Tunisian Ministry of Women, Family, Childhood, and Seniors (2020) Annual statistical report 2019 for Child protection representatives activities. Available at https://tinyurl.com/yyqk7fdz
[17] The Ministry of Justice,Supreme Judicial Institute (2020) A study course at the Higher Judicial Institute on alternative measures to penalties denying liberty in the Children Judicial System. Available at: http://www.ism-justice.tn/wp-content/uploads/2020/pdffc/sem210220.pdf
[18] Tunisian Ministry of Women, Family, Childhood, and Seniors (2020) Annual statistical report 2019 for Child protection representatives activities. Available at https://tinyurl.com/yyqk7fdz
[19] Court of Accounts (2018). Annual Report N.31:Reforming Children in conflict with the law. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/y3ywnmjw

Furthermore, alternative measures to detention still pose challenges in Tunisia. For minor offenses, most commonly judges either release children to parent(s)/guardian(s), or place them in 'specialized institutions' & 'social integration and defence centers'. On the other hand, while the Code establishes a ''child probation system'', such system is not yet fully operationalized,[20] which might be due to the lack of human and material resources to ensure supervision and reporting duties.[21]

1.2 Project Overview

Search-Tunisian has launched the project *"Towards the empowerment of adolescents in Kasserine and the prevention of their association with violent groups"* which is funded by UNICEF for a duration of one year and aims to reinforce positive protection mechanisms and alternatives to youth detention and deprivation of liberty in the governorate of Kasserine. This goal will be achieved through these main objectives:

1. Raising awareness of youth and residents of Kasserine on the physical and moral protection of children and adolescents

2. Promotion of an inclusive and constructive response to the judicial management of youth in Kasserine

The project mainly targets children and adolescents in conflict with law or at-risk (aged between 13 and 17) as well as their families, relevant practitioners in the field of child protection and the residents of Kasserine. The project is composed of the following main activities:

1. KAP Surveys: Two KAP studies will be conducted: one at the beginning of the project and another one following the completion of the project. Both studies aim to gather information on the Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices of residents in Kasserine regarding the situation of children in conflict with law, access to juvenile, and alternatives to detention and measure key indicators

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[20] Ibid.

[21] The Ministry of Justice,Supreme Judicial Institute (2020) A study course at the Higher Judicial Institute on alternative measures to penalties denying liberty in the Children Judicial System. Available at: http://www.ism-justice.tn/wp-content/uploads/2020/pdffc/sem210220.pdf

2. Workshops on the existing protection mechanisms for adolescents, which will gather youth and relevant practitioners in the field of child protection to better understand the existing protection mechanisms and develop recommendations on alternatives to detention

3. Awareness campaigns: Two awareness campaigns on *"children in conflict with law" or "at risk"* and the 'existing protection mechanisms' will be conducted throughout the project. The first awareness campaign will target youth and the second campaign will target the whole Kasserine governorate.

2. Methodology

2.1 Objectives of the KAP Study

In order to strengthen the program planning and design, this KAP study seeks to understand the Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices of people in the Kasserine governorate regarding their knowledge of child protection services/mechanisms, the rights of children in conflict with the law, access to juvenile justice, and alternatives to deprivation of liberty. The collected data will be used as a baseline to support the project team's design of future activities and to increase the project's impact and effectiveness.

2.2 Data Collection and Analysis

- *Target Zones and Timeframe*

To ensure that the study is representative of the project's target -- the population of Kasserine -- the survey was conducted in all 13 delegations of the Kasserine governorate and within a timeframe from 9 September and 3 October 2020. To complement data collected in the survey, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were simultaneously conducted with professionals working in the field of juvenile justice and alternative mechanisms to deprivation of liberty in the Kasserine governorate.

- *Methodology*

This research applied a mixed-methods approach that collected quantitative and qualitative data from both a questionnaire survey and interviews. These two research methods (survey and interviews) were employed to produce a holistic data set. The survey method produces broad data that identifies relationships between the variables age group, gender, education level, and employment status with the aim of generalising the findings to the wider population of the Kasserine governorate. Although the KIIs produced comparatively narrow data, it was effective at cross-examining and providing deeper and subtler understandings than the shallow survey data. In addition, the KIIs allowed the researchers to explore unanticipated topics.[22]

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[22] Mabry, L, (2009). *Case Study in Social Research.* In *The Sage handbook of social research methods*, eds. Alasuutari, Pertti et al. London: Sage Publications. p. 218.

The survey collected attitudinal data and produced a combination of quantitative data, from 38 closed-ended, multiple-choice questions. It also generated qualitative data from 11 open-ended questions where survey respondents were able to justify their responses. For example, "Q31.1: Do you believe that a child in conflict with the law should be deprived of their liberty? (Yes or No)" was followed with "Q31.2: If yes, why?".

- ***Target groups of the survey***

As requested by UNICEF, the survey population size was 1500. The population was calculated to produce representative sample of sex and delegation inhabitance in relation to data from the Tunisian National Institute of Statistics 2014 general population census.[23] For example, 17% of the population of the Kasserine Governorate live in the Sbeitla delegation therefore, 257 (17% of 1500) surveys were conducted in Sbeitla. For ethical reasons, all respondents were legal adults (aged 18 and over).

The key informants were selected based on their broad range of experience and expertise in different phases of dealing with children in conflict with the law. These candidates were two child protection delegates, a regional delegate of education, a psychologist from CDIS, a psychologist from CIJE, the director of CDIS, an investigative judge for minors and ILF, and two judges. The sample size is suitable for a governorate with a small population (460,200 people) and limited child protection institutions.

2.3 Data collection tools and activities

- ***Survey***

The 49-question survey was designed by an external research consultant and administered by a team of 8 interviewers. The selection and recruitment of the investigators were carried out by the local partner of the project, *Association Ahlem Toufoula*. A two-day training session was held to acquaint the investigators with data collection tools and ethical practices. The training included practical simulation exercises, to familiarize the data collectors with the different possible situations. The Search team revised the questions after receiving feedback from the data collectors

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[23] Institut National de la Statistique (INS). "Kasserine A Travers Le Recensement Général De La Population Et De l'Habitat 2014". Available at http://www.ins.tn/fr/resultats

and the members of *Ahlem Toufoula*. The data collectors were also trained on how to maintain the quality and consistency of the data collection process.

- ***Interview***

The Search program team designed an interview guide which included a set of questions for all interviews and specific questions based on the interviewee's profession. The team conducted 10 qualitative interviews (KIIs). The interviews took place via Google Hangouts due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. This allowed for greater understanding of responses as the interviewers could interpret non-verbal cues through observation of body language, facial expression and eye contact, and more effectively probe to explore hidden meanings. Interviews were one-to-one to ensure anonymity.

2.4 Data analysis

2.4 *Survey*

The analysis of quantitative data was conducted through SPSS software. Data analysis was based on univariate and bi-variate analysis. The univariate analysis aimed to analyze the frequency and distribution of key variables in the questionnaires. Bi-variate analysis was conducted to cross-tabulate key variables (measuring KAP of respondents toward key topics of the survey) with socio-demographic data such: age, marital status, employment status and education level. This cross-tabulation was complemented by a Chi-square test to assess the significance of the correlation. The aim of this bi-variate analysis is to provide a comparison between different profiles of respondents.

Interviews

The qualitative data was analysed by codifying responses into common trends and certain themes related to "*Children in conflict with law*" and *"Children at risk"* in addition to the perceptions and attitudes of interviewees.

2.5 Limitations

- The subject of child protection issues is a highly complex issue. However, to include questions that addressed all these aspects would have made the survey longer and more arduous for respondents to complete. The meant that the survey did not include questions related to the protection of children at risk and children in conflict with the law, such as the existing rehabilitation programs or the situation of detention centres for juvenile delinquents.

- The perception of parents whose children are in conflict with the law or the perception of adults who were in conflict with the law when they were minors was not included. Their perspectives would have been insightful but it would have been difficult and ethically problematic to interview them or ask them to complete the survey.

- The unfamiliarity of the respondents with the subject, in particular with some terminology used such as 'children in conflict with the law', 'the mechanism of mediation' and 'the mechanism of supervised liberty' led to inconsistencies in respondent's answers. The terminology should have been further simplified.

- The KIIs did not yield diverse or in-depth data. This is because the interviewers used a structured interview guide and asked the same questions to all interviewees. Although the intention behind this approach was to produce comparable and easily codifiable data, it meant that the interviewers missed the opportunity to produce 'thicker' description[24] and deeper observation by asking follow-up questions, probing for more details, or asking interviewees more specific questions about their professional experience. Therefore, the interviews produced similar findings.

- The survey design did not take into consideration the impact of COVID-19 on access of *"Children in conflict with law"* to the existing protection mechanisms. Although information on the impact of COVID could not be acquired, it is the opinion of the research team that it did not cause a significant impact on responses.

3. Findings

3.1 Description of Respondents

The survey respondents are composed of 48.7% males and 51.3% females. The distribution of the respondents by marital status indicates that 45.1% are single, 42.8% are married, 4.2% are divorced, and 4.7% are widowed. The sampling is composed of 38.7% of respondents aged between 18-29, 22.9% aged between 30-39 and 14.3% aged between 14-49. 32.7% of the surveyed population reached middle school, 31.0% reached secondary education and 19.3% reached university.

The demographics of respondents are detailed in the table below:

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[24] Ponterotto, J.G. (2006) Brief Note on the Origins, Evolution, and Meaning of the Qualitative Research Concept "Thick Description". The Qualitative Report. 11: 3 pp. 538-549. Available at http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.453.324&rep=rep1&type=pdf

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Socio-demographic characteristics	%
Gender	
Male	48.7%
Female	51.3%
Marital status	
Single	45.1%
Married	42.8%
Divorced	4.2%
Widowed	4.7%
Others	3.2%
Age	
18-29	38.7%
30-39	22.9%
40-49	14.3%
50-59	14.8%
60+	9.3%
Education level	
Illiterate/primary	17.1%
Middle School	32.7%
Secondary	31.0%
University	19.3%

3.2 Risk factors facing adolescents: knowledge and attitudes of the Kasserine population

3.2.1 Knowledge and perceptions of risk factors

The two main risk factors that are addressed in this report are: school dropout and child labor.

a-School dropout

Figure 1: Do you know any children who have dropped out of school in your environment?
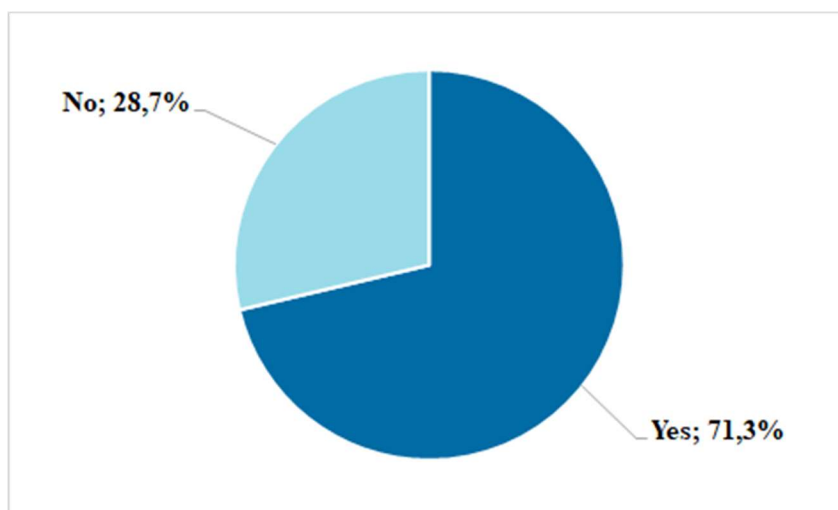
71.3% of the respondents reported that they knew a child who had dropped out of school in their community. This alarming rate indicates the degree to which school dropout has become a common phenomenon in the Kasserine governorate and confirms the official statistics that ranks this region the highest in terms of school dropout.[25] A study conducted in the Gafsa and Kasserine governorates by Association Citoyens Gafsa in 2015-2016 confirms that school dropout rate in Kasserine makes up 63% of the total dropout rate in both regions Gafsa and Kasserine.[26] The study points out the degree to which Kasserine has been affected by the school dropout phenomenon

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[25]Association Citoyens Gafsa (2017). "Abandon Scolaire: Les facteurs and Les obstacles Gafsa et Kasserine". Available at https://tinyurl.com/y2cz89jx
[26] Ibid.

despite the efforts of the Tunisian government to reform the educational system and achieve the objectives of ODD 4.[27]

Qualitative interview data confirms that school dropout is common in Kasserine. This is a serious problem because "youth who drop out from school are at increased risk for displaying socioemotional problems and engaging in delinquent and criminal behavior."[28] The majority of interviewees highlighted school dropout as a major issue in Kasserine and blamed the family's lack of awareness for not encouraging the completion of high school education. As a child protection delegate highlighted *"The family does not prioritize education in Kasserine and does not believe in education as a social ladder, and this would result in the birth of a "Child in conflict with law", incapable of adapting to his environment and surroundings."*

Figure 2: If yes, what is your perception of children who have dropped out of school?
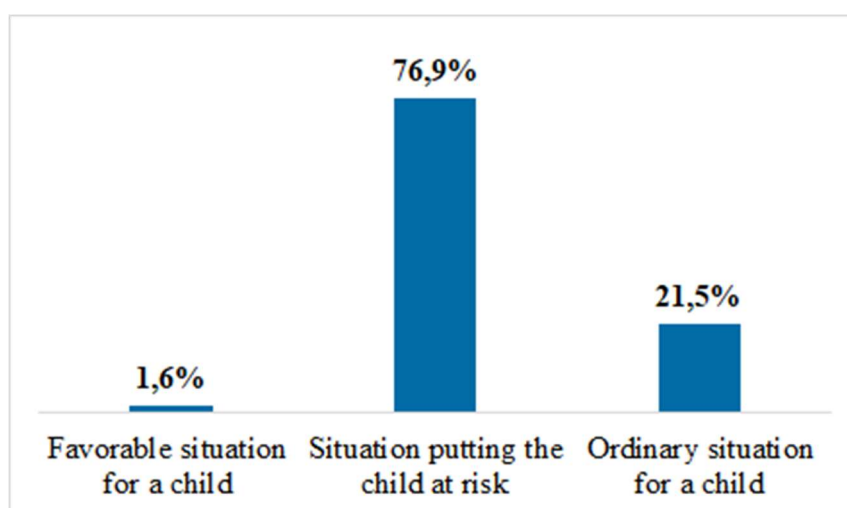
Moreover, among those respondents who confirmed that they knew a child who had dropped out of school in their community, 76.9% considered that dropping out of school would put the child at-risk. For the majority of survey respondents, the educational institution can be seen as a safe place that will most likely prevent children from getting in conflict with the law or involved in

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[27] The Ministry of Development, Investment and Cooperation and United Nations in Tunisia (n.d.), "Towards the Implementation of the Goals of Sustainable Development in Tunisia: Analyses of Referential Principles". Available at http://www.tunisiaodd.tn/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/RapportMAPS-Web17-12-2019.pdf.

[28] Fernández-Suárez A, Herrero J, Pérez B, Juarros-Basterretxea J and Rodríguez-Díaz FJ (2016) Risk Factors for School Dropout in a Sample of Juvenile Offenders. Frontiers in Psychology. 7:1993.

illegal affairs. However, it is notable that there was a difference between the perception of the surveyed population and the interviewed respondents who believed that school dropout was a result of the family and community's lack of awareness of the importance of school in educating and protecting children. As a judge stressed "*The organized crimes that are committed by children are a result of the absence of family support and the community's awareness of the importance of education for children.*"

The difference in perceptions can be explained by the fact that families seem likely to understand the risks to their children, but the bad economic situation might influence their perceptions and therefore, they would have no choice other than to allow their children to work to support them.[29] Accordingly, multidimensional poverty could be a hidden factor. Children will likely enter the job market or seek other alternatives after dropping out of school to improve their living conditions. Nonetheless, the alternatives that a child might seek after leaving school might not always be limited to legal channels, which can increase the possibility of getting in conflict with the law or becoming at-risk.

21.5% of respondents normalized the school dropout rate. This perception can be formed as a result of the different experiences of people in Kasserine, as many live in poor socio-economic conditions. This is confirmed by official studies that classify several areas in Kasserine as the most underprivileged communities with the highest poverty rates in Tunisia.

In fact, those groups of respondents seem to be unaware of the legal consequences of dropping out. The Tunisian legislator rendered the compulsory education obligatory and established penal sanctions for parents who refrain from enrolling their children in basic educational institutions or withdraw them, stating that: *"Every guardian who refuses to enrol their children, under the age of sixteen, in basic educational institutions or withdraws them... exposes themselves to fines ranging from 20 to 200 dinars, and the fine is doubled to 400 dinars in case of reoffending.*"[30]

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[29] L'Institut National de la Statistique; L'Organisation Internationale du Travail (2017)"Enquête Nationale sur le Travail des Enfants en Tunisie, 2017". Available at
http://www.ins.tn/sites/default/files/publication/pdf/Travail%20de%20l%27enfant-v2-6-web.pdf
[30]"Orientation law N. 2002-80 of July 23, 2002, relating to education and school teaching-Article 21",Journal Officiel de la République Tunisienne. Available at https://tinyurl.com/y6e34h9f

Additionally, the findings indicated that more women than men considered school dropout as an at-risk situation for children (83.9% vs. 72.5%).

Table 2: Perception of children who have dropped out of school per marital status and gender

Characteristics	Favorable situation for a child	Situation putting the child at-risk	Ordinary situation for a child
Marital status			
Single	0.9%	81.8%	17.3%
Married	0.8%	78.8%	20.4%
Divorced	2.1%	61.7%	36.2%
Widowed	1.4%	63.4%	35.2%
Gender			
Male	1.5%	72.5%	26.0%
Female	0.9%	83.9%	15.2%

Marital status correlated significantly with the normalization of school dropout: respondents from single-parent families (divorced, widowed) perceived dropping out of school to be an ordinary situation for a child that does not represent any risk. This could be because a single household income might not be enough to guarantee a decent living conditions for the family and, therefore, most single-parent families normalize child labor. This perception is also confirmed by the research study *"Abandon scolaires les facteurs et les obstacles Gafsa et Kasserine."*[31] On the other hand, single or married respondents were likely to highlight the danger of dropping out of school for a child.

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[31] Association Citoyens Gafsa (2017). "Abandon Scolaire: Les facteurs and Les obstacles Gafsa et Kasserine". Available at https://tinyurl.com/yxaun4lc

b-Child labor

Figure 3: Do you know any working children in your environment?
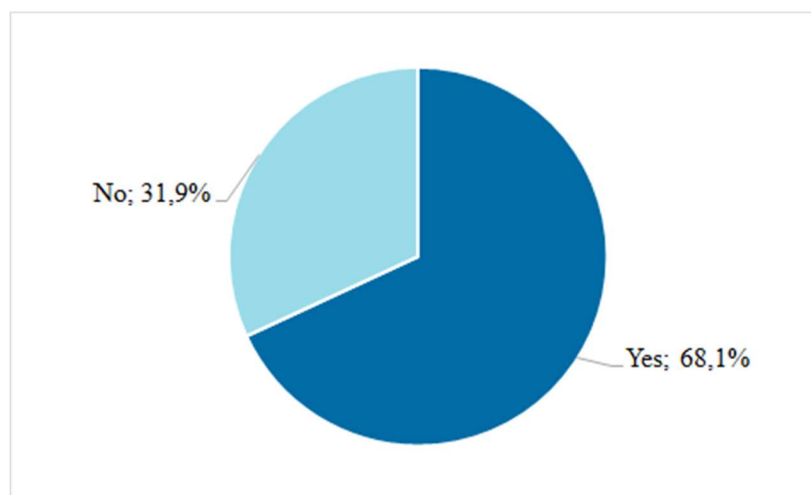
68.1% of respondents reported that they knew at least one child who worked in their community. This alarming percentage confirms the official statistics on child labor. Indeed, according INS/ILO study and data from 2017 the west center region of Tunisia, which includes Kasserine, Kairouan, and Sidi Bouzid, has the highest child labor rate in the country (15.7% of children population aged between 5 and 17).[32] Children in Kasserine, which is nationally classified as one of the most under-privileged regions, are suffering from hard living conditions which push several of them to start working before reaching 18 or to take responsibility at an early age to earn a living and support their families. According to Article 53 of the Labor Code*"Children under sixteen years of age cannot be employed in any of the activities organized to this code."*[33]

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[32] Institut National de la Statistique; L'Organisation Internationale du Travail (2017)"Enquête Nationale sur le Travail des Enfants en Tunisie, 2017". Available at:
http://www.ins.tn/sites/default/files/publication/pdf/Travail%20de%20l%27enfant-v2-6-web.pdf

[33]"Labor Code-Article 53," The Republic of Tunisia: The presidency of the government, Available at
https://tinyurl.com/y327kwoc

Figure 4: If yes, what type of work do they do ?
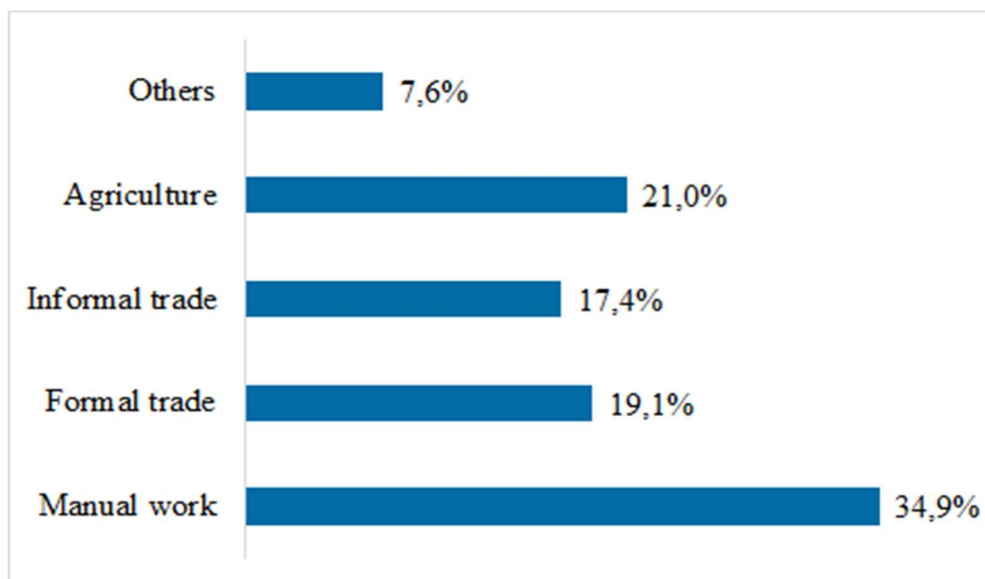
Furthermore, Graph 4 demonstrates that respondents thought that children most often participate in manual work and agricultural work, followed by formal and informal trade. Although children might not be physically ready to do activities that require physical efforts, manual work is highlighted as one of the main activities that they do to earn money and support themselves. It is important to note that even in law there is a loophole regarding child labor. Although child labor is illegal, children at the age of 13 and above are allowed to work in agriculture.[34]

The normalization of child labor in Kasserine is alarming because it contradicts with international standards and national laws. Nonetheleess, the prevalence of poverty in Kasserine might have pushed the society to accept child labor and allow the children to be an income provider at an early age. It is worth noting that children do not always engage in safe activities that do not harm them physically. Engagement in the informal economy (informal trade) is also considered to be one of the main activities (17.4%). This could be because smuggling is common as Kasserine borders Algeria. As the child protection delegate highlighted *"In addition to the gangs that recruit children*

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[34] "Labor Code-Article55" The Republic of Tunisia: The presidency of the government, Available at
https://tinyurl.com/y2km2lkd

in activities other than education, the informal trade has become a dream for children in Kasserine, which confirms the profit mentality that these children have."

Although child labor might help several communities to survive and combat poverty in the short term, it can impact the region's economic landscape and socio-economic profile in the future as child laborers often remain unskilled workers who remain economically vulnerable in adult life.[35]

Figure 5: What is your attitude to seeing a child working?
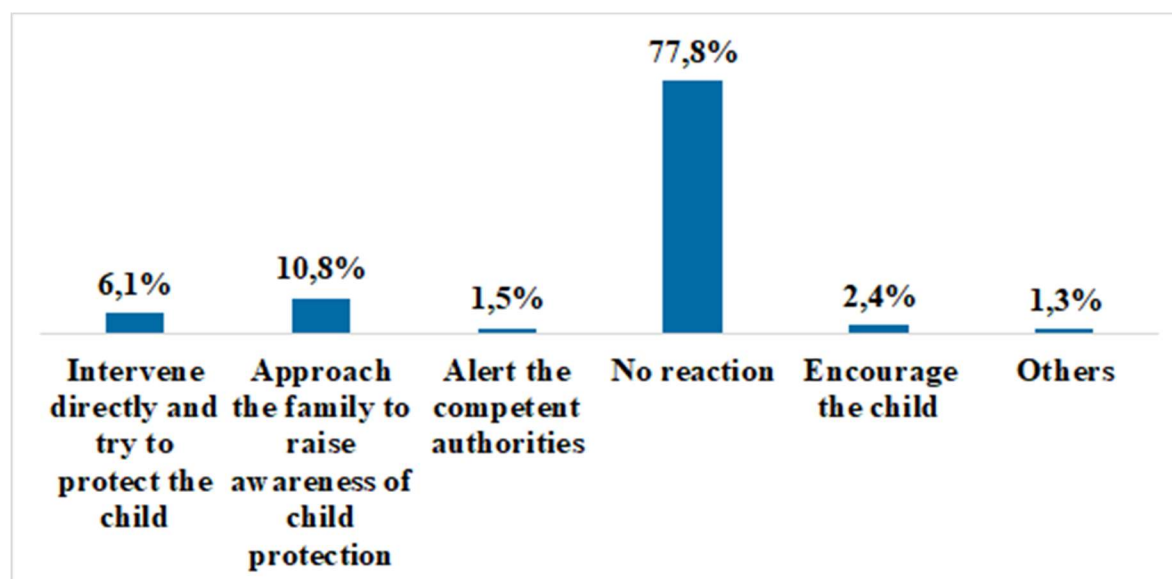
When asked about their attitudes towards seeing a child working, 77.8% of respondents reported that they would not react whereas 10.8% indicated that they would approach the family to raise awareness about the need for child protection. This can be explained by the normalization and spread of child labor phenomenon in Kasserine which is also confirmed by the findings in Graph 3. However, only 1.5% of respondents indicated that they would alert the relevant authorities. In fact, this result is very low and is alarming. It can indicate that respondents either are not aware of the right channels to inform the authorities or do not want the authorities to intervene out of fear of retaliation or causing harm to the employer. Additionally, the result can indicate that

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[35]Institut National de la Statistique; L'Organisation Internationale du Travail (2017)"Enquête Nationale sur le Travail des Enfants en Tunisie, 2017". Available at:
http://www.ins.tn/sites/default/files/publication/pdf/Travail%20de%20l%27enfant-v2-6-web.pdf

respondents might be aware that many children are working because of their need for money and therefore alerting the authorities might be a form of punishment for poor families.

3.2.2 Knowledge and perceptions of risk behaviors

Figure 6: Among the following risk behaviors, which are the most common in your community (rank from 1 to 5)?
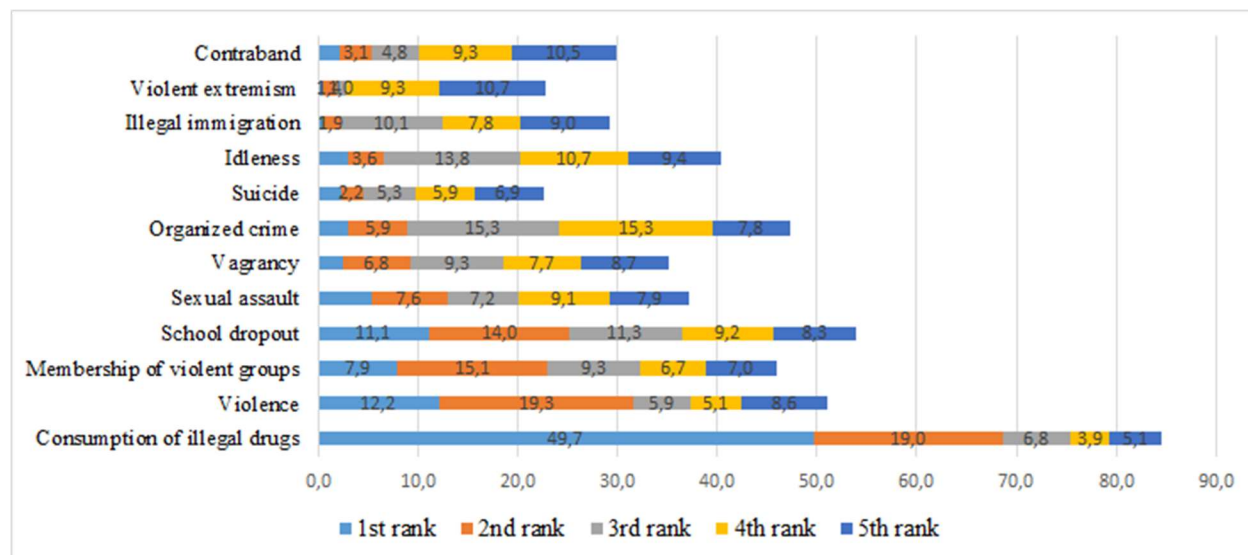
When asked about the common risk behaviors in their community, respondents ranked consumption of illegal drugs the highest (49.7%), followed by violence (19.3%), and organized crimes (15.3%). These results indicate the most common risk behaviors that children in Kasserine are facing could put their lives at risk. It is important to highlight that these risk behaviors might not only put the child at risk but also could threaten the stability of the whole community. However, the qualitative data provided another classification of the risk behaviors based on the common incidents in the region. According to the professionals, violence, organised crimes, and theft are the common risk behaviors among children. As a psychologist highlighted "*According to the center's statistics, among every 10 children, 8 of them suffer from disturbed behaviors such as theft, ..., and violence.*" As the Director of CDIS stressed "*The main common threats to children are failure in school and inability to adapt which result in school dropout... and in addition to the new emerging threats such as joining violent groups and getting involved in organized crimes in some neighborhoods in Kasserine as well as the violence and theft.*"

Another aspect that was highlighted by interviewees is that risk behaviors differ from one delegation of Kasserine to another. There is a particular difference between rural and populated areas as well as inside and outside school environments. As a psychologist stated *"Among the common behaviors in Kasserine as we find different behaviors varying from an area to another. For Sbeitla , there is violence, theft, and informal trade. Al Zuhur [populated area] district is one of the areas that has problems like delinquent, threatened children and violent behaviors."*

Figure 7: : According to current practices in your community, what are the dangers facing children at risk?
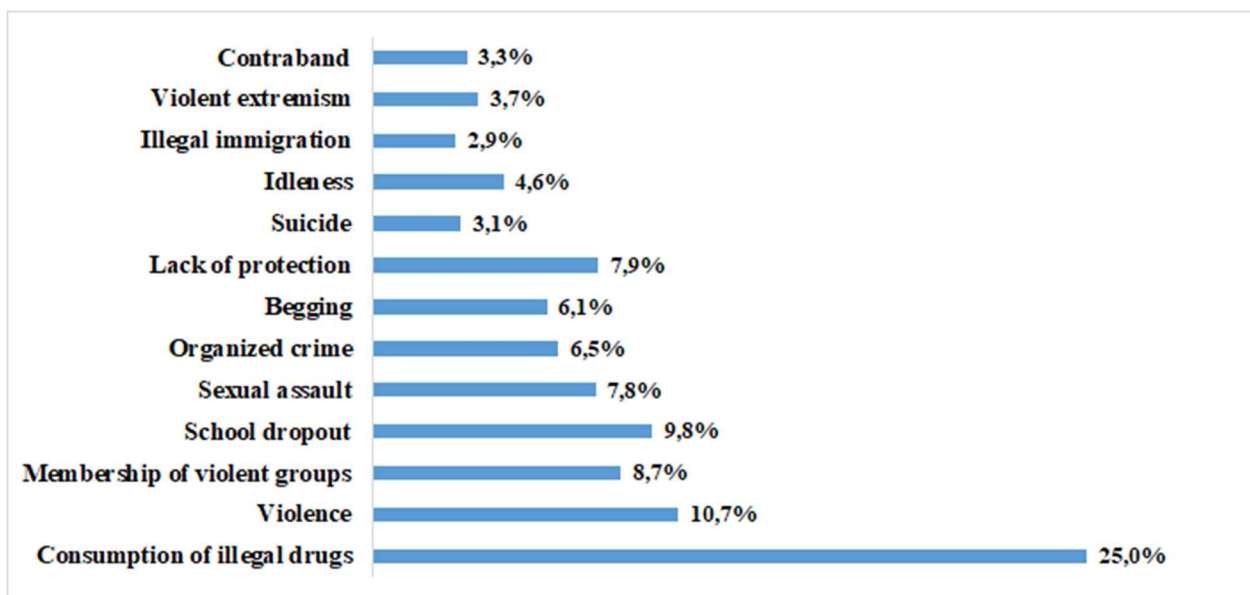
25% of the surveyed population considered consumption of illegal drugs to be a major danger facing children at risk while contraband (3.3%) and illegal immigration (2.9%) were considered to be minor danger. This result is not surprising because consumption of illegal drugs is not widely accepted by the Tunisian society. However, contraband is considered to be one of the main sources of income for several people in Kasserine despite how risky it is. Thus, it might not be perceived as a danger but rather as an activity that generates money.

3.2.3 KAP towards child at-risk or in conflict with law

a- Attitudes towards corporal punishment

Figure 8: Do you believe that physical punishment is an adequate method of education?
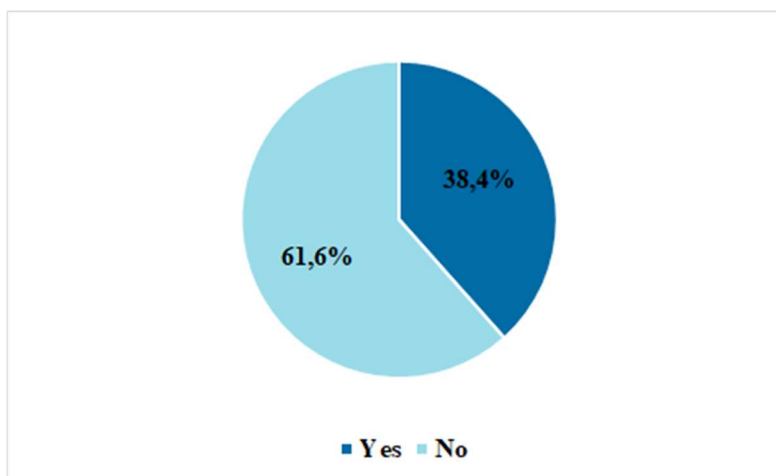
The graph indicates that 38.4% of respondents believe that physical punishment is an adequate method for educating and raising a child. This proportion shows their belief in the traditional methods in raising a child based on physical punishment, which can likely affect the psychological and physical state of the child. It could also push several children to find other alternatives to escape this hard situation. Nonetheless, these alternatives might be risky and lead to negative consequences. However, the majority of respondents (61.6%) believed that physical punishment is not an adequate method to raise a child.

It is worth mentioning that several interviewed experts highlighted that domestic violence against children is a major problem in Kasserine. In fact, according to them the majority of cases that they worked on involved children who were victims of violence. As a psychologist mentioned "*Regarding physical and sexual violence, the center [CDIS] periodically receives 6 out of 10 child victims of domestic violence or violence perpetuated in school.*" They also frequently mentioned that domestic violence against children could increase the likelihood to adapt violent or at-risk behaviors. According to child protection delegate *"Violence that the child is exposed to in his family makes him vulnerable to think about suicide or illegal immigration."*

Table 3: Do you believe that physical punishment is an adequate method of education (per marital status and employment status)?

Characteristics	% of yes
Marital status	
Single	35.9%
Married	37.2%
Divorced	40.4%
Widowed	54.9%
Gender	
Male	41.1%
Female	35.8%

It is worth noting that the proportion of divorced (40.4%) and widowed respondents (54.9%) in favor of physical punishment was the highest. Additionally, male respondents (41.1%) were more than female repondants (35.8%) to consider physical punishment as an adequate method of education. This result might be due to the parental role in which the fathers generally take the position of punishing.

b- Perceptions towards "Children in conflict with law"

Figure 9: Do you think that children in conflict with law are?
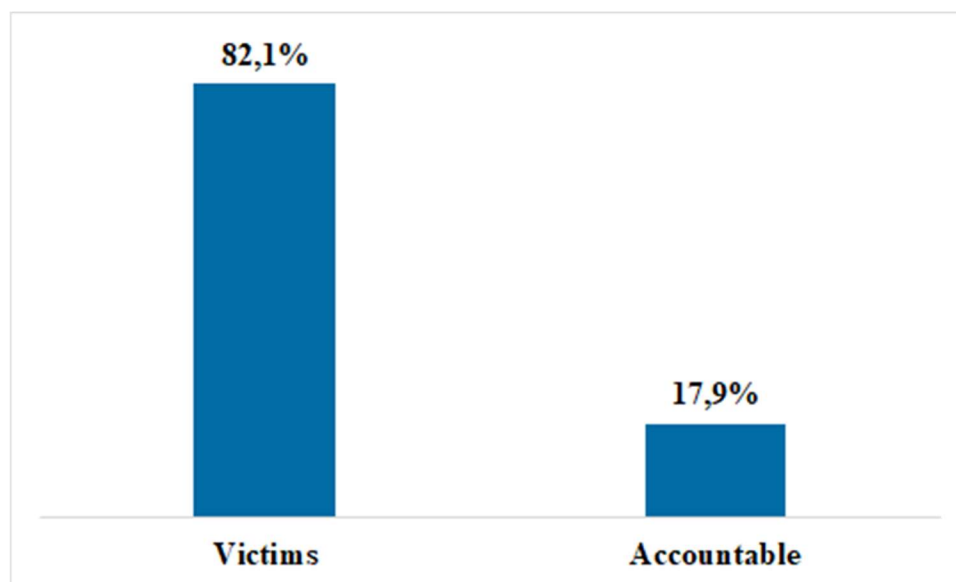
The survey indicated that 82.1% of respondents considered *"Children in conflict with law"* to be victims while 17.9% considered them to be accountable for their acts. The fact that a high proportion considered *"Children in conflict with law"* to be victims can be explained by their perception of younger children, as they are still not aware of their actions and victims of their environment. As one lawyer highlighted, *"A child in conflict with the law is a child at risk and a victim of family violence, which makes the child practice violence that was experienced inside the family outside the school or on the streets."*

It is important to note that youth constituted the majority in perceiving *"Children in conflict with law"* as victims while older survey respondents were most likely to consider them as accountable for their deeds. This could be because younger generations sympathize with these children, whereas the older generations judge them based on their wrongdoings and violations of the prevalent norms.

Another point to highlight is that educational levels affected the responses in which respondents with higher levels of education considered "*Children in conflict with law"* as victims. This can be explained by the fact that educated people are more able to recognise the structural issues that cause children to be in conflict with the law. Additionally, single (84.2%) and married respondents

(83.2%) were more likely than divorced (66.0%) and widowed respondents (66.2%) to consider *"Children in conflict with law"* as victims. This result can be explained by the fact that divorced and widowed respondents might have experienced difficult situations and lived under unstable conditions that pushed them to sympathize less with *"Children in conflict with law"* and hold them accountable.

Table 4: Do you think that children in conflict with law are

	Victims	Accountable
Marital status		
Single	84.2%	15.8%
Married	83.2%	16.8%
Divorced	66.0%	34.0%
Widowed	66.2%	33.8%
Education level		
Illiterate/primary	73.0%	27.0%
College	78.7%	21.3%
Secondary	83.1%	16.9%
University	89.0%	11.0%
Age		
18-29	84.7%	15.3%
30-39	84.0%	16.0%
40-49	79.9%	20.1%
50-59	81.5%	18.5%
60+	70.7%	29.3%

Despite the high proportion of the surveyed population considering *"Children in conflict with law"* to be victims, the qualitative data contradict with this result. The interviewed experts and practitioners frequently mentioned that community members do not usually sympathize with *"Children in conflict with law"*. Social stigmatization is considered as the main obstacle in the process of protecting children, which hinders any opportunities for change. On the contrary, it reinforces the feeling of marginalization and social exclusion that could lead to negative outcomes and the spread of a criminal mentality among "*Children in conflict with law"*. According to a lawyer, *"The social obstacles in this field are embodied in the social stigma that makes the child marginalized and criminal in the eyes of society, and the legal institutions of protection of rights and freedom which makes the child follow the path of delinquency in search of his identity that has been lost in the society in the future."*

Although the majority of respondents sympathized with *"Children in conflict with law"*, social stigmatization remains one of the main obstacles that hinders children's reintegration into society. This could be because of the difference between perceptions and real practices, which sometimes contradict each other.

3.3 Child protection mechanisms

3.3.1 Knowledge of existing protection mechanisms

a- Terminology of Child in conflict with the law

Figure 10: Have you ever heard the expression "Child in conflict with the law"?
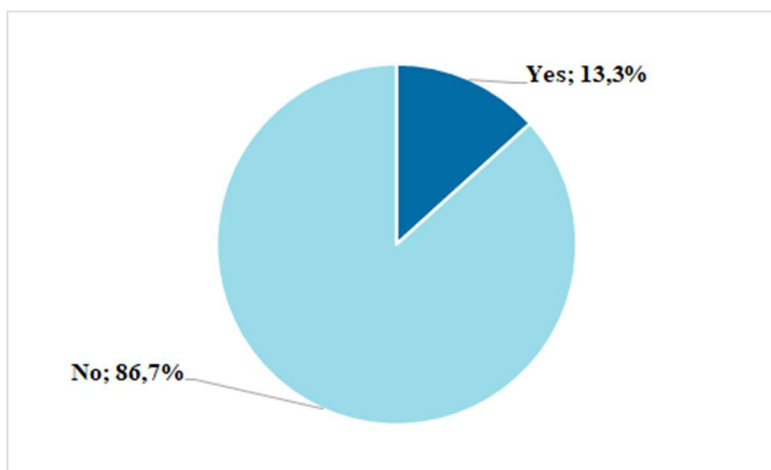
Figure 10 indicates that 13.3% of respondents reported that they had heard the expression "child in conflict with law". Although this percentage is not high, this result was anticipated because regular citizens were not expected to know technical and judicial terms. This indicates that there is a shortage of legal information accessible to ordinary people. The judicial terminology remains limited to those who practice judicial-related jobs or have been exposed to experiences dealing with lawyers in courts. Accordingly, the "divorced" respondents (23.4%) had the highest percentage confirming that they had heard the term "children in conflict with law" before. Additionally, the level of education and age affected the responses; respondents with a higher level of education and a lower age were the majority in confirming that they had heard about this terminology. This could be a result of the access to information: people with higher levels of education are more likely to be knowledgeable about certain terminologies and concepts that a normal citizen might not know.

b- Knowledge of child protection mechanisms

Figure 11: Do you know the child protection mechanisms?
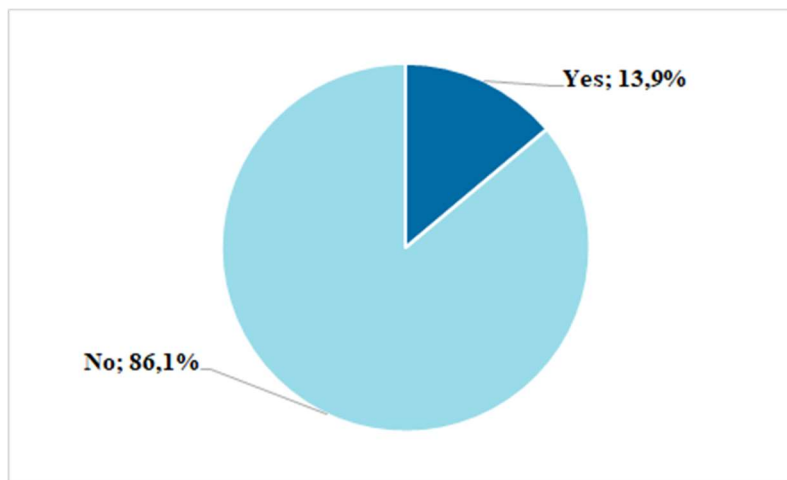
Figure 11 indicates that a relatively low proportion (13.9%) of respondents were aware of child protection mechanisms in Tunisia. However, when asked to provide examples of protection mechanisms, respondents confused mechanisms with institutions, as well as with other actors that have no role in legal and formal protection. These results show the lack of understanding of existing mechanisms and unawareness of child protection services in the region.

Figure 12: If yes, what are these mechanisms?
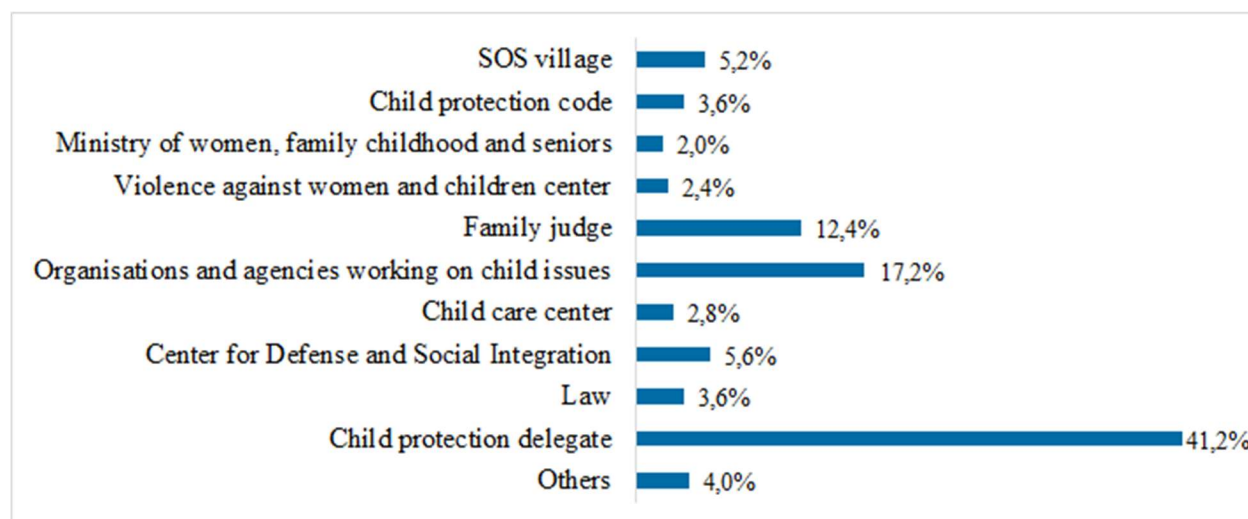
The majority of respondents (41.2%) were aware of the child protection delegate's role as the main actor in charge of child protection mechanisms. On the other hand, according to the respondents, organizations and agencies working on children (17.2%), in particular UNICEF and other local CSOs, are the ones who have the legal capacities to protect children. This proves the degree to which citizens have confidence in those organizations but also their confusion over the organizations' role in the communities; the legal/judicial role is not within the scope of work of development organizations.

It is important to highlight that child protection mechanisms in Tunisia are divided into two intervention areas: social and legal.[36] The results indicate that respondents are aware of the psycho-social protection mechanisms, such as the services provided by the associations, child protection delegates and social affairs institutions. Nonetheless, respondents overlooked other important services provided by other actors involved in the protection mechanisms, such as police, health service providers and public prosecution services.[37] Additionally, respondents failed to link the legal protection mechanisms to the services provided by relevant legal actors; mostly commonly family judges. In general, respondents confused legal protection mechanisms with social ones.

The qualitative data indicates that the requests of protection services by the community members and access to those services differ from one area to another. As the child protection delegate in

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[36] DEI-Belgique (2017). "Manuel sur Les droits de l'enfant et la Justice des Mineurs". Available at:https://tinyurl.com/y5rep5pv

[37] Ibid.

Kasserine reported "*Child protection institutions exist in the center of Kasserine. For families residing in the center, access to protection services is a lot easier.*"

c- Knowledge of child protection institutions

Figure 13: Do you know any child protection institutions?
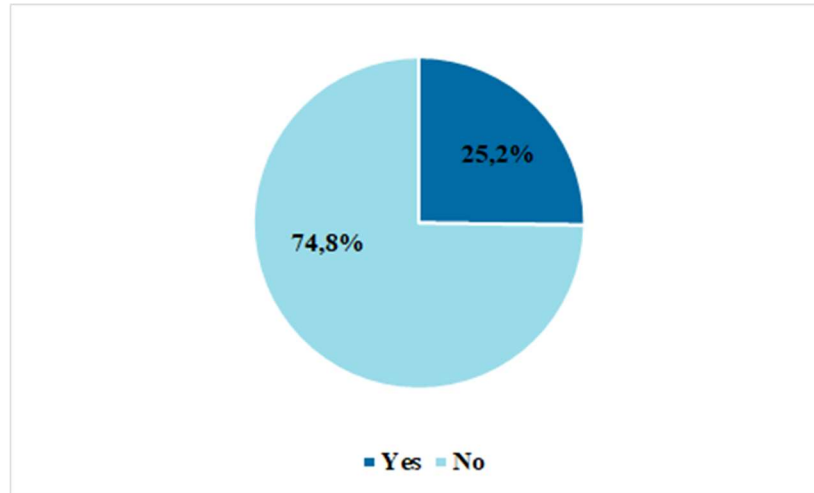
Compared to the previous findings, when asked about their knowledge of institutions, the percentage of respondents is higher (25.2%). This result shows that the term "institution" was more easily understood than "mechanism", which requires legal knowledge to clearly comprehend.

Figure 14: Which of these institutions work on child protection?
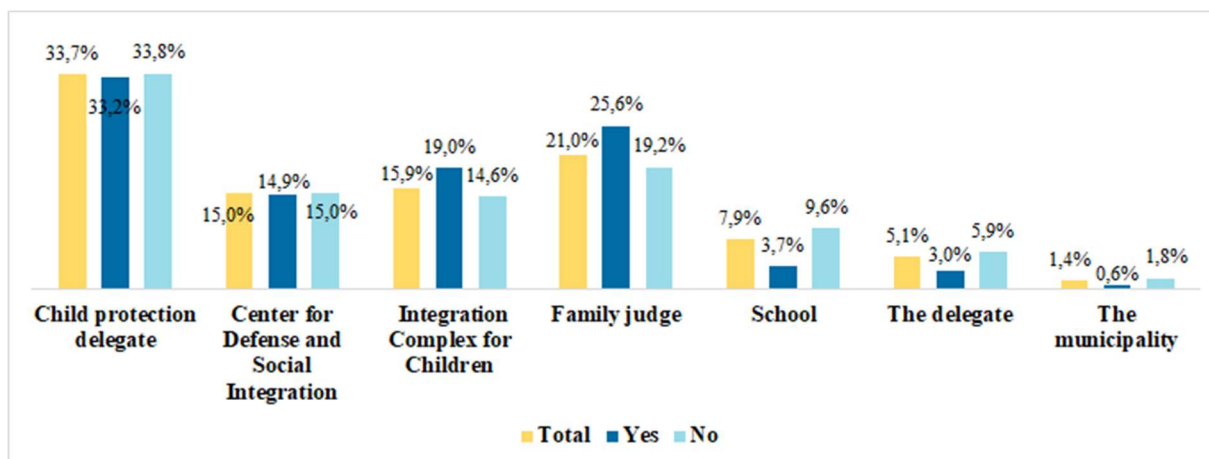
The results indicate that respondents, regardless of the responses in Graph 13, had a similar level of knowledge in classifying the suggested institutions as per their protection role. The child protection delegate (33.7%) and the family judge (21.0%) were commonly listed as the primary child protection institutions. This shows the degree to which these structures are well known among respondents and are easily identified.

Respondents who reported their lack of knowledge of child protection institutions perceived the school as a protection institution (7.9%). Indeed, there is a confusion between the educational and civic role of school in protecting children and the legal aspect that does not fall under its responsibility.

d- Knowledge of age of criminal responsibility

When asked about the age of criminal responsibility, 64.9% of respondents indicated that they knew the minimum age of criminal responsibility. Nonetheless, when asked to provide the minimum age of criminal responsibility, the majority of respondents did not have the right information on the age. Among this proportion, only 23.9% provided the right answer (13 years old) and the remaining proportion (76.1%) demonstrated that they had a wrong knowledge of the age of criminal responsibility.

An important point to highlight is that in Tunisia, information on penal age is not widely known. This can perhaps be explained by the fact that knowledge of this information is limited to only

those who had experienced certain incidents or penal cases. For this reason, 35.3% divorced respondents knew about the right information, while only 19% of married respondents and 20% of widowed had the right information.

It is worth noting that the level of education affected responses, as respondents with higher levels of education were more knowledgeable about the age of criminal responsibility, which can be a result of access to information.

Figure 15: Do you know the minimum age of criminal responsibility in Tunisia? If yes, what is it?
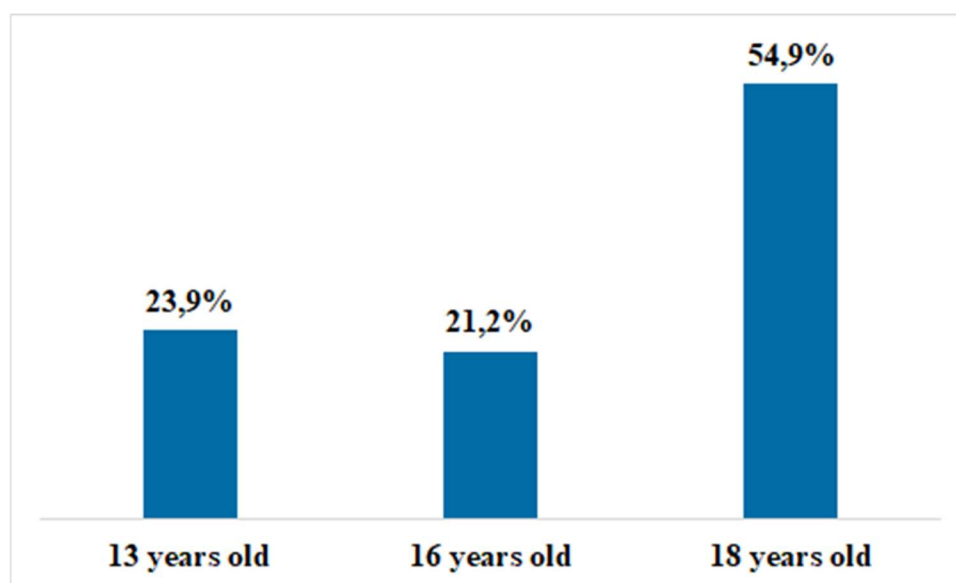
Another point to mention is that the issue of age is a complicated issue to comprehend in Tunisian legal system because the legal framework identifies several age ranges.[38]

The age of majority has been set at eighteen years according to the law of July 26, 2010 and below this age a person is considered a minor. The fact that the majority (54.9%) thought that 18 was the minimum age of criminal responsibility proves that the respondents confuse minimum age of criminal responsibility with the age of majority.

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[38] Court of Accounts (2018). Annual Report N.31:Reforming Children in conflict with the law. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/y3ywnmjw

3.3.2 Attitudes and Practices towards protection mechanisms

a-Reporting abuses

Figure 16: What is your action when seeing...?
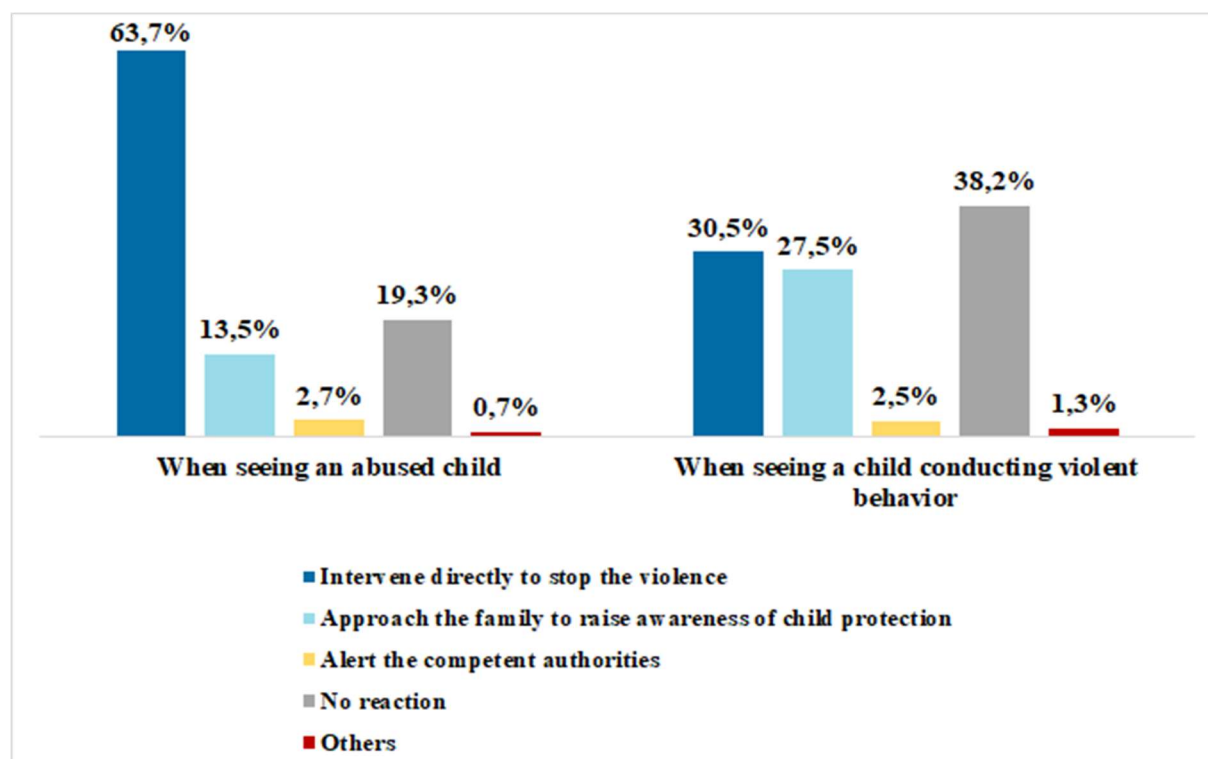
According to Article 31 of the Tunisian Child protection code *"Each person, including those subjects to professional secrecy, has a duty to notify the Childhood Protection Delegate whenever it becomes apparent to him that there is a threat to the child's health or physical or moral integrity according to the meaning of paragraphs (d and e) of Chapter 20 of this code."*[39]

Reporting on child abuses is an obligation by law for every Tunisian citizen. However, the findings indicate that the majority of people do not abide by this obligation. In fact, only 2.5% of respondents reported that they would alert the relevant authorities if they witnessed a child conducting violent behavior and 2.7% reported that they would alert the authority if they witnessed a child being a victim of violence.

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[39] "Child Protection Code-Article 31",The Republic of Tunisia: The presidency of the government. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/yxd8g6g9

The lack of willingness to report to the relevant authorities, despite the legal obligation, can be explained by the fact that people might not be knowledgeable of the confidentiality that is supported by law when reporting an abuse. According to the Article 34 "*It is prohibited for any person to disclose the identity of the person who undertook the duty of notification except with his consent or in the forms stipulated by law.*"[40] This lack of willingness to report could also be a result of people not trusting the authorities to act with competence or justice.[41] This possibly explains why the majority of respondents would use alternatives, such as approaching the family (13.5%) or intervening directly to stop the violence (63.7%).

Figure 17: According to current practices in your community, do the inhabitants alert the relevant authorities to take care of children at risk?
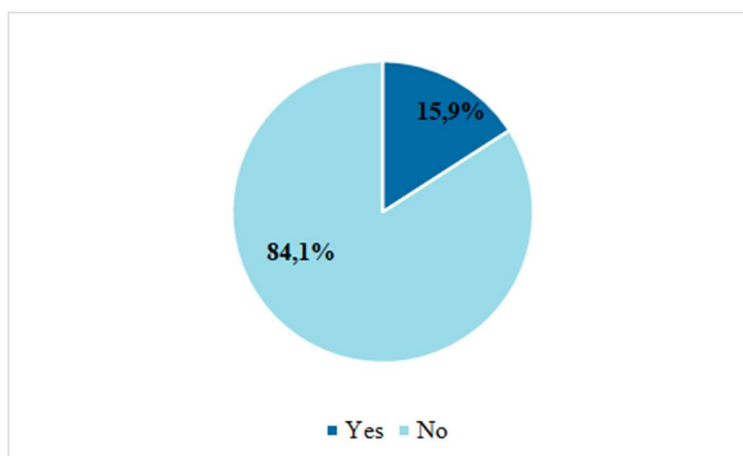
When asked about their perceptions of common community practices to alert the relevant authorities, 15.9% of respondents confirmed that residents would alert the authority while 84.1% said the opposite. This result contradicts with the previous findings when respondents asked about their individual practices in relation to alerting the authorities regarding at risk children. In fact, the findings showed that respondents were likely to be reluctant to report to the authorities individually, but they had the assumptions that the other community members would do.

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[40] "Child Protection Code-Article 34", The Republic of Tunisia: The presidency of the government. Available at:https://tinyurl.com/y3avmmtf

[41] Search-Tunisia (2017).Youth Consultations on Peace and Security: Findings from Focus Group Discussions and Interviews Including Hard to Reach Youth in Tunisia.Informing the Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security and the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 2250.

The official statistics[42] indicate that in 2019, there were a total of 938 notifications in Kasserine, making up 5.36% of the total notifications at the national level.[43] This demonstrates that the reporting rate in Kasserine is very low compared to the total population of Kasserine.

b-Access to services provided for children at risk

Figure 18: According to current practices in your community, do you know any at-risk child taken into care?
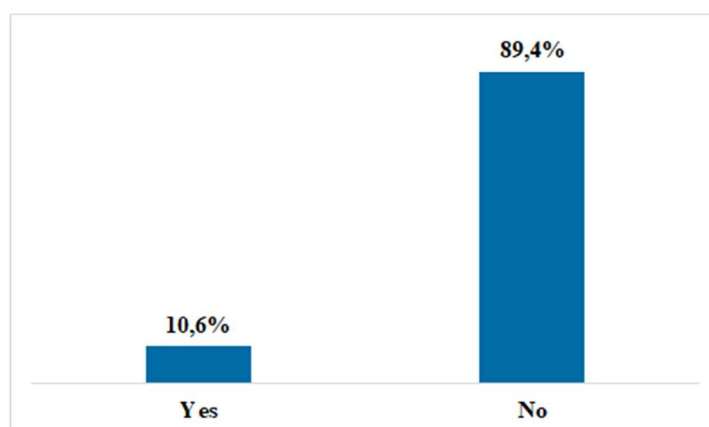
The majority of respondents (89.4%) reported that they did not know any at-risk child who was taken care of by the relevant protection institutions while only 10.6% confirmed that they knew at least one at risk child was taken into care. This result indicates that knowledge of children at risk who are being taken into care is very limited and restricted to certain groups of people who may have had previous experiences with at-risk children or have access to information related to this topic.

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[42] Tunisian ministry of Women, Family, Childhood, and Seniors (2020) Annual statistical report 2019 for Child protection representatives activities. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/yyqk7fdz
[43] Ibid.

Figure 19: If yes, by which entity?
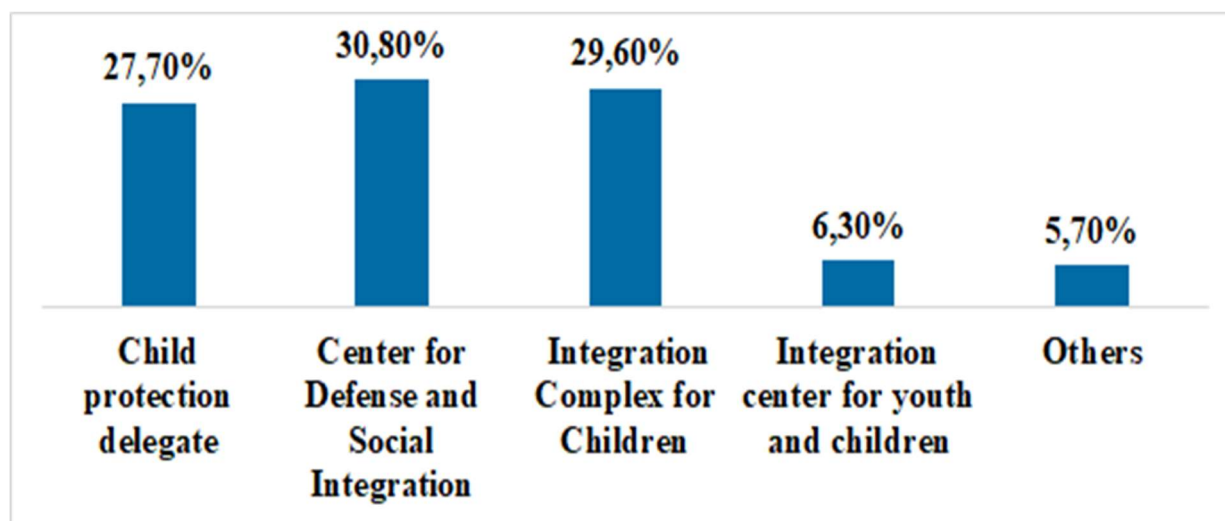
When asked to give examples of child care institutions, the majority of respondents highlighted the Center for Defense and Social Integration (30.80%), Integration Complex for Children (29.60%) and the child protection delegate (27.70%).

c- Barriers to providing protection services

The qualitative data demonstrated that one of the main barriers to provide protection services is the negative practices of parents. Professionals commonly agreed that parents of "*children in conflict with law*" or "*at risk*" perceived the protection institutions as institutions for financial support rather than institutions for reintegration and guidance for the children. As the Child protection delegate stressed *"One of the most important barriers to the path of child protection is the "customer" relationship in which the guardian uses the child for his best interest. In Kasserine, the family does not believe in the work of the child protection delegate as a culture of protection but actually the guardian uses the institution to settle family problems and involve the child in the problem. Thus, the relationship deviates from its main pillar, which is reintegration and protection, to exchanging the child interests for financial support."*

These results indicate that the relationship between protection institutions and families of children in *"conflict with law"* or *"at risk"* has been transformed from protection and reintegration relationship into more of a customer relationship that is based on providing financial support.

Additionally, the qualitative data indicate that the children's families do not seem to believe in the role of child protection delegate and other protection institutions to reintegrate and protect their children, but they only seem to be looking for the financial services that they can receive from those institutions. A psychologist highlighted that *"...All of these factors made the consumption relationship between the child and the institution end when the administrative procedures are completed. They are temporary relationships and the family do not believe in the reintegration and rehabilitation side of the protection institutions because the family is just looking for material support and profits."*

Another interesting point highlighted the barriers to providing reintegration and protection services as being the bureaucracy, lack of coordination between the protection institutions and administrative requirements that do not often apply to all the children. This makes their reintegration difficult and prevents them from having access to the services provided. The qualitative findings indicate that there is a contradiction between the theory and practice. As a psychologist stated *"In theory, for child employment and their reintegration into vocational training programs, the legal system imposes a certain age. However, in practice, the majority of children who are sent to the institutions have a low level of education and their age is below the legal age of 16. The code on Child Rights criminalized the employment of children under the legal age. Based on the experience of the center, in most cases, a large percentage of children under the legal age refuse to return to school, which makes the child move from administration to administration to find a solution."* The interviewees highlighted that, in some cases, the contradiction between the legal aspect and the practices meant that they were unable to provide adequate services for children.

Furthermore, the lack of tailored capacity building on *"Children in conflict with law"* or *"at risk"* made some child protection institutions incapable of solving the children's problems because they cannot respond to their reintegration and rehabilitation needs. As the child protection delegate highlighted *"For child protection institutions, there are many service providers that need capacity building on children's needs, their importance, privacy, and mechanisms to deal with them, which makes some institutions unable to support the child and resolve his problem."*

3.4 Alternative mechanisms to deprivation of liberty for children

Figure 20: Do you believe that a child in conflict with the law should be deprived of his/her liberty?
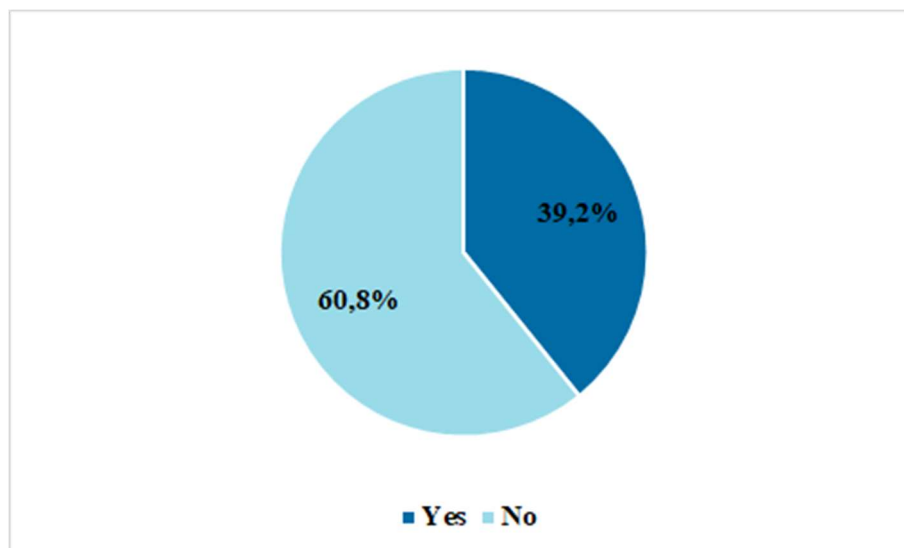
Nearly, 4 out of 10 respondents reported that they were in favor of a child in conflict with law being deprived of his or her liberty. In fact, being in favor of the deprivation of liberty can be considered as an admission that the existing ways of raising a child have failed and the deprivation of liberty is the only remaining way to rehabilitate the child. On the other hand, 60.8% of respondents were against a child getting deprived of his or her liberty.

The geographic environment (rural/urban) significantly affected the findings. More respondents from urban areas were in favor of the deprivation of liberty (45.2%) than respondents from rural areas (37.7%). As explained in the KIIs, the crime rate and type is likely to be higher in urban areas and in rural areas the extended family probably plays a more active role in protecting and guiding a child. Thus, people in rural areas are more likely to believe in the importance of family in correcting a child's delinquent behaviors rather than detention centers. According to an interviewee, *"One of the characteristics of Kasserine is that the challenges faced by children in rural areas are not the same as those faced by children in urban areas. For example, due to the overpopulation and the urban structure that exists in the city, the child sometimes gets lost . The absence of the extended family that plays an educational role in the rural areas pushes the child to resort to the streets which increases the crime rate and school dropout."*

Figure 21: Reasons behind supporting the deprivation of liberty (word cloud)

When asked about the reasons behind supporting the deprivation of liberty, the majority of respondents mentioned the need for detention to rehabilitate a child and correct the child's wrong behaviors as well as to make the child aware of the consequences of his or her actions.

80.6% of those who believed that a child should be deprived of his/her liberty thought that this mechanism is viable to correct a child's behaviors. Conversely, 90% of those who believed that a child should not be deprived of his or her liberty believed that the deprivation of liberty was not a viable correctional solution.

Figure 22: Perceptions of respondents towards the deprivation of liberty
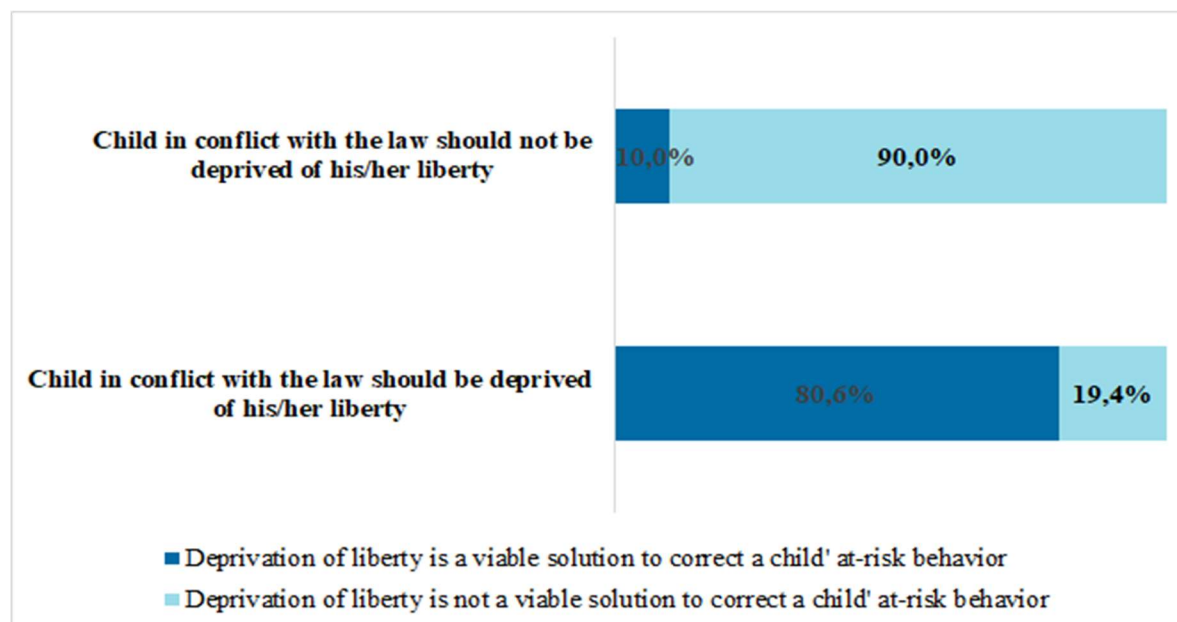
The perception of the deprivation of liberty as a mechanism of behavioral correction and reduction of crimes was predominant in the answers of this surveyed proportion (Graph 22). Nonetheless, this perception shows also that respondents who believed that a child should be deprived of his or her liberty seemed to be unaware of the negative impact of detention on a child's physical and mental development.

Additionally, Article 4 of Child Protection Code states *"The best interest of the child must be considered in all measures taken in his regard, whether by the courts, administrative authorities, or public or private social welfare institutions. In addition to the child's moral, emotional and physical needs, they shall take into account his age, health, family environment and other special conditions of his situation."[44]* The perception of respondents supporting the deprivation of liberty indicates their lack of awareness of the above Article that protects the interests of the child.

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[44]"Child Protection Code-Article 4," The Republic of Tunisia: The Presidency of the Government. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/y43cykbh

Figure 23: Reasons behind not supporting the deprivation of liberty (word cloud)

Moreover, respondents who were against detention reported that reasons behind their position were: their perception of a child as a minor who is not aware of the negative consequences and therefore, not responsible for his actions; the child was born free and always needs a second chance; and the possibility of reinforcing misbehaviors in detention. This shows that respondents seem to be aware of the negative impact of detention and deprivation of liberty.

Figure 24: Do you believe that a child in conflict with the law should be deprived of his/her liberty (per perception victim vs accountable)?
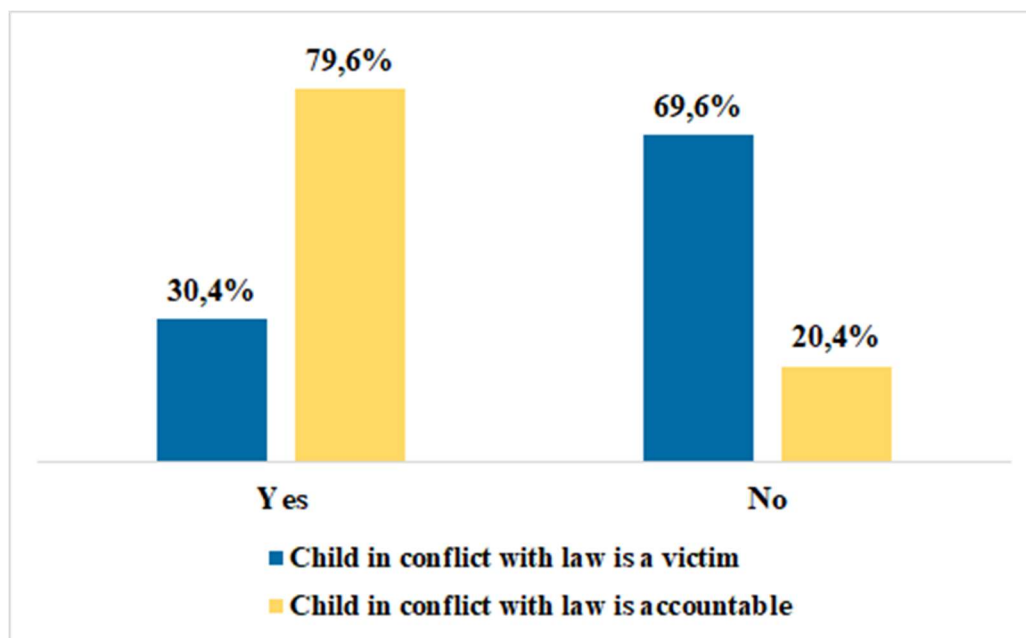
Graph 24 confirms the previous data as there is a significant correlation between favoring the deprivation of liberty and perceptions of *"Children in conflict with law"*. Respondents who consider "*Children in conflict with law"* as accountable for their actions are more likely to support deprivation of liberty as an appropriate sentence. This proves that deprivation of liberty is considered as a punishment and a way of holding children accountable for their acts. Also, it indicates that respondents seem to be unaware of or do not care about the differences between a child and an adult, meaning that if a child commits a misconduct or crime, the same punishment for an adult should be applied to him. On the other hand, those who perceive *"Children in conflict with law"* as victims were more likely to be against the deprivation of liberty because they might consider them as victims of their environment and do not deserve this kind of punishment.

It is worth noting that qualitative data highlights that during the court procedures, the child is treated as a criminal in the eyes of the judiciary system and has to go through all the stages that a normal criminal goes through. As the child protection delegate stressed "*At the institutional legal level, the court deals with children as a normal criminal. There are some court decisions that were issued by family judges, to deprive some children of their liberty*."

Table 5: Perceptions of the survey population toward deprivation of liberty

	Do you believe that a child in conflict with the law should be deprived of his liberty (% of yes)	Deprivation of liberty is a viable solution to correct a child' risky behavior (% of yes)
Marital status		
Single	35.1%	30.3%
Married	41.6%	40.7%
Divorced	51.1%	57.4%
Widowed	57.1%	62.0%
Gender		
Male	29.0%	27.9%
Female	48.8%	46.9%
Age		
18-29	36.5%	31.2%
30-39	33.8%	32.1%
40-49	41.6%	44.4%
50-59	45.0%	45.9%
60+	50.7%	55.0%

More women than men consider the deprivation of liberty to be a viable solution (46.9% vs 27.9%). This also indicates that the female percentage who support the deprivation of liberty may be higher due to peer influences that may concern women who want to protect their children from the street and having relationships with *"Children in conflict with law"* or *"at risk"*.

An interesting finding from the KIIs is that despite the high proportion of female respondents supporting the deprivation of liberty, mothers are the ones who keep accompanying and supporting their children throughout the different stages in courts.

Additionally, widowed and divorced respondents are likely to be more in favor of the deprivation of liberty (divorced 57.4%, widowed 62.0%, married 40.7% and single 30.3%. This could be explained by the fact that the respondents who are responsible for educating and raising their children on their own might need support to handle a child with risky behaviors. In fact, it might be hard for them to put a child with risky behaviors back on track without some support. Thus, they would most likely consider the deprivation of liberty to be an effective way in educating and re-empowering children. Furthermore, having a *"child in conflict with the law"* further exacerbates single parents' situations, as they are often presumed not to be able to educate their children. Hence, the need for single parents to be more severe, in order to fit in their communities and win their respect.

Another point to highlight is that age affected the responses. In fact, the more the age increased, the more respondents supported the deprivation of liberty. This result is anticipated due to the prevalent mentality among the older generation that cares more about raising the children and educating them and therefore is likely to support the deprivation of liberty as effective means to correct the child's behaviors. Younger generations may feel more empathy towards children at the same age and therefore, they would be more likely against the deprivation of liberty.

Figure 25: Do you know that there are alternative mechanisms to deprivation of liberty for children?
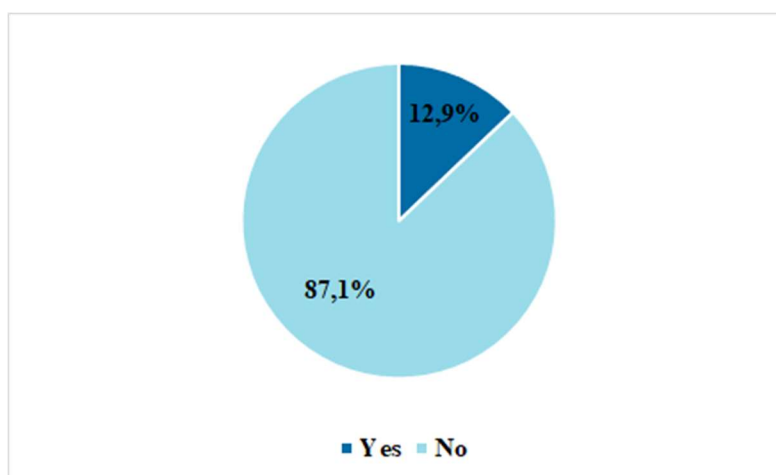
The graph indicates that the vast majority of respondents (87.1%) do not know that alternative mechanisms to detention and the deprivation of liberty exist, while only 12.9% know that those

mechanisms exist. These results are expected due to the judicial nature of those mechanisms. In fact, it might be hard for ordinary people to be knowledgeable about those mechanisms.

Table 6: Do you know that there are alternative mechanisms to deprivation of liberty for children?

	Yes (%)	No (%)
Marital status		
Single	**14.5%**	**85.5%**
Married	**9.3%**	**90.7%**
Divorced	**21.3%**	**78.7%**
Widowed	**15.5%**	**84.5%**
Education level		
Illiterate/primary	8.5%	91.5%
College	9.7%	90.3%
Secondary	12.9%	87.1%
University	18.3%	81.7%

It is worth noting that divorced respondents (21%) and those with higher levels of education are likely to report that they know about the alternative mechanisms. This is expected because they might have been exposed to the alternative mechanisms either in schools, meetings or in courts for divorced respondents.

Figure 26: If yes, what are these mechanisms
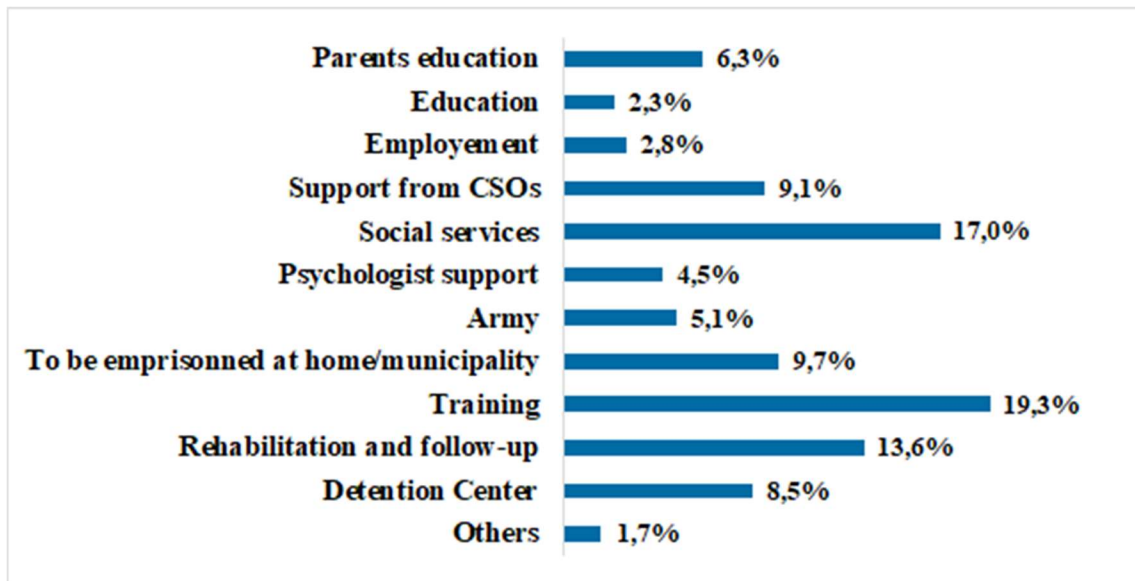
When respondents who reported that they knew about the alternative mechanisms were asked to provide examples of those mechanisms, their answers varied enormously. 8.5% perceived the detention center as an alternative mechanism to detention because it provides vocational training but, in reality, this center is the institution that deprives children of their liberty. This proves that some people might not be aware that there is no difference between the prison and detention center in terms of the deprivation of liberty.

5.1% of respondents believe that joining the Army is an alternative to the deprivation of liberty. This contradicts the law and standards. The data shows that respondents have misconceptions about the Army and that their perception of the Army is based on the belief of the disciplinary role of this institution. Additionally, the law does not allow minors to join the Army.

Another finding that confirms the previous results regarding the normalization of child labor, is that 2.8% of respondents suggested that protection institutions find jobs for them as an alternative, which is illegal.

Other alternative mechanisms that were suggested include vocational training (19.3%), community services (17.0%), and rehabilitation and follow up (13.6%). However, the suggestions show that respondents seem to be aware of some of the mechanisms but still need to explore the legal aspects to clearly understand what the law states and clarify the common misconceptions.

Figure 27: There are two alternative mechanisms: supervised liberty and mediation, do you think these mechanisms can be effective?
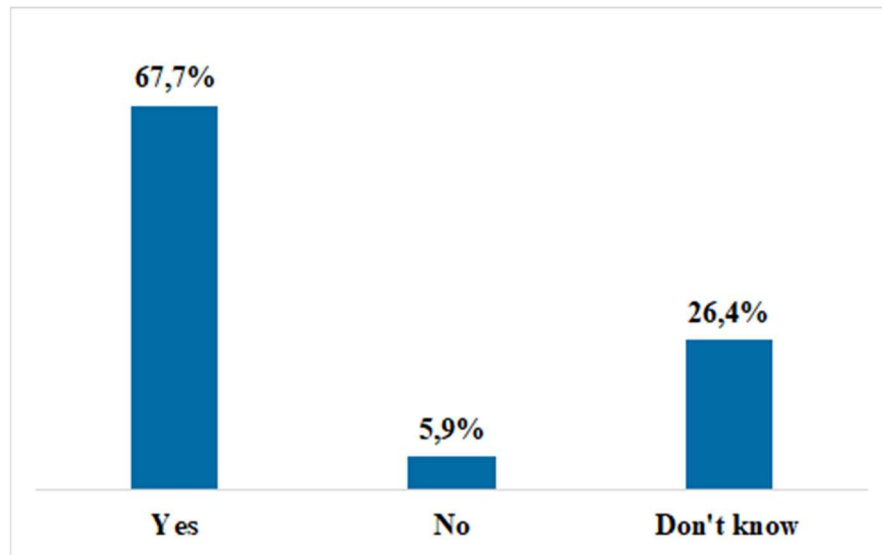

Findings indicate that 67.7% of respondents believe that supervised liberty and mediation could be effective alternative mechanisms to the deprivation of liberty while only 5.9% think the opposite. However, an interesting point to highlight is that 26.4% of the surveyed population reported that they did not know whether these two alternative mechanisms could be effective or not in their community.

In fact, these results are expected because respondents might not be familiar with the two mechanisms or perhaps the use of these mechanisms are still not considered common practice among the surveyed population. Other points that could explain these perceptions are the lack of trust between citizens and state authorities, and the common belief that they are ineffective mechanisms.

The proportion of respondents who think that the two alternative mechanisms to the deprivation of liberty could be effective are quite similar to the proportion of those who are against a *"child in conflict with law"* getting deprived of his or her liberty (60.8%).

*Figure 28: What mechanism could be effective in your community?*
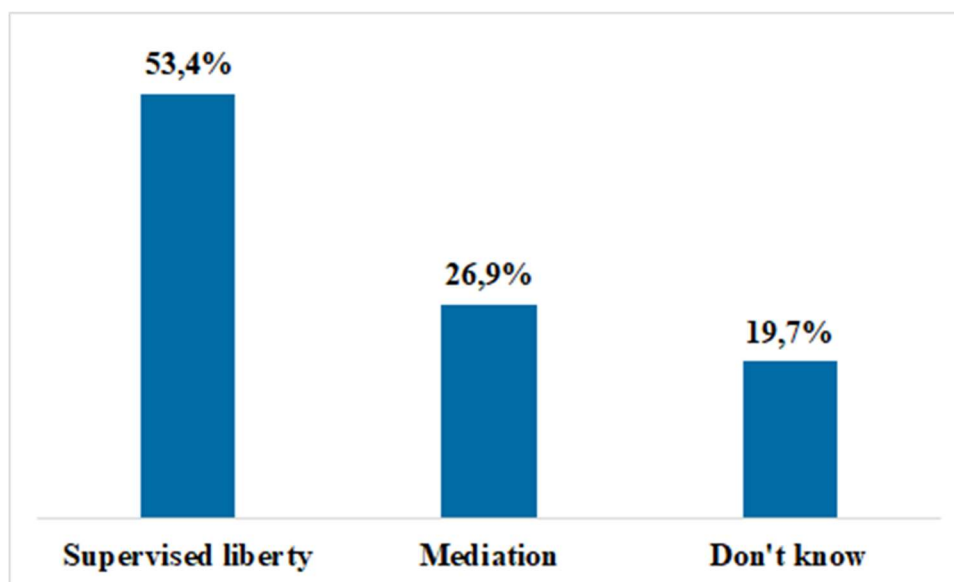
53.4% of the respondents considered supervised liberty to be more effective than mediation, while only 19.7% reported that they did not know which mechanism could be more effective

Qualitative data highlighted that mediation could prove challenging to implement in Kasserine due to the extended families' dominance and interference in the dialogue processes. As a psychologist mentioned "the *extended families make it hard for each party to reconcile with the other one*."

Another point to highlight is that "supervised liberty" has not been actively implemented yet[45] and, therefore, for this reason people might not be aware of this mechanism. Additionally, the activation of this mechanism needs several resources to monitor the process and specific staff such as delegates in charge of the "supervised liberty".

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[45] Court of Accounts (2018). Annual Report N.31:Reforming Children in conflict with the law. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/y3ywnmjw

Figure 29: Do you think these mechanisms can be effective / do you think children in conflict with law are victims or accountable for their actions
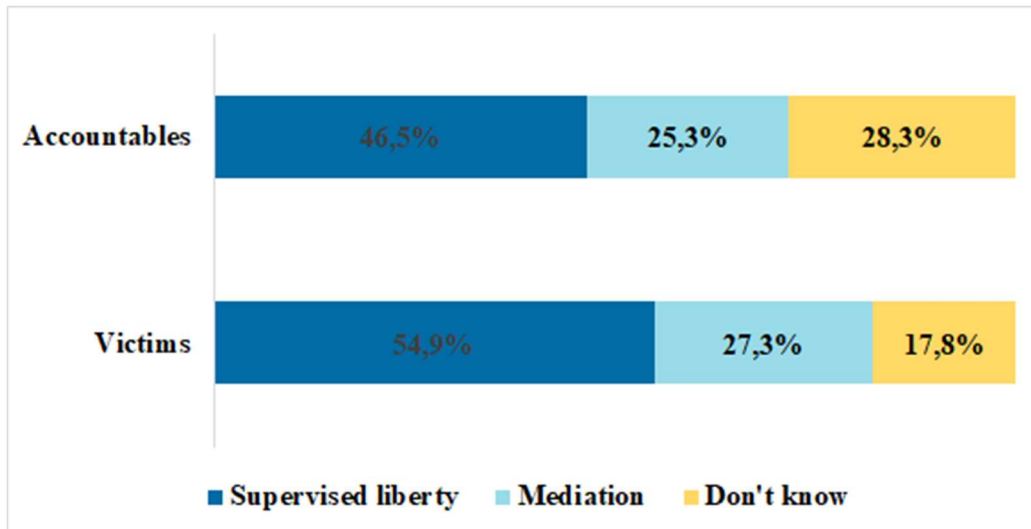
Supervised liberty is based on close monitoring of the child's behavior by a supervised liberty delegate and reporting to family judges. The majority of respondents reported that supervised liberty should be applied to the victims while 28.3% seemed to be confused about the application of the supervised liberty to children who were considered to be accountable.

4. Conclusions

The study demonstrates that the population of Kasserine possesses limited knowledge on the existing mechanisms and institutions related to child protection. The survey data show that the majority of respondents have misconceptions about child protection mechanisms and that it is far more likely that professionals, practitioners, and those working with children possess accurate knowledge.

Qualitative data, collected from interviews with child protection services professions, outline that there are certain gaps between the legal framework and the implementation of alternative mechanisms to the deprivation of liberty. These gaps are mainly influenced by the awareness of people regarding the alternative mechanisms. Survey data demonstrated support for alternative mechanisms even though there was widespread misunderstanding about alternatives to detention and the deprivation of liberty. Interviewees also expressed their support for alternative mechanisms but highlighted the difficulty of implementing those mechanisms due to the lack of sufficient financial resources and training for staff and communities.

The perception towards *"Children in conflict with law"* or *"at risk"* is influenced by whether the children are considered to be victims or they are accountable for their actions. A minority of respondents believed in punishing children, via detention and deprivation of liberty measures, and believed in the prison system's power to correct or rehabilitate offenders. Rather than focusing on youth behaviours and children's agency, however, most respondents were able to at least partially recognise the structural issues that children in Kasserine face, in particular how they are victims of systemic neglect.

This research demonstrates how the issues of school dropout, poverty, and child labour are interconnected. While most respondents were aware that the school dropout rate in the Kasserine governorate is high and believed school dropout puts children at-risk, they also recognised that, due to the widespread poverty and economic vulnerability in the governorate, children often worked to help support their families. Kasserine has suffered from decades of underdevelopment by the central government, and residents have normalised the sight of children working. This is further complicated by the misunderstanding of Tunisian law, which allows children to work but only in low labour-intensity agriculture tasks.

The research also identified that even within one governorate, one-dimensional solutions to tackling the *"Children in conflict with law"* or *"Children at risk"* problems would be ineffective. This is because the different areas of Kasserine face different problems. In particular, rural areas require different solutions than urban areas.

5. Recommendations

Recommendations from the KAP survey main findings

The following recommendations were developed to better improve the situation of "Children in conflict with law" and "Children at risk" locally (in the Kasserine governorate) and nationally.

A- To National Authorities

1- Introduce alternative measures as first resort in child-specific legislation: The alternative measures should be adapted as the first measures when dealing with "children in conflict with law" or "at risk" and the deprivation of liberty should be considered as a last resort.

2- Train juvenile justice professionals and staff on the use of alternative measures as a first resort: Alternative measures and restorative justice programmes that aim to decrease rates of deprivation of liberty and increase juvenile justice require specialist training programmes where professionals develop specific skill sets in mediation and discussion approaches.

3- Develop community-based services/facilities at the local level in order to provide a variety of alternative measures to children in conflict with the law: Community-based services and non-custodial sentences, such as refuse collection or volunteering in a nursing home, should be reinforced at the local level to provide children in conflict with law with alternatives to that could prevent them from getting deprivation of liberty, especially, when the two existing alternative mechanisms "supervised liberty" and "mediation" are not applicable.

4- Provide and operationalize an independent body or institution to monitor the execution of laws and legal mechanisms: An independent institution should be established to serve as the main body ensuring the effective application of legal mechanisms and respect of children rights.

5- Pay special attention to the rehabilitation and reintegration of children in conflict with the law to prevent reoffending: Community programs that target specific risk factors or directly re-

engage the offender with the community are more effective than deterrence and punishment programs which are more likely to be ineffective or harmful.[46]

6- Monitor the application of alternative measures to detention, through the development of a data collection system based on quantitative and qualitative indicators disaggregated by gender, age, and areas, to periodically monitor the effective implementation of the measures.

B-To UNICEF and SFCG

1- Advocate for the implementation and enforcement of alternative measures to detention to practitioners in the child protection field: The Child Protection Code encourages the implementation of alternative measures to detention. Furthermore, due to the systemic and structural issues youth in Kasserine face, such as poverty and low employment prospects, detention may not be a suitable or effective rehabilitation method. Thus, civil society organizations should promote the implementation enforcement of the alternative measures to detention

2- Design interventions to change people's knowledge, attitudes and practices through:

- Raising awareness of the public and relevant stakeholders on the importance of alternative measures to detention, to improve public knowledge and influence practices.

- Utilizing media and public figures to draw attention to child risks and existing protection mechanisms.

- Fostering inter-family dialogues, supporting and educating on good parenting practices.

- Building community-based support to children (through clubs for instance).

3- Expand research in other parts of the country to contrast, compare and elucidate trends: Studies with larger samples are necessary to understand how programs can be implemented at state level. Also, studies in other regions and governorates may demonstrate that region-specific mechanisms would be more effective.

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[46] Gill, C. (2016). Community interventions. In (David Weisburd, David P. Farrington, and Charlotte Gill, eds.), What Works in Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation: Lessons from Systematic Reviews. New York: Springer.

Recommendations from the KAP validation workshop

The following recommendations were developed by key professionals in the field of child protection in Kasserine during the KAP validation workshop which was held on December 22, 2020.

1- Establish a regional committee in Kasserine to monitor child protection mechanisms, This regional committee will be composed of psychologists, social and administrative workers to ensure the implementation process of child protection mechanisms and regular follow-ups.

2- Develop a children's database to gather relevant information on children in Kasserine, their profiles and situation. This database will help the relevant actors and practitioners to effectively allocate their services based on children's needs.

3- Develop a database to include the various services provided by the protection institutions. This database will help the public understand the role of each institution and will guide them to seek the needed service from the appropriate service providers.(child protection delegates, local authority, and social affairs centers, etc.).

4-Create Awareness Campaigns on children's rights in Kasserine. These awareness campaigns will aim to help families and community members to be aware of children's rights and the different ways to protect their rights.

5- Strengthen the role of educational institutions in the child protection system through:

- Establishing an early detection mechanism in schools to identify vulnerable children or *"at risk" or "in conflict with law" based on* regular visits to the educational institutions and creation of a direct communication channel between the teachers and child protection delegates in the region.

- Building the capacities of children and families on the children's rights in schools throughout the establishment of school clubs and extracurricular activities plans.

- Fostering a culture of dialogue among teachers, parents and children through conducting regular dialogue sessions with them