



L-Università  
ta' Malta

EQUITY OFFICE



# EMPOWERING CHANGE INVESTING IN PREVENTION

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

*Supported by*





The University of Malta's Equity Office, in collaboration with University of Malta Student Organisations, marked the United Nations' 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence 2023 through a student-led initiative organised on 29 November. This year emphasis has been made on awareness and empowering change through effective action.

The Student Organisations' proposals, compiled in this document, are aimed at addressing, preventing and combatting gender-based violence both at the University of Malta and society at large.

Together with the proposals presented during this initiative, this document also includes a literature review compiled in collaboration with the University of Malta Library, featuring student dissertations focused on gender-based violence in general and violence against women in particular.

## Poeżija miktuba minn Rita Saliba

### *Għax iħobbni*

iħobbni ... ma jħobbnix ...  
dil-lelluxa ssagrifikata  
twaqqa' qtar ta' dmija sofor  
imma jħobbni ... le, din inqatgħet  
bi żball, lagħbhieli bi żball  
daqqa ta' ħarta  
għax iħobbni ... qal  
irid jarani aħjar milli jien  
għax jien messni obdejt,  
ma jħobbnix ... jekk ma noqgħodx  
għal dak li jgħid  
għax hu biss jaf xi jgħid,  
iħobbni ... jgħidli wara kull darba;  
ma jħobbnix jekk nisfidah b'ħarsa,  
iħobbni jekk ma nlassinx  
nofs ta' kelma,  
ma jħobbnix ...  
għax idejh madwar għonqi  
ma ħallewnix  
nieħu  
n i f s

## Poeżija miktuba minn Antoine Cassar

*Is-Solitudni tal-Mara tad-Dar*

*(il-Bajja tal-Imgħarrqa)*

Bejn it-trunciera u Tal-Keskesun  
tiċċassa fil-bajja.  
Il-knisja faċċata, fil-għoli,  
midfuna fiċ-ċpar.

Ħarsa siċċa, ċatta, mgħaffġa.  
L-ewwel li mietet id-daħqa f'fommha,  
imbagħad il-leħħa f'għajnejha,  
imbagħad it-tieni nofs ta' isem id-dar  
beda jidħaq biha.

Aħjar kieku baqgħet got-taġen  
flok ippruvat tiskappa.  
Kultant ma tkunx taf hix liebsa  
fardal jew faldrappa.

Mgħarrqa fis-sirġa  
tal-madum li xebgħet timsaħ,  
il-poloż bilkemm tħosshom,  
tal-anqas mhux daqskemm tħoss  
il-polz ġo għonqha.  
Snin twal iżzomm  
ma tafx kif  
f'wiċċ id-dmugħ imliġġem.

*Ikun xi jkun il-kulur ta' dal-mewġ  
f'għajnejja dejjem ikħal daqs tbengila.  
Jien kulma nixtieqni baħar bla xatt  
biex ħadd ma jħokk miegħi, biex ma naħbatx  
mas-swar, mal-blat, biex ma nifgax fil-għatx  
għal xefaq iwiegħed ħalba bla beraq.  
Nišhitni xħin nišhet li sebbaħt omm.  
Noħlom li xi darba jieqaf il-ħolm*

# Proposals

## PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS ORGANISATION

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### 1. Educational Programs

- › Develop workshops or training sessions that educate individuals about the psychological impact of gender-based violence.
- › Include information on power dynamics, consent, and the role of bystanders.

### 2. Increase awareness of existing Counseling and Support Services

- › Strengthen and promote existing counseling services for survivors of gender-based violence.
- › Expand accessibility and awareness of support groups, therapy sessions, and other resources available to those affected.

### 3. Changing Social Norms

- › Implement campaigns challenging harmful gender stereotypes and promoting healthy relationship dynamics.
- › Encourage positive masculinity and femininity to reshape societal expectations.

### 4. Bystander Intervention Training

- › Provide training on how bystanders can intervene and prevent instances of gender-based violence.
- › Emphasize the importance of creating a culture where everyone feels responsible for each other's safety.

### 5. Empathy Building

- › Foster empathy through programs that encourage individuals to understand and share the experiences of survivors.
- › Highlight the long-term psychological effects of gender-based violence on individuals and communities.

### 6. Community Engagement

- › Involve the community in discussions about gender-based violence to reduce stigma and foster collective responsibility.
- › Use community-based approaches to address cultural factors that may contribute to violence.

### 7. Media Literacy

- › Develop programs that enhance media literacy to help individuals critically analyze and challenge harmful representations of gender in the media.
- › Promote positive portrayals of relationships and consent.

# Proposals

## MEDIA AND KNOWLEDGE SCIENCES ASSOCIATION

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In a world where the pursuit of equality and justice should be unyielding, the harsh reality persists that gender-based violence continues to affect countless people till this day. As MKSA we stand here not as mere bystanders but as active participants within this campaign against such violence. So here are our proposals that we think can greatly help in reduce and hopefully stop gender-based violence out right.

### **1. Our first proposal is the increase of well-lit areas around campus and its surrounding area.**

Unfortunately, there are many areas on this very campus where at night it can get super dark. Areas such as these may be considered dangerous by some and allows for anything to happen without the fear of being seen. Some examples of these areas are the passageway from quad to the ICT building, the east exit between the back of the ICT building and the football pitch and athletic track and let's not forget the surrounding area around our campus such as the skate park tunnels. A lot of students pass through these tunnels every night, mainly Gozitan students as a majority of them reside in Msida. Such areas are avoided by many as they are viewed as dangerous but unfortunately certain individuals are forced to pass through them to get to their destination. We believe that if we can identify all these areas and increase their visibility, we could greatly reduce any acts of violence from taking place while also making such areas more accessible and safer to those passing by.

### **2. Our second and final proposal includes a social media campaign.**

The idea behind this proposal is increasing awareness amongst individuals. Short videos and clips can be made talking about the effects of gender-based violence on all genders. Ways we can look out for it and help were needed. Also providing contact information of support groups within these videos for those who need it. In turn these can be posted on social media by different organisations. By increasing awareness especially amongst the younger generation and highlighting the negative impact gender-based violence can have on people's lives, we can hope to see a significant decrease in such acts. Thank you for this opportunity and let us all work together in hopefully putting an end to such violence once and for good.

# Proposals

## CRIMINOLOGY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

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First, gender-based violence is violence imposed on an individual based on their gender. This can take various forms: physical, verbal, sexual, psychological, and economic abuse. Statistics prove that while men do experience gender-based violence, women and girls are more prone to experiencing it.

### **1. Gender based violence in the workplace**

Power organisations, as featured by Raewyn Connell, enforce the idea that men dominate over women and hence are more powerful due to women's subordination at the place of work.

Women's subordination is typically enforced by the gender-pay gap and the norms we have grown up with. This may lead to gender-based violence at the workplace as the men view themselves as dominant and use this to justify their actions.

**Sexual harassment:** where do we draw the line?

Example inappropriate touching which could be interpreted as a 'joke' amongst colleagues or bosses who may play favorites with specific employees (the perpetrator for example) may not believe the victim when he/she states that the other employee is sexually harassing them.

Employers and Human Resources should educate employees:

- 1) Raising awareness on the concept of equality at the workplace; the fact that regardless of position or wage, gender-based violence should not be justified in any way or form.
- 2) The difference between a safe and toxic working environment- the workplace should be considered a safe environment where all workers are comfortable and are not imposed with certain 'fears' that something might happen to them at the workplace.
- 3) What actions are unacceptable?  
Compulsory educational courses at various workplaces aimed to address these gender issues. Policies at the workplace should be implemented to ensure that anyone who practices gender-based violence is immediately fired and reported to the police.

### **2. Addressing the root problem**

Gender-based violence stems from gender inequality that has its roots in world history and the way we are socialised into these inequalities from a very young age.

**Traditional roles:** Men are the breadwinners and dominant whilst women are caring and subordinate. The traditional roles and expectations of society should be reduced through the breaking of the cycle of gender roles. This can be done by women taken on male-oriented jobs such as engineering, stay at home fathers, men walking with prams. This discourages the cycle of subordination and dominance and can reduce gender-based violence.

Promoting female empowerment and teaching them the importance of their independence, rather than teaching them to depend on males.

This can be done amongst girls from a very young age while discouraging aggressive actions and discourse can be done amongst boys from a young age.

Female empowerment will help girls build confidence and strong characters, eliminating the subordination that men are taught to expect.

Discouraging aggressive actions among boys will prevent them from resorting to any form of aggression as they engage in discourse with others, specifically women.

Educating men to be more caring and help around the house. This brings about the concept of challenging gender norms.

#### **How can gender based violence be discouraged?**

No toleration if these rules and regulations are breached.

Harsh consequences as a direct response to the perpetrators actions. This demonstrates that their actions are unacceptable and not justified regardless of their supposed 'domination' since they are males.

#### **University of Malta: The Gender Equality and Sexual Diversity Committee**

The Committee works to:

- › identify unequal/blocked opportunities.
- › Seek treatment with respect to gender.
- › Promotes policy of equal opportunity

UM initiative: Mentoring Scheme for students

Collaboration with the Health Promotion Department for maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

### ***3. Promoting support programmes***

#### **How can gender-based violence be reduced?**

UM offers free counselling services. Sometimes we are so focused about the perpetrator and the offence committed that we tend to forget about the victim. Free counselling services are even beneficial to students who cannot afford the service.

UM should invest in student helplines where students can open to professionals/experts about their thoughts, feelings, experiences of gender-based violence whilst encouraging others that might be scared or afraid to speak up.

#### **Support programmes for perpetrators where:**

Their mental health is enhanced.

Understand the reasoning behind their actions and what drove them to commit that particular action. Educate the perpetrator on why that action is wrong – sometimes the perpetrator does not even register that that specific action is wrong and considers it to be 'normal'.

Programmes for individuals who may be exposed to violence at the home, workplace can also be offered in order to teach individuals that this is not justifiable.



### **Outside of UM**

**STOP** is part of Agenzija Appogg and a collection of services mainly:

- › The Malta Police Force
- › Foundation for Social Welfare Services
- › Department of Probation and Parole
- › Legal Aid Malta
- › Department of Justice
- › Accident & Emergency Department
- › Primary Health Care
- › National School Support Services

Example: "Full cooperation: zero violence" is a project led by the Human Rights and Integration Directorate (HRID). Its aim is to ensure that victims' needs are satisfied and services work to protect the victim.

### **4. Policies within an institution such as UM**

Policies regarding gender-based violence may already be in place however more awareness can be raised.

#### **How can more awareness be raised?**

Integrated job training and education

Dissuasive sanctions which act as a deterrent; sanctions being made public and properly applied. This discourages other individuals who might be contemplating to commit that offence. The more one knows how wrong it is, the less the likelihood of it occurring.

Awareness of harsher consequences; it could be the case that policies are not enforced or followed because the consequences are too lenient or not seriously considered.

# Proposals

## ERASMUS STUDENTS NETWORK, MALTA

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### ***Paint Your Story – Silent Canvas, Loud Voices***

#### **Objective**

This proposal aims to bring students together to create awareness for gender-based violence and remove the stigma around reporting incidents.

#### **Outcomes**

The end result of this project would be a large artistic expression inspired by real-life stories of gender-based violence and this art piece would then be donated to a relevant stakeholder.

#### Background and Inspiration

Gender-based violence can occur in many different ways and unfortunately, even we as university students have experienced, witnessed, or heard stories of our friends and families. There is a wide spectrum of severity of gender violence, but it is known that many university students have suffered from sexual violence to some degree. In a 2022 Unisafe survey, it was discovered that 1 in 3 university participants experienced sexual harassment and 1 in 4 experienced some form of gender-based violence.

There are many campaigns worldwide trying to raise awareness on how gender-based violence, particularly sexual violence is being normalised within public spaces such as bars, nightclubs and college campuses.

One Instagram account in New York, @catcallsfnyc came up with the campaign which allows people to send in personal experiences of harassment, catcalling or sexual violence along with the location whereby these events have happened and then this account will write out these quotes at the location whereby these experiences happen. Another account in Dublin, @empowerhervoicedublin, has followed suit with this campaign.

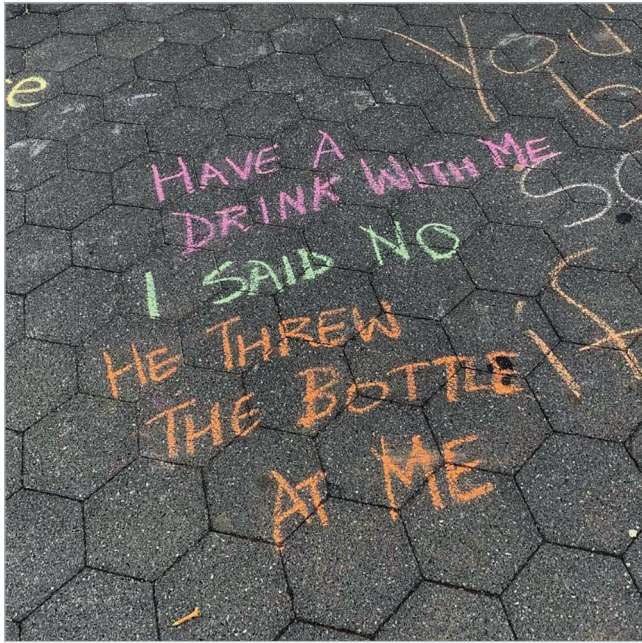


Image 1 – Taken from @catcallsofnyc

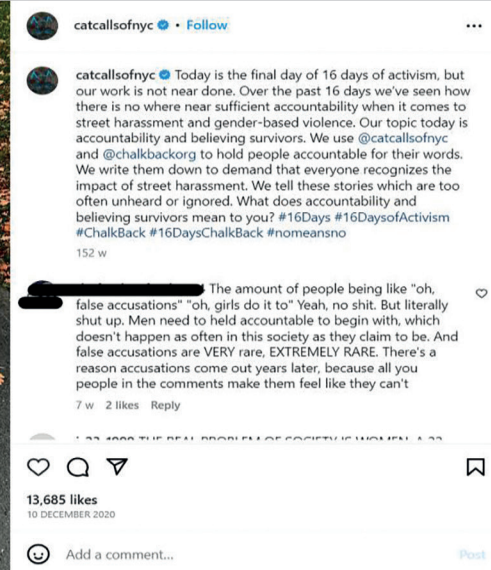


Image 2 – Taken from @catcallsofnyc



Image 3 – Taken from @empowerheroiceidublin

Thanks for getting in touch and I'm very sorry for the delay in getting back to you. We've been working here behind the scenes so I wanted to have a clear plan in place before I replied.

The post last week from EmpowerHerVoice really came as a tough blow to our team here as you can imagine in particular because over the past few years we have made a big effort to focus on events that promote a safe space for our gigs and clubnights. We have an array of events run by Women with a focus on female and non-binary artists and these events have been so well received that it was a shock to see the post last week. We also brought in the 'Angel Shot' system in 2022 which let's anyone who is experiencing harassment know to order an Angel Shot and the staff will know exactly what they mean and help them out of the situation. We have posters in all bathrooms explaining the Angel shot system to patrons and all staff know what to do.

However in light of the post last week it's clear that we need to improve and we are completely committed to doing that. To give you a quick run down on what we've been doing, last week I contacted our HR department to set up a meeting between them and our production team and bar managers. This meeting happened on Monday and in it we discussed how we're going to tackle this issue and make sure everyone who works here knows exactly the protocols that are in place when sexual harassment occurs and is reported. We laid out a plan which is currently happening where we are reviewing the current processes we have in place and we are finding practical and long term ways to improve them.

When this is complete, we are then going to organise a full training session with all the staff who work in the building with particular focus on staff who are a first point of contact with patrons. This training session will be happening with the next two weeks. In this session we are going to go through everything with staff and make sure that all reports of sexual harassment are believed and acted on immediately. We will lay out exactly what staff members are to do, who they are to call and how they are to treat the person who has come to them. The framework we will be operating this training session around is the Safe Gigs Ireland charter along with the Dignity at Work training session that each employee has to complete.

Along with this we are going to be implementing a Late Night Safety Officer whose sole job will be to make sure that everyone in the Workmans is safe and that any report of sexual harassment is dealt with immediately.

I really hope you and your friends do feel comfortable coming back here and know that we are taking this extremely seriously. We are listening and we are acting.

Also if you or any of your friends ever want to come in to discuss anything with me or the team here you're very welcome.

Image 4 – Screenshot of email response from club in Dublin regarding @empowerheroiceidublin social media post

The unfortunate truth about a lot of submissions these institutions receive involves people who gained no help from staff members at clubs or bars after experiencing sexual harassment. Often, establishments do not realise that their staff are not providing the necessary help to people therefore if staff members get trained in how to deal with these situations, hopefully individuals will gain the help they need.

As ESNers and advocates for the Erasmus Generation, we believe we hold a large responsibility to raise awareness about the gender-based violence that too many university students experience. Furthermore, students helping students and ensuring Europe remains a safe place for peace and cultural exchange are two values which are at the heart of ESN's mission.

With international students coming from so many different cultures and backgrounds, we strongly believe it is a priority to raise awareness for such issues, particularly because a lot of the students in our community are away from home. With all the challenges that come with this, we believe students deserve to feel safe to enjoy their time here without having to worry excessively about such incidents.

Through our proposed project, inspired by the work of @catcallsofny and @empowerheroiceidublin, we truly believe that we have been presented with a golden opportunity for us to uphold this duty, keep true to our values as an international organisation and continue to ensure that international students have a fun and safe experience on their journey away from home.

#### Our Vision for this proposal

We aim to take the impactful concept inspired by initiatives such as @catcallsofny and @empowerheroiceidublin and transform it into a powerful form of visual storytelling through art. By bringing individuals together, we envision the creation of a large, unified art piece that unifies the diverse stories of multiple people who have experienced gender-based violence.

We would also include simple statements in support of the movement, similar to the one presented in image.

We want to invite everyone to voice their opinion and thoughts on how we can support victims of gender-based violence as well as promote preventive measures to reduce the number of incidents which occur in the future.

Similar to what @catcallsofny and @empowerheroiceidublin do, we will also incorporate the location mentioned by the people who submit stories and hang them up in front of said establishments or around the college campus.

If we find out that a particular establishment has frequently not helped people when victims have reached out, we will contact the bar/club/faculty and inform them that they need to know how to provide help in these situations as this has been proven to work. See image 4 above.

These stories and statements will be used to create a meaningful piece of art that makes it possible for anyone to connect with what is being presented on the canvas and realise the importance of standing up against gender-based violence.

#### Objectives to be realised through this project:

Through this project, our main goals are to boost the confidence of victims of sexual harassment, allowing them to share their stories and feel a sense of unity and strength. We want to create a space for people to freely express their emotions, breaking the hold that these experiences might have on them. We believe this project will also make progress in removing the stigma around reporting incidents and encourage people to speak up when such incidents do occur.

We also want to tackle the issue of gender-based violence going unreported at the University itself and hope that the university will put better procedures in place so that reported cases are investigated properly.

Beyond artistic expression, our goal is to diminish the emotional power that these traumatic experiences may hold over individuals. Drawing inspiration from Therapy Brands (2020), we recognize that trauma survivors benefit from sharing their stories, gaining a better understanding of their reactions, and empowering themselves to manage their healing journey more effectively.

By doing this, we hope to shed light on the real stories of gender-based violence happening to people in Malta, making sure everyone is aware and engaged in the conversation. Most importantly, we want to bring people together to stand against gender-based violence, creating a supportive community that actively stands up for victims and works together to put an end to these situations.

Additionally, we're also pushing for the implementation of adequate procedures in bars and clubs that ensure that they take the necessary actions when gender-based violence is reported.

Finally, we would love to donate the final artwork to the university and ideally have it placed either side of the quad, next to the memorial for Daphne Caruana Galizia.

#### Timeline

<b>1 December 2023 – 31 December 2023</b>	Collection of stories and statements related to gender-based violence and creation of art team
<b>1 January 2024 – 31 January 2024</b>	Artists to prepare individual sketches from the statements and stories collected
<b>1 February 2024 – 29 February 2024</b>	Preparation of final sketch combining all the individual sketches
<b>1 March 2024 – 7 March 2024</b>	Final design to be painted onto a large canvas
<b>8 March 2024</b>	Donate artwork to the university

# EMPOWERING CHANGE THROUGH RESEARCH & AWARENESS

## Compilation of selected literature on gender-based violence and violence against women and girls

During the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, the University of Malta Equity Office together with the University of Malta Library compiled a list of University of Malta Students' dissertation research. The selected literature, spanning from 2018–2023, explores topics revolving around gender-based violence and violence against women and girls.

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### **Almerigo, Anabella (2019), #AntifeminismonTwitter**

The aim of this dissertation is to understand and discuss the main discourses around antifeminism on Twitter. Thousands of tweets containing the word Feminazi, AntiFeminism and FeminismsCancer have been downloaded from Twitter API for a period of six months. Both quantitative and qualitative methods have been used to analyse the main discourse around antifeminism on Twitter. The quantitative method was very useful in identifying which tweets could be further analysed for the qualitative part of this dissertation. As a matter of fact, two main events have been identified: the Gillette Advert and the MeToo Campaign. After reading all the available tweets related to the mentioned events, seven categories were identified. A 'Qualitative Content Analysis' was carried out, and from this qualitative method, it transpired that there are certain misconceptions and stereotypes around feminism. Moreover, antifeminists (which from the research carried out transpired that the vast majority are men) see feminism as a threat to their masculinity, thus to patriarchal power. Hence, antifeminists through the use of misogynistic language, are trying to silence feminists, as well as hindering young women in identifying themselves as feminists.

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### **Agius, Maxine (2021), The perspective of mothers of their relationship with their children in the context of domestic violence while residing in a shelter**

Intimate partner violence affects not only the health of the mother and children but also the dynamics of the mother-child relationship. The purpose of this study is to explore the mothers' perspective of their relationship with their children in the context of domestic violence and their experience within the shelter. A qualitative approach guided this study. In-depth semi structured interviews were conducted with five mothers who currently reside or have resided in a shelter. Reflexive thematic analysis was used to analyse the data gathered from the interviews. Seven master themes emerged from the interviews. The mothers' experiences were described in the context of the domestic violence that they went through, including their current physical and mental health challenges. They described that they have a good relationship with their children and good communication, but this was challenging when the father undermined the relationship. They were aware of how their children was impacted by the domestic violence. Some were unsure of whether to talk about the violence with their children. The concept of 'good mothering' was another important theme. Furthermore, the provision of support by shelter staff was another prominent theme amongst all participants. This support varied from being provided with material things to access to resources like psychological therapy.

### **Azzopardi, Simon (2020), Interviewing victims of sexual abuse: effective skills and techniques**

The discussion explores the interviewing techniques used in eliciting information from child victims of sexual abuse. Experience attests that such methods may prove crucial to get disclosure from victims, ensure that truth comes to light and so justice be carried out, whilst ensuring that no further harm is done to the traumatised victims. An extensive literature review focused on issues related to child sexual abuse including; prevalence, psychological effects and traumagenics as well as issues related to effective interviewing techniques, including the Child Sexual Abuse Protocol, the Child Health Development Protocol, and the Memorandum of Good Practices. The research adopted an exploratory qualitative methodology by using semi-structured interviews to a number of experts who question victims of child sexual abuse at some point or another during the exercise of their profession. Hence, worthwhile explanations were acquired about the actual processes and techniques used which were not simply described but presented to me in an evaluative way, since the participants at times also expressed their positive and negative assessments of what is currently being done in this specific field of interviewing child victims of sexual abuse. The data was transcribed, coded and analysed in terms of a number of thematic areas relevant to the subject matter. Attention was given to techniques adopted in terms of extrovert versus introvert children, gender, age, intelligence and socio-economic background. The study showed that Maltese professionals interrogating victims of sexual abuse are adequately qualified and operate in line with well-tested current international practices. A number of recommendations were proposed on the improvement of present interviewing techniques and processes with an eye toward future improvement.

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### **Baldacchino, Jodie (2019), Behind the scenes: the lived experiences of female professionals working with survivors of violence against women**

The focus of this study is to probe into the lived experiences of professionals working with survivors of violence against women. A qualitative approach was adopted, and the sample size consisted of seven participants from different professions, all working in the field of violence against women. Semi-structured interviews were carried out in the form of open-ended questions. The research tool used to analyse the data of this study was Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Results yielded from this study showed a number of emotions endured by the professionals due to the challenges they face along the way. Findings also show the impact working with survivors of violence against women can have on a professional, which permeates into their professional and private lives. Furthermore, this study delved into the methods used to mitigate the risks and the coping strategies embraced by the participants. Despite all these adverse aspects of working in the field of VAW, participants strongly showed how passionate they are about their work and the satisfaction they derive from helping these women progress towards a better life.

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### **Bartolo Rebekka (2021), Perspectives on sexual harassment: a quantitative approach**

The objective behind this study was to explore sexual harassment in Malta through a quantitative approach in order to discover the frequency, type and location in which sexual harassment takes place. The literature review defined sexual harassment especially in legal terms, as well as evaluated various research studies to assess which gender experiences more sexual harassment and in which age range, which type of sexual harassment is the most commonly experienced as well as, the locations reported. It was noticed that sexual harassment is quite an untouched subject in Malta and needs to be researched more. Additionally, the literature review included an explanation of why sexual harassment is often not reported along with two theories which aim to unravel possible intentions behind sexual harassment. After comparing different research studies and exploring several



different results, it was time to gather results from the Maltese population. Results were gathered through an online survey and some surveys being taken physically in one chosen gym. Participants were only asked for their age and gender and no other detail which may identify them, as this survey was anonymous. Findings agree with the literature review in terms that females tend to experience more sexual harassment than men. However, results differed from other research studies in the case of locations. Whereas, the majority of research studies indicated that sexual harassment often takes place in workplaces, findings show that public spaces such as clubs, bars and busses are the most common hot spots for sexual harassment.

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### **Bartolo, Daniela (2020), Empathetic tendencies and cyber surveillance of an intimate partner in University students**

From the first prosecuted case of cyber-surveillance, in 1999, this behaviour has become a widespread phenomenon and primary use of social media. This present study investigated the relationship between partner cyber-surveillance and empathic tendencies in university students. Data was collected through a survey, using the Interpersonal Reactivity Index that measures empathic tendencies, the Intimate Partner Cyber-Surveillance Scale that measures partner cyber-surveillance and a final section recording frequency of social media use. A total of 214 participants took part in the study; females made up 79.9% of the sample, whilst males made up the remaining 20.1%. Results showed that there was no statistically significant predictive relationship between empathic tendencies and cyber-stalking. This result reflects the further need for research with additional variables to be considered. The study found a positive correlation between social media use and cyber-surveillance. This finding supports previous research and sheds light on the local context. These results indicate that further research is needed with regards to cyber-surveillance predictors, with the possibility to apply such indicators into practice in situations with domestic violence.

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### **Bellizzi, Janika (2019), Surviving relationship violence: young people's perspective**

The primary aim of this study was to understand the lived experience of the participants and shed light on the local reality of relationship violence. Furthermore, it brought more awareness of the types and causes of violence as well as investigated whether victims of abuse were aware that they were victims at the time of occurrence. This research examined the current Maltese generation's and adolescent's ideas and thoughts about relationship violence, while established and expanded Maltese young people's views on relationship violence and the different ways it can present itself. This study also aimed to explore the consequences experienced or being experienced after having lived through such a situation. Research participants were recruited through a purposive sampling method. All participants were, at the time of the interview, undergoing therapy. Findings from this study indicated that experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) can contribute to physical and psychological consequences. Leaving IPV was not easy as various barriers to seeking help impeded this. Family responsibilities, financial difficulties, stigma, fear, denial, justification and shame were the most frequently cited difficulties that victims of IPV have faced before commencing treatment. In this study, society and family of origin were both factors that affected IPV. Motherhood was the primary motivator to exit and survive the victims' trajectory and seek desistance. With all these difficulties in mind, social workers working with IPV victims need to ensure that both females and males feel safe during treatment. Therefore, by understanding the research participants' perspective about this issue and how they dealt with it, this study can equip social workers with useful information, so they can better help clients going through relationship violence. As professionals, social workers can further learn how to give adequate and needed support. Additionally, this study aims in organising more

awareness. We can also prevent such cases by understanding those that survived this experience; through them, one may gain insight into the contributing factors leading towards a build-up of violence.

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### **Bonello, Bernice Theresa (2020), The European Union and women's rights in Malta**

The improvement of women's lives took a big boost in the nineteenth and twentieth century when concern on women's lives started to develop. Women had to start to take control of their lives and stop living under the control of men. To have a better understanding of women's lives at that time, Paul Cassar (1975) talks about the female activist Alfons Galea's appeal of 1907 to advance women "to women to endeavour to assert themselves not through their physical charms and elegance in dress, but the cultivation of their intellectual and moral talents. It was only by these means that they would learn to look ahead, think in-depth and gain their freedom". (Cassar. P 1975-77). It was not such a lot of time ago when Women's rights became equal to fundamental human rights. Women have faced various hurdles to have achieved the rights that they have today, but they are still lacking behind when compared to men. In this dissertation, I will contact research on women's right at an international level to see how they have developed worldwide. Then focus, on an EU context to analyse what has been done to improve Women's rights in its countries. Specifically, whether by Malta joining the EU, did the EU improve women's rights in Malta. In Malta, even though it is ranged in fifteenth place out of twenty-eighth countries in the Gender Equality Index it still has ways to go, to have Maltese women in the same level as men. In the case study on the issue of abortion in Malta and whether or not this has been affected by the EU is carried out by inductive study and qualitative design. Findings show that by being part of the EU women's organisations had easier access to come to Malta and lobby in favour of the legalisation of abortion. All in all, this dissertation would conclude whether the EU had any influence or not on the development of women's rights.

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### **Borg, Annalise (2021), An evaluation of the domestic abuse intervention programme (DAIP) in Malta**

This study explores the Maltese Domestic Abuse Intervention Programme (DAIP) from the perspectives of service users, (ex)partners of service users, and the staff and facilitators working in the service. The research delves into the perceptions of the DAIP, the helpful and unhelpful aspects of it, and whether or not there is a reported cessation of violence and abuse by service users and (ex) partners. The data was analysed through Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Twelve interviews were carried out with twelve participants. The results were mixed. In some cases, the DAIP resulted in a minor reduction or change in violence and abuse. In other cases, there was a cessation of violence and abuse. The DAIP is sought after by service users in an effort to keep the family together and it is credited for being a therapeutic process. The professionals take a Profeminist stance, liaise with other units in FSWS, and support the service users throughout. The context of a group was considered helpful. The service users felt their partners were similarly abusive; an observation for which the professionals did not validate. Ultimately, the 'time-out' strategy was of immense help. The under-researched area of perspectives of men who abuse can add to the knowledge of what is helpful and unhelpful in the process towards cessation of violence and abuse. This study is also helpful for professionals who support men in abuse and their families caught in the dynamics of domestic violence. This study explores the Maltese Domestic Abuse Intervention Programme (DAIP) from the perspectives of service users, (ex)partners of service users, and the staff and facilitators working in the service. The research delves into the perceptions of the DAIP, the helpful and unhelpful aspects of it, and whether or not there is a reported cessation of violence and abuse by service users and (ex) partners. The data was analysed through Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Twelve

interviews were carried out with twelve participants. The results were mixed. In some cases, the DAIP resulted in a minor reduction or change in violence and abuse. In other cases, there was a cessation of violence and abuse. The DAIP is sought after by service users in an effort to keep the family together and it is credited for being a therapeutic process. The professionals take a Profeminist stance, liaise with other units in FSWS, and support the service users throughout. The context of a group was considered helpful. The service users felt their partners were similarly abusive; an observation for which the professionals did not validate. Ultimately, the 'time-out' strategy was of immense help. The under-researched area of perspectives of men who abuse can add to the knowledge of what is helpful and unhelpful in the process towards cessation of violence and abuse. This study is also helpful for professionals who support men in abuse and their families caught in the dynamics of domestic violence.

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**Borg, Celine (2019), How do mental health professionals in Malta perceive female sex offending?: a qualitative analysis**

Data from seven professionals working with female sex offenders was gathered using semi-structured interviews to explore how professionals, working in the mental health field in Malta, perceive female sexual offending and how their perceptions influence their work with this population. The research concluded that most mental health professionals in Malta are not knowledgeable about female sexual offending and about the challenges these clients present. In addition to this, existing gender stereotypes and the media have been found to greatly influence the professionals' beliefs and perceptions about these perpetrators. The importance of supervision, self-care and teamwork for the professionals in question is highlighted. In addition to this, the lack of proper training for the professionals, and adequate services for female sex offenders in Malta is also emphasised.

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**Buhagiar, Sarah (2019), Unheard voices: the perceptions of persons with intellectual disability on abuse**

This study explored the topic of abuse by involving persons with intellectual disability to evaluate legislation and practices related to their rights to be free from abuse, with a focus on financial abuse and neglect. The first aim of this study is to empower persons with intellectual disability to actively participate in the evaluation of legislation and practices that influence their lives, and at the same time gain new knowledge about their human rights. The second aim of this research is to explore the awareness of persons with intellectual disability in relation to abuse and their inherent rights. A qualitative approach was chosen to carry out this study, and a Participatory Action Research approach was adopted to evaluate the topic of abuse, and identify solutions to the problem of abuse. Seven participants were recruited to participate in five workshop sessions which were used as a tool to carry out the evaluation of legislation and practices, as well as to collect the participants' feedback. The data gathered was analysed through thematic analysis and three major themes were identified; mainly, awareness on abuse, addressing abuse, and protective strategies. Findings from this study indicate that the participants were generally aware of what constitutes abuse, and were aware of their rights. However, the findings indicate that the implementation of these rights is not always efficiently put into practice. Control of personal finances and involvement in decision-making were significant concepts reported by the participants. Therefore, findings from this study suggest that power relations in the lives of persons with intellectual disability are a major concern. Also, most of the participants demonstrated to be resilient throughout their lives, and this contrasts societal perceptions of vulnerability. As a result of these findings, this study puts forward a number of recommendations. One recommendation is to ensure inter-agency collaboration to

improve the implementation of the rights of persons with disability across different entities. Other recommendations include enhancing service-user involvement through self-advocacy and service-user committees, more participatory research, and better reporting mechanisms in order to have safe and accessible systems for persons with intellectual disability to report any abuse they might experience.

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#### **Buttigieg, Dylan J. (2019), Exploring the reasons behind unreported sexual assaults**

This dissertation aims to explore the reasons behind the disturbingly high rates of unreported sexual assaults among the Maltese population. In order to reduce and hopefully eliminate such a phenomenon, one must therefore gather detailed knowledge about the hinderances and barriers that victims of sexual assault face when it comes to reporting such crimes to the authorities. Therefore, in order to obtain such in-depth data about the matter, the researcher utilises the qualitative approach by holding interviews with five professionals working at different yet relevant entities. The findings of this study serve to demonstrate just how complex and situation-specific the reasons behind this phenomenon indeed are. By means of this study, inclusive of a thorough review of the relevant literature in collaboration with the abovementioned interviews, the researcher found that there could be as many as six predominant explanations for such a happening. The findings also suggest that one particular reason, Known Offender, stands above all the rest insofar as its report-hindering ability. Lastly, the findings of this study suggest that although each of the identified reasons is an independent hinderance within its own right, due to the complexity of such crimes and human nature, one victim may be faced with several barriers when contemplating whether to report the assault or not. In light of such findings, the study then concludes with the author's recommendations for law enforcement, policymakers, and academics alike in an effort to hopefully bring this devastating phenomenon to a halt.

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#### **Caruana, Martina (2018), The incorporation of sexual and gender based crimes into Malta's criminal code: a critical legal analysis**

Since the incorporation of gender-based crimes in 2014, Malta's Criminal Code has been substantially supplemented in reaction to urgent appeals to domestically acknowledge sexual and gender-based crimes as high-priority violations. Throughout this thesis, the author critically analysed the provisions of the Maltese Criminal Code which cover sexual and gender-based crimes. The introduction of the crimes of female genital mutilation (FGM), sexual harassment, stalking, enforced sterilization, forced abortion and rape into Malta's criminal law by means of various Acts amending the Criminal Code were assessed in light of parliamentary discourse, lobbying by non-governmental organisations and how the substantive provisions have developed throughout the years. With the recent introduction of Act XIII of 2018, a comparison of the previous provisions and the newly incorporated ones ensues. A discussion on state responsibility considering several international fora follows, with the author appraising several international legislative materials, pinpointing their legal strengths and weaknesses. This analysis also includes consideration of the concept of State Sovereignty, and how countries may implement national legislation to safeguard their nationals against any sexual and gender-based violence targeted against them as individuals by private persons. In the third chapter, the author discusses the newest addition to Maltese sexual and gender based law; Act XIII of 2018 which came into force on the 12th of May 2018. This chapter comprises an analysis of the substantive criminal law provisions which have supplemented or replaced the previous provisions which embodied sexual and gender-based crimes. Furthermore, other initiatives implemented by means of such Act will be assessed accordingly. The fourth chapter outlines the common and distinct elements of sexual and

gender-based crimes; notably violence and consent, specific criminal intent, vulnerability of victims, inter alia. In the concluding remarks, the author discusses possible measures which need to be implemented in order to ensure that national criminal law offers the utmost protection possible to the victim.

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**Cassar, Jonathan (2018), Domestic violence in Malta: the impact of the 'Domestic Violence Act' on the dynamics of the crime and its effectiveness**

The research in question intends to analyse local legislation governing domestic violence in an attempt to measure the effectiveness of the law and ultimately come up with some recommendations on improving the existing legislation. Feminist activism as a call in opposing violence against women gave emergence to domestic violence which was shaped by studies in violent behaviour and family history. Initially an interdisciplinary field founded on pragmatic studies from sociology, criminology, women's studies and interest in domestic violence revealed women's oppression over time amid underlining patriarchal mechanisms and approaches as a modern political and gender regime (Murayeva, 2013). The research approach chosen for this study was initially perceived to be a triangulation of data. Nonetheless, since throughout the study the quantitative approach could not be met, the research rested on a qualitative approach specifically semi-structured 'in depth' interviewing with thematic analysis analysing the results. The interviews were conducted with professionals who in different ways interact with domestic violence. The main results gathered indicate that the way domestic violence is tackled locally can be improved by changes in both legislation and procedure.

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**Catania, Maris (2022), For "bettor" or for worse: the lived experience of being the wife of a former online problem gambler**

This study explores the lived experience of the wives/partners of former online problem gamblers. It explores the lived experience of these affected others to understand the meaning given to the online gambling experience, even through the participants are not online gamblers themselves. This study looks into the various aspects of their experience, and how the participants handle the husband's/partner's problematic gambling. Through a qualitative research approach, six affected others (wives or partners) were interviewed. These semi structured interviews were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Four super-ordinate themes emerged. The first theme 'onset' looks into the normalisation of gambling and how the problematic gambling was hidden, whereas in the second theme 'escalation to commitment' takes on how gambling took over their lives, and the broken trust in their relationship. The third theme 'reaching rock bottom' looked into how the gambling disorder shifted onto these affected others, through financial harm, emotional harm, and self-blame amongst other aspects. The last theme 'new hope and new beginnings' considers the new roles and resilience these affected others take on to manage this new aspect of their life. The findings elicited from these interviews were analysed through IPA to ensure that the experiences are at the centre of the research. Strengths and limitations for the study were presented, including recommendations for future research, practice, and policy.

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**Clews, Ylenia (2019), Child to parent violence: risk factors for parental abuse in parent-child relationships**

Child-to-parent violence is a subtype of family violence where the child exercises power and control over the parents. This phenomenon seems to have become increasingly predominant

recently. The aim of this dissertation is to identify the risk factors that could trigger CPV and to attempt to understand the offender's actions from the experiences of professionals. This research also tries to shed light on the support, interventions and preventative measures that are aimed at reducing CPV. The researcher adopted a qualitative approach whereby in-depth interviews were used among five professionals (psychologists, social workers and police inspectors) working in this field. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data gathered from the interviews. The findings are discussed and evaluated with previous literature review. The research indicated a growing trend of CPV with the main risk factors identified being witnessing domestic violence, exposure to child abuse, poor upbringing, lack of communication and attachment. Individual and social factors can also, be contributing factors to prompt such abuse, including mental health and behaviour disorders, substance abuse, relationship with aggressive peers and exposed to media violence. An analysis of the gender differences of the perpetrator and the victim as well as the type of abuse committed was discussed in this research. Support for families who seek help is important. Family therapy and psychological services are among the support programmes provided. Preventive measures and awareness incentives are essential to reduce the cases of this phenomenon. One main recommendation was the implementation of school programmes for both the children and the parents. Workshops aimed at tackling issues regarding abusive relationships are vital. The involvement of current affair programmes might be required also, to raise awareness that child to parent violent exists and to eliminate the taboo attached with CPV.

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**Cooper Bonnie (2020), Finding a critical peace education praxis of my own: a reflexive inquiry into peace and conflict studies curriculum and scholarship on sexual and gender-based violence**

The nuances of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) are significantly overlooked in Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) theory and practice. The incomplete framing of SGBV in PACS scholarship and curriculum effectually limits data analysis (Davies and True, 2015), misleads intervention suggestions (Confortini, 2006, p. 349), wed womanhood and victimhood (Garcia Gonzalez, 2016, p. 1), erases the lived experiences of SGBV in peace education scholarship (Mizzi, 2010, p. 1), and asserts colonial voice by reinscribing the gender binary (McLeod and O'Reilly, 2019). To remedy this, PACS scholars and educators must actively combat the academic erasure of SGBV in scholarship and curriculum, and question how to use a critical peace education practice to teach PACS students about sexual and gender-based violence. By reflecting on the lived experiences of a PACS education, this dissertation uses autoethnography and critical active research to aid in the development of a course on SGBV. Through this methodology the operationalization of a critical peace education praxis is considered, context for the course is explored, and tangible content is curated. Together, praxis, context, and content result in a holistic consideration of how to teach PACS students about SGBV.

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**Cutajar, Corinne Anne (2020), Deadly affairs: how does domestic femicide occur in Malta?**

This dissertation's main aim is to explore the key factors which drive a male to kill his female current or former intimate partner, to identify and prevent intimate partner femicide and raise awareness within professionals working in the field. The reasons and risk factors as to why men kill their current or former female intimate partners, will be included in this study and compared with those that are mentioned in literature. Femicide is a consequence of a vision of masculine privilege. Interviews were conducted with relevant professionals that work in the field in the Maltese Islands. The participants discussed the risk factors that could trigger a male to commit femicide, what is currently being done about it, how domestic violence and stalking are being tackled, the resources and risk assessments that are being done, how the courts and police take part in this issue and what is the way forward

towards preventing femicide. Their views were in due course, compared and contrasted with other foreign studies and their suggestions were taken into consideration whilst also comparing them with foreign literature. This research indicates that domestic violence is the most common predictor of femicide followed by estrangement, stalking, and extreme jealousy. A list of recommendations is presented. Even though some of the measures are already in place, they still need to be reinforced, revised, updated, and adjusted according to current situations.

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#### **Dalli, Leanne (2021), Under the influence of alcohol: the validity of consent in cases of rape**

Rape is described as non-consensual sexual intercourse with someone. When alcohol is also added to the situation, it constrains one's train of thought and obstructs one's ability to consent. Rape under the influence of alcohol makes it even more difficult to prove because of alcohol's legality and ease of access. Therefore, this study investigates whether alcohol has an effect on individual's awareness of consent during rape situations. To conduct this study, semi-structured interviews were organised with six participants. These participants are professionals whose career is related to working with victims and perpetrators. From these interviews, combined with independent research, and reference to a case study, this study finds that due to the complex nature of the cases under investigation, it is particularly difficult to prove the soundness of an individual's decisions. Due to the nature of the crime, victim's credibility is also doubted by the criminal justice system and by the community. Victim blame is indeed still an issue. Through these findings, it can be concluded that victims should be treated more appropriately during the criminal justice process. Additionally, it is the responsibility of current and future educators to guide children and adolescents in proper handling of alcohol, consent and sex.

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#### **Dingli, Sean (2021), Intimate partner violence among severely mentally ill females**

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is a social sore point in all countries worldwide. However, this issue is not perceived in the same way in every country. Countries that accept such situations do so in view of various reasons, including religious beliefs and cultural norms, and it is often regarded as normal practice. Both men and women can become victims of IPV, however, it is more common to hear of females being victims of abuse, especially if made vulnerable by their mental condition. Hence, the aim of this study is to explore whether the presence of Severe Mental Illness (SMI) amongst adult females increases the risk of IPV. This will be undertaken with the following research question. Can the presence of severe mental illness amongst adult females increase the likelihood of intimate partner violence? The PEO components extracted from the above question are: • P\_ defines population which in this case is adult females • E\_ defines exposure which is the presence of SMI • O\_ defines outcome meaning IPV in the present study A literature review was undertaken using 7 studies. Studies were appraised using CASP tools appropriate to the study design and MMAT. These studies were selected according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria. It was important that these studies were in English, published in the last 10 years and included only adult females. The main keywords used to generate the best results included, SMI, adult females, IPV, victimisation, psychotic experiences, domestic violence, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and physical abuse. A list of recommendations for further research, practice, and education has been compiled and presented together with recommendations for dissemination of findings through leaflets, radio, social media together with other platforms. Recommendations include more awareness regarding IPV together with enhanced support systems and guidelines for the staff. More education for staff, general public and possibly a module during the nursing course. Further research is also needed in the local scenario. The findings showed that women suffering from SMI are more often than men victims of IPV. These results came from different countries with different cultures.

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**Farrugia, Redeemer (2022), The homicide of Sylvia King: analysing newspaper's coverage reporting**

This, dissertation aims to analyse newspaper reportage regarding the homicide of Sylvia King which took place on the 3rd of April 1993. The objective of the dissertation is to understand how journalists communicate the news to the general public, evaluate the methods used to elicit interest in various readers and to which extent news are delivered to the public. Moreover, the objective is to analyse all the reports conducted and outline which methods are used by journalists to keep readers interested in their writings. The study itself is a qualitative study. The latter has been carried out by using two complimentary methods which are archival research and content analysis. The main findings of the dissertation were that Chibnall's eight imperatives for writing stories were evidently noticed to be used in the articles analysed. Additionally, moral panic theory had also appeared to be present in some of the articles analysed.

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**Fenech, Mariah Ann (2021), Shortcomings of the Maltese legal system vis-à-vis cases of femicide in the past five years**

This dissertation focuses on shortcomings of the Maltese legal system vis-à-vis femicide cases over the past five years. Before identifying such shortcomings, the author furnishes a literature review on the existing literature concerning femicide. Such review explores, inter alia, the definition of femicide, the different types of femicide and gender equality and its relation to femicide. It also investigates the nexus between status disparities and estrangement with femicide. Following this, the author analyses the protective measures offered by the Gender-based Violence and Domestic Violence Act. Other protective measures under Maltese law, including protection orders and ex officio proceedings, are also analysed. In analysing femicide cases that occurred over the past five years, the author focuses on shortcomings of the Maltese legal system that arise from each case. Such shortcomings regard the legal reasoning of the judges, what led to the crime per se, and how the law should have protected the victim so that femicide would not have occurred. Lastly, a comparison between the Maltese and English legal systems is also provided. Such comparison shows, inter alia, that neither of them defines femicide and that both have a Commissioner to regulate Domestic Violence measures to prevent femicide. Notwithstanding this, it is shown that the English legal system utilises measures that could enrich the Maltese legal system. Such measures include the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme and the elimination of cross-examination between perpetrators and victims in the Family Court.

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**Florian, Jasmine (2022), The professional responses of midwives and social workers to domestic violence during pregnancy and postpartum**

Domestic violence (DV) during pregnancy and postpartum is considered a serious risk factor for the well-being of both the mother and unborn child. The perinatal period provides health and social care professionals a significant opportunity to identify DV and effectively intervene. Implementing a coordinated approach is paramount to combat DV during pregnancy and postpartum in order to reduce the adverse effects on the mother and child. Despite the significance of implementing coordinated policies to tackle DV during pregnancy and postpartum, the search conducted indicates that there was no local study exploring the professional relationship between midwives and social workers working within the area of DV. Hence, the study aimed to explore the professional cooperation between midwives and social workers in their work with pregnant and postpartum women experiencing DV. This study implemented a qualitative approach. The researcher conducted six semi-structured interviews with three midwives from various departments within Mater Dei Hospital and three social workers working within the DV field. The data collected from the interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. The main themes that emerged from the data collected



were (1) the context of DV as presented by the participants, (2) the impact of DV during pregnancy and postpartum, (3) the type of support provided by the participants, and (4) the coordination of the service provision. It was highlighted that collaboration in cases of DV during pregnancy and postpartum is necessary to ensure that women receive a holistic service. Both midwives and social workers recognised that DV during pregnancy and postpartum is a complex phenomenon requiring coordinated policies and integrated services. The study found that midwives and social workers working within the DV field support women experiencing DV during pregnancy and postpartum through networking with specialised services and establishing a referral network. Lastly, the study concludes with several recommendations that emerged from the interviews and the research itself, including the importance of enhancing collaboration, addressing structural barriers, and ensuring continuous professional training. The significance of future research was also drawn up.

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### **Foraboschi, Ginevra (2020), Elisabeth Fritzl, a story of abuse: can it happen in Malta?**

This dissertation examines the Fritzl case of abuse and abduction in order to explore whether such an incident can occur in the Maltese Islands. In doing so, it examines different ecological influences, with particular emphasis upon culture, prevention strategies and policies. These objectives were achieved by conducting six semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions with field experts. Thematic Analysis was utilized for data analysis and four major overarching themes emerged: facets which may have facilitated the abuse and abduction of Elisabeth Fritzl, cultural influence on child abuse and abduction, professionals' experiences, and prevention strategies and policies. The key findings highlight the role played by individualism, secretive cultural attitudes and patriarchal norms in encouraging child abuse and abduction, especially within our local context. Other ecological influences identified include domestic violence, and the lack of necessary skills for identifying suspicious cases present in both child victims and police officers. The exploration of such factors allowed the author to identify the need to implement multiple coordinated strategies with a policy framework which includes the improvement of communities and an increase in awareness across all ecological layers.

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### **Gafa, Sylvana (2018), The victims' voice: analysing the victimisation process and Impact of counselling on violence against women**

This research explores the victims' violent experiences, not just after the initial impact but throughout the whole process of the criminal justice system. It mainly focuses on the women's emotional and psychological effects of the victimisation process, the effectiveness of the support services available and how counselling can help in their recovery process. Within this context, the researcher adopted a qualitative research method and conducted one-to-one interviews with seven adult women victims of violence who had contact with the criminal justice system. Since the researcher was interested in the victims' personal stories told from their own point of view, an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach was considered the most appropriate for such purpose. The findings suggest that apart from the crime impact, victims often suffer from secondary victimisation caused by the criminal justice system itself. Although the data gathered from this research is limited, it indicates that there is lack of sensitivity from the police and the judicial authorities. The needs of victims are not always taken seriously and they are not provided with the necessary support immediately after the incident. Whilst individuals have different needs and may require support at different stages of the criminal process, the findings show that the services of counselling helped them to feel empowered and prevent further victimisation. In this regard, this data implies how immediate and long-term counselling can assist victims and their families to surpass the emotional effects of violent acts,

both during and after the court process. Whilst it is hoped that this study forms the basis for further research on counselling victims of crime and its effects on the victims' psychological wellbeing, the study recommends ongoing training to professionals working in the field, and advocates for a more coordinated approach between all stakeholders to support victims in the best way possible.

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**Galea, Lisa (2022), The impact of COVID-19 on domestic violence service users and their social workers**

This research will demonstrate an understanding of the ways in which COVID-19 has impacted victims of domestic violence and also their respective social workers. This data was collected through semi-structured interviews with six social workers who work directly with domestic violence service users. These were transcribed and analysed using thematic data analysis. Social workers' views varied in relation to certain aspects explored, but there were also similarities in their views in relation to a number of other aspects. Feeling not enough support was available for them was a constant emotion experienced by social workers in this sector during the pandemic. Social workers also felt overwhelmed due to the high demands of the service. They also expressed fear that came out from the uncertainty of the pandemic as well as frustration due to all the limitations that social workers were facing, such as when seeking services for clients. On the other hand, victims also experienced difficult times during the pandemic, such as financial struggles, reporting and contact difficulties, barriers and mental health struggles. Additionally, the impact COVID-19 had on the elderly, child to parent violence and on the children who witness the abuse was also brought up. However, there were also some positive effects of the pandemic, such as the resilience that was shown by these women. This showed that even during tough times like these, there is always something positive which comes out of it.

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**Gauchi, Nathaniel (2021), An examination of Article 208E of cap. 9 of the laws of Malta: a legal analysis on the offence of revenge porn**

With the realm of Criminal Law, particularly within the sub-genre of sexual offences and other crimes affecting the dignity of persons, being of great interest to me personally, and the advent and development of such new offences in recent years based on new realities and the ubiquity of social media and its overreliance by members of my generation, my motivation for this dissertation was so to analyse and look at an offence that, along with others, I feel will be of great importance in the coming years despite its novel implementation, one which reflects modern realities. As such, I feel that the law and the whole system behind it is to always look forward, to always ensure that it protects human individuals adequately and to uphold their human rights, and to always ensure that due justice is served, no matter who it is for or against. As society develops, as new realities emerge, so shall the law adapt, and such an offence is one which reflects a clear example to me personally of how a new law may arise to protect against a never before seen offence, where the law provided such a provision to protect potential victims from such an offence that attacks their dignities. Nonetheless, I further personally feel that us future lawyers shall keep in mind such offences, looking at how such injustices may arise, and feel how all lawyers alike shall keep in mind such an ethical and moral standpoint, where we shall protect individuals against injustices while ensuring ourselves that we keep in mind the effects and harms victims go through to provide a more humane and moral approach taken by the law. With this, such an offence is another example of how such justice may be served, keeping in mind in particular that it often involves young and female victims who are often further attacked by the media and public opinion for their creation of such sexually explicit content in the first place, where often such opinion goes as far as to further victimise them. To this, I feel that such a dissertation will further reflect this reality to provide a better picture on which we can

better understand the offence and the justice and protection such victims deserve. As a result, my dissertation will commence by looking at such an offence from a generic and overviewing outlook in the first chapter, whilst going on to look at various contemporary cases and various rich sources of literature on the offence in my second chapter that entails the literature review. Nevertheless, the third chapter goes on to provide a thorough legal analysis of the provision in question, looking at its elements and theories of how it should be applied, while looking at relevant case-law and doctrine, whilst analysing the amendments to the provision in subsequent years following its enactment. The fourth chapter goes on to bring about a comparative analysis between the Maltese provision and three different provisions of foreign jurisdictions, ranging from English (Common Law), to Canadian (Trans-Atlantic) to Italian (Civil Law) provisions to properly determine, compare and contrast such an offence under different jurisdictions to the provision in question. Lastly, the fifth and final chapter goes on to conclude the dissertation, looking at what was observed and providing my final recommendations in regard to the local provision in case of future amendments. As such, this dissertation will thus vastly and greatly analyse such an offence, reflecting all the different doctrines, theories and philosophies on the offence, along with the practical approaches both locally and in foreign jurisdictions, reflecting the rich theory and paradigm behind the criminal offence of so called revenge porn.

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#### **Gauci, Owen (2022), Someone's watching: the risk factors that indicate escalation from estrangement to stalking**

Estrangement often represents a chance for a new beginning for certain individuals after being a relationship with a particular intimate lover for so long. However, for others, estrangement can be the direct cause to commit future crimes, such as stalking, in order to try and revive the intimate relationship. The main aim of this dissertation is to come up and research the risk factors in identifying how estrangement may escalate to stalking. The type of research that was chosen to be used for this research is qualitative research. This research was carried out by conducting semi-structured interviews with different professionals, including members from the Malta Police Force, a psychologist and a criminologist. The reason why these professionals were chosen is because, since their professional knowledge is heavily linked with the research question, they could give the best in-depth possible answer regarding the subject matter in a semi-structured interview. Throughout the interviews, a series of open-ended questions were asked to all the interviewees. Open ended questions were asked in order to let the participants open up and elaborate on the questions asked. After, the interviews were all conducted, the data obtained was analysed through the process of thematic analysis. From this process three main themes were identified as the main findings of this dissertation. These are; the relationship between the stalker and the victim, the influence of the attachment theory and the risk factors associated with stalking. The first theme, when analysed with the contemporary existing literature of stalking, suggest that the most common and most dangerous form of stalking in Malta is when the stalker and the victim had an intimate relationship. Also, the influence of the attachment theory seems to be very significant, as all of the participants interviewed for the purpose of this research all agree that they see this frequently in their line of professional work. Moreover, the main risk factors associated with stalking were found to be: domestic violence, jealousy, relationship type before estrangement and substance abuse. The conclusions reached from this dissertation is that the majority of the findings seem to be in line with the existing literature on stalking in relation to estrangement.

**Grech, Clarissa (2019), An analysis of the recent amendments to the Domestic Violence Act: are we evolving beyond the Istanbul Convention?**

This paper aims to examine the recent addition to the Maltese Statute book, 'The Genderbased and Domestic Violence Act' (Cap.581) and establish to what extent this Act is an improvement to the pieces of legislation it repealed, but consolidated into a single Act. The author seeks to establish whether or not the new legislation has conferred more protection onto the victim, a term which includes all kinds of victims, irrespective of, for example, race, gender, nationality, religion to mention a few. Chapter 1 identifies how the Maltese legislator, in a general manner tried to bring the Laws dealing with the topic under examination in line with the Twenty-First Century. Chapter 2 will examine "the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence" ("the Istanbul Convention") which forms the basis of Cap.581, whilst Chapter 3 aims to identify how other countries have ratified and implemented the treaty within their own legislations. In Chapter 4, particular focus will also be placed on the new concepts introduced by Cap. 581. The exercise will include a comparative analysis of the new provisions. In conclusion, the paper will highlight whether or not the adjustments in law have been implemented in a positive manner, whilst simultaneously attempting to answer the question of this term paper : that is whether or not Malta is truly going beyond the scope of the Convention which restricts itself to the female gender. The author shall also discuss the factors that should be executed on a national level, in order to improve matters from a practical point of view.

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**Grech, Justine (2018), Stalking victims: the effectiveness of the criminal justice system in Malta**

The focal point in this research is to identify the effectiveness of the criminal justice system with regards to stalking cases in Malta. Such research is essential to identify the strengths and weakness of the stakeholders involved: that is the police and the criminal justice system. The research adopted a qualitative approach using semi structured interviews with a magistrate and police Vice Squad Unit inspectors. The findings in this study suggest that the police are not always consistent in their evaluation of stalking incidents and do not know what course of conduct to follow. Reports were also incorrectly classified while being processed in the National Police System. This dissertation recommends that there is a need for effective police training in acknowledging the crime's criteria as well as training in managing and assisting victims of crime with empathy and understanding. Training is also needed with regards to prosecution techniques to avoid errors in court resulting in denial of justice. Other recommendations include that the structure of the court is adjusted to protecting the victim from being exposed to the offender, and the introduction of the electronic tag system to monitor stalkers. The presence and interaction of other professionals such as psychologists, as part of the initial investigation is a recommendation emerging from this study.

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**Laurenti, Michela (2018), The professionals' perspective on the impact of maternal childhood sexual abuse and attachment patterns with future offspring**

In this study the Dynamic Maturational Model (DMM) of attachment and adaptation was used as a base for understanding the attachment patterns utilised by survivors of sexual abuse. Childhood sexual abuse (CSA) is a traumatic event, the consequences of which have been linked to poorer attachment security in relationships (Murphy et al., 2014), and impaired attachment patterns with future offspring (Kendall Tackett, 2001; Iyengar et al., 2014). However, recent studies have shown that attachment patterns are more complex and unique to the individual's experience than was previously believed (Crittenden, 2005a). The aim of this research was to understand the link between Maternal CSA and attachment patterns of the survivor, as well as the intergenerational transmission of attachment

patterns to one's offspring. Five semi-structured interviews were conducted with professionals who have worked with survivors of sexual abuse. Thematic Analysis was utilised and three themes were extracted from the interviews: Attachment Patterns, Factors influencing Attachment Patterns, and Factors influencing the intergenerational transmission of attachment. One's attachment patterns are influenced by internal and external factors, as well as idiosyncratic experiences. The possibility of a mother passing on her attachment strategies is further dependent on a variety of elements, such as her ability to sensitively parent her child, whether she suffers from mental health issues, and her child's genetic predisposition. The DMM was a useful tool for understanding the different kinds of attachment, and the characteristics of the individuals who use them. The results of this study support the view that attachment is an interactional process, meaning it works both ways, and is dependent on the interaction of both parent's, and the child's traits (Rees, 2005).

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### **Mallia, Claudia (2019), Victims of domestic abuse and their choice of holding onto the abusive relationship: a professionals' perspective**

This research study explores the impacts domestic abuse may have on the victim and how these effect the decision of the victim of whether to stay or to leave the abusive relationship. The choice of title is motivated by the fact that little is known on the hurdles victims of domestic abuse face, when it comes to leaving an abusive relationship. A qualitative approach has been adopted to explore in detail the professional's perspective in relation to the victim's choice of holding on to the abusive relationship. Seven semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with professionals working in the field of domestic abuse. Thematic Analysis was adopted as a means of data analysis. Several factors including; self-esteem and self-worth, mental health, fear and safety, traditional and cultural values, shame, dependency of the victim, isolation, vulnerability of children, commitment to the abusive relationship and hope for change, were examined to better understand what influences such a decision. Results concluded from this study show that, the choice in ether staying or leaving the abusive relationship may be complex and influenced by multiple factors. Most of the findings emerging from the primary research conducted were in congruence with the available research.

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### **Micallef Grimaud, Audrey (2021), Leaving an abusive relationship: sources of strength and motivation**

This research study analyses how Maltese female victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) develop the resilience needed to permanently leave their male perpetrators. It also seeks to identify gaps in existing policies and practices and presents proposals that would feed into the development of better social policies, and in the implementation of rights enshrined in the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention (May 11, 2011). The findings aspire to contribute to the work of professionals in the field of domestic violence, such as lawyers, law enforcement agencies, policy makers, counsellors, social workers and heads of shelters, when supporting victims of intimate partner violence in their journey to develop resilience and become survivors. A qualitative research strategy design was employed to obtain in depth knowledge on the views of professionals on the sources of strength and motivation that women draw upon when deciding to leave an abusive relationship. A total of eight elite interviews were carried out between November 2020 and January 2021. The interviews followed eight pre-defined questions and took the form of a semi-structured interview to ensure that the goals] of the interviews were met. The pre-defined questions were standard for all interviews to achieve the same depth of information. All research participants dealt with policies and/or were working at the time of being interviewed with women going through domestic violence on a daily basis.

The study produced interesting findings on what professionals view as resilience during the Maltese woman's journey from living through intimate partner violence to becoming a survivor and establishes a new independent life. All participants agreed that the woman needs to be resilient to fight her perpetrator's actions and cultural norms, although society has matured over recent years to recognise that a woman's safety is more important than saving her marriage. The systems that are designed to support a woman, such as legal and housing are inefficient and frequently work against, rather than, with the woman. These findings underpin the recommendations aimed at improving efficiencies within such systems so as to facilitate the woman's transition from victim to survivor.

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### **Mifsud, Amy Ann (2022), A qualitative analysis of the public's opinion on abortion**

Abortion is a highly contentious topic within society especially so within Maltese society. It is defined to be the intentional removal of an embryo or foetus so as to terminate a pregnancy. Restrictive laws and regulations lead women into seeking unsafe abortions which, in 2008, was one of five primary causes of maternal mortality. Malta still remains the only European member state and Commonwealth country to completely ban abortions in all circumstances. Studies have shown that the Maltese population is still very much against the legalisation of abortion, even when looking at younger generations. This led the researcher to seek an understanding of how opinions and values change between groups as well as of what individuals view the controversy to be. This dissertation seeks to investigate how individual's opinions on abortion differ from each other based on their age, gender, and knowledge of the topic. Data was collected through qualitative means, primarily through four focus groups categorised into six females aged 18–25, six males aged 18–25, five females over 45 years, and four males over 45 years. The data was analysed through the use of inductive thematic analysis eliciting themes of Education, Abortion as an Emotional Issue, Religion, Politics and Unsafe Abortions. The main finding among all groups was that abortion should be accessible to all despite personal opinion or religious values. Differences in thinking were seen however, when it came to imposing limitations and restrictions on the service such as the idea that abortion should be allowed for any reason and that the service should not be selective in its accessibility. Although female participants of both age cohorts had the same understanding, younger women were more liberal in terms of reasons behind abortion. Male participants of both age cohorts presented the same way of thinking in that restrictions need to be in place and matters of irresponsibility should not justify the need for abortion. This study found that there is room for improvement in terms of informing and supporting women with the need for action on legal, community and health system levels so that everyone who needs abortion care can access the service.

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### **Mifsud, Chantelle (2021), The coverage and effectiveness of services provided by domestic violence shelters in Malta**

Scarcely any studies or analysis have relatively identified the wide range of shelter services presently being provided to support victims of violence. This dissertation, then, centres on the perception of the most invariably presented shelter services, distinguishing those provided in Malta with congruent consortia in a constituent unit of the UK. The study at issue, envisages to examine the spectrum and potency of assistances accorded by local domestic violence shelters. Withal, this research strove to analyse the productiveness and alliance of these services, through the schema of concerted proficient. The research is hinged on a qualitative approach, conclusively semi-structured thorough interviewing and also a thematic analysis examining the outcomes. The interviews were completed with experts who in distinct ways engage with DV shelters. The chief findings assimilated, denote that even though the services provided by shelters are functional, they can be bettered by amendments

and rigorous addendums. Albeit studies respecting domestic violence coinciding with the present, prove that there is not substantial awareness about this topic. Thus far in Malta, the subject has not been addressed, and hence further enlightenment on the matter will be propitious to all entities involved. The dissertation winds up with a scrutiny of lacunae within the existent information and propositions for future action.

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**Mifsud, Theresianne (2022), Public opinion concerning abortion in Malta**

Although abortion has had a long history in the lives of women and over time it has become increasingly disputable. Society started to question the morality on when the right to life applies and at what moment would a foetus be considered a person. Therefore, different views on abortion have been adopted. Nonetheless, people in Malta purposely avoid talking about abortion as it is still such a taboo subject. Having said that, a number of Women's right organisations are playing a key role in pushing those in power to make safe and legal abortions accessible in Malta. This research explores the general public's opinion regarding abortion in Malta and aims to analyse whether discrepancies in the opinions between generations or genders exist. To explore such research question, focus groups were conducted and analysed using thematic analysis. Overall, the abortion attitudes between females under 30 years and males under 30 years did differ, however, a similar attitude is adopted by both genders over 45 years. The findings portray that younger woman have a more 'pro-choice' attitude than younger males and the older generation.

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**Muscat, Natalia (2019), Does the Gender-based Violence & Domestic Violence Act safeguard both male and female victims effectively and equally?**

For many years domestic violence was a crime that was somewhat 'hidden' until very recently. It was hidden because, the social stigma was that what happens in the home should remain in the home and that it is no one's business to interfere in family affairs. This changed slowly but gradually and in 2005 Malta promulgated the Domestic Violence Act which meant that issues of violence in the home were not only affairs of the home but concerned society as a whole. This study will analyse the laws currently in effect and whether these laws equally protect all victims of Domestic Violence. Specifically, it will examine whether there is discrimination based on gender in our laws. Furthermore, this study will evaluate how society views domestic violence and whether there is discrimination in the belief of the people. In addition, this study will try to analyse the new Gender – Based Violence and Domestic Violence Act as compared with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention while examining the problems that may arise or have arisen regarding the Convention itself.

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**Muscat, Stephanie (2021), Analysing the potential exploitation of female victims trafficked for domestic servitude in Malta**

The aim of this dissertation is to explore potential scenarios related to female victims trafficked for domestic servitude in Malta. Since the phenomenon of domestic servitude is increasing both globally and locally (Contino, 2014), this research study aims to shed light on the situation of domestic work within the trafficking field. This research takes a qualitative approach and it is based on the analytical framework of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) to study how multiple forms of oppression are experienced by migrant women. Five semi-structured interviews were carried out with professionals working in various remits who are directly or indirectly involved with assisting victims of human trafficking in Malta. The data was collected and analysed using the approach of Thematic Analysis

(Braun & Clarke, 2006). This research revealed that although only few cases of domestic servitude have been detected so far, the prevalence of this crime could be much higher than it is perceived. The people who are impacted mostly by this crime are migrant women coming from Asian countries. Findings showed that most victims were being trapped into a situation of debt bondage and all them came to Malta legally. However, upon arriving they found themselves in an abusive context, totally dependent on their employer/trafficker. This research discovered that this crime is exceedingly difficult to identify due to its covert nature and it can only be detected if victims speak. Findings also highlighted some negative aspects mainly revolving around the societal attitude towards migrant workers, lack of awareness and enforcement towards this crime, as well as a number of lacunas in the employment process which require further attention to minimise the risk that the issue of domestic servitude is overlooked.

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#### **Schembri, Alessia (2021), A critical analysis of 'Ir-Repubblika Ta' Malta V Nizar I Mustafa Al Gadi'**

There is no distinction between homicide and femicide. In fact, in the case under study Ir-Repubblika ta' Malta vs Nizar I Mustafa Al Gadi, during the proceedings, no reference to femicide was made, even though the killing was of a woman. The word femicide does not feature in the Maltese Criminal Code as it is focused on homicide in general.

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#### **Spiteri, Gloria (2018), The experience of loss following the death of a husband who has been abusive**

This qualitative study explores the wives' experience of the loss of their husbands who have been abusive. Three wives with children, who have been bereaved through cancer were interviewed. The data is collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed through interpretative phenomenology analysis (IPA). Six superordinate themes have emerged which included : the complexity of the couple relationship; being a mother; the challenging aspects of the role within the context of violence; in search of another reality; striving to understand and making sense of the violence ; experiencing the loss within different contexts; life beyond the violence. The findings highlight the challenges the participants faced as wives and mothers and, the complexity of the couple's dynamics within a domestic violence setting while also engaging in the caring responsibilities during the illness. The results have indicated that losses and grief can have different meaning in a domestic violence context. This has implications for further research and also for professionals working with domestic violence survivors experiencing the death of the person who had abused them.

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#### **Sultana, Brandon (2023), Representations of domestic violence in Maltese newspapers: a thematic analysis**

The following research intends to analyse local newspaper articles from three of the leading news agencies within Maltese media in the context of domestic abuse. These being the Malta Independent, Malta Today and the Times of Malta all in order to answer the main research question posed in the study being: what are the discursive themes that prevail in the reporting of media articles? Mass media nowadays is an integral part of everyone's life with each individual having access to one form of the other from internet to radio. This research discusses how discourse and certain implicit meaning within the reporting of newspaper articles lend themselves to the creation to commonly held societal beliefs about domestic violence. To go about this, the research utilised a qualitative thematic analysis which enabled the research to focus on the subjective perceptions, motivations, and opinions

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surrounding the sensitive issue of domestic violence within the local media context of Malta. The main results and themes indicated that domestic violence in newspaper articles is not truthfully portrayed as one would hope, as the depictions typically undermined or simplified the complexities of domestic violence in order to create more newsworthy stories.

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#### **Tolu, Mina (2020), Designing a conflict map analysis to inform the policy reform on sex work in Malta**

In September 2019, the Government of Malta announced a public consultation to inform the reform of sex work related policies in Malta (MEAE, 2019). A number of stakeholders proposed policy recommendations to the reform, through submissions of policy papers and discussions at meetings of the Social Affairs Committee of the Parliament in March 2020. This dissertation looks to answer how a conflict mapping process can help to inform this policy reform on sex work in Malta. The methodology of critical reflection contributed to the design of a Conflict Map Analysis proposal to inform the reform. This proposal is situated in a human rights and harm reduction based framework, and aims to aid the advancement of active governance. Additionally, this dissertation offers an example of the benefits of conflict mapping to the policy reform process by applying a tailor-made Narrative Map Analysis to analyse the audio recording of the Social Affairs Committee meeting which was held on the 4th of March 2020. A key finding of this research is that a conflict mapping process, rooted in human rights values and harm reduction principles, can enhance active governance, and aid the Government of Malta to address the needs of sex workers in this policy reform.

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#### **Vassallo, Kelly (2019), I'm tired of sexism! : a qualitative study about the diverse forms of sexism women face in everyday life**

In today's so called 'liberal' world, sexism is being portrayed as annihilated and societies are perceived as having finally achieved gender-equality. Due to this reason, women are depicted as being radical feminists or simply exaggerating by complaining about sexism in their lives. This study aims to: explore the level of awareness and what the term 'sexism' means for women; identify personal experiences that these women have gone through or go through presently in their everyday life; explore the feelings that are evoked by such experiences; and consider the impact that these experiences have on these women. Semi-structured interviews with women who were chosen with the use of purposive sampling through social media were used to collect the necessary data which were audio-recorded. The data was analysed and coded through the use of Thematic Analysis. Conclusions gathered from this study were that contrary to popular belief that today's world is 'liberal' and gender-equal, it was found that everyday sexism is seen as a taken-for-granted way of life for men to which it is also rendered as second nature to them. Additionally, it was also revealed that because sexism is so embedded within our Maltese society, even women themselves participate in sexism by being 'unconsciously sexist' towards women and their male counterparts, as well as through the use of sexist humour.

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#### **Verbanova, Daniela (2019), A study on the abuse experienced by social workers in Malta in the exercise of their profession**

Literature explores various forms of abuse experienced by professionals in the course of one's professional duties (Mayhew & Chappell, 2001). Research has shown that there is especially high prevalence of violence experienced by social service employees (Harris & Leather, 2012; Koritsas,

Coles, & Boyle, 2010; McDonald & Sirotych, 2005; Ringstad, 2005). However, a lack of clarity exists regarding the issue of abuse against social work professionals in Malta. This research study was therefore conducted with the aim to examine the prevalence of abuse experienced by social workers in Malta in the exercise of their profession and to understand the bearing that the experienced abuse has had on the practitioners' wellbeing. For the purpose of this study, 'abuse' was defined as 'any behaviour in the form of hostile or unwanted conduct, verbal comments, gestures or actions by another person, that affect an employee's dignity or psychological or physical integrity, often resulting in a harmful work environment for the employee' (adapted from Chappell & DiMartino, 2006). A mixed methods design was employed in gathering the data for this study, as this enabled the researcher to cross validate the yielded results. There has been a 30% response rate to the questionnaire. Four participants were selected for the in-depth interviews through snowball sampling (Bryman, 2012). The quantitative data results have demonstrated that abuse from clients throughout the social workers' career was almost endemic, with nearly all of participants having experienced such abuse at least once. Furthermore, the study indicated that over the past 12 months period, psychological abuse from clients was the most prevalent form of abuse that the social workers reportedly experienced. The study results also confirm Koritsas, Coles and Boyle's (2010) findings that abuse towards social workers can come not just from clients but also from clients' significant others, work colleagues, supervisors/managers and allied professionals, and although they are reportedly not as prevalent as abuse from clients is, their impact is significant. In comparison to receiving any other abuse explored in this study, a high number of social workers have reported that experiencing abuse from their superiors has had the most adverse effects by means of diminished feelings of autonomy, safety, happiness, belonging, reduced ability to generally trust in people, increased feelings of distress (such as fear, anger, burnout) and reduced motivation for work. The qualitative results also point towards the social workers' perception that abuse from superiors is by far worse than abuse from clients (Refer to section 4.3). Therefore, although in this study the prevalence of abuse by superiors is not high (but still significant), its impact is noteworthy and cannot be ignored in a situation in which retention of social workers is a major challenge (Graham, & Nicholas, 2016; Koritsas, Coles, & Boyle, 2010).

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**Zammit, Samira (2021), A critical legal analysis on femicide : to which extent does EU law and ECtHR judgements impact the Maltese legal context?**

The primary objective of this dissertation is to investigate the causes that lead a man to kill his female present or former intimate partner, to recognize and avert intimate partner femicide, and to increase awareness among professionals employed in the sector. In light of the gender-based murders, this study will investigate the power imbalance among heterosexual couples as well as aspects associated to gender discrimination in society. A dual examination on femicide from both an international and national level ensues. This study is conducted by firstly analyzing the law on paper, highlighting workings of the United Nations (UN), General Recommendations of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Committee, and efforts of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO). The Maltese legislative position is also appraised with reference to provisions of the Equality for Men and Women Act and the Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Act. A study of the law in practice follows, wherein the standard of due diligence is recognized alongside judgements given by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) and the Maltese courts respectively. The researcher evaluates the measures taken up in line with the Istanbul Convention to eradicate gender-based violence and eventual cases of femicide. The paper further weighs the decisions of the courts to delineate legal shortcomings and address potential steps that may be enforced to ensure that national legislation affords adequate protection to women who end up victims of violence. Upon analyzing

court decisions concerning femicide, it may be argued that while sentencing the perpetrator to imprisonment may appear to be a successful method of punishing the culprit, the failure of authorities to take the required metrics sooner often results in the abuse culminating in murder. All of this begs the crucial question of 'too little, too late'. A set of actions and recommendations is provided, and while some are currently in place, they must be continually enforced and modified to reflect the current circumstances. This dissertation may act as a spark for future research into this phenomenon and, as a consequence, greater awareness, which may result in the saving of valuable lives.

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### **Zammit, Yanica (2019), The use of technology in stalking victims**

Technology has brought many advantages to the human being. However, the issue is that not everyone makes use of technology in the same manner. These past two decades, the crime of stalking has been drastically increasing, especially since technology made its drastic improvements (Brown, 2015). In fact, eventually, conventional stalking has by time led to cyber-based stalking. This study aims to point out the main types of technologies used by perpetrators to stalk their victims, and what is their motivation to do so. It is quite clear that technological devices are easy and cheap to obtain. Nonetheless, this research seeks to point out the effect left on the victims. To provide more insight, five professionals working with victims and offenders of conventional and cyber-based stalking were interviewed. Core discussion focused on understanding the technologies used to commit such crime and the difficulties encountered to investigate it. This research suggests that mobile phones, social networking and tracking devices are the most frequent tools used by stalkers. Moreover, the most common victims of stalking are ought to be women and they are normally stalked by an intimate or ex-partner, or an individual whom the victim previously had any kind of relationship or contact with. The perpetrators find technology as the ideal tool for anonymity and power. This study further looks at the negative effects left on the victims which are mainly psychologically and also physically. Lastly, this research shows how tiresome it is to issue evidence for cyberstalking cases "beyond a reasonable doubt", especially to identify if it is actually a crime and mainly, who is actually behind the crime.

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### **Zarb, Deborah (2020), Siblings' relationship within a domestic violence context: a case study**

The research aimed to gain a holistic understanding of how domestic violence (D.V.) affects the siblings' relationship in the Maltese context. The main research question of this study is: What is the experience of the siblings' relationship in the context of domestic violence between their parents/caregivers? This research was guided by a case study design, through using semistructured interviews with one family, involving three siblings and their mother. Professionals who worked with the family were additionally interviewed. A Reflexive Thematic Analysis approach (Braun, Clarke, Hayfield & Terry, 2019) was adopted to analyse the themes that emerged from the interviews. Using a systemic perspective enabled the researcher to focus on the siblings' relationship, and how this supported the siblings during the domestic violence experience. The findings include the different roles that the siblings took while going through this experience. The siblings' divided loyalty to their parents was also evident. Furthermore, the themes of trauma, resilience, justice-seeking, and the effects that such themes left on the sibling relationship were also important. Additionally, the mother's support in safeguarding the sibling relationship was relevant in this research. It further transpired that, although the siblings experienced the domestic violence events differently, their sibling relationship was very important for them. This study also included recommendations for practice and research that the professionals can adopt to support sibling relationships while going through domestic violence.

**Zerafa Le-Gros, Maria (2021), What effects did the Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Act of 2018 have on Maltese court judgements?**

The crime of domestic violence has been on the increase during the last few years, ranking up as the third most committed crime in Malta. In 2018, Malta ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, otherwise known as the Istanbul Convention, leading to the adoption of the Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Act aimed at combatting the problem of domestic violence and repealing the Domestic Violence Act of 2005. Reports show that often, victims of domestic violence withdraw their initial complaint. Therefore, this study will analyse reasons why Maltese courts dismiss certain domestic violence cases, to better understand why victims withdraw their complaint. The adoption of the Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Act brought forward amendments to the Criminal Code and the Civil Code, enforcing harsher penalties to acts of domestic violence as well as ensuring the protection of victims of such crime. This study compares Maltese judgements delivered before the implementation of the Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Act of 2018 with judgements delivered after the implementation of the Act of 2018. This comparison will be made with the aim to analyse whether the amendments brought forward by the implementation of the Act has been put into practice and its impact on the Maltese Courts.

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