

Aim of Study

 The main aim of this study is to get a better understanding of how family, religion and culture can effect female sexuality.







- Sexuality is one of the most important aspects of human life as it "encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy, and reproduction".
- Sexuality can be influenced by a multitude of factors
- It can be defined as the person's emotional, behavioural, cognitive and physical experiences that are sexual. Sexuality also encompasses the biological, erotic, spiritual feelings and behaviours



Data Collection

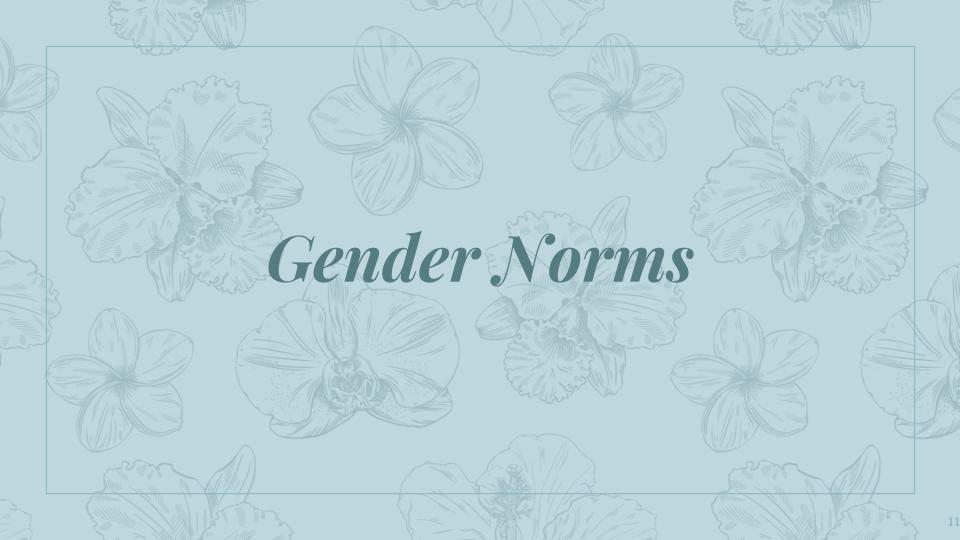
- The participants were recruited through a Facebook post.
- After signing the consent form the participants were interview via zoom.
 - There were 7 participants in total.





Results

 In this study six major themes were identified through the interviews by means of thematic analysis. These are: Gender Norms, Judgment, Religion, Education, Family Support and Friendship.



- Gender Differences-All of the participants highlighted that gender norms are a contributing factor in the way women express their sexuality. More specifically participants pointed out the different expectations that society has on women and how they express their sexuality.
 - Clothing and Appearance-Some of the participants noted that women tend to express their sexuality through the way they dress. Sometimes people make assumptions about a woman's sexuality based on the way that she is dressed. Also there are certain expectations for women on how they should look if they want to enter a relationship



- Language -It was indicated that in Malta women are discouraged from talking about their sexuality, and those who do are often judged. Furthermore, the language used to describe women is often harsh words such as "whore" and "stut" as a way of labelling women who are open about their sexuality as being bad girls. It was also noted that this kind of language creates an environment where women do not feel comfortable being open about their sexuality.
- Gossip Many participants felt that people tend to gossip when women talk about their sexual experiences and their sexuality. As well as creating rumours about the person opening up. They felt that when a woman shares her sexual experiences are talked about and judged.
- Social Media It was also noted that many of the participants felt that women who express their sexuality online often face judgement. Anonymity allows people to be harsher online rather than in person as their identity would be known. One could argue that judgment on social media can be a contributing factor as to why women do not feel comfortable discussing their sexuality.



- Sin & Shame Many of the participants stated that they have been thought that aspects relating to female sexuality, particularly aspects relating to foreplay, masturbation and sexual orientation are sinful and that one should not engage in these behaviours. Some of the participants felt ashamed when trying to explore their sexuality as they felt that they were sinning
- Taboo- The participants moreover noted that discussing issues related to female sexuality is still considered taboo in Malta.



- Sex Education-Many participants highlighted their sex education was quite limited. For many of the participants, it seemed that there was a reluctance by their schools to adopt a holistic approach towards sexuality. Some of the participants noticed that their sex education had religious undertones.
- Internet It was also observed by some participants that when they were younger the internet, was one of their primary sources of education. For plenty of them, this was mainly because their sex education was limited and they had to do their own research.



Acceptance -For many of the participants having the support of their parents was something of great importance. Many of them stated that having their families support them when it came to their sexuality gave them a sense of acceptance and for some, it gave them a sense of confidence in their sexuality.



Relating -The majority of the participants stated that for them friendships hold a great deal of importance. For many, talking to their friends helped them in relation to their issues and for some talking to their friends was easier than talking about their families. It seems that friendships were a way for the participants to discuss sexuality and find validation.

Support -For many of the participants friendships provide a sense of support and validation of their experiences. For them, their friends support is given a sense of importance.



"I think it's gender norms as well for example a woman is seen as having to be pure and demur and just, you know, sit pretty. While a man's having seen as having to be more macho and more, you know, getting what he wants, if he wants it when he wants it." (Rebecca age 20)"

• "I had these heels and they were like thigh heels boots. And it was still also cause they were the first properly heeled boots that I've ever bought. And every time I wore them, I could feel that people were kind of looking at me differently, even though it was in a party scene" (Rebecca age 20)

"No because we are whore, we have sex with a lot of men, we can't, we are prostitutes, I think they will find any word" (Sarah age 21)

"I remember we were gossiping with when we were there about someone who used to go to school with me, who was in the same year, so she was 14 and everyone was judging her because, and she had the. she had sex and she used a condom. And I remember people were saying what a whore she is, someone, that's what they say." (Jessica age 21)

• "When I was younger, I used to experiment a little but then I felt bad and then I would say a prayer so that God would forgive me." (Sarah age 21)



Diagrams and infographics

