Experiencing the Dissolution of a Romantic Relationship in Older Adulthood: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

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A dissertation submitted to the Faculty for Social Wellbeing in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Psychology in Counselling Psychology at the University of Malta

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Abstract

This study explored the lived experience of romantic relationship dissolution in older adulthood. This study aims to contribute new knowledge, as this phenomenon has not been explored locally, offering insights that may inform counselling psychologists. A qualitative design using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was employed to examine it. Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured individual interviews with five older adults (four females and one male), recruited via local organisations and relevant Facebook groups catering to older adults. The findings highlighted the emotional complexity of romantic relationships in older adulthood. While participants initially experienced positive aspects of their romantic relationship they described one-sided romantic relationships, betrayal, and feelings of entrapment gradually overshadowed the relationship's earlier benefits. The impact of ending their romantic relationships disrupted multiple domains of the participants' lives, including routines, social connections, intimacy, and anticipated futures. Despite these challenges, participants described a parallel process of growth, positioning romantic relationship dissolution as both a site of vulnerability and an opportunity for renewed autonomy. Rebuilding social support networks, engaging in community organisations, and pursuing new hobbies were described as beneficial strategies in navigating the aftermath of a RRD. The findings underscore the importance of clinical interventions that assist OAs in exploring the broader psychosocial consequences following a RRD, including disruptions to social networks, and in fostering confidence in their decision making to reduce potential self-doubt. Future research is recommended to examine underrepresented romantic relationship types, particularly the RRD of shorter-term or nonmarital romantic relationships in older adulthood to capture a broader range of experiences within the local context.

Key words: ***romantic relationships, romantic relationship dissolution, union dissolution, older adults, interpretative phenomenological analysis***

In the quiet void,

I search for pieces of me

Lost but now, I rise.

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List of Abbreviations

CoP: Counselling Psychology

GETs: Group Experiential Themes

IPA: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

NSO: National Statistics Office

OA**:** Older Adulthood

OAs: Older Adults

PETs: Personal Experiential Themes

RR: Romantic Relationship

RRs: Romantic Relationships

RRD: Romantic Relationship Dissolution

SR: Student Researcher

STT: Schlossberg's Transition Theory

WHO: World Health Organization

Chapter 1: Introduction

Preamble

Global life expectancy is steadily increasing, with the population of adults aged 60 and above rising significantly (Huang et al., 2019; Cao et al., 2020; World Health Organization (WHO), 2024). By 2030, 1.4 billion people will be aged over 60 (Noto, 2023), and by 2050, the population of those aged 65 and older is expected to double, reaching 20% of the global population (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d). The number of individuals over 80 is also projected to triple (Dogra et al., 2022).

Malta mirrored global ageing trends, with its ageing population posing significant demographic and socioeconomic challenges (Formosa, 2021). In 2022, 18.9% of Malta's population was aged 65 or older (National Statistics Office, 2022). Life expectancy at birth was 82.7 years, two years above the European Union (EU) average, with a smaller gender gap than the EU (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) & European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies (EOHSP) 2023). By 2060, life expectancy is projected to reach 85.1 years for men and 89.1 years for women (Ministry for Active Ageing, 2023).

The increase in life expectancy means that more older adults (OAs) are experiencing a romantic relationship dissolution (RRD) (Brown et al., 2018). As lifelong marriage becomes less common, OAs may find themselves navigating a new romantic relationship (RR) or navigating a RRD (Mikucka, 2020). OAs lack comparable relational experiences, particularly when it comes to RRD and re-partnering in older adulthood (OA) (Syacinka et al., 2023).

Terminology and Definitions

This section provides definitions of the key terms used throughout this research study to ensure clarity and consistency in discussing the experience of RRD in OA.

Romantic Relationship

Romantic Relationships (RRs) are characterised by shared displays of affection, an emotional connection, and typically include a strong attraction as well as a sexual element between the individuals involved (Tartakovsky, 2023; Gómez-López et al., 2019). For the purposes of this study, a RR is defined as monogamous, one in which the two individuals entered the RR voluntarily and that the RR lasted a minimum of one year. This study focuses specifically on the RRD of heterosexual RRs.

Romantic Relationship Dissolution

RRD has been defined as the termination of a previously committed RR (Tran et al., 2023). For this study, RRD is understood to encompass divorce, separation, and annulment of married couples or couples in a civil union. Additionally, it includes RRD in which the couple was not married or in a civil union. In this study, OAs' RRD happened within the past five years.

Older Adult

'Older adult' is widely regarded as a more respectful term than 'elderly' or 'senior citizen' (Lawrence & Singleton, 2015). Despite its broad use there is no universally accepted definition for 'older adult' (Lawrence & Singleton, 2015). WHO (2024) noted the complexity of defining an older adult, stating that "there is no typical older person" (para.12). Experiences can vary widely across age sub-groups and are shaped by physical and social environments that influence decisions and health behaviours (WHO, 2024).

While chronological age is commonly used as a threshold for defining OAs, the cut-off points vary. Literature shows variation in age ranges, with studies defining OAs as aged 50 and above, others using 60 or 65 as the threshold, among others. The WHO (n.d.) defined

OAs as 60 and older. The National Institute on Aging in the United States and Eurostat both define OAs as those aged 65 and older (National Institutes of Health, 2025; Eurostat, 2025).

To reflect heterogeneity within this population, age-based subgroups are often used: youngest-old (65 to 74 years), middle-old (75 to 84 years), and oldest-old (85 years and older) (Lee et al., 2018). In Malta, Active Ageing Centres set the eligibility for entry at 60 years and older reflecting a localised approach designed to support active aging initiatives (Ministry for Active Ageing, 2023).

For the purpose of this study, OAs are defined as individuals aged 65 and above, in line with the age threshold commonly adopted by key institutions and gerontological research.

Local Research on Romantic Relationship Dissolution in Older Adulthood

Research on RRs in OAs has shown that supportive RRs enhance emotional wellbeing, autonomy, and life satisfaction, while also reducing stress and adverse health outcomes (Waldrop, 2023; Connidis & Borell, 2023; Slatcher et al., 2022). However, poor quality RRs are associated with a decrease in mental health (Waldrop, 2023). In contrast, RRD in OA remains under researched**,** particularly when compared to the extensive focus on RRD in younger and middle-aged adults (Bildtgård and Öberg, 2017).

To date, no research has been identified that examines RRD in OA in Malta. The only known local study in this area is a postgraduate study that explored sexuality among married OAs (Morales, 2021). Abela et al. (2021), in the report ‘Navigating the Dating World’*,* presented findings from a nationally representative sample of 2,465 individuals in Malta aged 18 to 71and over. The data revealed a significant decline in dating activity with age. Among those aged between 56 to 70, only 0.8% reported casual dating and 10.7% were in a committed RR. These figures decreased further among OAs aged 71 and older (Abela et al., 2021). The report also noted a growing use of dating apps among OAs in Malta, particularly

for those with limited opportunities to meet potential partners through conventional means (Abela et al., 2021). Despite these trends, the authors identified a clear gap in local research concerning OAs' dating behaviours, including their motivations and the use of digital platforms amongst other areas, thus highlighting the need for further study in the field (Abela et al.,2021).

Malta's commitment to supporting its ageing population is reflected in the national strategic policy for active ageing (2023–2030) (Ministry for Active Ageing, 2023) and the Officer of the Commissioner for Older Persons (2024), which addressed healthy ageing, social inclusion, mental health, and OAs' rights. However, while loneliness and widowhood were briefly mentioned, experiences of separation, divorce, and RRD in OA are notably absent (Ministry for Active Ageing, 2023).

Rationale for the Study

RRs in OA have been associated with contributing to successful ageing. Consequently, a RRD may be experienced as emotionally intense and carries significant implications (Rauer & Jager, 2024). Despite its growing prevalence, the emotional, psychological, and social impact of RRD in OA remains largely overlooked.

This study seeks to address this gap by giving voice to the lived experiences of OAs who have gone through a RRD. It aims to contribute new knowledge to an underrepresented area, offering insights that may inform counselling psychologists, enhance social support systems, and influence public policy. Furthermore, the study aspires to foster greater awareness of the relational dimensions of ageing, and advocate for more inclusive, and emotionally attuned responses to the needs of OAs navigating a RRD.

Relevance to Counselling Psychology

This study explores the experience of RRD in OA, focusing on OAs in Malta, and offers culturally grounded insights into how Maltese OAs make sense of and navigate a RRD.

This is an increasingly relevant issue amid rising life expectancy, evolving generational norms, higher divorce rates, and greater openness to re-partnering in OA (Raley & Sweeney, 2020; Mikucka, 2020). These societal changes highlight the need to better understand the psychological impact of ageing, particularly underexplored experiences like a RRD in OA (Keum, 2018).

Aligned with the core values of counselling psychology (CoP), which emphasises lifespan development, the interaction between individuals and their environments, and cultural responsiveness (Douglas et al., 2016; Keum, 2018), this study addresses the relational and emotional complexities faced by OAs. A key tenet of CoP is appreciating and enhancing interpersonal relationships as vital to wellbeing (Milton, 2012a). A significant RRD can deeply affect an OA's sense of self, social support, and emotional health (Tran et al., 2023). This makes counselling psychologists uniquely positioned to help OAs process transitions, rebuild identity, and restore connections (Knight & Laidlaw, 2022). By examining the specific nuances of RRD within Maltese culture, this research can inform culturally sensitive, relationally attuned therapeutic approaches that align with CoP's commitment to supporting both individual and interpersonal wellbeing.

Aims and Research Questions of the Study

By purposively selecting a homogenous group of Maltese, heterosexual OAs, this research aimed to facilitate a deeper, context-specific understanding of the phenomenon (Smith et al., 2022)

The study's main research question was "How is the dissolution of a RR experienced in OA?" This was explored through the following key research objectives.

1. To explore the subjective lived experience of a RRD in OA.
2. To consider the causes/antecedents that lead to the RRD.
3. To explore the impact of the RRD on the individual.

4. To understand how the individual processed their RRD and the coping strategies that were utilised, if any.

Epistemological Stance

Epistemology concerns the nature of knowledge, how it is produced, understood, and communicated (Cuthbertson et al., 2020; Ejnavarzala, 2019). This study adopts an interpretivist paradigm, with a subjectivist epistemology and a transactional view of knowledge construction. As Guba and Lincoln (1994) explain, researcher and participant are "interactively linked so that the 'findings' are literally created as the investigation proceeds" (p. 111). Knowledge is thus co-constructed through dialogue, interpretation, and shared meaning-making, rather than discovered as objective fact (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). While another's experience cannot be fully grasped objectively, it can be interpreted through engaged understanding (Pretorius, 2024). In this study, participants made sense of their RRD, while the student researcher interpreted those understandings, recognising that meaning arises through this interactive process. The chosen methodology, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, aligns with this epistemological stance, acknowledging the double hermeneutic: the researcher interprets the participant's interpretation of their experience (Smith et al., 2022), reflecting the collaborative generation of meaning (Pretorius, 2024).

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted Schlossberg's Transition Theory (STT) to guide understanding of RRD in OA. A transition is defined as "any event or non-event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles" (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 39). Transitions may be "anticipated" or "unanticipated" and include "non-events" which are expected life events that fail to occur (Schlossberg, 2011, p. 159). Transitions can significantly affect an individual's life (Schlossberg, 2011; Musamali, 2018); a RRD in OA can be understood as a

life transition, often resulting in shifts in daily routines, social roles, and personal identity, amongst others (Dzando et al., 2025).

STT's 4-S framework; Situation, Self, Support, and Strategies helps explain how individuals navigate a transition. Situation refers to the context of the RRD, including whether it was expected, perceived control, and other stressors (Alpaslan, 2018; Anderson et al., 2012). For OAs, this may involve losing a long-term relational role or facing concurrent challenges like retirement or health decline. Self captures personal characteristics like values, coping style, and resilience (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 2011). Support refers to the emotional, informational, and practical resources available (Anderson et al., 2012). Strategies are coping responses used to manage the transition, including changing the situation, reframing its meaning, or addressing emotional impacts (Alpaslan, 2018).

While STT emphasises perception and available assets in managing transitions like RRD, it has been critiqued for overlooking specific coping styles and offering limited guidance on how individuals can strengthen or mobilise their resources (Musamali, 2018).

Student Researcher Reflexivity

My personal experience of a RRD served as a point of departure, prompting a deeper inquiry into how RRD is understood and managed across different life stages. As I recognised unmet emotional needs, I made the difficult decision to dissolve the RR. Initially, I felt relief, followed by sadness, self-doubt, and inward directed anger for staying longer than was emotionally beneficial. Support from close friends and personal therapy helped me process these emotions. Pursuing my master's provided stability and a meaningful focus amidst the emotional turbulence.

Choosing this topic meant entering an unfamiliar territory; I had limited personal or professional contact with OAs. OAs may carry not only the emotional weight of a RRD but also the added social and health challenges that come with ageing (WHO, 2024). If the

process of a RRD had felt emotionally taxing in my twenties, I was compelled to ask how this same experience might be lived and made sense of in OA, a stage so often overlooked in discussions of intimacy and RRs. Researcher reflexivity, including my relationship to the study, will be explored in greater depth in the methodology chapter.

Overview of Chapters

This chapter introduced the study, outlining its research questions, aims, and relevance to CoP. Chapter Two reviews key literature on RRD in OA. Chapter Three explains the methodology, including recruitment, data collection, analysis, and ethics. Chapter Four presents the main findings, which are then discussed in Chapter Five alongside existing research. The final chapter summarises the findings, considers their implications, and notes limitations and future research directions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of significant empirical and theoretical literature on the phenomenon of a romantic relationship dissolution (RRD)in older adulthood (OA). The factors shaping this experience, its impact and shifting family dynamics will be considered.

Literature Search

An exhaustive literature search was conducted using the University of Malta (UM) HyDi database and Google Scholar. Keywords included ‘RRD’, ‘union dissolution’, ‘romantic relationship’, ‘older adults’, ‘experience’, ‘impact’, and ‘Malta’. Additional relevant articles and books were identified through sources retrieved in the initial search and included in this review. As this study focuses exclusively on heterosexual older adults (OAs), the literature and empirical findings discussed relate specifically to this group.

Romantic Relationships in Older Adulthood

According to Huang et al. (2019), being in a romantic relationship (RR) in OA is often perceived as contributing to the development of a self-image that feels youthful (Huang et al., 2019). OAs in a RR benefited from a sense of mutual companionship and the opportunity to engage in common interests and hobbies (Huang et al., 2019; Chen & Feeley, 2014). Furthermore, engaging in a RR during OA fostered a sense of autonomy, reduced dependence on one's children and allowed individuals to rely on their partner instead (Bildtgård & Öberg, 2017). Both Chen and Feeley (2014) and Tran (2021) found that support from a spouse or partner was the most significant contributor to enhanced wellbeing in OA.

For a RR to positively influence OAs’ wellbeing, its quality has to be considered (Bulandha et al., 2016; Robles et al., 2014). Poor marital quality was associated with negative health outcomes, while higher quality romantic relationships (RRs) were linked to reduced cardiovascular reactivity during conflict (Kiecolt-Glaser & Wilson, 2017). Building on this,

Weidmann and Chopik (2022) highlighted that satisfying RRs played a crucial role in the overall health of OAs, particularly by supporting cognitive health through effective stress regulation. Such RRs promoted healthier conflict resolution and the use of adaptive coping strategies, which ultimately enhanced resilience amongst OAs (Weidmann & Chopik, 2022).

Furthermore, RRs played a vital role in supporting emotional wellbeing. OAs in positive RRs experienced lower levels of loneliness and greater emotional fulfilment, which significantly contributed to their overall wellbeing (Tran, 2021). In contrast, Chen and Feeley (2014) found that stress within a RR negatively impacted wellbeing. This highlighted the importance of RR quality in OA. Bulanda et al. (2016) further identified gender-specific differences; while marital status had a stronger influence on men's health, the quality of the RR was especially crucial for women's wellbeing. Meanwhile, Ye et al. (2018) suggested that marital status might have limited impact on psychological wellbeing in OAs, as long as individuals are healthy and financially stable.

These relationship dynamics tied into broader discussions on what constituted "successful aging" (Teater & Chonody, 2019, p.177). Traditional models of successful ageing focused on factors such as physical health, independence, and productivity. However, Teater and Chonody (2019) demonstrated that OAs prioritised emotional intimacy, companionship, and social connection when considering "successful aging" (p.177). RRs, therefore, play a pivotal role in shaping how OAs understand and experience their own ageing journey.

Motivations for Seeking New Romantic Relationships in Older Adulthood

RR in OA are more commonly pursued for companionship, emotional intimacy, shared values, and mutual support (Kislev, 2020; Fileborn et al., 2015). As people age, the experience of retirement, bereavement, or divorce may increase feelings of loneliness and social isolation, prompting a renewed desire for closeness and connection (Victor & Yang, 2012). OAs may also seek RR as a means of maintaining a sense of identity, purpose, and

vitality (Stephens et al., 2011; Teater & Chonody, 2019). These are linked to enhanced psychological wellbeing and perceived successful aging (Stephens et al., 2011; Teater & Chonody, 2019).

Additionally, RRs in OA often balanced emotional security with autonomy, as many individuals express a preference for RRs that provide personal freedom while still meeting their social and emotional needs (Carr, 2019; Connidis & Borell, 2019). Gendered motivations for re-partnering have also been observed. Older men are more likely to re-partner than women, often motivated by a desire for emotional and instrumental support (Bulanda et al., 2016; Brown et al., 2018). In contrast, older women may resist re-partnering, valuing their financial autonomy and independence, and often expressing a reluctance to return to traditional caregiving roles (Bulanda et al., 2016; Brown et al., 2018).

The initiation of a RR in OA might have different meanings and consequences than entering RRs at a younger age (Bildtgård & Öberg, 2017). De Jong Gierveld and Merz (2013) discovered that parents aged 50 and older frequently experienced negative reactions from their children regarding their new relationships. As a result, many chose to engage in living-apart -together (LAT)RRs rather than cohabiting, aiming to prevent conflicts with their children (de Jong Gierveld &Merz, 2013).

A Shift in Family Dynamics

Traditionally, most marriages in OA ended due to the death of a spouse, often occurring shortly after retirement (Bildtgård & Öberg, 2025). However, in recent decades, a significant shift has taken place. Divorce has become an increasingly frequent reason for the RRD among OAs (Bildtgård & Öberg, 2025). This trend is particularly evident among individuals born between 1946 and 1964, commonly referred to as ‘Baby Boomers’, who have shown a marked increase in divorce rates (Raley & Sweeney, 2020). As this generation

ages, they are more likely to experience both the end of long-term RR and the possibility of re-partnering in OA (Brown & Lin, 2012; Ermer & Keenoy, 2023).

This demographic shift has given rise to what is now referred to as the ‘Gray divorce revolution’ (Raley & Sweeney, 2020; Brown & Lin, 2012), reflecting a major transformation in marital patterns among OAs. Once relatively rare, divorce among those aged 50 and above accounted for less than 10% of all divorces in the 1990s. Since then, this figure has doubled in the United States, indicating a clear break from previous generational norms (Brown & Wright, 2019).

Interestingly, this rise in divorce in OA was anticipated as early as 1981, when Uhlenberg and Myers (1981) outlined four key factors likely to drive this trend. First, they pointed to the growing societal acceptance of divorce, alongside a shift in how marriages were perceived, moving toward an emphasis on personal fulfilment. Second, they noted the rise in remarriages, which statistically carried a higher risk of dissolution compared to first marriages (Uhlenberg & Myers, 1981). Third, the increase in female labour force participation meant that women were becoming less financially dependent on their spouses, offering greater autonomy. Lastly, increased life expectancy has extended the duration of marriages, increasing the chance that couples might grow apart over time (Uhlenberg & Myers, 1981).

These factors align with broader demographic shifts. In 2019, the global OA population was about 700 million, a number projected to double by 2050. By then, those aged 65 and older are expected to comprise 20% of the world’s population, with those aged 80 and above set to triple (Dogra et al., 2022). Longer lifespans mean more years in retirement, prompting deeper reflection on emotional satisfaction and RR fulfilment in OA (Brown & Lin, 2012). Raley and Sweeney (2020) argued that rising OA divorce rates reflected not just personal choices but broader shifts in social norms and generational

experiences, particularly among Baby Boomers, who have long challenged traditional views on marriage and family. Financial independence, especially among older women, has further contributed, as women today are more likely to leave unsatisfying marriages without the financial constraints faced by earlier generations (Lin & Brown, 2021).

The Maltese Context

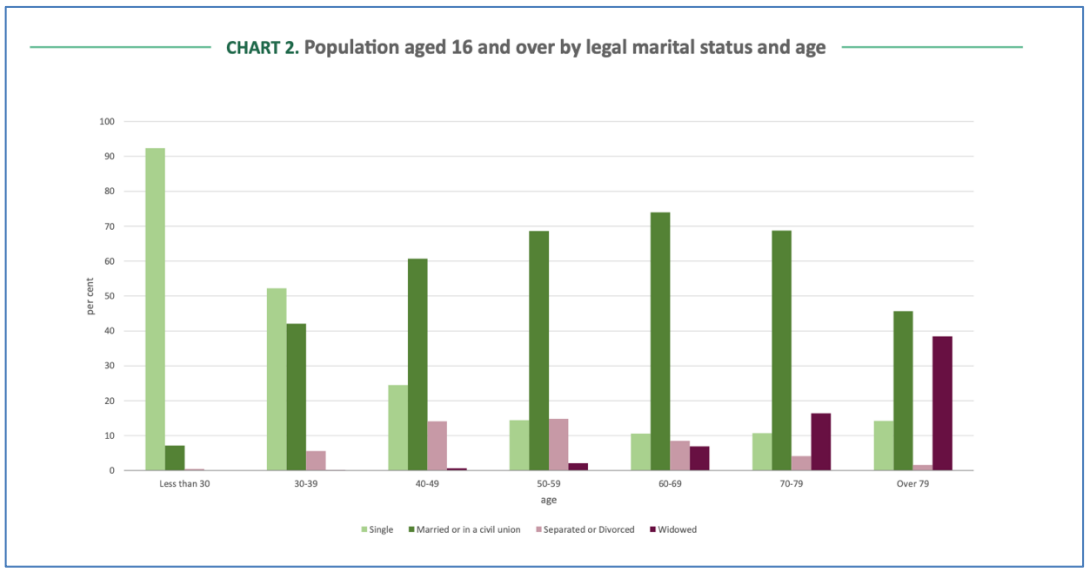
Malta has also experienced a significant rise in its ageing population, a trend identified as one of the most profound demographic and socioeconomic challenges the country will face in the coming decades (Formosa, 2021; Farrugia-Bonello, 2019). Malta's life expectancy at birth was 82.4 years in 2017, a figure that positioned the country among the top ranking in the European Union (OECD/European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, 2019).

Alongside these demographic changes, Malta has also seen gradual shifts in family structures and RRs patterns. Malta became the last European country to legalise divorce in 2011, and since then, the divorce rate has steadily risen (Eurostat, 2025). By 2022, it reached 0.9 divorces per 1,000 people. Despite this rise, Malta still reported one of the lowest divorce rates in the EU (Eurostat, 2025).

This cautious approach to marital dissolution is deeply rooted in Malta’s cultural context. Abela (2013) described Malta as a minority culture when it came to marriage and family dynamics. Historically, marital stability has been reinforced by close knit extended families, which often served both as sources of support. In addition, traditional values, particularly those linked to commitment and loyalty shaped by the Catholic church remained influential in reinforcing the stability of marital relationships (Abela, 2013). The introduction of divorce legislation marked a pivotal moment, signalling a broader shift in social and cultural norms within Maltese society.

Table 1

Bar Graph Displaying Marital Status Distribution According to Age Groups



(NSO, 2021)

The 2021 Census data from the National Statistics Office (NSO) (2022), provided valuable insight into marital status across age groups in Malta. Among OAs aged 60 to 69, 80.7% of males and 76.8% of females were married or in a civil union, while 10.5% were single. In the 70 to 79 age group, 10.7% were single, 2.8% separated, 1.3% divorced, and 16.4% widowed. For those aged 80 and over, 14.3% were single, 1.0% separated, 0.6% divorced, and 38.5% widowed. Although widowhood accounted for the highest proportion in the oldest groups, the presence of separated and divorced OAs highlighted that RR transitions in OA are not limited to widowhood. Interestingly, the proportion of single OAs remained relatively stable across age groups, with a slight increase in single males as age advanced (NSO, 2022).

While Malta's census provided a detailed snapshot of marital status, there is no national data on the average age at divorce or separation, limiting understanding of whether these transitions occur earlier or in OA, and how they shape the potential for re-partnering or the psychological impact of a RRD (National Centre for Family Research, 2021). Notably,

the data also does not account for marital satisfaction or RR quality, nor does it track how OAs transition between marital statuses over time or how recent life events may have shaped their current status.

Attachment and Romantic Relationship Dissolution

John Bowlby's attachment theory provides a foundational framework for understanding human relationships and how individuals cope with loss (Bowlby, 1969). RR are conceptualised as attachment bonds, whereby individuals depend on their partners for emotional support and a sense of self-worth (Sbarra & Borelli, 2019). These mirror early attachments formed with caregivers. Therefore, the dissolution of such bonds often results in significant emotional distress (Van Assche et al., 2013; Sbarra & Borelli, 2019).

Attachment styles are categorised as secure or insecure (anxious and avoidant). One's attachment style influences how individuals responded to a RRD (Simpson & Rholes, 2017). These styles shape emotion regulation strategies, particularly in the context of relational loss (Van Assche et al., 2013; Sbarra & Borelli, 2019). Bowlby (1969) proposed that disruptions in attachment relationships triggered predictable behavioural responses rooted in early relational patterns.

Individuals with avoidant attachment tendencies often employ deactivating strategies to suppress distress, thereby minimising the emotional impact of the RRD (Pittman et al., 2011). In contrast, those with anxious attachment were more likely to engage in hyperactivating strategies, attempting to restore closeness and regain a sense of security by re-establishing contact with a former partner (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2010).

Ultimately, insecure attachment styles tended to prolong and intensify emotional distress following a RRD (Van Assche et al., 2013). In contrast, individuals with secure attachment benefited from more adaptive regulatory strategies, maintaining a positive view of themselves and their RR even during a RRD (Sbarra & Borelli, 2019).

Attachment in Old Age

Although attachment theory remains a highly influential framework for understanding human relationships, it has not been without criticism (Khadka, 2022). One key challenge to its assumptions comes from Smith et al. (2017), who questioned the idea that attachment styles are fixed during early infancy. Negative consequences of early insecure attachments could be moderated or even reversed by positive experiences later in life (Platts et al., 2023). Similarly, research by Chopik et al. (2019) suggested that attachment security may either remain stable or change with age, following a range of developmental trajectories into OA.

Supporting this, Fraley et al. (2021), in a longitudinal study of over 4,000 people, found that attachment styles can shift in response to significant life evets. This is particularly relevant to a RRD in OA, as such disruptions may challenge or reshape attachment patterns. Positive RRs over time can strengthen secure attachment by reinforcing trust and availability (Saunders et al., 2011), while negative or rejecting experiences may increase insecurity (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2010). Ultimately, how individuals interpret and process major relational transitions like a RRD plays a crucial role in shaping attachment across the lifespan.

Understanding Challenges in Romantic Relationships in Older Adulthood

The reasons behind a RRD in OA are multifaceted, influenced by both personal and structural factors (Wu & Brown, 2022). Emotional dissatisfaction or unmet needs are often central, as many OAs prioritised emotional closeness, intimacy, and companionship in OA they were less willing to remain in RRs that no longer fulfilled these needs (Bildtgård & Öberg, 2025; Wu & Brown, 2022). Svačinka et al. (2023) explored the relational challenges faced by OAs through the lens of online counselling queries in the Czech Republic. Their findings identified diverse relational challenges, including infidelity, jealousy, emotional estrangement, changes in personality, and the burden of illness. Notably, these challenges

often arose in the absence of clear societal norms to guide RR in OA, leaving many with limited resources for conflict resolution (Svačinka et al., 2023).

Bildtgård and Öberg (2025) offered a useful distinction between "predictors" and "factors" for divorce in OA. “Predictors” refers to demographic characteristics, such as, early age at marriage, financial instability, or family history of divorce. These often operate outside of the individual's conscious awareness. In contrast, “factors” refers to the personal motivations that individuals give when explaining their decision to dissolve their RR. These are shaped through reflection and are often rooted in emotional or RR dissatisfaction, such as noticing communication difficulties, growing emotional distance, or a general sense of disconnection within the RR (Bildtgård & Öberg, 2025).

Life transitions also played a key role in shaping RR outcomes. For example, the empty nest phase was seen as leaving couples feeling disconnected once children had left home, prompting reflection on the future of the RR (Skowrońska et al., 2024). Similarly, in OA, there was often a shift in focus toward personal growth and self-discovery, which no longer aligned with the established dynamics of the RR (Lamela & Figueiredo, 2023). Health related concerns further complicated RR dynamics, as the caregiving burden or a partner’s inability to provide emotional or physical support led OAs to question the sustainability and value of the RR (Wu & Brown, 2022).

In addition to these factors, a heightened awareness of time plays a critical role in OAs' approach to RRs (Svačinka et al., 2023). The emotional connection and time invested in a RR may deepen its meaning. At the same time, the awareness of limited time remaining can create a sense of anxiety and urgency, pushing OAs in resolving unresolved issues or seeking fulfilment before it becomes too late (Svačinka et al., 2023). Changing social norms further shaped these decisions, particularly among Baby Boomers, who place greater value on

personal fulfillment and were thus more inclined to leave a RR that no longer aligned with their evolving identities (Raley & Sweeney, 2020; Brown & Lin, 2012).

Finally, the process of a RRD is often gradual and emotionally complex. In their qualitative study, Bildtgård and Öberg (2025) described how OAs engaged in an evolving internal evaluation over time, weighing the advantages and disadvantages of staying versus leaving. Participants often offered simplified explanations for their RRD, used to justify decisions that were shaped by deeply personal and multifaceted emotional processes (Bildtgård and Öberg, 2025). This capacity for reflection was closely tied to increased life expectancy, which provides OAs with the time to reevaluate their long-term happiness (Manning & Brown, 2011). As a result, many OAs may now be less willing to remain in unfulfilling or emotionally distant RRs, instead prioritising their own wellbeing (Brown & Lin, 2012).

The Impact of a Romantic Relationship Dissolution in Older Adulthood

RRD in OA is a complex and deeply personal experience, shaped by individual circumstances and the context in which it occurs (Rauer & Jager, 2024). For some, it becomes a profoundly distressing life event, accompanied by emotional turmoil and mental anguish (Tran et al., 2022; Kamiya et al., 2013). Chiao et al. (2021), who examined 1,645 older Taiwanese parents, found that marital transitions were significantly associated with heightened emotional and social loneliness, particularly among divorced OAs (Chiao et al., 2021; Vedder et al., 2024; Crowley, 2018).

A period of adjustment typically follows, often marked by a mix of relief, sadness, and guilt (Chen & Feeley, 2014). Several factors shaped how OAs adjusted after a RRD, including the length of the RR, the level of commitment, time since the RRD, and the presence of alternative supportive relationships (Tran et al., 2024). Ye et al. (2018) investigated how prior marital quality influenced depressive symptoms following marital

termination in OA. They found that higher marital happiness predicted more depressive symptoms after divorce, while lower marital quality, marked by conflict, predicted fewer symptoms, suggesting a relief effect (Ye et al., 2018). Notably, when health and income were controlled, the impact of marital status on depressive symptoms lessened, highlighting that health and financial factors were stronger predictors of depression than marital transitions alone (Ye et al., 2018). Additionally, Hanes and Clouston (2021) observed an increase in cognitive decline after RRD in OA.

The effects of transitioning into singlehood are not uniformly negative. OAs may experience benefits such as increased autonomy, opportunities for personal growth, and the freedom to prioritise individual goals (Rauer & Jager, 2024). Furthermore, they may possess more effective coping mechanisms and stronger social support networks that aid adjustment (Rauer & Jager, 2024; Teater & Chonody, 2019). Even when both partners mutually sought divorce, the RRD can potentially signal the start of a new chapter, serving as a self-protective measure, especially when exiting toxic RRs (Ye et al., 2018).

In addition to relational factors, OAs face unique life-stage challenges, including biological changes, health issues, retirement, relocation, and the loss of friends (WHO, 2022). Teater and Chonody (2019) argued that ageing is a subjective experience, and how OAs interpreted and navigated loss, is shaped by their ability to reconstruct meaning and develop new roles. Sbarra and Borelli (2019) further identified both interpersonal and intrapersonal challenges following RRD; the former involved managing interactions with a former partner, such as conflict or post-dissolution communication, while the latter concerns processing emotions, coping with loss, and redefining one’s sense of self. How individuals navigated these challenges, particularly how they redefine their RR with their ex-partner, played a key role in their overall adjustment (Sbarra and Borelli, 2019).

Finally, Bulanda et al. (2016) found that marital status was more strongly associated with men's mortality risk, while marital quality better predicted women's survival. Specifically, marital dissolution increased mortality risk for older men but did not significantly affect women's mortality, potentially reflecting women's greater resilience and stronger social connections after a breakup (Bulanda et al., 2016; Ermer & Keenoy, 2022). To deepen understanding of adjustment to a RRD in OA, Dzando et al. (2025) conducted a systematic review using Schlossberg's 4S Transition Theory. Drawing on studies from four countries, they found that divorce often led to emotional distress, financial strain (especially for women), and social disruption. The 4S framework explained adjustment through Situation (external stressors), Self (personal attributes), Support (family, friends, community), and Strategies (coping methods, both adaptive and maladaptive), offering a holistic view of how OAs navigate the complexities of a RRD.

Singlehood in Older adulthood

The number of single OAs is steadily increasing and is expected to continue rising in the coming years (Huang et al., 2019; Wright & Brown, 2017). As Ermer and Keenoy (2023) explained, there are multiple pathways into singlehood in OA. Some individuals become single following a RRD, such as through divorce or widowhood, while others have remained single throughout their lives. These distinct experiences of singlehood shaped how OAs navigated social and emotional wellbeing (Ermer and Keenoy, 2023).

Single OAs are often at a greater risk of loneliness, as they lack the daily social interaction and emotional closeness that typically comes with living with a partner (Cohen-Mansfield et al., 2016). This can result in an increased deprivation of both social and physical touch (Carr, 2021). While living alone is commonly linked to social isolation (Somes, 2021; Schimmele & Wu, 2016), Luhmann and Hawkley (2016) argued that it was not living alone itself that caused loneliness, but rather the presence of compounding risk factors, such as low

income and single status that heightened this vulnerability. OAs may also face limited opportunities to develop new supportive social ties, which further deepens their sense of isolation (Luhmann & Hawkley, 2016).

Interestingly, not all single OAs experience these challenges in the same way. Ermer and Keenoy (2023) noted that lifelong singles may have a relative advantage, as they are more likely to have sustained stable social networks over time. In contrast, those who become single later in life may need to reconstruct or expand their support systems to compensate for the absence of a partner (Ermer & Proulx, 2019).

In terms of wellbeing, unmarried OAs tend to report poorer health outcomes than their married counterparts (Wang& Yi, 2023). The absence of an intimate partner has been closely associated with a heightened risk of depression (Ye et al., 2017). RRs in OA often fulfil emotional and relational needs, thereby reducing loneliness and bringing added meaning to one's later years (Huang et al., 2019; Vespa, 2012).

The lack of a partner may also lead to greater dependence on formal support services (Wu et al., 2014). Wu et al. (2014) found that single OAs were more likely to rely on long-term care services. This finding was supported by Mu and Hall (2023), who connected this with reduced access to informal care that partnered individuals often receive. Taken together, these findings suggest that singlehood in OA can result in increased reliance on institutional support due to limited availability of informal assistance. Additionally, single OAs may experience decreased life satisfaction and are at an elevated risk of poorer health and wellbeing compared to their married peers (Mikucha, 2022; Wright & Brown, 2017).

Whilst singlehood in OA can bring with it certain vulnerabilities, it is not uniformly negative. In contrast to the risks noted above, Ermer and Keenoy (2023) observed that single OAs engaged in greater social participation, maintained more diverse social networks, and reported stronger connections between friendship and emotional wellbeing.

Dating in Older Adulthood

Wright et al. (2020) investigated the impact of re-partnering on loneliness among OAs who experienced a RRD. They found that re-partnering was associated with significantly lower levels of loneliness (Wright et al., 2020; Brown et al., 2018). This effect was particularly pronounced among men, for whom forming a new partnership helped mitigate the heightened loneliness often observed following a RRD. While women also benefited from re-partnering, the reduction in loneliness was more substantial for men, highlighting gender differences in the social and emotional impacts of transitions in RRs in OA (Wright et al., 2020). Re-partnering offered not only emotional intimacy and companionship but also restored crucial sources of social and emotional support that may have been lost after a prior RRD (Brown et al., 2018). These advantages seemed especially significant for older men, as they were more dependent on intimate partners for social support compared to women (Brown et al., 2020; Brown et al., 2019).

While dating posed challenges at any age, OAs faced distinct barriers linked to this stage of life (Tran, 2021; Brown et al., 2018). Tran (2021) examined the unique challenges OAs encountered in dating and maintaining RRs, identifying obstacles such as societal pressures around aging that shaped self-presentation and fostered insecurities, which often discouraged OAs from pursuing new RRs. Additionally, shrinking social networks due to retirement, health issues, or the loss of friends and partners reduced opportunities to meet potential companions. A pronounced gender imbalance, with women often outliving men, further narrowed the dating pool for older women, making it especially difficult for them to find suitable partners (Tran, 2021). Together, these findings highlighted the unique and often overlooked relational challenges that OAs faced when seeking to re-partner.

Brown et al. (2018) compared two types of RRD in OAs, divorce and widowhood, and examined their association with re-partnering. They found that divorced OAs, especially

women, were much more likely to re-partner than their widowed counterparts, a difference that remained even after controlling for age, socioeconomic status, and health (Brown et al., 2018). While divorced men and widowers showed similar likelihoods of re-partnering, women's patterns differed sharply depending on the type of RRD, with widowed women often reluctant to re-enter caregiving roles (Brown et al., 2018).

Among OAs, the internet has emerged as an important avenue for meeting and dating potential romantic partners, allowing them to connect beyond their shrinking social networks (Wada et al., 2019). However, Tran (2021) observed that many OAs faced barriers to fully accessing these opportunities, as unfamiliarity with modern dating applications and digital platforms limited their ability to engage effectively in online spaces. Additionally, physical and cognitive health might further hinder OAs' dating prospects. While Ni et al., (2025) did not examine dating specifically, their research showed that declines in cognitive functioning were associated with reduced social engagement, which can indirectly affect OAs' opportunities to participate in social spaces where new RRs might form.

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed key literature on the significance of RRs in OAs, including evolving family dynamics, challenges in later-life relationships, the emotional and psychological impacts of RRD, and the nuanced experiences of singlehood and re-partnering. The following chapter outlines the study's methodology and research design.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter presents the research design and methodology that were employed in this qualitative study, which explored the experience of romantic relationship dissolution (RRD) in older adulthood (OA) through in-depth semi-structured interviews. To gain a rich and nuanced understanding of the participants' lived experiences, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) served as the methodology on which this study is grounded. The chapter begins by outlining the rationale for selecting IPA, including its theoretical and philosophical foundations. It then details the participant recruitment process, sample size, data collection methods, and stages of data analysis. Finally, it addresses considerations of trustworthiness, validity, and ethics relevant to the study.

Research Rationale

The introductory chapter highlighted that increased life expectancy has in turn increased the likelihood that OAs may experience a RRD. RRD in OAs can have significant consequences (Rauer & Jager, 2024). However, this issue has yet to be explored in the Maltese context, and local research on the impact and the needs of OAs experiencing RRD has been overlooked.

This study aims to investigate the following research question: 'How is the dissolution of a RR experienced in OA?'

This study aims to achieve the following research objectives:

- To explore the subjective lived experience of a RRD in OA
- To consider the causes and / or antecedents that lead to the RRD
- To explore the impact that the RRD had on the individual.
- To understand how the individual processed the RRD and the coping strategies that were utilised, if any.

Rationale for Research Design

Research can be approached quantitatively or qualitatively, depending on the type of data the researcher wants to extract (Taherdoost, 2022). Quantitative research is a systematic, objective approach that uses numerical data to identify patterns, test hypotheses, and generalise findings across populations (Dehalwar & Sharma, 2024; Taherdoost, 2022). Qualitative research aims to explore and understand complex human experiences through in-depth exploration (Dehalwar & Sharma, 2024). It adopts a subjective approach that acknowledges how context shapes individuals' behaviours and perceptions (Dehalwar & Sharma, 2024; Taherdoost, 2022).

This study aimed to achieve an in depth understanding of the experiences of a RRD in OA. Therefore, a research design capable of capturing the depth and complexity of participants' lived experiences and their processes of meaning making was essential (Frechette et al., 2020). Thus, a qualitative approach was deemed the most appropriate method to achieve the scope of this study.

The student researcher (SR) considered both Narrative Analysis (NA) and IPA as potential qualitative methodologies. NA explores how individuals use stories to construct meaning, identity, and social connection, viewing storytelling as a culturally situated practice (Taherdoost, 2022; Wong & Breheny, 2018). However, IPA was chosen for its stronger emphasis on the subjective experience and its suitability for exploring emotional and cognitive responses to lived experiences (Ismail & Kinchin, 2023). Given this study's aim to understand how OAs make sense of their RRD, IPA provides a more direct route into participants' inner experiences.

This decision is supported by previous research that effectively applied IPA to similar topics, such as Moore et al.'s (2017) exploration of romantic love in OA and Subramaniam et al.'s (2024) study on breakup experiences and post-traumatic growth in vicenarian adults. As

such, IPA was selected as the most appropriate methodology to address the research aims and capture the richness of the participants' lived experiences.

Ontological and Epistemological Stance

Qualitative research is guided by philosophical assumptions, with ontology and epistemology forming the foundation for how researchers perceive reality and knowledge (Berryman, 2019). Engaging in research involves adopting a paradigm, which is a coherent set of beliefs that guides methodological choices and inquiry (Cuthbertson et al., 2020; Pretorius, 2024). This study adopts a postmodern constructivist-interpretive paradigm, grounded in a relativist ontology and transactional epistemology. This approach rejects universal truths, valuing complex, situated knowledge and seeing reality as subjectively constructed through human experience (Berryman, 2019; Liamputtong, 2013). The interpretive stance focuses on understanding experiences from the perspective of those who lived them (Burr, 2015; Heotis, 2020).

Ontology

Ontology concerns the nature of reality, what exists and what is considered real (Ejnavarzala, 2019). While a realist stance assumes a single objective reality, a relativist stance views reality as subjective and shaped by individual experience (Cuthbertson et al., 2020; Pretorius, 2024). This study adopts a relativist ontology to explore the diverse, personal experiences of RRD in OA, recognising that each participant's reality is influenced by social, cultural, and personal factors, with multiple interpretations seen as equally valid (Pretorius, 2024).

Epistemology

Epistemology concerns the nature of knowledge, how it is generated, understood, and shared (Cuthbertson et al.,2020; Ejnavarzala, 2019). This study adopts a transactional/subjectivist approach, where researcher and participant are closely connected,

and findings emerge collaboratively (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Here, knowledge is not seen as fixed truth but as co-constructed through interaction and shared meaning-making.

Theoretical Underpinnings of IPA

IPA recognises that understanding is always shaped by perspective and is inherently interpretative (McLeod, 2024). Larkin et al. (2011) highlighted the importance of this by explaining that "we are already situated in a meaningful world, and indeed, meaningfulness is a core component of its makeup" (p.8). Meaning making is therefore context sensitive, shaped by the relational, cultural, and historical conditions in which individuals are embedded (Smith et al., 2022; Smith & Nizza, 2022). In this view, "understanding arises from our interpretations and relationships" (Pernecky & Jamal, 2010, p. 1064). As such, the essence of human experience can be explored and understood through one's engagement with the world (Larkin et al., 2011). IPA, as a phenomenological approach, allows researchers to explore these lived experiences while acknowledging their embeddedness in context (Tuffour, 2017).

IPA is grounded in three philosophical foundations: phenomenology**,** which focuses on lived experience; hermeneutics, the theory of interpretation; and idiography**,** which emphasises detailed, in-depth analysis of individual cases. Together, these principles enable a rich, nuanced understanding of how people make sense of significant events in their lives (Smith et al., 2022).

Phenomenology

Phenomenology focuses on the exploration of lived experiences (Pernecky & Jamal, 2010), making it highly relevant to this study, which seeks to understand how OAs experience their RRD. Rather than focusing on external measures for example, divorce rates, phenomenology emphasises how individuals subjectively perceive and make sense of their experiences (Gill, 2014). Based on the premise that only those who have undergone a

phenomenon can truly describe it, this approach allows the study to centre the voices of OAs, recognising that they alone can meaningfully convey what it feels like to undergo a RRD (van Manen, 2017). As Husserl famously states, phenomenology allows researchers to "go back to the things themselves" (Smith et al., 2022, p. 8), helping uncover layers of meaning that are often taken for granted (Eatough & Smith, 2017). In this study, the 'things' being explored are the participants' lived experience of a RRD in OA.

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics, as introduced by Heidegger, refers to the theory of interpretation (Smith et al., 2022) and is central to IPA, where both participants and researcher engage in meaning-making. As participants articulate their understanding of their lived experience, the SR interprets and makes sense of these accounts, a process known as double hermeneutics (Smith et al., 2022). This is particularly relevant to this study, which explores how OAs understand and narrate their experiences of RRD, while the SR works to interpret and contextualise these understandings.

Applying the hermeneutic circle focuses on the dynamic relationship between "the part" and "the whole" (Smith et al., 2022, p. 22). The SR engaged in a holistic, iterative approach, moving back and forth between individual excerpts and the broader life context to develop a deep, evolving understanding (Smith et al., 2022, p. 22–23). This process involved a "dynamic" and "non-linear engagement" with the data, including repeated readings, revisiting earlier transcripts, and allowing interpretations to shift as insights deepened (Smith et al., 2022, p. 23).

Moreover, IPA merges the hermeneutics of empathy in seeking to access the participant's insider perspective with the hermeneutics of questioning, which pushes the researcher beyond surface description toward deeper interpretation (Tuffour, 2017; Smith et al., 2022).

Idiography

Idiography emphasises the attention to the particular and individual (Eatough & Smith, 2017). This is critical to the study's goal of preserving the integrity of each participant's unique experience. IPA' idiographic approach requires detailed, case-by-case analysis before identifying shared patterns across participants analysis (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Noon & Hallam, 2018). Idiography will allow the SR to carefully attend to how each OA perceives and interprets their RRD within their specific social and emotional context. While idiography does not reject generalisations, it supports developing them cautiously, grounding insights in detailed, contextual understanding (Smith et al., 2022). This allows the SR to explore not just general patterns, but the nuanced and subjective experiences of RRD in OA.

Sample Criteria

Sampling methods aim to enhance both efficiency and validity and should align with the study's objectives and methodological assumptions (Gray, 2014). In IPA, purposive and homogeneous sampling are central to ensuring that participants have direct, meaningful experience of the phenomenon under investigation (Bouncken et al., 2025; Creswell, 2016). This study therefore employed a non-probability, purposive sampling approach, selecting participants based on their relevance to the research focus, the experience of RRD in OA.

To ensure a homogeneous sample, inclusion criteria were established to recruit participants who shared key characteristics and a common experience, as recommended in IPA (Smith et al., 2022). Participants were required to be cisgender individuals aged 65 or older, identifying as male or female, who had been in a heterosexual RR lasting at least one year. They were also required to be Maltese citizens residing in Malta, and their RRs, whether through marriage, civil union, cohabitation, or informal partnership, had ended for reasons other than the death of a partner.

Interested individuals received a participant information sheet (Appendices D & E) outlining the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The SR then screened prospective participants to confirm eligibility. As IPA prioritises depth over breadth, a small sample size was selected to enable detailed exploration of individual experiences. Smith et al. (2022) recommend five participants for a Master's-level IPA study. In total, eight OAs reached out to the SR but only five met the inclusion criteria and were thus recruited.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics guide decisions throughout the research process, including how data is collected, analysed, and communicated (Gedutis et al., 2022). To ensure research integrity and participant wellbeing, ethical approval was obtained from the Dissertations Committee and the Social Wellbeing Faculty Research Ethics Committee (SWB FREC) at the University of Malta.

The research study addressed a potentially sensitive topic, as discussing a RRD may evoke emotional distress (Silverio et al., 2022). Therefore, necessary precautions were taken to safeguard the psychological wellbeing of participants.

Firstly, an exclusion criterion was set to avoid recruiting vulnerable participants. OAs who were receiving treatment for a severe psychiatric condition, such as bipolar disorder or schizophrenia or who had a diagnosis of dementia, were excluded from taking part in this study. Moreover, OAs who were under the care of a mental health professional were also prevented from participating in the research study. Additionally, to ensure participants' emotional wellbeing, their experience of RRD had to have occurred at least eighteen months before taking part in the study, but no more than five years prior to the research. This time frame was chosen to allow sufficient time for emotional processing, while keeping the experience recent enough for participants to recall it with clarity.

In addition, participation in the study was voluntary and interested individuals were invited to contact the SR at their own volition. The participants were provided with detailed information about the study in a written information sheet, which advised them that taking part in the interview might cause discomfort or distress due to its potentially sensitive nature. Prior to the interview process the SR went through the detailed consent form with potential participants. The consent form was signed by all parties involved before the initiation of the interview meeting. Consent forms were available in either English or Maltese, depending on participants' preference (Appendices J & K).

All data was pseudonymised, ensuring participants' identities were not linked to transcripts or notes, with identifiable details removed. Throughout the interview process, the SR employed a sensitive approach, regularly monitoring participants' comfort, and participants retained the right to ask for a break. While caution was taken to structure and ask questions in a sensitive manner, participants had the option to refrain from answering if they felt uncomfortable with certain questions and could withdraw from the interview at any stage without providing a reason.

In addition, a 'Debrief Form' (Appendix N & O) containing a list of free mental health services was provided to participants in case the interview elicited distress and further support was needed. The SR made herself available to support the participants in accessing these services if needed.

The SR ensured the safe storage of the collected data and informed participants about these storage practices. Participants were informed of their right under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation to access, rectify and request that data concerning them be erased, up until this is technically possible (by December 2026). Throughout the interview, participants were only asked to provide data pertinent to the research study. No data was uploaded to any online storage. In the case of storing personal

data, such as consent forms, which could be linked to pseudonyms, the interview data was identifiable only to those who have access to the pseudonym and personal data, namely the SR and the research supervisor.

Participant Recruitment

Following ethical clearance by the SWB FREC, organisations pertaining to OAs, were asked to disseminate a brief information sheet about the study among their members (Appendices B & C). In addition, the SR posted information about the study in Facebook groups that had granted permission to post. The 'Facebook Blurb' that was posted on Facebook can be found under appendices H & I.

Interested participants were asked to reach out to the SR either through email or phone. Once their eligibility was confirmed based on the inclusion criteria, they received a more comprehensive information sheet (Appendices D & E) for them to review. The information sheet explicitly stated that participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without needing to provide a reason, if it was technically feasible. This information was also communicated verbally.

After participants were identified, interviews were scheduled based on their availability. They were provided with a consent form (Appendices J & K), and their written consent was acquired.

Data Collection Tool

Semi-structured interviews were used to elicit rich, detailed first-person accounts of participants' experiences of RRD. As the most common data collection method in IPA studies (Smith & Nizza, 2022), semi-structured interviews use "open" and "expansive" questions to facilitate deep exploration (Smith et al., 2022, p.56). An interview schedule was carefully designed to promote a collaborative and comfortable interaction between the SR and participants, encouraging detailed reflections.

The guide included eleven open-ended contextual questions with prompts, followed by three debriefing questions that explored participants' feelings and revealed additional insights. Interviews lasted approximately 45 to 90 minutes (Smith et al., 2022). Questions invited participants to reflect on when they first sensed their RR was ending, their perceptions of the dissolution, their roles in the relationship dynamics, challenges faced, emotionally charged memories, and how they navigated the experience.

Both the interviewer and interviewee were active participants in the data gathering process. The SR practiced active listening and used probing to explore emerging issues, aiming to co-construct a nuanced, first-person narrative combining thoughts, emotions, and sensations (Smith et al., 2022). Care was taken to avoid leading or judgmental questions, and unexpected turns in the conversation often led to valuable insights.

Data Analysis

Participants consented to their interviews being audio-recorded, and these were then transcribed verbatim by the SR. Data was analysed using IPA, following the seven-stage approach outlined by Smith et al. (2022). IPA is an iterative and inductive process, requiring the researcher to move back and forth between the data and emerging insights (Kirkham et al., 2015).

In the first step, the SR immersed herself in the data through repeated readings of each transcript, beginning with the first transcript and proceeding sequentially. This helped develop familiarity with the content.

A table with three columns in a Word document was used to organise the analysis. The transcript was placed in the middle column; exploratory comments were made in the right-hand column, focusing on significant or interesting aspects of the participant’s account. During this stage, the SR aimed to bracket personal assumptions and stay close to the

participant's words (Smith & Nizza, 2022). Key phrases were highlighted, and additional insights were added with each rereading.

The second step overlapped with the first, as exploratory notes were further developed to capture the main topics and summarise key content (Smith et al., 2022).

In the third step**,** the focus shifted to analysing the exploratory notes to generate experiential statements. These statements reflected the participant's subjective experiences, capturing their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions in more interpretive terms (Smith et al., 2022). Experiential statements were noted on the left-hand columns of the word document created.

The fourth step involved mapping connections between experiential statements to identify patterns and groupings, revealing the underlying structure of each participant's experience (Smith et al., 2022).

In the fifth step, the grouped experiential statements were labelled to form Personal Experiential Themes (PETs), representing key elements of the participant's lived experience.

The sixth step repeated the above process for all transcripts, ensuring that each participant's account was analysed individually.

Finally, in the seventh step, the researcher identified Group Experiential Themes (GETs) by comparing PETs across transcripts to explore patterns of similarity and divergence.

The analysis was non-linear and dynamic, described by Smith et al. (2022) as "collaborative, personal, intuitive, difficult, creative, intense and conceptually demanding" (p. 76). Following the completion of the analysis, findings were documented. Four GETs were developed, with each comprising three to five sub-themes, as presented in the following chapter.

Reflexivity

As mentioned in Chapter One, OAs was an unfamiliar cohort for me. My perceptions of OAs and RRs in OA were largely shaped by my own family experiences: one grandmother who remained widowed for over 20 years without seeking another RR, and another set of grandparents who lived contentedly together into their 80s until death parted them. These personal experiences led me to associate ageing with either long term relational stability or emotional withdrawal from RRs.

My motivation to pursue this topic arose from both personal curiosity and professional interest. Personally, I had become aware that my understanding of ageing was shaped by limited, family-based perspective. I wanted to challenge and expand this view. As a counselling psychology trainee, I was drawn to the underexplored areas of relational experience, such as the emotional and psychological impact of RRD in OA. I became curious about how OAs experience RRD, how they make meaning of these transitions, and how they maintain or redefine themselves in its aftermath.

Reflecting on my assumptions, I realise that broader societal narratives also influenced my views. Cultural portrayals often depict ageing as a period of decline, passivity, or reduced emotional engagement. Without realising it, I had internalised some of these messages, assuming that OA tend to view life more negatively or experience it at a slower, less meaningful pace.

However, the participants in this study directly challenged these notions. Their stories revealed continued growth, adaptability, and hopefulness, even in the emotionally difficult context of their RRD. They demonstrated that OA can still be a time of change, resilience, and personal redefinition.

Additionally, having experienced RRD myself prior to conducting this study, I found moments of personal resonance with the participants' narratives. Although we were at

different life stages, their reflections on loss, loneliness, and rebuilding themselves mirrored aspects of my own experience. Some interviews evoked strong emotional reactions, particularly around themes of loneliness, something I had personally struggled with. I had to remain mindful not to let this aspect of their stories dominate my interpretation, nor to analyse their experiences through the lens of my own.

To manage these biases, I engaged in bracketing throughout the research process actively reflecting on and setting aside personal assumptions to remain attuned to the meanings participants ascribed to their experiences. This reflexive stance aligns with Heidegger's view that complete objectivity is unattainable, as researchers inevitably bring their own perspectives into the process (Chan et al., 2013). From topic selection to theme development, my worldview influenced the research but rather than a flaw, this subjectivity is embraced in IPA, which values the double hermeneutic: interpreting participants' interpretations.

Ultimately, this research reshaped how I view OA. Rather than seeing it as a period of decline, I now recognise it as another stage of life, one where transformation and growth remain possible, especially for those willing to engage with change.

Validity and Trustworthiness

Validity refers to how well a qualitative study's design and methods achieve its aims, while trustworthiness ensures rigour and credibility (Smith et al., 2022; Amankwaa, 2016). Yardley (2017) outlined four broad principles for enhancing and demonstrating quality in qualitative research. Firstly, 'sensitivity to context', by recognising participants' perspectives, sociocultural background, and how these shape both their accounts and the researcher's interpretation (Yardley, 2017). This study acknowledged the complexity of RRs and allowed participants to express their experiences openly and at their own pace. Moreover, a thorough review of the literature on OA and RRD in OA was conducted prior to the commencement of

the study and continued throughout the research process. In addition, the SR avoided imposing preconceived ideas but attended to the meanings expressed by the participants (Yardley, 2017).

'Commitment and rigour' involve an in-depth engagement with the topic (Yardley, 2017). The SR followed IPA procedures closely as outlined by Smith et al, (2022). Furthermore, this was attended by careful transcription, and prolonged engagement with the data. In addition, adopting a small, purposive sample allowed for rich analysis, aligning with the research aims.

This third dimension proposed Yardley (2017) is 'Transparency and coherence', which outlines the importance of a clear analysis. Coherence between the research question, theoretical perspective, and methods employed should be achieved. The use of verbatim quotes to provide a rich, contextualised representation of participants' lived experiences allowed for transparency.

'Impact and importance' consider that research should have practical significance and utility for the intended community (Yardley, 2017). Prior to initiating the research, the SR sought rationale and significance prior to undertaking this research. The impact and importance need to be re-written Ultimately, Yardley (2017) emphasises the importance of applying these criteria flexibly, depending on the topic under research, and the qualitative approach adopted.

Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework identify four key criteria for establishing trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In this study, credibility was ensured through repeated transcript readings and interpretative analysis grounded in participants' own words. Transferability was applied by providing relevant information about participants' backgrounds. Dependability through consistent adherence to IPA procedures and documenting each stage of data collection and analysis. Finally,

confirmability by bracketing assumptions and prioritising participants' meanings. These criteria remain central to establishing rigour in qualitative research (McGinley et al., 2021; Riazi & Ghanbar, 2023).

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research methodology for exploring RRD in OA, highlighting the choice of IPA for its ability to capture rich, subjective experiences. It also explained the study's rationale in light of the growing OA population, and detailed the research design, participant criteria, recruitment, data collection, and analysis methods. Finally, it addressed trustworthiness, validity, and ethical considerations.

The following chapter presents the findings that were elicited from the participants' interviews during data analysis.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the main findings from the data analysis, highlighting recurring themes across the participants' experiences. The Findings are organised into four Group Experiential Themes (GETs), with participants' voices and the Student Researcher's interpretative lens enriching the analysis (Smith et al., 2022). Both common and individual experiences are explored. A summary of the findings is shown in Table 2, with a detailed version and verbatim quotes (including original verbatim Maltese quotes) in Appendix S. Quotes are cited with transcript page numbers, as recommended by Smith et al. (2022).

Salient Participant Information

Five older adults (OAs) (four females, one male), aged 65 to75, participated in the study. One was recruited via social media and the rest through organisations catering for OAs. Legna, in her late 60s, had the longest romantic relationship (RR), a 51-year marriage with children. Laura, in her mid-sixties and Olga, in her early seventies met their ex-partners online, with their RR lasting one to two years. Frank, in his mid-seventies and Maria, in her early seventies met their partners socially, and their RR lasted around five years. Only Legna discussed a marital relationship dissolution. The other four participants were previously married earlier in life, but their marriages ended, and their most recent RR was non-marital. The participants' romantic relationship dissolution (RRD) all occurred within the past five years.

Group Experiential Themes

Table 2

Table of GETs

Theme 1: "I Was Seeing Things for What They Were" (Laura, p.4)	1. "It was a bit of a one-way stream" (Legna, p.4)
	2. "I Felt Trapped" (Legna, p.12)
	3. "Secrets and Lies" (Legna, p.3)
Theme 2: Unravelling Bonds	1.Feelings Towards Partner Started Changing
	2.External Opinions
	3. "Could I have been Wrong in my Decision?" (Legna, p.15)
Theme 3: The Many Faces of Loss	1. Losing my Place
	2. The Loss of What Could Have Been
Theme 4: A Catalyst for Growth	1. "I can survive this" (Legna, p.10)
	2. Steadying Forces
	3. Breaking Free
	4. Embracing Life's Journey
	5. Knowing One's Needs

"I Was Seeing Things for What They Were" (Laura, p.4)

This GET highlighted the complexity of romantic relationships (RRs). While the participants initially experienced happiness in their RR, over time they began to identify certain concerns which overshadowed the beneifts of their RR.

***"It Was a Bit of a One-Way Stream"* (Legna, p.4)**

Maria, Frank and Legna shared aspects of their RR which they enjoyed. Maria bonded with her partner over dancing: "we used to go dancing a lot, nearly every day" (p.1). She felt encouraged by him to pursue dancing " having someone gives you courage" (Maria, p.1). His dancing skills and physique contributed to early satisfaction in the RR: "he danced and had a good physique was enough to make me happy" (Maria, p.2). Frank valued the shared love for animals, saying "we both had a dog [...] they kept us like a family" (p.2). Despite difficulties in their RR, Legna acknowledged a continued recognition of her former husband's character: "I stayed also because he is a good man'" (p.2).

Over time, the participants began to recognise a recurring imbalance in their RR, where emotional and practical efforts felt one-sided and unreciprocated. Legna became aware of how much of the relational burden she was carrying. Legna described "I had to take almost mother father role" (p.3), and she spoke of the exhaustion that came with being the one who consistently upheld communication in the RR: "too tired of sustaining it up, by myself" (p.4). Her sense of being over- relied upon took on a deeper, more painful meaning when she reflected, "I have been convenient, cause I was a good homemaker" (Legna, p.6).

Maria's experience echoed this. Maria supported her partner's effort to lose weight, but later reflected on the imbalance; "I had to always go out with a pot of soup or vegetables when we were meeting up" (p.2). She later realised the lack of reciprocity: "I was offering a lot of food, and I wasn't being compensated for it" (Maria, p.8). The imbalance became even more tangible financially, as she noted, "I used to spend a lot more money on him" (Maria,

p.4), while he would contribute minimal amounts “three euros to enter […] and a bottle of water”(Maria, p.4).

Frank was open to involving his partner in his family life but felt shut out from hers: “she kept me away from her children” (p.2). Although he attended some family events, “not all of them” (p.2), which to him signified unmet expectations of inclusion. As someone who went “fully in” (Frank, p.3), he grew frustrated by the imbalance, eventually realising the RR was “one way” (Frank, p.8). This led him to withdraw and protect himself: “I put my guard up” (Frank, p.3).

Similarly, Maria began to question the foundation of their relationship: “what was he offering?” (p.11). Legna recognised that “it was a bit of a one-way stream” (p.4), and that the “minuses are more than the pluses” (p.4). In contrast to the other participants, Laura shared a reciprocal RR with her former partner “apart from giving I used to receive, it wasn’t only from my side” (p.13).

I Felt Trapped (Legna, p.12)

Olga, Laura and Legna all expressed a sense of entrapment in their RR, despite initially experiencing joy and fulfilment. Olga recalled good memories “we put on the radio full blast […] we go the kebab shop and have a pizza” (p.15). Laura described her partner as “out of this world” (p.12) and said, “he took care of me like a princess” (p.3). She emphasised, “I was happy a lot” (Laura, p.17). Olga found sexual satisfaction: “sexually it was wonderful” (p.4), and a sense of family with her partner’s children: “it got me into a family environment” (p.4). Laura, who “lacked love in my life” (p.17) , said the RR “gave me a sense of caring” (p.16).

Over time, Laura began to see her RR differently, stating, “I was seeing things for what they were” (p.4). She noticed her partner’s resistance to change, repeatedly visiting the same places, returning to the same restaurants, sitting at the same table: “the same spot he had

a photo at" (p.4). This made Laura question if the RR was "too good to be true" (p.1). While she wanted to create new memories, he clung to the past, attempting to recreate memories from his time with his late wife. Despite expressing her needs: "I told him 'let's make our own memories'" (Laura, p.4), Laura admitted with disappointment, "he wouldn't budge" (p.4). Eventually, she realised "this is not a healthy relationship" (Laura, p.6). This emotional atmosphere subtly confined her, leaving little room for spontaneity and growth and instead creating a quiet but persistent form of emotional entrapment.

This gradual awareness of relational confinement was also reflected in Olga's experience. She recognised a recurring pattern of entrapment in her RRs. Although she continued socialising: "I was still going out with men […] if there was a concert" (Olga, p.7), her partner became increasingly jealous and restrictive: "he says, 'you can't talk to that one or go there'" (Olga, p.7). This mirrored her past, prompting reflection: "I went through all that to separate from my husband […] and I find myself in the same situation" (Olga, p.7). Olga's personal freedom was constrained: "it did not give me the opportunity to pursue things like culture, which is something I love" (p.12), and his lack of interest in travel contrasted sharply with her passions: "he doesn't even like traveling and I have travelled the world" (Olga, p.7). Ultimately, the cumulative loss of autonomy led Olga to question the RR: "what can this person offer me?" (p.2). She reached a breaking point: "suddenly my life was being taken away from me […] so I left him" (Olga, p.7).

Legna's RR too became a space of emotional entrapment, particularly through the limitations on her ability for self-expression and autonomy. A powerful example was her decision to give up music which was a core part of her identity "music is my life" (Legna, p.23), which she had suppressed because "he did not appreciate it" (p.23). Her emotional entrapment also manifested physically: "staying home […] was making myself very ill"

(Legna, p.11), she said, describing a time when “I could not walk” (Legna, p.11). The weight of hopelessness became overwhelming: “I had given up […] I felt trapped” (Legna, p.12).

“Secrets and Lies” (Legna: 88)

Three participants experienced betrayal in their RR. Both Legna and Maria had suspicions about their partner: “I had felt that there was something” (Legna, p.3), while Maria recalled frequently finding her partner online “I always found him on the internet” (p.4). Despite giving her husband multiple chances to talk, “I gave him many opportunities to sit down and talk to me and that never happened” (p.3), Legna’s suspicions were confirmed, “I had evidence” (p.3). Similarly, Maria, aware that he had previously used a dating website, questioned her partner about his online activity. Though he claimed he was just playing “sudoku” (p.3), her doubts led her to search the site: “I found his photo” (Maria, p.5).

Legna shared that “there is nothing in the marriage vows which he has kept” (p.5), marking a turning point where she could finally set boundaries: “that was the last straw” (p.4). She confronted the reality behind her illusions:“thinking we had a very [...] good enough marriage [...] when there are lies I would not ever follow” (Legna, p.4). Legna described this as her “breaking point” and *“*turning point” (p.3), adding,“this frees me now” (p.3). The loss of guilt became a form of freedom “If I go now, I have nothing to feel guilty about, it justifies me” (Legna, p.3). Similarly, Maria reached her breaking point upon discovering her partner had been seeing someone else: “I confronted him [...] are you still looking for someone?” (p.5). He admitted to another RR, and Maria ended it decisively:“I blocked him [...] and it ended” (Maria, p.5).

Frank shared that “all the partners that I had betrayed me” (p.10), followed by a hint of self-blame: “this is what happens when you trust with your eyes closed” (p.10). Though he initially claimed, “it did not impact me negatively” (p.10) Frank’s repeated emphasis, “the parting, the parting, the betrayal, the parting” (p.10) suggested deeper emotional pain. He

became tearful and shifted to talking about his time in the war: “when you have friends that die in the war, that is forever painful” (Frank, p.10*).* This moment pointed to the cumulative weight of unresolved grief, and possibly a discomfort in showing vulnerability related to his RRD redirecting it toward a more socially accepted form of pain grief over the death of people he once knew.

Unravelling Bonds

This GET highlighted the gradual breakdown of the participants’ RRs. Shifts in feelings accumulated over time, while external opinions influenced whether participants stayed or left. Some participants faced internal struggles as they questioned their decisions of their RRD.

Feelings Towards Partner Started Changing

Maria’s feelings towards her partner shifted gradually. Maria began noticing aspects of her partner that bothered her: “he doesn’t even speak to people […] he does not make friends with anyone”(p.3), and admitted, “he was annoying me” (p.3). Her feelings were reflected in her behaviour: “I wasn’t paying attention to him” (Maria, p.8) and her efforts to nurture the RR declined: “I was offering a lot of food […] towards the end, I decreased” (Maria, p.8).

Maria’s growing dislike towards her partner mirrored Legna’s experience. Legna described being “unhappy for at least 20 years” (p.1), and recalled the shift as a gradual process: “not like it is a flip over from one day to the next […] this is getting harder and harder” (p.9). Legna went through an internal grieving process: “I was kind of grieving for myself, realising okay, it is over ” (p.9). Eventually, she started to verbalise her feelings: “then I started making it more apparent and more verbal with him” (Legna, p.9). Similarly, Frank described his RR as one that “faded out slowly” (p.8). He sensed a growing

disconnect, noting “she was not on the same intellectual level” (p.5). This led to a gradual loss of interest: “it was cooling off” (p.8).

External Opinions

External opinions played a significant role in shaping whether participants chose to stay, leave, or prolong their RR. For Maria, her son’s concern about her being alone at his wedding led her to delay her RRD, as he told her “ ‘make sure to get a partner with you so you can dance’” (p.3). She planned to dissolve the RR after the wedding: “let me wait until my son’s wedding passes, that I will leave him” (p.3). This delay led to distraction and prolonged the RR: “I used to forget that I had to dissolve the relationship [...] we were always dancing” (Maria, p.3).

Similar to Maria, external opinions created pressure for Legna to stay in the RR. Legna explained “everybody loved him [...] everybody liked the idea of us as a couple” (p.2). She feared being judged if she had to dissolve the RR: “my kids would be very angry and pitying their father, umm, and I would be the monster” (Legna, p.2). In contrast, Olga experienced the opposite, as her family disapproved of her partner. Olga’s niece and brother both voiced strong dislike for her partner: “ ‘aunt I don’t like him, I don’t like him’” (p.9), “ ‘I cannot stand him, he is annoying’” (p.9). This intensified her internal conflict, eventually prompting her to reconsider her RRD: “at times I think to hell what my brother thinks, and to hell what my niece thinks” (Olga, p.11).

Laura’s experience highlighted the positive influence of external opinions. Her strong bond with her daughter provided clarity and reassurance: “I spoke with my daughter […] and she told me it's not a healthy relationship” (Laura, p.6). Her daughter’s input helped her navigate uncertainty and supported her decision to dissolve the RR.

Could I have been Wrong in my Decision? (Legna, p.15)

Laura, Olga, and Legna grappled with self-doubt as they reconsidered their choices following their RRD. Laura initially felt conflicted and emotionally unsettled "I couldn't cope [...] worrying, worrying" (p.6). She questioned if she had given her partner a fair chance: "did I give him a chance?" (Laura, p.6). Laura's thoughts disturbed her sleep: "I kept drifting in and out of sleep" (p.6). Similarly, Olga questioned whether the outcome of her RR would have been different if she adopted a different approach: "maybe with a little bit of tact I could have handled the relationship differently" (p.11). Eventually, Laura found peace with her decision: "yes, I think I gave him enough of a chance" (p.6) but Olga remained burdened by self-blame wondering "if I had behaved differently in that relationship […] I could still be in that relationship " (p.19).

Legna's doubts led to a cycle of leaving and returning to the RR: "I make an effort to test my own decision of leaving" (p.3). Whilst she hoped for change, returning to the RR, was leaving her feeling emotionally depleted: "his thinking really crushes my soul" (p.15). The emotional impact would then manifest physically: " I start feeling unwell again" (Legna, p.15). Ultimately, she realised "I am trying again for nothing [...] this is no longer working (Legna, p.15).

In contrast, Frank appeared more at peace with his RRD. Describing himself as "a logical thinker" (p.13) and "not an emotional person" (p.13), he adopted a pragmatic approach: "if it is not working, I am not going to fight for it" (p.3). Legna however had once thought that "if someone works hard enough there would be a gratifying *(pause)* medium" (p.24). This delayed her decision to leave the RR: "not give myself the option to dissolve the relationship" (p.24). In fact because of her efforts to salvage the RR "I lasted 51 years cause otherwise I might have left much much sooner (Legna, p.24).

The Many Faces of Loss

This GET revealed the multifaceted nature of loss experienced by participants following a RRD. The impact extended far beyond the absence of a romantic partner, permeating various domains of life including daily routines, social connections, intimacy, and anticipated futures.

Losing my Place

Following their RRD, Laura, Maria, and Olga struggled with the shift to a more isolated routine . Laura reflected on the drastic change in her lifestyle: "from going out every day, to then ending up at home" (Laura, p.7). She described it as being "back to the old routine" (Laura, p.7). Similarly, Maria noted a change in her routine: "in the evening I stopped going out" (p.7). Olga experienced a painful isolation in her routine: "during the weekends I suffer a lot because I don't go out" (Olga, p.12), suggesting that the end of her relationship led to a withdrawal from spaces where connection and vitality once existed.

Maria not only lost her romantic partner but also her dancing partner: " if I go dancing at certain places […] I feel alone, everybody with his partner" (p.6). Maria said "I felt funny" (p.6), returning to places that she had visited with her partner, which led her to avoid them, as a result, "you lose the friends you have" (Maria, p.6). Similarly, Olga's RRD brought about the absence of the familial connection she had developed through her partner's family. This loss triggered an even deeper past loss, as she remembered when her parents were alive "I miss the time when my parents were alive and I would have them over every single Sunday lunch time" (p.12) now "Sunday lunch time I suffer like crazy" (p.12)

The feeling of losing one's place was closely tied to the loss of intimacy. Olga became emotional as she said, "sometimes you arrive at a stage where you need someone to hug [...] that hug meant so much to me" (Olga, p.18). She also missed the sexual side of the relationship, "sex is an emotion, that if you open up to it, it relaxes you, it's rewarding"

(Olga, p.18). For her, physical closeness brought comfort and care without it, she felt emotionally and physically alone.

The Loss of What Could Have Been

Laura reflected on how happy her RR initially made her feel "as soon as I found it, I said I found the treasure in my life" (p.23). Even speaking about it allowed her to feel "euphoria" (p.23). She reflected on her former RR with a bittersweet fondness, knowing that the love she anticipated and hoped her did not materialise: "it wasn't like that" (Laura, p.23). Similar to Laura, Legna's RRD brought about a loss of a vision of life that had once felt certain "I thought it would last forever" (p.9). This brought with it grief, not only for the RR itself but for the life that was supposed to unfold within it: "I was kind of grieving for myself, realising okay, this is over" (Legna, p.9). Olga got in touch with a deeper loss that went beyond the RR she shared with her former partner. This deeper loss was related to never having had a traditional family of her own: "sometimes I say 'God […] why did you not give me a family of my own?' But there is no reply" (Olga, p.23).

Olga expressed frustration towards men who resist embracing retirement "people are afraid to enjoy their retirement, especially men" (p.21). She added that " men hang on to their jobs [...] feeding the ego" (Olga, p.21). For Olga "retirement means enjoy your retirement" (p.21). Her words suggested a vision of retirement filled with companionship and appreciation for life's pleasures: "how about pretending you are the tourist […] going to see the beautiful architecture in Malta" (Olga, p.21).Yet she spoke from a place where this ideal remained unfulfilled. Beneath this frustration, there seemed to be a deeper, more personal sense of loss over not having a partner with whom to share this stage of life.

Frank got in touch with memories of his first love "when I was around 22, I was ready to get married […] prior to the wedding she fell ill and died" (p.5). The ending of his latest

RRD revealed lingering emotions of a earlier and past RR that was never given the chance to fully unfold. This reflected a loss not just of a person, but of a future which was suddenly cut short. He went on to say that "this continues to impact me" (Frank, p.5), potentially shaping how he experienced RR and their endings.

A Catalyst for Growth

Whilst the RRD brought with it significant losses and complexities, participants also encountered opportunities for self-discovery and psychological growth. The RRD prompted reflection, a reclaiming of personal agency, and a deeper recognition of one's own needs.

"I can survive this" (Legna, p.10)

When her RR ended, Laura stated "I was very down" (p.10) and "at first you feel lost" (p.10). She questioned "how am I going to rise above this?" (Laura, p.10). This got her in touch with her RRD from the father of her children, a time which she described as "I had lost myself [...]I was buried, literally buried" (Laura, p.22). She reflected how she managed to overcome the difficulties of that RRD, and this provided a source of encouragement to face her latest RRD as she recognised that, "I am strong enough, I can do this" (Laura, p.23). Maria also recalled her adversity during her dissolution from the father of her children: "I had lost everything in life. I was completely finished" (p.14). This allowed her to navigate her current RRD, as she stated "I am a survivor, I can handle this" (Maria, p.14).

Initially, Legna expressed a deep sense of despair, stating that she had "given up on life" (p.12). However, a turning point emerged when she challenged this resignation with a powerful question: "why should I die if I haven't yet lived?" (Legna, p.12). With little external support to rely on, Legna turned inward, and emphasised the importance of self-reliance: "nothing works better than internal support" (p.22). This introspective journey led her to a profound realisation: "I have to be the one to heal myself*"* (p.13). She began to reframe her future, allowing space for possibility: "I can give myself a better life than I'm

living instead of giving up on life completely" (Legna, p.12). Through positive self-talk:"I can survive this even on my own; it would be tough, but I can", she not only began to recover emotionally, but also noticed a parallel improvement in her physical health: "I started becoming much better physically too" (Legna, p.13).

Steadying Forces

Participants drew on different sources of support following their RRD, shaped by preferences and personal circumstances. When it came to support, Legna suggested that "people have to really reconcile with what would work with them" (p.30), a sentiment echoed by Maria: "people seek different things [...] it depends on one's character" (p.20).

Maria found comfort in staying active and socially engaged. Her days became full: "I'm always on the move" (Maria, p.18). Staying physically active was paramount for Maria "I went out walking every day" (p.13) and she started dancing again "I am going to line dancing" and "swimming" (p.16). She also got in touch with her creative side "I am going to drawing lessons" (p.18). Solo activities like swimming opened opportunities for connection: "all of a sudden there's a lot of people, everybody speaking with each other" (p.22). Engaging in new activities not only brought joy but also helped Maria build a supportive social network: "I made a lot of friends" (p.16).

Like Maria, Laura built a strong support network through forming part of different organisations: "I have a lot of friends, I have a lot of support" (p.3). Moreover, this enabled Laura to meet OAs whothemselves had gone through a RRD, which allowed her to feel that "I am not alone" (p.8). Just like Laura, Maria discovered the depth of connection with women her age: "when women get used to each other, they love each other with all their heart" (p.16). Laura emphasised "it is important that you hang around with people your age" (p.18). In addition, both Laura and Maria found support in their children: "my daughter was a

source of support ” (Laura, p.6). In contrast, Legna did not have their support: “especially from my kids […] the anger that came towards me was making it even harder” (p.10).

Frank, despite considering himself as “a loner” (p.14), also highlighted the importance of connection: “don’t stay alone […] you need to be with people” (p.9). He found fulfilment through social interactions, connecting with like-minded people and engaging in “different discussions [...] I found intelligent people” (Frank, p.8).

While some participants thrived in forming new social connections, Olga described a shift in her social needs, expressing fatigue with group interactions: “I am no longer a person of being part of a group of friends, I have had enough of that” (p.26). She is more interested in intimate, one-to-one connections, though she noted a lack of close friendships: “I don’t have women friends that I meet” (p.16). Legna struggled with feeling misunderstood by her friends, stating, “the few that I trusted *(pause)* didn’t really want to hear my pain” (p.10). Both women longed for deeper, more supportive relationships: Olga hoping for “a soulmate, a good friend, or a good partner” (p.22), and Legna reflected, “it would have been easier […] if I would have found people who would have understood” (p.22).

Work served as a coping mechanism for both Frank and Legna whilst navigating their RRD. Frank's work filled up his time: “I had a job where I travelled for five months, and I travelled to different countries, so I didn’t feel it that much" (Frank, p.8). Legna decided “not to retire” (p.18) and work provided a source of “satisfaction” (p.18). Positive feedback at work helped Legna feel less like a failure, “like I might have failed as a wife and as a mother” and realise, “at least I am not a failure at everything” (Legna, p.18). Legna also felt appreciated by colleagues: “I am appreciated in other ways too, and that supported me very much” (p.18).

Breaking Free

Before entering the RR, Laura described herself as emotionally guarded, admitting, "I was scared" (p.13) and *"*I absolutely had no trust" (p.21). She actively avoided RRs to protect herself: "I had a barrier to not get hurt" (Laura, p.11). However, this RR gradually softened her defences: "I loved again, and I was loved again" (Laura, p.23). It also helped Laura challenge a belief about ageing and love, affirming, "our body grows, gets old, but the soul is still young" (p.11) "and yes, you can, you can, fall in love again" (p.11).

Olga reached a self-awareness that empowered her to move beyond emotional dependency. She recognised that she had tried to make her partner "everything in my life that was missing" (Olga, p.19), but later realised "not to expect any men or relationship to be your everything" (Olga, p.23). This marked a shift toward emotional independence, as she embraced the idea of maintaining her own space and identity within a RR: "I have my own thing to do" (Olga, 23). Olga's focus turned inward, with a growing desire for personal growth: "I need to develop more myself in having hobbies and pursuing things I like to do" (p.24).

Legna's journey towards her RRD was a gradual process of freeing herself from emotional and social constraints. She began to question whether she should continue living according to others' expectations or honour her own struggles: "am I going to go by what people think and observe or am I going to go by my own *(pause)* struggles?" (Legna, p.11). A key part of her growth involved releasing the guilt and duty that had kept her tied to the RR: "free from having to live from guilt if I left" (Legna, p.4) and "free from obligation" (Legna, p.4). In time, she realised that permission to leave the RR did not have to come from anyone else: "I don't need his permission to leave, I need to give myself the permission" (Legna, p.10).

Knowing One's Needs

Participants expressed ambivalence about re-partnering, as they were open about the possibility yet cautious and reflective. Laura shared a relaxed view: "if it happens, it happens" (p.13), while Legna stated, "I am still open to the idea" (p.26). Despite this openness, all participants set clear boundaries, reflecting a shift towards self-protection, independence, and selectivity.

Maria approached re-partnering with a strong sense of autonomy and rejected superficial dating norms: "there are men that just want to go out and eat" (p.18) and asserted that "if he doesn't know how to dance, there is not much for us to do" (p.18). Dancing was central to Maria's life and non-negotiable: "then I would need to change my routine, and my routine is dancing" (Maria, p.23). This indicated that, for Maria, dancing took precedence over being in a RR. In addition, financial independence further reinforced her stance: "I worked, I have my own pension" (Maria, p.18), and thus she was not dependent on a partner. She clearly articulated the qualities she sought: a "modern, jolly, beautiful man [...] someone that knows how to take care of himself" (Maria, p.24).

In contrast, Frank's openness to re-partnering was tied to emotional security and mutual commitment. He emphasised a need for reassurance: "I will not commit with someone unless I am sure who truly wants to be with me" (Frank, p.11). Frank expressed fatigue with traditional romantic gestures: "I don't have the energy to get flowers and take someone out to eat" (p.6). This highlighted his desire for a RR that is emotionally restorative rather than draining.

Legna prioritised reciprocity and self-care, insisting that any future RR must be "an almost equal giving and taking" (p.28). She expressed concern about giving too much to others, fearing that a RR might take away from her own self-care: "I might lose focus of giving to myself" (Legna, p.28). This reflected an urge to safeguard her emotional wellbeing.

Both Frank and Laura emphasised the need for caution when considering re-partnering, advising not to rush: “don’t rush” (Frank, p.14), “don’t rush into things” (Laura, p.19). Their reflections revealed an awareness of the emotional vulnerability that can follow a RRD. Frank captured this vulnerability vividly: “you are fragile at that point, you will be drowning” (p.14), warning that what feels like a lifeline may actually be harmful, “you think you are grabbing on to a piece of wood, but it would be a shark fin” (p.14). Laura echoed this concern, highlighting the risks tied to age-related loneliness: “a lot of women are scared of being alone, and they would desperately want a man [...] one is to be cautious of this as it might cause damage” (p.19). They both recognised the risk of clinging to a new RR out of desperation rather than discernment of one’s needs.

Embracing Life’s Journey

Olga reflected, “everything happens for a reason in life [...] whatever happens, whatever you do in life, look at what the reason is, look at why it happened” (p.22). This outlook highlighted her attempt to make sense of her difficulties in navigating her RRD by reframing them within a broader positive narrative. A similar sense of acceptance emerged in Laura’s reflections. Despite the challenges she faced, she maintained a forward-looking perspective: “despite negative experiences, stay positive towards life [...] see what life is offering you and move on” (Laura, p.17). She also acknowledged the growth that came from the relationship: “I learnt from this experience” (p.10) and “I grew a little bit more” (p.16). Her words further emphasised a forward-looking attitude: “you have to be to improve your life. I have my life, and I want to live it, whatever comes” (Laura, p.19). For both women, acceptance became a way to make peace with the past and move toward personal growth.

Frank also expressed a form of acceptance, though his perspective was marked by an awareness of life’s unpredictability. He stated, “there is no guarantee, no one has a guarantee [...] it’s all a gamble” (Frank, p.16). He challenged the idea of permanence in relationships:

"there are no permanent relationships" (Frank, p.16). This revealed a pragmatic, perhaps even a protective approach toward potential future connections. While less optimistic than Olga or Laura, Frank's outlook still reflected an acceptance of life's uncertainties, showing how each participant arrived at their own form of meaning-making in the aftermath of their RRD.

Conclusion

Through these four GETs the participants' experience of their RRD was traced from initial doubts in the RR to the losses, the required support and the growth that followed. The next chapter will explore these findings in the context of existing literature and empirical studies.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter presents the key findings from participants' narratives, discussed in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The discussion is organised around the four Group Experiential Themes (GETs) that emerged from the data analysis. Additional literature accessed after data analysis has also been integrated. The GETs are examined through the lens of Schlossberg's Transition Theory (STT), using the 4-S system: Situation, Self, Support, and Strategies.The student researcher's interpretations and personal reflections are interwoven throughout the discussion to deepen understanding.

Seeing Things for What They Are

The Participants confronted painful truths about their romantic relationships (RRs), recognising patterns of imbalance, entrapment, and betrayal, which ultimately brought a sense of liberation.

These experiences disrupted their expectations of mutual support and care, leading them to question whether the RR remained equitable or emotionally fulfilling. They disrupted expectations of reciprocity, a key factor in RR satisfaction (Carter et al., 2023). Reciprocity, which is defined as the subjective evaluation of give and take in emotional, cognitive, and behavioural exchanges, is widely regarded as a key contributor to RR satisfaction (Carter et al., 2023; Wagner et al., 2013). Prior research has linked such imbalances to distress in older adults (OAs) (Kieslich & Steins, 2022; Braun et al., 2018; Bulanda et al., 2016), in addition a dysfunctional or non reciprocal RR has been associated with significant psychological distress in OAs (Kieslich & Steins, 2022). The participants realised that they did not have to remain trapped in an unsatisfying RR but were free to leave and take control of their lives.

These findings resonated with Braun et al. (2018), who explored how reciprocity related to RR satisfaction across age groups. While their longitudinal data suggested that

reciprocity may decline in importance over time, their cross-sectional findings indicated that OAs experienced a strong link between reciprocity and RR satisfaction (Braun et al., 2018).This supports the findings in this study, as participants appeared increasingly sensitive to perceived imbalances in their RR. Moreover, this mirrored the earlier literature reviewed, which highlighted the association between low RR quality and diminished wellbeing in OAs (Bulanda et al., 2016). It also aligned with Bildtgård and Öberg's (2025) distinction between unconscious predictors and consciously endorsed factors in OA divorce. Here, the conscious realisation of unmet emotional needs and persistent imbalance functioned as a key factor in motivating participants to dissolve their RR.

Social Exchange Theory (SET) posits that individuals assess RRs by weighing perceived rewards against costs (Wan & Antonucci, 2016). Dowd (1975) extended this theory to OAs, and suggested that age related declines in resources, such as health, income, and social roles increased dependence on one's partner and heightened vulnerability to inequitable exchanges. However, the present study challenged this assumption of passivity. Participants actively reassessed and, in many cases, chose to leave the RR they experienced as unbalanced or unfulfilling.

A particularly striking expression of this agency emerged in the context of betrayal. Several participants identified infidelity as a decisive rupture. This mirrored findings by Svačinka et al. (2023), who noted infidelity, jealousy, and third-party involvement as frequent sources of distress among RRs in OA. These stressors are not unique to RRs in OA, in fact they appear to function similarly across the lifespan (Svačinka et al., 2023). Supporting this, Lin et al. (2018) found that predictors of RRD, such as low marital quality, remarriage, and economic strain are consistent across age groups. This suggested that although the context of aging may shape experiences, the underlying relational dynamics remain broadly stable throughout OA.

In STT terms, non-reciprocity and betrayal constituted a destabilising Situation**,** undermining participants' expectations of mutual care (Schlossberg, 2011). At the same time, emerging indicators of personal resilience reflected the Self dimension, whereby Building on this, Machia and Ogolsky (2020) found that motivations to stay or leave RRs were guided by distinct cognitive processes, while feelings of love and satisfaction predict staying. The decision to leave a RR was more strongly influenced by the appeal of alternatives or the availability of social support (Machia and Ogolsky, 2020). Interestingly, none of the participants in the present study referenced alternative partners. Instead, their decisions aligned more with Canham et al. (2014), who reported that divorce across the lifespan is often driven by complex, interconnected factors such as flawed initial motivations, unresolved personal issues, abuse, poor communication, unequal household roles, and major life changes. Participants in the current study described an internal process of reflection, leading to the realisation that their RR had become untenable and that they had reached a personal limit of what they were willing to tolerate.

intrapersonal resources enabled individuals to reappraise their RR and exercise agency (Anderson et al., 2012). Together, these intersecting "S" factors catalysed a decision to dissolve the RR, illustrating how STT can account for both the stressor and the capacity to adapt.

Unravelling Bonds

For many participants, the path toward RRD began with a slow erosion of emotional connection. Feelings of distance and withdrawal often preceded the formal end of the RR, aligning with research suggesting that emotional disengagement often foreshadows a RRD (Weidmann & Chopik, 2022; Kiecolt-Glaser & Wilson, 2017).

Bildtgård and Öberg (2025) highlighted the reflective struggle OAs often faced when deciding to end a RR, typically marked by a gradual shift from tolerating underlying dissatisfaction to consciously evaluating and justifying the decision to leave. This process was reflected in both GET One and Two, where participants described moving from a vague sense of discomfort to a more deliberate and reflective stance. For many, this transition from the gradual buildup of dissatisfaction to an active decision played a central role in their journey toward a RRD.

However, not all experiences followed this gradual path. For some, sudden events like betrayal or emotional crises prompted abrupt endings, as supported by Canham et al. (2014) and Dzando et al. (2025). Although her emotional connection had been eroding over time, for one participant, it was the sudden realisation of an act of betrayal that ultimately compelled her to sever all ties. Similarly, another participant, who had endured years of dissatisfaction, reached a breaking point when her partner's secretive behavior came to light.

External influences also shaped participants' decisions. As highlighted in the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, successful adaptation to RRD often depended on how individuals navigated external adjustments and social influences (Sbarra & Borelli, 2019). This aligned with findings by Machia and Ogolsky (2020), who demonstrated that individuals were more likely to consider ending a RR when key figures in their lives validated that decision. Conversely, when one's social network encouraged staying despite dissatisfaction it deterred action (Machia & Ogolsky, 2020). This was evident in the current study, as participants who received support from their social circles often felt more confident and decisive in ending their RR, while those lacking such support tended to experience prolonged ambivalence, delayed decision-making, or heightened relational guilt (Pederson et al., 2020).

Dailey et al. (2020) explored the role of post-dissolution ambivalence, and emphasised that a RRD often involved conflicting thoughts and feelings toward former

partners. Their study linked such ambivalence to prolonged emotional distress, particularly among individuals who had experienced a cyclical RR (Dailey et al., 2020). These individuals were more likely to revisit doubts and reconsider reconciliation, complicating the adjustment process (Dailey et al., 2020). This emotional tension was strongly echoed in the sub-theme "Could I have been wrong in my decision?" Some participants grappled with uncertainty and second-guessed their decision. For example, one participant described deliberately testing her decision by re-entering the RR, reflecting the same cyclical patterns associated with distress noted by Dailey et al. (2020). Another participant questioned whether things might have been different had she approached the RR differently, reflecting the kind of ambivalence that can delay emotional resolution. In some cases, this inner conflict manifested somatically, such as through rumination and sleep disturbances.

The gradual breakdown of emotional connection created uncertainty about when, or even whether, to end the RR. According to STT slow and ambiguous transitions can make it difficult to recognise when change is needed (Anderson et al., 2012). In the present study, this ambiguity often left participants grappling with indecision or second-guessing their choices. At the same time, support from family and friends, whether encouraging or discouraging dissolution, significantly shaped participants' sense of control and readiness to act. STT helps explain how the interplay between a confusing situation and external feedback influenced both the timing of the RRD and participants' confidence in their decision.

The Many Faces of Loss

Participants' experiences revealed that the impact of a RRD extended well beyond the loss of a romantic partner. Rather, the RRD disrupted multiple aspects of their lives, be they emotional, social, and practical. As Canham et al. (2014) noted, the aftermath of a RRD is often emotionally complex and rarely follows a linear path. Research consistently showed that a RRD in OA is frequently accompanied by a temporary rise in psychological distress.

For instance, Dzando et al. (2025) found that depressive symptoms typically increased prior to and during the divorce process, but tended to subside afterward. Similarly, Tosi and van den Broek (2020) reported elevated levels of anxiety and depression during RRD, followed by a return to baseline within a year.

The RRD brought with it the loss of shared routines and social spaces, a loss of belonging, and connection. This finding echoed previous research showing that RRD in OA often disrupted social networks and increased the risk of loneliness (Wright et al., 2020; Teater & Chonody, 2019). In addition, the absence of intimacy, both emotional and sexual, was a particularly painful part of the RRD. Literature on RRs in OA identified intimacy as vital for emotional wellbeing, and its loss has been linked to increased loneliness and psychological distress (Ye et al., 2018; Tran, 2021). This was reflected in one participant's account, where she described missing both emotional closeness and physical touch following the RRD.

The sub-theme 'The Loss of What Could Have Been' captured a quiet but deeply felt grief that surfaced for several participants. The RRD not only marked the end of a RR but also intensified reflections on unfulfilled futures. The absence of a fulfilling partnership seemed to amplify other life disappointments, such as missed milestones, lost roles, or hopes that were never materialised. This mirrored findings in the literature on ageing and psychosocial transition, which noted that unachieved life goals can deepen feelings of loneliness and loss in OA (Victor & Yang, 2012).

Research by Dzando et al. (2025) and Sharma (2015) showed that OAs, especially women, often faced financial difficulties after a divorce. However, this was not reflected in the current study. The participants were financially independent, had worked throughout their lives, and were not dependent on their partners. Brown and Lin's (2012) findings suggested

that financial independence can empower OAs, especially women, to leave an unfulfilling RR.

From the perspective of STT, the Situation marked by losses in routine, intimacy, and future orientation intensified the emotional burden of the transition (Anderson et al., 2012). At the same time, the Self dimension emerged through participants' personal meaning-making, as they navigated and made sense of these layered losses using internal coping resources.

A Catalyst for Growth

OAs in this study drew on inner strength and various forms of support in navigating their RRD. Most of the participants emphasised the value of staying connected, and for some, informal spaces such as going swimming or local gatherings offered a sense of belonging. This reflected Torres's (2019) finding that casual settings fostered meaningful social connections among OAs. Beyond these encounters, participants actively rebuilt their support systems by joining organisations, taking up hobbies, or reentering employment. These provided emotional relief, structure, and opportunities to connect with others.

The importance of social support was consistently evident. Dzando et al. (2025) observed that OAs with strong social networks, particularly close friends or adult children, tended to adapt more successfully to a RRD. This was reflected in the current study; some participants relied on their children for emotional support. In contrast, one participant reflected on the absence of support from her children, while another became more aware of her childless state.These findings aligned with previous research showing that social networks protected against loneliness and that adult children often represented key relational figures in OA (Antonucci et al., 2019; Wright et al., 2020).

In line with existing literature, participants did not view the transition to singlehood as entirely negative (Teater & Chonody, 2019; Rauer & Jager, 2024). For many, the RRD

marked a turning point that prompted reflection on how they wished to live going forward. This period often brought greater clarity about personal and relational needs. Participants expressed a growing desire for emotional depth, mutual respect, and reciprocity in future RRs. This reflected a broader shift toward empowerment and self-awareness.

As Fraley et al. (2021) suggested, attachment patterns could shift in response to life transitions (Platts et al., 2023; Chopik et al., 2019). In this study, one participant described becoming more open to love and emotional closeness, while another, shaped by repeated betrayals, expressed a need for reassurance and emotional safety in re-partnering. A third participant reflected on her previous dependence on a partner and expressed a desire to maintain more emotional independence in future RRs. These reflections pointed to a move toward more intentional and balanced relational dynamics (Hazan & Shaver, 2017).

Despite not being a primary focus in the reviewed literature, resilience emerged strongly throughout the participants' narratives. Resilience is the capacity to adapt while maintaining wellbeing (Hughes et al., 2012). This was evident in how participants managed emotional setbacks, restructured their lives, and reclaimed a sense of self. Life experience seemed to serve as a buffer, especially for participants who had already experienced a RRD. Minton et al. (2023) found that while both younger and OAs experienced emotional strain in cognitively demanding tasks, OAs recovered more effectively due to more developed emotional regulation strategies. This supported the idea that OAs may be especially well equipped to adapt to relational loss.

Forward looking perspectives were also present. While Wright and Lovatt (2024) found that many OAs approached the future with apprehension, participants in this study described it as a space for renewal and possibility. Rather than retreating from future thinking, several embraced it by rebuilding support systems, taking up new activities, and regaining a sense of independence and clarity. For the participants the future was not seen as

a threat, but as an opportunity to redefine life on their own terms. This contrasted with deficit based views of ageing, suggesting that how OAs relate to the future may depend more on the meaning they assign to transitions than on age itself.

Taken together, these findings showed that participants not only endured the transition but actively shaped it, consistent with STT. The Strategies component was reflected in how they reframed their RRD as an opportunity for self-discovery, took goal directed actions, and used emotional coping techniques like positive self-talk. The Support dimension was evident in encouragement from peers and adult children, and involvement in organisations which provided a sense of belonging and structure. These components illustrated how intentional coping, supported by meaningful social connections, helped participants move from loss toward personal growth.

Conclusion

The findings of this study were interpreted in relation to relevant peer reviewed and international literature. This study helped to both support previous findings, indicating that the experience of a RRD in OA is shared cross-culturally, and to introduce new perspectives that was not featured in prior research.

The final chapter will conclude the dissertation by providing a summary of the key findings, outlining the study's limitations, and offering final reflections.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Introduction

The following chapter brings this study to a close. It outlines the key findings and addresses the study's limitations. Implications for clinical practice and suggestions for future research in the field are also featured.

Summary of Findings

This study explored the lived experience of older adults (OAs) who had experienced a romantic relationship dissolution (RRD). It explored the impact that the RRD had on their lives, the antecedents that led to the RRD, and attempted to obtain an understanding of how OAs processed the ending of their romantic relationship (RR) and any coping strategies that were utilised.

The findings revealed insights into the emotional complexities associated with a RRD in older adulthood (OA). Participants described a gradual recognition of imbalance and emotional disconnection within their RR, which prompted deeper self-reflection and a reassessment of their emotional and relational needs. While the RRD brought a profound sense of loss, it also marked a turning point for many, becoming a catalyst for personal growth, renewed self-awareness, and transformation.

The study highlighted how social support and community engagement played a pivotal role in helping participants navigate their RRD, opening space for new forms of self-expression, personal exploration, and autonomy. These findings reveal not only the profound sense of loss accompanying a RRD in OAs, but also the remarkable capacity for meaning-making, agency, and life reconstruction following relational change.

Limitations of the Research

The sample included more women than men, at a ratio of four to one. As a result, the findings may predominantly reflect female perspectives. This gender imbalance underscores the importance of considering how gender differences shape the experience and interpretation of RRD in OA. Gender plays a significant role in patterns of marital dissolution and re-partnering among OAs, as well as in the experience of social support and loneliness (Brown et al., 2018).

The study's methodology was IPA and therefore specific inclusion, and exclusion criteria were applied to ensure a homogenous sample (Smith et al., 2022). However, achieving true homogeneity within the OA population presents inherent challenges, as OAs are highly heterogeneous (Bruggencate et al., 2018). Experiences of RRD varied considerably depending on factors such as age cohort, length, marital status, presence of children, and socioeconomic or health status, among others (Carr & Utz, 2020; Antonucci et al., 2014). Despite efforts to maintain a focused sample, some variation was inevitable and may have shaped the findings.

The student researcher (SR) employed various gatekeepers and used organisations and social media to access potential OAs experiencing a RRD. However, recruitment inherently limited participation to those who are active in social organisations or social media. Consequently, the study may have excluded individuals who experienced a RRD in isolation, potentially narrowing the scope of the findings (Negrin et al., 2022). This is particularly important given that a significant proportion of OAs experience social isolation and loneliness, which are associated with poorer mental and physical health outcomes (Donovan & Blazer, 2020).

The sensitive nature of the topic may have influenced the depth of data collected. Discussing a RRD can evoke strong emotional reactions, including sadness, anxiety, and

avoidance of painful memories (Elmir et al., 2011; Whitney & Evered, 2022). Although care was taken to create a supportive interview environment, participants may have consciously or unconsciously withheld aspects of their experiences due to emotional discomfort or difficulty articulating distressing events. Furthermore, the inherent power dynamics in the researcher-participant relationship, alongside the vulnerability elicited by recalling painful experiences, may have further constrained participants' openness (Whitney & Evered, 2022). In addition, the notable age gap between the SR and participants may have shaped the disclosure process (Jen et al., 2020). While some participants may have found it easier to speak openly to a younger interviewer, others might have felt less comfortable disclosing deeply personal experiences, particularly in relation to intimacy and sexuality, due to generational attitudes towards privacy and the sensitivity of these subjects. These factors could have limited how much was disclosed, ultimately shaping the construction of the findings (Elmir et al., 2011).

Reflexivity was a vital aspect of this research. The SR sought to bracket her own assumptions, in line with IPA's theoretical underpinnings (Smith et al., 2022). However, it is acknowledged that her interpretations may have been subtly shaped by countertransferential feelings. Specifically, her own past experiences of loneliness and isolation surfaced during certain interviews and analysis stages. The SR also experienced moments of deep admiration in response to participants' accounts of growth and resilience. As Holmes (2014) suggested, countertransference, when critically examined, can offer valuable insight in qualitative research. Rather than functioning solely as bias, such emotional responses can be seen as co-constructed within the relational space between researcher and participant, enriching the interpretative process.

Finally, the role of language in shaping meaning must be acknowledged. Interviews were conducted in both Maltese and English, with Maltese excerpts translated into English. As Turhan and Bernard (2021) noted, translation is inherently interpretative and shaped by

social and cultural contexts. Despite efforts to preserve participants' voices, some contextual nuances may have been lost, complicating direct access to participants' original meanings.

Implications for Clinical Practice

This study underlines the salience of recognising the emotional impact of RRD in OA. It is important for clinicians to consider that this experience may evoke complex emotional experiences, including feelings of loneliness, social isolation, and disruptions to one's sense of identity.

The challenges faced by OA in their RRD require sensitive and supportive therapeutic engagement that attends to both the emotional and practical aspects of this transition. Therapy can provide a space to process the broader psychosocial consequences of one's RRD. It can also help foster confidence in decision making, reducing lingering self-doubt, support action taking, and the development of new social connections.

For most participants, the interview process offered a reflective space that they found supportive and comforting. This further supports the idea that therapeutic approaches incorporating narrative practices, such as life review therapy, may be particularly valuable in helping OAs integrate their losses into a coherent sense of self, fostering healing and emotional resilience (Goodcase & Love, 2017).

Future Research Directions

This study represents the first local exploration of the experience of a RRD in OA in Malta. Given the scarcity of research on this topic and the country's growing OA population, further research is warranted. A useful research direction might be to conduct quantitative research to estimate how many OAs are affected by a RRD. Such data is needed to clarify the prevalence and scale of this issue, which remains largely unknown in the local context. Without this information, it is difficult for policymakers, service providers, and community organisations to develop and implement appropriate support services or policies that assist in

navigating a RRD in OA. Additionally, prevalence data could help raise public awareness and encourage broader national discourse around RRD in OA.

Internationally, much of the existing research has focused on the dissolution of long-term marital relationships in OA (Malta & Farquharson, 2014). However, there remains limited understanding of how the end of shorter-term or non-marital RRs is experienced in this population (Malta & Farquharson, 2014). Future research should explore these underrepresented relationship types to capture a broader range of experiences.

Moreover, it would also be valuable to examine variations across different age cohorts within OA considering variables such as physical health and social networks. These distinctions could offer more nuanced insights into the needs and experiences of OA navigating a RRD.

Considering this study's findings, which suggested that participants remained open to the possibility of re-partnering in OA, the development of dating organisations or events specifically tailored to OAs may help facilitate meaningful connections. In addition, offering education and public health promotion on satisfying and healthy sexual relationships in OA could help challenge lingering stigma, support wellbeing, and normalise intimacy in OA.

Concluding Reflections

As I conclude this research study, I return to the participants' stories, the heart of this work. Their words revealed emotional truth, strength, and vulnerability. Witnessing their openness as they reflected on their RRD was humbling and deeply moving. This research into the world of OAs has strengthened my academic skills, but more meaningfully, it has reshaped how I think about ageing, loss, and the enduring capacity for growth. It is knowledge I will carry forward into my future practice as a counselling psychology practitioner.

OA is not an ending, but a continuation. Ultimately, their stories have reminded me, that growth, reflection, and emotional depth are not bound by age. They live on in every stage of life, waiting to be witnessed, honoured, and heard.

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Appendix A

Ethical Approval by SWB FREC

University of Malta Mail - Research Ethics Application - Approved by FREC, no UREC decision needed 17/05/2025, 19:06

L-Università ta' Malta

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>

Research Ethics Application - Approved by FREC, no UREC decision needed

1 message

SWB FREC <research-ethics.fsw@um.edu.mt> 9 July 2024 at 10:33
To: Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>
Cc: Marta Sant <marta.sant@um.edu.mt>, Dr Gottfried Catania <gottfried.catania@um.edu.mt>

REDP Application ID: SWB-2024-00476

Dear Livana Borg Falzon,

Since your supervisor has confirmed that the changes have been carried out AND/OR the gatekeepers' permissions have been obtained and uploaded (as per email below), your ethics application regarding your research titled *Experiencing the Dissolution of a Romantic Relationship in Older Adulthood: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis* has been **approved**.

Faculty Research Ethics Committees are authorised to review and approve research ethics applications on behalf of the University of Malta, except in the case of sensitive personal data. In this regard, your ethics proposal **does not need to be sent to UREC-DP**. Hence, **you may now start your research**.

Disclaimer: *The research team should note that only the English versions of the documents submitted have been reviewed by FREC. It is the duty of the research team to ensure that all documents in Maltese (or any other language) are faithful translations of the English version.*

Regards,

L-Università ta' Malta

Faculty Research Ethics Committee

Faculty for Social Wellbeing
Room 113, Humanities A Building
+356 2340 2237 / 3220 / 3625

L-Università ta' Malta

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>

Research Ethics Application – Changes requested to Approved Submission

1 message

SWB FREC <research-ethics.fsw@um.edu.mt> 14 November 2024 at 13:31
To: Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>
Cc: Marta Sant <marta.sant@um.edu.mt>, Dr Chantal Avellino <chantal.avellino@um.edu.mt>

REDP Application ID: SWB-2024-00476

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Regards,

L-Università ta' Malta

Faculty Research Ethics Committee

Faculty for Social Wellbeing
Room 113, Humanities A Building
+356 2340 2237 / 3625 / 3220

Website: www.um.edu.mt/socialwellbeing/students/researchethics

The contents of this email are subject to ***these terms****.*

L-Università ta' Malta

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>

Research Ethics Application – Changes requested to Approved Submission

1 message

SWB FREC <research-ethics.fsw@um.edu.mt> 4 December 2024 at 11:05
To: Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>
Cc: Marta Sant <marta.sant@um.edu.mt>, Dr Chantal Avellino <chantal.avellino@um.edu.mt>

REDP Application ID: SWB-2024-00476

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Regards,

L-Università ta' Malta

Faculty Research Ethics Committee

Faculty for Social Wellbeing
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L-Università ta' Malta

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>

Research Ethics Application – Changes requested to Approved Submission

1 message

SWB FREC <research-ethics.fsw@um.edu.mt> 6 January 2025 at 15:38
To: Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>
Cc: Marta Sant <marta.sant@um.edu.mt>, Dr Chantal Avellino <chantal.avellino@um.edu.mt>

REDP Application ID: SWB-2024-00476

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Regards,

L-Università ta' Malta

Faculty Research Ethics Committee

Faculty for Social Wellbeing
Room 113, Humanities A Building
Room 115, Humanities B Building
+356 2340 2352

Appendix B

Confirmation of approval from gatekeepers

L-Università ta' Malta

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>

Riċerka ta Studju ma Adulti Avvanazati Fl-eta - Balzan

5 messages

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt> 23 June 2024 at 20:43
To: balzan.lc@gov.mt

Dear Balzan Local Council,

Jiena Livana Borg Falzon, studenta fil-livell postgradwatorju fl-Universita ta' Malta, fejn bħalissa qiegħda nsegwi Master tal-Psikoloġija fil-Psikoloġija tal-Konsulenza. Bħalissa ninsab fl-istadji bikrija tat-twettiq tar-riċerka tieghi bit-titlu: "**L-Esperjenza ta' Tmiem Relazzjoni Romantika fl-Eta Adulta Avvanzata: Analiżi Fenomenoloġika Interpretattiva**". Din it-teżi tal-livell postgradwatorju qed issir taħt is-supervižjoni ta' Dr. Marta Sant.

Jiena qed infittex il-permess tiegħek biex taqsam/tpoġġi informazzjoni dwar din irriċerka Maċ-ċittadini ta Balzan, bit-tama li tilħaq parteċipanti potenzjali.

Dan l-istudju għandu l-għan li jinvestiga l-esperjenza personali u soġġettiva ta' tmiem relazzjoni romantika fl-et. adulta avvanzata. Għaldaqstant, dan l-istudju għandu l-għan li
jeżamina l-impatt li jista' jkun kellu dan it-tmiem fuq l-individwi involuti. Din ir-riċerka ser tesplora l-fatturi li wasslu għat-tmiem tar-relazzjoni romantika kif ukoll kif l-individwi
ġestew it-tmiem tar-relazzjoni tagħhom, billi jiġu identifikati strateġiji li għenuhom ikampaw, jekk hemm, li ġew adottati matul dan il-proċess. Barra minn hekk, partecipipazzjoni f'dan l-istudju titsta tgħin biex tagħti kontribuzzjoni għall-għarfien dwar suġġett li għadu mhux riċerkat biżżejjed. Din ir-riċerka ser tipprova toffri rakkomandazzjonijiet dwar il-bżonnijiet terapewtiċi ta' adulti ta' eta avvanzata li għaddejjin minn tmiem ta' relazzjoni romantika. Huwa mistenni li dan l-istudju ser jservi bħala għarfien siewi dwar interventi li l-psikologi jistgħu jikkunsidraw jinkorporaw fil-prattika professjonali tagħhom meta jaħdmu ma' adulti ta' et. avvanzata li qed jesperjenzaw tmiem ta' relazzjoni romantika.

Sabiex individwi jieħdu sehem f'dan l-istudju, il-parteċipanti huma meħtieġa jissodisfaw il-kriterji li ġejjin:

- Ikollhom **hamsa u sittin (65) sena jew aktar**;
- Ikunu **ċittadini Maltin u residenti f'Malta**;
- **Ċisġeneru** (tirreferi għal individwi li l-identita tal-ġeneru tagħhom hija allinjata mas-sess li ġew assenjati meta twieldu);
- Kienu **f'relazzjoni romantika eterosesswali** li **damet mill-anqas sena**.
- Barra minn hekk, lr-relazzjoni romantika ntemmet mill-anqas 18-il xahar qabel ma wieħed jieħu sehem f'dan l-istudju, u mhux aktar minn 5 snin qabel ma sseħħ l-intervista.

L-istudenta riċerkatriċi għanda tiżgura wkoll li tirrekluta parteċipanti li mhumiex vulnerabbli billi tiżgura, l-individwi li jinsabu għaddejjin minn trattament għal kundizzjonijiet psikjatriċi severi, bħal bipolari jew skiżofrenja, jew li għandhom dijanjożi ta' dimenzja, ser jiġu eskluži milli jieħdu sehem f'dan l-istudju. Apparti minn dan, individwi li jinsabu taħt il-kura ta' professjonisti tas-saħħa mentali wkoll ser jiġu eskluži milli jieħdu sehem. Dawn il-miżuri qed jiġu implimentati biex jiġi protett il-benesseri psikoloġiku tal-parteċipanti kollha.

Il-metodu tal-ġbir tad-dejta tieghi se jinvolvi li l-parteċipanti jaqsmu l-esperjenzi tagħhom waqt intervista semistrutturata individwali, li hija mistennija ddum bejn wieħed u iehor ħamsa u erbgħin (45) minuta sa sittin (60) minuta. Matul l-intervista, il-parteċipanti se jiġu mistoqsija mistoqsijiet immirati biex jirriflettu fuq il-perċezzjonijiet tagħhom dwar ittmiem tar-relazzjoni tagħhom fl-eta adulta avvanzata. Il-parteċipanti se jiġu mħeġġa jirriflettu fuq il-perspettiva tagħhom stess tar-rwol tagħhom fid-dinamika tar-relazzjoni, u r-raġunijiet għat-tmiem tar-relazzjoni tagħhom. Matul l-intervista, il-parteċipanti se jiġu mistoqsija biss mistoqsijiet pertinenti għall-istudju tar-riċerka. L-intervista ser tiġi rreġistrata bl-awdjo bl-użu ta' recorder diġitali, u l-awdjo jiġi traskritt verbatim mill-istudenta riċerkatriċi. Id-dejta mbagħad għandha tiġi analizzata bl-użu ta' Analiżi Fenomenoloġika Interpretattiva (IPA), li hija metodoloġija ta' riċerka kwalitattiva. L-intervisti se jsiru f'data u f'post magħżul mill-parteċipant. Il-parteċipanti kollha jingħataw psewdonimu, u kwalunkwe informazzjoni ta' identifikazzjoni tiġi editjata jew imhassra u mhux se tidher fl-istudju.

Inkun grata ħafna jekk l-organizzazzjoni tiegħek ġentilment tibgħat linformazzjoni dwar l-istudju tieghi lill-membri reġistrati, sabiex jiffaċilita r-reklutaġġ tiegħi.

Jekk teħtieġ aktar informazzjoni, jekk jogħġbok ikkuntatjani fuq livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt jew 99263131; alternattivament, tista' tikkuntattja lis-supervižur tar-riċerka tieghi fuq

marta.sant@um.edu.mt jew 23402312.

Grazzi għall-konsiderazzjoni tajba tiegħek ta' din it-talba.
Tislijiet,
Livana Borg Falzon

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt> 1 July 2024 at 07:59
To: balzan.lc@gov.mt

Good Morning,

This is a gentle reminder.

Looking forward for your reply.

Best Regards,
Livana
[Quoted text hidden]

Balzan Local Council at Balzan Local Council <balzan.lc@gov.mt> 3 July 2024 at 12:42
To: Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>

Sa Borg Falzon,

Nixtieq ninfurmak li l-Kunsill ma jsibx oġġezzjoni li jgħaddi l-informazzjoni lill-membri reġistrati. Nitolbok tgħaddilna aktar dettalji sabiex inkunu nistgħu anke ntellgħu avviż fuq il-paġna ta' Facebook.

Tislijiet,

Doriette Farrugia
Executive Secretary / Segretarju Eżekuttiv
Ħal Balzan Local Council / Kunsill Lokali Ħal Balzan

Tel: [+356] 21442323

7/9, Triq Dun Spir Sammut, Ħal Balzan BZN1020
http://www.halbalzanlocalcouncil.com http://www.lc.gov.mt

Office Hours:

Winter: Monday - Friday: 8.00am - 11.30am & 1.30pm - 3.30pm

Saturday: 8.00am - 11.30am

Summer: Monday - Saturday: 8.00am - 11.30am

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From: Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>
Sent: Monday, July 1, 2024 7:59 AM
To: Balzan Local Council at Balzan Local Council <balzan.lc@gov.mt>
Subject: Re: Riċerka ta Studju ma Adulti Avvanazati Fl-eta - Balzan

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[Quoted text hidden]

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt> 5 July 2024 at 08:34
To: Balzan Local Council at Balzan Local Council <balzan.lc@gov.mt>

Good Morning Ms Farrugia,

I hope you are well.

Thank you very much for your reply! And for agreeing to share details of my study.

I am still in the early stages of my research. This means that as of now I will not be able to start recruiting participants, however, I will reach out to you in due course once I have the go ahead to start recruiting participants.

Please find attached further information regarding my study.

Thank you and Best Regards,
Livana
[Quoted text hidden]

Participant Information Sheet .pdf
124K

Balzan Local Council at Balzan Local Council <balzan.lc@gov.mt> 5 July 2024 at 08:38
To: Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>

Thank you. We look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,

[Quoted text hidden]
[Quoted text hidden]

Floriana Local Council

L-Università ta' Malta

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>

Riċerka ta Studju ma Adulti Avvanazati Fl-eta - Floriana

5 messages

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt> 23 June 2024 at 20:54
To: floriana.lc@gov.mt

Dear Floriana Local Council,

Jiena Livana Borg Falzon, studenta fil-livell postgradwatorju fl-Universita ta' Malta, fejn bħalissa qiegħda nsegwi Master tal-Psikoloġija fil-Psikoloġija tal-Konsulenza. Bhalissa ninsab fl-istadji bikrija tat-twettiq tar-riċerka tieghi bit-titlu: "**L-Esperjenza ta' Tmiem Relazzjoni Romantika fl-Eta Adulta Avvanzata: Analiżi Fenomenoloġika Interpretattiva**". Din it-teżi tal-livell postgradwatorju qed issir taħt is-superviżjoni ta' Dr. Marta Sant.

Jiena qed infittex il-permess tiegħek biex taqsam/tpoġġi informazzjoni dwar din irriċerka Maċ-ċittadini tal-Floriana, bit-tama li tilħaq parteċipanti potenzjali.

Dan l-istudju għandu l-għan li jinvestiga l-esperjenza personali u soġġettiva ta' tmiem relazzjoni romantika fl-et. adulta avvanzata. Għaldaqstant, dan l-istudju għandu l-għan li jeżamina l-impatt li jista' jkun kellu dan it-tmiem fuq l-individwi involuti. Din ir-riċerka ser tesplora l-fatturi li wasslu għat-tmiem tar-relazzjoni romantika kif ukoll kif l-individwi ġestew it-tmiem tar-relazzjoni tagħhom, billi jiġu identifikati strateġiji li għenuhom ikampaw, jekk hemm, li ġew adottati matul dan il-proċess. Barra minn hekk, partecipipazzjoni f'dan l-istudju titsta tgħin biex tagħti kontribuzzjoni għall-għarfien dwar suġġett li għadu mhux riċerkat biżżejjed. Din ir-riċerka ser tipprova toffri rakkomandazzjonijiet dwar il-bżonnijiet terapewtiċi ta' adulti ta' eta avvanzata li għaddejjin minn tmiem ta' relazzjoni romantika. Huwa mistenni li dan l-istudju ser jservi bħala għarfien siewi dwar interventi li l-psikologi jistgħu jikkunsidraw jinkorporaw fil-prattika professjonali tagħhom meta jaħdmu ma' adulti ta' et. avvanzata li qed jesperjenzaw tmiem ta' relazzjoni romantika.

Sabiex individwi jiehdu sehem f'dan l-istudju, il-parteċipanti huma meħtieġa jissodisfaw il-kriterji li ġejjin:

- Ikollhom **ħamsa u sittin (65) sena jew aktar**;
- Ikunu **ċittadini Maltin** u **residenti f'Malta**;
- **Ċisġeneru** (tirreferi għal individwi li l-identita tal-ġeneru tagħhom hija allinjata mas-sess li ġew assenjati meta twieldu);
- Kienu **f'relazzjoni romantika eterosesswali** li **damet mill-anqas sena**.
- Barra minn hekk, Ir-relazzjoni romantika ntemmet mill-anqas 18-il xahar qabel ma wieħed jieħu sehem f'dan l-istudju, u mhux aktar minn 5 snin qabel ma ssejħ l-intervista.

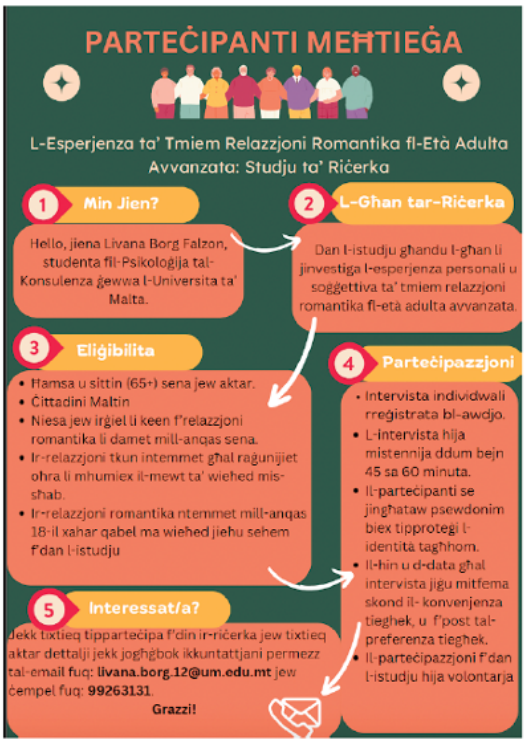
L-istudenta riċerkatriċi għanda tiżgura wkoll li tirrekluta parteċipanti li mhumiex vulnerabbli billi tiżgura, l-individwi li jinsabu għaddejjin minn trattament għal kundizzjonijiet psikjatriċi severi, bħal bipolari jew skiżofrenja, jew li għandhom dijanjożi ta' dimenzja, ser jiġu eskluži milli jieħdu sehem f'dan l-istudju. Apparti minn dan, individwi li jinsabu taħt il-kura ta' professjonisti tas-saħħa mentali wkoll ser jiġu eskluži milli jieħdu sehem. Dawn il-miżuri qed jiġu implimentati biex jiġi protett il-benesseri psikoloġiku tal-parteċipanti kollha.

Il-metodu tal-ġbir tad-dejta tiegħi se jinvolvi li l-parteċipanti jaqsmu l-esperjenzi tagħhom waqt intervista semistrutturata individwali, li hija mistennija ddum bejn wieħed u ieħor ħamsa u erbgħin (45) minuta sa sittin (60) minuta. Matul l-intervista, il-parteċipanti se jiġu mistoqsija mistoqsijiet immirati biex jirriflettu fuq il-perċezzjonijiet tagħhom dwar ittmiem tar-relazzjoni tagħhom fl-eta adulta avvanzata. Il-parteċipanti se jiġu mħeġġa jirriflettu fuq il-perspettiva tagħhom stess tar-rwol tagħhom fid-dinamika tar-relazzjoni, u r-raġunijiet għat-tmiem tar-relazzjoni tagħhom. Matul l-intervista, il-parteċipanti se jiġu mistoqsija biss mistoqsijiet pertinenti għall-istudju tar-riċerka. L-intervista ser tiġi rreġistrata bl-awdjo bl-użu ta' recorder diġitali, u l-awdjo jiġi traskritt verbatim mill-istudenta riċerkatriċi. Id-dejta mbagħad għandha tiġi analizzata bl-użu ta' Analiżi Fenomenoloġika Interpretattiva (IPA), li hija metodoloġija ta' riċerka kwalitattiva. L-intervisti se jsiru f'data u f'post magħżul mill-parteċipant. Il-parteċipanti kollha jingħataw psewdonimu, u kwalunkwe informazzjoni ta' identifikazzjoni tiġi editjata jew imħassra u mhux se tidher fl-istudju.

Inkun grata ħafna jekk l-organizzazzjoni tiegħek ġentilment tibgħat linformazzjoni dwar l-istudju tiegħi lill-membri reġistrati, sabiex jiffaċilita r-reklutaġġ tiegħi.

Jekk teħtieġ aktar informazzjoni, jekk jogħġbok ikkuntatjani fuq livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt jew 99263131; alternattivament, tista' tikkuntattja lis-superviżur tar-riċerka tiegħi fuq
marta.sant@um.edu.mt jew 23402312.

Grazzi għall-konsiderazzjoni tajba tiegħek ta' din it-talba.
Tislijiet,
Livana Borg Falzon



Floriana Local Council at Floriana Local Council <floriana.lc@gov.mt> 24 June 2024 at 10:58
To: Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>
Cc: Agius Malcolm 2 at Floriana Local Council <malcolm.agius.2@gov.mt>, Publio Agius <florianville@gmail.com>

Bongu,

Il-Kunsill Lokali Floriana ma jsibx oġġezzjoni sabiex isir dan l-istudju.

Qed nikkopja lis-Sur Publio Agius, li jmexxi l-Floriana Senior Citizens. Madanakollu nissġerixxi li l-aħjar mod huwa li inti tkun prezenti fil-Floriana u titkellem man-nies. Peress li huma anzjani, huma ftit dawk li jużaw il-media soċjali għal tali materji.

Nawguralek,

Mr Godwin Azzopardi

FLORIANA
Borgo Vilhena

Executive Officer

Floriana Local Council

p: 21235523

a: 15, Pjazza E.S Tonna, Floriana FRN 1483

e: floriana.lc@gov.mt

From: Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>
Sent: Sunday, June 23, 2024 8:54 PM
To: Floriana Local Council at Floriana Local Council <floriana.lc@gov.mt>
Subject: Riċerka ta Studju ma Adulti Avvanazati Fl-eta - Floriana

CAUTION: This email originated from OUTSIDE the Government Email Infrastructure. DO NOT CLICK LINKS or OPEN attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Floriana Local Council,

Jiena Livana Borg Falzon, studenta fil-livell postgradwatorju fl-Universita ta' Malta, fejn bħalissa qiegħda nsegwi Master tal-Psikoloġija fil-Psikoloġija tal-Konsulenza. Bhalissa ninsab fl-istadji bikrija tat-twettiq tar-riċerka tieghi bit-titlu: "**L-Esperjenza ta' Tmiem Relazzjoni Romantika fl-Eta Adulta Avvanzata: Analiżi Fenomenoloġika Interpretattiva**". Din it-teżi tal-livell postgradwatorju qed issir taħt is-superviżjoni ta' Dr. Marta Sant.

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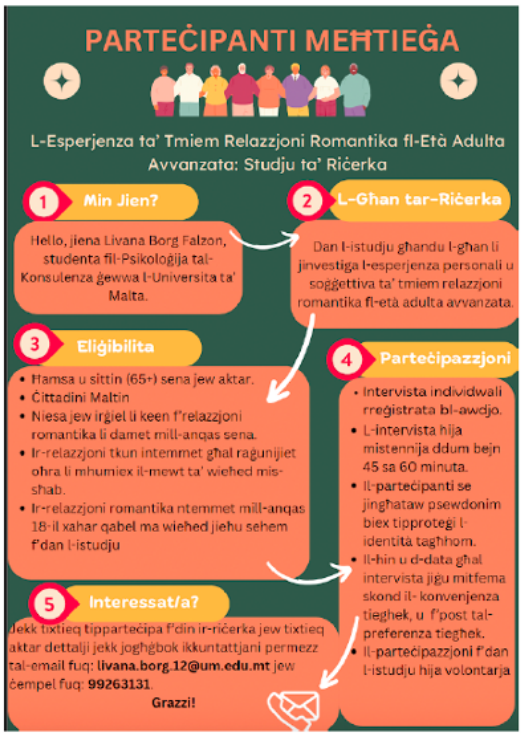
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Jekk teħtieġ aktar informazzjoni, jekk joġħġbok ikkuntatjani fuq livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt jew 99263131; alternattivament, tista' tikkuntattja lis-superviżur tar-riċerka tiegħi fuq marta.sant@um.edu.mt jew 23402312.

Grazzi għall-konsiderazzjoni tajba tiegħek ta' din it-talba.
Tislijiet,
Livana Borg Falzon



Publio Agius <florianville@gmail.com> 24 June 2024 at 17:03
To: Floriana Local Council at Floriana Local Council <floriana.lc@gov.mt>
Cc: Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>, Agius Malcolm 2 at Floriana Local Council <malcolm.agius.2@gov.mt>

Għażiż Sur Azzopardi,

Diġa kelli korrispondenza minn għand Ms Borg Falzon u għedtilha li l-materja partikolari ħafna li qed tittratta ma tinkwadrax mal-persuni anzjani li jgħixu fil-Floriana.

Grazzi għall-attenzjoni tiegħek.

Publio Agius

[Quoted text hidden]

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt> 24 June 2024 at 18:53
To: Floriana Local Council at Floriana Local Council <floriana.lc@gov.mt>

Għażiz Mr Azzopardi,

Grazzi ħafna tat-tweġieba tiegħek.

Iva, ideja tajba. Forsi aktar il-quddiem meta nkun nista nibda nirikruta l-parteċipanti, nkun nistgħaa natendi xi avenimenti, u nitroduċi r-riċerka tieghi ?

Tislijiet,

Livana
[Quoted text hidden]

Floriana Local Council at Floriana Local Council <floriana.lc@gov.mt> 25 June 2024 at 09:40
To: Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>
Cc: Agius Malcolm 2 at Floriana Local Council <malcolm.agius.2@gov.mt>, Zahra Silvia at Floriana Local Council <silvia.zahra@gov.mt>, Bugeja Emerson at Floriana Local Council <emerson.bugeja@gov.mt>

Bongu,

Tinfurmana qrib il-granet li ser tkun il-Floriana, nghidulek jekk ikunx hemm attivitajiet ghall-anzjani.

Tislijiet,

G

[Quoted text hidden]

Birżebuġa Local Council

L-Università ta' Malta

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>

Riċerka ta Studju ma Adulti Avvanazati Fl-eta - B'Buġia

5 messages

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt> 23 June 2024 at 20:44
To: birzebbuga.lc@gov.mt

Dear Birżebbuġa Local Council,

Jiena Livana Borg Falzon, studenta fil-livell postgradwatorju fl-Universita ta' Malta, fejn bħalissa qiegħda nsegwi Master tal-Psikoloġija fil-Psikoloġija tal-Konsulenza. Bħalissa ninsab fl-istadji bikrija tat-twettiq tar-riċerka tieghi bit-titlu: "**L-Esperjenza ta' Tmiem Relazzjoni Romantika fl-Eta Adulta Avvanzata: Analiżi Fenomenoloġika Interpretattiva**". Din it-teżi tal-livell postgradwatorju qed issir taħt is-supervižjoni ta' Dr. Marta Sant.

Jiena qed infittex il-permess tiegħek biex taqsam/tpoġġi informazzjoni dwar din irriċerka Maċ-ċittadini ta Birżebbuġa, bit-tama li tilħaq partečipanti potenzjali.

Dan l-istudju għandu l-għan li jinvestiga l-esperjenza personali u soġġettiva ta' tmiem relazzjoni romantika fl-et. adulta avvanzata. Għaldaqstant, dan l-istudju għandu l-għan li
jeżamina l-impatt li jista' jkun kellu dan it-tmiem fuq l-individwi involuti. Din ir-riċerka ser tesplora l-fatturi li wasslu għat-tmiem tar-relazzjoni romantika kif ukoll kif l-individwi
ġestew it-tmiem tar-relazzjoni tagħhom, billi jiġu identifikati strateġiji li għenuhom ikampaw, jekk hemm, li ġew adottati matul dan il-proċess. Barra minn hekk, partecipipazzjoni f'dan l-istudju titsta tgħin biex tagħti kontribuzzjoni għall-għarfien dwar suġġett li għadu mhux riċerkat biżżejjed. Din ir-riċerka ser tipprova toffri rakkomandazzjonijiet dwar il-bżonnijiet terapewtiċi ta' adulti ta' eta avvanzata li għaddejjin minn tmiem ta' relazzjoni romantika. Huwa mistenni li dan l-istudju ser jservi bħala għarfien siewi dwar interventi li l-psikologi jistgħu jikkunsidraw jinkorporaw fil-prattika professjonali tagħhom meta jaħdmu ma' adulti ta' et. avvanzata li qed jesperjenzaw tmiem ta' relazzjoni romantika.

Sabiex individwi jieħdu sehem f'dan l-istudju, il-partečipanti huma meħtieġa jissodisfaw il-kriterji li ġejjin:

- Ikollhom **ħamsa u sittin (65) sena jew aktar**;
- Ikunu **ċittadini Maltin** u **residenti f'Malta**;
- **Ċisġeneru** (tirreferi għal individwi li l-identita tal-ġeneru tagħhom hija allinjata mas-sess li ġew assenjati meta twieldu);
- Kienu **f'relazzjoni romantika eterosesswali** li **damet mill-anqas sena**.
- Barra minn hekk, lr-relazzjoni romantika ntemmet mill-anqas 18-il xahar qabel ma wieħed jieħu sehem f'dan l-istudju, u mhux aktar minn 5 snin qabel ma sseħħ l-intervista.

L-istudenta riċerkatriċi għanda tiżgura wkoll li tirrekluta partečipanti li mhumiex vulnerabbli billi tiżgura, l-individwi li jinsabu għaddejjin minn trattament għal kundizzjonijiet psikjatriċi severi, bħal bipolari jew skiżofrenja, jew li għandhom dijanjoži ta' dimenzja, ser jiġu eskluži milli jieħdu sehem f'dan l-istudju. Apparti minn dan, individwi li jinsabu taħt il-kura ta' professjonisti tas-saħħa mentali wkoll ser jiġu eskluži milli jieħdu sehem. Dawn il-miżuri qed jiġu implimentati biex jiġi protett il-benesseri psikoloġiku tal-partečipanti kollha.

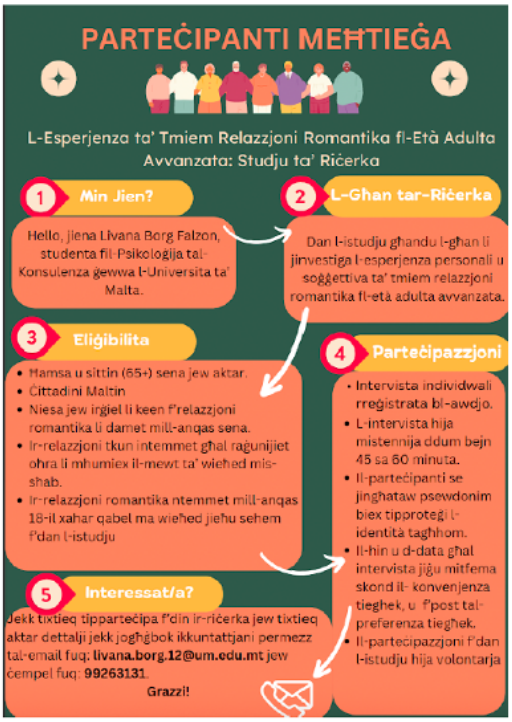
Il-metodu tal-ġbir tad-dejta tiegħi se jinvolvi li l-partečipanti jaqsmu l-esperjenzi tagħhom waqt intervista semistrutturata individwali, li hija mistennija ddum bejn wieħed u ieħor ħamsa u erbgħin (45) minuta sa sittin (60) minuta. Matul l-intervista, il-partečipanti se jiġu mistoqsija mistoqsijiet immirati biex jirriflettu fuq il-perċezzjonijiet tagħhom dwar ittmiem tar-relazzjoni tagħhom fl-eta adulta avvanzata. Il-partečipanti se jiġu mħeġġa jirriflettu fuq il-perspettiva tagħhom stess tar-rwol tagħhom fid-dinamika tar-relazzjoni, u r-raġunijiet għat-tmiem tar-relazzjoni tagħhom. Matul l-intervista, il-partečipanti se jiġu mistoqsija biss mistoqsijiet pertinenti għall-istudju tar-riċerka. L-intervista ser tiġi rreġistrata bl-awdjo bl-użu ta' recorder diġitali, u l-awdjo jiġi traskritt verbatim mill-istudenta riċerkatriċi. Id-dejta mbagħad għandha tiġi analizzata bl-użu ta' Analiżi Fenomenoloġika Interpretattiva (IPA), li hija metodoloġija ta' riċerka kwalitattiva. L-intervisti se jsiru f'data u f'post magħżul mill-partečipant. Il-partečipanti kollha jingħataw psewdonimu, u kwalunkwe informazzjoni ta' identifikazzjoni tiġi editjata jew imħassra u mhux se tidher fl-istudju.

Inkun grata ħafna jekk l-organizzazzjoni tiegħek ġentilment tibgħat linformazzjoni dwar l-istudju tiegħi lill-membri reġistrati, sabiex jiffaċilita r-reklutaġġ tiegħi.

Jekk teħtieġ aktar informazzjoni, jekk jogħġbok ikkuntatjani fuq livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt jew 99263131; alternattivament, tista' tikkuntattja lis-superviżur tar-riċerka tiegħi fuq

marta.sant@um.edu.mt jew 23402312.

Grazzi għall-konsiderazzjoni tajba tiegħek ta' din it-talba.
Tislijiet,
Livana Borg Falzon



Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt> 1 July 2024 at 07:58
To: birzebbuga.lc@gov.mt

Good Morning,

This is a gentle reminder.

Looking forward for your reply.

Best Regards,
Livana
[Quoted text hidden]

Camilleri Scott at Birzebbuga Local Council <scott.a.camilleri@gov.mt> 1 July 2024 at 12:36
To: Birzebbuga Local Council at Birzebbuga Local Council <birzebbuga.lc@gov.mt>, "livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt" <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>

Ms Borg,

Kindly call me on 99963254

From: Birzebbuga Local Council at Local Councils <birzebbuga.lc@gov.mt>
Date: Monday, 1 July 2024 at 11:47
To: Camilleri Scott at Birzebbuga Local Council <scott.a.camilleri@gov.mt>
Subject: FW: Riċerka ta Studju ma Adulti Avvanazati Fl-eta - B'Buġia

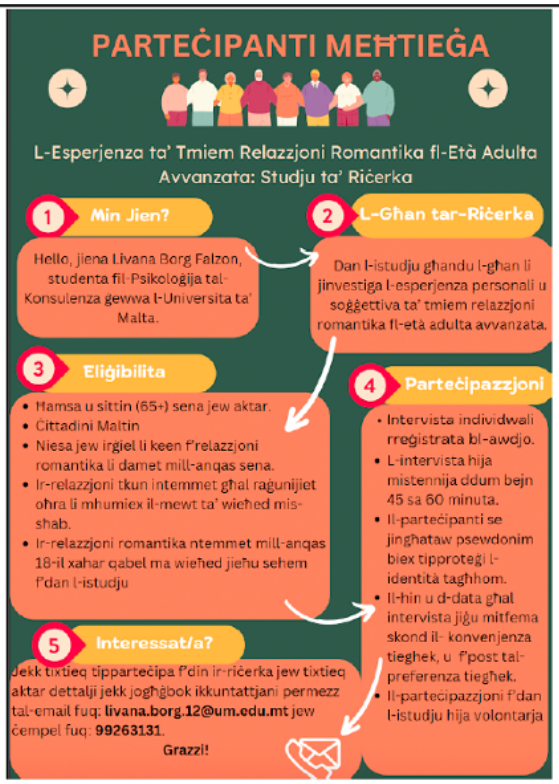
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From: Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>
Sent: Monday, July 1, 2024 7:58 AM
To: Birzebbuga Local Council at Birzebbuga Local Council <birzebbuga.lc@gov.mt>
Subject: Re: Riċerka ta Studju ma Adulti Avvanazati Fl-eta - B'Buġia

CAUTION: This email originated from OUTSIDE the Government Email Infrastructure. DO NOT CLICK LINKS or OPEN attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

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vana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt> 2 July 2024 at 15:03
: Camilleri Scott at Birzebbuga Local Council <scott.a.camilleri@gov.mt>

Dear Mr Camilleri,

As per our telephone conversation, please find information regarding my research study.

I would greatly appreciate if the Birzebbuġa Local Council can act as my gatekeeper. This means that once by study is approved by the University of Malta ethics board, the Birżebbuġa local council will be able to share my study via social media or also during events with older adults. Potential participants who are interested can reach out to me themselves.

"Jiena Livana Borg Falzon, studenta fil-livell postgradwatorju fl-Universita ta' Malta, fejn bħalissa qiegħda nsegwi Master tal-Psikoloġija fil-Psikoloġija tal-Konsulenza. Bhalissa ninsab fl-istadji bikrija tat-twettiq tar-riċerka tieghi bit-titlu: "**L-Esperjenza ta' Tmiem Relazzjoni Romantika fl-Eta Adulta Avvanzata: Analiżi Fenomenoloġika Interpretattiva**". Din it-teżi tal-livell postgradwatorju qed issir taħt is-superviżjoni ta' Dr. Marta Sant.

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- Barra minn hekk, Ir-relazzjoni romantika ntemmet mill-anqas 18-il xahar qabel ma wieħed jieħu sehem f'dan l-istudju, u mhux aktar minn 5 snin qabel ma sseħħ l-intervista.

L-istudenta riċerkatriċi għanda tiżgura wkoll li tirrekluta parteċipanti li mhumiex vulnerabbli billi tiżgura, l-individwi li jinsabu għaddejjin minn trattament għal kundizzjonijiet psikjatriċi severi, bħal bipolari jew skiżofrenja, jew li għandhom dijanjożi ta' dimenzja, ser jiġu esklużi milli jieħdu sehem f'dan l-istudju. Apparti minn dan, individwi li jinsabu taħt il-kura ta' professjonisti tas-saħħa mentali wkoll ser jiġu esklużi milli jieħdu sehem. Dawn il-miżuri qed jiġu implimentati biex jiġi protett il- benesseri psikoloġiku tal-parteċipanti kollha. Il-metodu tal-ġbir tad-dejta tiegħi se jinvolvi li l-parteċipanti jaqsmu l-esperjenzi tagħhom waqt intervista semistrutturata individwali, li hija mistennija ddum bejn wieħed u ieħor ħamsa u erbgħin (45) minuta sa sittin (60) minuta. Matul l-intervista, il-parteċipanti se jiġu mistoqsija mistoqsijiet immirati biex jirriflettu fuq il-perċezzjonijiet tagħhom dwar ittmiem tar-relazzjoni tagħhom fl-eta adulta avvanzata. Il-parteċipanti se jiġu mħeġġa jirriflettu fuq il-perspettiva tagħhom stess tar-rwol tagħhom fid-dinamika tar-relazzjoni, u r-raġunijiet għat-tmiem tar-relazzjoni tagħhom. Matul l-intervista, il-parteċipanti se jiġu mistoqsija biss mistoqsijiet

pertinenti għall-istudju tar-riċerka. L-intervista ser tiġi rreġistrata bl-awdjo bl-użu ta' recorder diġitali, u l-awdjo jiġi traskritt verbatim mill-istudenta riċerkatriċi. Id-dejta mbagħad għandha tiġi analizzata bl-użu ta' Analiżi Fenomenoloġika Interpretattiva (IPA), li hija metodoloġija ta' riċerka kwalitattiva. L-intervisti se jsiru f'data u f'post magħżul mill-parteċipant. Il-parteċipanti kollha jingħataw psewdonimu, u kwalunkwe informazzjoni ta' identifikazzjoni tiġi editjata jew imħassra u mhux se tidher fl-istudju.

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Jekk teħtieġ aktar informazzjoni, jekk jogħġbok ikkuntatjani fuq livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt jew 99263131; alternattivament, tista' tikkuntattja lis-superviżur tar-riċerka tiegħi fuq"

marta.sant@um.edu.mt jew 23402312.

Grazzi għall-konsiderazzjoni tajba tiegħek ta' din it-talba.

Tislijiet,

Livana Borg Falzon

[Quoted text hidden]

Camilleri Scott at Birzebbuga Local Council <scott.a.camilleri@gov.mt> 3 July 2024 at 11:50
To: Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>

Dear Mr Borg,

More than happy to help out with your studies.

Kind regards,

Scott Camilleri

Mayor Birżebbuġa.

[Quoted text hidden]

Women for Women Foundation

L-Università ta' Malta

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>

Research Study - Women for Women Foundation

5 messages

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt> 18 June 2024 at 14:46
To: "womenforwomenmalta@gmail.com" <womenforwomenmalta@gmail.com>

Dear Ms Fenech Conti,

I hope this email finds you in good health.

My name is Livana Borg Falzon, and I am postgraduate student at the University of Malta, currently reading for a Masters of Psychology in Counselling Psychology.

I am presently in the early stages of conducting my research study entitled "**Experiencing the Dissolution of a Romantic Relationship in Older Adulthood: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**." This postgraduate dissertation is being supervised by Dr.Marta Sant.

I am seeking your approval to disseminate information regarding my research within members of the 'Women for Women Foundation' with the aim of reaching out to potential participants.

This study aims to investigate the personal and subjective experience of the dissolution of a romantic relationship in older adulthood. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the impact that this termination may have had on the individuals involved. This research will delve into the factors that led to the end of the romantic relationship and will explore how individuals navigated through the ending of their relationship, identifying coping strategies, if any, that were adopted during this process. Furthermore, participation in the study may help contribute towards a better understanding of the unique needs and support required for older adults experiencing the dissolution of a romantic relationship, thus informing professional psychotherapeutic knowledge on this experience. Any data collected from this research will be used solely for purposes of this study.

In order to be eligible for participation in this study, participants are required to be a consenting adult:

- **aged 65 years or older**;
- a **Maltese national** and have been **living in Malta**;
- **identify as cisgender** (refers to individuals whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth);
- have been in a **heterosexual romantic relationship** that lasted a **minimum of 1 year**.
- Furthermore, the relationship needs to have ended at least 18 months prior to participating in the study, and not more than 5 years prior to the research.

I will also ensure to recruit participants who are not vulnerable by ensuring that participants are not under the care of a mental health professional, undergoing treatment for
severe psychiatric conditions, or who have a diagnosis of dementia. These measures are implemented to protect the psychological welfare of all participants.

My data collection method will involve taking part in a one-to-one semi-structured indepth interview, which is expected to last around 45 to 60 minutes. During the interview, participants will be asked questions aimed at reflecting on their perceptions about their relationship dissolution in older adulthood. Participants will be prompted to reflect on their own perspective of their role in the dynamics of the relationship, and the reasons for its dissolution. During the interview, participants will only be asked questions pertinent to the research study. The interviews will be audio-recorded and then manually transcribed verbatim
by the Student Researcher. Data shall then be analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which is a qualitative research methodology.

The interviews will take place on a date and at a location selected by the participant. Participants will all be given a pseudonym, and any identifying information will be edited or deleted and
will not feature in the study.

I would be very grateful if your organisation/Facebook group would kindly forward

the information about my study to registered members, in order to facilitate my recruitment process.

Should you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me via email or on 99263131. Alternatively, you may contact my research supervisor on marta.sant@um.edu.mt or 23402312.

Thank you for your kind consideration of this request.

Sincerely,
Livana Borg Falzon

Women For Women <womenforwomenmalta@gmail.com> 18 June 2024 at 21:17
To: Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>

Hi Liviana

The best thing would be to post on the group about the study yourself.....as they can ask you any questions etc. That's what other students usually do.

Kind regards
Francesca

[Quoted text hidden]

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt> 23 June 2024 at 20:08
To: Women For Women <womenforwomenmalta@gmail.com>

Dear Francesca,

Thank you for your reply.

That's a good idea thank you.

As of now, I am still in my early stages in my research. What I would like is a confirmation from your end, that when the time comes I will be able to share my research information via your Facebook group 'Women For Women'.

Moreover, I have attached my research poster and information sheet which I will sharing in the group chat.

Thank you and Best regards,
Livana
[Quoted text hidden]

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2 attachments

Research Study Poster.pdf
458K

Participant Information Sheet .pdf
124K

Women For Women <womenforwomenmalta@gmail.com> 24 June 2024 at 07:43
To: Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>

Yes yes of course! Good luck!
[Quoted text hidden]

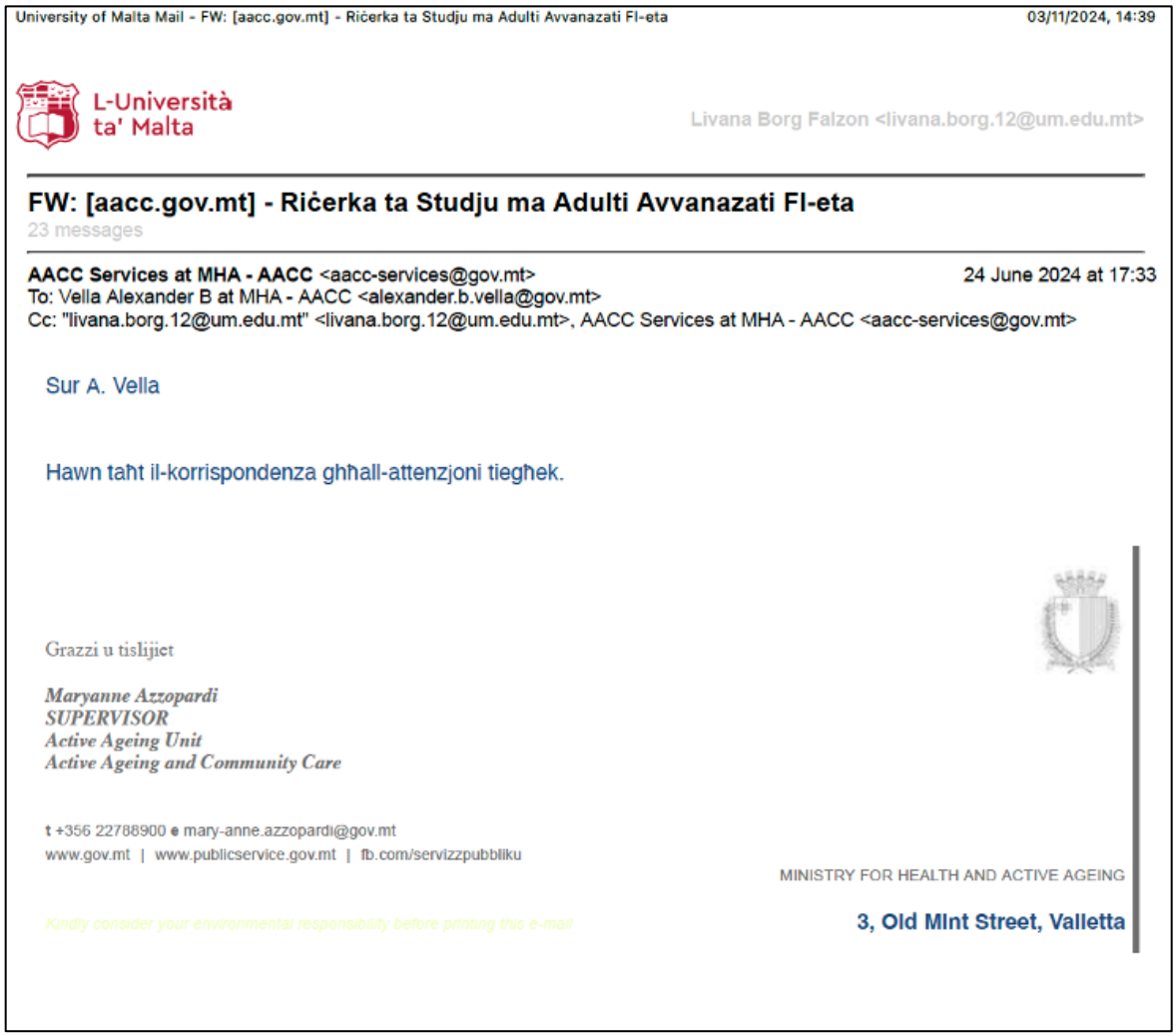
Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt> 24 June 2024 at 10:50
To: Women For Women <womenforwomenmalta@gmail.com>

Dear Francesca,

Thank you very much!

Have a lovely day.
Warm Regards,
Livana
[Quoted text hidden]

Active Ageing and Community Care



University of Malta Mail - FW: [aacc.gov.mt] - Riċerka ta Studju ma Adulti Avvanazati Fl-eta 03/11/2024, 14:39

L-Università ta' Malta

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>

FW: [aacc.gov.mt] - Riċerka ta Studju ma Adulti Avvanazati Fl-eta

23 messages

AACC Services at MHA - AACC <aacc-services@gov.mt> 24 June 2024 at 17:33
To: Vella Alexander B at MHA - AACC <alexander.b.vella@gov.mt>
Cc: "livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt" <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>, AACC Services at MHA - AACC <aacc-services@gov.mt>

Sur A. Vella

Hawn taħt il-korrispondenza għall-attenzjoni tiegħek.

Grazzi u tislijiet

Maryanne Azzopardi
SUPERVISOR
Active Ageing Unit
Active Ageing and Community Care

t +356 22788900 e mary-anne.azzopardi@gov.mt
www.gov.mt | www.publicservice.gov.mt | fb.com/servizzpubbliku

MINISTRY FOR HEALTH AND ACTIVE AGEING

Kindly consider your environmental responsibility before printing this e-mail

3, Old Mint Street, Valletta

Email livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt

Subject Riċerka ta Studju ma Adulti Avvanazati Fl-eta

Message Good Morning,

Jiena Livana Borg Falzon, studenta fil-livell postgradwatorju fl-Universita ta' Malta, fejn bħalissa qiegħda nsegwi Master tal-Psikoloġija fil-Psikoloġija tal-Konsulenza. Bhalissa ninsab fl-istadji bikrija tat-twettiq tar-riċerka tieghi bit-titlu: "L-Esperjenza ta' Tmiem Relazzjoni Romantika fl-Eta Adulta Avvanzata: Analiżi Fenomenoloġika Interpretattiva". Din it-teżi tal-livell postgradwatorju qed issir taħt is-superviżjoni ta' Dr. Marta Sant.

Jiena qed infittex il-permess tiegħek biex taqsam/tpoġġi informazzjoni dwar din irriċerka mal-membri ta 'Anzianità Attiva" bit-tama li tilħaq parteċipanti potenzjali.

Dan l-istudju għandu l-għan li jinvestiga l-esperjenza personali u soġġettiva ta' tmiem relazzjoni romantika fl-et. adulta avvanzata. Għaldaqstant, dan l-istudju għandu l-għan li jeżamina l-impatt li jista' jkun kellu dan it-tmiem fuq l-individwi involuti. Din ir-riċerka ser tesplora l-fatturi li wasslu għat-tmiem tar-relazzjoni romantika kif ukoll kif l-individwi ġestew it-tmiem tar-relazzjoni tagħhom, billi jiġu identifikati strateġiji li għenuhom ikampaw, jekk hemm, li ġew adottati matul dan il-proċess. Barra minn hekk, partecipipazzjoni f'dan l-istudju titsta tgħin biex tagħti kontribuzzjoni għall-għarfien dwar suġġett li għadu mhux riċerkat biżżejjed. Din ir-riċerka ser tipprova toffri rakkomandazzjonijiet dwar il-bżonnijiet terapewtiċi ta' adulti ta' eta avvanzata li għaddejjin minn tmiem ta' relazzjoni romantika. Huwa mistenni li dan l-istudju ser jservi bħala għarfien siewi dwar interventi li l-psikologi jistgħu jikkunsidraw jinkorporaw fil-prattika professjonali tagħhom meta jaħdmu ma' adulti ta' et. avvanzata li qed jesperjenzaw tmiem ta' relazzjoni romantika.

Sabiex individwi jiehdu sehem f'dan l-istudju, il-parteċipanti huma meħtieġa jissodisfaw il-kriterji li ġejjin:

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- Ċisġeneru (tirreferi għal individwi li l-identita tal-ġeneru tagħhom hija allinjata mas-sess li ġew assenjati meta twieldu);
- Kienu f'relazzjoni romantika eterosesswali li damet mill-anqas sena.

Barra minn hekk, Ir-relazzjoni romantika ntemmet mill-anqas 18-il xahar qabel ma wieħed jieħu sehem f'dan l-istudju, u mhux aktar minn 5 snin qabel ma sseħħ l-intervista.

L-istudenta riċerkatriċi għanda tiżgura wkoll li tirrekluta parteċipanti li mhumiex vulnerabbli billi tiżgura, l-individwi li jinsabu għaddejjin minn trattament għal kundizzjonijiet psikjatriċi severi, bħal bipolari jew skiżofrenja, jew li għandhom dijanjożi ta' dimenzja, ser jiġu eskluż milli jieħdu sehem f'dan l-istudju. Apparti minn dan, individwi li jinsabu taħt il-kura ta' professjonisti tas-saħħa mentali wkoll ser jiġu eskluż milli jieħdu sehem. Dawn il-miżuri qed jiġu implimentati biex jiġi protett il- benesseri psikoloġiku tal-parteċipanti kollha.

Il-metodu tal-ġbir tad-dejta tiegħi se jinvolvi li l-parteċipanti jaqsmu l-esperjenzi tagħhom waqt intervista semistrutturata individwali, li hija mistennija ddum bejn wieħed u ieħor ħamsa u erbgħin (45) minuta sa sittin (60) minuta. Matul l-intervista, il-parteċipanti se jiġu mistoqsija

mistoqsijiet immirati biex jirriflettu fuq il-perċezzjonijiet tagħhom dwar ittmiem tar-relazzjoni tagħhom fl-eta adulta avvanzata. Il-parteċipanti se jiġu mħeġġa jirriflettu fuq il-perspettiva tagħhom stess tar-rwol tagħhom fid-dinamika tar-relazzjoni, u r-raġunijiet għat-tmiem tar-relazzjoni tagħhom. Matul l-intervista, il-parteċipanti se jiġu mistoqsija biss mistoqsijiet pertinenti għall-istudju tar-riċerka. L-intervista ser tiġi rreġistrata bl-awdjo bl-użu ta' recorder diġitali, u l-awdjo jiġi traskritt verbatim mill-istudenta riċerkatriċi. Id-dejta mbagħad għandha tiġi analizzata bl-użu ta' Analiżi Fenomenoloġika Interpretattiva (IPA), li hija metodoloġija ta' riċerka kwalitattiva. L-intervisti se jsiru f'data u f'post magħżul mill-parteċipant. Il-parteċipanti kollha jingħataw psewdonimu, u kwalunkwe informazzjoni ta' identifikazzjoni tiġi editjata jew imħassra u mhux se tidher fl-istudju.

Inkun grata ħafna jekk l-organizzazzjoni tiegħek ġentilment tibgħat linformazzjoni dwar l-istudju tiegħi lill-membri reġistrati, sabiex jiffaċilita r-reklutaġġ tiegħi.

Jekk teħtieġ aktar informazzjoni, jekk jogħġbok ikkuntatjani fuq livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt jew 99263131; alternattivament, tista' tikkuntattja lis-superviżur tar-riċerka tiegħi fuq marta.sant@um.edu.mt jew 23402312.

Grazzi għall-konsiderazzjoni tajba tiegħek ta' din it-talba.
Tislijiet,
Livana Borg Falzon



image001.jpg
24K

Vella Alexander B at MHA - AACC <alexander.b.vella@gov.mt> 25 June 2024 at 05:42
To: Xuereb Louis at MHA - AACC <louis.xuereb@gov.mt>
Cc: AACC Services at MHA - AACC <aacc-services@gov.mt>, "livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt" <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>

Sur Xuereb,

Bongu

Qed nirreferulek il-korrispondenza tas-Sa. Borg Falzon għall-evalwazzjoni u permessi jew azzjoni ulterjuri neċessarja

Tislijiet

Alexander Vella
Head Care Centre
Centru Servizz Anzjan
Active Ageing and Community Care

t +356 22788813 e alexander.b.vella@gov.mt
www.gov.mt | www.publicservice.gov.mt | fb.com/servizzpubbliku

MINISTRY FOR HEALTH AND ACTIVE AGEING

3B, OLD MINT STREET, VALLETTA, MALTA

Kindly consider your environmental responsibility before printing this e-mail

[Quoted text hidden]

image001.jpg
24K

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt> 25 June 2024 at 12:32
To: Vella Alexander B at MHA - AACC <alexander.b.vella@gov.mt>
Cc: Xuereb Louis at MHA - AACC <louis.xuereb@gov.mt>, AACC Services at MHA - AACC <aacc-services@gov.mt>

Dear Mr Vella,

Grazzi ħafna.

Il-ġurnata t-tajba.
Tislijiet,
Livana
[Quoted text hidden]

Data Protection at MHA - AACC <dp.aacc@gov.mt> 1 July 2024 at 11:33
To: Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>
Cc: Tirchett Rita at MHA - AACC <rita.tirchett.1@gov.mt>

Dear Ms Borg Falzon,

With reference to your email below, before permission is granted, you are requested to provide the FREC approval.

Once approval is granted, we shall be able to process your enquiry.

Thanks & regards,

Louis Xuereb

University of Malta Mail - FW: [aacc.gov.mt] - Riċerka ta Studju ma Adulti Avvanzati Fl-eta 03/11/2024, 14:39

Good Afternoon Mr Xuereb,

I hope this email finds you in good health.

This is to give you an update that FREC has approved my research. Please find approval email;

REDP Application ID: SWB-2024-00476

Dear Livana Borg Falzon,

Since your supervisor has confirmed that the changes have been carried out AND/OR the gatekeepers' permissions have been obtained and uploaded (as per email below), your ethics application regarding your research titled *Experiencing the Dissolution of a Romantic Relationship in Older Adulthood: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis* has been **approved.**

Faculty Research Ethics Committees are authorised to review and approve research ethics applications on behalf of the University of Malta, except in the case of sensitive personal data. In this regard, your ethics proposal **does not need to be sent to UREC-DP**. Hence, **you may now start your research**.

Disclaimer: *The research team should note that only the English versions of the documents submitted have been reviewed by FREC. It is the duty of the research team to ensure that all documents in Maltese (or any other language) are faithful translations of the English version.*

Regards,

L-Università ta' Malta

Faculty Research Ethics Committee

Faculty for Social Wellbeing
Room 113, Humanities A Building
+356 2340 2237 / 3208 / 3015

I would greatly appreciate if the Active Ageing and Community Care can act as a gatekeeper, and share my research information with potential participants.

Kindly find further information regarding my study attached.

Please let me know if you require any more information from my end.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best Regards,
Livana

[Quoted text hidden]

Brief Information About the Study to be Shared by Organisations .pdf
125K

Data Protection at MHA - AACC <dp.aacc@gov.mt> 23 July 2024 at 12:42
To: Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>

Dear Ms Falzon,

Could you please send me a copy of the FREC approval as pdf.

The copy sent is very small and not clear when enlarged.

Thanks & regards,

Louis Xuereb

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt> 26 July 2024 at 12:10
To: Data Protection at MHA - AACC <dp.aacc@gov.mt>

Good Afternoon Mr Xuereb,

I hope this email finds you in good health.

Kindly find attached FREC approval in pdf. Furthermore, I have attached a 'Brief information sheet about the study', and 'Participant information sheet'.

Please, let me know if you require anything from my side.

Thank you and Best regards,
Livana Borg Falzon
[Quoted text hidden]

3 attachments

FREC Approval - Livana Borg Falzon.pdf
95K

Participant Information Sheet .pdf
124K

Brief Information About the Study to be Shared by Organisations .pdf
125K

livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt> 26 July 2024 at 12:11
To: louis.xuereb@gov.mt, louis.xuereb@gov.mt

Your message

To: louis.xuereb@gov.mt

Subject: RE: FW: [aacc.gov.mt] - Riċerka ta Studju ma Adulti Avvanazati Fl-eta
Sent: 23/07/2024, 13:42:16 EEST

was read on 26/07/2024, 13:11:00 EEST

Data Protection at MHA - AACC <dp.aacc@gov.mt> 7 August 2024 at 10:45
To: Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>
Cc: Tirchett Rita at MHA - AACC <rita.tirchett.1@gov.mt>, Data Protection at MHA - AACC <dp.aacc@gov.mt>

Dear Ms Borg Falzon,

Your request for data collection is hereby being approved.

You are also being requested to apply the necessary safeguards as a condition for carrying out this research, namely:

a. The personal data accessed or given are only to be used for that specific purpose to conduct the research and not for other purpose;

b. At the end of the research, all personal data should be destroyed;

c. All references to personal data should be omitted in the report unless consent is specifically obtained from the person being identified in the research report; and

d. This office is to be provided with a copy of the research report.

I wish you every success in your studies.

Regards,

avieli-2021-a-sense-of-purpose-older-pri

Caritas Malta

L-Università ta' Malta

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>

Research Study: L-Esperjenza ta' Tmiem Relazzjoni Romantika fl-Eta Adulta Avvanzata.

20 messages

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt> 4 November 2024 at 08:00
To: info@caritasmalta.org

Good Morning,

I hope this email finds you in good health.

Jiena Livana Borg Falzon, studenta fil-livell postgradwatorju fl-Universita ta' Malta, fejn bħalissa qiegħda nsegwi Master fil-Counselling Psychoogy. Bhalissa ninsab fl-istadji bikrija tat-twettiq tar-riċerka tieghi bit-titlu: **"L-Esperjenza ta' Tmiem Relazzjoni Romantika fl-Eta Adulta Avvanzata".** Din it-teżi tal-livell postgradwatorju qed issir taħt is-superviżjoni ta' Dr. Marta Sant.

Jiena qed infittex il-permess tiegħek biex taqsam/tpoġġi informazzjoni dwar din ir-riċerka ma membri li jaghmlu parti jew jużaw is-servizzi ta Caritas Malta, bit-tama li tilħaq parteċipanti potenzjali.

Dan l-istudju għandu l-għan li jinvestiga l-esperjenza personali u soġġettiva ta' tmiem relazzjoni romantika fl-eta adulta avvanzata. Dan l-istudju għandu l-għan li
jeżamina l-impatt li jista' jkun kellu dan it-tmiem fuq l-individwi involuti.

Il- partecipipazzjoni f'dan l-istudju titsta tgħin biex tagħti kontribuzzjoni għall-għarfien dwar suġġett li għadu mhux riċerkat biżżejjed. Din ir-riċerka ser tipprova toffri rakkomandazzjonijiet dwar il-bżonnijiet terapewtiċi ta' adulti ta' eta avvanzata li għaddejjin minn tmiem ta' relazzjoni romantika. Huwa mistenni li dan l-istudju ser jservi bħala għarfien siewi dwar interventi li l-psikologi jistgħu jikkunsidraw jinkorporaw fil-prattika professjonali tagħhom meta jaħdmu ma' adulti ta' et. avvanzata li qed jesperjenzaw tmiem ta' relazzjoni romantika.

Sabiex individwi jiehdu sehem f'dan l-istudju, il-parteċipanti huma meħtieġa jissodisfaw il-kriterji li ġejjin:

- Ikollhom **ħamsa u sittin (65) sena jew aktar.**

- Ikunu **ċittadini Maltin** u **residenti f'Malta.**

- Kienu **f'relazzjoni romantika eterosesswal**i li **damet mill-anqas sena**.

- Barra minn hekk, Ir-relazzjoni romantika ntemmet mill-anqas 18-il xahar qabel ma wieħed jieħu sehem f'dan l-istudju, u mhux aktar minn 5 snin qabel ma sseħħ l-intervista.

L-istudenta riċerkatriċi għanda tiżgura wkoll li tirrekluta parteċipanti li mhumiex vulnerabbli billi tiżgura, l-individwi li jinsabu għaddejjin minn trattament għal kundizzjonijiet psikjatriċi severi, bħal bipolari jew skiżofrenja, jew li għandhom dijanjożi ta' dimenzja, ser jiġu eskluži milli jieħdu sehem f'dan l-istudju. Apparti minn dan, individwi li jinsabu taħt il-kura ta' professjonisti tas-saħħa mentali wkoll ser jiġu eskluži milli jieħdu sehem. Dawn il-miżuri qed jiġu implimentati biex jiġi protett il-benesseri psikoloġiku tal-parteċipanti kollha.

Il-metodu tal-ġbir tad-dejta tiegħi se jinvolvi li l-parteċipanti jaqsmu l-esperjenzi tagħhom waqt intervista li hija mistennija ddum bejn wieħed u ieħor ħamsa u erbgħin (45). Matul l-intervista, il-parteċipanti se jiġu mistoqsija mistoqsijiet immirati biex jirriflettu fuq il-perċezzjonijiet tagħhom dwar ittmiem tar-relazzjoni tagħhom fl-eta adulta avvanzata. Il-parteċipanti se jiġu mħeġġa jirriflettu fuq il-perspettiva tagħhom stess tar-rwol tagħhom fid-dinamika tar-relazzjoni, u r-raġunijiet għat-tmiem tar-relazzjoni tagħhom. Matul l-intervista, il-parteċipanti se jiġu mistoqsija biss mistoqsijiet pertinenti għall-istudju tar-riċerka. L-intervista ser tiġi rreġistrata bl-awdjo bl-użu ta' recorder diġitali, u l-awdjo jiġi traskritt verbatim mill-istudenta riċerkatriċi. Id-dejta mbagħad għandha tiġi analizzata bl-użu ta' Analiżi Fenomenoloġika Interpretattiva (IPA), li hija metodoloġija ta' riċerka kwalitattiva. L-intervisti se jsiru f'data u f'post magħżul mill-parteċipant. Il-parteċipanti kollha jingħataw psewdonimu, u kwalunkwe informazzjoni ta' identifikazzjoni tiġi editjata jew imħassra u mhux se tidher fl-istudju.

Inkun grata ħafna jekk l-organizzazzjoni tiegħek ġentilment tibgħat linformazzjoni dwar l-istudju tiegħi lill-membri reġistrati,

sabiex jiffaċilita r-reklutaġġ tiegħi.

Jekk teħtieġ aktar informazzjoni, jekk joghġbok ikkuntatjani fuq livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt jew 99263131; alternattivament, tista' tikkuntattja lis-supervīżur tar-riċerka tiegħi fuq marta.sant@um.edu.mt jew 23402312.

Grazzi għall-konsiderazzjoni tajba tiegħek ta' din il-talba.
Tislijiet,
Livana Borg Falzon

Maria Ellul Desira <maria.ellul-desira@caritasmalta.org> 7 November 2024 at 16:01
To: "livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt" <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>

Dear Livana,

Once we receive ethics approval documentation from your end, we would be able to distribute your request to potential participants.

Kind regards,

Maria Ellul Desira
Data & Research Analyst

Caritas Community Centre,
Triq Mountbatten,
Il-Ħamrun ĦMR 1577

t: +356 22199156

e: maria.ellul-desira@caritasmalta.org

This email and any files transmitted with it are confidential and intended solely for the use of the person/s or entity to whom they are addressed. If you have received this email in error kindly delete it from your system and notify the sender immediately. If you are not the intended recipient you should not disseminate, distribute, or copy this email.

From: info <info@caritasmalta.org>
Sent: Monday, November 4, 2024 8:34 AM
To: Maria Ellul Desira <maria.ellul-desira@caritasmalta.org>
Subject: FW: Research Study: L-Esperjenza ta' Tmiem Relazzjoni Romantika fl-Eta Adulta Avvanzata.

From: Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>
Sent: Monday, 4 November 2024 08:00
To: info <info@caritasmalta.org>
Subject: Research Study: L-Esperjenza ta' Tmiem Relazzjoni Romantika fl-Eta Adulta Avvanzata.

You don't often get email from livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt. Learn why this is important

[Quoted text hidden]

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt> 7 November 2024 at 16:04
To: Maria Ellul Desira <maria.ellul-desira@caritasmalta.org>

Dear Ms.Desira,

I hope you are well.

Many thanks for your reply.

Kindly find attached 'Ethics Approval' document.

Let me know whether you require anything else from my end.

Thank you and best regards,
Livana Borg Falzon
[Quoted text hidden]

FREC Approval - Livana Borg Falzon.pdf
95K

Maria Ellul Desira <maria.ellul-desira@caritasmalta.org> 8 November 2024 at 16:26
To: Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>

Dear Livana,

I have forwarded your request to our Head of Social Work as she oversees the ROSE group.

Have a good day.
Warm regards,
Livana Borg Falzon
[Quoted text hidden]

Simone Ellul <simone.ellul@um.edu.mt> 2 December 2024 at 18:32
To: Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>
Cc: Christian Borg Xuereb <christian.borg-xuereb@um.edu.mt>

Dear Liviana,

Apologies about that. I'm copying again the Rector's Delegate for the University of the Third Age, Dr Christian Borg Xuereb as only he can guide you on the matter.

Good evening
simone
[Quoted text hidden]
[Quoted text hidden]

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt> 2 December 2024 at 19:08
To: Simone Ellul <simone.ellul@um.edu.mt>
Cc: Christian Borg Xuereb <christian.borg-xuereb@um.edu.mt>

Dear Ms.Ellul,

Thank you very much!

Warm regards,
Livana
[Quoted text hidden]

Christian Borg Xuereb <christian.borg-xuereb@um.edu.mt> 2 December 2024 at 21:10
To: Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>
Cc: Simone Ellul <simone.ellul@um.edu.mt>

Sincere apologies Ms. Borg Falzon. I completely missed Ms. Ellul's email.

From my side we can tell you that we can put the poster on our facebook page and that Ms. Ellul can circulate both the poster and information sheet to our members. Whoever is interested will contact you directly according to the contact details provided.

If that is ok with you, Ms. Ellul can start this process.

Kind regards
Christian

L-Università ta' Malta

Prof Christian Borg Xuereb | Head of Department
PhD (Aston), MSc Health Psychol (Aston), BPsy (Hons) (Melit)
Health, Academic & Research Psychologist (MPPB130)
Rector's Delegate for the Universities of the Third & Fourth Age, Rectorate
Associate Professor

Faculty for Social Wellbeing
Department of Gerontology and Dementia Studies
Rm 118, New Humanities A

[Quoted text hidden]

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt> 15 December 2024 at 16:40
To: Christian Borg Xuereb <christian.borg-xuereb@um.edu.mt>
Cc: Simone Ellul <simone.ellul@um.edu.mt>

Dear Prof. Borg Xuereb,

I hope this email finds you in good health.

That sounds great! I appreciate your help in circulating my research poster. Before we can move forward, I need to inform the ethics board that the 'University of the Third Age' has agreed to act as gatekeepers. Once I receive approval from the ethics board, I will provide you with an update so we can proceed from there.

Thank you and Warm regards,
Livana Borg Falzon
[Quoted text hidden]

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt> 6 January 2025 at 16:40
To: Christian Borg Xuereb <christian.borg-xuereb@um.edu.mt>
Cc: Simone Ellul <simone.ellul@um.edu.mt>

Dear Prof. Borg Xuereb and Ms Ellul,

I hope this email finds you in good health and that you had a restful holiday season.

The ethics board has granted approval for my request, allowing the 'University of the Third Age' to serve as the gatekeepers for my research study.

I would greatly appreciate if my research poster and information can be circulated amongst members. Please find the necessary documents attached.

Thank you for your help.

Warm Regards,
Livana Borg Falzon

Livana
[Quoted text hidden]

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt> 4 December 2024 at 16:34
To: Maria Ellul Desira <maria.ellul-desira@caritasmalta.org>

Dear Ms. Maria,

I hope this email finds you in good health.

This is to let you know that I can proceed with your offer.

I look forward for your email.

Thank you and warm regards,
Livana Borg Falzon

[Quoted text hidden]

Maria Ellul Desira <maria.ellul-desira@caritasmalta.org> 5 December 2024 at 17:55
To: Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>
Cc: Bernadette Briffa <bernadette.briffa@caritasmalta.org>

Dear Livana,

Would you be available to speak for a few mins, with the ROSE support group, on Friday 20th December at 6PM?

Thanks,

[Quoted text hidden]

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt> 5 December 2024 at 18:09
To: Maria Ellul Desira <maria.ellul-desira@caritasmalta.org>
Cc: Bernadette Briffa <bernadette.briffa@caritasmalta.org>

Dear Ms. Maria,

I hope you are well.

Yes, Friday 20th at 18:00 is fine by me.

Can you kindly provide me with the address?

Thank you and warm regards,
Livana
[Quoted text hidden]

Maria Ellul Desira <maria.ellul-desira@caritasmalta.org> 5 December 2024 at 18:13

L-Università ta' Malta

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>

Research Study: L-Esperjenza ta' Tmiem Relazzjoni Romantika fl-Eta Adulta Avvanzata.

10 messages

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt> 21 November 2024 at 06:02
To: simone.ellul@um.edu.mt

Good Morning Ms Ellul,

Nispera li dan l-email isibek f'saħħa tajba.

Jiena Livana Borg Falzon, studenta fil-livell postgradwatorju fl-Universita ta' Malta, fejn bħalissa qiegħda nsegwi Master fil-Counselling Psychoogy. Bhalissa ninsab fl-istadji bikrija tat-twettiq tar-riċerka tieghi bit-titlu: "**L-Esperjenza ta' Tmiem Relazzjoni Romantika fl-Eta Adulta Avvanzata".** Din it-teżi tal-livell postgradwatorju qed issir taħt is-superviżjoni ta' Dr. Marta Sant.

Jiena qed infittex il-permess tiegħek biex taqsam/tpoġġi informazzjoni dwar din ir-riċerka ma studenti ta **'The University of the Third Age Malta'**, bit-tama li tilħaq parteċipanti potenzjali.

Dan l-istudju għandu l-għan li jinvestiga l-esperjenza personali u soġġettiva ta' tmiem relazzjoni romantika fl-eta adulta avvanzata. Dan l-istudju għandu l-għan li
jeżamina l-impatt li jista' jkun kellu dan it-tmiem fuq l-individwi involuti.

Il- partecipipazzjoni f'dan l-istudju titsta tgħin biex tagħti kontribuzzjoni għall-għarfien dwar suġġett li għadu mhux riċerkat biżżejjed. Din ir-riċerka ser tipprova toffri rakkomandazzjonijiet dwar il-bżonnijiet terapewtiċi ta' adulti ta' eta avvanzata li għaddejjin minn tmiem ta' relazzjoni romantika. Huwa mistenni li dan l-istudju ser jservi bħala għarfien siewi dwar interventi li l-psikologi jistgħu jikkunsidraw jinkorporaw fil-prattika professjonali tagħhom meta jaħdmu ma' adulti ta' et. avvanzata li qed jesperjenzaw tmiem ta' relazzjoni romantika.

Sabiex individwi jiehdu sehem f'dan l-istudju, il-parteċipanti huma meħtieġa jissodisfaw il-kriterji li ġejjin:

- Ikollhom **ħamsa u sittin (65) sena jew aktar.**

- Ikunu **ċittadini Maltin** u **residenti f'Malta.**

- Kienu **f'relazzjoni romantika eterosesswal**i li **damet mill-anqas sena**.

- Barra minn hekk, Ir-relazzjoni romantika ntemmet mill-anqas 18-il xahar qabel ma wieħed jieħu sehem f'dan l-istudju, u mhux aktar minn 5 snin qabel ma sseħħ l-intervista.

L-istudenta riċerkatriċi għanda tiżgura wkoll li tirrekluta parteċipanti li mhumiex vulnerabbli billi tiżgura, l-individwi li jinsabu għaddejjin minn trattament għal kundizzjonijiet psikjatriċi severi, bħal bipolari jew skiżofrenja, jew li għandhom dijanjożi ta' dimenzja, ser jiġu eskluži milli jieħdu sehem f'dan l-istudju. Apparti minn dan, individwi li jinsabu taħt il-kura ta' professjonisti tas-saħħa mentali wkoll ser jiġu eskluži milli jieħdu sehem. Dawn il-miżuri qed jiġu implimentati biex jiġi protett il-benesseri psikoloġiku tal-parteċipanti kollha.

Il-metodu tal-ġbir tad-dejta tiegħi se jinvolvi li l-parteċipanti jaqsmu l-esperjenzi tagħhom waqt intervista li hija mistennija ddum bejn wieħed u ieħor ħamsa u erbgħin (45). Matul l-intervista, il-parteċipanti se jiġu mistoqsija mistoqsijiet immirati biex jirriflettu fuq il-perċezzjonijiet tagħhom dwar ittmiem tar-relazzjoni tagħhom fl-eta adulta avvanzata. Il-parteċipanti se jiġu mħeġġa jirriflettu fuq il-perspettiva tagħhom stess tar-rwol tagħhom fid-dinamika tar-relazzjoni, u r-raġunijiet għat-tmiem tar-relazzjoni tagħhom. Matul l-intervista, il-parteċipanti se jiġu mistoqsija biss mistoqsijiet pertinenti għall-istudju tar-riċerka. L-intervista ser tiġi rreġistrata bl-awdjo bl-użu ta' recorder diġitali, u l-awdjo jiġi traskritt verbatim mill-istudenta riċerkatriċi. Id-dejta mbagħad għandha tiġi analizzata bl-użu ta' Analiżi Fenomenoloġika Interpretattiva (IPA), li hija metodoloġija ta' riċerka kwalitattiva. L-intervisti se jsiru f'data u f'post magħżul mill-parteċipant. Il-parteċipanti kollha jingħataw psewdonimu, u kwalunkwe informazzjoni ta' identifikazzjoni tiġi editjata jew imħassra u mhux se tidher fl-istudju.

Inkun grata ħafna jekk l-organizzazzjoni tiegħek ġentilment tibgħat linformazzjoni dwar l-istudju tiegħi lill-membri reġistrati,

sabiex jiffaċilita r-reklutaġġ tiegħi.

Jekk teħtieġ aktar informazzjoni, jekk jogħġbok ikkuntatjani fuq livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt jew 99263131; alternattivament, tista' tikkuntattja lis-supervizur tar-riċerka tiegħi fuq marta.sant@um.edu.mt jew 23402312.

Grazzi għall-konsiderazzjoni tajba tiegħek ta' din it-talba.
Tislijiet,
Livana Borg Falzon

3 attachments



Poster - Malti.png
445K

Participant Information Sheet English .docx
30K

FREC Approval - Livana Borg Falzon.pdf
95K

Simone Ellul <simone.ellul@um.edu.mt> 21 November 2024 at 09:45
To: livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt
Cc: Christian Borg Xuereb <christian.borg-xuereb@um.edu.mt>

Dear Liviana,

Thank you for your email.

I am copying the Rector's Delegate for the University of the Third Age for his attention and guidance on the matter.

Kind regards
simone
[Quoted text hidden]
--

L-Università ta' Malta

Simone Ellul
B.Psy (Hons)

Administrator
University of the Third Age
Room 224. Old Humanities
+356 2340 3952

Website: https://www.um.edu.mt/u3a
Facebook Page: University of the Third Age Malta

*The contents of this email are subject to **these terms**.*

3 attachments



Poster - Malti.png
445K

Participant Information Sheet English .docx
30K

FREC Approval - Livana Borg Falzon.pdf
95K

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt> 21 November 2024 at 14:41
To: Simone Ellul <simone.ellul@um.edu.mt>
Cc: Christian Borg Xuereb <christian.borg-xuereb@um.edu.mt>

Dear Ms Ellul,

Thank you for your email.

I look forward for your guidance on this matter.

Thank you and warm regards,
Livana Borg Falzon
[Quoted text hidden]

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt> 2 December 2024 at 12:30
To: Simone Ellul <simone.ellul@um.edu.mt>

Dear Ms. Ellul,

I hope this email finds you in good health.

This is a gentle reminder.

Have a good day.
Warm regards,
Livana Borg Falzon
[Quoted text hidden]

Simone Ellul <simone.ellul@um.edu.mt> 2 December 2024 at 18:32
To: Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>
Cc: Christian Borg Xuereb <christian.borg-xuereb@um.edu.mt>

Dear Liviana,

Apologies about that. I'm copying again the Rector's Delegate for the University of the Third Age, Dr Christian Borg Xuereb as only he can guide you on the matter.

Good evening
Simone
[Quoted text hidden]
[Quoted text hidden]

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt> 2 December 2024 at 19:08
To: Simone Ellul <simone.ellul@um.edu.mt>
Cc: Christian Borg Xuereb <christian.borg-xuereb@um.edu.mt>

Dear Ms.Ellul,

Thank you very much!

Warm regards,
Livana
[Quoted text hidden]

Christian Borg Xuereb <christian.borg-xuereb@um.edu.mt> 2 December 2024 at 21:10
To: Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>
Cc: Simone Ellul <simone.ellul@um.edu.mt>

Sincere apologies Ms. Borg Falzon. I completely missed Ms. Ellul's email.

From my side we can tell you that we can put the poster on our facebook page and that Ms. Ellul can circulate both the poster and information sheet to our members. Whoever is interested will contact you directly according to the contact details provided.

If that is ok with you, Ms. Ellul can start this process.

Kind regards
Christian

L-Università ta' Malta

Prof Christian Borg Xuereb | Head of Department
PhD (Aston), MSc Health Psychol (Aston), BPsy (Hons) (Melit)
Health, Academic & Research Psychologist (MPPB130)
Rector's Delegate for the Universities of the Third & Fourth Age, Rectorate
Associate Professor

Faculty for Social Wellbeing
Department of Gerontology and Dementia Studies
Rm 118, New Humanities A

[Quoted text hidden]

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt> 15 December 2024 at 16:40
To: Christian Borg Xuereb <christian.borg-xuereb@um.edu.mt>
Cc: Simone Ellul <simone.ellul@um.edu.mt>

Dear Prof. Borg Xuereb,

I hope this email finds you in good health.

That sounds great! I appreciate your help in circulating my research poster. Before we can move forward, I need to inform the ethics board that the 'University of the Third Age' has agreed to act as gatekeepers. Once I receive approval from the ethics board, I will provide you with an update so we can proceed from there.

Thank you and Warm regards,
Livana Borg Falzon
[Quoted text hidden]

Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt> 6 January 2025 at 16:40
To: Christian Borg Xuereb <christian.borg-xuereb@um.edu.mt>
Cc: Simone Ellul <simone.ellul@um.edu.mt>

Dear Prof. Borg Xuereb and Ms Ellul,

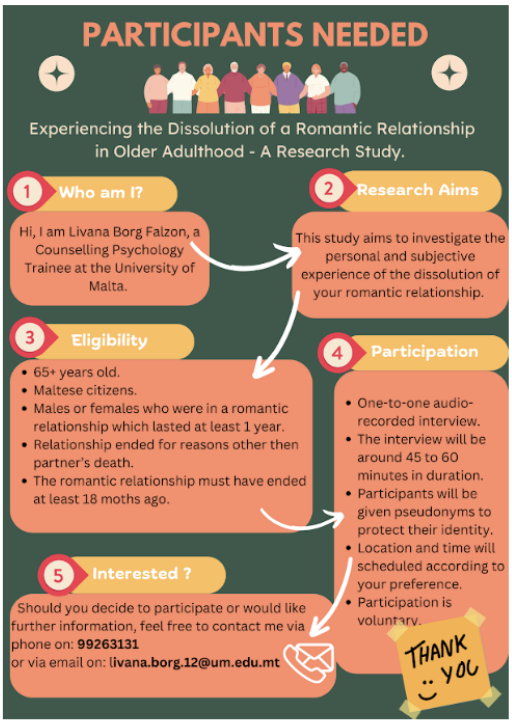
I hope this email finds you in good health and that you had a restful holiday season.

The ethics board has granted approval for my request, allowing the 'University of the Third Age' to serve as the gatekeepers for my research study.

I would greatly appreciate if my research poster and information can be circulated amongst members. Please find the necessary documents attached.

Thank you for your help.

Warm Regards,
Livana Borg Falzon



[Quoted text hidden]

Participant Information Sheet English .docx
30K

Simone Ellul <simone.ellul@um.edu.mt> 7 January 2025 at 18:36
To: Livana Borg Falzon <livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt>
Cc: Christian Borg Xuereb <christian.borg-xuereb@um.edu.mt>

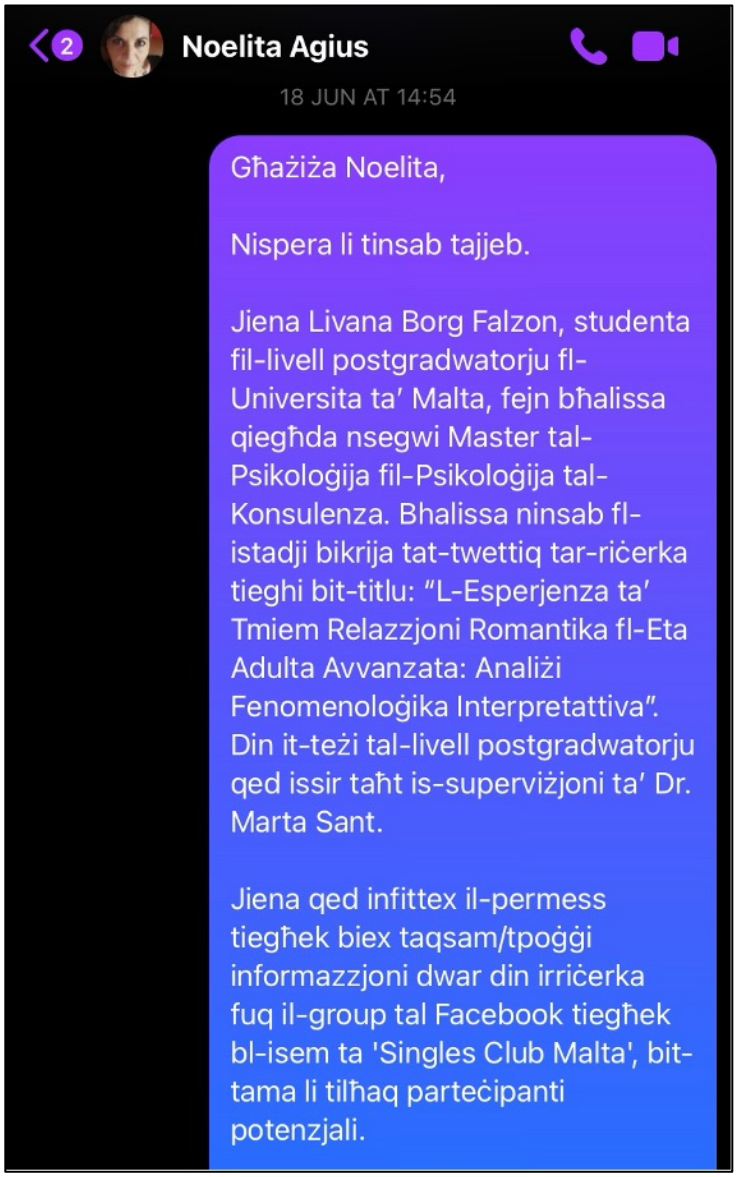
Dear Ms Borg Falzon,

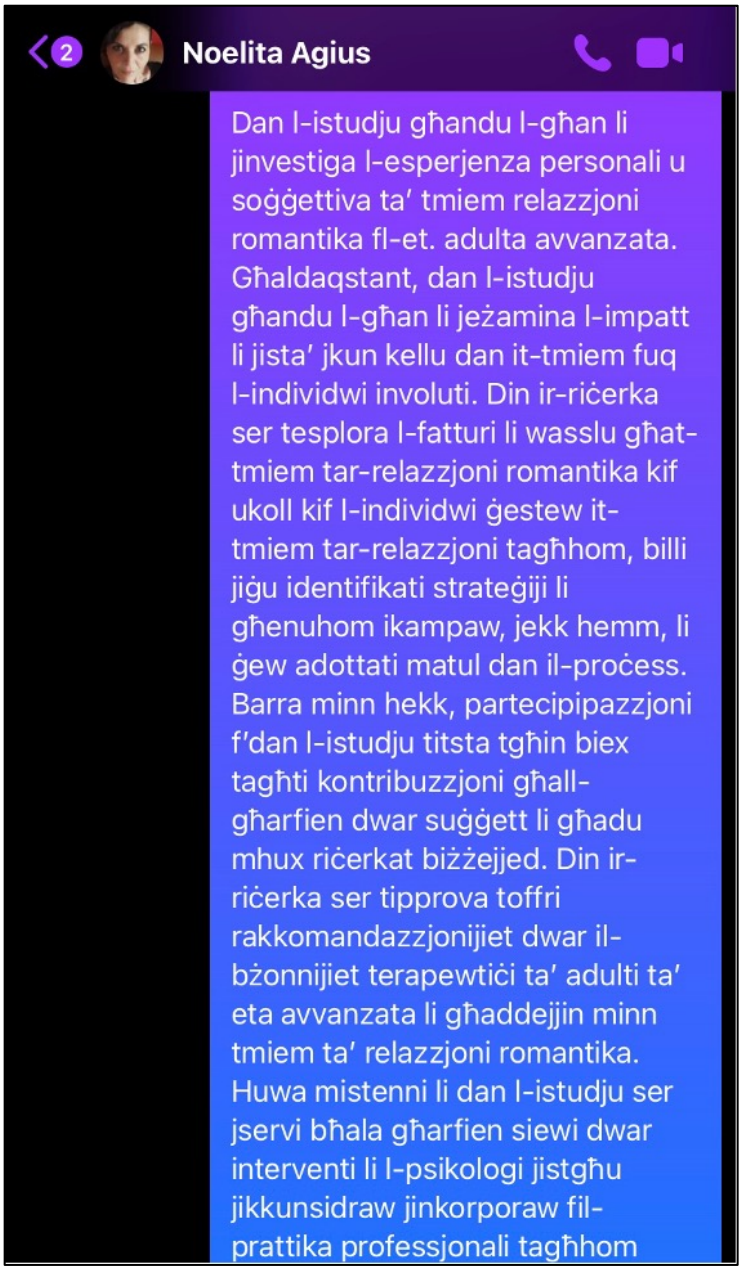
Happy New Year :)

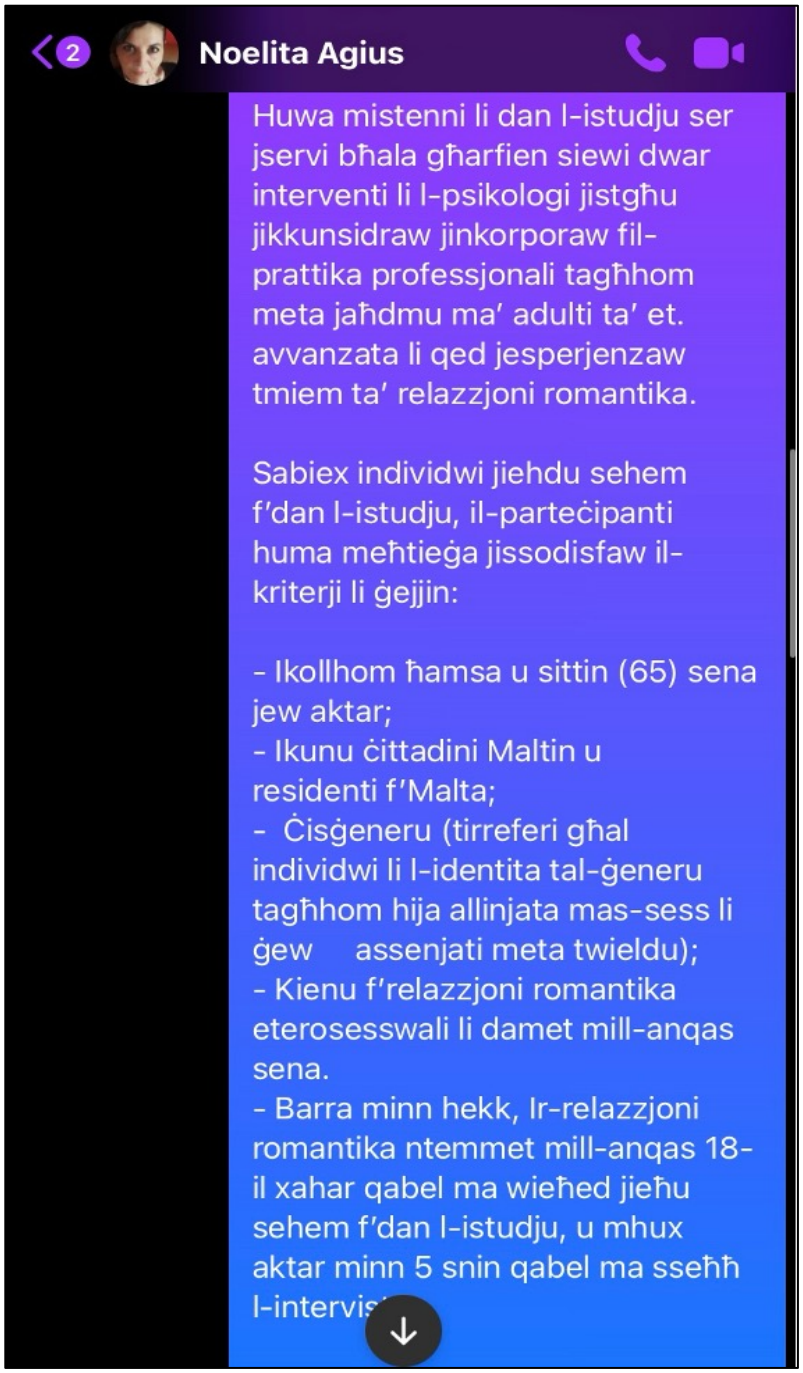
Thank you for sending the documents. I will send them to all our members.

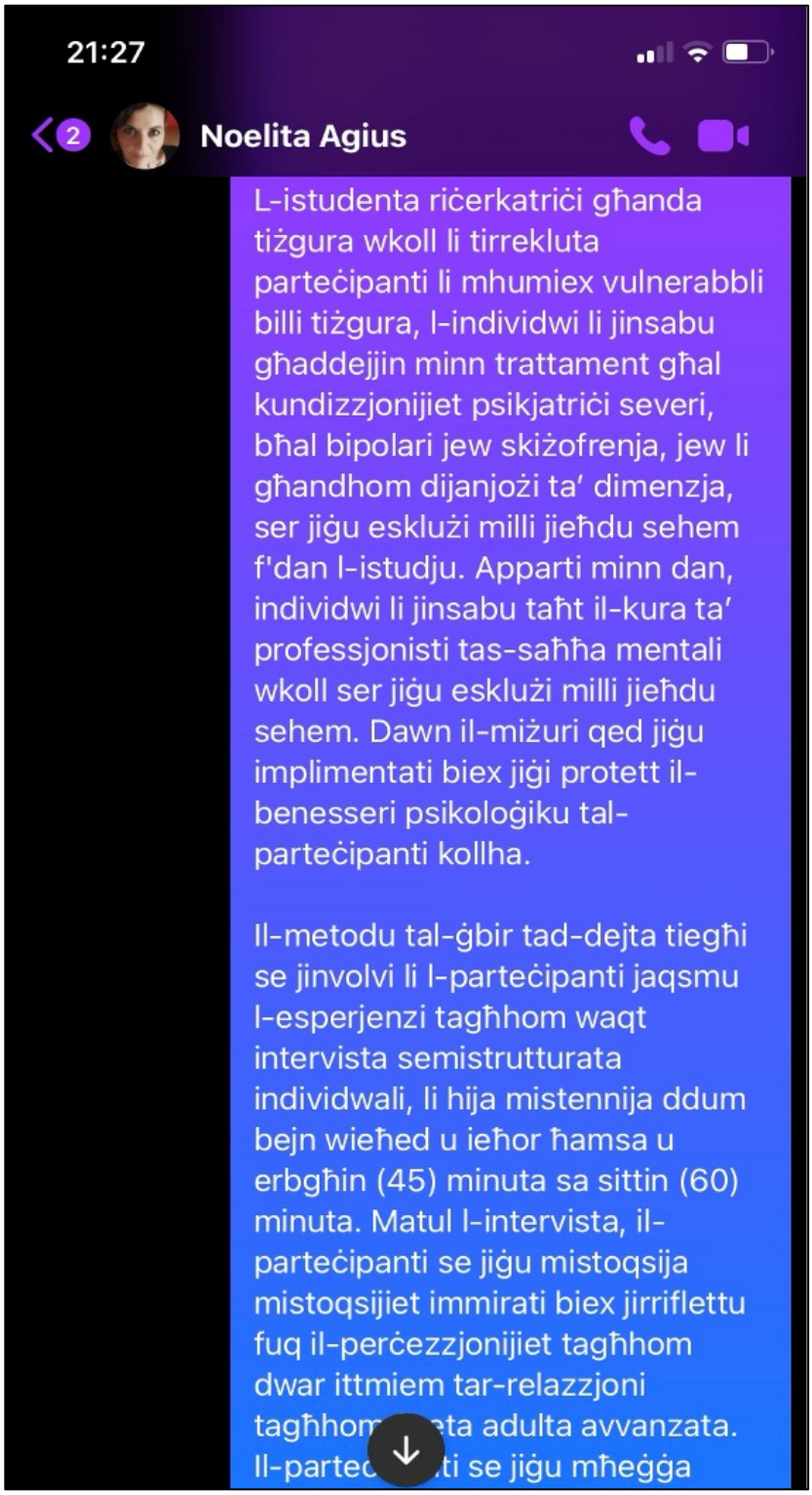
Good eve
simone
[Quoted text hidden]
[Quoted text hidden]

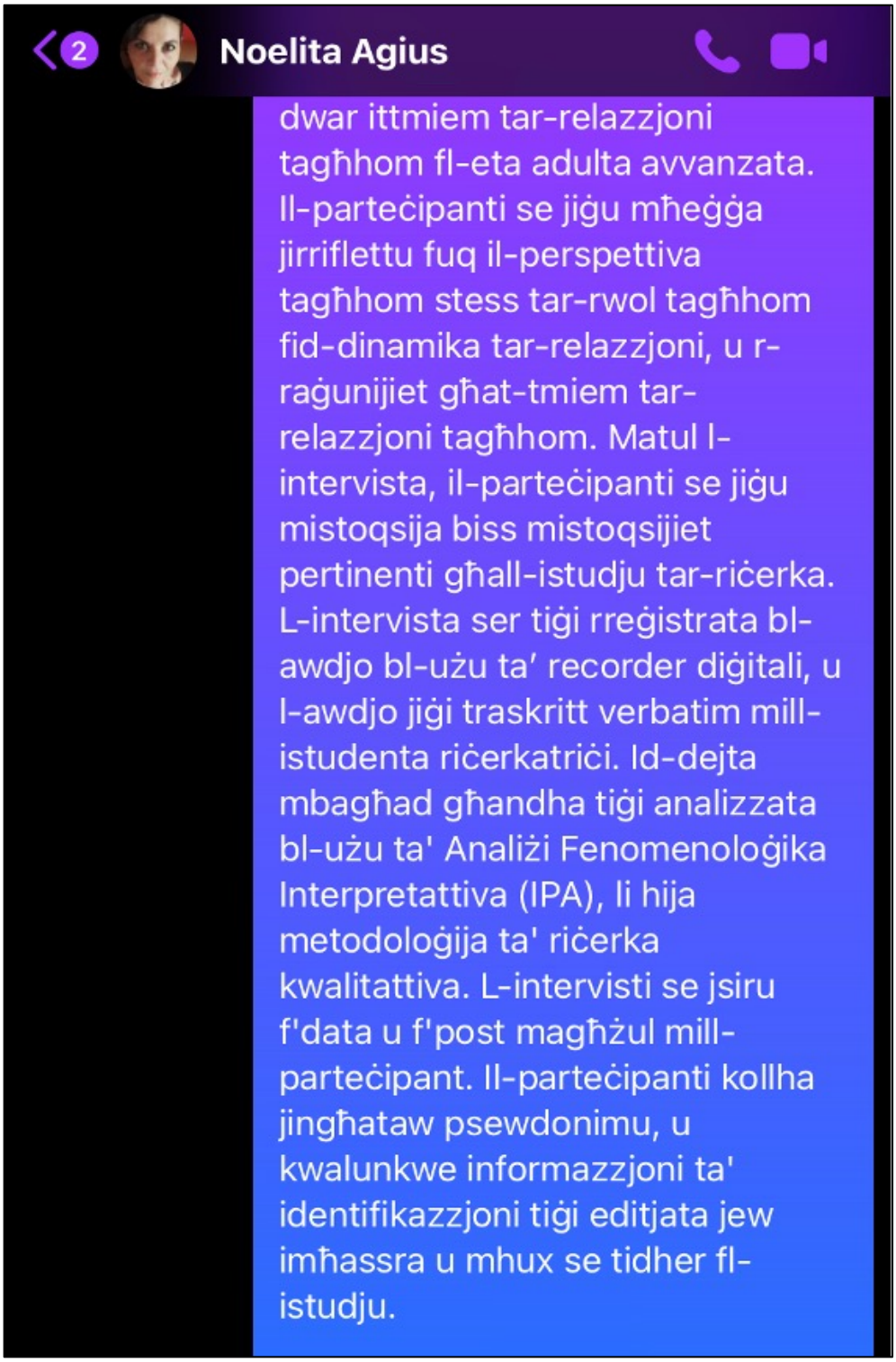
Single Club Malta - Facebook Group

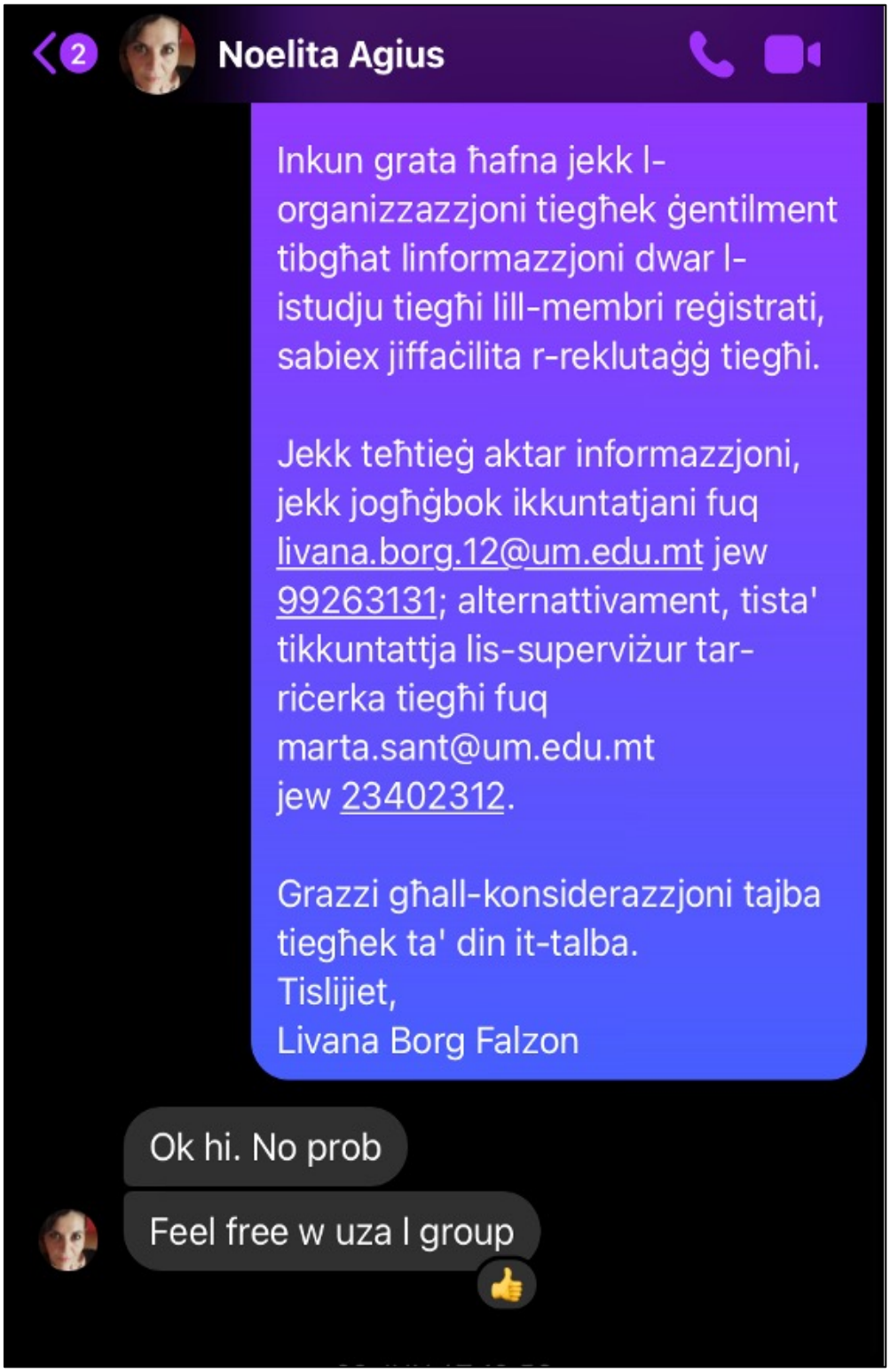


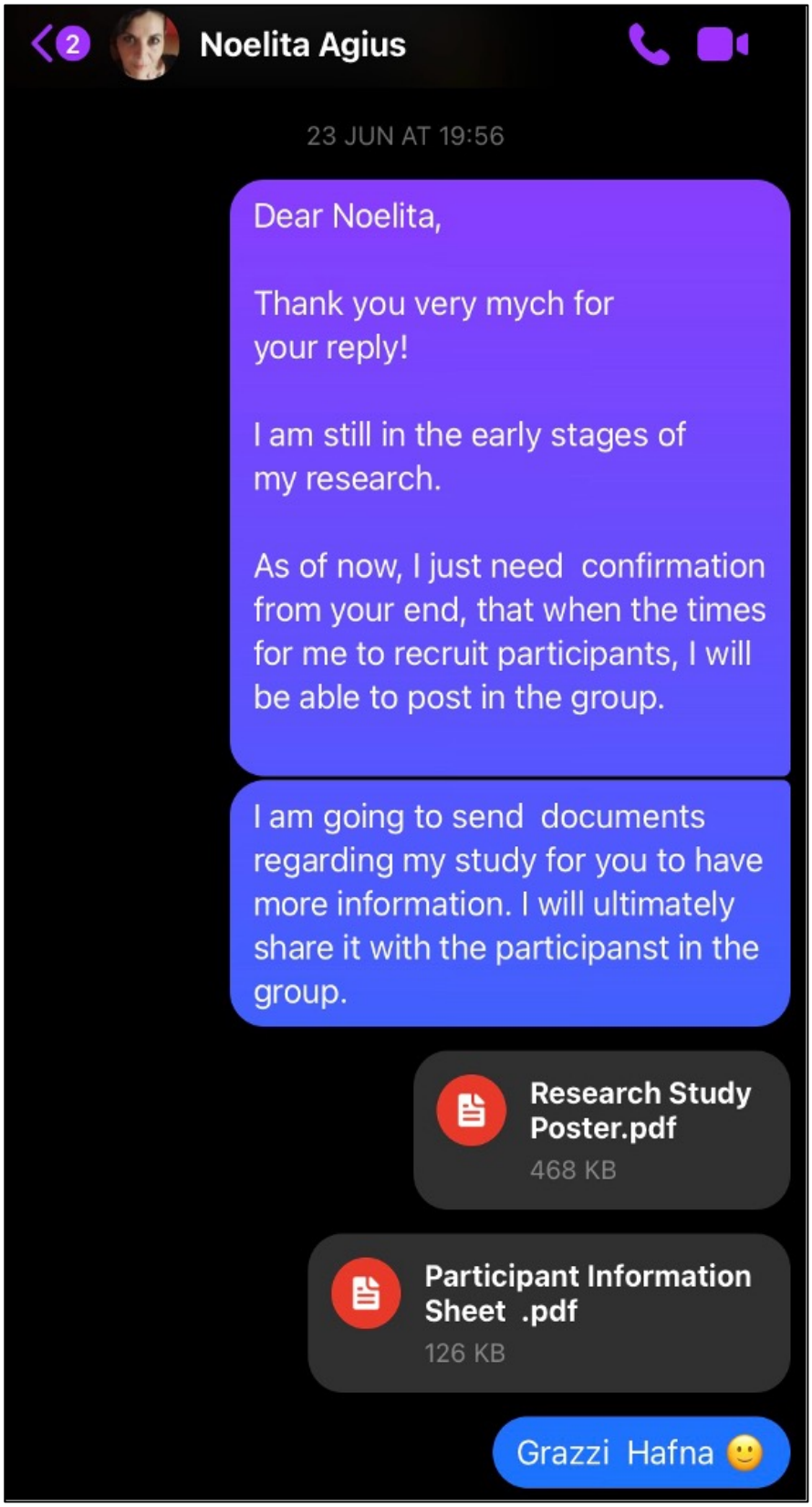

2
Noelita Agius
Dan l-istudju għandu l-għan li jinvestiga l-esperjenza personali u soġġettiva ta' tmiem relazzjoni romantika fl-et. adulta avvanzata. Għaldaqstant, dan l-istudju għandu l-għan li jeżamina l-impatt li jista' jkun kellu dan it-tmiem fuq l-individwi involuti. Din ir-riċerka ser tesplora l-fatturi li wasslu għat-tmiem tar-relazzjoni romantika kif ukoll kif l-individwi ġestew it-tmiem tar-relazzjoni tagħhom, billi jiġu identifikati strateġiji li għenuhom ikampaw, jekk hemm, li ġew adottati matul dan il-proċess. Barra minn hekk, partecipipazzjoni f'dan l-istudju titsta tgħin biex tagħti kontribuzzjoni għall-għarfien dwar suġġett li għadu mhux riċerkat biżżejjed. Din ir-riċerka ser tipprova toffri rakkomandazzjonijiet dwar il-bżonnijiet terapewtiċi ta' adulti ta' eta avvanzata li għaddejjin minn tmiem ta' relazzjoni romantika. Huwa mistenni li dan l-istudju ser jservi bħala għarfien siewi dwar interventi li l-psikologi jistgħu jikkunsidraw jinkorporaw fil-prattika professjonali tagħhom

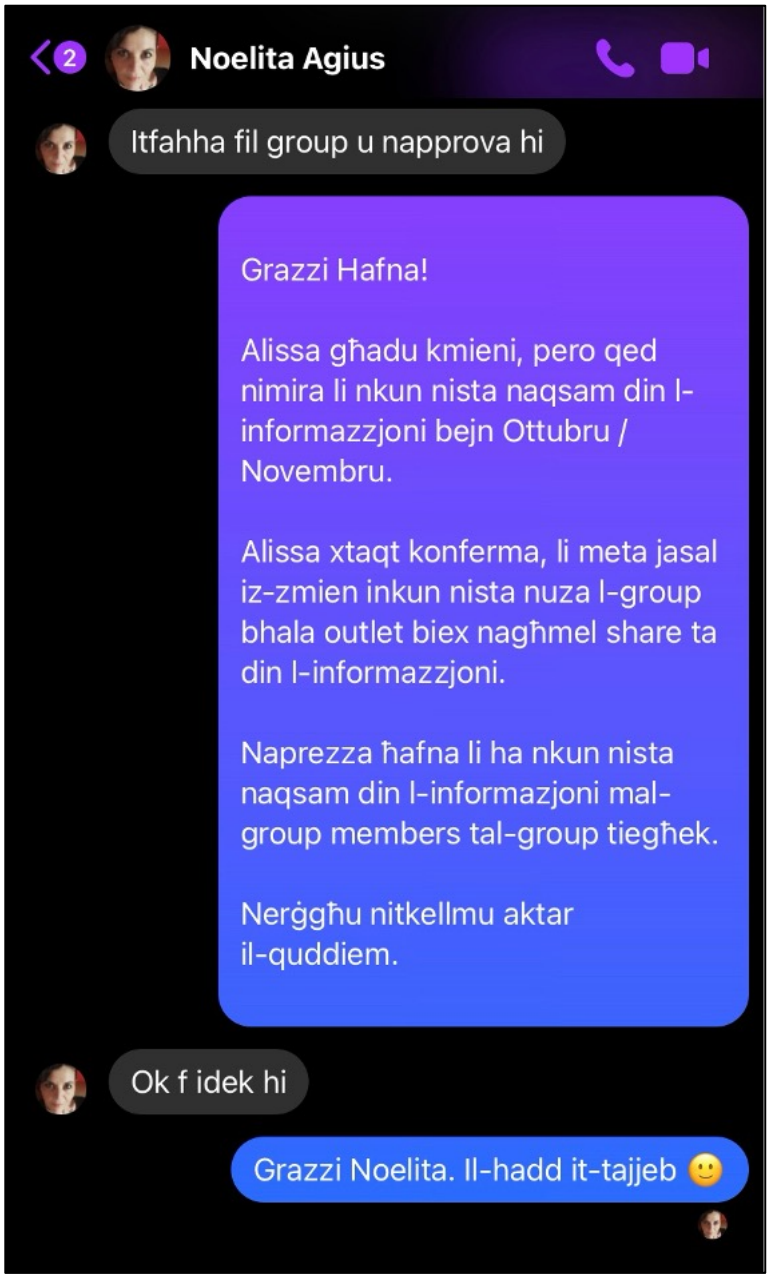

2
Noelita Agius
Huwa mistenni li dan l-istudju ser jservi bħala għarfien siewi dwar interventi li l-psikologi jistgħu jikkunsidraw jinkorporaw fil-prattika professjonali tagħhom meta jaħdmu ma' adulti ta' et. avvanzata li qed jesperjenzaw tmiem ta' relazzjoni romantika.
Sabiex individwi jiehdu sehem f'dan l-istudju, il-parteċipanti huma meħtieġa jissodisfaw il-kriterji li ġejjin:
- Ikollhom ħamsa u sittin (65) sena jew aktar;
- Ikunu ċittadini Maltin u residenti f'Malta;
- Ċisġeneru (tirreferi għal individwi li l-identita tal-ġeneru tagħhom hija allinjata mas-sess li ġew assenjati meta twieldu);
- Kienu f'relazzjoni romantika eterosesswali li damet mill-anqas sena.
- Barra minn hekk, l-relazzjoni romantika ntemmet mill-anqas 18-il xahar qabel ma wieħed jieħu sehem f'dan l-istudju, u mhux aktar minn 5 snin qabel ma sseħħ l-intervis


21:27
2
Noelita Agius
L-istudenta riċerkatriċi għanda tiżgura wkoll li tirrekluta parteċipanti li mhumiex vulnerabbli billi tiżgura, l-individwi li jinsabu għaddejjin minn trattament għal kundizzjonijiet psikjatriċi severi, bħal bipolari jew skiżofrenja, jew li għandhom dijanjożi ta' dimenzja, ser jiġu esklużi milli jieħdu sehem f'dan l-istudju. Apparti minn dan, individwi li jinsabu taħt il-kura ta' professjonisti tas-saħħa mentali wkoll ser jiġu esklużi milli jieħdu sehem. Dawn il-miżuri qed jiġu implimentati biex jiġi protett il-benesseri psikoloġiku tal-parteċipanti kollha.
Il-metodu tal-ġbir tad-dejta tiegħi se jinvolvi li l-parteċipanti jaqsmu l-esperjenzi tagħhom waqt intervista semistrutturata individwali, li hija mistennija ddum bejn wieħed u ieħor ħamsa u erbgħin (45) minuta sa sittin (60) minuta. Matul l-intervista, il-parteċipanti se jiġu mistoqsija mistoqsijiet immirati biex jirriflettu fuq il-perċezzjonijiet tagħhom dwar ittmiem tar-relazzjoni tagħhom
eta adulta avvanzata. Il-partec
ti se jiġu mħeġġa

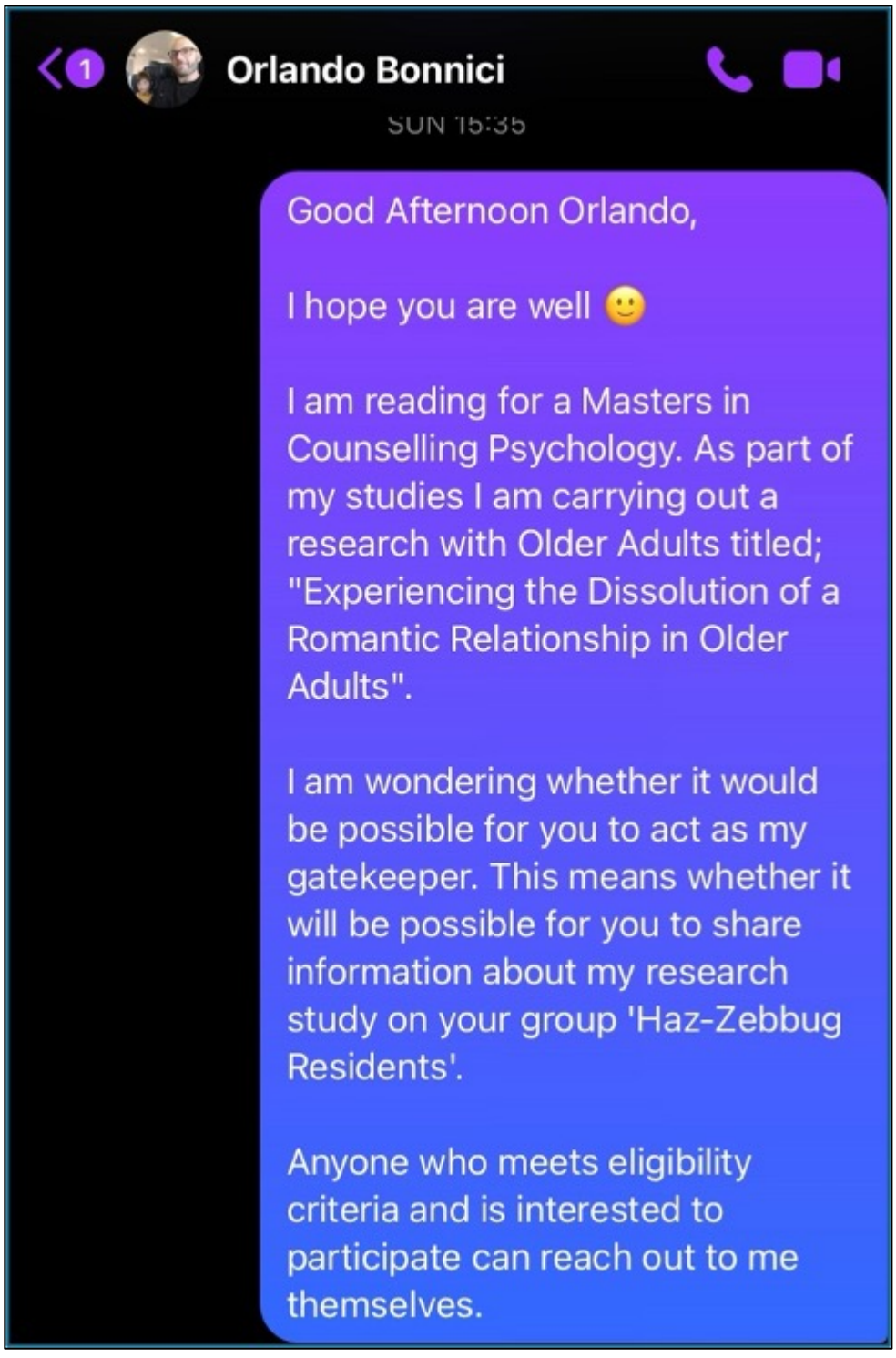

2
Noelita Agius
dwar ittmiem tar-relazzjoni tagħhom fl-eta adulta avvanzata. Il-parteċipanti se jiġu mħeġġa jirriflettu fuq il-perspettiva tagħhom stess tar-rwol tagħhom fid-dinamika tar-relazzjoni, u r-raġunijiet għat-tmiem tar-relazzjoni tagħhom. Matul l-intervista, il-parteċipanti se jiġu mistoqsija biss mistoqsijiet pertinenti għall-istudju tar-riċerka. L-intervista ser tiġi rreġistrata bl-awdjo bl-użu ta' recorder diġitali, u l-awdjo jiġi traskritt verbatim mill-istudenta riċerkatriċi. Id-dejta mbagħad għandha tiġi analizzata bl-użu ta' Analiżi Fenomenoloġika Interpretattiva (IPA), li hija metodoloġija ta' riċerka kwalitattiva. L-intervisti se jsiru f'data u f'post magħżul mill-parteċipant. Il-parteċipanti kollha jingħataw psewdonimu, u kwalunkwe informazzjoni ta' identifikazzjoni tiġi editjata jew imħassra u mhux se tidher fl-istudju.

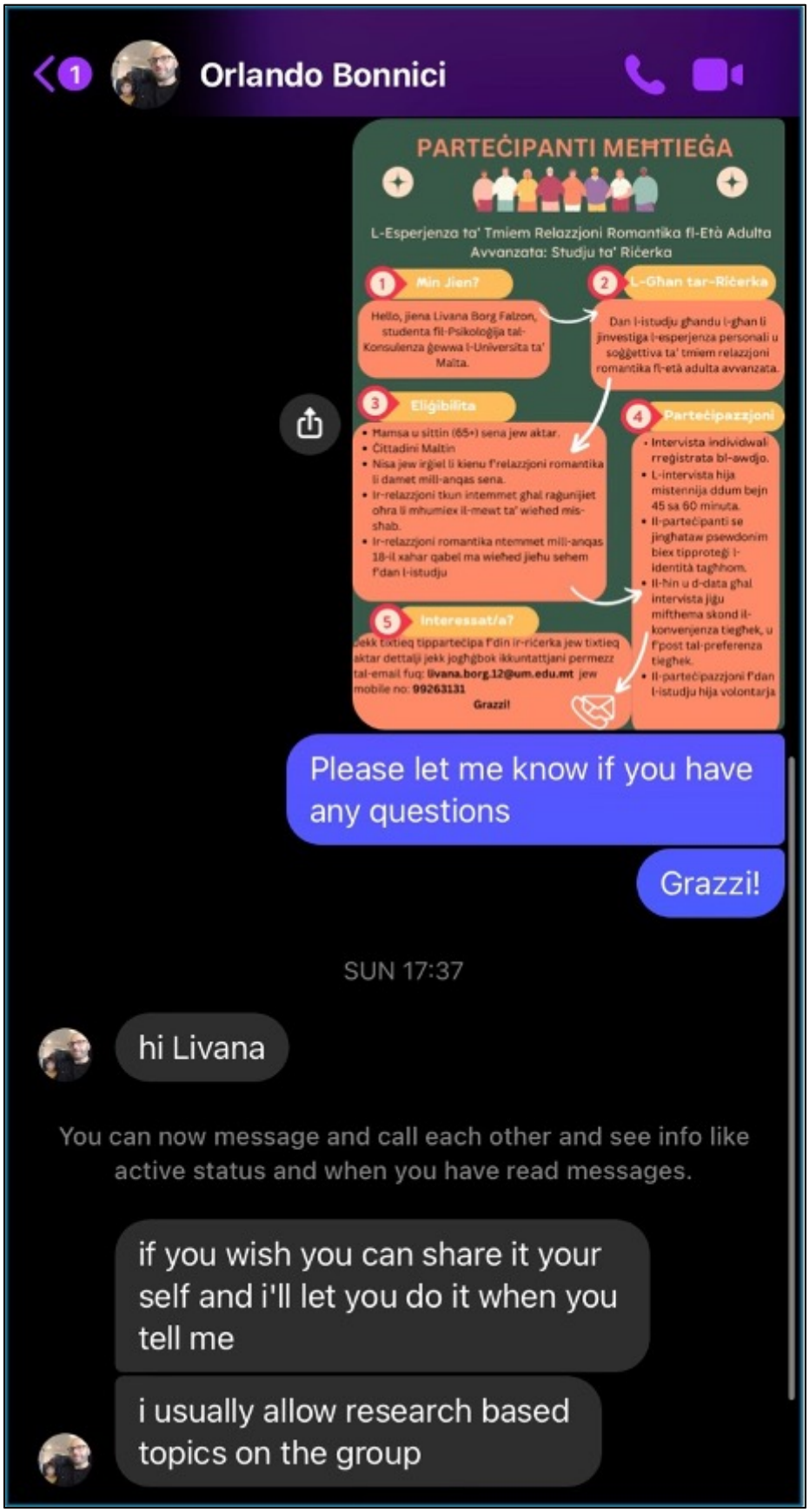

2
Noelita Agius
Inkun grata ħafna jekk l-organizzazzjoni tiegħek ġentilment tibgħat linformazzjoni dwar l-istudju tiegħi lill-membri reġistrati, sabiex jiffaċilita r-reklutaġġ tiegħi.
Jekk teħtieġ aktar informazzjoni, jekk jogħġbok ikkuntatjani fuq livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt jew 99263131; alternattivament, tista' tikkuntattja lis-superviżur tar-riċerka tiegħi fuq marta.sant@um.edu.mt jew 23402312.
Grazzi għall-konsiderazzjoni tajba tiegħek ta' din it-talba.
Tislijiet,
Livana Borg Falzon
Ok hi. No prob
Feel free w uza l group

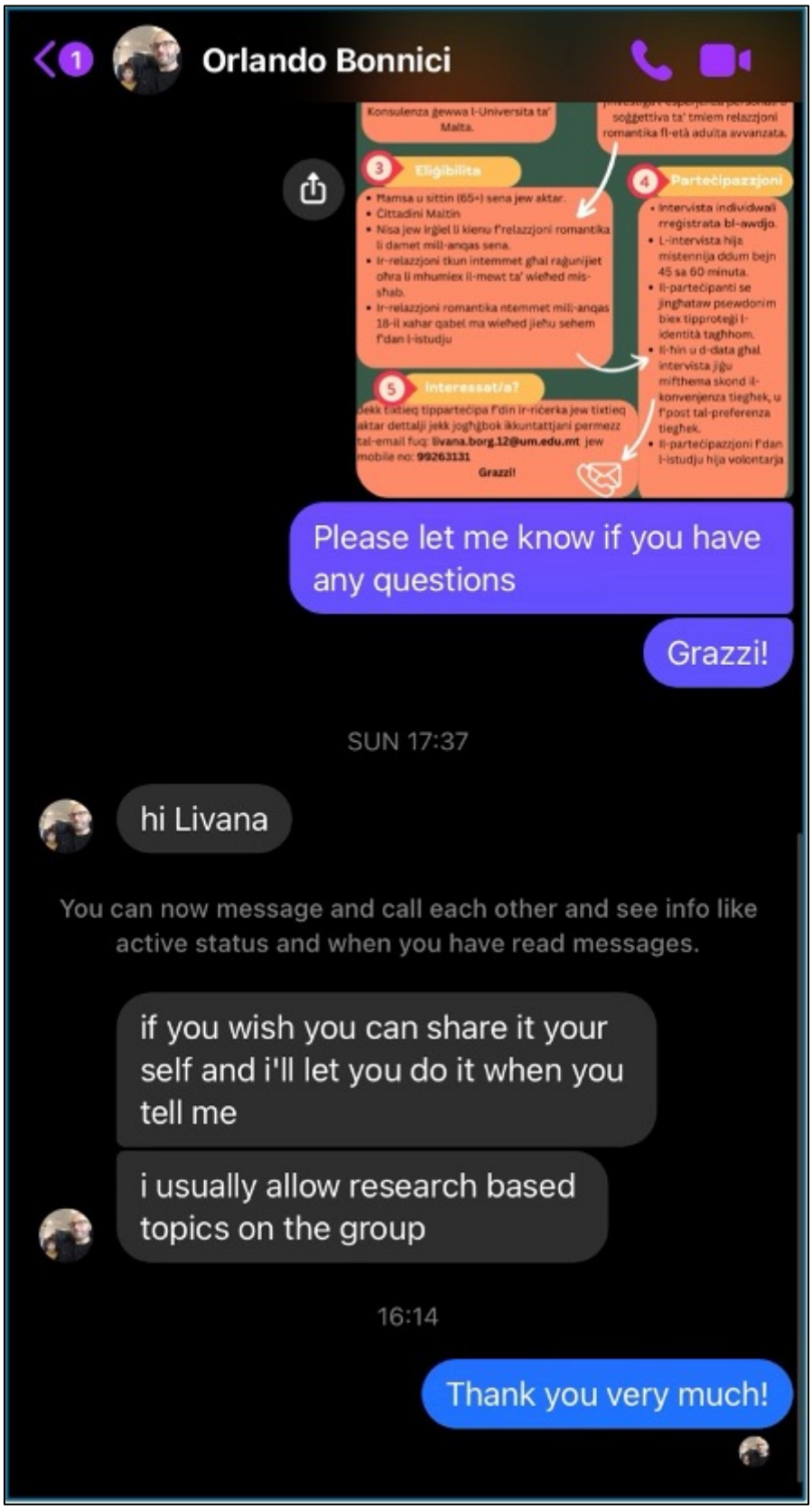

2
Noelita Agius
23 JUN AT 19:56
Dear Noelita,
Thank you very mych for your reply!
I am still in the early stages of my research.
As of now, I just need confirmation from your end, that when the times for me to recruit participants, I will be able to post in the group.
I am going to send documents regarding my study for you to have more information. I will ultimately share it with the participanst in the group.
Research Study Poster.pdf
468 KB
Participant Information Sheet .pdf
126 KB
Grazzi Hafna



Ħaż-Żebbuġ Residents – Facebook Group

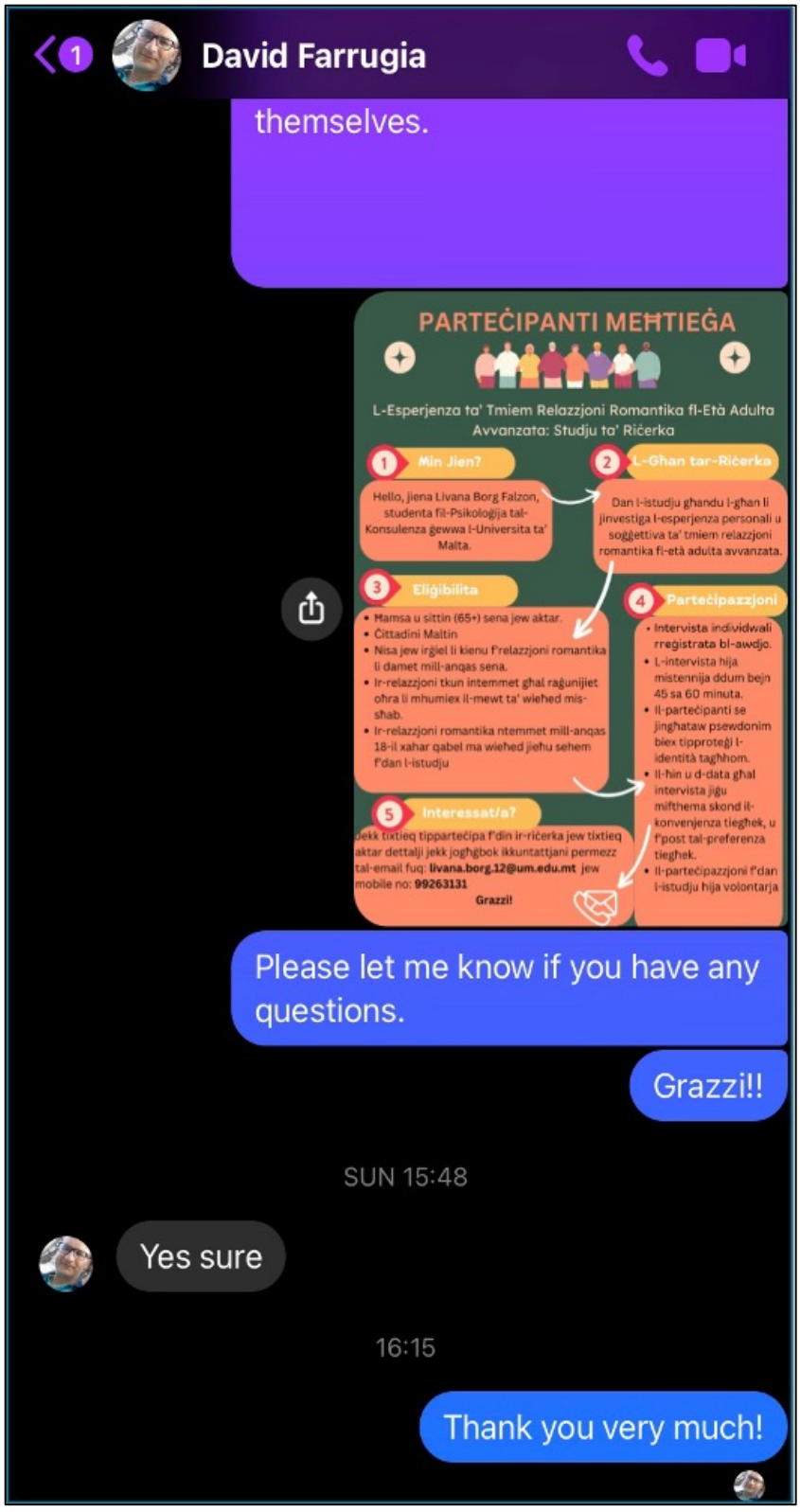

1
Orlando Bonnici
SUN 15:35
Good Afternoon Orlando,
I hope you are well
I am reading for a Masters in Counselling Psychology. As part of my studies I am carrying out a research with Older Adults titled; "Experiencing the Dissolution of a Romantic Relationship in Older Adults".
I am wondering whether it would be possible for you to act as my gatekeeper. This means whether it will be possible for you to share information about my research study on your group 'Haz-Zebbug Residents'.
Anyone who meets eligibility criteria and is interested to participate can reach out to me themselves.


1
Orlando Bonnici
PARTEĊIPANTI MEĦTIEĠA
L-Esperjenza ta' Tmiem Relazzjoni Romantika fl-Età Adulta Avvanzata: Studju ta' Riċerka
1 Min Jien?
Hello, jiena Livana Borg Falzon, studenta fil-Psikoloġija tal-Konsulenza ġewwa l-Università ta' Malta.
2 L-Għan tar-Riċerka
Dan l-istudju għandu l-għan li jinvestiga l-esperjenza personali u soġġettiva ta' tmiem relazzjoni romantika fl-età adulta avvanzata.
3 Eliġibilità
• Mamsa u sittin (65+) sena jew aktar.
• Ċittadini Maltin
• Nisa jew irġiel li kienu f'relazzjoni romantika li damet mill-anqas sena.
• Ir-relazzjoni tkun intemmet għal raġunijiet oħra li mhumiex il-mewt ta' wieħed mis-sħab.
• Ir-relazzjoni romantika ntemmet mill-anqas 18-il xahar qabel ma wieħed jieħu sehem f'dan l-istudju
4 Parteċipazzjoni
• Intervista individwali rreġistrata bl-awdjo.
• L-intervista hija mistennija ddum bejn 45 sa 60 minuta.
• Il-parteċipanti se jingħataw psewdonim biex tipproteġi l-identità tagħhom.
• Il-ħin u d-data għal intervista jiġu mifthema skond il-konvenjenza tiegħek, u f'post tal-preferenza tiegħek.
• Il-parteċipazzjoni f'dan l-istudju hija volontarja
5 Interessat/a?
Jekk tixtieq tipparteċipa f'din ir-riċerka jew tixtieq aktar dettalji jekk joħgbok ikkuntattjani permezz tal-email fuq: livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt jew mobile no: 99263131
Grazzi!
Please let me know if you have any questions
Grazzi!
SUN 17:37
hi Livana
You can now message and call each other and see info like active status and when you have read messages.
if you wish you can share it your self and i'll let you do it when you tell me
i usually allow research based topics on the group


Orlando Bonnici
Konsulenza gewwa l-Universita ta' Malta.
soġġettiva ta' tmiem relazzjoni romantika fl-età adulta avvanzata.
3 Eliġibilità
• Mamsa u sittin (65+) sena jew aktar.
• Cittadini Maltin
• Nisa jew irġiel li kienu f'relazzjoni romantika li damet mill-anqas sena.
• Ir-relazzjoni tkun intemmet għal raġunijiet oħra li mhumiex il-mewt ta' wieħed mis-sħab.
• Ir-relazzjoni romantika ntemmet mill-anqas 18-il xahar qabel ma wieħed jieħu sehem f'dan l-istudju
4 Parteċipazzjoni
• Intervista individwali rreġistrata bl-awdjo.
• L-intervista hija misteriija ddum bejn 45 sa 60 minuta.
• Il-parteċipanti se jingħataw psewdonim biex tipproteġi l-identità tagħhom.
• Il-ħin u d-data għal intervista jiġu mifthema skond il-konvenjenza tiegħek, u f'post tal-preferenza tiegħek.
• Il-parteċipazzjoni f'dan l-istudju hija volontarja
5 Interessat/a?
Jekk tixtieq tipparteċipa f'din ir-riċerka jew tixtieq aktar dettalji jekk joġħġbok ikkuntattjani permezz tal-email tiegħi: livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt jew mobile no: 99263131
Grazzi!
Please let me know if you have any questions
Grazzi!
SUN 17:37
hi Livana
You can now message and call each other and see info like active status and when you have read messages.
if you wish you can share it your self and i'll let you do it when you tell me
i usually allow research based topics on the group
16:14
Thank you very much!

Siġġiewi Ċitta Ferninand – Facebook Group




David Farrugia
themselves.
PARTEĊIPANTI MEĦTIEĠA
L-Esperjenza ta' Tmiem Relazzjoni Romantika fl-Età Adulta Avvanzata: Studju ta' Riċerka
1 Min Jien?
Hello, jiena Livana Borg Falzon, studenta fil-Psikoloġija tal-Konsulenza ġewwa l-Università ta' Malta.
2 L-Għan tar-Riċerka
Dan l-istudju għandu l-għan li jinvestiga l-esperjenza personali u soġġettiva ta' tmiem relazzjoni romantika fi-età adulta avvanzata.
3 Eliġibilità
Mamsa u sittin (65+) sena jew aktar.
Ċittadini Maltin
Nisa jew irġiel li kienu f'relazzjoni romantika li damet mill-anqas sena.
Ir-relazzjoni tkun intemmet għal raġunijiet oħra li mhumiex il-mewt ta' wieħed mis-sħab.
Ir-relazzjoni romantika ntemmet mill-anqas 18-il xahar qabel ma wieħed jieħu sehem f'dan l-istudju
4 Parteċipazzjoni
Intervista individwali rreġistrata bl-awdjo.
L-intervista hija mistennija ddum bejn 45 sa 60 minuta.
Il-parteċipanti se jingħataw psewdonim biex tipproteġi l-identità tagħhom.
Il-ħin u d-data għal intervista jiġu miftiehma skond il-konvenjenza tiegħek, u f'post tal-preferenza tiegħek.
Il-parteċipazzjoni f'dan l-istudju hija volontarja
5 Interessat/a?
Jekk tixtieq tipparteċipa f'din ir-riċerka jew tixtieq aktar dettalji jekk joħgbok ikkuntattjani permezz tal-email fuq: livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt jew mobile no: 99263131
Grazzi!
Please let me know if you have any questions.
Grazzi!!
SUN 15:48
Yes sure
16:15
Thank you very much!

Appendix C

Brief information sheet sent to organisation and Facebook group administrators in English

Brief Information Sheet in English

Name of Student Researcher: Livana Borg Falzon

Course: Master of Psychology in Counselling Psychology

Student Researcher's Contact Email: livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt

Student Researcher's Contact Number: 99263131

Name of Research Supervisor: Dr. Marta Sant

Research Supervisor's Contact Email: marta.sant@um.edu.mt

Research Supervisor's Contact Number: 23402312

Title of Study: Experiencing the Dissolution of a Romantic Relationship in Older Adulthood: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Brief Information About the Study to be Shared by Organisations

Dear prospective participant,

I am Livana Borg Falzon, a postgraduate student at the University of Malta, presently reading for a Master of Psychology in Counselling Psychology. I am conducting a research study for my dissertation, titled *Experiencing the Dissolution of a Romantic Relationship in Older Adulthood: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.* This research is being supervised by Dr. Marta Sant.

This study aims to investigate the personal and subjective experience of the dissolution of a romantic relationship in older adulthood. This study seeks to examine the impact that this termination may have had on the individuals involved. This research will delve into the factors that led to the end of the romantic relationship and will explore how individuals navigated through the ending of their relationship, identify coping strategies, if any, that were adopted during this process.

I am looking to recruit individuals who:

- Identify as cisgender and are sixty-five (65) years of age or older (cisgender refers to individuals whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth).
- Are Maltese citizens.
- Males or females who were in a heterosexual romantic relationship that lasted a minimum of 1 year. For the purpose of this study, a romantic relationship is understood to include one of the following: legal act of marriage, civil union, cohabitation, or a romantic relationship in which the couple were not legally married / in a civil union.
- The relationship would have ceased for reasons other than the death of a partner.
- The romantic relationship must have ended at least 18 months prior to taking part in the study, and not more than 5 years prior to the interview taking place.
- Are not in therapy, followed by a psychiatrist or have a diagnosed mental health condition, or dementia.

Your participation in this study will attempt to contribute to a better understanding of one's own process throughout the dissolution of a romantic relationship. This study will give you an opportunity to take part in local research and contribute to knowledge on a topic which is under researched, and which others going through a similar experience to you might find helpful. This research will attempt to offer recommendations concerning the therapeutic needs of older adults going through a dissolution of a romantic relationship. Any data collected from this research will be used solely for purposes of this study.

Participants will be asked to share their experiences during an audio-recorded, one-to- one semi-structured in-depth interview of approximately forty-five (45) to sixty (60) minutes in duration. Participation will be purely voluntary. The interview can be held in Maltese and/or English, based on your personal preference. The interview will be scheduled at a convenient time, and location of your preference. Participants will all be given pseudonyms, and any identifying information will be deleted or edited and will not feature in the study.

Interested individuals are kindly asked to send an email on livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt or call on 99263131 for more detailed information about this study. You can also contact my research supervisor, Dr Marta Sant on marta.sant@um.edu.mt or 23402312.

I look forward to hearing from you and thank you for your kind consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Livana Borg Falzon

Appendix D

Brief Information sheet sent to organisation and Facebook group administrators in Maltese

Brief Information Sheet in Maltese

Isem ir-riċerkatriċi studenta: Livana Borg Falzon

Kors: Master tal-Psikoloġija fil-Psikoloġija tal-Konsulenza

Email ta' kuntatt tar-riċerkatriċi studenta: livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt

Numru ta' kuntatt tar-riċerkatriċi studenta: 99263131

Isem is-superviżur tar-riċerka: Dr. Marta Sant

Email ta' kuntatt tas-superviżur tar-riċerka: marta.sant@um.edu.mt

Numru ta' kuntatt tas-superviżur tar-riċerka: 23402312

Skeda Informattiva Qasira Dwar l-Istudju li Għandu Jinqasam mill-Oeganizzazzjonijiet

Titlu tal-istudju: L-Esperjenza ta' Tmiem Relazzjoni Romantika fl-Età Adulta Avvanzata: Analiżi Fenomenoloġika Interpretattiva

Għażiż parteċipant prospettiv,

Jiena Livana Borg Falzon, studenta fil-livell postgradwatorju fl-Università ta' Malta, fejn bħalissa qiegħda nsegwi Master tal-Psikoloġija fil-Psikoloġija tal-Konsulenza. Qiegħda nagħmel riċerka ghad-dissertazzjoni tieghi, bit-titlu ta ***L-Esperjenza ta' Tmiem Relazzjonim Romantika fl-Età Adulta Avvanzata: Analiżi Fenomenoloġika Interpretattiva.*** Din it-teżi tal-livell postgradwatorju qed issir taħt is-superviżjoni ta' Dr. Marta Sant.

Dan l-istudju għandu l-għan li jinvestiga l-esperjenza personali u soġġettiva ta' tmiem relazzjoni romantika fl-età adulta avvanzata. Din ir-riċerka ser tesplora l-fatturi li wasslu għat-tmiem tar-relazzjoni romantika kif ukoll kif l-individwi ġestew it-tmiem tar-relazzjoni tagħhom, billi jiġu identifikati strateġiji li għenuhom ikampaw, jekk hemm, li ġew adottati matul dan il-proċess.

Qed infittex parteċipanti li jissodisfaw il-kriterji li ġejjin:

- Jidentifikaw bħala ċisġeneru u jkollhom ħamsa u sittin (65) sena jew aktar. Ċisġeneru tirreferi għal individwi li l-identità tal-ġeneru tagħhom hija allinjata mas-sess li ġew assenjati meta twieldu.
- Ikunu ċittadini Maltin u residenti f'Malta.
- Kienu f'relazzjoni romantika eterosesswali li damet mill-anqas sena. Għall-finijiet ta' dan l-istudju, relazzjoni romantika hija mifhuma li tinkludi wieħed minn dawn li ġejjin: att legali ta' żwieġ, unjoni ċivili, koabitazzjoni, jew relazzjoni romantika li fiha l-koppja ma kinitx miżżewġa/f'unjoni ċivili legalment.
- Ir-relazzjoni tkun intemmet għal raġunijiet oħra li mhumiex il-mewt ta' wieħed mis-sħab.
- Ir-relazzjoni romantika ntemmet mill-anqas 18-il xahar qabel ma wieħed jieħu sehem f'dan l-istudju, u mhux aktar minn 5 snin qabel ma sseħħ l-intervista.
- Iindividwi li jinsabu għaddejjin minn trattament għal kundizzjonijiet psikjatriċi severi, bħal disturb bipolari jew skiżofrenja, jew li għandhom dijanjożi ta' dimenzja, ser jiġu eskluży milli jieħdu sehem f'dan l-istudju. Apparti minn dan, individwi li jinsabu taħt il-kura ta' professjonist tas-saħħa mentali wkoll ser jiġu eskluży milli jieħdu sehem.

Dan l-istudju jagħtik l-opportunità li tieħu sehem f'riċerka lokali u tikkontribwixxi għall-għarfien dwar suġġett li għadu mhux riċerkat biżżejjed, u li persuni oħrajn għaddejjin minn esperjenza simili jistgħu jsibu ta' għajnuna. Din ir-riċerka ser tipprova toffri rakkomandazzjonijiet dwar il-bżonnijiet terapewtiċi ta' adulti ta' età avvanzata li għaddejjin minn tmiem ta' relazzjoni romantika. Huwa mistenni li dan l-istudju ser jservi bħala għarfien siewi dwar interventi li l-psikologi jistgħu

jikkunsidraw jinkorporaw fil-prattika professjonali tagħhom meta jaħdmu ma' adulti ta' età avvanzata li qed jesperjenzaw tmiem ta' relazzjoni romantika.

Il-parteċipanti se jintalbu jaqsmu l-esperjenzi tagħhom waqt intervista semistrutturata individwali rreġistrata bl-awdjo. L-intervista hija mistennija ddum bejn wieħed u ieħor ħamsa u erbgħin (45) minuta sa sittin (60) minuta. Jekk tagħti l-kunsens tiegħek biex tipparteċipa f'dan l-istudju, aħna niftiehmu ħin u data konvenjenti għal intervista f'post tal-preferenza tiegħek. Qabel ma tibda l-intervista, inti ser tiġi mitlub tirrevedi u tiffirma formola ta' kunsens, u tirċievi kopja tagħha għar-rekords tiegħek. Il-ġbir tad-dejta jibda biss wara li tkun iffirmajt il-formola ta' kunsens. L-intervista tista' ssir bil-Malti u/jew bl-Ingliż, skont il-preferenza personali tiegħek.

Jekk tixtieq tipparteċipa f'din ir-riċerka jew tixtieq aktar dettalji jekk jogħġbok ikkuntattjani permezz tal-email fuq livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt jew ċempel fuq 99263131 għal aktar informazzjoni. Tista' wkoll tikkuntattja lis-superviżur tiegħi bl-email fuq marta.sant@um.edu.mt jew fuq 23402312.

Jiena tassew nilqa' u napprezza l-parteċipazzjoni tiegħek f'dan il-proġett ta' riċerka.

Tislijiet,

Livana Borg Falzon

Appendix E

Participant Information sheet disseminated by organisations to potential participants in English

Participant Information Sheet in English

Name of Student Researcher: Livana Borg Falzon

Course: Master of Psychology in Counselling Psychology

Student Researcher's Contact Email: livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt

Student Researcher's Contact Number: 99263131

Name of Research Supervisor: Dr. Marta Sant

Research Supervisor's Contact Email: marta.sant@um.edu.mt

Research Supervisor's Contact Number: 23402312

Participant Information Sheet

Title of Study: Experiencing the Dissolution of a Romantic Relationship in Older Adulthood: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

To Whom It May Concern,

I am Livana Borg Falzon, a postgraduate student at the University of Malta, presently reading for a Masters of Psychology in Counselling Psychology. I am carrying out a research-based dissertation, which aims to explore the experiences of romantic relationship dissolution in older adulthood. This postgraduate dissertation is being supervised by Dr. Marta Sant. This letter is an invitation to participate in this study. Below you will find information about the study and what your involvement would entail, should you decide to take part.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to investigate the personal and subjective experience of the dissolution of a romantic relationship in older adulthood. The dissolution of a romantic relationship might be experienced as a complex significant life event. After a romantic relationship reaches termination, a period of adjustment may take place. This process has the capacity to involve a range of feelings, including relief, sadness, and guilt, amongst others.

Therefore, this study seeks to examine the impact that this termination may have had on the individuals involved. This research will delve into the factors that led to the end of the romantic relationship and will explore how individuals navigated through the ending of their relationship, identifying coping strategies, if any, that were adopted during this process. This study will attempt to contribute to a better understanding of one's own process throughout the dissolution of a romantic relationship. Furthermore, participation in the study may help contribute towards a better understanding of the unique needs and support required for older adults experiencing the dissolution of a romantic relationship, thus informing professional psychotherapeutic knowledge on this experience.

Who is Invited to Take Part in this Study?

In order to take part in this study, participants are required to meet the following criteria:

- Identify as cisgender and be aged sixty-five (65) years of age or older. Cisgender refers to individuals whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.
- Be Maltese citizens and have been living in Malta.
- Have been in a heterosexual romantic relationship that lasted a minimum of 1 year. For the purpose of this study, a romantic relationship is understood to include one of the following: legal act of marriage, civil union, cohabitation, or a romantic relationship in which the couple were not legally married / in a civil union.
- The relationship would have ceased for reasons other than the death of a partner.
- The romantic relationship must have ended at least 18 months prior to taking part in the study, and not more than 5 years prior to the interview taking place.

It is important to understand that this study centres on a potentially sensitive subject and discussing the end of your romantic relationship could be emotionally upsetting. If you believe that participating in this study may cause you undue distress, then I appreciate your interest in this study, but it is recommended that you refrain from participation in order to safeguard your psychological well-being.

Additionally, individuals who are undergoing treatment for severe psychiatric conditions, such as bipolar disorder or schizophrenia, or who have a diagnosis of dementia, will be excluded from taking part in this study. Furthermore, individuals who are under the care of a mental health professional will also be excluded from participation. These measures are implemented to protect the psychological welfare of all participants.

What does Participation Involve?

Participants will be asked to share their experiences during an audio-recorded one--to- one semi-structured interview. The interview is expected to last approximately forty-five (45) minutes to sixty (60) minutes in duration. If you consent to participate in this study, we will schedule a convenient time and date for an interview at a location of your preference. Before the interview beings, you will be required to review and sign a consent form, and you will receive a copy of this for your records. Data collection will only commence after you have signed the consent form. The interview can be held in Maltese and/or English, based on your personal preference.

Throughout the interview, you will only be asked to provide data pertinent to the research study. The interview will be audio recorded using a digital recorder, and the audio will be transcribed verbatim. You are entitled to request a copy of both the audio recording and the verbatim transcript of your interview. Following the interview, the audio-recording will be transcribed verbatim. Following this, data will be analysed using a qualitative research methodology known as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

The audio-recording will be stored on an encrypted storage device and any potential identifying details in the verbatim transcript will be edited or deleted to safeguard confidentiality. Anonymised

verbatim transcripts will be stored securely and separately from the audio recordings. Personal data will be stored securely and separately from the pseudonymised data.

Additional Information

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary; in other words, you are free to accept or refuse to participate, without needing to give a reason. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any time, without needing to provide any explanation and without any negative repercussions for you. Should you choose to withdraw, any data collected from your interview will be erased as long as this is technically possible (for example, before it is anonymised or published), unless erasure of data would render impossible or seriously impair achievement of the research objectives, in which case it shall be retained in an anonymised form. Please note also that, as a participant, you have the right under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation to access, rectify and where applicable ask for the data concerning you to be erased.Kindly note that you have the right to access, rectify and where applicable erase the data concerning you up to February 2025.

The study might be published in the future, and direct, anonymised quotes taken from the interview will be included in the Findings chapter of the dissertation. All collected data will be destroyed by December 2026 as it would have served the research purposes. It is also important to note that my research supervisor and the dissertation examiners have the right to access the data collected for verification purposes.

Benefits and Potential Risks

This study will give you an opportunity to take part in local research and contribute to knowledge on a topic which in under researched, and in which others going through a similar experience to you might find helpful. This research will attempt to offer recommendations concerning the therapeutic needs of older adults going through a dissolution of a romantic relationship. It is anticipated that this study will serve as valuable insight into interventions that psychologists may consider incorporating into their professional practice when working with older adults experiencing a romantic relationship dissolution. This study will be available at the University of Malta Library and can therefore be accessed by staff, students, and members of the public.

I understand that this is a potentially sensitive subject and discussing the end of your romantic relationship could be emotionally upsetting; therefore, it is important to note that participation in this study is voluntary. This means that you have the liberty to decide whether to participate in the study or otherwise. Moreover, interview questions have been phrased in a sensitive manner, and you have the right to refrain from answering certain questions if you feel uncomfortable. Additionally, you have the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to justify your decision and without facing any adverse consequences. If you opt to withdraw, any data collected from your interview will be deleted, provided it is technically feasible (by February 2025), unless deletion would compromise the research goals significantly, in which case the data will be retained in a pseudonymised form.

Following the interview, I will provide you with a Debrief Form which contains a list of free mental health support services that you can access should you feel that this is helpful. Moreover, I am also able to support you in accessing these services if necessary.

Thank you for taking your time to read this. Should you wish to participate in this research or would like any further details kindly contact me via email on livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt or call on 99263131 for further information. You can also contact my supervisor via email on marta.sant@um.edu.mt or on 23402312.

I would sincerely welcome and appreciate your participation in this research project.

Regards,

Livana Borg Falzon

Appendix F

Information sheet disseminated by organisations to potential participants in Maltese

Participant Information Sheet in Maltese

Isem ir-riċerkatriċi studenta: Livana Borg Falzon

Kors: Master tal-Psikoloġija fil-Psikoloġija tal-Konsulenza

Email ta' kuntatt tar-riċerkatriċi studenta: livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt

Numru ta' kuntatt tar-riċerkatriċi studenta: 99263131

Isem is-superviżur tar-riċerka: Dr. Marta Sant

Email ta' kuntatt tas-superviżur tar-riċerka: marta.sant@um.edu.mt

Numru ta' kuntatt tas-superviżur tar-riċerka: 23402312

Skeda Informattiva għall-Parteċipanti

Titlu tal-istudju: L-Esperjenza ta' Tmiem Relazzjoni Romantika fl-Età Adulta

Avvanzata: Analiżi Fenomenoloġika Interpretattiva

Lil min tikkonċerna,

Jiena Livana Borg Falzon, studenta fil-livell postgradwatorju fl-Università ta' Malta, fejn bħalissa qiegħda nsegwi Master tal-Psikoloġija fil-Psikoloġija tal-Konsulenza. Qiegħda nagħmel teżi bbażata fuq ir-riċerka, li għandha l-għan li tesplora l-esperjenzi ta' tmiem relazzjoni romantika fl-età adulta avvanzata. Din it-teżi tal-livell postgradwatorju qed issir taħt is-superviżjoni ta' Dr. Marta Sant. Din l-ittra hija stedina biex inti tieħu sehem f'dan l-istudju. Hawn taħt ser issib informazzjoni dwar l-istudju u xi tkun tinvolvi l-parteċipazzjoni tiegħek, jekk inti tiddeċiedi li tieħu sehem.

Għanijiet tal-istudju

Dan l-istudju għandu l-għan li jinvestiga l-esperjenza personali u soġġettiva ta' tmiem relazzjoni romantika fl-età adulta avvanzata. It-tmiem ta' relazzjoni romantika jista' jiġi esperjenzat bħala avveniment sinifikanti u kumpless fil-ħajja. Wara li relazzjoni romantika tilħaq it-tmiem tagħha, jista' jsegwi perjodu ta' aġġustament. Dan il-proċess għandu l-kapaċità li jinvolvi firxa wiesgħa ta' sentimenti, inkluż serħan, dwejjaq u ħtija, fost oħrajn.

Għaldaqstant, dan l-istudju għandu l-għan li jeżamina l-impatt li jista' jkun kellu dan it-tmiem fuq l-individwi involuti. Din ir-riċerka ser tesplora l-fatturi li wasslu għat-tmiem tar-relazzjoni romantika kif ukoll kif l-individwi ġestew it-tmiem tar-relazzjoni tagħhom, billi jiġu identifikati strateġiji li għenuhom ikampaw, jekk hemm, li ġew adottati matul dan il-proċess. Dan l-istudju ser jipprova jagħti kontribut biex jiġi mifhum aħjar il-proċess li jgħaddi minnu individwu tul it-tmiem ta' relazzjoni romantika. Barra minn hekk, il-parteċipazzjoni f'dan l-istudju tista' tgħin biex tagħti kontribut favur fehim aħjar tal-bżonnijiet u l-appoġġ uniċi li huma meħtieġa għall-adulti ta' età avvanzata li jgħaddu mit-tmiem ta' relazzjoni romantika, u b'hekk tipprovdi informazzjoni psikoterapewtika professjonali dwar din l-esperjenza.

Min huwa mistieden jieħu sehem f'dan l-istudju?

Sabiex jieħdu sehem f'dan l-istudju, il-parteċipanti huma meħtieġa jissodisfaw il-kriterji li ġejjin:

- Jidentifikaw bħala ċisġeneru u jkollhom ħamsa u sittin (65) sena jew aktar. Ċisġeneru tirreferi għal individwi li l-identità tal-ġeneru tagħhom hija allinjata mas-sess li ġew assenjati meta twieldu.
- Ikunu ċittadini Maltin u residenti f'Malta.
- Kienu f'relazzjoni romantika eterosesswali li damet mill-anqas sena. Għall-finijiet ta' dan l-istudju, relazzjoni romantika hija mifhuma li tinkludi wieħed minn dawn li ġejjin: att legali ta' żwieġ, unjoni ċivili, koabitazzjoni, jew relazzjoni romantika li fiha l-koppja ma kinitx miżżewġa/f'unjoni ċivili legalment.
- Ir-relazzjoni tkun intemmet għal raġunijiet oħra li mhumiex il-mewt ta' wieħed mis-sħab.

- Ir-relazzjoni romantika ntemmet mill-anqas 18-il xahar qabel ma wieħed jieħu sehem f'dan l-istudju, u mhux aktar minn 5 snin qabel ma sseħħ l-intervista.

Importanti li wieħed jifhem li dan l-istudju jiffoka fuq suġġett potenzjalment sensittiv u taħdita dwar it-tmiem tar-relazzjoni romantika tiegħek tista' tqanqallek emozzjonijiet spjaċevoli. Jekk temmen li l-parteċipazzjoni f'dan l-istudju tista' tikkawżalek stress mhux mixtieq, f'dak il-każ jiena napprezza l-interess tiegħek f'dan l-istudju, iżda nirrakkomanda li toqgħod lura milli tieħu sehem sabiex tipproteġi l-benesseri psikoloġiku tiegħek.

Barra minn hekk, l-individwi li jinsabu għaddejjin minn trattament għal kundizzjonijiet psikjatriċi severi, bħal disturb bipolari jew skiżofrenja, jew li għandhom dijanjożi ta' dimenzja, ser jiġu eskluži milli jieħdu sehem f'dan l-istudju. Apparti minn dan, individwi li jinsabu taħt il-kura ta' professjonist tas-saħħa mentali wkoll ser jiġu eskluži milli jieħdu sehem. Dawn il-miżuri qed jiġu implimentati biex jiġi protett il-benesseri psikoloġiku tal-parteċipanti kollha.

X'tinvolvi l-parteċipazzjoni?

Il-parteċipanti se jintalbu jaqsmu l-esperjenzi tagħhom waqt intervista semistrutturata individwali rreġistrata bl-awdjo. L-intervista hija mistennija ddum bejn wieħed u ieħor ħamsa u erbgħin (45) minuta sa sittin (60) minuta. Jekk tagħti l-kunsens tiegħek biex tipparteċipa f'dan l-istudju, aħna niftiehmu ħin u data konvenjenti għal intervista f'post tal-preferenza tiegħek. Qabel ma tibda l-intervista, inti ser tiġi mitlub tirrevedi u tiffirma formola ta' kunsens, u tirċievi kopja tagħha għar-rekords tiegħek. Il-ġbir tad-dejta jibda biss wara li tkun iffirmajt il-formola ta' kunsens. L-intervista tista' ssir bil-Malti u/jew bl-Ingliż, skont il-preferenza personali tiegħek.

Matul l-intervista, inti tintalab biss tipprovdi dejta pertinenti għall-istudju tar-riċerka. L-intervista ser tiġi rreġistrata bl-awdjo bl-użu ta' recorder diġitali, u l-awdjo jiġi traskritt verbatim. Inti intitolat titlob kopja kemm tar-reġistrazzjoni tal-awdjo kif ukoll tat-traskrizzjoni verbatim tal-intervista tiegħek. Wara l-intervista, ir-reġistrazzjoni tal-awdjo ser tiġi traskritta verbatim. Wara dan, id-dejta ser tiġi analizzata bl-użu ta' metodoloġija ta' riċerka kwalitattiva magħrufa bħala Analiżi Fenomenoloġika Interpretattiva.

Ir-reġistrazzjoni tal-awdjo se tinħażen fuq apparat ta' ħżin kriptat u kwalunkwe dettall potenzjali ta' identifikazzjoni fit-traskrizzjoni verbatim se jiġi editjat jew imħassar biex tiġi salvagwardjata l-kunfidenzjalità. It-traskrizzjonijiet verbatim anonimizzati se jinħażnu b'mod sigur u separat mir-reġistrazzjonijiet tal-awdjo. Id-dejta personali se tinħażen b'mod sigur u separat mid-dejta psewdonimizzata.

Tagħrif addizzjonali

Il-parteċipazzjoni f'dan l-istudju hija kompletament volontarja; fi kliem ieħor, inti liberu li taċċetta jew tirrifjuta li tipparteċipa, mingħajr ma jkollok bżonn tagħti raġuni. Int liberu wkoll li tirtira mill-istudju fi kwalunkwe ħin, mingħajr ma jkollok bżonn tipprovdi ebda spjegazzjoni u mingħajr ebda riperkussjonijiet negattivi għalik. Jekk tagħżel li tirtira, kwalunkwe dejta miġbura mill-intervista tiegħek titħassar sakemm dan ikun teknikament possibbli (pereżempju, qabel ma tiġi anonimizzata jew ippubblikata), sakemm it-tħassir tad-dejta ma jagħmilx impossibbli il-ksib tal-għanijiet tar-riċerka jew ifixklu serjament, f'liema każ ser tinżamm f'forma anonimizzata. Jekk jogħġbok innota wkoll li, bħala parteċipant, għandek id-dritt skont ir-Regolament Ġenerali dwar il-Protezzjoni tad-Dejta (GDPR) u l-leġiżlazzjoni nazzjonali li taċċessa, tirrettifika u fejn applikabbli titlob li titħassar id-dejta li tikkonċernak. Jekk jogħġbok innota li għandek id-dritt li aċċess, tirrettifika u fejn applikabbli tħassar id-dejta li tikkonċernak sa Frar 2025.

L-istudju jista' jiġi ppubblikat fil-futur, u kwotazzjonijiet diretti u anonimizzati meħuda mill-intervista ser jkunu inklużi fil-kapitolu tas-Sejbiet tat-teżi. Id-dejta kollha miġbura ser tinqered sa Diċembru 2026 peress li tkun qdiet l-għanijiet tar-riċerka.

Huwa importanti wkoll li jiġu nnutat li s-superviżur tar-riċerka tiegħi u l-eżaminaturi tat-teżi għandhom id-dritt li jaċċessaw id-dejta miġbura għal skopijiet ta' verifika.

Benefiċċji u riskji potenzjali

Dan l-istudju jagħtik l-opportunità li tieħu sehem f'riċerka lokali u tikkontribwixxi għall-għarfien dwar suġġett li għadu mhux riċerkat biżżejjed, u li persuni oħrajn għaddejjin minn esperjenza simili jistgħu jsibu ta' għajnuna. Din ir-riċerka ser tipprova toffri rakkomandazzjonijiet dwar il-

bżonnijiet terapewtiċi ta' adulti ta' età avvanzata li għaddejjin minn tmiem ta' relazzjoni romantika. Huwa mistenni li dan l-istudju ser jservi bħala għarfien siewi dwar interventi li l-psikologi jistgħu jikkunsidraw jinkorporaw fil-prattika professjonali tagħhom meta jaħdmu ma' adulti ta' età avvanzata li qed jesperjenzaw tmiem ta' relazzjoni romantika.

Dan l-istudju ser jkun disponibbli fil-Librerija tal-Università ta' Malta u għalhekk jista' jiġi aċċessat mill-persunal, studenti, u membri tal-pubbliku.

Nifhem li dan huwa suġġett potenzjalment sensittiv u taħdita dwar it-tmiem tar-relazzjoni romantika tiegħek tista' tqanqallek emozzjonijiet spjaċevoli; għalhekk, huwa importanti li wieħed jinnota li l-parteċipazzjoni f'dan l-istudju hija volontarja. Dan ifisser li għandek il-libertà li tiddeċiedi jekk tipparteċipax fl-istudju jew le. Barra minn hekk, il-mistoqsijiet tal-intervista ġew ifformulati b'mod sensittiv, u għandek id-dritt li toqgħod lura milli twieġeb ċerti mistoqsijiet jekk tħossok skomdu/a. Barra minn hekk, għandek il-libertà li tirtira mill-istudju fi kwalunkwe ħin, mingħajr ma jkollok għalfejn tiġġustifika d-deċiżjoni tiegħek u mingħajr ma tiffaċċja xi konsegwenzi negattivi. Jekk tagħżel li tirtira, kwalunkwe dejta miġbura mill-intervista tiegħek titħassar, sakemm tkun teknikament fattibbli (sa Frar 2025), sakemm it-tħassir ma jikkompromettix l-għanijiet tar-riċerka b'mod sinifikanti, f'liema każ id-dejta tinżamm f'forma psewdonimizzata.

Wara l-intervista, ser nipprovdulek Formola ta' Debrief li fiha lista ta' servizzi ta' appoġġ għas-saħħa mentali b'xejn li tista' taċċessahom jekk tħoss li dan huwa ta' għajnuna. Barra minn hekk, jiena wkoll nista' nappoġġjak biex taċċessa dawn is-servizzi jekk meħtieġ.

Grazzi talli ħadt il-ħin biex taqra din l-ittra. Jekk tixtieq tipparteċipa f'din ir-riċerka jew tixtieq aktar dettalji jekk jogħġbok ikkuntattjani permezz tal-email fuq livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt jew ċempel fuq 99263131 għal aktar informazzjoni. Tista' wkoll tikkuntattja lis-superviżur tiegħi bl-email fuq marta.sant@um.edu.mt jew fuq 23402312.

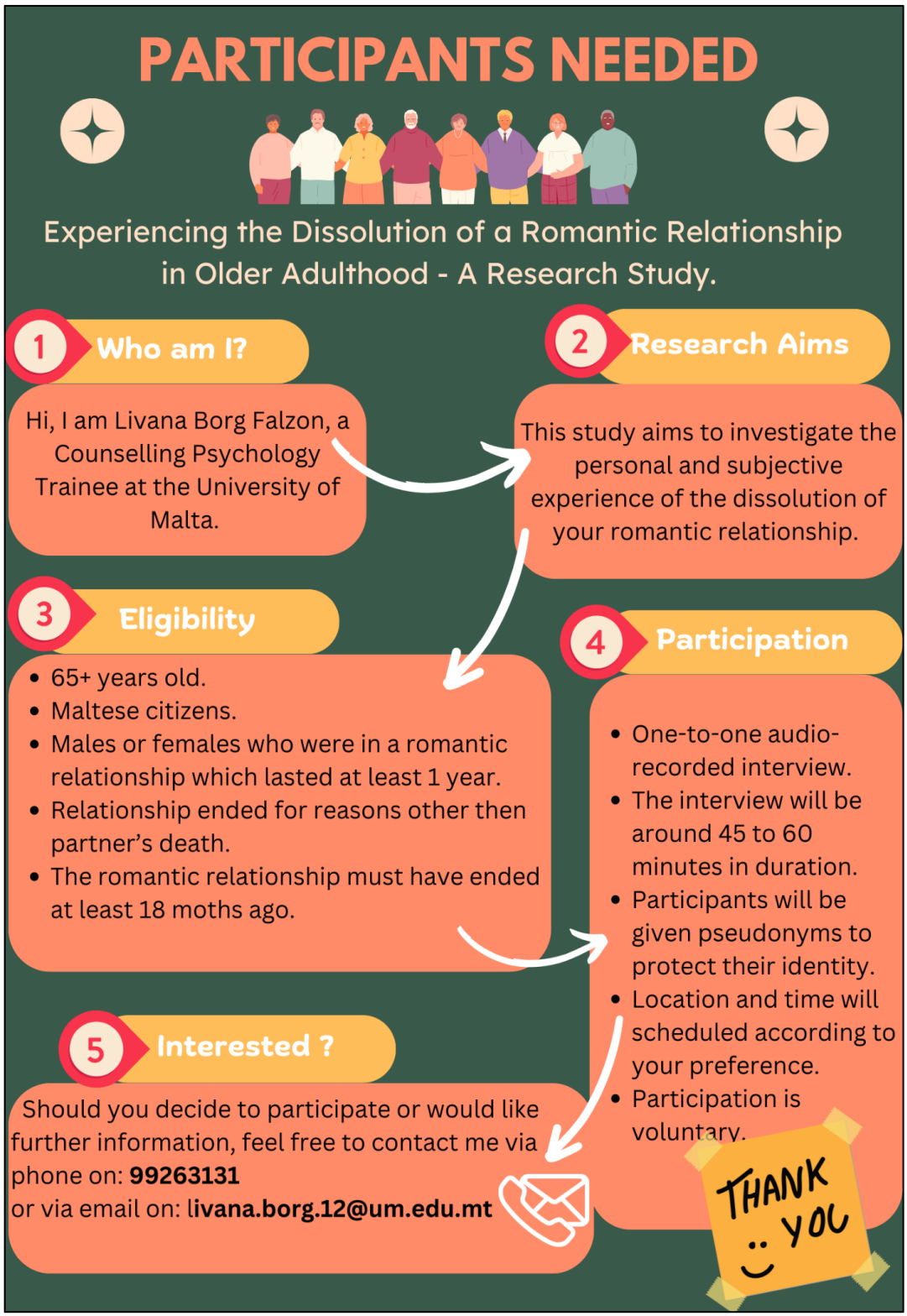
Jiena tassew nilqa' u napprezza l-parteċipazzjoni tiegħek f'dan il-proġett ta' riċerka.

Tislijiet,

Livana Borg Falzon

Appendix G

Poster disseminated by organisation to potential participants in English



Appendix H

Poster disseminated by organisation to potential participants in Maltese



Appendix I

Facebook blurb in English

Facebook Blurb in English

Name of Student Researcher: Livana Borg Falzon

Course: Master of Psychology in Counselling Psychology

Student Researcher's Contact Email: livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt

Student Researcher's Contact Number: 99263131

Name of Research Supervisor: Dr. Marta Sant

Research Supervisor's Contact Email: marta.sant@um.edu.mt

Research Supervisor's Contact Number: 23402312

Title of Study: Experiencing the Dissolution of a Romantic Relationship in Older Adulthood: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Facebook Blurb to be Shared by Facebook Administrators

My name is Livana Borg Falzon, a postgraduate student at the University of Malta, presently reading for a Master of Psychology in Counselling Psychology. I am conducting a research study for my dissertation titled '*Experiencing the Dissolution of a Romantic Relationship in Older Adulthood: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis'.* This study is being supervised by Dr. Marta Sant.

This study aims to investigate the personal and subjective experience of the dissolution of a romantic relationship in older adulthood. This research will delve into the factors that led to the end of the romantic relationship and will explore how individuals navigated through the ending of their relationship, identifying coping strategies, if any, that were adopted during this process. This study

will attempt to contribute to a better understanding of one's own process throughout the dissolution of a romantic relationship.

I am looking to recruit individuals who:

- Identify as cisgender and are 65 years of age or older. Cisgender refers to individuals whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.
- Are Maltese citizens and have been living in Malta.
- Have been in a heterosexual romantic relationship that lasted a minimum of 1 year. For the purpose of this study, a romantic relationship is understood to include one of the following: legal act of marriage, civil union, cohabitation, or a romantic relationship in which the couple were not legally married / in a civil union.
- The relationship would have ceased for reasons other than the death of a partner.
- The romantic relationship must have ended at least 18 months prior to taking part in the study, and not more than 5 years prior to the interview taking place.
- Are not in therapy, followed by a psychiatrist or have a diagnosed mental health Any data collected for this research will be used solely for purposes of this study.

Participants will be asked to share their experiences during an audio-recorded one to one semi-structured in-depth interview of approximately 45 – 60 minutes. Participation will be purely voluntary and participants will all be given pseudonyms. Identifying information will be deleted or edited and will not feature in the study.

Interested individuals are kindly asked to send an email on livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt or contact me via private message for further information. You can also email my research supervisor, Dr Marta Sant on marta.sant@um.edu.mt

I look forward to hearing from you and thank you for your kind consideration.

Appendix J

Facebook blurb in Maltese

Facebook Blurb in Maltese

Isem ir-riċerkatriċi studenta: Livana Borg Falzon

Kors: Master tal-Psikoloġija fil-Psikoloġija tal-Konsulenza

Email ta' kuntatt tar-riċerkatriċi studenta: livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt

Numru ta' kuntatt tar-riċerkatriċi studenta: 99263131

Isem is-superviżur tar-riċerka: Dr. Marta Sant

Email ta' kuntatt tas-superviżur tar-riċerka: marta.sant@um.edu.mt

Numru ta' kuntatt tas-superviżur tar-riċerka: 23402312

Titlu tal-istudju: L-Esperjenza ta' Tmiem Relazzjoni Romantika fl-Età Adulta Avvanzata: Analiżi Fenomenoloġika Interpretattiva

Facebook Blurb biex jinqassam mill-Amministraturi tal-Gruppi ta'Facebook

Jiena Livana Borg Falzon, studenta fil-livell postgradwatorju fl-Università ta' Malta, fejn bħalissa qiegħda nsegwi Master tal-Psikoloġija fil-Psikoloġija tal-Konsulenza. Qiegħda nagħmel riċerka għad-dissertazzjoni tieghi, bit-titlu ta *L-Esperjenza ta' Tmiem Relazzjonim Romantika fl-Età Adulta Avvanzata: Analiżi Fenomenoloġika Interpretattiva.* Din it-teżi tal-livell postgradwatorju qed issir taħt is-superviżjoni ta' Dr. Marta Sant.

Dan l-istudju għandu l-għan li jinvestiga l-esperjenza personali u soġġettiva ta' tmiem relazzjoni romantika fl-età adulta avvanzata. Din ir-riċerka ser tesplora l-fatturi li wasslu għat-tmiem tar-

relazzjoni romantika kif ukoll kif l-individwi ġestew it-tmiem tar-relazzjoni tagħhom, billi jiġu identifikati strateġiji li għenuhom ikampaw, jekk hemm, li ġew adottati matul dan il-proċess.

Qed infittex parteċipanti li jissodisfaw il-kriterji li ġejjin:

- Jidentifikaw bħala ċisġeneru u jkollhom ħamsa u sittin (65) sena jew aktar. Ċisġeneru tirreferi għal individwi li l-identità tal-ġeneru tagħhom hija allinjata mas-sess li ġew assenjati meta twieldu.
- Ikunu ċittadini Maltin u residenti f'Malta.
- Kienu f'relazzjoni romantika eterosesswali li damet mill-anqas sena. Għall-finijiet ta' dan l-istudju, relazzjoni romantika hija mifhuma li tinkludi wieħed minn dawn li ġejjin: att legali ta' żwieġ, unjoni ċivili, koabitazzjoni, jew relazzjoni romantika li fiha l-koppja ma kinitx miżżewġa/f'unjoni ċivili legalment.
- Ir-relazzjoni tkun intemmet għal raġunijiet oħra li mhumiex il-mewt ta' wieħed mis-sħab.
- Ir-relazzjoni romantika ntemmet mill-anqas 18-il xahar qabel ma wieħed jieħu sehem f'dan l-istudju, u mhux aktar minn 5 snin qabel ma sseħħ l-intervista.
- Iindividwi li jinsabu għaddejjin minn trattament għal kundizzjonijiet psikjatriċi severi, bħal disturb bipolari jew skiżofrenja, jew li għandhom dijanjożi ta' dimenzja, ser jiġu esklużi milli jieħdu sehem f'dan l-istudju. Apparti minn dan, individwi li jinsabu taħt il-kura ta' professjonist tas-saħħa mentali wkoll ser jiġu esklużi milli jieħdu sehem.

Il-parteċipanti se jintalbu jaqsmu l-esperjenzi tagħhom waqt intervista semistrutturata individwali rreġistrata bl-awdjo. L-intervista hija mistennija ddum bejn wieħed u ieħor 45-60 minuta.Parteċipazzjoni se tkun purament volontarja u l-parteċipanti kollha jingħataw psewdonimi. Informazzjoni ta' identifikazzjoni se titħassar jew tiġi editjata u mhux se tidher fl-istudju.

Individwi interessati huma ġentilment mitlubs jibgħatu email fuq livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt jew tikkuntattjani permezz ta' messaġġ privat għal aktar informazzjoni. Tista' wkoll tibgħat email lis-superviżur tar-riċerka tiegħi, Dr Marta Sant fuq marta.sant@um.edu.mt.

Nistenna bil-ħerqa li nisma' mingħandkom u nirringrazzjak tal-konsiderazzjoni tajba tiegħek.

Appendix K

Appendix Consent form in English

Consent Form in English

Name of Student Researcher: Livana Borg Falzon

Course: Master of Psychology in Counselling Psychology

Student Researcher's Contact Email: livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt

Student Researcher's Contact Number: 99263131

Name of Research Supervisor: Dr. Marta Sant

Research Supervisor's Contact Email: marta.sant@um.edu.mt

Research Supervisor's Contact Number: 23402312

Title of Research Study: Experiencing the Dissolution of a Romantic Relationship in Older Adulthood: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

Participant Consent Form

I, the undersigned, give my consent to take part in a study conducted by Livana Borg Falzon as part of her Master of Psychology in Counselling Psychology at the University of Malta. This consent form specifies the terms of my participation in this research study.

1. I have been provided with written and detailed information about the purpose of the study and what my participation entails. I have had the opportunity to ask questions, and any questions that I asked were answered fully and to my satisfaction.
2. I understand that I have been invited to participate in a one-to-one semi-structured

Interview, in which the Student Researcher will ask questions to explore how I navigated the ending of my relationship. Furthermore, I have been informed that this research explores how older adults experience the dissolution of a romantic relationship and what this is like for them, with the intention of informing local therapeutic practice in this field.

3. I am aware that the interview will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes in duration and that it will be scheduled at time, location, and date of my preference.

4. I have been informed that the interview will be audio-recorded and consent to this.

I am aware that following my interview, the audio-recording will be transcribed, that is, it will be converted into written text and pseudonymised at source.

5. I have been informed that the transcript will then be analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, which is a qualitive research methodology.

6. I understand that data will be pseudonymised, that is, my identity will not be directly associated with transcripts or interview notes. Instead, a code will be assigned, and any information that could potentially identify me will be altered or removed from the verbatim transcript.

7. I understand that the data will be securely stored in a password-protected file on a password-protected device, accessible only to the Student Researcher, the Research Supervisor, and the dissertation examiners for verification purposes if required. The data will not be uploaded to any online storage platforms. Additionally, a backup copy of the data will be stored on an external hard drive, securely kept in a locked cabinet by the Student Researcher. Any physical copies of material will be stored in a locked cabinet or drawer.

8. Any information that can identify my former partner will be edited or altered to safeguard their identity.

9. Pseudonymised verbatim transcripts will be stored securely and separately from the audio recordings. Personal data will be stored securely and separately from the pseudonymised data.

10. All data will be stored securely for the duration of the study and will be destroyed by December 2026.

11. In the event that I choose to withdraw from the study, any data collected from me will be erased as long as this is technically possible (by February 2025), unless erasure of data would render impossible or seriously impair achievement of the research objectives, in which case it shall be retained in a pseudonymised form.

12. I acknowledge that, as a participant, I have the right to request a copy of the audio-recording of my interview, a verbatim transcript, and the finalised dissertation upon being completed and assessed. The Student Researcher will ensure that the transfer of this data is secure, either by sending password-protected and encrypted files via email or by providing them in person on a secure data storage drive.

13. I am aware that the Student Researcher is duty bound to report any disclosure pertaining to risk of harm to self-and/or others.

14. I am aware that pseudonymised verbatim quotations from the verbatim transcript may be used in the Findings chapter of the dissertation. I am also aware that the dissertation will be accessible at the University of Malta library, and that there is also the possibility that this study may be published in the future.

15. I am aware that my identity will not be revealed in any publications, reports or presentations arising from this research.

16. I understand that, under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation, I possess the right to access, rectify, and where applicable, ask for the data concerning me to be erased, up until this is technically possible (by February 2025).

17. I understand that there are no direct benefits to me from participating in this study. I also understand that this research may benefit others by contributing to knowledge on a topic which is under researched, and in in which others going through a similar experience to me might find helpful. This research will attempt to offer recommendations concerning the therapeutic needs of older adults going through a dissolution of a romantic relationship.

18. I understand that talking about the dissolution of my romantic relationship can be emotionally upsetting for me in different reasons. I have been informed of this in writing in the Information Sheet and verbally by the Student Researcher.

19. To minimise potential distress, I am informed that I will receive a list of available free support services for my consideration should I require additional assistance. The Student Researcher will offer assistance in accessing these services if needed.

20. During the interview, I have the right to decline answering any questions and without having to give a reason for this. I can also terminate the interview at any time without needing to give an explanation for this. Any collected information will be promptly deleted and will not be included in the study. Furthermore, I have the option to take breaks during the interview.

21. I have been provided with a copy of the information letter and understand that I will also be given a copy of this consent form.

22. I am aware that the interview can be held in Maltese and/or English, based on my preference.

I have read and understood the above statements and agree to participate in this study.

Name of participant: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

_____ _____

Livana Borg Falzon Dr. Marta Sant

livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt marta.sant@um.edu.mt

23402312

Please tick this box if you would like to have a copy of your audio-recording.

Please tick this box if you would like a copy of your interview transcript.

Please tick this box if you would like a copy of the dissertation once it has been completed and assessed.

Appendix L

Consent form in Maltese

Consent Form in Maltese

Isem ir-riċerkatriċi studenta: Livana Borg Falzon

Kors: Master tal-Psikoloġija fil-Psikoloġija tal-Konsulenza

Email ta' kuntatt tar-riċerkatriċi studenta: livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt

Numru ta' kuntatt tar-riċerkatriċi studenta: 99263131

Isem is-superviżur tar-riċerka: Dr. Marta Sant

Email ta' kuntatt tas-superviżur tar-riċerka: marta.sant@um.edu.mt

Numru ta' kuntatt tas-superviżur tar-riċerka: 23402312

Formola ta' Kunsens Għal Parteċipanti

Titlu tal-istudju: L-Esperjenza ta' Tmiem Relazzjoni Romantika fl-Età Adulta

Avvanzata: Analiżi Fenomenoloġika Interpretattiva

Jien, hawn taħt iffirmat/a li nagħti l-kunsens tiegħi li nieħu sehem fl-istudju ta' Livana Borg Falzon bħala parti mill-Master tal-Psikoloġija fil-*Counselling Psychology* fl-Università ta' Malta. Din il-formola tal-kunsens tispjega t-termini tas-sehem tiegħi f'din ir-riċerka.

1. Jiena ġejt ipprovdut/a b'informazzjoni miktuba dwar l-iskop tal-istudju. Kelli l'opportunità li nagħmel mistoqsijiet u kwalunkwe mistoqsija li staqsejt ġiet imwieġba b'mod sħiħ u sodisfaċenti.

2. Nifhem li ġejt mistieden biex nipparteċipa f'intervista semistrutturata individwali rreġistrata bl-awdjo, li fiha l-Istudent Riċerkatriċi se tistaqsi mistoqsijiet biex jesplora kif jien innavigajt it-tmiem tar-relazzjoni tiegħi. Barra minn hekk, ġejt infurmat/a li din ir-riċerka
ser tesplora kif l-adulti avanazati fl-eta' esperjenzaw it-tmiem tar-relazzjoni romantika tagħhom, bl-intenzjoni li tinforma l-prattika terapewtika lokali f'dan il-qasam.

3. Jien gejt infurmat/a li l-intervista hija mistennija ddum bejn wieħed u ieħor ħamsa u erbgħin (45) minuta sa sittin (60) minuta.

4. Ġejt infurmat li l-intervista se tiġi rrekordjata bl-awdjo u jien nagħti l-kunsens għal dan. Jien/a konxju/a li wara l-intervista tiegħi, l-awdjo-reġistrazzjoni se tiġi traskritta, jiġifieri, se tiġi kkonvertita f'test bil-miktub u psewdonimizzata fis-sors.

5. Ġejt infurmat li t-traskrizzjoni mbagħad tiġi analizzata bl-użu ta' Analiżi Fenomenoloġika Interpretattiva, li hija metodoloġija ta' riċerka kwalitattiva.

6. Nifhem li d-dejta se tkun psewdonimizzata, jiġifieri, l-identità tiegħi mhux se tkun assoċjata direttament ma' traskrizzjonijiet jew noti tal-intervisti. Minflok, se jiġi assenjat kodiċi, u kwalunkwe informazzjoni li tista 'potenzjalment tidentifikani tinbidel jew titneħħa mit-traskrizzjoni verbatim.

7. Nifhem li d-dejta tkun maħżuna b'mod sigur f'fajl protett b'password fuq apparat protett b'password, aċċessibbli biss għall-Istudenta Riċerkatriċi, is-Superviżur tar-Riċerka, u l-eżaminaturi tad-dissertazzjoni għal skopijiet ta' verifika jekk meħtieġ. Id-dejta mhux se tittella' fuq l-ebda pjattaformi ta' ħażna onlajn. Barra minn hekk, kopja ta' backup tad-dejta se tinħażen fuq hard drive estern, miżmuma b'mod sikur f'kabinett msakkra mill-Istudenta Riċerkatriċi. Kwalunkwe kopji fiżiċi tal-materjal se jinħażnu f'kabinett jew kexxun msakkar.

8. Kwalunkwe informazzjoni li tista' tidentifika l-ex-sieħeb tiegħi se tiġi editjata jew mibdula biex tissalvagwardja l-identità tagħhom.

9. Traskrizzjonijiet verbatim psewdonimizzati se jinħażnu b'mod sigur u separatament mill-awdjo reġistrazzjonijiet. Id-dejta personali se tinħażen b'mod sigur u separat mid-dejta psewdonimizzata.

10. Id-dejta kollha se tinħażen b'mod sigur għat-tul tal-istudju u se tinqered sa Diċembru 2026.

11. Fil-każ li nagħżel li nirtira mill-istudju, kwalunkwe data miġbura mingħandi tkun imħassra sakemm dan ikun teknikament possibbli (sa Frar 2025), dan sakemm it-tħassir tad-dejta jagħmel impossibbli jew ifixkel serjament il-kisba tal-għanijiet tar-riċerka, f'liema każ għandu jinżamm f'forma psewdonimizzata.

12. Nirrikonoxxi li, bħala parteċipant/a, għandi d-dritt li nitlob kopja tal-awdjo-reġistrazzjoni tal-intervista tiegħi, traskrizzjoni verbatim, u d-dissertazzjoni finalizzata malli tkun lesta u ikkoreġuta. L-Istudenta Riċerkatriċi se tiżgura li t-trasferiment ta' din id-dejta jkun sigur, jew billi tibgħat fajls protetti b'password u kriptati permezz ta' email jew billi tipprovdihom personalment fuq drive ta' ħażna ta' data sigur.

13. Jiena konxju/a li l-Istudent Riċerkatrċi hija fid-dmir li tirrapporta kwalunkwe żvelar li għandu x'jaqsam ma-riskji ta' ħsara tieghi innifsi u/jew ta'oħrajn.

14. Jien konxju/a li kwotazzjonijiet verbatim psewdonimizzati mit-traskrizzjoni verbatim jistgħu jintużaw fil-kapitolu 'Riżultati' tad-dissertazzjoni. Jien konxju/a wkoll li d-dissertazzjoni se tkun aċċessibbli fil-librerija tal-Università ta' Malta, u li hemm ukoll il-possibbiltà li dan studju jista' jiġi ppubblikat fil-futur.

15. Jien konxju/a li l-identità tiegħi mhix se tiġi żvelata fl-ebda pubblikazzjoni, rapporti jew preżentazzjonijiet li joħorġu minn din ir-riċerka.

16. Nifhem li, taħt ir-Regolament Ġenerali dwar il-Protezzjoni tad-Data (GDPR) u leġiżlazzjoni nazzjonali, għandi d-dritt għall-aċċess, ir-rettifika, u fejn applikabbli, nitlob għad-dejta li tikkonċernani biex titħassar, sakemm dan ikun teknikament possibbli (sa Frar 2025).

17. Nifhem li m'hemm l-ebda benefiċċji diretti għalija mill-parteċipazzjoni f'dan l-istudju. Jien ukoll nifhem li din ir-riċerka tista' tibbenefika lil ħaddieħor billi tikkontribwixxi għall-għarfien dwar suġġett li hemm nuqas ta riċerka dwaru, u li oħrajn li għaddejjin minn esperjenza simili bħak tieghi

jistgħu jsibu ta’ għajnuna. Din ir-riċerka se tipprova toffri rakkomandazzjonijiet dwar il-ħtiġijiet terapewtiċi ta’ adulti avanzati li għaddejjin minn tmiem tar-relazzjoni romantika.

18. Nifhem li nitkellem dwar it-tmiem tar-relazzjoni romantika tiegħi tista’ tkun emozzjonalment diffiċli għalija. Jien ġejt infurmat b’dan bil-miktub fl-Iskeda ta’ Informazzjoni u verbalment mill-Istudenta Riċerkatriċi.

19. Biex inaqqas kemm jista' jkun it-tbatija emozjonali, jien infurmat/a li se nirċievi lista ta' servizzi ta' appoġġ b'xejn f’kas li għandi bżonn għajnuna addizzjonali. L-Istudenta Riċerkatriċi se toffri assistenza biex naċċessa dawn is-servizzi jekk ikun meħtieġ.

20. Waqt l-intervista, għandi d-dritt li nirrifjuta li nwieġeb xi mistoqsijiet u mingħajr ma jkolli nagħti raġuni għal dan. Nista' wkoll intemm l-intervista fi kwalunkwe ħin mingħajr ma jkolli bżonn nagħti spjegazzjoni għal dan. Kwalunkwe informazzjoni miġbura titħassar minnufih u mhux se tiġi inkluża fl-istudju. Barra minn hekk, għandi l-għażla li nieħu pawżi waqt l-intervista.

21. Jien ġejt ipprovdut b'kopja tal-ittra ta' informazzjoni u nifhem li ha tingħata

kopja ta’ din il-formola ta’ kunsens.

22. Jien konxju/a li l-intervista tista' ssir bil-Malti u/jew bl-Ingliż, skont il-preferenza tiegħi.

Qrajt u fhimt id-dikjarazzjonijiet ta’ hawn fuq u naqbel li nipparteċipa f’dan l-istudju.

Isem tal-parteċipant/a: _____

Firma: _____

Data: _____

Livana Borg Falzon

livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt

Dr. Marta Sant

marta.sant@um.edu.mt

23402312

Jekk jogħġbok immarka din il-kaxxa jekk tixtieq ikollok kopja tar-reġistrazzjoni awdjo tiegħek.

Jekk jogħġbok immarka din il-kaxxa jekk tixtieq kopja tat-traskrizzjoni tal-intervista tiegħek.

Jekk jogħġbok immarka din il-kaxxa jekk tixtieq kopja tad-dissertazzjoni la darba tkun tlestiet u evalwata.

Appendix M

Interview Schedule in English

Interview Schedule in English

Name of Student Researcher: Livana Borg Falzon

Course: Master of Psychology in Counselling Psychology

Student Researcher's Contact Email: livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt

Student Researcher's Contact Number: 99263131

Name of Research Supervisor: Dr. Marta Sant

Research Supervisor's Contact Email: marta.sant@um.edu.mt

Research Supervisor's Contact Number: 23402312

Title of Study: Experiencing the Dissolution of a Romantic Relationship in Older Adulthood: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Interview Schedule

I would like to understand how you experienced the ending of your romantic relationship in older adulthood and what this was like for you.

Contextual Questions:

1. How did you meet your ex-partner?
2. How would you describe the relationship you had?
    - Communication styles? Relationship dynamics
3. Can you tell me why your romantic relationship came to an end?
    - What do you think led to the breakup?

- What do you think went wrong?
- Who decided to end the relationship?

4. Can you describe your relationship immediately prior to the breakup?
5. How did the breakup make you feel?
6. How did you navigate through this period?
   - Coping strategies? Family? Friends?
7. What type of support did you feel you needed when your relationship ended, if any?
   - Family? Friends? Use of psychological services?
8. How did the ending of the relationship impact you, if at all?
   - Financial? Health? Impact on family or friends? Unexpected or unintended consequences?
9. How would you describe your life following the breakup?
   - How has your life changed, if at all?
10. What did you learn about yourself following this relationship?
    - What do you think you have learnt from this experience? How has this experience altered your perspective of life? How did you feel about discovering this new knowledge about yourself? How has it affected your subjective views on relationships? What impact did it leave on your decision to re-partner, if any?
11. Looking back, what advice, if any, would you give to other older adults who may be going through a similar experience?

Debriefing:

We are approaching the end of this interview.

12. Is there anything you would like to share that I have not asked you about?

13. How did you feel during this interview?
14. Is there anything else you would like to add before ending?

Appendix N

Interview Schedule in Maltese

Interview Schedule in Maltese

Isem ir-riċerkatriċi studenta: Livana Borg Falzon

Kors: Master tal-Psikoloġija fil-Psikoloġija tal-Konsulenza

Email ta' kuntatt tar-riċerkatriċi studenta: livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt

Numru ta' kuntatt tar-riċerkatriċi studenta: 99263131

Isem is-superviżur tar-riċerka: Dr. Marta Sant

Email ta' kuntatt tas-superviżur tar-riċerka: marta.sant@um.edu.mt

Numru ta' kuntatt tas-superviżur tar-riċerka: 23402312

Skeda tal-Intervista

Titlu tal-istudju: L-Esperjenza ta' Tmiem Relazzjoni Romantika fl-Età Adulta

Avvanzata: Analiżi Fenomenoloġika Interpretattiva

Nixtieq nifhem kif esperjenzajt it-tmiem tar-relazzjoni romantika tiegħek fl-età adulta u kif kienet din għalik.

Mistoqsijiet Kuntestwali:

1. Kif iltqajt mal-eks sieħeb/sieħba tiegħek?
2. Kif tiddeskrivi r-relazzjoni li kellek?
    - Modi ta' komunikazzjoni? Id-dinamika tar-relazzjoni?
3. Tista' tgħidli għaliex ir-relazzjoni romantika tiegħek waslet għal tmiemha?
    - X'taħseb li wassal għal dan?
    - X'taħseb li mar ħażin?

- Min iddeċieda li jwaqqaf ir-relazzjoni?

4. Tista' tiddeskrivi r-relazzjoni tiegħek eżatt qabel ma ntemmet?
5. Kif ġiegħlek tħossok it-tmiem tar-relazzjoni?
6. Kif innavigajt f'dan il-perjodu?
   - Strateġiji ta' soluzzjoni? Familja? Ħbieb?
7. X'tip ta' appoġġ ħassejt li kellek bżonn meta ntemmet ir-relazzjoni, jekk kien hemm bżonn?
   - Familja? Ħbieb? Użu ta' servizzi psikoloġiċi?
8. X'impatt ħalla fuqek tmiem ir-relazzjoni, jekk ħalla?
   - Finanzjarju? Ta' saħħa? Impatt fuq il-familja jew ħbieb? Konsegwenzi mhux mistennija jew mhux intenzjonati?
9. Kif tiddeskrivi ħajtek wara li ntemmet ir-relazzjoni?
   - Kif inbidlet ħajtek, jekk inbidlet?
10. X'tgħallimt dwarek innifsek wara li ntemmet ir-relazzjoni?
    - X'taħseb li tgħallimt minn din l-esperjenza? Kif bidlet il-perspettiva tiegħek fuq il-ħajja din l-esperjenza ? Kif ħassejtek meta skoprejt dan l-għarfien ġdid dwarek innifsek? Kif affetwa l-fehmiet suġġettivi tiegħek fuq relazzjonijiet? X'impatt ħalla fuqek meta għażilt li terġa' tibda relazzjoni mill-ġdid, jekk ħalla?
11. Meta tħares lura, x'parir, jekk tista', tagħti lill-adulti ikbar minnek li forsi għaddejjin minn esperjenza simili?

Ġbir ta' informazzjoni:

Qed noqorbu għat-tmiem ta' din l-intervista.

12. Hemm xi ħaġa oħra li tixtieq taqsam li jien ma saqsejtekx dwarha?
13. Kif ħassejtek matul din l-intervista?
14. Hemm xi ħaġa oħra li tixtieq iżżid qabel ma nieqfu?

Appendix O

Debrief form and list of services in English

Debrief Form in English

Experiencing the Dissolution of a Romantic Relationship in Older Adulthood: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Name of Student Researcher: Livana Borg Falzon

Course: Master of Psychology in Counselling Psychology

Student Researcher's Contact Email: livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt

Student Researcher's Contact Number: 99263131

Name of Research Supervisor: Dr. Marta Sant

Research Supervisor's Contact Email: marta.sant@um.edu.mt

Research Supervisor's Contact Number: 23402312

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your participation in this research study. Your participation has been invaluable and greatly appreciated. I hope that your participation in this research has been a meaningful and rewarding experience for you, as it has been for me.

Throughout the interview, I asked you several questions in order to understand your experience. These questions looked at your subjective experience of the dissolution of your romantic relationship in older adulthood. The questions delved into understanding factors that led to the end of your romantic relationship and attempted to understand how you navigated the ending of your romantic relationship.

I appreciate that this may have been a sensitive topic to talk about and share, and that recalling your relationship might have elicited upsetting feelings. If you feel that it would be helpful to seek professional support following this interview, please find information related to free services that you can access. I can also guide you in accessing these services, should you wish.

If you have any further queries or should you have any complaints about this study, then please do not hesitate to contact me on livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt or 99263131. You can also contact my research supervisor, Dr Marta Sant on marta.sant@um.edu.mt or 23402312.

I would like to once again extend my heartfelt gratitude for your kind participation.

Yours sincerely,

Livana Borg Falzon

Contact Numbers

Mental Health Helpline: Telephone Number: 1579

This is a 24-hr national telephone helpline, providing immediate and free emotional support, advice, and practical guidance for anyone in need.

Foundation for Social Wellbeing Services Freephone Number: 179

The FSWS is a national helpline offering support and a general list of information about Maltese social welfare services, and a service to refer callers who require support.

Kellimni.com: Telephone number: 21244123 / Email Address: info@kellimni.com

This is a 24/7 confidential free online service which are there to listen to you and understand you. Can be contacted through online Chat, Email, Whatsapp, Messenger, and Instagram.
Also, Kellimni.com also offer 10 – 12 free online counselling sessions with professionals. These can be booked via email.

Community Mental Health Services

Paola Health Centre Telephone Number: 2182 1566 / 21821562

Cospicua Health Centre Telephone Number: 21662088 / 23972330

Qormi Health Centre Telephone Number: 2144 1317 / 21440170

Floriana Health Centre Telephone Number: 2122 0521 / 21220454

Mtarfa Health Centre Telephone Number: 2145 4917 / 21456750 / 21456758

Mosta / Qawra Health Centre Telephone Number: 21424969

The Health Centres above offer free, confidential psychological services.

Caritas Malta: Telephone Number: 2590 6600 / Email Address: info@caritasmalta.org

The Social Work and Counselling Unit, offers support through various self-hep groups, support groups, and associations.

Richmond Foundation: Telephone Number: 21669150 / Email Address: info@richmond.org.mt

An NGO offering psychological support services, and self-help group sessions.

Cana Movement: Telephone Number: 22238000 / 79014827 / 79011435/ Email Address: info@movimenttakana.mt / support@movimenttakana.mt

Cana Therapeutic and Support Services, offer free professional and therapeutic services within a Christian Perspective. Aimed at accompanying clients toward achieving their desired therapeutic goals.

Appendix P

Debrief form and list of services in Maltese

Debrief Form in Maltese

L-Esperjenza ta' Tmiem Relazzjoni Romantika fl-Età Adulta

Avvanzata: Analiżi Fenomenoloġika Interpretattiva

Isem ir-riċerkatriċi studenta: Livana Borg Falzon

Kors: Master tal-Psikoloġija fil-Psikoloġija tal-Konsulenza

Email ta' kuntatt tar-riċerkatriċi studenta: livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt

Numru ta' kuntatt tar-riċerkatriċi studenta: 99263131

Isem is-superviżur tar-riċerka: Dr. Marta Sant

Email ta' kuntatt tas-superviżur tar-riċerka: marta.sant@um.edu.mt

Numru ta' kuntatt tas-superviżur tar-riċerka: 23402312

Għażiż Parteċipant/a

Grazzi tal-parteċipazzjoni tiegħek f'dan l-istudju tar-riċerka. Il-parteċipazzjoni tiegħek kienet imprezzabbli u apprezzata hafna. Nitama li l-parteċipazzjoni tiegħek f'din ir-riċerka kienet esperjenza sinifikanti u ta 'sodisfazzjon għalik, kif kienet għalija.

Matul l-intervista, staqsejtlek diversi mistoqsijiet sabiex tifhem l-esperjenza tiegħek. Dawn il-mistoqsijiet ħarsu lejn l-esperjenza suġġettiva tiegħek tat-tmiem tar-relazzjoni romantika tiegħek fl-età adulta avvanzata. Il-mistoqsijiet daħlu fil-fehim tal-fatturi li wasslu għat-tmiem tar-relazzjoni romantika tiegħek u ppruvaw jifhmu kif innavigajt fit-tmiem tar-relazzjoni romantika tiegħek.

Napprezza li dan seta’ kien suġġett sensittiv biex titkellem dwaru u taqsam, u li meta tfakkar ir-relazzjoni tiegħek seta’ qajjem sentimenti ta’ taqlib. Jekk tħoss li jkun ta’ għajnuna li tfittex appoġġ professjonali wara din l-intervista, jekk jogħġbok sib informazzjoni relatata ma’ servizzi b’xejn li tista’ taċċessaha. Nista' wkoll niggwidak biex taċċessa dawn is-servizzi, jekk tixtieq.

Jekk għandek aktar mistoqsijiet jew għandek xi ilmenti dwar dan l-istudju, allura jekk jogħġbok ikkuntatjani fuq livana.borg.12@um.edu.mt jew fuq 99263131. Tista' wkoll tikkuntattja lis-superviżur tar-riċerka tiegħi, Dr Marta Sant fuq marta.sant@um.edu.mt jew fuq 23402312.

Nixtieq nerġa' nagħti l-gratitudni mill-qalb għall-parteċipazzjoni tajba tagħkom.

Dejjem tiegħek,

Livana Borg Falzon

Numri ta'Kuntatti

Mental Health Helpline: Telephone Number: 1579

Din hija linja ta'għajnuna telefonika nazzjonali ta'24 siegha, li tiprovdi appoġġ emozzjonali immedjat u b'xejn, pariri, u gwida prattika għal kull min għandu bżonn.

Foundation for Social Wellbeing Services Freephone Number: 179

L-FSWS hija helpline nazzjonali li toffri appoġġ u lista ġenerali ta' informazzjoni dwar is-servizzi ta' assistenza soċjali Maltin, u servizz biex jirreferu lil min iċempel li jeħtieġu appoġġ.

Kellimni.com: Telephone number: 21244123 / Email Address: info@kellimni.com

Dan huwa servizz online b'xejn kunfidenzjali 24/7 li qegħdin hemm biex jisimgħuk u jifhmuk. Jistgħu jiġu kkuntattjati permezz ta' Chat online, Email, Whatsapp, Messenger, u Instagram. Ukoll, Kellimni.com joffri wkoll 10 – 12-il sessjoni ta' pariri onlajn b'xejn ma' professjonisti. Dawn jistgħu jiġu bbukkjati permezz tal-email.

Community Mental Health Services

Paola Health Centre Telephone Number: 2182 1566 / 21821562

Cospicua Health Centre Telephone Number: 21662088 / 23972330

Qormi Health Centre Telephone Number: 2144 1317 / 21440170

Floriana Health Centre Telephone Number: 2122 0521 / 21220454

Mtarfa Health Centre Telephone Number: 2145 4917 / 21456750 / 21456758

Mosta / Qawra Health Centre Telephone Number: 21424969
Iċ-Ċentri tas-Saħħa miktuba hawn fuq joffru servizzi psikoloġiċi kunfidenzjali b'xejn.

Caritas Malta: Telephone Number: 2590 6600 / Email Address: info@caritasmalta.org

Is-Social Work u il-Counselling Unit, toffri appoġġ permess ta'diversi self-help group, support groups, u assoċjazzjonijiet.

Richmond Foundation: Telephone Number: 21669150 / Email Address: info@richmond.org.mt

NGO li toffri servizzi ta' appoġġ psikoloġiku, u sessjonijiet ta' self-help group

Cana Movement: Telephone Number: 22238000 / 79014827 / 79011435/ Email Address: info@movimenttakana.mt / support@movimenttakana.mt

Cana Therapeutic and Support Services, joffru servizzi professjonali u terapewtiċi b'xejn fi ħdan perspettiva nisranija. Huwa immirat biex jakkumpanka lill-klijenti lejn il-kisba tal-għanijiet terapewtiċi mixtieqa tagħhom.

Appendix Q

Sample Analysis

Laura Interview Analysis

Experiential Statement	Line	Original Transcript	Exploratory Notes
	1	**I**: Kif iltqajt mal-eks sieħeb tiegħek?	
	2	**P**: Fuq il-Media.	
	3	**I:** X'tip ta media?	
	4	**P:** Facebook.	
	5	**I:** Alright, u kiern hemm xi group partikolari	
	6	għas-singles?	Met online but had friends in common
	7	**P:** Kien hemm mutual friends u I thought I	
	8	knew him through friends, and we began to chat.	*Does having mutual friends on Facebook enabled her to feel more comfortable and maybe more trusting of this person?*
	9	**I:** Okay.	
	10	**I:** Kif tiddeskrivi r-relazzjoni li kellek?	
	11	**P:** Esperjenza sabiha ħafna kienet ghal-ewwel.	
	12	Għal-ewwel kienet wisq sabiha, it's too good to	"Għal-ewwel" indicating that her experience is going to change. What started as a beautiful experience is about to change.
The relationship was "Too good to be true"	13	be true.	"Too good to be true": as if she anticipated that something might happen to this beautiful experience. Almost like she sensed that something was not quite right as it was too perfect
	14	Kien caring hafna. Qabel qatt ma kelli dak il-	
There is a sense of newness about the care that she received	15	caring so għalija kienet xi ħaġa ta'barra minn	"xi ħaġa ta'barra minn hawn": she seemed surprised by the care she was being given. There is a sense of newness about the care that she received.
	16	hawn.	
It was a new experience for her			

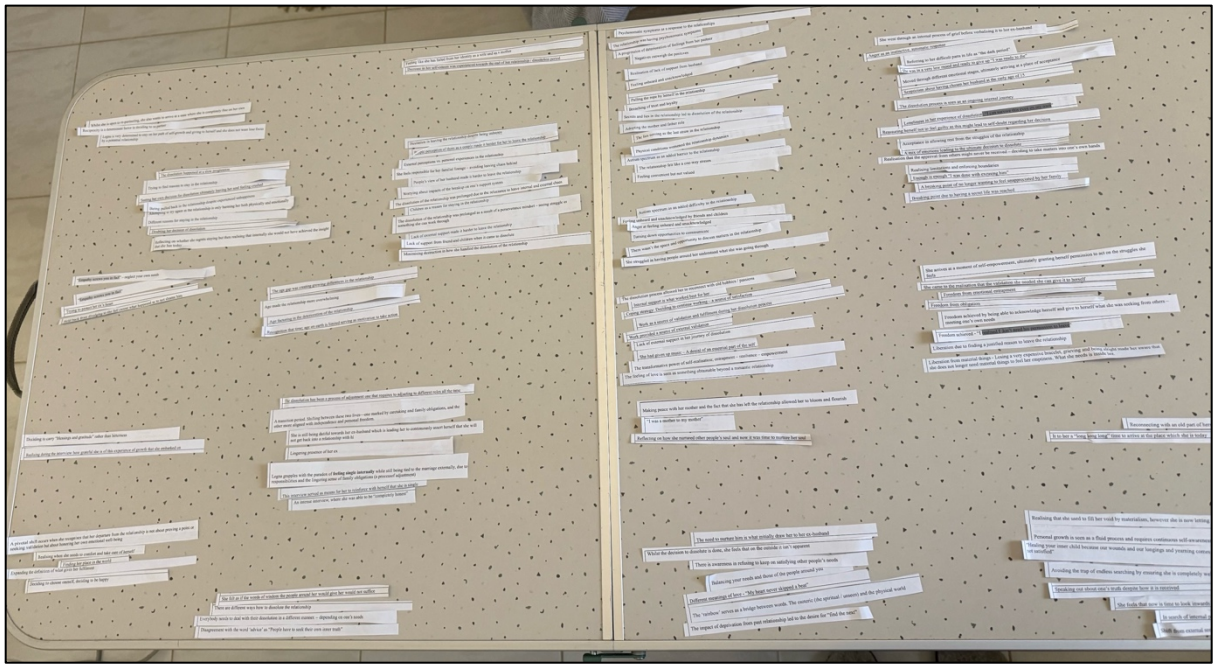
	17	**I:** Xi ħaġa ġdieda.	
	18	**P:** First time ehe.	Sounds like he might have still been in mourning
	19	**I:** U aparti li kien caring kif keinet id-dinamika	Admitting that it was her first receiving this care.
	20	tar-relazzjoni?	
	21	**P:** Id-dinamika f'liema sens ġifieri?	
	22	**I:** Inti ghalih minn kont?	
	23	**P:** Mela ħa ngħidlek għal-bidu kif kont. Mela,	
	24	esperjenza gdieda għalih wkoll għax wara li giet	
	25	nieqsa il-partner tieghu beda jkellem lili. Kien	
	26	iżomni qisni prinċipessa, kien jagħmel **wisq**	
	27	miegħi.	There is an emphasis on "wisq".
	28	**I:** U kif kienet il-mogħod ta'komunikazzjoni	*Is there an amount of how kind someone can be? What makes it too much?*
	29	tagħkhom?	
When she was in a relationship, she used to go out a lot as a couple, every day	30	**P:** Konna noħorgu ħafna, noħorġu kuljum.	
	31	During the week konna mmoru nieħdu café u	"nohorgu hafna", this might indicate that her amount of times she went out increased.
	32	nitkellmu. Ġieli sema li l-partner ġiet nieqsa, ma	
	33	kienx ikolli diffikukta s'hemm.	
	34	I: Kont thossok komda taqsam ċertu affarijiet	
	35	mal partner. Forsi qed idejqek xi ħaġa u	
	36	tikomunika?	
	37	P: **Ħafna** kont inhossni komda mieghu, **hafna**	
Her ex-partner provided a source of comfort	38	**hafna**. Aktar mir-ragel li propju kelli.	She repeated the word **"a lot"** in emphasising how comfortable she felt with her ex-partner. She even compared it to her ex-

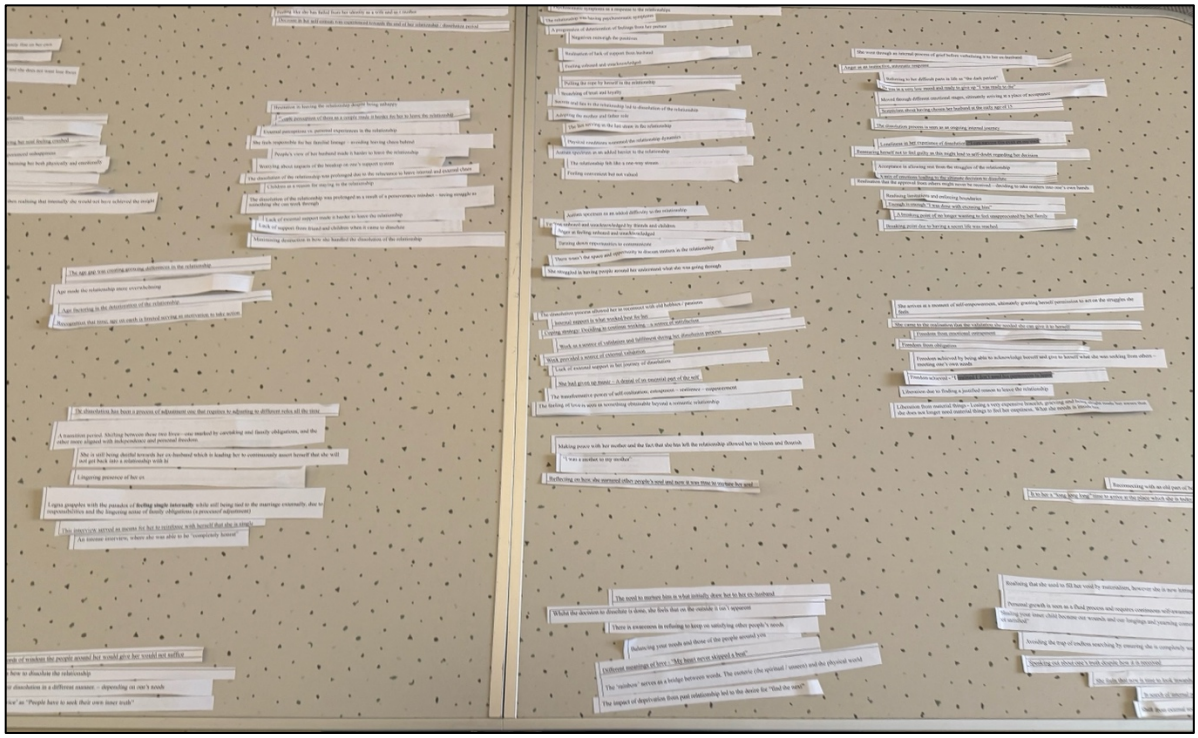
			husband, that she felt more comfortable with him. He made her feel comfortable.
	39	**I:** Kienet open il-communication?	
	40	**P: Hafna hafna**.	
	41	**I:** Tista' tgħidli għaliex ir-relazzjoni romantika	Emphasis on how good their communication was by repeating "**A lot, a lot**".
	42	tiegħek waslet għal tmiemha?	
	42	**P:** Imma nista ngħidlek bhala detal x'gara ezatt?	
"He took care of me like a princess"	43	X 'kienet il-kawza?	
Experiencing a deep sense of being valued and nurtured, as if she were receiving special, almost royal treatment	44	**I:** Tista tgħidli sakemm thossok komda inti.	
	45	**P:** jien kif qed nghidlek kien izommni ta	
	46	principesa, johodni fl-aqwa restaurants. Imma	"He took care of me like ahapp"
Realising that he was not open for change	47	imbagahd bdejt nirejalizza li ma jibdilx, la jbidel	"Imma imbaghad bdejt nirejalizza" – signifying that after some time in the relationship she recognised to what seems like a pattern.
	48	restaruants, la mejda fejn ha niehdu l-café…u	
Stagnation	49	kont insaqsih; hemm hekk hemm mejda vojta	
	50	lets go there. U kien jghidli le ta hawn nixtieq	She realised that something is strange. The fact that they always got to the same places and specifically stay in the same seating.
	51	noqod. Kien dejjem jaghmel dil-haga.	
Social media as a source of revelation.	52	Imbghad taf kif tiskrolja fuq facebook, tara l-old	*What made her look into it, rather than settling for what he gave her?*
	53	photos li kellu.	Curiosity into getting to know him seeing his photos on social media.
			Maybe a little of concern / worry? The same concern that she had from the very start when

			stating that it felt like too good to be true.
Replacing her partner's deceased wife	54 55 56 57 58 59 60	U bdejt nara li l-partner li kellu li giet nieqsa tixbahni hafna u kien qisu iqedni minflokha. Ghax kif qed nghidlek anka per-ezempju certu affarijiet li kien jixtrili, l-istess kulur, l-istess affarijiet li kien jixtri lilha. Ghax jien kif ghidtlek kont nara l-photos, bhala nahseb li kien jara tieghi li kien ikolli fuq facebook.	She realised that she and his deceased wife look similar. She realised that the things he used to buy her, are the same as the items his wife had.
	61	**I:** Hekk hu.	
Seeing things for what they are Seeing things clearly	62 63 64 65	**P:** u <u>bdejt nara dawn l-affarijiet precizi</u>. Darba morna mixja, u waqafna f'post u qaghdna bil-qieghda, caring for me u x'naf jien, same spot li kellu ritratt hemm.	<u>Bdejt nara dawn l-affarijiet precizi "I was seeing this for what they were"</u>. She was becoming aware of things.
Same memories, different partner Repeating lost memories	66 67 68 69	**I:** qisu beda jiprova jirepeti certu memorji li kellu mal eks siehba tieghu. **P:** mieghi **I:**….mieghek.	He was trying to recreate what he had with his deceased wife.
Creating new memories	70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77	**P:** ma riedtx jaghmel new ones ghax gieli ghidtlu. Ejja naghmlu memorji taghna, immoru postijiet differenti, anka restaurants jew ghal café imma no he was stuck like that. **I:** Imbagahd min idecida jieqaf mir-relazjoni? **P:** Imbagahd tkelimnija u, but he wouldn't budge. **I:** Mhm.	Laura communicated that she wanted to make new memories. **Stuck** – it's like she did not have a choice. That was as much as he was comfortable being open in the relationship.

Appendix R

Photos of clustering experiential statements





Appendix S

Detailed table of GETs

Theme 1: "I Was Seeing Things for What They Were"

1. **"It Was a Bit of a One-Way Strema (Legna, p.4)**

"we used to go dancing a lot, nearly every day" (Maria, p.1)
"konna immoru hafna zfin, kwazi kuljum" (Maria, p.1)

"having someone gives you courage" (Maria, p.1)
"pero qisek xi hadd jaghmilk il-kuragg" (Maria, p.1)

"he danced and had a good physique was enough to make me happy" (Maria, p.2)
"din tas-sfin u li kien bniedem blis-statura tieghu kont kuntenta bizejjed" (Maria, p.2)

"we both had a dog [...] they kept us like a family" (Frank, p.2)
"it-tnejn kelna kelb […] zamewna bhal qisna l-familja" (Frank, p.2)

"I stayed also because he is a good man'" (Legna, p.2).

"I had to take almost mother father role" (Legna, p.3)

"too tired of sustaining it up, by myself" (Legna, p.4).

"I had to always go out with a pot of soup or vegetables when we were meeting up" (Maria, p.2)
"kelli dejjem meta mmur niltaqa miegħu nohrog b'xi borma soppa jew haxix" (Maria, p.2)

"I was offering a lot of food, and I wasn't being compensated for it" (Maria, p.8)
"kont qed nogri hafna ikel, emm li kontx ikompensata ghalih" (Maria, p.8)

"I used to spend a lot more money on him" (Maria, p.4)
"Jien kont nonfoq hafn aktar flus ghalih" (Maria, p.4)

“three euros to enter […] and a bottle of water” (Maria, p.4)
“jhalas tlett euro biex nidhol [...] u fliskun ilma” (Maria, p.4)

“then we go dancing and he would not dance because he would be feeling tired” (Maria, p.9)
“Imbagahd immoru nizfnu u ma jizfinx għax ikun ghajjien” (Maria, p.9)

“Sometimes he used to come walking with me and then I would need to wash his clothes” (Maria, p.11)

“kien jigi jimxi mieghi ghax jien kont immur nimxi, imbaghad kien ikolli nahsilhu l-hwejjeg” (Maria, p.11)

“she kept me away from her children” (Frank, p.2)
“zamitni l-boghod mit-tfal taghha” (Frank, p.2)

“not all of them” (Frank, p.2)
“mhux kollha imma” (Frank, p.2)

“fully in” (Frank, p.3),

“one way” (Frank, p.8)

“I put my guard up” (Frank, p.3)
“zamitni dejjem on guard” (Frank, p.3)

“what was he offering?” (Maria, p.11)
“U dan x’kien qed jofri?” (Maria, p.11)

“it was a bit of a one-way stream” (Legna, p.4)

“minuses are more than the pluses” (Legna, p.4).

“apart from giving I used to receive, it wasn’t only from my side” (Laura, p.13)
“Barra li kont naghti kont nircivi, ma kienitx minn naghha tieghi biss” (Laura, p.13)

2. **“I felt Trapped” (Legna, p.12)**

“we put on the radio full blast […] we go the kebab shop and have a pizza” (Olga, p.15)

“out of this world” (Laura, p.12)

“he took care of me like a princess” (Laura, p.3)

“kien izommni ta principesa” (Laura, p.3)

“I was happy a lot” (Laura, p.17)

“kont kuntentissima” (Laura, p.17)

“sexually it was wonderful” (Olga, p.4)

“it got me into a family environment” (Olga, p.4).

“lacked love in my life” (Laura, p.17)
“jiena kont nieqsa mill-imhabba, kont nieqsa” (Laura, p.17)

“gave me a sense of caring” (Laura, p.16)
“kienu jaghtuni sense of caring” (Laura, p.16)

“I was seeing things for what they were” (Laura, p.4)
“Kont qed nara l-affarijiet kien vera huma” (Laura, p.4)

“the same spot he had a photo at” (Laura, p.4)
“ same spot li kellu ritratt hemm” (Laura, p.4)

“too good to be true” (Laura, p.1).

“I told him let’s make our own memories” (Laura, p.4)
“ghidtlu. Ejja naghmlu memorji taghna” (Laura, p.4)

“he wouldn’t budge” (Laura, p.4).

“this is not a healthy relationship” (Laura, p.6).

“I was still going out with men […] if there was a concert” (Olga, p.7)

“he says, ‘you can’t talk to that one or go there’” (Olga, p.7).

“I went through all that to separate from my husband […] and I find myself in the same situation” (Olga, p.7).

"it did not give me the opportunity to pursue things like culture, which is something I love" (Olga, p.12)

"he doesn't even like traveling and I have travelled the world" (Olga, p.7).

"what can this person offer me?" (Olga, p.2).

"Suddenly my life was being taken away from me […] so I left him" (Olga, p.7).

"music is my life" (Legna, p.23)

"he did not appreciate it" (Legna, p.23).

"staying home […] was making myself very ill" (Legna, p.11)

"I could not walk" (Legna, p.11).

"I had given up […] I felt trapped […] I was ready to die" (Legna, p.12).

3. "Secrets and Lies" (Legna, p.3)

"I had felt that there was something" (Legna, p.3)

"I always found him on the internet" (Maria, p.4)
"dejjem kont insibu fuq l-internet" (Maria, p.4)

"I gave him many opportunities to sit down and talk to me and that never happened" (Legna, p.3)

"I had evidence" (Legna, p.3).

"sudoku" (Maria, p.3)

"I found his photo" (Maria, p.5)
"sibt ir-ritratt tieghu" (Maria, p.5)

"there is nothing in the marriage vows which he has kept" (Legna, p.5)

"that was the last straw" (Legna, p.4).

“thinking we had a very [...] good enough marriage [...] when there are lies I would not ever follow” (Legna, p.4).

“breaking point” and “turning point” (Legna, p.3)

“this frees me now” (Legna, p.3).

“If I go now, I have nothing to feel guilty about, it justifies me” (Legna, p.3)

“I confronted him [...] are you still looking for someone?” (Maria, p.5)
“Ikunfrantajtu [...] ghadek qed tfittex lil xi hadd? (Maria, p.5)

“I blocked him [...] and it ended” (Maria, p.5)
“Iblokjajtu [...] spiċat” (Maria, p.5)
“all the partners that I had betrayed me” (Frank, p.10)
“l-partners li ghazilt kollha tradewni” (Frank, p.10)

“this is what happens when you trust with your eyes closed” (Frank, p.10)
“hekk jigrilek meta tafda b’ghajnejk maghluqa” Frank, p.10)

“it did not impact me negatively” (Frank, p.10)
“ma afetwatnix negattiv” (Frank, p.10)

“the parting, the parting, the betrayal, the parting” (Frank, p.10)
“il-firda, il-firda, il-firda (more convinced), it-tradiment, il-firda, tafewak” (Frank, p.10)

“when you have friends that die in the war, that is forever painful” (Frank, p.10)
“ghax ikollok l-hbieb fil-gwerra immutu, dik tibqa twegani meta tara n-nies qedin imutu” (Frank, p.10)

Theme 2: Unravelling Bonds

1. **Feelings Towards Partner Started Changing**

“he doesn’t even speak to people […] he does not make friends with anyone” (Maria, p.3)
“lanqas biss ikellem nies ohra […] ma jaghmilx hbieb ma haddiehor” (Maria, p.3)

“he was annoying me” (Maria, p.3)
“beda idejaqni” (Maria, p.3)

“I wasn’t paying attention to him” (Maria, p.8)
“ma kontx qed naghti kasu” (Maria, p.8)

“I was offering a lot of food […] towards the end, I decreased” (Maria, p.8)
“kont qed nofri hafna ikel […] Lejn l-ahhar naqast”

“unhappy for at least 20 years” (Legna, p.1),

“not like it is a flip over from one day to the next […] this is getting harder and harder”

(Legna, p.9).

“I was kind of grieving for myself, realising okay, it is over” (Legna, p.9).

“then I started making it more apparent and more verbal with him” (Legna, p.9). “faded out

slowly” (Frank, p.8).

“she was not on the same intellectual level” (Frank, p.5)
“ma kienitx fuq l-istess livell inteletwalment” Frank, p.5)

“it was cooling off” (Frank, p.8)
“Bdiet tikulja” (Frank, p.8)

2. External Opinions

“make sure to get a partner with you so you can dance” (Maria, p.3)
“ghara li ġġieb partner mieghek ħalli tisfen miegħu” (Maria, p.3)

“let me wait until my son’s wedding pass, then I will leave him” (Maria, p.3)
“ha nhali t-tieg tat-tifel jghaddi, imma peress li dejjem nisfnu kont ninsa li rried nitilqu” (Maria, p.3)

“I used to forget that I had to dissolve the relationship [...] we were always dancing”

(Maria, p.3).

“everybody loved him [...] everybody liked the idea of us as a couple” (Legna, p.2)

“my kids would be very angry and pitying their father, umm, and I would be the monster”

(Legna, p.2)

“aunt I don’t like him, I don’t like him” (Olga, p.9)

“I cannot stand him, he is annoying” (Olga, p.9).

“at times I think to hell what my brother thinks, and to hell what my niece thinks” (Olga,

p.11).

“I spoke with my daughter […] and she told me it's not a healthy relationship” (Laura, p.6)

“U tkelimt jien naqra mat-tifla […] u qaltli it is not a healthy relationship” (Laura, p.6)

3. Could I have been Wrong in my Decision? (Legna, p.15)

“I couldn’t cope [...] worrying, worrying” (Laura, p.6)
“ma stajtx inkampa […] norqod, newden” (Laura, p.6)

“did I give him a chance?” (Laura, p.6)
“imma tajtu cans bizejjed” (Laura, p.6)

“I kept drifting in and out of sleep” (Laura, p.6)
“nqum u norqod” (Laura, p.6)

“maybe with a little bit of tact I could have handled the relationship differently” (Olga, p.11).

“yes, I think I gave him enough of a chance” (Laura, p.6)
“nahseb ehe tajtu cans bizejjed” (Laura, p.6)]

“if I had behaved differently in that relationship […] I could still be in that relationship”

(Olga, p.19)

“I make an effort to test my own decision of leaving” (Legna, p.3).

“his thinking really crushes my soul” (Legna, p.15).

“I start feeling unwell again” (Legna, p.15).

“I am trying again for nothing [...] this is no longer working (Legna, p.15).

“a logical thinker” (Frank, p.13)

“not an emotional person” (Frank, p.13)

“if it is not working, I am not going to fight for it” (Frank, p.3)
“jekk mhux qed tahdem, mhux ha noqod nigieled ghalija” (Frank, p.3)

"if someone works hard enough there would be a gratifying *(pause)* medium" (Legna, p.24)

"not give myself the option to dissolve the relationship" (Legna, p.24)

"I lasted 51 years cause otherwise I might have left much much sooner (Legna, p.24)

Theme 3: The Many Faces of Loss

1. Losing My Place

"from going out every day, to then ending up at home" (Laura, p.7)
"minn kuljum nohrog, imbghad spicajt id-dar" (Laura, p.7)

"back to the old routine" (Laura, p.7).

"in the evening I stopped going out" (Laura, p.7)
"Imbagahd spicajt d-dar, filghaxija" (Laura, p.7)

"during the weekends I suffer a lot because I don't go out" (Olga, p.12)

"if I go dancing at certain places […] I feel alone, everybody with his partner" (Maria, p.6)
"jekk immur nisfen certu positijiet […] inhosni wahdi" Maria, p.6)

"I felt funny" (Maria, p.6)
"Hasejtni vera hekk, funny" (Maria, p.6)

"you lose the friends you have" (Maria, p.6)
"titlef il-hbieb li jkollok" (Maria, p.6)

"I miss the time when my parents were alive and I would have them over every single Sunday lunch time" (Olga, p.12)

"Sunday lunch time I suffer like crazy" (Olga, p.12)

"sometimes you arrive at a stage where you need someone to hug [...] that hug meant so much to me" (Olga, p.18).

"sex is an emotion, that if you open up to it, it relaxes you, it's rewarding" (Olga, p.18).

2. The Loss of What Could Have Been

“as soon as I found it, I said I found the treasure in my life” (Laura, p.23)
“X’hin sibta, ghidt sibt it-tezor f’hajti” (Laura, p.23)

“euphoria” (Laura, p.23)

“it wasn’t like that” (Laura, p.23)

“I thought it would last forever” (Legna, p.9)

“I was kind of grieving for myself, realising okay, this is over” (Legna, p.9)

“sometimes I say ‘God […] why did you not give me a family of my own?’ But there is no reply” (Olga, p.23).

“people are afraid to enjoy their retirement, especially men” (Olga, p.21)

“men hang on to their jobs [...] feeding the ego” (Olga, p.21)

“retirement means enjoy your retirement” (Olga, p.21)

“how about pretending you are a tourist in Malta and going to see the beautiful architecture in Malta” (Olga, p.21)

“they could be having a very rewarding life if they had, if they looked for a partner and enjoyed life” (Olga, p.21)

“when I was around 22, I was ready to get married […] prior to the wedding she fell ill and died” (Frank. p.5)
“meta kelli qisu xi 22. Kont lest biex nizeweg, wahda qisha mara tad-dar, u xi ftit qabel ma zzewigna, mardet u mietet.” (Frank. p.5)

“this continues to impact me” (Frank, p.5)
“baqat tafetwani, qisha” (Frank, p.5)

Theme 4: A Catalyst for Growth

1. "I can survive this" (Legna, p.10)

"I was very down" (Laura, p.10)

"at first you feel lost" (Laura, p.10)

"how am I going to rise above this?" (Laura, p.10)

"I had lost myself [...]I was buried, literally buried" (Laura, p.22)
"Kont qisni mirduma, literalment, mirduma" (Laura, p.22)

"I am strong enough, I can do this" (Laura, p.23).

"I had lost everything in life. I was completely finished" (Maria, p.14)
"kont tlift kollox fil-hajja. Kont totalment spicajt" (Maria, p.14)

"I am a survivor, I can handle this" (Maria, p.14)

"given up on life" (Maria, p.12)
"qtajt qalbi mill-hajja" (Maria, p.12)

"why should I die if I haven't yet lived?" (Legna, p.12).

"nothing works better than internal support" (Legna, p.22).

"I have to be the one to heal myself" (Legna, p.13).

"I can give myself a better life than I'm living instead of giving up on life completely" (Legna, p.12).

“I can survive this even on my own; it would be tough, but I can” (Legna,p.12)

“I started becoming much better physically too” (Legna, p.13).

2. Steadying Forces

“people have to really reconcile with what would work with them” (Legna, p.30)

“people seek different things [...] it depends on one’s character” (Maria, p.20).

“I’m always on the move” (Maria, p.18).

“I went out walking every day” (Maria, p.13)
“kont immur nimxi kuljum” (Maria, p.13)

“I am going to line dancing” (Maria, p.16)
“qed immur line dancing” (Maria, p.16)

“swimming” (Maria, p.16)
“nghum” (Maria, p.16)

“I am going to drawing lessons” (Maria, p.18)
“qed immur lezzjonijiet tad-drawing” (Maria, p.18)

“all of a sudden there’s a lot of people, everybody speaking with each other” (Maria, p.22)
“f’daqqa wahda jkun hemm hafna nies, kullhadd jitkellem ma xulxin” Maria, p.22)

“I made a lot of friends” (Maria, p.16)
“ghamilt hafna hbieb” (Maria, p.16)

“I have a lot of friends, I have a lot of support” (Laura, p.3)
“ghandi hafna hbieb, ghandi hafna support” (Laura, p.3)

“when women get used to each other, they love each other with all their heart” (Maria, p.16)
“meta jidraw lil xulxin in nisa, jkunu jhobbu hafna lil xulxin b’qalbhom kollha” (Maria, p.16)

“it is important that you hang around with people your age” (Laura, p.18)
“Importanti li inti taghmila ma ta tamparek” (Laura, p.18)

“my daughter was a source of support ” (Laura, p.6)
“It-tifla kienet ta support” (Laura, p.6)

“especially from my kids […] the anger that came towards me was making it even harder”

(Legna, p.10).

“a loner” (Frank, p.14)

“don’t stay alone […] you need to be with people” (Frank, p.9)
“tibqax wahdek […] ghandek bzonn tkun man-nies” (Frank, p.9)

“different discussions [...] I found intelligent people” (Frank, p.8)
“diskussjonijiet differenti […] sibt nies inteligenit” (Frank, p.8)

“I am no longer a person of being part of a group of friends, I have had enough of that”

(Olga, p.26)

“I don’t have women friends that I meet” (Olga, p.16).

“the few that I trusted *(pause)* didn’t really want to hear my pain” (Legna, p.10)

“a soulmate, a good friend, or a good partner” (Olga, p.22)

“it would have been easier […] if I would have found people who would have understood”

(Legna, p.22)

“I had a job where I travelled for five months, and I travelled to different countries, so I didn’t feel it that much" (Frank, p.8)
“kelli job li nsiefer hames xhur, u nsifieir pajizi differenti…ma hasejtix daqshekk” (Frank, p.8)

“not to retire” (Legna, p.18)

“satisfaction” (Legna, p.18).

“like I might have failed as a wife and as a mother” (Legna, p.18).

“at least I am not a failure at everything” (Legna, p.18).

“I am appreciated in other ways too, and that supported me very much” (Legna, p.18).

3. Breaking Free

“I was scared” (Laura, p.13)
“kont nibża” (Laura, p.13)

“I absolutely had no trust” (Laura, p.21).

“I had a barrier to not get hurt” (Laura, p.11)
“kelli qisu barrier biex ma inwegax” (Laura, p.11)

“I loved again, and I was loved again” (Laura, p.23)
“ergajt habebjt, u ergajt gejt Mahbuba” (Laura, p.23)

“our body grows, gets old, but the soul is still young” (Laura, p.11)
“gisimna jikber, jixjieh imma the soul is still young” (Laura, p.11)

“and yes, you can, you can, fall in love again” (Laura, p.11)
“Allura ehe, terġa thobb” (Laura, p.11)

“everything in my life that was missing” (Olga, p.19)

“not to expect any men or relationship to be your everything” (Olga, p.23)

“I have my own thing to do” (Olga, 23)

“I need to develop more myself in having hobbies and pursuing things I like to do” (p.24)

“am I going to go by what people think and observe or am I going to go by my own *(pause)*

struggles?” (Legna, p.11)

“free from having to live from guilt if I left” (Legna, p.4)

“free from obligation” (Legna, p.4)

“I don’t need his permission to leave, I need to give myself the permission” (Legna, p.10).

4. Knowing One’s Needs

“if it happens, it happens” (Laura, p.13)

“I am still open to the idea” (Laura, p.26)

“there are men that just want to go out and eat” (Maria, p.18)

“hemm irgien ikunu irriedu johorgu jieklu barra biss” (Maria, p.18)

“if he doesn’t know how to dance, there is not much for us to do” (Maria, p.18)

“then I would need to change my routine, and my routine is dancing” (Maria, p.23)

“Ghax imbaghad ikollok, kif tghid, inbidel ir-rutina tieghi u ir-rutina tieghi hija s-sfin” (Maria, p.23)

“I worked, I have my own pension” (Maria, p.18)
“hdimt, ghandi l-pensjoni tieghi” (Maria, p.18)

“modern, jolly, beautiful man [...] someone that knows how to take care of himself” (Maria, p.24)
“modern, allegruz, ragel sabih […] xi hadd li jaf jiehu hisbe tieghu nnifsu” (Maria, p.24)

“I will not commit with someone unless I am sure who truly wants to be with me” (Frank, p.11)
“mhux nikometi ma xi hadd qabel ma nkun cert li din vera tridni” (Frank, p.11)

“I don’t have the energy to get flowers and take someone out to eat” (Frank, p.6)
“jien ma niflhax u irried noqod ingiblek il fjrui, u niehdok tiekol” (Frank, p.6)

“an almost equal giving and taking” (Legna, p.28)

“I might lose focus of giving to myself” (Legna, p.28)

“don’t rush” (Frank, p.14)
“Tghagilx” (Frank, p.14)

“don’t rush into things” (Laura, p.19)

“you are fragile at that point, you will be drowning” (Frank, p.14)
“tkun fragli dak il-hin, u tkun qed tereq” (Frank, p.14)

“you think you are grabbing on to a piece of wood, but it would be a shark fin” (Frank, p.14)
“minghalik qed tereq u taqbad ma bicca injama, imma tkun dahr ta shark” (Frank, p.14).

“a lot of women are scared of being alone, and they would desperately want a man [...] one is to be cautious of this as it might cause damage” (Laura, p.19)

“hawn hafna niesa jibzghu jghixu wahedhom, u kwalunke kos ikunu irriedu ragel […] tried toqod attenta naqa ghax jista jkun li jkun ta hsara ghalijhom” (Laura, p.19)

5. Embracing Life's Journey

"everything happens for a reason in life [...] whatever happens, whatever you do in life, look at what the reason is, look at why it happened" (Olga, p.22)

"despite negative experiences, stay positive towards life [...] see what life is offering you and move on" (Laura, p.17)
"ibqaw pozitivi lejn il-hajja […] Allura ara x'qed tofrilek il-hajja u mexxi" (Laura, p.17)

"I learnt from this experience" (Laura, p.10)
"taghlimt minnha din l-esperjenzza" (Laura, p.10)

"I grew a little bit more" (Laura, p.16)
"kbirt naqra ohra ergajt" (Laura, p.16)

"you have to be to improve your life. I have my life, and I want to live it, whatever comes" (Laura, p.19)
"jiena issa ghandi hajti, u irried nghixha tajjeb. Whatever comes" (Laura, p.19)

"there is no guarantee, no one has a guarantee [...] it's all a gamble" (Frank, p.16)
"M'ghandekx u garanzija, hadt ma ghandu garanzija […] it's all a gamble" (Frank, p.16)

"there are no permanent relationships" (Frank, p.16)
"m'hawnx relazjonijiet permanenti" (Frank, p.16)