

**The Victims' Voice:
Analysing the Victimization Process
and Impact of Counselling on
Violence against Women**

Sylvana Gafa'

**Research undertaken in the Department of
Counselling, Faculty for Social Wellbeing,
University of Malta.**

Master in Counselling

2018



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**The Victims' Voice:
Analysing the Victimisation Process
and Impact of Counselling on
Violence against Women**

Sylvana Gafa'

**A dissertation submitted to the Department of Counselling
within the Faculty for Social Wellbeing
University of Malta**

**In Part-Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
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ABSTRACT

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

Keywords: counselling victims, victims of violence, victimisation, criminal justice system, victim support services.

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List of Abbreviations

CBT	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
CDV	Commission on Domestic Violence
COE	Council of Europe
EAC	Europe Association for Counselling
EMDR	Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing
EU	European Union
FRA	European Agency for Fundamental Rights
FREC	Faculty Research Ethics Committee
FSWS	Foundation for Social Welfare Services
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
MARAM	Multi-Agency Risk-Assessment Models
MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
SOAR	Surviving Abuse with Resilience
TFCBT	Trauma-Focused Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy
UREC	University Research Ethics Committee
VAW	Violence Against Women
VSE	Victim Support Europe
VSM	Victim Support Malta
VSU	Victim Support Unit
WRF	Women's Rights Foundation

DEDICATION

*To all those working hard to prevent
and put an end to violence against women.*

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Student's I.D. /Code: 135587M

Student's Name & Surname: Sylvana Gafa'

Course: Master in Counselling

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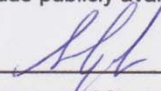
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The occurrence of a criminal offence, violent or not, is one of the most traumatic events human beings can experience throughout their life. The initial impact of crime is just the start of a long and challenging journey through the criminal justice system. The victimization process does not end with the crime, even when solved by law enforcement agencies and the perpetrators are taken to Court. The trauma experienced after a crime can affect victims differently; some may experience very few symptoms, whilst others may be impacted very seriously (Hoyle & Zedner, 2007). Besides the manifest physical and financial effects, victims also suffer psychologically and emotionally (Walklate, 2007).

1.1 Violence Against Women

Consequences of criminal behaviour affect victims in different ways. Victims may suffer material damages, physical injuries and/or psychological harm. However, serious psychological distress is found to be associated mostly with victims of domestic violence and sexual assaults, and is more common in females (Bisson & Shepard, 1995). Its effects may include post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, alcoholism, depression and reduced social functioning (Bonomi et al., 2006). Other effects of victimisation on women victims of violence may include feelings of fear, anxiety and social withdrawal (Shapland & Hall, 2007).

According to Norris and Kaniasty (1994), victims of violent crimes suffer higher levels of distress than those victims of property crimes, whilst those who have never been a crime victim are the least distressed. Also, when analysing gender differences in violent crimes, the authors found that the effect of violent victimisation was greater for females (Norris & Kaniasty, 1994).

1.2 Victimization Process in the Criminal Justice System

In the aftermath of a crime, victims may also suffer from secondary victimization. Although not directly resulting from the crime itself, secondary victimisation is caused as a result of actions or lack of them by authorities and individuals towards the victim. Studies show that symptoms of sadness, frustration and trauma suffered by victims of crime are often caused by the

system itself (Stern, 2010). This may be due to being treated insensitively by others, not being recognised as victims, not receiving the services and the information that a victim requires, or any other inappropriate treatment throughout the course of contact with the criminal justice system. This has led to further research into victims' needs and other issues in relation to the criminal justice system, especially when cases are taken to court where, apart from the impact of crime, victims must also cope with the consequences of the criminal justice process which could lead them towards further victimization (Miller, 20018).

1.3 The Importance of Counselling

The one thing that most researchers seem to agree upon is the fact that very few victims make use of the support services available to them. Victim Support Europe (VSE) estimates that notwithstanding that around 75 million people in Europe fall victim to crime each year, just around 2 million seek assistance from victim support organisations (VSE, 2014). The most common explanations found for not using services was a belief that talking about their victimization would not do them much good, not knowing that services existed, and turning instead to family or friends. Whilst legislation often puts emphasis on support and the need to meet victims' needs, often victims are not aware of the support available to them (Moore & Blakeborough, 2008).

Dunn (2007) argues how emotional and psychological help is often crucial to the recovery of victims, and counselling can be an important step for victims to take in order to recover from the effects of crime. It can help victims of crime to know that what they are feeling may be normal reactions to an abnormal event. Any support should be tailored to victims' needs, to help ease their difficult journey of recovery, even though at times this may prove difficult as certain effects of crime can be underestimated (Dunn, 2007). Furthermore, to prevent or reduce secondary victimisation during the trial, victims need emotional support before, during and after the hearing. Gintner (2001) argues that appropriate support given to victims will help them surpass the emotional effects of victimisation.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

Research on victims and victimisation is a relatively new area. Although studies on victimology date back to the 1940s, the interest in the field increased in the 1960s when human rights issues started emerging more prominently (Karmen, 2001, cited in Quinn DeValve, 2005). Much of the research conducted over the past years focused on the victims and the various aspects of victimisation, mainly on the impact of criminal victimization on victims (Karmen, 2001; Rock, 2002; Shapland, 2000, cited in Quinn DeValve, 2005). Schneider (2001, p.450) defined victimology as:

‘the scientific study of the extent, nature, and causes of criminal victimization, its consequences for the persons involved and the reactions thereto by society, in particular the police and the criminal justice system as well as voluntary workers and professional helpers.’

This dissertation aims to explore the extent of the victimisation process within the criminal justice system, whilst highlighting the importance of support services and elaborating on how counselling services can empower victims to recover from the effects of the criminal offence. The research will focus specifically on women victims of violence and will analyse not just women’s initial effect of victimisation, but their whole experience with the criminal justice system.

The interest in the subject arose after years of working with vulnerable victims of crime, including victims of child abuse, rape, domestic violence and human trafficking, amongst others. Throughout her work as a Police Inspector in the Malta Police Force, the author had to deal with victims’ frustration due to a number of reasons, especially for the lack of supportive measures available to them in the criminal justice system. Despite adopting the Victims of Crime Act and the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) with the scope of protecting victims from further harm, many of the obligations emanating both from the legislation and the Convention are still lacking in Malta (Grech, 2016).

Notwithstanding years of research, no conclusive evidence is available on the impact of the criminal justice system on victims of crime (Ten Boom &

Kuijpers, 2007, cited in Wemmers, 2017). This is even more limited within the Maltese context due to scarce research in this area. Hence this research will look at the various possible effects on the person in relation to the victimisation process. However, as the impact of crime on victims can be far too large, the focus of this research will be limited to the psychological and emotional impact of women who suffered violence.

1.5 Aims and Scope of the Study

This research will opt to understand the victimisation process of women who suffered violence, also within the Maltese Criminal Justice System. It seeks to explore the following:

1. the impact of victimisation on the psychological and daily routine of women victims of violence;
2. the victims' experiences throughout the criminal justice process;
3. the support services available to the women victims of violent crimes and the perceived level of satisfaction with services received; and
4. the way counselling can contribute to the recovery from victimisation.

In examining the full spectrum of women experiencing violence and how they perceive their experiences, it is hoped that the situation for victims could eventually be improved. As a researcher I will analyse both the initial impact of victimised women and the experiences with the criminal justice system on their lifestyle. Participants will be asked to talk about their experience as a victim, their involvement with the criminal justice system, the current support services available to them and if counselling would help in their recovery process. I am interested in the victims' experiences, from their own perspective and in as much detail as possible. As a result, this research is not intended to be generalised to victims in general, but will hopefully be indicative and will form the basis for further research.

1.6 Conceptual Framework and Positioning

The researcher's philosophical positioning in this study is mainly towards the social constructivist approach. The constructivists maintain that individuals construct their own perception of reality in their mind, with each individual giving

different meanings to it. Hansen (2004) argues that individuals have hidden meanings that would need to be brought up and reflected upon to understand the thoughts attached to their experiences. For social constructivists this can be elicited through communication and intervention between the researcher and the participant, thus using qualitative research methods through in-depth interviews rather than a more generalised approach.

Since the researcher is interested in the victims' personal experiences of violence, the constructivist approach is ideal as it emphasises the participants' language and meaning constructed to their incident, from their own point of view. Rather than putting effort into solving a particular issue, a constructionist therapist seeks to allow space for discussion (McNamee & Gergen, 1992). Therefore, in this study the researcher will be able to highlight the participants' voices about the effects of violence on their lifestyle, and their opinions about counselling throughout the whole victimisation process.

1.7 Dissertation Layout

This study is divided in five parts. Having established the aims and objectives of this research, Chapter 2 analyses the academic literature that explores the effects of violence against women, and their experiences throughout the criminal justice process. The research will tackle the importance of the support services, mainly from a counselling point of view and elaborate on how such services can empower victims to recover from the effects of the criminal offence. Chapter 3 provides a description of the research methodology adopted to elicit information from participants whilst detailing the ethical considerations adopted and the limitations of this study. Through the use of in-depth interviews, the researcher is interested in the victims' experiences, from their own perspective and in as much detail as possible. The outcome of this study will then be presented in Chapter 4 which cross-analyses the research findings versus the themes presented in Chapter 2. The concluding part of this dissertation summarises the main findings deriving from this research and presents proposals for further research, policies and better support to victims of violence.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This Chapter attempts to link relevant theories on the victimisation process of women victims of violence, mainly from a psychological perspective, throughout their journey in the criminal justice system. The research also examines what support services are available to women victims of violence and how counselling can contribute to their recovery process.

2.1 What is Violence against Women?

Violence against women is generally described as a hidden, undisclosed, underreported and under-prosecuted crime (Heath, Lynch, Fritch, McArthur & Smith, 2011). Whilst emphasising that women across the globe suffer some form of violence, the Council of Europe (COE) has in 2011 issued a stern statement declaring that this serious criminal offence is most often suffered behind closed doors and not reported to the authorities (2011b).

Article 3a of the Istanbul Convention (COE, 2011a) defines violence against women as:

‘a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.’

Whilst women are exposed to various forms of violence, such as domestic violence and sexual harassment, research indicates that over 35% of women across the globe experience physical and/or intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence (Garcia-Moreno & Pallitto, 2013). Garcia-Moreno and Pallitto (2013) also establish that worldwide, 30% of women in a relationship experience physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner. This criminal offence has been described as one of the most common forms of violence suffered by women across the globe (CEPOL, 2017).

A 2014 survey conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) within European Union (EU) member states found

that whilst one in three women in the EU experiences physical and/or sexual violence by a current or previous partner, the rate in Malta stands at 15% (FRA, 2014). On the other hand, according to a 2011 study held in Malta by the Commission on Domestic Violence (CDV), 26.5% of Maltese women have suffered emotional, physical or sexual violence (CDV, 2011).

Statistics provided by the Malta Police Force depicted in Table 1 underneath show a consecutive increase in reports of domestic violence between 2014 and 2016. Whilst in a seven-year period between 2007 and 2014 reports of domestic violence have increased tenfold (Formosa, 2015), between 2015 and 2017, domestic violence has been the third most reported crime amounting to 7 per cent of all crime reports (Formosa, 2017).

Domestic Violence	2014	2015	2016	Total
Physical Harm	564	631	658	1853
Psychological Harm	454	554	577	1585
Total	1018	1185	1235	3438

Table 1: Domestic violence cases reported to the Malta Police (2014-2016)¹

Table 2 underneath, representing statistics provided by the Malta Police, clearly indicates that almost 80% of victims of domestic violence who reported to the police are women. Moreover, 45% of reported violence against women was of a psychological nature. Besides the above reported figures of domestic violence, for the ten-year period between 2007 and 2017, there have been 15 women killed at the hands of a current or former partner or family member (Azzopardi, 2017). Given this predominance of women victims of domestic violence, this gender category was chosen as the basis of this research.

¹ The Malta Police reporting system categorises between two types of domestic violence reports, namely cases of physical or psychological harm.

	2014		2015		2016		2016		Total	
Domestic Violence	Fem.	Male	Total	Fem.	Male	Total	Fem.	Male	Total	
Physical Harm	460	149	609	522	170	692	557	179	736	2037
Psychological Harm	372	90	462	458	123	581	480	125	605	1648
Grand Total	832	239	1071	980	293	1273	1036	304	1341	3685

Table 2: Domestic Violence Victims reported to the Malta Police (2014-2016)

2.2 The Victimization Process of VAW

The victimisation process starts from the moment a person becomes a victim of a crime. However, the impact of crime on individuals is far from universal, and distress following victimisation can be wide-ranging and severe. As highlighted by O'Brien:

'The social, monetary, and mental health impacts of crime are far reaching and potentially long lasting, and the trauma caused by crime victimisation is unique' (2010, p.180).

The trauma experienced after a crime can affect victims differently, some may experience very few symptoms, whilst others may be impacted very seriously (Hoyle & Zedner, 2007). The effects of victimisation can be either physical, financial, psychological or emotional (Walklate, 2007). Whilst this study will mainly analyse the victimisation process of women victims of violence from a psychological and emotional point of view, one has to keep in mind the inter-relatedness of the physical and the financial impact as well.

2.2.1 Physical Impact

Victims of violent crimes often suffer from various physical injuries and traumatic reactions. Apart from life-threatening injuries, Resnick (1992) found that injuries may lead to heart attacks, fractures and other physical impairments amongst others (cited in Fohring, 2012). Peterrson (2009) also argued that violent crimes can lead to an increased risk of heart attack and chronic pain, although he continued that such physical health conditions may be minimized through adequate support.

2.2.2 Financial Loss

Besides the physical impact, victims may also suffer a financial burden, including direct losses incurred from crimes, loss of earnings due to absence from work, additional security measures, and the cost of healthcare and other professional help, amongst others (Xie & McDowall, 2008).

The financial impact is particularly high for women victims of domestic violence especially when these are low-income earners or unemployed. Whilst changes to present legislation are currently being discussed, as things stand to date, victims of domestic violence in Malta have to leave their homes, their belongings and their lives to seek refuge. Writing in a local newspaper, Professor Andrew Azzopardi, Dean of the Faculty for Social Wellbeing at the University of Malta, stressed that high rental costs in Malta are making it extremely difficult for women to leave an abusive relationship (Azzopardi, 2017).

2.2.3 Psychological Impact

Violent crimes do generally also leave a psychological impact, which affects the functioning and wellbeing of victims of crime. Bard and Sangrey (1987, cited in Fohring, 2012, p.17) state that:

‘the crime victims’ experience can never be reduced to a formula...violation disrupts the self in as many ways as there are victims, at the same time, most victims experience at least some of the feelings and behaviours associated with a crisis reaction, and people’s reactions to crisis have a pattern.’

Roberts (2005) divides a crisis reaction into two stages. The initial stage is one’s assessment of the incident as being harmful and threatening. Following this is the victim’s inability to cope or minimise the stresses emanating from the precipitating event. Features of a crisis reaction include recurrent upsetting thoughts, frustration, depression, nightmares, anxiety, panic and generalised hyper-arousal, all symptoms of what is commonly called ‘fight-or-flight’ (Roberts, 2005).

The perception of a crisis situation depends largely on the person’s assessment of the event, and what constitutes a crisis for one person might not

necessarily be perceived as such by another person. Bard and Sangrey had in 1987 developed a three-stage crisis model, the first one being the Impact Stage, followed by a period of struggle or Recoil Stage, to the stage of readjustment in the Reorganisation Phase.

Common initial reactions in the Impact Stage include shock, fear, resentment, guilt and disbelief. This reaction usually lasts for a very short period of time, ranging from several hours to a number of days, for up to six weeks after the crime (Frieze, Greenberg & Hymer, 1987). It is also highly possible that victims may at this stage feel confused, unable to recall events related to the crime and unable to think clearly or talk confidently (Bard & Sangrey, 1987, cited in Fohring, 2012).

The second stage, the Recoil Stage, may last from three to eight months following the crime event. Feelings may oscillate at this stage, moving from fear to anger, self-pity and remorse, or depression to happiness. Bard and Sangrey (1987) describe this phase as either helping the victim address any painful emotions provoked by the experience, or making an effort to try and avoid such painful feelings (cited in Fohring, 2012). A common reaction to victimisation is that victims would experience shattered assumptions about people and the world around them (Janoff-Bulman & Frieze, 1983). The belief in a just world is an assumption that if a person works hard and is kind to others, he/she will expect only good things in return. This many times results in self-blame, with victims thinking that the traumatic incident could have been averted had they been dressed differently, acted in another way, and lived a different lifestyle (Miller, 2008).

By the final stage of recovery, the Reorganization Stage, feelings of fear and anger should have diminished if not ended. Thus victims can invest their emotional energy on other issues. Typically victims will be able to move on from the symptoms of a traumatic event after six months. However, not all victims progress through the same stages, as some may find it more difficult than others to do so, depending mostly on the severity and type of impact (Frieze, Greenberg & Hymer, 1987).

Long-term psychological distress is often common in women victims of severe violent and sexual assaults, and includes depressive and anxiety disorders, substance abuse as well as other general distress which affects their daily functioning (Green & Diaz, 2008). The violent act is often more distressing when the perpetrator is known to the victim, such as a close friend, a family member, a colleague or a trusted person. At this stage, victims learn that people they had once trusted cannot be trusted and they would have no one to turn to (McCann & Pearlman, 1990).

The helplessness of trying to cope with the aftermath of crime, day to day routines and other stressors, such as personal and family life, may also trigger PTSD reactions (Miller, 1999, cited in Miller 2008). Miller (2008, p.13) defines PTSD as:

‘a set of emotional and behavioural disturbances that follow exposure to a traumatic stressful experience that is typically outside the range of normal, everyday experience for that person.’

Brown (2017, p.17) sums up the main symptoms associated with PTSD into four categories:

- Recurring thoughts – recurring thoughts about acts a victim experienced or images s/he saw related to the violence can lead to emotional reactions such as fear and anxiety;
- Avoidance – due to their anxiousness, victims may refrain from meeting other, going to certain events or do things that they associate with violence. They tend to avoid feelings and emotions that remind them of the traumatic experience. Because of these symptoms, victims go through periods of withdrawal from people and activities;
- Numbing – one of the most prevalent symptoms associated with PTSD is a numbing of feelings and responses. Victims describe this as the absence of any kind of feeling; and
- Hyper-arousal – a reaction of higher than normal levels of agitation. The body responds to the internal imagery resulting from victimisation as if it were happening in the present moment.

Although the prevalence of PTSD depends on a number of factors, the most common include, the severity and frequency of the violence, the gender of victim, putting women at a much higher risk, re-victimisation, and how the victim usually copes (Kilmartin & Allison, 2007). A person with strong coping styles is deemed to handle trauma much better than a person with poor coping styles (Brown, 2007). Brown concluded that 'poor social support and depression in women increases vulnerability for developing PTSD' (2007, p.19).

2.3 VAW and the Criminal Justice System

The victimisation process does not end with the violent impact. A number of victims describe their encounter with the criminal justice system as a negative one. In fact, research suggests that PTSD is more likely to prevail among crime victims who go through the criminal justice process than victims in general (Orth & Maercker, 2004).

The many injustices that victims encounter after the crime are often referred to as secondary victimisation which Williams (1984) defines as:

'a prolonged and compounded consequence of certain crimes; it results from negative, judgmental attitudes (and behaviors) directed towards the victim (which results) in a lack of support, perhaps even condemnation and/or alienation of the victim' (cited in Campbell & Raja, 1999, p.261).

Secondary victimisation might be caused by insensitive treatment at the hands of the police or other criminal justice personnel, not being recognised as victims, not receiving the services and the information that a victim requires, or any other inappropriate treatment throughout their contact with the criminal justice system (Stern, 2010). Crime victims who suffer secondary victimisation often find this process more painful in many ways than the actual crime itself. This is so because such victimisation is inflicted by people in care or by systems intended to relieve victims' pain rather than enhancing it. These types of responses also shape the victim's memory of the traumatic event (Miller, 2008).

Following a crime, victims do generally first come in contact with the police. At this stage, victims are still emotionally disturbed and the way the police treat victims of crime during these first encounters can have a tremendous

impact on how victims perceive the criminal justice system and their ability to proceed with their lives (Miller, 2008). Any lack of sensitivity by the police may aggravate the emotional trauma already experienced. In various studies the victims' encounter with first responders has demonstrated to 'ascribe to victim-blaming attitudes, such as believing women provoke rape, and often lie about the occurrence of rape' (Best, Dunsky & Kilpatrick, 1992; Campbell, 1995; Campbell & Johnson, 1997, cited in Campbell & Raja 1999, p.262).

Dr Janice Formosa Pace, author of the Crime Prevention Strategy for the Maltese Islands 2017-2021, also acknowledges that a number of victims have gone through negative experiences when filing a police report, 'feeling investigated rather than being considered as a victim' (Formosa Pace, 2017, p.42). This may attribute to the fact that, according to the already cited FRA study (2014), only 10% of physical violence and 30% of sexual partner violence is reported to the authorities, making violence against women one of the least reported crimes. In fact, a crime victimisation survey in Malta found that 85% of respondents are highly unlikely to report sexual abuse should such a situation arise (Scicluna, Azzopardi, Formosa Pace & Formosa, 2015, cited in Formosa Pace, 2017). This was also prevalent in a 300 sample run survey conducted by CrimeMalta, where it resulted that although the rate of victimisation continues to be high, people are unlikely to report after their first or second encounter with the police (Formosa, 2016). According to Dr Saviour Formosa (2016), under-reporting, known as the dark figure of crime, affects more than 50% of offences throughout western societies.

Besides police insensitivity, victims may also be discouraged to report a crime incident due to lengthy judicial proceedings as well as a result of a lack of information about their rights as victims of crime (Miller, 2008). If unaddressed, such negative encounters may leave victims feeling frustrated and unlikely to cooperate in the criminal justice process in the future (Bradford and Jackson, 2010).

2.4 Support Services

An increasing concern about the difficulties faced by victims of crime led to new amendments in the law, with the scope of supporting and protecting

victims from further harm. The Istanbul Convention (2011), also known as the Istanbul Convention, obliges all Member States to offer a number of services to women victims of violence. The Convention obliges signatory states to offer victims free and easily accessible support services, which also include a more specialised form of support when necessary. The support and assistance provided are beneficial in aiding victims of violence to cope with the effects of crime and move on with their lives. To be able to achieve this, the COE affirms that the services have to be offered to all women victims of violence, irrespectively of whether the victim has cooperated with the police, or her decision to proceed with the case or not (COE, 2011b).

According to the organisation Victim Support Europe (VSE) (2013, p.58), 'providing effective rights and services to victims in the aftermath of crime is a cornerstone in the establishment of a European Union where freedom, security and justice is a reality for all'. Similar to other EU countries, Malta has in 2015 enacted the Victims of Crime Act, Chapter 539 of the Laws of Malta, which was transposed from the European Union Victims' Directive 2012/29/EU, and the Istanbul Convention which was ratified by Malta in 2014, both with the scope of protecting victims from further harm. The most prevalent legal provisions emanating from the Victims of Crime Act include the right to receive information about the case, the right to free legal aid and support services, and the right to be protected from victimisation and intimidation during the criminal justice process.

Notwithstanding these positive developments, Dr Roberta Lepre, former Chairperson of Victim Support Malta (VSM), a non-governmental organisation (NGO) aimed at supporting victims of crime, had in 2014 emphasised that although the law implies that victims should be protected from further victimisation throughout the criminal justice process, the law was not being fully implemented (Grech, 2015). Concerns were also raised by Dr Lara Dimitrijevic, Director of the NGO Women's Right Foundation (WRF), who explained that although the Maltese government has ratified the Istanbul Convention, the Maltese law had not yet made the necessary legislative changes to help victims move forward (Grech, 2016).

As already indicated, the author's role as a Police Inspector within the Malta Police Force has given her the opportunity to work with a number of victims, mostly vulnerable persons, whose needs were not always prioritised by the country's criminal justice system. As highlighted by Miller (2006), a common approach adopted by the police authorities is that resolving a criminal act is more important than paying attention to the victim's needs. Despite this, clinical experience shows that a more caring and sensitive approach towards the victims and their relatives can encourage them to cooperate more with the criminal justice system (Miller, 2006), thereby increasing the chances of the crime being solved.

It is usually the victims themselves who furnish the police with information and evidence that enable them to bring perpetrators to justice. Gaining victims' trust and confidence in the criminal justice system is not easy. According to Herman (2002) the authorities have to be aware of victims' different needs and offer them the right information, assistance and safety that they require at that particular time. When feeling better supported, victims may be less reluctant to involve themselves in the criminal justice process.

In line with the foregoing, in January 2017, the Malta Police Force set up a Victim Support Unit (VSU), a specialized support service introduced to assist victims of crime and minimise their negative impact with the criminal justice system. The Unit is currently headed by the author and acts as a single point of contact for victims of crime by mainly providing additional information or follow-up on their cases, crisis counselling, and assistance in facilitating effective and timely referrals to other support services, amongst others.

Prior to establishing this Unit, the Malta Police did not have standard operating procedures to support crime victims. They used to refer victims mostly to two service providers, namely Aġenzija Appoġġ, the national state agency for social welfare services, and VSM, an NGO supporting victims of crime. Whilst Aġenzija Appoġġ offers a free 24-hour telephone helpline (Supportline 179), social work service to victims of domestic violence and an immediate protection in a safe environment through Għabex emergency shelter, VSM is more specialised in providing free emotional support to victims of crime.

Locally, there are other services intended to assist women victims of violence including;

- Two church-run NGO women's shelters, namely Merħba Bik, which is an emergency shelter and Programm Sebħ which is used as a second stage shelter after an initial stay at an emergency shelter;
- SOAR (Surviving Abuse with Resilience) service, which is an NGO survivor-led support service for female survivors of domestic violence and offers one-to-one emotional support, support groups and advocacy campaigns;
- Women's Rights Foundation, which is an NGO committed to informing, educating, and empowering women in relation to their legal rights; and
- Legal Aid service, which provides state legal services for low-income victims (CDV, 2017).

2.4.1 Use of Support Services

To reduce the crime impact, it is vital to have the support services available and easily accessible (VSE, 2013). District police process approximately 90,000 reports annually. Around 17,000 of these reports are filed by persons falling within the legal definition of "victims of crime". These include victims of fraud, bodily harm, theft, arson, domestic violence, sexual offences and victims of violence, amongst others (Malta Police, 2017). Although there are a number of support services in Malta, there seems to be a lack of a coordinated approach between them. As shown in 2016 statistics, whilst the Malta Police received 17,298 crime reports (Malta Police, 2017), VSM received 36 referrals on sexual abuse cases, and 80 other referrals on generic cases (personal communication, December 5, 2017), whilst the Domestic Violence Unit of Aġenzija Appoġġ received 348 new referrals (personal communication, December 11, 2017). Thus, although the lack of one single referral mechanism within the Force has made it difficult for the police to monitor the number of referrals made to victim support services before the year 2017, data from other support services shows that very few victims seem to have accessed support services.

The lack of referrals is one of the main obstacles for victims not accessing the necessary support following a crime (VSE, 2013). Other reasons why victims do not seek support services include the belief that they could solve their own problems, that they do not need any help, that talking about their victimisation would not do them much good, that they did not know that services existed, or that they had already received help from someone else (Simms, Yost & Abbott, 2006; Davis, Lurigio & Skogan 1999, cited in Fohring, 2012).

Between January and December 2017 in Malta, 371 victims of crime accepted to receive support from the Police VSU. Table 3 hereunder categorizes the victims between males, females and minors.

Gender of Victims	Year 2017
Males	93
Females	229
Minors	49
Total no. of victims	371

Table 3: Victims assisted by Police VSU in 2017

In line with assertions by Maguire (1985), as results from Table 4 indicate, victims who sought the Police VSU support mainly needed information about the case and immediate support.

Type of Support Received	Year 2017
Information on the case	142
Crisis Counselling	173
Safety plans	37
Referrals for ongoing support	68
Others ²	19

Table 4: Support sought from the Police VSU (2017)

² The field 'others' refers to those reports which could not be classified under any of the other sub-classifications and includes complaints about police mishandling of cases, practical assistance, and general information about the criminal justice system.

As per Tables 3 and 4, it emerges clearly that whilst in 2017, 371 victims have sought assistance from the Police VSU, only 68 gave their consent to be referred for ongoing support services. The above statistics tally with findings from a 2011 report commissioned by the Maltese Commission on Domestic Violence which found that 54% of victims of domestic violence had in 2010 failed to seek formal help (CDV, 2011).

Research shows that the referral schemes in Europe usually fall into an 'opt-in' system, where victims request to access victim support services themselves, or an 'opt-out' system, where victims are facilitated access to victim support services but can refuse assistance at any time. Practical experience shows that the 'opt-out' system is more beneficial for victims (VSE, 2013). One could foresee that minor adjustments, such as an obligatory automated referral system adopted by the Malta Police, would facilitate equal access to all victims of crime, and encourage more victims to seek support.

Research undertaken by Maguire and Corbett (1987) with 156 victims of assault, burglary and theft who had received support services found that they had appreciated the outreach, as it had been demonstrated by this point that victims do not usually seek or ask for help of their own accord. These authors thus suggested that the offer of help was valuable in and of itself because it demonstrated that someone cared (cited in Dunn, 2007). Having said that, it is to be acknowledged that should everyone request such a service, the existent national services and NGOs would be flooded with cases and the entire system would necessitate a significant increase in human resources.

2.5 VAW and Counselling Services

As victims are confronted with the traumatic victimisation and trying to move on with their life, Kilmartin and Allison (2007) argue that appropriate support or counselling can be vital to recovery. The European Association for Counselling (EAC) (2017) describes counselling as a helping profession, where '...the Counsellor can be involved in resolving specific problems which could involve making decisions and helping a client cope when in a crisis situation.' Thus, if effective, counselling can help a crime victim surpass the emotional effects of crime.

Empirical research shows that the right type of interventions provided immediately after any physical or psychological harm, help to reduce the risk of developing any of the traumatic syndromes (Miller, 1998). Dunn (2007) also highlighted that in cases of severe trauma or when the trauma response prolongs, the process will usually be more challenging. As previously noted, crime victims who have a higher risk of developing PTSD are those women who have experienced violent crimes, mostly physical or sexual violence. Therefore it is important for victims to receive rapid and effective treatment (Dunn, 2007). Even if not immediately after the incident, or when the effects of crime resurface at a later stage, appropriate treatment may still be vital for recovery (Miller, 2008).

2.6 Types of Intervention

Although as previously explained, a victim may suffer from various psychological effects throughout the victimisation process, much of the research conducted so far is more on prevention and therapeutic interventions of victims experiencing PTSD. This incorporates a wide range of possible interventions for victims, but often treatment tends to take place in one or more of these three stages:

1. Crisis intervention – offered directly after or within a very short period of time following the crime incident;
2. Short-term intervention – provided within days or weeks after the victimisation;
3. Longer-term intervention – treatment for psychological issues that persist for months or years after the crime (Miller, 2008).

2.6.1 Crisis Intervention

Hembree and Foa (2003) establish that crisis intervention focuses on the stabilisation of the victim's response to trauma. Crisis counsellors seek to determine the seriousness of the traumatic experience, assess what coping resources an individual possesses, and develop and carry out an intervention plan to establish a safe environment to be able to cope with the effects of crime. At this stage, therapeutic interventions may consist of: supporting the victim to seek emotional help as much as possible, such as friends, family, and

community helping resources; practical help in addressing immediate concerns such as safety, medical care and legal aid; and to try and attain a lot of information about the incident in order to identify the victim's immediate needs and adapt psychological interventions to these (Gard & Ruzek, 2006). Whilst this technique is applied widely, Agorastos, Marmar & Otte (2011) maintain that the results and success of such interventions remain unknown.

2.6.2 Short-term Interventions

Short-term treatment occurs within days or weeks after the crime. These interventions aim to aid victims in their recovery process and to be less likely to develop PTSD and other psychological symptoms. At this stage, victims of crime start understanding that the violent incident has in fact occurred and start integrating the episode into their own view of the world. Research shows that the use of cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), including to victims of crime, helps in the recovery process (Agorastos et al., 2011). CBT methods work on trying to change the person's distorted beliefs by helping them to think more rational and therefore will find themselves in a better position to cope with their situation. Cognitive behavioural theorists believe that this approach can be effective in changing irrational thoughts and maladaptive behaviour (Brewin, 2006).

2.6.3 Longer-term Interventions

Whilst with crisis-intervention the majority of victims cope fairly well, others might need long-term counselling for a number of reasons (UNODC, 1999). Particularly in cases of violence against women, the lack of support at the time of crisis or some processing of the event will most probably require treatment later in life (Brown, 2007). Long-term counselling will tackle those symptoms which continue to persist.

Besides the violent experience, there are often many practical matters to take care of, and, if a case goes to Court, there is often a need for ongoing counselling throughout the process. The criminal justice process is daunting in itself, and having to deal with the court procedures can be quite stressful to crime victims. Counsellors can help crime victims by providing concrete, practical help even though this may not be considered as real clinical work. Victims may need information, emotional support, and experts of different profiles including

lawyers, psychologists, psychiatrists and so forth (Miller, 2008). Furthermore, if no arrests were made, or the court sentence was not to the victims' satisfaction, additional counselling may be needed to support victims who see the criminal justice system as having failed them (UNODC, 1999).

In long-term counselling, victims might also keep on experiencing trauma-related symptoms, including social withdrawal and avoidance behaviours. Victims may experience an exaggerated startle response when they hear a noise or someone approaches them from behind. PTSD symptoms can be particularly distressing and are also likely to resurface over time, usually triggered by another victimisation (Brown, 2007).

In fact, research on long-term interventions tended to focus more on psychological issues such as PTSD symptoms in the aftermath of a violent act. The three therapeutic methods which are mostly used by experts are: trauma-focused cognitive-behavioural therapy (TFCBT); eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR); and psychodynamic psychotherapy (Friedman, 2006, cited in Knauss & Shofield, 2009).

TFCBT techniques include exposure, cognitive and anxiety management therapy:

- i. *Exposure therapy* uses exposure to trigger trauma-related symptoms in victims, such as sounds, smells, and memories of the traumatic event. This is shown to be effective in several studies on TFCBT treatment (Rothbaum, Meadows, Resick & Foy, 2000, cited in Knauss & Shofield, 2009);
- ii. *Cognitive therapy* involves cognitive reformation methods to change irrational thoughts and maladaptive beliefs about the self, as well as to try to change avoidance behaviours that makes the victim feel anxious and distressed;
- iii. *Anxiety management therapy* focuses on teaching victims how to control any physical signs of distress through forms of controlled breathing and relaxation skills such as progressive muscle relaxation. Victims may also learn techniques such as thought stopping, or guided self-talk to refrain from becoming anxious (Foa et al., 1999, cited in Amstadler, 2007).

Studies on behaviour techniques and EMDR approaches proved to be beneficial for treating PTSD, anxiety and depression (Van Etten & Taylor, 1998, cited in Knauss & Shofield, 2009). EMDR helps to reduce the negative thoughts associated with the traumatic event. Rather than focusing on the traumatic event itself, EMDR focuses more on the disturbing thoughts and symptoms that result from the event. EMDR treatment includes mainly rhythmic eye movements switching, by covering one eye at a time, to facilitate an immediate reduction in the traumatic intensity (Knauss & Shofield, 2009).

The third most common intervention, psychodynamic approach seeks to understand the victims' conscious and unconscious significance of the traumatic incident and try to integrate the two together. Psychodynamic treatment for PTSD is about helping the person recognize unconscious defence mechanisms (such as denial, repression or reaction formation) in relation to the traumatic memories or feelings, and modify these psychological defences to be able to cope in a more adaptive way (Kudler, Krupnick, Blank, Herman & Horowitz, 2008). The treatment's aim is not to make victims recount their traumatic experience, but to get to know their individual thoughts of the event, depending on their beliefs, feelings and early experiences (Levy & Lemma, 2004). However, to date there is not much research about this treatment's effectiveness.

Feminist counselling is another widely known form of counselling and considered to be very effective method to use with victims of violent crimes (Herman, 1992; Bagshaw et al., 2000; Geller, 1992; Walker, 1985; Domestic Violence Prevention Unit, 1998, cited in Seeley & Plunkett, 2002). The emphasis of feminist counselling is to empower the person throughout the entire therapy process. According to Herman (1992) empowerment is essential to be used in trauma intervention methods as it helps women victims of violence to recover from victimisation and feel stronger (cited in Seeley & Plunkett, 2002)

Empowerment highlights the victims' rights by eliciting their own concerns, thoughts and emotions and gives them the ability to decide for themselves of what they think is best for them to regain control over their lives. Women who suffer violence are perceived to be 'experts in their own lives and are supported to make informed choices about how they would prefer to be, in contrast to their present way of being' (Seeley & Plunkett, 2002, p.11).

Despite these various forms of intervention techniques, Amstadter (2007) establishes that much of these techniques cannot be used in isolation. They are rather intended to be used as an integrated approach. Brown (2007) argues that the road to recovery for victims of crime is to integrate the violent episode into their own experience and refrain from considering the act as the focal point in their life.

2.7 Conclusion

To summarise, this chapter gave an overview of the extent and consequences of the victimisation process and the impact of counselling on violence against women. It examined the various forms of impact that violence against women can have on victims and their individual needs in relation to overcoming the negative experience. In so doing it explored not only the initial stressors of crime, but also the longer term effects of criminal victimisation. Part and parcel of this process is the potential impact of counselling in the recovery process, which should complement each stage of the victimisation process.

Whilst the victims' experience in the criminal justice system is far from satisfying, literature emanating from a various research, has clearly demonstrated that counselling services provided in the aftermath of crime may reduce the risk of secondary victimisation and lessen the emotional effects of crime. In Chapter 4 the researcher will analyse and discuss the local situation. However, prior to carrying out this study, the following chapter will discuss the methodology and research tools undertaken to conduct this study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter gives an overview of the research methods employed in this study. It presents the procedure and methodology applied in identifying the participants for this study and the tools used to collect and analyse the data. This will then be followed by a discussion about the ethical considerations and limitations that impacted this study.

Before carrying out practical research, the researcher has gathered secondary data, which was discussed and outlined in Chapter 2. The literature presented in the previous chapter explored the victimisation process that victims go through in the criminal justice system and the psychological and emotional impact on their lifestyle.

Notwithstanding the global effort in trying to understand victims and their needs, literature shows that there is a lack of substantial evidence on the effects of crime and the effectiveness of the support services provided, and this is also the case in Malta. In view of this, this study will analyse the victims' personal experiences in relation to the violent event, their involvement with the criminal justice system, and the benefits of the support services received throughout the process, particularly, if counselling would help in their healing process.

3.1 Research Population

Since no such prior research was ever conducted in Malta, this study focuses primarily on the Maltese context. This was deemed ideal for a small scale research conducted with a limited number of participants. Interviews were conducted with seven women victims of violence, aged over eighteen, who went through the criminal justice process locally. Given Norris & Kaniasty's (1994) finding that female victims of violent crimes are often more negatively affected than other victims, the researcher deemed it appropriate to focus exclusively on this segment.

The seven persons interviewed were chosen according to their experiences to be able to provide as much relevant information as possible for this particular study (Formosa, Scicluna, Azzopardi, Formosa Pace & Calafato, 2011). Hence, interviews were conducted with participants who have passed

through the entire criminal justice process from one to five years ago. This time gap ensured that victims would have surpassed the ordeal, whilst at the same time, a maximum lapse of five years was deemed as necessary in order to minimise instances of crime victims not being able to remember their experiences when recounting certain details of relevance.

The method chosen was a non-probability form of sampling, where participation was voluntary, and participants were sampled in a strategic way in relation to their relevance to the research question being posed (Bryman, 2012). However, it is important to stress that participants were not selected because of their social differences, such as class, race, age and so forth. Instead, a specific procedure was adopted to ensure that there was no bias in the selection procedure.

Participants were recruited through NGOs working in the field, specifically those catering mostly for female victims of crime, namely the Women's Right Foundation and SOAR. Given the sensitivity of this topic it was vital for the researcher to use gatekeepers to help reach out to participants willing to take part in this study. Gatekeepers are highly important when conducting such types of research involving vulnerable people. This helps limit the possibility to impose any decision on them and can also be important for helping the researcher attain access to certain persons or information that would have been difficult or unobtainable without their intervention (Broadhead and Rist, 1976).

In the latter case, the success of getting in touch with a particular group of persons can also depend on other factors, including one's social networks (Harvey, 2009). In the course of this study, access to the above-mentioned NGOs was primarily the result of the researcher's employment as Police Inspector, currently heading the Police Victims Support Unit, while in the past having formed part of the Police Vice Squad dealing with cases of domestic violence, sexual abuse, human trafficking and the sort.

Having said that, since the researcher has been occupying the position of Head of the Police Victim Support Unit since November 2016, it was ensured that none of the interviewees would have had any contact with her prior to this study, neither in her current role nor in her previous positions. Additionally, had

any of the interviewed victims sought police assistance throughout the course of this study, the researcher would have referred them to any of her colleagues or other organisations offering the requested assistance.

To reinforce an opt-in decision making process for potential participants, recruitment letters with the accompanying relevant information letters and consent forms (Appendices A, B, C and F) were sent to the organizations acting as gatekeepers for dissemination with the clients. This resulted in a contact sample of seven women victims of violent crimes, of which four participants were from the NGO WRF, and the other three from the NGO SOAR. This was quite a long process as recruitment letters had to be sent twice for the researcher to find the seven participants.

Besides this, the researcher also attempted to reach participants through social media, particularly through the Facebook page 'Women For Women', which in 2017 was followed by more than 25,000 persons. However, despite posting twice on this Page, no response ensued. Given that participants were expected to talk about a potentially upsetting incident, such low rates of uptake were quite anticipated.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

Since this study's focus and objectives sought to uncover and understand victims' personal experiences, qualitative research in the form of one-to-one in-depth interviews was deemed essential for such study. Qualitative research is exploratory research 'designed to elicit the meaning of events to the people who experience them rather than the frequency with which those events occur' (King and Wincup, 2008, p.23). Kothari (2004, p.5) defines qualitative research as the:

'subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions and behaviour.

Research in such a situation is a function of researchers' insights and impressions. Such an approach to research generates results either in non-quantitative form or in the form which are not subjected to rigorous quantitative analysis.'

In view of the foregoing, the researcher opted to use an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach, which is a well-established research method. This method gives interviewees the opportunity to recount their own

stories in a detailed manner in their own way. As a result, the researcher would be able to capture and explore the meaning that victims assign to their experience (Flowers, 2008).

Researchers employing IPA techniques consider individuals as 'self-interpreting beings', meaning that they are actively engaged in interpreting events, objects, and people in their lives (Taylor, 1985). Participants in IPA research are considered to be experts with regards to their own experiences as they can offer researchers an in-depth understanding of their thoughts, commitments and feelings. Participants are given a choice to express their views, and to make sense of their personal and social world, whilst the researcher in turn attempts to make sense of their experiences and concerns.

IPA aims to provide a deeper understanding of the research topic, and although a purely IPA approach would probably have consisted of a single interview question, in this study the researcher had to prompt and ask follow-up questions to gather as much information as possible. The use of an interview guide (Appendix D) helped to obtain a wider understanding of the situation and elicit data on specific topics required, which most of the participants did not spontaneously mention, such as their experiences with the criminal justice system, and the type of support received. Therefore the qualitative data gathered via these semi-structured in-depth interviews does not necessarily make the approach entirely phenomenological.

The researcher has conducted one-to-one in-depth interviews with all participants. In this way, interviewees were made to feel more comfortable and given the space to express themselves and voice out their own thoughts and opinions about the subject under study. As Bryman (2012) argued, qualitative interviews give certain flexibility throughout the interview, and enable the researcher to ask questions not necessarily in the exact order of the interview guide. Qualitative interviews try not to disrupt the flow of conversation with the participant, and questions can be adjusted according to the direction taken by the respondent at that time. In line with IPA standards, the interviews contained mostly open-ended questions hence minimising a directive interviewing style (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). Such an approach also makes it possible to attain a

conversational flow (Harvey, 2009). Such an open-ended interview approach is also important to:

‘build a conversation within a particular subject area, to word questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversational style but with the focus on a particular subject that has been predetermined’ (Patton, 2002, p.343).

The researcher’s police experience in reading and interpreting non-verbal messages and the skills learnt throughout the course of counselling helped in building a rapport with all of the participants and understand them better. Such experience has given the researcher the opportunity to look and consider each individual as unique. Respondents may have different approaches and react differently to the same topic (Harvey, 2009). Through her experience, the researcher ensured to adjust the interview style according to the particular participants, hence making the interviewees feel at ease as much as possible (Harvey, 2009). In this way, the researcher sought to elicit more credible responses from the interviewees (Shenton, 2004).

The trustworthiness and credibility of data collected was further strengthened through a better understanding of women victims of crime as a result of research undertaken prior to holding the interviews as well as a result of the author’s occupation within the Malta Police Force (Shenton, 2004). With an aim to further enhance research credibility, the researcher was constantly reminding participants about the voluntariness to participate within this research.

In order to elicit more information from the interviewees, the researcher opted to ask open-ended questions. In this way, respondents were given the opportunity to talk freely about their unique experiences, feelings and opinions, hence contributing towards more detailed responses on issues they felt were important. Moreover, the author consulted with her supervisor who helped ensure asking the right questions within the right sequence to ascertain the validity of the findings (Shenton, 2004).

Given the conversational approach adopted during the interviews held, the researcher was able to explore and elaborate further on the responses provided. In the end, the experiences recounted by the seven participants were

collated together to better understand the victimisation process of women victims of violence.

All respondents took part in an individual semi-structured interview, which lasted between 40 to 60 minutes each. Understanding the sensitivity of the research topic, participants were given the choice to be interviewed where they felt most comfortable. Six out of seven participants opted to be interviewed at the researcher's private (residential) office whereas the other interview was carried out at the participant's residence. This was considered essential to minimise the possibility that participants would not provide all the relevant details fearing that someone else would overhear the interview (Harvey, 2009), or lack of privacy. All interviews were also carried out at a date and time convenient to them, and in their preferred choice of language (Maltese or English).

The semi-structured interview consisted of 19 questions as per Appendix D. During the interview the discussion was guided by the set of questions, and covered the four main themes, all reviewed in Chapter 2, namely (i) the impact of victimisation on the psychological and daily routine of women victims of violence, (ii) the victim's experience with the criminal justice system, (iii) the support services available to the women victims of violent crimes, and (iv) the way counselling and other support services can contribute to the recovery from victimisation. The format ensured that although the content of each interview varied depending on the experience of each participant, the thematic layout was consistent across the interviews. Also, with the participants' consent, interviews were audio-recorded and immediately transcribed once the interview was over. Extracts from the transcripts of all seven participants are produced in Appendix G.

Following the collection of data, the researcher proceeded with its analysis. The aim of data analysis is to obtain usable and useful information. It is the process through which the researcher aims to elicit 'patterns, coherent themes, meaningful categories, and new ideas and in general uncovers better understanding of a phenomenon or process' (Suter, 2006, p.327). Data analysis is often considered as a daunting process (King and Wincup, 2008). This is particularly true for the analysis of qualitative data which, as opposed to quantitative data, is not that straightforward to interpret (Bryman, 2012).

Given the fact that all seven participants had different views emanating from their own particular experience of violence suffered, each of them was coded to ensure anonymity whilst their responses were structured into different themes relevant to this study. Not only did this enable the researcher to identify common themes but it was also beneficial to highlight similarities as well as disparities. Since all participants were asked the same questions, though not necessarily in the same order, this helped in compiling interview replies and information collected was subsequently organised into meaningful data. Having said that, the use of semi-structured interviews allowed participants to highlight a number of issues and experiences not originally catered for within the designated questions, all of which had a positive impact on the research outcome.

In the course of data analysis the interview questions listed in Appendix D were categorised into four different groups in line with the themes discussed in Chapter 2. Questions 1 to 3 dealt with the general information on the impact and the victimisation process following the violent incident. This category uncovered the respondents' experience of the violent crime in relation to the type of crime suffered, the number of incidents, and the psychological effects of the initial and the longer impact of crime suffered. The second grouping made up of questions 4, 5, 6 and 7 dealt with the victims' experiences with the criminal justice system. This set of questions asked about their experience with the police and the courts in Malta, what they had found helpful, if anything, and what could have improved their experience.

The third group which focused on the type of support received following their incident and throughout their journey in the criminal justice system comprised questions 8, 9, 10 and 11. This set of questions was intended to specify the support structures in place, including the services available, the effectiveness of such support, and their level of awareness and satisfaction in this field. If they did not receive any form of support, in questions 12 and 13 they were asked if they were ever offered but refused such support.

The fourth and last group consisted of questions 14 to 18 the aim of which was to understand the victims' perception about counselling, and to expose the

effects of counselling to women victims of violent crimes, not just after the initial impact, but throughout the entire criminal justice process.

This coding method provided a clearer picture of the present situation regarding the victimisation process that victims have to go through in the Maltese Criminal Justice system, weeks, months or even years after experiencing a violent crime, and how counselling can contribute to the recovery from such victimisation. It further assisted in generating recommendations for better administration when dealing with victims of violent crimes to be able to lessen the negative impact as much as possible.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

Whilst ascertaining that the research outcome was an objective one, the researcher also ensured that this study will be guided by high ethical principles. Ethical considerations entail that the rights of research participants are fully respected and protected (Bulmer, 2009).

Prior to initiating the research, ethical approval was sought and given by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) and the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) as per Appendix E. During the primary research phase, prior to commencing the interviews, participants signed a consent form. This document annexed at Appendix F informed interviewees with the research background and their rights as participants in the study. Hence, they were informed that their participation was voluntary. Additionally, all participants were notified that they could withdraw from the study at any point in time both during and after the interview.

Participants were also informed of the confidentiality of the data gathered whilst ensuring them that each participant would be given a pseudonym not to be identified by name or other identifying features. The interviewees accepted that interviews be audio-recorded and transcribed for the purpose of this study only. They were at the same time notified that recordings would be destroyed following the completion of the study. Contact details of the researcher were also provided just in case any of the respondents sought any clarifications.

Another key priority in identifying respondents for participation in the interviews was to ensure that the welfare of the respondents was not

compromised. Therefore the participants chosen were women who have been through the victimisation process but who have now surpassed it. As stated above, this helped to reduce the risk of further harm to victims as they would have already finished the process.

As much as possible was done to ensure the comfort of participants during the interview, which included providing tea and coffee, as well as a relaxed and friendly environment. At the same time the researcher made certain to make participants aware of her occupation as police officer whilst notifying them that they had the opportunity to withdraw from the interview should they have so desired. During the interview, the comfort and stress levels of participants were closely monitored by paying close attention to body language, tensions and tone of voice, as well as more obvious signs of distress such as tearfulness. If participants did become upset, they were offered to take a break, or have something to drink and asked if they were happy to continue or if they wished to stop. However, no participants opted to withdraw from the interview due to discomfort.

Additionally, taking into consideration that interviews with victims of crime may have provoked intense emotions and painful feelings, the researcher has also been trained in how to respond in such situations and offered contact information for victim services after each interview. This allowed them, should they have felt the need, to discuss the matter further with a support professional after the interview.

3.4 Limitations

Whilst every effort was made to ensure that the outcome of this research will be an objective one, it is recognised that this study is bound by some limitations. First, despite the varied range of crimes to which the Maltese society might fall victim to, this study is based on the data gathered from seven women participants who had suffered violence. This is certainly a major limitation as it is not a representative sample of women victims of violence. There is also the issue of under-reporting to the authorities, therefore the degree of sampling error remains unknown.

The limited number of respondents willing to participate in such study was another drawback. As mentioned earlier, participants were not so forthcoming, and it took the researcher over two months to find the seven participants. Also, from the interviews carried out with all the participants, it resulted that the respondents were all victims of domestic violence. A larger sample of participants would have certainly increased the reliability and validity of the research outcome (Kvale, 1996). However, seeking more participants for this study was not possible due to time constraints as well as word count limitations imposed by the University.

Whilst ensuring that no contact was ever made between the researcher and participants before conducting this research, the researcher felt that the response attained from some participants could have been influenced as a result of the researcher's employment which was communicated to them before conducting the interviews. The fact that the researcher introduced herself with all respondents both as a researcher and as police officer currently working with victims of crime, could have directed some interviewees to feel hesitant in answering certain questions particularly those in relation to police assistance during the criminal justice process. The positive side of this is that since the researcher was well abreast with the subject under study and the criminal justice system in general as a result of her employment as a police officer, it was deduced that certain participants felt that she was well positioned to understand the process they have been through so much so that the interviewees did not spare their criticism towards the police and the entire justice system.

Despite ascertaining respondents that no individual names would be mentioned in the actual research, the researcher still considers that some participants were uncomfortable to answer particular questions. In view of the sensitivity of this research, the researcher could understand the participants' hesitation in not disclosing certain information which they might have considered as sensitive. As highlighted above, there could be a number of reasons for this, which may include, feeling uncomfortable when confronted with questions related to the researchers' role with the police, they might have considered the incident as a closed chapter in their lives and less likely to talk about it, or maybe

they would have felt more comfortable to talk privately without a recorder (Harvey, 2009).

Whilst understanding these limitations and aware of the fact that the findings of this research cannot be interpreted as a general perspective of women victims of violence, the researcher humbly deems that her aim in conducting this research was to increase awareness in this particular field of study.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the analytical techniques employed in this research as thought to be the best suited to the aims at hand. Following the account of the methodology applied during this research, the next chapter will delve into the research findings as well as analysis of these findings in relation to the themes presented in the Literature Review.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

This chapter provides the findings and analysis of seven in-depth interviews with women victims of violent crimes. A detailed account of the analytic framework and recruitment procedure is presented in Chapter 3 along with a copy of the interview guide available in Appendix D.

Each of the seven participants completed an interview lasting on average 45 minutes and focused on the details of the incident/s they had experienced, their reactions following the incident, any experience with the police or other agencies of the criminal justice system, their experience with support services, and their feelings towards counselling in general. The sample was drawn from two NGOs providing support services to women victims of crime, and their ages were from 34 to 45, with different educational backgrounds, ranging from school leaving certificate to university graduates.

The women who agreed to participate had been victimised by their husband or intimate partner on more than one occasion, with every participant reporting at least one incident to the police. The participants were very open about their experiences, and willing to share their insight into what had happened to them. By hearing directly from victims it was possible for the researcher to probe deeper into the emotional reactions of victims not only immediately after an incident, but throughout the often lengthy procedures and into how those emotions, and the process of coping with them had affected their daily lives. On the whole, the interviewing experience was very rewarding, and helped in furthering the author's understanding of victimisation.

After presenting the participants' profile, the researcher will briefly review the theories which have been discussed in the literature review and merge such theories to best describe the findings. The results will then represent the participants' victimisation process and experience in the criminal justice system, its psychological impact, and how support, in particular counselling, have helped them in their recovery process.

4.1 Participants' Profile

Diane is a forty-three year old mother of five. She had first suffered physical abuse by her former husband, from whom she had three children, and ended up in another violent relationship a few months after leaving her husband, from whom she had another two children. Throughout her eight-year relationship with her (latter) partner, she had struggled financially because of his gambling addiction and violent behaviour in order to help him sustain his habit. With the help of professionals, in 2015 she managed to leave him and went to reside in a shelter. However, three years later she is still financially unstable and currently living in a homeless shelter together with her three youngest children. Diane continues to maintain frequent contact with the abuser because of her children and finds it difficult to stop all contact.

Suzanne is a forty-two year old mother of two. She suffered both physical and psychological abuse by her husband throughout her twelve years of marriage, and the abuse continued even throughout the separation procedures. Her last contact with the criminal justice system was in 2013, where it was decided that she should stay in the matrimonial house with her children. Although at times she still recalls the traumatic experiences, with the support of her family she has now moved on and is happy in another relationship.

Natasha is a thirty-eight year old mother of two. She separated from her husband because of ongoing psychological abuse, both on her and on her eldest son, and after ending the relationship, the abuse escalated to physical violence as well. For seven years Natasha had to struggle financially to make ends meet and had to take care of her two young children on her own, especially her eldest son, who at the time was very ill and needed several medical interventions abroad. With the help of professionals she managed to get back on her feet, started working and is receiving maintenance money for her children. Her last court case was in 2015, and since then the contact with her husband has been very minimal.

Charmaine is a thirty-four year old mother of one, who had suffered ongoing violence by her husband, both physical and psychological abuse. The physical abuse had started six months after their wedding and continued

throughout the seven years they lived under the same roof. In 2014 Charmaine found the support she needed to leave her abuser, and worked hard to be able to provide a better environment for her son. Although her last incident dates back to 2016, she feels that she can never get over the relationship because of their son, and continues to suffer from PTSD symptoms.

Sandra is a forty-three year old mother of one. She had suffered ongoing physical and psychological violence by her husband in the past and reported him to the police on numerous occasions. However, the lack of support and the injustices she felt every time she went to Court has made her stay with her husband and refrain from seeking further help. Notwithstanding the fact that she still suffers psychological abuse (as opposed to physical abuse) from her husband, given her lacking trust in the judicial system, Sandra has no longer filed any police reports and her last Court appearance dates back to 2013. Her experience has made her adamant not to get involved with the criminal justice system again.

Alexia is a forty-five year old mother of two. She experienced physical, sexual and psychological violence by her husband throughout their twelve years of marriage including being threatened to be killed at gunpoint. When she finally decided to end the relationship, she had to leave everything behind her and struggled financially to take care of herself and her two young children whilst residing in a shelter. With the support of her family and various professionals, Alexia continued school and eventually graduated from university. She is now independent, working full time and settled in another relationship. Even though she left her husband ten years ago, her last Court case was in 2015 and she is still going for therapy because of the abuse she suffered.

Grace is a thirty-nine year old foreigner living in Malta with her daughter. She met her daughter's father a few weeks after arriving in Malta, and got pregnant three months later. The physical abuse had started during her pregnancy, and continued throughout their three-year relationship. Notwithstanding her partner's alcohol problems and drug abuse, it was very difficult for Grace to leave him because she did not have the support of anyone in Malta, was not working and had no financial means to take care of her baby daughter. She ended up in a shelter on numerous occasions, and with the help

of professionals she eventually managed to leave the abuser for good. Her last court case was in 2015, and she is now working and living independently with her daughter.

4.2 Different forms of Violence Experienced by the Women

When asked about the type of abuse suffered, the participants recounted a number of incidents when they had experienced violence. Despite the passage of time they were able to clearly recall details of the abuse. In this study, the women had all experienced domestic violence committed by their husband or intimate partner, and recounted how the abuse was spread over a number of years. Although the researcher was not able to analyze a vast spectrum of violent crimes against the women, the participants had suffered different forms of domestic violence. In fact the Council of Europe (2011a) describes domestic violence as the most common form of violence against women and includes physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm.

4.2.1 Physical Abuse

The women reported an array of physical violence and their experiences ranged from a slap in the face, pushing and throwing of objects to having their head banged against the wall and strangulation. The violent incidents described by the women had mostly commenced after their marriage, and as the violence was inflicted by persons who they trusted, the incidents were very distressing (Harvey and Herman, 1992).

L-ewwel ħaġa vera gravi kien sitt xhur wara ż-żwieg, meta kien qalibni minn fuq is-sodda wara argument [...] (Charmaine).

The first serious incident was six months after we got married, when he threw me out of bed after an argument [...] (Charmaine).

Domt nissaporti circa 12 years...kont diġa miżżewġa. L-abbuż fiżiku beda sena u disa' xhur wara li żżewwiġt, wara li kellna t-tifel [...] (Suzanne).

I kept tolerating it for around 12 years...I was already married. The physical abuse started one year and nine months after we got married, after we had our son [...] (Suzanne).

Apart from the physical injuries reported, Diane and Alexia recounted how the physical violence could have also been fatal (Gusman, 2004). Diane explained how her partner had tried to suffocate her: 'kien tefagħni fuq is-sodda u għamilli l-imħadda ma' wiċċi, jipprova jifgani biha' (he threw me on the bed and put the pillow on my face, trying to suffocate me with it). Similarly, Alexia described one of the first episodes of violence inflicted by her husband stating:

[...] kien qabadni minn idejja, waqqagħni ma' l-art u kien kaxkarni l-kuridur kollu, u mhux qed ngħidu li kuridur żgħir, għax fih mija u għoxrin pied u garani 'l barra. Malli garani 'l barra u għalaq il-bieb għedt oww, bejn it-tkaxkira mal-art, bejn ma kontx naf x'qed jiġri u bdejt inħabbat, u meta fetaħ il-bieb ippuntali s-senter ma' wiċċi u ksaħt.'

[...] he grabbed me from my hand, threw me on the floor and dragged me the length of the corridor, and we are not saying a small corridor, because it is one hundred and twenty feet long and he kicked me out. As he threw me out and closed the door I said oww, having just been dragged on the floor, I did not know what was happening, and I started banging, and as soon as he opened the door he pointed the shotgun at my face and I froze.

4.2.2 Emotional Abuse

The women also reported ongoing emotional abuse by their aggressors. In the incidents reported, the verbal abuse was often the first step leading to physical violence. There were a number of different forms of emotional abuse experienced by the different participants, including insults, threats and intimidation, isolation, humiliation and victim blaming.

[...] kien jgħajjarni, insomma mhux għax jgħajjarni, he always put me down, li jien inkapaċi, li jiena bla sens insomma (Sandra).

[...] he used to insult me, anyways not because he used to insult me, he always put me down, that I am incapable, that I am meaningless anyways (Sandra).

[...] kien jumiljani ukoll quddiem in-nies. Dan kollox verbalment u jiġifieri li anke n-nies kont narahom qishom jinġibdu, jħossuhom skomdi. Jiena kont inħossni qisni ma jien xejn (Alexia).

[...] he used to humiliate me in front of others. This was all verbally and in fact I used to see others keep their distance, they used to feel uncomfortable. I used to feel as if I'm nothing (Alexia).

As time passed, the participants expressed how the constant verbal abuse became part of their normal routine, and as Charmaine explained, 'għax inti mbagħad tagħti l-importanza fuq physical qisek, għax l-oħrajn ikunu qishom parti mil-lifestyle tiegħek' (because you then start giving importance to the physical sort of, because the rest seems to form part of your lifestyle).

In the initial stages of domestic violence, the women reported being unable to recognise how the abuse was impacting their self-esteem and confidence, therefore making it harder to leave the abusive relationship or even report the abuse. It was only when the verbal abuse escalated to physical violence or threats that the women felt the need to do something about it. This seems to reflect statistics depicted by the Malta Police, where the reports of physical violence seem to be higher than those of a psychological nature (Malta Police, 2016).

4.2.3 Other Forms of Violence

Respondents also reported financial difficulties both during and after ending their relationship. Diane and Grace claimed that their children's father still does not provide maintenance to their children because of drugs, gambling and other related issues. This was further complicated by the trauma of moving the children out from their home environment to live in a shelter or with relatives. The women added that having to raise their children on their own, whilst having to work full-time to make ends meet, had left intense psychological effects on their lives. In fact, the financial burden can be another factor which makes it difficult for women victims of domestic violence to cope with their situation on their own (Azzopardi, 2017).

Alexia reported suffering sexual abuse as well by her former husband. She described how after an argument, where he often used to use violence on her, he would then force her into having sexual intercourse with him. Although at the time she had never heard about marital rape, and therefore was not aware that this was illegal, she averred that therapy helped her to recognize her experience as abuse and work on her self-esteem.

4.3 The Violent Impact on Women

As seen in the literature review, crime may impact victims in various ways, causing great distress to some but less psychological effects on others (Hoyle & Zedner, 2007). During the interviews, the women mentioned taking various stances towards violence. Their approach to the abuser varied, with some being able to report, whereas others felt too scared and reluctant to take action.

Dobash and Dobash (1992) argue that women experiencing violence in their relationships are faced with various struggles to cope with the abuse. As discussed in the literature review, every time a victim is faced with a violent incident, the person will automatically assess the situation (Bard & Sangrey, 1987, cited in Fohring, 2012). That is, depending on the perceived threat or danger of the event, this will either lead the victim to a crisis situation, or to do something to avoid it. In avoiding a particular situation, a victim will either assess its circumstances and consider them to be bearable, therefore feeling able to cope, or make use of defensive mechanisms. In the latter instance, a person is capable of downplaying or minimising the incident and its effects to maintain her views of the world.

4.3.1 Defensive Mechanisms

According to Petersen (2003, p.97), a stressful incident may 'shatter the very basic assumptions victims have about themselves and the world around them.' Human beings develop certain beliefs about the world they inhabit. Hence, in order to feel secure, they believe that the world is a safe place without the possibility for any injustices or lack of order. People are convinced that others mean well and intend doing no harm to others. When becoming a crime victim, these beliefs may become completely shattered.

Similarly, for Lerner (1970), most people prefer to believe that the world 'is fair and just'. The belief in a just world allows us the safe assumptions that if we work hard, take care of ourselves and are kind to others, then good things will come to us (Miller, 2008). As reported by the women, their perception of a just world phenomenon, made them take the blame themselves by rationalizing that they must have been in one way or another responsible for their own victimisation.

[...] u dejjem it-tort tiegħi, għax jiena
 ġegħeltu jagħmel hekk, għax ma
 nħobbux, u dejjem kont inħoss li t-tort
 tiegħi (Alexia).

*[...] and it was always my fault,
 because I used to make him do that,
 because I did not love him, and I
 always used to feel that it was my fault
 (Alexia).*

[...] fil-bidu kont dejjem nassorbi t-tort
 jiena u kont ngħid forsi qed nonqsu f'xi
 ħaġa allura qed nittrigerjalu dawn l-
 emozzjonijiet (Suzanne).

*[...] in the beginning I used to take all
 the blame and I used to say maybe I'm
 failing him in some way therefore I'm
 triggering such emotions in him
 (Suzanne).*

[...] u dejjem nemmen li ħa jinbidel dan
 il-bniedem. Għax qed ngħidlek, għamilt
 xogħol biex jinbidel u dejjem nibqa'
 miegħu għax jgħidli minħabba t-tfal u
 hekk (Diane).

*[...] and I always believe that this
 person will change. Because I'm telling
 you, I did a lot of work to make him
 change and I always remained with
 him because he used to tell me
 because of the children and so on
 (Diane).*

By downplaying or minimising the seriousness of the incident, the victim is preserving the view of the just world, and this can be portrayed in a number of ways. Affirmations that the incident was not a crime scenario will help the person not to perceive herself as a victim, and therefore she would not need to report the incident. On the other hand, if the incident was considered more serious and the victim involves the police, she will be more likely to enter into a state of crisis (Lerner, 1970). On certain occasions this was particularly avoided when the

women downplayed the seriousness of the assaults to make them look rather trivial.

<p>[...] ħsibt li kien hekk (aggressiv) għall-bidu u li jekk ikollna tarbija iż-żwieġ ikun ok... inkunu aktar familja... isir iħobbni aktar (Alexia).</p>	<p><i>[...] I thought that he was like that (aggressive) for now, and that if we have a baby our marriage will be ok... we'll be more of a family... he will love me more (Alexia).</i></p>
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<p>Jiena qisni għedt ħa naċċetta s-sitwazzjoni u rrid naħfirlu insomma [...] (Sandra).</p>	<p><i>I sort of said I am going to accept the situation and I want to forgive him like [...] (Sandra).</i></p>
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In the above cases, victims did not report the case to the police, which might have been associated to their thoughts of not wanting to acknowledge the incident and be seen as a victim, therefore would not have to get involved with the criminal justice. When downplaying the severity of the event, the victim will be more likely to make a positive evaluation of the situation. Following such an assessment, it will be easier for a victim not to enter into a crisis and be in a position to cope with the event herself. Hence, the victim will be able to sustain her beliefs of a just world (Miller, 2008).

These defence mechanisms tend to help victims cope in the short-term. However, in the long-term they tend to deter women from seeking further help. Indeed, defence mechanisms can be 'maladaptive when they become the dominant mode for responding to problems' (Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 2009, p.469).

4.3.2 Crisis Reaction

Although any violent incident might be detrimental to a victim, ongoing abuse is likely to cause many more psychological difficulties for the person to be able to cope with constantly (Follingstad, Wright, Lloyd & Sebastian, 1991). It seemed that at a particular time in their lives, the women had neither adequate coping resources nor succeeded in the use of the above defences. These are the victims who, following an incident, find themselves in such a state that they

are unable to cope. In other words, they are having a crisis reaction which Roberts (2005) labelled as the 'fight-or-flight' response.

Here, it clearly emerges that the greater the violation felt, the stronger the adverse psychological reactions. However, as the literature shows, the perceived violation is not necessarily perfectly correlated with the type of crime. Rather, it has to do with the victims' own assessment of the incident. Blanchard et al. (1995) argue that if a victim perceives the act as life threatening, even if it was not, they are more likely to suffer psychological harm than others.

From this point onwards, victims are expected to embark on the path to recovery, working their way through the three stages of the crisis reaction covered in Chapter Two. Some of the psychological symptoms reported by the participants after experiencing a violent incident include shock, guilt, anxiety and helplessness. Victims interviewed here would fit into Bard and Sangrey's (1979) crisis based model of coping, with victims feeling that a sense of their personal self and identity has been threatened or even lost (cited in Fohring, 2012).

Alexia explained, 'Niftakar li l-ewwel inċident kien stramb għalija għaliex meta refa' jdejh fuqi ma stajtix nifhem x'għara. Qisu bħal meta tgħid din ħolma kerha' (I remember the first incident was strange because when he hit me I could not understand what happened. It was like a bad dream). This was also similar for Diane who stated that soon after leaving her husband she started going out with another man and wanted to believe that things were going to be different with him, 'ma kontx naf minn xiex ħa ngħaddi mill-istorja għax għall-ewwel kien jurini kollox tajjeb, li jaħdem u li għandu kollox u hekk' (I didn't know what I was going to pass through because at first he used to portray that everything is fine, that he works and he has everything and so on).

However, since the respondents had suffered violence over a long period of time, they showed less progression in the second and final stage of Brad and Sangrey's (1979) coping process. In fact, after the first violent episode, the respondents reported being shocked but defined it as an event that will never be repeated. There was only one participant, Grace, who stated that after the first violent experience she wanted to leave but, being a foreigner, had nowhere to resort to as she had no relatives in Malta.

According to Gusman (2004) women may find it difficult to terminate their relationship with their abusers due to early conditioning and a 'cycle of violence' which would make them feel unable to leave. Walker (1979) divides the cycle of violence into three phases: (i) the tension building phase, (ii) the acute battering incident, and (iii) the honeymoon stage. During the tension-building period, the victim feels her partner's tension and stress building. Meanwhile, the communication between the two decreases, resulting in the manifestation of violence in the second stage with the perpetrator blaming the victim for such act.

Kellna argument u beda jgħajjat u jgħid li hu mhux annimal, għax ma jsib lil ħadd id-dar... qabżitlu u kien xorob flixkun sħiħ inbid, u kien qalli li gēgħeltu jien minħabba s-sitwazzjoni għax tilef il-boxla [...] (Alexia).

We had an argument and he started shouting saying that he was not an animal, because he found no one at home...he got mad and drank a whole bottle of wine, and told me that I made him do it because such situation caused him to lose his temper [...] (Alexia).

The first two stages of the cycle of violence lead to a third stage of calm and loving on the part of the man. This cycle is repeated over and over and it functions to bring back equilibrium to the relationship and to reinforce women's willingness to stay in the relationship.

[...] u ftit wara kien tani l-flus. Kien qalli, "ħa mur ixtri xi ħaġa tajba, uwejja issa kollox orrajt", u dejjem hekk. Allura dejjem iħallik qisu you don't know where you stand (Alexia).

[...] and a few minutes later he gave me money. He told me, "go and buy something good, come on everything is fine now", and it was always like this. Therefore you never know where you stand with him (Alexia).

The repetition of the third phase is when the battered woman's victimization becomes complete, making her dependent on the abuser which may render the women psychologically not capable to fight and take action (Kirkwood, 1993).

<p>Imma huwa kellu vizzju (jgħajjar) li jiena issa la żżewwig t ma jridni ħadd, u kont naħseb li vera, m'għandix choice u rrid nibqa' miegħu. Dak iż-żmien hekk kien ir-reasoning [...] (Alexia).</p> <p>[...] issa jien dejjem ħfirtlu u qisu qatt ma ħallieni nitilqu dan il-bniedem. Kien hemm xi ħaġa li dan f'ħajtu lili qatt ma ħallieni kwieta (Diane).</p>	<p><i>But he had a habit (insulting) that since I got married no one wanted me, and I used to think it's true, I don't have a choice and I have to stay with him. That was my reasoning back then [...] (Alexia).</i></p> <p><i>[...] and I always forgave him and this person seems to have never let me leave him. There was something that throughout his life has never left me in peace (Diane).</i></p>
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Women suffering from learned helplessness appear powerless. They are bound to their abusers and tend to suffer from what is known as the battered women syndrome (Dobash & Dobash, 1992). This theory states that an individual may feel helpless after exposure to such traumatic events.

4.4 Long-term Psychological Effects

It emerges clearly that prolonged psychological effects were a common concern expressed by all the women interviewed. As discussed in the literature, the helplessness experienced following a traumatic event may trigger long-term psychological effects (Miller, 2008). Long-term reactions are unfortunately very common in many victims (Green and Diaz, 2007). It took these women years to be able to end their relationship and establish a new identity for themselves, and some are still suffering the repercussions. The interviewed women disclosed low self-esteem, depression, fear, relationship difficulties and PTSD symptoms cited as long-term problems.

Generally speaking, trauma may have long-lasting psychological consequences on the victim. In the case of domestic violence, trauma is more distressing because the perpetrator is known to the victim. The study participants also expressed how the psychological impact of domestic violence was worse than the physical abuse they had suffered.

<p>[...] ġrieħi sofrejt, pero ġrieħi fiżiċi fejn ġrieħi mentali, il-ġrieħi fiżiċi m'għadhomx hemm telqu, pero l-ġrieħi mentali għadhom hemm (Suzanne).</p>	<p><i>[...] I suffered injuries, but when comparing the physical injuries to the mental injuries, the physical injuries have healed, but the mental injuries are still there (Suzanne).</i></p>
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The participants described how the psychological effects have resulted in persistent sadness. Diane explained how throughout her abusive relationship she had suffered depression, and although the abuse has now stopped, she is still very angry at him for causing her homelessness, and she continues to suffer from a lot of stress stating:

<p>[...] bħalissa ħa ngħidlek il-verità, jien bħalissa għaddejja minn stress kbir, qawwi. Dan l-aħħar mort għand it-tabib għax l-istess qalli għandi stress... dan l-aħħar ili erba' snin straight ġo shelter, imma ili għaddejja hekk seven years niġri minn shelter għal shelter.</p>	<p><i>[...] at the moment to tell you the truth, at the moment I'm still suffering from a lot of stress. Lately I went to the doctor and he said the same that I have stress...lately I've been residing in a shelter for four years straight, but I've been moving from one shelter to another for seven years.</i></p>
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Ongoing stresses might be the cause of suffering from traumatic incident/s in which the event was associated with threats, fear, and helplessness. Other effects of such trauma may vary and include recurrent thoughts about the event, difficulty sleeping, avoidant behaviour, and isolation, which may all be long-term and cause mental health issues. In fact, as described in the literature, PTSD is one of the symptoms which can be experienced following a traumatic event, explained as a 'normal reaction to abnormal events' (Hughes & Jones, 2000, p. 16). Fagan and Freme (2004) found that PTSD is especially prevalent in victims of domestic violence.

PTSD is reported to persist in the lives of many victims (Hughes & Jones, 2000). This shows that victims will not necessarily ever recover from the symptoms of PTSD, but will learn how to cope with its effects and integrate them as part of their lifestyle. This is in line with what the participants have expressed,

stating that although they had managed to leave the abusive relationship, the psychological damage will often remain.

<p>[...] jien inħoss li r-repercussions għadhom hemm sinċerament. PTSD hemmhekk qiegħdha, kien hemm xi żmien kelli l-Istockholm Syndrome ukoll, imma l-lack of motivation u dik li ssaqsi għalfejn jien jibqgħu fik ux...jibqgħu fik (Charmaine).</p>	<p><i>[...] I feel that the repercussions are still there honestly. PTSD is there, there was a period of time when I had the Stockholm Syndrome as well, but the lack of motivation and asking why me remain in you...remain in you (Charmaine).</i></p>
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Although the participants have mentioned various symptoms related to PTSD, the two most common effects seem to be disturbing thoughts and flashbacks. They described episodes which triggered the violent abuse experienced in the past, such as specific places, sounds, and events. Such intrusive thoughts will affect their usual way of coping, and make them feel very anxious (Mechanic, 2004).

<p>[...] Mmm...tnessi biż-żmien, imma jiġu ċerti mument, ċertu ċirkustanzi fil-ħajja li terġa' qishom joħduk lura għal dak li tkun għaddejt minnu. Imqar tkun fit-triq u tisma' raġel jillettika ma' mara (Suzanne).</p>	<p><i>[...] Mmm...you forget with time, but there are instances, certain circumstances in life that take you back to what you went through. Even if you're in the street and you hear a man arguing with a woman (Suzanne).</i></p>
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Suzanne continues that at night she also experiences nightmares that remind her of the violence 'anki bil-lejl ġieli inqum, noħlom u nqum maħsuda għax noħlom li jkun qiegħed ħdejjja fis-sodda' (Sometimes I even wake up at night, I'll be dreaming and wake up frightened because I dream that he is next to me in bed).

Other effects include difficulty in creating new relationships and trust issues, which is referred to by Dutton (1992) as relational disturbances. This occurs not only in the abusive relationships, but also when the women try to form new relationships with others.

[...] Yes, trust. I am more self-confident because of all that to tell you the truth but trust is a little bit hard (Grace).

L-impatt fuqi baqa', baqa' jaffetwani,
ma tafda lil ħadd, tibda tibža', tibža'
mhux mix-xogħol jew hekk ta, imma
nibža' per eżempju kull raġel tgħid dan
[...] (Sandra).

*The impact remains, it still affects me,
you trust no one, you'll have fear, not
fear from work or so, but fear that
every man for example is [...] (Sandra).*

I realized I needed more therapy fejn
jidħol is-sesswalità meta ergajt, wara
ħafna snin, I started dating. Illi I
couldn't let someone touch me, anki
nightmares kien ikolli... it took me
around two to three years therapy, only
on this I worked (Alexia).

*I realized I needed more therapy in
relation to sexuality when, after a
number of years, I started dating again.
That I couldn't let someone touch me,
even nightmares I used to have... it
took me around two to three years
therapy, only on this I worked (Alexia).*

That being said, it is unlikely that an individual will ever entirely forget a traumatising event. Although the suffering seemed to have lessened over time, it is likely that victims would permanently change their way of thinking, that is, they will never perceive the world in the same way they used to do before the violent act (Frieze, Greenberg & Hymer, 1987).

4.5 Women's Involvement in the Criminal Justice System

Women tend to seek assistance from the criminal justice system after ongoing and severe violence by their abuser (Hohl & Stanko, 2015). This was confirmed by the participants stating that they had only reported the abuse on rare occasions, when they considered it very serious and often when accompanied by death threats.

As demonstrated in Chapter 2, research suggests that the involvement with the criminal justice system may at times leave a negative effect on the victims. Studies show how victims who for some reason or another came in contact with the system, were often disappointed by the way they were treated, and this may lead to further victimisation. Participants in this study described

mostly negative experiences in relation to the criminal justice system, which led to what was discussed in the literature review as secondary victimisation.

4.5.1 Contact with the Police

The victim's first point of contact within the criminal justice system is usually the police. Their response to victims is considered vital, especially in sensitive crimes, such as domestic violence cases. If victims experience a negative approach by the police, they will likely lose trust in the police, and refrain from filing further reports should similar instances occur (Hohl & Stanko, 2015).

Women's expectations in relation to the police varied, and appeared to be linked to several previous experiences with the police, including the officer's attitude towards them, the level of protection needed, and the type of support received. In this study the women expressed mostly dissatisfaction with the police in general.

There were instances where the participants spoke about positive encounters with the police and described them as being helpful and efficient in their work.

They helped me, they always helped me [...] (Grace).

Overall tajba imma kien hemm il-ħażin tagħha wkoll [...] (Sandra). *Good overall but there is the bad side of it as well [...] (Sandra).*

[...] niftakar li kien hemm pulizija mara li kienet għenitni ħafna bħala support (Alexia). *[...] I remember there was a woman police officer who helped me a lot as regards to support (Alexia).*

The participants have, however, also described a number of instances where the police response was perceived as inadequate, citing lack of necessary skills to best deal with such sensitive cases. Natasha expressed her frustration towards the police, stating that she did not find any support from them and that they used to make her feel that they are siding with her husband.

Apart from the perceived negativity about the police, the women also recounted various personal experiences when their intervention seemed to have

caused more harm than good to the victim. The participants described the police as being insensitive, and therefore more likely to cause secondary victimisation. The following statements show how the women often felt re-victimised after seeking police assistance.

[...] mhux ma joħdulix ir-rapport imma joħduhuli ta' malajr biex jeħilsu minni. Jew inkella darba minnhom dħalt l-għassa b'idi miksura u flok tawni l-appoġġ qaluli oħroġilna minn hawn u mur il-polyclinic. M'assistewnix u kelli nimxi mill-Għassa ta' Rahal il-Ġdid sal-polyclinic waħdi, hu dieħel l-għassa u jiena ħierġa u telquni waħdi. Ħassejt li dak inhar kellhom ituni naqra assistenza (Suzanne).

[...] it is not that they do not take the report, but they do it quickly to get rid of me. Or else on one occasion I entered the police station with a broken arm and instead of assisting me they told me get out of here and go to the health clinic. They did not assist me and I had to walk from Paola Police Station to the health clinic on my own, he was entering the police station and I was going out and they left me on my own. I felt that on that day they should have assisted me (Suzanne).

Kien hemm shift partikulari kien nice, pero l-ieħor le... lanqas biss raw is-severità tal-każ x'kien. Jien ġejt ivvittimizzata darbtejn... mis-sistema (Charmaine).

There was a particular shift who was nice, but the other one no... they didn't even consider the severity of the case. I was victimized twice... by the system (Charmaine).

Participants claimed that not only did the police fail to offer protection to the survivors but at times survivors felt intimidated by the police and their approach. For instance, they felt investigated instead of being treated like victims (Formosa Pace, 2017).

Il-pulizija beda jgħajjarni li biki tal-kukkudrilli, li aħna naseġeraw u nivvintaw fejn tidhol domestic violence, u speċi li ma kien hemm xejn verita u li kont qed nagħmel hekk biex nipprova nieħu xi ħaġa (Alexia).

The police started insulting me that I was weeping crocodile tears, that we over react and invent on domestic violence, and sort of there was nothing true and that I was reacting in that way to try and gain something (Alexia).

Alexia also spoke about instances where the police were dismissive, and discouraged her from reporting; 'bdew jgħiduli kemm l-Ispettur u kemm hu li jien kont ħa nonfoq il-flus fil-vojt, li huwa għandu l-power tal-flus, li missni nerġa' mmur lura u nagħtih ċans għax kont qed nesaġera' (both him and the Inspector were telling me that I was going to spend money in vain, that he has power financially, that I should go back and give him another chance and that I was over reacting).

The above experiences have made these women reluctant to report other crimes to the police. The results of a survey compiled by CrimeMalta have also showed that after their first encounter with the police, victims are unlikely to report a crime a second time. This may continue attributing to the fact that domestic violence is one of the most underreported crimes (FRA, 2014).

4.5.2 Contact with the Law Courts

The experience with the law courts was also described as an unpleasant experience, which would support Carline and Gunby (2017) who affirmed that courtroom experience re-victimizes women. Suzanne expressed her disappointment towards court proceedings that either nothing or not enough happened to the offender which has made her feel 'a total failure' and 'very angry'. Suzanne added that the courtroom experience led to an additional trauma, 'għax saħħa ma rnexxiex iż-żwieg tiegħi, issa l-Qorti, min-naħa l-oħra qed tkompli flok tgħini nitla' fil-wiċċ qed tnizzilni aktar taħt l-ilma' (apart from having a failed marriage, now the Court, on the other hand, instead of helping me get back on my feet, is putting me further down).

Charmaine mentioned that the Court did not take her needs into consideration but only those of the perpetrator stating; 'qaluli biex nitlaq, imma

bir-rispett kollu jiena ħa nitlaq mid-dar, meta kull one cent li kelli minn mindu kelli sittax-il sena tfajtha ġo dik id-dar...mhux daqshekk faċli li taqbad u titlaq' (they told me to leave, but in all fairness, am I going to leave the house, when I spent every cent I had from when I was sixteen years old in that house...it is not that easy to just leave). The participants' frustration was also similar to the findings presented in Naudi's (2002) study.

Feelings of inequity were common amongst the women interviewed, though not all expressed it in similar ways. For Suzanne, the injustice felt was that the Court judgements do not reflect the seriousness of the abuse committed:

<p>Jien naħseb li l-Qorti għadha mhux qed tieġu bis-serjetà l-kawżi tal-vjolenza domestika, għax kieku minn point one, il-perpetrator nibdew intuh punishment żgħir imbagħad aktar ma jagħmel nibdew ngħollulu gradually, tipo forsi jjeqfu.</p>	<p><i>I believe that the Court is not taking the cases of domestic violence seriously, because if from point one, we give a small punishment to the perpetrator, then as he does other things we increase it gradually, maybe they will stop.</i></p>
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Participants often complained that every time they report, they often end up being accused in Court as well because of other allegations made by the abuser against them, therefore making them perceive the system as being very unjust.

The delay in the beginning of the Court process is another cause of psychological distress for victims (Bennett, Goodman, & Dutton, 1999; Gutheil et al., 2000 as cited in Orth, 2002). Participants reiterated that the judicial process is too long and slow. Since most of the cases do not involve grievous bodily harm, they are not treated with urgency and thus, there is a long delay between filing the police report and the beginning of the court process. They claimed that such cases, even when there are no grievous physical injuries, require speedy resolution, especially if women are still living with their abuser, where a situation could be dangerous and more traumatising to the victim.

<p>[...] li jkun hemm każ li heddek jew imissek u jtellgħuk Qorti wara tliet xhur, meta mbagħad il-ħaġa qisha tibred...jien eżempju jekk għandi każ li dan heddidni, heddidni li ħa joqtolni, il-każ huwa urġenti (Diane).</p>	<p><i>[...] when there is a case where he threatened or hit you and they take you to Court three months later, when the situation has calmed down...for example I have a case when he threatened me, threatened to kill me, the case is urgent (Diane).</i></p>
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Such perceived impunity is likely to send the message to perpetrators and society at large that violence against women is tolerable. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, such treatment is likely to discourage survivors from seeking help and redress through the judicial process.

<p>Jien nista' nirrapporta fuq fastidju...għandi ħafna fuq xiex nirrapporta imma nagħzel li le. It failed me so much is-sistema li la għandi l-enerġija u lanqas il-finanzi biex nirrapporta (Charmaine).</p>	<p><i>I can report harassment...I have a lot to report on but I choose not to. The system has failed me so much that I neither have the energy nor the financial means to report (Charmaine).</i></p>
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The judicial system's shortcomings were highlighted by Herman (2002) who emphasised that the system must provide victims the adequate support, assistance and protection to gain trust in the criminal justice system. In return, when properly supported and provided with the right information, victims will be more willing to participate in the criminal justice system.

4.6 Support received to cope with the Effects of the Crime

The interviewed women clearly stated that advocacy and support was in many instances crucial for them to go through with the Court process. A range of individuals and agencies might provide this support including the police, social workers, lawyers, other agencies and relatives. Being informed about the Court process and how this worked was seen as part of this support. However, receiving emotional support from relatives and other professionals was the most sought after type of support by the participants.

Although the respondents had made use of one or more of the support services available to victims, they had resorted to such services after years of suffering violent abuse, mostly after ending their violent relationship. The women interviewed were never asked or referred for emotional support by the police. They were offered emotional support during their stay at one of the shelters, and in the case of Sandra, who was never a resident in a shelter, she was offered the services by the Family Court. Despite a number of Victims' Directives, Miller (2006) argues that the police still tend to be more interested in solving cases rather than putting effort into the victims' needs.

Gintner (2001) argues that appropriate support will help victims deal with their pain and any mental health issues. In fact, the data indicates that therapy in the lives of these women has proved to be satisfactory and effective in the victims' recovery process, as quoted by these women:

[...] inħossha (il-counsellor) tgħini, qatt ma ġġiegħlek taqta' qalbek u tgħollik u hekk (Diane).

[...] I feel that she (the counsellor) helps me, she never lets me get discouraged and she empowers me and so on (Diane).

Ara għenitni biex nemmen fija nnifsi, biex inkun kapaċi inżomm ċertu boundaries [...] (Natasha).

Look she helped to believe in myself, to be able to keep certain boundaries [...] (Natasha).

[...] kien hemm ħafna mumentni fejn ħdimt fuqi nnifsi u din (il-counsellor) għenitni biex insib l-identità tiegħi. Imbagħad kont ngħid mela mhux kollu t-tort tiegħi, hemm is-cycle eżempju u ħafna aktar affarijiet (Alexia).

[...] there were a number of times when I worked on myself, and she (the counsellor) helped me find my identity. Then I used to say that not everything was my fault, there is the cycle for example and many other things (Alexia).

From the data gathered, the women benefited from both short-term and long-term interventions of psychological support. It seems that the professionals at the shelters had provided them with short-term interventions throughout their stay there, whilst those who felt the need for further support continued with

therapy afterwards. Notwithstanding the different dates of treatment, the statements above show that the services received were vital for their recovery process. According to Miller (1998), immediate treatment could reduce the risk of prolonged psychological symptoms, including PTSD.

4.7 The Women's Perception on Counselling

When asked specifically about their perception of counselling, the participants reiterated the benefits of such services, stating that therapy has helped them to recognize the abuse and empowered them to end the abuse.

As described in the literature review, counselling is vital in assisting victims to recover from the psychological effects caused by their perpetrator. Although the women were not able to identify any specific intervention techniques used in the sessions, they emphasised that therapy had made a difference in their lives mainly through empowerment and various coping strategies to better their situation.

Nissuġerih lil kulhadd ux, pero' ovvjament il-journey li ttik, u awareness, imma ttik ċertu journey, trid tkun vera motivata imbagħad biex tkompli żżid dak il-pjan (Charmaine).

I recommend it to everyone, but obviously the journey it gives you and awareness, but it gives you a particular journey, you have to be really motivated then to continue with that plan (Charmaine).

[...] kwaži kwaži it's a must li persuna tiġi ggwidata li tagħmel naqra counselling għaliex waħdek ma jirnexxilekx. Strong kemm inti strong, ħa tiġi f'mumentu fejn tħossok li ħa tikrolla (Suzanne).

[...] it is almost a must that a person will be guided to do some counselling because on your own you will not succeed. No matter how strong you are, you will find moments where you feel you are going to fail (Suzanne).

The participants also recounted how after receiving counselling services, they knew what to look for to prevent further abuse.

[...] innalla kienet il-counsellor ghax kieku kont nibqa' hemmhekk (Charmaine).

[...] thank goodness for the counsellor because if not I would have stayed there (Charmaine).

Imma illum bl-għajjnuna li kelli ta' counsellors u hekk issudajt ux...Bilfors kelli nqabbad counsellor ghax kieku nkella kont nibqa' dgħajfa, ma nibqax soda u kieku dan ir-raġel bid-depression li jqabbdek jispiċċa jmarradlek mohhok ux (Diane).

But today with the help of the counsellors and others I became strong...I had to have a counsellor because I would have remained weak, would not remain strong and so this man would, with the depression that he causes you, will end up making you mentally ill (Diane).

4.8 What Women feel can help other Victims of Crime

Given their experience of violence, participants were asked to identify ways and means which could assist other victims of domestic violence cope with this ordeal. The responses could be grouped in four categories as follows:

- Immediate support during the legal process;
- Long-term emotional support;
- Support for relatives of victims;
- One-stop-shop for victims of crime.

4.8.1 Immediate Support during the Legal Process

This study's participants felt the need for ongoing support from the time they report their case to the police and that this should persist once the case is taken to Court.

The women maintained that empowerment and support from professionals when experiencing such situations can help them take the decision to move on. Lack of better treatment from the police and the criminal justice system seems to be a major disappointment for victims of crime. They expected the police to provide them with information, safety measures, and immediate support to help them move forward.

[...] u jiena ngħidlek il-verità, I never pursued għax ma kontx inħossni strong biżżejjed biex nibqa' mmexxi bil-każ (Natasha). *[...] and to tell you the truth, I never pursued because I never felt strong enough to keep on proceeding with the case (Natasha).*

4.8.2 Long-term Emotional Support

Victims explained how the effects of crime have persisted for years, but with the support received, they managed to mitigate some of the long-term psychological impacts. Participants expressed a need to be supported for a long as necessary, including when the crime was over.

[...] Yes, when I was in Merħba Bik I had the psychologist myself, and supposed I continued the sessions with her but I had to stop them because they were paid by Merħba Bik and I did the sessions for over one year (Grace).

[...] li bdejt hmm...two years ago pero domt ħafna ħafna ħafna biex nitkellem, ma kontx inħossni komda. Ftit ilu bdejt nitkellem u nftaħt u rajt change anki fija nnifsi, inħossni ħafna aħjar. Rajt u nħoss bidla kbira (Natasha). *[...] I started hmm...two years ago but it took me very very very long to talk, I did not feel comfortable. Some time ago I started talking and opened myself and I saw change even in myself, I feel much better. I saw and feel a big change (Natasha).*

They also expressed the importance of a trusting relationship with the counsellor to be able to work on yourself, cope with the impact of the crime and move forward.

[...] ifhem trid tkun counsellor li jkunu jaqblu magħhom, jiġifieri jħossuha li huma qed jifhmuhom (Diane). *[...] listen it has to be a counsellor that they connect with, therefore they feel that they are being understood (Diane).*

Kienet tgħini, kienet dik biss li tħallini nitkellem u dak kollu li rrid ngħid u li forsi quddiem ħaddieħor minix se ngħidu imma quddiemha nista' ngħidu *She used to help me, even just to let me talk and say everything I want that maybe in front of others I would not say but in front of her I can say it*

mingħajr ma tiġġudikani, dik lili għenitni *without her judging me, that has*
 ħafna. Li nitkellem ma' xi ħadd li naf li *helped me a lot. To speak to someone*
 mhux se jiġġudikani, mhux se jgħaddili *that I know that will not judge me, will*
 rimarki koroh jew hekk (Suzanne). *not pass negative remarks or other*
things (Suzanne).

The participants added that being able to share their experiences with other victims of domestic violence would also help them to overcome the effects of crime.

[...] dak iż-żmien xtaqt li jkun hawn *[...] back then I wished there were*
 dawn il-gruppi tan-nisa li jappoġġjaw lil *these groups for women that support*
 xulxin. Illum il-ġurnata hawn, qiegħda *each other. Nowadays there are, and I*
 f'wieħed minnhom jien. Dak iż-żmien *am in one of them. Back then when I*
 meta bdejt jiena, jew ma kontx naf *started, I did not know about them or*
 bihom jew ma kinux jeżistu (Suzanne). *they did not exist (Suzanne).*

4.8.3 Support for Relatives of Victims

The effects of crime may not only leave a negative impact on the victim but are also likely to affect the victim's family. A number of women interviewed emphasised the need that emotional support should not only be provided to the victims but that it should also be extended to their relatives. This is particularly important when the relatives are the main source of support for the victim. Hence, supporting these family members would automatically reinforce the support for victims.

Definitely, u anki tan-nies taċ-ċirku ta' *Definitely and even for the persons*
 magħhom, għax inti m'għandekx *around them, because you do not have*
 persuna waħedha broken, inti għandek *a broken person on her own, you have*
 in-nies ta' madwarha (Charmaine). *the persons around her (Charmaine).*

Għandi tifel ta 14-il sena, għaddieli... dan jekk ra lil ommu batiet dan it-tifel bata miegħi, allura għaddej l-istess problema miegħi u qed ibati li qed jgħix ġo shelter. Qed ibatili ħafna, għaddej minn stress ux ukoll (Diane).

I have a 14-year old boy, he passed through a lot...if he saw his mother suffering this boy has suffered with me, therefore he had passed from the same issue with me and he is suffering for living in a shelter. He is suffering a lot, he is experiencing stress as well (Diane).

4.8.4 One-Stop-Shop for Victims of Crime

The women also spoke about the effectiveness of having all the different agencies and services easily accessible under one roof. To date, women victims of violence seeking support have to juggle between several services provided by a number of agencies in different locations. The establishment of one-stop-shops providing various support services under one roof does not only facilitate access to these services but is most of all a way to ensure the provision of a synchronized support service (Cook et al., 1999).

[...] l-għassa, kull għassa mhix l-ambjent addattat biex titkellem. Hemm nies li jiffirmaw, hemm it-telefonati, hemm elf ħaġa oħra...mhux il-post addattat. Irid ikun persuna inkarigata li anki din tat-tabib, jgħidlek mur u ġib ċertifikat, hemm għalfejn li jkun hemm tabib hemmhekk, one-stop-shop. Ikun hemm il-pulizija, ikun hemm it-tabib, ikun hemm il-counsellor, li inti ma jkollokx saħħa toqgħod iddur dawn l-affarijiet kollha. Li jkunu kollha hemmhekk, ikun hemm persuna tgħidlek ehe ok hawnhekk għandna shelter għalik. Hekk irid ikun hemm ux,

[...] a police station, every police station is not the right environment to talk. There are persons who sign, there are telephone calls, there are a thousand other things...it is not the right place. There needs to be a person in charge that even the doctor, he'll tell you to go and grab a certificate, there needs to be a doctor there, one-stop-shop. There will be a police officer, a doctor, a counsellor, as you will not have the energy to go to all these things. To be all there, there will be a person to tell you yes ok, there is a shelter for you here. This is what

u din hija xi ħaġa li taffetwa l-wellbeing ta' kulħadd (Charmaine). *needs to be done, and this is something that affects the wellbeing of everyone (Charmaine).*

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the effects of crime through the experiences of a small group of women victims of violence. Their experiences of the initial incident, the criminal justice system, and the struggle to regain equilibrium went well beyond the first hurdle and provided new insight into the longer term effects of victimisation.

The results presented in this chapter clearly demonstrate that since they might always carry the traumatising event with them, instead of forgetting, victims may learn to integrate the experience into their lives. They accept that bad things do occasionally happen to good people, but that this is not a cause for despair.

Depending on the violence suffered and the impact that such an experience leaves on victims, their world view is permanently transformed in one way or another. However, these results demonstrate that although such violent incidents can leave a severe psychological and emotional impact on victims, the emotional support received has helped them to be able to lessen the effects of their experiences and became more able to cope.

The next chapter will focus on the conclusion and the identified recommendations from this study, as well as suggestions for further research.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

This research delved into the victimisation process of women victims of violence, including throughout the criminal justice system process, and how support services, in particular counselling, was in any way significant for their general recovery process. The findings helped the researcher to understand better how a victim perceives and interprets various forms of violence and how such impact often leaves a negative effect on the victims' emotional wellbeing and their subsequent behaviour. By interviewing victims who had suffered ongoing violence, the researcher was able to view the victims' needs from a broader context of support and evaluate better what might help them cope with the aftermath of the violence suffered.

5.1 Implications for Counselling

Prior research implied that victims of violent crimes, notwithstanding the nature of the victimisation, experience distress which may eventually lead to psychological and emotional consequences (Green & Diaz, 2008). In this study the researcher analysed the victims' experiences and focused on their ideas about the importance of counselling in the recovery process following a violent incident.

A number of implications may be drawn from the results of this dissertation, including the need for timely provision of counselling and other support services as victims are experiencing trauma related symptoms and other effects in the aftermath of a violent act. In such instances, victims are often expected to resort to relatives and close friends for support, safety and encouragement. However, not everyone is lucky to have this family backing. And even if they do have such assistance, as the participants suggested, family members might also need professional help to enable them to be of proper support. Therefore, if professional support is provided at such crucial times, women will be able to feel in control to make their own decisions, and reduce re-victimisation (Helmersson & Jonson, 2016).

The police need to be more sensitive towards victims as their response has a profound psychological impact on the victims' wellbeing and daily

functioning (Elliot, Thomas & Ogloff, 2014). As discussed in the literature, victims whose experience with the criminal justice system was not positive had reported experiencing secondary victimisation (Wemmers, 2013). In this study the women described mostly negative experiences, both with the police and the judiciary in general which in turn might have prolonged their recovery process and made them less likely to report a crime in the future.

Related to this is the implication of victim referrals to support services by the police. The participants stated that the police did not inform them of available support services or referred them for counselling. Research shows that very few victims of crime seek help and support of their own accord. Most will take up the offer of practical assistance and emotional support after having been referred (Davies, Francis & Greer, 2017). This might have hindered these women from seeking immediate help. If the police are not making victims aware of such services, accessing them in a timely manner is that much more unlikely. As evidenced in the literature review, the availability of such information to victims at an early stage of the criminal justice process may serve to minimise their anxiety and concerns. This would invariably ease victims' journey through the criminal justice system.

Another implication emerging from both the literature as well as from the empirical research conducted by the researcher is that in some instances short-term support may not be sufficient and victims would require assistance for much longer. Whilst research about victims' assessment for long-term support is somewhat limited, other studies have explored the needs for the person's immediate support and those which required support after months following the offence. These established how emotional support or safety assurance are usually required immediately after the crime, whereas the need for support in legal proceedings usually arose later, as the case progressed in court. Given that the criminal justice system may cause additional stress, ongoing support and information about the legal process can help victims cope better. Tapley, Stark, Watkins and Peneva (2014) argued that there are also others who may want to access counselling after noticing a change in behaviour months later. Regardless whether victims seek support days or years following the incident, it is essential that the requested support is provided.

Furthermore, encouraging the use of support groups may be a positive experience. Meeting and sharing experiences with other persons who have passed through similar circumstances has shown to help victims feel understood and acknowledge that they are not alone. Studies found that peer support tends to be more beneficial to those who lack the support from their relatives and friends, especially in cases when the abuser is well-known to the victim. Other studies involving victims of sexual abuse have also highlighted the effectiveness of peer support, stating that such support has helped them cope better (Whitty & Buchanan, 2016).

Although this research was carried out with a small number of victims and additional work may be required to further elaborate the findings, these participants reported a major improvement in their lives after receiving counselling. Whilst acknowledging that violence impacts each individual differently, the women reported that the use of counselling was mostly effective in: validating their concerns, providing them with the necessary information and by helping them to feel empowered and get back control over their lives (Dutton, 1992).

5.2 Recommendations

A number of recommendations for future research, training of professionals, as well as for practice and implementation have emerged from the research findings. These are examined in the subheadings hereunder.

5.2.1 Further Research

This research describes the experiences of seven women victims of violence, recounted from their own personal views. As shown in the findings, there were a number of suggestions elicited which could help victims in their recovery process. Amongst others, the findings highlighted that emotional support and safety from the authorities, principally the police and the law courts, were the most sought after when suffering a violent crime. Therefore, although these results cannot be generalised to victims in general, this data will hopefully be indicative and form the basis for further research.

Research on crime impact and the availability of support services to victims of violence in Malta is still very limited. Further studies amongst a larger group of victims may be helpful as they may provide further knowledge and understanding of the victimisation process and what is needed for victims to help them cope throughout the entire process. In this regard it is important that the support provided to victims will also be evidence-based to ensure a more effective service.

5.2.2 Training

The participants reported a number of occasions when they felt re-victimised by the criminal justice system. The women described how they were oftentimes not taken seriously, blamed and discouraged from pursuing with the case further. The perception of lack of care may lead to an additional trauma (Walker, 1984).

Specialised and ongoing training on the effects of violence against women, including domestic violence, could reduce the likelihood of further victimisation and help more women to come forward. Such training is crucial to all professionals working with victims of crime, particularly police officers, members of the judiciary and counsellors, amongst others. In this way professionals would be better placed to deal with victims, perpetrators and their relatives or children in an effective manner.

5.2.3 Practice and Implementation

This research has also stressed the importance of closer collaboration between different services to help victims receive the support and assistance needed in a coordinated way. In order to accomplish this, professionals from various sectors have to communicate and be willing to work with each other. A joint approach will help victims receive the necessary support as soon as possible and provide them with all the relevant information to keep them engaged with the criminal justice process. With the support provided victims will hopefully feel more encouraged to seek further help from the authorities and regain trust in the criminal justice system to help them move forward in their lives.

Moreover, there is clearly a need to promote greater awareness of the victim support service throughout the community. With the recent establishment of the Malta Police Victim Support Unit headed by the author herself, more victims are being actively referred to support services. From 2017 onwards, victims of crime who have filed a police report are now given the possibility to be referred to the Unit for further support. For those who do not feel the need for immediate assistance they are provided with information about the services and their rights through a leaflet which is available in all police stations. As explained in the literature review, the Unit is a single point of contact that allows police officers to refer all victims of crime who would require additional support. This Unit does not only provide crisis counselling services, but also offers information and referrals to other services available to ensure that victims are supported in the best way possible.

Despite these positive developments, there are still a number of gaps in the system. To start with, not all victims report their case to the police. Secondly, public entities and NGOs require more resources and publicity of the services they offer. Another issue highlighted in the literature and which was also corroborated by this research findings, is the lack of emotional support available to victims. At present only Victim Support Malta provides ongoing free counselling services to victims of crime. These services are operated by volunteers with limited resources. Since this study shows that victims of violent crimes usually require long-term support, it is deemed that the services currently offered are not enough to cater for every victim. It is recommended that State shoulders responsibility in providing resources for such essential services to crime victims.

Stanley and Humphreys (2015) recommend a holistic approach consisting of different professionals all housed in one place, hence emphasising the importance of hubs, such as Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Models (MARAM). These hubs will narrow the gap between service-availability and service-accessibility and make sure that the agencies involved are working in the best interest of the victim. Multi-agency responses to domestic violence highlight the benefits of a joint effort in prevention policies and decision making, the involvement of professionals

working together in a coordinated approach, including police officers, health and support personnel, and the crucial importance of exchanging information, which often help to lessen the distress caused to victims (Stanley & Humphreys, 2015).

With an aim to increase sensitivity towards victims and deal with cases of domestic violence more expediently, a major point raised by participants, it is also being proposed that a specialised Court dealing with gender-based violence against women and domestic violence be set up. Such a Court, staffed with professionals able to understand the severity of such cases, should be well-resourced to also tackle the current heavy caseload. In this way, cases would be heard much earlier than present timeframes (participants indicated delays of around three months between the act and the first Court sitting), hence minimising the occurrence of secondary victimisation. Moreover, such a Court would be better placed to hand down adequate judgments related to the particular case as, in the words of the women interviewed, judgments often did not reflect the severity of the violence experienced.

5.3 Concluding Remarks

Throughout the study and working directly with victims the researcher has come a long way to better comprehend how victims of violence could recover from such traumatic acts. As remarked earlier, further research is required to identify adequate support measures to help counsellors understand and assist victims better. The researcher came up with three main findings which emerged from this study, namely that (1) the process of victimisation is a long and complex matter; (2) victimisation does not end once the incident is over or once victims report the case to the police, or even when the abuser is charged and taken to Court; and (3) the psychological effects on victims may take many years to heal.

Even though the support provided can never wipe out the traumatic experience emanating from the criminal event, paying attention to the needs of victims of crime at a very early stage will help to lessen the negative impact of crime and ease their interaction with the criminal justice system. In this regard, further research within this field can continue building on existing knowledge to ameliorate the lives of crime victims and make their voice heard.

Appendices

Appendix A: Gatekeeper Consent WRF/SOAR

WRF

Request for Consent - sylvana
Gmail - Request for Consent

Secure | https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ui=2&ik=bd0381e2a7&jsver=z8_jB6tB0LQ.en.8&view=pt&q=request%20for%20consent&search=query&th=15adb653bb0b7b78&siml=15aa...

Gmail Sylvana Briffa <sylvanabriffa@gmail.com>

Request for Consent
10 messages

Sylvana Briffa <sylvanabriffa@gmail.com> Mon, Mar 6, 2017 at 11:27 PM
To: Women's Rights Foundation <info@wrf.org.mt>
Cc: Marceline Naudi <marceline.naudi@um.edu.mt>

Dear Dr Dimitrijevic,

I am currently filling in the UREC form in connection with my Master in Counselling Dissertation proposal. My research intends to explore the impact of victimization of women victims of violence, the support services available to them and their perceived level of satisfaction with services received, and how counselling can contribute to their recovery process. The study is being carried out under the supervision of Dr Marceline Naudi.

Participants for this study will be adult female victims of violent crimes and will be using a qualitative approach using interviews as the research tool. I am kindly asking if you would have any objection to forwarding my request to your clients, if and when UREC approves my proposal.

Following my approval I would then send you the required detailed information letter and the relevant consent form. At this stage, UREC is asking for your feedback in order to allow me to conduct the research. If in the affirmative, your reply will be attached to the form as appendix please.

Kind regards,
Sylvana Gafa' (135587M)

Type here to search | 18:46 14/04/2018

Request for Consent - sylvana
Gmail - Request for Consent

Secure | <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ui=2&ik=bd0381e2a7&view=pt&q=cons&search=query&msg=15aa7d0a0aa48ff7&siml=15aa7d0a0aa48ff7>

Gmail Sylvana Briffa <sylvanabriffa@gmail.com>

Request for Consent

Women's Rights Foundation <info@wrf.org.mt> Tue, Mar 7, 2017 at 9:09 AM
To: Sylvana Briffa <sylvanabriffa@gmail.com>

Dear Ms. Gafa,

We will be more willing to pass on your request to our clients and offer any other support or information to assist you in your research.

Warm Regards,
Lara

Dr. Lara Dimitrijevic
Director

203/1 Vincenti Buildings
Old Bakery Street
Valletta, Malta

Mobile: +356 79708615
Website: www.wrf.org.mt

[Quoted text hidden]

I'm Cortana. Ask me anything. | 07:16 29/03/2017

SOAR

Request for Consent - 5/ X

Secure | <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#search/request+for+consent/15aa5bc0715f6a9b>

Google

Click here to enable desktop notifications for Gmail. [Learn more](#) Hide

Gmail

COMPOSE

Inbox (73)

Starred

Important

Sent Mail

Drafts (17)

Categories

Sylvana

Make a call

Also try our mobile apps for [Android](#) and [iOS](#)

Sylvana Briffa <sylvanabriffa@gmail.com>

to Elaine, Marceline

Dear Ms Compagno,

I am currently filling in the UREC form in connection with my Master in Counselling Dissertation proposal. My research intends to explore the impact of victimization of women victims of violence, the support services available to them and their perceived level of satisfaction with services received, and how counselling can contribute to their recovery process. The study is being carried out under the supervision of Dr Marceline Naudi.

Participants for this study will be adult female victims of violent crimes and will be using a qualitative approach using interviews as the research tool. I am kindly asking if you would have any objection to forwarding my request to your clients, if and when UREC approves my proposal.

Following my approval I would then send you the required detailed information letter and the relevant consent form. At this stage, UREC is asking for your feedback in order to allow me to conduct the research. If in the affirmative, your reply will be attached to the form as appendix please.

Kind regards,

Sylvana Gafa (135587M)

18:52
14/04/2018

Research application - 5/ X

Gmail - Research applica X

Gmail - Request for Coni X

Secure | <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ui=2&ik=bd0381e2a7&view=pt&q=soarmalta%40gmail.com&qs=true&search=query&msg=15add0758f62bd72&siml=15add0758f62bd72>

Gmail

Sylvana Briffa <sylvanabriffa@gmail.com>

Research application

Elaine Compagno <soarmalta@gmail.com>

To: Sylvana Briffa <sylvanabriffa@gmail.com>

Fri, Mar 17, 2017 at 5:08 PM

Dear Sylvana,

The ERRC has approved your application.

We would also like to offer you the use of our premises for the interviews with our service users during office hours, if needed.

Should the survivor feel distress due to the content of the interview, you are to inform St Jeanne Antide Foundation so that we may offer support from our end.

Wishing you all the best with your research.

Kind regards,
Elaine

Elaine Compagno
SOAR Service Coordinator

ST JEANNE ANTIDE FOUNDATION (SJAF)
51 Tarxien Road, Tarxien TXN 1090 - Malta
Tel: 21808981; 21809011; 27672367; 99784784 (office hours)
VO enrolment number: VO0005/14th May 2008
website: www.antidemalta.org Facebook: SJAF Antide Centre

SOAR Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/soar.malta>
SOAR Mobile: 99927872 (office hours)

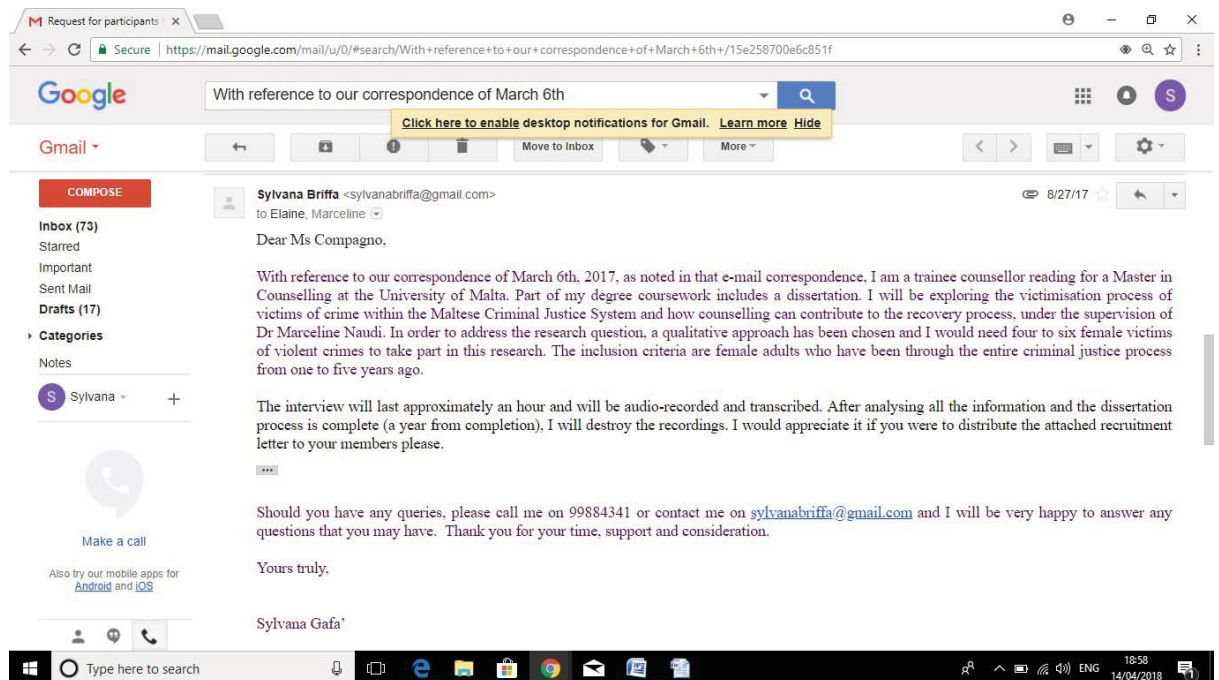
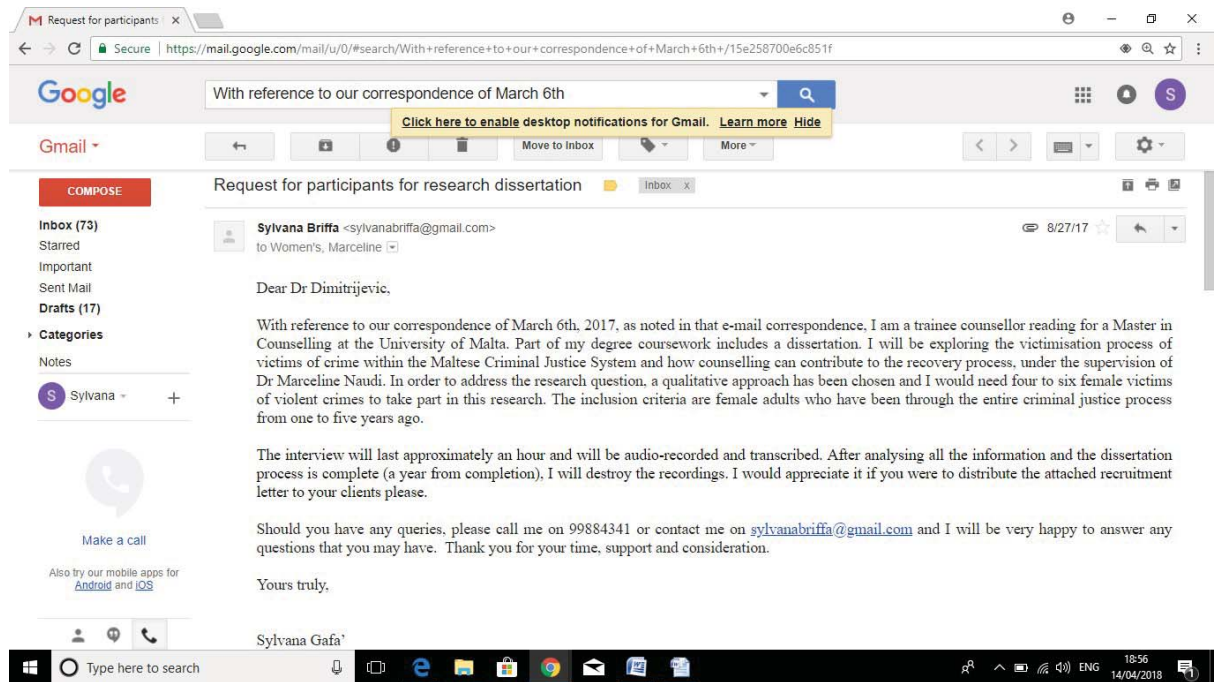
AFFILIATIONS: Mental Health Association; Anti-Poverty Forum - Malta; SKOP (Solidarjetà u Koperazzjoni); Malta Health Network; Aġenzja Zgħażaġħ; PHROM (Platform of Human Rights Organisations in Malta); Diaconia Secretariat of the Diocesan Curia

Publications:
SJAF Monthly e-Magazine: accessible from <http://www.antidemalta.org>
Book for Youth Workshops on Teen Dating Violence: *Caterpillar in a Jar*

I'm Cortana. Ask me anything.

07:19
29/03/2017

Appendix B: Recruitment e-mails sent to WRF and SOAR



Appendix C: Information letter to prospective participants (English/Maltese)

I am a trainee counsellor reading for a Master in Counselling at the University of Malta. Part of my degree coursework includes a dissertation, which I will be carrying out under the supervision of Dr Marceline Naudi. I will be exploring the victimisation process of victims of crime within the Maltese Criminal Justice System and how counselling can contribute to the recovery process. Participants who agree to take part in this research must be female adult victims of violent crimes who have been through the entire criminal justice process from one to five years ago.

I will be using individual interviews as the research tool to collect data for this study. The interview will last approximately an hour and will be audio-recorded and transcribed. Interviews will be carried out at a time and place convenient to participants. After I have analysed all the information and the dissertation process is complete (a year from completion), I will destroy the recordings. Please note that:

- Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are free to decide not to participate.
- All the raw data will only be seen by me and my supervisor/advisor.
- Anonymity will be respected and identities will not be disclosed at any point. You will be given the option to choose your own pseudonym.
- As a participant you have the right to not answer any questions you would not like to answer.
- As a participant you may withdraw from the study at any time without having to provide an explanation for your withdrawal. Your data would then not be used.
- As a participant you will be given the transcripts and the results chapter to review, as well as a copy of the study once the correction process is complete.

Should you have any queries, please call me on 99884341 or contact me at sylvana.briffa.05@um.edu.mt and I will be very happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours truly,

Sylvana Gafa'

Ittra ta' informazzjoni lill-parteciċipanti prospettivi

Jiena *trainee counsellor* u qed naħdem għal Master fil-Counselling fl-Università ta' Malta. Parti mill-ħidma tiegħi għal dan il-grad tinkludi dissertazzjoni, li jiena se nagħmel taħt is-superviżjoni ta' Dott. Marceline Naudi. Jien se nesplora l-proċess ta' vittimizzazzjoni mal-vittmi ta' reati fi ħdan is-Sistema Ġudizzjarja Maltija u kif il-counselling jista' jikkontribwixxi għal process ta' irkupru. Il-parteciċipanti li jiehdu sehem f'din ir-riċerka iridu jkunu nisa' adulti li kienu vittma ta' reati vjoleti u li għaddew mill-proċess kollu tas-Sistema Ġudizzjarja minn sena sa ħames snin ilu.

Bħala għodda ta' riċerka sabiex niġbor id-dejta għal dan l-istudju, jien se ninqeda b'intervisti individwali. L-intervista ddum madwar siegħa u se tiġi rrekordjata b'mod awdjo u traskritta. L-intervisti jsiru f'ħin u post komdu għall-parteciċipanti. Wara li nkun analizzajt l-informazzjoni kollha u temmejt il-proċess tad-dissertazzjoni (sena minn meta titlesta), jien neqred il-materjal irrekordjat. Jekk jogħġbok, innota li:

- Il-parteciċipazzjoni f'dan l-istudju hija kompletament volontarja u inti liberu/libera li tirrifjuta li tieħu sehem.
- Id-dejta kollha mhux ipproċessata se narawha biss jien u s-superviżur/konsulent tiegħi.
- L-anonimità se tiġi rrispettata u l-identitajiet m'huma se jinkixfu f'ebda stadju. Inti tingħata l-possibbiltà li tagħzel il-pseudonimu tiegħek.
- Bħala parteciċipant ikollok id-dritt li ma twiġibx kwalunkwe mistoqsija li ma tixtieqx twieġeb.
- Bħala parteciċipant tista' tirtira mill-istudju meta trid mingħajr ma tagħti spjegazzjoni għala rtirajt. Id-dejta tiegħek imbagħad ma tintużax.
- Bħala parteciċipant se tingħata t-traskrizzjoni tiegħek u l-kapitlu dwar ir-riżultati sabiex tezaminah, kif ukoll kopja tal-istudju ġaladarba jkun intemm il-proċess tat-tiswija.

Jekk tkun tixtieq tiċċara xi ħaġa, jekk jogħġbok, ċempilli fuq 99884341 jew ikkuntattjani fuq sylvana.briffa.05@um.edu.mt u nwieġeb il-mistoqsijiet tiegħek bil-qalb kollha.

Grazzi tal-ħin u tal-konsiderazzjoni tiegħek.

Tislijiet,

Sylvana Gafa'

Appendix D: Interview Questions (English/Maltese)

Section 1: Information on the incident and impact

1) As I explained to you I am doing my study on victims of crime - I am aware that you have been the victim of a crime, could you tell me a bit about what happened to you?

Prompts: How long has it been since the incident? Was this the only time this ever happened? Have you ever been the victim of any other incidents of crime?

2) Thinking back to the time immediately following the incident, how would you say it affected you?

Prompts: Any injuries? Psychological or financial difficulties, time away from work? Family issues?

3) Do you think the incident has had any long term impact on you?

Prompts: How do you feel about it now? Is there anything in your life that is still affected by what happened to you?

Section 2: Experience with the Criminal Justice System

4) How was your experience with the police?

Prompts: Were the police helpful/ not helpful? Did you get what you needed/expected from them?

5) Is there anything the police could have done to improve your experience?

Prompts: E.g. providing you with more information, being more sympathetic? Would you report another crime?

6) Did the incident result in a court case? If yes, could you tell me a bit about that experience?

Prompts: Were you satisfied with your level of involvement in the case? What was your experience of the justice system? Have your ideas of justice changed as a result of the incident?

7) Is there anything the court could have done to improve your experience?

Section 3: Receiving Support Following the Incident

8) Did you receive any kind of support following your experience of crime? If yes, from whom?

9) What was the type of support you received?

Prompt: Any emotional support, legal assistance, information?

10) Was the support you received helpful/not helpful? In what way?

11) Was there any type of support you would have liked to receive but was unavailable? If so, what?

If no support:

12) If you did not receive support, were you at any point offered it but refused?

Prompts: What type of support were you offered? Why did you refuse such support?

13) Generally, how do you feel about the level of support available to women victims of crime?

Section 4: Counselling Crime Victims

14) Have you ever heard of counselling?

15) What does the word 'counselling' mean to you?

16) How do you feel about counselling generally?

17) Do you think that counselling can help victims of crime? How?

18) Looking back, do you think that if it was available, counselling might have helped you or not? If yes in what ways?

19) Is there anything else you wish to add about your experience?

Mistoqsijiet għall-Intervista

Sezzjoni 1: Informazzjoni dwar l-incident u l-impatt

- 1) Kif spjegajtlek jien qed nagħmel l-istudji tiegħi fuq vittmi ta' reati - Jiena nformata li inti kont vittma ta' reat; tista' jekk jogħġbok tispjega ftit dak li għaddejt minnu?
Prompts: Kemm ilu li seħħ dan l-incident? Dan kien l-uniku incident ta' din ix-xorta li esperjenzajt int? Qatt kont vittma ta' xi reati ohra?
- 2) Jekk ikollok tmur lura għal dak li għaddejt minnu wara dan l-incident, kif tħoss li dan affetwak?
Prompts: Sofrejt xi griēhi? Diffikultajiet psikologiēi jew finanzjarji, żmien 'il bogħod mix-xogħol? Problemi familjarji?
- 3) Taħseb li dan l-incident kellu xi impatt fit-tul fuqek?
Prompts: Hemm xi ħaġa f'ħajtek li għadha affetwata minn dak li għaddejt minnu? Tħossok b'xi mod responsabbli għal dan ir-reat kriminali?

Sezzjoni 2: L-Esperjenza dwar is-Sistema Gudizzjarja

- 4) Kif kienet l-esperjenza tiegħek mal-pulizija?
Prompts: Il-pulizija kienu ta' għajjnuna/ mhux ta' għajjnuna? Tħossok li ħadt dak li kellek b'zonn/ dak li kont qed tistenna minn għandhom?
- 5) Kien hemm xi ħaġa li l-pulizija setgħu jagħmlu sabiex itejbu l-esperjenza tiegħek?
Prompts: Ez. Jipprovdulek aktar informazzjoni, jissimpatizzaw aktar miegħek? Terġa' tirrapporta reat kriminali iehor?
- 6) Dan l-incident wassal għal każ fil-qorti? Jekk iva, tista' tispjega ftit l-esperjenza tiegħek fil-qorti?
Prompts: Kont sodisfatta bl-involvement tiegħek fil-każ? Kif kienet l-esperjenza tiegħek dwar is-sistema ġudizzjarja? Il-ħsibijiet tiegħek ta' ġustizzja inbidlu b'riżultat ta' dan l-incident?

7) Hemm xi ħaġa li l-qorti setgħet tagħmel sabiex ittejjeb l-esperjenza tiegħek?

Sezzjoni 3: Għajnuna Riċevuta Wara l-Inċident

8) Irċevejt xi forma ta' għajnuna wara li esperjenzajt dan ir-reat? Jekk iva, mingħand min?

9) X'tip ta' għajnuna rċevejt?

Prompt: Xi għajnuna emozzjonali, assistenza legali, informazzjoni?

10) L-għajnuna li rċevejt kienet siewja/ mhux siewja? B'liema mod?

11) Kien hemm xi forma ta' għajnuna li xtaqt li tirċievi imma ma kinitx teżisti? Jekk iva, x'tip ta' għajnuna?

Jekk ma rċevejt ebda għajnuna:

12) Jekk ma rċevejt ebda għajnuna, f'xi mument inti ġejt offrut din l-għajnuna u rrifjutajtha?

13) B'mod ġenerali, kif tħossok dwar il-livell ta' għajnuna li teżisti għal nisa vittmi ta' reati kriminali?

Sezzjoni 4: Counselling lill-Vittmi tar-Reati

14) Qatt smajt bil-counselling?

15) X'taħseb li t-terminu 'counselling' ifisser?

16) Kif tħossok dwar il-counselling in ġenerali?

17) Taħseb li l-counselling jista' jgħin lil vittmi tar-reati? Kif?

18) Tħares lura, taħseb li kieku l-counselling kien aċċessibbli, seta' jgħinek? Jekk iva, b'liema mod?

19) Hemm xi ħaġa ohra li tixtieq iżżid dwar l-esperjenza tiegħek?

Appendix E: University and Research Ethics Committee Appeal

Sylvana G...
SWB 083/2017

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
Check list to be included with UREC proposal form
Please make sure to tick ALL the items. Incomplete forms will not be accepted.

		YES	NOT APP.
1a.	Recruitment letter / Information sheet for subjects, in English	X	
1b.	Recruitment letter / Information sheet for subjects, in Maltese	X	
2a.	Consent form, in English, signed by supervisor, and including your contact details	X	
2b.	Consent form, in Maltese, signed by supervisor, and including your contact details	X	
3a.	In the case of children or other vulnerable groups, consent forms for parents/guardians, in English		X
3b.	In the case of children or other vulnerable groups, consent forms for parents/guardians, in Maltese		X
4a.	Tests, questionnaires, interview or focus group questions, etc, in English	X	
4b.	Tests, questionnaires, interview or focus group questions, etc, in Maltese	X	
5a.	Other institutional approval for access to subjects: Health Division, Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education, Department of Public Health, Curia...	X	
5b.	Other institutional approval for access to data: Registrar, Data Protection Officer Health Division/Hospital, Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education, Department of Public Health...		X
5c.	Approval from person directly responsible for subjects: Medical Consultants, Nursing Officers, Head of School...		X

Received by Faculty office on	30/03/2017
Discussed by Faculty Research Ethics Committee on	07/04/2017
Discussed by university Research Ethics Committee on	

M. Nandi

2. Give details of procedures that relate to subjects' participation

(a) How are subjects recruited? What inducement is offered? (*Append copy of letter or advertisement or poster, if any.*)

In order to ensure an opt-in informed-decision-making procedure for participant, participants will be recruited from two non-governmental organizations who will act as gatekeepers, namely the Women's Right Foundation (WRF) and SOAR which organizations offer free legal advice, support groups for DV survivors, Advocacy and Educational Workshops amongst others. Both gatekeepers have given preliminary consent for dissemination to research participation (Appendices A and B). To reinforce an opt-in decision making process for potential participants, recruitment letters (Appendix C and D) with the accompanying relevant information letter (Appendices E and F) and consent form (Appendices G and H) for participants will be sent to the organizations acting as gatekeepers for dissemination with the clients, if and when ethical clearance is given.

No inducement is offered

(b) Salient characteristics of subjects—number who will participate, age range, sex, institutional affiliation, other special criteria:

The subject under study will focus specifically on the Maltese scenario and will conduct interviews with six (6) to eight (8) women victims of crime. The participants will be adult women who have been through the victimisation process but who have now surpassed it. The interviews will be conducted with participants who have passed through the entire criminal justice process from one (1) to five (5) years ago. This will reduce the risk of further harm to victims as they would have already gone through the entire process. At the same time, a maximum lapse of five years was deemed as necessary in order to minimise instances of crime victims not being able to remember their experiences when recounting certain details of relevance.

Respondents will be accessed via organisations, with them acting as gatekeepers.

Additionally, it shall be stressed that the researcher has been occupying her current position as Head of the Police Victim Support Unit since November 2016. Consequently, none of the interviewees would have had any contact with her prior to this study neither in her current role nor in her previous positions. Additionally, should any of the interviewed victims seek any Police assistance throughout the course of this study, the researcher would make it a point to refer them to any of her colleagues or other organisations offering the requested assistance outside of the Police Force.

(c) Describe how permission has been obtained from cooperating institution(s)—school, hospital, organization, prison, or other relevant organization. (*Append letters.*) Is the approval of another Research Ethics Committee required?

As noted above, Appendices A and B shows that provisional consent for dissemination has been obtained from the Director of the 'Women's Right Foundation', Dr. Lara Dimitrijevic

and Ms Elaine Compagno, as the SOAR Service Coordinator respectively, should this proposal be accepted by UREC.

(d) What do subjects do, or what is done to them, or what information is gathered? (Append copies of instructions or tests or questionnaires.) How many times will observations, tests, etc., be conducted? How long will their participation take?

Participants who accept to participate will be asked to attend one individual semi-structured interview each will last around an hour. Interviews will be audio-recorded and carried out at a venue, date and time convenient to the participants. Interviews will be carried out in the participants' choice of oral language. Appendix H and I is the interview guide, prepared in both languages.

To ensure credibility, an audit trail will be employed. Participants will be given their transcript as well as the results chapter to give them the opportunity to clarify and confirm whether the transcripts and the results chapter truly represent their voices. When the study is complete, they will also be given a copy of the study in CD or paper format, according to their preference.

(e) Which of the following data categories are collected? Please indicate 'Yes' or 'No'.

Data that reveals – race or ethnic origin	NO
political opinions	NO
religious or philosophical beliefs	NO
trade union memberships	NO
health	NO
sex life	NO
genetic information	NO

3. How do you explain the research to subjects and obtain their informed consent to participate? (If in writing, append a copy of consent form.) If subjects are minors, mentally infirm, or otherwise not legally competent to consent to participation, how is their assent obtained and from whom is proxy consent obtained? How is it made clear to subjects that they can quit the study at any time?

Participants will be briefed about the nature and aim of the study through the detailed information letter (Appendix E and F) they receive through their respective organization. This information letter also encourages participants to address any queries related to the study by communicating with me or my supervisor. The consent form (Appendix G and H) clearly explains the rights of the participants, including the right to withdraw at any point in the research and their data would then not be used. The contents of the consent form will again be discussed right before the individual audio-recorded semi-structured interview.

4. Do subjects risk *any* harm—physical, psychological, legal, social—by participating in the research? Are the risks necessary? What safeguards do you take to minimize the risks?

Given the research question, subjects do not risk any harm by participating in this research. However, taking into consideration that interviews with victims of crime may provoke emotions and painful feelings, the researcher has also been trained in how to respond in such

situations and will offer contact information for victim services. This will allow them, should they feel the need, to discuss the matter further with a support professional after the interview.

To ensure quality and integrity in my research, each participant will be asked to sign a consent form which will provide information about the goals of the study as well as confidentiality aspects, where participants will be given the option to choose their own pseudonym. All audio-recordings will be destroyed a year from the publication of the dissertation, and as highlighted above, participants will have the right to withdraw from this research exercise at any time.


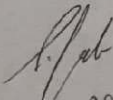
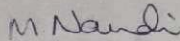
5. Are subjects deliberately deceived in *any* way? If so, what is the nature of the deception? Is it likely to be significant to subjects? Is there any other way to conduct the research that would not involve deception, and, if so, why have you not chosen that alternative? What explanation for the deception do you give to subjects following their participation?

Subjects will not be deceived in any way. They will be duly informed that their participation would be on a voluntary basis and that they are free to withdraw from participating. To protect their identity, the participants' names will be changed into pseudonyms when writing up this dissertation. Participants will be given the option to choose their own pseudonyms. After the participants give their permission to have their interviews recorded, they will be ensured that all recordings would be destroyed a year after the end of the study.

6. How will participation in this research benefit subjects? If subjects will be "debriefed" or receive information about the research project following its conclusion, how do you ensure the educational value of the process?

Debriefing sessions will follow the interviews held with participants who would subsequently be able to review the transcripts of their interviews and indicate any corrections they deem appropriate. This will help them maintain control over the information they have shared, and can be experienced as empowering.

Participants will be kept informed with the conclusions emerging from the study and a copy of the dissertation will be provided to each one of them upon completion. It is deemed that whilst recommendations deriving from the study will not necessarily be of direct benefit to research participants (since they would have already surpassed the entire criminal justice process), these shall nonetheless benefit those who shall be going through this process in the future.

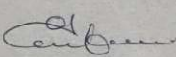
TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR APPROVAL IN TERMS OF THE DATA PROTECTION ACT	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Personal data shall only be collected and processed for the specific research purpose. ▪ The data shall be adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to the processing purpose. ▪ All reasonable measures shall be taken to ensure the correctness of personal data. ▪ Personal data shall not be disclosed to third parties and may only be required by the University or the supervisor for verification purposes. All necessary measures shall be implemented to ensure confidentiality and, where possible, data shall be anonymised. ▪ Unless otherwise authorised by the University Research Ethics Committee, the researcher shall obtain the consent from the data subject (respondent) and provide him with the following information: The researcher's identity and habitual residence, the purpose of processing and the recipients to whom personal data may be disclosed. The data subject shall also be informed about his rights to access, rectify, and where applicable erase the data concerning him. 	
I, the undersigned hereby undertake to abide by the terms and conditions for approval as attached to this application.	
I, the undersigned, also give my consent to the University of Malta's Research Ethics Committee to process my personal data for the purpose of evaluating my request and other matters related to this application. I also understand that, I can request in writing a copy of my personal information. I shall also request rectification, blocking or erasure of such personal data that has not been processed in accordance with the Act.	
Signature: 	
<p>APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE: <i>I hereby declare that I will not start my research on human subjects before UREC approval</i></p> <p> DATE 29.03.17</p>	<p>FACULTY SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE I have reviewed this completed application and I am satisfied with the adequacy of the proposed research design and the measures proposed for the protection of human subjects.</p> <p> DATE 29.03.17</p>

Return the completed application to your faculty Research Ethics Committee To be completed by Faculty Research Ethics Committee

We have examined the above proposal and advise

Acceptance **Refusal** **Conditional acceptance**

For the following reason/s:

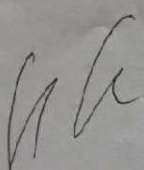
Signature  Date 7/4/17

To be completed by University Research Ethics Committee

We have examined the above proposal and grant

Acceptance **Refusal** **Conditional acceptance**

For the following reason/s:

Signature  Date 13/6/2017

UNSand

Appendix F: Consent Forms (English/Maltese)

Name of Researcher: Sylvana Gafa' (ID 135587M)
Phone No: 99884341
Email/s: sylvana.briffa.05@um.edu.mt

Title of Dissertation: THE VICTIMS' VOICE: ANALYSING THE
 VICTIMIZATION PROCESS AND THE IMPACT OF
 COUNSELLING ON VICTIMS OF CRIME.

Statement of purpose of the study: I will be exploring the victimisation process of women victims of violent crime within the Maltese Criminal Justice System and how counselling can contribute to the recovery process, under the supervision of Dr Marceline Naudi. In examining the full spectrum of women experiencing violence and how they perceive their experiences, it is hoped that the situation for victims could be eventually improved.

Methods of data collection: Individual audio-recorded semi-structured
 Interviews.

Use made of the information: For dissertation research purposes only.

With this Consent Form I, Sylvana Gafa', promise to keep to the following conditions throughout the whole research process. I will abide by the following conditions:

- i. Your real name/identity will not be used at any point in the study and you have the option to choose your own pseudonym.
- ii. You are free to withdraw yourself from the study at any point in time and for whatever reason without there being any consequences. In the case that you withdraw, all records and information collected will be destroyed.
- iii. There will be no deception in the data collection process of any form.
- iv. The interview will be audio-recorded.
- v. You will be given a copy of your transcript, as well as the results chapter, for your feedback and verification,
- vi. The recording will be destroyed one year after the research process has come to an end.
- vii. A copy of the research will be handed to you through a CD or as a hard copy at your request.

Participant

I, _____ agree to the conditions:
 Name of participant

 Signature of participant

 Date

Researcher

I, _____ agree to the conditions. Date: _____
 Sylvana Gafa' (sylvan.briffa.05@um.edu.mt)

 Date: _____
 Dr Marceline Naudi, dissertation supervisor (marceline.naudi@um.edu.mt/2340 2980)

Formola ta' Kunsens

Isem ir-Riċerkatur: Sylvana Gafa' (ID 135587M)
Nru tat-Telefown: 99884341
Indirizzi Elettronici: sylvana.briffa.05@um.edu.mt

Titlu tad-Dissertazzjoni: THE VICTIMS' VOICE: ANALYSING THE VICTIMIZATION PROCESS AND THE IMPACT OF COUNSELLING ON VICTIMS OF CRIME.

Dikjarazzjoni tal-iskop tal-istudju: Jien se nesplora l-proċess ta' vittimizzazzjoni mal-vittmi nisa ta' reati vjolenti fi hndan is-Sistema Ġudizzjarja Maltija u kif il-counselling jista' jikkontribwixxi għal process ta' irkupru, that is-supervizzjoni ta' Dott Marceline Naudi. Filwaqt li jigi ezaminat l-ispettru kollu tan-nisa li jkunu ghaddejjin mill-vjolenza u kif dawn ikunu qeghdin jipperċepixxu l-esperjenzi taghhom, nittamaw li eventwalment is-sitwazzjoni tal-vittmi tkun tista' titjieb

Metodi ta' ġbir tad-dejta: Intervisti individwali semistrutturati u rrekordjati b'mod awdjo.

Kif se tintuża l-informazzjoni: Bi skop ta' riċerka għad-dissertazzjoni biss.

B'din il-Formola ta' Kunsens jien, Sylvana Gafa', imwiegħed li nonora l-kundizzjonijiet li ġejjin matul il-proċess kollu tar-riċerka. Jien se nintrabat b'dawn il-kundizzjonijiet:

- i. L-isem reali/l-identità tiegħek m'huma se jintużaw f'ebda stadju tal-istudju u inti għandek il-possibbiltà li tagħzel il-pseudonimu tiegħek.
- ii. Inti liberu/libera li tirtira mill-istudju fi kwalunkwe stadju u għal kwalunkwe raġuni mingħajr ma jkun hemm konsegwenzi. Fil-każ li tirtira, ir-records u l-informazzjoni kollha miġbura jiġu meqruda.
- iii. Mhu se jkun hemm ebda forma ta' qerq fil-proċess tal-ġbir tad-dejta.
- iv. L-intervista se tkun irrekordjata b'mod awdjo.
- v. Inti se tingħata kopja tat-traskrizzjoni tiegħek, kif ukoll il-kapitlu dwar ir-riżultati, għar-reazzjonijiet u l-verifika min-naħa tiegħek.
- vi. Il-materjal irrekordjat se jinqered sena wara li jkun intemm il-proċess tar-riċerka.
- vii. Tingħatalek kopja tar-riċerka fuq CD jew f'għamla stampata fuq talba tiegħek.

Parteċipant

Jien, _____ naqbel mal-kundizzjonijiet:
 Isem il-parteċipant

 Firma tal-parteċipant

 Data

Riċerkatur

Jien, _____ naqbel mal-kundizzjonijiet. Data: _____

Sylvana Gafa' (sylvan.briffa.05@um.edu.mt)

 Data: _____

Dott Marceline Naudi, superviżur tad-dissertazzjoni (marceline.naudi@um.edu.mt/23402980)

Appendix G: Excerpts**Excerpt from Diane's Interview**

Transcript in Maltese	Translation in English	Comments
<p>Researcher: Ok, u bħala impatt, kif tħoss li affetwak, fiżikament, psikoloġikament?</p> <p>Diane: Bħalissa ħa ngħidlek il-verità, jien bħalissa għaddejja minn stress kbir. Ghandi tifel ta' 14-il sena, għaddieli...dan jekk ra lil ommu batiet dan it-tifel bata miegħi, allura għaddej l-istess problema miegħi u qed ibati li qed jgħix ġo xelter. Qed ibatili ħafna, għaddej minn stress ux ukoll. Żewgt itfal ġejja bihom mill-isptar għal ġox-xelter, jiġifieri baqgħu jikbru ġox-xelter ukoll. Iż-żgħira għandha 7 u t-tifel ħa jagħlaq 6. Il-ħajja tagħhom hekk jafuha, u ġieli jsemmuli meta ħa jkollna dar u hekk jaħasra. Ħa ngħidlek, tgħaddi minn trawma kerha, għax inti dejjem, ma tistax tgħid u le dak għadda ħa naħseb fil-futur issa.</p> <p>Orrajt jgħidulek ibda fittex xogħol, jgħinuk għall-</p>	<p>Researcher: Ok, and as an impact, how do you feel that it has affected you both physically and psychologically?</p> <p>Diane: To tell you the truth, I am currently suffering from a lot of stress. I have a 14-year old boy, he suffered...because if he had seen his mother suffering this child has suffered with me, therefore he is suffering the same problem with me and he is suffering in a shelter. He is suffering a lot, experiencing stress as well right. I came with two children from hospital to the shelter, therefore they grew up in a shelter as well. My youngest daughter is 7 and my son is soon to be 6. This is the life they know, and at times they ask me when are they going to have their own home and so on. I can tell you, you experience a very bad trauma, because you can</p>	<p>The violent impact</p> <p>She feels stressed with the whole situation, trying to cope on her own.</p> <p>Her children are suffering just as much.</p> <p>Finding it difficult to move on. She is also struggling financially and has to live in a shelter.</p> <p>Feels that she cannot plan for the</p>

<p>quddiem, però xorta tħares lura għax ngħid kieku jiena ma għamiltx, kieku jiena ma kontx dgħajfa, kieku m'għaddejt minn depression.</p> <p>Jiena imbagħad iktar bdejt ngħaddi minn depression kbira, b'hekk jiena mbagħad lilu bdejt inċedilu kollox għax lili ġabni f'depression. Allura meta jitlobni l-flus jiena ntih imma moħħi ma jkunx qiegħed sew. Ngħid moħħi kif taqbad tgħid mhux bħal meta waħda tkun matura jew soda, jien ma kontx soda.</p> <p>Imma llum bl-għajjnuna li kelli ta' counsellors u hekk issudajt ux.</p>	<p>never say it has passed and now you can think about the future.</p> <p>Ok, so they tell you to start looking for a job, it helps you for the future, but you still look back and say if I did not do that, if I was not weak, I would not have passed through a depression.</p> <p>Then I started to suffer from a severe depression, therefore I started accepting everything because he made me suffer from depression. So when he asked me for money I used to give him but I was not in my right state of mind. My mind was, how do you say it, not of a mature or a strong person, I wasn't strong.</p> <p>But today, with the help that I received from counsellors I am feeling much stronger.</p>	<p>future.</p> <p>Guilt feelings about her bad choices in life. Her weakness has made her feel depressed (she describes it as depression but was not diagnosed with same by a doctor).</p> <p>Feeling helpless.</p> <p>She was not strong but with the help of the counsellor she now feels better/stronger.</p>
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Excerpt from Suzanne's Interview

Transcript in Maltese	Translation in English	Comments
<p>Researcher: Emm...jekk tmur lura għal dak li ghaddejt minnu, kif tħoss li dawn affetwawk?</p>	<p>Researcher: Emm ... If you had to go back to what you went through, how do you feel these have affected you?</p>	<p>The violent impact</p>
<p>Suzanne: Ġrieħi sofret, pero ġrieħi fiżiċi fejn ġrieħi mentali, il-ġrieħi fiżiċi m'għadhomx hemm telqu, pero l-ġrieħi mentali għadhom hemm.</p> <p>Hemm...tnessi biż-żmien, imma jiġu ċerti mument, ċertu ċirkustanzi fil-ħajja li terġa' qishom joħduk lura għal dak li tkun ghaddejt minnu. Imqar tkun fit-triq u tisma' raġel jillettika ma' mara.</p>	<p>Suzanne: I suffered injuries, but when comparing the physical injuries to the mental injuries, the physical injuries have healed, but the mental injuries are still there.</p> <p>Emm... by time you tend to forget, but there come certain instances and certain circumstances in life that they tend to take you back to what you went through. Even if you're out and you hear a man arguing with a woman.</p>	<p>Psychological trauma remains. (the psychological impact is worse than the physical one).</p>
<p>Researcher: U din terġa' tfakkrek ...</p>	<p>Researcher: And this will remind you...</p>	<p>Still experiences episodes that remind her of violence.</p>
<p>Suzanne: Terġa' tmur lura ehe...</p>	<p>Suzanne: Yes, it would just take you back.</p>	<p>Flash-backs/ recurring thoughts of violence.</p>
<p>Researcher: Jiġifieri inti qisu l-effett psikoloġiku baqa'.</p>	<p>Researcher: So it seems the psychological effects remain.</p>	<p>Long-term psychological effects.</p>
<p>Suzanne: Ehe l-effett psikoloġiku ma jmurx.</p>	<p>Suzanne: Yes the psychological effects never</p>	<p>Still suffers from psychological effects.</p>

<p>Researcher: Anki illum il- ġurnata qed tgħidli li għadek tiftakar f'ċertu affarijiet.</p> <p>Suzanne: Ovjament anki bil- lejl ġieli noħlom, u nqum maħsuda għax noħlom li jkun qiegħed f'idejja fis-sodda.</p> <p>Researcher: Dan kellu xi impatt fit-tul fuqek?</p> <p>Suzanne: Illum il-ġurnata ili 7 snin ma noqgħodx miegħu, imma l-effetti psikoloġiċi hemm għadhom.</p>	<p>seem to go.</p> <p>Researcher: So even today you are saying that you still remember about certain things.</p> <p>Suzanne: Obviously even at night, at times I dream that he is still next to me in bed and I wake up shaken.</p> <p>Researcher: All this has had a prolonged toll on you?</p> <p>Suzanne: Nowadays I've been 7 years not living with him, but the psychological effects are still there.</p>	<p>Feels that they will last forever.</p> <p>Nightmares about violence – could be experiencing PTSD symptoms.</p> <p>Ended the relationship 7 years ago, but still suffers psychologically.</p>
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Excerpt from Natasha's Interview

Transcript in Maltese	Translation in English	Comments
<p>Researcher: Ok...u kif taħseb li din il-persuna għenitek illum il-ġurnata?</p>	<p>Researcher: Ok... And how do you think that this person has helped you at this point in time?</p>	<p>Support from the counsellor</p>
<p>Natasha: Ara, għenitni biex emm...nemmen fija nnifsi, biex inkun kapaċi inżomm ċertu boundaries, eżempju issa sirt inżomm mal-kuntratt. Fejn qabel kien iżommmhom iktar u ma jħallinix ngħid le, illum il-ġurnata sirt kapaċi ngħid le. U tkun ġlieda jġifieri għax kif iħossu li ħa jitlef il-kontroll jaqla' d-dinja, però illum il-ġurnata I am stronger, niflaħ aktar għaliha.</p>	<p>Natasha: Look, she helped me emm... to believe in myself, to be able to keep certain boundaries, for example now I learnt to abide by the contract. When before he used to keep them more and I was not allowed to refuse, nowadays I became capable of saying no. And it will be a fight because when he feels that he is losing control he makes a scene, but now I am stronger and able to cope more.</p>	<p>Found the counsellor very helpful. The counsellor helped her to feel stronger and more empowered to say 'no' to certain things. She learned how to cope with the situation.</p>
<p>Researcher: U kien hemm forsi xi tip ta' għajjuna li inti xtaqt li tirċievi dak iż-żmien u inti ma rċivejthiex?</p>	<p>Researcher: And was there any type of help that you had wished to receive at that time, and you did not receive?</p>	<p>Type of support received?</p>
<p>Natasha: Jiena qatt ma tlabt ta, li kien jġri, tant kemm kelli affarijiet għaddejnin f'daqqa li I just tried to get on with things. Lanqas kont naf li</p>	<p>Natasha: I never asked for help, what used to happen was that I had so many things happening at the same time that I just tried to get on</p>	<p>No support received. She did not know that there was any help available when she</p>

<p>teżisti għajjnuna biex ngħidlek, ghax kieku I might have taken it, però ma kontx naf.</p> <p>Researcher: Jiġifieri inti qatt ma ġejt offruta din l-għajjnuna, jew għax inti ma xtaqtx għajjnuna dak iż-żmien?</p> <p>Natasha: Le jiena qatt ma ġejt offruta din l-għajjnuna.</p> <p>Researcher: Ok, u b'mod generali, tħoss li teżisti l-għajjnuna neċessarja għall-vittmi ta' reati? Tħoss li hawn għajjnuna biżżejjed?</p> <p>Natasha: Jiena, ara ma rridx inwaqqa' x-xogħol tan-nies għax nimmaġina li hawn ħafna nies iddedikati u hekk...però naħseb hawn ħafna nies li jħossuha iebsa biex jirkellmu minħabba hekk.</p>	<p>with things. To tell you the truth I did not even know that this type of help existed, because otherwise I might have taken it, but I did not know.</p> <p>Researcher: So you were never offered this type of help or is it because you did not want any help at that time?</p> <p>Natasha: No I was never offered this help.</p> <p>Researcher: Ok, and in general, do you feel that the necessary help exists for victims of crime? Do you think that there is sufficient help?</p> <p>Natasha: Look, I do not want to criticise other people's work, because I imagine that there are a lot of dedicated people and so...but I think that there are many victims that feel uncomfortable to speak because of that.</p>	<p>filed the report.</p> <p>No one referred her for support services. At first she tried to cope on her own.</p> <p>Would likely have accessed support immediately if this was offered.</p> <p>No referrals.</p> <p>Lack of reporting. (Feels that women are not supported enough, that is why they do not report).</p>
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Excerpt from Charmaine's Interview

Transcript in Maltese	Translation in English	Comments
<p>Researcher: U affetwatek? Inti kont taħdem dak iż-żmien?</p>	<p>Researcher: And did it affect you? Were you working at the time?</p>	<p>Effects of violence</p>
<p>Charmaine: Iva.</p>	<p>Charmaine: Yes.</p>	<p>Financially independent but still stayed in the abuse relationship</p>
<p>Researcher: Għamilt forsi xi żmien ma tmurx għax-xogħol?</p>	<p>Researcher: Did you perhaps spend some days not going to work?</p>	<p>Financially independent but still stayed in the abuse relationship</p>
<p>Charmaine: Għamilt żmien minn wara l-parental, għamilt sena u nofs ma mmur għax-xogħol. Imbagħad aktar kont maqtugħa f'dinja waħdi ux. U aktar tkun fragli biex...inti din il-problema ma tixxerjaha ma' ħadd basically. Imbagħad meta tkun id-dar aktar u aktar ma tkunx empowered ux, u hemmhakk daħlet il-financial abuse.</p>	<p>Charmaine: I spent some time after the parental, I spent one year and a half not going to work. Therefore I was even more isolated in a world of my own. And you are more fragile to...you do not share this problem with anyone basically. And then when you are at home, you are even less empowered right, and then the financial abuse started.</p>	<p>No Support. Felt isolated at home. Did not share her problem with anyone.</p>
<p>Researcher: U taħseb li dan l-incident kellu xi impatt fit-tul fuqek?</p>	<p>Researcher: And do you think that this incident had a long-lasting effect on you?</p>	<p>Long-term Impact.</p>
<p>Charmaine: Jien inħoss li r-repercussions għadhom hemm sinċerament. PTSD hemmhakk qiegħda, kien</p>	<p>Charmaine: I feel that the repercussions are still there honestly. PTSD is there.</p>	<p>Psychological</p>

<p>hemm xi żmien kelli l-Istockholm Syndrome ukoll, imma l-lack of motivation u dik li ssaqsi għalfejn jien jibqgħu fik ux...jibqgħu fik. Nemmen li hemm affarijiet li rrid naħdem fuqhom imma ċertu affarijiet li l-kontroll tiegħi għadni nħabbat magħhom kuljum jagħmluha aktar diffiċli għalija biex inħalli kollox warajja.</p> <p>Researcher: Inti għedtli li kont bil-parental leave, jiġifieri qed nifhem li għandkom it-tfal flimkien?</p> <p>Charmaine: Eħe għandi tifel ta' 6 snin, dalwaqt ħa jagħlaq 6 snin. U jien fil-birthday ta' meta kellu 2 ħadt id-deċiżjoni li ma rridx nibqa' miegħu. Kellna argument u ġie jferraqna t-tifel u għedt it-tifel ma rridux li jkun espost għal dawn l-affarijiet.</p>	<p>There was a period of time when I had the Stockholm Syndrome as well, but the lack of motivation and asking why me remain in you right...remain in you. I believe that there are certain things that I have to work on that I have to experience his control every day make it more difficult for me to leave everything behind me.</p> <p>Researcher: You told me that you were on parental leave, therefore am I understanding that you have children together?</p> <p>Charmaine: Yes I have a boy who is soon to be 6. And on his 2nd birthday, I took the decision to leave his father. We had a big argument, and my son came to stop us and I said I do not want my son exposed to these things.</p>	<p>effects (reports PTSD and Stockholm Syndrome).</p> <p>Lack of Motivation.</p> <p>Just World Theory (she cannot accept what happened to her).</p> <p>Control (Although she left the abuser, she still feels controlled by him because of their son)</p> <p>The decision to move on (Wanted to protect her son from being exposed to violence)</p>
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Excerpt from Sandra's Interview

Transcript in Maltese	Translation in English	Comments
<p>Researcher: Dan wara li żżewiġtu qed tgħid?</p>	<p>Researcher: Are you saying that this was after you got married?</p>	<p>The first violent incident.</p>
<p>Sandra: Iva dan wara li żżewwiġna, emm...bdejt inħossni waħdi, totalment dejjem waħdi waħdi, ridt it-tifel, għax it-tifel jien ridtu, nammetti li jien ridtu.</p>	<p>Sandra: Yes, this was after we got married, emm...I was feeling alone, totally always alone, I wanted my son, because I had wanted to have a child, I must admit I wanted my child.</p>	<p>The physical abuse started after their marriage. Feelings of loneliness. (Her partner isolated her from her family and friends).</p>
<p>Researcher: Li jkollok it-tfal?</p>	<p>Researcher: To have children?</p>	
<p>Sandra: Ehe li jkolli t-tfal għax hu ma riedx. U hemm...bdejt inħossni waħdi, bdejt nitkellem ma zitu li illum mejta, zitu bdiet tifhimni li qed inħoss in-nuqqas tiegħu. Lihu dejjem xogħol, over-time, ma nistax immur l-Inspire, jiġifieri qtajt mill-Inspire, ma bqajtx inħallas hemm u bdejt immur nimxi u jogging, jiġifieri insejt l-għawm u nsejt kollox. Jien kien jikkontrollani biex iħallini waħdi. Bdejt noħroġ maz-zija tiegħu li illum mejta, mietet b'cancer</p>	<p>Sandra: Yes to have children because he didn't want. And emm...I was feeling alone, I used to talk to his aunt who is today deceased, his aunt was understanding me that I was feeling his absence. That he was always working, over-time, I cannot go to Inspire, therefore I had to refrain from going to Inspire, stopped paying my membership there and I started walking and jogging, therefore I forgot about swimming and forgot about everything. He used to</p>	<p>Loneliness – cycle of domestic violence (She was only allowed to speak to his aunt). Took full control over her life (she even had to stop her hobbies)</p>

<p>imma nibqa' niftakarha għax kienet qisha t-tieni omm tiegħi, għenitni ħafna, u dan qabel ma beda l-inkwiet u l-vjolenza bejni. Mhux ħa nistħi ngħid, emm...baqa' kollox l-istess bejni u bejnu jgħifieri baqa' bla komunikazzjoni bejni u bejnu, ħassejtni bla support meta kelli l-baby. Meta kont pregnant kont imwarrba ukoll, u kien għamel erbat ijiem kien telaq mid-dar. Ġie mument ikrah, forsi kont ħażin u hekk...u jiena ridt, ħassejt li nitolbu biex jgħini. Ma sibtx appoġġ min-naħa tiegħu, u dik nibqa' niftakarha, kien telaq mid-dar, u ma nafux fejn qiegħed.</p>	<p>control me to keep me alone. I used to go out with his aunt who is now dead, she died of cancer but I will always remember her as she was like a second mother to me, she helped me a lot, and this was before the trouble and violence began. I will not feel shy to say, emm...between us nothing changed, I mean no communication between me and him, I felt I had no support when I had the baby. I was put aside even when I was pregnant, and he left the house for four days. I had a bad moment, maybe I was in a bad state and so... and I wanted, I felt the need to ask him for help. I did not find any support from his end, and I still remember it, he left the house, without knowing where he is.</p>	<p>At the beginning the abuser used psychological control and then escalated to physical abuse.</p> <p>No support with the baby.</p> <p>Psychological Abuse (She could not communicate with him and was making her feeling rejected).</p>
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Excerpt from Alexia's Interview

Transcript in Maltese	Translation in English	Comments
<p>Alexia: Kont naħdem imma mbagħad kont bil-maternity u allura kont inkun id-dar waħdi u kont qed niddejjaq.</p> <p>Emm...niftakar li dak l-ewwel incident kien stramb għaliġa għaliex meta refa' jdejh fuqi ma stajtix nifhem x'gara.</p> <p>Qisu bħal meta tgħid, din ħolma kerha, għax meta ġrat ma rrapurtajtliex.</p> <p>Emm...assumejt minħabba li tliġna dan il-wild, għalkemm illum looking back ngħid li le. Kellna argument u beda jgħajjat u jgħid li hu mhux annimal, għax ma jsib lill hadd id-dar, u jiena bħala mara għandi noqgħod id-dar nistennieh bħal nisa oħra tad-dar. Jien għedtlu li kellu l-ikel fil-microwave imma huwa qalli li le għax jien irrid inkun id-dar qed nistennieh u nieklu flimkien.</p> <p>Jiġifieri jien ma kont għamilt xejn ta' barra minn hawn imma qabzitu u kien xorob flixkun sħiħ inbid. Kien qalli li ġegħeltu jien minħabba s-sitwazzjoni għax tilef il-boxla u ried ikeċċini mid-dar. Jien</p>	<p>Alexia: I used to work, then I was on maternity and therefore I used to be alone at home and I was getting bored.</p> <p>Emm...I remember that that first incident was a bit awkward for me because when he slapped me I couldn't understand why or what was happening. Just like when you say this is a bad dream, because when it happened I didn't report it. Emm...I presumed it was because we had lost our child, although looking back I would say it was not. We had an argument and he started shouting and saying that he is not an animal, because he finds no one at home, and as a woman I should stay at home waiting for him just like any other housewife. I told him that he had his food in the microwave but he said no because I had to be home waiting for him and that we should eat together. Therefore I did nothing out of the extraordinary, but he flipped and drank a whole bottle of</p>	<p>First violent incident – it was a shock and could not understand what happened.</p> <p>Belittling the incident (assuming that it was because of her miscarriage, therefore did not report the incident).</p> <p>It could also be attributed to the Just World Theory (describing it as a bad dream).</p> <p>Power and control (wanted her to stay at home, could not go out)</p>

<p>għedtlu li ma jstax ikeċċini fuq ċucata, għedtlu li ma tagħmilx sens, u kien qabadni minn idejja, waqqagħni ma' l-art u kien kaxkarni l-kuridur kollu, u mhux qed ngħidu li kuridur żgħir, għax fih mija u għoxrin pied u garani 'l barra. Malli garani 'l barra u għalaq il-bieb għedt oww, bejn it-tkaxkira ma' l-art, bejn ma kontx naf x'qed jġgri, u bdejt inħabbat u meta fetaħ il-bieb ippuntali s-senter ma' wiċċi u ksaħt. Kien garali ċ-ċwieviet u qalli biex nitlaq. Kont bla żarbun, dħalt fil-karrozza u għedt x'se nagħmel? Dak il-ħin ma ġitnix f'moħħi li mmur l-għassa u ma ridtx ngħid lil ommi u lil missieri għax ninkwitahom.</p>	<p>wine. He said that I made him drink this bottle because of the situation he lost his temper and wanted to throw me out of the house. I told him that he could not throw me out of the house on such a small thing, I told him that it did not make any sense, and he grabbed me from my hand, threw me on the floor and dragged me the length of the corridor, and we are not saying a small corridor, because it is one hundred and twenty feet long and he kicked me out. As he threw me out and closed the door I said oww, having just been dragged on the floor, I did not know what was happening, and I started banging, and as soon as he opened the door he pointed the shotgun at my face and I froze. He threw the car keys at me and told me to leave. I had no shoes on, got into the car and said what am I going to do? At that time it did not cross my mind to go to the Police Station and I did not want to tell my mother and father because I would worry them.</p>	<p>Guilt feelings (Abuser instilled guilt in her by telling her that what had happened was her fault).</p> <p>Threats (threatened her with a shotgun)</p> <p>Did not report him and did not tell her parents not to worry them.</p>
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Excerpt from Grace's Interview

Transcript in English	Comments
<p>Researcher: So he used to be physically abusive?</p>	Physical Abuse
<p>Grace: Yes, yes.</p>	
<p>Researcher: And do you remember when this started or how it started?</p>	First violent incident
<p>Grace: Mmm...at the beginning of our relationship, maybe after 5 months or 6 months when we were together, I think in 2010, beginning of 2010.</p>	Physical abuse started at the very beginning of their relationship
<p>Researcher: So you were married to him?</p>	
<p>Grace: No but we used to live together.</p>	
<p>Researcher: And you said that he was very aggressive?</p>	Abuser used to be very violent towards her.
<p>Grace: At the beginning of our relationship, and before I was pregnant it was not too much. It was once maybe in 3 weeks. But then since I got pregnant everything changed, everything changed. I thought that having a child, because I was pregnant it would change everything in a good way but it came opposite.</p>	Belittling the incident (stating that before she was pregnant the abuse was not too much)
<p>Researcher: And do you remember the first time it had happened?</p>	

<p>Grace: Yes he just slapped me and I started to cry and I said, I remember that I told him that my mum teaches me after one slap it will always be like that. And I told him that if I stay it was going to happen again, it was midnight I remember, and I packed my things and I was living in Marsaskala and I said where can I go from Marsaskala at that time. And I wasn't working, I stopped work and I didn't know anything because it was my beginning in Malta as well and he try to convince me by crying and apologising that it will never happen again. And I gave him another chance.</p>	<p>After the first incident she wanted to leave. She knew that things will not change but still did not leave, saying that she had no where to go. She was a foreigner and did not know anyone in Malta</p> <p>Cycle of violence (apologised and convinced her to stay by reassuring that it will never happen again).</p>
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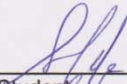
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