

Date Rape Cases Among Young Women and the Development of Good Practices for Support and Prevention

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*Country Research Report
MALTA*

Abstract

The Institute of Forensic Studies University of Malta is participating in a transnational study entitled "Date Rape Cases Among Young Women and the Development of Good Practices for Support and Prevention", funded by the Daphne II Programme, of the European Commission and co-ordinated by the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, University of Nicosia, Cyprus.

The project involves five countries of the European Union including Cyprus, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania and Malta. Project partners are the Institute of Equality in Greece, Coalition for Gender Equality in Latvia, Women Issues Information Center in Lithuania, the Institute of Forensic Studies in Malta and the Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies in Cyprus who are also the project co-ordinators and lead partners.

The main aim of the project is to investigate the incidence of date rape among female college students (aged 18-24) in the partner countries and assess the attitude, and level of awareness among beneficiaries and target groups. The project aims to promote awareness and make policy recommendations for prevention of date rape and support to victims.

The study adopts both a quantitative and qualitative approach: 150 women currently registered students at the University of Malta responded to an anonymous questionnaire; there were 2 focus groups with the participation of 20 female students; and, 3 in-depth interviews with relevant institutional representatives: the Malta Police, Agenzija Appogg which falls under the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity and Merhba Bik which is a shelter for battered women and their children.

The study suggests that while women in Malta have achieved some progress in terms of rights, there persists a gulf between Malta's proclaimed gender equality and women's experience of a lived reality of strong cultural roles and male dominance: while sexual aggression is an unknown phenomenon in Malta, date rape it is alive and well and especially prevalent in young people's relationships.

The study is a major contribution to understanding the nature of Malta's social policies and the gaps that pertain to a traditional gender regime: to date no legal structure or policies for support, prevention or protection of victims of date rape exist in Malta. The phenomenon remains an unknown both among young people and relevant authorities: date rape? Ah, date rape. What is it?

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Thanks are due to the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies in Cyprus for the opportunity to participate alongside four other European countries in a pioneer study of date rape in Malta, and to the respondents in the research who gave of their time to provide the data.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Aim

This research study aims to investigate the incidence of date rape among female students (18-24 years old), explore their attitudes and dating experiences; and the level of awareness among stakeholders and the female students.

1.1.1 Objectives

1. To identify the incidence of date rape to female students in each participating country.
2. To explore the attitudes and experiences of female students regarding date rape.
3. To explore and promote awareness to young people and stakeholders about date rape.
4. To develop recommendations, policies and strategies for victim support and the prevention of date rape.

1.2 Definition

Several definitions are found in the literature. However, for this project the following definition was adopted:

Date rape is a type of sexual assault, where the victim and the offender are or have been in, some form of personal social relationship, ranging from a first date to an established relationship (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2000).

2. Literature review

2.1. An overview

Criminologists consider date rape as a misunderstood crime and the source of this confusion may very well be the media which simplifies this criminal act and portrays stereotypical images in the minds of its audience. Victims may be males of all ages and perpetrators may very well be females (depending, of course, on the particular country's legal definition of rape). Thus, criminologists always insist on the 'multiplexity of rape' (Allison and Wrightsman, 1993:3). Where motive is concerned, although there might be the odd rapist who is solely motivated by an insatiable sex drive, it has now been established that 'rape is usually a crime of violence, not passion' (Allison and Wrightsman, 1993:3). Therefore, sex is generally used as a manifestation of power not as a valve to release built-up sexual tension. In the case of date rape, the perpetrator may be convinced that the victim secretly craves for sex or that he deserves to satisfy his lust after being the one who paid for the evening entertainment.

Date rape in Malta is still an unknown phenomenon: few understand the concept and more important its consequences. For example, the study respondents asked for a definition of date rape before they could participate and contribute to data in the research. Although in 2002, the National Council of Women were particularly concerned with the apparent increase in the incidence of rape (<http://www.ncwmalta.com/newsviewsdetail.asp?i=34>), the police suspected that the sudden increase in the rape-rate could have been the result of the fraudulent attempts of foreign students to claim their insurance money once they return home. In fact, two years prior to the article written by the National Council of Women, Winslow (<http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/faculty/rwinslow/europe/malta.html>) reported that, for the year 2000, the rape-rate was "3.17 for Malta, compared with 1.78 for Japan and 32.05 for the USA." In his comparisons, Winslow considered Japan to have a low crime rate, whereas he considered the USA to have a high crime rate. Although even males can fall victims of rapists, if represented in the figures quoted by Winslow, the author would expect the number of the cases in which males were raped to be very low since, males probably find it even more difficult than females to report their victimization, especially in Malta, where masculinity still has a very strong foothold.

2.2 Country situational analysis

Malta has a total resident population of 404, 039. Of this number, 200,715 are males and the rest (50.3%) are females (<http://www.euroconsulta.com/jurisdictions/malta.htm> accessed on the 4th of October, 2007). Age-wise, 17.1 per cent are 14 years or under, 68.2 per cent are between 15 and 64 years old. 13.7 per cent are 65 per cent and over. Malta has the highest population density in the European Union (i.e. 1,282 per square kilometre) – which makes it quite crowded and congested, especially in commercial places. Maltese law recognizes civil and Church marriages however, annulments by the Church and the State are not related and thus, are not necessarily granted in unison. Divorce and abortion are not legal in Malta (<http://www.euroconsulta.com/jurisdictions/malta.htm> accessed on the 4th of October, 2007). The national language of Malta is Maltese – which has Semitic origins but has been clearly influenced by Italian, English and French. Maltese is written with a Latin alphabet. Almost all the population is Roman Catholic (<http://www.euroconsulta.com/jurisdictions/malta.htm> accessed on the 4th of October, 2007).

2.3 Gender based violence in Malta

Gender based violence has its roots in culturally-imposed gender stereotypes. Maltese society has its roots in Roman Catholicism, which, in turn, is permeated by patriarchalism. Miceli (1994 in Sultana and Baldacchino, 1994:87) describes how the 'old concept of patriarchal rule...prevails'. In fact, Maltese citizens led a 'predominantly traditional way of life' (Abela, 1992:19; Callus, 1998:94), forged on the 'cult of masculinity' (Walklate, 1995:117) and based on patriarchy. Earlier studies are supported by the findings of a study of gender equality and social policies in Malta. For example, Camilleri-Cassar (2005) finds that 'a critical prerequisite for gender equality in Malta would be rethinking men's position in the family and in society. She argues that "the key to achieving gender equality is through actively promoting men's involvement in household responsibilities, supported by policies that require changes in male lifestyle" (Camilleri-Cassar, 2005:298).

Clearly, gender-ascribed stereotypes in Malta link power to men. Malta's male breadwinner model, restrains Maltese society from readily accepting women in top posts and decision making processes. Until relatively recently, it was unacceptable for men to engage in house chores or child care. Indeed, "Malta's strong pressure to

traditional roles is embedded in Maltese culture and social norms” (Camilleri-Cassar, 2005:294-295) that may be the cause that justifies gender based violence in Maltese society. However, Malta’s membership in the European Union may be a catalyst to a quick move forward towards gender equality.

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(<http://www.euroconsulta.com/jurisdictions/malta.htm>).

2.4 Date Rape and the Legal Framework

Maltese law does not specifically refer to date rape. However, The Laws of Malta (Chapter 9 of the Criminal Code, Sub-title II – Of Crimes Against the Peace and Honour of Families, and Against Morals) clearly state that “Whosoever shall, by violence, have carnal knowledge of a person of either sex, shall, on conviction, be liable to imprisonment for a term from three to nine years, with or without solitary confinement”. This criminal act is considered more serious if the victim is under-aged.

Furthermore, no research has been undertaken so as to have strong and reliable data to underline the extent of date rape or generally gender based violence. Social and cultural norms which tend to be conservative and traditional in Malta influence the understanding of date rape and its consequences. Indeed, this research is a pioneer study of the incidence of date rape among young women in Malta.

3. Methodology

3.1 Study Design

This research study applied both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Using triangulation was thought as to provide a wider perspective of date rape issues in each country participating in this study.

A quantitative methodology is used to test theories and hypotheses and to make generalizations that may contribute to the understanding of a condition or phenomenon and to the developing of a theory (Creswell, 1994).

A qualitative research study may have achieved a more in-depth understanding of the subjective perceptions of adolescents (Sarantakos 1993).

For quantitative methodology a structured questionnaire was used and for qualitative methodology two focus groups were carried out and also personal interviews of formal representatives of relevant institutions.

3.2 Sample population

Before launching the questionnaire survey, we faced the dilemma of how big our sample should be. We also had to decide how we were going to select respondents. Simple random selection was used among female students at the University of Malta which is geographically situated in one particular region in Malta and where there are no other higher education institutions with students between the age of 18 and 24 years.

With a 5% statistical error, the following calculation was applied:

$$Margin = \pm 1.96 \sqrt{\frac{(100-P)P}{n} \times \frac{(N-n)}{N-1}}$$

(1.96 is the Z value at a 95% Confidence Interval, N=population size, n= sample size and P = 50, percentage 50% where the maximum error is calculated)

For example, if the sample size is 500:

$$\text{Margin} = 1.96 \sqrt{\frac{(100 - 50)(50)}{(500)(7735-1)} \times (7735-500)}$$

$$\text{Margin} = 1.96 \sqrt{\frac{(50)(50)}{(500)(7734)} \times (7235)}$$

$$\text{Margin} = 1.96 \sqrt{\frac{2500 \times (7235)}{3867000}}$$

$$\text{Margin} = 1.96 \sqrt{\frac{18087500}{3867000}}$$

$$\text{Margin} = 1.96 \sqrt{\frac{18087500}{3867000}}$$

$$\text{Margin} = 1.96 \sqrt{4.677}$$

$$\text{Margin} = 1.96 (2.16)$$

$$\text{Margin} = 4.24 \%$$

(http://www.researchsolutions.co.nz/sample_sizes.htm,
<http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>, 2003)

In academic year 2006-2007 there were just over 4,000 registered women students and 150 female students were selected at random, as the study population. Besides using the formula for calculating an ideal sample population, a University professor of Mathematics and Statistics was also consulted so as to determine whether the sample size was statistically acceptable and that would give us a reliable picture of the situation of date rape in Malta.

Ideally, we would have sent a questionnaire to every student in the Maltese archipelago. This is known as a census study. However, we agree with Dooley (1995:124) that such a study would have been 'impractical since only the national

government has the resources and the legal mandate to require that everyone cooperates.'

3.3 Ethical issues

Although we went to classrooms with the questionnaires and explained the instructions before distributing them to the students, once we collected the completed questionnaires, we had no manner of finding out who the respondent was. Therefore, this technique enabled the respondents to remain anonymous (Harris 1998:50), thus reducing the risk of bias and securing sincere answers. In addition, questionnaires allow greater questioning uniformity – devoid of interviewer interference and cheating – fostering opportunities for longitudinal studies (Dooley, 1995:103). Moreover, the students who participated in the focus groups were asked to sign a consent form before the commencement of discussion and data collection.

3.4 Pilot study

Seale (1998:131) advises researchers to conduct a trial run before launching the questionnaire. Academics refer to this exercise as piloting. Seale (1998:131) explains how 'piloting of a question can ... reveal that it is not answerable, or that its meaning is ambiguous.' Thus, following his advice, we piloted the questionnaire (that had been provided to us by the coordinator of this project) with a group of six students (on an individual basis). Subsequently, we conducted a pilot focus group, with a group of five students.

The answers and comments received indicated that most of the questions were clear however, what can be considered as the "table questions" proved somewhat confusing (McNeill, 1994:26) to our young respondents. Consequently, since we could not change the questionnaire (as the same one was being used in all the participating countries) we were determined to carefully explain what was meant by the questionnaire instructions. We also realized that the main religion in Malta – Roman Catholicism – was completely missing from the list of options. Naturally, we felt that we could not leave this out so, we added it to the list. However, we must admit that, although it seemed incredible, especially after we had carefully explained the instructions each time we administered the questionnaires to a group, evidently

some respondents still got confused. In fact, we did get some responses that seemed incomprehensible; however, we decided to accept them as valid since we did not have the certainty that the respondents had, in fact, misinterpreted the question/s.

3.5 Instrument

The research instrument for the quantitative part of this study was based on instruments of previous research studies which include ¹:

The lead partners in Cyprus reviewed several questionnaires of studies of date rape undertaken previously in academia, and most of the questions in this study have been tested and proven appropriate for such a study. However, some questions were modified to suit Malta's case

The questionnaire consisted in three parts:

1. demographic data
2. dating relations and violence during a date
3. unwanted sexual experiences in relation to dating.

All questions were close-ended, except the last one that was an open question so as to enable the respondent to express their views of date rape, violence in dating relations or anything else they wanted to contribute to the study findings. An average of 30 minutes was allocated for completion of the questionnaire.

A discussion guide for data gathering in focus groups that ensured appropriate rapport between the interviewer and interviewees was based on relevant literature.²

The focus group discussion guide consisted of 3 parts:

1. Introduction (e.g. definition of date rape)

¹ Rickert VI, Wiemann CM, Vaughan RD, White JW. Rates and risk factors for sexual violence among an ethnically diverse sample of adolescents. *Archives of Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine* 2004;158:1132-1139.

Zeitler MS, Paine AD, Breitbart V, Rickert VI, Olson C, Stevens L, Rottenberg L, Davidson LL. Attitudes About Intimate Partner Violence Screening Among an Ethnically Diverse Sample of Young Women. *Journal of Adolescent Health* 2006;39:119.e1-119.e8.

² For example, Zeitler et al., 2006; Kvinnotorum and Partners, 2005 EU project; Rickert et al., 2004.

2. Dating relationships/unwanted sexual experiences/date rape (e.g. behaviour, gender stereotypes, assertiveness)
3. Support and Prevention (e.g. services, preventative actions, protective measures).

Finally, a semi-structured interview guide was used for data gathering in the one-to-one interviews with representatives of relevant institutions. The guide consisted of 3 parts:

1. Demographic data of institution including policies on date rape
2. Support services
3. Prevention, better practice and cooperation with other organizations

4. Findings

4.1 Quantitative results – questionnaire

Section 1 – Demographic data

This section, section 1 provides some demographics of the participants in the quantitative part of the study. As explained earlier in the study, the study population consists in a total of 150 women currently in tertiary education who are between the age of 18 and 24 years. Table 1 illustrates the age of the respondents, the majority (58%) of which are in the 19 to 20 age cohort and 12 per cent fall within the youngest age bracket for this study. Only three respondents choose not to reveal their age.

Table 1. How old are you now?

Age	Frequency
18	29
19	48
20	39
21	18
22	3
23	3
24	7
No response	3
Total	150

The study includes a random geographic spread with participants covering the rural and urban regions in Malta. The regional spread of the respondents is shown in Table 2 which points to an urbanised majority of more than half the sample population. As Malta is similar in region and geographic divide, 7 respondents seem unsure of the question and unable to place their hometown or village in any of the two categories chosen by the research.

Table 2. Are you from:

Urban	93
Rural	50
No response	7
Total	150

The University of Malta is an international institution of higher learning; however, most respondents in the study are Maltese (Table 3). Only 3 respondents do not disclose their nationality.

Table 3. What is your nationality?

Maltese	139
Chinese	1
Other	7
Non response	3
Total	150

The questionnaire probes into the major of the studies undertaken by the respondents. Table 4 reveals the distribution of the sample population by areas of study. Twenty-seven per cent of respondents are found in business studies. These are followed closely by women in education (20%). It is to be noted that tertiary education in Malta still reflects gendered forces behind women's lives, and Maltese women tend to choose the more feminised areas of study such as education, social science and health. Fourteen per cent put themselves in the 'other' category.

Table 4. What is the major of your studies?

Social Sciences	28
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Law	8
Education	30
Health Sciences	14
Business	40
Arts	6
Other	21
Non responses	3
Total	150

Trends in employment indicate a high rate of non-participation among the study respondents with only 28 per cent in the labour market (Table 5). However, statistics tell only part of the story and may not always reveal the reality. University students are discouraged from taking up paid work as they are entitled to a monthly stipend given by the state.

Table 5. Are you currently working/employed?

	Frequency	Percent
No	103	68.7
Yes	42	28
No response	5	3.3
Total	150	100

One predictable methodological problem pertains to the issue of family status. While almost 43 per cent of respondents say they never married, 34 per cent suggest 'other' for a reply. The situation suggests an inaccuracy in the responses and that the women are unsure whether the question on family status was meant to reflect their own individual / civic status or that of their home of origin. Clearly, one way past this problem is to push the issue further by asking the respondent directly and face-to-face. However, as with any other quantitative study anonymity makes this impossible.

Table 6. Family Status

	Frequency	Percent
Married	14	9.4
Separated	0	0
Never Married	64	42.7
Co-habit/live with someone	4	2.8
Widowed	1	0.
Divorced	0	0
Engaged	10	6.8
Other	51	34
No response	6	4.3
Total	150	100

The respondents were asked about their parents' level of education. Data seem to suggest that both parents have had sound formal schooling (Tables 7). Only 7 per cent of the respondents' mothers have a primary level of education and none have never been to school. Indeed, all their mothers have a secondary level of education and 24 per cent have been to tertiary schooling.

Table 7. What is the highest level of education of your mother?

	Frequency	Percent
Primary School	11	7.3
Secondary School	100	66.7
College/University	36	24
Has not gone to school	0	0
No response	3	2
Total	150	100

Interestingly, when compared to their spouses' educational level, respondents' fathers seem to score less favourably in terms of academic achievement. Less than half (40.7%) have a secondary level of education and 15.4 per cent have only been to primary school. By contrast to the mothers' experience of school, 1.3 per cent never went to school and 40.6 per cent have a tertiary level of education (Table 8).

Table 8. What is the highest level of education of your father?

	Frequency	Percent
Primary School	23	15.4
Secondary School	61	40.7
College/University	61	40.6
Has not gone to school	2	1.3
No response	3	2
Total	150	100

The majority of the population in Malta is Roman Catholic. Indeed, only 8 per cent of respondents suggest 'other' as their religion and 2 women gave no response (Table 9).

Table 9. Religion

	Frequency	Percent
Roman Catholic	135	90
Other	12	8
No response	3	2
Total	150	100

Despite the high percentage of Roman Catholic respondents, only 78 per cent go to church (Table 10) and almost 23 per cent do not go at all (Table 11).

Table 10. Do you go to church/mosque/synagogue?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	118	78
No	29	19
No response	3	3
Total	150	100

Table 11. How many times have you gone to church in the last month?

	Frequency	Percent
None	34	22.7
1-2 times	30	20
3 or more	83	55.3
No response	3	2
Total	150	100

The data that follows provides acute relevance to the study. For example, when asked whether they had a partner during the time they were filling in the questionnaire, almost 57 per cent answered in the affirmative (Table 12).

Table 12. Do you have a current partner?

	Frequency	Percent
No	62	41.3
Yes	85	56.7
No response	3	2
Total	150	100

Section 2 – Dating relationships

This section adopts an exploratory mood of dating relationships and defines a date as a planned romantic or social activity with another person. Examples of these activities may include going out to lunch, to the movies, out for a ride, to the beach or getting together at a friend's house. It could be an activity to get to know someone better, however, it could also mean hanging out with someone a person is already 'going out with'. When a date takes place, there could be romantic / sexual interest from either or both partner/s.

90 per cent of the participants in the questionnaire have started dating or have had a romantic and or sexual relationship which present the ideal scenario for Malta's pioneer study of date rape (Table 1).

Table 1. Have you started dating or had any romantic and/or sexual relationships?

	Frequency	Percent
No	11	7.3
Yes	135	90
No response	4	2.7
Total	150	100

The data provided in Table 2 reveals a very early age for commencement of dating among young women in Malta. Almost 72 per cent of the respondents suggest that they started dating between the age of 13 and 16: the majority (20.7%) were in a romantic relationship when they were 14 years.

Table 2. How old were you when you started dating?

Age	Frequency	Percent
10	1	0.7
11	1	0.7
12	2	1.4
13	20	13.4
14	31	20.7
15	28	18.7
16	28	18.7
17	11	7.5
18	7	4.7
19	3	2
20	2	1.4
21	1	0.7
No response	14 (11 did not continue)	9.4
Total	150	100

Apart from early dating, women in Malta indulge in sexual intercourse at a ripe age too. The study suggests that the first intercourse happens from the age of 13 and increases substantially among women in the 16 to 18 age bracket. Only 1 respondent had her first intercourse when she was 21 years of age (Table 3).

Table 3. At what age did you first have sexual intercourse?

Age	Frequency	Percent
13	2	1.4
14	3	2.0
15	7	4.7
16	15	10
17	18	12
18	12	8.0
19	7	4.7
20	4	2.6
21	1	0.6
Have not had sex	65	43.3
No response	16 (11 did not continue)	10.7
Total	150	100

The question on sexual orientation suggests that the majority of respondents (88.8%) consider themselves heterosexual (Table 4). Interestingly, 9.3 per cent gave no reply.

Table 4. Do you consider yourself to be:

	Frequency	Percent
Straight/heterosexual	133	88.8
Gay/lesbian/homosexual	1	0.6
Bisexual	2	1.3
I'm not sure	0	0
No response	14	9.3
Total	150	100

The question that follows provided some confusion in the minds of participants as they were filling in the questionnaire. This reaction may reflect the frequent and casual relationships that seem to be the natural order of teenage life and as revealed in the data above (see Tables 2 and 3). The study suggests that 24 per cent of respondents have had between 10 and 35 relationships since they started dating (Table 5).

Table 5. Since you started dating how many different people have you dated?

No of Different People Dated	Interviewees	Percent
0	1	0.8
1	13	10.2
2	16	12.6
3	16	12.6
4	9	7.1
5	15	11.8
6	12	9.4
7	6	4.7
8	6	4.7
9	3	2.4
10	7	5.5
11	1	0.8
12	2	1.6
13	1	0.8
14	1	0.8
15	6	4.7
20	5	3.9
24	1	0.8
25	2	1.6
30	1	0.8
35	3	2.4
Total	127	100

Table 6 reveals that during the 12 months prior to the study, half of the participants had had only one relationship and 21 per cent had 2 dates.

Table 6. During the last 12 months how many people have you dated?

No of Different People Dated	Interviewees	Percent
0	15	11.5
1	66	50.7
2	27	20.8
3	6	4.6
4	8	6.2
5	6	4.6
6	1	0.8
10	1	0.8
Total	130	100

The tables that follow probe more deeply into the activities that go on during a date and the attitudes of both partners. The data suggests that the trend for a romantic evening between 2 young people varies substantially, however, the majority seem to prefer the pub, a restaurant or the movies (Table 7). The park or a quiet apartment also seem popular venues for a hot date.

Table 7. Which, if any, of the following happened with your date/s **since you finished high school?** Please list everything that has taken place.

	No (%)	Yes (%)
1. My date and I went to a friend's house where we could be alone	77 (68.1)	36 (31.9)
2. Went to a friend's house with a group	30 (23.3)	99 (76.7)

3. Went to my/my date's house or apartment to be alone	48 (38.7)	76 (61.3)
4. Went to my/my date's house or apartment with a group	52 (43.3)	68 (56.7)
5. Went to the park to be alone	37 (30.6)	84 (69.4)
6. Were to the park with a group	36 (30.8)	81 (69.2)
7. Were at a club, pub	5 (3.8)	128 (96.2)
8. Went to the movies, restaurants	9 (6.8)	123 (93.2)
9. Other	5 (6.2)	76 (93.8)

The respondents seem to be divided in their experience of who pays the bill. Almost half (48.5%) share the costs on an equal footing and 44 per cent suggest that their partner pays for everything (Table 8).

Table 8. Who usually pays for the costs on a date?

	Frequency	(%)
I pay all/most	1	0.7
Other person pays for everything/most	60	44.1
We each pay about half	66	48.5
Other	9	6.6

Behavioural patterns are of particular interest to the study of date rape. Table 9 shows that while 10.3 per cent of the respondents say they do not drink when on a date, 64 per cent drink between 2 and 6 drinks (Table 9).

Table 9. How many alcoholic drinks do you have when you go out on a date?

	Frequency	(%)
Do not drink	14	10.3
1 drink	17	12.5
2 – 3 drinks	56	41.2
4 – 6 drinks	31	22.8
6 or more drinks	18	13.2

Despite the drug problem that has plagued Malta, 96 per cent of study participants say that they do not indulge in substance abuse when out on a date (Table 10).

Table 10. Do you take any drugs when you go out on a date?

No (%)	Yes (%)
130 (95.6)	6 (4.4)

Table 11 adds to the picture of behavioural patterns among women in Malta when on a date. The data suggests that kissing, touching the genital area and oral sex are a common occurrence during a date and well over half the participants contend that they accommodate to such behaviour 'willingly'. 51 per cent of respondents say they did not have intercourse.

Table 11. Please review each behavior below that may have happened with your date/s **since you finished high school**.

Sexual behavior	Did not Happen	I did this willingly	My date TRIED to against my wishes	My date DID this anyway against my wishes
1. Kissed	4 (3%)	125	1 (0.8%)	2 (1.5%)

		(94.7%)		
2. Touched/kissed breasts	28 (22.6%)	86 (69.4%)	8 (6.5%)	2 (1.6%)
3. Touched buttocks under your clothes	28 (22.8%)	84 (68.3%)	9 (7.3%)	2 (1.6%)
4. Touched genitals under your clothes	42 (33.9%)	71 (57.3%)	9 (7.3%)	2 (1.6%)
5. Had oral sex	55 (45.8%)	60 (50%)	4 (3.3%)	1 (0.8%)
6. Had sexual intercourse	64 (52.5%)	51 (41.8%)	6 (4.9%)	1 (0.8%)

In view of women's accommodating attitude towards their date, how do their partners treat them? Table 12 points to male dominance and an unequal role. For example, more than half the respondents have been ignored and / or criticized during a date. Almost half have experienced decisions made for them and / or had their ideas ridiculed by their date. Despite some psychological abuse, physical violence does not seem to occur often during a date as few respondents seem to have experienced severe physical violence such as being threatened with a weapon, punched or were at risk of being choked.

Table 12. How often **since you finished high school** did your date/s:

	<i>Never</i> (%)	Seldom (%)	Often (%)	Always (%)
1. Ignore you/did not pay any attention to you	46 (34.6)	82 (61.7)	5 (3.8)	0
2. Ignore your feelings	47 (35.1)	71 (53)	16 (11.9)	0
3. Criticize you	44 (31.1)	75 (56.4)	14 (10.5)	0
4. Ridicule your ideas	71 (53.8)	54 (40.9)	6 (4.5)	1 (0.8)

5. Shout at you	94 (70.7)	37 (27.8)	1 (0.8)	1 (0.8)
6. Call you names/insulted you	108 (81.8)	22 (16.7)	1 (0.8)	1 (0.8)
7. Insult your family/friends?	105 (79.5)	25 (18.9)	2 (1.5)	0
8. Humiliate you in private or public	108 (81.2)	24 (18)	1 (0.8)	0
9. Make decisions for you	63 (48.1)	59 (45)	9 (6.9)	0
10. Act extremely jealous	57 (43.2)	50 (37.9)	22 (16.7)	3 (2.3)
11. Persistently insist to know where you were	70 (53)	50 (37.9)	11 (8.3)	1 (0.8)
12. Try to restrict you from seeing your friends/family	112 (84.8)	15 (11.4)	5 (3.8)	0
13. Push or shove you violently	125 (94)	8 (6)	0	0
14. Hold you to keep you from leaving	101 (75.9)	26 (19.5)	3 (2.3)	3 (2.3)
15. Slap or hit you	131 (98.5)	2 (1.5)	0	0
16. Punch you	133 (100)	0	0	0
17. Put his arms around your neck to choke you	131 (99.2)	1 (0.8)	0	0
18. Throw objects at you	128 (96.2)	4 (3)	1 (0.8)	0
19. Threaten to hurt you	122 (91.7)	11 (8.3)	0	0
20. Subject you to reckless driving	108 (81.2)	21 (15.8)	3 (2.3)	1 (0.8)
21. Threaten to hurt you with a weapon/object	133 (100)	0	0	0

Section 3 - Unwanted sexual experiences with your date

An unwanted sexual experience is when a date tries to make it clear, either verbally or non verbally, that she does not want to indulge in sexual activity but is coerced to do it anyway. The unwanted sexual experience could have been anything from making a woman kiss her date to forcing her to have sexual intercourse.

The question that follows asks respondents whether they were forced to give in to sexual activity but not intercourse. Table 1 suggests that an overwhelming majority of respondents were never forced into unwanted sexual behaviour. Only 22 per cent contend they were overwhelmed by continual arguments and pressure and 16 per cent were afraid to refuse their date's advances. 12 per cent divulge they were afraid their date would break up the relationship, while 16 per cent were afraid to say 'no'. 1 respondent says she was forced into sex play by being given alcohol or drug. The data seems to support that in Table 11 Section 2 which seems to suggest that Maltese women engage with 'messaging around' quite willingly.

Table 1. **Since you finished high school** have you given in to *sex play/making' out/messaging around /fooling around / foreplay (fondling, kissing, or petting, but not intercourse)* when you didn't want to for any of the following reasons?

Reason (check all that apply)			Did it happen on a date?		How often?		
Yes			Yes	No	Never	Sometimes	
No					Always		
1. You were overwhelmed by a person's continual arguments and pressure	27 (21.8%)	97 (78.2%)	17 (28.8%)	42 (71.2%)	35 (61.4%)	20 (35.1%)	2 (3.5%)
2. A person threatened or used some degree of physical force (twisting your arm, holding you down, etc.) to make you	13 (10.6%)	110 (89.4%)	6 (11.5%)	46 (88.5%)	40 (78.4%)	11 (21.6%)	0

3. A person forced you by giving you alcohol or drugs	7 (5.7%)	11 6 (94.3%)	2 (4.4%)	43 (95.6%)	43 (91.5%)	3 (6.4%)	1 (2.1%)
4.You were afraid to say no	19 (16.2%)	98 83 (83.8%)	10 (21.3%)	37 (78.7%)	32 (71.1%)	12 (26.7%)	1 (2.2%)
5. You were afraid that if you didn't consent would leave you (break up with you)	15 (12.1%)	10 9 (87.9%)	9 (18.8%)	39 (81.2%)	37 (72.5%)	11 (21.6%)	3 (5.9%)
6. A person used his position of authority (boss, teacher, camp counselor, supervisor) to force you	5 (4.1%)	11 7 (95.9%)	1 (2.2%)	45 (97.8%)	43 (95.6%)	2 (4.4%)	0
7. For any other reason (please specify) ----- -----	2 (5.3%)	36 94 (94.7%)	0	13 (100%)	14 (93.3%)	1 (6.7%)	0

The following question asks specifically about unwanted sexual intercourse and other sexual acts. Interestingly, the data that emerges in this study is once again supported in Table 2 Section 3 above. Only a small percentage of the respondents say that they gave in to sexual intercourse against their wishes. 10 per cent were overwhelmed by the date's pressure and continual arguments to comply with his wishes and 4.5 per cent say that this situational behaviour happen always. 8.3 per cent of the women in the study were afraid to say 'no' and a gap in the study is that it does not divulge the reasons behind some women's fear to refuse unwanted

intimacy. By contrast, while 6 of the women say they suffered physical force to give in to sexual intercourse, only 2 were forced through alcohol or drugs.

Table 2. **Since you finished high school**, have you given in to *sexual intercourse/sexual acts* when you didn't want to for any of the following reasons?

Reason (check all that apply)			Did it happen on a date?		How often?		
No			Yes	No	Never Always	Sometimes	
1. You were overwhelmed by a person's continual arguments and pressure	11 (10%)	99 (90%)	7 (15.6%)	38 (84.4%)	35 (79.5%)	7 (15.9%)	2 (4.5%)
2. A person threatened or used some degree of physical force (twisting your arm, holding you down, etc.) to make you	6 (5.5%)	103 (94.5%)	4 (9.5%)	38 (90.5%)	37 (88.1%)	5 (11.9%)	0
3. A person forced you by giving you alcohol or drugs	2 (1.8%)	108 (98.2%)	1 (2.5%)	39 (97.5%)	40 (97.6%)	1 (2.4%)	0
4. You were afraid to say no	9 (8.3%)	99 (91.7%)	6 (14.6%)	35 (85.4%)	35 (83.3%)	7 (16.7%)	0
5. You were afraid that if you didn't consent would leave you (break up with you)	5 (4.6%)	103 (95.4%)	6 (14.6%)	35 (85.4%)	36 (85.7%)	6 (14.3%)	0
6. A person used his position of	1	10	2	38	38	3	0

authority (boss, teacher, camp counselor, supervisor) to force you	(1%)	4 (99%)	(5%)	(95%)	(92.7%)	(7.3%)	
7. For any other reason (please specify) ----- -----	1 (1.6%)	62 (98.4%)	1 (5.3%)	18 (94.7%)	18 (94.7%)	1 (5.3%)	0

A more direct question as to whether the women in the study have ever experienced unwanted sex, 16 per cent answer in the affirmative (Table 3).

Table 3. Since you finished high school, **did you have any unwanted sexual experience?**

(1) No (**Please go to question No.11**) (2) Yes

No	Yes
107 (84.3%)	20 (15.7%)

Only half (10) of the women who have experienced an unwanted sexual experience had divulged the incident to anyone (Table 4a). All but one spoke about the experience to a friend. Interestingly, neither the police nor the priest seems a reliable *confident* with young women in Malta. Only one respondent opened up to a parent (Table 4b).

Table 4a. Have you ever told anyone about this unwanted sexual experience?

No	8 (44.4%)
Yes	10 (55.6%)

Table 4b

Parent	1 (9.1%)
--------	----------

Friend	10 (90.9%)
Family Member	0
Priest / Religious Representative	0
Therapist	0
Police	0
Other	0

The data in Table 4c seems to suggest that it is not easy for a person who experiences unwanted sex to be quick and speak up about it. Most of the women who say they had unwanted sex waited 6 or more months before they told anyone.

Table 4c - How much time passed before you told someone?

I never told anyone	4 (28.6%)
1 day	3 (21.4%)
1 week	3 (21.4%)
1 month	0
6 or more months	4 (28.6%)

A rather worrying factor is that professional help is not sought in such traumatic circumstances. None of the women went to a professional person but as the data in Table 4b suggests, friends seem to be the trusted persons (Table 4d).

Table 4d - Did you seek professional help?

No	12 (100%)
Yes	0

The date with whom the women in the study had experienced unwanted sexual intercourse was largely know between a few weeks and a few months. 2 respondents did not know the date at all (Table 5).

Table 5 - How long had you known this date?

I didn't know this date at all	2 (10%)
A few days	2 (10%)
Few weeks	6 (30%)
Few months	4 (20%)
1 or more years	6 (30%)

Almost half of the women (45%) who experienced unwanted sex describe their date as a boyfriend. Only one person saw her date as a sexual partner (Table 6).

Table 6 - How would you describe your relationship with this person?

Your Boyfriend	9 (45%)
Sexual partner	1 (5%)
Someone you spend time with few times	3 (15%)
A friend	5 (25%)
Other	2 (10%)

The setting for unwanted sexual intercourse seems to be a single date 'just me and him' in 65 per cent of the cases (Table 7).

Table 7 -What was the setting?

Group of friends got together	4 (20%)
Single date, just me and him	13 (65%)
Several couples went out together	0
Other	3 (15%)

42 per cent of the cases where sexual intercourse takes place seem to be in an apartment or house (Table 8). This data supports that in Table 7 Section 2.

Table 8 - Where did you go on this date?

Movies	2 (10.5%)
Out to eat	0
Party	0
Park	2 (10.5%)
Apartment or house	8 (42.1%)
Beach	0
Club/pub	3 (15.8%)
Other	4 (21.1%)

The data in Table 9 suggests that the date was not drinking when the respondent was forced to have sex.

Table 9. Was the person drinking?

No	11 (61.1%)
Yes	7 (38.9%)

In most cases (63%) the date was not on drugs when sexual intercourse was forced on the respondent, however, 26 per cent of the women answered that they did not know (Table 10).

Table 10 - Was the person on drugs?

No	12 (63.2%)
Yes	2 (10.5%)
I don't know	5 (26.3%)

11. Is there anything else about dating and violence? The data that follow draw on verbatim quotes found at the end of some of the questionnaires and are deliberately presented 'untouched':

"Keep up the good work. About time someone did something about it."

"We should learn to say No."

"I have never been violated although sometimes I am continually sexually harassed through comments and minor touching of my arms etc. since I work in a bar. When it is annoying I tell the person to keep his hands to himself. With regards to dating, I do not date any guys who I know I wouldn't be interested in maybe for a relationship."

"A friend of mine thought she had bid her boyfriend goodbye two blocks away from home. Seconds after leaving him, she started hearing footsteps following her but every time she turned around there was no one in sight. Arriving on her doorstep, she heard some rustling and some noises. She caught the glimpse of her boyfriend's shadow hiding between some bushes. When questioned about it he said he was just checking on her."

"Many teenagers might think that date rape only happens if there is a sexual intercourse. I think we should be more aware that it might also involve subtler things which might still have negative impacts."

"Although I did not have any bad experiences, I am aware that there are persons with bad experiences. It is important that we know what to do."

"All I can say is that my boyfriend and I feel that in our relationship we do something if we both want to. I am quite fortunate that I found someone who trusts me and loves me just as I am and not for sex only."

"Dating is an experience in which you are supposed to have fun and feel loved. However, I do know persons who actually are in a relationship and continuously get hit by their boyfriend even though I never had such an experience or somewhat slight to be honest."

"I believe that consent is very important in this context. Being feminine does not mean that we have to be submissive to any man's request."

"If you know how to choose the right person to date, violence on a date has only a slim chance to occur."

"A girl must be careful with whom she's dating. Better go out with friends at first, until getting to know him. A girl should never see a guy again when acting even a little bit violent."

"People are not afraid to tell you about their sexual conquests, but they sometimes lie to impress others. I know of someone who was slipped drugs in her drink but luckily got out of the situation."

"I haven't ever experience any violence."

"I've had unwanted sex but for a little more than one week a guy is harassing me (call, text messages) so I begin to pay attention about that."

"First of all girls have to have the courage to say no ... secondly, she has to know when the time is right ... last she has to break up in the first violent act he makes!"

"Dating should be something pleasant and worthwhile without any type of violence! Girls shouldn't date a guy just out of boredom, even less continue to do so if he is violent ... DUMP HIM ASAP, coz once he hits you, he is likely to do it again. Hope it never happens to me! Would not tolerate it even if I'm madly in love!"

"Going out with someone must/should be based on a good relationship. Where violence starts to persist, problems will arise."

"Just that. You do things because you want to. No-one is really that persuasive anyway."

"Most men / boys look at women / girls just for fun and for doing these 'things'. It's not fair obviously."

"I did not experience any of these unwanted forced situations."

"The questions were set on when I finished high school till now, however, I recall having 2 forced sexual experiences mainly petting with my first boyfriend aged 20 when I was 15 and half years old and another boyfriend who was also more into sex than I was. Although they insisted both (and separately) on his having intercourse I never gave in to them although I gave in to certain other things."

"I believe there needs to be greater awareness amongst women as regards the need to be assertive and in their right to say no if they don't want to do something."

"I gave in to sex play not intercourse to avoid unnecessary conflicts."

"DATING IS WITHOUT MEANING. ONE IS TREATED AS AN OBJECT!" the bold capitals reflect the respondent's feelings about dating and dating attitudes.

"It wasn't violence. It was simply the boring routine of sex in a relationship that was going down the drain."

"Some people think that if you do not have sexual experiences you are a loser and that you are not worth it. We all have the mentality that everyone is doing sex on the first date."

"That boys should respect them and their ideas and not treat them as an object or someone who will increase their self-esteem when they are with their friends."

"Re. section 3 Q. 2. – gave in to sexual intercourse – had not feelings for him but still went with him. More education on interacting, sexual information and skills when young."

"Such acquaintance rape could even happen if you don't barely know the person. Never was afraid to say no however at times it can be that one feels that she has to please the person."

"Since finished high school no. But there are a lot of adolescents age 14 – 16 who go with older boys and stuff happens to them without wanting to. When you get older you have more control but when younger you are more prone in my opinion."

"I think it is a problem that is mostly seen abroad, however, such cases are only rare in Malta, fortunately."

"There is violence against women around and unfortunately women tend to keep their mouth closed. But not as much as abroad."

"Several sexual acts at a young age are committed as a result of immaturity; lack of sex education and peer pressure."

"If for the first date with a person which maybe you have not known before, you go somewhere where you're all alone, it is likely to be subject to violence. Never go out with a guy all alone whom you never knew before as it may be dangerous – not always but it may be."

"People need to be more careful about internet dating."

"In my opinion, it mostly happens to teenagers (i.e. under the age of 16) when they start dating older partners (talking about men of around 30 years old)."

"Violence during dating is less likely to occur when on a date with someone whom is already known, even if the person was met for one time. It is more likely to occur on blind dates who expect their partner to comply with them immediately because of the situation. Some people get the idea that blind dates are meant for occasional sex."

"I am totally against it since I think dating and sexual interest should be from both sides and nobody must be forced to do anything against their will."

"Dating might start out as something nice and exciting, however, it may become violent especially if both partners or one of the partners is on alcohol or a substance abuser or brought up in an undisciplined environment."

"Male juveniles are very possessive people and most of them are very selfish. In my case, because I have my mother with a career and works almost the whole day I

have been brought up very independent but the people that have their mothers unemployed cannot understand this fact and feel threatened if a boyfriend with his mother that doesn't work has his girlfriend that would like to work in the future."

4.2 Qualitative results – focus groups discussions

Two focus groups were conducted among students who were picked at random and invited to participate in the study. The first contact was by email where they were given a time and venue. The following data draw on the discussions with the women:

Awareness of date rape

What defines a relationship? What is the norm for intimacy in dating among young people in Malta?

The participants in the focus groups define a relationship as one that has lasted more than 12 months of dating. A woman in the group said she had had about 3 partners in 12 months and was not officially going out with anyone during the time of interviewing, hence, according to her there was no relationship and she added that she was never forced to do anything against her will. On the other hand, *one respondent said that in the 12 months prior to the interview, she experienced sexual intercourse but adds that she knew her date and was happy to do it voluntarily.* This attitude seems to correlate with the data that suggests women seem to accommodate their date 'willingly' (Table 11 Section2).

At what point can a person refuse sex while dating? The respondents agree that women can refuse sex at any point and although it may be very difficult during the act, especially before penetration, the situation depends on whether the couple is 'just dating' or is in a 'relationship'.

The women in the study suggest that the norm for intimacy on a date depends largely on the person. They argue that while dates may be casual without prior arrangements sex is often the norm. For example, they point out that they would rather be acquainted with the date before going out with him, however, they contend that 14 and 15 year-olds have a different concept of sex, are casual about their

dates to the extent that they do not need to know who the person is before they go out with him. Women in the focus groups draw a line when defining a serious relationship: for boys it is 21 years and for girls 18 years.

What do you understand by date rape? What is its definition?

The respondents define date rape as enforced sex by someone who is officially going out with someone else. There may be both physical and psychological violence, pressure and insults e.g. "you don't deserve better" or "*hoxna jien nissaportik*" (you're fat and I only tolerate you). They point out that girls may be fooled when for example, cars are locked, or the girl is under the influence of alcohol and drugs.

Dating relationships / unwanted sexual experiences

What specific acts are classified as date rape?

Behaviour that leads to rape includes touching, violation of personal territory and trying to touch intimate parts under clothes. "He should respect a woman's opinion". This verbatim quote tallies with the data in the quantitative study that suggests men tend to ignore or pay little attention to women on a date (Table 12 Section 2).

Do they know anyone who was raped? Did it happen to a friend?

It was suggested that they knew of girls who were taken to a secluded place and raped while being driven back home by their date. The 'hotel' culture was also discussed and the participants know of a woman who works in a hotel and who got raped by a older co-worker. They argued that it is a culture that has to be lived with or stand up to sexual harassment by being violent or slapping the harasser. The women in the focus groups are confident that reporting the incident gets you nowhere.

The respondents emphasise that men could easily use pressure on the girl as a result of alcohol and drugs "which are very determining". They contend that alcohol and drug interfere with the ability to resist sexual intercourse.

One woman spoke about her friend who was between 15 and 16 years of age who was put under pressure to had to give in to sexual intercourse.

Attitudes towards date rape

If consent is given by a woman to the date would that still be considered rape?

The women are hesitant about replying to this question. They argue that in most cases consent is given when either party is under the influence of drugs or alcohol. In such circumstances the date is quick to take advantage of the situation. "If he is drunk, the girl should not risks", they point out.

Gender stereotypes: women are considered passive, unassertive and dependent while men are regarded more constrained in their behaviour, aggressive, strong and relentless. What is your view on these stereotypes?

Women are considered more passive and consenting and men aggressive. But this is not the reality because women can be aggressive too. Nevertheless, because of the stereotypes, when women say no men insist on getting their way. They use physical force and threats. So women must comply. The women in the study agree that it is difficult to resist men. They add that some women behave in such a way that by saying 'no' they really mean 'yes'. "Everyone likes sex but if she says 'no' it's 'no'". The participants agree that there are women in Malta who are weak but today they tend to be more assertive. Education has changed young women and sex is no longer taboo.

The myth that when a woman says yes she means no is an excuse for men. There might be cases where a woman says yes then regrets it and makes men feel guilty. E.g. a 16-year old who dated a 21-year old is accusing him of rape, however, because of peer pressure is taking legal action against him. Older boys are more powerful and young women who date older persons feel they have gained status. Young women are often pressurised into keeping their older boyfriends, and this decision might also include unwanted sex.

What is the women's personal experience in terms of dates and date rape?

None of the women in the focus groups admits to being raped and emphasis that they had never experienced such a situation in the 12 months prior to the interview.

They insist that they always managed to stop the men from taking advantage of them. The participants signal that if a date tries to touch them, he is a *xitan* (devil).

Can a woman be 'asking for it' by dressing / acting in a certain way?

Every situation is different and the date might have an incorrect perception of the woman which is influenced by the dress she wears, her behaviour and her attitude towards him. The respondents contend that women should be more assertive and be clear about her boundaries. However, they knew of a woman who felt she would rather consent to her dates' requests as otherwise other boys would not go out with her. Moreover, "some women would consent out of fear that he might hit or insult her" the women in the focus groups warn. This verbatim comment corresponds with the data in the quantitative study Tables 1 and 2 Section 3.

Support and prevention

What specific measures are needed for women to protect themselves from date rape? What could prevent such abuse?

The focus groups suggest that the date must be told outright that touching will not be tolerated. A woman must be assertive and that 'no' means 'no'. They add that dress and the places a woman frequents are in themselves a statement about the type of woman and her attitude towards dating. "Behaviour and attitudes say more than words do." Moreover, it is suggested that the woman is well acquainted with the date before accepting to go out with him. More important, a first date should never be in a secluded place, the participants warn. Women must dress 'appropriately', be careful about drinking, inform her friends of her whereabouts, carry a mobile phone with her, and never divulge personal information. Ideally, a date should be scheduled for the afternoon or in day light. Ultimately, a woman should 'read him' before going out with a date, otherwise she should get out fast!

Interestingly, it was also pointed out that if a date were arranged through the Net, it was safer for a woman to agree on a meeting place rather than be picked up from her place of residence.

What do the focus groups perceive as the responsibilities of the woman to avoid rape on a date? And of the male partner?

Women should stay away from alcohol, be sure to dress appropriately and to behave in a decent manner and avoid flirting. Her attitude should be to keep her distance. However, they add that all this depends on the character of the women who might be misinterpreted by her partner and consequently abused. If engaging in sexual activity to use protection such as the condom.

According to the focus groups, what would prevent date rape?

- dress code
- avoid times and places
- some older women dress to attract sexual attention
- some young women dress like older ones to attract attention
- when on your own you must not dress like that but in a relationship it is ok to dress like that
- avoid secluded places and taking lifts
- bars are relatively safe
- Avoiding one night stands
- Knowing the person before dating him
- Preferably to stick with one's group of friends
- Not being promiscuous
- Sex before marriage is only acceptable if the woman knows her date

Men must understand and respect women and not treat them like a *bicca ta' l-art* (floorcloth). He should ask her if she is comfortable with sexual intercourse and during the actual act he should ask whether the woman would like to stop. The women in the focus groups define respect as: concern for emotions, needs and wants of a partner. They add that communication is key. Often a man takes a woman in his car and abuses her sexually. Men should avoid double dating and using their women as *objett* (an object). The women respondents contend that sex is always on men's mind. Whereas sex means love to a woman, to men it means pleasure and merely satisfies need. "Ofcourse, it is a need for women too, but women exert more self control than men and tend to associate sex with love" the interviewees suggest. Finally, the interviewees contend that men should avoid substance abuse or at least know their limits.

Where can women turn to for help if needed? Would they report date rape to the police?

The respondents have no confidence in the police and their reaction to the question is: Definitely not! Victims are not treated well. The police give no help and do more harm than good. *L-anqas haqq l-imbarazz* (it's not worth the embarrassment). (Date rape is too sensitive and very often the victims get blamed. Sometimes there are many false reports on rapes. The women do not feel comfortable to talk to the police especially if it is a man on duty. The women in the focus group contend that there is a lot of machismo among the police, however, if the police on duty were a woman, there would be a greater possibility of confiding in her when in need.

How much do the women in the study trust church representatives in such circumstances?

Some of the interviewees were quick to state that they would surely not approach a priest. However, others suggest that it depends who the priest is as some are helpful and open minded. "But oldies definitely not!" they say. They add that counsellors in secondary schools are useful and there is a greater chance of being approached.

How much do women trust the institutions / organisations that handle date rape?

The women in the focus group would not go to hospital voluntarily, willingly or immediately. They must first recover from the initial shock of the experience then they might consider going to hospital after having confided in friends and be convinced to go to hospital by them, and perhaps their parents but not family or a counsellor. There is consensus that parents are informed after they tell their friends as they fear the consequences of parents' reaction. Neither would they go to Agenzija Appogg as they are unsure whether they provide support and date rape services.

Whom would the women turn to if they fall victim to date rape?

Most interviewees say they would turn to their mother first, but others were quick to suggest they are afraid of their parents and would rather tell friends. Alternatively they would speak to their siblings. Anonymous internet reporting was suggested as there is a better chance of victims coming forward with their experience while avoiding the face to face trauma. Indeed, focus group participants would like a website run by an agency, not the police, where they could report anonymously via

internet. They contend that the first step would be to make the report less personal even if the victim needs to go to the police later on. An agency is preferred to the police as it is more humane. A police website would reflect a uniform and young people associate the police with road blocks and trouble. So if a woman falls victim of date rape and needs counselling and support, she will not turn to the police. The participants agree that involving parents might not be the ideal situation, as they tend to over rule their children by insisting on making an official report to the police and push for the perpetrators to be brought to justice.

Recommendations on date rape education

The respondents suggest that education and awareness raising are essential for women to know of their rights and be more assertive and schools are the best venue. Schools should instil such messages to both boys and girls at school through classes in personal and social development (PSD) and also through seminars and courses on cybercrime and porn. The women suggest that schools discuss the plight of unmarried mothers, however, discussions on date rape and its consequences are never on the agenda. Some of the women participants suggest they had heard of date rape but were never instructed on how to avoid it or deal with it. Interestingly, the participants raised the issue that PSD teachers and school counsellors are prompt to divulge all to parents with dire consequences at home. One woman in the focus group recalls that when she once confided in a school counsellor, to her chagrin her case (without mentioning names) was brought up as an example during a PSD lesson.

They further contend that more awareness is needed about cybercrime such as on-line dating. They warn that MSN or MIRC which are notorious for divulging personal information on internet are common among 13 to 15 year-olds.

Finally, the women in the study suggest TV campaigns against date rape, although some were concerned that this might alarm their parents, and warnings against date rape on internet, in public toilets, bill boards, in cinemas and MTV posters.

4.3 Qualitative results – institutional interviews

There are no institutions or organizations, whether governmental or NGOs that specifically relate to date rape in Malta. The closest we could get in terms of crime-related are the Malta Police, Agenzija Appogg that falls under the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity and Merhba Bik, an NGO that provides shelter to battered women and their children. All three were clear about the fact that date rape in Malta is neither covered by law, if only under the criminal code, nor do agencies or formal institutions provide services for the victims, their perpetrators or simply education in raising awareness about date rape. Date rape is an unknown phenomenon in Malta.

The following data draws on one-to-one interviews with relevant persons working for the 3 entities relevant to the study of date rape in Malta and are quoted *verbatim*.

Part 1 – Organizations' representatives data

For how long has your organisation been working with issues of sexuality, dating experiences, date rape, gender?

Agenzija Appogg: This agency has been working on these issues since 1994. Every unit in this agency touches somehow on date rape, however, victims of date rape usually report to the police first. They are the ones who deal with rape especially marital rape. Sometimes the police refer such cases to us. We have a few cases of stranger /acquaintance rape but no date rape.

Malta Police: The police have been doing this work for the last 20 years. Having said this, I know of no reported incidences of date rape. Such cases would be taken care of by the crime victim support unit which falls under the vice squad. Rape is channelled to those people because they have the necessary training.

Merhba Bik: We deal with rape in general especially marital but not date rape.

What are the main activities of this organisation?

Agenzija Appogg: The agency publishes leaflets, has its own website, and organise talks to raise awareness about various issues related to social problems. Although the agency deals mainly with adults over 18 years whom they try to empower, schools are visited regularly. The agency assesses clients' needs and then liaises with other entities depending on the person's needs.

Malta Police: We have no activities on date rape.

Merhba Bik: The NGO provides shelter for victims of domestic violence, empowers them to become more self-assertive and helps them seek a direction in their lives and that of their children.

Does the organisation have specific guidelines / policies in dealing with date rape?

Agenzija Appogg: No - not written ones but we advise clients to report to the police.

Malta Police: Not specifically. We have guidelines for sexual offences but they do not distinguish between date rape and other types of rape. We have women police officers for victims of rape and their children especially when dealing with interrogation and ID construction.

Merhba Bik: No.

Does your organisation have a definition for date rape?

Agenzija Appogg: No. The definition might be that a woman goes on a date the first time and gets raped but there was no relationship ...

Malta Police: No specific definition except the one in the Criminal Code on rape in general. In police terms, it means that the victim is drugged on Rohipnol (drug in drink for rape). Date rape is associated with drugs and unconsciousness.

Merhba Bik: No definition.

Part 2 – Support to girls / women that had an unwanted sexual experience under / or date rape

Does your organisation work with support activities structured for girls / women who have experienced or are at risk of date rape?

Agenzija Appogg: We give talks to schools in general and adapt to the audience.

Malta Police: ... sporadic campaigns in general but not specifically on date rape.

Merhba Bik: yes, but not dealing with date rape. If victims of date rape come to our door we would help them because they have suffered an abuse but we have never had such cases.

What kind of support do you offer?

Agenzija Appogg: We provide shelter to victims of domestic violence. Date rape victims do not really need shelter but need advice and psychological and legal services. Date rape cases are very rare.

Malta Police: Referral to NGOs. No in-house services.

Merhba Bik: Holistic support to victims of domestic violence. We lead women to financial, legal, psychological, health help (polyclinic or helper doctors).

What are the main problems that your organisation encounters when working to support girls / women? (e.g. structural, financial, organisational, policies, etc.)

Agenzija Appogg: We don't offer a service to date rape victims.

Malta Police: No problems. Police are guided by laws and they are rigid. If data protection so dictates we cannot divulge information no matter what social workers would like.

Merhba Bik: Financial and the organisational – the usual but we get along.

Part 3 – Prevention, better practice and co-operation with other organisations / stakeholders

Do you work with preventive measures against the occurrence of unwanted sexual experience / date rape? What kind of preventive / support work does your organisation do?

Agenzija Appogg: No, we have no preventive measures specifically for date rape. We have generic campaigns and talks.

Malta Police: No, not systematic and not generated from within. The victim support unit refers victims to other support agencies and then follows them up.

Merhba Bik: No, we promote awareness regarding domestic violence (incl. rape). We empower women to act differently if she returns to the perpetrator.

Do you have a successful example in your own work of support / prevention in relation to unwanted sexual experiences / date rape? Why do you think this was successful?

Agenzija Appogg: Most rape victims have been empowered. They become more aware of their rights. E.g. she was sent for psychological and legal advice, she was broken but now moved on and is ok. She has been prepared for court situation – this was stranger rape. Husband had to go to family therapy. As social workers we never came across a date rape. Date rape victims learn to cope without seeking help!

Malta Police: Yes, many. Follow-ups show that rape victims reintegrate into society.

Merhba Bik: We have many examples but these are not specifically date rape victims, although very often the abused women who come to us have been raped but do not admit it.

Do you know of other organisations / authority that is working successfully on the issue of date rape?

Agenzija Appogg: Yes, there are the criminal justice bureau and the vice squad.

Malta Police: Agenzija Appogg

Merhba Bik: No.

Do you know of any initiatives related to the issues of sexuality, gender, dating experiences, unwanted sexual experiences / date rape? (e.g. seminars, research, political activities, etc.)

Agenzija Appogg: No initiatives specifically on date rape.

Malta Police: Social Some years back the welfare development programme had done something but the police are currently doing nothing.

Merhba Bik: There is the G-U clinic based at Boffa Hospital where they work on genitally transmitted diseases.

Does your organisation co-operate with other organisations on these issues in relation to support girls / women? With whom? In what way? Who would you like to co-operate more with?

Agenzija Appogg : yes, we co-operate with the police, psychological services, Sedqa and the criminal justice bureau by referring our clients to relevant entities. We would like more co-operation with the police.

Malta Police: Absolutely. We co-operate with Agenzija Appogg by reading the guidelines they circulate. The Police would like to co-operate with anyone who is interested.

Merhba Bik: We co-operate with Agenzija Apogg and others by giving our support in every way. We find co-operation with everyone.

Who / which organization do you think has the main responsibility of fighting against unwanted sexual experiences / date rape?

Agenzija Appogg: the main responsibility falls on the police, hospital and women's organizations.

Malta Police: The police. They carry the responsibility and duty for crime prevention.

Merhba Bik: Agenzija Appogg has the main responsibility as it is a government hub. Any person in difficulty would go to Agenzija Appogg as it exists to raise awareness.

What are the main difficulties of the organization in fighting against date rape?

Agenzija Appogg: Frustration of not being able to take decisions on our own but we have to rely on the authorities. We also encounter public insensitivity. Police need to provide better service for rape victims.

Malta Police: Rapists are wolves in sheep's skin and are not easily identifiable.

Merhba Bik: No difficulties. We never came across date rape.

Would you like to be included in a national or European network of organizations in relation to these issues, for informational purposes?

Agenzija Appogg: Ofcourse. This would help because we need lots of training. We cannot emphasise this need more! Psychological services have a long waiting list so if we are trained we would help get rid of the workload.

Malta Police: Wouldn't mind.

Merhba Bik: We are part of EAPN and Good Shepard worldwide.

Are you planning any projects / activities, support services and / or other things for girls / women that is possible or had an unwanted sexual experience / date rape?

Agenzija Appogg: No. We cannot cope. This is a small unit. Awareness campaigns always lead to an increase in our workload.

Malta Police: No. Police is a reactive service. Police experts help in the training of nurses and medics. If crime prevention strategies are good, potential criminals would be deterred.

Merhba Bik: No, there is no demand for service related to date rape so it is not one of our priorities.

Please, evaluate your work in relation to sexuality, gender issues, unwanted sexual experiences, date rape.

Agenzija Appogg: The case load for each social worker is 60. It is so overwhelming that they cannot give the service they wish. More time and less workload would be better. As women, we can understand and give a lot. It is true we have a high caseload, however, when dealing with sensitive cases we all give a bit more even though we're stretched. We keep asking for evaluation services even to be carried out by university students for their dissertation. Unfortunately, some women abuse the services: some simply to gain housing, and others to

open a file in court. We need more co-operation from the police. Just referral is no help. We need information and more structure. We are not given feedback from police because of data protection.

Malta Police: Exceptional evaluation of work. The Forensic Unit has 2 female photographers / interviewers for children and women and this avoids secondary victimization.

Merhba Bik: We give a lot of support to women but not date rape victims so far.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Agenzija Appogg: A rape crisis centre is needed. As it is, rape victims are sometimes degraded by the police and hospital staff. This rape crisis centre would work in conjunction with police. We need to have trained people to deal with date rape victims. Training and service should be offered from here in Agenzija Appogg.

Malta Police: The process of recovery of evidence needs changing. It would be better to open another clinic for crisis cases. This would secure privacy. Date rape is usually committed against minors. This clinic would have a small number of dedicated professionals e.g. psychologists, medics, social workers and would be fully equipped. This would avoid secondary victimization.

Merhba Bik: Date rape exists but is a hidden problem. The majority of women do not tell anyone about it out of fear of further victimization in the same way as it is with domestic violence. Although we have never come across it, we are sure date rape exists!

5. Discussion

This study examined the prevalence and impact of date rape among women in Malta, their attitude and dating experiences and the level of awareness among students and persons in authority. The study adopted both a quantitative and qualitative approach for data collection. Data for the quantitative study come from 150 female students between the age of 18 and 24 years studying at the University of Malta. in 2006. Data for the qualitative study draw on another 20 students who participated in focus groups and from representatives of 3 relevant institutions in Malta that include an NGO, a government entity and the police. Is women's attitude tolerant toward or supportive of sexual aggression or date rape? To what extent are relevant stakeholders aware of the incidence of date rape among young people in Malta?

Among the findings were the following: (1) despite the seriousness of the crime, date rape is an unknown concept both among women to whom it matters most and to higher authority; (2) lack of awareness and self-respect adversely affect women's perception of decent behaviour on a date and are less likely to oppose sexual aggression; (3) the majority of women in the study tend towards 'rationalisation' when they accommodate to rape "willingly"; (3) a distinction between a 'date' and a 'relationship' creates a greater acceptance of sexual aggression on a date; (4) lack of information at school during the personal and social development classes tends to postpone a possible solution to the problem; (5) lack of training for police and social workers tend to conceal a hidden crime and support anti-woman, pro-rape attitudes, especially date rape; (6) a co-ordinated approach between the police, Agenzija Appogg and relevant NGOs is not yet institutionalized in Malta making it difficult to implement policies and support services holistically.

The study findings suggest that date rape is alive and well in Malta. However, date rape and its consequences for Maltese society, especially the young women living in it, are shrouded in silence and taboo to the extent that few know of its existence. Date rape is a global phenomenon as all societies are affected by its consequences and is a key theme for policy reform, public debate and even TV talk shows. More important, sexual aggression or date rape has implications for Maltese policy makers and our future society : the perpetuation of male dominance in Maltese society

means less gender equality, less trust and respect between young people, and a less safe place for youth in higher education and places of entertainment.

At the other end of the spectrum, date rape can become a risk factor for sexually transmitted diseases. The Genito Urinary Clinic in Malta reports a 'depressingly unchanged' pattern of casual and unprotected sexual behaviour, and that young people between the age of 13 and 25 made up 41 per cent of new patients in 2006. However, all is not lost. This study of the incidence of date rape among young women in Malta seeks to provide an opportunity for realizing new potential. The key is to address the troubling phenomenon of date rape, so as to better understand the implications and the seriousness of sexual aggression on a date. Date rape also implies changes in support systems that require recruiting more social workers and providing the training they seem to crave for. The study suggests more diversity in discourses and debates about social problems that also include date rape specifically.

6. Conclusion and recommendations

Change in policy and public awareness of date rape is not necessarily apocalyptic or catastrophic for individuals, Maltese society and Malta's social systems. With good will, it means a changing balance between a conscious acceptance that date rape exists, particularly among young people, and the challenge of finding new ways of dealing with victims of date rape, of communicating its consequences within schools, churches, local councils, hospitals and NGOs, and of supporting each other through co-operation with relevant stake holders particularly the police.

The Maltese government is strongly encouraged to take heed of the study findings in the hope of implementing preventive and support provisions for date rape victims and their perpetrators. An appropriate structure with support mechanisms for young people especially women will ease unnecessary suffering and confusion, often experienced by young women whose date has taken advantage of them, and by the same token improve girls' health and self-confidence when on a date. Investing in women's health through raising awareness about the consequences of date rape could make a critical contribution to improving the well-being of young people especially adolescents.

While it is awaited that this study may prompt further more wide ranging research for a deeper understanding of young people's attitude, especially women, during a date, it is hoped that in Malta, new support structures are set up alongside new health policies for the benefit and well-being of all concerned.

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