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Service Providers' Insights on Intimate-Partner Violence, Gender Norms and Culture of Honour in Italy

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Master in the Psychology of Global Mobility, Inclusion and Diversity in Society

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Department of Social and Organizational Psychology

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Aacknowledgement

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Resumo

O presente estudo qualitativo explora as normas de género, a cultura de honra e a violência doméstica na Itália contemporânea, analisando como as dinâmicas culturais enraizadas perpetuam a desigualdade e afetam a prestação de serviços. Foram realizadas entrevistas semiestruturadas com 15 profissionais do campo da violência de género, experientes no apoio a pessoas alvo de violência doméstica. A análise temática das entrevistas revelou normas de género persistentes que limitam a autonomia das mulheres e contribuem para a prevalência da violência doméstica. Os resultados destacam desafios sistémicos na prestação de serviços, incluindo formação inadequada para profissionais e falta de abordagens sensíveis ao género nas respostas institucionais, bem como a manutenção de papéis de género tradicionais ao nível societal, apesar dos esforços de modernização, contribuindo para a vitimização secundária entre sobreviventes de violência doméstica. O estudo apela a mais pesquisas e iniciativas políticas para abordar estas dinâmicas culturais enraizadas, defendendo reformas abrangentes para apoiar sobreviventes de violência doméstica e promover a igualdade de género em Itália.

Palavras chave: Normas de género, violência doméstica, Itália, cultura de honra, desigualdade de género, vitimização secundária, pesquisa qualitativa

Abstract

This qualitative study explores gender norms, culture of honour, and intimate partner violence (IPV) in contemporary Italy, analysing how entrenched cultural dynamics perpetuate inequality and impact service provision. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 professionals from the gender-based violence field, experienced in addressing IPV. A reflexive thematic analysis was conducted on the interview transcripts, revealing persistent gender norms that constrain women's autonomy and contribute to IPV prevalence. Findings underscore systemic challenges in service provision, including inadequate training for professionals and a lack of gender-sensitive approaches in institutional responses, as well as societal traditional gender roles despite modernization efforts, contributing to secondary victimization among IPV survivors. The study calls for further research and policy initiatives to address these entrenched cultural dynamics, advocating for comprehensive reforms to support IPV survivors and promote gender equality in Italy.

Keywords: Gender norms, intimate partner violence, Italy, culture of honour, gender inequality, secondary victimization, qualitative research

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Introduction

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is a significant issue worldwide and in Italy, where many women report experiencing it. Despite legal progress and increased awareness, gaps remain in understanding IPV's complexities and creating effective responses in Italian society. In Italy, where family honour is crucial, women's behaviour is often seen as vital for maintaining family reputation. Deviations can lead to punitive measures to restore honour, affecting societal attitudes toward IPV (Caffaro et al., 2014).

Gender norms shape power dynamics and attitudes towards violence in intimate relationships, often favouring masculinity (Cislaghi & Heise, 2020). Feminist thought in gender studies emphasizes examining gender roles and their impact on family dynamics, education, and workforce participation (Benadusi, 2014; Lomazzi, 2017).

Italy's gender culture is deeply rooted in historical legacies, economic policies, and societal norms. Persistent victim blaming and entrenched gender stereotypes hinder progress towards gender equality. Victim blaming, where survivors are held accountable for their victimization, is prevalent in Italy, allows offenders to evade responsibility further limiting women's autonomy (Lomazzi, 2017; Moriarty, 2008; Zambelli et al., 2018).

IPV encompasses various forms, including physical violence, sexual violence, psychological aggression, and stalking (Dokkedahl et al., 2019; Krebs et al., 2011). Secondary victimization refers to the additional suffering victims face due to inadequate support or understanding from formal agencies, worsening their trauma (Fanci, 2012; R. Campbell & Raja, 1999). In Italy, women experiencing IPV face significant barriers when seeking help, highlighting the need for more responsive and supportive interventions (Sette, 2022). This secondary victimization, both social and psychological, results in heightened negative psychological effects for survivors. Institutions often fail to understand or respond adequately to survivors' needs, further compounding their trauma (Fanci, 2012). Addressing these systemic issues is crucial for improving support systems and advancing gender equality efforts in Italy.

A qualitative approach was chosen to explore how IPV is understood, experienced, and responded to in Italy. This method allows for a nuanced examination of IPV's meanings and contexts from survivors' perspectives (Willig, 2013). Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was employed to systematically identify and analyse patterns within the qualitative data, offering a comprehensive understanding of IPV within Italian cultural contexts. Semi-structured interviews served as the primary tool, with predetermined questions that allowed for flexibility in sequencing and probing based on the interviewer's discretion and the respondent's answers (Wildemuth, 2016). This approach aims to capture the lived experiences, perceptions, and insights of professionals working in the gender-based violence field in Italy.

This study aims to address gaps by exploring the experiences of IPV survivors, examining gender norms influenced by frameworks like hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995) and patriarchal structures, and assessing societal responses to IPV. It provides valuable insights into the complexities of IPV within Italian cultural contexts, highlighting the impact of gender norms, honour dynamics, and societal responses on survivors' experiences. Through qualitative research and theoretical frameworks, this study advocates for survivor-centred approaches, challenges harmful cultural norms, and calls for policy reforms to promote gender equality and support IPV survivors in Italy and beyond.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

1.1. Gender norms

In the 1970s, "gender" was introduced to distinguish socially constructed roles from biological factors, challenging beliefs in innate differences (Cislaghi & Heise, 2020). The term includes social, cultural, and psychological aspects of belonging to one of the sexes (Robustelli, 2000). Feminist sociologists expanded this concept, viewing gender as a system that distributes resources, roles, and power, often favouring masculinity (Cislaghi & Heise, 2020). Gender norms define acceptable behaviour for each gender and have broadened discussions to include how masculinity norms affect all genders (Cislaghi & Heise, 2020). Feminist thought advanced gender studies by using gender as an analytical tool alongside biological sex, highlighting the need to study women in relation to men (Benadusi, 2014).

The term "gender role" refers to traits, behaviours, and job statuses typically linked to masculinity or femininity (Eisend, 2019). Gender role attitudes influence family structures, education, politics, and the workforce (Lomazzi, 2017).

1.1.1. Historical perspectives

Italy's industrial and cultural history, influenced by historical, economic, and political factors since unification in 1861, has deeply entrenched traditional gender roles. Despite efforts to unify Italian culture, these roles remained rooted in a traditional division of labour, reinforced during the fascist era (1922-1943), which emphasized women's caregiving roles and limited their public sphere participation (Lomazzi, 2017).

Capitalism and urbanization, especially in Northern Italy, reinforced gender complementarity, while Central Italy's sharecropping system maintained patriarchal family economies. In the South, an economy based on seasonal labour confined women to domestic duties, limiting their economic opportunities compared to the North (Lomazzi, 2017).

The fascist and Nazi regimes enforced rigid gender roles, influencing the development of gender history and feminist movements in the late 1960s, which challenged conservative views on women's roles and advocated for legal abortion and redefining sexual assault (Benadusi, 2014; Zambelli et al., 2018).

Issues of honour and morality have long shaped Italy's legal and cultural landscape. Concepts like "shotgun marriages" and honour-related crimes reflect societal attitudes toward gender roles. "Shotgun marriages" typically occur to spare the mother from disgrace or to legitimize a child conceived out of wedlock (Brown, 1967). In 1965, Franca Viola, a teenager from Alcamo, refused to marry the man who kidnapped and sexually assaulted her, pressing charges and securing an eleven-year prison sentence for him. At the time, Italian law allowed perpetrators to avoid punishment by marrying their victims, making

Viola's case notable (Pavesi, 2022). Honor-related crimes were legally recognized until reforms in the 1970s, including the legalization of divorce and the abolition of honour-related murder, alongside the abolition of "shotgun weddings" in 1981 (Concas, 2023; De Cristofaro, 2018; Garofalo, 2012).

While significant progress has been made in dismantling patriarchal structures, traditional gender roles and honour-based violence persist, particularly within families. The gradual shift away from these norms reflects broader societal changes, though challenges to achieving full gender equality remain (Cuzzi, 2010; Zambelli et al., 2018).

1.1.2. Contemporary Gender Dynamics

According to Pokharel (2008), discrimination based on sex, race, gender, and other factors hinders equality, development, and peace. Women globally face significant discrimination throughout their lives (Pokharel, 2008). Sexism, which includes negative attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, and cultural practices, maintains unequal gender status (Swim & Hyers, 2009).

Despite global advocacy for women's rights, discrimination often begins at home. Gender attitudes show more acceptance of women in the workforce than in changing domestic roles. Families often reinforce men's dominance and women's dependence, leading to unequal opportunities and earnings for women (Kane & Sanchez, 1994). While employment equality progresses, domestic gender equality lags behind (Eek & Axmon, 2015).

The ambivalent sexism theory identifies two types of sexist attitudes: benevolent sexism, which idealizes women as needing protection, and hostile sexism, which views women as challenging men's power (Hammond et al., 2018; Rollero et al., 2014). These attitudes support patriarchy, even if they appear positive (Glick et al., 2000). Traditional values emphasize men as providers and women as homemakers, often linked to benevolent sexism (Jost et al., 2009). The paradox of women's subordination alongside positive stereotypes assigned to women ("women are wonderful" effect) are a form of prejudice served to justify and maintain their subordination (Glick et al., 2000). Parents play a crucial role in children's gender understanding, reinforcing norms through their interactions. Studies show mothers often encourage daughters to do more housework, reinforcing traditional gender roles (Colaner & Rittenour, 2015).

Italy's gender landscape is predominantly defined by the traditional model of male breadwinners and female homemakers, a paradigm shaped by Western capitalism and modernization. This division places men in the public sphere and confines women to domestic roles, a pattern evident across Europe, although evolving at different historical junctures. This societal structure coincided with the rise of the bourgeois class (Lomazzi, 2017).

Recent trends in Italy illustrate divergent paths in gender roles influenced by modernization. Factors such as increased female employment, higher levels of education, and secularization have sparked shifts in gender dynamics. However, disparities persist while women in Northern and Central Italy have embraced greater workforce participation, those in the South lag due to entrenched traditional values and slower educational advancements. This regional divide is reflected in lower economic participation and educational attainment, particularly among women (Lomazzi, 2017).

Traditional masculinity norms in Italy constrain men's emotional expression and support networks, impacting their well-being. Connell (1995, as cited in Tager & Good, 2005) argues that adherence to these norms offers men avenues for attaining power and status. Italy's gender constructs, influenced by historical forces such as the Catholic Church, fascism, and the Communist Party, are evident in literature exploring the roles of honour and shame in shaping masculine and feminine socialization (Tager & Good, 2005).

Despite increased female presence in public life, gender inequality persists, notably in household chores and workplace representation. Occupational segregation and the gender pay gap remain pronounced, reinforcing traditional gender roles in Italy (Dotti Sani, 2016; Rosti, 2006). Children learn these divisions early, perpetuating unequal distribution of housework into adulthood (Dotti Sani, 2016). Scholars showed that social stereotypes also limit women's career choices, channelling them into traditionally feminine professions like teaching and nursing, while men dominate leadership roles across sectors, despite women's higher graduation rates (Rosti, 2006; Saccà, 2021).

Women remain significantly underrepresented in higher levels of various professions, a phenomenon known as the "leaky pipeline," where fewer women reach senior or managerial positions at each career stage (Reynolds et al., 2022). Even in fields traditionally dominated by women, men often report higher earnings and perceived advantages in promotions. This disparity is complex, involving traditional gender roles, societal status norms, and specific opportunities and constraints faced by women. Leadership roles are still predominantly associated with masculine traits, presenting obstacles for women aspiring to such positions (Reynolds et al., 2022).

Perceptions of gender significantly shape work experiences, contributing to inequality and persistent sex segregation in the workplace. Women frequently encounter prejudice and discrimination based on their position within work hierarchies and societal stereotypes dictating their expected roles, behaviours, and job assignments. They are often deemed less suitable for roles demanding attributes like strength, assertiveness, or leadership, leading to tangible disparities as positions associated with masculinity typically offer greater rewards and opportunities (Dozier, 2017).

The glass ceiling effect, which hinders women's career advancement within workplaces, is influenced by both cultural and cognitive factors. Women often perceive they need to exert more effort to gain

recognition for their work compared to men, yet their rewards and recognition may not match their contributions. Barriers at entry levels and throughout their journey toward leadership positions contribute to this disparity (Toffoli & Villa, 2023). In Italy, the glass ceiling remains a significant obstacle rooted in prejudices that limit women's access to leadership roles, particularly in academia and higher levels, more pronounced in Southern Italy. Despite Italy's representation in Europe on women's equity issues and universities' policies on gender equality and diversity, challenges persist due to inadequate transparency and lack of gender-disaggregated data (Roberto et al., 2020).

Cultural factors such as limited childcare services and persistent unpaid domestic work reinforce the male breadwinner model in Italy, burdening women with primary childcare responsibilities and restricting their workforce participation. Gender equality reforms are crucial to reshape societal norms and expand childcare services, especially in less educated sectors (Cutillo & Centra, 2017). Professional decisions in Italy are often influenced by gender-specific factors, with women prioritizing job security and men focusing on salary. Societal constraints, including childcare responsibilities and traditional gender roles, frequently limit women's career choices, contributing to occupational and sectoral gender disparities (Cutillo & Centra, 2017).

Italy's gender culture is deeply rooted in historical legacies, economic policies, and societal norms that often overlook regional modernization differences. Persistent victim blaming and gender stereotypes hinder progress toward gender equality. In cases of sexual assault, blame often falls on the victim, reflecting societal expectations for women to constrain their mobility and behaviour (Lomazzi, 2017; Zambelli et al., 2018).

1.1.3. Culture of Honour

Honour encompasses both self-worth and societal esteem. According to Pitt-Rivers (1965), it reflects how individuals perceive their own value and pride, as well as society's acknowledgment of these qualities. Honour involves seeking validation that aligns with one's self-image and societal ideals, linking personal and social identities. It includes the entitlement to certain behaviours and corresponding treatment, synonymous with status and social identity recognition (Pitt-Rivers, 1965). Mediterranean honour emphasizes preserving a positive reputation, especially in terms of family honour and adherence to both masculine and feminine codes. Having honour involves earning respect from others and maintaining personal integrity, with societal validation crucial for affirming individual claims to honour (Rodriguez Mosquera et al., 2002a).

Rodriguez Mosquera and colleagues (2002) define shame within the anthropological literature on honour as closely linked to the loss of honour. It is described as an emotion triggered by either disgraceful behaviour by oneself or intimate others, or by the withdrawal of social respect. Additionally, having a sense of shame appears to be central in honour cultures, particularly within Mediterranean

honour cultures. In this context, shame refers to an inner disposition or personal attribute of individuals who possess a sense of honour and are deeply concerned with matters of reputation (Rodriguez Mosquera et al., 2002b).

In cultures like Italy, where family honour holds significant importance, a man's honour is intricately linked to preserving the honour of the entire family, particularly through the chastity and moral behaviour of female family members. Honour norms dictate that a man must safeguard his reputation, while a woman's role is to uphold her man's and family's honour through her behaviour, irrespective of the circumstances she may face, such as instances of rape or involvement in arranged or unhappy marriages (Caffaro et al., 2014). Women are expected to uphold the family's honour regardless of circumstances, such as instances of rape or involvement in arranged or unhappy marriages. Violations of these values can lead to severe consequences aimed at restoring the family's reputation, including banishment, segregation, or violence against the woman deemed guilty (Caffaro et al., 2014).

According to Caffaro et al. (2014), Italy's collectivist culture emphasizes social image over personal beliefs, with strict adherence to social norms expected. Actions by women that jeopardize family honour are met with punishment aimed at reintegrating the family into social order and harmony. In contrast, individualist honour cultures may place less urgency on restoring family reputation (Caffaro et al., 2014).

The cultural emphasis on male honour can reinforce traditional gender roles and perpetuate violence against women. In honour cultures, men are expected to defend their reputation vigorously, often at the expense of their female partner's safety leading to male violence against women. Violence may be justified to maintain a man's integrity and family honour, with non-violent responses potentially leading to shame. Women in such cultures face pressure to prioritize family cohesion and sacrifice personal well-being, perpetuating traditional roles despite risks (Vandello & Cohen, 2003).

The concept of honour, as seen in practices like shotgun weddings and honour crimes, dictates that a woman's honour is tied to virginity and marriage. Women may be forced to marry their abusers to avoid societal shame, perpetuating cycles of violence and control (Cuzzi, 2010). Violence in honour-based cultures, synonymous with status and power, serves various purposes, including protecting property and retaliating against perceived insults, and is often justified as a means to uphold social norms, in the name of protecting their honour (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996).

1.2. Intimate-partner violence

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), also known as domestic violence, spousal abuse, and relationship violence, is viewed as a form of interpersonal violence occurring in a family or partner setting, directed towards an intimate partner (Burelomova et al., 2018). It is also characterized as a healthcare issue

involving physical or sexual assault, or a combination of both, within a marital or intimate relationship (J. C. Campbell, 2002). Krebs and colleagues (2011) completes this definition by adding psychological violence caused by a current or former partner. Indeed, psychological violence is considered the most prevalent form of IPV (Dokkedahl et al., 2019). Individuals facing IPV commonly endure various forms of victimization within an intimate relationship, including physical violence, sexual violence, psychological aggression, and stalking (Dokkedahl et al., 2019; Krebs et al., 2011).

In a study conducted by Dardis and colleagues (2015), three forms of IPV were identified. These include physical IPV, which involves actions like hitting, punching, or throwing objects at one's partner. Psychological IPV encompasses making disparaging or hurtful comments towards a partner. Lastly, sexual IPV refers to the use of intimidation, coercion, or force by one partner to compel the other to engage in sexual acts (Dardis et al., 2015).

IPV is increasingly recognized as a significant social and public health problem (Burelomova et al., 2018). As a matter of fact, extensive research confirms that IPV can lead to severe mental health repercussions among its victims. It is viewed as a form of interpersonal trauma, with studies indicating that 31–84.4% of women exposed to IPV experience symptoms consistent with posttraumatic stress disorder. Additionally, victims often exhibit comorbid conditions including depression, anxiety, suicidal tendencies, substance abuse, and sleep disturbances (Dokkedahl et al., 2019).

While IPV can affect all population groups, it is more frequently documented among women than men. Indeed, gender inequality and sexism within patriarchal societies are often seen as the main causes of IPV. This perspective argues that IPV is primarily a manifestation of men's violence against women, driven by societal norms and patriarchal beliefs that promote male dominance and female subordination (Burelomova et al., 2018). Building on this idea, Pomicino and colleagues (2019) decided to specify the gender of the perpetrator in their definition of IPV. Hence, they describe it as a multifaceted phenomenon defined by the "coercive control" exerted by the violent man to enforce or try to enforce on the woman through various methods such as intimidation, threats, financial and emotional abuse, and isolation. This coercive control is often reinforced by instances of physical and sexual violence (Pomicino et al., 2019).

Research has also indicated a statistical correlation between impulsivity and IPV, especially among younger couples who tend to be less introspective (Carabellese et al., 2014). Violence becomes a habitual mode of relating and communicating, aligning with their perception of exclusive ownership over their partner. Consequently, they struggle to envision the possibility of separation, viewing abandonment as an intolerable narcissistic injury. The violent partner is unable to accept rejection (Carabellese et al., 2014).

1.2.1. Influence of Gender Norms on Intimate Partner Violence

Women's inequality and gender-based violence are significant challenges in Italy, highlighted by Stuart (2014) who underscores the cultural acceptance of gender inequality. Italy's laws, customs, and values reflect a patriarchal framework, making societal changes to prevent abuse difficult. Women often face expectations of submission, with men typically seen as household heads. Many domestic violence victims in Italy hesitate to seek help due to fear or shame, despite protective laws, increasing their risk of homicide. This cultural acceptance of domestic abuse undermines women's rights to live free from violence, though efforts in literature and media aim to raise awareness globally (Stuart, 2014).

According to Vandello and Cohen (2003), while male violence against women is a global issue, patterns of domestic violence vary significantly across cultures. They explore how the concept of honour, defined universally as virtuous behaviour encompassing integrity, moral character, and altruism, plays a role in perpetuating male-on-female violence. In Mediterranean cultures like Greece, Italy, or Spain, honour emphasizes men's reputation for toughness, protecting family, and safeguarding possessions. Women in these societies are expected to maintain modesty, avoid behaviours that shame their families, and uphold their family's reputation within patriarchal and collectivist social structures (Vandello & Cohen, 2003).

In Italy, dynamics of IPV are shaped by unique cultural, social, psychological, and psychopathological factors, differing from other Western nations. It hinges significantly on the quality of the couple's relationship. Historical and cultural contexts perpetuate traditional stereotypes, influencing women to endure violence as they fulfil roles as homemakers and mothers responsible for family unity (Carabellese et al., 2014). These stereotypes may lead women to tolerate some level of violence, influenced by traditional roles as homemakers and mothers responsible for maintaining family unity. Additionally, socio-environmental factors such as social status, economic position, cultural background, and the fear of repercussions for reporting abuse contribute to understanding IPV dynamics. Women's reluctance to report violence stems from the fear of stigma or being held accountable for their partner's actions (Carabellese et al., 2014).

It is true that traditional roles within the family, related to the stereotypes of the powerful man and fragile woman dependent on her partner, are less and less common. However, we can say that this cultural stereotype of the man that demands obedience within the home is still a reality. Indeed, woman's independence is perceived by the man as a threat, sometimes leading him to react violently to prevent this. From this viewpoint, we can say that violence against women constitutes men's attempts to pertain the power that is often denied them in their daily life. This is especially true within the family, as more fluid models do not assign a superior authority to any of the members (Carabellese et al., 2014).

According to Saccà (2021), there is a persistent belief, in traditional cultures, that men should use coercive means, including physical mutilation, to maintain control over women and prevent them from

fully and freely expressing their desires and inclinations, particularly in the realm of sexuality. It is often thought that without this control, traditional society is destined to disintegrate (Saccà, 2021).

Consistent research findings indicate that opposed sexual beliefs, sex-role stereotyping, adherence to traditional gender norms, and accepting attitudes toward violence are positively correlated with both men's and women's perpetration of IPV (Dardis et al., 2015). Additionally, psychological distress, substance abuse, traditional gender attitudes, and acceptance of violence are also associated with perpetration of domestic violence among both young men and women (Dardis et al., 2015). Traditional feminist theorists proposed a gender and power analysis of IPV, highlighting the social construction of masculinity and explaining IPV as manifestations of power and control exerted by men over women within broader contexts of gender inequality (Hester & Donovan, 2009, as cited in Dardis et al., 2015). More recent feminist theories, emerging from third-wave and postmodern feminist movements, recognize multiple forms of oppression including sexism, classism, racism, heterosexism, and ableism (Dardis et al., 2015).

The power and control theories, as mentioned by Dardis and colleagues (2015), can be found in multiple studies. They attribute the roots of family violence to societal structures and historical dynamics, particularly evident since the 1970s. Research, such as that by Straus et al. (2006), indicates a clear link between male dominance and IPV instances. Men lacking resources, including income, education, or perceived power in relationships, may resort to violence to maintain or regain control (Dardis et al., 2015; Straus et al., 2006). Scholars view IPV as both a manifestation of and a means to assert power and control over partners, often involving coercive control. Coercive control entails perpetrators imposing unwanted actions or removing desired ones, with victims fearing negative consequences for noncompliance. In IPV contexts, dominance and control are typically enforced through violence, intimidation, or threats, creating a climate of fear and terror for the victim (Hamberger et al., 2017).

Tjaden's findings corroborate the theory that a significant portion of violence inflicted upon women by their male partners is indicative of a systemic pattern characterized by dominance and control. Some researchers refer to this phenomenon as "patriarchal terrorism" (Tjaden, 2000).

In a study by Gul and colleagues (2021) comparing attitudes in the Northern and Southern United States, it was found that individuals who strongly adhere to masculine honour beliefs are more likely to perceive women's romantic rejection as a threat to men's honour. Consequently, they view men's aggressive responses to rejection as more justified. This perception of aggressive behaviour as appropriate in response to romantic rejection (and other perceived slights) is linked to various forms of interpersonal violence, including rape (Gul et al., 2021).

In their research, Pichon and colleagues (2020) highlighted findings from a recent systematic review on romantic jealousy (RJ) in relationships and studies on women's experiences of IPV. Their work indicates

strong evidence of an association between male RJ and physical, psychological, and sexual male-to-female IPV. Additionally, they found RJ to be linked with higher levels of dominance in both men and women. Societal factors, such as the belief that RJ is desirable in relationships, patriarchal norms, and the social acceptance of IPV, may also moderate the relationship between real or suspected infidelity, RJ, and IPV. They discovered that real or suspected infidelity and RJ were strongly related to IPV, emphasizing the need for significant investment in IPV prevention. Partner suspicions and accusations of female infidelity can lead to various forms of IPV against women (Pichon et al., 2020).

1.2.2. Service providers for intimate-partner violence

In Italy, public institutions appear to be pressuring women to report the perpetrator and leave the abusive relationship. However, this trend poses a potential risk of revictimization, as women may be blamed for not adhering to the prescribed legal and socially approved pathway. Such women may face stigma as "battered women who stay." (Pomicino et al., 2019).

Secondary victimization refers to the additional suffering experienced by victims due to inadequate support or negligence from formal agencies during intervention. It manifests in further negative psychological consequences endured by victims, stemming from institutional support methods that often lack understanding and responsiveness to individual needs, thereby exacerbating their trauma (Fanci, 2012). Research shows that victims of sexual assault, such as rape, often struggle to access assistance and may feel revictimized by the support they do receive, termed as "the second rape" or "secondary victimization" (R. Campbell & Raja, 1999). In Italy, women victims of violence may face obstacles when interacting with formal social control agencies, which can deter them from seeking help (Sette, 2022).

Victim blaming, described by Moriarty (2008), occurs when the victim of a crime is assigned responsibility for their victimization. This process enables offenders to diminish their accountability by suggesting that the victim somehow provoked or deserved the harm inflicted upon them (Moriarty, 2008). According to Lerner (1980, as cited in Hafer & Bègue, 2005), individuals possess a fundamental need to perceive the world as just. When confronted with injustice, people may engage in victim blaming to restore their belief in a just world. This can involve rationalizing the victim's fate based on perceived character traits or behaviours. Just-world theory suggests that victim blaming influences perceptions of fairness regarding the punishment of perpetrators, as victims who exhibit certain behaviours may be deemed more responsible for their circumstances (Hafer & Bègue, 2005).

In post-separation, there is a tendency in services to favour fathers and accuse mothers of Parental Alienation Syndrome (PAS). This syndrome occurs when a child becomes overly aligned with one parent and fixated on criticizing the other, often resulting in the erosion of the child's previously loving relationship with the rejected parent, especially in severe cases (Rand, 1997). Familial dynamics during

divorce, especially with domestic violence, trigger complex psychological effects on the offender, victim, and child. Moon and colleagues (2020) highlighted that ignoring the context of domestic violence and the victim's psychology leads to unethical evaluations that overlook the child's best interests and put them at risk. Many child custody evaluators lack proper training in understanding the detailed dynamics of domestic violence or the assessment techniques needed to address these issues effectively (Moon et al., 2020).

1.3. Statement of the problem and goals

The study focuses on exploring the intricate relationship between gender norms, IPV, and the experiences of women seeking support in Italy. Despite existing research, there remains a gap in understanding how current gender norms in Italy contribute to IPV and influence women's interactions with service providers. Therefore, this research aims to address this gap by investigating: How do current gender norms and the culture of honour in Italy contribute to societal representations of intimate partner violence, the relationship between IPV and gender norms, and the effectiveness of service providers in supporting women seeking help?

Some values in Italian society are shifting, influenced by political changes and the rise of conservative perspectives, highlighting the need to examine IPV now. As progressive advancements in gender equality clash with traditional norms and patriarchal values, this study aims to document these changes and the ongoing challenges women face. By focusing on this critical moment, the research provides timely insights into how societal and political shifts impact the fight against IPV and emphasizes the urgent need for continued vigilance and proactive measures to protect women's rights in Italy.

Italy was chosen as the research focus due to its rich cultural heritage and nuanced societal norms, particularly regarding traditional gender roles, evident in the literature. The concept of a "culture of honour" prevails, shaping gender dynamics and perceptions of violence, influencing behaviours and societal attitudes. This cultural framework, reflected in laws such as those concerning shotgun marriages and crimes of honour, underscores the profound influence of traditional values on attitudes towards IPV.

Italy serves as a significant case study for examining gender norms and domestic violence due to its dual realities of legal commitments and persistent challenges. Despite ranking 79th globally in gender equality (Hausmann et al., 2012, as cited in Caffaro et al., 2014), Italy ratified the Istanbul Convention in 2014, aiming to combat violence against women comprehensively. Within Europe and Central Asia, Italy occupies the 35th position among 44 countries assessed in the Gender Gap Index (Caffaro et al., 2014; European Parliament, 2024). This legal framework mandates preventive measures and victim support services, yet the implementation faces obstacles, evident from high rates of IPV. The 2006 ISTAT survey revealed that approximately 31.9% of women aged 16-70 in Italy experience at least one episode of sexual or physical violence. Within the last 10 years, 20% of all homicide victims in Italy

were women killed by their partner or ex-partner, underscoring the lethal consequences of domestic violence (Carabellese et al., 2014).

The term "femicidio" highlights the severity of domestic violence in Italy, where significant percentages of women experience sexual and physical violence (Carabellese et al., 2014). Furthermore, studies show that despite efforts, 40% to 90% of women continue to experience IPV during follow-up periods (Pomicino et al., 2019), indicating persistent issues with the effectiveness of support services and intervention strategies. Gaps in support programs, shelters, and anti-violence centres underscore ongoing deficiencies in addressing the needs of survivors.

The European Court of Human Rights has criticized Italy for violating the Istanbul Convention for human rights related to discrimination and inadequate protection from violence, reflecting systemic issues that hinder progress in addressing domestic violence (Neri, 2021). Institutional barriers, such as limited trained personnel and awareness of available resources, further complicate efforts to protect victims and enforce legal safeguards (Rinaldi, 2023).

These complexities in Italy's approach to gender norms and domestic violence underscore broader challenges in achieving gender equality and ensuring the safety of women. Understanding these current dynamics is crucial for informing effective policies and interventions to address domestic violence both within Italy and globally.

The study's significance lies in providing a comprehensive analysis of how gender norms in Italy influence perceptions of IPV and women's interactions with service providers. Interviews with professionals in the field are crucial, as they offer insights into how IPV is perceived, addressed, and influenced by prevailing gender norms. These professionals, through their daily interactions with IPV survivors, possess valuable expertise in navigating the challenges faced by victims within the Italian societal context. Their perspectives illuminate systemic issues and barriers within service provision, contributing to a deeper understanding of IPV dynamics in Italy.

Thus, this paper has four primary goals, as perceived by professionals in the gender-based violence field: firstly, to examine current gender norms in Italy, particularly the culture of honour; secondly, to investigate societal perceptions of intimate partner violence (IPV); thirdly, to explore the relationship between IPV and gender norms; and finally, to assess how service providers perceive IPV and gender norms, and its influence on women seeking help. These objectives aim to provide insights into the intersections of gender norms, IPV, and service provision in Italian society.

Overall, this research fills a critical gap in the literature, offering insights into gender studies, domestic violence research, and social work practice. By uncovering the complex interplay between gender norms, IPV, and service provision, the study aims to inform more effective strategies for supporting IPV survivors and advancing gender equality in Italy.

Chapter 2: Research method

2.1. The participants

The participants in this study were selected to meet specific inclusion criteria. Firstly, all participants were required to be Italian citizens, with Italian as their mother tongue. This criterion was essential to ensure a shared cultural and linguistic background, facilitating effective communication and understanding of the research topic. Additionally, participants needed to have been working in the field of gender-based violence, ensuring they possessed relevant expertise and insights into the topic under investigation.

All participants in this study were women employed at anti-violence centres in Italy. They held diverse roles within these centres, reflecting the multidisciplinary nature of the field. The sample comprised a president of a gender-based organization ($n = 1$), managers of anti-violence centres ($n = 2$) (one of whom was also a lawyer), psychologists ($n = 5$), a social worker ($n = 1$), operators ($n = 4$), a lawyer ($n = 1$), and a volunteer ($n = 1$), totalling 15 participants. This diverse representation ensured a breadth of perspectives and experiences within the sample. Additionally, participants hailed from various regions across Italy, including Lazio ($n = 5$), Abruzzo ($n = 2$), Calabria ($n = 2$), Sicily ($n = 2$), Campania ($n = 1$), Trentino-South Tyrol ($n = 1$), Lombardy ($n = 1$), and Emilia-Romagna ($n = 1$). This geographic diversity enriched the study by capturing regional nuances and variations in approaches to addressing gender-based violence. The participants in this study ranged in age from 28 to 64 and had at least five years of experience in the field, with some having more than 20 years of expertise.

A qualitative approach was chosen for this study. Qualitative researchers focus on understanding meaning, exploring how individuals interpret the world and experience events. Their goal is to grasp the essence of what it is like to undergo specific conditions, emphasizing the richness and depth of experience rather than simply identifying cause-and-effect relationships. This approach prioritizes capturing the quality and texture of lived experiences, providing insights into the subjective perspectives and nuances of human existence (Willig, 2013).

Remote interview modalities were employed, facilitated by the Microsoft Teams platform ensuring a secure exchange of information while prioritizing the safety and convenience of all involved parties. Access to the Microsoft Teams platform was facilitated through credentials provided by ISCTE. Interviews are typically organized and planned interactions where both parties are aware of the interview's purpose and strive to achieve its objectives through verbal communication comprising questions and answers (Wildemuth, 2016).

In this study, semi-structured interviews were employed. They entail predetermined questions, yet the sequence can be altered based on the interviewer's discretion regarding what appears most appropriate.

This format allows interviewers flexibility to adjust questions during interviews and explore beyond initial responses, blending structured interviews with the openness of unstructured ones (Wildemuth, 2016). Semi-structured interviews were conducted in Italian using a structured script (Appendix A & B), featuring open-ended questions on gender norms, culture of honour, and intimate partner violence. These interviews sought perspectives from Italian society, service providers, and professionals, exploring challenges faced by victims and service providers alike. After initial interviews, questions were refined based on insights gained, aiming for clarity and comprehensive coverage. Participants were given opportunities to clarify uncertainties before each interview began, starting with an introductory question about their background and role within anti-violence centres.

2.2. Procedure

The ethical approval for this study was sought and granted by the Ethics Committee of the ISCTE Lisbon University Institute (parecer 31/2024). The recruitment process was thoughtfully designed, combining both convenience and snowball sampling strategies. Initially, an anti-violence centre in Rome known by the researcher served as the springboard for participant engagement. For a broader outreach effort, personalized email invitations to professionals across various Italian regions were extended.

Conducted entirely in Italian, the interviews lasted between 23 minutes and 1 hour 30 minutes, with an average duration of 53 minutes. Prior to each interview, attention was dedicated to ensuring participants' understanding of the study's objectives, procedures, and their rights as contributors. Informed consent (Appendix C & D) was obtained from each participant, with the consent sheet legally grounded on Article 6(a) and Article 9(2)(a) of the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) within the Portuguese legal system. Consent forms were securely stored in encrypted format, safeguarding the confidentiality of participant information.

A reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was conducted using MaxQDA software, with a license provided by ISCTE-IUL. This analysis involved coding for both semantic and latent meanings within participants' responses. Themes emerged through a systematic process of review, definition, and labelling, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the data and the identification of key patterns and insights. This method was selected for its accessibility and theoretical flexibility, making it suitable for analysing qualitative data. It allows for the identification, analysis, and reporting of themes within the data, providing a structured yet adaptable framework for understanding complex phenomena. By organizing and describing the dataset in detail, thematic analysis facilitates a thorough exploration of various aspects of the research topic. This methodological approach aids in interpreting patterns and relationships inherent in qualitative data, enhancing the depth and richness of the research findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

This study employs a mixed thematic analysis approach to comprehensively explore the research topic. By integrating both inductive and deductive methodologies, this framework leverages theoretical insights from existing literature while allowing themes to emerge organically from the data. Pre-ordinate categories derived from theory guide the analysis, ensuring a structured approach, while inductive elements permit the discovery of new insights directly from the data. This methodological balance acknowledges the complexities of qualitative analysis, facilitating a nuanced understanding of service providers' perspectives and support systems for survivors of gender-based violence in Italy (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Proudfoot, 2023).

2.3. Reflexive statement

Postmodernist scholars have critically engaged with the assumptions and ethical dilemmas in the interview process, as well as the power dynamics between interviewer and respondent. This critical discourse has spurred innovative approaches to qualitative interviewing, emphasizing heightened sensitivity to the voices and emotions of both respondents and the interviewer-respondent relationship (Fontana & Frey, 1994).

Personal reflexivity involves introspection about how our individual values, experiences, beliefs, political affiliations, broader life objectives, and social identities influence the research process. It requires thoughtful consideration of how these personal factors shape our approach to the research topic, methodology, and interpretation of findings. Additionally, personal reflexivity includes contemplating how engaging in the research has impacted and potentially transformed us, both as individuals and researchers. This encompasses recognizing shifts in perspectives, attitudes, or understanding, as well as acknowledging any personal growth or insights gained through the experience (Willig, 2013). In this study, the researcher's identity as a woman engaging with other women on topics of intimate partner violence and gender norms is particularly significant. Given the historical and systemic disadvantages faced by women in these domains, the researcher's gendered perspective may provide nuanced insights into the experiences and perceptions of the participants.

Furthermore, the researcher's Italian identity and personal connection to the topic, stemming from prior internship experience at an anti-violence centre in Rome, inform her positionality in the study. This familiarity with the context and subject matter may influence the researcher's interpretation of the data and engagement with the participants, potentially enriching the depth and authenticity of the findings. The interview dynamics benefit from the empathy arising from the researcher's shared identity with the participants, fostering a deeper understanding and sensitivity to the nuances of appropriate language and communication styles. This shared identity can create a more conducive environment for open dialogue, making participants feel more comfortable and willing to share their experiences. Consequently, this can lead to greater depth of insight and disclosure during the interviews. Acknowledging these reflexive

dimensions enhances the transparency and rigor of the research process, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the complex issues at hand.

It does, however, also introduce potential biases. Personal connections may lead to subjectivity, over-identification with participants, and assumptions that may not reflect diverse perspectives. Participants might also alter their responses based on the researcher's identity, affecting authenticity. Emotional impacts on the researcher can influence the research process, and confirmation bias might skew data interpretation.

Chapter 3: Results

Based on the interviews with professionals, 29 themes were identified and organised into three main domains: gender norms, culture of honour, and intimate-partner violence. The gender norms domain comprised 8 themes, the culture of honour category also contained 8 themes, and the intimate-partner violence domain included 13 themes. These 13 themes were further divided into two subfields: societal representations and understanding of IPV, and service providers' perspectives on gender norms and IPV.

The following section provides a detailed description of all these themes, including illustrative depersonalized quotes from the interviews, translated into English. Participants are referred to by numbers to ensure anonymity. A visual organization of all themes is presented in Appendix E.

3.1. Gender norms

In this section, participants were asked to define the current representations of gender norms in Italy and share their perceptions of how Italian society portrays the roles of women and men. The discussions covered various themes, including household responsibilities, participation in the workforce, regional differences between northern and southern Italy, as well as an examination of how these norms and representations have evolved within the newer generation.

3.1.1. Women are identified as care figures

This theme emerged most frequently among participants. Professionals highlighted that society expects women to spend more time than men caring for their homes and children, often identifying them primarily as mothers. Women are expected to multitask, including cooking and cleaning, and this caregiving role extends into their professional lives, where they predominantly take on jobs involving care for the elderly or disabled.

And she is the one who takes care of the family, the children, and the house, the Italian woman is the one who must cook and must know how to clean the house (P2).

Participants noted that women are expected to support their children, a responsibility not equally expected of men. Women often stop working to care for their kids, and parental leave is more frequently taken by mothers, with women often staying home longer. Advertisements reinforce this role by depicting women using various cleaning products.

I think about the number of hours to be divided equally for work leave, but no, there's maternity leave, but not much paternity leave (P15).

In job interviews, it was mentioned that women are often asked about their relationship status or if they plan to have children, questions not typically directed at men. It was said that women were encouraged

to pursue flexible careers to accommodate caregiving responsibilities, influencing their career choices. A woman dedicating time to her career faces more criticism than her male counterparts.

Still, thirty-year-old girls are asked if they want to have children, if they are engaged when applying for a job (P6).

It was discussed that societal expectations are higher for mothers than for fathers. Mothers are expected to be "competent" caregivers, whereas there is no equivalent expectation for fathers. Women are often seen as mothers first, before any other identity. Additionally, a comment from another service provider noted that women are drawn to caregiving professions because they are "naturally inclined to take care."

The standard that is asked of mothers, that is, the presence, the ability, the expectation that one has towards a good mother is certainly 100 times higher than that which one has towards a father. A father must be nice and tender and be like that, nice, a mother must be 100 times more competent (P11).

3.1.2. It is still like this

The following addressed the persistence of traditional Italian culture and its influence on gender roles. Participants noted that despite societal advancements, women in Italy continue to be objectified and dehumanized due to entrenched discrimination and traditional gender roles. For instance, participants reported that behaviours like catcalling are still perceived as compliments rather than harassment.

In the end, discrimination leads to a process of dehumanization. If you are dehumanized, you become an object; you have nothing human left and are treated as an object. This allows me, as a man, to say to you on the street, 'Nice ass you have' (P1).

This mindset is not limited to older generations; it also persists among younger individuals. Professionals conducting school workshops observed that many young people believe "it's always been like this" and accuse professionals of exaggerating the issue. Some fail to acknowledge the problem entirely, insisting that gender equality has already been achieved. This complacency creates a comfort zone for men, as recognizing these gender roles would require confronting and accepting this form of discrimination, indirectly implicating them in perpetuating it.

Well, look, just the other day a young man said to me, 'Well, it has always been like this, hasn't it?' as if it were normal (P1).

The roles are still very stereotypical, [...] this is evident even in the new generations (P15).

It was mentioned that these traditional gender roles are unconsciously transmitted from one generation to the next. The persistence of these norms suggests that Italy is lagging in terms of gender equality, as participants noted that the country continues to adhere to classic, stereotypical views of gender roles.

The likelihood of repeating the pattern in adult life is very high (P1).

We are very behind in terms of representing gender differences because, in reality, there is still a strong distinction between being a man and being a woman that adheres to those classical canons primarily concerning sexuality, gender identity based on sex, and also everything related to perceived behavioural norms (P14).

3.1.3. Women are less independent compared to men

This theme revolved around the phenomenon where many women in Italy do not work and rely on their partners for financial support. Professionals argued that there are more women with higher education degrees than women in the workforce, and it is typically men who own homes and other properties. They also highlighted the prejudice that men should earn more and be the primary providers for their families. Additionally, they noted that when there is a decision for one partner to stay at home, it tends to be the woman, even if she has a better position, thus perpetuating dependency.

Consider that in our data, women are unemployed at a rate of 60% (P1).

According to men, the image of the family is one where the person who brings home the money, who has the greater economic power, is the man (P2).

There is a widespread prejudice among them that men should earn more than women (P2).

Furthermore, it was mentioned that men often control the family budget, which restricts women's financial autonomy and decision-making power.

We have women who work but still have their bank accounts completely managed by their husbands, even today (P10).

3.1.4. It is a man's world

This theme addressed the dominance of men in society. Professionals highlighted how history books are predominantly written by men, medicine and research traditionally focusing on male bodies, men typically leading families, and men feeling entitled to express opinions about women. They described living in a patriarchy, where men are inherently advantaged. For instance, men do not fear harassment on the streets in the same way women do. They added that this patriarchal structure often pressures women to adopt "masculine behaviours" to advance in their careers and attain higher positions.

Textbooks need to change. Our textbooks, our history still narrated by men (P1)

Medicine has always developed studying the male body. There has never been a gender medicine that instead considered the female body (P9).

Men don't even experience once in their life going to a parking lot with keys in hand because it's completely dark late at night (P11).

3.1.5. Women occupy lower positions

This topic addressed the disparity in job positions between men and women. It was noted that women often face more challenges than men in the workforce, with men typically enjoying privileges in hiring practices and holding positions of greater importance compared to women. Additionally, it was mentioned that women often occupy caregiving roles, and their limited upward mobility can be attributed to their tendency to take maternity leave, as childcare responsibilities are still predominantly seen as a woman's role.

Even though today we say that women have more or less the same civil rights as men, they still face greater difficulty entering the workforce. That is, all else being equal in terms of qualifications and skills, a man is often preferred (P5).

Because a man doesn't get pregnant. Because a man doesn't take maternity leave. Because the burden of care, unfortunately, still falls on women (P5).

The stereotype is that a woman, next to a man, cannot exercise a profession that is superior or have higher responsibilities. You are immediately identified by the stereotype, like a secretary, maid, or nanny (P9).

3.1.6. Women in the north are more independent

A theme was identified relating to the differences observed between northern and southern Italy, particularly regarding the independence of women. According to professionals, women in the south generally exhibit less independence. It was noted that while unemployment among women is prevalent across Italy, it is particularly pronounced in the southern regions. Several factors were discussed to explain this disparity, including the persistence of traditional gender roles and a greater societal expectation for women to conform to these roles in the south.

Women in the North feel more liberated than women in the South (P1).

It's true that female unemployment mostly affects women in the South, not those in the North (P1).

Additionally, the professionals highlighted the challenges women face due to the lack of sufficient childcare facilities or schools for their children. This situation forces many women to stay at home to care for their children because they cannot leave them unsupervised. Consequently, these women have fewer opportunities to participate in the workforce or pursue independent activities outside the home. This issue underscores a significant barrier to women's economic and social autonomy in southern Italy compared to the north.

Because for daycare centres, if in Rome there is space for, I don't know, one out of four children, in the South it will be one out of eight (P4).

3.1.7. Women can show emotions, not men

In his theme, it was highlighted that men are often expected to suppress their emotions. Professionals noted that society does not readily accept men showing vulnerability or sensitivity; the only acceptable emotion for men to express is often anger. They mentioned that while women are permitted to show emotions, they are expected to exhibit kindness rather than aggression. For example, men are sometimes derogatorily told, "don't act like a little girl," implying that crying or showing sensitivity is unacceptable for men. This societal expectation reinforces the idea that men should be strong and exhibit traditional masculinity.

The woman must be caring, must be kind, must be, how can I say, not aggressive. She can afford to be fragile, she can afford to ask the man for help (P2).

The child cries, so from a young age you teach him that certain things should not be done, like acting like a girl, which has a somewhat derogatory meaning (P4).

The man must never cry, he must be strong, virile (P9).

3.1.8. There are not defined gender norms today

Professionals noted that in this period, both traditional and less conventional roles coexist, with some individuals resisting old norms while others embrace modern ones. There is a growing awareness among women, who are increasingly realizing their rights and challenging cultural limitations imposed upon them. Gender roles are being questioned and redefined, with discussions even mentioning a potential "post-patriarchy" era.

At the moment, there are no well-defined norms. Perhaps this creates such confusion that both genders do not know exactly how to behave and what the legitimate boundaries are (P8).

Fortunately, in Italy, the relationships between genders are undergoing profound changes, and therefore there are also different models emerging (P10).

A form of post-patriarchy that resists, that struggles to fade away (P11).

3.2. Culture of honour

For this section on the culture of honour, participants were asked to define what constitutes an honourable man and woman in Italy today. They were prompted to articulate the behaviours and actions expected of men and women to maintain their honour and avoid negatively affecting their cultural standing. The discussion delved into societal expectations and norms, highlighting the traditional and evolving aspects of gender roles within the context of honour in contemporary Italian society.

3.2.1. Men are treated with more respect and indulgence

In cultures of honour, the predominant theme revolves around the idea that honour imposes stricter restrictions on women than on men. Men generally have more freedom to engage in behaviours that might challenge societal honour codes, and their actions are often justified or excused. Professionals noted that men receive significant respect for their behaviour, regardless of their profession. Infidelity by a man is more readily accepted compared to infidelity by a woman. Today, certain "rules" dictate what constitutes a woman of honour, while expectations for men are often less stringent. Men can often act without facing the same level of judgment, and simply being a working man is often sufficient to be considered honourable.

A man who cheats does so only out of needs, shall we say, of a sexual nature, and does not fall in love with his mistress (P2).

Certain rules of male honourability are no longer mentioned because perhaps there is some modesty and now there is awareness that they are obsolete and make no sense (P6).

A man is free to do whatever he wants (P9).

3.2.2. Women lack freedom

Another predominant theme of the culture of honour was the significant restrictions placed on women. It was mentioned that an "honourable" woman cannot dress as she pleases; she should not show too much of her body or dress too lightly, cannot wear too much makeup, cannot drink, and cannot stay out late. Women are judged for failing to adhere to these expectations. Professionals highlighted that this is also tied to the fact that men enjoy these freedoms and often exert control over their partners, imposing their choices by asking them to stay home, avoid certain people, or remain silent.

People ask the woman, "but have you been drinking? So, you put yourself in that situation. How were you dressed? Were you wearing a miniskirt? Maybe you provoked it. But at that hour, you were still out of the house? Were you returning home alone?" In this sense, the woman is

revictimized. Asking these questions still implies that the woman is responsible for her own honourability (P9).

The man asks the woman not to go out, or not to go out much, or not to talk with colleagues. Gradually, women are isolated from friendships. Many women are asked to stay silent in public (P13).

3.2.3. Women's sexual conduct is important

For this theme, professionals emphasized that a woman's honour is intricately tied to her sexuality. They highlighted several expectations, such as the belief that a woman should maintain a single, long-term relationship, preserve her virginity until marriage, and when intimate, it should be driven by love rather than mere pleasure-seeking. Additionally, they referenced the practice of shotgun marriages to underscore how a woman's honour is linked to her sexual conduct. Furthermore, it was noted that women in positions of authority or success often face assumptions that they attained their positions through engaging in sexual favours.

That she loses her virginity with the love of her life, preferably not at too young an age, meaning not too young (P2).

The shotgun marriage, where the crime committed by the man who raped the woman was erased if the woman, not only violated, was forced to marry him because she had lost her honour (P9).

If a woman rises to power, for example, if she quickly climbs the career ladder, it is thought that this might be due to her having done some favour or having had some sort of sexual affair with her boss, for example (P12).

3.2.4. We judge women's behaviour in relation to her partner

This next theme, professionals highlighted how a woman's actions, particularly those related to her partner, are pivotal in the culture of honour. A woman's honour directly influences her partner's honour, with an honourable woman ensuring that her partner is perceived as an "honourable" man. Professionals emphasized that women are expected to be subordinate to their partners, remaining loyal and refraining from adultery. This notion extends to the idea of women belonging to their partners.

She should not betray him. She should not. She should not be a step ahead of him, no. She should not take his space (P1).

She should not commit adultery, meaning she should not have relationships with other men. She is married and should not have relationships outside of marriage (P3).

The discussion also touched upon the concept of honour crimes, previously mentioned in the literature review, referring to an old law that permitted men to kill their partners if they were unfaithful. Additionally, it was noted that many women still believe that engaging in sexual intercourse within marriage is a duty, one that they cannot refuse. This further underscores the deep-rooted expectations and restrictions placed on women in maintaining their and their partner's honour.

They are convinced that within marriage, it is not possible to say no to a sexual relationship because for the man, it is a matter of honour (P13).

3.2.5. A women's priority should not be her own self

In this theme, professionals noted that women are expected to prioritize their partner and children above themselves. It was mentioned that a woman's primary concern should be her family and the upkeep of the household. An "honourable" woman is expected to relinquish her individuality, placing herself last to focus entirely on her family. This concept is closely tied to the traditional role of maternity.

And it is the woman who, if necessary, gives up her own individuality in favour of taking care of the family (P2).

That she is always ready to take care, ready to put herself second, ready to sacrifice herself for her loved ones. It is inconceivable that she could primarily take care of herself rather than her children (P11).

Professionals also highlighted the notion of pleasure, whether sexual or otherwise, indicating that a woman's priority is to please others rather than herself. This reinforces the expectation that women should selflessly dedicate themselves to the needs and well-being of their family members, often at the expense of their own desires and personal fulfilment.

Not putting herself in the forefront, not asserting her own freedom if it does not conform to a stereotypical image of the reserved woman, a woman who is not focused on her own pleasure, attentive to the pleasure of others, not just in a sexual sense, or at least not only that, but to please others while neglecting her own needs (P8).

3.2.6. A woman must be “feminine” and a man “masculine”

Professionals made the traditional associations of "masculinity" with men and "femininity" with women. They described feminine behaviour as having a soft voice, being sensitive, and showing emotions. Conversely, masculine behaviour is linked to virility and the suppression of emotions.

For a man, honour is certainly reflected in that steadfast figure who has very little contact with his own emotions. The rock-like man, that macho vision, right? (P8).

An illustrative example given involved toddlers in kindergarten who were provided with strollers to aid in learning how to walk. Parents started a petition, requesting that teachers use something deemed more "masculine" for their boys. This reaction underscores the persistent belief that caring for a child and using a stroller is still considered a girl's role. This example highlights how deeply ingrained these gender norms are and how they continue to shape perceptions and expectations from a very young age.

While it was appropriate for a two-year-old girl to push the stroller, it was considered inappropriate and therefore feminizing for a boy to push the stroller. For the girl, it was better that the boy push the wheelbarrow, full stop (P7).

3.2.7. They (men and women) should follow the unwritten rules

Professionals referred to "unwritten rules," which vary between societies. These rules are shaped by previous generations and dictate what constitutes honour within a particular culture. The concept of honour itself differs across societies and is defined by adherence to these rules.

Men and women must follow the rules established by their fathers, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers, that is, behave in the way of each culture (P2).

The notion of a "cultural clan" was also discussed, highlighting how adherence to these rules fosters a sense of belonging and identity within a community. Many of these rules emphasize the sanctity of family, underscoring the belief that familial bonds are fundamental and should be protected. These unwritten rules not only govern behaviour but also reinforce cultural norms and values that are passed down through generations.

Linked to belonging to a clan, which can be a cultural clan or a criminal clan, there are rules that must be adhered to (P2).

Belonging, right? You belong to that family, to that idea of family, to that idea of society, to that idea of culture (P10).

3.2.8. A man has the role of power, protection, and provider

The final theme concerning the culture of honour revolved around the idea that a man's honour is closely tied to his ability to provide for his family and lead the household. Professionals emphasized that he is responsible for ensuring the family's needs are met, portraying a strong and protective figure. This role includes safeguarding the family from external threats.

A man who works, earns, maintains a certain standard of living, ensures that nothing is lacking at home, and provides for the family's needs is a man who knows how to set the rules (P4).

A man of honour is also perceived as someone who dictates the rules within the household, exerting authority over decisions and behaviours. This authority extends to controlling aspects of his partner's life, such as their movements and attire, under the guise of protecting the family's reputation and well-being.

A young boy who says, "I believe in telling my girlfriend that she shouldn't wear a short skirt to go out with friends" (P5).

3.3. Intimate-partner violence

In this section on intimate partner violence (IPV), professionals discussed societal representations and understandings of IPV, as well as the perspectives of service providers. They delved into how broader societal attitudes shape the understanding of IPV, often perpetuating misconceptions and stigmas, and highlighted the challenges they face in addressing IPV and supporting those women.

3.3.1. Societal representations and understanding of IPV

(a) She is controlled by her partner

Professionals underscored that IPV stems from the idea that a woman is subordinate to her partner. Even among the younger generation, participants indicated that there exists a belief that certain forms of physical aggression, such as a slap, are acceptable within a relationship.

It means we still find the girl who says a slap is acceptable (P1).

According to professionals, these young individuals also perceive IPV as being linked to jealousy, viewing it as something that women may appreciate or even expect. This perspective reflects a continued view of women as possessions of their partners.

According to the old view where the woman is the property of the man once they marry. When they start a family, the man decides for the woman. The man decides for the family (P2).

Professionals argue that this possessive mindset contributes to IPV, suggesting that if a man feels entitled to control a woman's actions, he may also resort to violence and exert dominance over her body. They highlighted that societal attitudes, often perpetuated through media portrayals, sometimes justify male violence as a sign of intense love or protectiveness due to jealousy.

We still talk about a gesture of crazy love, he killed her out of too much love (P13).

Contrary to these perceptions, professionals assert that IPV arises from a loss of control over the woman rather than a display of love. They emphasize the importance of challenging these harmful beliefs and behaviours to prevent and address intimate partner violence effectively.

He killed her because he was losing control of a woman and did not respect her choice (P9).

(b) Violence became normal

In this theme, professionals discussed how intimate partner violence (IPV) tends to be ignored or overlooked. They pointed out that society often turns a blind eye to the issue because addressing it would require taking responsibility and confronting uncomfortable truths. The seriousness of the problem is frequently underestimated. For women experiencing IPV, professionals noted that when violence becomes a recurring event, it can start to feel normal, making it difficult for them to recognize the severity of their situation. Women may come to accept the abuse as a part of their everyday lives.

It's in all of us, and it's a form of resistance. Not wanting to look in that direction is a form of resistance (P1).

They all enter through the door of normality. Entering a violent relationship happens through normality. And then, gradually, the most common question they ask themselves is, 'How did I not see it?' (P1).

The discussion highlighted that this normalization is deeply embedded in cultural attitudes. Italians often view certain behaviours as acceptable, perpetuating a cycle of violence and believing men are superior and entitled. Professionals mentioned that the sentiment, "he's such a good boy," reflects a reluctance to acknowledge abusive behaviour and denies the cultural factors behind it, refusing to believe that any "good boy" could be a perpetrator.

Because if we are used to it and have been raised that way, we end up with it. So, fundamentally, violence then comes down to this (P5).

The murderer, or rather the femicide or the abuser, is excused by saying, 'Oh, but he was such a good boy,' 'Oh, but he was a good worker,' 'Oh, but he was so nice.' And then simply saying, 'He killed her because they were separating' (P9).

Additionally, professionals mentioned that families of the victims sometimes encourage them to stay in abusive relationships. They might advise women to "know better," to "try to resist," or to "not provoke him," reinforcing the idea that male violence is a normal and acceptable part of relationships. This cultural conditioning normalizes many harmful behaviours, leading some women to believe that the abuse is justified and that their partners' actions are legitimate.

Because sometimes the families who know about the situation of violence say to the woman, 'Well, you know how he is. Just endure it, just bear it, just don't provoke him' (P9).

The man acts violently, and there's a part of the woman that thinks it's almost right because she is also part of that culture (P13).

(c) The stereotypes are still the same today

This theme delves into the enduring stereotypes surrounding intimate partner violence (IPV), which persistently intertwine with gender norms and are prevalent among both older and younger generations. Professionals noted that the questions posed to female victims of sexual aggression today mirror those asked many years ago, indicating a lack of societal progress in attitudes towards IPV. They emphasized that women continue to be viewed as inferior to men, with resistance to change evident in educational settings and perpetuated by older generations. According to these professionals, these entrenched gender roles contribute to IPV by reinforcing the belief that men inherently possess power, a stereotype that remains deeply ingrained and resistant to change.

It's a cultural issue. I mean, in my opinion, it is a product of culture and definitely something to fight against. However, there are stereotypes that we still carry with us (P3).

Because if I wear a skirt like that, it's seen as an invitation, right? It's actually a rather simplistic notion, one that has persisted perhaps since the 1960s (P5).

Moreover, they noted that in some respects, the situation has deteriorated over the past few years. According to participants, media and journalists, influenced by strong prejudices, frequently judge victims harshly, failing to understand the violence due to ingrained biases. The professionals also mentioned concerning attitudes among the younger generation, such as the belief that a girlfriend should not wear certain clothing, reflecting a possessive and controlling mindset that can lead to IPV.

In narratives, there are often plenty of prejudices, and therefore there is also a judgmental journalism regarding women's behaviour, leading to a tendency to interpret it in a non-gendered manner (P14).

Very often, even among the very young, for example, it's a mixture. 'Since you are mine, you can't wear a miniskirt because your body belongs to me' (P15).

(d) There is more sensibility on the topic

Professionals noted an improvement in attitudes towards intimate partner violence (IPV), adding that Italian society has become more sensitive and open to discussing the issue, leading to a stronger sense of collective responsibility. During protests, more young people, including boys, are participating.

In recent years, it has been talked about a lot, it has been talked about often. And a certain awareness has been raised even among men (P2).

They observed that more Italians are actively fighting against IPV, with increased awareness of the high rates of violence and femicide. Media coverage has improved, providing greater attention and more

informed reporting. They added that there are more training sessions and workshops, including in schools.

But I believe that today it is being discussed. We realize that we also do a lot of training, even in schools it is talked about a lot (P5).

This period was described as complex and transitional, reflecting significant societal changes. The increased sensitivity and awareness stem from the frequent discussions in the media and everyday conversations, making the issue impossible to ignore.

It is talked about a lot, necessarily, in the sense that because it is so present and it happens more often that a woman loses her life or her children, we inevitably cannot pretend it is not a problem, and therefore we must address it (P15).

(e) It is always the woman's fault

Professionals mentioned that women are always questioned, being asked what they did to end up in such situations. They mentioned that this perception is deeply rooted in the Italian societal view of women, implying that it is always her fault, and that this blame leads to secondary victimization, where society harshly judges the woman.

Then you clash with a world that doesn't help you, that doesn't let you walk freely, because you always encounter that world that asks you, "but what did you do? How much of this is your responsibility?" (P1).

Because it is dictated by the vision we have of women within society. So, the blame is always on Eve (P1).

Professionals also discussed how some men dictate women's actions under the guise of protection, reinforcing the idea that if something happens to her, it is her fault for bringing it upon herself. In cases of intimate partner violence (IPV), it was discussed a prevailing mentality that if a partner is violent, the woman must have provoked him. Furthermore, they highlighted how journalism often judges women in these scenarios, perpetuating these harmful stereotypes.

"I tell her for her protection, because she obviously faces risks. And these risks can range from bargaining to people harassing her". But in that case, she brought it upon herself (P5).

A journalism that judges the behaviour of the woman (P14).

(f) Economic independence has an important role in IPV

This theme is closely tied to the persistent perception that a man should earn more than a woman, or that a woman should be economically dependent on her partner. Professionals highlighted that a woman

experiencing IPV finds it challenging to negotiate or escape her situation due to financial dependence. They emphasized that these women often have no choice but to accept and endure the violence.

They don't accept it; they must. Do you understand? They must, because if I have a job, I can support myself and my children (P1).

It was noted that this economic dependency discourages women from reporting abuse. Fearing homelessness and the loss of their children, many women choose to stay silent, especially when their partner holds greater economic power. Professionals also pointed out that partners often ask women to stay home and care for the children, leading to a loss of autonomy, which reinforces the cycle of dependency and makes it harder for women to leave abusive relationships.

"No, you stay at home, take care of the children, take care of the family", and the women, seeing this as a family project, do not realize that they are depriving themselves of any economic autonomy in this way (P9).

(g) It is not fully understood

Professionals pointed out the various types of violence, noting that some are less understood than others. For example, physical violence is evident and well-understood because it is visible, while other forms of violence are less recognized. They mentioned that IPV only garners attention when a femicide occurs, after which it is quickly forgotten.

However, there is still so much to do, because, for example, domestic violence is still only recognized when it is physical, while all the other forms are not yet well understood (P4).

People only talk about it when there is a murder, a femicide. Then they go wild, and various so-called experts come out of nowhere. They do TV shows and bring in hastily-prepared psychologists to talk about why these murders happen within the home (P7).

Additionally, the discussion around IPV is often misguided, focusing excessively on the victim and not enough on the perpetrator. This approach sidesteps the underlying issue of patriarchy, often attributing the violence to jealousy and love. Furthermore, the media contributes to this misinterpretation by frequently showing pictures of the couple appearing happy, thus sending the wrong message, omitting crucial information, and using inappropriate terminology.

But often, even here, there is a significant responsibility. It's not talked about properly. The focus is often on the victim and not on the perpetrator. Terms like 'fit of rage' and 'jealousy' are frequently used (P10).

(h) We should teach in schools

For this theme, professionals emphasized the critical need for more training sessions and workshops to be organized in schools to combat the deeply rooted cultural norms and attitudes prevalent even among the younger generation. They insisted on the significance of such initiatives, highlighting that additional subjects like affective education should be introduced into the school curriculum. This, they believe, is essential in fostering a healthier understanding of relationships and dismantling harmful stereotypes leading to IPV from an early age.

In my opinion, working with children and teenagers is fundamental. If we don't start there, we will always have generations growing up and carrying forward the same issues (P4).

3.3.2. Service providers' perspectives of gender norms and IPV

(a) Violence needs a better diagnosis

In discussing service providers, the most prominent theme was the lack of proper training among police, social services, and legal services, leading to a fundamental misunderstanding of violence. Providers often adopt a neutral perspective instead of a gendered one, treating both parties equally and ignoring gender disparities. Professionals noted that this results in inadequate support, as police may underestimate complaints and services often confuse violence with conflict, failing to address the power dynamics and ignoring the inherent gender disparities that acknowledges that women are often in a disadvantaged position.

No, that complaint does not have a gendered perspective; it has a neutral perspective. And with a neutral perspective, you end up looking at what he did and what she did (P1).

Violence is treated as a conflict between spouses, possibly very contentious, but both spouses are put on the same level. In a situation of domestic violence, however, the man is here and the woman is here; there is a significant power imbalance between the woman and the man in a violent situation (P7).

Professionals stressed the need for training to challenge deep-rooted cultural biases and improve support for women. Without such training, cultural biases hinder effective assistance, as the belief persists that men are entitled to certain behaviours while women must be patient, slowing down procedures and exacerbating the abuse.

They said they were not required to do anything because there was no evidence of a crime in progress; the husband was not there hitting her (P6).

I believe the idea still persists that a man can do certain things and that a woman must be patient (P4).

For women, it's a slap in the face, perhaps even heavier than the abuse they suffered during the relationship, to not be believed, to feel trivialized (P7).

According to the professionals, the language used by service providers can be harmful, discouraging women from seeking help and making them feel more insecure. Women often feel traumatized by the service approach, feeling unheard, disbelieved, and judged, which sometimes deters them from seeking further assistance.

They often say, 'Why did I bother?' Because they've left a situation of violence only to enter another extremely difficult one (P9).

(b) We investigate and judge the victim

Professionals emphasized that services often question and judge women rather than perpetrators. They noted that a woman's capability as a mother is frequently evaluated. For instance, when a woman accompanies her children to see their father, she might not appear at her best, leading social services to judge her harshly. They also said that a woman is expected to be protective of her children in situations of violence, but there is less focus on the fact that it is actually the father who should not be violent.

To report on femicide and violence, the focus is often not on the abuser, but on the woman who is scrutinized and judged (P9).

There is a lot of attention on the fact that the mother must be protective, but much less emphasis on the fact that the father should not be violent (P11).

In court, the professionals witnessed judges that often ask why women stayed in the relationship or chose to have children with the perpetrator, and label them as uncooperative. They also mentioned Parental Alienation Syndrome, where women are accused of turning their children against their fathers. They added that women often have to defend themselves despite being the ones who reported the violence. Professionals shared instances of deceased women, killed by their partner, who are harshly judged in court.

Unfortunately, this happens even in the courts. The lawyers, and sometimes even the judges, ask the women, 'Why did you have the first child with him? Why did you have the second child if your husband was like that? (P2)

When reporting femicides and violence, very often the focus is not on the perpetrator, but on the woman who is scrutinized and judged (P9).

(c) A bad husband is not a bad father

Professionals emphasized how services prioritize co-parenting, viewing the father figure as essential for the children to the extent that violence is often overlooked. They mentioned that sometimes children are

taken from their mothers to bond with their fathers, and that fathers can exploit this opportunity to control their ex-partners through the children. They also added that these meetings, where women are forced to see their ex-partners, put them in danger as they are exposed.

If he wants to reach her, he reaches her downstairs and that's it. And the questions that fathers ask their children, 'Who is mom with?' 'Where is mom?' (P1).

It was said that a bad husband could still be a good father without considering the witnessed violence (P9).

They noted that there is still a vision of the family as a sacred entity that must be preserved, leading services to grant rights to the father, thereby disadvantaging the woman. Additionally, they pointed out that the father's good behaviour often results in the services siding with him.

A fact that some services still tend to somehow protect and maintain the aspect of the family, trying to safeguard the father in relation to the minor children (P4).

If the father brings a small gift, he is always viewed favourably (P13).

(d) Women are dissuaded to report

Professionals noted that services often discourage reporting by suggesting reasons such as the father's role in the children's lives, promoting the notion of a cohesive family unit despite violence. They also normalize conflicts within couples, which can dissuade women from reaching out to those services.

Ma'am, are you sure you want to press charges? Ma'am, consider that he is the father of your children. These things happen within a couple (P1).

Additionally, professionals highlighted the detrimental impact of negative experiences with services, which can dissuade future reporting. They emphasized that such incidents could lead women to withdraw complaints or feel unheard, perpetuating a cycle of mistrust. They stressed the responsibility of services in ensuring women's safety, noting that dismissing complaints could potentially expose them to further danger.

They somewhat act as obstacles in motivating the victim not to immediately file a complaint, to wait (P8).

Because if you've almost dissuaded her, as indeed happens in these episodes I told you about, if you've almost dissuaded her, you've taken on a responsibility that might lead her back home and he kills her (P10).

(e) There is more sensibility and training

Professionals noted a positive shift in recent years regarding the sensitivity of service providers. They observed that there has been an increase in training, leading to a higher level of awareness and better recognition of women's rights. This, in turn, results in more appropriate and supportive responses from services. Additionally, they highlighted the importance of ongoing confrontation and discussion in fostering greater sensitivity. The professionals also emphasized the crucial role played by anti-violence centres, whose efforts in networking and training have significantly contributed to this progress.

Then there is an awareness regarding what is happening at a cultural level (P3).

So, let's say that in this area we are somewhat ahead, but we have worked a lot on this (P13).

Professionals revealed varying sensitivity among service providers. They noted sensitivity depends on the service's resources and staff training quality. They cited instances of inadequate responses due to biases against women, but also highlighted competent professionals, often found in long-established anti-violence centres. Some women reported positive experiences where violence was recognized and addressed, affirming their abilities as mothers. However, others felt discouraged by interactions with less supportive providers, showing the impact of staff attitudes and training.

It depends, there are stories of recognition of their ability, their ability to be mothers, to have come out of violence, to have reported it, and sometimes, instead there are truly devastating stories (P9).

Chapter 4: Discussion

This qualitative study aimed to understand the social representations of gender norms in Italy, focusing on the culture of honour, investigate the social perceptions of intimate partner violence (IPV) and its relation to gender norms, and assess how service providers perceive IPV and gender norms and how these perceptions impact women's experiences. The reflexive thematic analysis evaluated the quality of participants' answers, extracted and labelled 31 themes, and organized and described them for better interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The identified themes for gender norms highlight traditional roles and expectations for men and women, with some regional differences. In the culture of honour, themes reflect respect and indulgence towards men, limitations on women's freedom and behaviour, and adherence to unwritten gender rules. For IPV, societal themes include control by partners, normalization of violence, persistent stereotypes, increased awareness, victim-blaming, and the impact of economic independence. Service provider themes reveal the need for better violence diagnosis, lack of training, victim investigation, and institutional responses, with women often discouraged from reporting abuse.

Most of the themes' findings reflect current literature on gender norms and IPV, showing both resistance to and evolution from deep-rooted ideas. While some themes suggest progress in societal representations, many indicate persistent traditional views, including among service providers. The discussion will connect these themes to previous literature, identifying new concepts and areas of continuity.

4.1. Integrating Findings into Existing Research

Gender norms in Italy are marked by rigidity across various domains, particularly evident in the expectation that women primarily fulfil caregiving roles as mothers and homemakers responsible for household duties and childcare (Lomazzi, 2017). This traditional framework places high societal pressures on women to excel in these roles, contrasting sharply with the lesser expectations placed on fathers. Professionals noted that while mothers face pressure, scrutiny and expectations of nurturing competence, fathers are often seen as competent with little effort, even if they have histories of violence as partners, as services prioritize co-parenting. This disparity extends into the cultural realm of honour, where professionals emphasised men's freedom to engage in behaviours deemed inappropriate under traditional norms yet are still respected more than women who do the same and their actions are often justified or excused.

It was also noted that, despite their higher education levels in Italy, many women remain economically dependent on their partners due to societal norms such as staying home for caregiving that discourage women from entering the workforce. A majority remains unemployed in Italy (Lomazzi, 2017). While

trends toward modernization, including increased female employment and secularization, are evident in Northern and Central Italy, traditional values and slower educational advancements prevail in the South (Lomazzi, 2017). Professionals identified additional factors contributing to these trends, such as regional disparities in childcare availability, perpetuating the male breadwinner model and reinforcing women's roles as homemakers and limiting their economic independence (Cutillo & Centra, 2017). It was noted that these cultural attitudes and economic dependencies significantly impact women's ability to leave violent relationships, as they often feel trapped and unable to negotiate or escape due to financial reliance and societal expectations. Thus, while there are shifts towards modernization in some regions, entrenched gender norms and economic realities continue to pose significant challenges for women in Italy, particularly those experiencing intimate partner violence.

Professionals also highlighted how the caregiving role influences women's career choices. Women are often encouraged to pursue flexible careers that accommodate caregiving responsibilities, making their priority finding a job that fits their role as a mother. This idea is supported by scholars who show that social stereotypes channel women into traditionally feminine professions like teaching and nursing, while men dominate leadership roles across sectors, despite women's higher graduation rates (Rosti, 2006; Saccà, 2021). Additionally, the male breadwinner model in Italy burdens women with primary childcare responsibilities, limiting their workforce participation. Women prioritize job security, while men focus on salary. Societal constraints, including childcare responsibilities and traditional gender roles, frequently restrict women's career choices, contributing to occupational and sectoral gender disparities (Cutillo & Centra, 2017).

Several themes underscore the patriarchal nature of Italian society. Professionals highlighted the absence of women in history books or medicine focusing on male bodies, and the fearlessness of men walking in dark streets at night, reflected by Italy's laws, customs, and values rooted in a patriarchal framework (Stuart, 2014). In addition, they mentioned that women frequently encounter more obstacles in the workforce than men, who generally benefit from preferential hiring practices and occupy more significant positions. This patriarchal structure pressures women to adopt masculine behaviours to succeed in their careers and attain higher positions. Indeed, leadership roles are still predominantly associated with masculine traits, presenting obstacles for women aspiring to attain such positions (Reynolds et al., 2022). This can also be seen in the glass ceiling theory, which hinders women's career progression in the workplace. Due to cultural and cognitive factors, women often must work much harder than their male colleagues to receive the same level of recognition (Toffoli & Villa, 2023).

Professionals also illustrated that gender norms are currently in flux, noting a coexistence of traditional and less conventional norms. While some individuals resist old norms, others embrace modern ones. However, in the workplace, traditional gender roles remain entrenched, with women often facing disparities in employment and domestic responsibilities lagging progress in employment equality

(Lomazzi, 2017; Eek & Axmon, 2015). Despite advancements in dismantling patriarchal structures, traditional roles and honour-related violence persist, particularly within familial contexts (Cuzzi, 2010; Zambelli et al., 2018). Recent trends in Italy reflect divergent paths in gender roles influenced by modernization, yet inequalities persist in household duties and workplace representation (Dotti Sani, 2016; Rosti, 2006), underscoring the coexistence of traditional and newer norms.

The caregiving role in Italy is closely tied to the culture of honour, where participants defined women's honour by their dedication to others, particularly their partners and children. An "honourable" woman prioritizes her family and household maintenance, often at the expense of her own needs, reinforcing societal expectations of selfless dedication to family well-being. This societal validation of behaviour defines personal honour (Rodriguez Mosquera et al., 2002a). In addition, married women are expected to maintain their partner's honour by adhering to sexual behaviours dictated by their partner, ensuring fidelity, and upholding family reputation. Caffaro and colleagues (2014) noted that a man's honour is not solely based on personal virtues but is intricately linked to the honour of the entire family. A woman is expected to adhere to community expectations of chastity or fidelity, with any violations requiring immediate action from the man to protect the family's honour. This illustrates that a woman's honour is intertwined with her family's, particularly her partner's, while men face fewer constraints and greater freedom in their actions. When a woman's behaviour jeopardizes her family's honour, it often results in punishment aimed at restoring the family's reputation and reintegrating it into social order and harmony (Caffaro et al., 2014).

Indeed, when professionals were asked about rules or constraints within the culture of honour, they highlighted that women must adhere to specific norms. Men, on the other hand, were described as having the freedom to do as they please. For example, an "honourable" woman is expected to dress modestly, avoid revealing clothing, limit her makeup, refrain from drinking, and not stay out late. Women's honour is closely tied to their sexuality, emphasizing chastity and fidelity. This ties back to previous Italian laws that emphasized protecting a person's honour rather than the individual, such as shotgun marriages, where women were often forced to marry their abusers (Cuzzi, 2010), and honour-related crimes, where violence in defence of one's honour was condoned or even approved (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996).

The only time the man's honour was mentioned by professionals was to emphasize that the man has power and should protect and provide for the family. This is also linked to the fact that men earn more and are more independent. In research, a man's honour is often referenced when women violate values from the culture of honour, necessitating urgent and decisive action from the man to protect his and his family's honour (Caffaro et al., 2014). Additionally, a man's masculine reputation is tied to the good name of his female partner (Vandello & Cohen, 2003). Here again, it shows how a man's honour depends on the good behaviour of his family, especially his wife, who must follow societal rules to preserve her partner's honour.

In the culture of honour, professionals also noted traditional associations of "masculinity" with men and "femininity" with women. They described feminine behaviour as characterized by a soft voice, sensitivity, and emotional expressiveness. In contrast, masculine behaviour is linked to virility and the suppression of emotions. This aligns with gender norms where traditional expectations of masculinity in Italy limit men's emotional expression, which was also mentioned by professionals. The roles of honour and shame play crucial roles in shaping these masculine and feminine ideals (Tager & Good, 2005). In addition, according to Connell (1995, as cited in Tager & Good, 2005), adherence to these norms provides men with pathways to gain power and status. This aligns with the observations made by professionals who described honour for men as intertwined with power.

In the culture of honour, professionals characterize these norms as "unwritten rules," emphasizing that the notion of honour varies across societies and is shaped by compliance with these norms. Specifically, Mediterranean honour revolves around maintaining a positive reputation, especially concerning family honour, social ties, and adherence to both masculine and feminine codes of honour (Rodriguez Mosquera et al., 2002a). According to Caffaro and colleagues (2014), Italy's collectivist culture leads individuals to see themselves in relation to their social image, compelling them to strictly adhere to social norms, even when their personal beliefs diverge significantly.

The concept of power extends beyond the culture of honour and permeates gender roles and IPV dynamics. Theories on power and control, as highlighted by Dardis and colleagues (2015), are widely discussed in research. Studies, such as those conducted by Straus and colleagues (2006), have established a clear link between male dominance and power dynamics within relationships and instances of partner violence. Violence is often employed to establish or reassert control (Dardis et al., 2015). Coercive control, defined as the ability to impose unwanted actions or remove desired ones from the victim, becomes intertwined with violence, creating an environment of fear and terror for the victim (Hamberger et al., 2017). Indeed, professionals noted that violence serves to remind women of their subordinate position relative to men, and that men exert control over their partners by imposing restrictions, such as asking them to stay home, avoid specific individuals, or remain silent, illustrating the coercive control theory. Furthermore, hostile sexism reinforces this notion by viewing women as threats to men's power (Rollero et al., 2014). This is evident in professionals' observations that IPV often stems from viewing women as subordinate to their partners, with such behaviour sometimes perceived as jealousy in Italian society. This perspective reinforces the notion of women as possessions, justifying control over their actions and the use of violence to dominate their bodies.

Professionals emphasized that the younger generation still adheres to old gender stereotypes regarding IPV, with women often viewed as inferior to men. This persistent stereotype stems from the entrenched notion of male power. Concerning attitudes among the younger generation were pointed out, including beliefs that a girlfriend should not wear certain clothing, reflecting a possessive and controlling mindset

that can lead to IPV. Women are expected to be submissive, with men typically seen as household heads (Stuart, 2014). Italy's historical and cultural contexts play a crucial role in shaping relationships, perpetuating old stereotypes that persist in certain social settings (Carabellese et al., 2014). The cultural stereotype of men demanding obedience within the home remains a reality. Additionally, participants noted that despite societal advancements in gender norms, women in Italy continue to be objectified and dehumanized due to entrenched discrimination and traditional gender roles. Behaviours like catcalling are still perceived as compliments rather than harassment. Many young people believe "it's always been like this" and accuse professionals of exaggerating the problem.

The lack of acknowledgment of the gravity of IPV has led to its normalization. Professionals noted that society often ignores the issue to avoid confronting uncomfortable truths. Recurring violence can start to feel normal, making it hard for women to recognize its severity. In Italy, certain behaviours perpetuate a cycle of violence and the belief that men are superior and entitled. In traditional cultures, there is a persistent belief that men should maintain control over women, particularly in the realm of sexuality, to prevent societal disintegration (Saccà, 2021). This belief diminishes the recognition of violence. Families sometimes advise victims to stay in abusive relationships, reinforcing the idea that male violence is normal and acceptable. Violence may be seen as necessary to maintain a man's and family's honour. The emphasis on family cohesion, coupled with traditional gender roles, exerts significant pressure on women to remain in relationships despite potential danger or harm (Vandello & Cohen, 2003). The societal acceptance of domestic abuse diminishes women's entitlement to a life free from violence, despite ongoing efforts in literature and media aimed at global awareness (Stuart, 2014).

In Italian society, professionals noted a prevalent belief that women are responsible for the violence they endure. This belief is reflected in how victims are questioned and judged rather than the perpetrators. Victim blaming allows offenders to deflect responsibility (Moriarty, 2008), and is common in Italy's gender culture, where societal expectations restrict women's behaviour (Lomazzi, 2017; Zambelli et al., 2018). Services may blame women for not following prescribed legal pathways (Pomicino et al., 2019), leading to secondary victimization due to negligence by formal agencies (R. Campbell & Raja, 1999).

Victim blaming is linked to the just world theory, which suggests a human tendency to believe in a fair world. When faced with injustice, people may blame victims by rationalizing their circumstances based on perceived character traits. This theory influences perceptions of blame towards victims and judgments about the fairness of punishments for perpetrators, reinforcing the need for a just world (Hafer & Bègue, 2005). Professionals also mentioned Parental Alienation Syndrome (PAS), where women are accused of turning children against their fathers. In IPV cases, PAS leads to unethical evaluations that overlook the child's best interests (Moon et al., 2020).

Professionals identified several reasons why intimate partner violence (IPV) is not fully understood in Italian society. They noted that psychological violence is less recognized than physical violence, with

society often viewing IPV as an emergency only in cases of femicide. IPV is frequently misperceived as an act of jealousy and love, rather than a negatively motivated behaviour. Psychological violence, the most prevalent form of IPV, is one of the least recognized and hardest to prove, significantly impeding a woman's efforts to leave a violent relationship (Dokkedahl et al., 2019). Additionally, the perception of IPV as an act of love can be linked to benevolent sexism, which idealizes women as needing men's protection and care, justifying control (Hammond et al., 2018; Rollero et al., 2014). Furthermore, societal factors, including the belief that romantic jealousy is desirable, patriarchal norms, and the social acceptance of IPV, may also influence the relationship between real or suspected infidelity, romantic jealousy, and IPV. Indeed, real or suspected infidelity and romantic jealousy are strongly associated with IPV. This idea is also evident in the culture of honour, where men's aggressive responses to romantic rejection are often seen as more justified (Gul et al., 2021).

Furthermore, professionals highlighted that the lack of understanding of IPV in services often leads to misdiagnoses of violence. They noted inadequate training and a tendency to adopt a neutral rather than gendered perspective, which overlooks gender disparities and confuses violence with conflict. Cultural biases hinder effective assistance, perpetuating the belief that men are entitled to certain behaviours while women must be patient. Holding traditional sexual beliefs, adhering to sex-role stereotypes, endorsing traditional gender norms, and accepting violence are associated with higher rates of both men's and women's perpetration of IPV (Dardis et al., 2015). This slows down procedures, exacerbates abuse, and discourages women from seeking help, leaving victims feeling traumatized, judged, and unheard. Moon and colleagues (2020) also emphasized this lack of training, particularly among child custody evaluators, who struggle to understand the dynamics of domestic violence and lack effective assessment techniques. In addition, Dokkedahl and colleagues (2019) confirm that IPV can lead to severe mental health repercussions among its victims. It is viewed as a form of interpersonal trauma, with victims often experiencing symptoms consistent with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The inadequate assistance from services fails to alleviate these issues and hinders effective recovery.

Professionals observed that beyond the lack of understanding or normalization of IPV, women are often discouraged from reporting it. They advocate for maintaining a cohesive family unit despite violence and normalize conflicts within couples, which may deter women from seeking help from services. This notion of family unity was associated with traditional stereotypes by Carabellese and colleagues (2014), suggesting that these stereotypes may cause women to tolerate some degree of violence due to their roles as homemakers and mothers responsible for preserving family harmony. Additionally, they noted that women's reluctance to report violence stems from fear of stigma or being blamed for their partner's actions.

Lastly, professionals highlighted increased sensitivity toward IPV in Italian society, with more openness to discussing the issue and a stronger sense of collective responsibility. Media coverage has improved,

offering greater attention and more informed reporting, and this period is seen as complex and transitional, reflecting significant societal changes. Services are also more sensitive and better trained, leading to higher awareness and recognition of women's rights. Various studies noted changes in mentalities, with shifts in gender dynamics due to feminist thought, increased female employment, higher education levels, and secularization (Lomazzi, 2017). Significant progress has been made in dismantling patriarchal structures (Cuzzi, 2010; Zambelli et al., 2018) and increasing female presence in public life (Dotti Sani, 2016; Rosti, 2006). However, traditional gender roles and honour-based violence persist, with domestic gender equality lagging (Eek & Axmon, 2015), or disparities continuing in household chores and workplace representation. Professionals emphasized the importance of organizing training sessions and workshops in schools to combat deeply rooted cultural norms and attitudes prevalent among the younger generation.

4.2. Implications

The implications of this research are far-reaching, highlighting gaps in the literature and the urgent need for practical interventions in gender-based violence services in Italy. Despite the wealth of research on intimate partner violence and its cultural underpinnings, there is a notable absence of studies focusing on the perspectives and challenges faced by professionals working in the gender-based violence field. This research aims to fill that void, providing a platform for these professionals to share their insights and experiences, thereby informing more effective and targeted support services.

Existing literature does not address the practical challenges within gender-based violence services. While authors like Dardis et al. (2015) and Lomazzi (2017) have examined the persistence of traditional gender norms and their correlation with IPV, the practical implications for service providers or the systemic inadequacies they face have not been sufficiently explored. By including the voices of professionals, this research highlights the need for more gender-sensitive training and a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics of IPV, as emphasized by Moon et al. (2020).

Furthermore, focusing on the new generation is central. Despite societal advancements, traditional cultural values and gender stereotypes persist among young people, perpetuating the cycle of violence. Professionals noted that many young individuals still hold conservative views on gender roles and IPV. Addressing these attitudes through educational interventions and awareness programs in schools is essential to promote gender equality and prevent future instances of IPV. Italy's collectivist culture contributes to the normalization of IPV and hinders progress towards gender equality (Caffaro et al., 2014), and patriarchal norms and the social acceptance of IPV persist, as noted by Dokkedahl et al. (2019), making it difficult for victims to seek help and for society to recognize the severity of the issue. Additionally, professionals pointed out the lack of training and gender-sensitive approaches among

service providers, leading to misdiagnoses and ineffective assistance. Cultural biases and victim-blaming attitudes within services further compound the problem.

The failure to adhere to the Istanbul Convention, which mandates comprehensive measures to prevent and combat violence against women, reflects systemic shortcomings in addressing gender-based violence in Italy. This highlights the need for policy reforms to ensure adherence to international conventions and to implement mandatory training for service providers to adopt gender-sensitive approaches and recognize the complex dynamics of IPV.

Continued research is essential to explore the perspectives of professionals and address gaps in existing literature. Advocacy efforts should focus on amplifying these voices and pushing for systemic changes in service provision. By addressing these issues, we can work towards a more equitable and just society where women can live free from violence and discrimination. This research is a step towards understanding the complexities of gender-based violence in Italy and advocating for the necessary changes to support victims effectively.

4.3. Limitations

One significant limitation of the study is the potential for a small sample size, which can limit the generalizability of the findings. With a smaller sample, the results might not accurately reflect the broader population's experiences and perspectives. Additionally, if the study focuses on specific regions or communities within Italy, the findings might not be representative of the entire country. Regional cultural variations can influence the prevalence and nature of IPV and the effectiveness of services, making it crucial to consider these differences when interpreting the results.

The study's reliance on self-reported data from professionals introduces the possibility of biases that can influence the accuracy and reliability of the data collected. Furthermore, the study primarily employs qualitative methods. While qualitative insights are invaluable for understanding complex social phenomena, the subjectivity of the data can limit the study's overall impact. In addition, it is important to note that all participants in the study were women, which introduces potential biases into the findings.

Focusing primarily on the perspectives of professionals working in the field of gender-based violence, the study may not adequately capture the experiences and viewpoints of survivors themselves which can result in an incomplete understanding of the issue. Additionally, the study might not fully explore how intersecting factors such as race, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation influence experiences of IPV and access to services, potentially overlooking critical dimensions of the problem. An example mentioned by a professional during the study was the occurrence of genital mutilations in Italy, a topic they explore which predominantly affects non-Italian women. This highlights the need to consider the

experiences of migrant and women of other social minority groups, who may face unique challenges and forms of violence that are not as prevalent among Italian women.

It is worth noting that in the research reviewed for this study, none of the studies explicitly mentioned including non-cis-gender women. Therefore, it can be assumed that all the studies referenced in the literature refer to cis-gendered individuals. However, we can only wonder about violence directed at non-cis-gender and trans women, highlighting a significant gap in the literature that future research should address.

Understanding and interpreting the cultural nuances that affect IPV in Italy pose a significant challenge. The study might struggle to fully grasp the deeply ingrained gender norms and values that shape attitudes towards IPV. Institutional biases and systemic barriers within the services and legal frameworks may also not be fully uncovered, limiting the study's ability to provide comprehensive recommendations for addressing these issues.

The study might highlight the need for more resources and training for professionals, but practical limitations such as budgetary and institutional constraints can hinder the implementation of these recommendations. Ensuring that the insights gained from the study lead to real-world changes is a significant hurdle. The study offers a snapshot of the current situation, which is subject to change over time. Ongoing research is essential to monitor and evaluate the long-term impact of any interventions or policy changes. The dynamic nature of societal attitudes and institutional practices means that continuous assessment and adaptation are necessary to address IPV effectively.

4.4. Conclusion

This study delved into the intricate landscape of intimate-partner violence in Italy, aiming to shed light on its various dimensions, societal implications, and the efficacy of existing support services. By synthesizing literature and insights from professionals in the field, this research provided a comprehensive analysis of the cultural, legal, and systemic factors influencing IPV. Methodologically, the study engaged in literature review and qualitative interviews with professionals from the gender-based violence field, offering an understanding of how gender norms, societal attitudes, and institutional responses shape the prevalence and management of IPV. It aims to contribute to the discourse on IPV by highlighting the need for improved service provision, enhanced awareness among the younger generation about persistent cultural values, and alignment with international standards such as the Istanbul Convention. This research underscores the imperative for continued advocacy, policy reform, and community education to effectively combat IPV and support survivors in Italy.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Interview script in English

Opening question

Could you tell me a little bit about yourself and how long have you been working in this field?

1. Gender norms

1. What are the representations of gender norms in Italy today? In other words, how would Italians define being a man or being a woman?
 2. What is considered an honourable man and women in Italy?
 3. How can a man's/woman's honour be negatively affected?
 4. How are gender norms perceived among service providers with whom you work with? And in what ways does it impact women's experiences while seeking for help?
-

2. Intimate-partner violence

1. How is domestic violence perceived in Italian society today?
 2. How do you see domestic violence related to gender norms?
 3. How do you think IPV is perceived among other service providers?
 4. Based on these perceptions, how would you characterize the responses from services?
 5. In your work, what challenges or barriers have women expressed in terms of engaging with these service providers?
 6. What are the outcomes for these women after they sought for help? In other words, what do they get from the service providers?
-

Closing question

Would you like to add anything on this topic that you think might be relevant?

Appendix B: Interview script in Italian

Domanda di apertura

Potresti parlarmi un po' di te e dirmi da quanto tempo lavori in questo campo?

2. Norme di genere

1. Quali sono le rappresentazioni delle norme di genere in Italia oggi? In altre parole, come definirebbero gli italiani l'essere uomo o donna?
 2. Cosa è considerato un uomo o una donna onorevole in Italia?
 3. Come può essere negativamente influenzato l'onore di un uomo o di una donna?
 4. Come sono percepite le norme di genere all'interno degli altri servizi che aiutano le donne vittime di violenza? E in che modo influiscono sulle esperienze delle donne che cercano aiuto?
-

2. Violenza da parte di un partner intimo

1. Come è percepita oggi la violenza domestica nella società italiana?
 2. Come pensi che la violenza domestica potrebbe essere collegata alle norme di genere?
 3. Come pensi che la violenza domestica sia percepita all'interno degli altri servizi?
 4. In base a queste percezioni, come descriveresti la risposta di questi servizi quando le donne si rivolgono a loro?
 5. Nel tuo lavoro, quali difficoltà hanno espresso le donne nell'interagire con questi servizi?
 6. Quali sono gli esiti per queste donne dopo aver cercato aiuto? In altre parole, cosa ottengono dai servizi?
-

Domanda di chiusura

Vorresti aggiungere qualcosa su questo argomento che ritieni possa essere rilevante?

Appendix C: Informed consent in English



This study is part of a research project taking place at **Iscte – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa**.

The study aims to explore the dynamic interplay between **changing gender norms** and **intimate-partner violence** in Italy and evaluate its impact on women's interactions with **support services**. Your participation in the study, which is highly valued as it will contribute to the advancement of knowledge in this field of science, consists of **sharing** your experiences and perspectives as a professional on gender norms, relationships, and domestic violence in a confidential **interview** that will last approximately **30 to 60 minutes**, ensuring a comfortable and flexible conversation.

Iscte is responsible for the processing of your personal data that are collected and processed exclusively for the purposes of the study, legally based on **Article 6(a)** and **Article 9(2)(a)** of the **GDPR** (General Data Protection Regulation) in the Portuguese legal system.

The study is conducted by **Jessica Scarlata Gulizia** (jessica.sc.gu@gmail.com), who you may contact to clear up any doubts, share comments or exercise your rights in relation to the processing of your personal data. You may use the contact indicated above to request access, rectification, erasure or limitation of the processing of your personal data.

Your participation in this study is **confidential**. Your personal data will always be processed by authorised personnel bound to the duty of secrecy and confidentiality. Iscte assures the use of appropriate techniques, organisational and security measures to protect personal information. All investigators are required to keep all personal data confidential.

In addition to being confidential, participation in the study is strictly **voluntary**: you may choose freely whether to participate or not. If you have decided to participate, you may stop your participation and withdraw your consent to the processing of your personal data at any time, without having to provide any justification. The withdrawal of consent shall not affect the lawfulness of processing based on consent before its withdrawal.

Your personal data will be kept for the **duration of the study** (until July 2024), after which they will be destroyed, with their anonymity being assured in the study's results, being disclosed only for purposes of statistics, teaching, communication in scientific meetings, books or articles.

There are no expected significant risks associated with participation in the study. Iscte does not disclose, or share with third parties, information related to its personal data.

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Iscte has a Data Protection Officer who may be contacted by e-mail: dpo@iscte-iul.pt. If you consider this necessary, you also have the right to submit a complaint to the Portuguese Data Protection Authority (CNDP).

I declare that I have understood the aims of what was proposed to me, as explained by the investigator, that I was given the opportunity to ask any questions about this study and received a clarifying reply to all such questions. **I accept** participating in the study and consent to my personal data being used in accordance with the information that was given to me.

Yes ☐ No ☐

_____ (place), ____/____/____ (date)

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix D: Informed consent in Italian



Questa ricerca fa parte di un progetto di ricerca in corso presso **Iscte – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa**.

Lo studio mira a esplorare l'interazione dinamica tra **le norme di genere in evoluzione e la violenza tra partner** in Italia, valutandone l'impatto sulle interazioni delle donne con i **servizi di supporto**. La tua partecipazione allo studio, molto apprezzata poiché contribuirà all'avanzamento della conoscenza in questo campo scientifico, consiste nel **condividere** le tue esperienze e prospettive professionali sulle norme di genere, le relazioni e la violenza domestica in un'intervista confidenziale della durata approssimativa di **30-60 minuti**, garantendo una conversazione confortevole e flessibile.

L'ISCTE è responsabile del trattamento dei tuoi dati personali raccolti ed elaborati esclusivamente per gli scopi dello studio, legalmente basati **sull'Articolo 6(a)** e sull'**Articolo 9(2)(a)** del **GDPR** (Regolamento Generale sulla Protezione dei Dati) nel sistema legale portoghese.

Lo studio è condotto da **Jessica Scarlata Gulizia** (jessica.sc.gu@gmail.com), a cui puoi rivolgerti per chiarire dubbi, condividere commenti o esercitare i tuoi diritti relativi al trattamento dei tuoi dati personali. Puoi utilizzare il contatto indicato sopra per richiedere accesso, rettifica, cancellazione o limitazione del trattamento dei tuoi dati personali.

La tua partecipazione a questo studio è **confidenziale**. I tuoi dati personali saranno sempre trattati da personale autorizzato vincolato al dovere di segretezza e riservatezza. L'ISCTE garantisce l'uso di tecniche adeguate, misure organizzative e di sicurezza per proteggere le informazioni personali. Tutti gli investigatori sono tenuti a mantenere confidenziali tutti i dati personali.

Oltre a essere confidenziale, la partecipazione allo studio è strettamente **volontaria**: puoi scegliere liberamente se partecipare o meno. Se hai deciso di partecipare, puoi interrompere la tua partecipazione e revocare il tuo consenso al trattamento dei tuoi dati personali in qualsiasi momento, senza dover fornire alcuna giustificazione. Il ritiro del consenso non influirà sulla liceità del trattamento basato sul consenso prima del suo ritiro.

I tuoi dati personali saranno conservati per la **durata dello studio** (fino a luglio 2024), dopodiché saranno distrutti, garantendo l'anonimato nei risultati dello studio, divulgati solo per scopi statistici, didattici, comunicazione in riunioni scientifiche, libri o articoli.

Non sono previsti rischi significativi associati alla partecipazione allo studio. L'ISCTE non divulga, o condivide con terzi, informazioni relative ai suoi dati personali.

L'ISCTE dispone di un Responsabile della Protezione dei Dati contattabile via e-mail: dpo@iscte-iul.pt. Se lo ritieni necessario, hai anche il diritto di presentare un reclamo all'Autorità portoghese di Protezione dei Dati (CNDP).

Dichiaro di aver compreso gli obiettivi di ciò che mi è stato proposto, come spiegato dall'investigatore, di aver avuto l'opportunità di porre eventuali domande su questo studio e di aver ricevuto risposte esaurienti a tutte le domande. **Accetto** di partecipare allo studio e acconsento all'uso dei miei dati personali in conformità alle informazioni che mi sono state fornite.

Si ☐ No ☐

_____ (luogo), ____/____/____ (data)

Nome: _____

Firma: _____

Appendix E: The themes

Gender norms	Culture of honour
<p>1. Women are identified as care figures E.g. <i>I think about the number of hours to be divided equally for work leave, but no, there's maternity leave, but not much paternity leave</i> (P15).</p> <p>2. It is still like this E.g. <i>Well, look, just the other day a young man said to me, 'Well, it has always been like this, hasn't it?' as if it were normal</i> (P1).</p> <p>3. Women are less independent compared to men E.g. <i>There is a widespread prejudice among them that men should earn more than women</i> (P2).</p> <p>4. It is a man's world E.g. <i>Textbooks need to change. Our textbooks, our history still narrated by men</i> (P1)</p> <p>5. Women occupy lower positions E.g. <i>Because a man doesn't get pregnant. Because a man doesn't take maternity leave. Because the burden of care, unfortunately, still falls on women</i> (P5).</p> <p>6. Women in the north are more independent E.g. <i>It's true that female unemployment mostly affects women in the South, not those in the North</i> (P1).</p> <p>7. Women can show emotions, not men E.g. <i>The man must never cry, he must be strong, virile</i> (P9).</p> <p>8. There are not defined gender norms today E.g. <i>A form of post-patriarchy that resists, that struggles to fade away</i> (P11).</p>	<p>1. Men are treated with more respect and indulgence E.g. <i>A man is free to do whatever he wants</i> (P9).</p> <p>2. Women lack freedom E.g. <i>The man asks the woman not to go out, or not to go out much, or not to talk with colleagues. Gradually, women are isolated from friendships. Many women are asked to stay silent in public</i> (P13).</p> <p>3. Women's sexual conduct is important E.g. <i>That she loses her virginity with the love of her life, preferably not at too young an age, meaning not too young</i> (P2).</p> <p>4. We judge women's behaviour in relation to her partner E.g. <i>She should not commit adultery, meaning she should not have relationships with other men. She is married and should not have relationships outside of marriage</i> (P3).</p> <p>5. A woman's priority should not be her own self E.g. <i>And it is the woman who, if necessary, gives up her own individuality in favour of taking care of the family</i> (P2).</p> <p>6. A woman must be “feminine” and a man “masculine” E.g. <i>For a man, honour is certainly reflected in that steadfast figure who has very little contact with his own emotions. The rock-like man, that macho vision, right?</i> (P8).</p> <p>7. They (men and women) should follow the unwritten rules E.g. <i>Linked to belonging to a clan, which can be a cultural clan or a criminal clan, there are rules that must be adhered to</i> (P2).</p> <p>8. A man has the role of power, protection, and provider E.g. <i>A man who works, earns, maintains a certain standard of living, ensures that nothing is lacking at home, and provides for the family's needs is a man who knows how to set the rules</i> (P4).</p>

Intimate-partner violence	
Societal representations and understanding of IPV	Service providers' perspectives of gender norms and IPV
<p>1. She is controlled by her partner E.g. <i>He killed her because he was losing control of a woman and did not respect her choice (P9).</i></p> <p>2. Violence became normal E.g. <i>Because if we are used to it and have been raised that way, we end up with it. So, fundamentally, violence then comes down to this (P5).</i></p> <p>3. The stereotypes are still the same in today E.g. <i>Because if I wear a skirt like that, it's seen as an invitation, right? It's actually a rather simplistic notion, one that has persisted perhaps since the 1960s (P5).</i></p> <p>4. There is more sensibility on the topic E.g. <i>In recent years, it has been talked about a lot, it has been talked about often. And a certain awareness has been raised even among men (P2).</i></p> <p>5. It is always the woman's fault E.g. <i>Because it is dictated by the vision we have of women within society. So, the blame is always on Eve (P1).</i></p> <p>6. Economic independence has an important role in IPV E.g. <i>They don't accept it; they must. Do you understand? They must, because if I have a job, I can support myself and my children (P1).</i></p> <p>7. It is not fully understood E.g. <i>However, there is still so much to do, because, for example, domestic violence is still only recognized when it is physical, while all the other forms are not yet well understood (P4).</i></p> <p>8. We should teach it in schools E.g. <i>In my opinion, working with children and teenagers is fundamental. If we don't start there, we will always have generations growing up and carrying forward the same issues (P4).</i></p>	<p>1. Violence needs a better diagnosis E.g. <i>I believe the idea still persists that a man can do certain things and that a woman must be patient (P4).</i></p> <p>2. We investigate and judge the victim E.g. <i>When reporting femicides and violence, very often the focus is not on the perpetrator, but on the woman who is scrutinized and judged (P9).</i></p> <p>3. A bad husband is not a bad father E.g. <i>If the father brings a small gift, he is always viewed favourably (P13).</i></p> <p>4. Women are dissuaded to report E.g. <i>They somewhat act as obstacles in motivating the victim not to immediately file a complaint, to wait (P8).</i></p> <p>5. There is more sensibility and training E.g. <i>Then there is an awareness regarding what is happening at a cultural level (P3).</i></p>