

**Staff and Public Attitudes towards Sexuality, Marriage and
Parenting regarding People with Intellectual Disabilities**

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore differences between staff and public attitudes towards sexuality, marriage and parenting in relation to people with intellectual disabilities (PWID) and to explore the impact of age groups and religious beliefs. A mixed method cross sectional design was employed. There were 222 participants in total (120 staff and 102 public) who completed online the *Attitudes to Sexuality Questionnaire (Individuals with an Intellectual Disabilities* [ASQ-ID] by Cuskelly and Gilmore (2007). Significant differences were found between staff and public attitudes towards sexuality. Participants reporting non-religious beliefs were slightly more positive in their attitudes towards sexuality and marriage than participants reporting religious beliefs. Analysing attitudes towards marriage is an addition to the research. Staff were more aware of the law pertaining to PWID and their sexuality. Five themes emerged from thematic analysis regarding awareness of the law. According to the two groups the law needs reform.

1. Introduction

1.1 *Defining Intellectual Disability*

Intellectual disability (ID) is defined as “impairments of general mental abilities that impact adaptive functioning” across three areas (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013, p.1). These areas include the conceptual domain involving skills such as language, writing, reasoning and memory, the social domain relating to empathy, judgment, communication skills, maintenance of friendships and the practical domain is focused on self-management for example personal care, managing money and organising events (APA, 2013).

There are four different levels of severity for ID. The four levels are known as mild, moderate, severe and profound (Boat et al., 2015). Most people with ID (PWID) are diagnosed as mild. People with mild ID are “slower in all areas of conceptual development and social and daily living skills” however they are able to acquire “practical life skills” that enable them to function in life with a small amount of support (Boat et al., 2015, p.170). People with moderate ID are able to “take care of themselves” with moderate support, can travel distances within their own community and acquire basic health and safety skills (Boat et al., 2015, p.170). The current study is focusing on attitudes towards sexuality, marriage and parenting in relation to mild to moderate ID. Therefore the term ID for the purpose of this study is defined as people with a mild to moderate ID.

1.2 *History of Attitudes*

Allport (1935 as cited in Bordens & Horowitz, 2012, p. 158) defined an attitude as “a mental and neural state of readiness, organised through experience, exerting a directive or

dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related". Attitudes are essential for explaining people's "thoughts, feelings and actions" in relation to other individuals, situations and beliefs (Bordens & Horowitz, 2012, p.158).

Historically, PWID were thought to be "asexual or sexually deviant" (Di Giulio, 2003 as cited in Jorissen & Burkholder, 2013, p.4). The misconception of asexuality is associated with the belief that PWID are incapable of sexual desires due to defects in their biological make-up and are seen as childlike (Milligan & Neufeldt, 2001). This is untrue as PWID mature physically at a similar rate to their peers (Advocates for Youth, 2006). Nevertheless western societies may still hold this misconception (Grant, Ramcharan, Flynn & Richardson, 2010).

Jorissen and Burkholder (2013) stated that in the past if these sexual feelings and behaviours were displayed by PWID they were viewed as maladaptive behaviours. According to Foley and Kelly (2009, p.30) these behaviour were also "seen as problematic and to be feared". However currently, there is an increasing awareness that PWID should be supported to develop and maintain personal and intimate relationships (Hardie & Tilly, 2012).

Woman with a ID were also regularly sterilised as a means of inhibiting any possibility of "unwanted pregnancies" (Hardie & Tilly, 2012, p.42). Woman with ID were not given meaningful information that they could understand. Today, this would not happen as people are now "protected by the Human Rights Act" (Hardie & Tilly, 2012, p.42).

Current research in Ireland is indicating that attitudes are becoming more positive in relation to sexuality and PWID. There is still "mixed feelings" in relation to the capacity of PWID to be able to make decisions and choices. A study carried out by Special Olympic Survey 2003 found that 23 percent of people thought that PWID would be able to raise

children (Foley & Kelly, 2009). Staff and public attitudes are important on this matter as they can have an effect on Irish legislation.

1.3 Legislation in Ireland

This research topic is quite current as the issue of consent and capacity were recently addressed on the 18th December 2015 in the Irish judicial system in relation to a woman with Down Syndrome (Gallagher, 2015). In May 2015, Ireland became the first country “to approve same-sex marriage by popular vote” (Caollaí & Hilliard, 2015). In October 2015, the legislation passed all stages in the Oireachtas (O’Regan & Bardon, 2015). In light of this recent result there is still a law in place that affect the rights of a minority group. The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act, 1993 impacts the rights of PWID. According to this law, section five reveals that:

A person who has or attempts to have sexual intercourse, or commits or attempts to commit an act of buggery, with a person who is mentally impaired (other than a person to whom he is married or to whom he believes with reasonable cause he is married) shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction (Irish Statute Book, n.d).

The Law Reform Commission (2013, p.13) stated that a “regrettable effect” of the 1993 Act, section 5, is that if two unmarried PWID were involved in a sexual relationship this “may constitute a criminal offence” (Law Reform Commission, 2013, p.13). The law currently does not recognise mutual consent as a defence for two adults with ID participating in a sexual relationship (Law Reform Commission, 2013).

Inclusion Ireland sent a written submission to the Joint Committee on Health and Children in November 2015. A case study was provided involving a couple with ID. This couple are in a “loving relationship” and “the service provider is worried about the

implications of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act” (Inclusion Ireland, 2015, p.19). Therefore they are not given the support they need to live together and continue their relationship (Inclusion Ireland, 2015). This is why parents and care givers can inhibit any intimate relationships from developing as they are fearful of being prosecuted (Law Reform Commission, 2013). The public and staff have an influence on law reform, policy making and implementation therefore it is important to obtain their opinions and attitudes on the matter.

1.4 Does Religion Play a Role in Developing Attitudes?

In Ireland, sexuality was generally believed to be taboo, “with personal values and religious beliefs” usually overshadowing the necessity to deliver information that is “accessible” and “accurate” (Irwin, 1993 as cited in Allen & Seery, 2007, p.9) Cochran and Beeghley (1991 as cited in Horan, 2015) stated that religion can have a large influence on a person’s beliefs regarding sexuality and these beliefs are held irrespective of someone having a disability. According to Ellison and Hummer (2010, p.369) “religious...beliefs can play an important role” and have an impact in the development of sexual attitudes.

A study was conducted by Saxe and Flanagan (2013, p.45) regarding “support workers’ perceptions of the sexuality of adults” with ID. Support workers with religious beliefs were found to hold more conservative sexual attitudes towards PWID than workers with no religious beliefs (Saxe & Flanagan, 2013). Sankla and Theodore (2015) stated in their future recommendations that researchers could focus on the impact of religion on people’s sexual attitudes. This current study will address this matter in the research.

1.4 Staff Attitudes

Grieve, McLaren, Lindsay and Culling (2009) conducted a study on staff attitudes towards sexuality in relation to PWID. The sample contained nurses and care staff that

worked with PWID. According to Grieve et al (2009, p.76) other studies completed previously in the area found that care staff believed “it is not okay for people with learning disabilities to have relationships”. It was found in the study conducted by Grieve et al (2009) that staff working in the community had more positive attitudes towards PWID having relationships than staff working in nursing homes. However a number of staff stated that they disagreed with PWID “kissing or holding hands” with one another (Grieve et al, 2009, p.82).

A study was carried out by Meaney-Tavares and Gavidia-Payne (2012) on staff characteristics and their attitudes towards PWID in relation to sexuality. This study was conducted in Australia and used the Attitudes to Sexuality Questionnaire (Individuals with an Intellectual Disability [ASQ-ID]) developed by Cuskelly and Gilmore (2007). This questionnaire will be used in the current study. It was found that staff attitudes were positive overall. Participants in the 20-29 age group demonstrated more positive attitudes towards sexuality in relation to PWID than participants in the 50-59 age group who showed the least positive attitudes. Staff training was positively linked with staff attitudes. Participants who received training demonstrated more positive attitudes than those who did not (Meaney-Tavares & Gavidia-Payne, 2012).

Young, Gore and McCarthy (2012) carried out a qualitative study on staff attitudes towards sexuality of PWID in England. Thematic analysis revealed “unfavourable attitudes” overall in relation to sexuality. Staff demonstrated huge anxiety when discussing PWID and their sexuality. They did not seem to be aware or committed to help support any sexual relationships. A limitation of this study is that the sample size was too small to determine if age could have had an effect. However the current study aims to address this limitation and examine if there are any age effects.

Gilmore and Chambers (2010) conducted a study in Australia. The study was on ID and sexuality. The sample contained disability support staff and leisure industry staff who would have contact with PWID. The researchers used the ASQ-ID. It was found that both groups overall had positive attitudes towards PWID and their sexuality. According to Gilmore and Chambers (2010) this finding is consistent with studies conducted previously in this area. However, support staff were found to be more cautious and “less positive” in their opinions regarding parenting (Gilmore & Chambers, 2010, p.25). It was found that there was no significant difference in relation to parenthood and sexuality for leisure workers. In this study, age and gender seemed to have no significant relationship with both groups’ attitudes overall. The sample consisting of a very small amount of older participants could explain the results. Gender was not found to be related to attitudes and this mirrors previous research in the area according to Cuskelly and Bryde (2010).

In 2012, Parchomiuk carried out a study on specialists attitudes towards sexuality of individuals with physical or intellectual disabilities. 98 specialists participated in the study which included, “special educators, social workers, nurses and physiotherapists” (Parchomiuk, 2012, p.407). It was found that participants demonstrated more positive attitudes to “most aspects of sexuality of physically disabled people but not people with” ID (Parchomiuk, 2012, p.407). It was also found that the participants believed sterilization is more acceptable in relation to PWID than people with physical disabilities showing that they are not in favour of PWID having children (Parchomiuk, 2012, p.407).

These studies reveal both positive and negative attitudes towards PWID in relation to sexuality and parenting. Therefore it is difficult to draw an overall conclusion on staff attitudes. Marriage never seems to be examined and discussed solely as a topic. The current study will address this gap in the research. It is also evident that these studies exclusively discuss staff attitudes that work with PWID and they do not take into consideration the

attitudes of the general public. The current research project will however compare and contrast both groups on their attitudes.

1.5 Public attitudes

Scior (2011, p.2164) believes that the public's opinion on PWID has an impact on the "success or failure of policies aimed at increasing their social inclusion". Scior carried out a systematic review of studies looking at public attitudes towards PWID and found overall, "high quality research into general population attitudes to...ID...is limited" and is an "under-researched area" (Scior, 2011, p.2164).

A survey was carried out in 2011 by McConkey and Leavey (2013) on Irish attitudes towards sexual relationships in relation to PWID. It was found that 50 percent of the participants believed that PWID should be permitted to have sexual relationships and one third believed that PWID are entitled to become parents. It also found that majority of participants expressed that people with "physical and sensory disabilities" were more entitled to engage in sexual relationships and become parents in comparison to PWID (McConkey & Leavey, 2013, p.181). Little progress has been accomplished to aid PWID to develop sexual relationships. According to McConkey and Leavey (2013, p.181) a "critical factor that has been rarely researched is the attitude of the general public". The current study aims to address this limitation.

1.6 Staff and Public attitudes compared

In 2004, Cuskelly and Bryde carried out a study in Australia with parents, support staff and a community sample on their attitudes towards sexuality in relation PWID. The age of participants was correlated with attitudes. It was found that participants "aged 60 and above" held the most "conservative attitudes" (Cuskelly & Bryde, 2004, p.255). The parents and staff groups showed less accepting attitudes towards parenting than any other aspects

regarding sexuality. The community group demonstrated no differences in their attitudes towards parenting or any other aspects of sexuality. Overall the community group had generally positive attitudes towards sexuality in relation to PWID (Cuskelly & Bryde, 2004).

There is a gap in the literature in relation to relevant studies comparing staff and public attitudes. However these groups are important to compare and contrast as they can have a major effect on the lives of PWID. There are no known studies in Ireland conducting research on comparing and contrasting these two groups. However this current research study will address this issue.

1.7 Rationale of Study

The purpose of the research study is to explore staff and public attitudes towards sexuality marriage and parenting in relation to PWID in Ireland. There has been research conducted on attitudes towards sexuality and parenting however there is no known research solely addressing people's attitudes towards marriage. Therefore this is a gap in this field of research. This project will explore and examine attitudes in relation to all three variables: sexuality, parenting and marriage. There has been a lot of research carried out on staff attitudes however there is a gap in research considering the views of the public and there is also a gap in comparing both groups. This current study aims to address these gaps by analysing, comparing and contrasting them.

There does not seem to be many studies discussing religious beliefs as a possible implication on attitudes therefore this current study will examine this matter. In light of the recent referendum and court case regarding PWID and capacity, this current study will explore the staff and public's awareness of the legislation in Ireland affecting the rights of PWID. This study will also explore their opinions and attitudes in relation to this legislation as these groups have an influence on law reform, policy making and implementation.

1.8 *Aims of study*

The aim of this study is to investigate if differences exist between staff and public attitudes towards sexuality, marriage and parenting in relation to PWID and to explore the impact of age groups and religious beliefs. This study will examine staff and public awareness of the Irish law that affects the rights of PWID in terms of their sexuality and explore their opinions on the matter. There is a gap in the research exploring attitudes towards marriage as a topic by itself therefore the current study will investigate attitudes towards marriage in more detail. There is also a gap in comparing staff and public attitudes towards sexuality and parenting and the impact of religious beliefs. Therefore this study will be carried out with the aspiration of adding to the existing body of knowledge in this area of research.

1.9 *Hypotheses*

Hypothesis 1 (H1): There will be a significant difference between staff and public attitudes towards sexuality and parenting in relation to PWID.

H2: There will be a significant difference between staff and public attitudes towards sexuality and parenting in relation to PWID across age groups.

H3: There will be a significant difference in attitudes towards sexuality and parenting in relation to PWID between staff and public participants reporting religious beliefs.

H4: There will be a significant difference between staff and public attitudes towards marriage in relation to PWID.

H5: There will be a significant difference between staff and public attitudes towards marriage in relation to PWID across age groups.

H6: There will be a significant difference in attitudes towards marriage in relation to PWID between staff and public participants reporting religious beliefs.

H7: It is hypothesised that the staff group will be more aware of the law affecting PWID and their rights than the public group.

2. Methods

2.1 *Participants*

The sample contained two groups which consisted of public and staff participants. Convenience sampling was used to access the participants through a link to the online questionnaire. This was created on a website Google Forms which was published and shared on a social networking site Facebook.

All participants both male and female were over the age of 18 and had access to Facebook. All staff participants have worked with PWID. All public participants have not worked with PWID. Participants were excluded if they did not meet these criteria. Participants were not offered any reward and took part voluntarily.

In total 222 ($n = 222$) participants completed the questionnaire. The public sample comprised of 102 ($n = 102$) participants of which 62 were females and 40 were males. The age of participants in this group ranged from 18 to 56+. Within this group 15 participants reported having religious beliefs, 38 reported non-religious beliefs and 49 reported a mixture of both beliefs. The staff sample comprised of 120 ($n = 120$) participants of which 106 were females and 14 were males. The age range for this group was 18 to 36+. There were 28 participants who reported religious beliefs, 29 reported non-religious beliefs and 63 reported a mixture of both beliefs within this group.

2.2 *Design*

This study employed a mixed methods research design which involved both a quantitative and qualitative aspect. The study also used a cross-sectional research design. This was carried out through the use of a questionnaire.

The quantitative aspect of the study explored if differences existed between staff and public attitudes towards sexuality, marriage and parenting in relation to PWID. This study also further explored the two groups' attitudes towards sexuality, marriage and parenting in relation to ID across their age groups and their self-reported religious beliefs. The quantitative aspect of the study had independent and dependent variables.

The independent variables used for analysis were age groups (which originally in the questionnaire were categorised as 18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 45-55 and 56+) and religious beliefs (religious beliefs, non-religious beliefs and mixture of both). However when examining the age groups it was found that the distribution of participants was very uneven therefore the two age groups were combined and formed the new age groups used for analysis (18-25, 26-35 and 36+). The dependent variables were sexuality, marriage and parenting.

There were two groups used in this study. The participants who worked with PWID were assigned to the staff group and the participants who have not worked with PWID were assigned to the public group. Staff and public attitudes were compared and contrasted using a between-subjects design.

This study also had a qualitative component. There was one qualitative question related to the legislation in Ireland pertaining to PWID and their sexuality. Thematic analysis was conducted on the qualitative data. This method was used as it allows identification of themes to emerge from the data that summarises the meaning that is related to the research question (Willig, 2012). Data was coded and themes were identified.

2.3 Materials

The questionnaire used in this study was ‘The Attitudes to Sexuality Questionnaire (Individuals with an Intellectual Disability) [ASQ-ID]. This questionnaire was first developed by Cuskelly and Bryde in 2004 (as cited in Cuskelly & Gilmore, 2007) however Cuskelly and Gilmore in 2007 developed it further and the revised version was used in this research study. This measure assesses people’s attitudes towards PWID across four subscales. The subscales are sexual rights (13 items), parenting (seven items), non-reproductive sexual behaviour (five items) and self-control (three items). In total the questionnaire contains 28 items and 16 of which are reverse scored. An example of an item on the questionnaire is people “with ID have less interest in sex than do other” people (Cuskelly & Gilmore 2007, p.218). An example of an item that must be reverse scored is “medication should be used as a means of inhibiting sexuality desires” in PWID (Cuskelly & Gilmore, 2007, p.218). In the current study the terms men and women on the questionnaire were rephrased to people.

Participants were instructed to answer the statements made in relation to people with mild to moderate ID. The participants response were scored on a six point Likert scale where 1=strongly disagree and 6= strongly agree with higher scores signifying more positive attitudes (Cuskelly & Gilmore, 2007). Mean scores were calculated for each subscale within the questionnaire.

Internal consistency was calculated by Cuskelly and Gilmore (2007, p.218) for each of the four subscales using Cronbach’s alpha. Three of the subscales, sexual rights (alpha = .93), parenting (alpha = .88) and non-reproductive sexual behaviour (alpha = .84) all had “excellent internal consistency”. The fourth subscale, self-control “had an acceptable level of internal consistency (alpha = .67)” (Cuskelly & Gilmore, 2007, p.218).

The current study also calculated the internal consistency of the scale and subscales using Cronbach's alpha. The scale overall had very good internal consistency (alpha = .85). The subscales sexual rights, non-reproductive sexual behaviour and self-control were combined together to form one subscale which was called sexuality. A Cronbach's alpha was run on this new subscale and it was found to have very good internal consistency (alpha = .80). The items in the subscale parenting remained the same and it was found to have an acceptable level of internal consistency (alpha = .76) (Pallant, 2013).

An additional Cronbach's alpha score was calculated in the current study for three items which refer to marriage (item 22, 28 and 32) and were used in statistical analysis in the current project (see descriptive statistics). A low alpha score of .42 was observed indicating poor internal consistency when these three items are considered as a separate subscale. However according to Pallant (2013) it is not uncommon to have very low alpha values if the subscales have less than ten items. Therefore Briggs and Cheek (1986 as cited in Pallant, 2013, p.101) "recommend an optimal range for the inter-item correlation of .2 to .4". The inter-item correlation observed in the current study was .21 with values ranging from .09 to .4. A copy of the questionnaire is provided in the appendix section.

2.4 Procedure

Ethical approval was granted from the Dublin Business School's ethics board. The online questionnaire was created through a website Google Forms. This questionnaire included demographic questions for example age, gender, religious beliefs. Two identical questionnaires were given. Participants completed the same questionnaire with one exception. One question asked participants if they had worked with PWID in their profession. Staff that clicked no were not permitted to continue. If the public clicked yes to the question they were also not permitted to continue. This ensured that participants met the inclusion criteria for the

study. When the questionnaire was created the website Google Forms produced a link that was published on a social networking site Facebook.

The first page of the questionnaire provided the title of the study and an information sheet. It explained that participation in the study was completely voluntary and that participants have a right to withdraw from the study before or during the completion of the questionnaire. However once the questionnaire was submitted it would not possible to withdraw as all information was anonymous. It was also explained that all information was confidential and the data collected would be kept for 18 months on a password protected computer. After 18 months all data will be deleted. Participants were also advised that completion of the questionnaire would take about 10 minutes of their time.

A section of the questionnaire was titled consent. This section instructed participants that if they clicked the button to continue onto the next page they had given their informed consent. The information sheet also detailed the reason for conducting the research, the aims, potential benefits, that there are no known risks involved and if additional information was required an email address was also provided (see appendix for full information sheet). Instructions were provided throughout the questionnaire to aid participants. The instructions given for answering the demographic questions was to pick the option that best represents them. The instructions given for answering the ASQ-ID statements was to click the button under the number that best represents how they feel about the statements made. It also explained that 1 = strongly disagree and 6 = strongly agree. Participants were also asked about their awareness of a law pertaining to PWID and their sexuality and to provide their opinion of this law. This represented the qualitative aspect of the study.

When participants completed the questionnaire a debriefing page appeared which thanked them for their time and provided a link to the Samaritans website. This is a support

service should any participant feel distressed. After all data was collected, it was entered into a computer software programme SPSS for statistical analysis. It was found when beginning data analysis that an administration error occurred and item 27 was omitted from the questionnaire.

3. Results

3.1 Quantitative Analysis

3.1.1 Descriptive Statistics

The sample collected contained two groups with 222 participants in total ($N = 222$). One group comprised of 120 staff participants who worked with PWID. The other group consisted of 102 public participants ($n = 102$) who have not worked with PWID. The majority of participants were female therefore no further analysis was conducted to investigate the effect of gender on attitudes. The ages ranged from 18 to 56+ (see table 1 for the staff and public gender and age group breakdown). The sample also contained participants reporting their religious beliefs. This variable had three levels religious beliefs, non-religious beliefs and a mixture of both. (see table 1 for the staff, public and religious beliefs breakdown). It was unclear how to define a mixture of both beliefs therefore participants reporting these beliefs were excluded from analysis.

Table 1 *Descriptive Statistics of gender, age and religious beliefs for staff and public groups*

Groups	Gender		Age Group			Religious Beliefs		
	Male	Female	18-25	26-35	36+	Religious	^a Non	^b Mixture
Staff ($N = 120$)	14	106	38	52	30	28	29	63
Public ($n = 102$)	40	62	55	25	22	15	38	49
Total ($n = 222$)	54	168	93	74	52	43	67	112

^aNon stands for Non-religious

^bmixture stands for mixture of both

Descriptive statistics were conducted to obtain the scores for the staff and public groups on the sexuality, marriage and parenting subscales. Staff attitudes towards sexuality

had a minimum score of 4 and a maximum score of 6, attitudes towards marriage and parenting had a minimum score of 3 and a maximum score of 6. Public attitudes towards sexuality and marriage had a minimum score of 3 and a maximum of 6 and attitudes towards parenting had a minimum score of 2 and a maximum score of 6. Means, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis and Kolmogorov-Smirnov results are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2 *Descriptive Statistics of Sexuality, Marriage and Parenting Subscales*

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Kolmogorov Smirnov
<u>Staff</u>					
Sexuality ^a	5.22	.47	-1.34	2.41	.000
Marriage ^b	5.27	.73	-1.28	1.51	.000
Parenting	5.07	.66	-.81	.12	.000
<u>Public</u>					
Sexuality ^a	4.99	.49	-.42	.81	.200
Marriage ^b	5.13	.75	-1.06	1.29	.000
Parenting	4.85	.77	-1.10	2.14	.002

^aMean, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis and Kolmogorov Smirnov results for sexuality are based on three subscales (sexual rights, non-reproductive sexual behaviour and self-control developed by Cuskelly & Gilmore, 2007) combined together to form one subscale.

^bMean, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis and Kolmogorov Smirnov results for marriage are based on items 22, 28 and 32.

Most of the data were not normally distributed on the dependent variables sexuality, marriage and parenting (see Table 2). Histograms and Q-Q plots were also assessed and most were found to be not normally distributed. Therefore non-parametric tests were used.

The test that was run for H1 was a one-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). The test that was run for H2 and H3 was a two-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). The test ran for H4 was a Mann Whitney U. H5 and H6 were tested with a two-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA). The test ran for H7 was a Chi-square test for independence.

3.1.2 *Inferential Statistics*

A one-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to investigate if difference exists between staff and public attitudes towards sexuality and parenting in relation to PWID (H1). This is a parametric test. It was used as it is robust to violations of normality for large samples (Pallant, 2013). Assumption testing was carried out and no violations occurred. It was found that there was a significant difference between staff and public participants on their attitudes towards the combined dependent variables sexuality and parenting, $F(2, 218) = 5.84, p = .003$; Wilks' Lambda = .95; partial eta squared = .05. The Bonferroni adjustment was applied as the two dependent variables were examined separately which changed the alpha level to .025. It was found that there was no significant difference between the groups on parenting with the new alpha level, $F(1, 219) = 4.10, p = .044$. However there was significant differences found for sexuality $F(1, 219) = 11.72, p = .001$, partial eta squared = .051 with staff ($M = 5.22, SD = .47$) reporting slightly more positive attitudes than the public ($M = 5.00, SD = .48$). Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected. One participant was removed from this test (participant 20) and all following analysis as the Mahalanobis distance value for this participant exceeded the critical value required for this test. Therefore this participant was an outlier.

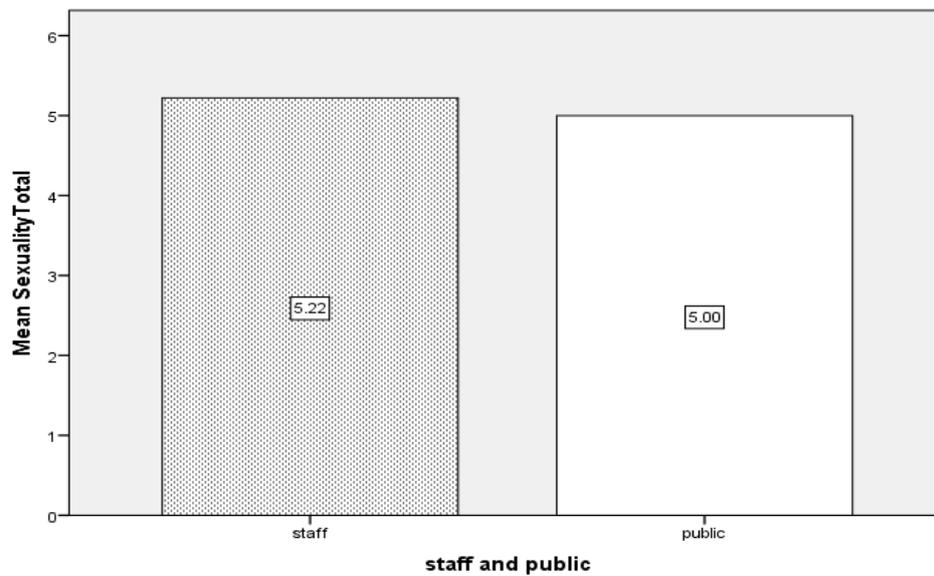


Figure 1 *Staff are slightly more positive in their attitudes towards sexuality in relation to PWID than the public*

A two-way between-groups MANOVA was performed to investigate if difference exists between staff and public attitudes towards sexuality and parenting in relation to PWID across age groups (18-25, 26-35, 36+)(H2). There were no violations to the assumptions of this test. The test revealed that there was no significant interaction effect between public, staff and age groups on their attitudes towards sexuality and parenting, $F(4, 428) = 1.12, p = .344$; Wilks' Lambda = .98. The Bonferroni adjustment was applied as sexuality and parenting were examined separately therefore the new alpha level was set to .025. There was no significant main effect for age groups, $F(4, 428) = .47, p = .758$; Wilks' Lambda = .99. The test revealed that there was a significant main effect for staff and public groups, $F(2, 214) = 6.55, p = .002$; Wilks' Lambda = .94; partial eta squared = .06. Staff and public groups were examined further and it was found that there was no significant difference between the groups and their attitudes towards the dependent variable parenting, $F(1, 215) = 3.14, p = .078$,

however there was significant difference between staff and public groups on the dependent variable sexuality, $F(1, 215) = 12.93, p < .001$; partial eta squared = .057, with staff reported slightly more positive attitudes than the public towards sexuality (see one-way between-groups MANOVA for mean and standard deviations). Therefore there is no significant difference between staff and public across age groups. The null hypothesis was accepted.

A two-way between-groups MANOVA was performed to investigate staff, public and religious beliefs differences in attitudes towards sexuality and parenting in relation to PWID (H3). The independent variable religious beliefs had three levels, religious beliefs, non-religious beliefs and mixture of both. However those who reported a mixture of both beliefs (staff $n = 63$ and public $n = 48$) were excluded from this analysis. Therefore the total sample consisted of 110 participants ($N = 110$) in this test. There was 57 staff participants ($n = 57$) 28 who reported religious beliefs and 29 who reported non-religious beliefs. There was 53 public participants ($n = 53$) 15 who reported religious beliefs and 38 who reported non-religious beliefs. Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances was violated therefore a new alpha level of .025 was set as recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013, as cited in Pallant, 2013). This test found that there was no significant interaction effect between staff, public and religious or non-religious beliefs on their attitudes towards sexuality and parenting, $F(2, 105) = 1.19, p = .309$; Wilks' Lambda = .98. The Bonferroni adjustment was applied as sexuality and parenting were examined separately therefore the new alpha level was .025. There was no significant main effect for staff and public groups, $F(2, 105) = 1.56, p = .215$; Wilks' Lambda = .97. However there was a significant main effect for religious beliefs, $F(2, 105) = 3.85, p = .024$; Wilks' Lambda = .93; partial eta squared = .07. Participants' religious beliefs were examined further and it was found that there was no significant difference between participants' religious or non-religious beliefs on their attitudes towards the dependent variable parenting, $F(1, 106) = .13, p = .719$. There was a significant difference between

participants' religious beliefs and non-religious beliefs on their attitudes towards the dependent variable sexuality, $F(1, 106) = 5.35, p = .023$, partial eta squared = .05. Therefore overall participants that reported non-religious beliefs ($M = 5.20, SD = .40$) were slightly more positive in their attitudes towards sexuality than participants that reported religious beliefs ($M = 5.00, SD = .69$) regardless of whether they worked with PWID or not. The null hypothesis was partially rejected.

Table 3 Means and Standard Deviations from the Two-Way MANOVA tests examining Staff and Public Groups, Religious Beliefs and Age Groups on Sexuality and Parenting

Variables		Groups	Mean	SD
Sexuality -	Staff	Religious Beliefs	5.06	.72
		Non-Religious	5.31	.35
	Public	Religious Beliefs	4.87	.64
		Non-Religious	5.12	.42
Parenting -	Staff	Religious Beliefs	4.96	.73
		Non-Religious	5.17	.60
	Public	Religious Beliefs	4.94	.59
		Non-Religious	4.83	.75
Sexuality -	Staff	18-25	5.25	.39
		26-35	5.13	.54
		36+	5.34	.44
	Public	18-25	5.00	.53
		26-35	5.05	.37
		36+	4.93	.51
Parenting -	Staff	18-25	5.04	.71
		26-35	5.10	.56
		36+	5.08	.78
	Public	18-25	4.86	.73
		26-35	4.95	.67
		36+	4.87	.71

Table 4 Results from the Two-Way MANOVA tests examining Staff and Public Groups, Religious Beliefs and Age Groups on Sexuality and Parenting

Variable	<i>F</i>	<i>dfs</i>	<i>P</i>
<u>Sexuality and Parenting</u>			
Staff/Public X Religious Beliefs			
Staff/Public	1.56	2, 105	.215
Religious/Non-Religious beliefs	3.85	2, 105	.024
Interaction Effect	1.19	2, 105	.309
Staff/Public X Age Groups			
Staff/Public	6.55	2, 214	.002
Age Groups	.470	4, 428	.758
Interaction Effect	1.12	4, 428	.344

A Mann Whitney test was performed to explore if a difference exists between staff and public attitudes towards marriage in relation to PWID (H4). No significant difference was found between staff attitudes ($Md = 5.33, n = 120$) and public towards marriage in relation to PWID ($Md = 5.33, n = 101$). $U = 5332, z = -1.56, p = .119, r = .10$. Therefore the null hypothesis was accepted.

A two-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to investigate if a difference exists between staff and public attitudes towards marriage in relation to PWID across age groups (H5). There was no significant difference in the interaction effect of age groups on attitudes towards marriage for staff and public participants, $F(2, 215) = .24, p = .784$. There was no significant main effect for staff and

public groups, $F(1, 215) = 1.75, p = .187$ and no significant main effect for age groups, $F(2, 215) = 1.64, p = .195$. Therefore there was no significant difference between staff and public attitudes towards marriage across age groups. The null hypothesis was accepted.

A two-way between-groups ANOVA was conducted to explore if a difference exists between staff, public and religious or non-religious beliefs on their attitudes towards marriage in relation to PWID (H6). However those who reported a mixture of both beliefs were excluded from this analysis (see the two-way between groups MANOVA (H3)). Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances was violated therefore a more stringent significance value was set to .025 as recommended by Pallant (2013). There was no significant difference in the interaction effect of religious beliefs on attitudes towards marriage for staff and public participants, $F(1, 106) = .04, p = .013$ and no significant main effect for staff and public groups, $F(1, 106) = 1.64, p = .203$. However there was a significant main effect for religious beliefs, $F(1, 106) = 7.50, p = .007$ with a medium effect size (partial eta squared = .06) as stated by Cohen (1998 as cited in Pallant, 2013). Participants overall who reported non-religious beliefs ($M = 5.36, SD = .63$) demonstrated slightly more positive attitudes towards marriage than participants reporting non-religious beliefs ($M = 4.98, SD = .95$). Therefore the null hypothesis was partially rejected.

Table 5 Means and Standard Deviations from the Two-Way ANOVA tests examining Staff and Public groups, Religious Beliefs and Age on Marriage

Variables		Groups	Mean	SD
Marriage-	Staff	Religious Beliefs	5.04	.98
		Non-Religious	5.49	.52
	Public	Religious Beliefs	4.87	.92
		Non-Religious	5.26	.69
Marriage -	Staff	18-25	5.36	.61
		26-35	5.28	.77
		36+	5.16	.78
	Public	18-25	5.19	.77
		26-35	5.24	.56
		36+	4.95	.72

Table 6 Results from the Two-Way ANOVA examining Staff and Public Groups, Religious Beliefs and Age Groups on Marriage

Variable	F	dfs	P
<u>Sexuality and Parenting</u>			
Staff/Public X Religious Beliefs			
Staff/Public	1.64	1, 106	.203
Religious/Non-Religious beliefs	7.50	1, 106	.007
Interaction Effect	.039	1, 106	.843

Staff/Public X Age Groups	1.75	1, 215	.187
Staff/Public	1.64	2, 215	.195
Age Groups	.24	2, 215	.784
Interaction Effect			

A Chi-square test for independence was carried out to investigate if the staff participants are more aware of the law affecting PWID and their rights than the public participants (H7). This test found (with Yates Continuity Correction) that staff participants (see Figure 2) are more aware of the law pertaining to PWID and their sexuality than the public participants (see Figure 3) $\chi^2 (1, N = 221) = 50.54, p < .001, phi = .49$. Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected.

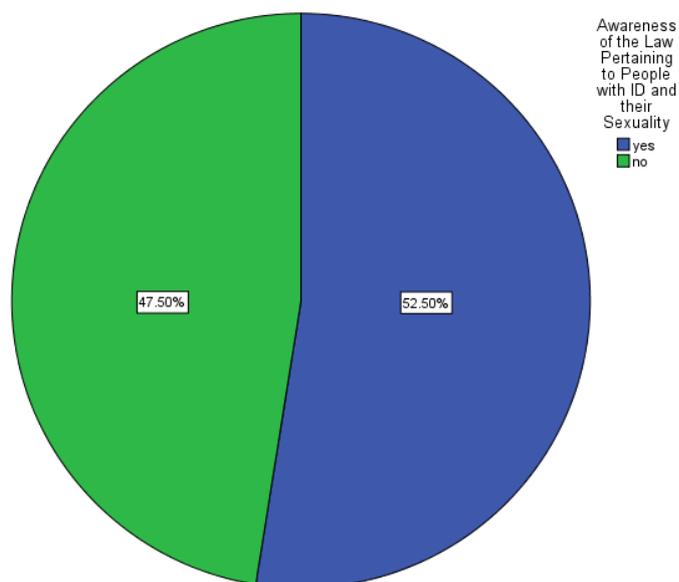


Figure 2 Percentages of staff awareness of the law affecting PWID and their rights

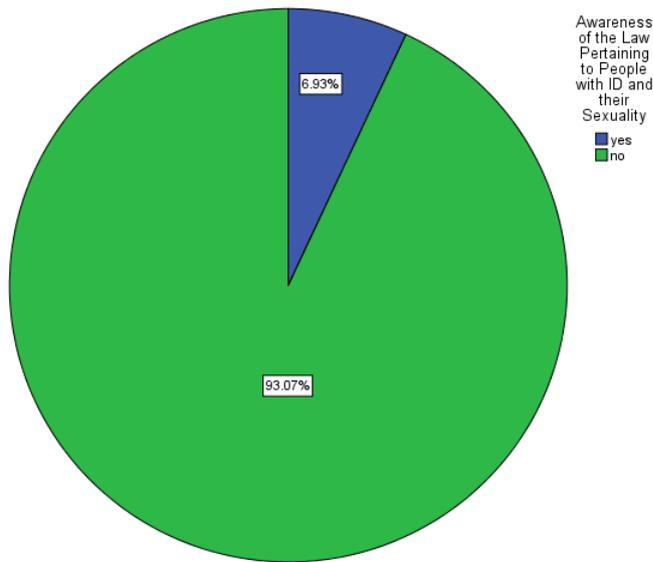


Figure 3 Percentages of public awareness of the law affecting PWID and their rights

3.2 Qualitative Analysis

A qualitative question was asked on the questionnaire relating to the law pertaining to PWID and their sexuality. Participants were asked to give their opinions regarding this law. The data was collected through an online questionnaire on Google Forms. The data was downloaded into an excel spreadsheet and printed and thematic analysis performed manually.

The steps of thematic analysis were carried out as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). The data was read and examined several times. It was analysed by highlighting common codes that emerged. Coding is “identifying a feature of the data that appears interesting” (Braun & Clark, 2006, p.87). The codes were then combined into groups to form themes. Themes were reviewed and some merged together to form one main theme. The main themes were then identified. This process was conducted twice as there were two groups to analyse.

The same five themes emerged from thematic analysis in both groups. The first theme Unreasonable and Unfair was the biggest theme for staff and second biggest for the public.

Participants stated the law was disgraceful, wrong, shocking, ridiculous and disrespectful. Participants professed that it was an unfair law for PWID as it is natural behaviour. Quotes from staff participants to sum up this theme are the law is “ridiculous” (participant 113), “unacceptable” (participant 44) and “we are living in an unfair country” (participant 28). Quotes from public participants encapsulate this theme are the law “seems very backwards” (participant 88), “insane” (participant 13) and “very unfair on those with ID” (participant 29).

The second theme found was Outdated and Needs Reform. Participants revealed that the law was very outdated for society today and needs to be reformed. Quotes from staff participants to summarise this theme are this law is “outdated, needs amending ASAP” (participant 8) and “this law is extremely outdated...needs to be revised” (participant 100). Quotes from the public participants to describe this theme are “like too many laws here it’s outdated and needs to be brought into the 21st Century” (participant 46) and “it should be amended” (participant 26).

The third theme to emerge was Equal Rights. It was the second largest theme for staff participants and the largest for public participants. Overall participants believed this law is discriminatory and that PWID should have the same rights and be treated the same as everyone else. They also stated the law doesn’t take into account different levels of ID which needs to be recognised. Quotes from staff participants that best portray this theme are “this law is discriminating against PWID when they should just be treated equally” (participant 58), “it depends on the person with ID” (participant 107) and “PWID are entitled to the same rights as everybody else in society” (participant 120). Quotes from public participants to sum up this theme are “discriminating against PWID in this day is not on” (participant 10), “they should have the same rights as everyone else” (participant 33) and “this law is too narrow to cover the broad spectrum of people with intellectual disabilities (participant 47)”.

The fourth theme was Consent and Decision Making. Participants explained that if PWID are able to consent and make decisions regarding a sexual relationship they should be allowed to have sexual intercourse outside of marriage. Quotes from staff participants to represent this theme are “if both parties have the ability to fully consent then it shouldn’t matter if they’re married or not” (participant 94) and “people with a disability who have capacity should be able to make their own decisions” (participant 71). Quotes from public participants to describe this theme are “two consenting adults (with ID) should be free to choose their own paths, in or outside of marriage” (participant 7) and “if two consenting adults (with ID) are legally capable of making decisions for themselves then the choice to enter into a sexual relationship is simply another one of those decisions (participant 93)”.

The fifth theme was Sexual Education. Participants believed that PWID should not be convicted and that sexual education should be taught to PWID who are able to consent to a sexual relationship. Quotes from staff participants to portray this theme are “if people with an ID...have education around sex then they can make an informed decision to participate or not” (participant 23) and “time and effort should be spent to educate PWID, not criminalise natural urges” (participant 62). Quotes from public participants to summarise this theme are “sexual education is taught to all children in school and so should be to with ID” (participant 39) and “if there is education and consent no one should be convicted of a criminal offence for having sex” (participant 87).

4. Discussion

4.1 *Aims of the Research Project*

The aim of this research project was to investigate if difference existed between staff and public attitudes towards sexuality, marriage and parenting in relation to PWID. The study also aimed to investigate if a difference exists between staff and public attitudes towards sexuality, marriage and parenting across age groups and religious beliefs. This study aimed to explore staff and public awareness of the Irish law that affects the rights of PWID in terms of their sexuality and discover their opinions on the matter.

4.2 *Summary of Findings*

A one-way between-groups MANOVA was conducted for H1. Significant differences were found between staff and public participants on their attitudes towards the combined dependent variables sexuality and parenting in relation to PWID. When examined further, no significant difference was found between the groups on parenting. Although there was significant differences found between the groups on their attitudes towards sexuality, with staff reporting slightly more positive attitudes than the public. The null hypothesis was rejected.

A two-way between-groups MANOVA was ran for H2. There was no significant interaction effect between public, staff and age groups on their attitudes towards sexuality and parenting in relation to PWID and no significant main effect for age groups. It was observed that there was a significant main effect for public and staff groups on the variable sexuality with staff reporting more positive attitudes than the public towards sexuality as found in the one-way between-groups MANOVA (H1). Therefore the null hypothesis was accepted.

A two-way between-groups MANOVA was also performed for H3. There was no significant interaction effect between staff, public and religious and non-religious beliefs on their attitudes towards sexuality and parenting in relation to PWID. No significant main effect was found for staff and public groups. The test revealed that there was a significant main effect for religious beliefs. When examined further there was no significant difference between participants' religious or non-religious beliefs on their attitudes towards parenting. However there was a significant difference on attitudes towards sexuality. Overall participants that reported non-religious beliefs demonstrated slightly more positive attitudes towards sexuality than participants that reported religious beliefs regardless whether they worked with PWID or not. The null hypothesis was partially rejected.

A Mann Whitney U test was conducted for H4. It was found that there was no significant difference between staff and public towards marriage in relation to PWID. Therefore the null hypothesis was accepted.

A two-way between-groups ANOVA was performed for H5. No significant difference found in the interaction effect between staff, public and age groups on attitudes towards marriage. There was no significant main effect for staff and public groups and no significant main effect for age groups. Therefore there was no significant difference between staff and public attitudes towards marriage in relation to PWID across age groups. The null hypothesis was accepted.

A two-way between-groups ANOVA was ran for H6. No significant difference was found in the interaction effect of religious beliefs on attitudes towards marriage for staff and public participants. The test revealed there was no significant main effect for the staff and public groups. The test did find a significant main effect for religious beliefs, with a medium effect size. Participants who reported non-religious beliefs revealed slightly more positive

attitudes towards marriage than participants reporting religious beliefs regardless whether they worked with PWID or not. Therefore the null hypothesis was partially rejected.

A Chi-square test for independence was conducted for H7. This test found (with Yates Continuity Correction) that staff participants are more aware of the law pertaining to PWID and their sexuality than the public participants. Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected.

4.3 Discussions of Findings and Previous Literature

Hypothesis 1, there will be a significant difference between staff and public attitudes towards sexuality and parenting in relation to PWID was supported. Significant differences were found between staff and public attitudes toward sexuality with staff reporting slightly more positive attitudes than the public. This finding supports Meaney-Tavares and Gavidia-Payne's (2012) and Gilmore and Chambers' (2010) studies as both found that staff groups overall had positive attitudes towards sexuality. However contradictory research was found by Young, Gore and McCarthy (2012). Their study revealed staff had "unfavourable attitudes" overall. Parchomiuk (2012) study found that the participants revealed more positive attitudes to "most aspects of sexuality of physically disabled people but not people with" ID (Parchomiuk, 2012, p.407).

This current research project has supported some previous research on staff attitudes however as there is mixed findings future research is required. McConkey and Leavey (2013) discovered that only half their participants showed positive attitudes towards PWID having sexual relationships. This current study found that the public attitudes toward sexuality were only slightly less positive than staff attitudes. This indicates that attitudes are becoming more positive in Ireland.

This current study explored staff and public attitudes together. There are not many studies comparing these groups. However one study that was found carried out research on

the community, parents and support staff on their attitudes towards sexuality and parenting in relation to PWID (Cuskelly & Bryde, 2004). It was found that parents and staff groups demonstrated less positive attitudes towards parenting than any aspect of sexuality. The community group exhibited no differences in their attitudes towards parenting and sexuality which shows that overall they had positive attitudes. This current study's finding does not support Cuskelly and Bryde's (2004) study as staff were found to be slightly more positive than the public. Therefore future research is necessary to examine staff and public attitudes.

Hypothesis 2, there will be a significant difference between staff and public attitudes towards sexuality and parenting in relation to PWID across age groups was not supported. Significant difference between staff and public attitudes towards sexuality was found (see hypothesis 1 above). No significant differences were found between staff and public across their age groups. This could be due to the sample containing mostly young participants. No age effect was found for Gilmore and Chambers (2010) either who had the same issue of a limited sample of older participants. Young, Gore and McCarthy (2012) also did not find an age effect as their sample was too small. However Meaney-Tavares and Gavidia-Payne (2012) found that participants age 20-29 showed the most positive attitudes towards sexuality when compared with participants aged 50-59. Therefore future studies would need to ensure their sample is evenly distributed in age.

Hypothesis 3, there will be a significant difference in attitudes towards sexuality and parenting in relation to PWID between staff and public participants reporting religious beliefs was partially supported. Participants who reported non-religious beliefs were found to be slightly more positive towards sexuality than participants who reported religious beliefs. This finding supports previous literature. Saxe and Flanagan (2013) found that participants with religious beliefs held less positive attitudes towards sexuality than participants with non-religious beliefs.

Hypothesis 4, there will be a significant difference between staff and public attitudes towards marriage in relation to PWID was not supported. No significant difference was found between staff and public attitudes towards marriage. There was no literature found discussing marriage as a separate topic therefore there are no studies to compare the current study's findings. No significant results found could be due to the small number of items on this new subscale or the low internal consistency. Another possibility could be due to the participants' attitudes. This is a new subscale therefore future research is warranted to explore attitudes towards marriage.

Hypothesis 5, there will be a significant difference between staff and public attitudes towards marriage in relation to PWID across age groups was not supported. No significant difference was found between staff and public across age groups in their attitudes towards marriage. Marriage again, seems to be a new concept that this study examined and the sample was limited to mainly younger participants therefore these factors could have contributed to the hypothesis not being supported.

Hypothesis 6, there will be a significant difference in attitudes towards marriage in relation to PWID between staff and public participants reporting religious beliefs was partially supported. Participants who reported non-religious beliefs were slightly more positive in their attitudes towards marriage than participants who reported religious beliefs. This has been discussed in detail in hypothesis 3 above. This finding supports previous literature. However caution is warranted in interpreting and comparing this result to previous and future research as the marriage subscale had very few items and a low internal consistency.

Hypothesis 7, it is hypothesised that the staff group will be more aware of the law affecting PWID and their rights than the public group was supported. It was found that the

staff were more aware of the law than the public. However in the staff group only 52.50% were aware. Considering staff are involved in PWID's welfare this seems a low figure. In the public group only 6.93% were aware of this law which is extremely small.

In the qualitative aspect of this study participants were given an explanation of the law and its implications that PWID could not engage in sexual intercourse before marriage as it would constitute a criminal offence. It was clear that participants in both staff and public groups were not in agreement with this law. The first theme that emerged was Unreasonable and Unfair. Participants found the law to be disgraceful. The second theme found was Outdated and Needs Reform. Participants explained that the law was extremely outdated and needs reform. The third theme that emerged was Equal Rights. Participants revealed that this law is discriminating and PWID should be afforded the same rights as everyone else. Participants also believed that this law should consider the different levels of ID. The fourth theme was Consent and Decision Making. Participants stated that if PWID have the ability to consent and make decisions involving a sexual relationship then they should be permitted to have sexual intercourse. The final theme found was Sexual Education. Participants believed that PWID should be taught sexual education if they have the ability to consent.

These themes have highlighted that participants do not agree with the law in its current state. Attitudes can change and this was demonstrated with the recent referendum on same sex marriage and that participants in Ireland seem more positive than previous attitudes towards sexuality in relation to PWID. Therefore policies and legislation should be reviewed to ensure PWID have equal rights in all aspects of life.

4.3 *Strengths*

There are a number of strengths to this study. It addresses gaps in this field of research such as the lack of studies comparing staff and public attitudes especially in Ireland.

These two groups are important as both groups can have an impact on the lives of PWID. Staff facilitate PWID in their daily lives and can affect how successful policies are implemented. The public and staff have an impact on the lives of PWID in relation to policy making and amendment of laws as was seen in the referendum with same-sex marriage. The public perspective was another gap in the literature. This was a strength of the current study as it addressed this gap.

Another strength of this study was examining attitudes towards marriage as a separate topic to sexuality. There are no known studies analysing attitudes towards marriage. Therefore this is adding to the existing body of research. A strength of this study was exploring religious and non-religious beliefs and their impact on attitudes. There is a gap in the literature discussing this and the current study also addressed this gap. Another strength is that the study was mixed methods with both qualitative and quantitative aspects which is uncommon in previous literature. The large sample size was another strength of this study.

4.4 Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. Examining marriage as a separate topic is a strength however caution is warranted for interpreting and replicating this study as the subscale marriage only had three items that related solely to marriage (items 22, 28, 32) with a low internal consistency ($\alpha = .42$). Two other items on the questionnaire also mentioned marriage however they were related more to parenting than marriage. Another limitation is that an administration error occurred and item 27 was omitted from the questionnaire. Despite this omission the sexuality subscale was found to have very good internal consistency ($\alpha = .80$). However caution is still warranted for comparing this study with previous or future research.

Another limitation was the age groups. The majority of participants were in the younger categories therefore this may have had an impact on the non-significant result. Another limitation was that the sample was accessed through convenience sampling through Facebook therefore anyone not on Facebook could not participate which limited potential participants the opportunity to take part.

In the two-way MANOVA and two-way ANOVA in relation to religious beliefs test the Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances was violated therefore results need to be interpreted with caution even though the new stringent alpha level was set.

4.5 Future Research Recommendations

Future research should consider examining marriage as a separate topic. There is merit in studying attitudes towards marriage as marriage and sexuality are not necessarily the same concept. Future research should develop more items as they could increase the internal consistency. Qualitative studies could aid development of new items for the subscale by exploring attitudes towards marriage.

Another area for future research could study religious beliefs. This current study removed participants who reported mixture of both beliefs from analysis as it was difficult to define. The option of mixture of both beliefs given in the current study could be modified to include a space provided for participants to elaborate on their choice. Examining the impact of religious beliefs on people's attitudes towards sexuality marriage and parenting in relation to PWID is relatively new and due to Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances being violated as mentioned previously future research is warranted to explore effect of religious beliefs on people's attitudes in this area.

There is a gap in studying public attitudes towards sexuality, parenting and marriage and mixed findings on staff attitudes. There is also a gap in studying these two groups together therefore these are areas for future research.

4.6 Implications and Applications

This research study has implications and applications. The staff participants are slightly more positive than the public in their attitudes towards sexuality in relation to PWID however the public are still quite positive. Despite positive attitudes and acceptance a large proportion were not aware of the law. Therefore an application of this study would involve advocates of PWID to raise awareness of the current law that is in place and provide education of PWID's rights. It is clear from thematic analysis that staff and public participants believe the law is unfair and should be amended. Staff and public participants also stated that sexual education is needed for PWID. Training for staff to facilitate sexual relationships could be provided to all services that work with PWID. It has been found that participants who receive training showed more positive attitudes (Meaney-Tavares & Gavidia-Payne, 2012). Religious beliefs seem to have a less positive impact on attitudes towards sexuality. Training could be put in place to assist staff tempering their attitudes therefore reducing the impact on their work with PWID.

4.7 Conclusion

This research study found significant difference between staff and public attitudes towards sexuality in relation to PWID. There was no significant difference between staff and public attitudes towards marriage. There was no significant difference found for staff and public attitudes towards sexuality, marriage and parenting across age groups. There was no significant interaction effect found between staff and public and religious beliefs on their attitudes towards sexuality, marriage and parenting. There was no main effect found for staff and public attitudes however there was a significant main effect found for religious beliefs on

marriage and sexuality. Participants who reported non-religious beliefs were more positive in their attitudes towards sexuality and marriage than participants who reported religious beliefs. It was found that staff were more aware of the law relating to PWID than the public. Five themes emerged through thematic analysis. Future studies should consider examining staff and public groups as they can influence and impact the lives of PWID. Marriage and religious beliefs should also be examined further.

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Appendix

Questionnaire (created online on Google Forms)

Title: Staff and Public attitudes towards Sexuality, Marriage and Parenting in relation to People with Intellectual Disabilities. This study is focused on people with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities.

INFORMATION SHEET REGARDING THIS PIECE OF RESEARCH:

Research Title: Staff and Public attitudes towards Sexuality, Marriage and Parenting regarding people with Intellectual Disabilities.

Researcher: Clare Sheridan

Reason for conducting research: This study is a requirement of the Higher Diploma in Arts in Psychology course. The study is looking at attitudes towards sexuality, marriage and parenting in relation to people with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities. The study will examine relevant literature in the area and distribute questionnaires.

Aims of the Research: The aims are to examine the relationship between staff and public attitudes towards sexuality, marriage and parenting in relation to people with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities. Another aim is to see if there is a significant difference in attitudes between the two groups. The study also aims to see if gender, age and religious/non-religious beliefs have an effect on a person's attitudes towards sexuality, marriage and parenting with people with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities.

Participation in the Study: This study is completely voluntary Participation is both confidential and anonymous.

Consent: Your consent is given if you click the button to go on to the next page.

Right to Withdraw: You can withdraw from the study before or during completion of the questionnaire however once the questionnaire is submitted it is not possible to withdraw as the researcher would have no way of knowing which questionnaire is yours.

Confidentiality: All information is confidential and anonymous. Quotes may be used from the questionnaire. This study will be marked by an examiner and used in an oral presentation. This study may be presented/published in articles and at conferences but

no individual person will be identifiable from the information. Names will not be asked and age will have categories.

What will happen to the information? Information will be on the researchers password protected computer and kept for 18 months. After 18 months all data will be destroyed. The online questionnaire files will be deleted.

Risk involved: There are no known risks involved in this study.

Potential benefits: There are no direct benefits for participating however participation in this study can highlight the attitudes in Ireland towards sexuality, marriage and parenting in relation to people with intellectual disabilities. It can also make an important contribution to the present body of literature as there is little research looking at both staff and the general public attitudes in one study.

Additional Information Required: If you have any questions or would like more information about the research, please contact me. Email: 10176741@mydbs.ie.

CONSENT

Instructions: If you click the button to go on to the next page you are voluntarily consenting to participate in this questionnaire

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOU

Instructions: Please click the option that best represents you

1. What is your gender?

Male

Female

Other: _____

2. What is your relevant age group?

18-25

26-35

36-45

46-55

56+

3. What is your current occupation?

4. Have you ever worked with people with ID in your profession?

Yes

No

5. Would you consider yourself to have:

Religious beliefs

Non-Religious beliefs

Mixture of Both

Other: _____

STATEMENTS REGARDING SEXUALITY, MARRIAGE AND PARENTING IN
RELATIN TO PEOPLE WITH MILD TO MODERATE INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

Instructions: On the scales below please circle the number that best represents how you feel about the statements made in relation to people with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities (ID). Intellectual disabilities will be abbreviated from now on as ID. 1 meaning strongly disagree and 6 meaning strongly agree.

6. With the right support people with ID can rear well-adjusted children

1

2

3

4

5

6

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

7. Provided no unwanted children are born and no-one is harmed, consenting adults with an ID should be allowed to live in a heterosexual relationship

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

8. Consenting adults with ID should be allowed to live in a homosexual relationship if they so desire

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

9. People with ID have less interest in sex than do other people

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

10. If people with ID marry, they should be forbidden by law to have children

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

11. Medication should be used as a means of inhibiting sexual desires in people with ID

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

12. Masturbation should be discouraged for people with ID

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

13. Discussions on sexual intercourse promote promiscuity in people with ID

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

14. People with ID should only be permitted to marry if either they or their partners have been sterilised

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

15. Masturbation in private for people with ID is an acceptable form of sexual expression

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

16. People with ID typically have fewer sexual interests than other people

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

17. People with ID are unable to develop and maintain an emotionally intimate relationship with a partner

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

18. Sex education for people with ID has a valuable role in safeguarding them from sexual exploitation

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

19. In general, sexual behaviour is a major problem area in management and caring for people with ID

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

20. Sexual intercourse should be permitted between consenting adults with ID

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

21. Group homes or hostels for adults with an intellectual disability should be either all male or all female, not mixed

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

22. Care staff and parents should discourage people with ID from having children

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

23. People with ID have the right to marry

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

24. It is a good idea to ensure privacy at home for people with ID who wish to masturbate

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

25. Sexual intercourse should be discouraged for people with an intellectual disability

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

26. Advice on contraception should be fully available to people with ID whose level of development makes sexual activity possible

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

27. People with ID are more easily stimulated sexually than people without ID

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

28. Marriage between adults with ID does not present society with too many problems

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

29. Sterilisation is a desirable practice for people with ID

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

30. Masturbation should be taught to people with ID as an acceptable form of sexual expression in sex education courses

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

31. Marriage should not be encouraged as a future option for people with ID

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

32. People with ID should be permitted to have children within marriage

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

33. People with ID have stronger sexual feelings than other people

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

34. There is a law in Ireland to protect people with ID, known as the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 1993 (Irish Statute Book, n.d).The Law Reform Commission (2013, p.13) reveal that an effect of this law in section 5 of the 1993 Act is that two people with an ID whom are not married but participate in a sexual relationship may be convicted of a criminal offence. Are you aware of this law?

Yes

No

In a brief few words, what is your opinion regarding this law?

CONFIRMATION PAGE

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. It is very much appreciated.

If you have any questions or would like more information about the research, please contact me.

Email: 10176741@mydbs.ie.

If this questionnaire has caused you any distress, there is a link below to the Samaritans organisation's website, they are a support service that are available round the clock.

<http://www.samaritans.org/>

Thank you for your time.