

**SLUT SHAMING: EXPERIENCE OF YOUNG WOMEN IN  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM**

*A Dissertation submitted to the University of Kerala in partial fulfilment of  
requirements for the Masters of Social Work Degree Examination*

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## CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled “**Slut shaming: Experience of young women in Thiruvananthapuram**” is a record of genuine work done by **Ms. Abhaya Pradeep. S**, fourth semester Master of Social Work student of this college under my supervision and guidance and that it is hereby approved for submission.

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## **DECLARATION**

I, **Abhaya Pradeep. S**, do here by declare that the Dissertation titled “**Slut shaming: Experience of young women in Thiruvananthapuram**” is based on the original work carried out by me and submitted to the University of Kerala during the year 2021-2023 towards partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Social Work Degree Examination. It has not been submitted for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship or other similar title of recognition before.

Place: Thiruvananthapuram

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## ABSTRACT

This research study delves into the complex phenomenon of slut-shaming experienced by young women, uncovering a variety of factors that contribute to its occurrence and the subsequent impact on various aspects of their lives. There is a dearth of research in this area in Indian context or in Kerala. The study is qualitative in nature and multiple case study design was used. Thematic analysis was done to analyse the data. The data were collected from five Participants (young women between 15-24 age, who were being victimised to slut shaming). The cases were purposively selected and interview guide was used as the tool. The findings reveal that clothing choices, expression of sexual orientation, body appearance, and asserting personal desires are among the factors that subject young women to derogatory treatment. This highlights the imposition of societal norms and judgments upon individual autonomy, underscoring the need for a more inclusive and accepting society. Moreover, the study demonstrates that sources of slut-shaming extend beyond immediate circles, with intimate partners, neighbours, family members, relatives, and peers all playing roles in perpetuating this harmful practice. The resulting negative effects on physical well-being, psychological states, and social relationships are profound, necessitating urgent societal change to challenge stereotypes, promote empathy, and create safe spaces. Within the context of coping strategies, the study reveals that seeking social support and fostering self-confidence through activities like self-care are crucial mechanisms for young women to counteract the detrimental effects of slut-shaming. This research underscores the critical importance of dismantling harmful stigmatization, fostering body positivity, and embracing diverse forms of self-expression. By promoting empathy and understanding, society can create an environment that empowers young women to reclaim their agency and well-being. The study sheds light on the urgent need for a more compassionate, inclusive, and supportive society that respects individual choices, challenges harmful norms, and provides avenues for young women to thrive free from the burden of slut-shaming. This study suggests practical steps to tackle challenges of slut-shaming among young women such as, comprehensive sex education can counter stereotypes, fostering self-value and inclusivity, adopting strategies to involving males in discussions about gender equality matters., building supportive networks forms a robust framework to combat slut-shaming and empower young women.



**KEYWORDS:** Slut-shaming, Sexual orientation, Individual autonomy, Stereotypes, Empathy, Stigmatization, Sex education, Self-value, Inclusivity, Gender equality.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

"There's nothing wrong with being sexually active and exploring your own body and your own desires. We need to stop labelling women based on their choices and instead focus on creating a society that respects and empowers them."- Emma Watson, activist and actress.

### 1.1 Introduction

In the contemporary world, the challenges encountered by young women are underscored by a particularly distressing issue: slut-shaming. Due to their perceived or real sexual behaviour, choices, or expressions, young women are frequently subjected to demeaning treatment and societal stigmatisation. Slut-shaming has negative effects on people's lives and psyches that go beyond individual encounters. Their social contacts, mental health, emotional fortitude, and self-esteem are all adversely affected by this practise, which also limits their autonomy and self-esteem. Slut-shaming is a manifestation of deeply rooted cultural views and gender conventions that influence ideas about how women should behave sexually. Young women frequently experience negative behaviours and judgements that falsely label them and limit their autonomy, from personal relationships to dress choices. Intimate partners, family members, and even institutions perpetuate these harmful beliefs, showing that this problem extends beyond peer groups. This study endeavours to delve into the intricate and multifaceted effects of slut-shaming on young women. The focal point here is to comprehensively comprehend the psycho-social issues and experiences encountered by young women due to slut-shaming. Additionally, it aims to explore the coping strategies employed by these women to navigate and manage the challenges stemming from slut-shaming. Ultimately, this research holds the potential to contribute significantly to the broader discourse on creating an empathetic and empowering environment for young women, one that champions autonomy, challenges societal norms, and upholds their well-being. The research area is Thiruvananthapuram.

The word "shame" developed from Old English scamu, sceomu, deriving from Germanic, which not only meant a feeling of guilt or disgrace, or loss of esteem or reputation, but also denoted modesty, as well as genitals. Its origin is postulated to lie in Proto-Indo-European

\*skem-, from \*kem- “to cover” – covering oneself is acknowledged as a natural expression of shame (Lim, 2021)

### Slut shaming

The behaviour of condemning or depreciating someone’s (typically a woman) worth based on their sexual reputation is known as slut shaming. It is the act of humiliating and degrading a girl or woman because of her sexual conduct, which includes dressing in a particular manner, having sexual feelings, and/or exploring and displaying them. It’s a blanket term for telling someone they are immoral, or worthless. The purpose of slut shaming is to regulate women’s sexuality through the use of archaic cultural conventions. Slut shaming is directed at anyone who does not adhere to the established societal norms around sexual behaviour. Slut-shaming affects married individuals, celibate people, abuse survivors, and even children. Survivors of violent and demeaning slut-shaming are more likely to be from marginalised identities (Salam, 2022) .Elizabeth A. Armstrong in her study defined slut shaming is defined as the stigmatization of an individual based on of his or her appearance, sexual availability, and actual or perceived sexual behaviour and is primarily aimed at women and girls. This stigmatization is reflected in social and relational sanctions, such as rumours, ostracism, or insults, such as “slut” and “fag”. (Armstrong., Hamilton, Armstrong, & Seeley, 2014)

As slut-shaming behaviours can take place on social networks or be exercised via instant messaging or SMS, the Internet and new technologies have made it possible to massively extend the scope of this (Daniels & Zurbriggen , 2016). Tanenbaum wrote that any adolescent girl, even if she had zero sexual experience, could become a target for being labelled a slut or ho. In *Slut!* She described four groups of girls who were most at risk: early developers and others perceived to be sexually active; girls who were different from their peers in some way; objects of jealousy; and rape victims. She connected slut-bashing with the sexual double standard and explained why this particular form of harassment leads to the sexual policing of all females, whether or not they have been personally targeted. A girl called a slut or ho often was targeted not because she was sexually active but because she was socially vulnerable in some way. *Slut!* is now recognized as a significant contribution to feminist thought. (Tanenbaum, 2015)

Who is called as “Slut”?

Ishika Tiwari wrote that all definitions seem to point towards women who are free about their sexuality and preferences, bold in their presentation of self and have full autonomy over their bodies and choices. But the digital world of disparages have additional definitions of who they presume to define as a ‘slut’- A woman speaking for her rights; or one who speaks against injustice; a woman who is politically active; a woman who voices her desires or helps others in doing the same: that woman is chosen to be titled as a slut. If there’s a woman with free will and she selects partners or even a partner, she’s a whore. If she’s surviving any onslaught and is self-affirming, if she thinks, we can do better than this government, she’s a slut (Tiwari , 2020)

Etiology of the word “Slut shaming”

Sex-negative culture in which women are expected to be consumable, seductive commodities while maintaining the impression of purity and virginity. Purity obsession is the source of this malevolence. It is closely associated with sexual shame since women who enjoy sex or have several sex partners are thought to be sinful and immoral. People of all countries, faiths, and ideologies might become fixated on the number of a woman’s lovers as though her character is determined by it. Our society imposes on all women the patriarchal notion of “pure ideal womanhood.” Only sexual practices involving procreation or “spousal responsibility” are intended to be pursued by an ideal woman. Slut-shaming is used to humiliate and discredit women who strive to break free from this “pure” mould. It aims to punish and ridicule women for not following cultural norms. Women are frequently stigmatised if they have a “high” number of partners, because our culture is fixated on female purity, and a “high” score indicates that women are of dubious character. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to be embarrassed if they have a “poor” number because our society associates sexual conquests with male success. (Salam, 2022)

How does slut shaming affect women?

Despite the fact that slut-shaming appears to be harmless banter with no real consequences, it is a major problem that women must deal with on a daily basis. Being constantly judged disrupts their mental serenity and has a severe impact on their productivity. Slut-shaming at

school, for example, results in low academic performance, school violence, and delinquent behaviour. Slut shaming in the workplaces has a negative impact on female employees' productivity, creativity, and general professionalism. Furthermore, survivors of slut shaming may experience self-hatred, sexual dread, sexual recklessness, body image concerns, low self-esteem etc. It leads to frustration, loneliness, and social exclusion in the long run. They may experience psychological issues such as depression, anxiety, and suicidality. Numerous incidents of young girls being sexually shamed and consequentially dying by suicide have been reported. (Salam, 2022)

### 1.2 Statement of the problem

All the achievements of women, starting from being a class topper to being the best employee or any other achievements can be undermined or taken away in just one second, by uttering and spreading just one single sentence – “she is a SLUT!” what is more shocking is, in many cases the abusers are also women themselves. Be it online or offline, be it in school, college, office, public transport, neighborhood or public space, Slut shaming has become a tool everywhere for silencing women with opinions and voice, for limiting their participation in educational and professional fields, to undervalue their skills and achievements, to destroy their reputation and most importantly to control them and punish them for not following a certain behavior. The emotional, psychological and physical impacts of slut-shaming on women are real, severe and irreparable and the scars remain embedded for years. Unfortunately, even though there are some laws in India relating to Defamation and crimes against women under the Indian Penal Code, 1860 but none of these laws directly addresses character assassination or slut-shaming of women. (Kumar, 2020)

### 1.3 Relevance and significance

The recent news in Kerala-The death of 20 year old Sradha Satheesh, a student of Amal Jyothi College of Engineering on Friday, June 2, not only sparked a massive protest within the college campus but also brought to the fore the harassment faced by the students in the educational institution. It ranged from moral policing, slut-shaming and video graphing of women students in the college without their consent in the name of ensuring discipline. Sradha's death has now led to these issues faced by students of Amal Jyothi College of Engineering being spoken about. The way the college management, run by the Catholic

Diocese of Kanjirapally, responded to her death is what sparked the protest. “If girls and boys are found together, talking or working, the manager will come and take videos of the girls, and confiscate their ID cards. Their parents will also be informed of what happened and it will be made into a huge issue,” -said by one of the students of that college which was reported by online news source. (Fathima, 2023)

Slut-shaming is in everywhere on the streets, at schools, at work, on social media and even at homes. On social networking sites, a slew of hate remarks shaming women for how they dress, how they act, and what they do. Even schoolgirls are subjected to slut-shaming. Survivor blaming is the most vile and pervasive type of slut-shaming. “What was she wearing?” “What was she doing there anyway?” are the very first questions some people ask when they hear about an incident of sexual assault. Slut shaming propagates the notion that women are to blame for the sexual violence against them, and that it is their obligation to protect themselves against sexual assault. Slut shaming has an impact on how people see “womanly behaviour “. It communicates the hazardous message that a woman’s sexual history determines her worth and how she should be treated. This is not only invasive to the personhood and choices of women, but also a blatant endorsement of patriarchy’s mandates on how women and other marginalised genders must behave. (Salam, 2022)

This study focuses on the complex array of difficulties confronted by young women due to the widespread problem of slut-shaming, a societal occurrence marked by the unjust and critical categorization of individuals based on their perceived or actual sexual conduct. The core issue investigated revolves around grasping the diverse repercussions of slut-shaming on the emotional health, self-esteem, and social interactions of young women, while also delving into the tactics they employ to navigate and manage the resulting challenges. Through a comprehensive exploration of the issues arising from slut-shaming and an examination of the strategies young women use to cope, this research aims to provide valuable insights into the ongoing discourse on gender-related bias and mental well-being. Ultimately, the study aspires to empower individuals and communities to cultivate a fairer and more supportive environment for everyone.

#### 1.4 Chapterization

The study is divided into seven Chapters,

Chapter I: An introduction to the study is provided in the first chapter. It includes the various concepts related to the study and states the problem addressed as a research paper, its intensity and later it explains the need and relevance of the study in the present scenario.

Chapter II: This chapter deals with a review of literature that analyses various studies conducted on this topic from international, national and regional perspectives. This helps the trainee to identify the dimension in which the researcher needs to focus more. A gap in these studies gets discussed in the following.

Chapter III: It discusses the methodology that the researcher uses in her study. It includes the details like title, research questions, research design, sampling techniques, details of the pilot study, Method of data collection, data analysis, and limitations of the study.

Chapter IV: Details of cases used in the study are recorded in this chapter in an elaborated manner for a better understanding of each case. Cases of Participants are described through narrative and verbatim reporting.

Chapter V: Thematic analysis is done in this chapter in a detailed manner.

Chapter VI: This chapter deals with major findings followed by suggestions, and conclusions. The last pages of the dissertation include will the bibliography, appendix, and tools used for data collection in this study.



## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

A literature review is a description of the literature relevant to a particular field or topic. It gives an overview of what has been said, who the key writers are, what are the prevailing theories and hypotheses, what questions are being asked, and what methods and methodologies are appropriate and useful. The conceptual and empirical literature reviews help in establishing the rationale and credibility to the study. This chapter is a review of relevant studies conducted by five participants who faced slut shaming in different context. At the end of the chapter, the studies conducted in the area are evaluated in order to identify the gaps in the literature. Both western as well as Indian studies have been reviewed in the chapter.

### 2.2 Studies of Slut shaming

#### A) Global

A person is stigmatised based on his or her attractiveness, sexual availability, and real or perceived sexual behaviour when someone uses the term "slut shaming." It can happen in real-world or digital settings. This study explores the interplay between values that girls learn from their experiences in life, particularly in the home sphere, and slut shaming victimisation. It also concerns the effect of this type of sexism in virtual spaces on females. 605 girls aged 10 to 18 (average age: 15.18) participated in a paper-pencil questionnaire study. Their findings support the detrimental effects of slut shaming on the physical and mental health of young females as early as adolescence. Second, insights into the processes of revictimization and poly-victimization from bad childhood experiences are provided through mediation studies. Second, mediation studies shed light on the processes of revictimization and poly-victimization, including how sexist victimisation in virtual environments and unfavourable childhood experiences affect girls' physical and mental health. Finally, they discuss gender stereotype deconstruction through preventative efforts and the engagement of socialising institutions. (Goblet & Glowacz, 2021)

Different sexual behaviours are acceptable for men and women according to (hetero)sexual double standards (SDS). The existence of SDS in social cognitions is predicted by evolutionary and biosocial theories, which were put to the test in this meta-analysis ( $k = 99$ ;

N = 123,343). Databases were searched for research addressing beliefs or preconceptions about how men and women behave sexually. Studies comparing opinions on or expectations of men's and women's sexual behaviour have found support for traditional SDS ( $d = 0.25$ ). The expectation and perception of regular sexual engagement were higher for males than for women. Studies that used Likert-type scale surveys failed to find any support for SDS (combined  $M = 0.09$ ). Effects were tempered by the country's level of gender equality, the SDS's operationalization (attitudes vs. stereotypes), the type of questionnaire, and the sexual behaviour type. The findings are in line with a hybrid model that accounts for the evolutionary and social elements that contribute to SDS. This meta-analysis showed that, on average, individuals still retain conventional beliefs about the sexual double standard (SDS), especially when it comes to men and women engaging in casual sex, having their first sexual experience at a young age, and their overall degree of sexual activity. In research examining variations in the assessment, or expectation, of men's and women's sexual activity, we also discovered unmistakable evidence of conventional SDS. But in nations with greater levels of gender equality, SDS were less common. This meta-analysis further exemplified the fact that meaningful and testable predictions about the presence of SDS are provided by both evolutionary theory and biosocial theory. The best explanation for the disparity in sexual expectations between men and women appears to be a hybrid model that incorporates both cultural gender norms and evolutionary factors related to gender variations in parental investment and sexual strategy. (Endendijk, van Baar, & Deković, 2019)

The author set out to further look into the problem of slut-shaming on social media. Social media is the limitless place for communication, interaction, and self-expression in the digital age. Social media, on the other hand, has evolved into a venue for cyberbullying, notably slut-shaming. Most often, young women, even college students, are the targets of societal shame. This context served as the foundation for research that was done to learn more about the slut-shaming issue on social media. In order to do this, survey responses from female students in the English Department at Bina Nusantara University were gathered for the research. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were done on the collected data. The research demonstrates that, despite social media being a powerful platform for women to raise their difficulties, women frequently experience insecurity and discomfort there. In the Indonesian setting, victim-blaming is still prevalent. Women who don't adhere to Indonesian beliefs and standards are also subjected to slut-shaming. The idea that women should be slut-

shamed if they do not behave and dress according to Indonesian beliefs and customs is still prevalent. The Participants (all of whom are female) appear to internalise the distinction between wholesome females and trashy ones. This study offers an alternative viewpoint on slut-shaming in the Indonesian setting and will be a valuable resource in creating curricular policies, particularly course curricula. (Ayuningtyas & Kariko, 2018)

Slut-shaming, or the public outing and shame of people for their (perceived or actual) sexual activities, is pervasive on the Internet; it mostly affects women, and it far too frequently has catastrophic results. The societal repression of female sexuality known as "slut-shaming" has been in use since ancient times. In order to contextualise this phenomenon, the author compares and contrasts cases of slut-shaming from the Roman Republic with more recent cases on the Internet. The author argues that while the focus of this slut-shaming, namely sexual virtue, has not changed over time, the unregulated nature of the Internet has increased its scope and impact. While the author attempted to highlight the similarities and differences between the Roman Republic and the Internet, many aspects of the social process of slut-shaming have persisted across time and culture. Women were shamed in public places in the Roman Republic and do so today on the Internet; the emphasis of this slut-shaming was and is sexual virtue and adherence to normative sexual behaviours; women in both eras have taken part in the slut-shaming of other women; and Women and their sexual virtue have long been on public trial in both physical and digital fora. Slut-shaming is an old, difficult, and harmful practise. However, the Internet's lack of regulation has given slut-shaming a newfound vigour. The anonymity, dispersion, inescapability, lasting quality, and boundless audience size of the Internet have greatly expanded the reach of this phenomena. The unrestricted nature of the Internet has increased the breadth and effect of slut-shaming, which affects both men and women. An online practise was created as a result of an offline social process, but due to the nature of the Internet, it has now been twisted and transformed into something horrific. Internet use has been exploited by both sexes to preserve the cultural repression of female sexuality and expose women to more scrutiny of their sexual activities. The main argument of this essay is that women have participated in the slut-shaming of other women and have done so because it has social advantages for them. The Internet has been utilised by both sexes to preserve the cultural taboo against women's sexuality and expose them to heightened scrutiny of their sexual behaviour. (Webb, 2015)

## B) Indian

Slut shaming may take many different forms, but it frequently entails blaming women for their own woes. Many societies across the world are rife with this sort of activity, which can have grave repercussions for the targeted women. It specifically starts with harassment, and when a female musters the guts to speak up, her clothing choices and manner of dressed are criticised. Derogatory terms and phrases are frequently used to describe her. Threats of sexual assault are among the most often used tactics to get women to wear less-revealing apparel. Frequently, women are warned that males may target them if they wear "revealing clothing". Women need to be free to dress whatever they like without worrying about being called sluts, harassed, or attacked. Slut shaming just helps to further the notion that males are incapable of self-control and that women are responsible for their safety. Unfortunately, women in both rural and urban regions are as likely to be the subject of slut shaming. Even if the cultural setting may be diverse, the fundamental attitudes and ideas frequently remain the same. It has come to the attention of the teachers while speaking with the high school ladies that they prefer to use the term "characterless" rather than "sluts" in order to appear more kind. The interesting topic is whether or not a teacher gives them the authority to criticise females for their appearance. A female student must wear her hair in plaits, while female teachers are forbidden from wearing pants on school grounds. The rule exists to safeguard female educators against molestation and offensive remarks. Not stopping women from dressing revealingly is the answer to slut shaming; rather, society has to rethink its perspectives on gender roles and sexuality. Women wore facial coverings in antiquity, yet crimes against them kept happening. Never would a piece of fabric treat someone with the disrespect of being called a cat. Without concern for slut shaming or judgement, women need to be free to express their sexuality however they see fit. (Dhillon, 2023)

In many schools, there is a practise known as gender segregation. The opposing sexes are prohibited from interacting with one another everywhere—in classroom seating arrangements, assemblies, and even lunchrooms. The reasoning for gender segregation in schools is based on the government's intention to train kids for a "ideal social order." Numerous preconceptions start to emerge as a result of the sex differences. Stereotypes that have persisted for ages must be unlearned in schools, especially in Indian society. In Indian schools, there is a well-known ban on jeans for female personnel. Considering the possibility of why a certain item of clothing could be deemed suitable for one gender and inappropriate

for another. By creating such erroneous equivalences, it is possible to hide the notion that women should not wear jeans because they are 'improper'. Every school would defend this policy, but in actuality, women face significantly more dress codes than do males. Punishments, which are intended to make someone more obedient, frequently traumatise people and cause them to behave in undesirable ways. Boys sometimes receive harsher punishments than girls, such as rounds around the schoolyard or beatings at the hands of the instructors (which, thankfully, are becoming much less common). In contrast, girls are freed from physical abuse but are asked questions on very personal issues like "character" and "integrity." Although performing 50 sit-ups could be physically taxing, the subsequent frigid conduct and slurs directed at ladies might be even more distressing psychologically. In schools, femininity is seen as a devalued gender characteristic, and practises like making long-haired guys wear ponytails as punishment serve only to reinforce that. To the point that guys even start crying when their hair is knotted in that way as a punishment, it is also furthering the stereotype that only ladies can tie their hair up with a rubber band. (Shukla, 2023)

Slut shaming typically takes the form of insulting someone for reasons like having sexual desires, thinking and discussing about sexual matters, having more than one sexual partner, exploring different sexual fantasies, having physical qualities that appeal to people of the opposite sex, masturbating, dressing sexily, enjoying nudity, and similar things. It aims to keep the victim of shame from exploring their sexuality or expressing their desires outside of moralistic, patriarchal norms. Explicit slut-shaming is possible (She is such a slut!). Branding someone as loose, easy, a skank, or a whore is one example. It can also be subtly subtle. It may even be rephrased as a worry. It could appear as though the attacker was motivated by the victim of a rape. Almost everyone has engaged in slut-shaming, at least unintentionally, due to how deeply established it is in our culture. Social media platforms have also developed into a new platform for slut-shaming. When someone utilises sexually explicit photographs, videos, or chat histories to humiliate or insult another person, this is known as "slut shaming" in digital settings. (Salam, 2022)

In India, moral policing and abuse motivated by honour are frequently practised in schools. In schools, girls are frequently made fun of and humiliated for wearing cosmetics, nail paint, a short skirt, or even a beautiful haircut. Speaking to males and falling in love frequently violates another level of honour in Indian schools. One of the most crucial components of

honour-based violence and moral policing is the assumption that the victim is to blame. Lack of gendered direction in the curriculum, ongoing moral policing by instructors, and a lack of emotional and psychological support from the educational system frequently cause females to feel guilty about their actions, which tends to excuse honour-based maltreatment in society. (Shokeen, 2021)

Slut shaming is a patriarchal strategy used to stigmatise or defame women whose sexual behaviour is thought to violate the patriarchal code of sexual propriety, or so-called "virtuous" femininity. It states that in order for women to be seen as "respectable," they must be mute facilitators of men's sexual pleasure, passive recipients of their sex desires, and their own sexuality may only be expressed in monogamous, heterosexual, married, or committed relationships. Women who are perceived as having sex with multiple partners or outside of a heterosexual relationship, expressing or pursuing their sexual desire, engaging in premarital, extramarital, or casual sex, having unconventional sexual preferences, or even dressing less than "modestly" are therefore inevitably the targets of slut shaming. Not simply women's sexual and social lives are negatively impacted by slut shaming. By encouraging a culture of impunity by passing judgement unfavourably in rape or sexual assault cases, it silences, denigrates, and denies justice and protection to victims of sexual violence (sex work or otherwise) and promotes men's access to women for sex (non-consensual). Because traditionally, "automatic" or "indiscriminate" sexual consent has been connected with sex workers, they have been characterised as "women who cannot be raped." Specifically, it refers to a group of women who aren't allowed to deny sex or make a claim of sexual assault made against them by compulsion, force, or fraud. The depth of this whore-stigma was such that it not only made it simpler for con artists to take advantage of these women, but that for decades, justice officials had no qualms about acquitting defence attorneys when it was a sex worker who had filed charges of rape or sexual assault, declaring the latter to be "deserving" of the result and unworthy of legal protection. The courts have also victimised and slut-shamed sexual assault victims. This is demonstrated by the fact that, rather than the sexual history of the offender, women's sexual history has been accepted as "admissible evidence." A woman may also be questioned about her behaviour, including why she was drinking, why she was at a certain location or time, and how she chose to dress. All of this, unintentionally, is intended to expose a woman's involvement in the crime and demonstrate that she acted or behaved like a whore, 'provoked' or encouraged the consequence. Since placing

responsibility on the victim suggests that she deserved to be sexually assaulted, there was no crime to be charged and the offender was found not guilty in all respects, resulting in his unqualified acquittal. (Chopra, 2020)

Our culture refuses to even mention the word "sexuality" much less attempt to understand it. In our nation, particularly women, lack the autonomy to explore their sexuality and even to publicly express their desire for sex. Whoever doing so is called a slut. In fact, many individuals believe that they have a responsibility to take such action in order to ensure that women adhere to the moral code established for women by our traditional culture and don't "stray. "The worst aspect of this situation isn't affluent males calling out women for being slutty; rather, it's women who uphold conventional ideas and criticise others who are similar to them. In contemporary culture, "character" is a woman's most valuable asset. When you want to be married, it's helpful, it offers you prestige, it makes you look like a "good" lady, and it makes you accepted by society. A woman loses respect and standing in society as a result of all this name-calling and slut-shaming that characterises her as "characterless". It is important that individuals comprehend that having sexual impulses is both common and normal. It shouldn't be impolite to express or openly embrace one's sexual inclinations. You shouldn't have to feel guilty about something that comes to your mind and body organically. It does not constitute a woman a slut or someone who is "asking for it" if she wears whatever she wants to wear, is upfront about her sex life, or has had several relationships in the past. It simply means that she is honest about it and would prefer to be happy than to conduct her life in accordance with social expectations. Getting our cultural standards and expectations correct is crucial if a woman expressing her sexuality entails challenging traditional norms and expectations. (Sojatia, 2020)

Shaming may be done in a number of methods, including on the internet, through social media and networking sites, out in public or with the aid of newspapers, etc. Shaming mostly targets persons who are well-known and have a distinct social identity. People harbour little grudges against one another, which is evident in situations like these. The majority of T.V. actors and well-known Bollywood actors go through similar things every day, but they are embarrassed in different ways for their acting, voice, clothing sense, attitude, etc. They do this because they have developed a positive attitude towards such things, and by doing so, they typically inspire regular people as well. Because the individual clearly wants to do this, the humiliation is typically done in public. Public shame, also known as public humiliation,



is a type of punishment characterised by dishonouring or degrading a person—typically an offender or a prisoner—especially in public settings. ( Mishra, 2019)

Slut shaming is the practise of demeaning women or girls who are thought to go against social norms or with relation to their sexual attractiveness. Additionally, it alludes to effeminate, who are viewed as excesses in society since they don't behave in a way that the other social organs would expect. The victim of slut shaming becomes a prostitute, rape victim, or even someone who uses birth control. Because of her errors, such as dressing in overly exposing clothing or acting seductively, the girl is blamed by the society for being raped. In accordance with conventional wisdom, women are assumed to be "sexy" and "hot," although there is a fine line between the two. Women run the risk of being branded as unfeminine if their behaviour deviates from the socially acceptable norms. The risk of crossing that thin line still exists even if you act in accordance with their instructions. (Kamath, 2019)

Slut-shaming is a serious issue that is present and is becoming worse every day. Therefore, it needs to be resolved right now. And the only way to stop it is with legislation that expressly forbids slut-shaming and is enshrined in law. If they want the daughters of India to be secure and stress-free, professional organisations, organisations for women, and service providers must handle this issue jointly and cooperatively with each individual. This area requires the promotion of a civil society effort. Thankfully, women all around the world are now fighting against whore-bashing and slut-shaming. The slut walks, which started in Canada and oppose using the term to silence or restrict women, are steadily catching on around the world, including India. Indian women need to stand up for themselves and stop allowing themselves to be sexually harassed and objectified. It is necessary to convey to society and a few individuals that they have no right to criticise or even express worry over any woman's morals, way of life, sexual desires, or "supposed purity". It's imperative that women ask abusers, "Why do you have an issue, or rather, who are you to even have an issue with my life or lifestyle for no discernible reasons?" to them. And that can only happen if the law stands up for every victim of slut-shaming and uses the legal system to make abusers legally responsible for all of their words, not just their deeds. (Kumar, 2020)

Slut. Whore. Wannabe. Prostitute. Cheap. Bitch. Randi. These phrases have all been used to make fun of women for everything they do, including dressing in a 'exposing' way, hearing

about someone else's sexual experiences, or even just seeing them out and about with someone of the opposite sex. Women from metropolitan origins are not the only ones who experience slut-shaming. The last time my housekeeper didn't cover her face before going for work, her father beat her up for engaging in immoral activity. I vividly recall her showing up to work one day dressed from head to toe with a dupatta on her head. All of these experiences have a few things in common: women's bodies, from their faces to their legs, have been treated like sexual objects, and frequently the negative treatment that these women have experienced has been given to them without their consent and has led to intrusive policing as well. Another cause for slut-shaming may be the simple fact that any conduct deemed "un-ladylike" or immodest is frequently viewed as rude and disgusting, and for which women must be called out on. The pressure to uphold the established norms of femininity manifests itself in this way. (Manglik, 2017)

Both sexes can be subjected to slut-shaming, although women are more frequently affected, especially in their adolescent and early adult years. There is a solid reason why slut-shaming is a hot topic of discussion right now. The practise, which regulates women's sexuality and sexual independence, only harms and disarms women. Unfortunately, slut-shaming has become deeply ingrained in our culture, and a lot of individuals do it unintentionally every day. In this regard, slut-shaming can be particularly harmful. Women's attire has always been subject to regulation. Unfortunately, young girls and even teens are affected by this as much as older women. Even in schools, females frequently face tougher clothing regulations than boys, which conveys the message that their bodies are intrusive and unsuitable for an educational environment. According to some research, women's initial exposure to slut-shaming occurs when they violate school clothing restrictions. The message that teens' bodies should be feared or that their bodies are shameful might be sent when parents scrutinise what their kids wear. It's understandable that parents worry about the people their children spend time and communicate with. Nevertheless, it might be interpreted as a sign of mistrust on the part of parents when they invade their teenager's privacy. And not only in terms of real intercourse. When parents try to control their teen's environment, such as by reading their text messages or looking through their browser history, it sends a message that they are not only untrustworthy but also lack a safe place to express questions. Additionally, they don't feel comfortable asking their parents any questions regarding sexual health or sexuality in general as a result. (Ging, 2016)

### 2.3 RESEARCH GAP ANALYSIS

Slut shaming is a significant and ongoing social issue that affects majority of women of all ages, since from their adolescent period. Numerous studies and articles have been published on this topic, shedding light on the various sources such as from family, relatives, peers etc. And consequences of slut shaming on women such as physical, psychological etc... However, it is important to note that there is a lack of research conducted in India, specifically in the state of Kerala, regarding this issue. The specific cultural, social, and economic factors in Kerala may contribute to unique experiences and manifestations of slut shaming. Therefore, conducting research in this region would provide valuable insights into the lived experiences of women who face slut shaming and how it intersects with their cultural context. And also, no research has been done in Thiruvananthapuram. Moreover, the existing literature also lacks focus on how victimized women cope with the challenges resulting from slut shaming. Understanding the coping mechanisms and strategies employed by these women can shed light on their resilience and provide valuable guidance for supporting them through such experiences. This is the gap which is identified by the researcher.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

## METHODOLOGY

This chapter deals with the methodology adopted for this study. An attempt is made to narrate the methods and techniques used to identify cases of young women of age between 15-14 who were victimized slut shaming. This chapter includes research design, pilot study, the setting for the study, population, sample, tools, and method of data collection and how the data will be analysed and interpreted in order to arrive at certain findings, suggestions and conclusions based on the study.

### 3.1 Title of the study

Slut shaming: experience of young women in Thiruvananthapuram

### 3.2 Objectives/research questions

Central research question

What are the problems faced by young women due to slut shaming and how did they cope up with this challenge?

Specific research questions

- i. What are the basis for slut shaming of young women?
- ii. Which are the sources of experience of slut shaming for young women?
- iii. How did the experience of slut shaming affect physical, psychological and social aspects of young women?
- iv. What are the coping strategies adopted by young women to address the difficulties they faced due to slut-shaming?

### 3.3 Definition of concept

Theoretical and Operational Definition

#### 1) *Young women*

- Theoretical definition

'Youth' as the 15- 24 years age group. While young people cover the age range from 10 to 24 years of age. (According to WHO) Young women or young lady is the women in the age group from 15 to 24.

- Operational definition

In this study young women are defined as the women in the age category from 15 to 24 of Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala who have been victimized slut shaming.

## 2) Slut shaming

- Theoretical definition

The phrase Slut shaming become popularized alongside the slut walk marches and functions similarly to the war of women producing affective connections while additionally working to reclaim the word slut as a source of power and agency for girls and women. (According to the author Jessalynn Keller)

- Operational definition

In this study slut shaming is the practice of criticizing people, especially women and girls, who are perceived to violate expectations of behaviour and appearance regarding issues related to sexuality.

## 3.4 Pilot study

The pilot study aimed to assess the feasibility of a full-scale research project on slut shaming among young women aged between 15-24 age category in Thiruvananthapuram. The researcher evaluated challenges, participation barriers, and topic sensitivity, refining data collection tools based on insights. Adjustments improved question clarity, addressed sensitive issues, and streamlined data collection processes. These enhancements contribute to a more meaningful investigation into slut shaming among young women in Thiruvananthapuram, benefiting from refined tools, improved design, and a better grasp of feasibility and challenges.

### 3.5 Research approach

In adopting a qualitative approach, the researcher normally tries to explore how people make sense of their world. A qualitative researcher seeks to define and interpret unfamiliar phenomena through non-numerical methods of measurement with the intention of focus on meaning and insight.

The qualitative approach was adopted for the study and a case study design was used to collect data for the study. McMillan and Schumacher (1993) defined qualitative research as, “primarily an inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns (relationships) among categories.” This definition implies that data and meaning emerge “organically” from the research context.

### 3.6 Research design

The research design refers to the overall strategy that is chosen to integrate the different components of the study in a coherently and logically, thereby, ensuring that the research problem will be addressed effectively. It constitutes the foundation for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data. “Case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system.” (Creswell, 2007)

The research design adopted is case study research design considering that the researchers need to explore to sense and identify the factors and effects of slut shaming in the life of young women. The case study research design is an in-depth study of a particular situation rather than a sweeping statistical survey.

### 3.7 Description of research site and participants.

Research Site: Thiruvananthapuram District. The research was conducted within the geographical boundaries of Thiruvananthapuram district, a prominent and culturally diverse region in the state of Kerala, India. Thiruvananthapuram district encompasses urban and rural areas, offering a rich social landscape for exploring the experiences of young women affected by slut shaming. The district's unique blend of modernity and tradition provides an intriguing backdrop for understanding the dynamics of this social problem.

Participants: Young Women Aged 15-24, Victims of Slut Shaming

The participants of this study consisted of 5 young women between the ages of 15 and 24 years who had been subjected to the distressing experiences of slut shaming. These participants were selected based on the eligibility criteria, ensuring that their narratives could shed light on the challenges, emotions, and consequences associated with slut shaming within the specified age range. The inclusion of participants from diverse backgrounds, including urban and rural settings within Thiruvananthapuram district, aimed to capture a comprehensive range of perspectives and experiences. The participants' willingness to share their stories provided valuable insights into the impact of slut shaming on the lives of young women, allowing for a deeper understanding of this social issue and its implications within the local context.

### 3.8 Sampling strategy and criteria/selection of respond

This research employs a snowball sampling strategy, which involves initially identifying a few participants who fit the criteria and then asking them to refer others who have experienced victimization due to slut shaming. The focus of the study is on young women aged 15 to 24 years who have been subjected to the negative phenomenon of slut shaming who resides at Thiruvananthapuram district.

### 3.9 Sampling design (Inclusion-Exclusion) criteria

Inclusion criteria: young women of age category 15-24, who have been victimized slut shaming.

Exclusion criteria: young women outside Trivandrum and not in the age category of 15-24

### 3.10 Data collection

Collected data was documented in written forms. The researcher read through it to find common themes in all cases and it was categorized as such. Different themes were found to group them in a meaningful way. The mode of data collection was interview guide.

### 3.11 Pre-Test

To analyse the feasibility and accuracy of the methodology, a pre-test semi-structured interview guide was tested with first participant. Flaws were identified and researcher added



a few more area of questions and modified the tool for other following interviews in order to have specific answers with the area that needed to be explored during the study.

### 3.12 Data-analysis

Collected data was documented as written data, researcher went through to find common themes in all cases and it was categorized as such. Different themes and sub themes were found in order to group them in a meaningful way.

### 3.13 Ethical consideration

In conducting this study on the challenges confronted by young women as a result of slut shaming, careful ethical considerations have been paramount throughout the research process. Prior to commencing the study, informed consent was sought from all participants, emphasizing their voluntary participation and the assurance of their anonymity and confidentiality. Researcher was aware to ensure the emotional well-being of the participants, particularly given the sensitive nature of the topic, appropriate measures were implemented to provide psychological support and resources if any distress arose during or after the interviews. Moreover, every effort was made to uphold the dignity and respect of the participants, refraining from traumatization and ensuring that their voices and experiences were represented accurately and authentically. This research adheres to the ethical guidelines and standards and follows the ethical principles of respect, beneficence, and justice in its pursuit of valuable insights into the lived experiences of young women affected by slut shaming.

### 3.14 Assumption, Limitations and scope

#### Assumptions:

Since the research approach the young women who were victimized slut shaming, assumes that the information they give about the factors, sources, effects of slut shaming and its management will be authentic.

#### Limitations:

The researcher studied only five cases out of several thousand in Kerala. Thus, the universe was wide and unit is small. This sets a limitation as the study cannot be generalized. When noting specific the limitations

- a) Some of the patients were emotionally very disturbed after sharing their experience of slut shaming. Respecting their individuality and dignity researcher was forced to minimize the number and approach people having cooperative and conscious responses.
- b) Lack of previous experience of researcher in the field of research.

Scope:

The study focusing on experience of young women due to slut shaming has direct relevance and applicability to professionals working for women empowerment and those engaged in women's studies. By exploring the concepts and issues arising from slut shaming, one can deepen their understanding of the challenges young women encounter in society.

For professionals, such as social workers, who are engaged in community development, this study can provide valuable insights into the concepts and issues related to slut shaming. Understanding the impact of slut shaming on young women can help inform their work in community development initiatives aimed at empowering women. By gaining knowledge about these issues, social workers can design interventions and programs that specifically address the negative consequences of slut shaming. They can organize awareness campaigns, workshops, and educational initiatives that promote inclusivity, challenge societal norms, and foster a supportive environment for women.

Medical social workers, on the other hand, can benefit from understanding the psychological, social, and biophysical impacts of slut shaming on young women. This knowledge enables them to develop comprehensive care plans and interventions that consider not only the physical well-being of women but also their mental health and social support systems. By collaborating with a multi-disciplinary team, including healthcare professionals, therapists, and counsellors, psychologist can ensure an integrated approach to address the holistic needs of young women affected by slut shaming.

## CHAPTER 4: CASE DESCRIPTION

Case no:01

Miss J is a 24-year-old working woman who belongs to a nuclear family in a rural community. She is currently pursuing her post-graduation in Public Administration from IGNOU (Indira Gandhi National Open University). Miss J works as a physics tutor in an educational institution and receives a monthly salary of ₹20,000. She is a divorcee and does not have any children. Her family consists of her father, who is a businessman, her mother who is a housewife, and an elder sister. During her 8th standard, Miss J experienced a distressing event when her sister decided to run away with her boyfriend. This incident caused Miss J to feel a deep sense of sadness and shame, as she shared a close bond with her sister. Despite the emotional turmoil caused by her sister's actions, Miss J has always been an excellent and dedicated hard worker. She consistently achieved high grades throughout her academic journey, excelling in her 10th and 12th standard examinations, as well as during her undergraduate studies in physics. Since childhood, Miss J has a strong dream of achieving success in the civil service examination. The first experience of slut shaming which she faced was due to her body type. Even from her close circle several body shaming had been faced by her.

*“It's been really challenging. My thick body type seems to invite judgment and objectification from others. I'm tired of being made to feel like my worth is solely determined by societal beauty standards”*

She hails from a patriarchal family, where she's expected to unquestioningly obey her parents, particularly her father, even in minor matters. This cultural norm perpetuates traditional gender roles, limiting her autonomy and reinforcing a hierarchical structure within the family.

*“My mother always says to obey whatever my father says even if he stood on opposite to my wish and desires”*

Miss.J is a type of women who express her uniqueness in various things. She faced slut shaming many times from her family itself for several reasons such as for choosing modern cloths, for having male friends, going out with friends etc

*‘I've faced judgment and slut shaming just because I expressed my desires openly about my desire to wore dress and go outing with my friends”*

*“My parents slut shame me by saying about my way of dressing which was aimed at drawing attention from men”*

During the incident when Miss J's childhood friends, including male friends, came to visit her at her house, they gathered in her room to watch a movie. Her mother reacted with anger and subjected her to severe slut-shaming. Her mother's judgmental attitude and derogatory remarks stemmed from a deeply ingrained patriarchal mindset that perceives any interaction with male friends as inappropriate or promiscuous. Mother's words reinforce feelings of guilt and shame, causing her to question her own choices and actions. In this context, her mother's slut-shaming not only hurt Miss J emotionally but also reinforced the notion that women should be limited in their social interactions and confined within rigid boundaries defined by outdated gender norms. This kind of behaviour can lead to a strained relationship between Miss J and her family, as she may feel stifled and unable to express her true self without facing harsh criticism and judgment.

*"My mother always says that having too many male friends and inviting them into the home, spending time with them alone in your room, may not be advisable for a woman. As like my sister they feared that I might also elope with multiple boys."*

Her slut-shaming experience extended beyond her family and reached her neighbourhood. Gossipy neighbours spread rumours about her, making negative assumptions about her behaviour and relationships. These rumours eventually reached her parents, leading to a massive conflict between she and her family. The situation became tense and emotionally charged as her parents were influenced by the neighbourhood's opinions. Feeling overwhelmed and misunderstood, she found herself trying to cope by adjusting to these uncomfortable circumstances. She also suffered a lot to cope up with social stigma.

*"My mother says that my neighbour says to her to control my way of dressing into culturally appropriate one"*

*'I have always been afraid of how society will judge me, so I sacrifice my desire to wear my favourite style of dresses and makeup. Additionally, I avoid inviting my male friends over to my home.'*

*"It's been incredibly difficult to navigate the social consequences of stigma. The fear of further judgment has caused me to retreat from social interactions."*

During her time in college, she had a relationship with her cousin, which her parents did not accept. As a result, her parents began searching for other marriage proposals for her. Wanting

to avoid causing her parents further sadness, she agreed to consider other marriage options. During the quarantine period due to the spread of COVID-19, her parents quickly arranged her marriage to a police officer. It was a decision made under pressure from her parents. While communicating with her fiancé, she believed that he understood her and would support her in pursuing her dream of the Civil Service exam. She saw his profession as a police officer as an indication that he would appreciate the importance of women being financially independent. Her fiancé agreed to her demands, including allowing her to continue her studies. Within one week, their engagement took place, but after that, her fiancé's behaviour changed dramatically, becoming toxic. He began engaging in slut-shaming by saying hurtful things.

*“He continuously engages in slut-shaming, accusing me of wearing modern clothes and makeup solely to attract male attention, suggesting that my happiness depends on receiving compliments about my body. Additionally, he insinuates that I could earn more money by exploiting my body”*

This change in behaviour suggests that her fiancé, who initially seemed supportive, has now become disrespectful and demeaning towards her. His comments indicate that he is trying to control her and belittle her by making her feel guilty or ashamed for any attention she may receive from other men. She is a woman who enjoys expressing herself through makeup and modern fashion choices. However, her partner becomes triggered by her style and begins imposing restrictions on her dressing. This gradually creates difficulties for her in the relationship, leading her to confide in her parents about her feelings. Unfortunately, her parents' response is not supportive. Instead of empathizing with her struggles, they engage in slut-shaming behaviour by blaming her for the situation. They teased her by saying that her choice of dressing and makeup is solely intended to attract men. Additionally, they advise her to obey to her partner's demands without questioning or speaking up. These negative responses from her parents exacerbate her emotional distress. Instead of receiving the understanding and support she hoped for, she starts blaming herself for the issues in her relationship. She decided to help herself out from this adverse situation. She reaches out to her ex-boyfriend and confides in him about everything that has happened to her. However, her ex-boyfriend comes from a poor family, and his family strongly opposes their relationship. As a result, he is unable to continue his own studies. Despite these obstacles, the couple decides to elope and seek legal registration with the assistance of his friends. They

got married in a temple. Once they are married, problems arise. The woman's husband, as well as her in-laws, subject her to domestic violence. She struggles to adapt to the limited facilities in her husband's home because she comes from a wealthy background. Her manner of dress and behaviour begin to trigger her in-laws, leading to severe slut-shaming and mistreatment.

*"My mother-in-law said that their family upholds certain cultural values where my dressing and behaviour, if not aligned with societal norms, may have a negative impact on how society perceives my husband. It is expected that I respect and comply with his decisions."*

Moreover, her husband blocks her from pursuing her studies based on his parents' advice. He insulted her by saying

*"It seems that your intention behind going is not focused on studying, but rather to go for outing with males"*

He also resists the phone call for her, his response while she attends phone call was

*"The purpose of calling male friends at night is to engage in sexual conversation with them"*

She then after expressed desire to go for studies. But her husband didn't allow that.

*"My husband believes that my primary role should be limited to taking care of the household and family. He doesn't see the value in my pursuing higher education so I need to beg to let me continue my studies. But he refused to permit"*

Due to her continuous hate towards her body due to slut shaming, affects her perception of body and ability to engage in self-care practices, self-blaming etc... In addition to this several other issues also arises such as loss of sleep.

*"Slut shaming has a significant impact on how I perceive my body and my ability to engage in self-care practices. The constant judgment and criticism make me doubt my self-worth, leading to negative body image and making it challenging for me to prioritize and take care of myself."*

*" Constant worry and negative thoughts from the slut shaming experiences keep me up at night, unable to get a good night's rest."*

*“I've been blaming myself for everything. I know deep down that it's not my fault, but it's hard to shake off those feelings of guilt and self-blame. I question my choices and wonder if I'm doing something wrong.”*

As a result of these difficult circumstances, Miss J gradually sinks into depression and begins experiencing suicidal thoughts. At one point, she attempts suicide by overdosing on medication, but her condition is not severe enough to be life-threatening. She is admitted to a government hospital, where she receives the necessary care and support to regain her health.

*"Constant humiliation and judgment faced from others due to slut shaming deeply affected my mental well-being. It created a sense of hopelessness and worthlessness, pushing me to the brink of self-harm and suicidal thoughts. So, I tried to commit suicide by overdosing on medication, but my condition is not severe enough to be life-threatening"*

Given the toll this situation has taken on her mental and emotional well-being, Miss.J and her husband come to a mutual decision to get divorced. After leaving her husband's house, she found solace and support in one of her friends. She is the one friend who stand with her in every adversity by providing psychological support. This friend offered her a place to stay in the house, allowing her to escape her difficult situation.

*“I am incredibly grateful to have a best friend who has been my rock through all the highs and lows, even extending her support to cover my financial needs for my studies. Her unwavering presence and assistance have been invaluable to me during challenging times.”*

Recognizing the need for professional guidance, she decided to seek counselling from Mr. Sunil Raj, a psychologist based in Thiruvananthapuram.

*“I seek help from a registered psychologist in Thiruvananthapuram provide the guidance and tools necessary to heal from the emotional wounds to help me navigate and cope with the negative impact of slut shaming”*

With the help and encouragement of her friends, she began actively searching for employment opportunities. Eventually, she succeeded in securing a job, which provided her with financial independence and stability. Additionally, she started offering tuition to students, utilizing her academic skills and knowledge to earn income. She hates to be a constant difficult for her friend and to ensure a stable living arrangement, she enrolled in a



hostel in Thiruvananthapuram. In addition to working and establishing herself financially, she was determined to continue her education. She took the initiative to pursue her studies, balancing her job and tuition commitments alongside her academic pursuits.

She carefully concealed the fact (that she was married) from her co-workers, choosing to keep her personal life separate from her professional one.

However, her secret was eventually discovered by a male colleague, who became aware of her marital status. This colleague, taking advantage of her vulnerable position as a divorced woman standing on her own without the support of her family, began to make inappropriate advances and requests for sexual favours. He threatened her by saying he will disclose this to everyone at the work place.

*“The truth that I was a divorcee had hidden from my co-workers. This was spread inside the co-workers and they started slut shaming and asked for sexual Favours”*

*‘It started with some hurtful comments about my past life. They labelled me with derogatory terms and made insinuations about my character and behaviour, suggesting that I'm promiscuous and asked for sexual Favour’.*

This created a highly distressing and uncomfortable situation for her, leaving her with a difficult decision to make. Ultimately, the ongoing problem became unbearable, and she felt compelled to resign from her job in order to escape the harassment and regain a sense of safety and well-being. And after that she began to join in other educational institution as a physics tutor. She had adopted self-empowering strategies so that she can navigate the challenges of slut shaming with resilience, confidence, and a commitment to self-empowerment and personal growth.

*“Once I relocated to Thiruvananthapuram for my higher studies, I began embracing self-empowering strategies in collaboration with my friend. These strategies included self-reflection and cultivating awareness, practicing positive self-talk and affirmations, establishing healthy boundaries, engaging in activities like yoga, and more.”*

In addition to this she created ultimate goal to achieve and started to identify specific and meaningful objectives that they aspire to achieve within a defined timeframe and also followed certain measures to overcome limiting beliefs.

*"I have a strong and determined aspiration to succeed in the civil service examination and complete my post-graduation in public service. I started leave my limiting belief and I have embraced self-belief and dedicated myself to working tirelessly towards achieving this dream, irrespective of the slut-shaming experiences I have faced along the way."*

**Case no:02**

Miss V is a 23-year-old working woman who belongs to a nuclear family in a rural community. She is currently working in a shop as sales girl and receives a monthly salary of ₹10,000. She is a divorcee and does not have any children. Her family consists of her father, who is an unmarried lesbian who is engaged in a romantic relationship with a divorcee female partner. She completed her under graduation in social work. She is belonging to a middle-class family. Her family consists of her father, who is working abroad, her grandmother, and an elder brother. Unfortunately, when Miss V was just 1 year old, her mother chose to leave the family and elope with her boyfriend. As a result, Miss V has no personal recollection of her mother except for a single photograph of the two of them together. Following her mother's departure, Miss V's father made the decision to go to Dubai in search of employment opportunities to support his children. During this time, Miss V and her brother were taken care of by their relatives, primarily their grandmother and their father's younger brother. These family members assumed the responsibility of raising and providing for the siblings in their father's absence. However, despite the care and support she received from her relatives, Miss V had to face the challenging circumstances surrounding her mother's departure. As she grew up, she experienced feelings of shame and embarrassment due to the stigma associated with her mother's decision to leave the family. Neighbours and members of the family had made hurtful comments or judgments, which likely added to Miss V's feelings of shame and isolation. So, she also added that she avoided family gatherings and functions.

*'my mother ran away with her boyfriend, and it seems like some people think it's a reason to shame me even from my family'*

*"I purposely avoid and distance myself during family gatherings or meetings because of the derogatory comments and judgmental glances from others."*

These external pressures and the absence of her mother undoubtedly had an impact on Miss V's emotional well-being and self-esteem throughout her developmental stages. She shared

her one hurtful life event that, one day when she was in the age of 6, she found herself confronted with a deeply distressing event that would leave a lasting impact on her life. She was sexually abused by a relative. The experience left her feeling vulnerable, confused, and emotionally scarred. In a moment of vulnerability, she confided in her grandmother, revealing the pain she had endured. However, instead of receiving the support, her grandmother advised her to keep the distressing events a secret, urging her to forget the hurtful experiences altogether.

When she reached the 5th standard, her father made the decision to enrol her in a convent school in Ernakulam for her further studies. This choice was likely influenced by her father's desire to provide her with a quality education and a safe environment. However, her time at the convent school was short-lived, as she studied there for only one year before returning to her native place. Concerned about her safety and well-being in society, her father decided to enrol her in martial arts classes. Martial arts training often emphasizes self-defence techniques, discipline, and physical fitness. By encouraging her to learn martial arts, her father aimed to equip her with skills that could help her navigate potential challenges and protect herself if needed. During her 8th standard, she had a significant realization about her sexual orientation. She discovered that she was attracted exclusively to individuals of the same sex, indicating that she identified as a lesbian. This self-discovery was a crucial moment for her as she began to understand and embrace her true identity. To express herself authentically, she made changes to her appearance. She started dressing in clothing traditionally associated with boys, such as shirts and pants. By adopting this style of dress, she aimed to align her external presentation with her internal sense of self, finding comfort and confidence in her chosen attire. This is the main reason she being slut shamed from the side of her neighbours.

*“At certain instances, I've encountered situations where individuals have directed hurtful remarks and insults towards me due to my clothing preferences. I typically opted for a combination of shirts and pants, and I projected a confident and masculine body language, which I personally found quite fulfilling. However, it was disheartening to witness how some people automatically associated inappropriate assumptions with my appearance, suggesting that I need both genders to fulfil my sexual desires”*

Likewise, her grandmother also shouted at her to wear feminine cloths

*“My grandmother always teases me to wear jeans and shirt she says that wearing such clothes are not as part of our culture, it is borrowed from foreign culture”*

*“Certain men from my neighbourhood subjected me to insults targeting my physique, suggesting that I should engage in prostitution like my mother to earn a substantial income due to my thick body type.”*

In addition to her change in clothing, she also took the brave step of expressing her romantic feelings towards other girls by proposing to them. However, these proposals and her sexual orientation remained unknown to her family members at that time. As she continued to grow and mature, she began to assert her independence and autonomy. She started making her own decisions across various aspects of her life, including her relationships, education, and personal choices. She then dreamt of having her own earnings so she decided to go for a part-time job and asked her father, but he didn't support her.

*“When I approached my father about the possibility of taking up a part-time job in a factory, he raised his voice and sternly told me not to go there, expressing concerns that I might be influenced by women he perceived as lacking proper conduct within society.”*

But after some days due to her continuous pressure her father let her to go for a job from where she also experienced a hurtful event of slut shaming from a co-worker that pressurised her to resign from the job.

*“When I took on a part-time job as a salesgirl, the co-worker subjected me to vulgar comments and inappropriate touching. He even went as far as soliciting sexual favours. This unbearable situation compelled me to resign from the job.”*

She also added that she faced unequal treatment or inequality based on gender from her family itself

*“I've experienced unequal treatment when it comes to things that my brother and I do. For instance, I'm not allowed to be out late when I hang out with friends, whereas my father doesn't impose similar restrictions on my brother.”*

By the time she reached her degree level, she found herself committed to multiple girls in romantic relationships. But she is interested to create a healthy relationship with male friends which was also restricted from her family side.

*“I typically maintain friendships with males, but my family imposes restrictions on me, prohibiting me from inviting them to our home or going out with them.”*

Miss V `s journey took an unexpected turn when her father discovered her true sexuality, identifying as a lesbian. Unfortunately, rather than accepting and supporting her, he vehemently denied her reality. Her father, in particular, insisted that she must adhere to his authority since he is the primary provider for the family.

*“It's been tough, to be honest. When I opened up about being a lesbian, I never expected to face such harsh judgment and slut shaming from others. It's disheartening and hurtful.”*

Driven by his refusal to acknowledge her identity, her father devised a plan to quickly arrange her engagement to a young man named X. Caught in a whirlwind of emotions, miss V found herself trapped between her father's desires and her own happiness. She was engaged with X. Feeling trapped and hopeless, she reluctantly agreed to her father's wishes, with a hope that someday she would find a way to break free from the chains that bound her. So, she after her engagement disclosed with Mr. X about her sexuality and he was not willing to leave her to live as she wishes. On the fifth day of her engagement with X, she made the difficult decision to elope with a female with whom she had been in a relationship. Her family leave her and registered man missing case in the police station. She subsequently ran away from her home, accompanied by her female partner who had previously been divorced and was living in Ernakulam. Her partner had a job, and she also actively looked for employment, successfully securing a position and becoming involved in her new job. She also mentioned experiencing significant health issues as a result of being subjected to slut-shaming. She would often stay awake at night, weighed down by the distressing memories of the hurtful incidents of slut-shaming and her previous traumatic life events. Consequently, she suffered from headaches and insomnia.

*"Sometimes, I experience sleeplessness due to excessive overthinking about the possibility of being targeted by slut shaming. This often leads to headaches and further lack of sleep."*

These experiences also had adverse effects on her self-esteem and self-value. The offensive comments and societal critiques contributed to a decreased self-regard, heightened self-questioning, and the internalization of shame.

*"The negative remarks and judgments cause me to doubt my value. I begin questioning if I somehow deserve this negativity. Sadly, the more I'm shamed, the more I internalize it."*

*"I've been called promiscuous and immoral just because I've chosen to explore my sexuality freely and also due to my family history"*

As a result of internalize the societal messages that suggest her behaviour is inappropriate, immoral, or deserving of criticism. She starts blaming her selves for the shaming she endures, believing that she is at fault. This self-blaming has profound psychological effects on her. Such as feelings of guilt, shame, and a diminished sense of self-worth. she started to question her own choices and actions, believing that it is responsible for the negative reactions and judgments she receives.

*"Ongoing shaming from my surroundings led me to internalize blame for the life I lead."*

She further explained that upon establishing herself in Ernakulam, she encountered challenges in forming social connections or expanding her circle of friends so she sometimes isolated from others. This was primarily due to her struggles with trust stemming from her past negative encounters with slut-shaming.

*"I often feel apprehensive about engaging in social interactions because of the painful incidents of slut-shaming I have endured, both within my community and even among those closest to me"*

She also says that she began to cope up with the negative impact of slut shaming by the help or support of her peers.

*"During times when I felt saddened or depressed due to the effects of slut-shaming, I am grateful for the numerous friends who stood by me without any conditions. They have been a crucial pillar of support in helping me recover and regain my strength."*

She says that she embraces self-empowering strategies so that she can navigate the challenges of slut shaming with resilience, confidence, and a commitment to self-empowerment and personal growth. She begins to give consideration only to her authentic self, acknowledging and appreciating both strengths and weaknesses, without judgment

*"I began embracing self-acceptance, which involved acknowledging and honouring my authentic self, my desires, and my sexual orientation. I made a conscious decision to*

*disregard the societal noise and opinions that were not beneficial to my well-being, allowing me to chart my own path forward.”*

She began to overcoming limiting beliefs involves challenging and transcending the negative thought patterns, beliefs, and assumptions that hinder personal growth, success, and fulfilment.

*I've realized that overcoming limiting beliefs means confronting and rising above those negative thought patterns and assumptions that have been stopping me from growing personally, achieving success, and finding true fulfilment.*

### **Case no:03**

Mrs A is a 25-year-old woman who has experienced several significant life changes and challenges. She resides in a rural community with her nuclear family, consists of her mother, who likely provides emotional support and assistance in caring for her 2 daughters. Mrs A's life took an unexpected turn when she became a widow at a young age, leaving her to raise her children on her own. Coming from a middle-class background, Mrs A grew up in an environment that valued creativity and artistic expression. This background likely played a crucial role in shaping her interests and aspirations. Her family's strong artistic background suggests that she was encouraged and supported in her creative endeavours from a young age. Despite the challenges she has faced, Mrs A has shown resilience and determination. she completed her under graduation in English literature. Mrs A is currently employed in a travel agency, which indicates her ability to balance work and family responsibilities. However, her artistic inclinations go beyond her professional life. She is also actively involved as an artist in a television serial on Surya TV. This involvement reflects her commitment to her creative talents and her willingness to explore opportunities outside her primary job. Unfortunately, she has lost her husband, and her relationship with her brother and sister is strained.

At the age of 18, she took a significant step by running away with her boyfriend and getting married, a choice that initially met with resistance from her family. Despite this initial opposition, her family eventually came to accept her relationship and supported her decision to marry. The couple's decision to migrate to Bangalore in search of better job opportunities and improved financial prospects showcases their ambition and eagerness to enhance their

quality of life. Her husband's choice to work as an IT professional highlight their shared commitment to building a successful future together. At the same time, Mrs. A's decision to both work and study Yoga underscores her dedication to personal growth and self-improvement. While adapting to her new life in Bangalore, Mrs. A remained deeply connected to her artistic roots and her passion for dance and acting. Despite being married and assuming new responsibilities, she continued to engage in programs and activities related to her artistic pursuits. In the early years of her marriage, Mrs. A's husband exhibited possessive and suspicious behaviour, casting unwarranted doubt on her interactions with other males. These unjustified accusations of infidelity cast a dark shadow over their relationship. He started to resist from many things for example he restricted her to be late after job on the other hand he can do the same.

*“My husband imposes this strict curfew on me, expecting me to adhere to a specific time limit for returning home. that is at 6 o`clock. If I may late beyond this, he shouted at me by saying with whom will you go for sleep”*

She also faced this sexual double standard from her neighbourhood itself

*“When I come home late from work, my neighbours spread rumours, insinuating that I might be involved in sex work, while they don't express the same concern when my husband arrives late. It's frustrating how this double standard exists, even though it's not something to be genuinely worried about”*

In between them unequal power dynamics exists. She always needs to seek permission from her husband even for basic things for example she requires their husband's approval even for wearing modern clothes.

*“I require my husband's approval for everything from going out with friends to making simple purchases. It's like Iam not allowed to make any decisions on myself”.*

His insecurities drove him to resort to a demeaning and hurtful form of manipulation known as slut-shaming. He subjected her to constant criticism, berating her choice of clothing, makeup preferences, and even her work-related communications.

*“My husband has been slut-shaming me because of the way I dress. He believes that my clothing choices are too revealing and inappropriate.”*



She also faced slut shaming based on their usage of makeup products, it became a basis for judgment, criticism, or shaming from her spouse as well as from her society.

*'It's un acceptable when people make assumptions about my character based on my makeup choices. It's just an external aspect of who we are. my neighbours and relatives spread rumours that I use more make up in order to attract males''*

The verbal abuse reached its peak when he accused her of deliberately dressing provocatively to attract other men. Mrs. A's bold and modern fashion choices became a point of contention, highlighting the stark contrast between her progressive outlook and her husband's regressive mindset. The birth of their two children did not temper her husband's behaviour. If anything, it escalated, intensifying the emotional turmoil Mrs. A endured. His unwarranted allegations and demeaning comments persisted, causing her self-esteem to plummet and eroding the foundation of their relationship. Her husband uses control and isolation tactics to limit her from social interactions, support network, and independence. She faced verbal attacks, insults, and demeaning languages. He uses threats, intimidation, or coercion to control her behaviour and silence her voices. She also said that exploit trust and love within the relationship to manipulate her emotions.

*'My husband used control and isolation tactics to limit me from having any social interactions or support network. This is because he has suspicious thought in me of having extra marital affair''*

She faces derogatory comments from her neighbours who criticize her when she travels alongside male friends or male colleagues, even if it's just to accompany her home.

*'It's just frustrating because people automatically assume that there must be something more going on between me and my male friends. They don't understand that it's possible to have purely platonic relationships''*

The way of her talking also be a reason to judge She said that her society often places expectations on how women, should speak and behave. Society expects women to speak and behave in certain ways.

*'It's like they've made assumptions about my character and my morals solely based on the tone or style of my speaking. It's incredibly irritating''*

Even from the workplace she got one incident of slut shaming and later them apologise about it. comparatively slut shaming from work place was less.

*“Well, I remember when I had that team outing, I overheard some colleagues making derogatory comments about me and labelling me as promiscuous. It felt like I was being slut-shamed, and it was incredibly hurtful.”*

The toxic atmosphere made it increasingly difficult for Mrs. A to thrive as an individual, mother, and professional. In the face of this adversity, Mrs. A found the strength to break free from the shackles of her toxic marriage. Recognizing the importance of her well-being and that of her children, she made the brave choice to return to her roots in Kerala, seeking refuge from the emotionally draining relationship. Although they separated, the legal ties of marriage remained intact. Tragedy struck with her husband's untimely demise, a result of a myocardial infarction. She then made the bold decision to pursue job opportunities in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). In her pursuit of a brighter future, Mrs. A entrusted the care of her children to her mother, a testament to her dedication to providing a stable environment for them despite the geographical distance. Her choice to work abroad was not met without challenges, however. Some family members were resistant to this decision, leading to strained relationships, particularly with her siblings who were unwilling to cooperate. In her journey as a widow who took the courageous step of migrating to a foreign land, Mrs. A faced a disheartening wave of judgment and derogatory accusations from her own relatives.

*“my sibling faced insult and then separated from her because of slut shaming by others when I went for abroad for job purpose”*

Instead of receiving the understanding and empathy she deserved, she encountered the cruel phenomenon of slut-shaming. Due to the continuous shaming I began to hate my body and appearance.

*“I have experienced slut shaming numerous times due to my body type, I started intense dislike for my body, and its my faith”*

It also had a significant impact on self-confidence and performance she said that,

*“I was an artist. Sometimes slut shaming has affected my performance in various areas, such as my work”*

Her family members, rather than recognizing her determination and independence, unjustly attributed her success to exploiting her beauty and talents to allure men for financial gain. Adding to the emotional burden, they insinuated that her pursuits had led her to neglect her late husband, perpetuating baseless notions of infidelity that cast a shadow on her grief. Yet, amidst this adversity, Mrs. A found solace and strength in the unwavering support of her mother and close friends who stood by her side.

*“I am fortunate to have a strong network of friends who have provided me with unwavering support during my difficult times of enduring slut-shaming. They have stood by my side, offering me comfort and encouragement when I needed it the most. Their presence has been a source of strength and reassurance throughout my journey.”*

As self-empowering strategies she used to follow certain measures such as yoga training and meditation classes and engaged in interested hobbies

*“I took the initiative to enrol in yoga training and meditation classes. Additionally, I explored my artistic side by engaging in activities like oil painting and classical dancing, allowing me to further nurture my self-empowerment journey.”*

#### **Case no:04**

Mrs R is a 24-year-old lady who comes from a nuclear family. Her family consists of her father, mother, and two younger sisters. She is married and currently resides in her husband's house along with her husband, their 1-year-old daughter, and her mother-in-law. Although she completed her higher studies, she encountered a setback when she had to discontinue her undergraduate course due to her marriage. In her formative years until the age of 14, Mrs R lived with her grandmother. This was because her father had a good job opportunity in Gujarat, and along with her two younger sisters, her parents relocated there, leaving Mrs. R behind with her grandmother. Consequently, Mrs R, developed a strong attachment to her grandmother, as she played a significant role in her upbringing during this period. When her parents returned and settled in Kerala, Mrs R faced a challenge in reconnecting with her sisters. The past separation had created a gap in their bond, making it difficult for them to establish a close relationship initially. However, with time and effort, Mrs R and her sisters began to rebuild their connection and bridge the emotional distance that had arisen due to their physical separation.

Mrs R shares that her father's attitude towards her has been different from that towards her sisters since childhood. Unfortunately, she has experienced harsh treatment from her father, who scolds and beats her even for the same mistakes made by her and her sisters. This differential treatment has left Mrs R feeling singled out and subjected to unfair punishment. In addition to this, Mrs R's father is a habitual drinker. When he returns home after consuming alcohol, he becomes physically abusive towards Mrs R, resorting to physical violence and verbal insults. In one instance, he even goes so far as to belittle her by suggesting that her previous living arrangement with her grandmother makes her characterless. As Mrs R progresses into higher secondary education, her father's controlling behaviour intensified. He consistently opposes her forming friendships with male classmates and discourages her from going out with them. Moreover, he imposes restrictions on Mrs R, preventing her from inviting her male friends to their house.

After completing her higher secondary studies, Mrs R's family sent her to a hostel for stay to pursue her undergraduate degree. During her first year of college, she developed a relationship with a guy from her hometown through social media, specifically Facebook. They grew close over time and eventually fell in love. In a turn of events during Mrs R final year of undergraduate studies, she and her boyfriend decided to elope and get married. However, their journey together faced unexpected challenges. This was the time the widespread impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, her husband lost his job, and as a result, his company sent him back to Kerala. Mrs R's husband has a mother who works abroad and a younger sister who is already married. Initially, Mrs R's family did not accept their relationship, possibly due to cultural or personal reasons. However, as time passed, her family gradually came to accept their union. In order to support themselves financially, Mrs R took up tuition classes and began earning an income. This decision to work as a tutor allowed her to contribute to their household expenses and take steps towards financial stability. In the evening, it became a common occurrence for Mrs R husband's friends to visit their house, where they would engage in activities such as eating, drinking alcohol, and smoking. Being a sociable person, Mrs R would often join them for conversations and socializing. However, this led to her being subjected to slut-shaming by her neighbours, who accused her of having questionable character due to her interactions with men other than her husband. The situation worsened when Mrs R became pregnant. Rumours began to circulate

among the neighbours, suggesting that the father of her baby couldn't be determined due to her alleged promiscuous behaviour.

*"husbands' friends are so friendly with me but I can't speak as friendly as my husband do. because when I did so my neighbours spread rumours that I am mingle with other males and did intimate things at night. so, when my daughter born, they say that the father of the child can't be determined"*

Adding to her difficulties, conflicts between Mrs R and her husband escalated, leading to instances of physical assault even during her pregnancy. She endured physical abuse from her husband for various trivial reasons, creating a hostile and unsafe environment.

She says that her husband uses control and isolation tactics to limit her from social interactions, support network, and independence. In addition, she faced verbal attacks, insults, and demeaning languages. He exploits trust and love within the relationship to manipulate her emotions.

*"I have a close friend with whom I confide in and feel at ease discussing my problems, but my husband prohibits me from contacting her and also faced verbal attacks, insults, and demeaning language. From the side of my husband for several things"*

After the birth of their daughter, the issues between Mrs R and her husband continued to escalate. He resorted to slut-shaming her, making derogatory comments about her appearance. One incident that stands out in Mrs R memory is when her husband publicly insulted her about her physical appearance during a function, further diminishing her self-esteem. Adding to the complexities of the situation, Reshma's mother-in-law, who holds strong traditional beliefs, returned to Kerala from her job abroad when their daughter turned one year old.

She also said that slut shaming also caused many physical issues such as increased head ache and sleep lessness through emotional un well due to slut shaming. Slut shaming affects her perception of her body and ability to engage in self-care practices. In addition to these various other issues such as body shame, negative body image also emerged. Objectification and criticism associated with slut shaming contribute to negative body image. The negative judgments associated with slut shaming makes her feel ashamed of her body and internalize unrealistic beauty standards imposed by society.

*'I hate the way I look. I'm so fat and unattractive. I think that's why my husband hates me'*

She also began to internalize the shame and guilt imposed upon them by society as a result of slut shaming. she internalizes the belief that her sexual behaviour or choices are inherently flawed, immoral, or unworthy of respect. It also creates a constant sense of guilt and self-criticism, causing her to view herself in a negative light.

*"It feels like I can never escape the constant scrutiny and judgment. I've started to believe that there's something inherently wrong with me for embracing my sexuality or*

She also faced difficulty to socialise with others due to afraid of being slut shamed by others. And also encountered feelings of shame, guilt, self-doubt, etc... which leads to social stigma result to social isolation, as she withdraws from social interactions to avoid further stigmatization and judgment.

*"The stigma and judgment directed at me due to slut-shaming have made it really hard to form genuine connections and engage in social activities."*

*"The stigma and judgment directed at me due to slut-shaming have made it really hard to form genuine connections and engage in social activities."*

After some days she begin to give consideration only to their authentic self, acknowledging and appreciating both strengths and weaknesses, without judgment but sometimes she forced to obey her husband to lead a smooth flow of life.

#### **Case no:05**

Miss S a determined 25-year-old lady, comes from a nuclear family that includes her father, mother, two elder sisters, and a brother. Unfortunately, their family faces numerous challenges due to their father's alcohol addiction, which has led to financial instability. Miss S 's father, who works as a farmer, frequently consumes alcohol, further exacerbating their financial situation. The financial struggles have had a significant impact on the family's ability to pursue higher education. Miss S and her siblings have been unable to continue their studies beyond the 10th standard, except for one sister who managed to graduate. This lack of education has further hindered their prospects for better job opportunities and improved financial stability. Despite the hardships they face, Miss S remains a strong-willed individual who is determined to support her parents and siblings. She is willing to take on any kind of

job to contribute to the family's well-being. However, the challenges do not end there. Miss S's sister and brother have already gotten married. Additionally, one of Miss S's sisters is a mental patient due to organic reasons stemming from an accident. This unfortunate incident has further strained the family's resources and requires them to allocate funds for her medical treatment and care. Despite the overwhelming circumstances, Miss S remains determined to support her family and improve their situation.

When Miss S was 16 years old, her family faced financial constraints that compelled her to seek small jobs to contribute to their income. Unfortunately, their other relatives did not offer any cooperation or financial assistance, except for Miss S's mother's brother. He proved to be a kind-hearted individual who consistently provided support for their day-to-day needs. Over time, as Miss S and her family grew closer to her uncle, a deep bond formed between Miss S and her mother's brother, unbeknownst to the rest of the family. In the midst of their close relationship, Miss S and her uncle gradually fell in love. The connection they shared was born out of the circumstances they faced together, and their feelings for each other grew without their relatives' knowledge. Miss S unconditionally wished to marry him and she trusted him deeply. He also provides assurance to marry her. Her uncle's romantic involvement developed in a secretive manner, driven by the desire to keep their relationship hidden from the rest of the family. Her uncle says that it should be kept secret for some years because he said that he has fear of judgment and societal repercussions, as consanguineous relationships are generally stigmatized and frowned upon in their cultures. And he said that after she attains 18 years, he agreed to marry her. Miss S had sexual intercourse multiple times with her uncle and became pregnant at the age of 17. The pregnancy came as a shock to the family. However, her uncle who was involved in sexual intercourse with her denied the truth and responded by slut-shaming her, accusing her of engaging in prostitution to earn money. The denial of paternity and the subsequent slut-shaming had significant emotional and psychological consequences for Miss S. She may feel betrayed, humiliated, and isolated as a result of the person's refusal to take responsibility for their actions. And also, her reputation within her family and community had also been negatively affected by these accusations. But one friend disclosed that, Miss S and her uncle had been in a relationship for one year. However, her uncle eventually eloped from the house. Subsequently, a missing case was filed in the police station and during the investigation, it was discovered that the uncle had a wife and two children. This revelation had a significant adverse impact

on Miss S life, as she became the subject of blame and slut-shaming by her relatives and neighbours once the stories were spread, instead of holding her for making the accusations accountable for their actions or behaviour, the focus of the neighbours is redirected towards blaming the victim of the accusations.

*'It's been really difficult for me. Not only did I have to go through the trauma of being sexually abused and cheated by my mother's brother, but now I'm also facing slut shaming from some people because of this'*

*"I experienced slut-shaming from my neighbours after becoming a victim of sexual abuse and infidelity. They blamed me, suggesting that my way of talking and interacting somehow attracted such behaviour towards me."*

Her relatives and neighbours discovered the stories that led to widespread gossip and the spread of negative perceptions about her. The slut-shaming likely caused immense emotional pain, humiliation, and isolation for Miss S, as she had to face judgment and negative labels from those who were supposed to support her. Even from her peer side.

*"I faced slut shaming from my peer group after I went for work, they said that in order to earn more it's better to go for sex work rather than going for Mason work due to my past story"*

In addition to facing slut-shaming from her relatives and neighbours, Miss S also experienced the hurtful behaviour from her own family, which likely intensified her emotional pain. Miss S gave birth to a baby boy, indicating that she became a mother while navigating through this challenging period. To support herself and her child, Sherly started working in mason jobs with her brother. However, even in this new work environment, she continued to face slut-shaming, this time from her co-workers. Experiencing slut-shaming from co-workers can be highly distressing and create a hostile work environment. Miss S faced derogatory comments, rumours, or exclusion based on the judgments, prejudices and her past from her coworkers.

*"My co-workers subjected me to slut-shaming because of my history of experiencing sexual abuse"*



Slut shaming on affects negatively to her self-esteem and self-worth. The derogatory remarks and societal judgment etc... lead to a diminished sense of self, increased self-doubt, and internalized shame.

*"I am begin to internalize the negative messages and question my worth. It erodes my confidence and leads to feelings of inadequacy, insecurity, and a diminished sense of self-worth and also I always feel so ashamed of my body because I victimized sexual abuse "*

Slut shaming has affected the physical health of her. She was subjected with increased head ache and sleep lessness through emotional un well due to slut shaming. It explores the direct link between emotional distress caused by slut shaming and its impact on physical well-being.

*'At times, the uncontrolled stress caused by slut shaming makes me feel overwhelmed to the point where it seems like my mind is on the verge of bursting and my head is going to blast by head ache'*

She internalizes the shame and guilt imposed upon them by society as a result of slut shaming. she internalizes the belief that her sexual behaviour or choices make them inherently flawed, immoral, or unworthy of respect. And it can create a constant sense of guilt and self-criticism, causing her to view herself in a negative light.

*"I constantly feel like I've done something wrong. That is, I love him and trust him. Its all my fault. That's why he physically uses me and cheated on me"*

She also added that she felt hesitant or reluctant to seek support or assistance because of the fear of being judged, stigmatized, or further shamed for their real or perceived sexual behaviour. This was arrived from the experience of isolation and social judgment and also due to trust issue.

*'To be honest, I've been feeling hesitant to reach out for help or support. I'm afraid of being judged or stigmatized because of my sexual behaviour. It's the fear of experiencing further shame or isolation that holds me back'*

*"The one I trusted and loved the most had cheated on me and also, I've had experiences of slut-shaming and judgment from people who were once close to me. It has made it incredibly*

*difficult for me to trust others, especially when it comes to matters of intimacy or sharing personal details about my life. That's why I decided to not have marriage life"*

She also faced experience of being socially excluded, isolated, or marginalized as a result of facing slut shaming.

*"I have experienced social exclusion as a result of slut-shaming, primarily due to becoming pregnant with a child conceived from a relationship with my uncle on my mother's side."*

As self-empowering strategy I began to accept the reality and given less mind to the society's judgements. I began to construct goal to teach my son and move on for him.

*"I began embracing self-acceptance, which involved acknowledging and honouring my authentic self, my desires, and my sexual orientation. I made a conscious decision to disregard the societal noise and opinions that were not beneficial to my well-being, and start to live for my son"*

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

## DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

### 5.1 Introduction

Qualitative data analysis involves transforming collected raw data from a research study into meaningful interpretations and explanations of the phenomena, individuals, and situations being investigated. Thematic analysis focuses on identifying, examining, and documenting patterns or themes present in the available data.

### 5.2 Profile of Participants

*Table 1, Profile of Participants*

Case	Age	Community	Education	Family status	Family type	Marital status	Number of children	Income
1	24	Rural	PG	Upper	Nuclear	Divorce	Nil	20,000
2	23	Rural	UG	Middle	Nuclear	un married	Nil	15,000
3	25	Rural	UG	Middle	Nuclear	Widow	1	50,000
4	25	Rural	10 <sup>th</sup>	Lower	Nuclear	Un married	1	10,000
5	22	Rural	12 <sup>th</sup>	Middle	Nuclear	Married	1	Nil

The researcher conducted five case studies in a rural community, aiming to understand the socio-economic backgrounds of the participants. The case studies included one participant from a lower economic background, one from an upper economic background, and three from middle economic backgrounds. With the exception of one case, all participants were employed. Their educational backgrounds varied, with one completed her high school, another completed her higher secondary studies, two of them completed undergraduate degrees, and one of them currently pursuing post-graduation.

### 5.3 Objectives / Question-wise Analysis

Research question no:1

- i. What are the basis of slut shaming of young women?

Theme: Basis of slut shaming

The first theme, based on the researcher's exploration, focuses on the various factors that contribute to slut-shaming of young women. Five subthemes emerged such as clothing choices, Expression of sexual orientation, Body appearance, expressing desires, Having male friends, Way of talking, Past life, Victim of sexual abuse, Usage of makeup products, Family history. These factors play a significant role in subjecting young women to slut-shaming, perpetuated by societal judgments and double standards.

- *Sub Theme 1: Clothing choices*

Clothing is a form of self-expression and should be a matter of personal choice. Nobody should be subjected to derogatory comments, insults, or harassment simply because of what they choose to wear. Some of the participants says that they faced slut shaming based on their clothing choices.

*Case 1: "My parents slut shame me by saying about my way of dressing which was aimed at drawing attention from men"*

*Case 3: "My husband has been slut-shaming me because of the way I dress. He believes that my clothing choices are too revealing and inappropriate."*

- *Sub Theme 2: Expression of sexual orientation*

Slut shaming takes on another dimension when targeted at individuals who disclose their sexual orientation. One of the participants says that she faced slut shaming from others when she disclosed her sexual orientation as lesbian.

*Case 2: "It's been tough, to be honest. When I opened up about being a lesbian, I never expected to face such harsh judgment and slut shaming from others. It's disheartening and hurtful."*

- *Sub Theme 3: Body appearance*

Some of the participants says that they faced slut shaming from others due to having thick body type. They also said that their bodies are often objectified and judged based on societal beauty standards.

*Case 1: "It's been really challenging. My thick body type seems to invite judgment and objectification from others. I'm tired of being made to feel like my worth is solely determined by societal beauty standards"*

- *Sub Theme 4: Expressing desires*

Some of the participants says that they faced slut shaming if they express their desires in selecting job, wearing dresses etc.

*Case 1: 'I've faced judgment and slut shaming just because I expressed my desires openly about my desire to wore dress and go outing with my friends"*

- *Sub Theme 5: Having male friends*

Some of the participants says that they face slut shaming due to having male friends, they are judged and shamed as having male friends implies a sexual or romantic involvement.

*Case 1:"my mother always says that having too many male friends and inviting them into the home, spending time with them alone in your room, may not be advisable for a woman. As like my sister they feared that I might also elope with multiple boys."*

*Case 3: 'It's just frustrating because people automatically assume that there must be something more going on between me and my male friends. They don't understand that it's possible to have purely platonic relationships"*

- *Sub Theme 6: Way of talking*

The way of talking also be a reason to judge said by some of the participants. They said that their society often places expectations on how women, should speak and behave. Society expects women to speak and behave in certain ways.

*Case 3: 'It's like they've made assumptions about my character and my morals solely based on the tone or style of my speaking. It's incredibly irritating"*

*Case 5:"husbands' friends are so friendly with me but I can't speak as friendly as my husband do. because when I did so my neighbours spread rumours that I am mingle with other males*

*and did intimate things at night. so, when my daughter born, they say that the father of the child can't be determined"*

- *Sub Theme 7: Past life*

One of the participant shares that her elopement and subsequent marriage with her boyfriend in the past led to her being subjected to slut shaming by her co-workers.

*Case 1: "I eloped with my boyfriend and got married. And after that we become divorced. The truth that I was a divorcee had hidden from my co-workers. This was spread and they started slut shaming and asked sexual Favors"*

- *Sub Theme 8: Victim of sexual abuse*

One of the participants says that she faced slut shaming as a result of being victim of sexual abuse. This is an incredibly harmful and unjust response to an already traumatic experience.

*Case 4: 'It's been really difficult for me. Not only did I have to go through the trauma of being sexually abused and cheated by my mother's brother, but now I'm also facing slut shaming from some people because of this'*

- *Sub Theme 9: Usage of makeup products*

Some of the participants says that they faced slut shaming based on their usage of makeup products, it became a basis for judgment, criticism, or shaming.

*Case 3: 'It's un acceptable when people make assumptions about my character based on my makeup choices. It's just an external aspect of who we are. my neighbours and relatives spread rumours that I use more make up in order to attract males"*

*Case 1 : "Iam a person who have more interest to wore modern dress and make up but my mother's says that my intention for this is to get attention from males"*

- *Sub Theme 10: Family history*

One of the participants shared her experience of being subjected to slut-shaming due to her family's past, where her mother had run away with her boyfriend.

*Case 2: 'my mother ran away with her boyfriend, and it seems like some people think it's a reason to shame me even from my family'*

Research question no: 2

ii. Which are the sources of experience of slut shaming for young women?

Theme: sources of slut shaming

The researcher aims to explore the various sources of slut shaming experienced by young women. During their schooling years none of the five cases encountered instances of slut shaming. 5 of them faced slut shaming at its severe form from the side of their spouse or fiancé. The contribution on this by their neighbours are also high. Additionally, slut shaming from family members and relatives resulted in these women being alienated from their family environments. While some of their peers provided encouragement and support to help them cope with slut shaming, other participants expressed that they faced such stigmatization even from their own peer groups. Overall, the data reveals a multi-faceted nature of slut shaming, with different sources contributing to the negative experiences faced by these young women.

Based on the first theme five sub themes were generated:

- Sub Theme 1: Family/relatives

The five of the participants says that they have experienced slut shaming from their family and relatives. Four of them mentioned that they faced slut shaming specifically based on their way of dressing. Their family members believed that wearing stylish or modern clothing could attract unwanted attention from males. The family members might have held the view that dressing in a particular manner could lead to moral judgments or negative consequences, such as being labelled as promiscuous or inviting harassment. The family's concern about societal judgment and their own well-being likely stems from cultural or societal norms and expectations. They may feel pressured to conform to certain standards of modesty or propriety in order to avoid criticism or potential damage to their family's reputation. The family's emphasis on conforming to societal norms could stem from a desire to maintain social acceptance and avoid ostracism. They family members perpetuate negative and harmful attitudes towards young women by blaming them for slut-shaming incidents, further perpetuating a culture of shame and discrimination.

*Case no: 1 "My parents slut shame me by saying about my way of dressing which was aimed at drawing attention from men"*



*Case 2 : ‘my mother ran away with her boyfriend, and it seems like some people think it's a reason to shame me even from my family’*

#### *Patriarchy*

The four participants mentioned that they are from a patriarchal family environment that is, power and authority predominantly reside with the male members. This means that the decisions made by the father or the spouse hold significant importance and which are expected to be obeyed by them. Their family also expects to subjugate their own desires and opinions in favour of those set by the male members of the family especially father and spouse. This power dynamic extends to various aspects of their lives, including even personal choices like dressing. The 3 participants mentioned that even for something as basic as selecting their clothing, they are required to seek permission from their spouse.

*Case 1; ‘my mother always says to obey whatever my father says even if he stood on opposite to my wish and desires’*

#### *Broken Family dynamics*

Three participants within the family experienced conflict when expressing their desires regarding various aspects of their lives, including their desired job and way of dressing... These desires were not accepted or supported by other family members, leading to tension and disagreements within the family. One participant shared her personal experience that her family did not approve of her decision to work abroad, which resulted in a separation from her siblings.

*Case 3; “my sibling faced insult and then separated from her because of slut shaming by others when I went for abroad for job purpose”*

#### *Inter-generational conflict*

According to four participants, they faced resistance and slut shaming from their families when it came to dressing in modern ways. Their families insisted that their choice of clothing should align with the existing norms within the family. Their family members say that wearing modern attire was seen as provocative, while wearing traditional clothing was considered more decent and acceptable.

*Case 2; “my grandmother always teases me to wore jeans and shirt she says that wearing such cloths are not as part on our culture, it is borrowed from foreign culture”*

- Sub Theme 02: Spouse/fiancé

Four of the participants says that they faced slut shaming at its worst form from the side of spouse or fiancé. Spouses or fiancés engaged in behaviours or made comments that aimed to shame them based on their sexual behaviour or choices.

*Sexual double standard.*

One of the participants says that her husband imposes a restriction on her, expecting her to adhere to a specific curfew or time limit for returning home. This can be seen as a form of control over her actions and movements. However, the participant highlights that when her husband violates the same expectation by coming back home late, there is no apparent consequence or problem. This scenario suggests a double standard or unfair treatment within the relationship.

*Case 3; “My husband imposes this strict curfew on me, expecting me to adhere to a specific time limit for returning home. that is at 6 o`clock. If I may late beyond this, he shouted at me by saying with whom will you go for sleep”*

*Un equal power dynamics within relationship*

Out of the five cases the four of them says that unequal power dynamics are faced by them. They mentioned that they need to seek permission from their husbands even for basic things and that they require their husband's approval even for wearing modern clothes.

*Case 3; “I require my husband's approval for everything from going out with friends to making simple purchases. It's like Iam not allowed to make any decisions on myself”.*

*Case 1; ‘My husband believes that my primary role should be limited to taking care of the household and family. He doesn't see the value in my pursuing higher education so I need to beg to let me continue my studies. But he refused to permit.’*

*Emotional abuse and manipulation*

Three of the participants says that their husband uses control and isolation tactics to limit them from social interactions, support network, and independence. Four of them faced verbal

attacks, insults, and demeaning languages. Their spouse also uses threats, intimidation, or coercion to control young women's behaviour and silence their voices. They also said that exploit trust and love within the relationship to manipulate their emotions.

*Case 3; 'My husband used control and isolation tactics to limit me from having any social interactions or support network. This is because he has suspicious thought in me of having extra marital affair''*

*Case 5; "I have a close friend with whom I confide in and feel at ease discussing my problems, but my husband prohibits me from contacting her.'*

*Case 5; "Iam faced verbal attacks, insults, and demeaning language. From the side of my husband for several things''*

*Case 3; "Trust and love are being exploited within our relationship to manipulate my emotions. He always says that he will commit suicide if I didn't obey him''*

- Sub Theme 03: Peer group

From the five participants, one of them experienced slut-shaming from her peers. She experienced slut shaming from peers who hold higher positions within the social hierarchy. However, the remaining four participants received support and motivation from their peers to cope with the effects of slut-shaming. She receives support in various ways, such as words of encouragement, validation of feelings, and safe space to express their feelings.

*Case 4; "I faced slut shaming from my peer group after I went for work, they said that in order to earn more it's better to go for sex work rather than going for Masion work due to my past story''*

- Sub Theme 04: Neighbours

All five participants have experienced criticism, derogatory comments, or judgment regarding their perceived sexual behaviour or choices within their immediate residential community.

*Gender Stereotypes and Double Standards:*

The participants says that they faced unequal treatment and judgment as compared to men for the same thing done. It explores how societal expectations and stereotypes contribute to slut-shaming.

Case 3; *“When I come home late from work, my neighbours spread rumours, insinuating that I might be involved in sex work, while they don't express the same concern when my husband arrives late. It's frustrating how this double standard exists, even though it's not something to be genuinely worried about”*

#### *Victim-Blaming*

Some of the participants says that they faced situation where instead of holding the individuals for making the accusations accountable for their actions or behaviour, the focus of the neighbours is redirected towards blaming the victim of the accusations.

Case 4; *“I experienced slut-shaming from my neighbours after becoming a victim of sexual abuse and infidelity. They blamed me, suggesting that my way of talking and interacting somehow attracted such behaviour towards me.”*

#### *Community Pressure*

The participants faced a social force towards them to change certain behaviours, choices, and decisions in order to fit in or avoid rejection from the group.

Case 1; *“My mother says that my neighbour says to her to control my way of dressing into culturally appropriate one”*

#### *Conformity to social norms*

One of the participants says that she sacrifices her wish, attitudes, beliefs, or behaviours to align with the prevailing social norms or expectations of a particular community.

Case 1; *‘I have always been afraid of how society will judge me, so I sacrifice my desire to wear my favourite style of dresses and makeup. Additionally, I avoid inviting my male friends over to my home.’*

- Sub Theme 04: co-worker

Some of the working women participants says that they had faced slut shaming from the side of their co-workers for several reasons.

*Workplace harassment:*

The four of the participants are working and faced slut shaming from the side of their co-workers.

Case 4; *“My co-workers subjected me to slut-shaming because of my history of experiencing sexual abuse by my maternal uncle.”*

*Toxic work culture*

The presence of slut shaming within a professional environment creates a toxic work culture which was faced by some of the participants. The participants says that they faced verbal abuse or the use of harmful or offensive language, insults, threats, or demeaning remarks towards them with the intention to degrade, belittle, or manipulate them emotionally by the use of negative gossip and rumours

Case 3, *“Well, I remember when we had that team outing last week? I overheard some colleagues making derogatory comments about me and labelling me as promiscuous. It felt like I was being slut-shamed, and it was incredibly hurtful.”*

Case 1, *‘It started with some hurtful comments about my past life. They labelled me with derogatory terms and made insinuations about my character and behaviour, suggesting that I’m promiscuous and asked for sexual favour’.*

Research question no:3

- iii. How did the experience of slut shaming affect physical, psychological and social aspects of young women?

Theme 1: Aspects

This study aims to delve into the significant negative impacts that slut shaming has on various aspects of young women's lives. By examining its effects on physical, psychological, and social well-being, researcher seeks to shed light on the far-reaching consequences of slut shaming and emphasize the urgent need for change.

Based on the first theme three sub themes were generated:

- Sub Theme 01: Physical

Slut shaming can have profound effects on the physical aspects of young women. Constant scrutiny and criticism regarding their sexual behaviour or appearance can lead to several issues. The emotional toll of slut shaming can manifest physically, impacting their overall health and well-being.

*Health Consequences:* All the participants said that slut shaming has affect the physical health of them. They were subjected with increased head ache and sleep lessness through emotional un well due to slut shaming. It explores the direct link between emotional distress caused by slut shaming and its impact on physical well-being.

Case 4; *'At times, the uncontrolled stress caused by slut shaming makes me feel overwhelmed to the point where it seems like my mind is on the verge of bursting and my head is going to blast by head ache'*

*Self-Care:* Some of the participants said that slut shaming affects their perception of their bodies and their ability to engage in self-care practices. In addition to these various other issues such as body shame, negative body image, disordered eating patterns, and the subsequent impact on physical health.

Case 1; *"Slut shaming has a significant impact on how I perceive my body and my ability to engage in self-care practices. The constant judgment and criticism make me doubt my self-worth, leading to negative body image and making it challenging for me to prioritize and take care of myself."*

Case 3; *"I have experienced slut shaming numerous times due to my body type, I started intense dislike for my body, and its my faith"*

**Sleep and Fatigue:**

Some of the participants said that due to the stress and anxiety resulting from slut shaming had disrupted their sleep.

Case 1; *"She explained that the constant worry and negative thoughts from the slut shaming experiences keep me up at night, unable to get a good night's rest."*

*Physical Self-Harm:*

One participant says that the intense emotional distress caused by slut shaming led her to self-harm by the intention to suicide.

Case 1; *"Constant humiliation and judgment faced from others due to slut shaming deeply affected my mental well-being. It created a sense of hopelessness and worthlessness, pushing me to the brink of self-harm and suicidal thoughts. So, I tried to commit suicide by overdosing on medication, but my condition is not severe enough to be life-threatening"*

- Sub Theme 02: Psychological

All the participants says that slut shaming profoundly impacts the psychological well-being of young women. It can lead to a variety of issues. The constant scrutiny and judgment of their sexual behaviour or appearance erode their confidence and contribute to long-lasting psychological distress.

*Self-Esteem and Self-Worth:* All the participants says that the impact of slut shaming on affects negatively to their self-esteem and self-worth. The derogatory remarks and societal judgment etc... lead to a diminished sense of self, increased self-doubt, and internalized shame.

Case 4; *"I am begin to internalize the negative messages and question my worth. It erodes my confidence and leads to feelings of inadequacy, insecurity, and a diminished sense of self-worth."*

*Negative body Image:* This theme delves into the connection between slut shaming and body image issues. Some of them said that objectification and criticism associated with slut shaming contribute to negative body image. The negative judgments associated with slut shaming makes them feel ashamed of their body and internalize unrealistic beauty standards imposed by society.

Case 5; *‘I hate the way I look. I'm so fat and unattractive. I think that's why my husband hates me’*

Case 4; *“I always feel so ashamed of my body because I victimized sexual abuse”*

*Emotional Well-being and Mental Health:* Slut shaming and mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and self-harm tendencies. Etc....

are inter linked. All the participants says that they goes through various psychological issues due to being victimized to slut shaming.

Case 1; *“Constant humiliation and judgment faced from others due to slut shaming deeply affected my mental well-being. It created a sense of hopelessness and worthlessness, pushing me to the brink of self-harm and suicidal thoughts. So, I tried to commit suicide by overdosing on medication, but my condition is not severe enough to be life-threatening”*

*Sexual Identity and Self-Expression:* one of the participants who is a lesbian faced internal conflicts and challenges for embracing their sexuality, all of them feels ashamed to expressing their desires.

Case 2; *“It's been tough, to be honest. When I opened up about being a lesbian, I never expected to face such harsh judgment and slut shaming from others. It's disheartening and hurtful.”*

Case 1; *‘I have always been afraid of how society will judge me, so I sacrifice my desire to wear my favourite style of dresses and makeup. Additionally, I avoid inviting my male friends over to my home.’*

#### *Internalized Shame*

All the participants had said that they internalize the shame and guilt imposed upon them by society as a result of slut shaming. They internalize the belief that their sexual behaviour or choices make them inherently flawed, immoral, or unworthy of respect. And it can create a constant sense of guilt and self-criticism, causing her to view herself in a negative light.

Case 5; *“It feels like I can never escape the constant scrutiny and judgment. I've started to believe that there's something inherently wrong with me for embracing my sexuality or expressing my desires.”*

Case 4; *“I constantly feel like I've done something wrong. That is, I love him and trust him. Its all my fault. That's why he physically uses me and cheated on me”*

#### *Self-blaming*

As a result of internalize the societal messages that suggest their sexual behaviour is inappropriate, immoral, or deserving of criticism All the participants said that they start



blaming themselves for the shaming they endure, believing that they are at fault or that they somehow brought the negative treatment upon themselves. This self-blaming has profound psychological effects on them. Such as feelings of guilt, shame, and a diminished sense of self-worth. They started to question their own choices and actions, believing that they are responsible for the negative reactions and judgments they receive.

Case 1; *“I’ve been blaming myself for everything. I know deep down that it’s not my fault, but it’s hard to shake off those feelings of guilt and self-blame. I question my choices and wonder if I’m doing something wrong.”*

#### *Un able to seek help*

Some of the participants says that they felt hesitant or reluctant to seek support or assistance because of the fear of being judged, stigmatized, or further shamed for their real or perceived sexual behaviour. This was arrived from the experience of isolation and social judgment.

Case 4; *‘To be honest, I’ve been feeling hesitant to reach out for help or support. I’m afraid of being judged or stigmatized because of my sexual behaviour. It’s the fear of experiencing further shame or isolation that holds me back’*

#### *Trust issue*

Due to their experiences of slut shaming, insecurities, or fears some of the participants says that they had difficulties or challenges in trusting others.

Case 4; *“the one I trusted and loved the most had cheated on me and also, I’ve had experiences of slut-shaming and judgment from people who were once close to me. It has made it incredibly difficult for me to trust others, especially when it comes to matters of intimacy or sharing personal details about my life. That’s why I decided to not have marriage life”*

#### *Performance Anxiety and Social Pressure*

The negative experiences of slut shaming had a significant impact on self-confidence and performance which was said by one of the participants.

Case 3; *“I was an artist. Sometimes slut shaming has affected my performance in various areas, such as my work”*

### *Suicidal ideation*

One of the participants had suicidal ideation due to the negative impact of slut shaming.

Case 1; *"Constant humiliation and judgment faced from others due to slut shaming deeply affected my mental well-being. It created a sense of hopelessness and worthlessness, pushing me to the brink of self-harm and suicidal thoughts. So, I tried to commit suicide by overdosing on medication, but my condition is not severe enough to be life-threatening"*

- Sub Theme 03: social

Slut-shaming significantly impacts the social aspects of young women, perpetuating harmful stereotypes and creating a hostile environment. The act of slut-shaming, which involves stigmatizing and shaming individuals for their perceived sexual behaviour or appearance, undermines women's autonomy and sexual agency. It fosters a culture of judgment, victim-blaming, and double standards, where women are discouraged from embracing their sexuality or expressing themselves freely. Slut-shaming reinforces societal norms that prioritize male control over female sexuality, limiting young women's personal growth and social interactions.

### *Internalized misogyny*

One of the participants says that due to internalized misogyny in her society which stigmatize and judge her based on her choices or behaviour. And also include labelling her as "promiscuous" or "immoral," perpetuating harmful double standards and limiting sexual autonomy.

Case 2; *I've been called promiscuous and immoral just because I've chosen to explore my sexuality freely and also due to my family history"*

### *Un able to socialise*

All the participants says that they faced difficulties in connecting with others and participating in social activities because of the stigma and judgment directed at them.

Case 5; *"The stigma and judgment directed at me due to slut-shaming have made it really hard to form genuine connections and engage in social activities."*

### *Social isolation*

All the participants says that they faced experience of being socially excluded, isolated, or marginalized as a result of facing slut shaming.

Case 4; *“I have experienced social exclusion as a result of slut-shaming, primarily due to becoming pregnant with a child conceived from a relationship with my uncle on my mother's side.”*

#### *Social stigma*

All the participants encountered feelings of shame, guilt, self-doubt, etc... which leads to social stigma result to social isolation, as they withdraw from social interactions to avoid further stigmatization and judgment.

Case 1; *“It's been incredibly difficult to navigate the social consequences of stigma. The fear of further judgment has caused me to retreat from social interactions.”*

Case 5; *“The stigma and judgment directed at me due to slut-shaming have made it really hard to form genuine connections and engage in social activities.”*

Research question no:4

- iv. What are the coping strategy adopted by you g women to address the difficulties they faced due to slut shaming?

#### Theme 1: Coping strategies

The researcher aims to understand what were the coping strategies adopted by young women in order to deal with the challenges resulting from being slut shamed Additionally, based on the first theme two sub themes were generated:

- Sub Theme 01: Strategy of seeking support.

Some of the participants by the help of their closed one build support system for the purpose to nurture and empower environment of them. It encompasses, safe spaces where they can share their stories without judgment, online platforms to provide support to the public about slut shaming through their own experiences, peer and family support for mutual understanding, collaborations with mental health professionals to address the psychological impact etc... The main aim of building support system is to provide emotional support,

validation, guidance, and a platform for individuals to reclaim their narratives and heal from the effects of slut shaming.

*Peer Support:*

Four of the participants says that they began to cope up with the negative impact of slut shaming by the help or support of their peers.

Case 1; *“I am incredibly grateful to have a best friend who has been my rock through all the highs and lows, even extending her support to cover my financial needs for my studies. Her unwavering presence and assistance have been invaluable to me during challenging times.”*

Case 3; *“I am fortunate to have a strong network of friends who have provided me with unwavering support during my difficult times of enduring slut-shaming. They have stood by my side, offering me comfort and encouragement when I needed it the most. Their presence has been a source of strength and reassurance throughout my journey.”*

Professional help

One of the participants seek help from a registered psychologist to cope up with the negative impact of slut shaming.

Case 1; *“I seek help from a registered psychologist in Thiruvananthapuram provide the guidance and tools necessary to heal from the emotional wounds to help me navigate and cope with the negative impact of slut shaming”*

Sub Theme 02: Self-empowering strategies

Some of the participants says that they embrace self-empowering strategies so that they can navigate the challenges of slut shaming with resilience, confidence, and a commitment to self-empowerment and personal growth.

Case 1; *“Once I relocated to Thiruvananthapuram for my higher studies, I began embracing self-empowering strategies in collaboration with my friend. These strategies included self-reflection and cultivating awareness, practicing positive self-talk and affirmations, establishing healthy boundaries, engaging in activities like yoga, and more.”*

Case 3; *“I took the initiative to enrol in yoga training and meditation classes. Additionally, I explored my artistic side by engaging in activities like oil painting and classical dancing, allowing me to further nurture my self-empowerment journey.”*

*Self-Acceptance:*

Some of the participants said that they begin to give consideration only to their authentic self, acknowledging and appreciating both strengths and weaknesses, without judgment

Case 2; *“I began embracing self-acceptance, which involved acknowledging and honouring my authentic self, my desires, and my sexual orientation. I made a conscious decision to disregard the societal noise and opinions that were not beneficial to my well-being, allowing me to chart my own path forward.”*

- *Setting Goals:*

Some of the participants says that they started to identify specific and meaningful objectives that they aspire to achieve within a defined timeframe.

Case 1; *“I have a strong and determined aspiration to succeed in the civil service examination and complete my post-graduation in public service. I started leave my limiting belief and I have embraced self-belief and dedicated myself to working tirelessly towards achieving this dream, irrespective of the slut-shaming experiences I have faced along the way.”*

- *Overcoming Limiting Beliefs*

Some of the participants says that they began to overcoming limiting beliefs involves challenging and transcending the negative thought patterns, beliefs, and assumptions that hinder personal growth, success, and fulfilment.

Case 1; *“I have a strong and determined aspiration to succeed in the civil service examination and complete my post-graduation in public service. I started leave my limiting belief and I have embraced self-belief and dedicated myself to working tirelessly towards achieving this dream, irrespective of the slut-shaming experiences I have faced along the way.”*

## **CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

## FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

### 6.1. Introduction

The final chapter deals with outputs that the research revealed. It can be used as indicators that need to be studied in planning an intervention for future. The purpose of discussion is to interpret and describe the significance of findings that was already known as research problem. Researcher here also tried to explain on new understanding and insights that emerged as a result of this study respective to areas that need to be focused with interventions.

### 6.2. Findings

Research question no:1

- i. What are the basis of slut shaming of young women?

Based on the researcher's exploration various factors that contribute to slut-shaming of young women are:

**Clothing choices:** The findings indicate that participants experienced slut-shaming due to their clothing choices. This suggests that societal norms and judgments are imposed upon individuals based on their attire. Participants reported facing derogatory comments, insults, and harassment simply because of what they chose to wear, highlighting the need for a more accepting and non-judgmental society that respects personal expression through clothing. These findings underscore the importance of promoting individual autonomy and challenging the practice of slut-shaming based on clothing choices.

**Expression of sexual orientation:** The findings suggest that individuals who disclose their sexual orientation may face slut-shaming from others. This indicates that society's judgment and stigmatization extend beyond clothing choices and can be directed towards individuals based on their sexual orientation. The participant's experience of slut-shaming highlights the need for increased acceptance and support for diverse sexual orientations, fostering a more

inclusive and tolerant society that refrains from shaming individuals based on their disclosed sexual orientation.

**Body appearance:** The findings indicate that participants who have a thicker body type experienced slut-shaming from others. Their bodies were objectified and judged based on societal beauty standards. These findings highlight the need for body positivity and the rejection of body-based judgments, emphasizing the importance of embracing diverse body types and challenging the objectification and shaming of individuals based on their appearance.

**Expressing desires:** The findings reveal that participants faced slut-shaming when they expressed their desires in various aspects of their lives, such as selecting a job or choosing their clothing. This suggests that societal norms and expectations can lead to judgments and stigmatization when individuals assert their own preferences and aspirations. Participants reported being shamed for pursuing careers or wearing dresses that are deemed "inappropriate" or deviating from traditional gender roles. These findings highlight the need to create a more inclusive society that respects and supports individuals' desires and choices without subjecting them to slut-shaming or unwarranted criticism.

**Having male friends:** The findings suggest that participants experienced slut-shaming based on their friendships with males. They reported being judged and shamed on the assumption that having male friends implies a sexual or romantic involvement. This indicates that societal stereotypes and assumptions about cross-gender friendships contribute to the stigmatization of women. The participants' experiences highlight the need for a more inclusive and non-judgmental perspective on friendships, challenging the notion that the presence of male friends automatically implies sexual or romantic involvement and combating the harmful practice of slut-shaming based on such assumptions.

**Way of talking:** The findings indicate that participants faced judgment and scrutiny based on their way of talking. They reported that their society often places expectations on how women should speak and behave. This suggests that there are societal norms and pressures that dictate how women are expected to communicate, imposing limitations on their freedom of expression. The participants' experiences highlight the need to challenge gendered expectations and allow individuals, regardless of gender, to express themselves authentically without fear of judgment or slut-shaming based on their way of talking. Embracing diverse



communication styles is crucial for fostering inclusivity and promoting the empowerment of all individuals.

**Past life:** The concept of "past life" in the context of slut-shaming refers to the participant's previous experiences or actions that become the basis for judgment and stigmatization. It can be a reason for slut shaming.

**Victim of sexual abuse:** Slut shaming can also face by those who was a victim of sexual abuse. These findings underscore the urgent need for a more compassionate and supportive society that recognizes the impact of sexual abuse and refrains from victim-blaming or subjecting survivors to slut-shaming. It is essential to prioritize empathy, understanding, and providing necessary support to survivors rather than perpetuating further harm through stigmatizing attitudes.

**Usage of makeup products:** The findings indicate that participants faced slut-shaming based on their usage of makeup products. They reported being judged, criticized, or shamed for their decision to wear makeup. This suggests that societal norms and expectations surrounding beauty and appearance contribute to the stigmatization of individuals who choose to use makeup. The participants' experiences highlight the need for a more inclusive and accepting society that respects personal choices in self-expression, including the use of makeup products. It is important to challenge the practice of slut-shaming based on someone's decision to wear makeup and promote a culture that celebrates diverse forms of self-presentation without subjecting individuals to unnecessary criticism or judgment.

**Family history:** Slut shaming can also face by those who have any family history of problems. The findings indicate that one participant faced slut-shaming due to her family's past, specifically the circumstance where her mother had run away with her boyfriend. The participant shared her experience of being subjected to judgment and stigmatization based on her family history. This suggests that society can unfairly assign blame and shame individuals based on their family's actions or choices. These findings highlight the need for a more compassionate and understanding approach, recognizing that individuals should not be held responsible for the actions of their family members. It is essential to challenge the practice of slut-shaming based on family history and promote empathy and acceptance towards individuals irrespective of their familial background.

Research question no:2

ii. Which are the sources of experiences of slut shaming for young women?

Based on the researcher's exploration of various sources of slut shaming experienced by young women, the findings indicate a multi-faceted nature of slut shaming, with different sources contributing to the negative experiences faced by these women. Here are the key findings:

**Schooling Years:** None of the five cases encountered instances of slut shaming during their schooling years. This suggests that slut shaming may not be prevalent within educational settings or that the sample size for this study was limited.

**Spouse or Fiancé:** Severe forms of slut shaming can be found from the side of Spouse or Fiancé. This finding highlights the importance of intimate relationships and the vulnerability of women to slut shaming within these contexts. It suggests that partners can perpetuate harmful stigmatization, which can have a significant impact on the well-being of the affected individuals.

**Neighbours:** The contribution of neighbours to slut shaming experiences was reported to be high. This finding suggests that slut shaming can extend beyond immediate social circles and infiltrate the community environment. The negative judgment and condemnation from neighbours can further exacerbate the emotional distress faced by the young women.

**Family Members and Relatives:** Slut shaming from family members and relatives resulted in these women being alienated from their family environments. This finding highlights the detrimental effects of slut shaming within the family unit, where individuals should ideally find support and acceptance. The lack of understanding and acceptance from family members can lead to strained relationships and feelings of isolation.

**Peers:** While some peers provided encouragement and support to help them cope with slut shaming, other participants expressed facing stigmatization even from their own peer groups. This finding suggests that peer dynamics can play a crucial role in either mitigating or perpetuating slut shaming experiences. It underscores the need for

promoting positive peer relationships and fostering a supportive environment among young women.

Research question no: 3

- iii. How did the experience of slut shaming affect physical, psychological and social aspects of young women?

The findings of this study reveal significant negative impacts of slut shaming on various aspects of young women's lives.

**Physical Well-being:** Participants reported experiencing stress, anxiety, and even physical health issues as a result of being subjected to slut shaming. The emotional toll and constant scrutiny can manifest in physical symptoms, highlighting the detrimental effects on their overall well-being.

**Psychological Well-being:** Slut shaming has profound psychological consequences on young women. Participants shared experiences of low self-esteem, self-doubt, and feelings of shame, which can lead to depression, anxiety disorders, and other mental health issues. The constant judgment and derogatory comments take a toll on their sense of self-worth and mental well-being.

**Social Relationships:** The impact of slut shaming extends to social aspects, with participants describing strained relationships and social exclusion. The stigma attached to their perceived sexual behaviour or choices led to isolation and a lack of support from peers, friends, and even family members. This highlights the detrimental effect on their social connections and overall sense of belonging.

These findings emphasize the urgent need for change and a more supportive, understanding, and inclusive society. Addressing slut shaming requires challenging harmful stereotypes, promoting empathy and respect, and creating safe spaces where young women can express themselves without fear of judgment or stigmatization. It is crucial to prioritize the well-being and empowerment of young women by fostering a culture that promotes acceptance, body positivity, and freedom of sexual expression.

Research question no: 4

- iv. What are the coping strategies adopted by young women to address the difficulties they faced due to slut shaming?

Research findings on coping strategies adopted by young women to deal with challenges resulting from slut-shaming suggest that they employ various approaches. Seeking social support from friends, family, or support groups helps validate their experiences and emotions. Developing self-confidence and reclaiming agency through activities like self-care, hobbies, or personal growth empower them.

### 6.3. Suggestions

Here are some suggestions for addressing and combating the problems faced by young women due to slut shaming which was formulated through this study.

#### Education and Awareness:

Promote comprehensive sex education that emphasizes consent, healthy relationships, and mutual respect. This can help challenge harmful stereotypes and reduce stigma surrounding female sexuality. Raise awareness about the consequences of slut shaming through campaigns, workshops, and discussions in schools and communities. Encourage empathy, understanding, and respect for individual choices.

#### Curriculum Integration:

Incorporate discussions about slut shaming, consent, and gender equality into school curricula. This can help instill the values at a young age and encourage critical thinking about societal norms.

#### Empowerment and Self-esteem:

Encourage young women to develop a strong sense of self-worth and body positivity. Foster environments that promote self-acceptance, diversity, and inclusivity. Provide mentorship programs, support groups, and safe spaces where young women can express themselves, share experiences, and build confidence.

#### Engage Men and Boys:

Engage men and boys in discussions about gender equality and address the issue of slut shaming. The goal is not to blame or shame men and boys, but to invite them into the

conversation as allies and advocates for change. Encourage them to question and change harmful ideas about masculinity that perpetuate the problem. Foster positive and respectful attitudes towards women.

Here are some strategies to engage men and boys in these conversations:

**Education and Awareness Workshops:** Organize workshops and seminars that focus on topics like consent, respectful relationships, and challenging harmful stereotypes. These workshops can help men and boys understand the impact of their actions and words on women and other marginalized groups.

**Peer-to-Peer Programs:** Establish peer-led initiatives where young men and boys can discuss and address issues related to slut shaming and gender equality among themselves. Peer influence can be powerful in shaping attitudes and behaviours.

**Media Literacy:** Promote media literacy skills among men and boys to help them critically analyse and deconstruct media messages that perpetuate harmful gender norms and contribute to slut shaming.

**Community Campaigns:** Launching of community-wide campaigns that involve men and boys in spreading awareness about slut shaming and promoting gender equality. Encourage them to become advocates for change within their families, peer groups, and communities.

**Open Dialogue:** Create safe spaces for men and boys to openly discuss their thoughts and experiences related to gender equality. Encourage them to share their perspectives and engage in meaningful conversations.

**Supportive Networks:**

Foster supportive networks among young women, both online and offline. Encourage solidarity and create spaces where they can share their experiences, seek advice, and provide emotional support to one another.

- Implications of social work practice:

Social workers play a crucial role in addressing the challenges posed by slut-shaming and its impact on young women. Some implications of social work in this context are mentioned below:

1. **Education and Awareness:** Social workers can design and implement educational programs in schools and communities to raise awareness about slut-shaming, its harmful effects, and the importance of respectful behaviour. These programs can empower young women to challenge stereotypes and build resilience.
2. **Counselling and Support:** Social workers can provide individual or group counselling to young women who have experienced slut-shaming. Through therapy, they can help individuals develop coping strategies, improve self-esteem, and navigate the emotional aftermath of such experiences.
3. **Creating Safe Spaces:** Social workers can establish safe spaces where young women can share their stories, connect with peers who have similar experiences, and receive validation and support. These spaces foster a sense of belonging and reduce isolation.
4. **Advocacy and Policy Change:** Social workers can advocate for changes in school policies, workplace environments, and online platforms to prevent and address slut-shaming. They can work with institutions to create anti-bullying policies and promote inclusive, respectful attitudes.
5. **Media Literacy:** Social workers can collaborate with schools and community organizations to provide media literacy workshops. These workshops teach young women how to critically analyse and respond to media portrayals that contribute to slut-shaming.
6. **Empowerment Programs:** Social workers can design empowerment programs that focus on building self-confidence, assertiveness, and communication skills among young women. These skills can help them navigate challenging situations and stand up against slut-shaming.
7. **Engaging Families and Communities:** Social workers can engage families and communities in conversations about gender equality, healthy relationships, and respectful behaviour. By involving multiple stakeholders, social workers can promote cultural shifts that challenge slut-shaming.

#### 6.4. Conclusion

In conclusion, slut shaming poses significant challenges for young women, impacting their self-esteem, mental health, and overall well-being. It perpetuates harmful stereotypes and restricts their sexual autonomy and freedom. To address these problems, it is crucial to

promote education, awareness, and empowerment. By fostering a culture of respect, inclusivity, and empathy, we can challenge societal norms, dismantle slut shaming, and create a supportive environment where young women are celebrated for their individuality, choices, and achievements. It requires a collective effort from individuals, communities, educational institutions, media outlets, and policymakers to combat slut shaming and ensure a more equitable and inclusive society for all. Let us work together to empower young women, promote gender equality, and eradicate the damaging effects of slut shaming.

“If women are expected to do the same work as men,  
we must teach them the same things.” -PLATO

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Tool for data collection

Research tool-Interview guide.

Socio demographic details

1. Name?
2. Age?
3. Sex?
4. Community?
5. Education:
6. Income:
7. Marital status?
8. If married, how many children?
9. Family type?
  - What are the basis of slut shaming of young women?
10. What are the observed any specific instances or scenarios where slut shaming occurs towards young women?
  - Which are the sources of slut shaming for young women?

Family/relatives

11. How do family members typically respond to instances of slut shaming within their social circles or communities?
12. Can you explain how have your family members addressed the issue of slut shaming?  
Have they ever held individuals responsible for the slut shaming they experienced?
13. To whom did you close to share all these things?
14. How has slut shaming impacted your family dynamics or relationships?

Co-workers

15. Can you describe any experiences or observations you have had regarding slut shaming in the workplace?
16. How do concerns about slut shaming in the workplace impact your feelings of safety and well-being?
17. Can you share your thoughts or experiences regarding pursuing legal action in response to incidents of slut shaming?
18. Could you describe your experience of reporting instances of slut shaming to the relevant authorities and how they responded?
19. Can you share any personal experiences or reflections on how slut shaming may have influenced your decision to leave a job?

#### Peer groups

20. Can you describe any experiences or observations you have had regarding slut shaming from your peers?
21. Can you describe your feel about it?
22. To what extent, if any, did your peer group play a role in motivating you to address or combat slut-shaming, and how did their influence impact your development and functioning?
23. In what ways, if any, did your peer group shows empathy or understanding towards you in the context of addressing slut-shaming?
24. How did you overcome this?

#### Spouse

25. What was the reaction of your spouse towards slut shaming?
26. How has slut shaming impacted your relationship with spouse?

#### Neighbours

27. Can you explain judgment or negative attitudes from your neighbours as a result of slut-shaming? How did you overcome this?
  - How did the experience of slut shaming affect physical, psychological and social aspects of young women?

#### Psychological

28. How does slut shaming affect your mental health?
29. How do you cope up with those issues?
30. When you experience emotional distress or feelings of discouragement due to slut-shaming, who or what provides you with support or encouragement to help you overcome those challenging moments?
31. Have you ever experienced any thoughts or feelings related to self-harm or suicide as a result of slut-shaming or similar negative experiences? If so, can you explain?

#### Social

32. Can you say your opinion that slut-shaming plays a role in individuals choosing to isolate themselves from society?
33. Can you explain judgment or negative attitudes from your neighbours as a result of slut-shaming? How did you overcome this?
34. Have you encountered any obstacles or challenges in fulfilling your roles and responsibilities within your family as a result of slut-shaming or the stigma associated with it? If so, can you explain?

#### Physical

35. How did slut shaming affect your physical health?
36. What is your opinion on “slut shaming is caused due to the appearance of the victimised person”?
  - What are the coping strategies adopted by young women to address the difficulties they faced due to slut shaming?
37. What are your personal strategies do you adopt to cope with the effects of slut shaming?
38. What resources and support networks are available for you when you experience slut shaming?