



BEYOND BOUNDARIES THROUGH APPLIED QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

“The Role, Experience, and Effectiveness of Social Care Education Placements: A Case Study in a Small Island State”

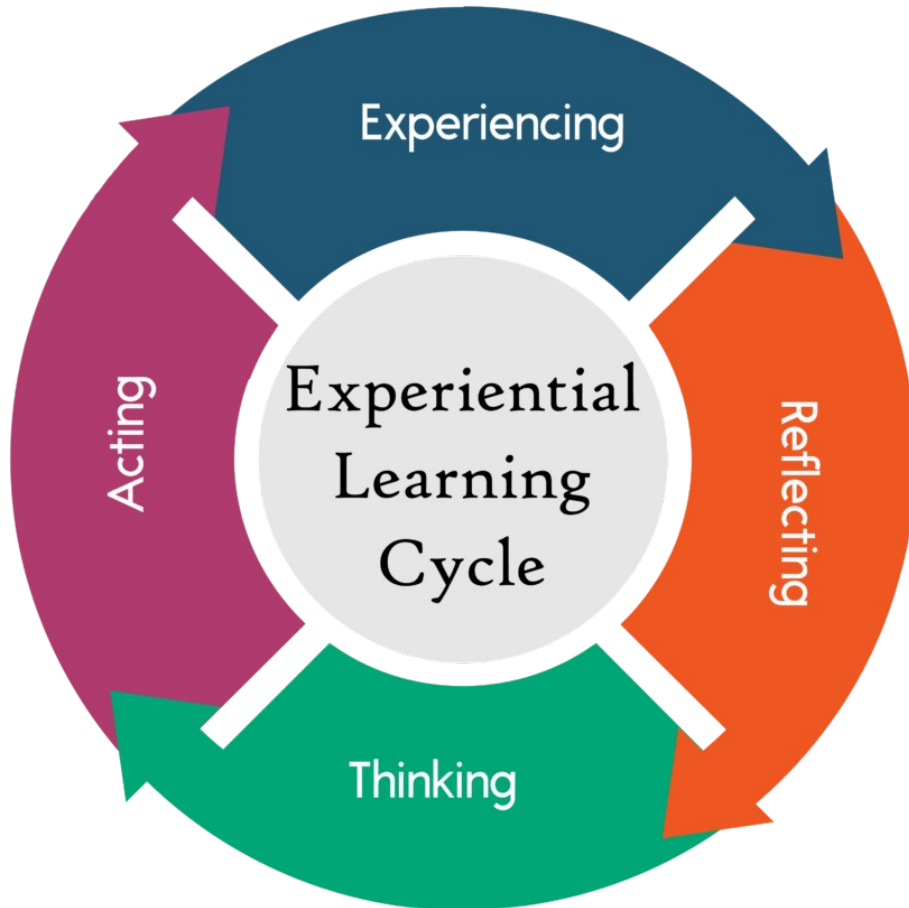
By: Anna Fiorentino

Background

- Nurse and lecturer at MCAST.
- Motivated to analyze how placements can:
 - Remain developmental for students.
 - Meet the range of skills demanded by employers.
 - Address challenges stemming from national developments over time.
- This is a unique approach rather than "pouring old wine in a new bottle."



Overall Aim



- Addressing the need for adaptable teaching strategies in social care education.
- Equipping instructors with the skills to meet contemporary industry demands.
- Understanding the experiences of:
 - Students in placements.
 - Mentors and workplace supervisors.
 - Focusing on professional development and readiness for the healthcare industry.

Main expected outcomes

- Across all industries, graduates with a variety of skills are highly sought for.
- Given the size and scarce resources of the country, the government of Malta has implemented programs and frameworks to handle developments in healthcare.

Malta's Employment Policy

Highlights that to provide high-quality services, employees must possess the necessary training.



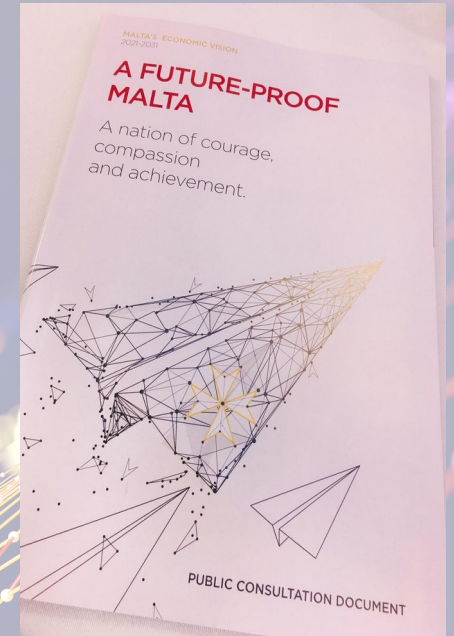
Malta's Ministry for Social policy - 2035

Investigates working together to develop standardized caregiver training programs between the ministry and educational institutions.



The Malta Economic Plan (2021 – 2031)

- Malta's unique economic challenges.
- Employment development and economic contributions from healthcare and care jobs.



Employment and Training Corporation

- Addresses labor shortages by promoting careers in the care industry.



- Supports government initiatives by implementing new skills and changes.
- Aims to better prepare students for careers in the care industry.

A national contribution

Education and employment:

- Supports government initiatives.
- Aims to better prepare students for future careers.

Ethical Framework:

- Focuses on improving quality over quantity in service delivery.

Methodology

Methodology: Grounded theory

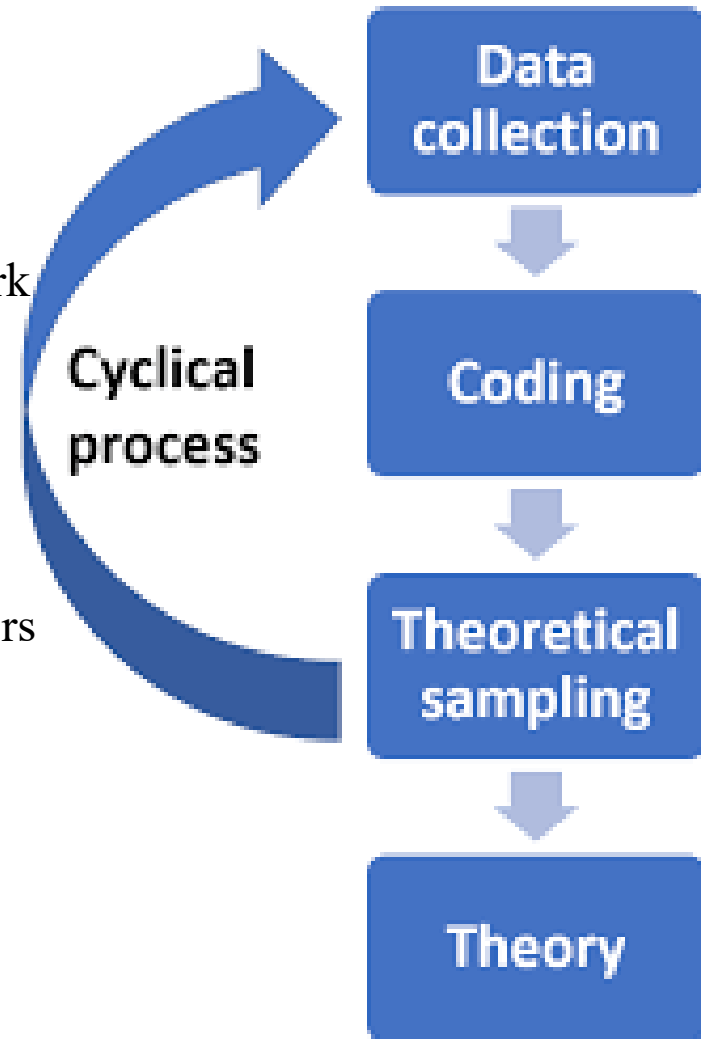
- Focus on data gathering and analysis to create a theoretical framework

Data Collection Methods:

- Semi-structured interviews
- Individual observations (students, lecturers, stakeholders, service users and health professionals)

Additional Method: Focus groups

- Used to address power disparity issues



Methodology

- Power Imbalance Challenge: Researcher is a lecturer; subjects are students.
- Data Collection Methods: Semi-structured interviews with program mentors.
- Observations: Document real-world behaviors in authentic situations.

Data analysis

- **Data Analysis Software:** MAXQDA 2023
- **Importance in Grounded Theory (GT):**
 - Frequent comparison and review of data (Corbin & Strauss, 2015)
- **Key Features:**
 - Visual tools identifying patterns and linkages. Integrated memo writing within the coding (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013).

The screenshot displays the MAXQDA 2023 interface. On the left, a codebook lists four codes with their associated colors and linkages:

- ..Students used to fill staffing gap (blue)
- ..Mentorship (+) (+) (+) (+) (+) (+) (+) (red)
- ..Mentor compensation (+) (+) (+) (+) (+) (red)
- ..Lack of financial incentive (+) (+) (+) (green)

The central text area shows a dialogue excerpt:

32 C: That makes great sense. One because as I was telling you before these students are not seeing the proper care skills because some of the staff are not properly skilled in particular foreign staff. Second these students are being treated sometimes as part of the staff compliment because of the shortage of staff there would be. Therefore having a mentor would automatically mean that each student would have someone who is teaching and assessing them the proper way. Also when you give this monetary incentive the mentor would be more compliant to do so. Infact I met this particular guy who told me that he prefers of course to mentor the students of university because he is paid.

33 I: What about the issue of screening our students before they actually start the course?

On the right, a memo titled "Memo..." contains the following text:

Other courses like nursing have mentors who are paid extra and are allocated with the students to follow them whilst carrying out activities with service users on their placements. Could it be that nursing is seen as a more professional job within the health care industry?

Data analysis

- **Arguments:**

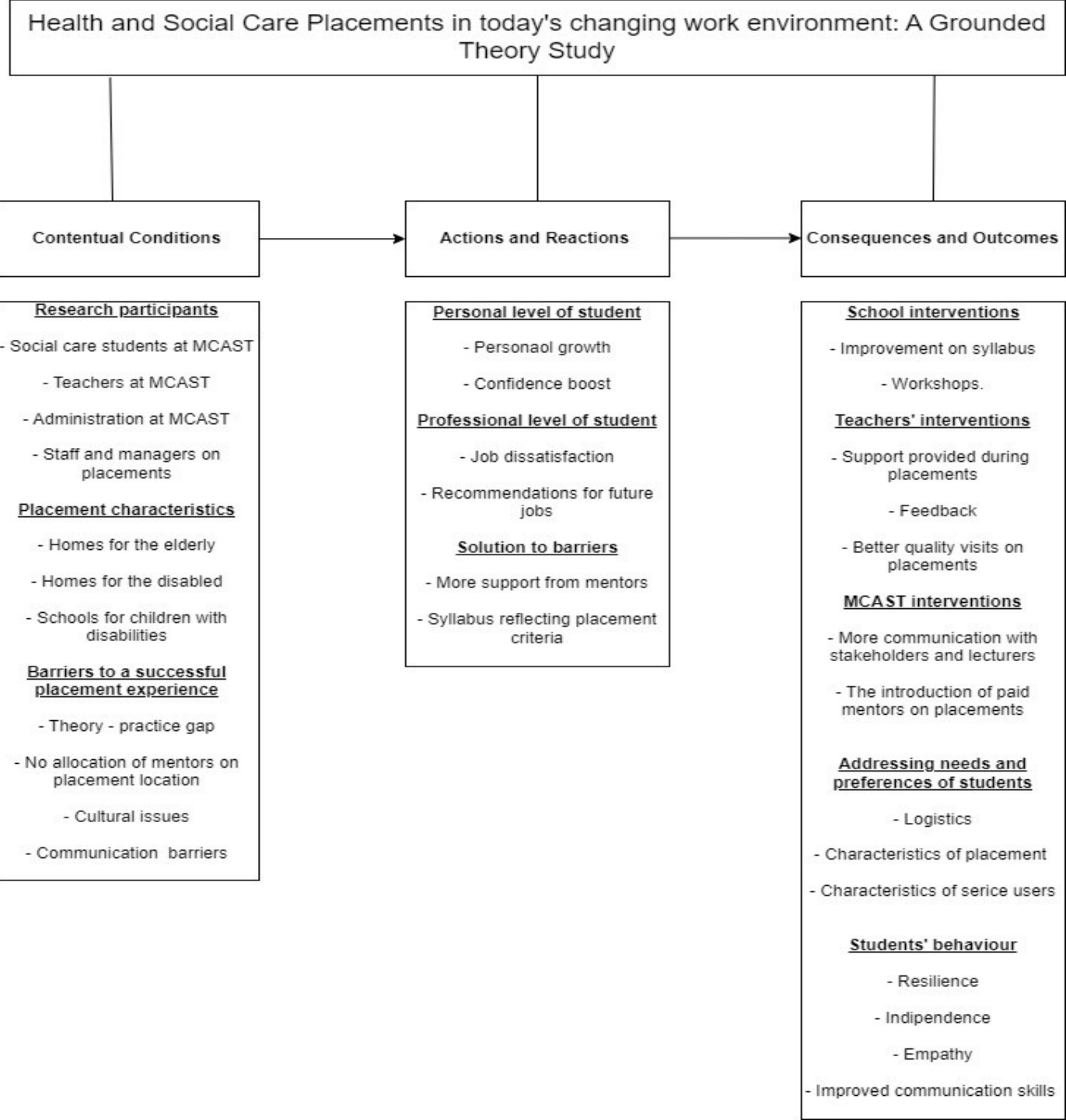
- Gathered and illustrated in the Strauss and Corbin matrix.

- **Strauss and Corbin's 2015 Paradigm:**

- **Contextual Conditions:** Note occurrences and happenings

- **Actions and Reactions:** Examine how participants give meaning to occurrences

- **Consequences and Outcomes:** Identify the repercussions



Data analysis

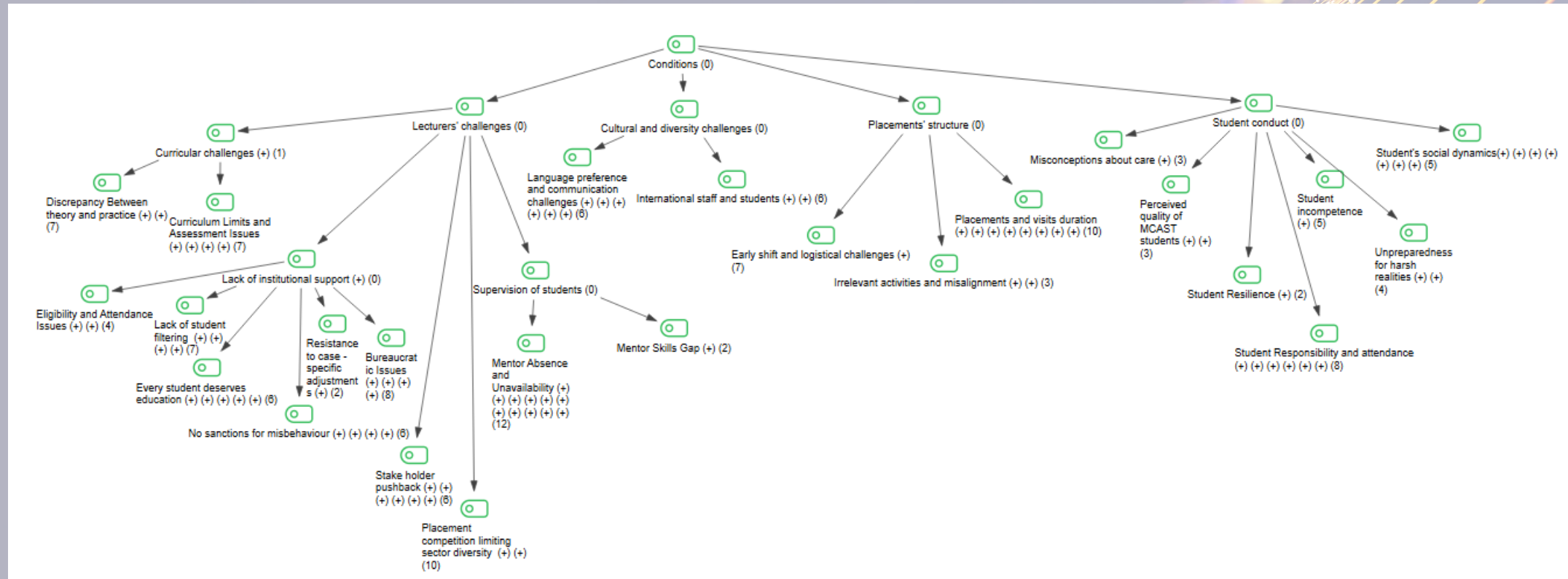
- **Use of MAXQDA with Strauss and Corbin Paradigm:**

- Visual tools applied as more data was gathered.

- **Benefits:**

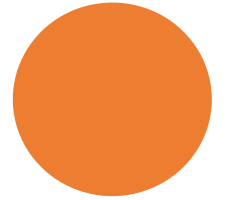
- Identifies trends and connections in the data

- Maintains focus on the larger picture through interactive link between visualizations and data in MAXQDA



Results

- **Emerging Results (Early Stage of Third Year):**
- More personalized learning environments.
- Pedagogy focused on contemporary skill development.
- Improved communication between students and program mentors.
- Closer relationships between stakeholders and educational institutions.
- Addressing cultural differences between students, staff, and service users.
- Challenges: limited supervision, time constraints, emotional demands on students.
- Teaching ethical and appropriate behavior in interactions.
- Maintaining consistent reference points across placements.



Impact of study

- **Curriculum Changes:** Inclusion of cross-cultural training and individualized learning pathways.
- **Support Structures:** Personalized feedback sessions.
- **Alignment with Industry Needs:** Matching educational programs with care requirements of organizations.
- **Goal:** Promote innovation by combining fresh viewpoints with real-world expertise for unique results.
- **Contextual Challenges:** Study conducted in Malta's small island state setting and limited research from other small island states.

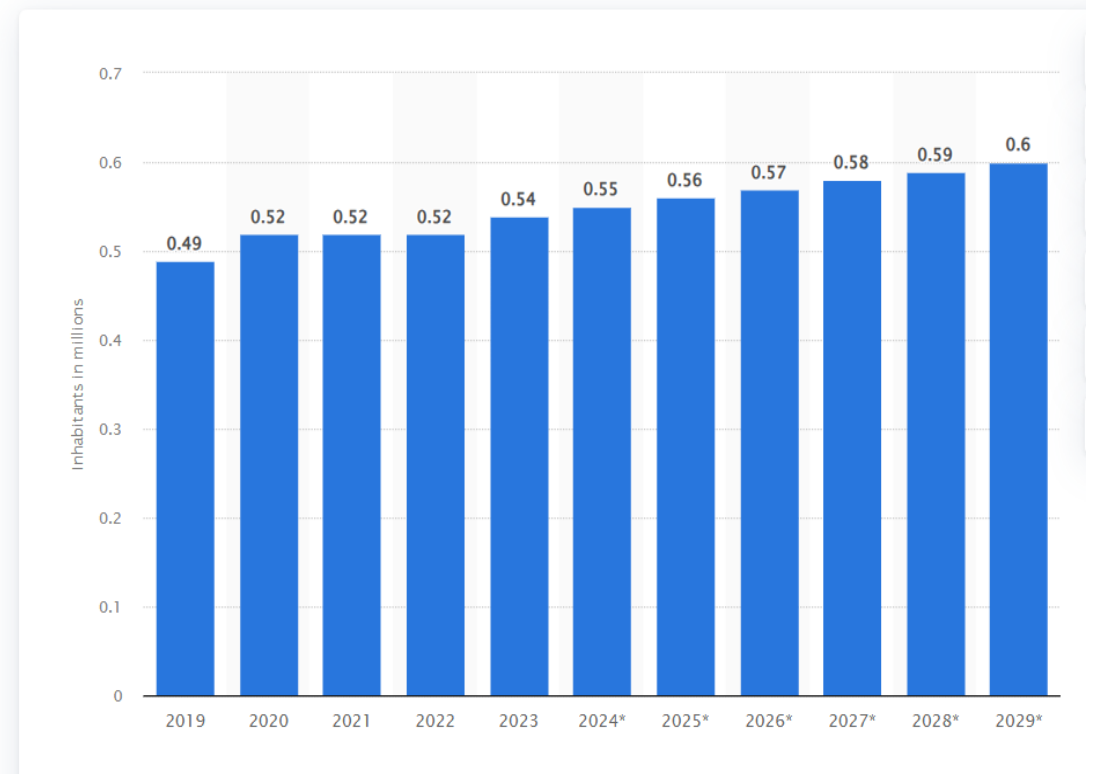
Impact of study

- **Challenges in Malta's health and social care**
 - Limited Placement Opportunities
 - Population Growth
 - Cultural Factors
 - Retention of Skilled Workers

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Malta: Total population from 2019 to 2029

(in million inhabitants)



Study's pragmatic goals

Best teaching techniques: Adapt the lesson to the student, not the student to the lesson.



Retention of students: nurture students to their full potential.



Discussion between multiple stakeholders: Bridge divides, don't just occupy common ground.



Retention of staff : A workplace where health care workers don't just stay but thrive.

Best care for service users: Empower dignity, not just deliver services.





**TIME FOR
CHANGE**