

**ENGAGING INNOVATIVE KNOWLEDGE THROUGH APPLIED
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

MCAST 2nd ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS



**Gender Awareness and Gender
Equality in Early Years
Education- Lecturers'
Perspective**



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Aim

- To address
 - if lecturers teaching early years courses within MCAST are gender aware
 - if this awareness impacts their pedagogical delivery

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Literature

- Gender is a social construct which is learned and assimilated through interactions with others (Butler, 1990; De Beauvoir, 1956; West & Zimmerman, 1987)
- The child learns their culture's definition of maleness and femaleness, which does not only include sex-lined connotations (such as biological features) but everything that society links to gender dichotomy
 - This information is organized through the child's developing gender schema
 - Leading them to learn which characteristics are assigned to them as a result of their sex (Bem, 1983)

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Literature

- Childcare settings are the first institutions where children experience society's expectations of gender outside their homes (Wingrave, 2018)
- Early years practitioners have an essential role in how children form gender schemas and stereotypes; hence the practitioners' beliefs and attitudes about gender and gender roles play a significant part in what children learn (Aina & Cameron, 2011; Wingrave, 2018)
- Self-reflection enables early years practitioners to grow as professionals and address their own biases, learning beliefs and practices whilst readdressing their thinking and behaviour to create an environment which promotes gender inclusivity.

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Methodology

- Participants: lecturers who teach early years students within MCAST, irrespective of the subject or area that they teach
- Instrumentation
 - Open-ended questionnaire
 - Online-Semi-structured small group/dyad interview (7 participants)
- Data Collection: Transcribed and coded using MAXQDA
- Results analysed using Thematic Analysis

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Results

• Gender Awareness

- Most participants stated that they either never actively reflected on their gender, and this was the first time they were asked such a question or took their gender for granted and never questioned it.
- The participants who did not perform their gender according to the prescribed gender scripts, especially when they were children, were the ones who thought or were aware of their gender.
- Clear gender segregation since childhood
- Participants recognized the impact that their families and immediate environment had on their gender identity and performativity

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Results cont.

- **Adjectives. What is expected, and what do I ascribe to?**

- Distinction between the adjectives that the participants associated with their gender and the ones they ascribed to
- More traditional adjectives were given for both genders, even though the participants felt that these adjectives do not represent them

- **Education**

- Early years education is changing towards a less stereotypical one
- However, there seems to be a discrepancy between why students choose the specific course/profession vs. their behaviour in class

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Conclusion

- Even though prior to the interviews, most of the participants did not engage in gender-critical or gender-awareness exercises, to a certain extent they were aware of the dominant ideologies regarding gender
- However, further in-depth reflection is needed so as to identify taken-for-granted ideologies and behaviour/s which impact the lecturers' pedagogy
- Further research about the students' gendered notions and gender awareness undertaking early years courses is needed

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THANK YOU

