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Problem Statement

Early years education plays a crucial role in the child's identity formation with regard to learning abilities and social development. Amongst various social cues learnt during this period, children also acquire and learn about their gender.

By engaging in self-reflection, lecturers teaching early years courses within Malta College of Art Science and Technology (MCAST) were given a space to explore their gender awareness, how dominant gender ideologies affect their gender performativity and how these ideologies impact their pedagogical delivery.

General Research Approach

Feminist Poststructuralist Approach

Gender Socially Constructed

How we **do gender** is impacted by dominant discourses

Qualitative Methodology

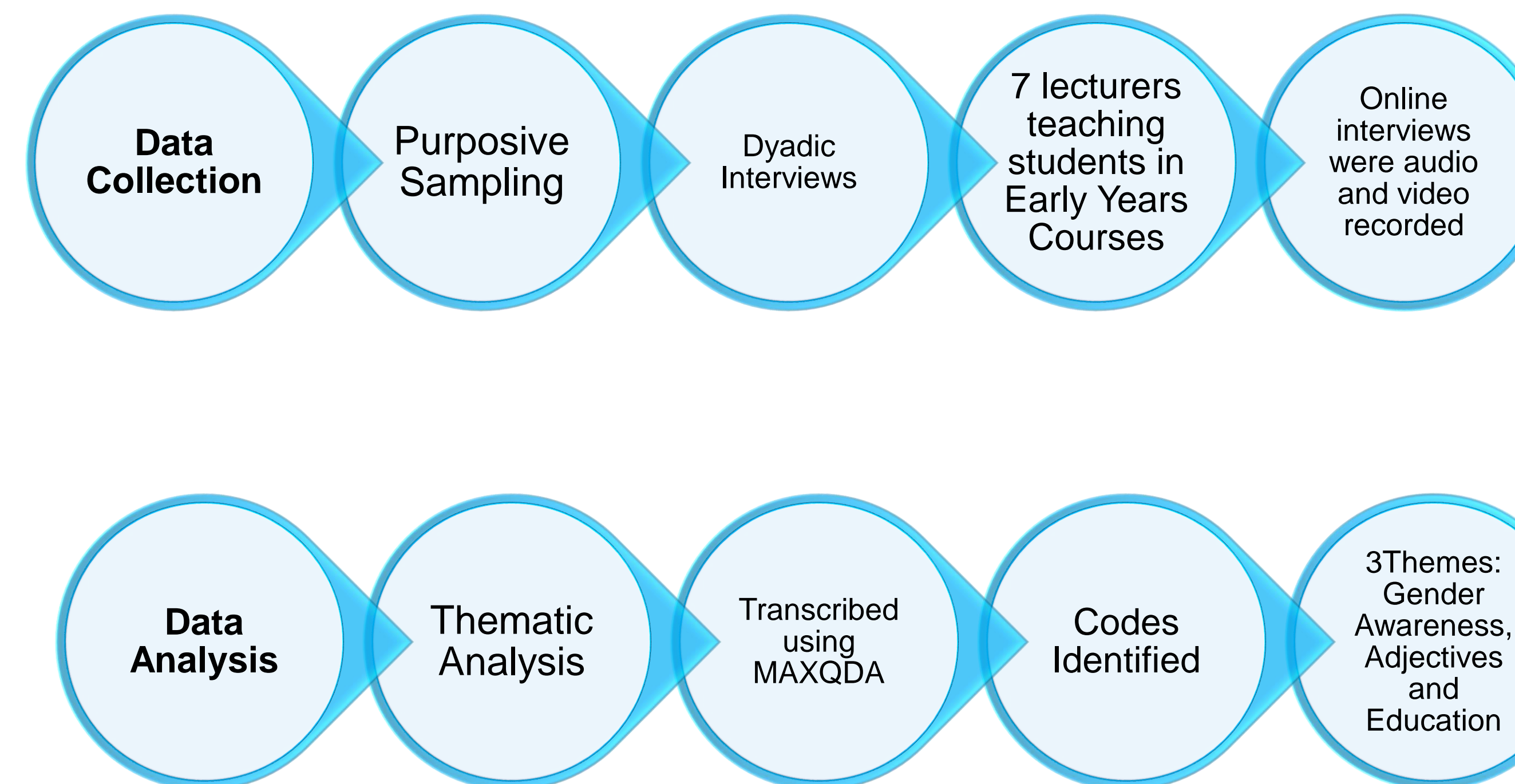
Constructionist: the role of social interactions in doing gender

Interpretative: how the participant does gender (Bryman, 2016)

Research Objective/s

- To explore if lecturers teaching early years courses within MCAST are gender aware
- To inquire about whether this awareness impacts their pedagogical delivery

Research Methodology



Key Figures & Visuals

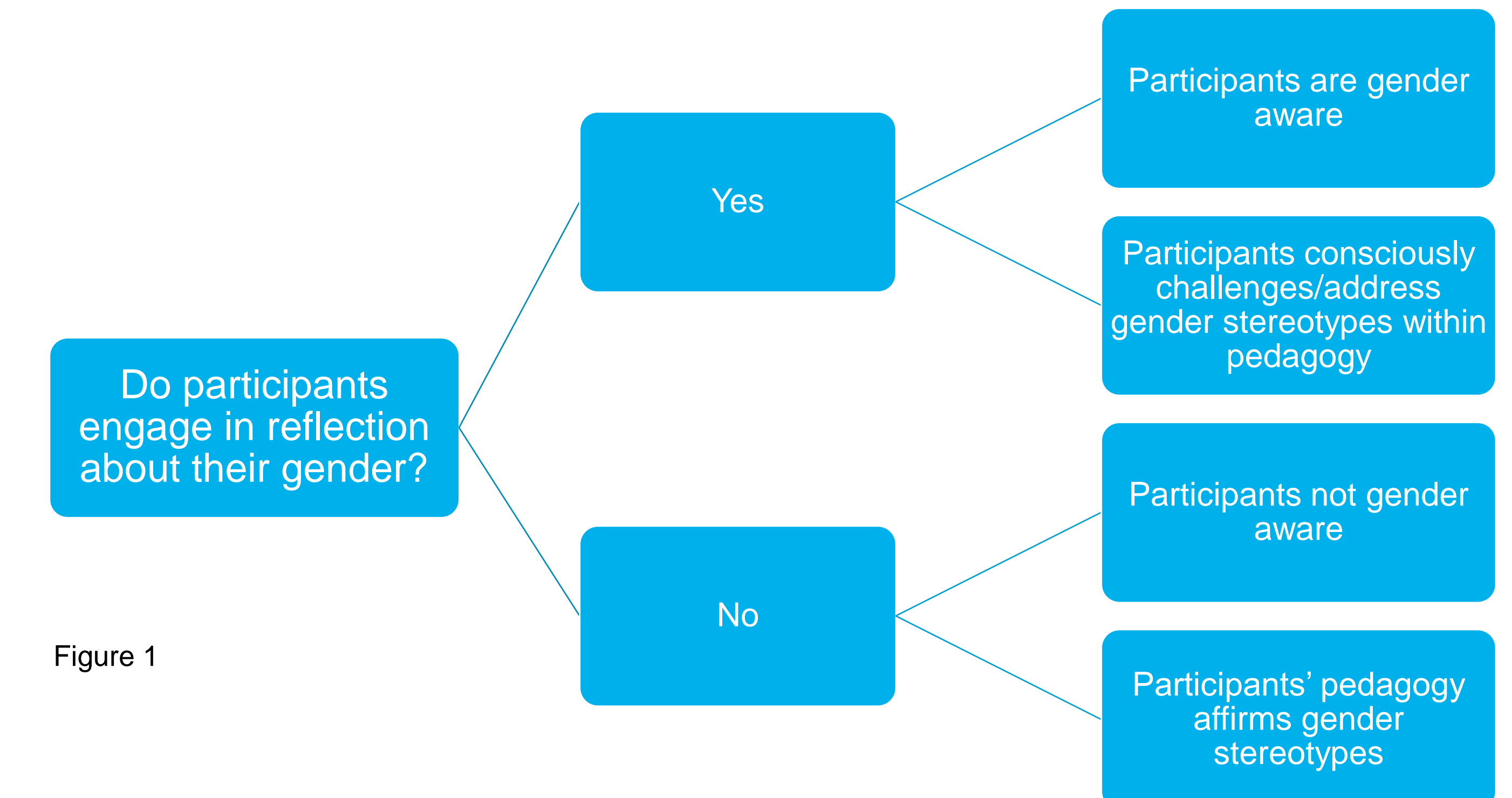


Figure 1

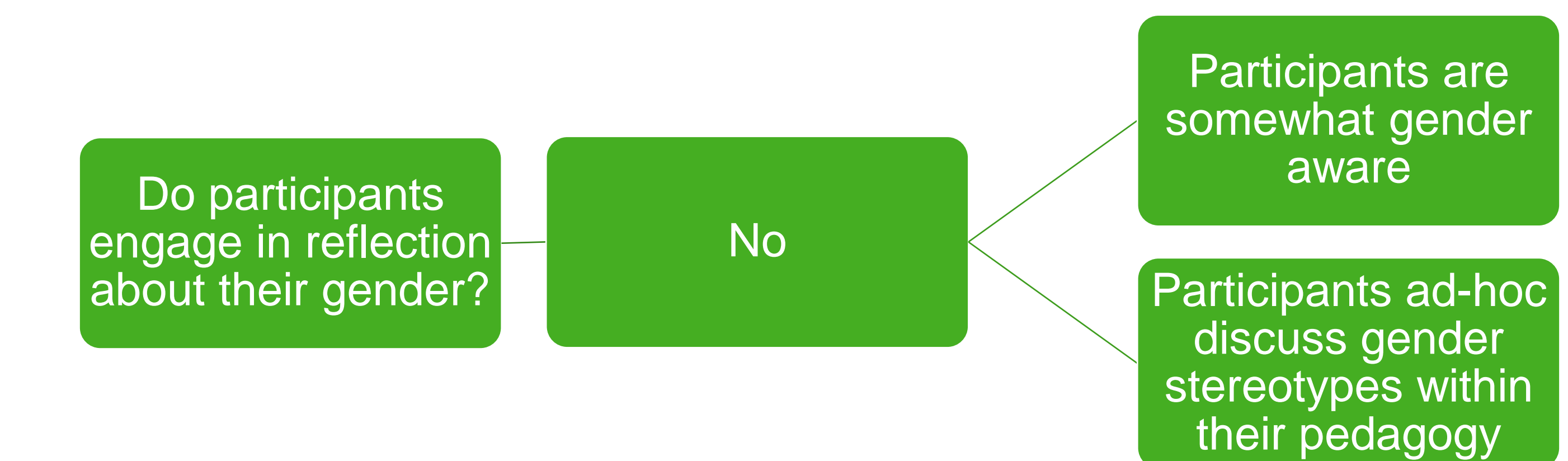


Figure 2

Figure 1- Impact of self-reflection and gender awareness according to Dewar et al. (2013)

Figure 2- Process as undertaken by the participants within this study

Key References

- Bern, S. (1983) 'Gender Schema Theory and Its Implications for Child Development: Raising Gender-Aschematic Children in a Gender-Schematic Society', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 8(4), pp. 598-616 Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1086/494131>.
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- Callahan, S. and Nicholas, L. (2019) 'Dragon wings and butterfly wings: implicit gender binarism in early childhood', *Gender and Education*, 31(6), pp. 705-723 Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2018.1552361>.
- Chapman, R. (2016) 'A case study of gendered play in preschools: how early childhood educators' perceptions of gender influence children's play', *Early Child Development and Care*, 186(8), pp. 1271-1284 Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2015.1089435>.
- Dewar, B.A., Servos, J.E., Bosacki, S.L. and Coplan, R. (2013) 'Early childhood educators' reflections on teaching practices: the role of gender and culture', *Reflective Practice*, 14(3), pp. 381-391 Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2013.767234>.

Research Project Overview

Dewar et al. (2013) argue that **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.**

An open-ended question-style questionnaire was constructed to gather information about Early Years lecturers' hidden gender biases/stereotypes.

The data gathered from these questionnaires was used as a basis for small-group/dyadic interviews conducted with the same sample population.

Dyadic interviews allowed the participants to "co-construct" the research topic since a comment from one participant could draw further or different responses from the other participant (Morgan et al., 2013) or act as a means of further reflection.

The purpose of the interviews was not to highlight an individual's behaviour but to serve as a process of reflection and awareness.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data gathered by focusing on **participants' prior gender awareness, self-reflexivity, gendered expectations and perpetuation of gendered stereotypes.**

Key Findings

- Most of the participants did not engage in gender-critical or gender-awareness exercises and reflections.
- To a certain extent, participants were aware of the dominant gender stereotypes within our culture and addressed them in a non-systemic manner.
- Various gendered stereotypes play a crucial role in determining why students are enrolling in Early Years courses.