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Problem Statement

Malta's small and micro businesses form a significant segment of the national economy, contributing to 55.6% of the country's GDP as well as addressing employment challenges and economic growth. Despite their substantial role, these enterprises often face challenges in the development and integration of essential soft skills among their workforce. Soft skills, encompassing communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and adaptability, are increasingly recognised as crucial for organisational success and individual career advancement. However, there is a paucity of research focusing on the attitudes, perceptions, and barriers towards implementing soft skills training within Malta's small and micro business landscape.

General Research Approach

The research adopts a qualitative research approach – **Grounded Theory**.

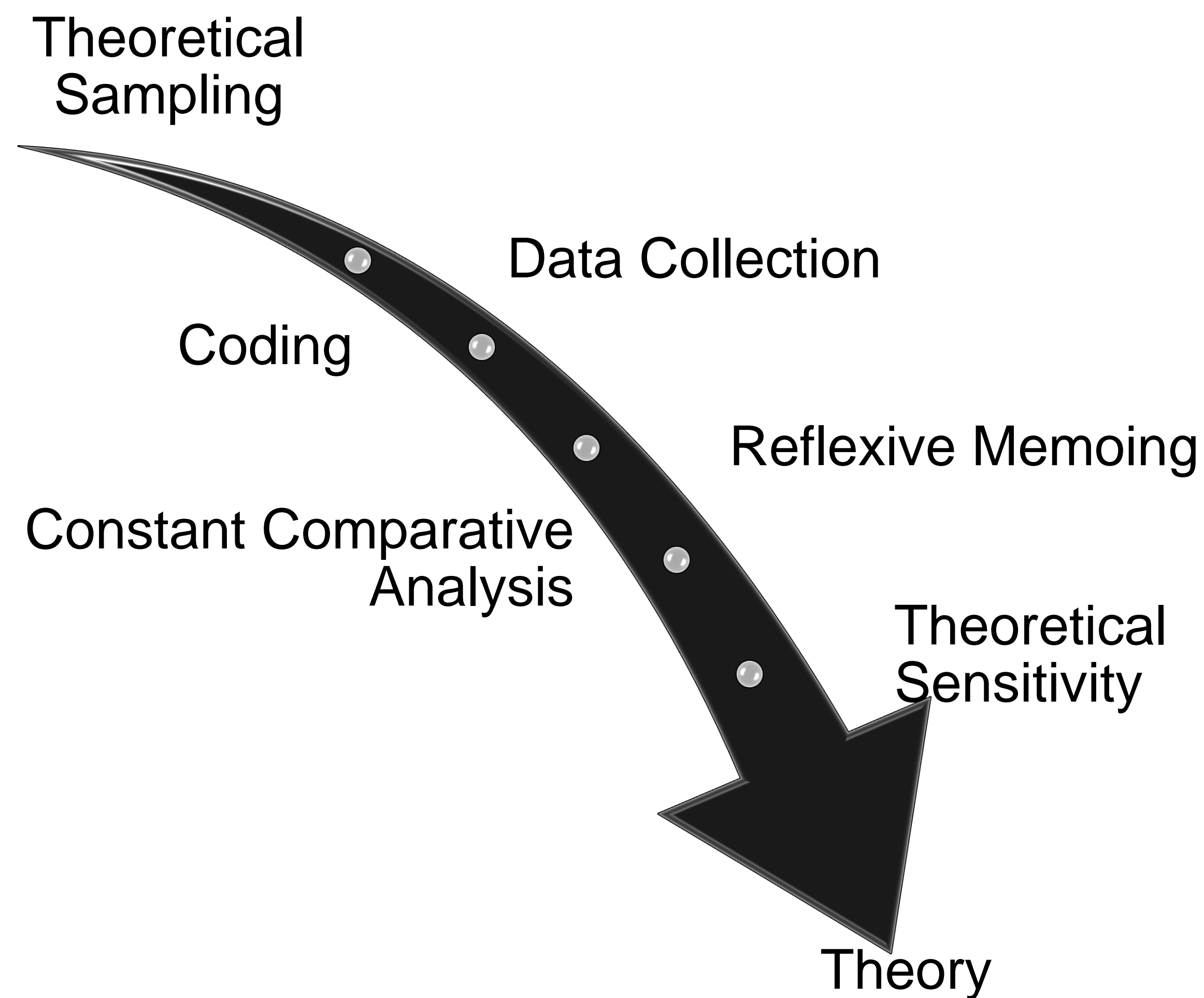
Research Question

What are the attitudes to soft skills training in Malta's small and micro businesses, to facilitate business growth?

Research Objectives

1. To **identify and evaluate contextual factors** forming owner-manager attitudes to soft skills training;
2. To **determine enablers and barriers** to soft skills training in small and micro enterprises;
3. To **establish an initial conceptual framework** for approaches to soft skills training common to owner-managers;
4. To **examine any correlation** between soft skills training adoption, entrepreneurial learning, and business growth.

Research Methodology – Grounded Theory Methodology



Key Findings

- Firms to become **more entrepreneurial**: organisations honed for sustainable business growth; importance of innovation, digital developments and sustainable/eco initiatives;
- **Policy-makers benefit** from data: understand better day-to-day pressures on business owners; their current knowledge limits; enable diverse local market development;
- Current Malta **policies provide few concrete recommendations**; more specific action needed to address skills gaps systematically; diminish reliance on importing 'cheap labour';
- **Ongoing research**; range and number of primary data interviews.

Emergent Concepts from Early Research Findings

