

THE VIEWS OF YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT AN INTERVENTION PROGRAMME DESIGNED TO SUPPORT THEM WITH EXAM RELATED ANXIETY AND STRESS.

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of East London for the degree of Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology.

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Student Declaration

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Declaration

I declare that while registered as a research degree student at UEL, I have not been a registered or enrolled student for another award of this university or of any other academic or professional institution

I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award

I declare that my research required ethical approval from the University Ethics Committee (UREC) and confirmation of approval is embedded within the thesis.

Madeehah Qureshi

Signature:

Date: 15/4/16

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

ASD – Autistic Spectrum Disorder

CBA – Cognitive Behavioural Approaches

CBT – Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

EP – Educational Psychologist

EPS – Educational Psychology Service

Exams – Examinations

TEP – Trainee Educational Psychologist

SEN – Special Educational Needs

SENCo – Special Educational Needs

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ABSTRACT

Both preparing for and sitting exams can be extremely stressful for children and young people. Whilst the research within the area of exam anxiety acknowledges the detrimental impact that it can have on individuals, much of the research has been completed with university students. Limited research has been carried out with children and young people. In addition to this, there is also little research that has been completed in order to understand which interventions are helpful in reducing exam anxiety in young people. The systematic literature review highlighted that much of the research employed quantitative techniques. This means young people's views and experiences of exam anxiety has largely been unexplored. The EPS service in which the TEP currently works is a partially traded service. Some of the schools that had bought a service level agreement requested support for certain pupils that were experiencing exam anxiety. The EPS service therefore delivered an intervention called 'beating exam anxiety together' (further details of this intervention can be found within chapter 1). Seven semi-structured interviews were carried out with GCSE students who took part in the 'beating exam anxiety together' intervention. The purpose of the interviews was to understand more about young people's views on exam anxiety, and also their experiences of the intervention in which they took part. The research highlighted the possible detrimental impact of exam anxiety on young people in terms of their mental health, and also how able they feel to prepare for their exams. The results of the research interestingly showed that young people

experience high levels of pressure from school teachers and also their parents. Furthermore, students reported that they didn't know how to revise. The results revealed that young people feel that the way in which exams are spoken about in schools is largely negative. As a result of this, the researcher suggested that it may be helpful to shift the narrative around the way in which exams are currently spoken about. In addition to this, the results indicate that the intervention was largely helpful in improving young people's well being and their ability to be able to manage exam anxiety.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER:

The aim of the current research was to understand young people's views on exams and stress, and about an intervention program they had recently experienced. Gathering young people's views on exam stress is particularly important as it is something that the researcher found has been under researched. This research is highly relevant to the U.K government's increased focus on the emotional well being of young people. Within this chapter, national and local contexts will be discussed, followed by the prevalence of exam stress and its impact upon young people. Details of the intervention program that participants in this study took part in will be stated; the researcher's position and rationale will then be discussed.

1.2 NATIONAL CONTEXT

Stress regarding exams and assessment is reported to be one of the largest forms of stress that young people attending schools experience, along with bullying and transitions (Seiffge-Krenke, 1993). Anxiety has been defined in the Collins dictionary (1994) as "a state of intense apprehension or worry often accompanied by physical symptoms such as shaking, intense feelings in the gut,

etc, common in mental illness or after a very distressing experience”¹. Spielberger and Vagg (1995) refer to exam anxiety as the extent to which young people find exam situations threatening.

The impact of exam anxiety has been found to be negative in relation to young people’s learning and revision. For example, it has been found that test anxiety is associated with avoidance (Elliot and McGregor 1999, 2001), low self-regulation of learning (Pekrun et al. 2011, 2014), and can negatively impact students’ overall well being (Putwain 2008). Exam anxiety has been linked to hypertension, coronary artery disease, and respiratory distress and lowered immune functioning (Curlette, et al 1992). The impact of exam anxiety on physical health appears to be linked with its impact upon mental health.

In recent years there has been a government shift in the UK towards performance related pay for teachers, which has resulted in an increased focus on exams within schools in the UK (Department of Education, 2014). Furthermore, schools are increasingly being judged and evaluated in terms of performance by exam results produced by students (Department for Education, 2013). This has appeared to place more pressure on exam results in school league tables, and children are now expected to produce better exam results. This in turn is putting young people under high pressure, not only to produce good exam results for their own future but also so that schools can be rated as performing well, for example in OFSTED inspections.

¹ Retrieved from <http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/anxiety>

The Performance for International Students Assessment (PISA, 2012), is a survey that assesses the extent to which 15-year-old students have acquired the skills required to participate within modern society at the end of their compulsory education. The results of this survey showed that exam results in the UK did not increase between 2006 and 2009, however the UK spends more on average than other countries on education. Despite the UK government spending more on education, this is not reflected in exam results obtained, and does not correlate positively to educational outcomes.

It could be speculated that one of the factors explaining the suggested lack of progress in UK exam results may be exam related anxiety experienced by students. It could be hypothesized that anxiety may be hindering progress in exams, despite the government attempting to improve exam results through a focus on the teachers, that is, performance related pay (Department of education, 2014). This may be because some children and young people struggle with this type of assessment. The number of students experiencing test anxiety has increased with society moving towards more testing (Casbarro, 2005). It is felt that students who are anxious about exams are less likely to perform well on standardised achievement exams (Everson, Millsap, & Rodriguez, 1991) and that their overall performance is lower than that of non-test anxious students, despite having the same ability (Hembree, 1988; Seipp, 1991).

Although there are increasing pressures placed on young people to perform well, the government has recognised that mental health and well being is important. This is shown in the recent paper on 'Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools' (Department for Education, 2014) Within this document it states the importance

of developing resilience in children and young people and in order to do this “protective factors” that engender resilience must be understood: *‘Resilience seems to involve several related elements. Firstly, a sense of self-esteem and confidence; secondly belief in one’s own self- efficacy and ability to deal with change and adaptation; and thirdly, a repertoire of social problem solving approaches.’* (Department for Education, 2014, p. 7). In addition the category ‘social, emotional and behavioural difficulties’ has been replaced ‘social, emotional and mental health’ within the Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 – 25 years (Department for Education, Department for Health, 2014). This indicates that the UK government are aware of the importance of focusing on the emotional well-being of young people. As a result of this schools may be more likely to want to help reduce the stress and anxiety for students caused by exams.

It is theorised that mental health, particularly anxiety, is linked to exam performance. For example Eysenck and Calvo, (1992) argue that task irrelevant worry can impact processing by using working memory resources. Task irrelevant worry, according to the authors, refers to spending time worrying about the exam, as opposed to attending to the task at hand (e.g. preparing for the exam). However they argue that exam related anxiety does not always have an impact upon results. This is because students that are anxious about exams can over compensate. An example of how an anxious student can over compensate is spending longer revising, in comparison to peers that are not as anxious about exams.

This essentially means that students who are anxious about exams are likely to spend longer studying in preparation. Therefore, the impact of anxiety on young people, with regards to exams and their performance, has been found to be largely negative. With regards to the negative impact that exam stress has on young people in terms of exam results and emotional well being, there is an increasing need to understand young people's views and experiences of exams. If young people's views about exam anxiety are known, this will allow a greater understanding of how to prevent and reduce exam related stress. It is also important to have an evidence base in terms of which interventions are helpful in reducing exam anxiety. This will help provide invaluable information for EPs, so they are aware of which interventions are effective. This will also be helpful for when EPs are asked to signpost evidence based interventions to other professionals.

1.3 PREVALENCE OF EXAM ANXIETY:

Exam anxiety refers to anxiety and worry related to exams. There has been some research in to the prevalence of exam anxiety, for example: Putwain and Daly (2014) completed a literature review that used 10 UK studies in order to estimate the proportion of students that are highly anxious about exams. From the studies 2- 30% categorised themselves as highly anxious, however they noted that all of these studies had a small sample size. Although this review of the literature did not give a clear indication of how many young people are suffering with exam anxiety (2-30% is a figure that is somewhat ambiguous) there seem to be a potentially large number of young people suffering with exam anxiety. Methia (2004) estimated that in countries such as the U.S. more than one third of

students experience test anxiety. It has been argued that test anxiety occurs when students repetitively fail exams, due to not having the skills required to study, or to take exams (Benjamin et al, 1981). However young people are not often asked themselves why they experience exam anxiety, or what the cause of it is. The research suggests that many young people suffer from exam anxiety and furthermore, there is a possibility that they are suffering alone and receive little support with the worries and anxieties that they are experiencing. Part of the role of EPs is to provide interventions to help improve children and young people's well being, according to the HCPC standards of proficiency (2b.2, 2012). For this reason, it is imperative for educational psychologists to be aware that certain groups of young people are more vulnerable to exam stress.

Putwain (2007) found that females reported significantly higher levels of exam stress than males. He also found that the young person's parental socio-economic background had an impact on how anxious young people were about exams. For example, young people with parents from routine/ manual socio-economic back grounds were more likely to be anxious about exams than students with parents from managerial/ professional backgrounds. The study also found that students from black and Asian backgrounds had higher levels of exam anxiety than white UK pupils. Despite higher levels of anxiety, students from certain Asian backgrounds outperformed students from other backgrounds, in particular British Chinese and British Indian (DfEE, 2001), achieved higher results. Putwain attributed anxiety experienced by certain ethnic groups to the emphasis placed on exams within these cultures (e.g. self worth being related to exam performance) as well as other factors such as individual differences in socio-

economic background. It could also be speculated that this may be because a certain level of stress can be good, and therefore the right balance is required to perform well within exams. Putwain also found that speaking English as additional language was not a predictor of exam anxiety.

The next section will discuss the importance of using interventions to help reduce exam anxiety.

1.4 EXAM ANXIETY AND INTERVENTIONS

Campas et al (1988) found that students with better coping mechanisms are less likely to be negatively impacted by stress. These results suggest the importance of using interventions to help build coping mechanisms for children impacted by stress, in particular exam related anxiety. Little is known about young people's views on their experience of exams and exam stress, or their views on interventions they take part in (as will be addressed in the literature review). This highlights the importance of increasing the body of research in this area. Therefore, this research aimed to understand more about young people's views around exam stress, along with an intervention that they participated in. Within the next section the local context will be discussed.

1.5 LOCAL CONTEXT:

The researcher is a trainee educational psychologist working in a large county in the UK. Within this county many schools had been making increasing referrals to the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) of students that appeared anxious about exams.

The Educational Psychology Service responded to this apparent need by developing an intervention called ‘Beating exam anxiety together’ (EduK, 2015), aiming to enable schools to support young people to cope with exam anxiety. Prior to the roll-out of the intervention, students were supported through consultations with teachers and parents, or in some cases through one to one support using interventions such as individualised cognitive behavioural approaches (CBA). However, it was felt by the service that this was neither a cost effective nor time effective response to the number of referrals. It was felt that a group intervention, perhaps based on CBT principles, may be better suited and a more appropriate and cost effective response to the referrals.

The EPS initially hoped that they would be able to identify an existing package designed to help reduce exam anxiety and that schools could be sign posted to this. However, the EPS could not identify a suitable intervention package and consequently an EP within the service developed a package based on existing interventions: a CBT program called “Study without stress” (Wuthrich and Passetto, 2010), and “Mindfulness in schools”². The intervention package was developed, building on core principles of these two programmes and tailored specifically towards exams; that is it was based on CBT and mindfulness principles.

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is an evidence-based therapy with both a cognitive and behavioural element to it. It has strong evidence in helping alleviate a wide range of mental health conditions in young people (Gearing, Schwalbe,

² <http://mindfulnessinschools.org/>

Lee, Hoagwood, 2013). The cognitive aspect helps the individual to work on their cognitions to help reduce anxiety and depression. It is based on the principle that thoughts, feelings and behaviours are linked. The behavioural aspect is based on behavioural principles, such as lowering anxiety through systematic desensitisation and relaxation techniques. Although there is no strong evidence base for CBT reducing exam anxiety, it was felt that the views of young people sought within the current research might help to understand whether the principles of CBT were helpful in alleviating exam anxiety.

Bishops et al (2004) have defined mindfulness as "the self-regulation of attention so that it is maintained on immediate experience, an orientation that is characterized by curiosity, openness, and acceptance" (p. 232). Mindfulness also has an evidence base in terms of reducing anxiety with young people and has been found to reduce anxiety in school children (Semple, 2010).

Although the individual elements (CBT and mindfulness) have an evidence base in terms of reducing anxiety, the exam anxiety intervention developed by the EPS service does not. Therefore, this research was developed to assist in building an evidence base for this particular intervention. Furthermore Putwain (2007) argues that more research is required into how young people are supported by schools regarding exam anxiety. The "Beating exam anxiety together" intervention was requested by schools to help young people to manage exam stress. Therefore, it was felt that it was important to gain an understanding of young people's views of the intervention, to ascertain whether they found it helpful. This would also provide useful information as to whether young people are effectively being supported in schools with exam stress.

1.6 LINKS TO EP PRACTICE

This research is therefore highly relevant to the EP role, which is required to adopt a proactive and preventative approach in order to promote the psychological wellbeing of clients (HCPC standards of proficiency 2b.4, 2012). This is particularly important as it is now evident that more young people are feeling distressed with the pressures they face in secondary school, with one of the biggest pressures being exams (Seiffge-Krenke, 1993). In order to adopt a proactive and preventative approach, it is important to understand children and young people's views on exam anxiety and what may help them cope.

Furthermore, EPs are required to apply effective interventions to promote psychological wellbeing, according to the HCPC standards of proficiency (2b.2, 2012). The study could ensure that EPs design interventions that relate to young people's views on what reduces anxiety. This could result in a preventative approach based upon what young people feel helps them cope with exams. In addition, EPs are required to be able to critically evaluate interventions and know which interventions are effective and why (HCPC standards of proficiency 2b.2, 2012). Although this piece of research is not an evaluation, it does help to understand young people's views of an intervention which they took part in.

1.7 THE RESEARCHER'S POSITION

The researcher holds an epistemological position of a critical realist, discussed further in the methodology section in Chapter 3. The researcher recognises that

there are fixed discoverable realities that can be known imperfectly through the research process.

The theoretical underpinnings of this research are based upon improving resilience in children and young people (Keenan and Evans, 2009). As the intervention that the young people took part in was based on cognitive behavioural approaches which aimed to reframe the young people's negative thinking patterns regarding exams.

This research arose partly from the researcher's own interest in exam anxiety, and also due to working in a service where an intervention to help reduce exam anxiety was being carried out in a number of schools. The service commissioned the researcher to carry out this study as they were aware that the researcher would complete doctoral research as part of Educational Psychology training requirements, and it was felt that it would be an important piece of work to understand young people's views on both exam anxiety and participation in the 'Beating exam anxiety together' intervention.

The researcher's own interest in exam anxiety stemmed from having completed A levels and an undergraduate degree which involved sitting exams. There was a narrative amongst her peers that a level of stress was required in order to be productive and to motivate them to revise for exams. Peers also commented that too much stress however was unhelpful. The picture seemed confusing and unclear as to how much stress they were able to tolerate, and what exactly contributed to anxiety that could not be tolerated.

Having carried out a brief literature review, it became apparent that most of the research was completed with university students (who may have better coping mechanisms) and not with school aged students who may struggle more with exam stress. Therefore, there is limited research available on the impact of exam anxiety on school aged students. Also the research highlighted that not many studies had researched young people's views on exam anxiety. Therefore the relationship between exam stress and young people's views was something that interested the researcher. The research is exploratory in nature and no specific hypothesis was held in mind.

1.8 SUMMARY AND CURRENT RESEARCH

In summary, in recent years as there has been increased emphasis placed upon exams, young people are being placed under increased pressure to perform well. This increased pressure may be linked to young people feeling anxious about exams. However, the UK government has recognised the importance of improving children's social and emotional well being. This chapter has highlighted the possible links to EP practice, for example the importance of EPs understanding young people's views on exam anxiety and what they think may help them with the pressures that they are experiencing. It also highlights the importance of understanding the views of young people on an intervention that they have taken part in, so that EPs are more aware of how to support schools to help reduce the anxiety experienced by young people. As the area of exam anxiety and particularly hearing young people's experiences of exams is under researched, the research will be exploratory in nature. There has been limited

research carried out with secondary school aged young people, as will be highlighted in the systemic literature review in chapter two. There is also a limited evidence base as to which interventions are helpful to reduce exam anxiety for school aged young people. The current research will build upon previous research, as will be discussed in the systematic literature search in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In order to draw upon the existing literature, an aggregative literature search was conducted with an aim to gather as much relevant research on the topic of exam anxiety as possible. This type of literature review is exhaustive (aimed to represent all of the research which meets the inclusion criteria). The methodology of how the systematic search was completed will be provided. A critical review of the literature will be provided, trends and patterns within the literature will be highlighted and the methodologies of previous research conducted will be critiqued. This will place the current research in context of previous research completed and highlight the rational of the current research aims.

2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW METHODOLOGY

Within this section the methodology that was used to search the literature will be detailed. A systematic search was completed using four search engines. A table will be provided below to show how the literature search was completed.

The initial search was carried out on Google, the search terms, and the inclusion and exclusion criteria are detailed below:

TABLE 1: INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA FOR THE GOOGLE SEARCH

Search engine	Search terms	Inclusion	Exclusion	Number of papers found
Google	Exams AND anxiety AND research ONLY.	Papers between the years 2000- 2015 Magazines, dissertations and academic journals.	Papers before the year 2000	6 papers were found. 2 papers were not relevant to the topic, therefore a total of four papers were included within the literature

The second search took place on EBSCO. It took place using three stages and three different search terms were used. Each is detailed in the table below:

Search terms 1: Exams AND Anxiety ONLY.

Search terms 2: Exams AND stress ONLY.

Search terms 3: Exam anxiety AND intervention ONLY.

TABLE 2: INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA FOR THE EBSCO SEARCH

Search engine	Search terms	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria	Number of papers found
EBSCO – • Academic Search Complete	Exams AND Anxiety ONLY.	Peer reviewed academic journals	Papers before year 2000.	27 papers were found, 22 papers were not relevant to the topic of

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British Education Index • Child Development and Adolescent Studies, • CINAHL Plus • Education Abstracts • Education Research Complete • ERIC • PsycArticles, PsycInfo). 		<p>Papers between 2000-2015</p> <p>School aged children (aged 6-12) and adolescents (ages 13-17) were included within the search.</p>		<p>exams and exam anxiety. 5 papers were therefore included within the literature.</p>
<p>EBSCO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Search Complete • British les, • PsycInfo • Education Index • Child Development and Adolescent Studies, • CINAHL Plus 	<p>Exams AND stress ONLY.</p>	<p>Peer reviewed academic journals</p> <p>Papers between 2000-2015</p>	<p>Papers before year 2000.</p>	<p>16 papers were found. 13 papers were not relevant. 2 papers were duplicates and 1 paper was not in English. Therefore 0 papers were included within the literature.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Abstracts • Education Research Complete • ERIC • PsycArticles 				
<p>EBSCO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Search Complete • British les, • PsycInfo • Education Index • Child Development and Adolescent Studies, • CINAHL Plus • Education Abstracts • Education Research Complete • ERIC • PsycArticles 	Exam anxiety AND intervention ONLY.	Peer reviewed academic journals Papers between 2000-2015	Papers before year 2000.	28 papers were found, 21 papers were not relevant to the topic of exam anxiety and exam anxiety interventions. 7 papers were included within the literature.

The third search took place using Scopus. It took place using three stages and three different search terms were used. Each is detailed in the table below.

Search 1: Exams AND anxiety AND school age ONLY.

Search 2: Exams AND stress AND school age ONLY.

Search 3: Exams AND anxiety AND intervention ONLY.

TABLE 3: TABLE 3: INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA FOR THE SCOPUS SEARCH

Search engine	Search terms	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria	Number of papers found
Scopus	Exams AND Anxiety ONLY.	All documents Articles found between years 2000-2015	Articles found before the year 2000	23 articles were found 20 articles were not relevant to exam anxiety 1 article was relevant but not in English 1 article was relevant but in press 1 article was a duplicate and already included within the literature. Therefore 0 new articles were included

				within the literature.
Scopus	Exams AND stress AND school age ONLY.	All documents Articles found between years 2000-2015	Articles found before the year 2000	27 articles were found. 23 articles were not relevant 3 articles were duplicates 1 article was included into the literature
Scopus	Exams AND Intervention AND school age ONLY.	All documents Articles found between years 2000-2015	Articles found before the year 2000	41 articles were found. 32 articles were not relevant. 9 articles were relevant. 4 articles were duplicates. 5 articles were included into the literature

The fourth search took place using science direct, the following took place as one search:

Exams AND anxiety AND school age ONLY.

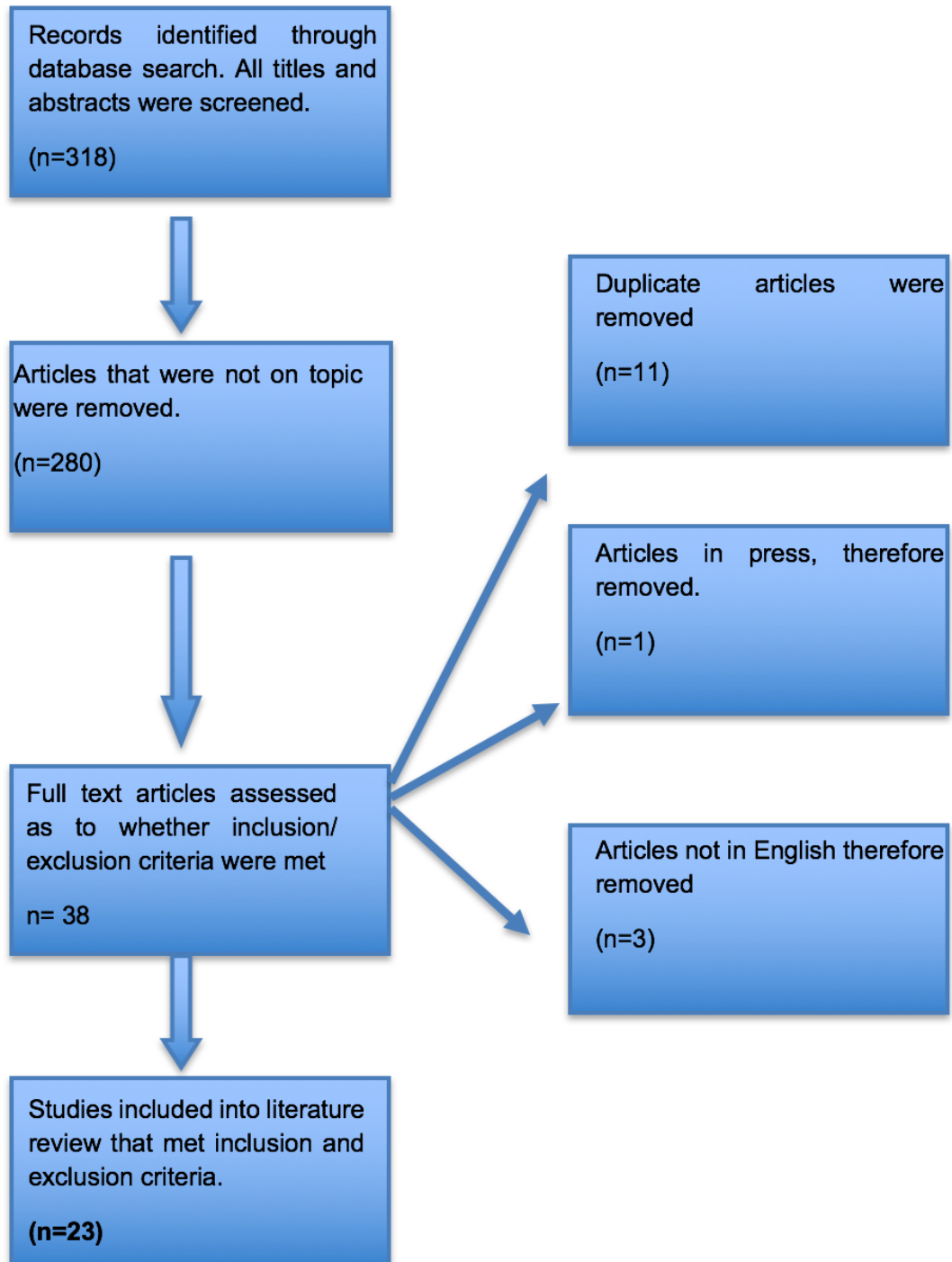
Exams AND stress AND school age ONLY.

Exam anxiety AND intervention AND school age ONLY.

TABLE 4: INCLUSION/ EXCLUSION CRITERIA FOR SCIENCE DIRECT

Search engine	Search terms	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria	Number of papers found
Science direct	Exams AND anxiety AND school age ONLY Exams AND stress AND school age ONLY Exam anxiety AND intervention AND school age ONLY.	All documents Articles found between years 2000-2015	Articles found before the year 2000	150 articles were found 147 articles were not relevant to exam anxiety 3 articles were relevant. However 1 was not in English. 1 article was a duplicate. Therefore 1 new article was included within the literature.

FIGURE 1: PRISMA FLOW DIAGRAM SHOWING HOW THE FINAL NUMBER OF STUDIES WERE OBTAINED:



One additional study was found through directly contacting a key writer within the field (David Putwain). Whilst reviewing the literature, the literature was put into a research map (see appendix 11). In order to synthesize the information obtained from the literature review, homogenous studies were placed together. By grouping together the homogenous studies, themes emerged (this was completed by looking for patterns and trends in terms on each studies research aims and findings). The following themes emerged upon examining the literature: The impact of exams and anxiety on young people, young peoples' perceptions of exams, coping strategies and the impact of exams on the level of anxiety experienced by students'. The purpose of this search was to review research literature with regards to how young people feel about exams. It was also to research the impact that exam anxiety has on school aged children and adolescents as well as research which interventions are available, and have been effective on this population. The majority of the research did not take place in the United Kingdom and therefore has implications for how generalizable it is. Furthermore, although the research for this thesis will be completed with secondary age students, the search included both children and adolescents only (excluding university students as part of the search criteria). However despite attempting to exclude literature not carried out with school aged children, many of the studies that were found through the systemic literature search were completed with undergraduate students. Due to the paucity of research in the area, studies including students in higher education have been included. This

highlights the limited research that has been completed with children and adolescents in the area of exam anxiety.

2.3 THE IMPACT OF EXAMS AND ANXIETY ON YOUNG PEOPLE

The impact that exams have on children and young people has been reviewed by examining the literature. Research has shown that exam anxiety can have a detrimental impact on young people's health. Dewald, Meijer, Oort, Kerkhof and Bogels (2014) highlighted that sleep is an important factor to examine when studying the impact of exam anxiety. They found that adolescents had more restless sleep during pre-exam and exam weeks (as opposed to low stress time). If exam anxiety is impacting children and young peoples sleep, it may be that feeling more tired is likely to have an impact on academic outcomes. Therefore children and young people may enter a vicious cycle where feeling stressed, impacts sleep/ health, which then impacts academic outcomes. This highlights the need for interventions. However this study was based on quantitative measures only and did not research how children and young people feel about exams and exam stress.

Aside from the impact that exam stress can have on health, it has also been found that exam pressure can reduce young peoples' interest in certain subjects. Remedios, Ritchie and Lieberman (2005) completed a study with pupils sitting the Transfer Test in Northern Ireland (this test is sat by 10 and 11 year olds in Ireland to assess which children meet the requirements to attend grammar school). There was also a control group, with students not preparing for the test. All students completed a questionnaire before and after the test which indicated

motivation levels regarding the subject. The results showed that once the students had sat the test, there was a significant drop in interest for that particular subject. This drop in interest was not also found within the control group. This shows that although exams can be used to give an indication of a student's knowledge, they can also have counterproductive implications in that they can reduce a pupils interest in a subject. Limited interest in a subject may also reduce academic outcomes. Although this study highlighted some interesting findings, it did not make clear links with exam anxiety and stress. For example exam anxiety was not researched explicitly (the quantitative measure that was used assessed motivation levels in pupils). Therefore the reader is left to assume decreased interest in a subject is due to exam stress/ pressure. It may have been that other factors (aside from exam stress) resulted in decreased motivation, for example the exam process not being child friendly.

Research has also been carried out by Putwain and Roberts (2012) on the methods that teachers use to motivate pupils to engage with their exams and revision. They found in their study that 67.5% of teachers felt that students should be told that if they failed their exams, they will not be able to pursue further education. Putwain, Remedios and Symes (2015) argued that "fear appeals" were used as a way to motivate students to revise and prepare for their exams. Putwain et al are concerned that using fear appeals when it comes to exam preparation at school may increase exam anxiety. This may decrease engagement with exam material and also reduce exam results. Putwain et al (2015) concluded that teachers should receive training on the impact of fear appeals and how young people receive them. However, this study used quantitative measures with

students only (questionnaires). The use of qualitative techniques would have allowed more insight in to their views. It is important to understand whether young people feel pressure, and what their views are on this.

2.4 YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF EXAMS

Researchers have also investigated how young people feel about exams. Vitasari, Nubli, Wahab and Othman (2010) conducted a study with university students to research the leading source of study anxiety. They gave a survey to 770 students in Malaysia, the survey asked students about their experiences, feelings and thoughts related to studying. The results showed that five themes arose with regards to study anxiety: exam anxiety, class presentation anxiety, mathematic anxiety, language anxiety and social anxiety. Interestingly exam anxiety was found to be the highest cause of anxiety amongst students. This piece of research is further evidence that young people worry about exams. The students highlighted that a lack of exam preparation in particular can cause exam anxiety. Therefore suggesting that interventions are required to help students to prepare well for exams (during the revision period). However it is noteworthy that this study took place in Malaysia, the results were self-report in nature and therefore may have been biased. Furthermore, the survey was based upon quantitative measures

Bonaccio and Reeve (2010) completed a study in which they aimed to gain an understanding of the perceptions of students' perceived sources of test anxiety. This study was conducted with undergraduate students in Canada. The researchers asked the students to think about a recent academic test for which

they had been highly anxious. They were asked to write about the reasons they had been anxious about the test. The writing was then analysed. It was found that feelings around being under prepared, having insufficient knowledge, previous experiences of poor performance and generalized anxiety such as fears around disappointing others (presumably parents) were the strongest unique predictors of test anxiety. Although this study did ask the views of young people in written form, the researchers would have been limited to that which the young people shared. The use of a semi structured interview would have allowed greater exploration of young peoples views, as the researcher would have been able to provide prompts to elaborate. The results of this study suggest that perhaps a combination of study skills interventions such as revision skills and a therapeutic intervention to reduce generalized anxiety may be beneficial. Cognitive behavioural approaches challenge thoughts and beliefs, therefore this study provides some rationale to gain young peoples views on whether a programme that uses such approaches were helpful to them. This study however took place with undergraduate students and therefore may have little generalisability to school aged students. This study took place in Canada and therefore may not be generalisable to the U.K.

A study by Chamberlain, Daly and Spalding (2011) examined test anxiety within A-level students. The sample consisted of 19 participants in the south of England and involved focus groups. The study revealed that students often feel two types of anxiety, one which is pre exam anxiety, and one which is exam day anxiety. The students explained that revision is stressful and described it as being a burden. One student explained that during revision time, they are often still being

taught new material and therefore cannot focus completely on revision. The students also stated that fear had no positive effect. For example, students stated their whole future could depend on an hour spent in an exam, and that entrance to their choice of university depends on how they performed on a single exam. However, most participants told the researchers that a degree of anxiety aided their performance (being motivational). The students overall felt that exam day anxiety was helpful, and one student commented "I'm in the zone" (p201), referring to the exam day. The researchers of this study argued that test anxiety may have an impact on the students' ability to prepare for the exam and that interventions can be put into place to help students prepare for their exams. Therefore, suggesting that interventions may be helpful during the preparation/revision phase (as opposed to how to manage in an exam). However no suggestions about which intervention to choose were given within this paper. This study researched young peoples' experiences of exams, and provided rich data from the students themselves. These students were taking A levels and it would be interesting to compare the results with that of the current research, where the participants will be GCSE students. This paper did seek to find out the views of young people about test anxiety and revealed some interesting findings, although the sample was small and used focus groups.

Connors, Putwain, Woods and Nicholson (2009) completed a mixed methods study in order to understand the experiences of year 6 students completing their SATS in terms of the pressure and anxiety that they experience (using qualitative methods). The SATS are national assessments which are used to measure the progress of children. The researchers wanted to examine the association

between SAT related anxiety and performance outcomes. The pupils reported feeling that the work that they completed towards the SATS would help them to prepare for more difficult work they will be expected to complete in secondary school (therefore some students felt that completing SATS was beneficial). In terms of pressure with regards to the SATS, some students explained that they were aware that their performance might have been impacted negatively due to the pressure placed upon them. They also explained that if they received a grade that was lower than what they would liked to have achieved, this might result in negative perception of themselves. Some pupils also commented that they were often compared to their siblings or family members who were highly achieving. They also compared themselves to their peers. The quantitative analysis showed that higher levels of self reported test anxiety resulted in poorer SATS grades. The results therefore suggest that students suffering with exam anxiety may benefit from a therapeutic intervention to reduce physical symptoms of anxiety. Although this study did research children's views on exams, it did not research their views on what they feel may help them to cope with exams. Furthermore the participants were children and not secondary aged children, which will be researched in the current study. Furthermore the study focus was on SATS that are sat by year 6 students and not exams in general.

Therefore the literature suggests that exams are a source of stress for students, in particular revising for exams and feeling under prepared. Furthermore children and young people appear to worry their performance is being compared to their peers and siblings. Some students have stated that there is some benefit in completing exams, as it prepares them for more difficult work. In addition to this

some students have reported that exam day anxiety can have some benefit as it helps them to focus on the exam. It is also noteworthy that many of the studies discussed were carried out with undergraduates and younger children, highlighting that limited studies have been completed with secondary age pupils. Young peoples' perceptions and experiences of exams have been discussed, and although the way in which exams influence students' anxiety levels has been touched upon, the following studies will examine this relationship more closely.

2.5 COPING STRATEGIES AND THE IMPACT OF EXAMS ON THE LEVEL OF ANXIETY AND EXPERIENCED BY STUDENTS

The relationship between exams and anxiety will now be discussed. These studies also explore the coping strategies that anxious students use. The concept of those students who engage with off task behaviours when preparing for an exam was also touched upon in a study by Aysan, Thompson and Hamarat (2001). They completed a study with 59 high school students, using the Test Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger, 1980). The students completed the inventory whilst preparing for exams and again once the exams had been completed. The results showed that students that were highly anxious about exams had ineffective coping strategies (such as self blame, wishful thinking and avoidance). Therefore, showing that a vicious cycle can occur. Those that are highly anxious cannot help themselves (to focus and feel calm during the stressful period of preparing for exams). The researchers also found that younger adolescents used less effective coping strategies than older adolescents (this may be significant as most of the literature in this field is completed with university students). The authors therefore argued that programmes to help children with exam anxiety

should be accessible in order to promote positive emotional well-being. The limitations of this study were that the participants came from middle to upper middle socio economic backgrounds and therefore may not be generalizable to the U.K population.

Putwain, Connors and Symes (2010) also found that those students that suffer with exam anxiety are likely to not perform as well in their exams as those students that don't. Putwain et al argue that this is due to anxious students suffering with inaccurate thinking patterns. Examples of this are viewing situations as worse than they actually are. Putwain et al hypothesized that these inaccurate thinking patterns would lower exam performance. They collected data from year 11 students who were going to be sitting their G.C.S.E's. The results showed that the students that reported more worry and bodily anxiety symptoms also reported more negative thinking patterns with regards to their academic studies. These students were also found to achieve lower GCSE grades in Mathematics, Science and English. The results therefore showed that high-test anxious students may be achieving less than their low-test anxious counterparts, due to negative/ inaccurate thinking patterns. Although this study has been completed with secondary age students (which is similar to the research carried out by researcher for this thesis), the study by Putwain et al did not ask the young people their views on exam anxiety and simply carried out a correlational analysis. Furthermore they did not ask the young people about what they might find helpful to manage exam anxiety. This study does provide some implications for the need for interventions. This is because cognitive distortions have been found to be linked to lower exam results. Cognitively orientated interventions can be put in

place to work on those distortions, for example CBA. Academic achievement could therefore be increased by targeting and reducing such cognitions.

Similarly Cassady and Johnson (2001) completed a study in which the researchers aimed to examine the relationship among cognitive test anxiety (cognitive test anxiety refers to thoughts which involve excessive worry, feeling underprepared, procrastination and also worrying about causing sorrow for their parents). This study was completed with university students. Two days before the participants sat an exam they completed test anxiety measures. The results showed that students with high levels of test anxiety scored lower grades on the exam than those with lower levels of test anxiety. This provides further evidence that those who experience exam anxiety have lower exam grades due to negative thoughts and therefore may benefit from a CBA intervention. The researchers speculate that worry may not only occur during the examination but may also occur during revision time. This is of course an area for further research but again highlights the need for interventions to help students acquire the skills required to revise. This study also showed that females show higher exam anxiety than males. Also those students that were highly emotional did not perform as well as those students that had average levels of emotionality (too much arousal can lead to an inability to focus). This study did not gain students views on exam anxiety, nor did it evaluate the effectiveness of an intervention. Furthermore the students were all undergraduate students.

Not all researchers have found that high levels of anxiety result in poorer academic outcomes. Burns (2004) conducted an interesting study, which examined the relationship between students reported anxiety level, their

performance expectations and their actual performance outcomes. The sample consisted of university students in America studying the principles of marketing. The results showed a significant relationship between performance expectations and levels of anxiety. For example the higher the level of expectation held by the student, the higher the level of anxiety. No evidence was found for a negative relationship between exam anxiety and exam results. This study therefore highlights that exam anxiety can have a positive impact on exam grades. However it may be that exam anxiety is helpful to a certain degree, also this study was conducted with university students who may have been more able to control their anxiety levels and use it to motivate them. This may be different for secondary school age students who are studying for their G.C.S.E exams (which will be explored by the researcher for the purpose of this thesis). Furthermore this study highlights that perhaps young people may benefit from interventions, which enable them to be calm enough (despite having a level of exam anxiety) to have positive expectations of the outcome of the exam, at the time of the exam. It is important to consider the limitations of this study, for example all of the students were university students (from the same course and the same university in America). This means there are significant limitations when attempting to generalise the findings to the U.K and to secondary age students. Furthermore the expected grades and the number of hours studying for the final exam were self-reported. Therefore it is difficult to ascertain the validity of that which is self reported. When using self reported measures there is no way of knowing what is factual, as it is based purely on what the participant has stated.

In general, several researchers have found that females are more anxious about exams than males (Spielberger, 1980). This was also confirmed in a study by Martin and Marsh (2008), data was collected from 598 students in year 8 and 10 in five Australian high schools. Data was collected by teachers during class in questionnaire form half way through the year, and again at the end of the year. The purpose of the data collection was to research the level of resilience to be able to deal with academic setbacks. It was found that females had higher levels of exam anxiety than males. This study took place in Australia and may not be applicable to the UK population. The researchers stated that females presented as being more open and honest about expressing their emotions, especially with regards to anxiety. However this explanation may have been based on gender stereotypes and not an evidence based finding, as this explanation was a mere speculation by the researchers as opposed to fact. Interestingly, the sample of participants that will take part in the research for this thesis are predominately female, (it may have been that the SENCO's put forward more females to take part in the intervention). However differences between males and females responses to exams will not be the focus of this thesis.

Overall the research has shown that those students that are anxious about exams are more likely to engage in ineffective coping strategies and negative thinking patterns. Furthermore, those that are anxious about exams generally do not perform as well as those that are less anxious. For these reasons it is important to put in place interventions to help reduce exam anxiety.

2.6 INTERVENTIONS TO REDUCE EXAM ANXIETY

There is a growing body of research around interventions linked to reducing exam anxiety; these include: exercise, music, study skills interventions, working memory interventions and cognitive behavioural approaches (CBA). The research in the area of exam anxiety interventions is limited and is predominately carried out with undergraduate students. This research will now be discussed.

Exercise, music and progressive muscle relaxation interventions:

Some research has been carried out using exercise and music in an attempt to reduce exam anxiety (Goldenberg, Floyd and Moyer 2013 and Hashim, Freddy and Rosmatunisah 2012). The literature shows that there is a positive correlation between exercise and academic performance. Hashim et al (2012) completed a study investigating the relationship between self determination (understanding the motivation to exercise), exercise habit, anxiety, depression, stress and academic achievement. The study involved 750 secondary school students completing self-report measures of exercise behaviour. Exam results from the middle of the year were used to indicate academic performance. Although no intervention took place in this study, it was suggested that those individuals with protective factors (such as high levels of exercise) were less likely to experience stress. Although this conclusion was drawn, exam anxiety was not researched specifically. This study did not actively provide skills to those children who struggle with exams in the form of an intervention.

Goldenberg et al (2013) completed a study on the effect of music as an intervention on exam related anxiety. However, upon analysis of the data they

found that there was not a reduction in anxiety levels. This intervention did not involve any work on the children's thinking predominantly with regards to exam anxiety. There was no evidence about the usefulness of these interventions which is more reason to research an intervention that young people have experienced that did work on cognitions.

Zargarzadeh (2014) completed a study to research the impact of progressive muscle relaxation on nursing students. The participants were 49 male and female nursing students. They divided those that were suffering with test anxiety into two groups (the study group and the control group). Progressive muscle relaxation was used as an intervention on the experimental group for four sessions. The students were then asked to carry out progressive muscle relaxation twice a day until their exam. When the students had their first exam, a test anxiety questionnaire was given to the two groups. The results showed a significant difference in anxiety levels between the two groups after the intervention had taken place. Although the results show a significant reduction in anxiety levels, it is important to take into consideration that this intervention was not completed with school aged children. This highlights once again the gap in the literature for interventions, especially for exam anxiety for school aged children/ young people. Therefore progressive muscle relaxation has been found to be an effective intervention for adults. However research would need to be completed in order to ascertain whether it is equally effective for adolescents. So far the interventions that have been discussed have focused on reducing exam anxiety through exercise, listening to music and using relaxation. The following studies focus on

helping to reduce exam anxiety through exam practice or through teaching study skills.

2.6.1 EXAM PRACTICE/ STUDY SKILLS INTERVENTIONS

It has been hypothesised by some researchers that exam practice or being taught study skills improves effectiveness in successfully completing exams. Agarwal, Antonio, Roediger, Mcdermott and Mcdaniel (2014) researched whether retrieval practice reduces test anxiety. (By retrieval practice the researchers meant the use of practice tests or quizzes). They completed a study with 1402 students aged 11-18 years old. The students took part in practice tests. The tests did not count towards the student's grades. These tests took place once a week. They found that 72% of students reported feeling less anxious about test anxiety when sitting exams because they had previously taken clicker quizzes. It may be that greater exposure to testing ultimately reduced their anxiety about tests. However 19% of students reported experiencing greater anxiety from quizzing. Although there was a large sample size, this study took place in America and the participants were public school students and not mainstream school students (therefore may be accustomed to taking more tests). Furthermore the research used only quantitative methods of data collection and therefore did not research young people's views about exams. The 19% of students that did experience exam anxiety were not asked what may help them to reduce their anxiety levels.

Neuderth, Jabs and Schmidtke (2009) completed literature reviews in the area of exam anxiety. They found that preparation for exams (for example strategies to cope with the demands and organisation of their studies) was key to reducing

exam anxiety. Neurderth et al then delivered a programme that consisted of lectures and peer coaching which covered learning skills, and exam preparation to prevent test anxiety. The researchers however did not share what exactly the students were taught within this programme. The results showed that there was a high acceptance rate from students that attended this programme. However there were no pre and post measures completed with the students as a way of measuring how effective the programme had been.

2.6.2 WORKING MEMORY INTERVENTIONS:

Mavilidi, Hoogerheide and Paas (2014) hypothesised that the negative thoughts that children and young people experience whilst in an exam situation use up resources at the cost of performing in the exam. As a way of reducing the negative thoughts that children experience, they hypothesised that allowing children and young people the time to look through the exam questions before beginning the exam would mean that their working memory would not be consumed by negative thoughts. They completed a study in which 117 children aged 11-12 years of age were split into two groups (with matched pairs in terms of levels of anxiety). The control group had 4 minutes for solving the first problem and 3 minutes to solve the 9 remaining problems. However the experimental group had one minute to look through all of the test problems at the start of the test and three minutes for solving each test problem. At the end of the test, participants completed questionnaires regarding how anxious they were. The results showed that allowing students to look ahead reduced exam anxiety and also increased performance. This study took place with primary school age

students and therefore may not be generalisable to secondary aged students. Furthermore this was a short strategy, as opposed to an intervention that teaches children and young people strategies to manage their anxiety levels prior to exams.

Mowbray (2012) completed a review on test anxiety and effective interventions. The scope of this review is too big to be covered within this literature review, however a summary will be provided. Mowbray related test anxiety to attentional control theory. Attentional control theory explains that anxiety affects the working memory system. Mowbray therefore argues that interventions that reduce the burden of anxiety on working memory would have a positive impact on individuals suffering with exam anxiety. Some of the interventions mentioned in the review are CBM-A (CBM-A trains those with exam anxiety to divert attention away from anxiety related stimuli, and therefore improved attention is placed upon the exam). He also mentions that interventions that are aimed at improving working memory (cognitive and attentional control) have had some evidence to show their effectiveness. These interventions however are not therapeutic. He states that therapeutic interventions such as ACT (based upon mindfulness principles) which teaches accepting thoughts and feelings, rather than changing or suppressing them. He argues that ACT combined with study skills may be a helpful intervention. He also highlights that most of the interventions that are mentioned within the review have limited research. The intervention that will be explored within this thesis will be based upon cognitive behavioural approaches, mindfulness principles and also study skills. This review however did not highlight the importance of hearing the voice of the young person in discerning what might

be helpful for them to reduce their anxiety around exams. Nor did it cover asking young people their views about exams and stress.

Another working memory intervention was completed by Ramirez and Beilock (2011). They argue that the function of the working memory is to maintain task focus, however this can be disrupted by anxiety and worries about the test. They completed two studies in which they hypothesised that writing about worries regarding the test prevents “choking” during the exam situation. They would argue that completing writing frees capacity within the working memory to focus on the exam rather than the worries. This study was completed with 9th grade students. The researchers wanted to know whether this intervention could improve exam outcomes for this group of students. They were placed in two different groups (an expressive writing group and a control condition). Before an exam the intervention group were asked to write about worries about the exam, and the other half were asked to write about things not related to the exam. The researchers found that those individuals who had high levels of test anxiety that were placed in the intervention group had higher exam grades than those with equally high levels of anxiety in the control group. This study however did not provide a therapeutic intervention. The students were simply asked to write about their worries, and although this was found to increase performance, the students were not given support as to how to manage their anxious thoughts/feelings. This is particularly significant, given the known effects of test anxiety on young people, the focus should be on supporting children and young people in terms of their well being, not simply increasing exam results. The following studies completed

therapeutic interventions with young people/ university students to reduce the impact of exam anxiety.

2.6.3 CBA INTERVENTIONS

Some researchers have explored the effectiveness of cognitive behavioural approaches (CBA) on exam anxiety. Cognitive behavioural approaches (CBA) is an evidence-based therapy with both a cognitive and behavioural element to it. It has strong evidence in helping alleviate a wide range of mental health conditions in youth (Gearing, Schwalbe, Lee, Hoagwood, 2013). The cognitive aspect helps the individual to work on their cognitions to help reduce anxiety and depression. CBA has received some support in reducing exam anxiety in young people.

Bodas, Ollendick and Sovani (2008) completed a mixed methods study on children from India. They completed five focus groups (qualitative) and also administered the Test Anxiety Inventory and the Friedbens Test (quantitative). From the results they concluded that desensitization with regards to exams is required to help reduce anxiety, however they do not explain what kind of desensitisation would be helpful. Part of cognitive behavioural therapy involves systematic desensitisation. Although this study did not evaluate the effectiveness of a CBA intervention, it provided some rationale to explore children's views on an exam anxiety programme they have recently experienced using CBA principles.

Dundas, Wormnes and Hauge (2009) carried out a study in order to examine the effectiveness of a cognitive-behavioural group intervention. The participants were university students. The intervention involved reducing physical symptoms of arousal caused by anxiety and also reducing negative thoughts (which would

distract the participants from completing tasks related to exams such as revision). The intervention was analysed qualitatively. The researchers found that the intervention helped individuals to reframe the task of exams. For example instead of perceiving the outcome of their whole future as depending on one exam, they viewed the exam situation as a task that needed to be completed at that moment in time. The participants felt that these changes to the way that they approached exams were a result of the intervention that they took part in. Therefore the results of the study showed that by reframing the task of exams and refocusing attention helped to reduce anxiety. Although this study did research the effectiveness of an intervention based on cognitive behavioural principles (and self-hypnosis), this study took place with university students, which again highlights the need for research to be carried out with young people of secondary age (which will be completed within this thesis). Also self-hypnosis was conducted for the final two sessions, however it was not made clear whether the successful outcome of the intervention (in reducing exam anxiety) was due to CBA or self-hypnosis. This study also investigated how exam anxiety affected students. The researchers found that somatic symptoms described were “headaches, tenseness, shaking, nausea, vomiting, stomach aches, gastrointestinal symptoms, dizziness, breathing problems, uncontrollable crying, sleeplessness and concentration problems” (Dundas et al 2009, p32). The way in which anxiety affects students will also be explored within the current study, however the findings are likely to be different for secondary aged students (as students at university may have a higher level of resilience due to having passed a certain number of exams to be studying at university). Furthermore although this study examined what was

effective about the intervention, it did not explore the young peoples' views with regards to what they think may help them to cope with exams.

2.7 SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW

Overall the literature suggests that there is limited research on the views of young people on exams and what they might find helpful to support them with their exams. Furthermore although a variety of interventions have been completed (predominantly with undergraduates), there is limited research that has been carried out using CBA principles, mindfulness principles (Mowbray 2012) and also study skills.

Having examined the methodologies used by the researchers, 21 of the 24 studies that were found used quantitative measures. Only 3 studies used either a mixed method or purely a qualitative approach. Only one of these studies was completed with young people, and also asked their views on what may help them with the exam pressures that they face. The current research aims to gain an understanding of young peoples' views of exams and what they feel would support them to manage the pressure of exams. Furthermore it aims to gain their views on an intervention they recently took part in (using CBT and mindfulness principles).

2.8 THE THEORETICAL PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING THIS RESEARCH

This piece of research aims to increase the resilience of children through gaining awareness and understanding of what may help children when studying for exams, and to help reduce the impact of exam stress. This piece of research is

also based on resilience as a theoretical underpinning, which matches the government objectives of improving resilience within children (as mentioned in the previous chapter). Resilience has been defined by Rutter (1990) as an individual's ability to withstand and overcome stressful situations and events in a successful manner. He specifically refers to the term competence. Keenan and Evans (2009) argue that certain skills, attributes and abilities are required to overcome such stressful situations competently. Keenan and Evans also argue that certain circumstances that occur within a child's life can make them more resilient, for example a teacher that supports the child (it is possible that this support may be provided through a group intervention), or the child having an interest in a certain academic subject. Gaining the views of young people as to whether they found the intervention helpful, will help further our understanding as to whether a CBA intervention can help raise resilience. Furthermore Garmezy (1985) argued that there are certain protective factors that contribute to resilience such as personality features (easy temperament and self esteem), a supportive family unit and presence of support networks. The last factor is particularly noteworthy as it relates to emotional availability of peers and elders in the community. It could be that group interventions carried out in schools contribute towards support networks for children, and therefore increase resilience. Asking young people what they themselves may find helpful (and to then provide this support) may help them with exam stress and may increase resilience.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

3.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

A methodology has been described by Robson (2011, p528) as “the theoretical, political and philosophical backgrounds to social research and their implications for research practice and for the use of particular research methods”. Within this chapter the researchers ontological and epistemological position will be stated, as will the research purpose. The methodology that was under taken in order to answer the research questions will be described, for example a clear justification and description of the participants and sample will be given. This will be followed by a clear description of how the data was gathered and analysed. A detailed account will be given of how the researcher ensured that the BPS: Code of Ethics and Conduct (2009) was adhered to whilst carrying out the research. Furthermore, a description will be given on the steps that the researcher took to ensure that the data that was collected was valid.

3.2 THE ONTOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL POSITION HELD BY THE RESEARCHER

There are various approaches to carrying out research as there are many different positions that researchers can take with regards to what reality is (ontology) and how we can know it (epistemology) (Willig, 2013). When

completing research, the approach that is taken with regards to methodology and design is dictated by the researcher's ontological and epistemological position. Ontology is concerned with what is the nature of the world and reality. The question that the researcher would ask when attempting to understand ontology is "what is there to know?" Conversely epistemology is the area of philosophy concerned with the nature of knowledge (Willig 2013). When attempting to understand epistemology one would ask the question "how can we know?" (Willig, 2013), "what is the nature of knowledge and the relationship between the knower and the would be known?" (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). There are a number of different world-views or ontological and epistemological positions such as positivist, critical realist, pragmatist and social constructionist. Each of which will be discussed in turn which will then lead to a justification of the position the researcher, which is critical realist.

3.2.1 POSITIVIST WORLD-VIEW

The ontological position taken by positivists is that there is one reality, which can be measured. The methodology that is generally employed by positivists is quantitative research (Mertens, 2010). The data that is collected is quantitative and based upon facts. They would argue that objective knowledge (facts) are the only knowledge available to science and that "invisible or theoretical entities are rejected" (Robson, 2011, P21). Therefore, positivists aim to measure visible, observable facts through direct experience or observation (Smith, 2008, Robson, 2011). There is often an empirical method of data collection (Robson, 2011). Hypotheses are tested and researchers would argue that they do not impose their

own values on their research (as the nature of science is value free (Robson, 2011). If a positivist epistemological position was taken for this piece of research, the researcher may have used a questionnaire to gain a base line (for students that were anxious about exams) to measure their anxiety levels regarding exams. The researcher may have used a questionnaire again after the intervention had been completed (to measure whether there had been a reduction in anxiety levels due to the intervention). If there had been a reduction, it may have been concluded that a reduction in anxiety level means that the intervention was successful (cause-effect). However, this ontological position would not help to understand young peoples' view of exam anxiety, and also does not help to understand their views of an intervention that they have recently taken part in. The positivist epistemology has also been critiqued for not considering cultural, historical and social factors when researching "objective knowledge" (Willig, 2013). Critical realists and social constructionists would also criticise the view that there is one reality. In particular, social constructionists would argue that individuals construct their own reality (Smith, 2008). Critical realism and social constructionism will be discussed later within this chapter.

3.2.2 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST

Social constructionists differ from positivists in that they do not claim that there is one truth, alternatively they would argue that there are multiple truths. Social constructionists state that the way in which we understand the world is historically and culturally specific. For example, it is only in recent times that children have stopped being viewed as small adults (Burr, 2003). In terms of ontology, social

constructionists argue that there is not one “knowledge” but conversely there are multiple “knowledges” and that language is an important part of socially constructed knowledge (Willig, 2013). Researchers that hold a social constructionist ontological and epistemological position are interested in what these multiple realities are. They seek to understand how social reality is constructed in society. They also attempt to understand the meanings their participants hold and how these were formed. Social constructionists are not interested in the nature of the world or how things are experienced, but more so by the manner and the processes through which knowledge is constructed (Creswell, 2013). Social constructionists feel that people construct knowledge between them. This occurs through daily interaction between individuals and therefore knowledge becomes “fabricated” (Burr, 2003). The way in which individuals interact with one another, and in particular the language that is used is of most interest to social constructionists. Therefore, in order to understand the world, social constructionists do not try to understand the real world in the way that positivists do, but they try to understand the social processes and interactions that take place between people. A social constructionist’s position could have been held by the researcher in order to gain an understanding of young peoples views on exam anxiety, and also on the intervention that they recently took part in. However, the researcher accepts that it is possible to know a reality, albeit imperfectly. This will be discussed further in the critical realism section (which is the ontological position held by the researcher).

3.2.3 THE PRAGMATIC WORLD-VIEW

The pragmatic approach rejects the idea of positivism vs social constructionism. It takes the view that rather than pondering over ontology and epistemology, it is best to “get on with the job” (Robson 2011, p27). A researcher of a pragmatic world view would argue their main concern is to come up with answers to the questions that they are trying to answer with which ever methodology fits best. Pragmatists recognise both the natural and physical world, as well as the social and psychological world. Their ontological position claims that there is a single reality and that the researchers have their own interpretation of reality (Mertens, 2010). Knowledge is therefore both constructed and based on reality (Robson, 2011). The epistemological position held by pragmatists is based upon the researchers own values and are dependent on what the researcher would like to study (Robson, 2011). Pragmatists would argue that the research and the interpretation of research is largely influenced by the researcher’s values. However, the researchers are not concerned about the influence of values in the research (Robson, 2011). Pragmatists feel that researchers decide to complete their study in a manner that is congruent with “their value system” (Robson, 2011). The pragmatic approach can bring together both qualitative and quantitative approaches (mixed methods). However, both qualitative and quantitative approaches can also be brought together through critical realism.

3.2.4 CRITICAL REALISM

There are links between critical realism and pragmatism. Pragmatism views “knowledge as being both constructed and based on the reality of the world we experience and live in” therefore acknowledging that a reality does exist (Robson 2002, p28). Similarly, critical realists perceive that the role of science is to help them to understand the real world (Robson, 2011), whilst acknowledging that knowledge is a product of the time and place that it is situated in.

Critical realism is similar to positivism in that it has a “long tradition in the philosophy of science” (Robson, 2011, p30). However critical realists accept the criticisms that positivists have previously received, as they would argue that the researcher cannot separate their own values from the research. Despite this difference, there remains a similar view as positivists in that hypothesis are usually tested and that theories are developed as a result of the outcome of the research. There are also similarities with positivism in that there is a pursuit for truth and evidence based research. The researcher searches for knowledge as truthfully as possible, and attempts to ensure that the knowledge is valid and reliable (Willig, 2013). A critical realist would argue that the world and what happens within it can be understood by the researcher (Willig, 2013). However, a critical realist would not assume that the data is a direct reflection of reality, as it needs to be interpreted in order to understand that which the researcher is interested in. The ontological position is that they recognise that there are fixed discoverable realities, however there are multiple realities (as opposed to a single

reality), which are influenced by time, social, political and cultural values. These can only ever be known imperfectly through the research process. Therefore, the epistemological position in terms of understanding knowledge/ data is that it is a social and historical product and therefore is bound by context. Critical realists would not assume that the data will be a direct reflection of “reality”. The data then needs to be interpreted by the researcher (the interpretation again would be influenced by culture and context). The task of the researcher is to construct a narrative as opposed to discovering a fixed truth (Cruickshank, 2003). As critical realism is the stance that will be taken for this piece of research, it would be argued that language will allow access to the reality of individual experience. However, the realities held by the young people within this piece of research can only be known imperfectly, through the interpretation of the researcher. This position has led to a qualitative design, this fits with the ontological position of a critical realist.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND PURPOSE

The aim of this piece of research is to gain an understanding of the views of young people on exam anxiety and also an intervention that they recently took part in. The intervention that the young people took part in was a six-week intervention. The intervention consisted of a one hour session each week for six weeks. The following was covered:

- 1) The physiological & neurological changes that happen within the body when stressed.
- 2) How thoughts and feelings affect actions, and how to challenge negative thoughts.
- 3) Strategies such as positive self-talk, taking a break, and using distractions.
- 4) Mindfulness and how this can help improve performance in exams.

- 5) Effective study skills and revision tips, along with how to tackle procrastination and perfectionism.
- 6) A review of all learning during the programme, and practise / maintenance.

This intervention was briefly described in the introduction and further details can be found in appendix 9.

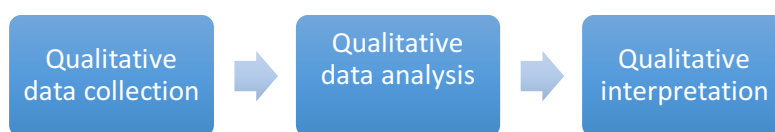
A research method has also been described by Robson (2011, p528) as “a means of collecting data”. Research can have various purposes, Robson (2002) states the different types of research: exploratory, descriptive, explanatory and emancipatory research. Exploratory research refers to the researcher having an idea, and the researcher hoping to gain more of an understanding about it. Descriptive research refers to attempting to explain a topic/ research area, whilst providing additional information. Explanatory research aims to connect ideas in order to gain an understanding between cause and effect. Emancipatory research refers to making improvements through the research process, for example through influencing policy or practice.

The purpose of the research design is exploratory. As made clear from the literature review discussed, there is limited research on young people’s views on exam related anxiety. The exploratory nature of the research sought to seek the views of young people about an intervention programme devised to support them in exam related stress. This will allow the researcher to gain more of an understanding of what the young people feel may help them with exam stress and exam anxiety. This is particularly important as it is an under researched area.

As highlighted in the previous chapter, the majority of the research that has been carried out in order to understand the nature of exam anxiety and interventions

has used quantitative techniques. When the researcher studied the methodologies of previous research conducted when completing the literature review, the researcher felt it would be beneficial to use a qualitative approach to understand young people's views and experiences of exam anxiety. Quantitative approaches often focus on a "cause-effect" relationship, used by positivists (and sometimes critical realists). Critical realists do not stipulate that either a qualitative or a quantitative approach is a better approach during the pursuit for knowledge. As the researcher holds a critical realist ontological position, and the research is exploratory in purpose, it was felt by the researcher that a qualitative approach would be most helpful to elicit young people's views on exam anxiety. A qualitative approach helps researchers to understand participant's views and the meanings behind their views. It also enables a greater understanding of how individuals make sense of the world (Willig, 2013). Qualitative researchers do not examine the relationship between variables (as variables are often a reflection of the researchers own values), qualitative researchers are more interested in the quality of the experiences of the participants' that have taken part in the research (Willig, 2013). This helps to provide a "rich, full and real" account of the participants experiences (Robson, 2011 p465), which would not be possible when using quantitative techniques only. Not only does qualitative research help to understand the meanings that individuals hold but it also helps to provide insight into how these meanings are constructed (Mertens, 2010). For these reasons a qualitative approach was used by the researcher. The qualitative research design would also help the researcher to answer the research questions. The research questions are all based upon eliciting young people's views, and therefore could not be answered using quantitative methods.

A pictorial representation of the design will now be shown:



3.4 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

This research aimed to gain the views of young people about an intervention programme devised to support them in exam related stress through the use of CBT and mindfulness principles. The theoretical underpinnings are based on aiming to improve resilience within children and young people. It is envisaged that this piece of research will help to provide evidence about young people's views as to whether a particular intervention programme was effective in reducing exam related anxiety.

The research questions are specific to a group of young people who have been involved in an intervention programme to support them in exam related stress.

The research questions have been developed as detailed below:

RQ1. What are the views of the group of young people about exams and stress?

RQ2. What are the views of the group of young people about an intervention programme related to managing anxiety/stress and exams?

RQ3. What do the young people say about what they need to support them to cope with exams?

3.5 PARTICIPANT INFORMATION:

The intervention programme was discussed in some depth within chapter one. The schools put forward individuals that they felt were anxious about exams and could benefit from the exam anxiety intervention. The participants that took part in this research were taken from groups who had already completed the intervention programme. Information about the current research was given to all of the young people that took part in the intervention (see appendix 1). Only the participants that consented and showed interest took part within the current study (purposive sampling). The participants were all year 11 G.C.S.E students aged 15-16. The participants were required to have attended most of the sessions (for example 5 out of six sessions). A total of 7 participants took part in the research. Although there was some difficulty gaining participants, it was felt that 7 participants would be sufficient to gain a range of views. Six participants were female and one participant was male. Participant information will clearly be stated in the table below. Some of the participants were due to sit their exams, and others had already sat their exams. The reason for this was that the participants were from a number of different schools, it was not possible to gain access to all of the participants at the same time. Some participants did not want to take part in the research until their exams had been completed (as they wanted to focus

on their exams, and taking part in the interviews may have resulted in missing a revision lesson). The differences in the data between the participants that were due to sit their exams and those that had already sat their exams will be reflected upon within the discussion.

TABLE 5: DETAILING ANONOMISED PARTICIPANT INFORMATION.

Participant name	Participant details	School name (false names)
Sara Jones	A female year 11 student. Age 16.	Arthurs Academy
Fatima Smith	A female year 11 student. Age 16.	Arthurs Academy
Mohammad Perkins	A male year 11 student. Age 15.	Arthurs Academy
Maryam Rose	A female year 11 student. Age 16.	St John's Academy
Zahra Stewart	A female year 11 student. Age 15.	St John's Academy

Aisha Hall	A female year 11 student. Age 16.	St John's Academy
Khadija Owens	A female year 11 student. Age 15.	St John's Academy

3.6 A STEP-BY-STEP DESCRIPTION ABOUT THE RESEARCH PROCESS:

The research process will now be detailed:

1. The intervention took place between September – February 2015. This intervention took place in five schools.
2. The EPS service where the TEP was on placement was a partially traded service. The schools that had bought a service level agreement had requested the “BEAT exam anxiety together” intervention programme to be delivered within their school. The schools requested the intervention package as they felt that students from their school who were anxious about exams may benefit from EP support to help reduce their anxiety levels. The five schools were mainstream secondary schools in a large county
3. The young people took part in the intervention programme, prior to taking part in the research.
4. A purposive sampling technique was used when selecting the schools to complete the research. The sampling technique was purposive, as the research could only take place with schools that had a service level

agreement and had requested the beat exam anxiety together intervention from the EPS service.

5. All five schools were contacted in February 2015. Consent was sought from the schools, parents and pupils with regards to pupils taking part in the research. All five schools consented to being part of the research.
6. Ethical approval was received in April 2015 from UEL.
7. Once ethical approval had been received, the schools were contacted (May 2015). At this stage, the participants that had taken part in the intervention were now preparing for their G.C.S.E exams.
8. Consent forms were sent to the school prior to the interviews being arranged. These consisted of parent consent forms, young person consent forms and head teacher consent forms (see appendices 2,4 and 6). Information on the research rational and how it was intended to be completed was also provided for the parents, teachers and young people (appendices 1,3 and 5).
9. Consent forms for the current research were completed by parents, teachers and young people (appendices 2,4 and 6).
- 10.3 interviews took place in May 2015 (all from one school). The interview took place in the staff room in a school (whilst staff were not present). 3 more interviews took place in another school (in June 2015). They took place in a quiet room, which had been booked by the SENCO at the school.
- 11.1 interview took place as a home visit in July 2015 in the living room of a family home.

3.7 DATA COLLECTION – PROCEDURE FOR INTERVIEW DATA:

Three interviews took place in a school staff room during lesson time. This room was selected by the SENCO of the school as the researcher had requested a room with little disruption. The interviews took place in a room where the young person could be seen visibly by other staff in the school, however it was not possible to over hear the content of the interview to ensure that participant confidentiality was ensured. Three more interviews took place in another school, a quiet room was identified by the SENCO of the school for the same reasons given above. One interview took place at a family home for the ease and convenience of the family, as the young person had completed their exams and lived some distance from the school. The interviews were recorded using a dictaphone. The researcher ensured that the dictaphone produced high quality recordings. This was to ensure that when the data was transcribed it would be accurate. This was also to ensure reliability and validity (quality assurance will be described further within this chapter). One of the interviews was transcribed by the researcher. The six remainder interviews were transcribed by two professional transcribers. The professional transcribers were asked to transcribe verbatim (to transcribe exactly what they had heard).

A semi-structured interview (see appendix 7) was used, each interview took no longer than 45 minutes. The interview was developed based upon guidance from

Kvale (1996). Kvale (1996) argues that the purpose of the interview is to gain qualitative descriptions of the world view of the participant.

Before the interview was recorded, it was ensured that consent forms were signed and that participants were aware of the purpose of the interview. The rationale behind having a dictaphone was explained. The researcher then gave the participants the opportunity to ask questions prior to the start of the interview. They were also informed that they could ask questions throughout the interview if they felt unsure about a question and required clarification. The researcher also ensured that participants were aware that they had the right to withdraw at any stage. Furthermore, it was ensured that the interview situation did not become a therapeutic situation (Kvale, 1996), however the researcher showed empathy throughout the research process.

The semi-structured interviews helped to provide detailed, in-depth information on the young people's experiences and views about exam related anxiety and also the intervention. During the interview it was ensured that the participants felt comfortable enough to share their views through the interview process and the researcher. In order to ensure that the participants felt at ease, the researcher spent time at the beginning of the interview building rapport. The researcher also ensured that ethics were held in mind throughout the interview when steering the interview (Kvale, 1996). For example, when the researcher was conducting an interview, if a participant became distressed recalling the anxiety around exams, the researcher moved to the next question, focussing on their experience of the intervention as opposed to continuing to question them about the anxiety around exams. The participants well-being was prioritised by the researcher over the

data collection. In addition to this, in the case of participants becoming distressed, information on how to support them was shared with the SENco and the young person's parents. The young people were also given information on agencies where they could receive further support if required.

The participants were also debriefed at the end of the interview. This was an important part of the interview as it has been reported by Kvale (1996) that the interviewee may feel a sense of emptiness having provided so much personal information with regards to their world view and not having received anything in return. The interviewee was given the opportunity to ask questions after the dictaphone was switched off.

All of the data and transcripts were kept on a computer, protected with a password.

3.8 DEVELOPMENT OF THE SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW:

Interview questions were based on the guidance provided by Kvale (1996). An interview script was also used (appendix 7), though this was not strictly adhered to. Kvale suggested using the following types of questions, this style of questioning was incorporated within the semi structured interview.

- Introducing questions: The following are examples of introducing questions: "Can you tell me about ...?" "Can you describe... to me in as much detail". These questions were used as a way of gaining in depth and detailed responses from participants regarding their experiences.

- Follow up questions: These questions were used as a way of extending the participants' answers, for example through nodding, or through clarifying with the participant regarding the meaning of what they have just stated. This is also achieved through asking further questions and also listening to what was important to the participants but also through keeping the research questions in mind.
- Probing questions: The researcher also used probing questions. This was used to help the participant to elaborate on the answer that they have been given. This also helped the researcher to acquire rich, in-depth and meaningful data. This also provided further insight in to the world view of the participant. Examples of probing questions were "Can you give me a more detailed description of what happened?" and "Can you tell me more about that?".
- Direct questions: Direct questions were used by the researcher to ensure that what the participant had said had been correctly understood.
- Indirect questions: Indirect, projective questions were asked by the researcher, an example of this kind of question that was asked during the interview is "what do you think that young people need to help them to cope with exams?" The answer to this question may help the participant to think about the attitudes of others but may also help to provide insight in to the researchers own attitudes.
- Interpreting questions: Attempts to understand what the participants had stated were carried out through asking them "You mean that.....?" and allowing the participant to clarify. Alternatively, participants were asked "Is

it correct that you feel that?”. It was ensured that participants were allowed the time and the space to be able to reflect on the questions, but also to allow them space to think about whether they would like to add more to their answer.

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS:

The researcher used thematic analysis to analyse the data of the current research. Although there are a number of qualitative techniques that the researcher could have used, the researcher felt that thematic analysis was best suited for this piece of research. Other qualitative analysis techniques will be briefly described, followed by the rationale for using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is used for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns in data. It can be used to organise and describe data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It involves searching across the data set for repeated patterns of meaning. However, there is no clear agreement about what it is and the procedure for carrying it out (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is a qualitative analysis technique that attempts to gain an understanding of individuals' experiences, and their world view. It also aims to help the researcher to understand the “quality and texture” and the meaning that the individual holds regarding their experiences (Willig, 2013). Unlike thematic analysis, IPA requires the researcher to follow clear steps when completing the analysis. IPA was not selected as a tool to analyse the data by the researcher because when analysing data using IPA the researcher is required to analyse data at the individual participant level but also analyse themes across all of the cases. It has been argued that IPA does not provide analysis at

the same level of depth and richness as thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Furthermore, it has also been argued that IPA is not theoretically flexible (Braun and Clarke, 2013) and is strongly aligned with the ontological and epistemological position of a social constructionist.

Grounded theory is similar to thematic analysis that the data is coded and patterns are looked for within the data. However, the difference with grounded theory is that the researcher “builds a theory” from the data (Braun and Clarke, 2013). It was felt by the researcher that grounded theory was not a good fit for this piece of research as the researcher was not aiming to build a new theory, but instead wanted to understand young people’s views on exam anxiety.

The researcher felt that thematic analysis was well suited for this piece of research as thematic analysis is flexible, in that it does not stipulate that certain research methods need to be used. Nor does it require the researcher to hold a certain ontological or epistemological position (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Unlike IPA and grounded theory, thematic analysis is not theoretically bound to any theoretical framework. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that critical realism is a good fit for thematic analysis. This is because it focuses on the social context of the meanings but also on the data in terms of attempting to understand reality (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The researcher can either analyse the data without any preconceived theories held in mind and can be “data driven” in a bottom up manner. Alternatively, the researcher can analyse the data in a top down manner, and explore the data in relation to a theory that is held in mind. Although there are a number of ways to complete thematic analysis Braun and Clarke advise using a six phase process (these six phases will be discussed below). However,

they also state in their paper that the six phases are guidelines and do not need to be stuck to rigidly. The researcher followed these phases flexibly in relation to her research questions and data (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Braun and Clarke (2013, p207) define codes as the “building blocks of analysis”. The data within this thesis was inductively coded. This means that the data was coded without trying to make it fit into a pre-existing code which would be required when deductively coding (theoretical coding). The rationale for analysing the data in a purely data driven manner was because researching young people’s views on exam anxiety is an under researched area. As stated within the previous chapter, there is limited research that has been completed within this particular area. The research questions were not based upon any pre conceived theories. The data was read and re read with the research questions in mind. Keeping the research questions in mind allowed the researcher to analyse the data in a way that would ensure that the research questions were answered. Answers to the research questions evolved through the coding process.

Braun and Clarke (2006) define themes as representations of the patterns within the data. Braun and Clarke suggest within their guidance that it is possible to analyse themes at different levels, for example semantic or latent. Semantic themes were analysed for surface level meanings, however latent level themes can also be identified. Latent themes analyse the data for underlying meanings and concepts. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that social constructionists would generally theorise about what they felt was meant by what was articulated by the participant within the data. As the researcher held a critical realist position, the motivations of the participants were analysed in a straight forward manner. This

means that the researcher interpreted that which was articulated by participants literally. Therefore, identifying semantic themes fits with the critical realist ontological and epistemological position.

A step by step account of how the data was analysed will now be given (taken from Braun and Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) advise that the analysis should not take place in a linear process, instead it should be a recursive process. This means that the researcher does not simply begin the analysis by analysing the data set in a linear manner until the analysis is completed. Instead the data was repeatedly scrutinized, and the researcher moved back and forth when analysing the data (i.e. repeatedly read the whole data set beginning to end).

Phase 1: Phase 1 involved becoming familiar with the data.

The data was transcribed into written form in order to begin the thematic analysis. Some of the data was transcribed by the researcher and some was transcribed professionally (as stated previously). The researcher read through the transcripts. The transcripts were also checked back against the original audio in order to check for accuracy. Once the data had been transcribed, the researcher familiarized herself with the data, in terms of the depth and the breadth of the content. This involved repeated reading of the data and becoming immersed. The researcher searched for patterns and meanings. The whole data set was read once before the coding process began. At this stage, notes were taken along the side of the transcript as ideas for codes. A formal coding process was not yet begun at this stage.

Phase 2:

During phase 2, the initial codes were formed. Codes are parts of the data that are of interest to the researcher. Coding the data is part of the analysis and how the data is organised. Only the data that related to the research questions was coded and then analysed (selective coding as opposed to complete coding). Selective coding involves “identifying a corpus of instances of the phenomena that you’re interested in, and then selecting those out” (Braun and Clarke, 2013 p 206). The initial codes were written on the original transcripts for each interview. The data was coded in a number of ways (i.e. there were at times more than one code for each segment of data). When the researcher read each transcript, a different highlighter was used for each research question, so that when the data was coded, it would make it clear to the researcher which research question the data related to. There were similarities in the data, for example for research question 1 and research question 3. This means that there were links between the data. For example, when young people spoke about their experiences of exam anxiety (research questions 1), these answers were linked to when they spoke about what they felt would help them to cope with exam anxiety (research question 3). However, the data did not overlap.

Once the data was coded, a word document was created for each participant’s interview (this was used as a way of knowing where the data had come from). Three tables were created in each document (one table for each research question). The tables had two columns, one for the data that related to the research question, and another column for the codes. The data that related to each research question was put into the relevant tables, the initial codes from the original transcripts were put along side them. The data was then re read and re

coded to ensure that any data that may have been missed was included during this process. This process was used by the researcher to ensure that a thorough and systematic approach was used in the process of coding (please see appendix 9 for example of a table with coded data).

During phase 3 themes were searched for

The coding evolved as the researcher went through the entire data set. For this reason, the researcher went back to the initial data set, as some of the codes had been modified. At this stage the researcher sorted the codes into different themes. All seven interviews were analysed together in order to examine common themes.

The researcher clustered the codes together by hand for each research question using large sheets of A3 paper. The researcher looked for patterns amongst the codes and identified the most salient features (Willig, 2013). However, the researcher did not look simply for saliency (this means concepts that came up repeatedly), but the researcher also looked for data that was meaningful in answering the research questions. Meaningful data was included within the themes, even if it was not something that came up repeatedly (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p223). The reason for this was because the analysis was not one that was quantitative. The researcher intended to present the data, including all of the nuances within it, not just that which was salient. The researcher then named these themes. The themes that were generated were not hierarchical.

Phase 4 – Reviewing themes

During this phase the raw data was repeatedly scrutinized to ensure that no data had been missed during the coding process. The themes were then checked to

ensure there was enough data for certain themes to be called themes. Some of the themes combined with other themes. Reviewing the themes involved two stages: Level one involved checking that the themes form a coherent pattern (if some of the codes did not fit the theme, the theme was reworked and sometimes this involved creating a new theme). Once this was completed, level two involved considering the validity of the data set. This involved re reading the entire data set and checking whether the thematic maps were an accurate representation of the data set.

Phase 5:

Once a thematic map was completed, the themes were “refined and defined”. This means that the meaning of each theme was identified (the themes were interpreted). The following questions were asked, as recommended by Braun and Clarke “what does this theme mean”? “What are the assumptions underpinning it?” “What are the implications of this theme” “What is the overall story the themes reveal about this topic”? Sub themes were identified at this stage. In order to test whether the themes could be defined, a few sentences were written in order to explain the content of each of them. If this was not possible, it meant that further refinement of the theme was required.

Phase 6

During this phase, a final analysis was completed and the results were written up.

3.10 QUALITY ASSURANCE:

Guba (1981) has argued that the following criteria should be used when judging quality in qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. The above was met by ensuring the following:

Credibility – this means ensuring that there is correspondence between the way the participants perceived social constructs and how the researcher portrayed their viewpoints. The researcher aspired to have a shared understanding of social constructs as the participants. Participants were informed that there was no right or wrong answer and as stated earlier the researcher ensured that a rapport was built with the participants so that they felt comfortable enough to give honest answers. In addition to this the researcher made it clear that she did not work for the school (Shenton, 2004). This was to ensure that the participants could speak freely about their ideas, without feeling that they are letting down the school because of their views (Shenton, 2004). Participants were reminded that they can withdraw at any stage of the study. This was to ensure that only those participants that took part genuinely consenting were included within the study.

The researcher used an inductive code. Use of an inductive code, meant that meaning was attempted to be captured without having pre-set codes to begin with. As suggested by Shenton (2004) the researcher kept a reflective diary as a way to evaluate the process of the interviews. The potential issues that arose within the interviews will be discussed within the limitations section of the discussion.

Transferability – this means the degree to which findings can be generalised to other situations. As this was a small scale study, it may not be completely generalisable other young people. However, the research provided insight into anxiety issues around exams and also how such a programme has been received.

Dependability – This relates to stability over time and the appropriateness of the enquiry. According to a positivist epistemological and ontological position, dependability is being able to repeat a study and gain the same results. However, when using qualitative approaches, it is not possible for a study to be “reliable” in the same way as when quantitative approaches are employed. Shenton (2004) suggest that when using qualitative approaches, the researcher should ensure that there is a process of transparent data collection and analysis. Therefore, the researcher has clearly documented the process and research design within this chapter to ensure dependability.

Conformability – This relates to ensuring that data and interpretation are not figments of the researcher’s imagination. This means ensuring the children’s views are accurately reflected in the data. Conformability was also ensured through reflexivity; regular research supervision will also ensure reflexivity through the form of debriefing with her research supervisor. Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that the best way to ensure conformability is for the researcher to be open about their own predispositions. The researcher ensured that the research remained unbiased through having regular supervision with her research supervisor and reflecting upon upon any personal biases to the ensure that the data remained as objective as possible. This ensured that the data is a true reflection of the young people’s views.

Trustworthiness was also aimed to be achieved. Trustworthiness has been referred to by Robson (2011, p85) as completing “a good, honest and thorough job”. Wolcott (1990) also argued that trustworthiness could be achieved through allowing the participant in leading the discussion but also through recording accurately. This means that the young person was supported to lead the discussion but the researcher ensured transparent and accurate recording.

Inter-rater reliability - (Willig 2013, p24) has stated that research can be deemed as being reliable if it yields the same answer on different occasions”. Although the concept of reliability is a positivist concept which assumes that there is a single reality that can be understood from language, the researcher holds a critical realist epistemology and ontological world view. Therefore, Braun and Clarke (2013) argue that inter-rater reliability can therefore be problematic within qualitative research due to the assumption that coding can be objective. Inter-rater reliability was therefore not sought by the researcher in the traditional sense where two or more coders code a section of data independently and then compare codes (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Codes that had been derived from the data were discussed with a peer to check that they would have understood the same meanings or understanding from the extracts of data.

3.11 ETHICAL ISSUES

Both HCPC (2012) Standards of conduct, performance and ethics and the BPS: Code of Ethics and Conduct (2009) were adhered to by the researcher. Both of these guidelines state the importance of obtaining informed consent and also maintaining confidentiality. It was ensured by the researcher that informed

consent was gained from the young people, parents and schools prior to the interviews taking place (appendix 2,4 and 6). The researcher informed those taking part in the study how the data will be used, and how the data will be stored (all participants were given this information in writing, appendix 1). The researcher anonymized all of the participant's names and schools and informed the participants of this prior to them taking part in the study. Confidentiality was also maintained and the participants and schools were aware of this. The researcher made it clear that the only time that confidentiality will be breached will be in the context of a disclosure that the young person or another person may be at risk of being harmed (within the bounds of safeguarding policy).

Throughout the interview participants were reminded that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any stage. They were also informed that they could withdraw the content of their interview within a two-month time frame. After the interview had been completed the participants were debriefed. It was anticipated that participants may encounter difficult emotions and may require additional support. Participants were signposted to services where they could receive this additional support. All interviews were conducted in a private and safe place to ensure that the participants feel comfortable and confidentiality was adhered to.

A research proposal was submitted to the University of East London. In addition to this an application for ethical approval was made to the University of East London. Both the research proposal and ethics request were accepted, and the research was accepted as an ethically appropriate piece of research.

3.12 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER:

Within this chapter, the researchers ontological and epistemological position was covered. The research design, quality assurance and the researchers chosen method of data analysis were also discussed. Within the next chapter the research findings will be presented and interpreted.

CHAPTER 4 – RESULTS

4.1 OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTER

Within this chapter the results that emerged from the analysis of the semi – structured interviews will be presented. The process of coding and analysing the data and how the themes and sub themes were determined was discussed in detail in chapter three. Ensuring that the data analysis was reliable was a key part of the process.

Each research question will be presented, and the thematic maps (in the form of a diagram) which emerged for each research question will be presented. The data supporting each thematic map will then be presented. These findings and implications will be discussed further in the final chapter (discussion).

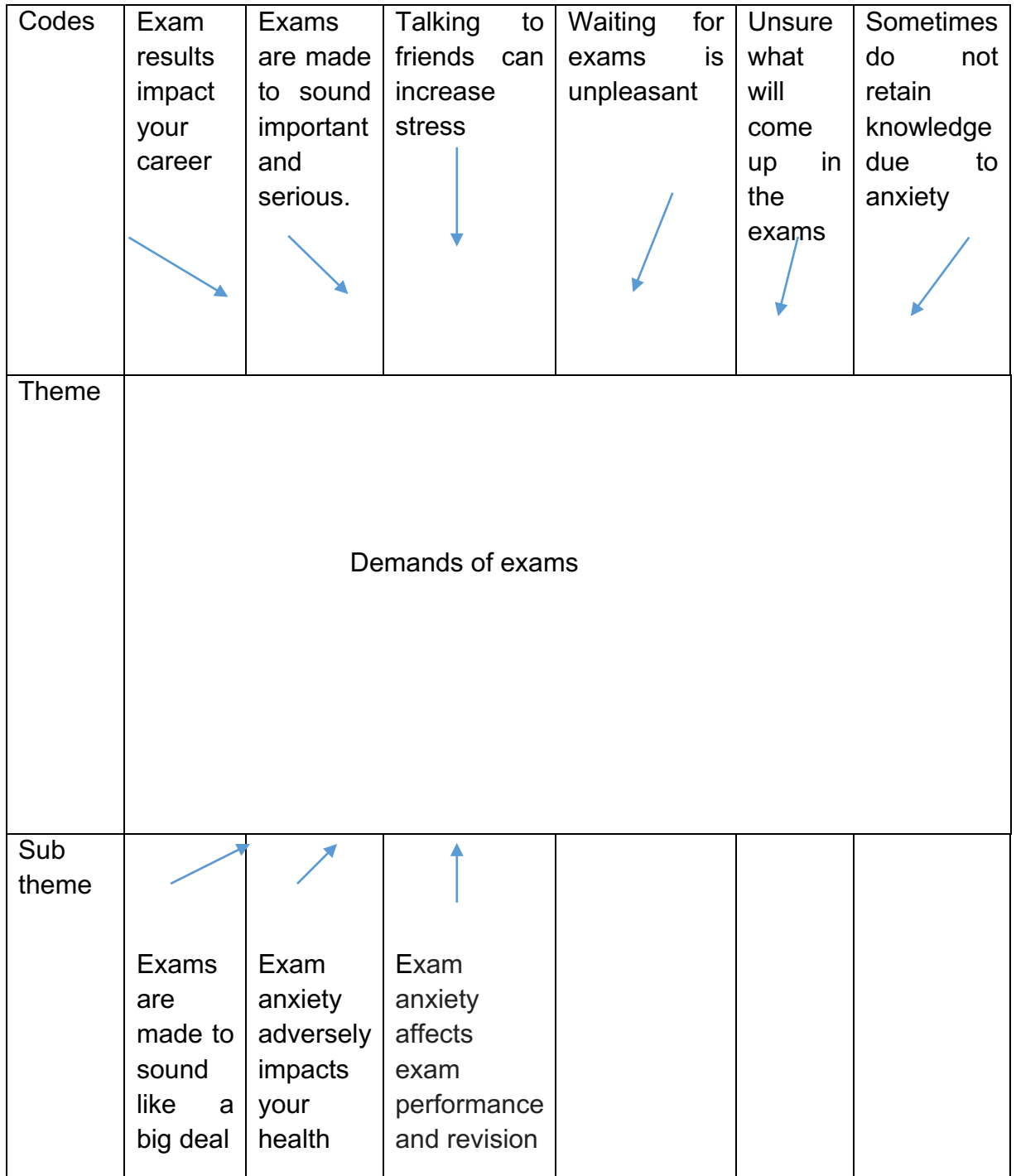
4.2 GENERATION OF THEMES

As explained in the previous chapter, codes that were similar in meaning were clustered together. Once the researcher had identified the patterns within the data, and identified themes. The themes were checked to ensure there was enough data within the theme for it to be called a theme. Initially there were a number of themes and these were collapsed so that more than one theme was merged into a single theme. Collapsing of themes took place because it was felt

that there was a central concept that unified the data extracts (there was an underlying similarity between the themes).

As part of the refinement process, subthemes were identified to ensure that the theme was representative of the data. Each theme was examined closely to ensure whether the themes represented the data. If it was felt by the researcher that a single theme did not represent all the data within the theme, subthemes were developed to ensure that the nuances within the theme could be understood. Braun and Clarke (2013, p337) have defined subthemes as “in thematic analysis, sub theme captures and develops one notable specific aspect of one theme, but shares the central organising concept of that theme”. The process of coding, identifying themes, collapsing themes and identifying subthemes was discussed with peers, and also the researcher’s supervisor as part of peer credibility checks. Examples of how the codes moved to themes, and how sub themes were developed can be seen in the figure below.

FIGURE 2: HOW CODES MOVED TO THEMES, AND ALSO HOW SUB THEMES WERE DEVELOPED



4.3 THEMATIC MAPS

Thematic maps were generated for each research question (as opposed to one overall thematic map). The thematic maps were reviewed and refined in stages.

The thematic map for research question ones shows 4 themes. The thematic map for research question 2 shows 4 themes. Finally, the thematic map for research question 3 shows 5 themes.

FIGURE 3: THEMATIC MAP FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 1

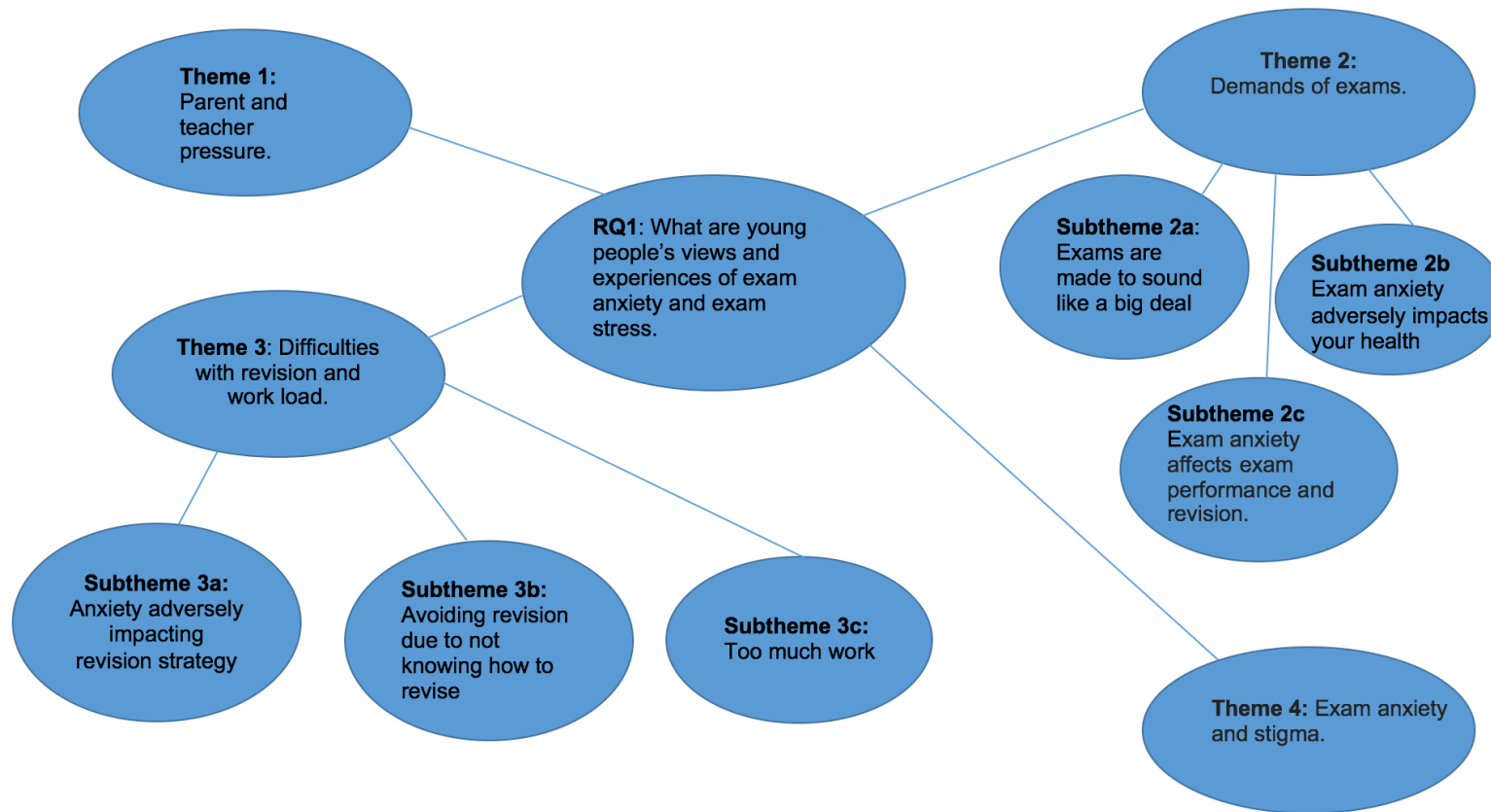


FIGURE 4: THEMATIC MAP FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 2

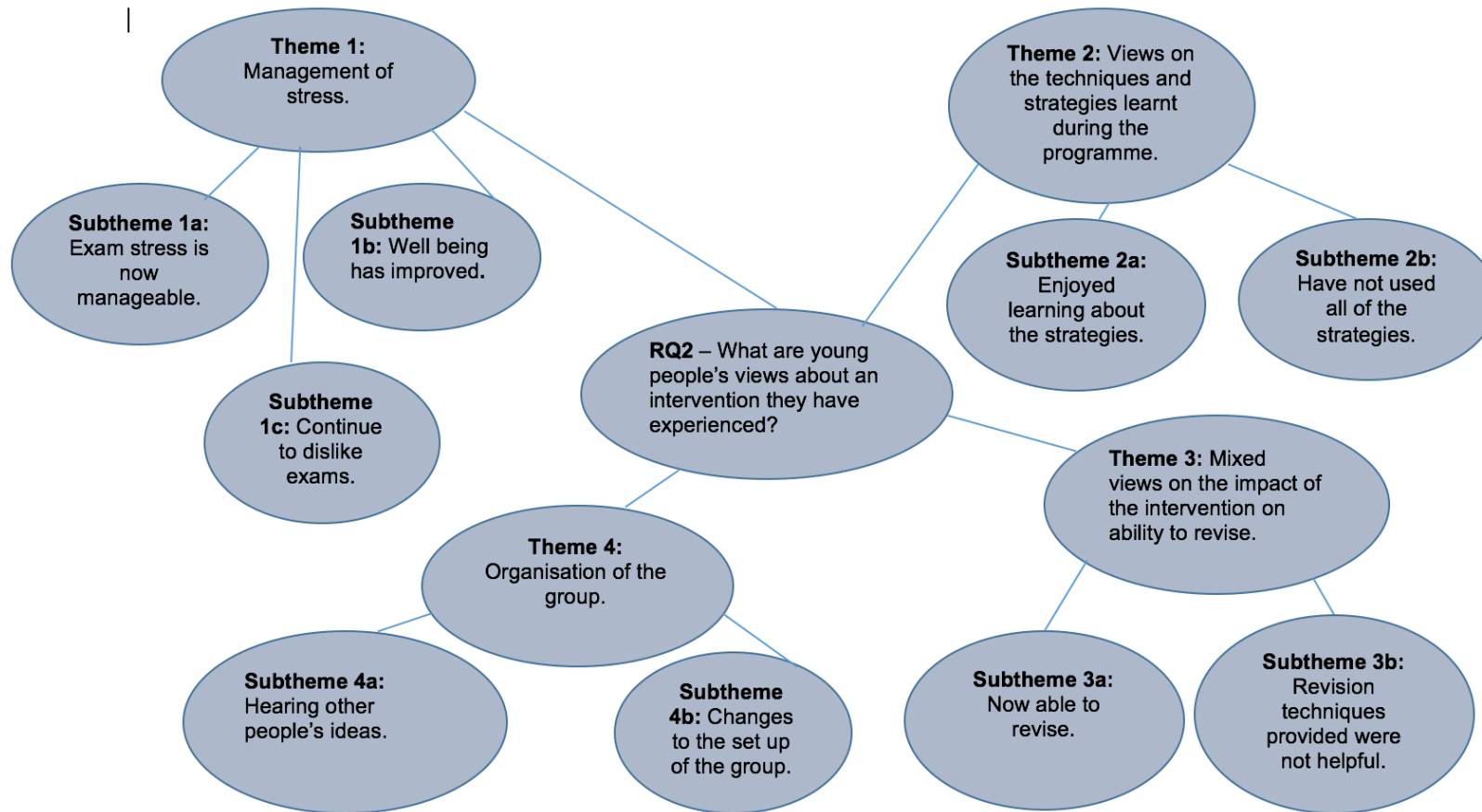
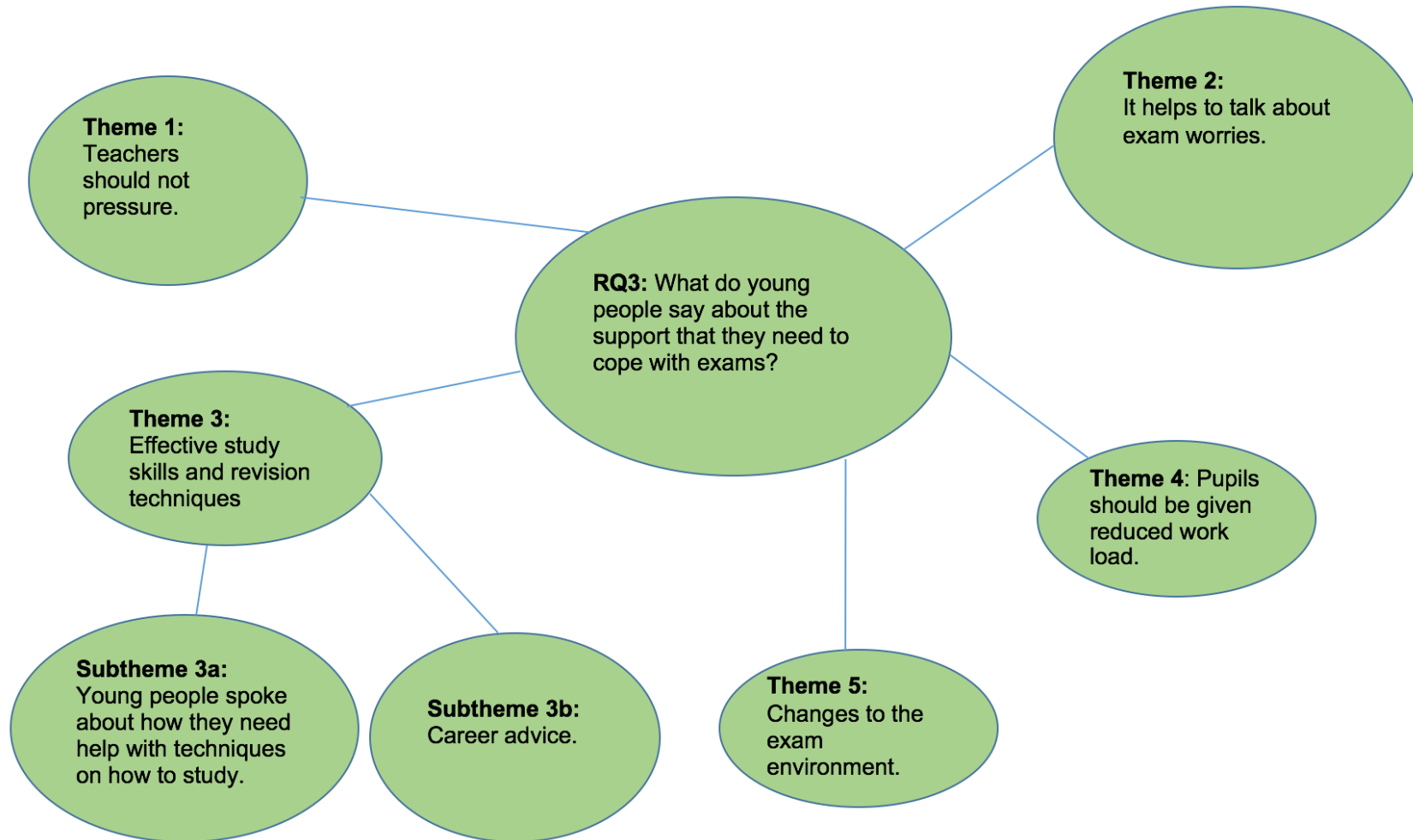


FIGURE 5: THEMATIC MAP FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 3



4.4 PRESENTATION OF THE DATA SUPPORTING EACH THEME

The results will be presented by showing extracts of data that supported each theme. As discussed in the methodology, false names will be used for the purpose of anonymity.

The data supporting the themes and subthemes for research question one will now be presented.

4.4.1 RESEARCH QUESTION 1: WHAT ARE THE VIEWS OF THE GROUP OF YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT EXAMS AND STRESS?

4.4.2 THEME 1 - PARENT AND TEACHER PRESSURE:

Many participants expressed that they felt pressure to do well in their exams by their parents and also indirectly by their teachers.

With regards to teacher pressure, one student commented that students feel torn in different directions with regards to the number of subjects that they are required to revise for (and also the number of tasks they are being asked to complete):

“I think having like if they’re being pressured and doing too many things like teachers saying their subject’s more important than the others, then that makes them focus and I don’t think that’s fair. They should’ve said like do your best and like revise as much as you can. But don’t put too much on yourselves, because it’s not fair on us and they should like just teachers should be a lot more understanding because I know they’ve done their exams”.

Transcript 2, line 696

The same participant explained that each subject teacher would like them to focus on the subject taught by them and produce good exam results in their own subject. She discussed how this had happened to her friends and shared their experience:

“but they told me about how like stressed they were getting over Drama, and the teacher telling you like it was more important because it’s not, every subject’s equally important so”.

Transcript 2, line 714

Zahra also expressed that she felt that individual subject teachers were telling them to do well in their own subject:

“but it’s just too much pressure because they’re like, “You’ve got to get this and you’ve got to do this. Remember to do this”, and for all the subjects that people were taking”.

Transcript 5, line 434

How much and how often young people are told by teachers to revise is unclear/ and one young person felt was sometimes unrealistic. However when the teacher ask the young people to revise, it appears that the teacher seems to be referring only to their own subject. Students also commented that they are not given guidance as to how much time they need to be spending overall, and how to divide their time between subjects.

Mohammad also stated that each teacher tells the students to go home and revise for a certain number of hours. However again it appears that the teacher seems to be referring only to their own subject.

“they say, ‘You need to be at home going home and revising every night’, but I just look at them and think are you being stupid or something, no-one’s going to go home revise every night for two hours and then do that again for another subject”.

Transcript 3, line 981

It would appear that Mohammad felt that the amount of time he was asked to spend revising may be unrealistic. Maryam’s comments highlight how students feel they are given inconsistent messages as to how much to revise for each subject and also whether it is acceptable to focus on other things in their lives.

They're like you should be revising at least an hour two hours a day and then you get the other teachers that are like no that's too much, like you need to be focusing on other things as well so.

Transcript 2, line 750

Zahra commented that because of the messages that they were given regarding the importance of doing their best and doing well in their exams, she felt worried about what would happen if she was unable to achieve them:

... it's too much pressure on us because all the teachers are like, "You've got to do your best. You've got to get this many in results", and you're just sitting there thinking, "What if I can't get the results? What's going to happen if I can't get the results".

Transcript, line 430

Maryam discussed that in her school, each individual's exam results would be publically displayed on a board:

"like at our school we have a board in one of the rooms and it has a picture of everybody in the year group, it had a picture we've finished now so it doesn't, of everybody in the year group and it was like 8 A – Cs, above 5 A - Cs, 5 A-C's, below 5 and it was like green, orange and red and like that was a lot of pressure like because anybody could see"

Transcript, line 639

Maryam stated that she felt that the reason for publically displaying how pupils were achieving was to make students aware of their performance, so that it would motivate them to study for their exams. This same student spoke about concerns around bullying:

But it's not nice, it's not a nice thing because that kind of thing causes bullying".

Transcript, line 639

Some participants stated that teachers highlighted to them that their performance in exams would have an impact on their future. For example, A'isha stated the following:

" People.. teachers kept going on about how important it was to revise and how they affect the rest of your life and that really didn't help me. It made me panic more".

Transcript, line 357

A'isha stated that she understood that it is important to let young people know the importance of exams, but found it unhelpful to continuously mention how it would impact their lives.

Mohammad commented that young people are continuously told about the importance of doing well in their exams, but they are not old enough to understand this or take it seriously:

“Like someone I know has just got an F in their coursework just didn't do anything thought it was a joke and he wasn't old enough to appreciate what's going on like he doesn't you know he thinks it's all a joke...”

Transcript, line 893

Mohammad stated that teachers tell young people that they only have one chance to do well in their exams:

“like the way they say, ‘Oh it's imperative you do well now, you've only got one chance’, but I know for a fact you have got another chance if you do badly worst comes to worst you could just do them again”.

Transcript, line 876

Mohammad therefore expressed that being told that they have one chance to succeed in their exams can increase pressure.

Many young people also spoke about the pressure that they experience to do well in their exams from their parents. Maryam gave the example of her mother discussing her exam performance with her friends:

“and my Mum's always saying to her friends, ‘Oh I want Maryam to do great in her exams’ and I'm just like, ‘No I'm not, stop mum’.

Interviewer: *So different expectations*

Maryam: *Like, ‘A's I want A's’ like jokingly but at the same I'm just there like, ‘You're not getting A's, like no’”.*

Transcript 4, line 706

Fatima also shared that parents pressure them to perform well in exams:

“I think some people’s parents definitely are pressuring too hard to get good grades”.

Transcript 2, line 814

Conversely other participants spoke about their parent being a protective factor in helping them to get through the stress of exams.

“I just didn’t know what to do, I was like, ‘Mum I have no idea what I’m going to do’ and she said at the end of the day it’s not what you do it’s just how you do it, if you try your best that’s all that matters and I just said to her, ‘But the thing is my best might not be the best and that’s what really worried me but she said at the end of the day you know... you’ve just got to do your best”.

Transcript 3, line 308

It seemed that just being told to do his best, without an expectation to perform very well reduced Mohammad’s anxiety about exams.

4.4.3 THEME 2: DEMANDS OF EXAMS:

Young people spoke about exams being made to sound very important and serious. As a result of the seriousness of exams young people expressed experiencing panic attacks, anxiety, losing sleep and appetite. In addition to this, when attempting to revise when feeling anxious young people expressed that they were unable to retain information due to exam anxiety.

4.4.3.1 SUBTHEME 2A: EXAMS ARE MADE TO SOUND LIKE A BIG DEAL

Participants commented on the way in which exams are spoken about in schools. Sara commented that exams were made to sound unpleasant from early on in her school career:

“I think it was just from primary school, that I just realised that uhm doing like your SATS or something. I don’t know whether its from there, I’ve perceived it to be this horrible thing”.

Transcript 1, line 467

The narrative around exams, for example that they are very important and will gradually become more difficult may be one of the reasons that young people find exams anxiety provoking:

“Because people keep saying, they keep getting harder and harder and harder. Its like, great”.

Transcript 1, line 473

Furthermore, the awareness that exams impact your future is closely related to the way in which exams are spoken about in school, and the messages that young people are given. For example, Sara felt that if she didn’t perform well in her exams, she wouldn’t be able to pursue her career choice, this would then result in her being unsure of what her future career may be:

“One thing that makes them even more scary is like if you don’t do well, you might not get what you want and you might not go into the career that you wanted to do”.

Transcript 1, line 478

“You make a choice and if you don’t get it, you don’t know what to do as like a job”.

Transcript 1, line 482

4.4.3.2 SUBTHEME 2B: EXAM ANXIETY ADVERSELY IMPACTS YOUR HEALTH

Young people expressed experiencing panic attacks, anxiety, losing sleep and appetite.

“Like I cried all the time”.

Transcript 4, line 125

This young person also spoke about how it impacted her sleep and also how she no longer wanted to take part in enjoyable activities such as socialising with her friends:

“So and then I wasn’t sleeping as much, as I wasn’t going out with my friends as much or anything, and yeah”.

Transcript 4, line 187

Khadija also explained that she experienced tiredness as a result of exam anxiety, and pain that she had previously experienced worsened as a result of the stress:

“I felt tired as well, and a bit stressful. I Um, and well, now I’m going to like, this chiropractor because I have pain in my leg and it made, kind of, the pain worse when I was stressed as well”.

Transcript 7, line 116

A’isha also spoke about how exam anxiety impacted her health:

“At certain points I kept getting panic attacks and stuff and getting reactions. I think they were because of the exams”.

Transcript 6, line 38

She also commented that she would suffer with anxiety attacks before entering the exam:

“I’ve been really panicky and most times I would have a panic attack before going in”.

Transcript 6, line 193

Zahra also spoke about how she would forget to eat due to the exam anxiety:

“I... I would... did eat but I mean, I didn’t... I didn’t feel hungry. I didn’t feel like I needed to eat. I just felt sick all the time but like after... if I talked to my... I talked to my mum because me and my mum are really close”.

In addition to this Sara also spoke about how anxiety adversely impacted her

“I would usually have a mental break down and cry for a little bit”.

Transcript 1, line 100

4.4.3.3 SUBTHEME 2C: EXAM ANXIETY AFFECTS EXAM PERFORMANCE AND REVISION

Some of the participants spoke about anxiety adversely affecting their performance within an exam. Mohammad stated that prior to taking part in the intervention, he would not engage with the exam paper due to the anxiety. He also spoke about pre-empting failure:

but I just go, 'Oh you know screw it oh well' you know, 'I'm going to fail, oh dear okay I don't really care', that's my sort of mind-set at the time I just feel angry...

Transcript 3, line 522

Exam anxiety was also found to inhibit the ability to actually learn information when revising for exams

"For example, Sara said "but if I can't do something, it kind of puts a mental block. I feel like I don't get this. I am never gonna get it".

Transcript 1, line 118

Other students shared that they were less able to retain what they revised because of the anxiety that they were experiencing. For example, Ai'sha said

"even though it was like, I do know the.. like the stuff in the subjects, its just where I worry so much I just kind of start to forget".

Transcript 1, line 153

Therefore, this might suggest that anxiety inhibits the ability to remember information acquired through revision for this student.

4.4.4: THEME 3: DIFFICULTIES WITH REVISION AND WORK LOAD

Participants spoke about how anxiety impacted their revision strategy (subtheme 3a). Other young people spoke about avoiding revision because they did not know how to revise (subtheme 3b). They also spoke about feeling overwhelmed with the amount of work they are expected to complete. For example, still being given non revision related home work during the lead up to exams, when they would like to be focusing on revision (subtheme 3c).

4.4.4.1: SUBTHEME 3A: ANXIETY ADVERSELY IMPACTING REVISION STRATEGY

Maryam felt anxiety impacted her revision strategy, in that she would revise too much, or avoid revising altogether.

“I was either over revising, because I was worried about how I would do or I was not revising at all because I didn’t want to think about exams”.

Transcript 4, line 177

Some students also spoke about how they avoided revision altogether due to anxiety.

For example, Aisha said

“knowing I had to revise, but because of panicking and getting really anxious about it, I would put it off until like a few nights before”.

Transcript 6, line 171

4.4.4.2 SUBTHEME 3B: AVOIDING REVISION DUE TO NOT KNOWING HOW TO REVISE:

Young people spoke about avoiding revision as they felt that they did not have an adequate revision strategy or lacked knowledge on how to go about revising.

“I get a book out and think, ‘Okay, what am I going to revise?’ And I choose a subject to revise okay, what part shall I revise? I’ll pick a subject, ‘Okay how am I going to revise that?’ I don’t know so I don’t do it”.

Transcript 3, line 323

Khadija also commented that she did not revise, because she did not know how to:

“I didn’t know how to do it really, I just.. didn’t know and that’s why I never really did it (laughter) because I didn’t know how to start”

Transcript 7, line 352

Not knowing how to revise, was also linked to poor motivation and finding the process cumbersome. For example, Mohammad stated not only did he struggle with his revision method but also with motivation:

“my mum came into my room saying, ‘Are you revising?’ And every time she came in I put my phone down under you know the front of the book, I was like, ‘Yeah I’m reading the book’ and I was on my phone like on Facebook just talking to people because I just didn’t want to do it”.

Transcript 3, line 406

He also suggested that revision was not a fun activity:

“Where’s the fun in your life if you’re always going to spend your whole time revising”?

Transcript 3, line 985

Another participant spoke about how much she didn’t enjoy revising

“I just... I hated... I hated sitting there and just studying and studying”.

Transcript 5, line 1184

When Zahra was asked why she didn’t like revision, she replied, *“that it was work and I had to do it”.*

4.4.4.2 SUBTHEME 3c: TOO MUCH WORK:

Young people expressed feeling overwhelmed with the amount of work they are expected to complete. For example, they are still given home work during the lead up to exams when they would like to be focusing on revision.

Uhm because sometimes we get too much work at night to do revision so they should be like either give us some work to revise or just uhm like not load like an essay on us when we have an exam the next day”.

Transcript 2, line 762

Fatima spoke about this meaning she had less time to focus on her revision:

“schoolwork is a factor for anxiety and exams because uhm you haven’t had time to revise so that makes it harder”.

Transcript 2, line 822

Mohammad also spoke about feeling overwhelmed with the amount of work that he needed to complete:

“and then manage to sit down and open my bag and look at all the stuff I’ve got to do and it’s overwhelming the fact of the amount of stuff that I’ve got to do...”

Transcript 3, line 341

Fatima also commented that she did not have enough time to relax due to revision, and exam pressure:

“but then they (teachers) say rest as well, and you’re like, we don’t have time!”

Transcript 2, line 974

4.4.5: THEME 4: EXAM ANXIETY AND STIGMA:

Some pupils said their peers say that they are not worried about exams, even if they are:

“I think people say they’re okay, but I think they feel a lot of pressure when it.. exam time is round”

Transcript 6, line 379

Zahra suggested that there may be a stigma around exam anxiety within schools:

“I don’t know if you noticed but when you’re in school, no... not many people talk about exams”.

Transcript 5, line 818

When Zahra was asked to explain what she meant she said

“you don’t normally hear them saying, “I’m so scared about the exams”, other than when it actually comes to the exams”.

Transcript 5, line 824

When the researcher asked Zahra why young people avoid talking about exam anxiety she said:

Like I said, you only have your reputation, like if you’re a person who’s scared and you’re worried about exams that would completely blow away. Yeah, and you won’t have one anymore and you’ll just be in your little... in the corner”.

Transcript 5, line 892

4.5 RESEARCH QUESTION 2: WHAT ARE THE VIEWS OF THE GROUP OF YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT AN INTERVENTION PROGRAMME RELATED TO MANAGING ANXIETY/STRESS AND EXAMS?

4.5.1 THEME 1: MANAGEMENT OF STRESS:

Many young people felt that they are now more able to manage exam anxiety due to the techniques they learnt in the programme (theme 1a). However, despite feeling that they can now manage the exam stress, they continue to dislike exams and feel nervous about them (theme 1b).

4.5.1.1 SUBTHEME 1A: EXAM STRESS IS NOW MANAGEABLE:

Young people explained that they can now manage exam anxiety. Zahra commented that she now knows what to do when she feels anxious about the exams:

“I know how to calm myself down now if I get worried or scared then I know how to, sort of, just like... sort of those methods like finger breathing”

Transcript 5, line 966

Some young people commented that they are now able to manage their anxiety levels whilst in the exam:

“Like on a mock exam like I remember I looked at it and I was like I have no idea how to do that, came back and I got full marks on that question and I was like, ‘Okay’ just because she said to me, ‘Don’t get panicked’ and I didn’t”.

Transcript 3, line 563

This young person spoke about the EP running the programme and the strategies that she gave the young people, helped him to remain calm within the exam situation.

Similarly, Fatima commented that as a result of the exam anxiety intervention, she now knows how to manage the exam anxiety:

“I’m not too worried because I know like what to do and uhm I just feel a lot better about them because I know if I get in there and I panic then I know what to do to calm myself down...”

Transcript 2, line 438

“If I get worried, I know how to calm myself down”.

Transcript 1, line 241

4.5.1.2 SUBTHEME 1B: WELL BEING HAS IMPROVED

Young people commented that their overall well being has improved as a result of the exam anxiety intervention:

“Oh its fine now, I can concentrate, and then my sleeping got better and I eat now”.

Transcript 5, line 591

Aisha also spoke about how the exam anxiety intervention techniques helped improve her sleep:

“It kind of relaxes you and is really helpful, I found it really helpful for going to sleep”

Transcript 6, line 209

“I wont spend as long upset or stressing over it”

Transcript 1, line 309

4.5.1.3 SUBTHEME 1C: YOUNG PEOPLE CONTINUE TO DISLIKE EXAMS

Despite young people feeling that they can now manage the exam anxiety, they commented that they continue to dislike, and feel nervous about them:

“but I still do get nervous as I said it’s because it’s an exam, it’s my future so I still get like I still get nervous, but not as nervous as I would do before”

Transcript 1, line 571

This participant therefore continues to feel nervous about exams, as she links the outcomes of the exams results with her future. Another participant also commented on how she continues to dislike exams:

I did like try and calm myself down but I still didn’t like the thought of exams.

Transcript 4, line 309

Another participant also said that despite still feeling anxious, she now has strategies to help reduce her anxiety levels:

“I feel better, I still get worried about them, but learning methods of how I can lessen the impact of the stress has helped”.

4.5.2 THEME 2: VIEWS ON THE STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES LEARNT DURING THE PROGRAMME

Some young people spoke about the strategies that they enjoyed learning about and found useful (subtheme 2a). They also spoke about not using all of the strategies that they learnt on the programme (subtheme 2b).

Subtheme 2a: Young people spoke about the strategies that they enjoyed learning about.

Young people commented on the strategies that they felt helped them to manage exam anxiety and those that they enjoyed learning about. Although it is not possible

to display the data to illustrate all of the techniques that the young people enjoyed learning about (as there were too many), some data will be used to show a few of the techniques that young people said they enjoyed learning about:

Mohammed commented that the intervention helped him with how he approached the exam paper and it also helped him not to blow his worries out of proportion:

“So you just slow your thoughts down, you just like take it one step at a time instead of you know like just blowing it out of proportion”.

Transcript 3, line 513

Fatima also spoke about how positive thinking had helped her:

“Because like if you go into the exam and you think, ‘Oh I’m going to fail’, then you normally would so when I did like assessments then I was like, ‘Oh I’m doing my best’ and like, ‘You can do this’ and so when we did that it really helped”.

Transcript 2, line 39

Khadija spoke about being forgetful, but she learnt some skills around organisation as a result of taking part in the intervention:

Well I have, like, a board on my wall so I can write everything down that I need to remember because... that’s been really helpful actually.

Transcript 7, line 286

She also spoke about the breathing techniques that she learnt during the intervention:

“Yeah, it was just like from... you start here or something and you go... you breathe in then breathe out like that... each finger.

Interviewer: *Yeah.*

Interviewee: *Yeah, it just helped me [laughter].*

Transcript 7, line 235

Fatima spoke about how she enjoyed all of the intervention as she felt that she was learning techniques that would help her in the future:

“I did enjoy all of the sessions because I knew like from it I was learning something to help myself so I enjoyed it in that way because I knew it would help me in the future”

Transcript 7, line 459

SUBTHEME 2B: SOME YOUNG PEOPLE COMMENTED THAT THEY HAVE NOT USED ALL OF THE STRATEGIES THAT WERE DISCUSSED DURING THE PROGRAMME

Maryam stated that she has used the strategies she learnt about, however did not use them in an exam situation:

but I don't think I don't know I don't think it didn't help me with exams because a couple of like the techniques that we were taught like the body scan and finger breathing and things like that I've used I've used but not with exams like I didn't find them useful within an exam situation.

Transcript 4, line 359

Mohammad also expressed that he did not use all the techniques that were suggested within the intervention group. However, he later commented that he did find other techniques helpful:

She er she taught us ways like of how to not be stressed and like er like just like close your eyes and like when you're at home and think about being positive and things like that and I particularly I didn't do that because I didn't think that really helped.

Transcript 3, line 504

4.5.3 THEME 3: MIXED VIEWS ON THE IMPACT OF THE INTERVENTION ON ABILITY TO REVISE

Some young people spoke about how they are now more able to revise due to the techniques that they learnt during the programme (subtheme 3a). However other

young people commented that they felt that revision techniques that were provided were not helpful (subtheme 3b).

4.5.3.1 SUBTHEME 3A: NOW ABLE TO REVISE:

Young people commented that they have felt that they are more able to revise after taking part in the programme. Zahra commented that she felt more motivated when revising as a result of taking part in the intervention:

“so if I got worried about... so, if I was like, didn't want to study, I'd think, 'oh, well I'm nearly there. I've just got to do this little bit then I'm done”.

Transcript 5, line 1222

Maryam also commented that she felt more motivated to revise due to the intervention:

“ I think I was a bit more motivated to revise, like rather than just giving up, I was like 'You need to revise”.

Transcript 4, line 412

Fatima spoke about a shift in her revision technique as a result of taking part in the programme:

“my mum and dad said that I have improved a lot with like my like stress levels because they've noted that I am not pushing myself as hard as I used to, I'm just doing my best and not revising like for four hours straight I'm doing like sections

Transcript 2, line 512).

She went on to talk about what she did instead, as a result of it being recommended during the intervention:

Because (EP name) said not to just she said to just do chunks of something rather than like go at it.

Transcript 4, line 535

The strategy that was given to the young people during the intervention was to revise for 45 minutes and then take a break. As a result of these changes to her revision strategy, her exam results have improved:

“I got a lot better results than last set of mocks we did and my dad’s really like noted and my mum on my math’s because they’ve seen like me progress”

Transcript 2, line 550

Sara also commented that the EP that led the intervention told her to move on to another topic when revising if she felt stuck so that she did not feel disheartened:

“so I just change to a different subject. At that moment I tend to do something I can already do quite well”.

Transcript 1, line 248

A’isha also commented that the intervention had helped her to forward plan revision.

Prior to the intervention she would put off revising:

“I would probably do it more in advance now because I know that’s going to help me”

Transcript 6, line 312

Fatima also spoke about feeling more confident about revising:

“I feel so much more confident about it because I know like better methods...”

Transcript 2, line 665

4.5.3.2 SUBTHEME 3B: REVISION TECHNIQUES WERE NOT HELPFUL

Some young people commented that they did not find all of the revision techniques that were suggested as part of the intervention to be helpful. Mohammad suggested approaches to how to teach young people about how to revise:

Well I think like teaching people like sort of how to revise and how to break down revising so like an easy method like going through all the different possibilities where

people find the way they revise. I feel I revise best when I'm not realising I am doing it. Like for example there's something on TV about something and then you know I'll just think, 'Oh I'll watch that'.

Transcript 3, line 812

Therefore, Mohammad suggested that traditional methods of revision do not always work for everybody, and perhaps the programme could be improved by helping young people find a method that works for them in terms of revision.

Aisha also commented that the techniques suggested such as the use of a revision time table were difficult to stick to:

It didn't really help me that much, you know, the different techniques you could use for revision and organising your time.

Transcript 6, line 332

4.5.4 THEME 4 - ORGANISATION OF THE GROUP

Some young people commented that the way in which the programme had been organised could be improved.

4.5.4.1 SUBTHEME 4A: HEARING OTHER PEOPLE'S IDEAS:

Some said that it was helpful being in the presence of young people with similar difficulties, especially being able to hear other people's ideas and experiences of exam anxiety.

"yeah, like everything really, when everyone's talking and sharing their ideas, I like that".

Transcript 7, line 264

Zahra also spoke about the group context and hearing other young people's worries.

This helped to normalise her own worries and anxieties:

Zahra: Yeah, I don't normally talk to them but it was nice. It was quite calming to know that I'm not the only one feeling like that.

Interviewer: So... so, you had met new people?

Zahra: Yeah, and also to know that they're feeling the same thing as well in order to not go mental so that...

Transcript 5, line 799

A'isha also stated that she felt better as she wasn't the only person that had anxiety around exams:

It was reassuring because I felt like I was one of the... like I felt like I was on my own panicking. So, it was good to know there was other people who felt the same way.

Transcript 5, line 257

4.5.4.2 SUBTHEME 4B: CHANGES TO THE GROUP SET UP

Young people commented on changes that could be made to the set up of the group to help improve it. Some young people commented that there could be more sessions, there could be a larger group and also the material could be revisited again.

Fatima commented that it would be helpful to have more sessions, and also for the set up of the intervention to be more organised:

"we wouldn't have like a full hour like because everyone would like not know the room to be to so I feel we could've learnt more if we had the full hour and maybe quite a few more sessions would be helpful".

Transcript 2, line 659

Fatima also spoke about going over the material that was covered in the intervention more thoroughly:

"Yeah like just to over everything more, that would be actually really helpful":

Transcript 2, line 665

Some young people commented that they would like more young people to be in the group in the future:

“I just think it felt a bit empty. It just needed a bit more people to share ideas”

Transcript 7, line 392

Therefore suggesting that more people would bring more to discussions around exam anxiety.

4.6 RESEARCH QUESTION 3: WHAT DO THE YOUNG PEOPLE SAY ABOUT WHAT THEY NEED TO SUPPORT THEM TO COPE WITH EXAMS?

The data supporting the themes and subthemes for research question three will now be presented:

4.6.1 THEME 1: TEACHERS SHOULD NOT PRESSURE

Young people spoke about how it would help them not to be pressured by their teachers.

Um, for like teachers not to put too much pressure on them during exam time because they understand how important GCSE's are and how important revision is, but not to keep going, like keep saying it all the time, because that really didn't help.

Transcript 6, line 353

A'isha therefore highlighted how it is unhelpful for young people to experience pressure during exams.

Mohammed also commented that it might be helpful for teachers think about ways to make exams less stressful for young people, for example changing the narrative/ approach to exams.

“in general teachers like you know not making it so bad like saying, ‘Oh you've got one time to pass and it's going to be really bad you've got little time’ and like they're trying to throw everything on you like each teacher expects like you should be revising like hours and hours a night for their subject and I just think like break it down, not make it as stressful as it actually is”.

Transcript 3, line 861

Some young people suggested that teachers may benefit from an intervention on the impact of exam anxiety and also on effective revision strategies:

Fatima: Uhm well some teachers should like benefit from lots of them doing like more maybe having some of these sessions...

Interviewer: Yeah.

Fatima: ...like so they know how the students can feel uhm when it's an exam situations because er I know they feel stressed as well but they should like not pressure.

Transcript 2, line 719

According to the young people, it seems that the purpose of teachers taking part in an intervention or training would be so that insight can be gained as to how young people feel during exams.

4.6.2 THEME 2: IT HELPS TO TALK ABOUT EXAM WORRIES:

Young people spoke about how it helped them to talk to someone about their worries around exams:

'Give them the opportunity outside of a revision session or... like at different points during the lesson to talk about how they feel about the exams and if there is anything they need specifically. They could do it... go through it then'.

Transcript 6, line 392

Fatima also spoke about how speaking to her friends and her family helps her to feel positive about her exams:

"Yeah they were really helpful and like if my friend said it to me too then that gives me an extra boost of confidence because they believe in me and like if my family say it then that really helps because you have their positive thinking..."

Transcript 2, line 588

Zahra spoke about how she did not feel as anxious about exams when speaking to her mum:

"when I talked to my mum, I felt sort of calmed but like when I started the programme"

Transcript 5, line 590

Other young people also spoke about how speaking to other adults helped them to manage their anxiety around the exams:

“Well no like if I’ve got a problem or something I’ll just tell her (counselor) and she’ll try and help me find a solution around it”.

Transcript 3, line 377

Aisha also spoke about how she spoke to family and the doctor to help her manage her anxiety around exams:

“Uhm, yeah to family. I think I spoke to a doctor as well”.

Transcript 6, line 51

4.6.3 THEME 3: EFFECTIVE STUDY SKILLS AND REVISION TECHNIQUES

Young people spoke about how they need help with techniques on how to study (subtheme 3a), revise and also careers advice on what they need to do when they leave school (subtheme 3b).

4.6.3.1 SUBTHEME 3A: YOUNG PEOPLE SPOKE ABOUT HOW THEY NEED HELP WITH TECHNIQUES ON HOW TO STUDY

“just keeping on track with everything, so maybe get... I don’t know... a board, if anyone does but... yeah, keeping on track with everything so maybe revising for math’s one day and then... because I had my exam list, what exams were the days, and then I had the revising sort of bits under it, so where I would revise, because there were certain days where we had our exams”.

Transcript 7, line 404

Khadija therefore explained that young people may need support on how to manage time when revising (e.g. how to divide time between subjects) and also how to remain organised.

A'isha also explained how young people needs support in how to manage their time when revising, she also gave some advice as to how young people can manage their time:

“they are doing certain subjects on a certain day, then you have to do it on that day. So, then you have a little bit of revision done, but put in breaks and don't do too many in one go”

Transcript 7, line 338

Sara expressed that she felt that young people should be advised to begin revising early:

Definitely starting, I'm not saying start revising super early, but I felt that after you do a lesson when you get home, like go over it again.

Transcript 1, line 400

Khadija also commented that more group interventions should take place so that young people are more aware of how to revise:

“I think, um, if people are given the right sort of way to revise and, um, had these sort of groups, I don't think there'd be so much pressure because their, you know, parents wouldn't be asking them 24/7 to, like, revise when they don't know how and that's like, quite a lot of stress there, so it might help a lot”.

Transcript 7, line 477

Some young people commented that it would be helpful for young people to continue to do the things that they enjoy to help them to manage the exam stress:

A'isha: “ but don't spend all the time focusing on them.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. Maybe do some other things as well. Yeah.

A'isha: Yeah, things you enjoy.

Transcript 6, line 411

She also went on to talk about the importance of taking breaks when revising:

So, I'd take a break and I'd watch some TV or read a bit of a book and then carry on

Transcript 6, line 421

Fatima also spoke about the importance of taking breaks, otherwise it would impact the individuals' ability to remember information:

"because otherwise then it's too much and then you don't remember anything if you don't relax".

Transcript 2, line 882

4.6.3.2 SUBTHEME 3B: CAREERS ADVICE

Khadija stated that young people often do not know what to do when they leave school:

"Yeah, and just when they come out of school, I think everyone's just a bit like, "Okay, I've finished school, now what do I do", and I've just got work experience at Age UK".

Transcript 7, line 567

She then went on to say what might help them to think about their future:

"Yeah, and I think they need more help with making CVs as well"

Transcript 7, line 579

Khadija went on to speak about feeling as though school suddenly ends and that young people need support with knowing what the next step will be for them

4.6.4 THEME 4: YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD BE GIVEN A REDUCED WORK LOAD

Young people commented that there should be changes in the expectations of the kind of work that students are expected to complete during the lead up to exams.

Young people spoke about how it would help them if they were given revision related home work during the lead up to exams:

"Like I understand like for math's we get revision for homework like to complete a pack or something, but in English we get like essays and that's too much..."

Transcript 2, line 1027

Therefore, it would appear that Fatima found home work that was directly related to her exams to be more helpful during the revision period.

Some young people also commented that there is a gap between what is expected of them and what they actually do:

“ I can guarantee 75% of people in all my classes that 75% of people don't revise anywhere near enough we're told to, just because they don't care or they just the fact that you know they're in the same situation as me where I just don't feel I can go and do it because it's just it sounds long in itself just going home sitting down reading for two and a half hours and then you just feel, 'Oh what's the point? I don't really want to do it I don't think I'm going to get anything from it' so they just don't so that's why I don't”.

Transcript 3, line 961

4.6.5 THEME 5: CHANGES TO THE EXAM ENVIRONMENT

Some young people commented that it would be helpful to have a smaller exam room and also to have less noise so that there are fewer distractions.

“like because you see everyone doing like their own little thing like some people tap their pens, some people tap their foot, some people like shake and it's just like everyone's going through the same thing and I just found it too overwhelming I think”.

Transcript 4, line 244

However, another young person spoke about having her exam in a room with only four children, and she liked this:

“I like the exam room because I'm sitting... I'm with the scribe, the reader and I... so I was... I'm normally in a room with lots of people, but we're quite lucky because in that room, we were able to get breaks so we have... we had the exam and then after the exam was finished, they let us out early”.

She went on to say that she liked some back ground noise and that too much silence would be eerie.

4.7 OVERVIEW OF MAIN FINDINGS

This was a qualitative piece of research which had an exploratory purpose to gain an understanding of young people's views on exam anxiety and also on an intervention that they recently took part in. Inductive analysis was used to analyse seven semi structured interviews. This gave the researcher detailed and meaningful insight into young people's views. A summary of the findings are detailed below in relation to each research question:

Research question 1: What are the views of the group of young people about exams and stress?

- Participants expressed that they felt pressured by their teachers to do well in their exams and also indirectly by their parents.
- Young people spoke about experiencing high levels of exam anxiety, for example panic attacks, losing sleep and also losing their appetite.
- Young people spoke about not knowing how to revise, and for this reason avoiding revising until closer to the exam.
- Exam anxiety impacted young people's ability to be able to retain information when revising.
- Young people spoke about there being a negative narrative in schools regarding exams becoming increasingly difficult as they progress through school.
- Young people expressed that they are told that they have one chance to do well in their exams and that their exam results will impact their future.

- Young people commented on their being a culture of not speaking about their exam worries to their peers at school. This was due to worries about what their peers will think of them and potentially losing their reputation.

Research question 2: What are the views of the group of young people about an intervention programme related to managing anxiety/stress and exams?

- Young people commented that after they took part in the intervention, they continued to dislike and feel nervous about exams. However, despite this they expressed that they were now more able to manage exam stress.
- Some young people said that they were now able to revise due to the suggestions shared within the group. However, one young person said that he still felt unable to revise and gave some suggestions as to what he thought would help young people to revise, for example helping each young person find a revision technique that works for them and their learning style.
- Students spoke about how they no longer have difficulty sleeping, and that they no longer have a reduced appetite.
- Some students spoke about the strategies that they found helpful, for example positive thinking, remaining calm in an exam situation, mindfulness techniques and also “finger breathing”. However, some young people expressed that they were not able to use the techniques in the exam situation (but could use them outside of the exam, for example at home).
- The participants found it helpful hearing the opinions of others in the group who were having similar difficulties, this helped to normalize their worries and anxieties.

- Some young people felt that the intervention could be improved by going over the material more thoroughly, having more sessions, for the intervention to be more organized so that young people can experience the full hour of the intervention. Finally, person expressed that she would like the groups to have more people present so that there would be more people contributing to the group discussions.

Research question 3: What do the young people say about what they need to support them to cope with exams?

- Young people said that they would cope better with exams if they were not pressured by the teachers.
- They also spoke about how support from parents and friends had helped them through their exams.
- Young people feel that they would cope better with exams if they were given revision techniques/ tips on how to be organised and manage time between subjects.
- Young people expressed the importance of taking breaks when revising.
- Some young people expressed that having revision related home work during the lead up to exams would be more helpful.
- Some young people expressed that smaller rooms with fewer pupils would be helpful in terms of the exam environment.

Within the next chapter the implications of the findings of research will be discussed, as well as the implications for educational psychologists.

CHAPTER 5 - DISCUSSION

5.1 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER

The researcher will be discussing the overall findings within this chapter. Each research question will be presented and discussed, whilst taking in to consideration the literature and the socio-political context. This will be followed by the implications of the findings for EPs. The researcher will then reflect on what has been learnt throughout the research process. Lastly, this will be followed by the meaningful conclusions of the overall research.

The findings of each research question will now be discussed:

5.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS FOR RQ1 (WHAT ARE THE VIEWS OF THE GROUP OF YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT EXAMS AND STRESS?)

The researcher found the research process very interesting. Particularly as the participants expressed themselves during the interviews which helped to provide meaningful and rich data. This helped to provide rich data. The importance of the findings was that the students offered views on how to make change. One of the most salient findings from this piece of research was the theme that young people feel pressured to perform well on their exams by their teachers. The young people stated that they wished their teachers did not make the exams sound like they were such a “big deal”. This can be seen to relate to the findings of Putwain and Roberts (2012) where teachers were found to use fear appeals as a way to motivate young people to

prepare for their exams. A fear appeal is informing students of the negative consequences of not engaging with their exams. This is used as a method to increase engagement with the exam and the exam material. For example, telling young people that they only have one chance to pass their exams is an example of a fear appeal. Putwain and Roberts hypothesised that the use of fear appeals could increase anxiety within students. This hypothesis was confirmed within the current research that the use of 'fear appeals' were counter productive and actually decreased engagement with revision. Although young people are aware of the importance of doing well in their exams, continuously being told the importance of performing well in their exams caused them distress. Instead children and young people may feel stifled by continuously being told that their performance on exams would impact their future. The decrease in engagement with exams and revision may be due to emotional and mental blocks.

Putwain et al concluded that teachers could benefit from training on the impact of using fear appeals. Interestingly, the young people within the current study also commented that they felt that teachers could benefit from training on the impact of putting pressure on them. If teachers were made more aware of the impact of fear appeals and how they are counter productive, this would help increase the well being of children and young people. Young people would therefore be less likely to be in a position of fear, and would have more energy and capacity to engage with their exam and revision. This may ultimately lead to better performance in the exam and also increased well-being.

Young people expressed their views that teachers informed them that their exam results would impact the rest of their lives and that they only had one chance to succeed. This links with the findings of Putwain and Roberts (2012) where it was found

that 67.5% of teachers felt that young people should be told that if they failed their exams that they would not be able to pursue further education. This method was used to motivate young people, however within the current study, the young people expressed that being told that they only had one chance to succeed made them “*panic more*”.

If the impact of the pressure that young people are under is increasing stress, this is having the opposite result to that desired by the governments increased focus on children and young peoples emotional well being (Mental health and behaviour in schools’, Department for Education, 2014). This finding interestingly is the same as that which was found by Chamberlain, Daly and Spalding (2011). In their study, young people stated that their whole future could depend on an hour spent on the exam, and that entrance to their choice of university would depend on their exam performance. They stated that fear had no positive effect (which is similar to the findings of the current study). However the participants in the Chamberlain, Daly and Spalding study also stated that a degree of anxiety was beneficial as it helped them to get into the ‘zone’. This finding was not found within the current research, however it may be because the participants within the current study were identified by the schools as being highly anxious about exams and therefore may experience anxiety to a much higher degree than other young people not identified by the schools. As they already experience high levels of anxiety, they might not have found a degree of anxiety to be beneficial to them, or use anxiety as a positive coping mechanism as stated by the participants in the study by Chamberlain, Daly and Spalding. Also, the participants in the Chamberlain, Daly and Spalding study were older and may have been able to manage anxiety levels better.

Some young people also commented that they felt that teachers were telling them to revise for their own individual subjects. Arguably this may be due to teachers being under pressure to produce good exam results as the performance of the school is measured by the results of the children and young people. This may also relate to the performance related pay for teachers agenda (Department of Education, 2014). Therefore, this may be a larger issue than one that schools can tackle in isolation. Putwain (2009, p1028) alludes to the pressure placed on teachers to produce good exam results as being the reason that teachers use fear appeals:

“The skeptical among you might wonder if there is an element of self-interest in teachers making fear appeals, since GCSE performance data are used to rank schools in league tables and, in some cases, as evidence of teacher effectiveness.”

However it is hypothesised by the researcher that this strategy is leaving young feeling confused, anxious and conflicted as they may not want to disobey those who they potentially may see as authority figures (teachers). It could also be hypothesised that although the students would like to please the teachers, they might not have sufficient time to dedicate to each subject equally. Therefore, they may given unrealistic messages by their teachers. For example, if a maths teacher told the young people that they needed to spend two hours of their evening revising, and if the young person is given a similar message from their English teacher, this would cause high levels of distress and anxiety for the young people (as this would be an unrealistic request in terms of the time that they have available during their evening). The picture for young people seems to be very confusing and they appear to be receiving mixed messages. The reason for this distress would be due to feeling conflicted and confused which is having an impact upon young peoples well being and also mental health.

Similarly young people also commented that the sheer number of tasks that they are asked to complete within each subject are too many. These issues could be overcome by the teachers communicating with one another about the number of tasks that they are asking young people to complete. Also if the young people were given guidance on how much time to spend on each subject and how to divide their time between the subjects across their week. Guidance will certainly help young people to organise their time and not feel conflicted in terms of the work that teachers are giving them regarding revision.

Some young people commented that they were still being given homework during the lead up to exams when they would like to be focussing on revision. This was also found by Chamberlain, Daly and Spalding (2011) that during the revision period, new material was still being taught. This is something that a young person within the current study also stated that they were given non revision related tasks to do and asked to complete revision. The implication made by the young person was that there might not be enough time to actually complete all the tasks that they are given. It may be beneficial for young people to be supported by schools to only focus on revision related material during the revision period, rather than continuing to learn new material, as this can increase the burden on revision.

Other young people spoke about not having enough time to rest and also felt overwhelmed by the number of tasks that they are expected to do. It may be that the work load needs to be made more manageable for young people by reducing it to the essentials that need to be completed or alternatively it may be that young people need interventions or support with how to actually manage their work load, rather than feeling over whelmed by it (as this is likely to result in increased anxiety,

disengagement with revision and exams and therefore reduced well being and educational outcomes).

Young people commented that there was a negative narrative around the way in which exams were spoken about in schools. However if schools are told not to use fear as a method to increase engagement with exams, they may be left unsure how to motivate young people. It may be that further research needs to be completed in the area of how teachers can motivate young people to study for their exams without using the method of instilling fear. One young person did provide a clue for how teachers could address this area as he said: *“break it down, not make it as stressful as it is”*. This may mean that the information that young people are given on exams needs to be given to them in a manageable form that will not overwhelm them. When the young person said *“not make it as stressful as it is”* this may mean that the way in which exams are spoken about in schools need to be thought about. The information needs to be put across to young people that they are important, however the information and the messages that they receive need to be conducive to good mental health. The way in which this is done in schools needs to be researched further.

One method to reduce distress, fear and dread around exams could be to shift the narrative around the way in which exams are currently spoken about. Instead of energy being spent telling young people about how important exams are and the impact it has on their future, teachers could tell students that exams are a good opportunity for the young person to show off what they have learnt. They could also be told that they could have opportunities to try again (for example re sitting their exams) if they did not get the result that they desired. A larger emphasis could be placed upon how to prepare for the exams and the benefits of preparation (as opposed to scaring students in to preparing for their exam). Another method could be to work

closely with children and young people to understand their goals and aspirations. This could be done through the use of person centred planning or personal construct psychology (with the support of an EP). The children and young people would therefore be supported to think for themselves about what they need to do to reach their goals and aspirations through the use of scaffolding and not using fear. By shifting the narrative around exams and whole school approaches to the way exams are spoken about could help to decrease the anxiety and dread felt around exams. This in turn may help to increase young peoples well -being.

Another matter the young people spoke about being placed under pressure to do well by their parents. This is similar to that found by Bonaccio and Reeve (2010) that worries around disappointing others was one of the main sources of stress. Bonaccio and Reeve speculated that “disappointing others” may mean disappointing their parents. Cassady and Johnson (2011) also explained that part of cognitive test anxiety is worrying about causing sorrow for their parents. Fears around disappointing parents may stem from the expectations that parents have of their children to perform well, and these expectations are shared by parents with the young people. For example, one young person expressed that her mother had told her that she wanted “A’s”, however the young person expressed during the interview that she felt that she wouldn’t be able to produce this result. It may be that parents are trying to motivate their children to prepare for their exams, or it may be a method of showing their children that they believe in them, however the young people are experiencing this as pressure to perform well in exams.

Young people also expressed that their parents were a source of support for them during the exam period. Therefore it may be that parents may benefit from training/information on how to balance motivating their children but also to provide a

supportive role, as this is key in improving young peoples emotional well being during a stressful life events (such as G.C.S.E exams). It may be that EPs need to work together with schools to help to provide information to parents about how they can support young people through the examination process. This could be given to parents in the form of an information sheet, for example, it may have information on strategies that parents could use to help support their children, whilst also encouraging them or interventions or training could be completed with parents.

Many of the students spoke about how the worry around exams had strong links with their health and their overall well being. The links with mental health were being tearful, experiencing anxiety and panic attacks and also not wanting to socialise with friends. The links with physical health were not being able to sleep, and having reduced appetite. This finding was found to be similar to that found by Dewald et al (2014), that children had more restless sleep during the lead up to exams and also during the exam period. One young person spoke about how she experiences pain in her leg generally. However when she was stressed about exams the pain became worse. Therefore, not only does exam anxiety have links with mental health, it also impacts physical health. It is important for schools to be aware of the strong impact that exam anxiety has on the health of their students well being, and that this is debilitating for them and also appears to be reducing their quality of life.

Regarding exam results being publically displayed as a way to motivate individuals, it is particularly important for schools to be aware of the impact that this may have on young peoples self esteem. Young people may be mocked by their peers if it were to be publically known that they were not achieving well. This may have the opposite effect of motivation and may actually cause a negative self -fulfilling prophecy in terms of how they view their own capability to perform well in the exam as well as well as

their academic and professional aspirations. Again this would lead to the opposite of that desired by the government in terms of improving mental health and well being in children and young people.

The findings of the current research imply that the impact that exam anxiety has on children and young people's mental health and over all well-being is detrimental. This finding highlights the need for interventions for children and young people and different ways of preparing students for exams. Young people may benefit from group interventions, or if they are experiencing extreme anxiety, individual therapeutic interventions as a way of improving children and young peoples overall well-being and mental health (which is in line with the governments agenda to improve mental well being in children and young people).

Aside from exam anxiety having a detrimental impact on the young peoples' mental health, a secondary impact of exam anxiety is that children and young people will be less able to engage with exams and revision, which would in turn lead to lower results, starting a negative cycle. The participants did speak about how exam anxiety had impacted their ability to engage with revision and learn information. This would explain the findings of that found by Remedios et al (2005) that sitting exams can reduce the students' interest in the subject. This may occur after experiencing a "*mental block*" despite the student feeling as if they know the material and therefore resulting in a decrease of interest in the subject. This may then reduce engagement/ motivation with the subject and therefore academic outcomes. Putwain et al (2010) also found that those who suffer with exam anxiety are likely to not perform as well due to inaccurate thinking patterns. He gave the example of viewing situations as worse than they actually are. This was also found within the current research, for example one

young person spoke about his mind set and expressed when he is anxious he thinks *“I’m going to fail, oh dear okay, I don’t really care”*.

Some young people spoke about putting off revision due to experiencing anxiety. This was also found by Aysan, Thomson and Hamaret (2001), that young people that experience anxiety about exams are more likely to engage in ineffective coping mechanisms. One of the ineffective coping mechanisms that they mentioned in their study was avoidance. Similarly in the study conducted by Vitasari et al (2010), the students commented that lack of exam preparation contributed to exam anxiety. The lack of preparation that the students mentioned in this study may be due to the anxiety and not being able to engage with revision material as opposed to being “lazy”. Bonaccio and Reeve (2010) also found that students expressed feelings of being under prepared, and having insufficient knowledge.

Other difficulties with revision that were frequently mentioned by the students was not knowing how to revise. This may be linked with avoidance. It may be that young people do not have the knowledge on how to revise and are therefore avoiding revision. Not knowing how to revise is linked to poor motivation. Other young people spoke about revision not being fun and that they didn’t enjoy it because it was work. This links to what was found within the literature as Chamberlain, Daly and Spalding (2011) found in their study of A –Level students studying in south England, that revision was described as being stressful and a burden.

Similarly, Cassady and Johnson (2001) also found that the students with high levels of anxiety scored lower grades. This would also explain the findings of Connors et al (2009), that students that were more anxious about exams had poorer SATS grades. The thought patterns that young people experience when anxious seem to be linked

with experiencing 'mental blocks', forgetting information when revising, avoiding revision and not knowing how to revise, which together have a negative impact upon exam results. If more young people are given the opportunity to take part in interventions, as stated previously, not only would this help to increase their well being, but it also may be that they will be more able to engage with their exams and revision and therefore may be able to produce better exam results. However it is noteworthy that this piece of research was qualitative in design and involved asking young people their experiences of exam anxiety. Their anxiety levels were not correlated with their exam results. Also, the young people took part in an intervention to try to help reduce the anxiety that they experience through challenging their negative thoughts (amongst another behavioural and mindfulness based techniques). This would make the pursuit of correlating exam anxiety with exam results null and void.

Some of the students that took part in this research stated that there was a stigma around expressing that they were anxious about exams. It seems that there is a culture of not speaking about exam anxiety by young people in schools and that if exam anxiety is spoken about, the young person may lose their reputation. It maybe that EPs could help support schools to shift this culture to help reduce the stigma and help to introduce a culture where young people feel comfortable enough to speak to their teachers if they are feeling anxious or upset about exams. This would enable young people to receive support and they would therefore not continue to suffer alone. Overall, the young people provided rich information on their views of exam stress. This information has helped the researcher to think about potential methods that professionals who work with the young people can employ to help reduce anxiety and distress.

5.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS FOR RQ2: WHAT ARE THE VIEWS OF THE GROUP OF YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT AN INTERVENTION PROGRAMME?

When speaking about the intervention programme many of the students spoke about continuing to dislike exams. However following the intervention they said that felt more able to manage their anxiety. This was an important finding and it would be interesting to fully understand what it was about the intervention programme that helped. This links with the findings of Dundas et al (2009) who found that the university students that took part in a cognitive-behavioural group intervention, were able to reframe the stressful task of exams better and that they viewed exams as a task that needed to be done.

As young people stated that they now know how to manage their anxiety and that this improved their health and well being, the implications of these findings are that the intervention that the young people took part in was effective in improving the young people's social and emotional well being. The wider implications of this are that the outcome of the young people taking part in this intervention is that it is in line with the government's agenda of improving social and emotional well being and also for improving resilience in children and young people.

If young people are supported through interventions to manage stressful situations such as exams, their resilience levels are likely to be raised. This means that if schools invest in children's social and emotional well-being (by running interventions to help improve their mental health and to give them the skills that they require to help them to be resilient during stressful periods such as exams), this too will also help to improve their educational outcomes.

Another interesting finding from this piece of research was that some of the young people commented that they are now more able to concentrate since attending the intervention. It could be that this increased ability to concentrate is linked to the hypothesis of Maldivi et al (2014) and Ramirez and Beilock (2011) that the negative thoughts experienced by children and young people as a result of exam anxiety actually consumes their working memory. Mowbrai (2012) similarly argues that anxiety consumes students working memory. It may be that the CBA and mindfulness intervention that the young people took part in reduced their anxious thoughts (or increased their ability to manage anxiety) and therefore increased their working memory capacity and therefore increased their ability to concentrate on their exams.

However alternatively, their ability to concentrate may have come from the study skills that were covered within the intervention. It is hypothesised by the researcher that feeling prepared may also increase working memory capacity. Feeling prepared may help the young person to feel more in control about preparing for the exam, which would in turn reduce stress and anxiety. For example one young person spoke about how the EP that ran the group gave them tips on organisation (so that the young people did not forget what things, for example when their exams were). Another young person commented that they completed their revision in advance, and related this change to the intervention. Therefore there may be links between the young people acquiring skills with organisation and experiencing reduced anxiety and increased concentration because they feel more prepared for the exam.

One student expressed that her results had improved due to the revision techniques that she had learnt. Therefore there is some evidence that the young people felt that taking the intervention helped to improve educational outcomes.

Although many of the young people found the techniques that were covered in the intervention to be helpful, it is noteworthy that one of the young people expressed that although she found the techniques to be useful outside of the exam situation (she did not find them useful within the exam). It may be that for some young people that are highly anxious about exams are unable to access the techniques within the exams. It may be that the exam stress makes them forget about how to calm themselves down. This is understandable, especially as exams can be highly stressful and they are attempting to recall information that they have revised, as well as draw upon techniques to help reduce exam anxiety. EPs and teachers may need to think about how young people access techniques that have been shared with them during an intervention, within high stress situations such as exams. It may be that individuals that have taken part in the intervention can be given extra support such as visual prompts to help remind them to use the techniques during the exam.

There was some evidence that not all of the young people found the revision techniques covered within the intervention to be helpful. One young person suggested that they should be supported to find a revision technique that suits them. This is evidence against a blanket approach that “one size fits all”, and fits the learning styles model, that everybody learns differently. A recommendation to help further improve the Beat Exam Anxiety Together programme could be that the EP provides a number of revision techniques and helps the young person to find an approach that suits them specifically. For example some individuals prefer to work in complete silence, whereas other individuals prefer to watch programmes on the topic such as you tube tutorials, as they are visual learners. This is particularly important to address, especially as two of the young people that took part in the intervention commented that they did not find the revision strategies that were covered to be helpful. Similarly as one young person

commented that they did not find relaxation or engaging in positive thinking to be helpful, it could be that the EP working with the young people specifically helps the young person to find techniques that they find useful to them and that they are able to use regularly to help them to reduce exam anxiety. It may be important for the EP to emphasise at the beginning of the programme that they may not find all of the techniques helpful and that some techniques may suit some individual more than others and that this is very normal as all individuals have varying needs.

Other areas for improvement were how the group was organised. Having some continuity and familiarity in terms of the room and the space that is used for the intervention may be particularly important to young people. This is especially important as the young people that are referred to take part in this programme are highly anxious about exams and it may be that they are anxious about taking part in the programme in general. Some of the children may also have some special educational needs and or developmental disorders such as Autism Spectrum Disorders (none were included in this study). Therefore knowing what to expect, such as the room that the group will take place in may help reduce anxiety and increase predictability. It would equally be important to have protected time, so that the full hour that has been allocated for the intervention is dedicated to delivering the intervention. This would mean that the EP that is delivering the intervention would need to have conversations with the schools about understanding the individual needs of pupils, having a protected space and also having protected time to complete the intervention. This would help to maximise engagement with the intervention and increase its likelihood of effectiveness.

In addition to this, one student said that going over the material that they had learnt would be helpful. Therefore potentially building in one more session at the end of the six session (totalling 7 sessions) or having a longer 6th (final session) session may

mean that the material that was covered over the whole of the intervention could be recapped as a reminder. This would help to consolidate the techniques that were learnt during the intervention.

Some of the students commented that they would like to have seen more young people take part in the intervention. Currently the maximum number of children that took part in the group was six, this could potentially increase to eight. The desired outcome of having more young people taking part in the group is so that a greater number of voices and opinions can be heard. This is especially important and this is something that the young people expressed that they enjoyed about the intervention. The reason for this was that it helped normalise their own experiences of exam anxiety and helped them to understand that they were not alone in their worries about exams. Overall the intervention programme was discussed in a very positive way by the young people.

5.4 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS FOR RQ3: WHAT DO YOUNG PEOPLE SAY ABOUT WHAT THEY NEED TO SUPPORT THEM TO COPE WITH EXAMS?

Young people's views on what they feel will help them to cope with exams will now be discussed. Many of the young people expressed that speaking to their parents was a significant pillar of support for them. This was discussed in depth above in research question one. The following section is on how young people felt that speaking about their exam worries was helpful. Therefore parents could be encouraged by schools to be available to listen to their child's worries and anxieties about exams.

As young people stated that speaking about exam worries is helpful schools could introduce the concept where the teachers in the school understand that exams are stressful and anxiety provoking and that they can always approach their form tutor, or

any other teacher with whom they feel particularly comfortable with to be able to speak to about their exam worries. This may reduce the stigma that exists around exam anxiety, as it will help to normalise the concept around being anxious about exams.

Young people commented that the study skills that were suggested within the interventions were helpful. For example one young person spoke about how the EP that ran the group gave them tips on organisation (so that the young people did not forget things, for example when their exams were). Many of the studies that were found in the literature suggested that young people would benefit from interventions that focus on improving study skills. Chamberlain, Daly and Spalding (2011) suggest that interventions would be helpful during the revision period as it was found that anxiety impacted their ability to prepare for exams (however they did not suggest which kind of intervention).

Vitasari et al (2010) suggest that an intervention is required to help students to prepare well for exams during the revision period. Bonaccio and Reeve (2010) also suggest that a combination of study skills interventions such as revision skills and a therapeutic intervention to reduce generalised anxiety may be effective in helping reduce anxiety but also giving young people the skills that they need to prepare for exams. Bonaccio and Reeve, however did not go in to detail as to what should be covered within the study skills interventions. Agarwal et al (2014) attempted to reduce exam anxiety through desensitisation (using retrieval practice in the form of practice tests or quizzes), and although 72% of the children that took part in their study felt less anxious about tests, 19% were more anxious. It may have been that the 19% were more vulnerable and had high levels of anxiety to begin with (similar to the group of young people that took part in the current study). Agarwal et al did not actually teach the young people how to prepare for the tests, and the findings of the current research imply that this is

something that young people need. Neuderth et al (2008) also felt that study skills interventions would benefit young people and delivered a program to university students which covered learning skills and exam preparation as a way to help reduce anxiety about their exams (however no pre and post measures were taken).

As some students commented that they found revision boring and they did not want to engage with it because it was “work”, schools may be able to introduce more interesting approaches to revision methods that may help to engage these young people. This is increasingly possible with the rise of technology, the use of smart phones and ipads. It may be that revision could be completed on ipads through the use of apps, so that young people feel more interested in the task at hand and so that it no longer feels so “burdensome”. This is clearly an area the young people feel that being supported with effective study skills would help them to cope better with exams.

Interestingly one student that took part in the intervention (who had recently completed her exams) spoke about how she was worried about what to do after she had finished school. She spoke about how there was a large focus on exams, however there was little support on what to do after they had left school. It may be that life after secondary school is an area that may cause anxiety for young people, especially due to the unknown. Therefore, it is important for schools to address this and support young people in giving them the skills that are required for once they have left school but also to provide information on career choices and to help them to make choices regarding this.

Young people spoke about how they were given too much work and that the amount of work that the young people were asked to do was not realistic. One young person commented on the gap between the amount of revision that was espoused by teachers,

and what young people actually did. It could be that the gap between espoused and actual work that is completed is causing anxiety, because the young people don't feel like they are completing what is required and therefore may have a constant feeling of not working hard enough. It could be that more research needs to be completed in the area of how much work can be managed by young people aged 15-16, in a way that does not damage their physical or mental health, but that they are still able to attain desired educational outcomes.

Although this issue was not spoken about in great depth by the participants, they did touch upon the topic. One young person spoke about how it helped her being in a small room with other young people who had scribes. Another young person who was not placed in a smaller exam room spoke about how the exam environment was distracting. The exam environment was something that was not covered in great detail within this piece of research, however it is an area that could be researched further to help understand the best environment for young people to take their exams in. If the environment could be one that helps to reduce anxiety, this again could help improve children and young people's emotional well being, during a stressful time.

5.5 THE IMPLICATION OF FINDINGS IN RELATION TO PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY

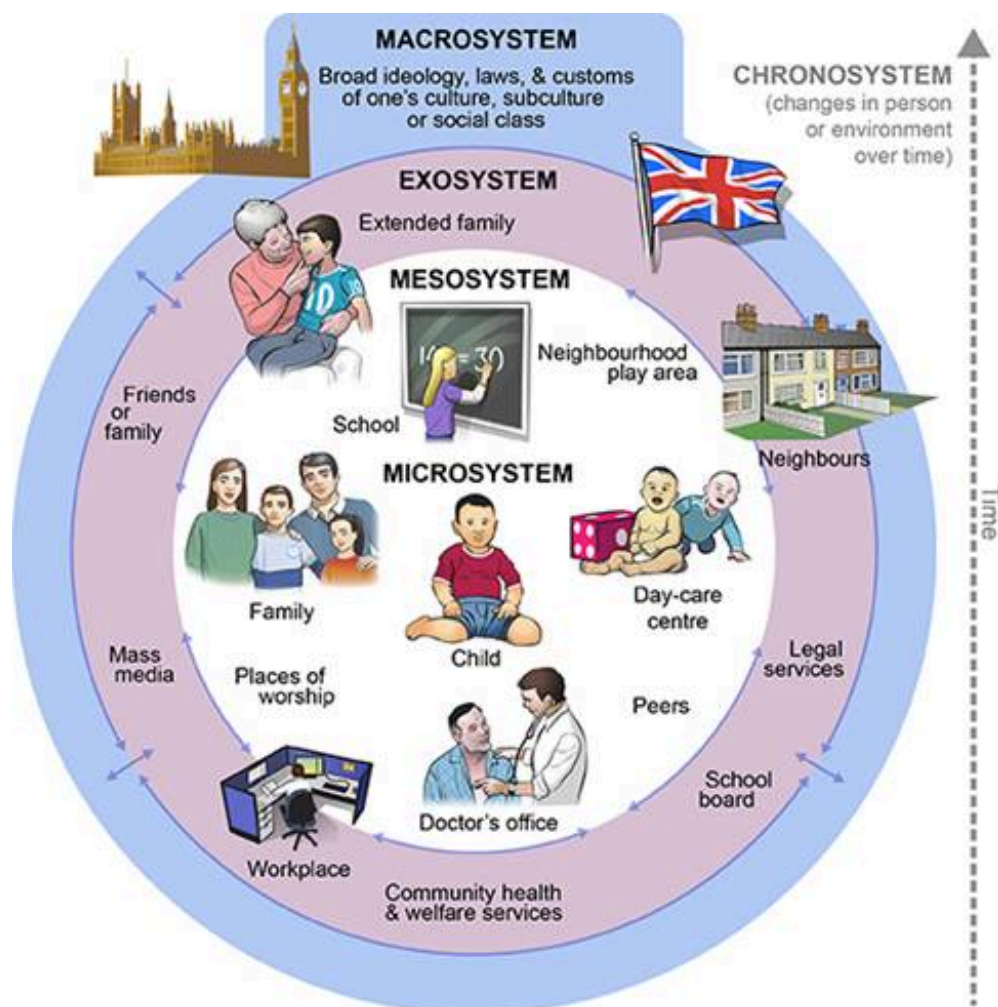
Within this section links between the theory underpinning this piece of research and the findings will be made. Rutter (1990) refers to resilience as a theory that helps to explain how able individuals are to overcome stressful situations successfully. The theory explains the skills that individuals require to cope with stressful situations (Alvord and Grados, 2005). Within the literature review chapter, Garmezy (1985) argued that certain protective factors contribute to resilience within children and young people, such as support from the elders in the community. The findings of the current study show that the intervention was overall helpful in reducing anxiety and helping young people to manage exam anxiety. There are clearly links between that which was argued by Garmezy (resilience theory) and the findings of the current study. For example the EP's that delivered the intervention with the young people were emotionally available elders in the community that helped young people to manage exam anxiety. In addition to this Keenan and Evans (2009) argued that support from a teacher could make a child more resilient. As the young people commented that they are able to deal with exam stress as a result of taking part in the group intervention, it could be argued that taking part in the group intervention (particularly the use of CBA and mindfulness) made them more resilient. It was also found that the group intervention provided a support network for the young people, as they commented that hearing the experiences of others helped to normalise the experience of exam anxiety. This links to social contagion theory. Social contagion theory refers to the idea that emotional states can be transferred between individuals (Kramer, Guillory and Hancock, 2014). Hearing how other young people have experienced exam anxiety

may have helped reduce their levels of anxiety (collectively as a group) as it reduced their feelings of isolation, therefore increasing group well-being.

The findings of this piece of research also link closely with systems theory. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory stipulates that the child is influenced by a number of systems and everything in their surrounding environment. There are four environmental systems. The microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem (see figure 6 below). The microsystem includes the individual, family, peers, school and community. This is the system with which the child/young person has the most direct interaction, for example home and school. The microsystem includes family or care givers. The relationships within this system are bi-directional e.g. the reactions to those in the microsystem will have an impact in return. The mesosystem is the interactions between different parts of a person's microsystem. This is where the different parts of the child's microsystems are interconnected and have influence upon one another for example the relationship between the child's parent and teacher. The exosystem is a setting that does not involve the person as an active participant, but still affects them for example a parent losing their job. The macrosystem is the cultural environment in which the person lives and all other systems that affect them e.g. the economy, cultural values and political systems. The EP works between these systems, completing consultations with parents and teachers, and also completing training for professionals. Beaver (2011) argues that the EP should work to help others within the microsystem to help adjust their behaviour and attitude in terms of how they work with the young person. This essentially means that the role of the EP is to not only work with the young person, but also to work systemically to support those also working closely with the child, to ensure healthy development and learning. This is especially the case since the new

SEN code of practice (Department for Education, Department for Health, 2014) which states that when the EP completes an assessment with the young person, they should consult other professionals involved with the young person (working systemically). The implications of this study has clear links with Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Model. For example, if training or consultations were carried out with teachers, EP’s could highlight how teachers/ parents could adjust their own behaviour to help reduce exam anxiety. This will be discussed in more detail within the next section.

Figure 6: Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979):



5.6 HOW THE FINDINGS OF THIS RESEARCH WILL IMPACT UPON THE FUTURE PRACTICE OF THE RESEARCHER:

As mentioned in the previous section, the implications of the current study have close links with systems theory. Within this section the researcher will state how the findings of the research will impact upon the future practice of the researcher (in particular systemic work). In the future, the researcher will ensure that the following will be reflected on and if appropriate acted upon:

- To encourage schools to change the narratives around exams so that they are more positive.
- It is important not to scare young people and to highlight that although exams are important, a negative outcome is not the end of the world as they would have the opportunity to repeat exams if required.
- For teachers to have increased communication between each other regarding the work load, or messages given to young people about how much to revise.
- For the young people to have somebody available for them to speak to about their worries.
- To recommend that schools teach revision techniques to young people.
- To highlight to schools how key the role of parents is in helping to reduce anxiety around exams, and jointly problem solving with schools the best way to involve parents.

5.6.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGES TO THE INTERVENTION

As a result of hearing the young people's views on the intervention, the researcher would recommend the following changes to be made to improve the current intervention:

- To potentially have larger numbers of young people in the group (for example up to eight individuals as opposed to six).
- As some of the young people commented that not all of the strategies were helpful for them, the EP could spend some one to one time with each young person, to help them to find strategies that may be helpful to them.
- For the EP to spend some one to one time with the young people to help them to understand their own learning style and to find revision techniques that suit their own learning.
- To potentially have two more sessions at the end of the intervention in which all of the strategies are revisited so that they can be consolidated. The reason for this is that cognitive behavioural approaches/ mindfulness approaches are only effective if they are used regularly. Therefore more sessions may help the young people to practise to use these techniques regularly.

5.7 IMPLICATIONS FOR EPS

The findings of this piece of research has strong implications for the work of EPs especially as one of their roles is to provide interventions to help improve the well being of children and young people according to the HCPC standards of proficiency (2b.2, 2012). This also links directly to the Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 – 25 years (Department for Education, Department for Health,

2014), where it states that the role of EPs is to be an advocate for the children with SEN. Interventions could mean completing systemic work with teachers to help them to understand anxiety around exams. EPs could work systemically with schools to provide training for teachers on how to support children and young people with the stress that they naturally experience when taking exams. It would be important for EPs to help schools to understand the impact of exam anxiety and the adverse impact of using fear to motivate young people. Alternative methods that teachers could use to help motivate children and young people to prepare for their exams need to be shared with schools. As stated earlier, methods to help motivate students need to be researched further by EP's. During any training, the EPs could also highlight some of the key messages as raised above such as the importance of individual subject teachers communicating with one another so that they are aware of the work load of the young people.

As many young people expressed that they do not know how to revise and therefore avoided, one suggestion could be that EPs support teachers in helping them to provide efficient revision techniques. These techniques could be provided if EPs provide direct interventions with children and young people, or they could be shared with teachers during consultation or during training. EPs could consult with schools and help them to support young people in finding revision methods that suit each individual. EPs could also complete more research on what would be a manageable work load for young people. As stated earlier EPs could also provide training to parents with regards to the impact that parental pressure can have on children and young people's emotional well being.

5.8 THE LEARNING PROCESS AND REFLEXIVITY

Gibbs (1988) reflection cycle will now be used so that the researcher can reflect upon the whole process of completing research. The six stages are as follows: 1) Description, 2) Feelings 3) Evaluation 4) Analysis 5) Conclusion 6) Action Plan.

1) Description: The feelings that the researcher felt at different stages of the research will be now be described.

2) Feelings: At the onset of beginning the research, the researcher was enthusiastic about completing the research, however also felt slightly nervous as the researcher had not completed doctoral level before. At the stage of gaining participants the researcher felt frustrated at how difficult it was to gain participants. The most enjoyable part of the research process was completing the interviews with the young people themselves. It was highly insightful being able to understand the pressures that young people are under and how much it impacts their lives, their self esteem and their health. Once the interviews had been completed the researcher felt a sense of relief but also excitement as the researcher was aware that rich data had been produced from the interviews. Finally, once the findings had been written up the researcher felt a sense of accomplishment.

3) Evaluation: The researcher was also aware of the power differential when completing the interviews with children and young people. In order to overcome this, the researcher spent time building rapport prior to asking the interview questions. This was carried out to help the young people to relax in to the interview situation and also to break down the barrier between the young person and the researcher. For example the researcher was aware that the young people may view her to be an authority figure in the same way that young people view teachers, however the researcher attempted to reduce this.

As it was very difficult to find participants, the researcher was very conscious of the time that the young people were giving up to take part in this piece of research (as it was during the lead up to the young people exams). During the first few interviews, a lot of time was spent building rapport with the young people, however as it became increasingly difficult to recruit, the interviews became shorter as less time was spent on rapport building with the young people (especially as the young peoples exams were approaching). When one young person seemed as though the topic was making them upset, the roles of being a researcher and being a TEP blurred together. Although the researcher did not move in to a counselling role, she did not probe further as she sensed that the young person may become distressed.

The researcher was also on placement within an EPS service and managing a number of placement demands This undoubtedly had an impact on the time that was spent on the research. The researcher did find the process of completing research highly isolating, as the researching, the write up and the analysis involved having to spend a lot of time alone. However, the researcher

was given research supervision and was also able to discuss the research process with peers (in particular when carrying out peer credibility checks) which reduced the level of isolation somewhat.

It is worth noting that as this piece of research was commissioned by the EPS that the researcher was working for, and that the intervention that the young people took part in was designed by this service. There may have been a conflict of interest to show that the intervention had been highly effective. However, this was held in mind at all times and the researcher attempted to remain as neutral as possible.

The researcher reflected upon the power and the impact of the voice of the young person. Particularly within this piece of research the young people spoke about how they felt pressured by teachers and that they needed to be given effective skills to revise for their exams. Gaining the views of the child or young person is part of the SEN new code of practice, and this is something that the researcher ensures is included within the daily practice of her work. Gaining the views of children and young people was possible due to the qualitative nature of the research design. This would not have been possible had the research been purely quantitative. The qualitative design allowed the young people to express and elaborate upon their views without the researcher leading their responses or having any pre-conceived theories or ideas held in mind prior to the research taking place.

Once the researcher had completed the research, she reflected on what she could do differently to improve the research if she could complete it again. She felt that as stated previously that she could have spent more time building

rapport with the participants. She also felt that it would have benefitted her to have completed a pilot interview, however as it was difficult to gain participants, this was not possible in this instance.

4) Analysis:

The researcher was conscious of the use of language though out the interview. Although there is always the possibility within qualitative research that the participants may interpret the use of language differently to that which was intended by the interviewer, the interviewer checked the participants understanding of what had been said. The researcher also checked back with the participant to ensure that the researcher had understood what the participant meant.

Many personal and professional developments were made through out the process of carrying out research. For example, for the first time in the researcher's career, she was asked to produce chapters with high word counts within short periods of time, whilst simultaneously carrying out the research. As the researcher found this challenging, this led the researcher to explore why this was in fact a challenge which led to gaining a diagnosis of dyslexia. Therefore, not only is the researcher now in a better position to understand the impact of young people of exam anxiety, the researcher also has more of an awareness of the struggles that children and young people experience with specific learning difficulties. The researcher is in a better position to understand this as a professional as a result of completing this piece of research.

The researcher was taken aback by some of the themes that arose from the research, in particular how strong a narrative it was in terms of the pressure

that young people experience from their teachers and their parents and also the impact upon their well being.

5) Conclusion: The researcher felt that this was an extremely useful piece of research as most of the studies in the literature did not aim to understand the experiences of young people, and in particular, for this specific age group (ages 15-16 approaching their G.C.S.E's).

6) Action plan: The researcher intends to present the findings of this piece of research within a team meeting within the local authority in which the researcher works. In addition to this the researcher will present her research at a conference at the university of East London. The researcher will also complete training with some of the schools that bought in the Beating Exam Anxiety Intervention. It is hoped that this training will help high light to schools how important it is to explore other methods for motivating young people.

5.9 LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION

It is important to note that this study had a number of of limitations. The sample size was relatively small however Braun and Clarke (2013) state that a sample of 6-10 would provide enough data for a small research project. The participants were all from a particular borough in the U.K and therefore it may not be possible to generalise the results to all young people in the U.K.

In addition to this, all of the young people that took part in the study had already been identified as being anxious and therefore for this reason were taking part in the intervention. Young people that had not been identified as being highly anxious may have very different views on exams, exam stress and also what may help them to cope with exams. The group of young people that did take part in this study may therefore

be representative of more vulnerable young people that are more susceptible to feeling anxious and stressed about exams. It is also noteworthy that some of the young people that took part in this study were yet to sit their exams and other young people had completed their exams. For this reason the young people that were yet to sit their exams may be more anxious about their exams, and the other young people that had completed their exams would be more anxious about receiving their results. Their thoughts and views on exam anxiety may have had a different focus regarding their thoughts on exam anxiety and exam stress. In order to improve this study, it would have been better if all of the pupils were yet to sit their exams, or alternatively if all of the young people had completed their exams in order to ensure that the participant group was similar. This would mean that their views would be more likely to be representative of others in a similar situation.

Some of the young people said that they would only like to take part in the research if a friend could come along, however it was difficult to gain parental consent in these situations. It may be that young people would feel more comfortable to discuss exam anxiety in a focus group, as opposed to individual interviews, which was the design of the current research.

Weber and Cook (1972) introduced the concept of demand characteristics. They argue that participants take on different roles within “experiments”. There are four roles which they identified which are as follows: the good subject, the negative subject, the apprehensive subject and the faithful subject. The good subject attempts to understand what the researcher would like to find through the research process and tries to help confirm what they perceive to be the researcher’s hypothesis. The negative subject attempts to do the opposite of that which the “good” subject attempts to do and attempts to give responses that go against what they feel that the

researcher's hypothesis is. The faithful subject is a more passive participant and follow instructions carefully, or alternatively goes out of their way to be honest in their responses. The apprehensive subject feels conscious or anxious about how the researcher may evaluate their responses and therefore would present the best version of themselves. The researcher was aware that this may naturally occur when carrying out research with children and young people, and for this reason the researcher ensured that she stated to the young people prior to starting that there was no right or wrong answer to the interview questions to ensure that the young people felt comfortable through out the research process. The researcher also wanted to reassure them that there was no deception involved in the research and was transparent when explaining the purpose of the research. The researcher also ensured that the young people were aware that what they said within the interviews would remain confidential and that their names would be anonymised so that there would be no way of tracing what they had said to them as individuals.

Overall, the researcher found carrying out the research extremely positive as qualitative rich data was gained, as the young people spoke their mind. The research highlighted the possible detrimental impact of exam anxiety on young people in terms of their mental health, and also how able they might feel with preparing for exams. Links were made with the experiences of exam anxiety and also the findings of this study were linked to theories on working memory which had been discussed within the literature review. The researcher hypothesised that worries may take up working memory resources and therefore impact exam preparation and exam performance.

Young people spoke about how they feel pressured by teachers. They spoke about how teachers only gave them guidelines for revision for their own subject. It is important therefore for teachers to communicate with each other in terms of the

messages that they are giving young people, so that there is more of a joined up approach regarding guidelines around revision. This also related to the workload that young people currently have regarding homework and revision. Research in to what would be a healthy workload for this age group is important as well as communication between teachers as a method of ensuring that there are realistic expectations of young people.

They also spoke about how they felt it would be helpful if the pressure that they experience in secondary school by their teachers could be reduced. In particular, young people spoke about breaking down information regarding exams, so that they do not sound as anxiety provoking as they currently do. This is an area that requires further research with young people in terms of what would be a helpful way to speak to young people about exams. Young people spoke about how they felt pressured by their parent to perform well in their exams, however they also valued support from their parents during exams, this has implications for EPs in terms of how they can work together with schools to provide information to parents as how they can best support young people during exams.

The intervention was largely helpful in improving young peoples well being and being able to manage exam anxiety. Young people generally felt that the revision techniques that were provided to them during the intervention helped them to prepare for exams. They suggested that other young people could benefit from study skills interventions. This supported the argument of other researchers that a combination between therapeutic interventions and study skills interventions are effective in reducing anxiety and helping young people to prepare for exams. Young people however gave suggestions on how to best improve the intervention. For example more effective and personalised revision techniques (however this area requires further research, for

example the use of technology to aid revision techniques) and also increased organisation regarding delivery of the group. Young people could benefit from careers advice and preparation for life after secondary school.

“Sometimes you get the impression they don’t understand what we’re going through..”

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APPENDIX 1 RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

My name is Madeehah and I will be researching how you feel about exams. I will also be researching your views about an intervention programme you have just completed.

What I am planning to do

After the programme has been completed, I will ask you to meet with me. I will ask you some questions on how you feel about exams and the intervention programme that you have been involved with. I will record what you have said to me, just so that I do not forget what you have said.

After you have spoken to me:

I will write about what I found out, however I will not use your name, so nobody will be able to identify you from the writing.

Remember that you don't have to take part if you don't want to. If you have any further questions please contact me using the details provided below

Madeehah ☺

Email: U13267070@uel.ac.uk



Telephone number: 07740183789





APPENDIX 2 CONSENT FORM FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

My name is:..... I am in year.....



1. I understand what Madeehah's project is about:

Yes  No 

2. I would like to take part in the project and tell Madeehah what I thought of it.

Yes  No 

3. I am happy for Madeehah to record what I say to help her to remember

Yes  No 

Signature



APPENDIX 3 INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON
School of Psychology
Stratford Campus
Water Lane
London E15 4LZ

Project title: 'The views of young people about an intervention programme designed to support them with exam related anxiety and stress'

My name is Madeehah Qureshi and I am training to become an educational psychologist at the University of East London.

Why is this research being done?

This research is being completed to gain a better understanding of what may help children to cope better with exams. It is also being completed to research how effective the intervention programme and the children completed to gain

When your child has finished the intervention programme (Beating Exam Anxiety Together) I hope to complete an interview with your child lasting no longer than 45 minutes to talk about a recent intervention programme carried out at school and their views. This was a 6 week intervention programme designed to help young people to help cope better with exams.

Confidentiality

When talking to the young people, the interviews will be recorded using a tape recorder; however this information will not be shared with anyone. The only time that information will be shared is if the child shares information that may mean that they or someone else is at risk of harm.

Once the programme has been completed and the questionnaires have been collated, I will write about what I found however I will not use the young people's names at all, nor will I use the name of the school. The young people will not be able to be identified through what they have said in my write up.

If you would like to contact me/ have any further questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me on:

U13267070@uel.ac.uk

Contact number: 07740183789

You can also contact my academic supervisor: Laura Cockburn, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ. Email address: l.cockburn@uel.ac.uk



APPENDIX 4 CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

Name of child

The purpose of this consent form is to state whether you give consent for your child to take part in the following research project:

Project title: The views of young people about an intervention programme designed to support them with exam related anxiety and stress'

1. I received and understand the information about the research project and understand what it is about:

Yes

No

2. I am happy for my child to take part in the research project, depending upon whether consent from parents is received.

Yes

No

3. I am happy for my child's responses to be audio taped?

Yes

No

Signature

Thank you very much



APPENDIX 5 INFORMATION SHEET FOR HEAD TEACHERS

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON
School of Psychology
Stratford Campus
Water Lane
London E15 4LZ

Date.....

Dear [SCHOOL NAME]

Project title: ‘The views of young people about an intervention programme designed to support them with exam related anxiety and stress’

My name is Madeehah Qureshi and I am training to become an educational psychologist at the University of East London.

Why is this research being done?

This research is being completed to gain a better understanding of what may help children to cope better with exams. It is also being completed to research how effective the intervention programme was that was completed at the school and also the children’s experiences of it.

What does the study involve?

When your child has finished the intervention programme (Managing Test Anxiety) I hope to complete an interview lasting no longer than 45 minutes to talk about the programme and their views.

Confidentiality

When talking to the young people, the interviews will be recorded using a tape recorder; however this information will not be shared with anyone. The only time that information will be shared is if the child shares information that may mean that they or someone else is at risk of harm.

Once the programme has been completed and the questionnaires have been collated, I will write about what I found however I will not use the young people’s names at all,

nor will I use the name of the school. The young people will not be able to be identified through what they have said in my write up.

If you would like to contact me/ have any further questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me on:

U13267070@uel.ac.uk

Contact number: 07740183789

You can also contact my academic supervisor: Laura Cockburn, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ. Email address: l.cockburn@uel.ac.uk



APPENDIX 6 CONSENT FORM FOR HEAD TEACHERS

Name of school:

The purpose of this consent form is to state whether you consent for young people from your school to take part in the research project:

Project title: 'The views of young people about an intervention programme designed to support them with exam related anxiety and stress'

1. I received and understand the information about the research project and understand what it is about:

Yes No

2 I am happy for the young people in my school to take part in the research project, depending upon whether consent from parents is received.

Yes No

3. I am happy for young people's responses to be audio taped?

Yes No

Signature

APPENDIX 7 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – YOUNG PEOPLE’S EXPERIENCES OF THE EXAM ANXIETY INTERVENTION

Introduction – The interviewer tells the interviewee the purpose of the interview, the use of tape recorder and asks whether the interviewee has any questions before starting the interview.

The interviewer will inform the participant that the purpose is to gather their views on exams and also on the intervention programme that they have recently taken part in. The interviewer will inform the interviewee that the interview will remain confidential, other than if they or anybody else are at risk or reveal something that compromises child protection.

Consent form signed Name and details taken

- 1) How is school going for you?
- 2) What is your favourite lesson at school?
- 3) What do you like doing in your spare time?
- 4) Can you tell me about how you felt about exams before the programme?

Follow up questions (repeating significant words)

Probing questions – Can you give me detailed description? Do you have examples of this?

- 5) How do you feel about exams now the intervention has been completed?
- 6) If you felt worried about exams, before the programme, can you describe to me in as much detail how did it affected you?
- 7) Now the programme has been completed, if you feel any anxiety about exams, can you tell me how it affects you?
- 8) Do you think young people feel pressure about their exams?

If yes – why might this be?

What factors might influence anxiety about exams?

Follow up questions (repeating significant words)

Probing questions – Can you give me a more detailed description.
Do you have examples of this?

9) If you do feel worried about exams, do you feel worried a long time before or a short time before or both? How do you know that you are worried?

10) How did you find the recent intervention programme overall?

11) Were there any parts of the programme that you enjoyed?

12) Do you feel that the programme has helped you?

If so how do you feel that the programme has helped you?

13) Which part of the programme do you feel could be improved?

14) How do you feel as a result of the programme?

15) Have any family members noticed *a change in you*?

16) Have any family members noticed improved focus on the exams?

17) How did you feel about revising before the programme?

18) How do you feel about revising now that you have finished the programme?

19) How did you feel about going into an exam situation before the programme?

20) How do you feel about going into an exam situation now the programme has been completed?

21) What do you think might help young people to cope with exams?

Probing questions – Can you give me detailed description? Do you have examples of this?

APPENDIX 8 EP SERVICE OVERVIEW OF BEATING EXAM ANXIETY TOGETHER INTERVENTION

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS GROUP

Most students experience some level of anxiety during an exam. However, when anxiety affects exam performance, it can become a problem. The effects of test anxiety include:

- Difficulties with: reading and understanding the questions on the exam paper; organising thoughts; and retrieving key words and concepts when answering essay questions.
- Doing poorly on an exam even though the material is familiar.
- Mental Blocking:
 - Going blank on questions.
 - Remembering the correct answers as soon as the exam is over.

Dealing with exam anxiety is particularly difficult because of its paradoxical nature: that is, that often our natural instinct leads us to do the very opposite of what is likely to be helpful.

The sessions

There are 6 weekly hour-long sessions in which we will cover the following:

- 1) The causes of exam stress, and the physiological & neurological changes that happen within the body when stressed.
- 2) How our thoughts and feelings affect our actions, and how to challenge negative thoughts.
- 3) Other ways of 'thought challenging', and strategies that may be useful in tackling stress – such as positive self-talk, taking a break, and distractions.
- 4) Mindfulness and how this can help improve performance in exams.
- 5) Effective study skills and revision tips, along with how to tackle procrastination & perfectionism.
- 6) A review of all learning during the programme, and practise / maintenance.

Participants will also be given tasks to complete between sessions.

Sessions will be delivered by an Educational Psychologist and a Teaching Assistant will be available to support students.

APPENDIX 9 EXAMPLE OF TRANSCRIPT (INTERVIEW 2)

Transcript of qualitative interview with Fatima (Interview 2)

1 Interviewer: ...at any point. Uhm yes so that's kind of like the point of like why I'm carrying out the
2 interviews, uhm and I just wanted to let you know that uhm it's all going to be confidential so
3 anything that you say will be confidential. I know we've got the door open and that's just for just
4 kind of for procedures...

5

6 Interviewee: Yeah.

7

8 Interviewer: ...but anything that you kind of tell me within the interview will be confidential and
9 when I write up my er when I write up what we've talked about I won't be using your name or
10 anything and you can withdraw at any point so within the interview you can withdraw, afterwards if
11 you feel like oh actually like I said I don't really want that to be in you know Madeehah's research
12 you can contact me, uhm I think it's on the information sheet...

13

14 Interviewee: Yeah yeah.

15

16 Interviewer: ...and I can take the information out. But your name won't be used at any point.

17

18 Interviewee: Okay.

19

20 Interviewer: If that makes sense? So the only time that I would have to break your confidentiality is if
21 I felt that you were at risk of like uhm of harm or if somebody else was at risk of harm and then I'd
22 have to kind of make sure that you were safe.

23

24 Interviewee: Yeah.

25

26 Interviewer: If that makes sense?

27

28 Interviewee: Yeah.

29

30 Interviewer: Uhm yeah, so first we are so the interviews kind of broken up into a few parts so er
31 firstly we talk about exams and then we'll talk about revising and then just a few general questions
32 afterwards. So uhm so how is school going for you in general?

33

34 Interviewee: It's going well actually, uhm I've made quite a lot of progress this year which I'm happy
35 with...

36

37 Interviewer: Good.

38

39 Interviewee: ...so especially in maths...

40

41 Interviewer: Good.

42

43 Interviewee: ...because I was on a U in October...

44

45 Interviewer: Oh.

46

47 Interviewee: ...so now I'm on a D and five marks off a C so.

48

49 Interviewer: Brilliant. So are you in Year 10 or 11?

50

51 Interviewee: Year 11.

Transcript of qualitative interview with Fatima (Interview 2)

52
53 Interviewer: Year 11.
54
55 Interviewee: Yeah.
56
57 Interviewer: So that's really good, so you've kind of made that...
58
59 Interviewee: Yeah.
60
61 Interviewer: ...shift. And what do you think has helped you do that?
62
63 Interviewee: Uhm well my teachers have actually really really helped.
64
65 Interviewer: Oh that's good.
66
67 Interviewee: Uhm revision and uhm just everything they offer really for maths especially...
68
69 Interviewer: Yeah.
70
71 Interviewee: ...like we do Saturdays and...
72
73 Interviewer: Oh really.
74
75 Interviewee: ...after school which is really helpful.
76
77 Interviewer: Really good. That's really really helpful .I also guess you'll be motivated as well?
78
79 Interviewee: Yeah it's I just because I don't want to have to continue maths next year, I want to get
80 my C and be happy with it...
81
82 Interviewer: Yeah.
83
84 Interviewee: ...rather than having to retake the exam when I do my A-Levels.
85
86 Interviewer: Yeah I can understand that. Yeah you want it to kind of maths to be over.
87
88 Interviewee: Yeah.
89
90 Interviewer: Something that you've left behind.
91
92 Interviewee: Yes.
93
94 Interviewer: And never have to look at it again! [Laughs]
95
96 Interviewee: I'd be very happy.
97
98 Interviewer: So I'm guessing it's not your favourite subject?
99
100 Interviewee: No...
101
102 Interviewer: No.

Transcript of qualitative interview with Fatima (Interview 2)

103
104 Interviewee: ...it's not but it's I prefer it now because I know I'm making progress so.
105
106 Interviewer: Yeah and you kind of maybe understand it a little bit more...
107
108 Interviewee: Oh definitely yeah.
109
110 Interviewer: ...than you did before?
111
112 Interviewee: Yeah.
113
114 Interviewer: Sometimes it can be a bit scary can't it maths.
115
116 Interviewee: Yeah.
117
118 Interviewer: Yeah I can relate to that! [Laughs] Uhm and so what's your favourite subject? We've
119 talked about kind of talked about the progress that you've made in maths and what's your favourite
120 subject?
121
122 Interviewee: History...
123
124 Interviewer: History.
125
126 Interviewee: ...or Catering, I can't really choose...
127
128 Interviewer: Oh wow.
129
130 Interviewee: ...bet- or Business, I don't know because they're all the ones I'm taking next year.
131
132 Interviewer: Oh brilliant.
133
134 Interviewee: So I like all of them really.
135
136 Interviewer: Good good. So they're the ones that you want to take as A-Levels?
137
138 Interviewee: Yeah.
139
140 Interviewer: Good. And uhm and what do you like doing in your spare time?
141
142 Interviewee: Er well I help actually I try and read the most I can but basically this year it's just
143 revision really.
144
145 Interviewer: Yeah.
146
147 Interviewee: But then I spend time with my friends when we can, uhm I read and then I help my
148 mum with her catering.
149
150 Interviewer: Oh right, so your mum's.
151
152 Interviewee: Yeah like part-time, so I like doing that, it's quite relaxing it's very.
153

Transcript of qualitative interview with Fatima (Interview 2)

154 Interviewer: Good. So you like reading, like spending time with your friends...
155
156 Interviewee: Yeah.
157
158 Interviewer: ...and you like catering.
159
160 Interviewee: And watching films.
161
162 Interviewer: Yeah. Which films do you like?
163
164 Interviewee: Oh God I'm not, especially TV programmes I get boxsets...
165
166 Interviewer: Oh do you?
167
168 Interviewee: ...and it's so hard this time of year.
169
170 Interviewer: Yes it is yeah, so which ones do you kind of like watching?
171
172 Interviewee: I love all the Harry Potter films.
173
174 Interviewer: Oh do you?
175
176 Interviewee: And then for TV programmes it's mainly like American ones because of Netflix uhm so.
177
178 Interviewer: Which ones do you like?
179
180 Interviewee: Er Supernatural.
181
182 Interviewer: Oh is it good?
183
184 Interviewee: Yeah, it's amazing.
185
186 Interviewer: Oh really?
187
188 Interviewee: The Vampire Diaries, The Office...
189
190 Interviewer: Alright okay.
191
192 Interviewee: ...which is funny and The Walking Dead.
193
194 Interviewer: Okay.
195
196 Interviewee: I like watching that but I don't do it as much now because of revising so.
197
198 Interviewer: Yeah yeah I can understand. You kind of like your boxsets so what's Supernatural
199 about?
200
201 Interviewee: Uhm two brothers, uhm well there's different like storylines in every season because it
202 leads onto it, but basically it's about in the first season it's two brothers uhm who are looking for
203 their dad and it's about all supernatural law so it's like creatures and that it's they like have to find
204 their dad whilst like, I can't really describe it because it's so complicated but.

Transcript of qualitative interview with Fatima (Interview 2)

205
206 Interviewer: Yeah.
207
208 Interviewee: There's, in season 4, there's like the apocalypse and they like create like the four
209 horsemen in like different ways...
210
211 Interviewer: Oh wow.
212
213 Interviewee: ...it's actually really interesting actually.
214
215 Interviewer: It sounds like it...
216
217 Interviewee: Yeah.
218
219 Interviewer: ...I might have to take a look myself [laughs]. Uhm er okay so how many sessions did
220 you take part in in the exam anxiety?
221
222 Interviewee: Er I think I did five because I had to miss one of them because I had a funeral.
223
224 Interviewer: You did well though.
225
226 Interviewee: Yeah it's really helped.
227
228 Interviewer: You feel like it's really helped?
229
230 Interviewee: Yeah.
231
232 Interviewer: Yeah that's really good. So I'll go into like how it has helped, so we'll start off with how
233 you so basically the way it's kind of structured is I'm going to start off with how you felt before, then
234 how you felt during when you were on it and now how you feel after. So how can you tell me how
235 you felt about exams before the programme?
236
237 Interviewee: I used to get like really really nervous and like anxious because I used to think that I'd
238 fail everyone and I think it was around October when we had mocks before and that's when I got a U
239 in my maths exams because I used to panic so much that I could my brain would just like go blank.
240 And but I would used to get really shaky and nervous before exams and wouldn't be, especially
241 maths exams because that's like my weakest subject I used to get like really really panicky.
242
243 Interviewer: So panicky, used to shake...
244
245 Interviewee: Yeah.
246
247 Interviewer: ...and that used to affect how you would perform as well?
248
249 Interviewee: Yeah yeah. It definitely did affect it because I just couldn't concentrate because I was so
250 worried...
251
252 Interviewer: Yeah.
253
254 Interviewee: ...about it.
255

Transcript of qualitative interview with Fatima (Interview 2)

256 Interviewer: So it really affected your concentration yeah?
257
258 Interviewee: Yeah.
259
260 Interviewer: Okay. Uhm is it, can you describe so you have told me about how you felt, can you give
261 me like in as much detail as you can about how if affected you?
262
263 Interviewee: Well it affected my confidence quite a lot actually because uhm all my friends were
264 doing really really well and so if like I would get like really nervous before exams and then I didn't do
265 well like I felt like I was actually letting people down...
266
267 Interviewer: Really?
268
269 Interviewee: ...because I wasn't doing well.
270
271 Interviewer: Who did you feel like you were letting down?
272
273 Interviewee: Er my friends and my family.
274
275 Interviewer: Yeah.
276
277 Interviewee: Because like I have an older sister so like she got all good grades and that so I thought
278 like I'd be letting them down by not getting, but I wasn't because they said to me that I wasn't but
279 uhm.
280
281 Interviewer: Your family reassured you that you weren't?
282
283 Interviewee: Yeah but it was still the thought that I'm letting people down if by like getting...
284
285 Interviewer: Yeah.
286
287 Interviewee: ...this like worried and not doing well in exams.
288
289 Interviewer: Yeah.
290
291 Interviewee: So it was like really nerve-wracking to think that and that just increased like like my fear
292 of doing exams.
293
294 Interviewer: Yeah sure. Sounds like it was really hard. Sounds...
295
296 Interviewee: Yeah.
297
298 Interviewer: ...like you know sounds like it was like really hard feeling like you're letting people down
299 and also like it affecting your confidence.
300
301 Interviewee: Yeah.
302
303 Interviewer: Yeah. I think kind of getting results back from the mock can kind.
304
305 Interviewee: Yeah because they make it like really big like big envelopes and that and it's horrible to
306 open up your envelope it's like a U on when all your friends have got like C's and B's and that.

Transcript of qualitative interview with Fatima (Interview 2)

307
308 Interviewer: Yeah. So you kind of feel you compare.
309
310 Interviewee: Yeah I compare myself to.
311
312 Interviewer: To friends, yeah.
313
314 Interviewee: Yeah.
315
316 Interviewer: So yeah it does sound like it's really really nerve-wracking, so it sounds like it affected
317 you physically and that you would get shaky and nervous...
318
319 Interviewee: Yeah.
320
321 Interviewer: ...but also it affected you internally in terms of your confidence as well.
322
323 Interviewee: Yeah definitely.
324
325 Interviewer: Yeah okay so what about going when you go into exams, used to go into an exam
326 situation, how did you feel about that before the exam?
327
328 Interviewee: Well uhm when I'd be like sitting down because I'd be getting like I'd be starting to get
329 nervous but then when we'd walk in I would sit down and then I would for a long like start shaking
330 more...
331 Interviewer: Really.
332
333 Interviewee: ...because you're in the scenario...
334
335 Interviewer: Yeah.
336
337 Interviewee: ...like you're in like the paper's in front of you and like if I, say in maths, if I opened up
338 the paper and I didn't know like the first question then that would put me off completely and that
339 would make me even more nervous for it.
340
341 Interviewer: Oh really?
342
343 Interviewee: Yeah because like it knocked confidence, well the little bit I had for maths, because I
344 didn't know the first answer.
345
346 Interviewer: So was it looking at the first question that...
347
348 Interviewee: Yeah.
349
350 Interviewer: ...kind of knocked your confidence?
351
352 Interviewee: And having the paper in front of you just makes you even more nervous because you
353 don't know what's in it.
354
355 Interviewer: Yeah yeah, so it's kind of the unknown.
356
357 Interviewee: Yeah.

Transcript of qualitative interview with Fatima (Interview 2)

358
359 Interviewer: And also you talked about seeing the first question, so if you felt like you didn't
360 understand the first question would that put you off the rest of the paper?
361
362 Interviewee: Yeah it would like because it's like not a good start, so that would put me off a bit.
363
364 Interviewer: Yeah that sounds like it wasn't very nice.
365
366 Interviewee: No.
367
368 Interviewer: No uhm okay so moving on to when you were on the intervention programme, so the
369 managing exam anxiety program uhm programme with (EP name) , how did you feel about exams
370 during that period?
371
372 Interviewee: I started to feel a lot better because she'd like every session she'd teach us a new thing.
373
374 Interviewer: Yeah.
375
376 Interviewee: And uhm like I'd start using them like even if we did like a little test in lessons I'd start
377 using that more then uhm because I knew what to do. Like before I didn't know like how to try and
378 stay calm or any methods that I could use but then when we were doing like doing the sessions and
379 started learning a lot more and it'd calm me down a lot because I knew how to do it...
380
381 Interviewer: Yeah.
382
383 Interviewee: ...and like positive thinking when we'd done that one that really helped me.
384
385 Interviewer: Really?
386
387 Interviewee: Yeah.
388
389 Interviewer: Yeah.
390
391 Interviewee: Because like if you go into the exam and you think, 'Oh I'm going to fail', then you
392 normally would so when I did like assessments then I was like, 'Oh I'm doing my best' and like, 'You
393 can do this' and so when we did that it really helped.
394
395 Interviewer: So there was an element of positive thinking...
396
397 Interviewee: Yeah.
398
399 Interviewer: ...in the which kind of helped, so you started to feel a bit more confident about the
400 exams.
401
402 Interviewee: Yeah it was really helpful like because she taught us methods on like how to like just
403 like focus on my paper and like get rid of like any nerves and that.
404
405 Interviewer: That's really good.
406
407 Interviewee: So it was really helpful.
408

Transcript of qualitative interview with Fatima (Interview 2)

409 Interviewer: That's really good, I'd like to know more about that, we'll come back to that.
410
411 Interviewee: Yeah.
412
413 Interviewer: Yeah. Uhm so how do you feel about exams uhm now that the intervention's been
414 completed?
415
416 Interviewee: I do feel a lot better but still nervous about them because obviously it's like my...
417
418 Interviewer: Sure.
419
420 Interviewee: ...real like what I need next year, but uhm I feel a lot calmer when thinking about them,
421 like I haven't actually got that stressed yet...
422
423 Interviewer: Yeah.
424
425 Interviewee: ...which I think is good because it's allowed me to revise...
426
427 Interviewer: Yeah.
428
429 Interviewee: ...better and uhm French was a subject that really stressed me out before but now I'm
430 not too worried because I know like what to do and uhm I just feel a lot better about them because I
431 know if I get in there and I panic then I know what to do to calm myself down...
432
433 Interviewer: Sure.
434
435 Interviewee: ...because I've been taught how to do that and before I didn't know so...
436
437 Interviewer: Sure.
438
439 Interviewee: ...really.
440
441 Interviewer: So you know how to like...
442
443 Interviewee: Yeah.
444
445 Interviewer: ...calm you know feel calm. And were there any parts of the programme that you
446 enjoyed?
447
448 Interviewee: I actually enjoyed all of it because uhm it was quite uhm psychological and I find that
449 quite interesting, so uhm I did enjoy all of the sessions because I knew like from it I was learning
450 something to help myself so I enjoyed it in that way because I knew it would help me in the future,
451 so that's what I enjoyed because I was learning more...
452
453 Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
454
455 Interviewee: ...so there wasn't anything in particular that I like really really enjoyed but it's just like I
456 enjoyed learning about what to do.
457
458 Interviewer: What to do yeah. And so you talked about, you talked about how the programme had
459 helped you so I'm going to ask you a bit more about how it helped you so you talked about how uhm

Transcript of qualitative interview with Fatima (Interview 2)

460 you feel like it's helped because you're now feeling calmer and you can revise more uhm and you
461 said that actually in the exam situation uhm (EP name) taught you how to get rid of the negative
462 thoughts...

463
464 Interviewee: Yeah.

465
466 Interviewer: ...so can you tell me a bit more about that?

467
468 Interviewee: Uhm we had we all had a folder and it had like all sheets in and then uhm I'm trying to
469 remember exactly because I've had so much like going on...

470
471 Interviewer: Don't worry.

472
473 Interviewee: ...but uhm she was like if uhm she said this phrase actually from Kung Fu Panda it was
474 really funny, uhm oh I'm trying to remember it like uhm to basically she told us like if you haven't
475 done well in the past then like today's today that's why we call it a present because it's a gift for
476 today and uhm...

477
478 Interviewer: Oh yeah?

479
480 Interviewee: ...uhm...

481
482 Interviewer: That's nice.

483
484 Interviewee: ...so when we did the positive thinking she told us like if you just like if you know you're
485 strong in a subject like a certain section of it then you think positively about that and like say you
486 know something so you're not going to fail because you know and uhm with the negative thinking
487 she said just try like to push it out of your head because you know you can do something you know
488 you can do it just uhm if you say you're going to fail like you're not because you know something so
489 like replace them with positive thoughts instead.

490
491 Female Speaker: Sorry, can I come in?

492
493 Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah that sounds really really helpful.

494
495 Interviewee: Yeah.

496
497 Interviewer: Uhm okay, so have any family members noticed a change in you?

498
499 Interviewee: Yeah uhm well sometimes it gets on top of me because uhm a few weeks ago uhm I
500 had to do a French speaking and I get like really nervous when doing that and I uhm kind of got like
501 really tearful with my dad but he told me that like I just need to you know like push it away because I
502 don't need French in the future but uhm my mum and dad said that I have improved a lot with like
503 my like stress levels because they've noted that I am not pushing myself as hard as I used to I'm just
504 doing my best and not revising like for four hours straight I'm doing like sections and they've noted
505 on that and they've said it's like helping me a lot more.

506
507 Interviewer: Yeah so you kind of four hours straight, do you feel like that was not helpful for you?

508
509 Interviewee: No it wasn't because it'd just tire me out.

510

Transcript of qualitative interview with Fatima (Interview 2)

511 Interviewer: Yeah.

512

513 Interviewee: And like 45 minute chunks is much better and they said that, that they've seen me like.

514

515 Interviewer: And is that something which you picked up from the programme as well to chunk it?

516

517 Interviewee: Yeah and uhm from assemblies the school have done too.

518

519 Interviewer: Yeah.

520

521 Interviewee: Because (EP name) said not to just she said to just do chunks of something rather than
522 like go at it.

523

524 Interviewer: All day.

525

526 Interviewee: Yeah.

527

528 Interviewer: Yeah yeah. Uhm okay and so I was just going to ask about whether family members had
529 noticed improved focus in the exams, er focus on the exams, but you said you feel more focussed
530 because of your revision strategy.

531

532 Interviewee: Yeah.

533

534 Interviewer: Yeah.

535

536 Interviewee: My my dad's uhm er well we when we last did our mocks I got a lot better results than
537 last set of mocks we did and my dad's really like noted and my mum on my maths because they've
538 seen like me progress and so they've uhm I don't know.

539

540 Interviewer: Yeah, so they've kind of noticed the progression within you?

541

542 Interviewee: Yeah they've said that just uhm they're confident of me to get my C and get they know
543 like they say to me like, 'You will get good grades because you've like worked really hard to get it', so
544 they have noted on my like...

545

546 Interviewer: Oh really?

547

548 Interviewee: ... progress, yeah.

549

550 Interviewer: Really. Uhm and so now the programme's been completed if you feel any anxiety about
551 exams, uhm can you tell me how it affects you?

552

553 Interviewee: Well.

554

555 Interviewer: So this is kind of like after, do still anxiety affects you now after you?

556

557 Interviewee: It's not too bad but I still do get nervous as I said it's because it's an exam it's my future
558 so I still get like I still get nervous but not as nervous as I would do before like I don't get as shaky
559 because I know a lot more now than uhm before so I know that I'll do better...

560

561 Interviewer: Yeah.

Transcript of qualitative interview with Fatima (Interview 2)

562

563 Interviewee: ...so that's really helped.

564

565 Interviewer: Brilliant. So you do get nervous but it's less than before?

566

567 Interviewee: Yeah it's much less than before, I don't get as shaky.

568

569 Interviewer: Yeah and you feel that you can revise more now?

570

571 Interviewee: Yeah.

572

573 Interviewer: Yeah. Uhm and how do you feel about going into an exam situation now that the

574 programme's been completed?

575

576 Interviewee: It's still quite uhm like [pause] still quite a daunting atmosphere but uhm it's not as bad

577 because I'd like go in there like thinking positively that I can do this like we had an English one on

578 Tuesday and I went in there because I was saying to myself, 'Right you can do this, like you know

579 what to do, you've practiced you've revised' and it made me feel so much better like in that

580 atmosphere. Like I managed to just get on with it rather than like sit there shaking...

581

582 Interviewer: Yeah.

583

584 Interviewee: ...like I would have done before.

585

586 Interviewer: Yeah. Uhm okay so it's kind of like the positive self-talk's really helping.

587

588 Interviewee: Yeah they were really helpful and like if my friend said it to me too then that gives me

589 an extra boost of confidence because they believe in me and like if my family say it then that really

590 helps because you have their positive thinking...

591

592 Interviewer: Yeah yeah.

593

594 Interviewee: ...as well.

595

596 Interviewer: Yeah. Uhm and if you feel worried about exams do you feel worried a long time before

597 or a short time before or both?

598

599 Interviewee: A short time before actually because uhm when a long time before it's because it's so

600 like far away I'm like...

601

602 Interviewer: Yeah.

603

604 Interviewee: ...'Oh no it's fine I can revise for this'. But say it's like a few days before then it finally

605 hits me that I have an exam so it's like really like it's er it's quite a scary feeling but uhm like if you've

606 revised like me it's not as bad but it's still quite scary.

607

608 Interviewer: Yeah (pause) and how do you know that you were worried?

609

610 Interviewee: Uhm I just keep thinking about it like uhm over and over again like, 'Oh I've got an

611 exam in a few days like you know maybe I haven't learnt enough', but then I'm like try and like get

612 that out of the way and that so you do stuff like positive thinking again...

Transcript of qualitative interview with Fatima (Interview 2)

613
614 Interviewer: Yeah.
615
616 Interviewee: ...so I'd like constantly think about it and it's really hard not to.
617
618 Interviewer: So that's how you know you're worried because you're constantly thinking...
619
620 Interviewee: Yeah.
621
622 Interviewer: ...about it?
623
624 Interviewee: Like that's me like I can't stop thinking about stuff if I'm worried so it's like it affects me
625 quite a bit but I try not to as much but I'm like naturally a worrier and my dad says so.
626
627 Interviewer: Yeah (pause) yeah, so it kind of crops up in your thinking a lot more.
628
629 Interviewee: Yeah.
630
631 Interviewer: Yeah uhm and okay so we're going to move onto revising now, how did you feel about
632 revising before the programme, you did say to me you used to revise straight?
633
634 Interviewee: Yeah I used to revise too much. I'd revise in chunks and that really because nothing
635 would go in.
636
637 Interviewer: Yeah.
638
639 Interviewee: Like some things would but if I was trying to learn like a specific subject like in four
640 hours then it just wouldn't stay because it was just like intense focus which doesn't help at all
641 because like you're cramming too much in.
642
643 Interviewer: Sure yeah.
644
645 Interviewee: Yeah so that didn't.
646
647 Interviewer: And how do you feel about revising now?
648
649 Interviewee: A lot better yeah because we're doing it in lessons for most subjects like Science so it's
650 like a lot better because it's just an hour like and you have a break so it's I feel so much more
651 confident about it because I know like better methods...
652
653 Interviewer: Yeah.
654
655 Interviewee: ...of revision now.
656
657 Interviewer: Yeah good and er which part of the programme do you feel could be improved?
658
659 Interviewee: [Pause] Uhm, although there isn't necessarily part of the programme but we wouldn't
660 have like a full hour like because everyone would like not know the room to be to so I feel we
661 could've learnt more if we had the full hour and maybe quite a few more sessions would be helpful.
662
663 Interviewer: so more sessions yeah.

Transcript of qualitative interview with Fatima (Interview 2)

664
665 Interviewee: Yeah like to just to go over everything more that would be actually really helpful.
666
667 Interviewer: And also just knowing what room you're going to be in.
668
669 Interviewee: Yeah definitely...
670
671 Interviewer: Yeah.
672
673 Interviewee: ...because then it makes it a longer period of time.
674
675 Interviewer: Yeah yeah uhm and what do you think might help young people to cope with exams?
676
677 Interviewee: I think having like if they're being pressured and doing too many things like teachers
678 saying their subject's more important than the others then that makes them focus and I don't think
679 that's fair, they should've said like do your best and like revise as much as you can but don't put too
680 much on yourselves because it's not fair on us and they should like just teachers should be a lot
681 more understanding because I know they've done their exams but ours are now and we're the ones
682 doing it and if they say like one subjects more important then that actually affects us.
683
684 Interviewer: Can you tell me a bit about that because I just want to know a bit more about that
685 about the other subjects more important part what do you mean by that?
686
687 Interviewee: My friends uhm do drama and their teacher said to them that Drama was more
688 important to them.
689 Interviewer: Than a subject?
690
691 Interviewee: Yeah and uhm that actually affected them quite a bit because they focused just on
692 Drama like they kept practising like they had a performance at like lunches and that and they had no
693 free time and like they would stop focusing on other subjects like English and then like I haven't had
694 that happen but they told me about how like stressed they were getting over Drama and the teacher
695 telling you like it was more important because it's not, every subject's equally important so.
696
697 Interviewer: Yeah, so did you feel like pressure can come from individual subjects?
698
699 Interviewee: Oh definitely definitely, pressure can come from every one of them if the teacher's too
700 harsh.
701
702 Interviewer: So you feel like its conflicting?
703
704 Interviewee: Yeah definitely.
705
706 Interviewer: Like all the different subjects can be conflicting with each other rather than looking at
707 your [cough] sorry, exams in general it's kind of like individual subjects...
708
709 Interviewee: Yeah.
710
711 Interviewer: ...and it kind of can conflict okay. Okay so how do you think that like what do you think
712 could help with that?
713

Transcript of qualitative interview with Fatima (Interview 2)

714 Interviewee: Uhm well some teachers should like benefit from lots of them doing like more maybe
715 having some of these sessions...

716 Interviewer: Yeah.

717 Interviewee: ...like so they know how the students can feel uhm when it's an exam situations
718 because er I know they feel stressed as well but they should like not pressure.

719 Interviewer: So what kind of sessions do you think they would benefit from?

720 Interviewee: Uhm [pause] ones.

721 Interviewer: Is that what you just said sorry?

722 Interviewee: Uhm I think they should uhm benefit from the revision like what she told us about
723 revision...

724 Interviewer: Yeah.

725 Interviewee: ...like.

726 Interviewer: What EP name (the EP that ran the program) said?

727 Interviewee: Yeah.

728 Interviewer: Yeah.

729 Interviewee: Uhm because sometimes we get too much work at night to do revision so they should
730 be like either give us some work to revise or just uhm like not load like an essay on us when we have
731 an exam the next day.

732 Interviewer: And does that happen?

733 Interviewee: Yeah uhm and it's not fair on us because we're trying to revise for everything like
734 because we have like some people have 20 exams so if you're getting work and revision from every
735 subject then the teachers are not being fair on us because they're not.

736 Interviewer: And how do you think people manage that when they've got an essay to write and an
737 exam the next day? Do they just do it I guess?

738 Interviewee: Yeah, I had to do it the other day, I had an exam on Tuesday and we had to write an
739 essay on Monday and it was actually really hard like it was good practice but it was too much for the
740 night before because they say like get a good rest like try and relax the night before and you can't
741 because you have too much work...

742 Interviewer: Yeah sounds like...

743 Interviewee: ...so it's really hard.

744 Interviewer: ...it's really hard.

745

Transcript of qualitative interview with Fatima (Interview 2)

765 Interviewee: Yeah.
766
767 Interviewer: And how did you manage that? Did you feel like you managed it okay?
768
769 Interviewee: I feel I think I did manage it okay but it was just took so much longer because I didn't
770 want to do it like I wanted to just relax and like try and talk to my friends the day before.
771
772 Interviewer: Yeah.
773
774 Interviewee: It was like it wasn't nice.
775
776 Interviewer: So do you feel, you feel like the teachers could do with some kind of some support in
777 knowing how young people feel?
778
779 Interviewee: Yeah definitely, because they sometimes I think I know they probably understand,
780 sometimes you get the impression they don't understand what we're going through...
781
782 Interviewer: Yeah.
783
784 Interviewee: ...because exams are really hard and theirs are probably hard as well but like they
785 should just understand how we feel ?
786
787 Interviewer: Sure yeah. Okay so uhm what factors do you think might influence anxiety about
788 exams? You've talked about some how some pressure comes from school, is there any other factors
789 that you think?
790
791 Interviewee: I think some people's parents definitely are pressuring too hard to get good grades.
792 Like I think you should be proud of your child whatever they get and I think if people pressure their
793 children then that's really like a big weight on someone's shoulders because like you're trying to
794 impress them and but you're not impressing yourself because you're working too hard.
795
796 Interviewer: Yeah.
797
798 Interviewee: And I definitely think uhm too much schoolwork is a factor for anxiety and exams
799 because uhm you haven't had time to revise so that makes it harder.
800
801 Interviewer: Yeah sure. Uhm so do you feel like uhm some of the factors are parents and also
802 teachers?
803
804 Interviewee: Yeah.
805
806 Interviewer: Is there anything else, or is that kind of?
807
808 Interviewee: Uhm I think actually uhm some if people have older brothers and sisters that have done
809 well then that's actually quite a big thing...
810
811 Interviewer: Yeah.
812
813 Interviewee: ...for some people because they're like, 'Oh if I don't get good grades then I'm like
814 letting people down like because my brother or sister have done so well'.
815

Transcript of qualitative interview with Fatima (Interview 2)

816 Interviewer: Yeah.
817
818 Interviewee: Then if you get don't get good grades too then you know people will be disappointed
819 and expect more of you so.
820
821 Interviewer: Yeah yeah I understand that.
822
823 Interviewee: That's quite a hard thing...
824
825 Interviewer: Yeah.
826
827 Interviewee: ...for people to cope with I think.
828
829 Interviewer: Uhm okay so we've kind of finished. So how did you find the interview?
830
831 Interviewee: It was really good actually it was yeah it was good to put like my points across.
832
833 Interviewer: Yeah.
834
835 Interviewee: Especially about like the factors that we just did so.
836
837 Interviewer: And when are you going off on study leave?
838
839 Interviewee: Actually we found out this morning that they might not be giving us study leave.
840
841 Interviewer: Oh.
842
843 Interviewee: So that's actually really stressful because uhm.
844
845 Interviewer: I wonder why that is?
846
847 Interviewee: I don't know. But apparently they didn't get our opinion on it and that really annoyed
848 me this morning because they didn't ask us like, 'Would you like study leave?' Of course everyone
849 wants study leave because like I sometimes work better at home because my sister's at home. She
850 could test me and that and like I don't know it's really annoyed me.
851
852 Interviewer: Yeah.
853
854 Interviewee: But we might get it or we might not.
855
856 Interviewer: So that's another thing [Laughs]...
857
858 Interviewee: Yeah.
859
860 Interviewer: ...talk about so this is the uncertainty of not knowing whether you get, do you feel like it
861 would be helpful to have?
862
863 Interviewee: Yeah definitely, I mean we have half-term but uhm.
864
865 Interviewer: I wonder why you won't get study leave, I wonder what that's about?
866

Transcript of qualitative interview with Fatima (Interview 2)

867 Interviewee: Uhm they said my form tutor said that it's because uhm apparently people's grades dip
868 whilst study leave, but I as someone who would revise I wouldn't let that happen. Like I'd probably
869 get my grades would go up if I was at home because I'd have more time and I wouldn't have to
870 travel to school and that.

871

872 Interviewer: Yeah.

873

874 Interviewee: So that's really annoying.

875

876 Interviewer: I guess there's the weekends and then there's the evenings isn't there?

877

878 Interviewee: Yeah, but you try you have to try and relax...

879

880 Interviewer: As well.

881

882 Interviewee: ...too because otherwise then it's too much and then you don't remember anything if
883 you don't relax.

884

885 Interviewer: Yeah so that's another thing which we could talk about...

886

887 Interviewee: Yeah.

888

889 Interviewer: ...you need your down time as well don't you?

890

891 Interviewee: Yeah you definitely, no I think it's crucial that you have that time.

892

893 Interviewer: Yeah it's really good that you've got that awareness because that means that you won't
894 burn out.

895

896 Interviewee: Yeah like you need to like get if people work revise to like 11 o'clock at night and then
897 have to wake up at six in the morning and that's not healthy for them.

898

899 Interviewer: No it's not.

900

901 Interviewee: Then I think it's like we should have study leave...

902

903 Interviewer: Definitely.

904

905 Interviewee: ...like I think some people actually work better at home and if we can like wake up late
906 and that would boost our performance because we've had more sleep so I think they should take
907 that into consideration when they cancel study leave.

908

909 Interviewer: Yeah I agree, I agree. I'm sure it'll all work out.

910

911 Interviewee: Yeah I hope so. I mean I know we'll be doing lessons at school but it wouldn't be the
912 same as being at home and being able to like have all your notes in front of you rather than being on
913 a cramped table.

914

915 Interviewer: Yeah. So has it definitely been cancelled?

916

917 Interviewee: Don't know. We heard this morning that it might be cancelled but I think it probably

Transcript of qualitative interview with Fatima (Interview 2)

918 will be.
919
920 Interviewer: Do you think? Well you never know they might decide...
921
922 Interviewee: Yeah.
923
924 Interviewer: ...you might just get like a shorter amount of time.
925
926 Interviewee: Yeah. Like because all our uhm big exams like English are this month so it'd be quite
927 helpful to do that at home...
928
929 Interviewer: Yeah.
930
931 Interviewee: ...but then obviously they might have like...
932
933 Interviewer: They might keep you in lessons in school but they might allow you to work in silence or
934 something I don't know.
935
936 Interviewee: Yeah like sometimes it's best to work with friends too because my friend really helps
937 me with maths so and I don't have many lessons with her so if we had study leave then we...
938
939 Interviewer: You could study together, exactly.
940
941 Interviewee: ...so that's really.
942
943 Interviewer: I guess there's half term isn't there?
944
945 Interviewee: Yeah.
946
947 Interviewer: Yeah.
948
949 Interviewee: But then they say rest as well and you're like we don't have time!
950
951 Interviewer: [Laughs] yeah. It'll all be over soon it will all be over soon!
952
953 Interviewee: My last exam is 16 June so I'm very happy.
954
955 Interviewer: Yeah I don't blame you.
956
957 Interviewee: And it's history so I'm leaving on a good note.
958
959 Interviewer: Yeah so it sounds like you're working really hard and you've got some really good
960 strategies.
961
962 Interviewee: I try my best so.
963
964 Interviewer: All you can do is try your best.
965
966 Interviewee: Yeah.
967
968 Interviewer: All you can do and just remember it's not the end of the world, it's never the end of the

Appendix 10 Interview coded extract

TABLE 6: INTERVIEW 2 CODED EXTRACT: RESEARCH QUESTION 1

Code	Example
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Anxiety -Failure -Panicking -Mind blank -Shaking/ physical symptoms -Anxiety affecting performance 	<p>I used to get like really really nervous and like anxious because I used to think that I'd fail every one and I think it was around October when we had mocks before and that's when I got a U in my math's exams because I used to panic so much that I could my brain would just like go blank. And but I would used to get really shaky and nervous before exams and wouldn't be, especially math's exams because that's like my weakest subject I used to get like really really panicky.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Anxiety affecting performance 	<p>It definitely did affect it because I just couldn't concentrate because I was so worried...</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Self image -Comparing performance with friends -Letting people down -Anxiety 	<p>Well it affected my confidence quite a lot actually because uhm all my friends were doing really really well and so if like I would get like really nervous before exams and then I didn't do well like I felt like I was actually letting people down...</p>

<p>-Confidence</p>	
<p>-Letting people down (friends and family)</p> <p>Anxiety</p>	<p>Because like I have an older sister so like she got all good grades and that so I thought like I'd be letting them down by not getting, but I wasn't because they said to me that I wasn't but uhm.</p> <p>Yeah but it was still the thought that I'm letting people down if by like getting...</p> <p>...this like worried and not doing well in exams.</p> <p>So it was like really nerve-wracking to think that and that just increased like my fear of doing exams.</p>
<p>-Comparing performance with friends</p> <p>-Exams are important</p> <p>-Exams are a big deal "big"</p> <p>Confidence</p>	<p>Yeah because they make it like really big like big envelopes and that and it's horrible to open up your envelope it's like a U on when all your friends have got like C's and B's and that.</p>

<p>-Going into exam situation</p> <p>-Shaking</p> <p>-Nervous</p> <p>-Not knowing the answer to the first question can put you off the whole exam.</p> <p>-Anxiety</p>	<p>like you're in like the paper's in front of you and like if I, say in maths, if I opened up the paper and I didn't know like the first question then that would put me off completely and that would make me even more nervous for it.</p> <p>because it's like not a good start, so that would put me off a bit.</p>
<p>-Unknown</p> <p>-Exam paper</p> <p>-Unsure about the content of the exam paper</p>	<p>And having the paper in front of you just makes you even more nervous because you don't know what's in it.</p>
<p>-Feeling worried a short time before the exam.</p> <p>When exams are a long way off, feel that there is enough time to revise.</p>	<p>A short time before actually because uhm when a long time before it's because it's so like far away I'm like...</p> <p>... 'Oh no it's fine I can revise for this'. But say it's like a few days before then it finally hits me that I have an exam so it's like really like it's err it's quite a scary feeling but uhm like if you've revised then I it's not as bad but it's still quite scary.</p>
<p>-Feelings of self doubt</p>	<p>Uhm I just keep thinking about it like uhm over and over again like, 'Oh I've got an exam in a few days like you know maybe I</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Exam anxiety -Experience of exam anxiety. -Rumination -Continuously thinking about exams -Anxiety about not having enough knowledge -Changing thinking patterns from negative to positive -Cant stop thinking when worried -Natural worrier 	<p>haven't learnt enough', but then I'm like try and like get out of the way and that so you do stuff like positive thinking again...</p> <p>...so I'd like constantly think about it and it's really hard not to.</p> <p>Like that's me like I can't stop thinking about stuff if I'm worried so it's like it affects me quite a bit but I try not to as much but I'm like naturally a worrier and my dad says so.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Young people are being asked to do too many things. -Teachers saying their subject is more important than others -Pupils feeling conflicted Pupils feeling pressured -Teachers should be a lot more understanding -Teachers should not pressure 	<p>I think having like if they're being pressured and doing too many things like teachers saying their subject's more important than the others then that makes them focus and I don't think that's fair, they should've said like do your best and like revise as much as you can but don't put too much on yourselves because it's not fair on us and they should like just teachers should be a lot more understanding because I know they've done their exams but ours are now and we're the ones doing it and if they say like one subjects more important then that actually affects us.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Pupils affected by pressure. -Teachers have done their exams 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Pupils feeling conflicted -Pupils feeling pressured -Pupils affected by pressure. -Pupils focusing more on one subject than another. -Teachers saying their subject is more important than others -No free time -Pressure coming from individual subjects -Researcher asked for clarification, participant agreed with researcher. -Teacher too harsh 	<p>Yeah and uhm that actually affected them quite a bit because they focused just on Drama like they kept practicing like they had a performance at like lunches and that and they had no free time and like they would stop focusing on other subjects like English and then like I haven't had that happen but they told me about how like stressed they were getting over Drama and the teacher telling you like it was more important because it's not, every subject's equally important so.</p> <p>Pressure can come from every one of them if the teacher's too harsh.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Agreed with researcher that teachers might benefit from some support re understanding exam pressure -Teachers don't understand -Teachers do understand 	<p>Yeah definitely, because they sometimes I think I know they probably understand, sometimes you get the impression they don't understand what we're going through...</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Teachers own exams were probably hard -Teachers should understand how pupils feel 	<p>...because exams are really hard and theirs are probably hard as well but like they should just understand how we feel</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Unfair -Injustice? -Given additional work to do (such as essay) as well as revision. -Teachers are not being fair on pupils with conflicting work- load. 	<p>Interviewee: Yeah uhm and it's not fair on us because we're trying to revise for everything like because we have like some people have 20 exams so if you're getting work and revision from every subject then the teachers are not being fair on us because they're not.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Work load too much -Given work to complete when there is an essay to write the following day -The teachers give helpful messages such as to "relax" which do not match the work load. 	<p>Interviewee: Yeah, I had to do it the other day, I had an exam on Tuesday and we had to write an essay on Monday and it was actually really hard like it was good practice but it was too much for the night before because they say like get a good rest like try and relax the night before and you can't because you have too much work...</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Given additional work to do (such as essay) as well as revision. -Given work to do such as essays when there is an exam the next day. 	<p>Uhm because sometimes we get too much work at night to do revision so they should be like either</p> <p>give us some work to revise or just uhm like not load like an essay on us when we have an exam the next day.</p>

<p>-Given work to do such as essays when there is an exam the next day.</p> <p>-Too much work</p> <p>Young people in need of support on how to multi-task? Manage revision from multiple subjects?</p> <p>-Want to relax the day for the exam (talk to friends)</p> <p>Did not want to do the essay.</p>	<p>I feel I think I did manage it okay but it was just took so much longer because I didn't want to do it like I wanted to just relax and like try and talk to my friends the day before.</p>
<p>-Agreed with researcher that teachers might need support to understand how young people feel</p> <p>-Teachers might not understand what young people are going through</p>	<p>Yeah definitely, because they sometimes I think I know they probably understand, sometimes you get the impression they don't understand what we're going through...</p>
<p>-Parental pressure</p> <p>Parents should be p</p> <p>-Children try to impress their parents</p> <p>- Young people not thinking about themselves and working too hard</p>	<p>I think some people's parents definitely are pressuring too hard to get good grades. Like I think you should be proud of your child whatever they get and I think if people pressure their children then that's really like a big weight on someone's shoulders because like you're trying to impress them and but you're not impressing yourself because you're working too hard.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Too much school work -Too much work means there hasn't been enough time to revise for exams. -Not enough time to revise for exams causes anxiety. - Time - Revision 	<p>I definitely think uhm too much schoolwork is a factor for anxiety and exams because uhm you haven't had time to revise so that makes it harder.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Not having enough time - Maybe not being given study leave. -Students not being asked on their opinion as to whether they should have study leave. - Student feels annoyed. - Can study better at home. -Stressful - Grades would increase when at home because there would be more time to study and less travel time. -Teachers feel that grades dip during study leave. - Need study leave. 	<p>Actually we found out this morning that they might not be giving us study leave.</p> <p>So that's actually really stressful because uhm.</p> <p>But apparently they didn't get our opinion on it and that really annoyed me this morning because they didn't ask us like, 'Would you like study leave?' Of course everyone wants study leave because like I sometimes work better at home because my sister's at home she could test me and that and like I don't know it's really annoyed me.</p> <p>But we might get it or we might not.</p> <p>I mean we have half-term but uhm.</p>

	<p>My form tutor said that it's because uhm apparently people's grades dip whilst study leave, but I as someone who would revise I wouldn't let that happen. Like I'd probably get my grades would go up if I was at home because I'd have more time and I wouldn't have to travel to school and that.</p> <p>So that's really annoying.</p>
<p>-Older brothers and sisters that have done well in their exams can increase exam anxiety.</p> <p>Older brother or sister doing well can increase pressure</p> <p>- Letting others down (family/parents?) because older sibling has done well.</p>	<p>I think actually uhm some if people have older brothers and sisters that have done well then that's actually quite a big thing...</p> <p>For some people because they're like, 'Oh if I don't get good grades then I'm like letting people down like because my brother or sister have done so well'.</p>
<p>Perception of exams after the intervention</p>	
<p>Feel better</p> <p>Nervous</p> <p>Calmer</p> <p>Can revise</p>	<p>I do feel a lot better but still nervous about them because obviously it's like my...</p>

	<p>: ...real like what I need next year, but uhm I feel a lot calmer when thinking about them, like I haven't actually got that stressed yet...</p> <p>...which I think is good because it's allowed me to revise...</p>
<p>Managing stress (even if panicked)</p> <p>Feel better</p> <p>Was previously stressed</p>	<p>better and uhm French was a subject that really stressed me out before but now I'm not too worried because I know like what to do and uhm I just feel a lot better about them because I know if I get in there and I panic then I know what to do to calm myself down...</p>
<p>Experience of exams</p> <p>Nervous</p> <p>Tearful</p> <p>Anxiety</p> <p>Not pushing self as hard as used to</p> <p>Managing stress better</p>	<p>: Yeah uhm well sometimes it gets on top of me because uhm a few weeks ago uhm I had to do a French speaking and I get like really nervous when doing that and I uhm kind of got like really tearful with my dad but told me that like I just need to you know like push it away because I don't need French in the future but uhm my mum and dad said that I have improved a lot with like my like stress levels because they've noted that I am not pushing myself as hard as I used to I'm just doing my best and like not revising like for four hours straight I'm doing like sections and</p>

<p>Improved focus</p> <p>Improved time management</p>	<p>they've noted on that and they've said it's like helping me a lot more.</p>
<p>Exams impact future</p> <p>Nervous</p> <p>Less shaky</p> <p>Feel confident that will perform better.</p>	<p>It's not too bad but I still do get nervous as I said it's because it's an exam it's my future so I still get like I still get nervous but not as nervous as I would do before like I don't get as shaky because I know a lot more now than uhm before so I know that I'll do better...</p>

<p>Experience of exam situation</p> <p>Daunting</p> <p>Think positive</p> <p>Positive self talk</p> <p>Feel better</p>	<p>It's still quite uhm like [pause] still quite a daunting atmosphere but uhm it's not as bad because I'd like go in there like thinking positively that I can do this like we had an English one on Tuesday and I went in there because I was saying to myself, 'Right you can do this, like you know what to do, you've practiced you've revised' and it made me feel so much better like in that atmosphere. Like I managed to just get on with it rather than like sit there shaking...</p>
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Appendix 11 Map of studies

TABLE 7: MAP OF STUDIES

Number	Authors	Title	Main topic	Population sample and size	Findings	Measure	Location
1	Vitasari, Wahab, Othman, Awang (2010)	A Research for Identifying Study Anxiety Sources among University Students	This researched aimed to identify the main causes of exam anxiety.	770 students	The results showed that exam anxiety was the main source of exam anxiety (ahead of class presentation anxiety, mathematics anxiety, language anxiety and social anxiety).	Study anxiety questionnaire	Malaysia
2	Cassady and	Cognitive test and anxiety	The relationship	168 undergrad	Students with high levels of test	The test procrastinatio	U.K

	Johnson (2001)	academic performance (2002)	between exams, anxiety and academic performance.	uate students.	anxiety performed lower than those with lower levels of test anxiety.	n questionnaire (TPQ). Cognitive test anxiety scale.	
3	Connors, L, Putwain, D., Woods, K., Nicholson, L (2009)	Causes and consequences of test anxiety in key stay 2 pupils – the meditational role of emotional resilience	The causes of test anxiety in key stage 2 children and the impact that this has on the children.	120 year 6 pupils and their teachers from three primary school and their teachers which examined pupils experience s of SATs and SAT related anxiety.	Poor grades were associated with higher levels of of self reported test anxiety and lower levels of resilience. Q	Test anxiety was measured using the childrens test anxiety scale (CTAS) Resilience was measured using the Resiliency Scales for Children and Adolescents (RCSA). The qualitative analysis involved the	U.K

						use of adapted grounded theory in which initially open coded	
4	Burns, D. J.	Anxiety at the time of final exam – relationships with expectations and performance.	How exam anxiety impacts exam results	378 junior and senior students enrolled in principles of Marketing classes. 55% of the sample were women and 45% were men.	It was found that those students that expected themselves to perform better had higher levels of anxiety (and this did not negatively impact their grades as no evidence was found for this).	Two questionnaires, one that included the grade that the students anticipated to receive and the second asked the students to evaluate their anticipated performance.	U.S
5	Mavildi, Hoogerh eide and Paas (2014) .	A QUICK AND EASY STRATEGY TO REDUCE TEST ANXIETY AND ENHANCE	Does allowing children to look ahead at the exam questions (therefore	117 primary school students (aged 11-12).	The results showed that allowing children to look ahead reduced anxiety	The cognitive test anxiety questionnaire .	Australi a

		TEST PERFORMANCE.	consumes less working memory resources).		and enhanced performance.		
6	Agarwal, Pooja., Antonio, L., Roediger, H., McDermott, K., McDaniel (2014)	CLASSROOM BASED PROGRAMS OF RETRIEVAL PRACTICE REDUCED MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TEST ANXIETY.	The impact of exam practice on exam anxiety	1408 middle and high school students	72% of students found that retrieval practice made them less about exams, however 6% felt more nervous.	A survey about what strategies are implemented when studying.	U.S
7	Bodas, Ollendick and Sovani (2008)	Test anxiety in Indian children: A cross-cultural perspective	Test anxiety in children living in India	231 school children	The results showed that the children were exposed to a high stake environment and	Mixed methods study including focus groups (using open	India

					were experiencing exam stress, this was not found to be associated with exam stress. They concluded that desensitization with regards to exams is required to help reduce anxiety however they do not explain what kind of desensitisation would be helpful	ended questions) and a Test Anxiety Scale.	
8	Martin and Marsh (2007)	Academic Buoyancy: Towards an understanding of students everyday academic resilience.	The purpose of the data collection was to research the level of resilience to be able to deal with	598 students in years 8 and 10 at five Australian high schools.	Females had higher levels of exam anxiety than males.	A rating scale on academic buoyancy	Australia

			academic setbacks				
9	Goldenberg, Floyd and Moyer	No Effect of a Brief Music Intervention on Test Anxiety and Exam Scores in College	Intervention (music) to reduce test anxiety	359 undergraduate psychology graduates.	The music intervention was found to not have any impact in reducing exam anxiety.	The preference for listening to music was measured on a four point likert scale. Exam anxiety was measured with an 8 item modified spielberger Test Anxiety Inventory.	U.S
10	Mowbray (2012)	WORKING MEMORY, TEST ANXIETY AND EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS : A REVIEW.	A review of interventions that are used to reduce exam anxiety. Working memory	N/A	He also mentions that interventions that are aimed at improving working memory (cognitive and attentional	N/A	Australia

			interventions are also discussed.		control) have received some support. These interventions however are not therapeutic. He states that therapeutic interventions such as ACT (which is based upon mindfulness principles) which teaches accepting thoughts and feelings rather than changing or suppressing them. He argues that the use ACT combined with study skills may be a helpful intervention.		
11	Chamberlain,	The Fear Factor:	Students views and	19 A level students	The results showed that most	Four focus groups	U.K

	Daly, Spalding (2011)	Students' Experiences of Test Anxiety when Taking A-Level Examination	experiences of exam anxiety.		students felt that a degree of exam anxiety helped their performance. The results also showed that the students felt that exam anxiety may negatively impact their ability to prepare for their exams.		
12	Neuderth, Jabs and Schmidtknecht (2008).	Strategies for reducing test anxiety and optimizing exam preparation in German university students: a prevention-oriented pilot project of the University of Würzburg.	Study skills used to reduce exam anxiety	91 university students	Evaluation of the project shows a high level of acceptance the study skills programme	Percentage of uptake (acceptance) was used as evaluation.	Germany

13	Aysan, Thompson and Hamarat (2001)	Test anxiety, coping strategies and perceived health in a group of high school students: A Turkish sample.	The relationship between exam anxiety, coping strategies and perceived health.	59 participants	The individuals that had high levels of test anxiety were found to have poorer coping strategies (such as escapism and other forms of avoidance) and had poor perceptions of their health. Younger students were also found to display higher levels of exam anxiety.	The perceived health scale. Test anxiety inventory. The coping strategies scale.	Turkey
14	Dewald, J. F., Meijer, A. M., Oort, F., J., Kerkhof, G. A.,	Adolescents' sleep in low-stress and high-stress (exam) times: a prospective quasi-experiment.	The impact of exams on adolescents sleeping patterns.	175 students with a mean age of 15.14 years.	Sleep was more fragmented during high-stress time than low stress time.	Objective sleep assessment (involves the use of a wristwatch that can record movements	Holland

	Bogels (2014).					over an extended period). The stress questionnaire for children.	
15	Hashim, Freddy and Rosmatunisah (2012)	Relationships between negative affect and academic achievement among secondary school students: The mediating effects of habituated exercise.	The relationship between academic achievement and exercise.	750 secondary school students.	Exercise reduces stress and anxiety and also helps to increase academic performance	Self report measures	Malaysia
16	Putwain, D. W., Connors, L., Symes, W (2010)	Do cognitive distortions mediate the test anxiety-examination performance relationship?	The relationship between test anxiety and	244 year 11 students	The researchers found that those that suffer with exam anxiety are likely to not perform as well as those students that do not due to	Revised test anxiety scale	U.K

			exam performance.		cognitive distortions.		
17	Dundas and Wormnes (2013)		Test anxiety intervention (in particular whether self hypnosis can enhance a CBT intervention on test anxiety.	73 test anxious university students.	The results showed that self hypnosis did not enhance the CBT intervention.	20 item test anxiety scale reactions to tests questionnaire Spielberger (1980) Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) The students were also interviewed after the intervention to gain their	Norway

						views on their experiences.	
18	Dundas, Wormnes and Hauge (2009)	MAKING EXAMS A MANAGEABLE TASK	Whether CBT can reduce exam anxious.	36 university students	The interviewers found that the participants described ways of reframing the task of exams as carrying out pieces of work that are made simple and manageable for them as individuals	Interviewing and grounded theory	Norway
19	Orbach, Lindsay and Grey (2005)	A RANDOMISED PLACEBO CONTROLLED TRIAL OF A SELF HELP INTERNET BASED INTERVENTION FOR TEST ANXIETY.	Intervention (CBT internet based to reduce test anxiety).	90 University students	53% of the CBT Group showed a reduction in exam anxiety (therefore this provides some evidence that CBT may be an effective intervention to	Test anxiety inventory, anxiety higherarchy questionnaire , The exam problem solving inventory, the general self	U.K

					reduce exam anxiety).	efficacy scale and the Heim reasoning tests.	
20	Remedios, Ritchie and Lieberman (2005)	I used to like it but now I don't. The effect of the transfer test in Northern Ireland. Pupils intrinsic motivation.	How exams can decrease interest in a subject.	66 10 and 11 year olds	The study confirmed the hypothesis that exams can reduce interest in subjects.	"A questionnaire to measure motivation"	U.K
21	Ramirez and Beilock (2011)	Writing about testing worries boosts exam performance in the class-room	Writing about the test worries prevents "choking" during the exam situation	Study 1 had 20 participants. Study 2 had 47 students. Study 3 had 51 students.	Studies the researchers found that those who had high levels of test anxiety that were in the intervention group out performed controls that also had high levels of test anxiety	Maths accuracy "A standard measure of test anxiety"	U.S

22	Bonaccio and Reeve (2010)	The nature and relative importance of students perceptions of the sources of test anxiety.	Understanding sources of test anxiety	<p>The first sample consisted of 67 undergraduate students.</p> <p>The second sample consisted of 130 undergraduate students</p>	<p>The researchers found that self-perceptions of low self efficacy (for example feeling under prepared, thoughts of having insufficient knowledge and prior poor performance) and perceived anxiety proneness (such as generalized anxiety, fear of disappointing others and social anxiety) were the strongest unique predictors of test anxiety, worry and tension. Test difficulty contributed little variance.</p>	The researchers used questionnaires and analysed students written accounts of tests	Canada
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23	Zargarzadeh and Shirazi (2014)	The effect of progressive muscle relaxation method on test anxiety in nursing (2013)	To determine the effectiveness of progressive muscle relaxation in nursing students.	49 male and female students	Sarason anxiety questionnaire	Progressive muscle relaxation was found to significantly reduce exam related anxiety.	Iran
24	Putwains, Remedios and Symes	Experiencing fear as a challenge or threat influences attainment value and academic self efficacy.	To understand the impact of the use of fear to motivate students.	Self report data collected from 1433 students in their final two years of secondary education.	3 Quantitative questionnaires were used.	The researchers suggest that teachers could benefit from training on how effective fear appeals are	UK

