Thesis

An Exploration into the Use of Social Media Technology in Adolescents who School Refuse.

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Abstract

Despite school refusal being a widely researched area; outcomes for young people affected by school refusal remain poor and the voice of the child continues to remain absent from the evidence base (Baker & Bishop, 2015). Due to the research on school refusal focusing mainly on treatment (Elliot & Place, 2019), there is little information which explores the impact of school refusal behaviour. Research often fails to address the externalised social factors which may be reinforcing the school refusal behaviour. Social Media Technology (SMT) now plays a large part of life, with the majority of people using some form of SMT (Battisby, 2018). It is still unclear what effect this is having on people's mental health with conflicting research often found (Twenge et al, 2018; Heffer et al, 2019). Research often discovers SMT links with mental health (Twenge et al, 2018) and socialising (Beyens et al, 2016). These links are also, often, observed within the Anxiety Based School Refusal (ABSR) literature (Csoti, 2003; Havik et al, 2015), one might assume that SMT can impact on the ABSR experience; there is currently no research which explores this further.

This research aimed to provide an insight into the experience of Anxiety Based School Refusal (ABSR) for the young people and how those involved viewed SMT during this time. Four participants were interviewed in total via a semi-structured interview process; all pupil participants attended an anxious and phobic specialist school provision for those who were not attending mainstream education. Data was analysed using the process of Interpretative Phonological Analysis (Smith, Flower and Larkin, 2009), four super-ordinate themes were identified: the experience of school; the self as a person; social connection and impacts of SMT use. Implications for educational psychologists and professionals are considered alongside possible future directions for further study.

Summary

This thesis is in three parts: a literature review, an empirical study, and a critical appraisal.

Part 1: Major Literature Review

Part one, is further divided into 2 Section, Literature Reviews 1A and 1B, beginning with an introduction providing context and setting the scene with statistics around the prevalence of school non-attendance. The introduction provides amplification of the title and rationale is presented. Section 1A of the literature review main starts with an overview of the term school-refusal and the different aspect often associated, this goes on to explore the prevalence of school refusal and long term outcomes often associated with this group of children and young people. Key theoretical and research literature is presented within the areas of school refusal and social media technology, which are then critically reviewed with section 1B of the literature review. Leading to the identification of a research gap regarding anxiety based school refusal and how social media affects this experience. A rationale for the empirical study and research questions are provided.

Part 2: Empirical Paper

Part 2, is an account of the empirical study, providing a brief overview of the literature discussed in Part 1 in order to provide a concise background to the research study. The methodology is outlined and details are provided of the approach used. 4 semi-structure interviews were conducted with participants from a special provision for school anxious and phobic pupils who were not attending mainstream education. Key findings are summarised s and discussed in relation to existing literature. Strengths and limitations of the study are proposed, along with suggestions for further research.

Part 3: Critical Appraisal

Part 3, the critical appraisal, is also further divided into two parts which provides a reflective account of the research process. Section 3A provides a critical account of the research process. An account of the research development process is discussed and contextualised within the research paradigm. It explores methodological issues and ethical issues. Section 3B outlines the researcher's contribution to knowledge and the researcher's professional development and practice.

Content

Declaration	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	v
Summary	Vi
Contents	ix
List of figures	xiv
List of Tables	xiv
List of Appendices	xv
List of Abbreviations	xvii

Contents

Part 1 – Major Literature Review

Part 2: Empirical Study

List of Figures

List of Tables

List of Appendices

List of Abbreviations

ABSR	Anxiety Based School Refusal
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ALN	Additional Learning Needs
ALNET	Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal Bill
APA	American Psychiatric Association
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
AWS	Attendance and Wellbeing Service
BPS	British Psychological Society
CBT	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
CYP	Children and Young People
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DSM-5	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition
EHE	Electively Home Educated
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
FOMO	Fear Of Missing Out
ICIYET	International Central Institute for Youth and Educational Television
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
LA	Local Authority
NAS	National Autistic Society
NSPCC	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
RSPH	Royal Society for Public Health
TA	Thematic Analysis
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
WG	Welsh Government
WAG	Welsh Assembly Government

An Exploration into the use of Social Media Technology in Adolescents' who Schools Refuse.

Part 1: Introduction and Literature Review

(Word Count: 13,620)

1. Introduction

1.1 Amplification of the title and rationale for the research

The most recent figures from Welsh Government (WG) found that in 2017/2018 the overall level of absence for the secondary school sector was 6.2 per cent, of which 1.6 per cent was unauthorised, which equates to 1 in 4 absences (WG, 2018b). 1 in 25 pupils (4.1 per cent) at secondary school level in Wales were classed as persistent absentees, this was determined as when a young person misses 20 per cent or more of the school year (WG, 2018b). This amounts to almost 1 child in every class throughout Wales missing 20 per cent or more of the school year. In 2017/2018 at the primary school level, overall absences were 5.5 per cent, of which 1.3 per cent was unauthorised absences (WG, 2018a). 1 in 60 pupils (1.7 per cent) at primary school level were classed as persistent absentees (WG, 2018a). Figures do not state the reasons for the persistent absenteeism; this could be as a result of long term illness, truancy or family holidays taken during term time and not necessarily a result of school refusal. With school refusal being a prevalent issue for young people and schools, outcomes for this group remain poor (Elliot & Place, 2019). The literature exploring school refusal often has a within child medical model approach which doesn't consider the wider social issues which could be driving refusal behaviour. This research aims to investigate the experience of school refusal from the pupil's perspective. Gaining their own thoughts and feelings about what they feel contributed to their school refusal, with a particular emphasis on how their experience is affected by the use of Social Media Technology (SMT). Social Media Technology (SMT) is defined as "*websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking*" (Oxford Living Dictionaries, n.d). With further exploration of what aspects of SMT the young people feel has, and has not, supported them during this time. SMT plays a large part in the lives of Children and Young People (CYP), with the majority using some form of SMT (Battisby, 2018). Anderson (2016) reported that some adolescents can spend an average of 27 hours per week online. With CYP who school refuse, possibly having increased amounts of time spent at home. It could be assumed that many could be spending this time on SMT. However, it is still unclear what effect

SMT is having on CYP, research often finding conflicting outcomes (Twenge, 2017). The current study focuses on adolescents who school refuse, but because of the age restrictions which often apply to SMT, the focus participants will be between 14-18 years old. The aim is to further inform educational psychologists and educational professionals about the experiences of young people who school refuse and how the young person's use of (SMT) impacts on this experience, thus endeavouring to ensure this group of professionals are better placed to work with both young people and schools.

1.2 Structure of the literature review

This review aims to provide a critical discussion synthesising an applicable and adequate range of theoretical and research literature, broadly covering the school refusal and SMT topic areas. The literature review part 1A starts with an overview of school refusal, aiming to define what is meant by the term and the different aspects often associated. It goes on to explore the prevalence of school refusal, causation and the long term outcomes often associated with this group of CYP. Key theoretical and research literature is presented within the area of school refusal. The review then moves to consider socialisation and development; being sociable is a key aspect to success at school (Wentzel & Looney, 2007). The literature review aims to draw on a number of key theories in development to inform more focused discussions on how CYP may be affected should they not attend school and explore ways CYP may get their social needs met. One may assume that with Social Media Technology (SMT) playing a key role in the life of CYP today, they are able to meet their needs for social connection, online. The literature review aims to explain how social development may be affected if a CYP refuses to attend school, provides an overview of SMT and the impact it can have on mental health, socialisation and bullying.

Within part 1B, key research has been identified within school refusal and SMT literature and critically reviewed. This then leads to the identification of a research gap regarding Anxiety Based School Refusal (ABSR) and how social media can

possibly affect this experience. The review explores adolescents' views and experiences of ABSR, their use of SMT during this time and how they feel SMT impacted on their ABSR. Using detailed qualitative methods, it is hoped that a holistic and rich picture of participants' views is achieved. The literature review will conclude with a rationale for the current empirical study, alongside the research questions and aims, as well as the relevance to the practice of educational psychology. The hope is that this research can contribute additional knowledge to the existing research base by exploring the positive and negative experiences of ABSR and the impact of SMT during this time. The research will also identify possible considerations for CYP and educational professionals when working with ABSR in the future.

1.3 Key sources of information

A variety of online academic search engines were used to gather information including PsycINFO, EBSCO and PsycArticles, information was gathered and reviewed to explore its relevance to the research topic. Preliminary searches were conducted using more generic search engines such as Cardiff University library and Google Scholar. Refining search terms such as school-refusal and persistent non-school attendance helped narrow the literature search highlighting the most appropriate and relevant literature. Articles were scanned by title and abstract, with reference lists were also scanned to identify further paper of interest article descriptors of appropriate. A screenshot of search terms and number of articles found can be found in Appendix 1.

The initial reading of Miller (2008) identified further papers of additional interest. Other relevant literature was found from hard copy material and relevant information such as government documents and charity led reports.

1.4 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Most of the studies were selected for inclusion if the primary language was English and publication was between 2005 and 2019. However, due to the rapidly changing nature of the technological world, research in SMT can fast become outdated; as a result, only research published within the last 5 years was included for SMT. To further explore the concept of school refusal, literature published prior to this time frame was included to provide a relevant historical perspective and theoretical background which has shaped current understanding.

Due to the exploratory nature of the study, it is recognised that a wide range of theoretical perspectives were considered in order to provide a broad understanding of the topic. Willig (2006) proposes that the qualitative nature of the research allows an extensive overview of different theoretical positions; challenging the meaning and relevance of the researcher's assumptions. It is acknowledged that in the initial stages, inclusion and exclusion criteria will be influenced by the researcher's own experience and standpoint as a psychodynamic psychologist. Considering how human behaviour will be influenced by an individual's experiences, feelings and emotions.

Theories of development were included to provide relevant and useful background to inform focused discussions around what aspects of social development could be impacted by school refusal. Links were then made to how CYP use SMT as a form of socialisation.

Studies were included concerning CYP specifically; an effort was made to include research centred on the role of the Educational Psychologist (EP) supporting CYP who school refuse. This aimed to ensure that research provided would be relevant to the role of the EP, however to accommodate the widely researched clinical aspect; studies from this area of psychology were also included. A focus on CYP's use and views of, SMT has also been included; rather than adults. While adult's use of SMT is a widely researched area within the literature, these studies were excluded to reflect the adolescent participants within this study.

Given the focus of this study was the UK, the research is deemed to be beyond the scope of effective generalisation. Research in the UK around school refusal is limited and while acknowledging that CYP's development and perceptions may differ between cultural contexts, studies were included from Westernised countries based on the assumption that there were cultural and ethical connections.

1.5 Relevance to educational psychology practice

Research around school refusal behaviour is heavily based within the clinical literature with little to be found with regard to educational psychology (Miller, 2008). Educational psychology literature has increasingly identified the potential role for EPs working at an individual and systemic level to support CYP, families and schools with school refusal (Lauchlan, 2003; Pellegrini, 2007; Nuttall & Woods, 2013; Baker & Bishop, 2015). Pellegrini (2007) suggested that EPs are best placed to support the development of a shared understanding of school refusal. Research has highlighted that more needs to be done to enhance knowledge and understanding of how EPs can provide support to CYP who school refuse from an educational perspective (Pellegini, 2007).

Costello, Mustilo, Erkanli, Keeler and Angold (2003) reported that by the age of 15 over one-third of young people were classed as having mental health problems with more recent reports suggesting this continues to rise (NSPCC, 2014). Baker (2015) stated that providing support around wellbeing and increasing issues regarding mental health is now a key function within the EP role. With EPs often being the first point of contact when presented with school refusal behaviour it is important to know what factors are driving these behaviours and how to support the affected CYP. With early intervention it is hoped that there will be better outcomes for this vulnerable group and knowledge around what is helping and preventing engagement into school will be fundamental during this process.

With SMT now being a major part of life, it's important for EPs to have more of an understanding around the positive or negative impact this may be having during a

time of psychological and emotional growth (Cline, Gulliford & Birch, 2015). With greater insight into the impact SMT is having on CYP, more interventions and support can be tailored to support these needs.

EPs are well placed within educational systems to support a number of aspects related to working with school refusal, bringing the unique contribution of psychology within schools. With a deeper understanding of school refusal from the CYP's perspective, there is more scope for EPs to become involved at an individual intervention based level. This provides an opportunity for education to support CYP rather than having a narrow focus on medical diagnosis and treatment. While EPs can acknowledge common factors within school refusal, they can also recognise and work with the individual exploring contextual and family factors which could be driving a CYP's school refusal behaviour to inform best practice (Nuttall & Woods, 2013).

With increased knowledge of the heterogeneous factors involved with school refusal, EPs can work at a systemic level by providing training to upskill professionals and offer an inclusive school environment for this group of CYP. By working more systemically within the school environment it is hoped that preventative work can take place. Training could be extended to support parents around good practice in managing school refusal behaviour and the difficulties which are often present (Pellegrini, 2007). EPs are able to work closely to support the home-school relationship through consultation and multiagency work. This facilitative role of the EP could prevent the involvement of third parties such as the Education and Wellbeing Services (EWS) (Baker & Bishop, 2015). When third parties do become involved the role of the EP could be used to ensure multi-agency work is joined up and coherent. Since 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children' (2004) and the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (2014) a focus on multi-agency working has been introduced. EPs are best placed within local authority and schools to facilitate multi-agency working to ensure effective early intervention; sharing information and strategies to best support the CYP and their families (Baker & Bishop, 2015).

1.6 Voice of the child

Although the literature often discusses the diverse nature of school refusal and how contributing factors are individual to each CYP (Nuttall & Woods, 2013), it has been recognised that the voice of the child continues to remain absent from the current evidence base (Baker & Bishop, 2015). In recent years a focus on the voice of the child has been considered a central focus when working with CYP, article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) stated that children have the right to express their views on matters relating to them and that these views should be heard. Since the development of the UNCRC, the voice of the child has been at the centre of Welsh Government policy-making and has been embedded within UK legislation (DfES, 2001; Every Child Matters, 2004, Rights to Action, 2004; Rights of Children and Young People Wales Measure, 2011). Within the draft Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal Bill (ALNET Bill, 2018c) a central focus on making CYP part of the decision-making process has been adopted. Research has suggested that gaining the voice of the child can support with increased motivation, increased independence, perception of personal control, greater knowledge of individual strengths and difficulties (Roller, 1998). The role of the EP has been highlighted as being well placed to facilitate the voice of the child (DfEE, 2000). Ensuring the CYP's needs are taken into consideration when developing interventions and strategies, this can contribute to greater responsibility for change being embraced by the CYP (Roller, 1998).

Literature Review Part 1A: Theoretical Review

2. School refusal

2.1 Understanding non-school attendance

In 1932, Broadwin was one of the first to describe different forms of school non-attendance at this time; it was referred to as truancy. He described fear contributing to a consistent and long-standing absence from school in which the child would stay at home. Berg, Nichols and Pritchard (1969) defined the term school phobia; as reporting significant emotional upset from children and described phobia specific qualities such as complaints of feeling unwell, fearfulness and tantrums. They explained that school phobic children remained at home with the knowledge of the parents and there is usually an absence of antisocial or, delinquent behaviour.

Blagg (1987) developed criteria to distinguish between the terms truancy, school phobia and other types of non-attendance. School phobia was termed as severe difficulties in attending school along with emotional upset (Berg et al, 1969). Truancy was identified as being absent from school without reason; no emotional impact is present and the child is absent without the knowledge of their parents, with the time usually being spent away from home (Blagg & Yule, 1984). Blagg and Yule (1984) distinguished other poor school attendance as being absent from school without reason or emotional upset when time is spent at home with parental knowledge of the absence. The term school refusal was further promoted by Chitiyo and Wheeler (2006); they discussed the multiple causative factors that can contribute to persistent school non-attendance. These encompassed terms such as school phobia but were not limited to these definitions. Although related, truancy is now seen as different from school refusal due to the identified delinquent behaviours and lack of interest in education (Tyrrell, 2005).

Throughout their education, many children do not attend school at some point. However, this is usually occasional (Hersov, 1985) and common for most pupils (Thambirajah, Grandison & De-Hayes, 2008). When a child's failure to attend school

is persistent and for a prolonged period of time, there are not usually uninformed reasons for their refusal. Each case is individual to the child and the cause is often a puzzling and complex problem (Thambirajah et al, 2008).

School refusal research to date mainly focuses on defining the topic and the characteristics of school refusal behaviour (Kearney, Eisen & Silverman, 1995; Place, Hulsmeier, Davis & Taylor 2000; Kearney 2002; Ek & Eriksson, 2013). The most widely used definition comes from Kearney and Silverman (1990) who described school refusal as the refusal to attend or experiencing difficulties attending school for an entire day which is motivated by the child. The research by Kearney and Silverman (1990) also suggested four main sets of reasons for school refusal including:

- to avoid the experience of severe anxiety or, fearfulness related to attending school;
- to avoid social situations that are feared or, which cause anxiety;
- to seek attention or, to reduce separation anxiety; and
- to enjoy rewarding experiences that non-attendance at school may bring.

Another term used increasingly to describe persistent non-attendance is school phobia. Marks (1969) classed phobias as "*a special form of fear*" which is disproportionate to the situation, is unexplainable, involuntary and often leads to avoidance. The term implies that something from the environment is producing a feared or, an anxious response from the child (Chitiyo & Wheeler, 2006). Thambirajah et al, (2008) described how the school itself is rarely the object of fear; often the fear is of the anxiety-provoking concern such as leaving a parent, peer interactions, speaking in front of peers or, being bullied. It is now recognised that various different causes can be the origin of school refusal behaviour. Csoti (2003) describes something more complex than a true 'phobia' and includes an array of disorders including separation anxiety, agoraphobia and social phobia.

For many, school phobia has become a term that has been used to encompass the different forms of anxiety that children and young people experience regarding school. Others see these as separate from one another, with school phobia being a specific fear of school or precise components (Kearney 2001). Three different types of anxiety associated with school are often described: separation anxiety; social anxiety and anxiety linked to mental health. Each is often associated with a peak onset within different stages of a child or young person's school career, although anxieties which may impact on school refusal are not restricted to these categories.

The DSM-5 defines separation anxiety as "*excessive fear or anxiety concerning separation from home or attachment figures*" (American Psychiatric Association (APA) 2013, p.190). The second, Csoti (2003) related this to social anxiety, the DSM-5 defines this as "*marked, or intense, fear or anxiety of social situations in which the individual may be scrutinized by others*" (APA, 2013, p.203). The fear must occur in peer and adult interactions and is not specific to one. The third can also be linked to social anxiety but also may incorporate other mental health problems such as depression (Csoti, 2003). Miller (2008) also described how anxiety can peak for a child at times of transition; changing schools or after time away from schools such as illness or holidays. Teenagers transitioning from primary to comprehensive school are most vulnerable to school refusal behaviour (Berg, 1996). It can occur suddenly and is more likely after time away from school, but usually occurs with a gradual onset (Berg, 1996).

The school phobic and school anxious terms appear closely related and are both included within the clinical explanations of school non-attendance. School refusal is not a diagnostic term identified independently within the DSM-5 (APA, 2013), with children and young people often meeting the criteria for "*specific phobias, a generalised or social anxiety disorder, or separation anxiety*" (Elliott & Place, 2019, p.5). Many researchers have attempted to distinguish school phobia from school anxiety (Johnson, Falstein, Szurek & Svendsen 1941; Johnson 1957; Doll 1987; Sigmon 1991; Kearney & Silverman 1990). Knollman, Knoll, Reissnwe, Metzelaars and Hebebrand (cited in Elliott & Place, 2019) differentiate the terms and explain that school phobia was viewed as a consequence of separation anxiety, and school

anxiety resulting in fear of the school environment. Miller (2008) observed that whilst school phobia and school anxiety incorporate similar terms, they have individual concepts to consider.

Elliott and Place (2019) identified that no clear agreed criteria has been set to define school refusal when carrying out a review of the current literature. They described selection criteria identified by Heyne, Sauter, Van Widenfelt, Vermeiren and Westenberg (2011) using Berg's (1996) principles of school refusal as "*a helpful operationalisation*"(p.5).

"*Criteria employed were as follows:*

- *Less than an 80% attendance record over the past 2 weeks (excluding legitimate absences);*

- *The presence of an anxiety disorder as identified in DSM-IV (APA, 1994) [excluding obsessive-compulsive disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)];*

- *Parents could account for the whereabouts of the child on the days marked by school absence;*

- *No concurrent DSM-IV conduct disorder (although mild forms of oppositional defiance are permitted);*

- *Clear commitment on the part of parents to help the child to achieve full school attendance."* (Elliott & Place, 2019, p.5).

The heterogeneous nature of school refusal has been seen as a contributing factor towards the difficulties defining school refusal, as well as identifying causation and effective interventions (Elliott & Place, 2019; Baker & Bishop, 2015; Nutall & Woods, 2013).

Throughout this research, the terminology Anxiety Based School Refusal (ABSR) will be adopted. This term has been developed based on the literature presented; which indicates that the term school refusal is heterogeneous and can include a

wide variety and diverse number of behaviours linked to non-attendance at school. The definition of ABSR is previously described as anxieties which contribute to the CYP's fears in relation to school and avoidance of social situations, resulting in the prevention of attendance at school. It is thought that this description is most relevant to the full range of need and behaviours presented by the participating young people. This term was deemed to be the most inclusive for all participants. With an explanation provided on the different terms associated with ABSR, this review will now explore factors that could be causing difficulties in relation to school attendance.

2.2 Causation of ABSR behaviour

Research by Kearney, Chapman and Cook (2005) focused on a sample of 55 participants aged 5-9 years, who attended a specialised outpatient clinic for CYP with school refusal behaviour. This found that that 66.7 per cent of children experienced anxiety disorders that contributed to their non-attendance at school. Other factors reported affecting ABSR include bullying (Place et al, 2000; Fremont 2003; Baker & Bishop 2015), depression (McShane, Walter & Rey 2001; Baker & Bishop 2015), family conflict (McShane et al, 2001) and academic difficulties (McShane et al, 2001). Boys and girls are equally affected and no relationship between social classes has been identified (Berg, 1996). It was found that transition periods such as the transition between primary and secondary school, could be considered particular risk factors (Berg, 1996).

Approaches from an educational psychology perspective take into account other factors that may be influencing ABSR such as systemic influences, bullying, the school settings, struggles with teacher/pupil relationships, the school environment and family factors (Lauchlan, 2003). Research in educational psychology views ABSR as the expression of a complex range of causalities which may include other social factors such as the school environment, bullying or ASD (Baker & Bishop, 2015). Literature diverges from within child diagnoses of anxiety and aims to explain the

impact of the systems around the child which could be resulting in the anxiety experienced (Lauchlan, 2003).

2.3 Social factors affecting ABSR

Lauchlan (2003) explored the different aspect of school that could be triggering the anxious responses focusing on three levels; the systemic, the group and the individual. Lauchlan (2003) described anxiety from within a child as a factor of ABSR but acknowledged external issues which could be contributing to the anxiety experienced. Lauchlan (2003) identified what the impact peer grouping may have on the child and what affect the hustle and bustle of toilets, corridors and playgrounds may have. He went on to explore the impact of the formal or possibly hostile teacher/pupil relationship, which can be present at secondary school. Educational psychology continues to explore a number of social factors that can cause ABSR behaviour and moves away from the medical model within child diagnosis of anxiety. Social factors such as bullying play a significant role in ABSR and can be a source of the child's anxiety (Lauchlan 2003; Randa & Wilcox 2010; Hutzell & Payne 2012).

Although research in the area of ABSR has been heavily based within clinical psychology exploring anxiety as a source of school refusal behaviour (Kearney & Silverman 1990; Phelps, Cox & Bajorek 1992; Berg, Butler, Franklin, Hayes, Lucas & Sims 1993; Kearney 2001), back in 1978 Olweus reported the link between peer victimisation and chronic anxiety. Olweus (1978) found that children who had experienced significant bullying were more anxious and insecure compared to peers who had not experienced bullying. Later, these findings were echoed by Salmon, James and Smith (1998). A further study by Salmon, James, Cassidy and Javaloyes (2000) explored 52 outpatients to adolescent services; results indicated that for adolescents with a primary diagnosis of depression, 71.4 per cent reported bullying. However, with this data being collected from outpatient psychiatric services, it would have been exploring the most severe cases. Bullying can affect a child, not only psychologically, but they can also experience the physical symptoms

associated with anxiety. Bullied children were twice as likely to say that they experienced headaches and stomach-aches; feeling sad, bed wetting and sleeping difficulties, among some of the other health symptoms that were reported (Williams, Chambers, Logan & Robinson 1996). Contradictory to this Wolke, Woods, Bloomfield and Karstadt (2001) found bullying victims only displayed low to moderate health problems. The psychological impact of bullying can have a lasting effect and impact on a number of areas in a person's life. Dietz (cited in Salmon et al, 2000) reported that when children who have been bullied grow up they may be more vulnerable to depression, anxiety, loneliness and feel less comfortable with the opposite sex. Csoti (2003) further implied that this work by Dietz (1994) indicated that adults who had experienced bullying could potentially have difficulties forming close intimate relationships. It is important to note that the work by Dietz (1994) was presented at a conference and not published within a peer-reviewed journal.

Statistics from Ditch the Label (2018) the annual bullying survey completed with schools and colleges around the UK highlighted that 22 per cent of 9,150 young people between the ages of 12 and 20 years old had experienced bullying. 45 per cent of CYP reported feelings of anxiety and 47 per cent said that the bullying had a moderate to extreme impact on their mental health. The study found that 21 per cent of young people bullied would truant from school/college as a result and the study provided an explanation into the different percentages between school and college, which would be classed as non-compulsory education. The definition of truancy provided would imply that it's possibly the wrong wording and absenteeism perhaps would be a better fit.

A number of studies have found that bullying can have a vast impact on a number of areas in school life, with a number of researchers reporting on the effect on school absenteeism (Batsche & Knoff 1994; Rigby 2002: Randa & Wilcox 2010; Hutzell & Payne 2012; Dunne, Sabates, Bosumtwi-Sam & Owusu 2013; Feldman et al, 2014). Hutzell and Payne (2012) reported school avoidance behaviours were more prevalent in young people who saw themselves as victims of bullying. Contrary to the findings of Miller (2008) which indicated that ABSR had no link to

social class and academic ability, Hutzell and Payne (2012) also suggested that younger students with poor academic achievement in public schools are affected more with avoidance behaviours as a result of being bullied. These findings are in line with Dunne, Sabates, Bosumtwi-Sam and Owusu (2013), who found that young people who were bullied were twice as likely to miss school. It is important to note that this study took place in Ghana, and with the different social culture it may be difficult to transfer these findings to the UK population.

Studies have found that academic performance can be significantly impacted as a result of missed time from school related to bullying (Kumpulainen & Rasanen 2000; Gottfired 2011) showing the wider impact school absenteeism can have on the lives of young people. It is important to note that all research around bullying and school absenteeism rely on self-reports from young people who have been bullied; results can be affected by how the individual sees how that bullying experience has impacted on them and their own perceptions of mental health.

While this piece of research did not set out to explore a link between Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and ABSR, analysis of the participant demographic characteristics discovered that all participants had a connection with the disorder, with either a diagnosis or an ASD pathway referral. As a result, it felt appropriate to include literature which explored the relationship further. CYP diagnosed with ASD are commonly associated with ABSR. A number of recent studies have reported that young people diagnosed with ASD are at higher risk of experiencing ABSR (Tyson & Cruess 2012; Munkaugen, Gjevik, Pripp, Sponheim & Diseth 2017a; Muukaugen, Torske, Gjevik, Naerland, Pripp & Diseth 2017b; Preece & Howley 2018). The UK National Autistic Society (NAS) (2018) defines ASD as "*a lifelong developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with and relates to other people, and how they experience the world around them.*" Statistics indicate that 1 in 100 people are affected by ASD in the UK (NAS 2018). APA (2013) described it as persistent deficits in social interaction, communication, the rigidity of thinking, restrictive/repetitive patterns of behaviour, activities or interests and sensory sensitivities. Along with these difficulties there are often other issues experienced by young people with ASD; including mental health difficulties. Young

people with ASD are twice as likely as the general population to be diagnosed with at least one anxiety disorder (Galonopoulos, Robertson, Spain & Murphy 2014).

As a result of these complex difficulties, the school environment can be a challenging place for young people with ASD; Preece and Howley (2018) state that this puts them at particular risk of displaying ABSR. Tyson and Cruess (2012) carried out a literature review to explore differentiating high functioning autism and school phobia. They believe that there is a high degree of overlap between the two; many of the symptoms can be misinterpreted causing confusion and in some cases incorrect diagnosis. Findings by Simonoff, Pickles, Charman, Chandler, Loucas & Baird (2008) suggested that ASD and school refusal can occur concurrently in young people. Like anxiety disorder, the research also suggests that young people with ASD are at a significantly higher risk of ABSR compared to their typically developing peers (Munkhaugen et al, 2017a). Exploring the area further Munkhaugen et al (2017b) found that school refusers exhibited more withdrawn and depressive symptoms and were significantly less socially motivated. The results of these studies should be viewed with caution as they were carried out in Norway; where young people with ASD attend inclusive schools with settings aimed at promoting socialisation with peers and access to the general curriculum (Osborne & Reed 2011). One could assume that without these exclusively inclusive schools with settings for ASD, ABSR may be more prevalent. With the causes of ABSR being so diverse in nature, a number of different methods of interventions and treatments have been applied to support ABSR (Elliot & Place, 2019), which have often been considered unsuccessful (Baker & Bishop, 2015).

2.4 Interventions and treatment

More recently, the focus of research has moved towards exploring treatment and interventions for ABSR (Pellegrini, 2007; Nuttall & Woods, 2013; Chu, Rizvi, Zendegui & Bonavitacola, 2015; Elliott and Place, 2019). According to Elliott and Place (2019), the most widely applied treatments continue to be Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). Followed by behavioural approaches, family therapy

and clinically based pharmacotherapy treatments for anxiety disorders. Elliott and Place (2019) reported a long-standing debate around the value of pharmacotherapy treatments for ABSR. The review identified some studies which reported the benefits associated with medication to treat ABSR (Bernstein, Borchardt, Perwien, Crosby, Kushner, Thuras & Last, 2000; Isper, Stein, Hawkridge & Hoppe, 2009). While others found no evidence that drug treatments were more effective for ABSR than other forms of treatment (Melvin, Dudley, Gordon, Klimkeit, Gulone, Taffe & Tonge, 2017) they argued that there are a number of health risks attached to adolescent use of these types of medication (Hazell & Mirzaie, 2013).

According to Pellegrini (2007) along with Ingles, Gonzalvez-Macia, Garcia-Fernandez, Vicent and Martinez-Monteagudo (2015) who completed a review of the current literature around school refusal; emphasised that most studies are clinical in nature due to the anxiety/phobic based elements which are usually present within a number of ABSR cases. As a result of the clinical presence within the literature on school refusal, this research has adopted aspects of clinical terminology in line with the research it aims to further explore. These findings are also reiterated in a more recent review by Elliott and Place (2019) who explored the development of treatment for ABSR. The review found that there have been "*little substantial advances in knowledge that can guide practitioners*" (p.4) over the last century. Without effect treatment and inventions in place for ABSR, CYP can be affected by long term outcomes stemming from non-attendance at school.

2.5 Long term outcomes of ABSR

Pellegrini (2007) describes how the school has a paramount role in teaching "*values of society and culture in children*" (p.63). Attendance at school and peer relationship are believed to play a central role in child development and socialisation. Without engagement in school young people are likely to experience long term difficulties in these areas. ABSR can affect how a young person finds their

way in society and impacts on the socialisation experiences they are likely to engage in.

McShane, Walter and Rey (2004) reported inconsistent long term outcomes for this group of CYP. Research-based in clinical psychology suggests that if anxiety symptoms preventing the CYP attending school are left untreated long term problems may include: marital and occupational difficulties, mental health issues, alcoholism and anti-social behaviour (Kearney et al; 1995). A social model of ABSR, which considers the impact of relationships and social environment (often adopted in educational psychology) may suggest that there are complex contextual reasons in each individual case of ABSR. For example, bullying that may result in the anxiety a young person may be experiencing (Csoti 2003; Thambirajah et al, 2008). Berg (1992) reported that a high number of ABSRs swiftly become confined to their homes; they avoided contact with others and became socially isolated.

Studies have found that the problems children had regarding their mental health often followed them into adulthood. Berg and Jackson (1985) found that 10 years after their first experience as an inpatient on a psychiatric unit; one-third of the ABSRs had received further treatment as an adult for psychiatric illness and one third reported minor mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. A study by Benjamin et al (2013) echoed these findings; children who were diagnosed with separation anxiety found independent living more difficult as an adult. They found that as adults these children were more likely to have further psychiatric input, still living with parents and were less likely to have children of their own (Flakierska-Praquin, Lindstorm and Gillberg, 1997). Although the findings were based on psychiatric data, the studies that explore the long-term effects are now outdated. The literature currently lacks research on how ABSR can impact a CYP's future or how prevalent ABSR may be within the school-aged population.

2.6 Prevalence of ABSR

UK statistics gathered around how many CYP are affected by ABSR vary a great deal; Elliott (1999) suggested around 1 - 2 per cent of the school-aged population display ABSR; which has become the widely accepted figure. Havik, Bru and Ertesvag (2015) however, suggested that around 4 per cent of the school-aged population were affected by school phobia. More recently statistics from WG (2018) found that around 4.1 per cent of secondary age children and 1.7 per cent of primary school were persistent non-attenders. However, these figures do not cover ABSR alone, with other explanations such as long term illness and truancy adding to this figure. The 'No Panic' Charity (2017) for anxiety disorders estimated the figure has remained unchanged from Elliott (1999) with 1 per cent of the school-aged population classified as school phobic due to anxiety, amounting to a massive 90 thousand pupils in the UK. Ek and Eriksson (2013) also stated that up to 90 per cent of children who refuse school have some form of psychiatric diagnosis. This is supported within the literature; Kearney and Albano (2004) carried out research with 143 children and adolescents and found that 44.8 per cent could be described as school refusers due to an anxiety disorder.

The research outcomes regarding the long term impact of ABSR are conflicting; Elliot and Place (2019) suggest that treatments for ABSR have seen little development over the last 10 years. The impact on the CYP can be unique and depend on how ABSR presents in an individual.

The focus will now move to exploring how socialisation may be affected by ABSR for these CYP, as school plays a major role. There are a number of theories of developmental psychology which may be applicable to understanding the processes of socialisation; these theories differ in perspective and focus.

3. Socialisation and developmental factors

3.1 Psychological theories of child development

It is not in the remit of this study to discuss all aspects of child development in detail, the research sets out to provide an overview of how ABSR can impact on a young person's development and how young people acquire the skills they are likely to miss out on as a result of ABSR.

There are numerous theories of psychological development which may be applicable to explaining how ABSR can have an impact on a young person long term. Child development is described as "*the physical, cognitive, social and emotional changes that children undergo from the moment of conception onwards*" (Lightfoot, Cole & Cole 2018 p.2).

A number of developmental and learning theories describe conflict within stages of development and how when a conflict is not resolved, this can impact on development at later stages (Erikson, 1982). They often rely on peer learning and peer socialisation as an aspect of completing the stage successfully. This could imply that children and young people who refuse school, may not progress to the higher stages of development which require these social interactions. A brief overview has been provided for the main theories of child development in Figure 1 below.

Area of Development	Primary Theorist	Focus of Learning
Psychosocial Theory	Erikson	Eight stages of psychosocial development which impacts on growth and change throughout the lifespan. Social interactions and experience play decisive roles; conflict within the stages impact on functioning and further growth.
Behavioural Theory	Watson	A process of association and reinforcement purely influences learning. Development is a

	Skinner	reaction to rewards, punishment, stimuli and reinforcement.
	Pavlov	
Cognitive Theory	Piaget	How children understand the world is influenced by thought processes and their influence of how we understand and interact with the world.
Attachment Theory **Social Development**	Bowlby	A major influence on child development and social relationships through life is the impact of early relationship attachments formed with caregivers.
Social Learning Theory	Bandura	Learning occurs through observation and modelling. Observing the actions of parents and peers is how a child develops new skills and acquires new information.
Sociocultural Theory	Vygotsky Bronfenbrenner	Learning occurs through hands-on experiences and activity. Higher-order functioning develops through interactions with parents, caregivers, peers and the environment. Learning is a social process.

Figure 1 – Main areas of child development (adapted by the author from Cherry & Gans, 2018)

The numerous theories can be broadly grouped to the developmental areas, as shown in Figure 1, offering different perspectives on CYP's development. Their inclusion aims to provide a framework from which to understand what aspects of development may be affected by non-attendance at school. A range of theoretical literature has been included to reflect the complexity of development and highlight the different areas which could be impacted when a CYP does not attend school and how this may affect them long-term. A particular focus on social learning and

socialisation is discussed in more detail as it is deemed most applicable to this research.

3.2 ABSR and the impact on development

Thompson and Colman (2000) reported considerable diversity with regards to how later development is affected by early experiences. One position believes that events that occur in the initial years of life determine a child's developmental trajectory (Thompson & Colman 2000). This implies that a child's experiences may contribute to whether they become a school refuser and the school refusal could then impact on the later development of the young person. Another position supposes that the capabilities and characteristics a child develops interacts with their past experiences and influences their development (Thompson & Colman 2000). Implying that experience going on during that time in a young person's life will contribute to the ABSR.

The organisational perspective believes that development is comprised of relevant age- and stage- tasks, rather than a series of tasks that need to be accomplished (Cicchetti & Rogosch, 2002). It proposes that an individual's experiences impact upon the development of social and emotional skills, personality and perception of reality; experiences of systems and organisations either promote or hinder growth within these areas (Scott & Davis 2007). Thompson and Colman (2000) suggested that it is only when a child successfully meets the task demands; that development can progress to the next stage. They suggest that this includes the ability to develop effective peer relationships and to meet the demands that school places upon them (Thompson & Colman 2000). The theory goes on to explain how environmental, interpersonal and constitutional risk factors, such as social isolation can affect whether a child reaches the next stage of development. Protective factors supporting the child can help compensate when risk factors are present (Rutler, 1990). One could assume that when a young person refuses school they miss out on the essential skills required to progress to the further stages of development.

Social Learning theory believes that learning occurs by watching others and imitating the observed behaviours (Bandura, 1977), without social interactions one could assume that CYP's are missing out on a large percentage of the learning that occurs from others. This will depend on the home environment; it could be that parents and siblings are able to provide these social interactions and learning experiences (Hartup & Collins, 2000). Caruana and Vassallo (2003) described the family as "*socialisation agents*", with the majority of children spending their time in the home environment. This is increased if the young person refuses school or has social phobia; often meaning almost all their time is spent in the family home, indicating that the CYP may be missing out on peer learning and age-appropriate learning opportunities.

The socio-cultural ecological systems theory postulates that aspects of the social world impact on psychological development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). As shown in Figure 2 below; the theoretical assumption is that the number of different systems the individual interacts with will shape their development. There are roles, norms and rules that are established within each system (Vander Zanden, Crandell, & Crandell 2007). The microsystem indicates that school and peers play a role in psychological development, as well as how the child interacts with the systems (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci 1994). Bronfenbrenner (1979) ecological perspective considers how the systems a person interacts with influences development, taking into account the individual's cognitive abilities rather than fixed stages. Ecological systems theory provides a flexible and holistic view of development, reflecting the wide range of factors such as culture, which could be influencing the CYP. The microsystem places value on elements such as friendships and school as a significant form of social support. Without opportunities provided to form important peer relationships an over-reliance on the family system could develop.
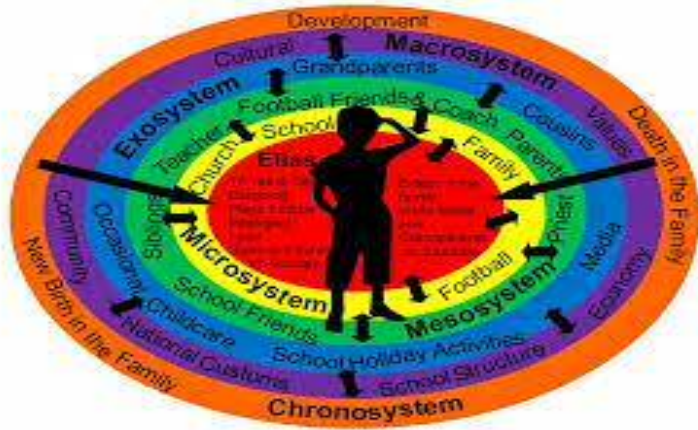
Figure 2 – Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory - Model of Development Framework (adapted by the author from Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994)

Social theories of learning consider that socialisation and peer interaction can play a fundamental role in effective psychological development (Bandura, 1977). Describing how an individual needs these interactions to effectively manage progression through these stages. If a young person does not meet these development stages successfully, it could be presumed that potentially the young person would not be able to function as a fully developed adult. That development

would be frozen at earlier stages; this would be in line with the findings from Flakierska-Praquin et al; (1997). A number of psychological theories consider social interactions as a key feature in learning and development (Piaget 1958; Bowlby 1969; Bandura 1977; Bronfenbrenner 1979). The research will now move on to further explore socialisation and the impact of the different kinds of socialisation a CYP may experience.

3.3 Socialisation

Socialisation is defined as "*a collective process within a social practice which is defined as the process of how the individual human being will come to think and act in certain ways in relation to what others in the group are doing, allowing or encouraging and how thinking and action are activated in a social context through routines, expectations and interactions*" (Bugental & Goodnow 1998, p427).

Hogg and Vaughan (2017) describe socialisation as an essential part of human life. They explored affiliation and the need to be with others by studying the short-term and long-term effect of isolation from other people. Although most individuals will prefer to be alone occasionally, the effects of social isolation are correlated with loneliness and depression (Matthews et al, 2016). To successfully function as a member of society the socialisation process is described as building the foundations. Larson, Richards, Moneta, Holmbeck and Ducklett (1996) described adolescence as the time in an individual's life where transformation occurs physically, emotionally and socially. They express a movement away from the family unit and the young person developing their own sense of identity. This occurs from engagement in social interactions; modelling their own behaviour from that of the actions and influences of their peers. Hartup and Collins (2000) described four kinds of socialisation which occurs throughout childhood: parent/child, siblings, peer and institutional experiences.

3.4 Socialisation and the parent/child relationship

The parent/child relationship is one that spans over a lifetime; evolving with the different stages of life and one that significantly influences the young person's development (Lerner & Castellino 2000). Adolescence is the time in a young person's life when they go through a period of transition; becoming more independent and developing their own individual personality. This is often a period of increased conflict within the parent/child relationship (Kreppner, 2000). There can even be a shift in the relationship where the child becomes responsible for meeting the parent's needs (Blieszner & Wingfield, 2000). For example, if CYP become young carers they could possibly be absent from school for prolonged periods and experience similar difficulties with peer socialisation as ABSRs. Fox (1995) reported that young carers often miss school due to the responsibilities they have at home, whilst a study by O'Dell et al (2010) found that some may use their parent's illness as an excuse to miss school.

Throughout the different phases of the parent/child relationship; the dynamic changes and so does the cost and benefit to each person. Social exchange theory describes the exchanges within a relationship, as balancing rewards and cost (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Nomaguchi and Milkie (2004) described that during the early stages of parenting the cost can be greater than the benefit with a new baby being fundamentally life-changing. Children need a high amount of care from parents, which often means putting a number of things in their life on hold; such as work and social activities. As children become more independent the benefits gained from the parent/child relationship start to increase (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2004). When a child displays school refusal behaviour it can also have a big impact on the life of the parent. Parents reported experiencing issues with their own mental health; they were unable to work due to the child being at home, which often resulted in money problems. Parents also reported arguments within their marriage and reduced socialisation with friends (Bodycote, 2018).

The relationship is built on the emotional attachment which has developed over the lifespan. Theories of attachment believe that the relationship which an infant

develops with a parent or primary caregiver in early life impacts on the relationships they have in later life (Feeney & Noller, 1990). Bowlby (1969) identified three styles of attachment; anxious, secure and avoidant. Children with an anxious attachment style are likely to seek out relationships with others; for school refusers, a parent or caregiver is often the focus of these relationships with anxiety occurring when the parent is not present (Kearney & Silverman, 1990). A factor to consider for CYP who school refuse is that the majority of social interactions and socialisation experiences often involve adults due to the potential socialisation experiences missed with peers through ABSR.

The parent/child relationship is an important aspect of school refusal behaviour; with a number of researchers identifying separation anxiety as a key factor (Johnson 1957; Kearney 2001; Berry et al; 1993). Factors such as anxiety of being away from the parent where strong attachments have been formed (Miller, 2008).

3.5 Socialisation and peer relationships

Peer relationships have also been identified as important in developing CYPs socialisation skills. Studsrod & Bru (2011) looked at the importance of child socialisation on development and how this was impacted by positive emotional connections with significant peers. Peers account for more than a third of social interactions by middle childhood (Gilfford-Smith & Brownnell, 2003). Supportive peer relationships were identified as important to socialization by Ryan and Powelson (1991). They identified the importance of peers when promoting values, affective ties, readiness and belonging in young people (Ryan & Powelson, 1991). Peer interactions in school settings provide important knowledge to young people about themselves, through observing peers demonstrating skills and social competences can build on the child's own skills and self-efficacy (Price & Dodge, 1989).

3.6 Socialisation within the school

Socialisation with peers and building peer relationship usually take place within the school environment. Although schools' objectives tend to be primarily academic in nature, the school experience is also seen as important for children's development of the social world (Wentzel & Looney, 2007). Social contexts such as school settings provide key opportunities for interactions with peers, allowing children to develop resources and gain information, which enables them to develop social competence (Wentzel & Looney 2007). The school setting helps a young person to develop skills and basic societal values to function within the wider society (Saldana, 2015); this would imply that children who lack socialisation would struggle to function in the wider community (Flakierska-Praquin et al, 1997). There are others who believe that although schools are categorised as the norm of social interaction; it removes a young person's socialisation choice (Mountney, 2009). Theories from elective home education suggested that school provides unnatural social groups and that young people can find social interactions and develop social skills through other avenues (Mountney 2009). A number of other sources from the social context have been described as an important arena for social interaction in young people such as religious groups, activity clubs and sports teams (Eccles, Wigfield & Schiefele 1997).

If the ABSR is stemming from a form of social anxiety which prevents a young person accessing school; it is possible that other settings for social interactions are also being refused (Csoti, 2003). Young people who are not attending school are often not fully accessing these social experiences; it could be suggested that social interactions usually gained by attendance at school are being replaced by online social interactions. The thesis now goes on to explore the SMT use of young people and discussing what factors, within this, may be relevant to ABSR.

4. Social media and impacts on young people

4.1 Social media usage of children and young people

Ye and Lin (2015) found that individuals that struggle with social interactions are more likely to engage with people online, which could be adding to the anxieties that young person has around attending school (Ranaeiy, Taghavi, & Goodarzi 2016). Social Media Technology (SMT) is defined as "*websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking*" (Oxford Living Dictionaries, n.d). Ofcom (2016) suggests that SMT use is most prevalent among the adolescent population. Twenge (2017) explained how the adolescent generation of today are growing up with SMT as a vast part of life; it is radically changing how we live life, our social interactions and mental health. Adolescents are growing up with smartphones' meaning that they are always connected online, have an SMT account before starting secondary school and are the first generation who will not remember a time without the internet (Twenge, 2017).

Anderson (2016) reports that adolescents spend an average of 27 hours per week online and ICIYET (2017) report showed that 39 per cent of 5 - 16-year-olds spend this time using Apps, while 36 per cent spend the time using mobile phones. Ofcom (2016) reported that the use of SMT is ubiquitous among the adolescent population. SMT appears to be growing among children and young people; WG (2017) reported that 32 per cent of 11-year-olds have SMT profiles, 58 per cent of 12-year-olds and rises to 77 per cent of 13-year-olds. Ofcom (2016) stated as many as 91 per cent of 16 - 24-year-olds have an SMT account, with 95 per cent visiting their profiles at least once per day and 44 per cent accessing their profiles more than 10 times per day.

Taking the attendance of school out of the equation; it could be assumed that many school refusers spend a percentage of this time online, with SMT potentially playing such a big role in the lives of adolescents (Coughlan, 2016). With currently no literature on the subject of ABSR and social media use, it is unknown whether SMT plays a positive or negative role in school refusal behaviour. From the literature

around both school refusal and SMT, it may be asserted that there are many similarities around the issues these young people face; such as the links between the effects on adolescent mental health and bullying/cyberbullying.

4.2 Impacts on mental health

Generational studies using data from national surveys of 1.1 million adolescents, found a sudden decrease in psychological wellbeing in 2012 (Twenge, Martin and Campbell, 2018). Interestingly this shift also occurs during the same point in time as the number of individuals that owned a smartphone increased to over 50 per cent of the population (Twenge, 2017). Twenge, Martin and Campbell (2018) suggested that the adolescents who spend more time on electronic communications and screen and less time on non-screen activities reported lower psychological wellbeing. This corresponds with another study completed by Twenge and Campbell (2018), with a sample of 40,337 CYP aged 2 to 17 years. The study found that CYP who displayed higher levels of screen time (+7 hours per day) were twice as likely to have a diagnosis of depression, anxiety or received treatment from a mental health professional than participants with lower levels of screen time (1 hour per day) within the last 12 months (Twenge & Campbell, 2018). Twenge (2011) reported that among Western adolescent figures suggest a sharp increase in anxiety, depression and mental health. These findings need to be treated with caution taking into account cause or effect; it may be possible that decreases in wellbeing are resulting in high SMT use.

Although not directly linked to SMT use, the increase in mental health problems over the last few years is also reflected in the statistics gathered by the NHS (2017). The survey showed that the prevalence of mental disorders has increased from 9.7 per cent in 1999 to 11.2 per cent in 2017; with emotional disorder now becoming the most common in 5 - 15-year-olds going from 4.3 per cent in 1999 to 5.8 per cent in 2017.

Research shows the negative effect often associated with SMT has been around for a number of years with some of the earliest studies in 1998 (Kraut, Patterson, Lundmark, Kiesler, Mukopadhyay, and Scherlis 1998) when the internet was a relatively new concept. It was not as easily accessible but was already finding associated increases in loneliness and depression. O'Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson (2015) found classic symptoms of depression were exhibited when adolescents spent increased amounts of time on SMT; although due to the speed SMT is advancing, the results from this study would now be considered dated. More recently Rohilla and Kumar (2015) found increased use of SMT can impact on adolescent anxiety, depression, loneliness and compulsive behaviours. With school refusing adolescents already experiencing issues around anxiety, the question remains around what further impact an increase in SMT could be having on these young people. A study carried out by Royal Society Public Health (RSPH, 2017) asked 1,479 young people to rate different SMT platforms on issues associated with health and wellbeing. The findings showed that YouTube was considered to have the most positive effect on wellbeing; while Snapchat and Instagram received the lowest score. The research found these platforms were driving a feeling of anxiety and inadequacy in young people; this could be as a result of the heavy image focus associated with these types of SMTs. Davey (2016) proposes that social media is a significant contributor to young people's friendship network; other research suggests that online individuals feel driven to add as many friends as possible in order to feel connected (Knight-McCord et al, 2016). The quality of the friendship can have an impact on loneliness, anxiety and mental health in general and as these relationships are with a screen and lack the personal connection. SMT such as Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest actually caused people to feel more alone (Davey, 2016).

Twenge (2017) states that depression and suicide in adolescents have increased dramatically since 2011; teenagers risk factors for suicide are 35 per more likely when an individual spends more than 3 hours per day on SMT. They are more likely to report symptoms of depression and teenagers who spend above the average

amount of time engaging with their electronic devices are more likely to be unhappy (Twenge & Campbell, 2018).

However, not all research has found negative impacts of SMT; RSPH (2017) also discovered a number of positive aspects to SMT reported by young people. The researcher stated that young people suffering from mental health issues found opportunities for support through SMT; learning from the experience of others and highlighting access to services. Young people described using SMT as a form of emotional support when they needed it, with 7 in 10 teenagers reporting the emotional support they received from friends through SMT beneficial during difficult times. Another positive impact found from the study was the ability to develop individual self-expression and self-identity via SMT; reporting it allowed them the opportunity to put their best self forward. Another positive that young people reported was the ability to make and maintain friendships online and how these friendships can be supported by SMT interactions (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson 2011; Van Schalkwyk et al, 2017; RSPH 2017). Urista, Dong and Day (2009) highlighted the ability to stay connected with family and friends; especially when people are unable to do so because of factors relating to time and distance. Socialisation and friendship online have always had both positive and negative associations; with many reporting friendships and connecting with peers online being beneficial to adolescent relationship development but others questioning the real-life experience of these interactions.

4.3 Social media and links with socialisation

Hill and Zheng (2017) found contradictory indicators as to whether SMT is detrimental or beneficial to social connections. While they found that SMT can enable connection to a larger number of people covering a wider geographical area, they also discovered that interpersonal interaction can be reduced by the amount of time spent online (Hill & Zheng, 2017). This picture is not one that has built up over time, early research into the effect of the internet and human interactions found that increased internet usage was associated with declines in an individual's

social circles and reduced communication with family members living in the same household (Kraut et al, 1998).

Twenge (2017) has reported the greatest long term impact of SMT on socialisation. Participants reported not needing to leave home to spend time with their friends, often resulting in decreased time spent in the physical company of others. When they do get together in person, SMT still plays a fundamental role in the socialisation that takes place; with meetups being highly documented on forums such as Snapchat, Facebook and Instagram. This resulted in the young people not invited being exceedingly aware of it; increasing feelings of being left out and loneliness (Davey, 2016). With young people spending more time at home it could be assumed that stronger relationships are built with family members, but the outcomes found say otherwise. Twenge's results echoed that of Kraut et al; (1998) that despite being at home more, they do not have closer relationships with parents. With the research by Twenge (2017) being carried out in America it would be difficult to transfer these findings to the population of young people in the UK due to the cultural differences between the two countries. However the use of smartphones and SMT is as prominent within the adolescent population in the UK and a number of other countries as it is in America (Battisby 2018). No generational findings have yet been published in the UK which explores the long term effects of SMT.

With negative outcomes often associated, SMT still attracts the vast majority of young people, one might wonder, what is it about SMT that teenagers prefer compared to personal interactions. For ABSR's, it could be proposed that this aspect of communicating via SMT enables them to feel connected with the peers they currently don't see at school. It could be postulating that for some ABSRs, the anxiety they may feel around social interactions could be reasons preventing them attending school.

One group of young people who experience more positive outcomes from interacting via SMT are those diagnosed with ASD. Research by Van Schalkwyk et al (2017) found that with this particular group of young people, SMT use was

associated with what the adolescent participants referred to as high friendship qualities. Van Schalkwyk et al (2017) indicated that SMT may be a way "*adolescents with ASD could improve the quality of their friendships*" (p. 2805). This is considered to be because its use requires less sophisticated social skills that may be difficult for an adolescent with ASD (Van Schalkwyk et al, 2017). A number of studies which examine the screen media technology use in young people with ASD show: adolescents with ASD spend approximately 4.5 to 5 hours per day on screen media technology such as televisions, video gaming and social media (Kuo, Orsmond, Coster & Cohn, 2013; Mazurek & Wenstrup, 2013) nearly 87 per cent more time than there typically developing peers (Mazurek & Wenstrup, 2013). Shane and Albert (2008) report that more time was spent on screen media technology than any other activity by adolescents with ASD. This could be as a result of the strong skills adolescents with ASD have when responding to visual cues (Qull, 1995). Most adolescents with ASD spent time on non-social media such as television and video games, 64.2 per cent, with only 13.2 per cent spending their time on SMT (Mazurek, Shaltuck, Wagner & Cooper, 2012).

From the adolescents who did spend their time on SMT, they reported more positive friendships with greater security (Kuo et al, 2013). Individuals with ASD often struggle to make and maintaining real-life friendships; having fewer friends than typically developing peers (Rowley, Chandler, Baird, Simonoff, Pickles, Loucas & Charman, 2012) and spend their time engaging in solitary activities due to their social communication difficulties (Orsmond & Kuo, 2011). Due to these difficulties, many adolescents with ASD prefer communicating through SMT (Barber, 2017). Roulhac (2017) found that individuals found the ability to drop in and out of relationships via SMT promoted social interactions for those who found maintaining relationships in the real world difficult. Van Schalkwyk et al (2017) found that in adolescents with ASD, SMT use was significantly associated with perceived high friendship quality from the CYPs perspective, leading to reduced anxiety associated with friendships. Interestingly for typically developing adolescents, no association was found between SMT and friendships.

A potential disadvantage of SMT identified for CYP with ASD is the possibility of the inappropriate use of SMT; cyberbullying, trolling ("*the deliberate act of making random unsolicited comments on SMT with the intent to provoke an emotional reaction to engage in an argument*" Urban Dictionary, n.d), sexual exploitation, grooming and religious and/or political radicalisation (Alarid, 2016). With adolescents with ASD and those who school refuse already being identified as more vulnerable than peers; one could assume they may be more susceptible to these forms of online behaviours (Allely, 2016). While the links between socialisation and online have been established there are other forms of online interactions which CYP may experience, including bullying online.

4.4 Cyberbullying

It has been suggested that bullying can be one reason that some children and young people refuse to attend school (Place et al, 2000; Fremont 2003; Baker & Bishop 2015). Before the development of the internet and SMT, when a young person refused to attend school because of bullying, one could assume the bullying would stop if they had no interaction. Now with SMT and the possibility of cyberbullying, it is conceivable that bullying may still be adding to ABSR and preventing the young person returning to school. Bottino, Bottino, Regina, Correia and Ribeiro (2015) describe cyberbullying as '*the use of electronic media with the intention of causing harm, humiliation, suffering, fear and despair for the individual who is the target of aggression*' (p.464). Research suggests that the majority of victims who experience cyberbullying are also victims of bullying in person (Hase, Goldberg, Smith, Stuck & Campain 2015). This study also found that negative psychological outcomes were more associated with traditional in-person forms of bullying. One could speculate that this is due to the ability the victim has to 'unplug' from SMT when cyberbullying becomes too much for the individual, which is not a possibility with traditional forms of bullying. Other research into the area contradicts these findings; suggesting that cyberbullying is more harmful due to the '*nearly unlimited*

access to victims' and the ability to be anonymous (Sticca & Perren, 2013; Bonanno & Hymel 2013).

Even though the arena for cyberbullying is less likely to be the school setting, research suggests that school life is still affected. Bottino et al (2015) found that victims of cyberbullying reported feeling unsafe in schools, school adjustment problems and poorer relationships with classmates compared to peers who had not experienced bullying. In a review of cyberbullying literature, Olweus and Limber (2017) found inconsistent findings and prevalence and effects were often exaggerated. When a young person is being bullied online they could remove themselves from SMT, although it may also be argued that young people are reluctant to do this due to 'Fear Of Missing Out' (FOMO).

4.5 Social media and fear of missing out (FOMO)

FOMO is defined as '*a pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent*' (Przybylski, Murayama, DeHaan & Gladwell 2013 p.1841). They found that participants with lower levels of satisfaction in the areas of competence, autonomy and relatedness experienced higher rates of FOMO. Higher levels of FOMO was also related to lower life satisfaction which included measured self-reported satisfaction in physical health, emotional health, personal relationships and life as a whole. Przybylski et al (2013) indicated that individual experiencing low life satisfaction may be drawn to SMT as a way of having some form of communication with others. It is hypothesised that school refusers may use SMT as a way of staying in touch with peers as it removes the social interaction element of the relationship; an area where this group may experience difficulties (Kearney, 2001). Kandell (1998) suggested that for people who struggle with social interactions, SMT can reduce anxieties around communication and it offers more thinking time around what they want to say and takes away the difficulty of being face to face with someone. With a perceived lack of physical social interactions with peers, SMT may be their way of gaining deeper relationships with peers (Przybylski et al, 2013). Fox and Moreland (2015) suggested

that SMT can be used to try to avoid a negative state of mind and to continue to feel part of a friendship group.

Another study implies that FOMO has the potential to increase stress around relationships; when using Facebook, higher levels of use were linked to an increased need for popularity and the need to belong to a peer group (Beyens, Frison & Eggermont 2016). The study by Beyens et al (2016) only looked at the impact of Facebook so could not be generalised to SMT use as a whole; statistics indicate that Facebook is no longer the most used form of SMT for young people (Battisby, 2018). Przybylski et al (2013) indicate that anxiety is an important factor of FOMO and the perceived need to use SMT; FOMO refers to the worries and anxiety people feel from missing out on interactions with peer groups. With children who refuse school, they are already missing out on the physical interactions with peers during school time. It could be presumed they experience FOMO more than the young people who attend school and SMT use is their way of belonging to a peer group in the absence of school attendance.

On the other hand, with increased SMT use linked to a strong need to belong (Beyens et al, 2016); if school refusers do not want to belong at school, could this indicate that they do not want to belong online and in fact display a reduced amount of SMT use compared to their peers who attend school. With no research currently in this area, it is difficult to know the impact of SMT use on ABSR.

Literature Review Part 1B: Research Review

5.   Overview of the research exploring ABSR

Reviews exploring the research regarding school refusal appeared to lack UK based literature which possibly is a reflection of the current leading research as a whole (Elliott & Place, 2019). They reported only a small number of recent studies around the topic of school refusal are based in the UK (Pellegrini, 2007; Nuttell & Woods, 2013; Baker & Bishop, 2015), with most research taking place in non-English speaking countries such as Japan and India (Elliott & Place, 2019). A large amount of

the literature around school refusal has been conducted in the United States (Kearney et al, 1995; Kearney, 2002; Kearney & Albano 2004; Tyrrell 2005; Chu et al, 2015), possibly then different social and political contexts could pose questions around the transferability to the experience of children and adolescents in the UK. Whilst UK based research investigating ABSR from an educational perspective is beginning to emerge, up-to-date studies are rare and few gather the view of the young people on the social and environmental factors which could be contributing to their ABSR (Pellegrini, 2007; Nuttall & Woods, 2013; Baker & Bishop, 2015). Elliot and Place (2019) highlighted the need for UK based literature on ABSR to support the effectiveness of individualised interventions which respond to the vast number of indicators and causes. A review of the wider research, from places such as the USA and Europe, indicated no advances have been identified to further guide professionals working with ABSR (Pellegrini, 2007; Ingles et al, 2015; Elliot & Place, 2019).

Reviews also found that most studies are based within clinical psychology, only a small amount of the literature comes from an educational psychology perspective (Ingles et al, 2015; Elliott & Place, 2019). School anxious and school phobic are the most popular terms used to describe school refusal behaviour (Kearney & Silverman 1990; Csoti 2003; Chitiyo and Wheeler 2006; Thambirajah et al, 2008) and still play a huge role in school refusal literature to date (Kearney, 2016). However, educational psychology literature has more recently begun to use more inclusive terminology such as extended non-attendance from school (Baker & Bishop, 2015). CYP often describe how their anxiety is preventing attendance at school and often feeling this is out of their control. The term school refuser implies the non-attendance is being driven by the CYP rather than the difficulties they are experiencing (Pellegrini, 2007; Baker & Bishop, 2015). No research was identified which further explored the individual factors.

A review of available literature reveals only two current and relevant UK based studies which focus on the experience of ABSR from the young person perspective. A quantitative study, completed in Norway aimed to further explore risk factors for school refusal from the perspective of CYP. There is currently no research which

aims to explore the impact of SMT at times of ABSR. A summary of six studies is provided in Table 1, with each further discussed in turn to provide an in-depth review of the work and how they link to the current research.

Table 1

Summary of key research studies regarding ABSR and SMT

Area	Authors	Title	Year	Place	Study design	Sample size	Key findings
School Refusal	Nuttall & Woods	Effective intervention for school refusal behaviour	2013	UK	Case studies and interviews with YP, parents and professionals	2 participants; 2 Females	-Perceived difficulties within the home environment -Impacts of peer relationships on ABSR -Importance of the eco-system; school and home working together to affect change -Importance of the CYP feeling involved with the process -Importance of parental engagement and support -The negative impact of prosecution -Importance of early intervention -Need for the continued support
School Refusal	Baker & Bishop	Out of school: a phenomenological exploration of extended non-attendance	2015	UK	Semi-structured interviews, IPA analysis	4 participants; 2 Males and 2 females	-All participants displayed anxiety towards school attendance -All mediated due to the mental health difficulties displayed with their ABSR behaviour -CYP felt a lack of understanding from the teachers and professionals

							they worked with -All CYP had a bad experience in school -All ABSR treated the same, although ABSR has a very heterogeneous nature -Negative and positive impacts of friendship -Importance of early intervention -Importance of setting work at a phase which is comfortable for the young person -Need for schools to improve knowledge and understanding of school refusal behaviour
School Refusal	Havik, Bru & Erstesvag	School factors associated with school refusal and truancy-related reasons for school non-attendance	2015	Norway	Quantitative analysis of self-reported questionnaires	3,629 participants	-Peer relationships were an important risk factor for school refusal -School factors were closely linked to school refusal -Bullying showed a strong association with school refusal -need to differentiate between school refusal and truancy
Social Media and mental health	Hill & Zheng	A Desire for Social Media Is Associated With a Desire for Solitary but Not Social Activities	2017	USA	A quantitative correlation-based study exploring the relationship between the desirability of social media and socialization preferences through a cue-based perceptual judgment task.	136 participants; 39 males and 97 females; age range: 19–30	-Social media has potential links with the desire for social isolation -Predictors of desire for social media included; desire for social isolation, the intensity of social media use and perceived impact on social life -Contradictory research as to whether social media is

41

							detrimental or beneficial to social connections
					Questionnaires to assess depressiveness and aspects of social media usage were also included.		-Dual systems model =higher usage → higher desirer - No link found between depressiveness and social media preferences
Social Media and mental health	Twenge, Joiner, Rogers, & Martin	Increases in Depressive Symptoms, Suicide-Related Outcomes, and Suicide Rates Among U.S. Adolescents After 2010 and Links to Increased New Media Screen Time	2018	USA	MtF - nationally representative survey administered every year since 1991 The YRBSS is a nationally representative sample of high school students administered by the CDC every other year since 1991. Suicide deaths per 100,000 population for the age group corresponding to the MtF and YRBSS	MtF = 388,275 YRBSS = 118,545 (Although this is unclear as it appears that this number has participated from 1991 to 2015)	-Between 2010-2015 adolescent depressive symptoms, suicide-related outcomes and suicide rates increased -The impact has been greater for females -Increases in SMT use, with adolescents spending less time on non-screen activities -33% more adolescents exhibited higher levels of depressive symptoms -65% increase in suicides rates in females -Adolescents who spend more time on screens were more like to experience depressive symptoms -Timing of increasing in mental health issues coincide with increases in smartphones in America.
Social Media and mental health	Beyens, Frison & Eggermount	"I don't want to miss a thing". Adolescent's fear of missing our and its relationships to adolescent's social needs, Facebook use	2016	The Netherlands	A quantitative paper-and-pencil survey exploring need to belong, need for popularity, FOMO, Facebook use and perceived stress related to Facebook use	402 participants	-Increased need to belong and the need for popularity was associated with increased Facebook use -Relationships were medicated by FOMO -Increased FOMO was associated with increased Facebook related stress

		and Facebook related stress.			

To further examine the robustness of these studies, an evaluation of validity using Yardley's evaluation criteria (2000) was completed on each study. Yardley (2000) indicated that more needs to be done to evaluate the quality of research. Yardley (2000) used open-ended and flexible principles to try to ensure reliability and replicability of studies. Table 1, shows the positive and negative aspects of each study using Yardley's framework.

Table 2

Evaluating the validity of research using Yardley (2000) evaluation criteria

	Sensitivity to context	Commitment & Rigour	Transparency & Coherence	Impact & Importance
Nuttell & Woods (2013)	Previous research has been conceptualised and investigated. Literature provided in-depth explanations of the terminology associated with ABSR, explored links with development, factors affecting ABSR and research on successful interventions. Case study analysis of 8 interviews per case supported with case records Nature of participants anxiety was factored into the data gathering and demographics and background disclosed.	Full descriptions provided of data gathering and analysis process. Approaches to analysis identified → broadly inductive (bottom-up) approach to Thematic Analysis In-depth analysis of the data was highlighted, by re-development and re-visiting themes. 2-4 case studies recommended for case study research	Type and level of intervention were not disclosed → only approaches to intervention. Varying levels of school refusal considering comparative measure were used. Method for requiring participants is unclear. Consideration into how themes could have been affected by researchers prior knowledge. Further coding of 50% of the data completed by a third party to the research. Themes were re-developed and re-worded with the third party. All interview schedules were provided. Information provided on themes developed. No explicit links of findings to research questions were highlighted, although implied throughout the results.	Experience of an individual → can not be generalised to further population. Not appropriate due to individual experiences provided. Does give insight into what worked and what didn't for these CYP. Further knowledge was gathered on the factors affecting ABSR although the voice of the child doesn't always come through → the voice of professionals working with pupils comes through strong.
Baker & Bishop (2015)	Sensitivity and investigation into ABSR → in-depth research process explained about finding the voice of the child in the	4 participants, deemed suitable for IPA research. Little information provided about time spent with data.	Interview questions not provided although a view of what the researchers hoped to explore was stated. While the method of IPA analysis is explained, this is	Findings resonant with SR research adding the unique quality from the CYPs perspective. Provides useful information to be aware of when working with

Study				
	literature of ABSR→ analysis provided of each paper → exploring research employing the view. The literature on ABSR was explored. Overview of risk factors and interventions with supporting research. Limited the participant group with the inclusion criteria employed. Nature of participants vulnerability was acknowledged. Participants demographics and background explored.		not specific to the study. Participation selection relied on other professionals views of suitability for study. Little information about how the data was analysed, no information on whether themes were reviewed or checked by the third party. The experience from the point of view of the CYP is being explored. No consideration of how themes could have been impacted on by researcher knowledge.	SR. Small sample, although consistent with IPA, individual accounts generalising is inappropriate. Used participants experience to inform aspects of research – such as use of the term extended non-attendance. Current ways of working i.e. getting back to 'normal' quickly → doesn't work for these children. Triangulations findings with previous research.
Havik, Bru & Erstesvag (2015)	Very specific factors being explored self-reported analysis. The research was conceptual and investigated the different factors - the research explored. Little distintion made in the literature about school refusal and truancy. Looking at two specific aspect – not accounting for other factors affecting school refusal. Participant demographics described – larger secondary participant sample. When working with children -parents were given the option of receiving the questionnaire prior.	Issues present with the term school-refuser →pupils only had to be absent for a day. Could question whether this study actually explores school refusal. An advanced multivariate approach which accounted for factors thought to play a role is unexcused school non-attendance.	Large sample group (45 schools – 3,629 pupils). Sample pupils were absent – not considering other reasons for absences i.e. sickness, holidays, etc. Appendix provides questionnaire details – measures were described in detail. Little explicit measures provided to explain results without prior knowledge of data analysis. While data fits with the research question there could be the question, whether school refusal and truancy is being measured or school absences – inclusion criteria was 1 day off in the last 3 months → as the questionnaire was completed in school it is unlikely to access the school refusal group.	Explores factors on a larger scale than qualitative → possibly aiming to allow for generalisation. Information is not provided as to whether the example is large enough to generate statistically significant results. Important to gain information on a larger scale but what is being measured could be questioned. School personal best placed to implement early interventions – starting in the classroom.
Hill & Zheng (2017)	Links to theory provided → aspects of SMT use linked to psychology	Little proof that the test is measuring what it is supposed to. The test was designed for this study. Participants self-reported social media use.	A detailed explanation of the experimental procedure. No research questions provided. No explanation provided on the impact of research on data. Correlation analysis.	With little exploring long-term effects of SMTuse → research to explore SMT impact is important. No information provided, if participant numbers are what is needed to make the test statistically significant.
Twenge, Joiner, Rogers & Martin (2018)	A lot of speculations made with the theories rather than evidence-based. Although figures from the national surveys on suicide rates are likely to be accurate, this can not be explicitly linked to mental health. A lot of research explores the links	The study starts by explaining an error within the statistical analysis →the authors indicate that this will not affect the results → but it is unknown whether this is true unless a re-analysis is conducted. Participants self-reported social media use. A large range of	Information provided on how data was gathered --> what surveys and statistics were used. While results can be hard to interpret without statistical knowledge →demonstrations graphs have been provided to present findings	Larger sample size using national statistics. No evidence to suggest the link made between mental health and SMT. Decreases in mental health could be the result of other factors – such as economic factors.

	between SMT use and mental health.	assessment data used.		
Beyens, Frison & Eggermount (2016)	Conceptualised and investigated the literature of FOMO. Simple and concise research questions.	Relying on self-reported data → although this may have been guessed or estimated by CYP, they could have also an over-exaggerated number of friends to make themselves appear popular. The analysis not over complicated and easy to understand for the novice reader.	The hypothesis developed using the supporting literature. In-depth explanations of the measures used. While recruitment was explained, it was unclear whether students volunteered for the research → with consent being obtained by school headteacher. Control variables considered. Results made accessible for novice readers and are simple to understand.	Large sample size (402). Generalizability is beyond those studied is limited, as relying on s relatively small sample. Important to understand what is driving social media use- despite negative experiences. Aimed to increase understanding of SMT use. Building on prior knowledge.

Note. Developed by author based on Yardley (2000) criteria for research evaluation. Green indicates valid research elements, red indicates areas where the studies are weaker.

5.1 Nuttall and Woods (2013) study

A study by Nuttall and Woods (2013) aimed to move away from the clinical based treatments of school refusal and explored effective intervention from an educational perspective. The research included cases studies from two participants; interviews were conducted with the young people themselves, parents and a number of the professionals involved with the case. Although the case studies touched upon the school refuser experience, the primary focus was exploring the factors which contributed to the success of the interventions supporting the young people back into school. Findings suggested that the home and school systems around the CYP working together was an important factor in the success of the intervention. They highlighted the importance of multi-agency collaboration working with both the CYP and parents. Friendships were also identified as a factor for success, friendships often led to improved confidence for the CYP. Early intervention along with a flexible and individualised approach was recognised as important for success.

The study applied a number of inclusion criteria which were adopted when recruiting participants who were specific regarding school refusal behaviour. This may have limited results in relation to the facts which contributed to successful interventions; for example one criterion included multi-agency involvement, this could be missing potential information from a successful return to education from

school-based interventions. One participant was also attending an alternative school provision specialising in school refusal, one could postulate that intervention and return to education is more likely to be successful within this setting. One could assume that interventions are likely to be more intensive and tailored to the individual needs of the CYP. Also the school-based factors which were contributing to the school refusal behaviour are no longer likely to be a present. With the small sample group explored within this study, it would be impossible to apply these findings to the general population. Both cases involved a number of professionals supporting the young person and their family, research from the Elliott and Place (2019) review suggests that this is unlikely to be the case for all CYP, as it is currently impractical for many practitioners to be able to specialise in school refusers. Although it wasn't the intention of the research there was little evidence of the pupil voice or the experience of school refusal and intervention from their perspective. With minimal research in the area of school refusal accessing the voice of the young person; little is currently known about school refusal from the perspective of the CYP. With friendships being recognised as an important factor for success, this study hopes to identify whether SMT is able to provide this link for CYP as well as accessing the pupil voice which is often lost within the research.

5.2 Baker and Bishop (2015) study

Baker and Bishop (2015) also set out to explore the experience of school refusal from the CYP's point of view, using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The researcher set out to capture the pupil's voice throughout their experience of school refusal. Although this is often missing from the literature, it is also very relevant considering the heterogeneous nature of school refusal (Miller, 2008). As part of the inclusion criteria, all participants received support received from the home education service or Electively Home Educated (EHE). Which could have provided a bias in the school refusal experience of the CYP, there is also the possibility that EHE pupils are not school refusers but choosing to be educated at home. This also means that they were engaged with some form of education,

missing out the CYP who were refusing to attend school. At times, results from the study were rather descriptive and interpretations were not always evident.

This study highlighted the different experience of each participant and identified a number of factors which were identified as contributing to their ABSR. The experience of anxiety was common for all pupils, along with difficulties transitioning from primary school into secondary school. The research identified a lack of understanding from the school system around their ABSR from the CYPs perspective. One may speculate that this is a biased response from the CYP due to school often being the primary cause of their difficulties. Participants reported they felt that decisions were often pushed onto them rather than made in collaboration, with feelings of being rushed back into school being identified. Previous findings on supporting ABSR return into school as soon as possible (Miller, 2008) were not perceived by CYP as the best approach, feeling that the systems to support ABSR did not work for them. Friendship and belonging were again highlighted as central to the ABSR experience, with CYP reporting feelings of isolations and feeling as if they didn't belong. The findings also suggested that friendships and remaining connected was a key factor in the drive to return to school.

With research being carried out in one Local Authority (LA), issues presented could be due to the approach taken to ABSR at a LA level. The study involved interviewing four participants, although a small sample size these numbers are supported by IPA research. This does limit the findings being generalised to the population, also the exploration into the individual accounts means that generalising would be inappropriate. These accounts allow further insight it to the issues experiences but are likely to be specific to each CYP. The current research hopes to build on these findings and explore whether SMT impacts ABSR.

5.3 Havik, Bru and Erstesvag (2015) study

Havik, Bru and Erstesvag (2015) set out to explore, on a larger scale, the potential risk factors associated with ABSR. Havik, Bru and Estesvag (2015) explored the school factors associated with school refusal and truancy with 3,629 participants in

secondary school. The study looked at a number of scales to measure school refusal-related reasons and truancy-related reasons for school absences. Inclusion criteria were CYP who had been absent from school for at least one day in the last 3 months. With original participants being 5,465, the study indicated that 66.4 per cent of the sample showed absences related to school refusal or truancy behaviour, which is a drastic increase from the 1-5 per cent often suggested (Chitiyo & Wheeler, 2006). The research failed to distinguish the other potential reasons such as sickness, school-time holidays and authorised absences. CYP displaying ABSR behaviour were possibly unintentionally excluded from the study due to their non-attendance and participants being recruited through school.

The study measured CYP reasons for school absence using the school refusal-related reasons (centred on expectations or experiences of negative emotions at school) and truancy-related reasons (centred on finding school boring and seeking more attractive activities outside school) scale from Havek, Bru and Erstesvag (2014). The study found that poor peer relationships were an important risk factor related to school refusal. Bullying showed strong associations with school refusal reasons for non-attendance in primary aged, CYP while feeling left out had a greater association for secondary aged CYP. The finding opposes the literature implying that the internal factor of anxiety is the leading cause of ABSR (Berry et al, 1993; Csoti, 2003). This study took place in Norway meaning results found cannot be generalised to the UK population, however, no studies within the UK has explored potential risk factors to school refusal with a large participant group in the same way as Havik et al (2015).

With findings from Havik, Bru and Erstesvag (2015) indicating that peer relationships and bullying are strong risk factors associated with school refusal. The research moves on to explore how a continuous way of socialising and communicating with peers such as SMT may be linked with ABSR behaviour.

6.   Overview of the research exploring SMT

The research into SMT is mainly quantitative in nature and lacks the individual lived experience of the person which is present in qualitative data. Smith (2007) highlighted that quantitative research often results in a superficial and narrow data set, providing a lack of depth into human perceptions. The United States appears to be the leading country in SMT research around the impact on socialisation, although there are some based in the UK, they tend to research cyber-bullying. Research completed in the United States has been selected within this review since there are studies which suggest Western cultures have a similar pattern of SMT usage (Twenge, 2017). Due to the constantly evolving nature of SMT, it is important to keep research up-to-date; studies dated in 2014 may be perceived as out of date due to the advances in technology since that time.

6.1 Hill and Zheng (2017) study

Twenge (2017) implied that SMT is changing the way the younger generation socialise and communicate with one another. Hill and Zheng (2017) explored how SMT use correlated with socialisation and symptoms of wellbeing. Data was collected from a relatively large example of college students, 136 participants; there was a high percentage of female participants (97 females to 39 males) which was not a true representation of the college population. The study set out to explore the relationship between the desirability of social media and socialization preferences through a cue-based perceptual judgment task. Depressiveness and aspects of SMT usage were also investigated using questionnaires. It is hard to see how SMT desire can be assessed using a visual presentation of cue cards, it was reported that participants were grouped and that the cards were presented in different orders for each group. This could have impacted on the desirability of the SMT cues, for example if presented with road signs first then SMT may appear more desirable. Results showed that desire for SMT had potential links to social isolation which were represented by solitary activities; however this could also be explained if the solitary activities were more appealing than the social activities presented.

SMT desirability was also linked to the intensity of SMT use daily and how much the SMT impacted on participant's interpersonal social life.

Hill and Zheng (2015) explored the contradictory research investigating whether SMT is beneficial or detrimental to connection with others. They examined two types of SMT use one which looked at solitary and social activities online. It would be interesting to see whether there was a correlation between perceived impact for social/solitary interactions and the types of activities engage with via SMT. From this study, one might assume that ABSR may enjoy spending their time online not to connect with others but because of the solitary nature. Another assumption may be that when ABSR is a result of difficulties with the school environment, SMT provides CYP with the social aspect of school that they are missing out on. In relation to the current research, the presentation of the work of Hill and Zheng (2015) is intended to explore the desirability of SMT to a CYP who is ABSR and who possibly finds socialisation difficult and what impact this may have on them. No association was found between SMT and depressiveness, although a study which contradicts the findings was carried out by Twenge, Joiner, Rogers and Martin (2018).

6.2 Twenge, Joiner, Rogers and Martin (2018) study

Twenge, Joiner, Rogers and Martin (2018) found that between 2010 and 2015, using data from the National Representative Survey, there had been an increase in adolescent depressive symptoms, suicide-related symptoms and suicide rates. Results found that adolescents who spend more time on new media (SMT, smartphones) were more likely to report mental health issues, while adolescents who spent more time on non-screen activities were less likely to report mental health issues. Twenge, Martin and Campbell (2018) also explored the links between mental health and SMT use. They found that adolescents who spent more time on SMT had an increased likelihood of reporting depressive symptoms than those who spent more time on activities that were not screen based, with correlations being higher among girls. Heffer, Good, Daley MacDonald and Willoughby (2019) found

contradictory evidence in response to Twenge et al (2018). With a more manageable data set, Heffer et al (2019) surveyed adolescent and undergraduate students annually for 6 years and found that SMT use did not predict depressive symptoms, but greater depressive symptoms did result in more frequent SMT use. Furthermore Twenge et al (2018) reported on statistics rather than experimental data and made a number of speculative rather than evidence based findings.

A weakness of this study was the errors reported within the statistics, this was due to the author inadvertently adding observations which shouldn't have been included. Although the researchers indicated that these do not impact on the findings, this cannot be known unless the results were re-analysed. The researchers had a large data set which was sometimes difficult to understand within the report; in particular, information about participants, whether the total number presented it a total since 1991 or whether this is an indication of annual numbers. It is also unclear whether the same participants were surveyed each year; if only part of the participants were re-surveyed this could impact on the data. A 33% increase in depressive symptoms was reported, with more work going into mental health support, it could be assumed that this increase is a result of a more open and accepting culture. The increase could be down to depression being reported rather than an increase in depressive symptoms. With personal data being collected through questionnaires, one might consider the depth of information some CYP might be happy to share. This could imply that figures might be higher than suggested. Another position could be that since 1991 society is more comfortable speaking openly about mental help and the most recent data provides a true representation compared to the 1991 data set. The figures reported regarding a 65 per cent increase in suicide rates in females are more likely to be a true representation due to the factual nature of the information.

With a number of studies showing some link between SMT and mental health, it is important to think about what effect SMT use could have on CYP who are ABSR and already experiencing issues regarding their mental health and what further impact SMT may have. With adolescents who refuse school already being at an increased risk of mental health difficulties (Kearney, 2001), it's important to consider the

further impact that SMT use could have on this vulnerable group of CYP. A number of studies suggest that as a result of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), adolescents are likely to continue using SMT, regardless of the impact on their mental health (Beyens, Frison & Eggermont, 2016).

6.3 Beyens, Frison & Eggermont (2016) study

This study aimed to explore how FOMO can impact on SMT use. Beyens, Frison and Eggermont (2016) investigated the need to belong, need for popularity, FOMO, Facebook use and perceived stress related to Facebook use of 402 participants. Results found that increased use of Facebook was associated with an increased need to belong and increased need for popularity. These findings are supported by Nadkarni and Hofmann (2012) who identified how SMT can often fulfil the need to belong. Facebook use was self-reported indicating that this figure was estimated for all participants, this figure may be reported inaccurately, providing a response bias which can impact on the validity of the results. CYP could have overestimated or underestimated their use by a great deal. FOMO was also associated with increased Facebook related stress, with girls reporting higher levels of need in all 3 areas. This increased impact on girls regarding SMT and mental health was also found by Hill and Zheng (2017) and Twenge et al (2018).

This research is quantitative in nature and only provides statistical information, assumptions were made around individual behaviour and wellbeing from data sets which were non-descriptive, lacking in personal experience and interpretation. Without the in-depth analysis, little is gained around knowledge of how to support the CYP using these findings. To add depth to the analysis, this study could have used a mixed methodology to enhance knowledge of the individual experience. By adding qualitative questions to explore the lived experience for these CYP and gain more understanding around the topic areas and their effect on the person. Beyens, Frison & Eggermount (2016) describe how adolescence is a critical developmental stage and at this time, peers develop into a primary support source. As a result of their ABSR, it is possible that CYP often missing out on socialisation and connections

with peers, one could assume that SMT provides them with this connection and becomes their primary source of social support with friends. With findings of Beyens, Frison and Eggermont (2016) suggesting that the need to belong is associated with higher SMT use, one could assume that CYP who are ABSRs are becoming increasingly dependent on SMT to gratify their social needs as these are not being met within the school environment.

7.0 SMT research and links to ABSR

Literature in ABSR consistently highlights the importance of friendships as a protective factor for CYP and has been suggested to encourage return to school (Nuttall & Woods, 2013; Baker & Bishop, 2017). Findings suggest that CYP who ABSR often feel that they don't belong and are isolated from peers as a result of their non-attendance (Baker & Bishop, 2015). Difficulties with peer relationships and bullying have been highlighted as a strong risk factor affecting ABSR (Baker & Bishop, 2015; Havik, Bru & Erstesvag, 2015). With belongingness and peer relationships playing an important role in the lives of ABSRs, it could be assumed that CYP will find other ways to maintain these connections when not attending school. It is possible that SMT is able to satisfy this need. Baker and Bishop (2015) also identified that CYP with ABSR have difficulty accessing friendship groups, possibly feeling that they are missing out on the social connections their peers are having in school. This may indicate that ABSRs have a higher FOMO which could be urging SMT use, with research indicating that increased levels of SMT use are also linked with the need to belong (Beyens, Frison and Eggermont, 2016). However, with CYP already experiencing difficulties with anxiety, one might wonder about the further impact SMT use could be having, with some research indicating increased SMT used can negatively impact on the mental health of adolescents (Twenge et al, 2018). This leads to the current research, exploring the impact of SMT use on the ABSR experience.

8. Current study

8.1 Overview

Despite school refusal being a widely researched area; outcomes for young people affected by school refusal remain poor and the voice of the child continues to remain absent from the evidence base (Nuttall & Woods, 2013; Baker & Bishop 2015). Research is often focused around treatment and interventions which aims to support the ABSR's return to education (Elliot & Place, 2019), but often fail to address the externalised social factors which may be reinforcing the school refusal behaviour. The approach to ABSR is often taken from a perspective of a medical model (Kearney, 2016), this considers that mental health disorders have a physical cause which can be treated (McLeod, 2018). This is often the approach adopted by clinical psychologists and psychiatrists who tend to group symptoms together to classify them into a 'disorder' or 'syndrome' which requires physical treatments to be administered (McLeod, 2018).

SMT now plays a large part of life, with the majority of people using some form of SMT (Battisby, 2018). It is still unclear what effect this is having on people's mental health with conflicts in research findings being frequent (Twenge et al, 2018; Heffer et al, 2019). Research from SMT literature often discovered links with mental health (Twenge et al, 2018) and socialising (Beyens et al, 2016). Mental Health and socialisation associations are often observed within the ABSR literature (Costi, 2003; Havik et al, 2015), one might assume that SMT can impact on the ABSR experience; there is currently no research which explores this further.

8.2 Aim of research

The proposed research hopes to explore the impact of SMT on young people who are school refusers. The term Anxiety Based School Refusal (ABSR) has been adopted as the most inclusive expression of persistent school non-attendance due to anxiety. A focus on adolescents who are described as anxious and phobic has been selected due to the high number of suggestions throughout the literature,

that anxiety and phobia are the most common elements that contribute to ABSR. It is asserted that there is currently a shared understanding among many schools and educational provisions constructing a view of non-school attendance as anxiety-based. The researcher aims to explore the experiences of CYP in using SMT during times of non-attendance at school.

8.3 Research questions

Primary research question:

- What are young people's experiences of SMT's impact during periods of ABSRs?

Secondary research questions identified and explored throughout the study:

- What are the ABSR experiences of young people?

- What are the positive experiences of SMT use for young people who are ABSRs?

- What are the negative experiences of SMT use for young people who are ABSRs?

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An Exploration into the Use of Social Media Technology in Adolescents who School Refuse.

Part 2: Empirical Study

(Word Count: 7,942)

1. Abstract

Despite school refusal being a widely researched area; outcomes for young people affected by school refusal remain poor and the voice of the child continues to remain absent from the evidence base (Baker & Bishop, 2015). Due to the research on school refusal focusing mainly on treatment (Elliot & Place, 2019), there is little information which explores the impact of school refusal behaviour. Research often fails to address the externalised social factors which may be reinforcing the school refusal behaviour. Social Media Technology (SMT) now plays a large part of life, with the majority of people using some form of SMT (Battisby, 2018). It is still unclear what effect this is having on people's mental health with conflicting research often found (Twenge et al, 2018; Heffer et al, 2019). Research often discovers SMT links with mental health (Twenge et al, 2018) and socialising (Beyens et al, 2016). These links are also, often, observed within the Anxiety Based School Refusal (ABSR) literature (Csoti, 2003; Havik et al, 2015), one might assume that SMT can impact on the ABSR experience; there is currently no research which explores this further.

This research aimed to provide an insight into the experience of Anxiety Based School Refusal (ABSR) for the young people and how those involved viewed SMT during this time. Four participants were interviewed in total via a semi-structured interview process; all pupil participants attended an anxious and phobic specialist school provision for those who were not attending mainstream education. The data was analysed using the process of Interpretative Phonological Analysis (Smith, Flower and Larkin, 2009), four super-ordinate themes were identified: the

experience of school; the self as a person; social connection and impacts of SMT

use. Implications for educational psychologists and professionals are considered

alongside possible future directions for further study.

2. Introduction

2.1 Understanding non-attendance at school

In 1932, Broadwin was one of the first to describe different forms of school non-attendance. Then, it was referred to as truancy; he described fear contributing to a consistent and long-standing absence from school in which the child would stay at home. Berg, Nichols and Pritchard (1969) defined the term school phobia; as reporting significant emotional upset from children and described phobia specific qualities such as complaints of feeling unwell, fearfulness and tantrums. They explained that school phobic children remained at home with the knowledge of the parents and there is usually an absence of antisocial or, delinquent behaviour. The term school refusal was promoted by Chitiyo and Wheeler (2006); they discussed the multiple causative factors that can contribute to persistent school non-attendance. These encompassed terms such as school phobia and school anxiety but were not limited to these definitions.

The term school phobic implies that something from the school is producing a feared or, anxious response from the child (Chitiyo & Wheeler, 2006). Thambirajah, Grandison and De-Hayes (2008) described how the school itself is rarely the object of fear; often the fear is of the anxiety-provoking concern such as leaving a parent, peer interactions, speaking in front of peers or being bullied. It is now recognised that various different causes can be the source of school refusal behaviour. Csoti (2003) describes something more complex than a true 'phobia' and includes an array of disorders including separation anxiety, agoraphobia and social phobia.

2.2 School refusal links to anxiety and mental health

The school phobic and school anxious terms appear closely related and are both included within the clinical explanations of school non-attendance. School refusal is not a diagnostic term identified independently within the DSM-V (APA, 2013), with Children and Young People (CYP) who are school refusers often meeting the criteria for "*specific phobias, a generalised or social anxiety disorder, or separation anxiety*"

(Elliott & Place, 2019, p.5). Many researchers have attempted to distinguish school phobia from school anxiety (Johnson, Falstein, Szurek & Svendsen, 1941; Johnson, 1957; Doll, 1987; Sigmon, 1991; Kearney & Silverman, 1990). Knollman, Knoll, Reissnwe, Metzelaars and Hebebrand (cited in Elliott & Place, 2019) differentiate the terms, explain that school phobia was viewed as a consequence of separation anxiety, and school anxiety resulting in fear of the school environment. Miller (2008) noted that whilst school phobia and school anxiety incorporate similar terms, they have individual concepts to consider.

Another link commonly associated with school refusal behaviour in children and young people diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). A number of recent studies have reported that young people diagnosed with ASD are at higher risk of experiencing school refusal (Tyson & Cruess 2012; Munkaugen, Gjevik, Pripp, Sponheim & Diseth 2017a; Muukaugen, Torske, Gjevik, Naerland, Pripp & Diseth 2017b; Preece & Howley 2018). As a result of these complex difficulties, the school environment can be a challenging place for young people with ASD; Preece and Howley (2018) state that this puts them at particular risk of displaying school refusal behaviour. Tyson and Cruess (2012) carried out a literature review to explore differentiating high-functioning autism and school phobia. They believe that there is a high degree of overlap between the two; many of the symptoms can be misinterpreted causing confusion and in some cases incorrect diagnosis. Findings by Simonoff, Pickles, Charman, Chandler, Loucas & Baird (2008) suggested that ASD and school refusal can occur concurrently in young people.

2.3 Defining school refusal

School refusal research to date mainly focuses on defining the topic and the characteristics of school refusal behaviour (Kearney, Eisen & Silverman, 1995; Place, Hulsmeier, Davis & Taylor 2000; Kearney 2002; Ek & Eriksson, 2013). The most widely used definition comes from Kearney and Silverman (1990) who described school refusal as a refusal to attend or experience difficulties attending school for an entire day which is motivated by the child. The research by Kearney and

Silverman (1990) also suggested four main sets of reasons for school refusal including:

- to avoid the experience of severe anxiety or, fearfulness related to attending school;

- to avoid social situations that are feared or, which cause anxiety;

- to seek attention or, to reduce separation anxiety; and

- to enjoy rewarding experiences that non-attendance at school may bring.

The term school refusal has been adopted as the most inclusive expression of persistent school non-attendance. A focus on adolescents who are described as anxious has been selected due to the high number of suggestions throughout the literature that anxiety is the most common elements that contribute to school refusal. Due to the nature of anxiety being closely linked to mental health with a large quantity of the literature coming from clinical psychology (Kearney, 2016), medical terminology such as treatment has been referred to throughout the discussions to reflect the terminology used in the literature being referred to. The majority of literature in this area is clinically based; there is little research in the field of Educational Psychology (EP). It is hoped that this research will provide further insight to Educational Psychologists (EPs) around approaching the topic of school refusal from an educational perspective and enable them to be better informed around how SMT impacts on young people during this time, currently no research as explored this area and how SMT may affect the school refusal experience.

Throughout this research, the terminology Anxiety Based School Refusal (ABSR) will be adopted. This term has been developed based on the literature presented; which indicates that the term school refusal is heterogeneous and can include a wide variety and diverse number of behaviours linked to non-attendance at school. The definition of ABSR includes a form of the previously described anxieties which contribute to the CYPs fearfulness related to school and avoidance of social situations, resulting in the prevention of attendance at school. It is thought that this

description is most relevant to the full range of need and behaviours presented by the participating young people. This term was deemed to be the most inclusive for all participants.

2.4 Long term outcomes of ABSR

Pellegrini (2007) describes how the school has a paramount role in teaching "*values of society and culture in children*" (p.63). Attendance at school and peer relationship are believed to play a central role in child development and socialisation, without engagement in school young people are likely to experience long term difficulties in these areas. ABSR can affect how a young person finds their way in society and impacts on the socialisation experiences they are likely to engage in.

McShane, Walter and Rey (2004) reported inconsistent long term outcomes for this group of young people. If anxiety symptoms preventing the child or young person attending school are left untreated long term problems may include: marital and occupational difficulties, mental health issues, alcoholism and anti-social behaviour (Kearney et al; 1995).

Studies have found that the problems children had regarding their mental health often followed them into adulthood. Berg and Jackson (1985) found that 10 years after their first experience as an inpatient on a psychiatric unit; one-third of the ABSRs had received further treatment as an adult for psychiatric illness and one third reported minor mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. A study by Benjamin et al (2013) echoed these findings; children who were diagnosed with separation anxiety found independent living more difficult as an adult. The literature currently lacks research on how ABSR can impact a young person's future.

2.5 Prevalence of ABSR

UK statistics gathered around how many children and young people are affected by ABSR vary a great deal; Elliott (1999) suggested around 1 - 2 per cent of the school-

aged population display ABSR; which has become the widely accepted figure. Havik, Bru and Ertesvag (2015) however, suggested that around 4 per cent of the school-aged population were affected by school phobia. More recently statistics from the Welsh Government (WG, 2018) found that around 4.1 per cent of secondary school-age children and 1.7 per cent of primary school were persistent non-attenders. These figures do not cover ABSR alone, with other explanations such as long term illness and truancy adding to this figure. Ek and Eriksson (2013) also stated that up to 90 per cent of children who refuse school have some form of psychiatric diagnosis. This is supported within the literature; Kearney and Albano (2004) carried out research with 143 children and adolescents and found that 44.8 per cent could be described as school refusers due to an anxiety disorder.

As research has indicated the long term affected of ABSR are conflicting throughout the literature, Elliot and Place (2019) suggest that treatments for ABSR have seen little development over the last 10 years. The impact on the CYPs life can be unique depending on how ABSR presents for them. Socialisation is an important element of school life, so for those who do not attend school there will inevitably be a negative impact

2.6 Socialisation

Although the majority of schools may have objectives that are primarily academic in nature, the school experience is also seen as important for children's development of the social world (Wentzel & Looney, 2007). Social contexts such as school settings provide key opportunities for interactions with peers, this allows children to develop resources and gain information, enabling them to develop social competence (Wentzel & Looney, 2007). Studsrod &Bru (2011) looked at the importance of child socialisation on development and how this was impacted by positive emotional connections with significant peers. Peers account for more than a third of social interactions by middle childhood (Gilfford-Smith & Brownnell, 2003). Peers interactions in school settings provide important information to young people about themselves, though observing peers demonstrating skills and social

competences can build on the child's own skills and self-efficacy (Price & Dodge, 1989). Young people who are not attending school are not fully accessing these social experiences; it could be assumed that social interactions usually gained by attendance at school are being replaced by online social interactions. Ye and Lin (2015) found that individuals that struggle with social interactions are more likely to engage with people online which could be adding to the anxieties that the CYP has around attending school (Ranaeiy, Taghavi, & Goodarzi, 2016). Hill and Zheng (2017) found contradictory indicators as to whether Social Media Technology is detrimental or beneficial to social connections. While they found that SMT can enable connection to larger numbers of people covering a wider geographical area, they also discovered that interpersonal interaction can be reduced by the amount of time spent online (Hill & Zheng, 2017).

2.7 Social media usage of young people

Anderson (2016) reports that adolescents spend an average of 27 hours per week online and International Central Institute for Youth and Educational Television (ICIYET, 2017) reports that 39 per cent of 5-16-year-olds spend this time using Apps while 36 per cent spend the time using mobile phones. 71 per cent of adolescents have the internet linked to their smartphones (ICIYET, 2017). New figures by the Welsh Government (WG, 2017) states that 95 per cent of children aged 7-15 years use the internet at home. These figures are not out of place with previous statistics surrounding social media use; Ofcom (2016) reported that the use of SMT is ubiquitous among the adolescent population. SMT is now a large part of everyday life for most adolescents (Coughlan, 2016).

Given these findings could be assumed that school refusers spend a percentage of their time online. The experience of social media use amongst adolescents who school refuse is not known, and there is very little on the role that social media plays in relation to the phenomenon of school refusal.

2.8 Social media and the impacts on mental health

Generational studies using data from national surveys of 1.1 million adolescents, found a sudden decrease in psychological wellbeing in 2012 (Twenge, Martin and Campbell, 2018). Interestingly this shift also occurs during the same point in time as the number of individuals that owned a smartphone increased to over 50 per cent of the population (Twenge, 2017). Twenge, Martin and Campbell (2018) suggested that the adolescents who spend more time on electronic communications and screen and less time on non-screen activities reported lower psychological wellbeing. This corresponds with another study completed by Twenge and Campbell (2018), with a sample of 40,337 CYP aged 2 to 17 years. The study found that CYP who displayed higher levels of screen time (+7 hours per day) were twice as likely to have a diagnosis of depression, anxiety or received treatment from a mental health professional than participants with lower levels of screen time (1 hour per day) within the last 12 months (Twenge & Campbell, 2018). Twenge (2011) reported that among Western adolescent figures suggest a sharp increase in anxiety, depression and mental health. These findings should be treated with caution given that it is not clear which is cause or which is effect; it may be possible that decreases in wellbeing are resulting in high SMT use.

Research showing the negative effect often associated with SMT has been around for a number of years with some of the earliest studies in 1998 (Kraut, Patterson, Lundmark, Kiesler, Mukopadhyay and Scherlis, 1998) when the internet was a relatively new concept. It was not as easily accessible but was already finding associated increases in loneliness and depression. O'Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson (2011) found classic symptoms of depression were exhibited when adolescents spent increased amounts of time on SMT; although due to the speed SMT is advancing, the results from this study would now be considered outdated. More recently, Rohilla and Kumar (2015) found increased use of SMT can impact on adolescent anxiety, depression, loneliness and compulsive behaviours. With school refusing adolescents already experiencing issues around anxiety, the questions remain around what further impact increased SMT could be having on these young people.

A study carried out by Royal Society of Public Health (RSPH, 2017) asked 1,479 young people to rate different SMT platforms on issues associated with health and wellbeing, with Snapchat and Instagram received the lowest score. The research found these platforms were driving feelings of anxiety and inadequacy in young people; it could be speculated this is the result of the heavily imaged focus associated with these SMTs. Davey (2016) proposes that social media is a significant contributor to young people's friendship network, by facilitating connectedness and the ability to keep in contact without needing to be physically with the person.

However, not all research has found negative impacts of SMT; RSPH (2017) also discovered a number of positive aspects to SMT reported by young people. Socialisation and friendship online have always had both positive and negative associations; with many reporting friendships and connecting with peers online being beneficial to adolescent relationship development with others questioning the real-life experience of these interactions.

2.9 Rationale for current research

Despite school refusal being a widely researched area; outcomes for young people affected by school refusal remain poor and the voice of the child continues to remain absent from the evidence base (Baker & Bishop, 2015). Due to the research on ABSR focusing mainly on treatment (Elliot & Pace, 2019), there is little information which explores what areas actually impact on ABSR. Research often fails to address the externalised social factors which may be reinforcing the school refusal behaviour (Miller, 2008). The approach to ABSR is often from a perspective of a medical model (Kearney, 2016), this considers that mental health disorders have a physical cause which can be treated (McLeod, 2018). This is often the approach adopted by clinical psychologists and psychiatrists who may group symptoms together to classify them into a 'disorder' or 'syndrome' which requires physical treatments to be administered (McLeod, 2018). The focus is often placed on the factors around the mental health and internal factors within the child.

SMT now plays a large part of life, with the majority of people using some form of SMT (Battisby, 2018). It is still unclear what effect this is having on people's mental health with conflicting research often found (Twenge et al, 2018; Heffer et al, 2019). Research from SMT literature often discovered links with mental health (Twenge et al, 2018) and socialising (Beyens et al, 2016). Mental Health and socialisation associations are often observed within the ABSR literature (Costi, 2003; Havik et al, 2015), one might assume that SMT can impact on the ABSR experience; there is currently no research which explores this further.

This study addresses a gap in current research that is an exploration of the factors involved and how this may impact on the CYP experience of ABSR. The research aims to explore how SMT affects the experience of CYP with ABSR. To date, no research has explored the relationship that social media usage might have with the phenomenon of ABSR and this is an additional focus of the current study, exploring whether social media usage might have perceived positive or negative interactions.

The study employs the social model when discussing anxiety and phobia school refusal. A social model of ABSR considers the impact of relationships and the social environment. The social model takes into account the context and environment which could have factors impacting on the development of anxiety in a CYP: such as bullying, disruptions in school, relationships within the school and the school environment, to name a few (Csoti 2003; Miller, 2008; Thambirajah et al, 2008). Throughout this research both the medical and social models will be taken into consideration.

The study will be explorative in nature, aiming to address the lack of in-depth qualitative studies into young people's views. With literature lacking the voice of the child, this study aims to capture the experience of school refusal behaviour and SMT use from the point of view of the young people. The research aims to explore the unique interpretations of participant's reality around school refusal and the perceived positive or negative impact of SMT on this experience. Research questions were developed, aiming to reflect the focus of participants understanding of their experiences, using Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009).

3. Research questions

Primary research question:

- What are young people's experiences of SMT's impact during periods of ABSR?

Secondary research questions:

- What are the ABSR experiences of young people?

- What are the positive experiences of SMT use for young people who are ABSR?

- What are the negative experiences of SMT use for young people who are ABSR?

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Paradigm

A constructivist-interpretive research paradigm underpins the study; this recognises that the participant's construction of school refusal is subject to their interpretations (Mertens, 2014.) Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) suggest constructivist is explorative in nature and intends to understand the individual own interpretation of the world. Smith et al (2009) explain how Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) research involves a double hermeneutic which involves the researcher making sense of the individual who is also making sense of their experience. This involves exploring the lived experience of the participant and the researcher constructing their interpretation of the participant's interpretation (Smith et al, 2009). The only access that the researcher has to the experience is how the participant reports the experience (Smith et al, 2009).

Relativist ontology has been adopted in this study, with the belief that there are multiple constructions of reality. Along with a constructivist epistemology, taking the belief that reality is interpreted and there is no single truth.

The constructivist paradigm emphasises that a close relationship between the researchers and the participants could increase the validity of the data (Mertens, 2014). For example, if the researcher develops rapport and forms a relationship with the young people, they are more likely to reveal information and be more open to speaking about their experiences (Mertens, 2014). Smith et al (2009) explain how a relationship between the researcher and participant will allow the researcher to facilitate and support the participant to uncover their own story of the experience they had.

4.2 Participants

Participants were selected using a voluntary purposeful sample; this sampling involves participants being selected because they had experienced a particular phenomenon (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). In the case of this research, young people who had experience of ABSR. The decision was made by the author to seek participants attending a specialist education provision due to the aspect of anxiety present for all pupils. While there may have been other factors contributing to participant's school refusal behaviour, all pupils had a diagnosis of anxiety, in relation to their ability to access education provisions. This allowed for a focused view of school refusal which is often heterogeneous in nature. This was also seen to be the most effective way to access this group of participants, school refusers can be particularly difficult to access due to the social anxieties they are experiencing.

A gatekeeper letter was sent to four specialist school provision supporting anxious and phobic school refusers. Two specialist provision expressed interest in participating in the research, unfortunately, due to time constraints and the added difficulty of parental consent for both stages of participation, it was not possible to visit one provision. As a result, all pupils participating in the research attended the same provision. The next step included an information session for all pupils who attended the specialist school provision, explaining the research in more depth and giving information about what participation would involve. From this session pupils volunteered themselves if they wished to participate in the research, then parental

and pupil consent was obtained. While the researcher felt it would be beneficial to gain the perspectives of young people from more than one setting, all the participants attending one setting did provide an advantage. This allowed the researcher the opportunity to visit the setting on a number of occasions; with the ability to develop rapport and form relationships with the participant group which Mertens (2014) and Smith et al (2009) suggests can add to the depth of interview data.

The participant group was made up of 4 young people aged 14-15. These participants were defined as school refusers by the local authority and on the basis that their issues were related to the presentation of anxiety or school phobia as decided by the Inclusion Support Service professional working with the specialist school provision. All young people accessing the specialist provision had a medical diagnosis of anxiety. All participants needed to define themselves as users of social media.

Table 3

Demographic Characteristic of Pupil Participants

Name	Age	Gender	Time spent at Specialist provision	Anxiety Diagnosis	SEN Details	SMT platforms
Pupil Participant 1	14	M	1 year	Y	ASD referral	Messenger Snapchat Instagram PS4 Live
Pupil Participant 2	14	F	2 years	Y	A high functioning ASD diagnosis	Facebook, Messenger Snapchat Instagram
Pupil Participant 3	15	F	2 years	Y	ADHD diagnosis, ASD referral	Facebook, Messenger KIK

						Snapchat Instagram
Pupil Participant 4	14	M	1 year	Y	ALN ASD diagnosis	Facebook Messenger Snapchat Instagram Xbox Live

Note: ASD = Autism Spectrum Disorder. ADHD = Attention Deficit Hyperactivity
Disorder. ALN = Additional Learning Needs. Developed by Author.

Consistent with Smith et al (2009) recommendations from IPA a minimum of four
participants were interviewed, which is recommended for novice IPA researcher.

4.3 Procedure

All pupils attending the specialist provision were invited to attend a group
information session which provided them with information outlining the purpose of
the study and the interview process. Further detail was provided via a pupil and
parent information sheet (see Appendix 7). To ensure pupils did not feel obligated
to take part they were asked to complete a participation volunteer form, indicating
whether they were interested in taking part in the research (see Appendix 6).
Following this session for pupils who wanted to take part the relevant parent and
participant consent was obtained (see Appendix 8, 9 and 10).

Given the nature of the participant's difficulties, it was deemed important that the
young people were comfortable and supported during the interview process. Each
interview took place at the school provision the pupils attended during the school
day. A private classroom was provided to maintain confidentially and the young
person's key member of staff was available throughout the interviews.

Young people with anxiety may have found it difficult talking to an adult,
particularly one they were less familiar with. Taking this into consideration,

interviews were conducted in 2 parts; the first stage was an interview to develop a rapport with the young person (Mertens, 2014), this involved questions around young person's interests and social media activities. During this interview, a timeline activity was added where participants could use visual prompts, enabling pupils to feel more relaxed while providing a deeper understanding of their school refusal journey. The second stage involved a semi-structured interview, prompt questions and probes were included to gain further clarification or insight. Asking pupils to provide more information, to expand or gain more thought to the answered they had provided (Appendix 12).

The interview questions were aimed to encourage an open-ended discussion around the individual's experiences to encourage obtaining deeper quality. Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) state that open-ended interviews are the most likely to give insight into participants experience.

4.4 Data analysis

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was selected to analyse the interview data. IPA examines "*how people make sense of their major life experiences*" (Smith et al, 2009, p.1); it is concerned with "*detailed examination of human lived experience. Its aim is to conduct human lived experience examination in a way that enables the experience to be expressed in its own terms, rather than according to predefined category systems*" (p.33). IPA was chosen to provide a framework for the methodology and analysis, the research is exploratory in nature and interested in finding more about the unique experiences from the perspective of the young people, which fitted with IPA principles. This form of analysis not only accounts for the characteristics of individual participants and their own personal experiences but allows for exploration into the possible meaning behind these (Smith & Osborn, 2007). It was hoped that IPA would help generate knowledge about the experience of ABSR from the pupils and what impact SMT had during this time.

Creswell (2013) stated that IPA data analysis allows insights into the "*participants' views of the situation being studied*" (p.8). IPA allows focussing on an in-depth exploration of participant's experiences and the researcher's interpretation of these. IPA enables the researcher to make sense of the participant making sense of their experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2007). While Thematic Analysis (TA) was considered as a method of analysis, it was thought TA would not allow for the same depth of analysis into the participant's experience.

Analysis of the data followed the six stages of IPA as identified by Smith et al (2009) an overview of the process is presented in Table 3 below.

Table 4

The Six Stages of IPA

Stage of IPA	Action taken	Appendix
1) Reading and re-reading of the text/data	Auto-recording of the data was listed to a number of times, in an attempt to become immersed in the data. When transcriptions were completed the data was read and re-read.	
2) Initial noting	Initial noting was completed on the left side of the page for each in data set. Descriptive comments were completed in blue, linguistic comments were completed in pink and conceptual comments were completed in orange.	13A
3) Developing emergent themes	Themes from the comments were noted on the right side of the page	13A 13D
4) Searching for connections across emergent themes	All themes were transferred onto post-its notes (colour coded for each participant) and emergent themes were developed	13B

95

5) Moving to the next case	This was completed for each individual data set	
6) Looking for patterns across cases.	The post-its were analysed together and patterns within the	13C 13E
Re- 2) Further noting	Further noting was completed on the left side of the page with an outlook for further interpretation; these comments were added in black. Further notes were also taken at this point.	13A
Re-3) Re-Development of emergent themes	Using the themes already developed and the new comments, new themes were developed	13D 13F
Re- 4) Re-Searching for connections across emergent themes	Using the new themes, new connections were made and themes and super-ordinate themes were re-analysed and re-developed	13F 13G
Re- 5) Moving to the next case	This progress was completed again for each individual data set	
Re- 6) Re-Looking for patterns across cases.	Using the Master themes already developed and the new comments, new themes were developed	13E 13G

Note. IPA = Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. The author adapted from Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009.

Themes were developed for each data set from the pupil interviews and then grouped together to explore patterns across cases. To account for researcher subjectivity/bias which could result in the production of insufficient or weak theme development, data was analysed and re-examined a number of times and themes reframed and reconstructed to ensure analysis provided an appropriate presentation of the data sets.

5. Results

Data collected from 4 pupil participants was analysed and four master themes which are outlined in Figure 3. A further breakdown of which super-ordinate themes were present for each pupil can be found in Appendix 15, providing a rich overview of the data sets.

5.1 Pupil analysis

An IPA of the interview data collected from four pupil participants identified four super-ordinate themes; the experience of school, the self as a person, social connections and impacts of SMT use. Together with emergent themes identified within each super-ordinate theme, which are outlined in Figure 3 below.
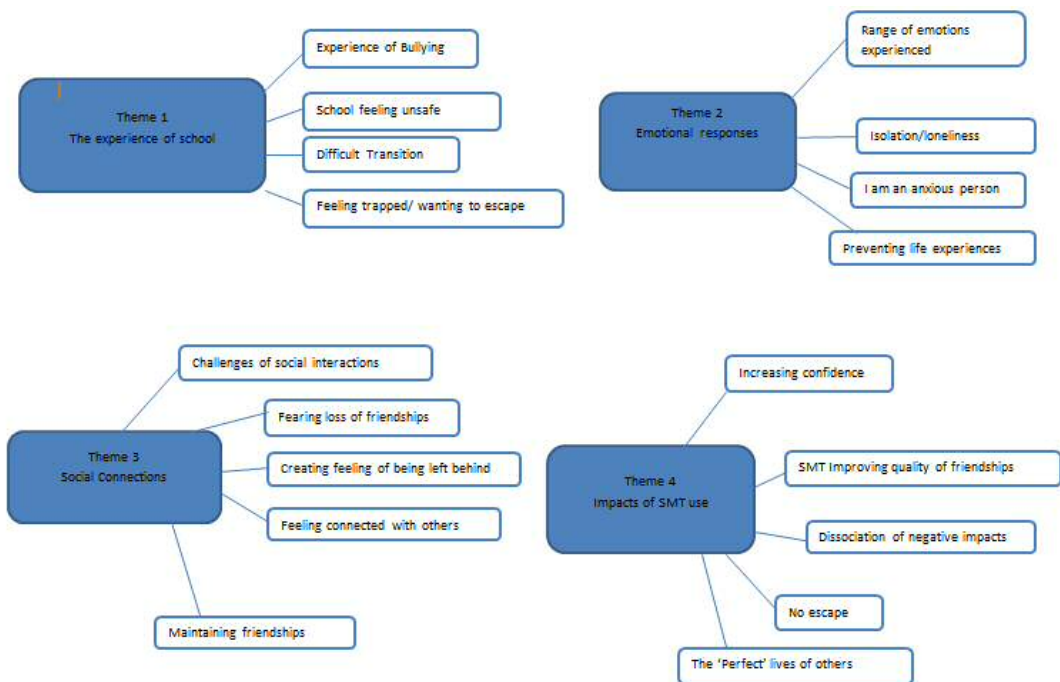
Figure 3 – Master group of Super-ordinate Themes and Themes for Pupil Participants

5.1.1 Super-ordinate Theme 1 – The experience of school

This theme concerns how pupil participants description of the overwhelming negative experience of school which ultimately resulted in their school refusal behaviour. School feeling unsafe, feeling trapped, difficult transitions to secondary school and the experience of bullying made up key aspects of the experiences pupils had in school. Although pupils had all received diagnosis of anxiety these themes regarding the impact of external factors and the school environment impacting on ABSR, corresponds with Lauchlan (2003) findings that a number of aspects from the social environment can contribute to ABSR behaviour.

Difficult transition

The transition from primary to secondary school felt like a significant change for PP1 and PP2 in regards to their views of school. Being safe in primary school is a feeling which comes through the data, with primary school being described as small and easy. PP2 described some difficulties with anxiety but not to the extent where ABSR was an issue. PP2 described the feeling of being able to manage the pressure of primary school before becoming overwhelmed with the different environment of her secondary school (see Table 3). A common theme was becoming overwhelmed with the new school environment and a strong triggering of feelings of anxiety. PP1 described feelings of secondary school being overwhelming and unexpected, the way he described the transition was the feeling out-of-control and his school-based anxiety being something that controlled him, he says how he "*couldn't attend*" implying that this decision was out of his control and wasn't as simple as something he chooses not to do.

Participant	Text	Page/line
PP2	primary school was pretty easy, … year 6 in the summer after I left Primary School my anxiety started to get really bad, and I was having panic attacks…I went to mainstream it just became difficult because I was always leaving class or not going in at all because of it	4.120-129

98

Participant	Text	Page/line
PP1	I come from a Small School … I wasn't expecting comp to be so big, and a kind of just, got over me	4.98
PP1	I couldn't really cope with the crowds …so I just, couldn't go. it was hard for me and then I couldn't attend	3.87-89

Table 5 – Supporting quotes from data for difficult transition theme

Although PP3 described love of learning she reported a different school experience to the other pupils. PP3 appeared to struggle to transition into all school environments, not just secondary school. PP3 described difficulty connecting with peers in school, struggled to be in school and to conform to social norms from the age of 3 years old. She sees herself as different from her peers at the specialist provision and doesn't associate herself as refusing school, however her words show ambivalence around this as she comments about not being able to go back to a mainstream provision and mainstream not being the right place for her. PP3 also reports days where she would choose not to go to school or to go home but didn't associate this as the same as the other pupils. Although PP3 does not describe the 'average' ABSR experience where she would refuse school for prolonged periods, it does fit with Kearney and Silverman (1990) definition where ABSR may be described as difficulties remaining in school.

Participant	Text	Page/line
PP3	I was 3 the first time I got excluded it was because I had bumped heads with someone… I just couldn't understand…there was nobody at fault	5.175-189
PP3	I am different to a lot of people here because like a lot of them have had time out (of school)	2.50-51
PP3	like obviously wanted to be back, but I knew……. but I couldn't…if it had been a possibility it wouldn't have been the right choice…it just would have made my life harder	14.638-643
PP3	I'd had enough that day…. if I'm struggling I can go, …I could	2.58-65

go home…I could always stay in school because I, I'd like lose
control and then be excluded

School feeling unsafe

Another theme was feelings of school being unsafe. Pupils described wanting to
escape from school or feeling uneasy while there. PP4 reported feeling afraid in
school, he often repeats phases a few times, for example, "*I'd try, I'd try*" this gives
the feeling that whatever he tried didn't work and a feeling of being stuck with no
way of changing.

Participant	Text	Page/line
PP1	(Home) felt calm and relaxing, coz in school It was like out of my comfort zone	4.96
PP4	Everyday I was scared trying to find ways to get out of it (school)	1.16
	In my old school…I'd try, I'd try to find ways to get out of it	3.76
	I used to be scared of the doors…of being trapped in a small space	7.235-236
PP4	like in my old school, I was afraid, and I'd try, I'd try to find ways to get out of it	3.76

Table 7 – Supporting quotes from data for school feeling unsafe theme

Feeling trapped/ wanting to escape

With the feeling of being unsafe in school, PP1, PP2 and PP4 all described the
feeling of wanting to escape school when they did attend. For PP4 in particular, the
feelings of classroom not having enough doors for him to get out and commented
on a number of occasions about trying to "*get out*" (see Table 6). It is possible that
this was an impact of the anxiety he was experiencing in school. While PP2

commented that she liked attending the specialist provision, she mentioned that it can feel enclosed. It is possible that this is related to her still seeing the specialist provision as a school and occasionally the anxiety may transfer over to her new education provision.

Participant	Text	Page/line
PP1	(school) was quite boisterous in a way and it just didn't work....get my head away from it	4.117-118
PP4	Everyday I was scared trying *to find ways to get out of it* (school)	1.16
	In my old school…I'd try, I'd try to find ways to get out of it	
	I used to be scared of the doors…of being trapped in a small space	3.76
		7.235-236
PP2	there's not a lot of freedom, can feel a bit enclosed sometimes (specialist provision)	2.63-65

Table 8 – Supporting quotes from data for feeling trapped/ wanting to escape theme

Experience of bullying

For PP4 the feeling of school feeling unsafe and wanting to escape were often associated with the experience of bullying, this theme was evident for all 4 pupils, and contributed to their experience of school. Pupils reported mild to extreme bullying which eventually contributed to school refusal. Pupils described experiences where acts of physical violence had resulted in hospitalisation and experiences of peers antagonising pupils to get reactions. What did stand out was the interpretation of the bullying pupils experienced. PP1 and PP2 reported their perceptions of bullying as questions asked, often by friends, via SMT about their return to school. PP1 and PP2 felt uncomfortable answering these questions but rather than bullying this may be their own interpretation. This could also be viewed as the pupils not wishing to share their experience of bullying within the interview.

PP2 did speak about her experience of bullying in terms of it being bad and feeling unable to stick up for herself, but when prompted further on her bullying experience she kept her comments brief.

Participant	Text	Page/line
PP1	and people would sometimes be, like nasty to me, it's just like, why didn't you come into school…Like some of my mates…they were trying to push me back into school and they weren't being very nice about it	3.88 7.202-206
PP2	bullying, that was quite bad, just like, I thought like I could get away from school I wouldn't stand up for myself…when troubles did start happening, I couldn't stick up for myself	8.293 4.151-154
PP2	it was definitely and the disadvantage as to why I left, because of the people who are bullying me on SMT	9.347-349
PP3	I had been going to the teachers and then I was being bullied more because I was going to the teachers. so I didn't go to the teachers then…the girls that will bullying me, when I would react, they would then go down and say P has done this	3.77-82
PP4	you see I got bullied a lot in my old school, like in the end it ended up, a kid knocked me out so I ended up leaving the school … everyday, everyday I was scared trying to find ways to get out of it, and it just scared me a lot, in my old school	1.12-17

Table 9 – Supporting quotes from data for experience of bullying theme

PP3 and PP4 describe very different experiences, within their accounts being more excessive verbal and physical bullying. PP3 has a feeling of resentment and feels that she was pushed to leave school but her bullies were able to stay. PP3 felt like the experience resulted in her losing her education while the lives of the girls who bullied her haven't had to change. PP3 described how through SMT her bullying experience is still affecting her, she comments on SMT allowing her to keep

messages, she is then reliving the bullying she has experienced by re-reading the messages. This action appears to confirm the negative feeling she has of herself. PP4 describes how the physical bullying he experiences, ultimately led to his ABSR behaviour. Although his parents made the final decision to remove him from school, this appears to be a relief for him, removing the need to escape. PP4 presents a school experience which was full of fear and anxiety. This finding supports research by Havik, Bru and Erstesvag (2015) who found that relationships with peers are risk factors for ABSR behaviour. For PP3 and PP4, it appeared that a factor in their ABSR was the difficulties they experienced with social interactions with peers. They both described experiences of bullying which had some traumatic outcomes, which appeared to result in a fear of being in school.

5.1.2. Super-ordinate theme 2 – Emotional Responses

This theme represented the emotional responses to the difficulties participants experienced throughout their ABSR and how these responses impacted on them as a person. All pupils discussed the impact which their anxiety had on their ability to attend school and engage with friends.

I am an anxious person

All children who attend the specialist provision had a diagnosis of anxiety; the experience of anxiety comes through the data as a common theme impacting on a pupil's ABSR behaviour. 3 pupils describe their anxiety being separate to themselves and often indicated that they felt as though the anxiety was controlling their reactions and school refusal, for PP1 and PP2 especially.

Participant	Text	Page/line
PP1	I couldn't really cope with the crowds … so I just, couldn't go. it was hard for me and then I couldn't attend	3.87-89

| PP2 | that's something that always triggered my anxiety is big crowds, so that was a problem being in a huge school with a lot of people, | 4.146-148 |
| | I first started getting like, proper panic attacks, my mum just thought that …I was getting overwhelmed. | 5.186-194 |

Table 10 – Supporting quotes from data I am an anxious person theme

Interestingly PP1 and PP2 anxiety appeared to develop through their transition into secondary school and factors within the school environment, these pupils reported less external factors affecting their ABSR, other than their experience of anxiety. PP1 and PP2 viewed other difficulties they experienced in school as secondary and as a result of their anxiety. Pupils individual themes such as being overwhelmed by the feelings of anxiety and it preventing them engaging in everyday activities were present within the data. For PP3 and PP4, anxiety appeared to develop though their difficult experiences with peers. Bullying developed as a stronger theme for PP3 and PP4 as impacting on their anxiety and ABSR.

Preventing life experiences

It appears that PP1, PP2 and PP3 all felt that their anxiety impacted on all areas of their lives, including their ability to attend school. PP2 described a disruption to family life, although PP2 appeared to be controlled by her anxiety at the time the research was carried out, the emotional responses of guilt due to the feeling that her family were also missing out on experiences because of her anxiety were present. Themes such as being helpless to being able to make changes or prevent their anxieties were common for the pupils especially during the time spent at home when refusing school. PP3 described how even 2 years on, she struggles to do 'normal' things such as go shopping or for food. Although bullying may have been the original cause it appears that now her anxiety about possibly seeing the bullies continues to prevent her from doing these things.

Participant	Text	Page/line
PP2	I just felt like I was... ruining stuff for my family, which was just making me more upset, and it just kind of made it all worse, yeah it just made me feel like really bad about myself	6.205-208
PP3	I still struggle like going out sometimes…I struggle if I go to McDonald's because that's like we're a lot of kids hangout…I like get on edge. And if I like have to, go out like around town, it's really hard …2 years and everybody's like they probably forgotten about you, but that doesn't make it any easier for me	15.709-716
PP1	It was hard for me and then I couldn't attend (school)	3.89

Table 11 – Supporting quotes from data for preventing life experiences theme

Isolation/Loneliness

With anxiety often impacting on time spent with family and friends, isolation and loneliness was a theme for a number of the pupils. It appeared that all pupils wanted to experience social connection with others. Pupils spoke as if they felt this was not a possibility during periods of ABSR, with anxiety and fear of being asked about their school refusal, preventing them from doing this. The anxiety they experienced was affecting their ability to make the changes that they desperately wanted. PP1 and PP2 described not being able to let their friends know what was wrong, which often led to isolating themselves to avoid talking about the problems they were experiencing. This also related to the theme, no escape, and was discussed as a negative effect of SMT and feeling unable to hide from friends, which again caused them to isolate themselves further by not interacting online. This felt as though this may have linked back to the bullying PP1 and PP2 experienced or their perceptions of this.

Participants	Text	Page/line
PP3	and your just alone all the time, then you can get lonely	14.670-671

Participant	Text	Page/line
PP1	because my anxiety sometimes I wouldn't be able to go out of the house with my friends	7.214-215
PP2	I didn't really do much…I just kind of, stayed at home all day, I stayed in bed, I watch TV, I didn't really talk to anyone … the only days I would leave the house was on a Monday when I had therapy	6.228-234

Table 12 – Supporting quotes from data for isolation/loneliness theme

For PP3 and PP4 isolation had a stronger link with their difficulties with social interaction and their perceptive difficulties with maintaining friendships.

Range of emotions experienced

While discussing their personal experiencing of ABSR, a number of emotional responses emerged from all participants, in particular PP2 and PP3. When the researcher explored the data for emergent themes (see Appendix 13.A) a number of emotions were identified. These included feelings such as being overwhelmed, helplessness, worthlessness, frustration, guilt and shame. It is possible these were emotions felt as they remembered periods of school refusal. It seems that these emotions are primarily negative, implying ABSR is not something that was enjoyable for the pupils. While Kearney and Silverman (1990) suggest that young people may enjoy the reward experiences from being at home, this theme would suggest that for the pupils, the home provides comfort from these emotions rather than being an enjoyable experience. PP1 and PP4 reported the experience of being able to play gaming consoles while at home. PP1 especially identified this as a way of doing something rather than nothing, the data indicate that PP1 is filling time rather than refusing school to stay at home due to enjoyment (see Table 12).

Participant	Text	Page/line
PP4	I'm the kid who doesn't it back, I was considered an easy target	2.39-43

Participant	Text	Page/line
PP3	my mum probably didn't want me. and like, I've had a lot of issues with my dad…so I was just like well he doesn't want me and she doesn't want me	2.69-72
PP2	When I started (secondary) school and I was having my panic attacks, it was pretty difficult cos I just come home crying or upset	5.201-202

Table 13 – Supporting quotes from data for range of emotions experienced theme

Participant	Text	Page/line
PP1	At home..in the morning I'd probably do some work, and then on the PlayStation, 2 hours work and then the PlayStation. And then the afternoon would be the same	5.131-132

Table 14 – Supporting quotes from data for range of emotions experiences theme

5.1.3 Super-ordinate theme 3 –Social Connections

Connection with others developed as a prominent theme for all 4 pupils, both from the feeling of disconnection experienced as a result of their ABSR behaviour and the feelings of connection with others provided by SMT. The majority of the pupils described how issues related to the social connection with peers had been a feature of their ABSR experience. PP3 and PP4 experienced more of a struggle with peer relationships which they reported ultimately led to their ABSR. PP1 and PP2 on the other hand originally feared the loss of friendship that ABSR could cause. This finding supports Havik et al (2015) who implied that peer relationships were a risk factor associated with ABSR.

Challenges of social interactions

With all pupils either having a diagnosis for ASD or a referral to explore this, experiencing difficulties around face-to-face interactions was common for all pupils. They explained how social interactions via SMT were more comfortable; they felt it

removed the pressure felt while speaking to someone in person. Pupils expressed feelings around SMT providing them with the time they need to respond and how they were able to control the interactions they had with other people. PP1 commented that when he builds up a relationship online he finds the in-person interaction easier to manage.

This difficulty with peer relationship is clear for PP3 and PP4. PP3 reported difficulties understanding social interaction from a young age. PP3 explains how she struggled to understand social norms. With the number of schools she attends, along with her views that she is different from her peers at the specialist school provision, feelings of not belonging anywhere, including within her own family are apparent. PP4 wants friendships with peers but doesn't know how to go about these interactions. He describes trying to make friends but what he tries doesn't work.

Participant	Text	Page/line
PP1	on the PS4, say I'm playing with my mate I could meet his friends that are Friends…if you didn't know them then you can become friends cos we've spoke to them	7.234-237
	if it was like in person I'd struggle a bit then…where online it's a lot easier because I can just speak to them and when they speak back it's much easier for me	8.245-249
PP2	I feel like people judge me and even though I guess people can comment on social media it's like, I can't see them and like they're not actually saying it to me I can just read the comment ignore it and just move on,	10.382-388
PP3	like it's just I don't get on with people	13.588
PP4	I didn't have any friends from then on. I did try to make some friends	6.201-202
	It was bad because I didn't have too many friends.	7.251-255

Often feeling as if they don't fit in with their peers, pupils report how SMT use allows them to feel connected in a way that feels comfortable for them. The link with all pupils having an association with ASD was not something that the research set out to explore, but something that was discovered after interviews with participants had taken place. However, this link does fit in with the literature around school refusal and ASD appearing to be closely associated (Tyson & Cruses, 2012).

This could explain why all pupils found social interactions in some way difficult and why it came through as a very prominent theme. While all pupils described that social interaction was important to them, PP3 and PP4 found social interactions difficult to understand. PP3 and PP4 mentioned that peers didn't tend to like them and they had difficulty manoeuvring their way through the complexities of friendships. PP1 and PP2 described how their friends were important to them and that losing friends was an added worry to their ABSR. They also described how they found making new friends difficult and often brought on feelings of anxiety. The distress that pupils with ASD present in relation to their school environment and social interactions indicate they have a higher risk of displaying ABSR, as suggested by Preece and Howley (2018).

Feeling connected with others

All pupils described how SMT allowed them to have some form of social connections with other people while being out of school. Often the anxiety they experience prevented them from socialising with peers often restricting them to their home and experiencing distress when they tried. All four participants described how SMT allowed them to connect with other people at a time when they couldn't do this physically. PP1 and PP2 describe how SMT enabled friendship to continue to develop while they were absent from school. One could also assume from PP1 that SMT might have been re-enforcing his ABSR, SMT allowed him to have the peer interaction he was missing when not attending school. PP2 described

her anxiety as isolating her from the world, She repeats the word 'contact' a number of times, it is possible she saw SMT as superficial contact, but that SMT is the next best thing due to her anxieties were preventing that in-person social connection.

Participant	Text	Page/line
PP1	yeah, a lot my friends I stayed in contact with (via SMT) from there…I have a lot of friends, mates from being here.	4.108-110
PP2	on Snapchat I mainly use it for talking to my friend's, so I'm friends with people here and I have friends from my old school and I used to do gymnastics, so that's like my main contact with my friends is on Snapchat	3.78-81
PP3	I only really used Facebook to talk to like, my family… Snapchat I used to communicate…I had a couple of mates, I had 3, but then Instagram I just used to... like…. see what people were doing. hummm…. Socialising. Because I don't go out in the evening	12.543-550 12.558
PP4	I use it (SMT) just to be silly with my friends	5.166

Table 16 – Supporting quotes from data for feeling connected with others theme

Maintaining friendships

Another positive theme emerging from the data in association with SMT was the ability to maintain friendships with peers from school. PP1 and PP2 reported fear around losing their friendship group when they left school but were able to maintain and build on these friendships through SMT use. It appears as if PP1 and PP2 feel that outcomes for them would have been worse if they had lost their friendships as a result of their ABSR.

PP3 had a different experience of friendships, it appears if her peer group is primarily online, she comments on her friendship group and corrects herself to stay 'actually I had 3'. In person she struggles to interact with her peers, she perceives

herself as not belonging anywhere and feels like a target that peers wind up and think it's funny.

Participant	Text	Page/line
PP1	like message you my friends means a lot…with social media and messaging them, speaking to them, it's made me like best mates with them now.	6.164-167
PP2	staying in contact with friend…so that I didn't feel completely alone…even if I couldn't go in (to school)	7.269-272
	it made me feel happy to feel like I could stay out of school when I needed to but then I would still have them there.	7.275-281
PP3	Snapchat I used to communicate…but it had a couple of mates… I had 3	12.547-549

Table 17 – Supporting quotes from data for maintaining friendships theme

Fearing loss of friendships

While pupils reported that through SMT they were able to maintain their peer relationships, from the data it was felt that losing friendships with peers as a result of not attending school was something that they were afraid of. Without the physical contact with friends at school, PP1 and PP2 described worries of the friendships being forgotten. PP1 and PP2 described how SMT provided that connection while they struggled to attend school and how SMT provided participants with some support through periods of ABSR. PP2 said that she felt things would have been worse without the connection with her friends. PP3, on the other hand, described how she felt left out of her friendship group and indicated this was because she wasn't attending school. PP3 described how SMT gave her the ability to see when friends had left her out; this was identified by Twenge (2017)

who described how SMT can make young people acutely aware of being left out increasing feelings of loneliness.

Participant	Text	Page/line
PP1	when I left school I thought I might not… be their friend again	6.165
PP2	if I lost contact with them (friends), like, I wouldn't have been in contact with anyone probably and I know it would have made me feel a lot worse.	7.279-281
PP3	I'm guessing for a lot more the people like me, who would have said, yeah like I'm in a friendship group… you get a message like or do you want to hang out , and they'll be like on no one busy tonight or no im ill…you look on maps and see that all your mates were hanging out together without you	16.756-761

Table 18 – Supporting quotes from data for fearing loss of friendship theme

Creating feelings of being left behind

This linked to the theme, creating feelings of being left behind. Although PP3 feels that she doesn't have strong connections with peers SMT has enhanced the feeling of left behind and forgotten about because of their ABSR. Interesting both female participants verbalised feelings of feeling left behind from friendship groups. Although not doing this intentionally, friends posting thing on SMT often made them feel as though they were missing out and felt excluded from their friendship group. For PP3, SMT made her more aware of what she was missing and her feelings around being excluded from her friendship group more prominent. These feelings experienced by the PP3 link with Baumeister and Leary (1995) theory that adolescents need to belong and maintain significant peer relationships (cited in Beyens et al, 2016). Beyens et al (2016) defined the term FOMO which could be an explanation for PP3 wanting to continue SMT use despite implying that she was upset by feeling outside of her friendship group as a result of her school absence. PP3 indicated that SMT was the only way for her to be a part of her friendship group while not attending school (see Table 17).

112

Participant	Text	Page/line
PP2	it did make me upset seeing my friends who were still at school and doing well and going out with their friends, And then I wouldn't be able to do that cos of my anxiety, so..yeah it was something that like, really did upset me	8.295-299
PP3	I started to find it difficult again when I got my phone, cos like from my friendship group and stuff, they would like post videos at lunch and like on their stories and stuff an it was just like… I'm not there…like obviously wanted to be back, but I knew I couldn't. You're keeping in touch with people…if you don't talk to people	14.635-641 14.668

Table 19 – Supporting quotes from data for feeling left behind theme

5.1.4 Super-ordinate theme 4 – Impact of SMT use

A number of themes within social connection related to how SMT has influenced social interaction for the ABSR population. Other factors which positively and negatively influenced pupils can be explained by the super-ordinate theme: the impact of SMT use and how this related to the experience of ABSR.

Increased confidence

Both PP1 and PP2 suggested that the confidence increase they had experienced was as a result of SMT allowing them to be the person they wanted to be, without the in-person pressure they often felt (see Table 18). The ability to remain unseen giving them confidence to things they wanted to do. PP2 has feelings of being able to put her ABSR behind her due to this newly developed confidence, learning more about transferring her experiences of SMT into in-person interactions.

Participant	Text	Page/line

PP1	*Probe question: can you explain more about how you find making friends and expressing yourself of SMT?*	8.244
	when I get to know them (friends online) and start speaking to them and I can come out of my shell	8.247
	when I left school, I wasn't in the best place but now I have come out of my skin, because of that (SMT) and I still see my friends.	6.189-192
PP2	I like posting pictures and people liking it…it makes me feel good about myself	7.257
	probably like last couple of months I really started to not care about what people think and just like do what I want, and before that, I was just like not put in anything up or posting a lot because I think is that will like worth posting I didn't because I wanted people not to judge me, yes so just like very recently I've just started doing what they want and being who I wanna be	10.291-397

Table 20 – Supporting quotes from data increased confidence theme

SMT improving quality of friendships

Hill and Zheng (2017) reported that in-person social interactions can be reduced by SMT use. Taking into account the anxieties experienced by this group of pupils, one could assume that their social interaction could be limited use to SMT from their non-attendance at school. However, from the data PP1, PP2 and PP4 indicate the opposite, they described how SMT not only enabled them to maintain friendships but often led to strong friendships. PP1 and PP2 both described how SMT allowed the ability to control their responses online and think around the social interaction, without having to worry about the face-to-face social interaction. PP1 and PP2 felt that as a result SMT improved the quality of their friendships. PP4 described that even though a friend moved away, they were still able to remain in contact via SMT and build on their friendship. It appears that this friendship, in particular, was important to him as he often speaks of the challenges he faces with social interactions and making friends.

Participant	Text	Page/line
PP1	like messaging my friends means a lot…with social media and messaging them…it's made me like best mates with them now. so it's better in a way social media has done that	6.164-167
PP2	The first step was.. starting on social media and being who I wanted to be on there because it was easier than in real life…that give me the confidence to be around people…and make more friends	10.408-412
PP4	Well a friend of mine went to live (away), then we became best friends… on snapchat	10.355-360

Table 21 – Supporting quotes from data for SMT improving the quality of friendships theme

No escape

Interestingly, the pupils who reported positive SMT used as the most beneficial for remaining connected with friends perceived this connection more negatively in the early stages of ABSR. PP1 stated that SMT allowed friends to pressure them into coming back to school and saw this as reinforcing their school refusal behaviour. At the time PP1 and PP2 were reluctant to tell their friends about the difficulties they were facing regarding school. This suggests an element of shame around there ABSR, wanting to avoid friends and the awkward questions they may have been asked. SMT made pupils accessible to the friends they are hoping to avoid by not attending school.

Participant	Text	Page/line
PP1	like, why didn't you come into school, and people trying to push me back in, Like some of my mates now didn't know what was wrong with me coz I didn't tell them, and they were trying to push me back into school	7.202-206
PP2	I left (school) I didn't tell anyone what was going on, I didn't even mention like now that I was going to a new school like no one even knew it was going to be leaving and they didn't know	8.304-313

what or why. so it's just like one day I didn't show up...all my friends were like trying to figure out what was going on and would contact me...talking to each other about what was going on...cos I didn't want to tell them and they knew they were talking about it anyway

Cyberbullying was also suggested as something that pupils could not escape from when using SMT. This was reported by both female participants. Pupils assumed that by leaving school the bullying would stop, PP2 and PP3 reported feelings suggesting they felt as if there was no escape from bullying. PP3 reported vicious comments from peers such as 'go kill yourself' (see Table 21). Both reported that the continuation of bullying via SMT added to ABSR behaviour and prevented re-engagement at school.

Participant	Text	Page/line
PP2	Bullying that was quite bad...I thought like I could get away from school, to get away from all that, but it was always still online anyway even if I was out of school.	8.292-299
PP3	people who like adding me to groups chats and stuff...just like talking about me, if I left they just like add me back. so there was this one where hummm, where people said they'd wish I'd been tasered and that, they were like just been really horrible and saying like, that nobody likes me and I have no friends, that I'm a massive screw up and that's why my dad doesn't want anything to do with me...it did make things like really hard	15.692-698
	one of them..she was telling me to go kill myself	
		15.701

Table 23 – Supporting quotes from data for no escape theme

Dissociation of negative impacts

PP1 described this as an example of a disadvantage of using SMT but never implied that these comments were ever made direct to him. With the two pupils who had more positive perception of SMT dissociation from the self was present when discussing the negatives, with pupils tending to use the third person. Interestingly PP2 refers back to the first person at the end 'it can make you feel worse about yourself ' (see Table 22), possibly meaning that this is something she has experienced herself.

Participant	Text	Page/line
PP1	get hate messages and someone may like act on the hate message…or go like very wrong and in some cases people have like said what they've done, and like killed themselves	6.196-198
PP2	people feeling bad about…then if there is somebody who is going through something, whether it's depression or whatever…they feel as if everyone is so amazing, how everyone is having a great life and they just stuck, I probably say that's quite bad and it can make you feel a bit worse about yourself	8.318-327

Table 24 – Supporting quotes from data for dissociation of negative impacts theme

Impacts on self; seeing the 'perfect' lives of others

Another finding from data provided by the female participants was the impact of seeing other peoples 'perfect lives' on SMT and how this impacted on their own wellbeing and self-worth. There is a feeling that pupils feel their life is not enough and want to be more like the friends they see on SMT. This can often negatively impact on mental health and often adolescents believe that what they see online is reality. Usually people only post the best and most exciting aspects of their life (Twenge, 2017). This also supports Twenge's (2017) results which suggest that adolescents are now acutely aware when they are missing out. PP2 reported how

117

by seeing what she is missing out on via SMT, she has feelings of not having any friendships and feels that she is alone what seems like all the time. The boys did not relate to these feelings.

Participant	Text	Page/line
PP2	on social media people don't put bad things about the life, they don't post about what's going on in what's upsetting them. they only posted what's good and then make it seem as though their life is amazing, then if there is somebody who is going through something, whether it's depression or whatever, if they see that it can be quite upsetting, they feel as if everyone is so amazing, how everyone is having a great life and they just stuck	8.318-326
PP3	there's the whole, people who put everything that's going positively and then when people are feeling negative, they, you just look on and you're like…right, ok. everyone's got that perfect life	16.752-754

Table 25 – Supporting quotes from data for the 'perfect' lives of others theme

6.   Discussion

6.1 Research Questions

The research originally set out to explore young people's experiences of SMT impact during periods of ABSR, looking at the overall experiences, as well as the specific positives and negatives. The findings in relation to these elements are considered below.

6.2 Impact of SMT

For the pupils whose anxieties were related to the school environment (PP1 and PP2), more positive associations with SMT were highlighted and dissociations of the negative impacts were noted. They saw SMT as a way of connecting with friends they were unable to see in school, while PP1 and PP2 show some ambivalence

towards SMT being a way for peers to contact them. Initially, they both felt that SMT played a positive part in helping them maintain friendships and social connections. PP3 and PP4 whose anxieties were related to difficulties with peers also found social interaction more difficult via SMT and were more likely to experience negative SMT outcomes, PP4 didn't view SMT as an important factor in his life often presenting with a 'could live without' it attitude and using SMT to have fun. PP3 however, reported high SMT use but struggled to find any positive association with SMT. Themes for PP3 included consuming thinking, being left behind, isolation, not belonging and cyberbullying. These findings imply that the impact of SMT is also diverse within ABSR and was often related to other presenting factors within their life.

An outcome that was consistent with finding by Twenge et al (2018) and Beyens et al (2016), was the apparent significant impact of SMT on girls compared to boys. Girls described how they were able to see friends in school via social media and how this made them feel they were missing out and left behind by friends. They both also highlighted how the perfect lives other people portrayed, often impacted on their anxieties during times of difficulty, making them feel worse. Boys reported positive impacts around the social aspect of online gaming, PP1 and PP4 reported how gaming strengthened friendships and interactions with the specialist provision and enabled them to gain confidence when communicating with others. These findings are consistent with the often contradictory outcome from SMT (Hill & Zheng, 2017; RSPH, 2017).

6.3 ABSR experience

This research also highlighted the diverse nature of ABSR, how each experience of ABSR is based on individual factors unique to the young person, as suggested by Miller(2008) and Elliot and Place (2019). While PP1 and PP2 were both affected by anxieties from the school environment, PP3 and PP4 ABSR behaviour developed from difficulties which were related to peer relationships. Risk factors found to be associated with ABSR related to the experiences of the pupils within this study. The

unique experiences highlighted may also explain the recent findings by Elliot and Place (2019) that "*little substantial advance in knowledge*" (p. 4) of school refusal treatment has been found in the last 10 years. This may indicate that the treatment of one CYP may not be effective for another.

The uniqueness of each participant experience was evident throughout the data, while PP1's experience of ABSR appeared to be linked to his difficult transition into secondary school, he discussed how he was able to socialise with his friends outside the school environment. PP2 also explained how her ABSR was linked to her transition into secondary school, but for PP2, this affected all areas of her life and she described being unable to leave the house. PP3 described how she didn't associate herself as a school refuser, explaining how she loved learning. PP3 feels that her anxiety and non-attendance at school was the result of the bullying she experienced. However, PP3 also described her difficulty staying in school and 'leaving' when school became 'too much'. PP4 explained high levels of anxiety, including fear of doors and windows within the classroom. PP4 described how although he found school difficult, the reason for his ABSR was because of bullying experienced at school. While all participants had a diagnosis of anxiety, their experiences all involve social and environmental factors that can be supported within education.

6.4 Principles of causality

Thinking about the experience of this particular participant group, there are questions generated on causality, the principle that everything has an effect (Oxford Living Dictionaries, n.d). Haralambos and Holborn (1999) described how causality explains the relationship between cause and effect, suggesting that one is causing the other to take place. Drawing on the theory of causality it may be postulated that while anxiety might be the effect, the causes for all participants were factors relating to the school environment (difficult transitions and experiences of bullying). Elliot and Place (2019) suggest that treatment of ABSR sees the anxiety as its cause. This research suggests that support should be focused

within the school environments which could be the cause of the anxieties experienced, rather than the CYPs anxiety.

6.5 Ecological Systems theory

The data highlighting complexity of ABSR can also be seen to link with the different levels of Bronfenbrenner (1979) ecological systems theory and how these systems can support during periods of ABSR. Within microsystem, it was identified how the family can be a supportive factor for young people. PP3 describes how her mum had stressed the importance of education and how she would have missed more school if her mother hadn't put an emphasis on the importance of school. PP1 and PP2 mentioned that they had come from small primary schools and found transition into secondary school difficult. This implies that the mesosystem can be an important factor and indicates how different systems in the microsystem can work together to provide a protective factor. PP1, PP2 and PP4 all identified the importance of the specialist provision in supporting them to manage their ABSR. While the pupils were all engaging in education at the provision, all 4 participants commented that they still felt unable to return to their mainstream school. These findings are consistent with Nuttall and Woods (2013) who found the family and the school systems were both important factors of successful reintegration into school.

6.6 Academic abilities

There has been contradictory evidence in previous research around the impact of learning on ABSR; earlier research suggests that there has been no link between ABSR and academic ability. Berg (1996) suggested there was no link; however more current research by Fernando and Perera (cited in Elliot & Place, 2019) found that "*low functioning was a prominent complaint*" (p. 6). Although this did not emerge as a theme within the data, all four pupils stated that school work was not a factor adding to their ABSR, PP3 stated, for her, school work was the most important aspect of school.

6.7 Associations with ASD

One finding that was unexpected was the link all pupils had with ASD, this is consistent with findings that this particular group of CYP are at higher risk of ABSR (Tyson & Cruess, 2012; Munkaugen et al, 2017a; Munkaugen et al, 2017b; Preece & Howley, 2018). It is possible that ASD factors had influenced their ABSR behaviours particular given that transitions to secondary school and social interactions with peers were highlighted as key aspects. Previous research has suggested that the ASD diagnosis could also influence the impact of SMT (Shane & Albert, 2008; Mazurek & Wenstrup, 2008). All pupils suggested that they find SMT interaction easier and discussed how this often had positive influences on the abilities to interact in-person; these findings are consistent with Van Schalkwyk et al (2017).

Acknowledging the unique experience of young people was consistent with the data. This is supportive of previous research by Baker and Bishop (2015) suggesting that young people experiencing ABSR need unique interventions that are specifically designed to meet the individual needs of the CYP. The nature of the ABSR behaviour appears to impact the way pupils used and viewed SMT. While positive impacts of social connections were identified, the majority of pupils suggested that SMT did not provide an escape from the more negative social experiences they had had when attending school.

7. Summary

7.1 Limitations and Future Research

7.1.1 Limitations of research

Although consistent with the IPA approach, 4 participants is a small sample group. The research remains an exploration of the individual experiences of these particular participants. Whilst exploring the aspect of how SMT is impacting on

these young people during this time, it limited the richness of the experience of ABSR specifically.

Recruitment was a particular issue, due to the nature of the anxieties experienced by these young people they can be a particularly difficult group to access. It is important to note that although participants had all been classed as school refusing due to anxiety. All pupils were attending some kind of school provision, staff from the setting suggested that the pupils who participated in the study were the pupils who were able to positively managing their anxieties; this may have impacted on the findings generated.

This sample group of participants is missing the voice of CYP who are currently withdrawn from education due to the anxiety they are experiencing. This group of young people can be difficult to access, as they are often disengaged from school and services. This particular group of CYP could include some who may not be even leaving their bedrooms, for whom SMT may be their only form of interaction with peers, so CYP who may some different experiences from the subject group .

7.1.2 Future research

Future research

While it is hoped that this account gives more of an insight into the factors which affect school refusal, the focus was on the use of SMT. SMT is a current concern due to the statistics which highlight how prevalent SMT use is for CYP. While there is research being done on SMT, the long-term impact that this can have in later life is still unknown, with today's youth being the first generation not to know what life was like without SMT (Twenge, 2017).

Studies with a focus solely on the experience of the school refusal are still limited within the literature. Due to the extent of the anxiety experienced by these young people and the vast factors which could contributing to ABSR, further research is important to understand more about these experiences from the CYP's perspective.

A number of potential research areas were highlighted, with the experience of school refusal being unique to the individual, and treatment outcomes remaining low for the school refusal population (Elliot and Place, 2019). Research within education could work on the development of tailor-made interventions based on the experience and needs of the CYP, then researching the impacts for school refusers could be the next step.

With links found between how SMT can influence the school refusal experience; research could further explore further other impacting factors, for example, the impact of peer relationships, parent-child relationship or bullying, to provide a richer picture of what factors contribute to ABSR. This could provide professionals with more knowledge about how to support ABSR; causes and interventions can be developed to support increased outcomes for these CYP. With the participants from this study all having links with ASD, this could be explored on a wider scale. Qualitative data could be gathered exploring the ABSR population and how ASD presents within this population.

7.2 Implications for educational psychology practice

Results from this study suggest that although pupils all had anxiety diagnosis, the anxiety had developed from a factor related to the school environment. This could be taken forward by EPs to improve schools' understanding of school refusal behaviour and encouraging them to be more inclusive environments for CYP who may be vulnerable to school refusal behaviour.
Elliot and Place (2019) suggested that EPs are still used to assess low functioning in relation to school refusal behaviour. Although, as yet, there is not any research that suggests a link with social refusal and academic abilities, so possibly an EP could be more effective by moving school-based work away from the cognitive assessment based approach to school refusal.

The current research on treatment shows little success for school refusers. Baker and Bishop (2015) indicated that EPs are rarely involved at the early stages of ABSR;

involvement with professionals is more often with those from adolescent mental health services or LA Attendance services. An EP could take on a much more preventative role through becoming involved at the earliest stages, and exploring initial concerns from the CYPs point of view, ensuring their voice is heard. EPs are well placed within schools to encourage development of more preventative strategies and the tailoring of interventions to meet the needs of the individual and their context. This would begin the move away from the within child medical model applied by the health professionals, which is often associated with school refusal.

Given that health care professionals may be involved, EPs are also ideally placed within the local authority to develop a cohesive multi-agency way of working for ABSR. EPs are able to consider the educational implications, along with the support which may be required from health to focus on the aspect of anxiety experienced.

The views of the CYP in this study highlighted issues linked to the systems around the child, EPs are skilled in working systemically and could apply these skills to this context. As well as working with the individual CYP, EPs can provide training to parents and families on how best to support their children. Bodycote (2018) discussed the potential impact that a child's ABSR can have on the family, indicating that they are often expected to manage independently. Training could focus on behaviour and anxiety management strategies and help parents to feel supported throughout this journey. Additionally, EPs could work closely with schools supporting factors such as transition and bullying with the aim to improve school refusal outcomes.

A key finding from this study was the protective factor that SMT can play in keeping social connection with peer groups and how this can lead to positive outcomes for the CYP. Possibly EPs could encourage schools to support the connections and friendships developed via social media as a protective factor –potentially use social media as a way to build friendships and encourage positive links with school for these CYP school refusers.

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An Exploration into the Use of Social Media Technology in Adolescents who School Refuse.

Part 3: Critical Appraisal

(Word Count: 6,445)

1. **Introduction**

This study aimed to explore the experience of Social Media Technology (SMT) use among adolescents that refuse school, looking at the positive or negative impact SMT can have during times of non-attendance at school. This critical appraisal has been separated into two sections and aims to provide a reflective and reflexive personal account of the current study.

Section one provides a reflective account of the research process. Discussing the process of selection, development of the research and explores how the research paradigm framed the research process. This section also provides a reflective critique of the ethical considerations, research design and method of analysis.

Section two considers how the findings of the study have implications for Educational Psychologists (EP) practice and the professional development of the researcher. Exploring what can be learnt from the findings and possible future directions for the research area.

To further demonstrate the personal reflective and reflexive account of the research process and implications of the findings, the critical appraisal is written in the first person.

2. **Section 3A – The Research Process**

2.1 Development of the Research

2.1.1 Topic selection

Both in my professional life working with teenagers and in my personal life, I had heard people commenting on the perfect lives people appear to have online. Even as a 20 something adult working with mental health and with a supportive network of family and friends, some Saturday nights I would find myself sitting at home browsing through SMT, thinking 'why is my life so boring, how come everyone else is out having fun.' If SMT was able to affect my mood so negatively and bring about these thoughts, I wondered what effect this was having on vulnerable young people who were experiencing some difficulties with their mental health.

Statistics around SMT reveal that adolescents today spend a lot of their time on SMT, around 27 hours per week (Anderson, 2016; ICIYET, 2017). David (2015) found that some adults and teenagers spend more time on their smartphones in one day than they do sleeping. With most of the data from these studies being self-reported, it is often considered an unreliable source due to the response bias which is present when participants possibly respond inaccurately. David, Roberts & Christenson (2017) followed this up by exploring the time spent on smartphones using the phone data, they found the most active users spent 7.78 hours per day actively using apps on their mobile phones.

Research has described how SMT has changed the way we interact with others (Twenge, 2017); today's younger generation has always had SMT at their fingertips. Many young people cannot remember a time without smartphones, when to make contact with friends involved going over to their house to 'call them' or if you were lucky you would both have a landline to phone one another to arrange a time to meet. Today young people don't need to leave their bedroom to spend time with their friends, Turkle (2011) suggests that people can now 'alone together'. When they do get together most of their time is spent on their smartphone rather than actually interacting with one another. This led me to wonder how real these interactions are, and what impact is SMT having on the younger generation.

The research which sparked my interest in exploring this further was RSPH (2017) and Davey (2016). Radio 1's Newsbeat reported that Instagram and Snapchat were considered the SMT which had the most negative effect on young people's wellbeing; they asked 1,479 young people to rate different SMT platforms on issues associated with health and wellbeing. The research found these platforms were driving feelings of anxiety and inadequacy in young people (RSPH, 2017). Another Newsbeat item reported that SMT such as Facebook and Twitter and actually caused people to feel more alone (Davey, 2016).

This led me to think back to a 14-year-old school refuser I worked with during my role prior to starting the DEdPsy course. When I first started working with this young lady she would not leave the house during daylight and was experiencing a level of anxiety which prevented her from even walking into a coffee shop without having a panic attack. Further, I learned that bullying had been the reason behind her school refusal and 3 years on, through SMT the same bullies would still affect her, they would add her into groups, then say horrible things which she could see. This impacted on her mental health just as much as when she had been attending school. Yet, SMT was also the only connection to other people outside her family.

The experience of school refusal was also something that had resonated within my work as a TEP, with services finding this an increasing issue for Children and Young People (CYP). I had also become aware this was a common piece of casework among my peers. This made me wonder about the experience of school refusal; what could be done from an Educational Psychologist (EP) perspective to support these CYP considering most of the work in the area is based in clinical psychology (Kearney, 2001; Kearney, Chapman & Cook, 2005; Pellegrini, 2007; Ingles, Gonzalvez-Macia, Garcia-Fernandez, Vicent & Martinez-Monteagudo, 2015).

As well as wanting to find out more about the impact of SMT, it was clear that little was known about the effects on CYP experiences. Today's CYP are the first generation to grow up with SMT as part of their world and adults working with them often have little understanding of what it's like to grow up with SMT at their fingertips (Twenge, 2017). With no research currently investigating how SMT impacts on CYP who school refuse it felt important to further investigate this area.

Greene and Hogan (2005) suggest that we can learn from CYP's experiences to advance and strengthen our understanding.

2.1.2 Influence of experience

My previous experience of this particular area was identified as potentially providing a bias to the research and impacting on my construction of reality. It was due to this experience that I felt I need to be more aware of the possible influence on my current thinking. With this being said, Ashworth (2007) described experimental research as discovering the relationships between external and internal world, "*research is a stimulus to the internal experience*" (p19).   Early principles of psychology describe the self as the starting point of research, James (1890 cited in Smith, 2007) indicated that the idea begins with one's own experiences and the significance of the research is grounded in personal relevance.

To ensure that these personal experiences did not influence the literature or research process I attempted to remain impartial and hold a critical view throughout, keeping in mind others may have a different construction of the same experience. I did this by engaging in regular supervision and recorded my thoughts and reflections in a research diary as suggested by Silverman (2013). Silverman (2013) advocated that this allows you to focus your thinking, providing a space which allows you to be reflective and reflexive both in your thoughts and throughout the research process. As a result of engaging with supervision and reflexing on the themes throughout the analysis stage, it was felt that impartiality was managed. While some themes that were developed could have been seen as a reflection of my previous experience, such as 'the experience of bullying' and 'I am an anxious person'. However, these were felt to reflective of the participant's experience also, when checked by a second coder. I also felt it was achieved as the analysis found things that I had not considered, I feel this was a true representation of the data rather than of my own constructions of the phenomenon.

Consideration of the influence my experience could potentially have on the data, I used trustworthiness to ensure that this did not affect the analysis. "*Trustworthiness*

is one-way researchers can persuade themselves and readers that their research findings are worthy of attention" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 cited in Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017 p.3). Steps were taken to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability was applied and that the process was reliability and validity (see Appendix 17). An aspect of this was keeping a reflexive journal aimed to keep a "self-critical account" (Nowell et al, 2017, p.3), this allowed me look back and consider the decisions I'd made (see Appendix 16). As well as to consider further whether decisions were a true reflection of the data or driven by my own constructions.

2.1.3 Construction of the research and research questions

When planning the research and exploring what questions the study would set out to explore, it was acknowledged that the research was led by my own constructions of reality and assumptions. Willig (2006) suggests that it is possible for this to impact on the constructions of data and findings of the study. To limit the impact of my own bias on the data personal and epistemological reflexivity was considered throughout. Willig (2006) states "*reflexivity requires an awareness of the researcher's contribution to the constructions of meanings throughout the research process, and acknowledgement of the impossibility of remaining 'outside of' one's subjective matter while conducting research*" (p.10). This allowed me to be more aware of how my assumptions impacted on the research and allowed me to reflect on these throughout the process.

With the research aiming to be explorative in nature, I ensured that the research questions captured the lived experience of the young people, these were developed using the guide provided by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) for Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The indicative questions gave the young people a chance to provide an account of how they made sense of the world rather than my view leading the questions asked; ensuring questions captured their understanding and experience. I used terms which aimed to capture the lived experience of school refusal and one that encourages participants to tell a story.

They were developed to identify gaps in the current literature; with the intention to explore the young people's own experience of school refusal, as the voice of the child is lacking in the available literature (Baker & Bishop, 2015). They were also intended to capture the potential positive and negative impact of social media during this time.

The process of designing the research questions, which aimed to capture the lived experiences of the participants, took many revisions. I feel that initial questions developed had a hint of presuming these experiences would be negative, which I wanted to avoid. The initial primary research question focused on the experience of the ABSR, however, the aim of the research was to explore the experience of SMT use during this time, and I felt this should have been reflected within the primary question. While I did consider, rejecting the question of the ABSR experience altogether, I felt it was important to further explore this with participants to gain more of an understanding of the young people's experiences and the context for their SMT use. I also considered the possibility that the word impact, implied that the young people were affected by SMT use, as a result, two more secondary research questions were developed to ensure both positive and negative experiences were explored. Through supervision, I was given the confidence that one primary and three secondary exploratory research questions were sufficient. Throughout the research process, I believe that the questions enabled the interviews to be personal and led to the relevant experiences of young people.

At times I did feel that through the questions generated, interviews didn't capture the true experiences of the pupils because discussions with staff members often painted a different picture, indicating that the majority of pupils' experiences of SMT were negative. As a result, I extended the study to explore the view of staff members working with ABSR. On reflection, the reason behind the choice to extend may have been due to my own perceptions not being present within the data. While the staff interviews generated a number of interesting findings, the scope of this study was considered to be too small to incorporate both data sets, as it resulted in a loss to the depth of analysis. It was also thought that the voice of the child was lost by incorporating the staff data which was a key aim of this research.

141

2.1.4 Construction of the literature review

The aim of the literature review was to provide a background of the psychological theories around school refusal and adolescents SMT use, providing an overview of the previous literature in each area. With many different definitions relating to persistent school non-attendance, the review also set out to define the term school refusal and what would be explored. School anxious and school phobic were adopted as part of the reason the young people were school refusers; my experience within the area led me to believe that these children were often the most affected in terms of their ability to attend school. Throughout the process of the literature review, I found it difficult to separate both terms. I found that the explanations provided were often overlapping between both terms. On occasions, the literature suggested that school phobia is an impact of the anxieties experienced by CYP, while labelling it separately from school anxiety.

ABSRs often needed high levels of support in place to be able to return to school and often showed little response to the interventions which were put in place (Baker & Bishop, 2015). Literature identified school refusal was heavily based in clinical psychology and often implied that school refusal behaviour needed to be treated as one would a mental health condition (Kearney & Silverman, 1990; Kearney, 2001).

However, research by Nuttall and Woods (2013) found that EP interventions can be effective to support these CYP to return to school and interventions don't always need to be based on clinical treatment. The Nuttall and Woods (2013) and Baker and Bishop (2015) papers were most relevant to EP practice due to the current date of research. The research on school refusal in educational psychology was limited, subsequently identified a gap in the literature. The review also explored how psychological development can be affected by non-attendance at school and the impact of missing out on key socialisation experiences. SMT provides socialisation to CYP to some extent (Battisby, 2018) and one could assume that with anxiety preventing communication outside the home environment SMT may be their only

way of communicating with others. To ensure this applied to the participants of this study, the question which explored this further was phrased to ask participants about their experience while they were not attending school (see Appendix 12).

One challenge of the research process was that there was no research which linked SMT and ABSR; I struggled to make explicit links between the two areas. However, I felt that through in-depth reading around different subject areas and supervision to check my thinking, these links were established throughout the literature. With no research exploring the SMT use of adolescents who school refuse in its entirety (previous research has not explored any link between ABSR and SMT use), the topic was deemed beneficial to explore further in future research.

2.2 Research paradigm and philosophy of science

The researcher's ontological and epistemological beliefs are what constructs the research paradigm, and identifies the methodology which is used to explore the research topic (Scotland, 2012). A constructivist-interpretive research paradigm underpins this study; leading to a relativist ontological position. Ontology is concerned with what is reality, or what is, this explores the researcher position in relation to "*how things really are and how things really work*" (Scotland, 2012, p.9). Relativist ontology believes that there are multiple constructions of reality; that reality is subjective and differs from one individual to the next, implying that there are as many realities that may be constructed as there are individuals. This research aims to understand how people interpret the world in different ways and explore individual experiences (Smith, 2007).

The research takes a constructivist epistemological stance; taking the belief that reality is interpreted and there is no single truth. Scotland (2012) defines epistemology as "*concerned with the nature and forms of knowledge,*" (p.9) and looks to explore what it means to know. Epistemology is concerned with how sense is made of the knowledge acquired through research, that understanding of the social world comes from the individual and acknowledges the need to explore the views of different individuals. Constructivism recognises that the participant's

construction of school refusal is subject to their interpretations (Mertens, 2014). Constructivist epistemology is explorative in nature and intends to understand the individual own interpretation of the world (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). IPA as a method of analysis lends itself to this epistemological stance, the interview process allowed participants to gain an insight into their own experiences and understand their own social constructions of their experiences. I appreciated that the pupils would construct multiple, equally valid realities of ABSR when considering their own individual experiences of school refusal. I saw the purpose of this research as identifying the different ways that their realities could have been constructed. While I was constructing reality through my own interpretations, I aimed to ensure that these realities were that of the participants and not influenced by my own constructions of SMT in ABSR. I tried to do this by exploring both the positive and negative aspects of the participants SMT use. I feel that viewing the data through a constructivist lens helped me to keep in mind the participant's realities of their own experiences.

I felt it was important to acknowledge my own constructions of SMT use and the impact I felt it could potentially have on CYPs mental health. With pupils sharing positive experiences it did shift my own constructions and considered the positive aspects of SMT from the CYPs perspectives, this emphasises that research cannot be completely independent of the researcher's values (Willig, 2006).

A critical realist approach may also have been adopted as an alternative epistemological stance with the view that "*reality has been shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values…. realities are socially constructed entities that are under constant internal influence*" (Scotland, 2012 p.13). Critical realism acknowledges that it doesn't mean something does not exist just because it is not known or lived (Willig, 2006). Critical realism paradigm was also in contradiction to my original reason for carrying out the research, to explore the individual's own constructions of their experiences of the CYP SMT use during periods of ABSR. The explorative nature of this research aims to capture the construction of other's experiences, the double hermeneutics present within IPA, explains that I will be making sense of the participant making sense of their own

experiences. The critical realist stance can lead to a 'scientist knows best' construction (Scotland, 2012), through the researcher's own interpretations of what is most accurate by competing participant views.

Mertens (2014) suggested that a constructivist paradigm emphasizes that a close relationship between the researchers and participants could increase the validity of the data. For example, if the researcher develops rapport and forms a relationship with the young people, they are more likely to reveal information and be more open to speaking about their experiences. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) support this within IPA research explaining the need to be attentive within the interview process. Due to the anxious nature of the participants, I made the effort to go into the setting a number of times before carrying out the research to develop a rapport with participants and enable them to feel comfortable with me should they wish to take part in the research.

2.3 Methodology

The constructivist research paradigm predominantly lends itself to qualitative methods such as interviews, reviews, and observations (Mertens, 2014). A two-part interview process, which included a rapport building interview and semi-structured interviews were used to enable interactions which feel comfortable with the participants and gain a detailed account of their individual experiences (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Due to the anxious nature of the participants, a number of prompts were included (see Appendix 12) to encourage further discussion around each question if needed. A soft rapport building interview was conducted before the main interview so that I could develop relationship with the young people. Semi-structured interviews also suited the belief on constructionism that multiple realities meant that definitive questions could not be established prior to the researching taking place as different questions may emerge with different participant realities (Mertens, 2014).

The rapport-building interview was developed further to build relationships with the YP, this was altered to provide a visual presentation of SMT enabling them to

think more about the types of SMT they like to use (see Appendix 12). Also, a timeline activity was added to the rapport building interview which participants could use as a visual prompt throughout (see Appendix 12). This not only helped them to feel more relaxed and less formal but also enable me to get a better understanding of their journey of school refusal. I feel that this did support the relationship and, I believe, allowed for more in-depth discussion within the part 2 data gathering interview. While it was felt that participants could have found it difficult to discuss in-depth the personal issues, for example PP1 and PP2 not talking in detail about their experiences of bullying, I felt that it did allow for more quality discussions of the questions I asked. A limitation of using an exploratory qualitative approach such as IPA methodology, when interviewing young people, is that it may not generate such in-depth information. As a result findings are often limited by what the participants were happy to share.

Whilst other methods were considered; it was decided that quantitative research methods did not meet the underpinning of the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm and simplistic interpretations would not be able to fully capture participant's experiences (Scotland, 2012). Qualitative interviews were conducted with the belief that interactions between the researcher and participants are key, in order to gain knowledge of individual's experience; this was in-line with the social construction of reality adapted through the research paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

2.4 Ethical considerations

During the initial proposal stages when developing the research there were a number of ethical considerations were made to ensure the study fully complied with the codes and practices established in the British Psychological Societies Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2014) and the Cardiff University Research Ethics Policy (Cardiff University, 2018).

Age inclusion criteria were set at 14 -18 years due to the age restrictions often applied to SMT. This age range took into account the potential of child protection

issues and legal age limit issues regarding SMT use of CYP younger than 14 years. As identified within the literature review and the findings of the prevalence of SMT use of CYP. This may have provided an underrepresentation of CYP's experiences, due to the statistics which indicate children from as young as 5 years could be using SMT (ICIYET, 2017).

It was decided that participants would be recruited through an alternative anxious and phobic school provision via gatekeepers. To build relationships with the participants, I visited the provision on a number of different occasions and provided an information session before participants volunteered to take part. This did mean that two different sets of parental consent were required which had implications on the timing of gathering data. Due to the time I spent in the setting before the research took place, pupils volunteered to take part via anonymous tick box exercise, this aimed to limit social participation bias. Before any work was undertaken with young people, parents and CYP had to complete consent form consenting to take part in the research (see Appendix 4, 5, 9 & 10).

Although participating in the interview should not have caused any distress, due to the potentially emotive subject and discussion around possible times of difficulty, support staff and school-based counsellors within the provision were available for participants to access during and after the interview process incase, any upset was inadvertently caused.

Although the measure was put in place, none of the participants felt they needed to access support following the interview, they were able to access this support for the remainder of the day should they have wanted to take this up. While I had an objective in mind when engaging in the interview process, I always ensured that the participant's safety was my main priority. Time was given when participants were discussing sensitive content and checks were made as to whether participants were happy to carry on before continuing onto the next question.

I was hoping for 4-5 participants to conduct the interview with, 4 participants volunteered. During supervision we debated the response should more pupils volunteer it was agreed that I would have conducted all interviews on the basis that

I could not ethically choose which participants to interview, as it could be interpreted by the young people that I was less interested in their experiences. Within the provision there was a young boy who was a selective mute, to ethically ensure he had the same opportunities to volunteer as his peers, adaptions were considered through supervision. Moving forward I feel that I have gained a greater understanding of how to protect CYP/participants of research, I will take this forward into my practice to ensure that the work I do is always in the best interest of the YCP.

2.5 Methodological Decisions

Studies in educational psychology demonstrate the importance of using qualitative methods to gain the pupil voice throughout research (Nuttall & Woods, 2013; Baker & Bishop, 2015). However, there is little research from this perspective and what there is has explored the effectiveness of intervention rather than focusing on the CYP experiences. Research on SMT use is mainly quantitative and carried out through online surveys with very little qualitative data other than unpublished doctorate thesis, however, the number of recent studies of this nature being carried out shows that SMT and the effects on CYP is a current topic of interest. There is currently no literature which combined the two topics, the literature review provides a clear rationale as to why this research topic may be of interest to explore.

On reflection, I did feel that a mixed-methods approach may have been useful to further explore the extent of participants use of SMT further. One possibility considered was exploring SMT use via a measurement such as the Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO) scale (Abel, Buff & Burr, 2016), however, this does only measures one aspect of SMT use. This would have only provided data for the participant group so could not be analysed in the same way to classify a quantitative study. The informed consent needing to be obtained from parents meant that given time and resources available, there could not have been a large enough sample size gathered

to qualify for a quantitative study in this area, especially considering the population of school refusers often being hard to reach. The added benefit of a questionnaire would have meant that SMT use could have been explored in more detail, for example, the data gathered could have been significantly different for a young person with high SMT use than those who rarely used SMT. Information provided on SMT use within the present study is self-reported, which could have led to a response bias. This could have resulted in participants reporting high levels of SMT use but don't use SMT a great deal and vice versa. However, I feel qualitative methods provided a richness of experience and produced a more focused study; which added a depth that is missing from current literature.

2.6 Questions were developed using the guide from IPA

Research questions were developed using the Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) guide for developing questions for IPA semi-structured interviews.

Table 26

5 steps for developing IPA Interview questions

5 steps for developing IPA interview questions
1. Do not simply ask your participants your research questions. 2. Think about the range of topic areas that you want your interview to cover. 3. Put the topics in the most appropriate sequence. 4. Thinking about how you might phase appropriate, open-ended questions relating to each topic area. 5. Discuss the questions with someone else and re-draft them

Note. Adapted by the author from Smith, Flowers and Larking (2009)

Questions were developed with the aim of exploring the lived experience of the children and young people about their school refusal but also the impact of social media during this time, aiming to allow the participants to talk in length around each question asked. To ensure a breadth of information was gathered, I also developed a number of prompts to go along with each question (see Appendix 12). Care was taken during this process to ensure that questions and prompts did not

lead participants to demand characteristics, altering responses to report what they thought I wanted to hear.

With the option of more participants, it would have been beneficial to conduct a pilot interview and modify questions as a result. Without this option, question development was discussed in supervision, following the constructivist research paradigm that the research will evolve as the study progresses.

2.7 Participants

The sample size of 4 participants was deemed an appropriate number for a novice student project by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009). This is thought to provide a richness of data, enabling meaningful similarities and differences but not become too overwhelming to manage. Students were recruited through a specialist provision to ensure that the target participants were reached. This did, however, mean that participants were at least attending some type of school provision but missed the CYP who were experiencing persistent school non-attendance. However, due to a lack of engagement, these are often a difficult group of YP to reach. Recruiting participants was a difficult task: gatekeeper letters were sent to 4 different specialist provisions. Only 2 provisions responded, which were those I had personal links with due to placements within the LAs. While it was the gatekeepers who needed to arrange parental consent for the initial group session, one provision struggled to do this and resulting in time constraints meaning I was unable to complete the interviews within the time frame.

Due to the nature of the difficulties around anxiety and mental health the participants experienced; extra consideration was taken during the interview process. Young people with anxiety often find it difficult talking to an adult, particularly one they don't know. I was aware that I didn't want to come across as having a position of power with the young people as I felt this would impact on what they would be willing to share. For this reason, the extra visits and information session had been incorporated to allow the young people to meet me in a less daunting environment. I engaged with them during a normal school day

and made an effort to get to know them on a more personal level. I did find this difficult at first because even within the relaxed environment of breaks and lunchtime, they were still very reluctant to engage in conversation with me. After the few visits, I took this to supervision as I was afraid that they wouldn't engage during the interview, as a result, I developed a less formal way of engaging through the rapport building interview. Participants were obtained from the same specialist provision, however, due to the nature of IPA analysing the lived experience of each participant this should not have impacted on the data.

Interviews took place at the YP school provision to reduce the potential of anxieties and create a sense of normality. From the first two interviews completed, it was highlighted that both participants experienced positive benefits from the use of SMT during periods of non-attendance. However, during my time spent in the setting, it became clear that staff had different perceptions. Two potential reasons were identified: firstly a response bias, where participants second-guess what the researcher is hoping to hear and so altered answers to reflect this. Secondly a halo-effect, where participants would overlook the negative associations and just want to see the positive aspects of SMT. Another possibility was that this could have been the participants lived experience and they viewed SMT differently from the staff.

On reflection, I wondered if my constructions were a factor. I was expecting CYP to see SMT as having a negative influence. Through supervision, we explored this further but kept coming back to the school staff who reported that these very CYP were experiencing some negative impacts of SMT. Again thinking of the constructionist paradigm and the potential for research to evolve. I started to think more about the constructions of the staff members and how these were very different from the YP. I felt it was important to gather these constructions and as I felt it could add to the data, the research then evolved into a triangulation method, which is using more than one method to explore one topic. On further reflection it was felt that the staff interviews removed the voice of the child from this study, which was one of the primary influences for conducting the research.

There was also further consideration around YP questions; extending the question to explore how they felt more generally and if they could think of any other negative experiences and then relating it back to them personally. During the analysis stage interpretative exploration of the data did find both positive and negative experiences of SMT during periods of school refusal.

2.8 Analysing the data - Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was chosen to analyse the data because it examines "*how people make sense of their major life experiences*" *(Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2009, p.1); it is concerned with "exploring experience in its own term*" (p.1). Creswell (2013) stated that IPA data analysis allows insights into the "*participants' views of the situation being studied*" (p.8). IPA allows focussing on an in-depth exploration of participant's experiences and the researcher's interpretation of these.

IPA, although similar to Thematic Analysis (TA), can be thought of in terms of a methodology and a framework for carrying out research rather than a method of analysis. To ensure that IPA was the method of analysis rather than slipping into TA, the 6 stages of IPA identified by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) were closely followed (see Table 4 and Appendix 13). Initial noting was completed using different colours for the different types of comments. From there the emergent and superordinate themes were developed, and then the research process was followed for each participant. Finally coming together to explore each group and identify common themes and patterns across cases to develop a final data set for both the YP and staff members. To account for the different experiences being studied, the two participant groups were explored as separate data sets. This process can be followed in Appendix 13.

One issue often identified in IPA research is assessing quality and validity. To further ensure a high-quality research process Yardley (2000) was acknowledged and reflected on throughout the research process.

Table 27

Principles for assessing the quality of qualitative research

Principles for assessing the quality of qualitative research to ensure reliability and validity
1. **Sensitivity to context**
- In-depth analysis of school refusal and associating terms   - Explored the theories which could influence socialisation through extended ABSR and linking to SMT   - A thorough analysis of relevant studies was completed to influence the research design → learning from previous research   - Addressed ethical issues presented (see part 3A – 2.4)   - Participants volunteered for the interviews   - Nature of participants vulnerabilities (see part 3A – 2.4)   - Acknowledged the impact of previous knowledge of researcher on the theme development   - The social context of the researcher and participants acknowledged → to improve the depth of information gain within the interview, an effort was made to build relationships with participants prior. This was done with visits to the specialist school setting   - Interview questions were provided with in-depth explanations of the research aims and process, in a bid to reduce the power imbalance between researcher and participant   - Interviews took place at the CYPs educational setting to ensure they felt comfortable throughout   - A two part interview process was conducted with a part 1 rapport building interview   - Discussions with external colleagues were conducted to discuss the study
2. **Commitment and rigour**
- Completed over a timeframe of 18 months   - Audiotapes of interviews were listened to a number of times before transcriptions   - Transcriptions were read and re-read a number of occasions and themes were developed and re-developed on 3 occasions   - Stages of IPA research were thoroughly followed as suggested by Smith et al (2009) (see Table 4)   - A full and transparent description of the research process, data collection (see part 2 – section 4) and analysis (see Appendix 13) was completed   - Engagement with supervision throughout the research process to check the work completed and discuss next steps   - A research diary was kept to ensure reflexivity

3.	Transparency and coherence

- A full and transparent description of the research process, data collection (see part 2 – section 4) and analysis (see Appendix 13) was completed

- Interview questions were developed and revised to ensure they would be effective in addressing he research aims (see Appendix 12)

- Participants were selected via Gatekeepers to specialist anxious and phobic school provisions → while it was hoped participants would be selected from a number of settings CYP from only one setting were able to participate. Due to the individual experience of participants this was deemed appropriate (Smith et al, 2009)

- Supervision was engaged with such that it provided external audit

- Member checking was completed by a third party to the research and theme revised with them

4.	Impact and importance

- Due to the explorative nature of the individual experience of participants, further generalisation would be inappropriate

- 4 participants were deemed appropriate for a novice IPA research

- Interesting findings about the ABSR experience were generated and the impact of SMT use on the CYP (see part 2 – section 5)

- Insight developed on how professionals can work to support ABSRs was generated (see part 2 – section 7.2)

- Voice if the child shows through the results generated

Yardley (2000)

Note. Developed by the author based on adapted from Yardley (2000): Principles for assessing the quality of qualitative research and how they were met within the study to ensure validity

IPA was chosen as the preferred method over TA due to the dual focus that is often present, not only identifying a pattern of meaning but also the ability to explore the unique characteristics of the individual experience (Smith & Osborn, 2007).

It was interesting that bullying came through as a theme for all participants, I thought about what the interpretation of bullying had been to them, but also what my interpretation had been. Looking back at the young girl I worked with bullying was a factor which resulted in her school refusal behaviour. I thought about how my interpretations of school refusal may have been affecting the themes developed. However, this difficulty with peer relationships was identified within the literature as a risk factor which often contributes to school refusal factors (Havik et al, 2015).

2.9 Decreasing the likelihood of a researcher bias

Throughout the research process, I have aimed to take a reflective and reflexive approach and recorded my thinking in a research diary. It was also important to engage in supervision during this time to ensure that my own constructions and beliefs did not guide the data analysis and research process.

To account for researcher subjectivity/bias which could have resulted in the production of insufficient or weak theme development, data was analysed and re-examined a number of times and themes reframed and reconstructed to ensure analysis provided an appropriate presentation of the data sets. Given the time I would have liked to minimise this further, I would have liked to check emerging themes and sub-themes with the young people to ensure that they were a true representation of the data. Instead, themes were coded by a third party to the research process. By checking themes developed this provides a balanced and unbiased account of the participant's experience. It is, of course, possible that constructional biases would be led by the second researcher but this provides a more robust way of ensuring this affected is limited.

Section 3B: Contribution to the knowledge

3.1 Distinct contribution to knowledge

This research set out to investigate the experience of ABSR, and CYP's use of SMT during this time. Research in educational psychology regarding school refusal is limited (Baker & Bishop, 2015). When educational psychology does explore school refusal, literature often follows clinical research and explores interventions to support school refusal behaviour (Nuttall & Woods, 2013). With outcomes frequently poor for this group of young people, it makes sense that professionals would want information to support better outcomes, and re-engage pupils back into education. However, what research is currently missing is the voice of the child and what the experience is like from their point of view (Baker & Bishop, 2015).

One might assume that before we try to put interventions in place, we need to know more about what is driving the ABSR behaviour. A number of studies define the heterogeneous nature of school refusal (Miller, 2008) acknowledging the large and diverse experiences which can impact on ABSR. But with an often one-size-fits-all approach to intervention, one might question if this is fully understood.

The confusion often starts with the definition; school refuser, school anxious, school phobic, school non-attender, persistent non-school attender, extended non-attendance, along with an occasional confusion with truancy (Kearney & Silverman, 1990; Kearney, 2001; Pellegrini, 2007; Baker & Bishop, 2015). From the literature I've explored there is often a cross over between some of the terms used while others define them as having different behaviours attached to them. When reviewing the literature, I wanted my investigation to be less about what was a successful intervention and more on what factors they felt support or negatively impacted on their school refusal behaviour. From my experience, SMT has a detrimental impact on one young person's social refusal. I felt that with SMT playing such a big role in the lives of young people today it would add to the literature in school refusal, with no research previously exploring this area.

3.2 Implications for educational psychologists

From my experience working with ABSR, the EP is rarely involved until an assessment is required to access a specialist placement. This has resulted in me believing that schools often see school refusers as "out of sight, out-of-mind". From data gathered in this study, the anxiety felt by young people regarding ABSR arose from the school environment. For example, PP1 and PP2's experience of difficulty transitioning into mainstream secondary school was a leading factor impacting on school refusal. PP3 and PP4's experience of bullying and difficulties with peer interactions were also a primary cause of anxiety.

Using these pupils as an example, EPs are in a position to support schools to prevent anxiety levels becoming enough to result in school refusal behaviours. For example, through the development of additional transition packages to support

vulnerable pupils, along with assisting schools in supporting young people affected by bullying.

According to staff members, the data discovered a possible connection between the experience of parental SMT use and how this may affect attachments. Literature explores how mental health difficulties can influence how parents engaging with their child and impacts on the co-regulation skills required for effective emotional literacy. But what are the effects of parents being more engage with their smartphones than they are their child? From my experience working with parent, attachment is often seen as an emotive topic. EPs could do more in schools to raise awareness on some of these issues.

3.3 Working with young people

I feel that this research has helped me to think about my approach when working with young people who school refuse. I will be mindful around the different factors which may be impacting on the pupil's school refusal behaviours. Aiming to start my work through exploration of the young person individual experience. Then base interventions around what can be done to support these factors. From the knowledge I have gained while investigating this topic, my aim is to use their experience to improve the outcomes for school refusers.

3.4 Limitations of the research

Something that stood out to me in the later stages of this research was the terminology I used to describe school refusal. Due to the anxiety experienced by young people who participated, I adopted the term Anxiety Based School Refusal, thinking that this was the most inclusive term to describe my participant group. After further reading, literature has suggested that young people don't actually like the term school refuser as it implies that they have a choice in the school refusal behaviour (Baker & Bishop, 2015). Interpretation of PP1 and PP2 data implies that the anxiety is the driving focusing them to feel unable to attend school. The

experience described was one that completely prevents young people engaging in the activity they often want to engage in. Thinking about this research again, I would possibly work with the young people to develop a term they deemed to be inclusive of their experience, such as Anxiety Based Extended School Non-Attendance.

The participants within this study were recruited from a specialist provision that supported anxious and phobic school refuser. Although the young people had experience of the topic under investigation, I felt that they were engaging in some form of education. This means that the experience of young people who were unable to re-engage with education was missed. Without accessing education these pupils are often very difficult to reach.

The participants all came from the same specialist provision within the same local authority; it might have been that the experiences were impacted by their attendance at the provision. I feel breath could have been added if participants from a number of different settings had been included.

Although this study investigating the experience of ABSR and their SMT use, this did lead me to question whether there is anything unique about ABSR and experiences of social media. Studies on SMT are often quantitative in nature and miss the voice of the pupil relating to the experience. It may have been beneficial to explore SMT use of young people who attend school using the same interview process and use this as a comparative measure to explore how ABSR differs.

Another limitation highlighted was the lack of validation gained by checking through the codes developed in the data. While themes were checked and revised with a third party to the research process, this was an undergraduate health student with A level knowledge of psychology. This did lead to themes being re-developed and added some validity to the findings. Given the time I would have ideally liked to carry out member checking with the participants. Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter (2016) suggested that member checking is a way to add validity to the results. It involves "*returned to participants to check for accuracy and*

resonance with their experiences" (p. 1802). I feel that this would have consolidated the findings from the research, ensuring a true reflection of the pupil's voice.

3.5 Future Research

To develop this research further I feel exploring the type of SMT use could have provided more information about how it impacts ABSR. Going forward I would add a quantitative measure of possibly FOMO (Przybylski, Murayama, DeHaan, & Gladwell, 2013), enabling me to further explore the impact has on the lives of young people and whether this, in turn, affects how SMT impacts on school refusal.

3.6 Personal reflections on the research process and impact on personal practice

My experience in carrying out this piece of research can only be described as an emotional roller-coaster. When completing the analysis of the data, I felt unsure of my interpretation of the data. I feared getting it wrong and constantly thought about it, was it what the participants meant. Given the time, I would have returned to the setting and reviewed the themes developed with the young people through member checking.

I felt that at times I took a little too much on, thinking about how 2 different theories relate to one-other but also exploring 2 sets of data. Given the scope of this piece and being a novice researcher, exploring the views of the pupils first would have been a more realistic task, given the time constants and word limit.

I feel this research has deepened my understanding of the importance of listening to the individual experience of pupils. The anxiety-provoking factor, at the school-based level, is where interventions should be based. This would allow preventive, systemic work to take place rather than trying to 'treat' the school refusal behaviour.

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<u>Appendix 1 – Literature Review Searches</u>

Social Media

Research by Davey (2015) and the Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH, 2017) stimulated an interest in exploring Social Media and the impact that this had on the wellbeing of Children and Young People (CYP). Following this, a variety of online search engines were used to gather information including University Library, PsychINFO and Google Scholar. Information was gathered and reviewed to explore and further understanding of the topic area.

Search Engine	Terms used	Results	Used
Psych INFO	Social Media	4887	
	Social media and adolescents	489	4
University Library	Social Media	1,799,806	
	Social Media Technology	729	
	Social media and mental health	44,976	
	Social media and impacts on mental health in adolescents	9.407	
	➔ Psychology	742	
	➔ 2007-2017	569	26
Google Scholar	Social Media	4,350,000	
	Social Media Technology	4,150,000	
	Social media and Mental health	1,140,000	
	Social media and impacts on mental health in adolescents	151,000	
	➔ Psychology		
	➔ 2007-2017	16,300	8

Item titles and abstracts were scanned and 34 were selected for further reading.

During supervision and the research process, the developmental of the topic of researcher was further refined to explore how social media technology can impact on school refusal

PRISMA 2009 Flow Diagram

Social Media and Adolescent Mental Health (August –September 2017)

```
Identification

  ┌──────────────────────────┐    ┌──────────────────────────┐
  │ Records identified through│    │ Additional records        │
  │ database searching        │    │ identified through other  │
  │ (n = 165,294 )            │    │ sources                   │
  │                           │    │ (n =  19)                 │
  └──────────────────────────┘    └──────────────────────────┘
              │                                │
              └──────────────┬─────────────────┘
                             ▼
              ┌──────────────────────────────┐
              │ Records after duplicates      │
              │ removed                       │
              │ (n = 104, 974) estimated      │
              └──────────────────────────────┘

Screening
                             ▼
              ┌──────────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────────┐
              │ Records screened      │───────▶│ Records excluded      │
              │ (n = 569 )            │        │ (n = 489) Estimated   │
              └──────────────────────┘        └──────────────────────┘
                             ▼

Eligibility
              ┌──────────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────────┐
              │ Full-text articles    │───────▶│ Full-text articles    │
              │ assessed for          │        │ excluded, with        │
              │ eligibility           │        │ reasons               │
              │ (n = 63 )             │        │ (n =  29 )            │
              └──────────────────────┘        │                       │
                             ▼                │ Not specific to       │
Included                                       │ research topic        │
              ┌──────────────────────┐        └──────────────────────┘
              │ Studies included in   │
              │ qualitative synthesis │
              │ (n = 63  )            │
              └──────────────────────┘
                             ▼
              ┌──────────────────────┐
              │ Studies included in   │
              │ quantitative synthesis│
              │ (meta-analysis)       │
              │ (n = 0  )             │
              └──────────────────────┘
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165

School Refusal

The initial reading of Miller (2008) identified further papers of additional interest through a backwards chaining method of research. From this key research within the area of school refusal were highlighted these included Elliot & Place, Kearney and Lauchlan. A number of research journals were identified and were specifically searcher for when journals of interest were identified. Books by Thambirajah, Grandison & De-Hayes (2008) and Csoti (2003) were also read to further understand and explore school refusal and the issues related.

To further explore the topic of school refusal variety of online academic search engines were used to gather information including PsycINFO, EBSCO and PsycArticles, information was gathered and reviewed to explore its relevance to the research topic. Preliminary searches were conducted using more generic search engines such as Cardiff University library and Google Scholar. Refining search terms such as school-refusal and persistent non-school attendance helped narrow the literature search highlighting the most appropriate and relevant literature.

Search Terms identified	School refusal
	School phobic
	Social anxiety
	Anxiety and school
	School non-attendance
	Persistent non-attendance at school

Search Engine	Terms used	Results	Used
Psych INFO	School refusal	357	
	School phobia	2578	
	Anxiety and school	119	
	Social media and adolescents	542	
	Online social networks	218794	
	Social media technology	40861	

	School refusal and mental health	28	
	Social media and mental health	27	
	School phobia and mental health	4	
	School refusal and social Media	1 – online schools	45
PsycArticles	School refusal and educational psychology	8325	
	School Refusal	348	
	School phobia	366	
	School refusal and school phobia	528	
	School Refusal and social media	0	2
University Library	School phobia	22,343	
	Last 10 years	11,841	
	School refusal and school phobia		
	School Refusal and social media	6,628	13
Google Scholar	School Refusal	22,343	
	Since 2007	4,390	0

Articles were scanned by title and abstract, with reference lists were also scanned to identify further paper of interest article descriptors of appropriate. Searches were saved so that they could be referred back to at a later date.

More specific searches were also carried out in the area of educational psychology, the journal Educational Psychology in Practice was searched in specific articles related to school refusal/persistence school non-attendance – a total of 5 articular were found and used within the literature review.

Other relevant literature was found form hard copy material and relevant information was sources from government document and charity led reports.

To provide relevant and useful background to inform the connection between school refusal and SMT, the main developmental areas are provided to inform the more focused discussion. Given the focus of this study was based in the UK, research is deemed to be beyond the scoop for effective generalisation, however, research in the UK around school refusal is limited, as a result researcher was chosen from Westernised cultures to make the connects as relative as possible. Due to the clinical element often present within the school refusal is often focused on a within child medial model, literature the review aimed to included researched based on educational psychology to make the information relevant.

Due to the advance in SMT research can quickly become outdated; as a result research from within the last 5 years was included. There is also a focus on young people's use and views of SMT; rather than adults.

PRISMA 2009 Flow Diagram

School Refusal (December/January 2017)
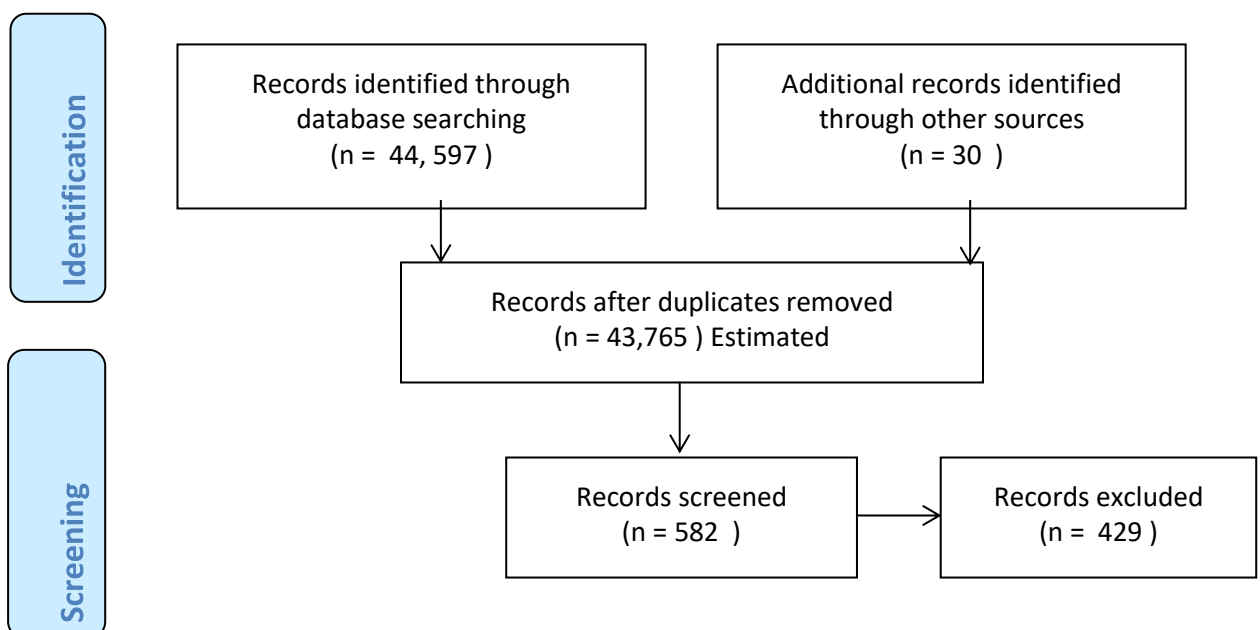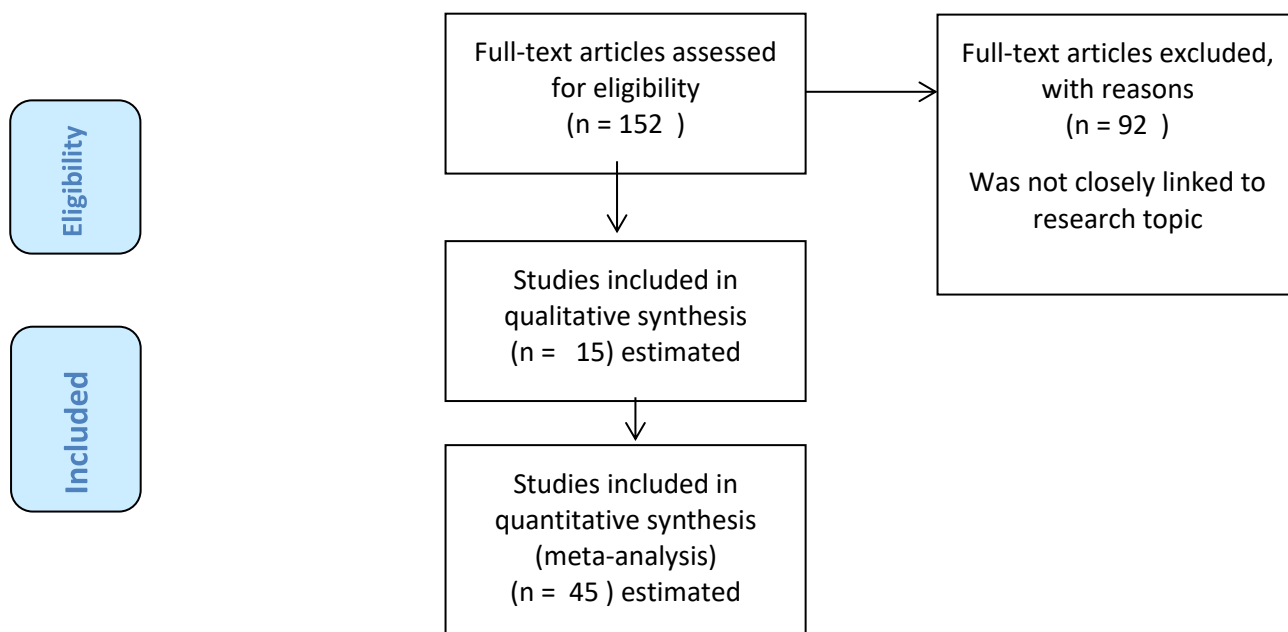
Eligibility

Included

Full-text articles assessed for eligibility (n = 152)	Full-text articles excluded, with reasons (n = 92) Was not closely linked to research topic

Studies included in qualitative synthesis (n = 15) estimated

Studies included in quantitative synthesis (meta-analysis) (n = 45) estimated

Csoti, M. (2003). *School Phobia, Panic Attacks and Anxiety in Children.* London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Davey, G. C. L. (2016). Social Media, Loneliness and Anxiety in Young People. Retrieved from Psychology today website: https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/why-we-worry/201612/social-media-loneliness-and-anxiety-in-young-people accessed on 01.12.2017.

Miller, A. (2008). School phobia and school refusal: Coping with life by coping with school? In Frederickson, N., Miller, A., & Cline, T, *Educational Psychology* (pp 215 – 235). London: Hodder Education.

Moher D, Liberati A, Tetzlaff J, Altman DG. The PRISMA Group (2009). *P*referred *R*eporting *I*tems for *S*ystematic Reviews and *M*eta-*A*nalyses: The PRISMA Statement. *PLoS Med 6 (7).*

Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) (2017). #Statusofmind Social media and young people's mental health and well-being. London: RSPH.

Thambirajah, M. S., Grandison, K. J., & De-Hayes, L. (2008). *Understanding School Refusal: A handbook for professionals in Education, Health and Social Care.* London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

School Address:

Date:

Dear (staff member)

I am a postgraduate student in the School of Psychology, Cardiff University. As part of my postgraduate doctorate in educational psychology, I am carrying out a study to explore the use of social media technology of adolescents who school refuse, with a specific focus around pupils who are school anxious and phobic. I am writing to enquire whether as an alternative school provision specialising in supporting pupils described as anxious and phobic you would allow me to visit. This would involve an information session which will include meeting with your pupils, discussing the project and what participation will include. Letters for parents to consent to the session are included with this letter. From this session pupils will be given the chance to participate in the study, with further formal written consent from parents.

This research is explorative in nature and aims to bring together both aspects of the young person's experience of school refusal and social media usage, something which is missing from the current literature. Research around school refusal behaviour is often lacking the voice of the child. This study aims to capture the experience of these children and young people from their point of view and the effects social media had during this time.

Due to the difficulties pupils may experience, I would like to come into your setting to meet them and discuss the research. Giving them the opportunity to ask any questions they may have. For any pupils interested in taking part parental consent will be required. I will then be carrying out the interview in two parts; a session to build rapport with the participants which will be approximately 30 minutes and the main interview which will take approximately 60 minutes. This may be completed in one or two sessions depending on each individual participant and their needs.

Many thanks in advance for your consideration of this project. Please let me know if you require further information.

Regards,
Jemma Goodridge
Trainee Educational Psychologist

Jemma Goodridge	Dr Ian Smillie
Postgraduate students	Project supervisor and lecturer
School of Psychology	School of Psychology
Cardiff University Tower Building	Cardiff University Tower Building

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Smillie@cardiff.ac.uk

This research project has been reviewed and ethically approved by SREC, if you wish to make a complaint regarding any aspect of this project please contact the Cardiff university ethics team on hcaredeanery@cardiff.ac.uk +44 (0)29 2068 7689 / +44 (0)29 2091 7999.

Appendix 3 – Information Sheet for Gatekeepers

This information sheet contains all the information you may like to know about the current research project, I would like to thank you for taking the time to read this and for your consideration in participating in this research.

The aim of this project is to explore the use of social media technology of adolescents who school refuse, specifically around anxious and phobic non-attendance behaviour.
School refusal research to date mainly focuses on defining the topic and the characteristics of school refusal behaviour. Despite this area being widely researched; the voice of the child continues to remain absent from the evidence base (Baker & Bishop, 2015). Statistics around how many children and young people are affected by school refusal vary a great deal; the No Panic Charity (2017) for anxiety disorders estimated the figure to be 1 per cent of the school-aged population classed as school phobic due to anxiety, this amounts to a massive 90 thousand pupils in the UK.

Anderson (2016) reported that adolescents spend an average of 27 hours per week online. It could be assumed that while not attending school young people are spending a percentage of this time online, with SMT playing such a big role in the lives of adolescents (Coughlan, 2016). With currently no literature on the subject of school refusers and social media use, it is unknown whether SMT plays a positive or negative role in school refusal behaviour. This research is explorative in nature and aims to bring together both aspects, something which is missing from the current literature; exploring school refusals behaviour and the SMT used in this particular group of young people.

The research will involve young people who are school refusers on the basis of issues related to anxiety or school phobic and use social media. The research aims to explore the unique experiences around school refusal behaviour and the perceived positive or negative impact of social media on this experience. Participation will involve a semi-structured interview which can be conducted in 1 or 2 parts depending upon the preference of the young person. The first will involve a rapport building session and should take approximately 15-20 minutes. The main interview will then take place taking approximately 60 minutes.

If you wish to contact the researcher or project supervisor at any time; contact details are provided below.

Jemma Goodridge	Dr. Ian Smillie
Postgraduate students	Project supervisor and lecturer
School of Psychology	School of Psychology
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This research project has been reviewed and ethically approved by SREC, if you wish to make a complaint regarding any aspect of this project please contact the Cardiff university ethics team on hcaredeanery@cardiff.ac.uk +44 (0)29 2068 7689 / +44 (0)29 2091 7999.

Appendix 4 – Information Session Letter to Parents

Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Jemma Goodridge, I am a postgraduate student in the School of Psychology, Cardiff University. As part of my postgraduate doctorate in educational psychology, I am carrying out a study to explore the use of social media technology of young people who struggle to attend school, especially young people that are nervous, worried or frightened.

As part of my research I will be attending your child's school provision on _____ for an information session. This will involve meeting with pupils in school so that they can become more familiar with me and I will be discussing the background of the study, what participation will include and provide the chance to ask any question they may have.

If you are happy for your child to take part in the information session, please complete the attached consent form to your child's school.

If your child is interested in participating in the research, further information around the study with be provided and written consent will be required from yourself, before any further contact will be made.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me.

Many thanks
Jemma Goodridge
Trainee Educational Psychologist (Cardiff University)

Jemma Goodridge   Dr Ian Smillie
Postgraduate students   Project supervisor and lecturer
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Appendix 5 – Information Session Parental Consent Form

I give my consent for my son/daughter …………………………………..to take part in the research information session in school.

Signed: ……………………………………………………………….

Parent(s)

Appendix 6 – Information Session Participant Volunteer Form

Name: …………………………………………..

Please tick one of these statements:

☐ Yes, I would be interested in taking part in the research

☐ No thank you, I would prefer not to take part in the research

Appendix 7 – Information Sheet for Participants and Parents

This information sheet contains all the information you may like to know about taking part in this research and if you have any other queries or questions you can contact me or my supervisor. I would like to thank you for taking the time to read this and for your thoughts around taking part.

The aim of this project is to explore the use of social media technology of young people who struggle to attend school, especially young people that are nervous, worried or frightened of attending school. The research that has been done about young people who don't attend school mainly focuses on defining the topic and the factors that impact on a young person being worried about attending school. Despite this area being widely researched, there is little which looks at it from the young person's view and looks at what this means for you. The number of young people who are not attending school due to feeling nervous, being worried or frightened is unknown but statistics suggest that is it around 90 thousand young people in the UK.

I am also interested in asking you how you use social media when you are not attending school. Today social media plays a huge part in our lives with most people having immediate access to social media through smartphones and tablets. It's thought that teenagers spend an average of 27 hours per week online. From this research I am aiming to discover what the positive and negative impact social media use has during times of non-attendance at school.

I am interested in talking to young people who may feel that they are struggling to attend school because they are nervous, worried or frightened as part of my research. I am hoping to understand your unique experiences around not attending school and what you see as the positive or negative impact of social media on this experience. Taking part in the research will include interviews which be conducted in 2 parts; the first session will be getting to know more about you as an individual and should take approximately 15-20 minutes. The next interview should take around 60 minutes where I will ask you questions around your experiences of your difficulties attending school and your social media use.

If you wish to contact the researcher or project supervisor at any time, contact details are provided below:

Jemma Goodridge   Dr. Ian Smillie
Postgraduate students   Project supervisor and lecturer
School of Psychology   School of Psychology
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GoodridgeJL@cardiff.ac.uk   Smillie@cardiff.ac.uk

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Dear Parent/Guardian

I am a postgraduate student in the School of Psychology, Cardiff University. As part of my postgraduate doctorate in educational psychology, I am carrying out a study to explore the use of social media technology of young people who struggle to attend school, especially young people that are nervous, worried or frightened. During this study I will be working with my fieldwork supervisor, Ian Smilie.

During the information session for young people in your child's school provision, they expressed interest in participating in the study. I am interested in talking to young people who may feel that they are struggling to attend school because they are nervous, worried or frightened as part of my research. I am hoping to understand your child's unique experiences around not attending school and what they see as the positive or negative impact of social media on this experience. Taking part in the research will include interviews which be conducted in 2 parts; the first interview will be a general discussion to allow me to develop a rapport and to give your child a chance to feel comfortable in talking me. The next interview should take around 60 minutes where I will ask your child questions around their experiences of their difficulties attending school and social media use. All interviews will take place at your child's school provision.

Enclosed with this letter is an information sheet if you wish to have more information around the background and what the study will involve. If you are happy for your child to participate please complete the enclosed consent form and return to school staff.

Many thanks in advance for considering your child's participation in this project. Please let me know if you require further information.

Regards,
Jemma Goodridge
Trainee Educational Psychologist

Jemma Goodridge   Dr Ian Smillie
Postgraduate students   Project supervisor and lecturer
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School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Consent Form - Anonymous data

I understand that my child's participation in this project will involve a 2 part interview:

- The first interview will be a general discussion to allow the researcher to develop a rapport and to give my child a chance to feel comfortable in talking with the researcher and to allow time for any questions they may have
- The second semi-structured interview will be around my child's experiences of school non-attendance and use of social media which will take approximately 60 minutes of their time

I understand that my child's participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw my child from the study at any time without giving a reason and without loss of school placement privileges.

I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time. I am free to withdraw my child or discuss any concerns with Jemma Goodridge or Ian Smillie.

I understand that the information provided by my child will be held totally anonymously so that it is impossible to trace this information back to my child individually. I understand that this information may be retained indefinitely.

I also understand that at the end of the study I will be provided with additional information and feedback about the purpose of the study.

I understand that findings from this research may be put forward for publication within educational book/journals or discussed at conferences. But only in the anonymised state so no information will with recognisable to individual young people taking part.

I, _____(NAME) give consent for my child _____ to participate in the study conducted by Jemma Goodridge School of Psychology, Cardiff University with the supervision of Ian Smillie.

Signed:

Date:

<u>**Appendix 10 – Pupil Consent Form**</u>

School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Consent Form - Anonymous data

I understand that my participation in this project will involve a 2 part interview:

- The first interview will be a general discussion for the researcher to get to know more about me and to allow time for any questions I may have
- The second semi-structured interview will be around my experience of not attending school and use of social media which will take approximately 60 minutes of my time.

I understand that participation in this study is completely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and it will not impact on my schooling.

I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time. I am free to pull out or discuss my concerns with Jemma Goodridge or Ian Smillie.

I understand that the information provided by me within the interviews will be kept and will not include my name or any information that will identify me. It will not be possible to trace this information back to me individually. I understand that this information may be retained forever.

I also understand that at the end of the study I will be provided with more information and can ask Jemma any questions I may have about my participation.

I understand that findings from this research may be put forward for publication within educational book/journals or discussed at conferences. But only in the anonymised state so no information will with recognisable to individual young people taking part.

I, _____(NAME) consent to participate in the study conducted by Jemma Goodridge School of Psychology, Cardiff University with the supervision of Ian Smillie.

Signed:

Date:

Appendix 11 - Debriefing Forms

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for taking part in this study, without you the research would not be possible.

Within this project, I hope to explore the use of social media technology of young people who struggle to attend school. There may be number of different reasons as to why a young person may not want to attend school that will be individual to them. I hope to explore the experiences of young people that are nervous, worried or frightened of attending school. The research that has been done about young people who don't attend school mainly focuses on defining the topic and the factors that impact on a young person being worried about attending school. Even though this area has a lot of research, there is a very small number that looks at it from the young person's viewpoint. Really looking at your experiences and what they mean for you. The number of young people who are not attending school due to feeling nervous, being worried or frightened is unknown but statistics suggest that is it around 90 thousand young people in the UK.

I am also going to be looking at how you use social media when you are not attending school. Social media plays a huge part in our lives with most people having immediate access to social media through smartphones and tablets. Research suggests that teenagers spend an average of 27 hours per week online. I would like to look at what the positive and negative impact social media use has during times of non-attendance at school and how social media has affected your experiences. The way young people use social media is forever changing and I am aiming to look at what impact this may have on you.

I am hoping to explore with you these areas something which has not been done in research before. I am aiming to explore non-attendance at school and the social media use, including the voice of the young people and getting your experiences from your points of view. Also looking at what you think are the positive and negative effects social media has had on you during this time.

There may be a time where I would like to come back and see you again, please let me know if this is ok with you. The information you provide will be kept private until I have copied it to write form. When this has been done no one will be able to recognize you from what we have discussed; only I will be able to identify individual interviews. The interviews will be transferred into writing 2 weeks after your interview and after this point no-one will be able to trace any information back to you individually, the information will be kept forever by the researcher in a locked cabinet. You can ask for the information you provided to be deleted/destroyed at any time up until it has been transferred to writing and you can have access to the information until this time.

The findings from this research may be put forward for publication within educational book/journals or presented at conferences, but only in the anonymised state so no information will with recognisable to individual young people taking part.

For further information please see:

- https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/feelings-and-symptoms/problems-at-school/

- https://www.moodcafe.co.uk/media/19579/cyp_parents_1_2_web.pdf

- http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/kidsfamilies/youth/Documents/forum-speaker-presentations/2017/school-refusal-parent-handout.pdf

- http://www.babcock-education.co.uk/ldp/absa

If you would like to know anything else about the research or have any other questions contact me anytime:

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Postgraduate students   Project supervisor and lecturer
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GoodridgeJL@cardiff.ac.uk   Smillie@cardiff.ac.uk

If you or your parents/guardians need to speak to someone about any complaints you may have:

Secretary of the Ethics Committee
School of Psychology
Cardiff University
Tower Building
Park Place
Cardiff
CF10 3AT

Tel: 029 2087 0360
Email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

Rapport Building Interview

Gender:
Age:

Hello, how are you today?

I met you at the information session, but I would like to introduce myself and thank you for agreeing to participate, without you my research wouldn't be possible. My name is Jemma and as you know the research I'm doing is around the struggles you may have faced with attending school and the impact social media may have had during this time. All the questions I'm going to ask are trying to find more about your own experience. But before that, I thought it may be nice just to get to know you a little more.

What do you like doing in your spare time?
What do you want to be when you grow up?
Which places in the world would you most like to visit?
What are the three things you would like to do before you die?

How are you enjoying being at this school?
What kinds of social media do you like using?
What kinds of things do you like doing on social media?

It has been lovely getting to know you a little more, and I would like to thank you again for your time and your participation.
Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?
Do you have any questions around the next interview?

Visual presentations for rapport building interviews

Visual presentation of life graph work completed during the rapport building interview
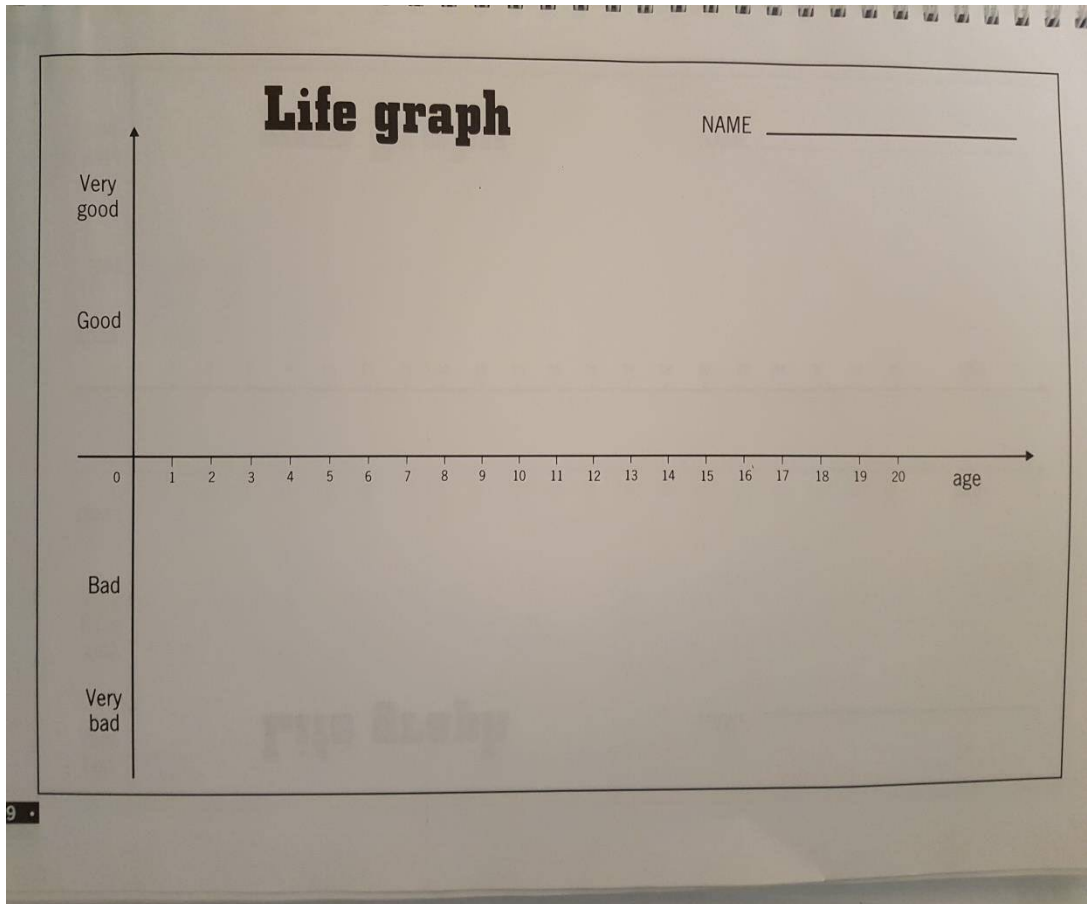
Main Interview

1. Please, could you tell me a bit about what school was like for you?

Probe: What were the reasons for this in your opinion?

2. Can you tell me more about the reasons you stopped attending school?

Probe: What did this feel like for you?

3. Can you tell me a little about what it is like being at home?

Probe: What do you find yourself doing?

4. Could you tell me a little about what you feel are the advantages of using SMT and in what ways it makes your life better?

Probe: could you explain a little more? What, in your opinion, is the main advantage?

5. How do you feel social media has helped you while you were not attending school?

Probe: why do you think this maybe?

6. Could you tell me a little bit about what you feel are the disadvantages of using SMT and in what ways it causes problems in your life or makes you feel sad?

Probe: could you explain a little more? What is the main disadvantage in your opinion?

7. Can you tell me how your school attendance has been affected by social media?

Probe: why do you think this is?

8. Could you explain whether you find it easier or harder to express yourself online?

Probe: could you explain why? When did you begin to feel this way?

9. Is there anything you would like to tell me that I have not already asked you, that you think may be important for me to hear?

*Some Questions have been adapted from Hammond, J. (2017). An Investigation into the Experiences of Adolescents Using Social Media Technology. Unpublished Research Thesis, Cardiff University, Cardiff.

Appendix 13 - Example of data analysis and theme development for PP2

13.An Interview Transcripts for PP2

Pupil 2: no not really, I'm not really into games 75

Researcher: no I me, so what kind of things do you like to do 76 on social media? 77

connecting with People

Staying in contact with old friends and with as new - bring together her friends

SNT is her social interactions with friends

using SMT as a way of Exploring her interests and possibly building on the future. Keeping up to date with current affairs

Pupil 2: well, hummm, on Snapchat I mainly use it for talking 78 to my friend's, so I'm friends with people here and I have 79 friends from my old school and I used to do gymnastics, so so 80 that's like my main contact with my friends on Snapchat. And 81 on Instagram, I'm really into photography so most of my page 82 is like pictures that I've taken or I like to follow people, Like 83 famous people I'm in too, so I like to do that, yeah I like them, 84 I like to do that. 85

Connection with People

Able to remain within friendship group

Researcher: that's fab, So when did you get into photography? 86

SMT using image focus to build her skills and interests

gaining skills

Pupil 2: hummm, about 2 years ago, my mum bought a really 87 nice camera for her birthday, and she didn't really use it that 88 much so she gave it to me and then whenever I went out with 89 friends or whenever we were on holiday I was always take it 90 pictures. it was just for fun but then when I look back at them I 91 come to realise I was actually pretty good at it so then I started 92 getting into it and I did speak to my Mum about possibly doing 93 it at college because my aunt at the moment is about to go 94 into college and she's also thinking of doing photography so 95 yeah I just got really into it. because I realise those pretty good 96 at it. 97

Learning new thing

Researcher: so what kind of things do you like taking photos 98 of? 99

Connecting with her family giving herself a role in the family Events

Possible that she does this to limit the interactions, being behind the Camera She has something to hide behind

Pupil 2: hummm, mainly like plants and of nature and urrr 100 animals, and when I'm out with family I'm always the one will 101 take like family pictures for people. but yeah are usually take 102 pictures of nature and animals and stuff. 103

Connection

Researcher: fabulous, yeah you can make a really good living 104 out of that, we're just planning our wedding now, and wedding 105 photographers earn a good bit of money. especially if you're 106 good, is definitely something to keep in mind if there's 107 something you enjoy. 108

Allow her to limit in-person interactions

Pupil 2: yeah 109

Researcher: so have you got any questions you'd like to ask 110 me before we going to the main interview? 111

Pupil 2: no not really 112

Researcher: are you happy to continue? 113

Pupil 2: yeah, yeah. 114

3

Researcher: humm so this is all about your experience, so 115
there's no trick questions it's all about how you found things 116
and what it was like for you really, so could you please tell me 117
a little bit about what school was like for you, your mainstream 118
School? 119

Pupil 2: humm, primary school was pretty easy, I had 120
friends. and I was really into my school work with Primary 121
School, like I wasn't brilliant but humm, I had some trouble with 122
my family when I was at primary school but I could tell my 123
teachers and they were really helpful. so that wasn't really too 124
bad but then around year 6 in the summer after I left Primary 125
School my anxiety started to get really bad, and I was having 126
panic attacks. so when I went to mainstream it just became 127
difficult because I was always leaving class or not going in at 128
all because of it. and then that made me not have so many 129
opportunities to make friends because I was always out of 130
school, so I did still have friends from my primary school and 131
when I was there I tried to get my head down but I just didn't 132
go in at all. yeah just in going at all and when I was there I was 133
always running out of class because of my anxiety. 134

Researcher: yeah, that must have been really difficult for you 135

Pupil 2: yeah it was, 136

Researcher: so did you go up to comprehensive with a lot of 137
your friends from primary? 138

Pupil 2: yeah mostly, there was 5 kids from my primary 139
school that went to Dyffryn Taf, and one moved to England, 140
and then the rest of my you all went to Greenhill. yeah I had, 141
there was like the majority of my group of friends, go to 142
Greenhill. 143

Researcher: what do you feel with your reasons for 144
struggling, the way you did in comprehensive? 145

Pupil 2: hummm, what's something that always triggered my 146
anxiety is big crowds, so that was a problem being in a huge 147
school with a lot of people, that was a big issue and in, I'd say 148
in the last 2 years I've done a lot of growing up so when I first 149
went to mainstream I was very immature, I was not so self 150
confident, I wasn't, I wouldn't talk to people I wouldn't stand 151
up for myself so I was just very quiet and I kept to myself a lot 152
so when troubles did start happening, and then I couldn't stick 153
up for myself so I think that was a problem as well. so it's just 154
confidence really and anxiety with the main ones. 155

Researcher : thank you. So you're 10 now aren't you? 156

Pupil 2: Year 9 now, I'll be going into Year 10 in September. 157

She already had fears about going to comprehensive - Preparing for comp

↳ She explains feels it is out of her control. - Panic attacks in Year 6

↳ I felt unable to catch up - friends had gone ahead without her - being left behind

Implying she struggled with friends in comprehensive

Enjoyed Primary School

Even though she had trouble in her home life she felt comfortable and had a place in primary school
Primary School felt Comfortable + a safe place for her
Feelings of Panic even before Starting Comprehensive
Physical Symptoms associated with her anxiety.

Feelings of it all becoming to much and drawing attention to her by leaving class
Affecting her friendships and free taking away the opportunities to make friends

Feelings of wanting to run away

Primary School friend had expanded their friendship group, felt this opportunity was taken away by her anxiety
Missing out due to her anxiety would take over
Feels of having no controll - anxiety

Small school environment
Splitting up of the friendship groups
Her support network - going to different schools?

Comprehensive triggering anxieties

Huge - feeling of it being a big to many people in the school
feeling less of a person because of her anxiety
felt young in school, feeling like a child - wasn't grown up enough. - Didn't feel ready for comp
developing as a person.
feeling of growing up
Lots of things she felt she couldn't do her herself.
Lacking in confidence.

Bullying Experience? - When problems did happen → Couldn't stick up for myself
Development of confidence and self-esteem

Struggling with friendship in-person

Panic overthinking her feelings

Physically feeling ill

becoming overwhelming

Anxiety taking away her Experiences

Wanting to get away

Being left behind

No control or Being out of control
Anxiety controlling her

Feeling Small
Everything being too big

Personal development

Lacking in Confidence

Bullying

Building Confidence and self-esteem

4

Researcher: so When did you come into the school? 158

Pupil 2: humm, I came here at like.......... the tail end of year 159
8, I left Greenhill at like, mid year 7, and then I was 160
homeschooled and tutored at the start of year 8, so, I came161
here at Christmas time in year 8. so humm the end of year 8.162

Researcher: can you tell me a little bit more about your 163
experience when you stop attending School, sorry to take you 164
back. 165

Pupil 2: it's fine, laughs. humm......I'd say the first to 3 months166
of primary school, of secondary school were pretty good and 167
my attendance wasn't bad. and my anxiety wasn't terrible and 168
then I'd say, my, I started getting like anxiety and getting 169
panic attacks, like pretty, at the start of year 7 so it was pretty 170
quickly. Like it wasn't good for a long time, humm yeah, but at 171
the start of year 7 started to get pretty bad. 172

Researcher: what was that like for you? 173
Pupil 2: hummm.......It was bad because no one really knew 174
what it was, and like my brother who has Autism and ADHD, 175
and in primary school I was very close to my friends and like 176
they knew about my brother and what he was going through, 177
so when I started showing my anxiety they automatically 178
thought I had the same, like I was whatever. so it was quite 179
embarrassing because they didn't know what it was, so they 180
just kind of scenes stuff, but it was just difficult having to deal 181
with it, as well as being in school it was just a load of pressure 182
and stress. it was just quite a lot. 183
Researcher: and you was quite young, you know, did you 184
know what it was yourself? 185

Pupil 2: not really, like when I first started getting like, proper 186
panic attacks, my mum just thought that it was like, just, he 187
didn't really know what like a panic attack was, she just 189
thought like I was getting overwhelmed. so we didn't really 190
think anything of it but when it started happening like more and 191
more often then..... like..... the symptoms I was getting before 192
were like the same, she realised actually it might be 193
something more. so then we started like looking into it, once 194
we did, we realised what it was and then I got help as well.195
when I first started getting them, Which was just before I 196
started to get overwhelmed, my mum just thought it was really 197
sensitive, but yeah. 198

Researcher: so can you tell me a little bit about what it was 199
like being at home, for you during that period? 200

Pupil 2: hummm.... Well When I started school and I was201
having my panic attacks, it was pretty difficult cos I just come 202
home crying or upset. and then my mum didn't really know203
what to do. and then I used to start getting like, wasn't getting 204

13.B - Initial theme development for PP2

13.C - Initial Master theme development for Pupil group

13.D - Initial themes for PP2

PP2

Theme 1 - Difficulties in School
- Wanting to be at home
- Feeling Small
- Feeling trapped
- Bullying
- SMT - No escaping

Theme 2 - Anxiety Controlling life
- Anxiety Controlling her
- Physical feelings
- Anxiety taking away experiences
- Panic taking over
- Anxiety impacting on family life
- Becoming Overwhelmed
- Being out of Control

Theme 3 - Negative Emotional Responses
- Feeling alone
- Frustration
- Lacking Confidence
- Wanting to escape
- Shame around school refusal
- Worthlessness
- Guilt
- Isolation
- Helplessness

Theme 4 - SMT improving quality of Life
- Personal Development
- SMT bringing on Positive feelings
- Controlling anxiety
- Building Confidence and self-esteem
- High levels of SMT use
- Developing aspirations
- Learning through SMT
- Providing Courage
- Reassurance via smt
- Giving Freedom

Theme 5 - Connections to others
- Connections to others
- Able to maintain friendships
- SMT widening friendships group
- Controlling interactions
- Limiting in-person pressures but enables interactions
- Support from friends
- Pressure from others
- Being left behind

Theme 6 - Impact of SMT
- Disinhibition effect
- Ambivalence around positive effects
- Vicious circle
- Dissociation of negative impacts
- No escape from SMT
- Smt providing feelings of other People having perfect lives

13.E - Initial Master theme development for Pupil group

Master Pupil Participants

Theme 1 - The Experience of School
- Bullying
- Feeling trapped
- Overwhelmed by School
- School Transition to Comprehensive

Theme 2 - The Impact of anxiety
- Anxiety taking over life
- Feeling overwhelmed
- isolation
- Helplessness
- Worthlessness

Theme 3 - Connections with others
- Difficulties Social interactions
- Improving quality of friendships
- Social Interaction
- Feeling left behind
- Connection with others
- Ability to maintain friendships

Theme 4 - Positive impacts of SMT
- Personal development
- Enhancing Positive feelings
- Increasing Confidence

Theme 5 - Consequences of SMT use
- Perfect lives of others
- Disinhibition effect
- Pressure from Peers
- No escape from bullying
- Ambivalence around SMT use

13.F - Final themes for PP2

13.G - Final theme for Pupil Participants

Appendix 14 – Pupil super-ordinate theme and theme figures

Theme 1 – The self
- Unique experiences to self
- Developing the self
- Increased confidence
- Leaving 'old me' behind

Theme 2 – The school experiences
- School felling unsafe
- Overwhelming
- Needing to escape
- Feeling small

Theme 3 – Experience of anxiety
- Preventing experiences
- Taking over life

Theme 4 – Connectedness to others
- SMT improving quality of life
- Staying connected
- Development of Friendships
- Development of confidence in communicating

Theme 5 – SMT consequences
- Perception of bullying
- Online safety
- Dissociation of negative impact
- Protection of SMT

PP1 – Super-ordinate theme and theme

Theme 1 School Life
- Transition Difficulties
- Overwhelmed by comprehensive
- School being safe to unsafe
- Perception of bullying

Theme 2 Anxiety controlling life
- SMT bringing on positive feelings
- Negative emotions responses
- Taking away life experiences
- Anxiety impacting on others
- Anxiety controlling her
- Isolation from others

Theme 3 SMT improving quality of life
- Personal Development
- Confidence Building
- Allowing her to be the 'real me'
- Developing aspirations
- Providing Freedom
- Things would be worse without it

Theme 4 Maintaining Connections
- Connection to friends
- Feeling supports
- SMT enables control over interactions
- Limiting in person pressures

Theme 5 SMT Impact
- Dissociation of negative impacts
- Circles of disengagement
- Feeling left behind
- No escape
- Perfect lives of others

PP2 - Super-ordinate theme and theme

196

Theme 1 – Importance of education
- Importance of education
- Conflict within
- Impact of being labelled
- Not fitting in
- Choices removed

Theme 2 – Emotional responses
- Impacts on mental health
- Feeling out of control
- Loneliness
- Worthlessness

Theme 3 – Connection with others
- Belonging
- Social interaction difficulties
- Isolation
- Exclusion from peer group
- SMT – only way of socialising
- Feeling Connected

Theme 4 –Effects of SMT
- Difficulties finding the positives
- FOMO
- Consuming thinking
- Disinhibition effect
- Being left behind
- Other people's perfect lives
- Adding to negative experiences

PP3 – Super-ordinate theme and theme

Theme 1 School experience
- Experience of Bullying
- Vulnerability
- Normalising experiences
- Impacts on mental health
- Being trapped in school
- Wanting to escape

Theme 2 – Connection with others
- Difficulties with social interactions and making friends
- Being left behind
- Social isolation
- SMT easier to maintain

Theme 3 –SMT usage
- Having fun
- SMT being a friend
- Online gaming
- Online safety

Theme 4 – The self
- Personal development
- Self-protection

PP4 – Super-ordinate and theme

197

Appendix 15 - Pupil results table of supporting quotations

Pupil Master super-ordinate theme and themes

Master Table of Themes			
Super-ordinate Theme	**Themes**	**Participants and related text**	**Page/Line**
The experience of school	Feeling Trapped/ wanting to escape	PP1 – to get my head away from it	5.134
		PP4 - and I'd try, I'd try to find ways to get out of it	3.76
		PP2 - I like it, I need it's easier to make friends. Everyone is really nice. It can feel sometimes like….. there's not a lot of freedom, can feel a bit enclosed sometimes	2.63-65
	Difficult transitions	PP1 – bit different for me cos … s which is a small school	4.98
		PP2 - primary school was pretty easy, I had friends. and I was really into my school work with Primary School, like I wasn't brilliant but hum … then around year 6 in the summer after I left Primary School my	4. 120-127

		anxiety started to get really bad, and I was having panic attacks.	
	School feeling unsafe	PP1 – (Home) felt calm and relaxing, coz in school It was like out of my comfort zone	4.96
		PP2 - so when I went to mainstream it just became difficult because I was always leaving class or not going in at all because of it	4.127-129
		PP4 - like in my old school, I was afraid	4.98
	Experience of Bullying	PP1 – people would sometimes be, like nasty to me	3.87-88
		PP2- Hummm bullying, that was quite bad, just like, I thought like I could get away from school, to get away from all that	8.293
		PP2 - That it affected me at school because I wasn't going to see them anyway, so yeah, but it was definitely and the disadvantage as to why I left, because of the people who are bullying me on it	9.347-349
		PP3- I had been going to the teachers and then I was being, being bullied more because I was going to the teachers. so I didn't go to the teachers then. and then the girls that will bullying me, when I would react, they would then go down and say P has done this	3. 77-82
		PP4 - you see I got bullied a lot in my old school, like in the end it ended up, a kid knocked me out so I ended up leaving the school … everyday, everyday I was scared trying to find ways to get out of it, and it just scared me a lot, in my old school	1. 12-17

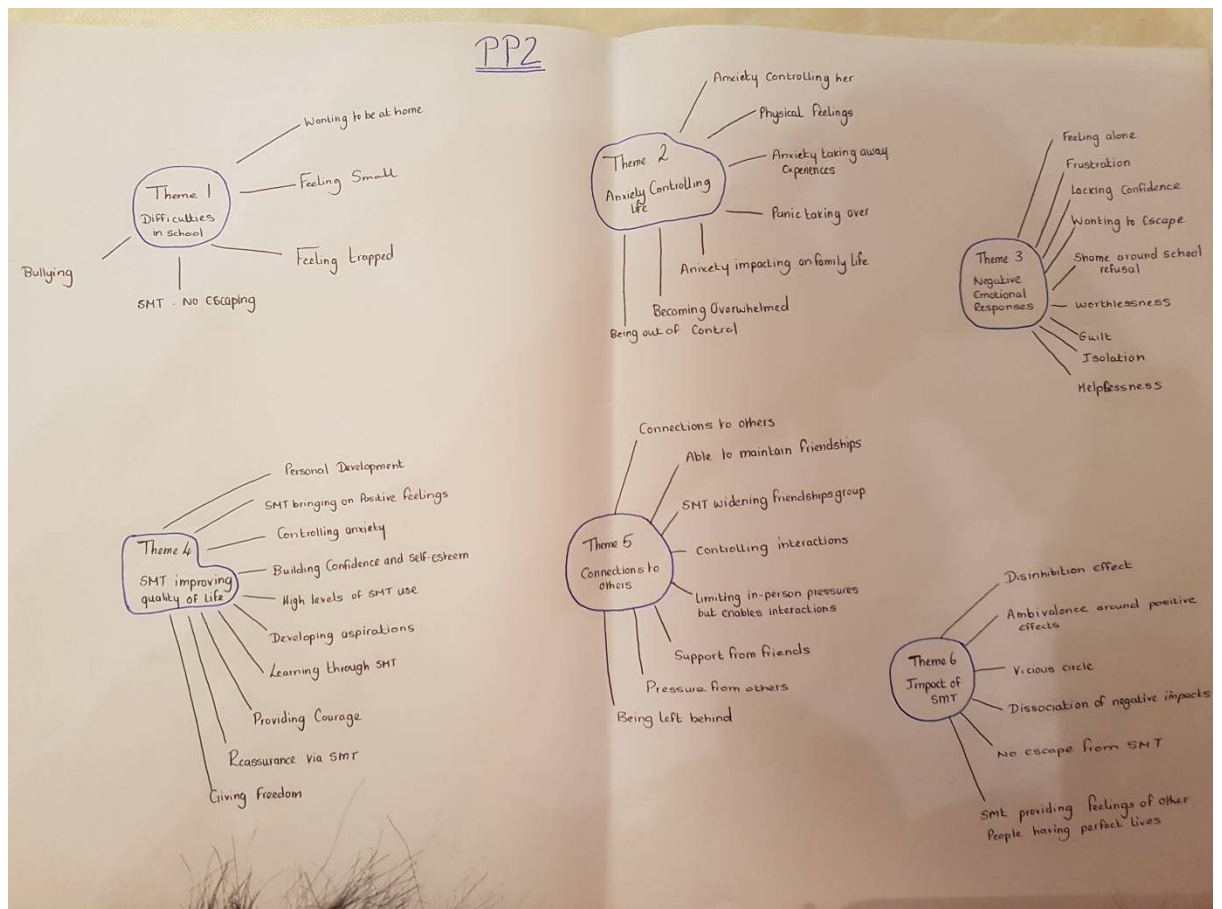| Emotional Responses	Range of Emotions experienced	PP4 - because I'm the kid who doesn't it back, I was considered an easy target. because when they hit me it I was always, told by my friends if you want to stop getting bullied you need to show them that your not just going to sit there while they do it	2.39-43
		PP2- When I started school and I was having my panic attacks , it was pretty difficult cos I just come home crying or upset	5.201-202
		PP3 - my mum probably didn't want me. and like, I've had a lot of issues with my dad, like my dad goes for long periods of time, and that was like, at this point I haven't seen him for a year. so I was just like well he doesn't want me and she doesn't want me	2.69-72
	Isolations/ loneliness	PP3 – and your just alone all the time, then you can get lonely	14.670-671
		PP1 – some of my mates now didn't know what was wrong with me coz I didn't tell them	7.203-204
		PP2 - I didn't really do much, I didn't really do any work at home, I just kind of, stayed at home all day, I stayed in bed, I watch TV, I didn't really talk to anyone … the only days I would leave the house was on a Monday, when I had therapy and then whenever my mum and I needed to go to the shop, and then apart from that I was just in the house. I do nothing really	6.228-234
	Preventing life experience	PP1 – it was hard for me and I couldn't attend	3.89
		PP2 - when me and my family, we'ed like try to go out for the whole day but then I'd have a panic attack, it was just like, it wasn't, wasn't the best, because it was getting in the way of my family doing stuff as well.	6.205-210

	I am an anxious person	PP1- My mainstream School, I couldn't really cope with the crowds, and people would sometimes be, like nasty to me, so I just, couldn't go.	3.87-89
		PP2 - what's something that always triggered my anxiety is big crowds, so that was a problem being in a huge school with a lot of people, that was a big issue and in	4.146-148
		PP2 - like when I first started getting like, proper panic attacks, my mum just thought that it was like, just, she didn't really know what like a panic attack was, she just thought like I was getting overwhelmed. so we didn't really think anything of it but when it started happening like more and more often then….. like….. the symptoms I was getting before were like the same, she realised actually it might be something more	5.186-194
		PP2 - I just felt like I was... ruining stuff for my family, which was just making me more upset, and it just kind of made it all worse, yeah it just made me feel like really bad about myself	6.205-206
		PP4 - in my old school, I was afraid, and I'd try, I'd try to find ways to get out of it	3.76-77
Social Connections	Challenges of social interactions	PP1 – on the PS4, say I'm playing with my mate I could meet his friends that are Friends and like we can like, if they know them like obviously, if you didn't know them then you can become friends cos we've spoke to them, tell them who we are and got close with them then	7.234-237
		PP1 - if it was like in person I'd struggle a bit then, like the first 10 minutes I'd really struggle but then when I get to know them, and start speaking to them I can come out of my shell, where online it's a lot easier because I can just speak to them and when they speak back it's much easier for me but it can take me awhile online to sometimes	8.245-249
		PP2- I feel like people judge me and even though I guess people can comment on	10.382-388

		social media it's like, I can't see them and like they're not actually saying it to me I can just read the comment ignore it and just move on, where as in real life like if I was talking to someone about hobby I'm into if they judge me for it I just can't, I just kind of feel like it's awkward, cos it's just yeah like weird	13.588
		PP3 – like it's just I don't get on with people	7.251-255
		PP4 – It was ……… bad because I didn't have too many friends. Researcher: is that something you struggled with? PP4-Making friend? Yeah. Like when everyone is getting friend	
	Fearing loss of friendships	PP1 – when I left school I thought I might not… be there friend again	6.165
		PP2 - because if I lost contact with them, like, I wouldn't have been in contact with anyone probably and I know it would have made me feel a lot worse.	7.279-281
		PP3 - that made everything a lot more difficult, for me and I'm guessing for a lot more the people like me, who would have said, yeah like I'm in a friendship group, and I like got all these mate, and then you get a message like or do you want to hang out , and they'll be like on no one busy tonight or no im ill, and then, you look on maps and see that all your mates were hanging out together without you	16.756-761
	Creating feeling of being left behind	PP2 - it did make me upset seeing my friends who were still at school and doing well and going out with their friends, And then I wouldn't be able to do that cos of my anxiety, so……...yeah it was…….. something that like, really did upset me	8.295-299
		PP3 - I started to find it difficult again when I got my phone, cos like from my friendship group and stuff, they would like post videos at lunch and like on their stories and stuff an it was just	14.635-641

		like……………… I'm not there. ………But…………..an yeh… like obviously wanted to be back, but I knew……. but I couldn't. and a knew even if there was like, even if there was, if it had been a possibility it would have been the right choice	
	Feeling connected with others	PP1 - yeah, a lot my friends I stayed in contact with (via SMT) from there, Some of them I come up from primary with and we are still like, my best mates now. I have a lot of friends, mates from being here.	4.108-110
		PP2 - on Snapchat I mainly use it for talking to my friend's, so I'm friends with people here and I have friends from my old school and I used to do gymnastics, so that's like my main contact with my friends on Snapchat	3.78-81
		PP3 - I only really used Facebook to talk to like, my family members who didn't have Instagram and Snapchat … Snapchat I used to communicate, I didn't really talk to a lot of people in here because we all fell out, but I had a couple of mates…….. I had 3……. but then Instagram I just used to… like…. see what people were doing. I mostly followed like famous people	12.543-550
		PP3 - hummm…. Socialising. Because I don't go out in the evening	12.558
		PP4 – I use it (SMT) just to be silly with my friends	5.166
	Maintaining friendships	PP1 - like message you my friends means a lot, coz because when I left school, I thought I may not like, might not be there friend again, but with social media and messaging them, speaking to them, it's made me like best mates with them now. so it's better in a way social media has done that	6.164-167
		PP2- staying in contact with friends, so	7.269-

		that I wasn't, so that I didn't feel completely alone and that's about it really just staying in contact with those people even if I couldn't go in	272
		PP2 - don't make me feel like I wasn't on my own, it makes me feel like, as if I wasn't losing my friends, and it's just….. it made me feel happy to feel like I could stay out of school when I needed to but then I would still have them there. and because if I lost contact with them, like, I wouldn't have been in contact with anyone probably and I know it would have made me feel a lot worse	7.275-281
impacts of SMT use	Increasing confidence	PP1 – start speaking to them and I can come out of my shell	8.247
		PP1 – it's help me because I've kind of come out of my skin abit coz when I left school, I wasn't in the best place but now I have come out of my skin, because of that and I still see my friends. Like all of it. I've come out now, and I've turned into this. Yeah.	6.189-192
		PP2 -probably like last couple of months I really started to not care about what people think and just like do what I want, and before that, I was just like not put in anything up or posting a lot because I think is that will like worth posting I didn't because I wanted people not to judge me, yes so just like very recently I've just started doing what they want and being who I wanna be	10.291-397
	SMT improving quality of friendships	PP1 - like message you my friends means a lot, coz because when I left school, I thought I may not like, might not be there friend again, but with social media and messaging them, speaking to them, it's made me like best mates with them now. so it's better in a way social media has	6.164-167

		done that	
		PP2- staying in contact with friends, so that I wasn't, so that I didn't feel completely alone and that's about it really just staying in contact with those people even if I couldn't go in	7.269-272
		PP2 - don't make me feel like I wasn't on my own, it makes me feel like, as if I wasn't losing my friends, and it's just….. it made me feel happy to feel like I could stay out of school when I needed to but then I would still have them there. and because if I lost contact with them, like, I wouldn't have been in contact with anyone probably and I know it would have made me feel a lot worse	7.275-281
	Dissociation of negative impacts	PP1 - get hate messages and someone may like act on the hate message, it could be, or go like very wrong and in some cases people have like said what they've done, And like killed themselves	6.196-198
		PP2 - probably people feeling, bad about themselves because on social media people don't put bad things about the life, they don't post about what's going on in what's upsetting them. they only posted what's good and then make it seem as though their life is amazing, then if there is somebody who is going through something, whether it's depression or whatever, if they see that it can be quite upsetting, they feel as if everyone is so amazing, how everyone is having a great life and they just stuck, I probably say that's quite bad and it can make you feel a bit worse about yourself	8.318-327
	No escape	PP1 – Get hate messages … sometimes people may act on hate messages… and like kill themselves	6.196-198
		PP2 - bullying, that was quite bad, just	8.292-

		like, I thought like I could get away from school, to get away from all that, but it was always still online anyway even if I was out of school. and then I also just like, it did make me upset seeing my friends who were still at school and doing well and going out with their friends, And then I wouldn't be able to do that cos of my anxiety, so………yeah it was…….. something that like, really did upset me	299
		PP3 - and people who like adding me to groups chats and stuff, and just like talking about me, and if I left they just like add me back. so there was this one where hummm, where people said they'd wish I'd been tasered and that, they were like just been really horrible and saying like, that nobody likes me and I have no friends, that I'm a massive screw up and that's why my dad doesn't want anything to do with me…….and that's when…….. it did make things like really hard. And on Instagram there was hummm, one of the main girls that bullied me, there were two main girls, hummm one of them, basically she was telling me to like kill myself, and saying that……. she was going to make my life hell, And that she knew she'd ruin my life but that she hadn't done it thorough enough. And basically she was just like ….saying all the things that she….. And, so that was like …………	15.692-704
			16.748-751
		PP3 - like I said once they've sent it, you've got that message, and you can look back on it……………... as many times as you want. because that message is there, so you can never forget, what people have said to you because……………. cos you can just see it……	
	Seeing the 'perfect' lives of others	PP2 – people feeling, bad about themselves because on social media people don't put bad things about the life, they don't post about what's going on in what's upsetting them. they only posted what's good and then make it seem as though their life is amazing, then if there	8.318-326

is somebody who is going through something, whether it's depression or whatever, if they see that it can be quite upsetting, they feel as if everyone is so amazing, how everyone is having a great life and they just stuck PP3 - there's the whole, people who put everything that's going positively and then when people are feeling negative, they, you just look on and you're like…………………….right, ok. everyone's got that perfect life	16.752-754

Large Sample – Identifying recurrent themes					
Super-ordinate theme Themes	**Pupil 1**	**Pupil 2**	**Pupil 3**	**Pupil 4**	**Present in over half of samples**
The Experience of school	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Experience of bullying	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
School feeling unsafe	✓	✓		✓	✓
Difficult transition	✓	✓		✓	✓
Feeling trapped/wanting to escape	✓	✓		✓	✓
Emotional Responses	✓	✓	✓		✓
Range of emotional experienced	✓	✓	✓		✓
Isolation/loneliness		✓	✓		
I am an anxious person	✓	✓		✓	✓
Preventing life experiences	✓	✓	✓		✓
Social connections	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Challenges of social interaction	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fearing loss of friendships	✓	✓	✓		✓
Creating feeling of		✓	✓	✓	✓

being left behind					
Feeling connected to others	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Maintaining friendships	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Impacts of SMT use	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Increased confidence	✓	✓			
SMT improving quality of friendships	✓			✓	
Dissociation of negative impacts	✓	✓			
No escape from bullying	✓	✓	✓		✓
Seeing the 'perfect' lives of others		✓	✓		

Appendix 16 – Representative sample of author's research journal

10th January 2019

After adventually finding all the journals I'm feeling quiet excited about this project. The reading is really interesting me. I'm only disappointed about how my work plans have been going. I was hoping to get most of my work done by now. I was hoping to have the proposal and the SSRP Literature review completed over christmas and havent managed to complete either. I need to start thinking outside the box when doing searches for literature, when Ian pointed me in ther right direction I found lots of research although I still dont understand how I didnt find any when the wording I used was in the title of most of them. I should have been able to do this myself tho. I need to start developing a resource bank and files which gather information around different areas of work within Education of Psychology as well as a file which holds Resources etc.

Any way back to Thesis; I really feel their is a gap in the literature around School refusal and their experiences with social media even though their are commonalities between the 2, such as links with mental health and Bullying.

I've also decided to start a notes journal of things I think of when I think them. By the time I come to writing things down half of them are out of my head.

I still like the idea of researching the positive impact as well as the negative impact of social Media by YP who are school refusers. When the proposal is complete I need to do some research around how I can access participants. Maybe arranging that visit to Stepping Stones.

In terms of how I'm going to do the Research, after speaking to Ian grounded theory has gone out the window. As I thought I'm not actually developing a theory around this, But trying to explore the experiences of the pupils. Sticking to IPA is the way to go to achieve what I'm hoping from the Interviews.

In Method writing about the way that it will be written for young people and the reasons.

IPA
low level, whats this like for them.
Think about questions and interview Schedule.
First few questions - Probing
IPA Start broadly - Narrative question
give Part ~~any~~ Opportunity to tell their story
Broad + open - Start Narrative + broad questions
My questions are dictating whats important.

less - Leave it to the individual to tell me whats important to them.
general Non-attendaning
then Build to Experience of social Media of someone who doesnt attend schol

inclusion Critia.
How to get information without it like and interview
What do you like doing, favorite activities.
Getting to know you Questions with funda

~~Good Morning~~

I feel a little bit behind in the thesis process after only managing to get 2 interviews over the summer and although one was over 30 minutes and I felt that I had a lot of good information. I feel I need more data than whats been gathered so far. I also feel that the interviews are giving me a lot of positive and strength of social media which may be the experiences that these young people have had but discussions around social media from the staff that work with this group of young people ~~will~~ tell a different side to the story.

Without feeling that I am biased towards one way of social media use, I want to gather more data that is a true reflection of the young peoples experience, after hearing these two differents sides.

Why's to ensure that I get I clear picture from ~~the~~ data would be to not only look at the experience from the young peoples point of view but also from the point of view of the staff members who work closely with them.

To ensure that the experience of both young people and staff members capurcher the same data interview questions for young people will be adapted from the young persons questions. Exploring not so much about the experience of not attending school but of the experiences with social media that they see with the young people.

It was interesting that ~~and~~ the young people interviewed percieved social media to play a positive role in building their confidence and their abilities to support them attending school, while discussions with staff tell of a number of issues with social media and problems within the group.

To ensure that this biased does not ~~affect~~ affect my analysis of the data, I feel I should check my analysis with someone but also checking the themes with another group of anxious and phobic school non-attenders. A way of doing this would be through a Q-sorting analysis of the themes developed from the data and giving blank options for the young people to add things that they feel are missing or import[ant]

I also feel its important to think about my ontology and epistemology, and how these changes fit with these. I feel its important to make sure that this is clear specially when preparing for my VIVA. I feel I need to do more research in this to ensure I can back up my position and why I've used this position and how this position has affected/impacted on each decision.

Changing Interview approach with Young People.

After supervision with Ian and thinking about the amount of data I was getting from the interviews with young people it was decided that a change of approach within the interview could allow me to build more of a relationship This follows inline with the Constructivist research paradigm that the research will evolve and change as the study progresses.

It was agreed that a visual presentation during the introduction interview would ~~~~ help ~~~~ YP get into the mindset of social media and really getting them to ~~~~ think about what kind of social media they use and their experiences with each. Also thinking about developing a time-line in an activity style rather than questions. Helping them to think of different stages throughout their life and where they felt at different points in their education they can then use this as a visual aid throughout the interview.

We also discussed how the interviews often have a positive view of social media and struggle to see the negative

impact school media can have, even though discussion with staff can often impact discribe a very different picture to the data discribed with the interview.

It was considered that when interviewing if the YP are struggling to relate the question to themselves it would be beneficial to then relate it to how they feel more generally or if they can think of an experience of someone else and then relating that back to themselves.

Thinking of Constructionist Paradigm and how the researcher Construction can evolve as the research does, how its important to attempt to understand the Complex world of lived experience from the point of those who live it. I started to think about the constructions of the staff members working with this group of young people and how their constructions are very different. I felt that it was important to gather these constructions and how it can add to the experience of the data study. I felt it was important to develop the questions not only in the IPA experimental style. but to include not only the experiences of the staff but to relate this to the research question.

Exploring the experience of the young people but from their view/construction, then asking them about their constructions but then relating it back to an experience that they can relate back to involving the young people.

Hopefully this will allow us to get data from a number of different constructions.

Exploration of social media.

Script about opening and closing around interviews.
→ is that ok and giving them to chance to read think about Participation and giving them a head up about whats coming

Relaxed way.

Whats going to work for each individual Participant.

Medical.
Acknowledging literature is medical because.
General + your research remember to say away from Medical teams.

Work to be done Speaking around Why think they are their and tap into their language
Why do they think their in the Unit?

What have adult told they are there? Use their terminology and explain in Methodology. and explain why and why its different in Papers for the YP (Appendix)

211

What I could have done
feel would improve.

* Provided a measure of SM use or Something like toMo assessment.

* Control group of yp who attend school. Comparitive message.

↳ Could have completed the child anxiety Life interference Scale to further Explore Anixous behaviour or even the school Refusal Ccale.

• only Briefly Explores the reasons behind School refusal behaviour → ← more could have been done to Explore this experience. with depper analysis around their Social media usuage

• All yp access from Same Setting, So although IPA discribes the individual Experience of SMT and School Refusal. STaff interview would all be exploring the Same children → experiences within the Specialist Provision would be Simular.

→ Need to you Literature to Create a Link. the 2 and why they Might be interesting.

* Ninging together Key Pieces.

✓ Experiences rather that understanding Both non-attending + social media.
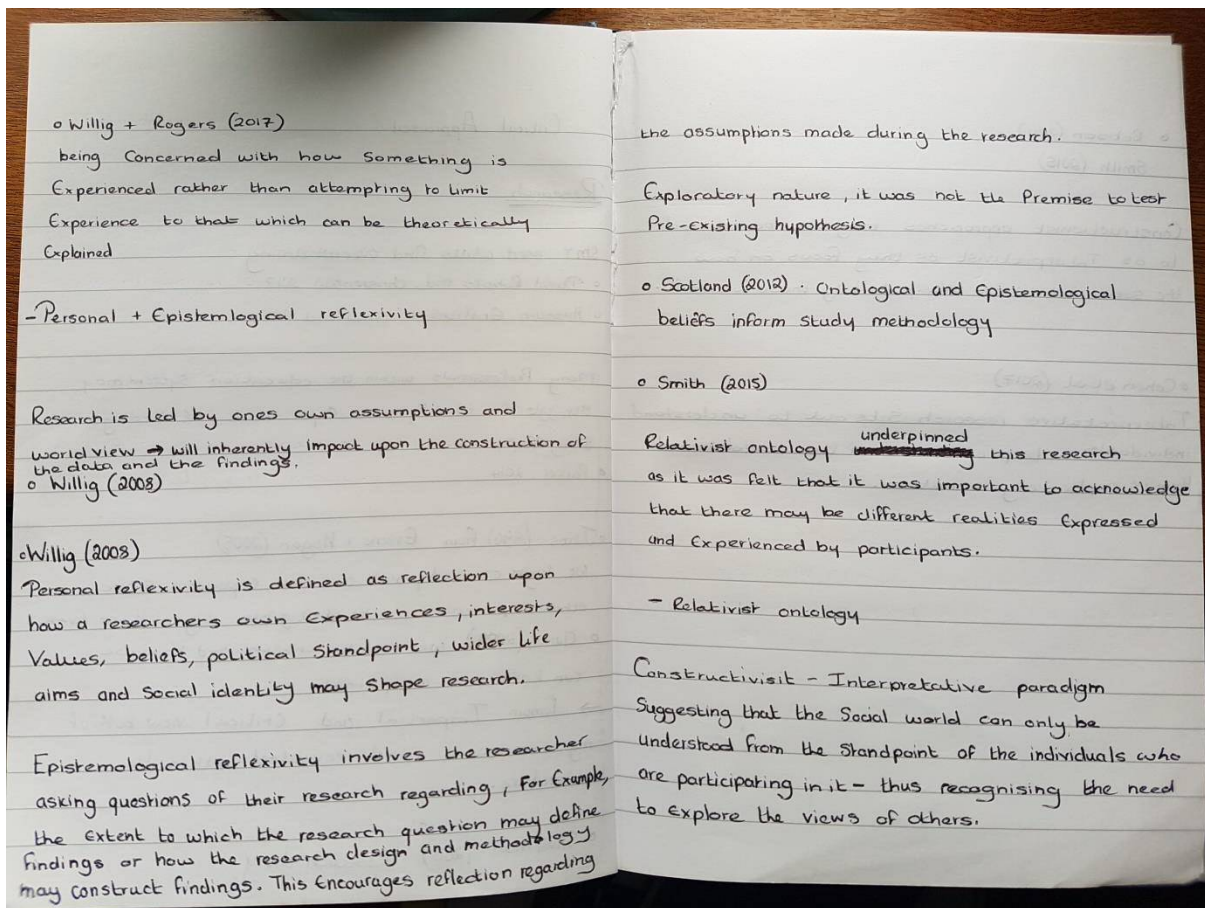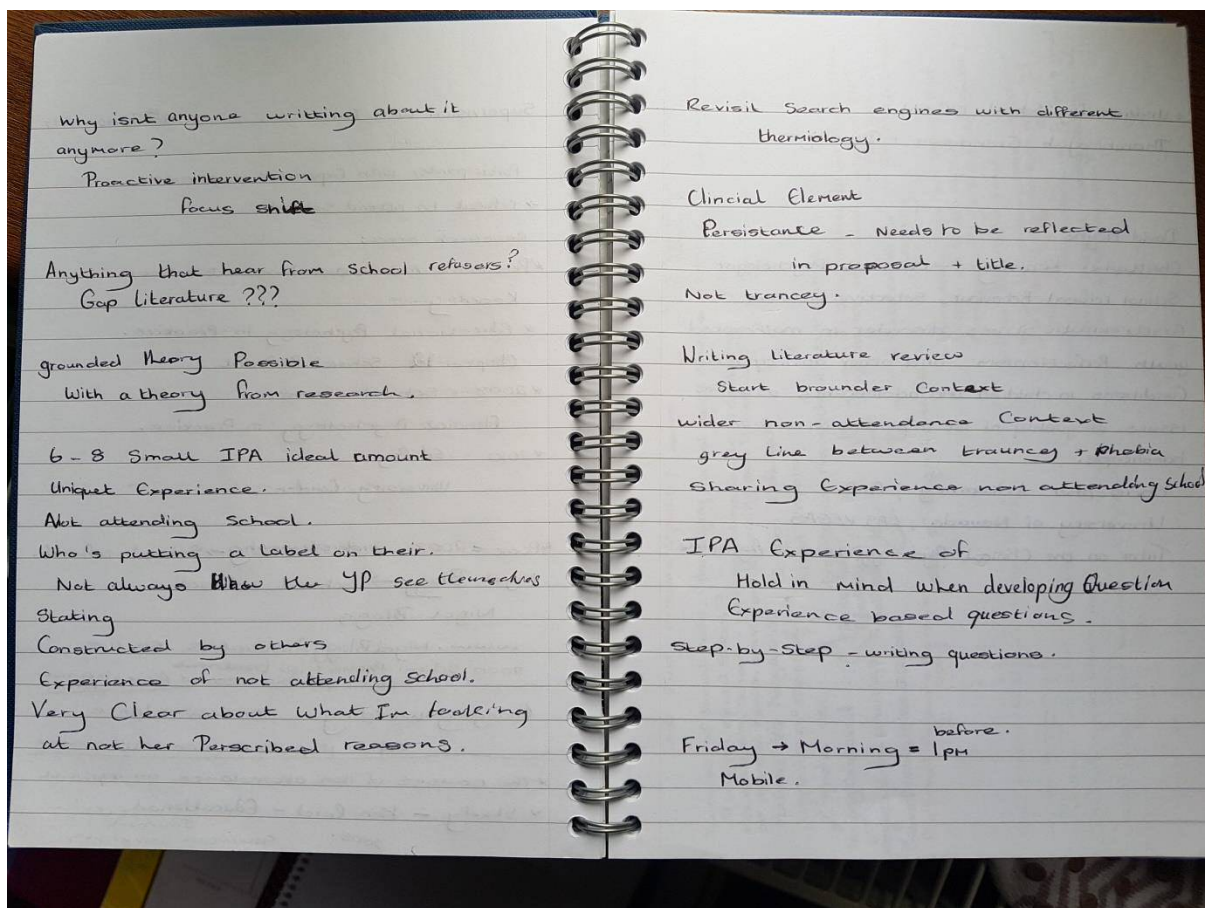* Participates = 2 things ⊏ non-attendance Social media. inclusion criteria.

* 14-18 years.
* Need to say about Plan to access support if nessarcy. + what it will look like.

Open questions - general so ok.

Rapport buliding and talc about it what kind of things do you like doing? Questions informally asked informal and having bit of a chat 2 sections ⊏ worm up → Possibility of returning Focused. depend on individual.

Why isnt anyone writting about it anymore?
　　Proactive intervention
　　　　Focus shift

Anything that hear from School refusers?
　　Gap literature ???

grounded theory Possible
　　With a theory from research.

6 - 8 Small IPA ideal amount
Uniquet Experience.
Not attending School.
Who's putting a label on their.
　Not always How the YP see themselves
Stating
Constructed by others
Experience of not attending School.
Very Clear about What Im looking
at not her Perscribed reasons.

Revisit Search engines with different
　　thermiology.

Clincial Element
　Persistance _ Needs to be reflected
　　　　in proposal + title.
Not trancey.

Writing literature review
　　Start brounder Context
Wider non-attendance Context
　grey line between trauncey + Phobia
　Sharing Experience non attending School

IPA Experience of
　　Hold in mind when developing Question
　　　Experience based questions.
Step-by-Step - writing questions.

Friday → Morning = 1PM　before.
　　Mobile.

∘ Willig + Rogers (2017)
　being Concerned with how Something is
Experienced rather than attempting to limit
Experience to that which can be theoretically
Explained

- Personal + Epistemlogical reflexivity

Research is led by ones own assumptions and
world view → will inherently Impact upon the construction of
the data and the findings.
∘ Willig (2008)

∘ Willig (2008)
Personal reflexivity is defined as reflection upon
how a researchers own Experiences, interests,
Values, beliefs, political Standpoint, wider life
aims and Social identity may shape research.

Epistemological reflexivity involves the researcher
asking questions of their research regarding, For Example,
the Extent to which the research question may define
findings or how the research design and methodology
may construct findings. This Encourages reflection regarding

the assumptions made during the research.

Exploratory nature, it was not the Premise to test
Pre-existing hypothesis.

∘ Scotland (2012) · Ontological and Epistemological
　beliefs inform study methodology

∘ Smith (2015)

Relativist ontology ~~understanding~~ underpinned this research
as it was felt that it was important to acknowledge
that there may be different realities Expressed
and Experienced by participants.

- Relativist ontology

Constructivisit - Interpretative paradigm
Suggesting that the Social world can only be
understood from the Standpoint of the individuals who
are participating in it - thus recognising the need
to explore the views of others.

Pupil Participant 2

Feelings of not wanting to have her difficulties

Still feels trapped by the Specialist Provision → Wanting freedom from School
Association with friends online with in-person friends
Feeling of two Seperate Uses for SMT → Socialising but also then not
being affraid of being the real her online with her photography
↳ She doesnt associate this with People but Nature + Animals.

Anxiety started in year 6 → worrying about Comprehensive before
she even left Primary School.
Primary School felt like a Safe and Comfortable place for her — Primary felt like her escape from home
Anxiety felt out of her Control → because of it she missed experiences she
felt she couldnt get back
Feelings of being left behind → her friends had made new friends
Not wanting to be noticed in comp = Keeping her head down
Feeling the need to escape School → because of her Anxiety
↳ Feeling less of a person for her anxiety
Feelings of being too Young and Self Concious → didnt feel ready for Comprehensive

Anxiety being Seperate from herself.

Positive Experience → associates with Primary School automatically

Pupil doesnt relate to her ASD → Making a point of Staying What she experienced
was different from her brother. → Not wanting to be compared to her brother
Hiddening the true self from her friends — Unable to tell them the truth.

Feeling Overwhelming having to deal with everything → being too much

Wanting mum to have the answers → looking too mum for help

No escape from her anxiety → home as well as school

Self blame for her anxiety affecting her family
She wants things to be different - doesnt know how - feels like her anxiety
Controlls her
Got in the way of her life - annoying her.
Needed things to distract her

Being alone - isolating herself - Further - from her family
Feelings of nothing — Doing nothing - nothing happening
↳ Boring - No enjoyment out of life.
Fear of People Seeing her having a panic attack — home was a safe place

Anxiety as being Seperate to her something she had no controll over
Wanting things to be different - would try but get the same result.

Repetitive Circle → Being stuck and having no way out
Wanting to have a normal life and do normal things
Feeling that anxiety was controlling her life and she couldnt do anything to
stop it.

Repetes the word contact → because its online → does she feel that the
Contact is really there? Superfical Contact?
Possibly feeling that SMT contact is all she could have with friends
SMT is her distraction ↳ Mum would say "go on your phone" → does she feel this
distraction is coming from her.
Defending SMT and wanting to see it as a possitive.
Giving the perception of being with People and having feelings of People being with her.
Even though she wasnt physically with People she didnt feel alone when on SMT
She didnt need school any more because she still had her friends.
She felt like things would be worse without SMT

Wanting to escape but doesnt consider deleting SMT

214

Appendix 17 – Table demonstrating the Trustworthiness of the data

Trustworthiness	Techniques	Applied during the research process
Credibility (the "fit" between respondents' views and the researcher's representation of them)	• Prolonged engagement with data • External check on the research process	• The research was carried out over an 18 month period • The raw data was returned to a number of times • Themes were looked at and revised on 3 separate occasions • Member checking was complete with a third party and themes were revised with them
Transferability (refers to the generalizability of inquiry)	• Providing thick descriptions so that those who seek to transfer the findings to their own can judge transferability	• Detailed notes were kept on the analysis process of each participant • Documentation of the theme naming process • Triangulation of pupil and staff experience was considered but it was felt that this affected the depth of analysis.
Dependability (ensuring the research process is logical, traceable and clearly documented)	• Audit Trails	• Kept recordings of all raw data • Fieldnotes • Transcripts – documents thoughts about potential codes and themes • Reflective Journals – documenting theoretical and reflective thoughts
Confirmability (establishing that the researcher's interpretations and findings are clearly derived from the data)	• Confirmability audit (an external audit to confirm confirmability) • An audit trail (a transparent description of the research steps) • Reflexivity	• Ensuring techniques for Credibility, Transferability and Dependability were met • Engaging in supervision to confirm thinking and next steps • reflecting the process in a research diary to ensure the effectiveness of the researcher

Adapted from Lincoln & Guba (1985) in Nowell, Norris, White & Moules (2017).

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017) Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16, 1–13.