How do Primary School Children Make Sense of their being Diagnosed with Dyslexia?

A Grounded Theory Study.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to the two precious gems in my life, my son Jerome and my partner Henri.

In one of our first lectures during the Mpsy course, we were asked to write or draw what the two-year course ahead of us meant for us. I drew a bridge, supported by two enormous pillars. The bridge represented the means that would enable the passage to reach my destination, namely that of becoming a psychologist.

Eighteen months ago, I did not doubt the strength of the pillars, but I underestimated the pressure I would exert on them. Notwithstanding the strong forces, the pillars stood tall, bearing my weight and ensuring my safe journey.

Jerome and Henri, you are my pillars of strength. Without you the completion of this course and this dissertation would not have been possible. You nourished my soul, and you are my beacon of light, especially when the reaching of my destination seemed completely elusive.

You put my interests and wellbeing first and never made me feel guilty about investing so much of my energy in my studies. The pride in your eyes as you watched me flourish, has made this course even more worthwhile.

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Abstract

With the increasing awareness of specific learning difficulties, and continuous demands on the educational psychologist working in a school setting, to assess and diagnose, it is valuable to explore children's experience of getting a diagnosis, how they construct their understanding of the diagnosis and how they assimilate it. Research considering children's views on receiving and assimilating the diagnosis of dyslexia and their meaning making of dyslexia after disclosure and its impact on them is very limited. To address this gap, five 7-10-year-old children participated in four group sessions that explored how children with dyslexia construct the meaning of their diagnosis and its implication for their well-being.

Grounded theory analysis identified "Positive meaning making contributes to hope" as the core category that highlighted a process that children go through in the meaning making of dyslexia diagnosis. This comprised of the categories "Feeling scared", "I have dyslexia, but it is OK", "Facing adversities" and "Coping with dyslexia." The core category was positioned in the context of Snyder's theory of Hope (1994). The study contributes a fresh insight on dyslexia contrary to the prevalent deficit lens.

The findings help professionals reflect on how to best approach the communication of a dyslexia diagnosis to children and what support services best to offer children in their journey towards a positive meaning making of this challenge.

Keywords: children, dyslexia, diagnosis of dyslexia, making sense of, meaning making, process, hope

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Chapter 1.0

Introduction

Carl[1] was a 21-year-old male student attending a post-secondary course whom I met during my practicum, as an educational psychologist trainee. Carl sought assessment for dyslexia after many years of struggling with literacy. The following is an excerpt from the account he wrote for me, in which he describes the challenges he faced. This was originally written in Maltese and has been translated into English. The English translation does not capture the rawness of his writing, and I was touched that he felt comfortable enough for the first time in his adult life to allow someone to see the spelling mistakes. He left his words unedited and granted me the permission to present it, in its entirety in my dissertation. To honour his wish, I am including the full account in Maltese in the appendix (see Appendix A). With Carl's permission, I am presenting a summary of the account here:

> Dyslexia made me feel different to others. Since year 3, I always felt different. I used to see others progressing more than me. This always worried me, and it made me feel worthless… I went to school because I had to. I did not enjoy it at all… Teachers were not aware of the problem and used to tell my mum that I do not read or do not work enough… This was not the case… I feared seeking help as I never wanted to have an LSE [Learning Support Educator] … I was scared that other children might exclude me and think that something was wrong with me… I gave up on school and I shed tears along the way… I regarded myself as not being cut out for school… This turned me into a shy person and if it were left up to me, I would hide from the world… My love for engineering made me reconsider schooling and I enrolled in a post-secondary course which focused more on applied knowledge… The same story repeated itself… I fell behind my classmates… Teachers made fun of me… and so did my classmates… They could not understand why my knowledge of the subject was

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[1] Pseudonym is used to protect the client's identity

> not reflected in the marks I obtained… My self-esteem was impacted negatively… My personality changed… Anxiety overtook me … I became depressed… Then, I met my girlfriend… she does not have dyslexia… In my eyes she is a genius… She is studying to become a teacher, and in her studies, she came across dyslexia… She encouraged me to seek help and so I did. It was the best thing that ever happened to me. Getting an assessment was a blessing… I made meaning of the failures… I appreciate my efforts because compared to others I am like an ant which has carried 20 times the load that others have had to bear. It makes me proud of my achievements. I appreciate the fact that dyslexia has given me a thick skin… The diagnosis was life changing… I accept myself for who I am.

My encounter with Carl at my placement is what sparked my initial curiosity in the topic of dyslexia. When I asked why he had come for assessment at the age of 21 and not before, he replied that he had always feared the implications of a diagnosis of dyslexia as this could single him out in class. He was scared to be accompanied by an LSE, to have a reader in class or to have to stay longer in an examination room, as he feared he would be perceived as stupid by his peers.

This lack of diagnosis and lack of support cost Carl a lot of pain. His candid disclosure raised a lot of questions in me. I asked myself: Is this client's journey something that other children, who are diagnosed with dyslexia also experience? How is it for a child to receive a diagnosis? What sense do they make out of their experiences? What meaning does a child give to the interventions, which are given in such situations, including a scribe, a reader, and extra time? The questions raised upon my encounter with Carl, and my subsequent exploration of the topic, have led me to the formulation of the following research question as part of a grounded theory study:

How do primary school children make sense of their being diagnosed with dyslexia?

1.1 Aim of the Study

A substantial number of children are diagnosed with dyslexia during their primary school years. This study aims to explore how these children construct the meaning of their diagnosis and its implications for their well-being, learning and development. When I had the opportunity to discuss the questions that occurred to me, following my meeting with Carl, with professionals who are working in the educational field, they were intrigued by his disclosure. In fact, they asserted that it made them reflect on their practice, of how best to convey a diagnosis of dyslexia to a child.

Even though professionals in their practice take adequate time to disclose the diagnosis and thoroughly explain the psychoeducational report to the child, apart from their parents, it is not the standard practice in the busy settings in which they work to meet with children for follow-up sessions. Professionals rarely take the time to ask about the process of meaning making, which children with dyslexia go through, and what impact the diagnosis makes upon their socioemotional wellbeing.

1.2 Dyslexia Definition

Throughout the dissertation I will adopt the working definition of dyslexia given in the Rose Report Review (2009), *Identifying and Teaching Children and Young People with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties*, which states that:

> Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling. Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed. Co-occurring difficulties may be seen in aspects of language, motor co-ordination and mental calculation (p. 9).

1.3 Rationale

With the increasing awareness of specific learning difficulties, and continuous demands on the educational psychologist working in a school setting, to provide effective assessment and diagnosis, it is valuable to explore children's experience of getting a diagnosis. Furthermore, it is essential to explore how a child constructs his/her understanding of the diagnosis and how they assimilate it.

This work is envisaged to contribute to the educational psychology field, by shedding light on the process that children go through, thereby assisting professionals to reflect on how to best approach the disclosure of dyslexia diagnosis to children, while also informing professionals on what support services are best to offer children along their journey towards a positive meaning making following diagnosis.

1.4 Personal Introduction: Starting from where I am at

I have started the introduction to the dissertation with Carl's narrative, because this wonderful testimony sparked my interest in the topic of dyslexia. Being an educational psychologist trainee, is what led me to my first encounter with dyslexia. Even though I spent 20 years teaching Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD), my previous knowledge about dyslexia, before meeting Carl, came from books and lectures.

PSCD is a non-academic subject, therefore I never encountered the experiences of children with dyslexia directly in the teaching context. Since my teacher training, I always envisaged dyslexia as a barrier which has to be overcome, and Carl's experience served as a confirmatory bias. These 'sensitising concepts' (Blumer, 1969) are my initial thoughts, and mark a starting point in this research journey.

However, these insights and bias must be acknowledged while exploring the experiences of children in my study, as it is a prerequisite for grounded theory researchers to look at data with a fresh outlook. Also, bracketing these insights would be imperative, so as not to be biased by looking at dyslexia through a deficit lens. My experiences and how these might present a bias in the research process will be further discussed in Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods. This brief introduction highlights the position from which I am carrying out this research.

1.5 The Child with Dyslexia in the Maltese Context

In Maltese schools, there is still a highly competitive academic culture where the ultimate goal is to get good grades in examinations (Bartolo, 2010). So, when children do not rise to such expectations they are viewed as a defective 'receptacle' that needs fixing and not as a 'receptacle' that needs to be filled by different means (Freire, 1972, pg. 72).

Such deterministic beliefs about ability still dominate in schools, where ability and challenges to learning are viewed as something unalterable within the child (Hart & Drummond, 2014). Teachers' beliefs about disability and learning difficulties also impact their perception of their self-efficacy and their responsibility towards the learning of these children (Jordan & Stanovich, 2001). This strongly impacts the learning outcomes of children with learning difficulties (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca, & Malone, 2006; Gibbs & Elliott, 2015). Gibbs and Elliott (2015) found that teachers viewed challenges posed by dyslexia as more unchangeable and biologically inherent in the child, than those challenges encountered by poor readers not diagnosed with dyslexia.

Educators throughout the years have attempted to challenge these deterministic assumptions by viewing ability and learning barriers as an interplay between the individual and the context in which they live (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Bartolo, Bjorck-Akesson, Gine'

& Kyriazopoulou, 2016; Florian & Kershner, 2009). Such relational approaches go beyond viewing the student as a defective 'receptacle'. Such approaches bring together, the stance taken by the Social Model of Disability which perceives disability as stemming from the barriers, that society places on individuals (Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation, UPIAS, 1975), and the medical model which views impairment as inherent in an individual. Relational approaches view 'disability as inherently relational' (Terzi, 2005, p. 451), meaning that impairment is a personal factor that becomes a disability in relation to circumstances and the environment.

1.5.1 Lack of inclusive mentality as a barrier to learning in the Maltese context. Great strides have been made to move from an 'exclusive mentality' of education to a more inclusive one in our schools, through changes in legislation, implementation of policies in favour of inclusion, and to the promotion of teachers' training in inclusive practices (Bartolo, 2010).

Inclusion is the development of "… regular school and classroom communities that fit, nurture, and support the educational and social needs of every student in attendance, where the school will be a place where everyone belongs, is accepted, supports, and is supported by his/her peers and other members of the school community'' (Stainback & Stainback, 1990, pp 3-4 as cited in Bartolo, 2010). The National Minimum curriculum is built on the principles of quality education for all, respect for diversity and inclusive education (Bartolo, Aguis Ferrante, Azzopardi, Bason, Grech, King, 2002).

Nonetheless, negative discourses that children with individual educational needs are 'robbing' other children in class from their entitlement to education still prevail. One could argue whether our schools are truly inclusive, when educators are still removing children with individual needs out of class to have their needs catered for elsewhere, or when they do not practice the universal design for learning. Whole-class teaching methods are still the favoured practice by most educators (Bartolo, 2010) and these methods rarely embed responsiveness to individual needs (Florian, 2014).

Also, the idea that students with individual needs that stay in class are the responsibility of the Learning Support Educator (LSE) is still common. Evidence for this is that when an LSE is not available at school, the child is sent home, with the child sometimes missing a full week of school (Spiteri, Borg, Callus, Cauchi, Sciberras, 2005). Notwithstanding the fact that the Education Division is supposed to have a pool of replacement LSEs, this practice still prevails occasionally within the Maltese schools.

When I was researching the topic of dyslexia I came across the following excerpt of a teacher's view of dyslexia: "Well, I mean, it's one of those things that has been conjured up by pushy parents for their thick or lazy children, quite often both" (Riddick, 1996, p.94). I was taken aback to read this but dismissed it by telling myself that things hopefully have changed over the past decades. However, during my practicum, a Head of School referred to a child with dyslexia with whom I was working as "miskin injurant u veru lura" (stupid and very slow), which shattered my hope.

Reading about this attitude was already shocking but hearing it from the lips of a Head of School was unsettling to say the least. Even more unsettling was the realisation that a child diagnosed with dyslexia is not taught how to read but is provided with adapted worksheets that are given to children who are not dyslexic. The diagnosis of dyslexia for a child in Maltese schools serves only to give that child access arrangements in exams such as a reader but does not contribute to the child receiving the necessary interventions to address their literacy difficulties.

1.6 Outline of the Study

The following chapter will provide a review of literature that explores the experiences of children being diagnosed with dyslexia. This will provide a context for the present study. In chapter 3, I will describe the methodology and methods adopted in this study and highlight the theoretical underpinnings and the rationale for choosing a grounded theory study and creative data collection methods. Chapter 4 will present the findings followed by a discussion in Chapter 5 of the categories and the core category in the light of the existing literature. Finally, limitations and implications of findings for practice in psychology and education, together with suggestions for future research will also be explicated.

Chapter 2.0

Literature Review

2.1 Chapter Overview

The aim of this chapter is to present an overview of key literature on the experiences of children with dyslexia. This will put the present research within a context and provides the necessary background for this qualitative work. Considering the nature of my research, I will present studies which explore the impact of a diagnosis of dyslexia on the psychosocial wellbeing of the individual such as the impact on their identity, on their self-concept and on their school experiences. Studies exploring the parental perceptions of the diagnosis on their children will also be reviewed, because these also enrich our understanding of what children go through in the process of assessment and identification of dyslexia.

The themes presented in this chapter are: the impact of dyslexia on self-concept, fear of stigma, children's understanding of the diagnosis of dyslexia, the negative impact of the diagnosis of dyslexia on the psychological wellbeing of children and perception of school experience. A critique of the literature will be presented, and the literature gap identified.

2.2 Conceptualising Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterised by problems with accurate or fluent word recognition, poor decoding and poor spelling abilities (DSM-5, APA 2013). Dyslexia has a neurobiological basis, meaning that problems are located within neural pathways in the brain (e.g. Hudson, High & Al Otiaba, 2007; Mather, Wendling Youman, Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2012). Moreover, there is a genetic predisposition implicated in dyslexia (Hulme & Snowling, 2009). Such definitions are frequently adopted in research pertaining to the cognitive and neurological fields.

However, there are researchers who object to these definitions of dyslexia and view dyslexia as a social construct (Elliott & Gibbs, 2008). They understand dyslexia as “a failure to meet the demands of particular social expectations of literacy” (Collinson & Penketh, 2010, p.9) and consider the medical discourse most often adopted by cognitive-neuroscience as pathologising the inability to read (Ho, 2004). Researching the correlates of dyslexia could help to achieve a better understanding of the concept and inform interventions but could also prove to be stigmatising. This argument concurs with Goffman’s (1963) description of stigma which is described as categorising people based on characteristics common to a specific group and perceiving them as differing from the norm.

To sustain their arguments, researchers who adopt a social constructivist perspective, highlight the shift in mentality towards literacy throughout history. They argue that whereas being literate was dangerous in certain periods of history, now the reverse holds true (Cook-Gumperz, 2006). They posit that the dominant ‘lexical’ discourse in schools (Foucault, 1980) created marginalisation of those children who struggle to learn to read.

Students are being excluded from formal education because of educational practices which prioritise literacy and equates success in literacy with academic ability (Collinson & Penketh, 2010). Exponents of dyslexia as a social construct also go on to say that the danger of leaving school as illiterate puts a lot of pressure on educators. When students do not learn how to read and write, they prefer to blame the dyslexia rather than admitting to the failure of their teaching strategies (Collinson & Penketh, 2010). Thus, the label of dyslexia takes the onus off the educators and puts it onto the child (Elliott & Gibbs, 2008).

Educators still rely on labels as an attempt to understand the learner’s individual characteristics. However, categories rarely inform teaching and learning. Rather, they give a generalised picture of what a child cannot do more than a picture of where a child is at present, and what the child can achieve (Hayward, 2014; Hollenweger, 2014; Warnock, 2005).

Other researchers adopt a biopsychosocial framework to understand dyslexia and posit that the interplay between the challenges inherent in the child, and the context in which they occur, impinge on the psychosocial wellbeing of the individual (e.g. Elliott and Grigorenko, 2014; Lopes, 2012; Pennington & Olson, 2005).

Many years of experience in the classroom as a teacher, and my recent working experience with clients as an educational psychologist trainee, have shown me that neither labelling children nor viewing diverse learners as the same as the rest, has proven to be effective. 'Both focusing on and ignoring difference risk creating it' (Minow, 1985 p. 160 as cited in Hollenweger, 2014).

As a result, I gravitate more towards relational approaches, which view human diversity as an interrelation between the individual and their context and consider this relation as a central criterion when evaluating an individual's capabilities and challenges (Terzi, 2005).

2.3 Overview of Key Literature

This literature review focuses on research that explores the experiences of children in relation to their being recognised as children with dyslexia. Due to the dearth of children's voices in literature, most of the research reviewed, does not give first-hand accounts of the children, but rather their experiences as recounted by adults in their lives, or by adults narrating their lived experience retrospectively.

Although dyslexia is highly researched, most of the available studies investigate cognitive and neurological correlates of dyslexia. While these cognitive and neurological studies contribute to a better understanding of dyslexia, they shed no light on the personal experiences of the individual. Although on the increase, research exploring the impact of dyslexia on the psycho-social well-being of the individual is still limited. Most of the literature reviewed in this chapter, involves retrospective accounts by adults or the viewpoints of parents and professionals working with children with dyslexia. There is therefore a clear lacuna in research, to explore the child's perspective of being diagnosed with dyslexia.

One of the challenges when reviewing the literature is the definition of the construct of dyslexia in research. American research uses the umbrella term Learning Disabilities (LD) while research carried out in the UK uses Specific Learning Disability (SpLD). These categories might include several subcategories such as dyscalculia and dyspraxia, although both categories are inclusive of difficulties in reading and writing. For the purpose of this current research, studies carried out in the UK and the USA were both included as long as these investigated the experiences of being diagnosed with dyslexia in particular.

2.3.1 The Impact of Dyslexia on Self-Concept

The term self-concept is understood as a person's self-perception, often in relation to others (Harter, 1998). It is multidimensional and context dependent, meaning that a person might hold different perceptions of themselves depending on different life contexts (Harter, 1998). A more general self-concept is the overall perception held by an individual (Harter & Pike, 1984).

Key research findings show that individuals with dyslexia view themselves more negatively than individuals without dyslexia (Alexander-Passé, 2006; Carroll & Illes, 2006). This is however context-dependent (Bonifacci, Storti, Tobia, Suardi, 2015; Humphrey, 2003; Ingesson, 2007; Riddick, 2010; Snowling, Muter & Carroll, 2007). These studies indicate that children with dyslexia view themselves negatively only in the academic domain.

Comparison between their achievement and those of their peers is often mentioned in the literature as a contributing factor in low self-esteem (Glazzard, 2010).

When children experience repeated failure at school or constantly fall behind, their self-esteem is negatively affected (Ingesson, 2007). In a study by Gibson and Kendall (2010), participants also reported that being placed in lower settings for different subjects confused them. They found it hard to reconcile that in some subjects they were placed within the bottom levels whereas in other subjects they were not.

These settings negatively impacted on their identity as learners and their self-esteem. Similar findings were replicated in the study by Lithari (2019) where participants’ ability grouping, per subject, confused them. These inconsistent academic profiles at times confuses the educators as well and increases their tendency to perceive a lack of achievement in literacy as stemming from laziness (Gibson & Kendall, 2010).

In the research carried out by Ingesson (2007) with teenagers and young adults, the participants reported that they were more optimistic about their future when they left school compared to those who remained at school. They also reported that difficulties in writing and reading did not affect them any more in their daily lives outside the school setting. Nonetheless feelings of embarrassment when they must read and write were still experienced. Similar findings support the notion of improvement in self-concept after leaving compulsory education especially if early negative schooling is replaced by positive educational experiences that happen later in life (Lithari, 2019).

Research also indicates that the educational context impacts the child’s self-concept in different ways. Children who received their education in a mainstream setting had a more negative impact on their self-concept than those who received their education in special schools. Research studies (e.g. Burden and Burdett, 2005; Casserly, 2013; Glazzard, 2010;

Humphrey, 2002; Humphrey & Mullins, 2002; Nalavany, Carawan & Brown, 2011) provide evidence for this premise.

Casserly (2013) indicates that when children receive specialised education in reading and writing with children experiencing the same difficulties, they held better views of themselves. Findings from the research conducted by Nalavany, Carawan, and Brown (2011), provides evidence of more anxiety and more emotional distress in children with dyslexia who receive education in mainstream schools. Several reasons could contribute to these findings.

For instance, having more teachers trained in dyslexia education in specialised schools, who hold positive attitudes towards the learning challenges that dyslexia brings with it and can support the educational and emotional needs of students with dyslexia, could be contributing to these findings (Nalavany, Carawan & Brown, 2011).

Receiving education with peers experiencing similar challenges might lead to less comparison and may give these children more opportunities to experience success (Casserly, 2013). There is research which indicates that children with dyslexia are less accepted by their peers when they are given individualised attention within the same general classroom (Wiener & Tardif, 2004).

Findings from the longitudinal study carried out by Casserly (2013), which followed students from special education to their return to the mainstream after receiving specialised intervention for their reading and writing difficulties, indicate that the children included in the study felt more self-conscious of their challenges, which impeded them from catching up with their peers. They reportedly felt more embarrassed due to the teasing they experienced, related to the academic difficulties faced in the mainstream. However, they were happier and more adjusted when joining the mainstream after having learned to read and write.

Literature reports that children with dyslexia feel ashamed, disappointed with their schooling experience and find their difficulties embarrassing (Collinson & Penketh, 2010; Riddick, 2010). Humphrey (2002) also reports findings of children experiencing humiliation due to their challenges in reading and writing. Bullying and exclusion by peers were also highlighted in research (Hellendoorn & Ruijssenaars, 2000; Humphrey & Mullins, 2002; Rose, 2009; Weiner, 2004). These experiences could also be negatively influencing the self-concept of these children (Burden, 2005; O’Moore, 2000).

Experiencing repeated failure at school at the time of the development of self-efficacy (Berk, 2003; Erikson, 1963; Gurney, 1988) also contributes to low self-esteem (Casserly, 2013; Ingesson, 2007). The feeling of being less able in comparison to their classmates has a negative impact on the feeling of self-efficacy (Alexander-Passé, 2006; Glazzard, 2010). Literature also shows that teachers hold lower expectations for academic success for children with dyslexia (Hornstra, Denessen, Bakker, van den Bergh, & Voeten, 2010) and that students can become aware of these reduced expectations (Glazzard, 2010; Lithari, 2019). When children perceive such low expectations, their sense of efficacy dwindles, and their self-perception is harmed (Elias, 2014). Conversely, when children feel in control of their learning and not overwhelmed by it, their sense of efficacy improves, and they experience more success in academic achievement (Burden, 2005).

A negative feedback loop is usually noticed in children with dyslexia, due to the fact that the lessening of their expectation for achievement increases their expectation for failure, thus resulting in less successful outcomes. Burden (2005) explains this by the ‘expectancy theory’ i.e. expectancy to fail generates more failure. Students with dyslexia often report the feeling that hard work does not pay off and thus their motivation to try harder peters out (Glazzard, 2010; Ronksley-Pavia, Grootenboer & Pendergast, 2019).

2.3.1.1 Stereotypes and their impact on self-concept. Among the numerous stereotypes associated with dyslexia, the most frequently mentioned in literature are the lack of academic ability and low intelligence (May & Stone, 2010). Studies which looked at the public perception of dyslexia indicated conflicting results (Castillo & Gilger, 2018; Wadlington & Wadlington, 2005). In the study conducted by Wadlington and Wadlington, (2005), participants believed that a person can be gifted and have dyslexia at the same time, whereas in other studies, such as the research carried out by Castillo & Gilger (2018), most participants reported that it is unlikely for a child with dyslexia to be talented and gifted.

The recent study conducted by Ronksley-Pavia, Grootenboer and Pendergast (2019) yielded similar findings. The students in this research narrated how their giftedness is often unacknowledged due to their learning challenges. Unfortunately, children with dyslexia often internalise this view and thus perceive themselves in a negative light (Nalavany, Carawan & Sauber, 2013).

2.3.1.2 Coping strategies to preserve self-esteem. Individuals with dyslexia engage in several strategies to cope with the adverse effects of dyslexia. A positive coping strategy adopted by individuals with dyslexia, to preserve their self-concept, is the investment of energy in other areas rather than reading, such as sports and music (Collinson & Penketh, 2010; Ronksley-Pavia, Grootenboer, & Pendergast, 2019). McNulty (2003) coins the term 'gifted compensation', where the individual with dyslexia tries to excel in an area and finds a niche for themselves (Hellendoorn & Ruijssenaars, 2000; McNulty, 2003; Orenstein, 2000). Entering fields which are more in line with the capabilities of the individuals with dyslexia, ensures a more positive outlook on the future and improves the feel-good factor (Ingesson, 2007).

However, it is also argued that these alternative fields are not always favoured in schools and are not given the same prestige as the more academic subjects. This lack of recognition most often leaves the individuals with a decreased sense of fulfilment which lingers until adulthood (Collinson & Penketh, 2010; McNulty, 2003). Living with a diagnosis of dyslexia, might make a person more sensitive to negative feedback even in adulthood which is reminiscent of the early negative feedback received in childhood (McNulty, 2003).

A negative coping strategy is the early termination of formal schooling. Many accounts are presented in literature where individuals, to avoid the possible confirmation of lack of success in academics, terminate their schooling experience prematurely (Collinson & Penketh, 2010; Ingesson, 2007).

2.3.1.3 Protective factors within the context. Support from family and peers proves to be a protective factor in the development of a positive self-concept (Al-Yagon, 2016; Bonifacci, Tobia, Storti, & Suardi, 2015; Humphrey, 2003; McNulty, 2003; Nalavany & Carawan, 2012). When the significant others in the child's life understands their struggles and empathise with the child, the child's self-worth increases (Terras, Thompson, & Minnis, 2009).

As the research carried out by Collinson & Penketh (2010) indicates, those participants who had parents who resisted the label of dyslexia and those who encountered teachers in their schooling experience who held high expectations for them, managed to be successful academically. Parents who advocated for their children to ensure an educational experience in which their child would have the best chance for learning is also a protective factor (Leitao, Dzidic, Claessen, Gordon, Howard, Nayton, & Boyes., 2017). The young participants in Raskind, Margalit and Higgins's (2006) research and the adolescents in Glazzard's (2010) study have stressed the need for this support.

The support of peers is also sought to help the child with dyslexia as this alleviates the worries related to the lack of academic achievement (Allodi, 2000; Weiner, 2004). Friendships at school make the school experience more bearable for the child with dyslexia (Eissa, 2010).

Teachers are indispensable in helping children with dyslexia to improve their view of themselves (Singer, 2008). When students with dyslexia are adequately supported, their learning outcomes are more positive. Thus, early recognition of dyslexia is ideal (Antoniazzi, Snow, & Dickson-Swift, 2010; Carvalhais & da Silva, 2010). When significant others believe in the child's strengths and hold high learning expectations, this helps them to be more successful.

Teachers can help students with dyslexia by educating the rest of class about the struggles these students are facing, thus minimising the perception that the students with dyslexia are being favoured by the individualised teaching strategies they receive. The teacher's positive attitude towards the students with literacy challenges minimises the stigma and helps all students to respect each other (Martan, Mihic Skokovic & Matosevic, 2017).

2.3.2 Fear of Stigma

Findings indicate that individuals with dyslexia are mostly comfortable with the label of dyslexia on a personal level and do not necessarily feel confident to use this label in public, fearing the stigma that such a label brings with it (Riddick, 2010). The same findings emerged from the study of Raskind, Margalit and Higgins (2014) where children were ready to identify with a label of learning disability with a group of children experiencing the same experiences, while enjoying the anonymity of the online activity. However, some refrained from disclosing their challenges to other peers outside the cyber world for fear of social rejection.

The younger the children the less likely they were to disclose their literacy difficulties (Ingesson, 2007). Children try to hide their disability to fit in (Ronksley-Pavia, Grootenboer & Pendergast, 2019). Several participants in the study carried out by Ingesson (2007) disclosed that they never accepted special education when younger, in order not to be singled out as someone who needs help. The same sentiment of resentment of being given special attention was expressed in the study by Raskind, Margalit, and Higgins (2006). In the mentioned study, children even admitted that they were ready to give up access arrangements not to be viewed as different from the rest of the class (Raskind, Margalit & Higgins, 2006). Findings from the study carried out by Leitao et al. (2017) also indicate that children resent extra support, because this attracts negative attention from peers.

Research shows that the creation of special areas for the teaching of students with learning difficulties, also impacts the learner's psychological wellbeing as it creates categories within the educational setting of 'us' and 'others' (Collinson & Penketh, 2010; Elliott & Gibbs, 2008). This adds to the feeling of exclusion experienced by children with learning difficulties (Armstrong, 2003). Participants in the study carried out by Collinson & Penketh (2010), preferred to absent themselves from school rather than attending special classes.

These above findings concur with other literature on invisible impairment. Sometimes an individual with invisible impairment or the child's caregiver/s might decide to conceal their impairment for fear of the anticipated stigma that would ensue if they disclose the impairment and for the reward of being considered 'normal'. The fear of stigmatisation is well grounded in the day to day experience of people with disabilities.

Quinn (2006) explains stigma as a "negative attribute or identity that devalues a person within a particular context or culture (p.83)." One study has shown that students graduated from college with invisible impairments were 14 times more likely to find employment than those with visible impairments (Martz, 2003). Goffman (1963) refers to the concept of concealment as 'passing'. Individuals with invisible impairments may regard information on their impairment as private (Matthews & Harrington, 2000 as cited in Lingsom, 2008). However, concealment in some contexts, such as in an educational one may require over extending of one's abilities and might thereby impede the individual from learning and participating socially (Lingsom, 2005).

Shakespeare and Watson (2001), view concealment as a refusal to be categorised. Due to this refusal, some individuals reach adulthood without the dyslexia being recognised (Macdonald, 2009). Some studies show that individuals with dyslexia refuse to assume the identity of someone not able to learn, and as a result they pursue further education to prove the point that they are not "stupid" (Collinson & Penketh, 2010).

The study by Collinson & Penketh (2010) presents resistance stories of individuals who pursued tertiary education as mature learners to prove to others and to themselves that they can be academically successful. These success stories came most often at the cost of having less time to play with peers as children, sacrificing break times at school and having less time for leisurely activities when older (Gibson & Kendall, 2010). The factor of expenses was also mentioned as most of the participants had to seek paid assistance outside the school setting which could be a detrimental factor for those with limited financial resources (Hartas, 2008; Leitao et al., 2017; MacDonald, 2009).

2.3.3 Children's Understanding of the Diagnosis of Dyslexia

The way that children understand their difficulties has an impact on how they view themselves. Understanding the diagnosis helps to promote a positive self-concept. The recognition of dyslexia was reported to be positive for most of the individuals in the studies reviewed, as they gave meaning to the difficulties experienced. In this way, they could reframe them as resulting from dyslexia and not attributed to a lack of intelligence (Burden & Burdett, 2005; Glazzard, 2010; Ingesson, 2007; Leitao et al., 2017; Lithari, 2019; McNulty, 2003; Pace, 2012).

Without an explanation, children remain perplexed about their inability to read (Palombo, 2001). When children cannot explain why they are not catching up with their peers, and still have not learned how to read and write, they attribute these failures to lack of intelligence and this can result in a lack of motivation to learn (McNulty, 2003; Riddick, 2010; Squires & McKeown, 2006). Thus, positive reframing contributes to a better emotional adjustment. Ingesson (2007) argues that the earlier the diagnosis is made, the more well-adjusted the child would be as it increases their confidence and coping ability. Parents also report using the diagnosis to disconfirm the child’s belief that they are lacking intelligence (Leitao et al., 2017).

The metaphors that children used to describe dyslexia in Burden & Burdett’s (2005) study, indicate that older children perceive dyslexia as a barrier which could be surmounted whereas younger children expressed fewer feelings of self-efficacy and internal locus of control. Findings from the research done by Ingesson (2007) corroborate this conclusion.

Acceptance of having dyslexia seems to follow a trajectory starting with resistance and lower feelings of well-being in the first few years of schooling (Ingesson, 2007). With time there is shift to more acceptance. Findings indicate that the reaction to the diagnosis shifts from initial resistance to identifying oneself with a category to the accommodation of dyslexia as an integral part of oneself. The study implies that the earlier on the diagnosis is made, the better the chance for the child with dyslexia to accommodate the diagnosis as part of their self-construct, due to the fact that identity becomes more fixed over time (Harter, 1990).

Being able to 'compartmentalise' dyslexia i.e. seeing the label as only part of who they are, leads to better adjustment and is related to more positive outcomes in life (Goldberg, Higgins, Raskind, Herman, 2003; Petersson, Ekensteen, Ryden, 2006; Raskind, Margalit, & Higgins, 2014). Children in the latter study, notwithstanding the fact that they voluntary identified with the category of learning disability by joining a self-help group online, described themselves in terms of their strengths rather than through a deficit lens, while chatting with others in the group (Raskind, Margalit, & Higgins, 2014).

McNulty (2003) explains that diagnosis can be experienced either as affirmative or traumatic. Diagnosis is an affirmative experience for individuals when it serves as means of understanding of what is happening to them. This often results when assessment and diagnosis are carried out with sensitivity, and when dyslexia is reframed in a positive manner. When strengths are highlighted, and dyslexia is presented as a challenge which can be overcome, better adaptation is achieved, and low self-esteem is subsequently improved.

Pollack's (2005) research concurs with the above view. Participants in his study did not receive the diagnosis of dyslexia well. Participants stated that the figures and tables in the educational psychologist's report which highlighted low reading ages and emphasised weaknesses rather than strengths, lowered their self-esteem still further. Whereas before the diagnosis, they perceived themselves as poor readers, after being diagnosed they viewed themselves as having a disability.

Participants in the research conducted by Leitao et al., (2017) reported a positive attitude resulting from diagnosis as they were able to do something about it and get the help they need to overcome their learning barriers. Consulting students in assessments, explaining to them the results of assessments, and engaging them in learning, all provide the students with a sense of control over their learning and increases their motivation (Flutter & Ruddock, 2004; Long & McPolin, 2009). On the other hand, the diagnosis could be 'traumatic' as it confirms that something is truly wrong, and that the label will be carried for a lifetime (Leitao et al., 2017; McNulty, 2003). Haft, Myers and Hoeft (2016) posit that the diagnosis of dyslexia increases the risk for socio-emotional issues.

2.3.4 The Negative Impact of Dyslexia on the Psychological Wellbeing

An increase in studies exploring the impact of dyslexia on the psychosocial wellbeing of children indicate that reading difficulties impact their mental health (McArthur, Castles, Kohnen, & Banales, 2016). This is reported as one of the main concerns of parents of children with dyslexia (Leitao et al., 2017). Parents fear that constant failure will harm their children's emotional wellbeing. Their fears are substantiated with literature which shows that repeated failure in academics may predispose children to anxiety and depression, with anxiety most prominently occurring in school settings (Novita, 2016; Willcutt & Pennington, 2000). Anxiety often follows when students realise that they are finding it challenging to perform tasks that other children in the classroom are finding easy (Alexander-Passé, 2006).

Literature gives evidence of poor psycho-social adjustment in children and adolescents with dyslexia (Burden, 2005; Boyes, Leitao, Claessen, Badcock, Nayton, 2016; Casserly, 2013; Leitao et al., 2017; Terras, Thompson & Minnis, 2009; Maughan & Carroll, 2006; Willcutt & Pennington, 2000). The perception of being different, which results from the negative attitude of educators towards the diagnosis of dyslexia (Eissa, 2010; Lithari, 2019; Rowan, 2010) and poorer peer relationships (Dahle & Knivsberg, 2013; Ingesson, 2007; Maughan & Carroll, 2006; Weiner, 2002), lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness (Glazzard, 2010).

Literature indicates that due to the lack of acceptance by same age peers, children with learning difficulties often befriend children who are two to three years younger, as these might be perceived at par with their own academic achievement (Weiner & Schneider, 2002). This friendships with younger peers, could also be due to the tendency, in some school settings, of aggregating children with similar competencies together in one class, irrelevant of age.

Children with dyslexia often feel misunderstood which contributes to their feelings of isolation, loneliness and a sense of confusion (Burden & Burdett, 2005; Margalit & Al Yagon, 2002). Sadness resulting from bullying and being put down in front of peers is often reported by individuals with dyslexia (Leitao et al. 2017). All these factors could explain the higher incidence of anxiety and depression in children and adolescents with dyslexia when compared to their peers without dyslexia (Carroll & Illes, 2006; Eissa, 2010; Mugnaini, Lassi, La Malfa, & Albertini, 2009; Terras, Thompson, Minnis, 2009; Willcut & Pennigton, 2000). The coping efforts to deal with the challenges posed by dyslexia also exacerbates the feelings of anxiety and depression (Bonifacci, Storti, Tobia & Suardi, 2015). Such anxiety and depression are often manifested in avoidance of tasks, lack of attention and psychosomatic symptoms such as nausea before engaging in literacy tasks (Alexander-Passé, 2006; Casserly, 2013).

Apart from the internalising symptoms of anxiety and depression, behavioural problems such as aggression and hyperactivity are also associated with reading difficulties (Eissa, 2010, Maughan & Carroll, 2006; Snowling, Muter, Carroll, 2007). Behavioural problems are more often reported by teachers than by parents as most often these behaviours are manifested in school settings (Dahle & Knivsberg, 2013). Anger is often the result of the frustration emanating from the inability to cope in class and from the feelings of being misunderstood (Leitao et al., 2017).

2.3.5 Perception of School Experiences

Extant literature reports more negative school experiences than positive ones and it sheds light on how these early memories of schooling experience persist throughout adulthood (Collinson & Penketh, 2010; Dale &Taylor, 2001; Hallendoorn & Ruijssenaars, 2000; Ingesson, 2007; McNulty, 2003; Nalavany, Carawan, & Brown, 2011; Raskind, Margalit, & Higgins, 2006).

Literature shows that teachers are strongly influenced by categories and may experience less anger and show more empathy, if they know that a child has a label (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Jordan & Stanovich, 2001). However, this is not always the reality for students with dyslexia. Negative teachers' attitudes towards students with dyslexia are well documented in literature (Dale & Taylor, 2001; Glazzard, 2010; Hellendoorn & Ruijssenaars, 2000; Lithari, 2019; Nalavany, Carawan & Brown, 2001; Singer, 2008).

Some teachers perceive students with learning difficulties as having control over their challenges and the failure to overcome them is attributed to laziness (Gwernan-Jones & Burden, 2010). This perception results in less empathy towards these children, who are often presented with fewer opportunities to advance academically (Boyle, 2016). Literature also reports that when children with dyslexia are given access arrangements for their learning challenges, these are at times perceived by educators and other students without learning difficulties as discriminating measures against children who do not have dyslexic type challenges (Denhart, 2008; Martan, Skocic Mihic, & Matosevic, 2017).

In a recent study done by Leitao et al. (2017), participants suggest that dyslexia is becoming more normalised, with some participants stating that "every second person seems to have it these days, p. 328." Notwithstanding this perceived diminishment of stigma, children are still being bullied due to challenges in reading and writing. Receiving interventions on a one to one basis from a teaching assistant, was also reported as a source of embarrassment by some participants as this would result in shaming from peers (Gibson & Kendall, 2010). Humiliation and embarrassment resulting from being called out to read aloud in front of peers and being ridiculed by a teacher, were experiences mentioned frequently by participants in the research studies reviewed (e.g. Collinson & Penketh, 2010; Glazzard, 2010).

Children with learning difficulties also refrain from asking questions in class out of fear of being perceived as stupid and being ridiculed by peers (Raskind, Margalit & Higgins, 2014). Students who lack effective literacy skills are still the target of teachers' aggression, such as being shouted at in front of their peers up till the present day. This is reported by the findings in a recently published study (Ronksley-Pavia, Grootenboer, Pendergast, 2019). Exposing the child's difficulties in front of the class contributes further to that child being bullied by their peers (Singer, 2005).

Providing literacy material designed for younger children to older children who have been diagnosed with dyslexia, was also reported as a source of humiliation (Hellendoorn & Ruijssenaars, 2000). These intense feelings of shame and humiliation sometimes continues to affect the individuals even in adulthood, who continue to be sensitive to negative feedback (McNulty, 2003).

When teachers and significant others such as peers were understanding of the child's challenges, these served as protective factors which enhanced the learning outcomes (Gibson

& Kendall, 2010). Some children mentioned that empathic teachers, flexible teaching strategies, teachers' knowledge on dyslexia and allowing them to move at their own learning pace, were all helpful factors that enriched their school experiences (Leitao et al., 2017). Children who enjoyed positive school experiences accepted their diagnosis much more than children who did not enjoy school (McNulty, 2003).

Children with dyslexia are not always understood and this often results in poor relationships with teachers and peers, which contributes further to low confidence and low self-esteem (Minnis, Terras, MacKenzie & Thompson, 2004). Positive experiences were reported when interventions were given by specialists in literacy as the children felt more understood in their learning struggles (Hellendoorn & Ruijssenaars, 2002; MacDonald, 2009). Better understanding of the child's challenges leads to higher self-esteem and better psycho-social adjustment (Terras, Thompson & Minnis, 2009).

The academic attainment of students with dyslexia is found to be poorer than that of children who do not face the challenges of dyslexia, and subsequently leading to lower rates in school completion and lower employability amongst individuals with dyslexia (Cortiella, 2014; Quieros, Wehby, & Halpern, 2015; Undheim, 2009). Whilst reading and spelling are found to predict academic achievement in adolescence (Hakkarainene, Holopainen & Savolainen, 2012), the lack of academic achievement could also be attributed to the negative experiences children with dyslexia encounter at school. These could affect the children's sense of belonging and motivation to learn.

From a young age, children with dyslexia learn that compared to their class mates they are slower to read and write. This comparison increases the likelihood of developing negative beliefs about themselves as learners (Snowling, Muter & Carroll, 2007). Parents of children with dyslexia, especially amongst those parenting boys, hold low academic expectations for their children (Rimkute, Torppa, Eklund, Nurmi & Lyytinen, 2014) which could also influence the aspirations and expectations that a child holds for the future.

Nonetheless, success stories of learners with dyslexia who achieved academic success are also presented in literature (Collinson & Penketh, 2010). Often, these participants had to take a longer route such as re-entering formal education as mature students after pursuing non-linear paths. Negative early school experiences tend to dishearten students to continue their academic trajectory (Gorard, Smith, May, Thomas, Adnett & Slack, 2006). While negative experiences have led some to develop learned helplessness, others held on to the belief that with great effort they can achieve (Lackaye & Margalit, 2006; Lithari, 2019).

A positive narrative also emerges in literature. Most of the participants in the research reviewed accepted the diagnosis of dyslexia but did not allow themselves to be defined by the label (Goldberg et al. 2003; Hellendoorn & Ruijssenaars, 2000; Nalavany et al. 2011). They showed tenacity, persistence and resilience in the face of challenges. These qualities led these learners to academic success. Literature suggests that students with dyslexia might find academic work at post-secondary level more challenging (Ryan, 2007; Bolt, 2004). Thus, tapping into the aforementioned qualities was crucial for their success.

The identity of a learner is more prominent in children as most of their time is spent at school or engaging in school-related activities. However, it is important to look at dyslexia through other lenses, rather than just focusing on the impact of dyslexia in an academic context because education is only one facet in the totality of the child's experiences (Gerber, 2012).

2.4 Critique of the Literature

2.4.1 Differing views. There is a difference in parental views on dyslexia and children's and adolescents' view on dyslexia. Parents' perceptions and children's perceptions differed in several of the studies reviewed. Whilst parents view the assistance of the LSE and a reader as pertinent in the academic success of their children (Pace, 2012), adolescents and young adults in Ingesson's (2007) study reported their resistance of having special support as a main reason for not seeking diagnosis.

Parents also tend to be less likely to report the internalising symptoms such as anxiety related to dyslexia when compared to adolescents (Bonifacci, Storti, Tobia, Suardi, 2015; Ginieri-Coccossis et al. 2012; Terras, Thompson & Minnis, 2009). Adolescents admitted to having increased levels of anxiety including social anxiety and depression due to dyslexia (Arnold et al., 2005; Carroll & Iles, 2006). These differing views highlight the need to hear the voice of young children with dyslexia rather than relying only on the voices of the adults around them.

2.4.2 A retrospective bias. A bias implicit in hearing the narratives of adults about their schooling experience, is that these are based on memories. Often people tend to remember those memories that stayed with them most, or those which inflicted the most pain. Narratives of young children although still tainted with negative emotions, also involve the positive experiences in their lives such as friendships.

Even though some recently published research still gives evidence that children with dyslexia and other learning difficulties are viewed more negatively than their peers without learning difficulties, the adult participants' retrospective accounts found in literature, might not reflect the experiences of the young children of today, who are receiving their education in more inclusive settings. A study conducted with a group of teachers in Croatian elementary schools, indicates that teachers who engaged in inclusive practices in Croatia, consider themselves to have positive attitudes towards dyslexia. Notwithstanding the fact that these findings sound promising, a limitation of the study was that the findings were based on self-reported measures and not on data collected through the observation of real practice (Martan, Skocic Mihic, & Matosevic, (2017).

2.4.3 Literature gap. There is a lacuna in literature on how young children who have just been diagnosed with dyslexia make sense of their diagnosis. Difficulties and process of meaning making are more studied from the parental or professional perspectives (Bonifacci, Storti, Tobia, Suardi, 2016; Karande & Kuril, 2011; Long & McPolin, 2009; Pentyliuk, 2002; Pace, 2012; Snowling et al., 2007).

The existing literature also explored the difficulties pertaining to parents of children with learning difficulties, upon receiving the diagnosis, and the challenges these families encounter in their daily functioning (Dyson, 2010; Roskam, Zech, Nils, & Nader-Grosbois, 2008). Most of the research explores general learning disabilities and fewer studies focus on specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia (Karande & Kuril, 2011).

Some studies took adolescents' perspectives of diagnosis with dyslexia (e.g. Armstrong & Humphrey, 2009; Rimkute, Torppa, Eklund, Nurmi & Lyytinen, 2014). Few studies have taken younger children's perspectives of being diagnosed with learning difficulties (Cosden, Elliot, Noble & Kelemen, 1999; Humphrey & Mullins, 2002; Raskind, Margaret, Higgins, 2006; Riddick, 1996). The voice of children with dyslexia is barely heard in literature. Little of the research resonates with the voice of the younger child regarding the construction of meaning of being diagnosed with dyslexia. The present study will try and address this important gap in the literature.

Conclusion

Taken together the findings in the reviewed literature highlight the challenges that children with dyslexia face, including a negative self-concept, stigma and negative schooling experiences. Due to these challenges, their psychosocial well-being might be impacted especially if there is a lack of understanding and support from significant others in the child’s life.

The literature also outlines that children with dyslexia perceive the diagnosis as an affirmation that their difficulties in academic achievement are not resulting from a lack of intelligence. Nonetheless, most individuals are not happy to be categorised by the dyslexic label since the label is often equated with lack of intelligence and failure in academics. There is a growing awareness about the support these children with dyslexia need, in order to be better able to achieve psychological well-being and academic success.

The ability to succeed in other non-academic fields or in academic fields if different teaching strategies which do not prioritise literacy are employed, indicate that dyslexia could be in part socially constructed. Therefore, children with dyslexia are at a disadvantage in an academic context which relies heavily on reading and writing as the primary mode of teaching and learning.

The following chapter describes the methodology and methods through which this research attempts to explain the process that children with dyslexia experience, in their meaning making of their diagnosis.

Chapter 3.0

Methodology and Methods

3.1 Chapter Overview

The aims of the chapter are twofold: Firstly, to provide the reader with the philosophical assumptions underpinning this research, namely its epistemology, ontology, axiology and methodology. Secondly, to present the research procedure - the research design, participant recruitment, methods of data collection and analysis of data.

The rationale for choosing a qualitative paradigm will be presented first, followed by a description of the chosen methodology - constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). In the last section, the methods adopted to generate the data will be described and a rationale behind the chosen methods will be given. Ethical considerations and a self-reflexive account will also be presented at the end of this chapter.

3.2 Rationale for Choosing a Qualitative Paradigm

Before stating my reasons for choosing a qualitative paradigm, I will give a working definition of qualitative research as posited by Denzin and Lincoln (2011).

> Qualitative research involves an interpretative, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p.3).

My intent as a researcher is to explore the process that children with dyslexia go through in their meaning making of their diagnosis. The focus is on understanding the meaning the participants ascribe to their experiences rather than the researcher's meaning or the meaning found in literature (Creswell, 2013). My intent is also to make the voices of the children heard as they seem to be excluded in the extant literature. The exploratory nature of the research question, coupled with my intent to empower the children to share their process of meaning making, effectively lends itself to a qualitative paradigm.

Qualitative research is inductive, namely from the bottom-up, rather than deducted from theory. The researcher's position is considered and through self-reflexivity the impact of the researcher on the research is highlighted together with the impact of the research on researcher. The interpretation of findings is shaped by the researcher's experience and background.

3.3 Rationale for Choosing a Constructivist Grounded Theory Methodology

According to Creswell (2013), there needs to be a flow in the process of research, a thread which weaves together the philosophical assumptions, the phenomenon investigated and the approach of inquiry, which is the methodology chosen in the investigation.

A constructivist grounded theory methodology was deemed to be the best approach to investigate the process that children go through in their meaning making of the diagnosis of dyslexia.

For this study, the model proposed by Charmaz, (2014) was chosen. The epistemology underpinning this model is constructivist. The theoretical assumptions underlying the constructivist grounded theory is that reality is multiple and is co constructed with the researcher. Constructivist research addresses the process of interaction among individuals (Creswell, 2013). This perspective allows the research to be viewed as another constructed reality, arising as it does in one situation and therefore shaped by what the researcher puts into it and draws out of the data that is collected.

Charmaz’s version of grounded theory resonates with my own epistemological view. The reflexivity process, which a constructivist grounded theory entails, made the methodology enticing for me. Through my training as an educational psychologist I became aware of the impact that the self (as psychologist/researcher) has on my interactions with others, and how even in a therapeutic relationship, experience is co-created between the therapist and client. As a result, I was most inclined to choose a methodology which directly acknowledges this co-creation.

The possibility to generate theory as opposed to giving a conceptual explanation of a phenomenon also drew me to a grounded methodology and made me select a grounded methodology over an IPA study (Creswell, 2013). In Charmaz words, “Grounded theorists value theory construction over description, patterns in data over individual stories, developing fresh concepts and theories over applying received theory, and theorizing processes over assuming stable structures” (Charmaz, 2017 p. 2).

Through Grounded theory methodology a theoretical ‘explanatory scheme’ (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 108) will be provided, that informs the practice of educational psychologists when giving a diagnosis and informs educators on how to best support children with dyslexia in their meaning making of the diagnosis.

As daunting as it might appear at the outset, the grounded theory methodology as proposed by Charmaz (2014) is a structured, well-defined approach which assisted me as a novice researcher. This was another factor which led me to choose Charmaz’s approach.

3.4 Philosophical Assumptions Underpinning this Study

Lincoln, Lnyham and Guba (2011) consider the philosophical assumptions as key factors in qualitative research. Crotty (2015) posits that four basic elements should govern the research process: epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods. As a novice researcher, the process seemed daunting. Initially I struggled to become aware of my beliefs and the philosophical assumptions that I am bringing into this research project. Guided by the book "*Grounded Theory. A Practical Guide*" (Birks & Mills, 2015), I began to keep a journal and started asking questions that led me to discover my underlying assumptions about the world. The first few pages of the research journal tried to answer the following questions "How do I define myself?", "How do I see the world?", "How do I define reality?", "What can be the relationship between the researcher and participant?" "How do we know the world or gain knowledge of it?".

Initially I was taken aback by these questions, as I had never engaged, in a sustained way, with such thoughts. When trying to answer the first question "Who am I?" I remembered a favourite quote I often used, to reply to the posed question, "I knew who I was this morning, but I have changed a few times since then" (Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland, 1865). This reminded me of a journal I had as a young girl, in which I kept favourite quotes from literary sources. Out of curiosity and nostalgia I looked though that journal. Sifting through the pages, yellowed with age, what stood out to me was another quote from C.S. Lewis's Chronicles of Narnia, "The Magician's nephew":

> For what you see and hear depends a good deal on where you are standing. It also depends on what sort of person you are (C. S. Lewis, 1955).

Upon reflection, the quotes chosen in the journal revealed the way I had, and still do, view myself and the world. Who I am is always changing and reality changes with experience and the context in which it occurs. Unbeknownst to me, this journal contained the seeds of my epistemological and ontological assumptions. Obviously, these beliefs were strengthened by my educational training and the extensive reading of academic journals and books.

This was a process of self-discovery. As I brought each piece of information together, everything starting to make more sense, beginning from how I got interested in the researched topic, to how I eventually formulated the research question, and which methodology I chose to guide my research. According to Creswell (2013) there is a close link between "the philosophy that one brings to the research and how one proceeds to use a framework to shroud his or her inquiry", (p. 15). My philosophical assumption informed how I posed the research question, and the research paradigm utilised to answer the question.

3.4.1 Epistemological and Ontological Assumptions

In this section I will highlight the epistemology – "What counts as knowledge and how knowledge claims are justified" (Creswell, 2013, p. 20) and ontology – "concerns about reality and being" (Ponterotto, 2005, p. 130), underpinning this research.

In agreement with the epistemological underpinnings of Charmaz's proposition of grounded theory, I place myself within a Contextual Constructionist perspective (Madill, Jordon & Shirley, 2000). The contextualism perspective assumes that "knowledge is local, provisional and situation dependent" (Jaeger & Rosnow, 1988). This position acknowledges that findings will vary "according to the context in which the data was collected and analysed" (Madill, Jordon & Shirley, 2000).

The ontological position underlying constructivism is a relativist one (Willig, 2013). My research attempted to understand how children make sense of their diagnosis, which is a relativist view that assumes a subjective reality for each child and is context dependent.

However, placing myself on the radical relativist end of the continuum would create ambiguity. While I subscribe to the relativist position and agree that as a researcher, notwithstanding the fact that I aimed to stay as faithful as possible to the participants' accounts when interpreting the data, I influenced the data generation and analysis and the experiences were co-created between participant and researcher in a particular context. However, I also assume that this co-created reality captures the reality of other children diagnosed with dyslexia.

To grapple with this ambiguity, my ontological position shifts more towards the critical realist than the radical relativist position. By adopting the critical realist approach, I do not assume that the data is a "mirror image" (Willig, 2013 p. 70) of the outside reality but can be an accurate interpretation of the reality of children with dyslexia. This position concedes that the data representation captures the experience but does not replicate it (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007).

3.4.2 Axiology

According to Ponterotto (2005), axiology acknowledges the role of the researcher's values in the research. The information gathered in the process of research is value laden (Creswell, 2013 p. 20). The researcher's values and biases permeate all the research process, from the selection of the topic to the generation and analysis of data, and the final write up. According to Rokeach (1973), values have a cognitive component, an affective component and a behavioural component. Applied to the context of research, it would translate into how I view the research topic, how I feel about it, and my motivation for researching the topic.

I have always valued highly academic pursuits, and not being able to achieve academically would have constituted a huge personal failure. From the little I knew about dyslexia prior to entering the Mpsy course, I always envisaged that people with dyslexia have difficulties in pursuing an academic path. As someone who equates success with academic achievement, I looked at dyslexia from a deficit lens, as something which holds a person back from achieving success. Maybe for someone who places less value on academics, such a person would view dyslexia as less distressing. This was a huge bias which I brought into research as I expected to hear accounts of distress.

3.4.2.1 Choosing the topic. Prior to working with a young adult with dyslexia at the practicum, I never had an intellectual curiosity about the topic of dyslexia. It was the experience of this young man that sparked my interest. As Lofland, Snow, Anderson and Lofland (2006) posit, it was the context, the different working setting from what I was otherwise used to, which exposed me to the topic. I met Carl in my first year as a trainee. Carl referred himself for assessment of dyslexia as he was finding the coursework at post-secondary education very challenging. Albeit my reality was different than his, I could easily relate to his experience since I as a student myself was also overwhelmed by my coursework.

Lofland, Snow, Anderson and Lofland (2006) highlighted the fact that "we make problematic in our research matters which are problematic in our lives (p.10)." Being a student made me more attuned to Carl. Fearing that I would not be able to excel academically was a great concern for me as a first-year student. Thus, I empathised with Carl's pain in his struggles to overcome the barriers that dyslexia was posing in his academic journey.

Although I acknowledged the pain, I realised that I could not fully understand it myself. I viewed Carl's struggles as daunting and I felt an immense shame, that I had even for a moment equated my reality with his. How could I, who was have always a high achieving student without much effort, with a great passion for reading, possibly even think that I would understand Carl's reality?

The encounter with Carl coupled with the literature I consulted on students with dyslexia as part of my training as an educational psychologist, created a confirmatory bias for me that had to be kept in check throughout this research. I held the belief that students with dyslexia struggle and have a negative self-concept and do not do well at school.

3.4.2.2 My view of children. I would like to share the way I view children by quoting James (1999), who posits that “children are people with abilities and capabilities different from rather than simply less than adults (p. 246).” Through my experience as a PSCD teacher with adolescents, I became aware that children are very often silenced by educators and often expressed hurt feelings when decisions were taken on their behalf without being consulted. After two decades of working in schools, I came to view children as having a lot to say, and that they are the experts about their own lives. My training as an educational psychologist strengthened my belief that children are not helpless victims of their reality but have the necessary tools to shape their reality.

Underneath this value lurks an unmet need to be heard as a child. Being a 46-year-old woman, I was brought up at the time when children were largely voiceless. I had to do what the adults around me told me to do and I did not have any say in the events and decisions that concerned me. Giving a voice to children might be my way of reclaiming what I did not have as a child.

This view of children as experts of their own experience informed my choice of methodology and methods for data collection. The choice of focus groups and creative methods of data collection were also influenced by the value of beneficence. I felt uncomfortable to gather the data as a means to an end, without the participants themselves also gaining from it. The constructivist methodology and constructivist methods allowed me to offer a safe context where together with me as the researcher, the children made meaning of their diagnosis.

The value I place on research is due to its ability to inform practice. Thus, the choice of a grounded methodology which affords the researcher the possibility to create theory, was found to be the best fit for my research.

3.5 Rhetoric Structure

As posited by Ponterotto (2005), "Rhetoric refers to the language used to present the procedures and results to one's intended audience pg. 132." Due to the reflexive nature of the methodological approach adopted, the writeup is in the first person. When presenting the findings, I tried to use the children's words as much as possible, using extensive direct quotations, as it is their authentic voice that I wanted to make heard.

Methods Section

3.6 Methods

This section will outline the process involved in this grounded theory study, namely the design, the sample and sampling strategy, the data collection tools, the data collection procedure and analysis of data.

3.6.1 The Design

Grounded theory was used to produce an 'explanatory scheme' which is made up of interrelated concepts brought together by a 'logical pattern' (Birks & Mills, 2015, p.108). In line with grounded theory, data collection and data analysis were carried out concurrently. Memos, capturing thoughts and ideas of the researcher related to the emerging concept, were written following each session and throughout the analysis process. This ongoing analysis shaped the data collection and enabled the refinement of the emerging concepts through theoretical sampling.

3.6.2 Research Procedure

3.6.2.1 Focus groups with children. Focus groups create a safe context, in which children can express themselves freely with their peers. They create an experience similar to the classroom context with which the children are familiar, making the focus groups a natural setting in which children can interact (Mauthner, 1997). A group setting addresses the power imbalance between adult-child which is less prominent in groups than in individual interviews (Heary & Hennessy, 2002). In a group setting, the researcher's role is to facilitate the process of sharing. Thus, the children do not feel interrogated by an adult.

Focus groups position children as experts. It gives them space to share and compare their views, hence providing the researcher with a richer account of the experience.

Assuming the role of a facilitator within the group was more challenging than I had at first expected. I was struggling not to be perceived as an authority figure. The experience I have with children in groups had always been within the classroom setting, where my role was more authoritarian. The children were calling me "Miss", which indicated from the outset that in their eyes I am a teacher. To mitigate this, I insisted that they call me by my first name. To minimise the power imbalance, we all sat down on the carpet in a circle. Sitting on the floor also created a less formal atmosphere and as a result the children felt more at ease. I also shared some information with them when we introduced ourselves such as my favourite food and my love for cats.

While the children's ease was something I aimed for, their behaviour soon became challenging. Although I was aware that my role was not to discipline these children, I needed to set limits so that everyone would have a chance to be listened to, and to achieve the aim of the sessions. Setting these limits without being authoritarian was indeed challenging.

However, choosing fun and engaging activities kept the children focused and lessened the need for me to intervene.

3.6.2.2 Limitations of focus groups with children. Whereas a classroom setting might be familiar to children, for some children with dyslexia the classroom context is stress inducing because it reminds them of the daily challenges they face due to dyslexia. The venue for the focus groups was at the psychology lab at the University of Malta. From the outside, the lab looks like a normal classroom. One participant refused to join the group as she feared that we would be doing school related activities. Another participant was also hesitant to join at first as he said he did not want to read and write.

In a group, there is always the possibility for a child to feel intimidated by the other group members and the child might keep back from giving their input (Lewis, 1992). This was the case for a boy in my research group. Being a shy boy and having difficulty expressing himself verbally, his voice was not heard as often as those of others. This barrier was addressed by presenting the group with engaging activities in which each child had their own turn to contribute. Research suggests that playful, engaging activities are a preferred mode of participation tools for children within groups, rather than conversation (Clark, 2004; Hill, Laybourn & Borland, 1996).

Another limitation of collecting data within a group is that some children, out of their need to be accepted, will give opinions/views which are desirable in order to fit in.

A shortcoming in planning the group, is that there was no screening of the participants beforehand. This resulted due to the lack of participants who volunteered to join the research group. Screening would have given me the possibility to get an indication of their personal qualities such as their level of confidence and capacity to express themselves. The group did not know each other. Fortunately, this did not present a problem in the running of the sessions as the group interacted well together. Allowing time in the initial session for introductions and doing ice-breaking activities helped to put the children at ease.

Getting the participants together and finding a common time where the children and their parents are free from their busy schedules proved to be another ordeal. However, the parents were very understanding, and the children were eager to contribute to the research. We eventually managed to find a time and place which suited everyone.

Focusing on the topic of discussion also presented challenges. I had to constantly find a balance between allowing the children to freely express themselves, thus enabling them to feel they have control over the discussion and keeping to the agenda. Once again, carefully selected activities kept the children focused on the agenda.

Clarifying the participants' responses also posed a challenge. To make sure that I understood the message conveyed by the children and to ensure that I was getting an accurate account, I made used of paraphrasing and reflection using their own words as much as possible. At times I was not sure whether the children agreed with my paraphrasing and reflecting, so as not to challenge me as an adult.

3.6.2.3 Ethical issues when working in a group. Participants share their experiences within a group, not just with the researcher. This makes confidentiality harder to maintain. The confidentiality issue was discussed at length in our initial session. In language which these children could understand I explained the importance of keeping their shared experiences within the group. All participants including their parents were informed of the possibility that disclosure could take place.

In a group setting, the researcher has little control of how much the participants will share, and the researcher cannot predict the impact of emotionally triggering discussions on other participants. This was minimised by constantly checking the children's reactions and asking them how they are feeling. Debriefing activities before leaving the sessions were carried out each time.

3.6.3 Participants

Seven children agreed to participate in my research. Only four could attend the group sessions. One of the participants fell sick on the week we held the group sessions, and another could not make it on any dates suggested. One participant insisted that I hear her story and since it was not possible for her parents to drive her to the sessions, I accepted to carry out an individual session at her home. Table 3.1 includes the demographics of the participants.

Table 3.1

Participants Summary Table

Name	**Age**	**Professional making the diagnosis**	**When they got diagnosed**
Rocky	7	Dyslexia Specialist	Few weeks before joining the group
Jack	8	Educational Psychologist	1 year
Christina	9	Dyslexia Specialist	2 years
Jacob	9	Educational Psychologist	2 years
Eve	10	Educational Psychologist	3 years

The inclusion criteria for taking part in this research:

- Age: Only participants whose age fell within the range of 8-10 years were recruited except for one participant. Rocky, age 7 years, was accepted when he volunteered himself upon hearing that his elder sister, Christina was joining. Choosing children whose age is not more than two years apart ensured that differing levels of maturity are minimised.

- Having a diagnosis of dyslexia.

3.6.4 Recruitment of Participants

Purposive sampling was used for this research where children with a diagnosis of dyslexia were invited to participate. The Malta Dyslexia Association (MDA) was the initial gatekeeper for the recruiting of participants. The MDA sent letters of participation to all parents of children with dyslexia who are registered on their database. Due to the lack of response, the plan had to be discarded. Subsequently, a permission for participation in research in government schools was requested, and the help of SPLD was enlisted to recruit participants. SPLD sent letters of participation to parents but once again there was no response. At this point, a private school was used as a gate-keeper. Only two participants replied and then declined to join the group upon contacting them. Finally, participants were recruited through the help of an educational psychologist working privately and through a teacher, an ex-colleague of mine, who contacted a few parents on my behalf.

A reason for refusal which was given to me by one parent was that she did not wish for her son to be placed with other children with dyslexia as she felt that this would be stigmatising. Also, another parent who declined to participate expressed her fear that some distressing issues might come up within the group which could negatively impact her son who has already passed through a difficult time coming to terms with dyslexia. The apprehension exhibited by these two parents indicate that a diagnosis of dyslexia leaves an impact on both the child and the parents.

The final sample size was five. Four participated in the group sessions and with one participant, I carried out an individual session using the same creative techniques used in the group. Since participants were not recruited through MDA, the original plan of holding the group sessions at the MDA premises was discarded, and the Psychology Lab at the University of Malta, was chosen instead as a venue for the group sessions.

3.7 Data Collection Tools: Strengths and Limitations

In this research I aimed at "constructing an account with the children" (Wescott & Littleton, 2005, p.151) using creative methods. Hence, the tools selected are close to the children's world, allowing the children to start from a place that is familiar to them. The methods of choice were story games, role-play and drawing (See Appendix B). These served as "constructive tools" for participants to share their experiences and give meaning to them (Veale, 2005).

For ethical reasons, I tried not to ask directly for the children's experiences but rather, to access them through non-directive methods. This gave the children more control, over what, and how much to share. Story games, role-play and drawing lend themselves to a non-directive approach.

3.7.1 Story games. According to Veale (2005), story games give "deeper insight into constructions of their world" (p. 259). The strength of the story game is that children put their minds together and give life to a "collective shared understanding" (Veale, 2005, p. 261). In the story game each participant takes it in turn to add a little bit to the story, until the children feel that the story is completed. The beginning of the story was given to the participants "Bibi was doing an English lesson…". The story games were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim after the session.

3.7.2 Drawing. Drawing was also used as means of expression. I provided the art material and encouraged free drawing. The drawings were processed by inviting the children to talk about their drawing. Some of the participants preferred puppet making as a means of expression and they created sock puppets.

3.7.3 Role-play. Gebauer and Wolf (1995) describe role-play as making "it possible for individuals to step out of themselves to draw the outer world into their inner world, and to lend expression to their interiority" (pp. 2-3).

According to Yardley (1995), role-play is effective as a research tool if the scene and place is given beforehand. I provided the scene to be acted out: "A boy with dyslexia doing a lesson in class." The children decided on the roles and collectively constructed the situation. The role-play was processed, with a discussion and there were times when I freeze framed a situation to make them reflect on an emerging theme.

A drawback of these collective methods is the risk of creating a false consensus. However, I felt that in my research group, these constructive methods allowed for differing views to emerge and participants were assertive enough to disagree when they felt the need to do so.

3.8 Data Generation Process

All the group sessions were carried out in Maltese and were approximately an hour each. The one to one session was carried out in English as this was the participant's preferred language of expression. These group sessions were audio recorded with the permission of the parents and children. Immediately after the session, I engaged in note-taking to aid my memory.

3.8.1 Transcription. The group sessions were transcribed verbatim. The researcher's questions and replies were also transcribed (Refer to Appendix C). Names and any locations mentioned in the data were kept anonymous (Flick, 2014). The first transcript was challenging. I did not refer to the children by their names when addressing them in the group. So, I had to recognise their voices while transcribing the session. In the second session I took this into consideration. Transcriptions were a laborious process with each session yielding over 40 pages of data.

3.8.2 Grounded Theory Analysis Process

3.8.2.1 Line-by-line coding and initial codes. After transcribing all the sessions and checking them again with the audio-recording, I engaged in the process of going through each line and placing the initial code. This process, although very time consuming familiarises the researcher with the data and allows her to stay grounded within the data as much as possible. To remain faithful to the participants' words and meaning, I used in vivo codes using the gerund to capture the process (Charmaz, 2006). For a sample of the line-by-line coding see Appendix D. The writing of memos was also carried out at this initial stage, in which I jotted down my reflections, questions and hypotheses (See Appendix D).

3.8.2.2 Theoretical sampling. I started with the process of theoretical sampling as from the first group session. Following the initial analysis of the first transcript, a comparison between the accounts of each participant took place (See Appendix E). I tried to capture similarities and differences within the session and the initial hypothesis started to take shape. After transcribing the session, what stood out the most was the phrase "she will try her best." As from the first session, the participants' tenacity and their resources to overcome adversities became evident. To investigate this theme further, I presented to the children the vignette of Missy, a student who is overwhelmed by the difficulties posed by dyslexia. I invited them to suggest solutions to her situation. In the last session I asked direct questions to gain more insight about their resources and coping skills and the positive reframing was highlighted even further.

3.8.2.3 Focus codes. The line-by-line coding generated large number of initial codes. This led to the next phase of coding, focus coding. Going through the initial codes I looked for repetition, inconsistencies, patterns and relationships in the codes, which led to the generation of approximately 20 focus codes within each session (See Appendix F). I assembled the focused codes together and moved to a more conceptual level of analysis by looking more deeply at the relationship between the focus codes (See Appendix G). Thus, the categories and the core category were developed.

3.8.2.4 Categories- theoretical coding. Arriving at the categories involved going back and forth between the focus codes. I displayed the focus codes on a whiteboard at home and started colour coding the codes according to the relationships and patterns. This physical display allowed for a fresh outlook of the data (See Appendix H). At times, I had to go back to the transcripts to make sure that the categories were capturing the true meaning of the children's words.

3.8.2.5 The core category. Identifying a core category was not an easy process. It was only after I identified the categories and jotted down a draft of the storyline that a theoretical construct began to emerge. Through constant comparison and analysis of the data, not only between sessions but also between participants, I realised that the participants who managed to reframe dyslexia positively, had tapped into their resources and were more hopeful. Rocky was an exception. He described dyslexia as a "three-eyed monster" and showed fewer coping strategies, more anger and had lower aspirations than the other children. In line with what Charmaz (2006) states, the "negative case" that is, the case which gives an opposing profile, helps to refine the theory.

After going back and forth through the data numerous times and comparing the process of all five participants to ensure that the storyline is not imposed on data but is grounded in it (Birks & Mills, 2015), I managed to capture the process of meaning making. The central category "Positive meaning making contributes to hope", was identified.

3.8.3 The Storyline

The Storyline is the "conceptualisation of the story… the core category" (Corbin, 1990, p.116 as cited in Birks & Mills, 2015). It helps to bring together the final theory and serves as a means to bring the theory to the reader (Birks & Mills, 2015). The use of storyline was harshly criticised initially as a grounded theory technique, because it was viewed as going against the principle of grounded theory by imposing a story on the data (Glaser, 1992).

However, Charmaz (2014) states that stories can be used "in the service of our analysis" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 317). The story in my research is a product of the analysis and interpretation of data (Birks & Mills, 2015). It is a narrative, an 'explaining story' (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 113) of the trajectory from feeling fearful about the diagnosis of dyslexia to feeling hopeful in life.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

This study was approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC; See Appendix I). The ethical principle guiding my research was that of beneficence that is doing no harm (The British Psychological Society, 2010).

Only children who are diagnosed with dyslexia and had already been informed about their diagnosis were recruited. Parental consent was obtained, and children were asked directly if they wished to participate before staring our first session (See Appendix J). They were briefed about the purpose of research and on how their contribution to this research will inform the practice of psychologists and educators. The participants were debriefed after each session by checking how they were feeling and doing a fun activity which destressed them.

My experience, as an educational psychologist trainee and drawing upon the sensibility and expertise garnered through 20 years of experience addressing socioemotional difficulties in a group setting, within the capacity of a PSCD teacher, ensured that I could provide a healthy and supportive experience for all the participants. A session with the parents was held as a follow up to check with them that all the participants are doing well, while also offering them tips and strategies which will ensure support for the participants at home. The names were changed to protect the identity of the children. The names used in the study were chosen by the participants themselves.

3.10 Credibility of the Study

3.10.1 Self-reflexivity. In a qualitative inquiry, the researcher and the participant are co-constructing reality. The researcher shapes the construction as well, during the interpretation of data and the presentation of findings. An analogy that comes to mind is that of a photographer who captures a moment on camera, then in post processing the photographer crops, adjusts contrasts and increases saturation, uses highlighting and shadowing and through the process of fine tuning, effects the final product. In this way, the photographer presents a slightly different photograph to the raw image that was captured on camera.

Thus, the process calls for a researcher’s reflexivity about the whole process of research. My identity as a researcher and my theoretical standpoint have both shaped my research. Having spent twenty years in a teaching profession in a system which gives importance to academic achievement and having raised a son who is a high achiever and having been a high academic achiever myself, all shape my beliefs and expectations about how children might assimilate the diagnosis of a learning difficulty.

As a person who has never lived the reality of someone with dyslexia, I experienced a sense of shame in the initial phases of the research. I felt fraudulent, asking myself how I could dare to understand a child from where I am at present- an adult who is passionate about reading and never struggled with literacy. Even as a PSCD teacher, I might have overlooked the struggles of children with dyslexia as my subject did not require the students to read and write and there was no formal assessment.

I came to terms with this issue by acknowledging that my training gave me enough insight and the necessary skills to be able to understand the realities of children with dyslexia. My genuine interest and an openness to what the children would bring into the sessions, also put me in a position to gain a deep understanding of the children’s reality (Dahlberg et al., 2008). The differing realities between the researcher and the researched contributed to more objectivity on my part as I managed to view their perspective without being too immersed in mine.

3.10.2 Being an outsider. Not having experienced dyslexia, myself put me in an outsider position in the relationship between the researcher and the researched (Raheim, Magnussen, Tveit Sekse, Lunde, Jacobsen, Blystad, 2016). In our initial encounter I made it clear that I am not dyslexic and emphasised that the children must provide me with their knowledge about what it feels like. This made me negotiate my position as being less knowledgeable than them and might have counteracted the children’s perception of an adult as the knower.

The perception of society, viewing children as subordinate to adults, cannot be overlooked in research as it certainly influences the research process (Mayall, 2000). I felt from the first encounter that the participants were viewing me as a teacher, which is the adult relationship that they are most familiar with in their daily lives outside of their interactions with family members. This was addressed early in the sessions, but I feel that it still pervaded the sessions although to a lesser extent. This might have influenced the children's interaction within the group and consequently the information shared (Richards & Emslie, 2000).

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the philosophical assumptions underpinning this research. The values impacting this research and their influence on the choice of research topic, the methodology and methods chosen was discussed. The chapter also presented the research procedure employed. Information about recruitment of participants and the process of data collection and analysis was presented and discussed in detail. My position as researcher was clearly underlined and against this backdrop, I invite the reader to explore the research findings, highlighted in the chapter which follows.

Chapter 4.0

Results

4.1 Chapter Overview

The aim of this chapter is to present the results from the data collected during the sessions. I will begin by presenting an account of each participant's personal meaning of dyslexia. The categories and core category will then be presented in a storyline (Birks, Mills, Francis, Chapman, 2009). The storyline will tie together the categories and will highlight the process of meaning making that these children go through upon receiving a diagnosis of dyslexia. The story line will also explicate the core-category generated in this research, that "Positive meaning making contributes to hope." In the final section I will present some themes from my research journal which will shed further light on how the group impacted the participants.

The diagram below visualises the process of meaning making which emerged from the findings:

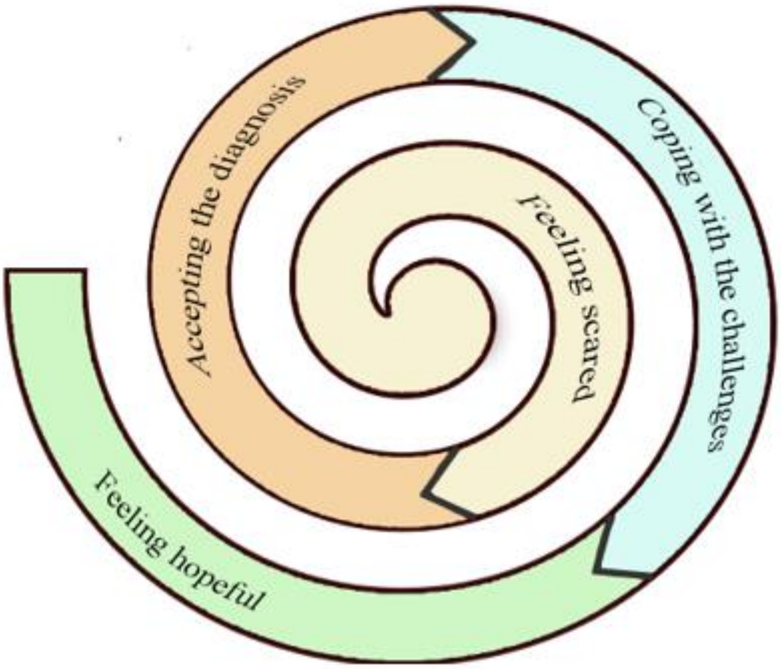

Figure 1: From feeling scared to feeling hopeful

4.2 One Diagnosis, Different Meanings

The following accounts give further information about how participant made sense of the diagnosis of dyslexia.

Rocky[2]- "Dyslexia is a Three-Eyed-Monster"

Rocky is a seven-year-old boy who has been recently diagnosed with dyslexia at his school by a dyslexia specialist. He enjoys swimming and his favourite food is pasta with fish. Rocky does not like school as he finds the lessons to be "super boring." When he grows up he would like to become "a fire fighter with dogs." He **c**reated a puppet, a three-eyed monster to describe dyslexia because he feels that it affects him negatively. The colour he chose to describe dyslexia is white, as in his own words "white is a colour no one fights over when they have no colours." For Rocky having dyslexia makes him feel different from others, and less competent than other children in his class. He often feels sad and overwhelmed by the amount of school work and home work he is expected to accomplish. Rocky keeps the diagnosis of dyslexia a secret, because he fears that other children will make fun of him. He believes that only the teacher should know "so that he goes to the dyslexia class (referring to the complimentary class) and does not stay sitting in the class for nothing". Also, the teacher would know the reason behind the mistakes in his work. "If she gives you sentences, she would know that you get a lot of them written wrongly."

Rocky feels that his difficulties will limit his aspirations for the future. When I asked the question "Can a person with dyslexia become whatever he choses to become?" Rocky answered, "Not really. When you start failing the tests at school, then you have to choose something for which you don't have to study".

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[2] All names were changed to protect the participants identities. The pseudonyms used here were chosen by the participants themselves.

Notwithstanding the challenges, Rocky does not give up. He stated, "I don't get disheartened. The teacher tells us never give up." If he were to change something in himself it would be "reading more and he would know the words."

Figure 4.2. Rocky's three-eyed monster sock puppet

Jacob- "Dyslexia Poses Challenges in Reading and Writing but it is Still Ok"

Jacob is an 9-year-old boy who was diagnosed with dyslexia a year ago by an educational psychologist. He loves drawing and his favourite food is spaghetti with rabbit. He describes himself as having "a nice character... who likes helping others." When he grows up he would like to be a teacher or a policeman. Jacob chose to describe dyslexia by drawing a picture, "I drew a boy reading and is struggling to read." He says the boy in the picture " is not sad as he does not like reading anyways, and he is good at drawing, something he enjoys doing very much."

For Jacob having dyslexia means having difficulties in writing and reading but he came to terms with it. He describes getting a diagnosis as a positive experience and even though he felt scared at first as he feared that two of the bullies in his class will make fun of him, this fear slowly dissipated. Jacob feels that disclosing his diagnosis of dyslexia makes the other people around him understand his difficulties and gets him the support he needs. He recommends that "everyone should go and see someone to check if they have dyslexia or not."

Jacob has great aspirations for the future and believes that dyslexia will not stop him from succeeding in life. He feels his life is good especially at home with his family but also at school. He would not change anything in himself.

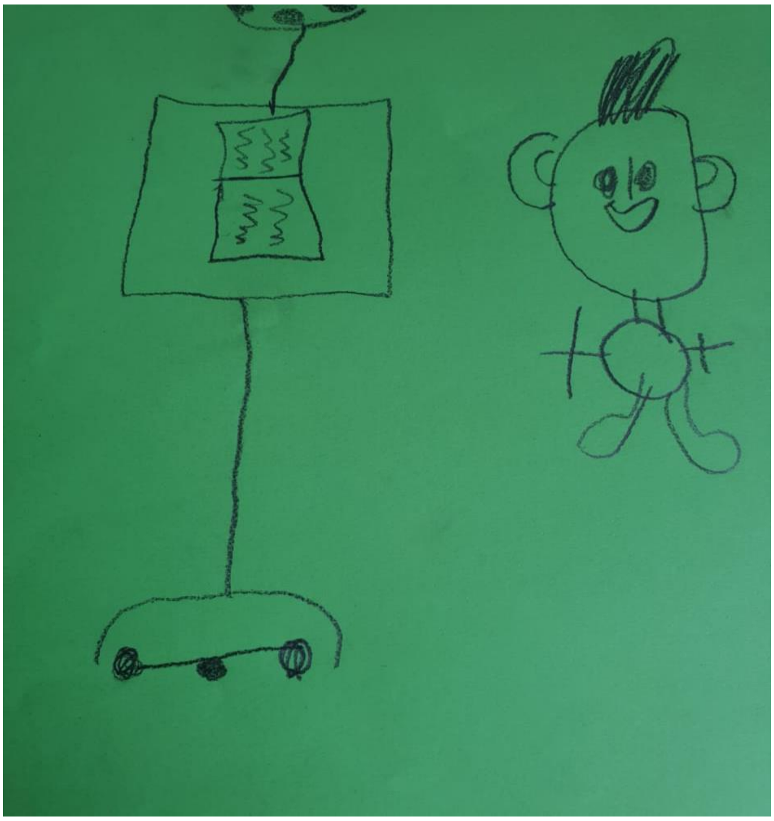

Figure 4.3. Jacob's drawing- a boy having difficulty to read in class

Jack- "Dyslexia is Scary"

Jack is an 8-year-old boy who was diagnosed with dyslexia two years ago by an educational psychologist. Jack loves drawing and playing with his friends at school. He also plays the piano. When describing himself, he emphasised his strengths, "I am very good at drawing." Jack has great aspirations for his future. He would like to become an architect or a chef**.** His favourite food is candy.

For Jack, having dyslexia is scary. He drew a yellow monster and he said that dyslexia scares him.

Figure 4.4. Jack's drawing- a yellow monster

Although Jack received his diagnosis two years ago, he was only told he has dyslexia shortly before attending the sessions. All his mother told him before was that he has difficulty in reading and writing without giving him the reasons why. His tenacity became evident as from the very first group session. When the children were creating the story of Bibi, the bee puppet and Bibi was overwhelmed by the work, he was the first one to add "she will try her best."

Christina- "Dyslexia makes me feel special"

Christina is an 9-year-old girl who was diagnosed with dyslexia last year by a dyslexia specialist**.** She likes to do ground flips and when she grows up she would like to become a vet or beauty therapist. Her favourite food is toast with cheese.

Christina described dyslexia as something positive. She said even though she has difficulties in reading and writing, it is fine because she said that everyone has different needs:

> I am going to make a puppet and the puppet is going to speak instead of me… the puppet will tell you that having dyslexia is difficult, but the puppet enjoys having dyslexia because he says that he is different to others. He has different needs. Yes, because you are not like others. You feel special.

Christina feels that dyslexia will not stop her from achieving her aspirations because she will study and push hard to succeed. She feels as competent as her peers and she stated, “one day I will achieve as much as them.” She looks at mistakes as opportunity for learning, stating that: “Sometimes I get stuck in some math problems, but I try to do them even if I get them wrong. I learn from mistakes.”

Christina feels happy in her everyday life however she would like to work a little harder to do obtain better results at tests. One thing she would change in herself is to “be better at reading and writing.”

Figure 4.5. Christina's sock puppet

Eve- "The life of someone with dyslexia is good"

Eve is a 10-year-old girl. She likes making crafts. Her favourite food is pasta. Her biggest dream is to become a stylist when she grows up. Eve describes her strengths when referring to herself, "So, I describe myself as very creative and good at hands-on activities and I'm very good in Maths, I play piano and I like drawing and creative stuff".

The first words that come to Eve's mind when mentioning dyslexia is difficulty in spelling. She feels that due to spelling mistakes she does not do well in certain exams. Eve feels that getting a diagnosis was scary at first:

> It felt not so good at first, like I was OK with it but it's like I'm all different from my friends and like I don't want to be all different and my friends are going to be so good at spelling and I am not.

Eve prefers not to disclose the fact that she has dyslexia, saying that: "I only told, for example my very close friends" as she feels most of her classmates do not understand what dyslexia means.

Eve acknowledges that everyone is different, and everyone has strengths and limitations. She believes that dyslexia is a limitation which only affects her in the academic domain. She described dyslexia as a ‘bad thing’ but is compensated for with “a lot of other good things” she has. Eve described dyslexia as a challenge which she is managing to cope with and she believes that she can do better each time if she keeps on trying. In Eve’s words “I think, my life of dyslexic is very good and that's the only thing I could add… I mean there's no so much problems about it.”

4.3 Collective Stories

The previous section portrayed the individual meaning making of the dyslexia diagnosis of each child. In this section, I will present the common experiences that emerged through the collective stories created in the sessions. The data used in this study consisted of the children’s discourse during the 4 sessions. Each session started with the construction of a situation/story created around puppets which generally represented the children’s schooling experience. A discussion followed every story in which the children expressed their views and emotions related to what was co-constructed within the session. Most of the time the children identified immediately with the stories they created and shifted from the collective story to their personal story.

I will share the stories created in the group sessions in the participants own words and present as much as possible the quotes of the children. This is because it is their voices that I wish to make heard. (See Appendix K for a full account of the stories, vignette and role-play and Appendix L for the quotes in Maltese).

The stories, vignettes and role-play were processed immediately with the participants within the group context. With the help of questions including “Do you know anyone like Bibi?”, “Do you think Bibi has dyslexia?”, “How did she get to know she has dyslexia?”, "How would you feel in that situation?", "Did it ever happen to you?" Such questions helped the children to express themselves and shared their meaning making strategies of having dyslexia.

4.4 The Categories

In this section, the categories making up the storyline will be presented. These categories capture the process of meaning making of the diagnosis of dyslexia. Notwithstanding the fact that each journey is personal, some common feelings and experiences emerged from the data and were put under the following categories.

Table 4.1.

A Summary of Categories, Subcategories and the Core-Category

Category	Subcategory
4.4.1 Feeling Scared	
4.4.2 I have dyslexia, but it is ok	4.4.2.1 I am not alone. 4.4.2.2 Acknowledging that they are not less than others. 4.4.2.3 Experiencing the special attention as an opportunity. 4.4.2.4 Dyslexia is only a small part of myself.
4.4.3 Facing adversities	4.4.3.1 Feeling depreciated by others. 4.4.3.1.1 Not disclosing the diagnosis of dyslexia. 4.4.3.1.2 Being perceived as less capable. 4.4.3.2 Being perceived by teachers as not trying enough and getting punished for it. 4.4.3.3 Being overwhelmed by school work. 4.4.3.4 Being bullied. 4.4.3.5 Unfair mode of assessment.
4.4.4 Coping with dyslexia	4.4.4.1 Supportive context. 4.4.4.2 Self-reliance. 4.4.4.2.1 Becoming autonomous.
Core Category	
4.4.5 Positive meaning making contributes to hope	4.4.5.1 Feeling hopeful. 4.4.5.2 Self-efficacy and determination.

The voice of some participants might be more represented than others in the following write up, since their words might more effectively capture the relevant category. I have attempted to translate the quotes word by word. This was not an easy task as some of these participants had difficulty conveying their ideas in grammatically structured phrases. For readability and comprehension, I have had to occasionally tweak these phrases. (Refer to Appendix L for the verbatim quotations).

4.4.1 "Feeling Scared"

Although each participant followed a personal trajectory in the process of meaning making of dyslexia, one experience shared by most participants in the group was initially feeling scared about getting a diagnosis. These children feared how others might perceive them. One could view this as the initial stage in the process of making sense of dyslexia.

Eve did not feel good about the diagnosis at first. She feared being different to other children: "It felt not so good… I am all different from my friends and I don't want to be different… My friends are going to be good at spelling and I will not".

The same feeling was shared by Jacob. He stated that even though going to the psychologist to be assessed was a positive experience, he was scared "of being teased by two boys" in his class if they got to know about his dyslexia.

Christina expressed similar sentiments. She stated that "I was feeling scared in the beginning, I feared that my friends will tease me because I will be going to the complimentary class... I was scared of being seen as weird... but then I enjoyed going there".

Jack described dyslexia as scary. He was never told directly that he has dyslexia except for a few weeks before joining the research group. He only knew he had difficulties in writing and reading. As a result, Jack was not given the time for meaning making as the other children.

Rocky’s experience was also different to the experiences reported by the rest of the children. He did not feel scared about getting a diagnosis as he was already attending the complimentary class when he was assessed for dyslexia by the dylexia specialist teacher. Like Jack, he only got to know about his diagnosis few weeks before attending the research group. His sister Christina who is a year older than him, was also diagnosed and attending the complimentary class. This might have prepared him for what was to come

4.4.2 “I have Dyslexia, but it is Ok”

The acceptance of their diagnosis of dyslexia is highlighted by the positive reframing expressed by the children. Being able to identify themselves with other children who are struggling with reading and writing made the participants feel less isolated. Over time they were able to acknowledge their different needs alongside their strengths. Going to the complimentary class/special class although a source of fear in the beginning was reframed as an opportunity.

4.4.2.1 “I am not alone.” One of the contributing factors towards acceptance was realising that these children are not alone, and that there are other students with dyslexia in their school. Christina said, “I started enjoying it because I realised that there are other children going to the complimentary (class) and I said I am not alone.” Jacob and Rocky also identified other children in their classroom who have dyslexia and this made them feel better about it. Rocky stated that “Half the class are like me.”

4.4.2.2 Acknowledging that they are not less than others. The participants differed in their views about the feeling of being different than other children due to their dyslexia diagnosis. During the first group session, Christina used the puppet to speak instead of her and said “(the puppet) will tell you that having dyslexia is difficult but the puppet enjoys having dylexia because it says “I am different than others. There are different needs. You are not like the others. You feel special.” She also added in our last session that, “Having dyslexia makes you more interesting than your friends because you will have things which makes you different from them.”

Not every one shared Christina’s view about feeling different. Jacob did not like to think of dyslexia as being different but preferred to think of himself as the same as any other child. He stated “We are all different but not due to dyslexia.” Jacob added that thinking of dylexia in terms of making someone different than others “makes him feel not good about himself.” Jacob emphasised that, “Everyone could be the same, those who have dyslexia and those who don’t.” Eve concurred with Jacob and she stated that “everyone is special” and dyslexia does not make anyone more special than others.

Although Eve acknowledged being different, this differentness is only experienced in the academic domain. She said, “It's OK I'm different but when it comes to for example playing a game I don’t feel different”.

Differing views on being different were further highlighted in the second session, when Christina stated that Missy (the dog puppet) should not feel sad because everyone has different needs. However, Rocky and Jacob stated that if she feels different she will be sad.

Having dyslexia does not make you less than others. This was a general feeling shared by all the participants, except for Rocky. Christina, Jacob, Jack and Eve all expressed the belief that by trying one’s best and working hard, one can achieve. When asked whether they think someone with dyslexia can succeed to fulfil their aspirations, the four children answered “Yes”. Christina said, “One will study and work hard (jistinka) and they will make their dream come true.” She does not feel less than other children who do not have dyslexia, "Because one day I will succeed as much as them." Jacob shared Christina's same outlook, saying, "Everyone can be the same." Jacob even feels more competent than others, and said, "I feel better than others in certain things."

4.4.2.3 Experiencing the special attention as an opportunity. The children in the group looked at recieving special attention for dyslexia as a positive thing. Whereas Chrisitina was initially wary of attending the complimentary class for fear of being teased, she soon started to see it as a perk of having dyslexia, saying, "I skip lessons so I enjoy going there. I skip the boring lessons".

Rocky shared the same view, "We go to the teacher and when we are ready from our work, we play." Another perk for Rocky is that he does not "stay sitting in the class for nothing," since he feels that in the main classroom he is unable to catch up with the rest. Although skipping boring lessons might not be a good reason to attend a complimentary class, Christina and Rocky described the complimentary class as a special place where they feel understood, are not teased and they enjoy a close relationship with their teacher.

> We have more fun in the complementary class. We are allowed to discuss and sometimes she gives us food to savour (Christina).
>
> We enjoy it, in the complimentary class we play games, and sometimes she gives us cheese from Spain (Rocky).

Eve depicts the special attention received in complimentary class as beneficial for a child with dyslexia. When I asked Eve the following question "What would you like to happen in school so that children with dyslexia feel that they are welcome there?", she replied "I would create this special room that we already have", referring to the special class where children "go in this room and there would be this teacher, teaching us spelling and reading. We would be in a group."

Jacob replied to the same question in the group by saying that if he had an LSE or could go out of class for certain lessons, he would have a better learning experience at school.

> It would help me if I were to have an LSE. I think it would be best for me to have an LSE so that she will help me.

Christina concurs with Jacob's view about the LSE and she shared her appreciation for the help she gets from the shared LSE in the classroom.

> I do have an LSE in the classroom and I tell her "Can you help me with this?" She helps me and I feel good becuase it is like getting the help when I do not understand. The LSE is of another girl but helps everyone. She belongs to us all.

All the participants, including Jack, who has an LSE assigned to him on a one-to-one basis, acknowledged the need for extra help, either given in a special class or offered by the LSE in the main classroom. Rocky expressed his view that he sits in the main class for nothing and Jacob felt that he would learn more with the help of an LSE. Jacob further states that everyone with dyslexia should receive special attention outside the classroom or have an LSE.

> I think that every child with dyslexia should either goes out of class or will have an LSE (Jacob).

These experiences might indicate that their class teacher is not addressing their needs in the fullest way possible. As explored in a subsequent section, when presenting the category of "Facing the challenges posed by dyslexia", teachers are not always sufficiently understanding of children with dyslexia.

4.4.2.4 "Dyslexia is only a small part of myself." As from the initial session, the participants described themselves in terms of their strengths. When they described themselves or others with dyslexia they emphasised the strengths. It was only Eve who referred to herself using the term dyslexic. In Eve's words the "life of a dyslexic is very good… I mean there's no so much problems with it. I think it is a very small part of me." Eve like the rest of the participants in the group emphasised her strengths when telling me about herself in our meeting and it was only towards the end of the session that she used the term dyslexic.

> I am creative like I like to do things with my hand and I think I am good at playing the piano, doing hair and makeup and drawing. I feel like I have a lot of good qualities.

The other participants in the group also introduced themselves in terms of their hobbies and their abilities and no one declared that they have dyslexia. Jack introduced himself as follows, "I do Piano and I'm very good at drawing".

Christina emphasised her talent of "doing ground flips" which requires a great deal of motor coordination and mastery. Jacob introduced himself in terms of his hobbies of drawing and drama and Rocky introduced himself to the rest of group by telling us about his enjoyment of swimming.

When I asked them to introduce Missy, the dog puppet with dyslexia, to other students in the school, the same thing happened. They related to Missy in the way that they related with each other in our initial session and asked her questions about her hobbies and what she likes eating ect. The children overlooked the fact that she had dyslexia. It seems that dyslexia does not define them and they do not define others in terms of dyslexia either. When Jacob drew a picture of a boy struggling to read in class to describe dyslexia he added that the boy despite his struggles in literacy, "is happy that he loves drawing."

During the last session I introduced the puppet Milky Buttons, and invited them to introduce themselves to this new member. Once again, they introduced themselves in terms of their hobbies and strengths.

4.4.3 Facing Adversities

These children have to overcome several challenges in their daily lives especially in the school context in which they spend most of their time and where the barriers posed by dyslexia are most evident. These children feel depreciated by others which prevents them from disclosing their diagnosis, leads them to being overwhelmed by schoolwork, facing added risks of bullying, and feeling discriminated against by unfair modes of assessment.

4.4.3.1 Feeling depreciated by others. Notwithstanding the fact, that these children accept themselves as they are and acknowledge their strengths, they are aware that others do not share their positive view about dyslexia. Although they preferred knowing about their diagnosis as this helped them make sense of their difficulties at school, they were cautious about disclosing it to others. Being aware that others might not share their positive view, they prefer not to disclose the diagnosis of dyslexia unless it took place with a teacher, a close friend or a family member, for fear of being teased.

The children are also aware that others underestimate their capabilities. They brought this fact to light in their accounts and spoke about teachers who fail to see their efforts and struggles. Whereas the children feel that they work harder than the rest, they recognise their teachers' misperceptions of them as not trying hard enough. They reported that they are at times punished due to this misperception.

4.4.3.1.1 *Not disclosing the diagnosis of dyslexia.* Whilst they acknowledge that disclosing the diagnosis of dyslexia will result in the needed support such as receiving complimentary lessons, they are cautious regarding to whom they disclose their diagnosis.

Rocky stated that disclosing the diagnosis to a teacher, will help the teacher to understand why children with dyslexia make mistakes. Rocky said:

> (They will know that) if you are given sentences, you will get most written incorrectly (Rocky).

Eve said that she would not tell others that Missy the dog puppet has dyslexia. Her reasons were the following:

> I won’t tell them that she has dyslexia because I don't know if they're gonna be her friend… because em I went through the (same) experience and they (the other children) did not understand.

The other participants in the group shared the same sentiment and stated the fear of being teased as one of the main reasons for not disclosing the diagnosis.

> No. I will keep a secret so that nobody makes fun (Jack).

Christina said that it is best for Missy not to disclose that she has dyslexia as others would think that her brain is not functioning properly. When asked “Does Missy think her brain is not functioning properly? The participants replied, “No, the others think so”.

These children also are aware that teachers view dyslexia differently than they do. Christina views the complimentary class as an opportunity for learning. However, she is aware that her teacher considers it as a waste of time. Even Rocky used the phrase “missing lessons” when referring to his attendance in the complimentary class.

> My teacher grumbles a lot when we go to complimentary class because we lose lessons (Christina).

One would question how an eight-year-old child reconciles these two contradictory views, namely, going to complimentary class to learn to read and write versus going to the complimentary class to waste time.

4.4.3.1.2 *Being perceived as less capable.* These children are also aware that others around them perceive them as less capable than they view themselves. When I asked them what would they would like others around them, especially adults, to know about dyslexia, the children replied that they would like to pass on the message that they can learn with different teaching strategies.

> Having dyslexia means you can learn. A lot of children with dyslexia do not learn by reading and writing but by games that are suitable for them (Christina).

These children are aware that they are more capable than others think they are. Rocky the youngest participant is already aware of this dissonance and he phrased it as best he could:

> You can get more than one correct (Rocky).

4.4.3.2 Being perceived by teachers as not trying enough and being punished for it. As evidenced in the role-play (Refer to Appendix K) and from the discussion that followed it, the children in this study feel that their teachers perceive them as not trying hard enough. They feel blamed for their challenges and it seems that teachers believe that the child has control over the situation. They also feel that the effort being put into reading is overlooked by their teachers. This upsets these children and they reported being sad because of it. They also feel scared to read in class, and that in an ideal school which is dyslexia-friendly, the teacher would not blame the children.

> I am scared when I get stuck in a word and the teacher tells me that I don’t read (Christina).

> I feel upset. I am scared to make mistakes. The teacher tells me "You don't read at home" and I do read at home (Rocky).

> I would like that when I make a mistake, the Miss won't tell me that I don't read at home. I feel a little sad when she tells me this (Jacob).

> In an ideal school, if a child gets stuck in a word, the teacher will not tell him that he does not know how to read, no bullying. (Christina).

The participants also highlighted their reality of being punished for not catching up in class. In the role-play, the child with dyslexia was being sent out of class because he kept asking the teacher for assistance when he could not find the page. The replies given by the participants while processing the role-play, were all blaming the child for not paying enough attention or for not waiting for the teacher to finish the explanation.

The child with dyslexia in the role-play was perceived as being disruptive, thus extreme measures of discipline were mentioned as taking place, such as calling for the intervention of the administrative team. This would single out the child and cause the child extreme distress. When asked whether they were ever sent out of class like the boy in the role-play, Rocky, Christina and Jacob said that it did happen to them. When asked how this makes them feel, they answered "sad" because they felt singled out.

> I feel sad when the teacher starts shouting (Jacob).

> Feeling sad because he says to himself "I am not like my friends" (Rocky).

> The boy (referring to the boy in role-play) will be taken to the office because he is not giving the teacher enough time to explain or else the Madam (head teacher) will be brought in class (Rocky).

> The teacher thinks that the boy is not paying attention (Christina).

Christina also mentioned that she gets scolded for reading painstakingly word by word as if she has control over her reading.

> When reading I will be with another girl and I end up trying to read word by word and the teacher tells me "Eq, Eq."

From what these children mentioned the teachers are not always sufficiently understanding. Eve and Jack do not concur with this reality. Jack is never asked to read in class, whilst Eve thinks that her class teacher is very understanding of dyslexia.

4.4.3.3 Feeling overwhelmed by schoolwork. As seen from the story of Bibi that the children created together, being overwhelmed with school work was a common experience for all of them. Children who go to complimentary classes, like Rocky and Christina, must make up for the missed content covered in the main classroom. This puts an added pressure on these children who are already struggling to keep up with the pace.

The story of Bibi highlights the frustration that Bibi who has dyslexia goes through during the lesson. She is overwhelmed by the work and is crying out for help. The emotions portrayed in the story are intense, including going crazy, screaming, throwing everything on the floor (Refer to Appendix K "Bibi, the Bee had trouble in class").

When we processed the story, it became evident that this is also their reality. The participants identified with Bibi.

> I feel that way, like Bibi. Once I forgot the homework copybook and started a new one and the teacher made me copy two pages and told me that I had to bring the copybook the day after. I felt like throwing the copybook and tearing it in half (Christina).

> I don't like to write compositions. We have a lot to write. Sometimes we have to fill two sheets back to front (Jacob).

> I feel sad because I have a lot of homework. In the other class (referring to the complimentary) no, only one homework she gives me. But if I miss the lessons then I have the homework and the schoolwork that I missed (Rocky).

Eve also created a similar story about Missy who had trouble with dictations. Missy was upset that she got most of the dictation wrong. The feeling of anxiety came across in the story that was told by Eve. Missy learned not to bother a lot but this still creates some level of anxiety in her. (See Appendix K "Missy the dog").

4.4.3.4 Being bullied. Name calling, teasing and exclusion were common themes which resurfaced in different sessions. In Bibi's story, Bibi get teased by Horn. He tells her that she does not know how to read. Rocky said that an ideal school for a child with dyslexia would be a place where "there will be no children who laugh at someone who goes to complimentary."

This teasing does not happen only at school but sometimes it also occurs within the family. At times close family members also misunderstand dyslexia, and this impacts the child negatively. Christina shares her experience:

> Once I asked my eldest sister to help me. She replied "You can't even read a sentence, how ridiculous you are." I told her I need help you know I go to complimentary." She replied, "Do it yourself". I felt sad. I had to wait till the evening for mummy to return from work to finish my work. My mum told me "Why didn't you ask your sister?" I told her I did but she did not want to help me.

Eve also described that there were children in her class who discarded her as they perceived her to be less clever than themselves.

> I feel that they didn't like to hang out with me, they think I am not smart. It doesn't feel like they're really understanding so much (Eve).

4.4.3.5 Being discriminated against by unfair mode of assessment. Eve highlighted another reality for children with dyslexia. She feels that the marks she receives in tests do not reflect her true ability. She feels that the mode of assessment such as deducting marks for spelling mistakes makes her get lower marks than she feels she actually deserves. Eve says that she is more creative than what her marks show. This was the first thing she shared with me during the interview.

> I feel that for me it's not that fair because I mean I do well in the story and then marks go down because of the spelling (Eve).

4.4.4 Coping with Dyslexia

These children not only accepted their diagnosis but learned how to overcome the adversities they encounter in their lives, especially at school, which is where they spend most of their time. The supportive context was a crucial factor in their coping with dyslexia and in the process of positive meaning making. They tap into their resources such as their family support by asking for help when needed. They learned to seek the teacher's and LSE's assistance and they garnered several coping skills along they way to help them overcome the barriers they encountered. Most of all, they introjected the positive beliefs that their complimentary class teacher holds of them and in return they come to believe of themselves.

4.4.4.1 Supportive context. These participants receive the most support from their mother and from the complimentary class teacher. When Missy the dog was feeling sad and the children were invited to come up with suggestions that could help Missy, the parents and the teacher were enlisted as those adults who could be most helpful to Missy.

> She should tell her parents to help her more with homework (Rocky).

Asks her parents to read with her, that's it (Jacob).

Going to the complimentary and asking the teacher to help her (Christina).

The mother was also presented as advocating on their behalf at school. Rocky also suggested that Bibi should ask her mother to intervene on her behalf, saying: "She asks her mum to start going to complimentary." On a similar note, when Bibi was being teased by Horn for her challenges in reading, Jacob suggested that she should "Tell her mummy to write a note to the teacher to change her place."

4.4.4.2 Self-reliance. These children do not always rely on their mother to get the help they need but are assertive enough to speak up for themselves in the classroom. As seen from the responses above, they come up with proactive solutions to resolve their challenges. At times they tried to resolve the problem by thinking outside the box such as suggesting that Bibi befriends Horn so that he will stop teasing her. This was suggested by Christina and approved by the others as the best solution to the problem.

They make friends so that he will stop teasing her (Christina).

Eve also demonstrated coping skills when telling the story of Missy. She said that Missy, not to become overwhelmed with anxiety, will try not to let the low mark in the test bother her too much. This sheds light on her ability to regulate her negative emotions such as anxiety. (Refer to Appendix K "Missy, the dog").

4.4.4.2.1 *Becoming autonomous.* The children appreciate their autonomy and rely on themselves as much as possible to overcome the difficulties. They do not feel helpless in their situations. Jacob suggested that Bibi should speak up for herself when being teased :

She should ask the teacher to change Horn's place or else changes her place (Jacob).

Christina also speaks up for her self when she needs help:

> I have an LSE in the class and I ask her "Can you help me in this?", and she helps me and I feel good because I have someone to help me when I do not understand (Christina).

Christina feels that asking for help is the right thing to do as long as they (students) are not given the answer without trying to get to the answers by themselves first.

> (The teacher) cannot dish out the answer but help you to work them out (Christina).

> I ask mummy or else if I know it I try to work it out by myself (Jacob).

4.4.5 Positive Meaning Making Contributes to Hope

Having gone through the process of positive meaning making by accepting the diagnosis, coming to terms with being different but not less than others and having learned how to cope with the challenges that dyslexia brings with it, had instilled in these children a sense that they have what it takes to be successful in their life.

4.4.5.1 Feeling hopeful. These children feel hopeful for their future, have aspirations and believe in their ability to achieve them. Reframing the diagnosis in a positive way by accepting that having dyslexia does pose challenges but these can be surpassed, instil in these children hope. They have the desire to suceed and feel they have the resources to accomplish their goals. These children have shown that they tap on their supportive context and their strong personal attributes such as self-reliance to overcome adversities and come up with creative ways to move forward.

4.4.5.2 Self-efficacy and determination. These children believe in their innate ability to achieve their goals and succeed in accomplishing them. They do not only believe that they can succeed but are willing to push themselves towards the goal. They try hard and learn from their mistakes. They acknowledge their success in learning and take it as proof that they can achieve their goals if they try hard enough. I found their determination to be admirable and inspiring. The analogy of the race that the youngest participant, Rocky, came up with, highlights their tenacity.

> I try harder to do well in the test (Christina).
>
> When doing problems (math) and I get stuck, I try to do them and if I get them wrong I learn from mistakes (Jacob).
>
> The first time I wanted to write 'ghax' and I wrote it incorrectly. Then when I needed to write it again I got it right... And if you get something incorrect because of dyslexia, you study harder maybe you get it right next time (Christina).
>
> When this happens, you get something wrong, you study more than you did last time and you get it all correct because that's what happened to me once (Rocky).

The determination to try hard and keep on going came through in their replies to the following statement. How much do you agree on a scale of 0 to 10 with this sentence, 0 not agreeing at all and 10 agreeing a lot: "When the other children give up I keep on trying".

Rocky, Christina and Jacob said 10 in chorus (Jack came late to the last session and missed this part). Part of this determination is coming from believing in themselves. Being encouraged and supported by their teacher seems to have given them this will power to succeed.

> I agree, because the teacher tells us not to get disheartened (Christina).
>
> I don't get disheartened because sometimes the Miss tells us never to give up (Rocky).

This determination was captured strongly in the analogy that Rocky came up with:

> If you are in a race and the others are ahead of you, you continue running so that you win it because they might stop at the end and you will be the first. You don't stop as they do.

Being given the opportunity to feel successful also strengthens their belief that they can make it. Rocky was given the opportunity to feel successful at school.

> In Year 2, I won a lot of certificates, because whoever is well behaved wins certificates. I won some animals (toys) and once I won a drum because we had a test, and who gets them all correct wins.

Whilst Rocky's determination is noteworthy, I was struck by his experience of school as a race where someone has to win or lose. One would speculate how a child with dyslexia who does not possess the same tenacity as Rocky might experience the feeling of constantly being in a race.

The children's ability to take the necessary steps towards success was evidenced in the story line above. They tap into their resources, they seek help and learn from their mistakes. As a result they feel that they will reach their goals just as much as any other child irrelevant of their dyslexia.

4.5 Impact on the Participants on Taking Part in these Group Sessions

Going through my research journal, I came across some reflections that I believe are worth sharing here as they might have impacted the data that was generated in the group. These reflections emerged when checking with the group members, about how they felt coming to the session on the day and also during the debriefing stage at the end of each session.

On our first meeting the children did not know exactly why they joined the group and some parents might have painted a nice picture for them so that they would consent to join. Jacob told me that he is expecting a lot of surprises. Christina felt lucky to be there and this might have impacted her idea of having dyslexia as something which makes her special.

For Jack and Rocky, the group was a transformative process. Jack cried before coming in the first session, because he was scared that we might do something school related. Unlike the parents of the other participants, his parents never used the term dyslexia to explain to him his difficulties in literacy. Before joining the sessions, he was told that he is going to join the other children because like him they were struggling with reading and writing. I only got to know about this information at the end of our meetings. I saw a change in his confidence within the group as time went by and I noticed that he bonded with the other participants.

Jack could not join us from the beginning in our last session as he had a dental appointment. Notwithstanding the fact that his mouth was anaesthetised after his visit to the dentist, he still showed up. He came for the giving of the participatory certificates and played enthusiastically outside with the others while I gave some feedback to their parents.

Rocky’s view of dyslexia changed from the initial session to the concluding session. In the last session he said that dyslexia is nice as it makes him different than others. This is a far cry from his first description of dyslexia as a three-eyed monster, white in colour, which in his words is a colour that nobody fights over, and is best to be kept secret from others.

Conclusion

The main findings in this research suggest that children go through a process of meaning making upon learning that they have dyslexia. Initially they feel scared about the diagnosis because they fear the reaction of others towards their diagnosis. Seeing that they are not alone in their situation, this fear slowly dissipates, and they learn how to acknowledge their strengths.

These children view themselves in the light of their abilities and do not allow themselves to be defined by the label of dyslexia. They become aware that other around them do not always share their positive reframing of dyslexia but nonetheless they tap into their resources to overcome the challenges. Their positive meaning making leads to hope as they not only have the determination to succeed but have garnered coping skills along the way which help them to achieve their goals.

In the following chapter these findings will be juxtaposed with literature. The theory generated through these findings, that "Positive Meaning Making Contributes to Hope," will be positioned in the context of the Hope theory proposed by Snyder (1994) and will be discussed in the following chapter in which I will link these results to the existing literature.

Chapter 5.0

Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Chapter Overview

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the research findings in light of existing literature about how children make sense of their diagnosis of dyslexia. The core-category generated from the findings, "Positive Meaning Making Contributes to Hope" will be positioned in the context of Snyder's theory of Hope (1994). This will provide fresh insight into how positive reframing of the diagnosis of dyslexia contributes to children feeling hopeful. These findings will also shift the deficit laden discourse of dyslexia diagnosis to a more strength focused one, as it highlights the determination and self-efficacy that children with dyslexia show in their lives. In the last section of the chapter the limitations and implications of this study will be outlined and recommendations for future research will be presented.

5.2 Main Outcomes of the Study

After being diagnosed with dyslexia, children go through a process, namely, from being fearful of how others will perceive them to coming to terms with the challenges encountered in their lives due to their diagnosis, and eventually learning how to surmount these challenges. In this process, they make use of their diverse resources: personal (self-reliance, self-efficacy, autonomy, determination) and contextual (family and school support) to keep moving forward. Experiencing this process makes them feel hopeful that they can achieve their goals and increases their belief in their own abilities to accomplish them.

5.2.1 Making sense of the diagnosis of dyslexia. As the findings indicate, making sense of the diagnosis of dyslexia involves a process. This is consistent with the literature, which supports the evidence that children with dyslexia initially resist the diagnosis and do not want to identify themselves with a label, and eventually come to accommodate dyslexia as part of their self-concept (Armstrong & Humphrey, 2008). The study conducted by Burden and Burdett (2005) also outlines a trajectory in which children diagnosed with dyslexia feel less overwhelmed by the challenges posed by the diagnosis as they grow older. Ingesson (2007) adds that the younger the children with dyslexia are, when first diagnosed the better their chances of positively accommodating the diagnosis as part of their self-concept.

Initially, participants in this study felt fearful of the diagnosis because they were aware of the negative stereotypes associated with dyslexia, including low intelligence and lack of academic ability. Literature gives evidence for these negative stereotypes (Castillo & Gilger, 2018; Ronksley-Pavia Grootenboer & Pendergast, 2019). The reluctance to disclose the diagnosis concurs with findings in the literature, which indicate that individuals with dyslexia are comfortable with the label on a personal level and do not feel confident using the label publicly for fear of the stigma it brings (Raskind, Margalit & Higgins, 2014; Riddick, 2010). Notwithstanding the initial fear of the diagnosis, for the participants in this research the recognition of dyslexia was reported to be beneficial, as this helped them to better understand their difficulties and helped them to receive the support they required.

For the participants in the study, the experience of getting a diagnosis was reported to be a positive one and this could have been a crucial aspect in their positive meaning making of dyslexia. Extant literature corroborates this finding (Burden & Burdett, 2005; Glazzard, 2010; Ingesson, 2007; Leitao, Dzidic, Claessen, Gordon, Howard, Nayton & Boyes, 2017; Lithari, 2019; McNulty, 2003; Pace, 2012). Research also shows that when the disclosure of the diagnosis is reframed in a positive manner and the child is consulted in the assessment procedure, the diagnosis is experienced as more affirmative, and the individual feels that they have more control over their situation (Flutter & Ruddock, 2004; Long & McPolin, 2009; McNulty, 2003).

As opposed to the research carried out by Ingesson (2007), in which participants reported that they were more optimistic about their future when they left school, children in the present research project, felt good about themselves, and believed in their abilities while still being at school. They reported a sense of hope for their future. A possible explanation for this hope is that they had a supportive context, including teachers who believe in them and parents who help them and advocate for them. They were also given a chance to experience success in their lives, thus reinforcing their belief in their abilities. Protective factors such as family support and teachers' support are also highlighted in literature as contributing towards a positive self-concept. Empathising with the child with dyslexia increases their self-worth (Terras, Thompson, & Minnis, 2009), and having teachers who hold high expectations for the child increases the likelihood of achieving academic success (Antoniazzi, Snow, & Dickson-Swift, 2010; Carvalhais & DaSilva, 2010).

Lithari's (2019) study further supports the impact of a supportive school context on children diagnosed with dyslexia. Findings from her research indicated an improvement of self-concept in older students with dyslexia when negative educational experiences are replaced by positive ones later in life. The children in the present study reported a balance between negative and positive experiences at school. Often the support of some teachers such as the complimentary class teacher counteracted the negative impact of the less positive experiences. This could be a contributing factor towards their positive outlook on life.

5.2.2 Positive meaning making contributes to hope. While sifting through the data and the written memos and also during the process of bringing the story line together, I noticed that the participants' experience resonates with the theory of hope posited by Synder (1994). Below is Snyder's definition of hope:

> Hope is a process constantly involving what we think of ourselves in relation to our goals (Snyder, 1994 , p.12).

Feeling hopeful is conceptualised by Snyder as having the ‘will power’ and the ‘way power’ to achieve one’s goals. The ‘will power’ means having determination and commitment, which according to Snyder is usually acquired through overcoming difficulties in life and being able to come up with solutions and sustain the efforts to overcome them, whereas, ‘way power’ is knowing how to get there.

Knowing how to get there is learned through previous successes and by adopting ‘the mental flexibility’ (Snyder, 1994, p. 9) that even if one pathway to success is closed, another one can be found. Hope is achieved by overcoming stumbling blocks, and the success in surmounting them increases the way power (Snyder, 1994). A person with higher hope not only leaves past mistakes behind, but takes the necessary steps to remediate them while moving forward (Synder, 1994). This goes beyond being optimistic for the future, because it implies a sense of agency. The children in the present study are not passive beings waiting for success to happen but know that they must work hard to reach their goals. In the process of successfully surmounting several obstacles, they realised that have the skills necessary to accomplish their aspirations.

The different experience of one of the participants further highlighted the core-category because it provided an opposing profile. The youngest participant, Rocky, had lower levels of hope. He focused more on the challenges that dyslexia posed in his schooling experience, felt less able when he compared himself to others, and felt that his difficulties will keep him from reaching his goals. His determination to keep trying is still there but he is at more risk to lose hope when compared to the other children who managed to achieve a positive meaning of their diagnosis of dyslexia.

Throughout the group sessions, Rocky showed more anger and frustration when compared to the other participants, in response to challenges, and expressed defeat when he said he feels he sits in class for "nothing." Whereas the other participants have both the will power and way power to succeed, as evidenced in their responses to the challenges posed by dyslexia, Rocky possesses the will power but is unsure of his way power. As opposed to Rocky, the other participants view the challenges of dyslexia as surmountable and feel capable enough to reach their goals in life.

A possible explanation for Rocky's lack of hope is that he did not have enough time to assimilate and make sense of dyslexia, due to being diagnosed close to the group sessions. Also Rocky is the youngest participant. Burden & Burdett (2005) found that the youngest children in their study expressed less feelings of self-efficacy as opposed to older students who perceived the challenges of dyslexia as surmountable. Ingesson's (2007) study corroborates this conclusion.

Hearing the other participants speaking positively about dyslexia was a transformative experience for Rocky, and as evidenced in the final group session when his views about having dyslexia had become more positive. This change sheds light on the importance of providing children with dyslexia with opportunities to explore their feelings regarding their diagnosis in a supportive context. It also underlines the need for children to become cognisant of their strengths and of the resources at their disposal, in their individual context. Thus, this leads us to a discussion about the implications of these findings on professional practice.

5.3 Strengths and Implications of the Study

The rich data gathered throughout the sessions with children, highlights a process of meaning making. These findings outline that the framing of dyslexia in a positive manner, acknowledging the strengths rather than focusing on the challenges, and learning to tap into the resources inherent in the self and in the context, leads to feeling hopeful. This study sheds light on the challenges that children face due to their diagnosis but it also illustrates the determination and self-efficacy with which they face their challenges. Difficulties are perceived as challenges which could be surpassed and mistakes are seen as an opportunity to learn.

This study can contribute towards raising awareness about the process of meaning making that children experience, thus helping professionals to reflect on how to best approach the disclosure of dyslexia diagnosis to children, and informing the professionals about what support services are best to offer children in their journey towards a positive meaning making of dyslexia.

As stated in literature and evidenced in this study, the diagnosis of dyslexia was an affirmative experience. Framing the diagnosis in a positive manner instilled a sense of control in the individuals, that something could be done about their situation. This stresses the importance of delivering the initial diagnosis with sensitivity and positioned in a strength framework.

Professionals working with children with dyslexia should strive to nurture hope in these children. Hope as posited by Snyder (1994) is not an inherent quality that one either possesses or not but can be developed. According to Snyder, hope can be nurtured by teaching children to perceive failures as challenges and encouraging children to take responsibility for their learning. This helps them feel that they are active agents in their own lives.

As shown in this study, providing a space for children to feel successful helps them to acquire confidence in their abilities. Children can be helped to become more confident by teaching them to set realistic goals and by supporting them to devise plans to achieve these goals (Snyder, 1994). The teachers’ positive attitude towards dyslexia, and their belief in the abilities of these children, were huge protective factors for the participants in this study. These children introjected the positive beliefs of their teachers. Knowing the impact that teachers’ attitudes have on children, all educators should be more vigilant of the messages they impart to children with dyslexia, because as evidenced in literature, children became aware of these attitudes (Glazzard, 2010; Lithari, 2019).

Finally, this study highlights the need to provide support to children diagnosed with dyslexia. This study shows that groups can be beneficial to support the process of meaning making. Educational psychologists and other professionals assessing dyslexia should carry out follow-up sessions after the disclosure of the diagnosis, to help the children come to terms with their diagnosis of dyslexia.

5.4 Limitations

The findings emerging from the group sessions capture a snapshot of the participants reality as co-constructed at a given point in time. The children’s interactions together and with the researcher contributed towards a constructed reality. On a similar note, the interpretation of data is one possible construction of the available data.

5.4.1 Sample size and theoretical saturation.

The sample size was small and the time for data collection was limited due to a restricted time frame. Also, there was the possibility of a sample bias. All the participants who volunteered had supportive families who committed themselves to bring their children four times for one and a half hours on Saturdays, notwithstanding the busy schedules of both the parents and children. This support has impacted the way the children make sense of dyslexia thus impacting the results.

Experiences of children coming from different backgrounds might have yielded different results.

Also, the experiences of these children were not representative of all children with dyslexia in Malta but the process they went through was one of the possible processes that can occur when children receive a diagnosis of dyslexia.

This leads to the often-debated argument of the generalisability of a qualitative study (Yin, 2014). The aim of this grounded theory was not statistical generalisation but analytic generalisation that is the "extraction of more abstract level of ideas" from findings (Yin, 2014, p.325).

On the subject of theoretical saturation, Breckenridge and Jones (2000) posit that researchers reach saturation when they feel positive that the categories are dense enough to provide an explanatory scheme. In the light of this understanding of saturation, I am confident in saying that the story line provided an explanatory framework which will inform the practice of educational psychologists and other professionals involved with children with dyslexia. This research has contributed to the theory of how children cope with the diagnosis of dyslexia. By positioning the findings in the context of Snyder's theory of hope (1994), this research makes an innovative connection between this theory and the field of dyslexia.

5.5 Recommendations for Future Studies

The findings from this study raised questions that could be answered by further research. Literature on dyslexia shows that a high percentage of students with dyslexia drop out of school or do not pursue further education (Cortiella, 2014; Quieros, Wehby, & Halpern, 2015; Undheim, 2009). Some of the questions raised upon the completion of this research included the following:

"What happens along the way which leads children with dyslexia to lose hope?", "Is positive meaning making at this age enough to keep these students on track to reach their aspirations?"

A longitudinal study which would follow the schooling trajectory of these students might answer these questions. Another question these findings raised is: "Do children with dyslexia without supportive families show the same self-efficacy and determination to succeed?"

5.6 Concluding Thoughts: My personal Journey in this Research

I have outlined, in the findings chapter how this research impacted the participants, but it is presumptuous to assume that as a researcher I am still the same person I was at the outset of the research process.

Working on a dissertation in such a short time, amidst other impending deadlines, proved to be very challenging for me. Depleted of energy, the writing of each chapter felt daunting. In these difficult moments, where the idea of quitting often tempted me, the tenacity of the children in the research kept me motivated. The words of young Rocky, "Never give up on yourself", kept me going. The completion of this dissertation taught me something about myself, namely, that I can reach beyond the limitations I set upon myself. The success of its completion made me acknowledge both my will power and my way power, and I became more hopeful in the process.

The writings in the research journal and the memos, captured a change in my view about dyslexia. I started the research thinking that dyslexia places disadvantages on children and I expected to hear experiences of children who would be angry at the school or the world. Albeit limited to few children, who may not be typical of others in similar situations, this research did reveal these challenges that children with dyslexia go through. However, findings also showed that the challenges have made the children more resilient than other children who never had to surmount stumbling blocks.

This research also strengthened my belief that children, when given the right tools for expression, can express their views on the things that affect them. This made me reflect on my practice as an educational psychologist trainee. Even though I always valued the voices of the children, my work with children did not always reflect this value. It made me realise that at times in my work, I do not involve the children as much as I ought to do. Now, I am working in a way which acknowledges the child’s view. Whereas before, in my practice, an interview with the adults in the child’s life would have sufficed as part of the initial assessment, now I spend time using creative techniques to explore how children construct the challenges for which they were referred. This way of working was an eye-opener for me as the meaning making offered to me by the child usually lead me to solutions to the problem. Thus, I learned not to overlook the child’s view of the problem.

Conclusion

This research explored the meaning making of primary school children of their diagnosis of dyslexia. The findings outlined a trajectory, from feeling fearful of the diagnosis to feeling hopeful. The findings, without minimising the barriers encountered by these children, challenged the perspective of dyslexia seen through a deficit lens. These children not only cope with their challenges but show self-efficacy and determination in the face of these challenges. The findings also outlined the protective factors which contributed to positive meaning making and thus, to the feeling of hope. The research also suggested that the nurturing of hope could be positively promoted among children diagnosed with dyslexia. This study has given a fresh outlook about dyslexia by linking the findings with the theory of hope, which had previously been a theory that was absent in the literature about dyslexia.

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Appendix A: Carl’s writing

Id disleksja li haga li bija jien kont inhossni ferm differenti min hadd iehor. Kont ilni inhosni differenti min hadd iehor mil year 3 fejn dejjem kont nara tfal ohra jamlu progress bil wisq aktar mini. Din il haga kienet tinkwetani ferm u kont inhosni dejjem qtuh ta qalb fliskola u li ma kontx kapaci namel xejn. Kont nara tfal li kapaci jaqraw sew u wehidom u anke l-itri kienu jafuwom sew, fija kont ninnota li inlaqlaq hafna u xi itri inhawwadom. Specjalment il (b) mad (d). Habba f’ekk kont inkun hafna imdjjaq u inhosni li minix kapaci , li waslitni al listat li inmur skola ax kienet bilfors. Hafna kienu dawk it teachers li ma kienux qed jafu il problema li kelli u kienu sahhan sitra anke il fil parents day jghidu lil ommi li ma kont naqra jew namel home work id dar fil waqt li dawn kienu jsiru dejjem u kont niehu hafna ajnuna mand ommi fuqom kienet toqod mieghi biex naqra u tara li amilt il home work kollu kuljum. Haga ohra li kinet iddejaqni fuq din il-problema tad-disleksja hi li minn dejjem kont bezan li jkolli l-lsa minhabba il-fatt li nigi imwarrab min shabi ax jaqtawk li ankek xi haga ta barra minn awn. Ommi kienet tippersisti hafna fuqi avolja ma kienetx taf anqas bil problema li kelli. Din il problema kompliet tikber maz zmien u tigrava fejn fis sekondarja kont nara lil shabi jaqraw Comprehension u jifmuwa u anke jirrispondu il mistoqsijet, jien dan kollu ma kontx kapaci namlu sew allura kont sirt nobod l-inglis u anke liskola. Haga wahda li kont namel fitt li xejn succes kieknu il matematika u il physics fejn kien jkun emm hafna ezempji prattici. Min ta eta zghira dejjem ogobni hafna ix xol tal idejn ax ma kienx jkolli aflejn noqod inhabbel mohi biex naraf jew nifem l-itri kont niehu gost hafna meta inmur hdejn missier li jahdem mekkanik. Is sena tieghu bdejt nitallima min ta eta zghira hafna fejn kont diga inhoss mohhi aktar ahjar jekk ma nersaqx lejn il karti. Din il problema sforunatament haliet impatt kibir fuqi anke il quddiem li qtajt qalbi mil liskola. Mhux darba jew tnejn kont nispicca wahdi nahseb fuqi in nifsi u bid dmuh f’ghajnejja jkolli nemmen li minix tajjeb al liskola. Hi haga ukoll li galitni inkun misthi hafna u jekk jista jkun ninheba min kollox. Wasal iz zmien fejn dhalt l-Mcast mand tal familja kelli hafna support u kuragg biex inkompli skola u part li komplejta kienet biex tipo inkun qed inkompli nistudja alijom u li ha sir xi haga. Meta bdejt hadt decizjoni li inkompli fuq il linja li tant ogbitni li kienet fuq l-inginerija adt hali alnaqas sa fejn nieqaf ma jkunx telf ta hin forsi inkun tallimt xi haga jew tnejn wara hafna repetizjonijiet. Listess storja li addejt minna baqat tirrepeti ruha u dejjem kont nistudjja mil li nista u kif naf pero dejjem inittama li allanqas jekk minix kapaci naddi bi zbrixx ax kienet il linja li inhobb hafna u ta interess kbir li kont niehu fija jien. Kien emm mument fejn anke ghalliema li kienu jaddu iz zmien bijja li jew ma nafx naqra sew jew li minix kapaci u dejjem gejjini il botti helwin helwin fejn gejt fi stat fejn kelli selfesteem baxxa hafna li komplejt inhosni aktar hazin. Hassejt il bdin il problema bhal qisa kistirtli bicca min hajti u anke mil karattru tieghi kont gieli nispicca b hafna nervi u rabja habba il pjacir ta hadd iehor li kien jienu gost jitmellah bija fuq dawn laffarijet il parti mil karatru inbidiel fejn sirt nervus hafna u anke initilef frabja li ma bhala kont inhosni li qed fi stat ta depression li ma kontx nammeti jien stess li qied fija hafna kienu jahsbu li sirt kiesah ax mhux darba jew tnejn habba din listigma li giet fuqi min meta kont zghir kont nispicca fxi glieda lawn u lemm meta qrobt li lahhar tal course tal level 4 ma kelli lebda hajra u hsieb nerga inkompli, insomma iz zmien adda u iltqajt ma din limbierka tfajla, it tfajla ma kelliex din il problema u alija jien kienet genja, taf taqra taggel u tifem aktar milli kont kapaci nitkellem jien. Bekk bdan l-att kont impresjona ruhi hafna u nixxennaq li jien kapaci namel listess. Biss darba fost kienet hdeja il garaxx u meta ratni nahdem fuq dawn laffariejt tal magni impresjonat ruha kif kont capaci inzarma magna li ma inkun qatt rajt bhala u nerga narma ezat kif kienet minajr ma naqleb bolt jew vit wiehed. Jien ma kontx nati kas pero hi kienet tithasseb hafna. Iz zmien adda meta hi fl-istudji tahha iltaqt ma din il problema tad dislexja u abbinata mieghi meta bi sforz kelli inmur biex nitkellem ma xi hadd dwara. B' ghajnuna ta Alla u anke ta dawk li huma esperti fdan il qasam il lum il gurnta skoprejt ahjar xini il porblema u naprezza immens tal hin li tatni dik il persuna li amlet l-ghalmu tahha biex tghini u urietni fejn kienet il problema.

Il lum il gurnata nista nghid li qed nghix fuq folja gidida fejn il hajja saret hafna aktar facli al fejn li kont qed naddi minnu. Fejn dik il holma li kelli li xi darba jkolli il karriera tieghi anke bhala engineer fejn kont naf li ma kellix cans alija illum il gurnata nista nghid li infethitli it triq biex nkompli nistudja u nasal sa dak il livel. Il livel tal iskola ovjament qied jghola pero il kuragg biex inkompli u nasal semm ukoll kiber ax issa naf kif andi nimxi pass pass ma din il problema tad disleksja nista nghid li anke is sena li addied kelli 6 suggeti xnirrepeti li anke bl-ahjnuna li hadd mil iskola bhal reader u extra time kienet sena ta succes fejn minajrom kont cert li ma kellix ic cans li naddi. Il lum il gurnata inhosni hafna ahjar milli kont qabel inhosni li andi ic cans li nirranga l-affarjiet li hassejtni tlift habba id disleksja u anke barra min ekk avojja hafna jarawa bhal ma kont qed naraha jein li hi porblema kbira illum il gurnata qed inhosni li permezz tahha andi vantagg kbir fuq kul min ma jbatix bija dan habba li certi affarijet vantgjuzi tahha li ghenitni fil pratika il lum il gurnata inhosni li qlajt balla min fuq listonku tieghi u anke liskola madnix nara bhala l-ghadu tieghi anzi li qed niehu gost nitallem fuq il karriera tieghi avoja naf li ha nkun qed nitalem bil pass ta nemlu pero naf li nemlu kapaci jgorr ogget oxrin darba iktar minnu. Nista nghid ukoll li wara li skoprejt u hadt l-ghajnuna fuq id dislekjsa il karatru tieghi qed nerga nibrhu ilum sar jkolli hafna aktar pacenzja u madnix nervus avoja it tajjir li qlajt xorta jibqa ferita imma qed insir naf kif ninjora u insodd widneja al min jista jiehu din il problema bhala vantagg biex jkisrek bija ir realizajt li anke l-ammot ta stress li kien jkolli habba din il problema qed jtir mar rieh u qed jkolli aktar cans ahjar niffoka fuq liskola. Din il problema tad disleksja illum nista nghid ukoll li apparti min li addejt servietni ukoll bil qed nissoda il karatru tieghi u mandix nara l-affarjet bmod li jaqtawli qalbi anzi bkuragg kbir u li nemmen li jkun emm triq ta succes fkul okkazjoni. Nixtieq niringrazja min qalbi ukoll li kull min gheni biex nohrog min din il problema kemm min tal familja u tfajla tieghi , specjalment liktar dik il persuna Gewa l-Mcast li hadet pacenzja kbira u qadet tisma b din il problema li kelli u amlet min kollox biex tghini. Nixtieq ukoll li jkun emm aktar awarness fuq min hu bdin il problema biex jkollu l-ghajnuna anke ta eta akbar minni. Il lum il gunata nemmen li bl-ghajnuna jkun emm bidla kbira fil hajja ta l-individwu li jkollu id disleksja.

Appendix B: Activities carried out during sessions

Session 1: Getting to know each other, explaining the aim of research and group formation

Joining a group of strangers could be daunting for some children. Thus, the researcher used ice-breaking activities, took time to establish rapport and allowed time to discuss common topics of interest. This allowed the children time to get to know each other and settle in the group. The researcher ensured that no one was forced to share and that a trustful environment was first established before exploring the issue of dyslexia.

Activity 1: Circle Time

The researcher invited the children to sit in a circle. After introducing herself, she encouraged the group members to relax. A talking object was presented to the group (a small soft toy which the children named "Baninu"), and the children were prompted to speak only when they had the soft toy in their hands.

In the first session, the aim of the circle time was for the children to meet up and start getting to know each other. After a quick round of names, the purpose of the group meetings was explained. An explanation in language understood by the children of what research is, and what a researcher does was given. Then the purpose of this research was discussed. The message that they were chosen as experts about dyslexia was conveyed and that the researcher wanted to learn from them and put forward their message to other people through the writing of the results.

Activity 2: Ice-Breaker activity

Coloured Candy Go Around (adapted from Arkell, 2010).

Aim: To set a fun tone and help participants feel comfortable with one another

Materials

Bags of jelly beans with various colours

Description

A bowl of jelly bean candies was put in the middle of the circle. The children were instructed that each colour represented a different task:

Green: Words to describe the self

Purple: Ways of having fun

Orange: Name of your pet

Red: Things that make you happy

Yellow: Good things about yourself

Each child picked up a jelly bean from the bowl and according to its colour he/she expressed something about the self.

Activity 3: Setting few ground rules

Aim: To discuss how we can encourage each other to feel comfortable by creating a supportive environment.

Materials

A cardboard paper split into four sections

Description

In each section one of the following questions was written down:

- How do you want me to treat you?
- How do you want to treat one another?
- How do you think I want to be treated?
- How should we treat one another when we don't agree between us?

Each child responded to the above questions. Researcher wrote down the responses. A discussion followed, and the emphasis was on the following points:

- Active listening
- Empathy
- No put downs
- No shaming

Activity 4: Story game

Aim: To gain an understanding of the participants' realities in the school context.

Materials

Two animal puppets which the children named Bibi and Horn.

Description

The first puppet was introduced to the group and the children took time to name it. Then the first phrase of the story was provided, and each child took a turn to add a line to the story. Half way through the story the other puppet was introduced, and another phrase was provided.

Phrase: Bibi was in the classroom during a lesson of English language…

Phrase: Horn sat next to Bibi in class…

This activity was followed by a discussion.

Closure of session

Researcher ensured that each participant had a chance to be heard and asked for any final thoughts or questions before finishing.

Session 2: Exploring the children's experiences of having a dyslexia diagnosis

Activity 1: Circle time

Children were given time to say how was their day, week ect. Also, they were given the opportunity to share how they were feeling on the day and how did they feel after the last session. They were also asked whether they had any questions or needed further clarifications about their participation in the group.

Activity 2: "Milky Buttons"

A puppet which the children named Milky Buttons was introduced in the beginning of the second session. The children took it in turns to introduce themselves to this new character.

Aim of activity: To see how each participant define and describe themselves to others.

Questions were asked to prompt discussion and gain a deeper understanding of the issues brought to light in the session.

Activity 3: "Missy a new student at school"

The following vignette was presented to the children in the group:

Part 1: *Missy (the dog puppet) has dyslexia and she is new to your school. She does not know anybody, and she spoke only a little bit to you. You would like to introduce her to your friends. How would you go about it?*

Part 2: *Missy is feeling very sad because she feels she knows less than the others in her classroom. Her classmates are already reading and writing, and she is still learning. What would you tell Missy as a friend?*

Aims of activity:

- To understand how they view and describe other children with dyslexia.
- To explore their resources and how they overcome the challenges.

The researcher engaged the children more in this activity by asking questions such as:

"Tell me more about it…"

"That's so interesting…"

"And when…what next…"

"And what is there about…"

"And how is that…"

Session 3: Exploring the challenges posed by dyslexia and their feelings and thoughts about themselves in relation to being diagnosed with dyslexia

Activity 1: Circle time

Children were asked how they are doing on that day and how they felt about attending the sessions.

Activity 2: Role-play

The following scenario was provided for the participants, who acted it out. Participation was voluntary.

A student with dyslexia is doing a lesson with other students in the classroom.

The participants chose the roles:

Jacob – The teacher

Jack – The student with dyslexia

Christina – LSE

Rocky- student

The role-play was followed by a discussion.

Themes discussed were: self-esteem in relation to the challenges posed by dyslexia, feelings of disheartening in the face of adversities and coping resources which the participants avail themselves of to overcome the challenges.

Activity 3: Drawing the ideal school for a child with dyslexia

Description

Participants were invited to draw an ideal school where a child with dyslexia will be happy in it.

Concluding session: Emphasising the strengths and closure of group

Every child presented through a drawing or a craft, something that he/she is good at, such as display of talent or hobby. This emphasised the strengths each child possesses. Then, we brought closure to the group.

Closure Activity: A small party and handing of certificates of participation.

Certificate of Participation

This Certificate is presented
to

____

For the active participation as a
Junior Researcher
in the
Study About Children with Dyslexia

Lead Researcher: ______________________________

Date: ______________________________

Appendix C: Sample transcript of a session

Interviewer: OK, mela għajduli daqsxejn kif qed tħossukom, ten għedtuli hux hekk?

Participant: Iva.

Participant: Iva.

Interviewer: Hmm Inti?

Participant: Infinity.

Interviewer: Thirty?

Participant: Infinity.

Interviewer: Infinity, infinity.

Participant: Aħna ten.

Interviewer: You're feeling very very?

Participant: Happy.

Interviewer: Happy OK.

Participant: Għax umbagħad ħa noħorġu maż-żija.

Interviewer: OK but you're not holding Baninu, you're talking over each other alright? So mela, we'll start and you will tell me how did you feel today know that you have to come here, how did it feel?

Participant: Very lucky.

Interviewer: Very lucky?

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: So you felt happy that you're coming here. How did you feel after last session? After you left here last time?

Participant: Good.

Interviewer: Good, you were thinking about what we did?

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: Yes so what did you tell your mother? I bet your mother asked you no?

Participant: No.

Interviewer: No she didn't, so you felt OK afterwards. Jacob kif ħassejtek?

Participant: Tajjeb ħafna.

Interviewer: Tajjeb ħafna, x'ħadt pjaċir l-iktar?

Participant: Kollox.

Interviewer: Kollox, kollox qadt taħseb fuq li għedna?

Participant: Eħe.

Interviewer: Xi ħsibt? Hekk kien hemm xi ħaġa li bqajt tiftakar milli għamilna?

Participant: Mħm.

Interviewer: Liema kienet?

Participant: Li għamilna l-puppet.

Interviewer: Li għamilt l-puppet.

Participant: U li pinġejna.

Interviewer: U li pinġejtu, inti Christina? Kif ħassejtek wara li mort id-dar? Tajjeb, ħadt pjaċir, fil-fatt erġajtu ġejtu llum.

Participant: Mħm.

Interviewer: OK, Jack inti kif ħassejtek l-aħħar darba?

Participant: Tajjeb.

Interviewer: Tajjeb, tajjeb ħassejtek fil-fatt erġajt ġejt, ridt tiġi inti minn jeddhek hux vera?

Participant: L-ewwel d-dar kelli żaqqi tuġgħani.

Interviewer: Kellek żaqqek tuġgħak? Għaddietlek issa?

Participant: Għaddietli.

Interviewer: Imma issa għaddietlek hux hekk, eh? Alright.

Participant: It-tablet u ma riedx it-tablet.

Interviewer: OK, ħa nibdew nagħmlu activity, illum ġibt puppet miegħi, dan il-puppet another girl named him Missy, Missy because she has a dog called Missy and she told me "OK I will call this dog Missy" ħa nsemmih Missy. Inħalluhielu Missy jew nibdluhulu?

Participant: Inħallihielu.

Interviewer: Inħalluhielu, inħalluhiela għax girl Missy naħseb. Mela Missy għandha d-dyslexia u ġiet ġdida fl-iskola, immaġinaw ġiet Missy fl-iskola tagħkom, she's new to the school and you want to introduce her to your friends, how would you introduce her? Kif tintroduċuha lil Missy? Mela din ma taf lil ħadd l-iskola, għandha d-dyslexia, ma taf lil ħadd u inti tixtieq tintroduċiha lil ħbieb tiegħek. You want to introduce her to your friends, how would you introduce her? Kif tiddiskrivuha lil sħabkom? Min se jibda? Aħsbu ftit, mela din ma taf lil ħadd OK?

Participant: Lanqas lilna?

Interviewer: Le, le lanqas lilkom, forsi tiġi l-complimentary ma xi ħadd minnkom, OK? How would you describe this girl? This dog insomma taparsi girl, min se jibda?

Participant: Imma hija girl.

Interviewer: Hmm

Participant: Hija girl.

Interviewer: Hija girl, mela din il-girl kif ħa niddeskrivuha lil ħbieb?

Participant: Tgħidilha x'jisimhom.

Interviewer: Tgħidilha x'jisimhom, OK, mela she would ask them what their name, ngħidulha x'jisimha. X'iktar?

Participant: Xi tħobb tiekol?

Interviewer: Xi tħobb tiekol, OK.

Participant: Dog food.

Interviewer: Dog food, imma x'tip ta' dog food tħobb tiekol. Lil Christina.

Participant: What do you like drinking.

Interviewer: What do you like drinking, OK, so you would ask her about the things she likes to eat and drink.

Participant: When it's her birthday?

Interviewer: Meta hu l-birthday tagħha, OK, mela kieku intom, mela intom tafu li din għandha d-dyslexia, kieku tgħidulhom lit-tfal l-oħra li għandha d-dyslexia?

Participant: Mħm

Participant: Le

Participant: Le.

Interviewer: Mela wieħed, wieħed, Rocky qalli?

Participant: Le.

Interviewer: Għaliex le?

Participant: Għax umbagħad jaqbdu magħha.

Interviewer: Għax jaqbdu magħha, mela inti kieku ma tgħidilhomx Missy għandha d-dyslexia? Le, ma tgħidilhomx, OK.

Participant: Inżommu sigriet.

Interviewer: Iżommu sigriet, Christina?

Participant: Le.

Interviewer: Tgħidilhom jew le?

Participant: Ma ngħidilhomx.

Interviewer: Għalfejn ma tgħidilhomx?

Participant: Għax forsi jaqbdu jidħku biha.

Interviewer: Għax forsi jaqbdu jidħku biha, imma l-ewwel għedtli iva tgħidilhom kieku.

Participant: Hi qaltilhom.

Interviewer: Din qaltilhom kieku. Inti?

Participant: Iva.

Interviewer: Tgħidilhom? Għalfejn tgħidilhom?

Participant: Biex ikunu jafu li hi għandha d-dyslexia.

Interviewer: Biex ikunu jafu.

Participant: Ħalli ma joqgħodux jgħajjruha.

Interviewer: Ħalli ma joqgħodux jgħajjruha, mela differenti milli qed jgħidu l-oħrajn. Il-fatt li jkunu jafu jgħajjruha inqas? The fact that they would know that she has dyslexia, would they tease her less? Jinkuha inqas?

Participant: Mħm.

Interviewer: Jacob qed jgħid iktar, Christina qed tgħid li le, xorta jinkuha.

Participant: Jgħajjruha iżjed.

Interviewer: Anzi jgħajjruha iktar?

Participant: Għax bħal ma jkolliex moħħha jaħdem sew.

Interviewer: Jgħajjruha?

Participant: U joqgħodu jgħajjruha.

Interviewer: Stenna wieħed, wieħed. Baninu għand Christina qiegħed. Ma jkollhiex moħħha jaħdem sew, min jgħidilha hekk?

Participant: It-tfal.

Interviewer: It-tfal mhux hi taħseb hekk? Hi taħseb hekk dwarha nnifisha?

Participant: Le.

Interviewer: It-tfal OK, alright, issa mela ma tgħidulhomx inkella jinkuha, jgħidulha li moħħha mhux qed jaħseb sew. Would you tell the others that Missy has dyslexia?

Participant: No.

Interviewer: Why not? Why would you keep it a secret Jack?

Participant: So nobody makes fun.

Interviewer: So nobody will make fun of her, OK, alright, u inti għedtli iva hux hekk?

Participant: Mħm.

Interviewer: OK, mela xi ħaġa oħra kieku? Tiddiskrivuha? Kif tiddiskrivuha lil Missy?

Participant: X'jisimha t-teacher.

Interviewer: Min jgħallimha, x'jisimha t-teacher tagħha. Jacob?

Participant: X'kulur għandha?

Interviewer: X'kulur?

Participant: Għandha.

Interviewer: X'kulur għandha xiex?

Participant: Em l-gilda sewda.

Interviewer: Eh alright, titkellem fuq kif tidher, OK.

Participant: Ngħidilha l-favourite colour tagħha.

Interviewer: X'jgħidulha?

Participant: Il-favourite colour tagħha.

Interviewer: Il-favourite colour tagħha, OK.

Participant: Jgħidulha x'jisimhom it-tfal ħalli tkun tista' tkellimhom.

Interviewer: OK, OK, qisu ħadd minnkom ma semma imma li għandha d-dyslexia le? Mhux importanti meta n-nies isiru jafu? Tħossu li importanti għalikom li n-nies ikunu jafu li intom għandkom dyslexia? Eh?

Participant: Eħe.

Interviewer: Jacob qed jgħid eħe, l-oħrajn qed jgħiduli le. Għaliex importanti li n-nies ikunu jafu Rocky?

Participant: Għax umbagħad ma tinsiex tmur il-complimentary class u tibda tagħmillhom jekk nagħtik is-sentenzi ħa ġġib ħafna affarijiet miktubin ħżiena.

Interviewer: OK, mela tajjeb li jkun hemm xi hadd li jaf, ara jekk hux qed nifhmek sew, tajjeb li t-teacher tkun taf hux hekk? Ħalli jekk iġġib is-sentenzi ħżiena tkun taf għaliex qed iġġibhom ħżiena imma nies li mhux it-teacher mhux importanti li jkunu jafu, hux hekk? Qed nifhmek sew? OK, alright.

Participant: Ħalli umbagħad tibda tmur id-dyslexia.

Interviewer: Tmur il-complimentary hux hekk? Biex tgħinek it-teacher tad-dyslexia.

Participant: Id-dyslexia ikollha, mhux tmur għandha.

Interviewer: OK, imma fhimtu ta jien xi jrid jgħid, tajjeb? Imur fejn issoltu tmur hux ħi? Biex tgħallmek it-teacher, OK mela dik l-ewwel parti. Issa din Missy, Jack, she's very sad because she is in this new school and she compared herself to other children, to other dogs and she said the other dogs are already reading and writing and I cannot write and read. I am very sad, qed tħossha vera mdejqa din għaliex meta tħares lejn l-oħrajn, l-oħrajn kollha jaqraw u jiktbu u hi le u xtaqet tkellem lil xi ħadd. Issa intom taparsi se tkunu l-guidance teacher fl-iskola, tajjeb? X'tgħidulha kieku intom? Kif ħa tgħinuha lil Missy? Christina?

Participant: Billi tgħid lil parents biex jgħinuha iżjed fil-homework u hekk.

Interviewer: OK kieku inti tissuġġerilha mela?

Participant: Tgħid lil parents jgħinuha taqra magħha, hekk.

Interviewer: Titlob iktar għajnuna mid-dar. Jacob x'tgħidilha kieku inti x'tagħmel biex ma tħosshiex daqsekk imdejqa?

Participant: Tmur il-complimentary u lil xi teacher.

Interviewer: Tgħid lil xi teacher biex tgħinha, Jack? How do you help her? How can she feel better about herself?

Participant: Tgħid lil mummy tagħha tgħidilha biex tibda tmur il-complimentary.

Interviewer: OK, tieħu l-għajnuna iktar l-iskola mela, OK. Għandha raġun tħossha sad?

Participant: Le.

Participant: Eħe.

Interviewer: Waħda, waħda għax mhux qed naqblu. Mela, min se jgħidli l-ewwel? Imma lil Baninu trid ittih naqra lil tfal l-oħra ta ukoll, mela le m'għandiex raġun tkun sad, għalfejn?

Participant: Għax kulħadd għandu bżonnijiet differenti mhux hi biss.

Interviewer: OK so m'għandiex għalfejn tkun imdejqa qed tgħid Christina għax kulħadd għandu bżonnijiet differenti mhux hi biss. L-oħrajn x'jaħsbu? Għandha raġun tkun sad Jacob? Iva Jacob qed jgħidli, tajjeb? Għalfejn Jacob? Għalfejn għandha tkun sad? Jew għalfejn taħseb qed tħossha sad?

Participant: Għax mhix bħall-oħrajn.

Interviewer: Għax mhix bħall-oħrajn, tħossha li mhix bħall-oħrajn. Jack, why do you think she is feeling sad? Eh? Inti? Għalfejn tħossha mdejqa taħseb?

Participant: Għax hi ma tafx li sħabha jafu.

Interviewer: Għax hi ma tafx li sħabha jafu, OK, ma tafx bħal sħabha mela? Qed nifhmek sew? Ma tafx daqs sħabha?

Participant: Mħm.

Interviewer: Hekk qed tgħidli? OK, alright u intkom x'tagħmlu biex ma tkunux sad? Tkunu sad intom li għandkom id-dyslexia?

Participant: Le

Participant: Le

Participant: Le.

Participant: No.

Interviewer: Min se jitkellem? Min se jieħu lil Baninu f'idejh u jgħidli għalfejn ma tħossokx sad? Mela, għalfejn ma tħossokx sad li għandek id-dyslexia?

Participant: Għax immur għand it-teacher u meta nlestu qabel il-ħin noqgħodu nilgħabu.

Interviewer: OK, mela l-iskola tħossok li meta tmur il-complimentary toqgħod umbagħad wara li tlesti għandek ħin tilgħab.

Participant: Jekk jibqa l-ħin għax tagħmlilna timer kemm indumu.

Interviewer: Tagħmlilkom it-timer kemm iddumu, l-oħrajn? Kif tħossukom? Għedtu li ma tħossukomx sad intom hux vera?

Participant: Mħm.

Interviewer: Iva jew le? No, why Jack? You're not sad about it, you shouldn't be sad eh? It doesn't make a difference for you no?

Participant: No.

Interviewer:It does or it doesn't? No it doesn't, OK u hekk x'taħsbu li jgħinkom l-iktar? What is the most thing qisu in school, around you that helps you the most? X'jgħinkom l-iktar Christina?

Participant: Il-complimentary.

Interviewer: Il-complimentary kemm Rocky u kif ukoll Christina li jmorru l-complimentary għalihom huwa post sabiħ hemm fejn tmorru.

Participant: U taqbeż il-lessons allura nieħu pjaċir.

Interviewer: U taqbeż il-lessons, diġà semmejtieli din li taqbeż il-lessons, xi ħaġa sabiħa li taqbeż il-lessons? Christina qed tgħidli li le.

Participant: Ikolli xi boring lesson u naqbiża.

Interviewer: OK u hemm hekk tieħu pjaċir hux vera?

Participant: U ma nibqax bilqegħda għal xejn.

Interviewer: Ma toqgħodx bilqegħda għal xejn?

Participant: Boring lesson.

Interviewer: Boring lesson, Jacob, mela għedtli ma tħossokx sad inti lanqas u x'jgħinek l-iskola?

Participant: Li għandi l-LSE.

Interviewer: Li jkollok L-LSE, inti għandek LSE? No, tixtieq li kieku għandek LSE?

Participant: Mħm.

Interviewer: Għalfejn taħseb li tgħinek l-LSE?

Participant: Għaliex jien naħseb aħjar li jkolli LSE ħalli tgħini.

Interviewer: Ħalli tgħinek, l-oħrajn x'taħsbu? Kieku kellkom LSE kif kontu toħduha?

Participant: Aħjar.

Interviewer: Inti għandek LSE? Inti għandek LSE?

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: Yes, how does it feel having an LSE?

Participant: Good.

Interviewer: Good? You like it?

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: Eħe, she stays with you all day?

Participant: Mħm.

Interviewer: Or in some lessons only?

Participant: Some lessons.

Interviewer: In some lessons and it's OK for you?

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: Yes, OK. Inti għandek Rocky LSE hux hekk? Tajjeb? Kif tħossok magħha?

Participant: Tajjeb.

Interviewer: Tajjeb, ma tidejjaqx ikollok LSE miegħek?

Participant: Le.

Interviewer: Le, OK, tajjeb.

Participant: Jien fil-klassi għandi LSE u ngħidilha "Tista' tgħini f'din?" tgħini u nħossni tajba għax qisni xi ħadd qed jgħini fejn ma nifhimx.

Interviewer: OK imma mhux tiegħek l-LSE, tal-klassi hux vera?

Participant: Se titlaq imma tgħin lil kulħadd.

Interviewer: Tgħin lil kulħadd.

Participant: Bħal l-LSE tagħna kollha.

Interviewer: Tal-klassi kollha, l-LSE tal-klassi kollha.

Participant: Jiena għandi l-LSE u tgħini.

Interviewer: U tgħinek.

Participant: Imma mhux tiegħi.

Interviewer: Imma mhux tiegħek, qegħda tal-klassi. OK, mela x'taħseb li jagħmilha happy lil Missy kieku kellha taħseb f'xi ħaġa biex tneħħi d-dwejjaq tajjeb? X'għandha taħseb fiha?

Participant: L-ewwel tgħinek LSE u tmur il-complimentary.

Interviewer: OK, Christina x'jagħmilha taħseb happy iktar kieku lil din Missy?

Participant: Tmur il-complimentary.

Interviewer: OK, alright, l-oħrajn? Il-complimentary għalikom vera jgħinkom.

Participant: Iva.

Participant: Mħm.

Interviewer: Christina?

Participant: Tista' tilgħab mal-ħbieb tagħha.

Interviewer: Tilgħab mal-ħbieb tagħha, Christina semmietli punt tajjeb. Qaltli playing with her friends, your friends do they make you happy Jack?

Participant: Mħm.

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: Jacob?

Participant: Sometimes.

Interviewer: Sometimes, OK. Min se jibda jgħidli about his friends? How do they help, your friends? Jack tell me.

Participant: They help me

Interviewer: They help you?

Participant: Going fast.

Interviewer: Going fast in the classroom?

Participant: No when we have break.

Interviewer: Eh OK, they help you OK outside, to play outside.

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: And you told me you enjoy running no? Last time.

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: Christina għedtli mhux dejjem.

Participant: Għax xi kultant ikun hemm xi ħadd bossy u li jrid jibbosja lil kulħadd.

Interviewer: Ma tieħux pjaċir biha din.

Participant: No għax tkun qed xi ħadd ma jkunx irid dak il-post bilfors dak il-post u tfotti logħba.

Interviewer: U l-ħbieb jgħinukom fil-klassi?

Participant: Mħm.

Participant: Eħe.

Participant: No.

Interviewer: No.

Participant: Jew l-LSE.

Interviewer: Jew l-LSE. Jacob qalli iva? Jgħinuk? Kif jgħinuk fil-klassi?

Participant: Jgħiduli jekk ma nkunx naf xi ħaġa jgħiduli "Dik ħażina" u jien umbagħad nipprova naħseb.

Interviewer: X'għamilt ħażin, jgħidulek dik ma ġibtiex tajba naħseb hux?

Participant: Eħe.

Interviewer: U inti tgħid ħa nara mela kif ġibta tajba, jgħinuk b'dak il-dan. Jack do they help you out in reading and writing your friends?

Participant: No.

Interviewer: No, the teacher mela only, the teacher, the LSE you mentioned, parents at home.

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: OK, Christina qaltilna eh?

Participant: Of course.

Interviewer: Of course, of course, il-parents importanti hux vera jgħinukom?

Participant: Joqgħodu jsajjarlna.

Interviewer: Isajjrulek, OK.

Participant: L-għaġin tajjeb li ssajjar il-mummy.

Interviewer: OK, mela, OK so the first part today is ready, ħa nwaqqfu sekonda.

Appendix D: Line by line coding, Initial codes, Memos

Transcript	**Line by line coding**	**Initial codes**	**Memos**
Interviewer: OK, mela għajduli daqsxejn kif qed tħossukom, ten għedtuli hux hekk? Ten? Kulħadd ten?		Feeling good to be in the group	*The participants looked happy to be there and came in the room with great enthusiasm. I wonder if it is due the activities which they were enjoying or as a result of meeting other kids with dyslexia.*
Participant: Iva.			
Participant: Iva.			
Interviewer: Eh? Inti?			
Participant: Infinity.	1. Infinity		
Interviewer: Thirty?			
Participant: Infinity.			
Interviewer: Infinity, infinity.			
Participant: Aħna ten.	2. Aħna ten.		
Interviewer: You're feeling very very?			
Participant: Happy.	3. Happy.		
Interviewer: Happy OK.			
Participant: Għax umbagħad ħa noħorġu maż-żija.			
Interviewer: OK but you're not holding the Baninu ta, you're talking over each other alright? So mela, we'll start and you will tell me how did you feel today know that you have to come here, how did it feel?			
Participant: Very lucky.			
Interviewer: Very lucky?	4. Very lucky.		
Participant: Yes.			
Interviewer: So you felt happy that you're coming here. How did you feel after last session? After you left here last time?			
Participant: Good.			
Interviewer: Good, you were thinking about what we did?	5. Good.		
Participant: Yes.			

	Initial Codes	**Memos**
Interviewer: She is at school doing English, OK? How would the story of Missy continue? You think a story about Missy, she's sitting down in the classroom while doing an English lesson OK? How would you continue the story, if you were to invent a story about Missy?		*I did not mention that Missy has dyslexia, nonetheless Eve's problems with spelling where projected unto the puppet. This shows a strong identification with the puppet*
Participant: Em I think that she did a dictation and I imagine that when she got the result it wasn't so good but then she was ok. She did her best.	Not doing very well at a dictation and not feeling good afterwards Feeling she did her best	
Interviewer: OK.		
Participant: But she still was proud of herself, but she didn't really bother a lot	Feeling proud of herself despite the poor result	*Resilience*
Interviewer: OK she bothered a bit but		
Participant: But she said don't.	Getting herself out of negative thoughts	*Self-regulation and resilience, coping skills*
Interviewer: OK and then? She got mela back the?		
Participant: Result.		
Interviewer: The result and she felt OK but I'm still proud of myself, that's what Missy said, and then? What did she do? Let's try and imagine the day.		
Participant: Em then she goes to tell her mother and she feels a bit worried again, feels that again.	Feeling worried to tell her mother about the result	
Interviewer: She told her mother		
Participant: Eħe and which one's got wrong and how she got them wrong.	Going through the dictation with her mother and seeing what mistakes she made	*The mother is a pillar of support*
Interviewer: Mħm.		
Participant: Em and maybe and then after a while she would do another one and she would do a bit better.	Feeling that she could do better next time	*Not giving up. Hopeful that next time she will do better.*
Interviewer: OK, she will keep on trying.		
Participant: Eħe.		
Interviewer: OK, does she like to go to school Missy?		
Participant: Yes, a lot.	Enjoying school	

Appendix E: Constant comparison between sessions

Session 1 and Session 2

They do not describe themselves in terms of dyslexia. They do not define themselves in terms of dyslexia. This was common between all participants.

All participants make sense of dyslexia in different ways. Common to all is that they equate dyslexia with difficulty in writing and reading.

Being punished for not knowing something or being scolded came across in the two sessions. In the first session in the story of Bibi and in the second session in the role play.

Feeling the need for teachers to be supportive and more understanding.

Not giving up. Working hard "tistinka"

Coming up with solutions to solve problems.

Resiliency in these participants.

I decided to explore more the resilience and positivity in the third session.

Session 3

The emerging picture is one of hope and resilience. They feel they can achieve if they work hard enough. They tap into their resources and seek support when needed. The metaphor presented, and the words used by these young participants is full of hope and tenacity. Even Eve in the one-to-one interview, presented the same picture even though I did not pose to her the same questions.

One to one session with Eve

Feeling good about her life. Eve feels supported, understood and views dyslexia as a very small part of her life. She describes herself as dyslexic towards the end of interview. She does not give up and feels she can do better next time. She is very resourceful and applies coping strategies such as talking herself out of negative thoughts. She feels that some assessments are unfair such as when teachers deduct marks in creative writing for her spelling mistakes.

Refused the help of a reader in exams as she found it more of a hindrance than help as she stated that since she will be with other children in the exam room, she will not be able to finish on time as she has to wait for the other children to finish. This could indicate a lack of resources.

She prefers to keep the diagnosis for herself and only shares it with a best friend.

Looking at patterns across the three sessions and one to one interview with Eve.

They do not define themselves by dyslexia.

It was only Eve who referred herself as dyslexic.

Feeling the need for support from teachers and being more understanding of their difficulties

Not giving up, feeling hopeful and being resourceful

A strong sense of resiliency.

Being hopeful for the future.

Both girls in the study aspire to become a beautician. They both mentioned that it is something they are good at.

All participants prefer not to disclose the diagnosis of dyslexia expect for a best friend in some cases

They all wish that teachers are more understanding and push less.

All participants felt good about their life: felt supported, understood and viewing dyslexia as only a small part of their life.

They do not give up, they keep on trying and they learn from mistakes

The complimentary class and their mother are the greatest support in their life

Eve mentioned being gentle and patience and Christina mentioned that teachers shout and scold her for mistakes.

A common theme which bothers the participants a lot is that teachers tell them to try harder, that they are not doing enough.

Appendix F: Focused Codes and Analysis of first session

Focused codes

1. Dyslexia does not define who they are
2. Disliking reading and writing
3. Preferring activities which are non-academic
4. Viewing dyslexia differently
5. Perks of having dyslexia
6. Being overwhelmed with school work
7. Being punished or scolded
8. Not giving up, trying one's best
9. Being teased for having reading difficulties
10. Feeling angry and sad
11. Feeling ok about getting a diagnosis but feeling scared at first
12. Feeling better when realising you are not the only one with dyslexia
13. Disclosing or not: Disclosing to family members and best friends
14. Disclosing to no one for fear of being teased
15. Keeping it to yourself is a burden
16. Being resourceful and coming up with solutions to a problem
17. Not feeling helpless
18. Projecting their strengths unto BIBI, the bee puppet

All participants have a strong sense of competency except for Rocky the youngest one.

Christina is aware that her teacher views complimentary class as a waste of time.

Common theme across the four participants is that dyslexia does not define them. They describe themselves according to their hobbies and strengths.

All participants make sense of their dyslexia in different ways:

Rocky created a puppet, a three eyed monster to describe dyslexia. For him having dyslexia means going to complimentary class and although he enjoys it there, it makes him feel less good than others. Also, for him going to complimentary class means missing lessons from the main classroom and he must make up for it at home. This is something which makes him sad. The colour he chose to describe dyslexia is white as in his own words white is a colour no one fights over it when they have no colours. Also, he prefers that no one knows that he has dyslexia at school so that no one will tease him.

Jacob drew a boy in class in front of a book. He describes dyslexia as having difficulty to read. He says it is ok to have dyslexia as he does not like reading anyways and he is good at drawing, something he enjoys doing very much. He describes it as blue in colour which for him is a colour like any other.

Jack described dyslexia as scary and chose a yellow colour for it. He was never told he has dyslexia before, but his mother told him that he has difficulty in reading and writing without knowing why.

Christina described dyslexia as something positive. She said even though she has difficulties in reading and writing, it is ok because she said that everyone has different needs. She described dyslexia as green, her favourite colour, as it makes her special, different to anyone else.

Differing views on the fact of being different. Jacob does not agree with Christina about being different. She states that for him being different is not a nice thing. He would not like to think of himself as different from any one else.

All the children described dyslexia with having difficulties in reading and writing.

A sense of resilience was evident when narrating the story of Bibi, they said she will try.

These participants got assessed for dyslexia from different professionals, Dyslexia specialist at SPLD and private educational psychologist.

For all of them getting a diagnosis was a positive experience which was scary at first, as they were scared that their peers will tease them or view them as 'weird.' This worry dissipated as time went by. When they realised that there are other children like themselves, they felt better.

The complimentary classroom helped both Rocky and Christina.

My position in the group

I tried from the very beginning to foster a good relationship with these children. I asked them if they wanted to know about me. I shared what they shared such as my favourite food and that I have a cat called Booboo.

Power Dynamics. I soon became aware, that they perceive me as a teacher. They called me Miss. I told them that they can call me Doriette since we are not at school.

They also perceived me as the one having the answers. They sought answers from me.

Group dynamics.

The children bonded together except for Jack who still was a little bit withdrawn.

Jack at first didn't want to stay because she thought that we are doing something school related. However, he was ok by the end of the session.

There was another girl who was going to join us but when we went in the psychology lab she started crying and left. Her mother called me saying that she thought we are going to be in a classroom doing school related work. The choice of venue was not ideal when considering the negative experience these kids have of schooling.

Christina felt initially that the puppet speaks instead of her as she stated she felt more comfortable that way. She felt she needed some distancing.

Appendix G: Focused Codes

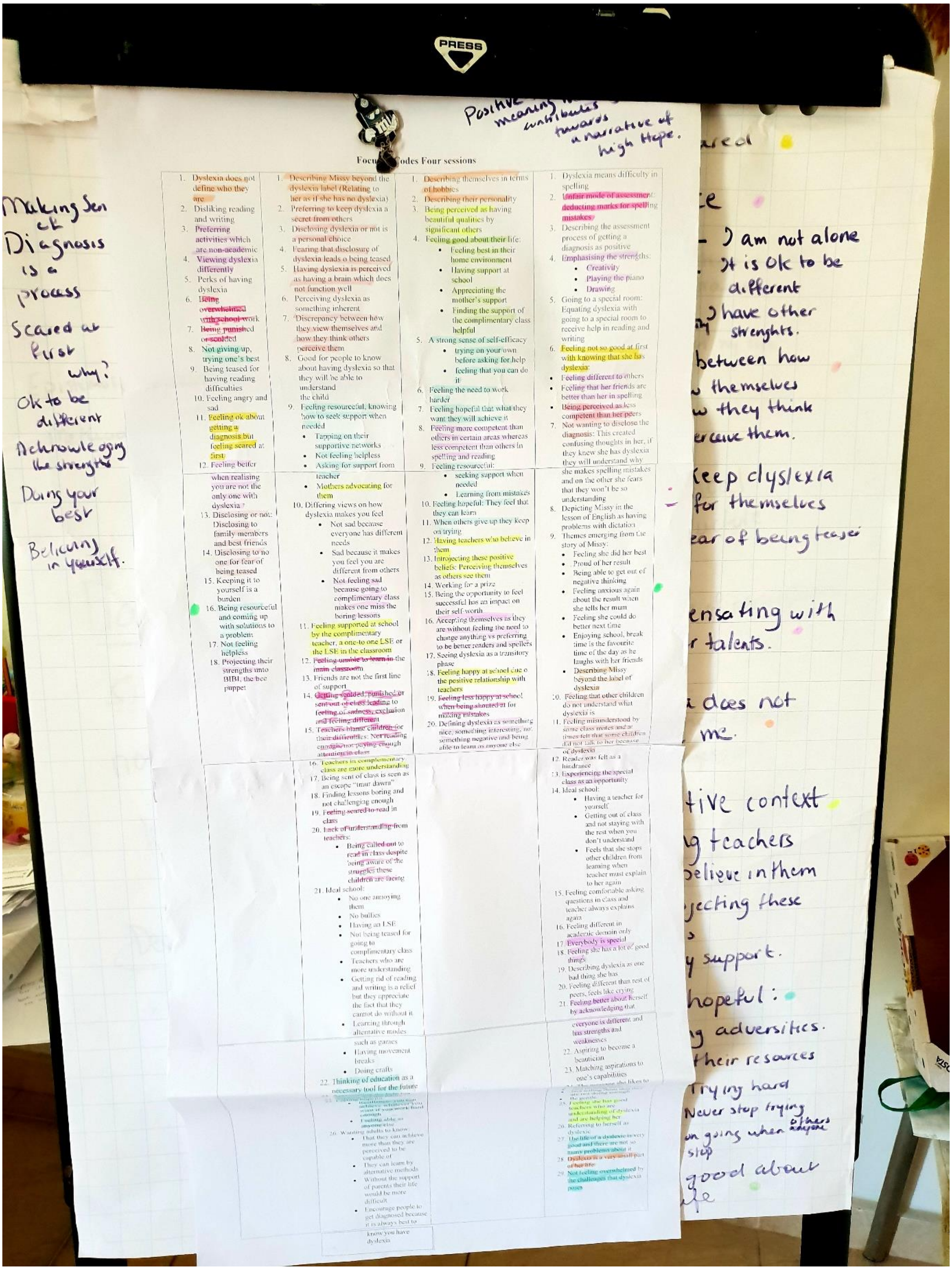
Focused Codes Four sessions

1. Dyslexia does not define who they are 2. Disliking reading and writing 3. Preferring activities which are non-academic 4. Viewing dyslexia differently 5. Perks of having dyslexia 6. Being overwhelmed with school work 7. Being punished or scolded 8. Not giving up, trying one’s best 9. Being teased for having reading difficulties 10. Feeling angry and sad 11. Feeling ok about getting a diagnosis but feeling scared at first 12. Feeling better when realising you are not the only one with dyslexia 13. Disclosing or not: Disclosing to family members and best friends 14. Disclosing to no one for fear of being teased 15. Keeping it to yourself is a burden 16. Being resourceful and coming up with solutions to a problem 17. Not feeling helpless 18. Projecting their strengths unto BIBI, the bee puppet	1. Describing Missy beyond the dyslexia label (Relating to her as if she has no dyslexia) 2. Preferring to keep dyslexia a secret from others 3. Disclosing dyslexia or not is a personal choice 4. Fearing that disclosure of dyslexia leads o being teased 5. Having dyslexia is perceived as having a brain which does not function well 6. Perceiving dyslexia as something inherent 7. Discrepancy between how they view themselves and how they think others perceive them 8. Good for people to know about having dyslexia so that they will be able to understand the child 9. Feeling resourceful, knowing how to seek support when needed • Tapping on their supportive networks • Not feeling helpless • Asking for support from teacher • Mothers advocating for them 10. Differing views on how dyslexia makes you feel • Not sad because everyone has different needs	1. Describing themselves in terms of hobbies 2. Describing their personality 3. Being perceived as having beautiful qualities by significant others 4. Feeling good about their life: • Feeling best in their home environment • Having support at school • Appreciating the mother’s support • Finding the support of the complimentary class helpful 5. A strong sense of self-efficacy • trying on your own before asking for help • feeling that you can do it 6. Feeling the need to work harder 7. Feeling hopeful that what they want they will achieve it 8. Feeling more competent than others in certain areas whereas less competent than others in spelling and reading 9. Feeling resourceful: • seeking support when needed • Learning from mistakes 10. Feeling hopeful: They feel that they can learn 11. When others give up they keep on trying 12. Having teachers who believe in them 13. Introjecting these positive beliefs:	1. Dyslexia means difficulty in spelling 2. Unfair mode of assessment: deducting marks for spelling mistakes 3. Describing the assessment process of getting a diagnosis as positive 4. Emphasising the strengths: • Creativity • Playing the piano • Drawing 5. Going to a special room: Equating dyslexia with going to a special room to receive help in reading and writing 6. Feeling not so good at first with knowing that she has dyslexia: • Feeling different to others • Feeling that her friends are better than her in spelling • Being perceived as less competent than her peers 7. Not wanting to disclose the diagnosis: This created confusing thoughts in her, if they knew she has dyslexia they will understand why she makes spelling mistakes and on the other she fears that they won’t be so understanding 8. Depicting Missy in the lesson of English as having problems with dictation

	• Sad because it makes you feel you are different from others • Not feeling sad because going to complimentary class makes one miss the boring lessons 11. Feeling supported at school by the complimentary teacher, a one-to one LSE or the LSE in the classroom 12. Feeling unable to learn in the main classroom 13. Friends are not the first line of support 14. Getting scolded, punished or sent out of class leading to feeling of sadness, exclusion and feeling different 15. Teachers blame children for their difficulties: Not reading enough, not paying enough attention in class 16. Teachers in complementary class are more understanding 17. Being sent of class is seen as an escape “tmur dawra” 18. Finding lessons boring and not challenging enough 19. Feeling scared to read in class 20. Lack of understanding from teachers: • Being called out to read in class despite being aware of the struggles these children are facing 21. Ideal school: • No one annoying them • No bullies • Having an LSE	Perceiving themselves as others see them 14. Working for a prize 15. Being the opportunity to feel successful has an impact on their self-worth 16. Accepting themselves as they are without feeling the need to change anything vs preferring to be better readers and spellers 17. Seeing dyslexia as a transitory phase 18. Feeling happy at school due o the positive relationship with teachers 19. Feeling less happy at school when being shouted at for making mistakes 20. Defining dyslexia as something nice, something interesting, not something negative and being able to learn as anyone else	9. Themes emerging from the story of Missy: • Feeling she did her best • Proud of her result • Being able to get out of negative thinking • Feeling anxious again about the result when she tells her mum • Feeling she could do better next time • Enjoying school, break time is the favourite time of the day as he laughs with her friends • Describing Missy beyond the label of dyslexia 10. Feeling that other children do not understand what dyslexia is 11. Feeling misunderstood by some class mates and at times felt that some children did not talk to her because of dyslexia 12. Reader was felt as a hindrance 13. Experiencing the special class as an opportunity 14. Ideal school: • Having a teacher for yourself • Getting out of class and not staying with the rest when you don’t understand • Feels that she stops other children from learning when teacher must explain to her again 15. Feeling comfortable asking questions in class and teacher always explains again

	• Not being teased for going to complimentary class • Teachers who are more understanding • Getting rid of reading and writing is a relief but they appreciate the fact that they cannot do without it • Learning through alternative modes such as games • Having movement breaks • Doing crafts 22. Thinking of education as a necessary tool for the future 23. Appreciating the help but realising the importance of being allowed to try themselves (resilience) 24. Aspiring for the future 25. Feeling hopeful: • Resilience- you can achieve whatever you want if you work hard enough • Feeling able as anyone else 26. Wanting adults to know: • That they can achieve more than they are perceived to be capable of • They can learn by alternative methods • Without the support of parents their life would be more difficult • Encourage people to get diagnosed because it is always best to know you have dyslexia		16. Feeling different in academic domain only 17. Everybody is special 18. Feeling she has a lot of good things 19. Describing dyslexia as one bad thing she has 20. Feeling different than rest of peers, feels like crying 21. Feeling better about herself by acknowledging that everyone is different and has strengths and weaknesses 22. Aspiring to become a beautician 23. Matching aspirations to one’s capabilities 24. The message she likes to convey to adults is: • Having patience • Being understanding • Not pushing them so hard • Not telling them that they are not doing enough • Be gentle 25. Feeling she has good teachers who are understanding of dyslexia and are helping her 26. Referring to herself as dyslexic 27. The life of a dyslexic is very good and there are not so many problems about it 28. Dyslexia is a very small part of her life 29. Not feeling overwhelmed by the challenges that dyslexia poses

Appendix H: Process of theoretical coding



Positive meaning contributes towards a narrative of high Hope.

Focu odes Four sessions

1. Dyslexia does not define who they are
2. Disliking reading and writing
3. Preferring activities which are non-academic
4. Viewing dyslexia differently
5. Perks of having dyslexia
6. Being overwhelmed with school work
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12. Feeling better when realising you are not the only one with dyslexia
13. Disclosing or not: Disclosing to family members and best friends
14. Disclosing to no one for fear of being teased
15. Keeping it to yourself is a burden
16. Being resourceful and coming up with solutions to a problem
17. Not feeling helpless
18. Projecting their strengths unto BIBI, the bee puppet

1. Describing Missy beyond the dyslexia label (Relating to her as if she has no dyslexia)
2. Preferring to keep dyslexia a secret from others
3. Disclosing dyslexia or not is a personal choice
4. Fearing that disclosure of dyslexia leads o being teased
5. Having dyslexia is perceived as having a brain which does not function well
6. Perceiving dyslexia as something inherent
7. Discrepancy between how they view themselves and how they think others perceive them
8. Good for people to know about having dyslexia so that they will be able to understand the child
9. Feeling resourceful, knowing how to seek support when needed
   - Tapping on their supportive networks
   - Not feeling helpless
   - Asking for support from teacher
   - Mothers advocating for them
10. Differing views on how dyslexia makes you feel
    - Not sad because everyone has different needs
    - Sad because it makes you feel you are different from others
    - Not feeling sad because going to complimentary class makes one miss the boring lessons
11. Feeling supported at school by the complimentary teacher, a one-to one LSE or the LSE in the classroom
12. Feeling unable to learn in the main classroom
13. Friends are not the first line of support
14. Getting scolded, punished or sent out of class leading to feeling of sadness, exclusion and feeling different
15. Teachers blame children for their difficulties: Not reading enough, not paying enough attention in class
16. Teachers in complementary class are more understanding
17. Being sent of class is seen as an escape "tmur dawra"
18. Finding lessons boring and not challenging enough
19. Feeling scared to read in class
20. Lack of understanding from teachers:
    - Being called out to read in class despite being aware of the struggles these children are facing
21. Ideal school:
    - No one annoying them
    - No bullies
    - Having an LSE
    - Not being teased for going to complimentary class
    - Teachers who are more understanding
    - Getting rid of reading and writing is a relief but they appreciate the fact that they cannot do without it
    - Learning through alternative modes such as games
    - Having movement breaks
    - Doing crafts
22. Thinking of education as a necessary tool for the future
23. [illegible]
    - [illegible] you can achieve whatever you want if you work hard enough
    - Feeling able as anyone else
24. Wanting adults to know:
    - That they can achieve more than they are perceived to be capable of
    - They can learn by alternative methods
    - Without the support of parents their life would be more difficult
    - Encourage people to get diagnosed because it is always best to know you have dyslexia

1. Describing themselves in terms of hobbies
2. Describing their personality
3. Being perceived as having beautiful qualities by significant others
4. Feeling good about their life:
   - Feeling best in their home environment
   - Having support at school
   - Appreciating the mother's support
   - Finding the support of the complimentary class helpful
5. A strong sense of self-efficacy
   - trying on your own before asking for help
   - feeling that you can do it
6. Feeling the need to work harder
7. Feeling hopeful that what they want they will achieve it
8. Feeling more competent than others in certain areas whereas less competent than others in spelling and reading
9. Feeling resourceful:
   - seeking support when needed
   - Learning from mistakes
10. Feeling hopeful: They feel that they can learn
11. When others give up they keep on trying
12. Having teachers who believe in them
13. Introjecting these positive beliefs: Perceiving themselves as others see them
14. Working for a prize
15. Being the opportunity to feel successful has an impact on their self-worth
16. Accepting themselves as they are without feeling the need to change anything vs preferring to be better readers and spellers
17. Seeing dyslexia as a transitory phase
18. Feeling happy at school due o the positive relationship with teachers
19. Feeling less happy at school when being shouted at for making mistakes
20. Defining dyslexia as something nice, something interesting, not something negative and being able to learn as anyone else

1. Dyslexia means difficulty in spelling
2. Unfair mode of assessment: deducting marks for spelling mistakes
3. Describing the assessment process of getting a diagnosis as positive
4. Emphasising the strengths:
   - Creativity
   - Playing the piano
   - Drawing
5. Going to a special room: Equating dyslexia with going to a special room to receive help in reading and writing
6. Feeling not so good at first with knowing that she has dyslexia:
   - Feeling different to others
   - Feeling that her friends are better than her in spelling
   - Being perceived as less competent than her peers
7. Not wanting to disclose the diagnosis: This created confusing thoughts in her, if they knew she has dyslexia they will understand why she makes spelling mistakes and on the other she fears that they won't be so understanding
8. Depicting Missy in the lesson of English as having problems with dictation
9. Themes emerging from the story of Missy:
   - Feeling she did her best
   - Proud of her result
   - Being able to get out of negative thinking
   - Feeling anxious again about the result when she tells her mum
   - Feeling she could do better next time
   - Enjoying school, break time is the favourite time of the day as he laughs with her friends
   - Describing Missy beyond the label of dyslexia
10. Feeling that other children do not understand what dyslexia is
11. Feeling misunderstood by some class mates and at times felt that some children did not talk to her because of dyslexia
12. Reader was felt as a hindrance
13. Experiencing the special class as an opportunity
14. Ideal school:
    - Having a teacher for yourself
    - Getting out of class and not staying with the rest when you don't understand
    - Feels that she stops other children from learning when teacher must explain to her again
15. Feeling comfortable asking questions in class and teacher always explains again
16. Feeling different in academic domain only
17. Everybody is special
18. Feeling she has a lot of good things
19. Describing dyslexia as one bad thing she has
20. Feeling different than rest of peers, feels like crying
21. Feeling better about herself by acknowledging that everyone is different and has strengths and weaknesses
22. Aspiring to become a beautician
23. Matching aspirations to one's capabilities
24. [illegible] she likes to
    - [illegible]
    - [illegible]
25. Feeling she has good teachers who are understanding of dyslexia and are helping her
26. Referring to herself as dyslexic
27. The life of a dyslexic is very good and there are not so many problems about it
28. Dyslexia is a very small part of her life
29. Not feeling overwhelmed by the challenges that dyslexia poses

Making Sen of Diagnosis is a process

Scared at first why?

Ok to be different

Acknowledging the strengths

Doing your best

Believing in yourself.

ared

e

- I am not alone
- It is Ok to be different
- I have other strenghts.

between how themselves w they think erceive them.

Keep dyslexia for themselves

ear of being teased

ensating with r talents.

does not me.

tive context

g teachers believe in them

jecting these

y support.

hopeful:

g adversities.

their resources

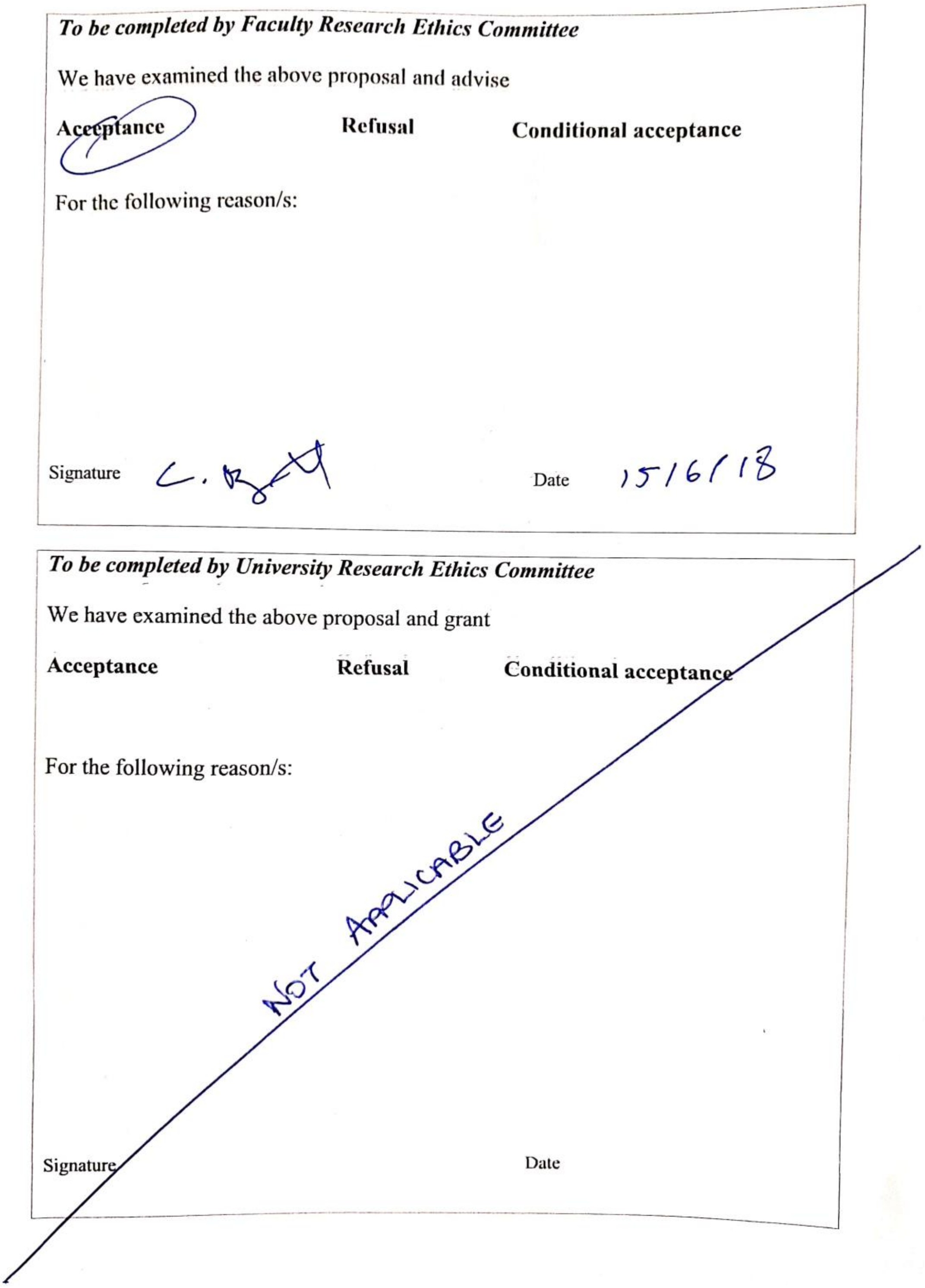
Trying hard

Never stop trying

on going when others anyone stop

good about fe

Appendix I: Ethics Approval



To be completed by Faculty Research Ethics Committee

We have examined the above proposal and advise

[✓ **Acceptance**] **Refusal** **Conditional acceptance**

For the following reason/s:

Signature

Date 15/6/18

To be completed by University Research Ethics Committee

We have examined the above proposal and grant

Acceptance **Refusal** **Conditional acceptance**

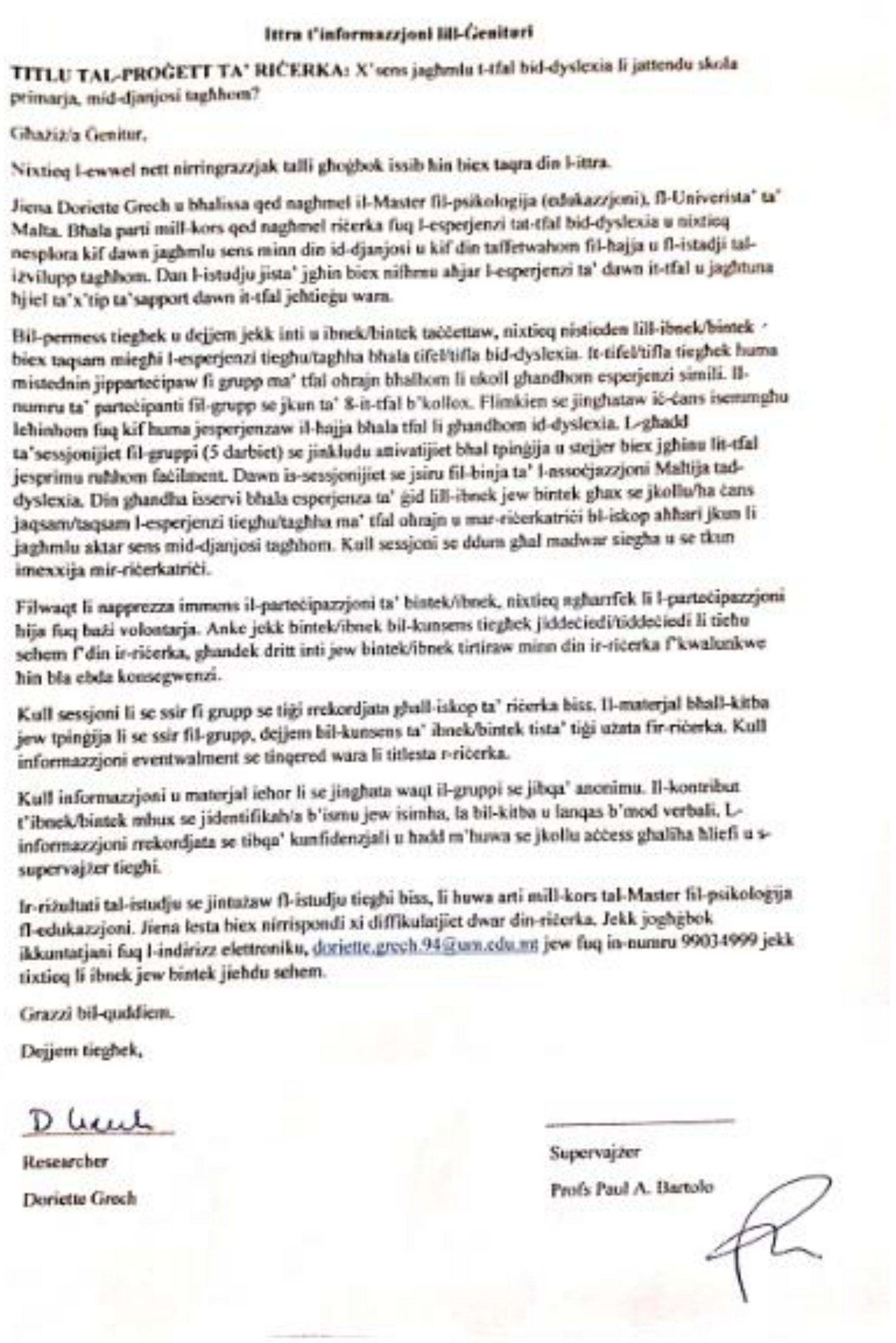
For the following reason/s:

NOT APPLICABLE

Signature

Date

Appendix J: Information Sheets and Consent Forms



Ittra t'informazzjoni lill-Ġenituri

TITLU TAL-PROĠETT TA' RIĊERKA: X'sens jagħmlu t-tfal bid-dyslexia li jattendu skola primarja, mid-djanjosi tagħhom?

Għażiż/a Ġenitur,

Nixtieq l-ewwel nett nirringrazzjak talli għoġbok issib ħin biex taqra din l-ittra.

Jiena Doriette Grech u bħalissa qed nagħmel il-Master fil-psikoloġija (edukazzjoni), fl-Universita' ta' Malta. Bħala parti mill-kors qed nagħmel riċerka fuq l-esperjenzi tat-tfal bid-dyslexia u nixtieq nesplora kif dawn jagħmlu sens minn din id-djanjosi u kif din taffetwahom fil-ħajja u fl-istadji tal-iżvilupp tagħhom. Dan l-istudju jista' jgħin biex nifhmu aħjar l-esperjenzi ta' dawn it-tfal u jagħtuna ħjiel ta'x'tip ta'sapport dawn it-tfal jeħtieġu wara.

Bil-permess tiegħek u dejjem jekk inti u ibnek/bintek taċċettaw, nixtieq nistieden lill-ibnek/bintek biex taqsam miegħi l-esperjenzi tiegħu/tagħha bħala tifel/tifla bid-dyslexia. It-tifel/tifla tiegħek huma mistednin jipparteċipaw fi grupp ma' tfal oħrajn bħalhom li ukoll għandhom esperjenzi simili. Il-numru ta' parteċipanti fil-grupp se jkun ta' 8-it-tfal b'kollox. Flimkien se jingħataw iċ-ċans isemmgħu leħinhom fuq kif huma jesperjenzaw il-ħajja bħala tfal li għandhom id-dyslexia. L-għadd ta'sessjonijiet fil-gruppi (5 darbiet) se jinkludu attivitajiet bħal tpinġija u stejjer biex jgħinu lit-tfal jesprimu ruħhom faċilment. Dawn is-sessjonijiet se jsiru fil-binja ta' l-assoċjazzjoni Maltija tad-dyslexia. Din għandha isservi bħala esperjenza ta' ġid lill-ibnek jew bintek għax se jkollu/ha ċans jaqsam/taqsam l-esperjenzi tiegħu/tagħha ma' tfal oħrajn u mar-riċerkatriċi bl-iskop aħħari jkun li jagħmlu aktar sens mid-djanjosi tagħhom. Kull sessjoni se ddum għal madwar siegħa u se tkun imexxija mir-riċerkatriċi.

Filwaqt li napprezza immens il-parteċipazzjoni ta' bintek/ibnek, nixtieq ngħarrfek li l-parteċipazzjoni hija fuq bażi volontarja. Anke jekk bintek/ibnek bil-kunsens tiegħek jiddeċiedi/tiddeċiedi li tieħu sehem f'din ir-riċerka, għandek dritt inti jew bintek/ibnek tirtiraw minn din ir-riċerka f'kwalunkwe ħin bla ebda konsegwenzi.

Kull sessjoni li se ssir fi grupp se tiġi rrekordjata għall-iskop ta' riċerka biss. Il-materjal bħall-kitba jew tpinġija li se ssir fil-grupp, dejjem bil-kunsens ta' ibnek/bintek tista' tiġi użata fir-riċerka. Kull informazzjoni eventwalment se tinqered wara li titlesta r-riċerka.

Kull informazzjoni u materjal ieħor li se jingħata waqt il-gruppi se jibqa' anonimu. Il-kontribut t'ibnek/bintek mhux se jidentifikah/a b'ismu jew isimha, la bil-kitba u lanqas b'mod verbali. L-informazzjoni rrekordjata se tibqa' kunfidenzjali u ħadd m'huwa se jkollu aċċess għaliha ħliefi u s-supervajżer tiegħi.

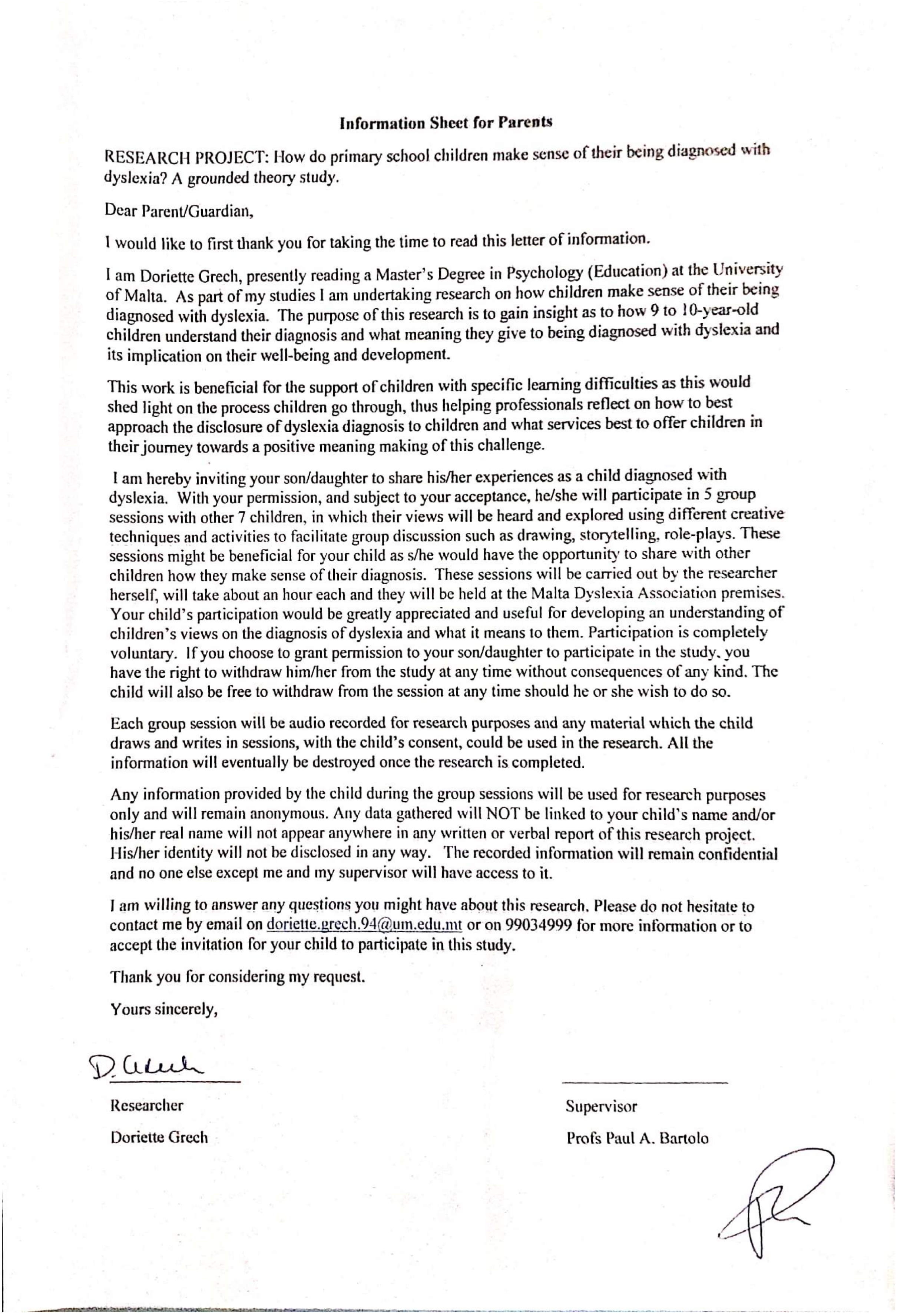
Ir-riżultati tal-istudju se jintużaw fl-istudju tiegħi biss, li huwa arti mill-kors tal-Master fil-psikoloġija fl-edukazzjoni. Jiena lesta biex nirrispondi xi diffikultajiet dwar din-riċerka. Jekk jogħġbok ikkuntatjani fuq l-indirizz elettroniku, doriette.grech.94@um.edu.mt jew fuq in-numru 99034999 jekk tixtieq li ibnek jew bintek jieħdu sehem.

Grazzi bil-quddiem.

Dejjem tiegħek,

Researcher
Doriette Grech

Supervajżer
Profs Paul A. Bartolo



Information Sheet for Parents

RESEARCH PROJECT: How do primary school children make sense of their being diagnosed with dyslexia? A grounded theory study.

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I would like to first thank you for taking the time to read this letter of information.

I am Doriette Grech, presently reading a Master’s Degree in Psychology (Education) at the University of Malta. As part of my studies I am undertaking research on how children make sense of their being diagnosed with dyslexia. The purpose of this research is to gain insight as to how 9 to 10-year-old children understand their diagnosis and what meaning they give to being diagnosed with dyslexia and its implication on their well-being and development.

This work is beneficial for the support of children with specific learning difficulties as this would shed light on the process children go through, thus helping professionals reflect on how to best approach the disclosure of dyslexia diagnosis to children and what services best to offer children in their journey towards a positive meaning making of this challenge.

I am hereby inviting your son/daughter to share his/her experiences as a child diagnosed with dyslexia. With your permission, and subject to your acceptance, he/she will participate in 5 group sessions with other 7 children, in which their views will be heard and explored using different creative techniques and activities to facilitate group discussion such as drawing, storytelling, role-plays. These sessions might be beneficial for your child as s/he would have the opportunity to share with other children how they make sense of their diagnosis. These sessions will be carried out by the researcher herself, will take about an hour each and they will be held at the Malta Dyslexia Association premises. Your child’s participation would be greatly appreciated and useful for developing an understanding of children’s views on the diagnosis of dyslexia and what it means to them. Participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to grant permission to your son/daughter to participate in the study, you have the right to withdraw him/her from the study at any time without consequences of any kind. The child will also be free to withdraw from the session at any time should he or she wish to do so.

Each group session will be audio recorded for research purposes and any material which the child draws and writes in sessions, with the child’s consent, could be used in the research. All the information will eventually be destroyed once the research is completed.

Any information provided by the child during the group sessions will be used for research purposes only and will remain anonymous. Any data gathered will NOT be linked to your child’s name and/or his/her real name will not appear anywhere in any written or verbal report of this research project. His/her identity will not be disclosed in any way. The recorded information will remain confidential and no one else except me and my supervisor will have access to it.

I am willing to answer any questions you might have about this research. Please do not hesitate to contact me by email on doriette.grech.94@um.edu.mt or on 99034999 for more information or to accept the invitation for your child to participate in this study.

Thank you for considering my request.

Yours sincerely,

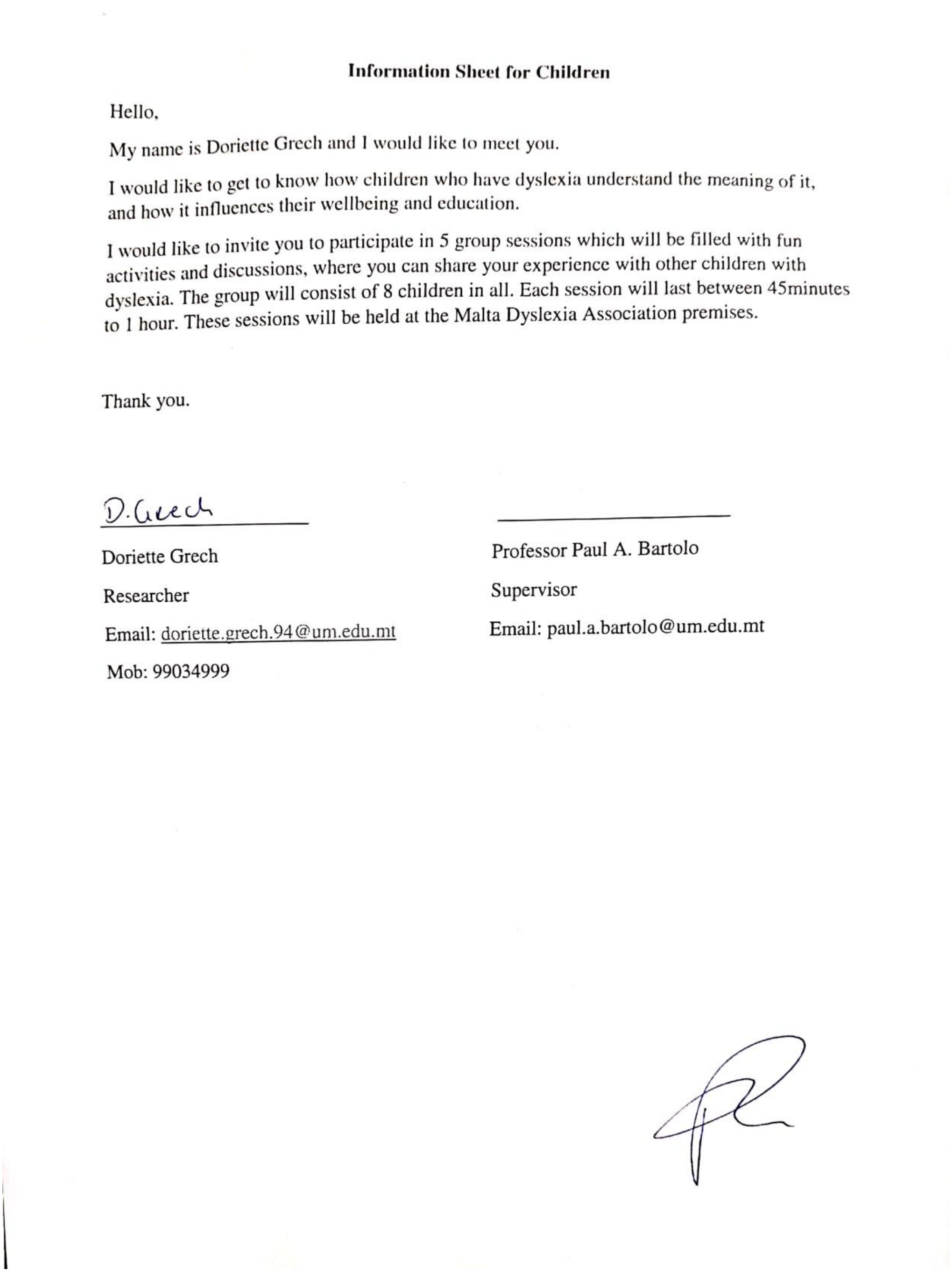
D. Grech

Researcher

Doriette Grech

Supervisor

Profs Paul A. Bartolo



Information Sheet for Children

Hello,

My name is Doriette Grech and I would like to meet you.

I would like to get to know how children who have dyslexia understand the meaning of it, and how it influences their wellbeing and education.

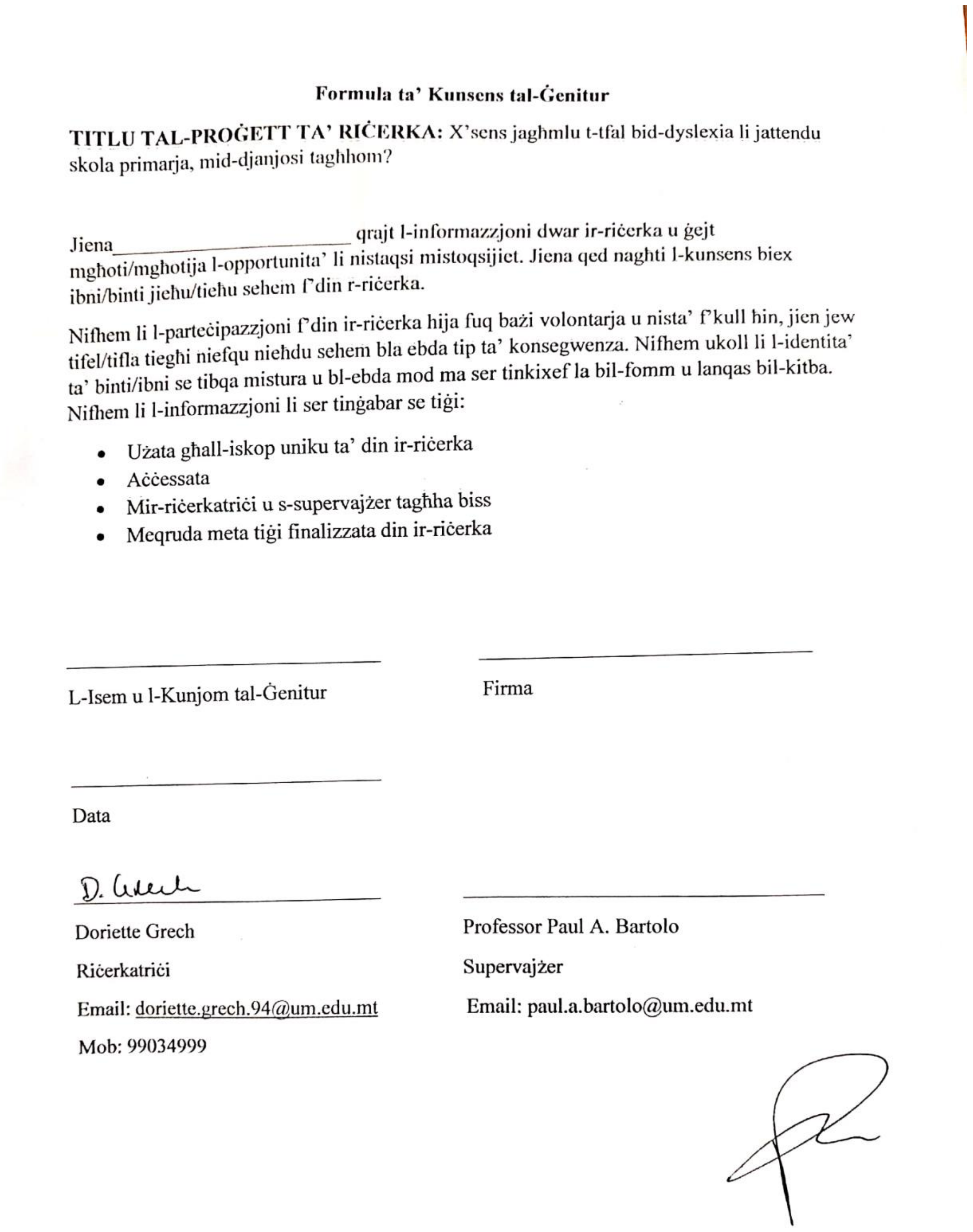
I would like to invite you to participate in 5 group sessions which will be filled with fun activities and discussions, where you can share your experience with other children with dyslexia. The group will consist of 8 children in all. Each session will last between 45minutes to 1 hour. These sessions will be held at the Malta Dyslexia Association premises.

Thank you.

D.Grech

Doriette Grech
Researcher
Email: doriette.grech.94@um.edu.mt
Mob: 99034999

Professor Paul A. Bartolo
Supervisor
Email: paul.a.bartolo@um.edu.mt



Formula ta' Kunsens tal-Ġenitur

TITLU TAL-PROĠETT TA' RIĊERKA: X'sens jaghmlu t-tfal bid-dyslexia li jattendu skola primarja, mid-djanjosi taghhom?

Jiena________________________ qrajt l-informazzjoni dwar ir-riċerka u ġejt mghoti/mghotija l-opportunita' li nistaqsi mistoqsijiet. Jiena qed naghti l-kunsens biex ibni/binti jieħu/tieħu sehem f'din r-riċerka.

Nifhem li l-parteċipazzjoni f'din ir-riċerka hija fuq bażi volontarja u nista' f'kull hin, jien jew tifel/tifla tieghi niefqu nieħdu sehem bla ebda tip ta' konsegwenza. Nifhem ukoll li l-identita' ta' binti/ibni se tibqa mistura u bl-ebda mod ma ser tinkixef la bil-fomm u lanqas bil-kitba. Nifhem li l-informazzjoni li ser tinġabar se tiġi:

- Użata għall-iskop uniku ta' din ir-riċerka
- Aċċessata
- Mir-riċerkatriċi u s-supervajżer tagħha biss
- Meqruda meta tiġi finalizzata din ir-riċerka

____

L-Isem u l-Kunjom tal-Ġenitur

____

Firma

____

Data

D. Grech

Doriette Grech

Riċerkatriċi

Email: doriette.grech.94@um.edu.mt

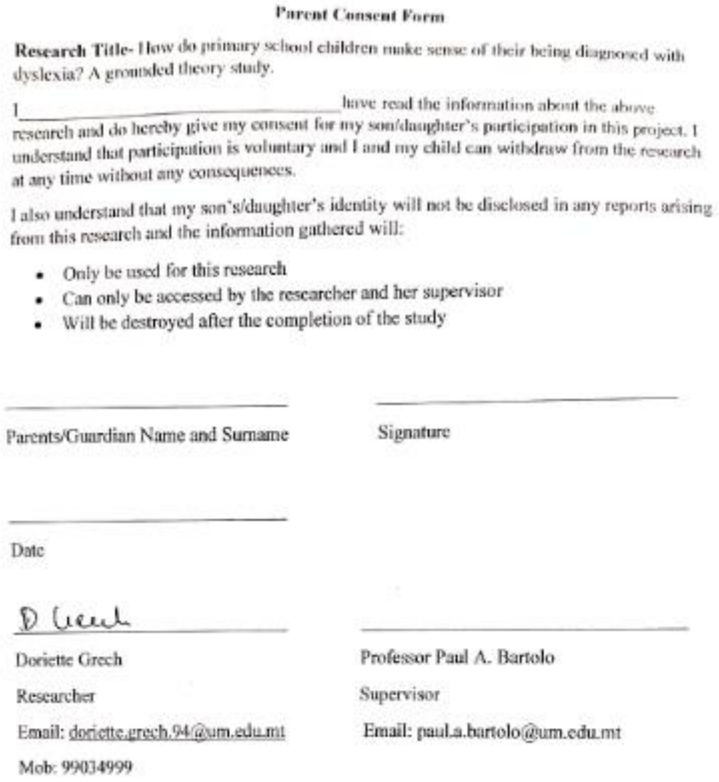
Mob: 99034999

____

Professor Paul A. Bartolo

Supervajżer

Email: paul.a.bartolo@um.edu.mt



Parent Consent Form

Research Title- How do primary school children make sense of their being diagnosed with dyslexia? A grounded theory study.

I________________________________have read the information about the above research and do hereby give my consent for my son/daughter's participation in this project. I understand that participation is voluntary and I and my child can withdraw from the research at any time without any consequences.

I also understand that my son's/daughter's identity will not be disclosed in any reports arising from this research and the information gathered will:

- Only be used for this research
- Can only be accessed by the researcher and her supervisor
- Will be destroyed after the completion of the study

____________________________ ____________________________

Parents/Guardian Name and Surname Signature

____

Date

D Grech	
Doriette Grech	Professor Paul A. Bartolo
Researcher	Supervisor
Email: doriette.grech.94@um.edu.mt	Email: paul.a.bartolo@um.edu.mt
Mob: 99034999	

Appendix K: Collective stories

1. "Bibi, the bee had trouble in class"

The following was created through a story game. The first phrase was provided for the children and each child took a turn to add a line to the story:

> Bibi was in the classroom during a lesson of English language. She enjoys school. -She was given sentences to write. She had ten to write. - Bibi immediately realised that she does not know how to write them as her English is very poor. - Then the teacher gave her a composition. - Of hundred sentences. - (If this were to happen to me I would tell them bye-bye, pack my things and leave). - Bibi was feeling annoyed. - Then Bibi told the teacher, "Miss, I am not very good at English and I am going crazy with this work, from where am I going to start? - Then the teacher told her, "You have to do them otherwise you will have them as homework or stay doing them in the playground at breaktime. - (I would do them so that I will not have them as homework and I can play outside). - She will try her best. - Horn one of Bibi's classmates started teasing her. - He told her "You are not like me, you don't know any English at all". - Bibi kicked him hard because she could not stand him anymore. - Then the teacher gave her a yellow card. - She was very sad. - She got into more trouble. - She felt like screaming, screaming loudly. - She threw everything on the floor… (Each line was contributed by different participant). (Transcribed verbatim and translated to English)

2. "Missy, the dog"- The story of Missy as told by Eve (in the one-to-one session)

The next narrative was created by Eve, during her session using the same technique as the story game. The first sentence was provided for her:

> Missy was in the classroom during a lesson of English language- "I think that she did a dictation and I imagine that when she got the result it wasn't so good but then she was ok. She did her best. She still was proud of herself. She didn't really bother a lot. She said to herself don't (bother). Then she goes to tell her mother and she feels a bit worried again. She told her mother which one's she got wrong and how she got them wrong. Maybe then after a while she would do another one and she would do a bit better. Missy likes going to school a lot. She likes that she always sees her friend. She likes the routine, that she always must wake up at the same time and go to school at this time. Her favourite part of the day is when we are in break, she talks a lot with her friend and she laughs." (transcribed verbatim from interview).

3. "Missy a new student at school"

The following vignette was presented to the children in the group:

Missy (the dog puppet) has dyslexia and she is new to your school. She does not know anybody, and she spoke only a little bit to you. You would like to introduce her to your friends. How would you go about it?

> Saying her name. - Ask her what she likes eating and drinking. - When is her birthday. - I would not say she has dyslexia so that the other children will not tease her. - I will keep it a secret. -I would tell them if I were her that I have dyslexia so that they would know, and they will not tease her. -They will tease her even more, so I will keep my

> mouth shut. -They will call her names such as "Her brain does not function". - I will keep it a secret, so nobody makes fun. (Each response was given by different participants).

Missy is feeling very sad because she feels she knows less than the others in her classroom. Her classmates are already reading and writing, and she is still learning. What would you tell Missy as a friend?

> She needs to tell her parents to help her out. - Tell her to go to complimentary class and asks a teacher to help her out. - Asks her mum to arrange for her to go to complimentary class. - She should not be sad as everyone has different needs not only she. - She is sad because she is different from the others. - She does not know the things that her friends know. (Each response was given by different participant).

4. Role-play

The following scenario was provided for the participants, who acted it out.

A student with dyslexia is doing a lesson with other students in the classroom.

The participants chose the roles:

Jacob – The teacher

Jack – The student with dyslexia

Christina – LSE

Rocky- student

> Jacob: Today we are doing a Maltese lesson. Find page 20. "A day at the beach".
>
> Jack: I can't find the page.
>
> Rocky & Christina (shouting): At the beach, at the beach.
>
> Jacob (In an angry voice): Turn the page. Ms Christina show him please.
>
> The other students started laughing. Jack keeps on asking.
>
> Jack: Sir I can't find it, I can't find it.
>
> Jacob: Please Ms. Christina take him out of class.

Appendix L: Quotes in Maltese

Rocky

1. Iddum biex tifhem ħafna

2. Jien ħa nagħmel puppet... Jien se nagħmlu monstru. Googly eyes. Se naghmillu tlett għajnejn il-monstru u għandu ħalqu kbir.

3. Aħna l-iskola meta mmorru, meta tgħidilna biex imorru. Għax għandna klassi fejn nagħmlu l-breakfast u hemm hekk aħna, hemm hekk fejn konna umbagħad tħallina nilgħabu.

4. Imdejjaq. Għax jitlef il-lessons umbagħad ikollhu ħafna homework. Għax imorru f'din il-klassi imma xorta nieħu pjaċir jiġifieri bid-dyslexia.

5. It-teacher tghidx kemm hi strict.

6. Il-klassi l-oħra le għax wieħed tagħtik homework.

7. Ittini wieħed imma jekk nitlef il-lessons mhux ittini l-homework biss, ittini anke l-school work.

8. White, Ħalli ħadd ma jiġġieled. Ħalli ħadd ma jiġġieled jekk m'għandux il-kuluri, il-kuluri tiegħi.

9. Tghid lill-mummy u lid-daddy biss. Thossha ferhana għax ħadd ma jibda jgħajjarha.

10. Ħalli umbagħad tibda tmur id-dyslexia. U ma nibqax bilqegħda għal xejn.

11. Insomma għax tibda ma tgħaddix mit-test u jkollok ssir ma dak il-job li m'għandekx x'tistudja.

12. Le. Inti tmur il-complimentary u dak ma jmurx allura dak qiegħed l-affarijiet jispelli bl-Ingliż u bil-Malti u int forsi ma tkunx taf tispelli bl-Ingliż u bil-Malti.

13. Li ma naqtax qalbi għax ġieli l-Miss qaltilna biex qatt ma nagħmlu give up. Jekk tkun ġo race u l-oħrajn igħadduk inti tibqa tiġri ħalli inti tirbaħa għax huma umbagħad jieqfu fl-aħħar u inti tiġi l-ewwel.

14. Jekk nagħtik is-sentenzi ħa ġġib ħafna affarijiet miktubin ħżiena.

15. Għax hi ma tafx li sħabha jafu

16. inbiddel li naqra iżjed u l-kliem inkun nafhom.

Jacob

17. Tifel qed jaqra. Ibati naqra biex jaqra. Ferħan. Li, li jħobb ipenġi.Mhux imdejjaq Le. Għax hu ma jħobbx jaqra imma jsib naqra diffikultà.

18. Le differenti ma nħossnix tajjeb.

19. Iva. Biex ikunu jafu li hi għandha d-dyslexia u ma joqghodux jghajjurha.

20. Kulħadd jista' jkun l-istess. Anke min ikollu d-dyslexia u anke min le xorta.

21. Biex immorru għand xi ħadd biex jaraw jekk hux it-tfal għandhom id-dyslexia jew le.

22. Jiena tifel simpatiku.

23. Li nħobb ngħin.

24. Anzi aħjar f'ċertu affarijiet.

Christina

25. Green għax nieħu pjaċir, bħal meta ninżel għal complimentary nilgħabu games, kienet ittina ġobon minn Spanja.

26. Jien ħa nagħmel puppet u Ħa jitkellem il-puppet minfloki... . Ħa niġi komda titkellem minn floki. Mela ħa jgħidlek li isib li tad-dyslexia bħal xi kultant tkun em diffiċli imma l-puppet jieħu pjaċir bid-dyslexia għax jgħid li jiena differenti minn ħaddieħor. Għax hemm il-bżonnijiet differenti. Eħe, għax inti ma tkunx bħall-oħrajn. Tħossok speċjali.

27. Jien il-composition ma nħobbx nikteb, ikollna ħafna x'nimlew. Ġieli anke rridu nimlew quddiem u wara, kollha.

28. Darba minnhom kont insejt il-pitazz tal-homework u bdejt ieħor umbagħad tiġi t-teacher u tgħidli ikkopja żewġ pages, qaltli għada trid iġġibu. Kelli aptit naqbad ngħolli l-pitazz anke inqattgħu min-nofs.

29. Għax kulħadd għandu bżonnijiet differenti mhux hi biss.

30. Em għax forsi jistudja u jistinka forsi jirnexxielu jsir dak li jħobb.

31. Xi darba jew oħra ħa jirnexxieli nilħaq daqshom.

32. Bħal il-problems u nibda neħel u nipprova nagħmilhom anke jekk jiġu ħżiena nitgħallem mil-mistakes.

Feeling Scared

33. Li ħa jaqbdu miegħi. Żewġt itfal.

34. Jiena bdejt nibża għall-ewwel darba, bdejt nibża għax sħabi jibdew jaqbdu miegħi għax kont se mmur hemm hekk imma umbagħad bdejt nieħu pjaċir.

35. L-oħrajn se jarawha weird

Acceptance.

"I am not alone"

36. Imma umbagħad bdejt nieħu pjaċir għax qisni ndunajt li kien hemm iżjed tfal li jmorru l-complimentary allura bdejt ngħid almenu għedt m'inix waħdi.

37. Jien għandi nofs il-klassi bħali.

"I have dyslexia but it is ok"

38. Mela ħa jgħidlek li isib li tad-dyslexia bħal xi kultant tkun em diffiċli imma l-puppet jieħu pjaċir bid-dyslexia għax jgħid li jiena differenti minn ħaddieħor. Għax hemm il-bżonnijiet differenti. Eħe, għax inti ma tkunx bħall-oħrajn. Tħossok speċjali.

39. Għax xi kultant meta jkollok id-dyslexia jista jkollok affarijiet differenti minn sħabek u jkunu iżjed interessanti minn ta' sħabek.

40. Aħna kollha differenti.

41. Ma nħossnix hekk. Meta nkun differenti. Le differenti ma nħossnix tajjeb.

42. Le. Għax kulħadd għandu bżonnijiet differenti mhux hi biss. (referring to Missy, no need to feel sad).

43. Għax forsi jistudja u jistinka forsi jirnexxielu jsir dak li jħobb (Christina).

44. Għax xi darba jew oħra ħa jirnexxieli nilħaq daqshom.

45. kulħadd jista' jkun l-istess. . Anke min ikollu d-dyslexia u anke min le xorta.

46. Tajjeb. Anzi aħjar f'ċertu affarijiet.

47. Tista iġġib iżjed minn wieħed tajjeb.

"Dyslexia is only a small part of myself"

48. Ferħan. Li, li jħobb ipenġi.

Experiencing the special attention as opportunity

49. Għax immur għand it-teacher u meta nlestu qabel il-ħin noqgħodu nilgħabu (Rocky). U ma nibqax bilqegħda għal xejn (Rocky).

50. U taqbeż il-lessons allura nieħu pjaċir. Ikolli xi boring lesson u naqbiżha (Christina).

51. Nieħdu aktar pjaċir. Nitkellmu u lilna kultant ittina xi ħaġa xi nduqu.

52. Nieħu pjaċir, bħal meta ninżel għal complimentary nilgħabu games, kienet ittina ġobon minn Spanja.

53. Kieku jgħinni li għandi l-LSE. Għaliex jien naħseb aħjar li jkolli LSE ħalli tgħini.

54. Jien fil-klassi għandi LSE u ngħidilha "Tista' tgħini f'din?" tgħini u nħossni tajba għax qisni xi ħadd qed jgħini fejn ma nifhimx. Ta' tifla imma tgħin lil kulħadd. Bħal l-LSE tagħna kollha.

55. Li naħseb ikun li min għandu d-dyslexia jew joħroġ jew ikollu xi LSE (Jacob).

Being aware of the discrepancy between their view of themselves and how other view them

Not disclosing the diagnosis of dyslexia

56. Jekk nagħtik is-sentenzi ħa ġġib ħafna affarijiet miktubin ħżiena.

57. It-teacher tiegħi tgħidx kemm tgerger meta jkollha complimentary. Għax nitilfu l-lesson.

Being percieved as less capable

58. Tista' titgħallem bid-dyslexia ħafna mit-tfal bid-dyslexia jitgħallmu mhux billi jiktbu u jaqraw b'xi tipi ta' logħob li huma tajbin għalihom.

59. Tista iggib iżjed minn wieħed tajjeb.

Adversities

Becoming overwhelmed by schoolwork

60. Jien hekk inħossni. Bħal Bibi. Għax darba minnhom kont insejt il-pitazz tal-homework u bdejt ieħor umbagħad tiġi t-teacher u tgħidli ikkopja żewġ pages, qaltli għada trid iġġibu. Kelli aptit naqbad ngħolli l-pitazz anke inqattgħu min-nofs.

61. Jien il-composition ma nħobbx nikteb, ikollna ħafna x'nimlew. Ġieli anke rridu nimlew quddiem u wara, kollha.

62. Imdejjaq. Ghax ikolli ħafna homework.

63. Il-klassi l-oħra le għax wieħed tagħtik homework. Ittini wieħed imma jekk nitlef il-lessons mhux ittini l-homework biss, ittini anke l-school work.

Being perceived by teachers as not trying enough

64. Nibża. Em għax ma nkunx naf kelma u t-teacher tibda tgħidli li ma naqrax (Christina).

65. Ħażin. Għax nibża nieħu l-iżbalji tibda tgħidli "Inti ma taqrax id-dar" u id-dar naqra (Rocky).

66. Eħe u jien inkun nixtieq jekk nieħu żball il-miss ma tgħidlix ma tantx taqra dar u jiena nħossni naqra sad li tgħidli hekk (Jacob).

67. Em l-iskola idejali jekk it-tfal jeħlu f'xi kelma waqt li qed jaqraw it-teacher ma tgħidilhomx li ma jafux jaqraw, no bullying

Being punished

68. Sad Meta taqbad tirrabja t-teacher.

69. Sad għax hu jibda jgħid "Jien mhux bħal sħabi".

70. Tieħdu fl-office. Għax mhux qed jagħtih ċans jibda jispjegalu. Jew inkella ġġib lil Madam.

71. Għax is-sir jibda jaħseb li hu mhux qed jagħti kasu x'inhu qed jgħid.

72. Fir-reading. Għax umbagħad inkun ma tifla umbagħad nispiċċa nipprova naqra iktar għax umbagħad naqra kelma kelma imma tgħidli "Eq, eq"

Being teased

73. Li ma jkunx hemm tfal jidħku b'ħadd ieħor għax huwa jmur il-complimentary.

74. Darba oħti il-kbira għax kont saqsejta biex tgħini, qaltli "Inti ma tafx taqra sentenza, kemm int tad-daħk" għedtilha "Għandi bżonn l-għajnuna, taf li mmur l-complimentary" qaltli "Għamlu waħdek". Imdejqa. Umbagħad kelli nistenna lil mummy sa filgħaxija biex nagħmilha din il-biċċa. Qaltli "Għalxiex ma saqsejtx lil oħtok?", għedtilha "Saqsejtha imma hi ma ridetx tgħini".

Coping with dsylexia

Supportive context

75. Billi tgħid lil parents biex jgħinuha iżjed fil-homework u hekk.

76. Tgħid lil parents jgħinuha taqra magħha, hekk (Jacob).

77. Tmur il-complimentary u lil xi teacher tgħinha (Christina).

78. Tgħid lil mummy tagħha tgħidilha biex tibda tmur il-complimentary.

79. Tgħid lil mummy tiktbilha note umbagħad tbiddel postha.

Self Reliance

80. Jagħmlu ħbieb ħalli umbagħad ma jinkihiex iżjed.

Becoming autonomous

81. Tgħid lit-teacher tbiddillu posthu. Jew inkella tbiddel lilha.

82. Jien fil-klassi għandi LSE u ngħidilha "Tista' tgħini f'din?" tgħini u nħossni tajba għax qisni xi ħadd qed jgħini fejn ma nifhimx.

83. Imma lanqas ma tistax taqbad u ttihom l-answer imma tgħinhom jaħdmuhom.

84. Jew insaqsi lil mummy jew inkella jekk inkun nafha nipprova nagħmilha waħdi.

Positive meaning making contributes to hope

Feeling hopeful

Self-efficacy and determination

85. Li nistinka ftit iżjed ħalli fit-test immur tajjeb.

86. Em bħal il-problems u nibda neħel u nipprova nagħmilhom anke jekk jiġu ħżiena nitgħallem mil-mistakes.

87. Bħal l-ewwel darba ridt nagħmel 'għax', għamilta ħażina. Umbagħad meta kelli bżonn nerġa niktibha għamiltha tajba.

88. Li jekk iġġib xi ħaġa ħażina ħabba d-dyslexia tipprova tistudja iżjed fuq dik u forsi xi darba ġġibha tajba (Christina)

89. Li meta jkollok hekk u darba tkun ġibt xi ħaġa haga inti tistudja iżjed milli studjajt id-darba l-oħra umbagħad id-darba l-oħra ġġibu kollhu tajjeb għax jien hekk kien ġrali (Rocky)

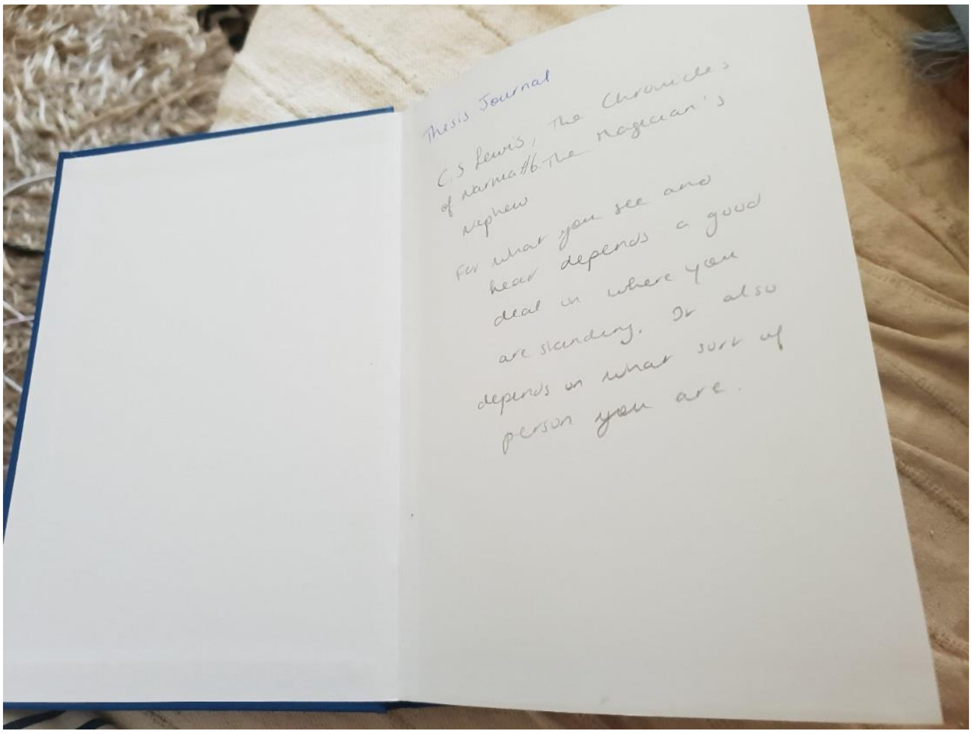
90.Jiena naqbel, għax it-teacher tgħidilna taqtgħux qalbkom (Christina).

91. Li ma naqtax qalbi għax ġieli l-Miss qaltilna biex qatt ma nagħmlu give up. (Rocky)

92. Jekk tkun ġo race u l-oħrajn ighadduk inti tibqa tiġri ħalli inti tirbaħa għax huma umbagħad jieqfu fl-aħħar u inti tiġi l-ewwel. Mhux tagħmel bħalhom tieqaf.

93. Ġieli fil-year 2 irbaħt ħafna certificates, min joqgħod bravu jirbaħ is-certificates, ġieli rbaħt xi affarijiet tal-animals u ġieli rbaħt tambur għax kellna test, min iġib kollhu tajjeb jirbaħ.

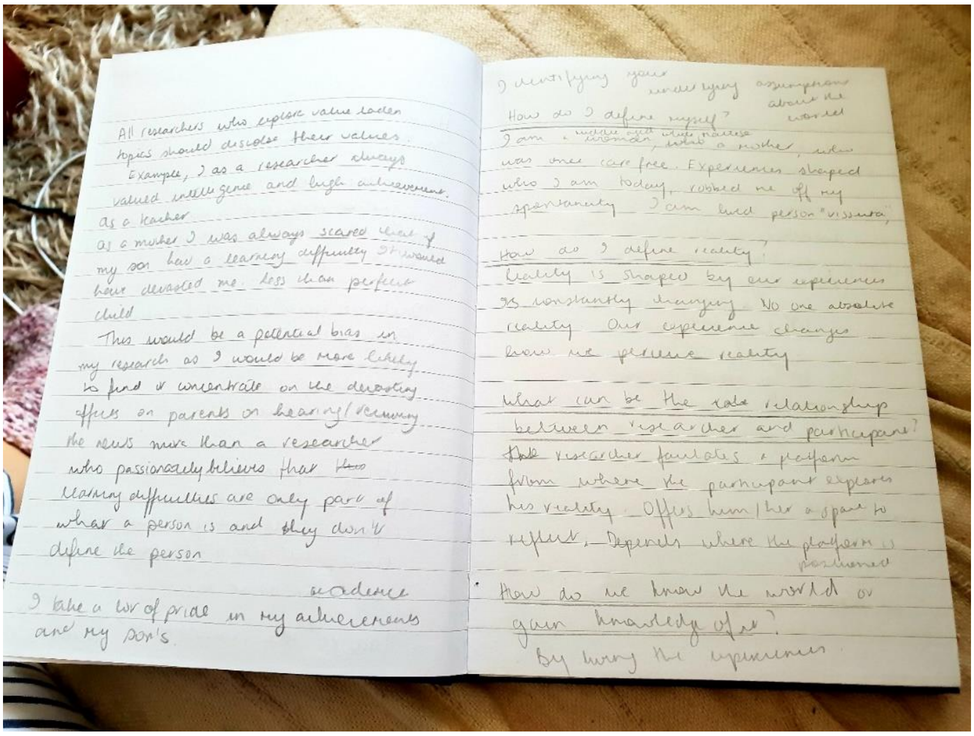
Appendix M: Pages from the Thesis Journal



Thesis Journal

C.S Lewis, The Chronicles of Narnia #6 The Magician's Nephew

For what you see and hear depends a good deal on where you are standing. It also depends on what sort of person you are.



All researchers who explore value laden topics should disclose their values.
Example, I as a researcher always valued intelligence and high achievement. as a teacher
as a mother I was always scared that if my son had a learning difficulty it would have devasted me. less than perfect child
This would be a potential bias in my research as I would be more likely to find or concentrate on the devasting effects on parents on hearing/receiving the news more than a researcher who passionately believes that ~~the~~ learning difficulties are only part of what a person is and they don't define the person

I take a lot of pride in my academic achievements and my son's.

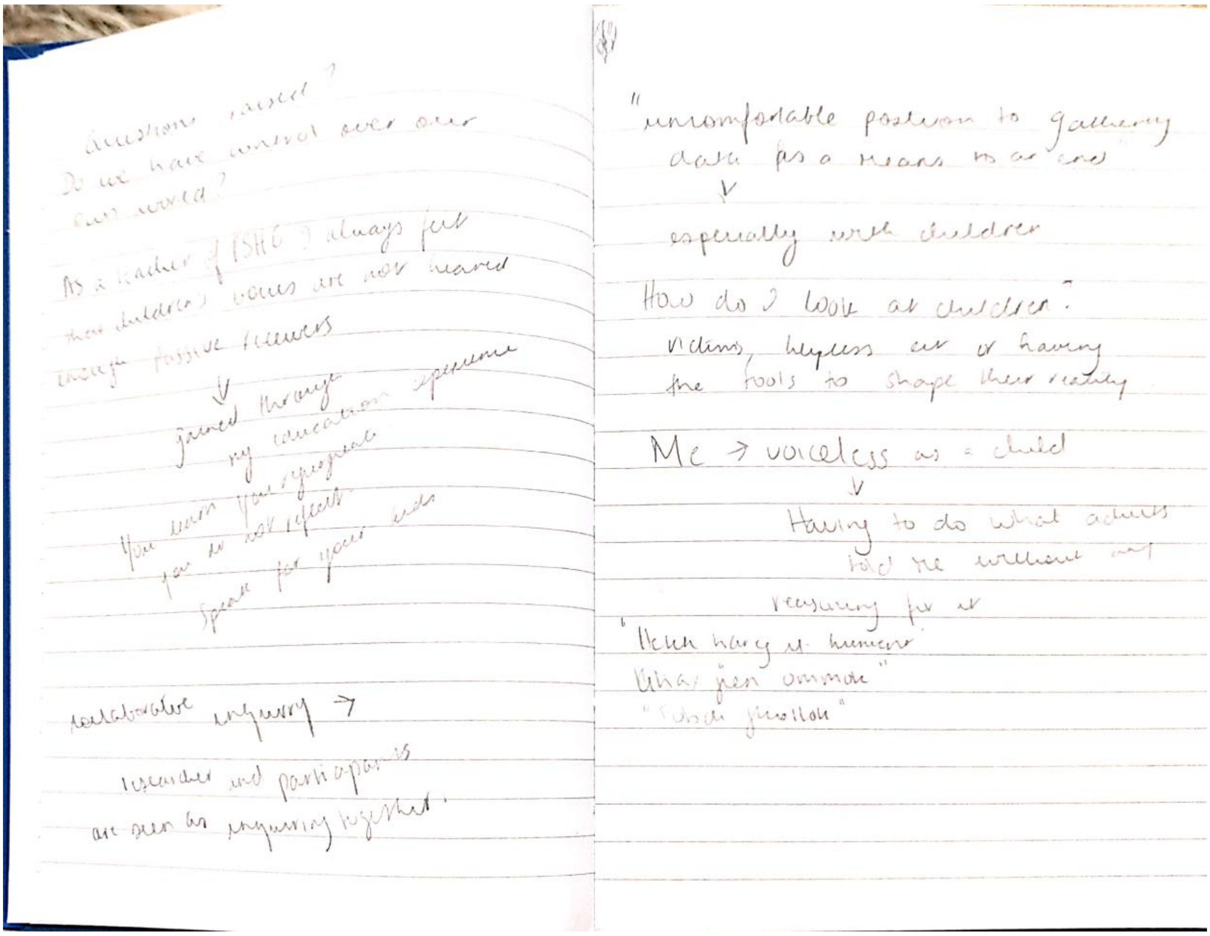
Identifying your underlying assumptions about the world

How do I define myself?
I am a middle aged white maltese woman, ~~adult~~ a mother, who was once care free. Experiences shaped who I am today, robbed me off my spontaneity. I am lived person "vissuta",

How do I define reality?
Reality is shaped by our experiences its constantly changing. No one absolute reality. Our experience changes how we perceive reality

What can be the ~~role~~ relationship between researcher and participant?
~~The~~ researcher facilitates a platform from where the participant explores his reality. Offers him/her a space to reflect. Depends where the platform is positioned

How do we know the world or gain knowledge of it?
By living the experiences



Questions raised?
Do we have control over our own world?

As a teacher of PSHE I always felt that children's voices are not heard enough - passive receivers
↓
gained through my education experience

You learn your pedagogical / you do not reflect / speak for your kids

collaborative inquiry →
researcher and participants are seen as inquiring together.

"uncomfortable position to gathering data as a means to an end"
↓
especially with children

How do I look at children?
victims, helpless etc or having the tools to shape their reality

Me → voiceless as a child
↓
Having to do what adults told me without any reasoning for it

"[illegible]
[illegible]"
"[illegible]"