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A thematic analytical exploration into secondary school teachers' views and experiences of risk factors for youth offending behaviour.

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ABSTRACT

Previous research into the related risk factors for youth offending behaviour has been explored from both a youth's perspective and a criminal justice system perspective. The aim of this study was to provide teachers views and experiences with regards to youth offending behaviour and the impact they believe they can have on said behaviours. Six semi-structured interviews of secondary school teachers, from one school in the North of England, were undertaken. A qualitative approach was adopted from a realist epistemological position. Three key themes were identified through a thematic analysis of the teachers' views and experiences; perceived influences, the impact of school, and the perception of crime and other individuals. Links were found between the current studies themes and previous research with regards to risk factors for youth offending behaviour. The current study recognises that further research needs to be conducted into the impact teachers can have in the reduction of youth offending behaviour and related risk factors. Interviewing teachers from a variety of schools across the country could provide a further insight into different experiences.

KEY WORDS:	THEMATIC ANALYSIS	SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS	EXPERIENCES	RISK FACTORS	YOUTH OFFENDING BEHAVIOUR

Introduction

Over the years there has been a constant flow of youth offenders passing through the criminal justice system either offending for the first time or reoffending. 'Youth offenders' refers to young people aged 10-18 displaying offending behaviours (Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, 2010). Violent and drug offences, abuse and attacks, and antisocial behaviour are among the identified offending behaviours (Sharp et al. 2006), with the Youth Justice System working to prevent offending and reoffending in young people in England and Wales (Ministry of Justice, 2016). Reported in March 2015, a reduction was seen in the number of youths entering the criminal justice system for the first time (Ministry of Justice, 2016). A reduction in the number of sentences given by the courts and cautions issued by the police was also reported. Many psychologists have paid an interest in addressing the risk factors that could lead to youth offending behaviour (Sutherland, 2011; Barnet et al. 2015; Farrington, 2015). Risk factors have been defined by Kazdin et al. (1997) as a predictor of high probability of offending later on in life.

Research into risk factors and youth offending has grown exponentially. Case and Haines (2010) claim to be able to identify risk factors that statistically increase the likelihood of offending later in adolescence. They believe that risk factors measured in childhood and early adolescence are the main predictors of offending behaviour later in life. The study of risk factors has been investigated using a variety of methods, and from numerous perspectives.

Aiming to understand risk factors from a youth's perspective, Barnet et al. (2015) interviewed twenty youths detained in Los Angeles. Similarly, Sutherland (2011) interviewed twenty-five youths held on remand in New Zealand youth justice facilities. Longitudinal studies have also been used to investigate the risk factors that may lead to youth offending, with Farrington et al. (2006) conducting the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development on 411 males from South London. Farrington (2015) conducted further longitudinal studies into related risk factors. Comparably, Bretherick (2006) conducted in depth case studies of those individuals classed as notorious criminals, seeking to identify what key events or circumstances they believe might have led them to offend. Despite the different approaches to exploring risk factors, each seemed to uncover similar risk factors believed to lead to youth offending behaviour.

Receiving poor parenting and coming from an unstable family background have been expressed by a number of researchers as potential risk factors that could lead a youth towards displaying offending behaviours. Youths interviewed by Barnet et al. (2015) suggested they turned to crime as a means of gaining the attention they craved. They expressed a need for love, attention and control, along with a positive role model and did not believe they received this from their school or family environment. It was also identified by Barnet et al. (2015) that coming from a large or single parent family could lead to financial difficulties at home. Consequently this steered youths to offending behaviours as a means to acquire items their family cannot afford, as youths believed this would help their parents with their financial difficulties. Similarly discovered by Farrington (2015) having a low income, large family or antisocial or young parents may often lead youths to offend. Contrastingly, Biehal et al (2010) suggested that those individuals that have either been placed in care from a high risk family background, have experienced deprivation, suffered poor

parenting, abuse or neglect, have a higher chance of displaying offending behaviours than those in the community. However, no statistics were provided for this, resulting in further research needing to be conducted into whether being placed in care could be considered a risk factor for displaying youth offending behaviour.

Socialising with delinquent peer groups, both in and out of school, has been highlighted as a further risk factor believed to potentially lead a youth to display offending behaviours. Hanging around with delinquent peers, whilst attending a school with a high delinquency rate has been described by Murray and Farrington (2010) as a possible influence for youths to then display offending behaviours. Murray and Farrington (2010) do however suggest that these risk factors can be altered using interventions, which may lead to a reduction in offending behaviour displayed.

One intervention initiative of the Department for Children, Schools and Families et al. (2009) is that of the Safer Schools Partnership. This initiative has involved police officers and police community safety officers being placed in selected schools as a method of identifying and working with those children and young people believed to be at risk of becoming either victims or offenders. McGuire (2004) attribute the chances of a youth displaying offending behaviours increasing with having an association with pro-criminal peers who come from a high crime neighbourhood. Sharp et al. (2006) provided evidence that supports delinquent peer groups being a risk factor, by using a multivariate analysis. Sharp et al. found that 6% of those aged 10-19 could be classed as belonging to a delinquent peer group, and that these individuals were 26% more likely to have committed at least one criminal offence.

There are a number of other risk factors, along with poor parenting and delinquent peer groups, which are considered to play a role in leading youths to display offending behaviours. McGuire (2004) provides a number of other potential risk factors that could steer a youth in the direction of displaying offending behaviours including: antisocial attitudes and beliefs, personality factors such as egocentrism and impulsivity, a varied history of antisocial behaviour, a family history of criminality, and low levels of personal, educational and financial achievement. McGuire's findings were developed by Barnet et al. (2015) who additionally stated that living in a high crime neighbourhood and substance misuse could also play a role in the presentation of offending behaviours.

It is important to note that the key risk factors that researchers have found, using a variety of methods, do not singly lead a youth to commit an offending behaviour or display anti-social behaviour. They are not deterministic, but all may link together to produce a range of emotional, social and behavioural difficulties (Leschied et al, 2008). The prevalence of an offending behaviour being displayed is not only due to the risk factors previously stated but is also attributed to the opportunity a youth is presented with to display offending behaviour (Pakes and Winstone, 2007).

An extensive literature review of previous research has identified that very little research has been conducted into the views of secondary school teachers with regards to the risk factors they think could lead to youth offending behaviour. The views of secondary school teachers would be a valuable addition to the current research, due to education being noted as a potential risk factor for youth offending behaviour as antisocial behaviour is displayed in schools. Gaik et al. (2010) describe

antisocial behaviour as 'a set of behaviours that goes against any established rules or norms'.

Alternatively, Sutherland (2011) suggests that schools can provide the unique opportunity to interrupt the pathway to offending. Homel et al. (2015) similarly regards schools as an institution of care that have a high importance in preventing crime. Stone (2010) suggests that many schools in the UK tend to keep incidents that take place on their school premises to themselves, rather than contacting other authorities, and regard them as an internal matter using their own disciplinary procedures towards offending behaviour. However disciplinary procedures used within schools vary greatly (Matjasko, 2011). This highlights how valuable teacher's views, experiences and perceptions can be towards helping others identify those at risk of displaying offending behaviour and what impact they can have, as children and young people spend a considerable amount of time in school every day (Op de Beeck et al., 2012). Wiesner et al. (2005) points out that early involvement in antisocial behaviour reduces a youth's opportunity to engage in other kinds of positive interactions and activities. This leads schools and teachers to be viewed as a determinant as to whether a youth will display an offending behaviour, due to their management strategies and attitudes towards the youths.

Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to explore the views of secondary school teachers as another perspective to those that have already been investigated. Previous research has been conducted from both a youth's perspective, and a criminal justice system perspective. The current study aims to close the current gap in the literature as the impact schools and teachers can have of offending behaviour is vital. This would allow for other researchers to explore further from this perspective as schools offer a promising focus for intervention and innovation with young people, and can be more easily targeted than the family (Case and Haines, 2003).

This research has two aims:

- To explore the specific risk factors that secondary school teachers think might lead to youth offending behaviours based on their views and experiences
- To capture whether secondary school teachers can have an impact on risk factors.

Methodology

<u>Design</u>

Qualitative research was utilised to explore the research aims in relation to youth offending behaviour as it is viewed as a flexible and fluid method (Mason, 2002) 'aimed at discovering how human beings understand, experience, interpret and produce the social world' (Sandelowski, 2004:893). Semi-structured interviews were employed as they provided the researcher the opportunity to collect and explore detailed and conversational first person accounts, as the interviewees were freely able to contribute as much or as little information as they wished with regards to their thoughts and experiences (Langdridge and Hagger-Johnson, 2013).

The aims were further explored through the use of thematic analysis upon the interview transcripts, although multiple types of analysis could have been conducted on the data (Willig, 2013). Conducting a thematic analysis allowed the researcher to

capture the teacher's thoughts and meaning attributed to their experiences of risk factors that could lead to youth offending behaviour (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). It must be noted that the thematic analysis was conducted through an inductive approach, as the data was first analysed without consulting current literature (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Therefore, the themes that materialised from the data do not reflect the researcher's theoretical position, but are actively constructed from the transcripts (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Participants

Six interviewees were recruited from Easingwold Secondary School near York, therefore obtaining a homogenous sample (Kuzel, 1992). A pre-existing relationship between the researcher and the school enabled the research to take place. Each interviewee worked within the school in the teaching profession, although at different levels of responsibility, thus exhibiting identical predetermined criteria (Patton, 2002). As six interviewees were used, any further interviews conducted would not have yielded new information that would make significant changes to the information already discovered (Ryan and Bernard, 2003).

Individuals interviewed were obtained through a gatekeeper within the school, who had been contacted prior to the research taking place with an invitation letter (appendix 1) in which details of the study's aims were provided, along with an information sheet (appendix 2) providing information regarding the research process. The researcher's ethical approval form (appendix 3) was also provided. An informed decision was made, with permission granted to interview the teachers (appendix 4). The volunteer interviewees then made an informed decision to take part, after expressing an interest in the research, based on the documents provided to the gatekeeper and an invitation letter (appendix 5).

Data collection

Those who volunteered to take part, were emailed a selection of potential interview dates and times from which a convenient time for themselves was selected. Based on the chosen interview dates, a neutral setting within the school was organised that ensured the interviews were conducted in a comfortable environment for the researcher and the interviewee, remaining standardised for all interviews. To ensure the safety of both parties involved, the research supervisor was provided with the interview details.

A consent form was presented at the beginning of the interview for the interviewee to sign (appendix 6), along with the information sheet previously provided. Detailed within these forms was the interviewee's right to withdraw from the research by 27th March 2016. This date was stipulated due to transcription and analysis commencing from that date forward. It also detailed the use of a voice recorder to effectively and efficiently collect data for analysis. Providing the interviewee gave their consent, the interview recording would be kept until the submission of the journal article for the purpose of analysis.

The interviews undertaken lasted approximately 25-50 minutes dependent upon how much information the interviewee provided for each of the fifteen open-ended questions asked from the interview schedule (appendix 7). Additional questions and prompts were asked within some interviews for clarification of points (appendix 8). The construction of the interview schedule arose through extensive research,

forming three subsections. Interviewee's were first asked about themselves as a method of building rapport between the two (King and Horrocks, 2010). Questions were then asked with regards to risk factors, which were informed by Barnet et al.'s (2015) research into suggested risk factors for youth offending behaviour. To end with, questions were asked about the individuals' experience, influenced by King and Horrocks as they detail that qualitative interviewing should focus on personal experience. The interview schedule was fashioned based on a thematic analysis being conducted. The questions needed to uncover data that would reflect reality and unpick the surface of reality with regards to the research area of risk factors and offending behaviour (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

A natural conclusion occurred in all interviews, prompting the researcher to provide the interviewees with a debrief sheet (appendix 9), reiterating the research aims, helplines to call, and providing the opportunity to create a unique code, enabling them to remain anonymous and withdraw should they wish to. The date for withdrawal was also reiterated.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis is described as a method that underpins most other methods of qualitative analysis, and is used for recognising and organising patterns in content and meaning (Willig, 2013). Prior to analysis taking place, the interviews were transcribed by the researcher, as it is regarded as a suitable way to re-familiarise themselves with the interview material (Halcomb and Davidson, 2006). Braun and Clarke's (2006) guide was consulted when conducting the thematic analysis.

Transcribed data was familiarised through reading and re-reading the transcripts, while simultaneously noting any initial ideas (appendix 10). Initial codes were generated that highlighted any interesting thoughts and experiences within the data. The excerpts from the transcripts relevant to the code selected were then collated. The codes identified were therefore a result of the interviewee's views and experiences (Willig, 2013). The initial codes were then collaborated into potential themes and reviewed allowing the researcher to check whether the themes worked in relation to the coded data extracts. The chosen themes were defined as a result of the collaboration and an analysis was produced, with Joffe (2012) referring to a theme as a specific pattern of meaning found in the data. The analysis captured the teachers' views and experiences in relation to risk factors for youth offending behaviour, and discussed the extent to which new information was found.

By using thematic analysis, the researcher was able to use a flexible and useful research tool enabling rich and detailed data collection (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Conducting a thematic analysis has been reported to provide the researcher with an understanding of the social phenomenon within the social reality (Joffe, 2012). The current study's social phenomenon was the youth offending behaviour subjectively experienced and reported by the interviewees. A realist epistemological position was adopted due to the study uncovering these thoughts and experiences in relation to youth offending behaviour, with there being no single reality of experiences.

Ethical Considerations

Research conducted adhered to Manchester Metropolitan University ethical guidelines, and the BPS code of conduct and ethical guidelines (The British Psychological Society, 2009). Documents were created and provided to interviewees

in line with these guidelines (appendix 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9), highlighting the research aims, procedure and issues that could have arisen. The ethical considerations applicable to the research were also detailed; informed consent, the right to withdraw, no deception would take place, debriefing, and confidentiality. To remain anonymous, interviewees provided the researcher with a unique code by which they would be known. Confidentiality was not promised, as data from the interviews would be recorded in the researcher's journal article, and discussed with a research supervisor.

Analysis and Discussion

Uncovered through a thematic analysis of the interview transcripts, three key themes were identified: perceived influences, the impact of school, and the perception of crime and other individuals. Each theme was then subdivided, presenting eight subthemes in total (see table 1). The identified themes arose from a sample of six teachers from a secondary school situated in a rural town just outside of York. An insight was gained into the risk factors perceived by teachers to lead a youth to display offending behaviour, along with the impact the teachers believe they could have, with the aims therefore being achieved.

Table 1. Themes and subthemes uncovered during a thematic analysis with regards to teachers views and experiences in relation to youth offending behaviour.

Themes	Subthemes
1. **Perceived Influences**	Parental Influence
	Peer Influence
	Teachers Influence
2. **The Impact of School**	Communication
	Agency Support
	Schools Management
3. **Perception of Crime and Other Individuals**	Emotions and Feelings
	Social media's impact

Theme 1: Perceived Influences

Theme 1 demonstrates teacher's perceived views of youth offending behaviour and the positive and negative influences they are subject to from parents, peers and teachers.

Parental Influence

Parental influence was reported by the teacher's at both ends of the socioeconomic spectrum, in both deprived and affluent families, but suggest that socioeconomic status is not wholly accountable for youth offending behaviour, as interviewee 3 suggests.

> I think the risk factors are not just in the poorer families there is definitely a pattern of where the parents aren't interested and there's not that support from home, I think that's where pupils are most at risk (I3, 303-305).

Barnert et al. (2015) suggested that youths lacking in attention and love often turn to offending as a method of gaining this. The teachers' statement supports this suggestion as they refer to a lack of interest, which therefore maps onto Barnet et al.'s lack of attention.

The teacher's also expressed that they believe having no boundaries set by their parents could have a potential impact on the youth presenting offending behaviour, as highlighted through the following quotes.

> If you don't have those boundaries then you are more likely to engage in offending behaviour 'cause you don't know the difference necessarily (I1, 59-60).

> There's very little input from the parents (I6, 119).

A lack in self-control can be believed to lead to youth offending behaviour, with Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) suggesting that to prevent this it falls on the parents to monitor their child, recognise offending behaviour and subsequently punish said behaviour. The statements supported both Gottfredson and Hirschi and Vazsonyi and Huang (2010) who found individuals whose parents monitor and discipline their behaviour have an increased level of self-control, and realise appropriate behaviours to conduct.

Teachers also made multiple references to youths potentially modelling parents' behaviour and how they believe that may lead to offending behaviours.

> Therefore they get pulled into sort of offending behaviours … modelling behaviour they have seen at home from older adults (I2, 50-52).

Referrals made can be interpreted and translated onto the social learning theory (Akers, 1998, 2009), as the teachers mention youths copying behaviours playing a part in offending behaviours. Behaviour is therefore explained through exposure to criminal behaviours of others. Several studies (Allen, Hauser, O'Connor and Bell, 2002; Black, 2002; Updegraff et al., 2004) have also found that adolescents tend to 'replicate features of the parent – child or parent – parent relationship in their peer affiliations' (Brown and Bakken, 2011: 157) and are therefore supported by the teachers' suggestions.

A negative impact of parental influence was not always reported by the teachers, as they mention that some individuals from troubled backgrounds, subject to parental influence did not present offending behaviours:

> It was an alcohol related thing, the parents were estranged … because of all the trauma that she'd been through she was very much a role model for her

younger siblings so would look after them … and this student did her GCSE's, did really well and maintained her focus (I5, 467-472).

Authoritative parenting has been described by McKinney and Renk (2008) as a method of safeguarding against offending behaviour. However, the quote provided from the teacher conversely highlights that individuals without authoritative parenting do not always go onto offend.

Peer Influence

Peer relationships have been suggested by the teachers as having an influence on offending behaviour. It is believed that a lack of parental guidance can often lead youths to form friendships with peers from similar backgrounds, due to the individuals having no guidance or boundaries set, summarised by interviewee 1: `

Whilst you are out that naturally will lead you to spend time with people who come from a similar situation … you've not got those kind of boundaries and without those boundaries in place you are naturally more likely to meet people with similar lack of boundaries (I1, 54-59).

Beier's (2014:74) recent statement 'adolescents with low levels of self-control 'end up' befriending each other because of a lack of alternatives' is supported by the current study, as they similarly indicate a lack of boundaries leading to befriending. The teacher's thoughts and experiences may therefore potentially mirror other psychologists' findings, such as Gottfredson and Hirschi self-control theory.

Conversely, the teachers report that peer influence can have a positive influence on reducing the chance of offending behaviour occurring. Teachers attribute this to having a group of close friends who boost their self-esteem and take their mind off other negative influences they may be subject to, as explained by interviewee 3:

It's the kids who do have a rough deal at home but have a strong circle of friends who socialise easy, feel accepted and I think it is that acceptance and wanting to be accepted that is a real key factor (I3, 446-48).

Akers (1998) provides the notion that youths tend to imitate the behaviour of their peers whilst acquiring beliefs regarding offending behaviour that are usually reinforced by their peers. Akers theory is supported by the teachers' statements regarding peer influence, as having a circle of friends may lead the youth to adopt certain beliefs and behaviours for or against offending behaviour dependent on the situation they are in.

Teachers' Influence

Teachers articulated the influence they believe they could have on reducing a youth's offending behaviour, referring to remaining positive and to how they presented themselves to the pupils within the school, as emphasised in the following quote:

It's inspiring every young person (p) to be the best that they can be (I3, 479).

I think you can underestimate the power of (p) being a good role model for students … wanting to be an effective role model for students (I4, 189-192).

Lumpkin (2008) states that it is vital that as teachers interact with students they serve as role models of character basing judgements on moral and societal virtues.

Statements made by multiple teachers support Lumpkin as they refer to aiming to have a positive influence on the individuals.

Additionally, the teachers communicated that whilst trying to influence a youth, they are often limited in the time spent with the individuals. They suggest that a positive attitude towards helping youths counteracts the time constraints, leading to a potential positive influence on offending behaviour.

> We only have kids in school for six hours a day … it's giving them the impression or making them feel like you care about them that has the biggest impact (I2, 303-306).

Hirschi's (1969) suggestion that youths who show a strong attachment and commitment to school are less likely to engage in offending behaviour than those with weaker bonds, can be related to the statement provided by the teacher. This is because if a youth feels that they are appreciated and liked within the school, they may become more committed to school, leading them away from offending.

Theme 2: The Impact of School

This theme encompasses how the teacher's reported they can have an impact on youth offending behaviour, either individually or as a school, through communication, agency support and school management strategies.

Communication

With regards to school having a positive impact on a youths offending behaviour and reducing their risk of offending, communication has been highlighted as vital. Teachers believe communicating positive messages is vital to limiting offending behaviour, rather than telling them they are not going to succeed later in life due to the grades they receive in school based on the education systems grade requirements.

> I think it's just communicating together, exchanging information so that we can do the best we can really for every individual (I3, 344-345).

> This benchmark exists in education where you have to achieve 5 A*-C's ... yet we're turning out people who don't, therefore fail … we shouldn't be telling people at the age of 16 that they're a failure (I4, 92-94).

The concept of being positive in relation to the youths at risk of offending is not a highly researched area, with the teachers' statements indicating the need for further research to be conducted into the effect of grade requirements on offending behaviour. Research conducted previously focused on teacher judgements of the students (Fischbach et al., 2013) rather than the educational system judgments displayed in the quote. Most recently, Weaver, Moses and Snyder's (2016;179) suggest the existence of behavioural confirmation in which a 'target's behaviour becomes objectively consistent with the expectation'. This suggestion can be translated onto the teacher's statements as the target being youth and the expectation being that they fail and go onto display offending behaviour.

In connection with communication, it was mentioned that the teachers think everyone deserves the chance to be listened to and provided with support. Schools should provide communication channels to all individuals within the school, not just those at risk of offending:

> I still think it should be recognised that that child might need some support and I still think potentially, you know, being able to talk about it and to have that open communication can only support them more (I5, 453-455).

Pupils within school may sometimes just need someone to talk to as a method of battling against the risk factors present in their life as Estévez and Emler (2010) suggest that not all adolescents reach adulthood with serious behavioural problems.

Agency Support

Communication has been reported to occur with outside agencies as a method of support for the individual and the school. The school works with a number of different agencies to reduce the risk factors for offending. However communication with these agencies does not always prove beneficial and successful as voiced by the teachers. The school are therefore left to deal with issues themselves without extra support.

> Directing them to youth services or mental health services or appropriate GP's (I5, 370-371).

> Those routes are long circuitous and sometimes it takes so long that it just doesn't work (I5, 371-372).

Unlike the opinions voiced, extra support from outside agencies has been proved successful for some in previous research, with a particular mention of the Safer Schools Partnership (2009) working with potential offenders and victims within schools.

School's Management

An individualised approach to each youth within the school has been emphasised by the teachers as a tool towards the management of youth offending behaviour, leading to a range of strategies employed.

> It depends on the incident, you take every case in isolation (I1, 84).

This supports both Stone's (2010) and Matjasko's (2011) suggestions that schools deal with offending behaviour presented in school using their own range of disciplinary procedures. From the statement it can be inferred that as a school they will employ certain strategies dependent on what is presented to them.

Also uncovered by the teachers in relation to management strategies is the suggestion that some individuals fall by the way side and are unable to be helped regardless of the strategies used.

> There are some students that you will never get through to … they walk in the door in year 7, in your head you predict they will be in prison in their 20's and no matter how much input you put into them that's not going to change, that doesn't mean you don't try, 'cause you do (I2, 329-332).

Recently it has been argued that the more risk factors present in a youth's life, the higher the probability they will engage in offending behaviour (Case and Haines, 2010). So although the school is only one potential risk factor in a youth's life, there may be other factors that the teachers feel they cannot have an influence over and will subsequently result in offending occurring.

In relation to helping reduce offending behaviour, it is also reported by the teachers that they do not necessarily have the ability to provide the specific help an individual may need, leading to a suggestion as to how schools could limit this behaviour:

> When you asked me about what we did about these risk factors … school's hands are tied in that we don't have people whose job it is only… I mean that would be amazing if we had people in every school whose job it was specifically … because our job is first and foremost to get youngsters qualified to the best of their levels (I3, 495-500).

Department for Education (2013) have implemented a performance related pay in which teachers are rewarded for impacting positively on a pupils educational progress and behaviour. This implementation would therefore not be favoured as a method for investigating risk factors by the teacher quoted above, as they feel it is not in their power to impact on both progress and behaviour.

Theme 3: Perception of Crime and Other Individuals

This theme describes how the teachers think people's perception of crime and youth offending behaviour may lead youths to carry out certain behaviours. The emotions and feelings of the youth and others around them, and the impact social media has in today's society have been highlighted.

<u>Emotions and Feelings</u>

When asked to describe what antisocial behaviour is to them, the majority of teachers described it as taking into account other individuals feelings alongside societal norms and expectations, as summarised by interviewee 4:

> Any behaviour which doesn't conform to society's norms really and at the same time which others find offensive (I4, 42-44).

The responses provided align with Gaik et al.'s (2010) definition of antisocial behaviour as going against established rules and norms. Antisocial behaviour could therefore be regarded as a concept that is clearly defined to individuals working with youths at risk of offending, leading them to present a similar definition.

It also became apparent that youths who display offending behaviours are expressed as lacking in respect for themselves and most other individuals. This lack of respect was voiced in relation to teachers, authorities and agencies working with the youths.

> The students that don't respect authority or don't respect the adults that are trying to work with them are at very high risk of offending (I2, 214-215).

> I think even in year 7 you can see the youngsters that are (p) at risk even at that stage just by the way they behave with their peers (p) and the way they respond to adults as well (I3, 127-129).

These views do not support previous research, and provide new thoughts and experiences as Estévez and Emler (2010) state that the majority of studies to date have focused on adult populations rather than youths and their attitudes to authorities.

<u>Social Media's Impact</u>

The impact of social media on youth offending behaviours being displayed was interestingly mentioned by the teachers. They expressed the impact of social media in terms of both the individual at risk of offending and those individuals who stereotype young people in general.

> Social media has brought in a massive vulnerability (long pause) that will increase I think the risk of offending for some individuals (I2, 282-284).

> Probably the role of the media in terms of labelling young people (I4, 70).

Commonly it is the most extreme forms of behaviour, such as violence, used to capture the public's attention in the media (Hart, 2010), which may lead to the public regarding all youths as individuals who commit these behaviours. However, social media is currently an under researched area that focuses primarily on sex offenders and the adult population (Mercer and Perkins, 2014; Penney, 2015).
One teacher feels that there is almost no escape from the pull of social media for youths, with it having the potential to have a negative effect on youth's mental health, demonstrated in the following quote:

> Pressure it puts on young people is MASSIVE and it's really influential and the pressure to be involved in it whether you want to or not (I5, 156-157).

> Constantly to be on the social I don't think it's good for your mental health … we're seeing a MASSIVE increase in the number of students with anxiety and sort of depression (I4, 336-338).

Through a literature review, Richards, Caldwell and Go (2015) found that social media was reported to pose risks for vulnerable individuals, but that it does however also have a positive impact on some individual's health. Their findings do not discard the fact that social media can lead to depression and anxiety, and report this frequently. Through the mention of the negative impact it has on youths during the interviews, it's clear that it is a largely important factor that teachers believe has an impact on youths presenting offending behaviours. This therefore needs to be further investigated.

Specific claims that are context-specific to the teachers interviewed are presented in the current study, and can be attributed to the use of semi-structured interviews uncovering individual's views and experiences, which vary from one individual to another. If the study had been conducted at another time or point in their careers, the findings may have proved different. The views and experiences provided therefore cannot be a representation of all teachers. Similarly, the analytic interpretation was subject to a realist perspective and therefore if conducted from an alternative perspective the findings again may prove different. Although the aims of the study were met, one limitation would be that interviewees were only recruited from one secondary school situated in a rural area, leaving the findings specific to that school. If further research was conducted, teachers from inner city schools or from those situated in a high crime neighbourhood could be interviewed and a comparison could be conducted between the thoughts and experiences provided. This may provide different sets of risk factors believed to lead youth offending behaviour due to different areas being represented. The impact schools can have may also be seen to vary if a comparison was conducted. Experiences of teachers are concepts that cannot be quantified, leading all further research to employ qualitative methods enabling rich and detailed data to be captured.

Overall this study has provided an initial investigation into the previously under-researched area of teacher's perceptions of youth offending behaviour and the risk factors attributed to it. The research aims were sufficiently explored through the thematic analysis findings. Given that the impact teachers believe they can have on offending behaviour is clearly expressed, a useful foundation for continued exploration is provided. In addition to the aims explored, the research uncovered teachers' views on the impact of social media on offending, which is a notably under-researched area. It can therefore be perceived as another area needing to be investigated when conducting further research into a teacher's perspective on youth offending behaviour, but it must be appreciated that the findings provided are based on individual experiences.

Reflexive Analysis

Reflexivity has been recognised by Ahmed Dunya et al. (2011) as a crucial strategy in the process of generating knowledge in qualitative research and is the process of a continual internal dialogue and critical evaluation of the researcher's positionality (Bradbury-Jones, 2007). Parahoo (2006) define positionality as the researcher's values, preconceptions, and behaviour.

Due to conducting a PGCE from September and a natural interest into young people's behaviour and the causes of crime, the aims arose. As the current level of research on this subject is low, I was prompted to further investigate the area of interest. The formulation of the research question, collection and analysis of data, and drawing of conclusions was subject to influence due to my own personal views, experiences and a realist epistemological position. This has been taken due to there being no single reality of experiences. It was later found that my aspiration to become a teacher and positionality helped to uncover new thoughts and experiences.

A pre-existing relationship with the school in which the interviews were conducted, put both the interviewee and myself at ease and led them to feel able to answer the questions freely. Although I was aware this could also influence the answers they provided me with. Conducting a pilot interview that was later reviewed with my research supervisor, highlighted to me changes in my interview style that needed to be made in subsequent interviews. I gained confidence in my interviewing techniques, leading to the interviews becoming more conversational and my interview skills improving. Active listening was employed furthering my insight into the thoughts presented. I was however anxious that the interviewees wouldn't provide me with much information. However my anxiety was suppressed, as I uncovered a large range of themes relevant to my research aims.

It came to my attention that the interviewees provided very similar accounts of what they would describe as antisocial behaviour, leading me to wonder whether as a school they are provided with a description that they have all adopted. The themes found allowed me to conduct further research into the area of risk factors and youth offending behaviour. From what was uncovered during the analysis, I expected to find some of the thoughts due to my own knowledge with regards to the topic, but I was also presented with new ideas that I had not given any thought that occurred as a result of the interviewee's interpretations of the questions.

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