

**THE EXPERIENCES OF LEARNERS' WITH DYSLEXIA IN MOVING FROM  
SPECIAL TO MAINSTREAM EDUCATION**

By

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**Faculty of Education**

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**University of Pretoria**

**Supervisor: Dr Sarina De Jager**

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## Declaration

I declare that the dissertation, which I hereby submit for the Master's degree in Curriculum Design and Instructional Development at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

*Bradfield*

.....

Jordan Bradfield

November 2024

I hereby confirm that this dissertation is the student's own work, adheres to ethical standards, and satisfies the academic requirements for submission.

.....

Dr Sarina De Jager

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November 2024

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## **Ethics statement**

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this dissertation, has obtained the applicable research ethics approval for the research described in this work. The author declares that she has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's Code of Ethics for Researchers and the Policy Guidelines for Responsible Research.

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## Abstract

This study explored the views of adolescent learners with dyslexia who transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school in South Africa. Studies done in the South African context have focused primarily on the academic performance of learners with dyslexia who transitioned to mainstream schools. Based on my exploration of prior and recent studies, the current research does not adequately represent the views held by learners with dyslexia in additional spheres of their lives. This qualitative research study made use of an interpretative phenomenological approach, incorporating photovoice data, narrative reflections, and semi-structured interviews. The data were analysed using systematic visuo-textual and interpretive phenomenological frameworks to understand the experiences of four learners with dyslexia who had transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school. The findings indicated that the learners with dyslexia experienced feelings of isolation and being overwhelmed in the mainstream academic setting and by social situations. The learners with dyslexia used their extracurricular activities and the preparations implemented at their special school as coping mechanisms for empowerment within the context of their educational transitions. The study generated new insights into the transition of learners with dyslexia from a special school to a mainstream school. This study offers valuable insights for curricular design and highlights the need for enhanced multi-disciplinary team support to facilitate smoother transitions for learners with dyslexia, ultimately promoting better educational outcomes and childhood well-being.

**Keywords:** dyslexia, photovoice, narrative reflections, transitioning, views, South Africa

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## Table of abbreviations

ADHD	Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder
IPA	Interpretative phenomenological analysis
PHAES	Phonological Awareness Educational Software
SIAS	Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support
SMT	School management team
LSEN	Learners with Special Educational Needs
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SLD	Specific Learning Disability
SBST	School-Based Support Team

## CHAPTER 1: GENERAL ORIENTATION

In this chapter, I provide an overview of why I researched the views held by learners with dyslexia during their transition from a special school to a mainstream school in the Western Cape, South Africa. I discuss the background, rationale, and significance of the study, as well as its focus and purpose. Additionally, I outline the research questions guiding the study and clarify the vital theoretical concepts. Finally, I state the limitations of my research.

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Dyslexia is a common learning disorder that hinders the ability of many learners to learn (Ugwuanyi, Okeke & Gama, 2020). It also prevents a person from developing the capabilities necessary to read appropriately (Snowling et al., 2019), making it challenging for learners to decode and spell (Snowling et al., 2019). Learners with dyslexia are slow to learn to decode words and struggle to formulate generalisations (Snowling et al., 2019). Cognitively, learners with dyslexia have a problem caused by the level of phonological representation (Snowling et al., 2019). Special schools for learners with dyslexia have historically been a popular choice since they provide specialised instruction and support to satisfy these learners' unique educational requirements (Reid, 2012).

According to Karimupfumbi and Dwarika (2022), all learners should have equitable access to learning opportunities. The principle of inclusion is the cornerstone of South Africa's screening, identification, assessment, and support (SIAS) policy (Department of Basic Education, 2014). The SIAS approach seeks to establish standardised procedures for identifying and assisting learners (Department of Basic Education, 2014). This policy aims to minimise learning gaps while offering learners adequate support so that all learners have equal access to education (Karimupfumbi & Dwarika, 2022). As a teacher of SIAS, I find it essential to promote the inclusion of all learners, including those with dyslexia, by acknowledging and supporting their diverse needs (Department of Basic Education, 2014). Through SIAS, the diversity of learning needs must be accommodated to facilitate learners' achievements to the fullest (Department of Basic Education, 2014). However, according to a recent study done at a primary school in Gauteng, South Africa, teachers experienced limited success when implementing the SIAS tool as a result of using inappropriate strategies, having inadequate

support resources, and dealing with the impairments of learners with dyslexia. The teachers thus required further professional development (Karimupfumbi & Dwarika, 2022).

However, a growing tendency has been to incorporate learners with dyslexia into mainstream educational environments. This change relies on the belief that appropriate inclusive education can help differently abled children reach their full potential in academic performance, socialisation, and self-esteem (Mather, White & Youman, 2020).

Despite the potential benefits, transitioning from a special school to a mainstream school can be challenging for learners with dyslexia. Learners may struggle to adapt to the new academic and social expectations of the mainstream classroom and may experience feelings of isolation, anxiety, and low self-esteem (Wilmot et al., 2023). Emotional difficulties among learners with dyslexia, such as anxiety, are more likely to arise as a secondary consequence of reading difficulties (Wilmot et al., 2023). In addition, teachers in mainstream schools may have limited training and resources to effectively support learners with dyslexia (Pettigrew, Vaughan & Roberts, 2013). According to a study on teacher perspectives in Austin, Texas, in the United States of America, the teachers acknowledged that procedures for intervention were similarly opaque. Although the teachers were eager to support their learners with dyslexia, they received no training (Worthy et al., 2016).

Given these difficulties, we must attempt to understand the views of adolescent learners with dyslexia who have transferred from special schools to mainstream schools. By exploring these views with a group of participants, I aimed to gain deeper insights that could directly contribute to creating smoother transitions for learners with dyslexia and identify the potential obstacles they face, ultimately guiding more effective support strategies. The insights obtained could contribute to forming practical support systems that enable learners with dyslexia to succeed in mainstream educational environments.

## **1.2 RATIONALE AND MOTIVATION**

The motivation for undertaking this research focused primarily on the experiences of four learners with dyslexia who transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school. The research was founded both in my professional and personal life.

### 1.2.1 Personal rationale

As a qualitative scholar interested in the views of learners with dyslexia, I believe that exploring the views of learners with dyslexia who transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school was crucial. By establishing an in-depth understanding of these viewpoints and experiences, I believe this study could contribute to informing the literature by exploring the personal experiences of learners with dyslexia. The topic expands the current literature. The data from this study were compared to current studies in the field. I found a formidable gap in the literature regarding South African learners with dyslexia who had transitioned or were transitioning from special schools to mainstream schools, with the current research focusing primarily on a study by Leseyane et al. (2018) in North West, a province of South Africa.

From my experience as a tutor in general, learners with dyslexia tend to face higher levels of stress than their peers due to the pressure they feel to perform academically. Learners with dyslexia primarily show symptoms that can hamper their performance, such as poor spelling, difficulty reading, fluency in writing, and difficulty with comprehension (Worthy et al., 2016). Adding to these challenges, teachers express frustration, arguing that the limited time frames make it impossible for them to offer the individualised support that these learners desperately need, which in turn leads to heightened stress levels for both the learners and the educators (Karimupfumbi & Dwarika, 2022).

Through my experience, I directly confront the profound struggles that learners with dyslexia endure when they transition from the familiar comfort of a special school to the often-intimidating environment of mainstream education. These learners grapple not just with academic hurdles but also with deep-seated emotional turmoil – feelings of isolation, crushing anxiety, and diminished self-worth. I have been struck by how ill-equipped many mainstream teachers are, often lacking the necessary training and resources to truly support these vulnerable learners, leaving them feeling misunderstood and overlooked.

Driven by a deeply personal and professional calling, I embarked on this research journey to give voice to the experiences of learners with dyslexia who are often marginalised in mainstream educational settings. My heart aches for these learners, who face a constant battle with an education system that does not fully understand their needs. I felt compelled to fill the

glaring gap in the literature, particularly for South African learners, and to shine a light on their unique challenges. This research was my way of advocating for them, hoping to influence policy and practice so that educators, policymakers, and school leaders might better understand, support, and empower learners with dyslexia on their educational journeys. I believed that researching learners with dyslexia and exploring their views on transitioning to mainstream schools could aid policymakers, teachers, tutors, and heads of schools in developing sensible and informed practices and regulations in order for instructors to better deal with learners with dyslexia in their classrooms.

Hence, to establish an in-depth and conscientious understanding, I used an exploratory phenomenological research design combined with the research methodology of photovoice and the theoretical framework of social identity theory.

### **1.2.2 Professional rationale**

I have worked for more than eight years as an educator with learners with dyslexia who have transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school. During that time, I noted the dramatic effect that transitioning could potentially have on the life of a learner with dyslexia. I, therefore, founded a tutoring company in George, in the Western Cape, where my employees and I assist mainstream and home-schooled learners academically. After working with these learners for more than eight years, I noticed that when they transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school, they faced a range of challenges academically, socially, and emotionally.

I noticed the benefit of assistance to their confidence and its impact on their performance. According to research, learners who have dyslexia need a learning atmosphere that primarily allows them to feel at ease and grow in confidence and self-esteem (Worthy et al., 2016). This study sought to understand and propose an effective learning environment for learners with dyslexia by directly exploring their perspectives on transitioning between schools.

### **1.3 FOCUS AND PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH**

This qualitative study aimed to explore the views held by learners with dyslexia in their transition from a special school to a mainstream school in the Western Cape, South Africa.

This study adopted a phenomenological research design that used photovoice and semi-structured interviews as data collaboration techniques to explore this topic. Data collaboration techniques refer entails working together on data analysis and interpretation, instead of gathering data.

Research has shown a formidable gap in the literature regarding South African learners with dyslexia who transition from special schools to mainstream schools. The research has focused primarily on the study by Leseyane et al. (2018) in the province of North-West. In that study, the mainstream school environment made the learners with dyslexia feel different from their peers. However, understanding the views of these learners in greater detail could potentially aid the development of effective support systems to help learners with dyslexia thrive in mainstream education settings. Therefore, in this study, I opted to explore the views of learners with dyslexia, using photovoice as a form of data construction, to explore their views on their transition from a special school to a mainstream school in the Western Cape, South Africa.

#### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following research questions guided the construction of information on the research topic.

##### **Primary research question**

What are the views of learners with dyslexia in transitioning from special schools to mainstream schools?

##### **Secondary research question**

What are the parents' perspectives on their children with dyslexia transitioning from special schools to mainstream schools?

#### **1.5 KEY THEORETICAL CONCEPTS**

This study discusses the key concepts of inclusive education, dyslexia, special schools, mainstream schools, and their transition between schools and will continue to explore them in greater detail.

### **1.5.1 Inclusive education**

Inclusive education is an approach in which all learners are treated equally, with specific strategies in place to support their diverse learning needs and environments (Moriña, 2017).

Inclusive education deems it essential to develop educational procedures and regulations that can accommodate the diversity of learners in the area (Hardy, 2015). This scenario requires that teachers support all children who are subjected to the pressure of being excluded from learning and participation and for the teachers to create an inclusive workplace (Hardy, 2015). Inclusion in education focuses on facilitating active involvement and participation while focusing on the learners (Messiou, 2017). The primary objective of an inclusive educational system is to ensure that every learner, regardless of age, has access to valuable, high-quality educational opportunities (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012).

### **1.5.2 Learners with dyslexia**

Dyslexia, a common learning disorder, impedes learners' learning ability (Snowling et al., 2019; Ugwuanyi, Okeke & Gama, 2020) and hinders the development of proper reading ability, making spelling challenging (Snowling et al., 2019). Furthermore, learners with dyslexia struggle with word decoding and generalisation, often due to phonological representation difficulties (Snowling et al., 2019). Historically, special schools have been a popular choice for learners with dyslexia, offering specialised instruction and support tailored to their unique educational requirements (Reid, 2012).

As extensive research shows, all learners should have equal learning opportunities (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012). However, dyslexia interfere with developing essential reading skills, making reading difficult (Leseayne et al., 2018). Dyslexia also impacts learners' time management and organisational skills (Leseayne et al., 2018), further leading to spelling, writing, and reading difficulties that affect their academic performance.

### **1.5.3 Special schools**

Special schools are designed to meet the unique educational needs of learners with disabilities or special needs by offering individualised instruction tailored to each student's abilities and requirements (Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020). Special education schools frequently have experience working with specific disabilities, such as learners with dyslexia or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), enabling them to offer specialised and efficient support (Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020). Special schools often foster a caring community of educators, additional personnel, and families who are mindful of the needs of learners with disabilities (Gonida & Cortina, 2014).

### **1.5.4 Mainstream schools**

Mainstream schools follow preventative and proactive methods and cover all the support provisions in general departmental programme policies, school budgets, and the norms and standards for mainstream schools (Department of Basic Education, 2014). However, mainstream schools provide the lowest level of support to learners who experience barriers to learning (Department of Basic Education, 2014). These low levels of support aim to prevent future problems with policies, budgets, and the overall norms and standards of the school (Department of Basic Education, 2014).

### **1.5.5 Transitioning schools**

The process of transitioning between educational institutions necessitates adjustment to novel academic and social contexts, a task that can pose significant difficulties for individuals with dyslexia (Lithari, 2023; Yeager et al., 2016;). Learners may encounter adverse emotions in settings prioritising excellence and perceiving transitioning as more intimidating (Lithari, 2023).

Research suggests that individuals with lower academic aptitude and self-confidence may have more significant difficulties when transitioning to mainstream schools, underscoring the significance of support systems (Lithari, 2023). Moving from special schools to mainstream settings can provide significant challenges, resulting in seclusion, unease, and diminished self-worth (Wilmot et al., 2023). The issues are further exacerbated by the limited training and resources available to teachers (Pettigrew, Vaughan & Roberts, 2013; Worthy et al., 2016).

Dyslexic learners encounter difficulties transitioning to mainstream schools, such as needing to acclimate to an unfamiliar language, navigating unfamiliar surroundings, and managing heightened academic expectations (Eccles, Lord & Buchanan, 2018). Many learners with dyslexia are drawn to the nurturing ambience of specialised schools' rather than the possibly antagonistic setting of mainstream schools (Leseayne et al., 2018).

### **1.5.6 Adolescent learner views**

Adolescence is a critical developmental phase characterized by significant cognitive, social, and emotional changes that influence how learners navigate educational transitions (Sawyer et al., 2018). During this stage, adolescents develop greater independence, refine their identity, and establish social relationships, all of which impact their ability to adapt to new academic environments (Steinberg, 2017). The transition from a special school to a mainstream school presents additional challenges for learners with dyslexia, as they must manage increased academic demands alongside their evolving self-concept and peer interactions (Eccles & Roeser, 2011). Feelings of being overwhelmed, as reported by participants in this study, align with the heightened emotional sensitivity and cognitive restructuring that characterize adolescence (Blakemore, 2018). Understanding these experiences within the context of adolescent development underscores the importance of targeted support strategies that not only address academic needs but also promote emotional resilience and social integration during this formative period.

## **1.6 VALUE OF THE RESEARCH**

In this scenario, I, aimed to uphold specific values in my study, including ensuring the inclusivity of diverse perspectives, enhancing understanding of the challenges faced by individuals with dyslexia during educational transitions, and attempting to contribute to the development of effective support systems to improve their educational experiences.

### **1.6.1 Academic**

This research aimed to contribute to the body of knowledge, explicitly addressing the gap in academic research on exploring the views of learners with dyslexia who were transitioning or had transitioned between schools. I endeavoured to fill this gap by exploring the perspectives of learners with dyslexia who had transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school.

## **1.6.2 Special needs education**

There was a general lack of understanding of the support required from teachers to show support to learners with dyslexia in their transition from a special school to a mainstream school. These learners could feel overwhelmed, isolated, and hostile. By studying the views of learners with dyslexia who had transitioned schools, this research could potentially assist school teachers, parents, and policymakers in developing sensible and informed regulations for instructors to best deal with learners with dyslexia who have transitioned into their classrooms.

## **1.7 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

This study only focused on eight participants: four adolescent learners with dyslexia and one of each of their parents. This case study was explicitly for learners with dyslexia and took place with learners who transitioned from the same special school to a mainstream school in George in the Western Cape, South Africa. Therefore, the findings of this study cannot be generalised to other schools. The learners who participated in this study were all adolescents between the ages of 14 and 16 years. There were two boys and two girls. This research investigated the views of the learners with dyslexia who transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school in April 2024.

## **1.8 INSIDER RESEARCHER**

As a researcher who is an insider, I actively participated in and observed the qualitative research study. My unique position at the study site allowed me to engage professionally with the participants. This pre-existing affiliation with the research site fostered greater trust from the participants, leading to more open discussions about their views on transitioning schools (Ross, 2017).

Having a pre-existing relationship with the participants for four years also allowed for a rapport to be established more quickly, providing me with the opportunity to generate rich data promptly (Aburn, Gott & Hoare, 2022). This role allowed me to gain a distinctive and insightful perspective on the research subject. As a researcher, I developed a profound comprehension of the research topic through my interactions with the participants and close observation of their behaviour.

Throughout the study, I remained conscious of the potential biases that could affect my interpretation of the data. This awareness guided my commitment to upholding ethical standards and maintaining trustworthiness in the study.

## **1.9 RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN**

A qualitative research approach was employed for this study to acquire rich, in-depth data on the complex topic of learners with dyslexia. I opted for this research approach as it was best suited to understand the phenomenon from the participants' views, understanding how they felt, thought, and experienced the transition to another school.

A phenomenological research design was employed for this study. Phenomenological research aims to understand the essence of the individuals' lived experience of the phenomenon while ascertaining and defining the phenomenon (Yüksel & Yıldırım, 2015). This research study aimed to understand the views of the learners with dyslexia who transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school. My research focused on the subjective experiences of learners with dyslexia, using a phenomenological research design to capture their perspectives.

## **1.10 POPULATION AND SAMPLING**

The target population refers to a specific group of individuals, the participants, whom the research aims to study and draw insights from. It defines the scope and boundaries of the study by identifying those who are relevant to the research questions. On the other hand, the sampling method is the systematic approach used to select a representative subset from this target population, ensuring that the sample accurately reflects the broader group while facilitating practical and effective data collection.

### **1.10.1 Target population**

The target population of this study were adolescent learners with dyslexia between the ages of 14 and 16 years who had transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school. The learners had to be based in George, South Africa, and the sample consisted of both boys and girls.

### 1.10.2 Sampling

For this study, I employed convenience sampling, which involved selecting participants based on their accessibility to me and willingness to participate in the study. This group of adolescent learners had all been diagnosed with dyslexia, had transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school, and were aged between 14 to 16 years. Each of the learners was based in George, South Africa. I selected the learners with dyslexia who were most likely to provide valuable insights into the research questions. The participants for this study were conveniently learners attending my tutoring centre, making them accessible.

### 1.11 DATA CONSTRUCTION

Data for the research were obtained from photovoice data construction, narrative reflections, semi-structured interviews, and observations from field notes.

Table 1.1: Outline of the data construction

Data Construction	Participant Group
Photovoice Data (image)	Each Learner with Dyslexia (Four Learners)
Narrative Reflection (a short brief with each image chosen, commenting on the image)	Each Learner with Dyslexia (Four Learners)
Semi-structured Interview	Each Parent of Learner with Dyslexia (Four Mothers)
Observations	Each Parent of Learner with Dyslexia (Four Mothers)

#### 1.11.1 Photovoice data construction

The photovoice method, also referred to as participant photography (Murray & Nash, 2017), is a visual approach in which research participants are encouraged to use images to visually document their social surroundings (Call-Cummings et al., 2019). Participants construct personal narratives by reflecting on their images, frequently through an unstructured chat or a structured photo-elicitation interview (Call-Cummings et al., 2019). Visual data collection may enable the researcher to access complex information that may not be as easy to gather through

other forms of data collection, such as questionnaires (Call-Cummings et al., 2019). Participation refers to people's engagement in a democratic knowledge production process in photovoice (Liebenberg, 2018).

The four participants each submitted five images representing their views on transitioning from a mainstream school to a special school. The participants used their own mobile cell phones to take these five photographs. Using photovoice allowed the participants to transcend language and literacy barriers to convey complex concepts and evoke emotion (Liebenberg, 2018).

### **1.11.2 Narrative reflections**

The photovoice initiative entailed participants capturing images that served as visual representations of their transition into mainstream education. After the photovoice procedure, the participants were requested to provide audio narrations expressing their viewpoints on the obtained images. The narrations were recorded in audio format to enhance accessibility for those with dyslexia. Throughout the audio narration, the participants were prompted to comment to themselves using two or three sentences regarding the emotions and thoughts evoked by the images, the challenges or triumphs they faced in the depicted situation, and any additional details or context that might provide a richer understanding of their experience.

### **1.11.3 Semi-structured interviews**

The semi-structured, face-to-face individual interviews were held with four participants, a parent, mother, of each learner with dyslexia in the study. The interviews were scheduled by mutual agreement between me and the parent, including the location, day, and time. The learners were not present during the semi-structured interviews with me and the mother. This allowed me to gain access to confidential knowledge and deeper insights, providing an opportunity for the mother of each participating learner to elaborate on their child's experience when they transitioned schools, to verify their interpretations, and to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon.

### **1.11.4 Observations**

Observations were extracted from the field notes recorded during data collection. The field notes assisted me in capturing the data, which included body language, arrival and departure

times, and the overall atmosphere of the semi-structured interviews with the mothers only. I used field notes to capture the participants' behaviours, thoughts, feelings, and interactions.

## **1.12 DATA ANALYSIS**

The data analysis consisted of a three-step process, where the focus was placed on interpreting the participants' reflections on their submitted images and the semi-structured interview transcripts.

### **1.12.1 Interpretation of data**

I interpreted the participants' visual data photographs before completing the semi-structured interviews with a parent of each of the learners, without their children being present. In the interpretation of the data, there were visual images and analysis collected from the participants in the research. I analysed the images in detail using a systematic visuo-textual analysis framework. Brown and Collins (2021) note that researchers who conduct photovoice studies often exclude the analysis of pictures as sources of meaning and experience because existing frameworks overly emphasise translating images into words. Visual data, however, offers a rich apprehension of individuals' diverse experiences and shows the embodied nature of these experiences (Brown & Collins, 2021).

In addition, connotation and denotation were completed as a part of the visual analysis of the construction of the images from the participants in the research study. The literal meaning of the word denotation is what is visually seen in the image; connotation, on the other hand, is an idea suggested by or associated with an image expressing emotions (Rao, 2017).

Following this, a semi-structured interview was conducted with the parent of each participant without the learner being present. Collaboration between the researcher and participants was emphasised, and the images were treated with a cautious and subjective approach in the interpretation of the data.

### **1.12.2 Cross-comparison of participant and research interpretations**

After completing the semi-structured interviews with the parent of each learner with dyslexia, I transcribed the discussions to understand the data comprehensively. Cross-comparisons were

then made between the sources from the participants, including (1) images, (2) narrative reflections, and (3) interview transcripts from parents, to enhance the data's validity and credibility further. Lastly, participant feedback was sought to validate my interpretations.

### **1.12.3 Thematic analysis**

Thematic analysis allowed for the identification, analysis, and interpretation of patterns of meaning within the qualitative data constructed (Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015). Thematic analysis was employed to uncover patterns and meanings within the data collected from the photographs and semi-structured interviews with the parents of the learners with dyslexia in the study. I used the visuo-textual systematic coding method facilitated by Microsoft Word, Excel and Notes, which aided me in organising and managing the data efficiently, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of themes and patterns.

## **1.13 METHODS TAKEN TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS**

Trustworthiness was established by building a degree of confidence in the data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality of this qualitative research study.

### **1.13.1 Credibility**

My degree of certainty regarding the accuracy of the research findings is identified as credibility (Maree, 2016). I employed multiple data sources, including photographs, images taken from the internet, and interviews, to enhance the credibility of the findings. Crystallisation of data was also used to strengthen the validity of the interpretations (Maree, 2016).

### **1.13.2 Dependability**

Dependability is stability in the findings, which can occur over time (Anney, 2014). Dependability was ensured in this study by the data supporting the conclusions and interpretations obtained as part of the study (Anney, 2014). This added consistency to the results, with in-depth data construction analysis upholding honesty.

### **1.13.3 Member reflections**

In this study, I also used member reflections when the participants were provided with an opportunity to review and verify the accuracy of the information gathered. This was offered to the learners with dyslexia after they gave me, their images for my data construction. This allowed the participants to clarify any misconceptions or misunderstandings in the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### **1.13.4 Trustworthiness**

In this research study, trustworthiness was enhanced through the approach of trustworthiness outlined by Tracy (2010) in the criterion model for qualitative research. The practices implemented in this research study were:

- (a) Worthy topic: This study focused on the views of learners with dyslexia transitioning from special schools to mainstream schools, which is a significant and relevant topic in education.
- (b) Rich rigour: Rigorous research methods, such as photovoice being used with each learner with dyslexia and semi-structured interviews with a parent of each learner with dyslexia, were employed to gather comprehensive data from multiple perspectives.
- (c) Sincerity: I maintained an authentic and genuine approach throughout the study, valuing the participants' voices and views.
- (d) Resonance: The research findings resonated with the views of learners with dyslexia and their parents, capturing their views and providing insights into their transition process.
- (e) Significant contribution: The study contributed to the existing knowledge by shedding light on the views of learners with dyslexia during their transition from a special school to a mainstream school, highlighting the challenges and opportunities they encountered.
- (f) Meaningful coherence: The research findings were analysed and presented coherently and meaningfully, aligning with the research objectives and addressing the research questions. The interpretations were supported by the participants' voices and rich data.

## **1.14 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

In this research study, the key ethical considerations applied included confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation, and informed consent of all the participants. The participants, the adolescent learners, and their parents provided informed consent and willingness to participate in the study. They were free to participate in the research and leave at any time.

When conducting the research, data protection was considered to ensure that the participant's personal information was kept private and that their data were secured. The study adhered to ethical considerations, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation of the participants. The research process also prioritised the well-being and dignity of all participants.

## **1.15 RESEARCH STRUCTURE AND OVERVIEW**

The research overview provides a summary of the research conducted on the topic. It provides an overview of the chapters covered in the study. The overview also addresses the research aims and questions and outlines how the study was structured. The chapters are outlined as follows:

### **Chapter 1: General Orientation**

The first chapter of this research report has discussed the study's topic, rationale, and research questions. The purpose of the study, a brief discussion of methodology, and clarification of concepts in terms of how they were used in the study were provided. This chapter also set out the aims and questions that were addressed in the research.

### **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The second chapter provides an overview of the research field, including a review of the relevant literature on learners with dyslexia, special schools, and mainstream schools. The theoretical framework underpinning is social identity theory. This study also discusses and links to the literature deemed suitable for this study.

### Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter discusses the research paradigm, design, and methodology used in this study, including a description of the data sources and how they were analysed. Sampling, data generation, analysis, credibility, ethical issues, and limitations are all investigated.

### Chapter 4: Analysis of Data Set 1

The fourth chapter presents the research results and discusses the data findings of the study. The data are presented clearly and concisely. The study's findings were significant and provide new insights into the topic under investigation.

### Chapter 5: Analysis of Data Set 2

The fifth chapter presented the research results and discussed the data findings of the study. The data were presented clearly and concisely. The study's findings were significant and provided new insights into the topic under investigation.

### Chapter 6: Findings of Data Set 1 and 2

The sixth chapter discusses the findings found in Data Sets 1 and 2. The results are organised into central themes corresponding to the theoretical framework, the literature review, and new literature. The chapter concludes by considering what the findings mean for practice in the field.

### Chapter 7: Recommendations, Summary of the Study, and Conclusions

The seventh chapter includes a summary of the study, its limitations, and its conclusions. Additionally, this chapter informs the reader of the discoveries during the research and relates them to the aims and research questions on which the findings and recommendations were based.

## 1.16 CONCLUSION

Chapter 1 of this dissertation discussed the introduction to the research project and gave an overview of the study. It outlined the research questions, the purpose of the study, and the

research rationale. A detailed description of learners with dyslexia, special schools, mainstream schools, and transitioning schools was provided. The next chapter, Chapter 2, reviews the relevant available literature and theoretical framework related to the study's topic.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, I explore the literature surrounding the transition of learners with dyslexia from special schools to mainstream schools. I provide an overview of what constitutes a literature review, its purpose, and how I conducted it. Through an extensive examination, I investigated the perspectives of learners with dyslexia, the dynamics within special and mainstream schools, and the role of support systems and resources in facilitating the transition process. These discussions helped me to understand how these factors influenced the transition experience of learners with dyslexia. Finally, I identify the gap related to the study and present a conclusion.

### **2.2 CONDUCTING AND PRESENTING A LITERATURE REVIEW**

A literature review is an objective, thorough summary and critical analysis of the literature on a research topic (Hart, 2018). I acknowledge that the literature review serves as a foundation for existing knowledge. Bryman, Bell and Harley (2019) assert that each research endeavour requires the researcher to thoroughly examine pertinent ideas and discussions in their selected field of interest. My primary objective in the literature review was to discern and structure concepts, assess the availability or scarcity of resources, and pinpoint knowledge gaps that would substantiate the need for the study (Bui, 2009). I leveraged the literature review to construct a rationale for the significance of my research and to position it within a specified research domain (Bryman et al., 2019).

The literature review served as a mechanism for validating my credibility by demonstrating my expertise in this chosen field (Bryman et al., 2019). By conducting the literature review, I was able to contribute to defining the boundaries of the research problem, explore new avenues of inquiry, and avoid unproductive approaches. Additionally, I obtained methodological insights and identified suggestions for future research (Randolph, 2019). A common error in literature reviews is the uncritical acceptance of another researcher's findings and interpretations as valid. To avoid this, I critically evaluated all facets of the research design and analysis (Randolph, 2019). I treated the authors' arguments fairly by subjecting them to reasoned analysis before offering critiques. A critical yet constructive approach was adopted.

For my study, I conducted a narrative literature review, aligning with the interpretative paradigm. A narrative review was ideal for the interpretative paradigm because it focused on comprehending and interpreting subjective experiences, meanings, and contexts. Through this approach to the literature review, I captured and provided an understanding of a specific subject (Bryman et al., 2019). A narrative review allowed me to explore the perspectives and subjective interpretations of the literature while acknowledging the subjectivity inherent in human experiences. My goal was to understand the subjective experiences of the participants (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020).

The interpretative paradigm is associated with the belief that multiple realities exist, each with its own subjective perception (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020), which guided my understanding of the views of the learners with dyslexia who transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school. Therefore, I focused on capturing the unique views of these learners.

In my literature review, I employed strategies across relevant search engines and electronic databases such as Google Scholar and Refseek. I applied a specific timeframe for article inclusion, favouring works published within the last eight years. The literature review followed themes outlined in the introduction, namely, the views of learners with dyslexia, the perspectives of special and mainstream schools, and the views on transitioning with the assistance of support systems and resources. These themes were carefully broken down into sub-themes that I chose after thorough reading and analysis.

## **2.3 THE VIEWS OF LEARNERS WITH DYSLEXIA**

### **2.3.1 An introduction to inclusive education**

Inclusive education is recognised as a fundamental human right and is considered the cornerstone of a just and equal society (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2013). In education, individual differences have been recognised as a source of learning diversity rather than a hindrance. Various educational approaches have been developed to help all learners equally, considering the extensive range of unique demands (Armstrong, 2007).

Learning support, like inclusive education, involves teachers' tools and methods to assist learners physically, emotionally, socially, and intellectually in their learning process (Stubbs, 2008). Recent trends indicate a shift towards integrating learners with dyslexia into mainstream educational settings, as highlighted by Mather, White and Youman (2020). This shift is based on the belief that effective inclusive education can help differently abled children reach their full potential academically, socially, and in terms of self-esteem (Mather, White & Youman, 2020).

It has been extensively examined that all learners should have equitable access to learning opportunities. The principle of inclusion serves as the cornerstone of the Screening, Identification, Assessment, and Support (SIAS) policy (Department of Basic Education, 2014). The SIAS policy aims to minimise gaps while offering learners adequate support so that all learners have equal access to education (Karimupfumbi & Dwarika, 2022). According to the SIAS policy, it is essential to promote the inclusion of all learners, including those with dyslexia, by addressing their unique needs (Department of Basic Education, 2014). The diversity of learning needs must be accommodated to facilitate learners' achievement to the fullest (Department of Basic Education, 2014). However, according to a recent study, teachers have experienced limited success through inappropriate strategies, inadequate support resources, and comorbidities with learners with dyslexia in implementing the SIAS tool, and they require further professional development (Karimupfumbi & Dwarika, 2022).

It is essential to develop educational procedures and regulations that can accommodate the diversity of learners (Hardy, 2015). This requires teachers to support all children subject to the pressure of exclusion in their learning and participation. To create an inclusive workplace, policies must improve schools for staff (Hardy, 2015). For inclusive education to succeed, diversity must be seen as a valuable resource rather than a challenge (Mahoney et al., 2021). Fostering inclusive policies that are more systematic and supportive is essential for promoting genuine inclusive educational practices (Hardy, 2015). These inclusive policies support and strengthen educators' capacities to develop an inclusive culture that fosters connection to improve student development (Mahoney et al., 2021). However, a lack of attention to inclusion issues in policy settings reveals how certain conditions have influenced policy production processes (Hardy, 2015).

Inclusion in education is focused on facilitating active involvement and participation while focusing on the learners (Messiou, 2017). Inclusion combines the concepts of presence, participation, and achievement to build up learner performance (Messiou, 2017). By providing all pupils with a high-quality educational experience and expanding the procedures that result in full participation, the main goal of inclusive education can be achieved (Moriña, 2017).

Inclusive education includes the learner's home, community, non-formal learning environments, informal learning environments, and official schooling (Stubbs, 2008). Additionally, it recognises that children, despite their learning challenges, can learn (Stubbs, 2008). No matter their backgrounds or abilities, it enables educational structures, processes, and methodologies to suit the needs of every child (Stubbs, 2008). Regarding enhancing involvement for all learners, developing systems that value every person equally while fostering fairness, compassion, human rights, and respect is a primary concern of inclusive education (Kefallinou et al., 2020). Age, gender, ethnicity, language, and other diversity among children are all recognised and respected in inclusive education (Stubbs, 2008). The primary objective of inclusive educational systems is to ensure that every learner, regardless of age, has access to valuable, high-quality educational opportunities (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2013).

According to Stubbs (2008), regulations in inclusive education can create challenges for learners with academic disabilities such as dyslexia to be included. Specific laws prevent children with disabilities from attending regular schools, which is discriminatory. Additionally, some resource-reliant policies only include learners who have access to resources (Stubbs, 2008). A recurring theme is that policies that concentrate on a particular group of learners often result in exclusion rather than ones that focus on the system (Stubbs, 2008). Educational exclusion entails not being recognised as a learner within the school, not being listened to, being neglected or ignored, and feeling distant from educational practices (Tarabini, Jacovkis & Montes, 2018).

To overcome obstacles in inclusive education, management that concentrates on tracking success and collaborations between learners, teachers, and parents has been found to be beneficial (Messiou, 2017).

### 2.3.2 An introduction to dyslexia

Dyslexia is a common learning disorder that hinders the ability of many learners to learn (Ugwuanyi, Okeke & Gama, 2020) and it prevents individuals from developing the capabilities necessary to read correctly (Snowling et al., 2019). At its core, dyslexia makes it challenging for learners to decode words and spell (Leseayne et al., 2018), and they also struggle to formulate generalisations (Snowling et al., 2019). Due to learners with dyslexia having a cognitive problem caused by the level of phonological representation (Snowling et al., 2019), their academic performance is affected by inadequacies in spelling, writing, and reading (Leseayne et al., 2018). Dyslexia, a prevalent cognitive impairment, presents substantial obstacles for several learners, specifically in the acquisition of reading skills (Snowling et al., 2019; Ugwuanyi, Okeke & Gama, 2020).

Learners with dyslexia in an educational context are exposed to different types of schools. Historically, special schools have been widely favoured for individuals with dyslexia due to their provision of specialised instruction and support specifically designed to cater to their distinct educational requirements (Reid, 2012). Nevertheless, these individuals encounter increased vulnerabilities in emotional, social, academic, and occupational domains, experiencing difficulties in reading, acquiring knowledge, maintaining focus, and executive functioning (Livingston, Siegel & Ribary, 2018).

Although individuals with dyslexia receive support, they face heightened risks of experiencing adverse outcomes across emotional, social, educational, and occupational spheres (Livingston et al., 2018). As outlined by Livingston, they often struggle with reading, encounter challenges in the learning process, and find it difficult to sustain attention (Livingston et al., 2018). Various challenges affect individuals with dyslexia influencing their processing speed, memory functioning, and visual processing, as recognised by Locke et al. (2015). Specifically, a diagnosis of dyslexia often involves difficulties in word retrieval, linguistic recalling, spatial awareness, and sequencing skills (Locke et al., 2015).

Although there have been significant studies on the effects of dyslexia on learners, there remains a noticeable absence of thorough examination in comprehending the fundamental mechanisms and successful interventions. Further research is required to delve into the intricate

dynamics of cognitive, social, and environmental elements in influencing the educational experiences of individuals with dyslexia. Moreover, the implementation of more lucid transitions between concepts and a cohesive framework might augment the comprehensibility and inclusivity of discussions pertaining to dyslexia in educational settings.

### **2.3.3 Learners with dyslexia in an educational context**

Learners with dyslexia do not always have access to qualified teachers for instruction (Knight, 2018). As they have a lot of classroom experience, teachers frequently assume they are well-equipped to work with all sorts of learners. However, they do not always have sufficient training in inclusive education to support learners' academic success (Adewumi & Mosito, 2019). Teachers in South Africa can be faced with a lack of parental participation, heavy workloads, inadequate training, multi-grade challenges, or a lack of resources, which makes inclusive education challenging (Adewumi & Mosito, 2019). Teachers typically do not understand dyslexia, leading them to categorise learners into generalised groups (Knight, 2018).

When training learners in the intermediate phase, dyslexic learners should not be portrayed negatively. If this occurs, it might have an immediate detrimental effect on their mental ability, resulting in loneliness, antisocial behaviour, being mocked by classmates, and possibly even depression (Macdonald, 2009). Teachers need to be well-versed in dyslexia and know how to communicate with learners who have dyslexia in a classroom setting. Teachers who have received training on dyslexia and how to engage with and evaluate dyslexic learners can make a significant difference in how well they perform (Macdonald, 2009). However, teachers frequently lack the knowledge and skills essential to understand dyslexia, and this lack of recognition leads to a continual failure to address learners' issues and a lack of help in general (Chitsa & Mpofu, 2016).

Teachers must exercise patience with learners with dyslexia. To assist their pupils with this, teachers must have access to training, support, tools, and knowledge; otherwise, they will feel helpless (Jing & Chen, 2017). Instructional training and assistance enable teachers to advance their abilities to promote the learning potential of their learners (Jing & Chen, 2017). There is a variety of assistive technology software explicitly designed to assist learners with dyslexia

that teachers can be trained to use (Lerga, Candrljic & Jakupovic, 2021). The software is directed towards enhancing reading and writing skills, such as Phonological Awareness Educational Software (PHAES), which presents a hypermedia application for helping dyslexic readers (Lerga et al., 2021).

According to Smith and Hattingh (2020), the use of assistive technology tools, such as text-to-speech and word prediction software, in regular classroom settings has the potential to augment the level of engagement and academic achievement among learners with dyslexia. Smith and Hattingh (2020) assert that this technology serves the dual purpose of facilitating learning and enhancing pupils' self-assurance, thus alleviating the impact of dyslexia on their scholastic advancement.

When identifying barriers preventing learners with dyslexia from obtaining support, creative approaches can be found to incorporate learning materials into the classroom to aid learners with dyslexia in improving their academic comprehension (Udeagbala et al., 2020). By successfully integrating and employing various instructional methods, the knowledge of academic learning areas of learners with dyslexia can be increased (Udeagbala et al., 2020). Programmes can assist educators in better understanding dyslexia, how to engage with learners with dyslexia in the classroom, and, with classroom modifications that educators can implement, help learners with dyslexia to achieve academic success (Chitsa & Mpofu, 2016).

A barrier that prevents learners with dyslexia from obtaining support is having classrooms with many classmates (Chitsa & Mpofu, 2016). By avoiding large classes, teachers are better able to support learners with dyslexia, and this also allows learners more opportunities to study and grow their comprehension (Chitsa & Mpofu, 2016). Overcrowding and large numbers of learners in the classroom can negatively influence the academic ability of learners with dyslexia who have a shorter attention span and where particular strategies implemented are inappropriate for the learners' needs (Karimupfumbi, 2022). According to Adewumi and Mosito (2019), teachers feel incompetent to accommodate learners who have special education needs and have a negative or neutral attitude toward implementing the inclusion of learners with special needs in mainstream schools (Adewumi & Mosito, 2019).

Despite a lack of adequate training given to teachers, Knight (2018) indicates that in their study, providing teachers with extra training increased their confidence and ability to assist learners with dyslexia. The additional training also had a significant positive effect on the teachers' work as they used cognitive descriptors (Knight, 2018). In conclusion, while teachers face considerable challenges, such as inadequate training and overcrowded classrooms, providing additional training can significantly enhance their ability to support learners with dyslexia, ultimately improving their educational outcomes.

## **2.4 THE VIEWS OF SPECIAL SCHOOLS AND MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS**

### **2.4.1 An introduction to special schools**

According to the Department of Basic Education (2014), special schools are classified as public schools. Consequently, the regulations and procedures that apply to other public schools must also apply to them. As such, special schools should offer highly inclusive environments that effectively address the exceptional educational requirements of learners (Hornby & Hornby, 2014). Special schools play a crucial role in implementing an inclusive educational system, and the rules and regulations that promote an inclusive education system should serve as a blueprint for the functioning of these schools (Department of Basic Education, 2014).

The Department of Basic Education (2014) notes that it is imperative for special schools to provide support to the families of children who attend such institutions. The provision of aid may encompass various forms, including educational counselling and support, psychological and emotional counselling and support, and seeking guidance from parents regarding optimal employment prospects for pupils (Department of Basic Education, 2014). The establishment of a collaborative community involving children, teachers, families, professionals, and community agencies is a fundamental principle of inclusive education (Hornby & Hornby, 2014).

Extensive research (Gonida & Cortina, 2014; Leseyane et al., 2018; Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020) has been conducted to investigate the perspectives of learners with dyslexia in special education environments, shedding light on the challenges they face and the efficacy of tailored interventions. The study conducted by Leseyane et al. (2018) aimed to compare the experiences of learners with dyslexia between a special school and a regular school in the province of North

West. The findings elucidated that the conventional educational setting was inhospitable to them and hindered their academic progress. Leseayne et al. (2018) observed that the mainstream school setting created a sense of differentiation from other learners, while the special school setting fostered a sense of normalcy and belonging. Furthermore, the learners with dyslexia expressed contentment with their interactions with their classmates in specialised institutions and reported feeling at ease. A crucial observation emphasised that they were not subjected to mockery but received assistance (Leseayne et al., 2018).

Special schools are established to cater to the distinct educational demands of learners with disabilities or other special requirements through personalisation in tailoring to their abilities and challenges (Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020). Furthermore, it is common for special education teachers to possess prior expertise in working with specific disabilities, which empowers them to provide tailored and practical assistance (Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020). Special educational institutions often cultivate a compassionate community that includes teachers, supplementary staff, and families who demonstrate attentiveness to the unique requirements of children with disabilities (Gonida & Cortina, 2014). This network can provide learners with crucial guidance, assistance, and promotion. Moreover, it offers a platform for parents and guardians to engage with other families facing similar challenges, share information, and access relevant services (Gonida & Cortina, 2014).

Nevertheless, special schools encounter their own set of difficulties. The educational setting in a special school presents challenges for learners as they struggle to adhere to regulations, effectively manage their behaviour, and engage in communication (Linde, 2019). Disturbing disparities in discipline are prevalent within the realm of special education, as seen by the adverse effects of repeated suspensions on academic achievement and several facets of learners' lives, including the likelihood of dropping out (McIntosh et al., 2018).

The significance of special schools in facilitating an inclusive educational setting for learners with varying needs cannot be overstated. The principles of inclusive education provide a framework for the functioning of special schools, guaranteeing that the unique needs of learners are adequately met. The cooperation among learners, teachers, and communities is a fundamental aspect of inclusive education, establishing a supportive atmosphere that encourages both intellectual development and emotional welfare.

## 2.4.2 Overview of conventional educational institutions

According to the Department of Basic Education (2014), mainstream schools provide only the slightest assistance to learners who encounter difficulties in their learning process compared to special schools. The Department of Basic Education (2014) asserts that this limited level of assistance covers preventative measures, proactive methods, and overarching programme policies, which encompass school finances as well as norms and standards. These schools prioritise success while seeking to avert future concerns with policies, funding, and overall standards, which may result in disregarding the different needs of learners (Hornby & Hornby, 2014). Teachers may refer learners in need of extra assistance to special schools (Department of Basic Education, 2014).

The objective of research investigating the experiences of learners with dyslexia in mainstream schools is to gain insight into the difficulties they face and devise inclusive strategies to address these issues (Leseyane et al., 2018; Ugwuanyi et al., 2020). Dyslexia is a condition characterised by challenges in reading, writing, and spelling. It presents notable cognitive, social, and emotional barriers (International Dyslexia Association, 2008; Kirby, 2020). It is imperative to implement focused interventions and establish support networks inside conventional educational environments to tackle these issues (Kirby, 2020).

The views of peers and teachers have a significant impact on the opinions of learners with dyslexia in mainstream classrooms (Ugwuanyi et al., 2020). According to Leseyane et al. (2018), individuals frequently express a deficiency in patience, attention, and acknowledgement of their learning challenges. The significance of comprehensive professional development programmes in improving educators' skills and instructional approaches is emphasised (Bell, 2013).

According to the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (Ramango, 2021), mainstream schools are encouraged to be inclusive. However, Spyropoulou (2020) indicates that certain dyslexic adolescents may have more positive experiences in special education settings. Comprehending these divergent experiences is crucial to establishing genuinely inclusive educational settings.

Research conducted on the views of learners with dyslexia in mainstream schools underscores several vital findings (Pitt & Soni, 2017; Spyropoulou, 2020). These findings emphasise the necessity of customised interventions, the possible advantages of assistive technology, the crucial involvement of teachers, and the significance of cultivating inclusive peer relationships. It is essential to use evidence-based techniques in mainstream schools to provide inclusive and supportive learning environments.

## **2.5 PERSPECTIVES ON TRANSITIONING: SUPPORT SYSTEMS AND RESOURCES**

The process of transitioning between educational institutions necessitates adjustment to new academic and social contexts, which can pose significant challenges for individuals with dyslexia (Lithari, 2023; Yeager et al., 2016). In environments that prioritise academic excellence, learners may experience adverse emotions and perceive the transition as particularly daunting (Lithari, 2023).

### **2.5.1 Challenges in transitioning for learners with dyslexia**

Research indicates that individuals with lower academic aptitude and self-confidence often face more significant difficulties during school transitions, highlighting the critical role of support systems (Lithari, 2023). Moving from special schools to mainstream settings can present substantial challenges, leading to feelings of isolation, anxiety, and decreased self-worth (Wilmot et al., 2023). These challenges are exacerbated by the limited training and resources available to teachers (Pettigrew, Vaughan & Roberts, 2013; Worthy et al., 2016).

Learners with dyslexia, in particular, struggle with increased academic demands and a lack of adequate support structures during school transitions (Kelly, 2015). They must adjust to unfamiliar language, navigate new environments, and manage increased academic expectations when transitioning to mainstream schools (Eccles, Lord & Buchanan, 2018). Many learners with dyslexia prefer the nurturing environment of specialised schools over the potentially hostile atmosphere of mainstream schools (Leseyane et al., 2018).

## 2.5.2 The role of support systems and inclusive practices

The transition between educational institutions underscores the impact of inadequate support, including insufficient teacher training and resources, which exacerbates the difficulties faced by dyslexic learners (Kelly, 2015). A report by Driver Youth Trust (2013) found that 52 per cent of teachers had not received any training on dyslexia, and 74 per cent did not feel their teacher training adequately equipped them to identify and teach children with dyslexia.

Peer interactions and social connections play a significant role in the experiences of learners with dyslexia in mainstream schools (Leseyane et al., 2018; Pitt & Soni, 2017). Creating an inclusive environment and fostering peer support can promote acceptance and belonging, positively influencing the educational outcomes of learners with dyslexia (Pitt & Soni, 2017). It is essential to implement inclusive strategies and tailor support to meet the specific needs of learners with dyslexia (Kelly, 2015). This approach includes understanding and disclosing dyslexia, seeking appropriate support, recognising strengths and areas for development, and having sufficient information about transitions (Kelly, 2015).

Social identity theory offers insights into how learners' experiences during school transitions are shaped by their group membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Learners with dyslexia may encounter social stigma and biases, negatively impacting their sense of inclusion and self-esteem (Chitsa & Mpofu, 2016). The emotional impact of transitioning can result in feelings of isolation and diminished self-worth due to insufficient support (Kelly, 2015). The findings by Kelly (2015) include significantly lower perceived academic competence, low academic self-esteem, feelings of isolation, poor internal locus of control, experiences of bullying, and frustration. However, peer support and relationships can help mitigate these challenges, fostering a sense of acceptance and inclusion (Rambaran et al., 2017).

Peer influence significantly impacts adolescents' academic beliefs and behaviours, emphasising the need for supportive peer networks during school transitions (Van Hoorn, 2016). Adolescents who seek peers with similar academic abilities can improve their academic performance in the long term (Rambaran et al., 2017). Kelly (2015) underscores the importance of supportive relationships, including peers and teachers, in helping learners with dyslexia navigate the transition process. Support from friends and family is crucial, as it helps learners

feel more accepted and less isolated, positively affecting their academic adjustment (Kelly, 2015).

Social identity theory as a conceptual framework aids in understanding the social dynamics during school transitions. This approach examines how the identities of social groups of learners with dyslexia influence their perspectives, interactions, and overall well-being throughout the transitional phase, offering valuable insights into the complexities of moving between different educational settings.

## **2.6 THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE STUDY**

### **2.6.1 Theoretical framework**

Social identity theory of human social behaviour served as the foundation for this phenomenological inquiry. This theory was employed to comprehend research pertaining to an individual's affiliation with a collective.

The theoretical underpinning for this research study is social identity theory, initially proposed by Tajfel and subsequently expanded upon by Tajfel and Turner (Trepte & Loy, 2017). The concept was first introduced by Henri Tajfel, a British social psychologist, and his colleagues during a series of tests in the early 1970s (Trepte & Loy, 2017). These investigations, commonly known as minimal group studies, formed the basis of social identity theory (Trepte & Loy, 2017). The participants were allocated to groups to ensure complete randomness and lack of significance. Nevertheless, they consistently assigned higher scores to persons within their group compared to those outside of it. The underlying concept of social identity theory posits that individuals can attribute significance to social encounters to their affiliation with a particular group (Islam, 2014) and enhance their self-awareness and interpersonal connections through active engagement in collective endeavours. Turner, a student of Tajfel, and his colleagues provided additional insights into the cognitive aspects of social identification. They elucidated how individuals interpret their position in different social situations and how this impacts their perception of others and the behaviour of the group (Islam, 2014).

Although social identity theory emerged in the 1970s, it remains pertinent in contemporary times. The core concept remains valid, asserting that affiliations with collectives exert a

significant influence on self-perception, actions, and cognition (Main, 2023). The significance of social identity theory in modern psychology is underscored by its ability to shed light on the intricate nature of human social behaviour through the examination of in-group and out-group dynamics (Main, 2023).

According to social identity theory, individuals undergo a cognitive process of redefining their sense of self as they align themselves with social categories, prioritising their group affiliations over their personalities and distinctive attributes (Jaspal, 2017). Simply put, this approach to self-identification encourages individuals to prioritise their group membership over their individuality and independence (Jaspal, 2017). Therefore, the transition of learners with dyslexia from special schools to mainstream schools leads to a modification in their social groups, thereby impacting their identity within the group. This re-evaluation enables them to redefine their sense of self, which was previously shaped by their group affiliation rather than their personality.

According to Chitsa and Mpofu (2016), individuals diagnosed with dyslexia may encounter stigmatisation and preconceptions associated with their condition. Their interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers may also be impacted, as well as their perception of their value. In addition, learners with dyslexia may find support and validation by forming relationships with those who have undergone similar circumstances and possess identical characteristics (Chitsa & Mpofu, 2016).

Trepte and Loy (2017) assert that social identity theory emphasises the impact of individuals' social identities on their interpersonal relationships and lived experiences. This research examined social identity theory to investigate the perspectives on the transformation of learners' self-worth, self-concept, and sense of belonging in the new mainstream school setting. Additionally, it examined the potential impact of social comparison, stigma, and social categorisations on their transitional views (Trepte & Loy, 2017).

Researchers have acknowledged the significance of teenagers' peers in shaping their academic ideas and behaviours (Van Hoorn, 2016). Peers exert a substantial and influential impact on individuals' behaviours and perspectives during adolescence (Rambaran et al., 2017). The study conducted by Rambaran et al. (2017) examined the degree of peer influence within an

adolescent setting. The findings revealed that adolescents who established friendships with their peers, or networks of peers, experienced enhanced academic achievement and exhibited a significant impact on various behaviours and attitudes related to their academic functioning and performance. The adolescents would often seek out friends who shared similar academic abilities, as these peers helped them to maintain their academic performance over time (Rambaran et al., 2017).

Consequently, given that the individuals involved in this study were adolescents, they were greatly influenced by their friends, which in turn affected their perspectives on the process of moving from a special school to a mainstream school. The potential influence of the social environment or group in which an individual learner is involved in their experience in transferring to schools underscores the relevance of social identity theory to this research study.

The graphic representation in Figure 2.1 illustrates how a person’s identity can be influenced by their experience of group participation, as depicted in this social psychology framework. This further supports the previously cited findings, as it underscores the significant impact that the role of peer influence can have on the lives of adolescents.

Figure 2.1 displays a visual of social identity theory, which is a visual representation developed by the author, drawing inspiration from the social identity theory proposed by Tajfel and Turner (1979).

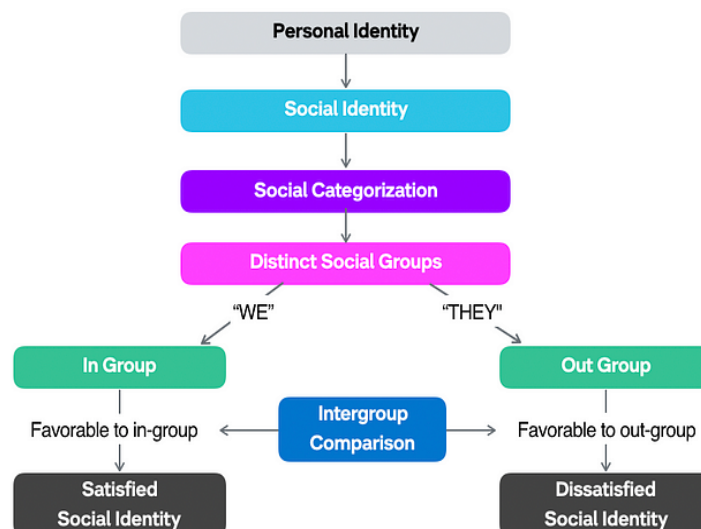


Figure 2.1: Visual of social identity theory

Group membership has a significant role in shaping one's identity and can have an impact on one's emotions (Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019). As a group member, individuals may experience emotions such as warmth, rage, and guilt (Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019). The social identity of an individual is perceived as a component of their self-concept, which is formed through their awareness of belonging to a social group and the emotional importance associated with that group (Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019). The inclusion of the participants in this research study who fell between the age range of 14 to 16 years, that is, adolescents, is a pertinent aspect of this study. The study examines the personal perspectives of learners with dyslexia, which can be significantly shaped by their group membership, thus directly impacting their unique experiences.

Social identity theory as a theoretical framework enables the researcher to acquire a more profound comprehension of the social dynamics in operation and the potential influence that a learner who is identified as dyslexic exerts on their perspectives, social engagements, and overall welfare throughout the process of transitioning from a special school to a mainstream school.

### **2.6.2 Limitations of the theoretical framework**

It is important to note the limitations of social identity theory despite its essential insights into the dynamics of group membership and its impact on individuals' lives. An inherent constraint is in its emphasis on collective identities, potentially disregarding individual variances and distinct encounters within a group (Haslam, 2001). Furthermore, it should be noted that the theory in question may not comprehensively encompass the intricate nature of human identity, as it is subject to the effect of other elements that extend beyond mere group affiliation. These aspects encompass personal values, beliefs, and experiences (Tarrant & Branscombe, 2002).

Moreover, it might be argued that social identity theory, as proposed by Foster and Matheson (1995), may not sufficiently account for the influence of power dynamics and structural inequalities on the formation of individuals' identities and lived experiences. In educational environments, various elements, including socioeconomic class, ethnicity, and gender, have the potential to intersect with group affiliation, thereby exerting an influence on the experiences and opportunities available to learners (Nasir & Hand, 2006).

Notwithstanding these constraints, social identity theory offers a valuable conceptual framework for comprehending the influence of group affiliation on people's encounters during periods of educational transitions. Researchers might enhance their grasp of the intricate dynamics in educational settings by recognising and supplementing them with alternative theoretical views.

## **2.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In Chapter 2, a comprehensive examination of pertinent literature and theoretical frameworks on the subject matter of the study was presented. Within this study, which examined the difficulties encountered by learners with dyslexia in regular educational institutions, the consequences of migrating between different educational environments, and the theoretical foundations that inform this research, this chapter established the foundation for the chapters that follow. These will explore the research methodology and findings of this study by analysing the perspectives of learners with dyslexia, the dynamics within educational environments, and the significance of support systems.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter, I explored pertinent literature and the theoretical framework that led me to pursue this study. Within the literature, I discerned a notable gap in examining learners with dyslexia transitioning from specialised educational settings to mainstream environments, particularly within the underexplored cohort of South African learners with dyslexia. By synthesising the existing literature, I formulated a precise research inquiry at the core of this identified gap: ‘What are the views of learners with dyslexia after transitioning from special schools to mainstream schools?’ In this chapter, I delineate the appropriate research methodology and framework to address this research query.

The transition views of learners with dyslexia in mainstream education settings represent a complex phenomenon that requires a multifaceted approach to investigation. In Chapter 1, I provided a concise overview of the selected research methodology and design for this study. Here, I expand on that discussion by elaborating on the specifics and outlining the suitable research approach, paradigm, design, methods, sample selection, and techniques for interpreting data, all of which were integral to the core of my study. I elucidate the integrated methodology and theoretical framework comprising photovoice, social identity theory, and exploratory phenomenology and offer a comprehensive understanding of these views.

The rationale for choosing my methodology lies in its ability to capture the subjective viewpoints of the participants through visual, theoretical, and phenomenological lenses. Wang and Burris (1997) pioneered the use of photovoice as a participatory research tool, emphasising community action and the amplification of marginalised voices through photovoice. Mitchell and DeMarco (2013) further underscored the method’s capacity for fostering participant empowerment and generating actionable insights.

Table 3.2: Outline of the research methodology and procedure

Methodology	Procedures
Research Approach	Qualitative
Ontological Perspective	Realism
Epistemological Perspective	Interpretivist
Research Design	Phenomenology
Sampling and Sample	Non-probability: Convenience
Data Collection Methods	Photovoice Semi-structured Interviews
Data Analysis	Inductive approach
Researcher's Stance	Subjective, involved in the study. Participant observer

### 3.2 STUDY FRAMEWORK

According to Coyne et al. (2016), research design refers to the blueprint for a research study. Researchers collect and analyse data in specific ways depending on the question they seek to answer (Coyne et al., 2016).

The three primary approaches are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. A qualitative research approach was chosen for this study.

In qualitative research, non-numerical data is gathered and analysed to understand ideas or viewpoints better (Blaikie, 2007). This research approach can uncover intricate details about a situation or generate new research concepts; therefore, this study used a qualitative research approach (Blaikie, 2007). An interpretive qualitative approach in research is well-suited to offering a detailed explanation that is field-focused and interpretative of the participants and their settings (Aveling, Cornish & Gillespie, 2015).

According to Alase (2017), a qualitative research approach, and specifically interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), provides researchers with the best opportunity to understand the innermost deliberations of the 'lived experiences' of research participants. A qualitative

approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the life and views of participants, regardless of their unique settings (Blaikie, 2007). This was a crucial component of the research, as each participant had a unique view and setting despite the common theme of transitioning from a special school to a mainstream school. The approach emphasises exploring and developing theories by using and interpreting the world in behavioural, mental, and social contexts. Qualitative studies are typically narrative, and the findings of this study provided specific and detailed contextual descriptions (Christensen et al., 2014).

A qualitative approach was well-suited to the purpose of this study, which explored the views of four learners with dyslexia who had transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school. Qualitative research facilitates a deeper understanding of social reality and interactions among individuals (Blaikie, 2007). This approach allowed me to explore the unique perspectives, meanings, and views held by each individual in their transition from a special school to a mainstream school. A qualitative approach was deemed appropriate for this study due to its epistemological alignment with the interpretative paradigm (Sefotho, 2018).

I adopted a qualitative approach to conduct this study, focusing on exploring an understanding or perception of the social construction of reality (Christensen et al., 2014). This approach was suitable given the study's interpretive nature and its intent to explore the views of learners with dyslexia after they had transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school. I used photographs, found images, and semi-structured interviews as data-gathering methods. According to Christensen et al. (2014), triangulation refers to the use of multiple research methods, data sources, and perspectives to 'cross-check and corroborate research data and conclusions'. Furthermore, I explored the experiences of the participating parents regarding their views of their children with dyslexia after they had transitioned from special schools to mainstream schools.

Thus, a qualitative approach was chosen due to the nature of the research question, which explored the views of the participating learners with dyslexia after transitioning from a special school to a mainstream school. The research approach was both suitable and practical for this study. Additionally, the qualitative approach was consistent with the interpretivist paradigm, which aligns with this study and is discussed in the next section of this chapter.

### **3.3. PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF RESEARCH**

#### **3.3.1 Overview of research paradigm**

As researchers, we must possess the capability to comprehend and articulate our beliefs concerning the fundamental nature of reality, the knowledge about it, and the methodologies employed to acquire such knowledge (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). These essential components constitute what is referred to as research paradigms. A research paradigm encapsulates a foundational belief system and theoretical framework underpinned by assumptions regarding ontology, epistemology, methodology, and methods (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). The research paradigm aids the researcher in anticipating potential drawbacks and advantages within the research methodology and design. I selected an interpretive research paradigm for this study. In the next section, the application of this paradigm is discussed.

#### **3.3.2 Adopting an interpretative paradigm**

In this research study, I explored the views of learners with dyslexia who transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school and I considered the underlying principles of the interpretative paradigm with the focus of the research study being placed on understanding the views of the learners with dyslexia. The interpretative paradigm primarily aims to understand the subjective experience (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). It may also be associated with the idea that multiple realities exist and that each person has a subjective interpretation and perception of the world (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). In addition, the findings from the research are less likely to have generalisations formulated through the interpretive paradigm as the data are mainly dependent on a specific context, viewpoint, and values of the people involved in the research (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020).

Interpretive methodology, as highlighted by Shah and Al-Bargi (2013), emphasises the importance of understanding social phenomena from the participants' perspective rather than through the lens of the researcher (Shah & Al-Bargi, 2013). Interpretivists favour an inductive over a deductive approach, as they perceive theory to emerge from data collection rather than serving as the primary driver of research (Pacho, 2015).

### **3.3.2.1 The relativist ontological stance**

Ontology refers to the philosophical study of one's perception related to reality (Sefotho, 2018). It holds paramount importance in a research paradigm because it helps researchers understand the fundamental constituents of the world as it is understood (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Ontology is a set of concepts in a domain that shows the genuine nature of the properties and their relations, which form themes to analyse and make sense of the inherent meaning embedded in research data (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). I used an interpretative ontological stance due to the qualitative nature of this research.

The interpretive paradigm supports the belief that multiple realities exist and that each individual has a unique perception of their social reality (Maree, 2016). Researchers who approach research using the interpretative paradigm tend to explore individuals' interpretations, meanings, and perspectives concerning their world (Maree, 2016). This research study explored the views of learners with dyslexia who transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school. To explore this topic, I used photographs, collected images, and reflective narrative data gathered through photovoice and semi-structured interviews that illustrated the views of the learners with dyslexia who transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school. This strategy allowed me to understand and explore their views for this study.

### **3.3.2.2 The subjectivist epistemological stance**

An epistemological paradigm is the lens through which the researcher interprets the findings of the study (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). It is a frame of reference in which knowledge is received and communicated and focuses on the nature of human knowledge and comprehension that you, , can acquire to extend, broaden, and deepen your understanding in your field of research (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). In this research study, the interpretivist paradigm was applied. The interpretivist paradigm views knowledge as subjective, based on an individual's experience and historical understanding (Ryan, 2018). As a researcher, your beliefs and values towards the research inform the assemblage, interpretation, and review of the data (Ryan, 2018). The epistemology and interpretivist paradigm was relevant to this research as it explored the views of learners with dyslexia who transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school.

In the interpretive paradigm, instead of generalising an understanding of the information, the researcher establishes a comprehensive understanding of the complexity of the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As the interpretive paradigm enables a diverse view, a study of the social context occurs throughout the research, creating a more profound understanding (Pham, 2018). This concerned the research as it investigated the social context, and the theoretical framework used in the study, which was social identity theory, based on the views of the learners who transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school.

### **3.4 PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH TO RESEARCH**

This qualitative study made use of a phenomenological research design. Phenomenology is an individual's perception of an event that exists external to the individual (Yüksel & Yıldırım, 2015). In phenomenological research, the aim is to understand the essence of the individual's lived experience of the phenomenon while ascertaining and defining the phenomenon (Yüksel & Yıldırım, 2015).

This design aligned with the underlying principles of the interpretive paradigm and was deemed suitable for the explorative nature of this research study. Having worked closely with learners with dyslexia for eight years through my company, I resonated strongly with Langridge's (2007) statement that phenomenology provides a perspective to comprehend the personal aspect of human experience. Phenomenologists emphasise that understanding objects in the world must involve considering subjectivity and perception, which vary depending on context, position, and mood (Langridge, 2007). As a result, phenomenologists focus on studying individual experiences and how individuals perceive the world, acknowledging the subjective nature of these experiences across different contexts (Langridge, 2007). Langridge (2007) explains the phenomenological perspective well, highlighting the interconnectedness of items in the world with our subjective perception of them. My personal experiences working with learners with dyslexia show how their experiences and perspectives influence their interactions with the world.

Langridge (2007) emphasises the significance of examining individuals' experiences and perceptions of the world (Langridge, 2007). This aligned with my dedication to comprehending the real-life experiences of learners with dyslexia and their views within the mainstream

educational environment. Using a phenomenological perspective, I explored the intricate and diverse world of recognising the many aspects of the experiences of the participating learners with dyslexia.

Thus, I opted to use a phenomenological research design for this study. This method enabled me to investigate the real-life experiences of the participants, that is, the four learners with dyslexia in a mainstream educational environment and their mothers (the parents), recognising the diversity and subjectivity present in their views. Through this phenomenological research, I aimed to reveal the core of their experiences and illuminate their perspective on the world while they faced the difficulties of learning with dyslexia.

### **3.5 RESEARCH SAMPLING TECHNIQUES**

Sampling pertains to selecting a subset of individuals from within a population to infer the characteristics of the entire population (Singh & Masuku, 2014). According to Maree (2016), there are two sampling categories: probability and non-probability. Non-probability sampling research sampling was used in this study.

#### **3.5.1 Non-probability sampling: Convenience sampling**

The research sampling method used was non-probability sampling, as in this research study learners diagnosed with dyslexia who had transitioned from a specialised support system to a mainstream education system were targeted. The recruitment strategies prioritised diversity in gender and severity of dyslexia, ensuring a comprehensive representation of experiences. Following the guidelines established by Davis and Dyson (2009), ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent, safeguarding confidentiality, and addressing potential risks associated with participation.

The research sample was a non-random selection of a sample group, conveniently chosen to easily allow the collection of the data pertaining to the study (Brick, 2014). Non-probability sampling is frequently used in qualitative research as it provides an in-depth description of the study (Vehovar, Toepoel & Steinmetz, 2016). Convenience sampling in qualitative research involves selecting participants based on their accessibility to the researcher (Clark et al., 2021). Non-probability convenience sampling applied to my study, as it provided a strong

understanding of the views of the learners with dyslexia who transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school. If a study on a convenience sample demonstrates trustworthy findings, it can exhibit high internal validity (Andrade, 2021).

### **3.5.2 Sampling criteria**

In the research on exploring the views of the learners with dyslexia who transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school, four key elements were a part of the sampling criteria.

First, the participants needed to be learners who had been diagnosed with dyslexia. The participants chosen had a formal diagnosis of dyslexia, as this was the specific population of interest for the research. They exhibited a learning difference that affected their reading, writing, and spelling skills. Exploring the views of individuals with this condition was the focus of the study (Leseayne et al., 2018).

The second criterion for sampling was that the learners had transitioned from a special school, where they received dyslexia support, to a mainstream school. This criterion ensured that the participants had first-hand views on the transition and could provide insights into the adjustments.

In addition, it was essential that the learners with dyslexia were enrolled in a particular mainstream school in the Western Cape, South Africa, and that each of their parents was physically present as the photovoice process and semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face.

Additionally, the learners had to be adolescents. This allowed them to provide insights into the age-related views or differences in the transition. Dyslexia and the transition to mainstream schools have unique implications and challenges for adolescents. The participants being studied had recently entered high school, falling between Grades 8 and 9.

The most crucial criterion for the research in terms of sampling was for the participants, the learners, and their parents to provide informed consent and be willing to participate. The participants discussed were willing to participate in the study and provided informed consent. It was also crucial to prioritise ethical considerations and ensure that the participants understood the purpose of the study, their rights, and any potential risks or benefits associated

with their participation. Hence, , I established the following sample of participants from the community. Eight participants in total took part in this study.

Table 3.3: Table showing the number of participants

Area	Quantity of participants
Learners with dyslexia	Four
Parents of learners with dyslexia	Four
Total number of research participants	Eight

During the data-gathering phase of this study, each learner with dyslexia submitted five images representing their views on transitioning from a special school to a mainstream school using either a mobile cell phone camera or had the image generated from artificial intelligence. As adolescents who had recently entered high school, they were technologically equipped to communicate remotely using email to send the images which they had chosen to represent their experiences. I collected these images from the participants to analyse the data. The participants had the option of either choosing an image or capturing a real-life image with their cell phones, one from the internet or requesting ChatGPT to make them an image. Hence, there was a total of 20 images, of which two were photographs and eighteen were taken from the internet.

ChatGPT is an artificial intelligence program which generates content by using generative AI algorithms to assist individuals in creating rich, personalised data of a high quality at a fast pace according to the user inputs or requirements (Wang et al., 2023). This innovative AI system allows a third-party individual to submit text in their chat, and ChatGPT will convert their text description into an AI-generated image (Wang et al., 2023). Therefore, ChatGPT was used to generate an image according to the participants' input requirements to convey the learners' experience in the transition from a special school to a mainstream school.

Semi-structured interviews followed my receipt of the photovoice data. I printed the collected images sent by each participant in colour for the semi-structured interview process. This approach created a neutral third party, the images, that helped to create a relaxed atmosphere

by negating the need for constant eye contact (Oliffe & Bottorff, 2007). Oliffe and Bottorff support using photographs in research, noting that they provide security and comfort to participants as they can physically engage with the photographs during the conversation (Oliffe & Bottorff, 2007).

The semi-structured interviews only occurred with the parents of the learners with dyslexia to further understand the learners’ personal views on the transition. All of the parent interviews held were with the mothers of each participant of learners with dyslexia. The semi-structured interviews with the parents of the learners with dyslexia focused on gaining a further understanding of the learners’ personal views during their transition to a mainstream school, rather than on the parents’ views.

### 3.5.3 Sample recruitment process

Four learners with dyslexia and a parent, a mother, of each of the participating learners with dyslexia from the mainstream school that they attended were selected to participate in the study. In the sample recruitment process, it is to be noted that I was aware that I am the owner of the tutoring centre which these learners attended, and, thus, I was in a position of authority. However, this research did not focus on the tutoring centre attended by the learners but rather on the learners’ views on their transition from the special school to a mainstream school. To recruit this sample, I used a step-by-step process (see Figure 3.1).

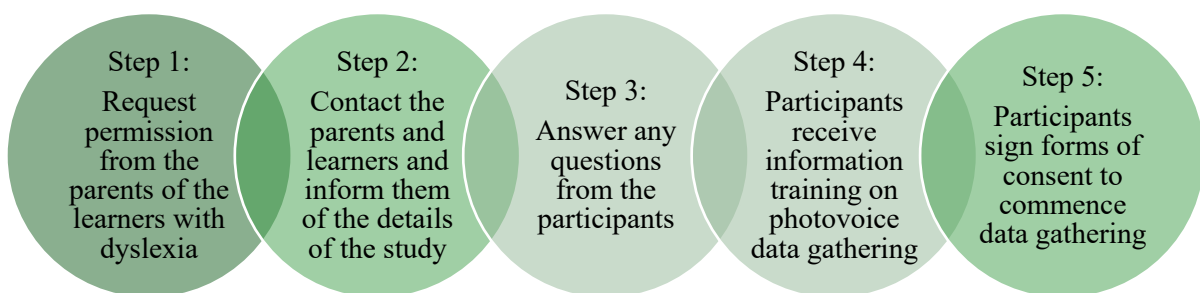


Figure 3.1: Figure sample recruitment process

Step 1: Permission from parents of participants

In April 2024, I approached the parents of learners with dyslexia who attended a mainstream school in the Western Cape. I explained the purpose and goal of the research study to the participants' parents. I requested that the parents sign a consent form detailing the information of the research study. The parents then requested permission to approach the learners to ask if they would be willing to participate in the research study.

#### Step 2: Contacting learners

I then collected the personal emails of the interested parents and learners and emailed them a detailed description of the aim of the research study. The document described the problem, rationale, purpose, question, design, methodologies, and ethical considerations of the research.

#### Step 3: Opportunity for questions

In the email discussed previously, the recipients had one week to ask me questions in person, by telephone, or by email and decide if they wanted to participate in the study.

#### Step 4: Information Training

Once the participants had agreed to take part in the study, they received a description of the virtual training on the ethical aspects of photovoice research. The meetings were held via phone, video call, or in person. After the consent forms had been signed, a 'short guideline to take photographs/how to collect images' was provided to remind the participants of the focus, photograph requirements, and purpose of the study.

#### Step 5: Signing of consent forms

The participants signed the consent forms indicating that they understood all the relevant ethical guidelines (Appendices A to C). However, the signatures obtained did not mean that the participants would not have the opportunity to discontinue their participation in the study at any point should they wish to do so, merely that it indicated their understanding of the ethical guidelines when participating in the study.

### **3.6 DATA CONSTRUCTION METHODS**

After recruiting the participants for the research sample for the study, the data-gathering process commenced. Data-gathering refers to the methods that researchers use to collect data to answer their research questions (Alshenqeeti, 2014). In this research, multiple sources of data were used. These data sources included the use of photovoice and semi-structured interviews. In addition, field notes were taken during the semi-structured interviews to document information and key participant behaviour.

Data construction encompassed photovoice workshops where the participants captured photographs depicting their transition experiences based on provided prompts (Allain & Dwyer, 2010). Individual photograph-taking guidelines were provided, and the participants received support as needed. The integration of photovoice involved workshops where participants received training in photography techniques and explored transition-related themes through visual expression (Van Laar & van der Meijden, 2012). The semi-structured interviews with each parent of a learner with dyslexia further elucidated the participants' narratives, ensuring a holistic understanding of their experiences. Data saturation was achieved through iterative analysis, as advocated by Smith and Osborn (2003).

The multiple data collection methods (photovoice and semi-structured interviews) resulted in clearer validity in the study, with a richness of data to formulate more potent and trustworthy interpretations. Using these data collection methods resulted in an in-depth exploration of the views of learners with dyslexia who had transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school. Employing an exploratory phenomenological design, this study delved into the essence and meaning of learners' views on their transition. Social identity theory informed the analysis by examining how the participants' identities and social contexts influenced their transition narratives (Stephenson & Riley, 2008).

#### **3.6.1 Phase 1: Training Participants and Securing Consent**

During the first phase of the data collection process, participants took part in a short training session during which the ethical use of photography was explained. A video demonstrated the guidelines for capturing photographs and how the learners could do so. The video consisted of an in-depth explanation of the main principles of safety, respect, and justice in the context of

photography in research. After the session, the learners received a consent form explaining the responsibilities that they had while being part of the research. Training and consent established a strong rapport with the researcher, as there was active listening and an empathetic response to their concerns (Grady, 2015). Creating a safe and comfortable environment was essential for the participants of learner with dyslexia (Grady, 2015).

Additionally, I elucidated the ethical guidelines for the participants regarding photography in public spaces. The training encompassed an overview of critical principles encompassing safety, respect, and justice within the framework of photovoice research. It was emphasised that the participants should refrain from capturing images that jeopardised the safety or privacy of individuals. Furthermore, the participants were advised against photographing individuals who violated the privacy of others.

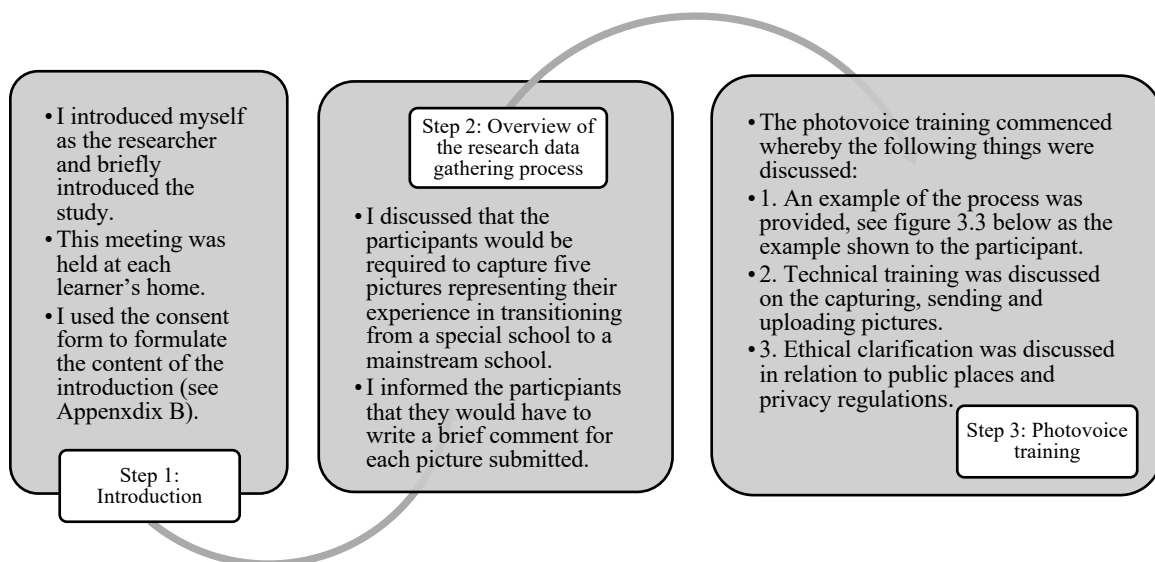



Figure 3.2: Phase 1: Training and consent steps

Example:



This picture shows my experience because when I transitioned schools I got to meet a lot more people. When I met all these new people, I got to make some new friends. It makes me happy to spend time with these new friends.

Figure 3.3: Picture and reflection example for participant

### 3.6.2 Phase 2: Constructing Photovoice Data

In the second phase of the data collection process, the participants in the research collected photovoice data. Visual data collection may enable the researcher to access complex information that may not be as easy to gather through other data collection forms, such as questionnaires (Call-Cummings et al., 2019). Participation refers to people's engagement in a democratic knowledge production process in photovoice (Liebenberg, 2018). The three key benefits of using photovoice in research are that it enables individuals to record and reflect on strengths and concerns (Liebenberg, 2018). Additionally, it allows you to promote knowledge and critical dialogue about community issues and their impact on individuals through a group discussion of images with consent, and it reaches and informs policymakers to bring about change (Liebenberg, 2018).

The photovoice method, also referred to as participant photography (Murray & Nash, 2017), is a visual approach based on PAR principles in which research participants are encouraged to use photography to visually document their social surroundings (Call-Cummings et al., 2019). Participants construct personal narratives by reflecting on their images, frequently through an unstructured chat or a structured photo-elicitation interview (Call-Cummings et al., 2019). Through thorough dialogues among participants, there is the capacity to amplify the knowledge of populations and the potential to promote advancing possibilities (Call-Cummings et al., 2019).

The four participants of learners with dyslexia each submitted five images, representing each of their views on the transition from a mainstream school to a special school. Using photovoice allowed the participants to transcend language and literacy barriers to convey complex concepts and evoke emotion (Liebenberg, 2018). The participants had the option of either choosing an image or capturing a real-life image with their cell phones, one from the internet or requesting ChatGPT to make them an image.

I then created a folder into which all 20 images and reflections were uploaded. I read and interpreted the reflections before commencing the next phase of the data collaboration process. The focus was on the visual interpretations, and the learners with dyslexia were encouraged to write a brief personal note to attach to each photograph.

### 3.6.3 Phase 3: Conducting Semi-structured Interviews

The participants took part in semi-structured interviews in the third phase of the data collection process. The interpretation of the visuals was a critical component of the research, as was the role of the semi-structured interviews which ensured an accurate understanding of the views of the learners. The semi-structured, face-to-face individual interviews were held with four participants, the parents of each learner with dyslexia in the study to gain a deeper understanding of the surroundings and environment of the learners with dyslexia. The semi-structured interviews allowed me to gain insight into the participants' views, perspectives, and beliefs (Adams, 2015). These deeper insights enabled the participants to elaborate their responses or verify their interpretations to understand this complex phenomenon better (Adams, 2015).

A semi-structured interview is a data-gathering method where the researcher has the opportunity to ask (1) standardised questions, (2) follow-up questions tailored to the situational context or discussion, and (3) to probe the reasoning of a research participant (Leedy et al., 2019). Each semi-structured interview was held as a face-to-face interview. It was scheduled based on a mutual agreement between me and the parent of the learner with dyslexia, including the location, day, and time. It is important to note that the learners were not present during the semi-structured interviews between the parent and me.

In the semi-structured interviews, I used open-ended questions guided by the acronym SHOWED, represented by the following questions:

- S     What do you see here?
- H     What is happening here?
- O     How does it relate to your lives?
- W     Why does this concern, situation, or strength exist?
- E     How can this image educate others?

D What can we do?

SHOWED is a questioning technique developed by Wang & Burris (1994, 1997) that attempts to achieve a deeper understanding of situations and views expressed by research participants by providing visual data such as a photograph (Liebenberg, 2018). The acronym SHOWED was applied to the visual images collected by the participants in the research study.

I did not use the precise questions asked in the acronym SHOWED. These questions were tailored and integrated into the semi-structured interview with a few changes in structure and wording. This study aimed to investigate the views of the learners with dyslexia who transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school.

### **3.7 APPROACHES TO DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

This data analysis strategy consisted of two data sets focusing on the interpretation of the participants' reflections on the submitted images of the learners with dyslexia and the semi-structured interview transcripts with the parents of the learners with dyslexia. Following a two-data-set process enabled me to explore visual data on the views of the learners with dyslexia who faced transitioning from a special school to a mainstream school.

During the second phase of the analysis of the data set, I interpreted the visual data (images) and the transcripts of the semi-structured interviews to explore the views of the learners with dyslexia who had transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school. An inductive approach to the data analysis was applied to identify themes, meanings, and relationships in this study's qualitative data. This study used the following general research methods for data analysis: reflection with the supervisor and denotation and connotation of the images.

Additionally, Smith et al.'s (2009) seven-step interpretive phenomenological analysis framework was used to understand the meaning that the individuals attached to their experiences (Smith et al., 2009). After that, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of a thematic analysis framework were employed to identify and present the findings of this study.

Table 3.4: General research methods for data analysis

<b>Data Set</b>	<b>Data Construction Method</b>	<b>Research Method for Data Analysis</b>
Data Set 1	Photovoice (images) and narrative reflections	Photovoice analysis methods Systematic visuo-textual analysis Reflecting with supervisor
Data Set 2	In-depth individual semi-structured interviews	IPA seven-step framework Reflecting with supervisor Thematic analysis

### 3.7.1 General research methods for data analysis

In this study, reflections with my supervisor were integrated as an ongoing data analysis technique within the data construction process. This approach was instrumental regarding the pivotal role of a supervisor acting as a critical peer reviewer (Kamler & Thomson, 2014). This allowed key criteria, such as accuracy, clarity, and meaningfulness, to be carefully analysed. My supervisor played a crucial role in fulfilling this vital function in the study.

### 3.7.2 Data Set 1: Thematic analysis of photovoice and narrative reflections

In the first step of the analysis process, I interpreted the participants' visual data images. The interpretation of the visual data was explicitly done using the collected images.

In the interpretation of the data, there was a visual analysis of the images collected from the participants in the research. A systematic visuo-textual analysis framework was used to analyse the images. Brown and Collins (2021) note that researchers conducting photovoice studies often exclude the analysis of images as sources of meaning and experience because existing frameworks overly emphasise translating pictures into words. Visual data, however, offers a rich appreciation of individuals' diverse experiences and underscores the embodied nature of these experiences (Brown & Collins, 2021). Pictures capture experiences beyond the limitations of language and words (Brown & Collins, 2021). Therefore, analysis was done on the visual data (images) and textual data (narrative reflections) submitted by each participant to fully understand the embodied experiences represented.

Brown and Collins’s (2021) systematic visuo-textual analysis framework was applied in the research analysis, allowing me significant interpretive control. The framework operates on two levels of analysis: Level 1, noticing and describing, and Level 2, conceptualising (Brown & Collins, 2021). Brown and Collins (2021) detail the analysis of two elements: element 1, visual only, and element 2, transcript only. Each element, according to Brown and Collins (2021), is represented in Table 3.4 below.

Table 3.5: Systematic visuo-textual analysis framework (Brown & Collins, 2021)

	Element 1: Visual only	Element 2: Transcripts only	Element 3: Visuo-textual combination
Level 1: Noting and describing	‘artistic in visual work (use of perspective, colour, space, form, tone, light, composition)’ (Brown & Collins, 2021, p. 1281)	‘linguistic in textual work (use of language, words, phrases, structure)’ (Brown & Collins, 2021, p. 1281)	‘connecting the visual and the textual (structure, meanings, expressions)’ (Brown & Collins, 2021, p. 1281)
Level 2: Conceptualising	‘essential elements that unite artefacts’ (Brown & Collins, 2021, p. 1281)	‘words/phrases that capture patterns/themes’ (Brown & Collins, 2021, p. 1281)	‘connections between artefacts and themes’ (Brown & Collins, 2021, p. 1281)

I used the framework in Table 3.4 to analyse each participant’s pictures (element 1) and narrative reflections (element 2). To do this, I made minor adjustments to the original analysis table developed by Brown and Collins (2021). I changed the headings in Table 3.5 as follows:

- Element 1 visual only → Image Analysis (Visual Data)
- Element 2 transcript only → Reflection Analysis (Textual Data)
- Element 3 visuo-textual combination → Image and reflection combined
- Level 1 noticing and describing → Level 1: Notice and describe

- Level 2 conceptualising → Level 2: Conceptualise

I analysed each participant's pictures and narrative reflections according to the table format represented in Table 3.5. The results from the data from each participant were presented in Chapter 4 as the data analysis in table format. Adapting the headings of Brown and Collins's (2021) table provided structure to the wording and made the use of a table format more suited to academic writing.

Table 3.6: Adapted systematic visuo-textual analysis framework (adapted from Brown & Collins, 2021)

	Image analysis (visual data)	Reflection analysis (textual data)	Image and reflection combined
Level 1: Note and describe	'artistic in visual work (use of perspective, colour, space, form, tone, light, composition)' (Brown & Collins, 2021, p. 1281)	'linguistic in textual work (use of language, words, phrases, structure)' (Brown & Collins, 2021, p. 1281)	'connecting the visual and the textual (structure, meanings, expressions)' (Brown & Collins, 2021, p. 1281)
Level 2: Conceptualise	'essential elements that unite artefacts' (Brown & Collins, 2021, p. 1281)	'words/phrases that capture patterns/themes' (Brown & Collins, 2021, p. 1281)	'connections between artefacts and themes' (Brown & Collins, 2021, p. 1281)

#### A) Image analysis (visual data)

I made use of connotation and denotation in the analysis of the images. , this allowed me to distinguish the meaning of an unfamiliar visual depiction (Rao, 2017).

Denotation is the literal meaning of what is visually seen in the image; however, the connotation is an idea suggested by or associated with an image expressing emotions (Rao, 2017). Observing and describing, which emphasises the specifics of the object shown in the image and the actual or literal meaning the image conveys, made up the first stage of analysis.

Conceptualising the language and imagery was part of the second degree of analysis and interpretation of data.

In the interpretation of the data, there was a collaborative effort between the author and interpreter to discern the intended message of each image. Clark (2011) emphasises that photographs are not self-explanatory artefacts and that the authors of the photographs should be actively involved in the interpretive process (Creswell & Creswell., 2018). Hence the narrative reflections were considered when analysing the visual data. Owing to the subjective and broad nature of visual data analysis, the interpretation of the data was approached with caution.

I used Figure 3.4, the three-step systematic framework of noticing and describing in the analysis of the images. Step 1 of noticing and describing objects in the photographs focused on identifying and describing all the objects in the picture to understand what the participant wanted to convey. Any material items were noted, artistic elements were described (such as colour, texture, and space), and the significance of objects that could represent symbols was highlighted. Step 2 of noticing and describing subjects in the photographs focused on identifying and describing any figures, people, and animals in the picture to understand the depicted subjects. The figures were listed in the order in which they were noticed, and any visual characteristics were noted, such as facial expressions, emotions, texture, clothing, and colour. Step 3 of noticing and describing text in the photographs included identifying and describing any text in the picture. The colour, tone, logos or similar visuals concerning the text were considered and noted.

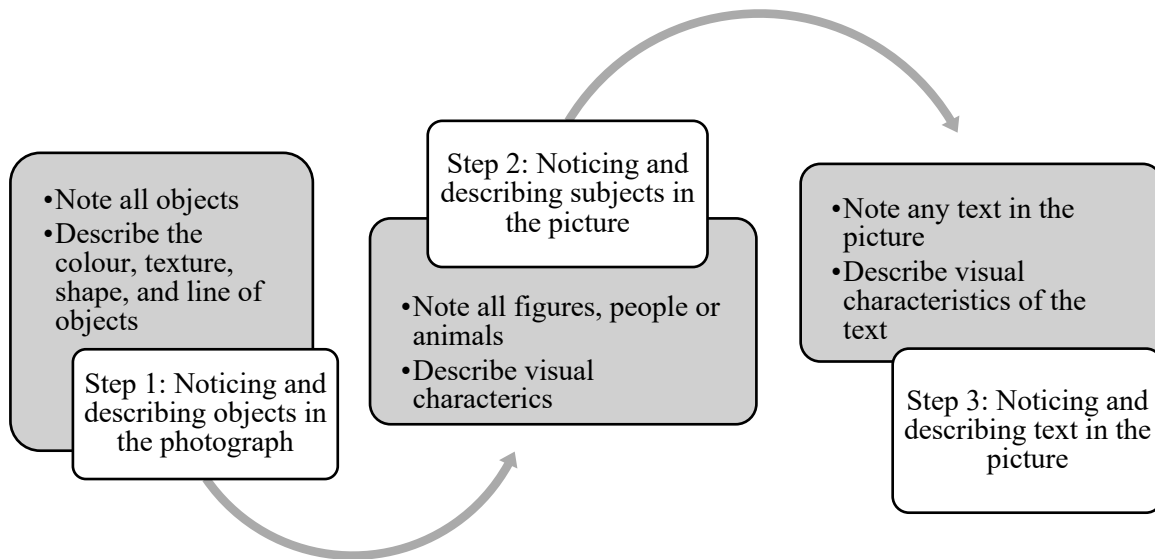


Figure 3.4: Three-step systematic framework of noticing and describing the images

In Level 2 of the analysis, the photographs were examined for relevance, significance, and conceptualisation of meaning. After briefly describing the content of the picture, the symbols and the meanings of the colours were discussed, keeping in mind any cultural associations that the participants might have made (Pink, 2001). After checking with the members, I made any necessary adjustments to ensure accurate personal interpretations of the photographs.

#### B) Reflection analysis (textual data)

In the reflection analysis of textual data, I analysed the reflections by first noticing and describing the use of words, phrases, and structures in Level 1: Notice and describe. Then, in Level 2: Conceptualise, I identified and conceptualised patterns and themes in these words, phrases, and structures.

#### C) Image and reflection combined (visual and textual data combined)

In the visual and textual data analysis, I combined the systematic visuo-textual data findings. The visual and textual structure was connected to form a coherent narrative (Brown & Collins, 2021). The previous analysis steps were applied to identify the structures, meanings, and expressions to formulate a cohesive narrative of interpretations (Brown & Collins, 2021)

The thematic analysis allowed for the identification, analysis, and interpretation of patterns of meaning in the qualitative data collected (Clarke et al., 2015). This was effective as the research followed inductive reasoning, which allowed the analysis to gather explicit and underlying meanings in the study (Clarke et al., 2015). In the interpretation of the visual data with the learners in the research study, there was thematic analysis. The application of thematic analysis allowed a search for themes essential to describing the phenomenon in this research study (Swain, 2018). I used systematic visuo-textual analysis of the gathered data, identifying themes from the visual data regarding the learners with dyslexia and exploring their views on their transition of schools to develop sensible and informed regulations.

By drawing on multiple data sources, data triangulation was achieved, which enhanced the validity and reliability of the findings (Stephenson & Riley, 2008). This comprehensive approach ensured a rich and nuanced understanding of the transition experiences of learners with dyslexia in mainstream education settings.

### **3.7.3 Data Set 2: Thematic analysis of semi-structured interview transcripts**

Smith et al.'s (2009) interpretive phenomenological analysis framework was applied to analyse the semi-structured interview transcripts. This was done due to its practical application in previous research. Smith et al.'s (2009) seven-step analysis guide to interpretive phenomenological analysis was used (Smith et al., 2009). These steps are:

- Step 1: Reading and re-reading the interview transcript
- Step 2: Initial noting of ideas
- Step 3: Identifying emergent themes
- Step 4: Searching for connections across emergent themes
- Step 5: Continuing with the following case
- Step 6: Looking for patterns across cases
- Step 7: Taking interpretation to a deeper level

The following steps were applied to this research on the parents' semi-structured interviews transcripts.

- Step 1: Reading and re-reading the interview transcript

Before starting the analysis, I printed the full verbal semi-structured interview transcripts with a margin on the left-hand side of the text. I then read the first semi-structured interview transcript while listening to its recording to immerse myself in the original data.

#### Step 2: Initial noting of ideas

While engaging with the transcript through reading and listening, I made a point to jot down any intriguing ideas in the margins alongside the text. As I delved into the transcript, I employed highlighters, sticky notes, and various coloured pens to underscore and pinpoint noteworthy quotes. Additionally, I took note of prominent themes that emerged throughout the reading.

#### Step 3: Identifying emergent themes

In this step, I focused on pieces of the transcripts and analysed the notes, placing them into themes. The emerging themes were generated into codes and the codes were organised into thematic categories. These themes were aligned with the research question of ‘What are the views of learners with dyslexia after transitioning from a special school to a mainstream school?’ and provided insight into addressing its queries. Patterns within the gathered datasets yielded significant themes for this study.

#### Step 4: Searching for connections across emergent themes

During this step, I searched for connections across emergent themes, abstracting and integrating themes. I searched for connections in the emergent themes in each participant’s interview transcript. Axial coding, which refers to identifying codes in the research that are more dominant than others, was used to identify potential themes (Saldaña, 2016). Additionally, a quality check was conducted, whereby the themes and coded data were reviewed to establish a relationship between them, and if there was no relationship, they were changed or discarded.

#### Step 5: Continuing with the following case

I proceeded to analyse the cases by iteratively following steps 1 to 4. Throughout this endeavour, I maintained receptivity to new themes while noting previously identified themes from earlier cases.

#### Step 6: Looking for patterns across cases

I then looked for patterns sharing higher-order qualities across each case and grouped them according to common themes.

#### Step 7: Taking interpretation to a deeper level

I refined my themes into more abstract concepts, a process commonly referred to as transcending the data (Saldaña, 2016). This involved using the predominant codes identified and establishing overarching thematic categories for each participant's collection of image reflections (Saldaña, 2016), thus forming a thematic narrative for each participant's IPA, which will be further explored in Chapter 4.

I employed Smith et al.'s (2009) seven-step IPA framework to initiate the interpretation of this dataset. This framework facilitated the analysis of each parent as a participant in semi-structured interview transcript., providing an initial layer of interpretation for this study.

### **3.7.4 Thematic IPA findings for each participant**

Following the presentation of the IPA findings for each participant, I proceeded with a thematic analysis to identify and categorise themes across all participants' findings. Employing Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach to thematic analysis, I constructed a cohesive narrative outlining the themes identified across each data set.

Beginning with a thematic analysis strategy, I initiated the process by immersing myself in the data. This involved the following steps: reading through each participant's IPA findings to gather initial impressions, generating preliminary codes in the data, and subsequently searching for recurring themes. These emergent themes were thoroughly reviewed and organised in the formulation of the findings. After this, I proceeded to finalise and document the findings.

By employing thematic analysis, I obtained a deeper layer of interpretation for this data set, enabling an analysis of the amalgamation of themes identified across each parent as a participant in semi-structured interview transcript.

#### **3.7.4.1 Thematic analysis of Data Sets 1 and 2**

Following the analysis and presentation of both data sets in the next chapter, Chapter 4, I compared the outcomes derived from the thematic analysis within the systematic visual analysis framework (Data Set 1) and the interpretive phenomenological analysis framework (Data Set 2).

Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of a thematic analysis framework, I identified themes in the data using the same steps used for the thematic analysis of Data Sets 1 and 2. I then wrote up the findings, which I discuss in Chapter 5. This process enabled me to explore the views of the participating learners with dyslexia after their transition from a special school to a mainstream school.

### **3.8 MY ROLE AS A RESEARCHER**

During my role, I actively took part in and observed the qualitative research study. My unique position at the study site provided me with a valuable opportunity to engage professionally with the participants. This pre-existing affiliation with the research site fostered greater trust among the participants, leading to more open discussions about their views on transitioning to a mainstream school (Ross, 2017). The pre-existing relationship with a participant also allowed for a rapport to be established more quickly during the research, which gave me the opportunity to generate rich data quickly (Aburn, Gott & Hoare, 2022). This role allowed me to gain a distinctive and insightful perspective on the research subject. I developed a profound comprehension of the research topic through interactions with the participants and close observation of their behaviour.

Throughout the study, I remained conscious of the potential biases that could affect my interpretation of the data. Possible bias was dealt with by allowing the research participants to respond to questions before I attempted to respond to them to avoid influencing their responses. This awareness guided my commitment to upholding trustworthy standards in the study, refraining from formulating assumptions about the research.

### **3.9 ENSURING TRUSTWORTHINESS**

In qualitative research, the criteria include credibility, dependability, and transferability to ensure an approach to trustworthiness (Steinke, 2004). Through these criteria, trustworthiness is established by building a degree of confidence in the data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality of a study (Steinke, 2004).

#### **3.9.1 Credibility**

The researchers' degree of certainty regarding the accuracy of the research findings is identified as credibility (Maree, 2016). In this study, to ensure credibility, I followed a detailed methodology and data presentation, which provided a detailed account of the research methodology, including the data collection procedures, analysis techniques, and any potential drawbacks, to allow transparency in evaluating the credibility and reliability of the study (Cope, 2014). In employing these strategies, I enhanced the credibility of the research while demonstrating trustworthiness in the findings on the views of the learners with dyslexia who transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school.

#### **3.9.2 Dependability**

In a qualitative research study, dependability is stability in the findings, which can occur over time (Anney, 2014). Dependability can be ensured in the study by the data supporting the findings and interpretations of the study (Anney, 2014). To ensure dependability in the study, there was consistency in the results with an in-depth data collection analysis.

### **3.10 ETHICAL FRAMEWORK**

Ethical considerations are how you follow your research design while upholding a specific code of conduct (Arifin, 2018). Ethical considerations follow the ethical principles of ensuring informed consent and minimising falsification in the research (Arifin, 2018). As a result, during the research process, I carefully adhered to the ethical standards approved by the University of Pretoria, the participants, and the ethical issues of visual research. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Department of Education at the University of Pretoria before commencing data collection. The study adhered to all ethical guidelines to ensure the protection of participants. The following subsections outline key ethical considerations, including

informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and trustworthiness. I adhered rigorously to the following measures and rules throughout the research procedure. Owing to the nature of the study, I was aware that any ‘heinous discovery’ could potentially have arisen. In that case, I would have recommended that the participants see a psychologist or counsellor. In the research study exploring the views of the learners with dyslexia who transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school, the key ethical considerations that were applied included confidentiality and the informed consent of all the participants.

Ethical principles governing the research upheld the rights and well-being of all the participants, aligning with established guidelines (Davis & Dyson, 2009). Informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity are paramount, with measures in place to mitigate potential risks. Photovoice, as advocated by Allain and Dwyer (2010), served as a tool for empowerment, allowing participants to share their experiences authentically.

Cultural sensitivity and respect for diversity were upheld throughout the research process, recognising the intersectionality of the participants’ identities (Stephenson & Riley, 2008). This ensured that the research benefited from a range of perspectives while honouring the voices of marginalised groups.

### **3.10.1 Informed consent**

Informed consent is achieved when a fully informed participant takes part in a research study (Christensen et al., 2015). All the participants who took part in the study received information and a consent form detailing all aspects of the phenomenological study. The adolescent participants each received an assent form, and the parents of the adolescents each received a consent form. Additionally, the participants were provided with sufficient time to consider taking part in the study and had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

### **3.10.2 Confidentiality and anonymity**

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by using coded transcriptions of interviews, accessible only to the supervisor and me. Participant anonymity was preserved in the discussion by the use of general references. The research participants were standalone individuals; therefore, there was no association between the research participant and any school governing

body or organisation. The identities of the research participants remained confidential to protect their privacy.

According to Christensen et al. (2015), confidentiality is used when the researcher aims to protect the privacy of the research participant. I identified participants through labels such as Participant A, Participant B, and Participant C to ensure their protection.

### **3.10.3 Voluntary participation**

The participants included in this study took part voluntarily. Voluntary participation was emphasised during the sampling process to ensure that they did not feel pressured to participate. Ensuring that the participants were emotionally safe was a priority for me.

### **3.10.4 Trustworthiness**

In enhancing the trustworthiness of the research study, the approach of trustworthiness outlined by Tracy (2010) was explored. The criterion is a model for quality in qualitative research with various strategies (Tracy, 2010). The criteria practices outlined by Tracy (2010) include the following:

- (a) Worthy topic: This study focused on the views of learners with dyslexia who transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school, a significant and relevant topic in education.
- (b) Rich rigour: Rigorous research methods, such as photovoice and semi-structured interviews, were employed to gather comprehensive data from multiple perspectives.
- (c) Sincerity: I maintained an authentic and genuine approach throughout the study, valuing the participants' voices and views.
- (d) Credibility: The research employed multiple data sources, including photographs and interviews, to enhance the credibility of the findings. Crystallisation of the data was also used to strengthen the validity of the interpretations.
- (e) Resonance: The research findings resonated with the views of the learners with dyslexia and their parents, capturing their views and providing insights into their transition process.

(f) Significant contribution: The study contributed to the existing knowledge by shedding light on the views of the learners with dyslexia during their transition from a special school to a mainstream school, highlighting the challenges and opportunities they encountered.

(g) Ethics: The study adhered to ethical considerations, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation of the participants. The research process also prioritised the well-being and dignity of the participants.

(h) Meaningful coherence: The research findings were analysed and presented coherently and meaningfully, aligning with the research objectives and addressing the research questions. The interpretations were supported by the participants' voices and rich data.

Further insights into these best practices for excellent qualitative research could be provided using Tracy's qualitative criterion (Tracy, 2010). By considering and addressing these qualitative research practices, the study's trustworthiness was enhanced, and its contribution to the field was strengthened.

### **3.11 LIMITATIONS**

Limitations to this study included the sampling, data collaboration, and data interpretation process. The sample for this study did not represent the full range of views among learners with dyslexia in the South African educational sector. Owing to the design of the study, I selected readily available participants based on the number of participants accessible from the same special school and mainstream school. This limited the diversity of views represented in the data. While participants from different cultural, linguistic, and racial backgrounds were included in the sample, their subjective views were shaped by their prior schooling environments, which limited the generalisability of the findings from the learners who had transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school in South Africa.

Furthermore, the nature of the data collected in this study also served as a limitation. While visual data, such as photographs, can provide a unique perspective on participants' views, the interpretations and perceptions of the researcher and participants had the potential to bias or restrict the level of understanding in data construction and interpretation. A limitation of photovoice is that the research relies mainly on interpreting the images gathered, which is vast

according to one's subjective views and understandings (Liebenberg, 2018). The essence of the photovoice technique lies in oral interaction, spontaneity, and authenticity (Liebenberg, 2018).

### **3.12 CONCLUSION**

This qualitative study explored the views of the learner participants with dyslexia who transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school and their parents. The study followed an inductive approach throughout the research process and used interpretivist principles to explore the views of the learners with dyslexia who transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school. I used a relativist ontological and interpretive epistemological stance while deciding on the appropriate data-gathering and interpretation methods for this study. I applied a phenomenological research design to gather pictures and semi-structured interviews with the eight participants, made up of four South African learners with dyslexia and one of each of their parents. I followed a non-probability convenience sampling strategy and used systematic visual analysis and a seven-step IPA framework to interpret the visual and semi-structured interview data. Thematic analysis was used to develop the findings of the study. Combining visual, theoretical, and phenomenological perspectives offered a holistic understanding of the topic. The prior anticipated challenges, such as participant engagement and ethical considerations, were addressed through careful planning and adherence to established guidelines. The next chapter focuses on presenting the research findings of this study.

## CHAPTER 4: DISPLAY OF ANALYSIS OF DATA SET 1

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in Chapter 3, I analysed the written data, including narrative reflections and the visual data (photographs), using Brown and Collins's (2021) systematic visuo-textual analysis framework. The results from the first data set were covered in this chapter.

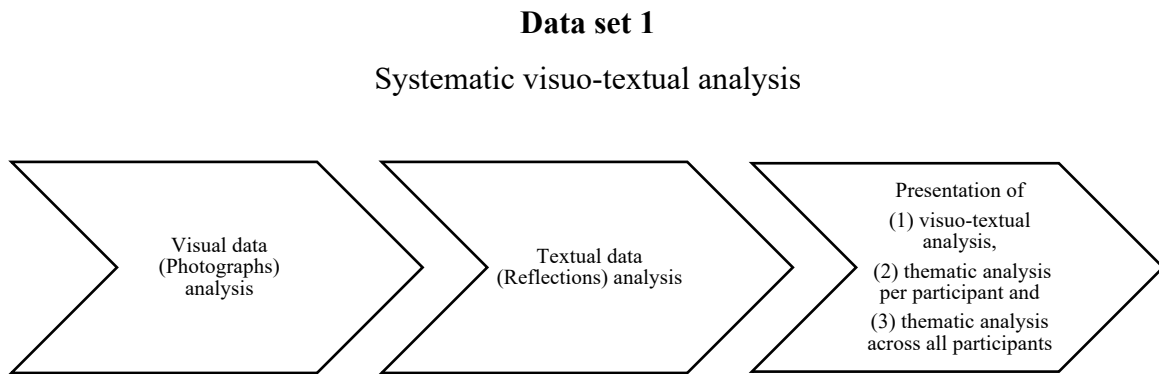


Figure 4.1: Analysis of Data Set 1

The data were analysed using a three-phase procedure. Phase 1 involved a systematic visuo-textual analysis of each participant's photographs and narrative reflections. Phase 2 involved compiling the analysis of each participant's photographs and narrative reflections into a group. Phase 3 was a thematic analysis of the photographs from each participant and the narratives shared by all the participants.

The following section focuses on analysing the pictures and narrative reflections submitted by the four participants in this study.

## 4.2 ANALYSIS OF EACH LEARNER PARTICIPANT

### 4.2.1 Participant 1



Figure 4.2: The challenge of reading

One thing that was hard for me when changing schools was the reading. Reading to me is like a fear, and it's a big one in my life. However, I have learnt to face my fear, and now it's not as big of a fear as it used to be. (Participant 1)

Table 4.1: Participant 1. Analysis 1

Analysis	Image analysis (visual data)	Reflection analysis (textual data)	Image and reflection combined
Level 1: Note and describe	<p>Participant 1 accessed this picture from the internet. The overall layout of the picture includes a central figure of a female character sitting at a desk, looking at a book reading with a worried expression on her face.</p> <p>The background in the image is minimal, focusing all the attention on the scattered letters and the central figure in her interaction with reading the book. The letters scattered in the background of the image contribute to</p>	<p>In the text, Participant 1 addressed the difficulty she faced with reading after transitioning from a particular school to a mainstream school.</p> <p>Participant 1 addressed reading as a significant fear. However, she notes her progress in overcoming this fear, indicating development and establishing coping mechanisms.</p>	<p>Anxiety</p> <p>Overwhelming</p> <p>Challenge</p> <p>Fear</p> <p>Overcome</p> <p>Determination</p> <p>Growth</p>

	<p>visual noise, suggesting the overwhelming influx of information. The floating letters resemble a visual metaphor for the mental chaos that Participant 1 experienced while reading.</p> <p>The book being read by the figure is prominently displayed, indicating the significance of the image.</p> <p>The central figure has wide eyes that are downward facing towards the book. Coupled with the wide eyes, the figure has a slight furrowing of her eyebrows. Her hands are firmly placed on the book, and she is near the book, suggesting an intense focus. These expressions show concern or fear, emphasising her discomfort while reading.</p>		
<p>Level 2: Conceptualise</p>	<p>In the picture, the central figure, a female character, represents a focus on her with a minimal background, which helps to emphasise the significance of the character's struggle, isolating and highlighting its intensity.</p> <p>The visual letters floating highlight the emotional weight of reading that Participant 1 feels, depicting it as a source of anxiety for them.</p>	<p>Participant 1 underscores the description of reading as a significant fear, emphasising that it is a major obstacle impacting her academic and personal life. Despite this, the participant shows growth and resilience as they mention reducing this fear, illustrating personal growth.</p>	<p>Being surrounded by jumbled letters while grasping a book evokes feelings of anxiety and fear, underscoring the challenging experience of learning despite the characters' proximity to understanding. Her determination to overcome and grow through this academic challenge underscores her journey from fear to empowerment.</p>

	<p>The expression on the character's face conveys confusion, directly reflecting her emotional state towards the task of reading. Her wide eyes facing downward towards the book indicate heightened alertness for the learner while reading. The furrowing of her eyebrows enhances the expression of confusion, and the character's facial muscles appear tense and lack a smile. The character's proximity to the book suggests a sign of trying to concentrate.</p> <p>The book, open on the table, serves as a symbol for the challenge she faces when reading.</p>		
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Figure 4.3: Diverse teaching styles

Changing schools came with changing teachers but for me, I have many more teachers. Each teacher has different ways and methods, which can be really confusing at times. What I have learnt is to find a way that I understand, and I can learn from. (Participant 1)

Table 4.2: Participant 1. Analysis 2

Analysis	Image analysis (visual data)	Reflection analysis (textual data)	Image and reflection combined
<p>Level 1: Note and describe</p>	<p>Participant 1 accessed this picture from the internet. The overall layout of the picture depicts a female teacher in front of a blackboard, holding a book in her left hand and chalk in the other, engaging as a teacher.</p> <p>The central figure depicted in the image, the teacher, appears cheerful and confident, which is conveyed by her smile and eye contact with the viewer.</p> <p>She is wearing professional attire that suggests a formal and structured educational environment, such as the mainstream school that this learner attends.</p> <p>Behind the figure is a blackboard. It is clean, suggesting that the</p>	<p>In the text, Participant 1 addresses the challenges she faced when adapting to the various teachers with different teaching methods at her new mainstream school. The participant said that she needed to get used to having many more teachers.</p> <p>She also addresses the confusion that the diverse methods she was exposed to caused; however, it underscores that this participant learnt methods for adaptation to better cope with her learning environment.</p>	<p>Confusion Approachable Prepared. Interactive Professional Enthusiastic Overwhelmed</p>

	audience focuses solely on her teaching method.		
Level 2: Conceptualise	<p>In Figure 4.3, the central figure of a female character represents a focus on the teacher in the class. The teacher's posture and expression, holding educational tools such as a book and chalk, symbolises clarity and an active approach to education.</p> <p>The demeanour of the central figure in the image is cheerful, representing the accessibility and positive influence that diverse teaching styles can have on learners, giving them access to the best method suited to them for learning.</p> <p>The teachers' attire communicates professionalism and preparedness, which are crucial for effective teaching and discipline in a classroom. She is</p>	<p>Participant 1 underscores navigating educational diversity, addressing how she had to adapt to multiple teaching styles, reflect on challenges faced, and learn opportunities in educational diversity.</p> <p>Participant 1 also comments on her ability to find and adapt to a learning method that worked for her, showcasing her resilience and proactive learning.</p>	<p>Being introduced to various teaching styles and methods evoked confusion in Participant 1, underscoring the challenging experience of adapting to new educational approaches despite the teacher's approachable demeanour. The prepared and professional manner of the participants' teachers, combined with their interactive and enthusiastic teaching, underlines the student's journey from initial confusion to gaining understanding. This progression showcases Participant 1's ability to navigate various learning environments.</p>

	<p>standing upright, showing a proactive approach to engagement, and her smile makes her warm and welcoming, allowing the learners to feel she is approachable.</p> <p>The clear blackboard behind her emphasises her role as the primary source of knowledge, highlighting a focus on methodology.</p>		
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Figure 4.4: Finding my people

Finding the right group of people to hang out with also came with changing schools. I've found the right group of friends to hang out with that will lead me on a good path and away from bad situations. (Participant 1)

Table 4.3: Participant 1. Analysis 3

Analysis	Image analysis (visual data)	Reflection analysis (textual data)	Image and reflection combined
<p>Level 1:</p> <p>Note and describe</p>	<p>Participant 1 accessed this picture from the internet. The overall layout of the picture depicts a group of four diverse friends standing closely together, each showing different signs of comfort and happiness. There is nothing in the background of the image that focuses all the attention on the interaction between the four friends and places emphasis on them.</p> <p>Overall, each person in the image has a unique style, which contributes to the overall diversity of the group. The relaxed and open body language, with arms or hands around each other, suggests friendliness among them.</p> <p>The first person on the left of the image is a teenage girl. She showcases a casual look with high-waisted jeans and a tucked-in T-shirt. Her arms are crossed with her left arm over her right, suggesting she is more intuitive and</p>	<p>In the text, Participant 1 addresses the fact that her transition to a new school led her to find a new group of friends who influenced her positively.</p> <p>The participant mentions that she steered clear of bad situations thanks to this new group of friends, highlighting how the people you surround yourself with can impact you.</p>	<p>Friendship</p> <p>Diversity</p> <p>Comfort</p> <p>Inclusion</p> <p>Belonging</p> <p>Support</p>

	<p>creative in personality. Her other hand is on her hip, conveying confidence and ease.</p> <p>The second person on the left of the image is a teenage boy who is wearing a plain, loose-fitting shirt and trousers, showing a relaxed vibe. His body language is upright yet relaxed. He has his arm around the first figure, indicating closeness. He has an open smile, showing contentment and active participation in this group dynamic.</p> <p>The third person in this image is a teenage boy. His style is more colourful and layered, with a red jacket over a shirt, signifying a more outgoing personality. He is standing in the centre of the group, suggesting he might be a central figure or member of this group. His broad smile reflects a cheerful disposition.</p> <p>The fourth person on the right of this image is a teenage girl. She is dressed in a more subdued colour palette than the others. Her</p>		
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	<p>smiling face indicates she is engaged with the group.</p>		
<p>Level 2: Conceptualise</p>	<p>In the picture, the central figures are all close, with cheerful expressions on their faces, illustrating social bonds and inclusion between peers and a welcoming atmosphere.</p> <p>The image shows diversity and individuality by their varied appearances, representing individual identities and emphasising acceptance and belonging.</p> <p>The image shows ease and comfort through relaxed body language and physical contact among the group, suggesting comfort and trust within the friendship circle.</p> <p>There is also a focus on relationships due to the lack of a detailed background, focusing the viewer's attention on the characters and their relationships.</p>	<p>In her text, Participant 1 underlines the importance of social adaptation and the positive impact that finding supportive friends in new environments could have on your life.</p> <p>The participant also addresses how crucial your choice of friends is to personal development and to avoid negative scenarios.</p>	<p>For Participant 1, finding a group of friends at her new school evoked feelings of warmth and security in her, underscoring the comforting experience of discovering diversity and inclusion in her environment. The supportive and engaging nature of the group and a strong sense of belonging and friendship highlight a deep understanding of community. This progression showcases the participants' ability to navigate new social settings, enriched by the diverse backgrounds and personalities within their circle of friends.</p>



Figure 4.5: My passion for hockey

Before I changed schools, I played indoor hockey with my old friends, and that was the only way I could see them because we were all in different schools. When I changed schools, I got to live my dream. From the time that I was in Grade 1, I wanted to play hockey on my school's Astro [turf] with a huge crowd supporting and cheering for me and my teammates. Now that I play hockey at my school, I feel as if I have accomplished so much and worked hard for the position I'm in now, and that was a big shift for me. I thought I wasn't going to make it because I only played hockey on the weekends, and I didn't practice a lot. But now I have been in the A team twice. As someone with dyslexia coming from a small school which didn't have any sports and having struggled to learn, read, and write for three years, now I am in a public school with my friends, and I work like I have no dyslexia, I am at the school I've always wanted to go too. (Participant 1)

Table 4.4: Participant 1. Analysis 4

Analysis	Image analysis (visual data)	Reflection analysis (textual data)	Image and reflection combined
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<p>Level 1: Note and describe</p>	<p>Participant 1 accessed this picture from the internet. The picture depicts two female hockey players in an outdoor setting on a hockey Astro, engaged in a game, wielding hockey sticks, and competing for a ball.</p> <p>Both figures are dressed in different colourful sports uniforms, suggesting they are on opposing teams, with one player in orange and the other in red.</p> <p>In the background, an outdoor hockey field with artificial turf and stadium lights is featured, suggesting a semi-professional setting for sporting matches.</p> <p>The expressions on both the teenage girls' faces are determination and focus, highlighting the intensity of the moment and joy and fulfilment, clearly taking part in something they are passionate about.</p>	<p>In the text, Participant 1 addresses her transition from playing indoor hockey with her friends on separate premises to achieving her dream of playing for her school team with significant support.</p> <p>She mentions overcoming challenges related to her dyslexia and how she transitioned from a smaller school with no sports programme to a mainstream school where she now thrives.</p> <p>Participant 1 also expresses a sense of accomplishment and pride in making the A team, reflecting on her growth.</p>	<p>Passion Achievement Dedication Empowerment Resilience Growth</p>
<p>Level 2: Conceptualise</p>	<p>In this picture, the central figures are in an active stance, showing intense focus and illustrating the</p>	<p>Participant 1 underlines her achievements and transitions, mentioning her growth journey in moving from casually playing hockey to a more</p>	<p>For Participant 1, entering a new school allowed her to embrace the sport of hockey with ignited feelings of passion and</p>

	<p>physical engagement involved in hockey.</p> <p>We see a sense of team identity and spirit through their uniforms, differentiating the teams and symbolising unity within a shared passion for the sport.</p> <p>There is emotional intensity in the facial expressions conveyed by the players, showing their passion and commitment to the game and reflecting the joy the sport brings both teams.</p> <p>The setting of the hockey field appears to be well-maintained, with lighting highlighting this sport's high-quality facilities and space for its spectators.</p>	<p>structured, competitive team. Her texts also highlight challenges being overcome, showing resilience and determination to overcome her educational and personal challenges.</p> <p>Participant 1 acknowledges a sense of fulfilment, emphasising the satisfaction and validation she feels from her involvement in hockey.</p>	<p>empowerment, highlighting her experience of achieving a lifelong dream. This participant's dedication to the sport and resilience in overcoming personal and academic challenges shows a growth journey. Participant 1 also emphasises a sense of achievement from making the A team twice, despite her obstacles, showing commitment.</p>
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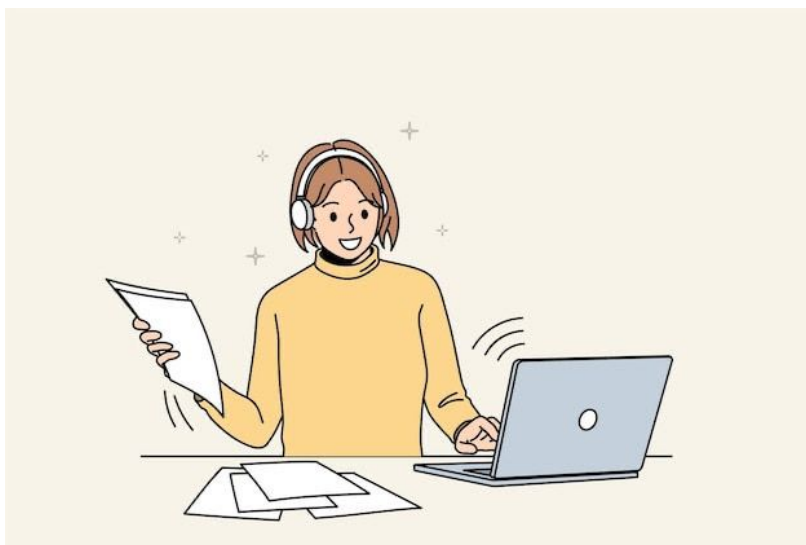


Figure 4.6: Computer aid

The three years of being at primary school, not knowing that I had dyslexia, was very hard on me because I had no idea why I was struggling so much. It was very hard for me to understand what was going on until I got to a school that uses a computer and had one-on-one time with the teachers, to also switch to a school that treats everyone the same. Being at a small school helped me understand and prepare me for the big challenges in the future such as going to high school. Something that was very confusing for me was that we didn't use computers in our classes, whereas in the small school, that's all we used. I never really used to like the computer but going to a different school where there is no computer at all only when I right exams was a big change. I have adapted to the change and work very hard. (Participant 1)

Table 4.5: Participant 1. Analysis 5

Analysis	Image analysis (visual data)	Reflection analysis (textual data)	Image and reflection combined
Level 1: Note and describe	<p>Participant 1 accessed this picture from the internet. The overall layout of the picture depicts a young woman using a computer and holding papers, with headphones on, looking as though she is busy with a learning activity.</p> <p>The figure is smiling, showing a positive interaction while using a computer to aid her learning. Her posture is also upright, suggesting</p>	<p>In the text, Participant 1 addressed her transition from a primary school without a computer to a special school that integrated technology into learning, which helped her manage her dyslexia.</p> <p>Participant 1 mentions her initial struggle with computers but addresses how she has adapted to her environment using such technology.</p>	<p>Technology</p> <p>Support</p> <p>Comfort</p> <p>Preparation</p> <p>Accessibility</p> <p>Adaptation</p>

	<p>that she is focused and attentive to her work.</p> <p>Papers on the desk surrounding the computer, suggest that the figure is taking a multifaceted approach to her studies.</p> <p>The environment around the figure is empty and minimalistic, with no distractions, thus emphasising the figure's focus on her learning activity.</p>	<p>The participant also underlines in the text how her new mainstream school does not use a computer in class, only during her examinations, which was difficult for her to adapt to.</p>	
<p>Level 2: Conceptualise</p>	<p>Technology integration is depicted in this image, and we see a computer highlighting modern educational tools to facilitate learning, especially for learners with dyslexia.</p> <p>We see a positive engagement in her expression with headphones, suggesting that she receives auditory information aiding the learning process.</p> <p>The two learning tools of a computer and paperwork imply a diverse multimodal learning environment accommodating the various learning styles.</p>	<p>Participant 1 underlines the critical role technology in supporting educational outcomes for this learner with dyslexia.</p> <p>Additionally, we see a reflection of growth in the participant's ability to adapt to her changing learning environments with the changing technology.</p> <p>The learner also mentions the equal treatment experienced at her special school, which shows a supportive culture crucial for those with dyslexia.</p>	<p>For this participant, transitioning to a new school enabled the embrace of educational tools such as the computer, helping support learning. This change highlighted her journey in adapting to a new learning environment equipped with technological support. The participant then continued to adapt from using her computer regularly in class to only during examinations for aid. This emphasises the participants' resilience and commitment to overcoming her educational challenges and adapting to the different tools the learners had available.</p>

	<p>The focused learning space is clean and uncluttered, which shows learners' concentration. Also symbolised is how learning on the computer for this learner drowned out the background noise, helping her focus on the task at hand.</p>		
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### 4.2.2 Participant 2

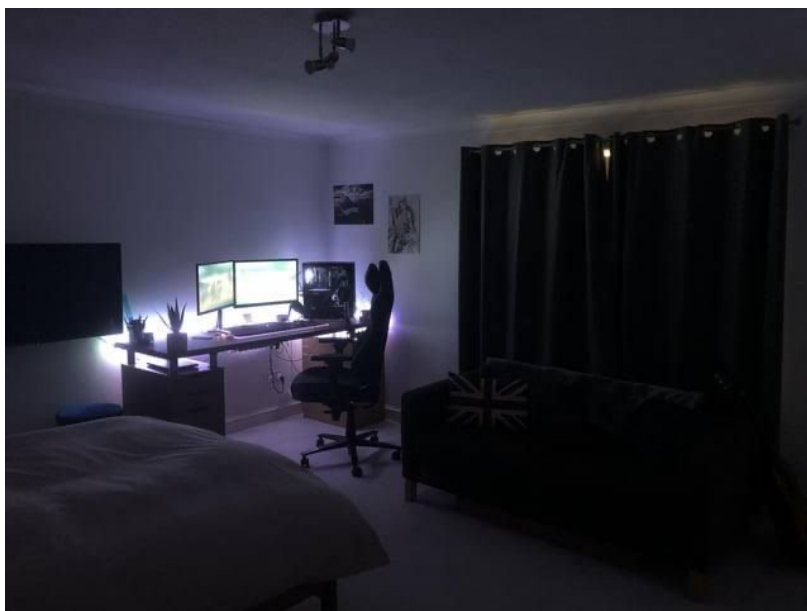


Figure 4.7: Mental escape

I spend a lot of time gaming in my room with the curtains closed. Being in a dark space helps me escape and recharge from a mentally tiring school day. (Participant 2)

Table 4.6: Participant 2. Analysis 1

Analysis	Image analysis (visual data)	Reflection analysis (textual data)	Image and reflection combined

<p>Level 1: Note and describe</p>	<p>Participant 2 accessed this picture from the internet. The overall layout of the picture includes a dimly lit room consisting of black curtains, which are drawn, adding to the dark and enclosed feeling of the space. The minimal lighting suggests a preference for a controlled and private setting. The primary light source in the room appears to be the two large computer monitors on the desk. The multi-monitor setup indicates a focus on gaming, and the chair is suitable for long gaming sessions. LED lighting around the desk area contributes to the gaming experience.</p>	<p>Participant 2 used gaming in his room to access his centre of relaxation. The dark room with curtains closed may represent Participant 2's effort to detach himself from the real world and escape from reality from tiring school days.</p>	<p>Escape Sanctity Gaming Anxiety Loneliness Overwhelmed Vulnerability Isolation</p>
<p>Level 2: Conceptualise</p>	<p>Participant 2 used gaming to escape his daily stresses, particularly school-related stress. This implies that gaming was not just a hobby but an essential part of his mental relaxation.</p> <p>There are elements of isolation from the drawn curtains. They symbolise a desire to isolate from the outside world. This can be interpreted as a need to create a safe bubble where external distractions are minimised, allowing him to</p>	<p>Participant 2 underlines the role of the room as a sanctuary where he can recharge mentally. This space adds to the importance of having a dedicated safe space for him, which allows for relaxation and space to escape the demanding school schedule.</p>	<p>Escaping into the dark room to game evokes feelings of safety and security while providing one with a coping mechanism to recharge.</p>

	<p>immerse himself in his gaming and recharge from the day.</p> <p>The individual's preference for a dark room represents that he finds solace in a controlled, low-light environment. Again, this minimises any external distractions, contributing to the sense of a personal space to escape to.</p> <p>Security, isolation, and escapement are all emotions observed in the personal space depicted above.</p>		
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Figure 4.8: Lost in the crowd

Sometimes I feel like another number lost in the crowd. I don't have a personal relationship with my teachers, and it makes it harder for me to ask questions because I am shy. (Participant 2)

Table 4.7: Participant 2. Analysis 2

Analysis	Image analysis (visual data)	Reflection analysis (textual data)	Image and reflection combined
<p>Level 1: Note and describe</p>	<p>Participant 2 accessed this picture from the internet. The picture is composed of a group of diverse individuals who are closely packed, with one central figure (with a downcast expression) who is seemingly emotionally detached from her surroundings. The use of colour in the image consists of muted, earthy tones, yet there are distinct colours for each person. This enhances the feeling of diversity among the crowd, indicating individuality. The visual uniformity of the image could symbolise blending identities in a large group. The facial expressions of the central figure look visibly distressed or sad, with her eyes downcast. Her facial expression contrasts strongly with the neutral or slightly disengaged expressions of those around her.</p>	<p>Participant 2 used the textual data to express the feelings of being just another number, lacking personal connection with teachers, compounded by shyness. Articulated are the difficulties in communication due to the absence of personal relationships with those around the individual.</p>	<p>Isolation Overlooked Disconnection Muted Unseen Alienation Desolate Crowded</p>

<p>Level 2: Conceptualise</p>	<p>Participant 2 underlines the central positioning of the individual to underscore their uniqueness and the emotional weight that they carry amongst the vast number of individuals.</p> <p>In addition, the central positioning of the individual, with her white shirt, makes her stand out as isolated and distinct, emphasising her feelings of being lost. Despite the individuals' physical proximity to others, the illustration creates a sense of loneliness and separation.</p> <p>The uniformity in colour and diversity in the image may symbolise blending identities as they are together in a similar environment, yet their personal emotional experiences may differ.</p>	<p>Participant 2 underlines the visual representation of being lost in a crowd. This underlines his identity and personal recognition of his issues in social structures as he transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school. Participant 2 mentions his shyness and the lack of personal connection to those around him, including his relationships with the teachers and other learners. This suggests a barrier for the learner that prevents meaningful engagement in his school settings. Hence, this emphasises isolation and a lack of personal connections during transitioning schools.</p>	<p>Being surrounded yet unseen in the crowd evokes feelings of isolation and disconnection, underscoring the lonely experience of being overlooked despite their proximity to others.</p>
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Figure 4.9: Overwhelming noise

There are many more kids in my class, and they make too much noise from talking. I find this overwhelming as it is very distracting and harder to concentrate than at my old school. (Participant 2)

Table 4.8: Participant 2. Analysis 3

Analysis	Image analysis (visual data)	Reflection analysis (textual data)	Image and reflection combined
Level 1: Note and describe	Participant 2 accessed this picture from the internet. The picture is composed of a group of learners in a classroom. The green chalkboard is at the centre of the picture, and desks are in front. Five children are in the classroom; however, they are all engaged in different activities around a chalkboard.  The classroom environment is filled with	Participant 2 mentioned an increase in class size, and as a result, the noise from talking increased, which the learner described as overwhelming. The learner found the noise level distracting compared to his quieter previous school setting, which allowed him to focus more.	Overstimulating Distracting Overwhelming Energetic Chaotic Cluttered Noisy

	<p>bright colours, with a large green chalkboard, soft pinks, and purples painting a cheerful and lively classroom. Numerous scattered papers lie on the floor, emphasising a chaotic atmosphere.</p> <p>In the classroom, each learner is taking part in a different activity: one learner is at the board drawing, another is watching the learner draw, a third learner is throwing a paper aeroplane around the classroom, while others are seated playing on their phone or talking. There does not appear to be a teacher in the classroom.</p>		
<p>Level 2: Conceptualise</p>	<p>The bustling classroom scene, filled with children engaged in various activities, represents a vibrant and active learning environment. This setting symbolises mainstream education's dynamic and interactive nature, where learning happens in multiple forms and interactions.</p> <p>There is a variety of engagement in the classroom depicted. There is no teacher in the image trying to organise the learners. Each learner in</p>	<p>There is stress for this learner, which the noise in the classroom environment has highlighted. A direct correlation between busyness and a sense of auditory overload impacts Participant 2's ability to concentrate on his classwork.</p> <p>Participant 2 also compares the different learning environments he experienced, mentioning the previous school setting and how the student feels discomfort now in the noisier environment.</p>	<p>The classroom, buzzing with noise and activity, evokes feelings in the learner of being overstimulated and distracted, underscoring the overwhelming experience of trying to concentrate amid chaos. The energetic yet chaotic atmosphere, filled with clutter and constant noise, makes it challenging for this learner to focus, highlighting his struggles in such a busy educational environment.</p>

	<p>the classroom is involved in a different activity, such as drawing on the board or throwing paper aeroplanes. This diversity in engagement reflects individual learning behaviours within a classroom setting. It highlights the natural variety in how learners interact differently with their learning environments.</p> <p>There is visual chaos in the image. The scattered papers and colourful classroom create a chaotic atmosphere that is visually stimulating for learners; however, for others, it can be potentially overwhelming.</p> <p>This highly active environment, for this learner, contributes to sensory overload, affecting his ability to focus and maintain calmness, making it especially hard to concentrate as he is not accustomed to such stimulation.</p>		
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Figure 4.10: Feels normal

There are a diverse range of people and cultures at my school, which makes an atmosphere I really like. It makes me feel normal. (Participant 2)

Table 4.9: Participant 2. Analysis 4

Analysis	Image analysis (visual data)	Reflection analysis (textual data)	Image and reflection combined
Level 1: Note and describe	<p>Participant 2 accessed this picture from the internet. The picture depicts five learners of diverse ethnic backgrounds sitting at desks in a classroom.</p> <p>Each child is engaged in their schoolwork differently. In the front row, the learner on the left is writing. The learner on the right is listening, just as the first learner on the left in the second row. The learner in the middle of the second row is busy</p>	<p>Participant 2 comments on a diverse range of people and cultures contributing to the atmosphere in the classroom, which this participant enjoys.</p> <p>As the participant was previously in a special school, his exposure to diverse cultures was minimal compared to his new mainstream school.</p> <p>The participant highlights the feeling of normalcy derived from being in this multicultural environment</p>	<p>Diversity</p> <p>Inclusion</p> <p>Normalcy</p> <p>Multicultural</p> <p>Community</p>

	<p>reading. The learner on the right-hand side of the second row is raising their hand.</p> <p>The classroom depicted in this image is bright and orderly, including educational materials such as textbooks, pens and paper to write on. There is also an apple visible on one of the learners' desks. All of the learners in this image appear happy and content in the classroom depicted.</p>	<p>around other learners of various backgrounds.</p>	
<p>Level 2: Conceptualise</p>	<p>The visual representation of diverse ethnicities amongst the learners mirrors a real-world multicultural setting, promoting a sense of belonging and equality for these learners and contributing to a sense of inclusion.</p> <p>The variety of activities occurring among the different learners showcases different learning styles and interests that the individuals have. This emphasises that 'normal' includes a spectrum of behaviours and interactions and that</p>	<p>Appreciation is highlighted in this image. The appreciation is for cultural enrichment and the diversity that the participant is exposed to in the school setting. The participant highlights the fact that this diversity among learners enhances the student's sense of normalcy, promoting his exposure to other cultures and contributing to understanding and acceptance.</p> <p>Participant 2 also emphasises that within this diversity, there is normalisation. The learner feels comfort and enjoyment in the</p>	<p>Being surrounded by classmates from diverse backgrounds and cultures evokes feelings of inclusion and community in Participant 2, underscoring the enriching experience of normalcy in a multicultural environment. The vibrant, shared space highlights the beauty of diversity, fostering a sense of belonging and acceptance among all learners.</p>

	<p>there is individuality in learning.</p> <p>The image paints an organised and vibrant classroom setting, creating an inviting and conducive atmosphere for learning and reflecting a positive educational experience for the learners in the classroom.</p> <p>The cheerful expressions and engagement from the learners in the image indicate a healthy and positive emotional and social environment within the classroom.</p>	<p>multicultural environment and shows how diversity can create a new definition of normal, fostering an inclusive community within mainstream schools.</p>	
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Figure 4.11: Demand

I have much more work to complete with all my new subjects. They give me less breaks, and I feel like there is so much more that is demanded of me. (Participant 2)

Table 4.10: Participant 2. Analysis 5

Analysis	Image analysis (visual data)	Reflection analysis (textual data)	Image and reflection combined
Level 1:  Note and describe	<p>Participant 2 accessed this image from the internet. The picture depicts a young woman studying at a desk. She is surrounded by a large desk that is cluttered with two piles of textbooks, more than nine books, a laptop, and coffee cups, one of which is full and three are empty.</p> <p>The central figure appears stressed as she has one hand resting on her forehead, and her face looks worried, with downcast eyes, furrowed brows, and a tense expression. The swirling lines above her head and a ticking clock to the right of the image symbolise stress, which enhances a feeling of pressure.</p>	<p>In the text, Participant 2 mentions an increased workload due to having received new subjects. He notes that with these new subjects, he is subject to fewer breaks and higher demands to complete his responsibilities for each subject. Participant 2 feels that much more is demanded of him, creating a sense of being overwhelmed, which adds to his stress.</p>	Stressed  Overwhelmed  Demanding  Pressure  Time-sensitive  Exhausted  Burdened
Level 2:  Conceptualise	<p>The individual is sitting at a cluttered desk around which are multiple books piled high and an electronic device, which illustrates the overwhelming amount of study</p>	<p>There is an increase in academic demands for Participant 2. This heightened academic expectation correlates with his stress in meeting all his academic demands.</p>	<p>Being surrounded by towering stacks of books and relentless deadlines evokes stress and exhaustion. The demanding deadlines contribute to the participant being</p>

	<p>materials and tasks the student faces.</p> <p>This overwhelming feeling shows emotional stress, reiterated by the body language and facial expressions. She conveys a high level of stress and anxiety due to the academic pressures. The character's slightly furrowed eyebrows suggest concentration and concern, typical of feeling anxious or overwhelmed. The character is placing her hand on her forehead, indicating emotion associated with worry or concern. Her eyes are downcast, reflecting defeat, a gesture done when facing complex problems. Overall, a tense expression of her facial features suggests she is troubled.</p> <p>There is time pressure shown by the inclusion of the clock which highlights and adds to the character's academic stress.</p>	<p>Participant 2 perceives these increased expectations, which resemble feelings of being overwhelmed that continue to intensify with these continuous demands.</p>	<p>overwhelmed. The pressure-packed, time-sensitive environment highlights the reality of academic demands that weigh heavily on the participants' ability to cope.</p>
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### 4.2.3 Participant 3



Figure 4.12: Alone during break

I came from a school which had a lot less kids. My socialising skills are terrible. I find it hard to have conversations with people, and it is a bit difficult to make friends with people. I sit alone at break. (Participant 3)

Table 4.11: Participant 3. Analysis 1

Analysis	Image analysis (visual data)	Reflection analysis (textual data)	Image and reflection combined
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<p>Level 1: Note and describe</p>	<p>Participant 3 had this AI image generated by ChatGPT. The picture depicts a young boy sitting alone on a bench in a busy schoolyard, where all the learners around him interact.</p> <p>The expression on the central figure's face in the image is pensive and slightly withdrawn, focusing on the ground or away from others. The boy's body language is closed off, with arms together, enhancing his isolation.</p> <p>In the image, the school playground is filled with learners in their school uniforms, suggesting a structured learning environment.</p>	<p>Participant 3 mentions in the text the difficulties he faced when socialising due to transitioning from a special school to a mainstream school. The participant highlights that he lacks conversation skills, making it hard to integrate socially with his peers.</p> <p>Participant 3 also addresses that he sits alone during breaks as he finds it difficult to make friends.</p>	<p>Isolation Loneliness Disconnection Withdrawn Struggle Alienation Solitude</p>
<p>Level 2: Conceptualise</p>	<p>The solitary figure in the image is amidst a lively background of learners, highlighting the stark contrast between his isolation and the bustling social environment around him. This emphasises the participants' feelings of isolation amidst activity around them.</p> <p>There is a visual representation of disconnection through</p>	<p>Participant 3 indicates the social challenges he has been exposed to during his transition as he struggled to adjust to a larger and more socially demanding environment.</p> <p>His feelings of loneliness are emphasised, and his adjustment has had an emotional impact on him, leading him to feel alienated and struggling</p>	<p>Being surrounded by playful peers and lively interactions evokes feelings of isolation and loneliness for the participant. His withdrawn demeanour and disconnection from his surroundings contribute to a profound sense of alienation. The struggle to engage, compounded by his solitude in a bustling school environment, underscores the emotional</p>

	<p>the central figures' facial expressions. He has a closed body posture, with his arms crossed, reflecting his struggle to connect with his peers, indicating feelings of social disengagement.</p> <p>The image's background represents a structured social setting, as the uniformed learners are organised on a playground, painting a picture of a setting where social interactions are expected, emphasising the boy's isolation.</p>	<p>with the challenge of forming new friendships with his peers in this new mainstream school setting.</p>	<p>challenges he faced while transitioning schools. This indicates the reality of social isolation and weighs heavily on Participant 3's ability to connect and thrive.</p>
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Figure 4.13: Team tennis

The school I went to before did not offer my sport so I had to go to a club. There was a big distance between the club and my school so the new school helps me save time of riding to the courts. Playing my sport helps me use up my energy from sitting all day and I like that I can be a part of a team. (Participant 3)

Table 4.12: Participant 3. Analysis 2

Analysis	Image analysis (visual data)	Reflection analysis (textual data)	Image and reflection combined
Level 1: Note and describe	<p>Participant 3 had this AI image generated by ChatGPT. The image shows four individuals, divided equally across the court, engaged in a double's tennis match on a sunny day,</p> <p>All the players in the image are dressed in athletic wear, suggesting a competitive sports setting at the school. They are all in motion, showing an active scene.</p> <p>The outdoor tennis court is surrounded by lush greenery, indicating a well-maintained sports facility.</p>	<p>In their text, Participant 3 addressed the convenience of having sport offered at his new mainstream school, allowing him to save on travel time to a distant club, which he had previously done, as tennis was not provided at his previous special school.</p> <p>The participant also discusses the benefits of playing tennis, allowing him to use his energy as he sits all day at school. It was also noticed that the participant commented on how much he likes being part of a team while playing this sport.</p>	<p>Collaboration</p> <p>Energy</p> <p>Accessibility</p> <p>Integration</p> <p>Unity</p> <p>Cooperation</p> <p>Athleticism</p> <p>Community</p>
Level 2: Conceptualise	<p>The visual data shows teamwork and engagement among the pairs playing tennis. This represents the cooperative and interactive nature of team sports, emphasising teamwork for the</p>	<p>In this text, we see Participant 3 addressing how he feels about the physical and social benefits of playing tennis. He mentions using up his energy and how he experienced team involvement, illustrating</p>	<p>Engaging in a dynamic team sport like tennis evokes a sense of community for this participant. His active participation and visible collaboration among teammates contribute to a sense of unity and</p>

	<p>participant. Dynamic interaction is also highlighted through the active postures and movements of the players.</p> <p>From the image, a sense of unity and discipline through the structured, uniform attire can be identified.</p> <p>The well-maintained tennis court reflects the mainstream schools' support of sports, encouraging physical activity and teamwork.</p>	<p>the dual benefits of sports in promoting physical health and social integration.</p> <p>The participant also recognised accessibility and convenience by highlighting the logistical benefits of the new mainstream schools' proximity to sports facilities, enhancing participation opportunities for this learner.</p>	<p>integration. The cooperation on the court, compounded by the accessibility of sports facilities at the new school, features the physical and social benefits he experiences. This indicates the reality of athletic integration and enhances the participant's ability to connect within his new schooling environment.</p>
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Figure 4.14: New subjects

My old school did not offer all the subjects so in the new school all the new subjects were very hard for me. It makes it hard because all the other people expect me to know some information, but I have not had the work before. Sometimes, I struggle

to understand new work and I need to spend more time understanding [it] first before I can remember. (Participant3)

Table 4.13: Participant 3. Analysis 3

Analysis	Image analysis (visual data)	Reflection analysis (textual data)	Image and reflection combined
<p>Level 1: Note and describe</p>	<p>Participant 3 had this AI image generated by ChatGPT. The image represents a central figure, a young boy, surrounded by piles and piles of textbooks. The textbooks around the figure are all labelled with different subject names, such as History, Mathematics, and Science. The central figure's expression in this image represents confusion as he tries to study from one of the open books in front of him. This figure's body language shows that his facial features are tightened, and his eyebrows are slightly furrowed. He has his eyes open wide. His posture resembles a stooped-down shoulders, and he is leaning firmly against the back of his chair. Surrounding the figure are books of all colours, labelled with different academic subjects,</p>	<p>In the text, Participant 3 addressed the challenge of adapting to new subjects at his new mainstream school, which were not offered at his previous special school.</p> <p>He also mentions the expectations from others, placing pressure on the participant to know certain information. He feels a personal struggle with this new content.</p>	<p>Overwhelmed Challenging Intensive Isolated Demanding Academic Burdened</p>

	emphasising the diversity that the participant has in learning materials. There are very bright colours in the textbooks. The setting of this image is an isolated study area, suggesting a focus on academic learning.		
Level 2: Conceptualise	In the visual data, an overwhelming volume of information was displayed. This is depicted by the massive pile of books around the boy, which symbolises the overwhelming amount of new information he must learn. This is powerfully conveyed as the books are piled high around him, enhancing his visual representation of being overwhelmed. There is also a physical barrier created by the books encircling him, which also visually isolates him, adding to the feelings of pressure and creating a solitary environment. There is a diversity of knowledge displayed in the variety of subjects illustrated in the books, showcasing the broad range of new knowledge areas the participant is now expected to grasp.	In his text, Participant 3 highlighted his struggle in transitioning to a more academically demanding environment with content he was unfamiliar with. The text emphasises the academic pressures and social expectations that aggravate this participant's challenges in catching up to be on par with his peers.	For this participant, being surrounded by towering stacks of academic textbooks evokes feelings of being overwhelmed. His intensive study sessions and visible struggle with challenging new subjects contribute to a sense of burden he feels. The demanding nature of the coursework, compounded by the lack of previous exposure to these academic materials, underscores the pressure he experiences. This indicates the reality of academic overload and exacerbates the student's feeling of being isolated within his new educational environment.

	<p>Looking at the central figure, his facial expressions indicate feelings of difficulty in understanding the new learning material. He has tightened features with eyebrows that are slightly furrowed, portraying confusion. This expression is commonly associated with perplexity, and his eyes are wide open, signifying alertness due to the overwhelming volume of work he is required to do. The figure also has his hands actively placed on the pages of the book, suggesting an attempt to understand the information.</p>		
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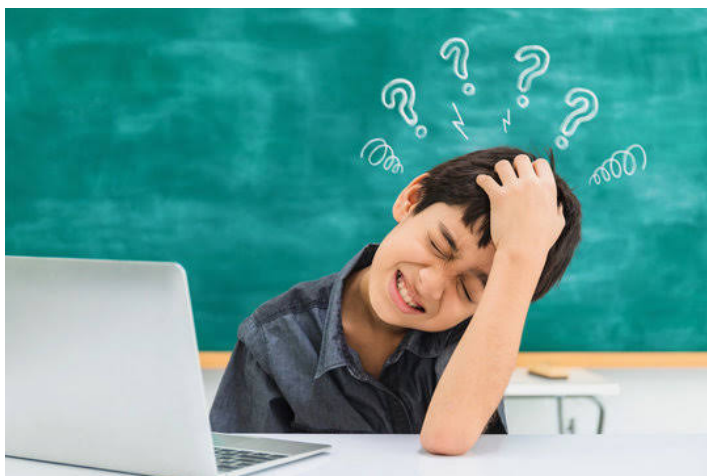


Figure 4.15: Confusion

In my old school, we had the same teachers each year and they all understood how I would learn. Now, I have different teachers all the time and I struggle. They don't

understand how fast I work and speed through everything. Sometimes I feel pressure, so I do not ask questions. I try to summarise everything in class but when I go back to study, I don't understand what I wrote. I also find it hard to understand the teacher by their different teaching methods because they all explain differently. For example, for maths there were different ways to solve a sum, and we were taught one method by one teacher but a different method by another teacher, which is confusing because I don't know which one to use. (Participant 4)

Table 4.14: Participant 3. Analysis 4

Analysis	Image analysis (visual data)	Reflection analysis (textual data)	Image and reflection combined
Level 1:  Note and describe	Participant 3 had this AI image generated by ChatGPT. The image represents a central figure, a young boy, with a blackboard in the background and a computer to the right of the learner on their desk. He is visibly frustrated, with question marks floating above his head. The expression on the face of the figure represents distress as he clutches his head, emphasising his discomfort. The setting of the image is a classroom, indicated by the green chalkboard in the background. The laptop on the learner's desk suggests that he might be using technology as a part of	In their text, Participant 3 addresses the transition from having consistent teachers to facing a variety of teaching styles that are hard to adapt to. The participant also indicates his struggle with the pace of teaching and his reluctance to ask questions due to pressure in the classroom. The learner mentioned that he tried to summarise his class material in class but later found it incomprehensible, and he was confused by the varying methods, like in maths.	Confounded  Inconsistent  Teaching methods  Pace  Overwhelmed  Pressure  Diversity

	his learning, adding another layer of potential complexity.		
Level 2: Conceptualise	In the visual data displayed by this participant, there is a strong symbol of confusion shown by the question marks above the learner's head, symbolising his uncertainty and effectively capturing his struggle with understanding the academic content. The body in this participant's image expresses frustration through language and facial expressions, conveying a deep sense of frustration and the overwhelming nature of his academic challenges. The presence of the laptop on the desk also implies a reliance on digital resources in an attempt to understand the different teaching styles.	In this text, we see Participant 3 experiencing the challenge of adjusting in his transition to different teachers and teaching methods, which shows the difficulty he feels in adapting to varied educational approaches. Additionally, the participant addresses the pressure and pace of learning, pointing to the worry of not keeping up impeding his learning. The participant addresses how the inconsistent instructional methods confuse him, complicating his ability to understand and apply the learnt material effectively.	For this participant, being confronted with inconsistent teaching methods evokes feelings of being confounded. The varying pace and overwhelming content of lessons contribute to the sense of pressure he feels to keep up. The diversity in instructional approaches, compounded by his difficulty adjusting to each teacher's unique style, stresses the overwhelming feeling he experiences. This shows the reality of educational disorientation and exacerbates the student's feelings of being unprepared in his learning environment.



Figure 4.16: Contrasted classrooms

In my old school, there was a little bit of learners, so we got lots of attention. In the new school, since there is a lot of learners in a class, we get very little attention. The teachers would notice if I was struggling but now, they won't notice, and they just move on. They don't notice if I am confused. (Participant 3)

Table 4.15: Participant 3. Analysis 5

Analysis	Image analysis (visual data)	Reflection analysis (textual data)	Image and reflection combined
Level 1: Note and describe	Participant 3 had this AI image generated by ChatGPT. The image is split into two contrasting classroom settings. The left side shows a vibrant, sunny classroom with a few learners and many decorations. The right	In the text, Participant 3 addresses the transition from a smaller school, where he received more attention, to a larger school with less personalised attention.  The participant also mentions the previous	Contrast Engagement Support Crowded Isolation Individualisation

	<p>side depicts a darker, more industrial-like classroom with many learners and minimal decorations. On the left, the teacher is engaging closely with the learners, some of whom are standing, suggesting an active participation in learning. On the right, the teacher stands distantly apart, lecturing to a full classroom where all the learners are seated and appear to be passive. The classroom on the left is filled with warm light, while that on the right has harsh, artificial light. The learners on the left appear more relaxed and happy, whereas the learners on the right seem more uniform and less expressive.</p>	<p>teachers' ability to notice when he struggled, contrasting with the new situation where he feels unnoticed and confused.</p>	<p>Observability</p>
<p>Level 2: Conceptualise</p>	<p>The visual data displayed by this participant shows a contrast in the environment and mood.</p> <p>The bright and intimate setting on the left contrasts sharply with the impersonal, crowded setting on the right, symbolising the differences in the learning environments</p>	<p>In this text, we see Participant 3 experiencing invisibility in the new, larger classroom setting, underscoring the challenge of a large mainstream educational environment where individual learners' needs may go unrecognised. In the text, the participant discusses how the impact of the school size shows</p>	<p>For this participant, being immersed in contrasting classroom environments evokes feelings of isolation amidst a crowded setting. The stark contrast between individualised support in a smaller class and the lack of observability in a more extensive, congested classroom contributes to the sense of alienation that</p>

	<p>and student-teacher dynamics. Depicted is also a difference in teaching styles and engagement, where the left classroom illustrates a personalised, interactive teaching approach. By contrast, the right shows a more traditional, less personal lecture style due to the greater number of learners. The lighting and atmosphere of both spaces vary. On the left, the lighting choices enhance the mood, with natural light supporting a nurturing environment, whereas on the right, harsh lighting contributes to a harsher atmosphere. The student's emotional responses vary too, as the left environment reflects a relaxed and engaged smaller class versus the right, which is subdued and uniform in a larger, more structured setting.</p>	<p>the level of individual attention and recognition of learners' needs.</p>	<p>this participant feels. The engagement and nurturing ambience in one classroom, juxtaposed with the impersonal and overwhelming atmosphere in the other, intensifies his challenges. This shows a disparity in his educational experiences and the learner's feelings of being overlooked in his new mainstream schooling environment.</p>
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#### 4.2.4 Participant 4



Figure 4.17: My friends

When I was in my old school, I only had one friend. I had little time to make friends outside school because there was so much homework. I also didn't have a lot of friends at the school. At my new school, I work hard to get my work done, so afterwards I go to the farm for horse riding in the afternoon. My new school has helped me make three new best friends, and we like the same things. My friends are special to me. They understand me. When I make mistakes, they help me. (Participant 4)

Table 4.16: Participant 4. Analysis 1

Analysis	Image analysis (visual data)	Reflection analysis (textual data)	Image and reflection combined
Level 1: Note and describe	Participant 4 accessed this photograph using their cell phone. The image represents four young girls standing	In the text, Participant 4 reflects on the limited social connections that she was exposed to at her previous school compared	Friendship Unity Tranquillity

	<p>closely together by a river, each with an arm around the others, facing away from the camera. Each of the girls is gazing off into the distance of the serene lake in front of them, surrounded by lush green forest during what looks like a golden hour. We see casual attire on each of the girls, matching the relaxed setting of a shared interest that bonds them together. None of the girls in the photograph are wearing shoes. The composition of the picture focuses on and shows the unity between them and the tranquil background without showing the girls' faces and emphasising them as a collective rather than as individuals.</p>	<p>to the rich social life she experiences at her new school. Participant 4 notes the importance of having friends who share similar interests and provide emotional and practical support for her. The participant also addresses that she learnt to actively manage her schoolwork to allow her more time for social activities, indicating that she is working towards a balanced approach to school and social life.</p>	<p>Support Nature Connection Serenity Bonding Isolation</p>
<p>Level 2: Conceptualise</p>	<p>In the visual data displayed by this participant, there is a strong symbol of unity amongst this group of friends. The close physical proximity and linked arms of the girls in the group signify they have a strong bond and mutual support from their friends. Also,</p>	<p>In this text, we see a social expansion for the participant. She shows her significant increase in social interactions and friendships in her new school setting, contrasting with her previous experiences. In the text, the participant also discusses her supportive network, reiterating the</p>	<p>Standing together by a tranquil lake for these friends evokes feelings of serenity in nature's embrace. The unity and bonding evident in their close embrace against the backdrop of a serene landscape contributes to a profound sense of connection among them.</p>

	<p>depicted is a serene landscape, with warm lighting contributing to a sense of peace and harmony. This reflects the quality of their friendship, showing a warm and kind friendship amongst them. From the group of friends, we can see they have shared interests: Their similar casual attire suggests that they engage in mutual activities that strengthen their bond, like spending time in nature or horse riding.</p>	<p>value of having friends who not only share the same interests as her but also offer understanding and help her when she makes mistakes to help her grow. The text also illustrates how the participant works towards a balanced lifestyle, manages her academic responsibilities and social life, and shows solid personal development.</p>	<p>The support they provide to one another is shown in a calming influence. The setting represents the importance of nature in fostering peaceful interactions and deepening bonds for this group of friends.</p>
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Figure 4.18: My passion for horse riding

Horses are my life. With my schooling now, I work hard during my school hours and then go to the farm in the afternoons for my riding. Riding is something I am good at and being with the horses is my safe place. If I have a bad day I like to be with the horses, they calm me down. Even when I have days when I struggle with directions and turns, my horse doesn't mind. Horse riding has also helped give me more of a chance to socialise and to see my close friends more often. I have also learnt to find different ways to help me, so to remember my steps I use colours instead of numbers. I also added a black and red colour to each of my thumbs to help with direction for left and right. (Participant 4)

Table 4.17: Participant 4. Analysis 2

Analysis	Image analysis (visual data)	Reflection analysis (textual data)	Image and reflection combined
Level 1: Note and describe	Participant 4 accessed this photograph with her cell phone. The image represents a young woman riding a horse, facing away from the camera towards a beautiful, natural landscape at sunset. In the image, the participant is riding bareback on a horse with no saddle. Participant 4 is actively engaged in horse riding in an open field, which suggests a peaceful and rural setting. The sunset setting provides warm lighting that creates a serene atmosphere. In the background, another rider is on another horse, indicating a shared	In her text, Participant 4 describes how horse riding is a vital part of her life and an activity in which she excelled. She mentions that she uses riding as a way to calm herself on her bad days and that it is a social outlet for her. Participant 4 also addresses how she and the people around her have created innovative strategies, such as using colours for memory aids, demonstrating a proactive approach to overcoming challenges.	Passion Therapy Nature Freedom Community Serenity Support Safe place Socialising

	community space for horse riding.		
Level 2: Conceptualise	<p>In the visual data displayed by this participant, there is a sense of freedom with the rider in harmony with nature, representing her safe space. There is also a deep connection to the outdoors depicted, underscoring the therapeutic aspect of her riding and her connection to nature. The warm glow of the sunset adds a calming effect, enhancing the emotional quality of this participant's haven. Additionally, the presence of other riders hints at the social aspect of her riding, providing her with an opportunity to make friends.</p>	<p>This text shows that riding is not just a hobby for this participant. It is a significant part of her identity and an area where she feels competent and confident. The participant explains how horse riding provides an emotionally safe place for her and a platform for social engagement, which is vital for her well-being. We also see her creative strategies for direction and memory aid, showing how she tailors her approach to managing and enhancing her riding skills through innovation and adaptation.</p>	<p>Being immersed in the landscape and the movements of horse riding allows Participant 4 feelings of serenity and freedom. The calm environment and the therapeutic presence of horses contribute to alleviating her stress. This natural setting, combined with the supportive community of fellow riders, is a rejuvenating power of passion for equestrian activities. The sense of peace she experiences while riding represents the profound impact of nature as a therapeutic escape from the pressures of life, enhancing the participant's ability to relax.</p>



Figure 4.19: The aid of computers

At my old school, they taught us how to use the computer, make slides, use Google Classroom and study. So, when I moved to my new school, it wasn't very hard because my old school taught me everything I needed to know about computers. I enjoy doing my work on the computer, it has no distractions for me. I like studying on the computer in different places. Sometimes I sit on an exercise ball when I am studying with my headphones in, and I move around to different places.

Table 4.18: Participant 4. Analysis 3

Analysis	Image analysis (visual data)	Reflection analysis (textual data)	Image and reflection combined
Level 1: Note and describe	Participant 4 generated this AI picture from ChatGPT. The picture represents a young woman using an iPad and laptop to study, seated on the floor surrounded by her other study materials. She is wearing headphones, suggesting that she is focused on listening to	Participant 4 notes in her text that having prior computer educational knowledge from her previous school made her transition to a new school smoother as she was confident and knew how to use her computer when needed. The participant also expresses her preference for studying on	Technology Adaptability Comfort Focus Mobility Innovation

	<p>educational content.</p> <p>There are also various educational aids like the exercise ball and books scattered around her, indicating her flexibility while studying. The setting is indoors, in a room that looks like a dedicated study area with ample light.</p>	<p>her computer and how she changed her study locations for a change of scenery. She also comments on how she used an exercise ball to sit on while studying.</p>	
<p>Level 2: Conceptualise</p>	<p>In the visual data displayed by this participant, we see multiple learning devices illustrate her comfort with technology.</p> <p>Also depicted is a focused learning environment, with headphones showing how she is immersed in her learning. We see various learning tools around her to enhance her focus, showing how she tries to adapt her learning. The personalised environment is also comfortable for her and encourages productivity.</p>	<p>This text shows how the participant's prior learning experience with computers gave her a skill set that eased her adaptation to the new educational setting. The participant discusses how she values technology's flexibility, allowing her to study in various places. Incorporating physical movement into her study routine suggests a kinaesthetic approach to learning, which helps her maintain focus while studying.</p>	<p>Using technology to enhance her learning brought a sense of adaptability, allowing for a better educational experience. Mobility allowed the learner to optimise her learning environment for maximum productivity.</p> <p>This learner, taking an innovative approach to her studying, tailored the learning process to her preferences.</p>



Figure 4.20: Telling the time

When I was younger, telling the time and getting the dates for assignments right was very hard for me. If I didn't get help from my teacher or parents, I would miss important assignments. Now that I am older, it is better. I have learnt to set alarms to remind me, and my new teacher has taught me to work out my own schedule to get my work done. I also learnt how to use Google Calendar, which helped a lot. I forget to remember important things said in class and write them down so I don't forget. Sometimes, I still need someone to check where I put the assignments under the right dates. (Participant 4)

Table 4.19: Participant 4. Analysis 4

Analysis	Image analysis (visual data)	Reflection analysis (textual data)	Image and reflection combined
Level 1: Note and describe	Participant 4 generated this AI image from ChatGPT. The picture represents a young woman surrounded by various symbols like	Participant 4 comments on her early difficulties with time management, leading to missed assignments. She mentions that she has seen improvements by using tools like alarms and	Stressful Anxiety Overwhelming Challenging

	<p>clocks, a brain, and light bulbs.</p> <p>The central figure appears to be overwhelmed, with her hands on her head and a distressed expression on her face. We see her forehead full of frown lines, her mouth open, making an ‘o’ shape.</p> <p>Open books and notes are on the table next to her, suggesting that she is busy studying. There is also a pile of learning books beside her, implying that she has much work to complete.</p>	<p>Google Calendar to avoid missing her deadlines, as she used to forget to write things down when her teacher said them in class.</p> <p>We see an ongoing need for her to verify her deadlines, which indicates a lingering challenge.</p>	<p>Distressed</p> <p>Struggle</p> <p>Management</p> <p>Adaptation</p>
<p>Level 2: Conceptualise</p>	<p>The visual data displayed by this participant reveals cognitive overload, with the numerous clocks and thought bubbles around her representing her struggles with time management and the stress associated with this.</p> <p>Depicted in her expression and posture, we see a sense of overwhelming stress and anxiety, highlighting the impact of challenge in this section of learning.</p>	<p>This text shows the participant’s early difficulties with time impacting her academic performance. Her adoption of solutions shows that she is being proactive in overcoming her time challenges.</p> <p>Despite her efforts for improvement, she still requires support and verification, suggesting that this is still an ongoing learning process.</p>	<p>Navigating time management proved stressful and anxiety-inducing, highlighting the challenging nature of deadlines. Using tools like alarms and Google Calendar introduced a structured approach to her management, easing the burden of these tasks. With support from teachers and family, this participant began adapting to her responsibilities more effectively.</p>

	<p>In the presence of study materials around the figure, we see the participant's efforts to manage her academic responsibilities effectively.</p> <p>The symbols around the central figure's head represent her thought processes and moments of insight. The lightbulb shining can represent her developing new strategies to manage her time effectively.</p>		
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Figure 4.21: The teachers

At my old school, my teachers were very kind and welcoming. They always explained things clearly and explained what I needed to do. This year, the teacher doesn't explain things very clearly to me and confuses me. This makes me tired. I also like how my old teachers asked me other questions and talked about my horse riding, but now we just talk about our schoolwork. (Participant 4)

Table 4.20: Participant 4. Analysis 5

Analysis	Image analysis (visual data)	Reflection analysis (textual data)	Image and reflection combined
<p>Level 1:</p> <p>Note and describe</p>	<p>Participant 4 had this AI image generated by ChatGPT. The picture represents two contrasting learning environments.</p> <p>The image on the left depicts a learner in a tidy, organised space as she works at her computer. This figure appears to be happy, with a large smile on her face and bright, big eyes.</p> <p>The image on the right shows a learner surrounded by a chaotic mess of papers, with a frustrated expression. We can see that she is overwhelmed by the frown, downcast expression, and pouting lips.</p>	<p>Participant 4 contrasts the straightforward and friendly teaching approach at her old school with the confusing and impersonal methods of the current teacher at her new school.</p> <p>The participant comments on her appreciation for the interactions with her previous teachers, who engaged in conversations beyond schoolwork, unlike her current situation.</p>	<p>Welcoming</p> <p>Clarity</p> <p>Organisation</p> <p>Confusion</p> <p>Stress</p> <p>Overwhelmed</p> <p>Impersonal</p> <p>Frustration</p>
<p>Level 2:</p> <p>Conceptualise</p>	<p>In the visual data displayed by this participant, the first learning environment represents her old special school, which is depicted as a positive learning environment of a tidy space, with a central figure smiling, suggesting an organised and positive atmosphere conducive to learning.</p>	<p>This text shows how different teaching styles can significantly affect a student's comfort, understanding, and engagement in their learning process.</p> <p>Additionally, we see how significant the value of a personal connection is for this participant. In the text, she emphasises the</p>	<p>Transitioning between different teaching styles proved confusing and frustrating for this learner, underscoring the impact of their educational environments on learning.</p> <p>The welcoming and organised atmosphere of the previous school provided clarity and support, fostering an effective learning</p>

	<p>The warm, bright colours in the environment appear friendly and inviting.</p> <p>By contrast, the image on the right depicts an overwhelming, stressful environment full of clutter. The expression of the central figure conveys a sense of frustration with her shoulders slumped down. We see a disorganised environment filled with many academic materials scattered around in the air, representing chaos. The muted colours show an uninviting space.</p>	<p>importance of her teacher connecting with her individually to enhance her learning experience.</p>	<p>experience. By contrast, the impersonal and overwhelming nature of the current setting led to stress, diminishing the student's ability to grasp new concepts effectively. The lack of personal interaction and the chaotic environment highlight the necessity of a structured approach for this learner.</p>
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### 4.3 THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS OF EACH LEARNER PARTICIPANT

The following section presents the findings of Data Set 1 by demonstrating the link between the artefacts and themes in the participants' images (Brown & Collins, 2021).


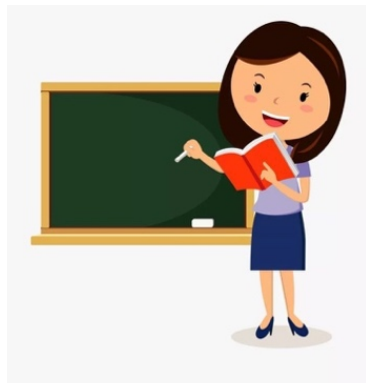

#### 4.3.1 Participant 1

Participant 1 submitted five digital pictures to express her experiences in transitioning from a special school to a mainstream school. Integrating the five digital pictures (Figures 4.2 to 4.6) indicates that Participant 1 saw a digital picture as an essential way to illustrate her transitioning experience.

Figure 4.2 depicts a female figure sitting at a desk with a book open in front of her, busy reading. This represents the participant's struggle with reading and the overwhelming

discomfort she experienced while doing this task. Figure 4.3 illustrates Participant 1's feelings of confusion towards the diverse teaching styles of her new teachers. Figure 4.3 depicts a female teacher in front of a blackboard with chalk and a textbook in her hand. Participant 1 represents the struggle of navigating educational diversity and addresses her ability to learn coping methods, which helped her progress with proactive engagement in learning. The next image she chose symbolised Participant 2's sense of belonging, with four diverse friends standing closely together, showing signs of comfort and happiness amongst one another and emphasising the strong value of connection among this friend group. Highlighted in this image by the participant is how transitioning from a special school to a mainstream school allowed the individual to find a new group of friends who positively influenced her environment (Figure 4.4). Figure 4.5 represents Participant 1's passion for her chosen sport, hockey. The participant emphasised her love and dedication for this sport in this image and how she was empowered by a dream of playing in the A team. In addition to Figure 4.4, Figure 4.5 acknowledged the friendships that Participant 1 found among her teammates through their shared passion for hockey. Figure 4.6 reflects the assistance of technological educational tools, such as the computer, in providing support in learning for Participant 1. The participant highlighted her journey in adapting to this new learning equipment of technological support and then transitioning away from the technological aid (Figure 4.6). Additionally, Participant 1 continued to adapt from using her computer regularly in class to only using it to aid her during the examinations (Figure 4.6). This emphasised her resilience and commitment to overcoming her educational challenges by adapting to the tools she had available (Figure 4.6).

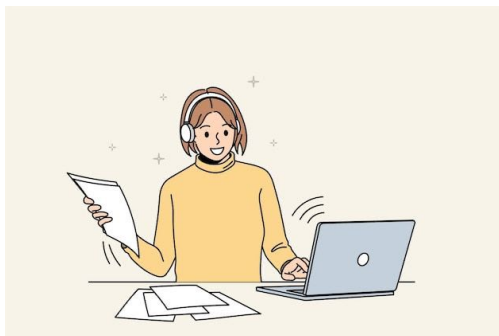
Table 4.21: Participant 1. Figures 4.2 to 4.6

Visual data	Textual data
	<p><b>Figure 4.2:</b> The challenge of reading</p> <p>‘One thing that was hard for me when changing schools was the reading. Reading to me is like a fear, and it’s a big one in my life. But I have learnt to face my fear, and now it’s not as big of a fear as it used to be.’</p>
	<p><b>Figure 4.3:</b> Diverse teaching styles</p> <p>‘Changing schools came with changing teachers but for me, I have many more teachers. Each teacher has different ways and methods, which can be really confusing at times. What I have learnt is to find a way that I understand and I can learn from.’</p>
	<p><b>Figure 4.4:</b> Finding my people</p> <p>‘Finding the right group of people to hang out with also comes with changing schools. I’ve found the right group of friends to hang out with that will lead me on a good path and away from bad situations.’</p>



**Figure 4.5:** My passion for hockey

‘Before I changed schools, I was playing indoor hockey with my old friends and that was the only way I could really see them because we were all in different schools. When I changed schools, I got to live my dream. From the time that I was in Grade 1, I wanted to play hockey on my school’s Astro with a huge crowd supporting and cheering for me and my teammates. Now that I play hockey at my school, I feel as if I have accomplished so much and worked hard for the position I’m in at the moment and that was a big shift for me. I thought I wasn’t going to make it because I only played hockey on the weekends and I didn’t practice a lot. But now I have been in the A team twice. As someone with dyslexia coming from a small school which didn’t have any sports and having struggled to learn, read, and write for three years, now I am in a public school with my friends and I work like I have no dyslexia, I am at the school I’ve always wanted to go to.’



**Figure 4.6:** Computer Aid

‘The three years of being at primary school not knowing that I had dyslexia was very hard on me because I had no idea why I was struggling so much. It was very hard for me to understand what was going on until I got to a school that uses a computer and has one-on-one time with the teachers, to also switch to a school that treats

	<p>everyone the same. Being at a small school helped me to understand and it prepared me for the big challenges in the future, such as going to high school. Something that was very confusing for me was that we didn't use computers in our classes whereas in the small school that's all we used. I never really used to like the computer but going to a different school where there is no computer at all, only when I write exams, was a big change. I have adapted to the change and work very hard.'</p>
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In each of the figures depicted (Figures 4.2 to 4.6), the interactions that Participant 1 was exposed to played meaningful roles in determining her experience in the transition between schools. These images highlight the individual's determination to adapt to her circumstances, not allowing her struggles to determine the outcome (Figures 4.2 and 4.3), portraying strength through persistence and willpower. However, Participant 1 did not allow the challenges she faced in her academic learning to go unnoticed, from the struggle of reading (Figure 4.2) to diverse teaching styles (Figure 4.3). Despite the obstacles all the participants faced, this participant highlighted optimistic aspects of her life in her new mainstream school, focusing on the uplifting new friendships she had built with respectable people (Figure 4.4) and how she lived out her fantasy, playing hockey for the A team with a crowd supporting and cheering for her (Figure 4.5).





### 4.3.2 Participant 2

Participant 2 submitted five digital pictures to express his experiences in the transition from a special school to a mainstream school. Integrating five digital pictures (Figures 4.7 to 4.11) indicated that Participant 2 saw a digital picture as more convenient than a manually captured picture, illustrating the utility of using digital media to express his transitioning experience. Figure 4.7 depicts a dimly lit gaming sanctuary filled with intentional isolation with closed curtains and focused lighting highlighting the computer monitors. This figure represents the participant's way of recharging from external pressures such as academic stress, which helped

him to relax and recharge. Figure 4.8 illustrates Participant 2's feelings of disconnection and being overlooked despite being surrounded by a crowd of learners at school. The central figure in Figure 4.8 expresses the participant's loneliness, emphasising his emotional isolation and an internal struggle with anonymity and lack of personal connection. Figure 4.9 symbolises Participant 2's learning environment, a classroom buzzing with activity, which portrays the chaos that overwhelms him. The struggle to concentrate and maintain normalcy is highlighted in this demanding mainstream educational setting, where various children are engaged in different noisy activities. Despite this participant's struggle with normalcy in disruptive classes in Figure 4.10, he found a sense of normalcy through diversity and inclusion among the varied ethnic backgrounds of the learners in the classroom (Figure 4.10). This allowed him to foster a community and enhance his acceptance and belonging (Figure 4.10). Regardless of the participant's new-found sense of belonging, he faces academic pressure, as shown by the visual clutter and stressed posture in Figure 4.11. Figure 4.11 reflects the high demands of his academic environment, resulting in the learner feeling intense pressure and exhaustion (Figure 4.11).

Table 4.22: Participant 2. Figures 4.7 to 4.11

Visual data	Textual data
	<p><b>Figure 4.7: Mental Escape</b></p> <p>'I spend a lot of time gaming in my room with the curtains closed. Being in a dark space helps me escape and recharge from a mentally tiring school day.'</p>

	<p><b>Figure 4.8: Lost in the Crowd</b></p> <p>‘Sometimes I feel like another number lost in the crowd. I don’t have a personal relationship with my teachers, and it makes it harder for me to ask questions because I am shy.’</p>
	<p><b>Figure 4.9: Overwhelming noise</b></p> <p>‘There are a lot more kids in my class and they make too much noise from talking. I find this overwhelming as it is very distracting and harder to concentrate than at my old school.’</p>
	<p><b>Figure 4.10: Normal</b></p> <p>‘There are a diverse range of people and cultures at my school which makes an atmosphere I really like. It makes me feel normal.’</p>
	<p><b>Figure 4.11: Demand</b></p> <p>‘I have a lot more work to get through with all my new subjects. They give me less breaks, and I feel like there is so much more that is demanded of me.’</p>


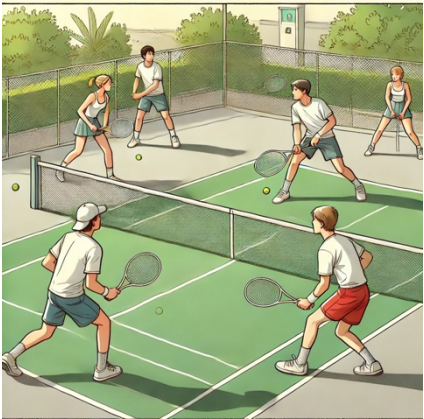

In each of the figures depicted (Figures 4.7 to 4.11), the environments and interactions around the participant played significant roles in shaping his experiences and responses. These images highlight the unique coping mechanisms that the learner applied to adapt to his circumstances (Figures 4.7 and 4.10), portraying a spectrum of resilience and vulnerability. They also

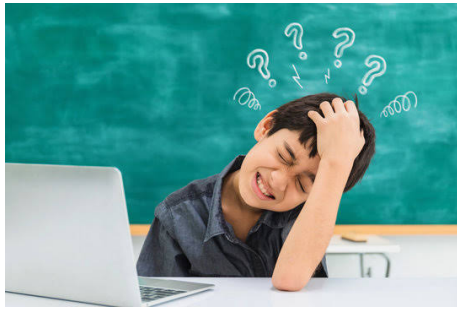
highlight the variety of challenges that he faced in academic learning, from the demanding workload (Figure 4.11) to overwhelming noise (Figure 4.9).

### 4.3.3 Participant 3

Participant 3 vividly illustrates his transition from a special school to a mainstream school using five visual representations generated by ChatGPT, each corresponding to specific experiences and challenges captured in Figures 4.12 to 4.16. These images, combined with the textual reflections, provide a comprehensive narrative of the emotional and educational adjustments faced by this participant. Figure 4.12 depicts a central figure sitting alone amidst a bustling schoolyard, highlighting the profound isolation and disconnection from his peers. Despite the surrounding activity, the participant's solitude and withdrawn demeanour underscore his struggles with social integration and the challenge of forming new friendships in a larger, more impersonal setting. In Participant 3's second image, Figure 4.13, this image is in stark contrast to the isolation depicted previously, as this image shows a figure actively engaged in a tennis match, embodying the physical and social benefits of participating in team sports. This environment allowed the participant to build camaraderie with his peers, helping him to find a way to break through his isolation and find a sense of belonging. Figure 4.14 symbolises Participant 3's overwhelming academic demands. He chose an image with a figure surrounded by towering stacks of textbooks, highlighting the demands of adjusting to new subjects that were not previously offered at his special school. The visual clutter and the participant's body language suggest intense pressure and a cognitive overload he experienced while trying to grasp the unfamiliar content. His cognitive challenges are further reflected in Figure 4.15, in the image showing the participant distressed by inconsistent teaching methods across different subjects, particularly mathematics. The varied instructional approaches the learner experienced led to confusion and frustration, complicating his learning process and exacerbating his feelings of academic inadequacy. Participant 3 represents the contrasting classrooms in Figure 4.16, depicting two classroom environments by illustrating the drastic shift from his previous attentive setting to a crowded, less personal classroom. The image emphasises the participant in a more extensive, more structured classroom, highlighting the lack of individual attention that he experienced.

Table 4.23: Participant 3. Figure 4.12 to 4.16

Visual data	Textual data
	<p><b>Figure 4.12: Alone at break</b></p> <p>‘I came from a school which had a lot less kids. My socialising skills are terrible. I find it hard to make conversation with people, and it is a bit difficult to make friends with people. I sit alone in break.’</p>
	<p><b>Figure 4.13: Team Tennis</b></p> <p>‘The school I went to before did not offer my sport, so I had to go to a club. There was a big distance between the club and my school, so the new school helps me save time of riding to the courts. Playing my sport helps me use up my energy from sitting all day and I like that I can be a part of a team.’</p>
	<p><b>Figure 4.14: New subjects</b></p> <p>‘My old school did not offer all the subjects so in the new school all the new subjects were very hard for me. It makes it hard because all the other people expect me to know some information, but I have not had the work before. Sometimes I struggle to understand new work and I need to spend more time understanding first before I can remember.’</p>



**Figure 4.15: Confusion**

‘In my old school, we had the same teachers each year and they all understood how I would learn. Now, I have different teachers all the time and I struggle. They don’t understand how fast I work and speed through everything. Sometimes I feel pressure, so I do not ask questions. I try to summarise everything in class but when I go back to study, I don’t understand what I wrote. I also find it hard to understand the teacher by their different teaching methods because they all explain differently. For example, for maths, there were different ways to solve a sum, and we were taught one method by one teacher but a different method by another teacher which is confusing because I don’t know which one to use.’



**Figure 4.16: Contrasted Classrooms**

‘In my old school, there was a little bit of learners, so we got lots of attention. In the new school, since there are a lot of learners in a class, we get very little attention. The teachers would notice if I was struggling but now, they won’t notice, and they just move on. They don’t notice if I am confused.’

Each of the figures depicted (Figures 4.12 to 4.16) captures the struggles and interactions that Participant 3 experienced during his transition from a special school to a mainstream school. These images highlight the social challenges he faced and how he tried to adapt to his circumstances (Figures 4.12 and 4.13), as well as emphasising the struggle to adjust to varied



teaching styles (Figure 4.15), the differences in moving from a special school environment to a mainstream setting (Figure 4.16) and facing higher demands with new subjects (Figure 4.14).

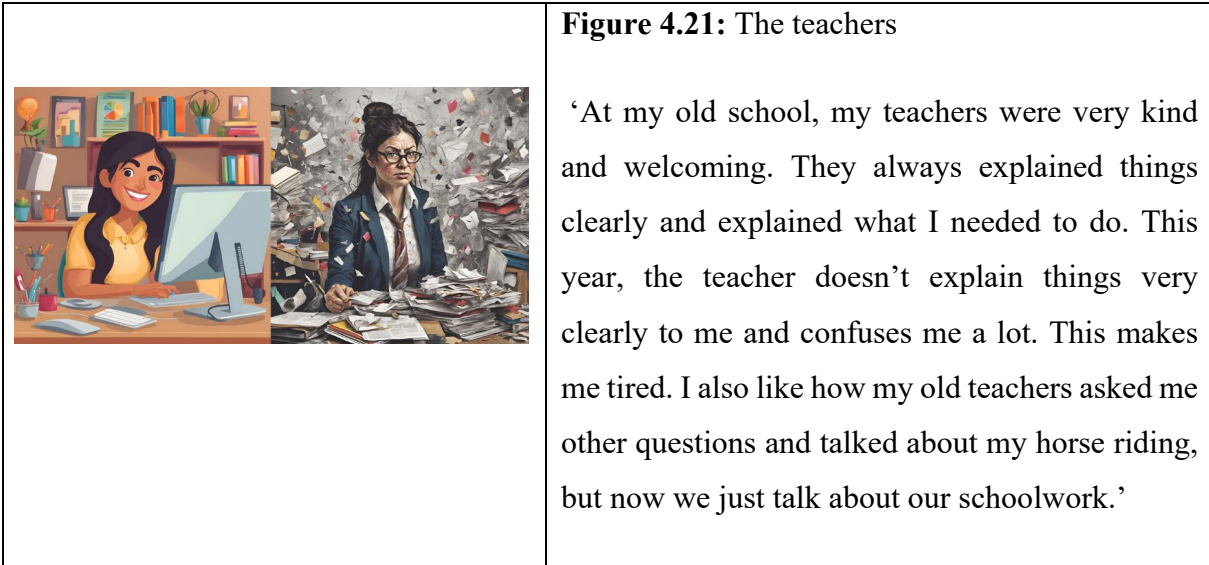
#### **4.3.4 Participant 4**

Participant 4 illustrated her transition from a special school to a mainstream school using five visual representations: two images taken using her cell phone and three images generated by ChatGPT, each corresponding to specific experiences and challenges captured in Figures 4.17 to 4.21. These images, combined with their textual reflections, provide a comprehensive narrative of the transitions faced by this participant. Figure 4.17 depicts a serene lake scene with four friends embracing, reflecting the participant's new-found sense of community and belonging in her new group of friends. This image captures the support the participant feels from this group of friends who provide one another with support and represents the comfort and understanding offered in her safe space. Additionally, Figure 4.18 represents another safe place for this participant. Figure 4.18 suggests how the environment of being around horses contributes to alleviating the participant's stress. This supportive community in riding horses, depicted in Figure 4.18, shows the sense of peace she experiences while riding, highlighting the profound impact of its therapeutic escape from the pressures of life, and enhancing her ability to relax. Figure 4.19 shows how the participant used technology to improve her learning, which has brought her a sense of adaptability, allowing her to have a better educational experience. This image underscores the importance of the technological fluency that the participant developed, allowing her to make a smoother transition. Participant 4 commented in her textual reflection that she liked to study 'in different places', which allowed her to optimise her productivity. Figure 4.20 shows a young woman overwhelmed with her hands on her head, looking distressed and surrounded by various symbols including clocks, a brain, and light bulbs. This image represents how navigating time management proved stressful and anxiety-inducing for Participant 4, highlighting the challenging nature of keeping on track with deadlines (Figure 4.20). Figure 4.21 depicts the two contrasting learning environments that this participant experienced before and after her transition from one school to the next. Figure 4.21 shows how transitioning between the different teaching styles proved confusing and frustrating for this learner. The contrast between the previous schools' welcoming and organised atmosphere provided clarity and support, whereas the current setting, with an impersonal nature, leads to stress for her.

Table 4.24: Participant 4. Figure 4.17 to 4.21

Visual data	Textual data
	<p><b>Figure 4.17: My friends</b></p> <p>‘When I was in my old school, I only had one friend. I didn’t have much time to make friends outside school because there was so much homework. I also didn’t have a lot of friends at the school. At my new school, I work hard to get my work done so afterwards I go to the farm for horse riding in the afternoon. My new school has helped me make three new best friends, and we like the same things. My friends are special to me. They understand me. When I make mistakes, they help me.’</p>
	<p><b>Figure 4.18: My passion for horse riding</b></p> <p>‘Horses are my life. With my schooling now, I work hard during my school hours and then go to the farm in the afternoons for my riding. Riding is something I am good at and being with the horses is my safe place. If I have a bad day I like to be with the horses, they calm me down. Even when I have days when I struggle with directions and turns, my horse doesn’t mind. Horse riding has also helped give me more of a chance for socialising and to see my close more often. I have also learnt to find different ways to help me, so to remember my steps I use colours instead of numbers. I also added a black and red colour to</p>

	<p>each of my thumbs to help with direction for left and right.’</p>
	<p><b>Figure 4.19:</b> The aid of computers</p> <p>‘At my old school, they taught us how to use the computer, make slides, use Google Classroom, and study. So, when I moved to my new school, it wasn’t very hard because my old school taught me everything I needed to know about computers. I enjoy doing my work on the computer; it has no distractions for me. I like studying on the computer in different places. Sometimes, I sit on an exercise ball when I am studying with my headphones in and I move around to different places.’</p>
	<p><b>Figure 4.20:</b> Telling the time</p> <p>‘When I was younger, telling the time and getting the dates for assignments right was very hard for me. If I didn’t get help from my teacher or parents, I would miss important assignments. Now that I am older, it is better. I have learnt to set alarms to remind me and my new teacher has taught me to work out my own schedule to get my work done. I also learnt how to use Google Calendar which helped a lot. I forget to remember important things said in class and write them down so I don’t forget. Sometimes I still need someone to check where I put the assignments under the right dates.’</p>



Each figure (Figures 4.17 to 4.21) captured the strengths and weaknesses that Participant 4 experienced in transitioning from a special school to a mainstream school. These images highlight the social victories she faced and how she found her safe space (Figures 4.17 and 4.18). It also emphasises the struggle to adapt to varied teaching styles (Figure 4.21), the differences in moving from a special school environment to a mainstream setting (Figure 4.21), and the challenges of meeting deadlines (Figure 4.20).

#### 4.4 DATA SET 1 FINDINGS

The following section links critical themes from each participant’s experience, captured through visual and textual reflections, underscoring the multifaceted impact of transitioning from a special school to a mainstream school. These narratives collectively highlight the themes of isolation, being overwhelmed in an academic setting and social situations, and being empowered through extracurricular activities within the broader context of educational transitions.

##### 4.4.1 Theme 1: Experiencing isolation

At the outset of their transition from a special school to a mainstream school, Participants 1, 2, 3 and 4 each encountered unique challenges and feelings of isolation.

Through his visual reflections, Participant 2 demonstrated that his transition made him want to withdraw from the world, a ‘Mental Escape’ (Figure 4.7, Participant 2) by closing himself off

in his bedroom, drawing the curtains, and maintaining a solitary light source of a computer screen, allowing him to recharge but still left him feeling lonely and isolated. Participant 2's narrative reflections demonstrated that he felt the need to 'escape and recharge from a mentally tiring school day' (Participant 2), showing a deep sense of isolation. This is reiterated by the dimly lit gaming sanctuary in Figure 4.7. Both his visual and narrative reflections portrayed Participant 2's retreat into solitary activities as a coping mechanism for transitioning from a special school to a mainstream school (Figure 4.7). Furthermore, Figure 4.8 captured the essence of being 'lost in the crowd' (Participant 2). This is a literal illustration of Participant 2's loneliness and disconnection from his peers and educators in the new mainstream school setting. Participant 2 stated in his narrative text that 'sometimes I feel like another number lost in the crowd'. He indicated through his visual reflections that his feelings of isolation and disconnection were evoked but were overlooked despite his proximity to others (Figure 4.8).

In her textual reflection, Participant 1 demonstrated in Figure 4.4 that 'finding the right group of people to hang out with also comes with changing schools' (Participant 1), highlighting the importance the participant attached to whom she surrounded herself with, allowing her to discard 'bad situations' (Participant 1). This showcased that the participant was more satisfied with her current group of friends than she was with those at her previous special school, and she now feels a sense of belonging, community, and enrichment.

Through his visual reflections, Participant 3 demonstrated that his transition from a special school to a mainstream school felt 'difficult' (Figure 4.12, Participant 3) and a 'struggle' (Figure 4.14, Participant 3). Participant 3 pictured a lonesome boy sitting on a bench surrounded by a busy schoolyard (Figure 4.12) and a young boy alone surrounded by piles and piles of textbooks (Figure 4.14), adding to the concept of loneliness and isolation. Participant 3 emphasised feelings of loneliness and adjustment, showing an emotional impact on this participant, leading to him feeling alienated. Furthermore, Figure 4.12's textual reflection addressed that it was 'a bit difficult to make friends with people. I sit alone in break' (Participant 3). He also noted that coming from a smaller special school made it more challenging for him to form new friendships with his peers, highlighting the struggle with social integration and the challenge of creating new friendships in a larger, more impersonal setting. In Figure 4.16, Participant 3 commented in his textual reflection, when comparing the

contrasting classrooms, stating that his teachers ‘don’t notice’ him (Participant 3) and that he ‘gets very little attention’ at his new mainstream school compared to his special school (Participant 3). From the visually stark contrasted settings in the visual reflection of Figure 4.16, Participant 3 represented his feelings of isolation amidst the crowded classroom setting, highlighting the lack of observability and a disparity in his educational experience of being overlooked.

By contrast, Participant 4 commented in her textual reflection, ‘When I was in my old school, I only had one friend,’ emphasising her isolation at her previous school (Participant 4). However, when she transitioned to her new school, the participant developed stronger friendships through their shared hobbies. In the image depicted (Figure 4.17), the close physical proximity and linked arms of the girls in the group signify that they have a strong bond and mutual support, highlighting their peaceful interactions and deepening bonds over their common interest in horse riding.

#### **4.4.2 Theme 2: Experiencing feelings of being overwhelmed**

A second strongly evident theme that Participants 1, 2, 3 and 4 were confronted with at the start of their transition from a special school to a mainstream school was that of feeling being overwhelmed.

##### **4.4.2.1 Subtheme 1: Overwhelmed in an academic setting**

Through her visual and textual reflections, Participant 1 expressed a profound sense of her academic struggle. One image, Figure 4.2, depicted a solitary figure tackling reading, symbolising Participant 1’s immense personal struggle and discomfort in the new educational setting. This theme of being overwhelmed was underscored by Participant 1’s depiction of the floating letters around the figure, emphasising this major obstacle and the challenge of understanding. Additionally, in an academic setting, Participant 3 was faced with overwhelming academic demands, as shown in Figure 4.14, where a figure was depicted surrounded by towering stacks of textbooks, symbolising the overpowering academic pressure he felt to catch up with the new subjects that were not offered at his previous school. This was reiterated by Participant 3’s textual reflection that ‘All the new subjects were very hard for me’.

Through their visual and textual reflections, Participants 1 and 3 addressed the diversity in the teaching styles. Participant 1 commented on the teaching methods at the new school, stating that they could be ‘really confusing at times’ (Figure 4.3), adding layers of complexity and adaptation to her learning experience and leading her to feel overwhelmed and confused. Additionally, Participant 3 highlighted this in Figure 4.15, commenting in his textual reflection that he ‘[found] it hard to understand the teacher by their different teaching methods because they all explain differently’, leading him to feel overwhelmed. The diversity in instructional approaches, compounded by the difficulty of adjusting to each unique style, stressed the overwhelming feeling experienced by Participant 3. Participant 4 also felt overwhelmed during their transition to having new teachers. Participant 4 commented, ‘This year, [the] teacher doesn’t explain things very clearly to me and confuses me a lot’, contrasting the straightforward, friendly teaching approach at her old school with the confusing, impersonal methods of the current teacher at her new school.

Participant 2 stated in his textual reflection, ‘I find this overwhelming as it is very distracting and harder to concentrate.’ Figure 4.9 depicted a classroom buzzing with activity, highlighting Participant 2’s struggle with the noise and chaotic environment, which he found distracting and which made concentration difficult, leading him to feel overwhelmed.

Participant 4 also felt overwhelmed in the academic setting represented in Figure 4.20 where the central figure sits with her hands on her head and a distressed expression on her face, showing cognitive overload. Participant 4 commented on her early difficulties with time management, leading to her challenges with deadlines and mentioning that she ‘would miss important assignments’. Start here

#### **4.4.2.2 Subtheme 2: Overwhelmed by social situations**

Participant 2 felt overwhelmed by loneliness and a disconnection from his peers, as shown in Figure 4.8, which depicted a group of individuals closely packed together but with one central figure detached emotionally from the surroundings. The feeling of being ‘lost in the crowd’ and lacking personal relationships with teachers led Participant 2 to comment, ‘I don’t have a personal relationship with my teachers.’ This exacerbated his sense of overwhelming isolation, making him feel alienated and overlooked.

In Figure 4.7, Participant 2 depicted a dimly lit gaming room. This visual reflected him escaping into the dark room for gaming, evoking feelings of safety and security for Participant 2 while providing him with a coping mechanism to recharge and relax in a space that allowed him to escape the overwhelming and demanding school schedule and human interactions. As Participant 2 stated, it ‘helps me escape and recharge’.

Participant 3’s image also reflected disconnection and alienation, as shown in Figure 4.12. Participant 3 starkly contrasted himself with his social surroundings in Figure 4.12 – a boy sitting alone in a bustling social environment, which emphasised his disconnection and struggle to connect with his peers. He commented, ‘My socialising skills are terrible,’ showing that he felt swamped by the social situations around him.

#### **4.4.3 Theme 3: Empowerment through extracurricular activities**

The next theme identified by Participants 1, 2, 3 and 4 was the crucial role played by the extracurricular activities in the empowerment of the participants in their transition from a special school to a mainstream school.

##### **4.4.3.1 Subtheme 1: Building self-esteem and confidence**

For Participant 1, field hockey as an extramural activity played a significant component in boosting her self-confidence and creating a more positive self-image. In Figure 4.5, Participant 1 reflected in her textual data, ‘Now that I play hockey at my school, I feel as if I have accomplished so much.’ For Participant 1, entering her new school allowed her to fully embrace the sport of hockey with ignited feelings of passion and empowerment. Her dedication to her sport and her resilience to overcome her personal and academic challenges showed a journey of growth. The participant also emphasised that despite obstacles, she was committed to her sport, proving that achieving a personal goal in a sport reinforced her belief in her abilities across all areas of her life.

##### **4.4.3.2 Subtheme 2: Social integration and friendships**

In Figure 4.17, Participant 4 highlighted the significant increase in social interactions and friendships in her new school setting, contrasting with her previous experiences. Participant 4 emphasised the sense of unity and bonding she felt with their friends and commented in her textual reflections: ‘My friends are special to me. They understand me. When I make mistakes,

they help me.’ This shows the strong sense of community that the participant created with her peers through their shared passion for horse riding.

Despite Participant 3 sitting alone during the break (Figure 4.12), he also enjoyed playing tennis and mentioned this in his textual reflection: ‘I like that I can be a part of a team.’ This showed his enjoyment of tennis and how it evoked a feeling of community for him (Figure 4.13). He used his enjoyment of this extramural activity to form a visible collaboration with his teammates, creating a sense of unity and integration. Thus, his journey with his visual data highlighted not just his challenges but also his opportunities to create new social connections. Figures 4.12 and 4.13 narratively contrasted the isolation he felt during breaks with the engagement in his team sport of tennis, which provided this participant with a vital social outlet and a sense of belonging. Moreover, transitioning from a special school to a mainstream school allowed Participant 3 to confront and manage his overwhelming social environment.

Extracurricular activities served as a bridge for social connections not only for Participant 3 but for Participant 1 as well, providing a more relaxed environment for interactions than the typical classroom setting they were exposed to. For Participant 1, hockey became the outlet through which she was able to form meaningful relationships. Her shared interest in hockey with her peers created bonds with her new friends, contributing to her successful integration into new social circles at her new mainstream school.

#### **4.4.3.3 Subtheme 3: Coping mechanisms and relief**

Participant 2 found empowerment through an extracurricular activity in gaming. For him, gaming was not just a hobby but a necessary psychological retreat that helped him to manage the stresses from his academic and social pressure. Participant 2 represented gaming as his escape in Figure 4.7, illustrating how it functioned as a vital coping mechanism, offering him a sanctuary where he could decompress and find solace. Participant 2 commented in their textual reflections that it ‘helps me escape and recharge from a mentally tiring school day’, evoking feelings of safety and security in this space and providing him with a coping mechanism to recharge from his demanding school schedule (Participant 2).

For Participant 1, her passion for hockey was a coping mechanism of empowerment. Her ability to be chosen for the A team inspired her to persevere through her reading, learning, and writing

struggles. Participant 3 used his access to playing tennis to use up his energy from sitting in class all day and he tried to form friendships with the new team, which he felt part of. Participant 4 used horse riding as a coping mechanism to alleviate her stress from schoolwork. She highlighted that through horse riding and their shared passion for equestrian activities, she built a supportive community with her fellow riders.

#### **4.5 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I have presented the thematic analysis of Data Set 1. The next chapter focuses on the findings of Data Set 2, and later, I discuss the findings of this study in Chapter 6.

## CHAPTER 5: DISPLAY OF ANALYSIS DATA SET 2

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 4, I presented the data analysis and findings for Data Set 1, the systematic visuo-textual analysis of each participant's images and narrative reflections with a thematic analysis of each participant's contributions. Chapter 5 presents the data analysis and findings for Data Set 2, which includes the semi-structured interviews with the parent of each learner with dyslexia who participated in the study. For example, a semi-structured interview was held with Participant 1's parent.

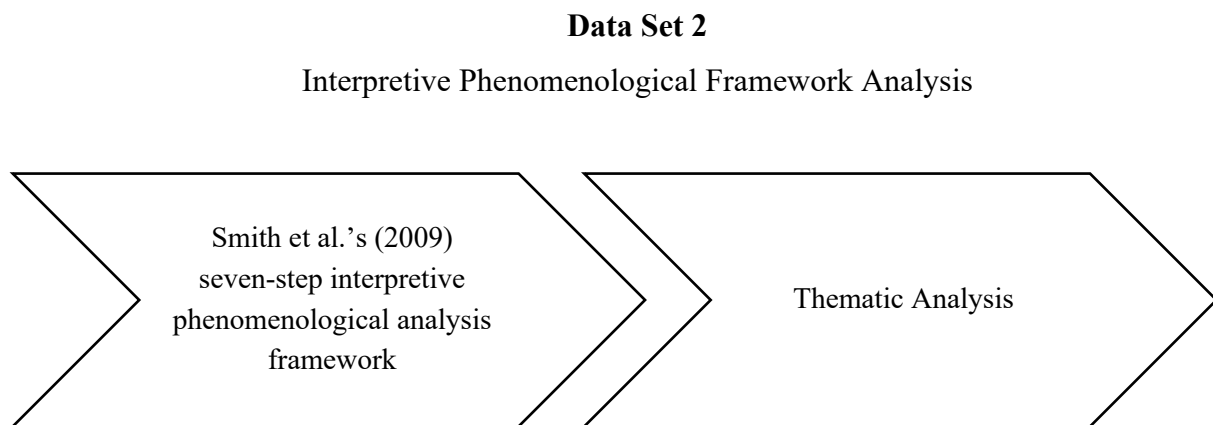


Figure 5.1: Analysis of Data Set 2

In this chapter, a thematic interpretative phenomenological analysis of the interview with the parent of each participating dyslexic learner is presented.

### 5.2 THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEW DATA OF THE PARENTS

The following section presents Data Set 2's findings in the format of a word cloud, highlighting key terms that were evident in the interviews. The critical terms highlighted allowed me to draw themes from the interview data.

### 5.2.1 Interview 1: Parent of Participant 1



Figure 5.2: Word cloud of Interview 1 – Parent of Participant 1

The interview with Participant 1’s mother highlighted the challenges and successes of transitioning from a supportive special school to a less supportive mainstream school. Initially, the lack of communication from the new school was a significant concern of the parents, but Participant 1 was determined to attend, demonstrating firm resolve. According to Participant 1’s parent, the previous special school focused on discipline and support, which played a crucial role in preparing her daughter for this change and helping her to develop resilience. Despite Participant 1’s academic and social difficulties in the larger, less accommodating environment, her parent commented on her child’s passion for hockey and the eventual formation of supportive friendships, which aided her adaptation and resilience at the new school.

### 5.2.2 Interview 2: Parent of Participant 2



Figure 5.3: Word cloud of Interview 2 – Parent of Participant 2

Participant 2’s mother commented on how the transition to mainstream schooling was marked by a mix of emotions, including significant nervousness and fear for them as a parent, mainly due to concerns about how their child would cope given his history of delayed speech and therapy. Despite these worries, Participant 2 was eager to attend the new school and gradually adjusted, maintaining disciplined study habits and using technology to support his learning. Socially, the parent of Participant 2 commented on how he faced the challenges but also made meaningful connections, although he required personal space to recharge. His parent noted the contrast between the supportive environment of his previous school and the more impersonal atmosphere of the new school, emphasising the importance of resilience, parental support, and the need to adapt while preserving the foundations built in earlier years.

### 5.2.3 Interview 3: Parent of Participant 3



Figure 5.4: Word cloud of Interview 3 – Parent of Participant 3

The mother of Participant 3 discussed the transition from a smaller, personalised learning environment to a larger mainstream school and how it brought significant concerns, particularly regarding her child’s ability to integrate because of his introverted social nature. While his mother addressed the fact that she maintained a structured home environment to support his academics, the emotional toll of adapting to the new setting was evident. She addressed how support systems, including extra lessons with a private tutor, played a crucial role in helping their son to navigate the academic challenges. However, his reluctance to join additional classes posed a difficulty. The mother observed that he faced challenges with the new subjects and inconsistent academic teaching methods. At the same time, the medication Ritalin, while

improving his focus, affected his social interactions by making him more reserved. According to the interview with Participant 3's mother, support from his tutor was valuable in encouraging him to engage more confidently in his academic and social life, highlighting the complexities of his transition.

#### 5.2.4 Interview 4: Parent of Participant 4



Figure 5.5: Word cloud of Interview 4 – Parent of Participant 4

According to the mother of Participant 4, her daughter's transition to a mainstream school was marked by initial nervousness and anxiety in both parent and learner, particularly concerning how well her daughter would adapt after attending a special school. The parent stated that although the adjustment period was challenging, the support of the teachers and the use of learning tools helped Participant 4 make academic progress, shifting her parents' expectations toward higher education. The mother noted emotional challenges, including anxiety and stress, which were managed through solid relationships with her teachers and supportive friendships, which aided her social integration. Her parents played a crucial role in providing emotional and practical support, balancing this with encouraging her independence. Additionally, Participant 4's mother highlighted her child's passion for horse riding and how it provided an important outlet, contributing to her resilience and overall well-being during this transition.

## 5.3 DATA SET 2 FINDINGS

### 5.3.1 Theme 1: Parental concerns over transitions

Initially, a theme that was evident amongst the second group of participants in this study, the parents of the learners with dyslexia, were concerns relating to the transition from one school to another. Commonly, the parents of these learners had strong concerns focused primarily on the unknown aspects of their child transitioning from a special school to a mainstream school.

In the interview with Participant 4's mother, she stated, 'It was a bit scary to her as all her friends were getting ready to go to their other schools.' In the interview, this parent discussed that although there was a fear, the special school had gone through many steps to prepare her child well for the transition. Parent 4 addressed concerns about the emotional toll and pressure related to her daughter's educational demands, which had led to anxiety and stress. Participant 4's mother commented, 'I think she was nervous.' Even though evident preparations were made at her previous school, the pressure applied to Participant 4 before her transition added to her feelings of nervousness and heightened her emotions before changing school.

In the interview with Participant 1's mother, she commented, 'I would have rather [have] seen her go to a much smaller, more nurturing school, perhaps maybe remedial for that one-on-one attention.' However, considering this participant's limited access to remedial schools in their area, they opted to send their child to a mainstream school. Despite the parents' concerns about a mainstream school, the learner was adamant that she wanted to attend this mainstream school. Participant 1's mother commented, 'She really wanted to go.' In the interview, the parent of Participant 1 also showed concern about the lack of communication from the new school, saying, 'I don't think the school did anything. No communication. Absolutely none whatsoever.'

In addition, in the interview with Participant 3's mother, she addressed her concerns over how she thought that Participant 3 would struggle with his transition. She commented on how close his special school was, calling it highly personal, 'like a family' and then emphasising how worried she was over how he would integrate socially and academically into his new mainstream school. Participant 3's parent said, 'I was thinking he was gonna struggle, really struggle,' preparing herself for the worst-case scenario. Regardless of Participant 3's mother's

concerns about the transition, she commented, ‘He was excited to be here. He adapted quite well, although he was very stressed and really freaked out.’ Participant 3’s mother addressed the fact that this was ‘a huge change’. Thereafter, his mother remarked that this was the first group of participants from this special school to transition to a mainstream school, highlighting the possibility that potentially the transition might not have worked. Participant 3’s mother also commented on her worry about her child’s ability to integrate due to his socially introverted nature.

During the interview, Participant 2’s parent commented, ‘Comically, he was actually quite excited.’ Similarly, Participant 1 was excited to attend her new school. Despite Participant 2 being excited about his transition, his mother commented on her own feelings, saying, ‘I was so scared. More than nervous, like scared.’ Sharing her concerns about his transition potentially impacting his self-esteem and confidence, she explained that her nerves were on edge due to the fact that her son had a history of delayed speech and therapy.

The transition from a special school to a mainstream school for these learners with dyslexia brought significant parental concerns, mainly due to the unfamiliar challenges. Despite thorough preparations, Participant 4’s mother noted her heightened nervous state, while Participant 1’s parent would have preferred a nurturing school but respected her child’s strong desire for mainstream education. While Participant 3’s parents feared the social and academic struggles, they saw their child adapt well despite the initial stress. Participant 2’s parent faced intense fear in contrast to their child’s excitement. Overall, while the learners with dyslexia showed mixed emotions, the mothers of each learner highlighted the complexities of their children’s transitions.

### **5.3.2 Theme 2: Social integration**

Social integration emerged as a theme in understanding the experiences of the learners with dyslexia who transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school. This theme encompassed the challenges, as well as the successes, that these learners faced as they navigated their new social settings and worked to establish friendships.

### 5.3.2.1 Subtheme 2.1: Navigating the new social setting

Navigating the new social setting proved a significant hurdle for the participants. Changing from a small, close-knit special school environment to a larger mainstream school environment often left the learners feeling overwhelmed and isolated.

Participant 3's mother highlighted the concerns she had for her child in navigating the new social setting by stating, 'The school was so close, so personal, like a family... I was worried about how he was going to integrate socially.' This reflected this parent's broader concern that transitioning to a less familiar, more extensive social environment could lead to difficulties in her child's social adaptation and integration. Participant 3's mother also commented on her child's nature, saying, 'He's an introvert, like me, so we're not social butterflies.' This further illustrates the difficulties that the more introverted learners faced in navigating the new and larger social setting, highlighting the personal challenges that came with such a transition. Additionally, Participant 3's parent, his mother, commented, 'He finds it hard to have conversations with people and to make friends. Sometimes he sits alone, which I didn't know, and it makes me concerned about his social integration.' This revelation highlighted some of this learner's struggles in his social integration when he transitioned from a more intimate, supportive setting to a larger, less familiar one. The parent's concern reflected the worry that her child may feel isolated or left out.

Similarly, Participant 4's mother shared, 'It was a bit scary to her as all her friends were getting ready to go to their other schools.' This indicates the anxiety associated with entering a new social landscape without the comfort of familiar peers. Despite the preparations done at the special school, the magnitude of the transition and the need to understand and adapt to new social dynamics were daunting for the participants.

When discussing the buddy system available at the new mainstream school, Participant 1's mother shared, 'I don't know if a Grade 8 is mature enough to help somebody else who's struggling... I don't think they have that awareness.' This illustrates the challenges that the younger learners might face in providing adequate social support to their peers, suggesting that more structured interventions led by learners from higher grades might be needed to aid the learners with dyslexia in their social integration. Additionally, Participant 1's mother commented, 'It was tough for her because the other girls already had their group, and she felt

a bit on the outside when she first started at the new school.’ This illustrates this student’s challenges in feeling excluded during her transition to a mainstream school. But as Participant 1’s mother noted, ‘She really wanted to go’, highlighting the child’s eagerness to engage in a new social environment despite the difficulties.

However, the process of making new friends was not straightforward. Participant 3’s parent, his mother, commented, ‘I was thinking he was gonna struggle, really struggle,’ reflecting her concerns about the child’s ability to form new social connections. Participant 2’s mother also addressed this concern indirectly, acknowledging her child’s excitement but underlining the parent’s fear: ‘I was so scared. More than nervous, like scared.’ This fear often stemmed from the uncertainty of how well the child would manage to establish new friendships and integrate into existing social groups.

Navigating the new social setting was a significant challenge for the participants as they transitioned from their special school to a mainstream environment, which often left them feeling overwhelmed and isolated. Despite their eagerness to engage in new social circles, the difficulties of making friends were common concerns, leading to heightened anxiety for both the learners and their parents.

### **5.3.2.2 Subtheme 2.2: Leveraging personal strengths for social integration**

Making friends was another critical aspect of social integration that posed challenges for the learners who participated in this study. Despite the fear stemming from the uncertainty of how well the learners with dyslexia would manage new friendships, they proved their strengths and used them to help them integrate.

Participant 1 used her strength in hockey to help her navigate the social dynamics of her new school. Hockey allowed her to connect with peers who shared similar interests, facilitating the formation of friendships and easing her transition into the mainstream school. Participant 1’s mother commented, ‘She was so proud of herself for making the A-team, even though she didn’t play hockey as much as others. Hockey has been her passion, and it really helped her feel like she belonged.’ This highlighted that hockey was more than just a sport for Participant 1; it was a critical factor in helping her build confidence, form new friendships, and establish a sense of identity at her new school.

Participant 2 demonstrated proficiency with computers, a strength that helped him integrate into his new school environment. His ability to use technology effectively not only supported him academically but also allowed him to connect with others with similar skills and interests. Participant 2's mother addressed this proficiency, stating, 'He enjoys playing online games with his friends from school, which helps him feel connected even though he's more introverted in person. It's his way of staying social and interacting with his peers.' This underscores how Participant 2's familiarity with computers became a tool for him to navigate the academic and social challenges of his new school. It provided him with a way to manage his workload and engage with his peers.

Participant 3's involvement in tennis played a significant role in helping him integrate socially into his new school environment. Tennis provided him with a structured activity where he could be part of a team and interact with others in a non-academic setting. Participant 3's mother commented, 'Even though he's more introverted, being on the tennis team gives him a sense of belonging and helps him connect with others.' This illustrates how tennis not only provided him with a physical outlet but also allowed him to feel a sense of belonging and community, which was crucial for his social integration.

Horse riding was a unique strength that helped Participant 4 integrate socially, as it gave her a distinct identity and a point of connection with others who were interested in or curious about the sport. Participant 4's mother mentioned, 'Horse riding has always been her escape. She mentioned that it's something that makes her feel confident, and it helped her find common ground with others who shared the same interest.' This highlighted how horse riding not only served as a personal passion for Participant 2 but also as a social bridge, helping her to initiate conversations and form connections with her peers.

Each participant in the study leveraged their unique strengths to help navigate the social challenges of transitioning into a mainstream school. Participant 3 found a sense of community and belonging through playing tennis, Participant 1 used her passion for hockey to build confidence and form new friendships, Participant 2 used his proficiency in computers to connect with peers who shared similar interests, and Participant 4's passion for horse riding provided a unique bridge to help her connect with others. Each of these strengths played a

crucial role in their social integration and assisted the learners with dyslexia in establishing social bonds.

### **5.3.3 Theme 3: Support systems**

#### **5.3.3.1 Subtheme 1: The impact of parent support**

Parental support was consistently highlighted as a cornerstone for the learners with dyslexia in the study, particularly during their transition to a mainstream school environment. Participant 3's parent emphasised the critical nature of this support, stating, 'I tried to be involved with the school to make it easier for him.' This reflected the parent's understanding that active participation in her child's education was essential in helping him navigate the complexities of the new school setting.

Additionally, Participant 1's parent pointed out the emotional and psychological importance of being there for her child, mentioning, 'I think she was scared that if she told me there was a problem, I would take her out.' This demonstrated the delicate balance the parents had to strike in providing a safe space for their children to express their fears and concerns while encouraging them to persevere through challenges.

Participant 4's mother shared a similar sentiment, emphasising the emotional support that she provided during the transition, 'It was a bit scary to her as all her friends were getting ready to go to their other schools.' This highlighted the parent's role in reassuring their child and helping them cope with the anxiety of entering a new social and academic environment.

Moreover, the practical involvement of parents was also crucial. Participant 2's parent discussed how she helped her child establish effective study habits, stating, 'I've even heard him talking to his sister... it's best to just sit down and just do it and get it done.' This shows that parental guidance not only reinforced discipline but also helped instil a sense of responsibility and time management in their child.

Parental support also extended to managing expectations and providing a sense of stability. Participant 1's parent emphasised the importance of realistic goals, saying, 'I really just want her to pass. That is the first thing. I don't want her to repeat a year.' This underscores how the

parents, while being supportive, also needed to set achievable goals that helped to reduce the pressure on their children, allowing them to focus on their own pace of learning.

Overall, consistent and active support from the parents proved vital for the learners with dyslexia as they transitioned into mainstream schooling. The parents played a role in their children's academic progress and were also pivotal in providing emotional stability, fostering resilience, and helping their children build the confidence needed to thrive in the new environment.

### **5.3.3.2 Subtheme 2: The impact of tutor support**

The role of me as the tutor has been highlighted as a crucial support system for learners with dyslexia, helping them manage the transition to a mainstream school environment. Participant 3's parent emphasised the importance of this support, stating, 'He's got you [me, as the researcher], which is a massive support system for him. I think without you, it would have been much harder for him to keep up with the work.' This reflected the mother's recognition that the additional help provided by the tutor was vital in helping her child stay on track academically.

Participant 2's mother also mentioned, 'The extra lessons you give him are really beneficial. Without them, I think he would struggle more with some of the new subjects he didn't have before.' This represents how the tutor's assistance in bridging the gap of new subjects contributed to the essential understanding of the student's academic adaptation. Participant 1's parent offered a similar sentiment, stating, 'I honestly don't know how she would have managed without you. The way you break things down for her, especially with her dyslexia, has made such a big difference.' Here, the parent recognises the tutor's role in simplifying complex material and making it more accessible for a child with learning challenges, contributing to their understanding.

Moreover, the tutor's impact went beyond just academic support. Participant 3's parent also pointed out, 'With your help, he's been able to keep up with his peers, even when he struggled with certain subjects. You've given him the confidence to ask questions and not feel lost.' This underscores the importance of emotional support, showing that the tutor helped the learners build the confidence they needed to engage actively in their education. Participant 2's parent

further elaborated on the tutor's role as more than just an academic aid, noting, 'You've been more than just a tutor; you've been a mentor. I can see how much more confident he is about his schoolwork because of the guidance you've provided.' This shows the transformative effect a tutor can have on a student's overall outlook towards their studies, helping to foster a more positive attitude.

Lastly, Participant 1's parent expressed how integral the tutor's support was in navigating the demands of mainstream schooling: 'You've been a bridge between what she learns in class and what she needs to understand for her exams. That extra support is invaluable.' This represents the tutor's role in connecting classroom learning with the practical demands of examinations, ensuring that the student is well-prepared.

The support provided by a dedicated tutor proved pivotal for the learners with dyslexia as they transitioned to mainstream schooling. The parents highlighted how the tutor helped their children keep up academically, boosted their confidence, and reduced anxiety.

#### **5.4 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I presented a thematic analysis of Data Set 2 of the semi-structured interviews held with a parent of each learner with dyslexia for this study. In the next chapter, I discuss the findings of this study.

## CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This research study examined the experiences of adolescent learners with dyslexia as they transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school in South Africa. The analysis presented in Chapters 4 and 5 focused on two data sets. Data Set 1 consisted of photovoice data and the learners' narrative reflections, while Data Set 2 consisted of semi-structured interview transcripts with each mother of a learner. I analysed these data sets using thematic analysis, which provided me with insight into the individual experiences of learners with dyslexia.

As outlined in Chapter 3, a phenomenological research design was chosen for this study. This approach was used to understand the experiences of the learners with dyslexia. In Chapter 4, the thematic analysis of the photovoice data from the learners with dyslexia was discussed, and the key themes from the learners' experiences during their transition were highlighted. These themes included feelings of isolation, being overwhelmed in academic and social settings, and empowerment through extracurricular activities. In Chapter 5, the data from the semi-structured interviews with the parents of the learners with dyslexia revealed significant themes, such as parental concerns during the transition, challenges in social integration, and the vital role of support systems, including parental involvement and tutoring. The discussion of the themes arising from both Data Set 1 and Data Set 2 provided answers to the research questions, 'What are the views of learners with dyslexia in transitioning from special schools to mainstream schools in South Africa?' and 'What are the parents' perspectives on their children with dyslexia transitioning from special schools to mainstream schools?' The chapter concluded with an analysis of five significant themes: (1) experiencing isolation, (2) experiencing feelings of being overwhelmed, (3) empowerment through extracurricular activities, (4) parental concerns and (5) support systems.

The following sections provide a detailed discussion of these themes. Table 6.1 outlines the themes, sub-themes and key points of discussion.

Table 6.1: Themes

Themes	Subthemes	Key Points of Discussion
<b>Theme 1:</b> Experiencing Isolation		<b>Point 1:</b> Learners felt isolated when shifting from a familiar, supportive environment to a more extensive, less personal setting
<b>Theme 2:</b> Experiencing Overwhelm	<b>Subtheme 1:</b> Academic Setting	<b>Point 1:</b> Increased academic demands were challenging, leading to stress and anxiety
	<b>Subtheme 2:</b> Social Situations	<b>Point 2:</b> Social integration led to overwhelming feelings
<b>Theme 3:</b> Empowerment Through Extracurricular Activities	<b>Subtheme 1:</b> Building Self-Esteem	<b>Point 1:</b> Extracurricular activities boosted learners' confidence
	<b>Subtheme 2:</b> Social Integration	<b>Point 2:</b> These activities facilitated the formation of new friendships
<b>Theme 4:</b> Parental Concerns		<b>Point 1:</b> Parents were anxious about their child's ability to adapt
<b>Theme 5:</b> Support Systems	<b>Subtheme 1:</b> Parental Support	<b>Point 1:</b> Parental involvement was crucial for emotional support
	<b>Subtheme 2:</b> Tutor Support	<b>Point 2:</b> The academic tutor provided essential academic support

## 6.2 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS FROM THE DATA

The following section discusses the findings of this study.

### 6.2.1 Theme 1: Experiencing isolation

The findings suggest that learners with dyslexia experienced a strong desire for connection during their transition from their special school to a mainstream environment, but this often left them feeling isolated and frustrated. Many of the learners noted their challenges in adapting to the new social dynamics, and their initial interactions with their peers and teachers in the more extensive classroom settings failed to meet their need for personal connection. However, they sought out and found belonging through extracurricular activities, such as sports and hobbies, and by forming close friendships with like-minded peers. These social support structures provided them with a sense of community and helped to alleviate their isolation, facilitating smoother transitions to their new school environments. This collaboration, according to Pitt and Soni (2017), shows how creating an inclusive environment and fostering peer support can promote acceptance and belonging, positively influencing the educational outcomes of dyslexic learners.

The learners with dyslexia in this study felt significant anxiety and isolation after they transitioned from the special school to a mainstream environment. This transition involved substantial changes in their academic and social lives, including adapting to larger classrooms and new teaching methods. As a result, they faced feelings of disconnection and loneliness, especially during the initial stages of their transition when they struggled to form new social bonds. Many of the learners reported feeling overwhelmed by the crowded and noisy environment at the mainstream school, which contrasted sharply with the more personalised attention they had received at the special school. These challenges made them feel ‘lost in the crowd’ (Participant 2) and exacerbated their sense of isolation.

Additionally, the learners faced academic pressures that heightened their emotional stress, mainly when they encountered new subjects and teaching styles. These findings concur with those of Leseyane et al. (2018), who states that learners with dyslexia can frequently be faced with a deficiency in acknowledging their learning challenges. In addition, as addressed by Wilmot et al. (2023), moving from a special school to a mainstream setting presents substantial challenges, leading to feelings of isolation, anxiety, and decreased self-worth. Although some learners eventually formed supportive friendships and relied on extracurricular activities to

cope, the initial lack of social integration and the emotional burden of new academic demands created a challenging landscape at the time of their transition.

The learners' transition revealed a profound sense of isolation as they moved from a familiar, supportive environment to a more extensive, less personal setting. At their special school, the learners were accustomed to the small, tight-knit community where the teachers were attuned to their individual learning needs and social dynamics were more manageable. This personalised setting offered the learners the attention and support required to navigate their academic and social lives. However, upon transitioning to a mainstream school, many of the learners were overwhelmed by the size and impersonal nature of their new environment. Figure 4.8, representing 'Lost in the Crowd' (Participant 2), illustrates Participant 2's loneliness and disconnection from his peers and the educators in the new mainstream school setting. In his narrative text, Participant 2 addressed his feeling that 'sometimes I feel like another number lost in the crowd' (Participant 2). The participant indicated through his visual reflections that feelings of isolation and disconnection were evoked and overlooked despite his proximity to others (Figure 4.8). In addition, Participant 3 pictured a lonesome boy sitting on a bench in a busy schoolyard (Figure 4.12) and a young boy alone surrounded by piles of textbooks (Figure 4.14), adding to the concept of loneliness and isolation. This reiterates the findings of Leseyane et al. (2018), who found that learners with dyslexia preferred the nurturing environment of specialised schools over the potentially hostile atmosphere of mainstream schools.

This shift was particularly challenging for the learners with dyslexia who struggled with social interactions, as they had to contend with making new friends in a much larger and more complex social setting. Whereas social bonds were often formed naturally within small, familiar groups at the special school, the mainstream school presented a daunting landscape of pre-established social circles. The dyslexic learners reported feeling like outsiders, struggling to integrate into new peer groups, and feeling overlooked by their classmates and teachers. The lack of personal connection with the educators, who could no longer provide the same level of one-on-one attention, further contributed to feelings of isolation and alienation. This sudden change left the learners feeling unsupported, both academically and socially. This reiterates what Wilmot et al. (2023) found in their study that moving from special schools to mainstream

settings can provide significant challenges, resulting in seclusion, unease, and diminished self-worth

## **6.2.2 Theme 2: Experiencing feelings of being overwhelmed**

The transition from a special school to a mainstream setting left many of the learners with dyslexia feeling overwhelmed as they encountered a range of new challenges that significantly impacted their emotional well-being. These challenges were academic and social, as the mainstream school's more extensive, more impersonal environment presented numerous difficulties. In addition to navigating new social dynamics, the learners had to cope with increased academic pressures, unfamiliar teaching methods, and, in some cases, a lack of understanding and support from their new educators. The cumulative effect of these factors led to many of the learners experiencing a heightened sense of anxiety and stress as they struggled to adapt to their new environment.

### **6.2.2.1 Subtheme 1: Academic setting**

The transition from a special school to a mainstream school often led to increased academic demands, which caused significant stress and anxiety for the learners with dyslexia. Many of the participants reported feeling overwhelmed by the sudden shift in curriculum pace, unfamiliar subjects, and diverse teaching styles in mainstream schools. This challenge was heightened because many of the learners had not been exposed to specific subjects at their previous schools, leading to confusion and inadequacy. This was addressed by Eccles, Lord and Buchanan (2018), who highlighted how learners with dyslexia must adjust to unfamiliar language, navigate new environments, and manage increased academic expectations when transitioning to mainstream schools.

One learner shared:

My old school did not offer all the subjects, so in the new school, all the new subjects were very hard for me. It makes it hard because all the other people expect me to know some information, but I have not had the work before. (Participant 3)

This statement illustrates how the expectation to quickly adapt to the new subjects without prior exposure created stress for the learners, further compounding their academic challenges.

Another participant highlighted the difficulty she had in navigating different teaching styles, stating, ‘Each teacher has different ways and methods which can be really confusing at times. What I have learnt is to find a way that I understand, and I can learn from’ (Participant 1). The inconsistency in instructional approaches between the teachers added a layer of complexity, leaving the learners unsure of how to proceed with their studies. This lack of clarity contributed to academic anxiety as they struggled to adjust to the varied methods of teaching that were often not tailored to their learning needs.

In a study done by Lithari (2023), the research indicated that individuals with lower academic aptitude and self-confidence often faced more significant difficulties during school transitions, highlighting the critical role of support systems. This was seen in my study as the learners expressed difficulty in managing the increased workload and fast-paced nature of the mainstream school environments. Participant 2 noted, ‘I have a lot more work to get through with all my new subjects. They give me fewer breaks, and I feel like there is so much more that is demanded of me.’ This added pressure of having to keep up with more demanding academic expectations led to heightened stress levels, as the learners found it challenging to balance their increased workload with their capacity to process and retain new information.

Additionally, the sense of falling behind academically often left the dyslexic learners feeling anxious about their ability to succeed. Participant 3 shared, ‘Sometimes I struggle to understand new work, and I need to spend more time understanding first before I can remember.’ The need for more time to grasp new material made the fast-paced curriculum even more stressful for the learners with dyslexia, who often felt they were lagging behind their peers. This, in turn, heightened their anxiety about keeping up in the classroom.

Each of the previously mentioned statements correlates to the study done by Kelly (2015), highlighting how learners with dyslexia, in particular, struggle with increased academic demands and a lack of adequate support structures during transitions. Furthermore, the transition between the educational institutions underscores the impact of inadequate support, including insufficient teacher training and resources, which exacerbates the difficulties faced by dyslexic learners (Kelly, 2015).

To conclude, the combination of new academic subjects, inconsistent teaching methods, and an increased workload contributed to significant stress and anxiety for the learners with dyslexia during their transition to a mainstream school. These challenges were particularly pronounced for those who felt unsupported in adjusting to the demands of their new educational environment.

#### **6.2.2.2 Subtheme 2: Social situations**

Peer interactions and social connections played a significant role in the experiences of the learners with dyslexia at the mainstream school (Leseyane et al., 2018; Pitt & Soni, 2017). The learners in this study were heavily influenced by their social situations. Their transition from the special to the mainstream school often led to overwhelming feelings regarding social integration, as many of the learners with dyslexia struggled to adapt to the larger, more impersonal social environment. The shift from smaller, close-knit classrooms where learners felt a sense of community to the larger mainstream school created significant stress and anxiety around making new friends and fitting into pre-established social groups.

One participant expressed how difficult it was for him to find his place in the new social landscape, stating, ‘Sometimes I feel like another number lost in the crowd. I don’t have a personal relationship with my teachers, and it makes it harder for me to ask questions because I am shy’ (Participant 2). This statement shows the learner’s feelings of being invisible or overlooked in the larger social environment, contributing to his overwhelming isolation and disconnection from his peers and teachers. This was previously mentioned in a study by Chitsa and Mpofu (2016), who stated that learners with dyslexia might encounter social stigma and biases, negatively impacting their sense of inclusion and self-esteem.

Another learner shared similar sentiments, describing how he struggled to make friends in his new school: ‘My socialising skills are terrible. I find it hard to make conversation with people, and it is a bit difficult to make friends with people. I sit alone in break’ (Participant 3). This sense of being socially excluded was common among the participants, as many of the learners found it challenging to break into established social circles, exacerbating their feelings of loneliness and alienation in the new environment.

The learners also felt overwhelmed by the competitive and less supportive nature of social interactions at the mainstream school. As Participant 1 described, ‘Finding the right group of people to hang out with also comes with changing schools. I’ve found the right group of friends to hang out with that will lead me on a good path and away from bad situations.’ This statement shows how his social integration at a mainstream school was not just about making friends but also about navigating the complexities of peer influence and avoiding negative social dynamics. The pressure to align with the ‘right’ group created additional stress for the learners, who were already grappling with the unfamiliarity of the new social environment.

Furthermore, the overwhelming nature of social situations was compounded by the sheer number of learners at the mainstream school. At the special school, the learners were used to smaller groups where social connections were more accessible to form. By contrast, the mainstream school presented a much larger, more complex social setting, making it harder for the learners to form meaningful relationships. Participant 1’s mother noted, ‘It was tough for her because the other girls already had their group, and she felt a bit on the outside when she first started at the new school.’ This feeling of being an outsider, surrounded by pre-existing friendships, left the learners feeling overwhelmed by their integration into the new social environment; however, peer support and relationships can help to mitigate these challenges, fostering a sense of acceptance and inclusion for learners (Rambaran et al., 2017).

In summary, the challenges of social integration at the mainstream school were significant for the learners with dyslexia, leading to them feeling overwhelmed, isolated, and disconnected. The shift from the supportive, close-knit environment of the special schools to the larger, more impersonal mainstream school created anxiety around making friends, fitting in, and navigating social situations. This difficulty in social integration often compounded the learners’ overall sense of stress during the transition.

### **6.2.3 Theme 3: Empowerment through extracurricular activities**

Amid the overwhelming challenges faced in the mainstream school, extracurricular activities played a crucial role in empowering the learners with dyslexia who participated in the study. These activities allowed the learners to express their talents, build confidence, and create meaningful social connections. Many learners found that participating in sports, clubs, and

hobbies helped them to develop a sense of belonging and accomplishment that was often lacking in their academic and social experiences.

### **6.2.3.1 Subtheme 1: Building self-esteem**

Extracurricular activities played a pivotal role in boosting the confidence of the learners with dyslexia as they transitioned to a mainstream school. These activities provided a space where the learners could excel outside the academic pressures that often left them feeling overwhelmed and anxious. For many, participation in sports, arts, or clubs became an avenue through which they could develop a sense of accomplishment and pride. Engaging learners with dyslexia in activities such as sports has been shown to boost their self-confidence and enhance academic performance (Davis, 2024). By focusing on their strengths through varied activities, learners benefit from a supportive environment that nurtures both personal growth and educational success, making these experiences an important addition to their daily routines (Davis, 2024).

One participant mentioned how joining the school's hockey team gave her a sense of achievement, stating, 'Now that I play hockey at my school, I feel as if I have accomplished so much.' This sense of achievement was not only empowering but also helped this learner to establish social connections, which in turn strengthened her self-esteem. Being part of a team or group allowed the learner to focus on her strengths, which boosted her confidence as she realised her potential in a non-academic setting. A study by Lee (2024) showed that for learners with dyslexia, participating in after-school activities like arts or clubs can help diminish feelings of isolation by allowing them to connect with peers who share similar interests.

Additionally, extracurricular activities helped the learners with dyslexia in this study navigate the social complexities of mainstream schools. Engaging in sports or other group activities enabled them to connect with peers who shared similar interests, creating an environment where they could feel valued and supported. For learners who initially felt isolated and disconnected in the more extensive, more impersonal setting of the mainstream school, these activities provided an essential platform for building friendships and fostering a sense of belonging. This social support and recognition of their skills and talents in extracurricular settings significantly reinforced their confidence. As the learners gained recognition and acceptance through these activities, they became more self-assured in their extracurricular

endeavours and overall school experience, demonstrating the transformative power of extracurricular participation in their emotional and social well-being (Lee, 2024).

### **6.2.3.2 Subtheme 2: Social integration**

Extracurricular activities also played a crucial role in facilitating social integration for the learners with dyslexia in a mainstream school. These activities provided a structured, less formal environment where the learners could meet and connect with their peers, helping to bridge the gap that many felt in the more impersonal and academically demanding classroom setting. Sports teams, clubs, and other group activities allowed the learners to form meaningful relationships with their peers with similar interests, creating a sense of community. According to Lee (2024), through structured group activities, these learners find opportunities to socialise and create supportive peer networks, making the school environment feel more inclusive and less daunting.

For instance, one participant shared how being part of the hockey team enabled her to develop strong friendships and feel a greater sense of belonging. Through these interactions, the learners could engage with their peers in a more relaxed and supportive setting, making it easier to form social bonds and integrate into the broader school community. The group dynamics in extracurricular activities helped the learners to navigate the often-overwhelming social landscape of a mainstream school. Being part of a team or club allowed them to collaborate, communicate, and build camaraderie, which was essential in establishing their place in the social fabric of the school (Partonen, 2015).

According to Slavin (2010), learners benefit from working collaboratively, as the group environment not only boosts enjoyment but also introduces a sense of individual responsibility, which drives learners to put more effort into their learning. He shows that cooperative learning does more than enhance academic performance; it also brings additional benefits (Partonen, 2015). For example, as learners engage in planning and supporting their peers, their motivation is amplified through a sense of ‘motivated self-interest’, leading to increased commitment to the group’s success.

For the learners who initially felt isolated in the large classrooms, participating in these activities offered a valuable platform for building friendships and social networks. This sense

of belonging, which was gained through shared goals and experiences in extracurricular activities, eased social integration challenges, helping learners feel more connected and accepted in their new school environment. Through these activities, they found a safe space to interact and develop the social confidence necessary to thrive in mainstream schools. The study conducted by Rambaran et al. (2017) examined the degree of peer influence in an adolescent setting, and the findings revealed that adolescents who establish friendships with their peers or networks of peers experience enhanced academic achievement and exhibit a significant impact on various behaviours and attitudes related to their academic functioning and performance (Rambaran et al., 2017). In addition, Slavin (2010) shows the necessity for cooperative learning in the 21st-century classroom, as it has proven to be a strong strategy for improving the achievement of learners and acting as an aid in their academic success.

#### **6.2.4 Theme 4: Parental concerns**

The parents of the learners with dyslexia who participated in this study were often anxious about their children's ability to adapt to the mainstream school environment after transitioning from the special school. Many parents expressed concerns about how their children would cope with the larger, more demanding academic setting, where the crucial individualised attention in their previous schools would be reduced. In prior research, Lithari (2023) suggests that individuals with lower academic aptitude and self-confidence may have more significant difficulties when transitioning to another school, underscoring the significance of support systems. Hence, the parents' concerns were relevant.

One parent noted, 'I was thinking he was gonna struggle, really struggle,' highlighting the worry that their child might face significant challenges in academics and social integration. The unfamiliar curriculum, increased pace, and diverse teaching methods in the mainstream school were a daunting prospect for the parents, who feared that their children would feel overwhelmed and fall behind academically.

In addition to academic concerns, the parents were also anxious about how their children would adapt socially to the new school environment. They were aware of their children's previous difficulties in forming social connections. They worried that the more extensive, more impersonal nature of the mainstream school might exacerbate feelings of isolation and anxiety.

One parent commented, ‘I was so scared. More than nervous, like scared,’ as they reflected on their child’s ability to find new friends and navigate the social dynamics of a much bigger school. This fear for the parents often stemmed from the understanding that their children, who had thrived in the close-knit, supportive environment of a special school, would now face a more competitive and less tailored social and academic landscape, leaving the parents concerned about their ability to adapt and succeed.

## **6.2.5 Theme 5: Support systems**

Support systems played a vital role in helping the learners with dyslexia navigate the challenges of transitioning to a mainstream school. Whether through parental involvement, academic tutors, or extracurricular activities, these support structures provided the necessary emotional and educational assistance to help learners adapt and thrive in their new environment.

### **6.2.5.1 Subtheme 1: Parental support**

Parental involvement was crucial in providing emotional support for the learners with dyslexia during their transition to a mainstream school. The parents played a vital role in helping their children manage the emotional challenges of adjusting to a new academic and social environment. Many of the parents became actively engaged in their child’s journey, offering encouragement, advocating for additional support, and ensuring their children had access to resources such as tutors or extracurricular activities. This involvement helped to mitigate some of the anxiety and stress that the learners experienced, as they knew they had a strong support system at home. One parent noted, ‘I tried to be involved with the school to make it easier for him,’ underscoring the importance of staying engaged and ensuring their child felt academically and emotionally supported. This affirmed Kelly’s (2015) study, which found that support from friends and family is crucial, as it helps learners feel more accepted and less isolated, positively affecting their academic adjustment.

Beyond academic support, the parents also provided a safe space for their children to express their frustrations and fears, helping them navigate the social and emotional challenges that arose in the mainstream school. The transition often left the learners feeling isolated or overwhelmed, and parental emotional support helped them to cope with these complicated feelings. According to Pearsall (2019), transitions can be overwhelming, but when parents

provide emotional support, children feel safer and more confident in the new environment. By being attentive to their children's needs and actively participating in their school lives, the parents were able to provide reassurance and stability during this significant transition. Their involvement boosted their child's confidence and played a crucial role in their emotional resilience, enabling the learners to persevere through the challenges of adapting to a new school environment.

In difficult transitions, such as starting a new school, parental support is crucial in nurturing children's resilience and self-reliance, as encouragement and reassurance help them develop emotional strength and confidence to handle challenges independently (Korol, 2024). By developing resilience and executive function skills, children better manage challenges during transitions, often facilitated by strong parental involvement and safe, supportive environments (Pearsall, 2019).

#### **6.2.5.2 Subtheme 2: Tutor support**

The involvement of an academic tutor provided essential academic support for the learners with dyslexia as they transitioned to a mainstream school. For many learners, the fast-paced curriculum and unfamiliar teaching methods at the mainstream school created significant academic challenges, making it difficult to keep up with their peers. Tutors, which were not associated to the school in anyway, played a critical role in helping bridge this gap, offering personalised, one-on-one instruction that catered to each learner's specific needs. Tutors often use specialised techniques, like multisensory learning approaches, to break down complex topics and present them at a pace suited to the learner (Felicia, 2024). This approach helps dyslexic learners grasp difficult subjects and manage the demands of mainstream education more effectively (Felicia, 2024).

One parent emphasised the importance of the tutor's assistance, stating, 'Without the extra lessons, I think he would struggle more with some of the new subjects he didn't have before.' The tutor's ability to break down complex material and teach at the learner's pace substantially impacted the learner's academic performance and confidence.

Tutors help learners grasp difficult subjects and provide them with the strategies and tools needed to manage their workload effectively (Rosen, 2024). This additional support was

significant for the learners who were overwhelmed by the demands of mainstream schooling, where individual attention from the teachers was limited. By reinforcing classroom lessons and offering tailored guidance, the tutors enabled the learners to feel more in control of their academic progress. This mastery over their schoolwork reduced the learners' anxiety. It allowed them to approach their studies with greater confidence and resilience, making the academic support from tutors a vital component of their overall success in mainstream schools.

### **6.3 SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION**

Theme 1: The participants collectively experienced isolation as they transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school. The shift from the small, close-knit environments to a larger, more impersonal setting led to feelings of loneliness and disconnection in the learners. The learners highlighted how the personal attention and support they received at the special school was crucial to their sense of belonging. At the mainstream school, the lack of individualised attention made it difficult for the learners to form strong connections with the teachers and peers, exacerbating their feelings of isolation.

Theme 2: The findings from the study indicate that the academic challenges in the mainstream school were a significant source of stress for the learners with dyslexia. The learners struggled to adapt to new teaching methods, a faster-paced curriculum, and unfamiliar subjects. At the special school, the academic environment was tailored to their needs, with individualised support and more manageable workloads. By contrast, the mainstream school presented the learners with an overwhelming number of new concepts, often leaving them feeling outpaced by their peers. This led to frustration, confusion, and anxiety as they grappled with increased academic expectations without the same level of support that they had previously experienced. In addition, the participants faced substantial difficulties in forming meaningful social connections at the mainstream school. Many of the learners felt that pre-existing social groups made integrating difficult, furthering their sense of isolation. Unlike the smaller, more supportive peer groups at the special school, the mainstream school environment was more competitive and less inclusive, leaving the learners with dyslexia feeling socially disconnected. The challenges of fitting into new peer groups and the emotional toll of navigating unfamiliar social dynamics created additional barriers to their social well-being and integration in the new school environment.

Theme 3: Despite the challenges faced in their academic and social settings, many of the learners found solace and empowerment through extracurricular activities. Sports, hobbies, and other non-academic pursuits gave the learners a sense of accomplishment and belonging. For example, the participants involved in sports like hockey or tennis reported feeling more confident and integrated when participating in these activities. These extracurriculars became essential outlets where the learners could build social connections, showcase their skills, and develop a sense of competence, helping them to mitigate the feelings of overwhelm they experienced in the classroom.

Themes 4 and 5: The parents and tutors were vital in supporting their children through the transition from a special school to a mainstream school. The study revealed that the parents were often concerned about how their children would adjust academically and socially but were active advocates for additional support structures. Many of the parents sought tutors, extracurricular activities, and one-on-one educational interventions to help their children cope with the challenges of mainstream schooling. This strong parental involvement helped to buffer some of the adverse effects of the transition, providing the learners with emotional and practical support as they navigated their new environment. Parental advocacy also highlighted the need for more school-based support systems to assist learners with dyslexia during such transitions.

## **6.4 CONCLUSION**

In Chapter 6, I presented and discussed the interpretation and analysis of the data collected during my research study. The themes and sub-themes that emerged from the experiences of the learners with dyslexia who transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school were thoroughly explored. These findings were grounded in both the learners' perspectives and the views of their parents, providing a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and adjustments involved in this transition. In the following chapter, Chapter 7, I conclude my research study by providing an overview of the key findings drawn from the literature and my research. I also present my conclusions based on the main research questions, which address the views of both the learners and their parents regarding the transition process. Finally, I offer recommendations for future research and policy, emphasising the importance of supporting learners with dyslexia through more targeted interventions and ensuring a smoother transition experience in mainstream educational settings.

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

This research study aimed to explore the experiences of adolescent learners with dyslexia after they transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school in South Africa. The research focused on answering the following research questions: ‘What are the views of learners with dyslexia in transitioning from special schools to mainstream schools?’ and ‘What are the parents’ perspectives on their children with dyslexia transitioning from special schools to mainstream schools?’ I followed the outline shown in Table 7.1 to conduct this study.

Table 7.1: Study outline

Chapter	Contents
Chapter 1: Introduction	Introduction to the general orientation of the research study
Chapter 2: Literature Review	Review of the relevant theoretical literature focusing on the experiences of learners with dyslexia in transitioning from special to mainstream schools
Chapter 3: Research Methodology	Discussion of the research methodology used in this research study
Chapter 4: Presentation of Data Set 1	Presentation of the images and analysis of the narrative reflections of the learners with dyslexia
Chapter 5: Presentation of Data Set 2	Presentation of the analysis of the semi-structured interviews with the parents of the learners with dyslexia
Chapter 6: Discussion of findings	Analysis of the findings of the study regarding the literature review and research methodology
Chapter 7: Conclusion	Conclusion of the study

This chapter presents the conclusion of the study. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 offered discussions and conclusions based on the findings of the study. In this chapter, I address the research question through a study review. Next, I examine the methodology used and highlight its limitations. Following that, I provide recommendations for improvement, suggest directions for future research, and explore the implications for educational policy and practice, focusing on recommendations for the school management teams (SMTs), policymakers, and teachers. Additionally, I share my personal and professional reflections. Finally, I outline the limitations of the study, propose areas for future research, and summarise the contributions of the study.

## **7.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY FINDINGS**

Chapter 1 introduced the study and provided a brief overview of the research problem, research questions, and the rationale of the study. Transitioning between educational institutions necessitates adjustments to novel academic and social contexts, a task that can pose significant difficulties for individuals with dyslexia (Lithari, 2023; Yeager et al., 2016). Learners may encounter adverse emotions in settings prioritising excellence and perceive transitioning as more intimidating (Lithari, 2023). This chapter introduced how moving from a special school to a mainstream setting could provide significant challenges to the learners, resulting in seclusion, unease, and diminished self-worth (Wilmot et al., 2023). Chapter 1 highlighted the problem statement of the study that exploring the experiences of learners with dyslexia in transitioning from a special school to a mainstream school is necessary.

Chapter 2 focused on discussing and presenting relevant literature in the field of learners with dyslexia and transitioning from special schools to mainstream schools. This chapter presented extensive research (Gonida & Cortina, 2014; Leseyane et al., 2018; Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020) that was conducted to investigate the perspectives of learners with dyslexia in special educational environments, shedding light on the challenges they face and the efficacy of tailored interventions. This chapter also addressed the theoretical framework of the social identity theory (Trepte & Loy, 2017) used to underpin this research study.

Chapter 3 presented the methodology. It led to me being encouraged to use photovoice data (Wang & Burris, 1994), systematic visuo-textual analysis (Brown & Collins, 2021),

interpretive phenomenological analysis (Smith et al., 2009), and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Chapter 4 discussed Data Set 1, including analysing the images and narrative reflections through Brown and Collins's (2021) systematic visuo-textual analysis and thematic analysis. This was done with the data obtained from each learner participant with dyslexia. Chapter 5 focused on the interpretive phenomenological analysis of the semi-structured interview data that was obtained from a parent of each participant learner with dyslexia. I used Smith et al.'s (2009) interpretive analysis framework to analyse Data Set 2. In Chapter 6, I analysed the findings of the study in relation to the literature review and research methodology. In Chapter 7, I present and discuss the findings of this study and answer the research question.

### **7.3 ADDRESSING RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following section briefly discusses the answer to the research questions, 'What are the views of learners with dyslexia in transitioning from special schools to mainstream schools?' and 'What are the parents' perspectives on their children with dyslexia transitioning from special schools to mainstream schools?'

#### **7.3.1 Primary research question – Conclusion**

The following section briefly discusses the answer to the research question, 'What are the views of learners with dyslexia in transitioning from special schools to mainstream schools?' The analysis of the images and narrative reflections resulted in the following themes: (1) experiencing isolation, (2) being overwhelmed in an academic setting and social situations, and (3) being empowered through extracurricular activities. These three themes defined the phenomenon of the experiences of the learners with dyslexia in their transition from a special school to a mainstream school and included a variety of sub-themes supported by the data gathered in this study. These themes portrayed the views that the learners with dyslexia identified as forming or influencing their transition experiences.

The following figure, Figure 7.1, illustrates the experiences of the learners with dyslexia in transitioning schools.

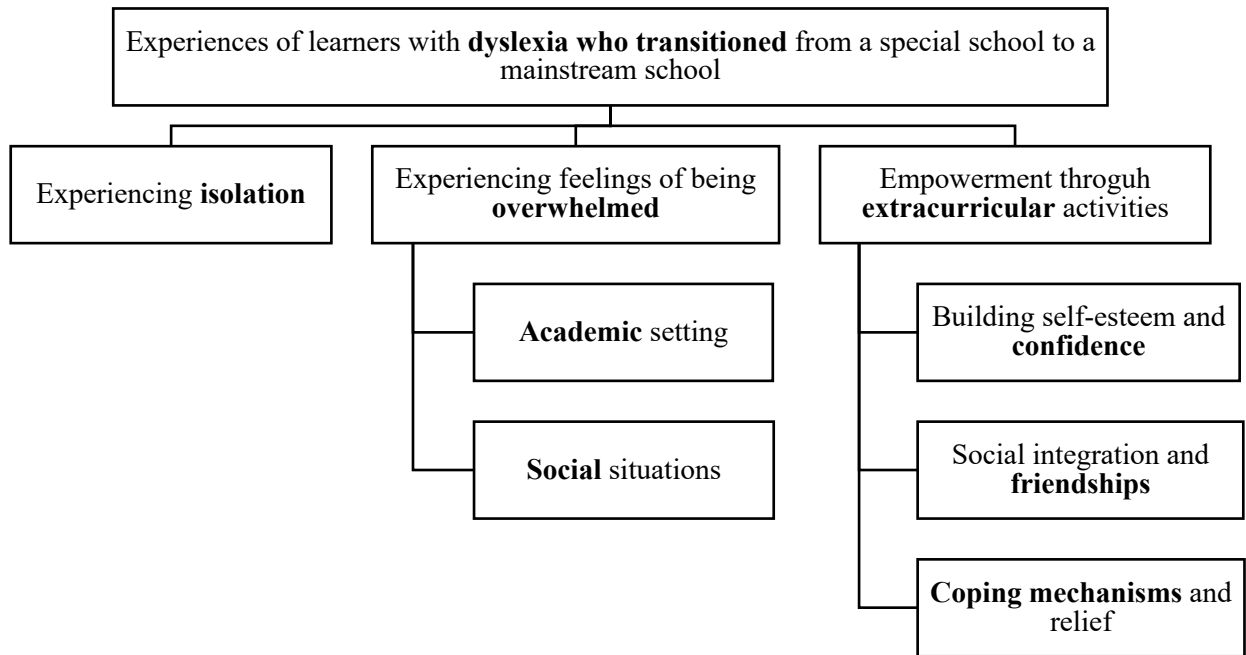


Figure 7.1: Experiences of the learners with dyslexia who transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school

### 7.3.1.1 Experiencing isolation

After the transition from the special school to a mainstream school, Participants 1, 2, 3, and 4 experienced varying degrees of isolation and social disconnection, highlighting the emotional impact of this significant change. Participant 2 expressed a strong desire to retreat from the world, describing what he needed after the transition as a ‘mental escape’ (Figure 4.7) when he closed himself off in his room with only the computer for company. This solitary space became a coping mechanism, allowing him to recharge but also his exacerbating feelings of loneliness. His visual reflections further captured this sense of isolation, with images like ‘Lost in the Crowd’ (Figure 4.8), symbolising his feeling of being just another face among his peers, unnoticed and disconnected from others.

Similarly, Participant 1 noted the importance of finding a supportive friend group, acknowledging that while she struggled initially, her current circle of friends provided a greater sense of community and belonging than her previous school. Meanwhile, Participant 3 described the transition as ‘difficult’ and ‘a struggle’, with his visual reflections showing a solitary figure in a busy schoolyard and overwhelmed by stacks of textbooks. This participant

grappled with the challenge of making new friends in a larger, less familiar environment, often sitting alone during breaks and feeling overlooked by teachers in crowded classrooms.

By contrast, Participant 4's transition improved her social life. While she had felt isolated at her previous school, making only one friend, her new friendships were strengthened through shared hobbies like horse riding. Her visual reflections portrayed close physical connections with her new peers, symbolising the mutual support and bonds formed through shared interests. This range of experiences underscored the varying emotional responses to the transition from a special school to a mainstream school, with isolation and connection emerging as key themes in how the learners navigated this change.

### **7.3.1.2 Experiencing feelings of being overwhelmed**

A second prominent theme was the overwhelming nature of both the academic and social environments. All the participants (Participants 1 to 4) felt academically overwhelmed as they adjusted to the more demanding environment. Participant 1 conveyed a deep struggle with reading, which was depicted in a visual reflection showing a solitary figure surrounded by floating letters, symbolising her battle to comprehend the material in this new setting. Similarly, Participant 3 shared the pressure to catch up with new subjects which had not been available at his previous school. His reflection showed a figure surrounded by towering stacks of textbooks, illustrating the heavy academic burden they faced. Both these participants highlighted the challenge of adapting to the different teaching styles in their new environment.

Social situations were another source of the participants feeling overwhelmed. Participant 2, in particular, felt isolated and disconnected from his peers and teachers. Similarly, Participant 3 struggled with social integration, often feeling disconnected from his peers, with his visual reflection depicting a solitary figure in a bustling social environment, but at the same time emphasising his isolation and difficulty in connecting with others. These participants reflected candidly on their poor social skills, admitting that the overwhelming nature of their social surroundings made it hard to form meaningful connections.

### **7.3.1.3 Empowerment through extracurricular activities**

While it is evident that the experience of having transitioned schools for learners with dyslexia had negative influences, they used the protective factor of extracurricular activities to feel

positive emotions. Engaging in sports allowed them to overcome personal and academic challenges, instilling a sense of accomplishment. Participant 1 reflected, ‘Now that I play hockey at my school, I feel I have accomplished so much.’ Sport provided the learners with dyslexia with a positive outlet, allowing them to channel their passions and find strength in their abilities, reinforcing their belief in themselves beyond the sports field and positively affecting other areas of their lives. In addition, the extracurricular activities helped foster solid social connections for the learners. They developed a deep sense of unity and friendship with their peers through shared hobbies. Extracurricular activities also served as necessary coping mechanisms for the participants. Participant 2 found empowerment through gaming, which offered him a psychological retreat from the academic and social pressures of mainstream schooling, providing him with a sense of safety and control and allowing him to recharge and manage the demands of school.

In conclusion, extracurricular activities played a pivotal role in the participants’ transitions, helping them to build confidence, integrate socially, and cope with the challenges of their new school environments.

### **7.3.2 Secondary research question – Conclusion**

The following section briefly discusses the answer to the research question, ‘What are the parents’ perspectives on their children with dyslexia transitioning from special schools to mainstream schools?’ The analysis of the semi-structured interviews presented the following themes: (1) parental concerns about transition, (2) social integration views, and (3) witnessing the impact of support systems. These three themes defined the phenomenon of the parents’ perspectives on their children with dyslexia who had transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school and included a variety of sub-themes supported by the data gathered in this study. These themes portray the parents’ views of their learners with dyslexia after their school transition.

The following figure, Figure 7.2, illustrates the parents' perspectives on their children with dyslexia transitioning schools.

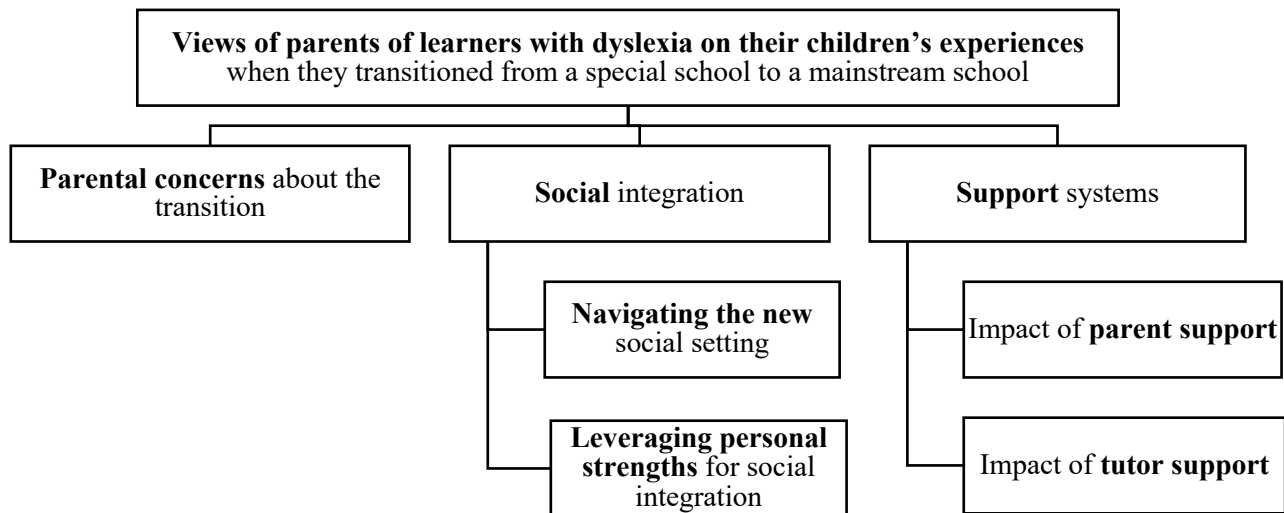


Figure 7.2: Parents' perspectives on their children with dyslexia transitioning from a special to a mainstream school

### 7.3.2.1 Parental concerns in transition

The parents showed significant concern for their children with dyslexia in their transition from a special school to a mainstream school. Many of the parents were anxious about how their children would cope with the new environment, academically and socially. Participant 4's mother expressed her own heightened nerves, even though the special school had prepared her child well for the change. Similarly, Participant 1's parent preferred a smaller, more nurturing school but respected her child's strong desire to attend a mainstream school, although she also noted a lack of communication from the new school, which added to her concern.

While the learners showed excitement and nervousness about the transition, the parents emphasised the emotional toll and complexity of their children who moved from a special to a mainstream school and were particularly concerned about how well their children would integrate and succeed in the new environment.

### **7.3.2.2 Social integration**

Social integration presented a challenge for the learners with dyslexia who transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school. It was challenging for them to (1) navigate the new social setting and (2) learn to leverage their personal strengths to integrate socially.

Moving from a close-knit special school to a larger mainstream environment was overwhelming and isolating for many of the learners. Their parents expressed concern about their children's ability to adapt, particularly those who were more introverted, like Participant 3, whose parent worried about his ability to form new friendships. Participant 4's parent noted her child's anxiety about entering a new social environment without familiar friends. Also, Participant 1's mother observed how her child initially struggled to fit in as the other learners had already formed social groups.

Despite the challenges, these learners used their strengths to aid their integration. Participant 1 leveraged her passion for hockey to connect with her peers, which helped her build confidence and establish a sense of belonging. Participant 2 used his computer proficiency to engage with his peers academically and socially, mainly through online gaming. Participant 3 found a sense of community through tennis, which provided a structured way to interact with others. In the same way, Participant 4's passion for horse riding became a bridge for forming new connections with her peers, with whom she shared similar interests. Each participant used their unique talents to ease their transition, reinforcing the importance of extracurricular activities in building social bonds and fostering integration in a new environment.

### **7.3.2.3 Support systems**

Support was crucial for the learners with dyslexia after they transitioned to mainstream schools. Both the parents and the tutors played a vital role in emotional and practical support. The parents helped their children navigate their academic challenges and social anxieties. Participant 3's parent emphasised the importance of active parental involvement to ease the transition. Also, Participant 1's parent highlighted the need to provide a safe space for her child to express her fears without pressure. Similarly, Participant 4's parent offered reassurance to help manage her son's anxiety in the new environment.

In addition, the tutors played a critical role in helping the learners manage their academic demands. The tutor of the participating learners provided essential academic assistance, breaking down complex material and helping bridge gaps in their understanding. The parents noted that the emotional support offered by the tutors helped boost their children's confidence. The combination of this tutor and parent support proved essential in helping learners with dyslexia transition.

## **7.4 METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS**

The following section shows my methodological reflections on the data-gathering, analysis, and limitations of the study.

### **7.4.1 Data-gathering strategy**

I used a phenomenological research design to conduct this study. The data collection methods included collecting images, some of which were photographs and others were images found on the internet, and narrative reflections submitted by the learners with dyslexia and semi-structured interviews that were conducted with a parent of each learner with dyslexia. The four learner participants each submitted five images, each representing their views of their transition to a mainstream school. They used their mobile cell phones if they took the photographs themselves. I then created a folder where all twenty images and reflections were uploaded. I read and interpreted the reflections. Thereafter, I held semi-structured interviews with the parent of each participant. The interviews were held in person with each participant's parent at a time suited to the parent participant's schedule.

### **7.4.2 Data analysis strategy**

I interpreted the learner participants' visual data images in the first step of the analytic process. The interpretation of the visual data was done using the images. In the interpretation of data, there was a visual analysis of the images collected from the participants in the research. A systematic visuo-textual analysis framework was used to analyse the images. Brown and Collins (2021) note that researchers conducting photovoice studies often exclude the analysis of images as sources of meaning and experience because existing frameworks overly emphasise translating pictures into words. Visual data, however, offers a rich apprehension of individuals' diverse experiences and shows the embodied nature of these experiences (Brown

& Collins, 2021). Pictures capture experiences beyond the limitations of language and words (Brown & Collins, 2021). Therefore, an analysis was done on the visual data (images) and textual data (narrative reflections) submitted by each participant to fully understand the embodied experiences represented.

In the second step of the analysis process, Smith et al.'s (2009) interpretive phenomenological analysis framework was applied to analyse the semi-structured interview transcripts. This was done due to its practical application in previous research. Smith et al.'s (2009) seven-step analysis guide to interpretive phenomenological analysis was used (Smith et al. (2009).

### **7.4.3 Limitations**

The main limitations of this study were the sampling, data collaboration, and data interpretation process. Specifically, the sample used for this study was not representative of the full range of views of learners with dyslexia in the South African educational sector. Owing to the study's design, the researcher selected four participants who were readily available based on the number of participants accessible from the same special school and mainstream school, which limited the diversity of views represented in the data. While participants from different cultural, linguistic, and racial backgrounds were included in the sample, their subjective views were shaped by their prior schooling environment, which limited the generalisability of the findings to learners who transitioned from special schools to mainstream schools in general in South Africa.

Furthermore, the nature of the data collected in this study also served as a limitation. While the visual data, such as photographs and other sourced images, provided a unique perspective on the participants' views, the interpretations and perceptions of the researcher and participants introduced bias or restricted the level of understanding in the data collection and interpretation.

## **7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPROVEMENTS, AND IMPLICATIONS**

The findings of this study allowed me to make recommendations for improvements in educational policy and practice and future research.

### 7.5.1 Educational policy and practice

Based on the findings from the data sets, the following recommendations are designed to support SMTs, educators, and policymakers in creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for learners with dyslexia who transition from special schools to mainstream schools. These recommendations focus on alleviating the isolation of learners, managing their feelings of being overwhelmed, and empowering learners through extracurricular activities.

- Mainstream schools should prioritise emotional support and social integration

As highlighted by several participants, the transition from a special school to a mainstream school often leaves learners feeling isolated and disconnected. SMTs should establish peer support programmes. These might include implementing buddy systems where learners with dyslexia are paired with empathetic peers, fostering a sense of belonging, and ensuring that older, more mature learners are part of this programme as they can provide better emotional support than younger learners.

- Mainstream schools should provide academic support to address feelings of being overwhelmed

The participants expressed feelings of being overwhelmed by the new academic expectations, subject matter, and diverse teaching methods in the mainstream school. Mainstream schools should offer personalised learning support by implementing individualised learning plans that cater to the specific needs of learners with dyslexia, such as providing additional tutoring or academic coaching which can help to reduce the academic pressure on these learners.

- Mainstream schools should create a calmer and more structured learning environment

Many of the participants expressed difficulty in coping with noisy, chaotic environments, which exacerbated their sense of being overwhelmed. Teachers could create designated quiet zones or sensory-friendly spaces to which learners with dyslexia could retreat when they feel overwhelmed. These areas could provide a calming space for learners to recharge during the school day.

- Mainstream schools should strengthen parent-school communication and collaboration

The participating parents expressed concern about the lack of communication and preparation when their children transitioned to a mainstream school. SMTs should establish strong and regular communication with parents during the transition process, providing updates on the learner's progress and any additional support measures that have been put in place. SMTs should also collaborate with parents to develop a tailored transition plan that includes emotional and academic support for learners with dyslexia. This partnership would ensure that the needs of the learner would be adequately addressed both at school and at home.

- Mainstream schools should enhance professional development for teachers

Teachers play a crucial role in helping learners with dyslexia navigate the academic and social challenges of mainstream education. SMTs should offer targeted training to help teachers better understand dyslexia and the unique needs of learners with dyslexia. This training should include strategies for differentiated instruction, early intervention, and building supportive classroom environments. In addition, teachers should be encouraged to reflect on their teaching practices, seeking feedback from learners and parents to improve their approach to continually supporting learners with dyslexia. Additionally, teachers should be provided with further training on differentiated instruction. They should also receive professional development to help them adapt their teaching methods to accommodate different learning styles. This can include simplifying instructions or providing multisensory learning opportunities to make content more accessible to learners with dyslexia.

- Mainstream schools should empower learners through extracurricular activities

Extracurricular activities, such as sports or hobbies, were shown to empower the participating learners and provide them with confidence and community. SMTs should actively promote participation in extracurricular activities, such as sports, arts, or clubs, where learners with dyslexia could develop confidence and social connections outside the academic setting. Offering a wide range of activities that cater to different interests, from physical activities like sports to creative outlets such as art or music, will help learners find their niche and connect with peers who share similar interests.

- Mainstream schools should address policy-level changes for sustainable support

The findings indicate a need for broader policy changes to support learners with dyslexia in mainstream schools. Policymakers should ensure that all mainstream schools have access to specialised learning support, including trained staff and resources for learners with dyslexia. Furthermore, SMTs should integrate mental health services, including counselling and emotional support, to help learners cope with the emotional and psychological challenges of transitioning to mainstream education.

### **7.5.2 Recommendations for future research**

Future research may explore the following topics:

- A study tracking the academic progress, social integration, and emotional well-being of learners with dyslexia as they continue through mainstream education
- A larger version of this study using quantitative methods such as surveys or questionnaires with a larger group of learners with dyslexia
- A study examining the effectiveness of various individualised support programmes, such as peer mentorship, counselling, and academic accommodations, in enhancing the experience of learners with dyslexia in mainstream schools
- An exploratory study into the impact of loneliness on learners with dyslexia in mainstream schools
- An investigative study focused on a deeper exploration of the psychological differences in how different extracurricular activities contribute to the social integration, self-esteem, and empowerment of learners with dyslexia in mainstream environments
- An exploratory study into the dynamics of parent-teacher collaboration, focusing on how effective communication and partnership between families and schools can improve support for learners with dyslexia

## **7.6 PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL REFLECTIONS**

Conducting this study has been both an insightful and demanding journey. In addition to managing my responsibilities as a student, I also manage my tutoring company, which I founded four years ago. Today, the company employs more than ten staff members, and we operate five days a week, with my teaching schedule stretching from 08:00 a.m. to 07:00 p.m. Managing the business and teaching classes during the day meant that I had to dedicate my

evenings and weekends to studying and conducting research. This dual commitment was both exhausting and rewarding.

More than half the learners I work with in my tutoring company have dyslexia, which allowed me to see first-hand many of the challenges that they face, challenges that closely align with the themes explored in this study. Balancing the demands of teaching, running a business, and conducting research has tested my time management skills and perseverance to the limit, but it has also taught me invaluable lessons about discipline and resilience.

Despite the challenges, I found the research process deeply fulfilling. It allowed me to combine my passion for education with a new love for research, providing me with a broader understanding of the academic and personal struggles that learners with dyslexia experience. This has enhanced my deep commitment to supporting these learners through innovative and compassionate teaching strategies.

This study has also provided me with a platform to reflect on my own experiences and those of my learners. It has reinforced my belief in the importance of giving a voice to learners with dyslexia and their unique challenges in the broader educational landscape. As I continue to teach and run my company, I am motivated by the knowledge that this research contributes to a greater understanding of their needs.

My research journey was eye-opening in terms of my understanding of the broader educational challenges. Through this process, I learnt a great deal about my perseverance and that of my colleagues and staff, many of whom work closely with learners with dyslexia. Working with these learners has revealed both the rewarding and challenging aspects of education and this study has provided me with a deeper understanding of their unique struggles.

During the data collection process, I was privileged to hear the stories of the learners and their parents. Some were filled with optimism and growth, while others shared the emotional toll that the transition from a special school to a mainstream school environment had on them. Although I've encountered similar challenges in my own teaching, hearing the depth of these experiences first-hand was both humbling and enlightening. Some moments were hard to hear, especially when parents expressed concern over their children's isolation or when the learners shared their feelings of being overwhelmed. However, there were uplifting moments, such as

the empowerment that the learners found through extracurricular activities and hearing how having an academic tutor assisted these learners.

## **7.7 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY**

This study has also contributed methodologically to the field by demonstrating how the three-step systematic framework for analysing visual and textual data (Figure 3.3) could be applied in practice. This framework was used to analyse the images and narrative reflections that made up the first data set of this phenomenological study, allowing me to extract deeper insights from the combination of the visual and narrative elements, making it a valuable tool for the analysis of this study. In addition, this study contributes to the literature surrounding the experiences of learners with dyslexia who transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school in the South African context.

Ultimately, this research reinforced the importance of providing support systems and a conducive environment for learners and teachers. A supportive, well-structured environment, combined with genuine social and professional support, can significantly improve the transition experiences of learners with dyslexia from special schools to mainstream schools.

## **7.8 CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, Chapter 7 addressed the research question by reviewing the study. I reflected on the methodology, highlighting its limitations and discussing the research strategy. This was followed by recommendations for future research and my personal and professional reflections. Finally, I outlined the study's contributions and concluded the chapter.

One of the key takeaways from this study is the critical importance of prioritising the support needed for learners with dyslexia in their transition from a special school to a mainstream school. Without further efforts to support learners with dyslexia, South African mainstream schools could face a situation where learners with dyslexia become overwhelmed and isolated, leading to their academic progress and their overall well-being being hindered and affecting their future opportunities, personal development and ability to thrive in both academic and social environments.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Consent form from adults over 18 years old



June 2024

Dear: .....

#### LETTER OF CONSENT: PARENTS

I, Ms Jordan Bradfield, am conducting a research study to explore aims to explore the views held by learners with dyslexia in the transitioning from a special school to a mainstream school. I will complete this study as part of my Masters in Curriculum Design and Instructional Development degree at the University of Pretoria, in collaboration with my research supervisor, Dr Sarina de Jager. I discussed the details of the research study with you at our online information session held on the \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_. The discussed aspects have been outlined below for your convenience.

#### **Title of the research study:**

*Exploring The Transition Views of Learners with Dyslexia: A Visual Approach to Mainstream Education Setting.*

#### **Purpose of the research study:**

The main objective of this research project is to explore the views held by learners with dyslexia in the transition from a special school to a mainstream school in the Western Cape, South Africa. The study will focus on learners with dyslexia who have remained transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school. The study will explore the views of the learners with dyslexia, during and after their transition, as well as the views of the parents on the transition of their children with dyslexia from a special school to a mainstream school.

### **Research questions:**

The key research questions of this study are:

What are the views of learners with dyslexia after transitioning from special schools to mainstream schools?

What are the views of the parents on the transition of their children with dyslexia from transitioning from special schools to mainstream schools?

### **Ethical principles:**

The researcher needs to apply for ethical clearance from the University of Pretoria and other relevant authorities before engaging in any form of data collection for this research study. All ethical guidelines and regulations must be strictly adhered to during the progress of the study. Such permission will only be granted to the researcher if all participants provide informed consent to participate in the study. The following ethical principles are internationally acknowledged when researching with human participants. These principles will be followed during the research procedure to ensure that the researcher strictly follows ethical guidelines.

#### **Autonomy and voluntary participation:**

The researcher will inform potential participants of all applicable information regarding the research process and purpose before participating in this research study voluntarily. This information will be discussed with you appropriately as a participant during an information session. Each participant will be provided with sufficient time to reflect on the material discussed during this session. Potential participants will also have the opportunity to enquire the researcher to provide clarity on any topic discussed during this session.

Participation in this study is voluntary based. The researcher will not exert inappropriate pressure or unwarranted influence to recruit or retain you as a participant. Participants who voluntarily partake in the study will have the right to withdraw their participation at any point in the research process. This withdrawal will not result in any adverse consequences. All participant information is confidential. Should your child, as a participant, withdraw your

participation from the study, the researcher will destroy all accumulated data gathered during the research process about your child.

**Full participant disclosure:**

The researcher will provide sufficient information regarding the research process, activities, benefits, risks, or any other aspects that might influence your decision to allow your child to participate before your child can voluntarily partake in the study. The researcher will consult your child as a participant throughout the research process and keep them informed of any relevant information. Once the project is complete, the researcher will debrief your child and provide you with a summary of the study's findings. Your child's identity will remain hidden at all times during the research process, including the conclusion and presentation of the findings phase of the study.

**Confidentiality between the researcher and participant:**

Each participant has the right to privacy. The researcher will protect your child's anonymity at all stages before, during and after the research process. No identifiable information, including written or verbally communicated information, will be associated with your child's identity. You have the choice to make your responses and data available to anyone other than the researcher. The researcher will make use of codes when recording data to hide your identity. The researcher will give back all information provided by you to check for accuracy once compiled. All information, including visual, verbal, and written data, will be stored on a password-protected computer to which only the researcher will have access. This guideline will be strictly adhered to during the research process to ensure your psychological and physical safety. The researcher will not place you in any situation, scenario or circumstance that may cause stress, embarrassment, or loss of self-esteem.

**Trust between the researcher and participant:**

All findings will be reported to you entirely and honestly without any misrepresentations. All findings will be returned to you to check for accuracy. The researcher will not fabricate any data or findings. As a participant, you will not be subject to any acts of deception or betrayal during the research process or its outcomes. We also would like to request your permission to

use your child's data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies

**The time frame of the research study activities:**

The researcher will ask your child as a participant to capture and submit various (five) pictures with their phone within the time frame of two weeks. The researcher will ask your child to gather the photos to represent their views in their transition from a special school to a mainstream school.

Please feel free to ask the researcher any questions about the aspects mentioned above.

We look forward to your response and your child's participation in this exciting study!

Researcher:

Jordan Bradfield

[Jordan5bradfield@gmail.com](mailto:Jordan5bradfield@gmail.com)

079 512 4125

Research supervisor:

Dr Sarina de Jager

[sarina.dejager@up.ac.za](mailto:sarina.dejager@up.ac.za)

012 420 5555

## LETTER OF CONSENT: PARENTS

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT ENTITLED: Exploring The Transition Views of Learners with Dyslexia: A Visual Approach to Mainstream Education Setting.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, (your name and surname) a parent have been informed of and fully understand all aspects associated with the research study titled: *Exploring The Transition Views of Learners with Dyslexia: A Visual Approach to Mainstream Education Setting*.

### A. PURPOSE

As explained to me by the researcher (Ms Jordan Bradfield), I understand the aim, scope, and purpose of collecting information proposed by the researcher and how the researcher will attempt to ensure the integrity and confidentiality of the information they collect towards to my child. I understand that the purpose of this study is to explore the views of the learners with dyslexia in their transition from a special school to a mainstream school.

### B. PROCEDURES

I understand that the researcher will ask my child to capture five photographs representing the concept of their transition from a special school to mainstream school. I am aware that my child may not take any photos at their school or of any person without their consent. I understand that my child may not capture any pictures of children. I consent to allow my child to partake in the collection of photovoice.

Therefore, I give my informed consent and volunteer to allow my child to participate anonymously in the study mentioned above, explained and introduced to me by Ms Jordan

Bradfield, a current student enrolled for a Master's degree in Curriculum Design and Instructional Development at the University of Pretoria.

### **C. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION**

- I understand that my child may withdraw my participation in this study at any point without any negative consequences.
- I understand that I may contact the researcher if I have any questions or concerns about the study.
- I understand that my child's identity will be kept anonymous at all times during the research process.
- I understand that my child's participation in this study is confidential.
- I understand that the data gathered in this study may be subject to secondary data analysis.
- I understand that the findings of this study may be published in an academic journal or reported at a conference or seminar.

#### Secondary Data Clause

We would also like to request your permission to conduct the above-mentioned research at your department and use the data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

#### No Award Clause

Since your participation in the study is voluntary, please note that no participants will receive any monetary awards or awards in kind.

I have reviewed and studied the aspects mentioned above and understand this agreement. I, therefore, consent to allow my child to participate in this research study voluntarily.

Full name and surname : \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact number: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Further suggestions or comments:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If you have any questions about the research study or your rights as a research participant in this study, please contact Ms Jordan Bradfield (079 512 4125) or the research supervisor Dr Sarina de Jager (012 420 5555).

## COMPLAINTS OR CONCERNS

*If you have a complaint or concern about conducting this research project, please speak to any member of the research team or if an independent person is preferred, consult the chairperson of the Ethics Committee (Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria) or the Institutional Office for Research,*

*Telephone +27 012 420 5656 or e-mail: sarina.dejager@up.ac.za*

## Support

If you feel as though your child requires emotional support during or after the research project participation, you are welcome to contact the following counsellors to make an appointment:

Carin Olwage Registered Psychological Counsellor	076 734 8327
Christie Els - Counselling Psychologist	044 884 1252
SADAG helpline	0800 567 567
South African Police Service	120 4200
Family Counselling Centre George	066 219 4102
Janie Loubser Psychologist	072 777 7119

Janse Van Rensburg P Clinical Psychologist	044 873 5136
Carien Brown Psychology	082 777 3320
Garden Route Counselling	065 046 6949

Researcher:

Jordan Bradfield

[Jordan5bradfield@gmail.com](mailto:Jordan5bradfield@gmail.com)

079 512 4125

Research supervisor:

Dr Sarina de Jager

[sarina.dejager@up.ac.za](mailto:sarina.dejager@up.ac.za)

012 420 5555

## Appendix B: Informed assent form for participants under 18 years old



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA  
Faculty of Education

June 2024

Dear: .....

### INFORMED ASSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS UNDER 18 YEARS OLD

Hello, I'm Ms. Jordan Bradfield. I'm doing a study to understand how learners with dyslexia feel when they move from a special school to a regular school. I'm studying at the University of Pretoria for my Masters in Curriculum Design and Instructional Development. My teacher, Dr. Sarina de Jager, is helping me with this study.

#### Title of the research study:

*Exploring The Transition Views of Learners with Dyslexia: A Visual Approach to Mainstream Education Setting.*

#### What We Want to Find Out:

We are doing a project to learn more about learners with dyslexia in South Africa. We want to understand how learners with dyslexia feel when they move from a special school to a regular school. We will talk to students who have already made this move, and we will also talk to their parents to learn about their feelings and thoughts.

#### Our Goal:

#### We want to know:

- How students with dyslexia feel when they change from a special school to a regular school.
- What their parents think about this change.
- How students feel during and after this big transition in their school life.

By learning these things, we hope to help other students with dyslexia who might go through the same change someday. Your thoughts and experiences will help us make schools better for everyone!

### **Important Information about the Study:**

#### **What We Will Do:**

We are doing a study to learn more about what you experienced as a learner with dyslexia when you change from one school to another school. We want to understand your experiences better. To do this, we will ask you to take a five photos with your phone. These pictures will help us see things from your perspective.

#### **Your Choice:**

Deciding to be a part of this project is completely up to you. It's your choice, and you can say yes or no. If you join, that's great! If you decide not to, that's okay too. You can stop being a part of the project anytime you want, and nothing bad will happen.

#### **Your Privacy:**

Your privacy is really important. Anything you share with us will be kept secret. We won't tell anyone your name or share your pictures with others. We have a special, secret computer where we keep all the things you tell us.

#### **What to Expect:**

Taking five pictures won't take a lot of your time. You can use your phone, and we'll explain to you exactly how it works. We'll make sure it's a time that works best for you.

#### **Your Questions:**

We want you to understand everything about the project. If you have any questions at all, ask us! We're here to help and make sure you feel comfortable. You can ask us questions before you decide to join, and even while we're doing the project.

#### **Important Reminder:**

Remember, you can change your mind at any time. If you don't want to be a part of the project anymore, just let us know. It won't upset us, and it won't get you into trouble. Your feelings and choices matter to us.

We really hope you choose to be a part of this project! Your thoughts and pictures will help us learn important things, and we appreciate your help.

Thank you!

Researcher:

Jordan Bradfield

[Jordan5bradfield@gmail.com](mailto:Jordan5bradfield@gmail.com)

079 512 4125

Research supervisor:

Dr Sarina de Jager

[sarina.dejager@up.ac.za](mailto:sarina.dejager@up.ac.za)

012 420 5555



**June 2024**

## **INFORMED ASSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS UNDER 18 YEARS OLD**

Hello,

I am the learner \_\_\_\_\_ and I understand and agree to take part in the study titled "Exploring The Transition Views of Learners with Dyslexia: A Visual Approach to Mainstream Education Setting," conducted by Ms. Jordan Bradfield, a student at the University of Pretoria.

### **What I Understand:**

#### **Purpose:**

I know that this study aims to learn about how children with dyslexia feel when they move from special school to regular school.

#### **What Will Happen:**

I will take five photographs showing my transition from special school to regular school. I understand that I can't take pictures of people at school without permission.

#### **My Consent:**

I will join this study. I know I can stop at any time without problems. I understand that the information will be private, and nobody will know who said what.

#### **Important Points:**

I can ask questions anytime.

My identity will be secret.

The study results might be shared at conferences or in journals.

I agree to this and sign my name below.

Learners' Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have any questions, you can call Ms. Jordan Bradfield at 079 512 4125 or Dr. Sarina de Jager at 012 420 5555.

Thank you!

Researcher:

Jordan Bradfield

[Jordan5bradfield@gmail.com](mailto:Jordan5bradfield@gmail.com)

079 512 4125

Research supervisor:

Dr Sarina de Jager

[sarina.dejager@up.ac.za](mailto:sarina.dejager@up.ac.za)

012 420 5555

## Appendix C: Informed consent form from participants over 18 years old



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA  
Faculty of Education

June 2024

Dear: .....

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM FROM PARTICIPANTS OVER 18 YEARS OLD

I, Ms Jordan Bradfield, am conducting a research study to explore aims to explore the views held by learners with dyslexia in the transitioning from a special school to a mainstream school. I will complete this study as part of my Masters in Curriculum Design and Instructional Development degree at the University of Pretoria in collaboration with my research supervisor Dr Sarina de Jager. I discussed the details of the research study with you at our online information session held on the \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_. The discussed aspects have been outlined below for your convenience.

#### **Title of the research study:**

*Exploring The Transition Views of Learners with Dyslexia: A Visual Approach to Mainstream Education Setting.*

#### **Purpose of the research study:**

The main objective of this research project is to explore the views held by learners with dyslexia in the transition from a special school to a mainstream school in the Western Cape, South Africa. The study will focus on learners with dyslexia who have remained transitioned from a special school to a mainstream school. The study will explore the views of the learners with dyslexia were during and after their transition, as well as the views of the parents on the transition of their children with dyslexia from a special school to a mainstream school.

#### **Research questions:**

The key research questions of this study are:

What are the views of learners with dyslexia after transitioning from special schools to mainstream schools?

What are the views of the parents on the transition of their children with dyslexia from transitioning from special schools to mainstream schools?

### **Ethical principles:**

The researcher needs to apply for ethical clearance from the University of Pretoria and other relevant authorities before engaging in any form of data collection for this research study. All ethical guidelines and regulations must be strictly adhered to during the progress of the study. Such permission will only be granted to the researcher if all participants provide informed consent to participate in the study. The following ethical principles are internationally acknowledged when researching with human participants. These principles will be followed during the research procedure to ensure that the researcher strictly follows ethical guidelines.

### **Autonomy and voluntary participation:**

The researcher will inform potential participants of all applicable information regarding the research process and purpose before participating in this research study voluntarily. This information will be discussed with you appropriately as a participant during an information session. Each participant will be provided with sufficient time to reflect on the material discussed during this session. Potential participants will also have the opportunity to enquire the researcher to provide clarity on any topic discussed during this session.

Participation in this study is voluntary based. The researcher will not exert inappropriate pressure or unwarranted influence to recruit or retain you as a participant. Participants who voluntarily partake in the study will have the right to withdraw their participation at any point in the research process. This withdrawal will not result in any adverse consequences. All participant information is confidential. Should you, as a participant, withdraw your participation from the study, the researcher will destroy all accumulated data gathered during the research process about you.

### **Full participant disclosure:**

The researcher will provide sufficient information regarding the research process, activities, benefits, risks, or any other aspects that might influence your decision to participate before you voluntarily partake in the study. The researcher will consult you as a participant throughout the research process and keep you informed of any relevant information. Once the project is complete, the researcher will debrief you and provide you with a summary of the study's findings. Your identity will remain hidden at all times during the research process, including the conclusion and presentation of the findings phase of the study.

### **Confidentiality between the researcher and participant:**

Each participant has the right to privacy. The researcher will protect your anonymity at all stages before, during and after the research process. No identifiable information, including written or verbally communicated information, will be associated with your identity. You have the choice to make your responses and data available to anyone other than the researcher. The researcher will make use of codes when recording data to hide your identity. The researcher will give back all information provided by you to check for accuracy once compiled. All information, including visual, verbal, and written data, will be stored on a password-protected computer to which only the researcher will have access. This guideline will be strictly adhered to during the research process to ensure your psychological and physical safety. The researcher will not place you in any situation, scenario or circumstance that may cause stress, embarrassment, or loss of self-esteem.

### **Trust between the researcher and participant:**

All findings will be reported to you entirely and honestly without any misrepresentations. All findings will be returned to you to check for accuracy. The researcher will not fabricate any data or findings. As a participant, you will not be subject to any acts of deception or betrayal during the research process or its outcomes. We also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include

secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies

### **The time frame of the research study activities:**

The researcher will ask you as the participant to meet in a semis-structured interview to ask questions about transition of your child with dyslexia from a special school to a mainstream school. As a parent, a face-to-face interviews will not be longer than an hour. You will have the option to negotiate and schedule your interview following your personal preference and schedule.

### **Secondary Data Clause**

We would also like to request your permission to conduct the above-mentioned research at your department and use the data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

### **No Award Clause**

Since your participation in the study is voluntary, please note that no participants will receive any monetary awards or awards in kind.

Please feel free to ask the researcher any questions about the aspects mentioned above.

We look forward to your response and participation in this exciting study!

Researcher:

Jordan Bradfield

[Jordan5bradfield@gmail.com](mailto:Jordan5bradfield@gmail.com)

079 512 4125

Research supervisor:

Dr Sarina de Jager

[sarina.dejager@up.ac.za](mailto:sarina.dejager@up.ac.za)

012 420 5555



## PARENT AS PARTICIPANT

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT ENTITLED: Exploring The Transition Views of Learners with Dyslexia: A Visual Approach to Mainstream Education Setting.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, (your name and surname) a parent have been informed of and fully understand all aspects associated with the research study titled: *Exploring The Transition Views of Learners with Dyslexia: A Visual Approach to Mainstream Education Setting*.

### C. PURPOSE

As explained to me by the researcher (Ms Jordan Bradfield), I understand the aim, scope, and purpose of collecting information proposed by the researcher and how the researcher will attempt to ensure the integrity and confidentiality of the information they collect. I understand that the purpose of this study is to explore the views of the learners with dyslexia in their transition from a special school to a mainstream school.

### D. PROCEDURES

I am aware that the researcher will ask me for my views during a semi structured interview convenient to my schedule.

Therefore, I give my informed consent and volunteer to participate anonymously in the study mentioned above, explained and introduced to me by Ms Jordan Bradfield, a current student enrolled for a Master's degree in Curriculum Design and Instructional Development at the University of Pretoria.

### C. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

- I understand that I may withdraw my participation in this study at any point without any negative consequences.
- I understand that I may contact the researcher if I have any questions or concerns about the study.
- I understand that my identity will be kept anonymous at all times during the research process.
- I understand that my participation in this study is confidential.
- I understand that the data gathered in this study may be subject to secondary data analysis.
- I understand that the findings of this study may be published in an academic journal or reported at a conference or seminar.

I have reviewed and studied the aspects mentioned above and understand this agreement. I, therefore, consent to participate in this research study voluntarily.

Full name and surname : \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact number: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Further suggestions or comments:

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If you have any questions about the research study or your rights as a research participant in this study, please contact Ms Jordan Bradfield (079 512 4125) or the research supervisor Dr Sarina de Jager (012 420 5555).

## COMPLAINTS OR CONCERNS

*If you have a complaint or concern about conducting this research project, please speak to any member of the research team or if an independent person is preferred, consult the chairperson of the Ethics Committee (Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria) or the Institutional Office for Research,*

*Telephone +27 012 420 5656 or e-mail: [sarina.dejager@up.ac.za](mailto:sarina.dejager@up.ac.za)*

## Support

If you feel as though you require emotional support during or after the research project participation, you are welcome to contact the following counsellors to make an appointment:

Carin Olwagen Registered Psychological Counsellor	076 734 8327
Christie Els - Counselling Psychologist	044 884 1252
SADAG helpline	0800 567 567
South African Police Service	120 4200
Family Counselling Centre George	066 219 4102
Janie Loubser Psychologist	072 777 7119
Janse Van Rensburg P Clinical Psychologist	044 873 5136
Carien Brown Psychology	082 777 3320
Garden Route Counselling	065 046 6949

Researcher's contact details:

Ms Jordan Bradfield

[Jordan5bradfield@gmail.com](mailto:Jordan5bradfield@gmail.com)

079 512 4125

Supervisor's contact details:

Dr Sarina de Jager

[sarina.dejager@up.ac.za](mailto:sarina.dejager@up.ac.za)

012 420 5555

## Appendix D: Supervisor checklist

**UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION  
CHECKLIST FOR SUPERVISOR**

**SUBMISSION OF MINI-DISSERTATION/DISSERTATION/THESIS**

Please check the **additional documents listed below** before submitting the mini-dissertation/dissertation/thesis. Kindly sign the form indicating satisfaction. The declaration with regard to the draft article is a prerequisite for the approval of the results and must be submitted with a **copy of the article (MEd) or acknowledgement of receipt of the draft article**, issued by an accredited journal (PhD), prior to or during submission of the examination copies.

**Masters and doctoral students:**

- 1. PAGE NUMBERING**  
Are the pages preceding Chapter One in Roman numerals?  
Does Chapter One start with page one?
- 2. TURNITIN REPORT**  
Has the ~~turnitin~~ report been signed by the supervisor?  
Is the similarity index 10 or less?
- 3. ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**  
Has the ethical clearance certificate been bound into the copies?
- 4. ABSTRACT**  
*Masters:*  
Is there an abstract of 250 words after the Ethics documents followed by a list of key terms?  
*Doctoral:*  
Is there an abstract of 350 words after the Ethics documents followed by a list of key terms?
- 5. LANGUAGE EDITOR DISCLAIMER**  
Has the language editor's disclaimer been bound into the copies?
- 6. DRAFT ARTICLE DECLARATION FORM**  
*Doctoral:*  
Has the form and proof of submission by an accredited journal been submitted?
- 7. DATA IN DIGITAL FORMAT**  
Has all data, in digital format, been submitted for storage to the supervisor?
- 8. FLASH DISKS**  
Have you checked that the thesis/dissertation/mini-dissertation is in PDF?
- 9. CITATION**  
Doctoral only:  
Has a citation for publication in the graduation programme been signed by the supervisor and submitted? An electronic copy must be emailed to bronwynne.swarts@up.ac.za

I have checked all of the above.

SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR: \_\_\_\_\_



DATE: 2024/11/27