A series of realist evaluations of multi-component programmes with disengaged young people: What works, for whom, and in what contexts?

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Abstract

1   Periods spent in the absence of education, employment, or training (NEET)
2 are associated with adverse psychological wellbeing, poverty, social marginalisation,
3 criminal behaviour, and premature mortality. As such, implementing effective
4 programmes to re-engage young people who are classified, or are at risk of becoming
5 classified, as NEET is of great importance to these individuals, family, and society
6 more broadly. To this end, the aim of the current thesis was to conduct three realist
7 evaluations to understand how, and under which circumstances multi-component
8 programmes may impact the engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes of
9 disengaged students and young people who are not in education, employment, or
10 training.
11   Study 1 consisted of a realist evaluation of a six-month multi-component
12 programme for year ten (aged 14-15 years) disengaged students across three schools.
13 In Study 2, the findings and refined programme theories from Study 1 were
14 subsequently tested through a 10-week multi-component programme with
15 disengaged year eight (aged 12-13 years) students and evaluated over ten months.
16 Informed by the findings from the first two studies, the final study comprised the
17 development, implementation, and evaluation of a four-week multi-component
18 programme utilising appreciative inquiry as a theoretical framework to re-engage
19 young people (aged 17-23 years) who were outside of education, employment, and
20 training.
21   Overall, the findings from the three studies highlighted the potential benefits
22 of utilising a multi-component programme to re-engage young people. Specifically,
23 context-mechanism-outcome configurations and refined programme theories relating
24 to the development of trust, positions of authority, the power of collective
25 experience, exploration of possible life directions, active learning, deviant peer
26 contagion, and the reinforcement and enactment of hegemonic masculine identities
27 were developed. Collectively, the results provide a detailed and practical
28 understanding of the architecture of programmes that can benefit disengaged young
29 people and help advance the implementation of future programmes for working with
30 disengaged populations.

Declarations and Statements

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed ███████ (candidate)

Date 18/03/2021

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed ███████ (candidate)

Date 18/03/2021

STATEMENT 2

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

Signed ███████ (candidate)

Date 18/03/2021

Conference Presentations

65 Owen, E. C., Knight, C. J., & Hill, D. M. (2020, May). "I've done stuff that I didn't
66   know I was even capable of doing": A realist evaluation of a multi-
67   component programme for disengaged students. Oral Presentation via Zoom,
68   ASTEM Online Postgraduate Conference. Swansea

69 Owen, E. C., Knight, C. J., & Hill, D. M. (2019, September). A realist evaluation of
70   a multi-component programme with disengaged young people. Oral
71   Presentation at Aberystwyth University, Building an ACE Aware Nation in
72   Wales – Understanding the Contribution of Welsh Research. Aberystwyth

73 Owen, E. C., Knight, C. J., & Hill, D. M. (2019, September). "Naughty kids come
74   from neglected parents. It's not the lack of money that's an issue, it's the lack
75   of love" A realist evaluation of a multi-component programme for
76   disengaged young people. 'Three Minute Thesis' Competition, at the Celtic
77   Manor Resort, the KESS 2 Awards 2019. Newport

78 Owen, E. C., Knight, C. J., & Hill, D. M. (2019, June). A realist evaluation of the
79   TACKLE programme: What works, for whom, and in what contexts? Oral
80   presentation at The Liberty Stadium, Ospreys in the Community Conference.
81   Swansea

82 Owen, E. C., Knight, C. J., & Hill, D. M. (2019, May). A realist evaluation of a
83   sport-based multi-component programme for disengaged young people. Oral
84   presentation at Cardiff Metropolitan University, Pan Wales Conference.
85   Cardiff

86 Owen, E. C., Knight C. J., & Hill, D. M. (2019, March). A realist evaluation of a
87   sport-based multi-component programme for disengaged young people. Oral
88   Presentation at Open University – 4th Annual Sport and Fitness Conference –
89   My Child: The Athlete (Youth Development in Sport), Milton Keynes

90 Owen, E. C., Knight, C. J., & Hill, D. M. (2018, November). A realist evaluation of
91   TACKLE: A programme for students at risk of school dropout. Oral
92   presentation at University of Dalarna, Swedish Behavioural and Social
93   Science Sport Research. Falun

94 Owen, E. C., Knight, C. J., & Hill, D. M. (2018, May). Evaluation of TACKLE:
95   A school-based education and sport programme utilising a professional rugby
96   club to target the classroom behaviour and engagement of students at risk of

97	school dropout. Poster presentation at Bangor University, Pan Wales
98	Conference. Bangor

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276

277 شكراً لعائلتي في الجزائر، شكرا جزيلا على تشجيعهم و دعمهم لي.

278 شكر خاص لحبيبي، يوسف. أشكرك على وقوفك بجانبي دائما. أحبك كثيرا.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Young people between the ages of 16 and 24 years who have not participated in any form of education, employment, or training for a minimum six-month period are classified as belonging to the category of "Not in Education, Employment, or Training" (NEET) (Welsh Government, 2018). Data from 2019 shows that approximately 11,000 (11%) of Welsh 16-18-year-olds and 37,000 (16%) of 19-24-year-olds were classified as NEET (Statistics for Wales, 2020). These statistics are concerning, for when young people have an absence of education, employment, or training provision it can result in adverse psychosocial outcomes, social marginalisation, criminal behaviour, and premature mortality (D'Angelo & Kaye, 2018; Nudzor, 2010; Psacharopoulos, 2007). There are also a range of social and economic impacts including higher public health and criminal justice expenditure (Goldman-Mellor et al., 2016; Levin & Belfield, 2007; Maguire, 2015). Given such consequences, the need to re-engage young people who are NEET[1], as well as preventing young people becoming NEET, is considered a key government priority and a major public health concern (Kirlic et al., 2020; Public Health England, 2014).

Disengaged young people are characterised by low levels of educational engagement, behavioural-related issues, and psychosocial challenges (Gutierrez-Garcia et al., 2018). Educational engagement issues include: negative feelings towards learning and lacking a sense of belonging and identification (emotional/affective engagement); limited involvement and poor conduct during academic and social activities (behavioural engagement); and negative beliefs or attitudes towards education alongside low psychological investment in their own development (cognitive engagement) (Hart et al., 2011; Singh & Srivastava, 2014). In addition to disengagement, behavioural-related issues include: persistent disruption; disobedience; verbal aggression and physical violence; unpredictability; poor attendance or unexcused absences; a high number of behaviour referrals or exclusions; substance use; and criminal behaviours (Fortin et al., 2010). Finally, psychosocial challenges include: low levels of self-esteem, self-worth, and social competence; high levels of emotional distress; and poor overall life satisfaction (Goldman-Mellor et al., 2016; Gutierrez-Garcia et al., 2017, 2018; Quiroga et al., 2013). Despite the lengthy list of negative characteristics, it is important to note that

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[1] Young people who are classified, or are at risk of becoming classified, as NEET will hereafter be described collectively as disengaged.

434 all are considered modifiable, and thus can be developed and enhanced through

435 programmes, and with appropriate support structures (Hart et al., 2011; Stea et al.,

436 2019).

437   Consequently, over the last few decades, a number of different programmes

438 have been implemented with disengaged young people, which aim to enhance

439 engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes (Mawn et al., 2017; Prevatt &

440 Kelly, 2003). Such programmes have included, one-to-one mentoring (e.g., Converse

441 & Lignugaris, 2009), positive youth development programmes (e.g., Curran &

442 Wexler, 2017), and sport/physical activity related programmes (e.g., Armour &

443 Duncombe, 2012; Whitley et al., 2017). Unfortunately, however, current evidence

444 regarding programme effectiveness is limited in quality and it remains unclear which

445 programmes are most effective (Christenson et al., 2001; Mawn et al., 2017;

446 Valdebenito et al., 2018). For instance, a systematic review (Prevatt & Kelly, 2003)

447 and meta-analysis (Mawn et al., 2017) found inconsistencies in the overall impact of

448 different programmes for disengaged young people on various outcomes, with each

449 demonstrating strengths and limitations.

450   To compensate for the limitations of different programmes, it has been

451 suggested that intensive, multi-component approaches may be the most promising for

452 re-engaging young people (Foster & Jones, 2006; Mawn et al., 2017; Prevatt &

453 Kelly, 2003). Particularly, a thoughtfully designed multi-component programme that

454 combines one-to-one mentoring, positive youth development, and sport and physical

455 activity programmes, may be useful (cf. Rajasekaran & Reyes, 2019). Despite this

456 recommendation, to my knowledge, no programme drawing on the full range of

457 available modalities has been utilised or evaluated with disengaged young people.

458 Consequently, the aim of this thesis was to conduct three evaluations to understand

459 how, and under which circumstances multi-component programmes may impact the

460 engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes of disengaged students and

461 young people who are not in education, employment, or training.

462 **1.1 Structure of the Thesis**

463   Following this introductory chapter, the thesis comprises six further chapters.

464 Chapter 2 offers an extensive literature review that begins by defining and

465 conceptualising 'NEET' and outlining the characteristics of disengaged young

466 people. The review then summarises the overall effectiveness of current re-

467 engagement programmes and investigates the characteristics of programmes that can

468   facilitate or constrain positive developmental outcomes. Chapter 3 then provides an

469   overview of realist evaluation methodology, explaining why this approach was most

470   appropriate to address the aim of this thesis. This chapter also discusses the key

471   principles of scientific realism, the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of

472   realist evaluation.

473   Chapters 4 to 6 present the empirical studies of this thesis. Specifically,

474   Chapter 4 presents the findings of a realist evaluation of a six-month multi-

475   component programme for year 10 (aged 14-15 years) disengaged students across

476   three schools. The findings and refined programme theories from Study 1 were then

477   tested in a new context of disengaged year eight (aged 12-13 years) students (Chapter

478   5). This study consisted of a realist evaluation with a longitudinal follow-up to

479   examine both the short and long-term effects of a 10-week multi-component

480   programme. Informed by the findings from the first two studies, Chapter 6 details the

481   development, implementation, and realist evaluation of a four-week multi-

482   component programme utilising appreciative inquiry as a theoretical framework to

483   re-engage young people (aged 17-23 years) who were outside of education,

484   employment, and training.

485   Chapter 7 summarises the refined programme theories and findings from all

486   three realist evaluations, unpacking how, why, for whom, and under which

487   contextual circumstances multi-component programmes impacted on disengaged

488   young peoples' developmental outcomes. The theoretical, methodological, and

489   practical implications of these findings are discussed, including recommendations for

490   programme development and innovation, and new insights regarding knowledge

491   translation and dissemination strategies.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

492   **2.1 Defining and Conceptualising 'NEET'**

493   The term 'NEET' refers to young people between the ages of 16 and 24, who

494   are 'not in education, employment, or training' and who have been absent for a

495   minimum six-month period (Welsh Government, 2018). Adopting the label of

496   'NEET' to broadly classify this population of young people has received criticism

497   due to identifying young people by what they are not (i.e., not in education,

498   employment, or training) (Nudzor, 2010; Yates & Payne, 2006). This label fails to

499   encapsulate individual experiences and circumstances, the wider systemic, social,

500   and cultural structures in which young people live, and disregards the young person's

501   strengths, skillset, and potentialities (Gutierrez-Garcia et al., 2017; Haudenhuyse et

502   al., 2012).

503   Given such criticism, alternative terms are used (often interchangeably)

504   within the literature such as, disengaged, disaffected, disconnected, dispossessed, at-

505   risk, underserved, marginalised, impoverished, and socially vulnerable (Lubans et al.,

506   2012; Sandford et al., 2006; Swadener, 1995). Unfortunately, there remains a lack of

507   clarity concerning which term is the most appropriate (Ralston et al., 2016). For the

508   purpose of this thesis, the term disengaged will be used because it is a nuanced and

509   multidimensional concept that takes into account the complexities of young people's

510   lives (Hancock & Zubrick, 2015).

511   There is general consensus that disengaged young people subsume a

512   heterogeneous mix of individuals who face many complex, fluctuating, and non-

513   linear transitions, risk factors, and multiple forms of disadvantage (Avila & Rose,

514   2019; Hayward & Williams, 2011). For instance, disengaged young people may be

515   more susceptible to extreme poverty, social deprivation, a reliance upon school for

516   meals, caregiving responsibilities for younger siblings, housing instability,

517   psychological challenges, parental incarceration, poor social skills, low academic

518   attainment, unsupportive teachers, and a disconnect between education and their

519   needs (Nudzor, 2010; Rajasekaran & Reyes, 2019). Such adversity may manifest

520   itself in three main ways: engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial challenges

521   (Gutierrez-Garcia et al., 2018).

522   **2.2 Engagement, Behavioural, and Psychosocial Challenges**

523   Educational engagement is usually determined by a young person's interest,

524   participation, investment, and active effort towards their learning within the

525   educational context (D'Angelo & Kaye, 2018). It is conceptualised as a

526   multidimensional construct, constituting three key components: emotional,

527   behavioural, and cognitive engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004). Emotional

528   engagement refers to identifying with the educational institution, valuing and trusting

529   key stakeholders (i.e., teachers, adult members, mentors, and peers), and

530   experiencing feelings of passion and enthusiasm towards learning (Appleton,

531   Christenson, & Furlong, 2008; Singh & Srivastava, 2014). Behavioural engagement

532   is determined by a young person's active participation in the classroom and

533   meaningful extra-curricular activities, conformity to rules, and the absence of

534   challenging and delinquent behaviour (Fredricks et al., 2004; Li & Lerner, 2013).

535   Lastly, cognitive engagement comprises a young person's investment in their own

536   academic development, reflected in their willingness to set goals, devise plans,

537   monitor progress, problem solve, modify strategies, and actively seek challenges and

538   new learning opportunities (Fredricks et al., 2004).

539   Each component of educational engagement is influenced by a complex and

540   dynamic interaction between a young person's internal and external resources

541   (Rajasekaran & Reyes, 2019). Internal resources refer to individual factors and

542   personal attributes, such as self-efficacy, self-esteem, and perceived competence

543   (Jalala, Latifoglu, & Uzunboylu, 2020). External resources relate specifically to

544   contextual factors and strengths, including the extent and quality of support provided

545   by the school, peers, family, workplace, and community (Jalala et al., 2020;

546   Rajasekaran & Reyes, 2019). There is recognition amongst researchers that

547   engagement does not reside within the individual, rather, it is a joint product of the

548   developing young person and the wider environmental context (Furlong &

549   Christenson, 2008; Li, 2011; Rajasekaran & Reyes, 2019). Consequently, in order to

550   promote engagement, efforts and strategies should be multidimensional, focusing on

551   enhancing the internal and external resources available to young people (Furlong &

552   Christenson, 2008; Lerner & Ohannessian, 2013; Rajasekaran & Reyes, 2019). In

553   turn, enhancing young people's engagement can lead to a host of positive

554   developmental outcomes and trajectories (Furlong & Christenson, 2008).

555   Educational engagement has been considered an important predictor of

556   positive youth development outcomes, including academic achievement, school

557   completion, and future employment opportunities (Chase, Warren, & Lerner, 2015;

558   Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Li & Lerner, 2011; Wang & Holcombe,

559 2010). Overall, high levels of engagement have been shown to positively influence a

560 young person's behavioural conduct within the school environment and to reduce the

561 likelihood of school dropout (Appleton et al., 2008; D'Angelo & Kaye, 2018;

562 Johnson, Crosnoe, & Elder, 2001). Importantly, unlike many other predictors of

563 NEET status that are fixed (e.g., home background and ethnicity), educational

564 engagement has been considered a more malleable characteristic and an essential

565 mechanism to focus on when designing programmes to re-engage young people

566 (Hart et al., 2011; Henderson et al., 2017; Jerald, 2006; Smart et al., 2017).

567   Alongside engagement, behaviour-related issues have been shown to be

568 robust predictors of a young person dropping out of school and entering NEET status

569 (Li, 2011; Obsuth et al., 2017; Rodwell et al., 2017; Smart et al., 2017). The most

570 prevalent behavioural problems reported by educators are: 1) persistent disruption

571 and disobedience; 2) absenteeism and truancy; 3) aggression and physical violence

572 towards peers; 4) substance abuse; 5) unpredictability, and; 6) a lack of self-control

573 with an inability to effectively manage emotions (Department for Education, 2017;

574 Fortin, Lessard, & Marcotte, 2010). When such behaviour-related issues are repeated

575 and sustained they can have a deleterious effect on a young person's academic

576 attainment (Breslau, 2010; Larson, Chapman, Spetz, & Brindis, 2017; Smart et al.,

577 2017) and present a unique risk factor for school withdrawal (Witte et al., 2013).

578 Thus, effective programmes are warranted to minimise behavioural problems in

579 order to help guide a young person's transition from secondary school into further

580 study or employment (Gutierrez-Garcia, Benjet, Borges, Rios, & Medina-Mora,

581 2017; Rodwell et al., 2017; Smart et al., 2017).

582   Engagement and behaviour-related issues may also be a predictor of

583 psychosocial challenges (Lewis, Huebner, Malone, & Valois, 2011; Li & Lerner,

584 2011; Wang & Peck, 2013). Extensive research has shown that young people who

585 are disengaged and consistently demonstrate negative behaviours also possess higher

586 levels of emotional distress, including anxiety and depressive symptoms, substance

587 use, low self-esteem and self-worth, and low perceptions of competence (Benjet et

588 al., 2012; Li, Bebiroglu, Phelps, Lerner, & Lerner, 2008; Li & Lerner, 2011;

589 Shochet, Dadds, Ham, & Montague, 2006; Wang & Fredricks, 2014). Such adverse

590 psychosocial outcomes and mental health conditions may also become more

591 entrenched during the transition to early adulthood (Gutierrez-Garcia et al., 2018; Li

592 & Lerner, 2011; Maddox & Prinz, 2003; Ramsdal et al., 2018). For instance, an

593 eight-year longitudinal study found that when young people experience NEET status

594 during adolescence, they are more likely to develop mental health conditions as they

595 transition to early adulthood, compared to young people who consistently remain in

596 education, employment, or training (Gutierrez-Garcia et al., 2017).

597 　　　Periods spent in the absence of education, employment, or training may be an

598 antecedent for the development of mental health conditions and adverse psychosocial

599 outcomes due to the limited social interaction and integration during this time,

600 leaving young people lost, lonely, and without a sense of meaning, direction, or

601 vision for their future (Benjet et al., 2012; Esch et al., 2014; Gutierrez-Garcia,

602 Jimenez, Martinez, & Gonzalez, 2017; Gutierrez-Garcia et al., 2018; Hartas, 2011;

603 Ramsdal et al., 2018). Over time, long periods outside of education or employment

604 have been associated with cognitive impairments, reduced capacity for learning, and

605 destructive coping behaviours (Gutierrez-Garcia et al., 2018). Without effective

606 programmes and support systems, such young people may be unable to re-orient and

607 re-integrate (Ramsdal et al., 2018).

608 　　　Increased levels of disengagement, behavioural related issues, and

609 psychosocial challenges are considered strong predictors for becoming NEET, as

610 well as a consequence of NEET status (Benjet et al., 2012). Thus, there is a need to

611 implement programmes that directly target engagement, behavioural, and

612 psychosocial challenges seen in disengaged young people and subsequently, cultivate

613 positive developmental outcomes. To ensure such programmes are effective requires

614 a focus on supportive person-context relationships that are fundamental for positive

615 adaptation during periods of transition (Li, 2011).

616 **2.3. The Role of External Resources on Engagement, Behavioural, and**

617 **Psychosocial Outcomes**

618 　　　External resources relate specifically to a young person's contextual

619 strengths, including family socio-economic status, structure, and the quality of social

620 support provided by family members, peers, the school, and the wider community

621 (Rajasekaran & Reyes, 2019). The developmental opportunities and support

622 structures provided in young people's family and educational environment are

623 critical in the promotion of positive engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial

624 outcomes (Li, 2011).

625 *2.3.1 Socioeconomic Status*

626   One important external resource and contextual strength to consider is an

627 individual's socioeconomic status (Moustakim, 2015). Extensive evidence has shown

628 that low socioeconomic status can have a significant negative impact upon a young

629 person's engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes (Bakar et al., 2010;

630 Benjet et al., 2012; Blondal & Adalbjarnardottir, 2014; Bynner & Parsons, 2002;

631 Kroenke, 2008; Kumar & Chahal, 2016; Li & Lerner, 2011). In particular, childhood

632 poverty has been associated with disengagement from learning, low academic

633 attainment, disruptive behaviour, low self-esteem, and limited employment prospects

634 (Carter-Wall & Whitfield, 2012; Kroenke, 2008). A longitudinal study demonstrated

635 a clear pathway between young people who are eligible for free school meals and the

636 development of NEET status, between ages 16 and 19 (DfE, 2011). It has even been

637 suggested that the reason young people become NEET is a result of their

638 socioeconomic status and the subsequent circumstances of adversity and hardship

639 which, without effective programmes and support, may shape and dictate their lives

640 (Spielhofer et al., 2009). This has been referred to as the Matthew Effect whereby,

641 differences between young people (i.e., socioeconomic status) at the start of

642 education, exacerbate over time, until the initial advantage becomes a significant

643 advantage, and a substantial gap between young people is evident (Lee, Wickrama,

644 O'Neal, & Prado, 2018; Merton, 1968; Ralston et al., 2016).

645   **2.3.1.1 Socioeconomic status and School Experiences.** Many young people

646 have reported experiencing discomfort and vulnerability in school, given the

647 structure of the education system, in which the curriculum, culture, ethos, educators,

648 and student population, are seen to be dominated by higher, rather than lower,

649 socioeconomic status individuals (Archer, Halsall, Hollingworth, & Mendick, 2005;

650 McPherson, 2020; Reay, 2006). Higher socioeconomic status families arguably carry

651 more cultural (e.g., knowledge, language, and culture to guide decisions and

652 behaviours), economic (e.g., monetary assets to afford tuition fees, tutoring, and

653 academic textbooks), and social (e.g., networks and resourceful connections) forms

654 of capital (Archer, 2003; Archer & Yamashita, 2003; Ball, 2003; Bourdieu, 1986;

655 Jaeger & Mollegaard, 2017; Spaaij, 2012). Consequently, young people from

656 families with lower socioeconomic status may enter the educational context already

657 in a disadvantaged position compared to their higher socioeconomic status

658 counterparts (Geckova, Tavel, Dijk, Abel, & Reijneveld, 2010; Higgins, 2013;

659 Werfhorst & Hofstede, 2007). A lack of resources and identification with the

660 educational institution may result in young peoples' lower levels of emotional,

661 behavioural, and cognitive engagement (Fredricks, Reschly, & Christenson, 2019).

662 Such disengagement can in turn lead to poor behavioural conduct, which may

663 exacerbate a young person's isolation from school, leading to a greater risk of

664 adverse psychosocial outcomes, and eventually, school dropout (Fredricks et al.,

665 2019).

666 **2.3.1.2 Socioeconomic Status, Sport, and Physical Activity.** Beyond the

667 educational impact, the socioeconomic status of families may also influence young

668 people's involvement and participation in sport or physical activity (Hanson & Chen,

669 2007; Holt, Kingsley, Tink, & Scherer, 2011; Vella, Cliff, & Okely, 2014). Sport and

670 physical activity participation may subsequently positively impact young peoples'

671 engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes (Bailey, Cope, & Parnell,

672 2015; Castelli et al., 2014; Owen et al., 2016). For instance, substantial evidence has

673 underscored the central role sport and physical activity play in the development of

674 young peoples' physical (e.g., cardiovascular fitness and muscular strength),

675 emotional (e.g., self-esteem and self-efficacy), individual (e.g., self-discipline and

676 persistence), social (e.g., teamwork and collaboration), intellectual (e.g., engagement

677 and learning), and financial (e.g., productivity and performance) forms of capital

678 (Bailey et al., 2015).

679 Unfortunately, due to financial constraints, families with lower

680 socioeconomic status may not have access to the necessary leisure facilities and

681 equipment (Hardy et al., 2010; Hesketh, Waters, Green, Salmon, & Williams, 2005;

682 Kirby, Levin, & Inchley, 2013). They may also lack the knowledge and

683 understanding of the importance of incorporating sport or physical activity into

684 everyday life, and consequently, may not promote or encourage these activities with

685 their children (Mackintosh, Knowles, Ridgers, & Fairclough, 2011; Quarmby &

686 Dagkas, 2013). Thus, efforts to promote sport and physical activity levels should be

687 embedded within programmes targeting disengaged young people, in order to

688 address socioeconomic status disparities and improve developmental outcomes

689 (Castelli et al., 2014).

690 *2.3.2 The Role of Social Support*

691 Access to social support, particularly the extent to which young people feel

692 connected to those around them, has been considered both a protective and a risk

693   factor for becoming NEET (Centre for Promise, 2014a; Ramsdal et al., 2018). Young

694   people, and in particular young people from vulnerable backgrounds, seek

695   relationships and connections with adults (e.g., teachers, mentors, coaches) and their

696   peers (Lerner et al., 2013). The type of relationships and connections formed can

697   either lead young people towards or away from education and employment (Centre

698   for Promise, 2014a; 2014b).

699   The presence of positive social support and relationships has been linked to

700   feelings of psychological security and safety, and can enhance disengaged young

701   peoples' self-worth, self-esteem, and perceived competence (Lerner et al., 2013;

702   McLafferty et al., 2018). Social support may also help young people cope more

703   effectively with stress and adversity and has been shown to mitigate adverse

704   engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes (Cohen & Wills, 1985;

705   Gottlieb, 2000; Ramsdal et al., 2018). As such, social support has been considered to

706   serve as a protective factor against school dropout (Rajasekaran & Reyes, 2019;

707   Ramsdal et al., 2018). Given such findings, implementing programmes which

708   surround disengaged young people with social support through the presence of

709   warmth, caring, and meaningful, supportive relationships is pertinent (McLafferty et

710   al., 2018).

711   **2.4 Programmes to Promote Engagement, Behavioural, and Psychosocial**

712   **Outcomes**

713   One-to-one mentoring, positive youth development (e.g., classroom-based

714   workshops and work-based placements), and sport and physical activity programmes

715   have all been implemented in an attempt to enhance the adverse engagement,

716   behavioural, and psychosocial characteristics of disengaged young people (Mawn et

717   al., 2017). Substantial literature is available on each type of programme. Given the

718   breadth of information to be covered, combined with the vast evidence base, the

719   following sections draw mainly on meta-analysis and/or systematic reviews,

720   supplemented by examples from individual studies where appropriate.

721   **2.5 One-to-One Mentoring Programmes**

722   Although various definitions of mentoring exist, the approach is often

723   characterised by the following elements: 1) the establishment of a continuous

724   professional relationship between the mentor and mentee; 2) the mentor has a higher

725   possession of wisdom, knowledge, and experience compared to the mentee; and 3)

726   the mentee is able to benefit from the mentor's expertise either academically,

727   socially, or emotionally (Butler, 2016; Tolan et al., 2013). Overall, one-to-one

728   mentoring programmes hold promise as a programme strategy for promoting positive

729   engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes (Raposa et al., 2019). For

730   instance, mentoring has been associated with improved emotional wellbeing (Dolan

731   et al., 2011), social skills (Karcher, 2008), academic achievement, and a reduction in

732   delinquency (Tolan, Henry, Schoeny, Lovegrove, & Nichols, 2014).

733   Given such benefits, over the last two decades, there has been a proliferation

734   of mentoring programmes developed for, and delivered to, young people displaying a

735   range of engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial challenges (Kanchewa,

736   Schwartz, & Rhodes, 2017). However, despite the widespread expansion of

737   mentoring programmes and acceptance of their benefits, a series of meta-analyses

738   assessing the effectiveness of mentoring with disengaged young people have

739   revealed only modest effect sizes. Further, questions remain regarding the conditions

740   in which mentoring will be most likely to succeed (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, &

741   Cooper, 2002; DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011; Raposa et

742   al., 2019).

743   The earliest of the meta-analyses examining mentoring programmes for

744   disengaged young people was conducted by DuBois et al. (2002) and included

745   findings from 55 evaluations of mentoring programmes conducted between 1970 and

746   1998. The aims of the meta-analysis were to assess the overall effects of mentoring

747   programmes on disengaged young people and to investigate the factors that may

748   account for variation in programme effects (i.e., mentee characteristics, type of

749   relationship formed, design and implementation of programme, and outcome

750   domains). The review encompassed studies which defined mentoring as a one-on-one

751   relationship between an older, more experienced mentor and a younger mentee.

752   Overall, it was concluded that, on average, mentees experienced developments in

753   five outcome domains: emotional/psychosocial wellbeing ($d = 0.10$, 95% CI = -0.02

754   – 0.22), problem or high-risk behaviour ($d = 0.21$, 95% CI = 0.09 – 0.33), social

755   competence ($d = 0.15$, 95% CI = 0.00 – 0.30), academic/educational ($d = 0.11$, 95%

756   CI = 0.03 – 0.19), and career/employment ($d = 0.22$, 95% CI = 0.06 – 0.38).

757   However, when collapsing effects across all outcome domains, mentees experienced

758   only modest developments ($d = 0.18$).

759   In 2011, DuBois and colleagues expanded on their earlier analysis and

760   examined 73 independent evaluations of mentoring programmes published between

761   1999 and 2010. Building on their earlier review, DuBois et al. (2011) explored

762   whether mentoring programmes had the potential to impact on multiple domains

763   (e.g., academic, psychosocial, social, and conduct problems). A moderator analysis

764   was also conducted to investigate the characteristics of programmes which may

765   account for variations in overall effectiveness. To be included in the review,

766   mentoring programmes had to consist of a relationship between a young person and a

767   non-parental adult (or an older young person), with the overall goal of promoting

768   positive developmental outcomes. Programmes utilising paid professionals (rather

769   than volunteers) and older peers as mentors, along with those adopting a group

770   mentoring format, were included. Consistent with the earlier review (DuBois et al.,

771   2002), mentees across the studies included in the meta-analysis reported

772   improvements in attitude/motivation ($d = 0.19$), social/relational ($d = 0.17$),

773   psychosocial/emotional ($d = 0.15$), conduct problems ($d = 0.21$), academic/school (d

774    $= 0.21$), and physical health ($d = 0.06$), with overall effect sizes around 0.20

775   (DuBois et al., 2011).

776   The third and most recent meta-analysis of mentoring programmes for

777   disengaged young people (Raposa et al., 2019), comprised 70 programmes published

778   between 1975 and 2017. Unlike DuBois and colleagues' (2011) review, which

779   included mentoring programmes adopting various formats and strategies (e.g., group

780   mentoring), Raposa and colleagues' (2019) only included programmes utilising a

781   one-on-one relationship between a younger mentee and an older, non-parental

782   mentor (excluding programmes adopting a peer, group, or curriculum-based

783   approach). The review estimated the overall effect of mentoring programmes and

784   examined whether the size of programme effects was moderated by key mentor and

785   mentee characteristics, programme characteristics, and research design issues.

786   Findings indicated improvements in five broad categories, including school

787   functioning ($g = 0.20$, $t = 6.27$, $p < .001$), social relationships ($g = 0.19$, $t = 5.82$, $p =$

788    $<.001$), health ($g = 0.23$, $t = 4.76$, $p = < .001$), cognition ($g = 0.19$, $t = 4.81$, $p = <$

789    $.001$), and psychosocial symptoms ($g = 0.17$, $t = 5.01$, $p = < .001$). The average effect

790   size across all 70 studies and all outcomes was $g = 0.21$ ($p < .001$; 95% CI $= 0.14 -$

791   0.28).

792   Drawing together the findings from these meta-analyses, it appears that

793   mentoring programmes produce modest effects for disengaged young people.

794   However, it is apparent that the characteristics of the mentee (e.g., gender, gender

795 and goals of the mentorship, age, risk factor status), mentor (e.g., age, gender, mentor

796 background), and programme (e.g., setting, duration, specific outcome domains) may

797 moderate the overall effectiveness of mentoring.

798 ***2.5.1 Mentee Characteristics***

799 Several mentee characteristics have been proposed to influence the effects of

800 mentoring (Raposa et al., 2019). Specifically, their gender, the association between

801 gender and goals of the relationship, the age of the mentees, and certain individual

802 and environmental risk factors.

803 **2.5.1.1 Gender.** The earliest review (DuBois et al., 2002) reported no

804 significant difference regarding the gender of the mentee on the impact of the

805 outcomes of mentoring. However, more recent evidence reports larger average effect

806 sizes for mentoring programmes with a higher proportion of male mentees.

807 Specifically, DuBois and colleagues' (2011) found a greater effect for programmes

808 with 50% or more male mentees ($d = 0.24$ versus $d = 0.18$). Similarly, Raposa and

809 colleagues' review (2019) identified that, in comparison to females, larger effects

810 were found in samples that had a higher percentage of males (B = 0.38, p < .05).

811 Gender could influence the impact of mentoring as girls and boys may require

812 different types of mentoring relationships (e.g., psychosocial versus instrumental;

813 Bogat & Liang, 2005). Research has shown that girls may enter mentoring

814 relationships with complex relational histories and more internalising of problems,

815 including anxiety and depression, in comparison to boys, and may therefore

816 encounter more challenges forming and maintaining an effective relationship with

817 their mentors (Bogat & Liang, 2005; Hankin et al., 1998; Kessler et al., 2005; Lerner

818 & Ohannessian, 2013; Rhodes, 2002; Rhodes, Lowe, Litchfield, & Walsh-Samp,

819 2008).

820 ***2.5.1.1.1 Goals of the Mentoring Relationship.*** Gender may determine the

821 overall goals of the mentoring programme and the type of relationship formed

822 (Rhodes, 2002). For instance, girls may be referred to a mentoring programme due to

823 insecure attachments and relationships with their mothers (Bogat & Liang, 2005;

824 Rhodes, 2002; Rhodes et al., 2008). Comparatively, the school or community may

825 refer boys to a male mentor due to behavioural problems and the absence of a male

826 role model within their home environment (Rhodes, 2002; Rhodes et al., 2008). As

827 such, research suggests that girls may respond more favourably to psychosocial

828 mentoring, which relies predominantly on the development of an interpersonal

relationship between the mentor and mentee. This relationship may consist of the

mentor providing emotional support, and helping the mentee develop personal

characteristics such as self-esteem, authenticity, trust, and communication skills

(Allen & Eby, 2004; Liang, Tracy, Talor, & Williams, 2002). Mentoring for boys,

however, may predominantly consist of instrumental mentoring, whereby the mentor

helps the mentee problem solve and reach specific goals (Allen & Eby, 2004). Thus,

male mentees may not require or respond well to the provision of emotional support

but may respond favourably to more autonomy-supportive behaviours (Bogat &

Liang, 2005). However, overall, effects of mentoring across all three meta-analyses

have remained consistent, regardless of the goals of the mentoring programmes

reviewed (DuBois et al., 2002; 2011; Raposa et al., 2019).

2.5.1.2 Age of Mentees/Developmental Stage. Mentee age has been

perceived as an important factor influencing the quality of the mentoring relationship

(DuBois et al., 2011). Though, across all three reviews (DuBois et al., 2002; 2011;

Raposa et al., 2019), no differences in effect size were apparent as a function of

mentee age. This is a somewhat surprising finding because previous research has

suggested mentorships may be more successful for younger adolescents, and that

relationships with older adolescents may be less close and enduring (e.g.,

Kupersmidt, Stump, Stelter, & Rhodes, 2017). However, it may be that mentoring

has the potential to be effective across each stage of adolescence, but the mentor has

to tailor their style of mentoring in order to be sensitive to their mentees context and

specific cognitive and social competencies (DuBois et al., 2011). Sensitive mentors

may help both younger and older adolescents to develop a sense of self-worth, in

that, the mentee is able to see themselves as someone who is worthy of love and

friendship, and able to see their mentor as someone they can rely upon during

challenges and times of need (Rhodes, 2002).

2.5.1.3 Individual and Environmental Risk Factors. Mentoring

programmes may be particularly effective for young people experiencing a range of

individual and environmental risk factors (DuBois et al., 2011). Risk factors related

to the individual include low academic achievement, behavioural problems, and

psychosocial challenges. Environmental risk factors comprise low socioeconomic

status, complex family backgrounds, and conflict with peers (Weiler, Boat, &

Haddock, 2019). Accordingly, young people with high levels of individual and/or

862 environmental risk factors have been the focus of a considerable proportion of

863 mentoring programmes (DuBois et al., 2002).

864   DuBois et al. (2002) found larger effect sizes for mentoring programmes

865 which served young people experiencing both individual and environmental risk

866 factors (ds of .25 and .26 for fixed and random effects, respectively), or

867 environmental risk factors alone (ds of .18 and .17). However, due to the relatively

868 low number of studies investigating young people possessing both individual and

869 environmental risk factors ($n = 11$), this finding warrants cautious interpretation.

870 DuBois and colleagues' (2011) reported larger effects when young people were

871 either high in environmental risk and low in individual risk, or conversely, high in

872 individual risk and low in environmental risk. For example, a young person may

873 experience high levels of family stress and housing instability (i.e., high

874 environmental risk) but display no academic challenges or problem behaviours (i.e.,

875 low individual risk), or vice versa. When mentees experience high levels of

876 individual and environmental risk, mentors (often volunteers) may not possess the

877 skill set or capacity to address both complex personal vulnerabilities and contextual

878 adversity (DuBois et al., 2011). Such experiences may even have a negative impact

879 on mentors' psychosocial outcomes (Cavell et al., 2009; Colvin & Ashman, 2010;

880 Rogers & Taylor, 1997; Spencer, 2007). As one example, mentoring young people

881 high in both individual and environmental risk factors has been linked with adverse

882 shifts in mentors' self-rated attitudes (declines in perceived self-efficacy) and

883 personality characteristics (decrements in mentors' level of openness,

884 conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeableness) at the end of the mentorship

885 (Faith et al., 2011). However, in contrast to DuBois et al.'s reviews (2002; 2011),

886 Raposa et al. (2019) identified no differences in effect sizes based on mentee

887 individual and environmental risk factor status.

888   For those high in environmental risk factors, mentoring may be particularly

889 beneficial because it enables the mentee to receive exposure to a caring, supportive,

890 and positive adult role model which they may otherwise not have access to (Anda,

891 2001; McQuillin, Smith, & Strait, 2011). Further, mentoring may have the capacity

892 to act as a 'corrective experience' for young people who have been exposed to

893 dysfunctional family relations. Specifically, enabling them to re-associate how they

894 identify and interact with significant others through the formation of a trusting and

895 supportive relationship with their mentor (DuBois et al., 2011).

896 *2.5.2 Mentor Characteristics*

897   A number of mentor characteristics have been suggested as potential

898 moderators of programme effectiveness. Specifically, the mentor's age, gender, and

899 background appear to influence the mentoring relationship and subsequent

900 effectiveness of the programme.

901   **2.5.2.1 Age of Mentors.** Previous research has underscored that the mentor's

902 age may be an important moderator of programme effectiveness (Raposa et al.,

903 2019). There is evidence to suggest that student mentors volunteering within

904 secondary school and college programmes may be less competent in comparison to

905 older volunteer mentors (Grossman, Chan, Schwartz, & Rhodes, 2012). As one

906 example, student mentors may be more likely to establish unrealistic academic and

907 personal expectations for their mentee (Leyton-Armakan, Lawrence, Deutsch,

908 Williams, & Henneberger, 2012) and may feel overwhelmed by the complexities of

909 mentees lives (Grossman et al., 2012). Further, student mentors may be unable to

910 complete the mentoring relationship due to their own unpredictable timetables, time

911 constraints, and academic commitments (Grossman et al., 2012). However, due to a

912 lack of variation across mentor age groups in DuBois et al's (2002; 2011) reviews,

913 no reliable analysis was able to be performed, and the effects of mentor age remained

914 unclear. Further, mentor age was not a significant moderator of programme

915 effectiveness throughout Raposa and colleagues' review (2019). Consequently, it

916 may be that mentors of varying ages have the potential to show comparable levels of

917 effectiveness, and other factors are more influential in determining the impact of

918 mentoring programmes.

919   **2.5.2.2 Gender of Mentors.** Research investigating the impact of mentor

920 gender on mentee outcomes remains unclear. For instance, DuBois et al. (2002)

921 found no differences in effect size based on the gender of mentors, while, no gender

922 analysis was conducted by DuBois et al. (2011) due to insufficient variation in the

923 gender of mentors across studies. In the work of Raposa et al. (2019), significant

924 differences were found in the impact of mentoring based on the percentage of male

925 mentors within the sample, with larger effects found in samples that had a higher

926 percentage of male mentors ($B = 0.36$, $t = 2.14$, $p < .05$). This finding warrants

927 cautious interpretation because mentoring programmes typically match mentor and

928 mentee gender, which results in difficulties determining the impact of mentor versus

929 mentee gender in the overall results.

930   **2.5.2.3 Background of Mentors.** Mentors who have prior experience in

931   helping roles or professions (e.g., social workers and counsellors) have been found to

932   be more effective in comparison to mentors who have none (DuBois et al., 2002;

933   Raposa et al., 2019). Specifically, mentors with helping backgrounds may bring with

934   them a valuable skillset and an accumulation of experience which enables them to

935   approach relationship building with patience, kindness, and empathy. Such mentor

936   attributes and interpersonal skills have been considered key ingredients of high-

937   quality relationships and enables mentees to develop perceptions of emotional safety

938   (Kanchewa et al., 2017). When mentors have prior experience in helping

939   backgrounds, they may enter mentoring relationships with higher levels of self-

940   efficacy, a variable that has been associated with successful mentor-mentee

941   relationships (Dutton, Bullen, & Deane, 2018; Karcher, Nakkula, & Harris, 2005;

942   Keller, 2005; Raposa, Rhodes, & Herrera, 2016; Strapp et al., 2014). For instance,

943   mentors with high self-efficacy have been shown to provide more consistent support

944   and to persevere during challenges with their mentees (Karcher et al., 2005; Parra,

945   DuBois, Neville, Pugh-Lilly, & Povinelli, 2002; Strapp et al., 2014). Comparatively,

946   mentors with low self-efficacy have been shown to give up more easily during

947   challenges with mentees, due to feeling overwhelmed and unappreciated (Hamilton

948   & Hamilton, 1992; Karcher et al., 2005; Strapp et al., 2014). These findings suggest

949   that mentors should be selected who have prior experience in helping domains.

950   However, this may be dependent on the overall goals and intended outcomes of

951   programmes. For instance, there is also evidence of stronger effects for mentoring

952   when the educational/occupational background of mentors suited the specific goals

953   of the mentorship (e.g., utilising mentors with teaching backgrounds when the goal

954   of mentoring is to enhance mentees' academic attainment) (DuBois et al., 2011).

955   *2.5.3 Programme Characteristics*

956   Over the past few decades, there has been variation in the characteristics of

957   mentoring programmes, which may influence the benefits that young people obtain

958   from it (Raposa et al., 2019). Specifically, consideration of the setting, duration, and

959   outcomes of programmes are warranted.

960   **2.5.3.1 Setting.** The setting of mentorships (e.g., educational or community

961   contexts) have been theorised to account for differences in mentees' engagement,

962   behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes (McQuillin et al., 2011). However, no

963   differences in effect sizes were reported by Dubois et al. (2011) and Raposa et al.

964   (2019). Interestingly, however, previous research has questioned the effectiveness of

965   school-based mentoring in comparison to community-based mentoring (DuBois et

966   al., 2002; Karcher, 2008; McQuillin et al., 2011). Such questions have been raised

967   because, when mentoring is delivered within an educational context, restrictions may

968   be placed on the frequency (amount of contact per week) and length (months or

969   years) of the mentoring relationship (McQuillin et al., 2011). As such, this may limit

970   mentees' access to a prolonged period of support and may prevent the formation of a

971   connection between the mentor and mentee (DuBois & Karcher, 2014). In addition, a

972   high proportion of mentors within the school context are school or college-age

973   mentors, typically unable to commit to mentorships beyond a semester or school year

974   (Herrera et al., 2007). It can also take a considerable time-period (up to three months)

975   to match mentors with mentees within this setting (e.g., Hansen, 2005; Herrera, Sipe,

976   McClanahan, Arbreton, & Pepper, 2000). The limited time commitment is

977   concerning because previous research has underscored that mentorships may need to

978   last for more than one year in order to produce favourable developmental outcomes

979   (e.g., Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). Consequently, limited time, as well as physical

980   constraints of the school context, may result in mentoring activities that are restricted

981   in scope and variety (McQuillin et al., 2011). In contrast, community-based

982   programmes have the capacity and resources to be more intensive, for instance,

983   aiming to last an average of 12 months (McQuillin et al., 2011). Such enduring

984   mentoring relationships may provide the mentor with sufficient time to emotionally

985   connect with their mentee and to tailor their practices, thus enhancing the likelihood

986   of establishing a secure, trusting, and high-quality mentorship (DuBois & Karcher,

987   2014).

988   **2.5.3.2 Duration.** As alluded to in the previous section, the effect of

989   relationship duration was examined across all reviews (i.e., DuBois et al., 2002;

990   2011; Raposa et al., 2019). Early research had linked mentorship duration to mentee

991   development, with longer relationships leading to more favourable mentee

992   engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes (e.g., Grossman & Rhodes,

993   2002). However, in contrast, within DuBois and colleagues' review (DuBois et al.,

994   2002; 2011) they reported no differences in programme effects based on the duration

995   of relationships, while Raposa and colleagues' (2019) found larger effect sizes for

996   mentoring programmes comprising shorter meetings.

997   Mentoring programmes that require a substantial time commitment often

998   experience difficulty recruiting mentors who are willing to invest a significant

999   amount of their time (usually voluntarily) to a young person's development. As such,

1000   there are often long waiting lists due to an insufficient number of mentors to meet

1001   demands (Grossman, Chan, Schwartz, & Rhodes, 2012; Grossman & Rhodes, 2002;

1002   Schwartz & Rhodes, 2016). Moreover, when mentors are recruited, they may be

1003   unable to make a year-long commitment and consequently, many programmes

1004   experience high attrition rates resulting in mentoring relationships terminating earlier

1005   than expected (e.g., six months or shorter) (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). However,

1006   when mentorships allow for shorter duration and place less demands on mentors,

1007   there may be an increased likelihood that mentors will volunteer and fulfil the

1008   mentoring relationship (Herrera, 1999; Herrera & Karcher, 2014). Hence,

1009   mentorships which are shorter in duration may have potential to close the mentoring

1010   gap; that is, the gap between the number of young people who require a mentor and

1011   the number of young people who currently receive access to one (Leyton-Armakan et

1012   al., 2012).

1013   Early termination of mentoring relationships has been shown to adversely

1014   affect mentees engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes (Downey,

1015   Lebolt, Rincon, & Freitas, 1998; Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Rhodes, 2002).

1016   Interestingly, however, such negative mentee outcomes may not be attributable to the

1017   shorter duration directly but more so the expectation that the mentee had for a longer,

1018   more sustained relationship (Karcher, 2008). Mentees may already enter mentoring

1019   relationships with internalised doubt that others may not be able to accept and care

1020   for them, due to either the absence of, or insecure and disorganised attachments with

1021   their own family members (Bowlby, 1982; Kanchewa, Yoviene, Schwartz, Herrera.,

1022   & Rhodes, 2018; Levy, Ayduk, & Downey, 2001; Madia & Lutz, 2004; Noam &

1023   Hermann, 2002). As a consequence, such vulnerable mentees may perceive that they

1024   are responsible for problems in subsequent adult interactions (Grossman & Rhodes,

1025   2002). Challenging upbringings can enhance the likelihood of a mentee developing

1026   rejection sensitivity, whereby, they may overreact to a mentor's behaviour, question

1027   intentions, and whether or not the mentor genuinely cares, and fear that they may

1028   suddenly be abandoned (Kanchewa et al., 2018). Rejection sensitive mentees may

1029   also be more likely to behave aggressively, encounter communication difficulties,

1030   and adverse psychosocial outcomes, such as loneliness and depression (Downey et

1031 al., 1998; McLachlan, Zimmer-Gembeck, & McGregor, 2010). It is, likely, therefore,

1032 that fulfilling duration commitment is more important than the actual duration of the

1033 mentorship (Grossman et al., 2012).

1034   **2.5.3.3 Outcome Domain.** Mentoring programmes have focused on

1035 addressing a wide range of academic, behavioural, and psychosocial outcome

1036 domains (Raposa et al., 2019). Across all three reviews (DuBois et al., 2002; 2011;

1037 Raposa et al., 2019), the type of outcome assessed was not a significant predictor of

1038 effect size. Of concern, despite the proliferation of mentoring programmes and the

1039 development of evidence-based guidelines over the past few decades (e.g.,

1040 MENTOR and the National Mentoring Resource Centre), the benefits of mentoring

1041 across a wide range of academic, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes have not

1042 improved (DuBois et al., 2002; 2011; Raposa et al., 2019). Overall effect sizes have

1043 remained relatively small, ranging from 0.18 to 0.21 (DuBois et al., 2002; 2011;

1044 Raposa et al., 2019).

1045   Although such effect sizes (0.18 to 0.21) are considered small according to

1046 Cohen's (1988) guidelines, they do fall within the medium range of empirical

1047 guidelines for the average effect sizes of primary prevention programmes for young

1048 people (Raposa et al., 2019; Tanner-Smith et al., 2018). However, in comparison to

1049 primary prevention programmes serving a general population of young people

1050 (Tanner-Smith et al., 2018), individuals selected for mentoring programmes tend to

1051 already be displaying various risk factors and difficulties. Thus, there may be greater

1052 room for improvement for those participating in mentoring in contrast to primary

1053 prevention programmes (Raposa et al., 2019). Further, it is difficult to compare

1054 findings across outcome domains due to inconsistencies in how constructs are

1055 categorised and assessed (DuBois et al., 2002; 2011; Raposa et al., 2019).

1056 *2.5.4 Conclusion*

1057   According to the meta-analytic reviews, to maximise the effects of mentoring

1058 programmes, it is apparent that mentors may need to tailor their style of mentoring in

1059 order to be responsive to the mentees gender, age, and developmental stage. To

1060 develop high-quality mentoring relationships, the mentor may also need to approach

1061 relationship building with patience, kindness, and empathy, and ideally, they should

1062 have prior experience in helping roles and professions (e.g., social workers and

1063 counsellors). Interestingly, the fulfilment of the mentoring relationship may be more

1064 important than the actual duration of the mentorship, and in order for disengaged

1065   young people to receive significant academic, behavioural, and psychosocial

1066   benefits, mentoring may need to be supplemented with various other modalities

1067   (Goodman, 1999; Grossman et al., 2012).

1068   **2.6 Positive Youth Development Programmes**

1069   Positive youth development (PYD) programmes are those which encompass a

1070   strengths-based approach, emphasising the potential for, and plasticity of, human

1071   development and growth (Bowers et al., 2010). This type of approach views

1072   disengaged young people as individuals to be nurtured, valued, and cared for,

1073   seeking to provide an enriching and empowering experience, where they can

1074   cultivate their ideas, creativity, assets, and capacities (Callingham, 2013; Roth &

1075   Brooks-Gunn, 2003). The overall aims of PYD programmes are to enhance young

1076   people's unique strengths and internal resources (i.e., asset development) through

1077   providing exposure to external resources, support, and opportunity (i.e.,

1078   environmental enhancement) (Lerner, Phelps, Alberts, Forman, & Christiansen,

1079   2007; Rajasekaran & Reyes, 2019; Snyder & Flay, 2012). Such programmes have

1080   been considered a promising approach for enhancing academic, behavioural, and

1081   psychosocial outcomes amongst young people (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak,

1082   & Hawkins, 2004; Curran & Wexler, 2017). However, such benefits may be

1083   especially important for disengaged young people as they encounter a heightened

1084   risk of academic failure, behavioural-related issues, and adverse psychosocial

1085   outcomes (Sanders, Munford, Thimasarn-Anwar, Liebenberg, & Ungar, 2015).

1086   Over the past few decades, PYD programmes have grown significantly and

1087   there have been many meta-analytic and narrative reviews that have assessed the

1088   overall impact of such programmes on young people (e.g., Catalano et al., 2004;

1089   Gavin, Catalano, David-Ferdon, Gloppen, & Markham, 2009; Shepherd et al., 2010).

1090   While some reviews have illustrated evidence of effectiveness, others have reported

1091   mixed or inconclusive findings (Catalano et al., 2004; Gavin et al., 2009; Shepherd et

1092   al., 2010). Such reviews, however, have varied considerably in relation to the

1093   inclusion criteria (e.g., design of the programmes, characteristics of young people,

1094   and the specific outcomes examined). For instance, while some reviews have focused

1095   solely on programmes conducted in the United States (Catalano et al., 2004), others

1096   have focused on universal populations and assessed specific outcomes, such as

1097   sexual and reproductive health (Gavin et al., 2009; Shepherd et al., 2010).

1098   Consequently, the impact of PYD programmes on a range of academic,

1099 behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes remains unclear. Investigations are also

1100 warranted to identify the programme features and characteristics which may enhance

1101 the overall effectiveness of programmes. To date, two meta-analytic reviews have

1102 been completed (i.e., Ciocanel, Power, Eriksen, & Gillings, 2017; Durlak,

1103 Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010), which have examined the effectiveness of PYD

1104 programmes on academic, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes among

1105 disengaged young people.

1106   Within this work, the programme features and characteristics which may

1107 enhance their effectiveness were reviewed. Durlak and colleagues' (2010) review

1108 focused on a mixture of young people, those experiencing risk factors (e.g., low

1109 socioeconomic status and behaviour-related issues), and young people displaying no

1110 pre-existing risk factors. In comparison, Ciocanel et al.'s (2017) review comprised

1111 young people displaying pre-existing risk behaviour (e.g., low self-perceptions and

1112 academic attainment) and young people deemed at risk of displaying risk behaviours

1113 in the future (e.g., high risk of teenage pregnancy).

1114   Durlak and colleagues' (2010) meta-analysis examined the effects of PYD

1115 after-school programmes (e.g., education/classroom sessions, social skills training,

1116 work-based placements, and leadership activities) on children and adolescents' (aged

1117 5 – 18 years old) personal and social skill development. The review included

1118 findings from 68 after-school programmes conducted between 1980 and 2007. To be

1119 eligible for inclusion, programmes had to have a control group, adult supervision,

1120 and include the development of one or more personal or social skills. The personal

1121 and social skills consisted of problem-solving, conflict resolution, self-control and

1122 discipline, leadership, decision-making, and the enhancement of self-esteem and self-

1123 efficacy.

1124   Overall, statistically significant improvements were reported in self-

1125 perceptions ($d = 0.34$, 95% CI = 0.23 – 0.46), bonding to the educational context ($d =$

1126 0.14, 95% CI = 0.03 – 0.25), pro-social behaviour ($d = 0.19$, CI = 0.10 – 0.29),

1127 achievement test scores ($d = 0.17$, CI = 0.06 – 0.29), school grades ($d = 0.12$, CI =

1128 0.01 – 0.23), and reductions in problem behaviours ($d = 0.19$, CI = 0.10 – 0.27).

1129 However, attendance ($d = 0.10$, CI = -0.01 – 0.20) and drug use ($d = 0.10$, CI = 0.00

1130 – 0.20) failed to reach statistical significance. There was also substantial

1131 heterogeneity in the effects ($Q = 306.42$, $p < .001$).

1132   Ciocanel et al. (2017) examined the effects of PYD programmes conducted

1133 between 1992 and 2014. In total, twenty-four studies were included, comprising

1134 23,258 young people (aged 10 – 19 years old). The aims of the meta-analysis were to

1135 assess the effects of PYD programmes on: 1) the promotion of positive outcomes;

1136 and, 2) the reduction of risk behaviour. The programmes had to address at least one

1137 of the PYD objectives (e.g., promotion of social, emotional, cognitive, behavioural,

1138 and moral competence, development of clear and positive identity, and enhanced

1139 self-efficacy; see Catalano et al., 2002), had to be delivered outside of school hours

1140 (i.e., community-based or delivered within the school, outside normal school hours),

1141 and had to adopt a randomised controlled design. Programmes utilised a wide range

1142 of strategies and formats including education/classroom sessions, social skills

1143 training, leadership opportunities, and work-based placements.

1144   Overall, it was concluded that the PYD programmes had a small but

1145 statistically significant effect on academic attainment ($g = 0.22$, 95% CI = 0.07 –

1146 0.38) and psychological adjustment ($g = 0.17$, 95% CI = 0.04 – 0.31). No statistically

1147 significant effect was reported for sexual risk behaviours ($g = 0.05$, 95% CI = -0.00

1148 to 0.12), problem behaviour ($g = 0.05$, 95% CI = -0.00 to 0.110), or positive social

1149 behaviours ($g = 0.04$, 95% CI = -0.11 – 0.21). Young people lower in risk factors

1150 were deemed to receive more benefit from the programmes in comparison to young

1151 people higher in risk factors. However, the studies examined were deemed to have

1152 methodological limitations, with problems associated with the randomisation and

1153 allocation of participants to groups (selection bias) and a lack of blinding of outcome

1154 assessors (detection bias). As such, this limits the ability to form inferences regarding

1155 the overall impact of PYD programmes.

1156   Drawing together the findings from both reviews and the broader literature,

1157 there is inconsistency regarding the impact of PYD programmes for disengaged

1158 young people, with effect sizes remaining relatively small. There appear to be a

1159 range of programme features and characteristics that enhance or hinder overall

1160 effectiveness (Ciocanel et al., 2017; Durlak et al., 2010).

1161 *2.6.1 Characteristics of Participants*

1162   In this section, the relationship between young peoples' risk factor status,

1163 overall group composition, the age/developmental stage of young people, and the

1164 timing of re-engagement programmes will be discussed.

1165   **2.6.1.1 Group Composition.** There is evidence that young people high in

1166 risk-factor status are more likely to benefit from PYD programmes when they are

1167 surrounded by young people with low-risk factor status (i.e., mixed group

1168 composition) (Curran & Wexler, 2017). Interestingly, previous research has

1169 highlighted concerns that placing high-risk young people together for a protracted

1170 period of time may create unintended iatrogenic consequences, which may have a

1171 detrimental effect upon a young person's developmental outcomes and life trajectory

1172 (Cho, Hallfors, & Sanchez, 2005; Dishion, McCord, & Poulin, 1999; Dishion,

1173 Poulin, & Burraston, 2001). Unintended negative effects may be due to 'deviancy

1174 training' and deviant peer contagion, whereby there is an encouragement and

1175 modelling of deviant and disruptive behaviour among young people creating a

1176 perception that such problematic behaviour is desirable and normative (Dishion et

1177 al., 1999; Jacob & Lefgren, 2003; Lansford et al., 2020). Studies have reported an

1178 association between deviancy training and increases in violent, anti-social behaviours

1179 (Capaldi et al., 2001; Dishion, Andrews, & Crosby, 1995; Dishion et al., 1997;

1180 Gottfredson, 1987), substance abuse (Dishion, Capaldi, Spracklen, & Li, 1995; Duan,

1181 Chou, Andreeva, & Pentz, 2009), and lower levels of emotional and behavioural

1182 school engagement (Li, Lynch, Kalvin, Liu, & Lerner, 2011).

1183   Deviant and disruptive behaviour may be cultivated through observation,

1184 imitation, and reinforcement within groups, especially during adolescence (Cho et

1185 al., 2005), as they are at a developmental period characterised by complex emotional,

1186 physical, biological, cognitive, and social changes (Ciocanel et al., 2017; Harter,

1187 2012; Li, 2011). It is also during adolescence when young people are particularly

1188 sensitive to peer influence and experience an enhanced propensity towards risk-

1189 taking behaviours (e.g., substance use, truancy, violence, and criminality) (Casey,

1190 Jones, & Hare, 2008; Poulin, Dishion, & Burraston, 2001). Consequently, in the

1191 context of disengaged young people, it has been proposed that placing high-risk

1192 young people together for a prolonged period may enable them to resonate and

1193 affiliate with other challenging and deviant peers, rather than providing an

1194 opportunity to socialise and interact with young people possessing more positive

1195 characteristics, behaviours, and aspirations (Cho et al., 2005; Cooper, Chavira, &

1196 Mena, 2005; Hebert & Reis, 1999; Rumberger, 1983). Such findings underscore the

1197 importance of programmes ensuring group diversity and introducing a mixed group

1198   of young people (high and low risk-factor status) to help cultivate a more desirable

1199   peer-to-peer environment (Curran & Wexler, 2017).

1200   **2.6.1.2 Age/Developmental Stage.** Early adolescence (i.e., aged 10 – 14

1201   years old) is a developmental period when young people may begin to demonstrate

1202   signs of disengagement and disaffection (Nelson & O'Donnell, 2012). The early

1203   adolescent period may be a particularly valuable time to intervene through PYD

1204   programmes as young people are considered more susceptible to re-engagement

1205   during this developmental stage (Gracey & Kelly, 2010). Consequently, young

1206   people's engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes should be monitored

1207   during early adolescence and if any challenges are identified, they should receive

1208   access to early academic, psychosocial, and behavioural support (Nelson &

1209   O'Donnell, 2012; Riglin, Petrides, Frederickson, & Rice, 2014). The implementation

1210   of programmes during early adolescence may prevent challenges becoming deeply

1211   entrenched and enhance the likelihood of school completion and positive

1212   developmental trajectories (Toth & Manly, 2019). However, despite research

1213   highlighting the importance of early identification and the implementation of

1214   programmes during early adolescence, Ciocanel et al. (2017) concluded that

1215   programme effects were similar regardless of age and the timing of re-engagement

1216   programmes.

1217   *2.6.2 Characteristics of Programmes*

1218   There are a number of programme characteristics which have been

1219   considered to influence the effects of PYD programmes. Specifically, programme

1220   practices, community partnerships, and the opportunities provided for work-based

1221   learning appear to be influential.

1222   **2.6.2.1 Recommended SAFE Practices.** The implementation of four

1223   practices have been shown to moderate programme effectiveness (i.e., SAFE:

1224   Sequenced, Active, Focused, and Explicit) (Durlak et al., 2010). Programmes that

1225   included all four of these practices reported statistically significant effects and were

1226   more effective in the development of young peoples' personal and social skills (12

1227   percentile increases between programme and control group). For instance, successful

1228   programmes involved a coordinated sequence of activities that helped young people

1229   adopt a step-by-step approach to acquiring new skills and competencies (i.e.,

1230   Sequenced) (Durlak et al., 2010). There is also evidence that programmes were

1231   effective when they provided opportunities for young people to be actively involved

1232   in the learning process (i.e., Active) through role plays, behavioural rehearsal, and

1233   cooperative learning activities (Durlak et al., 2010; Law & Shek, 2012).

1234   Alongside sequenced activities and active involvement in the learning

1235   process, programmes report more favourable outcomes when they provided young

1236   people with a sufficient amount of time and support to enable them to assimilate

1237   information and to effectively develop their knowledge and understanding (i.e.,

1238   Focused) (Durlak et al., 2010). Finally, the findings also suggest that programmes

1239   were more effective when they provided clear and specific learning objectives, in

1240   order for young people to understand what they were expected to learn (i.e., Explicit)

1241   (Bond & Hauf, 2004; Durlak et al., 2010; Maharaj-Landaeta, 2019). Such clarity,

1242   structure, and specificity may be essential for disengaged young people due to the

1243   instability experienced within their home and community contexts (Maharaj-

1244   Landaeta, 2019).

1245   Importantly, it has been suggested that SAFE practices are not disconnected

1246   or independent of each other and should be utilised in combination (Durlak et al.,

1247   2010; Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Taylor, Oberle,

1248   Durlak, & Weissberg, 2017). The relevance of these findings is confirmed by a

1249   review of 213 school-based programmes (Durlak et al., 2011), which also found

1250   SAFE practices moderated programme outcomes.

1251   **2.6.2.2 Involvement of the Community.** Successful PYD programmes have

1252   enhanced strengths, assets, and competencies across multiple levels, comprising not

1253   only young people but also through the involvement of the community (Bonell et al.,

1254   2016; Bond & Hauf, 2004; Ciocanel et al., 2017; James & Jurich, 1999). Partnerships

1255   with the community have provided insight, expertise, resources, structure, financial

1256   capital, and networks for the programme (Armstrong & Armstrong, 2004; Babiak &

1257   Thibault, 2009; Gipson, Campbell, & Malcom, 2018; Iachini, Beets, Ball, &

1258   Lohman, 2014). Such effective partnerships have also demonstrated to young people

1259   that the community values the programme (O'Neil, 1990). Through collaboration

1260   and co-ordination, young people are provided with access to information and visits to

1261   community organisations where they can accumulate meaningful voluntary and/or

1262   paid work experience (Bryan & Henry, 2012; Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003).

1263   However, the development of meaningful partnerships has been found to be

1264   dependent upon partnership complementarity and fit, extensive planning and

1265   collaboration time, consistent interaction and contact between key stakeholders,

1266 aligned political motives, collaborative interests, a shared vision (e.g., creating

1267 employment opportunities for young people), and high levels of trust and

1268 commitment (Bruening, Fuller, & Percy, 2015; Gipson et al., 2018; Lucidarme,

1269 Cardon, & Willem, 2016; Lucidarme, Marlier, Cardon, Bourdeaudhuij., & Willem,

1270 2013; Marlier et al., 2015). Such factors are crucial for the development of

1271 sustainable partnerships and the overall effective delivery of the programme (Gipson

1272 et al., 2018). Thus, when programmes utilise the support of community organisations

1273 and form effective partnerships, they have been shown to expand the type of

1274 activities and opportunities available within PYD programmes, enhance responsivity

1275 to the varied needs and interests of young people, and can produce long-term effects

1276 through the creation of career opportunities (Bryan & Henry, 2012; James & Jurich,

1277 1999).

1278   **2.6.2.3 The Inclusion of Work-Based Placements.** Programmes have been

1279 shown to be more effective when they incorporate work-based placements and

1280 vocational experiences in addition to classroom-based training (Catalano et al., 2002;

1281 Ciocanel et al., 2017; James & Jurich, 1999). When learning is extended beyond the

1282 classroom, young people have the opportunity to engage in experiential learning,

1283 where they can practically apply skills within a working environment, form

1284 connections with knowledgeable, supportive adults, and experience a position of

1285 responsibility and leadership (Chen, 2011; Durlak et al., 2010; Mawn et al., 2017;

1286 Maxwell, 1997). The inclusion of work-based placements may also provide exposure

1287 to varied and flexible learning opportunities, which can be more tailored and

1288 responsive to young people's interests, skills, and future employment prospects

1289 (Gracey & Kelly, 2010; Hartas, 2011; Nelson & O'Donnell, 2012).

1290   However, many work-based placements have been criticised due to providing

1291 low-status, 'pseudo-vocational' experiences, which fail to provide young people with

1292 qualifications that are recognised by employers (Hayward & Williams, 2011;

1293 Simmons & Thompson, 2011), and do not sufficiently prepare young people with the

1294 skills, attributes, and conceptual knowledge needed to compete within a demanding

1295 job market (Simmons, 2009; Wolf, 2011). It is essential that there is an explicit and

1296 authentic connection between a young person's vocational experiences and future

1297 employment opportunities (James & Jurich, 1999; Kerka, 2003). Thus, PYD

1298 programmes should provide young people with exposure to a succession of relevant

1299 and meaningful vocational experience and employment preparation, in addition to

1300   theoretical information and knowledge (Hayward & Williams, 2011; Maxwell,

1301   1997). Such authentic academic and work-based learning opportunities may facilitate

1302   a successful and sustainable transition to further education or employment (Nelson &

1303   O'Donnell, 2012).

1304   ***2.6.3 Conclusion***

1305   To optimise the effectiveness of PYD programmes for disengaged young

1306   people, there are several programme features and characteristics related to more

1307   favourable academic, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes. Specifically, the

1308   findings suggest that positive outcomes are more likely to occur if there is a mixed

1309   group composition, SAFE practices are implemented, effective and meaningful

1310   community partnerships are formed, and work-based placements and vocational

1311   experiences are integrated alongside theoretical learning.

1312   **2.7 Sport and Physical Activity Programmes**

1313   Numerous sport and physical activity-based programmes have been

1314   developed as potential strategies for improving academic achievement, behavioural

1315   conduct, and psychosocial outcomes for disengaged young people (Whitley, Massey,

1316   Camire, Boutet, & Borbee, 2019). Such programmes have been suggested because

1317   they have the capacity to provide a safe and empowering environment, which can

1318   help disengaged young people to foster internal resources, such as social and

1319   emotional competencies, self-esteem, self-worth, self-expression, and a sense of

1320   purpose, meaning, and vision (Coalter, 2016; Draper & Coalter, 2016; Forneris et al.,

1321   2016; Petitpas, Vanraalte, & Cornelius, 2004; Spaaij, 2012; Whitley, Coble, &

1322   Jewell, 2016; Whitley et al., 2019). Sport and physical activity programmes may

1323   comprise various forms and strategies, including outdoor adventure, team sports,

1324   skill-based (e.g., development of motor skills) physical activity, and physical fitness

1325   programmes.

1326   Governments and policy makers have a heightened interest in utilising sport

1327   and physical activity as a vehicle to help disengaged young people (World Health

1328   Organisation, 2019). The evidence regarding the effectiveness of such programmes

1329   for disengaged young people, however, remains relatively limited (Draper & Coalter,

1330   2019; Haudenhuyse et al., 2012; 2014). To date, only two systematic reviews have

1331   examined the impact of sport and physical activity programmes among disengaged

1332   young people (i.e., Hermens, Super, Verkooijen, & Koelen, 2017; Lubans et al.,

1333   2012).

1334   In 2012, Lubans and colleagues conducted a critical review, describing the

1335 effectiveness of sport-based programmes published between 1990 and 2011 on the

1336 social and emotional wellbeing of disengaged young people (aged 4 – 18 years old).

1337 Eligible studies had to include quantitative assessments of social and emotional

1338 wellbeing (e.g., resilience, self-esteem, anxiety, and depression). In total, 15 studies

1339 were included, comprising three types of programmes: outdoor adventure; sport and

1340 skill-based; and physical fitness programmes. Many of the studies reported

1341 significant positive effects on outcomes such as self-esteem, self-concept, self-worth,

1342 and resilience. However, the risk of bias among the studies was identified as high,

1343 with the quality of evidence deemed 'methodologically poor'. Consequently, Lubans

1344 et al. (2012) concluded that although sport and physical activity may be a potential

1345 strategy for improving social and emotional wellbeing in disengaged young people,

1346 the high risk of bias across the included studies resulted in difficulties interpreting

1347 the efficacy of such programmes.

1348   In 2017, Hermens and colleagues expanded on Lubans et al. work with a

1349 systematic review of life skill development through sport-based programmes for

1350 disengaged young people (aged 10 – 23 years old). Where possible, the review

1351 explored the characteristics of the programmes that were necessary for life skill

1352 development. Life skills were defined as those skills that allow individuals to

1353 succeed in a range of environments, such as their home, school, and within their

1354 community (Danish, Forneris, Hodge, & Heke, 2004). They were separated into

1355 three categories: emotional life skills (e.g., self-esteem and self-worth), cognitive life

1356 skills (problem solving and positive decision-making), and social like skills (e.g.,

1357 teamwork and leadership) (Hermens et al., 2017). In total, 18 studies were included,

1358 comprising sport and physical activity programmes, published between 1990 and

1359 2014. Each study reported on either an emotional, cognitive, or social life skill, with

1360 each study, indicating that at least one life skill improved for young people

1361 participating in the sport-based programmes.

1362   In contrast to Lubans et al. (2012), Hermens and colleagues' review

1363 encompassed both qualitative and quantitative studies. Further, Hermens et al.'s

1364 (2017) review only included programmes in which sport and physical activity were

1365 the core component of the programme, excluding programmes that utilised sport and

1366 physical activity in addition to various other modalities (e.g., mentoring). Hermens et

1367 al.'s (2017) also investigated the conditions necessary for sport-based programmes to

1368 optimise positive outcomes for disengaged young people. The needs of young people
1369 in high-risk environments are complex and may differ significantly to that of the
1370 general population (Haudenhuyse et al., 2014). Thus, developing an understanding of
1371 the conditions which may be most effective is integral to the implementation and
1372 success of future programmes.

1373   Drawing together the findings from both reviews, it is evident that sport and
1374 physical activity hold the potential as a programme strategy for disengaged young
1375 people. In order to enhance programme development and implementation, there are a
1376 number of features, characteristics, and settings of programmes which may influence
1377 overall effectiveness.

1378 *2.7.1 Type of Programme*

1379   Sport-based programmes can adopt various forms and strategies, including,
1380 sport and skill-based, outdoor adventure, physical activity, and physical fitness
1381 programmes, all of which may have different outcomes.

1382   **2.7.1.1 Outdoor Adventure Programmes.** In Lubans et al.'s (2012) review,
1383 seven studies explored the impact of outdoor adventure programmes on disengaged
1384 young people. In total, five studies reported significant improvements in social and
1385 emotional wellbeing; including self-worth (Pommier & Witt, 1995), self-concept
1386 (Wu & Hsieh, 2006), resilience (Bloemhoff, 2006; Green et al., 2000), and
1387 perceptions of alienation and self-control (Cross, 2002). The remaining two studies
1388 reported no significant programme effect on self-esteem (Kaiser, Smith, Heleski, &
1389 Spence, 2006) self-concept, locus of control, or perceptions of juvenile justice
1390 (Minor & Elrod, 1994). In Hermens and colleagues' (2017) review, one study
1391 explored the impact of an outdoor adventure programme, indicating outdoor
1392 programmes can lead to PYD if young people are to transfer the skills learnt during
1393 outdoor activities to other environments and areas within their lives (Armour &
1394 Sandford, 2013).

1395   Although outdoor adventure programmes have capacity to elicit favourable
1396 social and emotional wellbeing outcomes, the precise mechanisms through which
1397 such programmes work remains unclear. Previous research has theorised that outdoor
1398 adventure activities provide young people with exposure to positive risk taking and
1399 the opportunity to accomplish perceivably insurmountable challenges (Carty, Harper,
1400 & Magnuson, 2019). As a result of overcoming such challenges, a young person can
1401 realise their innate assets and strengths, which may shape their perception of what

they are capable of achieving within education and the community (Lubans et al., 2012; Minor & Elrod, 1994). Outdoor adventure programmes may also work by helping young people to establish new relationships and connections, receive positive social support from peers and facilitators, engage in unique and experiential learning opportunities, and through the process of learning how to become more resilient (Allan & Mkenna, 2019; West & Crompton, 2001).

Due to the limited number of studies, as well as methodological issues, based on Hermens et al.'s (2017) and Lubans et al.'s (2012) reviews alone, it is difficult to reach robust conclusions regarding the impact of outdoor adventure programmes on social and emotional wellbeing and life skill development. Alongside the high risk of bias there was insufficient reporting of baseline characteristics, no reporting of power calculations, and inadequate descriptions of the process of randomisation in the randomised controlled trials studies (Lubans et al., 2012). Further, the reviews included only outdoor adventure programmes that were conducted between 1990 and 2014 (Hermens et al., 2017; Lubans et al., 2012).

Since 2014, there has been a proliferation of research, that has evaluated the impact of outdoor adventure programmes designed to impact disengaged young people across a wide range of outcomes. This extant literature has demonstrated that outdoor adventure programmes can lead to improvements in disengaged young peoples' independence, assertiveness, self-esteem, self-regulation, resilience, educational outcomes, and the development of a positive view of one's future (Bowen, Neill, & Crisp, 2016; Bowers, Larson, & Sandoval, 2019; Gwyn, 2020; Manner, Doi, & Laird, 2020; Norton & Watt, 2014). However, published work on the features and characteristics of outdoor adventure programmes that contribute to positive developmental outcomes remains limited, especially among disengaged young people (Gwyn, 2020).

2.7.1.2 Sport-Based Programmes. Research has demonstrated the capacity of sport-based programmes as a vehicle for the development of life skills (Danish & Nellen, 1997; Fraser-Thomas, Cote, & Deakin, 2005). With disengaged young people, life skills have been considered an important protective factor that can help them navigate complex circumstances and provide a pathway for re-integration into education or employment (Zimmerman et al., 2013). Hermens and colleagues' (2017) review provides an overview of the impact of sport-based programmes on emotional, cognitive, and social life skill development. Six studies explored the

1436   impact of sport and physical activity programmes on emotional life skills, with four

1437   of them reporting improvements across a range of internalising symptoms (e.g.,

1438   enhanced perceptions of mood, improvements in global self-worth, decreases in

1439   anxiety, depression, withdrawal, and somatic complaints). These findings suggest

1440   that sport and physical activity programmes have the capacity to decrease

1441   internalising symptoms in disengaged young people. Eleven studies within the

1442   Hermens et al. review, investigated cognitive life skills, which were divided into two

1443   categories: self-regulation skills and self-esteem/confidence. Across the eleven

1444   studies, at least one cognitive life skill improved. Fourteen studies reported on

1445   developments in social life skills, with twelve studies highlighting improvements.

1446   All studies within the review reported at least one aspect of life skill

1447   improvement across cognitive, social, or emotional domains. However, many studies

1448   lacked a control group, and young people lower in individual and environmental risk

1449   factors may have self-selected into the programmes. Research that addresses these

1450   methodological concerns is needed to understand the efficacy of sport-based

1451   programmes. Similar to the findings of Hermens and colleagues, Lubans et al.'s

1452   (2012) identified that, based on seven sport and skill-based programmes and two

1453   physical fitness programmes, sport-based programmes have the potential to lead to

1454   favourable outcomes for disengaged young people. However, due to methodological

1455   weaknesses, including a failure of studies to include a control group and limited

1456   longitudinal follow-up designs, the authors suggested that these findings also warrant

1457   cautious interpretation.

1458   ***2.7.2 Conducive Conditions***

1459   In order for sport-based programmes to benefit disengaged young people,

1460   Hermens and colleagues' (2017) highlighted a number of conditions that may be

1461   conducive to a young person's development. Specifically, programme facilitators

1462   should establish an environment that is responsive and sensitive to the unique

1463   complexities of such young peoples' needs (Haudenhuyse et al., 2012; Super,

1464   Verkooijen, & Koelen, 2018). Unfortunately, if the sporting context does not embody

1465   a supportive and understanding climate (e.g., a person-centred approach which

1466   respects individuality, provides equal opportunities, and establishes emotional and

1467   physical safety), disengaged young people may be particularly susceptible to feelings

1468   of low self-esteem, worthlessness, self-perceptions of incompetence, rejection, and

1469   isolation (Bean, Fortier, Post, & Chima, 2014; Luguetti, Oliver, Dantas, & Kirk,

1470   2017; Super, Hermens, Verkooijen, & Koelen, 2018). Negative experiences within

1471   sport may potentially push disengaged young people down a spiral of vulnerability as

1472   they may replicate the experiences encountered across various settings, including

1473   education, family, and the community (Super et al., 2018). Consequently, an

1474   amalgamation of negative encounters, and especially those within the sporting

1475   environment, should be avoided as they may lead to young people becoming

1476   disconnected from the realm of society and developing a heightened level of

1477   resistance towards authority figures and those around them (Super, Wentink,

1478   Verkooijen, & Koelen, 2017; 2019).

1479   Therefore, gains in disengaged young peoples' development may be more

1480   likely to occur in sport-based programmes when: young people are actively involved

1481   in the learning process; a sense of belonging is engendered; sport facilitators possess

1482   certain attributes and characteristics; appropriate training, support, and supervision is

1483   provided to facilitators; a task-involved motivational climate is created; and sport and

1484   physical activity is utilised in addition to various other modalities (Hermens et al.,

1485   2017).

1486   **2.7.2.1 Active Participants in the Learning Process.** Sport programmes

1487   may elicit improvements in developmental outcomes when facilitators adopt a

1488   constructivist approach to learning (Rovegno & Dolly, 2006). Constructivist

1489   approaches emphasise the active involvement of young people in the learning

1490   process, the importance of collaboration, and encourage young people to construct

1491   their own knowledge and understanding (Bonnette, McBride, & Tolson, 2001; Light

1492   & Wallian, 2008). Such collaboration and active participation may be achieved by

1493   exposing young people to activities that require cooperation in small groups, problem

1494   solving, critical thinking, developing solutions, supporting those around them, and

1495   openly sharing their thoughts and feelings with their peers and the facilitator (Dyson,

1496   2002; Light & Wallian, 2008; Moreau et al., 2014; 2018). In contrast, approaches

1497   (e.g., behaviourist) which do not provide young people with independence,

1498   autonomy, and ownership over the learning process, may deny young people the

1499   opportunity to develop their creativity, critical thinking capacity, and as a

1500   consequence, they may be more likely to experience alienation and demotivation

1501   (Larson & Walker, 2018). Such findings point to the importance of programmes

1502   facilitating active learning, providing opportunities for exploration, and cultivating a

1503   sense of voice for disengaged young people, who may have previously been silenced

1504 (Mitra, 2008). This can empower young people to be more independent, and enable

1505 key stakeholders to receive access to information, perspectives, and ideas that they

1506 themselves do not possess (Cook-Sather, 2002; Fisette & Walton, 2014; Light &

1507 Wallian, 2008; Mitra, 2008).

1508   Extensive research has found that disengaged young people become more

1509 engaged and experience feelings of empowerment when they are incorporated as

1510 decision makers (Bonhauser et al., 2005; Bruening, Dover, & Clark, 2009; Fisette &

1511 Walton, 2014; Luguetti, Oliver, Kirk, & Dantas, 2015). When programmes are

1512 designed collaboratively with young people, each young person is provided with

1513 autonomy over what they want to learn and are active participants in the decision

1514 making and learning process (Bovill, Cook-Sather, & Felton, 2011). For instance,

1515 when disengaged young people are provided with leadership responsibilities,

1516 including an opportunity to establish their own learning objectives, decide which

1517 sports they would like to participate in, and coordinate specific drills and activities,

1518 they may, in turn, experience higher levels of engagement and motivation (Enright &

1519 O'Sullivan, 2012; Oliver & Hamzeh, 2010; Oliver et al., 2009; Whitley et al., 2017).

1520 Further, opportunities for active participation and self-directed learning may

1521 challenge the traditional adult-to-young person relationship, the inherent power

1522 imbalance, and the assumption among young people that they are subordinate to the

1523 facilitator (Buelens, Theeboom, Vertonghen, & Martelaer, 2015; Freire, 2000;

1524 Hartas, 2011; Luguetti et al., 2017; Spaaij, 2012). As such, this type of learning

1525 environment may engender perceptions of psychological safety and young people

1526 may be more likely to experiment and explore without fear of criticism from adults

1527 (Light & Wallian, 2008).

1528   Through facilitators collaboratively co-constructing a sport and physical

1529 activity programme with disengaged young people, they can develop a perception of

1530 independence, autonomy, and control over their own actions and behaviours

1531 (Martinek & Hellison, 1997), and be recognised as experts in their own learning

1532 (Cook-Sather, 2002; Enright & O'Sullivan, 2010). Thus, facilitators should listen to

1533 disengaged young people and work alongside them to develop a suitable programme,

1534 rather than designing a programme based on their own assumptions regarding what

1535 may or may not work (Fisette & Walton, 2014; Tilley & Taylor, 2018). Providing

1536 disengaged young people with a position of authority may also lead to improvements

1537 in their relationships with authority figures and the construction of a more positive

1538   self-identity (Luguetti et al., 2017). Such findings underscore the importance of

1539   actively including young people in the overall design of programmes and providing

1540   opportunities for disengaged young people to find voice during each stage of

1541   programme delivery (Bovill et al., 2011).

1542   **2.7.2.2 Sense of Belonging.** Sport-based programmes may be particularly

1543   effective when they foster a sense of belonging and acceptance among young people

1544   (Anderson-Butcher, Riley, Amorose, Iachini, & Wade-Mdivanian, 2014; Draper &

1545   Coalter, 2016; Sandford et al., 2006). When disengaged young people experience

1546   feelings of belonging and acceptance, they may be more likely to openly share their

1547   thoughts and feelings, depend on one another, and demonstrate improvements in

1548   other important outcomes, such as teamwork, reciprocity, effort, self-control, and

1549   social responsibility (e.g., responsivity to the needs of others and for the wellbeing of

1550   the group) (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2014; Draper & Coalter, 2016; Martinek &

1551   Hellison, 1997).

1552   In order to engender a sense of belonging, it has been suggested that

1553   programmes should aim to keep participant numbers small and establish a group

1554   identity through a range of strategies such as, the creation of team names, logos, and

1555   unique celebrations (Martinek & Hellison, 1997; Spaaij, 2012). Moreover, there

1556   should be a focus on facilitating opportunities for close personal relationships

1557   through prolonged one-to-one informal discussions with facilitators and the

1558   encouragement of peer support and collaboration (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2014).

1559   Such opportunities enable young people to feel connected, supported, and cared for,

1560   which may be particularly important for disengaged young people who, due to

1561   adverse circumstances, may not have access to positive adult interaction or a strong

1562   social support network, and may not experience feelings of belonging or connection

1563   outside of the sporting environment (Martinek & Hellison, 1997; Rutter, 1990;

1564   Spaaij, 2012). The absence of a nurturing and caring environment has been

1565   considered predictive of young people's disenfranchisement and disconnectedness

1566   with their lives (Nagpaul & Chen, 2019). Subsequently, for disengaged populations,

1567   feelings of belonging and identification with others have been identified as a key

1568   protective factor for navigating adolescence, and promoting favourable engagement,

1569   behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes (Gordon & Song, 1994; Bonell et al., 2019).

1570   **2.7.2.3 Characteristics of Facilitators.** In order to work effectively with

1571   disengaged young people, the characteristics and attributes of facilitators have been

1572   considered crucial to the promotion of young peoples' academic, behavioural, and

1573   psychosocial adjustment (Riley & Anderson-Butcher, 2012). As an example,

1574   facilitators who are flexible, caring, and have the ability to empathise and understand

1575   situations from the young person's perspective, may be more likely to foster trust and

1576   form meaningful connections with young people (Martinek & Hellison, 1997;

1577   Nagpaul & Chen, 2019). More specifically, young people may be more likely to

1578   resonate with facilitators when they come from similar impoverished backgrounds or

1579   when they share an understanding of adverse circumstances (Crabbe, 2009;

1580   Haudenhuyse et al., 2012). Through shared experiences and similar cultural capital,

1581   facilitators may command higher levels of authority, authenticity, respect, and in

1582   turn, young peoples' engagement and responsiveness (Crabbe, 2009; Haudenhuyse et

1583   al., 2012; Jacobs, Wahl-Alexander, & Mack, 2019; Theeboom, Knop, & Wylleman,

1584   2008).

1585   Previous research has also shown that when facilitators genuinely care about

1586   the young person's development, pay attention and are responsive to the young

1587   person, show an interest in their hobbies, volunteer time and energy, and establish a

1588   safe and warm environment, young people are more likely to confront new sporting

1589   activities and challenges (Larson & Walker, 2018; Riley & Anderson-Butcher, 2012;

1590   Spaaij, 2012). However, when an environment is created in which young people are

1591   unsure of facilitators intentions, question whether or not actions are authentic, and

1592   perceive the environment to be unsupportive and pressure inducing, disengaged

1593   young people are more likely to encounter feelings of anxiety, apprehension, and

1594   self-doubt (Haudenhuyse et al., 2012; Super et al., 2019).

1595   The emphasis placed on relationship building within sport-based programmes

1596   is consistent with findings from mentoring and PYD programmes, which suggest that

1597   close and caring adult relationships are crucial to the enhancement of cognitive,

1598   social, and emotional competencies for disengaged young people (Catalano, et al.,

1599   2004). Negative relationships with others may lead to young people dropping out of

1600   sport-based programmes and enhance the likelihood of seeking attention and

1601   affirmation elsewhere, usually through deviant and criminal behaviour, creating false

1602   perceptions of security (Armour & Sandford, 2013; Collingwood, 1997; Riley &

1603   Anderson-Butcher, 2012; Theeboom et al., 2008).

1604   **2.7.2.4 Training and Support.** The actions and behaviours of facilitators

1605   determine the degree to which disengaged young people experience positive

1606 developmental outcomes (Haudenhuyse et al., 2014; Nichols, 2007b; Theeboom et

1607 al., 2008). Consequently, in order to enhance the efficacy of sport-based

1608 programmes, it has been suggested that programmes should provide appropriate

1609 training, support, and guidance to facilitators working with disengaged young people

1610 (Coalter, 2011). Specifically, facilitators should receive guidance around: the

1611 importance of developing knowledge of a young person's background and previous

1612 experiences; how to empathise, listen, and communicate effectively with young

1613 people; how to sensitively provide feedback while establishing a supportive and safe

1614 environment (emotionally and physically); the importance of flexibility and

1615 adaptability; and, how to encourage young people's active participation and

1616 collaboration (Buelens et al., 2015; Haudenhuyse et al., 2014).

1617   **2.7.2.5 Motivational Climate.** A task-involved motivational climate (i.e.,

1618 emphasis on individual development and learning) may be particularly beneficial for

1619 disengaged young people (Coalter, 2007; Gould et al., 2012; Moreau et al., 2018;

1620 Spruit et al., 2018; Whitley et al., 2017). It has even been suggested that in order to

1621 protect and enhance a young person's psychosocial outcomes, the sporting

1622 motivational climate created and the subsequent social interactions that take place

1623 hold more influence than the content and activities delivered (Biddle, Gorely, &

1624 Stensel, 2004; Shields & Bredemeier, 1995).

1625   For disengaged young people, perceptions of competence across many

1626 domains including education, employment, and relationships tend to be lower than

1627 the general population and they may be more susceptible to low self-esteem and

1628 feelings of worthlessness (Andrews & Andrews, 2003; Super et al., 2019).

1629 Consequently, an ego-involved sporting motivational climate, that emphasises

1630 normative-based evaluation, the avoidance of mistakes, social comparisons,

1631 outperforming others, and competitive success between disengaged young people

1632 may not be conducive to favourable outcomes (Bortoli, Bertollo, Comani, &

1633 Robazza, 2011; Elliot & Hulleman, 2017). Disengaged young people may not have

1634 access to the internal resources (e.g., self-esteem and resilience) necessary to deal

1635 effectively with the demands of an ego-involved climate and may be more likely to

1636 withdraw effort and disengage (Andrews & Andrews, 2003; Brown & Fry, 2014;

1637 Smith, Smoll, & Barnett, 1995; Ullrich-French et al., 2012). Thus, facilitators and

1638 practitioners should structure the sporting environment in a way that promotes

1639 individual effort and progressive learning, allowing disengaged young people to

1640   accomplish personal goals and to experience feelings of competency and success

1641   (Bean, Whitley, & Gould, 2014; Haudenhuyse et al., 2012; 2014).

1642   **2.7.2.6 Multi-Component Programmes.** When sport-based programmes are

1643   complemented with various other modalities, they have demonstrated favourable

1644   engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes for disengaged young people

1645   (Bruening, et al., 2009; Haudenhuyse et al., 2014; Parker, Morgan, Farooq,

1646   Moreland, & Pitchford, 2019). Previous research has shown that when sport and

1647   physical activity are utilised in addition to components such as mentoring (Coalter,

1648   1989, 2000), young people have access to resources, information, and knowledge to

1649   be able to transfer the lessons learnt throughout the sporting environment to other

1650   areas including education, home, community, and the workplace. For instance, the

1651   support of a mentor can provide young people with an opportunity to actively reflect

1652   on the skills developed during sport and to practice applying these skills (e.g., self-

1653   discipline, perseverance, conflict resolution) within their daily lives (e.g., education,

1654   relationships, health, and wellbeing) (Bean & Forneris, 2017).

1655   Further, the various modalities enable young people to receive exposure to

1656   prolonged one-to-one guidance and theoretical content, which they may not have

1657   received through a sport-based programme alone. Subsequently, the accumulation of

1658   mentoring and sport and physical activity has been shown to stimulate young

1659   people's independent thinking, helping to change negative self-perceptions and self-

1660   defeating thoughts, promoting the formation of a positive identity (Bruening et al.,

1661   2009). In addition to one-to-one mentoring and sport and physical activity

1662   programmes, the inclusion of work-based placements, may enable young people to

1663   acquire the experience, practical skills, attitudes, and behaviours necessary to secure

1664   long-term employment (Chen, 2011; Spaaij, 2012).

1665   *2.7.3 Conclusion*

1666   Sport and physical activity programmes show promise to be a powerful

1667   programme strategy for disengaged young people experiencing adverse academic,

1668   behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes. However, in order to enhance the efficacy

1669   of sport and physical activity programmes, there is a need to consider the

1670   characteristics and features of programmes which can determine overall

1671   effectiveness. Specifically, programmes are found to be more effective when: young

1672   people are actively involved in the learning process; young people experience

1673   feelings of belonging; facilitators are flexible, caring, and are able to see situations

1674   from the young person's perspective; facilitators have received adequate training,

1675   support, and guidance for working with disengaged young people; facilitators create

1676   a task-involved motivational climate; and sport is utilised in addition to various other

1677   modalities and resources (e.g., mentoring).

1678   **2.8 Thesis Aim**

1679   Taken together, although research has established a number of programme

1680   features and characteristics that can enhance the overall effectiveness of programmes

1681   for disengaged young people, one-to-one mentoring, PYD, and sport and physical

1682   activity programmes alone continue to produce modest benefits (Ciocanel et al.,

1683   2017; Hermens et al., 2017; Raposa et al., 2019). In order to optimise disengaged

1684   young peoples' engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes, a singular

1685   programme may not be sufficient (Mawn et al., 2017; Nelson & O'Donnell, 2012;

1686   Rajasekaran & Reyes, 2019). For instance, a recent meta-analysis of re-engagement

1687   programmes for disengaged young people (Mawn et al., 2017), identified that, in

1688   comparison to individual programmes, intensive, multi-component programmes that

1689   combined both classroom and work-based learning were associated with higher

1690   effect sizes for disengaged young people. As such, multi-component programmes

1691   that comprise a diversity of resources, pathways, and options may be more likely to

1692   accommodate the complex needs of disengaged young people (Rajasekaran & Reyes,

1693   2019). To my knowledge, there is no empirical evidence regarding the impact of

1694   multi-component programmes for this population, which have combined each

1695   programme type (i.e., mentoring, PYD, and sport and physical activity).

1696   A promising pathway to enhance disengaged young peoples' engagement,

1697   behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes, may be through a thoughtfully designed

1698   multi-component programme that combines one-to-one mentoring, PYD, and sport

1699   and physical activity programmes. Exposure to a wide range of modalities and

1700   resources together, may resonate with the varied interests, needs, and capacities of

1701   disengaged young people and trigger the necessary support mechanisms to enable

1702   young people to re-engage in education, employment, or training (Rajasekaran &

1703   Reyes, 2019). In order to effectively evaluate the engagement, behavioural, and

1704   psychosocial outcomes of multi-component programmes, there is a need for theory-

1705   driven evaluation approaches to identify the contexts and mechanisms through which

1706   a combination of modalities and resources may or may not work (Rajasekaran &

1707   Reyes, 2019). Against this background, the aim of the current thesis was to use

1708   realist evaluation to understand how, and under which circumstances multi-

1709   component programmes may impact the engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial

1710   outcomes of disengaged students and young people who are not in education,

1711   employment, or training.

Chapter 3: Realist Evaluation Methodology

1712 **3.1 Chapter Overview**

1713   The preceding Chapters defined and conceptualised disengaged young

1714 people, the types of challenges these young people encounter, the overall

1715 effectiveness of current re-engagement programmes, and the characteristics of

1716 programmes that can facilitate or constrain positive developmental outcomes among

1717 disengaged young people. Based on the available literature, it was evident that a

1718 singular programme may not be sufficient to re-engage young people and that

1719 published knowledge on the effectiveness of multi-component programmes and

1720 theory-driven evaluation approaches is scarce. As such, developing, implementing,

1721 and evaluating multi-component programmes for disengaged young people was

1722 deemed pertinent. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of realist

1723 evaluation methodology and explain why this approach was most appropriate to

1724 address the aim of this thesis. This chapter will also describe the key principles of

1725 Scientific Realism, the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of realist

1726 evaluation.

1727 **3.2 Complex Multi-Component Programmes and Disengaged Young People**

1728   As evidenced throughout the literature review, one-to-one mentoring, PYD

1729 (i.e., classroom-based learning and work-based placements), and sport/physical

1730 activity programmes are complex, with many features and characteristics that can

1731 influence the likelihood of them being successful. When such modalities are

1732 combined to form a multi-component programme the complexity is further

1733 heightened due to the mixture of resources and the multiple, interconnected

1734 components that are delivered to disengaged young people with varied needs,

1735 attitudes, and interests, and implemented by different facilitators in a range of

1736 settings (e.g., school and community contexts) (Shearn et al., 2017; Wong et al.,

1737 2017).

1738   Multi-component programmes are also undertaken within a pre-existing

1739 complex social system which is active, influenced by the environment, and shaped

1740 by young peoples' volition, reasoning, and choice (Wong et al., 2016). The success

1741 of such programmes is therefore highly dependent on the experiences created and

1742 resources offered, as well as a young person's reasoning and responses to such

1743 experiences and resources (Green, 2008; Jagosh, 2017; Plsek & Greenhalgh, 2001).

1744 Moreover, the success of such programmes will be dependent upon young peoples'

1745 pre-established mind-sets and their willingness to learn and adapt (Pawson, 2013).

1746 The fact that the efficacy of such programmes is dependent upon active participants,

1747 with their own thoughts, feelings, and reactions, has major implications for the

1748 methodological approach adopted (Pawson et al., 2004).

1749   Unfortunately, however, many researchers conduct programme evaluations

1750 with the goal of minimising and controlling contextual influences and human

1751 volition, perceiving human behaviour as a contaminator rather than recognising the

1752 influence individuals and their behaviour will have on programme success (Marchal,

1753 2011; Pawson, 2006). It is the thoughts, feelings, and emotional reactions of young

1754 people which ultimately embody the programme and create outcomes (Pawson et al.,

1755 2005; Pawson, 2006). As Pawson and Tilley (1997) highlight, it is not programmes

1756 that work per se, rather, it is the young people engaging and choosing to make them

1757 work.

1758 **3.3 Realist Evaluation**

1759   Realist evaluation is a form of theory driven evaluation that aims to

1760 understand the causal pathways through which complex programmes work (Pawson

1761 & Tilley, 1997). Specifically, this methodological approach places emphasis not only

1762 on the outcomes and overall effectiveness of programmes, but also on the role of

1763 contextual factors and underlying mechanisms that bring about change (Chen, 1990;

1764 Chen, 2018). As such, realist evaluation seeks to understand how programmes work,

1765 for whom, and under which circumstances. To do this, realist evaluation aims to

1766 develop, test, and refine programme theories through the examination of contexts,

1767 mechanisms, and outcomes (Pawson & Tilley, 1997).

1768   Context refers to the 'backdrop' and conditions of programmes that are

1769 necessary to trigger mechanisms (Jagosh et al., 2013; Willis et al., 2018). A

1770 mechanism refers to underlying causal forces which determine the overall

1771 effectiveness of programmes (Jagosh et al., 2013). In essence, a mechanism consists

1772 of examining what it is about a programme which may elicit outcomes (Pawson,

1773 2006; Pawson & Tilley, 2004; Willis et al., 2018). Outcomes refer to the desirable,

1774 undesirable, anticipated, and unanticipated consequences of programmes resulting

1775 from the generation of mechanisms in various contexts (Pawson & Tilley, 2004;

1776 Willis et al., 2018). Thus, outcomes represent the changes in young people's

1777 reasoning as a result of the interaction between contexts and mechanisms (Pawson &

1778 Tilley, 1997; Wong et al., 2016).

1779   To examine the relationship between context, mechanism, and outcomes,

1780 realist evaluation provides a heuristic tool in the form of a CMO configuration (i.e.,

1781 C + M = O) (Marchal, 2011; Pawson & Tilley, 1997). The CMO configuration is

1782 depicted in figure 3.1. Importantly, each element of the CMO (context, mechanism,

1783 and outcome) configuration is connected and contingent upon the other (Pawson &

1784 Tilley, 1997). Thus, an interaction always occurs between the context in which a

1785 programme is undertaken, the mechanisms which may or may not be triggered, and

1786 the subsequent outcomes (if any) which follow (Jagosh et al., 2013).

1787 **Figure 3.1**

1788 *The CMO Configuration* (Pawson & Tilley, 1997, p. 58).

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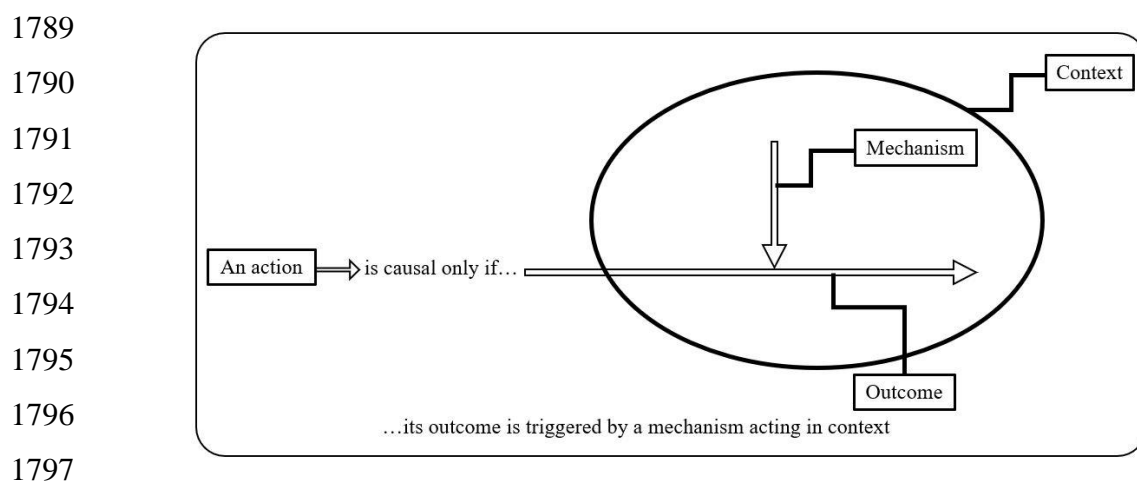
1798   To explain, in the context of community members who hold preconceptions

1799 and stigma towards young people who are NEET, perceiving young people as

1800 problems who need to be managed and controlled, possessing limited potential and

1801 capacity to change (context), such young people may internalise these negative labels

1802 and subsequently, when provided with the opportunity to receive mentorship

1803 (programme strategy) and given access to information that can assist their re-

1804 engagement (mechanism), they may experience feelings of hopelessness due to a

1805 belief that they are a burden to the system and a waste of the mentor's resources and

1806 time (mechanism). Thus, the young person may not attend the mentoring sessions

1807 (outcome).

1808   In contrast, the same mentoring programme may be implemented in another

1809 location, where community members empathise with young people who are NEET,

1810 and have an appreciation and awareness that there are a cluster of factors which can

1811 contribute to a young person becoming NEET (e.g., a young person may be forced to

1812 leave education in order to care for their younger siblings and to earn money to assist

1813 their family) (context). In such contexts, the young person may internalise a feeling

1814 that they are understood and valued, responding to the mentorship and access to

1815 information with a perception that the mentor is caring and believing in them, and

1816 they may feel a responsibility and obligation to not let their mentor down

1817 (mechanism). In turn, they may adhere to the mentoring programme and re-engage

1818 with education (outcome). This example illustrates the importance of the interaction

1819 between context and mechanisms as the exact same mentoring programme triggered

1820 different mechanisms and outcomes in different young people as a result of pre-

1821 existing contextual factors (Pawson, 2013).

1822 ***3.3.1 Context***

1823   Context refers to the setting and circumstances of programmes (Pawson,

1824 2013). Specifically, the success of any programme depends upon the context in

1825 which it is delivered, with programmes producing different outcomes across different

1826 contexts. According to Pawson (2013), there are four essential contextual layers to

1827 consider which may influence the outcomes of programmes:

1828   1) Individuals: The characteristics, backgrounds, capacities, competencies, and

1829   past experiences of the young people and facilitators involved in the

1830   programme (e.g., age, gender, level of education, upbringing, family

1831   circumstances, and socioeconomic status).

1832   2) Interpersonal relationships: The relationships established between young

1833   people and facilitators. These interpersonal relationships serve as the

1834   foundation for young peoples' participation in programmes and may be more

1835   influential than the resources and activities provided (Biddle, 2004; Jones &

1836   Deutsch, 2011). Facilitators likely have a diversity of backgrounds and

1837   experiences (e.g., social workers, educational psychologists, school personnel,

1838   volunteers, and sports coaches) that may influence how they approach

1839   relationship-building.

1840   3) Institutional setting: The rules, norms, and values which embody the

1841   programme (e.g., cultural norms and values of community members, political

1842   structures, loyalties, power dynamics, and physical space).

1843   4) Infrastructure: The social, health, economic, and cultural settings surrounding

1844   the programme (e.g., employment opportunities, geographical location, access

1845   to resources, and existing social connections within the area) (Jagosh et al.,

1846   2013).

1847   The interaction between mechanisms and outcomes are contingent upon pre-
1848 existing contextual factors (Pawson, 2013). Contextual factors produce causal impact
1849 which can either constrain or facilitate the activation of mechanisms and the overall
1850 success of programmes (Pawson, 2006b).

1851 *3.3.2 Mechanism*

1852   Within realist evaluation, mechanisms are an essential characteristic tool as
1853 they provide causal explanation and elucidate the young person's reasoning (e.g.,
1854 attitudes, beliefs, or their thought processes in a specific situation) to the resources
1855 (e.g., knowledge, guidance, role modelling) offered by the programme (Belle et al.,
1856 2016; Dalkin et al., 2015; Pawson, 2006b). It is through an understanding of
1857 mechanisms that allows the evaluator to move beyond asking 'whether or not a
1858 programme works' and instead explore 'how a programme may or may not work for
1859 whom, under what circumstances, and why' (Pawson, 2006b).

1860   Mechanisms are difficult to identify as they are often hidden, dormant, and
1861 sensitive to contextual differences (Jagosh, 2017; Pawson, 2008). Consequently, in
1862 order to identify mechanisms, there is a need to search beneath the surface and to
1863 focus on a deeper level of reality (Jagosh, 2017), to begin to understand why a young
1864 person may be responding in a certain way. Realist evaluators recognise that every
1865 individual is malleable and has the propensity to change, develop, and improve
1866 (Jagosh, 2017; Rodriquez, 2015). As such, each young person regardless of
1867 circumstances has the capacity and potential to re-engage with their academic
1868 studies, complete school, and accomplish successful educational trajectories.
1869 Successful programme outcomes, however, are contingent upon the effective
1870 implementation of appropriate modalities and resources, which determine whether
1871 underlying mechanisms are manifested or if they remain a latent potentiality (Jagosh,
1872 2017).

1873   When working with programmes which rely upon young peoples'
1874 interpretation and agency, mechanisms may not automatically activate via an on/off
1875 switch (Dalkin et al., 2015). Rather, the process of activation may be more gradual
1876 with mechanisms operating along a continuum, in line with the light generated by a
1877 'dimmer switch' (e.g., full brightness may reflect the development of trust) (Dalkin
1878 et al., 2015). Similar to a dimmer switch, mechanisms may vary in intensity or
1879 emerge at a later stage due to changes in context or circumstantial factors which
1880 trigger new volition and reasoning (Dalkin et al., 2015; Rodriguez, 2015).

1881   Importantly, the mechanism is not synonymous with the programme strategy

1882 (Astbury & Leeuw, 2010; Dalkin et al., 2015; Weiss, 1997). Adopting the example

1883 of mentoring mentioned earlier, consider the following: If one-to-one mentoring is

1884 associated with a reduction in school dropout, the causal mechanism may appear to

1885 be the one-to-one mentoring. However, this is the programme strategy, not the

1886 mechanism. The evaluator has to delve deeper by considering what resources the

1887 one-to-one mentoring offers to young people? Is it exposure to new ideas,

1888 perspective, and knowledge? Is it the influence of a positive role model? Is it

1889 confidence building? Is it the opportunity to feel listened to and valued? Perceptions

1890 of psychological safety? In turn, how do young people reason and respond to the

1891 resource? How does it make them feel? What is their emotional response to the

1892 resource(s) provided by one-to-one mentoring?

1893   Thus, the mechanism is the young person's reasoning to the resources

1894 provided by the programme. It is the cognitive, emotional, and social reasoning that

1895 is activated when young people engage with the resources of a programme (Jagosh,

1896 2017; Weiss, 1997). To help distinguish between programme strategies, contexts,

1897 and mechanisms (Marchal et al., 2012), Dalkin and colleagues (2015) expand on the

1898 earlier work of Pawson and Tilley (1997) by splitting mechanisms into resources and

1899 reasoning (see figure 3.2).

1900   **Figure 3.2**

1901   *Extension of Pawson and Tilley's (1997) model to aid operationalisation, adapted from Dalkin et al. (2015).*
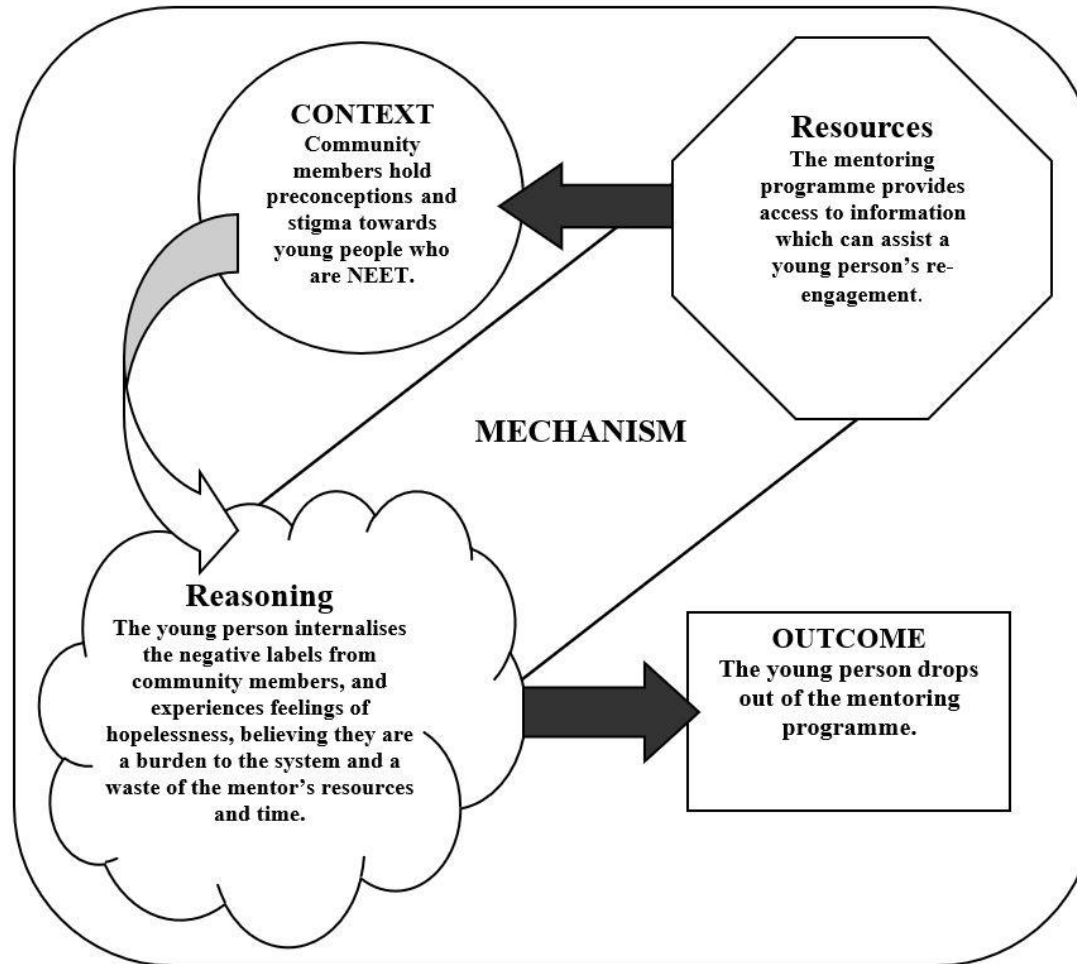
3.3.3 Outcomes

Outcome patterns may be proximal, intermediate, or final (Jagosh et al., 2013). Examples of outcomes include improved school attendance, engagement, behaviour, and academic performance, social cohesion, self-efficacy, and developments in knowledge and understanding (Jagosh et al., 2013; Jagosh, 2019). Such outcomes are contingent on not only the appropriate ideas and resources (mechanisms) but also the wider social, economic, and cultural factors surrounding the programme (context) (Dalkin et al., 2014; Pawson, 2006). Programmes may generate a range of successful and unsuccessful outcomes for each young person, which may enable the researcher to identify patterns in behaviours and outcomes. In realist evaluation, semi-predictable patterns in behaviours and outcomes are referred to as demi-regularities (Wong, Greenhalgh, & Pawson, 2010). Demi-regularities recognise that patterns of behaviour are semi-predictable as they are never static, in that, young people's thoughts and feelings are always subject to change. Realist evaluators therefore search for demi-regularities as opposed to outcome regularities, as all mechanisms will be modified in different contexts (Pawson, 2006; Pawson & Tilley, 1997; Wong et al., 2010).

Outcomes of programmes may inform the context of subsequent phases or future programmes, thereby, producing a 'ripple effect' (Jagosh et al., 2015). As one example, Jagosh and colleagues (2015) examined the impact of community-based participatory research. During the first phase of their project, they discovered underlying issues relating to a culture of mistrust between community stakeholders and academic researchers (context). As a consequence, mechanism resources were designed to build a sense of trust and rapport between community stakeholders and academics. The outcome of the first phase of the project was early research productivity and partnership growth due to the development of trust and reciprocity between community stakeholders and academics. In turn, the context of the next phase of the programme was pre-existing levels of trust, partnership, and collaboration between community members and academics. The new context therefore interacted with mechanisms to generate new outcomes (Jagosh et al., 2015). As such, developing an understanding of how outcomes are generated is essential in order to inform the design and tailoring of programmes, enhance the likelihood of their effectiveness, and decrease the unanticipated adverse outcomes of programmes (Jagosh, 2019; Wong, Greenhalgh, Westhorp, & Pawson, 2012).

1936   **3.4 Realist Evaluation Design**

1937   Realist evaluations are conducted in three broad phases (Cheyne et al., 2013;

1938   Gilmore et al., 2019). In phase one, initial programme theories are developed that

1939   aim to explain how the programme is expected to work. The initial programme

1940   theories elucidate the mechanisms that may trigger, the contextual elements

1941   necessary for mechanisms to trigger, and the outcomes of interest that will be visible

1942   if they trigger as anticipated (Westhorp, 2014; Wong et al., 2016). At phase two, the

1943   initial programme theories are tested, scrutinised, and expanded upon throughout the

1944   evaluation using multiple methods of data collection (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). The

1945   final phase of a realist evaluation involves the synthesis of evidence, the formulation

1946   of CMO configurations, and the refinement of programme theories which explain

1947   how the programme is or is not working, for whom, and under which contextual

1948   circumstances (Wong et al., 2016) (see figure 3.3 for an example of how these phases

1949   were used in Study 1).

1950   **Figure 3.3**

The three phases of Realist Evaluation. Adapted from Cheyne et al. (2013) and
Gilmore et al. (2019).
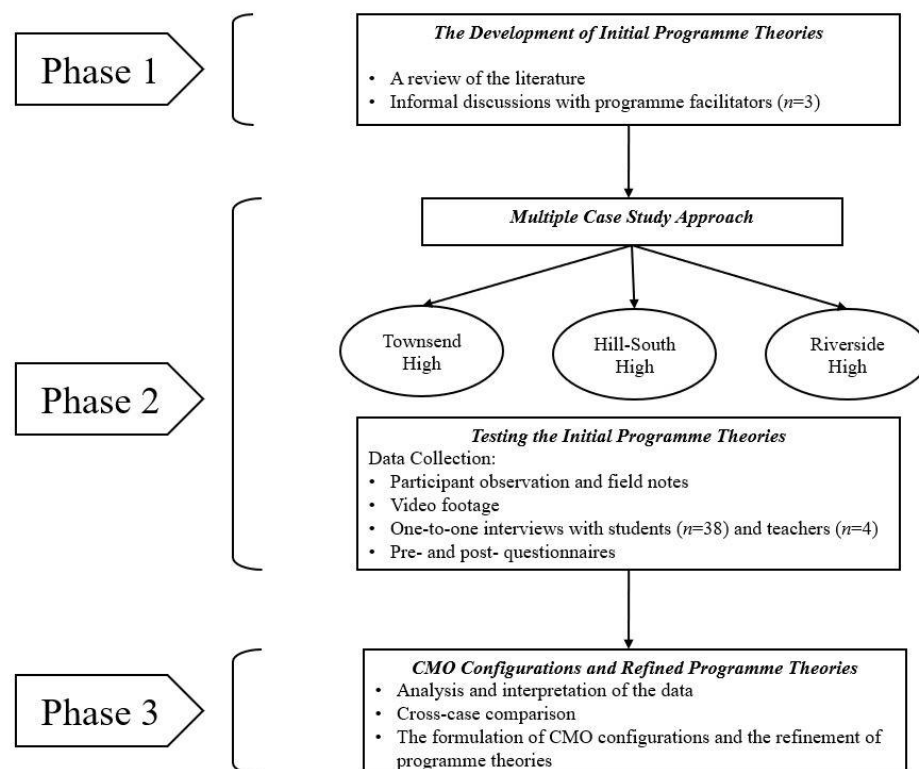
3.4.1 Phase One: The Development of Initial Programme Theories

As explained, the initial programme theories aim to unpack how and why the programme is expected to achieve its outcomes and include theorising the anticipated interactions between contexts, mechanisms, and outcomes (Pawson & Tilley, 2004; Shearn et al., 2017). To develop initial programme theories, researchers may review programme documents, reports, previous evaluations, and access existing literature relevant to each component of the programme (Gilmore, 2017). The researcher may also engage with key stakeholders such as, programme facilitators, designers, and managers, in order to understand stakeholders' expectations and perspectives regarding how the various components of the programme may work, and the factors anticipated to impact programme delivery and outcomes.

During this process, rival theories can also be constructed, whereby, alternative explanations are formulated unpacking why a programme may not be successful or why it may lead to adverse and unintended outcomes in certain contexts (Pawson & Tilley, 2004). Collectively, the document/literature review and engagement with key stakeholders can provide complementary data that can be used to finalise the initial programme theories (Mukumbang et al., 2016; Pawson & Tilley, 1997). Initial programme theories can then be articulated via if then statements: 'if we implement X then this may lead to Y because…' or hypothetical CMO configurations (Jagosh, 2017). The process of constructing initial programme theories for the studies in this thesis are explained in the relevant chapters.

3.4.2 Phase Two: Testing the Initial Programme Theories

During this phase, the initial programme theories and anticipated interactions between contexts, mechanisms, and outcomes are tested using either (or both) qualitative and quantitative methods (Pawson & Tilley, 2004). For instance, while quantitative data can be useful to identify and compare outcome patterns at the beginning and end of the programme, qualitative data is essential in order to understand why changes in outcomes have occurred, by unpacking and exploring the relationship between contexts, mechanisms, and programme modalities (Mukumbang, Marchal, Belle, & Wyk, 2020; Pawson, 2013).

In order to effectively explore the relationship between context conditions and mechanisms, data collection methods and participants should be selected based on their 'CMO investigation potential' (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). For instance, while educators may be able to provide detailed information regarding the family

background and psychological makeup of students' taking part in a school-based programme (context), students may be able to offer important insight into the resources and opportunities that the programme offers (mechanisms). As such, participants have in-depth knowledge regarding how, why, and for whom the programme may or may not be working and should be actively involved in refining the initial programme theories through realist theory-driven interview techniques (Gilmore, 2017; Manzano, 2016).

3.4.2.1 The Realist Interview. The realist interview is a methodological strategy used by realist evaluators to obtain knowledge about the relevant contexts, mechanisms, and outcomes, and to refine programme theories based on the experiences and perspectives of the participants involved (e.g., young people and educators) (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). Specifically, the realist interview presents the participants with the initial programme theories for examination and offers the participants the opportunity to accept, modify, and refine them based on their own ideas, thinking, and experiences (Manzano, 2016; Mukumbang et al., 2020; Pawson, 1996). The process has been referred to as a teacher-learner cycle (Pawson, 1996), whereby, the interviewer starts by explaining and teaching the participants the specific programme theories (e.g., the programme was supposed to help you decide what you may like to do after you finish school, by showing you the different types of jobs available, and giving you the chance to practice working), and ends with the participants teaching the researcher about the refined theories describing how each component of the programme worked (or not) for them (Pawson & Tilley, 2004). To guide the process of testing initial programme theories, Manzano (2016) proposed three phases of interview: theory gleaning; theory refining; and theory consolidation. These phases are summarised in figure 3.4.

2010 **Figure 3.4**

2011 *Phases in realist interviews. Adapted from Manzano (2016) and Mukumbang et al. (2020).*

Phase 1

Theory Gleaning
- Exploratory questions
- Participants asked to share experiences of, and views, on the programme
- Obtain details regarding relevant contexts, mechanisms, and outcomes
- Develop initial understanding of how, why, and under what conditions the programme is (or isn't) working

Phase 2

Theory Refining
- Introduce participants to the initial programme theories
- Participants comment on the initial programme theories based on their own knowledge and experiences of the programme
- Participants explain how and why each component of the programme worked (or not) for them
- Develop knowledge regarding important context conditions, mechanisms, and outcomes

Phase 3

Theory Consolidation
- Further detailed exploration into important context conditions, mechanisms, and outcomes
- Participants provide clarity and confirmation of details
- Initial programme theories are either accepted, modified, or refined

2012 *3.4.3 Phase Three: CMO Configurations and Refined Programme Theories*

2013   The end product of a realist evaluation involves the synthesis of evidence, the

2014 analysis of data utilising the CMO configuration as the analytical framework, and the

2015 refinement of programme theories in order to explain how, why, for whom, and

2016 under what contextual circumstances the programme did or did not work (Pawson et

2017 al., 2005; Wong et al., 2016). During this phase, to enhance the articulation of

2018 programme theories, middle-range theories, which are at a higher level of

2019 abstraction, can be used (Merton, 1968; Shearn et al., 2017). Theory at the middle

2020 range is not specific to the programme under evaluation but can be used to

2021 comprehend complex human behaviour and social phenomena (e.g., sociological,

2022 and psychological theories) (Jagosh, 2018). Middle range theories produce

2023 transferable knowledge that can be applied across different contexts and help to

2024 enhance understanding of how and why programmes achieve their outcomes (Shearn

2025 et al., 2017). Collectively, the CMO configurations and refined programme theories

2026 provide an understanding of the effects (outcomes) of the programme, the resources

2027 of the programme that led to effects (mechanisms), and the type of circumstances in

2028 which these effects occurred (contexts) (Pawson & Tilley, 1997).

2029 **3.5 Realism**

2030   Realist evaluation is underpinned by realism. Realism is considered a

2031 methodological orientation, directly influencing the choice and selection of research

2032 methods (Pawson, 2006b; Pawson et al., 2004). The approach has its roots in both

2033 the philosophy of science and social sciences (Bhaskar, 2008; Collier, 1994; Harre,

2034 1978). Specifically, there are two widely recognised streams of realism within the

2035 social sciences: critical realism (Archer, Bhaskar, Collier, Lawson, & Norrie, 1998;

2036 Bhaskar, 2002) and scientific realism (Pawson & Tilley, 1997; Pawson, 2006b). The

2037 key distinction between critical realism and scientific realism is how both approaches

2038 understand the 'open systems nature of social explanation' (Dalkin, 2014; Dalkin et

2039 al., 2015). Critical realists perceive that there will always remain a plethora of

2040 explanatory possibilities, of which some may be inaccurate and incorrect (Pawson,

2041 2006b). Thus, based on critical realism, the role of the social sciences is to critique

2042 the thoughts, beliefs, and actions, that underpin such false and inaccurate

2043 explanations (Archer et al., 1998; Bhaskar, 2002). In contrast, scientific realists adopt

2044 a more pragmatic perspective, accepting that although endless explanatory

2045 possibilities exist, the role of social science is to decide between alternative

2046 explanations and to investigate them through the development and testing of theories

2047 (Pawson, 2006b).

2048   As such, while critical realism is philosophically driven, focused on ontology

2049 and epistemology to explore broader societal issues (e.g., gender, social class),

2050 scientific realism is methodologically driven, focused on the application of principles

2051 to scientific practice (e.g., programme evaluation) (Jagosh, 2019a; Pawson & Tilley,

2052 1997). A piecemeal approach is advocated in scientific realism, whereby, learning

2053 occurs through theory testing and an accumulation of knowledge and evidence

2054 generation (Jagosh, 2019a; Popper, 1999; 2002; Stelzer, 2016). It is through theory-

2055 testing, that certain explanatory possibilities can be tested and either confirmed,

2056 modified, or refined, facilitating the development of new solutions, ideas, and

2057 theories (Stelzer, 2016). The scope of investigation under a scientific realist lens is

2058 narrow as it would be impractical to do theory testing at the wider societal level

2059 (Jagosh, 2019a). Scientific realism, which is underpinning this thesis, is the

2060 methodological orientation embraced by realist evaluation and used to evaluate

2061 complex programmes (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). The remainder of this chapter will

2062 focus on the ontology and epistemology of scientific realism.

2063 *3.5.1 Questions of Ontology and Epistemology*

2064   Ontological and epistemological assumptions influence the nature of

2065 research (Furlong & Marsh, 2010). Ontological commitments relate to beliefs about

2066 what exists, it is concerned with perceptions of reality and existence (Maxwell, 2012;

2067 O'Mahoney & Vincent, 2014). Understanding an individual's ontological

2068 assumptions is integral because how a researcher views reality will influence their

2069 epistemological commitments (Dillon & Wals, 2006). Epistemology relates to

2070 viewpoints on how perceptions of reality can be studied, understood, and known

2071 (O'Mahoney & Vincent, 2014). The ontological and epistemological beliefs and

2072 orientations a researcher holds will influence the research questions they seek to

2073 answer, the data collection methods adopted, engagement with participants, data

2074 analysis, and the overall inferences formed (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Killam, 2013;

2075 O'Mahoney & Vincent, 2014).

2076   **3.5.1.1 Ontology and Epistemology of Scientific Realism.** Scientific

2077 realism has been considered to occupy and reconcile a middle ground position

2078 between post-positivism (emphasis on theory testing and a belief that there is an

2079 external reality) and constructivism (reality and knowledge production is shaped by

2080   human minds and senses) (Bryman, 1989; Sayer, 2000; Westhorp, 2014). A key

2081   principle of scientific realism is the ontological belief that there exists a mind-

2082   independent reality, whilst also acknowledging that our knowledge of reality is

2083   shaped according to our ideas, experiences, perception, and constructions (Gilmore,

2084   2017; Maxwell, 2012). Thus, scientific realist ontology states that a real world exists

2085   independent of how an individual perceives or constructs it (Maxwell, 2012; Sayer,

2086   2000), whereas scientific realist epistemology recognises that how an individual

2087   perceives and makes sense of reality will inevitably be a construction from their own

2088   beliefs, experiences, and perspectives (Maxwell, 2012). For example, a young person

2089   may believe that having a criminal record will not affect their employment prospects

2090   but that does not mean that a criminal record will not impact upon employment

2091   prospects because reality is separate from the young person's accounts and

2092   descriptions of it (i.e., mind-independent reality) (Clark, 2015). As such, according to

2093   scientific realism, our knowledge of reality is partial and fallible as there is more to

2094   reality than what individuals are capable of processing and apprehending (Kemp,

2095   2017; Maxwell, 2012; Sayer, 1992). The aim of scientific realism is to move towards

2096   a closer understanding of an individual's version of reality through configurations of

2097   contexts, mechanisms, and outcomes (Manzano, 2016).

2098   *3.5.2 Principles of Scientific Realism*

2099   There are a number of key principles of scientific realism, including

2100   ontological depth, generative causality, retroduction, and demi regularities.

2101   Collectively, these principles unpack the ways in which scientific realism embraces

2102   complexity and provides the rationale as to why this approach underpinned the

2103   current thesis.

2104   **3.5.2.1 Ontological Depth.** An important principle of realism is the

2105   stratification of reality into three layers: the empirical, the actual, and the real

2106   (Bhaskar, 2008). The empirical domain relates to reality that has manifested and is

2107   observable (Clark, 2008; Jagosh, 2017; Sayer, 2000). The actual domain includes the

2108   observable manifested reality and a deeper level of reality which is not so readily

2109   observable. Thus, the actual domain consists of mechanisms and outcomes that have

2110   manifested, regardless of an individuals' capacity to perceive or observe. Finally, the

2111   real domain encompasses both the activated mechanisms and relates to the invisible

2112   structures, mechanisms, and causal powers which have the potential to be activated

2113   or the susceptibility to behave in specific ways (Clark, 2008; Jagosh, 2017; Sayer,

2114   2000).

2115   All knowledge and perceptions are considered incomplete and fallible, the

2116   ability to observe reality is dependent upon an individual's conception or

2117   manifestation of reality according to their own experiences and perceptions (what an

2118   individual has the capacity to sense) (Jagosh, 2017; Porter, 2015; Sayer, 2000). It is

2119   within the domain of the real whereby realists acknowledge the existence of

2120   underlying generative mechanisms, considered latent and dormant, that have the

2121   potential to be activated (Jagosh, 2017; Westhorp, 2018). This idea of invisible

2122   mechanisms existing at a deeper level of reality has been referred to as the ontology

2123   of absence (Jagosh, 2017; Shearn et al., 2017).

2124   To illustrate the empirical, the actual, and the real domain, Jagosh (2017;

2125   2018; 2019) provides the metaphor of an iceberg (see figure 3.5). The part of the

2126   iceberg existing above the surface of the water refers to the empirical domain, the

2127   manifested reality that is viewable (e.g., an individual's accomplishments, the

2128   qualifications, and awards they have achieved are able to be evidenced and are more

2129   easily observable, including academic certificates and graduation ceremonies). The

2130   domain of the actual includes the manifested reality and therefore, all of the ice,

2131   regardless of whether it is on the surface or below the surface, and whether or not it

2132   is observable (e.g., the reasoning and interpretation of the individual, including

2133   feelings of validation and legitimisation). Finally, the real domain refers to the water

2134   around the iceberg, consisting of the underlying and invisible mechanisms that have

2135   the potential to be activated and the propensity to produce causal changes in the

2136   actual domain, provided they are interacting with the necessary resources, under the

2137   right contextual circumstances (Clark, 2008; Jagosh, 2017). The real domain is the

2138   largest domain as it incorporates the mechanisms that are activated and the invisible

2139   causal powers which have the potential to be activated (e.g., during the pursuit of

2140   achieving qualifications, an individual will have activated many underlying

2141   mechanisms existing in the domain of the real, including constructing knowledge and

2142   understanding, cognitive development, financial sacrifices, the practice of applying

2143   self-discipline and consistency, along with the dedication needed to persist in the

2144   face of adversity).

2145   **Figure 3.5**

2146   *The Iceberg Metaphor – The Empirical, The Actual, and The Real Layers of Reality. Adapted from Jagosh (2019).*
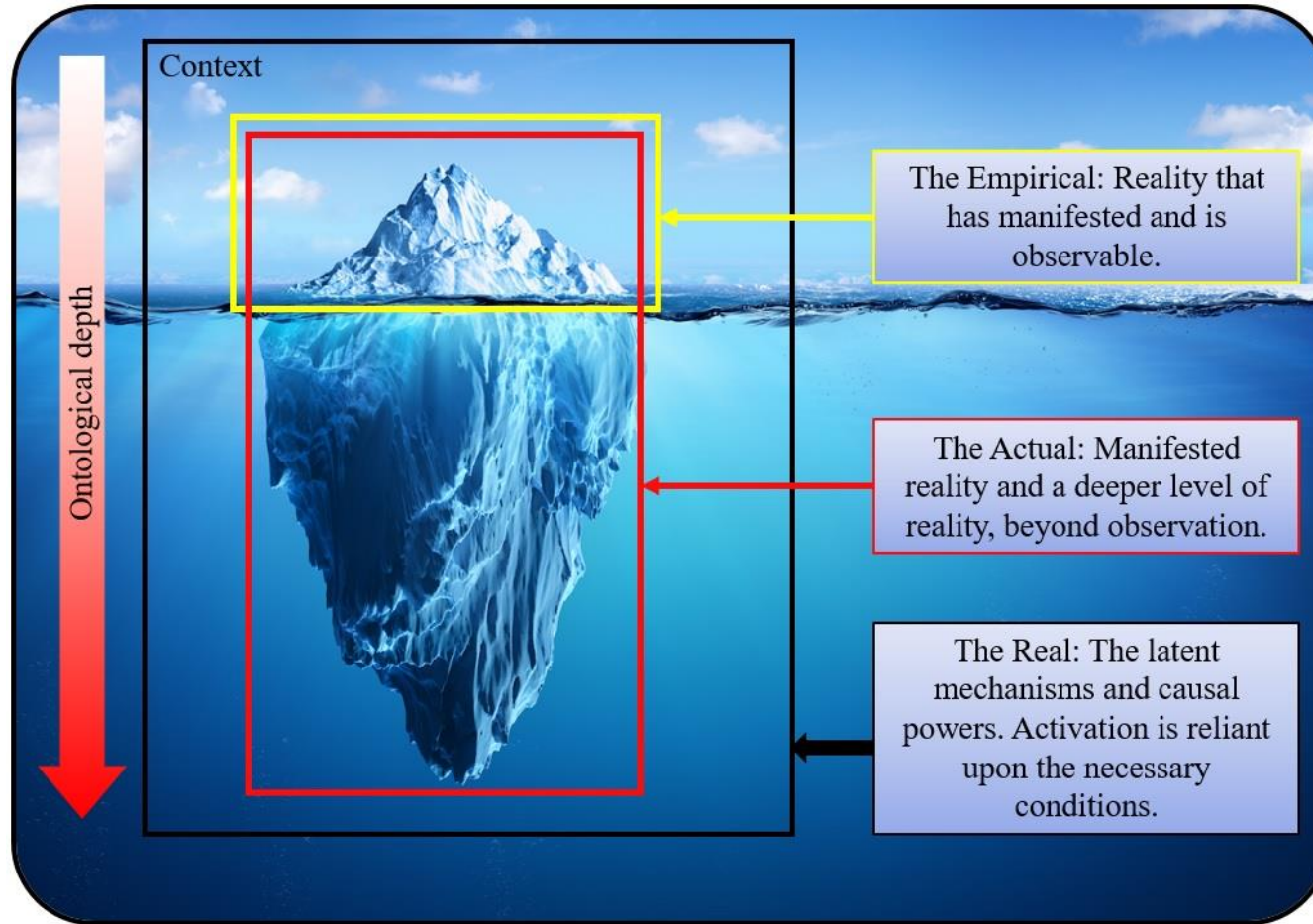
2147   **3.5.2.2 Generative Causality.** Scientific realism is based on the logic of

2148 generative causation, in that, individuals have potential mechanisms of causation that

2149 remain latent until they are generated within the right contexts (Marchal, 2011). The

2150 interaction between contexts and generative mechanisms therefore determines the

2151 outcomes that occur, and the aim of scientific realism is to obtain knowledge about

2152 the underlying process that leads to outcomes of interest (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). In

2153 order to explore the underlying process, scientific realism answers the question:

2154 'what is it about X that leads to Y?' or 'what is it about multi-component

2155 programmes that may lead to re-engagement?'. Contrastive questioning (e.g., 'does

2156 X lead to Y?') is underpinned by a successionist view of causation, that is focused on

2157 addressing whether or not a programme works, without answering the for whom,

2158 how, and why (see figure 3.6) (Marchal, 2011). Examples of successionist

2159 approaches encompass the 'gold standard' randomised controlled trial, experimental,

2160 and quasi-experimental designs (Pawson, 2008). Such approaches have received

2161 criticism from the scientific realist community for attempting to control context,

2162 human volition, and reasoning, which, are the ultimate causal pathways through

2163 which any outcomes of interest occur (Jagosh, 2019; Marchal et al., 2012; Pawson,

2164 2008; Pawson & Tilley, 2004).

2165 **Figure 3.6**

2166 *Successionist and Generative Models of Causation. Taken from Pawson and Tilley*

2167 *(1997; p. 68).*
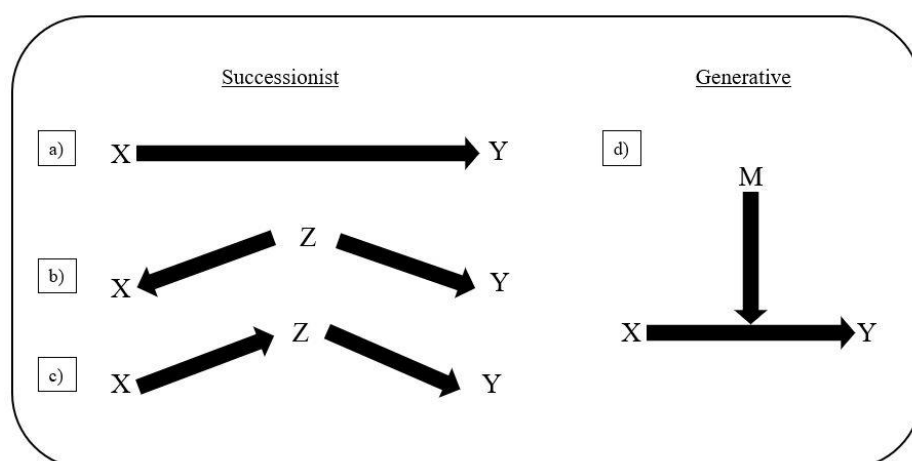
2177   As explained, due to the active nature of programmes, a programme will

2178 produce different outcomes across different contexts, as every individual will

2179 respond to the resources of programmes in different ways (Belle et al., 2016; Jamal

2180 et al., 2015). It is, therefore, not possible to ask or answer a generalisable question of

2181 whether or not a programme works, as the success of any programme will be

2182 determined by pre-existing contextual factors (Jagosh, 2019). Rather, the

2183 development of theory-based explanations that provide knowledge and insight into

2184 how programmes work by unpacking the complex interaction between contexts,

2185 mechanisms, and outcomes, which are transferable is possible (Belle et al., 2016;

2186 Wong et al., 2016). New understandings in relation to important contexts and

2187 mechanisms can be transferred to advance the design, implementation, and

2188 innovation of future programmes (Jagosh, 2019). Transferability is therefore

2189 advocated within scientific realism as this approach acknowledges the complex,

2190 dynamic, and evolving nature of reality (Jagosh, 2019a). Although theories, contexts,

2191 and mechanisms are relevant now, they may not be applicable to programmes in the

2192 future. As such, they will always need to be tested again in different settings and

2193 modified accordingly (Jagosh, 2019a; Wong et al., 2012).

2194   **3.5.2.3 Retroduction.** Retroduction is the technique through which

2195 generative causation is uncovered (Aldamman, 2020). Specifically, retroduction

2196 refers to the "idea of going back from, below, or behind observed patterns or

2197 regularities to discover what produces them" (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Liao, 2004, p.

2198 972), and has been suggested to overcome the limitations associated with inductive

2199 and deductive approaches to offer complexity-sensitive explanations (Blaikie, 2004).

2200 Retroductive explanations include identifying and elaborating on the contexts and

2201 mechanisms that are theorised to have generated outcomes (Hartwig, 2007;

2202 Mukumbang et al., 2020). As such, retroduction allows a scientific realist to move

2203 from an observed pattern of disengagement among secondary school students to

2204 explanatory theories about the underlying mechanisms that contribute to

2205 disengagement (Chindarkar, 2007; Olsen, 2010). In doing so, this mode of inference

2206 utilises multiple data sources, stakeholder input, creativity, and imaginative thinking,

2207 to theorise 'why do things appear as they do?' and 'why is the world the way it is?'

2208 (Clark, 2015; Olsen, 2010).

2209   **3.5.2.4 Demi Regularities.** The scientific realist searches for patterns in

2210 behaviour or human experience, which can provide causal explanations for why

2211 individuals behave in certain ways. Specifically, they search for demi regularities, a

2212 phrase introduced by Lawson (1997). A demi regularity is a patterned occurrence of

2213 reality which acknowledges and anticipates variations (Lawson, 1997). Such

2214 variations may occur as a result of contextual and individual factors (Jagosh, 2018;
2215 2019a). For example, a student's engagement during academic lessons may improve
2216 when a teacher authentically listens to the student and the student in turn, feels that
2217 they have been heard and understood. Consequently, the action of listening and the
2218 response of feeling heard can trigger mechanisms of engagement and attentiveness,
2219 which can be considered a demi regularity. However, there may be circumstances
2220 when engagement is not triggered and therefore the aim of realism would be to
2221 develop an understanding of why this might be.
2222   In contrast, research operating under an empirical paradigm, tends to search
2223 for regularities with any variation considered an outlier or anomaly (Kemp, 2017;
2224 Sayer, 1992). While no consideration is paid to contextual factors within the
2225 empirical paradigm, realism embraces outliers and variations in patterns, seeking to
2226 further explore the contextual factors underpinning them. Thus, scientific realism
2227 attributes equal value and importance to both patterns and variations (Pawson, 2008).

2228 **3.6 Conclusion**

2229   Realist evaluation methodology and scientific realism are particularly well
2230 suited to the evaluation of complex multi-component programmes and populations
2231 (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). Through the formulation of CMO configurations and the
2232 testing and refinement of initial programme theories, programme evaluators can
2233 unpack how programmes may work, for whom they work, under what circumstances,
2234 and why different outcomes occur (Wong et al., 2016). As such, realist evaluation
2235 methodology and the philosophy of scientific realism embrace complexity and were
2236 considered most appropriate to address the aim of this thesis.

Chapter 4: Study 1

4.1 Introduction

School completion and educational qualifications are considered powerful predictors of health (Dalgard, Mykletun, Rognerud, Johansen, & Zahl, 2007; Freudenberg & Ruglis, 2007). Completing secondary school with qualifications provides access to further educational and employment opportunities, and subsequently more informed health decisions (Ramsdal et al., 2018). In contrast, leaving school early, without qualifications, has been shown to enhance the likelihood of involvement in health-comprising behaviours, including smoking, alcohol, drugs, sedentary behaviour, and physical inactivity (Lantz et al., 1998; McWhirter et al., 2017). In addition, school dropout is associated with prolonged unemployment, poverty, a wide range of psychological and physical health problems, and premature mortality (Centre for Promise, 2014a; Ruglis, 2009). As such, the decision to stay in or leave school, may be one of the most critical decisions a young person makes during their adolescent development (Brooks-Gunn, Guo, & Furstenberg, 1993). Consequently, the implementation of programmes to enhance the likelihood of school completion and improve educational qualifications for disengaged students can be viewed as public investments, that have the potential to produce long-term social and economic benefits for society (Belfield & Levin, 2009).

The success of programmes to encourage school engagement are dependent upon the extent to which they account for and address the complex and varied reasons disengaged students may decide (or be forced) to leave school (Rajasekaran & Reyes, 2019). For instance, many disengaged students encounter adverse experiences and challenges including poverty, peer bullying, academic failure, neglect, emotional and physical abuse, parental death, parental substance abuse, and parental criminality (Kirlic et al., 2020). Exposure to such adverse circumstances can have a detrimental effect on these students' educational engagement (e.g., investment and active effort), behavioural (e.g., disobedience and absenteeism), and psychosocial (e.g., low self-worth and perceived competence) outcomes, each of which are salient predictors of school dropout (Ruglis, 2009; Witte et al., 2013). To counter such issues, programmes to help disengaged students remain in school need to provide access to high-quality relationships, support structures, and developmental opportunities, which can enhance students' engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes (Rajasekaran & Reyes, 2019).

2270   As outlined in Chapter 2, over the past few decades, numerous programmes

2271 have been implemented in an attempt to re-engage young people within education.

2272 Such programmes have included one-to-one mentoring (e.g., Raposa et al., 2019),

2273 PYD programmes including, classroom-based learning (e.g., Ciocanel et al., 2017)

2274 and work-based placements (e.g., Chen, 2011), and sport and physical activity (e.g.,

2275 Lubans et al., 2012), but the effectiveness of these programmes has demonstrated

2276 modest overall effects and it remains unclear what works for this population, under

2277 which circumstances (Mawn et al., 2017; Raposa et al., 2019). It has been suggested

2278 that a combination of programmes may enhance the likelihood of positive

2279 developmental outcomes with disengaged young people (Mawn et al., 2017).

2280 However, to my knowledge, there are no multi-component programmes for

2281 disengaged young people that have combined all available modalities (i.e.,

2282 mentoring, classroom-based learning, work-based placements, sport and physical

2283 activity). The specific combination of mentoring, classroom-based learning, work-

2284 based placements, and sport and physical activity may provide exposure to a

2285 diversity of resources and enable students to access many options and pathways,

2286 which could enhance the likelihood of them successfully engaging numerous

2287 students. However, delivery and subsequent evaluation of such a multi-component

2288 programme is required to support this suggestion.

2289   One such multi-component programme is TACKLE. This is an Ospreys in

2290 the Community school programme, which was designed to enhance disengaged

2291 students' engagement and behaviour in core subject lessons (e.g., English,

2292 Mathematics, and Science) and reduce psychosocial challenges. The programme

2293 combines one-to-one mentoring, classroom-based workshops, work-based

2294 placements, and sport and physical activity and is delivered within school settings.

2295 Recognising the potential benefit of multi-component programmes for disengaged

2296 students, as well as the lack of evaluation of such programmes, the aim of the current

2297 study was to conduct a realist evaluation to understand how and under what

2298 circumstances the TACKLE programme may impact disengaged students'

2299 engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes. Accordingly, the following

2300 research questions were formulated:

2301   1. How, why, for whom, and in what contexts does TACKLE impact (if at all)

2302   students' engagement and behaviour?

2303   2.   How, why, for whom, and in what contexts does TACKLE impact (if at all)

2304   students' psychosocial outcomes, including academic, social, physical, job

2305   competence, behavioural conduct, and global self-worth?

2306   3.   What are the underpinning mechanisms explaining the impact (if any) of

2307   TACKLE?

2308   **4.2 Method**

2309   *4.2.1 Methodology*

2310   This study utilised realist evaluation methodology (Pawson & Tilley, 1997) to

2311   evaluate the impact of TACKLE across three schools in Wales. As detailed in

2312   Chapter 3, realist evaluation begins through the development of an initial programme

2313   theory or theories, which seek to explain how the programme is expected to achieve

2314   its outcomes (Mukumbang et al., 2019). The programme theory elucidates the

2315   mechanisms that may activate, the contexts necessary for mechanisms to activate,

2316   and the outcomes that will be visible if they activate as anticipated (Westhorp, 2014;

2317   Wong et al., 2016). The initial programme theories, causal explanations, and

2318   anticipated interactions between context, mechanisms, and outcomes are then tested

2319   throughout the evaluation using a triangulation of qualitative and quantitative

2320   methods (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). Throughout data collection and immersion, initial

2321   programme theories are modified and refined (Wong et al., 2016). The end product

2322   of a realist evaluation is refined theories and CMO (context-mechanism-outcome)

2323   configurations which explain how the programme is or is not working, for whom,

2324   and under which circumstances (Wong et al., 2016). A realist evaluation approach

2325   was particularly suitable for this study as it enabled an understanding of the

2326   engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes students experience during

2327   TACKLE, the underpinning mechanisms explaining how and why students

2328   achieve/do not achieve these outcomes, and the specific contexts and circumstances

2329   in which these outcomes are achieved.

2330   *4.2.2 Study Design*

2331   The realist evaluation was conducted using a multiple/collective case study

2332   approach (Stake, 1995) with Townsend high school[2], Hill-South high school, and

2333   Riverside high school being three of the cases. A case study has been defined as a

2334   thorough investigation which takes into account a variety of perspectives in order to

---

[2] The schools have been given pseudonyms.

2335 understand the intricacies of a phenomenon of interest (e.g., an individual, group,

2336 institution, programme, project, or system) in a naturalistic environment (Crowe et

2337 al., 2011; Simons, 2009; Yin, 2009; Hodge & Sharp, 2017). As such, it is deemed an

2338 appropriate choice of method when the researcher is unable to control or manipulate

2339 the phenomenon and the research questions are driven predominately by "how" and

2340 "why" (Yin, 2009; 2018), as was the case in this study. Specifically, a multiple case

2341 study provided a platform to examine the impact of TACKLE across three schools,

2342 which led to enhanced theorising and an in-depth exploration of the interaction

2343 between context, mechanisms, and outcomes (Hodge & Sharp, 2017), enhancing the

2344 opportunities for a successful evaluation.

2345   When conducting case study research, the use of several sources of data,

2346 drawing from both qualitative and quantitative techniques, is encouraged in order to

2347 capture complexity and to reveal detailed and richer understanding regarding how a

2348 programme may or may not be working (Bishop, 2012; Sinha & Hanuscin, 2017;

2349 Yin, 2009). Methodological eclecticism is also recommended in realist evaluation

2350 (Pawson & Manzano-Santaella, 2012; Pawson & Sridharan, 2010; Wong et al., 2016)

2351 because the combination of multiple data sources can provide contrasting, distinct,

2352 but complementary information that can elicit a richer understanding of context,

2353 mechanisms, and outcomes (Patton, 2015). As such, the key principles of multiple

2354 case studies are methodologically suited to realist evaluation (Mukumbang et al.,

2355 2019), and they are used regularly as a methodological approach to evaluating

2356 complex, multi-component programmes delivered within educational settings

2357 (Chmiliar, 2012; Merriam, 2009; Simons, 2009; Timmons & Cairns, 2012; Yin,

2358 2009).

2359 *4.2.3 Cases and Participants*

2360   The programme took place in three schools from the Convergence region of

2361 Wales. This region includes fifteen local authority areas in West Wales and the

2362 Valleys. Each school was located in a socially and economically deprived

2363 community.

2364   **4.2.3.1 The Schools.** In order to provide contextual background for each

2365 participating school, information was collated from the most recent Estyn[3] inspection

2366 reports (Estyn, 2020) and the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD; Welsh

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[3] Estyn is the education and training inspectorate for Wales.

2367 Government, 2019). WIMD calculates an areas overall level of deprivation based on

2368 assessments across eight specific domains (i.e., income, employment, health,

2369 education, access to services, community safety, physical environment, and housing)

2370 (Welsh Government, 2019).

2371   ***4.2.3.1.1 Townsend High.*** The first school, Townsend High, is an English-

2372 medium comprehensive school with approximately 1,000 students aged between 11-

2373 19 years, situated in South West Wales (Estyn, 2020). Based on the latest inspection

2374 report, the number of students eligible for free school meals exceeds the national

2375 average (Estyn, 2020). A high number of students attending the school live in the

2376 most socially and economically disadvantaged areas in Wales. According to the

2377 latest Estyn report (2020), the school was identified as 'adequate and needing

2378 improvement' across all inspection areas. Of note, the school's location has remained

2379 among the top 50 highest areas in deep-rooted deprivation in Wales throughout the

2380 past fifteen years (Welsh Government, 2019). Specifically, the report identified

2381 particularly high employment deprivation, low access to services, low community

2382 safety, and a poor physical environment (Welsh Government, 2019).

2383   ***4.2.3.1.2 Hill-South High.*** The second school, Hill-South High, is a large

2384 English-medium comprehensive school with approximately 1,400 students aged

2385 between 11-18 years, located in South West Wales. According to data from the

2386 inspection report, a high proportion of the student body are eligible for free school

2387 meals and similar to Townsend High, many students reside in deprived areas (Estyn,

2388 2020). Hill-South High was identified as 'satisfactory' across all inspection areas,

2389 which was a significant improvement in comparison to their previous Estyn report.

2390 The school is currently classified as belonging to a community first area and is within

2391 the 10% most deprived areas in Wales (Welsh Government, 2019). Drawing on

2392 information from the WIMD, the school's location is within one of the ten most

2393 deprived areas within Wales for health, employment, community safety, income, and

2394 education (Welsh Government, 2019).

2395   ***4.2.3.1.3 Riverside High.*** The final school, Riverside High, consisted of a

2396 comprehensive school with around 700 students aged 11-16 years, based in South

2397 West Wales. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals, living in

2398 deprived areas, and on the special educational needs register was reported as higher

2399 than the national average (Estyn, 2020). Unlike Townsend High and Hill-South

2400 High, Riverside High was considered to be operating at a 'good' level overall by

2401 Estyn. However, the school's location has remained amongst the top fifty highest

2402 areas in deep-rooted deprivation in Wales over the past 15 years, with employment

2403 deprivation, low access to services, and a poor physical environment (Welsh

2404 Government, 2019).

2405 **4.2.3.2 Programme Participants.** To take part in the TACKLE programme,

2406 teachers at each of the schools purposefully selected disengaged students according

2407 to their overall score on the Vulnerability Assessment Profile (VAP) (Welsh

2408 Government, 2014). The VAP is used to predict the likelihood that a student may

2409 drop out of school, using the following criteria:

2410 • Attendance and unauthorised absences

2411 • Number of exclusions

2412 • Eligibility for free school meals

2413 • Reading age score

2414 • Assessment grades in core subject lessons (e.g., English and Maths)

2415 • Number of school changes within the last two years

2416 • Specific learning needs/requirements

2417 • Students in care/looked after status

2418 • English as an additional language

2419 Based on the above criteria, the VAP utilises a traffic light system, scoring

2420 students as either red (score of 11 or higher), amber (score between 6 and 11), or

2421 green (score below 6). Students identified as red or amber are considered at a

2422 particularly high risk of school dropout and, if they were in year 10, were eligible to

2423 take part in the TACKLE programme. Table 4.1 comprises the demographic

2424 information of the thirty-eight students who took part in the programme.

2425 **Table 4.1**

2426 *Demographic information of students*

Participant number	Pseudonym	Age	Gender
1	Hannah	14	F
2	Elliot	15	M
3	Rhys	14	M
4	Lewis	14	M
5	Lowri	14	F
6	James	14	M
7	Deion	14	M
8	Rhiannon	14	F
9	Amelia	14	F
10	Ryan	14	M
11	Jamie	14	M
12	Jordan	14	M
13	Sam	14	M
14	Jack	15	M
15	Owen	15	M
16	Dylan	14	M
17	Benjamin	14	M
18	Nathan	14	M
19	Adam	14	M
20	Bethany	14	F
21	Colton	14	M
22	Dominic	14	M
23	Carl	14	M
24	Samantha	14	F
25	Angharad	14	F
26	Megan	15	F
27	Charlotte	14	F
28	Erin	14	F
29	Marcus	14	M
30	Callum	15	M
31	Thomas	14	M
32	Emma	15	F
33	Charlie	15	M
34	Chloe	14	F
35	Faye	14	F
36	Sophie	14	F
37	Toby	14	M
38	Michael	15	M

2427 *4.2.4 The TACKLE Programme*

2428   The TACKLE programme was implemented over approximately six-months

2429 in weekly two-hour sessions and comprised forty workshops in total. The programme

2430 combined one-to-one mentoring, PYD classroom-based workshops and work-based

2431 placements, and sport and physical activity to target disengaged students'

2432 engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes. The programme was delivered

2433 by TACKLE facilitators who acted as students' mentors, classroom educators, and

2434 sport and physical activity coaches. There were also additional facilitators including

2435 professional athletes and work-based placement providers. However, TACKLE

2436 facilitators were present throughout each modality and activity. Full details of the

2437 programme are provided in Table 4.2.

2438 **Table 4.2**

2439 *Overview of the TACKLE Programme*

Modality and total number of sessions:	Aim of each modality:	Topics covered/Activities:
Classroom Lessons: 12 sessions.	To enhance students' academic, social, and communication skills through access to activities, games, information, and learning materials which may provide students with essential perspective.	Coping with feelings and emotions, group work and team building challenges, establishing business ideas and sport clubs, organising events (e.g., primary school rugby festival), healthy eating and smoothie making, CV workshops, mock interviews, and professional rugby player talks.
Sport and Physical Activity: 12 sessions.	To develop physical and social competencies, knowledge, and transferable life skills (e.g., goal setting, emotional regulation, discipline, leadership, resilience, and work ethic).	Refereeing/officiating, designing, and delivering drills, working towards sport leader's qualification. Activities included: football, rugby, badminton, basketball, netball, bench ball, dodgeball, fitness/circuits, and inflatable rugby cage drills.
Work-Based Placements: 7 sessions.	To provide students with exposure to a diversity of occupations and help them to understand their options post-school.	Workshops included: construction, carpentry, painting and decorating, engineering, customer support team roles, ICT, technician roles, hospitality and catering, social media marketing, graphic designer, and police community support officer roles.
One-to-One Mentoring: 6 meetings.	To nurture the mentees overall personal development.	Focusing on employment/educational opportunities, school-related issues, and relationships with teachers, peers, and parents.
Rewards: 3 sessions.	To allow students to access and explore new opportunities, that otherwise may not be possible due to financial constraints.	Attending a rugby match and a tour of the Liberty stadium. At the end of the programme, students are provided with certificates and awards (e.g., ambassador awards) during a celebratory event delivered by professional rugby players, teachers, and TACKLE facilitators.

2440 ***4.2.5 Procedure***

2441 This research was classified as a service evaluation by Ospreys in the

2442 Community and the University Ethics Committee, as such the programme did not

2443 require ethical approval (Twycross & Shorten, 2014). However, ethical principles

2444 and practices were followed to ensure the safety of participants. Specifically,

2445 parental/guardian informed consent was gained for each of the students and student

2446 assent was obtained to enable the data collected throughout the evaluation to be

2447 utilised for research purposes. Any students who were selected to take part in

2448 TACKLE by their school were able to participate in the programme, whether they

2449 took part in the research evaluation or not. Students who were part of the TACKLE

2450 programme were asked if they would like to be involved in the evaluation of the

2451 programme and were provided with an explanation pertaining to how the information

2452 would be used within a research context. Each student received a verbal and written

2453 explanation of the evaluation study and an assent form to complete. They were also

2454 provided with a parental consent form for completion. Out of thirty-eight students

2455 who were enrolled on TACKLE, all agreed to take part in the programme evaluation

2456 and provided parental consent and assent.

2457 ***4.2.6 Procedure: Realist Evaluation Design***

2458 As detailed in Chapter 3, the realist evaluation was conducted in three broad

2459 phases.

2460 **4.2.6.1 Phase One: The Development of Initial Programme Theories.** To

2461 develop initial programme theories, a review of the literature and informal

2462 discussions with TACKLE facilitators were conducted. The initial programme

2463 theories aimed to highlight how the TACKLE programme was expected to work and

2464 included theorising different elements of contexts, mechanisms, and outcomes

2465 (Jagosh et al., 2015; Pawson & Tilley, 2004).

2466 ***4.2.6.1.1 A Review of the Literature.*** The literature review focused on

2467 defining and conceptualising disengaged young people, the engagement, behavioural,

2468 and psychosocial challenges such young people encounter, and the four modalities of

2469 the TACKLE programme: one-to-one mentoring, PYD programmes (classroom-

2470 based learning and work-based placements), and sport and physical activity (see

2471 Chapter 2). Based on the review of literature, the overall effectiveness of each

2472 modality was summarised and an investigation of the characteristics of modalities

2473 that facilitated or hindered overall effectiveness was conducted (i.e., important

2474 contextual factors and mechanisms). Through this process, I was able to understand

2475 disengaged young peoples' context, the causal pathways explaining how and why

2476 each programme may work, and the importance of combining each modality together

2477 to cultivate positive engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes amongst

2478 disengaged young people. Based on the literature review, I developed and refined

2479 initial programme theories in collaboration with the TACKLE facilitators.

2480   *4.2.6.1.2 Informal Discussions with TACKLE facilitators.* The initial

2481 programme theories developed through the literature review informed the informal

2482 discussions with TACKLE facilitators. TACKLE facilitators comprised three

2483 stakeholders responsible for developing and/or delivering the TACKLE programme.

2484 The discussions focused on understanding stakeholders' justification for each

2485 modality (i.e., mentoring, classroom-based learning, work-based placements, and

2486 sport and physical activity), expectations regarding how each modality may interact

2487 together, and the factors anticipated to impact programme delivery and outcomes.

2488 Following this, I presented the initial programmes theories from the literature review

2489 to TACKLE facilitators who provided modifications and refinements based on their

2490 own insight and expertise. The literature review and informal discussions provided

2491 complementary data that were used to finalise the initial programme theories.

2492   **4.2.6.2 Phase Two: Testing the Initial Programme Theories.** Phase two of

2493 the realist evaluation utilised a combination of data collection methods to test,

2494 scrutinise, and expand upon the initial programme theories in the three schools over a

2495 six-month period. Specifically, participant observation, field notes, video footage,

2496 pre- and post- questionnaires, and one-to-one interviews with students and teachers

2497 were used.

2498   *4.2.6.2.1 Participant Observation and Field Notes.* I acted as a participant-

2499 observer throughout the entire TACKLE programme and completed comprehensive

2500 field notes. Being a participant-observer during a sixth-month period (three days

2501 each week at the participating schools), enabled me to understand the context of each

2502 school, to spend a considerable amount of time with the students; actively taking part

2503 alongside them in each activity, observing and recording students' behaviours and

2504 interactions, and engaging students in informal conversations (Bonner & Tolhurst,

2505 2002). As an active participant in TACKLE, I was able to gain an understanding of

2506 the students' lives, appreciate differences in their experiences of TACKLE, obtain

2507 information outside of programme delivery (e.g., during breaks), and develop high-

2508   quality, trusting relationships with students (Patton, 2015). Comprehensive field

2509   notes were completed during and shortly after the TACKLE programme. The field

2510   notes comprised my initial reflections, thoughts, feelings, and emotional reactions,

2511   descriptions of conversations and behaviours that had occurred, the setting in which

2512   they had taken place, and the specific programme activities and content that day.

2513   *4.2.6.2.2 One-on-One Interviews.* Interviews were conducted with all thirty-

2514   eight students and four teachers at the end of the programme. These teachers were

2515   selected because they had regular contact with the students who participated in

2516   TACKLE and were responsible for coordinating the TACKLE programme within

2517   their school. The interviews ranged in length from 43 to 58 minutes ($M = 49.4$ min,

2518 $SD = 8.3$ min) and were conducted by me in a classroom setting. The interviews

2519   comprised two phases. Initially they followed a semi-structured format comprising

2520   open-ended questions to understand interviewees perceptions of the TACKLE

2521   programme. During this, students were asked questions about their experiences of

2522   each component of TACKLE, the overall impact (if any) of the programme, and

2523   whether there had been any changes to their engagement, behavioural, and

2524   psychosocial outcomes (see Appendix A). Teachers were asked to explain their

2525   perceptions of the students' experiences of TACKLE, their own perspectives of the

2526   programme, the delivery and implementation of the programme, and the impact (if

2527   any) on students' engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes (see

2528   Appendix B).

2529   Following the initial phase of the interviews, the format transitioned into the

2530   teacher-learner cycle as outlined in Chapter 3 (Manzano, 2016). Specifically, I began

2531   by teaching students and teachers the theories behind each component of the

2532   programme (e.g., TACKLE was supposed to help you practice presenting your ideas

2533   to your peers, in a safe and trusting environment). Interviewees were then asked to

2534   articulate their own interpretation (i.e., refining theories) of how each programme

2535   component worked in practice. Encouragement and support were provided to

2536   students through questions such as, "how did it work for you?" "do you think there is

2537   something missing?" "sometimes that isn't working, do you know why sometimes

2538   that doesn't happen?". Such realist interviews are an essential tool for unpacking the

2539   causal nature of programmes and understanding important contexts, mechanisms,

2540   and outcomes (Gilmore et al., 2019; Manzano, 2016). All interviews were recorded

2541   on a dictaphone and transcribed verbatim.

2542   Recognising that disengaged students may find a one-to-one interview setting

2543 challenging (Daley, 2013; Sime, 2008; Tilley & Taylor, 2018), I provided students

2544 with a video of the TACKLE programme to watch as they discussed and reflected on

2545 their experiences. Researcher produced observation videos have been shown to

2546 create more meaningful and engaging discussion for students and have been

2547 considered particularly powerful tools for engaging disengaged students in the

2548 research process (Liebenberg, Ungar, & Theron, 2014). In the current study, the

2549 videos shown captured the students' involvement over the six-month period and

2550 comprised short clips of students taking part in the classroom workshops, work-

2551 based placements, and the sport and physical activity sessions. The use of videos

2552 helped to capture the diversity of modalities and the complexity of students'

2553 experiences throughout the TACKLE programme (Tilley & Taylor, 2018).

2554   *4.2.6.2.3 Engagement Measure.* The Teacher Engagement Report Form

2555 (TERF-N; Hart et al., 2011) was completed by teachers before and after the

2556 TACKLE programme, to assess any changes in students' level of engagement during

2557 academic lessons (i.e., English, Maths, Science). The TERF-N is a 10-item measure

2558 examining emotional (students' feelings towards learning and their sense of

2559 belonging and connection to the school environment), behavioural (active

2560 involvement, participation, and conduct during academic and social activities), and

2561 cognitive (students' beliefs and attitudes towards education and their psychological

2562 investment towards their own development) aspects of engagement (Hart et al.,

2563 2011; Blondal & Adalbjarnardottir, 2014; Singh & Srivastava, 2014). The instrument

2564 consisted of 10 items and utilised a Likert scale format of 1-5 (i.e., 1 = strongly

2565 disagree and 5 = strongly agree). The TERF-N demonstrates good internal

2566 consistency and reliability (α = .83) (Hart et al., 2011). Additionally, the correlations

2567 for the items range from trivial (r = -.07) to large (r = .87). The majority of

2568 correlations are significant (excluding item 6), and the average inter-item correlation

2569 is moderate (r = .43) (Hart et al., 2011).

2570   *4.2.6.2.4 Perceived Competence and Global Self-Worth.* To assess students'

2571 scholastic, social, athletic, job competence, behavioural conduct, and global self-

2572 worth, Harter's (2012) Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents (SPPA) was

2573 administered at the beginning and end of the programme. This instrument consists of

2574 45 items and captures 9 various domains (i.e., Scholastic Competence, Social

2575 Competence, Athletic Competence, Physical Appearance, Job Competence,

2576 Romantic Appeal, Behavioural Conduct, Close Friendship, and Global Self-Worth).

2577 However, the scale was adapted for the current study to include only domains that

2578 were deemed relevant for this specific population and purposes of the study.

2579 Subsequently, the adapted scale consisted of 30 items and covered 6 domains in total

2580 (i.e., Scholastic Competence, Social Competence, Athletic Competence, Job

2581 Competence, Behavioural Conduct, and Global Self-Worth).

2582   The instrument utilised a 4-point structured alternative format. An example

2583 item includes, "Some teenagers do things they know they shouldn't do BUT Other

2584 teenagers hardly ever do things they know they shouldn't do". Students are

2585 encouraged to choose one statement that they consider a more accurate self-

2586 description and then highlight whether that statement is "really true" or "sort of

2587 true." Each item is scored on a four-point Likert scale, where a score of 1 illustrates

2588 the lowest perception of competence, and a score of 4 indicates the highest

2589 perception of competence. The SPPA demonstrates good psychometric properties,

2590 with internal consistency estimates for each domain ranging from 0.78 to 0.92

2591 (Harter, 2012). The scale also demonstrates evidence of convergent validity when

2592 compared to Marsh (1990) Self-Description Scale. For example, the SPPA Scholastic

2593 domain correlates at .60 with the Total Academic domain, the Social Competence

2594 domain correlates at .68 with the Peer Relations domain, and the Global Self-Worth

2595 domain correlates .56 with the General Self-Concept domain (Harter, 2012).

2596   **4.2.6.3 Phase Three: CMO Configurations and Refined Programme**

2597 **Theories.** The final phase involved realist analysis and interpretation of the data to

2598 formulate context, mechanism, and outcome configurations and to refine programme

2599 theories. Specifically, data were examined to understand the effects (outcomes) of

2600 the TACKLE programme, the resources of the programme that led to effects

2601 (mechanisms) and the type of circumstances in which these effects occurred

2602 (contexts) (Pawson & Tilley, 1997).

2603   The data for each case study was analysed together to formulate CMO

2604 configurations and programme theories that were similar across each school and to

2605 examine instances where contexts, mechanisms, and outcomes were different

2606 (Gilmore et al., 2019). One-to-one interviews were the predominant source for the

2607 establishment of CMO configurations. Video footage and field notes from

2608 observations assisted in the process of establishing CMO configurations. Although

2609 the sample size of students was not sufficiently large enough to perform statistical

2610   analyses, pre- and post- questionnaires for each student provided pertinent insights

2611   into changes in their engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes following

2612   the programme. This information was subsequently used to help inform the

2613   identification of the outcomes in the CMO configurations, helping to support or

2614   expand the findings generated through the analysis of the qualitative data.

2615   ***4.2.6.3.1 Data Analysis.*** Interview transcripts and field notes were read

2616   repeatedly, and the audio recordings were listened to multiple times. Throughout this

2617   process, I immersed myself in the data while searching for instances where the

2618   interviewees spoke about important contexts, mechanisms, and outcomes

2619   (Mukumbang, Belle, Marchal, & Wky, 2016). The CMO heuristic was then applied

2620   to the data and instances highlighting contexts, mechanisms, and outcomes were

2621   coded. Specifically, to distinguish contexts from mechanisms, mechanisms were

2622   separated into resources and reasoning (Dalkin et al., 2015). A table was formulated

2623   listing the context, mechanism, and outcome configurations for each school and

2624   direct quotes were linked that related specifically to each part of the CMO

2625   configuration. Instances were explored where contextual factors differed across

2626   schools and how this may have prevented the activation of mechanisms. I shared the

2627   CMO configuration analysis with TACKLE facilitators and my supervisors who

2628   provided feedback and input throughout each stage of the analytical process.

2629   ***4.2.7 Quality and Reporting Standards in Realist Evaluation***

2630   The realist evaluation was carried out in accordance with the RAMESES II

2631   reporting (Wong et al., 2016) and quality standards (Greenhalgh et al., 2017). The

2632   reporting standards were introduced to enhance the overall quality and rigour of

2633   realist evaluations and comprise twenty items in total (Wong et al., 2016). Each item

2634   has been followed during the course of data collection and analysis. The quality

2635   standards highlight eight key principles: (a) a realist approach is suitable for the

2636   overall purposes of the evaluation (see chapter 3, section 3.1); (b) principles of

2637   generative causation are applied (see chapter 4, section 4.3); (c) there is an initial and

2638   refined programme theory (see chapter 4, section 4.3); (d) the evaluation design is

2639   explained and justified (see chapter 4, section 4.2); (e) data collection methods are

2640   appropriate (see chapter 4, section 4.2); (f) appropriate selection of participants to

2641   address research questions (see chapter 4, section 4.2); (g) data analysis is

2642   retroductive and examines the interaction between context and mechanism(s) (see

2643   chapter 4, section 4.2); and (h) realist analysis is utilised to construct CMO

2644   configurations and refine programme theories (see chapter 4, section 4.3)

2645   (Greenhalgh et al., 2017).

2646   **4.3 Findings**

2647   In the following section, the findings from the realist evaluation are presented

2648   under the eight initial programme theories (illustrated in boxes below). Evidence is

2649   provided pertaining to each initial programme theory. Specifically, under each initial

2650   programme theory description, there is a succinct summary of the initial programme

2651   theory and information regarding whether it was supported, expanded, refined, or

2652   refuted in light of the data collected. The findings related to each initial programme

2653   theory are then described according to the important contextual factors, mechanisms,

2654   and outcomes, which is followed by tables detailing the context, mechanism, and

2655   outcome (CMO) configurations. The CMO configurations are the output of the data

2656   collected and prolonged engagement and immersion within the field. Quotes from

2657   participants[4], as well as field notes, are provided to illustrate each CMO. The refined

2658   programme theories are then discussed and summarised based on the data collected.

2659   Taken together, the CMO configurations and refined programme theories provide an

2660   explanation of how the TACKLE programme is or is not working, for whom, and

2661   under which circumstances.

2662   *4.3.1 Initial Programme Theory 1: One-to-One Mentoring*

A mentor can listen, empathise, understand, and support the student, nurturing their overall personal development (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Reid, 2002). Through prolonged engagement, the student can develop trust and respect for their mentor, and the mentor can help the student recognise their strengths, assets, interests, and passion. Disengaged students may be unsure what they would like to do or hesitant to pursue their passion due to a lack of self-belief and direction. A mentor can provide a student with clarity and exposure to potential employment/educational opportunities, supporting them in the process of goal setting and planning (Reid, 2002).

2663   This initial programme theory refers to the impact of a one-to-one mentor.

2664   There was evidence to support many elements of this theory. For instance, the voices

2665   of students indicated that the mentor served as an effective source of support,

2666   providing an opportunity for students to feel listened to, understood, respected, and

---

[4] Each student participant has been allocated a pseudonym; any quotes presented with a name are from interviews with students. When quotes are used from the teachers, they are explicitly labelled as teachers.

2667 valued. Over time, students developed trust and respect for their mentor, and the

2668 mentor provided clarity and guidance regarding employment opportunities for their

2669 future. These findings are explained in more detail below.

2670 **4.3.1.1 CMO Configuration 1.1: Development of Trust and Respect.**

2671 Students valued the high-quality relationships they developed with TACKLE

2672 facilitators, who served as their one-to-one mentors. These relationships were

2673 particularly important for these students because many of them described having

2674 negative and psychologically destructive relationships outside of the school

2675 environment (context). As Jack explained: "The one person I can't rely upon is [my

2676 parent]. Just can't speak to them about anything… [they] always lies to me all of the

2677 time." Similarly, another student, Owen, stated: "my parents are quite literally

2678 examples of what I don't want to become."

2679 Within this context, the mentor served as a significant source of support, an

2680 opportunity for the student to feel listened to, respected, and valued (mechanism).

2681 Many students described how they experienced an immediate connection with their

2682 mentor (mechanism). For example, Angharad explained: "We got on right from the

2683 beginning, just kind of clicked." For other students, although the connection with

2684 their mentor did not happen immediately, they explained how their relationship

2685 developed over time (mechanism). Dominic recalled:

2686   I'd say I was quiet for a while, like just kept myself to myself, I mean, didn't

2687   really speak to [my mentor]. But after I got to know them properly, realised

2688   [my mentor's] sound like and someone I can proper count on.

2689 Through prolonged engagement with their mentor, many went on to explain how

2690 much they enjoyed being around their mentor, and the feelings of mutual trust and

2691 respect they had developed for one another (outcome). As described by Sam: "[My

2692 mentor's] got my back. I know I can trust them 'cause they supports and respects me.

2693 And I enjoy being around them, makes me feel happy and calm." Given the lack of

2694 quality relationships in their lives, the students indicated that they valued the

2695 authenticity of their mentors and being able to openly share their thoughts and

2696 feelings with them (outcome). According to the students, successful relationships

2697 were the ones where they felt comfortable sharing personal aspects of their life with

2698 their mentor. This sentiment was illustrated by Megan: "They've been someone I can

2699 rely on and talk to about anything. Things I haven't even told anyone before." This

2700 CMO configuration is detailed in Table 4.3.

2701 **Table 4.3**

2702 *CMO Configuration 1.1: Development of Trust and Respect*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Students described having negative and psychologically destructive relationships outside of the school environment.	The mentor provided an opportunity for students to feel listened to, respected, and valued.	Many students described an immediate connection with their mentor, for others, the connection developed over time.	Students enjoyed being around their mentor and over time, there was a development of mutual trust and respect, and improved self-disclosure.

2703

2704 **4.3.1.2 CMO Configuration 1.2: Guidance and Support.** According to the

2705 data, it was evident that many students in TACKLE lacked positive role models and

2706 received limited access to information, support, and guidance (context). Throughout

2707 the one-to-one mentoring process, TACKLE facilitators provided access to new

2708 perspectives, advice, and guidance on aspects such as diet and exercise (mechanism),

2709 which may otherwise not be available to students outside of the educational context.

2710 As Erin explained:

2711   My parents aren't really bothered about me drinking or smoking, they smoke

2712   as well you see and they know most people my age smoke too so they're not

2713   that bothered, they'd prefer it if I didn't but they never say anything or get on

2714   my back about it.

2715 By mentors providing such guidance and information to the students, this triggered a

2716 desire and motivation in students to adopt healthier behaviours (mechanism). In

2717 Hannah's case, for example, interactions with her mentor had helped her to realise

2718 the importance of looking after herself properly: Talking to [my mentor] just got me

2719 wanting to do more, taught me to take a lot more care of myself, and my health." As

2720 a consequence, the mentors were able to help direct students away from health-

2721 comprising behaviours and towards more informed health decisions (outcome). In

2722 Dylan's description of a discussion, he had shared with his mentor, he noted:

2723   I've understood exercise and diet a lot more and it's giving me inspiration to

2724   me cause I used to eat just junk, and now I'm changing that, and eating more

2725   healthy food. So, it helped, [my mentor] taught me about how much calories

2726   you put in cause I've got to put in 2,500… and normally I probably put

2727   maybe over that, but now I'm putting in just a bit less, they're helping out

2728   with my shape as well you know, for my body, and turning me into a

2729   different person.

2730 In a similar vein, Jordan commented:

2731   I'll be honest I'm eating a lot more healthy stuff now. I've been getting up

2732   earlier to sort out breakfast every morning. I've had more like salad,

2733   vegetables, I've even eaten more fruit. So, [my mentor] kind of taught me…

2734   and helped [me] to stop drinking, I haven't had a Monsters energy drink in

2735   three months. I used to have them [energy drinks] everyday mind.

2736 This CMO configuration is presented in Table 4.4.

2737 **Table 4.4**

2738 *CMO Configuration 1.2: Guidance and Support*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Many students in TACKLE lacked positive role models and received limited access to information, support, and guidance.	The mentor provided access to new perspectives, information, advice, and guidance on aspects such as diet and exercise.	This triggered a desire and motivation in students to adopt healthier behaviours.	Students were directed away from health comprising behaviours and towards more informed health decisions.

2739   **4.3.1.3 CMO Configuration: 1.3: Mechanisms of Awe.** The mentors were

2740 extremely competent and knowledgeable about rugby. Many had extensive coaching

2741 experience and had played rugby to a high standard (context). Through role

2742 modelling and serving as supportive models of success, mentors discussed

2743 employment opportunities and provided career-related guidance. During the

2744 meetings, the students listened attentively to advice, it was evident that they looked

2745 up to their mentors and were driven to emulate their mentor's achievements

2746 (mechanism). Sophie, for instance, shared: "I was impressed by the coaching that

2747 [my mentor] does, I'd like to do some coaching as well, with younger kids."

2748 Likewise, Colton described:

2749   I really want to do something just like the work [my mentor] does. Something

2750   in sport and helping, just like what they do with us. So, teaching us sport and

2751   coaching us, I'd like to do that with younger children, I think. I'd like to help

2752   them play sport because I enjoy doing that, so I could do that all the time, as a

2753   proper job I mean.

2754 Interactions with their mentors had positive outcomes for students, including the

2755 development of aspiration and ambition for their future (outcome). For instance,

2756 when asked to explain the impact of his mentor, Adam described how he had

2757 developed feelings of hope towards his future based on discussions with his mentor:

2758   Well, I know now that I wanna get my coaching qualifications. We [me and

2759   my mentor] talked about coaching a lot you see, and I realised that I'd really

2760   like to train the youngsters you see, at a good early age, five or six. And then

2761   train that team until their older and then hopefully I can arrange scouts to

2762   come down. So, it gives them all the chance to get into the professional

2763   [team].

2764 This CMO configuration is summarised in Table 4.5.

2765 **Table 4.5**

2766 *CMO Configuration 1.3: Mechanisms of Awe*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
TACKLE mentors were extremely competent and knowledgeable about rugby. Many had extensive coaching experience and had played rugby to a high standard.	Through role modelling, mentoring, and serving as supportive models of success, mentors discussed employment opportunities and provided career-related guidance.	Students listened attentively to advice. Many identified with and looked up to the mentors and felt driven to emulate their achievements.	Development of aspiration and ambition for their future.

2767   **4.3.1.4 Refined Programme Theory 1: One-to-One Mentoring.** In line

2768 with the initial programme theory, the data from this evaluation demonstrated that

2769 the mentor provided an opportunity for students to feel listened to, respected, and

2770 valued. Specifically, many students had negative, unstable, and psychologically

2771 destructive relationships outside of the school environment. In these conditions, it

2772 was evident that the student enjoyed being around their mentor and over time, they

2773 had developed a relationship based on mutual trust and respect. As a consequence,

2774 students felt comfortable sharing thoughts, feelings, and personal aspects of their life

2775 with their mentor. Furthermore, in the context of students who lacked positive role

2776 models and received limited access to information, support, and guidance, the mentor

2777 provided access to new perspectives, information, and advice on areas such as diet

2778 and exercise. Through engagement with their mentor, students were directed away

2779 from health comprising behaviours and towards more informed health decisions. In

2780 addition, within the context of mentors who had extensive coaching experience and

2781 knowledge, they served as supportive models of success and provided students with

2782 career-related guidance. The narratives of students indicated that they identified with,

2783 and looked up to their mentor and felt driven to emulate their mentor's achievements.

2784 This led to positive outcomes for students, including, feelings of aspiration and

2785 ambition for their future.

2786 *4.3.2 Initial Programme Theory 2: Classroom-based Workshops*

These may enhance academic, social, and communication skills through access to activities, games, information, and learning materials, which may provide students with essential perspective and orientation (Pearson et al., 2015). Interactive classroom activities, discussions, role play scenarios, and small group presentation work may also enable students to practice articulating and presenting their ideas to their peers, in a safe and trusting environment. These are skills that, due to their educational experiences to date, disengaged students may find particularly challenging or threatening. Thus, having an opportunity to develop them in a safe environment is likely to be beneficial and important.

2787 This initial programme theory explores the type of learning opportunities

2788 students are presented with in the classroom setting. There was evidence to support

2789 this initial programme theory, particularly the emphasis on interactive classroom

2790 activities, discussions, role play scenarios, small group presentations, and the

2791 opportunity for students to practice articulating and presenting their ideas to their

2792 peers, in a safe and trusting environment. However, the classroom-based workshops

2793 also demonstrated different ways of working. These findings will be discussed

2794 below.

2795 **4.3.2.1 CMO Configuration 2.1: Active Forms of Learning.** Students in

2796 the programme described how during the classroom workshops, their voices and

2797 ideas were heard, something which they were not used to in their usual lessons

2798 (context). For instance, Faye shared: "In TACKLE I can speak my mind out, I can

2799 like talk about ideas and stuff that I'm thinking. In English, Sir tells me to keep my

2800 voice in." While Thomas further described: "You could put your ideas more through

2801 TACKLE than lessons, you can't really put your ideas through normal lessons

2802 because you get told off when you do it." In field notes, TACKLE facilitators were

2803 observed actively involving students in their own learning by enabling them to

2804   problem solve, delegate roles, share ideas, experiences, and perspective. As a

2805   consequence, students experienced greater ownership and control over their learning

2806   and higher levels of engagement and enjoyment (mechanism). This led to positive

2807   outcomes for students, including improved social interactions and cooperation

2808   between students', a sense of shared responsibility for their learning, and higher

2809   levels of creativity and innovation.

2810   The students uniformly highlighted the importance of listening to each

2811 other's ideas, perspectives, and interests in order to experience higher levels of

2812 enjoyment towards learning and more control over the learning process

2813 (mechanism). As James expressed:

2814   We're learning a lot from TACKLE, but you do it in a fun and enjoyable way

2815   than normal lessons, like our group work, it was getting together everyone's

2816   ideas and taking everyone's opinions and interests. Like when we created our

2817   own business, that was spot on, fair play, I loved it. I know quite a lot about

2818   having your own business, 'cause I watch podcasts of people who've got their

2819   own [business], so, I could tell the others about it, I think them sort of tasks

2820   give you more say, like you're kind of in control cause you have a say in all

2821   the decisions.

2822 According to Deion, it was important for him to be actively involved through sharing

2823 his own ideas to ensure he remained engaged (mechanism). He explained:

2824   In a normal lesson, it will be kind of like a, well, basically the teacher will be

2825   up talking and then you just sit there and copy out of a book. Here [in

2826   TACKLE] it's not like that, when you're talking in groups and working

2827   together, you have more say and it makes you more focused, it's more

2828   interesting, like you don't wanna read words and paragraphs all the time, you

2829   wanna talk about your own sort of ideas.

2830 Emma also explained how working together in a group had helped her to interact

2831 more effectively with her peers and developed her capacity to think more creatively

2832 (outcome):

2833   I think you learn how to speak to everyone in your group properly because

2834   you have to make sure everyone's happy with the decisions. It [group work]

2835   sort of pushes you to think deep and teaches you to speak out your ideas in

2836   something you've worked together to create.

2837 The narratives of students emphasised the importance of learning environments

2838 where they were actively involved, free to share their ideas, express their thoughts,

2839 think more creatively, work alongside others, and to take ownership over their own

2840 learning. This is depicted further in Table 4.6.

2841 **Table 4.6**

2842 *CMO Configuration 2.1: Active Forms of Learning*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
The education system is focused on standardised tests, rote learning, and accountability. Many students in the programme felt that in contrast to their curriculum subject lessons, they had opportunities for their voices and ideas to be heard within TACKLE.	During the classroom sessions, students were actively involved in their own learning through problem solving, distributing roles, sharing their own experiences and perspective, and expressing and exploring ideas and interests (e.g., establishing their own businesses, sports clubs, and events).	Students experienced greater ownership and control over their learning and higher levels of engagement and enjoyment.	Improved social interactions and cooperation between peers, shared responsibility for learning, and higher levels of creativity and innovation.

2843 **4.3.2.2 CMO Configuration 2.2: The Power of Collective Experience.** For

2844 several students, psychological challenges such as anxiety and panic attacks were

2845 common (context). Students described struggling with psychological challenges

2846 during their day-to-day school experiences. For instance, Ryan reflected on missing a

2847 considerable amount of secondary school previously:

2848   I struggled in year seven and eight because I had like bad school anxiety so I

2849   found it hard to go into school, so I was like they'd let me like, not home

2850   school but like I stayed off for like a good three months because in year

2851   seven, I just found it too hard in school but then both times I got in like a rut

2852   when I was in the house, not coming out, so, I decided to come back in.

2853 Feelings of anxiety, depression, and disconnection from school was a feeling shared

2854 by most students, likely due to their early exposure to life adversity and/or their

2855 chaotic and complex lives (context). As described by one teacher:

2856   I mean, I think there's so many contributory points here, you know, I mean,

2857   many have been moved from one house to another, for some, there's ten of

2858   them sharing one flat, there's erm, issues with dad, there's, you know, issues

with partners, drugs, alcohol… There's so many kind of social and personal issues here, there is drama in virtually every one of these kids' lives. School is the closest they get to some normality. You know, these issues impact hugely on their engagement and wellbeing you know, a real poor support network.

Throughout the classroom-based workshops, students constructed a more positive self-identity (outcome) through the process of sharing similar experiences of adversity and hardship with their peers (mechanism). For many students, discussing past experiences helped students to develop an authentic understanding of each other, while simultaneously processing complex emotions, thoughts, and feelings (mechanism). As explained by Jamie:

When [my parent] died, it made my anxiety and depression 'anging [very bad], smoking helps though, it helps with panic attacks, makes them go down. Little things really stress you when you're going through things. But here, we get each other [in TACKLE], these boys', we've all been through the same shit, we get it. Most [people] don't get us. But been in this group with everyone, we can talk to each other and it's like I erm, I thought maybe I can do this [school], maybe I can stick to it, you know.

Rhiannon reiterated:

There's a lot of things going through my mind and stuff. I can't really tackle it on my own. The worse thing you can do about depression is nothing. Isolating yourself really doesn't help. I have to have someone to help me and I mean, after a while I did, I got comfortable in TACKLE speaking around people about my problems a bit more. So, I took a lot off my chest and give me confidence to talk to people, because I know how bad it is to feel, when you can't talk to anyone and you've got a lot on your chest and shoulders. So, it's important to be there for people around you and I've got more respect for people now, because I've heard about what they go through, everyone is fighting against their own demons.

From listening to different experiences and understanding their peers' interpretation of a shared phenomenon, students highlighted how they were able to understand and make sense of past or present experiences in their own lives (mechanism). For instance, Elliot revealed:

2892   I do make jokes about it [parental incarceration] 'cause it is what it is. I don't

2893   like attention. But speaking to the boys did make me see that it's not my fault

2894   though what happened. And that things happen that you can't control

2895   sometimes.

2896 While Bethany shared a similar thought:

2897   It definitely boosted my confidence to talk to people about things, last year,

2898   I'd keep most of it in. It's helped me a lot to just talk about things, I think I

2899   understand more stuff now than I did. I used to be really quiet and shy… I

2900   was just tucked like tucked away from everyone for a bit but now I'm coming

2901   out of my shell a bit. I talk to my friends in TACKLE about stuff that has

2902   happened to me. And I listen to them. I have a lot more respect for people

2903   because I've seen what they go through. It's just easier to put yourself in their

2904   shoes after you've seen it happen to someone else.

2905 As evident in the extracts above, through students sharing perspective and

2906 experiences with their peers, they were able to develop personal relationships, social

2907 connectedness, and an appreciation of one another's challenges (outcome). In the

2908 case of Bethany, for example, she described how the TACKLE programme helped

2909 her to develop feelings of empathy for those around her. When feelings of empathy

2910 were triggered, Bethany was able to cope more effectively with her own

2911 vulnerabilities and past experiences. As evidenced in the following quote:

2912   It made me realise that other people experience… they erm go through the

2913   same sort of things and feelings. I suppose it kind of like made me think

2914   differently and not be so hard on myself you know, like to stop worrying

2915   about stuff, and like feeling so bad about things that have happened cause I'm

2916   not the only one with problems here.

2917 This is explored further in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7

CMO Configuration 2.2: The Power of Collective Experience

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Many students had encountered adverse childhood experiences. Examples of such experiences included, but were not limited to, academic failure, peer bullying, emotional and physical abuse, neglect, parental separation, parental death, parental substance abuse, and parental criminality. As a result of exposure to such adversity, many students in TACKLE experienced psychological challenges.	During the classroom workshops, students shared perspective and similar experiences of adversity and hardship with their peers. Thus, the chance to share their own journey and to also hear their peers' journeys.	A feeling of being heard, a chance to understand aspects of their own lives and their peers' lives, the opportunity to process complex emotions, thoughts, and feelings, and to make meaning of their current or past experiences together.	Improved school attendance, relationships with peers, social connectedness, feelings of empathy towards others, and the construction of a more positive self-identity.

4.3.2.3 CMO Configuration 2.3: Personal Growth and Development. In the context of students who had encountered adverse childhood experiences, the classroom-based workshops provided students with an opportunity to receive encouragement and support from their peers, and established an environment where they could also share their own strengths, assets, and coping skills (mechanism). As highlighted by Charlotte: "Everyone was just so supportive, and I think like talking about myself, it made me see what I've overcome and the sort of things I've learnt about myself, you know, kind of like the ways I've coped with stuff." Outcomes evident included students developing feelings of self-esteem and self-worth and using their experiences of adversity to provide support to others facing similar challenges. For instance, Samantha explained:

> I understand other people because I've been through these things myself you see. So, I can help others get through them too. I'd say that's a good thing that's come out of all of this, now at least I can help others, help them to come through the other side.

This CMO configuration is displayed in Table 4.8.

2936 **Table 4.8**

2937 *CMO Configuration 2.3: Personal Growth and Development*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Many students had encountered adverse childhood experiences.	The TACKLE programme provided students with an opportunity to receive encouragement and support from their peers.	Students shared their own strengths, assets, and coping resources.	Improved self-esteem and self-worth. Students were motivated to use their own experiences to help others.

2938 **4.3.2.4 Refined Programme Theory 2: Classroom-Based Workshops.**

2939 There was evidence to support elements of the initial programme theory, however, it

2940 became clearer exactly how the classroom workshops were working and why. For

2941 instance, in the context of an education system where students experienced limited

2942 opportunity to express their voices and ideas, the classroom sessions worked when

2943 they created a student-centred learning environment in which students were actively

2944 involved in their own learning (Azzarito & Ennis, 2003; Bonnette et al., 2001).

2945 Through working cooperatively together in groups, problem solving, exploring new

2946 ideas, and developing new interests, students experienced greater ownership and

2947 control over their learning, and higher levels of creativity and innovation.

2948 Furthermore, the programme theory was also expanded, as the findings illuminated

2949 different ways in which the classroom sessions were working for students.

2950 Specifically, within the context of students who encountered psychological

2951 challenges (e.g., anxiety, panic attacks, depression), by bringing students together

2952 with similar challenges and backgrounds, they were able to share their experiences

2953 with their peers. This in turn enabled students to process difficult emotions and to

2954 make meaning of experiences together. As such, students developed feelings of

2955 empathy for their peers and constructed a more positive self-identity. In addition, the

2956 classroom-workshops also nurtured students' growth and development. For instance,

2957 as a result of the support and encouragement received by their peers, and the chance

2958 for students to share their own strengths and coping resources, students developed

2959 feelings of self-esteem and self-worth, and were motivated to use their own

2960 experiences of adversity to help others.

2961 *4.3.3 Initial Programme Theory 3: Work-Based Placements*

In order to re-ignite interest and engagement in education, students may benefit from exposure to more hands-on teaching approaches and practical experiences through work-based placements. Such experiences may help students to develop a vision for their future and offer clarity in relation to career options post-school. Work-based placements may also provide experiential learning opportunities which allow students to gain the skills, competencies, and behaviours necessary to secure employment in the future (Chen, 2011). Through interaction and engagement with supportive, knowledgeable adults, students may develop their perceived social and job competencies (Harter, 2012).

2962   This initial programme theory explores the idea that exposure to work-based
2963 placements may re-ignite students' engagement in their education, helping them to
2964 develop a vision for their future, and providing clarity regarding the opportunities
2965 available post-school. In line with this initial programme theory, there was evidence
2966 to support and confirm many elements, however, the theory was also expanded. For a
2967 minority of students, the work-based placements triggered different mechanisms and
2968 led to alternative outcomes.

2969   **4.3.3.1 CMO Configuration 3.1: Exploration of Possible Life Directions.**
2970 For many students, a summation of negative educational experiences had impacted
2971 their desire and motivation to learn during core subject lessons (e.g., English,
2972 Mathematics, and Science). Many had been referred to TACKLE due to displaying
2973 disconnection and disaffection with current forms of learning and education. From
2974 the data, it was evident that students lacked clarity regarding available options post-
2975 school and were unaware of alternative learning strategies and pathways such as
2976 vocational training schemes and apprenticeships (context). For instance, Marcus
2977 observed: "Well there's loads of different apprenticeships and courses isn't there?
2978 So, it was decent to see what you can actually do 'cause I didn't even know about
2979 them [the apprenticeships and courses] I'll be honest."

2980   Successful experiences in the workplace triggered mechanisms of hope and
2981 helped students to envisage possible life directions and a more desirable future.
2982 Consequently, their engagement and attendance in classroom lessons was enhanced,
2983 as they were able to make a meaningful connection between completing school and
2984 future opportunities (outcome). As Lowri said: "Finding the things that I've found
2985 out in TACKLE, all of the jobs I can do after school, changed the way I look at the

2986 [school] work and changed the way I thought because what I thought wasn't reality."

2987 For the first time, many of the students could identify a reason for completing school.

2988 This increased engagement and attendance in school arose for various

2989 reasons. For many students, the work-based placements enhanced perceptions of

2990 competence and developed their awareness of their own knowledge, strengths, and

2991 talents (mechanism). For example, reflecting on an engineering workshop, Lewis

2992 indicated: "I like practical things, you know, I love learning from doing things. So,

2993 my favourite part would be like knowing, finding out more about me. I've done stuff

2994 [on these placements] that I didn't know I was even capable of doing." For Lewis,

2995 building an awareness of his strengths and talents was a new experience and re-

2996 ignited his engagement in classroom learning to enable him to pursue his interests

2997 and talents post-school.

2998 The work-based placements also helped with the acquisition of new

2999 knowledge, assets, and skills (mechanism), including strategies they may apply in the

3000 future to establish an empowering and nurturing working environment. For instance,

3001 James shared: "Because I want to have my own business, it [the work-based

3002 placement] helped me to see how I could be an effective leader to my employees,

3003 understanding them, their backgrounds, and the ways they work best." Consequently,

3004 by recognising this, students' engagement in learning was re-ignited as they were

3005 able to form a connection between school and their future. This CMO configuration

3006 is depicted further in Table 4.9.

3007 **Table 4.9**

3008 *CMO Configuration 3.1: Exploration of Possible Life Directions*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Many students in the programme felt disconnected towards learning. They had limited understanding of future prospects and were unaware of the opportunities available to them post-school.	Trips to various companies (either site tours or job shadowing) provided exposure to new possibilities for thinking about their future and enabled students to envision. This was accomplished through role play and allowing students to practice working.	The student felt comfortable in this new role after a few hours/days, they enjoyed their new role, and this experience opened up their thinking, enabling them to realise their own knowledge, strengths, and talents, while acquiring new knowledge, assets, and skills. The student realised that they were interested in a particular job that previously they had not been due to a lack of exposure. This triggered feelings of hope and re-ignited excitement towards education and their future.	Improved attendance, engagement, and behaviour in core subject lessons due to an enhanced motivation to achieve the GCSE grades necessary to be able to pursue such options.

3009   **4.3.3.2 CMO Configuration 3.2: Process of Elimination.** In contrast to the

3010 students who developed a realisation of the occupations they were interested in

3011 pursuing; a minority of students did not connect or resonate with the work-based

3012 placements due to feelings of apathy towards the working environment.

3013 Consequently, for some of these students, the work-based placements triggered

3014 different mechanisms and outcomes.

3015   Specifically, prior to TACKLE these students were unaware of what

3016 opportunities were available to them after school (context). As Amelia explained: "I

3017 didn't have no clue what sort of things I could do [after school] so, it [TACKLE]

3018 helped me a lot seeing the different jobs that I can do and you know, trying them."

3019 Through immersing themselves in a diversity of work placements and experiences,

3020 they were able to recognise the types of jobs they did not want to pursue

3021 (mechanism) and subsequently, this realisation led to a desire to seek out different

3022 occupations (outcome). As Carl described: "I found them [work-based placements]

3023 boring, particularly 'cause I know now that I wanna work on my own and do things

3024 my own way, I wanna find something [a job] where I make the decisions." Deion

3025 concurred, he expressed:

3026   They [work-based placements] weren't really for me like but they did make
3027   me think about what route I wanna go down in life. Like when we went that
3028   massive company and seeing workers [customer support team] sat down at
3029   their desk and just answering phones all day long like and listening to
3030   everyone chopsing [complaining]. I really don't wanna do an office job mind,
3031   I'd go insane. So, I've been looking into other things I could do you know,
3032   like public services, military, and police… I'd need like good English, Maths
3033   grades, and proper good fitness levels mind.
3034   Clearly, for Deion and several other students, exposure to work-based placements
3035   helped them to eliminate the jobs they did not find appealing (outcome). The benefit
3036   of this process of elimination was also recognised by the teachers, as one described:
3037   It's not always about finding out what you like but sometimes you find out
3038   what you don't like, the sort of jobs you don't want to do. And then it's
3039   like…Well I've done that, it wasn't for me, move that to one side, and then
3040   move on isn't it?
3041   This is detailed in Table 4.10.
3042   **Table 4.10**
3043   *CMO Configuration 3.2: Process of Elimination*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Students were unaware of the opportunities available to them post-school.	Students receive exposure to various companies and work-based placement experiences. They realised that they did not feel a connection and decided not to pursue these occupations.	They started to direct their energy into thinking about what jobs they would like to pursue.	This led to students eliminating the jobs that did not resonate with them and instilled an interest and desire to seek out different opportunities.

3044   **4.3.3.3 CMO Configuration 3.3: Overcoming Anxiety and Fear.** For a
3045   small number of students, the work-based placements presented them with the
3046   challenge of unfamiliar people and a new environment, which activated mechanisms
3047   of fear, apprehension, and nervousness. I noted such feelings in my field notes,
3048   detailing that students stayed in close proximity to me at the start of the placement
3049   activities and explicitly expressed feelings of worry and panic towards new people
3050   and the new place. The opportunity to engage in work experience did, however, help

3051 students to overcome this anxiety and fear associated with entering into the unknown

3052 (outcome). Consequently, the work-based placements had another impact upon the

3053 students. For instance, a teacher described one of the student's level of anxiety:

3054   It was interesting that when I went down with them to the company, erm, I

3055   didn't think she'd [one of the students] come, right, because again it's taken

3056   her out of her comfort zone, and there were times when she was like 'oh my

3057   legs are wobbly and I feel, I feel the floor is shaking' And then you just, you

3058   know, you talked it through and then next thing, she's forgotten all about that

3059   and she's, you know, giving it all of this, she's flat out, saying well again, it's

3060   confidence and you know, losing that anxiety level, you know, of being in a

3061   new situation, a new environment.

3062 This CMO configuration is described in Table 4.11.

3063 **Table 4.11**

3064 *CMO Configuration 3.3: Overcoming Anxiety and Fear*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Many students experienced psychological challenges (e.g., anxiety, panic attacks, and depression).	The resource was new experience and unfamiliar people.	Students were confronted with feelings of anxiety and fear.	An opportunity to overcome anxiety and fear, and to complete the work-based placement.

3065   **4.3.3.4. Refined Programme Theory 3: Work-Based Placements.** In

3066 accordance with the initial programme theory, exposure to work-based placements

3067 re-ignited students' interest and engagement in their education. Specifically, in the

3068 context of students who had limited understanding of the opportunities available to

3069 them post-school, exposure to successful workplace experiences provided students

3070 with a vision of the occupations they would like to pursue and clarity regarding the

3071 options and pathways available to them. Through the placements, students developed

3072 a recognition of their own knowledge, strengths, and talents, while simultaneously

3073 acquiring new knowledge, assets, and skills. Such experiences re-ignited students'

3074 engagement in classroom-based learning in order to achieve the grades necessary to

3075 be able to access their chosen occupations. However, a minority of students did not

3076 connect with the work-based placements, but through exposure to occupations, they

3077 were able to eliminate the jobs that no longer appealed to them and began to seek out

3078   alternative opportunities. Furthermore, there was also evidence that in the context of

3079   students who experienced psychological challenges, exposure to work-based

3080   placements presented the resource of unfamiliar people and a new environment

3081   which triggered mechanisms of anxiety and fear. Through the placements, students

3082   were able to overcome feelings of anxiety and fear by successfully completing the

3083   work-based placement.

3084   *4.3.4 Initial Programme Theory 4: Sport and Physical Activity*

> These activities may provide students with the opportunity to develop physical and social competencies, a sense of purpose, and transferable life skills (e.g., goal setting, emotional regulation, communication skills, discipline, leadership, resilience, work ethic) (Bailey, Hillman, Arent, & Petitpas, 2013; Gould, Carson, & Blanton, 2013; Super et al., 2018a). Sport is seen as a particularly valuable medium for the development of life skills as it is a highly charged emotional setting, offering unique learning experiences, and 'opportunity structures' in comparison to other modalities (Hansen et al., 2003; Larson, Hansen, & Moneta, 2006). For instance, involvement in sport may provide a context for students to develop respect for their opponents, conformity to the rules, integrity, self-control, teamwork, and selflessness (Green, 2008).
>
> If students are effectively taught life skills within the sport and physical activity context, then they may be able to effectively apply these skills across other areas of their lives (e.g., the school, family, and community context) (Gould & Carson, 2008). However, in order for life skills and developmental lessons learnt within sport settings to be internalised and transferred into other domains, facilitators need to reinforce the lessons learnt in a variety of ways (e.g., team discussions, modelling, and role play). Such activities should provide students with time to actively reflect and practice the life skills they are developing in sport within other domains (Bean & Forneris, 2017a; Gould & Carson, 2008; Whitley, Wright, & Gould, 2016). The successful transfer of life skills to other contexts may lead to improvements in student's sense of coherence, engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes (Super et al., 2018a).

3085   This initial programme theory is grounded in the proposition that students can

3086   develop important life skills through sport and transfer these skills to other areas

3087   (e.g., the school, family, and community context) (Gould & Carson, 2008). The

3088   findings supported this theory to an extent. For instance, there was evidence to

3089   suggest that students developed leadership and communication skills through their

3090   participation in the sport workshops and that in turn, they were able to transfer these

3091   skills to their school contexts. However, it was evident that students developed life

3092   skills across all modalities of TACKLE (i.e., mentoring, classroom, and work-based

3093 placements) and that life skill development was not solely specific to the sport

3094 context (this is explored further in initial programme theory 6). Furthermore, the

3095 voices of students also highlighted that the sport workshops exposed them to new

3096 activities and opportunities. These findings are summarised below.

3097   **4.3.4.1 CMO Configuration 4.1: Position of Authority.** Many students

3098 involved in TACKLE were often disempowered. They were typically not trusted by

3099 teachers or significant others and were not provided with opportunities to lead or to

3100 take control (context). In this context, TACKLE facilitators spoke of the importance

3101 of offering students' leadership responsibilities and placing them in positions of

3102 authority. For instance, during the programme, students officiated rugby matches,

3103 festivals, and tournaments, and delivered sporting activities and drills to their peers.

3104 As a result of, all the students unanimously voiced increased feelings of competency,

3105 empowerment, and pride (mechanism). When describing his involvement in

3106 refereeing rugby for younger children, Benjamin said:

3107   In school, I'm usually sitting at the back like, trying to erm, trying to hide

3108   away from everyone. But on the field, it's kind of like I'm a different me. It's

3109   helping my confidence, I feel more happy in myself, like I can do a lot more

3110   things in life.

3111 Similarly, Nathan's description demonstrates the pride he had in his achievements

3112 (mechanism), particularly as they were highlighted by one of the TACKLE

3113 facilitators:

3114   I especially liked that, the primary school tournament because the second

3115   match I refereed I asked, has everyone touched the ball and two girls put their

3116   hands up, so, I put it, gave it them. And then the coach said… 'I'm proud of

3117   you so you can keep that whistle'. He gave me [the whistle], and I've still got

3118   it now.

3119 This led to students internalising feelings of competency, empowerment, and pride,

3120 continuing to search for more leadership responsibilities within the school, and

3121 establishing new ways of interacting with their teachers and peers (outcome). For

3122 instance, when discussing the impact of the sport workshops, Michael expressed:

3123   For me, it's improved sort of skills such as you know, confidence to do things

3124   and that. So, like I'm helping teachers run clubs in school. And that's quite a

3125   big, it's quite a big thing, helping teachers and that at my age. But after

3126   TACKLE, the teachers are trusting me with it you know, so, it's the

3127   confidence I've got, the speaking around people more, and helping out

3128   others… is the key things I learnt.

3129   This is explored further in Table 4.12.

3130   **Table 4.12**

3131   *CMO configuration 4.1: Position of Authority*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Students involved in the TACKLE programme were often disempowered. They were typically not trusted by teachers or significant others and were not provided with opportunities to lead or to take control. There were power inequalities.	Students had the opportunity to deliver practical drills/activities to their peers and to referee rugby matches for younger age groups. This offered leadership responsibilities and opportunities for students to re-associate how they identified with themselves. As opposed to being at the back of the class that no teacher may usually listen to, they now had to directly lead, and were placed in a position of authority.	Students felt like a leader and had opportunities to experience what it felt like to be in a position of authority. They experienced feelings of competency, empowerment, and pride when the session was well received by their peers.	During TACKLE, students internalised feelings of competency, empowerment, and pride. They continued to search new leadership roles and volunteering opportunities within the school and established new ways of interacting with their teachers and peers.

3132   **4.3.4.2 CMO Configuration 4.2: Exposure to New Opportunities.** All of

3133   the students in TACKLE lived in deprived and disadvantaged areas, with limited

3134   access to facilities, transport, and sporting opportunities (context). As expressed by

3135   Amelia: "I've never been to watch a rugby match at a stadium before. Where I live is

3136   rough, there's no clubs or teams around me, just pubs and that." During the

3137   programme, students participated in new sporting activities, attended professional

3138   rugby matches, and experienced a stadium tour. For many students in TACKLE, they

3139   expressed appreciation and gratitude for the opportunities provided (mechanism). As

3140   Michael stated: "Well we got to learn and experience new sports. So, when we did

3141   dodgeball, kick rugby, the rugby cage thing. And I was so happy we got the chance

3142   to watch the [rugby] game at the stadium, that was class." Likewise, Nathan shared:

3143   I haven't missed one single [TACKLE] session, and I haven't missed any

3144   trips or lessons, even when I was ill. Remember when I was really ill, really

3145   bad? But, because I didn't want to wreck the opportunity in coming to watch

3146   a match and see the stadium, meet rugby players. So, this is better than

3147 everything in this school. I think this is the only reputation the school, this

3148 school, has, I think, anyway. Because we do sports leadership, and we do

3149 trips where nobody could ever do like with this school. They couldn't do it

3150 their selves. Because it would be more expense, we would need to pay for it.

3151 Like going into the stadium and changing rooms, I wouldn't have got to do

3152 that if it wasn't for TACKLE.

3153 Echoing the voices of students, a teacher described the importance of these trips and

3154 how meaningful they were to the students:

3155 Let's say, well from them [the students] never being able to experience a

3156 game before, to then being able to not just watch a game but actually visit the

3157 stadium, to see around the stadium, you know, they were so happy, to see the

3158 changing rooms and the medic room. I don't think they expected it to be so

3159 big or so posh, you know, the massive TVs in the changing room, the racing

3160 seats. I think it gave them an insight into the level of professionalism in rugby

3161 and well seeing all the different facilities, that was brilliant for them, it was a

3162 huge thing for them.

3163 Unfortunately, however, it should be noted that one of the students in the programme

3164 was unable to attend the rugby match due to perceived financial concerns. As one

3165 teacher observed:

3166 He [one of the students] didn't go to the match, he was supposed to, but after

3167 I spoke with him the next day privately, he never turned up because he was

3168 worried that he would need money when he was at the stadium. You know, it

3169 really does make you realise and bring perspective doesn't it? Makes you step

3170 back and really appreciate the types of situations that these kids are facing,

3171 you know, they come from families who really are struggling financially you

3172 know, with very unfortunate backgrounds and leading such underprivileged

3173 lives. I mean, many are providing for such large families. It's tough, their

3174 lives are tough, and you really do feel for every one of them in TACKLE.

3175 For the majority of students, however, it was evident that the opportunities and

3176 activities provided in TACKLE led to positive outcomes, including improved social

3177 cohesion and connections with others. For example, in describing the impact of the

3178 sports and activities, Thomas succinctly stated: "It like brought a lot of us closer

3179 together. We experienced so much together and built good companionships and now

3180 we can trust each other with lots of things." Another student, Angharad, described

3181 how her involvement in the different sports and trips had helped her to "make close

3182 friends" and to "share experiences" with her peers, teachers, and the TACKLE

3183 facilitators. This CMO configuration is explicated in Table 4.13.

3184 **Table 4.13**

3185 *CMO Configuration 4.2: Exposure to New Opportunities*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Students live in deprived and disadvantaged areas, with limited access to transport, facilities, and sporting opportunities.	The resource was providing access to new sports, transport, and sporting opportunities (e.g., stadium tours and free tickets to attend rugby matches with TACKLE facilitators and their teachers).	Feelings of appreciation and gratitude for the opportunities.	Social cohesion and opportunities to connect with others.

3186 **4.3.4.3 Refined Programme Theory 4: Sport and Physical Activity.**

3187 According to the data, consistent with the initial programme theory, there was

3188 evidence to suggest that students developed leadership skills during the sport

3189 workshops which they were then able to transfer to their school contexts. For

3190 instance, in the context of students who were often disempowered and not provided

3191 with opportunities to lead or to take control, the strategy of placing students in

3192 positions of authority and providing them with leadership responsibilities led to

3193 positive outcomes. That is, through students delivering activities to their peers and

3194 refereeing rugby matches for younger children, they were able to re-associate how

3195 they identified with themselves and experienced feelings of competency,

3196 empowerment, and pride. As a consequence, students internalised feelings of

3197 competency, empowerment, and pride and continued to search for new leadership

3198 and volunteering roles within their school. These findings are congruent with

3199 research on reference group theory (Merton, 1968), which suggests an individual's

3200 behaviour may be influenced by how they perceive they are being evaluated and

3201 judged by the significant others around them. For instance, if TACKLE facilitators

3202 and peers are able to see the students as leaders, then in turn, the student may be able

3203 to see themselves as a leader.

3204 The programme theory was also expanded, the data revealed different ways

3205 in which the sport workshops worked for students. For instance, regularly, TACKLE

3206 provided opportunities for students to attend professional rugby matches, stadium

3207 tours, and to participate in new sporting activities. For many students in the

3208 programme, access to these types of opportunities would otherwise be limited, due to

3209 the cost of involvement and a lack of facilities and transportation. In this context,

3210 students expressed appreciation and gratitude for the opportunities provided.

3211 Through involvement in the activities, students had the opportunity to connect with

3212 others and social cohesion was facilitated.

3213 *4.3.5 Initial Programme Theory 5: Professional Athletes*

> Given that rugby is the national sport in Wales and is linked to national identity, professional rugby players may provide a platform to inspire and motivate students (Armour & Duncombe, 2012). Through authentically sharing their own personal backgrounds, the challenges they encountered at school, successes and failures, and emphasising to students the importance of school completion, the rugby players may inspire students who are also facing similar challenges within school. Students in turn may internalise the messages received by the rugby players, changing the value they place on education, re-igniting an interest in their studies, and a desire to complete their GCSE examinations.

3214 This initial programme theory postulates that professional athletes may have

3215 potential to serve as powerful role models for students (Armour & Duncombe, 2012;

3216 Bricheno & Thornton, 2007). Specifically, through rugby players sharing their own

3217 educational journey and emphasising the importance of school completion, they may

3218 influence and shape students' perspectives regarding the value and importance they

3219 attach to education. From the data, there was evidence in support of this initial

3220 programme theory, however, in certain contexts for certain students this theory was

3221 not supported.

3222 **4.3.5.1 CMO Configuration 5.1: Connecting to the Struggles of Role**

3223 **Models.** Within TACKLE, the majority of the students displayed an interest in rugby

3224 and a passion for the sport (context). For instance, in response to being asked about

3225 their experiences with rugby, Rhys shared: "I've grew up with rugby mind, it's erm

3226 defo [definitely] my favourite sport, and well all my brothers love it too." Likewise,

3227 Jordan noted: "I play rugby outside school and in school, I reckon I've played since I

3228 was around 5, just going out on the field up by ours every night like." In this context,

3229 interactions with professional rugby players served as a powerful 'hook' for

3230 engaging their attention. Specifically, through listening to rugby players share their

3231   own narratives and personal deficits with education, students realised that somebody

3232   they admire has also faced similar academic and behavioural challenges

3233   (mechanism). For many students, the value they placed on education shifted listening

3234   to the rugby player explain how even professional athletes must navigate education

3235   and university, in order to have opportunities available post-rugby. Hearing this

3236   resulted in a number of the students experiencing a substantial shift in their attitudes

3237   and behaviour towards education (outcome). For instance, Emma explained:

3238   Like, I've never liked school but like now I know that I need to go. Because it

3239   is the start of everything, and I'll be honest before I didn't really care. Now,

3240   I'm like I need to go, otherwise, I'm just not gonna get a job later. Just like

3241   [the rugby player] said, I don't want to look back and regret not working you

3242   know, hard enough now. Like I have to prioritise my exams because I need

3243   GCSE's to do the things I want to do, you know. Even [the rugby player] is

3244   doing exams and that just, suppose well you know, it just tells you how

3245   important they are, I reckon.

3246   Similarly, Callum commented:

3247   I've understood education a lot more and it's not something to just mess

3248   around with, kind of thing. Especially after listening to [the rugby player] …

3249   like this is what I could do next. And I'm not going to be in this school for the

3250   rest of my life, kind of thing.

3251   This is unpacked further in Table 4.14.

3252   **Table 4.14**

3253   *CMO Configuration 5.1: Connecting to the Struggles of Role Models*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Many students were interested in, and passionate about rugby.	Students listened to the athlete's narratives, their background, and schooling experiences. Specifically, athletes discussed the academic and behavioural difficulties they encountered during school and shared with students that they are currently completing qualifications alongside rugby.	A realisation amongst students that even athletes require qualifications to fall back on when their rugby career ends. Hearing this information from role models influenced students' perspectives as they realised that somebody, they look up to and admire has experienced similar academic/behavioural challenges and also needs to study in order to have career options and pathways available.	Changes in attitudes, behaviours, and the value students place on education. Enhanced motivation to complete school.

3254   **4.3.5.2 CMO Configuration 5.2: Lack of Connection.** In contexts where

3255   there was a distinct lack of interest in rugby, a minority of students were unable to

3256   connect with the rugby player nor internalise the important messages delivered due

3257   to a lack of admiration for the athlete and a failure to identify similarities between

3258   themselves and the athlete (mechanism). For example, when discussing the impact of

3259   the professional athlete, Marcus shared: "I'aint a big rugby fan so I don't, like, well

3260   no like it didn't change anything for me cause I'm not a rugby type of person and

3261   [I'm] not interested in rugby people." Chloe's experiences were similar, she

3262   succinctly explained: "I just like sat there. I don't follow rugby; I didn't even know

3263   who he [rugby player] was. I think someone different could be better, someone who

3264   does the same sport as me." As a consequence, these students were disengaged and

3265   withdrawn during the workshops with the professional athletes (outcome). This

3266   CMO Configuration is presented in Table 4.15.

3267   **Table 4.15**

3268   *CMO Configuration: 5.2: Lack of Connection*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
A minority of students displayed a lack of interest in rugby.	Students listened to the athlete's narratives, their background, and schooling experiences. Specifically, athletes discussed the academic and behavioural difficulties they encountered during school and shared with students that they are currently completing qualifications alongside rugby.	Students were unable to connect with the athlete or internalise the messages received due to a lack of admiration for the athlete and perceived dissimilarities between themselves and the athlete.	Disengagement and limited interaction during the workshops.

3269   **4.3.5.3 Refined Programme Theory 5: Professional Athletes.** In

3270   accordance with the initial programme theory, there was evidence to suggest that in

3271   the context of students who were interested in and passionate about rugby, the

3272   professional rugby players were influential in shaping their attitudes towards

3273   education and triggering a realisation of the importance of school completion.

3274   However, differences in contextual factors did exist. For instance, a minority of

3275   students displayed a distinct lack of interest in rugby. In such contexts, students were

3276   unable to connect with the athlete nor internalise the messages delivered due to a

3277   lack of admiration for the athlete along with a failure to identify similarities between

3278   themselves and the athlete. These findings corroborate research on social learning

3279   theory (Bandura, 1977), which suggests that in order for a student to actively listen,

3280   engage, and internalise the messages received by a role model, the role model must

3281   be considered important, desirable, and relevant to the student, and may need to

3282   possess similar characteristics or attributes with which the student can identify

3283   (Armour & Duncombe, 2012; Gibson, 2004; MacCallum & Beltman, 2002). Such

3284   characteristics may comprise interests, attitudes, backgrounds, gender, age, an athlete

3285   who has attended the same school, or those who have encountered the same

3286   academic, emotional, and behavioural challenges either during school or within their

3287   personal lives (Armour & Duncombe, 2012; MacCallum & Beltman, 2002).

3288 *4.3.6 Initial Programme Theory 6: The Importance of a Multi-Component*

3289 *Programme*

In order to re-ignite students' engagement and interest, a singular effort or approach may not be sufficient (Mawn et al., 2017; Nelson & O'Donnell, 2012; Rajasekaran & Reyes, 2019). To accommodate for each student's varied needs and interests, they may need to receive exposure to a mixture of programme modalities and resources (Rajasekaran & Reyes, 2019). Through the introduction of a thoughtfully designed multi-component programme including one-to-one mentoring, classroom-based workshops, work-based placements, and sport/physical activity, students are provided with diverse options and pathways. As such, mechanisms may be triggered for different students at different time points and through different activities. For instance, a classroom session alone may not activate students' motivation, however, exposure to a work-based placement, which helps students to develop a vision for their future, may re-ignite classroom engagement in order to develop the necessary skills to pursue their chosen occupation. Thus, different modalities may complement others and work in synergy to enhance students' interest and engagement.

A multi-component programme may also provide students with the opportunity to receive many forms of feedback, affirmation, and support from different individuals (e.g., mentors, coaches, teachers, professional athletes, work-based placement providers). Feedback and support from multiple sources is particularly important for disengaged students because, due to an accumulation of negative experiences and adversity, students may have internalised perceptions of incompetence and inadequacy across many domains (e.g., education, workplace, sport, and social relationships) (Centre for Promise, 2014b; Harter, 2012; Rajasekaran & Reyes, 2019). Thus, in order to change perceptions of competence that span multiple domains, disengaged students may need to receive repeated and consistent affirmation, and support from numerous sources.

3290 This initial programme theory refers to the importance of a multi-component

3291 programme. There was evidence to support this programme theory. For instance,

3292 each component of the TACKLE programme (i.e., mentoring, classroom-based

3293 workshops, work-based placements, and sport) complemented each other by

3294 providing students with a diversity of experiences, opportunities, and pathways.

3295 Through exposure to multiple components, the students indicated that their

3296 engagement in learning was re-ignited due to a realisation of their skills and interests,

3297 and subsequent motivation to pursue their interests and talents post-school.

3298 Furthermore, there was evidence to support the importance of disengaged students

3299 receiving affirmation, feedback, and support from multiple sources.

4.3.6.1 CMO Configuration 6.1: Exposure to a Diversity of Modalities.

Within the context of students who were disengaged and disconnected from school, the multi-component programme provided students with exposure to a diversity of modalities and resources. Through involvement in the various modalities, students were provided with a range of new experiences, opportunities, and pathways (mechanism). For instance, when asked to summarise the impact of the multipronged approach, Faye responded: "Experiencing. You get the trips, the placements, classroom, the practical's [sport]. My favourite was the trips and classroom, but I liked the fact that we did so many different things 'cause I could see what's out there in the world." Similarly, Ryan shared:

> Different because, I don't know, it's just, it's different to anything I've ever been [to] in school before. We got to do a range of things and they were, like, different to what I've ever done before in school. It's like, I've been taken out [of lessons] for a few things now [programmes] but I, I think this [TACKLE] has been the best one.

As a result of exposure to various experiences and opportunities, students began to look at themselves in a different way. Specifically, students developed a recognition of their own skills and interests, while simultaneously developing new skills throughout the different components (outcome). As stated by Callum:

> It [TACKLE] helped me realise my own skills. So, a lot of my skills came out with the sport, the competitive games, and the erm, the teamwork classroom sessions. I let people know how to do something, but I don't tell them. I go along with them and show them… 'it would be best if you did this, did that' and not 'you need to do this, you need to do that'. It would be a rare occasion I'd say something like that. So, that's me being a leader, because leaders are not on top, because no one can ever be on top. You have to help them [other people] and that's what I enjoyed, and I got better at how I, sort of speak to people because of TACKLE I reckon.

For many students, an awareness of their skills and interests, and the development of new skills, re-ignited their engagement in learning and motivated them to complete school in order to be able to pursue their interests (outcome). As explained by Ryan: "I would say it's made me more focused in lessons. Because I know what I want to do and so, it's just how to get there now isn't it." Similarly, Samantha shared: "TACKLE has made me work harder [in school] cause it's shown me what I wanna

3334   do and what I can achieve with my life." This CMO configuration is detailed further

3335   in Table 4.16.

3336   **Table 4.16**

3337   *CMO Configuration 6.1: Exposure to a Diversity of Modalities*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Many students in TACKLE were disengaged and disconnected from school.	The resource is exposure to a diversity of modalities (mentoring, classroom-based workshops, work-based placements, sport, and professional athletes).	Through involvement in the various modalities, students are provided with a range of new experiences, opportunities, and pathways.	Students started to look at themselves differently – they developed a recognition of their own skills and interests, while simultaneously developing new skills throughout the different components. This re-ignited their engagement in learning and led to enhanced motivation to complete school.

3338   **4.3.6.2 CMO Configuration 6.2: Access to Social Support.** In the context

3339   of students who received limited support and guidance, the TACKLE programme

3340   provided access to forms of emotional (e.g., care, trust, and safety), informational

3341   (e.g., guidance and insight), appraisal (e.g., understanding of innate strengths and

3342   capacity), and instrumental (e.g., access to resources, services, and work-based

3343   placements) support from multiple sources and various role models (e.g., TACKLE

3344   facilitators, professional athletes, work-based placement providers, and teachers).

3345   Access to social support and exposure to a range of role models resulted in students

3346   experiencing feelings of togetherness and connectedness (mechanism). As Amelia

3347   indicated: "I think it's just the support that's been given by everyone. Because I had

3348   people that were looking out for me and that I wasn't on my own." Echoing this

3349   sentiment, Jack shared: "TACKLE was helping [me] get a better future and trying to

3350   give us a good start in life. So, it makes me feel better cause there was people on my

3351   side." This led to positive outcomes for students, including, enhanced engagement

3352   and behaviour in their lessons. As one teacher explained:

3353   The TACKLE project had a positive effect on many students' attitude and

3354   behaviour. You know, I noticed students' taking part in lessons more,

3355   contributing, you know, interacting with others more positively. Getting on

3356   with their work, staying out of trouble. I think a lot of them [students] didn't

3357   want to let you lot down [TACKLE facilitators].

3358 This CMO configuration is summarised in Table 4.17.

3359 **Table 4.17**

3360 *CMO Configuration 6.2: Access to Social Support*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Students received limited support and guidance.	Students received forms of emotional (e.g., care, trust, and safety), informational (e.g., guidance and insight), appraisal (e.g., understanding of innate strengths and capacity), and instrumental (e.g., access to resources, services, and work-based placements) support from multiple sources and role models (e.g., TACKLE facilitators, professional athletes, work-based placement providers, and teachers).	Students experience a sense of togetherness and connectedness.	Enhanced engagement and behaviour in lessons.

3361   **4.3.6.3 Refined Programme Theory 6: The Importance of a Multi-**

3362 **Component Programme.** There was evidence to support the programme theory.

3363 Specifically, in the context of students who were disengaged and disconnected from

3364 school, the multi-component programme provided access and exposure to a diversity

3365 of experiences, opportunities, and pathways. Through exposure to different

3366 experiences, students developed a recognition of their own skills and interests, while

3367 simultaneously developing new skills. This led to positive outcomes for students,

3368 including, enhanced engagement and interest in learning and education in order to

3369 complete school and pursue their interests. Furthermore, in the context of students

3370 who received limited support and guidance, the programme provided access to

3371 emotional, informational, appraisal, and instrumental support from multiple sources

3372 and exposed students to a range of positive role models. This led to students

3373 experiencing feelings of togetherness and connectedness. Outcomes evident as a

3374 result included improved engagement and behaviour in lessons. These findings are

3375 congruent with research on social bonds theory (Hirschi, 1969), that highlights the

3376 importance of connections and networks with significant others (e.g., peers, teachers,

3377 adults) in order to prevent behaviour problems and to increase students' engagement,

3378 motivation, and persistence.

3379 *4.3.7 Initial Programme Theory 7: The Ethos of TACKLE Facilitators*

> Through facilitators caring for students, believing in them, and placing sensitive
> and customised high expectations (specific to each student's contextual
> circumstances) on them, students may internalise these positive supportive
> messages coming from credible sources, realising their potential and the innate
> strengths, assets, and skills which they already possess (Jalala et al., 2020;
> Noddings, 2005). Thus, facilitators placing high expectations with the underlying
> mechanism of caring for and believing in students' capabilities.

3380   This initial programme theory refers to the ethos and approach of the

3381 TACKLE facilitators. In correspondence with the theory, there was evidence to

3382 support the importance of facilitators caring for and believing in students'

3383 capabilities. However, the emphasis on facilitators placing appropriate, sensitive, and

3384 customised high expectations was not at the forefront of the data. Alternatively, the

3385 findings underlined the importance of facilitators implementing an ethic of care and

3386 endorsing a strengths-based orientation.

3387   **4.3.7.1 CMO Configuration 7.1: Caring and Responsiveness.** Due to the

3388 emphasis on assessments, testing, and accountability, many students in the

3389 programme described how, in contrast to the TACKLE facilitators, they did not feel

3390 that their teachers understood, cared for, or supported them (context). For instance,

3391 Dominic shared:

3392   TACKLE's different to normal lessons and school in general, like, here [in

3393   TACKLE] I feel like people care and listen to me, like, actually ask if I'm

3394   alright and if there's anything I want to talk about. Teachers never do that.

3395 Students explained that teachers were simply too busy focusing on assessments and

3396 testing to have the time to listen and respond to student's needs. Sophie, for example,

3397 underscored: "They [teachers] "care" but they don't. They just act like they do. But

3398 teachers are too busy to care for you. They're really toxic." Similarly, Lowri

3399 explained her feelings in the following way:

3400   All teachers care about is whether you're gonna get them good results, but I'd

3401   say, that [in] TACKLE, I think it was more like well the environment, it's

3402   more about, about you to be fair and how they can help you with anything.

3403 It was evident among students that there was a perceived lack of time for caring or

3404 pastoral roles within the school curriculum. In accordance with these views, a teacher

highlighted the challenges of caring for students within the context of a performance culture:

> It's a rigid setting [school], you know, I mean, you have a very strict regime on curriculum, there's exam pressures, content to cover, targets to meet, and you know, time constraints, and large class sizes, and unfortunately, there just isn't the time to get to know each student properly or to build that sort of relationship with every student in the class, you know.

In contrast to the school environment, however, the students highlighted that they believed TACKLE facilitators displayed genuine care and responsivity to their needs (mechanism). This was accomplished by demonstrating an understanding of students on a personal level and always being available to listen to them when needed (mechanism). As indicated by Benjamin: "He [TACKLE facilitator] knows stuff about me like, and so, he'll ask how stuff is and that, and like, that's tidy [great] because it shows that he's bothered and [he] cares." While another student, Erin, described how the TACKLE facilitators were always responsive and available: "When I need to talk about anything then they like will always listen to what I have to say." Similarly, observations revealed how TACKLE facilitators implemented behaviours and strategies that aligned with an ethic of care. In my field notes, I wrote:

> I have noticed they [TACKLE facilitators] never forget students' names (no matter how many students' they work with!), and they see it as their responsibility to get to know each student properly, including their backgrounds, and their lives outside of the school context. But most importantly, they make students feel important and valued by paying attention to small details and being cognisant of all of the 'little things' about students' such as, their interests, abilities, friendship groups, the sports they play, the positions they play, the number of tries and goals they score each week, the type of subjects they do and do not like, and even the names of teachers they do not get on with.

Outcomes evident included students demonstrating higher levels of engagement and feeling valued and cared for within the TACKLE environment. This is depicted further in Table 4.18.

3437 **Table 4.18**

3438 *CMO Configuration 7.1: Caring and Responsiveness*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Due to the emphasis on assessments, test scores, and accountability, there was limited time for caring or pastoral roles within the school curriculum. Many students in TACKLE did not perceive that their teachers understood, cared for, or supported them.	TACKLE facilitators displayed genuine care for students and responsivity to their needs. They had developed knowledge and an understanding of the students on a personal level and were available to listen to students when needed.	Students felt included, supported, and listened to.	Improved engagement, students feel valued and cared for in the TACKLE environment.

3439 **4.3.7.2 CMO Configuration 7.2: Strengths-Based Versus Deficit-Based**

3440 **Messaging.** Based on observations, informal discussions with teachers, and listening

3441 to many students speak at length about their teachers and the school environment, it

3442 was evident that a few teachers held deeply entrenched deficit ways of thinking about

3443 disengaged students (context). For instance, one teacher shared the perception that

3444 many students in TACKLE were unlikely to change their behaviour and attitude,

3445 regardless of the efforts and strategies implemented:

3446   It's their behaviour and attitude in general, you know, it's erm, impacting on

3447   their education. And It doesn't matter if we were to put some of these

3448   [students] on TACKLE, 5 days a week, you know, over 60 weeks. I think

3449   with many of them they will always revert back to that type.

3450 Similarly, in the following example from my field notes, I reflected on a

3451 conversation I had shared with a teacher:

3452   Today I walked with one of the teachers back to the classroom while

3453   speaking to them about students' employment aspirations. I was explaining to

3454   the teacher that one of the student's [in TACKLE] wanted to become a

3455   doctor, when the teacher suddenly looked at me and said "A doctor? Is that

3456   what he said? More like painting the walls of the doctor's surgery". I wasn't

3457   sure how to respond at the time, but I've been thinking about that moment

3458   ever since... If that's the mindset and belief system of a teacher then is it any

3459   wonder that some students may have internalised feelings of low self-esteem?

3460   If students are surrounded by a lack of support and self-limiting beliefs in

3461   their home AND school contexts… is it really that surprising that they don't

feel they are enough? That they can't believe in themselves or trust their own voice? That they choose to search for validation elsewhere?

When teachers endorse a deficit-based approach (context), they may prevent the TACKLE programme from acting optimally as students may have internalised a lack of support, low self-worth, and feelings of failure (mechanism). For instance, Luke acknowledged: "Teachers always make you feel you're not good enough you know, like you don't even matter and you're not gonna achieve anything or go anywhere with your life." Further, Charlie recounted a confrontation with his teacher that left him feeling ridiculed and humiliated:

Then when we came back after the summer holidays, we had about four lessons, maybe five, and then after those lessons, we had a test and because I didn't do really well and score on the easy marks, the teacher decided to erm, remove me from the class. And he, because he phoned [my parent], [my parent's] upset as well. He said I was illiterate and really other offensive things. He expects things from other people that they can't do because I remember we were doing a practical and he said what to do, and then he expected everyone to do it correctly which is kind of difficult because we're just learning.

Although Charlie did not explicitly state the psychological effects of this encounter during his interview, it had evidently shaken his self-esteem and it may have been a reason why he took longer to settle into the TACKLE programme (field notes). For other students, in the context of receiving negativity within their school environment, they were particularly drawn to the TACKLE programmes resources and facilitators (mechanism). Many described how TACKLE had helped them to identify and realise their own strengths, capacity, and assets, while developing hope for their future (outcome). Hannah, for example, shared:

I like think more of myself before I just didn't think that I was good at anything… I've realised that like there are things I can do when I finish school, things I want to do and erm you know, things I'm actually pretty good at, and it was TACKLE that helped me see that.

Similarly, Charlotte stated:

It's [TACKLE] just changed my life basically, I feel like I can do anything. It's been amazing, it's been a once in a lifetime thing. It's actually done me so well which I was really surprised about because I didn't think I'd change

3496   this much with the project, but I did, which is really surprising... It really has

3497   boosted my confidence and made me believe in myself and my abilities.

3498 As a result of teachers observing the impact the TACKLE programme had on

3499 students' engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes, the programme

3500 brought new resources of perspective and orientation to teachers (outcome). In

3501 particular, teachers reflected on the importance of focusing on students' strengths

3502 and capabilities. As one teacher described:

3503   The project really did just crack it you know, it really did show the

3504   importance of the attentiveness to students, the encouragement, the praise, the

3505   focus on their skills and abilities, helping students to see the types of things

3506   they are capable of doing, and by the slow intervention, by the weekly you

3507   know, intervention. If it wasn't for the TACKLE project, there's a side to

3508   them boys and girls that I would never have seen otherwise.

3509 When teachers at the school shared the same ethos of the TACKLE programme and

3510 endorsed a caring and strengths-based orientation, students may be particularly likely

3511 to re-engage due to receiving affirmation and support from multiple sources. As

3512 explained by Toby "I think it's just the support that's been giving by everyone, I

3513 don't know where I'd be without TACKLE and some of the teachers here." Based on

3514 all of the conducted interviews and prolonged observation, it was evident that

3515 teachers who had a positive relationship with students were the ones who genuinely

3516 cared for and wanted to work with disengaged students, and who also understood and

3517 appreciated the challenges of such an endeavour. The following extract from one of

3518 the teachers illustrates this:

3519   These students are difficult to work out. I say that to students a lot. I say I

3520   haven't got a crystal ball. You have to tell me, you know, what you're

3521   feeling, what you're thinking, why you're thinking it. With these students…

3522   The group you see at the beginning are not the group you have at the end. To

3523   see that development and it makes you appreciate you know, with some

3524   students, it takes a long time, you know, and a certain type of approach.

3525 This CMO configuration is described in Table 4.19.

3526 **Table 4.19**

3527 *CMO Configuration 7.2: Strengths-Based Versus Deficit-Based Messaging*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Students in the TACKLE programme received deficit-based messaging by teachers within their school.	The TACKLE programmes resources and facilitators endorsed a strengths-based approach.	While some students took longer to settle into the programme as they had internalised a lack of support, low self-worth, low self-esteem, and feelings of failure. Other students felt particularly drawn to TACKLEs resources and facilitators in the context of receiving negativity within their school environment.	Students were able to identify themselves with the strengths, capacities, and assets they already possess. Feelings of hope for their future. For some teachers, the programme brought new resources of perspective, helping teachers to see the importance of endorsing a strengths-based orientation.

3528 **4.3.7.3 Refined Programme Theory 7: The Ethos of TACKLE**

3529 **facilitators.** The data collected from interviews, informal discussions, and

3530 observations supported the importance of facilitators implementing an ethic of care

3531 and endorsing a strengths-based orientation. Specifically, within the context of

3532 accountability and high-stakes testing, there was a perception amongst students that

3533 their teachers did not understand, support, or care for them. Comparatively, the

3534 students' voices illustrated that a caring environment existed within the TACKLE

3535 programme, whereby, the facilitators displayed genuine care and responsivity to their

3536 needs. This was achieved by facilitators taking the time to develop an understanding

3537 of students on a personal level and always being available to listen to students when

3538 needed. As a consequence, students engagement increased and they described feeling

3539 included, valued, and cared for within the TACKLE environment.

3540   In addition to the limited time for caring roles within the school curriculum,

3541 interview data and observations of teachers' attitudes and behaviours towards

3542 students confirmed that a number of teachers held deeply entrenched deficit ways of

3543 thinking about students. In the context of receiving negativity within their school

3544 environment, many students were particularly drawn to the strength-based resources

3545 and facilitators of the TACKLE programme. For these students, the programme

3546 helped them to identify and recognise their own strengths, assets, and capacities.

3547 Other students, however, took longer to settle into the programme due to receiving

3548 repeated deficit-based messaging and subsequently, internalising feelings of low self-

3549 esteem and self-worth. As such, if teachers at the school do not buy-in to the

3550 programme and do not share the strength-based ethos of TACKLE then this can

3551 prevent the resources of TACKLE from activating optimally. For some teachers,

3552 however, observing the positive impact TACKLE had on various student outcomes,

3553 triggered a realisation of the importance of adopting a strengths-based approach

3554 when working with disengaged students.

3555 *4.3.8 Initial Programme Theory 8: The Behaviour Management Policy of the*

3556 *Schools*

> By preventing students from attending the TACKLE programme if they receive behaviour reports on the School Information Management System (i.e., behaviour management policy), students may be motivated to improve their behaviour and engagement within lessons out of a desire to be part of the TACKLE programme. The threat of taking away the programme may therefore lead to students changing their behaviour within core subject lessons and consequently, may serve as an effective behaviour management strategy (Skinner, 1953).

3557 This initial programme theory relates to the schools' behaviour policy. There

3558 was evidence to support the theory, for instance, for some students, the threat of

3559 removing access to the TACKLE programme did in turn, lead to improved behaviour

3560 and engagement during their core subject lessons. However, the theory was also

3561 expanded as other students did not adhere to the policy and it did not prove to be an

3562 effective strategy for everyone.

3563 **4.3.8.1 CMO Configuration 8.1: An Incentive to Improve Behaviour.** In

3564 the context of students who encountered less persistent and severe behaviour

3565 problems, the threat of taking away the TACKLE programme if students were to

3566 engage in any form of disruptive/challenging behaviour acted as a motivator to

3567 improve their behaviour, attendance, and engagement during core subject lessons in

3568 order to remain part of the programme (mechanism). For instance, many students

3569 described how they were committed to ensuring they did not receive any behaviour

3570 reports that would prevent them from attending TACKLE (mechanism). As

3571 expressed by Nathan:

3572 I've really tried to improve my behaviour to be fair, even Miss [teacher] said

3573 that. Because I knew that if I don't behave and keep winding people up then I

3574 won't be able to go [to TACKLE]. I used to always get sent to that [isolation]

3575   room cause of silly stuff really, just doing silly stuff all the time like, since

3576   TACKLE I haven't been, ever since.

3577 The programme was an incentive to attend school as it was something students

3578 looked forward to and wanted to be part of (mechanism). For example, Carl

3579 explained:

3580   There's a lot of days that I just wouldn't come in [to school], my attendance

3581   is shocking. I've missed like loads of lessons, there's so much to catch up on

3582   for me like. Because of TACKLE though I think right I'll go in today, it's the

3583   one thing I look forward to and enjoy in this school. So, I think well I might

3584   as well go in [to school] then 'cause I'll be to go [to] TACKLE if I do.

3585 Outcomes observed as a result included a reduction in behaviour reports and

3586 improvements in students' attendance and engagement during their curriculum

3587 lessons (outcome). This is illustrated in Table 4.20.

3588 **Table 4.20**

3589 *CMO Configuration 8.1: An Incentive to Improve Behaviour*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Students encountered less persistent and severe behaviour problems.	Teachers prevented students from attending the TACKLE programme if they received behaviour reports (e.g., non-compliance, disruptions, violence, truancy, exclusions) on the School Information Management System (SIMS). As such, there is potentially no resource, it is the threat of removing exposure and access to the programme.	This policy acted as an incentive and motivator for students to improve their behaviour, attendance, and engagement in order to attend and remain part of the programme.	Reduction in behaviour reports (e.g., less disruptive behaviour and non-compliance) on SIMS, and improved attendance and engagement during curriculum lessons.

3590   **4.3.8.2 CMO Configuration 8.2: A Feeling of Being Denied.** Within the

3591 context of students who encountered repeated and sustained behaviour incidents,

3592 suspensions, and exclusions (context), removing access to the programme resulted in

3593 frustration, a feeling of being denied, and higher levels of disaffection and anger

3594 towards teachers and the education system (mechanism). As such, many students

3595 described how they did not agree with this policy and the subsequent negative effect

3596 it had on their behaviour (outcome). For example, Owen shared: "When he [teacher]

3597 got up in my face and told me that I couldn't go [to TACKLE], I kicked off and well

3598 everything's just went really downhill in lessons since." Likewise, Dominic

3599 conveyed his frustrations:

3600   That [behaviour policy] was just stupid, and it did my head in, like, telling me

3601   I can't do something, like just made things worse cause they [teachers]

3602   always try to tell you what you can and can't do. I hate this place. If

3603   something is good for you then why stop you from going?

3604 This CMO configuration is outlined in Table 4.21.

3605 **Table 4.21**

3606 *CMO Configuration 8.2: A Feeling of Being Denied*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Students encountered repeated and sustained behaviour incidents, suspensions, and exclusions.	Teachers prevented students from attending the programme if they received behaviour reports. As such, there is no resource, the teachers removed exposure and access to the TACKLE programme.	This led to frustration, a feeling of being denied, and higher levels of disaffection and anger towards teachers and the education system, replicating the experiences they encountered across other areas of their lives.	Exacerbated behaviour problems (e.g., conflict with teachers, truancy, and violence) and increased reports on SIMS.

3607   **4.3.8.3 Refined Programme Theory 8: The Behaviour Management**

3608 **Policy of the Schools.** Concurring with the initial programme theory, in contexts

3609 where students encountered less severe behaviour issues, they were more motivated

3610 and committed to improving their behaviour, attendance, and engagement to ensure

3611 that they would be allowed to attend the TACKLE programme. However, in the

3612 context of students who experienced repeated and protracted behaviour incidents,

3613 suspensions, and exclusions, the removal of the programme triggered frustration, a

3614 feeling of being denied, and disaffection and anger towards teachers and the

3615 education system. In such contexts, the behaviour policy exacerbated behaviour

3616 problems and reports.

4.4 Discussion: How did TACKLE work, for whom and under which circumstances?

The aim of this realist evaluation was to examine how, why, for whom, and in what contexts the TACKLE programme impacted (if at all) the engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes of disengaged students aged 14-15 years. The findings provided insight into the contextual conditions and mechanisms through which the TACKLE programme led to desirable and undesirable engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes among disengaged students. Specifically, there was evidence from the data that supported, confirmed, and expanded many elements of the initial programme theories. This section will discuss the findings of the evaluation in relation to relevant literature, the implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

Within TACKLE, students were more likely to engage in classroom-based learning when they were actively involved in classroom activities, rather than passively listening to the facilitator. Similar to the pedagogies implemented by Fang and Ashley (2004) and Light and Wallian (2008), TACKLE established a learning environment where students were at the centre of the learning process, working in groups to construct their own ideas and knowledge, sharing and exchanging information and experiences, delegating roles, socially interacting, problem solving, and taking ownership and responsibility. Outcomes evident as a result of active participation included students cooperating more effectively, higher levels of creativity and innovation, and a sense of shared responsibility for their learning. Such findings echo previous research (Azzarito & Ennis, 2003; Bonnette et al., 2001) and supports the use of constructivist pedagogies for facilitating learning among disengaged students. Constructivist pedagogies share the belief that students should adopt an active role in their own learning and education (Shah, 2019; Thomson, 2012) and have been shown to empower and reinforce learning and to help students find value in their education (Azzarito & Ennis, 2003; Dogru & Kalander, 2007; Dochy, Segers, Bossche, & Gijbels, 2003).

Conversely, behaviourist or teacher centred learning (i.e., the teacher is in full control of knowledge dissemination and the direction of the lesson) provides limited opportunity for student exploration, creativity, independent thinking, and social interaction (Freire, 2000; Shah, 2019). Within such an approach, the student is characterised as taking a passive role in the classroom environment, engaging in rote

learning, repetition, and the memorisation of curriculum content (Ertmer & Newby,

2008). This type of approach may suppress students learning and can perpetuate

feelings of disaffection and disengagement (Shah, 2019; Stewart, 2012). From a

pedagogical perspective, the findings from this study suggest that if teachers and

facilitators structure lessons to allow opportunity for disengaged students to actively

participate, engage in group work, share their ideas and perspectives, and take

responsibility for their learning, students feelings of disaffection and disengagement

may be prevented. Thus, such findings support the commitment being made by

educators and scholars worldwide to integrate constructivist pedagogies within the

school curriculum (Shah, 2019; Thomson, 2012).

The findings from this study indicate that disengaged students encounter a

number of psychological challenges including anxiety, panic attacks, and depression.

This is in accordance with previous literature which has documented the high

prevalence of psychological challenges amongst students at risk of school dropout

(Melkevik, Nilsen, Evensen, Reneflot, & Mykletun, 2016; Ramsdal et al., 2018;

Riglin et al., 2014). Many of the students involved in the TACKLE programme had

experienced exposure to early life adversity (e.g., parental criminality, parental

substance misuse, neglect, emotional, and physical abuse), which has been

consistently shown to have an enduring adverse effect on later psychological

outcomes (Kirlic et al., 2020; Larson et al., 2017; McLafferty et al., 2018; Slopen et

al., 2010). The formation of positive peer relationships during TACKLE provided

students with support and encouragement that promoted more effective coping

strategies and resources. In particular, corresponding with previous literature

(Douglas, Jackson, Woods, & Usher, 2019), through sharing adversity and

challenges with their peers, the participants were able to understand and make sense

of aspects of their lives, develop empathy and an appreciation of one another's

challenges, and re-shape how they seen their own individual experiences. These

findings are important as positive and supportive peer relationships have the potential

to compensate for neglectful, unstable, or harsh parenting and have been considered

a protective factor for disengaged students (Lansford, Criss, Pettit, Dodge, & Bates,

2003).

Further, in line with social exchange theory (Homans, 1958), the benefits of

social support are believed to be reciprocal (McLafferty et al., 2018). For instance,

while receiving social support from peers is advantageous, providing social support

3685   and encouragement to peers may enhance psychological outcomes, by reducing

3686   distress and the stress response (Eisenberger, 2013). Taken together, these findings

3687   add to accumulating research that suggests programmes should provide opportunities

3688   for students to interact and connect with their peers in order to develop and expand

3689   social support networks, and to protect against the negative effect of early life

3690   adversity (Douglas et al., 2019; McGrath & Noble, 2010; McLafferty et al., 2018).

3691   Due to similarities in life experiences, it has been suggested that disengaged

3692   students may be more likely to identify and resonate with their peers (Topping,

3693   1996). This was apparent in the current study which, corresponding with previous

3694   studies (Abdi & Simbar, 2013; Douglas et al., 2019; Gilmer et al., 2012; James,

3695   Smith, & Radford, 2014), clearly identified that informal peer-to-peer mentoring

3696   strategies that arose between the students allowed them to feel empowered to make

3697   positive changes and construct a more positive self-identity through the process of

3698   supporting others. To date, most programmes have evaluated the impact of peers

3699   providing support to younger peers (Douglas et al., 2019), however, the findings

3700   from this evaluation extend the literature by revealing the potential for students of the

3701   same age to positively impact one another. Prospective research is, however,

3702   warranted to continue to understand the impact of same-age peer-to-peer mentoring.

3703   For students involved in the TACKLE programme, the education curriculum

3704   was considered unresponsive to their diverse interests, skills, and abilities,

3705   reinforcing their disengagement and marginalisation at school. Consistent with

3706   previous literature, many of the students taking part in TACKLE particularly valued

3707   the inclusion of work-based placements and more vocational learning opportunities

3708   (Bloom, 2010; Hartas, 2011; Nelson & O'Donnell, 2012). Such work-based

3709   placements enabled many students to identify and recognise their innate strengths

3710   and talents, while providing exposure to a diversity of occupations and potential

3711   future pathways. The findings of this evaluation concur with previous research that

3712   have proposed the re-structuring of the education curriculum in order to positively

3713   respond to disengaged students' interests, needs, desires, and employment aspirations

3714   (Callanan et al., 2009; Furlong et al., 2003; Hartas, 2011; Mizen, 2004). Although

3715   the majority of students were identified as "disengaged" and "unwilling to learn" by

3716   their teachers, the findings indicated that none of the students were entirely against

3717   learning and education, but rather, the education system was failing to successfully

3718   meet their needs. Specifically, these findings challenge the focus, structure, and

3719 organisation of the education curriculum, and underline the introduction of a broader

3720 curriculum that incorporates work-based placements as a pre-condition for

3721 disengaged students' engagement. By including both classroom and vocational

3722 learning opportunities, in occupations of students' choice, engagement in classroom-

3723 based learning was enhanced for many students due to increased clarity regarding

3724 their future directions and subsequent motivation and incentive to achieve the grades

3725 necessary to pursue such occupations.

3726   The TACKLE programme provided access to a number of adult relationships,

3727 including mentors, TACKLE facilitators, professional athletes, teachers, and work-

3728 based placement providers, which were considered critical to the success of the

3729 programme. The students indicated that the relationships formed during TACKLE

3730 had a positive impact on their psychosocial outcomes, self-worth, relationship skills,

3731 and hopes for their future. Consistent with prior research (Ronkainen, Ryba, &

3732 Selanne, 2019), during the process of identity formation, this study highlights the

3733 importance of students receiving exposure to a diversity of support structures, role

3734 models, and learning opportunities. Through exposure to role models and multiple

3735 sources of support, students can experience a change in their own 'imagined' or

3736 'possible' selves (Gibson, 2004; Markus & Nurius, 1986). However, one implication

3737 of the findings from this study is that students may be more likely to be inspired by

3738 role models and internalise the messages received, when there are similarities

3739 between students and the role model in relation to interests, backgrounds, life

3740 experience, gender, and age (Armour & Duncombe, 2012; MacCallum & Beltman,

3741 2002; Ronkainen et al., 2019).

3742   In the context of low levels of family support and a lack of caring

3743 experiences, the findings from this evaluation underscore the importance of the

3744 caring, stable, and consistent relationships formed between students and the

3745 TACKLE facilitators. In particular, students valued the authenticity of the facilitators

3746 and how they listened and responded to their needs. The connection and bond formed

3747 between students and the TACKLE facilitators were evident throughout the

3748 interviews. For disengaged students, the importance of consistency, authenticity,

3749 meaningful connections, and perceptions of closeness have been well documented in

3750 the literature (DuBois & Neville, 1997; Freedman, 1988; Grossman & Rhodes, 2002;

3751 Herrera et al., 2000; Parra et al., 2002). Caring relationships with at least one positive

3752 adult role model have been identified as a critical protective factor that can help

3753   disengaged students negotiate difficult family circumstances, engage in academic

3754   activities, improve their behaviour, and reduce the likelihood of school dropout

3755   (Daniels & Arapostathis, 2005; Jalala et al., 2020; Johnson, 1997; Perez, 2000).

3756   Unfortunately, however, students involved in TACKLE voiced discontent

3757   with current school practices and the perceived absence of caring relationships with

3758   their teachers. They attributed the lack of care to an educational culture focused

3759   predominantly on academic attainment, testing, league tables, and accountability.

3760   Such findings correspond to previous research that has highlighted the limited time

3761   for caring and pastoral roles within an increasingly academically driven school

3762   curriculum (Bintliff, 2016; Jamal et al., 2013; Noddings, 2005; Wellman, 2007).

3763   Within the constraints of the school curriculum however, the findings from this study

3764   reinforce the need to incorporate time for caring and pastoral roles when working

3765   with disengaged students.

3766   In order to implement caring pedagogies, the results from the current study

3767   are in accordance with prior research (Cooper & Miness, 2014), and posit the

3768   importance of teachers and facilitators taking the time to develop an understanding of

3769   students backgrounds and lives outside of the school context, engaging in one-to-one

3770   interactions regularly, expressing an interest in students' hobbies and extra-curricular

3771   activities, taking part in activities alongside students, praising their individual efforts,

3772   progress, and achievements within and outside of the classroom, and being available

3773   to authentically listen to students when needed. Such caring behaviours and gestures,

3774   in turn, can establish a culture of care, whereby, students perceive they are cared for,

3775   valued, and supported, and the overall teaching and learning experience is

3776   subsequently, enhanced.

3777   TACKLE facilitators endorsing a strengths-based ethos was an important

3778   overarching mechanism that enhanced the overall success of the programme. A

3779   strengths-based ethos focuses on identifying and enhancing students' assets,

3780   resources, potentialities, and innate capacity (Jalala et al., 2020; Maslow, 1954). The

3781   emphasis on students' strengths and assets shifts away from traditional approaches to

3782   re-engaging students that have predominantly adopted a deficit-based ethos; that is, a

3783   focus on what is wrong with students, including, psychosocial challenges, deviant

3784   behaviour, and risk factors (Hanrahan, 2017). For disengaged students, the explicit

3785   recognition of strengths and opportunity for further strengths development and

3786   exploration have been deemed particularly important, given that they may have

3787   fewer opportunities to realise their strengths within their school, home, and

3788   community contexts (Super et al., 2019). A successful strategy used by TACKLE

3789   facilitators to help students identify and express their innate strengths and attributes,

3790   and to experience feelings of competence included placing students in positions of

3791   authority and leadership (e.g., officiating and delivering sporting activities).

3792   These findings can be interpreted within reference group theory (Merton,

3793   1968), which indicates that a student's behaviour may be influenced by how they

3794   perceive they are being evaluated and judged by the significant others around them.

3795   As such, if TACKLE facilitators and peers see the student as a leader, then in turn,

3796   the student may internalise feelings of leadership and empowerment. Opportunities

3797   for disengaged young people to engage in leadership roles and display competence

3798   have been utilised in previous studies (Crabbe, 2009; Jones & Deutsch, 2011;

3799   Martinek & Hellison, 2009; Whitley et al., 2016) and have been identified in the

3800   literature as pivotal to cultivating favourable engagement, behavioural, and

3801   psychosocial outcomes (Ungar & Teram, 2000). Collectively, the findings from the

3802   study underscore the importance of facilitators identifying and recognising

3803   disengaged students' strengths, assets, and capacities, and actively seeking out

3804   opportunities for further strength development and exploration.

3805   In contexts where the school environment and teachers did not share the

3806   strengths-based ethos of the TACKLE programme, the resources of TACKLE can be

3807   prevented from activating optimally. In such instances, where students are receiving

3808   deficit-based messaging from their teachers, they may be unable to internalise the

3809   messages received by the TACKLE facilitators due to deeply entrenched perceptions

3810   of low self-worth and inferiority. Many studies have demonstrated a direct link

3811   between teachers' deficit-based thinking and their low expectations of students, on

3812   student's self-esteem, belief in their own capabilities, academic attainment, and

3813   school dropout (Rubie-Davies, 2006; Weinstein, 2002; Witte et al., 2013).

3814   Programmes, such as TACKLE, may therefore be more effective at supporting

3815   disengaged students when they are delivered in the context of a caring and strengths-

3816   based school ethos, where teachers and the wider school environment share the aims,

3817   objectives, and vision of the programme (Forneris, 2013; Quinlan et al., 2012). One

3818   way to ensure that teachers support the programme may be through pre-delivery

3819   consultation and teacher-training workshops that help teachers to understand the

3820   importance of adopting a strengths-based ethos and recognise ways in which they

3821   can incorporate strengths-based approaches within their teaching.

3822   ***4.4.1 Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions for Research***

3823   Previously, little attention has been directed towards the ways in which multi-

3824   component programmes impact disengaged students' developmental outcomes. To

3825   the best of my knowledge, this study is the first to use realist evaluation methodology

3826   to address how and why a multi-component programme, including mentoring,

3827   classroom learning, work placements, and sport led to changes in students'

3828   engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes. The realist evaluation allowed

3829   for an exploration of the contextual setting of each school and student that facilitated

3830   or hindered the mechanisms and observed outcomes of the programme. Collectively,

3831   the findings from this study provide practical understanding and recommendations

3832   regarding the architecture of programmes that can help advance the implementation

3833   of future programmes working with disengaged students.

3834   A methodological contribution and innovative feature of this study was the

3835   novel and engaging data collection methods used. Video-based interviews were a

3836   valuable pedagogical tool that encouraged students to authentically express their

3837   experiences and narratives in an interactive and engaging setting. This innovative

3838   approach is particularly important given that disengaged students may find a one-to-

3839   one interview setting challenging (Tilley & Taylor, 2018).

3840   There are, however, a number of limitations to this study that should be taken

3841   into consideration. The TACKLE programme was implemented over the course of

3842   six-months and was limited due to the strict school curriculum and the various school

3843   holiday breaks during the delivery of the programme. Programmes delivered over a

3844   sustained period of time may increase the likelihood of students' losing interest in the

3845   programme and subsequently, increase attrition rates. Moreover, the six-month

3846   period of delivery may be practically unfeasible within the school timeframe because

3847   students are taken out of their curriculum lessons in order to attend the programme.

3848   As a consequence, students can miss a considerable amount of instruction and

3849   learning time. Thus, a concise and short-term TACKLE programme may be more

3850   feasible. Additionally, the programme was implemented during late secondary school

3851   (i.e., for students aged 14-15 years), however, earlier intervention may be critical to

3852   reduce long-term adverse engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes for

3853   disengaged students (Toth & Manly, 2019).

3854   My role as a participant observer and programme evaluator may also have

3855 influenced the way in which the TACKLE programme worked, as well as the

3856 outcomes generated. For instance, throughout my immersion and active participation

3857 in TACKLE, I was able to gain an understanding of students' lives, appreciate

3858 differences in their experiences of TACKLE, and develop high-quality, trusting

3859 relationships with students. As such, it is possible that the interviews may have been

3860 susceptible to socially desirable responses, in that, students and teachers may have

3861 consciously or unconsciously presented themselves (or their students) in a favourable

3862 way in attempt to avoid disapproval and/or to gain praise (Razavi, 2001).

3863   Students and teachers were only interviewed at one time point, following the

3864 completion of the TACKLE programme, which did not allow for an examination of

3865 changes in students' outcomes over time. This lack of longitudinal follow-up

3866 measures is a limitation because it did not allow an understanding of the long-term

3867 implications of multi-component programmes and enable a deeper understanding of

3868 students' long-term engagement, behavioural, psychosocial outcomes, educational

3869 and vocational trajectories. Prospective, longitudinal research is needed in order to

3870 examine the potential mechanisms and important contexts of effectiveness of shorter

3871 and continuous multi-component programmes.

3872 ***4.4.2 Conclusion***

3873   In summary, the current study expands the body of literature on effective

3874 types of programmes with disengaged students by providing new insight into the

3875 effectiveness of a multi-component programme (i.e., mentoring, classroom-based

3876 learning, work-based placements, and sport and physical activity) to address the

3877 varied needs, interests, and skills of disengaged students. The findings from the

3878 evaluation suggested that each component of the TACKLE programme provided

3879 students with diverse experiences, options, and pathways, and worked in synergy to

3880 enhance students' interest and engagement. For instance, for some students, exposure

3881 to a work-based placement enabled them to realise the occupations they were

3882 particularly interested in and consequently, re-ignited engagement in classroom

3883 learning in order to be able to pursue their chosen occupations. Furthermore,

3884 throughout each component, students identified receiving forms of emotional (e.g.,

3885 care, trust, and safety), informational (e.g., guidance and insight), appraisal (e.g.,

3886 understanding of innate strengths and capacity), and instrumental (e.g., access to

3887 resources, services, and work-based placements) support, which for some students

3888   was not available to them within and/or outside of the educational context

3889   (Rajasekaran & Reyes, 2019). Concurring with previous research, emotional,

3890   informational, appraisal, and instrumental forms of social support were found to

3891   positively impact disengaged students' engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial

3892   outcomes (Centre for Promise, 2014b). However, there is a need to examine the

3893   long-term sustainability effects of multi-component programmes on students'

3894   engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes.

Chapter 5: Study 2

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 (Study 1) consisted of a realist evaluation of the TACKLE programme for disengaged students aged 14-15 years. The programme comprised mentoring, classroom-learning, work-based placements, and sport and physical activity, and was delivered over approximately six-months. Findings from Study 1 demonstrated how, why, for whom, and in which circumstances the TACKLE programme impacted students' engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes. However, although the evaluation of the programme demonstrated some positive outcomes, TACKLE occurred during the school day when students would otherwise be attending their curriculum subject lessons. Thus, the students, who were already struggling academically, missed schooling to attend the TACKLE programme. Consequently, with the programme running over the course of six months, it could result in the students missing out on a considerable amount of academic activities and instruction time (Kirk et al., 2018).

Moreover, due to delivery occurring over a six-month period, numerous interruptions (e.g., school holiday breaks, staff illness etc.) occurred during the delivery of the programme. Although no students dropped out of the TACKLE programme, it is recognised that discontinuity in programmes with disengaged students may lead to them losing interest in the programme and dropping out early (Weisman & Gottfredson, 2001). As such, to minimise such interruptions and the potential for dropout, as well as reduce the amount of time students missed from their core schooling, it was deemed important to identify whether implementing a shorter, more concise but continuous version of the TACKLE programme would be effective in improving students' outcomes, while overcoming the limitations associated with an extended delivery.

Beyond evaluating whether a shorter version of TACKLE would be effective, understanding if TACKLE may be effective with younger students than those in Study 1 was also of interest. As indicated in Chapter 4, TACKLE appeared to be effective with students aged 14-15 years, however, research indicates that it may be beneficial to implement strategies or programmes earlier to reduce long-term adverse engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes for disengaged students (Riglin et al., 2014; Toth & Manly, 2019). For instance, when programmes are implemented during early secondary school (i.e., ages 11-13 years), students'

engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial functioning may be more malleable and susceptible to effect change (Gracey & Kelly, 2010). Comparatively, there may be more constraints on change during late secondary school as engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial challenges may have expanded over time (Chase et al., 2015; Lerner, 1984). As such, based on these findings, it may be that introducing TACKLE at a younger age would be more beneficial, but this required examination.

Finally, due to data collection concluding immediately following the completion of TACKLE, the findings from Study 1 provided a limited understanding of the long-term implications and sustainable effects of the TACKLE programme. This lack of long-term understanding is a limitation that warrants addressing because previous longitudinal research has indicated that the effects of programmes for disengaged young people may diminish over time (Bloom, 2010). Thus, although the findings of Study 1 indicated that TACKLE was effective, the extent to which any changes remain is unknown. Moreover, previous realist evaluations have indicated that mechanisms may take time to trigger, and thus the impact of these may not be apparent immediately following a programme (Dalkin et al., 2015). Longitudinal research, comprising data collection at multiple time points during and following programmes for disengaged students, is important to identify the impact they have on students' engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes over time, and to generate new insights that can inform policy makers and strategies aimed at improving developmental outcomes in disengaged students (Callina et al., 2015).

The present study aimed to address the three areas outlined above through a realist evaluation with a longitudinal follow-up to examine the short and long-term effects of a 10-week TACKLE programme on the engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes of disengaged students aged 12-13 years. The specific research questions addressed were:

1. How, why, for whom, and in what contexts does a condensed version of TACKLE impact (if at all) on students' engagement and behaviour?

2. How, why, for whom, and in what contexts does a condensed version of TACKLE impact (if at all) on students' psychosocial outcomes, including academic, social, physical, behavioural conduct, and global self-worth?

3. What are the underpinning mechanisms explaining the impact (if any) of a condensed version of TACKLE?

4. Does a condensed version of TACKLE have long-term sustainability effects on students' engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes?

5.2 Method

5.2.1 Methodology

As with Study 1, due to the complex multi-component programme being evaluated, a realist evaluation approach was deemed most appropriate. However, in contrast to Study 1, a longitudinal follow-up was included to ensure evaluation of both the short and long-term impact of the TACKLE programme on disengaged students' engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes could be measured. As such, the realist evaluation approach aimed to understand how, why, for whom, and in what contexts the TACKLE programme did or did not work in the short and long-term at Llanfair School[5] in Wales (Pawson, 2013).

5.2.2 Study Design

This realist evaluation employed an in-depth, single, longitudinal case study design (Yin, 2018); the case being Llanfair School. A single longitudinal case study approach was adopted as it allowed for an in-depth exploration of the TACKLE programme and students' outcomes, at multiple time points, and in the real-world context of a school (Crowe et al., 2011; Yin, 2009; 2018). As outlined for Study 1, a case study approach was selected because it emphasises the centrality of context as the backdrop for students' attitude, thoughts, and feelings, and seeks to establish context-sensitive explanations regarding 'how' and 'why' programmes work (Yin, 2018).

In examining how and why questions, such as 'how is the programme leading to improvements in students' behaviour?' and 'why are students' disengaged during the classroom workshops?' case studies utilise multiple methods of data collection in order to refine theories and to develop a deep and rich understanding of complex phenomena (Bishop, 2012; Crowe et al., 2011; Forrest-Lawrence, 2019). As such, the characteristics of single case studies are methodologically compatible with realist evaluation lines of inquiry (Williams, Burton, & Rycroft-Malone, 2012), and was used as a platform to enhance theorising and to identify the contextual conditions, causal mechanisms, and outcomes of the TACKLE programme (Gerring, 2007).

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[5] This is a pseudonym.

3992 *5.2.3 Setting*

3993   The programme took place at Llanfair School, a comprehensive secondary

3994 school, located in South Wales. Llanfair school has approximately 800 students,

3995 ranging in age from 11-16 years (Estyn, 2020). According to the latest Estyn

3996 inspection report (2020), Llanfair is situated in a low socio-economic area and has a

3997 significantly higher than average proportion of students eligible for free school

3998 meals. The school was identified as operating at a 'good' level across all inspection

3999 areas (Estyn, 2020). Drawing on data from the WIMD (Welsh Government, 2019),

4000 Llanfair school is located in an area of high employment, income, and health

4001 deprivation, with extremely low community safety.

4002   **5.2.3.1 Programme Participants.** In order to obtain information-rich cases

4003 (Patton, 2015), teachers purposively sampled students to take part in the programme

4004 based on the identification of characteristics associated with school dropout.

4005 Specifically, students were selected by their teachers if they had displayed two or

4006 more of the following set of indicators, as the interrelation of these indicators has

4007 been shown to significantly increase the likelihood of early school dropout

4008 (Rajasekaran & Reyes, 2019):

4009 • Low academic attainment and grades

4010 • Behavioural challenges including disruption, inattentiveness, aggression, and

4011   truancy

4012 • Challenges related to poverty (sleep deprivation, hunger)

4013 • Housing instability

4014 • Limited family engagement and support

4015 • Caregiving responsibilities (taking care of younger siblings)

4016 • Negative relationships with teachers and peers

4017 • Psychosocial challenges including low self-esteem and low self-perceptions

4018 Additionally, students had to be in year 8 (aged 12-13 years). In total, twelve male

4019 students with a mean age of 12.6 years ($SD = 0.9$) took part in the TACKLE

4020 programme.

4021 *5.2.4 The TACKLE Programme*

4022   As detailed previously, TACKLE is a multi-component programme designed

4023 by Ospreys in the Community for students at-risk of school dropout. The programme

4024 comprised one-to-one mentoring, PYD classroom-learning, and sport and physical

4025   activity. The programme is delivered by TACKLE facilitators who act as students'

4026   mentors, classroom educators, and sport and physical activity coaches. There are also

4027   additional facilitators, including professional athletes. Unlike the TACKLE

4028   programme implemented in Study 1, work-based placements were not included in

4029   this study due to the age and developmental stage of students. For this study,

4030   TACKLE included a weekly two-hour session that occurred every week for 10

4031   weeks during the summer term. Additional reward sessions (e.g., opportunities to

4032   attend professional rugby matches and stadium tours) took place on separate days

4033   and the mentoring meetings occurred after the sport and physical activity sessions.

4034   An overview of the TACKLE programme as it was delivered in this study is

4035   presented in Table 5.1.

4036   **Table 5.1**

4037   *Overview of the TACKLE Programme*

Modality and number of sessions:	Aim of each modality:	Topics covered/Activities:
Classroom Lessons: 10 sessions.	To enhance students' academic, social, and communication skills through access to activities, games, information, and learning materials which may provide students with essential perspective.	Mathematics rugby-related challenges (e.g., co-ordinating a trip to Toulon, France to watch a professional rugby match), English challenges (e.g., establishing and designing their own sports club), sessions on leadership, respect, teamwork, group work and team building challenges, and a professional rugby player talk.
Sport and Physical Activity: 10 sessions.	To develop physical and social competencies, knowledge, and transferable life skills (e.g., goal setting, emotional regulation, discipline, leadership, resilience, and work ethic).	Refereeing/officiating, designing, and delivering drills, working towards sport leader's qualification. Activities included: football, rugby, basketball, bench ball, dodgeball, fitness/circuits, teamwork challenges, and inflatable rugby cage and passing drills.
One-to-One Mentoring: 4 meetings.	To nurture the mentees overall personal development.	Focusing on school-related issues (e.g., behaviour and attendance) and relationships with teachers, peers, and parents/guardians.
Rewards: 3 sessions.	To allow students to access and explore new opportunities, that otherwise may not be possible due to financial constraints.	Attending a rugby match and a tour of the Liberty stadium. Certificates and ambassadors' awards presentation delivered by TACKLE facilitators and teachers.

4038 *5.2.5 Procedure*

4039   The evaluation of the 10-week TACKLE programme was classified as a

4040 service evaluation by Ospreys in the Community and the University Ethics

4041 Committee, and consequently, ethical approval was not required. However, the study

4042 was conducted in line with the ethical principles of informed consent and assent, and

4043 the protection of students' anonymity and confidentiality. As such, all students were

4044 invited to participate in the evaluation of the 10-week TACKLE programme and

4045 received parental/guardian consent and assent forms. Students were informed that

4046 their involvement in the research evaluation was voluntary and their decision to take

4047 part in the evaluation would not influence their participation in the programme.

4048 Completed informed parental/guardian consent and assent forms were received from

4049 all twelve students, which enabled the data gathered throughout the 10-week period

4050 to be utilised for research purposes. Ethical approval was granted from the

4051 University's Ethics Committee (2018-067) for the longitudinal follow-up study. All

4052 students received a verbal explanation of the follow-up study and a document folder

4053 that comprised parental and student information sheets, consent, and assent forms.

4054 Informed parental consent and student assent forms were completed for all twelve

4055 students before they could take part in the longitudinal follow-up study.

4056 *5.2.6 Procedure: Realist Evaluation Design*

4057   The realist evaluation comprised the phases detailed in both Chapter 3 and 4,

4058 and the longitudinal follow-up interviews.

4059   **5.2.6.1 Phase One: The Development of Initial Programme Theories.** The

4060 initial programme theories were developed on the basis of the evidence and findings

4061 from Study 1 (see Chapter 4) and the wider literature (Lipsey & Pollard, 1989;

4062 Marchal, Dedzo, & Kegels, 2010; Marchal et al., 2012). Study 1 elucidated how the

4063 TACKLE programme worked in practice for year 10 (aged 14-15 years) disengaged

4064 students. Specifically, Study 1 described the outcomes of the programme, the

4065 important contextual factors, and the underlying mechanisms. As such, the findings

4066 from Study 1 and the wider literature were compiled to facilitate theory development

4067 and to formulate initial programme theories that highlighted how the TACKLE

4068 programme may work, in the context of disengaged year 8 students, and over what

4069 duration.

4070   **5.2.6.2 Phase Two: Testing the Initial Programme Theories.** Using a

4071 single case study design, the initial programme theories were tested, scrutinised, and

4072   expanded upon using participant observation, field notes, video footage, one-to-one

4073   interviews, and pre- and post- questionnaires with disengaged students' and their

4074   teachers over a ten-week period.

4075   *5.2.6.2.1 Participant Observation and Field Notes.* Consistent with Study 1,

4076   throughout the 10-week TACKLE programme, I served as a participant observer and

4077   made careful field notes during and after each activity and session. Observations of

4078   students occurred in a variety of contexts; the classroom, sporting field, the

4079   gymnasium, off-site trips (e.g., Liberty stadium tour), and during periods of informal

4080   interaction (e.g., lunch breaks). During the participant observations, I was able to

4081   actively participate in each activity and session, forming relationships and

4082   attachments with students, offering praise and positive reinforcement, engaging in

4083   informal conversations, and listening to students discuss their experiences and

4084   perspectives of the TACKLE programme. Moreover, observations provided insight

4085   into the wider school environment and the setting in which the TACKLE programme

4086   was embedded (Patton, 2015).

4087   Through my immersion in the school setting, I had the opportunity to interact

4088   with the school's head teacher, healthcare professional, and engagement officers.

4089   This allowed me to see and understand things about the students that I otherwise may

4090   not have discovered through my engagement with the programme alone. I left

4091   conversations feeling overwhelmed and emotional due to the sheer complexities of

4092   students' lives, their painful backgrounds, and current circumstances.

4093   Simultaneously, however, I experienced feelings of awe as I witnessed how much

4094   educators genuinely cared about their students and how invested they were in their

4095   development and progress. As such, through my immersion in the field, I developed

4096   an empathetic understanding of students' lives (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011) and

4097   collected critical information that enabled me to form connections between important

4098   contextual factors, mechanisms, and outcomes.

4099   Taking field notes is a widely accepted approach for documenting

4100   observations and experiences (Helleso, Melby, & Hauge, 2015; Tjora, 2006). Field

4101   notes can comprise the observers' own thoughts, emotions, and responses to

4102   experiences (Wolcott, 2009) and should be recorded in situ where possible or

4103   immediately after observational periods and/or experiences (Mulhall, 2003; Patton,

4104   2015). Throughout the programme, detailed field notes were recorded during and

4105   after each observational period, during informal discussions, and after interviews.

They included elements of my own reflections, insights, and interpretations, context, activities, students' interactions with the TACKLE facilitators and their peers, their engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes during activities, direct quotations, and students' decision-making, leadership, and conflict resolution skills.

5.2.6.2.2 One-on-One Interviews. Interviews were conducted with twelve students and two teachers at the end of the programme. They ranged in length from eight to fifty minutes (*M* = 37.1*, SD* = 18.8). The interviews with students took the form of 'walking interviews' in that, a student and I would talk while walking around school facilities together (King & Woodroffe, 2019). Specifically, we walked around the school yard, field, and gymnasium (where TACKLE had taken place). The interviews with teachers were conducted on the school field during regular school hours and by telephone at a time suitable for them.

The walking interview approach was adopted as this method provided an innovative opportunity to generate richer information from disengaged students regarding their experiences of the TACKLE programme (Botfield, Zwi, Lenette, & Newman, 2019; King & Woodroffe, 2019). Previous studies utilising walking interviews or the 'talk-as-you-walk" method with vulnerable populations have provided insight into both the value and success of the approach (Botfield et al., 2019; O'Neill & Hubbard, 2010; Ross, Renold, Holland, & Hillman 2009). Walking interviews allow for more flexible and free flowing conversation that can help students to feel comfortable articulating their perspective and experiences at their own pace (Botfield et al., 2019; Ross et al., 2009). The more informal style of walking interviews may also challenge the power imbalance inherent in the traditional adult-to-young person relationship and subsequently, students may be more likely to provide honest answers rather than attempting to search for the 'correct' answers (Evans & Jones, 2011). As such, walking interviews were used as they provided the students involved a space to share their personal experiences in a more natural and authentic environment, compared to the one-to-one sedentary interview setting (Evans & Jones, 2011; Ross et al., 2009).

Interview topics explored contexts, mechanisms, and outcomes, based on the perceptions of students and teachers. Initial questions followed a semi-structured interview guide, as this allowed for flexibility in the discussion and created an opportunity for students and teachers to provide new meanings and perspectives (Galletta, 2013). Open-ended questions were asked to elicit students experiences of,

and views on, the TACKLE programme, covering activities and modalities, the meaning of the programme to students and the relationships established, and the overall impact (if any) of TACKLE on students' engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes. Teachers were asked to reflect on the programme, to explain how the programme did or did not work, the perceived impact (if any) of the programme, the facilitators and constraints of the programme, and perceived changes in students' engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes.

Interview questions then progressed into the realist teacher-learner cycle as outlined in Chapter 3 (Manzano, 2016). During this phase, questions were informed by the initial programme theories. Examples of questions posed included: "TACKLE was supposed to help you develop leadership and teamwork skills, how did TACKLE work for you?" "TACKLE gave you the chance to be in control and to make decisions, how did you find this type of approach?" "TACKLE works differently for different students; how did the programme work for you?". Interviewees were then asked to share their own interpretations and experiences of the programme (i.e., refining programme theories). With the permission of students and teachers, all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

5.2.6.2.3 Follow-up interviews. Follow-up interviews were conducted with students and teachers at three points in time; October 2018, January 2019, and May 2019. Altogether, twelve students' and two teachers participated in the first interviews, ten students' and two teachers in the second interviews, and ten students' and one teacher in the final interviews ($n = 37$). Unfortunately, two students dropped out of the longitudinal follow-up at the second time point (January) because of family circumstances and subsequent school changes due to re-location. Interviews ranged in duration from seven to fifty-four minutes ($M = 38.9$, $SD = 20.3$).

Walking interviews (King & Woodroffe, 2019) were again used with students to explore their engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes at multiple time points. The semi-structured interview guides were tailored specifically to each student and employed a conversational tone, including questions around their interests, hobbies, friendship groups, and their educational and employment aspirations. Students were encouraged to describe their feelings and attitudes towards learning, their concentration, involvement, and behaviour during core subject lessons (e.g., English, Mathematics, and Science), their school attendance, relationships and interactions with teachers and peers, and their perceptions of confidence and

4174 competence. During the walking interviews, students were also prompted to reflect

4175 on the overall impact of the TACKLE programme, and whether they perceived the

4176 programme had led to any long-term changes in their engagement, behavioural, and

4177 psychosocial outcomes. The interviews with teachers were conducted in a classroom

4178 setting and explored teachers' views regarding their students' progress, focusing on

4179 important contextual factors, and their perceptions of students' engagement,

4180 behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes over time. Each interview was audio

4181 recorded and transcribed verbatim.

4182   *5.2.6.2.4 Engagement Measure.* Replicating Study 1, engagement was

4183 measured using the TERF-N (Hart et al., 2011), which was completed by teachers

4184 before and after the programme.

4185   *5.2.6.2.5 Perceived Competence and Global Self-Worth.* As with Study 1,

4186 students' perceptions of their scholastic, social, athletic, behavioural conduct, and

4187 global self-worth were assessed through the SPPA at the beginning and end of the

4188 programme (Harter, 2012). Job competence was not measured in this study due to the

4189 absence of work-based placements.

4190   **5.2.6.3 Phase Three: CMO Configurations and Refined Programme**

4191 **Theories.** The third phase involved realist analysis and synthesis of the data in order

4192 to formulate CMO configurations and to refine programme theories. Specifically,

4193 data were examined to explain how the TACKLE programme led to specific

4194 outcomes, under which contexts, and through which causal mechanisms (Marchal et

4195 al., 2010). The interview transcripts were the predominant source for the

4196 establishment of CMO configurations, particularly for assessing long-term impacts.

4197 Observations, field notes, and video footage assisted in the process of formulating

4198 CMO configurations. Pre- and-post questionnaires for each student provided

4199 pertinent insights into changes in their engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial

4200 outcomes at the beginning and end of the programme. This information was used to

4201 inform the outcomes of the CMO configurations, helping to support, confirm, or

4202 expand the findings generated through the analysis of the qualitative data.

4203   *5.2.6.3.1 Data Analysis.* All data were analysed following the same process

4204 as that adopted in Study 1. Specifically, interview transcripts and field notes were

4205 read several times in their entirety, and each audio recording was listened to

4206 repeatedly. Interview transcripts and field notes were then examined one at a time,

4207 and the CMO heuristic was applied to code relevant contexts, mechanisms (separated

4208   into resources and reasoning), and outcomes (Dalkin et al., 2015; Mukumbang et al.,

4209   2016). Contexts, mechanisms, and outcomes were reviewed against the entire data

4210   set to identify similarities and differences, before they were linked and compiled into

4211   summaries, diagrams, and tables (Marchal et al., 2012). Direct quotes from the

4212   interviewees were then conceptually matched with each element of the CMO

4213   configuration. The data from the follow-up interviews were analysed for contexts,

4214   mechanisms, and outcomes, and CMO configurations were formed to unpack

4215   students' long-term engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes. The CMO

4216   configuration analysis was reviewed and checked by my supervisors.

4217   *5.2.7 Quality and Reporting Standards in Realist Evaluation*

4218   Consistent with Study 1, this realist evaluation was carried out in accordance

4219   with the RAMESES II reporting and quality standards (Greenhalgh et al., 2017;

4220   Wong et al., 2016).

4221   **5.3 Findings**

4222   In the following section, the findings from the realist evaluation are presented

4223   under seven initial programme theories that were formulated based on the findings

4224   from Study 1 (see Chapter 4) and the wider literature. The first six initial programme

4225   theories relate to the short-term impact of TACKLE, and the seventh initial

4226   programme theory unpacks the long-term sustainability effects of the programme. As

4227   with Study 1, each initial programme theory is presented in a box and is followed by

4228   a succinct summary of the theory and information regarding whether it was

4229   supported, expanded, refined, or refuted in light of the data collected. Evidence

4230   relating to each initial programme theory is then explained according to the

4231   important contextual factors, mechanisms, and outcomes, which is followed by tables

4232   detailing the CMO configurations. The CMO configurations are the output of the

4233   data collected and prolonged engagement within the field. Quotes from interviews[6]

4234   and extracts from field notes are provided to support the CMO configurations.

4235   According to the evidence provided, the refined programme theories are discussed

4236   and synthesised. Together, the CMO configurations and refined programme theories

4237   are used to illustrate how and under what circumstances the TACKLE programme

4238   impacted on students' engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes.

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[6] Each student has been allocated a pseudonym; any quotes presented with a name are from interviews with students. When quotes are used from the teachers, they are explicitly labelled as teachers.

4239   *5.3.1 Initial Programme Theory 1: One-to-One Mentoring*

> The mentor may provide an opportunity for students to feel listened to, supported, and valued (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). Through prolonged engagement, the student can develop trust and respect for their mentor and in turn, they may feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, feelings, and personal aspects of their life with their mentor. Throughout the one-to-one mentoring process, the mentor may provide access to new perspectives, information, and advice. Further, as a result of similarities in interests, the student may look up to their mentor and feel driven to emulate their mentor's achievements. Consequently, the mentoring relationship may lead to improvements in students' engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes.

4240   This initial programme theory explores the role of a one-to-one mentor.

4241   Overall, the findings from this evaluation supported certain elements of this theory.

4242   For instance, there was evidence to suggest that in certain contexts, many students

4243   felt listened to, supported, and were able to share their thoughts, feelings, and

4244   personal aspects of their life with their mentor. Through the provision of mentor's

4245   advice and guidance, there was evidence to indicate improvements in students

4246   conflict resolution skills and emotional regulation. However, differences in

4247   contextual factors and mechanisms did exist, and not all students benefited from the

4248   mentoring relationship. Furthermore, within the context of year 8 students, there was

4249   no evidence to support the proposition that students looked up to their mentor and

4250   felt driven to emulate their achievements. The findings pertaining to context,

4251   mechanism, and outcome patterns will be discussed below.

4252   **5.3.1.1 CMO Configuration 1.1: Conflict Resolution and Emotional**

4253   **Regulation.** Many students in TACKLE had experienced numerous behavioural

4254   (e.g., disobedience, aggression, and violence) and personal (e.g., poverty, parental

4255   separation, and parental substance abuse) challenges (context). Within this context,

4256   the mentors had extensive experience of working with students with behavioural

4257   challenges and complex backgrounds, they approached the relationships with

4258   patience and empathy, offering guidance and advice in relation to healthy conflict

4259   resolution skills and emotional regulation strategies (e.g., reappraisal and

4260   suppression) (mechanism). Many students described feeling supported and confided

4261   in their mentor about challenges with their peers, parents, and teachers (mechanism).

4262   As explained by Brayden: "I was telling [my mentor] about my behaviour and like

4263   any [behaviour] points I got. And like I tell him about stuff in school and [he] helps

4264 with things going on at home." Similarly, Isaac shared: "I could tell [my mentor]

4265 about my behaviour and arguments with the boys and teachers and things like that."

4266 Outcomes evident included the development of conflict resolution skills and

4267 emotional regulation, improvements in behaviour, and relationships with peers and

4268 teachers. For instance, Ellis revealed: "I admit my anger used to be bad. [My mentor]

4269 taught me how to stay calm and say if I don't agree with someone, [my mentor]

4270 helped me to put the point across and then just leave it there." Another student, Alex,

4271 explained:

4272   I used to always be getting into fights over like little things. Like somebody

4273   calling me names and we'd get into a fight. I control my anger better, because

4274   [my mentor] made me see that I'm always gonna face stuff in life that's

4275   gonna make me angry. But like I know that when I'm angry, I have to

4276   remember [to] walk away and remember what [my mentor] told me.

4277 Consistent with the voices of students, a teacher described the impact of the mentors

4278 on students' behaviour and conflict resolution skills:

4279   You could see a noticeable difference in a lot of the students. There was less

4280   anger outbursts, swearing, or tantrums and things like that. I mean, because of

4281   their home life and backgrounds; these students haven't learnt everything that

4282   they could have by this age. But I definitely think the [TACKLE] facilitators

4283   taught them how to resolve things a bit better. I've seen Harrison today

4284   apologising to someone and you know, that would have been a real struggle.

4285   I've seen a lot of them have disagreements and rather than kicking and

4286   shoving each other they might have a little word and then it's over, you

4287   know. The other day, Alex and Harrison, you know, they'd had words, but

4288   they agreed to leave it there. I do think that they've got more skills to be able

4289   to deal with difficult situations and confrontations in particular, with their

4290   peers and teachers, you know. I mean, it's not 100% of the time, but for them

4291   we're probably never gonna get 100%, are we? I think if we can see

4292   improvement that's something isn't it?

4293 This CMO configuration is presented in Table 5.2.

4294 **Table 5.2**

4295 *CMO Configuration 1.1: Conflict Resolution and Emotional Regulation*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Students experienced a number of behavioural (e.g., disobedience, aggression, and violence) and personal challenges (e.g., poverty, parental separation, and parental substance abuse).	Mentors had extensive experience of working with students with behavioural challenges and complex backgrounds, they approached the relationship with patience and empathy, offering guidance and advice in relation to healthy conflict resolution skills and emotional regulation strategies (e.g., reappraisal and suppression).	Students felt supported and confided in their mentor about challenges with their peers, parents, and teachers.	The development of conflict resolution skills and emotional regulation, improvements in pro-social behaviour, and relationships with peers and teachers.

4296 **5.3.1.2 CMO Configuration 1.2: Barriers to the Mentoring Relationship.**

4297 One of the barriers to the mentoring relationship was in contexts in which students

4298 experienced chaotic home environments and challenges outside of school (e.g.,

4299 housing instability and caregiving responsibilities for younger siblings). In such

4300 contexts, during the process of relationship-building and getting to know the student,

4301 the mentor asked questions and provided an opportunity for students to feel listened

4302 to (mechanism). For a few students, it was evident that they experienced difficulties

4303 articulating their thoughts, feelings, and emotions, and were uncomfortable and

4304 reticent sharing personal aspects of their life with their mentor (mechanism). For

4305 instance, some students replied with short responses to questions, while others

4306 acknowledged that discussing personal challenges with adults in a 1-1 setting can be

4307 "hard" and "complicated" (field notes). In such instances, this led to delays and

4308 barriers to the formation of a relationship between the mentor and student (outcome).

4309 This CMO configuration is explored further in Table 5.3.

4310 **Table 5.3**

4311 *CMO Configuration 1.2: Barriers to the Mentoring Relationship*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Students experienced chaotic home environments and challenges outside of school (e.g., housing instability and caregiving responsibilities for younger siblings).	During the process of relationship-building and getting to know the student, the mentor asked questions and provided an opportunity for the student to feel listened to.	Students experienced difficulties articulating their thoughts, feelings, and emotions. They felt uncomfortable and reticent sharing personal aspects of their life and discussing challenges with their mentor.	This led to delays and barriers to the formation of a relationship between the mentor and student.

4312   **5.3.1.3 Refined Programme Theory 1: One-to-One Mentoring.** In the

4313 context of students who had a history of behavioural (e.g., disobedience, aggression,

4314 violence) and personal challenges (e.g., poverty, parental separation, and parental

4315 substance abuse), many students felt supported and confided in their mentor about

4316 challenges with their peers, parents, and teachers. Outcomes observed as a result

4317 included the development of conflict resolution skills and emotional regulation,

4318 improvements in behaviour, and relationships with peers and teachers. For other

4319 students, however, a constraint to the mentoring relationship was contexts in which

4320 students experienced chaotic home environments and challenges outside of school

4321 (e.g., housing instability and caregiving responsibilities for younger siblings). In

4322 these situations, students experienced difficulties articulating their thoughts, feelings,

4323 and emotions, and were uncomfortable and reticent sharing and discussing personal

4324 aspects of their life with their mentor. These findings correspond to attachment

4325 theory (Bowlby, 1982) and the findings from previous research (Ahrens et al., 2011;

4326 McLafferty et al., 2018; Rhodes, 2002; Sparks, 2004), which have indicated that

4327 exposure to early childhood adversity can result in a young person becoming

4328 mistrustful of others and lead to difficulties forming and maintaining relationships.

4329 *5.3.2 Initial Programme Theory 2: Classroom-Based Workshops*

In order to re-ignite engagement in learning and education, students who are passionate about sport, may benefit from classroom sessions which utilise the language of sport, sporting content, and active pedagogies to teach students subjects such as English and Mathematics and concepts such as leadership, respect, and teamwork (Spaaij, 2012). Through integrating sporting examples into the school curriculum and enabling students to work cooperatively together in groups, problem solving, and exploring new ideas, the classroom sessions may succeed in engaging and motivating students to learn (Azzarito & Ennis, 2003; Bonnette et al., 2001). Further, by bringing students together with similar experiences, challenges, and backgrounds, they may be able to provide support and positive encouragement to one another and may develop trusting relationships based on shared understanding and collective experience.

4330   This initial programme theory refers to the pedagogical content implemented

4331 within the classroom setting and the type of peer relationships established. There was

4332 evidence to suggest that utilising the language of sport and active pedagogies

4333 facilitated student interaction and engagement during the classroom-based

4334 workshops. However, for certain students, the classroom sessions triggered different

4335 mechanisms and led to alternative outcomes. Furthermore, within the context of year

4336 eight students in comparison to year 10 students (see Chapter 4), there was an

4337 emergence of bullying practices and an enhancement of deviant behaviours among

4338 students. Such findings will be explored in more detail below.

4339   **5.3.2.1 CMO Configuration 2.1: Using Sporting Content to Re-Ignite**

4340 **Interest in Academic Learning.** In the context of students who were passionate

4341 about sport but disengaged towards academic learning and their curriculum subjects

4342 (e.g., English and Maths), the classroom sessions focused on using sporting content

4343 and active pedagogies to engage and stimulate students to learn (mechanism). For

4344 instance, a maths lesson was built around students working in groups to co-ordinate a

4345 trip to France to attend a rugby match, an English lesson focused on students

4346 establishing and designing their own sports clubs, while other sessions utilised

4347 sporting examples and team building challenges to teach students concepts such as

4348 leadership, respect, and teamwork.

4349   Such activities were perceived by several students as triggering mechanisms

4350 of interest, curiosity, and enjoyment towards learning. In Caleb's case, for example,

4351 he explained: "I liked them you know 'cause they made you learn loads of different

4352   things but in a fun way 'cause it was all about rugby." Alex also had similar views,

4353   he shared "Well even though they [the activities] was about literacy and maths and

4354   that, they were quite fun cause it was rugby stuff and group challenges." In contrast,

4355   for other students, there was barriers that precluded their active participation in the

4356   activities, including a culture of hypermasculinity (i.e., emphasis on males displaying

4357   aggression, toughness, stoicism, and strength) and the competitive nature of the

4358   challenges that resulted in feelings of discomfort and frustration (mechanism).

4359   As such, different outcomes were generated for different students. For

4360   instance, for some students, outcomes observed as a result included the development

4361   of leadership and teamwork skills, higher levels of interaction and engagement

4362   (outcome). As explained by Rhodri, "Well 'cause they were all team efforts, they

4363   made me listen to other people's points of views, communicate more, and get on

4364   with people better." Similarly, Harrison shared:

4365   Well, I mean, it helped with teamwork and leadership skills, 'cause it was

4366   best to work together instead of just one doing all the work. We had to work

4367   out the prices to get to the game and we built the tower together. And for

4368   leadership that erm, it teached me you've got to be like, you've got to

4369   motivate the team and you've got to get them going if you wanna get a good

4370   result.

4371   For other students, however, outcomes evident included conflict, physical and verbal

4372   aggression, and bullying. This CMO configuration is presented in Table 5.4.

4373   **Table 5.4**

4374   *CMO Configuration 2.1: Using Sporting Content to Re-Ignite Interest in Academic*

4375   *Learning*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Students were passionate about sport but disengaged towards academic learning and their curriculum subjects (e.g., English and Maths).	Sporting content and active pedagogies were used to teach students subjects such as, English and Maths and concepts such as leadership, respect, and teamwork.	For some students, this triggered interest, curiosity, and enjoyment towards learning. However, for other students, there was barriers that precluded their active participation in the activities, including a culture of hypermasculinity and the competitive nature of the tasks, that led to feelings of discomfort and frustration.	For some, there was a development of leadership and teamwork skills, higher levels of interaction and engagement. For others, the activities led to conflict, physical and verbal aggression, and bullying amongst students.

5.3.2.2 CMO Configuration 2.2: Feelings of Isolation, Intimidation, and Frustration. Several students described the negative impact bullying and name calling (context) had on their engagement during the classroom workshops. Specifically, the TACKLE programme incorporated a mixed group of students, including, those students exhibiting aggression and behavioural challenges and students possessing low self-esteem and social skills deficits (mechanism). This amalgamation of students led to differences between students (e.g., loud and assertive versus quiet and reserved) being emphasised during the classroom workshops. As such, during observations and interviews, it became apparent that the activities and interactions among students led to the emergence of some bullying behaviours; consequently, this triggered feelings of isolation, intimidation, and frustration among the students subject to bullying, and led to them experiencing difficulties concentrating on the activities (mechanism). As Cameron acknowledged: "The boys were continually picking on me and that, so, I couldn't really take part [in the group work] properly cause, erm, I didn't wanna keep reacting to what they were saying." Brayden also experienced bullying by his peers during the classroom activities: "Some of the boys can be quite mean and like, well they kept saying things to me." He further explained: "I liked the activities but [I] didn't like talking to anyone in the erm, group 'cause I kept getting annoyed, so, [I] couldn't concentrate [on the activities]." This led to disengagement and a lack of participation during the classroom sessions (outcome), as one of the teachers attested:

> There is arguing and bickering between certain students, you know, you hear that someone has said this, and someone's said that, and unfortunately, it is certain individuals who receive the constant name calling. You can see their frustration and I do think that contributes to their disengagement in the classroom, you know.

Table 5.5 summarises CMO configuration 2.2.

4403 **Table 5.5**

4404 *CMO Configuration 2.2: Feelings of Isolation, Intimidation, and Frustration*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
A number of students were subject to name calling and bullying in TACKLE.	TACKLE incorporated a mixed group of students displaying various risk factors (e.g., students exhibiting behavioural problems and aggression, and students exhibiting low self-esteem and social skills deficits). This amalgamation of students led to differences between students been emphasised during the classroom workshops.	This led to the emergence of bullying behaviours and triggered feelings of isolation, intimidation, and frustration amongst certain students. As such, these students described how they struggled to concentrate on the activities and tasks.	Disengagement and a lack of participation during the activities.

4405 **5.3.2.3 CMO Configuration 2.3: Deviant Peer Contagion.** A number of

4406 students involved in TACKLE shared similar backgrounds and behavioural

4407 challenges, including disobedience, inattentiveness, verbal aggression, and physical

4408 violence (context). By bringing such students together in a classroom setting,

4409 interactions with one another were intensified and heightened (mechanism). The

4410 students indicated that clustering students with similar backgrounds and behavioural

4411 challenges resulted in an increase in deviant and disruptive behaviours among

4412 students (mechanism). For instance, Isaac shared: "The boys in TACKLE, they

4413 [have] got all the same problems as me so, and like some of them are naughtier than

4414 me. I reckon being around people like that, makes you like naughtier and naughtier."

4415 In a similar way, when asked to discuss the impact of his peers during the classroom

4416 sessions, Caleb explained how he would misbehave in order to entertain his peers:

4417   I don't know, because of the type of people in TACKLE, I find myself

4418   attention seeking because that is all I do, I try to make them [peers] laugh all

4419   the time. Then when people laugh, it encourages me to do it more. I put the

4420   blame on the boys [In TACKLE] I am trying to make laugh but then… it is

4421   mostly my fault.

4422 He further explained:

4423   When I'm not around them [the students in TACKLE] and I'm with like sort

4424   of people who I don't like but the brainy people, I'm fine. So, like last year's

4425   Maths, I sat by Sophie and Lucas, so, like I was getting Level 6s in Maths,

4426   you know. Because you know, you're not expected to get that [level 6] until

4427   year 9. So, like when I'm around people like them, Sophie and Lucas, I'm

4428   fine.

4429 Such narratives suggest that by bringing a number of students together with similar

4430 behavioural challenges, there was an increase in behaviour-related issues during the

4431 classroom workshops (outcome). This CMO is summarised in Table 5.6.

4432 **Table 5.6**

4433 *CMO Configuration 2.3: Deviant Peer Contagion*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Within TACKLE, a number of students shared similar backgrounds and behavioural challenges (e.g., disobedience, inattentiveness, verbal aggression, and physical violence).	The classrooms sessions brought these students together in a classroom setting where interactions with one another were intensified and heightened.	This group composition stimulated and encouraged deviant and disruptive behaviour amongst students.	Increased behaviour-related issues during the classroom workshops.

4434   **5.3.2.4 Refined Programme Theory 2: Classroom-Based Workshops.**

4435 Consistent with the initial programme theory, for some students, the integration of

4436 sporting content and active pedagogies into the school curriculum proved to be

4437 important mechanisms through which classroom sessions led to higher levels of

4438 teamwork, interaction, and engagement. However, for other students, there were

4439 barriers that precluded their active participation in the activities, including a culture

4440 of hypermasculinity and competition that resulted in feelings of discomfort and

4441 frustration. In turn, this led to the emergence of bullying behaviours and conflict

4442 among students. These findings resonate with previous studies (Bramham, 2003;

4443 Swain, 2006), which concluded that the inclusion of sport and competitive activities

4444 among boys can lead to bullying behaviours and practices due to the reinforcement

4445 and enactment of hegemonic masculine identities and 'top dog' competitive cultures

4446 (Bramham, 2003; Haegele & Kirk, 2018; Hickey, 2008; Salisbury & Jackson, 1996).

4447   In contexts where students experienced bullying and name calling, the

4448 incorporation of a mixed group of students (e.g., those exhibiting aggression and

4449 behavioural challenges and those displaying low self-esteem and social skills

4450 deficits) led to differences between students being highlighted. For several students,

4451 this triggered feelings of isolation, intimidation, and frustration, leading to

4452 difficulties concentrating on the activities and disengagement. Furthermore, in the

4453 context of students who shared similar behavioural challenges (e.g., disobedience,

4454 inattentiveness, verbal aggression, and physical violence), the assembling of students

4455 with similar challenges led to an increase in deviant and disruptive behaviours.

4456 *5.3.3 Initial Programme Theory 3: Sport and Physical Activity*

By providing disengaged students with leadership responsibilities (e.g., refereeing different sports) and opportunities to display their sporting talents, they may develop leadership skills and experience feelings of competency, empowerment, and pride. Opportunities for disengaged students to experience feelings of competency, empowerment, and pride have been recognised in the literature as mechanisms that can contribute to desirable engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes (Danish & Nellen, 1997; Ungar & Teram, 2000). Furthermore, the TACKLE programme may provide students with an opportunity to experience new activities (e.g., a stadium tour and free tickets to attend a professional rugby match) that they may otherwise have limited access to due to financial constraints. As a result of these activities, students may experience enhanced social cohesion and connections with others.

4457 This initial programme theory explores the role of sport as a potential strategy

4458 for improving students' engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes.

4459 Consistent with the initial programme theory, there was evidence to support the

4460 importance of providing opportunities for students to display their sporting talents,

4461 and to lead and referee various sports. However, the programme theory was also

4462 expanded. For instance, for some students, exposure to different activities and

4463 challenges triggered mechanisms of frustration and vulnerability. Furthermore,

4464 according to the data, there was evidence to suggest that the TACKLE programme

4465 provided students with access to new opportunities.

4466 **5.3.3.1 CMO Configuration 3.1: Praise and Positive Feedback.** Students

4467 involved in TACKLE typically received limited praise and positive feedback within

4468 school. For many students, this lack of praise was often mirrored in their lives

4469 outside of the school setting (context). In such contexts, TACKLE provided

4470 opportunities for students to display their sporting talents and to lead and officiate

4471 sports where they felt interested, passionate, and competent. Through involvement in

4472 such activities, students received praise and feedback from TACKLE facilitators and

4473 teachers (mechanism). As evidenced in the following quote from a teacher:

4474   It [TACKLE] gave the students an opportunity to get a lot of positivity,

4475   positive recognition, and reinforcement you know, and to do something they

4476   enjoy doing which all the students need and it comes back then to what

4477   they've got going on in school and their personal lives, they don't have a lot

4478   of praise and positive things happening. You know, in their home life,

4479   they've got very troubled backgrounds and difficult situations.

4480 As a result of receiving praise and positive feedback, students spoke of experiencing

4481 feelings of competency, empowerment, and pride (mechanism). For instance,

4482 according to Alex, involvement in the sporting activities allowed him to "feel proud

4483 cause other people were cheering me on and that." Isaac shared similar views, he

4484 explained how he felt "good because it was fun, we got to ref [referee] and play

4485 rugby, and the coaches [TACKLE facilitators] asked me like who it is I play for and

4486 they said that I was good like."

4487   Outcomes evident as a result included enhanced confidence in students' own

4488 abilities and improved leadership skills. As Caleb explained:

4489   I used to not call for the ball at all but now I do, 'cause I've got more belief in

4490   myself. It's [TACKLE] helped my rugby, teached me to communicate more

4491   on the pitch, speaking up for myself more, [and] being more respectful to

4492   other teams.

4493 Jamie corroborated these sentiments, he described:

4494   TACKLE encouraged me through the rugby. It taught me that you've gotta

4495   lead your team and help your teammates, help them to get better. You got to

4496   try out drills you've been working on when you're playing 'cause that's what

4497   games are for. And you have to shake hands at the end with your opponents

4498   and stuff like that.

4499 Another student, who was chosen for one of the ambassador awards because of his

4500 leadership skills, explained: It gave me more confidence in myself because it

4501 [winning the award] means I've actually done good, and I've improved." This CMO

4502 configuration is summarised in Table 5.7.

4503 **Table 5.7**

4504 *CMO Configuration 3.1: Praise and Positive Feedback*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Students typically received limited praise and positive feedback within school. For many students, this lack of praise was often mirrored in their lives outside of the school setting.	The programme provided opportunities for students to display their sporting talents and to lead and officiate sports where they felt interested, passionate, and competent. Through involvement in such activities, students received positive praise from TACKLE facilitators and teachers.	Students experienced feelings of competency, empowerment, and pride.	Enhanced confidence in students' own abilities and improved leadership skills.

4505 **5.3.3.2 CMO Configuration 3.2: The Sin-Bin Strategy.** Several students in

4506 TACKLE had low self-esteem and limited coping strategies to respond to challenges

4507 and stressors (context). As observed by one of the teachers:

4508 It is a confidence thing; some of them [the students] have definitely got low

4509 self-esteem, they don't think of themselves very highly at all. You do hear 'I

4510 can't' a lot and you know; they are vulnerable, they lack the skills needed to

4511 solve different types of situations.

4512 Throughout the programme, students experienced frustration and vulnerability when

4513 they engaged in different activities and challenges that were outside their comfort

4514 zone. For instance, when taking part in an inflatable rugby passing drill, one of the

4515 students struggled to throw the rugby ball into the target and vented his frustration by

4516 aggressively kicking the ball onto the next field (field notes). One teacher understood

4517 the student's frustration: "He's terrible if he doesn't feel he can do what he's doing,

4518 so, that incident with him on the field, was just because of his frustration that he

4519 couldn't get the ball in the target." The implementation of a 'sin-bin'[7] and time-out

4520 strategy provided students with time away from the activity to reflect and recalibrate

4521 (mechanism). This strategy helped students to calm down and manage their feelings

4522 and emotions (mechanism). As Logan, stated: "Helped me to like calm down I

4523 reckon." Alex shared similar views, he explained: "It [sin-bin strategy] was good

4524 'cause it made me take my mind of it [stressor]." Consequently, outcomes evident as

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[7] The sin-bin is a strategy used in professional rugby, where players who have received a yellow card offence must leave the game for ten minutes.

4525   a result included a willingness among students to re-engage with the activity and

4526   improved emotional regulation. Table 5.8 explicates this CMO Configuration.

4527   **Table 5.8**

4528   *CMO Configuration 3.2: The Sin-Bin Strategy*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Several students in TACKLE had low self-esteem and limited coping strategies to respond to challenges and stressors.	Students experienced frustration and vulnerability when they engaged in different activities and challenges that were outside of their comfort zone. The implementation of a 'sin-bin' and time out strategy enabled students time away from the activity to reflect and recalibrate.	This strategy helped students to calm down and manage their feelings and emotions.	A willingness amongst students to re-engage with the activity, improved emotional regulation.

4529   **5.3.3.3 CMO Configuration 3.3: Access and Exposure to New**

4530   **Opportunities.** Within the context of students who experienced high levels of

4531   poverty, socioeconomic adversity, and poor school attendance, TACKLE provided

4532   exposure to new opportunities (mechanism), including tickets to a professional rugby

4533   match and a tour of the stadium. For many, including students Caleb and Leo,

4534   visiting the stadium was a new experience. They acknowledged that: "I'd like to go

4535   to another Ospreys game because that was the first ever game I've actually been to,

4536   in the stadium" (Caleb) and "just got to see erm, you know, the actual stadium, never

4537   been in one before. It [the stadium] was big (Leo)." Access to new opportunities

4538   triggered mechanisms of excitement and happiness among students and enhanced

4539   motivation to attend school (mechanism). The excitement of the students was

4540   reflected in one of the teacher's comments:

4541   They [the students] were always ready waiting to come to TACKLE. I

4542   remember that there was a time when one of them [one of the students], he'd

4543   missed his bus, and he'd you know, usually would have been 'Oh I've missed

4544   my bus I'll stay at home' but he'd walked to school and got here 'cause he

4545   was excited to come and go to the stadium. You know, they erm, they really

4546   liked the stadium tour and the ones who were at the game just loved it.

4547   Further, Cameron described how he proudly shared his experiences of the stadium

4548   tour with his friends: "I was telling them [my friends] that we went in big rooms

4549 where the players sit and sat in the chairs down the field, and they all want to start

4550 coming TACKLE now."

4551   The outcomes evident as a result, included improvements in students'

4552 existing relationships with their peers and increased school attendance. As explained

4553 by Ellis: "There was an improvement with Rhodri, Caleb, and Brayden, we never

4554 really used to speak but like I talked to them more 'cause I sat by them at the match."

4555 Further, improvements in attendance were also evident, as Rhodri commented: "My

4556 attendance is better now than what it was because it's made me want to come in to

4557 school and go to TACKLE, otherwise I wouldn't have got to see the stadium and

4558 that." The corresponding CMO configuration is presented in Table 5.9.

4559 **Table 5.9**

4560 *CMO Configuration 3.3: Access and Exposure to New Opportunities*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Students experienced high levels of poverty, socioeconomic adversity (e.g., single parent-households), and poor school attendance.	The resource was providing access and exposure to new opportunities (e.g., a stadium tour and free tickets to attend a rugby match with TACKLE facilitators and their teachers).	Access to new opportunities triggered feelings of excitement and happiness amongst students, and enhanced motivation to attend school.	Improvements in students' existing relationships with their peers and increased school attendance.

4561   **5.3.3.4 Refined Programme Theory 3: Sport and Physical Activity.** In

4562 accordance with the initial programme theory, there was evidence to suggest that. in

4563 the context of students who received limited praise and positive feedback, the

4564 opportunity to display their sporting talents and to lead and officiate various sports

4565 enabled students to receive praise and to experience feelings of competency,

4566 empowerment, and pride. Outcomes evident as a result included enhanced

4567 confidence in students' abilities and improved leadership skills.

4568   Furthermore, in the context of students who had low self-esteem and limited

4569 coping strategies, exposure to different activities and challenges triggered feelings of

4570 frustration and vulnerability. The implementation of a sin-bin strategy, however,

4571 enabled students time away from the activity to reflect and recalibrate. This led to a

4572 willingness amongst students to re-engage with the activity and improved emotional

4573 regulation.

Many students in the programme experienced high levels of poverty, socioeconomic adversity, and poor school attendance. In such contexts, TACKLE provided access and exposure to new opportunities (e.g., a visit to the stadium to watch a professional rugby match and a stadium tour), this triggered mechanisms of excitement and happiness among students and led to improvements in students' existing relationships with their peers and increased school attendance.

5.3.4 Initial Programme Theory 4: Professional Athlete

> For students who are interested in, and passionate about rugby, the involvement of a professional rugby player may play an important role in enhancing students' engagement, motivation, and confidence (Armour & Duncombe, 2012). Specifically, through the rugby player sharing their own background, challenges experienced at school, the regret of not working hard enough in school, the obstacles they have overcome, and their current career pathways outside of professional sport, students may be able to envision the opportunities available to them post-school and develop a realisation of the importance of school completion.

This initial programme theory relates to the positive role a professional athlete may play in students' lives. According to the data, it was evident that many students were engaged, interested, and inspired by the rugby player's achievements outside of professional sport.

5.3.4.1 CMO Configuration 4.1: Orientation Towards the Future. There were similarities between the students and the professional rugby player (e.g., socioeconomic background, values, and interests). During interviews and informal conversations, it became apparent that many students valued how the rugby player was from the same area and shared an understanding of socioeconomic adversity (context). As evidenced in the following quote by Caleb: "Well obviously, [the rugby player] lives in a massive house now with a gym and that, but he'd grown up around here with nothing, like not much at Christmas." Similarly, Leo noted: "Cause like he lived with his mother, and she was a single parent... So, he was from a poor family growing up." During the workshop, the athlete shared with students his regret of not having worked hard enough at school, his apprenticeship route, and the businesses he had established outside of professional sport (mechanism). Many students were engaged, interested, and inspired by the rugby player's ambition and achievements, and described enhanced motivation to work hard in school (mechanism). As Alex and Jacob's comments revealed: "Well, he [rugby player] has about 3 different

businesses, doesn't he? That's just class! I know where one of them [businesses] are and why it's called what it is… It [listening to the player] made me wanna be better in school" (Alex) and "He's opened up businesses with his mates and that. If I tried more [in school] I could get on an apprenticeship after school like he did and get different trades behind me (Jacob)." A teacher also commented on the impact of the rugby player:

> It was brilliant. I thought [the rugby player] was just fantastic. And I suppose as well for all of them, you know, I'm not saying it's like, oh yeah, they've all decided now that this is what they want to do but I think it's planted some seeds. It's planted that seed, so, it's just given them a little bit of inspiration and given them a little bit of you know, to have a little bit of thought into what they are going to do in the future. I mean, they are very young, they're not going to, you know, like in Year 11, there's pressure on them to decide what they are going to do next. So, for these students, it isn't about decision making but I think it's given them motivation and it's planted some seeds, so, that when, in year 10 or 11, they need to start thinking more seriously, they've got a little more insight and a little bit more fact and information around it [different options]. And now it's around making that seed grow into an idea and I think also, if they are having one of those days, we will say "Do you remember when [the rugby player] came in and he said, he was a nightmare at school and wanted his time back again…"

As a result, the evident outcomes included students developing orientation towards their future and expressing feelings of hope and optimism. As acknowledged by Ellis: "I'd like to have my own business, like my own garage, 'cause I've always worked better with my hands." Likewise, Caleb explained:

> I want to buy my own car dealership and invest the money then… A populated one, Nissan or Renault, you see. Because for me, I think, because I grew up not having money, I think if I was to have money, I'd be different with my kids, I don't think I would spoil them. I wouldn't spoil them loads and loads but I would a little bit...

The corresponding CMO configuration is presented in Table 5.10.

4631 **Table 5.10**

4632 *CMO Configuration 4.1: Orientation Towards the Future*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
There were shared similarities between students' and the professional rugby player (e.g., socioeconomic background, values, and interests).	The athlete shared with students his regret of not having worked hard enough in school, his apprenticeship route, and the businesses he had established outside of professional sport.	During the talk, students were engaged, interested, and inspired by the rugby player's ambition and achievements. Many described enhanced motivation to work harder in school.	Students developed orientation towards their future and expressed feelings of hope and optimism.

4633 **5.3.4.2 Refined Programme Theory 4: Professional Athlete.** In the context

4634 of shared similarities between students' and the professional athlete (e.g.,

4635 socioeconomic background, values, and interests), listening to the athlete triggered

4636 mechanisms of engagement, interest, inspiration, and motivation to work harder in

4637 school. Outcomes observed as a result, included students developing orientation

4638 towards their future and expressing feelings of hope and optimism.

4639 *5.3.5 Initial Programme Theory 5: The Importance of a Multi-Component*

4640 *Programme*

> In order to re-ignite students' engagement and interest, a singular effort or approach may not be sufficient (Mawn et al., 2017; Rajasekaran & Reyes, 2019). To accommodate for each student's varied needs, they may need to receive exposure to a diversity of modalities, resources, and support mechanisms (Rajasekaran & Reyes, 2019). Through exposure to a diversity of modalities, including one-to-one mentoring, classroom-based learning, sport and physical activity, and forms of social support such as emotional, informational, appraisal, and instrumental types of support, students' engagement and interest in learning and education may be enhanced.

4641 This initial programme theory is about the interaction of the different

4642 modalities and the exposure to various forms of social support. There was evidence

4643 to support the initial programme theory. For instance, the diversity of modalities and

4644 the presence of positive social support led to increased school attendance and higher

4645 levels of connection and engagement with school.

4646 **5.3.5.1 CMO Configuration 5.1: Access to Support, Guidance, and**

4647 **Resources.** Within TACKLE, students experienced instability in their family lives

4648 and lacked access to emotional, informational, appraisal, and instrumental types of

4649 support (context). Through involvement in the TACKLE programme, students

4650 experienced diverse modalities and accessed multiple sources of social support from

4651 various role models (e.g., TACKLE facilitators, mentors, teachers, and a professional

4652 athlete). For many students, this triggered feelings of being supported and led to

4653 enhanced motivation to attend school. Rhodri remarked: "The [TACKLE facilitators]

4654 helped me to keep on the right path and try more in school." This experience was

4655 shared by Isaac, who explained: "it made me come to school, 'cause it was fun,

4656 getting to play loads of rugby like, and [we] wasn't in the classroom all the time. I

4657 got to hang around with friends and [TACKLE facilitators] and meet different

4658 people." Likewise, Brayden attested: "There was people in the TACKLE project that

4659 I could count on." Consequently, this led to positive outcomes for students, including

4660 increased school attendance and higher levels of connection and engagement with

4661 school. This CMO Configuration is presented in Table 5.11.

4662 **Table 5.11**

4663 *CMO Configuration 5.11: Access to Support, Guidance, and Resources*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Students experienced instability in their family lives and lacked access to emotional, informational, appraisal, and instrumental types of support.	Students received a diversity of modalities (mentoring, classroom-based learning, sport) and accessed multiple sources of social support from various role models (e.g., TACKLE facilitators, mentors, teachers, and a professional athlete).	This triggered feelings of being supported and enhanced motivation to attend school.	Increased school attendance, higher levels of connection and engagement with school.

4664

4665 **5.3.5.2 Refined Programme Theory 5: The Importance of a Multi-**

4666 **Component Programme.** The data corroborated the initial programme theory. For

4667 instance, by exposing students to a diversity of modalities and support structures, it

4668 was evident that student felt supported and were motivated to attend school.

4669 Consequently, this led to positive outcomes for students, including increased school

4670 attendance and higher levels of connection and engagement with school. Such

4671 findings support the proposition that providing access to various modalities, support

4672 structures, and role models can increase the likelihood that students will attend

4673 school and re-engage with their education.

4674   *5.3.6 Initial Programme Theory 6: The Ethos of TACKLE Facilitators*

> In the context of students who receive negativity within their school environment (e.g., deficit-based messaging), they may be particularly drawn to the strength-based resources and caring ethos of the TACKLE programme and facilitators. This type of approach may help students to identify and recognise their own strengths, assets, and capacities (Jalala et al., 2020; Noddings, 2005). As such, through the endorsement of a strengths-based approach and the implementation of an ethic of care, TACKLE may enhance students' perceptions of competence and confidence in their own abilities.

4675   This initial programme theory relates to the ethos and approach of the

4676   TACKLE programme and facilitators. In accordance with the theory, there was

4677   evidence to suggest that the implementation of a strengths-based approach and an

4678   ethic of care facilitated feelings of competence among students and enhanced

4679   confidence in their own abilities. In addition, there was data to support the

4680   importance of building mutual trust and respect between students and the TACKLE

4681   facilitators.

4682   **5.3.6.1 CMO Configuration 6.1: Strengths-Based and Caring Ethos.** A

4683   number of students experienced low self-esteem, insecurity, and self-doubt. Many

4684   received deficit-based messaging and a lack of caring behaviours from teachers

4685   within the school setting (context). For instance, Jacob described how several of his

4686   teachers did not believe he was capable of performing well in their classes, which

4687   caused him to give up easily during academic challenges:

4688   Some of them [my teachers] say that my answers are wrong all [of] the time

4689   and that I'm not going to do well. They say it's cause I'm not listening, but I

4690   am, I just don't get it, so, I give up if I find something hard 'cause they

4691   [teachers] don't think I can do it.

4692   Likewise, a teacher who worked closely with students and alongside the TACKLE

4693   programme, described the difference between their own philosophy and pedagogical

4694   practices to that of fellow colleagues:

4695   Teachers aren't always the most, you know, they just recognise the bad things

4696   and not the good things... Sometimes when I talk to teachers, well, I can't

4697   expect them to do what I do. So, you know, the session that we did in the

4698   gym, I wrote a list of everything they'd [the students] done well, you know,

4699   it's lovely seeing them do good things. So, like Isaac, is one for me. He

4700   shows such good leadership skills. It's showing them [the students] that they

4701   can do things, they have got skills, and they have got strengths!

4702   Throughout the programme, TACKLE facilitators demonstrated care for the

4703 students, by developing knowledge of each students' skills, hobbies, and interests,

4704 and helping students to identify and recognise the strengths they possess

4705 (mechanism). As a consequence, it was evident students perceived that the TACKLE

4706 facilitators cared about and believed in them (mechanism). For instance, Cameron

4707 described: "They [TACKLE facilitators] believe in me and make me feel more

4708 confident in myself." This feeling was shared by Rhodri, he explained: "I reckon I

4709 believe in myself a bit more like because he helped me see what I can do and my

4710 skills."

4711   Outcomes evident as a result included enhanced feelings of competence and

4712 confidence in their own abilities. Isaac explained, for example: "It's given me more

4713 confidence 'cause it made me see that I've got good communication and leadership

4714 skills and stuff like that." In a similar way, Jacob stated:

4715   Like [the TACKLE facilitators] told me that you know, "you can do it"

4716   [classwork work] and that. And they helped with my confidence 'cause they

4717   helped with my knowledge. Like [the facilitators] was telling us some things

4718   and some of those questions were in the PE exam. He kept saying like what

4719   frequency means like.

4720 Table 5.12 summarises this CMO Configuration.

4721 **Table 5.12**

4722 *CMO Configuration 6.1: Strengths-Based and Caring Ethos*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
A number of students experienced low self-esteem, insecurity, and self-doubt. Many received deficit-based messaging and a lack of caring behaviours by teachers within their school.	TACKLE facilitators demonstrated care for the students by developing knowledge on each students' skills, hobbies, and interests, and helping students to identify and recognise the strengths and attributes in which they possess.	Students felt that TACKLE facilitators cared about and believed in them.	Enhanced feelings of competence and confidence in their own abilities.

4723   **5.3.6.2 CMO Configuration 6.2: The Building of Trust and Respect.** The

4724 findings from the observations and interviews revealed that many students had

internalised feelings of mistrust towards teachers and authority figures (context). For instance, Jacob expressed his low levels of trust: "I'm not too fussy on them [teachers], cause some of them treat you like they're better, and always find a reason to make things your fault. But you know, you can't trust them see." In a similar vein, Leo explained: "Most teachers here get stricter and stricter and when they come over [to me] in the yard, [I] don't tell them anything."

In the context of an existing mistrust between students and teachers, the students indicated that the relationships formed with TACKLE facilitators were different and unique. Specifically, many students appreciated that they could interact with facilitators on a first-name basis and that facilitators actively participated in the practical activities, classroom activities, and reward sessions alongside them (mechanism). As explained by Rhodri: "It wasn't like normal teachers. You get treated more different. 'Cause like you call [TACKLE facilitators] by their names and they take part in like the practical and the other stuff."

The familiarity, stability, and continuity of the TACKLE facilitators across each modality led to students feeling comfortable around and trusting the facilitators (mechanism). Caleb described: "I liked it 'cause we got the same [facilitators] with us in everything [each modality] and so I got to know them more. I liked all of them [facilitators] really." Outcomes evident as a result included the building of trust and respect between students and TACKLE facilitators. This CMO configuration is presented in Table 5.13.

Table 5.13

CMO Configuration 6.2: The Building of Trust and Respect

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Many students had internalised feelings of mistrust towards teachers and authority figures.	In TACKLE, students interacted with facilitators on a first-name basis and facilitators actively participated in each modality (e.g., classroom, practical, and reward sessions) alongside the students.	The familiarity, stability, and continuity of the TACKLE facilitators across each component led to the building of trust and students feeling comfortable around the facilitators.	The building of trust and respect between students and TACKLE facilitators.

5.3.6.3 Refined Programme Theory 6: The Ethos of TACKLE Facilitators. Consistent with the initial programme theory, there was evidence to

4750   support the importance of TACKLE facilitators endorsing a strengths-based

4751   approach and implementing an ethic of care. Specifically, within the context of

4752   students who experienced low self-esteem, insecurity, self-doubt, and negativity

4753   within their school environment, exposure to the TACKLE programme and to caring

4754   and strengths-based facilitators led to students feeling that they were cared about and

4755   believed in. In turn, this led to enhanced feelings of competence and confidence in

4756   their own abilities. Furthermore, in the context of an existing mistrust between

4757   students and teachers within the school setting, the students particularly valued the

4758   types of relationships established with TACKLE facilitators. Specifically, students

4759   appreciated that they could interact with facilitators on a first-name basis and how

4760   facilitators actively participated in the practical activities, classroom activities, and

4761   reward sessions alongside them. The familiarity, stability, and continuity of the

4762   TACKLE facilitators across each modality led to students feeling comfortable

4763   around the facilitators and building mutual trust and respect.

4764   *5.3.7 Initial Programme Theory 7: Are any Changes Sustained? If Not, Why Not?*

4765   *For Whom? In What Contexts?*

> In the context of students who experience low self-esteem, disengagement towards school, and less complex home environments, the resources of the TACKLE programme may be sufficient to sustain improvements in students' engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes. However, in the context of students who encounter extremely complex home environments and difficult circumstances outside of the school setting, evidence suggests that the positive effects of programmes may diminish over time (Bloom, 2010). Consequently, within the context of heightened complexity, the TACKLE programme may not have sufficient leverage to sustain long-term improvements in students' engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes.

4766   This initial programme theory refers to the sustainability effects of the

4767   TACKLE programme. In order to test the initial programme theory, data were

4768   collected 3, 6, and 10 months after the completion of the TACKLE programme.

4769   There was evidence to corroborate the initial theory. Specifically, within the context

4770   of students who experienced less chaotic lives outside of the school setting, it was

4771   evident that the resources of the programme were sufficient to sustain improvements

4772   in engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes. However, for students who

4773   experienced exceptionally complex lives outside of the education context, the

4774   programme did not lead to lasting positive developmental outcomes among students.

5.3.7.1 CMO Configuration 7.1: Sustained Improvements in Self-Esteem, Attitude, and Behaviour. In the context of eight students who experienced low self-esteem, disengagement towards school (e.g., limited involvement and poor conduct during academic activities), and less chaotic home environments, there was evidence to suggest that TACKLE provided sufficient resources to sustain the reaction of improved self-esteem, attitude, and behaviour (mechanism). Outcomes observed as a result included improved engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes during curriculum lessons. For example, during the follow-up interviews, a few students noted how the programme had contributed to increased self-esteem. As Jamie explained: "It's given me the confidence to talk in front of people 'cause we did a lot of working in groups and presenting stuff in TACKLE" (6-month interview). Likewise, Rhodri shared: "In TACKLE, we had to speak up and say what we think. That gave me more confidence 'cause it's helped me to speak more in class like I didn't really speak in class" (3-month interview). As for Jacob, he stated: "There was an impact on like my confidence, like the way I was around people, like in a group project or subjects like Drama I wouldn't really talk but now I join in 'cause like I feel more confident." (6-month interview).

During the follow-up interviews, the students also highlighted improvements in their attitude and behaviour. Leo, explained: "I don't escalate small problems as much, it [TACKLE] taught me to be like more calmer in like different situations" (6 month interview). While another student, Cameron described (6-month interview):

> I've started to shape up a bit, yeah… Because it taught me to be a bit more respectful to other people and made me like dedicate myself more, like, be more disciplined. So, if I'm quite tired and don't wanna do work, I try to remember my discipline and things the [TACKLE facilitators] were telling us.

In a similar way, Caleb explained how the programme had brought new resources of perspective and encouraged him to exert more effort and improve his behaviour during lessons (3-month interview):

> TACKLE made me see that I am here to learn and that you see, and that even though I'm still obviously working on [my] behaviour and stuff, it's made me put more effort in. So, like yesterday I had to write an essay in geography, had to write 3 pages, and then the lesson after, I had to write another 3 pages, and then the lesson after that, I had to write another 2. Before TACKLE, I

mean, I probably wouldn't have even wrote a page, but I do see things a bit different now and that's what you gotta expect when you get into year 9, you have to work hard and write essays after essays.

A number of students also spoke about plans for their future and occupations they were considering, including working as an accountant, plasterer, construction labourer, police officer, a marine, electrical, and gas engineer, and a physiotherapist. These thoughts about their future appeared to have been triggered by participating in TACKLE. One student, Leo, described how the TACKLE programme had motivated him to start thinking about his future: "It [TACKLE] did have an impact because it has made me think a bit more seriously about what I'm gonna do and the subjects I need to pass and that" (10-month interview). Further, Caleb, explained how the talk from the professional rugby player in particular had stimulated him to start exploring options for his future (6-month interview):

Well, he [rugby player] shocked me with some of the things he said… He taught me stuff about things I never knew, and I realised that GCSEs are important 'cause it depends on what job you want really… I think I know the GCSEs I want to take, well I know two, but I don't know what third one to do see… I wanna go to university. I went there [university] with the school, and it was really nice, they had a gym, they had loads of pitches to play sports.

Consistent with the students, one of the teachers had also noticed improvements in students' confidence, behaviour, and attitude towards school (6-month interview):

I think the ones [students] that were lacking confidence and who were more disengaged but not massively concerning behaviour wise. So, the likes of Jacob, Rhodri, Alex, Leo, Logan, Cameron, have shown improvements and Jamie, I think for them they took a lot from the programme, in terms of their attitude towards school, communication skills, and it helped to raise their confidence in certain situations… I think Caleb for example, you know, he's improved loads, really turned it around, a lot less destructive behaviours and he is sort of a lot more mature in his way of thinking really, thinking of like the long term I want to get a good job, so I need to behave in school… One of the students had an award actually before Christmas for most improved behaviour, he was landed [happy].

4841 It should be noted that of those eight students, one of the students moved schools due

4842 to family circumstances and subsequent re-location. The corresponding CMO

4843 Configuration is presented in Table 5.14.

4844 **Table 5.14**

4845 *CMO Configuration 7.1: Sustained Improvements in Self-esteem, Attitude, and*

4846 *Behaviour*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
For students who experienced low self-esteem and disengagement towards school (e.g., limited involvement and poor conduct during academic activities), and less chaotic home environments.	The resources of the programme had enough leverage to sustain the reaction of improved self-esteem, attitude, and behaviour over time.	Students described how TACKLE had contributed to increased self-esteem, allowing them to feel more confident communicating in front of their peers. Others described improvements in their attitude, perspectives, and behaviour, including how they regulate their emotions, and their attitude towards the future.	Improved engagement, behaviour, and psychosocial outcomes during curriculum lessons.

4847   **5.3.7.2 CMO Configuration 7.2: A Lack of Sustainment, Reversion, and**

4848 **a Regressed State.** For four students facing an extremely chaotic home environment

4849 and difficult circumstances (e.g., parental separation, parental substance abuse,

4850 limited supervision, neglect, and gang affiliations) outside of the school setting

4851 (context), the resources provided through TACKLE did not have sufficient leverage

4852 to sustain improvements in students' self-esteem, attitude, and behaviour. Within

4853 such contexts, students described an increase in behaviour-related issues, difficulties

4854 concentrating in lessons, and associations with older, deviant peers (mechanism).

4855 Outcomes observed included poor school attendance, exclusions, entrenched feelings

4856 of disaffection towards school, and alternative learning arrangements.

4857   Brayden, Ellis, Isaac, and Harrison described difficult family circumstances,

4858 including parental separation, parental substance abuse, housing instability, limited

4859 supervision, neglect, and gang affiliations that had negatively impacted upon them

4860 within the school setting. The following extract from one student[8] provides some

4861 indication of the complexities and instabilities of their lives (3-month interview):

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[8] Due to the sensitive information provided, no pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of the students.

4862   We always lived with [my parent] then a big thing happened and then I lived

4863   with my uncle. My eight-year-old brother lives back with [my parent] now,

4864   but I don't bother [with] them. My fourteen-year-old sister lives with my nan

4865   and then my two baby brothers and big sister's in foster care, and also my

4866   new baby sister is.

4867 Poignantly, one of the student's stated: "I haven't talked to [my parent] in like a

4868 year… I got a bit lost, lost track a bit in school, like my attitude and behaviour. I

4869 wasn't really myself for like a, like a long time" (10-month interview). While another

4870 student also commented: "I've had stuff happening in my family recently and in the

4871 house, so I haven't been concentrating in class" (3-month interview). Overall, it was

4872 evident that family circumstances impacted upon students' school attendance, as one

4873 student simply stated: "When something bad happens at home, I stay off [school]"

4874 (6-month interview).

4875   For others, changing residence several times during the same term had led to

4876 disruptions in their education. For example, one student discussed how he was

4877 unable to revise for his exams: "The exams go towards your sets, for like Science,

4878 English, and Maths… I couldn't revise for them 'cause I was off school for a while

4879 'cause I moved house three times" (6-month interview). A few, including students

4880 Ellis and Isaac, described how the end of the TACKLE programme had impacted

4881 negatively upon their motivation to behave in school: "I think if I haven't got

4882 anything coming up where I go to, like TACKLE and the trips and stuff, then I'm not

4883 going to try as I'll never be as good" (Ellis, 6-month interview) and "I was good in

4884 class when I could go to TACKLE but if there's nothing to go to then I won't be

4885 good 'cause well I just don't want to be [good]. Schools the most boringest thing I've

4886 ever done in my life (Isaac, 6-month interview)."

4887   In a number of instances, students explained that they had limited parental

4888 supervision and guidance: "My parents let me do anything really, [they're] not strict

4889 at all" (6-month interview). Likewise, another student said (10-month interview):

4890   My [parent] works from six in the morning until ten at night… I don't usually

4891   go home after school. I only go home in the night. I go out straightaway to

4892   [name of area] and then just hang around down there. Then when I get home

4893   later, my [parent] sends me back out to the chippy [a chip shop].

4894 A teacher described the impact that limited parental support had on students, sharing:

4895   Their parents do not push them into school. They're not supportive of school,

4896   not reinforcing consequences, and not doing homework with them and things

4897   like that, so, no push and support from home is just a huge barrier…

4898   Everything is impacted by external things and when programmes are no

4899   longer in place, all this other stuff is still going on or has happened since (6-

4900   month interview).

4901   With limited parental guidance and supervision, and no access to TACKLE,

4902 some students expressed feelings of abandonment, disappointment, and loneliness,

4903 such as: "I wish I was doing TACKLE now. 'Cause I don't really have anyone to

4904 speak to now. I was disappointed when it [the programme] finished like but erm,

4905 talking to [TACKLE facilitators] like once a month or something could help" (6-

4906 month interview). While other students had started to associate with older peers

4907 outside of school which, in turn, had contributed to an increase in disruptive and

4908 maladaptive behaviours (3-month interview):

4909   I'm worse now than I was … because outside of school I am hanging around

4910   with like, older boy's, they're like 18, 17… On the summer holidays,

4911   basically I was hanging around with them and they're chopsy [loud] people.

4912   And if someone chops us, we'll chops them back, and now, I just got it from

4913   them. So, when a teacher says something to me nasty, I just chops back and

4914   don't stop chopsing… I'm on my last warning, they [parents and teachers]

4915   said that they dunno what to do with me anymore.

4916 In the context of friendships with older peers, a student discussed how he had

4917 consequently gained access to drugs and affiliations with gangs (6-month interview):

4918   They [my friends] all smoke the green [marijuana] and everything they do.

4919   One of my friend's mums a [drug] dealer, it's class... I've holded like acid

4920   tabs [tablets] and stuff, holded them but I've never done them. One of the

4921   boy's did them and he passed out, he was like, on the floor, he went to

4922   hospital, he had like this bad trip and everything… I want to go to [name of

4923   city], there's like all knife crimes and stuff like that innit? I would go with all

4924   the boys' and see if our group is bigger than theirs like… We have got quite a

4925   few of us, there's like 50 of us. We have like massive vans and stuff.

4926 The four students (Brayden, Ellis, Isaac, and Harrison) for whom the outcomes of

4927 TACKLE did not appear to be sustained were in very different situations at the end

4928   of the 10-month follow-up. A teacher explained these students' situations (10-month

4929   interview):

4930   He [one of the students] is permanently excluded now, just for complete

4931   disruption, really bad, continually not following instructions… One of the

4932   student's had to move schools [due to family circumstances] so, he's no

4933   longer with us… For [student], it's kind of got to that stage now, he's got like

4934   the most behaviour points in the school. We've had parents in, you know,

4935   we're trying like kind of referrals, youth work referrals, throwing everything

4936   at him now to try and keep him. We are even looking at doing like a reduced

4937   timetable for him. So, maybe he comes here [to school] for a couple of hours

4938   then goes to work somewhere else for a couple of hours, like in industry. But

4939   nothings, it's in the pipeline, nothings been organised yet…For [student], he's

4940   taking part in a [sport programme] two hours a week, so, it's regular.

4941   Obviously, it's not always sort of, how we sustain that [programme] with

4942   funding or do you know like people's workloads and stuff like that… There's

4943   been emotional literacy support [ELSA] which is looking at their strengths,

4944   what's important to them sort of, looking at their achievements to try and

4945   raise their self-esteem, someone showing an interest in them… The

4946   programmes helping him a lot, and he's actually engaging really well with it.

4947   Interestingly, despite there not appearing to be continuing positive impacts on

4948   engagement or behaviour, due to involvement in the TACKLE programme, it was

4949   evident that the one of the students was more willing to receive one-to-one support

4950   and to participate in other school-based programmes as a result of the positive

4951   experiences he encountered during TACKLE. He shared: "I think the TACKLE

4952   project helped me speak better to adults and try different things in school" (6-month

4953   interview).

4954   This CMO Configuration is presented in Table 5.15.

4955 **Table 5.15**

4956 *CMO Configuration 7.2: A Lack of Sustainment, Reversion, and a Regressed State*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Students experienced an extremely chaotic home environment and difficult circumstances (e.g., parental separation, parental substance abuse, housing instability, limited parental supervision, neglect, and gang affiliations) outside of the school setting.	The resources of the programme did not have enough leverage to sustain improvements in students' self-esteem, attitude, and behaviour over time.	Attitude and behavioural challenges, difficulties concentrating, feelings of being lost, a lack of motivation/incentive to behave in school and feelings of abandonment, disappointment, and loneliness due to no exposure to TACKLE, and association with older, deviant peers outside of school.	Poor school attendance, exclusions, entrenched feelings of disaffection towards school, and alternative learning arrangements.

4957 **5.3.7.3 Refined Programme Theory 7: Are any Changes sustained? If**

4958 **not, why not? For whom? In what contexts?** There was evidence to support the

4959 initial programme theory. Specifically, within the context of students who

4960 experienced low self-esteem and disengagement towards school (e.g., limited

4961 involvement and poor conduct during academic activities), and less chaotic home

4962 environments, the resources of the TACKLE programme had sufficient leverage to

4963 sustain the reaction of improved self-esteem, attitude, and behaviour over time. In

4964 turn, this led to improved engagement, behaviour, and psychosocial outcomes during

4965 curriculum lessons.

4966 However, in the context of students who experienced an extremely chaotic

4967 home environment and difficult circumstances (e.g., parental separation, parental

4968 substance abuse, housing instability, limited parental supervision, neglect, and gang

4969 affiliations) outside of the school setting, the resources of TACKLE did not have

4970 enough leverage to maintain improvements in students' self-esteem, attitude, and

4971 behaviour. Hence, the outcomes included poor school attendance, exclusions,

4972 entrenched feelings of disaffection towards school, and the arrangement of

4973 alternative learning provisions. Such findings are in alignment with previous research

4974 which underscore the erosion of programme effects over time as a result of the chaos

4975 and instabilities students encounter outside of the education context (Bloom, 2010).

5.4 Discussion: How did TACKLE work, for whom and under which circumstances?

The aim of this realist evaluation was to examine the short and long-term effects of a condensed version of the TACKLE programme on the engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes of disengaged students aged 12-13 years. Based on the findings, it was evident that a condensed multi-component programme can lead to favourable engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes among early secondary school disengaged students. However, the evaluation identified numerous contextual factors and mechanisms that constrained positive developmental outcomes. Further, the findings illustrated that the sustainability effects of multi-component programmes may be shaped and influenced by disengaged students pre-existing contextual circumstances. This section will discuss the findings of the evaluation in relation to Chapter 4 (i.e., Study 1), relevant literature, and provide practical recommendations for future programme design and practice.

In line with the findings from Study 1, important overarching mechanisms that enhanced the effectiveness of the TACKLE programme included facilitators endorsing a strengths-based ethos, providing students with access to multiple sources of support from various role models (e.g., TACKLE facilitators, mentors, teachers, and professional athletes), and the provision of financial support and transportation to new sporting events (e.g., attendance at professional matches and stadium tours). As such, within the context of both younger and older secondary school disengaged students, these findings underscore the importance of providing access to a network of supportive, close, and nurturing relationships, and new opportunities that may, in turn, cultivate desirable engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes among disengaged students (Borden & Serido, 2009). However, the findings from the current study also revealed new information that enhance understanding of how and in which circumstances a 10-week multi-component programme may work within the context of disengaged younger students. These unique findings will now be explored.

The findings from this evaluation indicated that many disengaged students who participated in TACKLE experienced socioeconomic adversity and complex family circumstances, and displayed challenges regulating their emotions, particularly controlling anger, and responding to conflict. These findings correspond

5010   to previous literature, which suggested that exposure to adversity and negative family

5011   relationships, may, in turn, lead to emotional regulation and behavioural difficulties

5012   among students (Evans & English, 2002; Kim et al., 2013; Wang, Vujovic, Barrett,

5013   & Lerner, 2015). As such, disengaged students may be more likely to experience

5014   more frequent, intense, negative emotions including anger, frustration, and shame,

5015   and are in need of emotional regulation strategies (Wang et al., 2015). Similar to

5016   Morgan, Sibthorp, and Tsethlikai (2016), the findings from this study indicate that

5017   mentors are uniquely positioned to support the development of emotional regulation

5018   in disengaged students. Specifically, through mentors listening to students' thoughts

5019   and feelings, discussing emotions, behaviours, and social relationships, and

5020   providing guidance regarding emotional regulation strategies, including reappraisal

5021   (e.g., reinterpreting a teacher's behaviour as caring instead of controlling) and

5022   suppression (e.g., hiding anger and frustration towards peers) (Wang et al., 2015),

5023   they were able to help students navigate difficult circumstances and complex social

5024   relationships. These findings build on previous research that has shown that

5025   mentoring can be an important mechanism through which students can enhance their

5026   emotional regulatory skills (Morgan et al., 2016; Wyman et al., 2010), which, in turn,

5027   may influence academic attainment, school success, and PYD (Rusk et al., 2013;

5028   Valiente, Swanson, & Eisenberg, 2012; Wang et al., 2015).

5029   However, there were barriers to the development of mentoring relationships,

5030   which limited their effectiveness for some students. Specifically, in the context of

5031   students who experienced chaotic home environments and challenging

5032   circumstances, including, housing instability and caregiving responsibilities for

5033   younger siblings, students were often unable to articulate their thoughts, feelings, and

5034   emotions, and were reticent sharing personal aspects of their life with their mentor.

5035   These results illustrate, in line with Bowlby's (1982) attachment theory and prior

5036   research (Ahrens et al., 2011; Gauthier et al., 1996; Rhodes, 2002), that when

5037   students have a history of adversity, neglect, and disorganised relationships, they

5038   may encounter heightened difficulties forming trusting relationships with others.

5039   In order to help students, develop trusting relationships within this context,

5040   the current findings point to the importance of the same facilitators delivering each

5041   programme component (i.e., mentoring, classroom-based workshops, and sport and

5042   physical activity sessions) to enhance feelings of familiarity and stability. Such

5043   familiarity, stability, and continuity of the TACKLE facilitators across each

5044 component did, over time, lead to students feeling comfortable around the facilitators

5045 and subsequently building mutual trust and respect. Furthermore, aligned with

5046 previous research (Jones & Deutsch, 2011; Moreau et al., 2018; Whitley et al., 2017),

5047 the results reinforce the importance of students interacting with TACKLE facilitators

5048 on a first-name basis and facilitators actively participating in the classroom and

5049 sporting activities alongside students. Collectively, these findings highlight the

5050 importance of facilitators implementing strategies to establish a culture of trust and

5051 high-quality personal relationships, particularly among disengaged students with

5052 histories of complex circumstances.

5053   In the context of students who were passionate about sport but disengaged

5054 towards academic learning, the findings from this study indicated that utilising

5055 sporting examples and active pedagogies to teach subjects such as English and

5056 Mathematics facilitated many students' interaction, enjoyment, and engagement in

5057 the classroom workshops. This observation is congruent with findings in the

5058 literature, which have illustrated that curriculum subjects may be more interesting,

5059 meaningful, and accessible to students when they utilise the language of sport and

5060 actively involve students in the learning process (Mthethwa, 2007; Robinson, 2012).

5061 However, unlike the current study, previous research has not focused on disengaged

5062 students within secondary school settings. As such, these findings extend the

5063 literature and suggest that in order to help disengaged students move from

5064 disaffection towards engagement, future programmes should integrate sporting and

5065 real-life examples into the school curriculum.

5066   Importantly, however, in the current evaluation, as with previous research

5067 (Andrews & Andrews, 2003; Haudenhuyse et al., 2014), the competitive nature of

5068 the activities led to a culture of hypermasculinity (i.e., emphasis on strength,

5069 physicality, competitiveness, toughness, and power) and the emergence of bullying

5070 among students. Such bullying likely arose because, as other studies have suggested,

5071 if students do not conform to hegemonic masculine identities, the competitive nature

5072 of group challenges and activities can result in isolation and exclusion (Bramham,

5073 2003; Hickey, 2008; Skille & Waddington, 2006), Together, these findings have

5074 important implications for classroom-based workshops. Specifically, in line with the

5075 recommendations of other scholars (Jimenez-Barbero et al., 2020), to prevent

5076 students from engaging in bullying behaviours, facilitators should actively supervise

5077 activities to ensure positive interaction and engagement between students, establish

5078   an environment that de-emphasises competition and reinforces cooperation, and

5079   encourage students to display pro-social behaviours and empathy towards others.

5080   Within TACKLE, a number of students shared similar backgrounds and

5081   behavioural challenges, including disobedience, inattentiveness, verbal aggression,

5082   and physical violence. Similar to both Cho et al.'s (2005) and Dishion et al.'s (2001)

5083   results, the findings from this study revealed that by aggregating students with

5084   similar backgrounds and behavioural challenges, there was an increase and

5085   enhancement of deviant and disruptive behaviours. These findings are similar to

5086   those reported in the literature on 'deviancy training' and deviant peer contagion

5087   (Dishion et al., 1999; Lansford et al., 2020), in that, TACKLE provided disengaged

5088   students with the opportunity to socialise with other deviant peers. Consequently, it

5089   became a setting that was conducive to the development of deviant behaviours and

5090   resulted in a perception between students that such behaviours were desirable and the

5091   norm.

5092   These findings can be interpreted within dual systems theory (Steinberg,

5093   2008; 2010). Specifically, this theory suggests that the parts of the brain that respond

5094   to rewards develop during early adolescence (i.e., aged 10 – 14 years old) (Lansford

5095   et al., 2020). In contrast, the parts of the brain that are responsible for response

5096   inhibition, cognitive, and behavioural control develop gradually throughout

5097   adolescence and early adulthood (Casey, Heller, Gee, & Cohen, 2019; Cohen et al.,

5098   2016; Steinberg, 2008). As such, when students perceive that their peers are

5099   accepting of deviant and disruptive behaviours, the rewards in relation to peer

5100   support and affiliation may outweigh students' capacity to assess risks, evaluate

5101   consequences, and control their behaviours (Lansford et al., 2020; Rudolph et al.,

5102   2017). Consequently, concurring with Dishion, Dodge, and Lansford (2006), within

5103   the context of younger students, the findings from this study support the need for

5104   experienced facilitators who command authority and respect, effective behaviour

5105   management strategies, increased supervision and monitoring during activities,

5106   careful arrangement of pairs and groups (e.g., the separation of students who already

5107   have deviant affiliations), and the establishment of a pro-social culture that facilitates

5108   and enforces positive and supportive peer relationships.

5109   In the context of students who experienced frustration and vulnerability when

5110   they engaged in different sporting activities and challenges, that were outside of their

5111   comfort zone, the findings from this evaluation strongly support the need for a 'sin-

5112   bin' or time out strategy to enable students' to remove themselves from the situation

5113   and be able to reflect and recalibrate. Outcomes observed as a result included a

5114   willingness among students to re-engage with the activity and improved emotional

5115   regulation. These findings are consistent with and expand upon previous work, which

5116   has concluded that time out strategies, and places of safety and refuge are

5117   particularly important for autistic students during periods of anxiety and frustration

5118   (Goodall, 2018; Parsons et al., 2011). Consequently, in addition to one-to-one

5119   mentoring, the findings from the current study suggest that, when appropriate time-

5120   out strategies are integrated, programmes such as TACKLE can play a valuable role

5121   in helping disengaged students learn to regulate their emotions.

5122   The findings from the longitudinal follow-up highlighted the important role

5123   of contextual factors in determining whether TACKLE created sustainable and

5124   lasting favourable engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes among

5125   disengaged year 8 students. Specifically, there was evidence to suggest that in the

5126   context of students who experienced less chaotic home environments, the resources

5127   of TACKLE were sufficient to maintain improvements in students' self-esteem,

5128   attitude, and behaviour. However, a condensed TACKLE programme was not

5129   sufficient in the long-term to compensate for students who encountered extremely

5130   chaotic home environments and circumstances, including parental substance abuse,

5131   limited supervision, neglect, and gang affiliations. These findings reinforce previous

5132   research (e.g., Bloom, 2010; Magee & Jeanes, 2011; Yates & Payne, 2006) and

5133   suggest that within the context of heightened complexity and vulnerability,

5134   programmes such as TACKLE may be able to offer positive experiences and a

5135   change of routine in the short-term, but they may be unable to produce long-term

5136   sustainability effects. In this context, in order to alter disengaged students' long-term

5137   trajectories, they may require multi-component programmes of longer durations and

5138   intensities (cf. Grossman & Rhodes, 2002).

5139   *5.4.1 Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions for Research*

5140   The strengths of this realist evaluation include the ability to unpack the

5141   contextual factors and mechanisms through which a condensed TACKLE

5142   programme worked among disengaged year 8 students. Specifically, the evaluation

5143   illustrated how differences in contexts can influence student's engagement with the

5144   resources of the TACKLE programme and the subsequent outcomes generated. As

5145   such, by identifying the dynamic interactions between contexts, mechanisms, and

5146 outcomes, the evaluation generated new insights that can be used to inform future

5147 programme design and innovation.

5148   This study complemented and expanded upon the data collection methods

5149 used in Chapter 4, demonstrating the value of using the walking interview method

5150 for disengaged year 8 students. The 'talk-as-you-walk' approach helped students to

5151 feel comfortable, interact more effectively, and to authentically share their own

5152 complex experiences. Collectively, these findings provide evidence that walking

5153 interviews can serve as powerful mechanisms in which disengaged students can feel

5154 empowered and experience higher levels of ownership over the interview setting.

5155   The longitudinal follow-up design allowed for an exploration of students'

5156 progress and trajectories over a ten-month period. As such, the current study expands

5157 previous literature by providing insight into how a condensed multi-component

5158 programme impacted students' engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes

5159 over time. Further, the longitudinal design sheds light on the contextual

5160 circumstances of disengaged students that may prevent programmes from having

5161 long-term sustainability effects. Accordingly, future research is needed that examines

5162 the effectiveness of multi-component programmes that provide disengaged students

5163 with additional resources and follow-up support. Further, future studies should also

5164 aim to establish how multi-component programmes may work for disengaged

5165 populations outside of the school setting.

5166   There were also some limitations that should be noted. Firstly, in contrast to

5167 Chapter 4, work-based placements were not included in this programme due to the

5168 age and developmental stage of the students. However, based on the findings, it was

5169 evident that students were able to engage in discussions regarding their future and

5170 post-school transitions. As such, within the context of disengaged year 8 students, the

5171 inclusion of work-based placements may have served as an effective engagement

5172 tool. Although, future research is required to evaluate the impact of work-based

5173 placements among younger disengaged students. Secondly, two students dropped out

5174 of the longitudinal follow-up at the second time point (six-month) and consequently,

5175 a detailed understanding of the long-term impact of TACKLE for these students was

5176 not gained. Additionally, interviews were conducted with students and teachers,

5177 however, in order to enhance understanding of the important contextual conditions

5178 and mechanisms, it may have been useful to have conducted realist interviews with

5179 TACKLE facilitators and to have included them in the process of theory refinement

5180 (cf. Verkooijen et al., 2020). Finally, consistent with Study 1, the TACKLE

5181 programme was delivered within the school setting and consequently, it remains

5182 unclear whether the refined programme theories from this study can be transferred to

5183 disengaged young people who are *outside* of education and employment.

5184 ***5.4.2 Conclusion***

5185   In conclusion, this study generates new insight regarding how and in what

5186 circumstances a condensed TACKLE programme worked for disengaged year 8

5187 students, and over what duration. These findings expand upon the research conducted

5188 in Chapter 4, providing an indication of the longevity of the TACKLE programme.

5189 Collectively, the findings from the evaluation can be used to inform the development

5190 and design of future programmes working with disengaged younger students.

5191 However, additional research is warranted to examine the influence of multi-

5192 component programmes of different durations, intensities, and across different age

5193 groups and contexts.

Chapter 6: Study 3

6.1 Introduction

5194

5195   Chapters 4 and 5 unpacked how, why, for whom, and in what circumstances

5196   the TACKLE programme impacted disengaged students within school settings.

5197   Collectively, the findings from both chapters generated new insights regarding the

5198   contextual factors that need considering and the mechanisms through which

5199   TACKLE led to desirable and undesirable engagement, behavioural, and

5200   psychosocial outcomes. However, although the findings from Chapters 4 and 5 add

5201   to the evidence base regarding what might work for disengaged students *within*

5202   school settings, there remains a scarcity of research exploring how multi-component

5203   programmes may work within the context of disengaged young people who are

5204   *outside* of education, employment, and training (Mawn et al., 2017).

5205   In comparison to disengaged students who are currently attending school,

5206   disengaged young people who are not in education or employment may be more

5207   susceptible to developing entrenched (i.e., deeply ingrained and difficult to change)

5208   engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial challenges (e.g., feelings of apathy and

5209   boredom; substance abuse and criminality, and; hopelessness and suicidal thoughts,

5210   respectively) (Goldman-Mellor et al., 2016; Gutierrez-Garcia et al., 2018; Nudzor,

5211   2010). Lengthy periods outside of education and employment may also have

5212   'scarring' effects on young peoples' future employment prospects and earning

5213   potential, and over time, can lead to them becoming (increasingly) detached and

5214   disconnected from society (Carcillo, Fernandez, Konigs, & Minea, 2015). Given

5215   such substantial and sustained negative consequences, there is an urgent need to

5216   implement effective programmes to help disengaged young people re-engage in

5217   education or employment settings. Specifically, there is a need to develop and

5218   evaluate programmes aimed at enhancing disengaged young peoples' engagement,

5219   behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes which, in turn, may support and facilitate

5220   their re-engagement.

5221   To enhance the effectiveness of programmes with disengaged young people,

5222   substantial evidence highlights the importance of ensuring young people are actively

5223   involved in co-designing their own programmes and activities (Enright &

5224   O'Sullivan, 2010; Sullivan, Saito, & Chamberlain, 2018). When young people are

5225   involved in the design and development of programmes, they may be more likely to

5226   engage with the programme and experience feelings of empowerment, leadership,

5227 agency, and purpose (Powers & Tiffany, 2006; Serido, Borden, & Perkins, 2011;

5228 Sullivan et al., 2018). To this end, the aim of the current study was to conduct a

5229 realist evaluation to understand how, and under which circumstances a *youth-driven*

5230 multi-component programme (i.e., the EMPOWER programme) may impact

5231 disengaged young peoples' engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes.

5232 The realist evaluation was guided by the following questions:

5233   1. How, why, for whom, and in what contexts does the EMPOWER programme

5234   impact (if at all) disengaged young peoples' engagement, behavioural, and

5235   psychosocial outcomes?

5236   2. What are the underpinning mechanisms explaining the impact (if any) of the

5237   EMPOWER programme?

5238 **6.2 Method**

5239 *6.2.1 Methodology*

5240   Recognising the importance of young people having a voice throughout the

5241 development and implementation of programmes (Christens & Dolan, 2011; Whitley

5242 et al., 2017), as well as the benefits identified in Chapters 4 and 5 of utilising a

5243 strengths-based approach when working with disengaged young people, this study

5244 applied appreciative inquiry as a guiding theoretical framework to inform the

5245 development of initial programme theories and the co-construction of the

5246 EMPOWER programme. In line with Chapters 4 and 5, this co-designed programme

5247 was evaluated using realist principles.

5248   **6.2.1.1 Appreciative Inquiry.** Appreciative inquiry is a form of participatory

5249 action research based on positive psychology (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros,

5250 2008; Seligman, 2002). The approach comprises a strengths-based framework that

5251 aims to facilitate positive change by discovering and elevating young peoples' assets,

5252 successes, hopes, and dreams (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom,

5253 2010). This strengths-based framework shifts away from traditional problem-focused

5254 orientations by seeking to identify: 'what is working, why is it working, and what

5255 could be in the future?' (Gray, Treacy, & Hall, 2019; Kadi-Hanifi et al., 2014).

5256 Appreciative inquiry is, therefore, grounded in the assumption that there is always

5257 something that is working effectively within young people's' lives, regardless of the

5258 challenges they may be experiencing (Horn & Govender, 2019; Lewis & Emil,

5259 2010). According to Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2010), appreciative inquiry is

5260 underpinned by eight core principles:

1. The Constructionist Principle: A young persons' reality is shaped according to their beliefs, interpretations, and perceptions.

2. The Simultaneity Principle: The process of inquiry and asking questions about young peoples' strengths, hopes, dreams, and aspirations stimulates young people's' curiosity, creativity, and imagination, which, in turn, generates change (Cojocaru, 2010).

3. The Poetic Principle: The language used, stories shared, and the topic of inquiry act as sources of inspiration. Questions around strengths and potentialities trigger feelings of hope and excitement, whereas questions around deficits and problems activate feelings of worry and stress.

4. The Anticipatory Principle: "The future we anticipate is the future we create" (Bagshaw, 2003, p. 25). Positive visualisations of the future can inspire action and execution.

5. The Positive Principle: Successful change requires hope, positive emotions, social bonding, and connection.

6. The Wholeness Principle: By engaging a diversity of stakeholders in the process of change (e.g., young people and facilitators), individual differences can be understood and celebrated, and new discoveries can be made (Ludema & Fry, 2008).

7. The Enactment Principle: Transformation occurs when young people have a clear vision of their desired future. This desired future is created by young peoples' thoughts, words, actions, and behaviours in the present (Friedman, 2011).

8. The Free-Choice Principle: The quality of a young persons' engagement and commitment is enhanced when they have the freedom to decide how they would like to be involved.

The current study was guided by these core principles. Specifically, the programme was grounded in young peoples' innate strengths, attributes, and virtues. Throughout the study, young people were involved in constructing knowledge by sharing their own ideas, beliefs, and interpretations, and were collaborators in the overall design and implementation of the programme. Further, by providing opportunities for young people to develop a vision of their desired future, this, in turn, initiated positive change and led to an atmosphere of empowerment. Overall, the young people were

5294 actively involved in the research process and an environment was established where

5295 they felt listened to, valued, and appreciated (Bergmark & Kostenius, 2009).

5296   **6.2.1.2 Integrating Appreciative Inquiry and Realist Evaluation.** The

5297 design of the EMPOWER programme and the development of initial programme

5298 theories required for the realist evaluation, was guided by the appreciative 4-D cycle:

5299 Discover, Dream, Design, and Destiny (Cooperrider et al., 2008). The 4-D cycle

5300 comprised:

5301   1. Discover: Through informal discussions and storytelling, young people

5302   articulated their strengths, attributes, virtues, interests, and previous

5303   successes. Specifically, they shared experiences from their education,

5304   employment, and personal lives where they felt most engaged,

5305   passionate, confident, and committed (Carter, Cummings, & Cooper

5306   2007).

5307   2. Dream: This phase included young people envisioning how their future

5308   could be if their strengths, attributes, and virtues were further developed

5309   and enhanced (Carter et al., 2007). Through several creative activities

5310   and tasks, young people engaged in discussions about their desired

5311   futures (Coghlan, Preskill, & Catsambas, 2003).

5312   3. Design: Young people worked collaboratively together to co-create their

5313   own programme, designing activities and strategies that enabled them to

5314   further identify and nurture their strengths, attributes, and virtues.

5315   4. Destiny: During this phase, the EMPOWER programme was

5316   implemented and young people continuously reflected on their progress.

5317   Activities were adjusted and new objectives created based on this

5318   reflection.

5319 These stages were integrated within a realist evaluation framework (see figure 6.1).

5320 Specifically, the Discover, Dream, and Design stages of appreciative inquiry were

5321 used to inform the development of initial programme theories and the overall co-

5322 design of the EMPOWER programme. During the Destiny phase, the initial

5323 programme theories were refined and context, mechanism, outcome configurations

5324 were formulated that illustrated how and under which contexts the EMPOWER

5325 programme impacted disengaged young peoples' engagement, behavioural, and

5326 psychosocial outcomes. These stages are explained in more detail in section 6.2.5.

5327   **Figure 6.1**

5328   *The Realist Evaluation and 4-D Cycle* (Adapted from Cooperrider et al., 2008).

Formulation of CMO
Configurations and
Refined Programme
Theories

DISCOVER
Young people articulated
their strengths, attributes,
virtues, interests, and
previous successes.

Developing Initial
Programme
Theories

DESTINY
The co-created programme
was implemented and
young people were
involved in an ongoing
reflection and action cycle.

Realist
Appreciative
Inquiry

DREAM
Young people envisioned
how their future could be if
their strengths, attributes,
and virtues were further
developed and enhanced.

Testing the Initial
Programme
Theories

DESIGN
Young people worked
collaboratively together
to co-create their own
programme.

Developing and
Finalising Initial
Programme Theories

5329 *6.2.2 Setting*

5330   The context for this evaluation was a small town in the South West of Wales.

5331 The town is situated in a low-socioeconomic area with a high percentage of young

5332 people who have low academic attainment and who are in many instances

5333 economically inactive (Carcillo et al., 2015; Welsh Government, 2019). In two of its

5334 three secondary schools, the number of students eligible for free school meals

5335 exceeds the national average, and there is a high proportion of students who have

5336 been suspended and/or expelled from school (Estyn, 2020). Additionally, according

5337 to data from the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, the town has remained within

5338 the top 50 areas for deep-rooted deprivation in the past fifteen years and has some of

5339 the highest deprivation rates for employment, income, health, education, and

5340 community safety in Wales (Welsh Government, 2019).

5341 *6.2.3 Participants and Recruitment*

5342   Inclusion criteria for involvement in the study were young people between

5343 the ages of 16 and 24 years old who had not participated in any form of education,

5344 employment, or training for a minimum six-month period. The recruitment of young

5345 people took place over the course of six-months through two different routes. First,

5346 prior to implementation of the EMPOWER programme, I spent one day a week (six

5347 or more hours a day) for six-months in the company of disengaged young people

5348 who were participating in another programme. During this period, I engaged with the

5349 young people in a number of creative classroom activities, sports, and practical

5350 games (e.g., pretzels, minefield, use it or lose it, tunnel ball plus; see Hanrahan &

5351 Carlson, 2000). This time was invaluable because it helped me to gain participants'

5352 trust, rapport, and respect, something which is critical when conducting research with

5353 vulnerable and marginalised populations (Liamputtong, 2007; Magee & Jeanes,

5354 2011). Many of the young people I had been engaging with enthusiastically agreed to

5355 participate in the EMPOWER programme.

5356   Secondly, I spent a considerable amount of time attending the Job Centre and

5357 contacting youth workers in order to establish opportunities to meet and interact with

5358 disengaged young people. Once I had opportunities to interact with young people, I

5359 promoted the programme via flyers, videos, and presentations. In total, over the

5360 sixth-month period, a purposive sample of eleven young people between 17 and 23

5361 years old participated in the current programme and study evaluation (Mean age = 19

5362 years of age, *SD* = 2.8). Of the young people, nine were male and two were female.

6.2.4 Procedure

Following ethical approval from the University's Ethics Committee (2018-100) and the period of being embedded with young people, I began the process of recruitment for this programme and evaluation study. To do this, I provided young people (either at the Job Centre or the alternative programme in which I was engaged) with a verbal explanation of the programme and the study. Importantly, I made it clear to young people that they could take part in the programme without participating in the evaluation study. That is, the young people could decline to take part in the evaluation without it affecting their involvement in the programme. After an initial discussion, I provided each young person with an information sheet that provided further details of the evaluation and distributed consent forms. All young people who chose to take part in the programme also provided informed written and verbal consent to participate in the evaluation study.

6.2.5 Procedure: Programme Design and Evaluation

As detailed above, the programme was co-constructed with, and for, disengaged young people drawing upon the principles of appreciative inquiry. During this process, the initial programme theories were also developed (phase one of realist evaluation). Subsequently, the programme was implemented, and the initial programme theories were tested (phase two of realist evaluation). Finally, refined programme theories and CMO configurations were formulated (phase three of realist evaluation).

6.2.5.1 Phase One: Development of the Programme and Initial Programme Theories.

6.2.5.1.1 Developing the EMPOWER Programme. To develop EMPOWER, I spent a day each week for a period of six-months interacting with disengaged young people. During this period, I established caring, trusting relationships with the young people who were going to engage with my programme. I also developed a contextual understanding of young peoples' lives, including, their backgrounds, interests, strengths, hopes, dreams, and aspirations. Such insights were influential in helping to underpin the development of the EMPOWER programme. Specifically, the development of EMPOWER had four phases.

In the first phase (Discover), I aimed to understand young peoples' strengths, attributes, virtues, interests, and previous successes. To do this, I used informal discussions and storytelling as tools to engage young people. In groups of five to six

young people, I used the following questions as a guide to stimulate discussion: "what attributes and virtues do you value most about yourself?", "Can you describe a time in your education, employment, or personal lives where you felt most engaged, passionate, and confident?", "What did you do to make that happen?" and "what were you most proud of?". The young people organised their answers on large sheets of paper which were then summarised on to the whiteboard. Examples of answers provided by the young people from this phase included:

- "Kindness is such an important attribute of mine and value because the way you act or something you say can affect someone long-term. Being kind can make someone's day, also, doing good acts of kindness at someone, or even something as small as smiling at someone can make not only them but yourself feel very positive."
- "In my community, I help out with the carnival. I am on the committee and organise the event with old people. That is a passion for me 'cause I get to help other people."
- "My strength is my determination and willpower. It's important to me to be able to say no because of the environment where I'm from."
- "I value my determination because I want to be able to earn money for myself and not live of anyone else. I feel it's better to have a good career 'cause you'll enjoy life more. I'm proud of myself because I keep looking for a job."
- "I feel confident when I am told someone is proud of me."
- "I'm proud of myself when I help others."
- "I have good timekeeping skills. I'm always on time and sometimes earlier. I'm very prepared, I'll always turn up somewhere with everything I need and more."
- "I feel most engaged when I'm on stage. I have 2 years of experience with performing arts and I've been in 4-5 shows held by the college."
- "I think I am great at being on time and I feel proud when I win a game of rugby because I know I did my best."

Overall, based on the group discussion and young peoples' writing, I identified four predominant themes: the importance of kindness, a recognition and enactment of helping behaviours, determination to succeed, and a desire to make themselves and others proud.

5430   During the second phase (Dream), in small groups, I asked young people to

5431 reflect on 'what could be'. Specifically, young people were encouraged to envision

5432 how their future could be if their strengths, attributes, and virtues were elevated.

5433 Additionally, young people discussed the strengths and attributes they would like to

5434 improve in order for their desired future to be created. These answers were written on

5435 post-it notes and displayed on the whiteboard. Examples of young peoples' responses

5436 during this phase were:

5437   • "If I was a bit more confident then I could get a job where I help more people

5438   and organise more events in my community."

5439   • "In the future, if I got more confident then I could be on stage and work in the

5440   performing arts. I'd need to stop doubting myself and believe that I could do

5441   it."

5442   • "I am interested in a job in construction. I would need confidence and good

5443   communication to work with new people."

5444   • "I want to do stuff that is outside of my comfort zone, gain confidence, new

5445   experiences, and team-building stuff."

5446   • "I'd like to boost my confidence and skills so I can work with children in the

5447   future."

5448   • "I want to be someone who never gives up."

5449   • "I would like to gain work experience and be able to get a good paying job in

5450   the future."

5451   • "I would like to exercise more often and be more confident in myself work

5452   wise."

5453   • "I would like to have better relationships with my family and have a job that

5454   gives me a reason to get out of bed."

5455 Collectively, based on the young peoples' ideas, the following themes were

5456 identified: A desire to enhance self-confidence, self-belief, and resilience, a need to

5457 escape their comfort zone, and the opportunity to accumulate meaningful work

5458 experience.

5459   In the final phases (Design and Destiny), young people were involved in

5460 working collaboratively with me to co-create the EMPOWER programme. These

5461 phases comprised young people researching activities on the computers and sharing

5462 ideas with the group. Help and support were provided to young people through

questions including, "who is going to deliver that activity?", "what equipment do you think we would need?", and "who do you think we could ask for help?". Young people were asked to provide rationales and justifications for different activities. In doing so, young people focused on activities that would enable them to develop their strengths and attributes and bring them closer towards their desired futures. During the Destiny phase, the EMPOWER programme was implemented and young people were involved in an ongoing reflection and action cycle, adjusting activities, and establishing new objectives. Examples of young peoples' feedback from these phases included:

- "I would like to do classroom activities that teach me to stop thinking negatively about myself because I think that will give me confidence to then try new things."
- "I'd like to learn more about my skills through different types of sports and work experiences."
- "It would be good to do activities in the nature because we are part of nature and if you respect nature, nature will respect you."
- "I'd like to learn about different employment jobs so I can understand what they are actually like. I'd also like to see what a university is like."
- "I'd like to do sports that are outside of my comfort zone and not give up when it gets hard, like rock climbing."
- "I want to do stuff that makes me stronger mentally so that I don't let small things get to me."
- "I'd like to volunteer working with children and experience different job roles."
- "It would be good to practice interviews and to do interview prep because I've never had any interviews before."
- "I want to continue to do things that are outside of my comfort zone in the outdoors."
- "I want to do rugby, football, and basketball, to help me communicate better and get to know new people."
- "I just want to keep developing my confidence by being able to speak to different types of people."

5495   Based on these discussions with young people, it was collaboratively confirmed

5496   throughout the Design and Destiny phases, that the programme needed to incorporate

5497   positive psychology and strengths-focused activities, sport, and outdoor adventure

5498   activities to enhance young peoples' psychological resources (e.g., self-confidence,

5499   self-belief, resilience, and coping skills), and work-based placements to offer

5500   exposure to a diversity of occupations.

5501   Consequently, the resultant EMPOWER programme developed was a youth-

5502   driven multi-component programme which aimed to enhance disengaged young

5503   peoples' engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes through its four-

5504   week, twelve-day project. The programme comprised a combination of positive

5505   psychology and strengths-focused workshops, sport, physical activity, and outdoor

5506   adventure experiences, and work-based placements. I delivered the programme,

5507   acting as the young peoples' classroom educator and sports coach. There were also

5508   additional facilitators including outdoor adventure instructors and work-based

5509   placement providers. The key elements of the EMPOWER programme are detailed

5510   in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1

5511 *Overview of the EMPOWER Programme*

Modality and number of hours:	Aim of each modality:	Topics covered/Activities:
Positive Psychology and Strengths-Focused Workshops: 20 hours	To help young people discover and refine their strengths, assets, virtues, and capacities (Quinlan et al., 2012).	Self-esteem and kindness/empathy journals, thought journals, role play scenarios, signature and character strengths, healthy lifestyles, counting blessings, gratitude letters, goal setting and goal striving, visualising one's best possible self, replaying and writing about positive experiences, challenging negative self-talk, emotional regulation and coping strategies.
Sport, Physical Activity, and Outdoor Adventure Experiences: 24 hours	To enhance young peoples' self-esteem, self-perceptions, leadership and teamwork skills, resilience, and emotional regulation, leading to improved relationships with their peers (Garst, Scheider, & Baker, 2001).	Rock and tree climbing, wood carving, orienteering, cooking on the fire, woodland activities, problem solving games (e.g., spiders web, round robin), dodgeball, badminton, football, rugby, basketball, fitness circuits, and practical games such as electric fence, tunnel ball plus, pretzels, and minefield (see Hanrahan & Carlson, 2000).
Work-Based Placements/ Preparation: 24 hours	To allow young people to gain experience working, raise awareness of employment opportunities, and provide exposure to a diversity of occupations.	Refereeing/officiating at rugby camps and festivals, sports coaching, and looking after younger children, construction work, university campus visit, student life talks, sport, exercise, and engineering tours, technology, engineering, and mathematics activities, and a mock interview event in which young people were interviewed by sport organisations, videographers, dance choreographers, apprenticeship/ traineeship co-ordinators, university, and college educators.

5512   *6.2.5.1.2 Developing Initial Programme Theories.* Throughout the process of

5513   co-constructing the EMPOWER programme, the initial programme theories were

5514   informed by group discussions with young people, the findings from Study 1 and 2

5515   (see Chapters 4 and 5), and engagement with the broader literature. Specifically,

5516   once the ideas about programme activities and components were finalised, I engaged

5517   young people in discussions regarding how they anticipated each activity and

5518   component to bring about change. Examples of questions included: "outdoor

adventure activities may provide a range of different benefits, including, increased

independence, resilience, and competence, how do you think these activities may

work for you?", and "work-based placements may help you to develop important

skills and behaviours needed to secure employment, what type of skills and

behaviours do you think are important to develop?". These questions and discussions

were informed by findings from Study 1, Study 2, and the positive psychology and

strengths-based, work-based placements, sport, and outdoor adventure literature

(e.g., Hermens et al., 2017; Nelson & O'Donnell, 2012; Norton & Watt, 2014;

Quinlan et al., 2012). Collectively, through these processes, several initial

programme theories were developed examining the mechanisms through which the

EMPOWER programme may contribute to positive engagement, behavioural, and

psychosocial outcomes among disengaged young people.

6.2.5.2 Phase Two: Testing the Initial Programme Theories. The initial

programme theories were tested and scrutinised in order to understand the impact of

the EMPOWER programme on young peoples' developmental outcomes. For this

study, a combination of participant observation, field notes, group reflections, and

one-to-one interviews were carried out with young people over a four-week period.

6.2.5.2.1 Participant Observation and Field Notes. Concurring with Studies

1 and 2, I adopted the role of a participant observer and recorded extensive field

notes during and after the programme. As a participant observer, I spent three days

per week and a total of sixty-eight hours with young people, over the course of four-

weeks. Of note, I had already spent a period of six-months working with many of

these young people in another programme. As such, by the time EMPOWER began,

I had already got to know the majority of my participants, built trusting relationships,

and understood their backgrounds and previous education and/or employment

experiences. Throughout EMPOWER, I delivered positive psychology and strengths-

based workshops, sport sessions, actively participated in work-based placements and

outdoor adventure activities, and shared many minibus trips, lunchtime meals, and

informal discussions with young people. By immersing myself in the setting, I was

able to develop an in-depth understanding of important contextual factors,

mechanisms, and the realities of disengaged young peoples' lives (Merriam &

Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). Over time, the young people considered me to be part

of their group and I was able to demonstrate that I was genuinely committed to their

overall development and progress. The field notes described my observations,

5553 interpretations, and experiences, focusing on the physical setting, activities, peer

5554 relations, patterns of behaviour, body language, and informal and formal

5555 conversations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

5556   *6.2.5.2.2 Group Reflections.* Group reflections with young people happened

5557 during and/or after activities, in the most convenient setting (e.g., the activity centre

5558 or inside the minibus). Each reflection involved six to eleven young people and

5559 averaged twelve to thirty-three minutes ($M = 25.8$, $SD = 11.7$). The intent of the

5560 group reflections was to understand young peoples' interpretations of activities and

5561 events, and to provide the opportunity for them to interact with each other while

5562 sharing their own experiences (Mutha, Takayama, & O'Neil, 1997). In these

5563 reflections, I asked young people a series of questions in order to help them articulate

5564 their thoughts and perspectives (e.g., "What did you think about the activity?", "Did

5565 you learn anything through your involvement in this activity?", and "Has the activity

5566 helped you to move forward in any way?"). I took field notes during the reflections

5567 to help me interpret and make sense of the young peoples' feedback. Additionally,

5568 the reflections were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

5569   *6.2.5.2.3 One-to-One Interviews.* In total, nine interviews[9] were conducted

5570 with young people at the end of the programme, either in-person ($n = 7$) or via

5571 telephone ($n = 2$). They ranged in length from twenty to fifty-six minutes ($M = 40.2$,

5572 $SD = 23.7$). In keeping with Study 1 and 2, the interviews initially followed a

5573 flexible, open-ended, and semi-structured format to allow young people the

5574 opportunity to share their own views of the programme and to discuss aspects of

5575 EMPOWER that were most meaningful to them (Galletta, 2013). During this phase,

5576 young people described their experiences of each component of the programme (i.e.,

5577 positive psychology and strengths-based workshops, sport, physical activity, and

5578 outdoor adventure experiences, and work-based placements), the positive and

5579 negative elements of the programme, the key things they had learned, the types of

5580 relationships formed, and the perceived impact (if any) of the programme on their

5581 engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes.

5582   Interviews then transitioned into the teacher-learner cycle (see Chapter 3)

5583 (Manzano, 2016). Specifically, I re-presented young people with the initial

5584 programme theories that we had co-created at the start of the programme. I then

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[9] Two young people did not complete the programme and dropped out of the study during the third week due to newly emerging education and employment opportunities.

5585 encouraged young people to either verify, reject, or modify the initial programme

5586 theories depending on how each component of the programme had worked in

5587 practice for them (i.e., refining programme theories) (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). To

5588 stimulate thinking and discussion, additional support and encouragement were

5589 provided through probing questions such as, "what was it about the activity that

5590 made you feel that way?", "why do you think it worked differently for you?", and "If

5591 you could change how the activity was delivered, what would you change?". All

5592 interviews were digitally audio-recorded with permission from young people and

5593 transcribed verbatim.

5594   In an effort to enhance young peoples' engagement during the one-to-one

5595 interviews, I showed them photographs to review on my laptop or phone that

5596 documented their experiences of the EMPOWER programme. Photo-elicitation

5597 interviews have been shown to actively engage young people in the research process,

5598 reduce perceived power imbalances between the young person and researcher, aid

5599 young peoples' retention, glean emotions, and stimulate more meaningful discussion

5600 (Banks, 2001; Harper, 2002; Liebenberg et al., 2014; Smith, Gidlow, & Steel, 2012).

5601 Within this study, the photographs captured young people taking part in a diversity

5602 of activities (e.g., rock and tree climbing, wood carving, woodland activities, and

5603 officiating at rugby festivals and camps) and were used as prompts to encourage

5604 young people to describe in-depth how they felt during the activities and the

5605 subsequent meanings they had attached to their experiences (Smith et al., 2012).

5606   **6.2.5.3 Phase Three: CMO Configurations and Refined Programme**

5607 **Theories.** The final phase involved realist data analysis to identify the important

5608 contextual elements, mechanisms, and outcomes, and to refine programme theories.

5609 As such, the purpose of this phase was to understand how, why, and under which

5610 circumstances the EMPOWER programme was effective and its impacts on young

5611 peoples' engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes. The one-to-one

5612 interviews and group reflections were the predominant sources for the establishment

5613 of CMO configurations. Additionally, participant observations and field notes

5614 assisted in the process of formulating CMO configurations.

5615   *6.2.5.3.1 Data Analysis.* The data were analysed in congruence with the

5616 procedures adopted in studies one and two. Specifically, I immersed myself in the

5617 data by reading and re-reading the interview transcripts, group reflections, and field

5618 notes multiple times. During this process, audio-recordings were also listened to in

5619 full. The CMO heuristic was then used to code relevant contexts, mechanisms

5620 (disaggregated into resources and reasoning), and outcomes (Dalkin et al., 2015).

5621 Contexts, mechanisms, and outcomes were then compared and contrasted against the

5622 entire data set before they were compiled into summaries, diagrams, and tables.

5623 Direct quotations from the young people were conceptually matched with each

5624 element of the CMO configuration. The CMO configuration analysis was reviewed

5625 by my supervisors.

5626 *6.2.6 Quality and Reporting Standards in Realist Evaluation*

5627 In accordance with studies one and two, this research followed the

5628 RAMESES II reporting and quality standards (see Greenhalgh et al., 2017; Wong et

5629 al., 2016).

5630 **6.3 Findings**

5631 The following section details the findings of the realist evaluation.

5632 Specifically, the findings are presented under four initial programme theories that

5633 were informed by group discussions with young people, findings from Study 1 and 2

5634 (see Chapters 4 and 5), and engagement with the broader literature. Consistent with

5635 Studies 1 and 2, each initial programme theory is presented in a box and is followed

5636 by a description of the theory and information regarding whether it was verified,

5637 rejected, or modified in light of the data collected. Evidence is then provided

5638 pertaining to each initial programme theory and important contextual elements,

5639 mechanisms, and outcomes are identified. The full CMO configurations, which are

5640 the output of the data collected and intensive fieldwork, are presented in tables.

5641 Collectively, the CMO configurations and refined programme theories unpack the

5642 contexts within which the EMPOWER programme was implemented, the

5643 mechanisms the programme activated, and the impact on young peoples'

5644 engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes.

5645 *6.3.1 Initial Programme Theory 1: Positive Psychology and Strengths-Focused*

5646 *Workshops*

> Positive psychology and strengths-focused workshops (e.g., sessions focused on self-esteem, kindness, and thought journals, role play scenarios, gratitude letters, signature and character strengths activities, goal setting, and challenging negative self-talk tasks) may enhance young peoples' engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes, including their feelings of self-efficacy, self-confidence, self-belief, self-acceptance, optimism, resilience, and coping skills (Govindji & Linley, 2007; Minhas, 2010; Seligman et al., 2009; Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009). Specifically, by supporting and helping young people to understand, discover, and refine their strengths, attributes, virtues, and aspirations, they may, in turn, be able to see themselves as competent and efficacious individuals who have the capacity to re-engage with education or employment opportunities and achieve successful future trajectories (Bandura, 1993; Jones, Destin, & McAdams, 2018).

5647   This initial programme theory suggests that positive psychology and

5648 strengths-focused workshops may be a promising approach for enhancing young

5649 peoples' engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes. There was evidence

5650 to support and confirm this programme theory. Specifically, it was evident among

5651 the young people that the workshops led to a recognition of their own strengths,

5652 assets, and virtues, enhanced feelings of competence, confidence, self-efficacy, and

5653 led to an increase in the coping strategies available to effectively manage emotions.

5654 These findings are explored in more detail below.

5655   **6.3.1.1 CMO Configuration 1.1: Discovering Strengths, Assets, and**

5656 **Virtues.** Many of the young people in this programme had encountered an

5657 accumulation of negative education and employment experiences (e.g., bullying,

5658 school dropout, low wages, short-term employment contracts, and constant job

5659 searches), which, in turn, had led to low self-esteem, self-doubt, and feelings of

5660 hopelessness (context). For example, when asked to describe their previous

5661 experiences, the young people noted that, "I left my last [college] course because of

5662 the stress and bullying, it knocked my confidence… I went into this huge depression

5663 state" (Gabrielle[10]), "I dropped out of school, so, no GCSE's… It's impossible for

5664 me to get a job, I've tried all of the time, trying to apply for jobs and its impossible

5665 cause of my age as well and that" (Connor), and "I had really bad experiences [at

5666 work]. Just long hours, like 10 hours a day, shocking pay, and then they just let me

5667 go at the end [of the contract]. I was gutted, just thought what's the point?" (Adrian).

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[10] Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of the participants.

Within this context, the activities (e.g., VIA character strengths survey and replaying/writing about positive experiences) provided opportunities for the young people to identify and discover their own strengths, assets, and virtues, and to positively reflect on the skills they had gained during their education, employment, and volunteering experiences (mechanism). Consequently, these activities led to a recognition among young people of their own strengths, assets, and virtues (mechanism). As explained by Gabrielle: "I know it's only stuff but it [learning about my strengths] means a lot to me. I didn't know what my strengths and that were before doing this programme." Similarly, Riley shared:

> They [activities] made me see my strengths and the types of skills I've already got through volunteering because well, I've volunteered [at charity shops] for about 5 years now, so, I've ran the shops, I've opened and closed them, handled cash, re-painted the walls, re-laid floors… So, I've got good teamwork and communication skills, just through like being around different types of people, listening to everyone's opinions.

Additionally, Harry described:

> The classroom stuff did help 'cause we talked about our strengths on a day-to-day basis and I learnt about my leadership skills and that, through helping with the carnival, do you know what I mean? Putting up marquees, stages, the backs of the marquees, putting crowd barriers up, and erm sort of showing people what they're doing for the day.

Outcomes observed by the young people as a result included enhanced feelings of competence and confidence in their own abilities, and a strong sense of urgency to act on their strengths and assets. This was illustrated by Charlie, who explained: "It [activities] built up my confidence, made me think that I have the skills and that now, so, no point in making excuses and wasting time." Like Charlie, Riley also described a strong sense of urgency to act:

> I'm ready to look at my strengths differently than when I first started… Just giving things a go and not thinking, I should have done this, I should have done that… I just need to do it. I'd rather not be on my death bed thinking "oh I wish I'd have done this when I was younger." You see people just moaning because they didn't do anything with their skills. The only person who can change that is you.

This CMO configuration is summarised in Table 6.2.

5702 **Table 6.2**

5703 *CMO Configuration 1.1: Discovering Strengths, Assets, and Virtues*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Many young people had encountered an accumulation of negative education and employment experiences, which, in turn, had led to low self-esteem, self-doubt, and feelings of hopelessness.	The activities provided opportunities for young people to discover their own strengths, assets, and virtues, and to reflect on the skills they had gained during their education, employment, and volunteering experiences.	This led to a recognition among young people of their own strengths, assets, and virtues.	Enhanced feelings of competence and confidence in their own abilities, and a strong sense of urgency to act on their strengths and assets.

5704   **6.3.1.2 CMO Configuration 1.2: Emotional Regulation and Coping**

5705 **Strategies.** Many young people in EMPOWER experienced challenges regulating

5706 their thoughts and emotions (context). As evidenced in the following quote by

5707 Gabrielle:

5708   It's emotions I struggle with… Like, I can flip out one moment and then be

5709   alright the next. So, I could feel alright but then inside everything will be

5710   stirring up. Then because I'll start thinking about what's in my head then I'll

5711   get myself down then.

5712 Throughout the classroom workshops, young people shared their own emotional

5713 regulation and coping strategies and had the opportunity to receive and learn from

5714 their peers' feedback (mechanism). For instance, Jordan revealed that: "I tend to

5715 listen to certain music and tempo beats when I have panic attacks, it calms me down.

5716 I used to make Lego too," while Josh explained: "I always clean my room, it's good

5717 for a distraction" and Steffan said: "I look through shopping sites [websites] for ages,

5718 I find it really calming." Additional examples were shared by Connor who explained:

5719 "When I'm angry, I just sort of channel it in the gym mostly, box the bag. Getting

5720 outside helps too mind," and Gabrielle: "I think writing things down or writing

5721 gratitude letters like we did [in EMPOWER] help 'cause you're forced to focus on

5722 the things that you're grateful and happy about" (field notes).

5723   For many of the young people, having opportunities to share their own coping

5724 strategies and experiences with peers led to them feeling heard, supported, and

5725 recognised by their peers (mechanism). As indicated by Louie: "It was good to learn

5726 more about each other and be open, [I] liked how we helped each other out with

different things." This experience was shared by Gabrielle, she described: "I really enjoyed the classroom lessons because we shared things together and listened to each other's views and opinions, and I built a bond with everyone in the group."

Outcomes evident included the development of close relations within the group and an increase in the strategies available to manage emotions. For instance, Riley explained:

> Just learning new things from each other to help us and the general notion that people actually want to be there you know because you've got a group that actually want to do things together, it's not as if we've all been forced to come in. We want to be here with each other.

See Table 6.3 for full details of this CMO configuration.

Table 6.3

CMO Configuration 1.2: Emotional Regulation and Coping Strategies

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Many young people experienced challenges regulating their thoughts and emotions.	During the workshops, young people shared their emotional regulation and coping strategies and had the opportunity to learn from their peers.	Young people felt heard, supported, and recognised by their peers.	Development of close relations within the group and an increase in the strategies available to manage emotions.

6.3.1.3 CMO Configuration: 1.3: Controlling Your Inner Dialogue. The findings from the observations, interviews, and group reflections revealed that young people had encountered chaotic home environments (e.g., family disruption, instability, and substance abuse), which had negatively impacted their thought patterns, self-perceptions, and feelings of self-worth (context). For instance, Gabrielle described the impact of her upbringing on her ability to interpret situations:

> I've been brought up to look at things negatively because when I was little my parents would always be negative and it had like a big effect on me now in terms of how I feel about myself. Because there's loads of sayings about the way you were brought up when you're little affects you when you're older. So, I was always taught to look at things negative and because it's been happening since I was little, it's quite hard to channel out.

Within this context, the EMPOWER programme provided opportunities for the young people to develop a recognition and awareness of their own ways of thinking and to practice controlling, countering, and changing negative thoughts (e.g., role play scenarios and thought journals) (mechanism). This led to young people making a conscious effort to control their inner dialogue and negative thinking patterns throughout the programme (mechanism). Adrian explained: "I've definitely tried to change my thinking. [I've] just dove straight into things and gave everything a go you know instead of thinking that I can't do something." Similarly, Louie noted how keeping a thought journal had helped him to change his perspective and thinking: "Writing my thoughts down made me stop worrying about what could go wrong all the time and instead look at what could go right." Gabrielle corroborated these sentiments, she stated:

> [I] changed the way I look at things and changed the way I deal with things, because well you know what I was like, I'd look at how hard something was and I would look at how difficult something is and "no I'm not doing it, can't do it" but now I'd do it anyway. So, it's a fact of stop saying, "I can't do it" and saying, "I can do it and I will do it." Because fear is just in your head, it's something that we make up.

Consequently, the evident outcomes included enhanced self-efficacy, agency, and a willingness among young people to attempt activities and challenges that were outside of their comfort zones during the EMPOWER programme. As Connor attested: "The tree climbing seems the most challenging like, looks like you've gotta have upper body strength, but I'll give it a go." The corresponding CMO configuration is presented in Table 6.4.

5776   **Table 6.4**

5777   *CMO Configuration 1.3: Controlling Your Inner Dialogue*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Many young people had encountered chaotic home environments (e.g., family disruption, instability, and substance abuse), which had impacted on their thought patterns, self-perceptions, and feelings of self-worth.	Through the classroom activities (e.g., role play scenarios and thought journals), young people developed a recognition and awareness of their thought patterns and practiced controlling, countering, and changing negative thoughts.	Young people made a conscious effort to control their inner dialogue and thinking patterns.	Increased self-efficacy, agency, and a willingness to attempt activities and challenges that were outside of their comfort zones.

5778   **6.3.1.4 Refined Programme Theory 1: Positive Psychology and**

5779   **Strengths-Focused Workshops.** In the context of young people who experienced

5780   low self-esteem, self-doubt, and feelings of hopelessness, the workshops offered

5781   opportunities for them to identify and discover their own strengths, assets, and

5782   virtues, and to positively reflect on the skills developed during their education,

5783   employment, and volunteering experiences. As a result, this led to a recognition of

5784   their personal strengths and assets, enhanced feelings of competence and confidence

5785   in their abilities and resulted in a strong sense of urgency to act on their strengths and

5786   assets.

5787   In line with the initial programme theory, there was evidence to suggest that

5788   in the context of young people who encountered challenges regulating their thoughts

5789   and emotions, the workshops enabled young people to share their own coping

5790   strategies and to learn from their peers. This led to young people feeling heard,

5791   supported, and recognised by their peers. Outcomes observed as a result included the

5792   development of close relations within the group and an increase in the strategies

5793   available to manage emotions.

5794   Many young people in EMPOWER had experienced chaotic home

5795   environments which, in turn, had negatively impacted their thought patterns, self-

5796   perceptions, and feelings of self-worth. In such contexts, the programme provided

5797   young people with opportunities to develop a recognition and awareness of their

5798   thoughts and to practice controlling, countering, and changing these when needed.

5799   This led to young people making a conscious effort to control their inner dialogue

5800   and negative thinking patterns. Consequently, the young people demonstrated

5801 enhanced self-efficacy, agency, and a willingness to attempt activities and challenges

5802 that were outside of their comfort zone during the EMPOWER programme.

5803 *6.3.2 Initial Programme Theory 2: Sport, Physical Activity, and Outdoor*

5804 *Adventure Experiences*

Sport, physical activity, and outdoor adventure experiences may be powerful platforms to enhance disengaged young peoples' engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes (Lubans et al., 2012; Super et al., 2018a). In particular, these activities may provide young people with an opportunity to interact and communicate with peers, form friendship groups, build trust, enhance feelings of competence, self-esteem, and resilience through overcoming challenges and accomplishing goals, and may promote overall physical activity participation (Armour & Sandford, 2013; Bailey et al., 2013; Green et al., 2000). Additionally, in the context of disengaged young people, EMPOWER may offer access to new experiences (e.g., climbing, and woodland activities) that, in turn, could provide an experiential educational environment where young people can learn through actively participating in meaningful and purposeful outdoor challenges (Garst et al., 2001).

5805 This initial programme theory explores the role of sport, physical activity,

5806 and outdoor adventure experiences as processes and mechanisms that may lead to

5807 desirable outcomes among disengaged young people. Consistent with the initial

5808 programme theory, there was evidence to suggest that participation in the activities

5809 led to the establishment of trusting and supportive relationships among young

5810 people, enhanced self-esteem, and increased physical activity levels. However, the

5811 activities also illustrated different ways of working. The findings pertaining to

5812 context, mechanism, and outcome patterns are detailed below.

5813 **6.3.2.1 CMO Configuration 2.1: Re-Establishing Trust.** A number of the

5814 young people participating in EMPOWER had experienced exposure to early life

5815 adversity which, in turn, had led to them experiencing reticence towards trusting

5816 others (context). For example, one of the young people[11] recalled:

5817 I lost three people to suicide… [One of my parents] was heavily on drugs, I

5818 got taken away from them when I was six. So, I hadn't seen them since I was

5819 six. One night, we had a knock at like nine and it was the police… I went

5820 upstairs but I sat on top of the landing because I didn't know what was going

5821 on and because kids are nosy, when they see the police, they're going to want

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[11] Due to the sensitive information, no pseudonym has been used to protect the identity of the young person.

to know aren't they? They said [my parent] had been found in their flat of a

drug overdose. Well, it broke me but then [my parent] was like why are you

crying? You haven't seen them for so long, I don't like [them] so why are

you upset about it? Then I'm like it doesn't matter about all of that, I know

they were on drugs and everything but at the end of the day that's [my

parent], my actual blood like… So, because of things that have happened, I

don't have a lot of trust anymore, like I don't find it easy to trust.

The EMPOWER programme provided opportunities for the young people to engage in mentally and physically demanding activities that were outside their comfort zone (e.g., rock and tree climbing) (mechanism). For many, these activities activated feelings of fear and vulnerability, leading to them having to trust and rely upon one another in order to successfully complete the tasks (mechanism). As discussed by Connor: "It all comes down to trust, putting yourself in new situations and trusting the group to help you." Gabrielle concurred:

Well for me it's the trust, I had to trust Harry, Remy, and a man [climbing

instructor] I didn't even know and had never seen before, I had to trust them

to hold the rope. So, I thought, I kept thinking that I'd just go flying down if I

fell.

Similarly, Riley described the role of the climbing activities in helping to build trust among young people:

The rock and tree climbing helps with trust because… Well, if you think

about it logically, you're basically hanging from a harness above the floor.

You know, you've either got to trust someone to hold the rope or you just

don't do it. So, it's kind of chucking someone in the deep end and saying

they're going to hold you and you have to trust them. And because some

people have had bad experiences in the past, they don't trust people. And so,

putting them there in that situation and doing that exercise proves that people

can be trusted and will help people who you know have trust issues… It puts

you out of your comfort zone.

Of note, however, the experience of tree climbing activated mechanisms of panic and anxiety among a minority of the young people. In such instances, the young people did then explain that completing the activity had led to a greater sense of control over their anxiety (outcome). For instance, during a group reflection, Jordan commented: "It was really hard to be honest with you, I kept wussing out, [I]

5856 didn't think I'd do it, but [I] didn't let my thoughts knock me down, [I] broke down

5857 but got back up." Collectively, in the context of disengaged young people,

5858 involvement in the climbing activities had positive outcomes, including the

5859 formation of caring, trusting, and supportive relationships within the group. This was

5860 illustrated by Remy: "I didn't know anyone at the start of this [EMPOWER], but

5861 'cause of all the activities and games we've done, I got to know everyone just

5862 through working together and trusting each other." See Table 6.5 for further details.

5863 **Table 6.5**

5864 *CMO Configuration 2.1: Re-Establishing Trust*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Due to exposure to early life adversity during their childhood, many of the young people found trusting people difficult.	Young people were provided with opportunities to engage in mentally and physically demanding activities that were outside their comfort zones	These activities triggered feelings of fear and vulnerability, leading to young people having to trust and rely upon one another in order to successfully complete the tasks. For others, the activities activated mechanisms of panic and anxiety.	The formation of caring, trusting, and supportive relationships within the group, and a greater sense of control over their anxiety.

5865 **6.3.2.2 CMO Configuration 2.2: Engagement and Focus.** According to the

5866 data, it was apparent that many of the young people in the programme experienced

5867 high levels of family conflict and difficult home environments (context). As Charlie

5868 and Gabrielle's comments reveal: "I've grew up with people getting aggressive from

5869 alcohol… Just arguing and fighting and that" (Charlie) and "I don't open up to

5870 anyone in my family. I'm scared to speak to [my parent] because it usually is taken

5871 the wrong way and causes full on riots [arguments]" (Gabrielle).

5872 Against these challenging backgrounds, The EMPOWER programme placed

5873 these young people in an environment where they needed to direct their attention and

5874 concentration solely on the activity at hand (e.g., wood carving and rock/tree

5875 climbing) (mechanism). In several cases, these activities triggered mechanisms of

5876 engagement and focus and led to young people being present in the moment. For

5877 instance, Gabrielle succinctly stated: "I didn't just enjoy it [wood carving]. I loved it.

5878 I was gutted when it was over. It made me calm and focused, and I were thinking

5879 about nothing else and same with tree climbing, I wasn't thinking about anything

5880 else." Connor's experiences were similar, he explained how "when you're climbing,

5881 you're only focused on which rock you're gonna grab next. Nothing else matters."

5882 Additionally, when asked to explain the impact of the wood carving activities,

5883 Adrian described: "I found it therapeutic. It was just like calming and nice to really

5884 focus on something for a while."

5885   Resulting outcomes included enhanced self-esteem, sense of achievement and

5886 pride, and improved relationships with family members. As explained by Connor,

5887 Harry, and Jordan: "I found new limits while climbing the wall and felt good

5888 afterwards, sense of achievement and all" (Connor), "I took the stick [from the wood

5889 carving activity] on the bus home… Well, I had to explain because [my parent] was

5890 like 'why are you bringing a stick home' and I was like I carved it and they said it

5891 looked good" (Harry), and "I like making something and then just looking at it for

5892 ages afterwards, don't know, makes me feel proud. My [parent] said they were proud

5893 too like" (Jordan). This CMO configuration is presented in Table 6.6.

5894 **Table 6.6**

5895 *CMO Configuration 2:2: Engagement and Focus*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Many young people experienced high levels of family conflict and difficult home environments.	Young people were placed in an environment where they needed to direct their attention and concentration solely on the task at hand (e.g., wood carving and rock/tree climbing).	This triggered engagement and focus and led to young people being present in the moment.	Enhanced self-esteem, sense of achievement and pride, and improved relationships with family members.

5896   **6.3.2.3 CMO Configuration 2.3: Reduced Sedentary Activities and**

5897 **Behaviours.** Many young people in EMPOWER spent a considerable amount of

5898 time engaged in sedentary behaviours, including, watching television, computer

5899 activities, and social media usage. The following excerpt from Adrian highlights this:

5900 "I love playing on the PC and gaming, I spend a lot of time on video games,

5901 watching movies, and being on my phone, like on Instagram." In the context of

5902 young people highly engaged in sedentary activities and behaviours, EMPOWER

5903 provided exposure and access to a diverse range of physical activities, sports, and

5904 outdoor adventure experiences which they may not otherwise have been able to

5905 access (mechanism). In Louie's case: "These [physically active] games I hadn't

5906   heard of before, so, they were new to me. I enjoyed them and the different sports."

5907   Similarly, Connor revealed:

5908   It was good to get more experiences and try different things, all the sports

5909   we've played, a couple of the active game sessions, they were fun, and erm

5910   rock climbing, [that was the] first time I've ever done it. I wouldn't you know

5911   get to do things like that otherwise like.

5912   Through their involvement in the activities, young people described feeling

5913 happier, calmer, and less isolated (mechanism). For example, the young people noted

5914 that: "I found the sports and that [activities] calming, they sort of chilled me out"

5915 (Connor), "I'm finding them [physical activities and sports] good, I feel happier in

5916 myself and I can have a good chat and laugh with everyone" (Gabrielle), and "Well,

5917 instead of being in the house alone, you're actually out doing orienteering, games,

5918 climbing, and sports with new people and making friends" (Riley).

5919   As a consequence, this led to reduced sedentary activities among the young

5920 people and enhanced their motivation to continue to participate in physical activity

5921 (outcome). As Connor attested: "I'm more active now; testing my willpower by

5922 walking long distances, even when I'm tired and can't be arsed, I keep going sort of

5923 thing." Adrian and Riley shared similar situations: "I've been getting outside and

5924 spending less time on video games. [I'm] enjoying the outdoors more because of this

5925 [EMPOWER]" (Adrian), and "I've been exercising, walking pretty much everywhere

5926 and now 'cause of this course, I'm thinking of joining the gym" (Riley).

5927 Additionally, Gabrielle described how her involvement in the EMPOWER

5928 programme had motivated her to "have a try of a dance and fitness class. I wouldn't

5929 have considered that before this course." This CMO configuration is displayed in

5930 Table 6.7.

5931 **Table 6.7**

5932 *CMO Configuration 2.3: Reduced Sedentary Activities and Behaviours*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Many of the young people spent a considerable amount of time engaged in sedentary activities.	The programme provided exposure and access to a diversity of physical activities, sports, and outdoor adventure experiences which the young people otherwise may not have been able to access.	Involvement in the activities led to young people feeling happier and calmer, and reduced feelings of isolation.	Reduced sedentary activities and enhanced motivation to continue to participate in sport and physical activity.

5933   **6.3.2.4 Refined Programme Theory 2: Sport, Physical Activity, and**

5934 **Outdoor Adventure Experiences.** In the context of young people who experienced

5935 challenges trusting others, EMPOWER provided opportunities for them to engage in

5936 mentally and physically demanding activities that were outside their comfort zone.

5937 These activities triggered feelings of fear and vulnerability, leading to young people

5938 having to trust and rely upon one another in order to successfully complete the tasks.

5939 For others, however, the experience of tree climbing activated mechanisms of panic

5940 and anxiety. In this instance, the young people indicated that completing the activity

5941 led to a greater sense of control over their anxiety. Collectively, the young people

5942 displayed outcomes including the formation of caring, trusting, and supportive

5943 relationships within the group.

5944   In contexts where young people experienced high levels of family conflict

5945 and difficult home environments, EMPOWER placed young people in an

5946 environment where they needed to direct their attention and concentration solely on

5947 the activity at hand (e.g., wood carving and climbing activities). These activities

5948 triggered mechanisms of engagement and focus and led to young people being

5949 present in the moment. This set of findings is consistent with research on acceptance

5950 and commitment therapy (Harris, 2019), that highlights the importance of developing

5951 engaging, savouring, and focusing skills in order to connect deeply with the activity.

5952 Outcomes observed as a result of being present and completing tasks included

5953 enhanced self-esteem, sense of achievement and pride, and improved relationships

5954 with family members.

5955   Consistent with the initial programme theory, there was evidence to suggest

5956   that EMPOWER promoted physical activity participation. Specifically, many of the

5957   young people spent a considerable amount of time engaged in sedentary behaviours.

5958   Within this context, EMPOWER provided exposure and access to a range of physical

5959   activities, sports, and outdoor adventure experiences. Through participating in these

5960   activities, young people described feeling happier, calmer, and less isolated. As a

5961   result, this led to reduced sedentary behaviours among the young people and

5962   enhanced their motivation to continue to participate in physical activity.

5963   *6.3.3 Initial Programme Theory 3: Work-Based Placements/Preparation*

Work-based placements may provide disengaged young people with valuable insight into the working environment (Kis, 2016). Through engagement with a variety of placements, young people may acquire important employability skills and attributes, including, confidence, communication, initiative, responsibility, and time-management strategies (Chen, 2011; Kis, 2016). Additionally, by allowing young people to practice working they may develop a vision for their future and clarity regarding the types of occupations they would like to pursue (Chen, 2011). Further, in the context of disengaged young people, exposure to higher education through a university campus visit may help young people to familiarise themselves with university, gain an awareness of the various courses and opportunities available, raise their aspirations, and enhance the likelihood that they consider university as a potential option (Beck, 2015; Fleming & Grace, 2015; Whitley et al., 2017). Finally, providing opportunities for young people to complete practice interviews with a variety of employers may help them to feel more comfortable within job interviews and enhance young peoples' capacity to articulate their strengths, assets, and virtues to employers (Taylor & Hooley, 2014).

5964   This initial programme theory describes the potential impact of work-based

5965   placements and preparation activities. There was evidence to support many elements

5966   of this theory, particularly the emphasis on employability skills and attributes, the

5967   development of a vision for the future, enhanced clarity regarding occupations and

5968   higher education opportunities, and improved interviewing skills. These findings are

5969   discussed in more detail below.

5970   **6.3.3.1 CMO Configuration 3.1: Sense of Purpose and Direction.** Many

5971   young people had limited work experience and lacked a clear sense of direction

5972   (context). For instance, when asked to describe their employment experiences at the

5973   start of the programme, Harry noted that: "I did go to work at one point but that

5974   didn't go down well for me. I haven't [got] that much experience of working mind…

5975 I don't know what it is I want to do." Consistent with this perspective, Connor

5976 described:

5977   I've done gardens [gardening] before, but it's just, well, what's the point? £5

5978   for two hours. So, it would be good to get work experience. See how

5979   workplaces sort of cope and how they work, you know, the other side of

5980   everything. That way I can compare different experiences and expand my

5981   horizons, break the shell a bit.

5982   Within the context of young people who had limited experience of the

5983 working environment, EMPOWER provided the young people with opportunities to

5984 explore and experiment with a range of occupations they were interested in and

5985 passionate about (e.g., refereeing at rugby camps and festivals, sports coaching,

5986 looking after younger children, and construction work) (mechanism). This led to

5987 young people developing new skills and competencies, including, communication,

5988 leadership, and problem-solving skills. Additionally, the young people described

5989 feeling energised and optimistic about their future (mechanism). Harry explained:

5990   [I] planned a drill for the camps, but it was short notice, so [I] had to think

5991   fast and get it all set up and then explain it to the kids. It's good to see them

5992   [children] enjoying it, do you know what I mean? Then I changed the drill up

5993   and did something different. I'd like to keep helping at the camps and reffing

5994   [refereeing] at the festivals, they're fun.

5995 Another young person, Riley, described the skills he had learned from working with

5996 younger children:

5997   I learnt how to control a crowd, how to set up stuff, how to make sure you're

5998   doing it the right way, how to enthuse children to be able to do one task and

5999   then move to another. I also learnt that when kids fall over, you've got to go

6000   over calm and collected and be like "what's happened?" "Are you okay?".

6001   Because if you go over all panicked then they'll pick up on it and they'll

6002   become stressed. But if you act calm and on their level then they'll see you

6003   more as a person and they will think, well I can talk to him because he

6004   understands what's going on. I really enjoyed all of the [rugby] camps, they

6005   were good fun, I'd definitely do more of that sort of work in the future.

6006 Similarly, Gabrielle wrote in her journal:

6007   I loved working with the children, I loved the atmosphere, and they were so

6008   lovely and a pleasure to work with, leaving them happy was amazing and

6009   heart-warming. I learnt to be more approachable and how to make others

6010   smile even when they don't want to. I would love to help with the rugby

6011   camps more often.

6012   Outcomes that arose from these activities included a sense of purpose and

6013 direction, and enhanced confidence and motivation to re-engage with employment

6014 opportunities. Gabrielle stated, for example:

6015   If it weren't for you and this programme, I wouldn't have the confidence that

6016   I have right now. I'm willing now to go up to workers and ask if they have

6017   any jobs available, I wouldn't normally just go up and ask someone about a

6018   job. But I'm more motivated and so, I've been focusing on my CV and

6019   making it so that it's spot on and really correct. I'm going to put my CV into

6020   the [theatre] because the building is lovely, it's got loads to it and the shows

6021   they put on and everything are amazing. I'd love to get a job there, whether

6022   it's cleaning or working in the box office or anything else, it can always lead

6023   to something more… The thought of working there excites me.

6024 Harry shared a similar situation, describing enhanced motivation to progress with his

6025 refereeing:

6026   Through this [programme], I've been asked to referee games do you know

6027   what I mean? So, it's upped my confidence to give refereeing a go and I'm

6028   into Nigel Owens [Welsh rugby union referee] as well so there's that, he's a

6029   good referee to go on really. When I get home, my refereeing book should be

6030   in the house. I bought one, with red and yellow cards because I thought do

6031   you know what I mean, if I'm been asked to referee at this festival, and I'm

6032   gonna start refereeing games now, do you know what I mean, may as well

6033   have one [refereeing book] hadn't I?

6034 Table 6.8 summarises this CMO configuration.

6035   **Table 6.8**

6036   *CMO Configuration 3.1: Sense of Purpose and Direction*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Many of the young people had limited work experience and lacked a clear sense of direction.	The programme provided the young people with opportunities to explore and experiment with different occupations they were interested in and passionate about.	This led to young people developing new skills, including, communication, leadership, and problem-solving skills, and feeling energised and optimistic about their future.	Sense of purpose and direction and enhanced confidence and motivation to re-engage with employment opportunities.

6037   **6.3.3.2 CMO Configuration 3.2: Exposure to Higher Education.** Within

6038   EMPOWER, the majority of young people had never attended a higher educational

6039   institution (context). For example, during a group reflection, the young people noted

6040   that: "I've never been to a university before, don't think I know anyone who has"

6041   (Harry) and "I wouldn't know what to expect from a university" (Louie). Through

6042   attending EMPOWER, the young people were provided with an opportunity to visit a

6043   university campus. During this visit, they attended a range of theoretical and

6044   practical workshops, subject tours, and listened to a number of student life talks. As a

6045   result of these experiences, young people had a better understanding and perspective

6046   regarding university (mechanism). As Louie attested: "University is different to what

6047   I imagined. You've got to be a lot more independent than school and college." Josh's

6048   experiences were similar, he explained:

6049   It gave me a new perspective on uni [university]. It's different to how I

6050   thought it was going to be, not as bad, I mean, yeah, it's hard work, but

6051   they're [lecturers] not up in your face, nagging you to get the work done, it's

6052   a case of you having to be responsible and mature about it and get it done

6053   yourself. If you don't do it, then it's pretty much your own fault.

6054   According to the data, it appeared that for some of the young people, they felt more

6055   comfortable within the university environment than anticipated and were able to

6056   imagine themselves as a university student (mechanism). As highlighted in the

6057   following extracts from Gabrielle and Louie: "I could see myself here. The campus is

6058   really nice and very big, and I'd like to make new friends from different places. They

6059   have a performing arts society too; I would love to join that" (Gabrielle) and "I'm not

6060   sure what subject yet but I would like to study at a university like this in the future.

6061   So, it has given me an idea of possibly going and applying for uni" (Louie).

6062   Others, however, were unable to connect with the university or envision their

6063   future as a university student (mechanism). In Harry's case, he explained: "It was

6064   decent to see, and I liked the games and that, but I'm not into university really, I'm

6065   more into hands-on, outdoor stuff, like construction work." Consequently, for some

6066   young people, the university visit led to an increased interest and desire to attend

6067   university, while for others, the visit led to a desire to explore alternative options and

6068   opportunities. For example, Josh described how the visit had encouraged him to

6069   consider a diploma and apprenticeship scheme:

6070   It's made me think more about what I wanna do. Because my plan now is to

6071   go with a diploma in September, do four years, start level one, go up to level

6072   four. 'Cause it's a level four diploma and once I've done that, either go into

6073   sport or an apprenticeship route, unless I can go into work on the

6074   apprenticeship side of it, but, in the end, I am still trying to figure everything

6075   out.

6076   This is depicted further in Table 6.9.

6077   **Table 6.9**

6078   *CMO Configuration 3.2: Exposure to Higher Education*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
The majority of young people had never attended a higher educational institution.	The resource was the opportunity to visit a university campus. During this visit, young people attended a range of theoretical and practical workshops, subject tours, and listened to a number of student life talks.	For some young people, they felt comfortable within the university environment and were able to imagine themselves as a university student. For others, they were unable to connect with university or envision their future as a university student.	For some, the university visit led to an increased interest and desire to attend university, for others, the visit led to a desire to explore alternative options.

6079   **6.3.3.3 CMO Configuration 3.3: Interviewing Skills.** Many young people

6080   perceived a 1-1 interview setting as challenging and stressful (context). This was

6081   summarised by Harry and Jordan: "I struggle in interviews, but even people whose

6082   done 50 and 60 interviews, everybody still struggles with them" (Harry) and

6083   "Interviews are stressful 'cause you might get a question [that] you haven't practiced

6084 and your mind might go blank" (Jordan). Within this context, the programme

6085 provided young people with the opportunity to participate in a mock interview event,

6086 whereby they were interviewed by various employers (e.g., sport organisations,

6087 videographers, dance choreographers, apprenticeship/traineeship co-ordinators,

6088 university, and college educators). This offered young people a chance to practice

6089 their interviewing skills, gain experience, and to receive extensive feedback from

6090 credible sources (mechanism).

6091   As a consequence, young people listened attentively to employers' feedback

6092 and gained an awareness of how they could improve their interviewing skills

6093 (mechanism). For instance, during a group discussion, the young people reflected on

6094 their feedback: "When they [employers] gave me feedback, I found that really good.

6095 I've got to be more enthusiastic they said. It's because when I'm speaking, you can't

6096 really see much emotion. I'll try and look more enthusiastic next time" (Connor),

6097 "My feedback was to give more examples with my answers, make more eye contact,

6098 and to dress smarter" (Jordan), "I got told that I was a bit intense and not to say too

6099 much about myself at the beginning, spread it out more and wait to be asked kind of

6100 thing" (Josh), "They said I was attentive and very friendly, and my answers were

6101 detailed. The main thing to improve was not to keep my hands in my pockets but

6102 that's because I didn't know what else to do with them" (Gabrielle) and "I did get

6103 feedback on my nerves and confidence, I've never been confident, but I got through

6104 it [interviews] and this course is helping me" (Louie). Of note, in the following

6105 example from my field notes, I reflected on young peoples' nervousness and anxiety

6106 during the interview event:

6107   Today I realised just how overwhelming 1-1 interview situations are for

6108   disengaged young people. Many of them experienced intense fear, anxiety,

6109   and panic before their interviews. In particular, one young person was

6110   physically shaking so much that they were unable to hold a glass of water

6111   without spilling it. This event has made employers see just how much young

6112   people care and how determined they are to find an opportunity that will

6113   change their lives. I feel proud that employers from various organisations and

6114   affiliations have had the chance to understand and get to know each young

6115   person. But most importantly, I am grateful that they have had the

6116   opportunity to see young peoples' strengths, attributes, and potentialities in

6117   the same way that I have been able to do throughout EMPOWER, and

6118   consequently, any preconceptions that employers may have held of

6119   disengaged young people have now been challenged.

6120   The mock interview event led to positive outcomes among young people,

6121   including, enhanced self-awareness and higher levels of confidence in their ability to

6122   succeed in a 1-1 interview setting. This was summarised by Jordan: "This [interview]

6123   practice has helped me [to] be better and given me confidence to face an interview in

6124   the future." The corresponding CMO configuration is presented in Table 6.10.

6125   **Table 6.10**

6126   *CMO Configuration 3.3: Interviewing Skills*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Many young people perceived a 1-1 interview setting as challenging and stressful.	The programme provided young people with the opportunity to participate in a mock interview event, whereby they were interviewed by different employers. This offered young people a chance to practice their interviewing skills, gain experience, and receive extensive feedback from credible sources.	Young people listened attentively to employers' feedback and gained an awareness of how they could improve their interviewing skills.	Enhanced self-awareness and higher levels of confidence in their ability to succeed in a 1-1 interview setting.

6127   **6.3.3.4 Refined Programme Theory 3: Work-Based Placements/**

6128   **Preparation.** In accordance with the initial programme theory, the work-based

6129   placements provided young people with valuable insight into the working

6130   environment. Specifically, in the context of young people who lacked a clear sense of

6131   direction and had limited working experience, EMPOWER provided opportunities

6132   for young people to explore and experiment with a range of occupations they were

6133   interested in and passionate about. In turn, this led to young people acquiring new

6134   skills and competencies, such as, communication, leadership, and problem-solving

6135   skills, and feeling energised and optimistic about their future. Resulting outcomes

6136   included a sense of purpose and direction, and enhanced confidence and motivation

6137   to re-engage with employment opportunities.

6138   In the context of young people who had never attended a higher educational

6139   institution, the programme provided an opportunity for young people to spend a full

6140   day at a university campus. Through this opportunity young people received access

6141 to new perspective, information, and advice. For some young people, they felt

6142 comfortable within the university environment and were able to imagine themselves

6143 as a university student. For others, however, they were unable to connect with the

6144 university nor envision their future as a university student. As such, for some, the

6145 university visit led to an increased interest and desire to attend university, for others,

6146 the visit led to a desire to explore alternative options and opportunities.

6147 Within EMPOWER, many young people perceived a 1-1 interview setting as

6148 challenging and stressful. The young people participated in a mock interview event,

6149 in which they were interviewed by various employers. This provided young people

6150 with an opportunity to practice their interviewing skills, gain experience, and to

6151 receive extensive feedback from credible sources. As a result, young people listened

6152 attentively to employers' feedback and gained an awareness of how they could

6153 improve their interviewing skills. Outcomes observed included enhanced self-

6154 awareness and higher levels of confidence in their ability to succeed in a 1-1

6155 interview setting.

6156 *6.3.4 Initial Programme Theory 4: The Importance of a Youth-Driven Multi-*

6157 *Component Programme*

> By allowing young people to experience control and autonomy over the design
> and development of EMPOWER, they may be more likely to choose activities
> that are relevant to their own needs and experience feelings of empowerment,
> agency, and purpose (Powers & Tiffany, 2006; Sullivan et al., 2018). Further,
> through exposure to a diversity of modalities, including, positive psychology and
> strengths-focused workshops, sport, and outdoor adventure experiences, and
> work-based placements, and access to various forms of social support, such as,
> emotional, informational, appraisal, and instrumental types of support, young
> peoples' engagement and access to support systems may be enhanced.

6158 This initial programme theory explores the impact of a youth-driven multi-

6159 component programme. In line with the initial programme theory, the findings

6160 illustrated the importance of actively involving young people in the design and

6161 development of EMPOWER in order to establish an environment where young

6162 people felt heard, visible, and valued. Additionally, the young people described the

6163 benefits of providing access to emotional, informational, appraisal, and instrumental

6164 forms of support. Such findings will be explored in more detail below.

6165 **6.3.4.1 CMO Configuration 4.1: Feelings of Agency and Control.** At the

6166 start of EMPOWER, it was apparent that many of the young people experienced a

6167 lack of control over their lives (context). Riley stated, for example: "I don't like

6168 relying on someone else, I'd rather be independent. I'm sick of living off people

6169 now." Likewise, Josh shared:

6170 It's a vicious cycle really because when it comes to jobs and work and stuff,

6171 unless you've got experience well, you're not gonna get it [job]. But you need

6172 the job to get experience, you can't work if you haven't got it [experience].

6173 It's out of your control, it's a vicious cycle.

6174 In such contexts, young people were provided with autonomy to co-design

6175 their own multi-component programme and activities. This allowed young people the

6176 opportunity to choose activities that were relevant to their own needs, interests, and

6177 desires (mechanism). As explained by Adrian: "I liked that we had a say in what

6178 things we did. Because we got to do things that we enjoyed like and we were

6179 interested in." Similarly, Josh articulated: "[I] really enjoyed it [EMPOWER] like. I

6180 found it good going out to different places like seeing a university campus, and

6181 picking which activities and that to do, 'cause now I've got more experience in

6182 things that I wanna do." As a consequence, this led to young people feeling visible,

6183 valued, and empowered (mechanism). In Riley's case, he explained:

6184 It was just the fact we were actually given some responsibility, you know, it

6185 wasn't just, 'Oh this is what we're gonna be doing', it was literally asking us

6186 what things we wanted to do and listening… it made me feel useful.

6187 Gabrielle echoed these sentiments: "The course has been amazing, and it's helped me

6188 a lot. I've been able to make my own choices and decisions and do things that I'm

6189 passionate about, and it's given me the belief in myself that I didn't have before."

6190 Outcomes evident among young people included improved self-esteem and

6191 enhanced feelings of agency and control over their lives. As highlighted in the

6192 following extracts from Louie and Josh: "I have the confidence now to start going to

6193 job fayres, handing out my CV, and applying for different courses" (Louie), and:

6194 "When it comes to job interviews and that now, when people say, 'you haven't got

6195 the skills and experience needed', I can say but I have, I've done this [EMPOWER]

6196 and I've volunteered at the [rugby] camps" (Josh). Another young person, Riley

6197 explained:

6198 Being on this course and looking into possible careers has made me wanna

6199 get the qualification of a mechanic, carpenter, brick layer, and plasterer.

6200 Because say if I get the qualifications of them, then I'll be able to mend a car,

6201 say if a car breaks down… or say if there's a hole in mine or someone's roof

6202 then I can fix it. I'll have all the materials and tools to just do it myself.

6203 This CMO configuration is presented in Table 6.11.

6204 **Table 6.11**

6205 *CMO Configuration 4.1: Feelings of Agency and Control*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Many young people experienced a lack of control over their lives.	Young people were provided with autonomy to co-design their own programme and activities. This allowed young people the opportunity to choose activities that were relevant to their own needs, interests, and desires.	This led to young people feeling visible, valued, and empowered.	Improved self-esteem and enhanced feelings of agency and control over their lives.

6206 **6.3.4.2 CMO Configuration 4.2: Access to Emotional, Informational,**

6207 **Appraisal, and Instrumental Support.** Within the context of young people who

6208 had limited access to social support, EMPOWER provided exposure to a diversity of

6209 modalities (i.e., classroom, sport, outdoor adventure experiences, and work-based

6210 placements), which enabled young people to receive access to emotional (e.g.,

6211 reassurance and compassion), informational (e.g., advice and guidance), appraisal

6212 (e.g., understanding of strengths and assets, and the opportunity to practice using

6213 them), and instrumental (e.g., access to resources, transportation, and training

6214 opportunities), forms of support from peers, facilitators, and instructors (mechanism).

6215 According to Connor, he explained how he received access to informational

6216 and instrumental forms of support:

6217 I got knowledge about what construction jobs you can do; I was just

6218 assuming it was mainly one thing but there's lots of different roles working in

6219 construction. I found it good to go on the work site and to see the offices and

6220 that as well.

6221 Additionally, Jordan reflected on the opportunity to identify his strengths during the

6222 classroom lessons and to then practice using them throughout the various modalities

6223 (appraisal support):

6224 The classroom stuff was good 'cause I learnt about my communication skills

6225 and that, so, you need the classroom stuff but then doing the [rugby] camps

6226   and sports with everyone, makes you better at your communication skills

6227   because you have to make sure that you're not talking over people who

6228   actually want to talk and don't really get the chance to [talk].

6229 Gabrielle described the benefits of providing emotional support to her peers and

6230 receiving emotional support from her peers:

6231   It was good to listen to other peoples' opinions and erm, just being a shoulder

6232   to cry on if any of them needed it. Because even though bad stuff has

6233   happened [to me] and everything, I'm still there for others, and throughout

6234   this course, other people have been there for me as well. And that's nice

6235   because sometimes people don't think they can open up to each other, and

6236   maybe some people haven't got anyone to talk to. So, I'll be there for them

6237   and then at the same time then it makes me feel like I have a purpose. I'll

6238   never be able to just sit there and watch someone suffer in silence on their

6239   own because I've been through it myself and I wouldn't want anyone

6240   experiencing that type of thing so I'm just there for everyone.

6241   Such experiences triggered feelings of engagement, happiness, and support

6242 among young people (mechanism). As explained by Riley and Louie: "I mean we all

6243 pretty much got on from the first day and it's been great fun to spend time together

6244 and get to know each other" (Riley) and "I'm happy because I've achieved a lot of

6245 things that I didn't know I could do. And I've also made a lot of friends" (Louie). In

6246 turn, this led to expanded social networks and support systems (outcome). Table 6.12

6247 summarises this CMO configuration.

6248 **Table 6.12**

6249 *CMO Configuration 4.2: Access to Emotional, Informational, Appraisal, and*

6250 *Instrumental Support*

Context	Mechanism (resource)	Mechanism (reasoning)	Outcome
Young people had limited access to social support.	EMPOWER provided exposure to a diversity of modalities which enabled young people to receive access to emotional, informational, appraisal, and instrumental forms of support from facilitators, peers, and instructors.	This triggered feelings of engagement, happiness, and support among young people.	Expanded social networks and support systems.

6251   **6.3.4.3 Refined Programme Theory 4: The Importance of a Youth-**

6252 **Driven Multi-Component Programme.** Consistent with the initial programme

6253 theory, in the context of disengaged young people who experienced a lack of control

6254 over their lives, EMPOWER provided young people with autonomy to co-design

6255 their own multi-component programme and activities. As such, this enabled young

6256 people the opportunity to choose activities that were relevant to their own needs,

6257 interests, and desires. This led to young people feeling visible, valued, and

6258 empowered, which, in turn, resulted in improved self-esteem and enhanced feelings

6259 of agency and control over their lives.

6260   Within the context of young people who had limited access to social support,

6261 EMPOWER provided exposure to a diversity of modalities which enabled young

6262 people to receive access to emotional, informational, appraisal, and instrumental

6263 forms of support from peers, facilitators, and instructors. This triggered feelings of

6264 engagement, happiness, and support among young people. Consequently, outcomes

6265 observed included expanded social networks and support systems.

6.4 Discussion: How did EMPOWER work, for whom and under which circumstances?

The aim of this realist evaluation was to understand how, why, and under which circumstances the EMPOWER programme impacted the engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes of disengaged young people aged 17-23 years. The findings identified the contextual elements and underlying mechanisms through which EMPOWER led to desirable and undesirable engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes. Specifically, according to the data, the initial programme theories were supported, expanded, and refined in order to explain how different outcomes arose among the young people. This section will discuss the findings of this study in relation to Chapters 4 and 5 (i.e., Study 1 and 2), relevant literature, the implications for practice, and propose directions for future programmes for disengaged young people who are outside of education, employment, and training.

The findings from this evaluation supported and reinforced the conclusions made in previous chapters (i.e., Study 1 and 2) that indicated that for programmes to facilitate positive outcomes among disengaged young people it was important that facilitators endorsed a strengths-based orientation, and that young people were provided with access to a diverse range of modalities and forms of support (e.g., emotional, informational, appraisal, and instrumental), had opportunities to engage in work-based learning, and were provided with exposure and access to new activities and experiences. Thus, taken together, it is apparent that in the context of disengaged young people both *within* school settings and *outside* of education and employment, opportunities to identify strengths, assets, and virtues, expand social networks, and access new learning opportunities and experiences may serve as effective mechanisms through which multi-component programmes can enhance engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes. However, the findings from the current study also highlighted novel insights regarding the contexts and mechanisms that underlie the effectiveness of a multi-component programme for disengaged young people who have encountered lengthy periods outside of education and employment.

For instance, within EMPOWER, many of the young people had encountered negative experiences of education and employment, including bullying, school dropout, low wages, short-term employment contracts, and constant job searches, which, in turn, had led to low self-esteem, self-doubt, and feelings of hopelessness.

6300 These findings support the conclusion of previous research (Wong, 2016; Webster et

6301 al., 2004), which illustrate how precarious work and short-term employment

6302 contracts can reinforce a 'discouraged worker effect' in that, young people may

6303 internalise feelings of pessimism and anxiety towards their future. Within this

6304 context, opportunities for young people to identify, discover, and refine their

6305 strengths, assets, and virtues were particularly powerful mechanisms through which

6306 EMPOWER led to enhanced engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes.

6307 Such findings correspond to other studies, which have concluded that the

6308 identification of strengths and assets can serve as protective factors for disengaged

6309 young peoples' psychosocial wellbeing and functioning (Park, 2004; Quinlan et al.,

6310 2012; Scales, 1999). However, the findings also extend previous research (Quinlan et

6311 al., 2012; Seligman et al., 2005), by highlighting the importance of programmes

6312 providing opportunities not only for young people to identify their strengths and

6313 assets but also to practice using and developing them in new ways across a variety of

6314 settings (e.g., work-based placements, sport, and outdoor adventure experiences).

6315   The findings from the current evaluation also demonstrate the value

6316 associated with offering young people a safe environment to both share their own

6317 emotional regulation and coping strategies with others and receive feedback and

6318 suggestions from their peers. Consistent with prior research (Brown & Braun, 2013),

6319 this suggests that through sharing their own experiences, peers not only help others

6320 by role modelling effective strategies, but also act as providers of emotional support

6321 which can encourage the formation of meaningful connections and relationships.

6322 Identifying mechanisms that help disengaged young people to develop meaningful

6323 connections and relationships are particularly important because positive and

6324 supportive peer associations may promote health-enhancing resources, resilience,

6325 and psychosocial adjustment (Anderson et al., 2013; McGrath & Noble, 2010). As

6326 such, this finding has important implications for practice, pointing to the importance

6327 of ensuring that young people have opportunities to enhance their emotional

6328 regulation strategies through creating collaborative learning opportunities in which

6329 young people actively share and reflect on their own experiences and participate in

6330 meaningful discussions with their peers.

6331   Building upon previous research (Kelley, Cunningham, & Branscome, 2015;

6332 Morris, 2015; Utley & Garza, 2011), in the context of disengaged young people who

6333 had negative thought patterns, low self-perceptions, and feelings of self-worth, the

current study additionally highlights the value of using role play scenarios and thought journals to help young people to learn how to control their thinking patterns and enhance feelings of optimism, self-efficacy, and agency. Specifically, the findings from this study showed that by engaging in role play and journaling activities, young people expressed their own thoughts, feelings, and experiences, and monitored the ways in which they perceived and interpreted events. Such positive outcomes are particularly valuable when one considers that, for instance, based on Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory, these positive emotions and optimistic appraisals may lead to numerous desirable outcomes such as engagement, achievement, adaptive coping resources, and emotional adjustment (Carver, Scheier, & Segerstrom, 2010; Gillham & Reivich, 2004; Seligman et al., 2005). As such, the findings from the current study, combined with previous literature, provide compelling support for the incorporation of role-play scenarios, and thought journals as strategies to enhance disengaged young peoples' optimism, positive emotions, and thinking patterns.

Integrated outdoor adventure experiences such as, rock and tree climbing alongside more reflective activities, may also be particularly useful when working with disengaged young people. Particularly, aligned with previous studies (Armour & Sandford, 2013; Lekies, Yost, & Rode, 2015; Witman, 1995) it was apparent within the current study, that providing young people with an opportunity to participate in outdoor adventure activities can challenge them in ways that helps them to trust and rely upon one another. Developing such trust is something that is particularly important for disengaged young people; many of whom have never learnt to trust significant others within their school and home setting (Hanna, 2014; Rhodes, 2002). Interestingly, in this study, as in prior research (Magee & Jeanes, 2011; Sanders et al., 2015; Spaaij, 2009), it was evident that the trusting relationships formed among young people expanded their social networks and provided opportunities for emotional support and connection.

Beyond facilitating the development of trusting relationships, the findings from this evaluation also illustrated how engagement in the outdoor adventure activities enabled young people to experience enhanced self-esteem, feelings of pride, and a sense of accomplishment. Importantly, the findings from the present study advance previous work (Hermens et al., 2017; Lubans et al., 2012) by unpacking the precise mechanisms through which these outcomes occurred.

6368   Specifically, by placing young people in an environment where they needed to direct

6369   their attention solely on the task at hand (e.g., wood carving and climbing activities),

6370   these activities activated mechanisms of engagement and focus, and led to them

6371   being present in the moment. In turn, this allowed young people to regulate their

6372   emotions and attention (i.e., they become highly focused/mindful and calm), and

6373   successfully complete the tasks. These results suggest, in line with Harris's (2019)

6374   acceptance and commitment therapy, that providing opportunities for disengaged

6375   young people to be fully present in the moment can strengthen their engagement,

6376   savouring, focusing, and emotional regulatory skills, and increase their chances of

6377   achieving successful outcomes. Given such findings, it seems appropriate, therefore,

6378   that future re-engagement programmes incorporate activities that are engaging,

6379   captivating, and meaningful, such as wood carving and climbing activities, to help

6380   young people move from disaffection towards engagement and subsequently enhance

6381   their psychosocial outcomes.

6382   Alongside outdoor activities, in contexts where disengaged young people had

6383   limited work experience and lacked a clear sense of direction, it is apparent that

6384   providing young people with opportunities to explore and experiment with a range of

6385   occupations they were interested in and passionate about was also important. This set

6386   of findings is consistent with other research, which concluded that opportunities for

6387   work experience can serve as an effective engagement tool that can provide young

6388   people with a sense of purpose and direction (Bloom, 2010). This enhanced sense of

6389   purpose and direction may, in turn, reduce behaviour-related issues such as,

6390   substance abuse, violence, depression, and suicidal thoughts (Benson et al., 1998),

6391   and as such seems a particularly noteworthy outcome to target. Moreover, through

6392   engagement with a range of occupations, it was apparent that many young people in

6393   EMPOWER developed new skills and competencies, including, communication,

6394   leadership, and problem-solving skills. These findings can be interpreted within the

6395   human capital approach (Hamilton et al., 2013), which highlights that effective re-

6396   engagement programmes help young people to develop and improve their work-

6397   readiness competencies in order to prepare them for employment and/or educational

6398   opportunities after programme completion (Symonds & O'Sullivan, 2017).

6399   Interestingly, in addition to the benefits associated with being exposed to

6400   workplaces, in the context of disengaged young people who had never attended a

6401   higher educational institution, exposure to a university campus enabled a number of

6402 young people to feel more comfortable within the university environment and to

6403 imagine themselves as a university student. This finding is consistent with previous

6404 work which has suggested that university visits can allow disengaged young people

6405 to gain knowledge, perspective, and experience regarding university life, and may, in

6406 turn, enhance their intentions to attend university and pursue higher education

6407 (Fleming & Grace, 2015; Formby, Woodhouse, & Basham, 2020; Whitley et al.,

6408 2017). Such findings are particularly important given that many disengaged young

6409 people are often from low socio-economic families and are underrepresented in

6410 higher education (DfE, 2020). Consequently, university campus visits may serve as

6411 powerful mechanisms in enabling disengaged young people to experience changes in

6412 their own 'imagined futures' and 'possible' selves (Fleming & Grace, 2015;

6413 Harrison, 2018; Markus & Nurius, 1986). However, it is important to note that for

6414 some students these visits did not serve to facilitate future thoughts pertaining to

6415 attending university. Rather, these visits acted to reinforce their desire/interest to

6416 pursue employment instead. Although such an outcome will not address the limited

6417 representation of individuals from lower socio-economic families in higher

6418 education, the outcome of encouraging engagement in work is positive, nonetheless.

6419   Finally, beyond the individual activities that were undertaken in the

6420 programme, the active involvement of young people in the design and delivery of

6421 EMPOWER was an important overarching mechanism that enhanced the

6422 effectiveness of the programme. Similar to the pedagogies implemented by Hopper

6423 and McHugh (2020) and Bergmark and Kostenius (2009), the EMPOWER

6424 programme provided disengaged young people with the opportunity to co-design

6425 their own activities and experiences, which, in turn, allowed young people to explore

6426 *their* interests, ideas, strengths, and assets, and to design activities that were relevant

6427 to their developing needs and goals. These experiences enabled young people to feel

6428 visible, valued, and empowered, and led to enhanced feelings of agency and control

6429 over their lives. Such findings concur with previous research (Christens & Dolan,

6430 2011; Mitra, 2008; Powers & Tiffany, 2006) and have direct implications for the

6431 design of multi-component programmes, in the context of disengaged young people.

6432 Specifically, programmes are likely to be far more effective at re-engaging young

6433 people when they actively include them in the decision making and learning process,

6434 provide opportunities for young people to co-ordinate their own activities, and

6435 encourage young people to identify and express their innate strengths, assets, and

6436 interests.

6.4.1 Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions for Research

6438   Within the context of disengaged young people, relatively little attention has

6439 been paid to the ways in which youth-driven programmes impact developmental

6440 outcomes. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first realist evaluation of a youth-

6441 driven multi-component programme utilising appreciative inquiry as a theoretical

6442 framework to re-engage young people. Consequently, this realist evaluation responds

6443 to the need to understand the contexts and mechanisms through which programme

6444 participation leads to engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes among

6445 disengaged young people. Additionally, the findings from the evaluation contribute

6446 to a growing list of effective strategies to enhance disengaged young peoples' trust,

6447 self-esteem, self-efficacy, agency, sense of purpose, emotional regulation, and

6448 coping responses (see Borden & Serido, 2009).

6449   A key strength of this study was the six-month period of immersion in the

6450 field prior to the implementation of EMPOWER. During this period, I was able to

6451 get to know each young person and develop safe and high-quality, trusting

6452 relationships that in turn, cultivated young peoples' interest and engagement with the

6453 programme. Further, in this study, as in previous research (Kirshner, O'Donoghue, &

6454 McLaughlin, 2002; MacDonald et al., 2011), the use of a facilitator (i.e., me) similar

6455 in age to the young people promoted the development of trusting relations and

6456 allowed young people to feel more comfortable discussing sensitive topics. Future

6457 research should continue to explore the use of similar age facilitators/researchers

6458 when co-designing programmes with, and for, disengaged young people.

6459   Despite the strengths of this realist evaluation, there were a number of

6460 limitations that should be noted. First, although group reflections occurred

6461 throughout the duration of the programme, the one-to-one interviews were conducted

6462 at only one-time point, at the end of the EMPOWER programme. As such, young

6463 peoples' responses may have been influenced by 'post-group euphoria' in that, the

6464 interviews were conducted soon after programme completion (cf. Bowers et al.,

6465 2019; Gillard, Watts, & Witt, 2009). Prospective, longitudinal research is therefore

6466 needed in order to develop an understanding of disengaged young peoples' long-term

6467 engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes, and education/employment

6468 trajectories. Moreover, despite the extensive steps taken to get to know the young

6469   people prior to the programme and to encourage participation, the numbers of

6470   participants were low throughout the weeks. Although this is not uncommon for such

6471   programmes, it is important to note because even if the most optimal programmes are

6472   developed, if we cannot encourage young people to engage with them in the first

6473   place, they are of limited value. As such, future research which seeks to develop

6474   more effective strategies to first engage young people within programmes or focuses

6475   on understanding the barriers to engagement would be particularly useful.

6476   **_6.4.2 Conclusion_**

6477   In summary, the current study advances important bodies of research by

6478   unpacking how, why, and under what conditions a youth-driven multi-component

6479   programme contributes to developmental outcomes among disengaged young people.

6480   Specifically, the findings demonstrate the importance of actively involving

6481   disengaged young people in the research process and providing opportunities for

6482   their voices to be heard. However, future research over longer time periods is needed

6483   to understand the long-term sustainability effects of programmes, such as

6484   EMPOWER, on young peoples' engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial

6485   outcomes.

Chapter 7: General Discussion

6486   **7.1 Chapter Overview**

6487   The overarching aim of the thesis was to use realist evaluation to understand

6488   how, and under which circumstances multi-component programmes may impact the

6489   engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes of disengaged students and

6490   young people who are not in education, employment, or training. To achieve this

6491   aim, three realist evaluations of multi-component programmes were conducted.

6492   Through these realist evaluations, a thorough understanding of the contexts within

6493   which the multi-component programmes were implemented, the underlying

6494   mechanisms the programmes activated, and the impact the programmes had on

6495   disengaged young peoples' developmental outcomes were identified. This chapter

6496   comprises a general discussion through which the findings from the three evaluations

6497   are collated, compared, and evaluated in line with both pre-existing literature and the

6498   programme theories. Based on this discussion, implications for practice and future

6499   programme development for disengaged young people are presented. Following this,

6500   the key strengths and limitations of the thesis are summarised, and future research

6501   directions are suggested. The chapter concludes sharing new insights regarding

6502   knowledge translation and dissemination strategies and is followed by a reflexive

6503   account that summarises my personal experiences, learning, and development.

6504   **7.2 How did the multi-component programmes work, for whom, and under**

6505   **which circumstances?**

6506   Overall, the findings from all three realist evaluations reinforced the

6507   importance of facilitators endorsing and practicing a strengths-based approach.

6508   Specifically, the results demonstrated the benefits arising from providing disengaged

6509   young people with opportunities to identify and discover their own strengths, assets,

6510   and virtues, and to practice using and developing them in new ways across a wide

6511   range of activities (e.g., organising events within the community, volunteering,

6512   refereeing, and delivering sports). Specifically, the current thesis highlights both the

6513   short- and long-term impact such a strengths-based approach can have on facilitating

6514   feelings of competence, empowerment, and pride, and in turn, helping young people

6515   begin to shift their identity and recognise who they would like to be in the future.

6516   Such a finding is important because, despite a substantial body of literature

6517   indicating that strengths-based resources and activities can serve as powerful

6518   mechanisms in enabling disengaged young people to experience positive

psychosocial outcomes (Quinlan et al., 2012; Seligman et al., 2009), much of the existing literature continues to adopt deficit-based perspectives (i.e., a focus on reducing problem behaviours) (See Caldwell & Smith, 2006; Sutherland et al., 2010). Given the substantial and consistent benefits associated with adopting a strengths-based approach, researchers and practitioners who continue to focus on "fixing" the "deficits" of disengaged young people are not only limiting the extent to which they can truly enact change in young peoples' lives, but also doing a disservice to the participants in their studies.

However, despite the positive outcomes associated with a strengths-based approach, adopting, and implementing this was not without its challenges in the current studies. Specifically, one of the barriers to successfully and effectively generating a strengths-based ethos in studies 1 and 2 was the wider school context in which the TACKLE programmes were embedded. That is, despite the best efforts of the programme facilitators, there were certain teachers within the different schools in which TACKLE was delivered who focused almost exclusively upon the "weaknesses" or "deficits" of the students taking part in the programme. This was most apparent through the disparaging remarks such teachers made when positive feedback was provided regarding the students' engagement or development. These findings correspond to other studies conducted in school settings (Hinde, 2004; Quinlan et al., 2012), which have previously concluded that the effectiveness of strengths-based programmes can be reinforced or undermined by school officials' (e.g., the Head teacher, teachers, and support staff) pedagogies, underlying assumptions, and the extent to which they endorse a strengths-based approach. Given such a finding, it would appear that to maximise the positive outcomes of such programmes for disengaged young people, expanding programmes beyond simply delivery to students and seeking to stimulate and instigate broader cultural change is required.

Although cultural changes are often very challenging and take considerable time, there was evidence in this thesis of some relatively simple ways to begin to instigate such change. Specifically, within the context of a deficit-based school environment, a noteworthy finding of this research was that providing school officials with opportunities to observe disengaged students in leadership roles and positions of authority, such as refereeing and delivering sports sessions, helped them to see their students' strengths and assets in a way that had not been revealed to them

6553 outside of the programme. Consequently, after becoming aware of the students'

6554 strengths and competencies, some of the teachers were subsequently more willing to

6555 place students in positions of authority (e.g., co-ordinating lunch-time clubs and

6556 after-school activities) within the school setting, something they would have

6557 previously avoided. These findings are particularly encouraging given that positive

6558 teacher-student interactions and expectations have been associated with enhanced

6559 engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes among disengaged students

6560 (Rubie-Davies, 2006; Weinstein, 2002). Although further research is warranted to

6561 investigate the long-term consequences that programmes such as TACKLE may have

6562 on teachers' perceptions of their students and the wider school context and ethos, this

6563 initial finding is positive and provides a clear strategy through which to help

6564 stimulate change in teachers' perceptions.

6565   The importance of providing disengaged young people with a voice, an

6566 opportunity to provide input and engage in decision-making opportunities was

6567 highlighted and reiterated in the findings included within this thesis. In particular, the

6568 findings from Chapter 6 (i.e., Study 3) demonstrated the benefits of actively

6569 including young people *outside* of education and employment, in the design and

6570 development of the EMPOWER programme. Consistent with prior research

6571 (Anselma, Chinapaw, & Altenburg, 2020; Bergmark & Kostenius, 2009; Powers &

6572 Tiffany, 2006; Rubin & Jones, 2007), by recognising young people as experts of

6573 their own lives and involving them as co-programme designers, they were able to

6574 identify activities that were informed by, and relevant to, their particular strengths,

6575 interests, hopes, and dreams. As a result of this opportunity, disengaged young

6576 people experienced enhanced feelings of empowerment, agency, and control over

6577 their lives. Collectively, these findings add to accumulating evidence that youth-

6578 driven programmes promote positive developmental outcomes among disengaged

6579 young people and can serve as particularly powerful mechanisms in enabling them to

6580 have their voices and experiences heard (Powers & Tiffany, 2006).

6581   In contrast to the autonomy and agency that could be provided to the young

6582 people aged 17-23 years in Study 3, it was apparent that, in the context of disengaged

6583 year 8 students (i.e., adolescents aged 12-13 years; Study 2), there was a requirement

6584 for facilitators to provide more structure and leadership. Specifically, the findings

6585 from this evaluation underscored the need for facilitators to provide the right amount

6586 of structure and control in order to prevent the emergence of bullying behaviours, the

6587 enactment of hegemonic masculine identities, and 'top dog' competitive cultures

6588 occurring among students. This set of findings supports the conclusions of Skille and

6589 Waddington (2006) and Mahoney, Stattin, and Lord (2004), which showed that a

6590 lack of adult control and structure was conducive to the development of hegemonic

6591 masculine cultures, anti-social behaviours, group conflict, and the exclusion of young

6592 people from activities. Thus, while it may be intuitively and theoretically appealing

6593 to seek to create an autonomy-supportive environment when delivering programmes

6594 for disengaged young people (Haudenhuyse et al., 2014), applying this without due

6595 consideration of specific contextual factors (e.g., age of participants) may lead to

6596 negative or detrimental outcomes, which distract from the potential efficacy of the

6597 programme.

6598   To overcome the potential issues described above, there appear to be a

6599 number of implications for programme facilitators and programme developers

6600 working with disengaged young people, both *within* and *outside* of school settings.

6601 First, it is apparent that there is a need for facilitators to receive ongoing training and

6602 support regarding the implementation of age-appropriate monitoring, structure, and

6603 boundaries. Second, it appears that rather than a focus on autonomy, it may be more

6604 beneficial for facilitators to establish physical and psychological safety in order to

6605 provide a context of belongingness and reduce the likelihood of iatrogenic effects,

6606 including, bullying and delinquent behaviour. Third, the emphasis on competition

6607 should be reduced and opportunities should be provided for young people to form

6608 supportive and meaningful peer relationships. Finally, activities should be tailored to

6609 suit the varying developmental stages of the young people involved in the

6610 programme (Anderson et al., 2007; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Mahoney et al., 2004).

6611   In addition to the adoption of a strengths-based approach and the integration

6612 of participants as active contributors to the programme, in line with previous

6613 literature (Bocarro & Witt, 2018; Haudenhuyse et al., 2014), the findings from this

6614 thesis also highlights the importance of the relationships that are established between

6615 young people and adult facilitators. Specifically, the findings across all three studies

6616 identified that the quality of the facilitator-young person relationship that was

6617 established was an important mechanism through which programmes could stimulate

6618 positive developmental outcomes. From the perspective of the young people, the

6619 relationships formed with their one-to-one mentor (i.e., adult facilitators) provided

6620 them with access to new perspective, advice, and career-related guidance, as well as

6621   the opportunity to develop conflict resolution and emotional regulatory skills.

6622   Additionally, through prolonged engagement and interaction with their mentor, many

6623   young people explained that they were able to develop mutual trust and respect with

6624   their mentor, something that was often missing in their other relationships. The fact

6625   that young people formed high-quality relationships with their mentors is particularly

6626   important, given that, longitudinal research has shown the power of mentoring

6627   relationships in helping disengaged young people to overcome adverse circumstances

6628   and accomplish successful long-term trajectories (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005; Hurd

6629   & Zimmerman, 2010; Werner & Smith, 1992).

6630   Importantly, however, although most participants were able to develop these

6631   high-quality relationships, they did not always happen instantly. Rather, the findings

6632   of this body of work indicated that, for several students, there were delays and/or

6633   barriers to the formation of a trusting mentoring relationship. Consistent with many

6634   previous studies (Ahrens et al., 2011; Gauthier et al., 1996; Rhodes, 2002), it was

6635   evident that the personal nature of the mentoring relationships triggered painful

6636   memories and vulnerabilities in certain students due to insecure and unstable

6637   attachments with their own family members. Given such a finding, ensuring that

6638   programmes are long enough to enable facilitators to engage with young people for

6639   an extended period and thus have sufficient time for trusting relationships to develop

6640   is particularly pertinent. Moreover, ensuring that facilitators are both aware of the

6641   potential barriers they may encounter when attempting to engage with disengaged

6642   young people and have been provided with appropriate insights and strategies to

6643   support the development of quality relationships is needed.

6644   Specifically, in line with the recommendations of other scholars (Morrow &

6645   Styles, 1995; Rhodes et al., 2009; Spencer, 2007), this thesis showed that mentors

6646   were most likely to promote positive engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial

6647   outcomes among disengaged young people and develop quality relationships with

6648   them when they: 1) Got to know and understand young people through increased

6649   time together; 2) Carefully designed the content of activities according to young

6650   peoples' strengths, interests, and preferences; 3) Established clear and appropriate

6651   boundaries that were sensitive to young peoples' context (e.g., the mentor did not

6652   probe young people to reveal personal information); and; 4) Effectively

6653   communicated with young people regarding cancellation of meetings, activities, and

6654   the end date of the mentoring relationship in order to avoid feelings of shock,

6655   disappointment, and rejection among disengaged young people. Providing facilitators

6656   with training prior to programmes, through which they can practice implementing

6657   these strategies and subsequently incorporating them within programmes may be

6658   useful to enhance the efficacy of future work.

6659   In addition to the incorporation of strategies and practices to promote trusting

6660   mentoring relationships, the studies incorporated within this thesis highlighted the

6661   promise of using outdoor adventure activities as powerful mechanisms through

6662   which young people formed trusting peer relationships. Specifically, in the context of

6663   young people who experienced reticence towards trusting others, the outdoor

6664   adventure activities including rock and tree climbing created scenarios in which

6665   young people were *required* to trust and depend upon one another in order to

6666   successfully complete the tasks. In line with several key tenets of cognitive

6667   behavioural therapy (Sheldon, 2011), by placing young people in conditions where

6668   they *had* to confront their own doubts and suspicions, they were able to observe their

6669   peers demonstrate consistent and reliable trusting behaviours. This, in turn, led to

6670   young people re-establishing trust and regaining their ability to depend upon others,

6671   which subsequently extended into other contexts, such as employment, education,

6672   and community settings. This transition of trust into different contexts corresponds

6673   with previous research, which has concluded that experiential learning provides a

6674   powerful educational environment because young people appear to be more likely to

6675   remember what they have learnt during outdoor activities and transfer these lessons

6676   to other areas within their lives (Kolb, 2015). As such, this evidence provides

6677   compelling support for the integration of outdoor adventure activities as important

6678   mechanisms to stimulate deep learning, psychological safety, and trust formation

6679   between disengaged young people.

6680   Although there were clear benefits associated with engagement in outdoor

6681   activities, in order to more extensively re-ignite young peoples' engagement and

6682   interest, the findings of this thesis point to the value of providing young people with

6683   exposure to a range of modalities, resources, and pathways. In particular, it was

6684   apparent that the amalgamation of modalities (i.e., mentoring, classroom, work-based

6685   placements, sport, and outdoor adventure activities) worked in synergy to enhance

6686   young peoples' engagement, motivation, and interest. For instance, access to a

6687   multipronged approach provided opportunities for young people to develop a

6688   recognition of their own knowledge, strengths, and interests, while simultaneously

6689 acquiring new knowledge, competencies, and skills. Through these experiences,

6690 young people were able to envisage possible life directions and a more desirable

6691 future. In turn, from the perspective of many young people, this re-ignited their

6692 engagement and motivation in order to pursue their strengths, competencies, and

6693 interests. Thus, through involvement in the multi-component programmes,

6694 disengaged young people were able to envision a range of 'possible' and 'imagined'

6695 future selves (Gibson, 2004; Markus & Nurius, 1986).

6696 Moreover, in line with a human capital approach (Hamilton et al., 2013;

6697 Hutchinson et al., 2016; Symonds & O'Sullivan, 2017), the findings from this thesis

6698 showed that work-based placements, volunteering experiences, and mock interview

6699 events can support disengaged young people in navigating the transition to

6700 employment by developing their work-readiness competencies and employability

6701 skills (e.g., self-awareness, communication, leadership, and problem-solving skills).

6702 Interestingly, this focus on enhancing young peoples' skills and competencies runs

6703 contrary to the strategies adopted in other re-engagement programmes that have

6704 attempted to direct young people into occupations quickly, without providing them

6705 with the necessary training opportunities and the subsequent, knowledge, attributes,

6706 and skills required to succeed within the workforce (Mawn et al., 2017; Symonds &

6707 O'Sullivan, 2017). There is evidence to suggest that steering disengaged young

6708 people into employment before they are ready may actually perpetuate feelings of

6709 disaffection and reinforce and sustain a 'discouraged worker effect' (Wong, 2016).

6710 Given such negative outcomes detailed in previous research when young people are

6711 not prepared for work, combined with the positive outcomes associated with the

6712 work-preparation activities included in the current thesis, it is clear that incorporating

6713 activities to enhance young peoples' work-readiness competencies is likely to be

6714 valuable in helping them to find and maintain employment after programme

6715 completion (Symonds & O'Sullivan, 2017).

6716 Finally, the findings from the longitudinal follow-up indicated the centrality

6717 of context in determining whether multi-component programmes have long-term

6718 sustainability effects. Specifically, in the context of students who experienced less

6719 chaotic contextual circumstances (e.g., low self-esteem and disengagement towards

6720 school), there was evidence to suggest that the resources of the multi-component

6721 programme were sufficient to sustain improvements in students' engagement, self-

6722 esteem, and motivation. Comparatively, within the context of students who

encountered extremely chaotic contextual circumstances (e.g., parental substance abuse, neglect, gang affiliations, and deviant peer contagions), it was apparent that the resources of the programme were not adequate to sustain improvements in students' developmental outcomes. Consequently, based on these findings, it is questionable whether multi-component programmes, such as TACKLE and EMPOWER, are sufficient to compensate for young people facing high levels of environmental risk factors and extremely complex lives. In such contexts of heightened complexity, the findings from this research suggest the need for more intensive, multi-component programmes of longer durations (cf. Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). Additionally, another implication is the importance of facilitators providing follow-up support and maintaining contact with young people once the programme is over. Such continuity of care may be particularly valuable in helping the most disengaged young people to sustain improvements in engagement, self-esteem, and motivation. Finally, concurring with Holland et al. (2008), providing consistent follow-up support can prevent the common phenomenon of facilitators forming trusting relationships with disengaged young people and then losing contact once programmes are discontinued.

7.3 Strengths of the Research

There are a number of strengths within this body of research which enable it to add to and extend the current evidence base pertaining to re-engaging disengaged young people. First, the three studies presented within this thesis are, to my knowledge, the first to use realist evaluation methodology to understand how, why, and under what conditions multi-component programmes impacted the engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes of disengaged young people. As such, through this series of realist evaluations, new insights have been generated regarding the contextual factors and underlying mechanisms through which multi-component programmes worked for disengaged students and young people who were outside of education and employment. Collectively, the refined programme theories of this research provide an explanatory framework and a re-useable conceptual platform that can be applied to similar programmes targeting the re-engagement of disengaged young people and tested again to enable further theory refinement (Pawson, 2013).

An additional strength of this research was the abundance of data collected across different age groups and settings (i.e., school and community contexts). This allowed for a thorough understanding of the contextual circumstances of schools,

6757 communities, disengaged students, and young people that facilitated and constrained

6758 the activation of mechanisms. As such, the findings of the current research should

6759 help programme implementers to tailor their programmes more effectively to the

6760 different settings and ages/developmental stages of the young people involved.

6761 Additionally, the results contribute to a growing list of strategies and practices that

6762 can enhance disengaged students and young peoples' engagement, behavioural, and

6763 psychosocial outcomes.

6764   Finally, another key strength of this research was the intensive fieldwork

6765 conducted. As a participant observer throughout the TACKLE programmes and a co-

6766 designer and facilitator of the EMPOWER programme, I was able to spend a

6767 considerable amount of time actively participating in activities alongside young

6768 people, observing their emotions, behaviours, and social interactions, sharing

6769 minibus trips, lunchtime meals, and engaging in informal discussions with young

6770 people. Over time, I developed a nuanced understanding of each young person's

6771 background, interests, aspirations, and strengths, which served as a conduit for the

6772 formation of caring, trusting, and supportive relationships. Consistent with most

6773 previous studies (Borden & Serido, 2009; Liamputtong, 2007), the amount of time

6774 spent in the field and the level of trust formed was crucial in enabling disengaged

6775 young people to authentically share their own experiences, ideas, and perspective in

6776 an atmosphere of familiarity and safety.

6777 **7.4 Limitations of the Research**

6778   Although there are many strengths to this programme of work, the findings

6779 should also be considered within the study limitations. Firstly, overall, although the

6780 realist evaluation approach responds to the need to understand the mechanisms that

6781 underlie the effectiveness of multi-component programmes, there are challenges to

6782 conducting realist evaluations that should be taken into consideration. Specifically,

6783 the process of identifying and distinguishing between contexts and mechanisms and

6784 forming CMO configurations requires a considerable amount of time, creativity,

6785 reflection, and capacity on behalf of the researcher (Dalkin et al., 2015; Gilmore,

6786 2017). Additionally, there is limited guidance, rules, and procedures regarding the

6787 operationalisation of realist evaluation (Adams et al., 2016; Rycroft-Malone et al.,

6788 2010). As such, due to the exploratory nature of the approach and the lack of

6789 standardisation, it can be difficult to assess the outputs of a realist evaluation. The

6790 effectiveness of the approach may only become clear when programme implementers

6791 act on the findings and recommendations of the realist evaluation (Jagosh, 2019a).

6792   Secondly, there were specific limitations within the three realist evaluations

6793 conducted. Specifically, although my role as a participant observer allowed me to

6794 gain the trust of young people and to develop a contextual understanding of their

6795 lives, my involvement as a programme evaluator may have increased the occurrence

6796 of socially desirable responses. Consequently, young people may have felt reluctant

6797 or hesitant to critique the programme during interviews, group reflections, and

6798 informal conversations (Orchard et al., 2019). Additionally, in an effort to portray

6799 themselves in a positive light, young people may have responded to questions in

6800 ways that were not reflective of their true feelings and/or experiences (Doi et al.,

6801 2015; Razavi, 2001). Thus, it is important for future research to incorporate both a

6802 participant observer (an insider) and a non-participant observer (an outsider) to

6803 minimise social desirability and acquiescence bias (Doi et al., 2015; Holt et al.,

6804 2008).

6805   Finally, although this research used novel and innovative data collection

6806 methods (e.g., 'the talk-as-you-walk' approach, photo-elicitation, and video-based

6807 interviews), it was apparent that some of the young people found the one-to-one

6808 interviews challenging due to limited social skills and/or communication difficulties.

6809 As is often seen in research with disengaged young people (Finlay et al., 2010;

6810 Wong, 2016), some participants were unable to verbally express and articulate their

6811 experiences, thoughts, and feelings. In turn, this led to short responses and feelings of

6812 discomfort among young people during the interview. Consequently, an in-depth

6813 understanding of the impact of the programme for these specific young people was

6814 not obtained. Future research is needed in order to examine the effectiveness of

6815 different types of interview techniques and communication tools (e.g., props, games,

6816 drawings, vignettes, and role play) in the context of disengaged young people (cf.

6817 Finlay et al., 2010).

6818 **7.5 Recommendations for Future Research**

6819   There are a number of recommendations for future research based on the

6820 findings from this thesis. First, although this series of realist evaluations contributes

6821 to an understanding of how, why, and under which circumstances multi-component

6822 programmes impacted on disengaged young peoples' developmental outcomes,

6823 future research is warranted to continue to examine the impact of multi-component

6824   programmes of different durations, intensities, and across different group

6825   compositions, age groups, educational, and community contexts. This will enable

6826   researchers to understand whether the CMO configurations and refined programmes

6827   theories of this thesis are transferable to other settings, contexts, and age groups. This

6828   consideration across different age groups and with programmes spanning different

6829   lengths is particularly warranted given the findings of the current thesis, which

6830   pointed to these contextual factors impacting upon the mechanisms that were

6831   triggered and the outcomes that arose.

6832   Additionally, based on the findings from this thesis, it may be beneficial to

6833   examine the effect of incorporating a series of sessions/teacher-training workshops

6834   prior to the implementation of school-based programmes. Specifically, developing

6835   and evaluating the impact of such workshops alone would be useful to identify the

6836   best strategies through which to encourage school officials to share the ethos,

6837   objectives, and vision of a strengths-based approach. Subsequently, integrating such

6838   teacher workshops at the outset or alongside the delivery of a strengths-based

6839   programme to students and evaluating the impact this has on student outcomes would

6840   be extremely useful.

6841   Importantly, the current body of research was limited in its ability to examine

6842   the long-term effects of multi-component programmes on disengaged young peoples'

6843   engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes, and education/employment

6844   trajectories. Although Study 2 included a longitudinal design, data were only

6845   collected at three time points. Future research would benefit from longitudinal

6846   designs with longer follow-up periods (i.e., 5-10 years) in order to understand if

6847   young peoples' engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes are sustained,

6848   and to assess whether any underlying mechanisms are triggered during the transition

6849   from adolescence to adulthood. Specifically, when considering the focus of these

6850   studies on encouraging re-engagement within education or training, following

6851   participants for a sufficient period of time in which engagement in these activities

6852   can be directly tracked would be particularly useful.

6853   Finally, despite the combination of strategies used to recruit young people

6854   outside of education and employment to take part in the EMPOWER programme,

6855   participation among disengaged young people remained relatively low throughout

6856   the weeks. As such, future research which explicitly incorporates a focus on

6857   identifying the most effective strategies to encourage disengaged young people to

6858   participate in such studies/programmes would be beneficial. Based on my

6859   engagement with youth workers and disengaged young people at the Job Centre, I

6860   identified several barriers that precluded young peoples' involvement in

6861   EMPOWER, that may be considered and evaluated in future research/programmes.

6862   Specifically, the feedback from young people included feelings of fear, anxiety, and

6863   nervousness towards meeting new people, low-self-esteem, and issues with

6864   transportation. Consequently, in line with the recommendations of other scholars

6865   (Bodilly & Beckett, 2005; Plante et al., 2014), future research may investigate the

6866   effectiveness of facilitators emphasising the uniqueness of the multi-component

6867   programme and the opportunities/experiences that can be gained through

6868   involvement, including testimonies of former young people in the information

6869   sessions, encouraging disengaged young people to bring friends with them to

6870   sessions, providing taster days and trial periods, and offering young people monetary

6871   compensation to cover transportation costs.

6872   **7.6 Knowledge Translation and Dissemination Strategies**

6873   The findings of the current programme of research have highlighted a number

6874   of novel and interesting implications for research with disengaged young people.

6875   However, perhaps more importantly, this body of work has generated a substantial

6876   evidence-base that can be used to enhance the development and implementation of

6877   programmes with disengaged young people in practice. However, to ensure this

6878   knowledge can be used by those "on the ground" effective knowledge translation and

6879   dissemination strategies are crucial (Holt & Knight, 2014; Holt et al., 2018).

6880   Recognising this, I have adopted a number of strategies to enhance the dissemination

6881   of these findings to the partner organisation and other practitioners. Specifically, the

6882   findings of the current research have been shared at academic *and practitioner*

6883   conferences and presentations have been delivered to TACKLE stakeholders, along

6884   with written summaries and reports.

6885   To further disseminate information to key stakeholders, I have collaborated

6886   with a graphic designer to create an infographic (see figure 7.1) that summarised the

6887   impact of the TACKLE programme on one student's trajectories. This infographic

6888   has been widely used by TACKLE stakeholders both to provide feedback on the

6889   programme, to stimulate discussion about future programmes, and to raise awareness

6890   among facilitators regarding the individual journey/experiences of participants taking

6891   part in the programme. Consequently, this has enhanced stakeholders buy in (and

6892   subsequent funding) of the programme, as well as increasing the knowledge and

6893   understanding of individuals directly involved in the programme delivery.

6894   **Figure 7.1**

6895   *TACKLE Infographic*
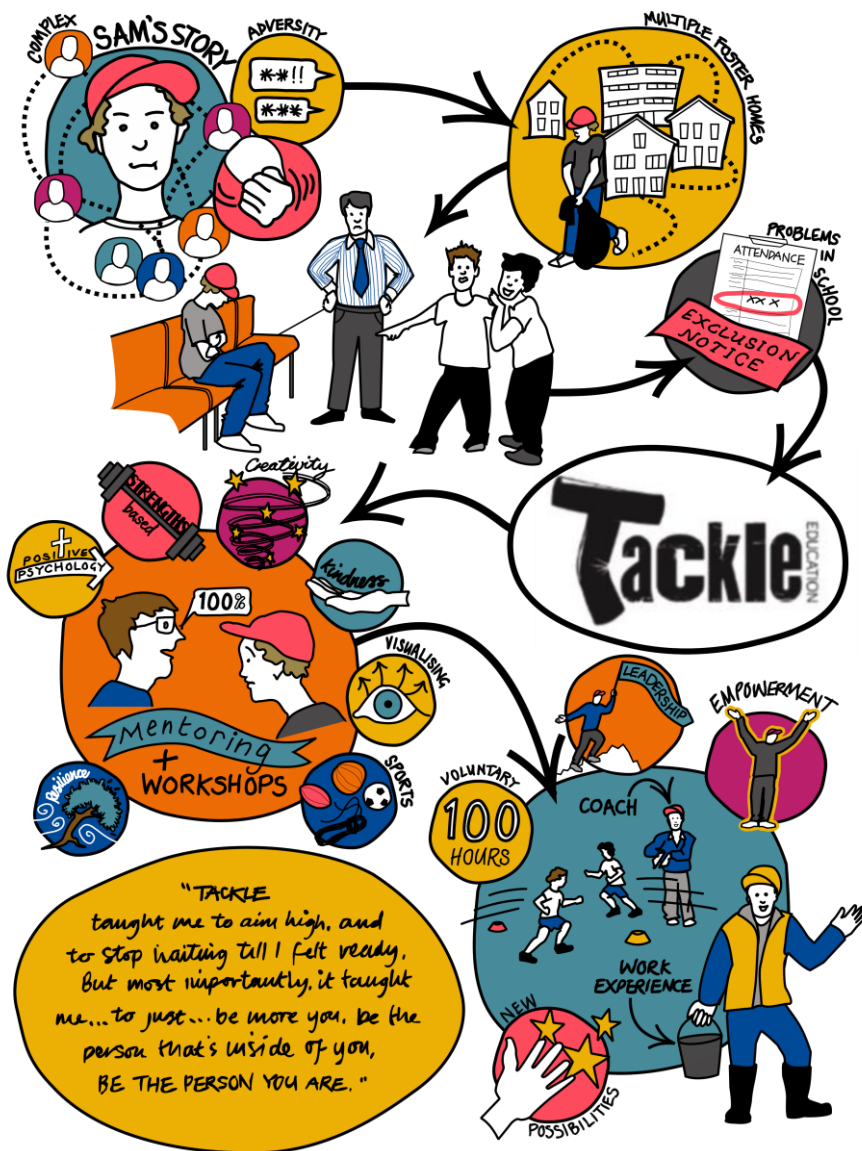
6896   Additionally, I have also designed journey cards (see figure 7.2 for examples)

6897   that served as visually engaging tools to capture young peoples' experiences of the

6898   TACKLE and EMPOWER programme. These cards have been used to share

6899   information to practitioners and stakeholders, and they have been a valuable

6900   pedagogical strategy to encourage other disengaged young people to participate in

6901   the programmes.

6902   **Figure 7.2**

TACKLE Journey Cards

7.7 Personal Reflections

Through my intricate engagement with this programme of work, I have been privileged to learn from and alongside the participants. They have trusted me with stories of some of their most precious memories, traumatic experiences, fears, concerns, dreams, and aspirations. I have been on a journey with the participants in each of the studies but particularly those within the EMPOWER programme. Reflecting upon this, I believe that I have developed some extremely important insights regarding how best to engage with, work with, and understand disengaged young people, which expand far beyond the findings that can be presented within the specific studies. What follows are some of my personal reflections of delivering the EMPOWER programme and working with disengaged young people over the past three years. However, to provide context to these reflections, I would like to share the motivations underlying my devotion to this research area. Specifically, I undertook this PhD because of a desire to help disengaged young people as a result of witnessing the negative impact of trauma and early life adversity on my own dad's psychosocial wellbeing and functioning.

My dad lived on a council housing estate in Liverpool, with his mum, four brothers, and one sister. Growing up, he faced extremely unstable living conditions, neglect, and economic deprivation. With limited parental guidance and supervision, and no money to buy school uniform, my dad rarely attended school and subsequently, never learnt how to read or write. Instead, he spent his childhood trying to provide for his own basic needs and caring for younger siblings. However, at the age of 14, my dad was placed into foster care. During this time, he started associating with young offenders and found himself becoming involved in 'petty' criminal activities. As a consequence, my dad was required to do community service at the local leisure centre. Through engaging in community service activities, he was able to gain valuable work experience that, in turn, proved to be a life changing experience and a significant turning point in his life. Specifically, a duty manager at the leisure centre had noticed my dad's work ethic, strengths, and potential, and decided to offer him a full-time job, which he has held for over forty years.

I often wonder what would have happened to my dad if he had not been given that opportunity? What would he be doing now? My dad's story is a powerful example of how one supportive and caring adult can transform a young person's life. As such, my dad's experiences have inspired me to work with disengaged young

people in the hope of designing effective re-engagement programmes that can help vulnerable young people to navigate complex circumstances and to accomplish successful education/employment trajectories. I have learnt many lessons along the way, which I hope others can draw on to enhance their own involvement with and empathy towards disengaged young people.

Firstly, the intensive fieldwork conducted throughout my research has been invaluable in allowing me to connect with disengaged young people and to gain their trust and respect. Without this period of trust-building, it is unlikely that young people would have felt safe enough to share their own ideas, thoughts, and feelings. As such, the level of trust formed with young people has been a particularly powerful mechanism that has contributed to positive developmental outcomes. However, in order to develop trusting relationships with young people, I have had to adapt and tailor my approach to meet the needs of each young person. Specifically, I spent a considerable amount of time designing activities that were relevant and meaningful to *each* young person's strengths, assets, and interests, recognising each person as an individual rather than assuming that all "disengaged young people" are the same. Additionally, I tried to empathise and understand situations from the young person's perspective, recognising that I do not and cannot fully understand their lives or the experiences they have had to date. Linked to this, I was extremely sensitive regarding the conversations we had and the topics of discussion. Importantly, I also shared my own vulnerabilities, mistakes, and failures with the young people. In doing so, I was able to create a learning environment in which young people were more willing to express their own experiences, take risks, and to try new things. But most importantly, they were able to see me as an authentic person who was committed to their development and progress.

Throughout my engagement, I have realised the importance of helping disengaged young people to identify and nurture their strengths, assets, and competencies. In particular, by placing young people in positions of authority (e.g., officiating rugby matches, festivals, and tournaments), providing exposure to a diversity of occupations and work-based placements (e.g., construction, engineering, and police officer roles), and creating opportunities for young people to re-establish trust and to accomplish perceivably insurmountable challenges (e.g., rock and tree climbing), I have had the opportunity to observe young people transition from disengagement and disaffection towards feelings of hope, passion, and optimism. For

many of these young people, they have experienced years and years of negative feedback and disparaging remarks, they have been surrounded by people who do not believe they can or will achieve. The simple act of seeing these young people as individuals with potential and believing they can achieve has been powerful beyond measure.

Finally, by giving voice to disengaged young people, and actively including them in the design and delivery of their own activities, I have been able to receive access to ideas and perspective that I had not heard or considered previously. Overall, my experience with these young people has been a collaborative, co-creational learning process for the young people and myself, and I have realised that each disengaged young person is fascinating, with their own unique strengths, coping strategies, and stories to tell. If we are to provide the very support to these young people and produce programmes and conduct research which will truly enact change in their lives and help them to achieve, in many cases against the toughest of odds and experiences, it must be underpinned by a **genuine** desire to understand their experiences and help them to experience and witness success in their future.

7.8 Thesis Conclusion

This research has generated new insights regarding how, why, for whom, and in what contexts multi-component programmes impacted the engagement, behavioural, and psychosocial outcomes of disengaged young people. Collectively, the findings from this series of realist evaluations can help policymakers and practitioners in tailoring programmes for disengaged young people through a comprehensive understanding of the contextual factors and underlying mechanisms that led to positive developmental outcomes. Future research is recommended to test the refined programme theories of this thesis in similar programmes targeting disengaged young people, in order to expand our understanding of how complex multi-component programmes work and enable further theory refinement.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide (Students) (Study 1)

Impact of TACKLE

- Overall, what did you think of TACKLE?

- TACKLE works differently for different students, how did the programme work for you?

- What about it has been good?

- What about it has been bad?

- What would you change? What could be better?

- How has it impacted on you as a person? Overall, do you think you have changed at all? How?

- Would you do it again? What's made you want to do it again? What's made you not want to do it again?

- What classroom sessions did you find useful? Why?

- What classroom sessions didn't you find useful? Why not?

- What did you think of the sport/practical lessons?

- What did you think of the work-based placements?

- How did you find the one-to-one mentoring?

Engagement, Behaviour, and Psychosocial Outcomes

- Has your behaviour changed in any way since taking part in TACKLE? How? In what ways? Why do you think it has or hasn't changed?

- Has your attitude towards school changed in any way?

- Since taking part in TACKLE, has there been any changes to your school attendance?

- Have the sport and physical activity sessions helped you to develop in any way? Have you developed any skills? Improved your fitness? Feel more physically competent/able?

- Have they introduced you to any new sports?

- How do you feel approaching new sports/physical activities?

- Has TACKLE impacted your confidence towards learning and schoolwork in any way?

- Do you participate in class discussions/activities during other lessons (e.g., English, Maths, and Science)?

- Would you say TACKLE has influenced your school grades?

- Has taking part in TACKLE made you feel any different about yourself?

- Has TACKLE helped you to get along better with your peers? How?

- Have you learnt any skills that have changed how you communicate/interact with others? Friends? Teachers? Parents?

- Has TACKLE helped you in your other lessons? (have you developed any skills that help you throughout your other lessons?).

- What skills do you think you have developed throughout TACKLE? (If any).

Realist Theories

- Your mentor was supposed to listen, understand, and support you, how did mentoring work for you?

- Over time, mentoring may help you to trust and respect your mentor, but this is not always the case. How did you find it?

- Mentors may help you to see your own strengths, interests, and skills. How did mentoring work for you?

- Some students prefer more hands-on teaching approaches and practical experiences. What works best for you?

- Work-based placements may help some students to see what they would like to do when they finish school. How did work-based placements work for you?

- Work-based placements may help you to develop important skills that may help you to get a job in the future. Did they help you to develop any important skills?

- Through all of the different sports and physical activities, TACKLE was supposed to help you develop leadership and teamwork skills, how did the sports work for you?

- Do you think it is possible to transfer the skills learnt in sport into other areas?

- How did you feel listening to the rugby player? Some students may find the rugby player's talk inspiring and it may motivate them to work harder in school, but others may not feel inspired and may not work harder. How did it work for you?

- Some students may prefer a mixture of activities/modalities (e.g., mentoring, classroom, work-based placements, and sport), others may not. How did you find all of the different modalities? Some students find that it provides access to more support from different types of people. Did it work that way for you?

- TACKLE facilitators try to genuinely care for and believe in you. Was this the case for you? Did you feel cared for? Did you feel that TACKLE facilitators believed in you?

- For some students, the behaviour management policy may motivate them to behave in order to be able to attend the TACKLE programme. For others, it may not. Why do you think this may be? And how did it work for you?

Appendix B

Interview Guide (Teachers) (Study 1)

Impact of TACKLE

- Overall, what did you think of the project?

- What did you like most and least about it?

- What changes in students, if any, have you seen?

- What lessons/sessions do you think have impacted on students the most?

- What did you think of the classroom lessons? Which ones were useful?

- What would you change? What could be better?

- What did you think of the sport/practical lessons?

- What did you think of the work-based placements?

- What did you think of the mentoring? How did it work?

- How would you describe the delivery of the TACKLE programme? (focus on facilitators and constraints).

- Overall, how could the TACKLE programme be improved?

Engagement, Behavioural, and Psychosocial Outcomes (realist theories)

- Have you seen any changes in students' behaviour since taking part in TACKLE? In what ways? Have there been any changes in the number of discipline referrals? How do you think the behaviour management policy worked for each student?

- The mentor was supposed to listen, empathise, understand, and support the student. How do you think mentoring worked for each student?

- Do you think students developed trust and respect for their mentor? If not, why not? Why do you think some students might not have developed trust?

- Would you say students attitudes towards school have changed in any way? Why? Why not?

- How do you think the professional athlete influenced students? Why do you think the athlete impacted students differently?

- Do you think the work-based placements helped students to develop a vision for their future?

- Why do you think the work-based placements may have worked differently for some students?

- Have you noticed any changes in students' level of engagement during core subject lessons?

- Would you say TACKLE has had any impact on how students participate during core subject lessons? (e.g., how they participate during class discussions/activities).

- Have there been any changes in students' attendance since taking part in TACKLE?

- Have you noticed any changes in terms of how students approach sports/practical lessons?

- Would you say TACKLE has helped students within their other lessons? How? Why do you think it has/hasn't?

- Have you noticed any improvements in students' grades? (Academic performance).

- Has TACKLE changed how students communicate/interact with others? Peers? Teachers? Parents?

- Do you think students have developed any skills throughout the project? If so, have these skills being transferred to any other areas? Why? Why not?

- What do you think about the combination of different modalities? How has this exposure to various modalities worked (or not) for students?

- How would you describe the ethos of the TACKLE facilitators?

- Overall, how, and why do you think TACKLE has impacted on each student?