Exploring Parental Experiences of Support from Professionals for their Child with School Non-Attendance and Developing Best Practice: An Appreciative Inquiry Approach.

Amy Rodriguez

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the School of Psychology, University of East London for the Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

October 2023

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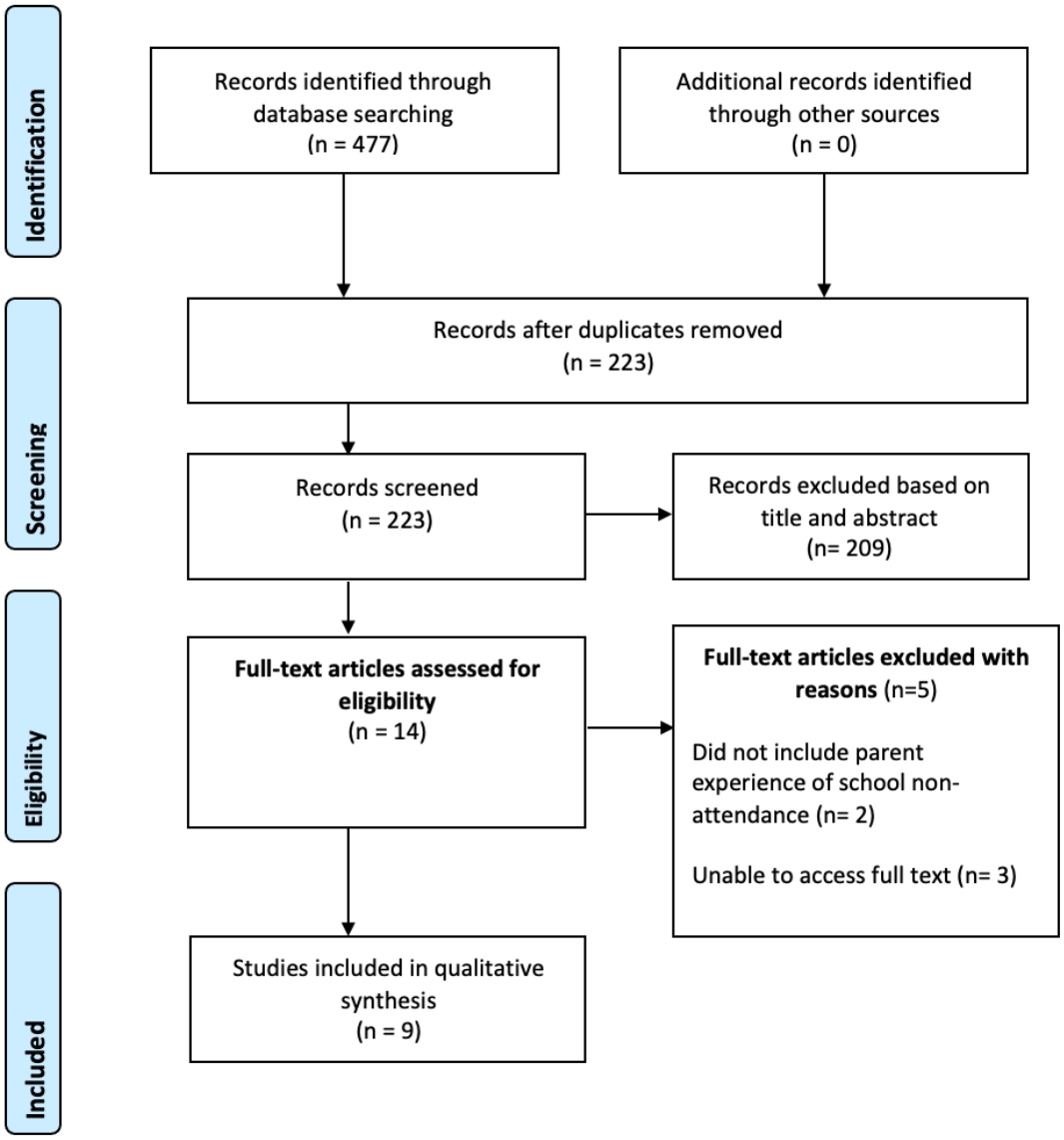
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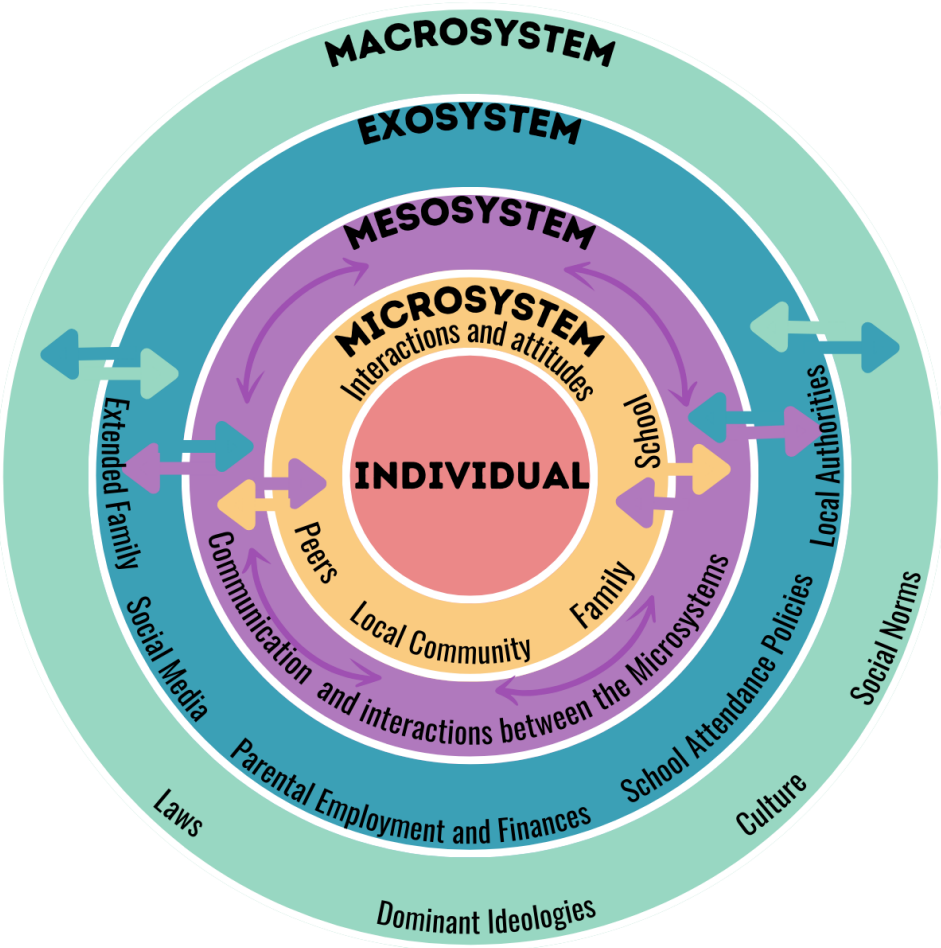
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Interactions and attitudes
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Local Community
Peers
Communication and interactions between the Microsystems
Extended Family
Social Media
Parental Employment and Finances
School Attendance Policies
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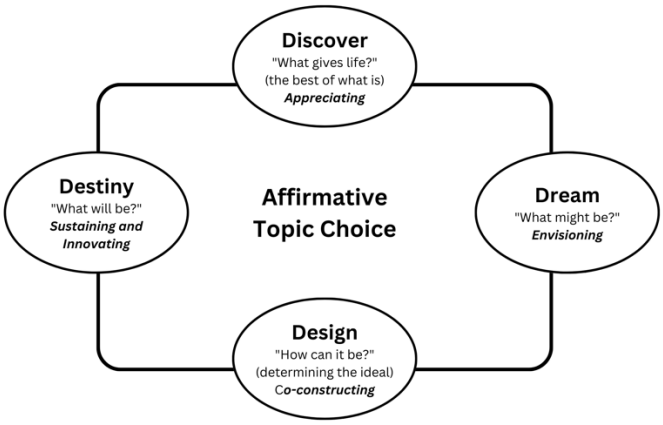
Discover
"What gives life?"
(the best of what is)
Appreciating
Destiny
"What will be?"
Sustaining and Innovating
Affirmative Topic Choice
Dream
"What might be?"
Envisioning
Design
"How can it be?"
(determining the ideal)
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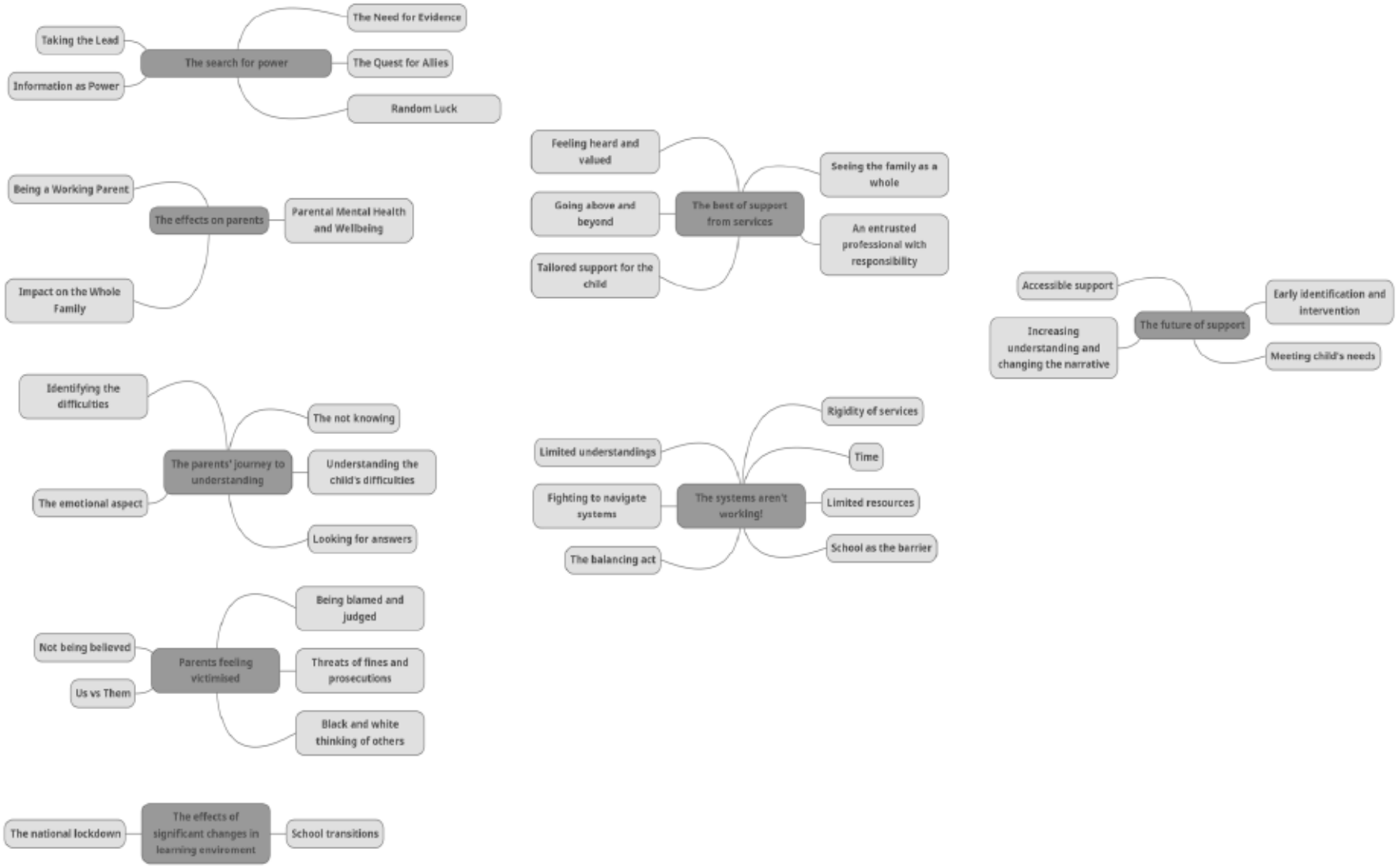
Figure 4. *The Overall Thematic Map*



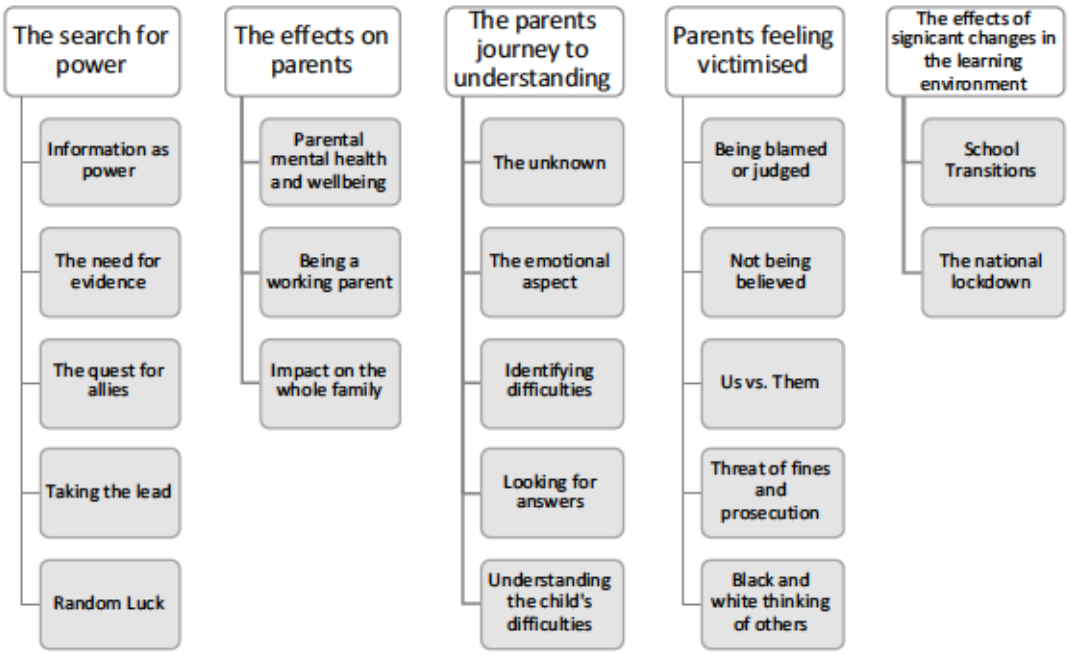
The next subsections will explore the specific findings in relation to the RQs.

4.2 Findings from Research Question 1

RQ1: What are the perceptions of parents of children who experience school non-attendance regarding the support that is on offer from both school staff and external agencies?

Five themes were identified in the data which were considered to relate to RQ 1. These are displayed in Figure 5 in a thematic map.

Figure 5. Thematic Map in relation to RQ 1



4.2.1. Theme 1: The Search for Power.

This master theme captures the participants attempts to search for resources and their attempts to gain some power in situations where they perceive themselves as powerless when trying to support their child's needs.

4.2.1.1. Subtheme: Information as Power.

Participants reflected upon the importance of having or finding the knowledge and information from different sources as Darrell exemplifies in his interview; *"getting information that people can leach on and I mean that in the nicest possible way because when*

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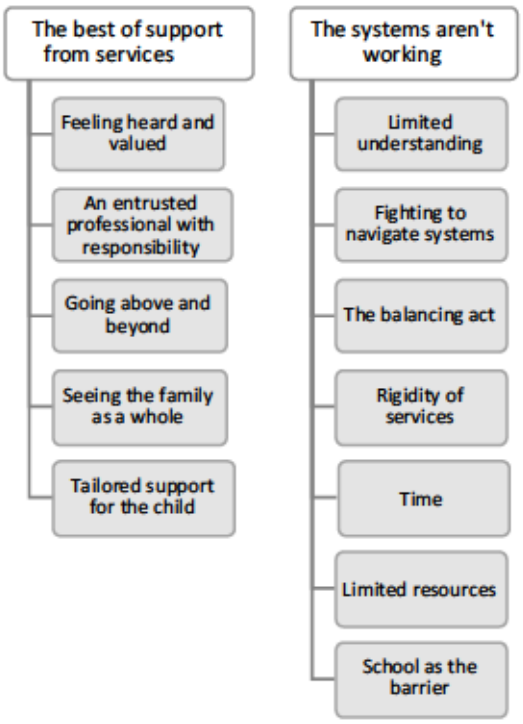
RQ2: What do parents feel are the facilitators and barriers to support?

Two themes were identified in the data which were considered to relate to RQ 2. These are displayed in Figure 6 in a thematic map.

Figure 6. Thematic Map in relation to RQ 2



4.3.1. Theme 6: The best of support from services.

This theme represents the various aspects from services and schools' which parents had found supportive when dealing with their child's attendance difficulties.

4.3.1.1. Subtheme: Feeling heard and valued.

Some parents felt the support they had appreciated the most was when they felt the professional was listening and understanding their perspective as Zoe illustrates when talking about her experience with an EP, "*that was probably the most positive. It felt like…I was heard that my opinions were valued and recognised and yeah, it felt very supportive*". Other parents felt that their difficulties had been acknowledged as Rosa expressed appreciation of the professional valuing her emotional wellbeing and providing check ins:

> *She kept in touch with me… she would check in with me… just to make sure that I was okay really because she obviously knew that we were in a bit of a situation… it was really good to talk to her.*

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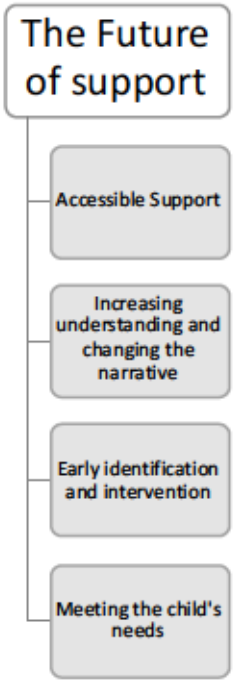
During the semi-structured interviews, participants had already begun to share their views about how practices and processes could be improved, thus one theme of 'the future of support' was identified. The findings of the interviews were shared with participants during the focus group which enabled the participants to revisit and share their reflections during the discovery stage of the AI process. In the discovery stage, parents collaboratively explored what they felt was working with regards to the support and during the 'Dream' phase, the discovery phase was used to positively imagine what the practices could become. The final stage of Design involved parents co-constructing provocative propositions. It is worth noting that similar themes were identified by participants during the focus group which enhanced the findings from the interviews and thus, the findings for the interviews and focus group are combined under the theme of *'The Future of Support'*.

4.4.1 Theme 8: The Future of Support

This master theme provides the context of what changes parents feel could be implemented that may have a positive effect on their child's attendance, and incorporates the parents' views on what they feel could have prevented their situation from escalating. The master theme and subthemes are depicted graphically below in Figure 7

Figure 7. Thematic Map in relation to RQ 3



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PARTICIPANTS NEEDED!

Are you a parent who has a child who finds it difficult to attend school?

Is your child on roll at a mainstream secondary school, in Year 8-11?

Has their attendance been less than 90% over the last two terms?

I'm interested to hear your views of the support you have received from professionals!

My name is Amy Rodriguez and I am a Third Year doctoral Trainee Educational Psychologist with the University of East London. I am conducting research into parents' experiences of support for their child who has difficulties with attending school.

If you agree to take part, you will be asked to take part in an interview online which will last approximately an hour.

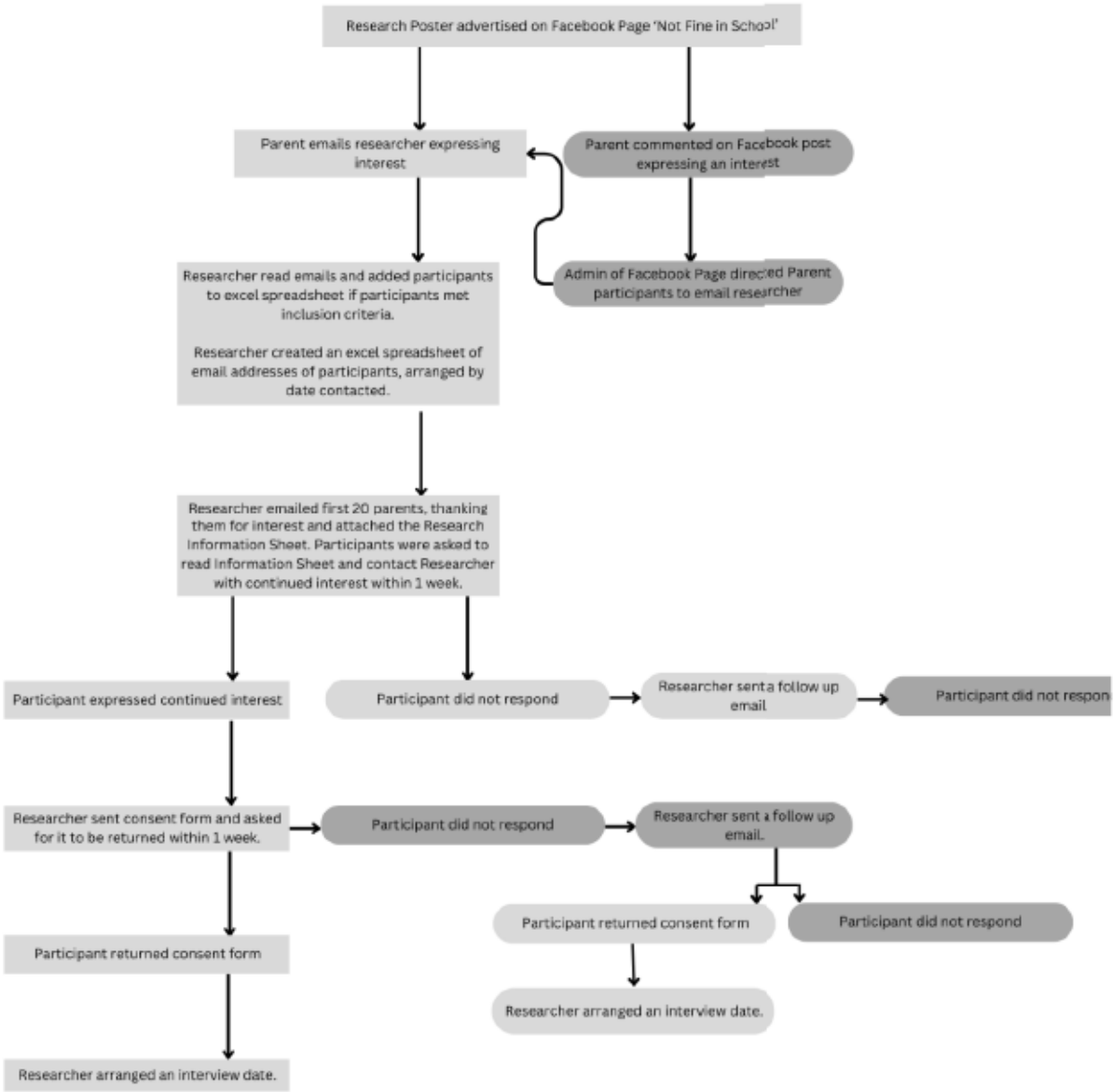
The interview will be like having an informal chat about your past and present experiences of the support you have received for your child's attendance and what you thought was helpful and what you feel needs to improve.

Following the interview, you will also have the option to take part in a focus group. We hope to create a list of recommendations for professionals in the focus group.

For more information or to express your interest, please contact me via:

u2064595@uel.ac.uk [redacted]

Process of Participant Recruitment



ıe flowchart above represents the process of recruiting participants following the advertisement on ıe social media 'Facebook' and the 'Not Fine in School' Facebook Page. This flow chart represents ıe first 20 parent participants which were contacted.

ıe researcher sent a follow up email to parent participants who had not responded, at both the formation sheet and consent form stages, providing them with a deadline of 1 week to respond. If ıe participant had not responded after the week deadline, the researcher begun the process of oking at the excel spreadsheet in date order, to then email the next parent participant with the formation sheet.

ıis process was followed until the researcher had received consent and arranged 11 interviews with ırticipants, which was due to time restrictions as this process had taken a considerable amount of ıne.

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Appendix M

University of East London Ethical Approval Letter

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School of Psychology Ethics Committee

NOTICE OF ETHICS REVIEW DECISION LETTER

For research involving human participants

BSc/MSc/MA/Professional Doctorates in Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychology

Reviewer: Please complete sections in blue | **Student:** Please complete/read sections in orange

Reviewer:	**Ali Lara**
Course:	**Prof Doc in Child and Educational Psychology**
Title of proposed study:	Exploring parental experiences of support from professionals for their child with school non-attendance and developing best practice: An appreciative inquiry approach.

Checklist (Optional)			
Detailed account of participants, including inclusion and exclusion criteria	☐	☐	

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Appendix N

University of East London Ethical Approval for Amendment

University of East London

School of Psy[illegible]nittee

REQUEST FOR AMENDMENT TO AN ETHICS APPLICATION

For BSc, MSc/MA and taught Professional Doctorate students

Please complete this form if you are requesting approval for proposed amendment(s) to an ethics application that has been approved by the School of Psychology

Note that approval must be given for significant change to research procedure that impact on ethical protocol. If you are not sure as to whether your proposed amendment warrants approval, consult your supervisor or contact Dr Trishna Patel (Chair of School Ethics Committee).

How to complete and submit the request	
	[illegible]
[illegible]	Type your name in the 'student's signature' section (page 2).
	[illegible]
[illegible]	Using your UEL email address, email the completed request form along with associated documents to Dr Trishna Patel: t.patel@uel.ac.uk
	[illegible]
[illegible]	Recruitment and data collection are **not** to commence until your proposed amendment has been approved.

[illegible]	
A copy of your previously approved ethics application with proposed amendment(s) added with track changes.	**YES** ☒
[illegible] amendment(s). For example, an updated recruitment notice, updated participant information sheet, updated consent form, etc.	**YES** ☒

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[illegible]	[illegible] ☐	[illegible] ☐

Student’s signature

[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]

[illegible]		
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	
[illegible]	[illegible]	
[illegible]	[illegible]	

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

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[illegible]