

Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO)
Wellbeing: A Mixed Methods Exploration of
Workplace Demands and Effective Coping Actions

by

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ABSTRACT

Occupational stress (OS) presents a significant threat to teachers' wellbeing. High-levels of OS can impact multiple areas, including teachers' health, job-performance, schools' financial resources, and pupils' wellbeing. Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) play a critical role in coordinating provision for pupils with special educational needs, and represent a group that have received little research attention in relation to OS and wellbeing.

This research adopted a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design to explore the extent, causes, and means of effectively managing OS in the SENCO role. The role that educational psychologists (EPs) can play in supporting SENCOs to manage OS was also explored. 38 practicing SENCOs from a local authority in the West Midlands, England, participated in the study. Participant views were gathered using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, and were analysed via descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. 84% of participants reported to find the role 'moderately stressful', 'very stressful' or 'extremely stressful'. Factors which were perceived to cause OS a.) most frequently, and b.) to the greatest extent were identified. These were diverse and included those related to workload and resource-availability, as well as those related to the status of the role, and relational and emotional factors.

Approaches that enabled participants to cope well with OS, despite facing high workplace demands were also identified, as were means through which educational psychologists could support SENCOs in managing OS. Participants' beliefs about the role, relationships, cognitive resources, and the culture and systems within their school

were instrumental in coping with OS. It was perceived that EPs could support SENCOs in managing OS through contact, working in a child and school-centred manner, and through facilitating problem-solving. Findings are discussed in relation to extant literature, and implications for theory and educational psychology practice are also highlighted.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Gary and Diana, my brothers, David and George, and my wife, Fiona. Thank you for your support, encouragement, and for believing in me.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ATL	Association of Teachers and Lecturers
CYP	Children and Young People
ERI	Effort-Reward Imbalance
EP	Educational Psychologist
HSE	Health and Safety Executive
JDR	Job-Demand Resources
NASUWT	National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers
NUT	National Union of Teachers
NHS	National Health Service
OS	Occupational Stress
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SLT	Senior Leadership Team

1 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context

This thesis is a contribution to the academic and research requirements for the doctoral programme in Applied Educational and Child Psychology at the University of Birmingham. This volume, the first of two, focuses on the wellbeing of Special Educational Needs Coordinators, and explores threats to wellbeing, as well as avenues through which it can be promoted.

The research was carried out over two years in a local authority in the West Midlands, where I was on placement as a trainee educational psychologist. Prior to my undergraduate degree in psychology, I had worked as an English teacher in China. This experience inspired me to choose modules in developmental and educational psychology during my undergraduate degree. I first became aware of the teacher stress literature in this context, and was drawn to become involved in the area due to its multiple, deleterious effects and the potentially positive impact that research could facilitate. I subsequently carried out my undergraduate dissertation in the area of teacher stress and aspired to carry out further research during my professional training as an educational psychologist (EP). My experience as a trainee EP highlighted the critical role that Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) play within schools. I was surprised to discover that despite there being known variations between groups of teachers regarding causes of stress and coping strategies, that there appeared to be little research relating to these factors amongst SENCOs. I was also aware that EPs had helped to promote

class teachers' wellbeing and management of OS through the use of systemic approaches (e.g. Murphy and Claridge, 2000), as well as consultation (e.g. Gibbs and Miller, 2014) and group approaches (e.g. Sharrocks, 2014), despite there being a relatively limited literature in this area. My existing interest in the research area of teacher stress, combined with my experiences as a trainee EP (i.e. those which highlighted the critical role of the SENCO and some of the ways in which EPs can support with class teacher wellbeing) therefore led to my interest in the current research. This chapter introduces the current study. The aims and rationale are outlined, before providing an overview thesis's structure.

1.2 Aims and Rationale

Occupational stress (OS) is a significant problem within teaching (Johnson et al, 2005). High-levels of OS have been linked to: reductions in teacher wellbeing, teacher attrition, poor teacher health, and negative financial implications for schools (EASHW, 2005; Lambert et al, 2009; Montgomery and Rupp, 2005; De Simone et al, 2016). Further, pupils' learning, behaviour and attainment can be negatively impacted by teachers experiencing high-levels of OS (Naghieh et al, 2015).

Consequently, a vast amount of research has explored OS within teaching (Kyriacou, 2001). Most research has focused on mainstream class teachers (e.g. Austin et al, 2005; Briner and Dewberry, 2007; Brown and Arnell, 2012), with a minority exploring OS within subgroups of the profession such as trainees, special education teachers, and headteachers (e.g. Chaplain, 2008; Cooper and Kelly, 1993; Platsidou and Agaliotis, 2008). There are similarities between such groups

regarding stressors and coping strategies, but there are certainly differences too (e.g. Kyriacou and Sutcliffe, 1977; Cooper and Kelly, 1993; Head, 1996).

SENCOs represent a subgroup that have yet to be explored in-depth within the OS literature. SENCOs play a pivotal role in schools, co-ordinating provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)¹, and supporting other staff in this duty (DfE, 2015). High-levels of OS can negatively affect job performance (e.g. Gillespie et al, 2001). For SENCOs, a change in job-performance could impact upon the provision available for pupils with SEN, and consequently affect wellbeing and achievement for pupils who are often already vulnerable in these areas (Ofsted, 2010). It is currently unknown if SENCOs experience a similar 'degree' of OS to other teachers, and if so, what the main causes and effective means of coping are. This study sought to address these gaps, in addition to illuminating how EPs can support with the coping process.

1.3 Structure

The thesis is comprised of five chapters. This introductory chapter is followed by Chapter 2, a literature review. Conceptualisations of OS and wellbeing, contributing factors, means of coping, and EPs' role in supporting with teacher and SENCO wellbeing is explored during this chapter. The methodology is presented in Chapter 3, covering the epistemological stance adopted, as well as the study design, methods, and means of analysis. A discussion regarding ethical issues, reliability,

¹ As noted by Mackenzie (2012b), it is recognised that this term is contested, but it is used throughout this research due to its presence in legislation, policy and the data gathered from the participants of this study.

validity and generalisation is also included. Chapter 4 presents the findings and Chapter 5 discusses these whilst considering the limitations and implications of the research.

2 CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Stress and wellbeing in teaching is a major area of research interest (Kyriacou, 2001). In comparison, preliminary searches suggested that scant research was available that specifically explored stress and wellbeing amongst SENCOs. SENCOs are required to be qualified teachers (DfE, 2015), and it was therefore thought that literature surrounding stress and wellbeing amongst class teachers, would be relevant. This literature review consequently sought to explore research which focuses on the stress and wellbeing of class teachers and SENCOs. The following research questions were used to guide the literature review:

1. How are the terms stress, OS and wellbeing defined and conceptualised in contemporary literature?
2. What are the potential effects of OS in teaching, which factors contribute towards it, and how are they addressed?
3. Which factors contribute towards OS for SENCOs, and how are they addressed?
4. How do EPs support SENCOs and other teachers in the management of OS?

2.2 Search Strategy

Three separate searches were carried out to identify relevant literature. An initial search explored literature related to stress and wellbeing amongst teachers to answer the first two research questions. The second search identified literature related to SENCOs' stress and wellbeing to answer research question 3, whilst the third search explored literature related to EPs supporting teachers in managing OS, to answer research question 4. Searches were carried out using the following databases:

- British Education Index
- Education Abstracts
- Educational Administration Abstracts
- Education Resource Information Center (ERIC)
- PsycARTICLES
- PsycINFO
- Web of Science

The hand-searching of databases and snowballing of articles from reference lists was used in addition to systematic electronic searches to enable further relevant papers to be identified (Blaxter et al, 2001; Hopewell, 2007). 27 relevant articles were identified for search one, whilst 12 and 4 articles were identified for searches two and three respectively. A detailed account of the search process and findings can be found in Appendix 1.

2.3 The Role of the SENCO

The SENCO role was formally established in 1994 (Griffiths and Dubsky, 2012), although the role existed informally in schools before this (Wedell, 2012). The establishment arose from the introduction of the Code of Practice for SEN (DfE, 1994), which required that all mainstream schools appoint a teacher to be responsible for day-to-day operation of SEN policy (Griffiths and Dubsky, 2012). Inadvertently, the 2001 SEN Code of Practice did not require SENCOs in England to be qualified teachers (DfES, 2001). This was however amended with the introduction of The Education (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators) (England) Regulations 2008, which came into force on 01/09/2009. Subsequent revisions of the Code of Practice have also included this requirement (e.g. DfE, 2015).

Currently, SENCOs are still responsible for coordinating schools' provision for children and young people (CYP) with SEN, and developing and overseeing the implementation of SEN policy (DfE, 2015). The role includes offering professional guidance to colleagues, and working with families and professionals to ensure that CYP with SEN receive appropriate support and teaching (DfE, 2015). There is great variation regarding the exact nature of SENCOs' roles (Szwed, 2007; Qureshi, 2014) making it difficult to give a specific account of the exact responsibilities that each SENCO holds. However, the most recent Code of Practice (DfE, 2015) states that in England, this may include:

- “Overseeing the day-to-day operation of the school’s SEN policy”;
- “Co-ordinating provision for children with SEN”;

- “Liaising with the relevant Designated Teacher where a looked after pupil has SEN”;
- “Advising on the graduated approach to providing SEN support advising on the deployment of the school’s delegated budget and other resources to meet pupils’ needs effectively”;
- “Liaising with parents of pupils with SEN”;
- “Liaising with early years providers, other schools, educational psychologists, health and social care professionals, and independent or voluntary bodies”;
- “Being a key point of contact with external agencies, especially the local authority and its support services”;
- “Liaising with potential next providers of education to ensure a pupil and their parents are informed about options and a smooth transition is planned”;
- “Working with the headteacher and school governors to ensure that the school meets its responsibilities under the Equality Act (2010) with regard to reasonable adjustments and access arrangements”;
- “Ensuring that the school keeps the records of all pupils with SEN up to date” (DfE, 2015, p.108-9)

Revision of the code of practice has influenced SENCOs’ roles (Cole, 2005), with each revision generally leading to more responsibilities (Qureshi, 2014). Clearly SENCOs have a diverse range of responsibilities, which has led some to question whether the role is too extensive for one person (e.g. Norwich, 2010). Whilst changes to the role have increased SENCOs’ responsibilities (Qureshi, 2014), the pace of change has accentuated turnover (Griffiths and Dubsy, 2012). Male (1996) warned about SENCO attrition, and this is still a concern (Pearson, 2008; Griffiths and Dubsy, 2012). SENCO attrition is associated with personal, strategic and financial losses for schools (Lewis and Ogilvie, 2003). A recent, informal survey on the SENCO Forum (Miles, 2016) suggested that 39% of responding SENCOs would like to give up their post and 32% were actually planning to. Whilst the survey was

informal and has methodological weaknesses (e.g. small and non-representative sample), the findings are concerning. Reasons behind attrition include retirement, workload, and using the post as a stepping stone to other positions (Pearson, 2008). OS is a major driver of attrition amongst class teachers (Pillay et al, 2005; NUT, 2008). As SENCOs are a similar group, exploration of OS in the role and means of reduction may help combat attrition and promote wellbeing.

2.4 Critical Review of Key Texts

The literature review includes several key papers which are drawn upon throughout this research. These are: Kyriacou (2001), Howard and Johnson (2004), Male (1996), Mackenzie (2012a; 2012b), and Gibbs and Miller (2014). This section provides a short critical review of each paper. Information regarding the nature of the papers, as well as a critical analysis of their designs, rigour and research tools is included below.

2.4.1 Kyriacou (2001)

Kyriacou (2001) reviews research findings in the field of teacher stress and suggests directions for future research in the area. Literature is reviewed in relation to definitions and models, measurement, prevalence, causes, and means of coping with and preventing teacher stress. Clear avenues for future research are identified based on gaps identified within the literature.

In general, a wide range of literature is included and synthesised. Causes and means of coping and prevention are explored at both the individual and school

levels, which represents a strength as these are often explored solely at the individual level (Howard and Johnson, 2004). Searches on google scholar and other academic search engines suggest that at the time of writing, this is the most frequently cited paper in the area of teacher stress. Many of the papers reviewed in this research (Brakenreed, 2011; Collie et al, 2012; Klassen, 2010; Split et al, 2011) cited Kyriacou (2001), predominately for the succinct and oft-used definition that is outlined for the term 'teacher stress'.

Limitations of the paper include the search strategy being omitted, meaning that the reader is unclear of the inclusion/exclusion criteria for included papers. Several factors which are known to have a relevance to teacher stress are also not discussed in the article. For example, gender (e.g. Fontana and Abouserie, 1993), and the impact of teachers' roles (e.g. Chaplain, 2008). In addition, many papers from an international context appear to be included within the review, making the findings perhaps less relevant for an English context.

2.4.2 Howard and Johnson (2004)

Howard and Johnson (2004) is an Australian, qualitative study which explores how some teachers are able to resist OS, despite facing high workplace demands. Purposive sampling was employed. Participants who were deemed to be 'at risk' of OS, but who had 'resisted' it over an extended period of time were invited to participate in the study. Participants were selected based on a.) working in a school in a deprived area as identified by the Disadvantage Index, and b.) based upon an appraisal by their principal (headteacher) that they were 'resilient'. 10 teachers were

selected through this method. 9 were female and 1 was male. Participants were interviewed individually using a semi-structured interview schedule previously employed by the authors, and these lasted for approximately 45 minutes (Howard and Johnson, 2004). Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analysed using thematic analysis.

The qualitative design enables an in-depth exploration of the types of approaches that some teachers and schools use to manage OS effectively. The findings of this research are not applicable to whole populations due to the small, unrepresentative sample, though this is not a purpose of qualitative research (Howard and Johnson, 2004). The research was also carried out in Australia, which makes it less relevant for English settings, although there are some similarities between the two education systems (e.g. Borg and Riding, 1991). Participants are also predominately female and it is not clear which type of setting participants worked in (e.g. primary, secondary etc) further limiting the contexts in which these research findings may be applicable.

2.4.3 Male (1996)

Male (1996) explores SENCOs' career continuation plans through the use of a cross-sectional postal survey. A revised version of Westling and Whitten (1992)'s questionnaire was employed for the study. The questionnaire collected demographic information and asked participants to rate various aspects of the role via Likert-like scales. These aspects included job satisfaction, OS, perceived support from others, and the perceived effectiveness of SENCOs. An open question

was also included for participants to provide additional information pertaining to their career continuation plans. Participants were selected at random from a cross-section of local authorities in the south east of England. 70 SENCOs (35 at the primary level, and 35 at the secondary level) were invited to participate in the study. Ultimately, 24 primary school SENCOs and 20 secondary school SENCOs participated, i.e. a 63% response rate. 91.5% of participants of primary SENCO participants were female, whilst 90% of the secondary SENCO participants were female. The mean age was 43 and 45 for primary and secondary SENCO participants respectively. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the data.

The cross-sectional design used in this study enabled a descriptive picture of the variables of interest to be provided, in this otherwise unexplored area. The response rate achieved is good for postal-survey research, which is often vulnerable to poor response rates (Nulty, 2008), and this was perhaps aided by the study's use of methods such as pre-paid envelopes. The findings represent a 'snapshot', and it is not clear whether they would be similar in different contexts (e.g. different times of the year). This may represent a threat of 'participant error' (Robson, 2002). The questionnaire has been successfully used in research in the USA and was piloted with SENCOs in England, thereby helping to address potential threats to validity (Bryman, 2012). Data was based entirely on self-report, and the accuracy of this approach for exploring certain variables, such as OS, has been questioned (e.g. Guiglielmi and Tatrow, 1998). The random sampling method which was employed potentially helped recruit a sample which had characteristics similar to the population as a whole, therefore improving generalisability (Cohen et al, 2007).

However, it is important to note that only schools in the south east of England were included in the study, and the results may not therefore be representative of other contexts.

2.4.4 Mackenzie (2012a) and Mackenzie (2012b)

Mackenzie (2012a) and Mackenzie (2012b) respectively explore: staff working with children with SENs' experiences of 'strong emotions' within their roles, and factors which determine why some SENCOs choose to stay in the profession. The two studies are independent papers and pieces of research, however, both apparently employ the same methodology and are based upon the same data. Mackenzie (2012a) comprised a sample of SENCOs, teachers, teaching assistants, and student teachers. The total sample size was 44 participants. Of these 23 participants were SENCOs. 2 participants were male whilst the remainder were female. 28 participants worked at the primary level whilst 26 participants worked at the secondary level. Opportunity sampling was used via responses to an advert "placed in two special needs magazines, the magazine of a teacher union, and a personal letter to all SENCOs in an inner London Borough" (Mackenzie, 2012a, p. 1070). Participants were geographically spread throughout England though there were no participants from the north east. In Mackenzie (2012b), participants were drawn from the sample gathered for Mackenzie (2012a). 19 individuals comprised the sample for Mackenzie (2012b), all of whom were either practising or former SENCOs. 10 participants were from the primary sector whilst 9 were from the secondary sector. All participants had been teaching for more than 15 years, and all but one was female. Data was gathered via focus groups and life-history

interviews, and a qualitative, narrative enquiry approach was employed. Transcripts from the focus groups and interviews were entered into the NVivo data management programme and were apparently analysed via thematic analysis, though this is not explicitly stated. Interview schedules and focus groups were piloted with students from the author's university and were adapted accordingly. Data collection took place over 10 months in 2007.

The approach adopted by both studies enables a complex set of data to be understood in a meaningful way, whilst still considering the complexity and context in which it was gathered. This is characteristic of qualitative research (Atieno, 2009). For Mackenzie (2012b), whilst it is stated that all participants had more than 15-years' experience, it is unclear exactly what criteria was used to select participants, i.e. how was it determined that these participants were demonstrating resilience to stay in the profession? The small sample size in both studies impedes the extent to which findings can be confidently applied within other settings (Atieno, 2009; Cohen et al, 2007), though the author notes that this is not an aim of qualitative research. The sample is also self-selecting which the author notes may adversely affect the finding's representativeness.

Extensive quotations are used to depict the data which helps to promote transparency, a key feature of trustworthiness in qualitative research (Robson, 2002). Semi-structured interview schedules were also piloted before use to ensure their relevance, which represents another strength of the study (Robson, 2002). Mackenzie (2012a) makes some intermittent distinctions between findings which

are related specifically to SENCOs as opposed to those based on themes drawn from teachers, teaching assistants, students and SENCOs data. Therefore, not all of the findings in the research can be said to directly relate to SENCOs. The author notes the limitations of using self-report measures to explore emotions in Mackenzie (2012a), and acknowledges that caution must be applied when generalising these findings.

Overall, both studies provide insight into underexplored areas. Mackenzie (2012a) highlights emotional experiences of SENCOs within specific contexts, whilst Mackenzie (2012b) provides insight into how resilience to stay in the profession is achieved within a specific context. Further research appears necessary to explore these phenomenon in different contexts (e.g. with SENCOs who are at the beginning of their careers, males etc).

2.4.5 Gibbs and Miller (2014)

Gibbs and Miller (2014) discuss how educational psychology as a profession can support teachers' wellbeing and resilience. The authors focus on a specific threat to teachers' wellbeing and resilience which they term 'pupil misbehaviour'. Literature related to teachers' attributions and self-efficacy is outlined and discussed in relation to the stressor of pupil misbehaviour. The areas are also highlighted as avenues where interventions to promote teacher resilience and wellbeing could be targeted. Literature which illustrates how psychologists have supported the development of helpful attributions and self-efficacy amongst teachers in relation to pupil behaviour is then detailed, and suggestions for professional practice are made.

There is scant research on EPs' supporting of teacher resilience and wellbeing and this research therefore addresses an underexplored area. Like Kyriacou (2001), the search strategy used to inform the literature review is not made explicit and the inclusion/exclusion criteria for studies is unclear. In general, a wide range of literature is drawn upon but little critical appraisal of any of the papers is offered. Some key areas related to pupil behaviour and teachers' experiences appear to be absent from the paper, for example, the impact of teachers' gender on OS experienced from pupil misbehaviour (e.g. Chaplain, 2008). Much of the literature drawn upon is from outside of the UK, and although there are similarities between the countries of origin and the UK's education system (Borg and Riding, 1991), there may be differences which are not explicitly discussed in the paper. Much of the literature drawn upon also appears to have been carried out at the secondary school level, and it is unclear whether similar findings would be evident at the primary level.

2.5 Stress, Occupational Stress and Wellbeing

2.5.1 Definitions of Stress

There is an understanding of what 'stress' means in everyday and academic parlance, but it is nonetheless difficult to define (Fink, 2009). Hans Seyle, often hailed as the 'Father of Stress' (Fink, 2016), captured this dilemma when he opined "Everybody knows what stress is, but nobody really knows" (Humphrey, 2005, p.ix). Although there are many conceptualisations, there is little consensus regarding a

singular definition (Baum and Contrada, 2010). Mark and Smith (2008) however, note that conceptualisations of stress fall within three categories.

The first is a 'physiological approach', where stress is seen as a biological change occurring in response to danger (Mark and Smith, 2008). For example, Seyle (1950) proposed a model termed General Adaptation Syndrome which outlines a three-stage physiological response to a perceived threat. Within the model, stress is defined as a 'non-specific neuroendocrine response of the body', i.e., a biological mechanism. Later conceptualisations viewed stress in terms of environmental stimuli which place various levels of demand on individuals, sometimes referred to as 'stressors' (Rohmert and Raab, 1995). Holmes and Rahe (1967)'s Social Readjustment Rating Scale is an apt example of this. The scale ranks life events such as 'marriage', 'retirement', and 'pregnancy' based on the amount of stress caused. Mark and Smith (2008) term this the 'engineering approach', and note that it has often been employed to try and minimise stress in the workplace through identifying and subsequently minimising stressors in particular jobs.

Physiological and engineering approaches have been criticised as being reductionist because individuals are part of a stimulus-response process with no agency, and for not accounting for cognitive and contextual factors (e.g. Cox et al, 2000). Contemporary conceptualisations of stress posit that it is a dynamic process, occurring when individuals interact with their environments (Glanz and Swartz, 2008). Mark and Smith (2008) refer to this as the 'psychological approach' and note that an emphasis is placed on factors which mediate the relationship between the

individual and their environment. For example, whether a stimulus is perceived to be a threat (Bell et al, 2012), how much control one has over the demands they face (Häusser et al, 2010), and their resources available to meet the demand (Bakker and Demerouti, 2014). These definitions acknowledge that stress can arise from factors which are internal and/or external to individuals, and better account for individual differences in the stress process (Mark and Smith, 2008).

Although 'stress' often describes negative outcomes, it can have positive effects too (Nelson and Simmons, 2004). Some 'stress' or demand is thought to be necessary for optimal functioning (Le Fevre et al, 2003), and Seyle (1975) coined the term 'eustress' to distinguish stress that leads to positive outcomes, from that which leads to negative outcomes ('distress'). This has led to some conceptualisations of stress as a neutral, adaptive process. For example, the National Institute of Mental Health (2016, p.1) defines stress as "How the brain and body respond to any demand" and Fink (2016b, p.4) similarly offers that "Stress is the response of the body to any demand".

However, common usage and much of the literature reviewed conceptualises stress as a negative phenomenon or focuses solely on distress. For example, NHS (2016, p.1) defines stress as a "feeling of being under too much mental or emotional pressure" and Fink (2009, p.551) similarly outlines that stress is a "perception of threat, with resulting anxiety, discomfort, emotional tension and difficulty in adjustment". Distress can have a multitude of adverse physical and psychological effects such as: anxiety, depression, accidents, conflict, and heart disease (HSE,

2007; Mark and Smith, 2008; Nabi et al, 2013). As contemporary conceptualisations of stress assert that both individual and environmental factors can contribute towards people experiencing stress, interventions to reduce stress are often aimed at one or both of these areas (Naghieh et al, 2015).

2.5.2 Definitions of Occupational Stress

OS refers to stress that derives specifically from or is exacerbated by being in the workplace (HSE, 2013). It nearly always refers to distress rather than eustress (Le Fevre et al, 2003) and the psychological and physiological effects of OS for individuals are like those already detailed (e.g. Mohammad Mosadeghrad, 2014). Individuals experiencing OS for sustained periods may also experience a phenomenon coined by Maslach and Jackson (1981) as 'burnout'. This refers to a cumulative response to occupational demands where one experiences: emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation (i.e. a state where one's thoughts and actions seem unreal to oneself), and reduced feelings of personal accomplishment (Maslach et al 2008).

OS can also have negative effects on job performance, organisations' finances, staff turnover, morale, and the general efficiency of the organisation (Kazmi et al, 2008; Teasdale, 2006). In 2014-15, OS accounted for 35% of work-related ill health cases and 43% of working days lost due to ill health in the UK (HSE, 2016). Overall, the prevalence rate for OS is thought to be approximately 1380 cases per 100,000 workers, although this figure is significantly higher for the education, health and social care sectors (HSE, 2016).

As with stress, OS research and interventions are often focused on addressing both individual and environmental contributors (Richardson et al, 2008). The models of OS adopted often guide the type of action taken to address it (Dewe et al, 2012). Naghieh et al (2015) found that the Effort Reward Imbalance model (Siegrist, 1996) and the Job Demands Resources model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007), are frequently employed within contemporary OS research, and the majority of studies in this review employed one of these models.

2.5.2.1 The Effort Reward Imbalance Model

The Effort Reward Imbalance (ERI) model (Siegrist, 1996) posits that when individuals' perceived efforts at work are greater than the rewards they receive, feelings of stress will be experienced. Effort is conceptualised as demands which are intrinsic (e.g. a need for control) or extrinsic (e.g. workload) to the individual (Van Vegchel et al, 2005). Rewards are comprised of: money, esteem, career opportunities or job security (Siegrist, 1996).

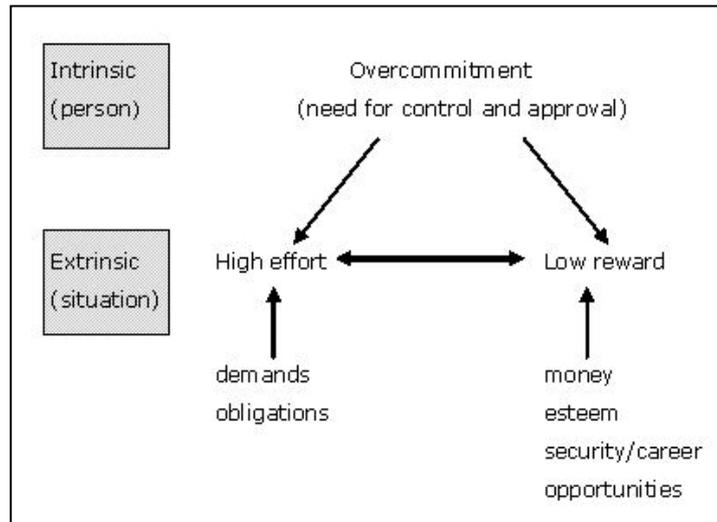


Figure 1 - The Effort-Reward Imbalance Model (Siegrist, 1999)

Many studies support the principles of the ERI model (Mark and Smith, 2008). Siegrist et al (1990) and Bosma et al (1998) found that individuals were at a greater risk of heart disease when exposed to high-effort low reward workplace conditions. Similarly, Jonge et al (2000) found that individuals in such conditions were more likely to suffer from emotional exhaustion, a core component of burnout.

The ERI model is easily understandable, although this simplicity is also a weakness. Bakker and Demerouti (2007) argue that there are many other determinants of OS (e.g. job demands, social support from colleagues, supervisory support etc), which are unaccounted for. The model's rigidity means that additional factors cannot be incorporated (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). Additionally, different efforts or demands are known to be required in different professions. For example, teachers often face emotional demands, whilst air traffic controllers often face high-levels of mental demand (Bakker and Demerouti, 2014). Consequently, the model's static nature may make it less applicable for exploring OS within certain professions,

particularly those where the demands are unclear and yet to be explored, as novel demands/effort cannot be incorporated. Finally, as Figure 1 shows, the ERI model does not explicitly account for eustress, ignoring findings that some stress and/or demands can be beneficial (e.g. Le Fevre et al, 2003).

2.5.2.2 The Job Demands Resources Model

The Job Demands Resources (JDR) Model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007) builds upon the ERI model's strengths and addresses many of its weaknesses. The model acknowledges that each occupation has risk and protective factors associated with OS, conceptualised as either 'job demands' or 'job resources' (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). Job demands are physical, psychological, social or organisational aspects of a job which require sustained effort, and therefore a cost for the individual (Brough et al, 2013). Demands are not negative in themselves, but have the potential to cause OS when insufficient resources are available (Meijman and Mulder, 1998). Job resources are located at either the physical, psychological, social, or organisational levels, and represent anything that: helps to achieve work-related goals, reduces job demands or the cost of job demands, and stimulates growth, learning or development (Hakanen et al, 2006). Contemporary versions of the model (e.g. Bakker and Demerouti, 2014) have incorporated 'personal resources', such as self-efficacy, which are known to influence the OS process (Klassen and Chiu, 2010). These broad definitions of job demands and resources enable the model to be tailored to individuals, groups or organisations, addressing a limitation of the ERI model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007).

Two psychological processes, 'job strain' and 'motivation', are hypothesised to underlie the model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). Job strain refers to individuals experiencing negative physiological or psychological effects following a period of high job demands and low job resources (Demerouti et al, 2001). It is hypothesised that the availability of job resources leads to intrinsic or extrinsic motivation to engage in work, whereas an absence of resources leads to a low level of motivation to engage in work (Meijman and Mulder, 1998). The inclusion of these processes builds upon extant research which has established their centrality to the OS process (e.g. Hakanen et al, 2006), representing a strength (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007).

'Job crafting', i.e. physical and cognitive changes that individuals make in their everyday work-related tasks or relational boundaries (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) is considered central in the most recent revision (Bakker and Demerouti, 2014), and is thought to influence job demands and resources. Several studies support this idea that employees can change their work environment to reduce OS (e.g. Tims et al, 2013; Petrou et al, 2012). Parker and Ohly (2008) note that this may occur through negotiating different job content or assigning different meanings to work-related activities. Figure 2 demonstrates these processes relation to one another within the model.

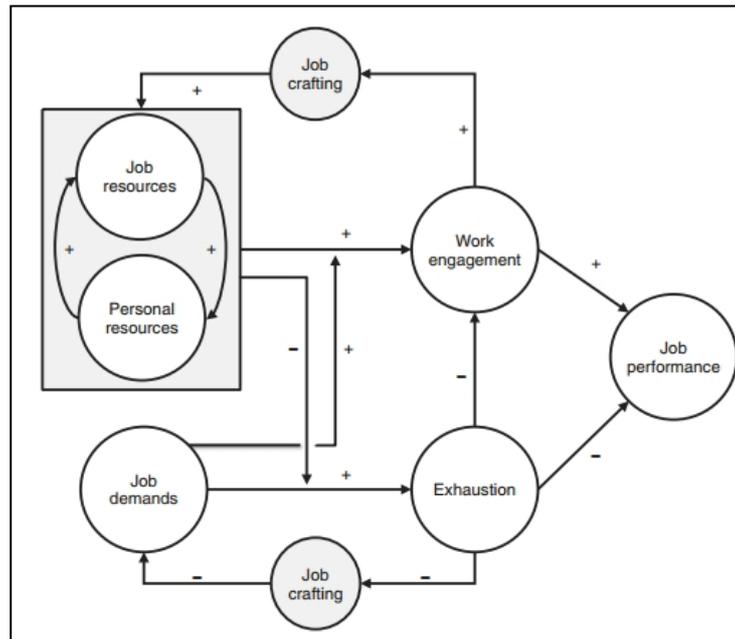


Figure 2 - The Job Demands Resources Model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2014)

The JDR model's consideration of positive (i.e. motivation) and negative (i.e. strain) outcomes represents a balanced approach and has increased its acceptability and use by unions, employees and organisations, rather than being solely used by health professionals as some other models of OS are (Schaufeli and Taris, 2014). The applicability of the model to a wide range of professions has further increased its acceptability (Mark and Smith, 2008). This is also a potential weakness of the model as further frameworks are sometimes needed to understand the mechanisms underlying associations between variables, but Schaufeli and Taris (2014) argue that this rarely presents problem as there are generally theories available to explain such phenomena. Mark and Smith (2008) note that the model's flexibility renders it useful for initial explorations of the kinds of demands that individuals are likely to experience within a particular role, and the model may therefore be particularly relevant for investigation of the relatively unexplored SENCO role.

2.5.3 Conceptualisations of Wellbeing

Stress and wellbeing are related but distinct terms (e.g. Dodge et al, 2012). Like stress, there are multiple definitions of wellbeing, and though there are professional and common understandings, there is no universally agreed definition (Acton and Glasgow, 2015; Dodge et al, 2012). There is even inconsistency in the way wellbeing is spelt (e.g. wellbeing, well-being or well being), which may reflect the current instability and subtleties associated with the concept (Jackson, 2013).

Definitions and models of wellbeing have traditionally been classified as either eudaimonic or hedonic (Roffey, 2012). Eudaimonic approaches emphasise individual meaning and self-realisation, conceptualising wellbeing as the degree to which one's actions are perceived to have meaning (Ryan and Deci, 2001). Hedonic approaches, sometimes referred to as 'subjective wellbeing', focus on happiness, life satisfaction and pain-avoidance. Wellbeing is conceptualised as pleasure attainment and the avoidance of negative affect by these approaches (Dodge et al, 2012). Hedonic or a combination of both approaches appear to be most frequently used in contemporary research (e.g. Dodge et al, 2012; Roffey, 2012).

Consistent with Acton and Glasgow (2015), many studies in this review omitted a definition of wellbeing, which instead had to be inferred. A common feature was that definitions were "blurred and overly broad" (Forgeard et al, 2011, p.81). For example, Pollard and Lee (2003) posited that the definition of wellbeing is one's happiness, whilst Seligman (2002) emphasises the importance of an individual's

satisfaction with life. Other research such the Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project (2008) suggests that wellbeing is the ability to fulfil goals. Dodge et al (2012) argue that such definitions of wellbeing, which are common in the literature, describe dimensions of wellbeing, rather than define the concept itself. Wellbeing is thought to be “a complex, multi-faceted construct” (Pollard & Lee, 2003, p.60), suggesting that many descriptions of wellbeing focus on a singular dimension (e.g. happiness) and ignore its multi-faceted nature (Forgeard et al, 2011). Despite not defining the concept, these descriptions represent important clarification of the dimensions of wellbeing and their impact (Dodge et al, 2012).

White (2008) proposes that dimensions of wellbeing can be understood as subjective (e.g. hopes, fears, aspirations), relational (e.g. networks of support), and material (e.g. income, wealth, assets). The exact nature and features of each dimension are different for each person (Jackson, 2013). For example, a ‘sense of meaning’ may be more critical to some individuals’ wellbeing than others. The dimensions of wellbeing are therefore thought to be wide-ranging and dynamic, as well as individually, culturally and time-specific (Jackson, 2013). Figure 3 demonstrates White (2008)’s proposed dimensions of wellbeing. The triangle format represents the idea that each dimension is influenced by, and dependent upon the others.

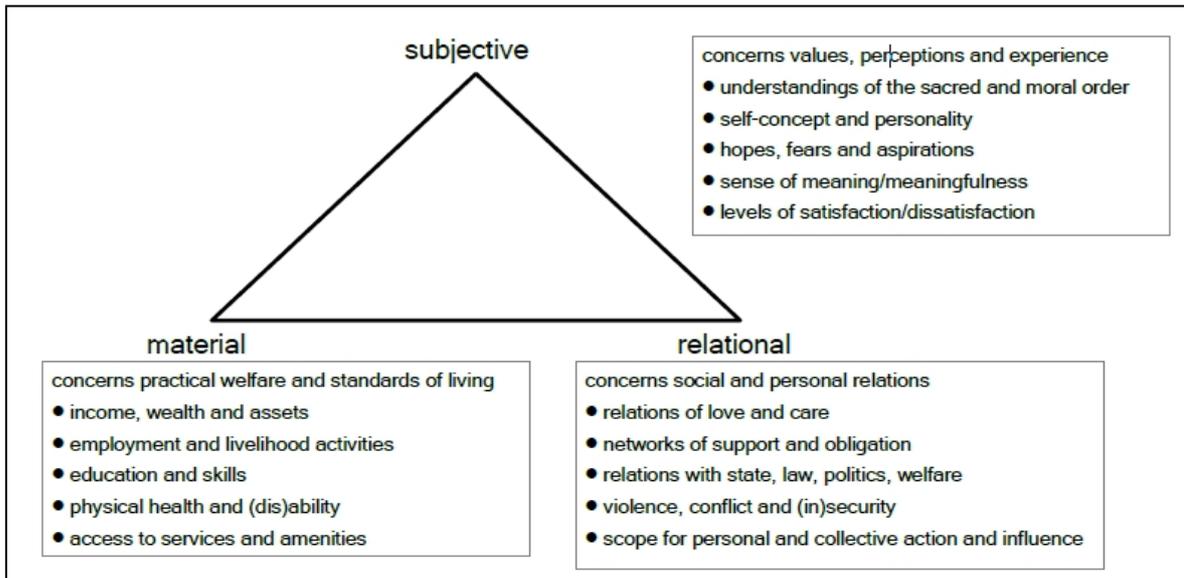


Figure 3 - Three Dimensions of Wellbeing (White, 2008)

Dodge et al (2012) reviewed theoretical perspectives on wellbeing and highlighted several key themes: a) that there is a set point for wellbeing which remains relatively stable (e.g. Heady and Wearing, 1989; Suh et al, 1996), b) that individuals have a drive for equilibrium towards this point (e.g. Csikszentmihalyi, 2002), and c) that individuals have pools of 'resources' and 'challenges' that are psychological, social or physical in nature, existing in flux (e.g. Cummins, 2010). Dodge et al (2012, p.230) subsequently proposed a new definition for wellbeing which incorporates these ideas, suggesting that wellbeing is the "balance point between an individual's resource pool and the challenges faced". The definition implies that when individuals have an imbalance between challenges and resources, their wellbeing will decrease. These ideas are presented by Dodge et al (2012) in Figure 4 below.

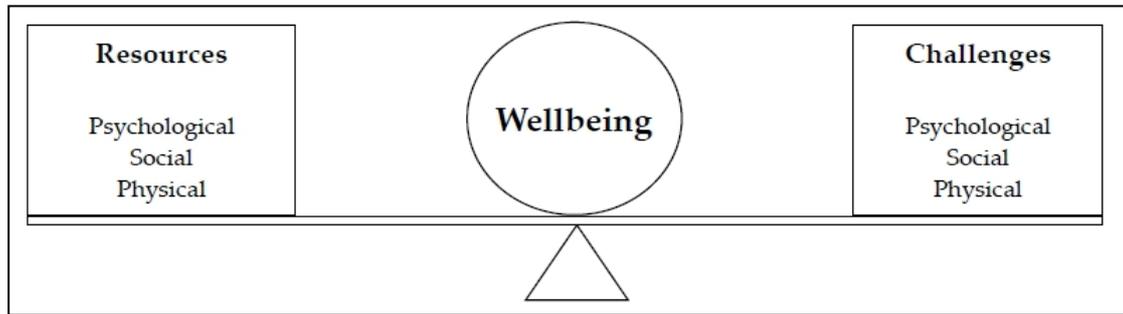


Figure 4 - Definition of Wellbeing (Dodge et al, 2012)

Dodge et al (2012)'s definition has several advantages. In addition to reconciling core models from the field, a specific definition of wellbeing is provided which moves away from broad definitions of the concept (Forgeard et al, 2011). Dodge et al (2012) also note that the model is easy to communicate and is accessible to both academics and others. By operationalising wellbeing, it also allows the concept to be measured (Jackson, 2013).

Within Dodge et al (2012)'s model, OS could be conceptualised as a challenge which may adversely influence wellbeing. This assertion has been made by Split et al (2011) who conceptualise wellbeing as being an umbrella term for positive and negative indicators of psychological and physical health, and note that OS is classified as a negative indicator. Within the research reviewed, OS appears to be the main factor explored when considering teachers' wellbeing (e.g. Split et al, 2011; Acton and Glasgow, 2015; Hall-Kenyon, 2014; Day and Gu, 2009). This is perhaps because the prolonged experiencing of OS can significantly impact teachers' wellbeing (e.g. Montgomery and Rupp, 2005; Split et al, 2011). Models of OS, such as the JDR model, can therefore act as a tool to help understand and make

predictions about an important aspect of teachers' wellbeing (Bakker and Demerouti 2014).

2.6 Stress and Wellbeing amongst Teachers

2.6.1 Teacher Stress

OS experienced by teachers is often referred to as 'teacher stress'. Chris Kyriacou, who coined the term, describes it as:

"...the experience by a teacher of unpleasant, negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration or depression, resulting from some aspect of their work as a teacher." (Kyriacou, 2001, p.28)

Studies which operationalised the term in this review defined it similarly, suggesting that Kyriacou (2001)'s definition is still relevant and in use (e.g. Brakenreed, 2011; Collie et al, 2012; Klassen, 2010; Split et al, 2011). The definition aligns with contemporary conceptualisations of OS as a negative phenomenon (e.g. HSE, 2016). Many studies in this review focused on the concept of burnout rather than teacher stress (e.g. Aloe et al, 2014; Brunstig et al, 2014; Foley and Murphy, 2015). Kyriacou (2001)'s definition is also relevant here, as burnout is conceptualised as unpleasant emotions such as 'emotional exhaustion', arising from the prolonged experiencing of OS (Maslach et al, 2008).

Models of OS are often applied to teacher stress research (Kyriacou, 2001) or specifically created to describe the phenomenon (e.g. Dick and Wagner, 2001). Currently, the JDR model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007) is frequently applied when exploring teacher stress (Naghieh et al, 2015).

Kyriacou (2001)'s definition of teacher stress appears to equate to the strain aspect of the JDR model. For example, Tremblay and Messervey (2011) conceptualise 'job strain' as anxiety and depression, and Roslan et al (2015) state that strain is when teachers' work leads to them experiencing adverse physiological or psychological consequences. When the JDR framework is applied within teaching, strain is thought to occur when teachers face high-levels of demand (e.g. a high workload) and low-levels of resources to meet the demand (e.g. inadequate time) (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). The model also suggests that low motivation is likely to be experienced in such instances (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). This is illustrated in Figure 5.

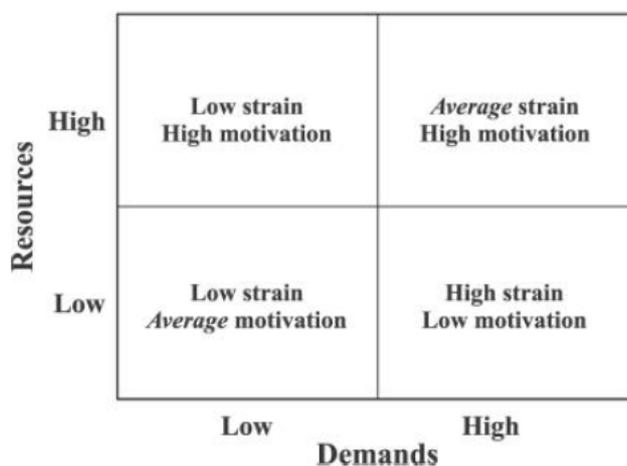


Figure 5 - Teacher Stress and Strain in the Job Demands Resources Model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007)

2.6.2 Teacher Wellbeing

Aelterman et al (2007) offers the only occupation-specific definition of wellbeing found in the current review. They note that teacher wellbeing is:

“a positive emotional state resulting from harmony between the sum of specific environmental factors on the one hand, and personal needs and expectations of teachers on the other” (Aelterman et al, 2007, p.286).

The definition is frequently used in teacher wellbeing research (e.g. Hulpia et al, 2009; Naghieh et al, 2015; Day and Gu, 2013). Additionally, the definition is in alignment with Dodge et al (2012)’s conceptualisation of wellbeing as a point of balance between challenges and resources.

Research exploring teacher wellbeing has generally focused on teacher stress, a critical component and significant determinant of teacher wellbeing (Hall-Kenyon et al, 2014). While wellbeing is not simply the absence of OS (e.g. Wood and Joseph, 2010), it can impact upon the dimensions of wellbeing proposed by White (2008). For example, at the material level, physical health can be compromised (Kyriacou, 2001), at the subjective level, sense of purpose in work can be reduced (Dworkin, 2001), and at the relational level, working relationships can be strained (Troman, 2000; Troman and Woods, 2001). Due to the wide-ranging impact of teacher stress and its prevalence, identifying potential sources of stress and subsequently exploring means of reduction appears to be a powerful focus to support teachers’ wellbeing (Gibbs and Miller, 2014).

2.6.3 The Prevalence of Teacher Stress

Employers are legally required to ensure the health and safety of their employees, and this includes minimising the risk of stress related illness or injury (HSWA, 1974; HSWR, 1999). However, teaching is consistently ranked as a high stress profession (Naghieh et al, 2015). Alongside health and welfare professionals, teachers were rated as having the highest rates of OS in the UK between 2014-15 (HSE, 2016), supporting findings that OS is more common amongst public sector jobs (HSE, 2016), and helping professions (Grant and Kinman, 2014).

NASUWT (2016) found that the majority teachers from a 12000-person sample believed the demands of teaching contributed to high-levels of OS and adversely affected their health and wellbeing. Although teacher stress is thought to be a problem globally, teachers in England may suffer from higher levels of OS than teachers in other European countries (Bricheno et al, 2009).

Much teacher stress research relies on self-report information, and the accuracy of findings has been questioned (Guiglielmi and Tatrow, 1998). However, contemporary theories of OS emphasise the role of individuals' perceptions in the stress process (Kyriacou, 2001), suggesting that self-report measures are both necessary and valuable.

Nonetheless absence data, attrition rates, and ill health retirements confirm the prevalence and impact of teacher stress. Approximately half of all qualifying teachers either do not gain employment as teachers or leave the profession within

5 years (Hayes, 2004). Pillay et al (2005) note that OS is a contributor towards attrition and NUT (2013) found that approximately half of teachers had considered leaving the profession due to stress. In 2014-15, 56% of teachers had at least one period of sickness-absence (DfE, 2016). OS is thought to be a frequent cause of sickness-absence, but may be underreported by medical professionals or teachers (NUT, 2008), perhaps due to the stigma attached to it (e.g. Sharrocks, 2014). Half of teacher ill-health retirements are also thought to take place due to stress-related illnesses (NUT, 2008).

2.6.4 The Impact of Teacher Stress

Wiley (2000) categorises the effects of teacher stress as 'physical', 'psychological', or 'work related'. Individual physical and psychological effects of teacher stress are like those already outlined for stress, and there is consensus that it can lead to a range of physical and psychological difficulties (Gibbs and Miller, 2014). For example, physical difficulties can include cardiovascular disease, headaches, and insomnia, whilst psychological effects can impact teachers' mental health, leading to worry, anxiety and depression (Wiley, 2000; Naghieh et al, 2015). Although some of the effects of teacher stress may be transitory, many are long lasting (Naghieh et al, 2015).

Teacher stress can also impact job satisfaction (Kinman et al, 2011), which is posited to be an aspect of wellbeing (White, 2008). Other effects include feelings of inadequacy as a teacher (Wiley, 2000). Resilience to stress and demands can also be impacted (Gibbs and Miller, 2014), making it more difficult to address everyday

demands. Teachers experiencing OS can also understandably come to view the role as damaging to their health and unenjoyable (Brown et al, 2002; Wiley, 2000). Teachers have a statistically higher risk of suicide than the general population (NUT, 2008). Whilst there is no known causal link between teacher stress and suicide, OS is thought to be a risk-factor for suicide (Feskanich et al, 2002).

Teacher stress can lead to a reduction in job-performance (Roffey, 2012). For example, less constructive feedback and positive reinforcement is given to pupils (Wiley, 2000). Most research has been conducted with mainstream class teachers but the impact of any reduction in performance may vary based on teachers' roles. Teachers' job commitment can be impacted (Foley and Murphy, 2015) and they may become isolated within their roles (Gibbs and Miller, 2014), making it more difficult to access support (e.g. Kyriacou, 2001). Teacher-pupil relationships can be negatively impacted too (Troman, 2000; Troman and Woods, 2001). Teachers may experience a lower tolerance for classroom disruption (Foley and Murphy, 2015) and classrooms can become less well-managed (Gibbs and Miller, 2014). Through a reduction in performance, teacher stress can indirectly affect students' social and emotional health, and academic performance (Brackenreed, 2011; Naghieh et al, 2015). Wiley (2000) notes that stress can also be 'transmitted' to students, which can negatively affect their wellbeing (Troman, 2000; Troman and Woods, 2001).

Organisationally, high-levels of teacher stress are linked to attrition, increased turnover and absenteeism (Brackenreed, 2011; Gibbs and Miller, 2014), and this consequently has negative financial implications for schools (ATL, 2005) and the

public budget (Naghieh et al, 2015), through the need to fill vacant posts and/or an increased need for cover (Wiley, 2000). Gibbs and Miller (2014) note that teacher training is a significant financial investment, but that much of this is lost due to half of newly qualified teachers leaving the profession within the first 5 years.

2.6.5 Causes and Contributors to Teacher Stress

There is general agreement about causes and contributors to teacher stress (Howard and Johnson, 2004), and developing an understanding of such factors is important in promoting teacher wellbeing (Gibbs and Miller, 2014). Causes and contributors are however, extremely diverse (e.g. Kyriacou, 2001). Wiley (2000) identified four dimensions through which they can be appraised: individual, task-related, organisational and extra-organisational.

2.6.5.1 Individual

Whilst common causes and contributors can be identified, sources of stress are unique for individuals (Kyriacou, 2001). This is in part, due to appraisal. The JDR model acknowledges that individuals' perceptions of workplace demands can influence the amount of stress/strain experienced (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007), and this is consistent with other models of OS too (e.g. Karasek, 1979; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). The appraisals of individual teachers consequently play a significant role in whether demands lead to stress (Chang, 2013). For example, Chan and Hui (1995) found that teachers who had taken on additional duties, and therefore experienced a higher workload, did not report higher levels of stress than those without additional duties, but instead reported a higher sense of personal

achievement due to them appraising the extra duties as valuable. Similarly, Gibbs and Miller (2014) and Chang (2013) note that teachers are more likely to experience stress following student misbehaviour if they attribute the cause to something outside of their control.

Certain appraisals are associated with increased stress. Teachers who appraise themselves to have little control over workplace demands (e.g. student misbehaviour), and to be receiving insufficient reward for their services are more likely to experience OS (Curry and O'Brien, 2012). Teachers who have a low appraisal of their efficacy are also more likely to experience OS. Appraisals are influenced by the school environment, and by any stress experienced (Gibbs and Miller, 2014; Roffey, 2012). Such findings are important to avoid construing teacher stress as an individual-deficit (Howard and Johnson, 2004), and affirm the value of interventions which have an organisational element (Naghieh et al, 2015). Successful coping can lead to subsequent appraisals being increasingly positive, creating a 'virtuous cycle' (Kyriacou, 2001).

Montgomery and Rupp (2005) found that personality and coping strategies play a key role in teacher stress. Foley and Murphy (2015) report that 'neuroticism', a dimension of the Five Factor Personality Model (Digman, 1990), predicted emotional exhaustion amongst teachers. Introversion is also a significant predictor of teacher stress (e.g. Fontana and Abouserie, 1993), possibly due to the coping strategies adopted to deal with stress, as personality has been shown to predict the coping strategies used by teachers (Foley and Murphy, 2015). Those employing

strategies that directly address the source, rather than solely the feelings of stress, are more likely to experience positive physical and psychological outcomes (Parker et al, 2012; Penley et al, 2002).

2.6.5.2 Task Related

Task/role-related factors play a significant role in teacher stress, and in some instances, can predict teacher stress even when individual variables are controlled for (e.g. Foley and Murphy, 2015). Kyriacou (2001) summarises common task-related contributors to teacher stress and these are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1 - Table detailing common task-related contributors to OS in teaching

Contributor to OS	Contemporary Supporting Evidence
Teaching pupils who lack motivation	Sass et al (2011)
Maintaining discipline	Gibbs and Miller (2014)
Time pressures and workload	Curry and O'Brien (2012)
Coping with change	Howard and Johnson (2004)
Being evaluated by others	Howard and Johnson (2004)
Dealings with colleagues	Mazzola et al (2011)
Administration and management	Tsouloupas et al (2010)
Poor working conditions	Collie et al (2012)
Role conflict and ambiguity	Kanchika et al (2015)

Some task-related factors can act as causes and contributors towards teacher stress if a resource is unavailable. For example, Anderson-Butcher et al (2012),

Brakenreed (2011) and Comam et al (2012) argue that teachers are generally supportive of an inclusive philosophy to education, but that this can serve as a source of stress if there is inadequate support, time or training.

Similarly, teaching is an emotionally demanding job which involves a high-level of ‘emotional labour’, i.e. ‘the effort, planning and control needed to express organisationally desired emotion during interpersonal transactions’ (Kinman et al, 2011). Facing such demands regularly can contribute towards OS (Kinman et al, 2011), and is perhaps implicated in some of the demands already listed (e.g. dealing with colleagues and maintaining discipline). However, if teachers are equipped with the resources to meet demands, e.g. emotion-related competencies, it does not necessarily act as a contributor towards OS (Vesley, 2013).

2.6.5.3 Organisational and Extra-Organisational

Less research is available on organisational and extra-organisational causes of teacher stress (Nagheih et al, 2015). Many of the task-related demands may be heavily influenced by organisational and extra-organisational demands (e.g. workload, role clarity, evaluation by others etc). Nonetheless wider contributors to teacher stress have also been identified in the literature. Wiley (2000) summarises these in Table 2:

Table 2 - Table detailing common organisational and extra-organisational contributors to OS in teaching

Contributor to OS	Contemporary Supporting Evidence
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The professional status of teachers	Sass et al (2011)
A lack of training	Stormont and Young-Walker (2016)
Salaries	Grayson and Alvarez (2008)
Class sizes	Klassen (2010)
Inadequate facilities or resources	Forman et al (2013)

Staff morale, school culture, and changes in the education system can also contribute towards teacher stress (Anderson-Butcher et al, 2012; Howard and Johnson, 2004). The revision and implementation of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (DfE, 2015) is one such change, and may be a source of stress for those with key roles in its implementation, such as SENCOs.

2.6.6 Prevention, Coping and Resilience

2.6.6.1 Individual and Small Group Approaches

Most studies in the review focused on the coping actions of individual teachers, and many construed OS as an individual-deficit, consistent with Howard and Johnson (2004). Coping strategies can be conceptualised as palliative or direct-action, with the former aiming to reduce feelings of stress and the latter aiming to address the source of stress directly (Kyriacou, 2001). Direct-action strategies generally lead to better long-term psychological and physical outcomes than palliative approaches (Parker et al, 2012; Penley et al, 2002), but palliative approaches represent the primary approach used to address teacher stress, in large part due to its individual-deficit conceptualisation (Howard and Johnson, 2004).

Some palliative approaches such as excessive drinking, smoking or avoidance, can clearly be detrimental in the long-term, to individual teachers and those working with them (Howard and Johnson, 2004). Conversely, some palliative approaches have shown promising results, such as commonly employed relaxation strategies (Kyriacou, 2001). Kaspereen (2012) found that group-based relaxation sessions led to significant decreases in teacher stress after just 3 weeks. Similarly, mindfulness intervention studies, such as Beshai et al (2016) have found significant reductions in stress and increases in wellbeing for teachers, although it is not known if this is maintained at follow-up. Whilst some palliative techniques can be very effective, they often need to be implemented consistently over time and therefore involve an ongoing personal cost (Kyriacou, 2000) that may be difficult to implement alongside other demands.

Direct action approaches commonly employed by teachers include: seeking support from colleagues, organising time and prioritising tasks, increasing task-related competence, and taking action to deal with problems (Kyriacou, 2001; Wiley, 2000). Much of the literature reviewed focused on developing teachers' capacity to deal with workplace demands which were potentially contributing to stress/strain. For example, Vesley (2013) and Acton and Glasgow (2015) suggest that developing teachers' 'emotional intelligence' can address the emotional labour costs associated with teaching, whilst Chang (2013) recommends development of behaviour management competencies can address the demand of 'student misbehaviour'.

Kyriacou (2000) suggests that counselling services can support teachers in developing direct action (e.g. assertiveness training) and palliative strategies (e.g. relaxation). Counselling services are often available to teachers, but are typically underused (Bricheno et al, 2009), and are sometimes seen as undesirable interventions (Sharrocks, 2014). Possible reasons include dangers that the approach may individualise the issue of OS (Sharrocks, 2014), or a lack of awareness about such services (Bricheno et al, 2009).

Preventative approaches have been proposed too. Curry and O'Brien (2012) suggest that trainee teachers should be encouraged to consciously seek to promote their wellbeing, in the form of a 'wellness plan'. This involves setting and working towards goals in different dimensions of wellbeing (e.g. health, leisure, relationships, work, spirituality). Trainees are encouraged to regularly reflect on their progress, and monitor their experiences of stress using a standardised measure of teacher stress such as the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach et al, 1996), and to subsequently implement coping strategies if necessary. The approach may help to provide stability, increase sense of control, and support career transitions, although systems level change is also necessary for the long-term management of teacher stress (Curry and O'Brien, 2012).

2.6.6.2 Organisational Interventions

Organisational strategies are amongst the most effective for reducing teacher stress (Wiley, 2000). Individual and organisational interventions tend to be most effective when used together (Naghieh et al, 2015), but few studies of teacher stress have

focused on organisational aspects, due to the phenomenon being frequently individualised (Howard and Johnson, 2004). Kyriacou (2001) highlights the need for research to identify the characteristics of 'healthy organisational functioning', so that teacher stress can be reduced or prevented through their implementation. Job redesign, participative decision making, providing pay incentives, access to administrative and collegial support, providing appropriate facilities and resources, clarifying role expectations, providing positive feedback, and matching duties to skills represent some organisational approaches that schools can use to reduce teacher stress (Kyriacou, 2001; Howard and Johnson, 2004; Wiley, 2000). Implementing such change is likely to be the responsibility of management teams (Howard and Johnson, 2004), which may help shift the conceptualisation of teacher stress away from an individual-deficit.

Naghieh et al (2015) carried out the first known systematic review of randomised control trials for organisational interventions for teacher stress. Only 4 studies met their inclusion criteria which is reflective of findings that most teacher stress interventions focus on individual approaches (Howard and Johnson, 2004). Organisational interventions led to improvements in teacher stress, wellbeing and retention rates. However, the authors highlighted the need for further research employing more robust methodologies and larger samples.

2.6.6.3 Resilience to Stress

Resilience is a process, capacity and outcome of successful adaptation despite facing challenging circumstances (Masten et al, 1990; Howard and Johnson, 2004).

It develops over time (Beltman et al, 2011) and occurs at individual and community levels (Howard and Johnson, 2004). Within teaching, capacity appears to refer to teachers' psychological, physical, social and/or cultural resources (e.g. Howard and Johnson, 2004; Mansfield et al, 2014), whilst outcomes appear to refer to diverse factors including self-efficacy, wellbeing, professional commitment, motivation, and growth (Day and Gu, 2013). Resiliency studies typically explore instances where people have been able to adapt well despite facing challenging situations, i.e. they focus on strength rather than deficit, which is in stark contrast to much teacher stress research (Howard and Johnson, 2004).

Resilience is a prerequisite for teachers as they often face challenging situations, and is essential to maintain wellbeing (Pretesch et al, 2012). Many factors can promote resilience including the maintenance of significant relationships, high self-efficacy, social problem-solving skills, and a sense of achievement (Howard and Johnson, 2004).

Studies of teacher resiliency have interviewed teachers who have coped well in challenging work environments. Through in-depth interviews, many individual and systemic strategies have been identified to support teachers' resilience to stress, which supports findings that the implementation of both approaches leads to the best outcomes regarding teacher stress (Naghieh et al, 2015). Many are like those identified in the coping strategy literature, and resilience perhaps represents the successful and consistent application of such strategies. Howard and Johnson (2004) and Richards (2012) found that at the individual level, depersonalising

challenging incidents, developing behaviour management skills, making time for oneself, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, meditating, and making positive appraisals promoted resilience. At the systemic level, effective whole-school behaviour management policies, recruiting staff that want to take on challenges, prioritising staffs' personal needs, and celebrating staff achievements were found to promote teacher resilience to stress (Howard and Johnson, 2004; Richards, 2012).

Resilience is an adaptive process, rather than an innate attribute (Day and Gu, 2007), and many of the approaches identified can be taught or implemented with little cost to schools (Howard and Johnson, 2004). Exploring how teachers and schools cope well with OS despite high-levels of demands may represent a valuable and cost-effective avenue to support with teacher stress. All schools have unique challenges (Howard and Johnson, 2004), and job roles present their own unique demands and potential sources of stress too (e.g. Kourmoussi and Alexopoulos, 2016), suggesting that exploration of underexplored roles may be helpful.

2.6.7 Differences amongst Groups of Teachers

Most research exploring teacher stress has focused on mainstream class teachers (e.g. Austin et al, 2005; Briner and Dewberry, 2007; Brown and Arnell, 2012). However, some has explored OS within subgroups of the profession such as trainees, special education teachers, and headteachers (Chaplain, 2008; Cooper et al, 1993; Platsidou and Agaliotis, 2008).

There are similarities between causes of OS for different subgroups of teachers. For example, trainee teachers, early years, primary, secondary, special education, and headteachers all cite workload as a major contributor towards OS (e.g. Chaplain, 2008; Cooper and Kelly, 1993; Hall-Kenyon et al, 2014; Kyriacou, 2001; Brunstig et al, 2014). There are clear differences too. Cooper and Kelly (1993) found that handling relationships with staff was a primary cause of OS for headteachers, whilst Chaplain (2008) identified that behaviour management and a lack of support from mentors constituted the primary causes of OS for trainee teachers. Special education teachers often cite that role conflict, ambiguity and a lack of administrative support are major contributors to OS (Brunstig et al, 2014), whilst early years teachers have noted that efforts to practice in alignment with particular early childhood philosophies can lead to OS (Hall-Kenyon et al, 2014). Similarly diverse findings are that subject coordinators perceive OS to arise from their duties of resource management and evaluation of others (Flecknoe, 2000).

Many of the factors contributing towards OS for subgroups of teachers are related to the specific demands of their roles. For example, headteachers have a responsibility to manage relationships with staff, and experience OS in relation to this (Cooper and Kelly, 1993). Due to the specific demands associated with each role, similarly specific coping strategies can be helpful. For example, Cooper and Kelly (1993) identified that training in communication and interpersonal skill development, and team development skills would be useful for addressing the primary stressors amongst headteachers. Similarly, Chaplain (2008) recommends that comprehensive training in behaviour management and group problem-solving

techniques may be useful for addressing trainee teachers' primary stressor of behaviour management. Such strategies are specific to the main stressors identified within the studies and represent distinct, targeted approaches.

The success of any effort to minimise stress depends upon an accurate appraisal of factors causing or contributing towards stress within the role (Cooper et al, 1993). There is an ongoing need to investigate the prevalence, causes and coping strategies applied in teaching (Kyriacou, 2001). Subgroups of teachers who are hypothesised to face high demands, have distinct roles from class teachers, and where little research has been carried out would appear to particularly benefit from this process.

2.7 Stress and Wellbeing amongst SENCOs

2.7.1 SENCOs' Experiences of Stress and Role Demands

Little research has directly explored SENCOs' experiences of stress. Male (1996) explored SENCOs' career continuation plans two years after formal establishment of the role. 80% of participants perceived the role to be 'stressful' or 'very stressful' and that the implementation of the new Code of Practice was perceived as a major contributor towards this. Male (1996) notes that much of the stress experienced was perceived to be transitory, until participants became more familiar with the role. However, 16 years later, Mackenzie (2012a)'s qualitative exploration suggests that stress is still present within the role. Staff attitudes towards inclusion, working with certain individuals, and the physical demands of the job led to participants

experiencing stress. Even since this point, there have been changes to the role (e.g. DfE, 2015), suggesting that other factors may now be contributing to SENCOs' experiences of stress.

The JDR model suggests that the demands one faces within a role can lead to the experiencing of strain/stress, and the current review highlighted a number of demands, frustrations and tensions that SENCOs report to experience. These may give insight into common contributors to OS within the role. Broadly, these fall into five categories: status, emotional labour, interactions, workload and support.

2.7.1.1 Status

SENCOs' status is often cited as a difficult aspect of the role (e.g. Wedell, 2012; Szwed, 2007; Layton, 2005). Despite requiring a high-level of skill, the role has been perceived as low-status and unimportant (Burton and Goodman, 2011; Cole, 2005). Burton and Goodman (2011) found that SENCOs often felt underappreciated and unrespected by colleagues, and Pearson (2008) notes that some SENCOs perceive not to be appropriately financially rewarded.

Wedell (2015) argues that SENCOs need sufficient status to be effective and facilitate inclusion, and Qureshi (2014) notes that support from the senior leadership team (SLT) is also a key contributor to SENCOs' efficacy. The Code of Practice (DfE, 2015) states that SENCOs will be most effective when they are part of schools' leadership teams, but there is variation in the appointment of SENCOs to these positions. Quershi (2014) reports differencing experiences regarding SENCOs

impact on colleagues even when they are part of a SLT. This is perhaps because some SENCOs are not afforded the power to fulfil their responsibilities optimally (Szwed, 2007; Cole, 2005). A lack of power can lead to SENCOs adopting a narrow focus on individual pupils, as opposed to whole-school development, which can lead to frustration (Szwed, 2007, Griffiths and Dubskey, 2012). The reasons behind this may be due to school leaders not perceiving SENCOs as leaders, or because of an unspoken resistance to inclusion within schools (Griffiths and Dubskey, 2012). Burton and Goodman (2011) also note that lack of recognition represents a risk of attrition.

2.7.1.2 Emotional Labour

SENCOs' roles can be emotionally laborious, and they are more likely to experience extreme emotions (both positive and negative) than class teachers (Burton and Goodman, 2011; Mackenzie, 2012a). Managing emotions, hiding 'negative' emotions, and experiencing hostility from CYP and colleagues are thought to play a role in this (Mackenzie, 2012a; Evans, 2013). Mackenzie (2012a) notes that managing emotions is particularly difficult when working with children who are ill. Evans (2013) views these demands from a psychoanalytical perspective and observes that SENCOs often work with those experiencing difficult feelings (e.g. anxiety) and are vulnerable to experiencing such feelings themselves through 'powerful projections'. Evans (2013) also concluded that external consultants working with SENCOs can in turn be the recipients of these projections, which could have implications for EPs supporting SENCOs' wellbeing. SENCOs also frequently use the emotional resources of barter, negotiation and compromise (Szwed, 2007).

Facing such demands regularly can lead to OS for class teachers (Kinman et al, 2011), and may also contribute towards OS for SENCOs (Mackenzie, 2012a). Mackenzie (2012a) found that experienced SENCOs felt better able to manage emotional labour-related demands than new SENCOs, which suggests that there may be value in respectively targeting support or exploring the coping strategies amongst these groups.

2.7.1.3 Interactions

Many SENCOs experience isolation (e.g. Lewis and Ogilvie, 2003; Mackenzie, 2012a; Wedell, 2012; Evans, 2013). The role has been described as lonely, at risk of being marginalised by management, and as operating at the 'edge' of school life (Evans, 2013). Isolation may occur due to the role being significantly different to that of other staff (Parker and Bowell, 1998), and due to SENCOs often having the most expertise and responsibility for SEN (Wedell, 2012). Some SENCOs also feel that they have nobody to share challenges with, which may contribute to a feelings of isolation, and for some, this increases the longer they are in post (Mackenzie, 2012a).

Facing different demands to class teachers may also contribute towards SENCOs feeling isolated. Burton and Goodman (2011) note that there is often a mismatch between SENCOs' and class teachers' perspectives, due to their (often) respectively different aims of inclusion and attainment. The tension between inclusion and academic attainment is also existent in government policy (Burton and Goodman, 2011). Mackenzie (2012a) notes that such mismatches can lead to

misunderstandings in communication, which presents barriers to carrying out the role effectively, and leads to SENCOs experiencing frustration with their colleagues.

2.7.1.4 Workload

Unsurprisingly workload is a major source of frustration and dissatisfaction amongst SENCOs (e.g. Qureshi, 2014; Lingard, 2001; NUT, 2012; Pearson, 2008), and has been identified as a contributor to OS amongst special education teachers (Male and May, 1997). Time constraints effect SENCOs' ability to manage workload and fulfil their role, particularly at the systemic level (Qureshi, 2014). There is dissatisfaction with the time allocated for the role (Pearson, 2008; Wedell, 2012), and whilst most SENCOs are allocated time for the role, this is often considered insufficient (NUT, 2012). Schools' financial resources and priorities are thought to contribute towards this (Crowther et al, 2001; NUT, 2012). Extracts from Lingard (2001) illustrate this dissatisfaction and highlight that this may contribute to attrition and negative affect:

"I offered to resign as SENCO, due to lack of time"

"I feel isolated and my confidence is diminishing..."

(Lingard, 2001, p.189)

Excessive paperwork can contribute towards workload (NUT, 2012). Szwed (2007) notes when the role is seen as purely administrative, SENCOs are more likely to face excessive paperwork, rather than being able to invest time in developing whole-school approaches to SEN. Lingard (2001) asserts that much of the role's

paperwork is unnecessary and has little effect on student outcomes. Local authority systems and their interpretation of the Code of Practice can also create excessive paperwork, as can OFSTED inspections (Lingard, 2001). Keeping up with revisions of the code and changes within the local authority can also be a contributor to workload (Wedell, 2015; Qureshi, 2014).

2.7.1.5 Support

SEN is a vast area, but SENCOs are sometimes expected to be experts in every facet (Mackenzie, 2012a). The role requires a massive range of professional knowledge (Parker and Boswell, 1998), and responsibilities appear to be widening over time (Qureshi, 2014). SENCOs welcome external support from specialist services to assist with this issue, and have benefited from interacting with other SENCOs in some local authorities (NUT, 2012). However, the external support available to SENCOs has generally decreased, and that which remains is perceived to be of a reduced quality due to redundancies and subsequent pressures in services (NUT, 2012). A summary of the demands faced by SENCOs is provided in Table 3.

Table 3 - A summary of demands, tensions and frustrations experienced by SENCOs

Demand	Citing Author(s)
Status:	
Low status	Burton and Goodman (2011)
Under appreciation	Burton and Goodman (2011)
Lack of respect from colleagues	Burton and Goodman (2011)
Insufficient financial reward	Pearson (2008)
Not being a member of the SLT	Qureshi (2014)

Not having the necessary power to effect change	Szwed (2007); Cole (2005)
A lack of opportunities for whole school approaches to meeting SEN	Szwed (2007); Griffiths and Dubsy, (2012)
Emotional Labour:	
Managing and hiding negative emotions	Mackenzie (2012a); Evans (2013)
Experiencing hostility from children and colleagues	Mackenzie (2012a); Evans (2013)
Working with individuals who are experiencing	Evans (2013)
Using emotional resources (barter, negotiation, compromise)	Szwed (2007)
Interactions:	
Isolation	Wedell (2012)
Having nobody to share problems with	Mackenzie (2012)
Having differing priorities to other staff	Burton and Goodman (2011)
Having differing priorities in government policy	Burton and Goodman (2011)
Misunderstandings in communication	Mackenzie (2012a)
Workload:	
Workload	Qureshi (2014)
Time allocation for role	Qureshi (2014)
Excessive paperwork	NUT (2012)
Local authority procedures	Lingard (2001)
OFSTED inspections	Lingard (2001)
Support:	
Breadth of knowledge required	Mackenzie (2012a)
Others' expectations of SENCOs knowledge	Mackenzie (2012a)
Lack of support from external agencies and the local authority	NUT (2012)
Quality of support from external agencies and the local authority	NUT (2012)
Academic pressures from taking the SENCO qualification	Griffiths and Dubsy (2012)

2.7.2 Coping, Prevention and Resilience amongst SENCOs

Several approaches were either suggested or documented to address the difficulties outlined in the previous section. These were categorised as: social support, status and resources and individual coping strategies.

2.7.2.1 Social Support

‘Computer mediated communication’ can counter isolation and assist problem-solving (Parker and Howell, 1998; Wedell, 2012). This often takes place through the SENCO Forum, a Department for Education hosted exchange where SENCOs and other professionals can communicate. Evans (2013) notes that using the SENCO forum can counter feelings of isolation and enables SENCOs to feel more confident in their role, possibly due to sharing practice (Wedell, 2012). Lewis and Ogilvie (2003) found that forum users perceived advice offered to be high quality, and noted that support can be provided by a wide range of professional groups (over 29) who use the forum. The use of humour and mentoring through the forum is also thought to provide support, and this is perceived to be helpful in managing OS (Lewis and Ogilvie, 2003). Wedell (2012) notes that users are a self-selecting group and that the forum is not used by all SENCOs, particularly those without the necessary computing skills, suggesting that some do not benefit from this resource. Additionally, many access the forum outside of work-hours (Lewis and Ogilvie, 2003), which could negatively impact on work-life balance. Local SENCO networks can provide emotional support to members (Mackenzie, 2012a), and this is perhaps an option that is particularly relevant for those not accessing the forum.

Mackenzie (2012a) found that SENCOs were most likely (out of teachers, teaching assistants and trainees) to discuss the emotional demands of their role. Evans (2013) suggests that SENCOs may benefit from external support to discuss and process these. Such support could also provide containment and develop reflective practice, which are necessary to carry out the role effectively (Mackenzie, 2012a). Supervision could fulfil this purpose but is generally absent in the role (Burton and Goodman, 2011). Burton and Goodman (2011) assert that other professionals facing similar demands would generally receive supervision, and SENCOs have noted that the resource would help to address stressful aspects of the role. EPs often supervise other professionals (e.g. Callicot and Leadbetter, 2013) and could provide support in this area.

2.7.2.2 Status and Resources

Membership of the SLT can give SENCOs the power to carry out their duties and make systemic changes (Parker and Bowell, 1998; Griffiths and Dubsky, 2012). Crowther et al (2001) assert that a shift towards systemic working which places an emphasis on enhancing staffs' skills rather than supporting individual pupils, improves pedagogy and prevents resources being spread too thinly. Providing SENCOs with sufficient time and fewer teaching duties can enable the role to be carried out more effectively too (Burton and Goodman, 2011; Crowther et al, 2001).

SENCOs are required to complete a postgraduate qualification for the role within three years of appointment, unless they have worked as a SENCO at a previous school for longer than a year (DfE, 2015). Although the qualification is associated

with an increased workload and a negative impact on personal lives due to the time required, it can increase: confidence in carrying out the role, perceived status, and networking opportunities (Griffiths and Dubsy, 2012). Developing skills in: identification and assessment of SEN, effective teaching strategies, counselling, leadership, curriculum development and tools to shift attitudes towards inclusion are perceived as valuable by SENCOs (Griffiths and Dubsy, 2012). Training is a core skill of EPs (Farrell et al, 2006), and they could potentially support with many of these areas.

2.7.2.3 Individual Coping Strategies

SENCOs in Mackenzie (2012a) noted that resilience was a pre-requisite of the role. Strategies which appeared to promote resilience included distancing oneself from CYP and parents after periods of emotional labour to recover. The ability to multitask was also perceived to be useful to the role (Mackenzie, 2012a). Mackenzie (2012a) found that experienced SENCOs felt better able to manage emotional labour, whereas those with less experience found it harder to maintain boundaries with CYP and parents.

SENCOs are often willing to engage in research relevant to their role (Pearson, 2008), despite the fact that little has been carried out in general (Szwed, 2007). Combined with the finding that strategies used to manage teacher stress and promote resilience are often teachable and cost-effective to implement (Howard and Johnson, 2004), the exploration of the specific approaches used by SENCOs who

successfully cope with stress may be productive. Table 4 summarises the strategies that SENCOs appear to employ to support with OS, demands and frustrations.

Table 4 - Table showing approaches that SENCOs used to help them meet demands

Support	Citing Author(s)
Computer mediated communication	Parker and Bowell (1998)
The SENCO Forum	Wedell (2012)
The local SENCO network	Mackenzie (2012a)
Being part of the SLT	Griffiths and Dubsky (2012)
Systemic working	Griffiths and Dubsky (2012)
Sufficient non-contact time	Burton and Goodman (2011)
The SENCO qualification	Griffiths and Dubsky (2012)
Other training	Griffiths and Dubsky (2012)
Taking the time to recover after emotionally demanding instances	Mackenzie (2012a)
Developing multitasking skills	Mackenzie (2012a)

2.8 Educational Psychologists’ Role in Supporting Teacher

Wellbeing

As EPs’ roles have developed, there has been an increasing focus on CYPs’ contexts, including school staff (Gibbs and Miller, 2014). There has also been a shift to promoting positive outcomes for all children, rather than a select few (Baxter and Frederickson, 2005; Cameron, 2006). Providing support for teacher stress can lead to positive outcomes for multiple CYP, due to the deleterious effect that it can have on wellbeing and learning (e.g. Troman, 2000; Naghieh et al, 2015). This review suggests that EPs primarily support with this through three of their core functions: consultation, training and intervention (Farrell et al, 2006).

2.8.1 Consultation

EPs are a resource that teachers can consult at times of professional concern (Gibbs and Miller, 2014). Consultation enables teachers to discuss their professional concerns and consider alternative possibilities to meet and manage workplace demands (Bozic and Carter, 2002; Wagner, 2000). Consultation can develop teachers' self-efficacy, resilience, sense of professional purpose, and problem-solving skills (Gibbs and Miller, 2014), many of which can be negatively impacted by OS (e.g. Wiley, 2000; Gibbs and Miller, 2014). Miller (2003) demonstrated the efficacy of a consultation approach in helping a teacher experiencing low-morale and isolation to positively reframe her situation. Workplace demands have the potential to lead to stress/strain if individuals do not have the resources to meet them (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007), and the use of consultation by EPs to enhance teachers' self-efficacy and facilitate problem-solving to meet demands, may therefore be valuable in promoting wellbeing.

Gibbs and Miller (2014) note that peer supervision may be useful for the ongoing maintenance of staff wellbeing. Many helping professions have access to peer supervision (e.g. Hawkins et al, 2006) but it does not appear to be a common resource for either mainstream class teachers (Gibbs and Miller, 2014) or SENCOs (Burton and Goodman, 2011). As professionals with experience in peer and other forms of supervision (Callicot and Leadbetter, 2013), and the training of school staff (Farrell et al, 2006), EPs are well placed to assist with the development of this practice in schools.

2.8.2 Training and Intervention

Murphy and Claridge (2000) assert that EPs often have the necessary knowledge to facilitate workshops to enhance teachers' knowledge of coping strategies. One such workshop was facilitated Murphy and Claridge (2000), and appeared to cover a mixture of direct action (e.g. action planning) and palliative (e.g. relaxation) approaches to manage teacher stress. Feedback suggested that the programme was perceived as valuable, and the strategies were successfully employed following cessation. Attitudes towards teacher stress also shifted away from an individual-deficit conceptualisation. It was unclear whether the programme was effective in reducing teacher stress over an extended period of time, and the authors note the need for longer-term evaluation.

Sharrocks (2014) aimed to enhance teacher wellbeing through the use of an 8-week programme including relaxation, social support, rest, and signposting activities. The programme operated on a 'drop in' basis where any member of staff could attend, which was thought to avoid exclusivity and stigmatising the issue of stress. Participants reported improved self-efficacy, increased job satisfaction and generally feeling calmer following the intervention. However participants expressed concern that they would be seen as failing by virtue of attending the group. This did not change following the intervention and represented an individual-deficit conceptualisation of teacher stress. Sharrocks (2014) concluded that it was important to challenge this through addressing both school and societal norms regarding the issue, and EPs may be able to support this through their skills in facilitating change at the systemic level (e.g. Boyle and MacKay, 2007).

Positive psychology interventions can also promote teacher wellbeing. Critchley and Gibbs (2012) encouraged teachers to record and reflect on three positive events that had occurred during their working days over a week. Beliefs of self-efficacy, sense of purpose and wellbeing were significantly enhanced compared to a group that did not receive the intervention. Participants also reported an improved ability to deal with change, which may be particularly relevant to the SENCO role considering the pace of its development (Griffiths and Dubsky, 2012) and recent legislative changes (e.g. DfE, 2015).

Other EP interventions which focus on staff wellbeing are designed to help deal with demands not normally faced on a regular basis. EPs have long been involved in supporting with the management of critical incidents, during which staff may experience acute distress (Hayes and Frederickson, 2008). Mackenzie (2012a) notes that such instances can be highly emotionally-demanding for SENCOs. EPs have previously used Critical Incident Stress Debriefing to support staff here (e.g. O'Hara et al, 1994), but the efficacy of this approach appears to be variable, and in some instances harmful (Aucott and Soni, 2016). Aucott and Soni (2016) suggest the use of a 'Psychological First Aid' approach, which is also advocated for use by the World Health Organisation (2012). The approach has not been evaluated for use in schools (Aucott and Soni, 2016), but its successful application in other fields (e.g. Ruzek et al, 2007), encourages further exploration regarding its efficacy.

2.9 Conclusion and Implications

The review suggests that teachers experience OS due to a combination of individual, task-related, organisational and extra-organisational factors (Wiley, 2000). OS can have adverse effects on: the wellbeing and performance of teachers (e.g. Hall-Kenyon et al, 2014), pupils' wellbeing and attainment (e.g. Naghieh et al, 2015) and schools' finances and operation (Wiley, 2000). OS is common within contemporary UK education (Gibbs and Miller, 2014) and schools have a legal responsibility to minimise the potentially adverse effects (HSWA, 1974; HSWR, 1999).

Identifying and addressing potentially stressful demands within a role can be a powerful focus to supporting teachers' wellbeing (Gibbs and Miller, 2014). Additionally, exploring how some individuals cope well with potentially stressful demands, can illuminate strategies which can be readily adopted by others, at the systemic and individual levels, for little cost (Howard and Johnson, 2004).

Such research has been undertaken with mainstream class teachers, but little has focused on these issues amongst SENCOs, despite there being known variations in stress and coping across teachers' roles (e.g. Chaplain, 2008; Hall-Kenyon et al, 2014). SENCOs have a critical and distinctive role, and appear to face a high number of potentially stressful demands (e.g. Burton and Goodman, 2011; Evans, 2013; Mackenzie, 2012a).

The current study aimed to extend the evidence-base through identifying work-related contributors to OS for SENCOS, exploring the strategies employed by SENCOS who cope well with OS despite facing high demands, and considering how EPs can support this process.

3 CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Epistemology and Research Questions

A Critical Realist (Bhaskar, 1998; 2013) approach was adopted for the research. Critical Realism asserts that reality consists of three (ontological) domains, the: empirical, actual and real (McEvoy and Richards, 2006). Figure 6 shows that in the empirical domain, phenomena are directly experienced (Sayer, 2000). Within the actual domain, phenomena occur, but are not necessarily experienced, and within the real domain, there are objects with powers and structures which cannot be directly experienced (McEvoy and Richards, 2006).

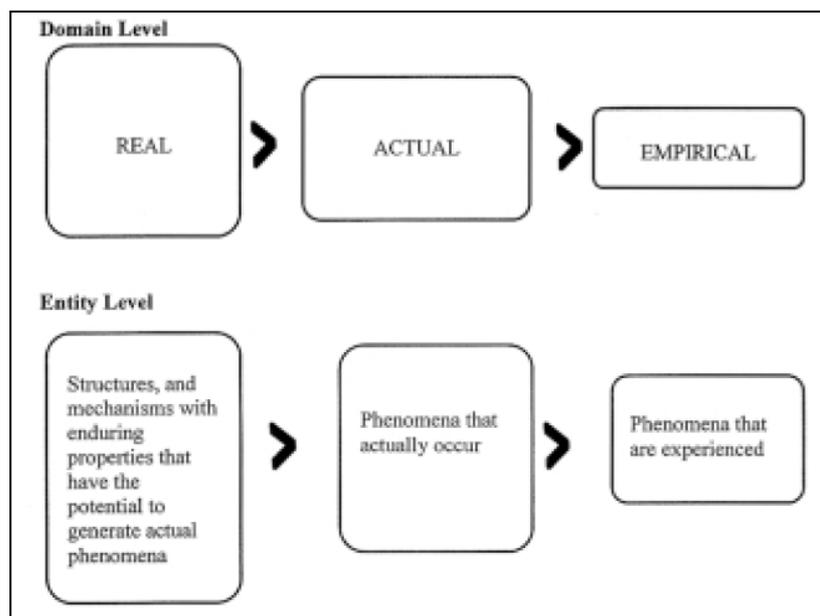


Figure 6 - The domains and associated entities of critical realism (McEvoy and Richards, 2006)

In contrast to interpretivist and positivist paradigms, which respectively seek to interpret the meanings of human behaviour or identify generalisable laws (Robson,

2002), Critical Realism seeks to develop deeper levels of understanding about phenomena (Zachariadis et al, 2010). This would ideally be achieved through directly exploring the 'real' domain. However, Critical Realism's ontological position holds that this is not possible due to perception being mediated by factors such as investigative interests, theoretical resources and available discourses (Sayer, 2004; McEvoy and Richards, 2006). Instead, Critical Realist approaches seek to hypothesise the nature of mechanisms which generate phenomena (Bryman, 2004), through empirical feedback attained from accessible aspects of the world (Sayer, 2004). Lack of direct access to the real domain means that the findings of Critical Realist research represent a model of the truth (Creswell, 2003). Critique and repetition can improve the adequacy of such approximations, and findings can add to the extant understanding and knowledge base of phenomena and mechanisms (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

Within this study, the phenomenon of OS amongst SENCOs was explored by attempting to identify factors which contribute towards it being experienced, i.e. features of mechanisms which generate OS amongst SENCOs. A secondary aim was to explore an aspect of the phenomena of SENCOs coping well with OS despite facing substantial demands, through identifying the means through which this is achieved. A final aim was to explore the phenomena of EPs supporting SENCOs with the management of OS, through identifying features of the generating mechanisms. Four research questions were formulated from a Critical Realist framework and exploration of extant literature:

RQ1 - To what extent do SENCOS report to experience OS?

RQ2 - Which aspects of SENCOS' roles are perceived to contribute to OS?

RQ3 - How do SENCOS who perceive to cope well with OS, despite facing high work-related demands, achieve this level of coping?

RQ4 - From SENCOS' perspectives, how can EPs support SENCOS with preventing and coping with OS?

3.2 Research Design

Within Critical Realism, methodology is informed by its suitability in answering the research questions (McEvoy and Richards, 2006). Often a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, i.e. mixed methods, represents the most effective option (Thomas, 2013), as their combining can provide a more complete answer than either one alone (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009).

In light of the literature review and research questions, a quantitative analysis appeared to enable the extent to which SENCOS report to experience OS (R1), and contributing factors to be explored (R2). It was also thought that the analysis could identify SENCOS who cope well with OS, despite facing high-levels of demand (R3). Reviewing extant literature, e.g. Howard and Johnson (2004), suggested that qualitative techniques were most effective in preliminary explorations of the factors

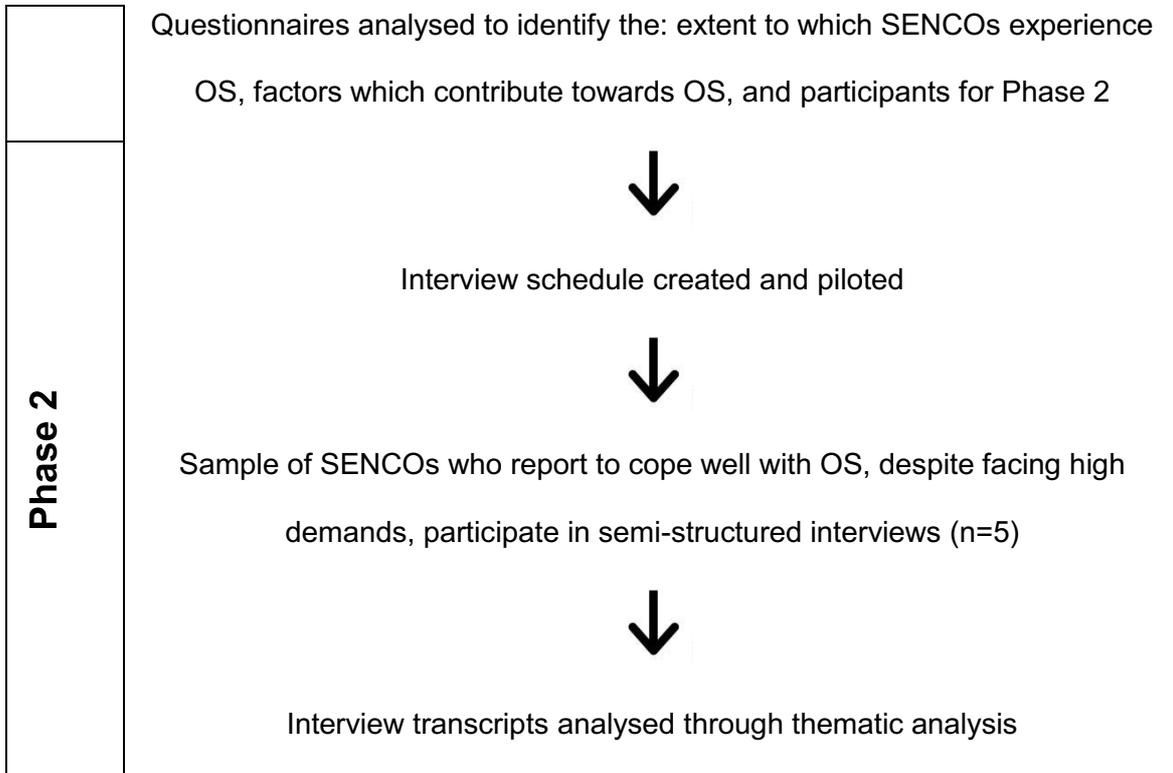
which promote resilience to OS (R3, R4), as they enabled these to be explored in detail.

A sequential exploratory mixed methods design (Creswell et al, 2011) appeared particularly relevant to the research questions and was employed by the study. Within the design, a quantitative phase of data gathering and analysis proceeds and informs a qualitative phase (Cameron, 2009). In addition to enabling quantitative and qualitative approaches to be used, a specific strength of the design is that a purposive sample can be drawn from the quantitative data (Creswell and Clark, 2007). In this instance, it enables SENCOS who report to cope well with OS, despite facing high demands, to be identified.

The following sections outline the design, participants and recruitment, measures, procedure, analysis, validity, reliability and generalisability for both phases of the study. Table 5 gives an overview of the data gathering and analysis process.

Table 5 - An overview of the study's phases and associated actions

	Action
Phase 1	Questionnaire constructed and piloted
	 Questionnaire delivered to SENCOS at conference (n=38) 



3.3 Quantitative Phase

3.3.1 Design

A cross-sectional design, using a survey measure, was employed to answer research questions 1 and 2. Within cross-sectional designs, data is collected over a short period of time. It is widely used in social science research (Robson, 2002) and although not always explicitly stated, most studies in the current review used the design when answering similar research questions (e.g. Foley and Murphy, 2015). Other research (e.g. Schonfeld, 1992; Lhospital and Gregory, 2009; Goklap, 2008) confirms that it is the most commonly used design in teacher stress research. This appears to be particularly the case when researchers are investigating teacher stress amongst relatively unexplored subgroups of teachers (e.g. Chaplain, 2008; Phillips and McNamee, 2008; Male, 1996).

Whilst cross-sectional designs are unable to establish causation when it is viewed as successivist (Oppenheim, 1992; Pawson, 2008), they can be used to provide a descriptive picture (Thomas, 2013) of a phenomenon, and to make inferences about mechanisms (Levin, 2006). Within Critical Realism, understanding of mechanisms and the contexts in which they operate can provide a causal explanation, and data gathering therefore focuses on enhancing this understanding (Pawson, 2008; Fleetwood, 2013). The literature review suggested that current information on SENCO wellbeing was sparse but that it was nonetheless a concern. Consequently, using a cross-sectional design to provide a description of OS experienced within the role and to identify factors which contribute towards it appeared to be a useful step, and one which was consistent with extant teacher stress research (Kyriacou, 2001).

3.3.2 Participants and Recruitment

SENCOs from the authority where I was on placement were invited to participate in the study. Table 8 (page 75) details the authority's characteristics. The authority holds termly conferences for SENCOs, and practitioners in the authority are invited to attend. I gave a presentation at the conference, outlining the research's rationale, aims and nature (Appendix 2). Attending SENCOs were also given a copy of the 'Participant Information Form' (Appendix 3), to further explain the study. Those wishing to participate were invited to take a consent form and questionnaire (Appendix 4 and 5), and return it during the conference or by post. All attending

SENCOs were invited to participate in the study. 38 participated and Table 6 details participants' demographic information.

Table 6 - Demographic information for the participants of phase 1 of the study

Female participants	100%
Male participants	0%
Participants from primary schools	81.57%
Participants from secondary schools	13.15%
Participants from special schools	5.26%
Average time as SENCO	6 years
Average time as a teacher	16 years
Average time allocated for the role	2.27 days
Participants sharing the role	24%
Participants in the SLT	55%

Table 6 shows that all participants in the study were female and that the majority (81.57%) worked in primary schools. Consequently, the potential bias in the sample of participants must be acknowledged as a limitation of the study. Findings are likely to have most relevance for females working at the primary level, and will be less relevant to males, and those working in the secondary and other sectors, due to their lack of representation within the sample. This issue therefore limits the number of contexts that the findings are generalisable to.

Much of the teacher stress research reviewed employed non-probability, opportunity sampling (e.g. Gates, 2007; Lambert et al, 2006; Klassen and Chiu, 2010). Although the approach can limit generalisation, it can facilitate the recruitment of participants (Robson, 2002). With teachers and SENCOs working

long and inflexible hours (DfE, 2013), in addition to the previously mentioned demands that SENCOs face, it was thought that recruiting participants could be problematic. Opportunity sampling therefore offered an approach to counter this. The larger sample that the method could potentially afford also made it more likely that participants could be identified through purposive sampling for phase 2 of the study.

3.3.3 Measures

Self-report questionnaires are the most widespread measure of teacher stress (Kyriacou, 2001). Physiological measures and observational measures exist (e.g. Vrijotte et al, 2000; Greiner et al, 1997), but would likely be impractical with large numbers of participants. Additionally, it is unlikely that such approaches could identify specific demands within the SENCO role. The use of a questionnaire was therefore employed for this study.

Many psychometric questionnaires exist to measure the extent to which teachers are experiencing stress, such as the Teacher Stress Inventory (Fimian, 1984) and the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach et al, 1997). Generally, such measures explore the impact of teacher stress, e.g. cardiovascular manifestations of stress (e.g. Fimian, 1984; Maslach and Jackson, 1981). Such measures are also designed for and standardised with class teachers, making them less relevant for SENCOs. Many studies have used a single-item measure of teacher stress, e.g. “In general, how stressful do you find being a teacher?” (Kyriacou, 2001, p.28), which is answered via a 5-point likert-type scale, and is reported to have good validity (e.g.

Elo et al, 2003; Bertram, 2012; Chaplain, 2008; Klassen and Chiu, 2010). As this study did not seek to explore manifestations of stress, a single item measure of teacher stress was used to explore research question 1, and the brevity of this measure was also adopted to increase response rates (Thomas, 2013).

An aim of phase 1 was to identify participants that face high-levels of workplace demands but report to cope well with them. Masten and Reed (2002) note that resilience can be inferred through individuals: 1) coping well with the demands placed upon them, and 2) facing a level of demand which poses a potential threat. Participants have previously been selected for inclusion in resiliency studies through asking colleagues to identify those exhibiting resilience (e.g. Giroux, 2007), or by identifying schools that perform well in deprived areas (e.g. Patterson et al, 2004). In most resiliency studies, participants have been recruited through self-selection (CIPD, 2011). For example, asking participants whether they are 'someone who can bounce back after a stressful or difficult day at work' (Hunter and Warren, 2014).

This study relied on participants' perceptions of resilience to OS, as extant research suggested that individuals' perceptions play a key role in stress and coping (e.g. Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). The colloquial definition from Hunter and Warren (2014)'s study detailed above was included as a Yes/No item to this end. Consistent with the JDR model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007) and contemporary conceptualisations of resilience (e.g. Masten and Reed, 2002), single-item measures were also used to ascertain participants' perceived level of coping and job demands. Both items have been used successfully before (e.g.

Ramey et al, 2010; Vantilborgh et al, 2016) and their brevity was selected to increase response rates.

Bespoke, likert-type questionnaires appear to be the most widely used approach for exploring the frequency with which factors cause OS in teaching (e.g. Head, et al 1996; Kinman, 2006; Kokkinoss, 2007). The items for such questionnaires are often drawn from literature or through focus groups, and piloted to ensure their relevance. A similar approach was used in this research whereby factors that may cause or contribute to OS for SENCOs were identified in the literature review and incorporated into the questionnaire. In addition to employing a well-established approach, creating a bespoke measure was most relevant for SENCOs, as many existing measures for exploring the impact of demands are designed specifically for use with class teachers. As little literature was available detailing which aspects of the SENCO role were *most* stressful, an open-ended question “What do you consider is the most stressful aspect of being a SENCO?” was included to enable participants to elaborate upon responses (Chaplain, 2008) and to capture responses that may not have been identified using the other measures which relied upon the existing literature to a large extent.

3.3.4 Procedure

In April 2016, the facilitator of the SENCO conference was contacted to request the opportunity to present and carry out the research. This was agreed and I gave a presentation outlining the rationale, aims and nature of the study at a conference in November 2016 (Appendix 2). Attending SENCOs were given a copy of the

'Participant Information Form' (Appendix 3). Those wishing to participate were invited to take a consent form and questionnaire (Appendix 4 and 5), and complete and return it to myself during the conference, or to return it via post. The questionnaire took approximately 10 minutes to complete. It was agreed that the findings of the study would be presented at a future SENCO conference.

3.3.5 Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the data (Thomas, 2013) as identifying differences between groups or conditions was not an aim of the study. This method of analysis is compatible with a critical realist epistemology, as patterns in the data allow inferences to be made about structures and mechanisms (Creswell, 2003). Following completion of the questionnaire, participants' responses were coded to promote confidentiality and ensure that responses could be withdrawn from the analysis. Participants' numerical responses were entered into the SPSS statistics program. The mean was then used to illustrate participants' central responses to each item. The percentage of participants who responded to each category was calculated to ascertain the spread of responses. When entering the data, participants who reported to face high-levels of demand, and to cope well with OS, in addition to being able to 'bounce back' from stressful situations, were highlighted as potential participants for phase 2.

Participants' written responses to the open ended question were entered into the QSR NVivo data management program, where responses were coded and

thematically analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach. This involved several steps which are described in the analysis section of phase 2.

3.3.6 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability need to be considered to ascertain the trustworthiness of fixed research designs (Robson, 2002), such as the cross-sectional design employed in this phase.

3.3.6.1 Validity

Validity is the extent to which an instrument measures what it is intended to (Thomas, 2013). There is no single method for establishing validity but Robson (2002) asserts that face validity (i.e. whether the measure subjectively appears to measure what it is intended to) can be used as an indicator. Bryman (2012) notes that piloting bespoke questionnaires can also promote validity. For these reasons the questionnaire was piloted with 6 SENCOs in the authority where I was on placement. The focus of the pilot study was on the phrasing of questionnaire items (i.e. whether they were comprehensible), and on their relevance (i.e. are they likely causes and contributors towards stress in the role [Van Teijlingen and Hundley 2002]). Items used within the questionnaire were also derived from all known literature on the topic of SENCO wellbeing, which strengthens the measure's content validity (i.e. whether the measure covers all the necessary content [Thomas, 2013]) (Yaghmale, 2009). Whilst it is recognised that this literature is sparse, additional content was added following the pilot, and there was facility within the measure to detail novel content.

A threat to validity that is somewhat inherent to teacher stress research is selection bias. McDonald-Fletcher (2008) note that those experiencing high-levels of OS may be more or less likely to participate in stress-related research, thereby influencing sample representativeness. Given that the literature reviewed suggested that those coping well with OS were more likely to access social support, such as the SENCO conference, findings regarding the OS experienced by SENCOs may be an underestimate.

3.3.6.2 Reliability

Reliability is the consistency and stability with which something can be measured (Robson, 2002). The use of a single, likert-type scale item to measure stress has been shown to have similar reliability and validity to that of longer psychometric questionnaires (Littman et al, 2006).

There is little research which explicitly confirms the reliability of the single-item resilience measures, and the likert-type scale to rate contributors to OS within the SENCO role, and this represents a potential limitation in the current study. However, brief measures of resilience to stress have been shown to be reliable (e.g. Smith et al, 2008; De La Rosa et al, 2016), and bespoke likert-type scales to rate contributors to teacher stress/OS are commonly used (e.g. Gersch and Teuma, 2005; Chaplain, 2008; Male, 1996).

Threats to reliability can also include participant error, participant bias, researcher error, and researcher bias (Robson, 2002). Participant error refers to participants' responses varying based upon contextual factors, such as time of day (Robson, 2002). There is conflicting evidence as to whether time of school year affects teachers' experiences of stress (e.g. Capel, 1991; Mäkinen and Kinnunen, 1986), and none of the literature reviewed referred to variations in SENCOs experiences of stress throughout the year. To address this, a similar approach was taken to Kyriacou (2001), whereby questions began with "In general", to encourage a response that was reflective of participants' views beyond the immediate context. The issue of participant bias, i.e. participants' either withholding or giving answers that they believe researchers want to hear (Robson, 2002), was also considered. In part, this was addressed through the design of questions, to avoid the use of leading questions, ambiguous wording, jargon, and double negatives (Bryman, 2012; Robson, 2002). The questionnaire was designed to look attractive and to be easy to use to encourage a higher response rate (Gersch and Teuma, 2005). In addition, items considered to be the least controversial, e.g. that workload may be a contributor to stress, were placed at the start of the questionnaire, whereas more abstract and potentially controversial questions, e.g. that a lack of respect from colleagues may be a contributor to stress, were presented towards the end (Robson, 2002).

Observer error, i.e. a change in participants' behaviour that occurs due to the researcher taking interest in them (Thomas, 2013), was also considered. The effect can be difficult to 'eliminate' entirely and it is important to be aware of its potential

presence (Thomas, 2013). Steps taken to ameliorate the effect included participants' responses being confidential (McBride, 2013), assurances that data could be withdrawn up to a certain point, and the condition that no SENCOs would be individually identifiable in the write up of the research. Potential observer bias effects, i.e. the expectations of the researcher influencing participants' responses, were addressed through the question construction procedures already mentioned, in addition to following the thematic analysis guidelines outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) for the open ended question.

3.4 Qualitative Phase

3.4.1 Design

A flexible design, employing semi-structured interviews, was used to answer research questions 3 and 4. Robson (2002) asserts that defining such designs is challenging but notes that flexible or qualitative designs:

“typically make substantial use of methods which result in qualitative data (in many cases in the form of words). They are also flexible in the sense that much less pre-specification takes place and the design evolves, develops and (to use a popular term with their advocates) ‘unfolds’ as the research proceeds” (Robson 2002, p.5)

Flexible design is commonly employed within Critical Realist frameworks and within this context, arises out of its suitability in answering the research questions (Anastas

and MacDonald, 1994). Research questions 3 and 4 explore participants' perceptions about coping with OS and EPs' roles in this process. Flexible designs have often been used for the former purpose (e.g. Howard and Johnson, 2004; Beltman, 2011; Patterson et al, 2004) and have similarly been used to explore EPs' roles or practice within areas (e.g. Kennedy et al, 2008).

Qualitative designs are also apt at exploring phenomenon and encompassing contextual factors (Creswell and Clarke, 2004). As contextual factors play a significant role in resilience to OS amongst class teachers (e.g. Howard and Johnson, 2004), it was thought that the design could help to illuminate these. Qualitative designs can also investigate causal mechanisms and the contexts in which they are activated (Maxwell, 2004), thereby aligning with a Critical Realist framework (Bryman, 2004), and the aims of this research.

3.4.2 Participants and Recruitment

Purposive sampling was used for this phase. The approach enables a sample to be selected based on a feature of interest (Robson, 2002). Consequently, it is common in many studies of teacher resilience (Howard and Johnson, 2004), with teachers who cope well with OS and their context representing the features of interest.

SENCOs that: participated in phase 1 of the study, reported to experience a moderate or less amount of OS, indicated that they coped well with OS despite experiencing high-levels of demand, and who generally recovered from stressful work events quickly, were invited to participate in this phase. Following analysis of

the questionnaire data, I contacted 5 individuals via the details left on their consent forms. The aims and nature of the study were reiterated, and an offer of participation was made. Analysis of the data from phase 1 of the research therefore informed the selection of participants for phase 2 of the research. Selection was based upon a feature of interest (i.e. reporting to cope well with OS, despite facing high workplace demands) which was revealed through analysis of the data in phase 1 of the study. All of those contacted agreed to participate in this phase, and a time was arranged to carry out the interviews. All interviews took place in a private area of participants' schools. Table 7 shows contextual and demographic information for each participant.

Table 7 – Contextual and demographic information for participants in phase 2 of the study

	Participant				
	1	2	3	4	5
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
Type of setting	Secondary Special	Primary	Primary	Primary	Primary
Setting's most recent OFSTED outcome	Not available ²	Good	Good	Good	Good
Other roles	Deputy Headteacher	Assistant Headteacher	Specialist Teacher	Deputy Headteacher	Class teacher
Membership of SLT	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Shared role	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Time as a teacher	26 years	10 years	30 years	18 years	7 years

² Ofsted data was not available for this school, due to it recently opening.

Time as a SENCO	13 years	4 years	16 years	4 years	4 years
Days allocated per week for the role	Flexible ³	Flexible	2	Flexible	1

Table 7 shows that all participants were female and that all but one of the participants worked in the primary sector. One participant worked in a secondary special school. It is possible that their role differed from the primary SENCOs, though no obvious differences emerged during the data gathering process. Previously, this participant had worked as a SENCO in a secondary school, and participants were encouraged to draw upon their experiences from throughout their career. As with phase 1, the findings from this phase of the research will likely be most relevant to primary-based, female SENCOs due to their representation in the sample, and less relevant to males and those working in other contexts.

3.4.3 Measures

Interviews are the most used method of exploring teacher resilience (Beltman, 2011). Although psychometric measures are available for exploring resilience, survey approaches are limited in their ability to investigate the context surrounding phenomena (Yin, 2009), which play a prominent role in resilience (Howard and Johnson, 2004). Often, such interviews are semi-structured (e.g. Howard and Johnson, 2004). This approach allows specific items to be explored, but enables follow-up on points if necessary (Thomas, 2013). Semi-structured interviews also

³ This term was used to describe instances where participants had autonomy about the amount of time spent on each of their roles.

enable clarification of questions and the use of prompts, which can elicit more accurate responses (e.g. Roulston, 2010). This research had specific topics which it sought to explore (i.e. approaches which promoted resilience to OS amongst SENCOs), but due to information in the area being sparse, flexibility was also needed. Consequently, a semi-structured interview was used to meet these requirements.

An interview schedule was constructed using Thomas (2013)'s format to answer research questions 3 and 4. Howard and Johnson (2004) and Patterson et al (2004) explored strategies employed by resilient class teachers using semi-structured interviews, and their schedules were used to inform question creation. Topics identified for exploration included: 'Experience', 'Demands of the Role', 'Beliefs about the role', 'Coping with Role Demands', 'Support from Others' and 'Support from EPs'. Follow-up questions were used to help refocus, clarify, or shift the focus of questions to related dimensions (Creswell, 2007). Verbal probes were also used in the interview to encourage greater depth in participants' responses (Zeisel, 1984). Semi-structured interviews are flexible and enable points of interest to be followed-up by the researcher (Thomas, 2013). In addition to the questions outlined in the interview schedule (Appendix 6), means of coping which appeared particularly relevant to addressing the main causes of OS, as identified in phase 1, were explored via questioning and verbal prompts. Phase 1 of the research therefore informed phase 2 both through the selection of participants, and through the direction of questioning.

The schedule was piloted with 3 SENCOS to ensure that: appropriate questions were being asked to answer the research questions, the wording of questions was appropriate, and that interviewees had the necessary knowledge to answer the questions (Teijlingen, & Hundley, 2002). Several changes were subsequently made to the schedule, and the final version can be found in Appendix 6.

3.4.4 Procedure

Individuals who met the outlined criteria for this phase were contacted and invited to participate in the semi-structured interviews between November 2016 and January 2017. The interview questions were shared with participants via e-mail beforehand, to contribute towards participants being able to give informed consent, and to promote in-depth responses to questions (Burke and Miller, 2001). Interviews were completed at participants' schools in a private area. A dictaphone was used to record the interviews for transcription. Each interview lasted approximately 40 minutes. Appendices 6 and 7 detail the interview procedure and schedule.

3.4.5 Analysis

Research exploring teacher resilience has often employed thematic analysis (e.g. Le Cornu, 2013; Kimber et al, 2013; Gabi, 2015), and the approach has led to the identification of practical strategies to promote resilience to OS (e.g. Howard and Johnson, 2004). Thematic analysis involves sorting data into codes and using these to derive themes (Boyatzis, 1998).

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that thematic analysis aligns with a Critical Realist approach as it reflects, rather than directly accesses reality, through individuals' ascribed meaning. The approach is also 'contextualist', taking into account social-contextual factors which may influence individuals' ascribed meanings (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Nonetheless, it retains a focus on material and other limits of reality, i.e. it gathers data from the 'empirical' domain.

With participants' consent (Appendix 8), responses were transcribed via a transcription service, and entered into the QSR NVivo data management program. The following stages of Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach were then used to analyse the data:

Familiarisation with the data – Braun and Clarke (2006) note that researchers should immerse and familiarise themselves in the data. Although participants' responses were transcribed verbatim via a transcription service, each recording and transcription was listened to, read and checked by myself multiple times. This process provided an opportunity for familiarisation with the data, through repeated and active reading (Riessman, 1993). There is no single approach to transcribing data in thematic analyses, but Braun and Clarke (2006)'s advice to record content verbatim was employed in attempt to provide an account that was as accurate as possible (Poland, 2002). Ideas for initial codes were also recorded in preparation for the next stage.

Generating initial codes – Codes are features of the data which appear relevant to the research questions, and are the most basic element of data that can be analysed meaningfully (Boyatzis, 1998). An inductive approach to thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998), where codes were generated from raw data was utilised for this study, due to the little research available to suggest what responses participants would give. Braun and Clarke (2006)'s advice to: identify as many codes as possible, include surrounding data extracts to provide contextual information, and to pay equal attention to each item was followed. Appendix 9 and 10 show the codes generated.

Searching for themes – Themes are patterns within data which describe and organise it (Boyatzis, 1998). It was considered how the initial codes could be combined to form overarching themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). A thematic map, i.e. a visual representation of codes' collation into provisional themes, was employed (Appendix 11, 12 and 13). Some initial codes formed (preliminary) primary themes, whilst others formed sub-themes.

Reviewing the themes – Themes were reviewed to ensure that: a) their data was meaningfully related, b) they were distinct. This was achieved by reading each theme's extracts and considering whether they were related and formed a pattern. A second phase considered the validity of themes in relation to the entire dataset, and whether they accurately reflected it. Themes without enough supporting data or which were too diverse were re-examined. This refinement led the formation of categories which were meaningful and distinct (Patton, 1990).

Defining and naming the themes – The collated data extracts for each theme were read and analysed. A description of each theme was then generated to describe its ‘essence’ in a few sentences, to ensure that further refinement was not needed (Appendix 14). Finalised thematic maps were also generated (findings section).

Producing a report – This involved writing up the analysis to convey the message of each theme and to illustrate some of the supporting data. These are provided in the findings section.

3.4.6 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability also need to be considered to ascertain the trustworthiness of flexible research designs (Robson, 2002).

3.4.6.1 Validity

Description, interpretation and theory, are the main threats to validity in qualitative research (Robson, 2002; Maxwell, 1992). Threats presented through description occur through inaccuracy or incompleteness of data (Robson, 2002). In this research, this was addressed through recording each interview, transcribing the data verbatim, and checking transcripts through several times for accuracy. A transcription service was also used to promote accuracy in the description (Easton et al, 2000).

Interpretation threats involve the researcher imposing meaning rather than allowing it to emerge (Robson, 2002). Providing a transparent explanation as to how data has been interpreted and conclusions reached can help to prevent this threat (Mason, 1996). This was addressed through adopting Braun and Clarke (2006)'s framework, which necessitates transparent, written records of every step of the data analysis.

Threats through theory occur through the researcher failing to consider alternative explanations for phenomena, and can be countered through actively seeking data which is not consistent with the adopted theory (Robson, 2002). Braun and Clarke (2006)'s approach to thematic analysis encourages equal attention to be given to each element of data, and findings which do not fit the theories adopted by this research were therefore more likely to surface.

3.4.6.2 Reliability

The standardisation of research instruments is less relevant for qualitative research (Robson, 2002), and applying the same criteria for reliability in quantitative research can be problematic (Mason, 1996). However technical considerations are still important. Easton et al (2000) notes that equipment failure, environmental hazards and transcription errors present threats to reliability in qualitative research. Consequently, recording equipment was trialled before interviews, and backup devices were made available. To mitigate interruptions, I requested that participants arrange for a quiet room to be available at their schools for 1 hour. Regarding transcription errors, Easton et al (2000) assert that hiring a professional and

experienced transcriber can help to promote accuracy, and that transcriptions should always be reviewed by the researcher for accuracy. This process was adopted for the study. Showing others that research has been carried out in an accurate and trustworthy manner increases the reliability of qualitative research (Robson, 2002). Examples of interview transcripts (Appendix 15), as well as detailed information regarding the coding and analysis of data, as required by Braun and Clarke (2006) are also included to this end.

3.5 Generalisability and Utility

Generalisation can be made to populations and theory (Sharp, 1998). Research conducted using a Critical Realist epistemology typically uses the latter, where theory is generated to explain relationships within particular cases and contexts, and can then be used to explain relationships within similar situations (Pawson and Tilly, 1997). This research develops a tentative theory about contributors to OS (demands) and effective means of coping with it (resources) in the SENCO role. Specific approaches for SENCOs, school leaders, and EPs are identified, providing insight into an underexplored topic. As with other initial explorations into the area of teacher wellbeing (e.g. Howard and Johnson, 2004), it is hoped that the research will also highlight worthwhile avenues for future inquiry.

3.5.1 Context

Due to the centrality of context within Critical Realist research, a description of the situation in which the current research took place is included. Table 8 shows

information about the local authority where the research took place. References are not included in this section to protect participants' identities.

Table 8 - Characteristics of the local authority in which the research took place.

Government Type	Metropolitan borough
Area	38 square miles
Population	345,400
Average resident age	33 years
Number of residents from Black and Minority Ethnic Groups	33.4%
% of residents living in neighbourhoods amongst the 10% most deprived in England	18.5%
Total number of pupils on roll	51,913
Percentage of pupils with SEN	21.3%
Number of primary schools	87
Number of secondary schools	23
Number of special schools	8
Primary schools judged as good/outstanding by Ofsted	94%
Secondary schools judged as good/outstanding by Ofsted	57%
Special schools judged as good/outstanding by Ofsted	100% ⁴

The number of pupils receiving free school meals, and the number of pupils identified to have SEN was higher than the national average. The research was conducted during a period of consultation and planned restructuring in the local authority. Cuts were planned to specialist teacher, specialist autism support worker, and other children's service posts. Although these cuts did not actually occur during the data-gathering period, participants were likely to have been aware of them. Further information regarding participant demographics and background is available in the 'Participants and Recruitment' sections for each phase.

⁴ Inspection data was not available for one school, due to it having only recently opened.

3.6 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is the exploration of ways in which a researcher's involvement in a piece of research influences, acts upon, and informs the research (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999). Continuous reviewing of the researcher's role within the research provides a level of scrutiny which discourages the imposition of meaning by the researcher and promotes validity (Willig, 2013). It is more than acknowledging personal biases and promotes thinking about how one's own reactions to the research context make insights and understandings possible (Willig, 2013). It is therefore not sought that these aspects be removed from the study, but that they are made explicit to frame the research (Willig, 2013).

There is no set format for addressing reflexivity and the most important aspect of the process is to include clear, honest and informative reflections on the researcher's role in the process (Willig, 2013). It is acknowledged that it is not possible to anticipate all of the ways in which I may shape the research. However, Willig (2013) notes that reflexivity discussions may focus on the researcher's:

- Personal characteristics (e.g. gender, ethnicity, age)
- Prior experience with the subject matter
- Expectations of the research and their investment in what might be found
- Motivations for carrying out the research

3.6.1 Positionality

My personal characteristics can be described as a 30-year-old male with Anglo-Indian ethnicity. It is notable that in contrast to my gender, all of the participants in this study were female. Padfield and Proctor (1996) note that the researcher's gender can impact the extent to which participants discuss their experiences. Whilst I did not intuit this whilst carrying out the interviews, it is important to note its potential impact.

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, I have prior experience with the subject matter and have existing and developed perspectives on key topics within the research. This included me having worked as a teacher and having a family where many members are teachers. I have witnessed the effects of teacher stress both professionally and personally which has undoubtedly acted as a motivator to engage in the topic.

My experience as a trainee educational psychologist has led to me considering issues from an eco-systemic perspective, which has likely shaped the research's emphasis on task and systemic level contributors to OS, rather than solely exploring within-person contributors. A desire to carry out research which moves away from an 'individual-deficit' model of teacher stress has also likely been shaped by my experience that teachers experiencing OS have sometimes been treated unjustly by their employers. My professional training has also led to me practising in alignment with the positive psychology paradigm, which again has likely shaped this research's emphasis on strengths and means of ameliorating teacher stress.

These experiences as well as wider unexplored discourses may have influenced the data collection and analysis. Critical realism acknowledges that knowledge about the world is mediated by the researcher and their context (Bhaskar, 2013). Whilst my position cannot be separated from the study, it is made explicit. Several steps were taken to minimise my impact on the research and to carry it out in a transparent way. These are outlined in detail in the validity and reliability sections for each phase but include; the avoidance of leading questions, following the thematic analysis guidelines outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), detailing clearly each step of the thematic analyses, use of a transcription service, formulating interview questions based on previous research, establishing rapport with the participants in phase 2, checking my interpretation of participants' answers in the semi-structured interviews, and sending interview questions in advance.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The University of Birmingham's Code of Practice of Research (2016) was adhered to throughout the research. I was on placement in the local authority where the research was carried out as a trainee educational psychologist, and the principles outlined in the Division of Child and Educational Psychology (BPS, 2002), as well as the British Psychological Society's Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2010) were therefore also adhered to. Ethical approval was granted by the Humanities and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee at the University of Birmingham on 7th September 2016.

3.7.1 Informed Consent

Informed consent involves participants knowing exactly what they are agreeing to participate in (Thomas, 2013). A participant information sheet which outlined the study's: purpose, nature, potential benefits, risks, confidentiality procedures, withdrawal procedures, proposed presentation of results, and researcher contact details was created. Efforts were made to present the information sheet in an understandable manner, and to make it clear that individuals had the option to choose whether to take part (Thomas, 2013). Individuals who wished to participate in the study were then asked to sign a consent form (Appendix 8), which included several 'statements of understanding' to indicate their understanding of the information sheet.

3.7.2 Right to Withdraw

Participants were informed via the information sheet and consent form that they had the right to withdraw from the study. Unique codes and pseudonyms for participants' data, were used in phase 1 and 2 respectively. In the event of withdrawal, this allowed the appropriate data to be located and destroyed. Participants who wished to withdraw from the study were asked to do so before 01/12/16 as analysis of the data was planned to be completed by this point and it would not be have been possible to remove individual responses.

3.7.3 Confidentiality and Data Protection

Participants leaving their contact details in phase 1 of the study, and face to face interviews with myself in phase 2 of the study meant that data was not anonymous

to me. In the reporting of the data, participants' information was anonymous to readers, as names, references to institutions, and other potentially identifiable features were removed or replaced with codes or pseudonyms (Thomas, 2013). The questionnaire data was presented on a group basis, i.e. through descriptive statistics and thematic analyses, rendering individual responses unrecognisable. The interview transcripts also used pseudonyms to protect participants' identities.

The datasets were inputted onto my work account using a local authority laptop, and codes and pseudonyms were assigned to participants at this point. Data was encrypted along with all other files on the account. Paper copies of the questionnaires were kept in a personal, locked filing cabinet at the local authority base. The data will be stored for 10 years in line with the University of Birmingham's research code of practice. When participants' names had been replaced with codes, and/or pseudonyms, the data was transferred to a personal laptop at my home, from which it was not possible to identify participants.

3.7.4 Risks and Benefit

As the questionnaire was delivered at a SENCO conference, a potential risk was that participants may have felt pressurised to complete the measure due to conformity or misinterpreting the questionnaire as being compulsory. Fox et al (2003) suggest that inviting individuals to participate after a thorough explanation can assist them in making an informed decision, and this was done via the participant information sheet and presentation.

An additional ethical consideration is that OS is a potentially sensitive topic and could evoke difficult memories/emotions for participants. Fully informing participants of this potential risk and providing signposting to relevant support agencies for OS such as 'Increasing Access to Psychological Therapies' teams was subsequently employed. These agencies are detailed in Appendix 3.

It was unlikely that participants would receive any immediate benefit from participating in the study. However, it was ultimately hoped that the research would raise awareness about OS faced by SENCOs, identify which factors contribute towards this, and highlight some of the ways in which SENCOs, schools, and EPs can prevent and/or cope with OS, thereby addressing an underexplored research area. It is hoped that this study's emphasis on task, organisational and extra-organisational related factors which contribute towards OS may also provide a small contribution towards shifting the phenomenon of teacher stress from an 'individual-deficit' model.

4 CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

4.1 Research Question 1 – SENCOs' Experiences of OS (Phase 1)

The first research question explored how stressful SENCOs find their role. Table 9 shows that responses to the question 'In general, how stressful do you find being a SENCO?' ranged from '2' i.e. 'Mildly stressful', to '5' i.e. 'Extremely stressful'.

Table 9 - Summary of the descriptive statistics generated for RQ1

N	Valid	38
	Missing	0
Mean		3.08
Range		3
Minimum		2
Maximum		5

The mean response was 3.08 and Figure 7 shows that over half the sample (63.16%) indicated that they generally found the SENCO role 'Moderately stressful'. 18.42% and 2.63% of participants respectively reported to find the role 'Very stressful' or 'Extremely stressful', whereas 15.79% of participants indicated to find the role 'Mildly stressful'. No participants indicated that the role was 'Not at all stressful' and all participants (n=38) gave valid responses to this question.

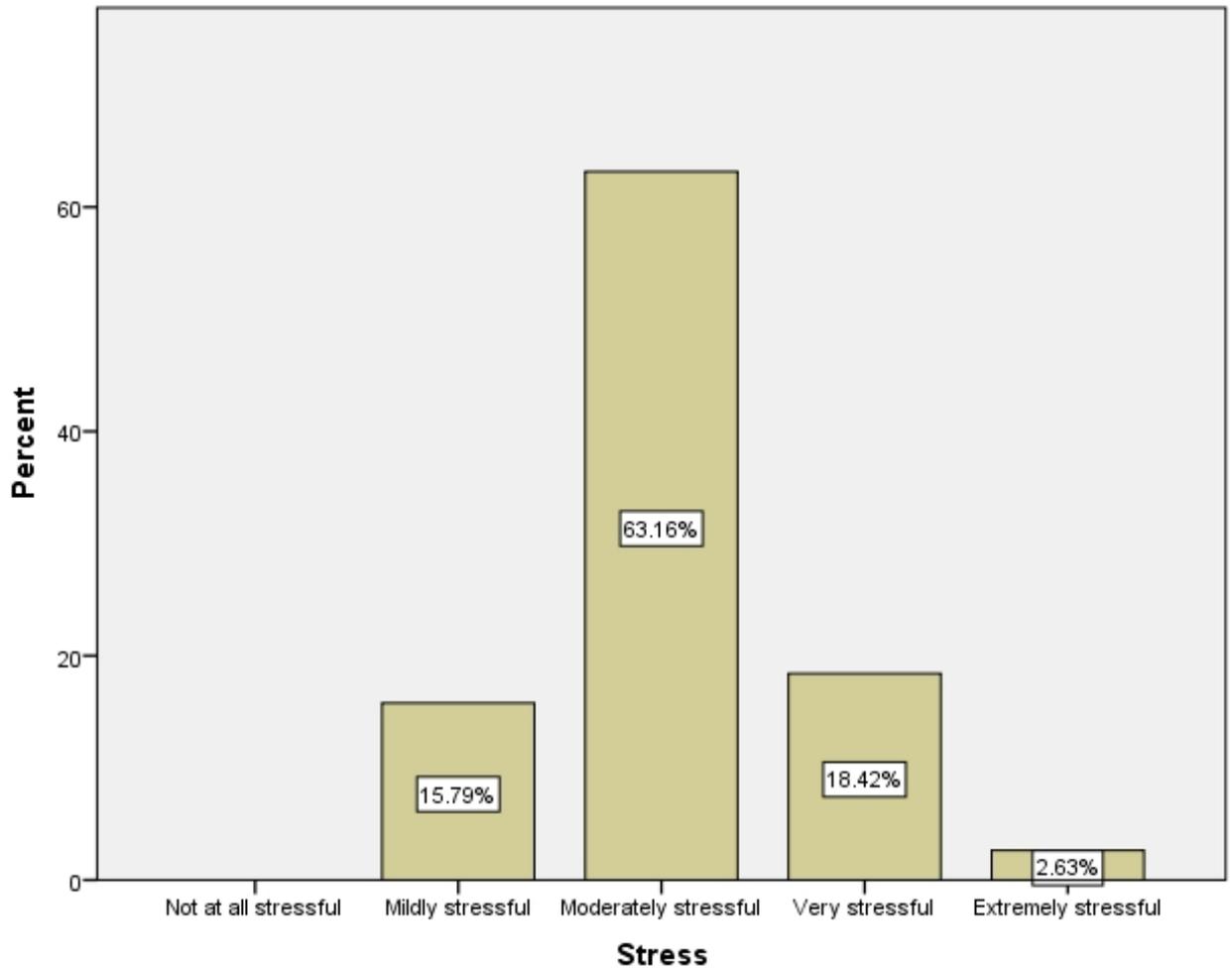


Figure 7 - Bar chart showing participants' ratings of how stressful they find the SENCO role

4.2 Research Question 2 – Factors which Contribute Towards OS

(Phase 1)

The second question explored which aspects of the SENCO role participants perceived to contribute towards OS. Participants rated factors identified from the literature and piloting, indicating how often they thought they caused OS. An open question explored which aspects of the role were perceived to be most stressful, and this was analysed through thematic analysis.

4.2.1 Aspects of the Role Perceived to Frequently Cause OS

Table 10 details participants' ratings of the frequency with which factors identified from the literature were perceived to cause OS. The frequency of participants' responses for each factor and the mean score is included. Responses are sorted from highest to lowest mean score. 'Workload', 'excessive paperwork', 'local authority procedures', 'time allocated for the role', 'OFSTED inspections' and 'having differing priorities to colleagues' were most frequently reported to cause OS.

4.2.2 Aspects of the Role Perceived to Cause the most OS

Responses to the open question 'What do you consider to be the most stressful aspect of being a SENCO?' were analysed using Braun and Clarke (2006)'s approach to thematic analysis. The final stage of the analysis, 'Producing the report', is detailed here. Supporting data extracts and an analytic narrative are included in effort to create a "concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and interesting account of the story the data tell" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.23). Figure 8 shows a thematic map of the final themes and subthemes that emerged from the analysis.

Table 10 – Table showing participants’ ratings of how frequently role-related factors are perceived to cause stress

	Never causes stress	Very occasionally causes stress	Occasionally causes stress	Frequently causes stress	Is a constant cause of stress	MEAN
Workload	0.0	5.3	21.1	42.1	31.6	4.00
Excessive paperwork	0.0	2.6	23.7	52.6	21.1	3.92
Local authority procedures	0.0	5.3	47.4	39.5	7.9	3.50
Time allocated for the role	2.6	15.8	36.8	31.6	10.5	3.32
OFSTED inspections	5.3	13.2	42.1	23.7	15.8	3.32
Having differing priorities to colleagues	0.0	21.1	31.6	44.7	2.6	3.29
Time management	0.0	21.1	50.0	18.4	7.9	3.14
A lack of engagement from parents	2.6	31.6	28.9	23.7	10.5	3.08
Implementing the new Code of Practice	0.0	23.7	47.4	18.4	5.3	3.07
Managing parents’ expectations	7.9	13.2	47.4	18.4	7.9	3.06
Having differing priorities to the government/local authority agenda	2.6	26.3	42.1	23.7	5.3	3.03
A lack of support from external agencies and/or the local authority	5.3	23.7	44.7	21.1	5.3	2.97

The breadth of knowledge required	5.3	23.7	39.5	26.3	2.6	2.97
Others' expectations of SENCOs' knowledge	7.9	21.1	42.1	28.9	0.0	2.92
Completing the SENCO qualification	10.5	10.5	15.8	13.2	10.5	2.92
The quality of support from external agencies and/or local authority	7.9	34.2	42.1	13.2	2.6	2.68
Working with others who are experiencing difficult emotions	10.5	39.5	31.6	13.2	5.3	2.63
Managing and hiding difficult emotions	7.9	36.8	39.5	10.5	2.6	2.62
Hostility from parents	5.3	47.4	28.9	15.8	0.0	2.62
Being isolated within the role	10.5	42.1	23.7	10.5	7.9	2.61
Having nobody to share work-related problems with	15.8	26.3	36.8	5.3	10.5	2.59
Not having enough power to make changes	13.2	26.3	21.1	15.8	5.3	2.59
Not being a member of the senior leadership team	10.5	13.2	7.9	10.5	2.6	2.59
The clarity of the SENCO role	10.5	39.5	31.6	13.2	2.6	2.57
Misunderstandings in communication	5.3	47.4	39.5	7.9	0.0	2.50
Using emotional resources (e.g. negotiating and compromising)	15.8	36.8	28.9	15.8	0.0	2.39

The status of the SENCO role	18.4	34.2	39.5	7.9	0.0	2.37
A lack of training	15.8	44.7	18.4	10.5	0.0	2.26
A lack of opportunities for whole school approaches to SEN	21.1	36.8	18.4	7.9	5.3	2.26
A lack of appreciation from colleagues	31.6	28.9	21.1	13.2	0.0	2.11
Hostility from colleagues	18.4	55.3	15.8	2.6	2.6	2.07
Insufficient financial reward	34.2	28.9	15.8	13.2	0.0	2.03
Hostility from children	28.9	47.4	13.2	5.3	0.0	1.89
A lack of respect from colleagues	50.0	31.6	2.6	10.5	0.0	1.68

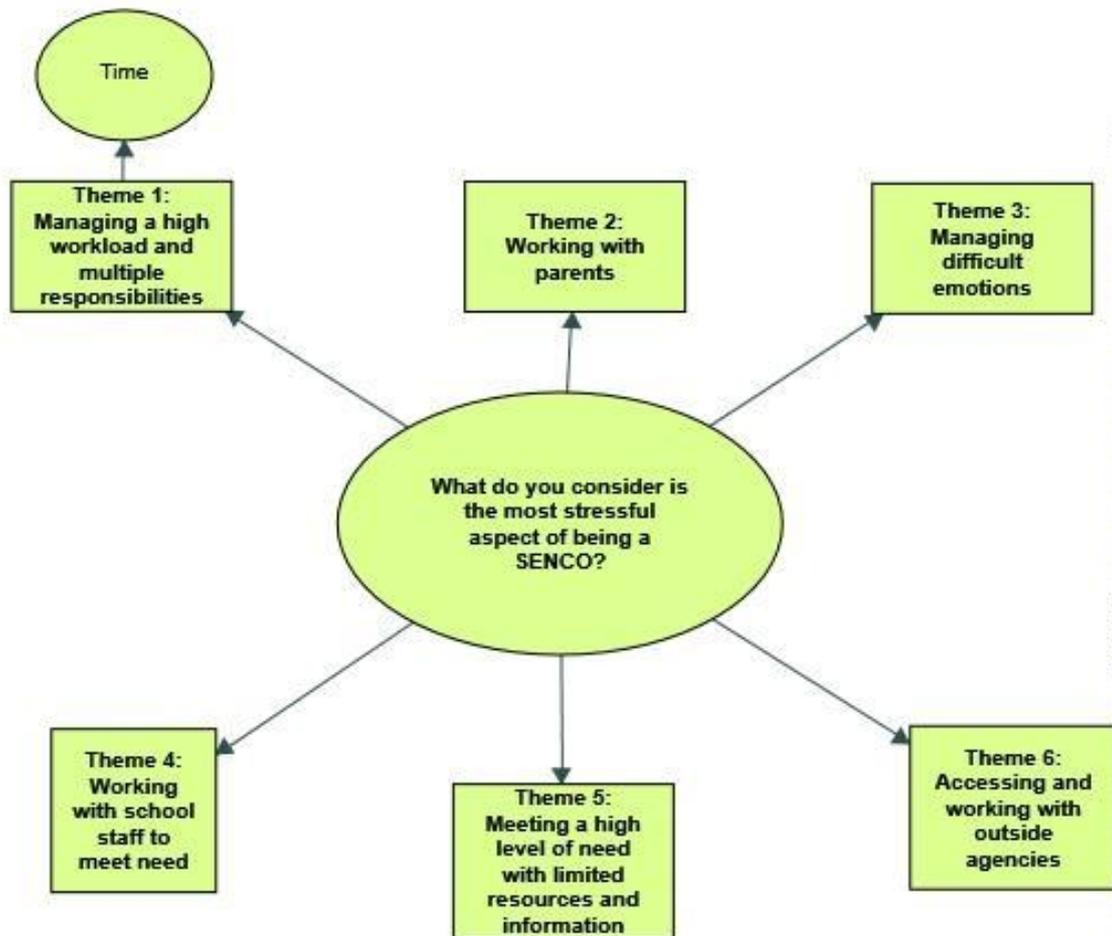


Figure 8 - Final thematic map showing themes and subthemes in relation to factors which participants perceived to cause the most stress in their role

4.2.2.1 Theme 1 - Managing a high workload and multiple responsibilities

This theme relates to participants experiencing OS from managing a high workload and multiple work-related responsibilities. Generally, participants' other responsibilities referred to other roles that they carried out in their setting. Most frequently, the additional role was as a class teacher, but others also mentioned carrying out the role in tandem with being a safeguarding lead, assistant headteacher, and headteacher.

In part, this appeared difficult because the SENCO role was often perceived as having enough work for a full-time job, despite it commonly being carried out on a part-time basis/in conjunction with other roles.

“The workload. The role is very varied and enough work for a full-time job. However, it is done on a part-time basis.”

Participants’ observations that the role is broad and somewhat all-encompassing also appeared to contribute towards workload.

“It often seems that all responsibilities come back to the SENCO”

To manage workload, participants referred to taking work home, and having to operate in a reactive capacity, rather than completing planned activities.

“Trying to fit everything in. Taking it home”.

“Fast paced decision making, responding ‘firefighting’ problems that arise throughout the day rather than getting to the ‘to do’ list”.

This led to feelings that work was often left incomplete and participants were denied a sense of achievement.

“Never feeling like something is complete/achieved”

The number of children on the register, wide remit of the role, and ‘paperwork’ were posited to contribute to a high workload, with the latter being referred to most

frequently. The demands of paperwork referred to participants preparing various documents (e.g. Education, Health, and Care Plan needs assessment requests), and to them relying on other staff to complete paperwork (e.g. referral forms).

“Chasing paperwork from colleagues”

“Keeping on top of paperwork”

4.2.2.1.1 Time

This subtheme related to participants’ views that time: frames, management, and allocations impacted upon workload and OS. Participants noted that there was often not enough time formally allocated to carry out the role.

“Having time to dedicate to the role”

“Time given over to SEN”

This appeared to make managing the time that was allocated difficult, and certain tasks added to this pressure by needing to be completed within a set window.

“Time management – paperwork alongside other responsibilities”

“Sometimes things have to be done within a set timeframe, which can put pressure on you”

For some, it seemed that time pressures varied throughout the year, and that there were periods where things were particularly busy or quiet.

“There tends to be packets of time when things are really busy but other times when it is fairly quiet”

4.2.2.2 Theme 2 - Working with parents

This theme relates to aspects of working with parents that contribute towards OS. Managing parents’ expectations regarding SEN provision appeared to be a source of OS for many participants.

“Dealing with parents’ expectations. We are usually perceived not to be doing enough for their child. We are ‘blamed’ when we don’t have a magical wand to magic away barriers to learning”.

Some of the parents that participants worked with were reportedly frustrated, possibly due to the waiting list times for SEN support services. Accessing support for parents at home in general was a difficulty and represented a gap in the provision that participants could coordinate.

“Waiting lists for some SEN services therefore having an impact for the child and causing stress for parents”.

“Accessing support for parents at home”.

Some participants also mentioned a difficulty in facilitating parental engagement, and cited this as a contributor to OS.

“Lack of engagement of some parents”

“Encouraging parents to engage”

4.2.2.3 Theme 3 – Managing difficult emotions

The essence of this theme is related to OS being caused by experiencing and managing challenging emotions that arose from role-related activities. Some challenging emotions appeared to arise from being party to disclosures and could have been compounded by not having the opportunity to discuss them with others.

“Offloading the impact of SEMH disclosures”.

Other challenging emotions arose from managing a high workload and multiple responsibilities, resulting in the sense that one was not carrying out their full range of responsibilities effectively.

“Feel guilt for letting class down as don’t feel like I can do each job to best of ability”.

Also related to workload was the frustration that dealing with unexpected incidents at the expense of planned activities caused.

“Can be frustrating constantly having children coming to you with their problems especially when you have so much to do”

Similarly, feeling responsible for meeting CYPs needs and knowing how to go about doing this appeared to contribute to experiences of OS.

“Weight of responsibility re: meeting children’s needs; knowing the most suitable provision”.

Participants also noted that dealing with others' frustrations can contribute to OS, and sometimes appeared to recipients of these.

"Frustrated parents"

"...can sometimes be the target for others' frustrations"

4.2.2.4 Theme 4 – Working with school staff to meet need

This theme related to participants working with colleagues to meet the needs of CYP with SEN. Coordinating SEN provision through other members of staff appeared to be challenging both in terms of information gathering/coordination and in relying upon them to implement relevant strategies into their lessons.

"Teachers are also extremely frustrating, getting them to differentiate and implement things into their lessons"

"Relying on others to complete things on time and carry out requested strategies to do your job effectively".

Some of the difficulties in this area related to colleagues having the appropriate skills and knowledge to implement strategies/approaches to support CYP with SEN, and this appeared to represent an additional pressure for some SENCOs.

"Keeping all colleagues trained up to effectively support the ever-changing needs of pupils".

There appeared to be systemic barriers to SENCOs carrying out their roles effectively which reportedly led to OS. These included not being afforded the power to make

changes and decisions, and the standing of SEN within the school/setting. The latter may well have impacted upon colleagues' willingness to implement strategies.

"Making SLT understand the importance of SEN"

"Whole school view of SEN and what it is"

"Mindset, keeping colleagues on board with the inclusive vision of the school"

Both others' and participants' expectations of themselves appeared to contribute towards OS. Many participants and their colleagues appeared to have high expectations of what was achievable, despite a perception of limited resources being available. This appeared to resonate with the tensions that some of Szwed (2007)'s participants experienced from 'managing in the middle'.

"Being caught in the middle!"

"Provision for SEN could always be better!"

"Opportunity to deliver expectations to others as not matched by resources available"

4.2.2.5 Theme 5 - Meeting a high-level of need with limited resources and information

This theme refers to OS caused by SENCOs having access to limited resources and information. Keeping up to date with relevant knowledge and information related to SEN provision appeared to contribute to this. It is possible that recent changes in the Code of Practice may have contributed towards changes in relevant knowledge and information, in part because an increasing number of pupils' SEN are now expected

to be met within mainstream provision (DfE, 2015), meaning that staff require a broader skill set.

“It is difficult to stay up to date and knowledgeable in all the different areas of SEN we come across. Children with a very high-level of need are now in mainstream settings”.

“Having sufficient time/knowledge/support to implement a diverse range of strategies to meet children’s needs”.

Some participants also had limited information regarding the agenda of senior leaders within the school, as well as limited power to implement change.

“Not being able to make decisions/know all the information (needing to defer to senior leaders)”

The resources available to SENCOs, particularly financial, appeared to be limited, and the limited funding for and of specialist services impacted the support that SENCOs felt they could offer. There was also the notion that such funding and resources had decreased over time.

“Lack of funding available to feel I am helping all children”.

“Limitation of resources to meet demand/expectation/outcome”

4.2.2.6 Theme 6 – Accessing and working with outside agencies

The essence of this theme was that accessing support from and communicating with external agencies contributed towards OS for participants. It appeared that many participants had experienced difficulties in accessing specialist support services, in part due to waiting list times.

“Supporting parents with an ever decreasing pot of funding and professionals’ time”.

“Waiting lists, particularly CAMHS and OT”

Difficulty in accessing Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) was particularly salient and there was the notion that there were delays in the assessment and any subsequent support.

“Accessing support/assessment from NHS services, particularly CAMHS neurodevelopmental team”.

“The long wait for assessment, especially through CAMHS, especially when have tried to move things forward to support a child and there is a 2-year waiting list.”

In the interim, participants had to meet the needs of CYP without the said input. For some participants, it appeared that a need was clearly identified in school, but that a formal diagnosis was needed to access support from external agencies. Delays in accessing specialist support were perceived to increase demands for participants, as well as having an adverse impact on CYP and parents.

“Waiting lists for children to get a diagnosis. So we have to cope on our own”.

“Waiting list for some SEN services therefore having an impact for the child and causing stress for parents”

Communication between participants and external agencies was also problematic. This was partly due to participants holding other responsibilities (e.g. class teaching) in addition to the SENCO role, therefore limiting the time available to liaise with external agencies, or providing an interruption to another role.

“Agencies wanting to speak to me whilst I teach”

“Coordinating communication – restricted availability due to teaching commitments means it can be tricky successfully contacting people”

4.3 Research Question 3 – Coping with OS (Phase 2)

Research question 3 explored how SENCOs who perceive themselves to cope well with OS, despite facing high work-related demands, achieve this level of coping. Thematic analysis of participants’ interview data identified a wide number of individual and systemic approaches. Figure 9 depicts the main themes and subthemes generated for research question 3.

4.3.1 Theme 1 – Beliefs and Outlook

Participants’ beliefs were a key factor in promoting resilience to OS. Participants highlighted that beliefs relating to: the purpose of their role, their coping ability, and their expectations of what could be achieved through the SENCO role, to be particularly important.

4.3.1.1 Subtheme 1 - Purpose

Participants identified that promoting positive outcomes for CYP and families was a core and guiding belief that they held about the role, as was the notion that SENCOs should act as an advocate for CYP and families. Participants also had the purpose of supporting CYP holistically, rather than purely academically. Some participants' own experiences of having children appeared to contribute towards the inception of these purposes.

“Lots of children in any school can face barriers to their learning and it is just trying to help remove some of those for them, and they are all, you know, they are all entitled to be included and to be valued and to have access to the best progress and learning that they can.”

- Participant 4

“I think having my own two young children also helps because I think if that was my child, what would I want for them, and that helps, I think, to guide...”

“...Yes, we do want them to be academically successful but we also want them to be happy and enjoy school.”

- Participant 2

How participants acted in alignment with these purposes was broad but involved: offering a level of challenge within the school-system, collaboratively problem-solving with CYP and families, and supporting other staff in understanding and meeting CYPs needs. Participants derived enjoyment from instances when they had been able to meet these purposes, and this attracted them to stay in the role. Some participants also actively sought to work in deprived areas which they reported to be rewarding as they could make a clear difference to helping CYP overcome barriers to their learning.

Interviewee: "Yeah similar catchment. I have always tended to work in quite deprived areas"

Interviewer: "You have been drawn towards that?"

Interviewee: "Yeah I think so, I don't know why but yeah that is the areas that I have taught in, but it does definitely come with challenges but I think it is just so rewarding."

Interviewer: "And then after"

Interviewee: "I was just going to say they have got a lot of barriers, a lot of the children, to their learning, so it is rewarding to try and help them."

- Participant 4

4.3.1.2 Subtheme 2 - Positive appraisals

Participants appraised themselves as resilient and also made positive appraisals about their coping abilities. They consistently recognised their own achievements and tended to view most events through a positive lens. Often, this attitude was mirrored by the general culture of the school. A solution focused approach was identified as a possible method which could promote such appraisals.

"I do feel like I am fairly resilient anyway. I don't think, and I like I think I quite like to be that kind of swan 'it's all fine, I have got my to do list and I have done none of it today but it is all fine'. I have got quite a positive outlook on most things. But I have also got, in school we have kind of got that ethos anyway"

"...There is very much, especially the kind of team that I am most involved with and the senior leadership team as well who are fairly positive, fairly solution focused."

- Participant 2

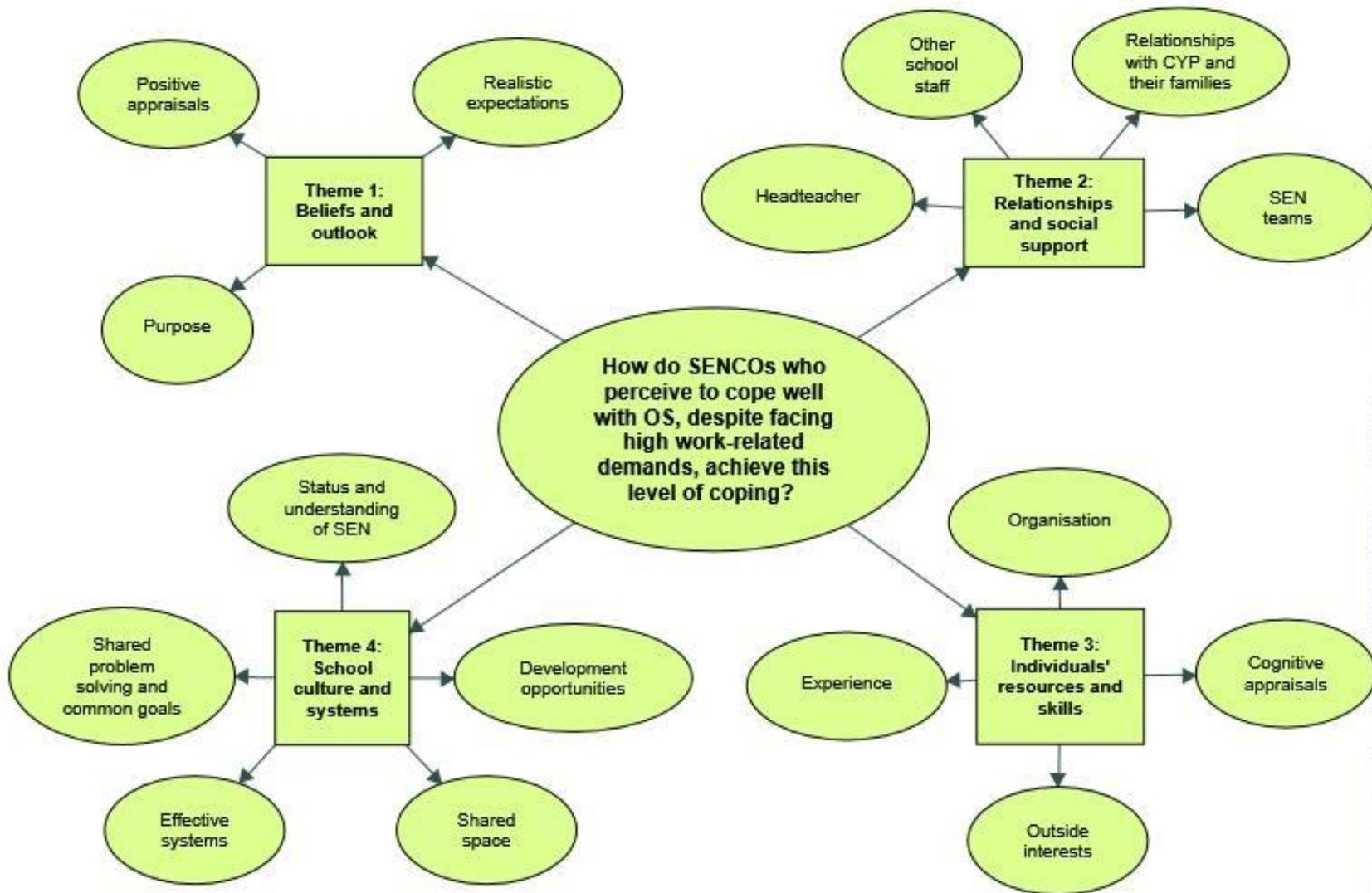


Figure 9 - Final thematic map showing themes and subthemes in relation to factors which participants perceived to be helpful in managing or preventing OS

4.3.1.3 Subtheme 3 - Realistic expectations

Having an accurate understanding of the demands of the role was considered essential in ensuring a good person-job fit. Facets of the role which appeared to be particularly important to understand included: it often taking extended periods of time to effect changes, that one may have to trial multiple approaches before something works, and that it can take time to accurately understand a problem or situation, and generate a solution for it.

“You have got to make sure it is for you. XXXX has just been given the SENCO role and he absolutely hates it. The SENCO role is a long, it is a lot of, you have got to be a certain type of person, you can't expect, if you are someone who wants quick answers, or quick changes it is not for you. You have got to be strategic, you have got to be in it for the long haul and you have got to be patient. Because if you think you are going to go in and change a kid's life like that, it takes five, six, seven years and you might never do it. You have also got to be resilient and you have got to keep changing things.”

- Participant 1

4.3.2 Theme 2 – Relationships and Social Support

The presence of a support network was identified to be essential in managing OS. Participants identified people inside and outside of school who they could contact to share concerns with or turn to for support during times of difficulty.

“Friends outside of work who are or have been in education.”

“That is really helpful. So my best friend was a teacher, she is a consultant now she works with the XXXXX because she kind of knows and then she has friends who are headteachers and if I do get stressed I will definitely talk to her and that helps a lot...”

- Participant 4

Those with experience of the SENCO role or teaching were seen to be particularly helpful. The headteacher, other school staff, and SEN teams were also perceived to be valuable, and good working relationships with CYP and parents were identified to be important in minimising OS.

4.3.2.1 Subtheme 1 - Headteacher

The headteacher often acted as a key support figure for participants. They frequently had experience of carrying out the SENCO role themselves and could empathise with the demands participants faced. Further, they could and often did provide additional resources to help participants meet need. For example, allowing work from home and granting extra funds. Sometimes this was done pro-actively by the headteacher to prevent OS from occurring. The opportunity to simply have a headteacher that would listen to concerns was identified to be very valuable.

"I think for me, the way I deal with things is just to talk to people. I am not one to bottle things up. I am the exact opposite. And the senior management here are really good, if you need an extra day, if I went to them then and just said this is too much. And as best they can, they will accommodate you an extra half a day or try and cover you."

- Participant 5

4.3.2.2 Subtheme 2 - Other school staff

Support from and relationships with other school staff was also perceived to be important. Opportunities to talk through difficult incidents, have colleagues demonstrate empathy with the demands faced by participants, and to receive positive feedback from staff were all valued.

"...in school, well again I would say, strangely enough you know from the feedback you get from, such positive feedback, you get from parents, from staff when they feel so well supported and you know you have helped them"

- Participant 3

It was felt that good relationships with staff minimised the amount of OS that may be caused by them, and made staff more aware of the demands that participants faced.

"Yeah it is really, really important and actually the majority I think of stress for SENCOs comes from other staff. So, if you can build a relationship with other staff then they will support."

- Participant 1

Social events, time in the staffroom and regularly talking to colleagues were perceived as ways to develop such relationships. In some schools, staff had collectively experienced challenging events (e.g. poor Ofsted inspections), which participants felt had led to a culture of resilience within the school and to a bond being created between staff through the facing of adversity.

"They have seen some really difficult times so they must be resilient."

"But then you don't know if it is the experience of what we have been through here, when the behaviour was extremely challenging, whether that bonds you together in a different way."

- Participant 4

4.3.2.3 Subtheme 3 - SEN teams

Some participants had a group of staff who acted as an SEN support team. This provided support through working towards shared goals, holding similar aims and

values, and developing practice through constructive criticism. During challenging periods, members talked with one another and could distribute workload evenly.

“Yeah and I think that is, we share an office, myself and the lead learning mentor and I think I kind of probably lean on her and say ‘right I have got to do this, this and this’ and she is quite good about saying ‘well let me do that’ and I think we can identify that in each other.”

“Yeah and you know there is an element of challenge there always, but you don’t feel threatened by that because you know it is, because you have worked together long enough, you know the point of it is either like challenged because you need to be or a point of growth.”

- Participant 2

4.3.2.4 Subtheme 4 - Relationships with CYP and their families

Good relationships with CYP and families was identified to make it easier to carry out the role, due to an increased knowledge of their situations and increased rapport. The establishment of such relationships was a priority for participants and it was felt that simply introducing oneself to CYP and their families could help to support development of these relationships.

“It has allowed me to develop quite positive relationships with the parents and the parents that we have got because we need them on board, especially the most vulnerable children, we need them.”

- Participant 5

4.3.3 Theme 3 – Individuals’ Resources and Skills

Data indicated that participants employed a range of strategies at the individual level to prevent or manage OS. Some of these related to how participants appraised

demands. The ability to draw upon previous experience, organisational skills, and the presence of outside interests were also identified as key in the management of OS.

4.3.3.1 Subtheme 1 - Cognitive appraisals

Participants often used techniques such as re-framing, depersonalising, humour, and perspective taking to manage challenging demands. This sometimes involved drawing upon experiences where they had successfully met similar demands, or through making appraisals which enabled them to depersonalise challenging situations.

“I often think, in a week or in a month or in a year this really won't matter. So just keep calm because it isn't, I know often it is not the end of the world, you know, really, it won't matter if we fast forward a week or a month or a year, I won't even remember it probably. So it is trying to think it is not, although it feels significant at the time, in the grand scheme of things, so I will often think that.”

- Participant 4

“The important thing to remember is not to take it personally really because at first you are thinking well what more could we possibly have done but actually it is going back to that phrase ‘you can't win all of the people all of the time’. You will get the odd case that is out of your control.”

- Participant 3

Participants also recognised their own achievements, both in relation to everyday tasks, and in effecting positive outcomes for CYP in the longer term. Making to-do lists and ticking off items represented one approach which was used to recognise everyday achievements.

“Yeah yeah..... and I think I like to, I do like a list, I do and sometimes I am you know, I have done something that is not on my list, I will write it on and cross is out because it is an achievement.”

- Participant 2

A final finding in relation to this subtheme is that participants appraised situations as having a range of potential solutions. For example, one participant reported that when they felt that they could not affect change in a school and that they had exhausted all options, they would be prepared to take the action of leaving the school.

“Yeah and you have done as much as you can and you just feel that you are going to end up on a treadmill doing the same thing and not seeing any major changes then, so then I moved here.”

- Participant 1

4.3.3.2 Subtheme 2 - Experience

Previous experience from other roles added to the resources available to participants.

“Before I was SENCO I worked with children with disabilities so I worked at a respite unit and then I worked within social care for the children with disabilities team. So I guess I have got experience of children who have difficulties, which some of the skills I learned before becoming a teacher, I have been able to sort of bring to this role.”

- Participant 5

Previous experience of successfully coping with OS also helped to overcome feelings of strain and to put challenging situations into perspective. In addition, participants could recognise physiological and psychological warning signs of stress, and take constructive action to address it.

“I will say to myself if I am feeling quite stressed out, you know you will get the feeling of stress in your shoulders you know the fight or flight thing and I will think to myself, well you need to go to the gym or I need to go for some exercise or I need to go for a swim. And I need to unwind or go for a nice walk and switch off.”

“And I say to myself well do you remember you felt like this before say I don't know, 2 years ago when there was another stressful similar incident or something like that and I will talk my way through it mentally and then I will think and actually you come through it, you know you do come through it. At the time you think this is a really difficult situation to manage, ‘oh I could do with just walking away’ or just giving it up and doing a different job, something that which isn't as stressful and I say to myself ‘well actually, remember you did actually manage to work your way through that situation and you came through it and it is over and done with now’ and then you work through, you have experienced better times. So you have to rationalise it, it is not forever, that difficult moment is not forever.”

- Participant 3

Some participants' experience with their own children increased empathy with parents and enabled good working relationships to be established. Participants' experience of the school (i.e. systems, procedures, CYP, parents, staff) made it easier for them to carry out their role, and having a teaching role in the school was thought to increase perceived credibility, making it easier to facilitate change through school staff.

“I am not an outstanding teacher but I can teach. So when I am advising staff, staff listen but actually if you have got a SENCO that is a rubbish teacher, why would staff listen to them when they can't hold it in the classroom?”

- Participant 1

4.3.3.3 Subtheme 3 - Organisation

Participants' organisational skills enabled them to maintain a work-life balance and minimise OS that can be caused by imbalance of these areas. Strategies to achieve

this included: creating a routine which provided a realistic opportunity to manage workload (e.g. dedicating certain days of the week to administration), prioritising tasks based upon their importance and the timeframe in which they needed to be completed, and time-keeping within meetings. As far as possible, participants had realistic expectations and knowledge of upcoming demands, and periods of high demand could therefore be anticipated and planned for. Participants also appeared to reflect upon their work-life balance and to take appropriate action to redress the balance where necessary.

“I think it is just, it is all in your, for me it is all in my mind. It is, I guess a sense of panic that there is too much to do and that is when I will write a list or you know, think about what I need to do there and then and then it becomes more manageable. Because you don't have to do everything in that moment where you are feeling overwhelmed.”

“I think sometimes as well I know that I will have to do a really long day but then I feel better for it at the end of that day. So I will come in at, say for example I don't know tomorrow or Friday and think oh there is so much to do and I will think oh I will just go in really early and stay because for me it is better for me to do that than be worrying about what I have got to do.”

- Participant 5

“At times that have been more demanding you have to try and address your work life balance and you have to remove yourself a little bit and think ‘right am I you know, not just working all the time, am I having a nice sort of like treats at the weekend, things to look forward to? Am I exercising regularly?’ You know I have taken up Yoga in recent years because that is really good, you know for breathing and relaxation.”

- Participant 3

4.3.3.4 Subtheme 4 - Outside interests

Participants had a variety of interests outside of work and had events that they had planned in advance and were looking forward to. Knowledge of these events acted as a strategy to persevere in the face of high demands.

"I would say outside of school I think it is important to have other interests. So because I think even as a class teacher you can just get bogged down with the stresses of it and you know at the end of the day you are so tired, you go home at 5 or 6 o'clock and it is not like a job where you can go make a cup of tea if you want to. It is full on from the minute the children walk in the door to when they leave. So you are tired but if you have other things to focus on outside of school, it just gives you that break, that mental break from getting caught up and too stressed out really. That is what I find."

- Participant 5

4.3.4 Theme 4 – School Culture and Systems

The culture of participants' schools and the systems that were in place played an essential role in both minimising the demands that were faced and in increasing resources. The status and understanding of SEN within the school, presence of shared problem-solving and common goals, effective systems, shared space, and development opportunities were particularly salient.

4.3.4.1 Subtheme 1 - Status and understanding of SEN

A high status and understanding of SEN within the school was thought to decrease the demands placed on participants and their experiences of OS. Being a member of or at least having the support of the SLT, having effective staff supporting with SEN, adequate funding, CPD, and good relationships between the SENCO and members

of staff were perceived to increase the status and understanding of SEN within schools.

“you have got to raise your profile of SEN all the time and if they see you as a very high profile they will work with you, if they see you as just somewhere where they put the SEN kids and often the naughty kids, then it becomes very stressful. Whereas if they see you as strategic and changing things to help then that, yeah. I don't think I know how a SENCO can be a SENCO without being a member of SLT to be honest. I think every SENCO has to be or has to have an Assistant Head that is just, has been a SENCO, understands your role, and will support you and which is what XXXX has, they always have a link who has done the role”

- Participant 1

Within such provision, support was tailored to CYP and their families. All members of staff working with CYP with SEN had an awareness of their areas of need, in addition to a wider, holistic understanding (e.g. family circumstances, strengths etc). This enabled effective support to be provided by more than one member of staff, and reduced demands on the SENCO.

“It is very nurturing. And it is very, in terms of the SEN, it is very personalised to them and a lot of people know what is in place for them.”

- Participant 4

4.3.4.2 Subtheme 2 - Shared problem-solving and common goals

A culture that promoted shared problem-solving amongst SENCOs and staff was perceived to increase confidence in participants' decisions and helped to identify alternative solutions to problems. Staff members' interests and strengths were explicitly identified and individuals were consulted based upon these. Teams that

worked towards common goals in a solution focused manner were seen to be particularly helpful.

“You know we have got different experts with lots of, you know a member of staff who is brilliant with making relationships with vulnerable families, that person is really great at developing relationships with younger children, go and lean on them because they have got that skill set.”

“You would always be solution focused with that because if you go ‘oh yeah that is really terrible, this this and the other’ then you have almost got a self-fulfilling prophesy there about we definitely can't fix this”

- Participant 2

4.3.4.3 Subtheme 3 - Effective systems

Effective systems within the school reduced everyday demands on participants and/or increased the number of resources available to them. A common feature of effective systems was clarity in participants' and other staff members' roles.

“Yeah it is setting up, for me, it is setting up a team and systems that everyone knows what they are doing and everyone is very clear about what they are doing but they can adapt and change as new things come in and are just happy as a team.”

- Participant 1

Often, the SENCO worked at the strategic and coordination level, whilst other staff provided the practical implementation of strategies. Effective communication systems within the school were valued as was the delegation of paperwork tasks, which could often be performed by administrative staff.

“Before we came in, God, there was just no systems. There was no email, there was nothing. We spent a long time and everything is now on XXX and everything has a system and everything is very clearly set out. Everyone uses electronic diaries so we can, so I know what all of my team is doing at every point of the day if I need to. If there are changes we communicate by email, we don’t run around.”

- Participant 1

Effective systems also minimised the unnecessary copying or repeating of information, often by storing things electronically. In some instances, these effective systems were made possible by the SENCO forming and/or being part of an SEN team. In these instances, the SENCO playing an active role in the development and management of the team was seen to be beneficial.

4.3.4.4 Subtheme 4 - Shared space

Sharing an office with members of an SEN team was perceived to combat feelings of isolation, and to manage feelings of strain through talking with others. Team members were also able to help each other in identifying signs of OS.

“Yeah and I think that is, we share an office, myself and the lead learning mentor and I think I kind of probably lean on her and say ‘Right I have got to do this, this and this’ and she is quite good about saying ‘well let me do that’ and I think we can identify that in each other.”

- Participant 2

However, there was also the perception that a means of being able to work privately was useful. Opportunities to work from home were seen to be valuable in some instances as work output could be increased. A culture which allowed this and where headteachers prompted SENCOs to do so was valued.

“When I get a bit stressed about my paperwork, because I have got too much, and the head will say right well go and work from home for, so I can work from home which really helps.”

- Participant 1

4.3.4.5 Subtheme 5 - Development opportunities

A school culture that actively promoted professional development provided an effective mechanism to develop participants’ practice and therefore their available resources, reducing strain for certain elements of their role. For example, training in solution focused approaches helped to shift the focus of meetings to identify ways forwards, and enabled participants to stay positive during challenging times.

“Yeah training about having challenging conversations, 3 part conversations, how you would - NSPCC do solution focused training for children but they also do a bit for adults as well. So you wouldn't go in and say ‘what are the issues’ you might go in and say ‘okay so tell me what it looks like on a good day’. So you change the perspective of the meeting already because you have gone in with a ‘you know we can do this’ rather than ‘oh yeah, oh yeah, oh yeah’”

- Participant 2

Interviewee: “...training around the different areas of need. So you think about wellbeing and so you can do anything there and we think about Autism training or if there is something with behaviour, speech and language. I think anything you can go on like that.”

Interviewer: “So strategies for supporting children?”

Interviewee: “Yeah so kind of like how those children might present and how you might identify those difficulties and then ideas for what you can do to support them and resources.”

- Participant 4

Opportunities to shadow another SENCO, particularly over time, were also seen to be valuable. The SENCO days within the local authority were noted as an effective way to share good practice and to build professional relationships with other SENCOs. Opportunities to view good practice at other settings were also identified as a vehicle to increase resources.

“She used to get the primary SENCOs together and the secondary SENCOs together, and it worked really well because you form bonds and shared ideas and felt like you were a department, whereas it can be quite a lonely role.”

“SENCOs are very much ‘oh we have always done it our way and this is it’ but there is good practice out there and I love going out and saying ‘oh you do it that way and we do it that way’ and you are pinching basically, people’s good ideas.”

- Participant 1

4.4 Research Question 4 – EPs supporting SENCOs with OS (Phase 2)

Research question 4 explored how EPs can support SENCOs with preventing and coping with OS, from SENCOs’ perspectives. Thematic analysis generated the themes: contact, child and school-centred working, and problem-solving and cognitive approaches. Figure 10 details these themes and associated subthemes. Reflection on the findings in relation to this research question suggests that two psychological processes in particular underlay the resources with which EPs could help SENCOs to manage OS. The psychological process of containment, i.e. interacting with another to help them manage and process potentially challenging emotions in a safe context

(Bion, 1962), represented one of these, and was particularly evident in the 'Contact' and 'Problem-solving' themes. Miller (2003)'s description of temporary and overlapping systems, whereby the involvement of an EP can enable CYP, parents, and teachers to share a temporary set of norms and values to construe situations differently represented another underlying psychological process, particularly in relation to the 'Child and school centred working' theme, and the 'Problem-solving' theme's 'Hypothesising and perspective' subtheme. The theoretical underpinnings of these processes and an interpretation of how they are evident in and related to the current findings is discussed in more detail in section 5.1.4.4.

4.4.1 Theme 1 – Contact

Contact with EPs helped participants meet demands. The accessibility of EPs, the flexibility to discuss issues other than the one that the EP had visited for, and consistency in the school's EP were identified as key factors in this process.

4.4.1.1 Subtheme 1 - Accessibility

Participants valued being able to easily contact EPs outside of commissioned time, either via telephone or e-mail, i.e. an 'open door policy'. In most instances, this appeared to enable participants to draw upon EPs' skills/knowledge and engage in a problem-solving process, or receive advice for a particular issue.

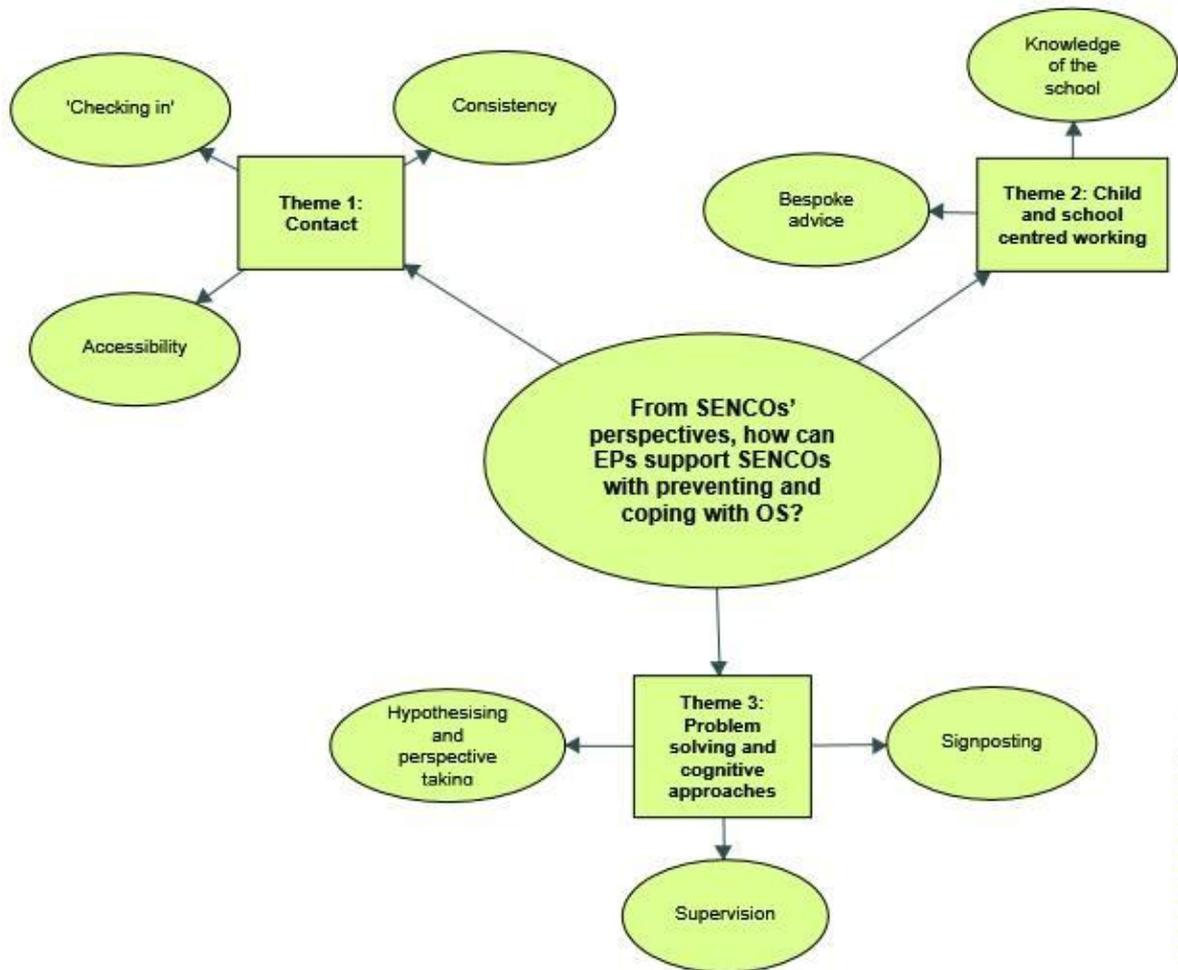


Figure 10 - Final thematic map showing themes and subthemes in relation to how participants perceived EPs can support SENCOs in preventing and coping with OS

"I know if I had a concern I could phone or email our EP today and she would get back to me as soon as she could."

- Participant 4

Some participants also noted that queries could be shared as they arose, which may have reduced any burden associated with 'holding on' to this information over time.

"But the email is great because as you are thinking of your query you are writing it."

- Participant 3

Participants also had an awareness of the demands that EPs themselves face, and that whilst this access was helpful, immediate responses were not expected.

“But I think we have got this understanding that you don't expect an immediate response if it is an email that you are sending at 4 or 5 o'clock or beyond, sometimes XXX or I wouldn't respond until the following day and that is fine. You know I am not saying to have somebody on hand because that is not fair or realistic”

- Participant 3

4.4.1.2 Subtheme 2 - 'Checking in'

Informal 'checking in' with SENCOs during periods of contact was also valued. This involved the EP making time to have conversations about issues other than that which they were visiting for. During conversations, active listening, assisting with problem-solving, facilitation of perspective taking, and helping SENCOs to prioritise tasks were perceived to be valuable. Some SENCOs reported that this had helped to inform their own practice in these areas.

“She would always just be there to reassure or if something had gone wrong she would say 'well try it this way', always off the record but it was always that we would have the chat, we would have the meeting and then she would go 'and how are things?' So you would always do that 'ah I am struggling a bit here' and she would always, it is just in her nature, 'have you tried this or have you tried that or maybe they are doing it because' and that was another one, she would always make me look at the other person's point of view and then that helps and then I suppose you just get into the way of working like that.”

- Participant 1

“Just listening really and talking and helping me to prioritise the need that we have got”

- Participant 4

4.4.1.3 Subtheme 3 - Consistency

Contact was considered most valuable when there was consistency in the school's named EP over time. As EPs became familiar with school staff, systems and CYP, they could more effectively contribute to whole-school development. Consistency also helped participants to have confidence in knowing that EPs understood their CYPs' needs and this was perceived to make their role more manageable.

"I think when we have kind of had an EP and kept them for a period of time, because it has been quite interchangeable of late, but you know we have had perhaps somebody for a term and a half and a different person. Once that, when we have had an EP that has kind of been with us and stayed with us for a considerable period of time they get to know our school staff, the way that we work and the interventions that we perhaps provide and that is quite nice to say actually 'I have noticed this in this class but remember when I came' and almost coordinate it with us about our staff needs and wants, because sometimes you know I don't often get to sit in a classroom for an hour to see one child, that is very rare for me and obviously that extra pair of eyes is quite interesting so we can coordinate bespoke and specific training rather than, these are things that we offer, because it doesn't always fit all people."

- Participant 2

"It just really helps when you have got that consistent person."

- Participant 4

4.4.2 Theme 2 – Child and School Centred Working

EPs working in a manner which met individual schools' needs was perceived to reduce demands for participants. This was largely achieved through EPs providing bespoke advice, and through EPs having a good knowledge of the school.

4.4.2.1 Subtheme 1 - Bespoke advice

Tailoring advice to the specific circumstances of individual schools, classes and CYP negated SENCOs having to adapt advice themselves.

“that for me is really valuable because you don't have to kind of continue to have lots of other conversations or almost like translate what this means to somebody else.”

- Participant 2

EPs working with class teachers and SENCOs to jointly formulate actions was one way in which this was done. Joint formulation based upon the views of school staff was also valued over solely basing advice on direct work with the pupil.

“I think the best EPs that I have worked with have taken the time to kind of know what that child is like over time and perhaps had five minute conversations with the class teacher or the class teaching assistant and built their report around that rather than it being just do this.”

- Participant 2

Joint formulation allowed the EP to check that actions were realistic and manageable for school staff, and that they fitted with the school's current framework or capacity. The ability to be flexible in terms of advice and to adapt training to meet the specific needs of school staff and pupil circumstances was also valued.

“I know we have had XXXX before and we had been doing some precision teaching around one child, and then there was a suggestion of precision teaching for some different children that she hadn't made, but we talked about okay well let's get a bunch of teaching assistants together that haven't had precision teaching training, and let's do that there and then at 8:30 in the morning before they come in and we will make it very relevant to the children

that they are going to be working with because there were quite complex needs children so the bog standard precision teaching training wouldn't work for them because they did need to adapt it slightly and that for me was really brilliant."

- Participant 2

During processes which involved action planning, participants valued EPs demonstrating empathy about the demands that SENCOs and class teachers face.

"It is helpful. And also I think remembering what it is like to be a class teacher. Because you know, I have to remind myself, you know 3 or 4 years out of doing that now"

- Participant 2

4.4.2.2 Subtheme 2 - Knowledge of the school

Knowledge of school staff, their way of working and the types of provision on offer were perceived to reduce the demands that EP-related work may create for SENCOs.

"they get to know the school and how the school works and the children and it just makes things much more manageable"

- Participant 4

EPs' awareness of current and previous cases was also seen as a useful resource for SENCOs, particularly when the EP created links between the two. This appeared to increase participants' confidence in agreed actions and may have decreased any uncertainty/ambiguity arising from the work.

"I do feel like when we have somebody that, and I know that it is really hard, but that is responsible or assigned to our school that knows our school setting, knows the children that we have, on current caseload and maybe can go back

and know them historically as well. 'oh when I was at your last planning meeting you raised that child or we know that we sent them out to XXXX last planning meeting, how did that go?' So it just feels like, and that is really hard, I know that that is really hard, but that gives me confidence in knowing that we are definitely to where we need to be for those children."

- Participant 2

4.4.3 Theme 3 - Problem-Solving and Cognitive Approaches

EPs supporting participants with work-related problem-solving was thought to reduce OS. Donating hypotheses and facilitating perspective taking, signposting to additional resources, and supervision were identified as the main avenues through which this did or could take place.

4.4.3.1 Subtheme 1 - Hypothesising and perspective-taking

Donating hypotheses, providing reassurance, and suggesting possible strategies for cases were seen to assist with problem-solving. Advice which was based on research was also particularly valued.

"She would always just be there to reassure or if something had gone wrong she would say 'well try it this way'."

- Participant 1

These processes appeared to be most effective when they allowed room for a solution to be arrived at jointly. EPs sometimes helped participants to understand that other professionals had had similar experiences to the participant in comparable cases, which depersonalised challenging situations.

“that was helpful to talk things through with her because you do sort of get to the point where you think ‘well is it me? Am I you know am I not right in thinking this?’ And you get so far down the line of someone that keeps challenging you, but the same thing was happening with her as well so I think to have that professional conversation with somebody else who is in the exact same position was nice just to sort of bounce off of each other, that we were going through the same sort of thing.”

- Participant 5

Discussions which helped participants to appreciate others’ points of view also facilitated problem-solving.

“She would always make me look at the other person’s point of view and then that helps and then I suppose you just get into the way of working like that.”

- Participant 1

4.4.3.2 Subtheme 2 - Signposting

Signposting was a key part of the problem-solving process. It was offered that EPs could encourage SENCOs to visit provisions to aid their development in certain areas, due to EPs’ knowledge of provision around the authority.

“If they are stressed about certain things, so say they are stressed about paperwork that you as an EP can go back to the other EPs and say ‘is there anyone in the city that has their paperwork cracked? Is there anyone who can support, is there anyone they can go and see?’”

- Participant 1

There was also the suggestion that EPs could facilitate SENCOs to liaise with one another, to engage in joint problem-solving and to share examples of good practice, thereby increasing the resources available to SENCOs.

“If EPs can facilitate the SENCOs to work together, that would be helpful because if XXXX role and I know the changes, they won't be there, but I think if the EPs can facilitate work together just to share good ideas but also support.”

- Participant 1

EPs being able to highlight support which could be provided outside of school (e.g. for parents at home), was also seen as a useful resource by participants, as this area could contribute towards worry and strain experienced by them.

“It is supporting the parents that I find quite tricky in that yes that we have acknowledged that there is a problem, there is an 18 month waiting list, we are alright in school and I think that that could possibly be an area where there is a gap.”

- Participant 5

4.4.3.3 Subtheme 3 - Supervision

Participants felt that EPs may be able to support SENCOs' wellbeing through facilitating supervision, which they currently perceived to receive little of.

“A little bit of what XXX already does informally but maybe a bit more time tabled in almost. Like your therapy time with the psychologist you know?”

- Participant 3

“I guess for me it would just be that sort of person you could go to, to talk things through with because other than your headteacher you don't.”

- Participant 5

It appeared that this would provide a designated time to engage in the kind of processes outlined in the 'hypothesising and perspective taking' subtheme (*i.e. problem-solving, hypothesising, perspective taking*). Having an EP to share concerns with and actively listen was also perceived to be helpful in a similar manner to that which occurred when headteachers took on this role (Research Question 2, Theme 2, Subtheme 1).

"Yeah I think I mean I am really lucky with my head so if I am worried about something or what have you then I know I can go to her. I think if that isn't always the case and you know. Headteachers are incredibly busy and I think as SENCO you could take on that responsibility, too much responsibility holding some of the challenges that some of the families face or some of the challenges that the children face or some of the waiting lists, you know, that they are having to cope with, you can take all that on and I think that if you haven't got that support in a headteacher that maybe if an ed-psych could offer that support, someone to offload on to or talk things through"

- Participant 5

It was felt that an opportunity to talk through key cases and review the progress of children over the term may also be useful in addition to termly planning meetings.

"Yeah like an extension of a planning meeting almost. Because in the planning meeting, sometimes we do go off a little bit on a tangent and talk about certain cases and you know the impact of that, and really your planning meetings are great because you have got that sharing time, and it would be nice to be able to just divert if we needed to."

- Participant 3

"Yeah once a term [in addition to the planning meeting] I think. I think if you know that you had that coming up, it would sort of alleviate some of the

pressure, the stresses, that you know that you could talk about that at that time.”

- Participant 5

5 CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Discussion of results

5.1.1 To what extent do SENCOs report to experience OS?

There is an ongoing need to explore the prevalence of teacher stress (Kyriacou, 2001). This research question aimed to extend previous research by exploring the extent to which SENCOs report to experience OS. Most participants (63.16%) reported the role to be 'moderately stressful'. 18.42% and 2.63% of participants respectively reported the role to be 'very stressful' or 'extremely stressful', whereas 15.79% reported the role to be 'mildly stressful'. No participants reported that the role was 'not at all stressful'. The results suggested that most participants experienced at least a moderate or higher degree of OS.

This is in-line with Male (1996), who found that 80% of SENCOs rated the role as 'stressful' or 'very stressful' - in the current study, 84.21% of participants reported to find the role 'moderately stressful', 'very stressful' or 'extremely stressful'. The current findings could be an underestimate of the actual OS experienced by SENCOs in the local authority, as the literature reviewed suggested that accessing social support, such as the SENCO conference where this data was collected, acted as a protective factor against OS (e.g. Howard and Johnson, 2004), implying that there may be others within the authority who experience higher levels of OS. The findings also indicated that participants experienced a similar degree of OS to that of class teachers. Kyriacou (2000) notes that approximately 25% of class teachers reported to find their work 'very stressful' or 'extremely stressful' and 21.05% of participants in this research reported similar experiences.

Appendix 16 shows that most participants found their role 'very demanding' (52.6%) or 'extremely demanding' (15.8%), suggesting that they experience a high-level of perceived demands. The amount of financial and professional resources (e.g. support from SEN services) has dramatically decreased over recent years, which has increased demands on SENCOS (NUT, 2012). Taken together, there appears to be a mismatch between the demands SENCOS face, and their available resources. The JDR model suggests that a high-level of demand, unmatched by appropriate resources, will lead to the experience of strain/OS (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007), and this is one possible explanation for the findings.

Some of Male (1996)'s participants perceived the OS experienced as transitory due to the implementation of the (then) new Code of Practice (DfES, 1994). A new Code of Practice (DfE, 2015) was also implemented a similar time prior to this research, and was reported to contribute towards OS. However, there appear to be more prominent causes of OS which are explored further in the next section. Instead, the findings confirm research that OS is still present within the role (e.g. Mackenzie, 2012a), and illustrate the need for effective support to be provided.

5.1.2 Which aspects of SENCOS' roles are perceived to contribute to OS?

Identifying factors which contribute towards OS provides the basis to address them (Gibbs and Miller, 2014). The literature review highlighted common demands faced by SENCOS, and a handful of studies (e.g. Male, 1996; Mackenzie, 2012a) identified demands which specifically contribute towards OS.

However, none of the literature explored the extent and frequency with which these demands cause OS. This research question attempted to. Participants rated factors from the literature based on how frequently they caused OS, and identified which factor(s) caused the most OS (primary causes) through an open-ended questionnaire item. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. Table 11 summarises the findings of the descriptive statistics, whilst Table 12 details themes generated by the thematic analysis:

Table 11 - Table detailing factors which were identified to cause OS most frequently (rank order)

<i>Rank based on mean score</i>	<i>Factors which cause OS most frequently</i>
1	Workload
2	Excessive paperwork
3	Local authority procedures
4	Time allocated for the role
5	OFSTED inspections
6	Having differing priorities to colleagues

Table 12 - Table detailing themes relating to factors which participants perceived to cause the most OS (non-rank order)

<i>Factors perceived to cause the most OS (Primary Causes)</i>
Managing a high workload and multiple responsibilities
Working with parents
Managing difficult emotions
Accessing and working with outside agencies
Meeting a high-level of need with limited resources and information
Working with school staff to meet need

5.1.2.1 Factors related to workload and resource-availability

Workload is a major source of frustration and dissatisfaction amongst SENCOs (Qureshi, 2014; Pearson, 2008). In this research, it was the most frequent cause of OS, and was also a primary cause. This is unsurprising as workload is the main contributor to OS amongst class teachers (NUT, 2011) and professionals generally (HSE, 2016). Cooper et al (2001) assert that OS caused by workload arises from:

1. Quantitative overload (*too much work to complete in the time available*)
2. Qualitative overload (*a mismatch between perceived skill set/capacity and the work*)
3. Underload (*work that does not provide challenge or allow use of personal skills*)

In this research, workload generally represented a 'quantitative overload', with insufficient time and quantity of work being identified as frequent and primary causes of OS. This relates to findings that SENCOs perceive workload to be 'excessive' (NUT, 2012), and the dissatisfaction with time allocated for the role (Qureshi, 2014). This is also characteristic of the class teacher stress literature (Kyriacou, 2001).

Participants' time for the SENCO role was impacted by managing multiple roles, which was a primary cause of OS, and supports findings that "other teaching commitments" are a barrier to SENCOs carrying out their role effectively (NUT, 2012). Most participants had one other role in addition to being SENCO (e.g. class teacher), and 12 (32%) had two or more responsibilities (e.g. assistant head, class teacher, SENCO). The finding that limited resources were perceived to be a primary cause of OS may be related to this. NUT (2012) found that "a lack of financial resources" was the biggest barrier to SENCOs receiving sufficient time allocations and predicted that

this would worsen due to reduced school budgets, and more recently, The Key's (2016) found that 82% of school leaders had insufficient funding to meet the needs of CYP with SEN.

Access to external agencies has reduced in recent years, due to school budgets and capacity within local authorities (NUT, 2012). This was similarly identified as a primary cause of OS. NUT (2012) found that that SENCOs were consequently under more pressure to provide support internally. This lack of resources (financial and specialist services) may therefore be contributing SENCOs' workload. Access to resources, knowledge and skills are needed to carry out the role effectively (Male, 1996), and there may also be an element of qualitative overload, given the reduction in specialist support, and implementation of the new Code of Practice (DfE, 2015), as illustrated by a quote from one participant:

"Having sufficient time/knowledge/support to implement a diverse range of strategies to meet children's needs".

The finding that excessive paperwork is a primary cause of OS and workload is consistent with literature related to class teachers (Tsouloupas et al, 2010), and previous findings that SENCOs perceive paperwork requirements to be excessive (Male, 1996; NUT, 2012). Much of the OS caused by paperwork related to local authority requirements for procedures like referrals and statutory assessment, supporting research which has identified similar demands (e.g. Szwed, 2007).

Ofsted inspections are the third most frequent cause of OS amongst class teachers (NUT, 2011) and the current findings suggest that the process is similarly stressful for SENCOs. Although the reasons behind this were unclear (due to its exploration through the rating matrix), Lingard (2001)'s findings suggest that for SENCOs, some of the OS caused relates to ensuring that paperwork, such as IEPs, meets requirements, and may explain why this was a frequent contributor to OS, when inspections would likely be infrequent for most participants ⁵.

5.1.2.2 Status, relational and emotional factors

SENCOs often have differing priorities to class teachers (Burton and Goodman, 2010), and the findings suggest that this is a primary and frequent contributor towards OS. Government priorities can prevent headteachers from prioritising the needs of pupils with SEN (NUT, 2012), which may be one explanation for this phenomenon. Participants also reported difficulties in promoting inclusion and encouraging class teachers to adapt practice to meet the needs of CYP with SEN, mirroring Burton and Goodman (2010)'s findings. 21 participants were members of SLT but only 3 of these did not hold the post of assistant, deputy or headteacher, suggesting that for most participants, membership may have come through a role other than that of SENCO, which could reflect a low status of SEN in these schools. This is illustrated by a quote from one participant:

"I am part of SLT when it suits them".

⁵ The contextual information outlined in the methodology section suggested that most participants worked at schools rated as 'good' or 'outstanding', and that inspections at these settings would occur less frequently than those rated as 'satisfactory' or 'requiring improvement' (Ofsted, 2016).

Lack of respect from colleagues was however the least frequently cited cause of OS, whilst hostility and lack of appreciation from colleagues were infrequent contributors too, suggesting that the OS experienced arose from difficulties with the status and/or implementation of support for SEN, rather than interpersonal difficulties with colleagues. Interestingly not being a member of SLT and the status of SEN were not perceived as frequent contributors to OS, perhaps because difficulties related to these factors manifest in more frequently observable ways (e.g. differing priorities to staff). These items were however captured in the qualitative data.

Engaging parents and managing their expectations was another primary cause of OS. Difficulties in this area have been reported elsewhere (e.g. Mackenzie, 2009). However, Male (1996) found that 91% of SENCOs perceived parents to be 'very supportive', which was surprisingly higher than the average support they perceived to receive from EPs. Some participants reported that parents felt not enough was being done to support their child, or to be frustrated with waiting times for support services. Reduced budgets have possibly contributed towards difficulties here. The right for parents to have direct payments for SEN provision has also been hypothesised to increase tension between SENCOs and parents (NUT, 2012), and may be another explanation for this finding.

Participants experienced challenging emotions in response to many of the issues discussed. For example, frustration about managing multiple roles and uncertainty about how to support CYP without specialist support. Others reported that not having opportunities to discuss challenges contributed towards OS, and supports the notion that the role can be isolating (e.g. Wedell, 2012). The findings suggest that the

experiencing of challenging emotions and use of emotional resources is a primary cause of OS for SENCOs. This is well evidenced amongst class teachers, but other factors are thought to contribute towards OS to a greater degree for this group (e.g. Kyriacou, 2001; NUT, 2011). It was surprising that managing challenging emotions was not rated as a higher frequency cause OS. This is perhaps because participants instead ranked the perceived causes of challenging emotions (e.g. workload, managing multiple responsibilities etc) as high frequency contributors, and the experiencing of challenging emotions was perceived to be resultant of these demands.

5.1.3 How do SENCOs who perceive to cope well with OS, despite facing high work-related demands, achieve this level of coping?

Resilience is an adaptive process (Day and Gu, 2007) and many means to develop it can be implemented cost-effectively (Howard and Johnson, 2004). Identifying how some teachers cope well with OS, despite facing high work-related demands has illuminated how this can be achieved for class teachers (Howard and Johnson, 2004). This research question aimed to identify how some SENCOs cope well with OS, despite facing high work-related demands. This was achieved through thematically analysing semi-structured interview transcripts with a sample of purposefully selected participants. 'Beliefs and outlook', 'Relationships and social support', 'Individuals' resources and skills', and 'School culture and systems', were found to be the main themes related to prevention/coping. Table 13 summarises the resources identified to help prevent/cope with OS for each theme.

Table 13 - Table detailing resources identified to help cope with OS

Theme	Resources identified to help cope with OS when facing high demands
Beliefs and outlook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A strong purpose to facilitate positive outcomes for CYP with SEN ▪ A strong purpose to support CYP both academically, as well as socially and emotionally ▪ A senior leadership team which supports the above purposes ▪ A realistic understanding of what the SENCO role entails
Relationships and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Access to support networks, both in and out of school, who understand the nature of the role ▪ Headteachers or senior leaders having a good understanding of the SENCO role ▪ Headteachers or senior leaders making themselves accessible to discuss concerns ▪ Headteachers providing the resources (e.g. time, funding) necessary to carry out the role ▪ Opportunities to discuss challenging incidents with colleagues ▪ A good awareness amongst colleagues regarding the nature of the role ▪ Good relationships with colleagues and opportunities to develop these (e.g. social events, introducing oneself) ▪ Working within an SEN team or a shared SENCO role ▪ Having good relationships with CYP on the SEN register and their families and actively seeking to develop these
Individuals' resources and skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Depersonalising or reframing situations ▪ Using humour ▪ Remembering times of previously coping with high-levels of demand ▪ Regularly recognising short and long-term achievements ▪ Being open to a range of solutions ▪ Knowing and taking actions to address the signs of stress ▪ A good knowledge of the school/setting ▪ Good organisational skills, such as prioritisation and time-keeping in meetings ▪ Having a routine to manage workload ▪ Having a variety of interests outside of work and things to look forwards to
School culture and systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Being a member of the senior leadership team ▪ Having effective staff supporting with SEN ▪ Opportunities to share problem-solving ▪ Knowing and drawing upon staff members' interests and strengths ▪ Staff working in a solution focused/goal-orientated manner ▪ Clarity in the SENCO's role ▪ Opportunities for the SENCO to delegate administrative work ▪ Systems which minimise the duplication of paperwork (e.g. electronic storage) ▪ A shared office with members of an SEN team ▪ Opportunities to work privately, or from home ▪ CPD opportunities, such as SENCO days, and opportunities to shadow other SENCOs

5.1.3.1 Beliefs and outlook

All participants had a strong sense of purpose about their roles, which focused on holistically promoting positive outcomes for CYP with SEN. Like Mackenzie (2012b)'s participants, this appeared to arise from participants' life experiences, often from outside of teaching. As found by Howard and Johnson (2004), some participants sought to work in deprived areas where they felt they could most promote positive outcomes. Participants reported that awareness of the nature and challenges of the role was essential to ensure prospective SENCOs held purposes that aligned with wanting to take the role and challenges on, which is like recommendations for promoting resilience amongst class teachers (e.g. Richards, 2012), but perhaps more necessary due to diverse nature of SENCO roles (e.g. Qureshi, 2014).

A strong sense of purpose about one's role is also characteristic of resiliency within teaching (Howard and Johnson, 2004) and the SENCO role (Mackenzie, 2012b). Such beliefs enable SENCOs to stay in the role and draw upon previously challenging incidents to manage OS (Mackenzie, 2012b). The support of senior managers in maintaining this purpose is important (Mackenzie, 2012b) and all participants referred to having supportive management. This may have enabled participants to 'action' their purposes, through means they identified such as: advocacy for CYP and families, offering challenge within the school system, and supporting other staff in understanding and meeting CYPs' needs, highlighting the importance of senior managers in maintaining this resource.

5.1.3.2 Relationships and support

Significant relationships are a protective factor against OS (Howard and Johnson, 2004). All participants reported to have good support networks, within and outside of school. Participants unanimously felt that support was available from senior leaders in schools, which is associated with resilience to OS amongst class teachers (Howard and Johnson, 2004), and most were members of the SLT. When senior leaders have a poor understanding of SEN and the SENCO role, it can create challenges for SENCOs (Mackenzie, 2009), such as increased paperwork and workload (Szwed, 2007), i.e. primary causes of OS. All participants felt that their senior leaders had a good understanding of the SENCO role, and provided resources necessary to meet demands, often proactively. Consequently, support and understanding from senior leadership was key in reducing demands and increasing resources for participants.

Other teachers were key support figures in Male (1996) and the current research. As per Howard and Johnson (2004)'s findings, colleagues helped participants manage OS through debriefing challenging incidents and being aware of the demands that SENCOs face. Participants' views on means of establishing and maintaining such relationships were also like those identified by Howard and Johnson (2004)'s participants (e.g. social events).

'SEN teams', comprised of professionals such as learning mentors, or shared SENCO roles, helped counter feelings of isolation and to distribute workload, factors which can be problematic for SENCOs (Wedell, 2012). Such partnerships had shared goals which may have helped mitigate OS caused by the potential difficulty of differing priorities to other staff (e.g. Burton and Goodman, 2011).

Participants had good working-relationships with CYP and their parents, which is associated with job satisfaction for class teachers and SENCOs (Aelterman et al, 2007; Mackenzie, 2009). Such relationships can promote wellbeing (Crosby, 2015) and may have acted as a protective factor against potential difficulties in this area, which were a primary cause of OS for participants in phase 1.

5.1.3.3 Individuals' resources and skills

Appraisals can determine whether OS is experienced from demands (Chang, 2013). Participants used appraisal strategies such as: depersonalisation, humour, reframing, and recognising achievements, all of which are well-evidenced to reduce OS in teaching (Richards, 2012).

Positive and solution-focused reframing was used, suggesting that participants may have increased the number of positive events they experienced at work (e.g. Lambert et al, 2012). The experiencing of positive events is a predictor of teacher resilience and retention (Morgan et al, 2010), and can improve wellbeing (Gibbs and Miller, 2014). Applying such skills over time has been linked to resilience amongst SENCOs too (Mackenzie, 2012b). Some participants had had training to develop this skill, and this may be a useful service for EPs to offer. A 'positive school climate' was often referred to where colleagues employed similar strategies. Such cultures can make individuals more likely to be positive, resilient and engaged (Gibbs and Miller, 2014), highlighting the importance of supporting with wellbeing at the systemic level.

Participants had been teaching between 7-30 years, and all had at least 4 years' experience of the SENCO role. Consequently, they had much experience to draw upon, including instances of facing and overcoming stressful situations. This acted as a resource for subsequent challenges, mirroring the findings of Mackenzie (2012b). One way that this occurred was through recognising signs of OS and knowing how to address it. These skills are taught in OS management programmes (e.g. Murphy and Claridge, 2000), and could represent another opportunity for training. Participants were confident about their ability to manage OS, matching findings that a high perception of control and efficacy is associated with reduced OS (Curry and O'Brien, 2012).

Some experiences helped to reduce the OS associated with certain demands, which is consistent with the class teacher stress literature (e.g. Vesely, 2013). For example, some reported that having a teaching role enhanced their credibility, making it easier to facilitate change through colleagues, a primary contributor to OS. A good knowledge of the school (e.g. systems, families, CYP etc) also made many demands easier to manage, which seems logical given the diverse responsibilities that SENCOs hold (Qureshi, 2014).

Participants employed palliative coping strategies consistent with the teacher stress literature too, e.g. having outside interests, maintaining a healthy life style, making time for oneself (Richards, 2012; Kyriacou, 2001). Organisational skills were considered important, and have been identified as a coping strategy (Kyriacou, 2001). They may be particularly relevant given the impact of workload and paperwork. There were clear factors within school systems which contributed towards this skill too.

5.1.3.4 School culture and systems

Organisational change is a key and effective way to reduce teacher stress (Wiley, 2000). The status and understanding of SEN in participants' schools was essential in enabling them to manage OS. Membership of the SLT, adequate funding, and effective members of staff supporting with SEN were perceived to increase the status of SEN, as were good working-relationships with staff. This enabled effective support for CYP to be provided by multiple staff, thereby decreasing demands on participants. The findings support Qureshi (2014)'s assertion that support from the SLT is key to SENCOs' efficacy, and that membership enables systemic changes to be made (Griffiths and Dubsy, 2012).

School cultures which encouraged shared problem-solving, flexibility regarding solutions, drew upon staff members' strengths, and adopted a solution focused approach were perceived to increase SENCOs' resources and help them to meet demands. Participative decision making and collegial support are effective organisational approaches to reduce teacher stress (Kyriacou, 2001; Wiley, 2000). Drawing upon staff members' expertise may have helped mitigate potential OS from reduced access to external agencies, and increased SENCOs' perception of control, which plays a significant role in the OS process (Spector, 2002).

Effective systems also prevented OS occurring. There was clarity about participants' roles which could reduce or make clear the demands of the role, something which the extant literature (e.g. Szwed, 2007; Qureshi, 2014) notes can be problematic, and which the findings of this study suggested could contribute to OS:

“It often seems that all responsibilities come back to the SENCO”

Many participants worked at the strategic level. Administrative tasks were delegated and electronic systems avoided unnecessary repetition of information, addressing the ‘paperwork’ aspect of the role, ranked as the second most frequent cause of OS. Some participants negotiated the nature of their role, implemented systems, and had selected an SEN team. Bakker and Demerouti (2007)’s concept of job crafting applies here and may have helped participants actively reduce demands and increase resources.

Sharing an office with members of an SEN team helped participants manage OS through: combating isolation, mutual identification of the signs of OS, and through debriefing. Evans (2013) suggests that it is, however, important that part any shared space is designated solely for the SENCO. The option to work from home helped to manage OS by enabling demands to be met more quickly/effectively. Such flexible working policies and redesigning of the role are beneficial approaches for promoting teacher wellbeing (Naghieh et al, 2015), and again implies an element of job crafting. Interestingly, 3/5 participants had autonomy about time spent on the role, suggesting that this flexibility was present in other areas, and may have acted as a resource to meet stressful demands (e.g. time constraints).

Development opportunities helped to manage OS, and may be particularly important whilst there are increased demands and reduced external resources (NUT, 2012). Shadowing colleagues and attending CPD around supporting CYP and working with

others was perceived to be beneficial. It was surprising that the SENCO forum was not mentioned given its prominence in the literature review, however SENCO days were identified to develop professional relationships and practice, and emotional support could be provided through such events too (Mackenzie, 2012a).

5.1.4 From SENCOs' perspectives, how can EPs support SENCOs with preventing and coping with OS?

Extant research has highlighted how EPs can support class teachers' wellbeing (e.g. Gibbs and Miller, 2014). However, no literature was found to explore how EPs can support SENCOs with managing OS. Given the differences between SENCOs' and class teachers' roles (Evans, 2013), this research question asked how EPs could support SENCOs in preventing and coping with OS. This was achieved through interviewing five purposefully selected participants, and thematically analysing the interview transcripts. The analysis generated the themes: 'Contact', 'Child and school-centred working' and 'Problem-solving'. Table 14 summarises the resources associated with each theme.

5.1.4.1 Contact

Participants valued being able to contact EPs outside of commissioned time to receive assistance with problem-solving. During school visits, informally 'checking in' with SENCOs and making time to discuss issues other than the one EPs were visiting for was helpful. This acted as an informal supervision where EPs supported with problem-solving, perspective-taking and prioritisation, which are key features of EP practice (Gersch, 2004). These aspects of contact appeared to address isolation (Evans, 2013)

and the absence of supervision in the role (Burton and Goodman, 2011). It may also represent a means to maximise the educational psychology resources available to SENCOs in a context of generally reduced hours (NUT, 2012). These practices were perceived as most valuable when there was consistency in the named EP over time, due to EPs' perceived understanding of school needs, and SENCOs' confidence in the EP, with the former being perceived to reduce demands. Consistency in service delivery has previously been identified as important (e.g. Imich, 1999). These findings may therefore have implications for individual EPs' practice, and EP-school allocation decisions.

5.1.4.2 *Child and school-centred working*

EPs tailoring input to CYPs', classes' and schools' needs reduced demands on SENCOs as they did not have to 'translate' advice to make it actionable. Consultation with SENCOs and class teachers allowed realistic and specific support to be implemented. Ensuring that class teachers and others working with the CYP were at consultation meetings saved time for SENCOs as they did not have to repeat advice, which helped to reduce workload, i.e. the primary contributor to OS amongst SENCOs. This is in-line with professional practice guidelines (BPS, 2002), and relates to Farrell et al (2005)'s findings that teachers in general would like more consultative input from EPs, and can become frustrated when input focuses solely on individual assessment. A good knowledge of the school was perceived help EPs facilitate realistic and specific support. This could relate to findings that implementing actions to support CYP with SEN can be problematic for staff if appropriate resources, e.g. time, are not available (Brackenreed and Barnett, 2006).

Table 14 - Table detailing the resources with which EPs can support SENCOs in preventing or managing OS

Theme	Resources with which EPs can support SENCOs in preventing or managing OS
Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Being accessible via telephone or e-mail to discuss arising concerns ▪ Making time to discuss issues other than those which they are visiting for ▪ Supporting SENCOs with problem-solving, perspective taking and prioritisation ▪ Having a consistent EP as the link to the school ▪ Having a good knowledge of the school, staff, systems and CYP
Child and school-centred working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tailoring advice to individual pupils and the resources available in schools ▪ Jointly formulating actions with class teachers ▪ Gathering information holistically ▪ Having an understanding of the demands that SENCOs and class teachers face ▪ Having an up-to-date knowledge of CYP on the SEN register and previous cases in the school ▪ Ensuring that class teachers and other relevant persons are present at consultation meetings
Problem-solving and cognitive approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disseminating research ▪ Donating hypotheses and strategies ▪ Facilitating perspective taking/reframing ▪ Providing reassurance ▪ Offering supervision sessions ▪ Providing a follow-up to planning meetings midway through the term ▪ Signposting SENCOs to relevant resources, particularly other provisions

EPs' knowledge of current and previous cases was also useful in helping SENCOs prioritise input, and to provide general advice for CYP not prioritised for EP input. EPs encouraged participants to draw upon their previous experience during prioritisation discussions. This acted as a resource to meet demands and building this capacity is likely important given the reduction in access to specialist services (NUT, 2012). Consistency in schools' EPs may be helpful in enabling EPs to provide some of these resources, but phased handovers may also help develop this knowledge (e.g. University of Birmingham Educational Psychologists in Training, 1994).

5.1.4.3 Problem-solving and cognitive approaches

Joint problem-solving was perceived to help manage OS, partly through facilitating the cognitive appraisals outlined earlier (e.g. depersonalisation). Joint problem-solving can help manage OS (Cooper, 2015) and is a core skill of EPs (Cameron, 2006) suggesting that most practitioners will likely have skills to support SENCOs this way. During problem-solving, dissemination of research, reassurance, donated hypotheses, facilitation of perspective taking, and donated strategies were all valued. Most of these techniques and the facilitation of cognitive appraisals can be conceptualised as 'cognitive approaches', i.e. mechanisms which promote one's understanding of a situation, and would therefore align with the aims of consultative work, which are to provide a professional relationship for joint problem-solving and to empower consultees to problem-solve (Conoley and Conoley, 1990). For example, perspective taking involves reflecting on a situation and considering one's own and others' feelings and behaviour (Sauter et al, 2009). It can help to 'depersonalise' challenging situations, i.e. perceiving that a situation has not arisen purely because of one's own actions, thereby providing a measure of distance and acting as a coping

mechanism to manage such experiences (Shepperd and Wild, 2013). Similarly, reassurance involves providing useful and necessary information for an individual to help them 'normalise' an experience (Grant et al, 2008). This is perhaps supported by the donating of hypotheses and strategies. Participants did value engaging in this process collaboratively, but also valued EPs sharing ideas. EPs teaching and sharing specific strategies is often valued by teachers (Boyle and Lauchlan, 2009), and such techniques can help individuals manage and/or understand situations with a greater depth (Branch and Willson, 2010; Banks and Zions, 2009), thereby acting as another resource to manage potentially stressful demands.

The dissemination of research may be a particularly unique role for EPs given that they are often one of the few professionals within local authorities trained to critically evaluate it (Cameron, 2006). There were clear similarities between these aspects of problem-solving and the approaches used by SENCOs reporting to cope well with OS (e.g. perspective taking), suggesting that EPs could help SENCOs develop these skills, and some participants reported that this had happened:

"she would always make me look at the other person's point of view and then that helps and then I suppose you just get into the way of working like that."

It was thought that problem-solving could occur through the informal manner mentioned earlier, and through consultation or designated supervision sessions. Participants highlighted that a supervisory facility would be a useful resource, and Gibbs and Miller (2014) have suggested this to improve teachers' wellbeing. Supervision has many benefits (Gibbs and Miller, 2014), and it appeared the resource could help SENCOs manage multiple demands including: a lack of supervision (Burton

and Goodman, 2010), the management of challenging emotions (Mackenzie, 2012a), isolation (Evans, 2003), problem-solving, and access to input from external agencies (NUT, 2012).

Some participants wanted such meetings to occur in-between termly planning meetings, so that up-to-date EP advice could be sought for multiple CYP. Again, this appeared to be an effective suggestion for maximising access to EP resources, in a similar manner to teacher 'drop in' sessions, which are potentially effective in reducing OS (Sidaway, 2011). The facilitation of peer group supervision, perhaps amongst groups of SENCOs, could enable EP resources to be used effectively here.

Some participants perceived that EPs could facilitate signposting to other provisions to aid SENCOs' professional development. EPs rank this as a low-priority function of their role (Clark, 2014), and it may be an underused method to increase resources for SENCOs. Problem-solving for difficulties parents were experiencing at home was particularly valued as uncertainty here contributed towards OS for some participants. EPs can contribute towards this area (Clark, 2014) and such input may be particularly beneficial, given the waiting time for services such as CAMHS (e.g. Rait et al, 2010).

5.1.4.4 Related psychological processes

5.1.4.4.1 Containment Theory

Containment theory (Bion, 1962) explains how caregivers can help children to process extreme emotions arising from either external or internal sources (Bower, 2005). Features of such care includes the carer being responsive to a child's distress, assisting the child to make sense of the feeling (e.g. identifying hunger, pain, fear etc),

and conveying this interpretation to them in a meaningful form (Lee, 2016). Bion (1962) conceptualises the child to be the 'contained' in this process, whilst the caregiver is conceptualised as the 'container' (Lee, 2016). The process is thought to support children's development of emotional-regulation skills (Lee, 2016).

Many of ways in which participants felt EPs could support them to manage OS appeared to be related to this. Participants valued EPs being accessible to discuss arising concerns (i.e. being responsive), and helping them to process potentially challenging situations via problem-solving (i.e. support with making sense of a situation). Bion (1962) notes that anxiety or challenging emotions are a fundamental part of everyday life and the findings of the literature review and the present study confirm that challenging emotions are frequently experienced by many SENCOs. The desire by participants for regular supervision may therefore reflect a desire for a containing environment and/or relationship in which to process these feelings (Fook et al, 2015). This interpretation is in part supported by Evans (2013) who employed containment approaches to help SENCOs manage challenging emotions, and notes that SENCOs "need containment and support in their difficult yet vital roles" (Evans, 2013, p.301).

Evans (2013) provided containment for SENCOs through the use of a consultation-based approach which focused on discussing potential problems, exploring solutions and action planning, and the approach has been used by EPs to provide containment for others too (Kelly et al, 2008). The process was informed by the client and they decided which action to take (if necessary) to address any identified problems. Consultation of this nature is a core skill of EPs (Farrell et al, 2006), who are likely

familiar with a number of frameworks which can be used to this end (e.g. Kelly et al, 2008). This skill can therefore be seen as another useful vehicle for EPs to provide containment for SENCOs.

5.1.4.4.2 Temporary overlapping systems

Miller (2003) describes how EPs, school staff, pupils, and their families can become part of a temporary and overlapping system. The concept derives from family therapy (De Shazer, 1982) and describes a temporary set of norms and values which are shared between the parties during an EP's involvement. Whilst the system is in place, it enables teachers and others within the temporary system, to step outside of the values and norms imposed by the school system and to construe pupils and/or situations differently (Miller, 2003; Everston and Weinstein, 2006).

This process was perhaps reflective of some participants' responses. For example, participants valued EPs facilitating perspective taking and reframing (i.e. assisting with construing), and noted that it was useful for class teachers and other relevant persons to be present at consultation meetings (i.e. including relevant persons within the temporary system). Miller (2003) describes that participants working with EPs within this system valued reassurance being provided by the EPs which was also reported by participants in this research. As the temporary system enables alternative construing of pupils and/or situations differently, there is often a move away from within-child conceptualisations of the concern, which may relate to participants reporting to value EPs gathering information holistically.

In-part, literature suggests that it is the involvement of an EP which enables a temporary overlapping system to be created, in conjunction with at least one member of staff, parent/carer and the CYP concerned (Miller, 2003; Everston and Weinstein, 2006). Miller (2003) notes that temporary overlapping systems are best created through a didactical approach which focuses on both reconstruing and joint action planning. Again, consultation is often used by EPs to this end and can involve all of the above parties (Kelly et al, 2008), suggesting that it may represent another useful vehicle for EPs to apply this approach. Miller (2003) notes that class teachers are key in ensuring that change continues once EPs' involvement ceases which, as stated by the participants in this research, underlines the importance of them being involved in any such consultation process. Frameworks for consultation, such as the 'Interactive factors framework' (Monsen et al, 1998) can help to elucidate environmental and other contributors to situations, and to highlight CYPs' strengths, which could help EPs to facilitate the reconstruing aspect of this process too.

5.2 Limitations and Implications for Future Research

Potential limitations were carefully considered during the development phase. However, several were identified. These are outlined in Table 15 and implications are suggested to ameliorate these in future research.

Table 15 - Table detailing limitations and implications for future research

Limitation and explanation	Implications for future research
Those experiencing high-levels of OS are less likely to participate in teacher-stress related research (McDonald-Fletcher, 2008) and those coping well with demands appear to be more likely to access social support, such as the SENCO conference. Further, all	In the future, a stratified sampling approach could be used with a larger number of participants.

<p>participants in phase 1 and 2 of the study were female, and the majority worked in primary schools. Consequently, the potential bias in the sample of participants must be acknowledged. The SENCO conference was chosen as the forum through which to invite participation, due to the potential difficulty of recruiting participants for the study.</p>	
<p>The means of determining the extent to which participants experienced OS and coped with this were based on self-report. It is not possible to say for certain that participants' ratings were accurate. However, the theoretical underpinnings of this research (e.g. Bakker and Demerouti, 2007) suggest that the role of individual perception is critical within these processes.</p>	<p>Future research could employ measures to confirm self-report ratings, such as appraisal from a colleague or completion of a standardised measure of OS (e.g. Maslach et al, 1996) and coping.</p>
<p>Participants were given questionnaires in a room full of their peers. I was also on placement with the authority's educational psychology service, both of which could have influenced responses. There was the option to return the questionnaire via post, which may have helped to address this issue to some extent. Confidentiality was also assured and I was not the link EP for any of the participants' schools in phase 2.</p>	<p>Gathering all questionnaire data via a postal-survey or online questionnaire could have helped to address this, although it may have limited opportunities to clarify the nature of the study, and may have impeded the response rate.</p>
<p>The use of thematic analysis as a method of data analysis could also be considered a limitation with regard to reliability and validity. The method involves individual interpretation by the researcher, and is prone to being influenced by researcher-bias. Braun and Clarke (2006)'s guidelines (<i>i.e. paying equal attention to all data, coding all elements etc</i>) and steps of analysis were followed in an effort to reduce this.</p>	<p>In the future, member checking could be employed to further minimise this risk.</p>
<p>Data from purposefully selected participants was used to answer research questions 3 and 4. It is possible that other SENCOs (e.g. those experiencing more OS) may have identified and valued different avenues of coping/support from EPs. Similarly, EPs themselves may have been able to identify a number of other means to support SENCOs' wellbeing. Previous research such as Howard and Johnson (2004) suggests that the strategies and approaches used by individuals who cope well with OS can be beneficial for others, and the purposive sample was consequently employed for this reason.</p>	<p>The views of SENCOs reporting to experience varying degrees of OS could be sought and analysed to identify if different coping strategies/support from EPs may be beneficial. The views of EPs, who may well have practical experience of supporting SENCOs' wellbeing, could also be sought.</p>
<p>Based on the data available, most participants in phase 2 of the study worked in primary schools which</p>	<p>Research could be carried out with SENCOs in other</p>

<p>had recently received 'good' Ofsted ratings. Qualitative data suggested that they faced similar demands to those identified through the questionnaire, but it is possible that SENCOs in different settings (e.g. secondary, those with poor Ofsted ratings etc) may prevent or manage OS through different means.</p>	<p>settings to compare whether they manage OS through different means.</p>
<p>Individual factors are known to play a key role in the OS process and the main sources of OS experienced will be unique for each person (Kyriacou, 2001). This research explored common, job-related sources of OS for a group of SENCOs, in part, because OS in teaching is often incorrectly depicted as an individual-deficit. However, factors such as personality, knowledge of coping strategies, and appraisals can play a role too (Wiley, 2000). It is possible that these factors may have influenced participants' ratings of OS.</p>	<p>Individual factors, such as personality, could be incorporated into and considered in future research.</p>
<p>Given the critical realist epistemology employed for this study, the findings may be generalisable at a theoretical level to authorities, schools and SENCOs that operate within a similar context to that outlined in this research. However, in light of the changing nature of contexts, the 'event' of experiencing and preventing or coping with OS may have different mechanisms depending on the nature of the context (Sayer, 1992), which may limit opportunities for generalisation.</p>	<p>Research could be carried out to address the research questions in different contexts (e.g. authorities, times of the year). Kyriacou (2001)'s assertion that it will be necessary to repeat this process over time could also help to address this potential limitation. Some aspects of this research could also be regularly carried out by employers (e.g. OS/wellbeing audits).</p>

5.3 Implications for Theory and Practice

Of initial importance is the finding that most SENCOs in this research faced at least a moderate degree of OS, which given its multiple and potentially deleterious effects, implies the need for effective support to be provided.

Second, identification of demands which cause OS for SENCOs most frequently, and to the greatest extent, provides a basis to address them (Gersch and Teuma, 2005).

Phase 2 of the study provided some practical suggestions about how this could be achieved. Further research explicitly exploring means of addressing OS related to these demands would likely be valuable. The implications from these findings are that future research and policy should focus on addressing factors such as: workload, paperwork, the management of multiple roles, and the others detailed in Table 11 and Table 12 (page 125).

Third, the findings of this research offer a tentative theory of both the causes of OS, and means of preventing/coping with OS amongst SENCOS. Figure 11 shows elements of the JDR model that this research has contributed towards for the topic. Job demands that cause OS: a) frequently, and b) to the greatest extent have been identified. Several personal resources, job resources, and elements of job crafting have also been identified to reveal how OS within the role may be successfully managed. Table 16 details the job resources identified to promote resilience to OS within the role. As per the JDR model, these can be understood to reside at the physical, psychological, social and organisational levels. Table 17 details personal resources identified to promote resilience to OS within the role, and Table 18 shows means of job crafting which were identified to help SENCOS prevent or cope with OS. On a practical level, the resources listed in these tables offer suggestions about how OS may be minimised within the role.

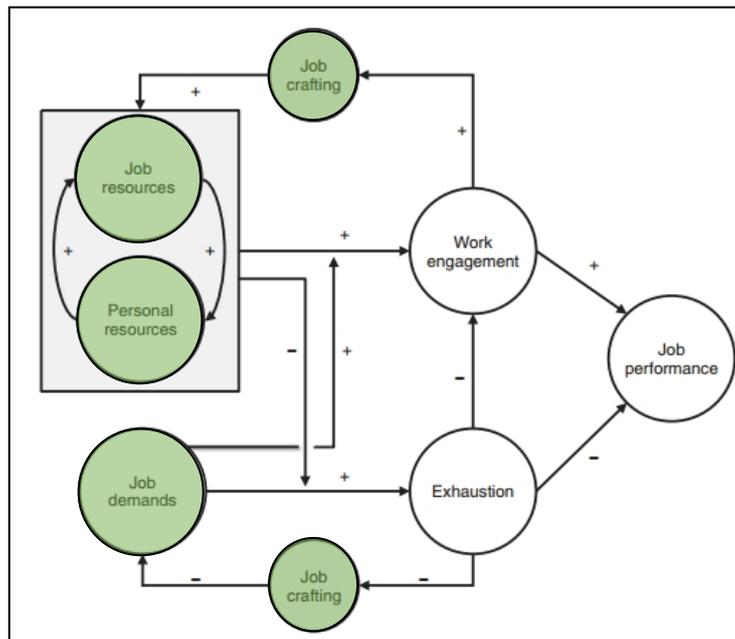


Figure 11 - Diagram showing elements of the JDR model contributed to for the research area

The implications from this aspect of the findings are that school leaders can introduce a variety of measures to prevent or help SENCOs cope with OS. Many would require little cost to implement (e.g. clarity in the SENCO role) and some, such as a culture which promotes good working relationships amongst staff, would likely be beneficial for all staff. It is also clear that personal resources are helpful in managing OS related to the role. The JDR model highlights that personal resources are important but notes that job resources actually foster the development of such resources (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). This implies that focusing on systemic change, and therefore the implementation of job resources, would represent the most effective first step to reducing OS within the role.

Table 16 - Table categorising job resources identified help SENCOs cope with OS in relation to the JDR theory

Job resources identified to help cope with OS when facing high demands
<p>Physical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A shared office with members of an SEN team <p>Psychological</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Knowing and drawing upon staff members' interests and strengths ▪ Staff working in a solution focused/goal-orientated manner ▪ Opportunities to share problem-solving <p>Social</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Headteachers or senior leaders making themselves accessible to discuss concerns ▪ Opportunities to discuss challenging incidents with colleagues ▪ A culture which promotes the development of relationships amongst staff (e.g. social events) <p>Organisational</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A senior leadership team which promotes positive outcomes for CYP with SEN, and places an equal emphasis on social and emotional, and academic aspects of development ▪ Clarity in the SENCO's role ▪ Headteachers or senior leaders having a good understanding of the SENCO role ▪ A good awareness amongst colleagues regarding the nature of the role ▪ Headteachers providing the resources (e.g. time, funding) necessary to carry out the role ▪ Working within an SEN team or a shared SENCO role ▪ Being a member of the senior leadership team ▪ Having effective staff supporting with SEN ▪ Systems which minimise the duplication of paperwork (e.g. electronic storage) ▪ CPD opportunities, such as SENCO days, and opportunities to shadow other SENCOs

Table 17 - Table detailing personal resources identified to help SENCOs cope with OS

Personal resources identified to help cope with OS when facing high demands
<p>Cognitive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ A strong purpose to facilitate positive outcomes for CYP with SEN▪ A desire to support CYP academically, and socially and emotionally▪ Depersonalising or reframing situations▪ Using humour▪ Regularly recognising achievements▪ Being open to a range of solutions <p>Skills, experience and interests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ A realistic understanding of what the SENCO role entails▪ A good knowledge of the school/setting▪ Good organisational skills, such as prioritisation, time-keeping in meetings▪ Having a variety of interests outside of work and things to look forwards to▪ Remembering times of previously coping with high-levels of demand▪ Knowing and being able to take actions to address the signs of stress <p>Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Developing good relationships with colleagues▪ Having good relationships with CYP on the SEN register and their families and actively seeking to develop these▪ Access to support networks who understand the nature of the role, both in and out of school▪ Having a supportive partner

Table 18 - Table detailing means of job crafting which were identified to help SENCOs prevent/cope with OS

Means of Job Crafting identified to help cope with OS when facing high demands
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Creating a routine to manage workload▪ Opportunities to delegate administrative work▪ Opportunities to manage and coordinate teams responsible for supporting with SEN▪ Opportunities to work privately, or from home

Fourth, the findings imply that EPs can use several resources to support SENCOs in preventing/coping with OS, and Table 14 (page 140) gives an overview of these. Service policy will play a key role in the implementation of some of these resources. For example, the use of a consultation model, and consistency in schools' EPs. The ability to employ other resources will depend upon how schools wish to utilise their EP time (e.g. supervision), whilst other resources can be freely implemented by EPs during their day-to-day work (e.g. signposting). EPs could also help develop many of the job and personal resources for SENCOs outlined in Table 16 and Table 17. For example, training related: to group problem-solving (e.g. Grahamslaw and Henson, 2015), working with CYP with SEN (e.g. Hodson et al, 2005), and solution focused approaches (Brown and Henderson, 2012), in addition to 'stress management' or wellbeing groups (e.g. Sharrocks, 2014), and other approaches to develop collegial support (e.g. Stringer et al, 1992).

EPs work at the individual, group and whole school (systemic) levels (Farrell et al, 2006). Consequently, it is important to consider how the current research can inform ways of working at each of these levels. Table 19 details the levels at which the resources which EPs can use to support SENCOs to cope with OS can be applied. Some of these are most relevant for use with individual SENCOs, whilst others are

relevant for use with the SENCO and other parties in a group context. Other resources are most applicable at the whole school or systemic levels.

The questionnaire developed for this study (Appendix 5) may also be of use for future research and/or EPs professional practice. With regard to future research, the measure may be a useful tool in exploring: a.) the extent to which SENCOs are experiencing OS and how well they feel they cope with this, and b.) which factors are perceived to be contributing towards SENCOs experiencing OS. None of the literature reviewed contained a questionnaire for this purpose suggesting that the tool would be of value in part because of its uniqueness. Adapting the questionnaire to include factors on the rating matrix which arose through the open question, but which were not detailed on the rating matrix in this research (e.g. managing multiple roles and having access to limited resources) could make the questionnaire more comprehensive based on the findings of the current research.

Kyriacou (2001) notes there will always be a need for studies to continue to explore the prevalence and causes of teacher stress, as well as the coping actions used to address it. A useful adaptation to the questionnaire could be the inclusion of a rating matrix to explore the coping strategies used to manage OS, and both the literature review and findings from this research could be used to help inform the items for this section.

Table 19 - Table detailing resources that EPs can use to help SENCOs cope with OS and the individual, group and whole-school levels

Resources that EPs can use to help SENCOs cope with OS	
Individual level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Being accessible via telephone or e-mail to discuss arising concerns ▪ Making time to discuss issues other than those which they are visiting for ▪ Supporting SENCOs with problem-solving, perspective taking and prioritisation ▪ Disseminating research ▪ Donating hypotheses and strategies ▪ Facilitating perspective taking/reframing ▪ Providing reassurance ▪ Offering supervision sessions ▪ Signposting SENCOs to relevant resources, particularly other provisions ▪ Providing containment via a consultation-based approach
Group level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensuring that class teachers and other relevant persons are present at consultation meetings ▪ Jointly formulating actions with class teachers, CYP and parents via consultation ▪ Offering supervision sessions on a group basis with other SENCOs ▪ Providing a follow-up to planning meetings midway through the term ▪ Gathering information holistically ▪ Tailoring advice to individual pupils and the resources available in schools through consultation
Whole school (systemic) level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Having a consistent EP as the link to the school ▪ Having a good knowledge of the school, staff, systems and CYP ▪ Having an understanding of the demands that SENCOs and class teachers within the setting face ▪ Having an up-to-date knowledge of CYP on the SEN register and previous cases in the school ▪ Offering training for staff related to: group problem-solving, working with CYP with SEN, solution focused approaches, stress management or wellbeing, and other approaches to develop collegial support

With regard to professional practice, the questionnaire could be used as a stimulus for identifying threats and supportive resources in relation to SENCOs' wellbeing. This could occur at the individual level via supervision, and act as a stimulus for discussion, and perhaps for the formation of a 'wellness plan', i.e. an active plan to promote wellbeing, as outlined by Curry and O'Brien (2012). The questionnaire could also be used on a group basis, perhaps during the LA SENCO days, to identify trends in the LA regarding threats to SENCOs' wellbeing, and to formulate a plan to address these collectively through the use of a group problem-solving approach (e.g. Grahamslaw and Henson, 2015). This may be particularly productive following periods of change in the LA (Kyriacou, 2001). The measure may also be a useful stimulus for SENCOs' personal reflection, or for discussions with senior management.

5.3.1 How the research is informing my current practice

McNiff et al (1996) note that reflection on how research has impacted one's practice is an important part of the research process and Willig (2013) asserts that such consideration is a core component of the process of reflexivity. This research was completed two months prior to the end of my professional training and there has therefore been a relatively limited time in which to observe and reflect upon how it has informed my current practice. However, I feel the research has impacted my practice in several ways.

First, I feel that I have a deeper appreciation of the everyday demands faced by SENCOs. The current research suggests that there are a diverse range of factors which can potentially cause OS for this group of teachers. This has furthered my enthusiasm to practice in a manner which promotes the wellbeing of SENCOs. In my

practice as a trainee EP, I have used some of the resources that participants in this research felt could be used by EPs to support SENCOs' wellbeing. This has included making time to discuss issues other than those which I am visiting the school for and actively encouraging such discussions, signposting SENCOs to other settings in the authority which are models of good practice, and disseminating research findings. I am planning to remain in the LA where this research was carried out during the coming academic year as a newly qualified EP, and have asked to remain the link EP for the schools where I currently perform this role with their consent, as this was identified as a helpful resource by participants in the research. I also feel that it will help me to have a good knowledge of the school, staff, systems and CYP, i.e. another resource that was highlighted as helpful by participants, and hope that this will be another mechanism through which wellbeing can be promoted.

In part, the research for me has emphasised the positive effects that working in a collaborative and child-centred manner can bring. These ways of working are already part of guidelines for best practice for EPs (e.g. BPS, 2002). Consultation allows EPs to work in this manner (Wagner, 2000) and the research has strengthened my resolve to use this model in my professional work and to opt to work in a service which actively advocates use of the approach.

As mentioned in the previous section, application of some of the resources with which EPs can support with SENCOs' wellbeing relies upon how schools wish to use their commissioned hours. During planning meetings with schools in the new academic year, I plan to have discussions around the potential benefits of supervision sessions and follow-up planning meetings. I also plan to invite discussions around training

needs, and to highlight some avenues for training that may be useful for wellbeing, based on the findings of this study (e.g. group problem-solving).

Ultimately, this research has incubated and developed my desire to support with the area of SENCO and teacher wellbeing. I plan to present the findings of the research at a SENCO day in the new academic year, and hope that the findings will have similarly positive effects for others.

5.4 Conclusions

OS in teaching presents a significant threat to wellbeing (Montgomery and Rupp, 2005) and there are variations regarding the causes and means of reducing it amongst different groups of teachers (e.g. Chaplain, 2008). SENCOs represent a group that had received little research attention regarding OS, despite playing a critical and distinct role within schools. This research consequently investigated the extent to which SENCOs experience OS. An exploration of the causes, means of effective prevention/reduction, and the role that EPs can play in the coping process was also undertaken.

Findings suggested that most participants experienced at least a moderate degree of OS within their roles. Demands that were perceived to cause OS were identified. These included demands that were perceived to cause OS: frequently (e.g. workload, paperwork, local authority procedures), and to the greatest extent (e.g. workload, working with parents, managing difficult emotions). Several themes emerged regarding coping with OS including: beliefs, relationships and support, individual

resources and skills, and school culture and systems. Several themes similarly emerged regarding ways in which EPs could support the coping process including: contact, child and school-centred working, and problem-solving.

The limitations of this research were identified and some suggestions for further research included the employing of: more representative samples, measures to confirm self-report ratings of OS and coping, and member checking. Research which explores the extent to which SENCOs experience OS during different times of the year, following legislative changes, and in different settings may also be beneficial, as would research which explores the kind of support that SENCOs would value from EPs if they are experiencing high amounts of OS.

It is hoped that the primary implication of this research will be to raise awareness amongst school leaders and policy makers about the OS experienced by SENCOs, and that some of the identified resources will be implemented in effort to address this. Due to EPs' widening roles (Gibbs and Miller, 2014) and the impact that teacher stress can have on CYP (Naghieh et al, 2015), it is also hoped that this research will provide a preliminary step towards EPs supporting with this area, both for the wellbeing of SENCOs, and ultimately to ensure the best possible provision for the most vulnerable CYP.

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GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

Burnout	The term 'burnout', coined by Maslach and Jackson (1981), refers to a cumulative response to occupational demands where one experiences: emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced feelings of personal accomplishment.
Child-centred	Ensuring that a child's individual situation, needs, interests, preferences and strengths are incorporated into and considered paramount within any supportive processes.
Critical realism	A philosophical approach which views the world as existing independently from one's knowledge of it. Knowledge of the world is socially constructed and limited by available discourse, researcher interests and theoretical resources. Research findings represent an interpretation of reality, rather than a direct, unmediated reflection.
Epistemology	The philosophy of what we can know about the world, the nature of knowledge, and how it can be disseminated (Cohen et al, 2007).
Inclusion	Refers to schools adapting to meet the needs of actual or potential pupils, irrespective of need, and taking steps to ensure that all pupils belong to the school community (Lindsay, 2007; Avramidis and Norwich, 2002)
Individual-deficit	Refers to the notion that individuals presenting with a psychological difficulty (e.g. stress) have a core deficit which is responsible for the said difficulty (Griffin, 1994). This way of appraising phenomenon has little consideration of environmental or contextual contributors.
Job demands resources model	A model of occupational stress developed by Bakker and Demerouti (2007). The model posits that stress (strain) is experienced when individuals have insufficient resources to deal with the demands that they face.
Job demands	Job demands are physical, psychological, social or organisational aspects of a job which require sustained effort, and therefore a cost for the individual (Brough et al, 2013).
Job resources	Job resources are located at either the physical, psychological, social, or organisational levels, and represent anything that: helps to achieve work-related goals, reduces job demands or the cost of job demands, and stimulates growth, learning or development (Hakanen et al, 2006).

Occupational stress	Distress that derives specifically from or is exacerbated by being in the workplace (HSE, 2013).
Psychoanalytic perspective	A psychological approach in which unconscious drives are seen to largely determine behaviour and cognition. The term was first coined by Sigmund Freud (1896), who established the discipline of psychoanalysis.
Reflexivity	The exploration of ways in which a researcher's involvement in a piece of research influences, acts upon, and informs the research (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999).
Stress	The response of the body to any demand (Fink, 2016b). The term is often used to describe negative outcomes and experiences, such as anxiety, that are resultant of experiencing particular demands. The terms 'distress' and 'strain' are similarly used to describe such experiences.
Supervision	A psychological process which focuses on personal and professional development through the provision of a confidential and reflective space to consider one's work and their responses to it (Dunsmuir and Leadbetter, 2010).
Systemic	Related to family therapy and the need to consider environmental and/or organisational contributors to a situation, rather than purely focusing on individual factors. Within the school context, this can refer to the ethos, policies, culture, and practice that is present within the setting.
Wellbeing	The "balance point between an individual's resource pool and the challenges faced" Dodge et al (2012, p.230). This balance results in the experiencing of a positive emotional state (Aeltermann et al, 2007). There is no universally agreed definition of the term and this description represents the conceptualisation adopted in this research.

APPENDICIES

Appendix 1 – Search strategy and eligibility criteria

Search 1

The first search sought to identify literature relevant to the initial two research questions. Kyriacou (2001) suggests that there are differences between teachers' experiences of stress and wellbeing based on their country's education system. The electronic search was therefore limited to papers written in English and to those carried out in the UK, USA, Australia, New Zealand, Canada or Malta, due these countries sharing similarities with the English education system (e.g. Borg and Riding, 1991). The electronic search was also limited to articles written in between 2011-2016 and to those that were peer reviewed, in effort to identify high-quality, contemporary literature which is relevant to the area.

The terms: Teacher* AND Stress* OR burnout OR wellbeing OR well-being OR well being were entered into the databases listed in the literature review section, alongside keywords and synonyms related to the first two research questions (model* OR factor* causes* OR contributor* OR stressor* OR prevent* OR intervention* OR cop* OR develop* OR support* OR resili*). A total of 255 articles were found. 228 articles were removed either due to duplication or not meeting the search criteria, and 27 articles remained.

Search 2

The second search aimed to identify articles relevant to the third research question, i.e. those which explored stress and wellbeing amongst SENCOs. Papers were limited

to those that were peer reviewed, but not by date, due to the scarcity of directly relevant research in the area.

An initial search, comprised of synonyms of 'SENCO' and 'stress' returned no results. The search terms were then widened to include words which may be related to job stress such as 'demand', 'pressure', and 'strain'. Databases were searched for the terms SENCO* OR SENCO* OR special needs coordinator* OR special needs coordinator*' AND 'stress* OR burnout OR demand* OR pressure* OR career* OR strain* OR tension* OR impact* OR dilemma*' OR wellbeing OR well-being OR well being OR cop* OR resili* OR support* OR help*. A total of 48 papers were identified. 36 papers were removed either due to duplication or not meeting the search criteria, and a total of 12 articles remained.

Search 3

The third search aimed to identify articles relevant to the fourth research question, i.e. those which explored how EPs support SENCOs' and school staff wellbeing. The same eligibility criteria as the previous section were applied.

The aforementioned databases were searched for the terms 'Educational psycholog* OR EP*' AND 'stress* OR burnout* OR wellbeing OR well-being OR well being demand* OR strain OR pressure OR resilience OR cop*' AND teach* OR educat* OR staff* OR SENCO* OR Special needs coordinator* OR head*. A total of 71 papers were identified. 67 papers were removed either due to duplication or not meeting the search criteria, and a total of 4 articles remained.

Appendix 2 – Presentation delivered at SENCO conference

THE SENCO WELLBEING PROJECT

Tom Lewis



TEACHER AND SENCO WELLBEING

- Class teachers' wellbeing
- Different roles, different pressures
- SENCO wellbeing
 - + Rights
 - + Crucial to supporting CYP
- What I want to find out
 - + Demands
 - + Successful coping
 - + EPs



THE STUDY

Two Phases:

- Questionnaire
- Interviews



PARTICIPATION

- Information sheet
- Consent form and questionnaire
- Individual interviews (5 participants) December 2016
- Feedback 2017

Today

RISK AND BENEFITS

- Health warning - thinking about stress
 - ✓ Voluntary
 - ✓ Confidential
 - ✓ Ethical approval from UoB
- Benefits
 - + Awareness
 - + Strategies - SENCOs & EPs

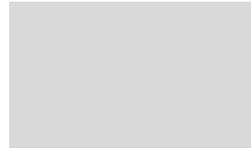


**THANKS
FOR
LISTENING**

Appendix 3 – Participant information form



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The SENCO Wellbeing Project: Information for Participants

You are invited to participate in this research. Please read this information sheet and decide whether you wish to participate. Feel free to discuss the study with others or to contact us if you have any questions (see overleaf for contact details).

What is the purpose of the project?

The project aims to explore wellbeing amongst SENCOs. We are interested in the extent to which SENCOs experience occupational stress and which factors in the workplace contribute towards it. We are also interested in exploring what schools, SENCOs and Educational Psychologists can do to help prevent and manage occupational stress and promote wellbeing at work.

What does participation in the project involve?

If you agree to take part, you will be asked to complete a short paper-based questionnaire. This will ask questions about your experiences of stress in the workplace, demands of your job and how well you think you feel you cope with these. Some demographic questions are also included. The questionnaire should take around 10 minutes to complete. Following analysis of the questionnaires, a small number of participants will be invited to participate either in an interview to explore their experiences of managing occupational stress, or a group interview to discuss how Educational Psychologists could support SENCOs' wellbeing.

Are there any potential risks and benefits?

Wellbeing and occupational Stress are potentially sensitive topics and could evoke difficult memories and emotions for those that participate. This may be particularly true for participants who are currently experiencing high levels of occupational stress. Some sources to support with the management of workplace stress are listed on the overleaf.

You are unlikely to receive any personal benefits from participating in the research. However, it is hoped that the project will lead to an understanding of how SENCOs and those working with them can promote wellbeing and optimally prevent and manage occupational stress. These findings will be shared at a future SENCO conference.

Is taking part confidential?

Yes, all data collected during the study will be strictly confidential. When findings are presented, participants and their schools will not be individually identifiable and pseudonyms will be used during any interviews. Data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and on an encrypted laptop for the duration of the study. Only the researcher will have access to this data.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is your choice whether you wish to participate. You are free to withdraw from the study without giving a reason. If you wish to withdraw from the study, please do so on or



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before the 1st December 2016, and your data will be omitted from the study. It will not be possible to remove data from the study beyond this point. Please contact the researcher using the details provided if you would like to withdraw from the study.

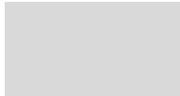
How will the results of the study be presented?

The results of the project will be included in a thesis and may be published in an academic journal. Individual participants will not be identified in any reports or publications. A research summary will be shared at a future SENCO conference once the thesis is approved.

What next?

If you are happy to participate in the project, thank you in advance for your participation. Please complete the consent form and questionnaire on the overleaf.

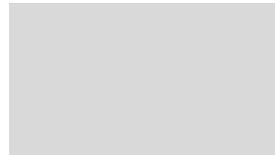
Yours sincerely,



Tom Lewis

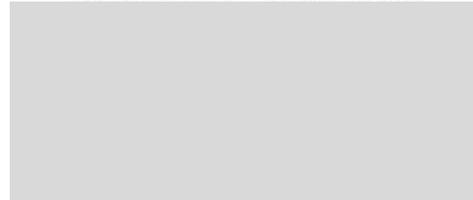
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Trainee Educational Psychologist



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Academic and Professional Tutor



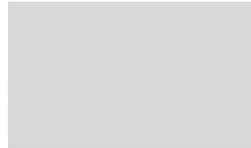
Sources to promote workplace wellbeing and support with the management of occupational stress

<https://www.educationsupportpartnership.org.uk/>
www.workstress.net
<http://www.nasuwt.org.uk/MemberSupport/MemberGroups/Stress>
www.hse.gov.uk/stress/resources.htm
[nhs.uk/iapt](http://www.nhs.uk/iapt)

Appendix 4 – Consent form for phase 1



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Participant Consent Form

Project Title

"SENCO Wellbeing: A mixed-methods case study of workplace demands and effective coping actions."

Fair Processing Statement

This information is being collected as part of a research project concerned with (objective of the research) by the Department of Education in the University of Birmingham in collaboration with Educational Psychology Service. The information which you supply and that which may be collected as part of the research project will be entered into a filing system or database and will only be accessed by authorised personnel involved in the project. The information will be retained by the University of Birmingham and will only be used for the purpose of research, and statistical and audit purposes. By supplying this information you are consenting to the University storing your information for the purposes stated above. The information will be processed by the University of Birmingham in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998. No identifiable personal data will be published.

Statements of understanding/consent

- I confirm that I have read and understand the participant information leaflet for this study.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions if necessary and have had these answered satisfactorily.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study without giving any reason. I understand that 01/12/16 is the deadline for withdrawal from the study, and that data will be destroyed and omitted from the study if I choose to withdraw on or prior to this date. I understand that it will not be possible to remove my data from the study after 01/12/16.
- I understand that my personal data will be processed for the purposes detailed above, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.
- I understand that I may be contacted by the researcher to be invited to participate in an individual or group interview using the contact details provided below.

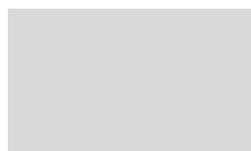
Please complete

..... Name Contact information (E-mail or telephone number)
..... Signature/...../..... Date

Appendix 5 – Questionnaire



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Please circle the choice which best describes your views, or write in the space provided as applicable.

A. In general, how stressful do you find being a SENCO?

Not at all stressful	Mildly stressful	Moderately stressful	Very stressful	Extremely stressful
1	2	3	4	5

B. In general, how demanding is your role as SENCO?

Not at all demanding	Mildly demanding	Moderately demanding	Very demanding	Extremely demanding
1	2	3	4	5

C. In general, how effectively do you cope with stress related to your role as SENCO?

Not at all effectively	Mildly effectively	Moderately effectively	Very effectively	Extremely effectively
1	2	3	4	5

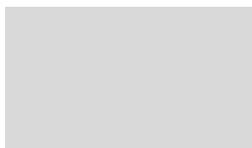
D. Would you describe yourself as someone who is able to bounce back after a stressful or difficult day at work?

Yes	No
-----	----

E. Below is a list of items relating to working conditions as a SENCO. For each item, please indicate whether you feel it causes stress:

Never causes stress	Very occasionally causes stress	Occasionally causes stress	Frequently causes stress	Is a constant cause of stress	Not applicable
1	2	3	4	5	N/A

Workload	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Time allocated for the role	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Excessive paperwork	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Local authority procedures	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
OFSTED inspections	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Implementing the new Code of Practice	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Time management	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
The breadth of knowledge required	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Others' expectations of SENCOs' knowledge	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
A lack of support from external agencies and/or the local authority	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
The quality of support from external agencies and/or local authority	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Completing the SENCO qualification	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
A lack of training	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Being isolated within the role	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Having nobody to share work-related problems with	1	2	3	4	5	N/A



Having differing priorities to colleagues	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Having differing priorities to the government/local authority agenda	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Misunderstandings in communication	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Managing and hiding difficult emotions	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Hostility from children	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Hostility from parents	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Hostility from colleagues	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Managing parents' expectations	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
A lack of engagement from parents	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Working with others who are experiencing difficult emotions	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Using emotional resources (e.g. negotiating and compromising)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
The status of the SENCO role	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
The clarity of the SENCO role	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
A lack of appreciation from colleagues	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
A lack of respect from colleagues	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Insufficient financial reward	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Not being a member of the senior leadership team	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Not having enough power to make changes	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
A lack of opportunities for whole school approaches to SEN	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

F. What do you consider is the most stressful aspect of being a SENCO?

G. How do you identify your gender?

Female	Male	Prefer not to disclose
--------	------	------------------------

_____ (Fill in the blank)

H. What educational setting(s) do you work in?

Nursery	Primary	Secondary	Further Education	Higher Education	Special Education	Prefer not to disclose
---------	---------	-----------	-------------------	------------------	-------------------	------------------------

Other _____

I. How long have you been a teacher?

_____ years	Prefer not to disclose
-------------	------------------------



J. How long have you been a SENCO?

years

K. Do you hold any additional responsibilities?

Class teacher	Subject Leader	Phase Leader	Assistant Head Teacher	Deputy Head Teacher	Head teacher	Prefer not to disclose
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Other _____

L. How much time does your setting allocate you to carry out the SENCO role?

hours days

M. Are you part of your setting's senior management team?

N. Do you share the role of SENCO with another practitioner?

Thank you for your participation

Appendix 6 – Interview schedule

Issue/Topic	Possible Questions	Possible Follow up Questions (Prompt)	Probes
Experience	Can you give me a brief summary or overview of your teaching career?	How long have you been in the SENCO role?	Go on...
Demands of the role	What are some of the day-to-day stresses that you face as a SENCO in this school/setting?	Which ones cause the most stress?	Is there anything else?
Beliefs about the role	Tell me your personal beliefs about being a SENCO	Why do you stay in the role?	Go on...
Coping with role demands	Can you tell me about a few of the most stressful incidents you have experienced as a SENCO?	How did you handle them?	Can you tell me anymore?
	What strategies do you, personally use to stay positive during difficult times?	Do you talk to yourself to help you stay positive? What do you say?	Is there anything else?
	Have you ever experienced “burn out”?	What did you do to recover?	Can you tell me anymore?
	Since you have been a SENCO here, is there anything that you feel particularly proud of?	What was it that made you feel proud about that?	Go on...
	What are your main sources of support and strength?	Who do you talk to?	What else?

Support from others	How does your school/setting help you to be resilient and manage stress?	Are there any particular resources, routines, policies, practices or people that are helpful?	Can you think of anything else?
	What advice would you give a teacher wanting to become a SENCO?	Why would you say this to them?	Could you tell me a bit more about that?
Support from EPs	Have you ever worked with an Educational Psychologist who supported SENCOs' wellbeing?	What did they do?	Was there anything else?
	Do you think consultation, intervention, or training would be helpful in promoting wellbeing?	What would the focus be? How would this work?	Go on...
	How else do you think Educational Psychologists could support SENCOs wellbeing?	Have you had any experience of this? What kind of things could they do?	What else?

Thank you very much for helping me and giving up your time. Can I finally ask if you think there is any aspect of your experience of promoting wellbeing within the SENCO role which has not been covered in this interview?

Appendix 7 – Interview procedure

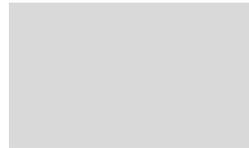
The following steps were taken during the interview process:

1. An informal discussion with the participant to promote rapport (e.g. weather, journey etc) (Thomas, 2013) and to help them feel at ease.
2. Thanking the participant for their involvement.
3. A reiteration of the nature of study, and in particular, phase 2 of the study, using the information sheet as a stimulus.
4. A reminder that there were no right or wrong answers or trick questions. The phrase “I’m just interested in your opinions and personal experiences” (Lofland and Lofland, 1995) was used.
5. Confirmation was sought regarding acceptability of recording the interviews and to take notes.
6. A reminder that the participant did not have to answer questions if they do not want to, and that taking a break was fine, was given.
7. A reminder that all responses were confidential was given.
8. It was asked whether the participant had any questions.
9. The interview then begun.

Appendix 8 – Consent form for phase 2



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Participant Consent Form

Project Title

"SENCO Wellbeing: A mixed-methods case study of workplace demands and effective coping actions."

Fair Processing Statement

This information is being collected as part of a research project concerned with (objective of the research) by the Department of Education in the University of Birmingham in collaboration with Educational Psychology Service. The information which you supply and that which may be collected as part of the research project will be entered into a filing system or database and will only be accessed by authorised personnel involved in the project. The information will be retained by the University of Birmingham and will only be used for the purpose of research, and statistical and audit purposes. By supplying this information you are consenting to the University storing your information for the purposes stated above. The information will be processed by the University of Birmingham in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998. No identifiable personal data will be published.

Statements of understanding/consent

- I confirm that I have read and understand the participant information leaflet for this study.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions if necessary and have had these answered satisfactorily.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study without giving any reason. I understand that 01/02/17 is the deadline for withdrawal from the study, and that data will be destroyed and omitted from the study if I choose to withdraw on or prior to this date. I understand that it will not be possible to remove my data from the study after 01/02/17.
- I understand that my personal data will be processed for the purposes detailed above, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.
- I understand that interview recordings may be transcribed via a transcription service. Participants' identities will remain confidential during this process.

Please complete

.....	
Name	
...../...../.....
Signature	Date

Appendix 9 – Initial codes for open question in phase 1 (RQ2)

Code	Description
Access to CAMHS	Issues related to accessing CAMHS services e.g. waiting list time, referral paperwork, and managing others' expectations of this.
Access to other services	Issues related to accessing specialist services such as the Occupational Therapy Service, the EPS, and specialist teaching services. Examples included waiting list time, referral paperwork/pathways, and time available with services.
Amount of information	Issues related to the amount of information SENCOs need to process. E.g. information about all children on the SEN register.
Breadth of work	Factors related to the diversity and the many responsibilities of SENCOs' roles
Colleagues knowledge of the role	Issues related to colleagues understanding of the role. E.g. how busy SENCOs are.
Communication	Issues related to communicating with other staff and agencies. E.g. taking calls whilst teaching.
Conflict with the local authority	Factors relating to tensions between SENCOs and the local authority. E.g. the perception that the local authority tries to make some things 'a battle' rather than working together.
Coordinating SEN provision	Issues related to facilitating effective support for CYP with SEN. E.g. encouraging/negotiating with teachers to implement relevant strategies and chasing referral paperwork.
Interactions with students	Factors related to interacting with students. E.g. supporting CYP in managing problems.
Emotional impact	Issues related to managing emotions related to the role. E.g. dealing with the impact of disclosures.

Expectations	Issues related to others' expectations of the SENCOs role, managing conflicting expectations, and SENCOs's own expectations. E.g. unrealistic expectations of what SENCOs can achieve, managing the differing views of parents and the local authority.
Funding	Issues related to the funding available to support CYP with SEN. E.g. recent reductions in school budgets.
Incomplete work	Issues related to difficulties finishing pieces of work. E.g. interruptions and not being able to get through a 'to do' list.
Information sharing	Issues related to sharing information with the relevant people in a timely fashion
Knowledge and resources	Issues related to the management of resources and the availability of resources to meet need, and having the correct knowledge to perform the role effectively. E.g. identifying the most suitable provision to meet a CYP's needs.
Level of need	Issues related to the type of SEN experienced by CYP. E.g. meeting a high-level of need in mainstream settings
Links between services	Issues related to inconsistency in the way the NHS and education agencies work together.
Managing multiple responsibilities	Issues related to the management of teaching and other responsibilities in addition to the SENCO role.
Managing without specialist support	Issues related to SENCOs putting support into place whilst waiting for specialist input. E.g. a lack of clarity about diagnoses.
Paperwork	Issues related to completing paperwork relevant to the SENCO role. E.g. for referrals.
Power	Issues related to having the power to make decisions. E.g. having to defer to the senior leadership team.
Parental engagement	Issues related to difficulties with facilitating parental engagement.

Parents' expectations	Issues related to parents' expectations. E.g. referral times, speed of change.
Parents' frustration	Factors related to parents becoming frustrated
Promoting inclusion	Issues related to SENCOs promoting inclusion on a whole school level.
Recipients of frustration	Issues related to SENCOs being the target for others' frustrations.
Responsibility	Factors related to SENCOs experiencing of a high-level of responsibility for meeting children's needs.
Statutory	Issues related to legal requirements related to the role. E.g. contributing to Education, health and care plans, changes in the statutory assessment process.
Status of SEN	Factors related to the senior leadership team understanding the importance of SEN.
Support for parents at home	Issues related to difficulties providing support for parents in the home environment
Time	Issues related to SENCOs having an appropriate amount of allocated time in which to complete their duties.
Training colleagues	Issues related to SENCOs being able to keep other staff updated about pupils' needs.
Workload	Issues related to the amount of work SENCOs have to complete

Appendix 10 – Initial codes for phase 2 (RQ 3 and 4)

Code	Description
Access to external agencies and support	Issues relating to accessing and coordinating external agencies.
Accessibility	Related to SENCOs being able to easily contact EPs outside of commissioned time by phone or e-mail. The feeling that there is an 'open door' policy.
Assemblies	Issues relating to the leading of assemblies causing or contributing to SENCOs experiences of OS.
Awareness of stress	Related to SENCOs being able to self-identify when they are beginning to feel stress. This could be through physical sensations (e.g. tightness in shoulders), and/or thought or feeling patterns (e.g. feeling that one "needs" to complete lots of tasks). This code also relates to other staff noticing and 'checking in' with colleagues during periods or situations that they may be experiencing stress.
Bespoke working	Related to EPs tailoring training and advice to the specific circumstances of individual schools, classes, and children, thereby relieving the SENCO of having to 'adapt' input themselves.
Boredom	Related to SENCOs feeling bored in their role and a feeling that they have made all the positive change that they can.
Boundaries and routines	Related to SENCOs maintaining a work-life balance through incorporating a routine which enables them to address their workload, without unexpectedly encroaching on their home life. For example, designating Wednesday as an 'admin' day where late working has been planned for.
Resilient staff	Related to SENCOs working with staff who have previously faced adversity within the school setting which has created a bond with one another.
Child and family focused	Related to SEN provision being tailored to individual children and their families and this having positive outcomes for children. Many staff around the school may be aware of children's needs and

	there is an emphasis on holistic understanding of children (e.g. family circumstances, strengths etc).
Collaborative working	Related to EPs working with class teachers and SENCOs to ensure that actions are jointly formulated, understood and manageable. Actions to support children are agreed collaboratively and fit within the school's current framework or capacity.
Complex cases	Relating to involvement in complex cases requiring large amount of SENCOs' time and leaving little room for other pupils on the SEN register. Such cases may involve applying for or implementing EHCP, or preparing for tribunals.
Consistency in EP	Relating to SENCOs valuing having the same EP over time. As such, EPs know the school's systems, staff and children, and can effectively contribute to school development. SENCOs have confidence in knowing that EPs understand their children's needs and this is perceived to make their role more manageable.
Coordinating outside agencies	Relating to appointments with external professionals and instances where SENCOs have forgotten that a visit is taking place. These instances are perceived to contribute towards OS.
Credibility	Related to SENCOs or EPs having perceived credibility by school staff and/or parents. For both professionals, having taught or currently teaching well was thought to increase the credibility of advice given. For SENCOs, credibility was also linked to personal experience of having a child with SEND and navigating similar local authority systems.
De-escalation	Relating to SENCOs deescalating a parent with intent to seriously harm another member of staff. This was perceived to contribute towards OS.
Disseminating, organising and recalling information	Related to disseminating information from external professionals to relative persons in school and parents. SENCOs were sometimes expected to do this themselves but elsewhere had systems in place so that this happened automatically. The code also related to informal conversations about children being challenging due to the volume of information SENCOs work with.

Donated hypotheses and strategies	Related to EPs supporting SENCOs through donating hypotheses, strategies or suggesting alternative ways of thinking.
Effecting positive change	Related to SENCOs enjoying the process of using their skills to promote and achieve positive outcomes for pupils, either at school and/or at home, and their parents. This process generally referred to a pupil's transition from a challenging situation to a positive one.
Effective systems	Related to systems that are in place that reduce everyday demands on the SENCO or increase the number of resources available to them. These could be at the individual or school level.
- Clarity of role	Systems which clearly demarcate the SENCOs role. Often, this will be at a strategic and coordination level, with other members of staff being responsible for the practical implementation of strategies.
- Communication	Systems which allow information to be clearly, promptly and easily communicated with staff.
- Delegation of admin	Systems where SENCOs can delegate administrative and 'paperwork' duties to an assistant.
- Lack of duplication	Systems which minimise unnecessary copying or repeating of paper-based information.
Empathy	Related to SENCOs and/or EPs demonstrating an understanding of the demands that SENCOs and class teachers face day to day.
Enjoyment	Related to aspects of SENCOs roles which they derive pleasure from. E.g. supporting families, effecting positive change for children and families, helping families to problem solve.
Expectations	Related to SENCOs and others' expectations of themselves. Meeting a high-level of demand causes less strain if it is planned for. Not addressing the expected number of demands causes strain.
Experience	Related to SENCOs' experience prior to beginning the role.

Family life	Relating to a perception that carrying out the role and having a family would be challenging.
'Firefighting'	Relating to SENCOs facing and having to address unexpected demands throughout the school day.
Flexibility	Related to EPs being flexible to SENCO/school needs during their everyday work. For example, making time to further discuss strategies after meetings and being open to talking about issues that are not directly related to the purpose of their visit. EPs may also be flexible in adapting their training and recommendations to pupil and school circumstances.
Training	Related to SENCOs undertaking CPD to support with their role. For example, training to support children with autism, speech and language difficulties etc.
Guiding beliefs	Beliefs held by SENCOs about their role which influence and guide their practice. For example, that one should act as an advocate for parents and children first and foremost in the role.
Holistic approach	Related to SENCOs viewing the social and emotional aspects of development as being as important as the academic aspects. Children are viewed as a whole rather than just in terms of their difficulties. Families and the child are an active part any planning processes.
Holistic assessment	Relating to EPs including teaching and other staff in the assessment process and building and understanding that is representative of the child generally, rather than just the period that they have been directly worked with.
Humour	Related to SENCOs using humour to manage OS and be resilient.
Impact of OS	Related to the effects of OS. For example, serious illness and reduced effectiveness at work.
Informal 'checking in'	Related to EPs asking SENCOs how the role is going and making time to have conversations about issues other than the case that they have come in for. This process will often involve active listening and empathy, and assisting with problem-solving, perspective taking and the prioritisation of tasks.

Interests outside of work	Related to SENCOs engaging in other activities outside of work hours as a strategy to reduce feelings of strain and to take their focus of work-related demands. For example, exercise.
Interruptions	Related to SENCOs planned activities being disturbed to deal with unexpected demands. For example, phone calls from outside agencies.
Isolation	Relating to the perceptions of SENCOs that the role is SENCO is lonely and isolating.
Knowledge of the school	Relating to EPs being familiar with school staff, their way of working and the types of provision that are on offer. This enables them to make suggestions about school improvement, links with previous work, and to check on the current status of cases or other work. Adaptations to interventions and training are also able to be made. There is the perception that acting on knowledge about the school makes it easier for staff to implement recommendations and makes the SENCOs role more manageable due to recommendations already being tailored.
Lack of policies	Relating to instances where there are a lack of policies to address OS and where the issue is rarely raised within school.
Leaving role	Relating to instances where SENCOs leave their role and move to a different school due to a feeling of stagnation and minimal impact.
Looking forward to planned breaks	Relating to SENCOs remembering and counting down to upcoming planned breaks as a strategy to manage high demands in the present.
Management of team	Relating to SENCOs creating, being part of, and managing an SEN team as a means of support.
- Shared goals	Relating to all members of the team working together and the SENCO removing members that do not.
Managing multiple roles	Related to SENCOs having other roles in the school (e.g. behaviour, inclusion, or safeguarding leads, assistant head or class teacher). Such roles can cause strain within the role of SENCO in the form of interruptions, available time, and frequent switching between roles.

Meeting potential	Related to a belief that children with SEN may not often meet their potential due to a lack of understanding on the part of staff/adults to support them appropriately.
Mismatch between aims and practice	Related to the experience of stress or strain being experienced as the result of an imbalance between the planned and actual meeting of demands.
Opportunity to work from home	Related to SENCOs being afforded the opportunity to work from home. This may be suggested by the SENCO or the head teacher, and there is the perception that work can be completed quicker at home than at school.
Paperwork	Relating to 'paperwork' activities, such as administrative tasks and compiling EHCP applications, acting as a source of strain. The dissemination and interpretation of professionals' reports can also act as a source of strain and is included within this code.
Perceptions of EP role and capacity	Related to a perception that EPs' work generally involves supporting with individual children or delivering training, rather than supporting with staffs' wellbeing. There is the perception that such work may be useful, but that EPs would probably not have the capacity to deliver it.
Personal experience	Related to SENCOs experiences of family life outside of work helping to inform their decision making within the role. For example, helping them to view things from parents' perspectives or to put current demands in perspective.
Perspective taking	Related to SENCOs appraising demands in a manner which minimises or reduces the feeling of strain. For example, recalling past experiences of successfully managing strain and depersonalising incidents. This code also relates to SENCOs taking action to actively reduce demands. For example, negotiating later hand in dates with the local authority.
Perspective taking (EPs)	Related to EPs helping SENCOs to appreciate others' points of view, understand that other professionals faced similar challenges with particular cases, and problem solve to jointly arrive at an agreeable solution to concerns arising from casework.
Positive beliefs	Related to beliefs that one is a resilient person who generally holds a positive outlook on life and

	recognises their achievements. This is mirrored by the general ethos of the school and other staff appears to hold similar views.
Positive school ethos	Related to SENCOs perceiving that there is a 'strong' team who work towards common goals in a solution focused manner, which may be facilitated by training. There is also perception of trust amongst staff.
Potential to be harmed	Relating to SENCOs experiencing situations where they have the potential to be physically harmed, and to this acting as a source of stress/strain.
Previous experience	Relating to SENCOs having previous experience in other roles (e.g. working with children with learning disabilities, working in other capacities in the school) which they can apply within the SENCO role. SENCOs appeared to be drawn to roles which involved working with children in challenging situations, and feeling a sense of reward from helping them to overcome barriers. This code also relates to SENCOs' previous experiences of successfully overcoming feelings of strain.
Prioritising	Relating to SENCOs ranking tasks based on their perceived importance and the time-frame by which they need to be completed. There is a clear order in which tasks are completed and this helps to minimise feelings of stress and strain.
Promoting positive outcomes for children with SEN	Related to SENCOs being motivated to stay in their role to help children with SEN achieve the best possible outcomes.
Realistic expectations and understanding of role	Related to SENCOs having an understanding of the requirements and nature of the role before taking it on, in order to avoid a mismatch between expectations and reality of the role (e.g. understanding the affecting change is not always a quick process). This code also relates to staffs' expectations and understanding of the SENCO role, both in empathising with the demands they face, and with regards to expectations of how quickly SENCOs can affect change.

Realistic strategies	Related to EPs suggesting strategies to support children with SEN which the school are able to implement within the confines of their time and resources.
Reassurance and strategies	Related to SENCOs have the facility to consult EPs informally about children and seek advice regarding appropriate support. SENCOs perceived that EPs sharing advice based on research or that which might aid future assessment to be particularly helpful, especially when it was conveyed in a manner which was perceived as confident and reassuring.
Recognising achievement	Related to SENCOs recognising their own achievements in terms of completing everyday tasks and effecting positive outcomes for children and young people. This code also relates to staff, parents and children recognising SENCOs achievements and displaying this through positive feedback or thanks. This is perceived as a process which promotes relaxation and minimises strain.
Relationships with children and families	Related to SENCOs forming good working relationships with children and parents. This serves to make it easier to effect change in the role and helps to combat the potentially isolating nature of the role. The establishment of such relationships perceived as a priority for new SENCOs and requires good people skills.
Relationships with staff	This code relates to good working relationships with staff minimising strain within the role through reducing demands, receiving social support, and other staff being increasingly empathetic towards the demands SENCOs face. Means to build such relationships are also included in this code (e.g. social events, visiting the staffroom regularly, checking in on colleagues etc). There was the sense that such relationships are threatened by an increased pace in schools.
Resolutions	Related to SENCOs not being able to fully resolve unpredictable demands that arise. Temporary solutions are put in place leading to a feeling of 'firefighting' rather than addressing the route cause. This is perceived to contribute to stress/strain.
SENCO days	Related to SENCOs viewing SENCO development days as valuable for forming relationships with other SENCOs and sharing ideas about practice. This was perceived to combat isolation. There was also the view that EPs could facilitate such events if changes occur in the local authority.

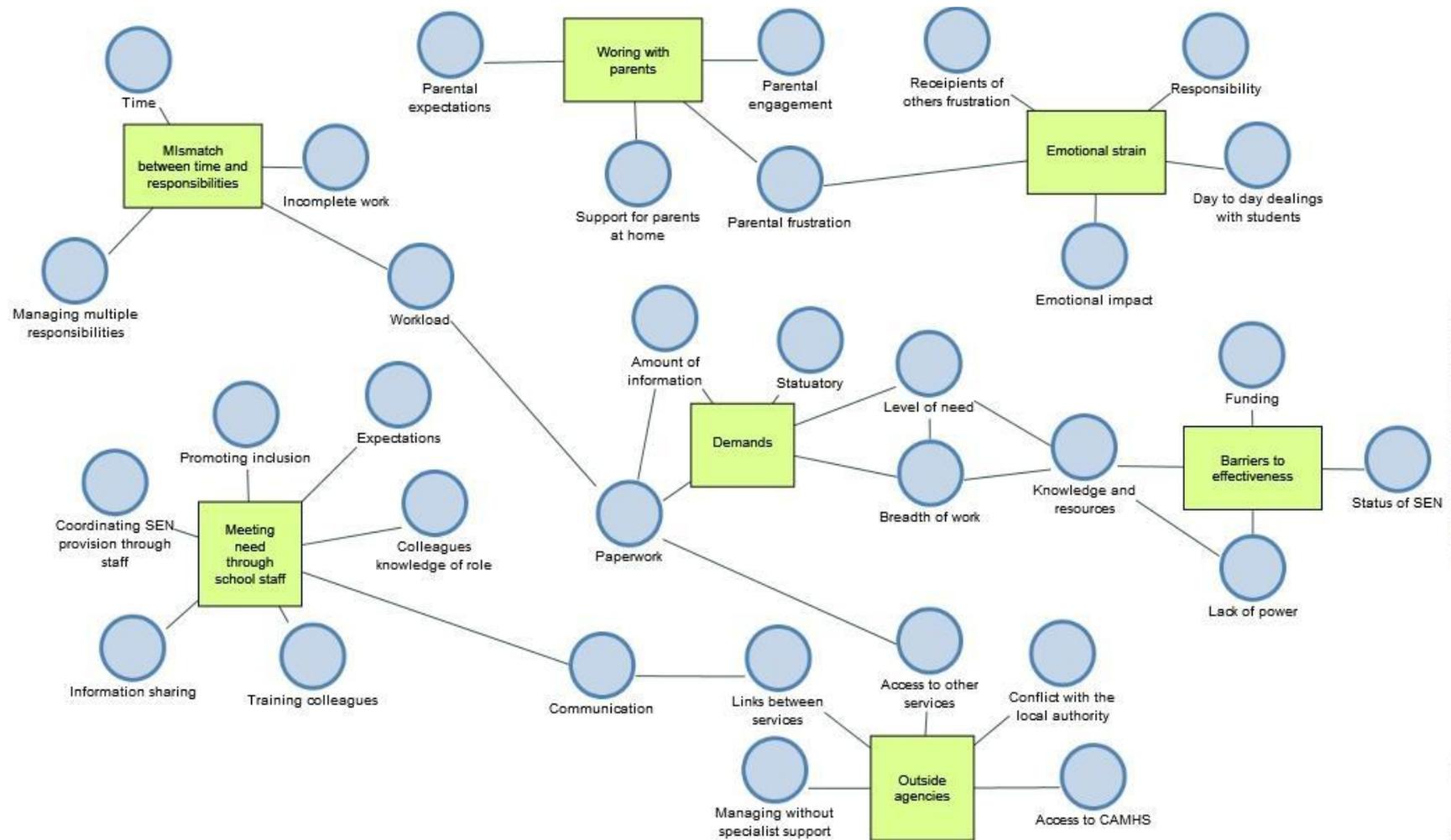
- Sharing of information	Related to opportunities to share and view good practice, at other settings or the SENCO conference, as acting as a vehicle to promote wellbeing.
SENCO qualification	Related to SENCOs completing the National Award in Special Educational Needs Coordination. There was the perception that this qualification was hard to complete whilst working as a full time SENCO, due to the academic demands of the course (e.g. essay writing and completing a research project). There was also the perception that the course to not give SENCOs enough emotional support, although support from the SENCOs school made the qualification easier to undertake. Prioritisation helped SENCOs complete the course, but to the detriment of other roles in school.
SENCOs' knowledge of the school	Related to SENCOs knowledge of the school (i.e. systems, procedures, children, parents, staff etc) making it easier for them to carry out their role.
Shadowing opportunities	Related to mentoring or shadowing opportunities being perceived as particularly valuable over time within the SENCO role, but that this is difficult due to the (often) singularity of the role within schools.
Shared office	Related to SENCOs inhabiting a shared office with other members of an SEN team. This was perceived as a way to combat isolation and to manage feelings of strain through talking with others. However, there was also the perception that a means of being able to work privately was useful.
Shared problem-solving	Related to systems or culture being present within the school which enables SENCOs to discuss problems with others. This is perceived as useful to increase confidence in SENCOs decisions or to identify alternative avenues to solve the problem. There is an awareness of staff specialisms (e.g. working with children with autism), and SENCOs consult these members of staff to draw upon their expertise too.
Shared role	Related to the perception that sharing the SENCO role with another member of staff may help to manage the complexity, demands and workload of the role. There was the perception that such partners could empathise well with each other and divide their roles between KS1 and KS2.

Signposting	Related to EPs identifying schools with good practice and sharing this information with SENCOs who are actively seeking development in a particular area. This was perceived as a means to promote wellbeing.
Solution focused approaches	Related to SENCOs using an approach to problem-solving which focuses on identifying positives and a desired outcome, rather than dwelling on problems and negative aspects. This was perceived to be useful for helping others to change their perspectives and as a means to stay positive during challenging times.
Staffing	Related to the perception that having a full-time SENCO or an SEN team which included a SENCO would help to manage demands faced on an everyday basis.
Statutory work	Related to SENCOs involvement in writing and coordinating EHC plan applications to be time consuming and to increase their workload. This was especially challenging when there was a mismatch between the views of parents and school with regard to applying for an EHCP. This code also relates to tribunals being viewed as a source of strain due to the increased workload.
Status and understanding of SEN in the school	Related to the perception that the profile of SEN in the school can increase or decrease demands and experiences of strain within the SENCO role. Membership and support of senior leaders, having effective staff supporting with SEN, adequate funding, CPD, and good relationships with members of staff were perceived to increase the status and understanding of SEN within schools.
Supervision	Related SENCOs feeling that EPs may be able to support wellbeing through facilitating supervision, which SENCOs currently perceived to receive little of. It was felt that an opportunity to talk through key cases and review the progress of children over the term may be useful in addition to termly planning meetings. This relates to a formal opportunity to do this.
Support for parents	Related to SENCOs perceiving a gap in the provision for supporting parents at home, and this leading to worry and strain for them. It was felt that if EPs could support with this area more, it could reduce strain for SENCOs.

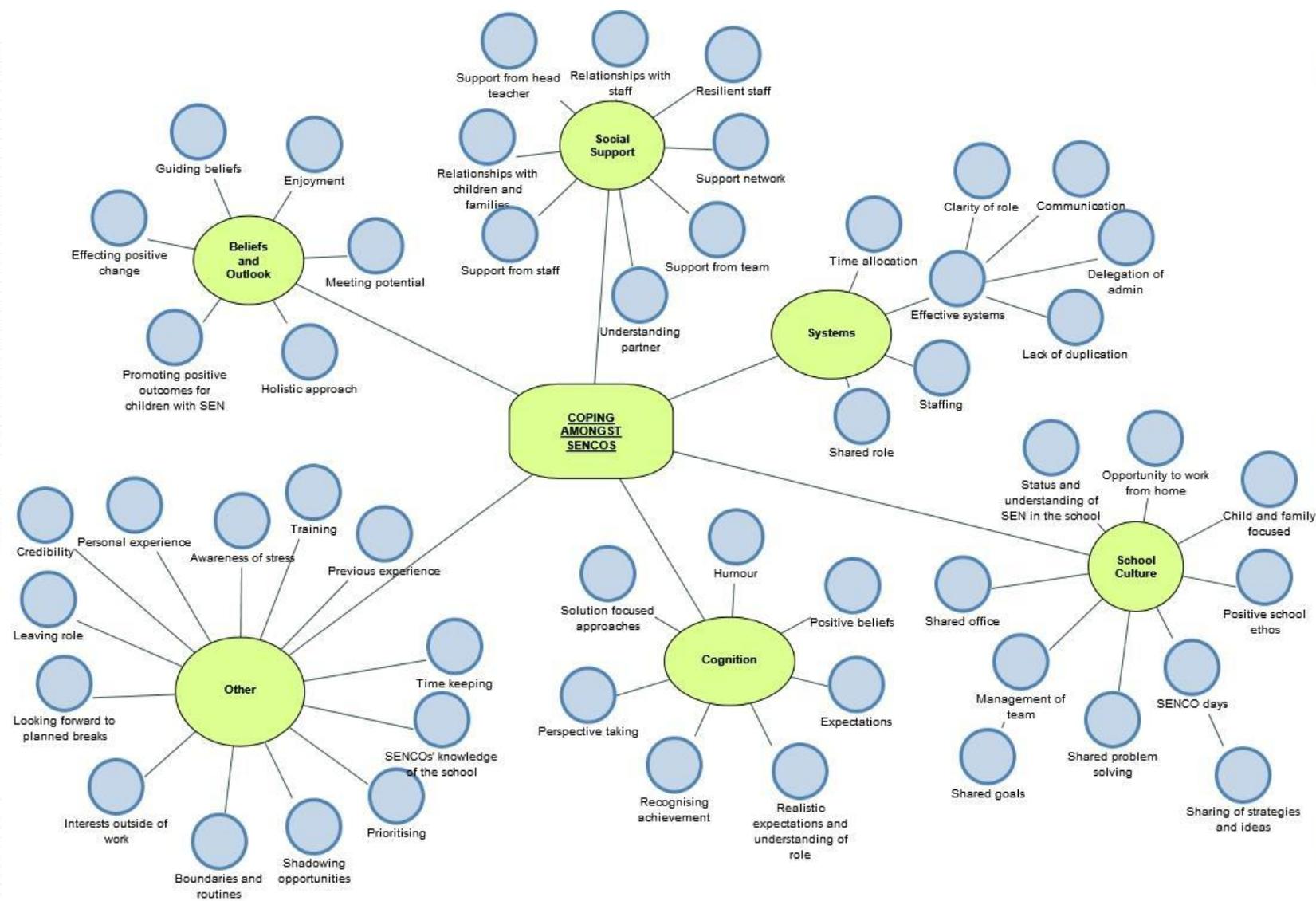
Support from head teacher	Relating to the behaviour and traits of head teachers which serves to reduce stress and provide support for SENCOs (e.g. listening to concerns, providing autonomy, access to funding etc).
Support from staff	Relating to the behaviour and traits of staff which serves to reduce stress and provide support for SENCOs (e.g. communicating openly, talking through difficult incidents, giving positive feedback etc).
Support from team	Relating to the behaviour and traits of SEN support teams which serves to reduce stress and provide support for SENCOs (e.g. sharing similar aims and value, constructive criticism, checking that members are OK during challenging periods, sharing workload etc).
Support network	Relates to SENCOs being able to contact others for support during times of difficulty (e.g. friends and other members of staff). Where effective systems are in place, the SENCOs support network will actively seek to provide support. Those that have an understanding of the SENCO role were perceived to be particularly effective in supporting.
Supporting with challenging behaviour	Related to SENCOs experiences of supporting children who display behaviour that challenges.
Time allocation	Related to SENCOs perception that adequate time management promotes wellbeing through ensuring that they have enough of this resource to meet demands.
Time constraints	Related to SENCOs experiencing difficulty in meeting the number of demands with the time they have available. The code covers factors which contribute towards this difficulty (e.g. complex cases, statutory procedures, paperwork etc).
Time keeping	Related to parties keeping to agreed timeframes within meetings to reduce feelings of strain.
Uncertainty about local authority provision	Related to uncertainty about provision from the local authority acting as a source of worry for SENCOs due to them not being able to answer governors and other leaders' queries or plan for the future.

Understanding partner	Related to SENCOs having a partner who understands the role and helps with childcare arrangements.
Working as a team	Related to SENCOs having open communication with EPs and being able to contribute towards formulation. This code also relates to other members of staff being aware and actively contributing towards the creation and implementation of support for children.

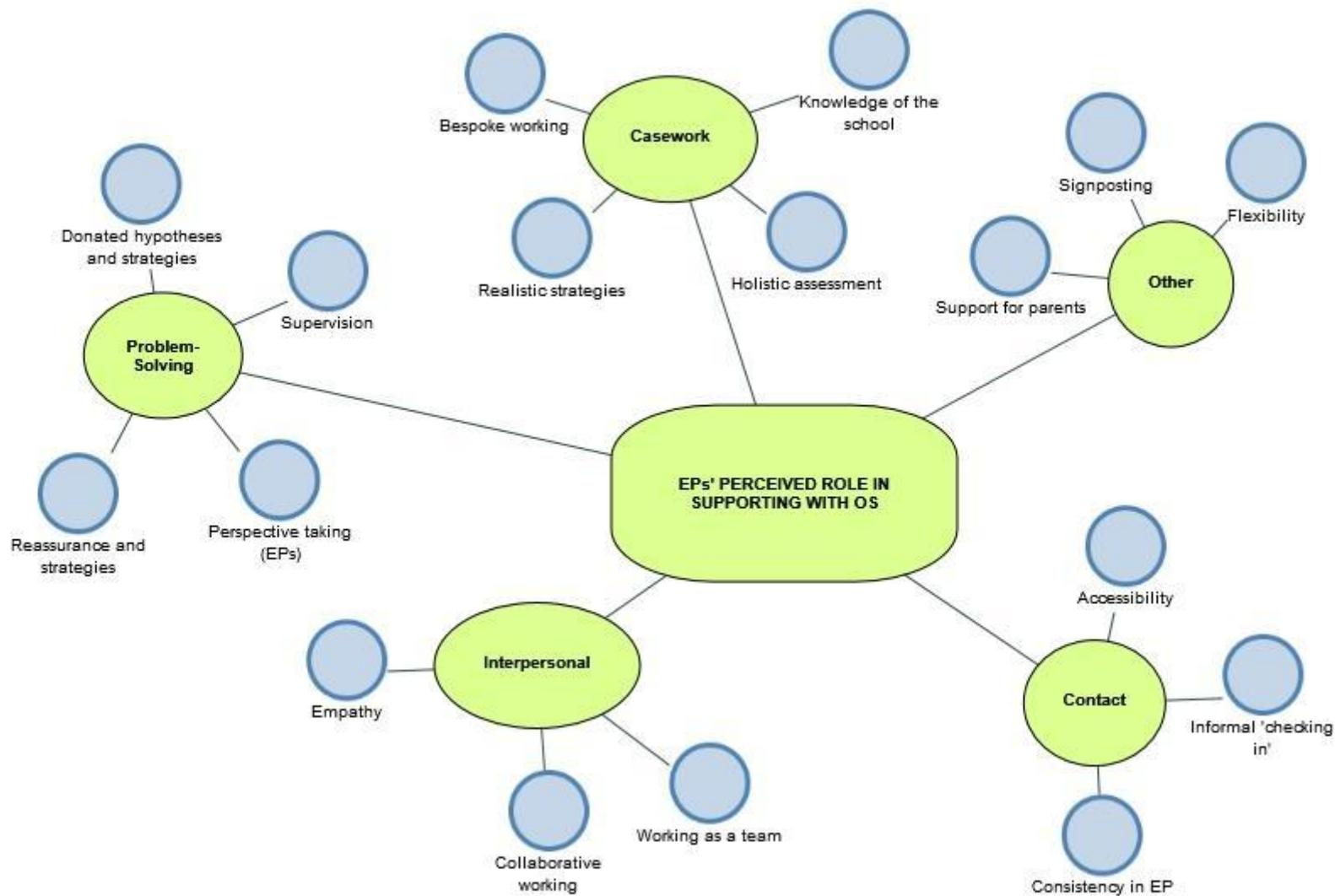
Appendix 11 – Initial thematic map of codes generated for RQ2 (Phase 1)



Appendix 12 – Initial thematic map of codes generated for RQ3 (Phase 2)



Appendix 13 – Initial thematic map of codes generated for RQ4 (Phase 2)



Appendix 14 – Description of themes

Research Question	Theme	Definition	Associated subthemes
2 - Which aspects of SENCOs' roles are perceived to contribute to OS?	Managing a high workload and multiple responsibilities	SENCOs experiencing OS from having a high workload and holding multiple roles within the school-setting.	Time
	Working with parents	SENCOs experiencing OS from parents' expectations, engaging parents, and through difficulty accessing support for them.	-
	Managing difficult emotions	SENCOs experiencing OS from managing challenging emotions that arose from role-related activities.	-
	Working with school staff to meet need	SENCOs experiencing OS from relying on colleagues to implement strategies and when facing systemic barriers to support CYP with SEN.	-
	Meeting a high-level of need with limited resources and information	SENCOs experiencing OS from supporting CYP with a diverse range of SEN, whilst having access to limited specialist support, information and other resources.	-
	Accessing and working with outside agencies	SENCOs experiencing OS from the waiting time to access external services, and the difficulty associated with coordinating this.	-
	Beliefs and outlook	Participants values and appraisal of themselves and work-related demands acts as a protective factor against OS.	Positive appraisals Purpose Realistic expectations

3 - How do SENCOs who perceive to cope well with OS, despite facing high work-related demands, achieve this level of coping?	Relationships and social support	Access to a support network acts as a protective factor and a coping strategy to mitigate OS.	Headteacher Other school staff Relationships with CYP and families SEN teams
	Individuals' resources and skills	Personal resources at the cognitive level, as well as skills, experience, interests and relationships enable participants to prevent and/or cope with OS.	Organisation Experience Cognitive appraisals Outside interests
	School culture and systems	The presence of a supportive and nurturing culture within schools, as well as systems to minimise workload and promote the status of SEN supporting participants in coping with OS.	Status and understanding of SEN Development opportunities Shared space Effective systems Shared problem solving and common goals
4 - From SENCOs' perspectives, how can EPs support SENCOs with preventing and coping with OS?	Contact	The initiation of contact by EPs, EPs being accessible and consistency in schools' EPs acted as a resource to help SENCOs meet demand.	Accessibility 'Checking in' Consistency
	Child and school centred working	EPs tailoring advice to the needs CYP and the resources available within the school reduced demands on SENCOs.	Knowledge of the school Bespoke advice
	Problem solving	Engaging in problem solving processes, both formally and informally, enabled SENCOs to prevent or manage OS.	Signposting Supervision

			Hypothesising and perspective taking
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Appendix 15 – Extract from interview transcriptions

The following text is an extract of a semi-structured interview transcript from phase 2 of the study. Information that may render the participant potentially identifiable has been replaced with 'XXXX':

Interviewer: So the first is just, can you give me like a brief summary or overview of your teaching career?

Interviewee: Alright so let's see now. I started off doing teaching in XXXX actually.

Interviewer: Oh really?

Interviewee: yes, because I did a XXXX degree so as part of that degree you have to spend a year abroad. So I taught in a XXXX School That was great, great experience. Came back to England, I specialise in Primary training so I went in my first post was at St XXXX and XXXX school, which is the other side of the city. So that was really interesting, really good experience there. And I did sort of like a combination of things, I wasn't actually doing special needs there I was doing class teaching. I taught across Foundation, Key Stage and Key Stage 1 and I also taught some XXXX into Year 6. So that was nice to get that opportunity as well. And then moved on from there to XXXX actually and started off my role as a Year 1 phase leader, so I have sort of done the leadership roles, class teacher again teaching all across Key Stage 1. Then I became Assistant Head for a period before the school amalgamated. So I was also SENCO and started to become very interested in doing the XXXX qualification, so I did that 10 years ago. So that is my general background. The SEN side of it has grown over the last 15 years.

Interviewer: Is that how long you have been a SENCO?

Interviewee: Yes, yes and of course I did my, I work with XXXX as well.

Interviewer: Of course yeah.

Interviewee: And I was appointed by XXXX 12 years ago.

Interviewer: So that is how long you have been with XXXX XXXX with your current role?

Interviewee: With XXXX 12 years. So the combined role of being a SENCO in a school and working 2 days for the authority for XXXX has been 12 years.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you. I should imagine that is quite a unique position you have got.

Interviewee: Yeah it has been quite different. You don't meet many people that have done that but for me, although it can be very difficult and stressful at times because you know you are trying to be in two places sometimes or you're having to think with a different hat on in each place, I think "where am I now? I am a SENCO here" and where am I now? I am a XXXX going into a school giving advice" but because of the nature of the job, the two roles marry very well.

Interviewer: That is good so they kind of complement.

Interviewee: Yeah you can bring skills into one or the other. It has been a good experience.

Interviewer: Thank you. I am just thinking about the SENCO role that you do here and I think you have already touched on some of them, you were saying kind of like juggling lots of

different demands but what are some of the day to day stresses that you face as a SENCO in this particular setting?

Interviewee: Right perhaps if you are, for example, this morning I was in doing the school hymn practice and we received a phone call from a parent and I couldn't sort of take that because I am actually addressing the school, I can't sort of just take the phone call. So you know sometimes that sort of thing occurs where you are actually doing something else in school and a message comes through from a parent or you might get an important email at the same time which needs this information sort of now or by lunch time and it is that pull. You know that you feel well actually I can't do this at the moment because I am doing that and you have to think right well I can only do what I am in control of at the moment and that will have to wait and then I will do that and then I will do that.

Interviewer: So you have got a kind of clear way of thinking about it in your head. I know this is urgent but I am going to do it then after I have done whatever I am, yeah.

Interviewee: Yes, that is how you have to work.

Interviewer: Yeah, alright thanks XXXX. Do you have any kind of guiding or personal beliefs about being a SENCO or about the SENCO role?

Interviewee: Yes, I do. I think I believe you can make a real difference to children and to families and to parents if you have this really good rapport with them and you have a good knowledge of their children. So I would like to feel that yes I think it does make a real difference the fact that you can have that really lovely relationship knowing the children so well and making sure that you are making that difference. So for example if a parent comes in and they are upset and concerned and they need to discuss things with you, you know the next steps and you can advise on what the next steps are to help move their situation forward, their child forward. So that is very satisfying for me.

Interviewer: So it is about kind of having those kind of relationships but also having the kind of subject knowledge to be able to effect change for?

Interviewee: Yeah that is it, it is a combination of that and I think because there is such a pace in life at the moment and such an emphasis on pace and you know groups and we have got to get this finished and class teaching, we have got to get that finished and what I like about the SEN is that it is more individualised and you can tailor your specialism to support a particular child or group and help to move them forward.

Interviewer: Doesn't always have to be that kind of blanket approach that we sometimes have to use?

Interviewee: Yeah, no.

Interviewer: Alright thank you. The next question, you don't have to answer it if you don't want to. I was just thinking, can you think of a particularly stressful incident you faced as a SENCO and how you went about managing that stress in that incident? Does that make sense?

Interviewee: Yeah well there have been a few, mostly it is very, very satisfying and you get fantastic feedback and encouragement from parents and the staff that you working with. You will always get one or two situations with parents and I use the phrase where you can't please all the people all of the time. It is just one of those and you know that you have done absolutely everything you possibly can and taken the child through all of the correct processes and you know and you just get the odd individual case which we have one at the moment actually of a Key Stage 2 pupil where the parent would like the child to go to a different setting out of the

XXXX authority because a child has been identified as being dyslexic and it is a very complex case.

Interviewer: So they want a different setting?

Interviewee: So they are sort of discussing this with the authority at the moment and it is a tricky one and we have never had this before but this one particular case is leading to a tribunal. And it is not that school haven't done everything that we can possibly do because we have and we feel very happy with that and the authority have said they feel the best setting for this child who has just recently received an EHCP plan. The best setting for their child is to remain at our Primary School however the parent still wants to go to a tribunal with the authority because she thinks that her child will be, her needs will be best met at a school outside the authority, a private dyslexia school. So it is very contentious this one. It is a very prominent case at the moment. So you will get the odd case like that but like I say in my history of well you know certainly 20 years of this school, we have never had a tribunal case which is great but the important thing to remember is not to take it personally really because at first you are thinking well what more could we possibly have done but actually it is going back to that phrase you can win all of the people all of the time.

Interviewer: Right okay.

Interviewee: You will get the odd case that is out of your control and you know the parent wants to

Interviewer: So in terms of what you do personally to stay positive during those times, is it kind of using that phrase that you just used?

Interviewee: Well yes that is how I rationalise it but I have to say when you are saying to me is there any particular case that causes you stress well it is cases like that because actually it brings additional requirements and takes a lot more time. There has been a lot to sort regarding that, it has taken a lot of time for additional emails, additional research and tracking all your data and sending all that off to the local authority, letters, phone calls with parents, checking constantly monitoring and checking everything should be happening as it should be. I would say it has taken the stress that that causes, it takes more time and you know it also takes time away from other cases where you feel perhaps the children need the support even more.

Interviewer: Yeah okay. So it is creating kind of a higher workload for you that incident?

Interviewee: Yeah it increases your workload dramatically.

Interviewer: In terms of how you handle that, is it just a question of oh I am just going to get on with it or?

Interviewee: Yes, I just sort of say psychologically I just say "right well you know this is like an unusual case, it is not precedented so you know, I just do whatever I need to do for it, whatever is required which I have done now, we have had to send off some additional information quite recently, you know sort of like 2 weeks ago because I think the tribunal is due at the end of February. So again you suddenly get an email out of the blue and please can we have this from the local authority and we have to send more information through so that is stressful at the time. But I say to myself, it is a short term thing. So let's get it done, let's work through it, this has to take priority at the moment and that is it and then it is finished and you can move onto your other priorities that you have.

Interviewer: So you kind of contained it and set the limits of that particular task.

Interviewee: Yes, that is how you do it.

Interviewer: Okay thanks that is really useful. The next question, it's another one you don't have to answer if you don't want to, it may not apply to you. But have you heard of that kind of phrase like burnout before?

Interviewee: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: I was just wondering, have you ever felt anything that has come close to that and if so kind of how do you kind of manage that?

Interviewee: Definitely. Oh yes, I have experienced that. I mean I don't think any, I mean I am not just saying SENCO's experience that, I am sure lots of different types of teachers or different professions, everybody experiences it. How I personally worked through it, at times that have been more demanding you have to try and address your work life balance and you have to remove yourself a little bit and think right am I you know, not just working all the time, am I having a nice sort of like treats at the weekend, things to look forward to? Am I exercising regularly? You know I have taken up Yoga in recent years because that is really good, you know for breathing and relaxation.

Interviewer: Yeah it is the whole package isn't it, Yoga?

Interviewee: Yeah and you do, I am quite strict with myself. I will say to myself if I am feeling quite stressed out, you know you will get the feeling of stress in your shoulders you know the fight or flight thing and I will think to myself, well you need to go to the gym or I need to go for some exercise or I need to go for a swim. And I need to unwind or go for a nice walk and switch off. So you learn how to manage that and work through different situations.

Interviewer: So it sounds like you can both like recognise when you might be getting stressed and then actually do something positive about it whether that is exercise or work life balance.

Interviewee: That is it. And I say to myself well do you remember you felt like this before say I don't know, 2 years ago when there was another stressful similar incident or something like that and I will talk my way through it mentally and then I will think and actually you come through it, you know you do come through it. At the time you think this is a really difficult situation to manage, "oh I could do with just walking away" or just giving it up and doing a different job, something that which isn't as stressful and I say to myself "well actually, remember you did actually manage to work your way through that situation and you came through it and it is over and done with now" and then you work through, you have experienced better times. So you have to rationalise it, it is not forever, that difficult moment is not forever.

Interviewer: It is not kind of going to last indefinitely. So drawing upon your previous experiences kind of helps you put it into perspective.

Interviewee: Yeah definitely you have to. But then I am more experienced now you see Tom because I have been teaching for 30 years now you see.

Interviewer: Yeah maybe that is part of the secret then

Interviewee: And you have got to say now "oh you don't look old enough to have been teaching for 30 years"

Interviewer: Well obviously I do mean that. I was just wondering since becoming a SENCO, is there anything that you feel particularly proud of?

Interviewee: Yes, I hope so. Yes, I do stop and think, well it is lovely when you get positive, very positive feedback from parents and you know you have made a difference and they say you know thank you so much, they have got something in place for them, a child we suspected was dyspraxic and now he has an identification, this is like one of examples now. Similarly, children in the past where they have thought whatever is the matter with my child and I have sort of said shall we possibly look at the Autism route, shall we pursue that, would you like me to refer and we can send some evidence in of what we have seen. And then they receive identifications or a child who you suspect is dyslexic and you again use the correct processes and they receive identifications and the parents just feel that sense of closure and they feel that they you have helped move their situation forward and improved things for their child. So yes you do feel very proud of those sorts of achievements. And I think I feel proud of the fact that I have managed to juggle demanding roles.

Interviewer: Yeah, as in?

Interviewee: Well I don't think everybody would find it very easy to do that

Interviewer: No I don't either.

Interviewee: Because it has been hard. But very rewarding at the same time

Interviewer: So being able to be a class teacher and a SENCO and all your other roles and your XXXX work obviously?

Interviewee: Yeah it is very satisfying that.

Interviewer: So both the juggling and also the kind of helping needs being met or kind of giving a name to things that

Interviewee: Yeah that has really been helpful.

Interviewer: Yeah alright. Thanks XXXX. I was just wondering in both in school and out of school, what are your main sources of support and strength?

Interviewee: In school and out of school? right in school, well again I would say, strangely enough you know from the feedback you get from such positive feedback you get from parents, from staff when they feel so well supported and you know you have helped them in a certain situation. You know sometimes I will have to attend say very, or chair a very difficult meeting and another member of staff will say to me "oh thank goodness you were there and you knew what you were talking about" and that sort of thing. And that support works two ways doesn't it? Because then you feel, right that is great I can sort of say well actually I find that quite tricky too but. So nice feedback from staff, from the children themselves and from the parents. And you feel supported in that respect. Outside of school, well it is definitely family. You know, it is husband and children, dog. Can a dog be included in this?

Interviewer: Yes of course

Interviewee: Because it all helps you, all of that, the whole package helps you relax and it is nice to have that work life balance and you have other things as well as work.

Interviewer: yeah you have got that support network outside of school as well as

Interviewee: Yeah that is very important I think.

Interviewer: in school is there anyone in particular that you would say that you speak to or go to, to help with things?

Interviewee: Let's see. Probably mostly the headteacher because the headteacher obviously has to know everything as well and be aware of different situations. Yeah and I think we share a supportive relationship because obviously there are things she needs support with and things that I need support with and we you know, confidentially share different things so that is good. I have to say though it can be quite an isolated role and I am aware of this through my role with going into other schools. There are other settings that have say two SENCO's, a SENCO in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 and in particular if it is a big school and It does occur to me that it would be quite nice to have that, to be able to share that sort of, you know a colleague that could completely empathise with you.

Appendix 16 – Perceived demands

The questionnaire completed in phase 1 of the research asked participants how demanding they perceived their role to be, through use of the question *'In general, how demanding is your role as SENCO?'*. Table 20 shows that responses to the question ranged from 'Mildly demanding' to 'Extremely demanding'. The mean response was 3.80. Over half the sample (52.6%) indicated that they generally found the role to be very demanding, whilst 15.8% found the role to be extremely demanding. 23.7% and 5.3% respectively found the role to be moderately or mildly demanding. No participants reported that the role was 'Not at all demanding'. All participants (n=38) gave valid responses to this question.

Table 20 - Table detailing participants' perceptions of demands related to the SENCO role

	Not at all demanding	Mildly demanding	Moderately demanding	Very demanding	Extremely demanding	MEAN
In general, how demanding is your role as SENCO?	0.0	5.3	23.7	52.6	15.8	3.80