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How Do Young People Construe Abusive Behaviours Within Intimate Relationships? Using Q Methodology to Hear Young People’s Voices.

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**Abstract**

In the UK, there has been a lack of research on abusive behaviours in young people’s intimate relationships (Barter, 2009; Barter et al., 2009; Griffiths, 2019; Lyons & Rabie, 2014; NICE 2014), with few studies based upon young people’s own perceptions (Barter, 2009; Prospero, 2006). This limited evidence-base means that understandings of these relationships and abusive behaviours within them may not represent the experiences of young people. Previous research has also primarily focused on physical and sexual abuse (Barter, 2009; Barter et al., 2009), with emotional abuse only relatively recently receiving an increased focus (Barter, 2009; Barter et al., 2009).

This exploratory study examines the ways in which a UK sample of young people construe abusive behaviours within intimate relationships. Q methodology facilitated the holistic identification of subjective understandings. 26 participants, aged 14-16 years from five mainstream secondary schools in a UK local authority (LA), completed a card sort of statements in a forced choice distribution grid. Both online and in-person Q sorts were utilised. The Q sorts were analysed using factor analysis to identify shared perspectives on abusive behaviours in young peoples’ intimate relationships.

Substantive differences in viewpoints were found between two groups of young people. These related to diverging perceptions of emotionally, physically and sexually abusive behaviours in young people’s intimate relationships, as well as the contextual and consequential features which influence them. A common perspective relating to consent, as well as sexual coercion and abuse, was held across both groups’ viewpoints. Implications for understandings of the dynamics of abuse in young people’s relationships based on young people’s own experiences, as well as for educational provision and Educational Psychologists, are discussed.

**Introduction**

In this introduction, I will outline how I came to undertake research in this area and the history which brought me here. This will incorporate a reflexive approach, to acknowledge my influence on the research process from its inception, throughout the study and in the conclusions drawn (Willig, 2013). This is in accordance with the social constructionist approach of the research.

I am a 44 year old female, who is undertaking this research as part of a Doctorate in Child and Educational Psychology. I have previously worked in mental health roles within the NHS, as well as being a primary school teacher for eight years. In these roles, I have held safeguarding roles in a variety of guises and have always had an interest in the safeguarding and protection of children and young people. Further, my own experience of an abusive relationship for three years from when I was 17 years old has led to personal awareness of the short-term and life-long impacts that these experiences can have. Overall, my history and experiences have provided me with an interest in positively impacting the outcomes of young people who are experiencing, have experienced or are at risk of experiencing relationship abuse.

Whilst researching domestic abuse to contribute to my understandings and practice when working in schools, I came across information about abuse within young people’s intimate relationships. This led me to want to know more and, eventually, to this research project. An element of the doctoral course was to complete a practice placement as a Trainee Educational Psychologist. I did this for two and a half years within the LA in which this research is set. I developed some familiarity with the educational context in the area, although not in the schools or the local area where the research schools are located. I felt that it would be helpful for the research to directly contribute to the understandings and practice of schools within the local area where I was working. I hope to be able to feed back my findings to schools, so that they can gain an understanding of the ways young people construe abusive relationship behaviours in their local context. Further, I hope the study can contribute to the wider research base and practice in this area.

In reflecting on how this research has impacted me, it has given me a passion for enabling the voices of young people to be heard in research and also for research to be channelled into practice. The research process has been prolonged, but the subject matter has maintained my interest and passion throughout, alongside a drive to be faithful to the perceptions entrusted to me by the participants.

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**1. Literature Review**

**1.1 Introduction**

This literature review will initially outline broad definitions of abuse within relationships, before identifying the prevalence of relationship abuse and the impacts. Following this, abuse in the specific context of young people’s relationships will be explored. The prevalence of abuse within young people’s relationships, as well as risk factors, will be discussed. Finally, young people’s perceptions of abuse in relationships identified by previous research will be explored, including perceptions of emotional, physical and sexual abuse. The rationale for this study will then be identified, with the research aims and questions outlined.

**1.2 Defining Abuse in Intimate Relationships**

When exploring abuse within intimate relationships in the UK, the term relationship abuse should first be defined. Definitions of relationship abuse have historically been characterised under the umbrella term ‘domestic violence’ determined by the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act of 2004, with this previously applying to adults aged 18 years or over (HM Government, 2015; UK Government Home Office (HO), 2012a; HO, 2012b; National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), 2014). However, following a cross-government consultation on the definition of domestic violence, the definition was widened to include coercive and controlling behaviours, with the age delineation also expanded to incorporate 16 to 17 year olds (HO, 2012a; HO, 2012b). This was deemed to be necessary as the 2009/10 British Crime Survey highlighted that the risk of intimate relationship abuse was greater for younger age groups (HO, 2011). Further, practitioners’ and professionals’ concerns were identified regarding young people’s limited access to support and resources available to adults (HO, 2011).

In 2019, a Domestic Abuse Bill was proposed for consultation, with a draft Bill being taken forward (HM Government, 2019). This process remains ongoing, with current guidance stating that the provision in the Domestic Abuse Act of 2020 will come into force in 2022 (HO, 2022). In this bill, ‘domestic violence’ was redefined as ‘domestic abuse’, with the definition of ‘domestic abuse’ being:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexual orientation. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to: psychological, physical, sexual, economic and emotional forms of abuse.

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape, and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten a person.

(HM Government, 2019, p. 5)

Emotional and psychological abuse are described as the most likely forms of abuse to be minimised or not considered to constitute domestic abuse by both perpetrators and victims (HO, 2012a).

Additional behaviours not specifically identified in the above definition include stalking, coming under the jurisdiction of coercion and control. While UK Crown Prosecution Service information on stalking states that there is no legal definition of stalking, examples of behaviours are provided to offer guidance for legal prosecutions (Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), 2018). These include following, watching or spying on another person with the aim of curtailing their freedom (CPS, 2018). These behaviours may initially appear to be isolated incidents or not to be malicious, but when repeated over time can cause significant harassment, alarm or distress (CPS, 2018). This can include monitoring where a partner is and their electronic communications, as well as obligating the partner to ‘check in’ by messaging, calling, using apps or sending photographs (Aronson Fontes, 2015)

Gaslighting is also a behaviour which falls under the remit of coercion and control. Gaslighting is psychological manipulation to encourage a partner to doubt their own perceptions, memories and/or mental health (Aronson Fontes, 2015). This is with the aim of disorientating them and isolating them from others to gain increased control (Aronson Fontes, 2015).

A further behaviour described by Aronson Fontes (2015) is the withholding of communication to coerce and control a partner towards a preferred behaviour. This can be referred to as ‘the silent treatment’ and can include not contacting or not speaking to a partner, but also not acknowledging a partner for a prolonged period of time (Aronson Fontes, 2015).

Finally, a behaviour relevant to intimate relationships is stealthing. Stealthing is non-consensual condom removal before or during sexual intercourse, without the other person’s knowledge (Chesser & Zahra, 2019). This behaviour is not identified under domestic abuse legislation and is instead recognised under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (CPS, 2021). Previous research has included participants aged 18 to 25 years, in which 18.9% of females and 5% of males (with a significantly higher number of these males describing themselves as homosexual) reported having been a victim of stealthing. (Bonar et al., 2021). A further study with males aged 21 to 30 years found that almost 10% of participants had perpetrated stealthing since the age of 14 years (Davies, 2019). 42.6% of these males had perpetrated stealthing three or more times, indicating an ongoing pattern of behaviour (Davies, 2019).

1.2.1 Prevalence of Domestic Abuse

Both women and men can be perpetrators and/or victims of domestic abuse (Lyons & Rabie, 2014). However, men are more frequently reported to be perpetrators, particularly in cases of repeated and severe physical and sexual assault (NICE, 2014). Abuse can occur in heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual relationships and relationships can be marital, long-term partnerships or short-term intimate liaisons (Harvey et al., 2007; Lyons & Rabie, 2014). Abuse can also be perpetrated by ex-partners after these relationships have ended (Harvey et al., 2007).

Government statistics on the prevalence of domestic abuse are based upon data from adults aged 16 years and over (UK Government Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2018). This states that 14% of all reported crimes are domestic abuse related, with this figure increasing (ONS, 2019; Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), 2015). Further, domestic abuse constitutes approximately a third of violent offences (HMIC, 2015; ONS, 2019). In the year prior to March 2018, approximately 1.3 million women and 695,000 men experienced domestic abuse (ONS, 2018), with the police service in England and Wales receiving an average of over 100 related calls per hour (HMIC, 2015).

The number of reported domestic abuse incidents is increasing in the UK (ONS, 2018; 2019). This is thought to at least partially reflect improving identification and recording, increased police focus on these types of crimes, as well as an increased willingness of victims to report domestic abuse (Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), 2019; ONS, 2018; 2019). This increased willingness to report is thought to be related to increased confidence in prosecutions, but it is acknowledged that the reasons for increased reporting are not fully understood (HMICFRS, 2019). As well as this, the expansion of the domestic abuse definition to include 16-17 year olds, as well as the inclusion of coercive and controlling behaviours, means that this definition can be applied to greater numbers of people (HO, 2011). However, understandings of domestic abuse prevalence based upon statistical data are likely to be underestimates, as all types of domestic abuse are under-reported to police and other services, as well as in health and social research (NICE, 2014; ONS 2018, 2019). There are limited research studies which have analysed reasons for under-reporting (Gracia, 2004). Those reasons identified include personal and societal factors. Personal factors include economic dependency, shame and fear of retaliation. Societal factors include low detection rates in medical services, gendered power dynamics, perceived privacy of the family and victims being held responsible for their own abuse or ‘victim-blaming’.

1.2.2 Impacts of Domestic Abuse

On an individual level, there is a significant impact of domestic abuse on victims, including lifelong adverse effects on education, employment and health (World Health Organization (WHO), 2010). These effects can also be passed through generations (WHO, 2010). Difficulties or conditions associated with domestic abuse include mental health difficulties such as sleep disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety (NICE, 2014). They can also include suicidal tendencies, self-harming and alcohol or other substance abuse (NICE, 2014). There is an associated risk of repeated traumatic physical injuries, including adverse reproductive outcomes such as: multiple unintended pregnancies or terminations; miscarriage; premature labour; stillbirth; delayed pregnancy care; and sexually transmitted infections (NICE, 2014). There are also associated risks of medical difficulties, such as: unexplained chronic pain; central nervous system issues, such as hearing loss, headaches and cognitive difficulties; reproductive symptoms including pelvic pain, vaginal bleeding and sexual dysfunction; chronic gastrointestinal symptoms; and genitourinary symptoms, including frequent bladder or kidney infections (NICE, 2014). Treatment can be complicated by the presence of an intrusive ‘other person’ in consultations (NICE, 2014). Finally, it is reported that in every year since 1995, approximately half of all murdered women in England and Wales aged 16 or above were killed by their partner or ex-partner (NICE, 2014).

Regarding wider societal impacts, domestic abuse is reported to have a significant adverse economic impact (WHO, 2010). In the UK, the annual cost to public services is £3.1 billion, while the economic loss is £2.7 billion, amounting to over £5.7 billion per year (Walby, 2004). Key contributing factors include approximately £1 billion per year used in the criminal justice system (CJS), almost a quarter of the total CJS violent crime budget (Walby, 2004). The annual NHS cost is approximately £1.2 billion, while related mental health care is an additional £176 million (Walby, 2004). Social Services costs are almost £0.25 billion, the majority of which is for children involved in co-occurring domestic and child abuse (Walby, 2004).

**1.3 Defining Abuse in Young People’s Relationships**

Abuse within young people’s relationships has traditionally been based upon understandings of domestic abuse in adult relationships (Viejo et al., 2016). However, abuse in young people’s relationships has characteristics which differ from those of adults, with research and policy being impacted by the lack of a universal definition for this age group (Sutherland, 2011; Viejo et al., 2016). This is necessary to allow accurate analysis of prevalence, risk and mediating factors, as well as outcomes (Sutherland, 2011). In the UK government review of the adult domestic abuse definition, 85% of respondents advocated the inclusion of 16 to 17 year olds (HO, 2012a; HO, 2012b). This indicates an impetus to develop understandings of abuse in the context of young people’s relationships. One of the respondents to the domestic abuse definition consultation was The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), who expressed that:

…drawing the line at 16 would be an arbitrary cut off point. There is evidence of young people under 16 experiencing threatening behaviour, violence and abuse inflicted on them by their intimate partners who are young people themselves.

(HO, 2012a, p. 14)

In the definition consultation, 53% of respondents, including Barnardo’s and the NSPCC, supported the inclusion of all young people aged under 18 years (HO, 2012a). It was asserted that young adults under 16 years could be in relationships involving abusive behaviours and, therefore, the definition should incorporate age neutrality (HO, 2012a). It was also argued that younger victims may not be provided with the same protections as those aged 16 and over, as well as potentially not having access to domestic abuse support services (HO, 2012a). Finally, the lack of age neutrality was felt to impact younger victims, who might not recognise abusive behaviours as domestic abuse, as well as hindering identification by safeguarding services and other professionals, including school staff (HO, 2012a).

However, 31% of consultation respondents expressed a preference that all young people under 18 years should not be incorporated in the definition (HO, 2012a). Reasons for this included perceived risk of ‘blurring lines’ between child abuse and adult domestic abuse (HM Government, 2019). It was stated, though, that domestic abuse could occur between partners with differing combinations of ages and that young people under 16 years could be victims within their own relationships (HO, 2012a). As well as this, the importance of appreciating the experiences and impacts of abuse within intimate relationships for young people aged under 16 years was accepted (HM Government, 2019).

Young people aged under 16 years were ultimately not included in the domestic abuse definition as this group is protected by safeguarding frameworks (HO, 2012a). These include the ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’ framework (HM Government, 2018) and related guidance for schools and colleges on sexual violence and harassment between children (Department for Education (DfE), 2021). It was expressed that overlap across services could cause confusion and that delineations between child abuse and domestic abuse could become less distinct (HO, 2012a). However, child abuse is defined as abuse perpetrated by an adult against a child or young person aged 16 years or under (HM Government, 2019). Therefore, in relationships where both young people are under the age of 16, abuse within intimate relationships is not incorporated in definitions of child abuse or domestic abuse.

Regarding research definitions of abuse in young people’s relationships, understandings can be dependent upon researchers’ definitions of abuse and relationships (Barter, 2009; Manganello, 2008; Tomaszewska & Schuster, 2021; Viejo et al., 2016). Definitions of domestic abuse between adults describe those involved as ‘partners’ (HM Government, 2019; HO, 2012; NICE, 2014) and it is questioned whether young people would recognise this term as relevant to their age group or those involved in different types of relationships. The language used to describe relationships between young people is variable across research studies. The majority of US-based research, as well as international research, tends to use the term ‘dating’ (Barter, 2009; Barter et al., 2009; Sutherland, 2011). This is despite concerns raised in a US-based study regarding this designation being less valid in contemporary diverse relationship structures (Brown et al., 2007). Further, in UK-based research, it has been queried whether this has limited transference to a UK context (Barter, 2009; Barter at al., 2009). It is asserted that young people in the UK may not use or identify with this term (Barter at al., 2009). It is argued that the term ‘dating’ may imply a formality not necessarily representative of the diverse range of intimate encounters and relationships between young people (Barter, 2009; Barter at al., 2009; Sutherland, 2011).

There are potential implications for cultural transferability of research findings. If the language used is restrictive by not allowing young people to relate their own experiences to the delineating terminology, language used can impact the ways that relationships and questions/discussions have been understood and reported by young people in different contexts (Brown et al., 2007). Barter and colleagues (2009) argue that variability in the composition of young people’s relationships may not be encapsulated in the term ‘dating’, which means that detail in related behaviours may be discounted if young people do not relate their experiences with this term (Barter at al., 2009). Further, practice and interventions may also not be deemed by young people as relevant to their circumstances if extraneous terminology is applied (Barter at al., 2009). There are barriers for researchers to overcome in operationalising young people’s relationships, so that variance in form and meaning can be captured (Barter, 2009).

Understandings of abuse in young people’s intimate relationships is also impacted by research sampling parameters (Barter, 2009; Manganello, 2008; Tomaszewska & Schuster, 2021). Barter (2009) found that research has tended to focus on young college adults based in the US, potentially excluding the experiences of young people who have not continued within education. Across research, participants with a varied range of ages have been included and interchangeable language for those age ranges has also been used (Manganello, 2008). For example, the term ‘adolescents’ has been applied to young people aged under 18 years (Barter et al., 2009), but also those aged 10 to 19 years (Lyons & Rabie, 2014) and aged 10 to 20 years (Tomaszewska and Schuster, 2021). The term teenagers can also be applied to a similar age group and generally refers to young people aged 13 to 19 years, the ‘teens’ (Noonan & Charles, 2009; Tomaszewska and Schuster, 2021). Barter and colleagues (2009) stated that the terms, ‘adolescents’, ‘teenagers’ and ‘young people’ have been used interchangeably for participants under 18 years in research (Barter et al., 2009).

Overall, terminology used to define and research abuse within young people’s intimate relationships has been diverse and inconsistently applied. This has complicated understandings in this area (Barter, 2009; Manganello, 2008). To clarify these understandings, young people’s own perceptions of intimate relationships should be established (Barter, 2009; Manganello, 2008). Only on this basis can the dynamics of abuse within young people’s intimate relationships be better understood.

With regard to an operational definition of abuse in young people’s intimate relationships for the purposes of the current study, there is an absence of a universal or UK government definition. In NICE child abuse safeguarding guidelines regarding young people aged 16 years and under, it was stated that guidance did not refer to abuse of a child or young person by an individual who was not their parent, carer, step-parent, partner of a parent or family member (NICE, 2017). In domestic abuse guidelines provided by NICE, aimed at adults over the age of 16 years and using the adult definition of domestic abuse, organisations were prompted to support children and young people experiencing domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (NICE, 2014). In attempting to locate a geographically and age-relevant operational definition, it was found that UK-based studies have tended not to outline a specific definition of abuse, expressing the difficulties with this, or utilised the UK government adult abuse definition (HM Government, 2019). A review of European-based studies analysing abuse in young people’s intimate relationships used the US-based Centers for Disease Control (CDC) definition (CDC, 2020; Tomaszewska & Schuster, 2021). This definition described abuse in young people’s intimate relationships as a form of intimate partner violence which occurs in teenage relationships, incorporating physical and sexual violence, as well as psychological abuse and stalking behaviours. In this research, the UK adult domestic abuse definition incorporated with the CDC’s (2020) and Tomaszewska and Schuster’s (2021) definition will be referred to, ensuring use of definitions aimed at young people which are UK-based and have been utilised in European research.

1.3.1 Prevalence of Abuse in Young People’s Relationships

A review of European-based research incorporating studies from 10 European countries analysed psychological, physical and sexual relationship abuse involving participants aged 10 to 20 years (Tomaszewska & Schuster, 2021). This research found that 5.9% to 95.5% of females and 5.6% to 94.5% of males reported having been a victim of psychological abuse (Tomaszewska & Schuster, 2021). Regarding physical abuse, the prevalence ranges were between 2.2% to 32.9% for females and 0.8% to 29.8% for males (Tomaszewska & Schuster, 2021), For sexual abuse, 4.8% to 41% of females and 2.4% to 39% of males reported having been a victim (Tomaszewska & Schuster, 2021).

The review also found that psychological abuse perpetration rates ranged from 7% to 97% for females and 19.9% to 95.3% for males (Tomaszewska & Schuster, 2021). For physical abuse, perpetration rates were 2.1% to 46% for females and 4.8% to 37% for males, while perpetration rates for sexual abuse ranged from 0.8% to 23.6% for females and 1.6% to 43.6% for males (Tomaszewska & Schuster, 2021).

In the first large-scale UK study on abuse in young people’s intimate relationships, Barter and colleagues (2009) surveyed 1353 young people (680 females and 669 males) aged 13 to 16 years, with 91 follow-up interviews. It was found that 1

in 4 females reported having been victims of emotional abuse, 1 in 4 reported experiencing physical abuse and 1 in 3 reported experiencing sexual abuse (Barter et al., 2009). For physical abuse, 1 in 10 of the females characterised the abuse as severe (Barter et al., 2009). When including all forms of abuse, 1 in 6 females reported at least one form of severe abuse (Barter et al., 2009). For males, 1 in 2 reported having been a victim of emotional abuse, while 18% reported experiencing physical abuse and 16% reported sexual abuse (Barter et al., 2009).

Regarding psychological abuse, a further large scale UK study involving 1751 participants aged 16 to 19 years found that 46.1% of females had experienced controlling behaviours and 31.6% had experienced threatening behaviours (Young et al., 2018). For males, 49.9% of males had experienced controlling behaviours and 27.1% had experienced threatening behaviours (Young et al., 2018). Although, a further UK-based survey found that females reported higher rates of emotional abuse than males (Barter et al., 2017).

For physical abuse, a UK-based survey of 199 young people aged 15 to 18 years found reporting levels of between 9.7% and 30.1%, depending on the severity of the physical violence (Viejo et al., 2016). No gender differences were identified (Viejo et al., 2016), although a European survey by Barter and colleagues (2017) found that UK females reported higher rates of physical abuse than UK males.

A further European survey identified sexual coercion and abuse reporting rates of 41% for UK females and 14% for UK males, with significantly higher rates for females than for males (Stanley et al., 2018). Sexual coercion and abuse perpetration rates of less than 5% for UK females and 22% for UK males were also identified, with significantly higher rates for males than for females (Stanley et al., 2018). In a study of the characteristics of 60 young people under 18 years who attended a sexual health clinic in England, as the result of having experienced a sexual assault, 43 of the 60 young people were able to identify 46 of the assault perpetrators (Mullan, 2022). Of those perpetrators, 13 (28%) were currently or previously in a relationship with the victim. This included those not accepting the victim’s right to consent or to refuse sexual activity (Mullan, 2022). Of the 60 participants, 31 (52%) were under 16 years of age (Mullan, 2022).

In conclusion, there is a wide range of relationship abuse prevalence rates. This is influenced by complicating factors previously identified in delineating a definition of intimate relationship abuse between young people, as well as definitions of different types of abuse within this. This has led to variability in researchers’ descriptions of abuse and also young people’s understandings of abusive behaviours within and between research studies. Differences between research studies impact consistency in identifying prevalence. Further, differences between research studies in defining and incorporating variance in the form of young people’s intimate relationships is also likely to have influenced variability in prevalence rates. Variation in prevalence rates are also impacted by the wide range of measures and instruments used in research studies and variability in the use of adapted scales, with potential impacts on validity and reliability leading to challenges in providing accurate prevalence data (Manganello, 2008; Tomaszewska & Schuster, 2021). The wider consequence of this is uncertainty in the prevalence of abuse in young people’s intimate relationships with impacts on prioritising resources and intervention. However, abusive behaviours within young people’s intimate relationships are characterised as highly prevalent and widespread (Manganello, 2008; Prospero, 2006; Sterne & Poole, 2010; Viejo et al., 2016).

1.3.2 Impacts of Abuse in Young People’s Relationships

The developmental period of adolescence is critical for the long-term health and wellbeing of individuals and wider society (Call et al., 2002; Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF), 2007). The adverse impacts of abuse in young people’s intimate relationships include a range of long-term outcomes, which can persist after the relationship has ended (Barter et al., 2009; Griffiths, 2019; Lyons & Rabie, 2014; Manganello, 2008). In addition to the previously detailed impacts for adult relationships, young people’s health impacts include significantly elevated risk of teenage pregnancy, risky sexual behaviours and unhealthy weight control, as well as an increased likelihood of substance abuse, depression and attempted suicide (Banyard & Cross, 2008; Manganello, 2008; Silverman et al., 2001). In relationships involving both physical and sexual abuse, the levels of risk further increase (Silverman et al., 2001). Regarding the specific impacts of injury, Collin-Vézina and colleagues (2006) found that teenage females who had experienced violence resulting in injury developed a negative self-concept, with the level of negativity increasing according to how sustained the abuse had been. Further, females have demonstrated more limited educational and vocational goals and outcomes (Banyard & Cross, 2008; Collin-Vézina et al., 2006), as well as experiencing additional difficulties with emotional regulation and psychopathological symptoms (Collin-Vézina et al., 2006).

1.3.3 Risks Associated with Abuse in Young People’s Relationships

US-based studies have identified factors which may increase young people’s risk of experiencing abuse within an intimate relationship (Barter at al., 2009). Exposure to conflict in adult relationships has been identified as a risk factor, with this impacting young people’s emotional regulation and increasing the likelihood of involvement in their own abusive relationships (Kinsfogel & Grych, 2004; Manganello, 2008). It has been found that young males who have witnessed higher levels of parental conflict are more likely to go on to justify aggression as legitimate within their own relationships (Kinsfogel & Grych, 2004). In contrast, female witnesses of parental conflict demonstrated increased awareness of potential consequent harm in relationships (Kinsfogel & Grych, 2004).

In UK studies, an older male being in a relationship with a younger female was found to be a risk factor for females (Barter et al., 2009; Wood & Barter, 2015), with the risk increasing if the male was more than two years older than the female (Barter et al., 2009). This included risks of emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse (Barter et al., 2009).

If the relationship is the first intimate relationship which the young person has experienced, there may be an increased risk of abuse acceptance (HO, 2012a). This limited experience of intimate relationships may potentially mean that the young person has less awareness of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours within intimate relationships (HO, 2012a).

Abusive behaviours in young people’s relationships can take place face-to-face and through technology, with social media, mobile phones and the internet bringing new relationship dynamics and additional platforms which can be utilised for abusive behaviours (Barter et al., 2017; Griffiths, 2019; Sutherland, 2011; Tomaszewska & Schuster, 2021). There is also an intersection between online and offline abuse, with participants reporting the co-existence of these behaviours (Barter et al., 2017). In UK-based focus groups, Stonard and colleagues (2017) established themes around monitoring and controlling communication, including checking messages and online accounts, as well as controlling online accounts. In a research study across five European countries, in all of which controlling behaviours were described as common, the UK had the highest rate of abusive messaging (personal or shared publicly online) of the countries studied (Barter et al., 2017). In further research across five European countries, the UK was found to have the highest rates of young people sending and receiving sexual messages and/or sexual/naked images (Stanley et al., 2018). In a large-scale UK study of 16 to19 year olds, 45.4% reported having sent a sexually explicit image to another person (Young et al. 2018). When exploring the impact of sexual message/image sharing, 61% of UK females who reported a negative impact expressed that this was due to the message/image being shared more widely (Stanley et al., 2018). It has been identified that females who have sent an explicit image of themselves are 2 to 4 times more likely to experience offline relationship abuse, whilst males are 2 to 8 times more likely (Young et al., 2018).

Females appear to be disproportionately negatively impacted; across the European studies reviewed by Tomaszewska and Schuster (2021), the highest reporting rate of being a victim of online abuse was found to be in UK females (Barter et al., 2017), with higher reporting rates than females or males in the other countries and UK males (Barter et al., 2017). Barter and colleagues (2009) stated that a key method used to extend control and exploitation is through technology, including influencing the victim’s family and peer networks (Barter et al., 2009). Attempts to isolate through online abuse are less commonly reported, but follow the same gender bias, with UK females displaying higher reporting rates than males (Barter et al., 2017). These findings demonstrate that it is important to understand the influence of technology on young people’s relationships and abuse dynamics (Sutherland, 2011).

Peer relationships and friendships increase in importance during adolescence, with young people spending increasing amounts of time in social situations rather than familial ones (DCSF, 2007). Research has found that British young people spend more time with peers and less time with parents and other adults than young people in other culturally comparable countries (Dixon et al., 2006). The influence of peer relationships peaks at approximately 15 years (DCSF, 2007). Within these peer groups, young people develop their individual identities, incorporating friends’ attitudes and behaviours (DCSF, 2007). In a USA-based study with 11 to 14 year olds, Noonan and Charles (2009) explored emotional, physical and sexual relationship abuse in conjunction with peer perceptions of relationship norms. Participants acknowledged that abuse within relationships was unacceptable, but depicted it as inevitable because of peer pressure (Noonan & Charles, 2009). Gender differences also emerged, with the males’ peer group appearing to encourage and support mistreatment of females; a mechanism for this was public humiliation, encouraged by the males’ peers (Noonan & Charles, 2009). The females’ peer group accepted that males would be under pressure to mistreat them if peers felt that they were being too kind (Noonan & Charles, 2009). Participants of both genders acknowledged the disproportionately increased negative impact of abuse for females (Noonan & Charles, 2009). Peer influence was also found to influence sexual expectations, as older male participants indicated that females should engage in sexual relationships to please them, while female participants suggested wanting to please males (Noonan & Charles, 2009).

Young people experience pressure to be in a relationship (Chung, 2005; Hird, 2000; Noonan & Charles, 2009; Sterne & Poole, 2010), potentially tolerating abuse rather than being single (Hird, 2000; Sterne & Poole, 2010). This is related to increased social acceptability through being in a relationship. Young people expressed that dating experience is required to avoid exclusion from conversations about relationships and sex (Chung, 2005). There has been found to be less pressure for males to be in a relationship than for females, as independence is perceived as more acceptable for males than for females (Chung, 2005). As well as this, it is perceived that males need sexual, rather than dating, experience (Chung, 2005; Hird, 2000), whereas females need to be in a relationship to protect/defend their sexual reputation (Hird, 2000). Females expressed a willingness to please males and maintain the relationship by engaging in sexual activity, therefore, sustaining the social acceptance which being in a relationship provided (Noonan & Charles, 2009).

It has been suggested that research into risk factors has been cross-sectional, rendering attributions of causality problematic (Manganello, 2008). Further, findings across studies regarding the influence of risk factors have been mixed (Manganello, 2008).

**1.4 Prevention and Intervention**

In evidence presented to the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee’s inquiry into domestic abuse (House of Commons, 2008), four female victims of domestic abuse were asked where it began. They responded that it had started when they were in school (House of Commons, 2008). Early intervention is key to the prevention of abuse in young people’s and adults’ relationships and in limiting the severity of abuse when it does occur (HO, 2012a). In a systematic international review of evidence-based interventions teaching sexual consent in education settings, of the 18 programmes identified it was found that the majority were one to two hour sessions, 16 were provided in the USA (it was not stated where the other 2 were provided) and 15 were delivered in university settings (Burton et al., 2021). Only three were delivered in secondary schools, although, it should be noted that the criteria for this review only included interventions for 15 to 29 year olds (Burton et al., 2021).

The UK government has stated that it is, at least partially, the responsibility of schools to provide preventative education and raise awareness of abuse constructs whilst teaching about healthy relationships (HO, 2012a; HM Government, 2019). Statutory guidance has recently been stipulated for relationships and sex education (RSE) for young people aged 11 to 16 years in UK secondary schools (Department for Education (DfE), 2019; 2020; 2021). This aims to enable informed decision-making in present and future relationships and includes criteria for young people to be taught about: sexual consent, coercion and abuse; peer pressure; sharing private material with others; and acceptable or unacceptable behaviours in healthy intimate relationships (DfE, 2019; 2020; DfE, 2021). It states that teaching on relationships should establish that emotional, physical and sexual abuse are not inevitable or acceptable (DfE, 2019).

It is considered reasonable to expect young people to experience some limited instances of emotionally harmful behaviours in developing relationships, with these limited experiences not necessitating professional intervention (Barter et al., 2009). Indeed, there may be a danger in professionals problematising these experiences, leading to interventions being perceived by young people as inappropriate and unrealistic (Barter et al., 2009). However, given the continuing prevalence of abuse in young people’s relationships and the findings of research exploring young people’s perceptions of relationship abuse, there is clearly more to be done. Despite the enactment of statutory RSE, recent research states that;

Our ﬁndings support the suggestion of a ‘rape culture’ in many of our schools, where misogyny and sharing of non-consensual images create an environment where sexual violence and harassment are normalised.

(Mullen, 2022, p. 506)

Young people require professional support in identifying and understanding abusive behaviours, which can be perceived as normative within early relationships (Barter et al., 2009). Respondents to the Domestic Violence Bill consultation were asked to suggest ways which the education of young people in this area could be further supported (HM Government, 2019). Of those respondents, 58% proposed that schools required increased access to resources, advice and training from specialist organisations (HM Government, 2019). Mullan (2022) proposed that, while teaching related to abuse is incorporated into RSE, school staff require more formal training to facilitate exploration of abuse concepts and strategies with young people, using a multi-agency approach. Future policy and intervention development should be guided by evidence about the features which constitute effective relationship education (Healy Cullen et al., 2022). To achieve this, stakeholder views, including the views of young people themselves, are vital to provide insights to contribute to effective education and intervention programme design and implementation (Healy Cullen et al., 2022).

Educational Psychologists can and should adopt a key role in developing and contributing psychological understandings of abuse in young people’s intimate relationships. This is particularly the case for young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), as it is stated that these young people may be more vulnerable to exploitation in relationships and warrant additional support (DfE, 2019). The contributions of Educational Psychology should aim to generate frameworks for understanding relationship abuse in this age group and context, contributing to support provision for schools, enhancing education and intervention.

**1.5 Young People’s Perceptions of Abuse in Relationships**

The majority of the research on abuse in young people’s intimate relationships has been conducted in North America (Hird, 2000; Tomaszewska & Schuster, 2021), with most of these US-based studies utilising large-scale surveys (Barter, 2009; Barter at al., 2009). In a systematic review of studies on abuse in young people’s intimate relationships carried out in Europe between 2010 and 2021, it was found that there have been 43 research studies resulting in 34 article publications, with only four of these studies being (at least partially) based in the UK (Barter et al., 2017; Stanley et al., 2018; Tomaszewska & Schuster, 2021; Viejo et al., 2016; Young et al., 2018). These four studies all used standardised measures to gather data (Tomaszewska & Schuster, 2021). Tomaszewska and Schuster (2021) acknowledged that limitations to the review search criteria may have restricted the number and scope of studies included. Prior to 2010, it was suggested that a limited number of studies incorporated young people’s views (Prospero, 2006), with a small proportion of these being UK-based (Barter, 2009).

This emphasis on quantitative methodologies may have led to limited understandings of the range and complexity of abuse in young people’s intimate relationships (Barter et. al., 2009), including restricting explorations of context, intent, impact and meaning (Barter, 2009). Barter (2009) proposed that relatively little is known about young people’s perspectives of relationship abuse within their own age group, with this requiring examination of young people’s experiences, viewpoints and understandings (Banister et al., 2003; Barter, 2009). Young people’s perspectives identified in these limited research studies are outlined below. This includes both UK and non-UK studies. However, it should be considered that it is unclear how far non-UK studies can be related to the UK context and culture.

1.5.1 Emotional Abuse, Including Coercion and Control

Emotional abuse and coercive control are the least researched types of abuse in young people’s intimate relationships (Barter, 2009; Barter et al., 2009), despite being the most frequent (Barter et al., 2009; Jackson et al., 2000). In a European study of online and offline abuse in young people’s relationships involving five countries, including the UK, it was found that controlling behaviours and surveillance were common across samples from all five countries (Barter et al., 2017). Barter and colleagues (2017) acknowledged that the measures used were at an early stage of development, with validity not yet tested.

Coercion includes blaming, minimisation of feelings, domination, possessiveness, intimidation and humiliation, as well as threats of and actual physical and sexual abuse (Scheiman & Zeoli, 2003). Coercive control has been found to play a key role in underpinning other forms of abuse (Barter et al., 2009; Scheiman & Zeoli, 2003). In a UK-based research study involving 310 female and male young people, aged 14 to 18 years, Griffiths (2019) found that participants who had experienced emotional abuse indicated confusion regarding whether they were to blame for physical or sexual abuse in their intimate relationships. It was acknowledged that no males known to have experienced relationship abuse were involved in the study (Griffiths, 2019). In a New Zealand-based qualitative study involving 373 high school senior students aged 16 to 20 years, Jackson and colleagues (2000) also found that reports of sexual coercion were frequent and not always related to sexual intercourse. Data in this study was collected using questionnaires with a combination of forced choice and open questions, which means that it is challenging to identify which data is entirely young people’s perspectives and which was delineated by options provided by the researchers.

There have been similar coercion reporting rates for females and males (Jackson et al., 2000), but in a large-scale UK-based study, gender differences have been identified in young people’s understandings of emotional abuse (Barter et al., 2009). Females have been found to experience difficulties identifying controlling behaviours, due to a blurring of the representation of controlling behaviours with caring behaviours (Barter et al., 2009; Chung, 2005; Griffiths, 2019). Males have been found to use this blurring to coerce females into sexual activities (Barter et al., 2009; Chung, 2005; Griffiths, 2019).

In one of the earliest UK-based studies in this area, Hird (2000) found that the most frequent form of emotional abuse was name calling, with females reporting higher rates than males. This study involved both single-gender and mixed-gender focus groups which met weekly over the course of at least a year, providing detailed information over time (Hird, 2000). A Swedish study involving interviews with 17 to 21 year olds found that young people described verbally abusive behaviours, such as systematic name-calling, as well as controlling behaviours, such as being told what to wear (Korkmaz & Overlien, 2019). There were also descriptions of dates threatening to post sexually explicit photographs online if the relationship was ended (Korkmaz & Overlien, 2019). These behaviours occurred alongside being isolated from their friends and wider social community (Korkmaz & Overlien, 2019). This study involved 11 participants, 10 of whom were female, with the only male having experienced abuse within a homosexual relationship.

In relation to impact, although emotional abuse was the most frequently reported form of abuse, it was also deemed as having the least negative impact by males and females (Barter et al., 2009). However, the reported negative impacts for males have been found to be more limited than for females (Barter et al., 2009; Jackson et al., 2000), in both online and offline abuse (Barter et al., 2017). It is suggested that coercive control is ineffectual when not underpinned by broader power dynamics of fear and intimidation (Barter et al., 2009). However, it has also been suggested that this may be a consequence of males having a greater acceptance or tolerance for abusive behaviours (Jackson et al., 2000).

1.5.2 Physical Abuse

In the UK, Hird (2000) found that young people described physically abusive behaviours as a ‘normal’ part of relationships in their age group. Play fighting was depicted as part of a healthy relationship, providing opportunities for physical closeness and exploration of trust issues, on the basis that it was mutually consensual and free from coercion or negative impacts (Barter et al., 2009). However, it has been found that these boundaries are often breached, with consensual play fighting progressing to physically abusive behaviours (Hird, 2000; Barter et al., 2009).

In a New Zealand-based study, physical abuse was reported less frequently than emotional or sexual abuse, but remained at a concerning level (Jackson at al., 2000). In the UK, Hird (2000) found similar levels of reported emotional and physical abuse. However, it has been suggested by males that they are unwilling to report being subjected to physical abuse due to embarrassment and fear of not being taken seriously (Griffiths, 2019).

While similar reporting rates of having experienced physical abuse have been found between females and males (Hird, 2000; Jackson et al., 2000), gender differences in the form and understandings of physical abuse have been identified. High proportions of females’ use of physically abusive behaviours were found to be related to self-defence (Barter et al., 2009; Griffiths, 2019; Hird, 2000). Females in a Swedish study described attempting to use physical force in defence, but that this often increased the severity of abuse from their boyfriend (Korkmaz & Overlien, 2019).

Regarding impact, research has indicated that physical abuse can be reciprocal, whereby individuals are both victims and perpetrators of physically abusive behaviours (Viejo et al., 2016). This study consisted of greater numbers of males (61.9%) than females (38.1%). In the first large-scale UK study, involving 1353 young people aged 13 to 16 years, Barter and colleagues (2009) questioned the notion of mutual or reciprocal physical abuse, due to the implication of equal impact. It has been found that, while justifications used by some males indicated that physically abusive behaviours were mutual, the severity of male behaviours was disproportionate to that of females (Barter et al., 2009; Griffiths, 2019; Hird, 2000). It has been found that UK and Spanish females are more sensitive to differences in severity of physical abuse than male counterparts of the same nationality (Viejo et al., 2016).

Further, a disproportionately negative emotional impact on females has been found (Griffiths, 2019; Jackson et al., 2000), with depictions of males perceiving physically abusive behaviours as a ‘laugh’, while females depicted them as ‘scary’ (Jackson et al., 2000). However, Griffiths (2019) found that participants did not indicate a gendered divide in attitudes to physical abuse, with participants acknowledging that females and males were emotionally impacted.

1.5.3 Sexual Abuse

UK-based research has identified that relationships between young people often contain both consensual and coerced sexual experiences (Barter et al., 2009; Hird, 2000), with females reporting higher rates of sexual abuse (Hird, 2000). Females in a Swedish study described ongoing sexual coercion, with them acquiescing to sexual intercourse under duress or coercion escalating into forced sexual intercourse (Korkmaz & Overlien, 2019). Gender differences have been found regarding sexual consent, with females stating that verbal expressions of non-consent provided sufficient confirmation that they did not want to have sexual intercourse, while males stated that both verbal and physical expressions were required for non-consent to be clear (Hird, 2000). Females particularly find the combining of consensual experiences with sexually abusive behaviours confusing (Hird, 2000; Barter et al., 2009).

In interviews, female participants expressed feeling guilty for not agreeing to sexual intercourse, describing that this was unfair for the male (Barter et. al., 2009). A perception was identified amongst young people that males have an increased need for sexual intercourse and, therefore, are more likely to initiate sexual activity (Hird, 2000). Females were perceived as having a lower need for sexual intercourse, with the role of females being to regulate males’ sexual behaviour (Hird, 2000). This was particularly the case if the male was older than the female, as it was perceived that older males have increased needs and experience (Barter et. al., 2009).

**1.6 Rationale**

In the USA, there has been increased research and professional interest in young people’s intimate relationships. This is in contrast to the UK, where research, policy and practice has been limited (Barter et al., 2009), despite abusive behaviours being identified as highly prevalent and widespread (Manganello, 2008; Prospero, 2006; Sterne & Poole, 2010; Viejo et al., 2016). There is a lack of UK-based studies (Barter, 2009; Barter et al., 2009; Griffiths, 2019; Lyons & Rabie, 2014; NICE 2014; Viejo et al., 2016; Young et al., 2018), with consequent limited understandings of the definitions and meanings applied to abuse within young people’s relationships in a UK context.

Further, the use of variable terms for young people, differing understandings of diverse forms of relationships and the imposition of adult definitions and understandings of abuse lead to challenges when attempting to comprehend prevalence, meanings and implications. Prior to conceptual framework or policy development, these understandings should be clarified (Fox et al., 2014). Challenges associated with this are compounded by young people themselves feeling that they experience difficulties understanding the frequency, meaning and impact of abusive behaviours, expressing uncertainty about what is ‘normal’ or ‘healthy’ (Griffiths, 2019). Further research is needed to provide insights into the dynamics of UK-based young people’s intimate relationships (Lyons & Rabie, 2014).

Despite a significant amount of UK research into adult domestic abuse, there are limited understandings of relationship abuse based upon young people’s own perceptions (Barter, 2009; Prospero, 2006), with only a small number of research studies being conducted in the UK (Barter, 2009). This limited evidence-base means that understandings of young people’s relationships and abusive behaviours within them may not be representative of the experiences of young people. Therefore, educational provision and interventions may not be accurately targeted, which could mean a reduction in efficacy. Young people’s perspectives are vital to ensuring that the subjects covered and methods of delivery are relevant to young people and meet their needs (Burton et al., 2021).

Further, previous research has primarily focused on physical and sexual abuse (Barter, 2009; Barter et al., 2009; Viejo et al., 2016). Emotional abuse is the least researched type of abuse in young people’s intimate relationships and has only relatively recently received an increased focus, (Barter, 2009; Barter et al., 2009), despite being the most frequently reported (Barter et al., 2009; Jackson et al., 2000). It is important to enrich understandings of emotional, physical and sexual abuse, separately and in relation to each other, to support further development of integrated approaches to abuse prevention (Barter et al., 2009).

Previous research focused on developing understandings of abuse behaviours from the perspectives of young people have produced a range of findings. Emotional abuse often underpins other forms of abuse (Barter et al., 2009; Scheiman & Zeoli, 2003), including confusion regarding responsibility for physical and sexual abuse (Griffiths, 2019). Within emotional abuse, a range of coercive and controlling behaviours were identified (Barter et al., 2017; Korkmaz & Overlien, 2019) including use of threats (Korkmaz & Overlien, 2019; Scheiman & Zeoli, 2003). Systematic name-calling was the most frequently reported (Hird, 2000; Korkmaz & Overlien, 2019). Emotional abuse behaviours often coincided with being increasingly isolated from friends and family (Korkmaz & Overlien, 2019). Understandings of emotionally abusive behaviours differed between females and males (Barter et al., 2009). Females found it challenging to differentiate between caring and controlling behaviours, utilised by males to facilitate sexual coercion (Barter et al., 2009; Chung, 2005; Griffiths, 2019). Further, sexual coercion in this age group is not necessarily related to intercourse (Jackson et al., 2000). As well as this, the impact of emotional abuse is disproportionately negative for females (Barter et al., 2009; Jackson et al., 2000), potentially due to behaviours being located within broader power dynamics of fear and intimidation for females (Barter et al., 2009) and higher acceptance/tolerance rates for males (Jackson et al., 2000).

Regarding young people’s perspectives of physical abuse, this can be considered a ‘normal’ part of relationships (Hird, 2000). It can often take the form of consensual play fighting with boundaries going on to be breached, progressing to abuse (Barter et al., 2009; Hird, 2000). Gender differences in understandings of the form, severity and impact have been found. While the notion of reciprocal physical abuse has been proposed (Viejo et al., 2016), male behaviours were more severe than females’ (Barter et al., 2009; Griffiths, 2019; Hird, 2000). It is suggested that males may be less willing to report this type of abuse (Griffiths, 2019).Females often use physical force in self-defence (Barter et al., 2009; Griffiths, 2019; Hird, 2000), with this increasing the severity of the response (Korkmaz & Overlien, 2019). The physical and emotional impact of physical abuse is disproportionately negative for females (Barter et al., 2009; Griffiths, 2019; Hird, 2000; Jackson et al., 2000).

Sexual experiences in young people’s relationships consist of both consensual and coercive experiences, with females particularly finding this confusing (Barter et al., 2009; Hird, 2000). Females also reported that sexual coercion can escalate to forced intercourse (Korkmaz & Overlien, 2019). There are gender differences in perceptions of consent indicators, with males expressing a need for higher levels of non-consent indication (Hird, 2000). Perceptions of males experiencing a greater need for sex were identified (Hird, 2000), with females experiencing feelings of guilt for not providing this (Barter et al., 2009). Females were identified as needing to regulate males’ sexual needs/behaviours (Hird, 2000), particularly if the male was older (Barter et al., 2009).

1.6.1 Aims and Research Questions

The majority of research studies into abuse within young people’s intimate relationships has been undertaken outside of the UK. This has primarily been quantitative research to develop understandings of abuse prevalence, focussing mainly on physical and sexual abuse. This study aims to explore the ways that a UK sample of young people construe abusive behaviours within relationships. This includes emotional, physical and sexual abusive behaviours within intimate relationships. The age range of participants is 14 to 16 years to explore the views of school-age young people involved in developing formative relationships and not included in adult definitions/understandings of relationship abuse. The study uses Q methodology to gain the perceptions of young people themselves. This methodology is designed to enable holistic and systematic identification of social viewpoints and knowledge structures on a chosen subject (Watts & Stenner, 2012). It is hoped that this will contribute to enhancing and further targeting school-based relationships education, training and interventions, including Educational Psychology provision.

The research questions which will be explored in this study are:

1. How do young people construe abuse in intimate relationships?
2. What, if any, are the differences in the ways that female and male young people construe abuse in intimate relationships?

**2. Methodology**

**2.1 Q Methodology Overview**

Q methodology was chosen as the research design as it can be used in exploratory research to examine viewpoints about complex social issues (Franz et al., 2016; Healy-Cullen et al, 2022). Q methodology was first developed by William Stephenson as a means of objectively measuring subjectivity, focusing on subjective understandings defined by participants rather than objective variables delineated by researchers (Brown Walker et al., 2018; Ramlo, 2016; Watts, 2015). In this way, it enables the examination of social viewpoints and understandings on a topic by categorising the key subjective perspectives and/or values of groups of individuals (Brown Walker et al., 2018; Franz et al., 2016; Ramlo, 2016; Watts, 2015; Watts & Stenner, 2012). Therefore, Q methodology facilitates holistic understandings of the ways a topic is understood within a grouping and/or setting (Watts & Stenner, 2012), for example in the current research, secondary school students within a local area.

In Q methodology, participants complete a Q sort. This involves participants organising a set of items provided by the researcher into a pattern. Most commonly, the items consist of a set of statements on cards relating to the research topic (Watts, 2015). Q sorts are usually carried out face-to-face in settings (Brown Walker et al., 2018; Watts & Stenner, 2012), although the use of online Q methodology is increasing (Meehan et al., 2022). The cards are sorted into a forced-choice grid pattern, a distribution grid, with each statement being rank-ordered relative to the other items (Brown Walker et al., 2018; Meehan et al., 2022; Watts & Stenner, 2012). This forced-choice distribution grid standardises the procedure and ensures that participants consider the items holistically, as they sort the items in relation to each other (Brown Walker et al., 2018; Watts & Stenner, 2012). Each participant sorts the statement cards based upon their own perspective or opinion (Brown Walker et al., 2018; Healy-Cullen et al., 2022), operationalising individual subjectivity (Brown 1980; Brown Walker et al., 2018; Meehan et al., 2022; Ramlo, 2016). Factor analysis of the participants’ Q sorts is then used to conduct a holistic comparison of them (Watts & Stenner, 2012). It does this by identifying correlations of participants across a sample, with the factor analysis being by participants rather than items (Brown Walker et al., 2018). This means that, rather than identifying participant groups’ generalised responses to items, the analysed data reveals clusters of participants who have associations with a similar point of view or group (Brown Walker et al., 2018; Watts & Stenner, 2012). Each of those group perspectives is represented by a discrete factor, with similarities and divergences between factors then being explored in relation to the research aims (Brown, 1980; Meehan et al., 2022; Ramlo, 2016).

Q methodology has previously been used in studies relating to the research topic. These include exploring discourses relating to sexual relationships with 16 to 19 year olds (Franz et al., 2016), exploring views of sexual relationships with 16 to 18 year olds (Stenner et al., 2006) and exploring the views on porn literacy education with 16 to 18 year olds (Healy-Cullen et al., 2022). Stenner and colleagues (2006) expressed that Q methodology is particularly suited to research in the field of sexual health due to the simultaneous exploration of subjective insights and identification of diverse viewpoints. They stated that this methodology can be utilised effectively to explore young people’s shared and divergent accounts of sexual relationships (Stenner et al., 2006).

2.1.1 Mixed Methods?

Q methodology utilises both qualitative and quantitative designs, comprising a mixed methods approach (Hughes, 2017; Meehan et. al., 2022; Ramlo, 2016; Zabala et al., 2018). Alternative approaches to the notion of Q methodology as a mixed methods approach have been proposed. On one hand, it has been asserted that while the method and findings are achieved qualitatively, factor analysis renders Q methodology a primarily quantitative procedure (Stenner & Stainton Rogers, 2004; Watts, 2015). On the other hand, Brown Walker and colleagues (2018) suggest that Q methodology achieves the qualitative aim of identifying unique participant perspectives within a group, with the assistance of quantitative methods through statistical analyses. This type of research also tends to be conducted in naturalistic settings, as does qualitative research (Franz et. al., 2016; Ramlo, 2016; Stenner & Stainton-Rogers, 2004). It is proposed that the quantitative factor analysis incorporates a qualitative focus, as the factor analytic decisions are based upon qualitative clarity rather than statistical significance (Ramlo, 2016). For these reasons, Ramlo (2016) asserted that Q methodology is a qualitatively dominant mixed methods approach, with qualitative principal elements supported by aspects of quantitative methodology (Ramlo, 2015).

This research study is aligned with the standpoint that Q methodology is a primarily qualitative approach, facilitated by statistical analyses. Factor analytic decisions, including the number of factors analysed and interpreted, were primarily based upon substantive meaning and qualitative clarity, rather than statistical significance (Ramlo, 2016). This was intended to achieve the qualitative aim of identifying unique perspectives within the group of participants (Brown Walker et al., 2018). Further, the research was conducted in naturalistic settings, including school classrooms. While some Q sorts were conducted in online meetings, at the time of the research this was commonplace as the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic meant that school lessons, as well as meetings with school staff, family and friends, were frequently taking place online.

In a review of Q methodology, Kampen and Tamas (2014) suggest that Q methodology does not provide insights into human subjectivity. They also outlined criticisms on measurement validity, sampling and the internal validity of Q methodology. However, Ramlo (2016) proposes that the literature review for this article was limited due to the search criteria used and did not include many of the key research contributions. Further, it is expressed that these criticisms are based upon a lack of philosophical, conceptual and methodological understandings of Q methodology, instead relying on quantitative criteria such as validity, reliability and sample sizing (Brown et al., 2015; Ramlo, 2016). Ramlo (2016) expressed that criticisms of Q methodology tend to be levelled at the qualitative aspects amalgamated with mathematical procedures. Brown and colleagues (2015) refuted the assertions made by Kampen and Tamas’ (2014) through further clarification of Q methodology’s philosophical and procedural positionings, including exposition on subjectivity, as well as factor analysis and sampling.

2.1.2 Abduction

An element of Q methodology’s philosophical and methodological approach includes its positioning in the use of abductive reasoning. There are differing reasoning approaches to research. A ‘top-down’ deductive approach begins with a theory, then develops into a hypothesis which is confirmed or disproved by study (Trochim, 2022). Another approach is a ‘bottom-up’ inductive approach, which begins with the observation of a pattern or series of irregularities upon which a hypothesis is based, with the subsequent study contributing to wider theory (Trochim, 2022). However, Q methodology adopts an abductive approach (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Abduction is more closely aligned with induction than deduction, but where induction studies a phenomenon to establish a generalisable description, abduction studies a phenomenon with the aim of achieving an explanation and novel insights (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Using an abductive reasoning approach, integrated into Q methodology through factor analysis, observations become indicators of a potential explanation upon which hypotheses are based (Watts & Stenner, 2012). This further renders Q methodology suitable for exploratory research seeking enlightenment about the ways in which understandings are constructed.

**2.2 Paradigm and Positionality**

Before outlining the research procedure, it is important to consider the positionality of the researcher and the research within ontological and epistemological paradigms. This positionality reflects the locating of the research within a socio-political context, or a “world view” (Holmes, 2020). This is important as it influences the research design and its outcomes, by identifying the researcher’s standpoint on the topic being researched, the context of the research, the participants and the procedure used (Holmes, 2020).

Q methodology is a methodology which encompasses a technique and set of procedures, as well as a distinct philosophical framework (Ramlo, 2016). Ramlo (2016) states that, due to its mixed methods approach, it should be understood as having a ‘mixed’ philosophy, ontology and epistemology (Ramlo, 2016). However, Stenner and Stainton Rogers (2004) assert that this is concerned with a philosophical battle between approaches, rather than an understanding of the underlying aims of Q methodology.

2.2.1 Defining Philosophical Terms: Ontology and Epistemology

Ontology concerns the nature of reality and the nature of the world (Mertens, 2010; Willig, 2013). This relates to assumptions based upon perspectives of what is knowable about the world (Holmes, 2020) and includes perceptions of subjectivity and objectivity (Ramlo, 2016). Ontological questioning asks, “what is the nature of reality?” (Mertens, 2010, p. 10) or “what is there to know?” (Willig, 2013, p. 12).

Epistemology concerns beliefs about the nature of knowledge and its scope (Holmes, 2020; Mertens, 2010; Ramlo, 2016). Epistemological questioning asks, “what is the nature of knowledge?” (Mertens, 2010, p. 10) or “how, and what, can we know?” (Mertens, 2010, p. 4).

2.2.2 Position of the Research

The aim of this research is to explore young people’s subjective understandings of abusive relationship behaviours. Social constructionism is, therefore, aligned with the aims of the research as Q methodology allows the holistic empirical observation and exploration of the socially constructed understandings of the topic. Within this research study is embedded the concept that the participants’ (and the researcher’s) understandings of the world are constructed through social interaction and discourse, as part of the social world which they inhabit. Therefore, participants’ understandings of relationships, behaviours within them, as well as boundaries of acceptability of behaviours, are positioned within a historic, cultural, political, socially constructed reality. This reality is shaped by the interactions which they have with those around them, such as peers, adults, school systems, etc., but also through technological access to wider discourse and discussion. This approach underpins the understandings of young people’s individual and collective perceptions of abusive behaviours in relationships, explored through Q methodology. Therefore, this research study is positioned within the paradigm of social constructionism.

Social constructionism challenges the notion that knowledge and understanding is based upon unbiased, objective observation of the world (Burr, 2003). Instead, it is based in the concept that understandings and constructions of the world are developed through social interactions and exchanges, particularly in language (Burr, 2003). This means that what is and can be known varies cross-culturally and historically (Burr, 2003). The development of understandings and constructions through narrative and language is aligned with the study’s qualitative positioning. Further, Watts and Stenner (2012) state that the epistemological position of social constructionism accounts for the meaningful and reliable factors which emerge through Q methodological factor analysis and factor extraction. They describe that socially constructed understandings of the world become part of an individual’s environment and context, leading to groupings of viewpoints emerging through factor analysis (Watts & Stenner, 2012). There is scope for individuals to reject these socially constructed understandings, but this requires conscious consideration and justification, with people generally being more influenced by contextual social constructions (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Social constructionism is, therefore, aligned with the research’s qualitative positioning, Q methodology and the research aims.

**2.3 Research Q Methodology Procedure**

Watts (2015) stated that the three stages of a Q methodological study broadly involve: carrying out Q sorts to gather participant data; analysing the participants’ Q sort data using factor analysis; then interpreting the identified factors. These factors represent the key perspectives held within the group of participants (Watts, 2015).

2.3.1 Generating the Q set

The initial stage in collecting participant data using Q sorts is to develop the concourse (Brown Walker et al., 2018; Ramlo, 2016; Watts & Stenner, 2012). This usually incorporates a group of statements based upon the topic being researched and should represent a universal range of differing viewpoints on that focus area (Brown Walker et al., 2018; Franz et al., 2016; Ramlo, 2016). For this research, the concourse statements consisted of behaviours which can occur within young people’s intimate relationships. These types of relationships were termed intimate relationships to differentiate them from familial relationships or friendships (HM Government, 2019; Tomaszewska & Schuster, 2021).

The terminology used to describe behaviours altered during the course of Q set generation, as a function of the changing circumstances of the research over time. The research behaviour statements, originally intended to be sorted by participants in face-to-face research, were planned to incorporate a range of behaviours. These were intended to incorporate abusive and positive relationships behaviours.

To that end, the original concourse was developed (see Appendix 1). The statements which the concourse consisted of included abusive behaviours, incorporating emotional, physical and sexual abuse. It also included identified positive relationship behaviours. During the literature review, behaviours identified as potential abuse indicators/risk factors were also identified and included in accordance with the research’s exploratory emphasis and to provide a less ‘binary’ concourse. Some of these behaviours indicate poor conflict management and escalation patterns, leading to increased risk of abusive behaviours (Halpern-Meekin et al., 2013; Sutherland, 2011). At this point, the behaviours within the statements were referred to as ‘potentially harmful behaviours’. This description was chosen as the concourse statements included a range of abusive behaviours, behaviours potentially indicating future abuse and positive relationship behaviours. It was also felt that this description would avoid influencing the responses of the participants by suggesting that any or all of the behaviours were abusive or by prompting responses based upon understandings of abuse rather than reflecting their own understandings of relationship behaviours.

The concourse was generated through three sources: the literature base explored through a literature review; resources provided by a local charity; and interviews with young people who met the participant selection criteria (Zabala et al., 2018). Use of these types of sources in the generation of Q sort concourses, including input from related professionals, has been utilised in previous Q methodology research with young people (for example, Franz et al., 2016).

The initial concourse of statements was developed using the literature base following a literature review. The literature review entailed examining research exploring abuse in young people’s intimate relationships. The concourse statements were developed through examination of both qualitative and quantitative research findings, including those directly exploring the views of young people (including Banyard & Cross, 2008; Barter et al., 2009; Chung, 2005; Fox et al., 2014; Halpern-Meekin et al., 2013; Hird, 2000; Sutherland, 2011; Wood & Barter (2015) (see Appendix 1).

As well as using the literature base to develop the concourse, prior to beginning the research, local organisations involved in supporting young people with domestic abuse and abuse within relationships were contacted. This was to inform the concourse, but also to support understandings and inform procedures when working with young people potentially experiencing related difficulties. Of these organisations, a domestic abuse charity working across the local authority in which the research was conducted agreed to provide support. The charity provides a range of related services, including counselling, therapy and advice clinics, as well as providing refuge and community outreach support. There were conversations with staff from the charity on several occasions to discuss their work with young people, the practicalities of the proposed data collection processes and issues which could potentially arise before, during and/or after data collection. One of the community outreach programmes which the charity provides is working with groups of young people considered vulnerable to abusive behaviours in intimate relationships in local secondary schools. An activity used by charity staff is a card sorting exercise with behaviour statements considered to be ‘healthy’ or ‘unhealthy’ within relationships, which young people in small groups sort into these two categories to prompt discussion. Staff at the charity shared these resources (see Appendix 2), which had been adapted over time according to feedback from young people in previous sessions. With the charity’s permission, these 48 statements were incorporated into the concourse, amalgamated with those from the literature review.

Following the generation of the initial concourse of statements, two participants were recruited to participate in semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 3). At this stage there were 83 potential statements (see Appendix 1). Due to impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, in-person research was no longer permitted and the research design was adapted to take place online. The interviews took place online, according to recruitment, consent, information and logistical procedures used for the main study (see Appendices 4 to 7 for the interview participants’ information sheet and consent form, as well as the parent/carer information sheet and consent form). The interviews took place using video conferencing. The purpose of these interviews was fourfold:

* To discuss the relevance of the initial concourse statements to young people of their age
* For the young people interviewed to contribute to editing the potential statements (see Appendix 1), including suggesting any additional statements which they felt would also be relevant
* To clarify the preferred language used by young people for relationships, the individuals within them and general terms for individuals in their age group
* To explore the utility of the information sheet and consent form

Following the interviews, interview participants were contacted to ask if they would like to take part in the main study, which they both did.

These interviews resulted in refining of the concourse. Some statements were described by the interview participants as not being relevant for their age group, some language was clarified and some statements required greater specificity. Some repetition was also identified, as well as some statements identifying individual behaviours, rather than behaviours between young people dating or in a relationship, therefore not being as relevant to the study aims. Some additional statements proposed by interview participants which met the research aims were also included. Following this, any overlap in statements was identified, with these being amalgamated or removed. This process ensured that overlap, redundancy and repetition of statements was eliminated (Watts and Stenner, 2012).

The concourse remained too sizeable to be manageable in a Q-sort, particularly Q sorts which would take place online with young people aged 14 to 16 years and on a sensitive topic. Watts and Stenner (2012) cited that a Q set of approximately 40 to 80 items is standard. However, given the participant group and research topic, it was felt that that number of items in the Q sorts needed to be at the lower end of this range. Jeffares and Dickinson (2016) stated that a Q set of 35 to 40 statements is typical. It was important for the Q set to a be manageable size for school-age participants to sort. Meehan and colleagues (2022) also recommended using a conservative number of items for online Q methodology research, with participants reporting fatigue and frustration when sorting a Q set of 48 items.

It had originally been intended that the statements would include abusive behaviours, behaviours identified as being potential abuse indicators/risk factors and positive relationship behaviours. But as the number of statements in the concourse needed to be reduced, it was considered which behaviour statements needed to be retained and which would be removed. As this was an exploratory study, to achieve the study aims a range of abusive behaviours needed to be included in the statements, across emotional, physical and sexual abuse. Further, the positive behaviour statements were mainly based upon the charity resources as the literature review yielded limited information for these behaviours (see Appendix 1). It was felt that positive behaviour statements were less likely to contribute to understandings of the ways in which young people construe abusive behaviours in intimate relationships, as outlined in the research aims.

As a result of this, to maintain inclusion of a range of behaviours relevant to the research aims, while ensuring manageable numbers of statements in the Q set, it was decided to only include abusive behaviours and behaviours identified in the research literature as potentially indicating future abuse. The resulting set of 56 statements became the pilot Q set (see Appendix 8). The behaviours within the statements continued to be referred to as ‘potentially harmful behaviours’ as the pilot Q set included a range of abusive behaviours, as well as behaviours potentially indicating future abuse. It continued to be felt that this description would avoid influencing the participant responses by suggesting that any or all behaviours were harmful or prompting responses based upon understandings of abuse rather than reflecting understandings of relationship behaviours.

The interviews also clarified the language used in the statements, information sheets, consent forms and instructions, as well as in the research thesis itself. This ensured that the terminology and language reflected that used by young people within their context. The terminology identified by the interview participants for young people in their age group was ‘young people’ (as opposed to adolescent, teenager, student, etc.). The preferred terminology for people in relationships was dates or boyfriend/girlfriend (as opposed to partners, etc.), which was replicated in a previous UK study (Fox et al., 2014). Preferred terminology for the relationships, including single dates, open relationships and long-term relationships, was dating or relationship (as opposed to seeing, etc.), which was also replicated in a previous UK study (Fox et al., 2014).

2.3.2 Developing the Condition of Instruction

The condition of instruction is a research question or prompt which participants respond to when they sort the items (Watts (2015). In this case the items were a set of statements. Watts (2015) stated that effective questions in Q methodology research should be focused, simple and coherent. In relation to a specific topic, the research question could investigate an understanding or definition, a cause, an outcome or a policy, but should not try to explore all of these simultaneously (Watts, 2015). When completing the Q sorts, participants are provided with the research question or condition of instruction (Brown Walker et al., 2018). This is then used by the participants to guide them while they are sorting the statements (Brown Walker et al., 2018). The condition of instruction for this research was;

“When dating or in a relationship, this behaviour is…”.

As Watts and Stenner (2012) suggest, the participants were provided with a visible copy of the condition of instruction while completing the Q sort, to ensure that every participant answered the same question (see Appendix 9). The statements were sorted into a distribution grid pattern along a continuum (Brown Walker et al., 2018), from “most unacceptable” to “most acceptable” (see Appendix 9). Watts and Stenner (2012) emphasise that each pole should be represented by a ‘most’ statement, as each pole is designed to capture either positive or negative strong feelings.

2.3.3 Piloting the Q set

The pilot Q set was then piloted to assess its utility and validity with two further participants meeting the sampling criteria. Pilot studies were conducted as outlined for the main online study, described under ‘2.3.5 data collection’. Pilot Q sorts assessed the process of online data collection and utility of the instructions and Q sort materials provided. As well as this, participants’ understanding of the statements, applicability of the statements to their context and additional statements which they felt should be included was also explored. Data collected from the pilot Q sorts was not included in the main study due to subsequent alterations made to the statements in the pilot Q set. This included further reducing the number of items by amalgamating and removing some statements. The pilot Q set was refined into the final study Q set of 41 statements (see Appendix 10). Q sets with similar numbers of items have previously been used in online Q methodology research (for example, Meehan et al., 2022).

2.3.4 Selecting the P Set

In Q methodology, participants are referred to as the P set (Brown Walker et al., 2018). As the research is interested in the views of a specific group of individuals, purposive sampling was used to identify and recruit individuals who met the sampling criteria relevant to the study aims (Brown Walker et. al., 2018; Willig, 2013; Zabala et al., 2018).

2.3.4.1 P Set Selection Criteria

Participants were secondary school students in key stage 4 (year 10 and 11). They were aged between aged 14 and 16 years. This group was selected as there are more limited research understandings around intimate relationship abuse in this age group. Previous Q methodology research has explored the views of young people aged 16 years and older on sexual relationships and sex education (Franz et al., 2016; Healy-Cullen et al., 2022; Stenner et al., 2006), but there has been limited Q methodology research in this area with young people below this age group. However, there has been previous mixed methods research in this subject area incorporating combinations of surveys, focus groups and/or interviews with UK-based young people aged 12 years and over (Barter et al., 2009; Barter et al., 2017; Hird, 2000; Stanley et al., 2018; Stonard et al., 2017).

The participant selection criteria incorporated pupils in key stage 4 in a mainstream secondary school. Specialist settings were excluded due to the difficulties in implementing support with participation via online research. Information on participants’ gender was requested, with participants being asked to indicate if they considered themselves to be ‘female’, ‘male’ or ‘other’. The ‘other’ option was provided to avoid forcing participants into a binary choice, but no participants selected this option. Gender information was incorporated into the data analysis to address research question 2, regarding potential differences in the ways that female and male young people construe abuse in intimate relationships. Participants were not asked to indicate their sexuality, as this was an exploratory study which was not focussing on a particular sexuality identity. Further, the Q sort statements were worded so that they did not differentiate between behaviours in homosexual, bisexual or heterosexual relationships. There were no other exclusion criteria. School staff, parents/carers and participants were not asked about participants’ experiences of relationship abuse and it was made clear in contact with school staff that prior experience was not a recruitment criterion. However, it is acknowledged that any experiences will have influenced the responses. Efforts made to facilitate inclusion in participant recruitment included verbal as well as written instructions, adaptable time frames and additional adult support during the Q sort.

2.3.4.2 Participant Recruitment

Participants were sought from multiple mainstream secondary schools to further research quality by providing a breadth of participants. All of the schools were based within a single local authority (LA), enabling explorations of young people’s perceptions within that LA context. Initially, attempts were made to recruit schools working with the local domestic abuse charity and one of these schools became involved in the research. This meant that relevant support systems and staff contacts were in place in the school before, during and after the research. However, too few participants were able to be recruited from this school. Secondary schools across the local authority were then contacted, with six additional secondary schools expressing interest in involvement and facilitating contact with participants. Ultimately, participants from five of these additional secondary schools, as well as the previously recruited school, took part in the research. All six schools involved were in the same local authority as the domestic abuse charity, so that support offered could still be accessed. The charity’s contact details were provided on the information sheets (see Appendices 11 to 14) and will also be forwarded to schools with the feedback on completion of the research project.

Brown Walker and colleagues (2018) expressed that the number of participants in Q methodology research was not a key concern, while Watts and Stenner (2012) stated that Q methodology does not require large numbers of participants. It is suggested that 40 to 50 (Stainton Rogers, 1995) or 40 to 60 participants (Watts & Stenner, 2012) is sufficient. However, it is also stated that quality Q methodology research can be carried out with much less than this number (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

A total of 26 participants were recruited from six schools within a single local authority (for information on participants and participant codes see Appendix 15). Similar participant numbers have previously been involved in Q methodology research (Healy-Cullen et al., 2022; Meehan et. al., 2022). The schools were anonymously identified as schools E, G, J, P, S and W. The participants from each school were:

* School E - 3 participants: 2 female, 1 male, all year 10
* School G – 7 participants: 6 females, 1 male, all year 11
* School J – 2 participants: 1 female, 1 male, both year 10
* School P – 11 participants: 5 females, 6 males, 10 in year 10 and 1 in year 11
* School S – 2 participants: 2 females, both year 10
* School W – 1 participant, 1 female, year 10

The participants were recruited from year 10 and year 11 in key stage 4 (age 14 to 16 years):

* Year 10 (age 14-15 years) – 18 participants
* Year 11 (age 15-16 years) – 8 participants

Both female and male participants were recruited, with 17 female participants (65.38% of the total participants) and 9 male participants (34.62% of the total participants). It had initially been hoped that there would be similar numbers of female and male participants. However, limitations to recruitment, which will be discussed below, meant that there was not the opportunity to redress this balance.

Due to the ongoing impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic throughout the research, participant recruitment took place in two phases. The first involved online research, with 5 participants being recruited in this phase. The second phase involved face-to-face research, with 21 participants being recruited in this phase.

2.3.4.3 Participant Recruitment Phase 1: Online Research

During the initial phase of participant recruitment and data collection, all in-person research was halted. This was due to the issued guidance for researchers in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, stating that research which required face-to-face contact with participants could not go ahead. Therefore, it was decided to continue the research online. Meehan and colleagues (2022) suggested that online Q methodology research is an approach which remains consistent with the holistic and relational interpretation principles of Q methodology, whilst resolving the complications of conducting this type of research in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, it was also stated that online Q methodology requires careful consideration regarding technology choices, piloting, data management, participant engagement, instruction delivery and recruitment (Meehan et al., 2022).

Due to the topic of the research, it was felt that remote Q sorts, for example using software where participants could complete an electronic Q sort on their own, would not be suitable or provide enough support should any issues arise. Therefore, it was decided that participants would complete the Q sort at home (all students were learning at home at the time) whilst accessing an online meeting with the researcher, using materials posted to them beforehand.

To recruit for the online research, staff contacts at participating schools were asked to forward details of the study to students who matched the participant criteria. Once students responded to this by contacting the researcher, they were then provided with access to an online participant information sheet (see Appendix 11) and consent form (see Appendix 16). These were provided through an email containing a link to the secure online platform, Gorilla, where information sheets and consent forms were provided so that they could provide informed consent and demographic data securely online (see Appendix 17). For the young people who expressed an interest, parent/carer consent was then also sought via the same online platform, with parent/carer contact being provided with access to an online parent/carer information sheet (see Appendix 13) and consent form (see Appendix 18).

Various ways of promoting recruitment were attempted over time, including:

* Emailing all secondary schools in the LA at various intervals
* Maintaining contact with interested schools
* Creating a video about the research, sent to pupils meeting the recruitment criteria in interested schools
* Approaching schools known to the researcher
* Contacting Educational Psychologists in the LA and asking them to contact schools which they worked with
* Placing information about the research in the weekly bulletin sent to all secondary schools in the LA
* Contacting Educational Psychologists who had children meeting the recruitment criteria within the LA
* Contacting Trainee Educational Psychologists with contacts in schools in the LA and asking them to support contact
* Researching and contacting local youth groups working with young people in the LA who met the recruitment criteria

However, due to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on schools, this led to limited participants, with only five participants being recruited over eight months.

2.3.4.4 Participant Recruitment Phase 2: Face-to-Face Research

Due to changes in Covid-19 pandemic research restrictions, as well as the limited number of participants recruited in the online research phase, the research was then continued on a face-to-face basis.

For the face-to-face research, the schools who had already expressed an interest or been involved in the research were contacted. Schools were asked to contact parents/carers of young people in year 10 and 11 (aged 14-16 years) and provide them with information about the research, as well as access to an online parent/carer information sheet (see Appendix 14) and consent form (see Appendix 19) through an online link. It was arranged with the school contacts that the Q sorts would take place in school, involving young people whose parents/carers had consented and who also wanted to take part. The Q sorts took place in participants’ schools in groups. Paper copies of the participant information sheets (see Appendix 12) were provided and verbally explained before written consent from the participants (see Appendix 20) was gained at the beginning of the meeting. It was made clear to all participants that participation was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw at any time, with two participants choosing to withdraw at this stage (not included in the total participant numbers). 21 further participants were recruited through the face-to-face research, bringing the total participants involved in the research to 26 young people.

2.3.5 Data Collection

2.3.5.1 Data Collection: Online Research

For the online research phase, Q sorts were conducted by the researcher meeting with each participant individually in an online meeting, with the participant completing the Q sort with paper and card materials which had been posted to them beforehand. These materials consisted of:

* Cover letter (see Appendix 21)
* Card sort instructions (see Appendix 22)
* Copy of the distribution grid and condition of instruction (see Appendix 9)
* Two sets of cards in envelopes: a set of cards with numbers 1 to 9 on them; and a set of Q set cards (see Appendix 10) (Brown Walker et al., 2018)

Online Q methodology is gaining acceptance within the Q methodology researcher community, although face-to-face research continues to be the typical method used (Meehan et al., 2022). It was decided that the Q sorts should be conducted on a 1:1 basis in an online meeting, rather than using online Q methodology software, due to the sensitive nature of the research and the potential for safeguarding disclosures. Face-to-face Q sorts have been asserted as a preferred method for Q methodology as it enables participant engagement with the Q sort items and direct communication with the researcher (Meehan et al., 2022). However, synchronous online meetings when conducting Q methodology online have been advocated by Meehan and colleagues (2022) to clarify understandings in sorting procedures. Therefore, it was attempted to use Q methodology online in a way which represented face-to-face research as closely as possible. A set of standardised procedures was used with each participant (see Appendix 23).

At the beginning of the meeting, it was explained that the conversation and interview would be audio recorded using a hand-held digital recorder, with security and confidentiality procedures outlined. It was verbally checked that the participant agreed with this.

During the online meeting, the research was explained by the researcher, referring to the information sheet and answering any questions. Participants were given the option to continue to take part or not, ensuring that they understood that participation was optional. The Q sort instructions and condition of instruction were also provided verbally. It was explained to participants that the research was exploring the ways which young people construe abuse within intimate relationships in their own age group. This included a discussion regarding the terms ‘more acceptable’ and ‘more unacceptable’ outlined in the condition of instruction. The possibility was raised that, when using the forced choice distribution grid, participants may need to place a behaviour which they considered to be unacceptable into the half of the distribution grid identified as being ‘more acceptable’ and vice versa. The column numbering and use of the word ‘more’ in the condition of instruction was emphasised and that this was not a reflection of an opinion that the behaviour was acceptable or vice versa. The written instructions and condition of instruction were available throughout the Q sort activity, ensuring that all participants answered the same question (Watts and Stenner, 2012).

The participants then completed the Q sort, sorting the Q set cards into the distribution grid pattern (see figure 1) by rank ordering them according to whether they felt the behaviours on the statements were more unacceptable or more acceptable within an intimate relationship (Healy-Cullen et al., 2022; Watts and Stenner, 2012). The grid had nine columns, with these being numbered 1 to 9 rather than -4 to +4. This numbering system was chosen so that participants were not forced to place a behaviour which they felt was unacceptable in a positively numbered column or vice versa (Watts & Stenner, 2012). When considering the range and slope of the columns and grid pattern, a steeper slope (or kurtosis) was chosen as this was recommended for topics which are more complex and/or unfamiliar to participants (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

*Figure 1: Q sort distribution grid*

The participants were provided with verbal advice to begin sorting the items by reading each card in turn and arranging them into three piles, as outlined by Watts and Stenner (2012): a pile for behaviours which they strongly felt were the most unacceptable, a pile for those they felt were the most acceptable and a central pile for the behaviours which they felt lay between these two poles. It was then discussed how they could use these three piles to sort the items into the distribution grid pattern, by arranging the cards at the two extremes of the poles before adding the central items.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

The researcher was available throughout to provide procedural directions and answer any questions. Once the participant had completed the Q sort, a post-sort semi-structured interview was carried out (see Appendix 23). The interviews were used to gain further qualitative information on participants’ perceptions, choices and reasoning (Brown Walker et al., 2018; Healy-Cullen et al., 2022; Watts & Stenner, 2014), with the aim of enriching the data, contributing to the internal validity of results and to support factor interpretation (Brown Walker et al., 2018; Meehan et al., 2022). The interviews were also used to ascertain any barriers or facilitating factors in the online recruitment or research procedure to ensure that subsequent Q sorts were accessible. All participants interviewed expressed that the research process was accessible and the Q set items were clear and understandable. All interviewed participants expressed that they had enjoyed taking part.

Initially, it had been intended for the researcher to take a photograph of the completed Q sorts through the screen to collect the data. However, it was found that this did not provide adequate images of completed Q sorts for analysis. A change that was made following the initial Q sorts was for the Q set item numbers to be written on the back of the cards prior to being sent. These numbers were randomly assigned to ensure that they did not influence the Q sorts. Once the participants had completed their Q sort, they turned over the cards and then read out the numbers to the researcher, who filled them in on a blank copy of the distribution grid for each participant (see Appendix 24 for updated Q sort instructions).

The participant was then debriefed and thanked for their participation, according to the standardised procedures (see Appendix 23). This included signposting them to support sources, as well as emailing a copy of the information sheet directly to them which contained details of school staff contacts and external support organisations, including the local charity (see Appendix 11).

2.3.5.2 Data Collection: Face-to-Face Research

For the research phase conducted in person in schools, Covid-19 restrictions were complied with by ensuring that the researcher was socially distanced from the participants at all times. The researcher attended each school and, in a room provided, placed packs containing the Q sort materials on each participant’s socially distanced desk. These materials consisted of:

* Blank copy of the participant consent form (see Appendix 20)
* Participant information sheet (see Appendix 12)
* Card sort instructions (see Appendix 25)
* Copy of the distribution grid and condition of instruction (see Appendix 9)
* Two sets of cards in envelopes: a set of cards with numbers 1 to 9 on them; and a set of Q set cards (see Appendix 10) (Brown Walker et al., 2018)
* Contact details slip for a post-sort online interview (Appendix 26)

Participants were brought to the room by a member of school staff. The research was explained by the researcher by reading the information sheet with participants and answering any questions. The participants were given the option to take part or not. It was ensured that the participants understood that participation was optional and each option was completely acceptable. For those who chose to take part (all but two participants), the Q sort instructions and condition of instruction were also provided verbally. As in the online research, it was explained to participants that the research was exploring the ways which young people construe abuse within intimate relationships in their own age group. The discussion regarding terminology in the condition of instruction and impacts of using the forced choice distribution grid was also carried out with face-to-face research participants, as it was with online research participants. This was clarified with the whole group and individually where necessary. The Q sort then continued as in the online research, with the written instructions and condition of instruction available throughout, ensuring that all participants answered the same question (Watts and Stenner, 2012). The researcher was available throughout to provide procedural directions and answer any questions (Franz et. al., 2016).

Once the participants had completed the Q sort, they were asked to turn over the Q set cards and write the numbers in the correct positions in their blank copy of the distribution grid. The participants were then provided with information about an optional follow-up online interview to discuss their Q sort. It was decided to do this with each participant separately to ensure confidentiality, given the sensitive nature of the topic. Meehan and colleagues (2022) advocated the use of online post-sort interviews for participants to discuss their impressions and Q sort choices. Participants were provided with the option of entering their contact details on the slip provided if they wished to take part in the interview or to leave it blank if they did not. Again, it was ensured that the participants understood that each option was completely acceptable. However, only two participants chose to complete the contact slip, with one participant responding to email contact following the face-to-face Q sorts and completing the post-sort interview. Therefore, of the post-sort interviews conducted, five were completed during the online research phase, with one from the face-to-face research phase.

The participants were then debriefed and thanked for their participation. This included signposting them to support sources, as well as ensuring that they retained the copy of the information sheet provided with details of school staff contacts and external support organisations, including the local charity (see Appendix 12). The Q sort materials were then collected by the researcher once the participants had left the room.

**2.4 Ethical Considerations**

All ethical procedures followed guidance provided by the local authority, as well as the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP, 2020) and the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2018; 2020).

2.4.1 Participant and Parent/Carer Informed Consent

Informed consent was gained from both participants and parents/carers prior to being involved in the research (see Appendices 5, 7, 16, 18, 19 and 20). All participants and parents/carers involved with the interviews, pilot Q sorts and study Q sorts were provided with information sheets (see Appendices 4, 6, 11, 12, 13 and 14), with these being verbally reviewed with participants prior to taking part. Information sheets and consent forms were accessed and completed using Gorilla software, with the participants and their parents/carers being emailed secure links to the online system. For the face-to-face research, the participants completed paper consent forms. All participates and parents/carers were able to view the information sheet and contact the researcher with any questions prior to completing the consent form. This was outlined in the information sheets. It was made clear, verbally and in the information sheets, that participants were free to withdraw if they wished to and that they did not need to give a reason.

2.4.2 Confidentiality

Participants and parent/carers were assured of confidentiality when taking part in the research. This was reiterated verbally to the participants. Prior to beginning the interview or Q sort, it was explained that the research is confidential, but that if they disclosed information which indicated that they or anyone else was/is at risk of harm, that this would need to be shared with the member of school staff responsible for safeguarding.

During the online data collection, the Q sorts were conducted using the secure, university-approved platform, Google Meet. During those online meetings, the participants were asked not to identify themselves or others by name or any other identifiable details. When arranging the meeting, the researcher stated that the young person should think about where they would be in their home so that they could have as much or as little privacy as they would like. Also, they were advised to be aware of what would be in the background behind them, for their privacy. This was in accordance with guidelines provided by the British Psychological Society (BPS) for working online with children or young people, issued during the Covid-19 pandemic (BPS, 2020).

During the face-to-face data collection, all materials gathered also remained confidential. As this took place in groups, participants were provided with an opportunity to speak with the researcher via a 1:1 online meeting to discuss the research further if they wished.

All materials were anonymised and participants were assured that they would not be individually identified in any reports or publications. Participant names or identifying details were not used in written/typed notes, audio recordings or any reporting. Participants and their parent/carers were anonymised by providing them with participant or parent/carer numbers, for example as ‘Young Adult 1’ (YA1) and ‘Parent/Carer 1’ (PC1) (see Appendix 15 for participant coding).

All documents and recordings were stored electronically with access controlled by a password. All anonymised data was stored on the university Google Drive, with a back-up on the university U drive. Identifying information collected electronically was secured separately to other materials using Gorilla software. This included data collected from the consent forms, including the names of the young people and their parent/carer, their school, year group, their gender and participant and/or parent/carer email addresses. The key to the anonymised participant numbers and personal data collected was stored separately to Q sort and interview data. Written documents and any other physical materials were locked in a secure filing cabinet. Paper documents containing identifying information, such as paper consent forms, were stored separately and securely.

2.4.3 Safeguarding Protections

Participants were not asked about their personal experiences. Instead, they were asked about their general opinions on behaviours within intimate relationships by sorting the Q sort statements. As the participants were being asked for general opinions rather than reflections on their own experiences, the risk of distress or harm was limited. However, it is acknowledged that young people's potential experiences of abuse in relationships will have informed ways in which they responded, even though they were not being directly asked about those experiences.

Those potential experiences also meant that there could have been disclosures of current or historical abuse by participants, though this did not occur. As local authority child safeguarding procedures apply to all young people under 18 years, any disclosures would have been dealt with according to those safeguarding procedures. They included sections on abusive relationships between young people, witnessing abuse in adult relationships and being abused by adults. They also included guidance on conversations with young people regarding information sharing following a disclosure of abuse. Specific procedures relating to potential disclosures were developed and received ethical approval prior to the research beginning (see Appendix 27). This included a statement which was read at the end of each interview or Q sort, addressing potential concerns participants may have had following the research activities.

2.4.4 Research Participant Debriefing

Due to the topic of the research, significant levels of signposting for support were provided in the information sheet before and after participation. This included signposting related to the research topic, as well as potential concerns regarding face-to-face research and Covid-19. Following the research activities, participants were debriefed by providing them with the opportunity to discuss their involvement, as well as signposting to further information and support. This included appropriate local and national support services, as well as pre-identified school staff. Participants were directed to this verbally, with this information also provided on all information sheets. The information was provided to school staff contacts prior to the study.

2.4.5 Covid-19 Procedures

During the initial stages of the research, all contact with participants and their parents/carers was via paper or electronic communication due to Covid-19 related restrictions on face-to-face contact. Paper materials for the Q sort were posted to the participants. Later in the research, when restrictions were altered to allow face-to-face research, all school, university and local authority risk assessments were adhered to, including those pertaining to Covid-19 ‘bubbles’, which young people in schools were segregated into at the time of face-to-face data collection. On the face-to-face information sheet, it was stated that pupils who were particularly vulnerable to Covid-19 could participate via an online meeting.

**2.5 Ensuring Quality in the Research**

In exploring criteria used to ensure quality in the research, it was identified that quantitative methodology criteria would not be suitable for a Q methodological research design. These criteria include the use of a large, statistically representative sample with reliability of measures, with the aim of yielding objective findings and/or replicable outcomes (Yardley, 2000). As previously outlined, this is contrary to Q methodology’s underpinning philosophical and procedural position. Further, the research’s social constructionist positioning means that basing quality in research on objectivity is incompatible with the view that knowledge is not objective and is, rather, shaped by the activities and perspectives of those who create it through social discourse and interaction (Yardley, 2000).

Regarding quality in qualitative research, Yardley (2000) states that it is necessary to utilise explicit quality criteria, but that these should be open to flexible interpretation and also meaningful to the stakeholders who are the subject of the research. Quality criteria generally agreed upon across qualitative research publications are:

* Sensitivity to context
* Commitment and rigour
* Transparency and coherence
* Impact and importance

(Cohen & Crabtree, 2008; Yardley, 2000)

However, as this research has a mixed methods design rather than solely qualitative, mixed methods quality criteria will also be considered. There is not currently agreement on core quality criteria for mixed methods approaches (Fabregues & Molina-Azorin, 2017). In a review of quality in mixed methods research, Fabregues & Molina-Azorin (2017) found that the core quality criteria outlined by Bryman (2014) are used across mixed methods publications and frameworks. These six criteria are:

* Qualitative and quantitative components implemented with technical competency
* Transparency of methodology
* Mixed methods are linked to research questions
* Being explicit about the mixed methods design
* Rationale for the use of mixed methods
* Integration of methods

(Bryman, 2014)

While there is some overlap between the criteria identified by Yardley (2000) and Bryman (2014), some elements pertain specifically to mixed methods approaches. Therefore, a combination of these criteria will be used to ensure quality in this mixed methods research study.

2.5.1 Rationale and Sensitivity to Context

The rationale for the research is clearly identified in section 1 of this thesis, the ‘literature review’. It identifies the previous research literature, current socio-political context and the aims which the research hopes to achieve using a Q methodological design. Primacy has been given to ensuring that young people’s perspectives are central to the research findings, so that these can contribute to broader understandings of intimate relationships abuse. The ethical complexities of conducting the research with young people on a sensitive topic, particularly in the climate of the Covid-19 pandemic, have been documented in the section ‘ethical considerations’ above.

2.5.2 Connection to Research Questions

The research questions posed are:

* + - 1. How do young people construe abuse in intimate relationships?
      2. What, if any, are the differences in the ways that male and female young people construe abuse in intimate relationships?

In the section, ‘Q methodology overview’, it was identified that Q methodology is particularly suitable for exploratory research as it enables examination of viewpoints and understandings, providing insights into subjective perspectives (Franz et al., 2016; Watts & Stenner, 2012). There has been limited related research in a UK context which has incorporated the subjective views of young people. Therefore, the ways in which young people construe abusive behaviours in intimate relationships warrants further exploration. The insights provided by a Q methodological study would contribute to the existing quantitative and qualitative research body. Regarding gender differences, previous research has found differences in the ways which female and male young people construe abuse in intimate relationships. Q methodology aims to provide holistic insights into a topic across clusters of people, rather than extrapolating generalisable findings for a particular section of a study sample. However, the research will explore whether the gender-based viewpoints identified in previous literature indicate similarities and/or differences with the viewpoints of groups of individuals across a mixed-gender sample.

2.5.3 Commitment, Rigour and Technical Competency

Yardley (2000) expressed that this requires an in-depth engagement with the topic, which has been established through the literature review. This is also established by the association developed with the domestic abuse charity in the local area and the continuing relationships with schools over the course of the research. The rigour in terms of technical competency is indicated by the adherence to established Q methodology procedures (extensively outlined by Watts and Stenner (2012)) and engagement with a range of prior research to ensure efficacy. The breadth and depth of analysis is outlined in the section ‘results’ to follow.

Watts and Stenner (2012) state that rigour is indicated through the generation of a Q set which has been tailored to the aims and research questions at the core of the research. It must also be broadly representative of the opinion/knowledge range of the topic being studied (Watts & Stenner, 2012). This was achieved by ensuring that the Q set incorporated a range of behaviours identified in research literature, as well as by a local related charity and in interviews with young people.

2.5.4 Integration of Methods

In the section ‘mixed methods?’ it was described that the research has adopted the position that, while Q methodology has been identified as a mixed methods approach, this research is aligned with the approach of Q methodology as a primarily qualitative approach, expediated by statistical analyses. The use of factor analysis alongside qualitative considerations renders Q methodology an integrated mixed methods approach, facilitating understandings with breadth and depth (Stenner & Stainton Rogers, 2004). However, factor analytic decisions were primarily based upon providing an analysis of substantively meaningful viewpoints contributing to wider understandings in this research area.

2.5.5 Transparency and Coherence

Transparency and coherence have been provided in a full outline of the procedure used to collect and analyse the data, as well as the procedural and ethical considerations of working with participants in this demographic and topic area. The data analysis is also provided in full in the ‘results’ section. Further, in line with the philosophical stance of the research, a reflexive statement has been included within the introduction section, to establish the researcher’s position in relation to the research topic and methodology.

2.5.6 Impact and Importance

The impact and importance of the research will be discussed in the discussion section under ‘future implications’.

**3. Results**

**3.1 Participant Data Analysis**

Following the collection of the completed participant Q sorts, the data was analysed using PQMethod software (Schmolck, 2014). This software was selected as it is purpose-built for Q analysis (Schmolck, 2014; Watts & Stenner, 2012). Also, step-by-step guidance on completing an analysis using PQMethod is provided by Watts and Stenner (2012). The process of data analysis began by entering the raw data into PQMethod. The raw data was the 26 participants’ completed distribution grids, with the Q set item numbers entered into them. This provided the basis of the factor analysis using PQMethod.

To support ease of analysis, each participant was allocated a participant code: this consisted of the participant number, their year group and their gender (Watts and Stenner, 2012). For example, participant ‘YA1Y10F’ was participant YA1, a year 10 female, while ‘YA19Y11M’ was participant YA19, a year 11 male. It should be noted that participant numbers do not necessarily correspond with Q sort numbers, as the participant numbers were allocated as participants were contacted, with some Q sorts taking place out of order and some participants not proceeding to the Q sort stage (see Appendix 15 for participant coding).

**3.2 Factor Analysis**

Q methodology is derived from factor analysis (Watts & Stenner, 2012), in which each participant becomes a variable (Brown Walker et al., 2018). Factor analysis involves correlating and factoring participant’s Q sorts representing their individual perspective, to identify a set of factors or collective viewpoints (Stenner et al., 2008). As outlined by Watts and Stenner (2012), analysis of participant data begins with factor extraction; then factor rotation; preparation of factor estimates and factor arrays; and finally factor interpretation. Each of the factors which emerge from this process portray a perspective shared by a group of participants on a topic (Watts & Stenner, 2012); in this case, abusive behaviours in young people’s intimate relationships. The factor analysis process will be outlined below.

3.2.1 Factor Extraction

The factor analysis process began by correlating each participant’s Q sort with all of the other collected Q sorts (see Appendix 28 for the correlation matrix illustrating this) (Brown Walker et al., 2018). This correlation matrix was then factor analysed to identify how every participant’s viewpoint related to those of others, by identifying statistically significant groupings of Q sorts: ‘factors’ (Brown Walker et al., 2018; Franz et al., 2016). Each identified factor in Q methodology identifies a group of participants who share a similar perspective or viewpoint (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

It was then necessary to choose a method of factor extraction to identify the factors. The two options provided by PQMethod are Principal Components Analysis (PCA) and Centroid Factor Analysis (CFA). The primary difference between these methods is that PCA will identify a single solution considered to be the most mathematically fitting (Watts & Stenner, 2012). CFA may not necessarily be the most mathematically fitting outcome, but it allows an exploration of the data to ensure that the emergent factors are informative and meaningful (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Watts and Stenner (2012) assert that CFA is also compatible with the theoretical underpinnings of Q methodology and, for all of these reasons, CFA tends to be the chosen method of factor extraction for Q methodology researchers. PQMethod offers two methods of CFA, outlined by Brown (1980) and Horst (1965, cited in Schmolck, 2014). Schmolck (2014) described the Brown (1980) Centroid method as the customary method employed and so this was used.

3.2.2 Factor Rotation

The factor rotation process follows factor extraction. Each Q sort is positioned around the central origin of the factor axis within a conceptual multi-dimensional space (Watts & Stenner, 2012). This central axis point represents the subject which the study is exploring (Watts & Stenner, 2012); in this case, behaviours in young people’s relationships. Each Q sort represents the individual participant’s viewpoint of that subject. Clusters of viewpoints within the multi-dimensional space indicate a shared perspective by that group of participants; this becomes a factor. The perspective of the factor can be rotated within the conceptual space to elucidate the group perspective.

Rotation of a factor also maximises the amount of study variance which the range of factors account for (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Study variance is the variability and meaning present in the study, with 100% representing the total possible (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

There are two factor rotation options in PQMethod: varimax rotation and by-hand rotation. They can be used separately or in conjunction with each other (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Varimax rotation operates statistically to ensure that, as far as possible, sorts significantly load onto a single factor, as opposed to more than one factor or no factors (Watts & Stenner, 2012). In by-hand rotation, factors are manually rotated. Varimax rotation was utilised for each of the factor solutions outlined in Appendix 29. By-hand rotation was not found to provide any further clarity in the factors and so was not incorporated into the factor analysis.

3.2.3 Factor Extraction Criteria

The factor extraction process involved an exploration of factors across the participant group, to determine the number of factors to be extracted. There are substantive and statistical criteria which contribute to the determination of the final number of factors or perspectives revealed. As this research study is aligned with the approach that Q methodology is a primarily qualitative approach factor analytic decisions, including the number of factors extracted, were primarily based upon substantive meaning and qualitative clarity. Factors which emerged in factor solutions were explored to ensure that those extracted provided meaningful insights into perspectives of participants.

Further, a central tenet of this exploratory research was prioritising the sharing of young people’s voices. Therefore, it was important to identify the maximum possible number of significant factors/perspectives and have no prior expectations in terms of viewpoints.

While factor extraction decisions were primarily based upon substantive meaning rather than statistical significance (Ramlo, 2016), the qualitative methodology was facilitated by statistical analyses, using factor analysis. The correlation of factors was considered to ensure that all extracted factors represented distinct viewpoints. Watts and Stenner (2012) also outlined a series of statistical criteria contributing to conclusions on the number of factors to be extracted:

1. For two or more Q sorts to load significantly onto each factor (Brown, 1980). The value determining a significantly loading factor at the 0.01 level is calculated using the equation provided by Brown (1980) and outlined by Watts and Stenner (2012):

2.58 x (1 ÷ √ number of Q set items)

= 2.58 x (1 ÷ √41)

= 2.58 x (1 ÷ 6.4)

= 2.58 x 0.16

= ± 0.4

Therefore, in this research, a Q sort with a factor loading value of 0.4 or higher would significantly load onto a factor. Further, Watts and Stenner (2012) expressed that three or more significantly loading Q sorts per factor would be preferable.

1. The Kaiser-Guttman criterion outlined by Guttman (1954) and Kaiser (1960) (cited in Watts & Stenner, 2012) refers to the eigenvalue (EV) of a factor. This is an indicator of the factor’s explanatory power and statistical strength (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The Kaiser-Guttman criterion suggests that a factor should have an EV of 1.00 or greater to be retained, as this means that the factor accounts for more of the study’s variance than a single Q sort (Watts & Stenner, 2005).

The above statistical criteria were applied during a systematic analysis of factor solutions incorporating between two and seven factors (for a breakdown of the factor solutions of two to seven factors at the 0.4 factor loading significance level, see Appendix 29). These extremes were chosen as Brown (1980) suggests that seven factors are the ideal number of factors to extract. This seven-factor solution can then provide a starting point to further explore factor numbers (Schmolck, 2014; Watts & Stenner, 2012), while two factors are the minimum number of factors that PQMethod will extract (Schmolck, 2014).

3.2.4 Rationale for Final Factor Solution

Taking statistical criteria into consideration, a single factor solution was identified. This meant that a single perspective was identified as being held across the research participants by the quantitative, statistical conditions.

It was initially observed from the factor solution breakdowns (see Appendix 29) that, with a factor loading significance value of 0.4, a two-factor solution met the criteria for two or more factors to load significantly onto a factor. For a rotated two-factor solution, with the significance value at 0.5, 12 Q sorts significantly loaded onto factor 1, while four Q sorts significantly loaded onto factor 2. These significant Q sorts are termed ‘defining sorts’. There were nine confounded Q sorts, while one Q sort was non-significant as it did not significantly load onto either factor. In accordance with criteria established by Brown (1980) and Watts and Stenner (2012), each factor in the two-factor solution had at least two/three significantly loading Q sorts.

The two-factor solution was also considered in relation to the statistical Kaiser-Guttman criterion, that a factor should have an EV of 1.00 or greater to be retained (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The EV for factor 1 was 10.82 and the EV for factor 2 was 6.87 (see Appendix 32). This meant that factors 1 and 2 both met the criteria to be retained.

However, during the factor extraction analysis, it was found that there were a high number of confounded Q sorts (where the Q sort significantly loads onto more than one factor). High levels of confounding Q sorts have previously been found in Q methodology research with young people on the subject of relationships (Franz et al., 2016). This meant that a further consideration was to explore solutions which incorporated as many Q sorts as possible, maximising inclusion of young people’s voices. After exploring the impact of a range of significance levels, the significance value was raised to 0.5. This maximised the number of Q sorts loading onto factors, meaning that more Q sorts could be included in the data analysed. This met the study aim of enabling young people’s voices to be heard.

With the significance value at 0.5, two-factor and three-factor solutions were explored (for a breakdown of the factor solutions, see Appendix 30). This further indicated that a two-factor solution was the most representative outcome, whilst maximising participants’ voices (see Appendix 31 for the two-factor solution unrotated factor matrix and Appendix 32 for the rotated factor matrix).

Further analysis of the rotated two-factor solution indicated that the two factors cumulatively accounted for 68% of the study variance, with factor 1 accounting for 42% and factor 2 accounting for 26% (see Appendix 31). As factor analysis is designed to account for as much study variance as possible, allowing an understanding of shared meaning and perspectives, Watts and Stenner (2012) suggest a minimum study variance level of 35-40%. Study variance was 68%, meaning that the two factors accounted for 68% of the possible meaning present in the study. However, the unrotated factors indicated that factor 1 accounted for 65% of the study variance, while factor 2 accounted for only 3% (see Appendix 32). This means that factor 1 accounted for the vast majority of the shared meaning held by the research participants.

Further, the two factors significantly correlated with each other at 0.7496. Watts and Stenner (2012) state that, where there is a significant correlation between factors, a reduction in the number of factors should be considered. This significant correlation and the unrotated variances of the two factors meant that, rather than representing separate factors, they instead represent a single factor (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

While taking into consideration these statistical outcomes, decisions on factor extraction were primarily based upon interpretations of substantive meaning. This was in accordance with the approach that Q methodology is primarily qualitative. Both 1-factor and 2-factor solutions were explored according to the key factor extraction criterion, that extracted factors provide meaningful insights into the perspectives of the participants, elucidating viewpoints which have substantive meaning. A qualitative exploration of the two-factor solution indicated that, while the factors are closely aligned, there are distinct substantive differences between them. Statistically, a single viewpoint was indicated with factor 1 representing the majority of the meaning. The qualitative exploration of the factors elucidates these statistical findings, indicating a divergent perspective within that viewpoint.

Therefore, it was indicated that a single, common viewpoint was held by young people across five secondary schools in different areas of a local authority. However, within that shared viewpoint, there were also substantive differences in perspectives held by two groups of participants. A group of participants held a viewpoint which was distinct from the majority view. As there has been limited qualitative research with young people in this area, both the majority perspective and the divergent perspective are of interest and value in understanding the ways young people construe abusive behaviours. This is particularly the case if the divergent perspective, as a less commonly held perspective, has not previously been identified in related research. If intervention is to be effective in supporting young people, it should be tailored to as many young people as possible. Therefore, to achieve the aim of facilitating young people’s voices, while acknowledging that the participant data represents two elements of a single perspective, these two aspects of the single perspective will be discussed. This is based upon analyses of the two-factor solution.

3.2.5 Factor Arrays

Following data analysis, factor arrays were created for each factor. A factor array is an idealised Q sort in which the items illustrate the viewpoint of that factor (Brown Walker et al., 2018; Franz et al., 2016; Stenner et al., 2008; Watts & Stenner, 2012). This is constructed based on the weighted average scores for each Q set item from the significantly loading Q sorts for that factor (Franz et al., 2016; Stenner et al., 2008; Watts & Stenner, 2012). The use of weighted averages means that Q sorts more highly correlated with that factor having a greater influence on the configuration of the factor array (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The weighted scores are converted to *z* (or standard) scores to allow cross-factor comparisons (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The factor arrays for each factor are illustrated in Appendices 33 and 34 (see also Appendix 35 for the factor array item rankings across both factors).

**3.3 Factor Interpretation**

The factor arrays (see Appendices 33 to 35) were used to develop the factor interpretations. The factor arrays are interpreted in conjunction with exploration of the overall item rankings (Stenner et al., 2008). To do this crib sheets were created for each factor (see Appendices 38 and 39) to enable a holistic approach, as outlined by Watts & Stenner (2012). This is a systematic approach to engaging with the items, incorporating all item statements while ensuring that potential meaning is not missed (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

As suggested by Watts and Stenner (2012), the crib sheet for factor 1 identified the items given the lowest (-4) and the highest (+4) rankings. It also identified items ranked higher in factor 1 than in factor 2, as well as items ranked lower in factor 1 than in factor 2. The exploration of the crib sheet allowed interpretation of perspectives within the factor which are polarised, as well as how the viewpoint of factor 1 is polarised compared to factor 2 (Watts & Stenner, 2012). To further facilitate interpretation, the items ranked at -3 and +3 were also included in the crib sheet. As the factors have been interpreted as two manifestations of a single perspective, the statements which the two factors agreed on and were identically ranked were also identified. The positions of all items were then considered in relation to the other items in the array. This ensured a rigorous examination of the data, which provided a holistic factor interpretation elucidating the viewpoint of the participants whose Q sorts loaded significantly onto that factor. This process was then repeated for the crib sheet for factor 2.

3.3.1 Viewpoint Interpretations

Abductive reasoning plays a key role in factor interpretation through the emergence of the unique patterns of statements in the factor arrays (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The positioning of these items and the interrelationships between them provide the indications for the overall viewpoint which that factor represents, as well as the narrative underlying that viewpoint (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Explorations of the arrays were used in conjunction with demographic information and discourse provided by the post-sort interviews to further enhance the interpretations of each factor (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The resulting factor interpretations aim to provide the most plausible hypothesis or theoretical explanation of each factor array (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

The interpretation will be presented for each of the two viewpoints, illustrating the perspectives of participants. While the analysis of each factor in a two-factor solution will be used to enable interpretation of these viewpoints, they are considered to be two manifestations of a single factor. The viewpoints will be identified as ‘Viewpoint 1’ and ‘Viewpoint 2’.

Following the viewpoint title, statistical and demographic data relevant to each viewpoint will be presented, followed by viewpoint interpretations presented narratively as suggested by Watts and Stenner (2012). These will be provided in the first person, representing the group of young people’s perspective. The item number and ranking of each statement will be provided in brackets. Quotations from the post-sort interviews of participants whose Q sorts loaded significantly onto each viewpoint are also incorporated to enhance the factor interpretations (Watts & Stenner, 2012). All participants in the online phase of the study and one participant from the face-to-face research consented to take part in post-sort interviews. However, only two of these significantly loaded onto a factor, with participant YA3 (see Appendix 36) significantly loading onto Viewpoint 1 and YA1 (see Appendix 37) significantly loading onto Viewpoint 2.

For ease of narrative, participants’ preferential term for those they are in a relationship with used on the statements, ‘date or boyfriend/girlfriend’, will be shortened to ‘date’. The condition of instruction, which the participants responded to when competing the Q sorts was: ‘When dating or in a relationship, this behaviour is…’.

3.3.2 Viewpoint 1 Title and Interpretation

The title of Viewpoint 1 is: ‘Physical and sexual force are unacceptable to me, and consent and context matter’.

3.3.2.1 Viewpoint 1 Statistical and Demographic Information

Viewpoint 1 has an eigenvalue of 10.82. It explains 65% of the unrotated study variance and 42% of the rotated variance. 12 participants completed Q sorts which significantly loaded onto this viewpoint (Q sorts 2, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, 23, 25 and 26). This was 46.14% of the total participants.

Of the 12 participants significantly loading onto viewpoint 1, 9 were female (75% of participants loading onto factor 1, 56.25% of participants loading onto any factor and 34.62% of all 26 participants) and 3 were male (25% of participants loading onto factor 1, 18.75% of participants loading onto any factor and 11.54% of all 26 participants).

9 of the participants were in year 10 of secondary education (age 14 to 15 years), while 3 of the participants were in year 11 (age 15 to 16 years). The participants attended 5 different secondary schools:

* School E - 2 participants: 1 female, 1 male, both year 10
* School G – 3 participants: 3 females, all year 11
* School J – 1 participant: 1 female, year 10
* School P – 5 participants: 3 females, 2 males, all year 10
* School S – 1 participant: 1 female, year 10

3.3.2.2 Viewpoint 1 Interpretation Narrative: ‘Physical and sexual force are unacceptable to me, and consent and context matter’

Physically and sexually abusive behaviours are unacceptable to me; and they are as bad as each other. Neither is worse than the other. Being physically safe, your date not hurting you, is a line that can’t be crossed. That includes pushing, slapping, hitting, pinching and holding someone down (31: -3), as well as strangling, beating, kicking, biting or hitting with an object (7: -4). *“… physically forcing someone, … they were the more serious”* (YA3). For sexual abuse, forced kissing, touching and other sexual activities (16: -4) are as intolerable as forced sexual intercourse (26: -3). They are “*personal to do with, like, sex and things so, that were more serious”* (YA3)*.*

Physically hurting someone (31: -3 & 7: -4) is worse than threatening to hurt someone, (1: -2 & 24: -2), even if the threats are to try to make them do something they don’t want to. It doesn’t matter if they’re threatening their date (24: -2) or threatening to hurt themselves (1: -2), it’s the threat that matters, not who it’s against. But threats are never as bad as being hurt; they can say what they like as long as they don’t actually hurt someone. That’s “*because they were, like, the ones that were, like, like, physically forcing someone. So, like, not just, like, threatening, like acting on it”*” (YA3). It's the same with sexual abuse; physically forcing sex or something sexual is worse than pressuring or persuading them to do it (12: -2 & 17: -3).

I think there are different types of emotional abuse and threatening to physically hurt someone (1: -2 & 24: -2) and sexual shaming (28: -2) are worse than the other types, even humiliating and criticising. That’s because anything to do with physical or sexual abuse is not ok. Threatening to physically harm someone (1: -2 & 24: -2) is more worrying than a threat of being publicly shamed, like sharing private information (11: -1). I’d rather someone actually shared private information (6: 0), criticised and name-called (19: 0), spread rumours and lies (9: +1) or humiliated them (8: +1). It’s not as bad as being physically harmed. It’s the same with gaslighting; if they’re gaslighting about being physically hurt (30: -1) it’s worse than if they’re emotionally hurt by being made to feel guilty for no reason (38: +1). They can manipulate their date by saying they’ll leave them (10: 0) or stop them seeing people they care about (14: 0), as long as they don’t physically or sexually hurt them.

When I think about what makes a difference to how acceptable a behaviour is, consent, context and how physically close they are, so risk of being physically hurt, are all influential. Proximity matters. The closer they or what they’re doing is, the greater the risk of physical harm. So things like in-person stalking (33: -1) rather than virtual/remote stalking (2: +2, 22: +1 & 27: +2) or throwing things at someone (29: -2) versus just breaking them (32: -1). Physical harm is always the biggest risk.

Consent is really important. If you’re being physically forced, then not only are you being hurt, but you’re having your right to consent or choose taken from you. Using force in self-defence (36: +3) is ok because you’re trying to get control of the situation, show that you don’t consent. If you’re choosing to share naked photos (20: +2) you’re consenting, but if someone shares your private information without your permission (6: 0) there’s no consent. That’s why not stopping sex straight away when you’ve been asked to (23: -3) is the same as forced sex (26: -3). It’s not consensual.

A date refusing to use contraception when you’re having sex (40: 0) is better than pretending to use it (37: -1):

“*if you’re refusing they’re, like, aware that you’ve refused it and they, then, that’s up to them. But, then, like, the pretending one was worse because, well, they’re not aware that you’re not.* (YA3).

If you know about it you can choose, but if you don’t know then you can’t. You can’t consent to something if you don’t know about it. So it’s not just about consent, it’s about informed consent. Hidden coercive and controlling behaviours like stalking (33: -1) are worse than ones you know about, like telling someone what to do (4: 0 & 41: 0). If you don’t know about it, you have no choice.

Behaviours that I think are acceptable on a date or a relationship are ones where you can consent and you know what you’re consenting to. Things like consensual play fighting (5: +4), love-bites (34: +4) deciding whose needs come first (21: +3) or decision-making in the relationship (15: +2). You can choose those things in a relationship and you can change them if you want to. Acceptable behaviours are, *“all about, like, consent”* (YA3).

And consent isn’t just about giving someone permission. If they’re both behaving the same way, they’re saying it’s ok. Like saying negative things about someone’s friends or family (13: +1), “*could, like, be bad on the person saying it or they could just have a family that, like, they would say bad things about as well.*” (YA3). If you’re doing the same things as someone, you’re effectively saying that what they’re doing is fine.

For context, how it happens matters. If it’s one-sided against one person or the other. Like arguing between you is fine (18: +3), but one person shouting or screaming at the other (35: +1) isn’t. Or how often it happens, like encouraging a date to skip school (39: +1), because it *“may be a one off, not as low down [the Q sort]. If regular it would be a lot further* *[up the Q sort].”* (YA3). But it’s not the same for getting someone to use drugs or alcohol (3: -1) – they’re physically harmful and that’s never ok. Plus, some behaviours are a normal part of a relationship context; it *“could just be, like, a normal argument but then it, and, like, just normal. But, then it depends, like, what scenario it was in”* (YA3). Like not speaking to someone (25: +3) to control them and marking skin by giving love bites (34: +4). On the face of it they shouldn’t be ok, but they’re not unusual in relationships so they’re fine.

3.3.3 Viewpoint 2 Title and Interpretation

The title of Viewpoint 2 is: ‘Coercion and control are unacceptable to me, and consent and consequences matter’.

3.3.3.1 Viewpoint 2 Statistical and Demographic Information

Viewpoint 2 has an eigenvalue of 6.87. It explains 3% of the unrotated study variance and 26% of the rotated variance. 4 participants completed Q sorts which significantly loaded onto this viewpoint (Q sorts 1, 6, 15 and 19). This was 15.38% of the total participants.

Of the 4 participants significantly loading onto viewpoint 2, 1 was female (25% of participants loading onto factor 1, 6.25% of participants loading onto any factor and 3.85% of all 26 participants) and 3 were male (75% of participants loading onto factor 1, 18.75% of participants loading onto any factor and 11.54% of all 26 participants).

All of the participants were in year 10 of secondary education (age 14 to 15 years). The participants attended 3 different secondary schools:

* School J – 1 participant: 1 male, year 10
* School P – 2 participants: 2 males, all year 10
* School S – 1 participant: 1 female, year 10

3.3.3.2 Viewpoint 2 Interpretation Narrative: ‘Coercion and control are unacceptable to me, and consent and consequences matter’

Coercive and controlling behaviours are unacceptable to me, especially when it’s to do with sexual behaviours; “*… they’re more sexual than others.”* (YA1). Coercing someone to do something sexual by verbally pressuring them (17: -3) is worse than physically forcing them to do it (16: -2). Persuading or pressuring them to have sexual intercourse (12: -4) and not stopping sex when asked (23: -4) are worse than physically making them (26: -3). Sexual coercion and control are worse than physical harm. That includes public sexual shaming (28: -3) and pretending to use contraception (37: -2). They’re worse than physical abuse (7: -1 & 31: 0). Even situations where there’s potential for being sexually vulnerable are worrying, like sharing naked photos with someone (20: -2). If it’s coercive or controlling and it’s to do with sex, it’s not ok.

Just like sexual coercion and control are worse than sexual violence, threats of physical harm (1: -1 & 24: 0) are worse than actual harm (7: -1 & 31: 0). The threat matters more than being hurt. I’d rather they threatened to hurt someone (24: 0) than manipulate them by saying they’ll leave them (14: -1) or hurt themselves (1: -1). It’s them trying to control someone using threats that I really don’t like, not necessarily what will happen.

Emotional abuse to do with sexual or physical behaviours is particularly unacceptable in relationships. Gaslighting about being physically being hurt (30: -2) is worse than gaslighting about being emotionally hurt by being made to feel guilty for no reason (38: +1). But emotional abuse that isn’t about sex or physical harm, so threats about other things, are still as worrying if not more worrying than actual harm. Threatening to share private information (11: -1) is as bad as actually sharing it (6: -1).

It doesn’t matter whether shaming is public (9: +1 & 11: -1) or private (8: +2 & 19: 0) it doesn’t make much difference. But whether it is truthful or factual (11: -1 & 28: -3) versus rumours or lies (9: +1) does. Sharing personal information (11: -1) or naked images (28: -3) is much more harmful that spreading false information.

When it comes to stalking, it doesn’t matter if they’re doing it in person (33: 0), getting other people to do it (27: +1) or using technology (2: 0 & 22: +1). Whether it’s remote (2: 0 & 22: +1) or not (27: +1 & 33: 0) and whether it’s hidden (22: +1, 27: +1 & 33: 0) or not (2: 0) doesn’t make a difference. Interaction makes a difference. If they’re in touch with me using technology (2: 0) or by being nearby (33: 0), that’s more worrying than if they’re not in contact with me, either by checking my social media (22: +1) or getting friends to spy (27: +1). Being told what to do (41: +1) isn’t as concerning for me as it is if I have stay in contact with them to prove what they’ve asked me to do using photo messages or calls (4: 0). Being stalked through more direct interaction feels less ok.

When I think about what makes a difference to how acceptable a behaviour is, consent and consequences are what matter. Consent and choice are important, particularly when it’s to do with sexual behaviours. That includes not stopping sex straight away asked to (23: -4) because, *“your choice is made“, “they’re taking over you in a way and that you have nothing really that you can do at that moment” and “They’ve got no choice but to have it done.”* (YA1). Pretending to use contraception (37: -2) is worse than refusing to use it (40: -1); *“they’re trying to catch someone out by just pretending that they’re actually using it when they’re actually not*” (YA1). Deception takes away choice. You can only consent to something if you know what’s happening. It’s not just about consent, it’s about informed consent.

Having some control and choice in a situation is what allows consent. Using physical force in self-defence (36: +4) is trying to regain control in a situation. Behaviours like giving love-bites (34: +3) or consensual play fighting (5: +4) allow a feeling of control and choice; *“it’s just you that has control over them”* (YA1). Stopping someone from seeing their friends and family (10: 0) is taking the choice away from them in a way that criticising their family (13: +2) doesn’t. One person can make most of the decisions in the relationship (15: +2), but that could be how you’ve chosen it to be.

The consequences of a behaviour, how serious those consequences are, changes whether it’s ok or not. Consequences are to do with the impact of the behaviour and how easily what happens because of it can be sorted out. For example, not using contraception (37: -2 & 40: -1) has impactful consequences that are not easy to work out;

*“you would use contraception if you was young to obviously protect yourself… there’s so many people that are so young having babies, but I would rather someone use contraception than not use it.”* (YA1).

Dates can encourage you to skip school (39: +3) or to use drugs/alcohol (3: -3), but the consequences of being caught drinking or using drugs are more serious than being caught skipping school. Arguing (18: +2), shouting (35: +2) or criticising their family (13: +2); “*They’re not as serious as them [less acceptable behaviours]. Something can usually be done about them.”* (YA1). Broken property (32: -2) is not as easily sorted as things thrown where there’s only a possibility of hitting someone (29: +1). Some behaviours don’t have serious consequences so they’re ok, like refusing to speak to someone (25: +3) or putting their own needs first (21: +3); “*they’re not as serious”.*

How serious consequences are is different for different people. If they’re getting other people to spy for them (27: +1);

“for *some people, it might feel unacceptable because they might feel a bit scared. But then some people, they might not be bothered because they can still carry on with their normal daily life.”* (YA1).

So it’s also not just about how easy the consequences are to sort out, how much they affect you emotionally can make a difference as well. Emotions matter.

**4. Discussion**

**4.1 Research Aims and Questions**

This research study aimed to explore the ways that a UK sample of young people, aged 14-16 years, construe abusive behaviours within intimate relationships in their age group. These behaviours included those related to emotional, physical and sexual abuse. Research questions were posed to facilitate this. They were:

1. How do young people construe abuse in intimate relationships?
2. What, if any, are the differences in the ways that female and male young people construe abuse in intimate relationships?

Q methodology was utilised to gain insights into the perceptions of the participants, enabling systematic and holistic identification of their viewpoints (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The findings relating to the research questions will now be discussed.

**4.2 Alternative Viewpoints Within a Single Factor**

Statistical analysis of the data indicated that a common perspective was held across the participants; young people across five secondary schools in different areas of a local authority. But within that shared perspective, there were substantive differences in viewpoints held by two groups of participants, illustrated in the factor interpretations. A main viewpoint was held by the larger group of participants, but there was a group of participants who held a viewpoint which was distinct from the majority view. Both of these viewpoints are of interest in understanding the ways young people construe abusive behaviours in intimate relationships. The two viewpoints are encapsulated in the viewpoint titles below:

* Viewpoint 1: ‘Physical and sexual force are unacceptable to me, and consent and context matter’
* Viewpoint 2: ‘Coercion and control are unacceptable to me, and consent and consequences matter’

If understandings are to be representative of young people’s experiences and interventions targeted to their specific circumstances, it is important to incorporate the views of all young people in research.

**4.3 Research Question 1:** **How do young people construe abuse in intimate relationships?**

This research question was posed to explore the ways school-age young people construe emotionally, physically and sexually abusive behaviours within intimate relationships in their own age group. The term ‘intimate’ differentiates these types of relationships from familial relationships or friendships (HM Government, 2019; Tomaszewska & Schuster, 2021).

The two viewpoints identified represented two distinct viewpoints of abuse constructions held by the participants. There were core themes which both groups of participants aligned themselves with, including consent and the primacy given to concerns regarding sexual abuse and sexual coercion in relationships. But there were distinct differences in the viewpoints indicating a separation in perspectives between the two groups of participants.

The larger group of participants expressing Viewpoint 1 identified that the most unacceptable abusive behaviours in intimate relationships involved physical and sexual abuse, with other abusive behaviours secondary to this. Other abusive behaviours were determined more or less acceptable according to this principle of physical and sexual harm (including the of risk physical harm) being the most intolerable behaviours, as well as the context in which the behaviours occurred.

The smaller group of participants expressing Viewpoint 2 departed from this perspective. This group expressed the view that coercive and controlling behaviours were the most unacceptable behaviours in intimate relationships, particularly if in relation to sexual behaviours. For this group, emotional abuse relating to coercion, control and threats of physical or sexual harm were more concerning than actual physical or sexual abuse. Beyond this principle, the relative acceptability of other abusive behaviours was mediated by the perceived consequences of the actions.

Therefore, there is a primary viewpoint that sexual and physical abuse are unacceptable in intimate relationships, with a sub-group of young people departing from this perspective and expressing concerns regarding coercion and control within young people’s relationships. This research identified a central concept of the importance of consent across both viewpoints, as well as an overall emphasis on concerns regarding sexually abusive behaviours. Both viewpoints considered emotional abuse not related to sexual or physical harm as less concerning than other abusive behaviours.

4.3.1 Viewpoint 1: ‘Physical and sexual force are unacceptable to me, and consent and context matter’

Viewpoint 1 considered that physically and sexually abusive behaviours which involved physical force were the most intolerable behaviours in intimate relationships. This included varying degrees of severity of physical abuse, as well as sexual activity ranging from forced kissing to rape. Physically and sexually abusive behaviours were considered equally unacceptable. This perception was maintained throughout, with this view on physical and sexual harm impacting considerations of other abusive behaviours. If a behaviour involved physical or sexual harm, or even risk of harm, that behaviour was rendered less acceptable. Emotional abuse relating to physical or sexual harm was considered less tolerable than other emotionally abusive behaviours. These findings have not previously been expressed in these terms, with research tending to focus on reporting rates, impacts, gender differences and consent. Previous findings reported gendered differences to perceptions of physical harm with females being more sensitive to differences in severity of physical abuse than males (Viejo et al., 2016). Males have been reported to perceive physically abusive behaviours as a ‘laugh’, while females depicted them as ‘scary’ (Jackson et al., 2000), although more recent research found no gendered divide in attitudes to physical abuse (Griffiths, 2019).

In exploring the potential basis for this viewpoint, the teaching guidance on statutory RSE was examined (DfE, 2019; 2020; 2021). This provides an unclear picture in terms of an explanation. Within the statutory guidance, there are 13 secondary school teaching modules (DfE, 2020). Three of these are relevant to abusive behaviours within young people’s intimate relationships: ‘being safe’; ‘intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health’; and ‘respectful relationships, including friendships’ (DfE, 2020). Within the module ‘being safe’, intended to outline a wide range of areas of abuse (in intimate and familial relationships, as well as perpetrated by people unknown to the victim), there is a single page (of 175) relating specifically to physical abuse (with the only reference to intimate relationships being the words ‘child to child’). There is extensive information on sexual consent, sexual abuse, rape, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, child sexual abuse, image-based sexual abuse, sexual harassment and grooming. Further, the module ‘intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health’ also covers sexual consent, sexual coercion, sexual health and pregnancy/contraception. If basing young people’s understandings on educational experiences, this is likely to be influential for sexual abuse, but the origins of physical abuse concerns are less apparent.

When evaluating acceptability of abusive behaviours, a mediating factor for young people with this viewpoint is the context in which the behaviour happens. This includes frequency, how the behaviour occurs and the extent it is considered a ‘normal’ part of intimate relationships. These contextual factors impact evaluation of the behaviour. This renders navigating acceptance or non-acceptance of these behaviours challenging, as contextual perceptions vary from person to person. For example, one person may accept their partner checking where they are using tracking apps as caring or ‘normal’, another may consider it stalking and unacceptable, while another may accept it once but not as an ongoing pattern of behaviour. Further, behaviours related to physical and sexual abuse are exempt from this, with physically abusive behaviours previously found to be a ‘normal’ part of relationships (Hird, 2000), but despite this not tolerated by young people identifying with Viewpoint 1.

4.3.2 Viewpoint 2: ‘Coercion and control are unacceptable to me, and consent and consequences matter’

In contrast to Viewpoint 1 expressing concerns regarding physical force, participants asserting Viewpoint 2 identified coercive and controlling behaviours as the most unacceptable behaviours in intimate relationships. Coercive behaviours relating to sexual activity were the least acceptable, including sexual shaming and pretending to use contraception, also known as stealthing. Pressuring a date into sexual activity such as kissing/touching was identified as more concerning than physically forcing them to do the same, while coercing a date to have sexual intercourse was considered more unacceptable than rape. Coercive and controlling behaviours relating to potential physical abuse, such as threats of harm, were considered equally or less tolerable than physically abusive behaviours. Threats were considered more disturbing than even the possibility of being physically hurt, exemplified by threats to leave or the perpetrator hurting themselves being more unacceptable than threats to hurt their date. This finding regarding the primacy placed on concerns regarding coercion and control in young people’s relationships has not previously been identified, though there is research evidence that the prevalence of these behaviours is widespread (Manganello, 2008; Prospero, 2006; Sterne & Poole, 2010; Viejo et al., 2016). This viewpoint is in direct contrast to Viewpoint 1, with disparate viewpoints on sexual abuse and sexual coercion reflected in previous Q methodological research findings that young people have a range of perspectives on sexual behaviours in relationships (Franz et al., 2016).

Coercive control has previously been found to underpin other forms of abuse (Barter et al., 2009; Scheiman & Zeoli, 2003), with young people also having described sexual coercion escalating to sexual intercourse under duress and/or rape (Korkmaz & Overlien, 2019). These behaviours are important to consider in young people’s formative and developing understandings of relationships. Young people’s experiences of blurred boundaries between consensual sexual activities and sexual coercion have previously been identified (Hird, 2000; Barter et al., 2009; Mullan, 2022), with Viewpoint 2 indicating that this is a primary area of concern for a group of young people. The divergence of Viewpoints 1 and 2, alongside previous research findings, indicates that perceptions of the boundaries between consent, coercion, intercourse under duress and forced sexual activity are challenging to consider theoretically, rendering them more challenging to navigate in real-world situations. It is vital that the perspectives of young people provide the basis for evidence-based educational provision on physically and sexually abusive relationship behaviours.

When young people holding Viewpoint 2 evaluate acceptability of abusive behaviours in intimate relationships, a mediating factor is the perceived consequences. Post-sort interview data referred to the influence of how ‘serious’ a behaviour was. In ascertaining what factors rendered a consequence as ‘serious’, this related to perceived impact and also how easily difficulties arising as a result could be resolved. As with the influence of context for Viewpoint 1, perceptions of consequences vary from person to person according to subjective opinion. In educational intervention, best practice is considered to be encouragement of personal empowerment while supporting understandings of impacts (Banyard & Cross, 2008; Burton et al., 2021; Collin-Vezina et al., 2006; Manganello, 2008; Silverman et al., 2001). Risk-based approaches have been found to place responsibility for abuse prevention onto victims (Burton et al., 2021).

4.3.3 It’s *“all about … consent”*

A consensus was found across both viewpoints that consent is considered of primary importance in young people’s intimate relationships, particularly in relation to sexual behaviours. This included behaviours which limited or removed choice as they reduced or eliminated the ability to consent. This is consistent with previous Q methodology research, which found that sex is only considered acceptable when consensual and without coercion/pressure (Franz et. al., 2016). In this research participants expressed that consent requires sufficient information/knowledge to be able to make a choice: informed consent. It was identified that consent cannot be given if behaviours are hidden or unknown; uninformed consent.

An example of this was refusal to use contraception being considered more acceptable compared with stealthing. In this research, as in previous Q methodology research, young people refusing to use contraception was acceptable (Franz et al, 2016). This was because a choice could be made whether to continue with sexual intercourse on an informed basis (Franz et al, 2016). However, in the same research and under the same factor, it was also indicated that it is not justifiable for a male to refuse to use a condom and that contraception use should always be decided jointly (Franz et al, 2016). The contradictions identified in previous research illustrates the difficulties for young people in navigating this issue theoretically and practically. Franz and colleagues (2016) found variation across factors in perceptions of contraception use. While this and previous research indicates an understanding regarding the need for informed consent in contraception use, there remains uncertainty in understandings of responsibility and choice in real-world situations.

Consent was of particular importance in relation to sexual behaviours. Primacy placed on consent in intimate relationships is in contrast with Mullan’s (2022) assertion that young people lack understanding and concern regarding consent to sexual activity. Previous research indicates uncertainty regarding how consent and non-consent should be expressed, with females stating that verbal expressions of non-consent provided sufficient non-consent, while males stated that verbal and physical expressions were required for clear non-consent (Hird, 2000).

A connection was also identified between consent and choice. An example of this was participants across both viewpoints considering use of physical violence in self-defence amongst the most acceptable behaviours. Despite this involving behaviours deemed less acceptable when not used in self-defence, using physical violence to assert choice and non-consent was considered reasonable. Some previous research studies describe reciprocity of physical abuse, with this notion being contested due to disproportionately negative severity against females (Barter et al., 2009; Griffiths, 2019; Hird, 2000; Korkmaz & Overlien, 2019; Viejo et al., 2016). In this study, young people theoretically understood physical abuse and physical defence as distinct and opposing concepts. Physical defence is aligned with consent and regaining choice, with previous research identifying that physical force in self-defence is more often used by females (Barter et al., 2009; Griffiths, 2019; Hird, 2000).

In identifying this perspective on consent and particularly sexual consent shared by young people, it was queried how this consistent message was being provided to/received by young people of different genders and ages in a diverse range of secondary schools across a geographical area. In exploring this, statutory RSE teaching guidance was analysed (DfE, 2019; 2020; 2021) and it immediately became apparent how a consistent message regarding the importance of consent was, at least partially, being delivered. In the module ‘being safe’, the opening section of the teaching materials was entitled ‘consent’ (DfE, 2020). Of this module content which is intended to cover all forms of abuse (in intimate and familial relationships, as well as perpetrated by people unknown to the victim), 27% of the material provided related to consent, with over a third of that content on consent relating specifically to sexual consent (DfE, 2020). The law relating to sexual consent was revisited in the module ‘intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health’ (DfE, 2020). UK government messaging is that consent is important. This message has been received, but has it been understood?

It has been found that knowledge of consent does not consistently translate into practice when young people negotiate sexual interactions (Burton et al., 2021). While these participants have a theoretical understanding of consent, variability has been found in it’s practical application as indicated by findings that young people experience an amalgamation of consensual and non-consensual sexual experiences (Hird, 2000; Barter et al., 2009). However, it should be stated the DfE RSE guidance came into effect after these studies were published (DfE, 2019), with understandings of the impact of this statutory curriculum yet to be ascertained. It is asserted that education on consent needs to be tailored to more taboo areas of young people’s lives, including parties with peer groups and casual relationships (Burton et al., 2021).

4.3.4 “*… they’re more sexual than others”*

Across both viewpoints, participants expressed that sexually abusive behaviours are amongst the most unacceptable behaviours in an intimate relationship. These behaviours included physically forced sexual acts, as well as sexual coercion and control, such as sexualised public shaming by sharing naked images with others/over social media. Young people in the UK have been found to commonly engage in sending and receiving sexual/naked images (Stanley et al., 2018; Young et al., 2018). The concern raised in this research regarding risks involved with sexualised public shaming demonstrate that this is important to young people, with descriptions being provided of the negative impacts of naked images being widely shared (Stanley et al., 2018).

These findings of a high level of concern regarding sexual force and coercion is consistent with the previously discussed emphasis on sexual abuse and sexual coercion in the RSE curriculum (DfE, 2020). Previous research found that sexual coercion in young people’s relationships was not always related to sexual intercourse (Jackson et al., 2000), with this being reflected in participants’ concerns extending beyond sexual assault and rape to sexual coercion and control. Both viewpoints considered not stopping sexual activity when asked to be as or more unacceptable than rape. This perception of sexual activity is likely to be related to young people’s core view of the importance of consent. In general, abusive behaviours related to sexual interaction (remote or in-person) were viewed more negatively than other behaviours across both viewpoints.

4.3.5. Emotionally Abusive Behaviours; “*They’re not as serious”*

Emotional abuse within young people’s relationships has primarily previously been researched in terms of prevalence, impacts and gender differences. The dynamics of emotional abuse, including coercion and control, are the least researched aspects of abuse in young people’s intimate relationships (Barter, 2009; Barter et al., 2009), despite being the most frequently reported (Barter et al., 2009; Jackson et al., 2000).

Across both viewpoints emotional abuse behaviours not relating to physical or sexual behaviours was considered less concerning than other emotionally abusive behaviours. An exemplar of this was perceptions of gaslighting, where an individual is psychologically manipulated to encourage them to doubt their own perceptions, memories and/or mental health with the aim of disorientation and isolation to increase control (Aronson Fontes, 2015). Both viewpoints felt that gaslighting about physical harm was more worrying than experiencing emotional impacts alone.

Previous research has identified that other forms of relationship abuse are underpinned by coercion and control (Barter et al., 2009; Scheiman & Zeoli, 2003). Young people subjected to emotional abuse experienced confusion regarding whether they were to blame for physical or sexual abuse in their relationship (Griffiths, 2019). Both viewpoints perceived that isolating a date by actively stopping them from seeing their friends and/or family is more unacceptable than being critical about friends or family, with interview data reflecting that being critical is not as ‘serious’. Previous research has found that coercive and controlling behaviours occurred alongside being isolated from friends and wider social networks (Korkmaz & Overlien, 2019), with mental health and educational impacts of abuse being moderated by social support (Banyard & Cross, 2008).

In considering elements of emotional abuse which increased concern, both viewpoints agreed that coercion and control by sharing truthful, factual information, whether private information or images, is more troubling than emotional abuse based on fabrications or lies. There was considered to be limited difference between public and private shaming/humiliation across the viewpoints, with the exception of public sexual shaming. One of the most frequent forms of emotional abuse has been found to be name calling (Hird, 2000), with this being described as systematic for some young people (Korkmaz & Overlien, 2019).

A difference in perceptions of emotional abuse illustrated by the diverging viewpoints relates to stalking, defined as following, watching or spying with the aim of curtailing freedom (CPS, 2018). Surveillance and controlling behaviours in young people’s relationships are commonplace (Barter et al., 2017). Young people identifying with Viewpoint 1 perceived that physically stalking a date is more unacceptable than remote means, such as calling, messaging, using apps or asking friends to spy. The defining dynamic for this viewpoint was physical proximity, related to the core perception of Viewpoint 1 regarding the primacy of risk of physical harm. For Viewpoint 2, in-person versus remote stalking was not an influential dynamic, instead prioritising the level of interaction (remote or in-person) between the perpetrator and victim. Previous research found that young people have variable perceptions of stalking behaviours as healthy or unhealthy in relationships (Stonard et al., 2017). As with other types of coercive control, this can be due to interpretation as care or protection (Barter et al., 2009; Chung, 2005; Griffiths, 2019; Stonard et al., 2017) and being embedded in relationship power dynamics (Barter et al., 2009). Further, rapid advances in technology mean that research studies have struggled to keep pace with developing understandings regarding the influence of technology on relationship stalking behaviours in (Stanley et al, 2018).

There appears to be a perception of emotional abuse as less concerning, less impactful (Barter et al., 2009; Barter et al., 2017; Jackson et al., 2000) and less clearly delineated as abusive. However, previous research finding that this type of abuse is the most frequently reported (Barter et al., 2009; Jackson et al., 2000) and underpins other forms of abuse (Barter et al., 2009; Scheiman & Zeoli, 2003) means that emotional abuse should be given increased consideration in research and education/intervention. This is not currently the case, as identified in the RSE guidance (DfE, 2020), with emotional abuse not related to sexual behaviours given only cursory reference. In fact, it was stated that coercion could potentially constitute a criminal offence only in relation to sexual activity, whereas adult domestic abuse legislation defines coercion and control as a criminal offence whether related to sexual activity or not (HM Government, 2019). In the module ‘respectful relationships’, the adult definition of coercion and control is used, though again it states that while always considered ‘wrong’ coercion and control is only sometimes a criminal offence. These formative understandings are impactful for young people’s perceptions of emotional abuse within their relationships, but also for perceptions of emotional abuse being of less importance and not a criminal offence in their adult relationships.

**4.4 Research Question 2:** **What, if any, are the differences in the ways that female and male young people construe abuse in intimate relationships?**

Of the 16 participants whose Q sorts significantly loaded onto a factor and were included in the analysis, 10 were female (62.5%) and 6 were male (37.5%). While the recruitment for both the online and in-person research phases were designed to be as inclusive for female and male young people as possible, this skewing towards female participants (of the 26 total participants, 17 were female and 9 were male) means that the research may have been considered more accessible or important for females in this age group. This is further illustrated as more males were recruited during the in-person phase (where parents/carers initially consented) with 12 females and 9 males recruited, than in the online phase (where young people initially consented) with 5 females and 0 males recruited.

There were 12 Q sorts which significantly loaded onto Viewpoint 1. 9 of these were completed by females (75% of participants loading onto factor 1 and 90% of females loading onto either factor) and 3 were completed by males (25% of participants loading onto factor 1 and 50% of males loading onto either factor).

For Viewpoint 2, there were 4 Q sorts which significantly loaded onto it. 1 of these was completed by a female (25% of participants loading onto factor 1 and 10% of females loading onto either factor) and 3 were completed by males (75% of participants loading onto factor 1 and 50% of males loading onto either factor).

So, for Viewpoint 1, the female to male participant ratio was 3:1, while for Viewpoint 2 the female to male participant ratio was 1:3. However, the ratio of females loading onto Viewpoint 1 versus Viewpoint 2 was 9:1, while the ratio of males loading onto Viewpoint 1 versus Viewpoint 2 was 1:1. This means that more females loaded onto Viewpoint 1, but male participants loading onto a factor were spread evenly across both viewpoints.

Neither of the Viewpoints consisted entirely of female or male participants and Q methodology is not designed to provide findings generalisable to a wider population (Franz et. al, 2016; Stenner et al, 2006; Zabala et al., 2018). However, Q methodology does aim to explore the breadth of perspectives on a topic and gender differences were identified in previous literature. Therefore, this research study will explore whether the gender-based viewpoints identified in previous literature indicate similarities and/or differences with the viewpoints of groups of individuals across a mixed-gender sample. Therefore, a tentative exploration of these findings will be made while being mindful of the limitations presented, including the higher number of female participants.

4.4.1 Gender Differences in Ways Emotionally Abusive Behaviours are Construed

Regarding emotional abuse, including coercion and control, similar reporting rates have been identified for females and males (Jackson et al., 2000). However, a review of European research found that, in UK studies, there were higher reporting rates, both of experiencing and perpetrating emotional abuse, for females than for males (Tomaszewska & Schuster, 2021). It has been found that there are gender differences in the ways that emotional abuse is construed (Barter et al., 2009). Females have indicated experiencing difficulties identifying controlling behaviours due to a blurring between perceptions of controlling and caring behaviours, with this blurring then used by males to coerce females into sex (Barter et al., 2009; Chung, 2005; Griffiths, 2019). Viewpoint 2 particularly indicated the perspective that coercive and controlling behaviours related were the most unacceptable behaviours, more unacceptable than physically or sexually abusive behaviours. This viewpoint primarily consisted of male participants and only 10% females loading onto a Q sort. However, both viewpoints indicated the perception that sexual coercion is amongst the most unacceptable behaviours.

A further gender difference in constructions of emotional abuse identified in the literature relates to perceptions of impact. Emotional abuse was deemed to have less impact than physical and sexual abuse by females and males (Barter et al., 2009), while the negative impacts for males were reported to be more limited for males than females (Barter et al., 2009; Jackson et al., 2000). The influence of consequences on the acceptability of a behaviour was identified across both viewpoints, particularly in relation to more unacceptable behaviours. This was expressed more clearly in Viewpoint 2, which had a higher proportion of male participants than females and 10% of female loading Q sorts. While this finding cannot address the relative impacts of different types of abusive behaviours for females or males, this does indicate a recognition across both viewpoints that more ‘serious’ consequences equate to more unacceptable behaviours in intimate relationships.

4.4.2 Gender Differences in Ways Physically Abusive Behaviours are Construed

It has previously been identified that reporting rates for physical abuse are similar for females and males (Jackson et al., 2000), although a review of European research identified that females were more likely to perpetrate physical abuse (Tomaszewska & Schuster, 2021). It has also been reported by males that they are unwilling to admit to physical abuse due to embarrassment and fear of not being taken seriously (Griffiths, 2019). Research has indicated that physical abuse can be reciprocal, whereby individuals are both victims and perpetrators of physically abusive behaviours (Viejo et al., 2016). However, Barter and colleagues (2009) questioned the notion of mutual or reciprocal physical abuse due to the implication of equal impact. Griffiths (2019) identified that both females and males acknowledge that members of both genders are affected by physical abuse within intimate relationships (Griffiths, 2019). It has been found that, while some males indicated that physical abuse was mutual, the force used by males was disproportionate to that of females (Barter et al., 2009; Griffiths, 2019). It has also been found that there is a disproportionately negative impact of physical abuse on females (Griffiths, 2019; Jackson et al., 2000), with descriptions suggesting that males perceived it as a ‘laugh’, whereas females construed it as ‘scary’ (Jackson et al., 2000). High proportions of females’ use of physically abusive behaviours were found to be related to self-defence (Barter et al., 2009; Griffiths, 2019; Hird, 2000).

Viewpoint 1 perceived that physically abusive behaviours were amongst the most unacceptable behaviours, alongside sexually abusive behaviours. The Q sorts significantly loading onto Viewpoint 1 were primarily completed by females, with 90% of significantly loading female Q sorts loading onto Viewpoint 1, while Viewpoint 2 perceived that physically abusive behaviours were more acceptable than sexually abusive behaviours and emotionally abusive behaviours relating to physical or sexual abuse. Further, while all participants with a significantly loading Q sort expressed that using physical violence against a date in self-defence was amongst the most acceptable behaviours, the mainly female Viewpoint 1 indicated that it was slightly less acceptable than the mainly male Viewpoint 2. It should be acknowledged that 50% males with significantly loading Q sorts loaded on Viewpoint 1 and 50% onto Viewpoint 2. Therefore, it appears that Viewpoint 1 perceives all types of physical behaviours as more unacceptable than Viewpoint 2. Due to the contentious issue of reciprocal physical abuse, as well as findings relating to physical self-defence and males masking impacts, it is challenging to explore alignment of perceptions. However, this does highlight the complex dynamics in developing understandings of physical abuse in young people’s intimate relationships.

4.4.3 Gender Differences in Ways Sexually Abusive Behaviours are Construed

In a review of European research, in UK -based studies it was found that there were higher victimisation rates for sexual abuse for females than for males, with higher sexual abuse perpetration rates for males also being identified (Barter et al., 2017; Stanley et al., 2018; Tomaszewska & Schuster, 2021). Barter and colleagues (2009) found that the relationships between young adults often contained a combination of both consensual and coerced sexual experiences. However, they suggest that female participants found this combining of consensual and coerced behaviours confusing (Barter et al., 2009). For participants expressing both viewpoints, sexually abusive behaviours were deemed to be amongst the most unacceptable behaviours in an intimate relationship. These behaviours included not only physically forced sexual acts, but also coercion into sexual acts and the denial of sexual consent. Therefore, while there appears to be a shared perspective regarding the acceptability of sexually abusive behaviours, including coercion, this does not appear to translate into the experiences of sexual relationships for female and male young people in context.

**4.5 Conclusion**

Abusive behaviours in young people’s intimate relationships are highly prevalent and widespread (Manganello, 2008; Prospero, 2006; Sterne & Poole, 2010; Viejo et al., 2016. Despite this, there has been limited UK-based research on abusive behaviours in young people’s intimate relationships (Barter, 2009; Barter et al., 2009; Griffiths, 2019; Lyons & Rabie, 2014; NICE 2014), especially research incorporating the perspectives of young people themselves (Barter, 2009; Prospero, 2006). Previous research has also primarily focused on physical and sexual abuse (Barter, 2009; Barter et al., 2009).

This exploratory study aimed to explore the ways that 26 participants, aged 14-16 years from five mainstream secondary schools in a UK local authority, construed a range of abusive behaviours within intimate relationships. Q methodology was utilised to identify young people’s subjective shared perspectives. The research questions explored were:

1. How do young people construe abuse in intimate relationships?
2. What, if any, are the differences in the ways that female and male young people construe abuse in intimate relationships?

It was found that a single, common viewpoint was held by young people across five secondary schools in different areas of the local authority. This incorporated views on the importance of consent, concerns regarding sexual abuse, coercion and control, as well as more limited concerns regarding emotional abuse. However, within that shared viewpoint, there were substantive differences in perspectives held by two groups of participants. A main viewpoint was held by the larger group of participants, with another group of participants holding a viewpoint distinct from the majority view. The two viewpoints were:

* Viewpoint 1: ‘Physical and sexual force are unacceptable to me, and consent and context matter’
* Viewpoint 2: ‘Coercion and control are unacceptable to me, and consent and consequences matter’

Both of these viewpoints are of interest in understanding the ways young people construe abusive behaviours in intimate relationships. If understandings are to represent young people’s experiences and interventions targeted to young people’s circumstances, all young people’s views need to be incorporated in research and related practice.

It was identified that, while young people have a theoretical understanding of the importance of consent, navigating this in practice is more challenging. Further, while there is a majority view of physical and sexual abuse being the most concerning behaviours in intimate relationships, there is a section of young people whose primary concern relates to sexual and physical coercion and control. This represents young people’s experiences of abuse within their relationships. This outcome, combined with the finding that young people feel less concern regarding emotionally abusive behaviours not related to sexual and physical abuse, indicates that there is less certainty in young people’s understandings of emotional abuse. This is certainly reflected in the secondary school RSE curriculum, where this area is neglected compared to sexual abuse and consent.

As a 17-year old who found herself in an abusive relationship for 3 years, this uncertainty around emotional abuse in a formative relationship reflects my own experiences. Certainly I had an understanding that physical and sexual abuse ‘crossed a line’, but by the time that occurred I had already been coerced, controlled and isolated to the point where that line being crossed no longer felt as dramatic a step as it had in theory. Young people’s relationships provide a formative basis for their adult experiences. If we are to emphasise early intervention (in this area as well as in educational and social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) interventions as a whole), then the focus should be on initial underpinning emotionally abusive behaviours, rather than on behaviours which young people already have an awareness of. Further, as I experienced myself, knowing a concept in theory does not necessarily translate to practice – it is vital that the dynamics of transference from theoretical teaching to real-world practice are understood to better enable this.

Regarding the question of gender differences in the ways that female and male young people construe abuse in intimate relationships, the gender-based viewpoints identified in previous literature were explored in relation to the viewpoints of the young people sampled. Due to the research methodology and design, initial tentative considerations of the findings in relation to the existing literature were made, although direct associations or conclusions cannot be drawn.

**4.6 Implications of the Research Outcomes for Schools**

Research and policy are impacted by the lack of a universal definition for intimate relationship abuse in this age group (Sutherland, 2011; Viejo et al., 2016). There needs to be an understanding of the ways relationship abuse functions in young people’s relationships and for this to be reflected in a universal definition. The explicit inclusion of emotional abuse unrelated to sexual behaviours appears to be particularly important. This should be based upon understandings of emotional, physical and sexual abuse in young people’s relationships, as well as the boundaries and connections between those behaviours. This should then inform rigorous guidance which informs identification, as well as educational provision and targeted interventions. The language used in this should also reflect young people’s own vocabulary and experiences.

Early intervention is key to limiting and preventing abuse in both young people’s and adults’ relationships, with schools being at least partially responsible for provision of this (HO, 2012a; HM Government, 2019). The diverging viewpoints and uncertainty regarding emotional abuse within this research indicates a need for increased situation-based educational provision, particularly on coercion and control. As the young people sampled indicated a clear perspective on the importance of consent, as well as sexual abuse and coercion being unacceptable, support should target areas where young people have greater variability of understandings; emotional abuse.

My own anecdotal experiences of working with school staff providing RSE in secondary schools is that school staff feel unsure of curriculum content and teaching approaches in this area, emphasising consent as this feels like a boundaried area where staff feel more confident. Regarding targeted support in specific circumstances, this tends to be provided ‘ad-hoc’ by pastoral staff rather than through structured subject-specific interventions. Support for schools and school staff could be provided through external services and organisations, for example the community outreach programme which generously provided advice and support for this research study. Educational Psychology services should play a key role in supporting evidence-based provision, providing staff training to develop confidence and understanding of the research evidence and psychological understandings of relationship abuse.

**4.7 Implications of the Research Outcomes for Educational Psychologists**

It has been expressed that schools require increased access to resources, advice and training from specialist organisations to enhance and improve provision for young people on relationships and abusive behaviours within them (HM Government, 2019; Mullan, 2022). I have certainly been approached for this as part of my Educational Psychology practice. Educational Psychologists are well placed to provide a connection between up-to-date research and practice in this area, including using action research to develop conceptual frameworks and support structures in schools. Educational Psychologists should target training and interventions for young people, parents/carers and school staff in areas where young people: (a) have less clear constructions of relationship abuse - emotional abuse; and (b) experience barriers to implementing theoretical understandings in real-life situations. Further, evidence-based targeted support should be provided for those ascertained to be vulnerable, including young people experiencing and/or perpetrating abuse and young people with SEND.

**4.8 Research Limitations**

In considering the limitations of this research and whether quality in the research has been ensured, the amalgamated quality criteria (Bryman, 2014; Yardley, 2000) outlined earlier in the study will be returned to.

4.8.1 Rationale and Sensitivity to Context

While efforts were made to ensure that access to the research was as inclusive as possible, during the online research phase, access to technology and confidence in using it may have been a barrier to involvement in the research for some (Meehan et al., 2022). While all students were to have been provided with devices to access online learning at home, proficiency with technology may have been a barrier. As well as this, as the information sheets, consent forms and, indeed, the statements, were presented using extensive language, this may have proved off-putting to young people experiencing literacy difficulties. This would include parents/carers who were also required to provide informed consent.

Further, during the in-person phase of the research, there were young people who had consented to be involved in the research, but were unable to due to the impacts of Covid-19 on attendance at school (for example, year group bubbles being sent home, being symptomatic and awaiting testing). This, therefore, also limited participation and inclusion.

4.8.2 Connection to Research Questions

The research questions posed were:

1. How do young people construe abuse in intimate relationships?
2. What, if any, are the differences in the ways that male and female young people construe abuse in intimate relationships?

While it felt that the research fully addressed the first research question, it is important to state that the findings and interpretation relating to gender differences in constructions of relationship abuse can only be viewed as tentative. This is because Q methodology aims to provide holistic insights into a topic across groups of people, rather than extrapolating generalisable findings for a particular section of a study sample.

The high level of confounding Q sorts (with 16 of the 27 participants significantly loading onto a single factor) and significant correlation between the 2 factors identified indicates a level of accord between young people’s constructions of abuse in intimate relationships. However, it was found that there was variation between viewpoints within that accord. This in itself contributes to understandings relating to the first research question.

4.8.3 Commitment, Rigour and Technical Competency

While every effort was made to ensure that this research study was as rigorous and complete as possible, limitations have been identified. It is acknowledged that some of these are related to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on both research and education. For example, the impacts of the pandemic led to significant difficulties in recruitment of participants, leading to more limited participant numbers and a more skewed female to male ratio than had been envisaged.

A decision was made to include abusive behaviour statements in the Q set, as well as behaviours which have been identified as potential indicators of future abuse. This balanced including a range of abusive behaviours to meet the research aims, whilst maintaining a manageable Q set size for the age group and topic. Further, positive behaviours would not have supported the analysis in answering the research questions. However, the absence of positive or healthy relationship behaviours meant that there were not the two poles of extreme feelings at each end of the distribution usually aimed for in Q methodology research (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The retention of behaviours identified as potential indicators of future abuse meant that there was a range of behaviours within the statements.

There were differing impacts and limitations to the two different recruitment methods for the online and in-person research. For the online research phase, once advertised by school staff, participants were required to initiate contact. This meant that they were interested and invested in the research from early in the process. However, this (and the implications of Covid-19) led to limited recruitment. For the in-person research phase, parents/carers signalled approval for their children to take part, before those young people were approached in school. This led to a higher recruitment rate (although some could not attend the Q sorts due to Covid-19 restrictions), but the young people were not as invested in the research, evidenced in the limited uptake of post-sort interviews.

4.8.4 Integration of Methods

While Q methodology is considered a mixed methods approach, this research study is aligned with the standpoint that Q methodology is a primarily qualitative approach, facilitated by statistical analyses. Factor analytic decisions were primarily based upon qualitative, substantive meaning with the aim of identifying unique perspectives within the group of participants, (Brown Walker et al., 2018; Ramlo, 2016). This was implemented according to the extensive guidelines outlined by Watts and Stenner (2012).

4.8.5 Transparency and Coherence

Changes in the research design required by Covid-19 restrictions meant that there were fewer post-sort interviews, leading to limited qualitative data to inform factor analysis interpretation. Only two participants with significantly loading Q sorts completed post-sort interviews, one participant for each viewpoint. This meant that it was challenging to verify how representative the post-sort interview participants’ perceptions were. Regarding the question of gender differences, this posed particular issues for Viewpoint 2, as the participant providing the post-sort interview for this participant group was the only female in the group.

It had been the intention of the researcher to include member-checking as part of the process of ensuring that the research analysis was as representative of the young people’s viewpoints as possible. However, due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the time frame of the research completion, the young people involved had either left school or were undertaking their GCSE exams at the time that the analysis was completed. As well as this, it had been intended to ascertain whether the young people at the school working with the domestic abuse charity had had involvement in the relationship abuse outreach programme. Due to the extensive time frames, this was also not possible.

4.8.6 Impact and Importance

As expressed in the study aims, it is hoped that this research will contribute to enhancing and further targeting school-based relationships education, training and interventions, including Educational Psychology provision. This has been detailed above. The research-base in this area is also increasing in breadth and depth. It is hoped that this research study can contribute to the important and impactful findings being developed by researchers both internationally and within the UK.

**4.9 Future Research**

Despite the implications of conducting research during the Covid-19 pandemic, it is felt that this research does provide a contribution to understandings of the ways that young people construe abusive behaviours in intimate relationships in their age group. Further research could continue to focus on exploring young people’s views in this area and triangulating this with the views of other related stakeholders, including parents/carers, school staff (including teaching assistants), school senior leaderships teams and governors (who drive school policy), professionals and services, including Educational Psychologists.

Further research could specifically focus on perceptions of emotional abuse and exploring the dynamics of these behaviours within young people’s relationships. This is important to understand emotional abuse itself, but also to develop understandings of the ways that this underpins and enables other forms of abuse. This research could provide the basis for evidence-based support and provision in this area.

The effectiveness of current RSE and targeted provision could also be ascertained to ensure that it is adequately achieving its aims. This could be completed through established implementation science frameworks, to ensure that barriers to provision and implementation are systematically identified and revisions developed.

Finally, future research could continue to explore gender differences in young people’s constructions of relationships, behaviours within them and also the wider power dynamics which influence them. However, similarities and differences within those constructions could also be explored to gain a more nuanced view, rather than using broad descriptions of gender-based constructs. Further to this, it has been expressed that there are a lack of research studies addressing abuse within the intimate relationships of young people in sexual minorities and with a range of gender identities; this could also be further explored.

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**Appendices**

Appendix 1: Generating the Q -Set: Q Sort Statement Tracker and Final Adapted Q set Statements

Key: Yellow highlighted statements were adapted, amalgamated or not included

Green highlighted statements were included in the Q set unchanged

*\* Positive statements are included here but were not incorporated into the research.*

*\*\* A table including the final Q set statements is included at the end, to indicate which statements were unchanged and which were altered following the interviews*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Statements** | **Research Source** | **Interview 1** | **Interview 2** |
| Verbally pressuring a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to have sexual intercourse | Charity Resources  Barter et al (2009)  Hird (2000)  Banyard & Cross (2008)  Wood & Barter (2015)  Fox et al (2014) | From year 11 and out of school, mainly say peer pressuring into doing it | Yes |
| Physically forcing a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to have sexual intercourse | Barter et al (2009)  Hird (2000)  Chung (2005)  Banyard & Cross (2008)  Wood & Barter (2015)  Fox et al (2014) | Vary from older people not in school | Yes |
| Verbally pressuring a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to do something sexual, such as kissing, touching or something else | Barter et al (2009)  Hird (2000)  Banyard & Cross (2008)  Wood & Barter (2015)  Fox et al (2014) | Could start from year 10 upwards | Yes |
| Physically forcing a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to do something sexual, such as kissing, touching or something else | Barter et al (2009)  Hird (2000)  Banyard & Cross (2008)  Wood & Barter (2015)  Fox et al (2014) | Start from year 10 | Yes |
| Using physical force, such as pushing, slapping, hitting, pinching or holding down | Charity Resources  Barter et al (2009)  Hird (2000)  Chung (2005)  Sutherland (2011)  Banyard & Cross (2008)  Halpern-Meekin et al (2013)  Wood & Barter (2015)  Fox et al (2014) | Start from year 11 and upwards | Yes |
| Using physical force, such as punching, strangling, beating, kicking, biting or hitting with an object | Barter et al (2009)  Hird (2000)  Chung (2005)  Sutherland (2011)  Banyard & Cross (2008)  Halpern-Meekin et al (2013)  Wood & Barter (2015)  Fox et al (2014) | This age and older | Could be relevant |
| Pretending to use contraception | Charity Resources  Sutherland (2011) | Older years, year 10, 11 and higher | Yes |
| Refusing to use contraception | Charity Resources  Sutherland (2011) | Could use it to get themselves protection or could not want to use it but would want to have safe sex | Yes |
| Encouraging a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to use drugs | Charity Resources |  | Yes |
| Stopping a date or boyfriend/girlfriend from seeing their friends/family | Charity Resources  Sutherland (2011)  Banyard & Cross (2008)  Barter et al (2009)  Fox et al (2014) | This age | Yes |
| Dating or being in a relationship with someone much younger or older | Charity Resources  Barter et al (2009)  Wood & Barter (2015) |  |  |
| Cheating on a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | Charity Resources | Start from young age but could vary, depends if willing to do what the boy wants to do, more relevant for year 9 to 11 | Yes |
| Encouraging a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to skip, skive off or wag school | Charity Resources | This age, wagging school, teachers call it truancy | Skip and wag is out of school, skive off is missing lessons |
| Checking a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s phone and social media without their permission | Charity Resources  Sutherland (2011)  Fox et al (2014)  Stonard et al (2017) | This age and upwards | Yes |
| Telling a date or boyfriend/girlfriend what to wear | Charity Resources | This age | Yes |
| Giving love-bites or hickies to a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | Charity Resources | Year 9 to year 11 | Yes, people say both |
| Making a date or boyfriend/girlfriend feel guilty about something they have not done | Charity Resources | Year 11 and upwards | Yes, use that phrase |
| Refusing to talk to a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | Charity Resources  Hird (2000) | Vary from year 10 and upwards, term it as not talking to someone | Yes |
| Paying a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to do something sexual such as touching, kissing or something else | Charity Resources | Older teenagers | Yes |
| Asking a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to send or share naked photos of themselves | Charity Resources | Younger ages to year 11 | Yes, or maybe sending nudes |
| Sending or sharing naked photos with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | Charity Resources  Sutherland (2011) | Younger ages to year 11 | Yes, or maybe sending nudes |
| Sharing naked photos of a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to other people or over social media | Charity Resources | This age and older | Yes |
| Threatening to self-harm if a date or boyfriend/girlfriend tries to leave | Charity Resources | Year 10 | Yes, harm yourself or self-harm |
| Threatening to end a date or relationship unless the person does as asked/told | Halpern-Meekin et al (2013)  Hird (2000) | *Included post-interview* | *Included post-interview* |
| Spreading rumours or lies about a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | Charity Resources | This age | Rumours |
| Calling a date or boyfriend/girlfriend hurtful names | Charity Resources  Barter et al (2009)  Hird (2000)  Chung (2005)  Sutherland (2011)  Halpern-Meekin et al (2013)  Fox et al (2014) | Year 10 and 11 | Yes, the same as making fun |
| Threatening to harm a date or boyfriend/girlfriend physically unless the person does as asked/told | Charity Resources  Barter et al (2009)  Hird (2000)  Sutherland (2011)  Fox et al (2014) | Older years | Yes |
| Always the same person paying for things | Charity Resources | This age | Yes |
| The same person getting their way most of the time | *Suggested by participant* |  | getting their own way definitely, one sided relationship, |
| Embarrass/humiliate a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to their face | Barter et al (2009)  Hird (2000)  Sutherland (2011)  Halpern-Meekin et al (2013) | Older year groups | Yes, embarrass and humiliate is when they are there, this one is behind their back |
| Embarrass/humiliate a date or boyfriend/girlfriend behind their back | Barter et al (2009)  Hird (2000) | Older year groups | Yes, embarrass and humiliate is when they are there, this one is behind their back |
| Embarrass/humiliate a date or boyfriend/girlfriend in front of other people | Halpern-Meekin et al (2013) |  |  |
| Shouting/screaming in a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s face | Barter et al (2009)  Sutherland (2011) | This age | Yes |
| Saying negative things about a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s appearance/body/friends/family | Barter et al (2009)  Halpern-Meekin et al (2013) | This age, all better if combined | Yes and may also putting down, appearance and body and friends and family separated |
| Telling a date or boyfriend/girlfriend who they can see, where they can go or when they can go out | Barter et al (2009)  Wood & Barter (2015)  Fox et al (2014) | This age | And maybe controlling, all together |
| Tracking or checking where a date or boyfriend/girlfriend is or what they are doing by calling, messaging or using apps | Barter et al (2009)  Charity Resources  Chung (2005)  Sutherland (2011)  Wood & Barter (2015)  Stonard et al (2017) | Want to know what doing, at what time and what date, make them take a photo to send exactly where they are, this age and older, snapchat, can turn off location so it wouldn’t show | Snapchat, getting friends to check private stories, yes |
| Threatening to share a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s private information to make them do something | Barter et al (2009) | This age | Yes |
| Using phones, devices or the internet to humiliate or threaten a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | Barter et al (2009)  Sutherland (2011) | This age and older | Yes |
| Using physical violence against a date or boyfriend/girlfriend in self-defence | Barter et al (2009) | More for older | Yes |
| Putting a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s needs above their own | Barter et al. (2009)  Chung (2005)  Halpern-Meekin et al (2013) | This age | Yes |
| Getting friends or a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s friends to watch/spy on them | Barter et al (2009) | This age, if from different schools or one of them not in school, spying | More like social media, doesn’t really happen in person |
| Deliberately teasing/annoying/winding up a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | Barter et al (2009) | You’ll wind them up make them do what you want to, older | Yes |
| Sharing private information about a date or boyfriend/girlfriend without their permission | *Suggested by participant* | If had secrets could spread them everywhere |  |
| Telling a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to go somewhere or do something at specific times | *Suggested by participant* | Make you do things at specific times that they want you to do them, do this or go there | Yes |
| Telling a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to go somewhere or do something at specific times and asking them prove it using photos/messages/a tracker on an app | *Suggested by participant* | Texting to see where they are, can’t go out at a certain time, have to be in at a certain time, this age group |  |
| Wanting to have sex or do something sexual most of the time when with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | Hird (2000) | Constantly trying to be sexual | Yes |
| Physically following/stalking a date or boyfriend/girlfriend without their knowledge | Chung (2005) | Follow you around | Following or stalking |
| Play fighting with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend where both people consent and feel comfortable | Barter et al (2009) |  | Teasing |
| Getting carried away during sexual activity and not stopping straight away when a date or boyfriend/girlfriend asks to | Barter et al (2009)  Hird (2000) | This age and older, wouldn’t use term sexual activity but not sure what | Yes |
| Throwing objects at a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | Hird (2000)  Halpern-Meekin et al (2013) |  |  |
| Arguing with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | Charity Resources  Halpern-Meekin et al (2013) |  | Yes |
| Damaging, breaking or smashing a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s property | Hird (2000)  Fox et al (2014) |  |  |
| Persuading a date or boyfriend/girlfriend that being emotionally/physically hurt is their own fault | (Barter et al., 2009) |  | Yes |
| Blaming | Charity Resources | This age but more for older years | Yes |
| Feeling jealous | Charity Resources  Barter et al (2009)  Sutherland (2011) | All year groups | Yes |
| Your parents do not like them | Charity Resources | Any age group |  |
| Feeling like you are not good enough | Charity Resources | Young age and upwards |  |
| Running away together, run away from home | Charity Resources | Older, not in school | Yes |
| Publicly falsely accusing of cheating | Charity Resources | Any year group, some people blame people for cheating and some people keep it to themselves, some people go around spreading and then other people will get involved | Yes |
| Crying all the time | Charity Resources | Younger years |  |
| Privately falsely accusing of cheating | *Suggested by participant* |  | Yes |
| Agreeing to do something sexual or have sex when a date or boyfriend/girlfriend would like to but you would prefer not to | *Suggested by participant* |  | Yes |
| Spending most of free time with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | *Suggested by participant* | Couldn’t be away from you | Yes |
| Spending more time with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend than with friends | *Suggested by participant* |  | Yes |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Positive Statements** | **Research Source** | **Interview 1** | **Interview 2** |
| Communicating | Charity Resources  Hird (2000)  Stonard et al (2017) |  | Communicating or talking |
| Encouraging each other’s self-care | Charity Resources |  | Say it like that |
| Seek support from family/friends | Barter et al (2009)  Hird (2000) |  | Ok |
| Apologising | Charity Resources |  | Yes |
| Compliments | Charity Resources  Halpern-Meekin et al (2013) |  | Yes |
| Giving gifts | Charity Resources |  | Yes |
| Enjoying the same hobbies together | Charity Resources |  | Having the same things in common, hobbies |
| Encouraging each other’s success | Charity Resources |  | Yes |
| Going on dates | Charity Resources |  | Yes, call it a date |
| Respecting each other’s boundaries | Charity Resources |  | Yes (said respecting, not boundaries) |
| Having fun | Charity Resources |  | Yes |
| Feeling safe | Charity Resources |  | Yes, safe and comfortable |
| Being able to say ‘no’ and being heard | Charity Resources |  | Yes |
| Equality | Charity Resources |  | (Being equal to), Yes |
| Listening | Charity Resources |  | Yes |
| Public displays of affection | Charity Resources |  | Yes |
| Sharing secrets or confidences | Halpern-Meekin et al (2013) |  | Secrets or tell each other everything |
| Enjoying personal space and time away | *Suggested by participant* |  | Personal space or just space |
| Waiting to do something sexual or have sex until they want to | *Suggested by participant* |  | Maybe waiting until a girlfriend or boyfriend is ready |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Verbally pressuring a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend to do something sexual, such as kissing, touching or something else | Saying negative things about a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s appearance/body/ opinions/intelligence including name calling | Tracking or checking where a date or boyfriend/girlfriend is or what they are doing by calling, messaging or using apps |
| Using physical force, such as punching, strangling, beating, kicking, biting or hitting with an object | Physically forcing a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to do something sexual, such as kissing, touching or something else | Persuading a date or boyfriend/girlfriend that being emotionally/ physically hurt is their own fault |
| Pretending to use contraception | Refusing to use contraception | Arguing with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend |
| Requesting, sending or sharing naked photos with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | Sharing private information about a date or boyfriend/girlfriend without their permission | Threatening to physically harm themselves unless the other person does as asked/told |
| Spreading rumours or lies about a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | The same person making most of the decisions | Encouraging a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to use drugs or alcohol |
| Threatening to physically harm a date or boyfriend/girlfriend unless the other person does as asked/told | Sharing naked photos of a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend with other people or over social media | Play fighting with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend where both people consent and feel comfortable |
| Checking a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s phone and social media without their permission | Stopping a date or boyfriend/girlfriend from seeing their friends/ family | Damaging, breaking or smashing a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s property |
| Throwing objects at a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend | Shouting/screaming at a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend | Giving love-bites or hickies to a date or boyfriend/girlfriend |
| Refusing to talk to a date or boyfriend/girlfriend |  |  |
| Encouraging a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to skip, skive off or wag school | Threatening to end a date or relationship unless the other person does as asked/told | Getting friends or a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s friends to watch/spy on them |
| Not stopping sexual activity straight away when a date or boyfriend/girlfriend asks to | Telling a date or boyfriend/girlfriend what to wear, where to go, what to do or who they can see | Threatening to share a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend’s private information to make them do something |
| Putting a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s needs above their own | Embarrass/humiliate a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend | Physically forcing a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to have sexual intercourse |
| Saying negative things about a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s friends/family | Using physical violence against a date or boyfriend/girlfriend in self-defence | Making a date or boyfriend/girlfriend feel guilty about something they have not done |
| Verbally pressuring a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to have sexual intercourse | Physically following/ stalking a date or boyfriend/girlfriend without their knowledge | Using physical force, such as pushing, slapping, hitting, pinching or holding down |
| Telling a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to go somewhere or do something at specific times and asking them to prove it using photos/ messages/a tracker on an app |  |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Feeling pressured to have sex | Communicating | Hitting |
| Refusing to wear a condom | Taking drugs together | Apologising |
| Complements | Giving gifts | Arguing |
| Enjoying the same hobbies together | Falling out with friends/family over each other | Big age difference |
| Cheating | Feeling like you are not good enough | Encouraging each other’s success |
| Encouraging each other to skip school | Going on dates | Running away together |
| Stopping you from seeing your friends | Checking your phone and social media | Telling you what to wear |
| Guilt tripping | Tracking where you are | Giving the silent treatment |

Appendix 2: Domestic Abuse Charity Healthy and Unhealthy Behaviour Game Resources

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Getting paid to do sexual acts | Sending naked photos of yourself | Distributing naked photos of your partner |
| Pretending to take the pill | Respecting each other’s boundaries | Having fun |
| Crying all the time | Threatening to harm yourself if they leave | Feeling safe |
| Spreading lies about them | Calling names | Threatening to harm them physically |
| Being able to say ‘no’ and being heard | Blaming | Always the same person paying for things |
| Equality | Listening | Public displays of affection |
| Giving love bites | Being jealous | Your parents do not like them |
| Enjoying personal space | Encouraging each other’s self-care | False accusations of cheating |

Appendix 3: Pre-Pilot Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

**‘How do Young People Construe Abusive Behaviours in Intimate Relationships’**

**SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

Prior to the interview:

* *Ensure that the disclosure guide has been reviewed and is available*

The interview:

* *Remind them that they are being recorded. Say that you are starting the recording.*
* *Reassure participants of their confidentiality and repeat that they are able to withdraw/stop at any time.*
* *Explain that everything they say is confidential and that it won’t be shared with anyone unless there is a risk of harm to them or someone else.*
* *Ask them not to refer to themselves or other people by name so that the recording is confidential.*
* *Ask them if they have any questions and if they are happy to proceed.*

My research is aiming to find out how young people sometimes behave with other people that they are in a relationship with. I am particularly looking at harmful behaviours in relationships. What I will be doing is asking people in key stage 4 to sort some cards for me. The cards will have statements with behaviours on them. But before I do that, I want to speak to a few students about the statements and other resources I am using.

1. What did you think about the information sheet and consent form?

*Prompt: Did you find them readable? Was the language used appropriate for you? Did it help you to understand what you were going to be doing?*

Follow-on: Was there anything in the information sheet and consent forms that you think needs to be changed? If so, how could it be altered?

1. People in your age group are referred to in lots of different ways. How would you refer to yourself?

*Prompt: What words would you use to describe yourself? For example, would you use the word pupil? Students? Young people/person? Teenager? Adolescent? Any others?*

Follow-on: How would you describe people in your age group to someone else? Why do you think that description is more relevant for you?

1. When I ask people in key stage 4 about relationships, I want to include everything from single dates, short term or new relationships and longer term relationships. Can you tell me how you and your friends describe different types of relationships?

*Prompt: For example, seeing, dating? Any others? Do you feel that the word relationship is relevant for people your age?*

Follow-on: Thinking about different types and lengths of relationships, what words or phrases would describe all or most of those?

1. There are lots of different words used for people in relationships. How would you or your friends refer to the people you are in a relationship with?

*Prompt: For example, would you use the word partner? Date? Boyfriend/girlfriend? Any others?*

Follow-on: Would the ways you describe people you’re in a relationship with change if you were in a different type or length of relationships? If so, how would they change? Which words or phrases would describe all or most of those?

1. I’d like to read out some statements. They are descriptions of behaviours in relationships. You do not need to tell me what you think about the behaviours themselves. I’d like you to think about whether the language used in them is appropriate for your age group. I’d also like you to think about whether the behaviours apply to people in your age group.

*Read statements.*

1. Do you have any other thoughts on relationship behaviours or anything else that we have discussed that you would like to share with me?

*Follow-on: Is there anything else that you would like to share with me that you think is relevant or would be helpful for my understanding?*

At the end of the interview:

* *State that you will email a copy of the information sheet to the participant – highlight the signposting information – use the non-disclosure procedures.*
* *Ask if the recruitment email was helpful or if anything on it needs to be changed.*
* *Ask if they have enjoyed it and to mention the research to friends and ask them to get in touch if they would like to take part – refer to the email address.*

Appendix 4: Participant Information Sheet – Interview

Text

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**How Do Young People Construe Behaviours Within Intimate Relationships?**

**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET - INTERVIEW**

Your school is taking part in some research taking place as part of research for a Doctorate course at the University of Sheffield. You do not have to take part, but please read this information carefully and speak to your parent or carer before you come to a decision.

**What is the research about?**

The research is about how young people sometimes behave towards other young people that they are in a relationship with. The research wants to try to understand how young people think about and understand those behaviours and how they value them in relationships.

**Who is doing the research?**

My name is Sarah and I will be doing the research. I have worked with young people in schools and now would like to do some research with you.

**What will I be asked to do?**

You will take part in a conversation. During this conversation, I will be asking questions about ways which young some young people behave when they are in relationships with each other. You do not need to have had any experience of these behaviours and I will not be asking about your past experiences. I am interested in your viewpoint on them.

You will be asked to go on a video meeting with the me so that I can explain the activity and answer any questions you have. I will send you the link for the meeting. While on the video meeting, we will have a conversation. This will take approximately 30 minutes, but there is no set time for it. It might take less time or could take longer if you have more to say. The conversation will be recorded onto an audio recorder and I will make some written notes.

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**What if I say or do the wrong things?**

There are no wrong answers to the questions. I am just interested in what you think.

**What happens to the recordings?**

The recordings and notes will be kept safe and none of them will have your name on them so that they are confidential. I will use the recordings and notes to help me understand how young people think about and understand different ways that young people behave when they are in relationships with each other. These will be used to create cards to be used in a card sort in the next stage of the research. Your details will not be on the cards and no other participants will know what you said to me.

Once I have finished the research, I will feed back to your school but they will not know which information was yours. I will also write it into a final report for a Doctorate course at the University of Sheffield.

**Will my name be used?**

Everything you say during the research will be private, unless you tell me something about you or someone else being at risk of harm. Then I have to share that information with the Safeguarding Officer in your school. But if that did happen, I would talk to you about it first.

Your name will not be used in the notes or the final report. None of the recordings will have your name on them. Names such as ‘Young Person A’ and ‘Young Person B’ will be used instead. When the report is read, no one will know what you said or which cards had information you gave on them.

**What happens if I change my mind?**

If you change your mind before or during the video meeting that is absolutely fine. Whether you take part is totally up to you. I will ask you at the beginning of the video meeting if you are still happy to participate and you can tell me at any time during it if you have changed your mind and don’t want to take part. You won’t have to explain why and you won’t be in any trouble.

**What should I do if I feel any concern or distress following the research?**

If you feel concerned or worried about anything that has come up during the interview, you can contact [school staff information – only included if they are happy for it to be]. You can also contact your doctor to speak to them. Other organisations you could speak to are:

* The Elm Foundation: <https://www.theelmfoundation.org.uk/> or (free phone) 08000 198 668 (9.30am to 5pm)
* Young Minds: <https://youngminds.org.uk/>
* Childline: <https://www.childline.org.uk/> or 0800 1111
* NSPCC: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/our-services/nspcc-helpline/#contact> or phone 0808 800 5000

**What is the legal basis for processing my personal data?**

According to data protection legislation, we are required to inform you that the legal basis we are applying in order to process your personal data is that ‘processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest’ (Article 6(1)(e)). Further information can be found in the [University’s Privacy Notice](https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general). The University of Sheffield will act as the Data Controller for this study. This means that the University is responsible for looking after your information and using it properly.

**What if I want to make a complaint?**

Minor complaints

If you have a minor complaint then you need to contact the researcher in the first instance:

Sarah Hodson – [shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk)

Alternatively you can contact a research supervisor:

Dr. Lorraine Campbell – [l.n.campbell@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:l.n.campbell@sheffield.ac.uk)

The School of Education, The University of Sheffield

241 Glossop Road, Sheffield, S10 2GW

Formal complaints

If you wish to make a formal complaint or if you are not satisfied with the response from the researcher or supervisor in the first instance, then please contact Professor Pat Sikes using the details below:

Professor Pat Sikes,

School of Education, Edgar Allen House  
241 Glossop Rd, Sheffield, S10 2GW

[p.j.sikes@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:p.j.sikes@sheffield.ac.uk)

If you have any other questions about the research or anything that you would like to ask before completing the consent form, please feel free to contact me using the email address: [shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk)

Thank you for taking part in this research.

Appendix 5: Participant Consent Form – Interview

**How Do Young People Construe Behaviours Within Intimate Relationships?**

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

**Names of Researcher: Sarah Hodson**

**Researcher Supervisor: Dr. Lorraine Campbell**

If you are happy to participate, please read the consent form and initial it:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Please initial the box |
| I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions. |  |
| I understand that my participation is voluntary and I can withdraw at any time before or during the research. I can ask for my information to be taken out of the research up to 2 weeks after my meeting and/or card sort. I understand that I do not need to give a reason. To withdraw, contact Sarah Hodson at [shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk) or the research supervisor (see information sheet). |  |
| I agree to take part in the project. I understand that taking part may include:   * Being interviewed on an online video meeting or by telephone * Completing a card sort on an online video meeting with the card sort being photographed * The meetings/interviews having the audio (sound) recorded |  |
| I understand my personal details such as name and email address, will not be shared with other people and will be confidential. I understand that my responses will be anonymised before analysis. |  |
| I understand that my responses may be used anonymously in publications, reports, web pages and/or other research outputs. |  |
| I agree to take part in the above research project. |  |

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Participant Date Signature

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Date Signature

Appendix 6: Parent/Carer Information Sheet – Interview

Text

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**How Do Young People Construe Behaviours Within Intimate Relationships?**

**PARENT/CARER INFORMATION SHEET**

Your child is being invited you to take part in research being conducted as part of a Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Before you decide whether or not you would like your child to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please feel free to contact me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Thank you for reading this.

**What is the project’s purpose?**

The research is about how some young people sometimes behave towards other young people that they are in a relationship with. The aim of the research is to try to understand how young people think about and understand those behaviours and how they value them in relationships. To do this, some young people will be asked to sort cards into a pattern. These cards will have statements on them which describe ways some young people sometimes behave when they are in a relationship with another young person.

But before this, I would like to speak to some young people to see what they think about the statements on the cards. I will also be asking them about the language used on the cards and on the related documents, such as information sheets. This is to make sure the cards and documents have been designed to find out as much as possible in a way that works for young people. This is the part of the research I am asking your child to participate in. The interview will be done on an online video meeting with me. The information your child provides will inform any changes made to the cards and related documents.

**Why has your child been chosen?**

They have been chosen because they are a student at the school.

**Does your child have to take part?**

Your child’s participation is entirely voluntary and you or they may end participation at any time, even if the research is not finished. You do not have to give a reason. You can do this by contacting me or school staff (see the end of this information sheet for contact details). It is up to you and your child to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide that you would like your child to take part, both you and your child will be emailed a link to a consent form for you to complete. Your child will also be sent their own information sheet. Following this, you can still withdraw at any time up until two weeks after the video meeting. At this point the information your child has provided will be integrated with other young people’s. If you wish to withdraw within two weeks of the video meeting, just contact me let me know that you do not want me to use your data. Any information you have provided will be deleted.

**What will happen to your child if they take part?**

Your child will take part in an online video meeting with me. I will email a link to them for them to access the meeting at a prearranged date and time. During this meeting, I will ask them some questions about statements. These statements will be about ways which some young people sometimes behave when they are in a relationship with another young person. I will make notes and use an audio recorder to record the sound from the video meeting. I will not record any video. The audio recording and notes will be anonymous and stored securely.

The whole video meeting should last approximately 30 minutes, but may be shorter or longer depending on how long your child wishes to speak.

**What do I have to do?**

Your child may need help accessing the video meeting using the link which I will send them. They will also need access to an electronic device with a microphone and camera which can be used for an online video meeting, for example a laptop.

**Where will the research be conducted?**

The research will take place via an online video meeting. They will be in the place where they are staying. I will be in my private office. Guidance on the video meeting will be sent with the link to ensure their safety, privacy and confidentiality.

**Will I or my child be paid for this research?**

No, there is no money being offered for this research.

**What happens if the research study stops earlier than expected?**

If this is the case, the reason(s) will be explained to the you and your child as soon as possible.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work and the resulting feedback will provide future benefits in terms of understandings of behaviours between young people in relationships.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

There are no foreseeable disadvantages in taking part in this research. However, if any discomfort or concerns arise during the research, your child will be given the opportunity to speak to me about those during the meeting. If you or your child have any concerns following the research, these should be brought to my attention as soon as possible by you, your child or a school staff member using the contact details at the end of this form.

**What if something goes wrong?**

If there is concern about any aspect of this research project, it should be addressed in the first instance to Sarah Hodson, School of Education, University of Sheffield, [shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk). You can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Lorraine Campbell, School of Education, University of Sheffield, [l.n.campbell@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:l.n.campbell@sheffield.ac.uk).

If your child is worried about any issues that have come up following the meeting, they have been provided with contact details for several support organisations. If you have concerns, you can contact [school staff information – only included if they are happy for it to be]. You can also contact your doctor to speak to them. Other organisations you could speak to are:

* Young Minds: <https://youngminds.org.uk/>
* NSPCC: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/our-services/nspcc-helpline/#contact> or phone 0808 800 5000

If you have a complaint regarding a reportable serious adverse event, please contact the supervisor. If your complaint relates to an ethical issue or breach, please contact Professor Pat Sikes using the details below:

Professor Pat Sikes  
School of Education, Edgar Allen House  
241 Glossop Rd, Sheffield, S10 2GW

[p.j.sikes@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:p.j.sikes@sheffield.ac.uk)

**Will my child’s taking part in this project be kept confidential?**

Participants will have complete confidentiality at all times. This includes you and your child. All information that I collect during the research will be kept strictly confidential. You and your child will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications. Participant names or identifying details will not be contained in the written notes, audio recordings or in any reporting. These will be anonymised, for example as ‘Participant A’. All documents and recordings will be stored electronically with access controlled by a password known only to the researcher. Written documents and any other physical materials will be locked in a secure filing cabinet. Consent forms and identifying information collected will be secured separately to other materials.

During the online meeting, your child should not identify themselves, other adults or children by name or any other identifiable details.

**Will your child be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?**

The audio recordings and notes of your child’s meeting will be used only to inform the statement cards and documents for the main research study and to inform any related research reports. No other use will be made of them without you and your child’s written permission and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings. All data will be anonymised so that it will not be possible to identify participants or the school.

**What will happen to the results of the research project?**

The research findings will form part of the research for a Doctoral Thesis. A summary of the findings will be provided as feedback to the school. Participants will not be identified in any reporting and will remain entirely anonymous.

**Who is organising and funding the research?**

The School of Education at The University of Sheffield.

**Who has ethically reviewed the project?**

This project has been ethically approved via The University of Sheffield’s School of Education ethics review procedure.

**What is the legal basis for processing my personal data?**

According to data protection legislation, we are required to inform you that the legal basis we are applying in order to process your personal data is that ‘processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest’ (Article 6(1)(e)). Further information can be found in the [University’s Privacy Notice](https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general). The University of Sheffield will act as the Data Controller for this study. This means that the University is responsible for looking after your information and using it properly.

**Contact for further information**

Please feel free to ask the researchers any questions. If you have further queries or need any further information, contact details are:

Researcher: Sarah Hodson – [shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk)

Researcher supervisors: Dr. Lorraine Campbell - [l.n.campbell@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:l.n.campbell@sheffield.ac.uk)

The School of Education, The University of Sheffield

241 Glossop Road, Sheffield

S10 2GW

Thank you for taking part in the research project.

Appendix 7: Parent/Carer Consent Form – Interview

**How Do Young People Construe Behaviours Within Intimate Relationships?**

**PARENT/CARER CONSENT FORM**

**Names of Researcher: Sarah Hodson**

**Researcher Supervisor: Dr. Lorraine Campbell**

If you are happy for your child to participate, please read the consent form and initial it:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Please initial the box |
| I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions. |  |
| I understand that my child’s participation is voluntary and they or I can withdraw them at any time before or during the research. I can ask for their information to be taken out of the research up to 2 weeks after the meeting and/or card sort. I understand that neither I or my child need to give a reason. To withdraw, contact Sarah Hodson at [shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk) or the research supervisor (see information sheet). |  |
| I agree to my child taking part in the project. I understand that taking part may include my child:   * Being interviewed on an online video meeting or by telephone * Completing a card sort on an online video meeting with the card sort being photographed * The meetings/interviews having the audio (sound) recorded |  |
| I understand that personal details such as name and email address, will not be shared with other people and will be confidential. I understand that my child’s responses will be anonymised before analysis. |  |
| I understand that my child’s responses may be used anonymously in publications, reports, web pages and/or other research outputs. |  |
| I agree for my child to take part in the above research project. |  |

Name of child: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent/Carer Date Signature (or legal representative)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Date Signature

Appendix 8: Pilot Q Set Statements

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Verbally pressuring a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to have sexual intercourse | Sending or sharing naked photos with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | Sharing private information about a date or boyfriend/girlfriend without their permission |
| Physically forcing a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to have sexual intercourse | Sharing naked photos of a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to other people or over social media | Telling a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to go somewhere or do something at specific times |
| Verbally pressuring a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to do something sexual, such as kissing, touching or something else | Physically forcing a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to do something sexual, such as kissing, touching or something else | Telling a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to go somewhere or do something at specific times and asking them to prove it using photos/messages/a tracker on an app |
| Asking a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to send or share naked photos of themselves | Spreading rumours or lies about a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | Wanting to have sex or do something sexual most of the time when with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend |
| Using physical force, such as pushing, slapping, hitting, pinching or holding down | Calling a date or boyfriend/girlfriend hurtful names | Spending most of free time with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend |
| Using physical force, such as punching, strangling, beating, kicking, biting or hitting with an object | Threatening to harm a date or boyfriend/girlfriend physically unless the other person does as asked/told | Physically following/stalking a date or boyfriend/girlfriend without their knowledge |
| Pretending to use contraception | Always the same person paying for things | Spending more time with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend than with friends |
| Refusing to use contraception | The same person getting their way most of the time | Threatening to self-harm if a date or boyfriend/girlfriend tries to leave |
| Encouraging a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to use drugs or alcohol | Play fighting with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend where both people consent and feel comfortable | Checking a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s phone and social media without their permission |
| Stopping a date or boyfriend/girlfriend from seeing their friends/family | Embarrass/humiliate a date or boyfriend/girlfriend behind their back | Throwing objects at a date or boyfriend/girlfriend |
| Dating or being in a relationship with someone much younger or older | Shouting/screaming in a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s face | Damaging, breaking or smashing a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s property |
| Cheating on a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | Deliberately teasing/annoying/winding up a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | Arguing with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend |
| Encouraging a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to skip, skive off or wag school | Telling a date or boyfriend/girlfriend who they can see, where they can go or when they can go out | Embarrass/humiliate a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to their face |
| Paying a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to do something sexual such as touching, kissing or something else | Tracking or checking where a date or boyfriend/girlfriend is or what they are doing by calling, messaging or using apps | Getting carried away during sexual activity and not stopping straight away when a date or boyfriend/girlfriend asks to |
| Telling a date or boyfriend/girlfriend what to wear | Threatening to share a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s private information to make them do something | Getting friends or a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s friends to watch/spy on them |
| Giving love-bites or hickies to a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | Using phones, devices or the internet to humiliate or threaten a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | Putting a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s needs above their own |
| Threatening to end a date or relationship unless the other person does as asked/told | Embarrass/humiliate a date or boyfriend/girlfriend in front of other people | Refusing to talk to a date or boyfriend/girlfriend |
| Kissing or sexually touching a date or boyfriend/girlfriend when it is known that they do not want it to happen | Saying negative things about a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s appearance/body/friends/ family | Using physical violence against a date or boyfriend/girlfriend in self-defence |
| Belittling a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s opinions | Making a date or boyfriend/girlfriend feel guilty about something they have not done |  |

Appendix 9: Q Sort Distribution Grid and Condition of Instruction

**When dating or in a relationship, this behaviour is…**

**Most Unacceptable Most Acceptable**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
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|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Appendix 10: Q Set Statements

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Verbally pressuring a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend to do something sexual, such as kissing, touching or something else | Saying negative things about a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s appearance/body/ opinions/intelligence including name calling | Tracking or checking where a date or boyfriend/girlfriend is or what they are doing by calling, messaging or using apps |
| Using physical force, such as punching, strangling, beating, kicking, biting or hitting with an object | Physically forcing a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to do something sexual, such as kissing, touching or something else | Persuading a date or boyfriend/girlfriend that being emotionally/ physically hurt is their own fault |
| Pretending to use contraception | Refusing to use contraception | Arguing with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend |
| Requesting, sending or sharing naked photos with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | Sharing private information about a date or boyfriend/girlfriend without their permission | Threatening to physically harm themselves unless the other person does as asked/told |
| Spreading rumours or lies about a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | The same person making most of the decisions | Encouraging a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to use drugs or alcohol |
| Threatening to physically harm a date or boyfriend/girlfriend unless the other person does as asked/told | Sharing naked photos of a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend with other people or over social media | Play fighting with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend where both people consent and feel comfortable |
| Checking a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s phone and social media without their permission | Stopping a date or boyfriend/girlfriend from seeing their friends/ family | Damaging, breaking or smashing a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s property |
| Throwing objects at a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend | Shouting/screaming at a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend | Giving love-bites or hickies to a date or boyfriend/girlfriend |
| Refusing to talk to a date or boyfriend/girlfriend |  |  |
| Encouraging a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to skip, skive off or wag school | Threatening to end a date or relationship unless the other person does as asked/told | Getting friends or a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s friends to watch/spy on them |
| Not stopping sexual activity straight away when a date or boyfriend/girlfriend asks to | Telling a date or boyfriend/girlfriend what to wear, where to go, what to do or who they can see | Threatening to share a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend’s private information to make them do something |
| Putting a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s needs above their own | Embarrass/humiliate a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend | Physically forcing a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to have sexual intercourse |
| Saying negative things about a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s friends/family | Using physical violence against a date or boyfriend/girlfriend in self-defence | Making a date or boyfriend/girlfriend feel guilty about something they have not done |
| Verbally pressuring a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to have sexual intercourse | Physically following/ stalking a date or boyfriend/girlfriend without their knowledge | Using physical force, such as pushing, slapping, hitting, pinching or holding down |
| Telling a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to go somewhere or do something at specific times and asking them to prove it using photos/ messages/a tracker on an app |  |  |
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 |

Appendix 11: Participant Information Sheet – Online Research

Text

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

**How Do Young People Construe Potentially Harmful Behaviours Within Intimate Relationships?**

**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

Your school is taking part in some research taking place as part of research for a Doctorate course at the University of Sheffield. You do not have to take part, but please read this information carefully and speak to your parent or carer before you come to a decision.

**What is the research about?**

The research is about how some young people may behave towards other young people that they are in a relationship with (this may include someone they have been on a date with, are dating or are in a long-term relationship with). The aim of the research is to try to understand how young people think about and understand potentially harmful behaviours and how acceptable or unacceptable they perceive them to be in relationships.

**Who is doing the research?**

My name is Sarah and I will be doing the research. I have worked with young people in schools and now would like to do some research with you.

**What will I be asked to do?**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| I will post a set of cards and instructions to the place where you are staying. You will meet me in an online video meeting and I’ll ask you to sort a set of cards into a pattern of your choice. These cards will have statements on them which describe ways that some young people may behave when they are in a relationship with another young person. After the card sort, I will offer you the opportunity to answer some questions about the way you have arranged your cards. | | Graphical user interface, application  Description automatically generated | |
| The statements include references to potentially harmful behaviours. These include sensitive topics such as sexual consent, physical aggression, coercion and control. Example statements are, ‘Not stopping sexual activity straight away when a date or boyfriend/girlfriend asks to’ and ‘Play fighting with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend where both people consent and feel comfortable’. Your responses will only be seen by me. I will not be asking you about your experiences, only your perceptions of how acceptable/unacceptable you perceive the behaviours on the statements to be. | | |  |
| Graphical user interface  Description automatically generated | The activities will take approximately 45 minutes, but there is no time limit. It might take less time or you can take longer if you need to. The activity and conversation will be recorded onto an audio recorder and I will make some written notes.  It is expected to be an enjoyable and interesting activity, giving you an opportunity to reflect on behaviours within relationships. | |  |

**What if I say or do the wrong things?**

There is no correct way to sort the cards and there are no wrong answers to the questions. I am just interested in what you think.

**What happens to the recordings and notes?**

The recordings and notes will be kept safe and none of them will have your name on them so that they are confidential. I will use the recordings and notes to help me understand how young people think about and understand different ways that young people behave when they are in relationships with each other. After I have gathered the information from all the young people taking part in the research, I will analyse them to try to find key viewpoints across the whole group. I may then get in touch with you to see what you think about these viewpoints. Once I have finished the research, I will feed back to your school but they will not know which information was yours. I will also write it into a final report for a Doctorate course at the University of Sheffield.

**Will my name be used?**

Everything you say during the research will be private, unless you tell me something about you or someone else being at risk of harm. Then I have to share that information with the Safeguarding Officer in your school. But if that did happen, I would talk to you about it first.

Your name will not be used in the notes or the final report. None of the recordings will have your name on them. Names such as ‘Young Person A’ and ‘Young Person B’ will be used instead. When the report is read, no one will know what you said or what pattern you sorted the cards into.

**What happens if I change my mind?**

If you change your mind before or during the video meeting that is absolutely fine. Whether you take part is totally up to you. I will ask you at the beginning of the video meeting if you are still happy to participate and you can tell me at any time during it if you have changed your mind and don’t want to take part. You won’t have to explain why and you won’t be in any trouble.

**What should I do if I feel any concern or distress following the research?**

If you feel concerned or worried about anything that has come up during the interview, you can contact [school staff information – only included if they are happy for it to be]. You can also contact your doctor to speak to them. Other organisations you could speak to are:

* The Elm Foundation: <https://www.theelmfoundation.org.uk/> or (free phone) 08000 198 668 (9.30am to 5pm)
* Young Minds: <https://youngminds.org.uk/>
* Childline: <https://www.childline.org.uk/> or 0800 1111
* NSPCC: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/our-services/nspcc-helpline/#contact> or phone 0808 800 5000

**What is the legal basis for processing my personal data?**

According to data protection legislation, we are required to inform you that the legal basis we are applying in order to process your personal data is that ‘processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest’ (Article 6(1)(e)). Further information can be found in the [University’s Privacy Notice](https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general). The University of Sheffield will act as the Data Controller for this study. This means that the University is responsible for looking after your information and using it properly. Data will be securely stored and archived within university systems until the completion of the project, after which it will be safely destroyed.

Formal complaints

If you wish to make a formal complaint you can contact the researcher at [shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk). Alternatively you can contact a research supervisor:

Dr. Lorraine Campbell – [l.n.campbell@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:l.n.campbell@sheffield.ac.uk)

School of Education, University of Sheffield, 241 Glossop Road, Sheffield, S10 2GW

If you are not satisfied with the response from the researcher or supervisor, then please contact Dr Anna Weighall, the School of Education Chair of Ethics, using the details below:

Dr Anna Weighall - [anna.weighall@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:anna.weighall@sheffield.ac.uk)

School of Education, Edgar Allen House, 241 Glossop Rd, Sheffield, S10 2GW

**If you have any questions about the research or have anything that you would like to ask before completing the consent form, please feel free to contact me using the email address:** [**shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk**](mailto:shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk)

Thank you for taking part in this research.

Appendix 12: Participant Information Sheet – In Person Research

Text

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**How Do Young People Construe Potentially Harmful Behaviours Within Intimate Relationships?**

**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

Your school is taking part in some research taking place as part of research for a Doctorate course at the University of Sheffield. You do not have to take part, but please read this information carefully and speak to your parent or carer before you come to a decision.

**What is the research about?**

The research is about how some young people may behave towards other young people that they are in a relationship with (this may include someone they have been on a date with, are dating or are in a long-term relationship with). The aim of the research is to try to understand how young people think about and understand potentially harmful behaviours and how acceptable or unacceptable they perceive them to be in relationships.

**Who is doing the research?**

My name is Sarah and I will be doing the research. I have worked with young people in schools and now would like to do some research with you.

The activities will take place in school. If you have any particular vulnerability to coronavirus or concerns about completing the activity in person at school, you can take part through an online meeting using cards which I send to you. Just email me at [shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk) saying that you would like to take part online and I will arrange it with you.

Before the meeting in school, you will be asked if you have had coronavirus symptoms or been in contact with anyone who has in the last 14 days. If you have, we will need rearrange you taking part in the activities or you can take part online.

**What will I be asked to do?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| You will meet with me in school. I will ask you to sort a set of cards into a pattern of your choice, which will show how acceptable or unacceptable you perceive potentially harmful behaviours to be. These cards will have statements on them which describe ways that some young people may behave when they are in a relationship with another young person. I will explain the activity beforehand and answer any questions you have. You will need a pen/pencil to write the card numbers on a sheet of paper when you have finished. |  |
| The activities will take approximately 30 minutes, but there is no time limit. It might take less time or you can take longer if you need to. It is expected to be an enjoyable and interesting activity, giving you an opportunity to reflect on behaviours within relationships. During the meeting in school, social distancing will be maintained at all times. I will wear a mask. Everything you need for the card sort will be ready for you and you will not need to take anything from me or hand anything to me. You will be using your own pen or pencil to write down the card numbers.  The statements include references to potentially harmful behaviours. These include sensitive topics such as sexual consent, physical aggression, coercion and control. Example statements are, ‘Not stopping sexual activity straight away when a date or boyfriend/girlfriend asks to’ and ‘Play fighting with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend where both people consent and feel comfortable’. Your responses will only be seen by me. I will not be asking you about your experiences, only your perceptions of how acceptable/unacceptable you perceive the behaviours on the statements to be. | |
| After the card sort, I will offer you the opportunity to answer some questions about the way you have arranged their cards in an online meeting on another day. The online meeting will take approximately 20 minutes, but might be shorter or longer depending on how much you would like to tell me. The online meeting would be recorded with an audio recorder and I will make some written notes. This online meeting is optional, I will ask you if you would like to do this after you have finished sorting the cards. | A picture containing text, green, sign, screenshot  Description automatically generated |

**What if I say or do the wrong things?**

There is no correct way to sort the cards and there are no wrong answers to the questions. I am just interested in what you think.

**What happens to the recordings and notes?**

The recordings and notes will be kept safe and none of them will have your name on them, so that they are confidential. I will use the recordings and notes to help me understand how young people think about and understand different ways that young people behave when they are in relationships with each other. After I have gathered information from all the young people taking part in the research, I will analyse them to try to find key viewpoints across the whole group. I may then get in touch with you to see what you think about these viewpoints. Once I have finished the research, I will feedback to your school, but they will not know which information was yours. I will also write it into a final report for a Doctorate course at the University of Sheffield.

**Will my name be used?**

Everything you say during the research will be private, unless you tell me something about you or someone else being at risk of harm. Then I have to share that information with the Safeguarding Officer in your school. But if that did happen, I would talk to you about it first.

Your name will not be used in the notes or final report. None of the recordings will contain your name. Names such as ‘Young Person A’ will be used instead. When the report is read, no one will know what you said or how you sorted the cards.

**What happens if I change my mind?**

If you change your mind before or during the activities that is absolutely fine. Whether you take part is totally up to you. I will ask you at the beginning of the activities if you are still happy to participate and you can tell me at any time during them if you have changed your mind and don’t want to take part. You won’t have to explain why and you won’t be in any trouble.

**What should I do if I feel any concern or distress following the research?**

If you feel concerned or worried about anything that has come up during the interview, you can contact [school staff information – only included if they are happy for it to be]. You can also contact your doctor to speak to them. Other organisations you could speak to are:

* The Elm Foundation: <https://www.theelmfoundation.org.uk/> or (free phone) 08000 198 668 (9.30am to 5pm)
* Young Minds: <https://youngminds.org.uk/>
* Childline: <https://www.childline.org.uk/> or 0800 1111
* NSPCC: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/our-services/nspcc-helpline/#contact> or phone 0808 800 5000
* Young Minds information about Coronavirus: <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/looking-after-yourself/coronavirus-and-mental-health/>

**What is the legal basis for processing my personal data?**

According to data protection legislation, we are required to inform you that the legal basis we are applying in order to process your personal data is that ‘processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest’ (Article 6(1)(e)). Further information can be found in the [University’s Privacy Notice](https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general). The University of Sheffield will act as the Data Controller for this study. This means that the University is responsible for looking after your information and using it properly. Data will be securely stored and archived within university systems until the completion of the project, after which it will be safely destroyed.

Formal complaints

If you wish to make a formal complaint you can contact the researcher at [shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk). Alternatively you can contact a research supervisor:

Dr. Lorraine Campbell – [l.n.campbell@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:l.n.campbell@sheffield.ac.uk)

School of Education, University of Sheffield, 241 Glossop Road, Sheffield, S10 2GW

If you are not satisfied with the response from the researcher or supervisor, then please contact Dr Anna Weighall, the School of Education Chair of Ethics, using the details below:

Dr Anna Weighall - [anna.weighall@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:anna.weighall@sheffield.ac.uk)

School of Education, Edgar Allen House, 241 Glossop Rd, Sheffield, S10 2GW

**If you have any questions about the research or have anything that you would like to ask before completing the consent form, please feel free to contact me using the email address:** [**shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk**](mailto:shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk)

Thank you for taking part in this research.

Appendix 13: Parent/Carer Information Sheet – Online Research

Text

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**How Do Young People Construe Potentially Harmful Behaviours Within Intimate Relationships?**

**PARENT/CARER INFORMATION SHEET**

Your child is being invited to take part in research conducted as part of a Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Before you decide whether or not you would like your child to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please feel free to contact me if you would like more information. Thank you for reading this.

**What is the project’s purpose?**

The research is about how some young people may behave towards other young people that they are in a relationship with (this may include someone they have been on a date with, are dating or are in a long-term relationship with).

The aim of the research is to try to understand how young people think about and understand potentially harmful behaviours and how acceptable or unacceptable they perceive them to be in relationships. This is so that the research can inform future interventions/support in this area.

**Why has your child been chosen?**

They have been chosen because they are a student at the school. All students in your child’s year group have been given the opportunity to take part in the research.

**What will your child do if they take part?**

I will post a set of cards, a piece of paper showing a triangular pattern and instructions to the place where your child is staying. Your child will then take part in an online video meeting with me, lasting approximately 45 minutes. When they meet with me, I will ask them to sort a set of cards into a pattern of their choice, which will show how acceptable or unacceptable they perceive potentially harmful behaviours to be. These cards will have statements on them which describe ways that some young people may behave when they are in a relationship with another young person. After the card sort, I will offer your child the opportunity to answer some questions about the way they have arranged their cards.

The statements include references to potentially harmful behaviours. These include sensitive topics such as sexual consent, physical aggression, coercion and control. Example statements are, ‘Not stopping sexual activity straight away when a date or boyfriend/girlfriend asks to’ and ‘Play fighting with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend where both people consent and feel comfortable’. Their responses will only be seen by me. I will not be asking them about their own experiences, only their perceptions of how acceptable/unacceptable they perceive the behaviours on the statements to be. The statements have been developed through reviewing relevant research, ideas provided by young people in your child’s age group and resources provided by The Elm Foundation, a [*local area inserted here*]-based charity working with secondary age children on healthy/unhealthy relationship behaviours. The statements have been piloted and discussed with young people in key stage 4 to ensure they are informative for the research aims, whilst making sense and being relevant to young people.

I would use an audio recorder to record the sound from the video meeting. I will not record any video. The audio recordings and any notes I take will be anonymous and stored securely. Finally, I will analyse the findings and provide feedback to the school. This feedback will be about the general research findings and not about your child individually.

**Will your child’s taking part in this project be kept confidential?**

All the information collected during the research will be kept strictly confidential and both participants and parents/carers will have complete confidentiality at all times. The only exception to this is if your child discloses information relating to themselves or another person being at risk of harm. In those circumstances, I would inform the school safeguarding officer, in line with school and local authority safeguarding procedures. I would also need to inform the research supervisor.

The personal data collected will constitute names, school year group, gender, the name of the school and email addresses. It will be ensured that these names and contact details are stored separately to the data collected during the research activities. You, your child and the school will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications. Participant names or identifying details will not be contained in the written notes, audio recordings or in any reporting. These will be anonymised, for example as ‘Young Person 1’. All documents and recordings will be stored electronically with access controlled by a password known only to the researcher. Written documents and any other physical materials will be locked in a secure filing cabinet. Consent forms and identifying information collected will be securely stored separately to other materials. Data will be securely stored and archived within university systems until the completion of the project, after which it will be safely destroyed.

**Where will the research be conducted?**

The research will take place via an online video meeting, They will be in a place of your/their choosing, e.g., at home. I will be in my private office. Guidance on the video meeting will be sent with the link to ensure their safety, privacy and confidentiality.

**What do I have to do?**

If you would like your child to take part, please complete the attached consent form and return it to school. Or you can use this link to complete an online consent form: <https://research.sc/participant/login/dynamic/C1490A92-1786-42EB-9DBE-A7EA7CD32E2C>. If you give your child consent to take part, they will also be provided with their own information sheet and consent form to complete. Your child may need help accessing the video meeting using the link which I will send them. They will also need access to an electronic device with a microphone and camera which can be used for an online video meeting, for example a laptop.

**Does your child have to take part?**

Your child’s participation is voluntary and you or they may end participation at any time, even if the research is not finished. You/they do not have to give a reason. You/they can do this by contacting me (Sarah - [shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk)) or school staff. It is up to you and your child to decide whether or not to take part. Following this, you or your child can still withdraw at any time up until two weeks after the online meeting. At this point, the information your child has provided will be integrated with responses from other young people. If you ask for their data to be withdrawn, information you have provided will be deleted.

**Will I or my child be paid for this research?**

No, there is no money being offered for this research.

**What happens if the research study stops earlier than expected?**

If this is the case, the reason(s) will be explained to the you and your child as soon as possible.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

This research may enable young people to reflect upon their understandings of healthy and unhealthy behaviours in relationships. It is also hoped that this work and the resulting feedback will provide future benefits in terms of understandings of behaviours between young people in relationships.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

There are no foreseeable disadvantages in taking part in this research. All risk assessments related to coronavirus will be strictly adhered to. However, if any discomfort or concerns arise during the research, your child will be given the opportunity to speak to me about those during the in person and online meetings. If you or your child have any concerns following the research, these should be brought to my attention as soon as possible by you, your child or a school staff member using the contact details at the end of this form.

**What if something goes wrong?**

If your child is worried about any issues that have come up following the meeting, they have been provided with contact details for several support organisations. If you have concerns, you can contact [school staff information – only included if they are happy for it to be]. You can also contact your doctor to speak to them. Other organisations you could speak to are:

* Young Minds: <https://youngminds.org.uk/>
* NSPCC: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/our-services/nspcc-helpline/#contact> or phone 0808 800 5000
* Young Minds parent information about coronavirus: <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/supporting-your-child-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>

In addition, the university has a policy for safeguarding to aim to prevent harm in research. The policy is available at: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/rs/ethicsandintegrity/safeguarding>

The university safeguarding contact is [name and contact details to be added when confirmed].

If there is concern about any aspect of this research project, please contact the researcher:

Sarah Hodson - [shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk)

You can also contact the research supervisor:

Dr. Lorraine Campbell - [l.n.campbell@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:l.n.campbell@sheffield.ac.uk)

School of Education, University of Sheffield, 241 Glossop Road, Sheffield, S10 2GW

If you are not satisfied with the response from the researcher or supervisor, then please contact Dr Anna Weighall, the School of Education Chair of Ethics, using the details below:

Dr Anna Weighall - [anna.weighall@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:anna.weighall@sheffield.ac.uk)

School of Education, Edgar Allen House, 241 Glossop Rd, Sheffield, S10 2GW

**Will your child be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?**

The audio recordings and notes of your child’s activities made during this research will be used only for analysis and to inform any related research reports. No other use will be made of them without you and your child’s written permission and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings. All data will be anonymised so that it will not be possible to identify participants or the school.

**What will happen to the results of the research project?**

The research findings will form part of the research for a Doctoral Thesis. A summary of the findings will be provided as feedback to the school. Participants will not be identified in any reporting and will remain entirely anonymous.

**Who is organising and funding the research?**

The School of Education at The University of Sheffield.

**Who has ethically reviewed the project?**

This project has been ethically approved via The University of Sheffield’s School of Education ethics review procedure.

**What is the legal basis for processing my personal data?**

According to data protection legislation, we are required to inform you that the legal basis we are applying in order to process your personal data is that ‘processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest’ (Article 6(1)(e)). Further information can be found in the [University’s Privacy Notice](https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general). The University of Sheffield will act as the Data Controller for this study. This means that the University is responsible for looking after your information and using it properly.

**Contact for further information**

Please feel free to contact the researcher with any questions. If you have further queries or need any further information, my contact details are:

Researcher: Sarah Hodson – [shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk)

Thank you to you and your child for taking part in the research.

Appendix 14: Parent/Carer Information Sheet – In Person Research

Text

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**How Do Young People Construe Potentially Harmful Behaviours Within Intimate Relationships?**

**PARENT/CARER INFORMATION SHEET**

Your child is being invited to take part in research conducted as part of a Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Before you decide whether or not you would like your child to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please feel free to contact me if you would like more information. Thank you for reading this.

**What is the project’s purpose?**

The research is about how some young people may behave towards other young people that they are in a relationship with (this may include someone they have been on a date with, are dating or are in a long-term relationship with).

The aim of the research is to try to understand how young people think about and understand potentially harmful behaviours and how acceptable or unacceptable they perceive them to be in relationships. This is so that the research can inform future interventions/support in this area.

**Why has your child been chosen?**

They have been chosen because they are a student at the school. All students in your child’s year group have been given the opportunity to take part in the research.

**What will your child do if they take part?**

I will be asking young people to meet with me in school for approximately 30 minutes. When they meet with me, I will ask them to sort a set of cards into a pattern of their choice, which will show how acceptable or unacceptable they perceive potentially harmful behaviours to be. These cards will have statements on them which describe ways that some young people may behave when they are in a relationship with another young person.

The statements include references to potentially harmful behaviours. These include sensitive topics such as sexual consent, physical aggression, coercion and control. Example statements are, ‘Not stopping sexual activity straight away when a date or boyfriend/girlfriend asks to’ and ‘Play fighting with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend where both people consent and feel comfortable’. Their responses will only be seen by me. I will not be asking them about their own experiences, only their perceptions of how acceptable/unacceptable they perceive the behaviours on the statements to be. The statements have been developed through reviewing relevant research, ideas provided by young people in your child’s age group and resources provided by The Elm Foundation, a [*local area inserted here*]-based charity working with secondary age children on healthy/unhealthy relationship behaviours. The statements have been piloted and discussed with young people in key stage 4 to ensure they are informative for the research aims, whilst making sense and being relevant to young people.

After the card sort, I will offer your child the opportunity to answer some questions about the way they have arranged their cards in an online meeting on another day. This would take approximately 20 minutes. I would use an audio recorder to record the sound from the video meeting. I will not record any video. The audio recordings and any notes I take will be anonymous and stored securely. This online meeting is optional, I will ask your child if they would like to do this after they have finished sorting the cards.

Finally, I will analyse the findings and provide feedback to the school. This feedback will be about the general research findings and not about your child individually.

**Will my child’s taking part in this project be kept confidential?**

All the information collected during the research will be kept strictly confidential and both participants and parents/carers will have complete confidentiality at all times. The only exception to this is if your child discloses information relating to themselves or another person being at risk of harm. In those circumstances, I would inform the school safeguarding officer, in line with school and local authority safeguarding procedures. I would also need to inform the research supervisor.

The personal data collected will constitute names, school year group, gender, the name of the school and, potentially, email addresses (if taking part in online research activities). It will be ensured that these names and contact details are stored separately to the data collected during the research activities. You, your child and the school will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications. Participant names or identifying details will not be contained in the written notes, audio recordings or in any reporting. These will be anonymised, for example as ‘Young Person 1’. All documents and recordings will be stored electronically with access controlled by a password known only to the researcher. Written documents and any other physical materials will be locked in a secure filing cabinet. Consent forms and identifying information collected will be securely stored separately to other materials. Data will be securely stored and archived within university systems until the completion of the project, after which it will be safely destroyed.

**Where will the research be conducted?**

The research will take place in school. During the meeting in school, social distancing will be maintained at all times. I will wear a mask. Everything they need for the card sort (the cards, instructions and a picture of the pattern) will be ready for them and they will not need to take anything from me or hand anything to me. If your child agrees to take part in an online video meeting, they will be in a place of your/their choosing, e.g., at home. I will be in my private office. Guidance on the video meeting will be sent with the link to ensure their safety, privacy and confidentiality.

**What do I have to do?**

If you would like your child to take part, please complete the attached consent form and return it to school. Or you can use this link to complete an online consent form: <https://research.sc/participant/login/dynamic/C1490A92-1786-42EB-9DBE-A7EA7CD32E2C>. If you give your child consent to take part, they will also be provided with their own information sheet and consent form to complete. If your child would like to take part in the later online meeting, they may need help accessing the video meeting using the link which I will send them. They will also need access to an electronic device with a microphone and camera which can be used for an online video meeting, for example a laptop.

**Does your child have to take part?**

Your child’s participation is voluntary and you or they may end participation at any time, even if the research is not finished. You/they do not have to give a reason. You/they can do this by contacting me (Sarah - [shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk)) or school staff. It is up to you and your child to decide whether or not to take part. Following this, you or your child can still withdraw at any time up until two weeks after the card sort or online meeting, whichever is latest. At this point, the information your child has provided will be integrated with responses from other young people. If you ask for their data to be withdrawn, information you have provided will be deleted.

**Will I or my child be paid for this research?**

No, there is no money being offered for this research.

**What happens if the research study stops earlier than expected?**

If this is the case, the reason(s) will be explained to the you and your child as soon as possible.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

This research may enable young people to reflect upon their understandings of healthy and unhealthy behaviours in relationships. It is also hoped that this work and the resulting feedback will provide future benefits in terms of understandings of behaviours between young people in relationships.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

There are no foreseeable disadvantages in taking part in this research. All risk assessments related to coronavirus will be strictly adhered to. However, if any discomfort or concerns arise during the research, your child will be given the opportunity to speak to me about those during the in person and online meetings. If you or your child have any concerns following the research, these should be brought to my attention as soon as possible by you, your child or a school staff member using the contact details at the end of this form.

**What if something goes wrong?**

If your child is worried about any issues that have come up following the meeting, they have been provided with contact details for several support organisations. If you have concerns, you can contact [school staff information – only included if they are happy for it to be]. You can also contact your doctor to speak to them. Other organisations you could speak to are:

* Young Minds: <https://youngminds.org.uk/>
* NSPCC: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/our-services/nspcc-helpline/#contact> or phone 0808 800 5000
* Young Minds parent information about coronavirus: <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/supporting-your-child-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>

In addition, the university has a policy for safeguarding to aim to prevent harm in research. The policy is available at: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/rs/ethicsandintegrity/safeguarding>

The university safeguarding contact is [name and contact details to be added when confirmed].

If there is concern about any aspect of this research project, please contact the researcher:

Sarah Hodson - [shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk)

You can also contact the research supervisor:

Dr. Lorraine Campbell - [l.n.campbell@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:l.n.campbell@sheffield.ac.uk)

School of Education, University of Sheffield, 241 Glossop Road, Sheffield, S10 2GW

If you are not satisfied with the response from the researcher or supervisor, then please contact Dr Anna Weighall, the School of Education Chair of Ethics, using the details below:

Dr Anna Weighall - [anna.weighall@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:anna.weighall@sheffield.ac.uk)

School of Education, Edgar Allen House, 241 Glossop Rd, Sheffield, S10 2GW

**Will your child be recorded and how will the recorded media be used?**

If your child takes part in the online interview, the audio recording will be used only for analysis and to inform any related research reports. No other use will be made of them without you and your child’s written permission and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings. All data will be anonymised so that it will not be possible to identify participants or the school.

**What will happen to the results of the research project?**

The research findings will form part of the research for a Doctoral Thesis. A summary of the findings will be provided as feedback to the school. Participants will not be identified in any reporting and will remain entirely anonymous.

**Who is organising and funding the research?**

The School of Education at The University of Sheffield.

**Who has ethically reviewed the project?**

This project has been ethically approved via The University of Sheffield’s School of Education ethics review procedure.

**What is the legal basis for processing my personal data?**

According to data protection legislation, we are required to inform you that the legal basis we are applying in order to process your personal data is that ‘processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest’ (Article 6(1)(e)). Further information can be found in the [University’s Privacy Notice](https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general). The University of Sheffield will act as the Data Controller for this study. This means that the University is responsible for looking after your information and using it properly.

**Contact for further information**

Please feel free to contact the researcher with any questions. If you have further queries or need any further information, my contact details are:

Researcher: Sarah Hodson – [shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk)

Thank you to you and your child for taking part in the research.

Appendix 15: P Set Demographic Information and Participant Codes Key

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Q sort Number | Participant Code | Participant Number | Year Group | Gender | School | Post-Sort Interview |
| 1 | YA1Y10F\* | YA1 | 10 | Female | School S | Yes |
| 2 | YA3Y10F\* | YA3 | 10 | Female | School S | Yes |
| 3 | YA8Y10F | YA8 | 10 | Female | School P | Yes |
| 4 | YA9Y11F | YA9 | 11 | Female | School P | Yes |
| 5 | YA13Y10F | YA13 | 10 | Female | School W | Yes |
| 6 | YA33Y10M | YA33 | 10 | Male | School J | No |
| 7 | YA34Y10F | YA34 | 10 | Female | School J | No |
| 8 | YA41Y10F | YA41 | 10 | Female | School E | No |
| 9 | YA42Y10F | YA42 | 10 | Female | School E | No |
| 10 | YA44Y10M | YA44 | 10 | Male | School E | No |
| 11 | YA45Y10M | YA45 | 10 | Male | School P | No |
| 12 | YA46Y10F | YA46 | 10 | Female | School P | No |
| 13 | YA47Y10F | YA47 | 10 | Female | School P | No |
| 14 | YA48Y10F | YA48 | 10 | Female | School P | No |
| 15 | YA49Y10M | YA49 | 10 | Male | School P | No |
| 16 | YA50Y10M | YA50 | 10 | Male | School P | No |
| 17 | YA51Y10M | YA51 | 10 | Male | School P | No |
| 18 | YA52Y10M | YA52 | 10 | Male | School P | No |
| 19 | YA53Y10M | YA53 | 10 | Male | School P | No |
| 20 | YA18Y11F | YA18 | 11 | Female | School G | No |
| 21 | YA19Y11M | YA19 | 11 | Male | School G | No |
| 22 | YA20Y11F | YA20 | 11 | Female | School G | No |
| 23 | YA21Y11F | YA21 | 11 | Female | School G | No |
| 24 | YA23Y11F | YA23 | 11 | Female | School G | No |
| 25 | YA24Y11F | YA24 | 11 | Female | School G | No |
| 26 | YA27Y11F | YA27 | 11 | Female | School G | No |

*\* indicates a participant who took part in an interview during the Q set generation process, prior to the main study*

The participant code is made up of:

* Participant number (e.g., YA1)
* Year group (Y10 or Y11)
* Gender (M or F)

Appendix 16: Participant Consent Form – Online Research

Text

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

**How Do Young People Construe Potentially Harmful Behaviours**

**Within Intimate Relationships?**

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

**Names of Researcher: Sarah Hodson**

**Researcher Supervisor: Dr. Lorraine Campbell**

If you are happy to participate, please read the consent form and initial it:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Please initial the box |
| I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions. |  |
| I confirm that I have not had coronavirus symptoms or knowingly had contact with anyone who has had coronavirus symptoms in the 14 days prior to the card sort meeting |  |
| I understand that my participation is voluntary and I can withdraw at any time before or during the research. I can ask for my information to be taken out of the research up to 2 weeks after my card sort and/or online meeting. I understand that I do not need to give a reason. To withdraw, contact Sarah Hodson at [shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk) or the research supervisor (see information sheet). |  |
| I agree to take part in the project. I understand that taking part may include:   * Completing a card sort and being interviewed on an online video meeting * The online meetings/interviews having the audio (sound) recorded. |  |
| I understand that if I share information about myself or other/s being at risk of harm, this will be reported to the school safeguarding officer according to school and local authority safeguarding procedures. |  |
| I understand my personal details such as name and email address, will not be shared with other people and will be confidential. I understand that my responses will be anonymised before analysis. |  |
| I understand that my responses may be used anonymously in publications, reports, web pages and/or other research outputs. |  |
| I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials generated as part of this project to The University of Sheffield. |  |
| I agree to take part in the above research project. |  |

Name of participant: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of researcher: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Appendix 17: Images of Gorilla Information and Consent Form Programme – Online Research

Diagram

Description automatically generated

Diagram

Description automatically generatedDiagram

Description automatically generated

Diagram, schematic

Description automatically generated

Appendix 18: Parent/Carer Consent Form – Online Research

Text

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**How Do Young People Construe Potentially Harmful Behaviours Within Intimate Relationships?**

**PARENT/CARER CONSENT FORM**

**Names of Researcher: Sarah Hodson**

**Researcher Supervisor: Dr. Lorraine Campbell**

If you are happy for your child to participate, please read the consent form and initial it:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Please initial the box |
| I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions. |  |
| I confirm that my child has not had coronavirus symptoms or knowingly had contact with anyone who has had coronavirus symptoms in the 14 days prior to the card sort meeting |  |
| I understand that my child’s participation is voluntary and they or I can withdraw them at any time before or during the research. I can ask for my child’s information to be taken out of the research up to 2 weeks after the card sort and/or online meeting. I understand that we do not need to give a reason. To withdraw, contact Sarah Hodson at [shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk) or the research supervisor (see information sheet). |  |
| I understand that if a disclosure is made by my child regarding themselves or other/s being at risk of harm, this will be reported to the school safeguarding officer in accordance with school and local authority safeguarding procedures. |  |
| I agree to my child taking part in the project. I understand that taking part may include:   * Completing a card sort and interview during an online meeting with the researcher * Having the audio (sound) recorded. |  |
| I understand personal details, such as mine or my child’s names and email addresses, will not be shared with other people and will be confidential. I understand that my child’s responses will be anonymised before analysis. |  |
| I understand that my child’s responses may be used anonymously in publications, reports, web pages and/or other research outputs. |  |
| I agree to assign the copyright I or my child hold in any materials generated as part of this project to The University of Sheffield. |  |
| I agree for my child to take part in the above research project. |  |

Name of child: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of parent/carer: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of researcher: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Signature

Appendix 19: Parent/Carer Consent Form – In Person Research

Text

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

**How Do Young People Construe Potentially Harmful Behaviours Within Intimate Relationships?**

**PARENT/CARER CONSENT FORM**

**Names of Researcher: Sarah Hodson**

**Researcher Supervisor: Dr. Lorraine Campbell**

If you are happy for your child to participate, please read the consent form and initial it:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Please initial the box |
| I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions. |  |
| I confirm that my child has not had coronavirus symptoms or knowingly had contact with anyone who has had coronavirus symptoms in the 14 days prior to the card sort meeting |  |
| I understand that my child’s participation is voluntary and they or I can withdraw them at any time before or during the research. I can ask for my child’s information to be taken out of the research up to 2 weeks after the card sort and/or online meeting. I understand that we do not need to give a reason. To withdraw, contact Sarah Hodson at [shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk) or the research supervisor (see information sheet). |  |
| I understand that if a disclosure is made by my child regarding themselves or other/s being at risk of harm, this will be reported to the school safeguarding officer in accordance with school and local authority safeguarding procedures. |  |
| I agree to my child taking part in the project. I understand that taking part may include:   * Completing a card sort during a meeting in school * Being interviewed on an online video meeting * The online meetings/interviews having the audio (sound) recorded. |  |
| I understand personal details, such as mine or my child’s names and email addresses, will not be shared with other people and will be confidential. I understand that my child’s responses will be anonymised before analysis. |  |
| I understand that my child’s responses may be used anonymously in publications, reports, web pages and/or other research outputs. |  |
| I agree to assign the copyright I or my child hold in any materials generated as part of this project to The University of Sheffield. |  |
| I agree for my child to take part in the above research project. |  |

Name of child: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of parent/carer: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of researcher: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Appendix 20: Participant Consent Form – In Person Research

Text

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

**How Do Young People Construe Potentially Harmful Behaviours**

**Within Intimate Relationships?**

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

**Names of Researcher: Sarah Hodson**

**Researcher Supervisor: Dr. Lorraine Campbell**

If you are happy to participate, please read the consent form and initial it:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Please initial the box |
| I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions. |  |
| I confirm that I have not had coronavirus symptoms or knowingly had contact with anyone who has had coronavirus symptoms in the 14 days prior to the card sort meeting |  |
| I understand that my participation is voluntary and I can withdraw at any time before or during the research. I can ask for my information to be taken out of the research up to 2 weeks after my card sort and/or online meeting. I understand that I do not need to give a reason. To withdraw, contact Sarah Hodson at [shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:shodson1@sheffield.ac.uk) or the research supervisor (see information sheet). |  |
| I agree to take part in the project. I understand that taking part may include:   * Completing a card sort during a meeting in school * Being interviewed on an online video meeting * The online meetings/interviews having the audio (sound) recorded. |  |
| I understand that if I share information about myself or other/s being at risk of harm, this will be reported to the school safeguarding officer according to school and local authority safeguarding procedures. |  |
| I understand my personal details such as name and email address, will not be shared with other people and will be confidential. I understand that my responses will be anonymised before analysis. |  |
| I understand that my responses may be used anonymously in publications, reports, web pages and/or other research outputs. |  |
| I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials generated as part of this project to The University of Sheffield. |  |
| I agree to take part in the above research project. |  |

Name of participant: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of researcher: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Appendix 21: Online Research Materials – Cover Letter

**Text

Description automatically generated with medium confidence**

Dear [NAME],

Thank you again for agreeing to participate in the research. I am looking forward to meeting you online at [TIME] on [DAY & DATE].

I have enclosed a set of cards and instructions in an envelope – please do not open the envelope before the meeting. You won’t need to read the instructions, I will go through everything with you when we meet. I have sent everything that you will need for the activity.

If you have any problems or questions before me meet, please feel free to email me. See you on [DAY].

Best wishes,

Sarah Hodson

Appendix 22: Online Research Materials – Card Sort Instructions

Text

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

**How Do Young Adults Construe Behaviours Within Intimate Relationships?**

**Card Sort Instructions**

This research is about how young adults sometimes behave towards other young adults that they are in a relationship with. The research wants to try to understand how young adults think about and understand those behaviours and how they value them in relationships.

In the envelope there are 41 cards statement cards and 9 number cards. On each statement card, there is a statement about a way a young adult might sometimes behave when they are dating or in a relationship with another young adult.

I would like you to arrange the cards in a pattern like the one shown on the grid in the pack. The columns on the right are where you can place the behaviour statements which you think are most acceptable. The columns on the left are where you can place the statements which you think are most unacceptable when dating or in a relationship.

There are no right or wrong answers. I am just interested in your thoughts and opinions. You can move the cards or change your mind as much as you like. If you need any help or have any questions then just let me know. It is fine to talk about what you are doing as you sort the cards, if you feel comfortable doing that.

All of your answers are confidential and will only been seen by myself and my university tutor, unless I feel that you or someone else is at risk of harm.

Please look at the cards and think about the following:

**When dating or in a relationship, this behaviour is…**

I may make some notes about how you sort the cards during the activity.

Once you have finished moving the cards and are happy with where they are, I will ask you to turn over the cards. On the back of the cards there are numbers. I will ask you to read them out to me in the order of the pattern on the grid.

At the end of the activity I would like to ask some questions about it.

If you would like to stop the activity at any point, that is fine. If you later decide that you do not want your card sort to be included in the research, you will find information about how to do that on the information sheet. You do not need to explain why.

If the activity makes you feel uncomfortable or worried you can speak to me about it. There is also information about more people that you can speak to or contact on the information sheet.

Thank you.

Appendix 23: Online Research Procedures and Interview Schedule

**‘How do Young Adults Construe**

**Abusive Behaviours in Intimate Relationships’**

**Q Sort Script and Post-Sort Interview Schedule - Online**

Prior to the interview:

* *Ensure that the disclosure guide has been reviewed and is available.*
* *Gather the card sort pack – incorporating a copy of the distribution grid, instructions and Q set.*
* *Print off distribution grid.*

The Q sort:

* *Remind them that they are being recorded. Say that you are starting the recording.*
* *Reassure participants of their confidentiality and repeat that they are able to withdraw/stop at any time.*
* *Explain that everything they say is confidential and that it won’t be shared with anyone unless there is a risk of harm to them or someone else.*
* *Ask them not to refer to themselves or other people by name so that the recording is confidential.*
* *Ask them if they have any questions and if they are happy to proceed.*
* *Ask them to open the pack sent to them and go through the instructions with them.*
* *Provide tips on sorting, i.e. sorting into, use of columns versus rows, starting at extremes.*

Post sort:

* *Ask them to turn over the cards and read out the numbers.*
* *Ask if they have any questions or anything they would like to say.*

The post-sort interview:

1. Looking at the statements at the most unacceptable end of the grid, why did you choose those cards to go there?

*Prompt: Why did you feel strongly about those? What about those behaviours felt most unacceptable to you?*

1. Looking at the statements at the most acceptable end of the grid, why did you choose those cards to go there?

*Prompt: Why did you feel strongly about those? What about those behaviours felt most acceptable to you?*

1. Where there any items which felt important to you?

*Prompt: Are there any statements which stood out to you?*

Follow-on: Why did those feel important/stand out?

1. Draw attention to any unusual placements/any deliberated over/any commented on by the participant.

Can you tell me about that statement?

*Prompt: Refer to the reason why you have raised it, ensuring you look for meaning.*

1. Were there any statements that felt difficult to read or that you weren’t sure what they meant?

Follow on: Where there any items that felt out of place/not relevant to your age group/overlapped each other?

1. Are there any behaviours which you think should have been included which aren’t there?

*Prompt: Do you think there are any behaviours which I have missed?*

1. Thinking about the whole process from first contacting me to now, what did you think about the process of taking part?

*Prompt: Where the instructions and information clear? Were the paper/card materials easy to use? Have you enjoyed it?*

Follow up: Is there anything that I can do to make it easier to take part? Is there anything that I could change?

At the end of the interview:

* *State that you will email a copy of the information sheet to the participant.*
* *Highlight the signposting information.*
* *Use the non-disclosure procedures if there has not been a disclosure.*
* *Ask if they enjoyed it and to mention the research to friends and ask them to get in touch if they would like to take part – refer to the email address.*

Appendix 24: Online Research Materials – Updated Card Sort Instructions

Text

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

**How Do Young Adults Construe Behaviours Within Intimate Relationships?**

**Card Sort Instructions**

This research is about how young adults sometimes behave towards other young adults that they are in a relationship with. The research wants to try to understand how young adults think about and understand those behaviours and how they value them in relationships.

In the envelope there are 41 cards statement cards and 9 number cards. On each statement card, there is a statement about a way a young adult might sometimes behave when they are dating or in a relationship with another young adult.

I would like you to arrange the cards in a pattern like the one shown on the grid in the pack. The columns on the right are where you can place the behaviour statements which you think are most acceptable. The columns on the left are where you can place the statements which you think are most unacceptable when dating or in a relationship.

There are no right or wrong answers. I am just interested in your thoughts and opinions. You can move the cards or change your mind as much as you like. If you need any help or have any questions then just let me know. It is fine to talk about what you are doing as you sort the cards, if you feel comfortable doing that.

All of your answers are confidential and will only been seen by myself and my university tutor, unless I feel that you or someone else is at risk of harm.

Please look at the cards and think about the following:

**When dating or in a relationship, this behaviour is…**

I may make some notes about how you sort the cards during the activity.

Once you have finished moving the cards and are happy with where they are, I will take a photo through the screen of the device you are using to meet me. I will then ask you to turn over the cards. On the back of the cards there are numbers. I will ask you to write the numbers in the grid and then read them out to me.

At the end of the activity I would like to ask some questions about it.

If you would like to stop the activity at any point, that is fine. If you later decide that you do not want your card sort to be included in the research, you will find information about how to do that on the information sheet. You do not need to explain why.

If the activity makes you feel uncomfortable or worried you can speak to me about it. There is also information about more people that you can speak to or contact on the information sheet.

Thank you.

Appendix 25: In Person Research Materials – Card Sort Instructions

Text

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

**How Do Young Adults Construe Behaviours Within Intimate Relationships?**

**Card Sort Instructions**

This research is about how young adults sometimes behave towards other young adults that they are in a relationship with. The research wants to try to understand how young adults think about and understand those behaviours and how they value them in relationships.

In the envelope there are 41 cards statement cards and 9 number cards. On each statement card, there is a statement about a way a young adult might sometimes behave when they are dating or in a relationship with another young adult.

I would like you to arrange the cards in a pattern like the one shown on the grid in the pack. The columns on the right are where you can place the behaviour statements which you think are most acceptable. The columns on the left are where you can place the statements which you think are most unacceptable when dating or in a relationship.

There are no right or wrong answers. I am just interested in your thoughts and opinions. You can move the cards or change your mind as much as you like. If you need any help or have any questions then just let me know.

All of your answers are confidential and will only be seen by myself and my university tutor, unless I feel that you or someone else is at risk of harm.

Please look at the cards and think about the following:

**When dating or in a relationship, this behaviour is…**

I may make some notes about how you sort the cards during the activity.

Once you have finished moving the cards and are happy with where they are, I will ask you to turn over the cards. On the back of the cards there are numbers. I will ask you to write the numbers on the paper copy of the grid in the same pattern that you have sorted them into.

If you are happy to, I would like to ask you some questions about the card sort afterwards. This would be in an online meeting with me, which could take around 20 minutes. If you would like to take part in this, please write your name and email address on the slip provided.

If you would like to stop the activity at any point, that is fine. If you later decide that you do not want your card sort to be included in the research, you will find information about how to do that on the information sheet. You do not need to explain why.

If the activity makes you feel uncomfortable or worried you can speak to me about it. There is also information about more people that you can speak to or contact on the information sheet.

Thank you.

Appendix 26: Contact Details Slip for In Person Research Post-Sort Interview

I would like to speak to some young people about the ways they have arranged the cards. This is optional and you can choose if you want to be involved. It will be on another day, will take about 15-20 minutes and the sound will be recorded.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| If you would be happy to speak to me in an online meeting about the card sort, that would be great. I would like to speak to as many young people as possible. Just write your name and email address below and I will email you to arrange it. | A picture containing shape  Description automatically generated |

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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

Appendix 27: Disclosure Procedures

**Disclosure Procedures**

*These procedures have been derived from the Local Authority domestic abuse guidance for schools.*

Responding to a Disclosure

As the young person makes the disclosure, this will be supported by:

* Listening carefully and sensitively.
* Not interrogating or interviewing them.
* Not judging them.
* Respond calmly to what they say without overreacting or becoming emotional.

Following the disclosure, I will respond to the young person by:

* Letting them know they did the right thing by telling me and thanking them.
* Letting them know it is ok to feel sad, scared, angry etc., or however they are feeling.
* I will refer to the earlier conversation in which I explained that if they disclosed information indicating that they or someone else was at risk then I would need to share that information for their safety. I would let them know that I have decided to do that.
* Telling the young person that I need to tell someone in their school whose job it is to help with these kinds of problems.
* Asking them what they would like to do now, for example, whether they would like to take a break, end the video call or have someone with them.
* Referring the young person to the information sheet which contains contact details of organisations where they can access support.
* Telling the young person what I am going to do (see below).
* Ensuring that they have an understanding of that I will do next and that they feel sufficiently supported at the end of the video conference.

Action which I will take following the disclosure is:

* Ensure that details of the disclosure are recorded and secured according to confidentiality procedures.
* Follow school safeguarding and disclosure reporting procedures by:
* If the research takes place during school hours, immediately contact the school’s member of staff responsible for safeguarding and share details of the disclosure.
* If the research takes place out of school hours, send an initial email to school’s member of staff responsible for safeguarding requesting contact. If I consider the disclosure to require more urgent attention, I will contact one of the two local authority advice and consultation domestic abuse helplines for professionals.
* I will immediately contact my Research Supervisor to gain their advice.
* I will record the appropriate action I took and its outcome.
* As per local authority procedures, I will not inform parents/carers as decisions regarding this are not part of my role.

**Non-Disclosure End of Interview/Q Sort Statement**

It may be that taking part in these activities has made you aware of behaviours in relationships which you feel worried about. If that is the case, it is important that you look at the section of the information sheet that talks about what to do if you feel concerned following the research [point this out]. There are lots of people who you can talk to about any worries you might have. [Check they feel ok to access these if they need to].

Appendix 28: Q Sorts Correlation Matrix

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sorts |  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 1 | YA1Y10F | 100 | 34 | 43 | 48 | 46 | 45 | 32 | 12 | 38 | 27 | 42 | 36 | 35 | 41 | 35 | 22 | 36 | 22 | 35 | 23 | 44 | 52 | 12 | 47 | 29 | 30 |
| 2 | YA3Y10F | 34 | 100 | 70 | 80 | 80 | 71 | 79 | 63 | 82 | 82 | 84 | 82 | 78 | 80 | 64 | 68 | 66 | 80 | 51 | 28 | 83 | 80 | 54 | 79 | 78 | 87 |
| 3 | YA8Y10F | 43 | 70 | 100 | 75 | 73 | 68 | 68 | 64 | 78 | 61 | 64 | 71 | 63 | 62 | 57 | 62 | 75 | 75 | 51 | 36 | 76 | 74 | 59 | 68 | 61 | 60 |
| 4 | YA9Y11F | 48 | 80 | 75 | 100 | 83 | 79 | 72 | 60 | 77 | 85 | 80 | 73 | 74 | 83 | 67 | 58 | 82 | 81 | 66 | 15 | 84 | 87 | 63 | 81 | 74 | 79 |
| 5 | YA13Y10F | 46 | 80 | 73 | 83 | 100 | 78 | 77 | 68 | 74 | 74 | 78 | 73 | 81 | 80 | 49 | 59 | 71 | 80 | 60 | 28 | 84 | 81 | 58 | 74 | 75 | 89 |
| 6 | YA33Y10M | 45 | 71 | 68 | 79 | 78 | 100 | 69 | 59 | 71 | 65 | 76 | 70 | 71 | 72 | 70 | 61 | 78 | 69 | 60 | 5 | 72 | 78 | 48 | 68 | 66 | 66 |
| 7 | YA34Y10F | 32 | 79 | 68 | 72 | 77 | 69 | 100 | 60 | 80 | 72 | 77 | 80 | 77 | 79 | 66 | 60 | 64 | 84 | 44 | 32 | 76 | 71 | 57 | 73 | 72 | 80 |
| 8 | YA41Y10F | 12 | 63 | 64 | 60 | 68 | 59 | 60 | 100 | 65 | 60 | 59 | 64 | 66 | 62 | 38 | 48 | 63 | 78 | 52 | 28 | 56 | 53 | 69 | 57 | 49 | 70 |
| 9 | YA42Y10F | 38 | 82 | 78 | 77 | 74 | 71 | 80 | 65 | 100 | 79 | 85 | 77 | 71 | 71 | 57 | 63 | 78 | 80 | 57 | 36 | 79 | 79 | 62 | 76 | 72 | 76 |
| 10 | YA44Y10M | 27 | 82 | 61 | 85 | 74 | 65 | 72 | 60 | 79 | 100 | 73 | 78 | 76 | 78 | 58 | 68 | 72 | 76 | 59 | 22 | 82 | 74 | 56 | 77 | 81 | 81 |
| 11 | YA45Y10M | 42 | 84 | 64 | 80 | 78 | 76 | 77 | 59 | 85 | 73 | 100 | 80 | 65 | 81 | 56 | 56 | 77 | 79 | 56 | 23 | 78 | 84 | 60 | 81 | 74 | 85 |
| 12 | YA46Y10F | 36 | 82 | 71 | 73 | 73 | 70 | 80 | 64 | 77 | 78 | 80 | 100 | 70 | 76 | 61 | 60 | 69 | 78 | 46 | 27 | 75 | 80 | 59 | 76 | 81 | 78 |
| 13 | YA47Y10F | 35 | 78 | 63 | 74 | 81 | 71 | 77 | 66 | 71 | 76 | 65 | 70 | 100 | 75 | 60 | 62 | 57 | 76 | 53 | 24 | 81 | 65 | 52 | 58 | 64 | 77 |
| 14 | YA48Y10F | 41 | 80 | 62 | 83 | 80 | 72 | 79 | 62 | 71 | 78 | 81 | 76 | 75 | 100 | 57 | 63 | 73 | 81 | 56 | 40 | 77 | 82 | 61 | 85 | 76 | 84 |
| 15 | YA49Y10M | 35 | 64 | 57 | 67 | 49 | 70 | 66 | 38 | 57 | 58 | 56 | 61 | 60 | 57 | 100 | 47 | 57 | 57 | 42 | 15 | 63 | 57 | 41 | 61 | 54 | 52 |
| 16 | YA50Y10M | 22 | 68 | 62 | 58 | 59 | 61 | 60 | 48 | 63 | 68 | 56 | 60 | 62 | 63 | 47 | 100 | 67 | 64 | 44 | 32 | 64 | 54 | 59 | 54 | 59 | 56 |
| 17 | YA51Y10M | 36 | 66 | 75 | 82 | 71 | 78 | 64 | 63 | 78 | 72 | 77 | 69 | 57 | 73 | 57 | 67 | 100 | 74 | 73 | 25 | 73 | 71 | 64 | 76 | 69 | 69 |
| 18 | YA52Y10M | 22 | 80 | 75 | 81 | 80 | 69 | 84 | 78 | 80 | 76 | 79 | 78 | 76 | 81 | 57 | 64 | 74 | 100 | 51 | 28 | 76 | 72 | 81 | 74 | 68 | 84 |
| 19 | YA53Y10M | 35 | 51 | 51 | 66 | 60 | 60 | 44 | 52 | 57 | 59 | 56 | 46 | 53 | 56 | 42 | 44 | 73 | 51 | 100 | 18 | 59 | 52 | 46 | 55 | 37 | 56 |
| 20 | YA18Y11F | 23 | 28 | 36 | 15 | 28 | 5 | 32 | 28 | 36 | 22 | 23 | 27 | 24 | 40 | 15 | 32 | 25 | 28 | 18 | 100 | 29 | 24 | 32 | 43 | 24 | 34 |
| 21 | YA19Y11M | 44 | 83 | 76 | 84 | 84 | 72 | 76 | 56 | 79 | 82 | 78 | 75 | 81 | 77 | 63 | 64 | 73 | 76 | 59 | 29 | 100 | 77 | 58 | 75 | 73 | 81 |
| 22 | YA20Y11F | 52 | 80 | 74 | 87 | 81 | 78 | 71 | 53 | 79 | 74 | 84 | 80 | 65 | 82 | 57 | 54 | 71 | 72 | 52 | 64 | 77 | 100 | 57 | 80 | 76 | 74 |
| 23 | YA21Y11F | 12 | 54 | 59 | 63 | 58 | 48 | 57 | 69 | 52 | 56 | 60 | 59 | 52 | 81 | 41 | 59 | 64 | 81 | 46 | 32 | 58 | 57 | 100 | 54 | 47 | 60 |
| 24 | YA23Y11F | 47 | 79 | 68 | 81 | 74 | 68 | 73 | 57 | 76 | 77 | 81 | 76 | 58 | 85 | 61 | 54 | 76 | 74 | 55 | 43 | 75 | 80 | 54 | 100 | 77 | 82 |
| 25 | YA24Y11F | 29 | 78 | 61 | 74 | 75 | 76 | 72 | 49 | 72 | 81 | 74 | 81 | 64 | 76 | 54 | 59 | 69 | 68 | 37 | 24 | 73 | 76 | 47 | 77 | 100 | 79 |
| 26 | YA27Y11F | 30 | 87 | 60 | 79 | 89 | 66 | 80 | 70 | 76 | 81 | 85 | 78 | 77 | 84 | 52 | 56 | 69 | 84 | 56 | 34 | 81 | 74 | 60 | 82 | 79 | 100 |

Appendix 29: Breakdown of Factor Solutions for 2 to 7 Factors at the 0.4 Factor Loading Significance Level

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **2 Factor Solution** | |
|  | |
|  | **Q Sorts** |
| Factor 1 | 8; 13; 16; 18; 23; 26 |
| Factor 2 | 1; 19 |
| Confounded | 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 10; 11; 12; 14; 15; 17; 21; 22; 24; 25 |
| Non-significant | 20 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **3 Factor Solution** | |
|  | |
|  | **Q Sorts** |
| Factor 1 | 25 |
| Factor 2 | 1; 15 |
| Factor 3 | 8; 23 |
| Confounded | 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 9; 10; 11; 12; 13; 14; 16; 17; 18; 19; 21; 22; 24; 26 |
| Non-significant | 20 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **4 Factor Solution** | |
|  | |
|  | **Q Sorts** |
| Factor 1 | 2; 7; 12; 14; 25; 26 |
| Factor 2 | 1 |
| Factor 3 | 23 |
| Factor 4 | 20 |
| Confounded | 3; 4; 5; 6; 8; 9; 10; 11; 13; 15; 16; 17; 18; 19; 21; 22; 24 |
| Non-significant | 20 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **5 Factor Solution** | |
|  | |
|  | **Q Sorts** |
| Factor 1 | 2; 7; 12; 14; 25; 26 |
| Factor 2 | 1 |
| Factor 3 | 23 |
| Factor 4 | 20 |
| Factor 5 |  |
| Confounded | 3; 4; 5; 6; 8; 9; 10; 11; 13; 15; 16; 17; 18; 19; 21; 22; 24 |
| Non-significant |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **6 Factor Solution** | |
|  | |
|  | **Q Sorts** |
| Factor 1 | 2; 7; 11; 12; 14; 15; 21; 25 |
| Factor 2 | 1 |
| Factor 3 | 8; 23 |
| Factor 4 | 20 |
| Factor 5 |  |
| Factor 6 |  |
| Confounded | 3; 4; 5; 6; 9; 10; 13; 16; 17; 18; 19; 22; 24; 26 |
| Non-significant |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **7 Factor Solution** | |
|  | |
|  | **Q Sorts** |
| Factor 1 | 2; 7; 11; 12; 21; 24; 25 |
| Factor 2 | 1 |
| Factor 3 | 8; 23 |
| Factor 4 | 20 |
| Factor 5 |  |
| Factor 6 |  |
| Factor 7 |  |
| Confounded | 3; 4; 5; 6; 9; 10; 13; 14; 15; 16; 17; 18; 19; 22; 26 |
| Non-significant |  |

Appendix 30: Breakdown of Factor Solutions for 2 and 3 Factors at the 0.5 Factor Loading Significance Level

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **2 Factor Solution** | |
|  | |
|  | **Q Sorts** |
| Factor 1 | 2; 7; 8; 10; 12; 13; 14; 16; 18; 23; 25; 26 |
| Factor 2 | 1; 6; 15; 19 |
| Confounded | 3; 4; 5; 9; 11; 17; 21; 22; 24 |
| Non-significant | 20 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **3 Factor Solution** | |
|  | |
|  | **Q Sorts** |
| Factor 1 | 2; 12; 14; 25 |
| Factor 2 | 1 |
| Factor 3 | 3; 8; 16; 23 |
| Confounded | 4; 5; 6; 7; 9; 10; 11; 13; 17; 18; 21; 22; 24; 26 |
| Non-significant | 15; 19; 20 |

Appendix 31: Rotated Factor Matrix for 2-Factor Solution with 0.5 Significance Loading Level

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Q Sort  Number | Participant Identifying Code | Factor 1, Rotated, 0.5 significance level | Factor 2, Rotated, 0.5 significance level |
| 1 | YA1Y10F | 0.0628 | 0.6129X |
| 2 | YA3Y10F | 0.7662X | 0.4835 |
| 3 | YA8Y10F | 0.5742 | 0.5815 |
| 4 | YA9Y11F | 0.5893 | 0.7302 |
| 5 | YA13Y10F | 0.7217 | 0.5316 |
| 6 | YA33Y10M | 0.4870 | 0.7124X |
| 7 | YA34Y10F | 0.7682X | 0.4117 |
| 8 | YA41Y10F | 0.7082X | 0.2508 |
| 9 | YA42Y10F | 0.6875 | 0.5660 |
| 10 | YA44Y10M | 0.7332X | 0.4673 |
| 11 | YA45Y10M | 0.6553 | 0.5983 |
| 12 | YA46Y10F | 0.7325X | 0.4722 |
| 13 | YA47Y10F | 0.7537X | 0.3705 |
| 14 | YA48Y10F | 0.7593X | 0.4859 |
| 15 | YA49Y10M | 0.4370 | 0.5293X |
| 16 | YA50Y10M | 0.6270X | 0.3435 |
| 17 | YA51Y10M | 0.5290 | 0.6979 |
| 18 | YA52Y10M | 0.8446X | 0.3708 |
| 19 | YA53Y10M | 0.3758 | 0.5535X |
| 20 | YA18Y11F | 0.3332 | 0.1090 |
| 21 | YA19Y11M | 0.6942 | 0.5675 |
| 22 | YA20Y11F | 0.5786 | 0.6801 |
| 23 | YA21Y11F | 0.6377X | 0.2968 |
| 24 | YA23Y11F | 0.6555 | 0.5803 |
| 25 | YA24Y11F | 0.6849X | 0.4441 |
| 26 | YA27Y11F | 0.8530X | 0.3611 |
| Eigenvalues (EV) |  | 10.82 | 6.87 |
| Explained Variance |  | 42% | 26% |

*\* Q sorts significantly loading onto the factor (defining sorts) are highlighted and marked with an X*

Appendix 32: Unrotated Factor Matrix for 2-Factor Solution with 0.5 Significance Loading Level

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Q Sort  Number | Participant Identifying Code | Factor 1, Unrotated, 0.5 significance level | Factor 2, Unrotated, 0.5 significance level |
| 1 | YA1Y10F | 0.4279 | -0.4433 |
| 2 | YA3Y10F | 09012 | 0.0928 |
| 3 | YA8Y10F | 0.8107 | -0.1028 |
| 4 | YA9Y11F | 0.9145 | -0.2105 |
| 5 | YA13Y10F | 0.8959 | 0.0275 |
| 6 | YA33Y10M | 0.8230 | -0.2596 |
| 7 | YA34Y10F | 0.8585 | 0.1505 |
| 8 | YA41Y10F | 0.7119 | 0.2401 |
| 9 | YA42Y10F | 0.8903 | -0.0207 |
| 10 | YA44Y10M | 0.8652 | 0.0851 |
| 11 | YA45Y10M | 0.8849 | -0.0659 |
| 12 | YA46Y10F | 0.8678 | 0.0808 |
| 13 | YA47Y10F | 0.8216 | 0.1740 |
| 14 | YA48Y10F | 0.8973 | 0.0867 |
| 15 | YA49Y10M | 0.6706 | -0.1465 |
| 16 | YA50Y10M | 0.7053 | 0.1169 |
| 17 | YA51Y10M | 0.8470 | -0.2224 |
| 18 | YA52Y10M | 0.8934 | 0.2299 |
| 19 | YA53Y10M | 0.6374 | -0.2033 |
| 20 | YA18Y11F | 0.3294 | 0.1200 |
| 21 | YA19Y11M | 0.8964 | -0.0178 |
| 22 | YA20Y11F | 0.8751 | -0.1777 |
| 23 | YA21Y11F | 0.6849 | 0.1603 |
| 24 | YA23Y11F | 0.8740 | -0.0517 |
| 25 | YA24Y11F | 0.8129 | 0.0736 |
| 26 | YA27Y11F | 0.8939 | 0.2427 |
| Eigenvalues (EV) |  | 17.0097 | 0.7825 |
| Explained Variance |  | 65% | 3% |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| Using physical force, such as punching, strangling, beating, kicking, biting or hitting with an object | Verbally pressuring a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend to do something sexual, such as kissing, touching or something else | Threatening to physically harm themselves unless the other person does as asked/told | Encouraging a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to use drugs or alcohol | Telling a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to go somewhere or do something at specific times and asking them to prove it using photos/ messages/a tracker on an app | Embarrass/humiliate a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend | Tracking or checking where a date or boyfriend/girlfriend is or what they are doing by calling, messaging or using apps | Arguing with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | Play fighting with a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend where both people consent and feel comfortable |
| Physically forcing a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to do something sexual, such as kissing, touching or something else | Not stopping sexual activity straight away when a date or boyfriend/girlfriend asks to | Verbally pressuring a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend to have sexual intercourse | Threatening to share a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend’s private information to make them do something | Sharing private information about a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend without their permission | Spreading rumours or lies about a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | The same person making most of the decisions | Putting a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s needs above their own | Giving love-bites or hickies to a date or boyfriend/girlfriend |
|  | Physically forcing a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend to have sexual intercourse | Threatening to physically harm a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend unless the other person does as asked/told | Persuading a date or boyfriend/girlfriend that being emotionally/ physically hurt is their own fault | Stopping a date or boyfriend/girlfriend from seeing their friends/ family | Saying negative things about a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend’s friends/family | Requesting, sending or sharing naked photos with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | Refusing to talk to a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend |  |
|  | Using physical force, such as pushing, slapping, hitting, pinching or holding down | Sharing naked photos of a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend with other people or over social media | Damaging, breaking or smashing a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend’s property | Threatening to end a date or relationship unless the other person does as asked/told | Shouting/screaming at a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | Checking a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s phone and social media without their permission | Using physical violence against a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend in self-defence |  |
|  |  | Throwing objects at a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend | Physically following/ stalking a date or boyfriend/girlfriend without their knowledge | Saying negative things about a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend’s appearance/body/ opinions/intelligence including name calling | Making a date or boyfriend/girlfriend feel guilty about something they have not done | Getting friends or a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend’s friends to watch/spy on them |  |  |
|  |  |  | Pretending to use contraception | Refusing to use contraception | Encouraging a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to skip, skive off or wag school |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  | Telling a date or boyfriend/girlfriend what to wear, where to go, what to do or who they can see |  |  |  |  |

Appendix 33: Factor Array for Factor 1

Appendix 34: Factor Array for Factor 2

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| Verbally pressuring a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend to have sexual intercourse | Encouraging a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to use drugs or alcohol | Physically forcing a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to do something sexual, such as kissing, touching or something else | Threatening to physically harm themselves unless the other person does as asked/told | Tracking or checking where a date or boyfriend/girlfriend is or what they are doing by calling, messaging or using apps | Spreading rumours or lies about a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | Embarrass/humiliate a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend | Putting a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s needs above their own | Play fighting with a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend where both people consent and feel comfortable |
| Not stopping sexual activity straight away when a date or boyfriend/girlfriend asks to | Verbally pressuring a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend to do something sexual, such as kissing, touching or something else | Requesting, sending or sharing naked photos with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | Sharing private information about a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend without their permission | Telling a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to go somewhere or do something at specific times and asking them to prove it using photos/ messages/a tracker on an app | Checking a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s phone and social media without their permission | Saying negative things about a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend’s friends/family | Refusing to talk to a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend | Using physical violence against a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend in self-defence |
|  | Physically forcing a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend to have sexual intercourse | Persuading a date or boyfriend/girlfriend that being emotionally/ physically hurt is their own fault | Using physical force, such as punching, strangling, beating, kicking, biting or hitting with an object | Stopping a date or boyfriend/girlfriend from seeing their friends/ family | Getting friends or a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend’s friends to watch/spy on them | The same person making most of the decisions | Giving love-bites or hickies to a date or boyfriend/girlfriend |  |
|  | Sharing naked photos of a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend with other people or over social media | Damaging, breaking or smashing a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend’s property | Threatening to share a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend’s private information to make them do something | Saying negative things about a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend’s appearance/body/ opinions/intelligence including name calling | Throwing objects at a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend | Arguing with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | Encouraging a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to skip, skive off or wag school |  |
|  |  | Pretending to use contraception | Threatening to end a date or relationship unless the other person does as asked/told | Threatening to physically harm a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend unless the other person does as asked/told | Making a date or boyfriend/girlfriend feel guilty about something they have not done | Shouting/screaming at a date or boyfriend/girlfriend |  |  |
|  |  |  | Refusing to use contraception | Using physical force, such as pushing, slapping, hitting, pinching or holding down | Telling a date or boyfriend/girlfriend what to wear, where to go, what to do or who they can see |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  | Physically following/ stalking a date or boyfriend/girlfriend without their knowledge |  |  |  |  |

Appendix 35: Item Rankings in the Factor Arrays for Factors 1 and 2

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Item | Factor 1 | Factor 2 |
| 1. Threatening to physically harm themselves unless the other person does as asked/told | -2 | -1 |
| 2. Tracking or checking where a date or boyfriend/girlfriend is or what they are doing by calling, messaging or using apps | 2 | 0 |
| 3. Encouraging a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to use drugs or alcohol | -1 | -3 |
| 4. Telling a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to go somewhere or do something at specific times and asking them to prove it using photos/ messages/a tracker on an app | 0 | 0 |
| 5. Play fighting with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend where both people consent and feel comfortable | 4 | 4 |
| 6. Sharing private information about a date or boyfriend/girlfriend without their permission | 0 | -1 |
| 7. Using physical force, such as punching, strangling, beating, kicking, biting or hitting with an object | -4 | -1 |
| 8. Embarrass/humiliate a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend | 1 | 2 |
| 9. Spreading rumours or lies about a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | 1 | 1 |
| 10. Stopping a date or boyfriend/girlfriend from seeing their friends/ family | 0 | 0 |
| 11. Threatening to share a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend’s private information to make them do something | -1 | -1 |
| 12. Verbally pressuring a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to have sexual intercourse | -2 | -4 |
| 13. Saying negative things about a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s friends/family | 1 | 2 |
| 14. Threatening to end a date or relationship unless the other person does as asked/told | 0 | -1 |
| 15. The same person making most of the decisions | 2 | 2 |
| 16. Physically forcing a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to do something sexual, such as kissing, touching or something else | -4 | -2 |
| 17. Verbally pressuring a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend to do something sexual, such as kissing, touching or something else | -3 | -3 |
| 18. Arguing with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | 3 | 2 |
| 19. Saying negative things about a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s appearance/body/ opinions/intelligence including name calling | 0 | 0 |
| 20. Requesting, sending or sharing naked photos with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | 2 | -2 |
| 21. Putting a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s needs above their own | 3 | 3 |
| 22. Checking a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s phone and social media without their permission | 2 | 1 |
| 23. Not stopping sexual activity straight away when a date or boyfriend/girlfriend asks to | -3 | -4 |
| 24. Threatening to physically harm a date or boyfriend/girlfriend unless the other person does as asked/told | -2 | 0 |
| 25. Refusing to talk to a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | 3 | 3 |
| 26. Physically forcing a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to have sexual intercourse | -3 | -3 |
| 27. Getting friends or a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s friends to watch/spy on them | 2 | 1 |
| 28. Sharing naked photos of a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend with other people or over social media | -2 | -3 |
| 29. Throwing objects at a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend | -2 | 1 |
| 30. Persuading a date or boyfriend/girlfriend that being emotionally/ physically hurt is their own fault | -1 | -2 |
| 31. Using physical force, such as pushing, slapping, hitting, pinching or holding down | -3 | 0 |
| 32. Damaging, breaking or smashing a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s property | -1 | -2 |
| 33. Physically following/ stalking a date or boyfriend/girlfriend without their knowledge | -1 | 0 |
| 34. Giving love-bites or hickies to a date or boyfriend/girlfriend | 4 | 3 |
| 35. Shouting/screaming at a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend | 1 | 2 |
| 36. Using physical violence against a date or boyfriend/girlfriend in self-defence | 3 | 4 |
| 37. Pretending to use contraception | -1 | -2 |
| 38. Making a date or boyfriend/girlfriend feel guilty about something they have not done | 1 | 1 |
| 39. Encouraging a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to skip, skive off or wag school | 1 | 3 |
| 40. Refusing to use contraception | 0 | -1 |
| 41. Telling a date or boyfriend/girlfriend what to wear, where to go, what to do or who they can see | 0 | 1 |

*\* The factor array rankings correspond with the columns in the distribution grid (see Appendix 10):*

* *ranking -4 =* *column 1*
* *ranking -3 = column 2*
* *ranking -2 = column 3*
* *ranking -1 = column 4*
* *ranking 0 = column 5*
* *ranking +1 = column 6*
* *ranking +2 = column 7*
* *ranking +3 = column 8*
* *ranking +4 = column 9*

Appendix 36: YA3 Study Post-Sort Interview Transcript

Question 1: Looking at the statements at the most unacceptable end of the grid, why did you choose those cards to go there?

I think I chose them because they were, like, the ones that were, like, like, physically forcing someone. So, like, not just, like, threatening, like acting on it and then there were some more about, like, physically forcing someone, but those ones were, like, more like personal to do with, like, sex and things so, that were more serious.

No, in the more, like, physically forcing someone, like, they were like, like making someone, yeah, they were the more serious.

Question 2: Looking at the statements at the most acceptable end of the grid, why did you choose those cards to go there?

Because, like, number 9 was, like, all about, like, consent and they were, like, yeah and then 8 was like, even though it was like arguing and things, like, it’s, like, healthy to, like, argue as long as it doesn’t lead to, like, the things I put in the other columns.

Question 3 Where there any items which felt important to you?

I feel like it was hard to decide on, like, the ones where it was, like, shouting and screaming and things because it could just be, like, a normal argument but then it, and, like, just normal. But, then it depends, like, what scenario it was in where it would go on the thing.

Maybe, like, when it was, like, encouraging a date to do something when it was, like, drugs or alcohol or, like, skive off school or something because, especially the school one, maybe, like, a one off it wouldn’t have gone as low down, but if it was, like, regular, it would go a lot further down.

Maybe the, like, saying negative things about a person’s family because it could, like, be bad on the person saying it or they could just have a family that, like, they would say bad things about as well.

Maybe, like, the refusing to use contraception or the, the pretending to use it because, like, the refusing, I don’t know, I suppose it depends, if you’re refusing they’re, like, aware that you’ve refused it and they, then, that’s up to them. But, then, like, the pretending one was worse because, well, they’re not aware that you’re not.

Maybe, like, the checking up because, like, it depends, you don’t know whether they’ve done something to already lose their trust.

Appendix 37: YA1 Study Post-Sort Interview Transcript

Question 1: Looking at the statements at the most unacceptable end of the grid, why did you choose those cards to go there?

It’s just that they’re more sexual than others and some people might find it unacceptable to have people, like, sexual things about them. Like, the one, refusing to use contraception, it’s like, you just wouldn’t, someone, if you wanted to do something with somebody and because you would use contraception if you was young to obviously protect yourself. But obviously if you’re younger and you obviously want to have a baby then you’re not going to use it but it’s still, like, there’s so many people that are so young having babies but I would rather someone use contraception than not use it.

Question 2: Looking at the statements at the most acceptable end of the grid, why did you choose those cards to go there?

Like, they’re not a serious as number 1, 2, 3. They’re not as serious as them. Something can usually be done about them. But, it’s like, whereas number 1 [*2 words inaudible*], like, it’s more like you have more control over it so it’s your, your choice is made, whereas 8 and 9, they’re more like, you, it’s just you that has control over them.

Question 3 Where there any items which felt important to you?

It was more like, getting friends or a date or boyfriend or girlfriend’s friends to watch to spy on them because some people, it might feel unacceptable because they might feel a bit scared. But then some people, they might not be bothered because they can still carry on with their normal daily life.

Pretending to use contraption. It’s like, you wouldn’t pretend to, like, use it, like, because the female would be able to see if you’re actually using it, whereas, like, they are saying that, like, pretending to, so it’s, like, they’re trying to catch someone out by just pretending that they’re actually using it when they’re actually not.

Not stopping sexual activity straight away when a date or boyfriend or girlfriend asks to. It’s, like, the thought of it, like, if you don’t feel comfortable doing it for how long they want you to do it and, it’s like, they, they’re taking over you in a way and that you have nothing really that you can do at that moment where, and I just don’t think it’s, like, it just don’t seem right, when I were reading it. It’s the fact that, like, there’s so many people that, like, do sexual activities and stuff, but it just, it just doesn’t seem right when they’re not, they’re not stopping when you want to so, like, whether they’ve give consent or not for them to do that, it’s like, this, it’s like they’ve taken, the male’s taken over the female so it’s like they’ve not got anything they can do. They’ve got no choice but to have it done.

Appendix 38: Crib Sheet for Factor 1 (Watts & Stenner, 2012)

Items Ranked at +4

5. Play fighting with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend where both people consent and feel comfortable

34. Giving love-bites or hickies to a date or boyfriend/girlfriend 4

Items Ranked at +3

18. Arguing with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend 3

36. Using physical violence against a date or boyfriend/girlfriend in self-defence 3

21. Putting a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s needs above their own 3

25. Refusing to talk to a date or boyfriend/girlfriend 3

Items Ranked Higher in F1 Array than in F2 Array (More Acceptable)

34. Giving love-bites or hickies to a date or boyfriend/girlfriend 4

18. Arguing with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend 3

27. Getting friends or a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s friends to watch/spy on them 2

22. Checking a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s phone and social media without their permission 2

20. Requesting, sending or sharing naked photos with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend 2

2. Tracking or checking where a date or boyfriend/girlfriend is or what they are doing by calling, messaging or using apps 2

14. Threatening to end a date or relationship unless the other person does as asked/told 0

6. Sharing private information about a date or boyfriend/girlfriend without their permission 0

40. Refusing to use contraception 0

37. Pretending to use contraception -1

30. Persuading a date or boyfriend/girlfriend that being emotionally/ physically hurt is their own fault -1

32. Damaging, breaking or smashing a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s property -1

3. Encouraging a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to use drugs or alcohol -1

12. Verbally pressuring a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to have sexual intercourse -2

28. Sharing naked photos of a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend with other people or over social media -2

23. Not stopping sexual activity straight away when a date or boyfriend/girlfriend asks to -3

Items Ranked Lower in F1 Array than in F2 Array (Less Acceptable)

36. Using physical violence against a date or boyfriend/girlfriend in self-defence 3

13. Saying negative things about a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s friends/family 1

35. Shouting/screaming at a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend 1

39. Encouraging a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to skip, skive off or wag school 1

8. Embarrass/humiliate a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend 1

41. Telling a date or boyfriend/girlfriend what to wear, where to go, what to do or who they can see 0

33. Physically following/ stalking a date or boyfriend/girlfriend without their knowledge -1

1. Threatening to physically harm themselves unless the other person does as asked/told -2

24. Threatening to physically harm a date or boyfriend/girlfriend unless the other person does as asked/told -2

29. Throwing objects at a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend -2

31. Using physical force, such as pushing, slapping, hitting, pinching or holding down -3

16. Physically forcing a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to do something sexual, such as kissing, touching or something else -4

7. Using physical force, such as punching, strangling, beating, kicking, biting or hitting with an object -4

Items Ranked at -3

31. Using physical force, such as pushing, slapping, hitting, pinching or holding down -3

23. Not stopping sexual activity straight away when a date or boyfriend/girlfriend asks to -3

17. Verbally pressuring a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend to do something sexual, such as kissing, touching or something else -3

26. Physically forcing a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to have sexual intercourse -3

Items Ranked at -4

7. Using physical force, such as punching, strangling, beating, kicking, biting or hitting with an object -4

16. Physically forcing a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to do something sexual, such as kissing, touching or something else -4

Items Ranked in the Same Position in Both Factor Arrays

5. Play fighting with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend where both people consent and feel comfortable 4

21. Putting a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s needs above their own 3

25. Refusing to talk to a date or boyfriend/girlfriend 3

15. The same person making most of the decisions 2

9. Spreading rumours or lies about a date or boyfriend/girlfriend 1

38. Making a date or boyfriend/girlfriend feel guilty about something they have not done 1

4. Telling a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to go somewhere or do something at specific times and asking them to prove it using photos/ messages/a tracker on an app 0

10. Stopping a date or boyfriend/girlfriend from seeing their friends/ family 0

19. Saying negative things about a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s appearance/body/ opinions/intelligence including name calling 0

11. Threatening to share a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend’s private information to make them do something -1

17. Verbally pressuring a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend to do something sexual, such as kissing, touching or something else -3

26. Physically forcing a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to have sexual intercourse -3

Appendix 39: Crib Sheet for Factor 2 (Watts & Stenner, 2012)

Items Ranked at +4

5. Play fighting with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend where both people consent and feel comfortable 4

36. Using physical violence against a date or boyfriend/girlfriend in self-defence 4

Items Ranked at +3

39. Encouraging a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to skip, skive off or wag school 3

34. Giving love-bites or hickies to a date or boyfriend/girlfriend 3

21. Putting a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s needs above their own 3

25. Refusing to talk to a date or boyfriend/girlfriend 3

Items Ranked Higher in F2 Array than in F1 Array (More Acceptable)

36. Using physical violence against a date or boyfriend/girlfriend in self-defence 4

39. Encouraging a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to skip, skive off or wag school 3

13. Saying negative things about a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s friends/family 2

35. Shouting/screaming at a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend 2

8. Embarrass/humiliate a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend 2

29. Throwing objects at a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend 1

41. Telling a date or boyfriend/girlfriend what to wear, where to go, what to do or who they can see 1

33. Physically following/ stalking a date or boyfriend/girlfriend without their knowledge 0

24. Threatening to physically harm a date or boyfriend/girlfriend unless the other person does as asked/told 0

31. Using physical force, such as pushing, slapping, hitting, pinching or holding down 0

1. Threatening to physically harm themselves unless the other person does as asked/told -1

7. Using physical force, such as punching, strangling, beating, kicking, biting or hitting with an object -1

16. Physically forcing a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to do something sexual, such as kissing, touching or something else -2

Items Ranked Lower in F2 Array than in F1 Array (Less Acceptable)

34. Giving love-bites or hickies to a date or boyfriend/girlfriend 3

20. Requesting, sending or sharing naked photos with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend -2

18. Arguing with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend 2

27. Getting friends or a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s friends to watch/spy on them 1

22. Checking a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s phone and social media without their permission 1

2. Tracking or checking where a date or boyfriend/girlfriend is or what they are doing by calling, messaging or using apps 0

14. Threatening to end a date or relationship unless the other person does as asked/told -1

6. Sharing private information about a date or boyfriend/girlfriend without their permission -1

40. Refusing to use contraception -1

37. Pretending to use contraception -2

30. Persuading a date or boyfriend/girlfriend that being emotionally/ physically hurt is their own fault -2

32. Damaging, breaking or smashing a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s property -2

28. Sharing naked photos of a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend with other people or over social media -3

3. Encouraging a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to use drugs or alcohol -3

23. Not stopping sexual activity straight away when a date or boyfriend/girlfriend asks to -4

12. Verbally pressuring a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to have sexual intercourse -4

Items Ranked at -3

3. Encouraging a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to use drugs or alcohol -3

28. Sharing naked photos of a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend with other people or over social media -3

17. Verbally pressuring a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend to do something sexual, such as kissing, touching or something else -3

26. Physically forcing a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to have sexual intercourse -3

Items Ranked at -4

12. Verbally pressuring a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to have sexual intercourse -4

23. Not stopping sexual activity straight away when a date or boyfriend/girlfriend asks to -4

Items Ranked in the Same Position in Both Factor Arrays

5. Play fighting with a date or boyfriend/girlfriend where both people consent and feel comfortable 4

21. Putting a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s needs above their own 3

25. Refusing to talk to a date or boyfriend/girlfriend 3

15. The same person making most of the decisions 2

9. Spreading rumours or lies about a date or boyfriend/girlfriend 1

38. Making a date or boyfriend/girlfriend feel guilty about something they have not done 1

4. Telling a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to go somewhere or do something at specific times and asking them to prove it using photos/ messages/a tracker on an app 0

10. Stopping a date or boyfriend/girlfriend from seeing their friends/ family 0

19. Saying negative things about a date or boyfriend/girlfriend’s appearance/body/ opinions/intelligence including name calling 0

11. Threatening to share a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend’s private information to make them do something -1

17. Verbally pressuring a date or boyfriend/ girlfriend to do something sexual, such as kissing, touching or something else -3

26. Physically forcing a date or boyfriend/girlfriend to have sexual intercourse -3