Get Up! Stand Up! (Version 2): An Evaluation of a school-based social skills programme.

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EVALUATION OF GET UP! STAND UP! (VERSION 2)

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Abstract

Background: Social and emotional (SE) skills play an important role in a person's development, while a range of negative outcomes are associated with poor SE skills (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2013; 2015; Gresham & Elliott, 2008). The targeting of these skills in school-based programmes can produce positive outcomes (Durlak, Dymnicki, Taylor, Weissberg, & Schellinger, 2011). Get Up! Stand Up! (Version 2) (GUSU2) (National Educational Psychological Service, 2017) is a SE skills programme currently in use in Irish schools. However, to date, no substantial evaluation of GUSU2 has been conducted. CASEL outline a framework for such school-based programmes which identifies several essential elements, including being well-designed, addressing five SE competencies, offering support and training to facilitators and being offered over multiple years. Programmes which meet these standards are noted to be associated with a range of positive outcomes for participants.

Aim: This study aims to evaluate GUSU2 as a SE skills programme in the context of the CASEL framework. This study will consider the impact of GUSU2 on participants' SE skills, whilst also considering the perspectives of the relevant stakeholders on GUSU2 and the training and support provided.

Methodology: A mixed-method, partially mixed sequential equal status design was used to evaluate GUSU2. Documentary analysis was conducted on the GUSU2 manual. Thematic analysis, using a combination of deductive and inductive analysis (Braun, Clarke, Hayfield, & Terry, 2018; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010) was conducted on data from four pupil focus groups involving 27 pupils and from seven semi-structured teacher interviews. Data collected by the school psychology service, using the Social Skills Improvement System-Rating Scales (SSIS-RS) (Gresham & Elliott, 2008), was analysed using a mixed between-within subjects' analysis of variance and post-hoc t-tests to determine the impact of participating in GUSU2 compared to participants in a business-as-usual control group. Data included pre- and post-intervention measures of SE skills from 225 pupils in 14 schools, including three control schools consisting of 68 pupils. In addition to the full study sample, a lower ability sample ($n = 37$) were identified based on their pre-intervention scores and analysed accordingly.

Findings: There was a statistically significant increase in participants' total standard scores in both the GUSU2 and business-as-usual groups in both the full study and lower ability samples. There was no significant interaction effect identified, suggesting that GUSU2 is as effective as the business-as-usual approach. However, qualitative analysis suggests that pupils engaged with the programme and demonstrated learning in several competencies. Analysis of the qualitative data indicates that several aspects of GUSU2 require further development to align with the CASEL framework. Several potential barriers to implementation and learning were identified, including a lack of ongoing external support, brief training, concerns over resources, pupil over-familiarity, and small school size.

Conclusions: Several implications from this evaluation are discussed, including areas for development within GUSU2 in relation to the CASEL framework, issues regarding programme fidelity and the collection of appropriate data. Suggestions for further research and policy are also made.

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List of Abbreviations

CASEL	The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DES	Department of Education and Science/Department of Education and Skills (Name changed from Department of Education and Science to Department of Education and Skills in May 2010)
EP	Educational Psychologist
GUSU1	Get Up! Stand Up! (Version 1)
GUSU2	Get Up! Stand Up! (Version 2)
INTO	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
PDST	Professional Development Service for Teachers
PSI	Psychological Society of Ireland
SAFE	Sequenced, Active, Focused and Explicit
SE	Social and Emotional
SEL	Social and Emotional Learning
SPHE	Social, Personal and Health Education
SSIS-RS	Social Skills Improvement System-Rating Scales
WoE	Weight of Evidence

Chapter 1: Introduction

EVALUATION OF GET UP! STAND UP! (VERSION 2)

1.1   Introduction

Social and Emotional (SE) skills play an important role in a child's

development (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning

[CASEL], 2013; 2015; Gresham & Elliott, 2008; Smith & Gilles, 2003) and in their

overall wellbeing (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012; Chernyshenko, Kankaraš, &

Drasgow, 2018; Jonathan Cohen, 2006; Government of Ireland, 2018; Hymel, Low,

Starosta, Gill, & Schonert-Reichl, 2018). CASEL defines SE skills as consisting of

five interrelated competencies, specifically self-awareness, self-management, social

awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2013,

2015). Individuals who demonstrate deficits in SE skills are more likely to present

with associated difficulties including rejection by peers, substance use, mental

illness, academic failure and school dropout (CASEL, 2013; 2015; Gajewski et al.,

1998; Gresham & Elliott, 2008; Parker & Asher, 1987; Smith & Gilles, 2003). The

provision of school-based, high-quality SE interventions has been shown to have a

positive impact on the development of these skills (Cefai, Bartolo, Cavioni, &

Downes, 2018; CASEL, 2013; 2015; Durlak et al., 2011; Gresham, 2017; January,

Casey, & Paulson, 2011). Investing in high-quality SE programmes far outweighs

the associated costs (Cefai et al., 2018; Heckman & Masterov, 2007; Nathanson,

Rivers, Flynn, & Brackett, 2016).

A nationally and internationally (Cefai et al., 2018; Durlak, Domitrovich,

Weissberg, & Gullotta, 2015; Government of Ireland, 2018; Gresham, 2017)

recognised framework for high-quality school-based SE programmes has been

identified by CASEL (2103, 2015). This states that SE skills programme need to be

well-designed and provide participants with the opportunity to practise skills. It must

cover the five main components which are acknowledged as crucial to SE skills interventions (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making) and be offered over multiple years. Furthermore, the programme must offer training and support to the facilitators of the intervention and have at least one piece of research which demonstrates a positive impact on the participants' behaviours compared to a comparison group (CASEL, 2013, 2015).

1.2   Focus and Purpose of Study

The Department of Education and Skills (DES) indicates that schools should ensure their pupils' wellbeing through the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum and through the use of specific interventions which provide additional targeted support (Government of Ireland, 2018). SPHE covers three main strands: "Myself", "Myself and others" and "Myself and the wider world" (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA], 1999b, p. 5). An overview of the SPHE curriculum highlights a number of topics within these strands which are directly related to SE skills (as identified by CASEL), particularly "My friends and other people", "Relating to others", "Self-identity", "Self-awareness", "Developing self-confidence", and "Making decisions" (NCCA, 1999c, p. 9). Currently, programmes such as *Walk Tall* (Professional Development Service for Teachers [PDST], 2016) and *The Incredible Years* (Webster-Stratton, 2000) address a number of SE skills (Cefai et al., 2018) which are also identified as programmes that promote wellbeing in schools (National Educational Psychological Service [NEPS], 2015c). In addition to these programmes, Get Up! Stand Up! (Version 2) (GUSU2) (NEPS, 2017) has been developed and promoted for use in Irish schools. This school-based programme was designed to support children who are transitioning from primary to post-primary school through the development of their SE skills. The programme is

described as a "grassroots initiative" (NEPS, 2017, p. 4) designed by practising

Educational Psychologists (EPs) who identified a cohort of individuals "at risk of

social isolation" (NEPS, 2017, p. 4) following their transition to post-primary school.

Limited research has been conducted on this version of GUSU2 (See NEPS,

2012a; 2015a, for research conducted on previous versions), despite it being

promoted for use in Irish schools by the school psychological service. The role of an

EP involves working with and supporting schools, families and children who may be

presenting with a variety of concerns including social, emotional and behavioural

difficulties (Passenger, 2013; Scottish Executive, 2002). This work includes the

identification of appropriate interventions to support the relevant stakeholders

(Cameron, 2006; Fallon, Woods, & Rooney, 2010; Frederickson, 2002; Lane &

Corrie, 2007; Passenger, 2013; Scottish Executive, 2002). EPs need to be

accountable for the interventions they recommend for use (Dunsmuir, Brown,

Iyadurai, & Monsen, 2009; Woolfson, Whaling, Stewart, & Monsen, 2003). Hence,

any intervention recommended needs to meet the highest standards based on

research and best practice.

This research aims to evaluate GUSU2 in the context of such standards. Such

an evaluation should include a focus on the process and implementation, as well as

the outcomes for the participants (Lobo, Petrich, & Burns, 2014). In this sense, the

inclusion of quantitative data, collected via NEPS (NEPS, 2018), provides outcome

data regarding pupils' SE skills following the programme. Additionally, gathering

the views of the users of the programme, specifically facilitating teachers and

participating pupils, provides an insight into the application of GUSU2 in a natural

setting, while potentially identifying barriers and facilitators to its success or

otherwise (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Forsner, Hansson, Brommels, Wistedt, & Forsell, 2010). This evaluation will provide valuable feedback regarding the programme, while also identifying potential areas for development of future iterations of GUSU2.

1.3   Research Questions

The following research questions were identified to evaluate GUSU2 as a SE skills programme:

- What was the impact of GUSU2 on the participants' SE skills?

- To what extent are the CASEL competencies addressed by GUSU2?

- What are teachers' perceptions of the training and support they received for GUSU2?

- What are teachers' and pupils' experiences of GUSU2?

1.4   Personal Background

As part of this doctorate programme, Trainee Educational Psychologists are required to undertake a 120-day professional placement with NEPS. The GUSU2 programme was developed by a team of practising EPs, who were based in the same regional office as I was during this placement. As part of my professional placement, I was presented with the opportunity to become involved in a small-scale research project to evaluate GUSU2 as it was being rolled out to schools in a geographical area. This involvement highlighted the importance of SE skill development in the education system and the importance of having a programme that is of the highest standards for the pupils receiving this input. In this sense, undertaking this evaluation allows me to develop my knowledge and contribute to the quality of SE skill programmes in use in the Irish education system.

1.5   Layout of Thesis

This chapter has outlined a brief overview of the context and rationale for conducting research in this area. The research questions have been highlighted. Chapter two will provide an in-depth review of the literature, specifically focusing on the context and rationale of conducting research on school-based interventions for SE skills in pupils who are transitioning from primary to post-primary school. Chapter three will describe the methodology utilised, including an overview of the epistemological stance adopted. Chapter four presents the findings from the review of the GUSU2 manual, the teacher interviews, the pupil focus groups and the statistical analysis conducted on the outcome data collected via the Social Skill Improvement System-Rating Scales (SSIS-RS) (Elliot & Gresham, 2008). Chapter five discusses the implications of the findings in the context of the research conducted in the area, while chapter six draws the conclusions from this study, including consideration of the limitations of this study before considering potential areas for future development.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 2: Literature Review

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2.1   Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the relevant research in the chosen field of study. It begins by outlining the context and rationale for the study, specifically focusing on social and emotional (SE) skills. Following this, a systematic review of the literature is presented, focusing on interventions designed to support the development of SE skills in pupils who are transitioning from primary to post-primary school. The implications of this review consider the role of SE skills in the context of the Irish education system, specifically the role of Get Up! Stand Up! (Version 2) (GUSU2) (National Educational Psychological Service [NEPS], 2017), while also outlining a framework for evaluating SE programmes. Finally, having identified a gap in the literature, several research questions are outlined at the end of this chapter.

2.2   Context and Rationale

This review begins by highlighting the research that exists on both social skills and SE skills internationally. An attempt to conceptualise both terms in relation to each other will be outlined. The role of SE skills in children's transitions will be presented, specifically focusing on its role in the period before the transition from primary to post-primary school as well as the theoretical framework which underpins SE skills.

2.2.1   Overview of social skills and social and emotional skills. The terms social skills and SE skills are often used interchangeably (Gresham et al., 2018; Moote, Smyth, & Wodarski, 1999). It is acknowledged that both social skills and SE skills occur in a social context (Cook et al., 2008; Wolstencroft et al., 2018) and

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involve person-to-person interaction (Wolstencroft et al., 2018). However, despite the similarities between both terms, it is evident that there is also a significant difference between what both terms are referring to.

It has been suggested that the term SE skills came to prominence following a report by the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2002) on children's health (Sklad, Diekstra, Ritter, Ben, & Gravesteijn, 2012). The inclusion of the term "emotional" is of importance, as it recognises that successful social interaction also depends on one's ability to manage and regulate emotional responses (Garner, Mahatmya, Brown, & Vesely, 2014; Nathanson et al., 2016; Spence, 2003). There is not an agreed upon definition of SE skills (Humphrey et al., 2011), however, several key areas associated with well-developed SE skills have been identified, including problem solving, conflict resolution, demonstration of empathy for others and management of one's emotions when interacting with others (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2013, 2015; Cefai et al., 2018; Durlak et al., 2011; S. Jones & Doolittle, 2017; O'Conner, De Feyter, Carr, Luo, & Romm, 2017). CASEL (2013, 2015) identified five specific competencies that are essential for the development of SE skills, namely; self-awareness; self-management; social awareness; relationship skills; and responsible decision-making. Such a definition incorporates both interpersonal skills, i.e. social awareness and relationship skills, and intrapersonal skills, i.e. self-awareness and self-management (Cefai et al., 2018). However, for an individual to be considered socially competent, they must demonstrate a proficiency across the spectrum of SE skills (Garner et al., 2014; Nathanson et al., 2016; Spence, 2003; Stichter, O'Connor, Herzog, Lierheimer, & McGhee, 2012; Stichter, Randolph, Gage, & Schmidt, 2007).

Social skills, on the other hand, may be conceptualised as the individual skills and behaviours which form part of a larger spectrum of skills, i.e. SE skills (Gresham, Sugai, & Horner, 2001; Moote et al., 1999; Stichter et al., 2012; Stichter et al., 2007). These specific skills are necessary to interact appropriately with others and to demonstrate social competence (Gresham, 1986; Gresham, Van, & Cook, 2006; Merrell, 1994; Moote et al., 1999), and may encompass a wide variety of verbal and non-verbal skills (Trower, Bryant, & Argyle, 2013). Social skills can include verbal skills, such as ending a conversation appropriately, and non-verbal skills, such as the use of gestures (Guivarch et al., 2017; Spence, 2003; Trower et al., 2013). These skills, while discrete, are often used simultaneously in social interactions. Social skills can be viewed as encompassing discrete skills, such as eye contact and verbal greeting, as well as more intricate and complex skills, such as emotional regulation (Stichter, Malugen, & Davenport, 2019). In this sense, it may be beneficial to consider SE skills as an umbrella term which contains all the individual social skills which are necessary to successfully interact with others and to succeed across a variety of domains.

2.2.2   Role and development of social and emotional skills. SE skills are an essential aspect of life, for both children and adults. Poor SE skills are associated with a variety of difficulties, including isolation, substance use, early school dropout and difficulties maintaining a job (CASEL, 2013; 2015; Gajewski, Hirn, & Mayo, 1998; Gresham & Elliott, 2008; Parker & Asher, 1987; Smith & Gilles, 2003). A poor ability to interact with others may negatively impact on one's likelihood of achieving success, both in school and in employment (Cefai et al., 2018; Chernyshenko et al., 2018; D. Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015; Smith & Gilles,

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2003). While there are children who benefit from support, many children develop SE skills without the need for direct intervention from adults (Guivarch et al., 2017). Precipitating factors such as culture, parents' behaviour and socioeconomic status are noted to have an impact on the development of such skills (Cefai et al., 2018; Cordier et al., 2015). Effective learning of SE skills occurs within the context of various environments including, the school curriculum, the school environment and culture, and the broader family and community environment (CASEL, 2013; 2015; Cefai et al., 2018; Downey & Williams, 2010; Greenberg et al., 2003; January et al., 2011; O'Conner et al., 2017; Weare & Nind, 2011). Furthermore, it is acknowledged that the effective utilisation of SE skills can be impacted by a variety of other factors, such as an intellectual disability (Durlak et al., 2015; Elias, 2004; Gresham et al., 2001), a neurodevelopmental disorder (Bellini, Peters, Benner, & Hopf, 2007; Einfeld et al., 2018) and anxiety (Carr, 2015; Erath, Tu, & El-Sheikh, 2012; Goldstein, Boxer, & Rudolph, 2015; Grills-Taquechel, Norton, & Ollendick, 2010). Such biological, psychological and environmental factors highlight the variety of facets which can influence an individual's ability to develop and utilise SE skills appropriately. In this sense the development of SE skills appears to be underpinned by the biopsychosocial framework, which notes the role of the psychological, biological and environmental aspects which may be impacting on presenting issues (Alvarez, Pagani, & Meucci, 2012; Cooper, Bilton, & Kakos, 2012; Engel, 1977). Any intervention targeting the development of SE skills should consider the various factors potentially impacting on these skills be tailored to address a variety of specific areas of need for the best outcomes (Alvarez et al., 2012; Bolton, 2013; Cooper et al., 2012; Damon & Lerner, 2008). Lack of appropriate support can result in distress in pupils which may ultimately lead to difficulties such as school refusal,

dropout and under-achievement (CASEL, 2013; 2015; Coyle & Malecki, 2018; Durlak et al., 2011).

    2.2.3   Social and emotional interventions in schools. For most children, school is where they spend a large portion of their time. The school setting can be a particularly stressful environment for some children (Coyle & Malecki, 2018), as they may be required to utilise SE skills, such as self-regulation, problem-solving and goal setting, in a variety of situations (Grusec & Hastings, 2014). These skills are important, as children are typically taught in a group setting, that generally involves interactions with several other individuals, including teachers and classmates (Coyle & Malecki, 2018; Durlak et al., 2011; Grusec & Hastings, 2014).

    Positive pupil-teacher relationships are noted to have a positive impact on a pupils' academic outcomes and school engagement, while Durlak et al. (2011) suggest that SE skills may predict the quality of teacher-pupil and peer relationships in individuals. In an Irish context, the *Growing Up In Ireland* study (2018) found that pupils who reported more positive teacher interactions, including praise for completing work and encouragement to ask questions, at nine years old were more likely to report liking school at 13 years old, however, they were unable to infer the direction of this causal relationship. Nevertheless, it is logical to reason that SE skills will have an impact on pupils' ability to function and learn in this setting (Durlak et al., 2011; Rosenblatt & Elias, 2008; Simonsen et al., 2012).

    Schools provide an ideal setting for developing these skills (Bellini et al., 2007; Durlak et al., 2011; Grusec & Hastings, 2014), as teachers and school staff are perfectly placed to identify and encourage the development of such skills (Coyle & Malecki, 2018). The development of these skills in pupils can be supported from a

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young age through school-based programmes (Durlak et al., 2011; Greenberg et al., 2003; January et al., 2011; S. Jones & Doolittle, 2017; Smith & Gilles, 2003), which typically involve acquiring and developing skills, reducing behaviours that contradict the new skills and generalising these skills (Cook et al., 2008; S. Jones & Doolittle, 2017). Such positive outcomes can be achieved, regardless of school location, pupil ethnicity or socioeconomic status (Cefai et al., 2018; Durlak et al., 2011; R. Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2017). Additionally, the provision of such interventions can be effective across a wide variety of students, including those with emotional and behavioural difficulties (Cook et al., 2008), autism spectrum disorders (Einfeld et al., 2018; Gates, Kang, & Lerner, 2017) and the general school population (Durlak et al., 2011). The targeting of the general school population for intervention is becoming more commonplace, as it is acknowledged that many pupils would benefit from explicit support in this area (Simonsen et al., 2012).

Interventions which target the entire population are often referred to as Tier 1 (Gordon, 1983; Gresham, 2017; January et al., 2011) or universal interventions (CASEL, 2013, 2015; Gresham, 2017), and tend to address a broad range of SE skills (CASEL, 2013, 2015; Durlak et al., 2011; Gresham, 2017). In their review of school-based interventions, January et al. (2011), noted that universal interventions are typically pre-emptive in nature and are designed to increase protective skills and decrease detrimental behaviours in the general population. Universally implemented programmes also negate the need for the withdrawal of pupils, which can lead to a degree of stigmatisation due to the perception of requiring additional support by their peers (Evans, Scourfield, & Murphy, 2015; January et al., 2011). It is expected that up to 80% of pupils will "respond adequately" (Gresham, 2017, p. 59) to Tier 1 SE skills interventions, while the remaining 20% require additional, targeted support in

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the form of Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions (CASEL, 2013, 2015; Gresham, 2017; January et al., 2011). Such targeted interventions typically focus on specific social skills or competencies and are often referred to as social skill programmes (Cefai et al., 2018; Gresham, 2017). While the universal application of interventions is noted to be effective, research suggests that these interventions can be most effective at particular times in a child's life.

  2.2.4 Periods of transition and social and emotional skills. The greatest impact of SE interventions was observed in a child's early years, specifically preschool and the early years of primary school (January et al., 2011). These interventions targeting SE competencies can have a significant impact on children's social and academic outcomes in both the long and short term (McClelland, Tominey, Schmitt, & Duncan, 2017). CASEL (2013) note a variety of programmes that have been developed for implementation during the early school years, such as *You Can Do It! Early Childhood Education Program* (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012), *Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS)* (Domitrovich, Cortes, & Greenberg, 2007) and *The Incredible Years* programme (Murray, Rabiner, Kuhn, Pan, & Sabet, 2018; Webster-Stratton, 2000). This is not the only time in a child's life when the development of such skills is necessary. The transition to early adolescence is noted as a period SE skills can positively impact on wellbeing (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010) and is a period when a significant response is noted in SE skill programmes (January et al., 2011). This effect is likely due to an increased interest in relationships and the change in social demands that occurs as children transition into adolescence (January et al., 2011; Steinberg & Morris, 2001).

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The transition to adolescence is recognised as a time of change and uncertainty for many individuals (Lerner & Galambos, 1998) which typically involves additional challenges, such as puberty, extra responsibility and academic pressures (Chernyshenko et al., 2018; Duchesne, Ratelle, & Feng, 2017; Goldstein et al., 2015; Grills-Taquechel et al., 2010; Hopwood, Hay, & Dyment, 2016). Individuals must navigate more complex social interactions due to the increased value placed on social status (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). This transitional period is often associated with a peak in peer victimisation (Erath et al., 2012; Wolke, Woods, Stanford, & Schulz, 2001) which typically occurs between classmates (Lee, Shellman, Osmer, Day, & Dempsey, 2016). Social anxiety (Erath et al., 2012; Pickard, Happé, & Mandy, 2018; Spence & Rapee, 2016) and poor self-evaluation of their social abilities (Coyle & Malecki, 2018) are closely associated with this time in a child's life. A further complication during the transition to adolescence is the contemporaneous transition from primary to post-primary school.

This transition, while predictable (Benner, 2011), will typically involve a drastic change for many young adolescents, including the change from having one teacher for an entire academic year to having multiple teachers throughout the day (Duchesne, Ratelle, & Roy, 2011; Grills-Taquechel et al., 2010; Hopwood et al., 2016), being part of larger classes and year groups (Coelho, Sousa, & Marchante, 2018; Duchesne et al., 2011), increased complexity of school work (Grills-Taquechel et al., 2010) and changing peer group (Duchesne et al., 2011; Goldstein et al., 2015). Durlak et al. (2011) noted that poor SE skills can result in a difficult transition for students as they begin post-primary school due to the poor connection they may feel towards their school and peers. This poor connection with peers can begin in primary

school and can have negative outcomes in the long term. An Irish study noted that

pupils who had no friends in primary school were more likely to experience bullying

in their first year of post-primary school (Smyth, McCoy, & Darmody, 2004), which

increases the likelihood of those students experiencing long-term consequences, such

as social isolation and poor self-esteem (Wolke et al., 2001). However, the *Growing*

Up In Ireland study (Williams et al., 2018) suggests that less than 1% of 13-year-

olds reported having "no friends at all" (p. 153), while 7% reported having one or

two friends. This suggests that most pupils have some connection to their peers,

which may alleviate the challenge of transitioning for many pupils. These figures

need to be interpreted with some caution, as the number of friends that each 13-year-

old reported they "hang around with" (p. 153) are self-reported and does not indicate

the quality of these relationships, as social interactions become more complex as

children transition to adolescence (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). An additional caveat

to this finding is that some individuals, such as those with an ASD, can find it

difficult to accurately identify friendships and may over-report the number of friends

they have (Carrington, Templeton, & Papinczak, 2003), which may be influencing

these statistics. Nonetheless, the provision of suitable support to children should be

considered an integral part of school-based interventions which will likely have

positive impacts on their transition and wellbeing.

2.2.5   Conclusion. SE skills play an important role in an individual's life.

Research has highlighted the importance of good SE skills in education settings as

social demands, as well as academic demands, are placed on pupils. The school

environment has been identified as an appropriate setting for such an intervention to

occur, as teachers and school staff are in a position to encourage the development of

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the relevant SE skills. Furthermore, research notes that many interventions can be implemented universally to the entire pupil population, which address the spectrum of SE skills required for interacting with others. Such interventions are shown to be successful for up to 80% of the population, while the remaining 20% require targeted support for specific social skills. The need for support in developing SE skills appears to increase in the period prior to their transition to post-primary school, as this coincides with the transition to adolescence and the increasing complexity of social relationships. Hence, a systematic review of the literature focusing specifically on school-based SE interventions, which are targeted at the time of transition from primary to post-primary school should be conducted to provides additional insight into this area.

2.3 Systematic Review of Research

A systematic review of the literature was conducted to provide greater insight into research in the area of school-based SE interventions during the transition period from primary to post-primary school. To begin, the review topic and search strategy will be outlined, followed by an in-depth evaluation of the research, with specific consideration given to the quality of the methodology employed, the relevance of the methodology to the research question and the relevance of the findings to this study's interest. This evaluation shall utilise the Weight of Evidence framework (Gough, 2007) to critically review and compare the identified articles.

2.3.1 Review topic and search strategy. This review considers the impact of school-based, SE skills training or interventions for pupils, which coincides with their transition from primary to post-primary school. Several inclusion and exclusion

criteria were identified, as recommended by Gough (2007), in order to determine

which articles identified in the search are to be included in the review (Table 1).

Table 1

Inclusionary and Exclusionary Criteria

	Inclusion	Exclusion	Rationale
1. Type of Publication	The study must appear in a peer-reviewed journal.	The study does not feature in a peer-reviewed journal.	Research that has been reviewed by experts will be of a higher standard.
2. Language	The study must be published in English.	The study is unavailable in English.	To ensure reviewer understanding of the study.
3. Research Design	The study must include primary empirical data.	The study does not include primary empirical data.	This means that the data are original (i.e. not meta-analyses or reviews).
4. Intervention	The study must make use of an intervention which incorporates an element of SE skills training	The study uses a form of intervention that does not incorporate an element of SE skills training	This study is only concerned with studies which use an intervention that incorporates an element of SE skills training
5. Population	The participants must be children or young adolescents who are transitioning to a post-primary school from a primary school or who have just transitioned to a post-primary school from a primary school (or	The participants are not children or young adolescents who are transitioning to a post-primary school from a primary school or who have just transitioned to a post-primary school from a primary school (or international equivalent)	This study is only interested in the impacts of interventions which are targeted at children or young adolescents transitioning from primary to post-primary education (or international equivalent)

	international equivalent)		
6. Date	The article was published any time before 10th December 2018.	Article published after 10th December 2018.	Final search date before the analysis began. Due to the limited number of relevant studies, no exclusion date was set regarding how old articles could be.

A comprehensive literature search of several databases (Academic Search Complete, British Education Index, Education Full Text, Education Source, ERIC, MEDLINE, Omnifile Full Text Mega (H.W. Wilson), PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, and Social Sciences Full Text (H.W. Wilson)) was completed up to December 2018. The search included combinations of the following terms;

social skills training OR social skills intervention OR social and emotional skills training OR SEL OR social competence OR social and emotional learning OR social and emotional education

AND

transition* OR school transition*

AND

school-age children OR youth OR student* OR pupil* OR adolescen*

A combination of these searches identified a total of 1647 articles. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to these articles (See Table 1). Further to this, the titles and abstracts of the remaining articles were reviewed for suitability to the review topic. This led to the identification of 14 full articles for review (See Figure 1

for an overview of the review procedure). Five articles were ultimately identified for

inclusion in this review (See Table 2).

Search of Online Databases n=1647

Studies excluded based on criteria 1 (326) * & 2 (50) *

Removal of duplicates

n=1271

Abstract and title review. Studies excluded based on criteria 3(30) *, 4 (17) * & 5 (164) *

n= 225

Full Text Review. Studies excluded based on criteria 2 (2) *, 3 (4) *, & 5 (3)*

n= 14

Included in the review n= 5 (See Table 2 for final list of papers included)
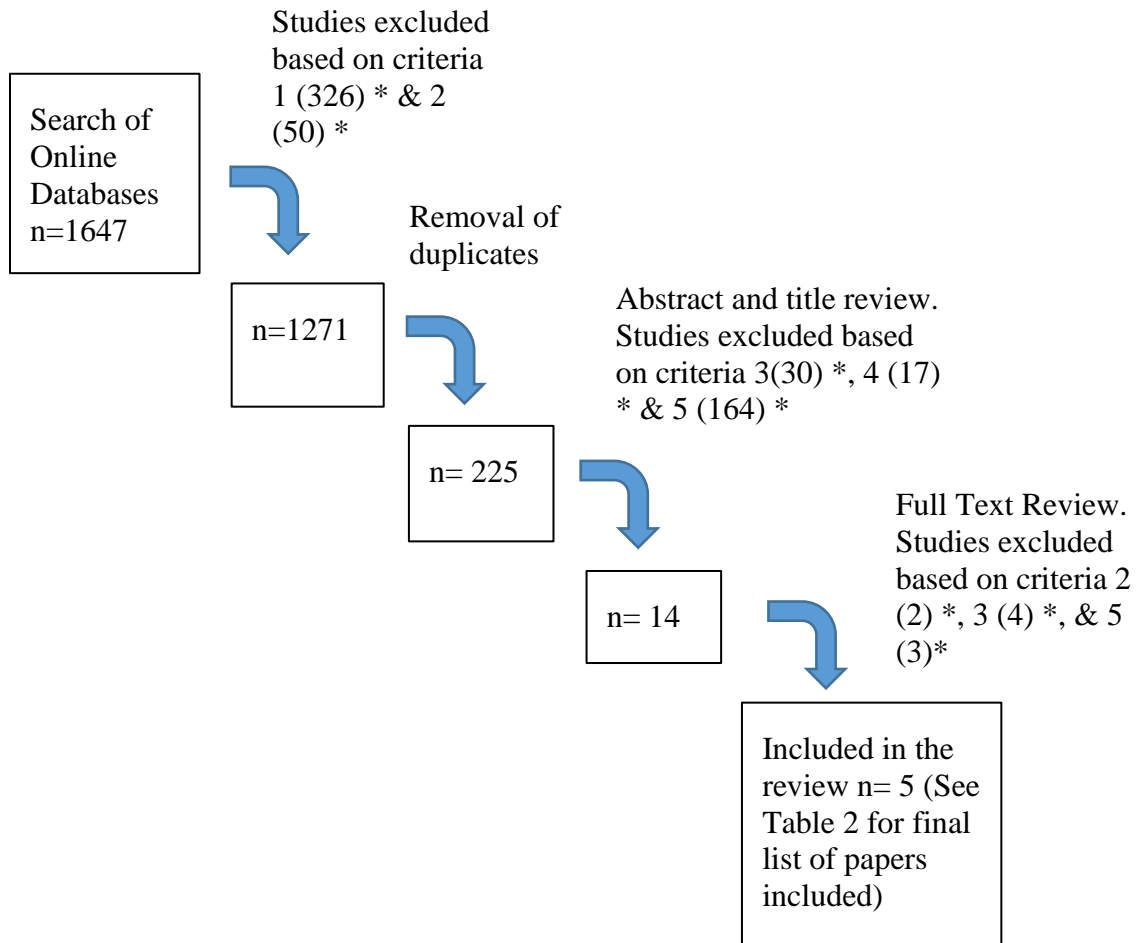
Figure 1: Outline of the procedure for selecting studies for the review

* Number of studies excluded stated in brackets.

Table 2

Studies Included in The Review

Greene, R. W., & Ollendick, T. H. (1993). Evaluation of a multidimensional program for

sixth-graders in transition from elementary to middle school. *Journal of*

Community Psychology, 21(2), 162-176.

Junge, C., Krienke, U. J., Böhme, K., Prüß, F., Sander, A., Niemann, J., & Langosch, J. M.

(2016). The transition from primary to secondary school as stressful life event

provoking risky drinking behaviors. *Journal of Addictive Diseases, 35*(2), 128-134.

Snow, W. H., Gilchrist, L. D., Schilling, R. F., & Schinke, S. P. (1986). Preparing for

junior high school: A transition training program. *Social Work in Education, 9*(1),

33-43.

Tijms, J., Stoop, M. A., & Polleck, J. N. (2018). Bibliotherapeutic book club intervention

to promote reading skills and social-emotional competencies in low SES

community-based high schools: A randomised controlled trial. *Journal of Research*

in Reading, 41(3), 525-545.

Vassilopoulos, S. P., Diakogiorgi, K., Brouzos, A., & Moberly, N. J. (2018). A problem-

oriented group approach to reduce children's fears and concerns about the

secondary school transition. *Journal of Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools*,

28(1), 84-101.

2.3.2   Evaluation framework. In order to critically evaluate the identified

articles, it is important that an appropriate evaluative framework is applied. Gough,

Oliver, and Thomas (2017) suggest that research should be reviewed systematically

to determine the appropriateness of the methods to the review question, the relevance of the findings to the review question and the quality of the study. This transparency in approach allows for appropriate comparisons to be made between the articles. It also determines which findings should have more "trust" (Gough et al., 2017, p. 259) placed in them.

The studies in this review were appraised and evaluated using a framework developed by Gough (2007) which gives each study a score based on specific aspects. The studies will be given a Weight of Evidence (WoE) score based on methodological quality (WoE A) (see Appendix A), methodological relevance (WoE B) (see Appendix B), relevance of evidence (WoE C) (see Appendix C) and finally the overall score (WoE D) based on the average of the scores from the first three evaluations. WoE A is focused on methodological quality and is scored based on "integrity of the evidence" (Gough, 2007, p. 223) which is not specific to the review question. In contrast, WoE B is concerned with the relevance of the methodology specific to the review question, while WoE C is concerned with the relevance of the findings to the review question. Finally, WoE D, which provides an overall average score, helps determine which study's findings have the most weight and value. The studies shall be examined in more detail in terms of participants, measures used in the study, the intervention used, the design of the study and the results of the study, before considering the implication of this review for further research in this area.

2.3.3   Participants. There was a total of 672 participants in the studies reviewed. These participants were all pupils who were either getting ready to transition from primary to post-primary school (i.e. in their final year of primary school) or who had just transitioned from primary to post-primary school (i.e. in

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their first year of post-primary school). The number of participants in each study

varied from 54 (Vassilopoulos, Diakogiorgi, Brouzos, & Moberly, 2018) to 278

(Snow, Gilchrist, Schilling, & Schinke, 1986). The studies were based in a variety of

countries, including two in the United States of America (R. Greene & Ollendick,

1993; Snow et al., 1986), one each from the Netherlands (Tijms, Stoop, & Polleck,

2018) and Greece (Vassilopoulos et al., 2018), while the study by Junge et al. (2016)

involved students from both Germany and Poland. While there is a mix of countries

identified in the review, there were no studies identified with an Irish cohort.

Participants in each study were recruited in a variety of ways. Three studies

included all the students from a school or class in their study, i.e. a universal

approach (Snow et al., 1986; Tijms et al., 2018; Vassilopoulos et al., 2018). The

rationale for selecting the two primary schools that were involved in the study by

Snow et al. (1986) was not reported, however, Vassilopoulos et al. (2018) and Tijms

et al. (2018) both provided a rationale for the selection of the participant schools.

Tijms et al. (2018) selected two post-primary schools which were in an area of the

Netherlands of low socioeconomic status, as individuals living in these areas are

more likely to have low reading attitudes and poor SE skills compared to their peers

from areas of higher socioeconomic status. Conversely, Vassilopoulos et al. (2018)

selected three inner-city primary schools which were located near to the researcher.

Junge et al. (2016) and R. Greene and Ollendick (1993) both recruited their

participants from a cohort within schools. Junge et al. recruited participants from

schools in an area on the border of Poland and Germany (referred to as Pomeria).

These schools were identified based on "expected risk factors" (p. 129), however,

these criteria were not specified. A focus on grade point average (GPA), specifically

the change in GPA following the transition to post-primary school was the method

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for identifying participants used by R. Greene and Ollendick (1993). This study identified 66 first-year students, from four post-primary schools, however, it was not stated how the schools were selected. A total of 42 participants, whose GPA dropped by at least one point following their transition to post-primary school in contrast to their GPA in their final year in primary school, were selected for the intervention group. The participants in this study were also matched with a "contrast group" (p. 165). The "contrast group" consisted of participants whose GPA either did not change or improved following the transition to post-primary school.

     2.3.4   Interventions. As was the remit of this review, each study used a form of intervention which utilised an element of SE skills training targeted at students in a school-based setting. The studies identified in this review used a variety of intervention types, including developing a specific curriculum that targets specific skills and attitudes (Junge et al., 2016; Snow et al., 1986; Vassilopoulos et al., 2018), the use of a bibliotherapeutic book club (Tijms et al., 2018) and a combination of teacher support, parental support and peer support (R. Greene & Ollendick, 1993). The degree to which each study specifically addressed SE skill competencies is reflected in their WoE C scores (See Appendix C).

     As mentioned, the development of a curriculum for use with students to aid their transition to post-primary school was the most commonly employed intervention in the studies included in this review. The contents of the curriculum developed by Snow et al. (1986) were identified based on the findings from a needs assessment completed by the researchers, which involved 150 students who were due to transition to post-primary school from two separate primary schools. The needs assessment involved participants identifying three personal concerns regarding the

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transition to post-primary school. A curriculum, which included some aspects associated with SE skills, was then developed based on these identified concerns, which included concerns regarding fights; drug use; peer pressure; disagreement with parents; maintaining friendships; decision making; and making new friends. This curriculum was delivered to six classes of students in 50-minute sessions over an eight-week period. These sessions were facilitated by "trained social work personnel" (Snow et al., 1986, p. 37). In contrast to this study, a reduction of risky drinking behaviour was targeted by Junge et al. (2016), while Vassilopoulos et al. (2018) targeted a reduction of fears and a change of cognition. Junge et al. (2016) developed a curriculum for the participants in their study, which included five modules focusing on the following: raising awareness about attitudes; training required behaviours; developing strength; developing a healthy lifestyle; and supportive factors in families. These groups were facilitated by undergraduate students over the course of two years. However, there was limited detail provided regarding these modules and hence it is difficult to state the extent to which the development of SE skills was addressed. The study by Vassilopoulos et al. (2018) devised a curriculum for their participants which was delivered in 90-minute sessions, spanning five weeks. Both intervention groups in this study received input from the same facilitator on the same day. The facilitator in this study was a "graduate student" who "had attended a group counselling course" (p. 11). The facilitator was required to submit a summary of their session plans on a weekly basis and attended supervision frequently. The curriculum incorporated problem-solving, cognitive restructuring (i.e. changing the participants' view of situations from threatening to non-threatening) and social competence, which appears to address SE skills such as developing self-esteem, interpersonal skills, and communication.

A different approach was adopted by Tijms et al. (2018). Rather than develop a curriculum and teach skills using a more traditional teaching approach, as was the case in the previous studies (Junge et al., 2016; Snow et al., 1986; Vassilopoulos et al., 2018), the researchers in this study used a book club intervention. This intervention served a dual purpose of both improving SE skills and literacy skills (i.e. reading comprehension, reading attitude and reading motivation). This small group intervention, which consisted of five to seven students per group, was facilitated in 45-minute weekly sessions by "junior psychologists" (p. 533) who had received two days training from the research team. However, the study did not clarify the exact role, position or background of the "junior psychologists". The facilitators met the research team weekly to ensure that the programme was being implemented as intended. Each student took part in eight to ten sessions over the course of 12 weeks, but it was not stated why students received varying numbers of sessions. This bibliotherapeutic book club intervention used books which were matched to the participants' reading level. As the participants were all from an area of low socioeconomic status, books were chosen, based on a collaboration with a Dutch government project, which covered relevant topics for the participants. These topics provided the group with an opportunity to explore and discuss some of the difficulties that they may face in their own lives (e.g. fighting in school and cyberbullying). However, additional detail regarding the content of the books was not provided, making it difficult to determine the extent to which SE skills were addressed.

Finally, R. Greene and Ollendick (1993) utilised a multifaceted intervention which provided participants, who were identified due to their decrease in GPA

following the transition to post-primary school, with a variety of supports. Two overlapping forms of intervention were offered. Both groups received additional support from their "block teacher" (p. 166), who was a teacher that the participants had regularly for class. The support provided by this teacher included informal counselling, monitoring, encouragement, assistance and advice on a variety of topics including completing homework, interactions with staff members and students, attendance and behaviour. The block teachers were asked to meet with each student at least twice a week for the first 12 weeks and then once per week for six weeks following this. This was the only support that the "partial treatment group" (p. 166) received. However, the "full treatment group" (p. 166) received additional support. This support involved both a student support group and receiving increased support from home (see below). The student support group involved students attending 13 sessions over the course of 15 weeks. All the groups had the same leader (it was not reported who this leader was or what their training or background was), consisted of three to five students, and provided students with an opportunity to discuss a variety of issues including; differences between primary and post-primary school; accepting greater responsibility in post-primary school; and positive interactions with school staff and peers. The groups also involved problem-solving training, identifying strategies for requesting help, goal setting and organisational skills, which are all elements of SE skills. The student support group employed role-playing, modelling and peer support throughout. The final support that the full treatment group received was increased support from their parents. Parents of the participants were contacted and asked to monitor their child's homework, academic progress and to informally discuss improving school performance. Parents were contacted four times in the space of the 15-week intervention by the project director and asked to continue to

provide support to their child. This was the only study which included a parental aspect in their intervention.

A variety of interventions involving a large number of participants were provided in these studies, however, three of the studies also contained control groups (Junge et al., 2016; Tijms et al., 2018; Vassilopoulos et al., 2018), which is a sign of methodological quality (i.e. WoE A). One study used a "contrast" group (R. Greene & Ollendick, 1993), while the study by Snow et al. (1986) did not report using any form of a control group. Both Vassilopoulos et al. (2018) and Tijms et al. (2018) used a treatment as usual approach (Löfholm, Brännström, Olsson, & Hansson, 2013; Witt et al., 2018) to their control groups, in that the control group continued to receive regular schooling while the intervention group received their intervention. Only Tijms et al. (2018) randomly allocated the participants to these groups. Both studies reported that there was no significant difference between the participants in the control group and the intervention groups at the beginning of the study. Junge et al. (2016) reported using a control group, however, no information was provided regarding the condition of the control group. The participants of the control group were identified by the project managers, however, it is not clear whether these participants were matched with the intervention sample. Finally, R. Greene and Ollendick (1993) incorporated a "contrast group" (p. 165), which consisted of students whose GPA had maintained or increased its level since the transition to post-primary school. These participants were matched with the intervention group based on both their GPA in the final year of primary school and their gender. R. Greene and Ollendick (1993) stated that "school restrictions" (p. 166) precluded the use of a no-treatment control group in their study.

2.3.5   Measures. A wide variety of instruments were used to collect data in these studies, which reflects the various targeted areas in each study (see Table 3). As this review is predominately concerned with the SE skills training and the impact of the relevant interventions on the participants' SE skills, there will be a focus on the measures relevant to this area.

Table 3

Overview of Measures

Study	Measure	Concept measured
Greene and Ollendick (1993)	Revised Behaviour Problem Checklist	Behaviour problems
	Children's Depression Inventory	Depression
	Revised Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale	Anxiety
	Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale	Self-esteem
	Survey of Middle School Stressors	Middle school stress
	Revised Behaviour Problem Checklist	Problem behaviour
	GPA	Academic achievement
Junge et al. (2016)	Items from the Child Behaviour Checklist	Social withdrawal
		Depressiveness
		Aggressiveness
	Teacher's Assessment List	Self-control
		Assertiveness
		Empathy
		Social integration
Snow et al. (1986)	Evaluation of training survey*	Interest in topics
		Preference for training methods
		Usefulness of skills
Tijms et al. (2018)	School Attitude Questionnaire	Social and emotional competencies
	Vlaamse Test Begrijpend Lezen Version 6	Reading comprehension
	The Bazar Reading Attitude Questionnaire	Reading attitude
	Reading Motivation and Reading Interest Questionnaire	Reading motivation
	NIO subscale-Vocabulary **	Receptive Vocabulary
	The Dutch version of the 1-minute test **	Word Decoding
Vassilopoulos et al. (2018)	School Liking and Avoidance Questionnaire	Attitude to school
	Ambiguous Situations Inventory	Reactions to ambiguous situations
	Illinois Loneliness Questionnaire	Loneliness
	School Concerns Questionnaire (Greek Version) *	Secondary school concerns

*measure used at post-intervention only ** measure used at pre-intervention only

Vassilopoulos et al. (2018) measured their participants' loneliness and social dissatisfaction using a self-report questionnaire, specifically the Illinois Loneliness Questionnaire. This measure contains 24 items and measures feelings of loneliness, estimations of peer status and feelings of social adequacy. They also measured their participants' attitude to school, their view of ambiguous situations and their concerns about post-primary school. As mentioned, Tijms et al. (2018) measured literacy in their study, however, they also measured SE competencies. Specifically, they measured participants' ability to express themselves, their school self-concept and their social relational skills using subscales from the Dutch version of the School Attitude Questionnaire. Junge et al. (2016) were interested in their participants' self-control, assertiveness, empathy and social integration, which they measured using the Teacher Assessment List (translated name as provided in the original article), which is a German instrument. They also used the Child Behaviour Checklist to measure social withdrawal, depression, and aggression. R. Greene and Ollendick (1993) measured peer relationships and conflict with authority and older students using the Survey of Middle School Stressors. This is a self-report survey which contains 28 items and also measures substance abuse and academic pressures. This study included the most measures of all the studies in this review. In contrast, while the study by Snow et al. (1986) involved a curriculum which covered a wide variety of topics, including interpersonal skills, it did not use any standardised instrument to measure outcomes. Upon completion of the intervention, participants were asked to complete a "two-page evaluation of the programme" (p. 40) in terms of their interest in the topics covered, their preference for the training methods used and the usefulness of the skills they were taught. Participants' views were also gathered

through "discussion" (p. 40), however, it was not clear how many participants views were gathered or the format of these discussions. Self-report measures were utilised in all these studies, with the exception of Junge et al. (2016) who utilised measures completed by the teachers of the participants. While there is value in each approach, the lack of different perspectives and the possible triangulation of findings could be viewed as a limitation of these studies.

2.3.6   Results. The variety of measures used across the studies produced a large variety of results. Firstly, Snow et al. (1986) noted that their post-intervention evaluation indicated most of their participants enjoyed the intervention, found it helpful, would use the skills learnt in future challenging situations and would recommend it to a friend. Role-playing was reported as the participants' preferred method of learning, suggesting that an active rather than a direct instruction approach is favoured. It was also reported that the participants "appeared to display greater confidence" (p. 41) utilising stress management, problem-solving and SE skills, however, it is unclear how this was determined. No follow up of the participants' actual use of these skills was undertaken, which makes it difficult to determine the effectiveness of their intervention. The inclusion of additional perspectives, such as parents or teachers, may have provided more information regarding the participants' use of the learnt skills.

Vassilopoulos et al. (2018) reported a significant decrease in perceived loneliness in the intervention group, while there was no significant change in the control group. The intervention group was also less likely to report feelings of loneliness, more likely to report liking school and significantly less likely to avoid school compared to the control group. The intervention group also reported fewer

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concerns about school and had a significant decrease in the number of ambiguous situations which they interpreted as being negative compared to their baseline scores.

In the study by Tijms et al. (2018), it was reported that, following the intervention, the intervention group demonstrated a significant increase in their scores for social-emotional competencies from pre- to post-intervention, as well as compared to the control group. Additionally, in terms of measures of literacy, the intervention group were reported to have made significant improvements in reading comprehension and reading attitude from pre to post-intervention. There was also a significant difference in reading comprehension and reading attitude between the intervention group and the control group, with significantly higher results in the intervention group.

As Junge et al. (2016) carried out their intervention across two countries they reported their results in terms of their Polish cohort and their German cohort, each of which had an intervention group and a control group. At pre-intervention, the German cohort's risk behaviours were "either not or rarely appearing" (p. 131), for both the control group and the intervention group, while the risk behaviour of both groups in the Polish cohort was "exhibited at least occasionally" (p. 131). All participants, both German and Polish, were noted to frequently display skills in the area of self-control, empathy, assertiveness and social integration at baseline, however, these scores were not compared statistically. Both the Polish and German intervention groups reported significant increases in empathy and social integration at post-intervention. The Polish intervention group displayed a significant increase in self-assertiveness and a significant decrease in social withdrawal and aggressiveness. However, the Polish control group were reported to have significantly decreased

their aggressiveness scores and increased their interpersonal skills, i.e. empathy, self-control, assertiveness, and social integration. The German intervention group was reported to have a significant decrease in self-assertiveness while there was no change in any of the risk behaviours measured (i.e. social withdrawal, depressiveness, and aggressiveness). In contrast, the German control group demonstrated a significant decrease in self-control, empathy and social integration, and a significant increase in risk behaviour, specifically social withdrawal and depressiveness. The different outcomes associated with both countries may suggest that an intervention should be adapted to meet the local needs of the participants.

The study by R. Greene and Ollendick (1993) reported no difference between all three groups (full treatment, partial treatment and contrast) at pre-intervention in terms of measures of depression and anxiety, however, the partial intervention group had significantly higher scores for anxiety/withdrawal behaviours compared to the full intervention group. Both intervention groups, who had lower GPAs following their transition to post-primary school compared to the contrast group, reported significantly higher scores in several areas compared to the contrast group, including measures of conduct disorder, socialised aggression, attention/immaturity, motor tension/excess and stress related to academic pressures. Conversely, the contrast group was reported to have significantly higher scores in self-esteem and significantly lower scores for anxiety/withdrawal compared to both intervention groups. Such differences between the intervention groups and the contrast group make direct comparison difficult. Additionally, the direction of the relationship between the changes in GPA, which was used to allocate the participants to the

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experimental groups, and the differences in the abovementioned measures is not clear.

Following the intervention, there was a significant increase in GPA for the full intervention group, while the partial intervention group also had an increase in GPA, however, this was non-significant. A significant decrease in the depression scores was reported for the full intervention group at post-intervention, which was maintained at follow-up, at the end of the academic year. However, it was not clear how long there was between post-intervention and the follow-up. Both intervention groups displayed significant decreases over time for self-reported anxiety, while there were no significant changes in reported scores for self-esteem, conduct disorder, socialised aggression, attention problems/immaturity, and anxiety/withdrawal in either intervention group. A comparison was also conducted between the three groups in this study. The contrast group initially displayed significantly lower stress for academic pressure and teacher-reported problems in scores for attention problems/immaturity at post-intervention, however, the significant difference only remained for attention problems/immaturity at follow up. Comparisons also indicated that the partial intervention group had significantly greater teacher-reported problems in scores for socialised aggression at both post-intervention and follow up. Significant differences were also reported for anxiety/withdrawal between the partial intervention group and both the full intervention group and the control group at post-intervention, however, at follow up the contrast group demonstrated significantly lower scores in anxiety/withdrawal while there was no significant difference between both intervention groups.

R. Greene and Ollendick also conducted "manipulation checks" (p. 165) to check for the fidelity of the intervention, which was one of only two reviewed articles to include a form of fidelity check. The intervention groups received support from their allocated block teachers an average of 1.7 times a week. There was no significant difference between the volume of support provided or the content covered in support from the block teachers between both intervention groups. These block teachers were also requested to document the topics of discussion that they had with each student. The main topics reported were academic problems (33%), trouble with homework assignments (20%) and issues around school behaviour (15%).

2.4   Conclusion and Implications

Several conclusions can be drawn from this review, particularly in relation to the WoE scores (Table 4). It is clear, in terms of methodological quality, that the studies by Tijms et al. (2018) and Vassilopoulos et al. (2018) both presented with high methodological quality, while the study by Snow et al. (1986) was noted as presenting with poor methodological quality (Appendix A). The WoE B scores were impacted for a variety of reasons (Appendix B), for example, the majority of the programmes, bar the study by R. Greene and Ollendick (1993), were facilitated by trained professionals rather than class teachers which is relevant as programmes are typically designed for implementation by teachers (Durlak et al., 2011; Sklad et al., 2012). Additionally, several of the studies did not include fidelity checks, while no study collected data from more than one source. Most importantly, none of the interventions sufficiently addressed the development of SE skills, as evident by the WoE C scores. In this sense, there were several limitations and implications which should be considered.

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Table 4

Weight of Evidence Scores

Study	WoE A	WoE B	WoE C	WoE D*
Greene and Ollendick (1993)	2 (Medium)	2 (Medium)	2 (Medium)	2 (Medium)
Junge et al. (2016)	2 (Medium)	2 (Medium)	2 (Medium)	2 (Medium)
Snow et al. (1986)	1 (Low)	1 (Low)	1 (Low)	1 (Low)
Tijms et al. (2018)	3 (High)	2 (Medium)	2 (Medium)	2.33 (Medium)
Vassilopoulos et al. (2018)	3 (High)	2 (Medium)	2 (Medium)	2.33 (Medium)

*Overall score of 0-1.5 (Low), 1.6-2.4 (Medium), 2.5-3.0 (High).

The results from these studies support the suggestion that SE skills can be improved when targeted within a school-based setting (Durlak et al., 2011; Greenberg et al., 2003; January et al., 2011; S. Jones & Doolittle, 2017; Smith & Gilles, 2003). It is also apparent from these studies, conducted in a variety of countries, that there is a perceived need for providing pupils with support in developing their SE skills beyond what schools are already providing, although no Irish study was identified in this review. However, the lack of studies specifically focusing on this stage of a child's life is of concern, considering the review by

January et al. (2011) which suggests that children benefit the most from targeted interventions during this period.

This review supports previous research which suggests that there is no consensus regarding the most appropriate method for measuring outcomes of SE skills (Durlak et al., 2011). The authors in the reviewed studies measured a variety of associated outcomes e.g. GPA (R. Greene & Ollendick, 1993), literacy (Vassilopoulos et al., 2018), and risk behaviour (Junge et al., 2016) in addition to some measures of SE skills. This likely reflects the array of outcomes associated with SE skills (Cook et al., 2008; Gresham et al., 2006; Guivarch et al., 2017; Trower et al., 2013; Wolstencroft et al., 2018). The inclusion of a comprehensive measure which specifically measures participants' knowledge and use of SE skills may provide more insight into the effectiveness of such interventions. Additionally, while quantitative data was collected in all the studies to varying degrees, only one study (Snow et al., 1986) included the qualitative perspective of the pupils when considering the impact of the interventions. The inclusion of a qualitative aspect is now recognised as important when evaluating interventions and provides an additional layer of information (Baxter, Enderby, Evans, & Judge, 2012; Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Kellaghan & Stufflebeam, 2012; Pluye & Hong, 2014).

Various designs and approaches were taken by the studies in this review, such as a specific curriculum (Junge et al., 2016; Snow et al., 1986; Vassilopoulos et al., 2018), a bibliotherapeutic book club (Tijms et al., 2018) and a combination of teacher, peer and parent support (R. Greene & Ollendick, 1993). This variation of approach suggests that there is no agreed-upon design for developing SE skills. While all these intervention designs were noted to produce positive results in terms

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of SE skill development to various degrees, the identification of essential

components to SE skill programmes would provide guidance in this regard.

2.4.1 Social and emotional skills framework. Providing pupils with an

intervention which meets criteria for an evidence-based framework, in turn, affords

them with the greatest opportunity to achieve positive outcomes. There are various

definitions of SE skills, all of which vary slightly, however, there remain more

similarities between them than differences (Cefai et al., 2018). While various

frameworks can accompany these definitions, one of the most commonly cited

frameworks is that of CASEL (Clarke, Morreale, Field, Hussein, & Barry, 2015;

Durlak et al., 2015; Durlak et al., 2011; Government of Ireland, 2018; Gresham,

2017), which is acknowledged by the European Union as one of the leading

frameworks internationally (Cefai et al., 2018). The CASEL framework is outlined

in their reviews of SE interventions in preschool and primary school (2013), and

post-primary school (2015). CASEL was established to provide guidance and

support for schools, and as a result, they have reviewed thousands of SE skills

interventions and identified an evidence-based best practice framework to support

pupils develop these attributes (CASEL, 2013; 2015; Durlak et al., 2015; Durlak et

al., 2011; Gresham, 2017). Key aspects of high-quality, evidence-based interventions

which have been shown to have positive impacts on mental health, academic

outcomes and social skills have been identified. Specifically, they state that such a

programme should incorporate the following:

- Be offered over multiple years;

- Be delivered as a school-based programme;

- Provide participants with the opportunity to practise their new skills;

- Be a well-designed programme;

- Offer training and support to the facilitators of the intervention;

- Have at least one piece of research which demonstrates a positive impact on the participants' behaviours compared to a comparison group;

- Cover the five main components which are acknowledged as crucial to SE skills interventions (See Appendix D for an overview of these competencies)

  o self-awareness

  o self-management

  o social awareness

  o relationship skills

  o responsible decision making.

Bearing these criteria in mind, this framework provides a checklist against which to judge a SE skills programme. While some aspects of this framework could be identified easily, others require a more thorough level of investigation, particularly the SE competencies, to determine the extent to which they are addressed.

2.4.2 Irish context. This review included programmes from a variety of countries, however, there was no programme identified that is currently used in an Irish setting. A report by the EU commission (Cefai et al., 2018) notes that the majority of SE skills programmes have been developed in the US, as a result of the creation of CASEL. However, SE skill concepts can vary across cultures, as there are different expectations and definitions of such in diverse cultures (Cefai et al., 2018;

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Durlak et al., 2015), and may need to be culturally adapted (Durlak et al., 2011). In this sense, the provision of a programme designed to meet the needs of a specific cohort, culture and educational system will likely produce the most positive outcomes.

In Irish primary schools, the programme *Walk Tall* (Professional Development Service for Teachers [PDST], 2016) is currently in use and is noted to be closely aligned to the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum (NEPS, 2015c; PDST, 2016). *Walk Tall* appears to address several topics closely aligned to the CASEL framework, such as "Making Decisions" (i.e. responsible decision-making), and "Between cultures? Bridging the gap" (i.e. social awareness). In addition to the *Walk Tall* programme, a number of schools also incorporate complementary SE skills programmes such as *The Incredible Years* programme (Webster-Stratton, 2000) and the *FRIENDS for life* programme (Barrett & Ryan, 2004) into their SPHE curriculum (Cefai et al., 2018; NEPS, 2015c). Both of these programmes are noted to address SE skills (CASEL, 2013; Cefai et al., 2018; NEPS, 2015c), and have also been demonstrated to be effective in the Irish System (Cefai et al., 2018; NEPS, 2015c).

In addition to the aforementioned programmes, many Irish schools are also using the GUSU2 (NEPS, 2017) programme. GUSU2 is designed for use for pupils in the final year of primary school or their first year of post-primary school. Additionally, it is designed to be implemented by teachers, rather than by trained professionals, as was the case in several of the reviewed studies. GUSU2 is a free, seven-week, school-based programme designed to support the development of SE skills of children in Irish schools. The programme includes the following topics:

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- Knowing Myself and Getting to Know Others;

- Friendship;

- Dealing with Feelings- Mine and Other's;

- Dealing with Teasing and Intimidation;

- Learning to Solve Problems and Making Decisions;

- Resilience and Coping.

Due to the recency of GUSU2, there has been limited research conducted on this version of the programme. Get Up! Stand Up! (Version 1) (GUSU1) was initially designed for use with students who were already attending post-primary school. Unpublished research conducted by NEPS (2012), with two cohorts of 2nd-year students, measured outcomes using the Social Skills Improvement System-Rating Scales (SSIS-RS) (Gresham & Elliott, 2008), which included parent, teacher and self-report measures. Results indicated that the intervention had a moderate effect size for the "low stream ability" group, however, there was no statistically significant difference in any of the measures from pre- to post-intervention. Additional unpublished research of GUSU1 was carried out by NEPS (2015). Following this, GUSU2 was developed, and it was deemed to be suited for implementation either at the end of primary school or the beginning of post-primary school rather than for 1st and 2nd year in post-primary school, as had been the case in GUSU1. However, it is not clear what the changes in the content of the programme entailed. To the author's knowledge, no formal evaluation has been conducted on the current version of GUSU2.

Educational Psychologists (EPs) need to ensure that clients are not receiving outdated programmes or interventions (Fox, 2011). Hence, there is an emphasis on

practising EPs to utilise research to inform their practice and inform the interventions to which their clients are subject (Cameron, 2006; Eodanable & Lauchlan, 2009; Fox, 2003, 2011; Hagstrom, Fry, Cramblet, & Tanner, 2007; Keith, 2008). Given the importance of SE skills in an educational setting (CASEL, 2013; 2015; Coyle & Malecki, 2018; Durlak et al., 2011) and the identified need for additional support for children at this stage of their lives (January et al., 2011), there is value in conducting research and evaluating GUSU2 as it is being promoted in schools. As a result, several research questions have been identified relevant to such an evaluation, which are outlined in the following section.

2.5   Research Question

To appropriately evaluate GUSU2 as a SE skills programme, the following research questions and hypotheses were identified, based on the aforementioned context and rationale:

- What was the impact of GUSU2 on the participants' SE skills?
    - ❖ Null Hypothesis: There will be no statistically significant change in the participants' SE total standard scores from the SSIS-RS following participation in GUSU2.
    - ❖ Alternative Hypothesis 1: There will be a statically significant increase in the participants' SE total standard scores from the SSIS-RS following participation in GUSU2.
    - ❖ Alternative Hypothesis 2: There will be a significant interaction between group allocation and time of testing.
    - ❖ These hypotheses were considered for the full study sample and the cohort displaying lower SE skill at pre-intervention.

- To what extent are the CASEL competencies addressed by GUSU2?

- What are teachers' perceptions of the training and support they received for GUSU2?

- What are teachers' and pupils' experiences of GUSU2?

It is envisaged that the answers to these research questions will provide an insight into the outcome of participating in GUSU2 for the pupils, detail regarding the content of GUSU2 whilst also potentially identify any difficulties in implementing the programme which may not have been envisaged by the programme developers.

2.6   Conclusion

This chapter outlined the rationale for reviewing the research regarding SE skills and school-based SE skills programmes. A systematic review which focused specifically on SE skills when children are transitioning from primary to post-primary school was also outlined. While there was no Irish study identified in this review, a specific SE skills programme has been developed for use in the Irish education system by NEPS in the form of GUSU2. However, there is a lack of research conducted on this programme. Hence, the need for a thorough evaluation of the programme was deemed necessary, which lead to the identification of several research questions. Having identified the research questions for this study, the next stage is to identify a suitable research methodology to answer these questions, which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Methodology

EVALUATION OF GET UP! STAND UP! (VERSION 2)

3.1   Introduction

The aim of this study was to evaluate Get Up! Stand Up! (Version 2) (GUSU2) (National Educational Educational Psychological Service [NEPS], 2017) as a social and emotional (SE) skills intervention. The research questions outlined in chapter two was addressed using a pragmatic approach, which incorporates a mixed methodology design. A variety of measures, including the Social Skills Improvement System-Rating Scales (Gresham & Elliott, 2008), teacher interviews and pupil focus groups were utilised in this evaluation to consider GUSU2 in the context of a framework for SE skills (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2013, 2015). This methodology also allowed for the perspectives of the relevant stakeholders to be considered. Details of the participants, including their recruitment, is outlined before considerations regarding the reliability, validity and trustworthiness of the relevant measures are presented. Finally, ethical considerations and methodological limitations are highlighted.

3.2   Paradigm and Assumptions

All research is approached from a viewpoint based on how the researcher views reality. This becomes the lens through which a researcher views their data, which is frequently referred to as "epistemological assumptions" (Briggs & Coleman, 2007, p. 19). These viewpoints inform the way the research is conducted, including the collection and the interpretation of the data (Denzin, 2010; Mertens, 2010).

Pragmatism is one such viewpoint, or paradigm, which is noted as being flexible for research (Hammond, 2013) and hence is utilised in this study. Pragmatism lends itself to answering research questions without the need to follow a specific approach. This paradigm acknowledges that either an objective or subjective

approach, or a combination of both approaches, can be appropriate depending on the type of answer required (Feilzer, 2010). In this sense, it can incorporate many of the assumptions which are generally associated with either a post-positivist or constructivist paradigm to answer the research question. A pragmatic paradigm views reality as one that cannot be measured using a single method, and which may require the use of a qualitative approach, to measure certain aspects of a topic, and the use of a quantitative approach, to measure other aspects (Feilzer, 2010). This ensures that the findings are not limited by strict adherence to an epistemological and methodological approach. Pragmatism advocates that specific research questions will need a specific approach, to ensure that the question is answered appropriately while acknowledging that there is no specific approach or method that works better than another (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Mertens, 2015). The adoption of a pragmatic stance is also noted as an aspect of evaluation, which encourages evaluators and researchers to incorporate various methodology to provide the greatest value of information for the relevant stakeholders (Patton, 2008; Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey, 1999).

3.3 Evaluation

GUSU2 is a free, seven-week, school-based programme designed to support the development of SE skills of children in Irish schools. The programme is designed for use with children in their last year of primary school or their first year of post-primary school. Teachers are required to implement the programme, with the assistance of another staff member, in a small group setting over a period of seven weeks. The programme is designed for universal application and is recommended to consist of six to nine pupils with mixed SE ability. A typical session is envisaged to last 45 minutes and consists of outlining the aims of the session, watching or

listening to a story, a group discussion, teacher modelling or pupil role-playing, identifying "top tips"/advice on the session topic and target setting. As GUSU2 is in its relative infancy and has limited research conducted on it, which was outlined in chapter two, it was important that a wide-ranging evaluation was conducted.

Lobo et al. (2014) suggest that different types of evaluations are required depending on the stage of the project or programme, such as a process evaluation (focus on implementation), a formative evaluation (focus on whether the programme is understood and needed by target population) or an outcome evaluation (focus on the effect on target population). In this sense, evaluations such as this one offer the opportunity to improve a programme, as well as proving it works (Kellaghan & Stufflebeam, 2012; Monaghan, Sanders, Kelly, Cogen, & Streisand, 2011; Patton, 2008; Rossi et al., 1999). The formative and process evaluations are particularly important in the early stages of programme development and rollout, as is the case with GUSU2, to ensure that the programme is accessible to the relevant stakeholders and being implemented appropriately (Lobo et al., 2014). A sole focus on outcomes is likely to miss important information that is contributing to the effectiveness of the programme and the identification of aspects which may need to be refined (Lobo et al., 2014; Wight, Wimbush, Jepson, & Doi, 2016). Such a view is reflected in the literature regarding evaluations, as Baxter et al. (2012) noted in their study, which observed a move towards including qualitative data in evaluations. The inclusion of qualitative data also allows for consideration of factors such as practicality, adaptability and acceptability (D. Bowen et al., 2009), as well as explaining the "why and how" (p. 32) a programme may vary when administered in different contexts (Pluye & Hong, 2014). Evaluations also allow for the identification of any potential barriers or facilitators to the intervention which may not have been foreseen

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by the original intervention designers (Forsner et al., 2010; Lobo et al., 2014; Pluye & Hong, 2014). This type of information gathered from an evaluation allows for the identification of potential areas for improvement and refinement (Baxter et al., 2012; Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Kellaghan & Stufflebeam, 2012), which is also noted as a goal of pragmatic research (Burnham, 2013).

There appears to be a consensus that there is no defined method for the gathering of such information and that the adherence to one particular approach may limit the value of the findings (Patton, 2008; Rossi et al., 1999). The collection and integration of information from a variety of sources contribute to a coherent and rigorous evaluation (Rossi et al., 1999; Sandelowski, 1996). In this sense, the evaluation of GUSU2 may require the adoption of a mixed method design which includes both objective and subjective measures. A flexible approach to an evaluation such as this ensures that valuable information is gathered and fits within the pragmatic paradigm.

3.4   Mixed Method Design

As noted in the previous sections, the adoption of a pragmatic approach often aligns itself to a mixed method design (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Such a design typically involves the collection, analysis and interpretation of both qualitative and quantitative data (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009; Pluye & Hong, 2014), and is frequently employed in research when the use of a singular approach is insufficient (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). When applied appropriately, this design allows the researcher to overcome many shortcomings that are associated with the sole use of a qualitative or quantitative approach (Pluye & Hong, 2014; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). The pragmatic approach and mixed method design of this study allowed for the collection

of quantitative data measuring changes in SE skills, i.e. outcome evaluation, whilst

also provided the participants with an opportunity to share their perceptions of

facilitating and participating in the programme, i.e. process and formative evaluation

(See Figure 2 for study design).
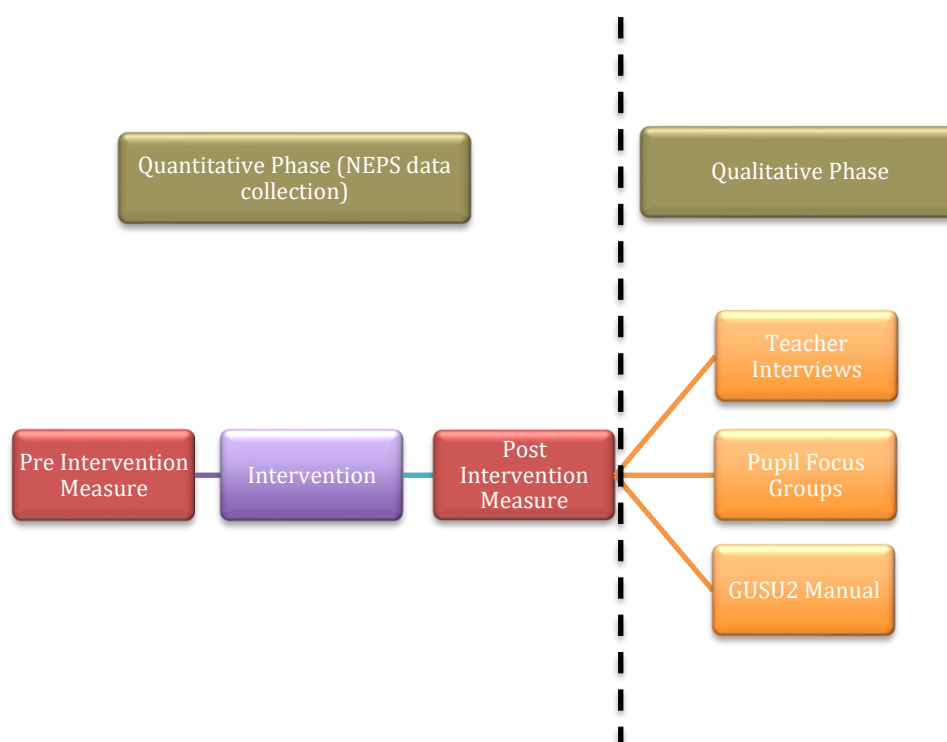
Figure 2: Design of the study

A quantitative approach lends itself to the view that reality can be measured

objectively. This study was concerned with determining the impact of GUSU2 on

participants' SE skills. As a result, several hypotheses were developed for testing

(Bryman, 2016; Newman, Benz, & Ridenour, 1998), based on the data gathered by

NEPS (2018a). This allowed for the SE skill outcome of GUSU2 to be considered.

In contrast, qualitative research adopts the stance that there are a variety of realities,

which are construed differently by every individual (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Bryman, 2016; Howitt, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Newman et al., 1998). In this sense, the collection of qualitative data via interviews and focus groups allowed the researcher to better understand the participants' and facilitators' perspective of various aspects of GUSU2 (Bryman, 2016; Howitt, 2013; Newman et al., 1998; Thomas, 2003). Additionally, the GUSU2 manual was analysed, as programme manuals provide details of the content of GUSU2 and informs the facilitators approach (Bond, Evans, Salyers, Williams, & Kim, 2000; CASEL, 2013; Chernyshenko et al., 2018; Gearing et al., 2011; O'Conner et al., 2017; Sklad et al., 2012). This, in turn, informs the content that the pupils are exposed to (See Figure 3).
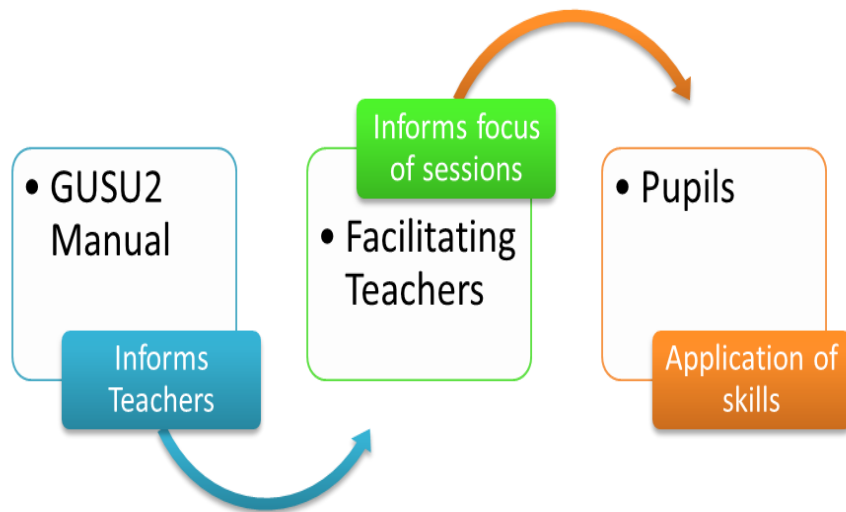
Figure 3: Transference of information

Researchers have argued that mixed method research should be considered in terms of its typology, particularly focusing on the extent to which integration of data collection and data analysis occurs (Halcomb, 2018; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010; Zhang & Creswell, 2013). This study took the format of a "partially mixed sequential equal status design" (Leech & Onwuegbuzie,

2009, p. 270), as equal status was given to the data collected quantitatively and

qualitatively and the findings were integrated following data collection (See Figure 4

for integration of findings). The design of this study is considered sequential, as the

quantitative data was collected prior to the qualitative data, however, the qualitative

element of this study was not informed directly by the collection of the quantitative

findings, as is often the case (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009).
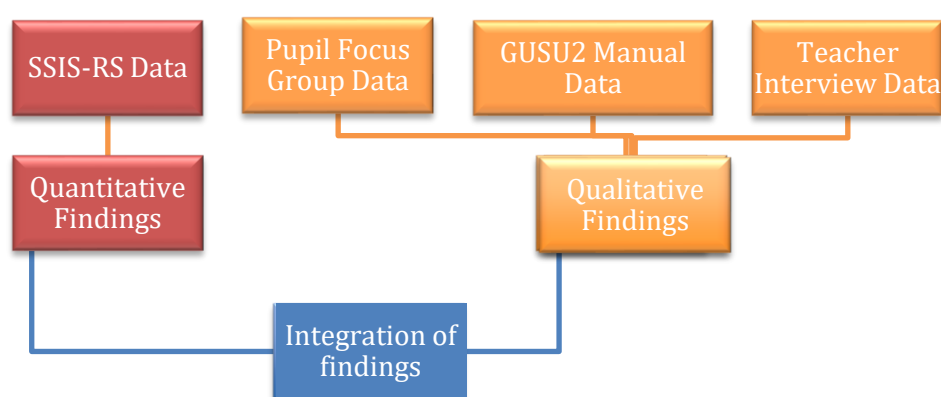
Figure 4: Integration of findings

3.5 Measures

An overview of the measures utilised in this evaluation will be presented in

this section (See Figure 4 for measures used). The Social Skills Improvement

System-Rating Scales (SSIS-RS) (Gresham & Elliott, 2008) will be outlined, before

considering the teacher interviews and pupil focus groups in this study.

3.5.1 Social Skills Improvement System-Rating Scales. The data from

this scale was gathered by NEPS and used by the researcher for the purpose of this

study (see Appendix E for a description of NEPS research). The SSIS-RS is

considered a suitable questionnaire for measuring SE skills in children (Gresham,

2017; Humphrey et al., 2011), and for assessing outcomes of SE programmes

(Cordier et al., 2015; Gresham, 2017; Humphrey et al., 2016; Humphrey et al.,

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2011). It is available in two separate age groups, (ages 8-12 and ages 13-18), which

were both used in this study, dependent on the age of the participant. Each form

contains the same 46 statements relating to the participants' SE skills, which

participants were asked to decide "how true" each statement is for them and circle

one of four options; not true; a little true; a lot true; or very true (Gresham & Elliott,

2008). The responses to these statements were collated to provide an overall score

for SE skills, as well as scores for seven subscales. These subscales are identified as

communication, cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, engagement and

self-control. Gresham (2017) stated that the SSIS-RS provides a measure of SE skills

which overlap with four of CASEL's five SE competencies (See Figure 5). As the

SSIS-RS does not provide a direct comparable measure for the CASEL competency

of self-awareness (Gresham, 2017), the domain of self-awareness in pupils was

assessed qualitatively.

CASEL Competency

SSIS-RS Subscale

self-management	⟷	self-control
social awareness	⟷	empathy
relationship skills	⟷	communication/engagement
responsible decision making	⟷	responsibility
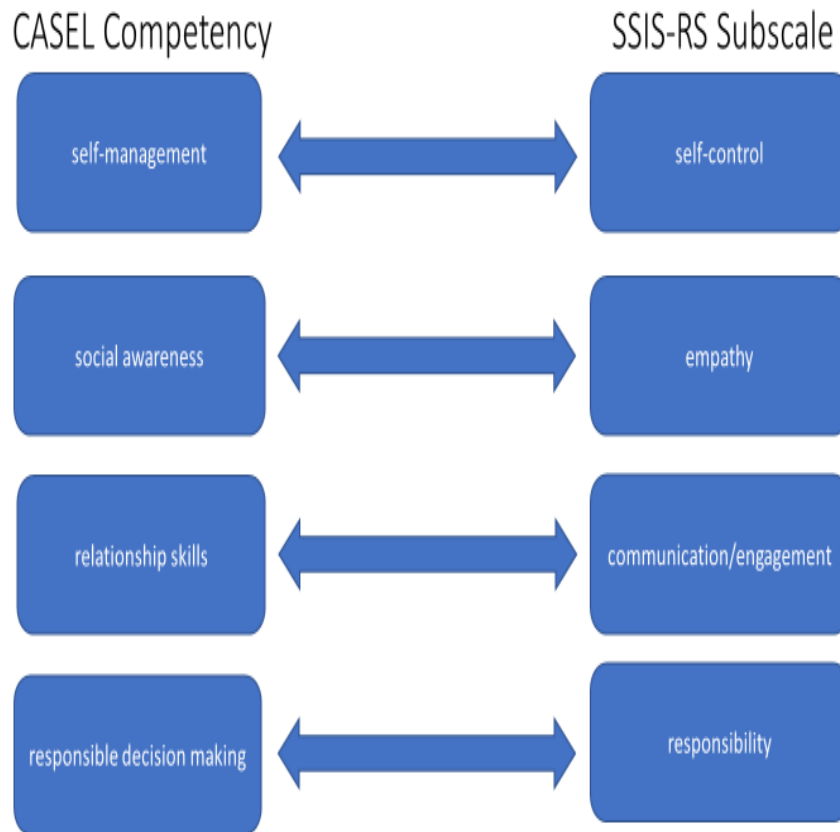
Figure 5: CASEL competencies matched to SSIS-RS subscales: Adapted from Gresham (2017)

3.5.2   Teacher interviews. Semi-structured interviews were utilised as they allowed the researcher to ask a predetermined set of questions, whilst also allowing for additional follow up questions to clarify any responses that are made (Adams & Cox, 2008; Braun & Clarke, 2013; Bryman, 2016; Howitt, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Phellas, Bloch, & Seale, 2011). This approach provides rich and detailed data that may not be provided in alternative methods (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Phellas et al., 2011).

The interview schedule (Appendix F) was designed to identify aspects of GUSU2 which align with the CASEL framework to gather the teachers' perspective

on GUSU2, the training and support provided and to identify areas of learning in their pupils related to the CASEL competencies (CASEL, 2013, 2015). The interview schedule was piloted with one teacher prior to its use with the remaining participants, to ensure that useable data was gathered (Adams & Cox, 2008; Braun & Clarke, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) and to develop interviewing skills (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Upon reflection, following the completion of the pilot, it was decided to reorder the questions, as it appeared that teachers were eager to give general feedback on the programme. Hence an open question "What did you think of the programme?" was added to the start of the interview schedule to allow teachers to voice their most pressing thoughts and reduce the chances of participants attempting to make their point when providing answers to other questions (Adams & Cox, 2008). This also allowed the researcher to begin discussing this topic in a more natural manner, in keeping with the semi-structured interviewing style (Adams & Cox, 2008; Braun & Clarke, 2013; Bryman, 2016; Howitt, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Phellas et al., 2011).

     3.5.3 Pupil focus groups. The inclusion of the pupil voice is noted as an important aspect of an evaluation of a school-based programme, such as GUSU2 (Department of Education and Skills [DES], Cefai et al., 2018; 2016; Inspectorate, 2009, 2016), as well as in research involving children (Alasuutari, 2014; Danby & Farrell, 2004; Fargas-Malet, McSherry, Larkin, & Robinson, 2010; Irwin & Johnson, 2005; Morgan, Gibbs, Maxwell, & Britten, 2002; O'Reilly & Dogra, 2016; Rice & Broome, 2004; Scratchley, 2016). The use of focus groups is recognised as an appropriate approach to gathering data from children (L. Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; J. E. Gibson, 2012; Heary & Hennessy, 2002; Horner, 2000). Similar to interviews, focus groups allowed participants to express their views in an

open manner and elaborate on points where necessary (Bryman, 2016; Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008; Howitt, 2013). This method also allowed the participants to comment and challenge each other's contributions (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Kitzinger, 1995). Focus groups can be a more natural, less intimating experience than an interview for the participant (L. Cohen et al., 2007; Kitzinger, 1995; Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009), and allow shy participants to contribute by following the lead of the other participants (Kitzinger, 1995).

The focus group guide (Appendix G) was designed to gather the pupils' perspectives on their learning from GUSU2 (focus on outcomes) in the context of the CASEL framework. Pupils were also asked to identify the aspects of the programme that they enjoyed or would change (i.e. an aspect of formative evaluation). The interviewer endeavoured to ensure that the language used in the focus group guide was suitably pitched for the cohort, whilst also maintaining the ability to reframe questions in a manner that matches the level of the participants by utilising a semi-structured approach (O'Reilly & Dogra, 2016; Phellas et al., 2011).

The focus group guide was initially piloted with a small group of pupils who had participated in GUSU2, using a similar format to that described for the teacher interview schedule (Adams & Cox, 2008; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The researcher was able to reflect on the suitability of the questions asked, the language used, the quality of answers provided by the participants and the researchers own interviewing style with a group of children. This resulted in the identification of the need for the use of a more prominent "talking object" (Mosley, 2005), as the initial item was deemed to be too inconspicuous and resulted in pupils frequently speaking out of turn and over their fellow participants. It was also observed that the challenging of the views of others, which is expected in a focus group (Braun & Clarke, 2013;

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Bryman, 2016; Kitzinger, 1995), resulted in some participants appearing more reluctant to offer opinions during the focus group. Hence, the importance of respecting each other's views was emphasised to all participants before each subsequent focus group.

3.6   Participants

As part of a rollout of GUSU2 to an area in Cork, 24 schools attended training, provided by NEPS, in February 2018. At this training, schools were invited to take part in a study to evaluate the outcomes of the GUSU2 programme as part of research being conducted by NEPS (an overview of this research is provided in Appendix E). This ultimately resulted in 14 schools and 225 pupils, which included a control group of three schools and 68 pupils, participating in the quantitative aspect of this study.

Convenience sampling was utilised in this study to recruit the teachers for interviewing, as they were identified based on their availability rather than randomly (Bryman, 2016; L. Cohen et al., 2007). All fourteen schools who participated in the NEPS study were then invited to partake in the qualitative component of the study, which this author conducted independently, as they were familiar with the author due to their involvement with the collection of the quantitative data (See Appendix H for information sheet sent to the relevant school's board of management). Four teacher interviews were conducted at the end of the 2017/2018 academic year. Teachers and schools were contacted again in September 2018 regarding partaking in the research, as no response was received following initial invitation. This resulted in an additional three teacher interviews being conducted in the first term of the 2018/2019 year (see Table 5 for an overview of teacher participants).

Table 5

Overview of Teacher Participants

Teacher	School Size*	Position	Previous Training in SE programmes
Teacher Summer Term 1 (TS1)	Very Small	Special Education Teacher (SET)	No
Teacher Summer Term 2 (TS2)	Medium	Class Teacher (CT) and Principal	Yes
Teacher Summer Term 3 (TS3)	Large	CT	Yes
Teacher Summer Term 4 (TS4)	Large	SET	No
Teacher Autumn Term 1 (TA1)	Medium	CT	No
Teacher Autumn Term 2 (TA2)	Small	CT and Principal	No
Teacher Autumn Term 3 (TA3)	Large	CT	Yes

*Large = over 200; Medium = 100-199; Small = 30-99; Very Small = Less than 29

In addition to the teacher interviews, four schools agreed for their pupils to partake in focus groups (See Appendix I for information sheet sent to the relevant school's board of management). As with the teacher participants, the pupils in the focus groups were recruited using convenience sampling. Focus groups ideally contain between 6 and12 participants (Bryman, 2016; Gill et al., 2008; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009), however, when involving children, it is suggested that that 10 is the maximum number of participants, to ensure that all the children participate fully (Gibson, 2007). As GUSU2 recommends that it is implemented in a small group setting, i.e. between six and nine participants, it was decided that the focus groups would be of similar size (see Table 6 for an overview of focus groups). Due to the

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size of the schools, the two pupil focus groups conducted in small schools (i.e. school B and C) consisted of all the pupils who participated in GUSU2 in that school. In the remaining two schools (school A and D), a larger number of pupil volunteers were available than required for the focus groups. In these cases, pupils were randomly selected to partake in the focus groups by the researcher. An equal mix of males and females was selected in the large mixed gender school to reflect the mix of pupils in the class. All pupils involved had received consent from their parents (see Appendices J and K) and consented to participate themselves (see Appendices L and M).

Table 6

Overview of The Focus Groups

School	School Size*	Gender	Setting	Allocation to group	Number of participants
School A	Large	Boys	Urban	Random	8 Males
School B	Very small	Mixed	Rural	Matched to GUSU2 group	2 Female 3 Male
School C	Small	Mixed	Rural	Matched to GUSU2 group	4 Female 2 Male
School D	Large	Mixed	Rural	Random	4 Male 4 Female

*Large = over 200; Medium = 100-199; Small = 30-99; Very Small = Less than 29

3.7 Procedure

Data for this study were collected in various stages. The quantitative measure of SE skills was collected by NEPS (see Appendix E for an outline of NEPS research) while the qualitative data was subsequentially collected from teachers and pupils by the researcher.

3.7.1   Interviews. Information sheets and informed consent forms were shared with all interviewees prior to arranging interviews (see Appendices N and O). Teachers were given the choice regarding their preferred medium of interview, either face to face or over the telephone, for their own convenience. Three interviews were conducted face to face, in the teacher's school during the school day, while the remaining four interviews were conducted over the phone. The purpose of the interview was stated before the beginning of each interview and consent was obtained if the participant was happy to continue with the interview.

A semi-structured approach was used with the interview schedule as a guide (Appendix F), which allowed for additional questions to be asked of the participants to elicit additional information when relevant (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Bryman, 2016; Howitt, 2013). To maintain a degree of rigour and reliability in the measure between interviews the researcher ensured that all topics on the interview schedule were covered. All interviews were recorded and ranged from 25 to 45 minutes.

3.7.2   Focus group. All focus groups took place in the relevant pupils' schools and consisted of pupils solely from that school. This ensured that it was a practical and convenient location for all parties. Furthermore, the pupils were familiar with the setting of the focus groups (Braun & Clarke, 2013; L. Cohen et al., 2007), and with each other, as children response more freely with friends rather than strangers (Khadka, Woodhouse, Margrain, Ryan, & Davies, 2008). Finally, from an ethical standpoint, it also ensured that the designated liaison person for the school was on-site (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2011).

A quiet room was located to allow for the recording of the focus group and to afford the participants some privacy (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Before the beginning of each group, the purpose of the study was explained. Questions were asked to

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ensure all participants comprehended the information sheet and consent forms. Participants were informed that the researcher was not a teacher, as this could impact on the power imbalance as pupils feel pressure to respond (Fargas-Malet et al., 2010; Morgan et al., 2002). Participants were given the opportunity to withdraw if they wished but no participant withdrew at this stage. Once participants verbally stated that they were happy to participate, informed consent forms (see Appendix M) were signed, and ground rules were established. These rules included the following: everyone was to be allowed a chance to speak; names of individuals not within the group were not to be used; the content of the discussion would be kept confidential unless there were concerns that they or someone else was getting hurt or that a crime was reported (Bryman, 2016; Psychological Society of Ireland [PSI], 2011). A "talking object", similar to that used in "Circle Time" (Mosley, 2005), was utilised (a fabric football) to ensure one child spoke at a time (Bryman, 2016). Pupils were familiar with this concept, as this is also recommended in GUSU2 (NEPS, 2017, p. 14). All the focus groups were recorded, while the researcher made some additional observations regarding the participants' interactions in this social setting (Bryman, 2016). The topic guide (Appendix G) was used in all focus groups. In keeping with a semi-structured approach the guide was not followed in strict order, as the researcher was free to follow the natural lead of the pupils and follow themes as they emerged during each group (Adams & Cox, 2008; Braun & Clarke, 2013; Bryman, 2016). The researcher ensured that all topics on the topic guide were covered to maintain a degree of rigour and reliability in the measure between groups. The focus groups lasted between 20 and 40 minutes to ensure that the participants did not tire (Khadka et al., 2008; Large & Beheshti, 2001).

3.7.3   Outline of NEPS research. As the author of this study was also involved in the collection of data in the NEPS research project, they are in the position to provide an overview of this research procedure. To ensure that their procedure is accurately presented, it was shared with and verified by the other members of the NEPS research team. An abridged version of which is presented here (See Appendix E for full version).

Participation in the study involved teachers agreeing to implement the programme between specific dates to facilitate the collection of pre- and post-intervention data from the participants. Permission for pupils to take part in this aspect of the research was sought from all parents, using an "opt-out" approach to participation (i.e. parents had to explicitly state that their child would not take part in the research). Pre- and post-intervention data were collected via the SSIS-RS (Gresham & Elliott, 2008) by one member of the research team.

3.8   Data Analysis

Distinct approaches were taken to analysing the different strands of data collected. The analysis of all data shall be outlined, firstly an overview of the approach to the qualitative analysis, followed by the quantitative data analysis.

3.8.1   Thematic analysis. The data obtained from the focus groups and interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. This is a commonly used, flexible approach to analysing data in psychological research (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013; Braun et al., 2018) and lends itself to a pragmatic approach (Wood, Giles, & Percy, 2009). Thematic analysis allows for both a "top-down" or deductive approach to the analysis, where the themes identified by the CASEL framework can be applied to the data collected (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Braun et al., 2018; Tashakkori & Teddlie,

2010) and a "bottom-up" or inductive approach, where themes are identified from within the data set itself (Braun et al., 2018; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). The process for thematic analysis was identified by Braun and Clarke (2006) and will be outlined in detail below (see Figure 6 for an overview of the thematic analysis process).

```
Familiarisation        Generation of
with the data     →        codes
                            ↓
Reviewing          ←    Searching for
themes                    themes
    ↓
Defining and           Producing the
naming themes     →       report
```
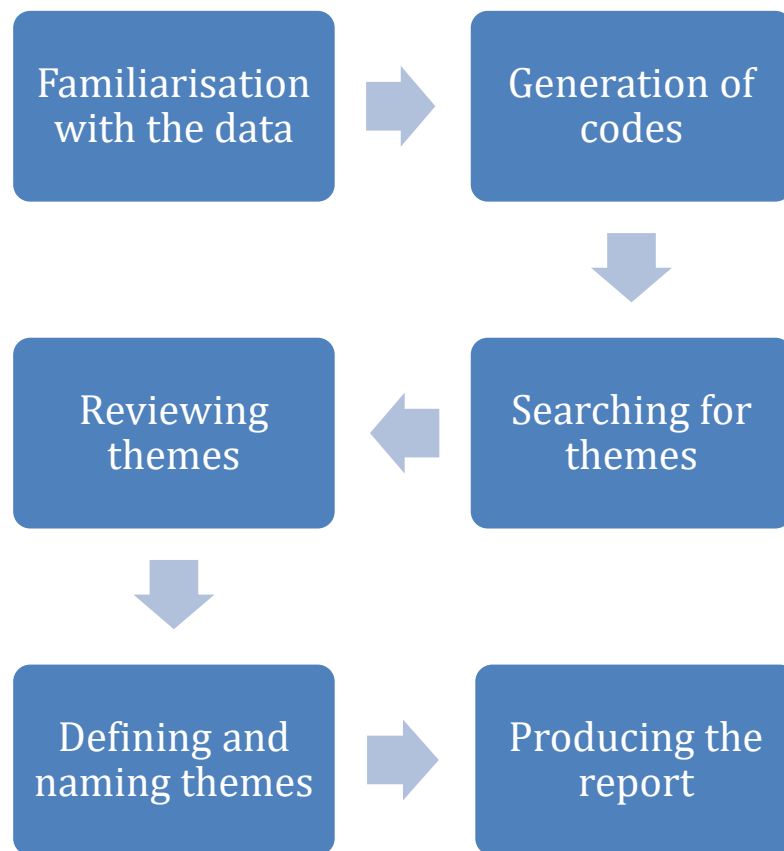
Figure 6: Method of analysing data thematically: As outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006)

The first stage identified by Braun and Clarke (2006) required the researcher to become familiar with the data. In this case, familiarisation involved the reading and re-reading of the data. Both the interviews and focus groups were transcribed by the researcher, which allowed the researcher to familiarise themselves with the data, whilst also beginning to process the information. The recordings of the interviews

and focus groups were listened back to and compared to the transcipt to ensure

accuracy and to aid familarity with the data. Analysis was conducted on the

interviews and focus groups separately before their findings were combined. Initial

written notes were also taken by the researcher at this stage on observations made

regarding the data and to generate ideas for coding.

The next stage involved the generation of the initial codes, which were

identified by the researcher based on their reading and re-reading of the data (See

Table 7 for a sample of initial codes from teacher interview). Codes were identified

following detailed reading of each sentence and phrase of the transcribed interviews

using tables on Microsoft Word. This ultimately resulted in the creation of a large

volume of codes.

Table 7

A Sample of Initial Codes: Teacher Interview

Verbatim Extract from Teacher Interview	Initial Codes
Interviewer: so, in general, what did you think of the Get Up! Stand Up! program?	
TA2: look, I really enjoyed the program, there's no doubt about that,	Teacher enjoyed the programme
like I must say I did think that the children really benefited from it, you	Pupils benefitted from GUSU
know what, it was one of the first programs they did that that I could	
confidently say that I did think that they were growing in confidence as they	First programme pupils growing in confidence
went along you know and definitely there were a few issues in the program,	
you know little tweaks and	Would make changes to programme
improvements that I did think could be made along the line, but in general it	
was definitely worth implementing	GUSU worth doing

Following the coding of all the transcribed data, the third step involved reviewing these codes and collating them in Microsoft Word to form initial themes. The codes from the various interviews were colour coded to allow the researcher to

review the context of the codes if necessary. This formation of initial themes was guided by the theoretical data, however, the flexibility of thematic analysis also meant that a number of themes emerged from the data inductively. Many groups or themes were initially identified following this grouping, such as "perception of the language used", "change in self-confidence", and "identifying goals".

The next step in the data analysis involved reviewing the initial themes created by considering the relationship between them. The data extracts accompanying the codes in each theme were reviewed to ensure that the themes were capturing the content of what the participants reported. This resulted in some themes being moved to ensure a coherence to the themes being formed. This ultimately resulted in several themes being combined due to their similarities e.g. "perception of the language used" and "maturity of the programme" were combined, as it was clear that both referenced the teacher's perception of the content of the manual and programme. Where appropriate, themes were aligned to the CASEL framework, and hence derived by deductive analysis. However, additional themes such as "teachers' perception of accessibility and engagement" also emerged from the data via inductive analysis.

The penultimate step in this process involved naming and defining the themes based on their main features, and where appropriate themes were named after the CASEL framework. This ensured that there was minimum overlap between the various themes. In the teacher interviews eight themes and six subthemes were identified while seven themes and two subthemes were identified within the focus groups (see Figure 7 and 8 for overview of themes and subthemes).

The final aspect of the thematic analysis process involved producing a report, which is presented in detail in chapter four. The findings from the various aspects of

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this study are presented separately before being combined to answer the research questions at the end of chapter four.

      3.8.2 Documentary analysis. The GUSU2 manual for facilitators was analysed using documentary analysis. Examination and analysis of relevant documents can provide insightful information (Silverman, 2004). This is a frequently utilised form of analysis in qualitative research, which can vary greatly in the manner in which it is carried out (G. Bowen, 2009; Briggs & Coleman, 2007; Bryman, 2016). It is generally recommended that several documents are included in the analysis, to ensure that the weight of evidence gathered is sufficient (G. Bowen, 2009). However, in this study, the GUSU2 manual is the only document of relevance. Hence, the findings from this document should be viewed as supplementary evidence to the data gathered from the various other sources and facilitate the triangulation of the data (G. Bowen, 2009; Silverman, 2004). In this case, the data obtained from the GUSU2 manual can provide a context to what the teachers taught their pupils and what the pupils experienced.

      The manual was analysed using the approach outlined by G. Bowen (2009). Initially the manual was skim read to establish a general understanding of its contents and allow the researcher to begin processing the information. Following this, it was read in depth to develop a detailed understanding of the document itself and to determine the "relevance of the document" (G. Bowen, 2009, p. 33). It was apparent that the manual was designed to guide the teachers who are facilitating the programme. Having read the document, the pertinent aspects of the document were identified. Specifically, those relating to the CASEL framework (2013, 2015) in the session overviews, as well as aspects of the programme not directly related to the CASEL framework. The identified aspects of the programme were initially coded.

The codes were then reviewed and grouped together. Where appropriate, the groups were aligned to the CASEL framework. For example, initial groupings included "noticing strengths" and "identifying and managing emotions", however, when reviewing these groups, it was apparent that they were aligned to the CASEL competency of self-awareness (CASEL, 2013, 2015) and were consequently grouped together. The remaining groups of codes were similarly combined and aligned to the CASEL framework, where appropriate, while additional groups of codes were identified relating to the purpose of the manual and the format of GUSU2.

  3.8.3 Quantitative analysis. The quantitative data were analysed using the software; Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Version 25 (IBM SPSS 25). The data gathered from the SSIS-RS (Gresham & Elliott, 2008) at pre- and post-intervention from the pupils was analysed. A mixed between-within subjects' analysis of variance was conducted to determine the extent to which GUSU2 impacted on the intervention group's SE skills in comparison to the control group (L. Cohen et al., 2007; Pallant, 2016). Additional post-hoc t-tests were conducted to identify any significant differences that existed between the groups and within the groups following the intervention period (L. Cohen et al., 2007; Pallant, 2016). The analysis was conducted on the full group sample, while additional analysis was conducted on the cohort of participants whose standard total score at pre-intervention was at least one standard deviation below the mean.

 3.9 Ethical Considerations

  There were numerous ethical considerations relevant to this study, which are outlined in this section. Ethical approval was received from Mary Immaculate College to complete this study in April 2018 (See Appendix P for original ethical application). Additional ethical approval was also received from the external agency

with whom the research was conducted (NEPS) in May 2018. The study was designed and planned to ensure that it meets the criteria stipulated by the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI, 2011).

To address the issue of consent, all participants were provided with information sheets and informed consent forms prior to taking part in the research (See Appendices L, M, N and O). Information sheets were sent to the school principal, who was asked to share them with the relevant participants prior to the interviews and focus groups. Information sheets were also provided to participants immediately prior to all interviews and focus groups. Additionally, information sheets were provided for each school's board of management (See Appendices H and I). As the pupils who participated in the GUSU2 intervention were all under 18, their parents/guardians were also sent information sheets and informed consent forms prior to their child partaking in the research (See Appendices J and K). This ensured that parents could brief their child prior to participation and also give the child an opportunity to ask questions in a safe environment (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2012) The information sheets and consent forms were presented in an accessible and appropriate manner to ensure that it is understood by all relevant parties (Rice & Broome, 2004; Rice, Bunker, Kang, Howell, & Weaver, 2007) by ensuring that the language was clear and developmentally appropriate, by referring to information sheets used in studies with pupils of a similar age. These forms were also ratified for use by the ethics board in Mary Immaculate College (MIC).

To address the potential power imbalance (Råheim et al., 2016) which may have existed between the author and teachers, due to the author possibly being viewed as a member of NEPS as a result of their involvement in previous data collection, it was made clear to participants that this aspect of the study was being

conducted as an aspect of the doctoral research study. This was outlined both in the information sheets supplied to participants and orally before the beginning of the interview. It was also made clear to the participants that their responses and participation or otherwise would not have repercussions in terms of the service they received from NEPS. The opening question in the interview guide also reflects this possible perception that teachers may possess, by providing them with an opportunity to express their opinions on the programme before questioning began relating to the CASEL framework.

It was made clear to all participants in the information letters that their participation in the research was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw at any stage (Adams & Cox, 2008), without any repercussions to themselves from the researcher, their teacher (where relevant), their parents/guardians (where relevant), or NEPS (where relevant). It was also restated prior to the beginning of all interviews and focus groups (Adams & Cox, 2008).

A protocol was designed to support pupils should they become upset during the focus group, which did not occur in this study. Firstly, the pupil would be given the option of stopping. The pupil would be escorted back to their class, and their class teacher informed of the situation. Where necessary, the researcher would be available to liaise with the class teacher, the school principal, the pupil's support teacher (if appropriate and relevant), the pupil's Special Needs Assistant (if appropriate and relevant). Furthermore, the researcher would be available to talk to the pupil themselves and their parents/guardians if necessary.

To address confidentiality, all hard data, i.e. consent forms and written notes, were stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home office, while all soft data, i.e. audio files from the interviews and focus groups, and transcribed data, were

stored on a fingerprint encrypted flash drive. To ensure the anonymity of the participants, the interviews and focus groups were transcribed by the researcher only and codes were used in the stead of the participant's name.

In accordance with the MIC Record Retention Schedule guidelines (MIC, 2018) the data collected as part of this study is required to be stored for specific periods of time. Specifically, the research records (i.e. voice recordings of interviews and focus groups, transcribed interviews and informed consent forms) will be kept for the duration of the project and a further three years, at which time the data will be destroyed. In addition, the research data, research findings and research notes will be kept indefinitely.

Finally, in the context of the qualitative aspect of this study, the contact details of the researcher, his supervisor, and the Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology course leader were provided to all participants in case they had any queries or concerns relating to the research or the manner in which the research was conducted.

As noted previously, in addition to the qualitative aspect of this study, the quantitative data was collected as part of a research project conducted by NEPS (2018a). As a result, the author of this study was not directly responsible for addressing the ethical considerations of the collection of that data. In relation to this study, permission was sought from NEPS for the use of the anonymised quantitative data that they collected. No identifiers were included in the raw data received from NEPS.

3.10   Reliability, Validity and Reflexivity

There are various issues to consider regarding reliability, validity and reflexivity. These issues relating to the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the study will be outlined in the following sections.

3.11.1 Reliability. Reliability is considered to be the consistency with which a concept is measured (Adams & Cox, 2008; Bryman, 2016). Alpha scores for each of the internal subtests of the SSIS-RS were at least .70, indicating good internal reliability (Crosby, 2011; Gresham & Elliott, 2008). In this current study, the Cronbach alpha coefficient was .82, indicating good internal consistency (Croasmun & Ostrom, 2011; DeVellis, 2016; Pallant, 2016). An additional measure of reliability is that of test-retest reliability (Bryman, 2016; Pallant, 2016). In the SSIS-RS, test-retest reliability is reported to be .81 for the overall score of social skills (Crosby, 2011; Gresham & Elliott, 2008) indicating good reliability.

Trustworthiness, which consists of dependability and confirmability, has been proposed as a more suitable term for reliability when evaluating qualitative methods (Bryman, 2016; L. Cohen et al., 2007; Morse, 2015). Dependability, "which parallels reliability" (Bryman, 2016, p. 384), is also frequently applied by researchers. A detailed account of both the data collection and data analysis was provided to allow readers to determine the reliability and dependability of the findings. One interviewer utilised the same interview schedule and topic guide across all the interviews and focus groups to aid reliability. Sections of the anonymised transcripts were shared with a peer of the researcher. This researcher was asked to code these sections, which were then shared and discussed with the researcher to establish interrater consistency or internal reliability (Bryman, 2016; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010) to the analysis. This also acted as a method of providing

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dependability and confirmability to the research, as a full "auditing" of the data was not possible due to the quantity of the data collected and the timeframe of this research. Confirmability indicates that the research was conducted in good faith without letting the researchers own views and values overly impact on the interpretation of the data (Bryman, 2016; Morse, 2015). Similarly, the provision of a suitable audit trail and transparency of decisions made when conducting the research allows the reader to determine the confirmability of the research.

      3.11.2 Validity. The concept of validity is concerned with whether the instrument is accurately measuring the concept it claims to be measuring (Adams & Cox, 2008; Bryman, 2016). A strong and positive correlation between the items in the respective social skills subtests in the SSIS-RS is reported (Gresham & Elliott, 2008; Gresham, Elliott, Vance, & Cook, 2011).

      Credibility and transferability, which are both aspects of trustworthiness, are typically viewed as qualitative equivalents to internal and external validity, respectively (Bryman, 2016; L. Cohen et al., 2007; Morse, 2015). The complementary nature of mixed method research and the use of opposing methods to assess different components of the same phenomenon enhanced the validity and credibility of the findings as a form of triangulation (Bryman, 2016; J. Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013). Collecting data from various sources while maintaining a similar methodology, i.e. asking similar questions to different cohorts of participants, acted as a means of "cross-checking" (Briggs & Coleman, 2007, p. 100) the data and helped account for various viewpoints (Briggs & Coleman, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Validity in the qualitative method was addressed by developing the interview schedule and topic guide by consulting with an evidence-based SE

framework (CASEL, 2013, 2015). Both were piloted to ensure that they were

sufficiently addressing and capturing the topics they intended to capture. Several

techniques for "enhancing the credibility of qualitative research" (Noble & Smith,

2015, p. 35) were included in this study, including the use of a reflective journal, the

inclusion of verbatim extracts from the interviews, a clear description of the research

procedure and repeated reading and listening to the interviews (Noble & Smith,

2015). A thorough description of the context and participants, i.e. a "thick

description", allows the reader to determine the extent to which the findings can be

generalised to other populations (Bryman, 2016; Kuper, Lingard, & Levinson, 2008).

      3.11.3 Reflexivity. Reflexivity refers to the researcher's ability to reflect

critically on their own role within the research, as well as the process of conducting

research (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This includes the researcher being aware of their

own biases and assumptions when conducting the research (Braun & Clarke, 2013;

Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Noble & Smith, 2015; Phellas et al., 2011). This provides

insight into decisions and interpretations that may occur during the process of

conducting the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

      When evaluating this research, the author was aware of the potential bias that

they might have towards the outcome of this study. Such biases were identified by

the researcher to ensure transparency in the research process and to aid the

researcher in maintaining a critical stance when evaluating GUSU2. As the

researcher was on placement with the school psychology service who developed

GUSU2 (NEPS, 2017), the researcher was aware that they may have had a vested

interest in seeing the programme succeed. Furthermore, the potential power

imbalance between the author and the participants, as highlighted in the ethical

considerations section, needed to be considered (Råheim et al., 2016). However, the

identification of such potential biases both prior to beginning the research and throughout the research process allowed these concerns to be addressed (Angrosino, De Pérez, Denzin, & Lincoln, 2000; Råheim et al., 2016; Yardley, 2017) . To negate potential bias that the researcher may have had when analysing the data, 25% of the focus group transcripts and 28% of the teacher interviews were coded by a peer of the researcher to achieve consensus in coding. Informal discussions were also had between the author and their peers and supervisor to assist in identifying any unacknowledged biases (Noble & Smith, 2015; Råheim et al., 2016). The themes identified within both the interviews and focus groups were reviewed and discussed with the researcher's supervisor to maintain a critical stance. Furthermore, a reflective journal was also maintained by the author which allowed for biases to be considered and reflected on (Noble & Smith, 2015). The researcher's personal background is also outlined in chapter one to outline their positionality in relation to the conduction of this study. Outlining such a position aided the researcher in considering their own potential biases and allowed the researcher to consider the implications of these beliefs. This ultimately aided the researcher in maintaining a critical stance was maintained when conducting the research.

3.11 Methodological Limitations

On reflection, it was apparent that there were some methodological limitations to this study. As noted, the SSIS-RS, while acknowledged as a measure suited for measuring outcomes for SE skill programmes (Cordier et al., 2015; Gresham & Elliott, 2017; Humphrey et al., 2011), does not include a subscale aligned to the competency of self-awareness (Gresham, 2017). The identification of a more suitable measure, or an additional measure, would have allowed for this to be addressed. However, such a measure was unavailable to the researcher in the limited

timeframe available to conduct the research. Hence, this aspect of the CASEL

framework was considered qualitatively, through the collection of data from teachers

and pupils. On reflection, providing the participants with the opportunity to review

the findings from the qualitative aspects of this study, i.e. member checking (Lincoln

& Guba, 1985) , would have provided additional credibility and reliability to the

findings. The inclusion of measures relevant to other outcomes, such as academic

performance, anxiety and depression and behaviour, which are associated with SE

skills (Barnes, Smith, & Miller, 2014; Cefai et al., 2018; Durlak et al., 2011; R.

Taylor et al., 2017), may provide further insight. Additionally, it had been hoped to

include a parental perspective in the form of parental interviews, as parental

involvement in SE skill development is noted as being important (CASEL, 2013;

2015; Downey & Williams, 2010; Greenberg et al., 2003; January et al., 2011;

O'Conner et al., 2017; Weare & Nind, 2011). However, due to the timing of the

study which made it difficult to contact parents over the summer months and in the

following academic year as pupils had transitioned to post-primary school, and

school staff acting as gatekeepers to accessing the parent population, only one parent

was recruited. Hence, it was deemed that the inclusion of such data would be

unrepresentative (Bryman, 2016; Fusch & Ness, 2015; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson,

2006) and unethical due to the potential for identification of the parent (Kaiser, 2009;

PSI, 2011). The inclusion of the perspectives of other staff members, such as

principals (as had been initially proposed in the ethics application-see Appendix P),

would have also provided an additional perspective on the impact of GUSU2 in the

relevant schools. It became apparent when conducting the initial round of

interviewing that it was not possible to access this cohort due to the time demands

required for such interview at a very busy time in the school year. However, the

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views of two teaching principals were included in the interviews, Due to the timing of receiving ethical approval for this study it was not possible to include observations of GUSU2 sessions (as had been initially proposed in the ethics application-see Appendix P), The lack of inclusion of such observations, or similar checks for programme fidelity, was clearly a limitation, as the inclusion of a check would have provided information which could contribute to process aspect of this evaluation (CASEL, 2013; Elliott & Mihalic, 2004). Finally, as a doctoral student conducting this research, there were some methodological implications. Primarily, this evaluation was limited in terms of the timescale within which it was expected to be completed. It was not possible to include a follow-up aspect to this evaluation, which would have allowed for further exploration regarding the long term impact of the programme (L. Cohen et al., 2007; R. Taylor et al., 2017), particularly in the context of having transitioned to post-primary school. Furthermore, as noted in the previous section, as a doctoral student on placement with the school psychology service, the potential for bias also exists, which may influence the evaluation process.

3.12   Conclusion

This chapter presented details of the overall aim of this study, including the epistemological stance and methodology that was adopted when conducting this research. The methods for collecting and analysing both the quantitative and qualitative data in this study have been outlined. Additionally, information regarding the participants in this study and the details outlining the procedure have been discussed. Finally, this chapter highlighted issues addressed regarding ethical concerns, reliability, validity and reflexivity. The subsequent chapter will provide details regarding the findings of this study.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1   Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the various aspects of this study. Specifically, the quantitative analysis of the Social Skills Improvement System-Rating Scales (SSIS-RS) (Gresham & Elliott, 2008) data, which was collected by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) will be presented. This quantitative data includes findings from several mixed between-within subjects' analyses of variance of the full study sample and those presenting with social and emotional (SE) skill deficits at pre-intervention. Additionally, the findings from relevant post-hoc t-tests will be presented. Following this, the findings from the qualitative data, which was gathered from the Get Up! Stand Up! (Version 2) (GUSU2) manual (NEPS, 2017), seven teacher interviews and four focus groups involving 27 pupils, will be presented. The analysis of the GUSU2 manual will be presented first as this provides the context to the findings from the SSIS-RS, the teacher interviews and the pupil focus groups. Finally, as it noted as an important aspect of mixed method designs (Halcomb, 2018; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010; Zhang & Creswell, 2013), these findings will be integrated to address the research questions.

4.2   Get Up! Stand Up! (Version 2) (GUSU2) Manual

The analysis of the manual consists of two parts. The first section outlines the purpose and rationale behind the manual and programme are outlined. The following section describes the contents of the GUSU2 sessions in the context of the competencies identified within the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) framework (see Appendix D for an overview of CASEL competencies).

EVALUATION OF GET UP! STAND UP! (VERSION 2)

4.2.1   Purpose of the manual. The primary purpose of the GUSU2 manual appears to be to act as a lesson guide for facilitating teachers. Additionally, it states the rationale for GUSU2 and highlights the "research and good practice" (NEPS, 2017, p. 4) which GUSU2 is based on. As noted in chapter two, some research was conducted on the initial version of the programme, which resulted in changes being made to the content and timing of the programme (i.e. it is now recommended for 6th class of primary school or 1st year of post-primary school rather than 1st and 2nd year in post-primary school).

The manual identifies the main aims of the programme, the typical format of a session and session contents. It states that the aim of GUSU2 is that "young people will have enhanced knowledge and skills necessary to better interact socially with peers within various situations" (p. 4). In this context, the manual continues to highlight the aims of each session within GUSU2, specifically stating that sessions are designed to develop pupils' "social skills in a particular domain" (p. 7). The awareness of these skills is facilitated using stories, group problem solving and discussions, modelling and role-playing, and setting goals to practice skills between sessions. The goals set by the participants for practice between sessions are designed to be accessible to parents/guardians if desired. An optional information letter is also supplied for parents/guardians informing them of the purpose and outline of GUSU2, which would likely aid in generalising skill development.

The GUSU2 intervention consists of seven sessions, as outlined below (see Appendix Q for an overview of each session):

- Introduction
- Knowing Myself and Getting to Know others

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- Friendships

- Dealing with Feelings – Mine and Other's

- Dealing with Teasing and Intimidation

- Learning to Solve Problems and Making Decisions

- Resilience and Coping

While not stated in the manual, it appears that the programme utilises a mixture of behavioural and cognitive approaches in the programme. Behavioural approaches such as pupil role-playing, and teacher modelling provide pupils with an opportunity to practice the skills and see the skills in use. In contrast, the cognitive aspect of the programme includes techniques such as brainstorming, problem-solving, group discussions and target setting, all of which attempt to change a pupil's interpretation of an event or action. The programme also appears to adopt a SAFE approach (i.e. Sequenced, Active, Focused and Explicit), as outlined by Durlak et al. (2011). Each session appears to be building on previous learning, i.e. sequenced. The manual includes a variety of active learning strategies, such as role-playing and modelling, i.e. active. GUSU2 is focused on developing SE skills, i.e. focused. Additionally, while different terminology is used from that in the CASEL framework, it explicitly addresses several of these skills, such as problem-solving and friendship i.e. explicit.

The GUSU2 manual also includes references to 15 videos to supplement the sessions, accessible via YouTube. Four videos consist of songs with a relevant theme, such as Katy Perry's "*Roar*" which advocates for speaking up for oneself and increasing confidence in oneself. The inclusion of popular music such as this is likely to increase the engagement of the pupils. The remaining 11 video clips vary and include four animated videos, two clips from TV shows, two movie trailers, a

video from an anti-bullying campaign and two real-life scenarios. Four of these videos appear slightly dated, in terms of the quality of the video, which may impact on the pupils' engagement with them. Two of the videos contained Irish actors or characters, while the remaining videos were international, predominately American. Additionally, while the manual highlights 15 videos to supplement the programme, guidance regarding when to utilise was only provided for seven of the videos which may impact on the effectiveness of the videos.

Finally, the manual recommends that GUSU2 is run in a small group format, containing between six and nine pupils of mixed social ability, which is facilitated by a member of the teaching staff within the school. Each session contains a checklist, which contains the activities of each session and the resources required. It also includes a two to three-page session plan, followed by the relevant stories, scenarios, worksheets and visuals, which makes it user-friendly for teachers.

4.2.2   Aspects of the CASEL competencies addressed in the manual. Having outlined the format and design of the manual, the next step involves analysing the contents of the sessions to determine the extent to which each of the CASEL competencies is addressed (see Table 8 at the end of this section for an overview).

4.2.2.1 Self-awareness. To address this competency, as outlined by the CASEL framework (2013, 2015), pupils are expected to learn to identify emotions, recognise their strengths, develop self-confidence and self-efficacy, and to develop an accurate perception of themselves. The extent to which the GUSU2 manual addresses these areas will be outlined in the following paragraphs.

Identifying emotions is covered predominately in "Session 4: Dealing with Feelings – Mine and Others". This session recommends that the pupils identify the feelings and emotions of individuals from magazine photos, before a group discussion regarding feelings and the connection between feelings and thoughts. This activity is complemented by the provision of a pupil handout and several scenarios for pupils to discuss or role-play.

The concept of developing an accurate self-perception and recognising one's strengths is addressed across several sessions with the GUSU2 manual, specifically "Session 2: Knowing Myself and Getting to Know Others", "Session 5: Dealing with Teasing and Intimidation" and "Session 7: Resilience and Coping". The latter two sessions were predominately concerned with developing these areas as a means of increasing the resilience of the pupils. However, this process is built upon from the earlier sessions, which are just concerned with the pupils identifying their personal "strengths and achievements" (p. 19). A group discussion regarding personal strengths and strength in others is included, while a similar activity is also identified in session seven which encourages the pupils to assign characteristics to an identified behavioural strength "e.g. looking after a pet might show responsibility, a caring attitude, trustworthiness etc" (p.57). Identifying and recognising strengths appear to be viewed as contributing to the pupils' self-confidence and self-efficacy, as it states that pupils can: "become aware of how we can support and nurture our own confidence and resilience by becoming aware of our own strengths" (p. 57). However, there is no other direct reference to increasing confidence and efficacy in the pupils within the manual.

4.2.2.2 Self-management. The CASEL framework (2013, 2015) states that self-management consists of pupils controlling their impulses, managing their stress,

developing their self-discipline and self-motivation, setting goals and developing their organisational skills. Only two of these aspects were directly addressed within the manual, specifically goal setting and impulse control.

Goal setting, referred to as "target setting" in the manual, is an aspect of each session. The manual states that goal setting serves as a method for "generalising learning" (p. 8) of skills learnt beyond the classroom environment. It is recommended that pupils set goals for themselves to complete at the end of each session, which is then reviewed by the teacher at the beginning of the subsequent session. Sample targets that pupils may choose are provided at the end of each session, e.g. "I will join in group activities during break time" (p. 27) and "If someone says something nasty to me, I will ignore [sic]" (p. 34).

The final aspect of self-management which was identified within the GUSU2 manual is impulse control. This featured predominately towards the latter sessions, specifically "Session 4: Dealing with Feeling – Mine and Others", "Session 5: Dealing with Teasing and Intimidation" and "Session 7: Resilience and Coping". The focus of the impulse control within the manual is on developing pupils' response to situations when they may experience bullying, intimidation or teasing. Stories and scenarios for role-playing are provided throughout these sessions, which provides the pupils with the opportunity to problem-solve and discuss the appropriate response to make. Teachers are encouraged to facilitate their pupils providing feedback and suggestions following the relevant scenario or story. Practical techniques which pupils can utilise when faced with one of these situations are also provided. Some of the techniques, including "fogging" (p. 47), positive self-talk, using "I statements" (p. 47) and having a trustworthy friend, were identified as potential options for

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pupils to utilise in real life scenario. Additionally, when discussing the identification of emotions, pupils are encouraged to create a list of "do's and don'ts" regarding their behaviour when feeling angry, which can be viewed as a form of impulse control. However, there are no examples provided within the manual for the teacher to utilise. Such discussion represents a cognitive approach to skill development, however, the manual also encourages the incorporation of these techniques into their target setting, as a behavioural approach.

4.2.2.3 Social awareness. Social awareness refers to perspective-taking, empathy, appreciating diversity and respect for others (CASEL, 2013, 2015). Perspective-taking is the only aspect of social awareness that is addressed. However, it is not explicitly stated as an objective of the programme and is indirectly addressed through the pupils' participation in the role-playing activities. The other aspects of this competency do not appear to be addressed in the manual.

4.2.2.4 Relationship skills. This competency consists of the ability to communicate clearly, to engage socially with others, to form relationships and to work as part of a team (CASEL, 2013, 2015). Communication, social engagement and relationship building are the aspects of relationship skills addressed in the manual. These aspects were addressed predominately in the earlier sessions, specifically "Session 2: Knowing Myself and Getting to Know Others" and "Session 3: Friendship". Session 3 notes that the aim of this session is to "to support us in making friends and being a better friend" (p. 26). This session involves the pupils identifying the "qualities of a good friend" (p. 26) as well as identifying the non-verbal body language that pupils can utilise to support the formation of relationships. As with the other competencies, this aspect of the programme is supplemented by relevant stories and scenarios for role-playing/modelling in both sessions.

Furthermore, pupils are asked to identify ideas for making and maintaining friendships, however, as noted previously, there are no suggestions provided for teachers completing this task. Teamwork, however, was not directly addressed in the manual.

4.2.2.5 Responsible decision-making. The final competency from the CASEL framework (2013, 2015) is responsible decision-making, which consists of identifying problems, analysing situations, problem-solving, evaluating and reflecting on decisions and ethical responsibility. Identifying, analysing and solving problems was evident throughout the manual and featured in several of the sessions. They were also incorporated into many of the scenarios and stories, and the teacher is encouraged to gather suggestions from the pupils following the presentation of each of these. One session within the manual, "Session 6: Learning to Solve Problems and Make Decisions", directly addressed problem-solving and evaluating options. The session explicitly states that it aims "to help students make appropriate decisions about what they will do or say" and "to think about the different ways" (p. 49) to problem solve. This is achieved through both cognitive and behavioural techniques, including a relevant scenario, a group discussion considering potential options, a written activity and teacher modelling. While the programme addresses some aspects of responsible decision-making, it does not directly address pupils evaluating and reflecting on decisions nor does it address ethical responsibility.

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Table 8

Overview of CASEL Competencies Addressed by GUSU2 Manual

CASEL competency	Addressed in GUSU2 manual	GUSU2 sessions which address the competency
Self-awareness		
Identifying emotions	Yes	Session 4: Dealing with Feelings – Mine and Others
Accurate self-perception	Yes	Session 2: Knowing Myself and Getting to Know Others
Recognising strengths	Yes	Session 2: Knowing Myself and Getting to Know Others
		Session 5: Dealing with Teasing and Intimidation
		Session 7: Resilience and Coping
Self-confidence	Not explicitly	N/A
Self-efficacy	Not explicitly	N/A
Self-management		
Impulse control	Yes	Session 4: Dealing with Feelings – Mine and Others
		Session 5: Dealing with Teasing and Intimidation
		Session 7: Resilience and Coping
Stress management	Not explicitly	N/A
Self-discipline	Not explicitly	N/A
Self-motivation	Not explicitly	N/A
Goal setting	Yes	Throughout the manual
Organisational skills	Not explicitly	N/A
Social awareness		
Perspective taking	Yes-indirectly	Indirectly addressed through role-playing activities throughout sessions
Empathy	Not explicitly	N/A
Appreciating diversity	Not explicitly	N/A
Respect for others	Not explicitly	N/A
Relationship skills		
Communication	Yes	Session 2: Knowing Myself and Getting to Know Others
		Session 3: Friendship
Social engagement	Yes	Session 2: Knowing Myself and Getting to Know Others
		Session 3: Friendship

Relationship building	Yes	Session 2: Knowing Myself and Getting to Know Others Session 3: Friendship
Teamwork	Not explicitly	N/A
Responsible Decision-making		
Identifying problems	Yes	Session 6: Learning to Solve Problems and Make Decisions Throughout the manual
Analysing situations	Yes	Throughout the manual
Solving problems	Yes	Session 6: Learning to Solve Problems and Make Decisions
Evaluating	Not explicitly	N/A
Reflecting	Not explicitly	N/A
Ethical responsibility	Not explicitly	N/A

4.2.6   Conclusion. It is clear that the GUSU2 manual addresses all the CASEL competencies to varying degrees. However, none of the five competencies are addressed in their entirety (see Table 8 for an overview of the CASEL competencies addressed by the GUSU2 manual). However, several strengths were identified, including the use of both behavioural and cognitive techniques, the adoption of a SAFE approach and the inclusion of target setting as a means of generalising the skills beyond the classroom environment. The inclusion of video clips is also considered a positive, however, several are not directly referenced in the sessions. Two of the 15 videos are Irish, which may impact on the pupils' engagement with the programme, but it may also serve as a method for appreciating diversity and taking the perspective of others. The manual also includes a checklist for teachers with the content and materials for each session, which may be used as an aid to ensure programme fidelity.

4.3   Social Skills Improvement System-Rating Scales

The findings from the SSIS-RS will be presented in this section. The data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Version 25 (IBM

SPSS 25). Several mixed between-within subjects' analyses of variance were conducted to determine the impact of the intervention versus a control group on all the scales of the SSIS-RS. This was completed for the full study sample and a lower ability sample (i.e. those whose total standard scores were at least one standard deviation below the mean at pre-intervention). Additional post-hoc t-tests were carried out, where appropriate, to determine the significance of the changes in scores. The findings from the full study sample are presented initially, before outlining the findings from the lower ability sample.

      4.3.1   Full study sample analysis. The means and standard deviations for each of the subscales and the overall standard score from the SSIS-RS at pre and post-intervention for both the intervention and control groups are shown in Table 9. A mixed between-within subjects' analysis of variance was conducted to assess the impact of participation in GUSU2 versus a control group on all the scales included in the SSIS-RS. There was a statistically significant main effect for time in a number of scales, including cooperation (Wilks Lambda $[\lambda]$= .97, F (1, 223) = 7.10, p = .008, partial eta squared $[n_p^2]$= .031), assertion (λ = .95, F (1, 222) = 11.09, p = .001, n_p^2= .047), responsibility (λ = .98, F (1, 223) = 4.51, p = .035, n_p^2= .020), self-control (λ = 1.00, F (1, 223) = 11.65, p = .001, n_p^2= .05) and standard score (λ = .93, F (1, 222) = 15.84, p > .0005, n_p^2= .067). This indicates that there was a significant increase in participants' mean scores in these scales for both groups from pre- to post-intervention.

Table 9

Mean and Standard Deviation Scores SSIS-RS (Full Cohort)

	Intervention Group n = 157		Control Group n = 68	
Scale	Pre M (SD)	Post M (SD)	Pre M (SD)	Post M (SD)
Standard Score	97.30 (11.80) *	99.55 (12.21) *	95.49 (11.50) *	98.78 (9.77) *
Communication	13.74 (2.81)	13.94 (2.60)	13.84 (2.49)	14.13 (2.01)
Cooperation	15.31 (3.41)	15.65 (3.08)	13.88 (3.13) *	14.53 (2.64) *
Self-control	10.44 (3.57) *	11.20 (3.25) *	9.97 (3.93) *	10.74 (3.20) *
Engagement	15.20 (3.48)	15.17 (3.36)	14.96 (3.37)	14.99 (3.08)
Empathy	13.87 (2.87)	13.48 (2.74)	14.07 (2.50)	14.16 (2.24)
Responsibility	15.02 (3.24)	15.47 (3.02)	14.78 (3.15)	15.16 (2.34)
Assertion	12.30 (3.31) *	13.04 (3.10) *	12.01 (3.46) *	12.75 (2.83) *

* Statistically significant change (p >.05) from the pre-intervention score to post-intervention

Post hoc paired sample t-tests were conducted on the scores for each scale. This revealed that there was a statistically significant change noted in several scales in both the intervention group and the control group, namely standard score, cooperation and self-control (highlighted in Table 10). In addition, the control group also had statistically significant differences in scores for assertion (highlighted in Table 10). The effect size, as denoted by *d* (Cohen's *d*), for each are also reported, suggesting that the magnitude of the difference between the means was small, based on the classification suggested by Jacob Cohen (1988) (i.e. small = .2, medium = .5,

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large = .8). This suggests that the changes are likely quite subtle and hence may be difficult to capture without the use of such a measure.

There was also a statistically significant main effect for group identified for one of the scales, specifically cooperation (F (1, 223) = 9.03, p = .003, n_p^2= .04), however, post hoc independent sample t-tests revealed that there was a significant difference between both groups at pre-intervention (t (223) = 2.95, p =.004) and at post-intervention (t (223) = 2.61, p =.010). Examination of the data revealed that the mean scores for both groups increased from pre- to post-intervention, however, this change was only significant for the control group. Additionally, an examination of the data indicates that the mean score for the intervention group was significantly higher on both occasions. This suggests that the cooperation scores for the intervention group remained at a significantly higher level compared to the control group, despite results suggesting that there was no significant impact on the scores of the intervention group from pre- to post-intervention.

Table 10

Post-Hoc Paired Sample T-Tests (Full Cohort)

Scale	Intervention Group n = 157			Control Group n = 68		
	t	Sig.	*d*	*t*	Sig.	*d*
Standard Score	-2.79*	.006	.047	-3.36*	.001	.144
Communication	-.983	.327	.006	-1.13	.264	.016
Cooperation	-1.64	.103	.017	-2.12*	.038	.063
Self-control	-3.01*	.003	.054	-2.14*	.036	.064
Engagement	.165	.870	<.0005	-.081	.935	<.0005
Empathy	1.84	.068	.021	-.317	.752	.002
Responsibility	-1.95	.053	.023	-1.36	.178	.026
Assertion	-2.87*	.005	.050	-2.15*	.036	.064

* Denotes a statistically significant change (p >.05) from pre- to post-intervention

4.3.2   Lower ability group analysis. Additional analysis was conducted on the participants whose standard score in the SSIS-RS at pre-intervention was at least one standard deviation below the mean. A mixed between-within subjects' analysis of variance was conducted to assess the impact of GUSU2 on participants meeting these criteria in the intervention group versus a control group of participants meeting the same criteria, on all the scales included in the SSIS-RS (see Table 11 for an overview).

Table 11:

Mean and Standard Deviation Scores SSIS-RS (Cohort 1 SD Below Mean)

	Intervention Group		Control Group	
	n = 24		n = 13	
Scale	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Standard Score	77.33 (8.36) *	86.08 (8.39) *	78.42 (5.48) *	90.00 (9.53) *
Communication	10.17 (2.24) *	11.37 (2.43) *	11.38 (2.96) *	13.08 (2.18) *
Cooperation	11.58 (3.45) *	13.21 (2.89) *	10.92 (3.17)	12.85 (2.97)
Self-control	5.92 (3.48) *	8.38 (3.48) *	6.00 (3.56) *	9.23 (4.21) *
Engagement	11.58 (4.45)	12.08 (3.79)	12.15 (3.58)	13.62 (2.87)
Empathy	10.21 (3.19) *	11.54 (3.46) *	11.77 (1.79)	12.62 (3.58)
Responsibility	10.96 (2.93) *	13.13 (2.72) *	11.31 (2.63) *	13.38 (2.02) *
Assertion	8.58 (2.65) *	9.88 (2.51) *	9.54 (3.73) *	11.69 (3.64) *

* Statistically significant change (p >.05) from the pre-intervention score to post-intervention score

Analyses indicate that there was no significant interaction between the group type, i.e. intervention or control group, and time of testing i.e. pre- and post-intervention. However, there was a statistically significant main effect for time in all scales except the engagement scale (Table 12). Examination of this data indicates that an increase was observed in all scales from pre- to post-intervention.

Table 12

Within-Subjects (Time) (Cohort 1 SD Below Mean)

SSIS-RS Scales	*F*	Sig.	n_p^2
Communication	11.89 *	.001	.25
Cooperation	11.74 *	.002	.25
Assertion	12.57 *	.001	.26
Responsibility	18.44 *	<.0005	.35
Empathy	5.92 *	.020	.15
Engagement	3.93	.055	.15
Self-Control	35.08 *	<.0005	.50
Standard Score	55.46 *	<.0005	.62

*Denotes any *F* figure which is statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$.

Post hoc paired sample t-tests were conducted on the scores for each scale of the SSIS-RS (See Table 13). This indicated that there was a statistically significant change in several subscales from pre- to post-intervention in both groups. In the intervention group, statistically significant differences were noted in all subscales, except for engagement, while in the control group statistically significant differences were noted in all the scales except engagement, cooperation and empathy. Larger effect sizes were noted for the participants in this cohort in comparison to the full study sample in several scales, suggesting that changes may be more pronounced for the participants who presented with lower scores at pre-intervention compared to the full study sample.

Table 13

Post-Hoc Paired Sample T-Tests (Cohort 1 SD Below Mean)

| | Intervention Group | | | Control Group | | |
| | $n = 24$ | | | $n = 13$ | | |
Scale	*t*	Sig.	*d*	*t*	Sig.	*d*
Standard Score	-6.19*	<.0005	.625	-4.37*	.001	.614
Communication	-2.23*	.036	.177	-3.09*	.009	.443
Cooperation	-3.08*	.005	.292	-1.88	.084	.227
Self-control	-4.48*	<.0005	.466	-3.91*	.002	.56
Engagement	-0.88	.388	.032	-1.73	.109	.199
Empathy	-2.37*	.026	.197	-1.32	.210	.127
Responsibility	-3.91*	.001	.399	-2.38*	.035	.320
Assertion	-2.44*	.023	.205	-2.42*	.032	.327

* Denotes a statistically significant change (p >.05) from pre- to post-intervention

The main effect comparing both groups was not statistically significant (Table 14). Post hoc independent sample t-tests were conducted on the scores in both groups at pre- and post-intervention, which indicated that there was no significant difference between the groups at either pre- or post-intervention. This suggests that there is no statistically significant difference between the effectiveness of GUSU2 and the control condition.

Table 14

Between-Subjects (Group) (Cohort 1 SD Below Mean)

SSIS-RS Scales	F	Sig.	n_p^2
Communication	4.07	.051	.10
Cooperation	4.41	.594	.01
Assertion	2.30	.138	.06
Responsibility	0.15	.697	.004
Empathy	2.26	.142	.06
Engagement	0.72	.399	.02
Self-Control	0.16	.688	.005
Standard Score	0.96	.334	.03

4.4 Teacher Interviews

The data from the teacher interviews were analysed using thematic analysis, as described in chapter three. Four interviews were conducted with teachers in the summer term at the end of the academic year (denoted with TS, e.g. TS1 refers to Teacher 1 in the summer term) following the completion of GUSU2. Another three interviews were conducted with teachers in the autumn term the following academic year (denoted with TA e.g. TA1 refers to Teacher 1 in the autumn term), and hence their responses consisted predominately of their reflections on the programme rather than specific details, as was the case in the earlier interviews. Several themes and sub-themes regarding the CASEL framework including the SE competencies (pupil self-awareness, pupil self-management, pupil decision making, pupil relationship skills, pupil social awareness) and perception of the quality of training and support (CASEL, 2013, 2015) were identified through deductive analysis. Additional themes

were identified using inductive analysis including the anticipation of transition, teachers' perception of pupil engagement and perceived barriers (See Figure 7 for thematic map). Each theme and its relevant sub-themes will be outlined in detail, including relevant supporting quotations.
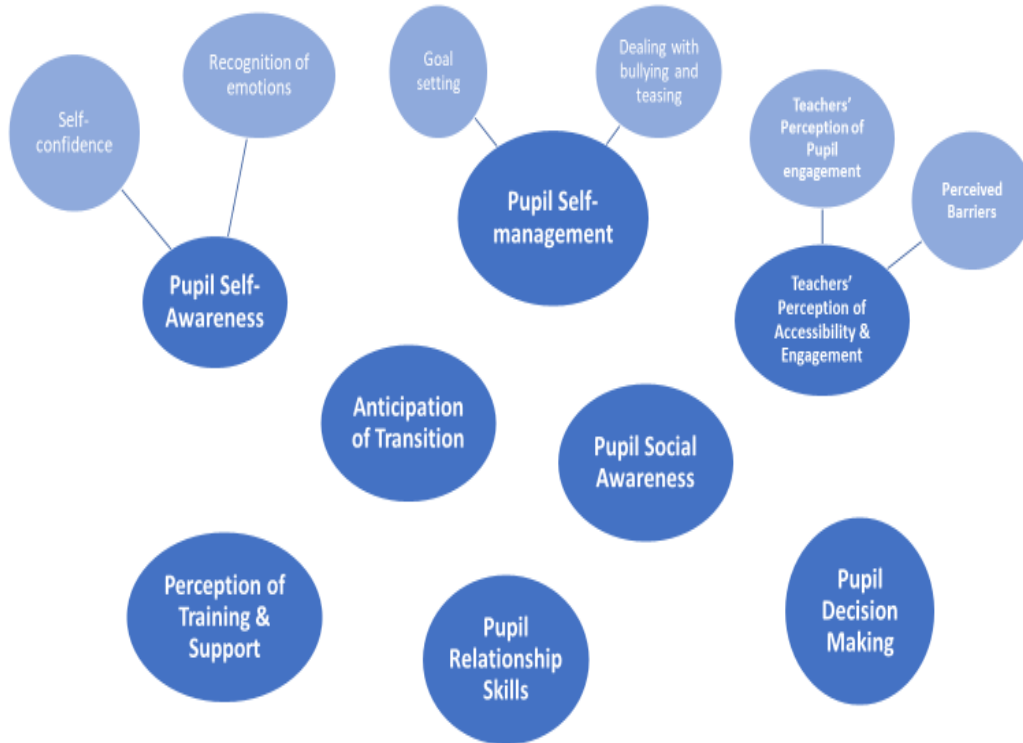
Figure 7: Thematic map: Teacher interviews

4.4.1   Pupil self-awareness. Pupil self-awareness was identified as a theme within the teacher interviews. CASEL suggests that self-awareness includes the ability to identify emotions, recognise strengths, have a good sense of self-confidence and self-efficacy (CASEL, 2013, 2015). The theme of pupil self-awareness consists of the sub-themes of "pupils' recognition of emotions" and "pupils' self-confidence".

4.4.1.1 Pupils' recognition of emotions. Recognising emotions was identified as an area that some pupils struggled with prior to partaking in the GUSU2 programme. TS3 noted that their pupils found the naming and identifying of their own emotions difficult, and felt that this was an area in which their pupils appeared to demonstrate an improvement: "I suppose it's what they learnt the most from it …they do find it hard to verbalise, you know, feelings and emotions" (TS3). TS1 reported that while all his pupils demonstrated knowledge of emotions, the boys in his class struggled to apply this beyond the classroom environment. This was not an issue for the girls in his class:

> well in practical application sometimes the boys can get quite cross with each other outside and I think they have forgotten what they've been learning in theory…but all three of the girls, they'd all be firstly not entering those situations and if they found themselves in those situations, they'd know how to end it and if they notice someone else in that situation, they'd be over there nearly resolving it with the person that's in trouble (TS1).

It appears that this aspect of the programme was considered worthwhile by four of the teachers, three of whom were interviewed shortly after the completion of GUSU2. The remaining teachers did not note identifying emotions as an aspect of self-awareness addressed in GUSU2.

4.4.1.2 Pupils' self-confidence. All the interviewees noted that encouraging pupils to identify their own strengths was an integral aspect of GUSU2. TS3 reported that their pupils had difficulty identifying their own strengths prior to participation in GUSU2. However, an improvement in identifying strengths was directly referenced by five of the interviewees, while the remaining two also suggested an improvement

in this regard. TS3 stated that previously her pupils were "always focusing on the negative and…they're kind of hard on themselves" (TS3). This interviewee noted that the programme encouraged her pupils "to verbalise [their strengths] out loud" and felt that this was particularly useful for the "quiet boys" in her class. These strengths were also often reinforced by their peers, as well as providing an opportunity for their peers to highlight other positive attributes. TS2 noted that "the others might say but you're good at this and you're good at that" which TS2 felt "feeds into their confidence". In this sense, it appears that the activities included in GUSU2 were viewed as building the confidence of the pupils, which was a sentiment expressed by all the interviewees.

The CASEL competency of self-awareness appears to be well covered in GUSU2. All the teachers noted that their pupils appeared to demonstrate strengths in self-awareness, including the ability to identify emotions and recognise strengths, which teachers felt was impacting positively on their pupils' sense of self-confidence and self-efficacy. This competency of the CASEL framework is noted as being one of two intrapersonal skills, the second being self-management (Cefai et al., 2018), which will be outlined in the next section.

4.4.2 Pupil self-management. Pupil self-management, which is a CASEL competency, was identified as a major aspect of the GUSU2 programme by the interviewees. CASEL (2013, 2015) notes that self-management involves managing stress and impulses, setting goals, developing self-discipline and self-motivation, whilst also developing organisational ability. This theme was particularly evident in the interviews conducted with teachers in the following academic year, several months following the implementation of the programme. TA2 noted that these sections, specifically "the resilience and coping section and the intimidation and

teasing sections", resonated with them because "they were something new, there was something beneficial". In general, the interviewees appeared to rate this aspect of GUSU2 highly, noting that the "coping", "resilience", and "[self] management skills" (TS2) were the main aspects of GUSU2. While TA2 noted these sections resonated with them, they also acknowledged that they may have "put extra focus on those areas" in comparison to the rest of the programme because they felt that they are important areas for post-primary school.

It should be noted however that when asked directly about self-management skills in their pupils, two teachers reported that they did not notice any changes in their pupils' self-management skills, while TS1 noted that "it's difficult to see a change". However, this participant, unlike the others, was noted to have difficulty noticing a change in their pupils in several aspects of the CASEL framework. Despite this, most interviewees stated that they covered aspects of self-management, including subthemes "dealing with bullying and teasing" and "goal setting".

4.4.2.1 Dealing with bullying and teasing. The subtheme "dealing with bullying and teasing", which aligns to aspects of impulse control and self-discipline in CASEL's self-management competency (CASEL 2013, 2015), was identified as an important element of GUSU2. Interviewees noted its importance in preparing pupils for the transition to post-primary school, while TS2 stated that they were concerned that the pupils with special education needs (SEN) in their school were more likely to be targeted for bullying. Whilst acknowledging its value, two interviewees, TA2 and TA3, noted that they felt that this was a new concept for many of their pupils, and one which "were the unique aspects of this program" (TA2). TA3 stated that they:

thought that [the lesson on coping and resilience] was a really beneficial one and that was probably new, that was definitely new for them. The first few lessons they'd probably done before in other ways (TA3).

In contrast, TS3 noted that they felt that GUSU2 reinforces skills that the pupils have in their repertoire, while TS2 noted that the content of GUSU2 coincides with the anti-bullying campaign that their school had run during the academic year. TS3 also stated that GUSU2 provides the pupils with the language to recognise and deal with bullying. Additionally, TS2 felt that "the more they hear it though, the more likely they are to act on it" and viewed the overlap with similar programmes as a positive.

When talking about coping, or resilience, TA2 suggested that her pupils were provided with skills relevant to developing their resilience. A similar suggestion was made by TS1, who highlighted "fogging", i.e. ignoring what another person is saying, as a technique that his pupils identified as helpful. TS2 also noted that her pupils reported improvements at coping, which was also referred to as "resilience", after partaking in GUSU2: "I said who feels more comfortable now with coping with any kind of situation that they come across and we got a good shot [of hands up]" (TS2). TS3 noted that she felt that GUSU2 provided her pupils with "tools" that they can avail of following their transition to post-primary school. She highlighted one lesson which "stood out in my mind a good bit because a lot of them were like 'oh yeah I do that already without really realising it, but I can try these other things as well" (TS3). Hence, it appears that the teachers valued this aspect of GUSU2, particularly the practical skills that were provided to aid their pupils to cope with challenging social situations.

4.4.2.2 Goal setting. All seven interviewees identified goal setting as an aspect that was utilised throughout GUSU2. TS1 noted that while his pupils were

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encouraged to identify and set goals, they were reluctant to share these with their peers. This teacher felt that their pupils "didn't share them now and that comes from being shy and fear of being judged [by their peers]", despite feeling that some of them would have set "really high goals for" themselves.

Several interviewees stated that while all pupils were encouraged to set goals as part of GUSU2, some demonstrated a greater aptitude for this than others, as it was "challenging for some of them" (TS2). Interviewees identified differences in their pupils' ability to set their own goals. Some interviewees, TS2 and TA2, noted that they helped their pupils set goals: "we're kind of feeding them the targets" (TS2), while others, TS1, TS3 and TA3, stated that their pupils "were setting them themselves" (TA3). TA2 reported that she reminded her pupils to meet their goals each week by writing a prompt on the whiteboard. Teachers described pupil goal setting as varying between goals "from week to week" (TA2), to long-term goals relating to beginning post-primary school: "we were kind of enticing them to bring them [their goals] with them into secondary school" (TA3). However, three of the interviewees reported being unsure as to the success of the goals that the pupils had set for themselves, as they noted that the pupils did not always share the outcomes with their teachers. In contrast, TA1 noted that her pupils did not engage with this element of the programme and stated that pupils regularly lost their sheets which made it difficult to check the progress with their targets. Similarly, TA2 noted difficulties recalling previous targets and suggested that the inclusion of a "booklet", which they felt would have allowed their pupils to review the targets "at the start of each lesson".

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It appears that self-management, which is considered an intrapersonal skill (Cefai et al., 2018), was viewed as being a strength of the programme by six of the seven interviewed teachers. Goal setting was identified as a strength by the six teachers, while aspects of impulse control and self-discipline were identified by four teachers. However, no teacher identified stress management, self-motivation or organisational skills in the programme content.

4.4.3   Pupils' decision-making. Pupils' decision making, referred to as the responsible decision-making competency in CASEL's framework, was identified as a theme in the teacher interviews. Responsible decision-making involves the identification of problems, analysing and solving problems, evaluating, reflecting and demonstrating ethical responsibility (CASEL, 2013, 2015). It should be noted that this competency was not directly addressed by three interviewees, and one interviewee, TS3, reported that they felt that they "didn't really see much" responsible decision-making in their pupils. However, those that mentioned decision-making stated that they felt it was a positive aspect of the programme: "dealing with things as they come up and solving problems, I think that has to benefit them to be honest you know" (TA3).

The four interviewees that referenced decision-making reported that it was typically observed "in the discussion you have afterwards" (TA2), i.e. the group discussions, which are noted in the manual as being an integral aspect of GUSU2 sessions. TS4 notes that this is "where the real learning happens". The decision-making component of GUSU2 appeared to be closely aligned with the process of problem-solving. It was noted by one interviewee, TS4, that problem solving was also a group process. She noted that "something came up in the group…we were

trying to do the problem solving, trying to figure out what could they have done"
(TS4).

Two of the interviewees, TS2 and TA2, noted that they used GUSU2 as an
opportunity to highlight the importance of personal responsibility and making
appropriate decisions to their pupils. TS2 told her pupils that "you do have a choice"
and asked, "what could you do in these scenarios?". TA2 reported a similar benefit
of the programme and noted that GUSU2 "really challenged [the pupils] to think and
to sort of evaluate their choices".

In the context of the CASEL framework, decision making was not viewed as
a key component of GUSU2 by several of the teachers. However, the teachers that
noted its presence suggested that it was predominately addressed as part of the group
discussions, where pupils identified, analysed and solved problems. In contrast, none
of the teachers felt that evaluating and reflecting on decisions and demonstrating
ethical responsibility were addressed by GUSU2.

4.4.4 Pupils' relationship skills. CASEL states that the relationship skills
competency refers to an individual's ability to communicate and engage
appropriately with peers, to build relationships and work as part of a team (CASEL,
2013, 2015). Pupils' relationship skills were identified as a minor theme from the
teacher interviews. Teachers presented a mixed opinion to the degree to which
relationship skills were covered in the programme. TS1 identified the "friendship"
session as "one of the better sessions" within GUSU2. He also felt that GUSU2 was
relevant for the transition to post-primary school in terms of making friends: "they
really liked the idea and it got them really excited for secondary school, talking
about strategies, about how to build friendships, and how to make new friends"

(TS1). However, he noted that while the programme provided pupils with relationship skills, he felt that the size of the school limited his pupils from practising those skills in a real-life setting:

> maybe in bigger schools it works, when six random people come together and they're not trying to impress anyone…but they're friends up there, so they know that they are being judged on what they say, so I don't think it's the complete experience for them (TS1).

In contrast, the remaining interviewees did not appear to view it as a major element of the programme in contrast to other competencies. One interviewee noted that relationship skills were "a little bit in [GUSU2]" (TS2). While some of the teachers who were interviewed in the summer term, immediately following the completion of GUSU2, referred to relationship skills, those who were interviewed several months later did not feel that relationship skills were a main aspect of GUSU2. TA2 reported that they were unable to recall skills related to relationship skills in the programme: "I have to say, it doesn't stick out in my memory as clearly…you know what, I can't think of anything". Similarly, TA3 acknowledged that it was covered but were unable to recall any specifics of it. This contrasts greatly with other aspects of the programme, such as dealing with bullying and teasing, which several of the interviewees appeared to rate highly.

The competency of relationship skills in GUSU2 does not appear to be highly rated by the majority of the teachers interviewed. Only one teacher identified relationship skills as a strength of the programme, however, they also stated that the size of their school limited the effectiveness of this aspect of the programme. A similar sentiment was suggested regarding the pupils' social awareness, which, like relationship skills, is also considered an interpersonal skill (Cefai et al., 2018).

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4.4.5   Pupils' social awareness. Pupils' social awareness was also identified as a theme. Social awareness refers to the pupils' ability to take the perspective of others, express empathy, appreciate diversity and show respect for others (CASEL, 2013, 2015). Five teachers suggested that GUSU2 was helpful for increasing their pupils' ability to view situations from different perspectives. The use of scenarios and role-playing within GUSU2 was recognised as playing an important role in assisting in the development of perspective taking. TS4 stated that her pupils "would have considered…all different angles, like from going through the role-plays and the different stories" (TS4). A similar sentiment was noted by TS3: "I suppose that [role-playing] helps them put themselves in someone else's shoes too".

When discussing one of these scenarios, a pupil was identified by TS4 who demonstrated perspective taking that exceeded what she was expecting from her pupils. TS4 stated that her pupil "brought a different point of view altogether, a different perspective, even one that I wouldn't have seen myself, so she was able to see lots of different angles". Additionally, TS2 identified the *"think, feel, do"* activity in GUSU2 as useful for their pupils in terms of perspective taking:

> I would say that the [the think, feel, do] cycle helped, in things like how all your thinking affects your feelings, which affects your actions and that it's a big cycle, so those pages were very good to explain to them as well why people do things that they might be feeling (TS2).

However, the same interviewee also felt that the programme could provide more examples that could be used for this activity. They noted that they felt that, in its current format, the facilitating teacher both provide examples and complete the "think, feel, do" cycle. TS2 noted that:

it was a start [the provision of the cycle], but if there was a diagram in there

that's not something that we particularly have to fill out, maybe a diagram

giving examples of…say a positive cycle of think, feel, do, and a negative

cycle of think, feel, do, and how you have a choice there (TS2).

While perspective taking appeared to be covered by many of the teachers,

only two teachers commented on their pupils' appreciation of diversity. TS2

commented that they felt that it was not an area covered by GUSU2. She stated that

her school, in general, would not have much experience of diversity due to the

homogenous nature of the school population, noting that "we haven't had that many

who don't have English as their first language". However, this represents a narrow

view of diversity. Similarly, TS1 noted that the makeup of his school, in particular,

the small size of the school, was making it difficult for their pupils to develop social-

awareness skills. They stated that "it has the right stuff there but they [the pupils]

don't get the opportunity to employ it in their own lives themselves, because it's a

small school" (TS1).

In contrast, TA1 felt that many aspects of social awareness were addressed,

including appreciating diversity, empathy for others and perspective taking.

Additionally, she felt that it complemented the ethos that the school have tried to

instil in the pupils throughout their school career. She noted that the school are

"constantly trying to make [the pupils] aware of diversity and other people all the

way through school" (TA1).

The teachers who reported aspects of social awareness in GUSU2 identified

perspective taking as the main element of CASEL's definition of social awareness

that was addressed by GUSU2. In this sense, empathy, perspective taking and

respect for others all appear to be underdeveloped in GUSU2. Teachers also

suggested that their pupils' learning was limited due to the make-up of their respective schools. However, it is likely that this experience will be different following the transition to post-primary school.

    4.4.6   Pupils' anticipation of transition. In addition to the five SE competencies (CASEL, 2013, 2015) identified through deductive analysis, the theme of pupils' anticipation of transition was identified via inductive analysis. Interviewees reported that their pupils were both excited and anxious regarding the transition to post-primary school. Three interviewees felt that their pupils were comfortable in primary school, while TS4 referred to her pupils as "top dogs" and being "top of the pecking order". However, four of the interviewees also reported that their pupils were apprehensive of the impending transition to, an often larger, post-primary school. TA1 noted that "a lot of [the pupils] were concerned about going into secondary school…the numbers in their classes and the size of the schools, you could see there was some worry and concern with some of them". One interviewee noted that she was surprised by the anxiety as she "didn't think that would be a big issue for them" (TS3).

    All the interviewees suggested that GUSU2 was relevant to their pupils, as they felt it provided them with skills and a "toolkit" (TS4) which they hoped "would prepare them for the transition" (TA2) to post-primary school. TS4 felt that the scenarios provided in the GUSU2 manual were relevant to her pupils and their transition "because it got them focusing on the scenarios and situations that might arise when they [transition] to secondary school" (TS4). Five teachers stated that they "hoped" their pupils would recall the skills they learnt in GUSU2: "hopefully they will use their skills now that they go into secondary school, hopefully" (TA1).

The relevance of the programme to their pupils' impending transition was noted as a positive by all the teachers interviewed. However, despite the perceived positives regarding the content of the programme, there were also several aspects of the programme which teachers reported as influencing the implementation of GUSU2.

4.4.7   Teachers' perception of accessibility and engagement. A theme relating to teachers' perception of accessibility and engagement was identified inductively from the teacher interviews. The theme consists of two sub-themes, specifically "teachers' perceptions of pupil engagement" and their "perceived barriers" to implementing GUSU2.

4.4.7.1 Teachers' perception of pupil engagement. It was reported by all the interviewees that their pupils appeared to engage with the programme and were reported to enjoy various aspects of GUSU2. The interviewees noted that most of their pupils appeared to have learnt from the programme. Several interviewees noted the apparent difference between their pupils' abilities prior to GUSU2 in comparison to their abilities upon completion of the programme. TS3 stated that the programme allowed their pupils focus "in on themselves in a positive way", while TS4 felt that the programme gave her pupils "a box of tricks to deal with things that come up". TA2 reported that her pupils gained a lot of confidence following their participation in the programme, noting that GUSU2 is "the first programs they did that, that I could confidently say that I did think that they were growing in confidence as they went along" (TA2). The 6th class of TS3 were reported to have finished their academic year positively, which the interviewee noted is generally not the case in her experience with her previous cohorts. However, not all the pupils responded positively to the programme. TS4 noted that some of their pupils were overheard

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commenting to their peers that they felt that the programme was not appropriate for them and that they would not learn anything from it: "they're saying 'how is this going to help us in secondary school?' you know" (TS4). Despite this, TS4 reported that these pupils did respond to the programme and felt that they engaged with it more as the programme progressed.

Six teachers noted that pupils responded positively to the interactive aspects of GUSU2. Role-playing was one such activity noted by all the interviewees who utilised this element of GUSU2. However, one interviewee, TS1, stated that they did not include the role-playing as it was felt that their pupils "would mess with it", which may discourage some of their pupils from participating in the group fully. The inclusion of videos and music clips were identified as positives by all the interviewees, however, one interviewee felt that some of the video clips "might have been a bit dated" (TA1). Nonetheless, they indicated that their pupils still engaged with these videos. TS2 suggested the inclusion of additional videos to further complement the programme and increase pupil engagement, such as testimonies from former pupils: "clips of teenagers saying that this helped me, I remember this happened so this helped me" (TS2).

Interviewees generally reported that GUSU2 was set at an appropriate level for 6th class pupils, which they felt helped with their pupils' engagement with the programme. It was noted that GUSU2 treated the pupils with a level of maturity which they were not always used to experiencing. As a result, TS2 reported that the pupils responded positively to this, because "they do appreciate that, to try to appeal to their bigness and to highlight the exciting times that are ahead as well" (TS2). In this sense, it is apparent that the interviewees felt that their pupils responded

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positively to several aspects of GUSU2. Nonetheless, several potential barriers and difficulties were also identified.

4.4.7.2 Perceived barriers. Concerns were expressed by several interviewees regarding the facilitation of GUSU2. These barriers, which will be discussed in the following paragraphs, included the timing of the programme, staffing levels, the complexity of the language used in GUSU2, and the support materials.

The timing of the programme was remarked upon by all interviewees. They felt that facilitating GUSU2 late in the academic year resulted in them feeling pressurised for time to complete the programme. It was also noted that while pupils were excited at this time of the academic year, due to their impending transition to post-primary school, the pupils were perceived as being less motivated to engage with learning at the end of the school year.

> I just think that they would have been more in the zone for engaging with this kind of thing, or even with anything. earlier in the year. So, going forward if I was to change anything, I'd probably try to get [GUSU2] done…in the first term or the second term (TS4).

The requirement for GUSU2 to be run in a small group setting was acknowledged as a positive by all interviewees, as TA3 noted: "a smaller group is definitely [beneficial] if you can manage it, it makes a difference I suppose it makes [it] that little bit more personal". This requirement was also reported as a barrier to successful implementation by four teachers. Two interviewees noted that the requirement for additional staff to facilitate the small group format placed a demand on the school's teaching resources. One interviewee noted that they were:

> lucky at the way we have a walking principal and that she could free herself
> up to take the sessions. Like, you could have 30 in the class, but we only
> have 20, so I only needed one teacher, and I was lucky that I had a walking
> principal who was willing to do it (TS2).

However, this teacher did not have another staff member to support the facilitation of the group. TA2 noted a similar issue with accessing staff members to support the sessions: "[it] would have been great if I could have had a second adult in the room, you know for that modelling" (TA2). TS1 also reported that they were not able to follow the prescribed format of the programme, as they did not engage their pupils in role-playing activities. The same interviewee also felt that the size of their school made it difficult for pupils to engage with the programme in general at times, as they are "afraid of being judged by each other".

It was noted by some interviewees that the language used within GUSU2 was pitched at an appropriate level for their 6th class pupils. TS3 noted that GUSU2 contained vocabulary that was unfamiliar to some of her pupils, however, she felt that this provided her with an opportunity to develop her pupils' vocabulary:

> linking it to other subjects… English language with the various vocabulary
> you're using, like we started looking up some of those pages there online that
> they use for people with autism, but even some of the expressions that were
> used, you'd be like, wow what is that, you'd struggle yourself with some of
> the more subtle ones you know, so even the English language it would
> definitely link in with as well (TS3).

In contrast, TS4 felt that the language used in GUSU2 was too difficult for many of her pupils.

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you're taking it for granted that kids of 12 years of age understand what it is,

let's say that definitely 50% of them don't know what it is, so like some of it

would have gone over their heads (TS4).

The accessibility of the language and content of GUSU2 for pupils with SEN was

questioned by TS2, as she noted that some of her pupils required extra support. This

support, which was provided by the special education teacher (SET), was necessary

to ensure that her pupils had enough opportunities to revise and review concepts.

However, this raised another difficulty, as the interviewee reported that this required

the SET to use some of their teaching time to support GUSU2.

The support material for GUSU2 was noted as a barrier to implementation by

two interviewees. TA2 stated that the organisation of the video clips, resulted in a

degree of confusion on their behalf.: "it wasn't entirely clear which clip went with

what lesson it was a little bit disjointed in that element of it". The lack of a pupil

"booklet" was highlighted by two interviewees. This presented challenges in terms

of the organisation and user-friendliness of GUSU2:

> in an ideal world, to have the worksheets in the separate booklet for kids
>
> provided…give[s] it a bit of standing you know, they might bring it home as
>
> well, and they might discuss it more with their parents, and it allows parents
>
> to become aware of the situation that psychologists are highlighting (TS2).

When asked about facilitating GUSU2 in the future, all interviewees stated

that they would. However, one interviewee, TA2, suggested that they may not run

the programme in its entirety on the next occasion. This decision was based on both

the content and accessibility of the supplementary materials:

being totally brutally honest about it, I'd probably pick the lessons from it

that I felt are best and maybe just put my bits together and that, and I might

not do then the whole programme because there are other programs that do

friendships, feelings, emotions better, with better worksheets (TA2).

A similar opinion was expressed by three teachers regarding the quality of the latter

sessions "Dealing with Teasing and Intimidation", "Learning to Solve Problems and

Making Decisions", and "Resilience and Coping". One interviewee, TA2, felt that

these sessions were "unique" to the programme. However, she had not received

training in similar SE programmes, which may have influenced her view of GUSU2.

Only three of the interviewed teachers reported being trained in similar

programmes, however, they all noted GUSU2 as being positive. TS2 suggested that

GUSU2 "would be a great reinforcer" for the skills learnt in such programmes.

Comparisons were also made with the training provided by these programmes (i.e.

FRIENDS for Life [FFL] and *the Incredible Years*) and GUSU2, as well as other

insight provided regarding the training provided with GUSU2.

4.4.8   Perception of training and support. The final theme identified from

the teacher interviews was the teachers' "perception of the training and support" they

received for GUSU2. This theme was identified deductively as it is noted as an

important element of high-quality SE skill programmes (CASEL, 2013, 2015).

Teacher training for GUSU2 was reported as positive by the six interviewees

who attended (TS4 did not attend the training). Three interviewees stated the training

highlighted the potential value of GUSU2 for their schools. The provision of training

from Educational Psychologists (EPs) was viewed positively by one teacher: "we're

all on for that kind of guidance, where it's backed by expert and evidence-based

research definitely" (TS2). Three interviewees commented that the training provided them with information about the development of GUSU2 rather than guidance on implementation:

> it was okay, the training was okay like, there is nothing kind of fantastic about it. I suppose a lot of the time was kind of spent on introducing the programme and almost selling it as opposed to training and how to implement it (TA2).

These interviewees also commented that they felt that they would have benefitted from having an opportunity to practice some sessions in a supported environment: "[I] would have liked to have seen it, maybe just even take one of the lessons, it could be any one of them, and actually, fully model it from start to finish" (TS3). Instead, one teacher noted that they were expected "to read it ourselves and take up our perspective of it" (TA1), which may result in teachers interpreting the manual differently.

TS3 compared the GUSU2 training with the training for FFL. She noted that the FFL training was provided over two days and provided teachers with the opportunity "to go through the lesson in full, from start to finish". However, she noted that that "time was given to" teachers to attend this training, which was not the case for GUSU2 training. TS4, who did not attend the GUSU2 training, noted that "principals have difficulties getting subs, so they can send only one person…the easiest person to represent the school, even though that is not going to be the person that is actually delivering it".

In terms of the support provided, all interviewees reported that they would feel comfortable contacting the providers of GUSU2 should an issue requiring

support arise. No such issues were reported by any of the interviewees. One interviewee noted that they would have liked the opportunity to check in to evaluate their lessons partway through the delivering of GUSU2, as this was his first time implementing such a programme:

> if I could have [got support] as the session goes on, like it is a seven-week program and we do our training day from day one, but maybe to meet up after two or three weeks, maybe give a little feedback as to how it's going and whether we're doing it right…that kind of thing, because you know, we only had one day before the whole thing began, so we have it all in theory but you haven't applied it yet, so maybe just get to talk about it after a bit of application (TS1).

It is apparent that the level of support provided was minimal. This was particularly evident for one teacher, who may not have had as much teaching experience as the other teachers interviewed and who also noted that they were teaching in a small school. In this sense, the level of support and expertise available to them in the school may differ compared to other, larger schools.

   4.4.9   Conclusion. Deductive analysis of the teacher interviews identified several themes related to the CASEL framework, specifically the five SE competencies and perceptions of training and support. Teachers identified a number of areas related to the CASEL framework that suggested that the intrapersonal competencies of CASEL's framework, i.e. pupil self-management and pupil self-awareness, were views as strengths of GUSU2, while the training provided, the level of support and the remaining competencies all require further development. Additionally, themes regarding the transition to post-primary school and regarding

the perception of accessibility and engagement were identified inductively. These suggested that the programme was viewed as positive in the context of the impending transition, while teachers also identified several potential barriers to successful implementation.

4.5 Pupil Focus Groups

Four focus group interviews were conducted, at the end of the academic year, with 27 pupils from four different primary schools who had participated in GUSU2. Each group is labelled A-D and the participants in each group were given a number which corresponded to their respective groups e.g. FGAP1 refers to focus group A participant 1. There were benefits associated with conducting the focus groups at this time of the year as pupils had completed most of their curriculum and the population was easier to access. Furthermore, pupils' confidence appeared high as they neared the end of their primary school career. However, there were several extra-curricular activities arranged for that time of the year, which was likely distracting the pupils. This was evident in two of the groups, where the pupils were noted as being excitable and slightly reluctant to engage.

However, once collected, the data from these focus groups were analysed thematically. Themes, and subthemes, relating to the CASEL framework were identified deductively, specifically self-management, relationship skills, decision making, social awareness and self-awareness. Additional themes were also identified inductively, including anticipation of transition and engagement (see Figure 8 for thematic map). The findings from this analysis will be presented, along with quotations from the relevant interviews to support these findings.
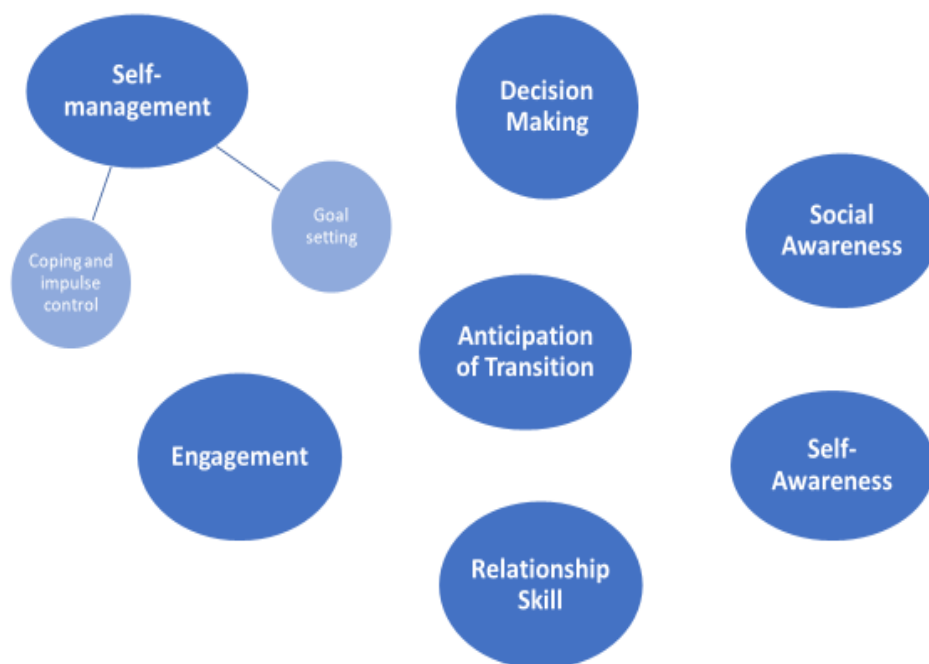
Figure 8: Thematic map: Pupil focus group

4.5.1   Self-management. Self-management, which CASEL notes consists of managing stress, controlling impulses, developing organisational skills, setting goals and developing self-motivation and self-discipline (CASEL, 2013, 2015), was identified as a theme. This theme consisted of two subthemes including "goal setting" and "coping and impulse control".

4.5.1.1 Coping and impulse control. Three of the four focus groups identified coping and impulse control, specifically in response to bullying and teasing, as skills that were covered by GUSU2. Several participants in Focus Group C (FGC) and Focus Group D (FGD) identified learning to cope with bullying as an aspect of GUSU2 that they enjoyed when asked what they thought of the programme. FGCP5 stated that they "liked [GUSU2] because if a person is getting bullied…you know if you're supposed to tell an adult or stay out of it". Many

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participants reported increased confidence in coping with bullying, noting techniques from GUSU2, such as "fogging", as beneficial. One participant noted that they "know what to say now if someone does it, hurt you or say something bad, and you know what to say to him from the programme" (FGCP5).

Another aspect of this subtheme was the participants' ability to manage their emotional responses. Several participants reported that they learnt how to respond appropriately in emotive situations. One participant referred to the normalisation of having emotions, noting that "you know we're humans, so it's ok to feel sad or angry because that's going to happen" (FGBP1). A few participants also noted some practical methods for coping with strong emotions including locating an area to relax, counting to ten, positive self-talk and deep breathing:

> we learnt about talking yourself out of it, you know, like, if you get worked up about something, you said to yourself, all this is going to happen, or this is going to happen but it's not going to happen because it kind of tells you to stop, because that's never going to happen (FGCP6).

These strategies for coping with emotions were also noted by other participants. While one participant stated that they "calm down way easier, like it used to take me a while to calm down, but now it doesn't take me as long as before" (FGBP1).

In this sense, it is evident that the pupils reported developing a greater understanding of their emotions, as well as learning techniques for managing their reactions and impulses to challenging situations, such as being bullied.

4.5.1.2 Goal setting. Goal setting was also identified within the theme of self-management. Participants across all four groups mentioned goal setting as an aspect of GUSU2 that they engaged in throughout the programme. Participants'

goals were noted to include personal goals, such as "keep my room tidy" (FGAP5), and academic, school-based goals, such as goals relating to "an exam" (FGDP1). The immediacy of their goals was noted to include short-term goals, e.g. "targets for spelling" (FGAP4), to longer-term goals focused on the transition to post-primary school e.g. "talk to at least three people in every class that you're going to" (FGAP1).

Some participants reported setting goals themselves: "I set that target because I wanted to get better" (FGAP5). However, others reported that goals were set for them by their teacher: "after every lesson, our teacher give [sic] us a target and then we tried to do them" (FGCP2). Meeting the goals that had been set was noted as important by several participants in the focus groups. When asked about the possibility of not meeting their goals, many participants reported an eagerness to meet their goals. Several suggested ways that they would ensure their goals were met, including "get[ting] advice from older people who have already been through it" (FGDP8), and perseverance at the task: "just keep trying until you accomplished the goal" (FGBP2). However, some of the pupils in Focus Group A (FGA) stated that they would likely "give up" if the task was too difficult to complete. FGAP4 stated that he would "get bored after a while and then forget about it". However, the pupils in this group were noted to be reluctant to share their goals with their peers by their teacher, which may also have influenced their responses to this question.

It is evident that most pupils reported engaging with several aspects of the self-management competency in GUSU2. Pupils reported an array of techniques for managing their impulses to challenging situations. A wide variety of goals were reported by the pupils in different groups, while three of the four groups set their own targets. However, in terms of the self-management competency outlined by

CASEL (2013, 2015), it is apparent that organisational skills and self-motivation were not addressed by the programme, while self-discipline and stress management were indirectly addressed by the programme. In addition to self-management, which is noted as being one of two intrapersonal competencies(Cefai et al., 2018), the theme of self-awareness was also identified through deductive analysis.

    4.5.2   **Self-awareness.** CASEL (2013, 2015) indicates that self-awareness includes identifying emotions, developing an accurate perception of themselves, developing self-confidence and self-efficacy and identifying strengths. It was evident that many of the participants felt that their self-perception and the ability to recognise their own personal strengths developed as a result of GUSU2. Several participants commented that they found it difficult initially to identify their own strengths: "it was very hard at first to say what are strengths, but it got easier every week" (FGDP5). This concept was often regarded as "boasting", however, the benefit of recognising one's own strengths was noted as a positive: "it's good nowadays to be able to say nice things about you without bragging" (FGBP2).

    Participants reported that their confidence increased and that they recognised the importance of being confident in their own abilities. It was noted by some participants that taking part in GUSU2 increased their confidence in themselves: "[I] feel before [GUSU2] that I might embarrass myself, but now I don't really mind if I embarrass myself because it doesn't really matter" (FGCP5).

    The analysis of the focus group data suggests that many aspects of the self-awareness competency are addressed. It is apparent that the participants are more comfortable talking about their strengths, which influenced their self-perception. Additionally, it appears that GUSU2 has had a positive impact on participants' self-confidence and self-efficacy. However, when asked about their learning regarding

emotions it was evident that the management of responses to emotions rather than the identification of emotions was the main aspect of GUSU2. This suggests that the identification of emotions may need further development within this competency area.

4.5.3   Relationship skills. This theme, which was identified deductively, is noted to include communication, the ability to engage socially with peers, building relationships, and working as part of a team (CASEL, 2013, 2015). The participants identified these skills as beneficial for their impending transition to post-primary school, suggesting this was a motivating factor for engaging with this aspect of the programme.

The participants identified skills that they felt would aid them in forming new relationships in post-primary school such as using "good body language" (FGDP8), "just to talk, don't be putting your hands in your pockets" (FGDP7), "ask them what they like" (FGAP5) and "listen[ing] to other people and see what they have to say" (FGBP4). These skills appear to be aligned to building relationships and engaging socially with peers.

The participants from Focus Group B (FGB) reported that they practised these skills, such as "communicating with other people" (FGBP1) in the role-playing activity in GUSU2. In contrast, the participants in FGD stated that they did not have the opportunity to practice the skills they learnt in school as "all of the lads are just best friends with each other, so we couldn't really make more friends" (FGDP1), however, they did acknowledge that the skills would "be handy for secondary school" (FGDP1). This reflects the sentiment expressed by some interviewed

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teachers who also suggested that the pupils' familiarity with each other limited their ability to practice the learnt skills.

When the topic was discussed, nearly all the participants stated that they would not give in if faced with peer pressure. The majority were clear in saying that they would not do something which they did not want to do, such as FGDP8 who stated that they "don't give in to peer pressure and just take your time and think about it". However, there appeared to be a gender divide in FGC in terms of their response to peer pressure. The two boys noted that they would "probably do it" (FGCP6). However, it is possible that this response was for the benefit of their peers, as many pupils were noted to laugh at this answer. When probed for their rationale for this choice, they noted that they felt they would lose friends by not doing something. However, the girls in the group immediately contradicted this and stated that they would not give in to peer pressure. Most of the other participants, across the focus groups, identified a variety of possible methods for managing peer pressure. These responses varied from inventing an excuse, talking to their friends about it, "walk[ing] away" (FGBP4) and using "my 'I' statements" (FGCP1).

The pupils appeared to have developed some skills relating to relationship skills following their participation in GUSU2, specifically communication, relationship building and social engagement. Their impending transition to post-primary school appeared to act as a motivating factor for this engagement. However, teamwork does not appear to have been addressed by the programme suggesting that this is an area that requires development.

4.5.4   Social awareness. Social awareness, which in CASEL's framework includes perspective taking, expressing empathy, respecting others and appreciating diversity (CASEL, 2013, 2015), was identified as a theme in the pupil focus groups.

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This competency was evident in the participants' ability to take the perspective of another and express empathy, which was noted across all the groups. A participant from FGB felt that GUSU2 helped provide the pupils with "a new perspective" (FGBP5) which they did not have previously. This sentiment was evident in the response of other participants: "we learnt that like if someone bumped into you by accident or something, they might look like they're mean or something, but they might just be having a bad day" (FGCP1). The use of the role-playing activity was highlighted as useful for helping the participants take the perspectives of others: "the role-play kind of puts it into perspective what actually happens and it kind of gives you a feel for it, a feel for what would happen if something happened" (FGCP5).

When questioned about their appreciation of diversity and respecting others, the participants in all the groups were clear that they felt that there was no difference between them and others who may have a different background. Several participants reported that they would treat someone from a different background the same as they would treat anyone else: "treat them the same way that you treat other people you don't know" (FGCP6). Additionally, several participants noted that they felt that "you can't really judge them…you'd have to get to know them first" (FGDP8). However, when the participants were asked whether they learnt this as part of GUSU2, it was noted by a few participants that these were skills and concepts that they were somewhat familiar with already: "it's half and half like I was kind of like that [appreciating diversity] but not really" (FGBP6).

It is predominately perspective taking, which also contributed to their ability to empathise with others, that the pupils reported learning from the programme through their participation in the role-playing activities. Appreciating diversity and

respecting others was also addressed by the pupils, however, this appears to be knowledge that they possessed prior to GUSU2.

4.5.5 Decision making. The theme of decision making was also identified through deductive analysis in the pupil groups. CASEL (2013, 2015) states that responsible decision-making consists of identifying and solving problems, analysing situations, reflecting and evaluating the decision and acting ethically.

All four groups identified learning about decision making. However, while all the groups provided examples of problem-solving, two groups were unable to provide details regarding the process of analysing and evaluating that was evident in the other groups. Identifying, analysing and evaluating their possible options before deciding on their best option was noted by both FGB and FGD. One participant referred to this procedure as being a "process of elimination" (FGBP5). A similar strategy was noted by FGBP1 who stated that:

> like if it's something you could be getting in trouble for and that was one of
>
> the answers then I crossed it out straight away so then just pick something
>
> that I have no chance of getting in trouble for something like that (FGBP1).

In addition to considering options, some participants also noted that they would "find out what other people have to say and then you make your own decision as to whether you want to go on it or not" (FGDP6).

The participants that referred to their process for identifying, analysing and evaluating solutions to problems appeared to demonstrate good insight into this area. However, ethical responsibility does not appear to have been addressed by GUSU2. This suggests that the CASEL competency of responsible decision-making requires development.

4.5.6   Engagement. In addition to the themes relating to the CASEL competencies, which were identified deductively, other themes were also identified inductively from the data, including the pupils' engagement with GUSU2. As was reported in the teacher interviews, participants in all the focus groups reported enjoying GUSU2. FGCP1 noted that they liked GUSU2 "because it gives you the confidence if someone is at you", while FGBP3 stated that "it was very realistic and like you weren't trying to make stuff up to be cool or whatever like that". The role it plays in the context of the transition to post-primary school was also identified by FGDP7, who noted that they "liked how it taught us how to like move on into secondary school and how it explains to us what to do if you were being bullied".

In general, participants reported positive experiences of taking part in GUSU2. They also identified numerous aspects of the programme which they particularly enjoyed and highlighted to the interviewer when they were asked what they thought of the programme.

> I liked [GUSU2], I especially like the videos in the workbook and like when you get to throw the ball and then you get to speak. I like the videos because they were very inspirational, especially the one with the girl who was born with no limbs, but she gave an outstanding speech (FGBP1).

While the interactive sections of the programme, such as the video clips and role-playing, were identified as positives and enjoyable for the participants, they also identified aspects of the programme which they did not enjoy as much. The participants in FGA felt that "there was a lot of writing" (FGAP3) in GUSU2. While participants in FGC highlighted specific elements of the programme that they did not enjoy. FGCP6 noted that they "didn't like the bullying" aspect of the programme as it

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was "just really long". Also, in that group, FGCP1 reported that they "didn't like the stories" included in the first session of GUSU2. However, this view of the stories was not shared by the participants in the other groups, as the stories and videos provide in GUSU2 were typically highlighted as popular aspects of the programme. Several participants noted that they found some videos "inspirational" (FGBP1) and that they made them feel "grateful" (FGBP3) for what they had. A couple of participants in FGC reported finding the programme repetitive, "because you have learnt this like a load of times before" (FGCP6). However, this was immediately contradicted by other members in the same group who felt that the repetition was useful for learning "because like it gets it into your head, like what to say and stuff" (FGCP3). Both participants that suggested that GUSU2 was repetitive, FGCP4 and FGCP6, acknowledged that they learnt some skills in the programme.

Many of the participants also noted the role-playing activities as an enjoyable aspect of the programme:

> we used to all ask our teacher at the start if there was role-playing this week because we always used to want to do the role play at like the end because they were…fun (FGCP4).

The role-playing was also used as an opportunity to practice some of the skills that they were learning in GUSU2, such as perspective taking and the use of the fogging technique. Participants also reported that they utilised some of the skills they learnt in GUSU2 in a setting outside of their school including situations such as interacting with siblings, at football training and at entrance exams for post-primary school:

before [GUSU2] I used to be a bit shy to talk to people and then when I was

going to football, I said hello to new people and I just started chatting to them

(FGCP1).

In general, the participants in this study suggested that they enjoyed

partaking in GUSU2. Numerous positives in the programme were identified, as were

some negatives. Pupils reported learning skills and having the opportunity to practice

these skills as part of the group, as well as outside of the school environment. One

factor noted by pupils which appeared to increase their engagement with the

programme was their anticipation of the upcoming transition to post-primary school.

4.5.7 Anticipation of transition. The anticipation of the transition to post-

primary school was identified as a theme throughout the pupil focus groups, as was

also the case in the teacher interviews. The participants identified a mixture of

emotions about the transition to post-primary school, including feeling "frightened

and excited" (FGAP5), "nervous" (FGCP4), and "excited but a little bit nervous"

(FGBP4). FGCP4 stated feeling this way "because I'm the only one going into the

school that I'm going to, from this school, so I don't know anyone" (FGCP4).

FGCP5 felt that they learnt "not that much" from the programme that would

be useful for the transition. However, this participant appeared to be in the minority,

as many participants reported feeling that GUSU2 was helpful for preparing them for

their transition to post-primary school. One participant noted that they "liked how it

taught us how to, like move on into secondary school and how it explains to us what

to do if you were being bullied" (FGDP7). The participants reported that the

programme was relevant to them and that it provided them with skills that they could

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use when they transitioned to their new school. This sentiment was noted by FGBP5, who stated that:

> for me [GUSU2] kind of broke down my nerves, because I was like panicking because I was like, I don't know anyone there but now I know just to keep my head up and to get on with it (FGBP5).

Several participants mentioned their anxiety regarding their ability to make new friends when they begin post-primary school. However, they also stated that they felt better prepared for such an eventuality having taken part in GUSU2, as FGBP6 noted that "now I know that if I don't know anyone in my class, I'll still be able to make friends".

It is evident from the responses of the participants that pupils were very aware of their upcoming transition to post-primary school. As noted in other themes, this anticipation of the transition appeared to motivate the pupils to engage with the programme, however, they also reported learning several skills which would help them following this transition.

4.5.8   Conclusion. Several themes were identified deductively, relating to the SE competencies from the CASEL framework. Of these competencies, it is apparent that pupils identified aspects of GUSU2 that were strongly aligned to the competencies of self-awareness and relationship skills, however, the remaining competencies appear to require further development. Additionally, themes relating to pupil engagement and the anticipation of the transition to post-primary school were both identified inductively. These suggested that, in general, pupils appeared to respond well to the programme and identified several aspects that they enjoyed. This engagement also appears to have been motivated by the impending transition, as

pupils were eager to learn practical skills to assist in forming relationships when they transition.

4.6   Integration of Findings

The findings from the various elements of this mixed methods evaluation have been presented, however, the integration of these findings is necessary in order to answer the research questions and is an important aspect of a mixed method design (Halcomb, 2018; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010; Zhang & Creswell, 2013). The following research questions and a range of hypotheses were derived as part of the evaluation of GUSU2:

- What was the impact of GUSU2 on the participants' SE skills?
  - ❖ Null Hypothesis: There will be no statistically significant change in the participants' SE total standard scores from the SSIS-RS following participation in GUSU2.
  - ❖ Alternative Hypothesis 1: There will be a statically significant increase in the participants' SE total standard scores from the SSIS-RS following participation in GUSU2.
  - ❖ Alternative Hypothesis 2: There will be a significant interaction between group allocation and time of testing.
  - ❖ These hypotheses were considered for the full study sample and the cohort displaying lower SE skill at pre-intervention.
- To what extent are the CASEL competencies addressed by GUSU2?
- What are teachers' perceptions of the training and support they received for GUSU2?
- What are teachers' and pupils' experiences of GUSU2?

These questions and hypotheses will be considered in more detail in the following sections.

4.6.1 What was the impact of GUSU2 on the participants' social and emotional skills? This section will begin by stating the various hypotheses that were tested, along with outcomes of the respective hypotheses. The findings from the quantitative analysis of the SSIS-RS (see Table 15 for an overview of findings) will then be considered in the context of the qualitative data that was collected in this study in the following section.

4.6.1.1 Null hypothesis.

The findings from the SSIS-RS rejects the null hypothesis, as the results from the mixed between-within analysis of variance indicates that there was a statistically significant main effect for time in the total standard score for both the full study sample and lower ability group, signifying that there was a significant difference between scores at pre- and post-intervention.

4.6.1.2 Alternative Hypothesis 1.

This hypothesis was accepted as data indicates that there was a statistically significant increase in several SSIS-RS scales, including total standard score, cooperation, assertion, responsibility and self-control from pre- to post-intervention. A similar pattern of results was observed for the lower ability group, with significant increases noted in total stand score, communication, cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy and self-control. The findings from this study are promising as they indicate that there was a significant positive change in participants scores following the intervention.

4.6.1.3 Alternative Hypothesis 2.

This hypothesis was rejected as the results of the mixed between-within analysis of variance indicate that there was no statistically significant difference between the intervention group and the control group in terms of the total standard score for both the full study sample and the lower ability cohort. This suggests that partaking in GUSU2 or remaining in the control group did not result in statistically significant differences in scores. These results mean that one cannot conclusively state the increase in participants' SE skills were solely due to GUSU2, however, it is not possible to state how much or how little of a role that it did have on the participants' reported increase in measured outcomes. Hence, any conclusions drawn need to be done so with a degree of caution.

Table 15

Overview of SSIS-RS Subscales Relevant to CASEL Competencies

CASEL competency	SSIS-RS equivalent scale*	Full study sample		Lower ability sample	
		Sig Intervention group	Sig Control group	Sig Intervention group	Sig Control group
	Total standard score	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Self-management	Self-control	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Social awareness	Empathy	No	No	Yes	No
Relationship skills	Communication	No	No	Yes	Yes
	Engagement	No	No	No	No
Responsible Decision-making	Responsibility	No	No	Yes	Yes
Self-awareness	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

* As reported in Gresham (2017)

4.6.2 To what extent are the CASEL competencies addressed in GUSU2?

In the context of the findings from the qualitative aspect of this study, the pupils and

teachers both identified aspects of GUSU2 that align with the CASEL framework

(CASEL, 2013, 2015). The integration of these findings is outlined in the following

sections (see Table 16 for an overview of findings).

4.6.2.1 Self-management. Self-management is noted to consist of impulse

control, stress management, self-discipline, self-motivation, goal setting and

organisational skills (CASEL, 2013, 2015). The results from the SSIS-RS indicated

that there was a statistically significant change in participants' scores in the self-

control subscale, which Gresham (2017) notes coincides with CASEL's self-management competency. This was observed in both the full study sample and the lower ability cohort. Analysis of the manual identified goal setting and impulse control as the two aspects of self-management that were addressed. Both teachers and pupils identified the management of responses to bullying, teasing and intimidation, i.e. controlling one's impulses and displaying self-discipline, as well as goal setting as major elements of GUSU2. Hence it appears that GUSU2 addresses certain aspects of the self-management competency, however, it does not appear to address self-motivation, organisational skills and stress management. As these aspects of self-management were not addressed in the manual, logically, they were also not noted as being covered by the participants. These findings suggest that while this CASEL competency area may be viewed as a strength of GUSU2, there remain aspects which require further development.

4.6.2.2 Self-awareness. CASEL (2013, 2015) states that self-awareness refers to the identification of emotions, developing an accurate perception of oneself, increasing one's self-confidence and the identification of one's strengths. Self-awareness was identified as a major theme by teachers and pupils, while the review of the manual identified several sessions which were aligned to this competency. The manual addresses the identification and subsequent management of emotions, identifying one's own strengths and developing self-confidence. Teachers noted that pupils' identification of their own strengths was an aspect of the programme that was beneficial for their pupils, which in turn appeared to increase their pupils' self-confidence and sense of self-efficacy and contribute to the participants' self-perception. This sentiment was also noted by several pupils, who reported an increased sense of self-confidence following their participation in the programme.

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Additionally, pupils reported having an increased understanding of emotions, however, their main learning involved learning how to manage their emotions, rather than the identification of emotions.

Unlike the other competencies, self-awareness does not have an equivalent scale in the SSIS-RS (Gresham, 2017). Hence, it is not possible to quantitatively determine the impact of GUSU2 on participants' self-awareness. However, as qualitative data was collected, it is possible to consider the extent that self-awareness was addressed in GUSU2. Teachers and pupils identified improvements in recognising strengths, developing an accurate perception of themselves and increasing self-confidence. In contrast, improvement in the identification of emotions was not reported, however, they noted that this was a skill which they already possessed. Hence, it appears that self-awareness is addressed by GUSU2 and qualitative improvements were noted in the participants.

4.6.2.3 Social awareness. Findings from this evaluation suggest that improvements were not noted in participants' social awareness. This competency is defined as consisting of perspective-taking, expressing empathy, respecting others and the appreciation of diversity (CASEL, 2013, 2015). Pupils' scores in the empathy subscale from the SSIS-RS, which is noted to coincide with CASEL's definition of social awareness (Gresham, 2017), did not significantly increase following participation in GUSU2 for the full study sample. However, there was a significant increase in the empathy scores for the lower ability cohort following participation in GUSU2, but there was no statistically significant difference between the intervention group and control group at pre- or post-intervention. This lack of significant change in empathy scores in the full study sample may be explained in the context of the GUSU2 manual, which did not directly address any aspect of this

competency. The role-playing activities which are included in the programme may indirectly provide the participants with the opportunity to take the perspectives of others and develop empathy, as was noted by both teachers and pupils. It was also apparent that pupils themselves reported an appreciation for diversity and respect for others, however, participants noted that they possessed these attributes prior to GUSU2. In this sense, GUSU2 requires further development to address this CASEL competency in more detail.

4.6.2.4 Relationship skills. Relationship skills is another competency of SE skills that were identified by CASEL (2013, 2015), which involves communicating clearly with others, engaging appropriately with others, forming and maintaining relationships and working as part of a team (CASEL, 2013, 2015)(CASEL, 2013, 2015)(CASEL, 2013, 2015)(CASEL, 2013, 2015)(CASEL, 2013, 2015)). Analysis of the GUSU2 manual indicates that the formation and maintenance of relationships and, to lesser extents, communication and social engagement are addressed, however, teamwork is not addressed. Only one teacher viewed this aspect of the programme as a strength, while several teachers noted that they could not recall any aspects relating to this competency in GUSU2. Pupils reported learning related to communication, social-engagement and relationship building. The value placed on relationship skills by pupils may be motivated by the perceived importance of relationship building at the beginning of post-primary school. However, the results from the SSIS-RS indicated that there was no statistically significant change in the pupils' scores in either the communication or engagement subscales for the full study sample, which Gresham (2017) states overlap with CASEL's relationship skills competency. While there was also no significant change noted in the engagement scale for the lower ability cohort, there was a significant increase in the

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communication scale scores from pre- to post-intervention. This suggests that GUSU2 may have more of an impact on the lower ability cohort in this competency.

   4.6.2.5 Responsible decision-making. The final competency identified within the CASEL framework is responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2103, 2015). This competency involves analysing situations, identifying and solving problems, evaluating and reflecting on decisions and acting ethically and responsibly (CASEL, 2013, 2015), In the context of the manual, identifying, analysing and solving problems was addressed throughout, while there was also a session dedicated to these areas. Three teachers stated that their pupils were encouraged to problem solve throughout the programme, often as a response to the role-play activity in the form of group discussions, which was an element of each session. The pupils from all groups spoke about problem-solving, however, only two groups reported a clear process for evaluating and analysing problems before identifying an appropriate solution. In this sense, it appears that GUSU2 addresses identifying problems, analysing and evaluating possible solutions, and problem-solving. However, reflecting on decisions and ethical responsibility does not appear to have been addressed by GUSU2. Results from the responsibility subscale, which coincides with responsible decision-making (Gresham, 2017), within the SSIS-RS indicated that there was a statistically significant change in the participants' scores in this subscale for the lower ability cohort only, with their scores increasing significantly from pre- to post-intervention. As improvements were only noted in the lower ability cohort, this suggests that, in its current guise, GUSU2 may have more of an impact on participants presenting with SE skill deficits.

Table 16

Overview of CASEL Competencies Addressed by GUSU2 Manual

CASEL competency	Addressed in GUSU2 manual	Addressed by Teachers	Addressed by Pupils
Self-awareness			
Identifying emotions	Yes	Yes	No
Accurate self-perception	Yes	Yes	Yes
Recognising strengths	Yes	Yes	Yes
Self-confidence	Not explicitly	Yes	Yes
Self-efficacy	Not explicitly	Yes	Yes
Self-management			
Impulse control	Yes	Yes	Yes
Stress management	Not explicitly	No	No
Self-discipline	Not explicitly	Yes	Yes
Self-motivation	Not explicitly	No	No
Goal setting	Yes	Yes	Yes
Organisational skills	Not explicitly	No	No
Social awareness			
Perspective taking	Yes-indirectly	Yes	Yes
Empathy	Not explicitly	Yes	Yes
Appreciating diversity	Not explicitly	No	No
Respect for others	Not explicitly	No	No
Relationship skills			
Communication	Yes	No	Yes
Social engagement	Yes	No	Yes
Relationship building	Yes	No	Yes
Teamwork	Not explicitly	No	No
Responsible Decision-making			
Identifying problems	Yes	Yes	Yes
Analysing situations	Yes	Yes	Yes
Solving problems	Yes	Yes	Yes
Evaluating	Not explicitly	No	Yes
Reflecting	Not explicitly	No	No
Ethical responsibility	Not explicitly	No	No

4.6.2.6 Conclusion. The findings from this component of the evaluation suggests that GUSU2 improves participants' SE skills, based on their total scores from a measure of SE skills, however, the findings from the control group must also be considered when drawing any conclusions. When considered in the context of the GUSU2 manual and incorporating the views of teachers and pupils it is clear that several areas of GUSU2 require development, specifically social awareness as a whole and aspects of self-management, relationship skills and responsible decision-making, if it wishes to meet the criteria identified by CASEL for SE interventions.

4.6.3 **What are teachers' perceptions of the training and support they received for GUSU2?** The CASEL framework identifies high-quality training and on-going support as important aspects of successful SE programmes (2013, 2015). The GUSU2 manual describes the training as "brief". The responses from teachers support this description, as several teachers noted that they felt that the training provided could have offered them more guidance. Interviewees reported that they were required to interpret the manual themselves and would have benefited from the opportunity to go through an entire GUSU2 session during the training.

In terms of the teachers' perception of the support provided to them, it was clear that teachers did not identify any direct support offered from the school psychological service. However, teachers reported that they felt that they could have contacted the psychology service had they felt that there was a need to do so. The lack of support was noted as a concern by one teacher who had not previously implemented an SPHE programme, while they were also noted to deviate from the intended programme design. In this sense, it is apparent the support and training provided to teachers facilitating GUSU2 requires further development.

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4.6.4   What are teachers' and pupils' experiences of GUSU2? Teachers reported that their pupils appeared to learn from their participation in the programme, which supports the findings from the total standard score in the SSIS-RS. Teachers generally reported that they felt that the small group format of the programme and active learning techniques, such as role-playing and teacher modelling, allowed their pupils to engage with the programme, particularly those pupils who participate less in a general classroom setting. Pupils reported a similar level of engagement with the programme and identified the active learning techniques such as the use of role-playing, video clips and stories as positive. Partaking in the role-playing activities provided them with the opportunity to practice the skills, which many pupils reported utilising outside of the classroom. However, some teachers felt that the school size and pupil familiarity with each other limited the opportunity to generalise these skills beyond the group setting.

The provision of practical skills to assist in a variety of scenarios, such as bullying and making friends, was noted as a positive by teachers and pupils. These skills were noted as relevant for pupils in the context of their upcoming transition to post-primary school and appeared to increase the pupils' confidence regarding this transition. A mixture of excitement and anxiety in pupils was reported by pupils and teachers, with one teacher reporting surprise at the level of anxiety that her pupils appeared to have. However, despite the reported positive engagement by pupils with GUSU2, several potential barriers were also identified.

Several barriers to the successful implementation were identified by teachers and pupils, many of which may have impacted on the programme fidelity. While the impending transition was viewed as a motivating factor for engagement, as pupils

were nearing the end of their primary school careers, they were noted to be less engaged with schoolwork. Additionally, teachers commented that they were under pressure to complete the programme within a limited timeline and had reduced opportunities to provide reinforcement of learnt skills. Teachers felt that running GUSU2 earlier in the academic year may resolve these concerns. The successful adoption of aspects of the programme, such as active learning and the small group setting, was noted as a challenge by several teachers. Teachers from small schools reported the size of the school as a difficulty due to pupil familiarity, limited opportunity for practice and difficulty accessing staff. Lack of opportunities to utilise skills due to friendships already been established was also noted by some pupils. The accessibility and organisation of resources were also noted as a barrier by some teachers, while one teacher noted that this will likely impact on her choice of programme in the future. Contrasting views regarding the accessibility of the language used in the programme were expressed. Some teachers noted that the mature language used engaged the pupils and provided an opportunity for vocabulary development. However, others noted the language was a challenge for their pupils' engagement due to the complexity of the vocabulary. Furthermore, one teacher commented on the language in the context of it being challenging to pupils with SEN, noting that they required extra support outside of the group setting.

4.7   Conclusion

The findings from both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of this study have been outlined, including an overview of the GUSU2 manual which provides a context to the collected data. When the findings from each aspect of this study are considered in their entirety, several conclusions can be drawn. It is apparent that the contents of the manual address several competencies identified by the CASEL

framework (2013, 2015). In terms of content, self-awareness and relationship skills are the strongest elements of GUSU2, while in contrast, self-management, responsible decision-making, and social awareness require further development. The findings from the SSIS-RS indicates that there was a statistically significant increase in total standard score, from pre- to post-intervention in both the intervention and control groups. The magnitude of the effect was noted to be small for the full study sample, suggesting that any change would be difficult to observe. However, there was a medium effect size for the lower ability sample. For the full study sample, the subscales of the SSIS-RS indicate that there was a statistically significant change in self-control, which coincides with CASEL's self-management competency, while significant changes were not observed in the other relevant scales. In the lower ability sample, significant changes were observed in the self-control, empathy, responsibility and communication subscales, which coincide with the CASEL competencies of self-management, social awareness, responsible decision-making and relationship skills respectively. However, no significant change was observed in the engagement subscale, which forms part of the relationship skills competency, for this cohort. Additional insight was outlined regarding the pupils, in terms of their engagement with GUSU2 and their anticipation of their transition to post-primary school. Furthermore, teachers provided information regarding the training and support they received for implementing GUSU2, while additional information was provided regarding perceived barriers to the successful implementation of the programme. In the following chapter, these findings will be considered in the context of the literature.

Chapter 5: Discussion

EVALUATION OF GET UP! STAND UP! (VERSION 2)

5.1   Introduction

Utilising a mixed method design, this study attempted to evaluate Get Up!
Stand Up! (Version 2) (GUSU2) (National Educational Psychological Service
[NEPS], 2017) in the context of an internationally recognised framework for social
and emotional (SE) skill programmes (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and
Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2013, 2015), whilst also considering the outcomes
and process involved. This chapter will discuss this study's findings in line with the
national and international literature. The impact of GUSU2 on participants, as well
as considerations of potential influencing factors, will be discussed. GUSU2 in the
context of the CASEL framework will be considered, including areas for
development and teachers' perceptions of training and support. Finally, the
perceptions of both the pupils and teachers will be considered, before discussing
issues regarding programme fidelity and the value of including a mixed method
approach to evaluations.

5.2   Impact on the Participants' Social and Emotional Skills

A school-based programme, such as GUSU2, which specifically targets SE
skills can result in an increase in pupils' SE skills (CASEL, 2013, 2015; Cefai et al.,
2018; Clarke et al., 2015; January et al., 2011; O'Conner et al., 2017; Sancassiani et
al., 2015). The findings from this study suggest that pupil participation in GUSU2
resulted in improved SE skills. This improvement was observed in the full study
sample, as well as in the cohort of participants who presented with SE deficits based
on their scores at pre-intervention. However, the exact impact of GUSU2 remains
unclear as the findings indicate that the participants in the business-as-usual control

group also demonstrated an increase in their SE skills. There are several conclusions that can be drawn from this finding.

Firstly, it is possible that GUSU2 does not sufficiently address SE skills and any changes observed were merely the result of an unaccounted-for variable, which is a challenge often associated with research conducted in the natural setting (Lipsey, 2005; Löfholm et al., 2013). If this is the case, the authors of GUSU2 and NEPS may wish to consider whether to continue promoting the use of the programme in Irish primary schools, as there is an ethical responsibility for Educational Psychologists (EPs) to ensure that appropriate interventions are utilised to support children (Cameron, 2006; Fallon et al., 2010; Frederickson, 2002; Lane & Corrie, 2007; Passenger, 2013; Scottish Executive, 2002).

Alternatively, there are numerous possible explanations for these results which warrant consideration and possibly further investigation. The various articles included in the literature review were concerned with a variety of outcomes including risk behaviour (Junge et al., 2016), literacy (Tijms et al., 2018), depression, anxiety and academic performance (R. Greene & Ollendick, 1993), while relevant meta-analyses have focused their attention on academic performance (Corcoran, Cheung, Kim, & Xie, 2018; Durlak et al., 2011; Sklad et al., 2012), reduction in aggression (Barnes et al., 2014) and substance use (Sancassiani et al., 2015; Sklad et al., 2012). This likely reflects the fact that there is no agreed upon measure for SE skills, hence research has focused on associated outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011). While the SSIS-RS (Gresham & Elliott, 2008) is identified as an appropriate measure of SE skills and outcomes (Cordier et al., 2015; Gresham, 2017; Humphrey et al., 2016; Humphrey et al., 2011), it is possible that it is not sufficiently

sensitive to allow for significant differentiation between pupils (Simms, Zelazny, Williams, & Bernstein, 2019). Hence, a more sensitive instrument may have more accurately captured the changes pupils' SE skills (Croasmun & Ostrom, 2011), particularly as the effect sizes were noted as being small (Jacob Cohen, 1988; Pallant, 2016). Furthermore, response categories which are not clearly defined, such as those in the SSIS-RS (i.e. not true, a little true, a lot true, very true), may be difficult to differentiate between, which may impact on the reported results (L. Cohen et al., 2007; Phellas et al., 2011). The number of options provided to pupils when responding, i.e. four, may also impact on the reliability of a measure, as precision is potentially reduced when less than five response options are provided (Simms et al., 2019).

It is possible that there was an unaccounted-for variable that was positively impacting on the SE skills of the participants, in either or both groups. This is often the case when research is conducted in a natural setting (Lipsey, 2005; Löfholm et al., 2013), as exerting full control over groups is not possible or feasible due to the associated costs (Greenberg, 2010). Hence, gathering sufficient detail to identify variables which may be impacting on outcomes is important (L. Cohen et al., 2007; Gearing et al., 2011; Löfholm et al., 2013; Witt et al., 2018), as this can often explain the differences in observed outcomes.

Collecting data on an array of variables allows for the analysis of relationships between them (Bryman, 2016; L. Cohen et al., 2007). Minimal additional data was collected regarding the participants, as GUSU2 is implemented universally to a cohort of mixed abilities (NEPS, 2017). The collection of additional data is recommended in many evaluative studies (O'Mara, 2016), which may identify

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variables which influence the outcomes of programmes (Weisz, Sandler, Durlak, & Anton, 2005). Data regarding pupils' socioemotional status (R. Taylor et al., 2017; Tijms et al., 2018; Weisz et al., 2005), pupils' academic performance (Durlak et al., 2011; R. Greene & Ollendick, 1993), pupils' gender (C. Taylor, Liang, Tracy, Williams, & Seigle, 2002) and school location, i.e. rural or urban (Durlak et al., 2011; R. Taylor et al., 2017), are frequently reported in research and meta-analyses. In an Irish context, the inclusion of data regarding whether a school is classified as disadvantaged and requiring support under the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan (Department of Education and Science [DES], 2005a) would likely be beneficial, as such schools are currently being targeted for a rollout of SE skill programmes, i.e. *The Incredible Years* and *FRIENDS for life* (DES, 2017), which both address similar topics as GUSU2 (Cefai et al., 2018) and would likely influence SE outcomes. It is possible that differences in such variables between groups may have influenced the outcomes of this evaluation.

Business-as-usual control groups can impact on study outcomes (Löfholm et al., 2013; Witt et al., 2018). Teachers volunteered to be part of the control group, which may represent some selection bias, as it is possible that these teachers place more value on research compared to their colleagues (Bernard, 2013; Boardman, Argüelles, Vaughn, Hughes, & Klingner, 2005; L. Cohen et al., 2007). Additionally, both groups were exposed to the same training, which may have inadvertently influenced the teachers' behaviour (L. Cohen et al., 2007; McCambridge, Witton, & Elbourne, 2014). As the control group was aware of the purpose of the study, it is possible that teachers' behaviour and teaching practices changed as a result, i.e. the Hawthorne effect (L. Cohen et al., 2007; McCambridge et al., 2014). It is also possible that pupils in the control group inferred the purpose of the study following

pre-intervention testing, which may also have influenced their behaviour. Pupils are noted to be susceptible to responding in a particular way based on their perceptions of what the researcher expects from them when completing questionnaires (L. Cohen et al., 2007; Tourangeau & Yan, 2007). Furthermore, as the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA], 1999b; 1999c) and programmes such as *The Incredible Years* (Webster-Stratton, 2000) and *FRIENDS for Life* (Barrett & Ryan, 2004) are noted to address SE skills (Cefai et al., 2018; DES, 2017), it is possible that pupils in the control group may also have inadvertently been exposed to the teaching of SE skills. If this were the case, it may be incorrect to state that GUSU2 was ineffective, and it may be more accurate to state that GUSU2 is as effective as the other approaches in increasing SE skills.

In an attempt to control variables, programmes and interventions are regularly facilitated by a member of the research team or another trained professional, rather than by the professionals who the programme is designed for (e.g. Junge et al., 2016; Snow et al., 1986; Tijms et al., 2018; Vassilopoulos et al., 2018). In these scenarios, the programme facilitators likely have a vested interest in the success of the programme which likely influences programme implementation and outcomes (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2002; Wilson & Lipsey, 2007), while teachers can show a preference for practicality and the presence of suitable resources over evidence-based research (Boardman et al., 2005). However, while the outcomes of teacher implemented programmes can be positive (Durlak et al., 2011; Hahn et al., 2007; Sancassiani et al., 2015; Sklad et al., 2012), as GUSU2 was facilitated by teachers in this study, with no input from the researcher and limited input from programme providers, it is possible that the fidelity of the programme was impacted

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(Domitrovich et al., 2008; O'Connell, Boat, & Warner, 2009). Programmes that are well implemented are shown to produce better outcomes (CASEL, 2013; 2015; Durlak et al., 2011; Elliott & Mihalic, 2004; Forman, Olin, Hoagwood, Crowe, & Saka, 2009; Greenberg, 2010; Payne, 2009; Weisz et al., 2005). In this study, concerns were identified in the teacher interviews regarding programme fidelity, while the teaching of SPHE in Irish primary schools has been noted as a concern previously (Inspectorate, 2009). Programmes which are implemented with poor adherence to the prescribed method are likely to result in outcomes similar to those in control groups (Greenberg, 2010; O'Connell et al., 2009; Pentz et al., 1990), as was the case in this study. Hence, it is possible that the attributes of the teachers, such as attitudes towards evidence-based research and SE skills, and a lack of external support may be influencing the teaching of GUSU2 and the observed outcomes.

5.3   How Get Up! Stand Up! Fits Within the CASEL Framework

The CASEL framework (2013, 2015) is a nationally and internationally recognised framework for SE programmes (e.g. Cefai et al., 2018; Clarke et al., 2015; Durlak et al., 2015; Durlak et al., 2011; Government of Ireland, 2018; Gresham, 2017), that identified several features of SE programmes that are associated with positive outcomes for pupils (CASEL, 2013, 2015). These features identified five key competencies including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making (See Appendix D for an overview of CASEL's competencies). This study considered the extent to which these competencies were addressed in GUSU2 by triangulating data from the subscales within the SSIS-RS, review of the GUSU2 manual, teacher interviews and

pupil focus groups (Bryman, 2016; J. Greene et al., 1989; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Ritchie et al., 2013).

Analysis of the programme manual, which provides guidance to facilitators regarding the content of their teaching (Bond et al., 2000; CASEL, 2013; Gearing et al., 2011; O'Conner et al., 2017) is noted as an important element of any SE skill programme (Chernyshenko et al., 2018; Sklad et al., 2012), particularly as manuals are not always provided (Chernyshenko et al., 2018; O'Connell et al., 2009). These findings indicate that self-awareness and relationship skills are the best addressed, while in contrast, self-management, responsible decision-making, and social awareness were noted to require further development, as outlined in chapter four. A noted strength of the GUSU2 is that it adopts a SAFE (i.e. Sequenced, Active, Focused and Explicit) approach, which is noted to be associated with positive short and long term outcomes (Cefai et al., 2018; Durlak et al., 2011; Sancassiani et al., 2015; R. Taylor et al., 2017). Such an approach is likely to aid facilitators, particularly those utilising the programme as part of their routine teaching, in maintaining programme fidelity (Durlak et al., 2011; Sancassiani et al., 2015).

The results from the SSIS-RS subscales indicate that, for the full study sample, there was a statistically significant change in the self-control and responsibility subscales, which coincide with CASEL's self-management and responsible decision-making competencies respectively (Gresham, 2017). However, significant changes were not observed in the other relevant scales. Participants in the lower ability sample, who were identified based on their total standard scores in the SSIS-RS at pre-intervention, demonstrated significant increases in the subscales which coincide with the CASEL competencies of self-management, social awareness

and responsible decision-making. However, for relationship skills, only one of the two corresponding scales within the SSIS-RS (Gresham, 2017) demonstrated a significant increase. The implications of the findings of the lower ability group will be discussed later in this chapter.

Self-management, which was noted as lacking in content in the manual, was identified as a strength of GUSU2 based on the findings from the accompanying elements of this study. This competency is important as it includes emotional regulation (CASEL, 2013, 2015), which is necessary for successfully developing and maintaining social standing (Garner et al., 2014; Nathanson et al., 2016; Spence, 2003). In an Irish context, children who were at risk of emotional difficulties were noted to be more likely to have fewer friends than those not at risk of emotional difficulties (Williams et al., 2018). Statistically significant changes in pupils' scores in the relevant SSIS-RS subscale for self-management was identified, while self-management was identified as a key theme by pupils and teachers alike. Review of the manual also suggests that many aspects identified by CASEL were addressed, including impulse control, self-discipline and goal setting (CASEL, 2013, 2015). However, content to specifically address pupils' self-motivation and stress management is required for the self-management competency to be fully covered by the programme. The CASEL competencies of self-awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making were noted as positives aspects of GUSU2 based on the qualitative analysis, however, all these competencies were still noted to require additional development. The findings suggest that all aspects of self-awareness identified by CASEL were addressed, apart from the identification of emotions. However, as pupils appeared to display a good knowledge of this when questioned, it is possible that pupils in sixth class may already have this in their repertoire, as a

result of the SPHE curriculum (NCCA, 1999b; 1999c) or *Walk Tall* (PDST, 2016),

and GUSU2 offered the opportunity for reinforcement of this knowledge. This

suggests that GUSU2 may be suitable as a supplementary programme for further

developing SE skills in addition to programmes already in use in schools. Several

aspects of the relationship skill competency identified by CASEL were addressed,

however, aspects such as co-operation and teamwork were not addressed by GUSU2.

Pupils identified this aspect of GUSU2 as a strength, however, this view was not

reciprocated by teachers. This may pupils' awareness of their peer group changing as

they transition to post-primary school (Duchesne et al., 2011; Goldstein et al., 2015)

and the increased complexity of social interactions (Steinberg & Morris, 2001).

Furthermore, aspects of responsible decision-making, such as evaluating reflecting

and demonstrating ethical responsibility, were noted to require additional

development. The final CASEL competency, social awareness was noted as being

lacking in GUSU2. The results from all aspects of this study indicated that this

competency was not explicitly addressed, however, perspective taking was noted to

be indirectly addressed as a result of some activities included in GUSU2. This is

clearly an aspect of GUSU2 that is much weaker than the other competency areas

and requires further development, particularly as Ireland becomes more diverse. The

Central Statistics Office (CSO) noted, following the 2016 census, that there are just

under 100,000 non-Irish national pupils and students engaging with the Irish

education system (CSO, 2019a). Additionally, as research suggests that up to 18% of

Irish adults experience discrimination, including discrimination due to gender, race,

sexual orientation, ethnicity, age and having a disability (CSO, 2019b), the

development of an appreciation of diversity can only be viewed as a positive. Cefai

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et al. (2018) state that teachers should aim to utilise the diverse backgrounds that their pupils present with them.

It is evident from the findings of this study that, while there remain areas for development, GUSU2 addresses many aspects of SE skills, as identified by CASEL (2013, 2015). Interventions which support the development of SE skills are generally viewed as comprising of three categories, or tiers, of programmes (Cefai et al., 2018; Gresham, 2017; January et al., 2011). The first tier consists of programmes which provide support at a universal level to all pupils and encompasses the spectrum of SE skills. In contrast, the two remaining tiers are focused, and often targeted to address the individual's specific need. It is in these latter tiers that specific social skills programmes are contained, as they target a particular skill or set of skills rather than the universal approach as outlined above (Cefai et al., 2018; Gresham, 2017; January et al., 2011). From the description of the various tiers of support, it appears that GUSU2 is aligned with the former. However, despite this, it refers to itself as a social skills programme (NEPS, 2017) which appears to be underselling itself in terms of the contents it covers.

5.4   Meeting the Needs of Children with Social and Emotional Skill Deficits

GUSU2 is currently designed for universal application (NEPS, 2017), however, individuals with special educational needs (SEN) often present with SE difficulties (Bellini et al., 2007; Einfeld et al., 2018; Elias, 2004; National Council for Special Education [NCSE], 2013). Hence, the provision of support for this cohort is likely to be of concern to teachers and concerns were noted by some teachers regarding GUSU2 meeting the needs of pupils with SEN. The findings from this study suggest that GUSU2 produced a significant increase in pupils' SE skills in the

lower ability cohort, specifically in their total standard score, as well as in the relevant subscales for self-management, social awareness, responsible decision-making and one of the two subscales for relationship skills. These findings are promising, as universal interventions are typically effective with up to 80% of the population, while the remaining cohort may require more intensive interventions to support the development of SE skills, in the form of Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions (Durlak et al., 2015; Gresham, 2017; January et al., 2011). These findings suggest that GUSU2, in its current guise, may meet the needs of those requiring additional support. Hence, GUSU2 may be suited as a Tier 2 programme, that can build on the SE skills which have previously been addressed as part of the SPHE curriculum (Cefai et al., 2018; NCCA, 1999b; 1999c). Providing support across multiple levels depending on the needs of the pupils fits within the Irish education system, as such an approach mirrors the NEPS continuum of support model (NEPS, 2010, 2018b). However, teachers may also be required to differentiate the curriculum, and GUSU2, to meet the needs of their pupils (Cefai et al., 2018; DES, 2005b; Mowat, 2009; NCSE, 2013; Ware et al., 2009). Appropriate differentiation can influence pupils' motivation to learn and their learning outcomes (Mowat, 2009). This may need to be addressed during the training provided to teachers, as concerns have been highlighted regarding the differentiation of SPHE to meet pupils' differing needs (Inspectorate, 2009).

5.5   Provision of Training and Support

High-quality training and on-going support are important aspects of successful SE programmes (CASEL, 2013, 2015). While the quality of the training was not directly assessed in this study, the findings suggest that it may require

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further development. The GUSU2 manual refers to the training accompanying the programme as "brief" (NEPS, 2017, p. 4), while there was a consensus among the teachers interviewed that they were required to interpret the manual themselves prior to implementing GUSU2. This contrasts with training for similar programmes outlined in the CASEL review of SE interventions (CASEL, 2013, 2015), which involve training for facilitators that takes place over several days such as Al's Pals (two days), Competent Kids, Caring Communities (one to three days) and RULER (two days). Such extensive training likely provides programme suppliers the opportunity to engage participants in active learning and allow for practicing implementation, which are noted as important elements of training (de Paor, 2015; Domitrovich et al., 2008; Elliott & Mihalic, 2004; Penuel, Fishman, & Yamaguchi, 2007), rather than passive, information only training (Costine, Marron, & Costine, 2012; O'Carroll, 2012). The lack of opportunity to practice implementing the programme under the tutelage of the programme providers was noted as a concern by teachers in this study. Furthermore, the provision of high-quality training can influence the fidelity of the programme (Cefai et al., 2018; Durlak et al., 2015; Gearing et al., 2011; Payne, 2009), which is considered paramount by developers of evidence-based interventions for schools (Forman et al., 2009). However, schools can find it difficult to release teaching staff to attend such training programmes (Elliott & Mihalic, 2004), which was noted in this evaluation. A teacher facilitated GUSU2 without having attended the training, which was likely to impact on implementation and outcomes (Domitrovich et al., 2008; Ross, Luepker, Nelson, Saavedra, & Hubbard, 1991). This potentially questions the value that teachers, and school principals, place on the provision of training and professional development in SE skills.

Engaging with principals, by increasing their awareness of the importance of SE skills in schools is a possible consideration for programme providers. This approach has been demonstrated to result in the provision of appropriate supports, such as materials and staff members for implementing such programmes (Cefai et al., 2018; Durlak et al., 2015). Providing support for school principals and other support staff is integral to the success of programmes (Forman et al., 2009), as schools are more likely to implement a programme if it has a supportive principal (Payne, 2009). Furthermore, providing training to a cohort of teachers from the same school can provide additional support for teachers (Penuel et al., 2007). Such engagement is more likely to result in a supportive school environment and culture which facilitates the promotion of SE skills (Cefai et al., 2018; Cefai et al., 2015; CASEL, 2013; 2015; Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2002; Payne, 2009) and is recommended in the well-being guidelines (Government of Ireland, 2018; NEPS, 2015b).

The provision of support is as important as the training provided for teachers to ensure that the programme is successfully implemented (Domitrovich et al., 2008). The lack of external support provided for facilitating teachers in this evaluation is of concern as such support is considered an essential aspect of high-quality SE programmes (CASEL, 2013, 2015). Furthermore, a lack of support is associated with poor programme fidelity (Domitrovich et al., 2008; O'Connell et al., 2009). Such support can be provided by programme providers, school principals or parents (CASEL, 2013, 2015; Cefai et al., 2018). This support is particularly important for new and inexperienced teachers who may require feedback from a more experienced professional (Bubb, 2005; Wiebke & Bardin, 2009), which was noted as a concern by one teacher in this study. The provision of support and high-

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quality training is likely to have an influence on the implementation and fidelity of GUSU2, which may impact on the SE outcomes of the programme.

5.6   Teacher and Pupil Perceptions of Get Up! Stand Up!

Pupils typically experience a mixture of excitement and anxiety regarding the transition from primary to post-primary school (Duchesne et al., 2011; Erath et al., 2012; Grills-Taquechel et al., 2010), which was consistent with the findings in this evaluation. Anxiety, including social anxiety, is commonly reported at this stage in a child's life, while adolescence is acknowledged as a period when anxiety problems can often develop (Carr, 2015; Erath et al., 2012; Goldstein et al., 2015; Grills-Taquechel et al., 2010). Despite the accepted frequency of anxiety at this stage of a child's development, one teacher in this study noted being surprised with their pupils' level of anxiety regarding the transition. Pupils also reported some anxiety regarding bullying and making new friends in post-primary school. Peer victimisation and bullying are commonly experienced at the time of transition (Erath et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2016; Smyth et al., 2004; Wolke et al., 2001), however, improved SE skills can lessen this impact and aid the formation of new friendships. Learning skills relating to forming friendships and dealing with bullying as a result of GUSU2 were reported, as was a reduction in pupil anxiety. In this sense, the transition to post-primary school was likely a motivating factor for pupil engagement with GUSU2. However, the end of the academic year was also noted as a barrier to full pupil engagement by some teachers.

Engagement with SE skill programmes and the SPHE curriculum can be increased through the provision of active learning approaches (Cefai et al., 2018; Durlak et al., 2011; January et al., 2011; NCCA, 1999c; Sancassiani et al., 2015).

Such approaches were noted as positives of GUSU2 by teachers and pupils in this evaluation, as was the small group format. The use of stories adopts a similar approach to that implemented by Tijms et al. (2018), who utilised a bibliotherapeutic approach with stories relevant to their specific population, and has been shown to be an effective method for encouraging participants to reflect on their own behaviours (Cefai et al., 2015; Hankin, Omer, Elias, & Raviv, 2012). The inclusion of video clips was also noted as positives by several pupils, particularly in contrast to the perceived quantity of reading and writing activities. Supplementing programmes with activities such as these are recommended as ways to ensure a programme is inclusive and reduces the demands of literacy on pupils (Cefai et al., 2018), including those whose home language is not English, and also allows pupils to access material that is beyond their reading age (NEPS, 2012b; 2016; Reid & Wearmouth, 2002; Snowling & Stackhouse, 2013). Providing pupils with the opportunity to practice skills is a key component of the CASEL framework (2013, 2015) and noted as important for skill generalisation (Bellini et al., 2007; Cefai et al., 2018; Cook et al., 2008). Such opportunities were noted in GUSU2 in the role-playing activities by teachers and pupils, while some pupils were also reported to utilise skills outside of the classroom environment, suggesting some generalising of skills. However, despite target setting being an integral aspect of each session within GUSU2, such generalising of skills was not reported by all pupils and teachers. This questions programme fidelity, as teachers are asked to review the previous week's targets at the beginning of the following session.

Poor implementation, and poor programme fidelity, are also noted to impact on programme outcomes (CASEL, 2013; 2015; Forman et al., 2009; Greenberg, 2010) and may have impacted on SSIS-RS scores. Several barriers to the successful

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implementation were highlighted in this evaluation. The successful incorporation of active learning approaches and a small group setting have been highlighted as concerns in the teaching of the SPHE curriculum (Inspectorate, 2009), and were also noted as difficulties for some teachers in this study. Failure to incorporate such approaches, which are key elements of GUSU2 (NEPS, 2017) and SE skill programmes (Cefai et al., 2018; Durlak et al., 2011; January et al., 2011; Sancassiani et al., 2015), likely impacted on pupil learning.

When selecting a programme for use in SPHE, teachers are encouraged to choose a resource that is "appealing to children and to the teacher" (NCCA, 1999c, p. 103). Some teachers in this evaluation noted that the GUSU2 resources were not accessible and did not appeal to them, hence, they suggested they may choose an alternative programme, with better-organised resources, in the future. A preference for accessible programmes over those with an evidence-base has been highlighted previously (Boardman et al., 2005), which may question the value teachers place on SPHE and evidence-based programmes. However, an advantage to including well-organised materials with a programme is that it can alleviate issues around programme fidelity (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2002).

5.7   Programme Fidelity

Well implemented programmes are noted to result in greater reported improvements for the participants (Bertram, Blase, & Fixsen, 2015; CASEL, 2013; 2015; Durlak et al., 2011; Elliott & Mihalic, 2004; Forman et al., 2009; Greenberg, 2010; Payne, 2009; Weisz et al., 2005). Implementation is particularly important when research is conducted in a natural, rather than in a controlled, environment (Greenberg, 2010; Lipsey, 2005; Payne, 2009; Weisz et al., 2005). Despite this,

implementation and programme fidelity is often not considered, or reported on, when discussing the impact of school-based programmes (Durlak et al., 2011).

When the same programme is implemented by different facilitators, as was the case in this evaluation, there can be a large variance in implementation and outcomes (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). Such a difference in implementation was also noted in this evaluation, as teachers appeared to interpret the manual differently and adapted GUSU2 at a local level. Some researchers maintain that a certain amount of adaption is inevitable when programmes are implemented in a natural setting, such as a school (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Ringwalt et al., 2003). Furthermore, Durlak and DuPre (2008) suggest that there is a value in a facilitator demonstrating some degree of flexibility in their approach as this can lead to greater benefits for participants, compared to those that rigidly adhere to the fidelity of the programme. However, it may be beneficial to incorporate a framework to assist with this adaption. Frameworks for supporting adaption, whilst not impacting on the fidelity of the programme, have been identified in the literature (e.g. Aarons et al., 2012; Meyers, Durlak, & Wandersman, 2012). These frameworks identify several steps that should be followed to ensure a programme is implemented correctly, including consideration of the needs of the participants, the setting and ongoing evaluation of implementation. These frameworks also note that the provision of appropriate training and support for facilitators, which were both identified as concerns in this evaluation, can improve programme fidelity. Furthermore, providing facilitators with the opportunity to select aspects of the programme that they want to include may enhance their connection to the programme (Borntrager, Chorpita, Higa-McMillan, & Weisz, 2009; O'Connell et al., 2009). Developing such a connection may ultimately improve their sense of satisfaction with the programme in comparison to

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those who were given no choice regarding adaption (Borntrager et al., 2009). This

may be particularly suitable for experienced teachers, as it gives them a sense of

agency by providing them with the opportunity to utilise their own knowledge in the

area, which is considered an important aspect of effective education (Biesta,

Priestley, & Robinson, 2015).

Such a scope for adaption needs to be carefully considered as well

implemented programmes are associated with positive outcomes (Bertram et al.,

2015; CASEL, 2013; 2015; Durlak et al., 2011; Elliott & Mihalic, 2004; Forman et

al., 2009; Greenberg, 2010; Payne, 2009; Weisz et al., 2005). Numerous methods

have been suggested to support teachers in implementing programmes as intended.

The provision of high-quality training, as outlined in the previous section, is one

such method for improving implementation (Forman et al., 2009; O'Connell et al.,

2009; Payne, 2009), as is the provision of ongoing support for the facilitators

(O'Connell et al., 2009). The CASEL reviews of SE programmes noted that most of

the programmes they identified included measures of fidelity (CASEL, 2015). The

inclusion of procedures for monitoring progress and fidelity have been suggested,

such as video recording of sessions and the observation of sessions (CASEL, 2013;

Elliott & Mihalic, 2004; Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2002), the latter of which was

initially proposed as part of this study. However, due to the timing of ethical

approval and the end of the academic school year, it was not possible for this to

occur. The provision of standardised manuals, including lesson plans and checklists,

can act as a support to implementation for facilitating teachers (CASEL, 2013; Bond

et al., 2000; Gearing et al., 2011; O'Conner et al., 2017) and are included in GUSU2.

These may need to be emphasised as a tool that teachers should be using. However,

the inclusion of a manual does not necessarily predict more successful outcomes

(Wyatt Kaminski, Valle, Filene, & Boyle, 2008), while other researchers have expressed concerns regarding the use of manualised programmes, stating that it reduces the facilitators' ability to act creatively and adapt the programme to suit their participants (Borntrager et al., 2009; Weisz et al., 2005). Such a suggestion contradicts research which advocates programmes utilising a SAFE (sequenced, active, focused and explicit) approach (Durlak et al., 2011; Sancassiani et al., 2015).

5.8   Strengths of Mixed Method Evaluation Research

There is no agreed-upon method for evaluating programmes such as GUSU2 (Patton, 2008; Rossi et al., 1999), however, previous reviews of SE programmes focused primarily on RCTs or quasi-experimental studies only (e.g. Clarke et al., 2015; Durlak et al., 2011). While the virtues of such studies and research methodologies are acknowledged as important in psychological practice (Dunsmuir et al., 2009; Fox, 2011), there is now a shift towards including a qualitative aspect into evaluations (Baxter et al., 2012). Despite the value of including the voice of the relevant stakeholders (Cefai et al., 2018; DES, 2016; Inspectorate, 2009, 2016; Patton, 2008; Rossi et al., 1999), there is a noted dearth of such included in programme evaluations. The findings from this study reiterate the value of adopting a pragmatic approach and incorporating both qualitative and quantitative aspects to this evaluation (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Patton, 2008; Rossi et al., 1999; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). The inclusion of this variety of data facilitated both an outcome and process evaluation (Lobo et al., 2014), and hence a greater variety of insights and conclusions can be drawn (Lobo et al., 2014; Wight et al., 2016).

5.9   Conclusion

Having situated the findings in the context of the national and international research, it is evident that there are aspects of GUSU2 which appear to be having a positive impact on participants. The value of approaching this evaluation from a mixed method approach is reiterated in the spectrum of insights that were identified. Despite some positive quantitative outcomes, for both the full study sample and the lower ability sample, there are several aspects of the programme which require further development to meet CASEL's standard for SE skills programmes. Nonetheless, GUSU2 has the potential to be utilised to provide support to pupils with SE skill deficits. Teacher training and support appears to require further development, which will likely have an impact on programme fidelity, and potentially programme outcomes. The following chapter will consider the limitations of this study and possible implications for researcher, practitioners and policymakers.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

EVALUATION OF GET UP! STAND UP! (VERSION 2)

6.1 Introduction

This study utilised a mixed method approach to evaluate Get Up! Stand Up! (Version 2) (GUSU2) (National Educational Psychological Service [NEPS], 2017) as a social and emotional (SE) skills programme. GUSU2 has been developed by practising Educational Psychologists (EPs) to address an identified need, specifically to support the development of SE skills in children as they transition from primary to post-primary school. Chapter one provided a brief rationale for conducting this evaluation, while chapter two outlined the research in the field of SE skills. An evidence-based framework for SE skills programmes provided by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), which GUSU2 is evaluated against, was also highlighted in this chapter. Chapter three outlined the methodology, while the findings from this study were outlined in chapter four. These findings were situated in the context of international research conducted in the area in chapter five. Finally, this chapter provides a brief summary of the findings from this study before considering the implications and limitations of the study.

6.2 Summary of Findings

As noted, the aim of this study was to evaluate GUSU2 as a SE skills programme. Specifically, the following research questions were identified based on the research in the area of SE skills programmes:

- What was the impact of GUSU2 on the participants' SE skills?

- To what extent are the CASEL competencies addressed by GUSU2?

- What are teachers' perceptions of the training and support they received for GUSU2?

- What are teachers' and pupils' experiences of GUSU2?

The first research question was concerned with the outcome of the quantitative measure of SE skills, in the form of the results from the Social Skills Improvement System-Rating Scales (SSIS-RS) (Gresham & Elliott, 2008). These findings indicated that the pupils' total SE skills increased following participation in GUSU2, both for the entire study in the full study sample and in the lower ability sample. The effect size was noted as being small for the full study sample, however, a medium effect size was noted for the lower ability sample (Jacob Cohen, 1988; Pallant, 2016). This suggests that GUSU2 had a greater impact on pupils with a lower SE skill ability. However, the results indicated that there was also an increase in the scores for participants who were in the control group. Furthermore, there was no statistically significant difference between the intervention and the control groups at both pre- and post-intervention. Hence, it is difficult to state the exact impact that GUSU2 had on the participants.

The second research question considered GUSU2 in the context of the five main SE skills competencies identified by the CASEL framework (2013, 2105) (see Appendix D for overview of competencies). Review of the manual indicated that self-awareness and relationship skills were the best addressed of the competencies, however, both aspects still require development to be fully aligned with CASEL's definition. In contrast, responsible decision-making and self-management both require further input and development, while there was limited evidence for the presence of social awareness in the manual despite this being presented as a SE skills programme. In addition to the review of the manual, the perspectives of the teachers and pupils were collected, as well as outcome data from the relevant subscales of the SSIS-RS (Gresham, 2017; Gresham & Elliott, 2008). This analysis suggested that self-management was viewed as the strongest element of GUSU2 by teachers and

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pupils, while a statistically significant increase was noted in the corresponding SSIS-RS subscale. Learning concerning relationship skills was valued more by pupils, particularly in the context of forming relationships in post-primary school, however, this view was not shared by teachers. While there was a statistically significant increase in one of the two relationship subscales in the SSIS-RS for the lower ability sample, there was no statistically significant change for the full study sample. Social awareness was also identified as an area that needs further development, as teachers and pupils only identified one aspect of CASEL's definition of social awareness. The findings from the relevant subscale in the SSIS-RS indicated that there was no statistically significant increase in the full study sample, however, a statistically significant increase was noted in the lower ability sample. Aspects of responsible decision-making were identified by both teachers and pupils, however, the findings from the SSIS-RS indicates that statistically significant increases were only observed in the lower ability sample. Finally, the self-awareness competency was noted as being well addressed by teachers and pupils, however, as there is no corresponding subscale within the SSIS-RS it is not possible to determine the exact impact on pupils. These findings suggest that there are areas of GUSU2 which align with the CASEL framework, however, there remain several areas which require further development.

The next research question was concerned with the perspectives of facilitating teachers and participating pupils. Teachers and pupils both reported that pupils responded positively to GUSU2 and identified several aspects of the programme that contributed to their engagement with it, including the use of active learning techniques. The pupils' impending transition to post-primary school was also noted to motivate the pupils to engage with the programme, which had

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previously been suggested in research (January et al., 2011). However, several potential barriers to implementation were also noted, including the language of the programme, the timing of the programme, the use of the programme with pupils with special education needs (SEN), the accessibility of teaching materials and the size of the school. The findings from this research question also identified several concerns regarding the fidelity of the programme.

The final research question considered teachers' perspectives of the training and support they received as part of GUSU2. Several teachers noted that the training provided was sufficient and provided them with an insight into the value of such a programme. However, some aspects of the training were identified that may require further development, including considering each session in-depth and providing teachers with an opportunity to interact with the programme. This finding is particularly relevant as research highlights the value of the provision of high-quality training for facilitators (CASEL, 2013, 2015; Forman et al., 2009). The provision of support to facilitators is also noted as an important element within the CASEL framework (2013, 2015), however, teachers in this study reported not receiving support from the programme providers. The reported level of support and training provided for teachers is of concern, as research suggests that both are important for programme fidelity (Forman et al., 2009; O'Connell et al., 2009; Payne, 2009; Webster-Stratton, Reinke, Herman, & Newcomer, 2011). However, no teacher in the study sought the support of the programme providers.

The findings, in the context of the research questions, highlight several areas of GUSU2 which are working well and aligned to the CASEL framework (2013, 2015), whilst there are also other aspects which require further development. The

adoption of a pragmatic stance to this evaluation facilitated the utilisation of a mixed

method approach (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

Such an approach allowed for a thorough evaluation to be conducted, by collecting

data from a variety of sources and blending the findings together (Patton, 2008;

Rossi et al., 1999). This also ensured that the evaluation focused on more than just

outcomes (Lobo et al., 2014), and allowed for the identification of a variety of

implications.

6.3   Implications

As noted, there are numerous direct and indirect implications evident as a

result of this evaluation of GUSU2. There are several potential implications

highlighted for programme developers, future researchers and policymakers.

6.3.1   For programme developers.

- The programme developers should consider reviewing the training provided to

  programme facilitators. Utilising a framework that ensures that the training is

  standardised and meeting the needs of the intervention, such as that proposed by

  Bellg et al. (2004), should be considered by the developers. Effective training is

  noted to include an active learning aspect and provide trainees with the

  opportunity to implement aspects of the programme under the guidance of the

  trainer (de Paor, 2015; Domitrovich et al., 2008; Elliott & Mihalic, 2004; Penuel

  et al., 2007). Furthermore, training should be made a compulsory aspect of

  facilitating GUSU2 to ensure that facilitators are fully trained and aware of

  potential difficulties, such as programme fidelity (Elliott & Mihalic, 2004;

  Forman et al., 2009; O'Connell et al., 2009; Payne, 2009). A number of options,

  such as providing training over the summer, providing training onsite for schools

or providing schools with a bursary to cover teachers attending training (Elliott & Mihalic, 2004) should be considered to ensure that teachers are available for such training.

- The programme developers should consider providing whole school training, involving all school staff. This is more likely to produce a supportive school environment, which is associated with positive outcomes for such programmes (Cefai et al., 2018; Cefai et al., 2015; CASEL, 2013; 2015; Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2002; Payne, 2009) and is recommended in the well-being guidelines (Government of Ireland, 2018; NEPS, 2015b).

- The programme developers should consider providing additional support to facilitating teachers, particularly teachers with limited experience of facilitating such SE programmes. This is likely to improve the fidelity of the programme (Domitrovich et al., 2008; O'Connell et al., 2009). Peer mentoring or peer support may also be considered once a cohort of teachers demonstrates sufficient proficiency in implementing GUSU2 (Cefai et al., 2018).

- The programme developers should consider including fidelity checks in GUSU2 to ensure that it is run as designed (CASEL, 2013; Bond et al., 2000; Gearing et al., 2011; O'Conner et al., 2017). Emphasis may need to be placed on any measures, such as the checklist included in the manual, at the training being provided (Elliott & Mihalic, 2004).

- Programme developers should consider reviewing the content of GUSU2 to ensure it addresses all the SE competencies outlined by CASEL (2013, 2015). Successfully addressing all these areas ensures that GUSU2 is aligned to an internationally recognised framework for SE skills. Furthermore, programme

developers may wish to consider relabelling GUSU2 as a SE skills programme to accurately reflect its contents, and possibly its appeal with teachers.

- The involvement of parents in interventions, along with the involvement of the school, tends to have the greatest impact in terms of outcomes for children (CASEL, 2013; 2015; Downey & Williams, 2010; Greenberg et al., 2003; January et al., 2011). The involvement of parents is also noted to result in long terms positive outcomes, including increased wellbeing of parents and a reduction in participants requiring health and special education services (Cefai et al., 2018). Hence the developers of GUSU2 may wish to incorporate a parental aspect to the programme. However, this should be carefully considered, as the added complexity of including a parental aspect can lead to difficulties with programme fidelity (Durlak et al., 2011).

- Research suggests that the best outcomes are achieved when an intervention is implemented over a longer period (CASEL, 203, 2015), while long term benefits are associated with programmes being implemented over a longer period (Greenberg et al., 2003). Hence, programme developers may wish to consider extending the length of GUSU2 and creating a top-up session to consolidate the skills initially learnt.

- The current evaluation resembles effectiveness research, as it was concerned with the effectiveness of GUSU2 in a natural setting (Löfholm et al., 2013)**.** However, efficacy research should be conducted to ensure that GUSU2 is addressing what it claims to address (Löfholm et al., 2013; O'Connell et al., 2009). While the outcomes following participation in GUSU2 are promising, the findings from the control group make it difficult to determine the exact impact of GUSU2 on participants.

6.3.2 For researchers.

- In this evaluation, minimum data was collected regarding the pupils, teachers and schools involved. Future researchers may wish to collect additional data to assist in identifying variables which may influence the outcomes of programmes (Weisz et al., 2005). Data regarding the socioeconomic status of pupils and pupil gender, which are both associated with SE skill development (C. Taylor et al., 2002; R. Taylor et al., 2017; Tijms et al., 2018; Weisz et al., 2005), should be collected to determine whether such variables influenced programme outcomes. Furthermore, school variables, such as the value that teachers place on evidence-based resources, which is a potential barrier to successful implementation (Boardman et al., 2005; M. Jones, 2009), and the classification of the school as disadvantaged or not under the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan (Department of Education and Science [DES], 2005a). Such research may assist in determining the effectiveness of GUSU2 with specific populations and may identify areas requiring development to meet the needs of specific cohorts.

- The findings from this evaluation suggested that GUSU2 may be effective with pupils presenting with some SE skill deficits. Hence, future researchers may wish to consider the impact of GUSU2 on specific pupil cohorts, such as pupils with SEN, as this cohort may require additional support in SE skills (Bellini et al., 2007; Einfeld et al., 2018; Elias, 2004; National Council for Special Education [NCSE], 2013).

- Future researchers should consider directly comparing the effects of GUSU2 and similar SE skill programmes (Löfholm et al., 2013; Watts, Turnell, Kladnitski,

Newby, & Andrews, 2014), such as *the Incredible Years* (Webster-Stratton, 2000) programme and *FRIENDS for life* (Barrett & Ryan, 2004).

- The findings from this study suggest that some teachers found it difficult to assess their pupils' SE skills, which questions the awareness that teachers have of such skills in their pupils. Teachers' assessment of skills related to the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum, including SE skills, was noted as being infrequent in a review of the curriculum by the Inspectorate (2009). While this review has likely aged, an up to date review of the practices and attitudes of teachers to SE skills and SPHE would likely be beneficial, as it may identify a potential barrier to the successful implementation of such programmes.

- The possible impact of the Hawthorne effect (L. Cohen et al., 2007; McCambridge et al., 2014) as a result of the pre-intervention assessment was noted in this evaluation. Furthermore, concerns regarding the possible impact of social desirability (L. Cohen et al., 2007; Tourangeau & Yan, 2007; Van de Mortel, 2008) on pupils' responses were also noted. Future researchers may wish to adopt a research design such as the Solomon four-group design (Solomon, 1949; Solomon & Lessac, 1968) and include a measure of social desirability, such as that proposed by Crandall, Crandall, and Katkovsky (1965) or Ford (1970), to address these concerns.

- Researchers should continue to consider information beyond outcomes when conducting evaluations of similar programmes (Lobo et al., 2014; Wight et al., 2016). The perspectives of relevant stakeholders, such as pupils, teachers and parents, should be included in any future evaluations (Cefai et al., 2018; DES, 2016; Inspectorate, 2009, 2016; Patton, 2008; Rossi et al., 1999). This identifies

a greater volume of information that can be used to inform decisions regarding the programme.

- High-quality training is an important aspect of SE skill programmes which can impact programme fidelity (Cefai et al., 2018; Durlak et al., 2015; Gearing et al., 2011; Payne, 2009). As such researchers should consider evaluating the training provided as part of GUSU2. The use of an evaluation model for training, such as Kirkpatrick's four-level training evaluation model (Kirkpatrick, 1976), would provide an insight into the training provided for GUSU2.

- In any study, the inclusion of a follow up of participants can provide additional information regarding the longer-term effect of the programme (L. Cohen et al., 2007). CASEL (2015) noted that the inclusion of follow up data offers valuable information regarding the effectiveness of a programme and can highlight how sustainable any improvements are. The collection of additional data after the participants had transitioned to post-primary school, would provide additional information regarding the longer-term impact of GUSU2. However, due to the timescale involved in this research, such a follow-up was not possible but should be considered in future evaluations.

- The SSIS-RS (Gresham & Elliott, 2008), which was used to measure outcomes in this study, does not contain a subscale aligned to self-awareness (Gresham, 2017). While numerous alternative methods were utilised in this study to determine the extent to which this competency was addressed in GUSU2, the inclusion of a supplementary quantitative measure for self-awareness, such as the Social Skills Improvement System-Social-Emotional Learning Edition (SSIS-SEL) (Gresham & Elliott, 2017) may be beneficial.

- While the SSIS-RS (Gresham & Elliott, 2008) is noted as a suitable outcome measure (Cordier et al., 2015; Gresham & Elliott, 2017; Humphrey et al., 2011), future researchers may wish to determine whether it is sufficiently sensitive to identify changes in SE skills. The SSIS-RS consists of four response classes (Gresham & Elliott, 2008), however, instruments may not be as accurate when they contain less than five response options (Simms et al., 2019). The provision of a seven-point Likert-type scale is noted as optimal, as it allows for the greatest return on reliability for the effort required to analyse the data (Croasmun & Ostrom, 2011). In this sense, the identification or creation of which includes more response options may provide a more precise measure.

- SE skill programmes are associated with a variety of additional outcomes (CASEL, 2013, 2015), such as improved academic performance, reduced anxiety and depression, less aggressive behaviour and better behaviour in the classroom (Barnes et al., 2014; Cefai et al., 2018; Durlak et al., 2011; R. Taylor et al., 2017). Future evaluations of such programmes may wish to include measures of supplementary outcomes, along with measures of SE skills.

6.3.3 For policymakers.

- The recommended weekly allocation to the teaching of SPHE is currently 30 minutes (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA], 1999a), however, research indicates that the impact of SE skills programmes increases with an increase in intensity (Gresham et al., 2001; January et al., 2011). Furthermore, teachers reported having insufficient time to cover the SPHE curriculum as required (Irish National Teachers' Organisation [INTO], 2015). Hence, policymakers may wish to consider allocating additional time to the

teaching of SE skills and the SPHE curriculum to increase the associated impact and positive outcomes.

- The well-being guidelines for teachers (NEPS, 2015c) currently recommends a number of programmes to support the development of well-being in primary schools. The programmes identified in the current guidelines are Tier 1 programmes or programmes for universal application. While such programmes are necessary, as part of the continuum for support model (NEPS, 2010, 2018b), there remains a need for targeted interventions (Cefai et al., 2018). Policymakers should identify suitable Tier 2 and Tier 3 programmes for pupils in need of additional targeted support, as a combination of both universal and targeted interventions have the greatest impact for such a cohort (Cefai et al., 2018; Durlak et al., 2015; Weare & Nind, 2011).

6.4 Limitations

There are a few limitations to this study. Methodological limitations have been identified in chapter three, including the limitations regarding additional perspectives, observation of sessions to consider the programme fidelity, the collection of additional outcome data and the lack of a follow up aspect to this evaluation. Additionally, a thorough review of the training provided to teachers was not included as part of this evaluation, due to the timing of the training and ethical approval. While the views of the participating teachers are important in an evaluation of training (Kirkpatrick, 1976), a thorough review of the training provided would allow for the identification of both the positive elements of the training, as well as potentially identifying areas of the training which may require further development (Costine et al., 2012). When analysing the data, additional credibility and reliability

to the findings could have been provided by providing the participants with the opportunity to review the findings from the qualitative aspects of this study, i.e. member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, and Walter (2016) suggest several methods for doing so, such as a member check interview or focus group or a member check of the analysed data. Finally, potential bias, as a result of social desirability (L. Cohen et al., 2007; Tourangeau & Yan, 2007; Van de Mortel, 2008) and the Hawthorne effect (L. Cohen et al., 2007; McCambridge et al., 2014), have both been noted in this evaluation. The limitations outlined here should not take from the findings and implications of this evaluation, however, future researchers may wish to consider these before embarking on similar evaluation studies.

6.5   Personal Reflection

Having completed this evaluation, the value of including the perspectives of the relevant stakeholders is highlighted. While this study was concerned with SE skill programmes, and GUSU2 specifically, I feel that the learning from this study can be carried into my future practice as an EP. While I have always endeavoured to ensure that the voice of the child is considered in any decision that I make, this evaluation has reiterated the value and insight that they can provide. Furthermore, EPs are regularly asked to intervene and assess children prior to their transition to post-primary school. While there is undoubted value in considering the cognitive and academic abilities of a child in this context, it is now evident that consideration of their SE skills is equally, if not more important, due to the associated outcomes. I now envisage my future role as an EP to involve advocating for the promotion of SE skill development in children.

6.6   Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings from this evaluation highlight the potential value of GUSU2 as a means of developing SE skills in pupils. However, there remain components of the programme which require further development should it wish to align itself to an evidence-based framework for SE skills. It is also clear that, while the findings from this evaluation are promising, further evaluation of this programme is required to ensure that the best product is available for use in schools in Ireland. This study also highlights the value of approaching evaluation studies with a mixed-method approach, as several insights were provided which may not have been afforded without the inclusion of both approaches.

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Appendix A: Weight of Evidence A

WoE A Criteria: Adapted from Gersten et al. (2005)	Greene and Ollendick (1993)	Junge et al. (2016)	Snow et al. (1986)	Tijms et al. (2018)	Vassilopoulos et al. (2018)
Randomised control trial				X	
Participants randomised to condition				X	X
Participants comparable	X				
Consistency between scorers				X	X
Intervention clearly described	X		X	X	X
Provider of the intervention clearly described	X	X	X		X
Procedure for ensuring fidelity of intervention	X				X
Control group		X		X	X
Control group condition clearly described				X	X
Appropriate measures	X			X	X

EVALUATION OF GET UP! STAND UP! (VERSION 2)

Multiple measures	X	X		X	X
Measured at appropriate times	X	X		X	X
Reliability of measures provided				X	X
Data analysis appropriate	X	X		X	X
Data on attrition rates				X	X
Effect sizes calculated		X		X	X
Follow up Assessment	X				
Total score *	9 (Medium)	6 (Medium)	2 (Low)	13 (High)	14 (High)

* High = 12-17, Medium = 6-11, Low = 0-5

Appendix B: Weight of Evidence B

WoE B Criteria	Greene and Ollendick (1993)	Junge et al. (2016)	Snow et al. (1986)	Tijms et al. (2018)	Vassilopoulos et al. (2018)
Randomised Control Trial				X	
Matched participants in both the intervention group and the control group				X	X
The intervention involves explicit teaching of some aspect of SE skills	X	X	X	X	X
SE skills are explicitly measured	X	X		X	X
Data collected at appropriate times (i.e. pre intervention, post intervention and follow up)	X				
Intervention implemented in last year of primary school (post intervention/follow up can include post-primary school)		X	X		X
Intervention is school based	X	X	X	X	X

EVALUATION OF GET UP! STAND UP! (VERSION 2)

Intervention facilitated by a schoolteacher	X				
Fidelity checks included	X			X	
Includes measures from multiple sources (e.g. parents/guardians, teachers, children)					
Total Score *	6 (Med)	4 (Med)	3 (Low)	6 (Med)	5 (Med)

* High = 8-10, Medium = 4-7, Low = 0-3.

Appendix C: Weight of Evidence C

WoE C Rating	Greene and Ollendick (1993)	Junge et al. (2016)	Snow et al. (1986)	Tijms et al. (2018)	Vassilopoulos et al. (2018)
High: Study explicitly focuses on developing SE skills in the five SE skill competencies in children in anticipation of the transitioning from primary school to post-primary school. Includes a measure of SE skill outcomes					
Medium: Study explicitly focuses on developing SE skills at least two of the five SE skill competencies in children in anticipation of the transitioning from primary school to post-primary school. Includes a measure of some element of SE skill outcomes	X			X	X
Low: Study makes limited reference to developing SE skills in children in anticipation of the transitioning from primary school to post-primary school and/or did not include a direct measure of SE skill outcomes		X	X		

Based on criteria identified by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL 2013, 2015)

Appendix D: Social and emotional competencies (as identified by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013; 2015)

Social and emotional competency	Components of competency
Self-awareness (defined as the ability to recognise one's emotions and thoughts that influence social behaviour)	▪ Identifying emotions ▪ Accurate self-perception ▪ Recognising strengths ▪ Self-confidence ▪ Self-efficacy
Social Awareness (defined as the ability to take the perspective of and empathise with others)	▪ Perspective-taking ▪ Empathy ▪ Appreciating diversity ▪ Respect for others
Responsible Decision Making (defined as the ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behaviour and social interactions)	▪ Identifying problems ▪ Analysing situations ▪ Solving problems ▪ Evaluating ▪ Reflecting ▪ Ethical responsibility
Self-management (defined as the ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviours in different situations)	▪ Impulse control ▪ Stress management ▪ Self-discipline ▪ Self-motivation ▪ Goal setting ▪ Organisational skills
Relationship skills (defined as the ability to establish and maintain healthy rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups)	▪ Communication ▪ Social engagement ▪ Relationship building ▪ Teamwork

Appendix E: Description of NEPS Study as Verified by Team Members

As part of the rollout of Get Up! Stand Up! (Version 2), training was provided to a cohort of schools in an area of Cork by two NEPS psychologists in February 2018. This cohort of schools was invited to partake in the research project to evaluate the effect of the programme on pupils social and emotional (SE) skills and on their wellbeing. A total of 14 schools agreed to take part in the study. Of these schools, three volunteered to act as controls, two of which were Irish medium schools. Participation in the study involved the schools agreeing to implement the programme between specific dates in February and May, to facilitate the collection of pre and post data from the pupils who were partaking in the research. This also ensured that there was enough time left in the school calendar for the control schools to implement the programme. The control groups were instructed to continue with their regular teaching practice during this period. Permission to take part in the research was sought from all parents, using an "opt-out" approach to participation (i.e. parents had to explicitly state that their child would not take part in the research). Pre-intervention data were collected from the pupils over the period of one week, where a member of the research team went to each school and administered the SSIS-RS (social skills improvement system-rating scales) and the Stirling Wellbeing Scale to the class group. A script was created for use with the pupils prior to them completing the questionnaires to ensure that the instructions and purpose of the research were clearly explained. No additional demographic information was collected from the pupils other than their age (in years), to ensure that they received the appropriate SSIS-RS forms and their school. A list of names and the corresponding number on their forms was taken for the purpose of ensuring that the

pre and post responses from the participants could be compared. The questionnaires were read aloud to the class group by the member of the research team to allow for any literacy difficulties that participants may experience, and participants were provided with an opportunity to clarify the meanings of words if necessary. The collection of post-intervention data was collected using the same procedure as at pre-intervention over a period of three weeks, as due to the time of the year it was difficult to coordinate suitable dates and times with all schools.

Appendix F: Teacher Interview Schedule

- What did you think of the training provided?

    - Was it adequate?

    - Are there any changes you would make to it?

    - What were the most useful aspects of it?

    - What was the least useful aspect of it?

    - How does it compare to other training you have received?

    - Was it worthwhile?

- Do you feel there was enough support provided?

    - Did you feel supported by NEPS?

    - Did you feel supported by your school?

        - Principal

        - Other teachers

    - Would you have felt comfortable contacting your NEPS psychologist if you had a problem with it? Why/why not?

- What have you noticed about your pupils following this intervention? (Follow up questions if not mentioned by the teacher)

    - What have you noticed about your pupils' self-awareness?

        o What do you notice about your pupils and their ability to recognise their emotions?

        o What do you notice about your pupils recognising their strengths?

- o What do you notice about their self-confidence?

- o What do you notice about their self-efficacy?

- ▪ What have you noticed about your pupils' self-management skills?

    - o What do you notice about their impulse control?

    - o What do you notice about their stress management?

    - o What do you notice about their self-discipline?

    - o What do you notice about their self-motivation?

    - o What do you notice about their goal setting?

        - ▪ Personal goals

        - ▪ Academic goals

    - o What do you notice about their organisational skills?

- ▪ What have you noticed about your pupils' social awareness?

    - o What do you notice about their perspectives taking?

    - o What do you notice about their ability to express empathy for others?

    - o What do you notice about their appreciation of diversity (cultures, genders, background etc.)?

- o What do you notice about their respect for others that may be different to them?

- What do you notice about your pupils' relationship skills?
  - o What do you notice about their ability to communicate?
  - o What do you notice about their ability to listen?
  - o What do you notice about their response to inappropriate social pressure?
  - o What do you notice about their response to conflict?
  - o What do you notice about their social engagement?
  - o What do you notice about their relationship building?
  - o What do you notice about their cooperation with others?
- What do you notice about your pupils' decision making?
  - o What do you notice about their ability to identifying problems?
  - o What do you notice about their ability to analyse situations based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms?
  - o What do you notice about their ability to solve problems?

- (Probe for examples if necessary, in all of the above)

- Like what?

- Can you give me an example of when you saw that happen?

- If a change identified

    - What would have happened before?

    - What's different now?

- Do you feel that your pupils had the opportunity to practice the skills they learned?

    - During the session?

    - In Class?

    - During free time?

    - Any other time?

    - Was it linked to any other subjects/parts of the curriculum?

- What did you think of the training provided?

    - Was it adequate?

    - Are there any changes you would make to it?

    - What were the most useful aspects of it?

    - What was the least useful aspect of it?

    - How does it compare to other training you have received?

    - Was it worthwhile?

- Do you feel there was enough support provided?

    - Did you feel supported by NEPS?

    - Did you feel supported by your school?

- Principal

- Other teachers

- Would you have felt comfortable contacting your NEPS psychologist if you had a problem with it? Why/why not?

Appendix G: Pupil Focus Group Guide

- What did you think of Get Up! Stand Up!?

    - Did you like it?

    - What was your favourite bit?

    - What bits didn't you like?

    - Are there any bits you'd change?

- What did you learn?

    o Is there anything you noticed about yourself after taking part on Get

      Up! Stand Up!?

    o Is there anything you'd do differently now or is it the same as before?

    - self-awareness

                o Did you learn about emotions?

                o **If yes-** what did you learn?

                o Do you think you know what your strengths are

                   (what you're good at)?

                o How do you feel about

                      - Yourself?

                      - Going to secondary school

                      - Meeting new people

                      - Making friends

    - self-management

                o What are you like at getting organised for

                   yourself?

- What would you do if you were stressed or worried about something?
- Do you set targets for yourself?
  - Personal (in your own life outside of school)
  - Academic (in your schoolwork)
  - **Probe-**Did you always do this? **If no-** Why do you do it now?
- What do you do if something is hard to do? (Use examples from targets set)

- social awareness
  - What would you do if someone was upset because of something that had happened?
  - What would you think if you met someone who was different from you and your friends?
    - From a different country
    - If they were a boy/girl
    - If they lived in a different type of home to you
  - **Probe-**would you always have done this? **If no-** what would you have done before?

- relationship skills
  - What do you know about relationships/friendships?

- - - **Probe-**Did you always know this? **If no-** Why do you know more now?
    - What would you do if someone asked you to do something you didn't want to do?
    - What if all your friends were doing it but you didn't want to?
    - What would you do if you had a disagreement with somebody?
    - What do you know about teamwork?
  - responsible decision making
    - What happens if there's a problem? Or if something isn't working out?
    - How do you know if there's a problem?
    - How do you decide what to do?
    - What do you do after?
- Did you use any of the things you learned from this group?
  - Practice in the group?
  - In class
  - In school
  - Yard/lunch/free time
  - At home?
  - Ask for examples
- General Probes
  - What does everyone else think?
  - Does anyone think something different?

What is the project about?

This study's aim is to evaluate the "Get Up! Stand Up!" (Version 2) social skills intervention programme. "Get Up! Stand Up!" (Version 2) is a social skills programme that was developed by psychologists from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS). It is aimed at students who are moving from primary school to secondary school. It is a free, seven-week programme that the teachers in your school received training in and subsequently facilitated.

Why is it being undertaken?

The objective of the study is to evaluate the "Get Up! Stand Up!" (Version 2) social skills intervention in the context of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) framework for social and emotional interventions. This framework has identified specific components, which are necessary for a social skills intervention to be considered high quality and effective. The evaluation of the "Get Up! Stand Up!" (Version 2) programme in this context will provide valuable information regarding the standard of the intervention in comparison with recognised high-quality interventions. This information can inform the future development of the intervention to ensure that Irish school children receive the highest quality form of social skills intervention.

Who is undertaking it?

My name is Billy O'Meara and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist attending Mary Immaculate College. I am currently on professional placement with the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and completing a doctoral thesis under the supervision of Dr Fionnuala Tynan.

Exactly what is involved for the participant (time, location, etc.)

The study will involve an interview with the staff, the teacher who facilitated "Get Up! Stand Up!" and the principal. The interviews will be about the staff's experience of the intervention and what was covered in it. The interview should take between 30 and 60 minutes. The interview can take place in your school, with your permission; so that the staff member will not be required to travel, or any other place that is convenient for them.

Right to withdraw

The anonymity of the staff and your school is assured. The staff is free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without consequence. Taking part or not taking part in the research will not have any impact on your school's access to your NEPS psychologist.

How will the information be used/disseminated?
With the staff member's permission, the interview would be recorded on a digital device. The data from the interview would then be transcribed. The data from the interview will be combined with that of the other participants in this study and used to form the results section of my thesis. The recorded interview will be deleted from the digital recorder on the day of the interview and transferred to a secure flash drive which only the researcher will have access to.

How will confidentiality be kept?
All information gathered will remain confidential. Participants' names and any other identifying features (e.g. school name) will not be used in the write up of this study. Pseudonyms will be used in their place. The anonymised data will only be seen by the researcher and their supervisor. All data will be stored securely.

What will happen to the data after research has been completed?
In accordance with the MIC Record Retention Schedule, all research data will be stored for the duration of the project plus three years.

Contact details:
If at any time you have any queries/issues regarding this study my contact details are as follows:

Researcher:	**Supervisor:**
Billy O'Meara	Dr. Fionnuala Tynan
XXXXXX@XXX	XXXXXX@XXX

If you have concerns about this study, you may contact:
Dr Therese Brophy (DECPsy Programme Leader)
Mary Immaculate College
South Circular Road
Limerick
Email: XXXXXX@XXX
Phone: XXXXXX

What is the project about?

This study's aim is to evaluate the "Get Up! Stand Up!" (Version 2) social skills intervention programme. "Get Up! Stand Up!" (Version 2) is a social skills programme that was developed by psychologists from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS). It is aimed at students who are moving from primary school to secondary school. It is a free, seven-week programme that the teachers in your school received training in and subsequently facilitated.

Why is it being undertaken?

The objective of the study is to evaluate the "Get Up! Stand Up!" (Version 2) social skills intervention in the context of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) framework for social and emotional interventions. This framework has identified specific components, which are necessary for a social skills intervention to be considered high quality and effective. The evaluation of the "Get Up! Stand Up!" (Version 2) programme in this context will provide valuable information regarding the standard of the intervention in comparison with recognised high-quality interventions. This information can inform the future development of the intervention to ensure that Irish school children receive the highest quality form of social skills intervention.

Who is undertaking it?

My name is Billy O'Meara and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist attending Mary Immaculate College. I am currently on professional placement with the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and completing a doctoral thesis under the supervision of Dr Fionnuala Tynan.

Exactly what is involved for the participant (time, location, etc.)

The study will involve an interview with the staff, the teacher who facilitated "Get Up! Stand Up!" and the principal. The interviews will be about the staff's experience of the intervention and what was covered in it. The interview should take between 30 and 60 minutes. The interview can take place in your school, with your permission; so that the staff member will not be required to travel, or any other place that is convenient for them.

The final part of the evaluation will involve a focus group with some of the students who took part in the "Get Up! Stand Up!" programme. A focus group is a small group (between 6-10 people) where the participants talk about what they thought of "Get Up! Stand Up!" and what they learned from it. The focus group will take place in your school, with your permission, and should take less than 30 minutes to complete.

EVALUATION OF GET UP! STAND UP! (VERSION 2)

Right to withdraw

The anonymity of the pupils, the staff, and your school are assured. Both the staff and pupils are free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without consequence. Taking part or not taking part in the research will not have any impact on your school's access to your NEPS psychologist.

How will the information be used/disseminated?

With the permission of the relevant staff, the pupils and their parent/guardians, the interviews and focus group would be recorded on a digital device. The data from both the interview and focus group would then be transcribed. This data will be combined with that of the other participants in this study and used to form the results section of my thesis. The recorded interview and focus group will be deleted from the digital recorder on the day of the interview and transferred to a secure flash drive which only the researcher will have access to.

How will confidentiality be kept?

All information gathered will remain confidential. Participants' names and any other identifying features (e.g. school name) will not be used in the write up of this study. Pseudonyms will be used in their place. The anonymised data will only be seen by the researcher and their supervisor. All data will be stored securely.

What will happen to the data after research has been completed?

In accordance with the MIC Record Retention Schedule, all research data will be stored for the duration of the project plus three years.

Contact details:

If at any time you have any queries/issues regarding this study my contact details are as follows:

Researcher:	**Supervisor:**
Billy O'Meara	Dr. Fionnuala Tynan
XXXXXX@XXX	XXXXXX@XXX

If you have concerns about this study, you may contact:
Dr Therese Brophy (DECPsy Programme Leader)
Mary Immaculate College
South Circular Road
Limerick
Email: XXXXXX@XXX
Phone: XXXXXX

Evaluation Study of the Get Up! Stand Up! (Version 2) Social Skills Intervention

Participant Information Sheet

What is the project about?

This study's aim is to evaluate the "Get Up! Stand Up!" (Version 2) social skills intervention programme. "Get Up! Stand Up!" (Version 2) is a social skills programme that was developed by psychologists from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS). It is aimed at students who are moving from primary school to secondary school. It is a free, seven-week programme that the teachers in your child's school received training in and subsequently facilitated in your child's class.

Why is it being undertaken?

The objective of the study is to evaluate the "Get Up! Stand Up!" (Version 2) social skills intervention in the context of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) framework for social and emotional interventions. This framework has identified specific components, which are necessary for a social skills intervention to be considered high quality and effective. The evaluation of the "Get Up! Stand Up!" (Version 2) programme in this context will provide valuable information regarding the standard of the intervention in comparison with recognised high-quality interventions. This information can inform the future development of the intervention to ensure that Irish school children receive the highest quality form of social skills intervention.

Who is undertaking it?

My name is Billy O'Meara and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist attending Mary Immaculate College. I am currently on professional placement with the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and completing a doctoral thesis under the supervision of Dr Fionnuala Tynan.

Exactly what is involved for the participant (time, location, etc.)

As part of the evaluation, a focus group will be conducted with some of the pupils who took part in the "Get Up! Stand Up!" programme. A focus group is a small group (between 6-10 people) where the participants talk about what they thought of "Get Up! Stand Up!" and what they learned from it. The focus group will take place at your child's school and should take less than 30 minutes to complete.

Right to withdraw

You and your child's anonymity are assured, and your child is free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without consequence. To withdraw from the study please contact the researcher or their supervisor using the details supplied on this sheet.

How will the information be used/disseminated?

With your permission and your child's permission, the focus group would be recorded on a digital device. The data from the focus group would then be transcribed. This data will be combined with that of the other participants in this study and used to form the results section of my thesis. The recorded focus group will be deleted from the digital recorder on the day of the interview and transferred to a secure flash drive which only the researcher will have access to.

How will confidentiality be kept?

All information gathered will remain confidential. Participants' names and any other identifying features (e.g. school name) will not be used in the write up of this study. Pseudonyms will be used in their place. The anonymised data will only be seen by the researcher and their supervisor. All data will be stored securely.

What will happen to the data after research has been completed?

In accordance with the MIC Record Retention Schedule, all research data will be stored for the duration of the project plus three years.

Contact details:

If at any time you have any queries/issues regarding this study my contact details are as follows:

Researcher:	**Supervisor:**
Billy O'Meara	Dr. Fionnuala Tynan
XXXXXX@XXX	XXXXXX@XXX

If you have concerns about this study, you may contact:
Dr Therese Brophy (DECPsy Programme Leader)
Mary Immaculate College
South Circular Road
Limerick
Email: XXXXXX@XXX
Phone: XXXXXX

Appendix K: Parent Informed Consent Form Pupil Focus Group

Evaluation Study of the Get Up! Stand Up! (Version 2) Social Skills Intervention

Informed Consent Form

(Please tick boxes to indicate that you agree)

- I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet.

- I understand what the research is about.

- I know that my child's participation is voluntary and that my child can withdraw from the project at any stage without giving any reason and without consequence.

- I agree to have my child's focus group audio recorded.

- I am aware that my child's input will be kept confidential.

- I have read this form completely and am happy for my child to take part in this study.

Parent's/Guardian's Name: _____

Child's Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix L: Pupil Information Sheet

"Get Up! Stand Up!" Study

Pupils' Information Sheet

My name is Billy O'Meara. I'm a student from Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. I'm doing some research on the "Get Up! Stand Up!" lessons, which your teachers are doing with you. This form is called an information sheet and will explain what my research is about. After reading this you can decide if you want to be part of my research or not.

I want to see if these lessons are helpful for children in 6th class. So, if you agree to help with this, I would like you to be part of a focus group. A focus group is when a small group of people comes together to answer some questions as a group. Don't worry, there are no right or wrong answers. I just want to know what you thought of "Get Up! Stand Up!" and what you did in it. The focus group will be with some other children from your class who also took part in "Get Up! Stand Up!" and me. This group will take place in your school and take no longer than 30 minutes.

Everyone in the group will be allowed to answer the questions and share their own opinions. It is important that you do not talk about what other people say in the group outside of the group. I will keep what was said in the group private unless something is said that suggests you or someone else might get hurt, or if there is a crime reported. What is said in the group will be audio recorded (just your voices). This will then be written up as part of my study for college. Your name will not be used but what you say will be put together with what other children from different schools say about "Get Up! Stand Up!" This will help us to decide if this is a good programme to use for other children in 6th class in the future.

If you decide that you don't want to be part of the group that's okay too. You will be taking part in "Get Up! Stand Up!" with your class regardless. You can leave the group at any time, even after we have started, you can just tell me or your teacher.

If you have any worries you can talk to your teacher or parents about this and they can contact me with your questions.

Informed Consent Form

(Put a tick √ beside the points you agree with and put an X beside the points you do not agree with)

- I have read and understood the student information sheet. ⬜

- I understand what the study is about. ⬜

- I know that I have a choice about taking part in this study. I can decide not to take part in the focus group without giving any reason. ⬜

- I agree to have the focus group audio recorded. ⬜

- This form has been explained to me and I am happy to take part in this study. ⬜

Name: _____

Date: _____

Appendix N: Teacher Information Sheet
Evaluation Study of the Get Up! Stand Up!
(Version 2) Social Skills Intervention

Participant Information Sheet

What is the project about?

This study's aim is to evaluate the "Get Up! Stand Up!" (Version 2) social skills intervention programme.

Who is undertaking it?

My name is Billy O'Meara and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist attending Mary Immaculate College. I am currently on professional placement with the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and completing a doctoral thesis under the supervision of Dr Fionnuala Tynan.

Why is it being undertaken?

The objective of the study is to evaluate the "Get Up! Stand Up!" (Version 2) social skills intervention in the context of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) framework for social and emotional interventions. This framework has identified specific components, which are necessary for a social skills intervention to be considered high quality and effective. The evaluation of the "Get Up! Stand Up!" (Version 2) programme in this context will provide valuable information regarding the standard of the intervention in comparison with recognised high-quality interventions. This information can inform the future development of the intervention to ensure that Irish school children receive the highest quality form of social skills intervention.

Exactly what is involved for the participant (time, location, etc.)

The study will involve participation in an interview with the researcher (Billy O'Meara) about the implementation of the "Get Up! Stand Up!" (Version 2) intervention in your school. The interview should take between 30 and 60 minutes. The interview can take place in your school, with your permission; so that you will not be required to travel, or any other place that is convenient for you.

Right to withdraw

Your anonymity is assured, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without consequence. To withdraw from the study

please contact the researcher or their supervisor using the details supplied on this sheet.

How will the information be used/disseminated?

With your permission, the interview would be recorded on a digital device. The data from your interview would then be transcribed. The data from your interview will be combined with that of the other participants in this study and used to form the results section of my thesis. The recorded interview will be deleted from the digital recorder on the day of the interview and transferred to a secure flash drive which only the researcher will have access to.

How will confidentiality be kept?

All information gathered will remain confidential. Participants' names and any other identifying features (e.g. school name) will not be used in the write up of this study. Pseudonyms will be used in their place. The anonymised data will only be seen by the researcher and their supervisor. All data will be stored securely.

What will happen to the data after research has been completed?

In accordance with the MIC Record Retention Schedule, all research data will be stored for the duration of the project plus three years.

Contact details:
If at any time you have any queries/issues regarding this study my contact details are as follows:

Researcher:	**Supervisor:**
Billy O'Meara	Dr. Fionnuala Tynan
XXXXXX@XXX	XXXXXX@XXX

If you have concerns about this study, you may contact:
Dr Therese Brophy (DECPsy Programme Leader)
Mary Immaculate College
South Circular Road
Limerick
Email: XXXXXX@XXX
Phone: XXXXXX

Appendix O: Teacher Informed Consent Form

**Evaluation Study of the Get Up! Stand Up!
(Version 2) Social Skills Intervention**

Informed Consent Form

(Please tick boxes to indicate that you agree)

- I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet.

- I understand what the research is about.

- I know that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the project at any stage without giving any reason and without consequence.

- I agree to have my interview audio recorded.

- I am aware that my results will be kept confidential.

- I have read this form completely and am happy to take part in this study.

Signed: _____   Date: _____

Appendix P: Ethical Application Form Mary Immaculate College

[MIC logo] MARY IMMACULATE COLLEGE COLÁISTE MHUIRE GAN SMÁL	Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology Research Ethics Committee
	DECPSY Ethics Application Form

Instructions:

1. *Complete all relevant sections of this form. The information provided must be comprehendible to non-experts.*

2. *Attach a copy of all relevant documentation to the application. Failure to provide the necessary documentation will delay the processing of the application.*

3. *Your research supervisor must sign Section 4 of this form.*
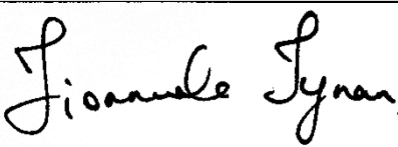
1a	Title of Research Project
An evaluation of the "Get Up! Stand Up!" (Version 2) social skills intervention.	
1b	Brief Outline (50-75 words)
"Get Up! Stand Up!" (Version 2) (GUSU2) (See Appendix A for an overview) is a social skills training programme for pupils at risk of social isolation when transitioning to a post-primary setting, developed by the National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS). This study aims to evaluate this intervention using the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) framework, which promotes evidence-based social and emotional interventions.	

2	Proposed Start Date	Month	March	Year	2018
	Anticipated Completion Date	Month	September	Year	2020

3	Applicant

EVALUATION OF GET UP! STAND UP! (VERSION 2)

a	Applicant Details			
Name:	Billy O'Meara		Student ID:	160****
E-mail:	XXXXX@micstudent.mic.ul.ie		Phone:	083 *******
b	Ethical Guidelines / Ethical Clearance from Another Source			
Are there Ethical Guidelines to which you must adhere in your field of study? If yes, please specify below:		Yes	X	No
Psychological Society of Ireland's Code of Ethics (PSI, 2011)				
Do you require Ethical Clearance from another source? If yes, please specify below:		Yes		No
National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)				

4	Supervisor
To be completed by the research supervisor.	
I hereby authorise the applicant named above to conduct this research project in accordance with the requirements of DECPSY REC 2 FORM* and I have informed the applicant of their responsibility to adhere to the recommendations and guidelines in DECPSY REC 2 Form	
*The DECPSY REC 2 will outline the decision of the ethics committee and may contain a number of recommendations pertaining to the study. This form will be emailed to both the trainee and supervisor.	

Name	Contact Details	Date	Signature
Fionnuala Tynan	fionnuala.tynan@mic.ul.ie	05/03/18	*Fionnuala Tynan*

Study Descriptors
Please mark the terms that apply to this research project with a ✓

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Healthy Adults	✓	Vulnerable Adults	
Children (< 18 yrs)	✓	Vulnerable Children (<18yrs)	✓
Physical Measurement		Psychological Measurement	
Video Recording/Photography		Voice recording	✓
Questionnaire/Interview	✓	Observational	✓
Physical Activity		Record Based	
Project is Off-Campus	✓	'Other' descriptor(s) not named here	
Please specify 'Other' descriptor(s)			

6	Project Design and Methodology
6a	Rationale, Purpose, and Benefits of Research Project (max 300 words)

Social skills are an essential aspect of life, for both children and adults. Poor social skills are associated with a variety of difficulties, including loneliness, substance use, isolation, dropping out of school and difficulties maintaining a job (Elliot & Gresham, 2008; Gajewski et al., 1998; Smith & Gilles, 2003). Early adolescence is a particularly challenging time for individuals as it coincides with changing schools, as well as developing more complex social interactions and relationships (Horner, 2000; Steinberg & Morris, 2001).

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning's (CASEL) recent reviews of social and emotional interventions for preschool (2013), primary school (2013), and secondary school (2015) identified key aspects of high quality evidence-based interventions which have been shown to have positive impacts on mental health, academic outcomes and social skills. These included: being well designed; school-based; covering the five main components which are acknowledged as crucial to social skills interventions (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making); allowing participants the opportunity to practise their new skills, and is offered over multiple years. Additionally, for interventions to meet this standard they need to offer training and support to the facilitators of the intervention and have at least one piece of research which demonstrates a positive impact on the

participants' behaviours compared to a comparison group. The interventions which meet these criteria are referred to as "SELect" (CASEL, 2015, p. 3).

While informal feedback from practising NEPS psychologists has suggested positive outcomes for the GUSU2 intervention, it is clear that more evaluation of the intervention is required in order for it to be considered to have a strong evidence base. The title "SELect" is given to social and emotional interventions which are of the highest standard. This is clearly a title that all social and emotional interventions should strive towards. Evaluating the GUSU2 intervention in terms of the "SELect" criteria would provide valuable data regarding the intervention, both in terms of its strengths and areas for possible future development.

6b (i)	Research Methodology (max 200 words)

To evaluate the GUSU2 intervention in the context of the CASEL "SELect" criteria, this study will use a variety of qualitative approaches. This will allow the researcher to explore the implementation of the intervention from the facilitating teachers' perspectives, from the school principal's perspective, from the participating pupil's perspectives and from the pupil's parent/guardian's perspective in a more open manner than a quantitative approach would allow (Bryman, 2016; Gill et al., 2008; Howitt, 2013). It also provides the pupils involved in the research with a voice, as they are they the individuals impacted directly by the intervention (Fargas-Malet et al., 2010; Morgan et al., 2002; O'Reilly & Dogra, 2016; Rice & Broome, 2004). Additionally, as concepts such as "self-awareness" and "relationship skills" are difficult to measure quantitatively, such as with questionnaires, the use of qualitative approaches may better capture these.

For an intervention to be recognised as "SELect" it also requires research that shows that there are positive outcomes on the participants' behaviours in comparison to a control group. Quantitative data is currently being collected for a research project conducted by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) as a separate piece of research to this current study. The participants in the NEPS project are the same cohort of pupils that will be invited to partake in this current research. The participant's social skills and wellbeing are being measured

both pre and post-intervention, using the Social Skills Improvement System-Rating Scales (Elliot & Gresham, 2008) and the Stirling Wellbeing Scale (Liddle & Carter, 2015) respectively. Additionally, the social skills and wellbeing of a control group are also being measured. This data can be combined with the qualitative data collected in this study to establish whether there are positive outcomes for the participants following completion of the GUSU2 intervention, as is a requirement to be considered "SELect".

| 6b(ii) | Research / Data Collection Techniques (max 200 words) |

To evaluate the various aspects of GUSU2, a selection of research/data collection techniques will be employed. This will also provide reliability in the findings as the data will be triangulated from a variety of sources (Denzin, 2012; Fusch & Ness, 2015; Stavros & Westberg, 2009).

To check the fidelity of the intervention, a number of data collection techniques will be used. This will determine whether the components required for an intervention to be considered "SELect" were covered. While ideally, the fidelity of the intervention would involve direct observation of each session, this is not possible due to the timescale and resources which would be required to do so. Hence, a variety of data collection techniques will be used which will allow for data to be collected from a variety of sources. This will allow for triangulation of the data gathered (Denzin, 2012; Fusch & Ness, 2015; Stavros & Westberg, 2009) and hence the findings can be stated with more confidence than if the data was only collected from one source. Firstly, the manual and the contents of the intervention will be examined to determine whether the aspects of the five key components for "SELect" social and emotional interventions are covered. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with the teachers who facilitated GUSU2 and the principals of schools who implemented GUSU2. Semi-structured interviews are appropriate as they allow the researcher to probe and follow up on the participants' responses as required (Bryman, 2016; Howitt, 2013). Additionally, focus groups will be used with the participating pupils as a method for establishing whether the relevant "SELect" components have been covered. Finally, observation of a number of sessions, whereby a teacher teaches a lesson from GUSU2 within a natural setting (i.e. the school), would allow the researcher to evaluate the fidelity of the programme to its recommended structure. Sessions

can be evaluated based on the checklist provided in the GUSU2 manual for each session (See Appendix B) and supplemented by aspects identified by CASEL.

Furthermore, a number of data collection techniques will be used, which will provide information regarding the outcomes of the GUSU2 intervention. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a selection of parents/guardians of pupil's who took part in GUSU2, as this will determine whether any effects of the intervention were seen at home. The focus group data, along with the data from the interviews with the teachers (as outlined above) will also provide information regarding the outcomes of the intervention. The outcome data from the teacher and parent/guardian interviews and the pupil focus groups will also complement the quantitative data on the outcome of the intervention gathered by NEPS (2018). By incorporating qualitative measures, it allows for the participants to express their in a less restricted manner than that which would be afforded to them in quantitative research (Bryman, 2016; Gill et al., 2008; Howitt, 2013; Kitzinger, 2005; Krueger & Casey, 2014).

6c	Steps taken to Minimise Risk

All participants (teachers, principals, pupils, and parents/guardians) will be provided with information sheets and informed consent forms prior to taking part in the research (See Appendix F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, and N). Additionally, information sheets will be provided for each school's board of management (See Appendix O, P, Q, and R). As the pupils who participated in the GUSU2 intervention are all under 18, their parents/guardians will also be sent information sheets and informed consent forms prior to their child partaking in the research (See Appendix K, L, S, and T). The information sheets and consent forms will be presented in an accessible and appropriate manner to ensure that it is understood by all relevant parties (Rice & Broome, 2004; Rice et al., 2007).

It will be made clear to all participants that their participation in the research is voluntary and that they have the right to withdraw from the research at any stage, without any repercussions to themselves from the researcher, their teacher (where relevant), their parents/guardians (where relevant), and NEPS (where relevant). For the pupil participants, it will be made clear to them that the

researcher is not a teacher, as this could impact on the power imbalance as pupils feel pressure to respond (Fargas-Malet et al., 2010; Morgan et al., 2002).

Contact details of the researcher, their supervisor, and the DECPsy course leader will be provided to all participants in case they have any queries or concerns relating to the research.

Focus groups will be used with the pupils who participated in the GUSU2 intervention rather than individual interviews as focus groups tend to be less "threatening" to the participants (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009, p. 2). The focus groups will be kept relatively short (maximum 30minutes) as recommended by the research, to accommodate the attention span of children that age (Khadka et al., 2008; Large & Beheshti, 2001). This will ensure that the participants are not overexerted.

The focus groups will be run in the same groups that the pupils were in during the intervention. GUSU2 recommends that the intervention group contains between 6-10 individuals, and similarly, research on focus groups suggests that groups ideally contain between 6-12 participants (Bryman, 2016; Gill et al., 2008; Large & Beheshti, 2001; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). As the pupils will have been in this group over a course of seven weeks previously, this should ensure that they are comfortable in this setting (Large & Beheshti, 2001) and with each other (Horner, 2000; Khadka et al., 2008; Large & Beheshti, 2001). Horner (2000) suggests that having young adolescents who know each other together in the focus group also reduces the power imbalance that can exist, as there is less pressure on each individual to respond. It is also recommended that focus groups involving children should only include children who are a similar age, within two years of each other, to ensure that older children do not dominate the group and that the children are at similar developmental stages (F. Gibson, 2007; Large & Beheshti, 2001). However, as all the participating pupils are in 6th class this should not be an issue. The language used in the questions in the focus groups will be child-friendly and targeted at an appropriate developmental level for the participants (Khadka et al., 2008; O'Reilly & Dogra, 2016). The researcher will also be aware that there may be vulnerable pupils within the group, as it is aimed at pupils who are at risk of social isolation. Hence a "talking object", such as the one used in "Circle Time"

(Mosley, 2005) will be used to ensure that all pupils get a chance to speak and that no pupil is left out.

As the participants are under 18, the door to the room where the focus group is taking place will be left open and another adult (a staff member in the school) will be asked to "check in" on the progress of the group as frequently as they would like. This will ensure that the participants' can respond without the presence of a teacher listening directly to their comments, which may impact on the way they respond. The researcher will also ensure that they comply with each school's child protection policy.

Confidentiality cannot be assured in a focus group, as the researcher cannot guarantee that all members of the focus group will keep the information shared confidential (Bryman, 2016). Hence, a number of group rules will be explained to the participants at the beginning of the focus group. This will explicitly state that what is said by other participants in the group should not be discussed outside of the group, once the group is completed. The participants will be assured that the researcher will not be disclosing anything that they have said to their parent/guardians or teachers unless there are disclosures regarding child protection issues, harm to themselves or others, or intent to commit a crime. This will be made clear to the participants in their informed consent forms, their parent/guardians' informed consent forms and again at the beginning of the focus group (F. Gibson, 2007; PSI, 2011). The pupil participants will be given the option of withdrawing from the study again at this stage, without any consequences. If they have any concerns or questions once the group is completed they can contact their teacher or parent/guardian who can contact the researcher.

If a pupil becomes upset during the course of the focus group, they will be given the option of stopping. Additionally, they will be escorted back to their class teacher. The researcher will ensure that they inform the class teacher of the pupil's situation. The researcher will check in with all relevant people, i.e. their class teacher, the school principal, their support teacher (if appropriate and relevant), their Special Needs Assistant (if appropriate and relevant), before leaving the school to ensure that the pupil has recovered. If required the researcher can speak to the pupil themselves and contact their parents/guardians.

The researcher will ensure that when observing a session of GUSU2 that the teacher will know that the sole focus of the observation is to evaluate the aspects of intervention rather than their teaching.

| 6d | Location(s) of Project |

As the GUSU2 programme will be conducted in individual schools, the interviews with the teachers and principals will be conducted in their own school. This is to facilitate the participants to take part in the study. A selection of teachers in schools which are currently implementing the GUSU2 programme will be invited to take part in the research (see below for more detail regarding the selection of participants).

Similarly, the focus groups with the participating pupils will be conducted within their own school. This is also to facilitate the participants, and their parents/guardians (Rice et al., 2007). It also ensures that they are in a more familiar setting that they are comfortable with, rather than in a clinic setting which may be viewed as a power imbalance by the pupils (F. Gibson, 2007; Large & Beheshti, 2001). Where possible the focus groups will be conducted in a room other than their regular classroom, such as a resource room or art room, so that the participants won't feel pressure to give the right answers as they may do in a formal classroom setting and view the researcher as a teacher (Fargas-Malet et al., 2010).

| 6e | Questionnaires and Interview/Survey Questions |

The teachers who facilitated and delivered the GUSU2 intervention and the principals of schools where GUSU2 took place will be interviewed upon competition of the intervention (See Appendix C for the interview schedule). Parents/guardians of children who took part in the GUSU2 intervention will also be interviewed for their perspective of GUSU2 and the impact it had on their child (See Appendix D for interview schedule). A semi-structured interview approach will be used in this study, as it will allow the participants to express their views (Bryman, 2016; Mertons, 2005). This will allow a list of questions/ topics to be identified beforehand (Bryman, 2016; Gill et al., 2008) while also allowing for additional questions and probes to be followed up with (Bryman, 2016; Gill et al., 2008; Howitt, 2013).

A selection of pupils who completed the intervention will take part in a focus group (See Appendix E for focus group schedule). This will also use a semi-structured approach (Bryman, 2016; Gill et al., 2008; Howitt, 2013) as it allows for questions to be asked in a manner that matches the level of the participants (O'Reilly & Dogra, 2016).

7	Participants
7a	How will potential research participants be identified and selected?

24 schools from an area in Cork, with a variety of school types (i.e. rural, urban, large, small, all boys, all girls and mixed gender pupils) received training on GUSU2 from NEPS psychologists, in February 2018. The GUSU2 intervention will be facilitated by teachers prior to completion of the academic year, as the intervention is aimed at school children in 6th class who will be transitioning to post-primary school.

A number of schools will be selected to take part in the research using purposive sampling (Bryman, 2016; Gill et al., 2008; Guest et al., 2006; Howitt, 2013). These schools will be selected in order to ensure that the schools will represent a variety of types (i.e. rural, urban, large, small, mixed gender, all boys) rather than randomly selecting the schools. The teachers and principals in these schools will be invited to take part in the evaluative research, in the form of interviews (See Appendix U). A parent/guardian from each of these schools will also be invited to take part in the research (See Appendix Y).

Additionally, a smaller number of schools (and teachers) will be invited to partake in the observational aspect of the study (See Appendix V and W).

A small number of schools will also be contacted about their pupils taking part in a focus group (See Appendix W and X) (Rice et al., 2007). Once the school gives permission for this to occur, the parents/guardians of the pupils will be sent an information sheet and informed consent form (See Appendix K, L, S, and T) to allow their child take part in the research (O'Reilly & Dogra, 2016; Rice et al., 2007). Finally, the pupils who have received parental consent to take part in the focus groups will receive an information sheet and informed consent form regarding taking part in the focus group (See Appendix M and N) (O'Reilly &

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Dogra, 2016; Rice et al., 2007). Where possible, the focus groups will consist of the same groups that the pupils were in during the intervention (additional reasons outlined previously). As the GUSU2 intervention recommends that the groups contain pupils with a mix of abilities (to ensure that appropriate models for social skills are available), this should also ensure that the participants in the focus groups are relatively heterogeneous, as it is not possible to randomly select participants for the focus groups. If it is not possible for pupils to form the focus groups based on the intervention group they were part of, the focus group members will be selected randomly from the pupils who have consented to partake. There is a mixed consensus regarding the composition of groups in terms of gender (F. Gibson, 2007; Large & Beheshti, 2001). Due to the size of some schools and the natural mix that is involved in their intervention groups in this study, the focus groups will not be divided based on gender.

7b	How many participants will be recruited?

The GUSU2 intervention recommends that at least two members of staff implement the intervention. A letter will be sent to 15 participating schools, who will be purposively selected, inviting both the teacher who facilitated the GUSU2 and the principal of the school (there may be an overlap in smaller schools) to take part in the research. If not all schools agree to take part in the research, the remaining schools can be contacted to take part in the research, as required. It is anticipated that up to 30 interviews will be conducted. This is the maximum amount of interviews that can be conducted by the researcher in the time frame. The teacher and principal will be interviewed individually, as it may not be possible to interview both in all cases due to staffing.

As there may be upwards of 400 pupils partaking in GUSU2, it is not feasible to interview all their parents/guardians. Two parents/guardians from eight participating schools will be invited to partake in the research. It is anticipated that up to 16 parents/guardians will be interviewed. Similarly, this is the maximum amount of interviews that can be conducted by the researcher in the time frame. The parent/guardians will be interviewed separately to facilitate the organisation of interviews.

Observation of three different sessions of GUSU2 will allow the researcher to evaluate a random selection of sessions. This will involve observing sessions

facilitated by six teachers, as GUSU2 requires two members of staff to be involved. Due to the relatively short timeframe of the intervention (7 weeks), additional responsibilities of the researcher (i.e. professional placement with NEPS), and the recommendation to teachers that GUSU2 is run at the same time every week (to emphasise its importance to the pupils), it is not possible to observe more sessions.

GUSU2 recommends that the intervention group contain 6-10 individuals, and similarly, research on focus groups suggests that groups ideally contain between 6-12 participants (Bryman, 2016; Gill et al., 2008; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). However, focus groups that involve children suggest that 10 is the maximum size a focus group should be as otherwise all the children may not participate fully (F. Gibson, 2007). Four schools will be approached regarding focus groups with their pupils (Large & Beheshti, 2001). Ideally, there will be between 24 and 40 pupils involved in the focus groups.

7c	Will participants be reimbursed for taking part in this research project? If YES, please attach the details to this application.	Yes		No	X
7d	Will incentives/inducements be provided to participants for taking part in this research project? If YES, please attach the details to this application.	Yes		No	X
7e	Will Recruitment Letters/Advertisements/e-mails, etc. be used to recruit participants? If YES, please attach the details to this application.	Yes	X	No	

Confidentiality of collected data and completed forms (e.g. informed consent)
8a   What measures will be taken to ensure confidentiality of collected data?
The data from the interviews and focus groups will be transcribed by the researcher only, and the participants' names will be anonymised. Pseudonyms will

be used in their stead. The names of any school involved will not be included. The interviews and focus groups will be recorded using a digital recorder. These recording will be transferred to a fingerprint protected flash drive on the day of recording and deleted from the digital recorder to ensure confidentiality of data.

8b	Where and how will the data be stored/retrieved?

All hard data (informed consent forms, observation checklists, and any written notes) will be stored in a secure filing cabinet in the researcher's office in their home. All soft data (i.e. audio files from the interviews and focus groups, and transcribed data) will be stored on a fingerprint protected flash drive.

8c	Who will have custody of, and access to, the data?

The researcher will have primary custody of the data. However, data will be accessible to the primary researcher (Billy O'Meara), their supervisor (Dr Fionnuala Tynan) and the course leader of the Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology (Dr Therese Brophy).

8d	For how long will the data from the research project be stored? (Please justify)

In accordance with the MIC Record Retention Schedule guidelines (Mary Immaculate College, 2018) data will be stored for the following:

Research Records (i.e. voice recordings of interviews and focus groups, transcribed interviews and informed consent forms): Duration of project + 3 years (data will be destroyed following the completion of this timeline)

Research data & findings: Indefinitely

Research notes (general): Indefinitely

9	Information Documents

Indicate which of the following information documents are applicable to your Research Project by ticking either Yes or No in the checklist below. Attach a copy of each applicable information document to the application.

Applicable Please ✓

Documents	Yes	No
Participant Information Sheet	✓	
Parent/Responsible Other Information Sheet	✓	
Participant Informed Consent Form/Assent Form	✓	
Parent/Responsible Other Informed Consent Form	✓	

EVALUATION OF GET UP! STAND UP! (VERSION 2)
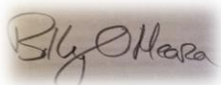
Questionnaires, Interview Schedules (or sample)	✓	

10	Declaration

The information in this application form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief, and I take full responsibility for it. I undertake to abide by the ethical principles outlined in the DECPsy Research Ethics Guidelines. If the research project is approved, I undertake to adhere to the study protocol without unagreed deviation and to comply with any conditions sent out in the letter sent by the DECPsy REC Committee notifying me of this. I undertake to inform the DECPsy REC of any changes in the protocol. I accept without reservation that it is my responsibility to ensure the implementation of the guidance as outlined in DECPsy REC 2 Form

Name (Print) Billy O'Meara

Signature   _Billy O'Meara_   Date: 6/3/18

Appendix Q: Overview of GUSU2 sessions

Session Title	Aim of each session- as presented in GUSU2 manual (NEPS, 2017)
Session 1: Introduction	• To develop appropriate social interaction skills of each student according to his/her own capability. • Practise techniques such as role play, goal setting, problem-solving, modelling, and rehearsal both within the social skills group and generalising to everyday situations.
Session 2: Knowing myself and getting to know others	• To help us to realise our strengths and achievements. • To identify positive characteristics in other people.
Session 3: Friendship	• To support us in making friends and being a better friend.
Session 4: Dealing with feelings-mine and others	• To help us identify our feelings • To help us to manage anger
Session 5: Dealing with teasing and intimidation	• To sensitively share views/experiences of teasing and intimidation. • To learn ways of coping with teasing and intimidation using a variety of techniques. • To become aware of how we can support and nurture our own resilience.
Session 6: Learning to solve problems and make decisions	• To help students deal with pressure from others to do things that they don't want to do. • To think about the different ways in which the students can solve problems. • To help students make appropriate decisions about what they will do or say.
Session 7: Resilience and coping	• To learn ways of coping and being resilient in difficult social situations.

EVALUATION OF GET UP! STAND UP! (VERSION 2)

- To become aware of how we can support and nurture our own confidence and resilience by becoming aware of our own strengths.

Appendix R: Empirical Paper for Dissemination

Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

Empirical Paper

Get Up! Stand Up! (Version 2): The impact of a school-based programme on 6th class pupils' social and emotional skills

Billy O'Meara

Supervisor: Dr Fionnuala Tynan

EVALUATION OF GET UP! STAND UP! (VERSION 2)

Abstract

Background: Social and emotional (SE) skills play an important role in a person's development, while a range of negative outcomes are associated with poor SE skills (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2013; 2015; Gresham & Elliott, 2008). The targeting of these skills in school-based programmes can produce positive outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011). Get Up! Stand Up! (Version 2) (GUSU2) (National Educational Psychological Service, 2017) is a programme currently in use in Irish schools. However, to date, no substantial evaluation of GUSU2 has been conducted. The CASEL framework for such school-based programmes identifies several essential elements which high-quality SE skill programmes must include. Programmes which meet these standards are noted to be associated with a range of positive outcomes for participants. One essential element is that programmes must demonstrate a positive impact on the participants' behaviours compared to a comparison group.

Aim: This study considers the impact of GUSU2 on participants' SE skills compared to participants in a business-as-usual control group.

Method: Data collected by the school psychology service, using the Social Skills Improvement System-Rating Scales (SSIS-RS) (Gresham & Elliott, 2008), was analysed using a mixed between-within subjects' analysis of variance to determine the impact of participating in GUSU2 compared to a business-as-usual control group. Additional post-hoc t-tests were conducted to identify any significant differences that existed between the groups and within the groups both before and after the intervention period. Analyses were conducted on all the subscales, in addition to the total standard score, within the SSIS-RS. Data included pre- and post-intervention measures of SE skills from 225 pupils in 14 schools, including three control schools consisting of 68 pupils. In addition to the full study sample, a lower ability cohort ($n = 37$) were identified based on their scores at pre-intervention. Their data were analysed using the same method.

Results: There was a statistically significant increase in participants' total standard scores in both the GUSU2 and business-as-usual groups for both the full study and lower ability samples. There was no significant interaction effect identified, suggesting that GUSU2 is as effective as the business-as-usual approach.

Discussion: Several implications from this evaluation are discussed, including possible confounding factors, programme fidelity and the collection of appropriate data. Suggestions for further research and programme developers are also made.

Introduction

Social and Emotional (SE) skills are an essential aspect of life, for both children and adults. Poor SE skills are associated with a variety of difficulties, including isolation, substance use, early school dropout and difficulties maintaining a job (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2013; 2015; Gajewski et al., 1998; Gresham & Elliott, 2008; Parker & Asher, 1987; Smith & Gilles, 2003). A poor ability to interact with others may negatively impact on one's likelihood of achieving success, both in school and in employment (Cefai et al., 2018; Chernyshenko et al., 2018; D. Jones et al., 2015; Smith & Gilles, 2003). Precipitating factors such as culture, parents' behaviour and socioeconomic status are noted to have an impact on the development of such skills (Cefai et al., 2018; Cordier et al., 2015). While there are children who benefit from support, many children develop SE skills without the need for direct intervention from adults (Guivarch et al., 2017). Lack of support can result in distress in pupils which may ultimately lead to difficulties such as school refusal, dropout and under-achievement (CASEL, 2013; 2015; Coyle & Malecki, 2018; Durlak et al., 2011).

There is not an agreed-upon definition of SE skills (Humphrey et al., 2011), however, several key areas associated with well-developed SE skills have been identified, including problem solving, conflict resolution, demonstration of empathy for others and management of one's emotions when interacting with others (CASEL, 2013, 2015; Cefai et al., 2018; Durlak et al., 2011; S. Jones & Doolittle, 2017; O'Conner et al., 2017). CASEL (2013, 2015) identified five specific competencies that are essential for the development of SE skills, namely; self-awareness; self-management; social awareness; relationship skills; and responsible decision-making. Such a definition incorporates both interpersonal skills, i.e. social awareness and

relationship skills, and intrapersonal skills, i.e. self-awareness and self-management (Cefai et al., 2018). However, for an individual to be considered socially competent, they must demonstrate a proficiency across the spectrum of SE skills (Garner et al., 2014; Nathanson et al., 2016; Spence, 2003; Stichter et al., 2012; Stichter et al., 2007).

For most children, school is where they spend a large portion of their time. The school setting can be a particularly stressful environment for some children (Coyle & Malecki, 2018), as they may be required to utilise SE skills, such as self-regulation, problem-solving and goal setting, in a variety of situations (Grusec & Hastings, 2014). These skills are important, as children are typically taught in a group setting, that generally involves interactions with several other individuals, including teachers and classmates (Coyle & Malecki, 2018; Durlak et al., 2011; Grusec & Hastings, 2014).

Schools provide an ideal setting for developing these skills (Bellini et al., 2007; Durlak et al., 2011; Grusec & Hastings, 2014), as teachers and school staff are perfectly placed to identify and encourage the development of such skills (Coyle & Malecki, 2018). The development of these skills in pupils can be supported from a young age through school-based programmes (Durlak et al., 2011; Greenberg et al., 2003; January et al., 2011; S. Jones & Doolittle, 2017; Smith & Gilles, 2003), which typically involve acquiring and developing skills, reducing behaviours that contradict the new skills and generalising these skills (Cook et al., 2008; S. Jones & Doolittle, 2017).

One of the most effective times for implementing such programmes is in early adolescence, at the end of a child's primary school career (January et al., 2011).

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This effect is likely due to an increased interest in relationships and the change in social demands that occurs as children transition into adolescence (January et al., 2011; Steinberg & Morris, 2001). This transitional period is often associated with a peak in peer victimisation (Erath et al., 2012; Wolke et al., 2001) which typically occurs between classmates (Lee et al., 2016). Social anxiety (Erath et al., 2012; Pickard et al., 2018; Spence & Rapee, 2016) and poor self-evaluation of their social abilities (Coyle & Malecki, 2018) are closely associated with this time in a child's life. Hence, the provision of support in the development of SE skills at this stage in a child's life is of the utmost of importance.

One such programme which supports the development of SE skills at the stage in a child's life is Get Up! Stand Up! (Version 2) (GUSU2) (NEPS, 2017). This programme has been specifically developed and promoted for use in Irish schools. This school-based programme is described as a "grassroots initiative" (NEPS, 2017, p. 4) designed by practising Educational Psychologists (EPs) who identified a cohort of individuals "at risk of social isolation" (NEPS, 2017, p. 4) following their transition to post-primary school, through the development of their SE skills.

GUSU2 is designed for use for pupils in the final year of primary school or their first year of post-primary school. Additionally, it is designed to be implemented by teachers, rather than by trained professionals. GUSU2 is a free, seven-week, school-based programme designed to support the development of SE skills of children in Irish schools. Teachers are required to implement the programme in a small group setting over a period of seven weeks. Each session is envisaged to last 45 minutes. A typical session consists of outlining the aims of the session, watching or listening to a story, group discussion, teacher modelling or pupil role-playing,

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identifying "top tips"/advice on the session topic and target setting. The programme includes the following topics:

- Knowing Myself and Getting to Know Others;

- Friendship;

- Dealing with Feelings- Mine and Other's;

- Dealing with Teasing and Intimidation;

- Learning to Solve Problems and Making Decisions;

- Resilience and Coping.

Limited research has been conducted on this version of GUSU2 (See NEPS, 2012a; 2015a, for research conducted on previous versions), despite it being promoted for use in Irish schools by the school psychological service. The role of an EP involves working with and supporting schools, families and children who may be presenting with a variety of concerns including social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (Passenger, 2013; Scottish Executive, 2002). This work includes the identification of appropriate interventions to support the relevant stakeholders (Cameron, 2006; Fallon et al., 2010; Frederickson, 2002; Lane & Corrie, 2007; Passenger, 2013; Scottish Executive, 2002). EPs need to be accountable for the interventions they recommend for use (Dunsmuir et al., 2009; Woolfson et al., 2003). Hence, any intervention recommended needs to meet the highest standards based on research and best practice. A crucial aspect of any intervention is that it can demonstrate a positive impact on the participants' behaviours compared to a comparison group (CASEL, 2013, 2015).

This study aims to determine the impact of GUSU2 on participants' SE skills in comparison to a business-as-usual control group, which resulted in the

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identification of two hypotheses. Firstly, it was hypothesised that there will be a statically significant increase in the participants' SE total standard scores and in the subscales of the SSIS-RS following participation in GUSU2. Additionally, it was hypothesised that there will be a significant interaction between group allocation (i.e. intervention group or control group) and time of testing (i.e. pre- and post-intervention), which would indicate that participating in GUSU2 is more effective in increasing SE skills compared to a business-as-usual control group. Both hypotheses were considered for the full study sample and for the cohort displaying lower SE skill at pre-intervention.

Method

Measure. The Social Skills Improvement System-Rating Scales (SSIS-RS) (Gresham & Elliott, 2008) The data from this scale was gathered by NEPS and used by the researcher for the purpose of this study. Research has identified the SSIS-RS as a suitable questionnaire for measuring SE skills in children (Gresham, 2017; Humphrey et al., 2011), and for assessing outcomes of SE programmes (Cordier et al., 2015; Gresham, 2017; Humphrey et al., 2016; Humphrey et al., 2011). The SSIS-RS is available in two separate age groups, (ages 8-12 and ages 13-18), which were both used in this study, dependent on the age of the participant. Each form contains the same 46 statements relating to the participants' SE skills, which participants are asked to decide "how true" each statement is for them and circle one of four options; not true; a little true; a lot true; or very true (Gresham & Elliott, 2008). The responses to these statements are collated to provide an overall score for SE skills, as well as scores for seven subscales. These subscales are identified as communication, cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, engagement and self-control. Gresham (2017) stated that the SSIS-RS provides a measure of SE skills which

overlap with four of CASEL's five SE competencies (See Figure 1 for overlap of SSIS-RS subscales and CASEL competencies).
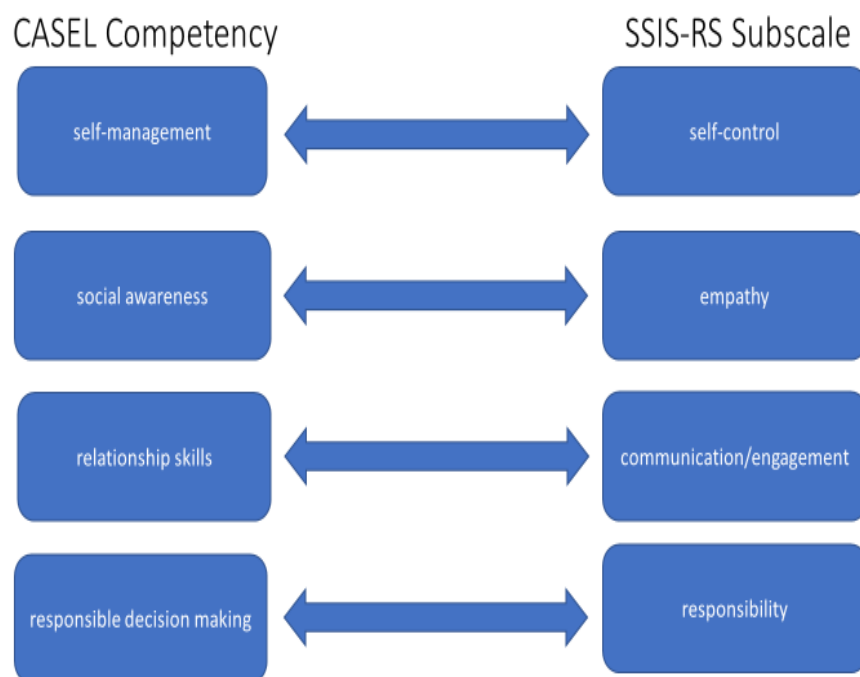
Figure 1: CASEL competencies matched to SSIS-RS subscales: Adapted from Gresham (2017)

Participants. As part of a rollout of GUSU2 to an area in the south of Ireland, 24 schools attended training, provided by the school psychology service, in February 2018. At this training, schools were invited to take part in a study to evaluate the outcomes of the GUSU2 programme as part of research being conducted by the school psychology service. This ultimately resulted in 14 schools and 225 pupils, which included a control group of three schools and 68 pupils, participating in this aspect of the study.

Procedure. This section provides an overview of the data collection procedure carried out by the school psychology service (NEPS, 2018). This overview has been verified by members of that research team.

Participation in the study involved the schools agreeing to implement the programme between specific dates in February and May, to facilitate the collection of pre- and post-data from the pupils who were partaking in the research. This also ensured that there was enough time left in the school calendar for the control schools to implement the programme. The control groups were instructed to continue with their regular teaching practice during this period. Permission to take part in the research was sought from all parents, using an "opt-out" approach to participation (i.e. parents had to explicitly state that their child would not take part in the research). Pre-intervention data were collected from the pupils over the period of one week, where a member of the research team went to each school and administered the SSIS-RS to the class group. A script was created for use with the pupils prior to them completing the questionnaires to ensure that the instructions and purpose of the research were clearly explained. No additional demographic information was collected from the pupils other than their age (in years), to ensure that they received the appropriate SSIS-RS forms and their school. A list of names and the corresponding number on their forms was taken for the purpose of ensuring that the pre- and post-responses from the participants could be compared. The questionnaires were read aloud to the class group by the member of the research team to allow for any literacy difficulties that participants may experience, and participants were provided with an opportunity to clarify the meanings of words if necessary. The collection of post-intervention data was collected using the same procedure as at pre-

intervention over a period of three weeks, as due to the time of the year it was difficult to coordinate suitable dates and times with all schools

Analysis. The quantitative data were analysed using the software; Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Version 25 (IBM SPSS 25). The data gathered from the SSIS-RS (Gresham & Elliott, 2008) at pre- and post-intervention from the pupils was analysed. A mixed between-within subjects' analysis of variance was conducted to determine the extent to which GUSU2 impacted on the intervention group's SE skills in comparison to the control group (L. Cohen et al., 2007; Pallant, 2016). Additional post-hoc t-tests were conducted to identify any significant differences that existed between the groups and within the groups following the intervention period (L. Cohen et al., 2007; Pallant, 2016). The analysis was conducted on the full group sample, while additional analysis was conducted on the cohort of participants whose standard total score at pre-intervention was at least one standard deviation below the mean.

Reliability. Reliability is considered to be the consistency with which a concept is measured (Adams & Cox, 2008; Bryman, 2016). In this sense, a measure can be considered capable of producing reliable measures if it is shown to accurately measure what it is supposed to be measuring and that the questions and/or the subscales are measuring the same concept. Alpha scores for each of the internal subtests were at least .70, indicating good internal reliability (Crosby, 2011; Gresham & Elliott, 2008). In this current study, the Cronbach alpha coefficient was .82, indicating good internal consistency (Croasmun & Ostrom, 2011; DeVellis, 2016; Pallant, 2016). An additional measure of reliability is that of test-retest reliability, or "stability" (Bryman, 2016). In this sense, good reliability would

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indicate that the measure can produce similar findings in subjects when tested over time. In the SSIS-RS, test-retest reliability is reported to be .81 for the overall score of social skills (Crosby, 2011; Gresham & Elliott, 2008).

Results

Several mixed between-within subjects' analyses of variance were conducted to determine the impact of the intervention versus a control group on all the scales of the SSIS-RS. This was completed for the whole group sample and a lower ability group sample (i.e. those whose total standard scores were at least one standard deviation below the mean at pre-intervention). Additional post-hoc t-tests were carried out, where appropriate, to determine the significance of the changes in scores. The findings from the whole group are presented initially, before outlining the findings from the lower ability group.

Full study sample. The means and standard deviations for each of the subscales and the overall standard score from the SSIS-RS at pre and post-intervention for both the intervention and control groups are shown in Table 1. A mixed between-within subjects' analysis of variance was conducted to assess the impact of participation in GUSU2 versus a control group on all the scales included in the SSIS-RS. There was a statistically significant main effect for time in a number of scales, including cooperation (Wilks Lambda $[\lambda]$= .97, F (1, 223) = 7.10, p = .008, partial eta squared $[n_p^2]$= .031), assertion (λ = .95, F (1, 222) = 11.09, p = .001, n_p^2= .047), responsibility (λ = .98, F (1, 223) = 4.51, p = .035, n_p^2= .020), self-control (λ = 1.00, F (1, 223) = 11.65, p = .001, n_p^2= .05) and standard score (λ = .93, F (1, 222) = 15.84, p > .0005, n_p^2= .067). This indicates that there was a significant increase in participants' mean scores in these scales for both groups from pre- to post-intervention.

Table 1

Mean and Standard Deviation scores SSIS-RS (full cohort)

Scale	Intervention Group n = 157		Control Group n = 68	
	Pre M (SD)	Post M (SD)	Pre M (SD)	Post M (SD)
Standard Score	97.30 (11.80) *	99.55 (12.21) *	95.49 (11.50) *	98.78 (9.77) *
Communication	13.74 (2.81)	13.94 (2.60)	13.84 (2.49)	14.13 (2.01)
Cooperation	15.31 (3.41)	15.65 (3.08)	13.88 (3.13) *	14.53 (2.64) *
Self-control	10.44 (3.57) *	11.20 (3.25) *	9.97 (3.93) *	10.74 (3.20) *
Engagement	15.20 (3.48)	15.17 (3.36)	14.96 (3.37)	14.99 (3.08)
Empathy	13.87 (2.87)	13.48 (2.74)	14.07 (2.50)	14.16 (2.24)
Responsibility	15.02 (3.24)	15.47 (3.02)	14.78 (3.15)	15.16 (2.34)
Assertion	12.30 (3.31) *	13.04 (3.10) *	12.01 (3.46) *	12.75 (2.83) *

* Statistically significant change from the pre-intervention score to post-intervention

Post hoc paired sample t-tests were conducted on the scores for each scale. This revealed that there was a statistically significant change noted in the several scales in the intervention group, namely standard score, cooperation and self-control (highlighted in Table 2). In the control group, statistically significant differences in scores were noted in the standard score, cooperation, self-control and assertion scales (highlighted in Table 2). The effect size, as denoted by *d* (Cohen's *d*), for each are also reported, suggesting that the magnitude of the difference between the means was small, based on the classification suggested by Jacob Cohen (1988) (i.e. small =

.2, medium = .5, large = .8). This suggests that the changes are likely quite subtle and hence may be difficult to capture without the use of such a measure.

There was also a statistically significant main effect for group identified for one of the scales, specifically cooperation (F (1, 223) = 9.03, p = .003, n_p^2 = .04), however, post hoc independent sample t-tests revealed that there was a significant difference between both groups at pre-intervention (t (223) = 2.95, p = .004) and at post-intervention (t (223) = 2.61, p = .010). Examination of the data revealed that the mean scores for both groups increased from pre-intervention to post-intervention, however, this change was only significant for the control group. Additionally, an examination of the data indicates that the mean score for the intervention group was significantly higher on both occasions. This suggests that the cooperation scores for the intervention group remained at a significantly higher level compared to the control group, despite results suggesting that there was no significant impact on the scores of the intervention group from pre- to post-intervention.

Table 2

Post hoc paired sample t-tests (full cohort)

Scale	Intervention Group $n = 157$			Control Group $n = 68$		
	t	Sig.	d	t	Sig.	d
Standard Score	-2.79*	.006	.047	3.36*	.001	.144
Communication	.983	.327	.006	-1.13	.264	.016
Cooperation	-1.64	.103	.017	-2.12*	.038	.063
Self-control	-3.01*	.003	.054	2.14*	.036	.064
Engagement	.165	.870	<.0005	.081	.935	<.0005
Empathy	1.84	.068	.021	-.317	.752	.002
Responsibility	-1.95	.053	.023	-1.36	.178	.026
Assertion	-2.87*	.005	.050	-2.15*	.036	.064

* Denotes a statistically significant change (p >.05) from pre- to post-intervention

Lower ability group analysis. Additional analysis was conducted on the participants whose standard score in the SSIS-RS at pre-intervention was at least one standard deviation below the mean. A mixed between-within subjects' analysis of variance was conducted to assess the impact of the Get Up! Stand Up! (Version 2) on participants meeting these criteria in the intervention group ($n = 24$) versus a control group of participants meeting the same criteria, on all the scales included in the SSIS-RS ($n = 12$) (see Table 3 for an overview).

Table 3

Mean and Standard Deviation scores SSIS-RS (Cohort 1 SD below mean)

	Intervention Group		Control Group	
	n = 24		n = 13	
Scale	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Standard Score	77.33 (8.36) *	86.08 (8.39) *	78.42 (5.48) *	90.00 (9.53) *
Communication	10.17 (2.24) *	11.37 (2.43) *	11.38 (2.96) *	13.08 (2.18) *
Cooperation	11.58 (3.45) *	13.21 (2.89) *	10.92 (3.17)	12.85 (2.97)
Self-control	5.92 (3.48) *	8.38 (3.48) *	6.00 (3.56) *	9.23 (4.21) *
Engagement	11.58 (4.45)	12.08 (3.79)	12.15 (3.58)	13.62 (2.87)
Empathy	10.21 (3.19) *	11.54 (3.46) *	11.77 (1.79)	12.62 (3.58)
Responsibility	10.96 (2.93) *	13.13 (2.72) *	11.31 (2.63) *	13.38 (2.02) *
Assertion	8.58 (2.65) *	9.88 (2.51) *	9.54 (3.73) *	11.69 (3.64) *

* Statistically significant change from the pre-intervention score to post-intervention score

Analyses indicate that there was no significant interaction between the group type and time of testing. However, there was a statistically significant main effect for time (Table 4) in all scales except the engagement scale. Examination of this data indicates that an increase was observed in all scales from pre- to post-intervention.

Table 4

Within-Subjects (time) (Cohort 1 SD below mean)

SSIS-RS Scales	F	Sig.	n_p^2
Communication	11.89 *	.001	.25
Cooperation	11.74 *	.002	.25
Assertion	12.57 *	.001	.26
Responsibility	18.44 *	<.0005	.35
Empathy	5.92 *	.020	.15
Engagement	3.93	.055	.15
Self-Control	35.08 *	<.0005	.50
Standard Score	55.46 *	<.0005	.62

*Denotes any F figure which is statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$.

Post hoc paired sample t-tests were conducted on the scores for each scale of the SSIS-RS (See Table 5). This indicated that there was a statistically significant change in several subscales from pre- to post-intervention in both groups. In the intervention group, statistically significant differences were noted in all subscales, except for engagement, while in the control group statistically significant differences were noted in all the scales except engagement, cooperation and empathy. Larger effect sizes, as denoted by *d* (Cohen's *d*) (Jacob Cohen, 1988), were noted for the participants in this cohort in comparison to the whole cohort in several scales, suggesting that changes may be more pronounced for the participants who presented with lower scores at pre-intervention compared to the whole group sample.

Table 5

Post hoc paired sample t-tests (Cohort 1 SD below mean)

Scale	Intervention Group			Control Group		
	n = 24			*n* = 13		
	t	Sig.	*d*	*t*	Sig.	*d*
Standard Score	-6.19*	<.0005	.625	-4.37*	.001	.614
Communication	-2.23*	.036	.177	-3.09*	.009	.443
Cooperation	-3.08*	.005	.292	-1.88	.084	.227
Self-control	-4.48*	<.0005	.466	-3.91*	.002	.56
Engagement	-0.88	.388	.032	-1.73	.109	.199
Empathy	-2.37*	.026	.197	-1.32	.210	.127
Responsibility	-3.91*	.001	.399	-2.38*	.035	.320
Assertion	-2.44*	.023	.205	-2.42*	.032	.327

* Denotes a statistically significant change (p >.05) from pre- to post-intervention

The main effect comparing both groups were not statistically significant (Table 6). Post hoc independent sample t-tests were conducted on the scores in both groups at pre- and post-intervention, which indicated that there was no significant difference between the groups at either pre- or post-intervention. This suggests that there is no statistically significant difference between the effectiveness of GUSU2 and the business as usual control.

Table 6

Between-Subjects (Group) (Cohort 1 SD below mean)

SSIS-RS Scales	F	Sig.	n_p^2
Communication	4.07	.051	.10
Cooperation	4.41	.594	.01
Assertion	2.30	.138	.06
Responsibility	0.15	.697	.004
Empathy	2.26	.142	.06
Engagement	0.72	.399	.02
Self-Control	0.16	.688	.005
Standard Score	0.96	.334	.03

Discussion

These results support the first hypothesis, as a statistically significant increase was observed in the total standard score of the intervention group following participation in GUSU2. This improvement was observed in the full study sample, as well as in the cohort of participants who presented with SE deficits based on their scores at pre-intervention. This suggests that a school-based programme, such as GUSU2, which specifically targets SE skills can result in an increase in pupils' SE skills (CASEL, 2013, 2015; Cefai et al., 2018; Clarke et al., 2015; January et al., 2011; O'Conner et al., 2017; Sancassiani et al., 2015). However, the exact impact of GUSU2 remains unclear as these results reject the second hypothesis proposed, which suggested that there would be a statistically significant difference between the impact of both groups on the participants' total standard score. This suggests that GUSU2 is as effective in impacting participants' SE skills as the business-as-usual condition. There are several possible explanations for these observed outcomes.

Firstly, it is possible that GUSU2 does not sufficiently address SE skills and any changes observed were merely the result of an unaccounted-for variable. If this is the case, the authors of GUSU2 and the school psychology service may wish to consider whether to continue promoting the use of the programme in Irish primary schools, as there is an ethical responsibility for Educational Psychologists (EPs) to ensure that appropriate interventions are utilised to support children (Cameron, 2006; Fallon et al., 2010; Frederickson, 2002; Lane & Corrie, 2007; Passenger, 2013; Scottish Executive, 2002).

It is possible that there was an unaccounted-for variable that was positively impacting on the SE skills of the participants, in either or both groups. This is often the case when research is conducted in a natural setting (Lipsey, 2005; Löfholm et al., 2013), as exerting full control over groups is not possible or feasible due to the associated costs (Greenberg, 2010). Hence, gathering sufficient detail to identify variables which may be impacting on outcomes is important (L. Cohen et al., 2007; Gearing et al., 2011; Löfholm et al., 2013; Witt et al., 2018), as this can often explain the differences in observed outcomes.

Business-as-usual control groups can impact on study outcomes (Löfholm et al., 2013; Witt et al., 2018). Teachers volunteered to be part of the control group, which may represent some selection bias, as it is possible that these teachers place more value on research compared to their colleagues (Bernard, 2013; Boardman et al., 2005; L. Cohen et al., 2007). Additionally, both groups were exposed to the same training, which may have inadvertently influenced the teachers' behaviour (L. Cohen et al., 2007; McCambridge et al., 2014). As the control group was aware of the purpose of the study, it is possible that teachers' behaviour and teaching practices changed as a result, i.e. the Hawthorne effect (L. Cohen et al., 2007; McCambridge

et al., 2014). It is also possible that pupils in the control group inferred the purpose of the study following pre-intervention testing, which may also have influenced their behaviour. Pupils are noted to be susceptible to responding in a particular way based on their perceptions of what the researcher expects from them when completing questionnaires (L. Cohen et al., 2007; Tourangeau & Yan, 2007). Furthermore, as the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA], 1999b; 1999c) and programmes such as *The Incredible Years* (Webster-Stratton, 2000) and *FRIENDS for Life* (Barrett & Ryan, 2004) are noted to address SE skills (Cefai et al., 2018; DES, 2017), it is possible that pupils in the control group may also have inadvertently been exposed to the teaching of SE skills. If this were the case, it may be incorrect to state that GUSU2 was ineffective, and it may be more accurate to state that GUSU2 is as effective as the other approaches in increasing SE skills.

Alternatively, it is possible that the measure used was not suitable. While the SSIS-RS (Gresham & Elliott, 2008) is identified as an appropriate measure of SE skills and outcomes (Cordier et al., 2015; Gresham, 2017; Humphrey et al., 2016; Humphrey et al., 2011), it is possible that it is not sufficiently sensitive to allow for significant differentiation between pupils (Simms et al., 2019). Hence, a more sensitive instrument may have more accurately captured the changes pupils' SE skills (Croasmun & Ostrom, 2011), particularly as the effect sizes were noted as being small (Jacob Cohen, 1988; Pallant, 2016). Furthermore, response categories which are not clearly defined, such as those in the SSIS-RS (i.e. not true, a little true, a lot true, very true), may be difficult to differentiate between, which may impact on the reported results (L. Cohen et al., 2007; Phellas et al., 2011). The number of options provided to pupils when responding, i.e. four, may also impact on the

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reliability of a measure, as precision is potentially reduced when less than five response options are provided (Simms et al., 2019).

Another possible explanation for the observed results is regarding programme fidelity. Programmes that are well implemented are shown to process better outcomes (CASEL, 2013; 2015; Durlak et al., 2011; Elliott & Mihalic, 2004; Forman et al., 2009; Greenberg, 2010; Payne, 2009; Weisz et al., 2005). The teaching of similar content, in the SPHE curriculum, in Irish primary schools has been noted as a concern previously (Inspectorate, 2009). Programmes which are implemented with poor adherence to the prescribed method are likely to result in outcomes similar to those in control groups (Greenberg, 2010; O'Connell et al., 2009; Pentz et al., 1990), as was the case in this study.

In addition to the total standard scores, the various subscales within the SSIS-RS were also analysed. These results indicate that, for the full study sample, there was a statistically significant change in the self-control and responsibility subscales, which coincide with CASEL's self-management and responsible decision-making competencies respectively (Gresham, 2017). However, significant changes were not observed in the other relevant scales. Participants in the lower ability sample, who were identified based on their total standard scores in the SSIS-RS at pre-intervention, demonstrated significant increases in the subscales which coincide with the CASEL competencies of self-management, social awareness and responsible decision-making. However, for relationship skills, only one of the two corresponding scales within the SSIS-RS (Gresham, 2017) demonstrated a significant increase. This suggests that GUSU2 may be suited for supporting pupils with SE skill deficits.

GUSU2 is currently designed for universal application (NEPS, 2017), however, individuals with special educational needs (SEN) often present with SE

difficulties (Bellini et al., 2007; Einfeld et al., 2018; Elias, 2004; National Council for Special Education [NCSE], 2013). Hence, the provision of support for this cohort is likely to be of concern to teachers. The findings from this study are promising, as universal interventions are typically effective with up to 80% of the population, while the remaining cohort may require more intensive interventions to support the development of SE skills, in the form of Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions (Durlak et al., 2015; Gresham, 2017; January et al., 2011). These findings suggest that GUSU2, in its current guise, may meet the needs of those requiring additional support. Hence, GUSU2 may be suited as a Tier 2 programme, that can build on the SE skills which have previously been addressed as part of the SPHE curriculum (Cefai et al., 2018; NCCA, 1999b; 1999c). Providing support across multiple levels depending on the needs of the pupils fits within the Irish education system, as such an approach mirrors the NEPS continuum of support model (NEPS, 2010, 2018b).

Future Directions. There are numerous direct and indirect implications evident as a result of this study. These potential implications are relevant for both programme developers and future researchers

Programme developers should consider reviewing the content of GUSU2 to ensure it addresses all the SE competencies outlined by CASEL (2013, 2015). Successfully addressing all these areas ensures that GUSU2 is aligned to an internationally recognised framework for SE skills. Furthermore, programme developers may wish to consider relabelling GUSU2 as a SE skills programme to accurately reflect its contents, and possibly its appeal with teachers.

The current evaluation resembles effectiveness research, as it was concerned with the effectiveness of GUSU2 in a natural setting (Löfholm et al., 2013)**.**

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However, efficacy research should be conducted to ensure that GUSU2 is addressing what it claims to address (Löfholm et al., 2013; O'Connell et al., 2009). While the outcomes following participation in GUSU2 are promising, the findings from the control group make it difficult to determine the exact impact of GUSU2 on participants.

The programme developers should consider including fidelity checks in GUSU2 to ensure that it is run as designed (CASEL, 2013; Bond et al., 2000; Gearing et al., 2011; O'Conner et al., 2017). Emphasis may need to be placed on any measures, such as the checklist included in the manual, at the training being provided (Elliott & Mihalic, 2004).

Research suggests that the best outcomes are achieved when an intervention is implemented over a longer period (CASEL, 203, 2015), while long term benefits are associated with programmes being implemented over a longer period (Greenberg et al., 2003). Hence, programme developers may wish to consider extending the length of GUSU2 and creating a top-up session to consolidate the skills initially learnt.

In this evaluation, minimum data was collected regarding the pupils, teachers and schools involved. Future researchers may wish to collect additional data to assist in identifying variables which may influence the outcomes of programmes (Weisz et al., 2005). The value that teachers place on evidence-based resources, which is a potential barrier to successful implementation (Boardman et al., 2005; M. Jones, 2009), may be a variable worth exploring in future research.

The findings from this evaluation suggested that GUSU2 may be effective with pupils presenting with some SE skill deficits. Hence, future researchers may

wish to consider the impact of GUSU2 on specific pupil cohorts, such as pupils with SEN, as this cohort may require additional support in SE skills (Bellini et al., 2007; Einfeld et al., 2018; Elias, 2004; National Council for Special Education [NCSE], 2013).

Future researchers should consider directly comparing the effects of GUSU2 and similar SE skill programmes (Löfholm et al., 2013; Watts et al., 2014), such as *the Incredible Years* (Webster-Stratton, 2000) programme and *FRIENDS for life* (Barrett & Ryan, 2004).

The possible impact of the Hawthorne effect (L. Cohen et al., 2007; McCambridge et al., 2014) as a result of the pre-intervention assessment was noted in this evaluation. Furthermore, concerns regarding the possible impact of social desirability (L. Cohen et al., 2007; Tourangeau & Yan, 2007; Van de Mortel, 2008) on pupils' responses were also noted. Future researchers may wish to adopt a research design such as the Solomon four-group design (Solomon, 1949; Solomon & Lessac, 1968) and include a measure of social desirability, such as that proposed by Crandall et al. (1965) or Ford (1970), to address these concerns.

In any study, the inclusion of a follow up of participants can provide additional information regarding the longer-term effect of the programme (L. Cohen et al., 2007). CASEL (2015) noted that the inclusion of follow up data offers valuable information regarding the effectiveness of a programme and can highlight how sustainable any improvements are. The collection of additional data after the participants had transitioned to post-primary school, would provide additional information regarding the longer-term impact of GUSU2. However, due to the

timescale involved in this research, such a follow-up was not possible but should be considered in future evaluations.

Limitations. On reflection, it is apparent that there were some limitations to this study. As noted, the SSIS-RS, while acknowledged as a measure suited for measuring outcomes for SE skill programmes (Cordier et al., 2015; Gresham & Elliott, 2017; Humphrey et al., 2011), does not include a subscale aligned to the competency of self-awareness (Gresham, 2017). The identification of a more suitable measure, or an additional measure, would have allowed for this to be addressed. However, such a measure was unavailable to the researcher in the limited timeframe available to conduct the research. The inclusion of measures relevant to other outcomes, such as academic performance, anxiety and depression and behaviour, which are associated with SE skills (Barnes et al., 2014; Cefai et al., 2018; Durlak et al., 2011; R. Taylor et al., 2017), may provide further insight. The lack of inclusion of checks for programme fidelity, such as an observation of sessions (as had been initially planned), is clearly a limitation, as the inclusion of a check would have provided information which could contribute to process aspect of this evaluation (CASEL, 2013; Elliott & Mihalic, 2004). Finally, due to the time constraints of this study, it was not possible to include a follow-up aspect. Clearly, the inclusion of a follow-up with the participants would have allowed for further exploration regarding the long term impact of the programme (L. Cohen et al., 2007; R. Taylor et al., 2017), particularly in the context of having transitioned to post-primary school. Finally, potential bias, as a result of social desirability (L. Cohen et al., 2007; Tourangeau & Yan, 2007; Van de Mortel, 2008) and the Hawthorne effect (L. Cohen et al., 2007; McCambridge et al., 2014), have both been noted in this evaluation. The limitations outlined here should not take from the findings and implications of this

evaluation, however, future researchers may wish to consider these before embarking

on similar evaluation studies.

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